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The University of Hull

Iconoclasm In Modern British Drama

being a thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Hull

by

Faisal Moáyad al-Kasim

B.A. (Damascus)

1989



For My Parents, Brothers and Sisters.

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Declaration.

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that it was completed solely by myself.

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Take of English earth as much
As either hand may rightly clutch.
In the taking of it breathe
Prayer for all who lie beneath...
Lay that earth upon thy heart,
And thy sickness shall depart!

Rudyard Kipling: A Charm.

I hold by the Ould Church, for she's the
mother of them all - ay an' the father too.

Rudyard Kipling: On Greenhow Hill.

Let us now praise famous men.

Rudyard Kipling: A School Song.

England! Filthy wevver!

Howard Brenton: The Churchill Play.

England? Bloody England's nothing to me!

David Mercer: Belcher's Luck.

God rot great men!

Howard Brenton: The Churchill Play.

INTRODUCTION

Complaining about the current iconoclasm of modern British playwrights in his book, Theatre in Britain, Harold Hobson regretted that "the prevalent post-war mood of Britain and the West is a repudiation of its customs and achievements, of Homer, of Shakespeare, of Christianity, of conventional morality, and as such, it is vividly represented in the contempt for our traditions and history shown in many contemporary plays"¹. Hobson's complaint was well-founded. English dramatists after the Second World War, particularly in the mid-sixties and throughout the seventies, have indeed moved a long way towards desecrating those relics of the past glorified by such jingoistic Victorian poets and writers as Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Carlyle. The name of England and its icons are to be no longer spoken of with reverence and pride, nor are their power and glory to be celebrated. "England my England" has now often been replaced, by modern British dramatists by "bloody England" represented now not by "a garden" in full bloom, but as a "dying bit of old England" "ruled by a "corpse." Chauvinists are replaced by iconoclasts who look at their past and present with absolute indignation. The "English earth" is no longer a magic medicine which heals incurables; it is now only "filthy" and contagious. There is no tendency on the part of iconoclastic playwrights to "breathe prayer for all who lie beneath", or to "praise famous men." Instead, the icons of England's glorious history have now been resurrected to be assailed and dissected. The myths of the past and the present are now

being torn asunder. It is the nature and intention of this iconoclasm that this thesis will seek to examine.

However, treating Hobson's statement quoted above topic by topic, one could end up writing scores of theses about the various iconoclastic trends in modern British drama. For that reason, I think it worthwhile to establish a definition of the term iconoclasm as it is going to be examined in this work. As exhibited in the modern British plays singled out for consideration, iconoclasm is identified as the deconstruction, or rather destruction of iconized monumental figures of the past and the present. As we shall see, idolatrized historic and living personages who are regarded almost as holy icons to be adored and held in high esteem, who are usually elegised by poets, immortalised by sculptors, idealised by painters and enthroned in the realm of glorious legend by chroniclers are now treated with scorn by iconoclastic dramatists and ultimately demythologised and condemned as villains.

The iconoclasts however, do not merely demagnify iconic individuals, but also, through them, proceed to debunk and demystify British history, together with its various cherished myths. In a nutshell, they aim to rewrite both history and the present.

Amongst the most salient factors behind the emergence of iconoclasm in modern British drama is, no doubt, the demise of theatre censorship in 1968. With that epoch-making achievement, finally accomplished as a result of the strenuous efforts of many dramatists and other writers, the

theatre was free to approach the unapproachable and to speak the unspeakable.

Tracing back the encumbrances and difficulties encountered by British playwrights before the abolition of censorship, one comes to recognise that those daring plays put on towards, and after the removal of the Censorship Act, could hardly have been permitted on any British stage which had to adhere to the Theatre Act of 1843.

However, many attempts had been previously made by playwrights and other authoritative voices to lift the ban on some theatrical presentations. Lord Willis, speaking in a debate on theatre censorship in the House of Lords on 17th February, 1966, attacked, like many other dramatists, the curbing of "artistic freedom" which he regarded as "an affront" to dramatists. He also condemned censorship as a "wrong institution."²

George Bernard Shaw, himself an iconoclast, who subjected revered persons of history such as Napoleon and Caesar to irreverent treatment in plays such as The Man of Destiny and Caesar and Cleopatra had also previously attacked censorship on many occasions:

"All censorship exists to prevent anyone from challenging current conceptions and existing institutions. All progress is initiated by challenging current conceptions and executed by supplanting existing institutions. Consequently the first condition of progress is the removal of censorship."³

Most of the British playwrights who were already writing during the first theatrical revolution were to fall foul of the Lord Chamberlain over their audacious plays, the language

they used and the questions they raised. John Arden was among those dramatists who, like Shaw before them, strongly rejected the censorship of their plays. Early in 1966 he sent a letter to the Lord Chamberlain, expressing his view of theatre censorship:

"I am in principle opposed to theatrical censorship, but I do recognise the difficulty of abolishing the Lord Chamberlain...The Lord Chamberlain has become a sort of arbiter of standards which have little to do with art and equally little to do with the manners of individual people in our society. If writers are of any use at all to society they surely must examine such standards for themselves as freely as possible and, in their work, either throw them over or confirm them, according to circumstances...I can see no reason for interfering with the actual words of a writer...which are his tools..."⁴

Likewise, Edward Bond, a brilliant iconoclast, was to become repeatedly the target of censorship which if it had continued to operate after 1968, would have prevented him and many other playwrights from presenting those plays, (for example, Early Morning in which Queen Victoria is presented as a lesbian, and was banned by the Lord Chamberlain) which I intend to examine.

Another modern British playwright who chose to subject idolised characters to scathing treatment, and who had more trouble with the Lord Chamberlain than any of his fellow playwrights was Charles Wood. Quoted by Richard Findlater in Banned, Wood attacked those who were not courageous enough to combat censorship:

"Actors are timid, managements are timid, and we shall always have the Lord Chamberlain. I don't think of him much because I'm not timid."⁵

Wood's play Dingo (1967) which I am going to study later was also banned.

The ultimate success in 1968 of the revolt against the restrictions of censorship was, in fact, an introduction to the second revolution in the British theatre which began to manifest itself towards the end of the sixties and which could expand during the seventies.

The majority of the plays which are to be discussed in the course of this work were, however, produced after the repeal of censorship on 28th September, 1968, and consequently benefited from the freer climate.

The second major factor which led some dramatists to try their hands at demythologising history and its luminaries was the then political mood prevalent. The personages targeted by the playwrights are de-iconized not as individuals, but as the idols of the establishment and as representatives of political forces. The 1968 events in Paris, Vietnam, the U.S.A., Czechoslovakia, China, the Middle East, Latin America, Britain and Ireland produced a new mythology and led to the politicisation and ultimately the Marxisation of a rising generation, particularly that of the playwrights who were to identify themselves with the emergent movement of thought that appealed to "Marx as a symbol of the revolutionary transformation of society."⁶ It was in this environment that Howard Brenton, John McGrath, Steve Gooch and Caryl Churchill came to maturity. However, 1968 "not only politicised a new generation, it had strong political influences on important writers of the previous generation -

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Arden, Bond..... and Trevor Griffiths".⁷

For example, 1968, for Brenton, "was crucial. It was a great watershed" that "directly affected" him.⁸ Likewise, McGrath states that he was deeply influenced by the 1968 Paris events. In an interview with Catherine Itzin in Theatre Quarterly he marvels at the outbreak of a new "thinking", "the freshness of the approach" and "the urgency and beauty of the ideas" thrown up by the "para-military situation."⁹ Arden was politicised by the situation in Northern Ireland, Vietnam and India, in the wake of which he relinquished his pacifism in favour of "revolutionary socialism." In like manner, Bond underwent tremendous change of heart from 1968 on. Social criticism in his early plays was replaced by the socialist thinking and "Marxism" in the plays written from 1968 onward. With the advent of the above events, Griffiths was engaged with the "New Left." However, May 1968 prompted him to give up journalism and to dedicate his time to the theatre and led to his becoming one of its most authentic Marxist dramatists.¹⁰

The clashes between the "establishments" of America and Europe on the one hand, and the students and, on occasions, striking workers on the other, deepened the sense of class consciousness of the playwrights concerned, who now saw the conflict between the above two camps, not as a confrontation between governments and governed, but as a struggle between classes. The establishment was recognised as the class enemy of all those who rose up to oppose it. Deeply influenced by the confrontations between the ruling classes and the

insurgent strikers, the dramatists in question, using history as a source material for their plays, could not but see the past as a series of class rivalries between what they might term the oppressors and the oppressed.

The suppression of the demonstrations by the agents of the establishment was seen as a class oppression. Hence the dramatisation of history as a cycle of oppression on the part of the ruling classes against the masses; a theme that dominated plays such as Will Wat, If Not, What Will by Steve Gooch, Early Morning, Bingo, and The Woman by Edward Bond, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire by Caryl Churchill, The Island of the Mighty by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy and The Churchill Play by Howard Brenton. For example, Brenton's response to the defeats of May, 1968, as his above play shows, may be seen to have led the playwright to condemn Sir Winston Churchill in the above play for doing something similar to what was done to the student demonstrators, that is, using soldiers to put down striking "Welsh mining men in 1910." In The Island of the Mighty, the bandit Garlon cries that he has suffered sufficiently at the hands of King Arthur and his ruthless dynasty, "I have suffered far too much from these Kings and these Princes; Every one of them is my enemy."¹¹ The struggle between American imperialists and Third World countries such as Vietnam was also seen in terms of class warfare. King Arthur, a representative imperialist, is shown, like the Americans, trying to impose his hegemony on his weak neighbours such as the poverty-stricken Picts.¹² Thus, Marx's view, that history is a series of class struggles was embraced as prophetic and workable. In a word,

history was re-examined in the light of the 1968 events, and Marxism was the yardstick.

The happenings of 1968 have not only led the dramatists concerned to view history as a conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed, but also made them indict their fellow artists who allied themselves with the oppressors. Strongly believing in the important role that art can play in the revolutionary struggle against what they term the people's enemies, Bond and the Ardens amongst others, reverted to the past to condemn historic artistic figures for their complicity with the oppressors against the people, and for their failure to engage in the struggle. In Bingo Bond condemns the great William Shakespeare as a bourgeois artist and in like manner, Merlin, the Arthurian bard, is portrayed in The Island as a hack in the pay of the ruling class.

Supportive of the students' and striking workers' uprisings and their challenge to the establishment, the Ardens, Griffiths, McGrath and Brenton on the other hand, set out to discover and glorify the anti-establishment heroes of history, even sometimes recommending them as revolutionary types to be emulated. John MacLean of John McGrath's The Game's a Bogey, for instance, could be identified with the revolutionary elements which provoked and led the struggle against the ruling classes in 1968.

Another major influence on iconoclastic modern British playwrights, particularly the Marxist ones, was Bertolt Brecht's Marxist-based plays such as Coriolan, Saint Joan of the Stockyard and The Trial of Lucullus which, like the modern

British plays concerned, subject historic figures to a Marxist dissection.

This work will indeed deal with two types of iconoclast, the Aristophanists and the Marxists. The first category is characterised by its use of satirical comedy to debunk influential living political figures and war heroes. It calls for pacifism by satirizing war and its heroes and agitates against politicians and their policies. The second type is marked by its Marxist-based ideological dissection of the great and by its elevation of the people to the status of heroism. The third and final part of the thesis concludes the study on a positive note by dealing with the figure of the Marxist hero.

Part I

Part I.

Aristophanic Iconoclasm.

"The theatre is...there to bait... public figures."
Howard Brenton.

Theatre Quarterly, No 32, 1979

Much of the comic iconoclasm found in modern British theatre, particularly that which pre-dates the repeal of censorship, represents the continuation of an approach which would appear to be as old as drama itself but whose first extant existence appears in the works of the Greek dramatist Aristophanes whose ardour to castigate those in power never softened throughout his lifetime.

Amongst those modern English playwrights who have, on occasions, followed in the footsteps of Aristophanes, are Charles Wood, Howard Brenton, John Arden and Steven Berkoff. It was Aristophanes who first presented irreverent treatment of mighty politicians and war heroes such as Cleon in the Knights and General Lamachus in the Acharnians. Like Aristophanes, the above British dramatists subject public figures and war heroes to scathingly unsympathetic treatment through the medium of satirical comedy, and are politically motivated. Still, they, as I shall show later, have not followed Aristophanes slavishly. For example, Wood and Arden who in Dingo and The Hero Rises Up, revive an Aristophanic dramatic tradition, also make use of modern theatrical techniques notably Brecht's epic theatre. In this section, the term Aristophanic is restricted only to the satirical, jocular and vituperative mood of deconstruction of war heroes and living politicians. Politically, this type calls for pacifism through satirizing war and its heroes and agitates

against living political figures and their policies. Before proceeding to examine the British plays concerned, I shall briefly consider Aristophanes and two of his plays to furnish this chapter with a historical as well as a theatrical background.

Aristophanes was born about 445. B.C. in the deme, Cydathenaeon. He was in his lifetime to experience the darkest years of Greek history, the war between Athens and Sparta. Repelled by the atrocities of war heroes, and the wrong-headed policies of certain politicians of his time, he set out to expose their faults. Aristophanic comedy evinces a political involvement in the issues of the time. In the words of Aristophanes, "the dramatist should not only offer pleasure but should, besides that, be a political adviser."¹

How could Aristophanes dare to challenge the mightiest figures of his time by presenting them in a farcical, degrading light? Old comedy, Coburn Gum argues, "freely represented actual 'contemporary persons on the stage.'"² This brings us to the question of dramatic censorship, which I have mentioned in my introduction. Wood's Dingo, as I shall illustrate later, was banned by the British Lord Chamberlain for its attack on iconic figures from contemporary British history. The Lord Chamberlain could not allow Wood's iconoclastic treatment of Field-Marshal Montgomery and Sir Winston Churchill. Here lies the difference between Aristophanes and some of his British followers. Not all the English playwrights concerned deal, like Aristophanes, with living public figures. In Dingo, for example, not all Wood's

targets are living personages. Likewise, Arden in The Hero Rises up, directs his iconoclastic hammer against eighteenth century figures. Thus Aristophanes was much more daring as far as the caricature of actual public figures was concerned. His targets, unlike Wood's and some of Brenton's, are living personages such as Cleon and Lamachus. This obviously illustrates the greater freedom enjoyed by the Greek satirists in the theatre than that available to their British counterparts of the 1960s. As Coburn Gum reveals:

"In ancient Greece, no person was immune from the possibility of being ridiculed on the comic stage. In fact, eminent citizens were, by their prominence and importance, almost assured of a place in comedy. The abuse of such public figures often reached astonishing heights, and was accompanied by unrestricted ribaldry, obscenity and buffoonery. This type of satire was made possible by the unique licence of Greek comedy. Aristophanes freely ridiculed prominent Greek citizens; he caricatured not only a powerful statesman and a brilliant Greek general, but the entire Athenian public..... The extent of this personal satire is impressive. In the comedies, 112 actual persons are attacked, derided, or lampooned by name."³

Thus, Aristophanes' shafts are not directed at "obscure, private, powerless men and women", but only at "those prominent in public life, whose actions, personal habits and ideas significantly affect the state."⁴ The British Aristophanists are aware of that objective. Their targets are persons whose actions affect the welfare of the country, and who exercise a mythical influence on the people. Thus, to challenge them becomes a daunting and daring task, because it is with them that the audience identifies. Aristophanes ridiculed not only statesmen and heroes, but also other idols of society, such men-of-letters as Euripides, or philosophers like Socrates, who were pilloried in The Frogs and The

Clouds. Thus the free rein given to Aristophanes in the theatre led him to luxuriate in his iconoclasm.

Two of Aristophanes' plays, the Acharnians and the Knights, may be used to illustrate how modern British theatre has adopted, for the purpose of satire, features of the earlier comedy.

The Acharnians was produced in 425 B.C., at the Lenaia, and was awarded first prize.⁵ I have chosen this play for a brief examination partly because I shall use it later as a point of comparison and contrast when I discuss the British plays which de-iconize war heroes. More importantly, however, the Acharnians can rightly be considered the "progenitor" of the modern British plays which satirize national heroes. Alexis Solomos, in his examination of the above play, argues that it was Aristophanes' Acharnians which paved the way for later types of slapstick imposed upon the victors of war. But Solomos, although making no mention of the modern British plays which I am going to consider under the description of Aristophanic Iconoclasm, nevertheless, says that "Through the Acharnians, he (Lamachus) becomes the legitimate progenitor of all the braggart soldiers, who will storm the theatre in later ages - from the Alazon and the Episeistos of New Attic Comedy and the Roman Miles Gloriosus to the Capitano and the Scaramuccia of the later European farces - whose living scion is, prosaically enough, the tough sergeant of modern films",⁶ such as Sergeant Bilko. Solomos has made a big mistake by considering General Lamachus the "progenitor" of the "Capitano" and other types. There is a world of difference between Lamachus and the

Capitano of Comedia del Arte. The former is not made fun of for his Falstaffian, false courage. His boasting of his military might is quite justifiable. Unlike the "Capitano", he is really courageous. Hence his braggadocio. To my mind, Lamachus can more appropriately be seen as the forefather of the military types (such as Monty in Dingo and Nelson in The Hero Rises Up) lapidated in modern British plays and who, like Lamachus, were sturdy heroes.

Just as Dingo and The Hero Rises Up are intended to offer a shocking farcical perspective on British heroes such as Monty and Nelson the Acharnians makes mince-meat of a great Greek general, Lamachus who, in fact, played a considerable role in the war against Sparta. Thus Wood and, in some ways, Arden, may be seen to be, in the second half of the 20th century A.D., the revivers of an Aristophanic tradition.

Like Dingo and The Hero Rises Up, the Acharnians can be rightly called propaganda for peace. Aristophanes was embittered by his war experience. He "saw his home-town packed with refugees from all the nearby areas."⁷ War itself, however, is not dramatised in Aristophanes' play.⁸ Unlike the Acharnians, Dingo written by a soldier-playwright, is set on the battlefield and is a far more authentic cry against war and its perpetrators who, as Aristophanes and Wood suggest, stood to gain by continuation and escalation of the war, and out of it eventually were to enjoy an iconic status.

Like Brecht and Wood, Aristophanes attached paramount importance to the role of the theatre in persuasion and change. Like Dingo, the Acharnians is propagandistic in approach. Dicaeopolis, the main character in the play addresses the audience almost directly to force them "into playing a role as unexact as it is appropriate."⁹ To Gilbert Norwood, the play "is not only a comedy; it possesses some of the qualities of a political pamphlet. Aristophanes puts forth all his powers to turn his countrymen against the war, and his last scenes bear witness that there is a jingoism of peace as well as a jingoism of war."¹⁰ In the words of Gilbert Murray "Aristophanes pled for reasonableness and peace throughout a fierce and dangerous period of war fever."¹¹ How could Aristophanes make his audience reject the war? Does he, like Wood, show mutilated bodies and broken weapons? No. He resorts to playing down the importance of popular military idols such as Lamachus who, like Monty and Nelson, are identified with by the audience. Like Wood, Aristophanes has no patriotic tendency to glorify a national hero. His attack on Lamachus is in itself an assault on the members of the audience who identify with him, and, on what Norwood has described above as "a jingoism of war." Just as Dingo says that Churchill has pissed on us,¹² the chorus in the Acharnians, instead of lauding Lamachus, accuses "this man" of "incessantly" abusing "Athens."¹³

In the Acharnians, Aristophanes is not afraid to take liberties in the creation of the stage figure. Cedric H. Whitman argues that "there is little or nothing historical about the ferocious figure who now leaps upon the stage. The

real Lamachus seems to have been a brave officer. His name, however, contained the word for battle."¹⁴ To Francis Cornford, Lamachus "appears to have been picked out for the sake of his name, which might be rendered 'valiant soldier', and lends itself to puns on mach, 'fight'."¹⁵ Thus Lamachus enjoyed, during his lifetime, like his British counterpart, Monty, or even Nelson, a mythical reputation for his triumphs and expeditions and despite Lamachus' political power, Aristophanes was audacious enough to treat him grotesquely, and to diminish his status as a hero.

Dicaeopolis, the vulgar farmer, who is used by Aristophanes to deflate, and ultimately triumph over the powerful Lamachus is, as Whitman notes, "ironical enough at first as he pretends to cringe before the generals' arms and waving plumes; tremblingly, he induces Lamachus to put down his shield, which he calls a 'bug-bear', and then vomits in it, borrowing a feather from the crest to assist his purpose. This is mere slapstick and what follows might be called verbal slapstick."¹⁶ When Lamachus makes his first appearance in the play, he strikes the audience as a Heracleian hero: "Where comes this cry of battle? Where must I bring my aid? Where must I sow dread? Who wants me to uncase my dreadful Gorgon's head?"¹⁷ This heroic appearance is deflated once Lamachus starts upon his tussle with Dicaeopolis who turns the former's heroism into an object of laughter: "But as you are so strong, why did you not circumcise me? You have all you want for the operation there."¹⁸ Dicaeopolis goes further to call Lamachus "a vile mercenary", who as Victor Ehrenberg argues, "takes more

pride" in his "spears than in" his brain, who, as I have already said, brags about his "glorious deeds",¹⁹ and is the type of hero who appears in John Arden's The Hero Rises Up, in which Lord Nelson at the beginning of the play chides the audience and reminds it of his heroic exploits. Like Lamachus, he strikes the audience as a swashbuckler and as a "professional soldier."²⁰

Another important feature in which iconoclasts of the modern British theatre such as Charles Wood and Howard Brenton resemble Aristophanes is in their use of obscenity and indecency. The above two dramatists wallow in obscene and indecent words, jokes and scenes which "call attention to any part of the directly 'sexual', as well as excretory"²¹ processes, but in doing so contribute nothing new to the theatre. It was indeed Aristophanes who first "filled his plays with scatological and prurient material which flouts every consideration of decency and propriety."²² According to Norwood, "There is no kind or aspect of impropriety that cannot be found in his surviving work."²³ In the words of C. W. Wright, "No sense of decency, no shades of the proprieties, ever restrained the general humour of Aristophanes."²⁴ Few of Brenton's plays restrain from the use of foul language and from referring to indecent physical processes. Wood's work is no less scatological than Brenton's and has also outraged public taste by freely presenting upon the stage the most disgusting material imaginable. In Steven Berkoff's Sink The Belgrano!, we are presented with an extreme example of Aristophanic obscene satire where Mrs Thatcher and her ministers are given vulgar

names and made to address each other in an offensive foul language.

In the early stages of the Acharnians the Ambassador explains how it took a barbarian king eight months to defecate: "At the end of the fourth year we reached the king's court, but he had left with his whole army to ease himself and for the space of eight months he was thus easing himself in the midst of the golden mountain."²⁵ The translator seems to be careful in his translation of the play from Greek into English. Thus he uses the verb to "ease." A playwright like Brenton or Wood would not hesitate to crudely use "shit." Thus instead of elevating both the language and events of a play concerned with a great personage, Aristophanes and his British followers demagnify their celebrities by means of obscenities and indecencies.

Compared with the Acharnians, the Knights is even more iconoclastic. The target of attack is here Cleon, a powerful Greek politician as well as a war-leader and imperialist. The play was produced in 424 B.C., at the Lenaeon Festival. In the Knights, Aristophanes, Whitman argues, "unleashed one of the most savage attacks to be found anywhere in the history of literature."²⁶ While Lamachus appears just twice in the Acharnians, Cleon is the "Aunt Sally" of the whole of the Knights.²⁷ I have chosen this play for a brief examination because in a way it clearly equates with those modern British plays which deal with living statesmen and current politics in an iconoclastic comic manner. Athenian politics were undoubtedly different from ours, and so it is not my aim to compare the issues raised by Aristophanes'

above play with those raised by modern British dramatists. It is the iconoclastic political nature of the Knights that forms the theatrical and historical point of reference when I come to deal later with Howard Brenton's Shock, Steven Berkoff's Belgrano and Wells' Denis.

But to return to the Knights, Cleon, according to Thucydides (iii, 36), was "the most violent of the citizens and the most influential with the people."²⁸ To Murray, he "was the most successful of the generals."²⁹ Unlike Thatcher, who is pilloried as a politician in the above British plays, Cleon was both a political leader, and a war-hero. In the Knights, Aristophanes' valour appears at its best. To Murray, "it was a bold thing for a young man with no official position to challenge the greatest man, and one of the most unscrupulous, in Athens to a battle of life and death."³⁰ This testifies to the great political role played by the theatre in the Greek era, and to the independent nature of the arts. It follows from Aristophanes' attacks that the classical stage could severely criticise the politics of the time. However, it should be noted that the Knights was not intended by Aristophanes to absorb and defuse the indignation of the public by treating its politicians in a farcical manner and from the evidence of this play, it would appear that the theatre certainly was not used simply to reflect establishment views. Aristophanes' agit-prop theatre would appear to have been much more powerful than the alternative political theatre of modern Britain, because unlike the latter which performs outside the established theatres, Greek theatre was not simply peripheral

"entertainment", but part of the calendar of state and yet could be used to attack leaders of the establishment - a factor perhaps reflecting the more democratic nature of the Greek society. However, British institutional theatres have not been totally impervious to Aristophanic iconoclasm, some of the British plays to be examined later indeed have been performed in institutional theatres such as the National, the R.S.C., and in the West End. This has undoubtedly been due to the absence of censorship which had so shackled the theatre before 1968, and to the essentially democratic nature of Great Britain. Just as Cleon "witnesses furiously from the first row, his own degradation", Mrs Thatcher herself and her husband, were sitting in the first tier of the theatre when Denis was produced.³¹

The Knights is highly political. Its plot is based upon the various political incidents of the day and its action concerned with the political scene in Athens. Solomos calls it a "masterpiece of political satire", and a "ruthless political libel."³² Just as A Short Sharp Shock! is "an outright anti-Thatcherite polemic",³³ the Knights is anti-Cleon propaganda. Just as Aristophanes tries to turn his audience against Cleon, Brenton eggs his audience on to reject Mrs. Thatcher and her policies. Political propaganda is central to the iconoclasm of both and indeed to much of that which appeared elsewhere in the modern British theatre.

Having cursorily pointed out the political and theatrical affinities between the Knights and the British plays with which I am concerned, I shall now look at the way

Aristophanes treats Cleon, and at the political implications of this treatment in order to use them later as reference points against which to examine the political and theatrical aspects of Wells', Berkoff's and Brenton's plays. In the first instance, I shall illustrate how Aristophanes treats his target, Cleon.

To start with, in the play Aristophanes reduces Cleon from a celebrated, mighty leader to a "conniving, toadying, ruthless slave"³⁴ whose degradation is carried out through three main parties which all contribute to demeaning him in the eyes of the audience. Nicias and Demosthenes, two generals of the time, are employed by the playwright to libel Cleon before the audience. Through them, Aristophanes uses various sorts of propaganda to destroy his target. Even before he appears on the stage, Cleon is slandered verbally. The two generals call Cleon everything from a pig to a dog. He is an "arrant rogue"; "he plays the fawning cur."³⁵ He is a "robber."³⁶ Aristophanes goes further to suggest that, like the Sausage-Seller, who will later take up his comic, satirical agon with Cleon, the latter is neither "educated nor an honest man"; he is "an ignoramus."³⁷ Later the chorus supports this opinion when it says: "You also know what a pig's education he has had; his school-fellows can recall that he only liked the Dorian style and would study no other; his music master in displeasure sent him away, saying, 'This youth in matters of harmony, will only learn the Dorian style because, 't's akin to bribery'."³⁸ When Demosthenes says to the Sausage-Seller, "you posses all the attributes of a demagogue, a screeching horrible voice, a perverse, gross-

grained nature",³⁹ he means none but Cleon. All this is before Cleon appears on the stage. When he does appear, he is made to frighten the Sausage-Seller to death with his violent, vulgar, raging voice. The chorus elaborates on Cleon's detestable voice when it says, " 'tis this very bawling that incessantly upsets the city."⁴⁰ Later throughout the agon, Cleon's voice becomes terrifying. He yells like a mad dog, causing the Sausage-Seller to comment that "His bluster makes me laugh."⁴¹ Thus, theatrically the actor playing the part of Cleon must have assumed a "horrible voice" and displayed a rabid nature in order to terrorise and alienate the audience.

No sooner have Demosthenes and Nicias stopped their slander of Cleon, than the second party, the chorus of Knights, who were also abused by Cleon, start to attack him, now present on the stage, with a whirlwind of invective. They call him a "villain" five times in one passage. He is "an impostor", a "dull varlet", a "scoundrel", and "an impudent bawler."⁴²

At times Aristophanes' language becomes very violent and less humorous. His anger, expressed through the chorus, is such that he uses words such as "strike", "bruise", and "punish" to show his detestation of Cleon. Later in the same vein, the chorus once again releases its fury by ordering the Sausage-Seller to "Strike, strike with all your might; bruise his belly, lashing him with your guts and your pipe."⁴³ "And above all, bite your foe, rend him to atoms, tear off his comb and do not return until you have devoured his wattles."⁴⁴ Here, as can be seen, Aristophanes probably

becomes almost childish in his diatribes due to his extreme hate of Cleon.

To the chorus, however, the Sausage-Seller is "a much greater rascal than Cleon"; he beats him "in roguery, in brazenness and in clever turns."⁴⁵ He is nonetheless his match in vileness, indicating of course a similar trait in Cleon. Solomos argues that Aristophanes "chose on purpose a common, uneducated specimen of mankind for his hero, in order to emphasise Cleon's lowliness and vulgarity: he matched, that is to say, the famous scoundrel of the pnyx with an infamous scoundrel of the market place, sarcastically theorising that no respectable or virtuous citizen was destined to beat Cleon."⁴⁶ Thus their agon is a contest in "clever wickedness", "shamelessness", "disgustingness", "criminality", and "impostorship."⁴⁷

The comic farcical part of the play begins when Cleon commences his tussle with the Sausage-Seller. The audience laughs when Cleon thrusts himself overbearingly forward and the Sausage-Seller gets in his way. The following quotation is not from the copy which I have already quoted; it is from Murray's Aristophanes in which the following passage is translated much more comically. Moreover, the translator uses, "Offal-Monger" for "Sausage-Seller":

Cleon.	Allow me!
Offal-Monger.	No!
Cleon.	Allow me!
Offal-Monger.	No! You shan't address them first.
Cleon.	(Oh, I shall burst!) Allow Me.
Offal-Monger.	No!
Chorus.	Oh, please, Sir, let him burst. ⁴⁸

As the play progresses, the agon becomes so heated that the two rivals go on bullying and abusing each other in a farcical way. Cleon is made to call himself "a cynocephalus", which means "a vicious species of dog."⁴⁹ The scurrilous contest ends with the Sausage-Seller achieving victory over Cleon before Demos. Cleon is condemned by the Sausage-Seller to "follow my old trade; posted near the gates, he must sell sausages of asses and dogs-meat ; perpetually drunk, he will exchange foul language with prostitutes and will drink nothing but the dirty water from the baths."⁵⁰ Demos seconds the Sausage-Seller's indictment of Cleon: "he is indeed fit to wrangle with harlots and bathmen."⁵¹ Dogs, asses and whores are therefore, in Aristophanes' opinion the appropriate counterpart for Cleon.

In the Knights as in the Acharnians, Aristophanes spices his satire with obscene as well as indecent remarks. The Sausage-Seller says that "a lewd man broke wind on my side."⁵² Later he says to Demos "Were you not yourself in those days quite red in the gills with farting?."⁵³ As far as obscenities are concerned, the "two slaves emerge from the stage building, dolefully rubbing their behinds."⁵⁴ The Sausage-Seller comments to Demos "may a hook be passed through my testicles."⁵⁵ And later he declares that "I sold sausages and did a bit of fornication."⁵⁶

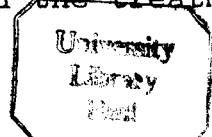
In the Knights Aristophanes' attack is, however, not merely directed towards the politician concerned, but also towards those members of the audience who support that politician and his policies. He has Cleon assert that Demos, who stands for the Greek people, (represented in the theatre

by the audience) "loves me passionately,"⁵⁷ and therefore implies guilt by association on the part of those members of the public who follow Cleon blindly. There can nevertheless be no doubt of Aristophanes' opinion expressed clearly by the chorus: "Oh! happy day for us and for our children if Cleon perish....No! he shall not command us."⁵⁸

As I said earlier, Athenian politics are different from modern Britain's, and for that reason I shall not go through Cleon's political defects in detail. The most important thing in the Knights is its agit-prop, political comic nature which makes it a clear antecedent of plays such as A Short Sharp Shock!, Sink the Belgrano!, Anyone for Denis? and the like, one which served as a model for subsequent iconoclastic political drama.

I. 1. "I Don't Hold With Heroes"

As we have seen, the diminishing of war-heroes began as early as Aristophanes. But a look at the history of British drama reveals that the victors of war have generally been worshipped as idols with whom the audience was invited to identify. In contrast, modern British dramatists, particularly Charles Wood and John Arden, have rejected wholesale, the cult of hero-worship and have set out to present an aggressive, unsympathetic perspective on idolised war-heroes. Before, however, coming to Wood's and Arden's treatment of war-heroes, I shall briefly look at the treatment of the warrior and conqueror as hero in British drama in order to illustrate later in what manner modern British playwrights have radically altered the treatment of



such figures.

Shakespeare's attitude towards war-heroes is self-contradictory. In Troilus and Cressida, he follows an Aristophanic tradition, that is, using a lowly character to gibe at a great hero. Thersites, a repulsive dirty little character jeers at Agamemnon in a grotesquely comic manner. But Thersites differs from his Aristophanic predecessor in that he does not achieve triumph over his betters. He merely degrades them in the eyes of the audience. But when we come to Julius Caesar, we find Shakespeare going to great lengths to show his warriors as demigods. Calphurnia, Caesar's wife is made to say that "Heavens" are alerted by the passing away of a hero like Caesar: "When beggars die, there are no comets seen; The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."¹ Thus during the murder of the great hero Caesar, the elemental frame, one evening, is shaken. It follows from that that there are two different attitudes in Shakespeare's plays, towards heroes, reflecting Shakespeare's experience and changes in social values.

It was, however, Christopher Marlowe who in the Elizabethan period created the most colossal hero in his Tamburlaine The Great. The figure of Tamburlaine dominates the whole play which, in fact, is constructed of a series of constantly repeated heroic actions on the part of the hero; a new enemy appears and takes up battle with Tamburlaine, who emerges each time as conqueror until he dies from natural causes and thereby ends the play. Marlowe does not stop at magnifying and focusing on the valour and heroism of his

victor; he proceeds to compare him variously to such figures as Achilles, Hector, Alexander and Jupiter and keeps repeating his victories to sustain "the heroic illusion."² Eugene M. Waith argues in The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden that "the poet who associates his hero with Hercules or Achilles shows him, momentarily at least, in a pre-existing heroic form, as if already part of a great tradition."³ The mythical heroes of the past to whom Tamburlaine is compared have "special qualities" about them, which makes us "colour our image of those latter heroes who invoke" their "ancestry." Achilles is well known for his wrath, Hercules is famous for his "endurance under trial", and Alexander is so mighty that he could conquer the whole world. Thus Tamburlaine becomes not only a marvellous, courageous warrior, but also a combination of every heroic characteristic. He holds "the fates bound fast in iron chains; And with my hand turn fortune's wheel about."⁴ The prologue of the play is an invitation to watch the greatness of the hero:

"From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
Threatening the world with his conquering sword."⁵

There can be no greater lionisation of the warrior as hero than this.

As mentioned above, John Dryden, like Marlowe associated his brave men with the classical heroes. Quoted by Lindenberger in Historical Drama, he wrote: "The first image I had of (Almanzor), was from the Achilles of Homer."⁶ In

this manner, Dryden glamorised his heroic drama. In the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, his spokesman, Neander, when differentiating between a comedy and a "serious play" says:

"'Tis nature wrought up to an higher pitch [than in comedy]. The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions, are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them..."⁷

As the above passage shows, Dryden insists that the hero should be presented as a larger-than-life figure in a "serious play", and not in a comedy. He is to be celebrated by poetry which is "higher than history."⁸ In this respect, Dryden comes to accord with Francis Bacon about the role of poetry in the process of magnification and beautification of history and its characters:

"Because the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical: because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence: because true history representeth actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged; therefore poesy endueth them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations: so as it appeareth that poesy serveth and confereth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation."⁹

Thus Dryden and Bacon insist that history and its heroes should not reflect reality, but should be magnified so that they appear sublime and marvellous. Having briefly looked at the dignified treatment of heroes in earlier English drama, I shall now turn to the iconoclastic depreciative perspectives presented on war-heroes in modern British plays.

War has provided the new English dramatists with rich

material for their plays in which the attitude towards war and its heroes, is harshly iconoclastic. Like Aristophanes, they have set out to demythologise heroism by presenting national heroes in a formidably ludicrous light. There is no tendency amongst the modern British dramatists to glorify champions of war as was the case with the previous playwrights such as Marlowe, Dryden and others. Following Brecht's example in Mother Courage, Sean O'Casey's in The Silver Tassie, and Rolf Hochhuth's in Soldiers, Arden wrote Sergeant Musgrave's Dance and The Hero Rises Up to discredit militarism and to condemn its manipulators. John McGrath wrote Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun. Peter Brook staged US to indict American imperialism and belligerency. Henry Livings wrote Nil Carborundum. Peter Nichols wrote Forget Me Not Lane and Privates on Parade out of his war experience. Willis Hall wrote The Long, the Short, and the Tall. Edward Bond, a consummate pacifist, wrote his anti-war plays, The Woman, We Come to the River, and The War Plays, each with a similar aim.

However, it is not the above type of plays that I intend to examine in this section. My aim is not to consider the question of war in modern British drama in general, for such a subject calls for more attention than this chapter can offer. There is no doubt about the fact that the aforementioned plays share with the plays which I am going to examine, certain major features, foremost of which is a tendency to condemn war. In this section I shall look at two modern British plays, Dingo (1967) and The Hero Rises Up (1968). I have chosen these plays because, unlike the plays

mentioned earlier, they are germane to my thesis, that is, like Aristophanes' the Acharnians and the Knights focus their attention not merely on war in general, but take as their targets actual historical iconized war heroes.

Charles Wood, as I have suggested above, continued a tradition begun by Aristophanes, that is, the irreverent treatment of the idolised champions of war. Just as Lamachus is made a laughing-stock in the Acharnians, General Montgomery is treated in a comic, grotesque way in Dingo. Furthermore, Aristophanes can be regarded as one of the first pacifists in the drama and, like him, Wood also pleads for peace, condemns war-mongers who, to him, are wrongly iconized as war-heroes.

However, the comic nature of Aristophanes' and Wood's plays should not blind us to their seriousness. Their iconoclasm is motivated by a deep sense of responsibility towards their societies and humanity in general. Comedy, to them, is meant to teach, hurt, and deconstruct. Before coming to Dingo in particular, I shall be briefly considering Wood's career, for he is the most underexamined of the modern British dramatists, but one whose reactions to personal experiences, particularly in the army, have heavily influenced the subject matter and tone of his plays.

Wood was born in Guernsey, Channel Islands, August 6th, 1933. He obviously has followed in the steps of his family which worked in theatre. In fact, he was very nearly born on stage. In an interview given to Derek Weeks, Wood talks of the theatrical history of his family: "My brother's got a

photograph of my mother playing in Ouida's melodrama, Under Two Flags, and she has this extraordinary bulge, and that's me."¹⁰ Wood's parents were members of a pre-war travelling repertory company formed by his grandfather, the son of a family of animal trainers in a circus, and his earliest memories are of the theatre, "I've got memories of father doing Uncle Tom's Cabin in Guernsey, Channel Islands and I've got a vivid memory of him playing Uncle Tom and being lashed, and me in the audience screaming for them to stop hitting my daddy. And, later one of my mother going across the shore box ice flow in Uncle Tom, carrying me, because I was playing the little boy."¹¹ Of his parent's productions after the war were East Lynne and Ma's Bit O' Brass at the Kidderminster Playhouse. Wood has appeared in many productions done by his parents. In 1950, after his parents left the Playhouse, "he went to act at college, then joined the army on a five year regular engagement as a trooper."¹² Disgusted by the military and its leaders, Wood wrote Dingo, which, compared with its counterpart, the Acharnians, is no less satiric and anti-heroic. Unlike the latter, Dingo traces war heroes on the battlefield. While Lamachus is taken out of the battlefield to be poked fun at by a vulgar farmer, Monty and Churchill, as we shall see, are derided by a bolshy squaddie.

Unlike Aristophanes, Wood had a first-hand experience of the Forces, and for that reason, his pacifist plays and his comic, idoloclastic portrayal of heroes, is more impressive, and to the point.

Pacifism and the condemnation of war and its atrocities are of course subjects not restricted only to treatment by

Wood. The subject of war and its effects have been widely treated by twentieth century British writers, particularly poets such as Rupert Brook, Julian Grenfell, Charles Sorley, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and Isaac Rosenberg whose subject matter was the First World War. In its turn, the Second World War was also dealt with by a number of poets such as Keith Douglas, Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes. What Charles Wood contributed in Dingo to the theatre was, however, in addition to a drama of pacifism, the prototype for subsequent iconoclastic onslaughts to be launched widely in the British theatre. Thus, Wood is not only singled out for examination only for his pacifist drama, but also for his revival in the late sixties of Aristophanic iconoclasm and in doing so, for a brief period, suffered under the Lord Chamberlain.

Before looking closely at Wood's particular Aristophanic iconoclasm, in the light of Dingo's mixture of styles and erratic changes of pace and subject matter, I think it worthwhile to attempt a brief summary of its plot. The first act is "set in the whole of the Western Desert during the Second World War against the Germans."¹³ The play opens with the two principal characters, Dingo, a regular, and Mogg, a civilian conscript who, although as the stage direction indicates, have got burned faces and bloated arms, are still able to laugh and make fun of their situation. They have lost interest in their looks, which, to use Mogg's words, attract "the flies like cake."¹⁴ During the play, we are not shown heroic scenes from the desert war. Nor are we invited to watch Montgomery "Threatening the world with high

astounding 'missiles', and scourging kingdoms with his Conquering 'tanks.'" Dingo and Mogg are instead shown bandying indecent phrases. Dingo "shall shortly piss gentian violet",¹⁵ and Mogg implores him to "piss some over me."¹⁶ This opening reminds one of the beginning of the war-play, the Acharnians, in which an ambassador sets the heroics of war aside in order to recount the story of the king who took eight months to excrete.

Wood does not stop at this; he proceeds also to describe the atmosphere of war similarly in defecatory terms, "Take for instance the shit-beetle - a more exhilarative sight..."¹⁷ Mogg feels "excitement bubbling within me."¹⁸ Dingo understands Mogg's joy in terms of evacuation, "you never shat."¹⁹ Mogg answers in the positive, "at the nearness of the enemy."²⁰ Mogg's military courage is that he can defecate at the enemy's border. Valour, in the first instance, is shown in faecal terms. In the place of heroism, we have references to excretory and urinary processes. In fact, Wood's offensive introductory scene only anticipates his irreverent treatment of the national heroes who are to appear later, and this opening scene of the play reveals the subversive nature of the whole, in which the glamour of the war celebrated, for example, in British war films of the nineteen-fifties, is reduced to a vulgar level.

In the second scene, Dingo and Mogg are now joined by Tanky who has just escaped from a burning tank in which his buddy, Chalky, is still trapped, screaming. The three squaddies' reaction to Chalky's screaming is anything but

heroic. They are absolutely devoid of any human compassion. In the meantime, a navigating officer appears whom Dingo and Mogg direct into a minefield and then remain on their own, betting on the screams of the potential victims. Dingo and Mogg also relate obscene and erotic fantasies. At the same time, they vent their spleen on each other, and they both masturbate.

Later, Dingo and Mogg again meet Tanky who subsequently has retrieved the charred corpse of his trapped mate, Chalky, from the burned-out tank. The corpse is now handled as a "ventriloquist dummy." The rest of the act goes on with Dingo and Mogg convincing Tanky to dispose of the corpse, thinking that it is not the British Chalky's but the body of a vicious German. Their conversation is counterpointed with a rowdy comedy show, "full of low humour and moral uplift, and the irrelevant histrionics of a group of brainless hero-figures, spouting all the right idealistic sentiments to the accompaniment of Elgar." The comedian who is entertaining the soldiers and heroes, here, is the comic, (Montgomery) who like his counterpart, Lamachus of the Acharnians, becomes the butt of the characters.

The second act shifts to a prisoner of war camp, where we find Dingo and Tanky revolving around each other in a small boxing ring, carelessly planning an escape attempt without trying one, and thinking about the best way to opt out of this bloody business and survive. Later, the Comic, now on the beaches of Normandy is revealed mouthing jingoistic sentences while sitting on Mogg who on telling the former that he is being sat on, is instantly promoted to

Sergeant-major. Mogg's newly acquired status is almost shattered when he is captured and placed in the same camp as Dingo and Tanky. Here Mogg, a symbol of the opportunist soldier, and an "idiot who uses the military system to fit his natural brutality within a set of rules",²¹ starts chastising his mates for not planning an escape. To discredit this type of hero, who also has some of Montgomery's traits, Wood presents him as a ruthless oppressor, excitedly kicking Tanky's head to a pulp in the hope of raising morale. With the arrival of the Comic, the atmosphere is hilarious again, and a camp party gets underway. Three "girls" in long blond wigs begin a show with a burlesque of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, while Dingo and the new N.C.O., Mogg, start a new phase in their relationship in which the latter, enjoying the status of a hero for his "bravery in the field", bullies his mates.

The third act is set in the same camp, which, by now has become incredibly smart due to Mogg's efforts. Willie, a docile German guard, Dingo and Mogg are waiting for the arrival of the "Victorious Allied Armies." After finishing with the post-war "political carve-up", the "Victorious Allied Armies" arrive at the camp where they are moved by the spectacle that it presents. Tanky is now a hero after being killed by a British N.C.O. The comic appears here dispensing honours like a television quiz show as the various characters we have met before - nearly all now dead - come up with their tales of daring exploits, waiting for their reward. The Dicaeopolis-like character, Dingo, defies death and stays alive, condemning the cult of heroism and heroes, making

ready to go home to enjoy his family's company. Finally, the comic plays the part of Sir Winston Churchill who invites his soldiers and generals to piss on the "west wall of Hitler's Germany",²² and the curtain comes down on Tanky moaning unremittingly, "He killed me. He killed me. He killed me."²³

Wood sets out to turn myths and values topsy-turvy. As he declared in an interview with Ronald Hayman, Dingo's aim is to demythologise and demystify the received ideas about the war-time role of Montgomery and others as well as the myth of heroism manufactured by countless movies and heroic tableaux. As Roger Barnard rightly observed, Wood "has conceived his play on two distinctly different levels, both as an attack on our cosy communal nostalgia for the far-off 'fine hour' and as a pretty urgent pacifist broadside."²⁴ In the manner of satirical Aristophanic comedy, we are prompted to laugh here at patriotism, officers, military police, discipline, heroism and heroes, foremost of whom is, no doubt, Viscount Montgomery. Indeed, in spite of the harsh references described above, Irving Wardle in The Times described the play as a "comedy."²⁵ Roger Barnard saw it as "extremely funny."²⁶ War and heroes, previously the targets of Aristophanes' comic pointed satire, have become, in Dingo, once again the targets of a comic but vituperative theatrical satirist.

In Dingo, clichés concerning the Second World War from films, plays and fiction are, in J.R. Taylor's words, "turned inside out."²⁷ The myth that the behaviour of the British

soldier was metaphorically pure and white in contrast to the enemy's blackness, is stood on its head. Mogg, who licks up war propaganda and patriotism in the form of sexual titillation, convinces Tanky that the corpse he is handling as a "ventriloquist's dummy", is "foreign." "No British squaddie goes on like that"; it "Bears no relation to the British soldier."²⁸ Following his practice of debunking, Dingo, the ironic spectator, mocks this idea that the enemy is always horrible-looking. In an ironic tone, he mocks those myths propagated by the British political and military establishment about the British soldier's purity:

"No! It's grotesque - and it's not Chalky. Do you think we'd make a mistake like that? Do you think that black, burnt up, high in the sun stinking charred old, toothy old jerk of raw material is a British squaddie do you? Do you think we'd risk offending every mother here tonight with unlikely looking material? Highly upset they'd be. That's enemy. People out there lost their dear ones - that's enemy. No British soldier dies like that. That's enemy. You wont find a photograph, a statue, a painting of a British soldier like that."²⁹

Dingo's speech is not to be understood as a defence of Mogg's idea of the whiteness of the British soldier. Here, Dingo uses irony to drive his idea home. He doesn't mean what he says. He merely mocks and demystifies. After all, the charred corpse turns out to be Chalky's, the British soldier burned to death in his tank while his fellows look on unsympathetically.

An important myth about the Second World War is that the British soldier fought "chivalrously", and was ennobled by suffering. In Dingo, that myth is harshly debunked. The soldiers are turned into brutes who have lost their human

dignity and compassion, their ability to feel having been totally deadened. It seems that Wood has followed Wilde's suggestion that "anti-war propaganda should try to make the admittedly glamorous military world seem vulgar."³⁰

To subvert the nostalgia evolved by the last war and its heroes, Wood tends to show the atrocities rather than the heroics of the battlefield. In this respect, Dingo differs from Aristophanes' the Acharnians and John Arden's The Hero Rises Up, which although they share Dingo's pacifism, are not filled with horrific war scenes. On the contrary, Dingo shows us a man screaming in a burned out tank. "He is burning" while his fellow comrades respond cold-bloodedly and brutally, "Couldn't you put a bullet in him?..." "He'll be all right when his brain goes." "Can't you do something...shoot him - blow it up - shoot him?" "Go out and finish him if you like." "No - let the bastard scream." "He'll belt up shortly." These are the squaddies' responses to the trapped victim. According to Wood, that is the true nature of the battlefield. In his interview with Hayman, Wood elaborated on the brutalisation of men in battle: "The heat finishes you off quite quickly, but you can be heard. And people can do nothing about it. Your only attitude can be "Let him die." And I know that's exactly what I'd feel."³¹ Wood's view concerning the de-humanising effects of war is reflected in Dingo's loss of human sentiments both when he is confronted with one of his "burning" fellows and when, at the end of the play, he rails at the "bastard" for killing human feelings in his bosom:

"The thing I blame that bastard for more than anything, is that he has taken away my sorrows..... That's what I blame the bastard for more than anything, chopping off, more like wearing away, rubbing down my compassion to not a thing - What was this wailing? It was the wailing of my wife,..it was the wailing of myself. It was the wailing of all that I have seen die and it was nothing.³²

Dingo's above beration of the "bastard" reminds one of Dicaeopolis of the Acharnians. Just as Aristophanes employs that "vulgar" character to deflate and degrade General Lamachus, Wood, in sympathising with the victims of war, also employs a lowly character to poke fun at and castigate Field-Marshal Montgomery, and other public figures of the Second World War. It is that scurrilous word, "bastard" that Dingo uses to describe the so-called heroes of the Second Word War, such as Montgomery and Churchill. Just as Dicaeopolis and the chorus of the Acharnians accuse the great Lamachus of abusing Athens, and of being "a vile mercenary",³³ Dingo labels Montgomery a bastard and addresses him in a Dicaeopolis-like tone: "Get out and drop your drawers - loosen your blackouts, don't tell me, but let the top of your head go whirl with the stir of Churchill's cigar."³⁴

Just as Aristophanes derides Lamachus' bellicose nature, and reduces him to a laughing-stock, Wood similarly condemns Montgomery's militarist and patriotic tendencies in a farcical Aristophanic manner. However, while General Lamachus is mentioned by name in the cast of Aristophanes' the Acharnians, Wood is more oblique in Dingo and does not attach Field-Marshal Montgomery's name to the character playing him. Nevertheless, Wood takes care to draw the attention of future directors and readers of the play to the

fact that the Comic, a character in Dingo, "looks like a certain one of our finest soldiers."³⁵ This is, however, not the only indication that the Comic is supposed to be the great war-hero, Montgomery. Having described the setting of Dingo, Wood leaves the audience or reader of the play in no doubt concerning the identity of the Comic. Who else on the British side but Montgomery was iconized as the victor of the war in the Western Desert during the Second World War? Indeed in the three major productions of the play so far, the Comic has in each case displayed the characteristics of Montgomery in his presentation. In the Royal Court production of Dingo, as some photographed scenes illustrated in both, Plays and Players³⁶ and, The Times,³⁷ General Montgomery was portrayed in a clownish light. He is shown sitting astride the Navigating Officer. In another picture, he is shown as a buffoon in shorts and wearing a beret with characteristic badges on it.

What adds the most Aristophanic element to Wood's satirical treatment of Montgomery is, however, the fact that the actor who played the latter was one, Henry Woolf, chosen for that role for his comic clownish acting abilities, as well as his diminutive stature. Woolf, in addition to his Montgomery grotesquerie in Dingo, was also soon to play Horatio Nelson in John Arden's The Hero Rises Up, a fact which testifies to both Wood's and Arden's intended comic degradation of their celebrated British war heroes.

Woolf's role is not only to present a degrading perspective on Montgomery in Dingo; he also plays another part as an entertainer of the soldiers. The two parts are

not, however, intended to be different. The Comic is at once the jester and Montgomery. His role as the Field-Marshal can in no way be separated from his part as a joker and when playing Montgomery, he continues to act as a clown. Reinforcing the fact that Montgomery is also intended to be a buffoon in the play are Dingo's words at its conclusion, "are we fools, that comedians are set to lead us?" Thus Wood's treatment of Montgomery proves to be much harsher than Aristophanes' treatment of general Lamachus. Having ascertained the identity of the Comic, I shall from now on, replace the Comic with Montgomery.

When Montgomery first appears, he begins to prepare for his funny, "Tails up and lick 'em show."³⁸ No sooner has he prepared the soldiers and the heroes for his show, than he appears on the stage, the spotlight upon him, and, as the stage direction indicates, "puts on a beret with two badges on it."³⁹ Being the only character on the stage with the squaddies and other caricatured Second World War heroes watching him, Montgomery, like Lamachus, conveys the impression of a swashbuckling buffoon, and begins to brag about his heroism, which stands in marked contrast to Dingo's and Dicaeopolis' rejection of heroics. He boasts about his "first encounter with Rommel" which "was of great interest."⁴⁰ He declares that "I don't smoke and don't drink but I do grip and I did see him off."⁴¹ This foolish braggadocio turns, however, into buffoonery: "Talking of love did you hear the one about the gippo bint with the pieyard, as they call their bow-wows. A pissy-arsed Digger jig-a-jigs this sister out of bounds one night - says Sheila, what's

the dog for? Something new Johnny."⁴² As can be seen above, Montgomery is given foul-mouthed language, something that will continue throughout the play.

Montgomery also takes his share of ridicule in the second act of the play. In scene two, we find him on "The Bloody Beaches of Normandy" with his shoes in his hand and his "trousers rolled up."⁴³ He mistakes Mogg for something to sit on. Here, as the stage direction reads, "he lets the head he has on him loll and shake and be all his parts in turn."⁴⁴ This scene reminds us of Aristophanes' Lamachus after he had fallen in the water in a ludicrous incident. Having sat on Mogg, Montgomery starts talking to himself in a farcically funny manner. He sways right and left, letting the head he has on shake in the process, "Get off my shoulders. My head."⁴⁵ Just as he fought Rommel out of "great interest", he calls the war in Europe, a game of hunting, "Good luck to each one of you and good hunting on the mainland of Europe."⁴⁶ This scene becomes funnier when Mogg, being used as a seat, thinks that Montgomery who has been talking to himself, unaware of Mogg's presence, is talking to him. When Montgomery asks himself, "Do your sailors sing?"⁴⁷ Mogg thinks he is being talked to, "Are you talking to me?" "I am talking to me",⁴⁸ Montgomery replies. And when Mogg mentions that a "bloke" who used to "hit officers" has been "repaired", Montgomery starts talking nonsense again. Amused by the word "repaired", he begins waffling that his "great passion in life is to see things repaired as this is so much more interesting than seeing them whole."⁴⁹ And then he goes on to conjure up his "cheery old

friend" bone-setter Sir Herbert Barker whose "wonderful gift" has saved many "cripples" in Britain, and who, like the former, would love to repair things. This aimless talk turns into expressing sympathies with the injured animals of the battlefield. Here we laugh when Montgomery starts bleating like a lamb, "Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa."⁵⁰ The "pathetic sight" of the animals makes him low like a cow, "moooooooooooooooooo"; a memory that "haunts me still."⁵¹ Then he relates to the audience the difficulties that he used to experience when he milked the cows there. At this point, Mogg having proved to be a "dutiful armchair", gets promoted by "Sir" Montgomery, who tells him that his mother will be "proud" "to learn"⁵² that her son has been sat upon by Montgomery. In this scene therefore, any idea of military grandeur is deflated.

In act three, scene one, Montgomery is also presented in a farcical light. He haggles over dividing Germany with a German Commandant, and later, to celebrate his victory in the war, he "mounts the Commandant who is on all fours hoping to surrender."⁵³ (He frequently climbs on officers' shoulders throughout the play) Here the German Commandant stands for a ravished Germany over whom the Allies are haggling in order to divide her into various spheres of influence. At the end of the play Wood presents Montgomery as a T.V. Quiz master dispensing honours to those who died on the battlefield. He tells Harold, a British officer in the guise of the "First Blonde" that the latter can "choose any major prize you wish without answering any question at all."⁵⁴ But he apologises for not being able to grant him the Victoria Cross. Here

Wood satirizes battle honours. Having been unable to find a loop to pin the order on, Montgomery "decides to pin it to the rear of the First Blonde's panties",⁵⁵ thus indicating Wood's irreverent view of both war-heroes and the honours conferred upon them by the establishment.

All in all then, Montgomery is portrayed as the representative of "militarist" and "patriotic propaganda." "He is the personification of several myths of the imperialist British Establishment"⁵⁶ and becomes a "deranged, manipulative power-mad psychopath." Like General Haig in Joan Littlewood's Oh, What a Lovely War!, Montgomery stands for the blood-thirsty general. "The troops must be brought up to a state of wild enthusiasm before the battle begins - Give our gallant Scot a burst of wild enthusiasm",⁵⁷ he orders, going on to recommend that, "to win battles", troops should be "in top-hole condition, top-hole...."⁵⁸ Dingo, deflating Montgomery, continues the latter's above unfinished sentence with, "Arsehole."⁵⁹ And thus the troops become in "Arsehole condition."

Dingo accuses Montgomery and Churchill of waging the war for their own glorification. As Benedict Nightingale suggests, throughout Dingo Wood "pursues the thought with indiscriminating disgust, excepting no politician, no general, from blame, blindly and wilfully refusing to concede that there was any reason for fighting the last war at all."⁶⁰ Just as Dicaeopolis accuses Lamachus and Cleon of starting wars with the neighbouring countries of Athens in their own interests, Dingo thinks that the British military

establishment, led by Churchill and Montgomery fought the war, not for the Jews, or against "the world of evil" of the concentration camps, but for its own ends. Asked by Tanky about the "Jews", Dingo says, "we don't know about the Jews yet."⁶¹ The millions of people on both sides, Soviets, and British have been killed "for all the usual reasons",⁶² for the power and the glory and the profit of those public figures who directed the course of events on all sides. Tanky's repeated moaning at the late stages of the play, "He killed me", "He killed me"⁶³ is not without its significance. Wood through his Dicaeopolis-like Aristophanic character, Dingo, condemns those who came to be apotheosized in the wake of the war, as criminals and barbarous, sanguinary monsters, "all these public figures who directed the course of events....every general, colonel, corporal."⁶⁴ Foremost of these no doubt, being Churchill and Montgomery, who, to use Tanky's words, found in the war an "interesting" game and who "lapped it up."⁶⁵ At the end of the play, Dingo goes even further by calling Montgomery and Churchill comedians, "Am I a fool, are we all fools that comedians are set to lead us?"⁶⁶

Again at the end of the play, Dingo returns to his indecent references to bodily functions. The British people, he claims, have been urinated upon by the icons of the Second World War. In a Dicaeopolis-like manner, however, he refuses to be cheated again by Churchill and his followers. (Probably by not voting for him in 1945.) "I have not come all this way to be pissed on twice by Mr. Churchill",⁶⁷ he says. Like Lamachus, Churchill, in Dingo's view, together with Montgomery and other top-brass were the only people to

benefit from the Second World War if only by being iconized.

Although Wood does not maintain a Socialist or Marxist view of the masses and their role as a political force, he nevertheless, does not hesitate to indict Churchill's and Montgomery's followers for foisting war and destruction upon helpless men like Dingo and his comrades who become aware of the fact that, "the hierarchical and privileged political system, mirrored by the Army", is "responsible for the suffering of the Second World War."⁶⁸ Montgomery, like Lamachus, belongs to a privileged group of people, to whom, wars, as Aristophanes and Wood intimate, mean personal gain. Dicaeopolis, as Dingo, might tell Lamachus, "And why do you always receive your pay, when none of these others ever get any?"⁶⁹ Wood achieves a powerful theatrical image by juxtaposing "the pompous and complacent official war propaganda of the government", with "the endless suffering",⁷⁰ of those helpless victims who can be easily overlooked. This image is achieved by the recurring cries of Dingo's wife which mingle with the hollering of people like Chalky who was burned to death, to become an incessant wailing and condemnation of the imperialist establishments of all sides in the war that sacrificed millions of souls primarily for their own gains. In his typically darkly comic way, Dingo tells Mogg that he can distinguish between the cries of ordinary and upper-class soldiers, "The next one to scream is clean, dry, and slightly upper-class white English."⁷¹ Later, Dingo can see that the First Blonde is a British officer "by the feel of your chubby cheeks."⁷² The officers led by Montgomery whom Dingo detests as incompetent,

those upper-class figures from a world not his own are as much as or even more as his enemies than the Germans who themselves are shown to be divided by basically the same class contradictions. This again is reminiscent of the Acharnians where Dicaeopolis regards as his real enemies, his fellow countrymen, Lamachus and Cleon, and for that reason, we find him concluding peace treaties with other nations and with the poor, helpless men of other countries like the Megarian, who are also made to suffer because of the militaristic tendencies of their own leaders. Thus we find a comradeship between the underdogs of warring countries formed by their common realisation that wars are not fought for them, and that for them there is nothing to gain. Just as Dicaeopolis helps the Megarian who is supposed to be his enemy,⁷³ and condemns Lamachus who is supposed to be the saviour of Athens, Dingo and Tanky enjoy the company of the docile German soldier Willie because, like them, he is a victim of the imperialists of his country like Hitler and Rommel who also take their share of ridicule in Dingo. When Dingo wonders if Tanky condemns or harbours a grudge against the German, Willie who killed him, Tanky answers in the negative, "Not Willie, he's alright 'is Willie."⁷⁴ Although Tanky has been stabbed by Willie, he does not accuse him of being his murderer; he points the finger of blame at his own superiors and at those sections of the people, represented by the opportunist Mogg, who have been "taken in." Thus Willie is vindicated in the eyes of Tanky who knows that the former is but a beetle to be crushed by the privileged German military hierarchy, represented by the Commandant, who, as Wood suggests, like his British counterparts, is but a

businessman who has "shares in the R.U.R."⁷⁵ The Commandant is, furthermore, one who rejects the idea of Socialism in Europe because it affects his business, and to whom helpless people are but "a few wretched, diseased sub-humans"⁷⁶ who are to be ridden as Trojan horses; an image used by Wood to show the relationship between what he calls imperialists like Churchill and Monty and their victims. The image of riding in the play is not without its significance. As we saw earlier, Montgomery rode over Mogg; a scene used by Wood to show that Montgomery used the helpless as asses to be mounted. Wood's notion of the working soldier as a pawn is not, however, ideologically motivated. He does not look at the suffering of the squaddies from a Socialist perspective, for there is no indication in the play or even in Wood's interviews that he maintains a Marxist view of the role of the masses in history. Horst Höhne argues that:

"though Charles Wood's condemnation of war as a result of imperialistic class oppression has no restrictions and his view point is that of the working masses who are forced to take part in it, he does not give an indication of active struggle against war and capitalism, and he does not really show a determined socialist or Marxist inclination. In spite of his plebeian partisanship which is certainly quite honest, his dramaturgical method in most of the other plays, tends towards farcical intellectualist dissection rather than to the proletarian rejection of middle-class values."⁷⁷

To put it more simply, Wood is morally - not politically motivated in his satire.

Like Dicaeopolis, Dingo, therefore, is employed to propagate the ideas of the dramatist. His role is propagandistic. Just as Dicaeopolis addresses the audience almost directly to involve them in the rejection of the cult

of war and heroism, Dingo, as the beginning of the play reveals, is there to do much the same. When Mogg objects to raising the idea of the "desert war" again because "We are agreed not to talk about it", Dingo replies in a propagandistic manner, "I must state it for them."⁷⁸ He no doubt means the audience by "them." Thus, like Wood, Dingo becomes the foil to the "blood-thirsty hero", here Montgomery, who can never resist propagating the myths and war-like machinations of the political as well as military establishments. Like Wood, Dingo loathes war and its heroics, or to use Tanky's words, does not "hold with bleeding heroes."⁷⁹

Due to its harshly iconoclastic nature, Dingo was received with a great deal of condemnation by the critics. The latter were, however, in no doubt about its objective of subverting in an Aristophanic comically pointed way, the heroes and heroics of the Second World War. In his treatment of Britain's war-heroes, Wood laid himself open to accusations of petulance and bad taste. D.A.N. Jones of The New Statesman of 5th May, 1967, calls Wood a "rogue puritan as brilliantly disagreeable as Jeremy Taylor: he disturbs people's enjoyment with accusations of sickness."⁸⁰ Jones goes further to call Dingo a "kinky" play which, "must be tucked away in Bristol Arts Centre where it will do no harm, performed for a sophisticated club membership by skilful U.S. veterans" from the R.S.C. But Jones goes on to add that "a more democratic state once sponsored Aristophanes' serious lampoon on General Lamachus as serious as Wood's on Montgomery - before the whole citizenry."⁸¹ Defending

Montgomery and Churchill against their scathingly unsympathetic treatment, Jones contends that "The honours the War-chiefs earned cannot be easily removed, any more than Muhammad Ali can really be stripped of his title."⁸²

Unlike Jones, Philip French has no objection to Wood's insulting treatment of the heroes of the Second World War, "One has no objection whatever", he writes, "to unfairness or bias, in the depiction of generals as ludicrous monsters and all officers as dunderheads to the deflation of conventional heroism, the assaults on hollow, patriotic rhetoric."⁸³ But French does not let Wood get away with it, "to sustain his principle contention - that the Second World War was a purposeless farce"⁸⁴ is outrightly rejected by French as rot; a view shared by many other critics. Jones, for example, does not agree to dodging "big questions."⁸⁵

To Ronald Bryden of The Observer, the play is "malevolent to the point of illogic."⁸⁶ Like French and Jones, Bryden rejects Wood's notion of the purposelessness of the Second World War, and calls it, "a bit of angry illogic."⁸⁷

Other critics found Dingo extremely antagonistic. John Higgins of The Financial Times considered that, "several people will find" the play "disagreeable."⁸⁸ In New Society, Roger Bernard wrote that "If Charles Wood's Dingo were to be transferred from the stage to the television screen at peak viewing time, I fear that Lord Montgomery would lose more than his bloody baton."⁸⁹ "Discussing Dingo on television with an M.P. who had served in the Western Desert", D.A.N.

Jones was "informed that the war was less horrible than Dingo" and that the play reviled courage."⁹⁰ Furthermore, the M.P. told Jones that "ex-rankers would be outraged" and that "There must be veterans who object to the oily cant spread over their scars."⁹¹ In short, therefore, Dingo caused a lot of trouble.

Despite the trouble it created and the condemnation it received, Dingo's iconoclasm was, however, played down by Benedict Nightingale:

"If we still thought of the last war as a sort of updated cavalcade full of cockneys happily swigging sweet tea, upright officers cantering to sublime death with staccato self-deprecation on their (stiff upper-lips), honour; glory, unalloyed patriotism, the sound of Jerusalem rising from the regimental trumpeters and an enemy as black as we were white, then Charles Wood's Dingo would certainly be relevant and revolutionary."⁹²

To my mind, Nightingale's view was simply self-delusion. Jingoism has never cooled down. Patriotism still holds sway in Britain. The nostalgia of the struggle and victory of the Second World War still mean a lot to the British people. The myths of militarism and their glories have, even today, not disappeared. Had Nightingale reviewed Dingo after the Falklands War, he would have wholeheartedly acknowledged the fact that the above play is highly "revolutionary and relevant." Just as Churchill and Montgomery were iconized for their heroism and triumph in the Second World War, Mrs. Thatcher became a highly celebrated national hero who led the nation to victory in the Falklands War against Argentina. Mrs. Thatcher, as everybody knows, won another landslide victory in the election of 1981 simply because she proved to

the British people that "Britannia" can still "rule", conquer, produce heroes and heroism, and enjoy the glories of victory. Recently, a painting of Mrs. Thatcher was completed to celebrate her triumph in that war. The picture was entitled "The victor of the Falklands." The memories of imperialism still lie dormant in the minds of the British people; stir them, and once again, they are active. Thus, contrary to Nightingale's argument, Dingo still remains to this day an iconoclastic, "revolutionary and relevant" play.

In addition to his Aristophanic humour, Wood, in Dingo, also uses modern theatrical techniques. The play is characterised by its loose, episodic structure; a technique borrowed from Brecht's epic theatre. The play has no "coherent plot", and the characterisation is minimal; a technique favoured by Wood who claimed that "Dingo is becoming more important to me as far as structure is concerned."⁹³ Another influence on Dingo, as Höhne also noted, was Joan Littlewood's Oh, What a Lovely War! which "provided an unforgettable model of music-hall type treatment of the topic of war."⁹⁴ Höhne's point is supported by Wood himself who wrote to me saying that the play follows a "camp concert" technique "with all the sentiment, music hall licence, unfairness, morbid humour, obligatory irreverence towards superiors expected of such a concert."⁹⁵ Thus, even in the form it takes, is embodied that irreverence towards those in charge; that is the motivating force of Dingo.

In H: Being Monologues In Front of Burning Cities. (1969), Wood again dealt with a victor of war. The hero of this play is Sir Henry Havelock, a much celebrated Victorian

hero whose iconic statue stands next to Nelson's in Trafalgar Square. H differs from Dingo in that it does not treat Havelock in an Aristophanic satiric manner, as Dingo does the World War II heroes. But still H remains a condemnation of Havelock and his atrocities. The play, according to Ronald Hayman, "sardonically and devastatingly exposes the disparities between the Christian principles of the mild-mannered Sir Henry Havelock, hero of the campaign against the mutinous sepoys, and the vindictive ferocity of the reprisals he organizes."⁹⁶ Asked whether or not it was his intention to treat Havelock farcically, Wood wrote to me saying "There is nothing farcical about Havelock, unless it is farcical to attempt to be a true Christian and a soldier."⁹⁷ Wood's reply is evasive but sardonic and might be judged to imply that it is next to farcical to be a religious man and a war-hero. War-heroism, to Wood, is barbarism, and for that reason Sir Henry is a hypocritical Christian who preaches humanity but practises inhumanity, and consequently takes his share of Wood's indirect satire. It is here left for the audience to judge whether or not Havelock is a hero or a bloody imperialist. Given Wood's attitude, it may, however, be concluded that Havelock is no different from Dingo's Montgomery or Churchill. All of them are portrayed as blood-thirsty hounds.

In order to establish more clearly the radical nature of Wood's treatment of iconic war-heroes in Dingo and its significance as a prototype for the subsequent outbreak of iconoclasm in the British theatre, it is useful to compare his dramatisation of these figures with the similarly

satirically intended presentation of the greatest of the First World War featured in Joan Littlewood's Oh, What a Lovely War!, some four years earlier.

As it soon becomes apparent, Littlewood, particularly in the West End production, tended to be mild in her treatment of great British war-heroes, and the play was devoid of such scatological remarks as are a major feature of Dingo. Also, unlike Dingo, it was not meant to hurt, a fact criticised by Ewan MacColl who ostensibly blames Littlewood and her Workshop for not having presented a nastier view of the First World War and its heroes:

"You had, for example, a retired general in the audience saying 'Good show, damn good show. That is the real thing'. I maintain that a theatre which sets out to deal with a social and human problem like war and which leaves the audience feeling nice and comfy, in a rosy glow of nostalgia, is not doing its job; it has failed. Theatre, when it is dealing with social issues, should hurt; you should leave the theatre feeling furious."⁹⁸

In the same vein, Frances Cuka indirectly comments on certain changes to the ending of the play, which made it less cutting:

"When I saw it at Stratford Victor Spinetti made the closing speech, which went something like 'The war game is being played all over the world, by all ages, there's a pact for all the family. It's been going on for a long time and it is still going on. Good night'. This cynical speech which followed the charge of the French soldiers, was quite frightening and you were left crying your heart out. When I saw it again in the West End, I was shocked by the change of ending. After Victor's speech the entire cast came on saying 'Oh what a lovely war' followed by a reprise of the songs. All frightfully hearty and calculated to send the audience home happy."⁹⁹

As can be gathered from the above two criticisms, the play is

by no means an antecedent for later iconoclastic plays which came to debunk war and its heroes. Although it was performed about four years before Dingo, nevertheless, it lacks the latter's bite and satiric attitude. There is no doubt about the fact that Oh, What a Lovely War! "played down the war and made it seem as if it were great fun."¹⁰⁰ It is quite clear that the play is meant to provoke laughter at "the human absurdities of the situation and at the inhuman absurdity of those who were leading men into it",¹⁰¹ and that it delivered a message to the effect that the masses should not trust their rulers and should not respond to their jingoism. In other words, its target was the people. They had condoned to war. The generals had already been indicted by history and certainly were not viewed as icons. The fact remains, however, that the play lacks the Aristophanic, acid satire of Dingo. Littlewood indeed was accused of being more interested in a "profitable West End transfer", than in "giving offence."¹⁰² While Dingo was a degradation of the soldiers and their idolised superiors, Oh What a Lovely War! was "much more a tribute to the men in the trenches, than an assault on the top brass."¹⁰³ Another important difference between the above plays is while Oh What a Lovely War! was about war-leaders for whom the audience feels little sympathy, Dingo was more relevant and audacious in that its targets were heroes whose images are still fresh in the minds of the audience. While few members of the audience could have defended the memories of Haig and French, most of Dingo's spectators undoubtedly, felt offended by the way Wood had treated Montgomery and Churchill. In comparison with Oh, What a Lovely War!, Dingo, in terms of its iconoclasm and in

the grotesqueries of its presentation of war and its heroes, can be seen as a new departure for British drama. Thus, compared with Dingo, the previous "angry" plays of the new British theatre appear mild indeed. In the play, Wood brings about a new revolution in modern British drama. Just as Look Back in Anger was a watershed in that it started the theatrical campaign against the Establishment and its values, Dingo, as Ronald Bryden described it, was "one of those milestones at which a younger generation overthrows the taste and beliefs of an older one."¹⁰⁴ Thus over a year before the second historic landmark of modern British theatre, that is, 1968, at which point those opposed to the establishment became politicised, Wood launched the most denunciatory onslaught upon the Establishment and its icons.¹⁰⁵ The play, unlike its sequels was not, however, motivated by the events of 1968. Still it was no less iconoclastic than the plays that were to follow later, such as Howard Brenton's Scott of the Antarctic or The Churchill Play. To be more precise, it was in Dingo in the post-war British theatre that first appears the degradation of iconized heroes from British history. A year later, Bond and Arden presented their hostile perspective on other British historical figures prominent amongst whom were Queen Victoria, and Lord Nelson, and from that time on, other idolised figures were to suffer at the hands of the emerging iconoclasts. Thus, the campaign of demythologisation and demystification in modern British drama owes its origins to Charles Wood's Dingo.

The second factor which makes Dingo a turning point in modern British theatre is the fact that it was the antecedent

of later plays by Howard Brenton and David Hare, in which an attempt was made to re-write history especially that of the Second World War. Just as Wood turned the memories of the last war upside down, Brenton and Hare later looked afresh at some historical periods and proceeded to debunk their events and characters. In Hitler Dances, and The Churchill Play Brenton, as I shall show in a later chapter, rejected the received history of the last war and set out to demystify it. Similarly, Hare declared in a lecture given at Cambridge University that he was not happy with the history taught to him throughout his school career and saw the need for it to be re-written. It should, however, be born in mind here, that unlike Brenton and Hare whose reversed picture of history and its characters was influenced, as I shall later fully illustrate by Angus Calder's book The People's War, Wood's iconoclastic treatment of the past and its victors is his own. In other words, Wood's iconoclasm is authentic and personal. Dingo was written out of his own rejection of the myths propagated about the Second World War and not as a result of reading an iconoclastic book or pamphlet about recent history and its heroes. In an interview with Ronald Hayman, Wood bitterly exhibited his disgust over the mythification of the war and its heroes, "I wrote Dingo because I was sick of the things that were being written about the Second World War, and I knew instinctively that they were untrue. I was sick of the cult of the war story and the war film. So I did Dingo as a conscious parody of all those things of the prison camp, of the desert war."¹⁰⁶ Later, in the same vein, Brenton was to voice a similar

attitude. Hitler Dances and The Churchill Play were also written in reaction against the "B movies" of the Second World War, and in order to degrade history. Commenting on the idea of the history of the last war, Brenton says in an interview in Theatre Quarterly No. 17:

"I saw children in Eindhoven, which was flattened twice in the war - a bomb site with children playing on it.... and there the idea was lodged in my mind, because it was like children playing on this heap of rubble - history."¹⁰⁷

As can be deduced from the above passage, received history, to Brenton, was nothing but rubbish. Like Wood, he has no tendency to mythicise history and its events; rather he reduces it to child's play. John Bull argues that, "That the children conjure with the meaningless names of 'great men' of history as they would with those of their comic-book heroes is a part of the point Brenton wishes to make."¹⁰⁸ In a Dingo-like fashion Hitler Dances debunks the British myth of a "finest hour" as depicted in countless B. movies, parodying the 1950s film Carve her Name with Pride by having its fighter pilot heroes permanently blind drunk out of fear and categorically stating that the narrative of Violette's torture by the Gestapo was a complete fabrication. All of this corresponds to Wood's depiction of the Second World War in Dingo in terms of defecation, masturbation, and blood-sucking on the part of the soldiers and their leaders.

Soon after the production of Dingo, another play, this time by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy was to appear to begin the process of turning an isolated novelty into that shared approach to which Brenton was to contribute. That play was The Hero Rises Up, in which Arden and D'Arcy follow

the same Aristophanic tradition as Wood. Their comic and degrading presentation of heroes is, like those of Aristophanes, also motivated by pacifist tendencies so much so that, indeed, they can be regarded as the leading exponents of pacifism in post-war British drama.

Arden's early pacifism had begun to manifest itself as early as 1959 when he denounced belligerency in Sergeant Musgrave's Dance, "I did not fully understand my own feelings about pacifism until I wrote Sergeant Musgrave",¹⁰⁹ he admitted. Like Dingo, the play is "about soldiers." It is one of the first examples of the presentation of the British soldier in other than ideal light. But although in the play, Arden is determined to expose what he calls "the hair-raising stories about things that were done by British soldiers during World War II",¹¹⁰ he, unlike Wood, approaches the subject indirectly. In other words, unlike Dingo, Musgrave is not set during the Second World War, but becomes a more generalised parable. That does not detract, however, from its powerful pacifist message against all war, including, as Arden mentions, the imperialist wars in "Malaysia", "Rhodesia", "Vietnam", "South Africa", and "Ireland."¹¹¹ The play, he claims, was written to attack the "complacency with which the British public was prepared to regard actions undertaken by the British Army in foreign parts."¹¹² The British Tommy who is usually glamorised in war films as restrained and disciplined was, for the first time, presented as vindictive and violent.¹¹³ In brief, in its viewpoint, the play can be seen as a prelude to The Hero Rises Up.

Nevertheless, in The Hero Arden's approach to pacifism enters a new phase. While Sergeant Musgrave was realistic and serious in its treatment of war, The Hero is written in an Aristophanic spirit. Arden's condemnation of Nelson's bloody heroism is presented in a comic manner. While Aristophanes' attitude towards Lamachus and Cleon is overtly hostile, Arden however, uses, amongst other things, irony to question the myth of Nelson. Compared with Dingo, The Hero is less direct and therefore, less offensive. Nevertheless, Like Aristophanes and Wood, Arden seems not to "hold with heroes."

The Hero Rises Up was first presented by the Institute of Contemporary Arts at the Round House, on November, 6th, 1968. As the title suggests, the play is about a hero. That hero is Lord Nelson, whose achievements, as Thomas Carlyle wrote in The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia, have "raised the admiration of his countrymen to enthusiasm, and gave him the character of a hero all over Europe", who is followed by the public "with an affectionate veneration, which few individuals have ever enjoyed in a nearly equal degree", and whose awful "name" has "saved our Colonies."¹¹⁴ Carlyle goes on in his celebrative hero-worshipping tone to find in Nelson's history, "traces of a spirit possessing, a higher and more general species of excellence."¹¹⁵ Nelson's "force of will", is highly commended by Carlyle and his "great war-like talents" celebrated. He glamorises the hero's bellicose nature by embellishing it "by all that is elevated", and "by all that is soft and romantic in human affections." For him, "Nelson's name will always occupy a section in the history of

the world, and be pronounced wherever it is understood, as that of a hero."¹¹⁶ In a word, Nelson is made into an "icon."

While Carlyle honours the memory of the great British "hero", Nelson, Arden resurrects the hero for an utterly different purpose. Nelson is, in contrast, resurrected by Arden to reveal his failings rather than merely to celebrate his successes. Like Montgomery in Dingo and Lamachus in the Acharnians, Nelson is made to stand trial for his bloody heroism. Unlike Carlyle, Arden is not blinded by patriotism; rather, he is critical of his nation's heroes. It is this pacifist characteristic which distinguishes the former from the latter. While Carlyle turns a blind eye to what Arden might call Nelson's crimes, Arden's bent is, like Wood's and Aristophanes', to dissect and attack. It should be born in mind, here, however, that while Aristophanes lampooned living Greek war-heroes, Arden, in The Hero Rises Up, turns his shafts upon a historical hero. In this both Arden and Wood differ markedly from Aristophanes for, whereas Aristophanes attacks a current hero seen as an individual, they assail an icon, a now mythic figure in their country's patriotic history of war. Nevertheless, all of them are united in their indictment of heroism, heroes and war.

Carlyle's earlier idolisation of Nelson may be seen to represent the British Nation's and the Establishment's accepted view of their hero; a fact acknowledged by Arden in his "Necromantic Prologue": "let us consider the last uncontested hero-figure of our own history - Lord Nelson",

he writes, "A man beloved, successful, and abundantly commemorated both by the established ruling circles and the undifferentiated popular sludge."¹¹⁷ The hero is then the undisputed idol of both society and its rulers. It therefore follows that any attempt by the playwright to ridicule the hero is, in itself, an attack also upon Nelson's worshippers, and so the play becomes not only a demythologisation of a hero, but also concurrently a dissection of and an onslaught upon the actions and ideals which society and its leaders claim that he represents. Thus the attack on the past becomes also an attack upon the present.

Critics seem to be unanimous in their agreement that The Hero Rises Up, like Dingo, was meant to antagonise and to debunk. Irving Wardle of The Times, argues that "the intention is to cut Nelson down to even less than his own size."¹¹⁸ D.A.N. Jones of The Listener accuses the play of being "insolent." Significantly, Henry Woolf the actor who was chosen by Wood to play Montgomery in an aggressive farcical manner, is also made by Arden to play "Nelson as a murderous little clown" strutting like a painted puppet, "crowing, killing and whoring against a rolling, dazzling blue sea."¹¹⁹ To this effect, another critic comments that, "we know Nelson was physically a small man, but to cast Henry Woolf (you know Henry Woolf looks and stands just like Dudley Moore) is to give the game away before playing it."¹²⁰ Glenda Leeming describes the play as "sustaining a savagely comic tone throughout."¹²¹ Ronald Hayman notes that Nelson is presented as "a circus dog."¹²² Simon Trussler writes that Nelson is shown as a "vulgar little sailor" "projected

as a Nietzschean superman cut cruelly down to size."¹²³ Donald McWhinnie calls the play, "a deliciously shameless piece of effrontery" in which Arden and D'Arcy "take as their props those revered figures, Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, put them through the mincer, toss the bits indelicately in the air, and chuck the remnants with total irreverence into the fry-up."¹²⁴ Benedict Nightingale describes the play as an "attempt to demythologise a British hero."¹²⁵ Robert Cushman notes that "the celebrated team of roof-top fiddlers", who were supposed to collaborate with Arden on "the Nelson musical....withdrew when they found they were becoming parties to the denigration of a hero they thought they had been called in to celebrate." Cushman goes on to say that "what we do learn" about Nelson in the play "is not amiable."¹²⁶ Albert Hunt argues that "the great romantic hero" is turned into "a tiny crippled cock-sparrow."¹²⁷ W.J. Lambert is surprised to find that "Nelson is so embarrassingly undone by that clever though tiny actor, Henry Woolf that one remembers only the shame."¹²⁸ Defying Arden, Lambert goes on to say that "The national hero who is shown up as professionally irresponsible, politically vicious and morally disgraceful remains a national hero still",¹²⁹ which reminds us of Jones' defence of Montgomery and Churchill and the titles they achieved as "war chiefs" in Dingo. Ronald Bryden writes that the play follows a "lampoon-style."¹³⁰ In other words, the play, like Dingo or any other iconoclastic play, was consciously intended to present an alternative view to the one popularly held, by what Arden called "the established ruling circles" and "the undifferentiated popular sludge."

Even the title of Arden and D'Arcy's play is ironic. While the hero indeed rises up in the play's final tableau, the overall effect on the hero's status is to make him fall down. At the very beginning of the play in the "Necromantic Prologue to be spoken by an Academic Representative of the Authors", Arden starts to question heroes and heroism. He cites, "savant Vespasien Ladrogue, who - in a short but pungent history entitled Le Sang et la Merde de la Guerre, established once and for all that the great commanders of history - were in fact responsible not only for winning battles but also for losing them."¹³¹ Arden's "prologue" anticipates his mordant anatomy of Nelson and his heroism. More importantly, in the title given to Ladrogue's book about heroes, he, like Wood in Dingo, satirizes war and its heroes in terms of excrement, (merde).

Before Nelson appears on the stage, Arden, at the end of his "prologue" bids the audience to meditate "upon the sexual congress of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton."¹³² We are invited to see the two lewd characters making love as if they were in a blue movie in which Nelson and his concubine play hero and heroine. Furthermore, Arden encourages the audience to consider "the manifold vibrations ... and alterations of posture" of the intercourse, and to breathe "very hard indeed." This, no doubt, also gives a clue to the kind of treatment which the hero is due to receive in the play, that is, he will be presented as an object of laughter, and the usually hidden aspects of his life will be revealed, those which the priest at the close of the play wishes to discount

or obscure as aberrations.

Appearing on the stage, Nelson makes his first entrance jumping through a paper screen like a clown through a hoop, or to use Hayman's words, he leaps like a "circus dog." He strikes the audience as a crippled dwarf. He is both one-armed and one-eyed and, like Lamachus, he is shown in a ludicrous light. His romantic image which obscures his actual deformities is exploded in order to make him a figure of fun. While Aristophanes employs Dicaeopolis to deflate Lamachus' first heroic appearance by making the former ask the latter to use his power to "circumcise me", Arden makes use of Nelson's pygmy stature and maimed body, which is short of an arm and an eye, to turn the latter's heroism and braggadocio into an object of ridicule, and so, Nelson at the beginning becomes his own deflator by fiercely claiming heroism while appearing in his physical disfigurements very unheroic.¹³³ But this does not mean that Nelson is reduced to an object of fun and censure simply as a result of his own puppet-like movements; Arden, as I shall show later, like Aristophanes and Wood, uses the harsh bitter debunker, Nisbet, in the play, to further demean the hero.

After briskly haranguing the audience, Nelson "sinks down in dejection",¹³⁴ to be accosted by Emma who starts cheering him up; a scene which reminds us of Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra where Caesar is pathetically stranded on the Sphinx in Egypt, while Cleopatra, like Emma, takes care of the hero as if he were a marooned child.

Arden uses the sexual relationship between Nelson and

Emma for comic effect and at times, like Aristophanes, he does not hesitate to be obscenely funny. Nelson is described as, "a venereal kind of fellow", and when Emma "enfolded" her "flesh around his skinny little ribs", "he nailed" her "to the wall."¹³⁵ Further, the hero is shown to be indiscriminate in his sexual activity. Allen, his servant describes him in the following lines:

"Little whores from old Livorno
Green-eyed Jenny from Genoa town
Red-haired Rosa from Gibraltar
Whatever she were, he'd lay her down."¹³⁶

Angry at Allen's brassiness towards him, Nelson silences him by calling him "a disgusting filthy beast"¹³⁷ which reminds us of Lamachus' railing at Dicaeopolis for the latter's insolence towards him. Ironically, Nelson is also seen as a moral man who has a "sound morality", and whose "own father is a clergyman."¹³⁸ In an ironic tone, the Prince confirms Nelson's statement about moralities and religion: "Exactly so, and you have proven it, my Lord, to the last drop of your blood."¹³⁹ The audience already knows what kind of person Nelson is. Morally, as Lambert has said, he is presented as a "disgraceful" pervert whose "elephantine phallus in Trafalgar Square is as fitting a monument to his lechery as a grateful nation could devise."¹⁴⁰ When he and Emma couple, "the body of the murdered insurrectionary Admiral of Naples is swung aloft, which is an implicit comment on the sinister springs of a hero's sexuality",¹⁴¹ which is matched with his concubine's "greedy womb."

To induce more laughter at the expense of the hero, Arden introduces us to his wife, Fanny, who is likened to a

"tom-tit." She hopes, "that the public enthusiasm will not lead him (Nelson) to behave in an unsuitable fashion."¹⁴² In a hypocritical manner, the hero reproaches his wife for not meeting him on his "Triumphant Return" to London and for making him "look particularly foolish in front of my good friends the Hamiltons."¹⁴³ The sharpest comic moments in the play take place between Nelson and his clumsy wife whose concerns are shown to be very banal and ridiculous. She cannot wait to tell Nelson that she has "had so many improvements carried out upon the new house", particularly "the kitchen pump."¹⁴⁴ While Nelson is busy introducing her to his high-society friends, his wife who looks like a human "waxwork", and who speaks "with a voice like a hopped-up metronome",¹⁴⁵ insists again on telling him "all about the kitchen pump." In another scene, we find Nelson winding up the "mechanical plume" a gift from a grateful ruler for services rendered, and strutting "about the stage while it whirls upon his hat",¹⁴⁶ a scene which reminds us of Lamachus' funny plumes and of Henry Woolf playing Montgomery in Dingo. Just as we see Montgomery swaggering funnily while entertaining the soldiers in Wood's play, Nelson in this scene acts also like a buffoon, becoming more of an entertainer than a hero. The hero's apotheosis at the end of the play is not to be comprehended as a celebration or an elevation of Nelson to the level of the Gods. Arden's intentions are anything but celebratory. In the words of Nisbet, the decrifier, the deification of the hero "is not to be construed as an historical reconstruction", nor "even as an act of poetic justice, I am afraid it will fall rather

short."¹⁴⁷ And it does. Nelson's apotheosis is absurd and ironic; it is also intended for the sake of fun. Concisely, the process of rising up is in itself a detraction for, as we have seen through the course of the play, Arden's intentions are cynical and not commemorative, even the hero's final ascension to heaven.

In The Hero Rises Up, Arden, through Nelson, revives the character of the swashbuckling soldier, which can be traced back to Aristophanes' Lamachus. Like Aristophanes, Arden presents his hero as a braggart both to make the audience discredit this type of hero and to make fun of him. Nelson's first appearance on the stage, and his angry haranguing of the audience can, as I have intimated earlier, be described as incongruous. The handicapped "cock-sparrow"-like hero, starts, like Lamachus and Montgomery, to brag about his victories:

"If you don't know who I am you ought to be ashamed of yourselves, God damn your eyes! You are, I take it, Englishmen? Is there any point in my informing you of all the great deeds I have done for you? My victories? St. Vincent, the Nile, Copenhagen, Trafalgar? Of the techniques by which I achieved them? Surely all such history is already known. I was the first naval commander who understood - and put into practice - the theory of the entire and total destruction of the enemy fleet, at whatever cost to my own. A destruction made possible by my enthusiastic disregard of everybody's orders - the orders of my immediate superiors, and also the unwritten but potent orders provided by two hundred years of conservative naval tradition."¹⁴⁸

Nelson takes it for granted that he is a hero, and chides the audience for forgetting his victories. Nelson describes Napoleon in implied comparison to himself as, "entirely inadequate: and I was the first one to prove it, before all

the world - he met his match when he met me."¹⁴⁹ He goes on to sing vauntingly that Napoleon:

"was nothing more than two bright eyes
Glowing in the dark
He was nothing more than a sullen muttering
Round the corner of my work.
I did not see him: and his name
Was one at that time I had never heard -
How could I know that I kept alive
The worst man in the world?"¹⁵⁰

In another scene, he is shown as a megalomaniac, who like Montgomery in Dingo, is very much concerned with achieving military honours and decorations, "Medals, Allen, damn ye! - deck me out, garnish me - while I tell 'em what they're all for."¹⁵¹ To him, it is of paramount importance "that the newspapers should be properly informed of my movements when in town."¹⁵² Like Lamachus, he is shown to be a vainglorious character, who celebrates his own greatness instead of being celebrated by the dramatist; an action intended not only to alienate the audience but also to make it laugh at the hero's braggadocio, lust for power and self-glorification. This also appears at the final scene of the play when "The Hero Rises Up." In this scene, Nelson has no qualms about his iconisation. He laps it up and brags that, "The hero rises up to reach; His everlasting proud reward"¹⁵³ in which he highly rejoices.

Nelson's buffoonery and ostentation are not the only techniques used by the dramatist to belittle him. As I have mentioned earlier, like Aristophanes and Wood, Arden tends to employ a harsh, critical debunker to further shame the hero. Like the characters Dingo and Dicaeopolis, Arden's Nisbet is

there to deflate the hero and comment aggressively and cynically on his actions. He stands to represent the commonalty.

Nelson is quite aware of Nisbet's hostile attitude towards him:

"Let him bite as he has always bitten
Into the heart of my glory
And the gut of my reputation."¹⁵⁴

Nelson's complaint establishes Nisbet's role as a fault-finder in the play. Nisbet's first encounter with Nelson concerns the latter's treatment of his wife and his repugnant relationship with the courtesan, Emma. When Nelson talks of his affairs with the latter, Nisbet tells him to "make sure you tell the truth. And do not compel me to correct you."¹⁵⁵ This reminds us of Dicaeopolis treating Lamachus as if the latter were the servant, and the former the master. Like Aristophanes, Arden seems to tip the balance in favour of the representative of the common people by investing him with the power to degrade and flay the traditional hero. Nelson shudders and stammers when Nisbet reproaches him for his treatment of Commodore Caracciolo of Naples. Nisbet's power is such that he can make Nelson and Emma's faces go pale. He is courageous enough to make Nelson's "little cock-sparrow head" sink "deep into his shoulders."¹⁵⁶

Nisbet's diatribes against Nelson are numerous. Nelson is however most condemned for his shameful execution of the popular leader of Naples, Caracciolo. In his short history of Nelson, Carlyle mentions in passing the former's bloody involvement in the politics of Naples and his killing without

trial of the Neapolitan leader. But just as he vindicates Nelson's disreputable affairs with Lady Hamilton, Carlyle also deems it insignificant and "unnecessary" to dilate upon what he calls "the only stain that deforms the history of Nelson",¹⁵⁷ that is, the latter's actions in Naples. Carlyle's neglect of certain aspects of Nelson's history may be explained by reference to E.H. Carr's book What is History? Carr rightly contends that, "Before you study the history, study the historian - Before you study the historian, study his historical and social environment."¹⁵⁸ Carr's statement can be usefully applied both to Arden's and Carlyle's treatments of history. It is no wonder that Carlyle turns a blind eye to Nelson's atrocities in Naples. Carlyle's judgement of Nelson's history is largely influenced by the former's background and what Carr calls "the historical and social environment." Carlyle lived at a time when his country was at the peak of its reputation both politically and militarily. Furthermore, like Nietzsche, he was a hero-worshipper who therefore justified the enormities of his "supermen" by seeing in them evidence of "greatness" and heroism. Moreover, the ordinary people killed by Nelson in Naples are given no mention in Carlyle's history. Obviously, he has no qualms about calling such an act "a force of will." Like Nietzsche, he asserts that a great man is quite justified in annihilating "millions of the misbegotten",¹⁵⁹ to reach the status of the superman. Carlyle has no admiration for or sympathy with the commonalty, and for that reason we find him praising Nelson and neglecting the people he put to death. In other words,

Carlyle's history of Nelson is highly coloured by his beliefs and convictions.

Unlike Carlyle, Arden, a dramatist determined to dissect and expose, goes to great lengths to denounce and indict what he might call Nelson's barbarity towards the inhabitants of Naples and their leader. Just as Wood demystifies what he calls Churchill's and Montgomery's brutalities during the Second World War, Arden's bent is to lay bare Nelson's felonies by focusing on those actions which are usually ignored by such as Carlyle. Arden's re-writing of the history of Nelson is also coloured by the former's ideology. Above all, in this play Arden's viewpoint is that of a pacifist, and at the same time he bears a great deal of love for what he calls "the curvilinear", an essentially romantic concept, which stands for the common man who is not corrupted by the evils of so-called civilisation and is not restricted in his behaviour by social conventions. Although The Hero Rises Up is not as ideologically motivated as later plays, but it may be seen to usher in Arden's change of heart. This tendency towards "the curvilinear" in Arden's early plays, including The Hero Rises Up, stands as the seed from which Arden's later Marxist attitude towards the masses particularly in The Island of the Mighty and in The Non-Stop Connolly Show was to grow.

Arden uses various techniques to give prominence to Nelson's behaviour in Naples. "The dramatic hinge of the play" as Cushman contends, in Plays and Players, centres on Nelson's questionable conduct - which is "not very well-publicised by the text books at Naples where, he...crushed a

popular rising and reinstated a despotic monarch."¹⁶⁰ In the play it is Nisbet who brings the audience's attention to the events. Earlier in the play, we are informed by Nisbet that, "King Ferdinand" of Naples "was the abominable monarch....Lord Nelson persuaded him to commit himself against the French. But the French forthwith defeated him. His people rose for - Liberty. A republic. Death to the Bourbon tyrants."¹⁶¹ Being persona non grata, the king fled the country to be later restored to his kingdom by Nelson who "has power; To kill every soul in that damnable town."¹⁶² Fighting on the side of the oppressor, Nelson carries out the king's frenzied order to:

"Kill them, everyone kill them,
Strangle them horribly, cut out their bowels,
I will be with you and I will be doing it,
Revenge oh revenge - I will make them to howl
- Howl, let them howl, kill them, kill them,
Kill them, men, women, priests, children,
where are the executioners, the gaolers, guards,
and torturers, the firing squads, the hangmen, the
hangmen, the hangmen?"¹⁶³

The King's gruesome sadism, is, as we can see, grimly and grotesquely caricatured. The hangman summoned by the king turns out to be Nelson. As the play proceeds, the king's barbaric order is put into action. The stage directions read that "Screams of terror and brutal slaughter"- are heard. "Some people are hunted out by the King's supporters and chased mockingly about till they are caught: then they are put to death with callous abandon",¹⁶⁴ Caracciolo's death follows. Thus, Nelson completes a cycle of blood-shed on behalf of a despicable monarch.

Ironically, Nelson regards himself as the "friend" of

the people of Naples. He claims that he "brought them their liberty."¹⁶⁵ In the sailor's ironic song about Naples, the word "free" recurs several times. Has Nelson really made the people of Naples "free" by restoring to them their king? As a matter of fact, he has clipped their wings and turned them into captives of a tyrannical king. The sailors' song, T.P. Clayton argues in The Drama of John Arden as Communal Ritual, "echoes the notorious remark of an American officer that to save a Vietnamese village, it had to be destroyed":¹⁶⁶

"He ordered his red marines Sing ho for liberty
And he smashed them all to smithereens
All for to make 'em free."¹⁶⁷

Metaphorically, Nelson, as his above bloody action shows, is the people's gaoler rather than their hero. The following part of the song of Nelson's sailors about the execution of Caracciolo can be applied to them and to all the downtrodden people of Britain:

"We caught the Chief of all the gang
Sing ho for liberty
And we beat him down with many a bang
We meant to make him free
We tied his arms with a length of twine
Sing ho for liberty
And we dragged him up at the end of a line
That's how we made him free."¹⁶⁸

Nelson, working for a system that suppresses the masses, becomes the people's enemy. And Caracciolo becomes a symbol of the oppressed people both in Naples and in Britain; a premise driven home by Nisbet:

"For had they known who he (Caracciolo) was
Being ragged dirty British skin-and-bone -
It is just possible they would have cried
For a bold Caracciolo, of their own."¹⁶⁹

The tenor of Nisbet's comment is that the sailors who are collaborating blindly with Nelson have failed to realise that Caracciolo, the man whom they have helped to kill, unlike Nelson, is their representative, and that, had they been more conscious of their own plight, they would have produced a leader similar to Caracciolo from their own ranks to lead them against Nelson and the forces he works for.

While Nelson calls his action in Naples a "victory", Nisbet, telling the truth, thinks otherwise:

"I was there and I saw it. The start of your story
Was not any moment of victory and joy:
But a time of confusion and bloody-minded treason."¹⁷⁰

Nisbet goes on to make Nelson feel ashamed, holding him to blame for all that happened in Naples.

In addition, Arden uses the events to condemn Nelson's imperialist tendencies: "Yet he does not know, and she does not know; Why the politics of Naples disturb them so"¹⁷¹ is an indication that Nelson, like Montgomery, Lamachus and Cleon is a bloody imperialist, a fact confirmed in the play by the restored king of Naples and by Nisbet:

"We are glad to see them gone
Caracciolo need never have died
Had Nelson not been yelping at my side
Therefore, the blame, if any blame remain,
Must fall on Nelson's head - strong head,
not mine."¹⁷²

In the same vein, Nisbet contends that, "A naval Officer is not permitted; In foreign politics to be committed; What he does may be distasteful..."¹⁷³ Thus, Nelson turns out to be a blood-thirsty interventionist in other people's

affairs.

To arouse indignation against the hero, Arden makes him boast about his bloody policies. Nelson, however, feels no guilt for his atrocious deeds, "But for the matter of Naples, I refuse to apologise; My conduct in that city was tactically wise, personally heroic, and strategically justified; I look back on it with pride."¹⁷⁴ The self-delusion of Nelson's justification of his actions is, however, revealed forcibly by Admiral Parker's countercharge that, "We turn the world into a wilderness and we have the nerve to call it peace."¹⁷⁵ Here, Parker recognises an unsettling contradiction between the ends and the means of a hero.

In addition to exposing and dissecting Nelson's unpublicised actions, Nisbet seems to be employed, like Dingo and Dicaeopolis, to propagate an anti-war message which is the crux of those plays by Aristophanes, Wood, and Arden which I have discussed. People remember Nelson's victories, but "forget the essential inhumanity of the cause of war."¹⁷⁶ Like Lamachus and Montgomery, Nelson, as the play presents him, is a belligerent war-criminal. As a pacifist, Arden is repelled by a war-loving Nelson whose energies are harnessed for a profession of killing and destruction. Like Lamachus, Nelson stands for the "professional soldier"; a fact regretted by Arden in his "Asymmetrical Preface":

"The play is about a man who was, by accident of birth and rearing, committed to a career governed by the old Roman 'rectilinear' principles; He himself was of asymmetrical 'curvilinear' temperament to an unusually passionate degree. But the English soon discovered how to handle him. He was done properly: wasted his extraordinary energy, courage and humanity upon having men killed (in the end himself killed)."¹⁷⁷

Arden's point is that Nelson's good qualities which he has in common with the ordinary people are manipulated by a vicious establishment. When the fervent Nelson puts his talents at the service of naval warfare, the result is monstrous butchery. His entire romanticised reputation, like Montgomery's and Lamachus', depends upon the "successful organisation of slaughter." His heroism battens onto "the entire and total destruction of the enemy fleet at whatever cost to my own."¹⁷⁸ After his death Nelson is set on a "pillar - At the north end of Whitehall; For every inch of that great pillar; A Frenchman I did kill."¹⁷⁹ When Nelson accuses Napoleon of having built his reputation on massacres, his relatives and acquaintances retort all together: "So does yours, dear Horace So does yours."¹⁸⁰ When not destroying and killing, Nelson "becomes a withered root." In his denunciatory tone, Nisbet describes Nelson's behaviour at Trafalgar as "barbaric."¹⁸¹ In the battle of Copenhagen, Nelson wins the day; a victory set against a background of blood and "shambles."¹⁸² The stage directions read that the dead and wounded seamen are carried across the stage with "groans and cries and screams",¹⁸³ which reminds us of the celebration of victory by Montgomery and others set against the screams of the millions of people who lost their lives in Dingo. Under the title, "Peace: As achieved by the Treaty of Amiens, 1802", Nisbet comments that, "Yet, even as the result of this kind of shambles, we do occasionally find ourselves at peace."¹⁸⁴ Nisbet's point is that this is almost accidental peace. Nelson has not brought it except in that the combatants are too worn-out to fight on.

Sick of Nelson's penchant for war, Nisbet wishes to God that the former's, "premonition of death....would come true."¹⁸⁵ Nelson's praying for God to grant him and his country "a great and glorious victory",¹⁸⁶ is labelled by Nisbet as "Blood and molasses"¹⁸⁷ and the scene in which Nelson is on his knees praying reminds us of General Haig in Oh What a Lovely War!, whose supplication to God for victory, is also caricatured and satirized as a barbaric wish for more blood-shed. Ungrateful, however, for Nelson's victories whose "brutality" is "brought out as clearly as the banality of his strategy",¹⁸⁸ Arden, employing the same virulent-tongued commentator, Nisbet, thrusts Nelson's and other European heroes' achievements aside by declaring that, "Equality, Fraternity, and so on, never came; And where we were then, now we are just the same", and that "The bare-arsed hordes of hungry Frenchmen; Stand exactly as they were; The poor of Europe are just as poor."¹⁸⁹ Arden's statements are intended to show the emptiness of Nelson's victories and the futility of wars, and The Hero Rises Up, like the Acharnians and Dingo, is, "peace propaganda....the most aggressive of its kind since Sergeant Musgrave's Dance."¹⁹⁰ Thus Nelson's resurrection becomes not a celebration of a hero, but a posthumous trial of a blood-thirsty war criminal.

Nelson is not however, Arden's only target in the play; the audience representing British society or what Arden called "the undifferentiated popular sludge" which idolises Nelson, takes its share of the playwright's venom. Nelson is not only attacked as a hero, but also as a representative of a hypocritical, imperialist and blood-stained society. The

hero sings that "In London they will praise me; For all the Frenchmen whom I killed."¹⁹¹ The hero's savagery is applauded by his people. Nelson, Trussler argues, stands to personify "the vanity and the cruelty of his militaristic society."¹⁹² It is not only Nelson's fault that his energies and valour were wasted on a life of killing; it is also the fault of "the admiring crowd." In the words of Nisbet, Nelson "did what we required."¹⁹³ In other words, he was the product of his nation. Thus, the blame falls not only on the hero, but also on his society which has had no better use for his extraordinary qualities than to set him killing on its behalf. The Hero Rises Up becomes an indictment of the imperialist, belligerent past of Britain and of the policies of destruction and suppression followed by British imperialists throughout history; a theme taken up in Peter Nichols' Poppy, and Charles Wood's H, which also condemn Britain's suppression of Nationalists in India, and the imposition of imperialistic rules on China and other countries. In Cloud Nine and The Romans in Britain, Caryl Churchill and Howard Brenton also present a scathing perspective on British imperialism. Nelson's intervention in Naples is, thus, part of British bloody imperialism.

Finally, the structure of the play itself may be seen to contribute towards the demythification of the hero. In addition to using the hero's funny buffoonish figure, a detractor to decry the hero, and the hero's own crimes to evoke antipathy towards him, Arden also borrows Brecht's alienation techniques to further discourage any attempt at

identification or sympathy with Nelson on the part of the audience. The dialogue written for the hero, as Hayman rightly argues, is "so aggressively anti-heroic and so school-masterish that the actor inevitably becomes a man talking about Nelson rather than an embodiment of Nelson."¹⁹⁴ Samples of this technique can be found in Nelson's aforementioned haranguing of the audience which becomes more of a lecture by the hero than an arresting heroic introduction of his character. Instead of being inspired by the hero, the audience tends to be repelled by his angry, reproachful rodomontade, which is intended by Arden to distance it and thereby make it view the hero in a new and critical light throughout the ensuing play. Another of Arden's distancing techniques was, as I have already shown, to turn his hero into a doll-like character in an attempt to give the spectator the impression that what he was seeing was not a real hero. To further enhance the image of Nelson as a marionette, Arden also directed that a medal that spins by clockwork should be fixed on Nelson's hat.¹⁹⁵ In addition, the play is divided into sections, each section bearing a title. As in Dingo, we are presented with loosely connected episodes, and our illusion of reality and absorption of the narrative of the play is constantly disrupted by the interventions of choric figures such as Allen, Mr. Hamilton, and Nisbet.

Similar commentators to those used by Arden can be found in Brecht's and Aristophanes' plays particularly, in the latter case in the Acharnians. In addition to playing a role similar to Dicaeopolis', that is, standing in sharp contrast

to Nelson's bellicose nature, Nisbet together with Allen and Mr. Hamilton, play a choric role. Like Brecht's commentators, they elucidate the action and comment on it. Like the Chorus in the Acharnians, Nisbet becomes the playwright's mouthpiece. He not only clarifies the action but also voices Arden's attitude towards Nelson. In his capacity as a dissertator, Nisbet deprives the audience of an independent view of the hero by forcing on it his own views, and so the play becomes, like the Acharnians and Brecht's plays, educational propaganda.

An illuminating contrast to Arden's iconoclastic treatment of Nelson may be seen in Terrence Rattigan's A Bequest to the Nation written in 1970, which also centres upon Nelson and which can be seen to represent the most common approach to the treatment of national heroes apparent in the British theatre up to the late sixties.

Although A Bequest to the Nation was also criticised for degrading Nelson, it is by no means, intended as a dissection and a rejection of the hero. The play is concerned with Nelson's private life. It focuses, as F. Gray rightly argues, on "one question", that is, Nelson's infatuation with Lady Hamilton and hatred for his wife; a feeling articulated by Nelson to Hardy the night before he goes off to Trafalgar.¹⁹⁸ Nelson contrasts the voluptuousness of the one with the unbearable tolerance of the other before passing into history, "leaving on stage, the dinner silver he has arranged in the shape of his battle-plan of Trafalgar, over which, in the final scene, the two women achieve some sort of reconciliation."¹⁹⁷

Rattigan, as Gray rightly contends, is most interested in the fundamental personal weaknesses of the hero.¹⁹⁸ He never judges Nelson's heroism. Nor does he show the hero in action or present the effects of Nelson's actions upon his society. The setting of the play, like most of Rattigan's plays, is in the private rooms and rich mansions reminiscent of the upper-class drama which used to prevail in the British theatre before 1956. Nelson's sailors and henchmen are shown to be a blind, hero-worshipping lot and the actors do their utmost to force the audience to identify with them in the context of a realistic plot structure. The Hero Rises Up indeed stands in marked contrast to A Bequest to the Nation. While Rattigan takes for granted Nelson's heroism, Arden questions it. Unlike Rattigan's, Arden's techniques are so alienatory that they never cease to remind us that we are seeing a hero who should be judged and not identified with. Unlike Rattigan, Arden tends to show the consequences of Nelson's actions upon his sailors. In all, Arden, like Aristophanes, Brecht, and Wood, is more interested in public actions, such as war and its aftermath, than in focusing upon the psychology of the hero, as does Rattigan.

Thus, in Dingo and The Hero Rises Up, Wood and Arden have revived and adapted for their times, the Aristophanic tradition of comic demythification of war-heroes. Without recourse to political dogma, they turned their heroes into grotesquely comic representatives of the militaristic values which they despised and set out to shock their audiences out of their moral complacency and into a realisation of the

horrors of war and their own part in its perpetration from generation to generation.

I. 2. Political Lampoon

Just as Charles Wood and John Arden followed Aristophanes by presenting deliberately scathing farcical perspectives on war-heroes, Howard Brenton, Steven Berkoff and John Wells revived another aspect of the Aristophanic tradition, that is, the subjection of highly influential living politicians to unsympathetically irreverent treatment. Like Cleon, the then powerful Greek statesman, who, as I have shown, was mercilessly pilloried in Aristophanes' the Knights, Margaret Thatcher, the current British Prime Minister, stands as the target of three modern British plays, A Short Sharp Shock!, Sink The Belgrano!, and Anyone For Denis? Before coming to those plays, however, I think it worthwhile to trace briefly the re-emergence of the above iconoclastic trend in British theatre, after its suppression by the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, which was not subsequently abolished until 1968 and to illustrate how Brenton, Berkoff, Wells and others, enjoying the absence of censorship, were once again able after 1968 to try their hands at aggressively lampooning the highest in the land.

Aristophanic political lampoon is, by no means, a new phenomenon in British drama. In their comprehensive survey of Censorship in England, Frank Fowell and Frank Palmer note that:

"Prior to the passing of the Act of 1737, politicians were satirized and criticised with the utmost frankness.... But under Walpole's guidance politicians assumed a shyer disposition, and from that

date the Censor has been peculiarly averse to anything approaching political satire."¹

Although it is not my aim to trace the Aristophanic presentation of politicians on the stage throughout the history of British drama, it is worth mentioning a few dramatists who long before the three modern British playwrights in question, both subjected prominent politicians to ridicule and mounted attacks upon their policies. In the 18th century, the heyday of the political lampoon, John Gay's The Beggar's Opera enjoyed wide popularity for "its attack upon the 'great men' of the time."² The play was not, however, concerned with particular politicians; but with "statesmen" in general. Nevertheless "contemporary audiences", Findlater notes in his book Banned, "gleefully recognised the targets in George II's Court and Walpole's Cabinet."³ In this respect, the above play differs from the three British plays concerned, which do not hesitate to name their targets.

The most Aristophanic of British playwrights throughout history was, however, undoubtedly, Henry Fielding, whose political satire was an important factor behind the passing of the 1737 Act. Two and a half centuries ago, he challenged the dignity of the most powerful of politicians and rulers, particularly the then British Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, and King George the Second and his family. His political lampoons were offensive and daring. His revolt was politically motivated and he stood in full opposition to the then ruling parties and their leaders.

Fielding's play The Fall of Mortimer, which "showed a

man ruling England with an insatiable appetite for plunder, intriguing with the Queen, selling places to the highest bidder, paying for his luxury by corruption and oppression",⁴ was, as Findlater notes, condemned as an "infamous, scandalous, seditious and treasonable libel against His Majesty's Government"⁵ and the actors who collaborated with Fielding in mounting the play, were wanted by the police.⁶

Fielding's "farces", Colley Cibber notes, "seemed to knock all distinctions of Mankind on the head... Religion, laws, government, priests, judges, and ministers, were all laid flat at the feet of this Herculean satirist."⁷

In March of 1731, six years before the passing of the Censorship Act, "Fielding prepared for the Haymarket a play which would make him one of London's most controversial playwrights; it would also, temporarily, put him out of business and separate him from his theatrical home."⁸ Like The Fall of Mortimer, this play, The Grub Street Opera created a great deal of furore and "steps were quickly taken to suppress it."⁹ The targets of the play were the then Royal Family and other eminent politicians of the time. Like Gay, Fielding did not, however, mention the people he was pillorying by name. King George II, and the Queen appeared as Squire Apshenkin and his wife. Lady Apshenkin is presented as an over-domineering rough woman who henpecks her husband. Squire Apshenkin is presented as a "boozier" who cannot drink all the time for fear of being rebuked by his wife, "What a fine thing it is for a man of my state to stand in fear of his wife, that I dare not get drunk so much as

once a day, without being called to account for it."¹⁰ The political influence is all too clear; a King who is incapable of ruling at home cannot be expected to influence his own government. Robert Walpole is presented as the ruling family's butler and like Cleon, he is accused of corruption, embezzlement of public money, and other political blunders.

Fielding's Aristophanic audacity created a great deal of furore on the part of those in power, and they were to act mercilessly to suppress such political lampooning. John Loftis, "a contemporary apologist for the Act of 1737", called for action against Fielding whose "lack of restraint... could scarcely be allowed to continue."¹¹ Loftis goes on to say that "it is less surprising that the Government took action... than that it tolerated for so long such a large body of dramatic abuse directed and pointed personally at the Chief Minister of State."¹² While Greek Governments took no action to muzzle their iconoclastic playwrights like Aristophanes, the British government, unable to put up with the outspokenness of rebellious dramatists like Fielding, clamped down on many of his plays, and in 1737, passed the crippling Act which paralysed the theatre and its potential political Aristophanists for more than two centuries.

The passing of the Licensing Act attests to the importance, during Fielding's time, of the theatre as a powerful artistic institution. The theatre appeared as a threat to those in power by jeopardising their credibility as statesmen and thus the Censorship Act was passed out of political fear on the part of the rulers. Michael Foot

contends that "It was political fears which persuaded the original introduction of censorship and it has very largely been political fears which have sustained it ever since."¹³ In the words of Findlater, the 1737 Act was passed particularly, however, to "safeguard the dignity of one politician - the Prime Minister of England", and not for what the latter called "the protection of the public."¹⁴ This is a premise supported by Russell Stephens who in his book The Censorship of English Drama, argues that political satire usually directed towards establishment figures is "quite damaging to the fabric and dignity of government and its institutions."¹⁵ Quoted by Stephens, James Sutherland remarks that satire "has always been unwelcome to people in authority" for it can be "destructive, either of the individual, or of the party, or the ideas and traditions on which established institutions are based."¹⁶ However, Sutherland cites other reasons than "political fears" behind censorship. He contends, and rightly so, that satire in personalised form "is perhaps most immediately dangerous in the theatre, for there its explosive qualities are greatly increased by the presence of an audience in whom excitement is easily generated...and the feelings of each individual are communicated to his neighbour, the mass emotion may rapidly become overwhelming."¹⁷ That could be, no doubt, seen by those in power as the most justifiable "rationale" behind theatrical censorship.

While the 1737 Censorship Act was enacted out of political panic, its abolition in 1968 could in contrast be seen to imply indifference towards the theatre and its

influence. By 1968, politicians were quite aware of the fact that the theatre had lost its comprehensive audience which had now turned to television. They were quite sure that political theatre was no more than "much ado about nothing", and such in the 1970s, it turned out to be. The Thatcher Government was not only unshaken by political dramatists, but also knew how to bring them to heel, and surprisingly enough not by passing a Walpolian act. A government which could put down such powerful industrial action as the Miners' strike was not to be threatened by theatrical agit-prop. Although Howard Brenton's and Tony Howard's A Short Sharp Shock!, in attacking Mrs Thatcher, provoked some opposition from a number of Tory M.Ps., the play was subsidised and later ignored by those who were lampooned. Indeed Tony Howard was afraid that "The strongest weapon" the Thatcher government "have is ignoring us."¹⁸ Rob Walker, the director of the play sarcastically commented that those in power did not give a damn about what plays like Shock might say: "We live in what is laughingly called the free West. I'm sure they will be happy for us to be free to say what we want."¹⁹

Enjoying the demise of censorship, Brenton, Berkoff, and to some extent Wells, set out to ridicule and show contempt for their rulers. Brenton and Berkoff were determined to bite, but although they might hurt, their bites, as I shall show later, had little sustained effect and their satire was to become simply cathartic both for them and for their audiences while having little effect on the conduct of the government.

Like Arden, Brenton is a playwright who, in terms of iconoclasm, can be dealt with both as an Aristophanist and, as what I shall describe later, as a Brecht-Marxist. His Aristophanicism is, however, consciously coloured by his socialism. Unlike The Churchill Play, which resurrects Sir Winston Churchill to indict him as a historical figure, from a Marxist standpoint and which fits into my second category, A Short Sharp Shock!, like Aristophanes' the Knights, is an agit-prop campaign against living politicians and their policies. More importantly, it subjects those political figures to an Aristophanic treatment by presenting them as laughing-stocks. Politically, however, it also takes a firm socialist line.

Like many of his fellow political dramatists, Brenton regards the establishment as the enemy of society, and therefore, his own enemy; an enemy "Not to strive for, but to struggle against."²⁰ Brenton's rebellion which has culminated in directly attacking the government in Shock, was only another example of an approach which had been fired by the events of 1968, the "historic year which politicised many people",²¹ and which also directly affected him. "May '68", he admitted, "gave me a desperation I still have."²² A feeling that, as we can see in Brenton's work five years later, was still as firey and pungent as ever. Nevertheless, although the events of 1968 happened to be the starting point for Brenton's iconoclasm, they are not to be taken as the main factor leading to Brenton's lapidation of the Thatcher government in 1980. In the case of Shock, 1979 was for Brenton more significant. It was in this year that his

socialist hopes were dealt a fatal blow by the landslide election victory achieved by the Conservatives headed by Mrs. Thatcher.

The theatre's job is usually taken to be to educate and to amuse. For Brenton, however, it has another function; "it's there to bait....public figures."²³ Indeed, Brenton would agree with Philip Hedley's reasoning that "If the arts never attacked the Establishment, it wouldn't be doing its job."²⁴ Just as Aristophanes used the stage as a venue for pouring scorn on Greek politicians and other respected figures of his time, Brenton, as he made clear above, was determined to make of the theatre an agit-prop weapon that, to use his words, could "damage the Government."²⁵

Shock was first presented at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, London on 21, June, 1980. It transferred to the Royal Court on 16, July. Tory M.Ps. were infuriated by the play, which, following the normal course taken by offended politicians, they described as "disgraceful", "deplorable", and "bad taste"!.²⁶ Some asked whether or not taxpayers' money should be used to subsidise theatres and playwrights who staged outrightly offensive attacks on the government. Likewise, other "Tory backwoodsmen" thundered (most loudly in the Daily and Sunday Telegraphs) "about the iniquity of state subsidies for socialist propaganda."²⁷

Like any political play, Shock had its decriers and supporters. Whereas M.P. Taylor was rankled by the play, Peter Jenkins, the theatre critic of The Spectator, showed his dissatisfaction with it by crying it down. He was

disgusted by the presentation of "England's green and pleasant land" as "a rubbish tip guarded by a tank."²⁸ Unhappy with the political content of the play, he described it as a "feeble entertainment." He also seems to have been repelled by the authors' suggestion that all Conservatives are fascists. In a pro-government tone, he condemned the theatricality of the play and discouraged people from watching it. He concluded his detraction of the play by adding his voice to Teddy Taylor's in asking "How much longer should the taxpayer be obliged to support such a dwindling talent."²⁹

B.A. Young of The Financial Times, regretted all the fuss about the play, but at the same time, like Jenkins, he depreciates it by stating that "There isn't a thought in Howard Brenton's and Tony Howard's charade that hasn't been spoken in Hyde Park a thousand times, probably more deeply considered and more amusingly phrased."³⁰ Benedict Nightingale criticised what he called "the low voltage" of the play and asked for a more biting satire.³¹ In Michael Billington's opinion, the writers "leave the government unscathed" and "the evening as a whole offers caricature instead of satire, frenetic bark instead of real bite."³² Ned Chaillet of The Times offered a similar view and Graham Lock of the New Musical Express found the play "hardly as shocking as its target" - Mrs Thatcher.³³

Running counter to this, another group of critics praised the play's sharpness and regarded it as an acid satire. R. Cushman of The Observer commended the play as a "vigorous and imaginative lampoon."³⁴ John Elsom of The

Listener considered the play "offensive and hostile", and could "think of no other play in London which attempts such wholesale slaughter of our new political 'sacred cows', not even Accidental Death of an Anarchist",³⁵ which of course, had no reference to Britain at all. John Sutherland of The Times Literary Supplement shared Elsom's view by contending that the play is "an offensive play in both the neutral and pejorative senses of the term. At times the audience were perplexed in their response; unsure whether to approve of the attack on Toryism or be affronted at the assault on common decency."³⁶ To Andrew Veitch of the Guardian, the play is "very sharp." To Philip Hedley, "It's a very strong lampoon on the Government." "The artistic Left", Veitch noted, "is hailing it as the most savage satire since Henry Fielding's onslaught prompted Walpole to introduce censorship of the theatre in 1737."³⁷

I myself share the view of those critics who regard the play as a mordant satire. Shock is indeed no mild and liberal criticism. It is no less insulting and injurious than Aristophanes' the Knights which is deemed as the most savage attack in the history of literature. But had not Brenton and Howard changed the original title of the play, Shock could have been even more offensive. The first title was Ditch the Bitch, a "slogan plucked from the mouth of a labour M.P."³⁸ Taylor, however, was perhaps angered by the fact that the authors had changed the title not to lessen the offensiveness of the play but in order to be considerate towards the feelings of "militant feminist activists."³⁹ Although the writers "ditched" the first title, they did,

however, reserve its main word to be used against Mrs. Thatcher later in the course of the play. Unlike the Knights which is mainly directed against Cleon, Shock attempts a wholesale ridicule of the present British Government. Funnily enough, all the Cabinet Ministers are played by women. Interviewed by A. Veitch in the Guardian, the authors and their director Rob Walker explained that "It became clear during casting that it would be impossible to find actors who looked like Whitelaw, Joseph, Prior, and the rest, and that any chance similarity would blur the message. So Rob Walker, decided that the Ministers and the ghosts should be played by women";⁴⁰ a technique that turned out to be successful. Howard commented that it was "a novelty. It will take five minutes for the audience to get used to the idea that Sir Keith is a woman, and by half time they won't even notice."⁴¹ But it was quite difficult for the actresses "to learn how to play men... they went backstage at the Westminster show, hogged the public gallery, and carted off loads of Central Office material. Darlene Johnson, who plays Sir Keith Joseph went to see him at work in committee, and came close to taking tea with the great man."⁴² The result of this technique, as photographer Mark Rusher commented, was a "shocking cast."⁴³ As one of Rusher's pictures shows, the members of government headed by Thatcher, appear before the audience as a bunch of grotesque and funny creatures. The gimmick was "wonderfully evocative on the physical level and crudely hilarious on the ideological",⁴⁴ said Sutherland. The ministers are made to behave clownishly. Douglas Home, a kilted, half-witted buffoon, "a nice man who likes to kill little birds",⁴⁵ is presented as a murderous character who

shoots Thorneycroft's chauffeur while conniving to stab Heath in the back.

The funniest and most grotesque mockery is aimed at Sir Keith Joseph, whom Brenton and Howard sarcastically call a "great man", and "who has very kindly come here tonight to explain to you he is not mad."⁴⁶ He is shown as a raving lunatic, and is spectacularly flailed by Darlene Johnson who reduces him to a demented loony. "Most of his entrances and exits, Sutherland notes, "are made Dracula-style, from a grave and as the play progresses, 'loony' deteriorates into the self-flagellating Teiresias of the cabinet ('Keith dear, don't neglect yourself , murmurs, the Leader absent-mindedly picking at a hanging button").⁴⁷ His policies are shown to be foolish insanity. The Mad Monk's brain is shown to be full of rubbish. "It is not true", he says, "that I want to gas people."⁴⁸ In one of the funniest scenes in the play, he "collapses and thrashes about on the floor, clutching his chest."⁴⁹ As he does so, Professor Milton Friedman shoots out from his chest.⁵⁰ In another scene, he whips himself and screams like a psychopath. Later he appears covered in eggs and tomatoes.

Sir Geoffrey Howe is also shown as a figure of fun. He trots boyishly around Mrs Thatcher with "a lighter-than-air balloon tied to the quiff of his hair." The balloon has a £ sign on it.⁵¹

"Piggy" Prior makes his first appearance appropriately with "A loud noise of farm animals",⁵² in the background. "He is disembowelling a dead calf"⁵³ and blood is up to his

elbows. Later he carries the stuffed calf everywhere with him, and takes phone calls from his wheelbarrow. He uses four-letter words, and calls the cabinet "silly arses." In the cabinet, "he is debugged, black-balled, and forced to drink Nobel Prize Winners' semen for his U-turn and his loyalty to Ted ('I'll tell the Guardian', he vainly threatens." At times he is also presented as a comic conjurer.

Linda Spurrier's "rumpled, shambling" Whitelaw, was presented as a toadying character. He slobbers kisses on Thatcher's face and is described as a "creepy-crawlie" and a "Second-rate mind." His role is that of a permanent also-ran, "A leader's got to have something to lead", he cries, "here I am."⁵⁴ He is always drunk and in one scene appears trouserless and in another wets his trousers, and is ordered by Thatcher to go and change them - hardly a flattering picture of an influential public figure. Lord Carrington, who owns half of Buckinghamshire, does not worry about money, and wants to "invade Iran and forget all our troubles."⁵⁵ He sweeps in with a gypsy violinist to dance a tango in his topee with Thatcher. He is, as Billington says, a "pith-helmeted caricature from Carry On Up the Khyber."⁵⁶

John Biffen, and John Nott are presented as Downing Street bouncers. They are used by Thatcher as bully-boys to stop anyone writing disloyal things about her. Airey Neave is also shown in an unfavourable light. Having been murdered by the I.R.A, his resurrection is perhaps the most offensive. In scene four, act one, he enters carrying a severed blood-stained arm. Mountbatten, having suffered a similar fate,

follows him also holding a gory severed limb, and Norman St. John Stevas likes to see himself as the Tory party's Hamlet, but he says, "I can't stand leaping about in people's graves."⁵⁷

The authors, however, reserve most of their spleen for the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher who is presented as a rough vulgar woman who at the final curtain points at her buttocks to indicate that they should be kissed by the audience. In the tradition of Aristophanic abuse Carrington is made to call Thatcher "a bitch" the main word of the title previously ditched, Neave calls her a "Monster" and Greta, another character in the play, in an agitated outburst, calls her a "mite" and a "fucking fart."⁵⁸ Like the Chorus in the Knights, Greta also acts as an agitator. In another diatribe she calls for Thatcher's dismissal, "The fart!... Get rid of her! Get her out! Roll her flat... who does the fart think she is...."⁵⁹ In the same vein, the Old Man agitates to "Destroy that Woman." These invectives are similarly reminiscent of the angry tirades of the Chorus of the Knights and likewise reflect that extreme loathing felt so powerfully by the dramatists that it bursts even the bounds of satiric invention to become straightforward abuse. In this case, in the face of her "swingeing attempts to impose extremist right-wing policies on both the Conservative party and on the British people."

In response, Michael Billington accused the writers of the play of offering "images and rhetoric rather than fact and argument."⁶⁰ Contrary to Billington's claim, however, Howard contends that "the script is firmly rooted in

documentary evidence... Cabinet ministers, reiterate, in only slightly exaggerated form, their own published words; while the lines of Sir Keith Joseph - convincingly portrayed as a jabbering lunatic - have been lifted almost verbatim from his speeches." "We could not think up anything as crazy as what he'd actually said",⁶¹ explained Howard who "spent nine months researching cuttings, speeches, books, anything he could find, and finished it all off with a trip to the Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool";⁶² an experience which he described as "Horrible, mind-blowing and shocking", so much so that he "wanted to shriek with horror at what these people were saying."⁶³ Thus, the resulting play, in addition to being a theatrical show, is a political pamphlet which sets out, in Brenton's words, "to show that in human, moral, and political terms, these people are intolerable." Milly, a working-class girl, speaks out unambiguously against Thatcher's policies:

"I can hear her voice [Thatcher's]. Like a siren in the war. What's she saying? All the muck spitting out of her - double-talk and bile. 'Freedom of the individual' meaning hate your neighbour.... Margaret Hilda Thatcher is the ball on the end of a demolition crane, crashing into everything that's decent in my country. Freedom? Free choice? Community groups? Unions? Nurseries? They'll pulverise the lot. Wherever people gather together there'll be a hole. We'll be in a great big sludge tank. Sinking free. Hard-line, vicious, loony, right-wing can't-know who their saint is? Adam Smith. What did he cause? The Irish famine. So Why? What the hell is history doing - landing Britain with this lot now?... The wealth of nations is dribbling away. Thirty years, we thought - things will always get better,... we never looked further than the wheel of our Ford Capri, or our plate of roast lamb on Sunday. All the western-world is getting poorer. And tonight - Thatcher and the New Right are cornering the supply. Oh, the lady is a great class-warrior. They've got to smash down now before we get the right slogans. They'll cordon us off. Shanty towns. South London? Sludge tank. The streets are stinking..."⁶⁴

Milly's account of Britain under Thatcher is also achieved by a theatrical image designed by Sue Blake who "sets the tone with the nozzle of a tank protruding onto the stage full of ripped, dilapidated walls, besmirched grass and stuffed animal heads: a metaphor for a rent, declining, antiquated Britain, which, the authors argue, has been pushed nearer to the brink by present Tory policies."⁶⁵

Foremost of Thatcher's policies under attack is that of monetarism. As I have shown earlier, these policies were shown as an object of scorn and ridicule when the figure of the monetarist guru, Milton Friedman, bursts out from Joseph's chest:

Keith: W-w-w-what must I do to be saved?
Friedman: Stop printing money on this planet.
Keith: At last! A higher intelligence on earth.
Friedman: You gotta let the rich get rich. Else the rich won't be rich. There is no short cut to economic recovery. Only one big cut.
Keith: Cut?
Friedman: Like most of your country north of Euston Station.
Keith: But Milton - people are living there. Or so I'm told.
Friedman: ...I know the answers. You got a steel industry?
Keith: Oh no
Friedman: You got cotton?
Keith: Lancashire, falling to bits. Or so I'm told.
Friedman: You got English cars?
Keith: British Leyland, Poor Michael Edwardes. A bunny rabbit with blood in his mouth.
Friedman: No problem! Your cars and your cottons and your steel-plated teapots - and your people, above all your people - don't make money - so - close 'em down.
Keith: So clear. So - (a gesture) stupid, it's almost obvious. So - (a gesture) brutal it's almost kind... Monetarism. Something simple. Faceless, flashing in the sun light. Numbers, rows of figures, bland.⁶⁶

In the above passage, Brenton and Howard achieve a superb Shavian sarcasm. The dialogue is light but effective. The authors reduce the theory of monetarism to an object of derision, and reveal it as callous and inhuman.

In addition to their assault at Thatcher's monetarist policies, Brenton and Howard return to a subject tackled by Brenton six years earlier in The Churchill Play - Britain as a police state. Shock is full of references to the heavy-handedness of the police. Just he castigated Churchill's repressive policies, Brenton accuses Thatcher of following in Churchill's steps by giving "the coppers bigger boots."⁶⁷ To indicate Britain's totalitarian nature, the writers together with their set-designer have, as I have already mentioned, placed a tank or at least the gun barrel of one on the stage. There are references to using troops to stop picketing, and to corpses found in police stations. "To be free", says Thatcher, "we need a big police force to help my lovely big boys in the S A S to kill people"⁶⁸ and in another scene, we see her surrounded by Tory hit-men with bulging dinner jackets⁶⁹; both references intended to convey the despotic nature of Thatcher's regime.

Thus, contrary to the contentions of some critics' that Shock was not outrageous enough, the play, in fact, rises to the level of acid satire. It was indeed one of the sharpest Aristophanic political lampoons to appear in the modern British theatre since the repeal of censorship and may justifiably be seen to have taken up where Fielding was forced to leave off.

With Steven Berkoff's Sink the Belgrano! (1987) came an even more extreme example of Aristophanic satire which targeted Mrs Thatcher and members of her government. The play is far more offensive in its treatment of living politicians than A Short Sharp Shock!. John Peter recommended it to all "people who loathe Mrs Thatcher without reservation",⁷⁰ The London Standard described it as an "audacious piece of theatre"⁷¹ and The Financial Times saw it as "savagely comic."⁷²

Belgrano unlike Shock which was presented in an establishment theatre, was tucked away in an alternative theatre, The Half Moon and then transferred to the Mermaid Theatre. Thus, unlike Aristophanes' iconoclastic plays, particularly the Knights which, as we have seen, were staged in state theatres, and as such may be seen to have had tremendous agit-prop anti-government effect on their audiences, Berkoff's Belgrano, being a highly injurious play against living British political figures, was deprived of the honour of being performed at institutional theatres. The play, as we shall see, is too abusive for such venues.

Belgrano is singled out for examination not merely because it subjects political "sacred cows" to farcical degradation, but because of its highly Aristophanic excessive use of obscenity and indecency to vilify its targets. While Shock can be described as tame in its traducing of Mrs Thatcher and her Cabinet, Belgrano is a proper example of the ribald and smutty, Aristophanic satire. One can only think of Aristophanes' the Knights to compare with Belgrano's gross

denigration of living politicians . Unlike Shock which restricts its use of scurrility to words such as "bitch", "arses", and "fart" to describe its targets, Belgrano is an extreme exercise in vulgarity. Indeed, as I shall show presently, the play is full of invective and foul language.

Like Aristophanes and Brenton, Berkoff believes that a dramatist should play a political role in society. For that purpose, he sets out to use the theatre to pillory statesmen and to expose and subvert their policies.

The play, as its title indicates, derives from the events and personalities of the Falklands War. Just as Aristophanes lambasted Cleon as a war-monger and consequently set out to present a scathingly vitriolic perspective on his belligerent manipulative policies, Berkoff, in Belgrano, as his introduction to the play, entitled "The Still Small Voice of Truth - Chronicles of Inconsistencies"⁷³ shows, embarks on a similar experience. As the title of his introduction indicates, Berkoff thinks that the theatre has a big role to play in unearthing the truth and in the process of demystification and demythification. The Falklands War which together with it figures was quickly mythologised is dealt telling blows in Berkoff's verse satire. While the establishment led by Mrs Thatcher has gone about reviving patriotic works such as Thomas Arne's Rule Britannia to glamorise the war, Berkoff, an iconoclast, does otherwise.

Characteristically, the play, as The London Standard had it, is a "parody of one of Shakespeare's historical dramas."⁷⁴ Indeed, Berkoff, as Belgrano and West show, is a

master of parody where Shakespeare's grand diction with its high-sounding words and phrases is counterpointed with Berkoff's versified foul Billingsgate.

Interestingly enough, Belgrano is not only Aristophanic in its baiting of public figures, but also in certain aspects of its dramaturgy. Like the Knights, Belgrano uses the chorus to propagate the playwright's political views and invectives against political totems. With uncharacteristic political mindedness, Berkoff begins his play with a presentation of the deteriorating state of the nation which is, as the Chorus tells us, "Worn out with strikes and social strife; Numb with queues of unemployed that add; Their groaning weight to the nation's back",⁷⁵ which led the "Argies" to make use of that by invading the Falklands. No sooner has the Chorus set the scene than the then Foreign Secretary, Francis Pym, who played an influential role in the Falklands War, and who disrespectfully enough is called "Pimp" in Berkoff's play, appears angry at the Argentine invasion of the Falklands and calls on Mrs Thatcher to take action, "Oh shit your royal sweetest Maggot; The lousy Argy swines unleashed their bile."⁷⁶ Maggot here is none other than Prime Minister, Thatcher herself, whose first name Margaret is vulgarised to become, in Berkoff's diction, a loathsome worm and whose surname is turned into Scratcher. It should be noted here, however, that while Henry Fielding avoided mentioning his targets by name for fear of censorship, Berkoff, changing the names of his targets does so, not for the sake of obliqueness, but to add more resonance to his iconoclasm. Certainly, he achieves more

impact by calling Thatcher and Pym Maggot Scratcher and Pimp and the audience or the reader can easily see the inference in the switch.

To return to the play, Berkoff lashes out at what he calls "those ghosts of past; Who made up our great history."⁷⁷ Like Edward Bond, Berkoff regards the icons of England's glorious history as ghosts who stole other people's lands including the Falklands, and who may be seen to be represented now by Mrs Thatcher who, like Churchill before her, dreams of resurrecting the past and its heroes, probably by trying to achieve military victory and by proving to the nation that those who made Britannia rule in the olden days have not passed away for good but are resurrected in her. Berkoff explodes this Thatcherite logic by ridiculing those idols of the past and their deeds and by cocking a snook at British history and those who try to revive it.

When Pimp tells Scratcher to be reasonable in her tackling of the emergent question she, in her typically bitchy way, snaps at him, "Oh bloody bollocks compromise you mean."⁷⁸ Significantly, by the end of the first encounter she says, "By the way Pimp... where is the Falklands?"⁷⁹, thus revealing herself not as true a patriot as she claims to be, but as an opportunist manipulative situationist to whom war is only a means to an end. To this effect, Berkoff argues in the introduction to the play that had Thatcher not fought the war, she "would have been deprived of the Military Victory, which was what, for her, the Falklands War was all about." He goes on to say that the war was fought "not for

reasons of military necessity but for reasons of political advantage."⁸⁰

The idea that the Falklands War was fought for political purposes is hammered home when we meet a group of Falklands farmers who claim that they are exploited by Mrs Thatcher and her followers:

"Those who ponce from distant lands
Who own more than forty per cent
Of this, this wind-spat spit of rock,
And take the wool, our precious locks,
They own our house , they keep us poor
And we buy our grub at the company store."⁸¹

To the same effect, another farmer mocks the hypocrisy of the British government which, he says, "chat about our future rights⁸² but only ignore our wishes,"or to use the words of First Farmer, "bullshite soggy Scratcher" "couldn't give a fart"⁸³ about the inhabitants of the Falklands who, as Pimp tells us, "piss their lives away in hell."⁸⁴ Later, Scratcher tells Pimp, "you stupid simpering silly ponce. You think the wishes of those few; Will dictate how and what we do."⁸⁵

In the scene entitled "Falkland Farmers", we are presented with another member of the Thatcher government, the then Defence Secretary, John Nott, who is called in the play a Nit and whom Scratcher enjoys calling a "git" and a "tit."

In addition to the Chorus, Berkoff employs other characters in the play to drive his political message home. The first sailor is made to compare Scratcher's tactics to Hitler's:

"Whenever hard truth won't go down
We grease the way with subtle quotes,
Self-determination, paramount, law and order
All that crap. Old Adolf smashed Slovakia
To protect his German hordes
Sudetenland must have, he said,
Self-determination for those Nazi bores."⁸⁶

Here, Berkoff satirizes British imperialism and its manipulators who created their own pretexts for colonising other people's countries. The passage is reminiscent of Nisbet in The Hero Rises Up who derides Nelson's militarism and subterfuges. Just as Nisbet advises the sailors against collaborating with Nelson blindly, First Sailor in Belgrano tries to warn his fellow sailors not to be taken in by the thinking done by Whitehall, which, as Command adds, uses those sailors as "toys in "a game they play."⁸⁷ Thus, Mrs. Thatcher is roasted as a flaming imperialist.

As the play moves on, Scratcher or what Berkoff calls later, the "master bitch" grows more vulgar and nastier. Her language becomes fouler. She strikes us as a scurrilous bitch who is unable to say something without spicing it up with four-letter words. To her, Pimp and Nit are "male turds; Still, I'll throw them out but screw them first."⁸⁸ Berkoff goes on to drag President Reagan into the pillory. "Old Geriatric Joe", as Scratcher describes him, is married to "an evil bore.... Why is it great blokes marry such whores?"⁸⁹. In the scene called "Cabinet", Scratcher starts "effing and blinding." She tells Pimp and Nit to "fuck all that"⁹⁰, to which Pimp answers frantically "Oh fuck, Oh shit, Oh piss, Oh balls...Oh hot bollocks."⁹¹ To Nit, Pimp who, like the former, addresses Scratcher as 'm'lady' and 'ma'am', is a "prat" and a "cur"; epithets which remind us of

the Sausage Seller in Aristophanes' the Knights calling Cleon similar names.

Exposing the British government further, Berkoff describes them as dealers in "death weapons."⁹² They manufacture bombs and sell them all over the world, encouraging warring factions to go on destroying each other. From that he moves on to comment on national problems such as unemployment and the dole. To divert the attention of the people from economic and political crises at home, which have led to a drop in Tory majority and popularity, and which have "placed us in the opinion polls; Behind the scurry Socialist crud",⁹³ Scratcher finds the war an excellent way out, and so she sets out to launch it. Berkoff describes the Falklands operations in terms of a horrible recipe. To him, the whole experience is a hotch-potch. Scratcher talks of a "Spanish omelette" whose ingredients are "Argy eggs", "British herbs" and "English earth." Having got those ingredients, Scratcher relates:

"Round and round the cauldron go
In the poisoned entrails throw
Hate and good old Tory guile
Plots to cover up our sins
Lies and slander to beguile
Then throw massive outrage in,
Synthetic will do just as well.
To make the mixture rise and swell
Then add more than one thousand dead
Tears of children's salty brine
Broken hearts and widow pining
Mothers mourning for their lost boys,
Collect those dewdrops to make the paste
Soldiers' howls as they lay burning,
Throw in the lot and keep it turning
Olé, you Spanish omelette!"⁹⁴

Pimp finds Scratcher's recipe weird and hard to swallow; he asks "But who will eat this foul stew?"⁹⁵ to which Maggot answers, "The entire British press, you fool!"⁹⁶ Strangely enough, as Scratcher tells Pimp later, "The press has swallowed all that shit",⁹⁷ and so she orders "the greasy stupid silly sod", Pimp, to create no "fuck-ups" so that she carries her plans through.

In the Commons scene, Scratcher tells M.Ps that she would tell the "Argies" to "piss off" and "Go screw your mother" "Or I'll shove the junta up your ass!".⁹⁸ In this scene, we are presented with the Opposition represented by Feet [Michael Foot]. M.Ps address and boo each other by using a language similar to Maggot's. When Sir Fish Face tells the Commons we should ban Argentina from entering the soccer World Cup, M.Ps tell him to "piss off." And when Reason, a character in the play, speaks, Tory M.Ps boo him and call him a "coward", a "Commie", eventually telling him also to "piss off."⁹⁹ Here, Berkoff exposes the Tories, led by Mrs Thatcher, as unreasonable. To this effect, he wrote in another preface to the play describing the Conservatives as a "pack of fakes" and a "disgusting bunch of rogues... dead to all real human response... human life and values",¹⁰⁰ a broadside which also reminds us of Aristophanes' onslaughts upon Cleon and his party in the Knights and of Brenton's against Thatcher in Shock.

As the play proceeds, Scratcher makes her political objectives clear. The war should be fought to keep the Tories in power, and so she states that in return for Reagan's help in the war, she will "support his wars; prop up

his Nicaragua; Ignore his murder squads he sends; To clean up vile El Salvador."¹⁰¹ Pimp is ordered to "screw this pissy peace plan",¹⁰² that is, compromise with the Argentines. The lackey Pimp then begins to understand his Scratcher's policies better. While at the beginning, he spoke of peaceful solutions to the war, now he can see Scratcher's point. If the war is not fought "No medals, no heroes lined up... Before the Nation's TV screen... No photos in the Daily Muck" or "Wide-angle lens of history; Being made by Fleet Street hacks." By fighting the war, Pimp goes on to say, Maggot Scratcher will rise up high "And then, vote Tory... written in the sky."¹⁰³ Indeed, the play ends with Scratcher giving her orders to sink the Belgrano and with her schemes going as planned, an action which has led the playwright to comment that "The Belgrano Sinking was a typical product of that muddled and opportunist thinking "¹⁰⁴ of the Tories and their leader.

As we have seen, Belgrano stands as a brilliant example of vituperative Aristophanic iconoclasm. It went to great lengths to drag its targets down to the lowest depth possible by presenting them as vulgar nasty people, by putting foul language into their mouths and by using gruesome effigies to represent them. It is not surprising then, that the play, as Berkoff tells us, received virulent reviews from Tory press, which he describes as "hysterical cant."¹⁰⁵ Berkoff's iconoclasm was met with threats and poisoned mail from what he calls "Fascist thugs",¹⁰⁶ which is hardly the case with another play which dramatises Thatcher, John Wells' Anyone For Denis?

While Shock and Belgrano were intended to hurt, John Wells' Anyone For Denis?, like innocuous apolitical skits screened on British television every now and then (Black Adder, Spitting Image, Saturday Review, Weekending on Radio) seeks only to amuse and because of this provides a useful contrast to my previous illustrations of the really iconoclastic lampooning of living politicians. Wells is a master of lampoon. He is a prominent writer for the well-known irreverent magazine Private Eye in which all celebrities of British public life could become targets of caricature. Thus, he was a literary comic satirist before becoming a playwright.

Unlike Brenton and Berkoff, Wells is not an Aristophanist in the full sense of the term. He is Aristophanic only in his comic treatment of politicians.

Unlike Shock, Denis could well be rightly regarded as an entirely harmless type of play. I do not think that we can even truly describe it as an iconoclastic play in that it is more concerned with mimicry and laughter than in challenge and in causing "damage" to those lampooned.

Denis is derived from Denis Thatcher's "Dear Bill letters" written regularly by Wells in Private Eye. The author has successfully translated those letters into a play with Denis Thatcher taking the limelight. The play is intended to present a segment of the daily life of Mrs Thatcher and her husband. Finding himself on his own at Chequers while his wife is absent on Euro-business, the

spouse, prototyped as the henpecked, seizes the opportunity to invite some of his friends to stay over for a "booze." In Wells' portrayal, Denis Thatcher is a heavy drinker. His hopes are ruined when a notice is sent to the effect that the Euro-conference is switched from Knokke-Op-Zoom to Chequers. However, the arrival of Denis's "chums" coincides with the unexpected return of Mrs Thatcher, accompanied by her European and American fellow dignitaries who strain "to its limits the resourcefulness and adaptability of the staff - domestic, administrative and parliamentary.".. What follows is fun produced through the interactions of the characters now placed in farcical situations.

The play's ridicule is most directed at the Prime Minister's husband who was played by Wells himself "assisted by false rabbit-teeth and a bad wig."¹⁰⁷ "The portrait of him as a buffoon", W.F. Deeds notes, "is absurd."¹⁰⁸ Denis's real daughter, Carol, later observed in the News of the World that the play "removes all the affection for Dad and replaces it with ridicule."¹⁰⁹ As I have mentioned, Denis is presented as a great "boozer" who is obliged to suck a bottle of wine "out through the cork."¹¹⁰ This opens the way to many jokes such as his comment to the admiral that "under a Conservative Government you are there to serve me... a very large gin and tonic",¹¹¹ and later, none too originally, he mistakes a glass of urine for a glass of wine.

In Well's play, Roy Jenkins, a well-known British political figure who never received the highest political honour of being P.M. is reduced to a wine-butler. He is stripped of his trousers by Denis who wants to give them to a

"Tory friend of mine who happens to be on the run from the police."¹¹² Poor Jenkins, however, dreams of "vintage claret" and of "the supreme power" that "will drop into my lap like ripe fruit."¹¹³

Over all this, Angela Thorne's Mrs Thatcher presides icily immaculate. The play, B. Nightingale notes, is funniest when Thorne, Thatcher's "lookalike... simply steps forward and is graciously, plonkingly characteristic. 'Let me make this absolutely clear' or 'I have tried to get this over again and again and again', she begins; and the house is in stitches even before she reaches the punch-line, 'whatever happens, it's your fault'."¹¹⁴ Later, Mrs. Thatcher is flirted with by Vouvray, a French sex-maniac and a participant in the Euro-conference. Denis does not, however, mind her being had by Vouvray "for the duration" and uncharacteristically the "Metal Virgin" is then seen on Vouvray's "knee" melting "in my hand like a chocolate drop."¹¹⁵

While Shock presents Thatcher and her ministers as grotesque creatures to stir enmity and disregard for them, Denis avoids any graceless handling of the Thatchers who are dressed in their usual clothes with no attempt at grotesquerie. Wells knew before hand what kind of audience his was to be in the Whitehall theatre. He was catering for a sophisticated, well-mannered West-End audience which would, no doubt, be offended by any crude presentation of characters with whom it identified. Thus, on the physical level, the playwright is more interested in an exact representation of

the Thatchers rather than in distorting his targets as did Brenton and Berkoff in Shock and Belgrano. Unlike these two plays, Denis is meant as an experiment in the art of mimicking Mrs Thatcher and her mannerisms and not as a polemic against her policies. While Shock is more concerned with delivering messages by means of a series of loosely connected scenes, Denis makes the audience laugh at Mrs Thatcher, but does not, as does Shock, stir them to reject her. It is written in the form of an amusing farce which does not touch on the real life of the Thatcher's who themselves seem to have enjoyed it immensely. Having seen the play, they left the theatre amused, describing it as "A marvellous Farce."¹¹⁶ Furthermore, they attended a special gala performance and a charity performance of the play which, of course, made them appear rather good sorts who did not mind being made fun of

Unlike Shock, which caused much huffing and puffing on the parts of some Tory M.P.s who, ludicrously enough, condemned the play without seeing it, Denis was lavishly praised by Thatcher and by pro-Thatcher newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph which significantly did not send a critic to review Shock. The Telegraph was delighted by the authentic mimicry of the play which it commended as an..... "admirable and thoroughly good-tempered new show."¹¹⁷

Critics' attitudes towards the political innocuousness of the play ranged from praise to criticism. W.F. Deeds of The Spectator wrote that "On this corner of Whitehall, blessedly devoid of any serious political message whatsoever, Anyone For Denis? seems a natural present to ourselves, and

pretty well all the many laughs are happy."¹¹⁸ The Telegraph told potential beholders of the play comfortably not to expect any "acrid political satire."¹¹⁹ Irving Wardle of the Times wrote that Wells in Denis "can claim greater political impartiality than the B.B.C."¹²⁰ Other critics were, however, disappointed at the mildness of the play. When Benedict Nightingale reviewed Shock, he had not then developed his subsequent full-blooded aversion to Mrs Thatcher. He merely commented on the play and its "low voltage, but never came to comment on its target. A year later, he dedicated his review of Denis to unreservedly lashing out at the Prime Minister to the extent that his review became more iconoclastic than the play it attempted to report on.

"There are days, and more and more of them, when it seems to me that la Thatcher has stepped, trim and lacquered, from one of the grimmer parts of the Book of Revelation; and yet I have to admit that her very monstrosities explain why she's also such a remarkable comic construct. That serenity, that blithe self-belief, while all around the world is crumbling. That obliviousness to others' outrage, that habit of talking to the boiling mad as if they were very small, silly children. That pose of being infinitely reasonable and infinitely humane, when she's patently neither, or of being an international tough-guy, when the nation has none of the resources to sustain it."¹²¹

Nightingale's criticism of Mrs Thatcher anticipates his disappointment at the end of his article, over the play's smooth treatment of the Prime Minister. He complained that the play left him "greedy for larger doses" of "malicious characterisation" and "pungent repartee", and that Well's caricature was insufficient.¹²² To The Listener's critic, "it seemed a pity that a good idea, some funny topical jokes

and a marvellous mimicry of Maggie (by Angela Thorne) could not have been put into a competent farce story, or dare one suggest it, to even moderately satirical ends."¹²³

The above critics might be justified in their criticism of the play's mildness towards its targets. Anyone For Denis? was indeed manipulated in such a way as to appeal to or suit the West End audience it was written for. More importantly, the play was intended more as a commercial piece than as a politically vituperative satire, and thus makes particularly clear difference between the iconoclasm of Wood, Arden, Brenton and Berkoff and that of Wells'. Gentle caricature of personality replaces grotesque distortion of character and physique used to reveal truth, as the dramatist sees it hidden from public view, and naughty or risqué jokes replace verbal obscenity.

To conclude, Wood's assault on idolised figures is, as we have seen morally motivated. The playwright takes the stance of a moralist pacifist. The same can be said of Arden. In contrast, Brenton's iconoclasm is purely political. The dramatist's lapidation of public figures is intended as a way of revealing his political disagreement with his targets. The same is true of Berkoff. Unlike the rest, Wells' ridicule of sacred cows is, as mentioned above, primarily commercially motivated. The dramatist is not at all interested in delivering any moral or political messages through his skit, and confines himself to what might be called the light lampooning of real or perceived personality traits of his targets. Thus, unlike liberal soft caricature of war-heroes and political and public figures encouraged by

the British media, Wood's, Arden's, Brenton's and Berkoff's plays offer real, merciless Aristophanic iconoclasm that aims to damage rather than to entertain.

Part II

II. Brecht-Marxist Iconoclasm

Oh, blindness of the great!
They wander like gods,
Great over bent backs, sure
Of hired fists, trusting
In their power, which has
already lasted so long.
But long is not for ever.
Oh, Wheel of Fortune! Hope
of the people.

Who built seven-gated Thebes?
The books give names of Kings.
Was it Kings who hauled the lumps of rock?
And the oft-destroyed Babylon -
Who built it so oft up? In which of
the houses
Of gold-glittering Lima lived those
who built them?
On the evening the Chinese Wall was
finished,
Where did the masons go? Great Rome
Is full of arcs of triumph. Who
reared them up?
Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph?

What the city but the people?
True, the people are the city.

Brecht

Poems

Whereas the icon, particularly the idolised war-hero, was demolished by the Aristophanic iconoclasts on the basis of a pacifistic ideology, in the plays to be examined in this section the icon is dissected instead from a Marxist standpoint. As will be seen, glorified figures of history are placed in the spotlight in order to face a Marxist tribunal.

If the farcical treatment of victors of war and living politicians by modern British dramatists can be traced back to Aristophanes, the de-construction by them of great personages from a Marxist angle, as the poems cited at the beginning of this chapter suggest, can be primarily attributed to the example of the well-known German Marxist playwright, Bertolt Brecht whose work from 1956 onwards began increasingly to influence politically-minded left-wing British dramatists, both in the field of theatrical techniques and also in matters of ideology. Reviewing Brecht's influence on modern British playwrights, Ronald Hayman argues that:

"When Arthur Miller was in London in October 1956 for the production of 'A View From The Bridge', he complained that it was hard to find English actors who could be convincing in Common Man parts. Five years later he would have been more likely to find difficulty in casting Kings or aristocrats, were it not for the fact that by then casting policy has moved in the direction of Berliner Ensemble practice."¹

Like Brecht, directors and playwrights, particularly after 1968, began to manifest anti-heroic attitudes, becoming more concerned with the "social sub-text" of plays and "shifting the focus away from the central figure towards the group that surrounded him - partly because of Brecht's

doctrine that each play should be approached as a piece of history."² The dramatic action was no longer to be centred around the great hero; it was now, on the contrary, constructed to belittle him and to celebrate the forgotten masses who, in 'bourgeois' plays, were usually relegated to secondary positions if not ignored completely.

Brecht's Marxist treatment of the hero has influenced British playwrights such as Edward Bond, the Ardens, Howard Brenton, and Caryl Churchill and has offered the theatrical means by which the above dramatists could convey critical attitudes towards idolatrised characters.

Following my earlier practice of establishing the historical as well as theatrical background for the various types of iconoclasm, I shall, in the first instance, briefly look at Marxist criticism of the great figures of history by means of a concise examination of Ferdinand Lassalle's play, Frans Von Sickingen, the dramatic work which, most importantly, provoked both Marx and Engels into revealing their views concerning the portrayal of historical figures in the theatre. Secondly, I shall cursorily look at some of Brecht's plays which take up Marx's conception of the hero, and later in the light of the above, I shall show how modern British playwrights in question have followed in the footsteps of Marx in their treatment of the iconic historical figures.

Marx is better known for his political and economic, rather than for his literary writings. But this does not mean that he regarded art as insignificant. Indeed, he had a

great taste for poetry, drama and fiction.³ As an intellectual with literary tendencies, Marx used to correspond with his friends to exchange ideas and criticisms of their writings. Amongst his best known friends was the German writer Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), who, in addition to his political and economic writings, wrote two plays, Heraclitus and Franz Von Sickingen. The second play, appropriately for this chapter, dealt with an historic figure from German history. Having finished his play, Lassalle sent Marx a copy of it in order to obtain his opinion.

Lassalle's play appeared in the year 1859.⁴ The name of the historical German figure who lived from 1481-1523 contributed his name as the title of the play which is concerned with the defeat of the German revolution of 1848. Like the great monumentalised personages resurrected by the modern British dramatists, Franz Von Sickingen was an idolised historical figure. He was, as Daniel De Leon pointed out, "a distinguished German knight - distinguished in wealth, in character, in genius and in arms - on that borderland of the world's events when the scroll of modern history began to unroll. Sickingen's stature is almost legendary."⁵

Lassalle's Sickingen, in the play, tries to convince emperor Charles V to follow in the steps of Luther and the German knights in their campaign against Rome, whereupon Charles refuses to listen to Sickingen's demands. Consequently, Sickingen sets out to unite the German knights in opposition to the emperor in order to launch a decisive

battle in the local feud against the Elector of Treves. To Sickingen's disadvantage, however, the siege of Treves drags out too long and the princes start ganging up on him. In the meantime, some of Sickingen's allies begin to drop out of the war and the emperor threatens those who are still fighting on Sickingen's side with imperial proscription. Sickingen's expedition appears to be doomed. In one of his last strongholds, Sickingen, finding himself besieged by the imperial army, expresses bitterness over his failure to win the battle. Trying not to surrender, the hero and his friend Ulrich Hutten devise a desperate plan of resistance. Sickingen thinks of joining the peasant army which is in the process of launching an offensive on the emperor's troops. But to their disappointment, the plan comes too late. the last attack fails, and Sickingen is brought back to his castle seriously wounded. In the last scene we see Hutten sneaking to Sickingen's bed-side disguised as a priest, ending the play on a sad note by predicting the defeat of the peasants at the emperor's hands and recommending Sickingen's struggle to future revolutionary centuries.

"With this man our fatherland breaks down.
In death's throes lie the hopes that we lived for.
- With his death, impotent the nobles will
Draw back afraid, and bend before the princes,
Who masterful the realm in pieces tear; -
To prince's flunkey they will soon descend!
- Deprived of his support, himself mistrusting,
The TOWNSMEN will be absorbed within the web
of his peculiar interests, and lost
Is he to our Nation's broader sense. -
Alone the PEASANT true remains to our
Great Cause; he takes up arms - but on his own
Resources thrown, he to the slaughter-house,
The bloody, only drags his body; and
His quartered limbs the broad face of our land,
With horror struck, from end to end will cover!
On his own property the Right of Conquest
High carnival will lead, will strip from him

The last shreds that of freedom still he enjoys. -
 A long night falls upon our heads, the sad
 Fate of this country in its sable veil
 Concealing -
 Thou diest, and thou carriest to thy grave
 Whatever worthy of this life made.
 ME now, my errant feet to exile take;
 But not for long; a few weeks more, and then -
 My ashes joined will be unto your dust.
 To FUTURE DAYS I our REVENGE bequeath."⁶

The bone of contention, between Lassalle on the one hand, and Marx and Engels on the other, regarding Sickingen, lies in the perception of his position in history. To the dramatist, the hero occupied a respectable place in history due to his greatness and indispensability. Like Nietzsche, Lassalle exhibits a tendency to hero-worship. Arno Schirokauer argues in Lassalle: The Power of Illusion that the playwright has written a tragedy "which only differs from ordinary tragic dramas in that its hero sustains and embodies the destinies of world-wide historical importance."⁷ To Lassalle, "The conception of history according to which necessity is linked on to necessity, so that individual resolves and actions cease to count, cannot serve as a foundation either for practical revolutionary activity or for dramatic action. For both alike, the force of individual decisions is essential, seeing that without this neither enthralling dramatic interest nor a bold deed is possible."⁸ Thus individualism plays a momentous role in the determination of history which, to Lassalle, did not come into being "spontaneously", but was created "by individual doers who carry out the commands of 'God' ."⁹ To the playwright, Sickingen is great because he does not wait for the historical process to do the work for him, "but sets out to work on his own account, interfering in the process"¹⁰

and trying to make history. As we can see, Lassalle therefore, apotheosises the iconic figure and raises it to the status of a prophet or agent of God who is able to change the world. This attitude towards great men is due to the fact that Lassalle, as Schirokauer notes, was a "self-willed personality" who himself tried to achieve great exploits. For that reason he never acquiesced to the "idea that individual activities are of no moment."¹¹ Lassalle's inclination towards hero-worship is paralleled also by a disgust for the common herd. Hence his obscuring of the role of the peasants in the play.

Marx certainly did not agree with Lassalle's attitude towards heroes. Marx, and Marxists after him were characteristically very critical in their estimates of important personages, and were usually inclined to minimise their individual greatness. "Where others would see cause for praise" Marx "discerns weakness and faults."¹² Many international distinguished figures were the targets of Marx's idoloclasm. To him, for example, Edmund Burke, the 18th century political philosopher was a "celebrated sophist and sycophant", the "political cant-monger." "This sycophant, who in the pay of the English oligarchy played the romantic laudator temporis acti against the French Revolution, just as, in the pay of the North American colonies ... he had played the Liberal against the English oligarchy, was an out-and-out vulgar bourgeois." John Stewart Mill, the well-known 19th century English literary figure and economist is described as a "vulgar economist" who was "as much at home in absurd contradictions as he feels at

sea in the Hegelian contradiction, the source of the dialectic." Leopold Von Ranke, the 19th century social scientist was a "little dwarf." Jean-Baptiste Say, the 19th century political economist, was "dull" and "Adam Smith applied the Scotch saying that 'mony mickles mak-a muckle' even to his spiritual wealth."¹³ Depreciative of great men, Marx considered their ideas as mistaken and denied them any radical influence on the world.

In Marx's view, history is not made by heroes, but by peoples. George Bisztray notes that "Historical materialism states that great historical changes are brought forth not by great men, but by economic necessities and mass movements."¹⁴ Marx and Engels regarded "historical heroes as but executors of historical necessities",¹⁵ and were concerned more with the destinies of nations than with individuals.

Stressing the fact that it is the nature of society which decides the course of events of history, Marx and Engels contend that history finds the men it needs and not the other way round, "If Napoleon had died in childhood a sufficiently similar man would have played the part that Napoleon played."¹⁶ There was only one Napoleon because history needed one and not because the man was unequalled. Historical events are brought about by social forces which no individual can control. Thus if gifted individuals "try to impose their will on a situation which does not require them, they will be brushed aside as a sparrow by a locomotive."¹⁷ The latter can be applied to Sickingen's defeat. Sickingen, to Marx, went down in defeat "because, as a knight and a

representative of a perishing class, he rose up against existing order or rather against its new form."¹⁸ In other words, Sickingen wanted to force his will on the movement of history, but since the time was not ripe for change, he was vanquished. As a knight, he could not prevail as history moved on, and as a member of a class that, Marx maintained, had its day, his attempt to steer history for his own class purposes was inevitably futile because historical determinism must take its course.

Just as Marx nullified almost entirely the role played by historic heroes in the movement and making of history, he attempted to raise the masses to the highest pinnacle of glory and influence.

Marx's strongest criticism of Lassalle's play indeed lies in the latter's treatment of the peasants. Marx attached paramount importance to the role of the masses in the movement of history. To him, everything that aided the development and victory of the proletariat was good; everything that harmed it was evil. In one of his letters to Lassalle, Marx argued that Sickingen did not fail in his revolution only because he belonged to a class that was doomed to perish, but also because he did not ally himself with the peasants right at the very beginning of the conflict. Sickingen "had raised the flag of battle against the emperor and declared open war against the dukes" only out of a "knightly feud."¹⁹ He neglected the masses and their cause and set out to defend his class whose interests did not harmonise with what Marx identified as "those of the townfolk and those of the peasants."²⁰ Sickingen, to Marx, should

have appealed "directly and at once to the cities and peasants, that is, to those very classes whose development means the negation of knighthood."²¹

Moreover, Marx criticised Lassalle severely for not giving prominence to the peasants in his play; "the representatives of the peasants", he says, "(these especially!) and of revolutionary elements in the towns would have had to be shown significantly active, in the background."²² Another mistake made by Lassalle in the play was that "he has engaged his audience's sympathies for more with the representatives of an aristocracy, with knightly rebels against progress"²³ than with the peasants.

Suspicious of religious revolutions, Marx also downrated the presentation in the play of Luther's uprising and blamed the playwright for what he called "overestimating the protestant knightly opposition" and for neglecting "the plebeian opposition"²⁴ that found its leader in the figure of the peasant rebel Thomas Münzer. In a strong-worded statement in his letter of 19th April, 1859, Marx wrote, "Did you not, to a certain extent, like your own Franz Von Sickingen, make the same diplomatic mistake of setting the Lutheran-Knightly opposition higher than the plebeian Münzer one?"²⁵ Luther seems to have favoured "a moderate reform, suited to the needs of the lower nobility, the middle class in the cities, and the more advanced dukes. In contrast, Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski go on to note, "Thomas Münzer had urged the end of feudalism. Münzer's peasant army was defeated in May 1525, and he was captured, tortured and

killed."²⁶

It was not, however, only Marx who criticised Lassalle for playing down the role of the common people in the play; Engels in a letter to the dramatist, 18th May, 1859, also focused on the same question. "It seems to me, however", he wrote:

"that you have not paid sufficient attention to the unofficial, plebeian, and peasant elements with their concomitant theoretical representation. The peasant movement was in its way just as national, just as opposed to the dukes as was the movement of the nobility, and the colossal dimensions of the struggle in which the peasants succeeded stands in great contrast to the ease with which the nobility, leaving Sickingen to his fate, acquiesced again in its historical role of court servility."²⁷

Like Marx, Engels contended that Sickingen had no point in allying himself with the peasants because of the conflict in class interests.²⁸ Sickingen, he considered, was alien to the purpose of the serfs.

Marx's iconoclastic attitude towards idealised persons, as shown in his criticism of Lassalle's play, was to be later expressed in dramatic terms by Brecht who set out to revive Sickingen-like figures in order to dissect them in the light of his Marxist ideology. In this respect, Brecht stands eminent amongst historical dramatists in that his dramatisation of monumentalised characters was not merely subconsciously but very consciously motivated by his political ideology.

Amongst Brecht's plays which attempt a de-iconisation of historic personages are, as I have mentioned in my introduction, Coriolan, Saint Joan of The Stockyard and The

Trial of Lucullus. In his adaptation of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, basing his estimate of the great in history on Marxism, he repudiates the idea that Coriolanus is irreplaceable. Consequently, while cutting the hero down to size, he tips the balance in favour of the plebeians, whose representatives, the Tribunes of the people emerge victorious at the end of the play. As Philip Brockbank suggests, he also tried to "diminish both the impact and the value of Martius' valor."²⁹ Moreover, he "cuts from Shakespeare's poetry much of its heroic hyperbole."³⁰

Just as the Tribunes of the people take over at the end of Coriolan, in The Trial of Lucullus, the masses are made to try Lucullus. The great hero of the above play is therefore reduced to a culprit condemned by ordinary people such as fishwives, farmers, cooks and the like.

Thus, Brecht's version of Coriolanus is not simply an updating of an old play, as Ronald Hayman has claimed, but is therefore an effort to show a different conception of historical development: one which includes the force of the people as an active agent in the movement of history and which questions the indispensability of the hero. Having attempted a brief examination of the Brecht-Marxist approach to the hero in order to establish both an historical as well as a theatrical context for this section, I shall now turn to the modern British dramatists who have been largely influenced by this Marxist-based Brechtian conception of the great.

Unlike Lassalle, Edward Bond, the Ardens, Caryl Churchill and Howard Brenton followed Brecht's example by resurrecting the totems of the past not to celebrate their individualism and their contribution to history, but to place them as it were, on trial. To examine the conduct of this trial, I shall divide the present section into two chapters. In the first, I shall deal with what the dramatists concerned might call "the people's enemies." The targets of de-idolisation here are celebrated historical political figures and heroes. In the second section, I shall examine how the de-iconisation is directed against renowned historical artists, who are condemned for failing to use their talents in the service of the people.

II. 1. The People's Enemies

I have suffered far too much from these kings and these princes. Everyone of them is my enemy.

I recognise as the enemy the fed man, the clothed man, the sheltered man, whose food, clothes, and house are obtained at the expense of the hunger, the nakedness, and the exposure of so many millions of others.

The true voice of liberty is more likely to be heard today from the kind of men and women who have little part to play in the traditional tales: I mean the ones who did the work, who fed and housed the noble warriors, and who equipped them for their fight.

John Arden

Arden's above statements, significantly reminiscent of those of Brecht which I quoted earlier, are characteristic of modern British playwrights who have followed in the steps of the Marx-Brecht tradition of the hero. The upward bias which has traditionally characterised Aristotelian drama has been sharply questioned. Shakespeare's statement that "When beggars die, there are no comets seen; The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes"¹ has repeatedly been turned topsy-turvy by modern British dramatists.

Bond, the Ardens, Churchill and Brenton have all returned to history to look at the relationship between the great figures and the people. The thesis of The Woman, The Island of The Mighty, Light Shining In Buckinghamshire, Early Morning and The Churchill Play, the plays to be examined in this chapter, is that the iconic mythical and historical figures demolished therein, have oppressed and exploited their peoples. In other words, ^{they} were their people's enemies.

As I shall show later, the Greek miner in The Woman is

Heros' victim. In The Island, the Bondwoman and the bandit, Garlon suffered much at the hands of King Arthur. In the seventeenth century, as Light Shining shows, the Diggers and Levellers were suppressed by Oliver Cromwell. In the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria, represented in Early Morning, spared no efforts to put down any revolt on the part of the people. In The Churchill Play, Churchill is accused of suppressing a miners' strike by force and of ignoring ordinary people. In the above plays history offers a series of examples of the oppression and exploitation of the people by their masters and through them their dramatists comment on the struggle of the masses against their manipulators and oppressors throughout history. Bond's poem, written for The Woman, summarises these playwrights' interest in the heavyweights of history:

"The past is full of their crimes [the people's enemies]
No one will live in peace; Till the last of their
crimes; Are known and condemned; That is the purpose of
history; And why it is called just." 2

According to Bond and these fellow dramatists, history and its leading figures should be demystified and demythologised and the "crimes" of the great against the people should be laid bare.

The above plays are not, however, only Brecht-Marxist in their undercutting of historical sacred cows, but also in their treatment of the idea of history itself. Re-arranged chronologically according to the historical periods they present, they, interestingly enough, seem to be an epoch-by-epoch series of dramatizations of Marx's classification of historical eras, otherwise known as the Dialectic, and thus

the historical personages targeted for destruction therein become, as mentioned earlier, representatives or symbols of historical political forces and the struggle between the masses and their oppressors is identified clearly as a stage in the struggle between classes.

Up to the present, the Dialectic has distinguished four productive regimes, and Marx subdivides past history into four periods. "In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois modes of production."³ These epochs are also known as primitive communism, ancient slavery, medieval feudalism and capitalism.

The Woman is a Marxist perspective on ancient slavery which is marked by a class-ridden society where the latter is divided into two opposing classes, the free citizens or the slave-holders, and the slaves. This period is an era of slaves "whose forced labour formed the basis on which the whole superstructure of society was reared."⁴ Athens is reported to have had 90,000 free citizens and 365,000 slaves. Corinth and Aegina had about half a million slaves, ten times the number of free citizens. Slaves were most concentrated in "factories." Engels attaches paramount historical importance to this regime which is regarded to be "the watershed from which flowed the streams of modern thought and institutions."⁵ He writes in Anti-Duhrig that "Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire... no modern Europe...."⁶ The merchant played an influential role in this era and his

strongest weapon was money "before which the whole of society must bow down."⁷ Ancient slavery, like that of other eras, bred a clash between the masters and the slaves. "The Athenian state," Engels contends, "was an instrument of the rich against the poor and of the master against the slave."⁸ "Such was the pleasant dawn of civilization among the people of Attica."⁹ This phase did not end, however, with the Greeks; it lived on with the Romans. The Roman age is well known for its slavery and its highly developed class-society which was made up of the patricians and the plebeians. Like the Greeks, the Romans oppressed their slaves; "serfdom was the outcome of the oppressive policy of Rome,"¹⁰ Engels contends.

When we examine the British drama of the nineteenth seventies we discover examples of the treatment of three politico-economic periods. John Arden in The Island, portrayed life under Medieval feudalism, the latter as an era of serfs who tilled the land but did not own it because absolute ownership was vested in the landlord, to whom the serfs pay rent and on whose estates they worked. This age of serfdom, like its predecessor, was itself to give way to a new system. Serfdom was abandoned in England during the 14th century and the serfs became independent of their landlords.¹¹ Marx saw the demise of serfdom as the faint beginnings of capitalism which then began to spread during the 14th and the 15th centuries.

Light Shining takes up the first phase of capitalism when the dispossessed peasants, freed from serfdom, are set loose. The struggle from now on is between the rising

capitalists and the expropriated peasants; an expropriation "written in the annals of history in letters of blood and fire."¹² "The drama," to use the words of a scholar paraphrasing Marx's view of this process of displacement, "is enacted in England and there are various factors at work. The impoverished feudal nobility disband the numerous retainers who had thronged house and castle. At the same time, the enclosure movement is inaugurated by the lords who desire to turn arable land into sheep walks; whole populations of independent peasants are uprooted from the soil and cast adrift in utter ruin."¹³ Marx described this development as a series of flagrant violations of "the 'sacred rights of property' and the grossest acts of violence to persons"; "a whole series of thefts, outrage, and popular misery"; a display of "merciless vandalism... of passions the most infamous, the most sordid, the pettiest, the most meanly odious."¹⁴

As a result of the Enclosure Movement, "armies of homeless, enraged vagabonds are left loose, who, partly by need and partly by inclination, take to robbery and thieving, which led to enacting severe legislations to curb them and to force them to sell their labour at any price." "Thus were the agricultural people first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible...."¹⁵

In Early Morning full-fledged capitalism is depicted under Queen Victoria, where the conflict between the working-

class and the capitalists sharpens. During the Victorian age, we have capitalism at its best where working-class revolts are very much in vogue. At the beginning of the century, the Luddites called for the destruction of machinery installed by the capitalists and the Chartist political movement called for the improvement of the deteriorating conditions of the working-class. Despite its prosperity, the Victorian age was an age of proletarian misery, for the further the capitalist system progressed, Marx contended, the more miserable became the lot of the workers.

The Churchill Play was to go one step further to present a broadside on capitalism in the 20th century where it was characterised by massive unemployment, industrial unrest and strikes. The play stands as a sequel to Early Morning's presentation of the Victorian era with its references to "neo Luddism" and other working-class resistance movements. The capitalists of the new age, represented by Sir Winston Churchill, are seen to have spared no efforts to put down a rebellious working-class. Just as Queen Victoria, as Early Morning shows, was ruthless in her treatment of the "mob," Churchill, as Brenton's play shows him, did not hesitate to send troops against striking miners.

Having stated the argument of this chapter, I shall now turn to the plays in question to show how the dramatists translated into their own drama Marx's classification of history as well as the demolition of its icons, as exemplified both in the Dialectic and in Marx's and Engels' criticism of Franz Von Sickingen.

The Woman is a major work by one of the most politically conscious modern British playwrights, Edward Bond, a writer who has abundantly contributed to the wealth of Marxist political theatre in the twentieth century. Although in 1970, he denied that his work had been influenced by Brecht, and that, as he came to declare in 1972, Brecht's plays are "naive" and convey "painful knowledge,"¹⁶ in his later letters, he withdrew his above remarks and came to view his own work as a contribution to and a continuation of the latter's pioneering example in "the creation of a Marxist theatre."¹⁷ Bond was among those British dramatists who happened to see one of the Berliner Ensemble's productions performed in Britain in 1956. "They were speaking a foreign language," says Bond, "and I had no theatrical education, but I recognised his importance then as I'd only done with one other writer, Shakespeare... Really I came to the Court as a Brechtian."¹⁸

The Woman was first performed by the National Theatre Company at the Olivier Theatre, London on the 10th of August, 1978. In this play, Bond, as Irving Wardle argues in The Times, "drives a bulldozer through the centre of the myth and erects a structure of his own from the monumental debris."¹⁹ Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world is, surprisingly enough, no longer a human being. She is laughingly presented as a statue image of the Goddess of Fortune whose theft is the cause of war between the Trojans and the Greeks. As in Early Morning and Bingo, Bond, throughout The Woman takes great liberties with history. He turns it upside down. However, it is not Helen who is the target of Bond's

iconoclasm; it is the well-known Greek war-hero and politician, Heros, who is subjected to a Brecht-Marxist debunking. Unlike Queen Victoria of Early Morning, Heros is not undone farcically. We do not laugh at him as we do at Victoria. It is not through iconoclastic theatrical presentation that Bond expresses his rejection of Heros. The hero instead is dissected ideologically. In other words, as I shall shortly show, he embodies a failure to live up to Marxist standards of heroism.

The Woman falls within those of Bond's plays, as Tony Coult suggests, "whose function is to demythologise eras which might tempt us to see them as 'golden'."²⁰ Unlike the rest of plays to be examined here, the above play, like John Arden's and Margaretta D'Arcy's The Island of The Mighty, takes as its targets of deconstruction historical mythical figures. But in the case of The Woman myth is not to be separated from history, for they are the same. Greek history was blended with myth and the Greeks lived with and by myths. Nevertheless, one might wonder why Bond was trying his hand at history and characters which apparently have nothing to do with modern societies. Oleg Kerensky, for instance, complains in his book The New British Drama, that "there is obviously no reason why plays should deal with the problems of society, but there is something irritating about a playwright who claims to be doing that but in fact seems to be living with the problems of the past."²¹ Kerensky's statement indicates that he has missed the whole point of Bond's use of history in his plays particularly in The Woman. Approaching history with a Marxist ideology, Bond identifies

the present as a sequel to the past, "our age," he says, "like every age, needs to reinterpret the past as part of learning to understand itself, so that we can know what we are and what we should do."²² This argument presents us with a dramatist with a deep sense of history. To Bond, the past is not merely an amalgam of isolated incidents; it is bound up with the present. Ancient slavery is not to be examined separately, it should be studied in the light of the present, which brings to mind Engels' argument that without Greek slavery, "no modern Europe," "no modern institutions." Bond is aware that present-day European capitalism and its institutions are merely an extension of the Greek age. Thus Bond's castigation of ancient slavery in The Woman becomes also an assault on modern Europe, which goes to show that contrary to Kerensky's argument, Bond is not "living with problems of the past." Nor is he a detached critic, avoiding the present. Bond writes about the past because, as he claims, it "throws light on the present,"²³ and because it is an institution manipulated by "reaction."²⁴ In a nutshell, Bond's interest in history also relates to the probing of modern issues. The Greeks, for instance, represent for Britain a cultural background out of which essentially British democracy and values have grown. Greek and Latin are still taught to the bourgeoisie in Britain. Thus through his deconstruction of Greek society and its icons, Bond is doing a double-edged job. He dissects Greek history and de-iconises its idolised figures and at the same time, he cocks a snook at the British aristocracy, which regards the Greeks and their heritage as its idols. Thus, just as Brecht and, as I shall show later, Arden debunk Roman history and its

patrician hierarchy, Bond feels that a good revolutionary Marxist "must scorn 'the classics' as a symbol of elitism."²⁵

Bond views Greek history and its personages from a Marxist perspective. Heros is assaulted as the representative of the free-citizenry, which, as we have seen, is utterly rejected in Marxist politics. Heros and his family are described by Hecuba as "the richest in Athens and money buys power."²⁶ Hecuba's statement echoes Engels' earlier comment that money was a powerful weapon in the hands of the merchant, who, as a free citizen, was capable of making the whole of society bow to his will, and that the Athenian state was no more than an instrument of the rich against the dispossessed slaves. Through Hecuba's words, Bond establishes the identity of his target. A champion of socialism, Bond sets out to attack not only an Athens governed by the wealthy, but also capitalist governments which to him wield power through the accumulation of capital, which own the means of production and which subject political, social and industrial institutions to their own purposes. Bond's Marxist view of Greek history and its personages accords with Arnold Hauser's represented in his book The Social History of Art. Hauser writes that Athens carried on "a policy which gave benefits to the free-citizens and the capitalists at the cost of the slaves and those sections of the people who had no share in the war profits."²⁷ According to Hauser, Greek economic democracy was unjust to the masses; it "meant at most an expansion of the rentier-class,"²⁸ which, through its profits dominated politically. Bond does not see capitalist western

democracies as being much different from their Greek counterpart. To him, they are only its extension. Thus, for example, the Greek slave-miner of The Woman who is dispossessed both politically and economically, is presented by Bond as an example of the expropriated western working-class.

Heros is not only presented as an embodiment of the free-citizen, but also as an oppressor and enslaver of his people. Looking at history from a Marxist point of view, Bond, unlike Lassalle, who was criticised by Marx for his obscuring of the peasantry in his play, gives prominence to the plebeians in The Woman. To show Heros' heroism and glory as empty achievements, Bond presents the former's people in a state of complete impoverishment and oppression. The miner is an archetype of all down-trodden working people. His mother was a cook and his father a guard and he himself was born in a mine.²⁹ The miner makes clear in more than one speech that he has suffered sufficiently at the hands of great individuals like Heros and he revealed that he has escaped from the mines.³⁰ When Hecuba says to him that "In your mine you were as safe as a mouse in its hole,"³¹ he retorts "you haven't been down there,"³² by which answer he indicates the hardships and misery of the slaves working there. "When you built your new city," he says to Heros, "our hell grew with it."³³ Later, he tells Hecuba that he "ran over half a continent"³⁴ to escape Hero's oppression. Such was his description. In another moving speech, which, as I shall show later, is reminiscent of the predicament of the Bondwoman and Garlon in the Ardens' The Island of the

Mighty, the miner indicts Heros' regime as one of slavery and oppression of the masses:

"The work's shaped round our lives as naturally as the seasons. At five I dragged baskets of rock through the tunnels. The rope round my waist cut a groove in my flesh. I was glad when the groove was cut. I was a machine with a gulky-here-for the rope. That pain would be kept there. An iron cable and a pulley are oiled when they rub together. The gulley in the flesh can't be oiled. That flesh would go soft. The rope would tear it. It must be two stones. Rubbing together. The flesh of a child. Each day. All day! When the child - with his nipped-in waist like an ant - can lift an axe - he's sent to the face. First we break it - with fire. Then we crawl in while it's hot - Athens is built fast. Our hands and knees are hoofs! We don't dig in a straight line: we follow the bend at the seams. They're put there by the devil. Our bodies are twisted round his finger in the dark. like string. When we're too old to dig we go to the top - corpses surfacing! Old men and women - the difference went long ago, their sex is small knots on the skin - empty the children's, baskets and crouch by the trough, sorting and sorting, their hands going up and down, sorting, like the legs of a beetle turned on its back."³⁵

As we can see from the miner's indictment, Bond, unlike Lassalle, sets his play against a background of slave suffering. The miner's "description of his life in the mines turns into an open accusation of all that Heros stands for."³⁶ His outburst is intended not only as an indictment of Greek society, but also as a condemnation of the exploitation of the proletariat by capitalist regimes.

Heros does not only turn a blind eye to the plight of his people represented by the miner, but also deals with them with an iron rod and is responsible for their starvation. When Heros promises the miner that he will "help those people"³⁷ if he wins the race, the miner, voicing Bond's view, refutes Heros' promises, "you'll go away and forget. Every second of my life - till I ran - was watched by people

like you - holding a whip with a silver handle. If you could count our crumbs, you would."³⁸ Thus, Heros, therefore, in the play goes through his heroic motions against a background of slave poverty and hardships and his gestures therefore need to be seen ironically against this background. The play, unlike traditional Greek tragedies which celebrate Heros-like characters, is, thus, a Marxist tragedy of the people.

Bond believes, as I have mentioned earlier, that the "classics" are elitist. As his treatment of Heros shows, he seems to share Hauser's view that Greek tragedy "unquestionably propagates the standards of the great-hearted individual, the uncommon distinguished man"³⁹ like Achilles and Heros. It is elitist and individualistic. A Marxist who believes in egalitarianism, Bond therefore undermines Greek elitism and individualism represented by Heros who, like Brecht's Coriolanus, is assailed as an "elitist" individualistic general. Like Coriolanus, Heros claims that he is "God to my men."⁴⁰ He has a Nietzschean and Carlylian view of himself. He thinks that he is chosen to rule while others should worship him. He sets himself above the people, considering them an inferior species; a supposition totally dashed by the Marxist Bond.

Heros is also lapidated as an individualist. Like Coriolanus, he "is motivated by vanity and an overriding ambition."⁴¹ His conquests, like Coriolanus's are harnessed to build up his heroic image, while his people are dying. His heroism is completely individualistic. He loves power

their leaders, Bond, in the play, gives credit to the representative of the slaves. The miner, voicing Bond's view of the masses, and challenging Heros as regards the true builders of Athens, states that he was born in Athens.

"Why", he asks, "d'you cover your new city in silver? Your mud bricks, the soles of your shoes, are worth more than silver. I know what value is. I made your statues in Athens. You think I'm the broken bits that were chipped away! No - I made their smile."⁴⁷ Heros' silver palaces are made in the mines from which the miner has escaped. The glory of Athens is made by its slaves and not by its heroes. Bond's standpoint, in fact, is that of Brecht in his poem, "Questions from a worker who reads ("On the night the Chinese wall was finished ; where did the masons go?," or "what the city but the people" and the miner's above words clearly echo Engels' statement that "without slavery" there would have been "no Greek state, no Greek art and science."

While Bond, as I have shown, presents Heros as a ruthless monstrous dictator, he, like Marx and Brecht, also exhibits a somewhat romantic view of the masses. He shows the miner, as he does the Man in Bingo, as a kind-hearted compassionate person. The miner spares no efforts to extend a helping and caring hand for Ismene whom he mistakes for Hecuba's daughter. He takes care of Hecuba as well, and co-operates with the islanders for an honest livelihood.⁴⁸

Having a great confidence in the potential of the proletariat, Bond sets out to hail the promise of their dictatorship when at the end of his play, he, like Brecht in

Coriolanus, tips the balance in their favour. In Bond's play, the representative of the aristocracy, Heros, the "natural enemy" of the people is slain by the representative of the slaves, the miner who has come all that way from the mines to eliminate his enemy on behalf of the oppressed. Bond's view of the destruction of Heros at the end of The Woman is like Marx's of the defeat of Sickingen at the end of Franz Von Sickingen. As I have mentioned earlier, Marx contended that Sickingen was defeated because he belonged to a class that, in terms of Marxist political theory, is doomed to perish. Bond seems to share Marx's opinion of the above class. In a previously unpublished interview with Tony Coult in 1978, he stated that "Heros who stands for the classical values.... is opposed by a miner who stands for a new order, for a new proletarian direction of history. There's a conflict between them and the miner wins."⁴⁹ Bond goes on to say that he has "represented history as a woman with a sword under her skirt."⁵⁰ According to Bond's Marxist statement, history will progress dialectically to culminate in the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, the miner's killing of Heros "is not revenge; it is a revolutionary action."⁵¹ His escape from the mines is a positive act. The miner did not kill himself, although "life was unbearable."⁵² His "escape was not negative reaction" or "a blind escape from intolerable conditions - it contained the seeds of positive resistance,"⁵³ and the miner is intended to represent a "working-class consciousness."⁵⁴ Heros's death, Bond stated, "must seem the result of historical, rather than tragic inevitability,"⁵⁵ by which statement he, like Brecht,

indicates his Marxist view of the movement of history and the role of the masses in it. Thus, "Hero's death," Coult argues, "is not an end. It is a beginning, for the miner, for the islanders - and ultimately, for the audience"⁵⁶ which Bond champions. A reconciliation between Heros and the miner is impossible. Just as Engels argues in one of his letters to Lassalle concerning Franz Von Sickingen that the imperial aristocracy "represented by Sickingen "had no point in allying themselves with the peasantry first because of the clash in class interests, and second because the aristocracy was dependent on the peasants for its income, ⁵⁷ Bond has the same view of Heros and the miner who cannot reach a compromise because they are class enemies. To indicate the proletarian victory at the end of the play, Bond lets the islanders survive the tumult and turmoil of war. We see them in a state of jubilation and happiness, celebrating their victory over their enemies and the miner takes Heros' wife for himself.

Just as Bond associates the Greek free-citizenry with the capitalists of modern Europe, he, as mentioned earlier, presents the miner as a symbol of a revolutionary proletariat which can always deal telling blows to its enemies, the capitalists. The miner's triumph over Heros in the play may even be seen to have its contemporary relevance. By choosing the miner as a proletarian hero, Bond could also be seen to be indirectly celebrating the ever recalcitrant British Miners' Union and its actions against successive capitalist British governments. Just as the miner defeats Heros in The Woman, British miners, with their Strike of 1974, brought

about the overthrow of the government of Edward Heath, the then Prime Minister. Bearing in mind Bond's projection of the past into the present, his play about a Greek miner and his victory over his oppressors becomes also a comment on the struggle of the British proletariat against the capitalists, thus bringing the past and present uncomfortably together.

Bond's emphasis on this potentially revolutionary proletariat was also conveyed in his direction of the play at the National Theatre. Theatrically, the people represented by the crowd to which the miner belongs were on stage given a "corporate identity expressed through gesture."⁵⁸ Bond described his aim as follows:

"I tried to show their common purpose through their hands. First their hands are flat and extended, the hands of beggars; when they come closer to their enemies their hands become fists; when they carry out the statue their hands are weapons, claws and flails; and when they're united in one moment of choice (to give the statue to the Greeks) their hands swing in the direction of the harbour like the leaves of a tree turning in the wind."⁵⁹

Bond's theatrical presentation of the crowd stressed the latter's unity. In part two of the play, Hay and Roberts argue, "The role of the crowd is vital if the audience is to appreciate the full significance of the Dark Man's (the miner's) killing of Heros. In Bond's production, at the moment when Heros is killed, chaos and pandemonium are let loose for a few seconds...; the stage is full of people running in all directions. Then Hecuba calls out and takes charge, and in one co-ordinated movement all the characters look out to sea."⁶⁰ The fact that the crowd has "one co-ordinated movement" indicates its solidarity. Bond wanted

the people to appear united against their enemies, thereby reminding us of Marx's call, "working men of all countries, unite!".⁶¹ Emphasising the unity of the people against their oppressors, Bond criticises the critics who "don't want the poor or oppressed to have a common purpose."⁶² He rejects the idea that "It's nicer, safer when" the people are "picturesque individuals" and "passive spear carriers,"⁶³ once more attesting to Bond's rejection of capitalist individualism or what he calls "the idea of a central heroic character," and his preference for a revolutionary violence on the part of the masses. Challenging his critics sarcastically, he wonders if "a spear" is "the last thing that should be carried passively."⁶⁴

Historically, however, the slaves' victory over their masters was achieved only theatrically. As Marx's *Dialectic* illustrates, in fact, the Greek slaves achieved no such triumph, but in later ages were to reappear as serfs, again to be exploited and oppressed, now by feudal landlords and their agents. This Medieval feudalism with its particular variety of slavery had itself already been dramatised in John Arden's and Margaretta D'Arcy's The Island of the Mighty in 1972. The play takes up the early stages of feudalism, that of the 6th century, when the conflict was between an oppressed peasantry and its despotic landlords. Thus King Arthur, a feudal symbol, becomes an extension of Heros set in another period of history. However, before coming to The Island, it is worth relating how Arden changed from a pacifist, Aristophanic satirist into being a Brecht-Marxist iconoclast.

Arden changed heart towards the end of nineteen-sixties. In his book of essays, To Present The Pretence (1976) he admitted that he having undergone a radical ideological change: "Twelve years ago I looked on at people's struggle and wrote about them for the stage, sympathetically, but as an onlooker. Without consciously intending it, I have become a participant."⁶⁵ In the same vein, he says that "All conclusions about the state of contemporary affairs must inevitably be partisan."⁶⁶ Such statements attest to Arden's radical conversion, a conversion in which his wife Margaretta D'Arcy played an important part, and which resulted in his producing Marxist-based drama.

Like Bond, the Ardens have taken upon themselves to fight for the powerless against the powerful. For that purpose they returned to history to look at the relationship between the leaders and the people. The Ardens, in doing so, are not, however, avoiding the present. Like Brecht and Bond, they historicise their subject-matter in order to comment on the rulers and the ruled of modern societies. Thus society, history and politics form the crux of the Ardens' drama.

The Island of the Mighty is the Ardens' most pioneering work in the field of Brecht-Marxist iconoclasm. The play is a trilogy and its targets are historic personages from the Arthurian era. The first two parts deal with the decline and fall of King Arthur and the third part concerns Merlin, Arthur's poet. In this chapter, I shall focus on Arthur,

leaving Merlin for another chapter for reasons which will become apparent later.

Arden was since his school days fascinated by the Arthurian tales. In 1956, he submitted a play about the above subject to the Royal Court. But it was rejected as a "boring historical play written in phoney verse."⁶⁷ In 1966 he re-wrote the play as a trilogy to be screened by B.B.C. television, but again it was shelved.⁶⁸ Finally in 1972, the Royal Shakespeare Company decided to stage the play at the Aldwych. Now, however, the production was rejected by the Ardens themselves and a fierce controversy ensued. I shall comment on the dispute between the Ardens and the R.S.C. throughout my examination of the play.

Like all iconoclasts', the Ardens' distortion of historical characters is intended to stimulate a critical reassessment of figures who have been ossified in the public imagination. The past and its icons, according to the Ardens and Bond, are not to be forgiven nor forgotten, it is to be dug up, exposed, and stripped bare. Myths and legendary figures are to be demythologised. Mysteries are to be demystified.

As we have seen, the Ardens' scornful attitude towards idolised personages was first manifested in The Hero Rises Up, in which Nelson, as I have shown earlier, was treated iconoclastically. But while in The Hero Rises Up heroism was rejected out of a pacifistic ideology, it was to be viewed from a Marxist perspective in The Island.

Unlike other writers who have taken up the Arthurian

cycle and refashioned it "as a patriotic epic work to rival Homer's treatment of the Trojan wars or Virgil's Aneid"⁶⁹, the Ardens, as in the Hero Rises Up, are far from being patriots. Michael Anderson rightly argues, that "Arden devotes his historical imagination, not to bolstering up a wistful picture of a vanished golden age, but towards the stern task of 'demystifying' and 'demythologizing' the events which gave rise to the Arthurian legend."⁷⁰ The play intentionally leaves out the traditional Arthurian legends such as the Round Table, Sir Lancelot, and the Holy Grail, and proceeds to subject the period and its great figures to a Marxist analysis. The Ardens' Arthur is a "far cry from this superhuman warrior; but the grizzled authoritarian with his attention to administrative detail is a more credible figure than the Arthur of the myth and legend."⁷¹ To John Lahr, "Arden's Arthur is not off the pages of romance, but off the battlefield.... There is no poetry about the man. Militant, murderous and ugly, Arthur is neither the emperor of a golden age nor the Celtic Messiah."⁷²

In traditional films featuring King Arthur, the hero is usually shown in a favourable light. In the recent film Excalibur by John Bormann, Arthur's physical appearance is so flattering that it becomes an invitation to identify with him. In The Island, the Ardens' Arthur is deliberately presented as an ugly character, thus revealing the playwrights' rejection of him.

The great King is turned in the Ardens' play into an invalid. He is presented as an "ageing warrior swimming

vainly against the tide of history, and his failing strength is reflected in his physical appearance."⁷³ Arthur is no longer a romantic glamorous hero who attracts the audience to identify with his heroic image. The stage directions read that he is "walking with the aid of a stick."⁷⁴ We are not invited to laugh at him as we did at Nelson, but to despise him as an ageing monstrous cripple who "climbs the quaking hill ; One leg well and one leg ill."⁷⁵ Albert Hunt argues that Arthur's "verbal rhetoric is always set off ironically against the physical fact that he hobbles about the stage."⁷⁶ His lameness adumbrates the falseness and hollowness of his grandeur and glory. However, he says, Arthur "demands to be presented with irony."⁷⁷

As I have already mentioned, the Ardens dissociated themselves from the R.S.C. production of The Island, and picketed the theatre, thinking that their play was being "distorted."⁷⁸ Arthur who is intended to be treated ironically and idoloclastically by the Ardens, was, in their view, turned into a pathetic king "by no means despicable in the R.S.C. production" and the emphasis in his presentation was "on the pathos of an ageing hero"⁷⁹ who deserves our sympathies. Instead of presenting Arthur as a "ludicrous, posturing figure,"⁸⁰ the R.S.C. had made of him a target of sympathy. In consequence, the play was turned into an "introvert meditation about the decline of a kingdom."⁸¹ By presenting Arthur as an old man with deteriorating health and a pathetic air about him, the tenor of the image of lameness was distorted, the irony was therefore missing, and the hero was not presented iconoclastically as the Ardens had

intended.

Arden's philosophy of the rectilinear versus the curvilinear, expressed, for example, in The Hero, was metamorphosed after his conversion to Marxism, into the conflict between the masses and their exploiters. The dramatic hinge in The Island of the Mighty is on the struggle between the feudalists represented by Arthur and the serfs, or between the oppressor and the oppressed. Merlin's opening song summarises the conflict between the two groups:

"O Christian men, are you aware
How once an emperor controlled
The going-out and coming-in
Of every man in all the civil world-
So hard he toiled?
Around his boundaries he set
A ditch, a wall, a palisade.
The wildmen outside were kept
Outside, until one day he was betrayed,
Or so he said."⁸²

Merlin's song refers to two conflicting parties, the "Emperor," and the "wildmen." In the Ardens' Marxist terms, the above two groups stand to represent the great individual (emperor) and his people, "the wildmen." Arthur is an extension of the Roman heritage, a heritage totally condemned and rejected by Marxist writers. It was during Roman times that the gap was very wide between the patricians and the plebeians as Marx and Engels have shown, and Brecht's version of Coriolanus is a brilliant representation of the nature of that society. Like Brecht, the Ardens represent the Roman establishment's suppression of the masses. In their an "Asymmetrical Authors' Preface" of The Hero Rises Up, they condemn the Romans for their "rectilinear" nature and for imposing order on the anarchic Celts. In The Island, the

Romans become, to the Ardens, not only inimical to the people's freedom, but also symbols of exploitation and oppression. Arthur, as the play shows, always looks back to the history of the Roman Empire when class society was at its peak. Now he applies Roman class tactics to the new era, feudalism. He becomes a feudalist general instead of a patrician, and the slaves are now serfs and peasants with whom he deals in the same way as his ancestors used to deal with the Britons and plebeians.

The Ardens turn the Arthurian cycle upside down. Arthur's empire is not there to achieve "justice, restraint of power" and "protection for the weak,"⁸³ as he claims. The dramatists ironically suggest that none of Arthur's above objectives have ever been achieved. Arthur's reign is, in fact, one of suppression. Arthur is "conceived not as a chivalrous hero" but as an oppressor "completely alienated from the peasants, in whose eyes he represents all that is alien, oppressive and unacceptable."⁸⁴ He is a "traitor who has wilfully disowned the native traditions and identified himself with the imperial Roman heritage of the 'Long Sword', and the 'spiked encampment'."⁸⁵ Thus, the play, as Malick and Hunt rightly argue, "focuses mainly not on the marvellous adventures and tragic defeat of a valiant hero but on the secret and subversive life of the people under an oppressive regime."⁸⁶ In other words, the Ardens set the traditional heroic events firmly inside the framework of an oppressive social system. King Arthur and his followers, like Heros, go through their heroism and chivalry against a background of peasant suffering and poverty. Their gestures,

like Heros', also need to be seen ironically against this background.

Like Heros, Arthur is presented as a ruthless dictator who has never spared any efforts to repress his people. As a general of cavalry troops, he has the mobility to put down any disturbance in the extensive British area, "He has a hand that is no hand; Until he splices steel to it; Oh so most truly he can cut."⁸⁷ Arthur's Roman forts, as Balan describes them, are "Much in the nature of a prison...a cruel gridiron where our liberty must burn to death,"⁸⁸ thus attesting to Arthur's heavy-handedness with and oppression of his serfs.

In the play, the Ardens, at one point direct that Arthur should wear a mask with tusks on it so that he becomes a vampire-like figure. This is intended not only to uglify the hero, but also to comment on the relationship between him and the serfs. The fangs are symbols of exploitation, and the impoverishment of the peasants is expressed in terms of blood sucking. The exploited and oppressed peasantry is represented in the play by characters such as Garlon, the Bondwoman and others who regard Arthur and his class as their enemies and the class struggle is referred to in terms of theft. We are presented with a raging Garlon who, like the miner in The Woman, is determined to strike at his exploiters. When Merlin asks him which king or prince he is going to fight against, he says:

"I don't give a damn which of them, so long as I get in my stroke... I have suffered far too much from these kings and these princes. Every one of them is my enemy.

Though they don't know it till they feel my weapon.. I had a cornfield and an orchard, five pigs, and a black-and-white cow. But the Prince of Gwynedd took them off me, grabbed my wife to be his mistress, turned me out of my cottage. For what reason? I was in debt to him, rent and so forth. Interest upon money he lent me. Said I was to be bound to him as a serf for evermore if I could not pay it. My grandfather had been a serf... For a Roman it was natural he should enslave the men of Britain... My grandfather bought his freedom with hard work. Died of it moreover."⁸⁹

Through Garlon's outburst, the Ardens present us with a vivid picture of life under feudalism which was dogged by an incessant series of class antagonisms between the landlords and the serfs, and which demonstrates the transfer from Roman slavery to feudal serfdom. King Arthur, as I have mentioned earlier, practises his Roman exploitation techniques under the feudal mode of production which results in a serf and landlord society.

Badly effected by Arthur's crippling taxes, the peasantry rise up in rebellion, "Our agriculturalists," Taliesin relates, "are in a state of suppressed rebellion over the exactions laid upon them for food for the general's men."⁹⁰ In like manner, Aneurin, the plebeian poet sings that the serfs are forced to "keep cattle" and "harvest their grain" for their "landlord."⁹¹ Caradoc, another oppressed serf, complains about being robbed by Arthur's men, who ransacked his house and slaughtered his cows. Like Garlon, he wishes them destruction.⁹² Arthur does not stop at exploiting the peasants; he deals with them with a rod of iron. In the words of Balan, the king is a tyrant who enslaves the people. Balan advises his brother Balin to keep away from Arthur, "go to him and be his slave. For myself I think much better to avoid all such persons and the fortunes

they bring."⁹³

As I shall show later, Arthur is allied with a group of princes who are no less oppressive than he is. The Picts, "an enfeebled and poverty-stricken tribe"⁹⁴ are exploited and suppressed by Stratchlyde, one of Arthur's main allies. The Picts' theft of sheep and cattle, as one of the characters comments in the play, "is outweighed... by the slavery to which" they "have been subjected by Stratchlyde."⁹⁵ Gododin, another landed prince, Balan comments, "was the man who raised no hand; To help his people when the ruin fell on their land."⁹⁶

Arthur's reign of serfdom is also condemned by the Bondwoman in the play. She entreats Balin who is intent on joining the king's army to renounce the landlords.

"For you to help a little king to grow into a bigger one - what good is that to me?... He will make me the slave of his bed, and you too will be his slave.. If you live a life of fighting, why not fight in defence of me? There are so many like myself.. everything that is ever done in the name of God or good order becomes done against us."⁹⁷

The Bondwoman's plea suggests that the mass of serfs is always the victim of the landlords' actions. The passage also reminds us of the miner's outbursts in The Woman.

As far as Arthur's knights and army who are known in history books for their chivalry and championship of the poor are concerned, the Ardens also turn the table upside down. Medieval knights are viewed from a Marxist perspective. The "heavy cavalry" or "the General's own men" are no more than plunderers and gangsters. They eat children and prostitute

themselves with the animals.⁹⁸ Gildas, the sixth century Welsh monk, John Lahr notes, describes the knights as "sanguinary, boastful, murderous, addicted to vice, adulterous and enemies of God.. They are generally engaged in plunder and rapine, and they prey by preference upon the innocent; if they fight to avenge anyone, it is sure to be in favour of robbers and criminals."⁹⁹ The Ardens seem to have based their view of Arthur's knights on Gildas' book or a similar source. Like their master, the knights seem to have oppressed the peasantry of the time and not fought for them as we are told in the mythology. They are described as "wolves" and robbers of the poor.

The oppressive landlord class led by Arthur is presented by the Ardens to be in alliance against the peasant class. Arthur's relationship with his landed allies is "of collaboration." "He offers them protection, and in turn they support and maintain him and his army by paying regular tributes."¹⁰⁰ Gwennddydd relates that his "father was a little prince" who "ruled over a few miles of marshland," and who "paid a regular tribute for the protection of Arthur's army."¹⁰¹ The princes also, as the play shows, allowed the king to "use their territories, palaces, and forts."¹⁰² This co-operation on the political and military level among Arthur and his princes makes them united in their contempt for the mass of serfs. Thus Arthur wages his wars out of class considerations. He is more concerned about his dynasty than about the peasants. His victories, to the Ardens, are empty victories because they fail to benefit the people. Arthur fortifies his realm to keep his reign intact.¹⁰³ The

monarch's world is likened to a "spiked encampment." In the Ardens Marxist terms, the spikes stand for demarcation lines between the two conflicting classes, the peasants and the landlords.

The Ardens are not, however, primarily interested in dissecting medieval feudalism; rather they have a message to deliver to modern audiences and readers of the play. To them, the modern world is full of Arthur-like leaders and dictators. As staunch anti-capitalist Marxists, the playwrights associate feudalism with modern capitalism which is also, to them, riven into exploited and exploiting classes who are in a state of continuous conflict.

The Ardens' enmity towards Arthur is paralleled by affection for and celebration of his people. Like The Woman, Light Shining In buckinghamshire, and the Churchill Play, The Island of the Mighty views history "left-handedly" or from a "plebeian stance." The play emphasises the peasant background against which the figures in the Arthurian legend act. The Ardens "plebeian bias" is not only articulated by their demythologisation and condemnation of Arthur, but also by their glorification of the people. Just as Brecht stresses that "What the city but the people," the Ardens regard the masses as the "true voice of liberty." Thus the play becomes a social history of the non-ruling classes" or the "disinherited multitudes. 104

The Ardens' rejection of the R.S.C. production of The Island of the Mighty was not only because it made of Arthur a sympathetic character to be identified with, but also because

it relegated the people who "did the work" to a secondary role. The Ardens' criticism of the R.S.C.'s obscuring of the peasants in the play brings to mind Marx's and Engels' comments on Lassalle's Franz Von Sickingen. As we have seen, Marx and Engels were most repelled by Lassalle's treatment of the peasants in the play. They recommended that the peasants should have been "shown significantly active in the background." Just as they castigated Lassalle for focusing on Sickingen and neglecting the people, the Ardens themselves disowned the production of their play because it was turned into an "Arthuriad" concentrating more on Arthur than on his victims, or what the Ardens call "the kind of men and women who have little part to play in the traditional tales." This latter aspect is particularly focused upon in the final play of the trilogy, A Handful Of Watercress which in the R.S.C. production, it was claimed with the Ardens' consents, was heavily cut and remained only as an epilogue.

Tipping the balance in favour of the underprivileged, the Ardens manifest a Marxist understanding of history. They maintain that it is the people who are the real makers of history and not their leaders. Arthur's victories, like Heros', should be attributed to their people and not to them personally. In Arden's words, it is the people who "did the work, who fed and housed the noble warriors, and who equipped them for their fight." And that is why the dramatists were repelled by the R.S.C.'s handling of the peasants without whom "the play can be interpreted as telling the story of once a great king in decline."¹⁰⁵ Giving prominence to the peasantry in the play will turn Arthur into an insignificant

vaunting character.

Merlin's opening song foreshadows the triumph of the people over their oppressors. The last five lines of the song read that "The wall fell down, the wild men; Did jump across it and then ran; Down every road that led to Rome; They broke to bits the Emperor's golden crown; Kicked over his throne."¹⁰⁶ Throughout the play, as we have seen, Arthur's world is shown as "decaying," which indicates his final downfall. In comparison, the world of the "plebeian masses comes across as full of undying spirit, vitality, and tenacity."¹⁰⁷ The latter survive various historical upheavals, while the former, as Merlin's song shows, "disintegrates and is destroyed at Camlaan - the 'end of all great men'"¹⁰⁸ which foreshadows the victory of the people which is clearly articulated at the end of the final play of the trilogy in Aneurin's concluding song; a song which summarises the Ardens' Marxist view of the movement of history and the inevitability of the destruction of the people's enemies:

"There was a man called Lazarus
And when he died they said he died at peace with God.
They had muffled a rag round his open mouth
And as he died he could not speak one word.
Perhaps he tried but he was not heard.
Then a fool of a friend, who did not know
When to be quiet or loud, into the graveyard ran -
He danced on the grave in great big boots -
'O Lazarus, Lazarus, are you awake, young man?
Come out of there, come up, come on!'
The Clay did heave and the clay did hoist -
And Lazarus he came up like a strange gigantic mole.
He tore the muffler from his jaw -
All rotten he was, with such an evil smell.
They closed their eyes and down they fell.
And this is what Lazarus said to them all
When he came back to life so hideous and so tall:
'O I found underground
A score or two

Of decent people
Just like you.
I found underground
Two thousand or three
Of stinking corpses
Just like me.
And when the big boots
Dance on the grave
It is the corpses
They will raise
For you went and buried them
With all the life inside
That they could not live
While they were alive.
We are going to come back
And we are going to take hold
So hideous and bloody greedy
We take hold of the whole world! "109

As Aneurin's song predicts, Lazarus, a symbol of the oppressed, will one day come out of his grave to turn the world upside down. In other words, just as Brecht and Bond give victory to the representatives of the masses at the end of Coriolanus and The Woman, the Ardens predict the threat of a "revolutionary apocalypse" and a "plebeian millennium" when the people will crush their oppressors and be masters of the world.

Caryl Churchill's Light Shining In Buckinghamshire continued the theatrical analysis of the progression towards present-day capitalism. It takes up the emergence of capitalism in history at the point at which feudal serfs were set loose only to become vagabonds, when the rising capitalists pursued a policy of privatisation and land enclosure already begun in the 16th century and when private property became a tool during the Civil War in England in the hands of people like Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton and their followers with which to achieve political power. The play, as indeed Churchill remarks in the introduction, is meant as

an onslaught on what she calls the "development of capitalism,"¹¹⁰ and its manipulators.

It clearly charts the demise of subsistence farming, as a result of which the peasants were turned into wage labourers or unemployed paupers while the rising bourgeoisie reaped most of the profits. During this period the two parties who spoke for the rights of the dispossessed peasantry were the Levellers and the Diggers who campaigned against the Enclosure Movement and its disastrous consequences for the peasants. W.E. Tate states in his book The English Village Community and The Enclosure Movement that the Enclosures were "an important phenomenon in English social and economic history," but were "achieved at the cost of social dislocation."¹¹¹ That is the core of Light Shining. The enclosure theme of the play is best summarised in the following succinct quotation from Sir Thomas More's Utopia which shares Light Shining's incriminatory view of the Enclosure and prefigures the emergence of capitalism:

"There is an other (cause of stealing), whych, as I suppose, is proper and peculiar to you Englishmen alone... your shepe that were wont to be so meke and tame, and so smal eaters, now, as I heare saye, be become so great devowerers and so wylde, that they eate up, and swallow downe the very men them selves. They consume, destroye, and devoure whole fields, howses, and cities... nobleman and gentlemen: Yea and certeyn Abbottes... leave no groundes for tillage, thei inclose al into pastures: thei throw doune houses: they pluck downe townes, and leave nothinge standynge, but only the churche to be made a shepehowse... that one covetous and unsatiabie. Cormaraunte and very plage of his natyve countrey maye compasse aboute and inclose many thousand akers of grounde together within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust owte of their owne, or els either by coveyne and fraud, or by violent oppression they be put besydes it, or by wronges and injuries thei be so worried, that they be compelled to sell all: by one meanes therefore or by other, either by hooke or crooke they must needs departe awaye, poor selye wrecked souls,

men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widowes, wofull mothers, with their yonge babes... Awaye thei trudge, I say, out of their knowen and accustomed houses fyndyng no place to rest in... And when they have wondered abroad tyll that be spent, what can they els doo but steale, and then justly pardy be hanged, or els go about beggyng. And yet then also be cast in prison as vagabounds, because they go aboute and worke not: whom no man wyl set a worke, though thei never so willingly profre themselves theirot. For one Shephearde or Heardman is ynoughe to eat up that ground with cattel; to the occupiynge whereof aboute husbandrye many handes were requisite... Caste out these pernicious abominations, make a lande that they which plucked down fermes, and towens of husbandrie, shall needifie them, or els yelde and uprender the possession thereof to such as wil."¹¹²

I have quoted More's passage at length because it summarises clearly and historically the plot of Light Shining. Like Churchill, More offers a "most powerful and effective criticism of the agrarian change then taking place, and a very moving plea for the peasants."¹¹³

However, it should be noted here that while More looks at the Enclosure and its aftermath from a humanist point of view, Churchill views the whole question from a Marxist perspective. Like Bond and the Ardens, Churchill is one of the socialist, British playwrights who sought in "the past both a starting-point for debate and a way of re-analysing history."¹¹⁴ Unlike The Woman and The Island, Light Shining, like the rest of the plays to follow, takes as its targets of lapidation not mythic but real history and its leading individuals. If the mythic King Arthur is assaulted as a feudal symbol, the historical Cromwell and Ireton are shot down as the developers of capitalism, the third phase of the Marxist Dialectic. The "greatest of soldier-statesmen, and not least of Englishmen"¹¹⁵ are shown by Churchill as vicious capitalists.

Nonetheless, Churchill does not distort her targets as did the Ardens with King Arthur. Cromwell and Ireton are not presented as laughing-stocks as in Aristophanic iconoclasm. Rather their glamour is played down in a detached manner. To this effect, David Zane Mairowitz argues that "One of the dramatic virtues of this magnificent play is that it can assume a certain given historical foundation and proceed to de-emphasise specific characters and events."¹¹⁶ Cromwell and Ireton appear only in one scene. Churchill avoids giving them prominence in the play. We are presented indeed, "with a not over-significant Cromwell in the chair"¹¹⁷ of the Putney Debates. Instead, as I shall show later, she, like her fellow socialist dramatists, emphasises the plebeian background. Like Bond and the Ardens, she has conceived her play on two levels, both as a Marxist demythification of a certain period of history and its figures and as an attack on modern Britain.

Looking at history from the viewpoint of the down-trodden, Churchill singles Cromwell and Ireton out for assault as representatives of the seventeenth century rising bourgeoisie, a class which is considered by Marxist dramatists to be, like its predecessors, an arch enemy of the masses. Like Sickingen, Ireton and Cromwell started their revolt against the King in defence of their class which, as Churchill intimates, is little different from that of the King's. What appeared to be a people's revolt turned out to be a nascent middle class rising against the aristocracy. While Lassalle, as we have seen, celebrates Sickingen's

rebellion against the Emperor irrespective of its class objectives, Churchill, viewing history with a Marxist ideology, sets out to condemn and demystify Cromwell's and his followers' uprising against King Charles The First. She does not find Cromwell and Ireton different from the King they have set out to topple. To her, they were the other face of the same coin. Although they led a popular revolution, they fought for their own class. Like Sickingen's, to use Marx's comments whose tenor Churchill appears to share, Cromwell's and Ireton's interests could not have harmonised, in the long run, with those of the townsfolk and those of the peasants. They were not, in fact, "revolutionaries... They were, on the contrary, fighting a rearguard action against the forces of progress."¹¹⁸ Their victory against the King was exploited for their own purposes. They, as I shall show later, did not reward their people who achieved that victory. They manipulated the gains for their own ends. Thus just as Marx disapproved of Sickingen's revolt completely, Churchill rejects Cromwell's. Marx's point, as I have shown earlier, was that if Sickingen's rebellion had succeeded, nothing would have changed for the people. Sickingen's victory would have elongated the rule of a class similar to the one he revolted against, because he himself belonged to a noble class. Marx's argument concurs with Churchill's which regards Cromwell's and Ireton's triumph over monarchy as an extension of the same regime but with different rulers. Rainborough's outburst in the Putney Debates makes Churchill's point clear. He sarcastically comments that "When these gentlemen fall out among themselves, they shall press the poor scrubs to come and kill one another for

them."¹¹⁹ This comment attests to the bourgeois nature of Cromwell's revolution against the king which is not fought for the people of England but for a group of gentlemen. The contemporary relevance is all too clear in this play. Cromwell and Ireton, to^{the} Marxist Churchill, are the ancestors of the rulers of modern Britain. A class-conscious Churchill, like Bond and the Ardens, tries, through her play, to drive home the idea that a rigid class hierarchy is still strikingly operative in modern Britain.

Churchill looks at Cromwell's and Ireton's insistence on a property-based government from a Marxist perspective. The possession of property, Marx claims, "places the owners in a position of power to the non-owning workers." They dictate their own "terms."¹²⁰ Marx goes on to say that "With the differences in property distribution, however, classes are introduced. Society becomes divided into upper and lower classes, into plunderers and plundered."¹²¹ Churchill seems to take up Marx's argument about property in her play. In the "Putney Debates," Cromwell and Ireton, as I have said above, insist that power should be in the hands of men of property.¹²² Their debates with the Levellers show them as dyed-in-the-wool individualistic capitalists. Ireton thinks that "no person hath a right to an interest in the disposing of the affairs of this Kingdom that hath not a permanent fixed interest in this Kingdom... But that by a man's being born here he shall have a share in that power that shall dispose of the lands here, I do not think it sufficient ground."¹²³ Cromwell's and Ireton's property-based logic dictates that "a lord shall choose twenty members... and a

poor shall choose none," and that a "gentleman" who "hath three or four lordships... must be a parliament man."¹²⁴ Their view is that poor men "must be oppressed." If one does not have "interest in the Kingdom," he "must suffer all its laws be they right or wrong."¹²⁵ They exclude the people totally from government. Cromwell's and Ireton's insistence on property in governing the country is because, they, like Sickingen and Heros, are men of property. Ireton brags that he has "property and this I shall enjoy."¹²⁶ Being propertied, they, as we can see in the play, are "in a position of power." Just as Heros ruled Athens by buying "power" through "money," they relied for their power on their ownerships. They ruled as capitalists who controlled the economic base of the country, capital and large estates, and so had no qualms about forcing their own terms on the people represented by the Levellers and the Diggers. They imposed on the masses a law which was enacted in their own interests, and in which the latter "have no voice." Their law did not "lie in the people," "It enslaves the people."¹²⁷ In Churchill's Marxist terms, they stand for what Marx calls the "plunderers" while the people stand for the "plundered." An egalitarian socialist, Churchill indicts this individualistic system of government and "dissects the perverse logic of Cromwell's sermons, where the self-appointed chosen are justified in persecuting those who are not."¹²⁸

To stress the class distinctions that accompanied the development of capitalism during the 17th century, Churchill introduces us in the play to the members of the two warring classes of the period. In the scene entitled "Briggs Joins

Up" she likens the capitalists to the Normans and the dispossessed to the Saxons. The latter "raised the animal. Sheep. Cow." And the former "ate the meat. Boeuf, mouton."¹²⁹ In the scene called "A Butcher Talks To His Customers" the class struggle is also expressed in terms of eating. The butcher attacks one of his capitalist customers for stuffing himself while children are dying from hunger, and refuses to sell him any more meat:

"You're not having meat again this week. You had your meat yesterday. Bacon on Monday. Beef on Sunday. Mutton chops on Saturday. There's no more meat for you. Porridge. Bread. Turnip. No meat for you this week. Not this year. You've had your lifetime meat. All of you. All of you that can buy meat. You've had your meat. You've had their meat. You've had their meat that can't buy any meat. You've stolen their meat...You cram yourselves with their children's meat. You cram yourselves with their children."¹³⁰

According to Churchill, Cromwell and Ireton, were not only vicious capitalists, but also bloody oppressors. Like Heros and Arthur, they ruled their people with brute force. In fact, the play is full of instances of oppression on the part of Cromwell and his son-in-law, Ireton. The Diggers, a grass-root group of the 17th century, who "came to St. George's Hill in Surrey and began to dig, and sowed the ground with parsnips and carrots and beans"¹³¹ were the main target of Cromwells tyranny. They were thrown in prisons. "The dragonly enemy," Cromwell's men, "pulled down" the Diggers' houses and "cut" their "spades to pieces."¹³² Churchill uses a group of actors representing the Diggers in the play to report on the oppression they were exposed to at the hands of Cromwell. The Fourth Actor relates that "One of us had his head sore wounded, and a boy beaten. Some of us

were beaten by the gentlemen, the sheriff looking on, and afterwards five were taken to White Lion prison and kept there about five weeks".¹³³ The Fifth Actor reports on how the "enemy... trumbled on the earth up and down and would suffer no corn to grow."¹³⁴ The Sixth Actor tells of how soldiers pulled down houses and turned their owners "out of doors to lie in the field on a cold night."¹³⁵ The First Actor, concluding his fellow Actors' reporting on oppression, points the finger of blame at none but Cromwell, "It is understood the General gave his consent that soldiers should come to help beat off the Diggers, and it is true the soldiers came with the gentlemen and caused others to pull down our houses."¹³⁶

It was not only the Diggers who were put down by Cromwell's men, but also the Levellers, another group of social reformers who called for equality and justice for the people. Most of the Levellers, as the play shows, were "shot" because the "officers" headed by Ireton and Cromwell, "have all the power," and their "army is so great a tyrant as the King was."¹³⁷ In another scene, we are presented with the funeral of one of the Levellers who "were finally crushed." The character Brigg, concludes from these experiences that to free England is to kill Cromwell. Cromwell's brutality reminds us of King Arthur and his handling of his people's revolts. As I have shown earlier, Arthur, as a general, had a hand spliced with steel and likewise, Heros of The Woman is said to have watched his people with silver-handled "whips." In the plays, therefore, each of these hitherto heroes of history is now represented

as an oppressor and enslaver of the people.

Churchill further accuses Cromwell and Ireton of betraying and exploiting the people for their own ends in that they manipulated the masses in the revolt against the King by promising them a "New Jerusalem." The people fought to depose their enemies. And they triumphed. But it was Cromwell and his "Clique" that reaped the fruits of the victory developing their properties and estates. Rainborough, a Leveller, wonders "what we have fought for?"¹³⁸ He bitterly complains that "the men who have laid themselves out for the parliament" and who "have ruined themselves by fighting"¹³⁹ have no voice in Cromwell's government. Claxton, a well-known Ranter, expresses his disappointment in a bitter tone. He relates that "when I was first a seeker, everything shone. I thought the third age was coming, age of spirit, age of lily, everything shining, a raindrop on the hedges shining in the sun, worlds of light. Well, we know how parliament betrayed us. Then how the army betrayed us. It was all a cheat."¹⁴⁰ The masses, like their counterparts in The Woman and The Island of the Mighty, were no more than chess-pieces and cannon fodder. Sexby, another Leveller, cries that Cromwell has swayed from his promises. Embittered, he goes on to say that "we have ventured our lives and it was all for this: to recover our birthrights as Englishmen; and by the arguments urged there is none. There are many thousands of us soldiers that have ventured our lives... I wonder we were so much deceived... we were mercenary soldiers."¹⁴¹ Rainborough condemns Cromwell's betrayal of the people. He cynically comments that the

ordinary people fought "to enslave" themselves "to give power to men of riches, men of estates, to make themselves perpetual slaves."¹⁴² Sexby concludes this series of complaints with a note of sorrow; it was a "sad and miserable condition that we have fought all this time for nothing?"¹⁴³ The life under the Lord Protector, initiated by Cromwell is not very different from the life under King Charles I. These outbursts are again reminiscent of Dingo's and of the Tribunes agitating for the people's rights against the patricians in Brecht's Coriolanus. But while the Tribunes triumph at the end of Brecht's play by bringing down Coriolanus and his rule, the Levellers and Diggers of Churchill's Light Shining are crushed by Cromwell.

Like The Woman and The Island of the Mighty, Light Shining In Buckinghamshire, as I have indicated earlier, is set against a background of peasant deprivation. Churchill, like the Ardens, is bent on giving prominence to the people under a subversive regime. She carefully avoided overrating Cromwell and Ireton. And in her preface to the play, she makes clear that she is determined to focus on the victims of the land enclosure and its upheavals. She writes that "The simple Cavaliers' and Roundheads' history taught at school hides the complexity of the aims and conflicts of those to the left of parliament."¹⁴⁴ Just as the Ardens wrote in their programme to The Island of the Mighty, that their intention was to celebrate the ones who "have little part to play in the traditional tales," Churchill sets out to shed more light on the forgotten. She says that "We are told of Charles and Cromwell but not of the thousands of men and

women who tried to change their lives,"¹⁴⁵ a statement which again reminds us of Brecht's poem Questions of A Working Man cited earlier. To her, "the poor and meaner of this Kingdom have been the means of preservation of this Kingdom,"¹⁴⁶ and Britain has been built on their travail.

Viewing history left-handedly, Churchill sets out to show the suffering and hardships of the dispossessed and the play deftly sketches the condition of the displaced during the emergence of capitalism. We are presented with a vagrant girl called Brotherton (a similar character to whom is to be found in Edward Bond's Bingo). Both girls are displaced victims and take up begging and vagrancy. Also, Brotherton, like Bond's character, is whipped and put on trial. She is sentenced "to be stripped to the waist and beaten to the bounds of this parish and returned parish by parish."¹⁴⁷ Churchill condemns Brotherton's persecutors who are also the cause of her poverty and displacement. "You great Curmudgeons," Churchill quotes from a Digger pamphlet 1649, "you hang a man for stealing, when you yourselves have stolen from your brethren all land and creatures,"¹⁴⁸ thus reminding us of More's passage cited earlier. Churchill means by the "Curmudgeons" none but Cromwell and his followers. In another scene, another girl, Hoskins, is also shown as a tramp travelling from one place to another. She sells herself to men to live. She admits that she is with "Different men sometimes,"¹⁴⁹ and tells another character in the play, Claxton's wife, that she is "not the only one"¹⁵⁰ who has taken up vagrancy and prostitution to ensure her livelihood. In an indicting passage which reminds us of

Garlon's and the Bondwoman's of The Island, she relates that her family had died "because how we live. My brothers did. Died of hunger more than fever. My mother kept boiling up the same bones."¹⁵¹ While Cromwell and those who reaped the fruits of the people's struggle prospered, the masses, represented by Brotherton and Hoskins were suffering and dying from hunger and deprivation as a result of the enclosure, the Civil War and their aftermath. Thus, the play's re-interpretation of the Cromwellian revolution leaves its audience therefore with the impression not that the Civil War established parliamentary democracy in Britain, but that it perpetuated the exploitation of the lower classes and simply shifted the ruling power from the monarchy to the bourgeoisie, thus paving the way to the rise of capitalism.

If Cromwell and Ireton prepared the way for capitalism . by insisting on a property-based government, Queen Victoria, as represented in Edward Bond's Early Morning, was to perfect it. Capitalism continued to develop during the 17th and 18th centuries to reach its most advanced stage under Victoria, expanded and consolidated by the Industrial Revolution. In consequence, this great Queen becomes for Bond the iconic representative of that full-blown 19th century capitalist society and its institutions which continue to haunt 20th century Britain.

In Early Morning, the Victorian icons are undone by means of savage comedy. In fact, Bond's play is redolent, in its bloodthirstiness, of Alfred Jarry's equally anti-bourgeois Ubu-Roi. As a result the play was banned by the

Lord Chamberlain, just before his powers were curtailed in 1968, for its extremely offensive degradation of the still highly respected characters of Britain's glorious, and relatively, recent history.

Most significantly, in terms of the iconography of the Victorian period, the great Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert are portrayed not as loving wife and husband, but as bloody conspirators against each other. Disraeli and Gladstone, two contemporary Prime Ministers are also presented as political hoodlums. Florence Nightingale, the virtuous angel of mercy, is presented as the lesbian lover of Victoria: "(Distraught). I'm changed," says Nightingale, "Queen Victoria raped me. I never dreamed that would happen... Her legs are covered in shiny black hairs."¹⁵² Later, Victoria cherishes that moment when she "felt" that Nightingale was a "virgin".¹⁵³ Miss Nightingale is also the sexual victim of the Lord Chamberlain who took the former for his wife and ultimately "got her with child."¹⁵⁴ As the play moves on, Nightingale enters another experience. She becomes a madame, "I opened a brothel, and business was so brisk... I catered for ministers, probation officers, Wvs hierarchy, women police chiefs- well there I was, in bed with Disraeli and Gladstone. They always shared a booking."¹⁵⁵ In scene thirteen, her therapy for the drooping morale of the wounded soldiers consists in sleeping with them. Thus Nightingale becomes the prostitute figure of the play. In addition to their promiscuity with the latter, the rest of the characters, including Queen Victoria, also engage in a long series of cannibalistic activities.

Bond's objective behind this repulsive topsy-turvydom is not, however, merely a simplistic anarchic distortion of Queen Victoria, her family and politicians. As in The Island of the Mighty, it is a prelude to subjecting historic figures to Marxist trial. Unlike in The Woman, in Early Morning, Bond expresses his iconoclasm both theatrically and ideologically. While in the former he merely questions Heros from a Marxist angle without degrading him theatrically, in the latter he defames the great Victoria by presenting her in an extremely disrespectable theatrical light, invokes laughter at and irreverence for her, and ultimately proceeds to put her in the limelight to be, like Heros, King Arthur, and Cromwell tried by a Marxist tribunal.

The critics of Early Morning could not see beyond the play's "gross insults" to respected characters from British history, or its "demonstration of total anarchy."¹⁵⁶ The reputable drama critic of The Times, Irving Wardle saw the play as "muddled and ^{un}talented."¹⁵⁷ To Benedict Nightingale, it was a "mad fantasy."¹⁵⁸ Another critic found it "bizarre and repulsive."¹⁵⁹ Martin Esslin, in Plays & Players, also dubbed it a "fantasy."¹⁶⁰ The above critics have failed to detect that although the play is surrealistic in its approach to history, it, as N. Harben rightly argues, is rooted in history. As a Marxist perspective on the Victorian era, the play conveys in "unsettling metaphorical terms the problems and discontent created by the divisive nature of Victorian society."¹⁶¹

The process of oppression, exploitation and vicious

capitalism followed by Cromwell and Ireton in the seventeenth century did not come to a halt with their death. It was to flourish in the reign of Queen Victoria two centuries later. As Bond's play shows, Victoria has obviously followed in the steps of Cromwell in her treatment of her people. A look at the play will show that Victoria's reign is a prolongation of Cromwell's.

Just as Heros, Sickingen, and Cromwell are assailed as perpetrators of upper-class privilege at the expense of the lower classes, Victoria is condemned as a standing symbol of the established aristocracy and monarchy. Kingsley Martin, a historian, describes the Queen in question as a "model monarch."¹⁶² Another critic regards her as an "archetype of monarchy." Bond, however, explodes the notion of Victoria as an aristocratic totem by presenting her in an incredibly ludicrous and injurious light.

Bond seeks to convey, however, that in spite of her popularity, Victoria was, in terms of her views and policies, no people's hero. She always acted out of her class interests. Just as Sickingen counted on the co-operation of the knights of his class in his revolt against the emperor, Victoria, as Elizabeth Longford writes in the biography, Victoria R.I., "relied on the aristocratic hierarchy to preserve her own magical balance."¹⁶³ She was more concerned about her throne than about the people. To this effect, Frank Hardie states in his book The Political Influence Of Queen Victoria (1935), that "certainly to keep her position was one of the ruling passions of her life."¹⁶⁴ "She was determined to hand on to her successors, unimpaired, and

undiminished, all the rights and privileges which she had acquired at her accession... she seems always to have seen herself as fighting a rearguard action in defence of the institution of monarchy."¹⁶⁵ And for that reason, we find her in the play strongly stressing that the "anarchists" and "immoralists," supposedly the people, "are wrong, our son will follow in our footsteps, with his brother at his side, and in time his son will follow him. Our line began at Stonehenge and shall not fall till Stonehenge falls... we shall not abandon this kingdom to anarchy."¹⁶⁶ Victoria hit hard against the rebels to preserve royalty. Hardie's above statement that Victoria was fighting a "rearguard action" to defend "monarchy" echoes Marx's criticism of Lassalle's Sickingen who was, in the words of Marx, also "fighting a rearguard action against the forces of progress." The Queen is regarded as a reactionary by Bond. Her insistence on the royal line reminds us of the Ardens' King Arthur, who, as I have shown earlier, wields power in co-operation with a group of princes from within the "spiked encampment," thus creating a power structure which excludes the people from government. It is also reminiscent of Cromwell's and Ireton's assertion of the rule of the virtuous and the propertied, and of Sickingen's revolt which was "concealed beneath a knightly feud." Thus, Victoria, like those rulers who preceded her, is shown to have denied the people a share in power and to have done her utmost to keep it in the hands of her closest allies and family. Eventually a Marxist socialist, Bond rejects any source of power which is not directed from below by the masses and undermines Victoria's reign for its

elitism.

Victoria is portrayed by Bond in the play, however, not only as elitist but as the enemy of her people. Instead of showing sympathy with and understanding of her subjects, she, as her husband describes her in the play is "afraid of the people. She thinks they're evil, she does not understand their energy. She suppresses it."¹⁶⁷ Hardie, in his aforementioned book, writes that Victoria indeed in reality "never learnt to distinguish between the people and the mob."¹⁶⁸ And for that reason, she took them for her enemies. She, in fact, represents the typical ruler for the anarchist Marxist thinker Pierre Joseph Proudhon, in whose view, monarchy regard the people as a "monster to be fought, muzzled, and chained down; which must be led by trickery like the elephant or the rhinoceros, or cowed by famine."¹⁶⁹ In the play, Victoria is indeed portrayed leading her people "by trickery." "She is afraid. She knows a royal wedding will pacify the people."¹⁷⁰

Regarding the people as "evil," Victoria also sets out to "suppress" them. Like Arthur and Cromwell, in the play she spares no efforts to put down any revolt on the part of the masses. She is tyrannical so much so that a critic of the play does not consider her only as an archetype of monarchy but also as a symbol of "repression."¹⁷¹ She romps the stage as a monstrous dictator. There would seem to be some factual evidence for this view. Lady-Lyttelton, a governess to the royal children remarked that a "vein of iron runs through her most extraordinary character"¹⁷² and Longford writes in her afore-mentioned book that Victoria

"thought prison the best place for public enemies."¹⁷³

Bond's play articulates these facts about the Queen and condemns them. In the early stages of the play, Victoria is made to say that "Instead of fighting enemies our armies are putting down strikers and guarding our judges."¹⁷⁴ She, as I shall show later, anticipates Sir Winston Churchill, who, in like manner, set troops on striking men. Viewing the Victorian age from a Marxist angle, Bond suggests through the play that during Victoria's reign, the people, like their counterparts in The Woman, The Island of the Mighty and Light Shining In Buckinghamshire, were oppressed, and the judiciary used to enforce the laws of the superstructure, represented by Victoria. N. Harben notes that Bond's view of oppression during Victoria's rule is well-founded. "The country," she writes, "was restless, and often rent by industrial and agricultural uprisings and discontent... Chartism was the expression of revolutionary democratic agitation among the masses of population clamouring for extension of the franchise."¹⁷⁵ Trying to suppress the elements of such movements, Victoria kept throwing rebels in gaols, "Our prisons are full,"¹⁷⁶ she says in the play, which reminds us of how Cromwell and Ireton put down the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters, who, like the Chartists of the Victorian era, also agitated for a democratic franchise for the people, and expresses Bond's reference elsewhere to the "explosive atmosphere of the 19th century where there was a great deal of economic injustice and a working class that really could have risen up and cut the landlords' throats."¹⁷⁷ The other character who shares Victoria's view of the people in the

play is her son, Prince Arthur, who regards the "mob" as "sadistic, violent, vicious, cruel, anarchic, dangerous, murderous, treacherous, cunning, crude, disloyal, dirty, destructive, sadistic."¹⁷⁸ This outburst reminds us of Coriolanus's tirades against the plebeians in Shakespeare's Coriolanus.

As a representative capitalist, Victoria epitomised the character of her age. Hence Kingsley Martin's statement quoted in Frank Hardie, The Political Influence Of Queen Victoria, that Victoria's prejudices and convictions were "so exactly those dominant in her age that she seemed to embody its very nature within herself."¹⁷⁹ She was the sum total of the type of social and economic relationships that were dominant at that time. Like the rest of the characters in the play, she is portrayed by Bond as a "disparate, calculating, competing," atom "in a society which operates on the principle of eat or be eaten." Bond explodes "the philosophy of a materialistic merchantalist empire of which Queen Victoria is the supreme symbol."¹⁸⁰ It was during her time that economic competition and the operation of the laws of capitalism flourished.¹⁸¹ N. Harben notes:

"It was a century of great trade profits, and had immense repercussions for the twentieth century in the attitudes it fostered, with its emphasis on aggressive individualism and untrammelled enterprise. England was seen by some as the citadel of laissez-faire or the free play of economic forces. Commercial monopoly was the theoretical foundation of its merchantalist empire. In Chesterton's words, economic liberalism was the philosophy in power. The often quoted motto of laissez-faire was, 'Each for himself and God for all of us', as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens."¹⁸²

Embodying the individualistic spirit of the age, it is

no wonder, then, that Victoria, as we have seen, is portrayed in the play as a self-centered monarch who wants power and wealth to be in the hands of her family. The above historical facts about Victorian capitalism are articulated in the play through the use of cannibalism as a metaphor for capitalistic, individualistic competitions and the social and economic relationships. Victoria and her followers prey on each others' limbs. In scene sixteen, Albert comments, "In heaven we eat each other" and in scene seventeen, he, as the stage direction reads, snatches a piece of body from the hamper. In the same scene, George fights with Arthur for a piece of Albert's body, and is chewing away at it. In like manner, Victoria is shown determined to eat Arthur, and Florence Nightingale complains that her arm has been eaten. Like Marx, Bond identifies capitalism, particularly the Victorian one, as a regime of unbridled rivalry and Early Morning dramatises Marx's tirades on extreme competition as a law of the capitalist mode of production. Bond also offers an animalistic picture of a competitive grinding capitalism in scene eleven:

"D'you dream about the mill? There are men and women and children and cattle and birds and horses pushing a mill. They're grinding other cattle and people and children: they push each other in. Some fall in. It grinds their bones, you see. The ones pushing the wheel, even the animals, look up at the horizon. They stumble. Their feet get caught up in the rags and dressing that slip down from their wounds. They go round and round. At the end they go very fast. They shout. Half of them run in their sleep. Some are trampled on. They're sure they're reaching the horizon... Later I come back. There's a dust storm. White powder everywhere. I find the mill and it's stopped. The last man died half in. One wooden arms dropped off, and there's a body under it... Some of my dreams are better. In one, each man slaughters his

family and cattle and then kills himself."

Through Arthur's nightmare about the mill, Bond exposes the capitalist Victorian society as bestial and devouring, where its members are no more than competing atoms in a mad world obsessed with economic rivalry, avarice and extreme individualism. In Bond's view, it is the capitalist mode of production which leads people to behave like animals in their striving for achieving their material needs, which echoes Marx arguing that people's lives are shaped by the kind of economic relationships that dominate society, and the ways and means through which they attain their livelihood. In the introduction to The Fool, Bond also severely castigates the ruthlessness and aggressiveness of capitalist business and calls for a more human approach to obtaining one's needs, i.e., socialism which, as Longford writes, was anathema to Queen Victoria who "never had any conception of the real meaning of the word 'Socialism' and apparently confused it with rioting,"¹⁸³ a fact that could only rouse the satirist in the socialist Bond who has made clear in more than one interview that he considers that British society still follows in the steps of Victorian, class-riven capitalism.

As I have mentioned earlier, Marx stated that a difference in property distribution creates classes in society. To Bond, Victoria, through her development of capitalism, wanted the country to be stratified into classes so that she, like Cromwell and Ireton, owning huge wealth and riches, could remain on top holding the reins of power. Just as Heros, Cromwell and Ireton ruled their peoples through their purchase of power with money and property, so Victoria

and her power-structure, in Bond's view, relied on the Banks. Owning capital, properties and the means of production, she and her politicians ruled the country. They formed a powerful class which prospered at the expense of the misery of the working-class. The Victorian era is portrayed in Early Morning as an age of "hostile layers of leaders and followers, dominators and dominated, presided over by the imperious sovereign Lady herself."¹⁸⁴ In other words, Victoria is condemned as the epitome of 19th century capitalism.

Viewing history from below, Bond, following his practice of demystification, has a point to make about the dispossessed of the Victorian epoch. Arthur, Victoria's son, says in the play that "A lot of people are starving."¹⁸⁵ This is not intended as a passing comment. It forms the crux of Bond's plebeian viewpoint. The nineteenth century is well-known for its "slums" which Bond describes as "slow - motion concentration camps"¹⁸⁶ and indeed poverty was rife under the great Queen. John Rae, writes in his book Contemporary Socialism, 1884:

"In the wealthiest nation in the world, almost every twentieth inhabitant is a pauper, that according to poor-law reports, one fifth of the community is insufficiently clad; that according to medical reports to the Privy Council, the agricultural labourers and large classes of working people in towns are too poorly fed to save them from what are known as starvation diseases, that the great portion of our population lead a life of monotonous and incessant toil, with no prospect in old age, but penury and parochial support; and that one third, if not indeed one-half of the families of the country, are huddled-six in a room, in a way quite incompatible with elementary claims of decency, health or morality."¹⁸⁷

A Marxist iconoclast, Bond is not dazzled by the glory and grandeur of the rulers of the Victorian age. He, like the Ardens and Churchill, is more concerned about the condition of the masses than about the greatness of the great. Thus, like their counterparts in The Woman the Island of the Mighty and Light Shining on Buckinghamshire, the Victorian proletariat, Bond emphasises, was not only oppressed by Victoria and her regime, but also impoverished and starved. Victoria's greatness is hollow to him, in that it failed to redeem the people.

I have said earlier that Bond, the Ardens, and Churchill have conceived the plays cited on two levels, both as a demythification and demystification of certain historical periods and their great figures, and as perspectives on modern times. In other words, their thesis is that what was done to the people by the rulers of the Greek era, Arthurian times, the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, is still done to the people by twentieth century leaders. As Howard Brenton shows in The Churchill Play, Heros, King Arthur, Cromwell, Ireton and Victoria, have not died. They were resurrected in the person of Sir Winston Churchill. Brenton characterises Churchill as the present legacy of the past, and in doing so represents the culmination of that development of capitalist power which I have brought out in my examination of the previous four plays. The historical Churchill, as I shall show later, always looked back to and wrote about the glory of the heroes of the past. He always wanted to revive the glory of the kings and queens of England,¹⁸⁸ who, as we have seen in the plays examined

earlier, are targets of destruction for Brecht-Marxist plays because of their unsympathetic treatment of their peoples. Churchill's treatment of his people, as Brenton's play shows, was not, however, any different from that employed by the kings and queens whose glory he wishes to celebrate. 189

Brenton, as The Churchill Play reveals, is particularly interested in myths and icons. I have dealt with Brenton in the first section of this thesis as an Aristophanist, who subjects living politicians to a derogatory, farcical comic treatment, and, who, like Aristophanes, lashes out satirically at their various policies. In The Churchill Play, however, he, like Brecht and those of his fellow dramatists examined earlier, bases his analysis of his targets upon Marxist ideology.

Like Early Morning, The Churchill Play undoes its target farcically. The Great Man, Churchill, as will be seen, is, like Victoria, scorned and vulgarised.

The Churchill Play (1974) was written to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Sir Winston Churchill, the great English totem-hero who won, for the nation, the Second World War, and who helped to carve up the modern world. 190 Marking centenaries is usually elegiac. But in the case of The Churchill Play, the tradition is turned upside down. Brenton's objective is far from being celebratory. He takes up the occasion to present a by no means congratulatory perspective on Churchill whose iconic status in the play is absolutely shattered.

"The portrait of Churchill in The Churchill Play,"

Harold Hobson argued in the Sunday Times, "is drawn in such a manner that Mr Brenton could himself repudiate it."¹⁹¹ To Ned Chaillet of The Times, "Brenton's play includes and endorses the demolition of Winston Churchill,"¹⁹² and is, intended to "take the piss out of a great Englishman."¹⁹³

Like all Brenton's targets, Churchill is treated boorishly. Like Scott of the Antarctic, Wesley, and Thatcher, he takes his share of Brenton's savage humour and bawdy subversion.¹⁹⁴ Unlike those other plays, however, The Churchill Play is a play within a play. Brenton does not approach the Great Man directly; instead, he lets a group of internees of an "English Dachau" put on a play about Churchill who is, "put before ye. Fer a few laughs"¹⁹⁵ and one of the characters is pleased to "have a little fun with a play about Sir Winston"¹⁹⁶ who is presented as an object of laughter for a visiting delegation.

The play features Churchill rising "obscenely" from the dead, something reminiscent of Brenton's other dramatic resurrections, for example, in a A Short Sharp Shock! where Airey Neave and Lord Louis Mountbatten are shown in a dreadful light, carrying human limbs and stained with blood. As in Shock and other plays, Brenton uses scabrous language to lash at his targets. Churchill is called an "old bugger"¹⁹⁷ with "pus-coloured eyes"¹⁹⁸ and with "Dogpiss" on his grave.¹⁹⁹ He is a "dirty 'orrible old man."²⁰⁰ He is ridiculously portrayed by the internees having a bath with Stalin, with another actor representing "a bar of soap, in between the thighs ... of Winston Churchill and Joseph

Stalin."²⁰¹ In the play, Churchill complains that he is shovelled "away ... after all these years" ²⁰² as if he were rubbish. Hence Mike's remarks that he does not like to touch him lest the former "fall apart. In my hands . Bits a Sir Winston Churchill. I don't fancy that."²⁰³ Mike proceeds to ridicule Churchill's legacy:

"you left us nothing. Few statues of you, in your boiler suit. Your name in a kid's skipping rhyme. Adventure story from some lost colonial war. Bit a gas from our fathers about some darkest hour years ago. Gas only, not a single human, thought. Not a single true, human remain."²⁰⁴

Churchill's famous rhetoric is derided as "a rave from the grave."²⁰⁵

Brenton goes on to demystify and debunk Churchill's and his family's history in a subversive and aggressive manner, focusing on the seamy side of both. The Great Man is reported in the play to have "'ad terrible fits a depression. He called these fits, Black Dog. When 'e 'ad the fit come on, 'e would cancel all appointments, and shut 'imself up. Not even Mrs Churchill could come into 'room, when Black Dog was upon 'im."²⁰⁶ Churchill's "childhood" was "Hedged by fears":

"He was a sad little boy. Nine years old, brutally put to prep. school. The English public School system is there for the brutalisation of the Ruling Classes... And Harrow is an abattoir to hack out the sensitive spirit, the all too human meat of the shy, fat boy."²⁰⁷

Finishing with Churchill himself, Brenton moves on to dissect the history of the former's father who, as Churchill is made to say, contracted "syphilis": "Lord Randolph Churchill.... died of that filthy disease."²⁰⁸ Churchill:

"cannot express, even to myself, the obscenity of what the disease had done to him. It had ... scraped his brain. Despite the heavy cologne his nurses doused upon him, he smelt. His affections had putrefied Lost in the vile infected marsh of his illness ... I have feared his disease all my life. When Black Dog came, thought ... This is it! My father's disease, visited upon me, as the Bible says, generation upon generation.... In the lavatory would look at myself for chancres, little signs, eczemas, rashes, the slightest inflamed pimple ... Made me mad with fear. The bridge of my nose! On the rot! Spent hours before mirrors. Should it ever come to me, I resolved, I would kill myself. Took that resolve into the grave. Won't read that in the official biography."209

Thus, to Brenton, the idolised Churchill was beneath the facade no more than an obsessive hypochondriac.

Interviewed by Hugh Hebert in The Guardian of 9 May, 1974, Brenton, strangely enough, claimed that The Churchill Play was not meant to satirise Churchill:

"It's not a satirical portrait of him. I hope it is a very truthful one ... I think that in a curious way he was in continuous pain. The view of him as a brutal, witty, insensitive man is quite wrong, and I've tried to express that in the play. There was the tragedy of his father's illness and death. And he was pursued by uncontrollable depressions. He was an adventurer by necessity. And he was hated by most of his peers for most of his life: that's something that's often forgotten. People kept on stopping me in Nottingham and saying, 'I hear you're writing a play about Churchill. Great man, great man'. They always use that same phrase. But I don't think he was really a great man at all. I think he was certainly an efficient ginger man as a war leader."210

In a later interview given to Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler of Theatre Quarterly, Brenton, again, stressed that "The idea that Churchill is universally admired by people who went through the war is not true."211

However, Brenton is not the first playwright to try his hand at dissecting Churchill. The Great Man was the target

of slander of other plays written before The Churchill Play. It was Rolf Hochhuth, the well-known German iconoclast, who first presented an unfavourable perspective on Churchill in his controversial play, Soldiers in which the latter is shown instigating the death in 1943 of General Sikorski, head of the Polish Government in exile. In addition to that, Churchill was condemned for his policy of bombing civilian populations in World War Two. In Dingo 1967), as I have shown earlier, Wood ridiculed Churchill, and, like Hochhuth, he denounced his war-mongering policies. In What the Butler Saw by Joe Orton, Churchill does not appear on the stage, but still, he is made fun of and slurred through innuendo. One of the characters in the play relates that "parts of the great man, were actually found embedded in my step mother" who "died recently after a remarkable intimate involvement with Sir Winston Churchill."²¹² The character is actually speaking of a fragment of a destroyed statue but the association is clear. Having distinguished himself well in the Second World War, Churchill's "moral collapse" is mischievously pardoned in Orton's play and so "the Great Man can once more take up his place in the High Street as an example to us all of the spirit that won the Battle of Britain."²¹³ Thus Orton characteristically uses sexual reference to desecrate a national icon.

While Hochhuth and Wood indict Churchill as a war-monger, and while Orton holds him up to ridicule for the sake of mischief, Brenton, as I have already mentioned, has another objective. His de-iconisation of Churchill is ideologically motivated. In other words, the process of

debunking in The Churchill Play, as in The Island of the Mighty and Early Morning is a preliminary device to view the personage in question from a Marxist point of view. Like Brecht, Brenton manifests in his play a depreciative sceptical attitude towards monumentalised figures. To him, "All leaders of the world" are "vampires. Imagine them in the Gents Toilet at the United Nations, sucking each other's necks."²¹⁴ Ernie, Mike, and Black Dog, three characters in the play, serve to voice Brenton's view of the great when they shout: "God rot great men. God rot great men. God rot great men."²¹⁵ Brenton's attitude towards Churchill in The Churchill Play significantly finds a parallel in a letter sent by fellow iconoclast John Arden to the editor of The New Statesman of 29th January, 1965, concerning the death of Churchill:

"Sir, surely I am not the only one of your readers to feel that there is something very wrong about the press reactions to the death of Sir Winston Churchill? Even your contributor, Mr Morgan (although he does make a plea for balanced obituary notices) has fallen into the controversial elegiac phrases: 'the great warrior... defying those laws of nature that apply to ordinary men'. Now in fact many 'ordinary men' take just as long to die, even at the age of 91, but because they are not celebrated in their lives they depart with no public note taken of the weather - outside or the prolongation of their last agony. We were all shocked by the death of president Kennedy and sorry for his widow: but what did she suffer that the widow of the policeman shot in Dallas the same day did not? ... We have, in fact, managed as a nation to survive for the last few years without Churchill's active leadership, and no doubt will continue to do so. Why then must we present a natural sorrow at the death of a strong old man as though it were a cry of despair by an army deprived of its general in the hour of crisis?"²¹⁶

The Churchill Play echoes the main points of the above letter. To Arden, as to Brenton, Churchill is not a godly figure in the "Wilderness," as a TV series showed

him.²¹⁷ In that series, the Great Man is portrayed as a Christ-like mythical figure out of this world and its concerns. He is likened to Moses and other prophets upon whom the salvation of their peoples depends. Looking at Churchill from a Marxist point of view, Brenton repudiates and subverts the former's legendary image, relegating him and his achievements to a very secondary position.

Arden's above letter to The New Statesman is, however by no means, Brenton's source-material for the Churchill Play, rather he drew material for the play from an iconoclastic history of Britain's domestic front during the Second World War, Angus Calder's The People's War (1969). Calder, a socialist with a Marxist ideology, rewrote the history of the Second World War from a plebeian stance. Hence the book's title which is echoed in the standpoint of Brenton's play. The idea that it was the genius and superb leadership of Churchill that won the Second World War was indeed to be dashed in The Churchill Play.

As I have shown earlier, Marx in his criticism of Lassalle's Franz Von Sickingen, has stressed that great individuals are not irreplaceable. They are produced by the people for certain situations. In other words, history finds the men it needs and not the other way round. Napoleon was not unique. If he was not there, another man would have replaced him, a view shared by the present Russian leader M. Gorbachyov who is on his way to be mythicised as the man who will change Russia. In an interview with him by Christopher Walker in the Guardian 21, May, 1987, Gorbachyov, echoing

Marx, rejects the idea that he is "personally" responsible for transforming Russia, "if there was no Gorbachev," he says, "there would have been someone else. Our society has ripened for changes and the need of changes has cleared a road for itself."²¹⁸ Calder and Brenton apply this Marxist theory of great figures to Churchill. In his above-mentioned book, Calder argues that "in May 1940," Churchill was "thrown up by the very situation which he called on all classes to defy. He was part of that situation, he did transcend it, he expressed defiance, he did not create it."²¹⁹ In other words, Churchill was created by what Calder calls "those peculiar circumstances" which when they receded "his magic dwindled".²²⁰ Taking up Calder's view, Brenton echoes the former in his interview with Herbert when he says that Churchill "was an adventurer by necessity."²²¹ He was not exceptional. Nor did he come from the wilderness. Brenton's point is that according to history necessity is linked on to necessity, so that individual resolves and actions cease to count. To this effect D.K.Peacock contends that "Churchill's near dictatorship... was accepted by the population because it appeared to be an effective way of conducting the war." Churchill was "granted power and support by the people for as long as the people deemed it necessary and with the cessation of hostilities, the people unsentimentally removed him from power."²²² "He was seen," Calder notes, "as essentially a war leader, and his rejection by the electorate in 1945 was the result of this long-standing image of him, not of any sudden access of ingratitude."²²³

Just as they minimise the role of Churchill in achieving

victory in the Second World War, Calder and Brenton, like Marx, Brecht, and the Ardens, celebrate the people, and raise them to the status of heroism. Brenton's sympathies in his play, like Arden's in his letter to the New Statesman, are with the masses, the real makers of history. In his comments on Sickingen, Marx has contended that destinies of world-wide historical importance are not sustained by individuals, but by the masses; destinies of such far-reaching significance, such as winning a large-scale war are made not by heroes but by peoples; a premise taken up and embraced by both Calder and Brenton.

The Churchill Play attempts to drive home the idea that it was the whole of the British people, who won the war through suffering and struggle. One of Brenton's characters in the play, Ernie, challenges Churchill and addresses the audience by saying: "Don't you know? I did. And she did. People won the war."²²⁴ To Calder and Brenton, it is not the Churchill war; it is "the people's war." Churchill was no more than an individual soldier who did not achieve victory by himself but with the great valour and steadfastness of the people. "In 1940 and the years which followed," Calder notes, "the people of Britain were protagonists in their own history."²²⁵ "Whether they liked it or not," the establishment, "depended on the willing co-operation of the ruled, including even scorned and underprivileged sections of society, manual workers and women."²²⁶ Even children were involved in the struggle.

Celebrating the willingness and courage of the people, Calder goes on to write their history in golden letters. (my

bolding).

"With parliament muted, with the traditional system of local government patently inadequate, with the army conceding the soldier's right to reason why, with the traditional basis of industrial discipline swept away by full employment, the people increasingly led itself. Its nameless leaders in the bombed streets, on the factory floor, in the Home Guard drill hall, asserted a new and radical popular spirit. The air raid warden and the shop steward were men of destiny, for without their ungrudging support for the war it might be lost."²²⁷

With the high-spiritedness and unwavering struggle, the people went on to "fight the war, forcing their masters into retreat, rejecting their nominal leaders and representatives and paying homage to leaders almost of their own imagination... The war was fought with the willing brains and hearts of the most vigorous elements in the community, the educated, the skilled, the bold, the active, the young, who worked more and more, consciously towards a transformed post-war world."²²⁸ Calder's and Brenton's point is that Churchill and other heroes of the war derived their power and strength from the people. To this effect, Peacock notes, that the relationship of the mythical leaders of the Second World War with the people of the nation is presented by Calder, "not simply as one of leader and led, the charismatic leader followed passionately and blindly by a civilian population and by the armed forces, but more as an interaction between leader and population."²²⁹ Thus, The Churchill Play, like Coriolanus, views history from below. It shows a different conception of historical development: one which includes the force of the people as an active agent in the movement of history and which questions the indispensability of the hero. The British people could have

won the war without Churchill, and as Arden's letter states, they could survive for the last few years without his "active leadership." But at the same time, Brenton, like Hare in Plenty and Caryl Churchill in Light regrets that the people's hopes in achieving a better tomorrow after the war were dashed; "the effect of the war was not to sweep society on to a new course, but to hasten its progress along the old grooves"; a view echoed in The Churchill Play.²³⁰

"I read a lot of military 'istory. Do you know what it tells me? In medieval times before a defeated city, they cried 'avoc. And for three days the city was the common soldiers'. Rape. Burn. Loot. Dance in blood, wine, stuff yerself. Disgustin', eh? Morning O' the forth day, King'd send 'is aristocrat officers in with staves, un' dogs. Clear out the common soldier. And then send in the Archbishop, to consecrate the place. So the king, and his retinue, a fat ermine-robed lot, politicians all, could ride in. Unsullied. To thank God, for their delivery, and freedom. The point o' my story is ... That the runnin' amok, the havoc, the sackin' of the city ... Why that was the soldiers' pay. The loot and what's more... The ecstasy."²³¹

In the above passage, Brenton historicises his subject. The middle ages are none but modern Britain, where a handful of people, "aristocrat officers," "the king, and his retinue, a fat ermine-robed lot, politicians all," or what Calder calls the "old grooves" from which Churchill descended, are the only ones who benefited from the war. The real victors, or what Brenton calls "the common soldier," supposedly the ordinary people of Britain have, ironically enough, enjoyed the ecstasy of victory and nothing else. In Dingo, they were awarded useless medals. Brenton's point is that Churchill, like Sickingen and Cromwell, is a class warrior. He fought the war, as I shall show shortly, to revive the glory and

status of his class, which, to Brenton, reaped the fruits of victory. Thus, Churchill, becomes in Brenton's Marxist terms, a representative of the 20th century bourgeoisie, for which he fought, and which in Brenton's play is likened to a dangerous malignant tumour or the disease of syphilis, that should be eradicated from the body of the nation.²³²

Brenton, relying on Calder's book, sees Churchill as a successor of a long-established aristocratic class in Britain. The Great Man, as I have said earlier, was fascinated by the past and its heroes; "it was kings he loved ... he thinks of his great ancestors."²³³ His goal was to recreate the past. He saw himself as the representative of his ancestors in the modern world. He wanted to revive the glory of the kings of England, who in socialist plays such as Early Morning, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire and The Cheviot are, like Churchill in The Churchill Play, portrayed as the enemies of the people. Brenton tries to make clear in the play that the reins of power have still not been passed to the people. The class which used to rule Britain in the past is still there, and the Churchill myth is an extension and illustration of it. In the play Brenton articulates this view by aggressively calling Churchill "the greatest, the biggest, blood-y most monument-al English-man that ever lived,"²³⁴ "Daddy of 'em all," ²³⁵ the "fat English ... gut."²³⁶ To this effect, Peacock argues that:

"For Brenton, the perpetuation of the Churchill myth becomes a representation of how Britain persists in clinging to those class-divisions which are represented by a paternalistic upper-class leadership followed gratefully by a subservient working class. In the play as a whole his iconoclasm provides a powerful image of Britain's adherence to the social

structures of the past, its unwillingness to develop a more equitable society and, in the context of the play's setting of an Interment Camp for union Activists during 1984, a warning of the threat to the freedom of the mass of population which the perpetuation of such social myths represents."²³⁷

In Brenton's opinion, it is Churchill's bourgeois class that tries to impose his mythical image on the people, a view originally communicated by Roland Barthes, who in his book Mythologies, contended that "the bourgeoisie hides the fact that it is the bourgeoisie and thereby produces myths."²³⁸ Brenton, apparently sharing Barthes's view, sets out therefore to demythologise and demystify myths and the manner of their construction in an attempt to enlighten the people concerning the bonds which hold them.

In terms of Brenton's Marxist politics, the modern bourgeoisie represented by Churchill is alienated from the people. It is out of touch with the commonality. It lives in ivory towers completely cut off from the people and their plight. "Mrs Churchill once said to her husband's doctor, 'you probably don't realise, Charles, that he (the historical Churchill) knows nothing of the life of ordinary people. He's never been in a bus and only once on the underground."²³⁹ Hence his emergence in the play as a smug windbag, mentally deaf to mistake a bombed-out Cockney's "We might just give it back to you"²⁴⁰ for "give it 'em back, guv." ²⁴¹ Brenton rewrites the second sentence as the "give it 'em back, guv" mentioned in Churchill's memoirs to become "we might just give it back to you." The inversion conveyed is that Churchill's mishearing of the Cockney's

phrase is intended by Brenton to suggest that the Great Man was unable to understand the aspirations of the working-class.²⁴² His interests, as I have shown, are in kings and monumental rulers of the past. Just as Marx criticised Sickingen's neglect of the peasantry, Brenton, a people's dramatist, can not abide Churchill's class-ridden and imperialistic interests from which the people are excluded.

The Churchill Play does not, however, show Churchill only as an alienated leader, but also as an exploiter, oppressor, and enemy of the people. Like his fellow leaders "at the United Nations," Churchill is a "vampire" and a "Dracula" who comes "back for blood and young women's necks."²⁴³ As a representative of modern capitalism, Churchill is an exploiter of the masses. In Brenton's savage dramatics, he sucks their blood and leaves them as haggard corpses and himself developed a "fat gut" at the expense of their hunger and poverty. Churchill's successors in office have continued a similar exploitation of the people. In A Short Sharp Shock! Thatcher who regards Churchill as her hero, was attacked for creating shanty towns and for impoverishing millions of people by creating unemployment and by promoting the upper-class and the wealthy to whom Churchill belonged.

In addition to reaping the fruits of the people's struggle, Churchill is shown in the play to have in fact always been a people's enemy. In The People's War, Calder notes, Churchill is known for "his reckless use of troops to break strikes in the docks and railways when he had become Home Secretary in 1910."²⁴⁴ "He was repeatedly accused in latter life of having set troops to fire on striking Welsh

miners at Tonypandy in 1910"²⁴⁵. He was the strikers' most bitter enemy. Brenton's play echoes Calder's view of Churchill's brutality.

"He'll come out, he'll come out, I do believe that of him. Capable of anything, that one. (Fiercely), To bugger working people. (He coughs - Recovers - Fiercely). We have never forgiven him in Wales. He sent soldiers against us, the bloody man. He sent soldiers against Welsh mining men in 1910. Three were shot. The working people of Wales know their enemies. He was our enemy. We hated his gut. The fat English upper class gut of the man. When they had the collection, for the statue in front of parliament... All over Wales town and county councils would not collect. No Welsh pennies for the brutal man to stand there!"²⁴⁶

In the above passage, we are presented with the iconolators and iconoclasts. The former, supposedly Churchill's class, attempted to iconise him by setting him on a pedestal in front of the houses of parliament, while the working people of Wales display their hatred for Churchill by refusing to idolise him. The Marine, voicing Brenton's attitude towards Churchill, fiercely disapproves of the "statue" or the icon and calls for pulling it down. "No.... pennies for the brutal man."

The Churchill Play is intended to illustrate how oppression is still rife in modern Britain; a view articulated in the play in the Sergeant's words:

"Ten years down Ulster then English streets. Then the late seventies and the laws against industrial unrest. Soldier boy at the picket line, working men 'is own kind comin' at, 'im yellin' Scab, Scab. I went down a mine..... The miners o' that pit tried t' kill us,... Women spit-very 'ard."²⁴⁷

The unruly elements thrown in prisons attest to the

disharmony between the internees and social, political, and economic institutions bequeathed by Churchill. The above passage clearly charts the industrial unrest during the seventies and the intensification of the struggle between the workers and their employers, the capitalists, represented by Churchill and imaginatively presupposes a situation in which the troops sent by him to quell Welsh miners in 1910 could be replaced by more ruthless elements capable of extreme violence.

"O'w freedom goes. When did freedom go?...Thar, then. Was it then? Or some ev'nin', ... Wun ev'nin'. Y' were in pub, or local Odeon. Or in bed w' your Mrs. Or watchin' telly. An' freedom went. Ay, y' look back and y' ask... when did freedom go?"²⁴⁸

asks one of the internees.

While Brecht, Bond, and the Ardens, at the end of Coriolanus, The Woman, and the Island of the Mighty, convey a sense of hope that the oppressed will one day avenge their oppression by turning the world upside-down and by achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat, Brenton seems to be a more pessimistic Marxist. He appreciates the vital role played by the masses in the movement of history, but at the same time, he manifests a sense of despair. His play ends on a pessimistic note. The internees' attempt to revolt against their jailors and to achieve freedom fails. There is nowhere to break out to.²⁴⁹ They are besieged and their hopes of victory are dashed. The enemies of the people, according to Brenton, will prove invincible if not recognised and defeated before they attain the dominance that is illustrated in the play by the Churchill internment camp.

The concept of The People's Enemies, the title of this chapter, as we have seen, is echoed in all the plays in question. As can be seen from the examination of the historical chronology of the plays concerned, history is presented as a repeated story of oppression and exploitation of the masses by the iconised figures targeted therein. Heros did not die. He was resurrected throughout ages repeatedly in the persons of King Arthur of the middle ages, Cromwell and Ireton of the seventeenth century, Victoria of the nineteenth century, and finally in Churchill of the twentieth century, who all followed in each others' footsteps in what Bond's poem calls the perpetration of "crimes" against the people. The Brecht-Marxist playwrights, Bond, the Ardens, Caryl Churchill and Brenton each attempt to discharge what they consider to be their obligations as writers by fighting for the powerless against the powerful and by turning history and its icons upside down in order to reveal the continuance of those crimes within their own society. It is no wonder then, that, as the next chapter will reveal, they set out to decry and arraign their fellow artists who failed to do the same.

II. 2. Culpable Artists

As part of their attempt to communicate left-wing political views of British society, a number of playwrights, conscious of their role, have raised the question of the place and duty of art and artists in society. Among these artists are Trevor Griffiths, Dusty Hughes, Howard Brenton,

John Arden, and Edward Bond. The above dramatists, except Griffiths, are marked by a tendency to resurrect actual historical artists in some of their plays in order to explore their positions in society. Hughes wrote about Maxim Gorky and Vladimir Mayakovsky in Futurists. Brenton revived Shelley and Byron in Bloody Poetry. Arden dealt with David Lindsey in Armstrong's Last Goodnight, a few Arthurian poets in The Island and with himself in The Bagman. Bond, following his practice of probing history, resurrected many historical artists such as Matsuo Basho in Narrow Road to the Deep North, Shakespeare in Bingo, Clare in The Fool and Orpheus in Orpheus. However, it is not my intention to examine all the above plays in this chapter. Instead, I shall focus on Bingo, Narrow Road, The Island and The Bagman because, unlike the rest, they fall within the framework of my thesis, that is, in common with the rest of the plays examined in the first chapter of the present part they are iconoclastic in nature, and are ideologically Brecht-Marxist. In contrast, Griffiths who wrote Comedians to comment on commercial art and artists in Britain, dealt with fictional characters and Bloody Poetry, Futurists and Orpheus are iconolatrous and therefore will be spared for another section. In Armstrong, although Arden channels his play through the character of the 16th century Scottish poet, Lindsey, he is still probing his favourite themes, the curvilinear versus the rectilinear, the barbarity of a civilised man and pacifism and is not essentially iconoclastic, while Bond's The Fool is also not meant to attack Clare as Bingo does Shakespeare. In The Fool, Bond portrays Clare as the victim of an unjust society. In other

words, unlike in Bingo where he assails society through Shakespeare, in The Fool, his criticism is levelled at society in favour of Clare.

Towards the end of the sixties and during the seventies, Bond and the Ardens felt forced by the wider inclusion of politics in theatre, to assess the nature of the role of the artist, particularly the dramatist, in the revolutionary popular struggle. As a result of this, they, to use Bond's argument, have tried to "find representative figures from the past..., to see how they were functioning as writers"¹, and in the light of this, to point out their shortcomings and prescribe an antidote. In doing so, they were assessing their own positions by seeing their targets as measuring rods by which to compare themselves.

The resurrecting of literary and artistic luminaries from history was conceived on three levels, as an attempt to topple the cultural and artistic hegemony of the establishment; as a Marxist artistic judgement of their targets and as a consideration of the political role of the artist.

The people's enemies, for the Ardens and Bond, are not only the slave-holders, feudalists and capitalists discussed earlier, but also the artists who fail to champion the cause of the masses - sometimes by assuming a bourgeois stance as is the case with the Shakespeare of Bingo; by dedicating one's art to mysticism as does the Japanese poet, and perfecter of the Haiku Matsuo Basho in Narrow Road, or by putting one's artistic talents in the service of the ruling

class, thus becoming a lackey to it, a criticism levelled at the Arthurian sorcerer-poet, Merlin in The Island and at the playwright himself, John Arden, in The Bagman. Thus we can recognise three major types of artistic relationship to society targeted by the playwrights concerned; the artist as a bourgeois, the artist as a mystic, and the artist as a lackey. As will be seen, Marx's critique of Lassalle's Franz von Sickingen which is considered to have provided what Henry Arvon, the well-known Marxist critic calls "the first broad outlines of the specifically Marxist esthetics"², is whether consciously or unconsciously echoed in Bond's and the Ardens' own treatments of Shakespeare, Basho and Merlin.

II. 2A. The Artist As Bourgeois

Bond's Bingo, first performed at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter on the 14th of November, 1973, takes as its target the dramatist and poet, William Shakespeare, whose significance can hardly be denied to have had a world-wide influence on the lives of men and as such has long been a universal, artistic cultural icon. The bard has not become only the "quintessential idol" of the "west," but also has struck roots in world culture in general to the extent that he has lost his nationality to become a universal literary figure. His works have been translated into most of the world's languages and his humanist teachings have been assimilated by millions of peoples the world over. His name is a perennial glory to the theatre and its workers, and a source of inspiration for artists of all sorts. In consequence of this eminence it was perhaps inevitable that

he should be judged as an appropriate target for socialists and Marxists, of whom Bond is one who wishes to assault the bourgeois cultural hegemony.

In the recent history of theatre, Bond, however, is, by no means, the first to assault the Shakespearian myth. Among the first modern detractors of the bard as a historical figure was G.B. Shaw. Unlike the far more pervasive bardolators, Shaw was no hero-worshipper. As I have suggested earlier, like Bond, he has a tendency to de-idolise the great. Hence his criticism of those who are "disposed to making too much of a fetish of our swan... It is false admiration to worship him as an infallible demigod,"³ a statement echoed later, by Bond. Shaw's iconoclastic attitude towards Shakespeare is best summarised in a statement which reads that Shakespeare "is to me one of the towers of the Bastille, and down he must come."⁴ In The Dark Lady of The Sonnets, Shaw derides the bard and ridicules his plays as "all talk."⁵ In addition to the above play in which Shakespeare is presented in a ludicrous light together with Queen Elizabeth I, Shaw wrote a "Puppet Show" called Shakes Versus Shaw, in which the two dramatists lash out at each other; an agon which reminds us of Aristophanes' The Frogs where Euripedes and Aeschylus are made to address each other in similar invectives. In another instance, Shaw calls for digging the bard up to "throw stones at him,"⁶ and insisting that he "must go."⁷

Like Shaw, Bond also criticises those who adore Shakespeare as a demigod and as a fetish and considers it

wrong to make a cultural hero out of the man however great he was as an artist. Thus, he proceeds to de-idolise Shakespeare by presenting him in an unfavourable light; a presentation which has drawn hostile reactions from many critics and bardophiliacs.

"With old age prematurely upon him," Benedict Nightingale notes, "the sweet swan of Avon has shrivelled back into an ugly duckling, a bedraggled creature who sits morosely in his garden.. with woozy.. eyes."⁸ He is portrayed as a ... "drunken wanderer" and as a "simpleton."⁹ The play is described by Garry O'Connor as an "assassination of Shakespeare's reputation," and as "a celebration" of his "humiliation, every bit as systematic as one of Genet's rites, every bit as thorough as the most sophisticated of tortures."¹⁰ O'Connor goes on to complain that the bard is "led through a guignol of sordid, unredeemed, social, and personal, misery." Gielgud's performance at the Royal Court is described as a "wracked" performance: "bald done sweating and crimson with embarrassment and strain, boldly trying to endow Bond's character with nobility, with love, compassion but doomed because these qualities do not really exist in the part, or in the play."¹¹ Repelled by the way the bard is treated in Bingo, O'Connor calls for the re-application of censorship.¹² Indeed Bingo obviously capitalised on the absence of censorship in its treatment of iconised totems.

Kenneth Hurren of The Spectator expresses his disapproval of the way the bard is presented by calling the play a "fiction" and a "failure," and by dubbing Bond a "blinkerer

academic possessed of the ignorance of the second-rate mind."¹³ Gareth Lloyd Evans shares Hurren's view of the play by also repudiating it as distortion of Shakespeare's life.¹⁴

Raymond Goodlatte, an American school teacher, was also repelled by Bond's handling of Shakespeare and wrote to The Listener of September 1974 to express his extreme displeasure at Bingo. He was "more distressingly bewildered" that John Elsom could find "any shred of merit in Edward Bond's Bingo, or that the Royal Court or John Gielgud should associate themselves in so mean-spirited an undertaking and understanding." Goodlatte goes on to say that Mr Elsom says that Bingo is "not necessarily about The Shakespeare, but it was The Shakespeare who retired at forty odd to Stratford, who at thirty three was able to purchase New Place. It was Gentle ~~Will~~, as Ben Johnson called him, in fact (not in this play), who made the will leaving his wife the Second Best Bed."¹⁵ Concluding his letter, Goodlatte pays homage to the bard by wondering "To what social reformer or philanthropist are we so indebted as to Shakespeare? From what teacher or polemicist have we so learned our fragile humanity and kindness? Who have been the true makers of our heritage, or common wealth — who formed of the sweet English tongue the Public Thing of our republic."¹⁶ Goodlatte ends his letter on a denunciatory note by describing Bingo as a "spiteful play."¹⁷

As in Early Morning, in Bingo Bond's iconoclasm is a preliminary device used to stimulate a critical re-

assessment of figures who are fossilised in the public imagination. However, while Victoria is debunked as a capitalist symbol, Shakespeare is assailed as the artistic embodiment of the bourgeoisie. What Bond tries to do in Bingo is to delineate the major features of the bourgeois artist as reflected in Shakespeare, often by means of the visual imagery of the play. By Bond's Marxist standards, the bourgeois artist is characterised by an aristocratic frame of mind, servility, contempt for the masses, alienation, corruptibility, individualism, passivity and complacency.

I have mentioned in a previous chapter that Bond regards "The Classics" as the literature of the bourgeoisie. To Bond, artists whose art is based on the ethics of the "Classics" are bourgeois artists. In other words, Bond associates classical ethics with bourgeois ideology. However, it should be noted here that the term "classics" is used ideologically and not aesthetically. Bond, no doubt, accords with Hauser when the latter says in The Social History of Art that:

"the conception of the classical style as 'idealistic' and of classical as representing a better, normative world of ethically superior beings is a characteristic expression of the aristocratic frame of mind.... This aesthetic idealism of the cultured nobility shows itself, above all, in the choice of subjects to be presented. The aristocracy favoured almost exclusively motifs from the old Hellenic myths of gods and heroes; up to date subjects from every-day life are left to be common and trivial."¹⁸

Hauser goes on to say in a leftist vein that tragedy is an aristocratic form of art, "it unquestionably propagates

the standards of the great-hearted individual, the uncommon distinguished man, the embodiment of the ideal of Kalokagathia."¹⁹ Athens the birthplace of tragedy, "was governed in the name of the people, but in the spirit of the nobility."²⁰ Hauser's above points are clearly manifest in Shakespeare's art.

Bond, unquestionably, also accords with Shaw's argument which identifies "Shakespeare's political views with those of his aristocratic heroes, above all with the views of Coriolanus."²¹ Just as Shaw regards the bard as an artist "with all the social pretensions of our Higher Bourgeoisie"²², Bond, like Hauser and the Latin American Marxist dramatist and critic Augusto Boal, dubs Shakespeare as a bourgeois artist, and as such, Bingo shows a continuity in socialist and Marxist condemnation of the idol of the western world. Bond criticises in his introduction to Plays Two, a drama teacher who teaches university students that "Shakespeare had no opinion of his own, he could understand and retell everyone's opinion, he left it to others to judge."²³ Bond, looking at Shakespeare from a Marxist point of view, is disturbed to hear "that students can still be taught this."²⁴ In his conclusion of the above introduction, Bond dubs the drama teacher a confused teacher of Shakespeare for misunderstanding his subject and for wrongly forgiving the bard's "class bias by trying to call it wisdom."²⁵ In a letter to Howard Davis, a director of the play, Bond further stresses Shakespeare's class orientation. Asked whether it is "just a matter of signing a piece of paper" with Combe, or if "it's wider

than that," Bond answers that "by making these arrangements with Combe, he [Shakespeare], has to accept the enforcement of those relationships. And that means accepting a certain series of laws, and a certain series of punishments to enforce those laws, and a certain mythology to explain those laws. And when those things are involved, he can't say 'I will sign this piece of paper and stand back'."²⁶ Bond is trying to say here that the signing of the agreement with Combe is not an isolated incident, it is rather the life-style and values which Shakespeare believed in that made him sign the contract.

Bond's above premise concurs with Hauser's. Hauser contends that Shakespeare's "sympathies" were with the "ruling class," and that his interests and inclinations bound him to the social strata which embraced the middle class and the liberally minded aristocracy."²⁷ It is no wonder then to find him in Bingo standing on the side of Combe, the representative of the nascent bourgeoisie. To this effect, S. Schoenbaum writes in The Times Literary Supplement that the bard sided with the emerging capitalists against "the poor who stood to lose their holdings."²⁸

Shakespeare's sympathetic attitude towards the rising bourgeoisie has led him not only to be in league with it economically, but also to harness his art for its concerns and characters. He wrote about princes, generals and great lords in his plays or what Hauser describes as "a better, normative world of ethically superior beings" which is a "characteristic expression of the aristocratic frame of mind." In the tradition of the classics, Shakespeare focused

on heroes by writing tragedies about them, which is also an aristocratic form of art that disseminates the values of the distinguished. By writing about personages with whom the rising bourgeoisie identified, Shakespeare could be seen to have been catering for the bourgeoisie. In Bond's view, therefore, he was a tool in the hands of the establishment, and he consequently regards his writing for the ruling class as a kind of connivance against the people. Shakespeare's art, Bond suggests, was harnessed to reinforce the status quo. Bond explodes this type of art and counters it with a Marxist reinterpretation of how art and artists should function in society. An artist, to Bond, should first and foremost smash down the yoke of the ruling class by writing against it, and his own art is marked by a tendency to attack the establishment by demystifying its myths and what he sees as its pernicious culture. In a word, it is anti-establishment.

Bond contends that art should be for and about the people. It must make their voice loud and clear, a view which echoes Marx and Engels lavishing encomium on those English novelists who "dethroned the kings and princes and finally elevated the poor, 'the despised class' to a suitable subject for literature."²⁹ Marx wrote in The New York Daily Tribune on August 1854, about "the splendid brotherhood of fiction writers in England, whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to all the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together."³⁰ In this, Shakespeare, like Lassalle, has fallen short. Identifying

with his aristocratic heroes, Shakespeare fails to be a people's artist. Like his hero, Coriolanus, Shakespeare always in his plays shows the masses in a disgraceful light and allows them to be insulted "with much obvious delight."³¹ In Julius Caesar, he makes fun of their stinking breath,³² and in Coriolanus, he describes them as "curs," "rats" and "rogues."³³ Bond articulates Shakespeare's unsympathetic, unsocialist stand towards the masses in Bingo by portraying him as their enemy. The peasants recognise him in the play as a collaborator against their cause. After his binge with Ben Johnson, Shakespeare asks Jerome if "you've been filling the ditches."³⁴ The latter answers, "No."³⁵ He knows that Shakespeare has allied himself with the exploiter, Combe, and for that reason, Jerome thinks it is not in the interest of the peasants to inform Shakespeare of what they are doing lest he should tell his partner, and betray their cause. Shakespeare knows that Jerome is not telling him the truth about filling ditches: "Lie to me. Lie. Lie."³⁶ Shakespeare's words indicate that he has begun to see that he is persona non grata to the peasants, who need someone to stand on their side in their fight against the enclosures.

Shakespeare, following the example of the classics, from the evidence of his plays, appears to have considered the masses and their plight a common and trivial subject, a view which stands in marked contrast to Bond's own conception of the role of art and artist. Art, for Bond, should concern itself with what he calls the "problems of the street" and the lower depths of society, a socialist theorem that stands in sharp contrast to the subjects and personages taken up by

Shakespeare. While Shakespeare writes tragedies about heroes and great figures, focusing on their private lives and using history as a backdrop, Bond writes tragedies about the people. Bingo, like Brecht's Coriolanus, is a people's tragedy. Bond is not interested in the play in Shakespeare's hamartia. He is more concerned about the plight of the masses and their suffering as a result of social, political and economic change. In so doing, Bond honours his obligation of setting his "scenes in public places, where history is formed, classes clash, and whole societies move. Otherwise we're not writing about the events that most effect us and shape our future."³⁷

Bond's art is harnessed to assist the working-class and condemn its enemies. In the play he even expresses a romantic view of the lower classes. The Old Man, although mentally retarded, stands particularly in his sexual virility in extreme contrast to Shakespeare's inertia. As the play shows, the latter is not only politically and economically alienated, but also personally. Even his relationship with his family is awfully cold and inhuman. His retreat into his garden isolates him not only from the world outside, but also from interacting with his wife and daughter one of whom is sick and neglected, the other dejected and angered by her father's incredible detachment. Judith explains why her mother "stays in bed." "She hides from you. She doesn't know who she is, or what she's supposed to do, or who she married."³⁸ The daughter's remarks can be interpreted in terms of sex. Shakespeare is emotionally and sexually impotent. His wife feels uncared for. Compared with

Shakespeare, the Old Man, in contrast, is able to make love to the girl the moment she sets foot in the garden. The stage directions read, "He glances round and then touches her breast."³⁹ In like manner, The Old Woman, his wife, is also capable of enjoying happy marriage. Asked by the confused Judith if her marriage has been happy,⁴⁰ The Old Woman rejoices in having had "seven good years"⁴¹ of married life. Thus Bond's love for the commonality can be interpreted in terms of John Arden's theory of "the Curvilinear" and the "Rectilinear." Shakespeare is a rectilinear type of person who is unable to express human emotions and sympathies, whereas the Old Man and Old Woman are vivacious and ready to enjoy sexual pleasure. Besides, the Old Man cares more for the girl [Young Woman] than Shakespeare does for his daughter and wife. Bingo's Shakespeare is unfeeling compared with "the people" who "have feelings."⁴² Learning of the girl's guilt of setting a fire, the Old Man becomes aware that she will be executed. Unlike the bard who does not show any sympathetic reaction to the hanging, the Old Man exclaims, "O dear, I do hate a hanging."⁴³ The stage directions read after Shakespeare has seen the girl gibbeted, he "has stood up and walked slowly away. His movements and face express nothing."⁴⁴ This stands in direct contrast to the Old Man who cannot abide hangings, and who breaks down when he remembers how "people pushin' t', see in they empty coffins. Allus so quiet 'fore the rope go so's yo' hear babies an' dogs cry- an' when it thump the people holla."⁴⁵

Shakespeare's individualistic, bourgeois artistic

tendency to celebrate the isolated greatness of the individual in his plays as is the case with what Brecht calls "the great loner, a Lear, an Othello, a Macbeth" who are cut off from all their "human ties of family and state and onto the heath, into total isolation," where they have "to show greatness in downfall"⁴⁶ is best reflected in Bingo, in Shakespeare's attitude towards society. The play shows him out of touch with reality. Like his above heroes, he seems to prefer isolation. He is totally alienated. As I have suggested earlier, Bond conveys his dramatic themes in the play primarily through visual imagery which he then builds ideas around by means of the dialogue. In Bingo, the garden, usually a symbol of beauty and romance, becomes the alienated artist's solitary confinement from the outside hectic world. The bard is hemmed in by the garden hedge, thus reflecting his solitude and lack of commitment to society.

Instead of being engaged in what is going on around him, he retreats into seclusion which, to committed active artists like Bond, is an unforgivable mistake. Hence Bond's premise that man, including artists, "only exists through society: outside society he is a monster"⁴⁷ and his insistence upon the need for more interaction between writers and the masses.

To Bond, Shakespeare's preference for isolation is dictated by his bourgeois ideology which advocates a non-committal stand on the part of artists who are encouraged to assume the position of passive spectators without being involved in the political events around them. The bourgeoisie, according to Marxist artists, encourages its

artists to remain passive in order to protect its position. It naturally, stands against revolutionary art because it endangers its very existence. Shakespeare, for Bond, therefore, serves as a model of the alienated bourgeois artist.

An artist who expresses no interest in the world outside his garden, Bond intimates, is a selfish individualist. Just as the Enclosure marks the decline of feudalism with its reciprocal relationship between landlord and tenant, and the corresponding rise of the capitalist wage labour system, so the medieval relationship between artist and patron is giving way to a new system in which art is another commodity in the market-place. Shakespeare is portrayed as a typical bourgeois writer who uses his art for the sake of personal promotion and material gain, an attitude which contrasts with Bond's own maxim that "I write plays not to make money." To Bond, as to Shaw, Shakespeare is a representative bourgeois artist not only in station, but also in art:⁴⁸

"That Shakespeare's aim in business was to make money enough to acquire land in Stratford, and to retire as a country gentleman with a coat of arms and a good standing in the country; and that this was not the ambition of a PARVENUE, but the natural course for a member of the highly respectable, though temporarily, impecunious family of the Shakespeares."⁴⁹

Shaw's premise is not unfounded. S. Schoenbaum writes that as a "house-keeper of "the King's Men... troupe", Shakespeare "shared in the profits, which he invested prudently."⁵⁰ He was so keen on economic promotion that:

"In Stratford in 1597 he bought a pretty house of brick and timber, called New Place, with extensive gardens.... Five years later he paid £320 in cash to

William Combe and his nephew for a large tract of arable in Old Stratford. Then, in 1605, he made his most ambitious investment, £440 for a half interest in a lease of tithes in Welcombe and other neighbouring hamlets of Stratford. His tenants cultivated their narrow subdivisions, and his representative, Antony Nash of Welcombe, managed the tithes, which brought Shakespeare £60 a year after rents. Near the end of his life he bought the Blackfriars Gatehouse in London, presumably as an investment rather than as a residence. Meanwhile Shakespeare pursued debtors in the courts, although whether he ever collected is not known. The Herald's Office granted his father a coat of arms, probably at the son's instigation, and the latter is thereafter described in records as William Shakespeare, gent. A curious career in a way, especially to those who subscribe to a romantic conception of the poet's odyssey. After all, as Dowden long ago pointed out, does not Shakespeare mock Osric as being 'spacious in the possession of dirt' at just around the same time that he was himself becoming spacious in the possession of old Stratford dirt?"⁵¹

As far as Shakespeare's involvement in the Enclosure is concerned, Schoenbaum writes:

"In the autumn of 1614, Arthur Mainwaring (or Mannering), a steward to Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, in league with the prominent landholder William Combe, was seeking to enclose the common fields from which Shakespeare derived his tithe income.... To protect his own interests Shakespeare entered into an agreement with Mainwaring's attorney, William Replingham, by which he was guaranteed against any loss as a result of enclosure."⁵²

In the historical documents, as in Bingo, Shakespeare sides with the landlords against the peasants who lost their holdings. Bond finds the above covenant as a "conclusive evidence of Shakespeare's complicity, with - or, at least, acquiescence in - the enclosure."⁵³

Schoenbaum's and Shaw's description of the bard as an active property-holder is also clearly reflected in Bingo. Shakespeare is shown to be obsessed with his own economic interests. Answering Combe's suggestion to "stay in your

garden," and "I'll pay for that,"⁵⁴ Shakespeare replies, "you read too much into it. I'm protecting my own interests. Not supporting you, or fighting the town."⁵⁵ Shakespeare's answer adumbrates his total lack of interest in anything outside his own properties. He is portrayed as an individualist, selfish business man, thus also echoing Marx's condemnation, in The Rheinische Zeitung of 1842, writers who take up art as a business, and who regard their works as means and not as ends in themselves.⁵⁶ To him, as to Bond, those writers are simply hired hacks who sacrifice commitment to society for their own business interests.

In his conversation with Combe, in Bingo, Shakespeare declares that "I bought my share years ago out of money I made by writing."⁵⁷ Thus Shakespeare's objective behind his art is totally materialistic. In the play, the bard does not only connive with the manipulators of the enclosure but also works as a property dealer: "All farmers, on the common fields," Combe says, "pay you... a rent based on their earnings... Quite a large part of your regular income must come from that rent. A sound investment."⁵⁸ Combe's advice is answered with more individualistic, merchantalist statements by Shakespeare, "I wanted security"⁵⁹, he says, "you can afford to guarantee me against loss"⁶⁰... "I invested a lot of money."⁶¹ "you guarantee the difference between what my rents are now and what they'll be after enclosure, if they fall."⁶² Thus money becomes a dangerous thing in Bingo; Shakespeare prefers it to opposing the enclosure; it is so highly valued that it takes the place of food, "young woman," says Shakespeare, "stay, stay... You'd

rather have money not food,"⁶³ thus reflecting his essentially materialistic attitude to life. The young woman offers herself to the Old Man for money, "Got money, hev yo'?"⁶⁴ Shakespeare says to his daughter, "I loved you with money"⁶⁵ and at the end of the play Judith cares more about her father's will than for his death.⁶⁶ In this respect, Bond assumes a Shavian position to moralise on ethical issues. Like Mrs Warren in Mrs Warren's Profession, the young woman takes up prostitution to make money in a money-grubbing society. Bond's concentration on money and art is intended to condemn commercial, uncommitted writing. In a society where money takes priority over everything art becomes no more than a capitalistic commodity in the marketplace. Thus the play becomes not only an indictment of Shakespeare's economic dealings but also a satire of art in modern capitalistic society.

Opting for material gain, Bond seems to suggest, renders the artist unfit for revolutionary ,committed writing. Attaching more importance to money than to the political and social role that art should play in the process of transforming society, Shakespeare becomes utterly passive and complacent. His apathy towards the burning issues of his society is expressed in terms of "resting." He is so inert that when pressed to do something about the enclosure, he winges and complains that "I came out here to rest,"⁶⁷ a behaviour which completely contrasts with Bond's ideal artist who, as I shall show later in a section dealing with the revolutionary hero, should not only be a thinker, but also a literary freedom-fighter, not passive but active.

To stress the bard's guilt of inaction even further, Bond has his character echo one of Hamlet's most famous soliloquies:

"What does it cost to stay alive?
I'm stupefied at the suffering I've seen. The shapes
huddled in misery that twitch away when you step over
them. Women with shopping bags stepping over puddles
of blood. What it costs to starve people. The
chatter of those who hand over prisoners. The smile
of men who see no further than the end of a knife.
Stupefied. How can I go back to that? What can I do
there? I talk to myself now. I know no one will ever
listen."⁶⁸

Shakespeare's own words appear superficial when compared to those uttered by his tragic hero:

"O that this too too sullied flesh/Would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,...
Fie on it, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden.
That gross to seed; things rank and gross in nature
possess it merely..."⁶⁹

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
or to take arms against a sea of troubles...." etc.⁷⁰

Whereas Hamlet, faced by the corrupt state of his world, asks his well-known question, to be, or not, to be, Shakespeare in Bingo wonders "what does it cost to stay alive". To Hamlet to stay alive means to "take arms against a sea of troubles." To Shakespeare, the cost of remaining alive is to be "stupefied at the suffering I've seen." But whereas Hamlet brings about order at the end of the play by uprooting evil, Shakespeare, unable to face society as it is, dies capitulatorily as a cool beholder.

A bardolator and a biographer of Shakespeare, Antony Burgess, has no qualms about celebrating the bard's position

as a cool uninvolved spectator-artist, and as such he proceeds to exonerate him from the charge that he never cared to take sides, and was merely a detached delineator of reality.

"He saw what lay behind the sadism of his age, but he did not expend ink on reformist pamphlets. He accepted. He accepted the baiting of the bears Sackerson and Harry Hunks on the Bankside, within hearing of the theatre where he worked, and of the tearing to pieces by dogs of a terrified ape. He accepted the 'hangman's hand' - and when Macbeth sees his own as those, he is not thinking of the manipulator of a rope: he is thinking of the fresh blood and the clotted entrails on fists that have plunged into the open belly of the victim. Will accepted what it was not his mission to change: he was a playwright, a recorder of life. And he accepted the bestowals of God who must have seemed as cruel as men - the diseased bodies of beggars, the periodic visitations of plague." 71

Just as Bond criticises the drama teacher for misunderstanding the bard's class-bias, he would, no doubt, entirely disagree with Burgess. Believing in the importance of art as an influential means of changing society to the extent that, to use Richard Blackmur's phrase, it could "save the world by taking on the jobs of the other functions of the mind,"⁷² Bond must reject Shakespeare's irresponsibly inactive bourgeois approach to art. In Bingo, Bond uses the image of coldness to express Shakespeare's artistic inertia. He is portrayed as all of the time feeling cold.

Coldness and serenity are at the heart of the play's

imagery, which opens with "emptiness and silence."⁷³ The bard is lifeless. His coldness towards his family is indicative of his capitulatory attitudes towards the ills of society. Ben Johnson describes him precisely when he observes "life does not seem to touch you."⁷⁴ Snow, usually a symbol of purity, is deconstructed by Bond as an image by which to convey Shakespeare's iciness and inactivity in the face of injustice. Addressing his daughter, Shakespeare says: "My hatred isn't angry. It's cold and formal."⁷⁵ Bond also plays on the word "serene" which usually denotes peacefulness. But when Shakespeare says. "serene, serene," the word assumes another meaning. It denotes passivity. The Old Woman also contributes to illuminating Shakespeare's moribundity when she says, "Good lor', you're froze."⁷⁶ Shortly after that, Shakespeare himself says, "light a fire in my room."⁷⁷ "I'm cold,"⁷⁸ "It's cold."⁷⁹ "It's so cold now."⁸⁰ "cold! cold."⁸¹ "what is the ice inside me?"⁸² "How long have I been dead?"⁸³ All of the above quotations testify to that quiescence by Shakespeare which in terms of Marxist aesthetics must be utterly rejected.

Just as Bond uses the visual image of a hedged garden to comment on the bard's alienation, he employs that of snow in respect of Shakespeare's writings. Bond suggests that the bard's failure as an artist is revealed not only in his inactive stand towards the enclosure, but also in the quality of his art which also reflects his personal coldness. Again, deconstructing the tenor of certain traditional literary symbols, Bond uses the image of "snow" which usually stands for purity, for another purpose. In Bingo, snow is described

as "empty."⁸⁴ like Emily Bronte, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens, who, in their novels, Wuthering Heights, Emma, and Hard Times, use natural elements like the wind, to indicate a state of mind, Bond uses the image of snow to reflect the barrenness of Shakespeare's art. Snow is no longer a symbol of goodness. Just as Gerald dies on a glacier in D.H. Lawrence's Women In Love, Shakespeare becomes wrapped in his isolation in a frozen world. While Lawrence uses ice to show the inhumanity of modern civilisation, Bond employs snow to condemn the futility of Shakespeare's art which, like the snow, is, not only extremely cold, but also "empty," an epithet used here to show the uncommitted unrevolutionary nature of Shakespeare's work which is best shown in the following passage uttered by the bard over a snow-blanketed plain:

"The last snow this year. Perhaps the last snow I shall see. The last fall (He kneels on the ground and picks up some snow). How cold (He half smiles). How perfect, but it only lasts one night. When I was young I'd have written on it with a stick. A song. The moon over the snow, a woman stares at her dead... what? In the morning the sun would melt it into morality. Writing in the snow - a child's hand fumbling in an old man's beard, and in the morning the old man dies, goes- taking the curls from the child's fingers into the grave, and the child laughs and plays under the dead man's window. New games now I'm old. Where is the child to touch me and lead me to the grave?. Serene. Serene. Is that how they see me?"⁸⁵

Although the above passage is romantic in nature, yet it is meant to further detract from Shakespeare's greatness. To change the fact that the bard is universal, Bond likens Shakespeare's writings to the snow which is vacuous. Thus the latter's "literary assets amounts to writing in the snow because, as time passes things change and the world as it was

one moment vanishes."⁸⁶ In a word, Bond tries to say that just as writing in the snow disappears when snow melts, Shakespeare's masterpieces lost their significance with his death if not during his lifetime, in these he again echoes Shaw who considered that Shakespeare was "for an afternoon, but not for all time."⁸⁷ As Shaw makes the above statement to ridicule the bardolators, so Bond has a Marxist point to make when he repudiates the universality and timelessness of Shakespeare's writings. He is repelled by the popularity the bard enjoys, and by the fact that he is blindly taken as an all-knowing artist. In his conversation with one of the directors of the play, Howard Davis, before the production of Bingo at the Other Place, November, 1976, Bond stated that:

"You know, we think that two people went up to the mountain and got things written on tablets, one was Moses and the other one was Shakespeare. He's the sort of great idol of the humanist west or whatever, and it's not true.... I object to the idea of him being for all ages in that particular sense."⁸⁸

As we can see in the above passage, Bond rejects the idea of Shakespeare being for all time. Elsewhere, he remarked that:

"even in his own time he [Shakespeare] was in many ways already out of date... what I think is that he is not somebody who provides a total blueprint for the way people should live... of course... As a guide to conduct, or to attitudes to work, he's not so good for us."⁸⁹

Bond's Marxist rejection of the universality of the bard becomes clearer when he avers that "In literature there are no abstract statements universally true for all time — or if

there are, they are trivial until given content and context,"⁹⁰ thus echoing the Marxist argument that all art bears the imprint of its historical epoch. By taking Shakespeare as its ideal artist, the bourgeoisie, in Bond's view, is attempting to force on the people its ideals and its mythology embodied in the bard and his art. Shakespeare can be cited as a typical bourgeois artist, who, amongst other things, believed in the immutability of human nature, and Original Sin, and who presented life in his art as ahistorical and unchanging and whose literary greatness can therefore be seen to give credence to bourgeois values.

Bond's charges against Shakespeare in the play are finally clearly summarised in the bard's late recognition of guilt towards the end of the play:

"I howled when they suffered, but they were whipped and hanged so that I could be free. That is the right question: not why did I sign a piece of paper? no, no. Even when I sat at my table, when I put on my clothes, I was a hangman's assistant, a gaoler's errand boy. If children go in rags we make the wind. If the table's empty we blight the harvest. If the roof leaks we send the storm. God made the elements but we inflict them on each other."⁹¹

Like Brecht's St. Joan of the Stockyard, Shakespeare learns about the plight of his people, but fails to act. His confession is a form of condemnation. It is too late to awaken to the adversities besetting his people. His death at the end of the play is a kind of "passive evasion" and escapism. "Was anything done",⁹² a question asked several times by Shakespeare in the play testifies to his guilt. Hence his culpability as an artist.

II. 2B. The Artist As Mystic

Art is not an act of withdrawal.

Edward Bond

~~Orphan~~

Equally useless to the masses and their predicament, as will be shown, is a mystic artist who immerses himself in spiritualism and therefore becomes completely alienated from the people and their concerns. This type of artist is best presented by Bond's Narrow Road To The Deep North which is no less iconoclastic than Bingo in its treatment of its target.

Narrow Road was first staged at the Belgrade Theatre, on 24, June, 1968. Basho, the butt of the play, like Shakespeare, enjoys a respectable reputation amongst world artists. He is well-known as "the greatest of the Japanese...poets"⁹³ and is honoured as the "saint of the Haiku"⁹⁴, a form of poetry in Japanese literature.

Bond's ridicule of Basho figures right at the very beginning of the play. The great poet is placed before us in an "unmistakably sardonic light."⁹⁵ He strikes the audience as a boaster, celebrating his own greatness. He vauntingly brags that he is well-known to the world, "I am, as you know, the great seventeenth-century Japanese poet, who brought the Haiku verse form to perfection and gave it greater range and depth."⁹⁶ He is laughingly presented as cock-sure of himself. He claims that he is so wise and all-knowing that "two years ago.... I.... with foresight"⁹⁷ refused to take Kiro as a disciple as "I thought," he was not fit to be one. Later he wonders if a "doctor can do what I can't?"⁹⁸ The

respectable priest-poet is shown to be well-versed in effective, venereal murder techniques. When the Prime Minister complains that he has tried all sorts of tricks to kill Shogo, Basho offers good advice, "I've heard you can poison the woman's passage."⁹⁹

Equally travestied is Basho's poetry. In the prologue, Bond introduces a "piece of cheerful literary fraud." Basho recites as a specimen of his work, the following lines:
"Silent old pool ; Frog jumps ; Kdang !"¹⁰⁰ This, as John Peter rightly argues, is intended to parody one of the best-known examples of Japanese Haiku by the real Basho, which in Nobuyuki Yuasa's translation, (Penguin) reads:

"Breaking the silence
Of an ancient pond
The frog jumped into water
A deep resonance."¹⁰¹

As we can see, Bond turns Basho's Haiku into a rather trivial perception. Throughout the play, in a similar manner, he also lets him recite other trivial poems such as:

"The soldier leant his spear on the wall
It fell; Clatter
They took him for idleness. "¹⁰²

The soldiers came
The head of the city wants me
They waited
While I wrote this poem.¹⁰³

I drank the cup
At the bottom
Flags!"¹⁰⁴

The above poems are extremely nonsensical and lacking in substance and, as we can see, Bond reduces Basho's poetry to pettiness. At Shogo's trial, as he is pushed aside by Shogo,

Basho's "folder of loose pages with his poems on them.... are thrown into the air."¹⁰⁵ When the Commodore apologises to him by saying "I'm sorry about your poetry,"¹⁰⁶ Basho replies, "It's of no importance, I've copies."¹⁰⁷ Bond here could be playing on the word "It's" which stands to mean two things in this context. It either means the act of throwing Basho's poems into the air or Basho's poetry itself, which are "of no importance." Given Bond's hostile attitude towards Basho, the second possibility that it is Basho's poetry that it is insignificant, becomes more likely; a premise that becomes stronger when Georgina is made to complain that she has not "time to rest. All these sheets. Then I've got to sweep the water."¹⁰⁸ In other words, Basho's poetry, to Bond, is so unimportant that it should be swept away like dirt and dead leaves.

The mood of debunking in Narrow Road is more humorous than that of Bingo. It is sarcastic and Basho is presented ironically throughout. The treatment has some of the characteristics of Brecht's presentation of St. Joan in St. Joan of the Stockyard. Unlike in Early Morning, where the Victorian icons are presented in a savage Aristophanic light, in Narrow Road, Bond is less severe, but no less hostile. We are made to despise Basho coolly through irony. Why, however, does Bond go to such lengths to degrade an ancient oriental poet such as Basho?

Bond informed Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts that his presentation of an iconoclastic perspective on Basho in the above play was motivated by a reading of one of Basho's

travel accounts, The Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton. Bond was shocked by what he read, I don't "think I'd ever done it, before, I just shut the book and I couldn't read it anymore."¹⁰⁹ It was the following shaming account by Basho in the above diary that Bond happened to read:

"As I was plodding along the river Fuji, I saw a small child, hardly three years of age, crying pitifully on the bank, obviously abandoned by his parents. They must have thought that this child was unable to ride through the stormy waters of life - which runs as wild as the rapid river itself, and that he was destined to have a life even shorter than that of the morning dew. The child looked to me as fragile as the flowers of bushelover that scatter at the slightest stir of the autumn wind, and it was so pitiful that I gave him what little food I had with me.

The ancient poet
Who pitied monkeys for their cries,
What would he say, if he saw
This child crying in the autumn wind?"

How is it indeed that this child had been reduced to this state of utter misery? Is it because his mother who ignored him, or because of his father who abandoned him? Alas, it seems to me that this child's undeserved suffering has been caused by something 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."¹¹⁰.

In the play Bond, presents the child's parents pleading with Basho to care about it, but he refuses, claiming that he has more important business to do. The irony is that he is set on a journey of enlightenment to the "Deep North," an unexplored territory which represents for him "all the mystery there was in the universe."

Basho's above notorious narrative can only arouse the satirist in Bond or in any other respectable, thoughtful person. It is not surprising, then, that Bond angrily declared to Irving Wardle and G. Loney that "Basho is the villain of the play" ¹¹¹ which "poured out of my indignation at this man" whom "I turned.... into a sort of monster, a hollow zombie. One of those people who appear immensely cultured, with all the filigree of culture, all the outward show, but as hollow as can be." ¹¹² It is no wonder, then, to find the "immensely cultured" poet reciting hollow nonsensical poetry in the play. In Narrow Road as in Bingo, Bond proved with reason to be a muck -raker. His justification for denigrating his targets is historically based and nobody can accuse him of wilful defamation. Just as he challenges the bardophiles by revealing Shakespeare as a selfish property-dealer "spacious in the possession of old Stratford's dirt," he defies Basho's admirers by stating that "what particularly incensed me about Basho was that everybody says oh what a marvellous poet. I think that is absolutely phoney. I mean that is bad poetry, that's academic phoney poetry all the things he said," ¹¹³ a statement which certainly justifies Bond's trivialisation of Basho's poetry in the play. In a word, his antagonism to Basho, as to Shakespeare, is because they are both morally overrated and unduly mythicised. It is also a call to re-examine what they represent in terms of bourgeois cultural hegemony.

Just as Brecht resurrected historical figures from other cultures such as Coriolanus, Gallileo and St. Joan of Arc to judge them by his Marxist standards, Bond, by trying his hand

at a Japanese cultural hero, does not intend to antagonise or challenge the Japanese nation; his choice of Basho parallels Brecht's of a Chinese legend in The Caucasian Chalk Circle where the two plays become an exposition of the playwrights' ideological stand towards their subjects. In the case of Narrow Road, Bond's demagnification of Basho is intended as a Brecht-Marxist dissection of the artist as a contemplative spiritualist. The emphasis is placed on Basho as a representative artist and not as a Japanese totem.

Narrow Road, whether consciously or unconsciously, is a version of Brecht's St. Joan of the Stockyard. Although Basho and Joan are historically different in profession, in Bond's and Brecht's plays, they have something in common. Brecht turns the French peasant amazon into merely a missionary, thus stripping her of her war-like status. Bond invests the poet, Basho with another role, that is, of a priest, thus he becomes both an intellectual and a cleric. But in St. Joan, Brecht places an historical character into a different plot. He concocts a new plot for his play in which Joan is taken away from her French town, Orlean, to become a social worker in Chicago. Unlike Brecht, Bond has in his play an historical character plus one actual incident dramatised in the prologue, i.e., Basho's stumbling upon an abandoned child at the river Fuji. However, after the opening scene, Bond departs from the actual circumstances of Basho's life to make his own plot. In the play, the child grows up to become a bloody dictator. And thus Narrow Road, like St. Joan of the Stockyard becomes, plotwise, a fictional device to suit the playwright's iconoclastic purposes.

In both St. Joan and Narrow Road, there appears a clearly Marxist conflict between spiritualism and materialism or religion versus economics. As I have shown, Marx himself castigated Lassalle in his criticism of Franz Von Sickingen for giving prominence to the clergy at the expense of the peasants. Both Engels and Marx regarded religion as "the antithesis of the rational,"¹¹⁴ and as "a collection of superstitions, a bundle of riddles. The word 'religion' symbolised to them delusion, worship of appearances, and unwillingness to understand." It was "a complete negation of all reasoning."¹¹⁵ To Marx, "Religion provides solace to the lowly but fails to remove the underlying causes of their distresses."¹¹⁶ In his famous utterance, it was the "opium of the people"; a premise strikingly presented through Narrow Road and St. Joan. Joan and Basho, according to Brecht and Bond, are also irrational. They are deluded and superstitious. They are blind and unable to understand their people's plight. Ironically enough, "In a dark time of bloody confusion; Ordered disorder; Planned arbitrariness; Dehumanised humanity,"¹¹⁷ Joan wants to reintroduce God to poverty-stricken workers, and thinks that "Misfortune comes like the rain, that nobody makes, and still it comes."¹¹⁸ Similarly, Basho attributes the misery of the child to what he irrationally calls "something greater and more massive; you can call it the irresistible will of heaven." Puzzled and unwilling to learn, "he believes that all fates, lucky or unlucky, are dispensed by heaven" and that life must be lived as it is. To him, suffering is unavoidable because it is already decided by God, and, to use

Combe's words in Bingo, "there can be no civilisation till you've learnt to live with it"¹¹⁹. Like Joan, Basho is intoxicated with religious stupor, which blurs his vision of the world around him and ultimately makes him numb to the suffering of his fellow human beings. His sense of compassion is vitiated by his mystic and fatalistic world view. In the scene where the pot is stuck over Kiro's head, Basho would rather sacrifice Kiro, a human being, than the pot. His view is that man should be devalued before God.

Both Joan and Basho try to provide consolation, the one to the workers, the other to the peasants and their child. Failing to understand or do anything to put an end to the real causes of misery and impoverishment, Joan sympathises with the striking workers by offering them fatless soup and by alleviating their wretchedness with sermons. In like manner, Basho pities the child and his parents, "I gave him what little food I had with me" ¹²⁰, which echoes Marx's derision of men of religion who offer "solace to the lowly" without removing the causes of their deprivation.

Both Basho and Joan believe that salvation is spiritual, and so work to save their people's souls. Basho thinks that religion will remedy everything. Hence his outburst against Shogo's irreverence for it:

"(angrily). He's imprisoned innocent women, orphaned children, made the men soldiers, and killed them. His city is hell, ruled by atrocity. I could put up with that if I could still hope. But how can I hope if he destroys religion."¹²¹

Basho is outraged by Shogo's destruction of the pot. He

can sustain misery and inhuman social conditions by placing his faith in a transcendental world which is manifested through symbols such as the pot. Religion renders him unfeeling. Bond, through Basho, satirises hermits and mystics, presenting them as inhuman and ridiculous. In the same way, Brecht treats St. Joan who naively cries that the forgotten Lord should be brought back to the souls of the starved workers so that they are uplifted! Basho's and Joan's views of salvation are totally spiritual, which as I shall show later, stands in sharp contrast to Bond's and Brecht's concept of redemption.

Bond's presentation of Basho as both priest and poet in Narrow Road, Lynn Christy Brown notes, is consistent with the development of Japanese art, which was profoundly influenced by Buddhism,¹²² "this world has value, but only relative value, while the abiding essence that gives meaning to all things is to be found only in Buddha and his all prevailing law."¹²³ Brown goes on to note that the critic Makoto Ueda argues that the philosophy expressed in Basho's travel diary is "based on the idea of Sabi, the concept that one attains perfect spiritual serenity by immersing oneself in the egoless, impersonal life of nature,"¹²⁴ which Basho regards as an important prerequisite for his poetic creation. It is no wonder, then, that he always preferred seclusion during his lifetime.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica has it that Basho used on occasions to withdraw from society altogether.¹²⁵ Hence his journeys to solitary spots like the Deep North. Familiar with this fact about the historical Basho, Bond rightly

presents him in his play as an alienated poet who retreats away from society into total solitude. Just as Shakespeare seeks refuge in his garden to rest from the troubles of the peasants, and complains that "I come out here to rest, people coming and going," Basho can not face what is going on in his troubled city, he leaves his old hut, "I left my old hut up there in the orchard and moved here farther down the river, away from the city."¹²⁶ Both Shakespeare and Basho are presented as alienated artists. They fail to look conditions in the face, and consequently move away to enjoy their own lives; an action condemned not only by Bond, but also by Jane Howell, the first director of the play. Howell contends that Basho is a "pretty representative artist":

"In the pursuit of perfection of our craft, we attempt to retain the centre of ourselves....in order to create....at the cost of not committing ourselves to the world....not noticing the world as it really is. This is what Basho does - he writes perfect poetry but in the first scene of the play, he abandons the baby by the river. This is what the real Basho did during his life. I felt that Bond couldn't forgive him for that act."¹²⁷

As we can see, Basho, whether consciously or unconsciously is an individualist, retaining the centre of himself if by turning a blind eye to the world around him.

Basho's hermitage amounts, in Bond's terms, not only to individualism but also to self-seeking and possessiveness, thus echoing Marx's castigation of the selfishness of mystics. In his criticism of the clergy, Marx argued that

men of religion have always been selfish in matters of possession. They preach heaven but strive to "possess as much as possible of the earth."¹²⁸ Himself according with Marx's contention, Bond cannot but present the mystic Basho as possessive and self-centered. He is made to declare shamelessly in the play that: "My old hut was by the place where they throw people in the river. Their friends and relatives used to come and stand quietly by the bank, with Shogo expressions on their faces. But when it was over they always ended up behind my hut, crying on my vegetables and treading on them."¹²⁹

Thus, just as Shakespeare is shown in Bingo to be obsessed with the protection of his properties, and turning a blind eye to the suffering of the peasants, particularly the flogging and execution of a vagabond girl, Basho is more concerned about his properties than about his people. Both of them make of their abodes cloisters detached from society. Just as Shakespeare feels trespassed upon when somebody encroaches upon his garden, Basho, as the above quotation shows, is very much incensed because his vegetables are trodden upon. He cares more about his plants than about the peasants who are thrown into the river. He hoes his garden while people are being drowned, and "amidst the killing, he wonders if his house and orchard are still where he left them.."

Bond's presentation of Basho as an uncaring egoistic character furthermore echoes Marx's castigation of the church which never pardoned an "attack... on 1/39 of its income" and which "winked at the unspeakable atrocities in the colonies,

and tolerated Negro slavery."¹³⁰ It also brings to mind Rolf Hochhuth's The Representative, in which Pope Pius XII is accused of turning a blind eye to Hitler's atrocities during the Second World War.

According to Marx, men of religion are not only self-centred and blasé, but also subservient. Once recognised by the state, Marx contended, the clergy joined the "ranks of those engrossed in sordid affairs," and enlisted themselves "as an agency of oppression."¹³¹ They took "part in the slavery of the Roman empire for centuries." ¹³² During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they helped the German nobility in oppressing the serfs by forging "documents by which the rights of the peasants were curtailed and their duties increased ."¹³³ He went on to claim that "The representatives and leaders of religion.... join the ruling class and the state in maintaining the disinherited and the lowly in subjection.... Some of them supply the oppressors with a philosophy," ¹³⁴ and have a tendency to "look down on the exploited masses,"¹³⁵ a premise clearly reflected in Bond's Narrow Road.

Basho indeed wholeheartedly offers himself as a lackey to Georgina and the Commodore in the play. He helps them overthrow Shogo and becomes their puppet prime minister. His reluctance to meddle "in politics," and later his complete involvement with the new regime is reflective of the hypocrisy and deception of men of religion who, on the face of it, regard themselves as independent and disinterested having, to use Basho's words, "more important things to do,"

while in fact, they are part and parcel of the ruling class. Marx's argument that the religious establishment sometimes helps supply politicians with policies is also reflected in Basho's participation in drawing up new plans for the new regime. He helps Georgina manufacture false myths to rule the people with. Both he and Georgina repudiate Shogo's system and ultimately create their own. Georgina contends that Shogo's policies did not work:

"because it left people free to judge him. They said: he makes us suffer and that's wrong. He calls it law and order, but we say it's crime against us - and that's why they threw spears at him. So instead of atrocity I use morality. I persuade people - in their hearts - that they are sin, and that they have evil thoughts, and that they're greedy and violent and destructive, and - more than anything else - that their bodies must be hidden, and that sex is nasty and corrupting and must be secret. When they believe all that they do what they're told. They don't judge you - they feel guilty themselves and accept that you have the right to judge them. That's how I run the city: the missions and churches and bishops and magistrates and politicians and papers will tell them they are sin and must be kept in order. If sin didn't exist it would be necessary to invent it. I learnt all this from my Scottish nanny. She taught our prime minister, the Queen, the Leader of the Opposition, and everyone else who matters. They all learned politics across her knee."¹³⁶

Basho is quite happy with Georgina's system of government of which he becomes a part. His philosophy supports hers. He admires her for running "the city better than Shogo," and helps her enforce her policies upon the people, thus echoing Marx's exposition of the clergy as an agent of manipulation of the masses in favour of the ruling class. Basho's assistance to Georgina amounts to helping her oppress the people, for her techniques, to Bond, are as oppressive as Shogo's but in a different way. In addition, Marx's accusation that men of religion despise the masses is

also echoed in the play. Basho regrets that the city has been ruled by a peasant's son, Shogo, and not by princes, poets and samurai.¹³⁷ Compared with the Shakespeare of Bingo and the St. Joan of St. Joan of the Stockyard, Basho is far more passive in terms of Marxist politics. As we have seen, Shakespeare becomes enlightened, although late in the day, when he declares that "there is no higher wisdom of silence"¹³⁸ and when he feels "stupefied at the suffering I've seen." In like manner, Joan, in her "second descent" into the degraded world of the workers, begins to recognise that their "degradation's ultimate cause is not ethical but economic."¹³⁹ They are starving and immoral because they are exploited by their employers. Joan comes to the conclusion that "those who are up / Sit up there only because the others sit below. And only as long as they sit below"¹⁴⁰, a recognition resulting from her experience of the meat kings and the workers' appalling class-contradictions. At the beginning, as I have shown earlier, she attributed misery to heaven or the unknown, and called for spiritual salvation. But later, unlike Basho, she "comes to recognise that salvation must work through jobs, wages, and prices."¹⁴¹ Basho, in contrast, fails to reach any conclusion about his impoverished peasantry. The difference between Basho and Shakespeare of Bingo is that the one intensely feels his guilt and ignorance, and ultimately commits suicide, while the other continues to be blind and numb to the predicament of his people. While Shakespeare and Joan at least learn about the class-struggle and the suffering of the underdogs, Basho remains ignorant even at

the end of the play. Narrow Road ends with him remaining the same, thinking that reality and with it human nature, good or bad, are given and unchangeable. When he learns that Shogo was the baby he found on his way to the deep north he says "I looked at it and went on. O god forgive me if I had looked in its eyes I would have seen the devil, and I would have put it in the water and held it under with these poet's hands...I am a poet and I would have known."¹⁴² For Basho, human nature remains fixed and immutable.

I have mentioned earlier that part of Bond's intention of resurrecting historical artistic figures from the past is to compare himself with them. Just as he challenges Shakespeare's irresponsibility to the ordinary people in Bingo, he measures himself against Basho in Narrow Road.

Richard Scharine argues in his book The Plays of Edward Bond, that Basho is assailed for his human failing to pick up an abandoned child. Scharine's argument is that "Bond concludes that human beings created the child and his misery and the human action to take would be to save him....Narrow Road is the story of what Bond perceives to be the results of this kind of inhumanity."¹⁴³ I do not, however, think that Bond's thesis is as naive as Scharine suggests. Although Bond condemns Basho for his inhumanity towards the child, yet that is not the whole point behind Bond's rejection of him. The action of the play is, no doubt, generated by Basho's conduct, but Bond takes that as his starting point from which he proceeds to preach Marxism and not what Scharine calls humanism or Basho's moral responsibility towards the child. To my mind, Bond is not interested only in the artist's moral

duty towards his community. Basho is not attacked for his lack of humanity. To Bond, picking up the child or leaving him is not Basho's only responsibility. Looking at the latter from a Marxist point of view, Bond blames him first and foremost for his political ignorance. To Bond, artists, to use Michael Anderson's words about Brecht's Marxism, should "build a clear understanding of the social and economic framework of society." Thus it is not only Basho's unawareness that Bond convicts. It is the economic base that leads the members of society, represented in the play by the peasant and his wife, to get rid of thousands of children like Shogo. I do not think if Basho behaved like the shepherd of King Oedipus and Grusha of The Caucasian Chalk Circle by picking up the child and caring for him, all the problems of society would have been solved. People will continually abandon their babies. To Bond, partial reforms such as Shakespeare's giving of money to the vagrant girl, Joan's serving of fatless soup to the workers, and Basho's feeding or even sparing the life of one baby are no solutions to poverty-stricken societies¹⁴⁴. In the words of the peasant of Narrow Road, "people do it everyday." He means that children are left to die in large numbers. Thus, it is Basho's lack of political consciousness of the structure and workings of his society that Bond indicts. Bond's condemnation of Basho rests on a political and not on a human or moral basis. It is Basho's failure to construe the reasons behind the impoverishment of the masses that Bond focuses on in the play. To Bond, Basho's spiritual enlightenment is so ridiculous that his twenty nine and a

half years of exploring the deep north is no more than sitting "facing a wall and staring into space,"¹⁴⁵ a mockery of those contemplative artists who alienate themselves from the real harsh world ruled by greed and economics. To stress his rejection of religious enlightenment, Bond makes Basho say in the play that the latter's journey to the north is useless, "I saw there was nothing to learn in the deep north - and I'd already known everything before I went there. You get enlightenment where you are."¹⁴⁶ In like manner he lets Kiro declare in the play that "I've been in the seminary two years and I haven't learned anything."¹⁴⁷

To Bond, Basho has failed to understand the question of class struggle in his society. The peasants are poor and have no food because their landlords are rapacious exploiters, and not, as Basho thinks, because they are destined by God to be poor. In other words, for Bond, "The destiny of Man is Man (i.e. other people) and salvation will not come from above but through political and economic ideology."¹⁴⁸ To use Brecht's words "only men help where there are men."¹⁴⁹ What Basho calls heaven means, to Bond, human exploiters rather than God. And that is why when Basho asks Kiro how many "eyes," "ears" and "lips" God has, Kiro replies two of each, by which quip Bond reveals his atheism and materialist view of life, and tries to hammer home the idea that man is exploited by man and that it is the exploiter of the two eyes that is The God that installs himself as an imaginary saviour over the people to "divert their attention from the evils heaped upon them here below"¹⁵⁰ by him. To Bond, if God exists, he must be, as

Shogo is made to say in the play, one-eyed if not blind.

For Bond, as for Brecht, those who tell their people "they may be rised in spirit; And still be stuck in mud, they should have their heads knocked on the pavement."¹⁵¹ In other words, "believers in a God who might save man the task of hacking his way to something better should have their heads pounded on the pavement till they croak."¹⁵²

Bond's own materialistic world view, as we can see, stands in marked contrast to Basho's mysticism. A guru-artist can not save his people or help them by immersing himself in spiritual meditation for his art. The "egoless impersonal life of nature" which Basho regards as a prerequisite for his art amounts to dreaming. An art that ignores the harsh, social, economic and political realities that harden and brutalise human beings is futile and irresponsible. It is, to use Gwenddydd's words of Merlin's verse in the Island of the Mighty, "a meaningless rainstorm upon a wooden roof." It is phoney and academic. When Basho's poems are thrown into the air, Georgina exclaims "snow, snow. It's a cold winter that blows nobody any good."¹⁵³ Basho's art, like Shakespeare's, is here likened to snow for its uselessness to society. It is cold and might harm rather than benefit society. Basho's art is inspired by spiritualism which is as ethereal and inconsequential as the snow that melts quickly, leaving no traces behind. Religion-based art is alien to Bond, to whom, as to Marx, religion renders people servile and cold towards revolutionary activity and in the end smothers them; Basho is de-activated by religion, he can not write committed poetry, and Kiro is

smothered by a pot which symbolises religion.

Basho is not prepared to dirty his hands with filth and squalor out of which, Bond intimates, true art is created. For him, art which avoids the man in the street and his plight is valueless. Basho's is the type of art encouraged by the bourgeoisie, an art which presents reality as ahistorical, eternal and unchanging. This art obscures the kind of dynamic contradictions which could lead to radical change.

Like Marx, Bond thinks that "Human traits...do not constitute a fixed apparatus supplied at birth, on the contrary, they are consequently shaping themselves and are steadily undergoing modifications, under the impact of stimuli."¹⁵⁴ To Marx, man is largely influenced by his society whose atmosphere he breathes. "Apart from society, man is a paradox. He must be within society before there can be reference to this nature,"¹⁵⁵ and the essence of man is the social conditions. Marx's theory is echoed by Bond when he comments that "the moment anything is born, it must be put into society."¹⁵⁶ Basho fails to realise that it is social experience which determines the character and thought of human beings, and not the other way round. In contrast, Bond always shows the plight of the individual in the political and social context that has given rise to it, a premise played up in Narrow Road through the characters of Shogo and Kiro. Both characters are abandoned children. Shogo grows up to be a bloody despot because he has been exposed to cruelty and ill-treatment. In contrast, Kiro was picked up

by a priest kinder than Basho, and was cared for. The result is goodness and innocence. Bond introduces this example to challenge Basho's view that had Shogo been cared for by Basho, he would not have become a cruel man. His character was shaped by the social conditions he was exposed to. Shogo, himself, is shown by Bond in the play to be more compassionate than Basho. He feels sorry for the emperor's child who has done no harm.¹⁵⁷ He wants to care for the child because the latter has not done anything to deserve death. While Basho believes that he could discern evil in a baby whom he considers to have been born wicked, Shogo, voicing Bond's view, thinks that the child emperor is without blemish, a view stressed by Kiro who, refuting Basho, believes that Shogo is a victim of circumstances and not innately evil, "the upturned boat," he says, "knocks the pier,"¹⁵⁸ by which simile Bond seeks to drive home the idea that human actions, rather than the will of heaven or innate evil, are responsible for the misery of mankind.

If Basho is a replica of Brecht's St. Joan of St. Joan of the Stockyard, Shogo is a facsimile of his Galy Gay of A Man's A Man. Like Shogo, Galy Gay, to use Keith Dickson's words, is "the random and unstable product of a changing environment." ¹⁵⁹ His existence is not determined by his consciousness, but by his social being. Augusto Boal argues that "Galy Gay is not Galy Gay; he does not exist purely and simply. Galy Gay is not Galy Gay, but rather is everything that Galy Gay is capable of doing in particular situations."¹⁶⁰ The same can be applied to Shogo who is shaped into a nasty creature by environmental factors. He

simply uses the same weapons used by society against him.¹⁶¹

To sum up, like Shakespeare, Basho may be seen then to be singled out for derogation as he, as his artistic world view is portrayed by Bond, also stands to be part of the cultural bourgeois hegemony which his art props up. Thus, in Shakespeare and Basho, Bond finds his ideological as well as artistic foils.

II. 2C. The Artist As Lackey

Are we all supposed to be a lot of servants?

Can't we all be masters?

Brecht

~~Thou art a lackey~~ Theatre

Just as Bond condemns Shakespeare and Basho for functioning as tools in the hands of their masters and for ignoring their people's cause, the Ardens are repelled by subservient artists who offer themselves as flunkys to the ruling class, thus becoming panderers; a theme that stands at the heart of The Island of the Mighty and The Bagman.

The Island is intended not only as a demythification of King Arthur's feudalism, but also as an onslaught on his poet, Merlin, who is presented as a servile lackey to his king. He is, to use his own words, "the General's poet";¹⁶² a position that could only rouse the iconoclast in the Ardens, who, after their conversion into Marxism, have become, as they have made clear more than once, playwrights of the people. Their commitment to the cause of the disinherited multitudes stands in marked contrast to Merlin's subservience to his master. Thus, just as Bond measures his anti-bourgeois

and anti-mystic attitude by undercutting bourgeois and mystic artists in Bingo and Narrow Road, the Ardens compare their own fight for the powerless against the powerful with Merlin's connivance with the mighty against the downtrodden. Just as Shakespeare and Basho function as foils to Bond, Merlin is chosen by the Ardens as a yardstick by which to measure their own commitment. Before coming to Merlin's treatment by the Ardens in The Island, I shall briefly trace his character historically to establish his identity within British mythology.

In the Arthurian legend, Merlin, "the famous bard of Welsh tradition" is also "an enchanter and counsellor to... King Arthur."¹⁶³ He is Arthur's aide. He is a "wild man... gifted with powers of divination."¹⁶⁴ He is a magician and a prophet who is distinguished for his political counsel and sagacity and who advises Arthur and helps in drawing up his policies. It is not, however, this wise sage who is presented by the Ardens. Although Merlin teaches and guides, his teaching talents are, however, placed in the service of his oppressor-king. He sells himself as well as his art to his master, thus becoming merely a skivvy.

Like Basho in Narrow Road, Merlin is treated ironically throughout The Island. In their portrait of him, the Ardens' irony, Albert Hunt notes, "is clear and sharp."¹⁶⁵ To John Lahr, "Merlin's function is as ironic as it is entertaining."¹⁶⁶ He is ironically called the "bard of historical wisdom" ¹⁶⁷ who "would accept a young woman for the night as a token of courtly hospitality and who would, by day, turn his poetry to praise Christian asceticism."¹⁶⁸ He

works hard to propagate Christian faith while being hypocritical throughout. Although the general mood of the play is grim, the Ardens, at times, try to inject a sense of lively sarcasm into it. They make fun of Merlin who, like Basho, is made to brag swashbucklingly about his poetic abilities, especially when he addresses the unruly Balin in front of the court. He bullies the latter with his rhetoric by claiming that he is a sacred creature who can change "the visible face of nature" ¹⁶⁹ and who can "turn you into a pillar of salt with one-four-line stanza."¹⁷⁰ Funnily enough, Balin, awed by Merlin's rodomontade, submits. In part two, scene six, Merlin is further presented as a mean person. Although humiliated by Arthur, "Hurt and blind and three parts ignorant," "I do not intend to refuse to take my pay,"¹⁷¹ he says, revealing an absence of personal dignity. In the play as a whole, therefore, in the words of Michael Anderson, he is "stripped of his romanticism."¹⁷²

The Chief Poet is, however, most degraded in part three of the play where he becomes the central character. After Arthur's defeat, he goes mad, runs like a rabid dog "stark crazy in his pain"¹⁷³ and becomes a dweller of the "Glen of madmen," living naked in the trees of that weird corrie and, at times, frenziedly fighting with his fellow bedlamites for his share of the watercress of the "Glen." Throughout his madness, he is presented dishevelled and behaving like a fool. Merlin's misfortune and deterioration into a lunatic are, therefore, not treated sympathetically by the Ardens who view *them* as a just and necessary punishment for his earlier life.

It might, however, be argued that by presenting Merlin as a deranged wild man of the woods, the Ardens are following the original Arthurian legend, and are not being iconoclastic, for Merlin is reported in the legend, at one stage of his life, to have gone mad and to have become a raving lunatic, living in a jungle.¹⁷⁴ It is, however, the context and motivation for the Ardens' degradation of Merlin and his presentation as a jabbering idiot which reveals their iconoclastic purpose. Merlin's madness, the Ardens appear to intimate, is the only destiny for an artist who offers himself as a pawn to a people's enemy such as Arthur. Thus, in their presentation of Merlin as a demented poet, the dramatists try to hammer home the idea that a "poet must not separate himself from the people if he does not want to destroy himself physically and mentally."¹⁷⁵ It is Merlin's bending of his talents to his monarch that ultimately results in the disastrous consequences for himself.¹⁷⁶

Like the Shakespeare of Bingo and Basho of Narrow Road, Merlin alienates himself completely from his people. Whereas, however, Shakespeare and Basho retreat into seclusion, the one into his hedged garden, the other into his hut-hermitage, Merlin estranges himself by, as I have already mentioned, serving as a hireling-poet in the pay of Arthur, an act which cuts him off totally from the masses who, as in Bingo and Narrow Road, are presented as the victims of similar oppressors. In so doing, Merlin has betrayed his people's cause and, in the eyes of the Ardens, has become a traitor.

Merlin is best described by D.N Jones who dubs him a "sort of F.B.I agent for his ruler" and "the political mind of the regime." ¹⁷⁷ In the early stages of the play, we see him performing his shuttles in pursuit of his master's political schemes, a servant ordered about by Arthur. He writes his poetry to glorify his general's deeds. "As a Chief Poet to the General," he declares, "my first responsibility is to praise him by means of verse and music... of equal importance, moreover, is the work that I do in rendering his victories possible." ¹⁷⁸ Merlin is Arthur's image-maker, his P.R. man. He publicises his general as a Christian whose "work is to defend civility and Christianity" ¹⁷⁹ whereas, in fact, he is a bloody dictator. Like modern image-makers hired by statesmen as propagandists who go about embellishing their masters' image and creating a halo about them, Merlin unashamedly declares that his job is to laud his general and to beautify his image amongst men:

"I am the General's poet - I make
The words that make him famous in his age...
Poetry must praise...
My words are ever willing
In the service of his sword."¹⁸⁰

In the same vein, he admits that "I ornament with polished euphemy the coarse words of the General's thought."¹⁸¹ He brags about the many songs he has made about his general and about the fact that he, as well as Arthur, will always be remembered through those song.¹⁸² It is because of his servility to Arthur, that his young wife, Gwynddyd has left him.

In terms of the Ardens' Marxist politics, Merlin is,

therefore, presented as the artist of the ruling class and culturally he is the propagator and perpetuator of its myths and values. While the Ardens, as I have already mentioned, strive to destroy the cultural hegemony of the establishment, Merlin enforces it. He stands to prop up the orthodox status quo. The aim of his poetry is to force the ideological and cultural prestige of the superstructure upon the infrastructure represented by the masses. Hence Aneurin's and Gwynddydd's comments that all Merlin was "was a poet for... princes and great men"¹⁸³ and that his "verses... were all of ... potent ancestors."¹⁸⁴ In the words of Javid Malick, he is "guilty of commission and omission."¹⁸⁵ He is commissioned by Arthur to write for the regime. At the same time, he ignores anything that is not related to his monarch. He omits, or fails to represent the people in his poetry.

In his fight for the superstructure represented by great men, Merlin, like Shakespeare, regards the people and their concerns as a subject unworthy of his poetry. For that reason we discover him as well as his other fellow chief poets looking contemptuously upon the plebeian poet, Aneurin, during the meeting of the college of bards called to consider Aneurin's application for the title of Chief Poet. No sooner has Aneurin presented himself before the committee, than Merlin expresses his disgust at the former's appearance, foreshadowing his disapproval of his becoming a Chief Poet, "His appearance is bad: his manner inclines to be rude." ¹⁸⁶ However, the committee proceeds to examine Aneurin's poetic abilities by asking him to construct an ode in a specified meter. When Aneurin summarises the theme of his poem which

is about Arthur's reign, another chief poet, like Merlin, is surprised to find Aneurin disputing and not stating his theme.¹⁸⁷ Taliesin, Strathclyde's chief poet regards the poem to be lacking in logic,¹⁸⁸ and, when they actually hear Aneurin's poem, they are all outraged and proceed to repudiate it as "blackguardism."¹⁸⁹ For Merlin, Aneurin's iconoclastic poem is "low-class."¹⁹⁰ Merlin and his fellow poets, all hired by rulers such as Arthur to preserve the establishment culture, are, as might be expected, shocked to hear Aneurin's demythologisation of their master's reign, and consequently bar him from the title for challenging the official standpoint.¹⁹¹ As a poet of the people, Aneurin is scorned by the cultural establishment, whose artists' aim is to sustain, not question, the myths of the ruling class, and thereby justify and defend the existing socio-political power structure.¹⁹² From this, they, as opportunists, benefit by preserving their careers, drawing their pay and living securely under the wings of their masters; a point which I shall examine further when I come to The Bagman. Merlin, like Shakespeare, sacrifices his art for the sake of promotion and prestige. He serves Arthur for the sake of what he calls "goods and gear" ¹⁹³ given to him by his monarch "for the work that I perform."¹⁹⁴ In his opinion, it is better to be Arthur's Chief Poet, than to be nobody's poet, for there is nothing to be gained in terms of material rewards or public honours from being a people's poet.

By functioning as a mercenary to Arthur, the Ardens reveal that Merlin has destroyed his poetic imagination, "the time has long gone past, I should think of composing a

poem."¹⁹⁵ He has, to use his own words, sacrificed "truth" and "poetic integrity" to become a "sideways" false dishonest man even with himself. He knows that he is untrue to himself; a contradiction revealed when he contrasts the "untruth" of his poetic "words" with the truth of the crude words of the bandit, Garlon, "the only truth this child could know; From all the men who ever used her (Bondwoman); Was truth of Garlon's rage and fear...; What word apart from his foul word; Can now be trusted in these days."¹⁹⁶ The poem reveals his dishonesty. It is not surprising then to find Morgan accusing him of telling "no truth"¹⁹⁷ in his poetry, and to hear Bedwer deflating him by saying, "I do not think; A sideways man like you; Could ever tell a tale; That was completely true,"¹⁹⁸ thus echoing Arden's comment in his introduction to the play that Merlin is "unable to draw a distinction between poetic ambiguity and political dishonesty."¹⁹⁹

As we see, Merlin admits the contradictions in his position. He is a fettered two-faced poet; a state that can be analysed in psychological terms as a case of mental abnormality and one which eventually leads to the schizophrenia or total madness which overtakes him during the third play of the trilogy. Merlin is a shackled poet who in fact works against his will and throttles his freedom by lying to himself. His association with Morgan, his first love, who is known to be the goddess of freedom, frees him, however, from his unreal "sideways" self. His madness purges his soul and sets him free from the chains which used to stunt his liberty. By living a lie in Arthur's service,

Merlin has turned himself into a schizophrenic who lives with two selves, and who consequently, as I have mentioned above, goes completely mad. Ironically, however, his madness benefits him by helping him get rid of his false self by removing the pressures and chains that deprived him of his real identity. He yearns for freedom. "Merlin is a bird," he cries, "Merlin grows feathers! Merlin will fly everywhere."²⁰⁰ Flying becomes therefore, for him, his expression of freedom and indeed he does later become free. The Ardens utilise this change to make an ideological Marxist point.

Merlin's separation from Arthur and journey into the woods allow him to gain a new identity, "A poet alone in the dark forest; May learn once more how to be a poet."²⁰¹ Malick contends that Merlin goes mad, "as an expression both of his self-disgust" ²⁰² and, as Gwynddyd remarks, "disgust with every place in which he used to be."²⁰³ Before his madness, Merlin spent most of his time in the company of Arthur. Thus, his abandonment of his previous environment from which he is released at Arthur's death becomes a rejection of his master and a relinquishment of his previous role.

In the third play, A Handful of Watercress, Arden takes up again from his earlier plays his old theme of the Curvilinear versus the Rectilinear. In his portraiture of a regenerated Merlin, unlike the old Merlin, Arthur's Chief Poet, the urban sophisticated poet, the new Merlin behaves innocently like a child and "rejoices in his nakedness, in

the rediscovered sensuality of his body, from which he and his poetry had moved far away."²⁰⁴ After his change of heart to become a Marxist dramatist, Arden's theorem of the Curvilinear vs. the Rectilinear assumes a new meaning, becoming now not a conflict between the anarchic and the symmetrical but, as I have mentioned in a previous chapter, a struggle between the people and their oppressors. Merlin's renunciation of his rectilinear role and his adoption of a curvilinear one is here used to reflect his return to the people's fold to become one with them in their struggle against their exploiters. In the third play, he begins to behave in a Dionysian manner free from the restrictions of his previous life, "I shall remain naked. I shall rejoice in it." ²⁰⁵ In the same vein, he expresses a sexual desire for women, "I shall look for a young girl - two of them - three - and astonish them by my virility." ²⁰⁶ Up until this outburst of sensuality, Merlin was, like Shakespeare of Bingo, sexually cold. Now, however, that he is amongst the people, sharing with them a sense of humanity and love for life, he becomes like Shakespeare's foils, the Old Man and his wife, able to enjoy sexual pleasure. It is this new identity that leads him to declare that his new poetry will be written "Not only with music and words," "But with every muscle and every nerve; Touch and taste and hearing and sight and shall; Never before will they say; Has Merlin done his work so well."²⁰⁷ While during his life with Arthur he had "run shamelessly for shelter"²⁰⁸ now, like the peasants, he becomes a naked, hungry, and unsheltered human being and now shares the predicament of the dispossessed by starving and going homeless. His rejection of his previous

role is also expressed through his stabbing of Taliesin. He admits that the "only true reason for driving a spear at Taliesin is because he was a Chief Poet just like myself,"²⁰⁹ which "signifies a successful attempt to free himself from the last remaining effects of his former life as Arthur's Chief Poet."²¹⁰

Merlin's complete shift of position from a skivvy-poet to a poet of the people manifests itself clearly when he begins to change his attitude towards Aneurin, a poet of the oppressed, whom, he described earlier as low-class and of bad appearance. Now he admires Aneurin's constant commitment to Arthur's victims, the crushed masses; he respectfully says that Aneurin has "remained constant from the day of his birth; To the wild forest and the rain soaked earth",²¹¹ a statement which reflects his emergent sympathy for the people, to whom, from now on, he dedicates his poetry. While earlier, he took an aggressive stand against his rebellious country-men and wanted Arthur to inflict a decisive crushing defeat upon them, he, now, to use his own words, "has learnt better".²¹² His songs now are sung not in praise of his master-king, but for the ordinary people from whom he was completely detached before. Meeting a cowman's wife, he sings for her:

"Mother of your children
And wife of your good man
Your face is pale with terror
But you stand up tall and strong.
The green man from the thorny wood
Wears neither wool nor silk
But his chest is broad and his eyes are clear
He has drunk your good white milk."²¹³

He refuses to eat the cowman's wife's brown bread until he has finished his song for her, "By God but I will make a verse about the way your mouth turns up", he sings:

"It came so quick it came so warm
Across your face of fear
As a man might see on a frozen moor
The running of the wild red deer."²¹⁴

As we can see, his poetry is now free from sophistry. It is written for and about the people. The cowman's wife's white milk is so healthy that it builds up sound men with broad chests and clear sight. Drinking the milk, he will see clearer, thus indicating his realization that before he joined the people, he was blind. The Ardens' sympathy with the masses, as we can see, is expressed through showing them as more human and kinder than their oppressors. They are generous and well-meaning. They welcome Merlin for the man he is, "And neither for craft, nor for art".²¹⁵ In contrast, Arthur used him for his artistic or poetic talents or what he calls "craft" and "art". Thus, the regenerated Merlin is a projection of what Arden claimed he would like to be himself, a playwright of the people.

If the reborn Merlin is Arden, the plebeian playwright, Arthur's Merlin is the Arden dramatized in The Bagman, the uncommitted artist. Indeed as far as artist-drama is concerned, The Island is a sequel to The Bagman. Arden's conception of the role of the artist as exhibited in The Island did not come all of a sudden into being. Like his reborn Merlin, Arden had himself undergone a process of change during his artistic career to finally become a proletarian dramatist, harnessing his talents in the service

of people. In actual fact, Merlin's career in The Island is a reflection of Arden's.

Like Merlin, Arden spent a long time uncertain of his artistic role, undergoing an ordeal and trial at the end of which he emerged converted. Just as Merlin "has discovered; Upon what road it was he staggered",²¹⁶ Arden towards the end of the sixties, found out that he had not been on the right track, and that, to use Aneurin's poem about Merlin, "He must thread his own way home again; Through thorns and bog and snow and rain; Until he comes once more; Upon the doorstep"²¹⁷ of a new track. While Merlin's trial takes place in a dark forest where he becomes enlightened better, Arden until The Island was to go through a similar experience during his artistic life; an experience clearly summarized in his painful play, The Bagman which shows us an artist with an eye on his past and another on his future. As we shall see, like Merlin, Arden was to renounce the past and start out upon a new path. As I have mentioned in a previous chapter, The Hero Rises up had ushered in a shift in Arden's position; a shift that becomes clearer in The Bagman which shows that, like his new Merlin, Arden was on the brink of a process of transformation as he prepared to forsake his Aristophanic pacifism in favour of a revolutionary career. The Bagman is clearly a re-examination of his earlier commitment to pacifism and, as Michael Anderson has pointed out, the play "is reflective of a period of uncertainty if not of actual crisis".²¹⁸ Arden's crisis was partly brought about by the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, clearly a challenge to

his pacifism and the play shows Arden in labour at the birth of a new drama which appeared shortly after his return from India.

Just as Merlin, in the late stages of The Island, begins to castigate himself for having written all his poems for no purpose and for straying away from the people in the service of Arthur, Arden writes The Bagman, likewise, as a denunciation of his past artistic career.

However, while Bond explores his position as an artist by debunking other artists such as Shakespeare in Bingo and Basho in Narrow Road To the Deep North, Arden, in The Bagman, creates a new and surprising type of iconoclasm in which, he himself, "John Arden {thirty-eight} of ancient family; Writer of plays",²¹⁹ becomes the target of castigation. Iconoclasm begins at home!

The play, The Bagman is an ironic, funny and biting critique of its target. In the words of Frances Gray, "it is a painfully honest and highly entertaining piece of self - satire"²²⁰ where Arden is "portrayed... in the radio production by Alan Dobie with, wicked imitation of Arden's own Yorkshire vowels".²²¹ Arden is quite merciless with himself. He describes himself as a "little" man²²² obviously with the intention of reducing the audience's estimation of him. He is no more than an "inkspot". He portrays himself as a pathetic tramp ordered about by old-women, ministers, park-keepers, horsemen and revolutionaries, a weak creature who is so insignificant that if he died no one would take notice.²²³ He even ridicules his previous writings as,

"sheets of paper" covered "with his babble"²²⁴. Arden's portrayal of himself as a little weak figure is, however, not simply modesty, false or not, but is intended to indicate his subservience and impotence as an uncommitted artist. He "could not boast, like Cicero; That I had saved the state; Nor yet like Catiline, that I had, tried; My fiercest best to have it all destroyed."²²⁵ He was so feeble indeed that he was "not able; To chase one little rat from underneath the table".²²⁶ To him, his previous art amounted to "nonsense"²²⁷, because it failed to produce any real change, and because it was not revolutionary enough to destabilize the establishment; a premise stressed in The Bagman, when his bag is opened by the starving women he meets throughout his dream. The bag fails to offer any satisfaction for the women. It can not satisfy their needs, by which allegory, Arden tries to hammer home the idea that only art committed to the masses, not servile liberal art which even unintentionally caters for the establishment, is worth-writing. Significantly after his change of heart and in consequence of his controversy with the R.S.C over the production of The Island Of The Mighty, he decided to stop writing for the English establishment theatre. Instead, as Merlin left Arthur, portrayed by the Ardens as the forefather of the modern authoritarian establishment, to dedicate his poetry to the peasant masses whom Arthur oppressed, so Arden moved his attention to Ireland whose people, in his view, have something in common with those of the Third World in that they, too, are oppressed.

Arden's criticism of Merlin in The Island as a hired

artist in the pay of Arthur, can also be traced back to The Bagman where the leading character is torn between working for the ruling class and opposing it. Through the narrator of the play, Arden levels his onslaught at those opportunistic artists who sell themselves out to their rulers, but does not indict himself personally, for he could justifiably claim that he had never functioned, like Merlin, as an hack-artist.

In The Bagman, Arden also sets out to reveal the manner in which the artist can be manipulated by the state, thus becoming an opportunist or merely an agent in the hands of politicians who will admire him as long as he remains uncritical of their politics, but will repudiate him as an enemy if he opposes them through his art.

The artist can, no doubt, pose a great threat to the state. The intelligencia and politicians are often two conflicting parties and writers may be politicians in their own right, and may potentially be dangerous opponents to any regime in the world; a premise made clear in Arden's preface to The Bagman written after his return from India, i.e., after he had written the play. Referring to his trip, he wrote:

"My belongings were searched and I was found to be in possession of sundry Books of an 'anti-state nature'. I hadn't written any of these myself, alas. But the dangerous potentials of literature, were for the first time in my life at first hand, made clear to me. In a country where the possession of the works of Mao and Lenin - though this is not exactly forbidden - can get a man into prison for an unspecified length of time, the writer begins to take a more encouraging view of the value of his craft than he can normally do in Britain".²²⁸

Although Arden is, undoubtedly, right in claiming that artists are muzzled in the third world and the communist bloc, I am sure that he would not, however, argue that western governments are themselves always tolerant of non-conformist artists. The difference between the east and the third world on the one hand and the west on the other, is that the former follow a more violent approach in their treatment of their undesirable artists by throwing them in gaols. In contrast, western governments are diplomatic but no less intolerant of their rebel artists. Their best weapon, to use the words of the director of A Short Sharp Shock! is to "ignore us". They generally combat them coolly although there may also be some cries from establishment figures for the suppression of artists or their work, Teddy Taylor being a case in point.²²⁹ Indeed Arden's raising of this point in his play anticipates his own later conflict with the establishment in the form of the R.S.C., after which he became persona non grata, his work becoming a target of detraction and sometimes of distortion on account of its anti-establishment nature, particularly when he or his wife began to associate themselves with the Republican cause in Northern Ireland.

In his conclusion to the preface to The Bagman, Arden clearly reveals his intended opponents:

"I recognise as the enemy the fed man, the clothed man, the sheltered man, whose food, clothes and house are obtained at the expense of the hunger, the nakedness, and the exposure of so many millions of others: and who will allow anything to be said in books or on the stage, so long as the food, clothes and house remain undiminished in his possession".²³⁰

In other words, those capitalist western democracies continue to tolerate hostile artists as long as they accept limitations in subject matter and manner of expression. When it comes, however, to a potential threat to their existence {possession} and status, they will not hesitate to act to suppress the trouble-makers, usually in a bureaucratic fashion.

Arden raises the conflict between the artist and the body-politic in The Bagman through the Narrator, {Arden}, the two ministers, and the king. The unpopular minister acknowledges that the Bagman, {the artist} can play a momentous role in his community. He can educate and impress the people. He can "diagnose our weaknesses and discover our public perils with such acute perception".²³¹ Later, however, the same minister exhibits his doubts concerning the Bagman who "has these powers, certainly, and considerable skill"²³² in the deployment of the people, and who subversively encourages "insurrection and revolution".²³³ Arden communicates through the words of the unpopular minister that the artist is always a potential enemy to politicians. The two ministers agree to encourage the Bagman as long as they control him, but agree that "of course we must be careful".²³⁴ In order to control him they promise:

"peace and quiet agreeable surroundings... appreciative audiences... plenty of opportunity of experiment... unlimited funds at your disposal... and as for any personal gratifications appropriate to your status amongst us."²³⁵

In pleasing the King, the Bagman is abundantly rewarded. He

is left to enjoy himself in the gardens of the palace among the silver fountains, and marble tables with plenty of food and drink and "sumptuous girls".²³⁶ In the above, Arden, therefore, raises up the question of the artist as an opportunist and as a tool. He attempts to drive home the idea that many western writers opt for security and agreeable surroundings, preferring servility to rebellion. Some British artists, Arden intimates, are a case in point. Those who cater for the establishment are rewarded and those who oppose it are punished. Like Bond, Arden is indeed now the Dr Fell of the establishment, unpopular with it because of his iconoclasm. By taking the bait offered by the establishment, Arden suggests, an artist abandons revolutionary art and becomes simply a time-server. That is how capitalist governments control their artists, they buy them. This theme is, of course, popular amongst committed artists all over the world. In To Satisfy Caesar, a play by the Syrian dramatist Ali-Ulka Ursan, the relationship between the state and the writer is at the core of the play. Plautus stages a play in honour of Caesar. Unfortunately, it does not appeal to Caesar. Plautus then writes a play about the slaves of Rome which arouses Caesar's anger. He orders Plautus' arrest but Plautus' friends convince Caesar to free the dramatist and to hire him instead. Plautus agrees, and feeling more content and secure, is co-opted. The play, therefore, like The Bagman, condemns both the state's dominance over writers and also the compliance of the latter with the state.

To conclude, The Bagman is not an apologia for subservient

artists, nor is it a farewell to commitment as Martin Esslin argues.²³⁷ It is rather a condemnation of lackey-artists, and for Arden himself, is a solution to a crisis. Disapproving of his attitude at the end of the play, Arden calls himself a "forsworn traitor".²³⁸ He "walked home sideways; Like a slinking fox"²³⁹, by which statement he expresses his guilt and indicts his inability to commit himself to revolutionary politics. Three years later, 1971, as we have seen in The Island, Arden revises this position completely. "As a result", Henry Schvey notes in Essays On Contemporary British Drama, "the ending of the play was no longer valid for him, and in the preface, written for the published version, the author clearly dissociates himself from his earlier stand, stating bluntly that"²⁴⁰ 'The attitude of the central character at the end of the story is reprehensible, cowardly, and not to be imitated'.²⁴¹ In actual fact when he came to write The Island, Arden refused to imitate John Arden of The Bagman. He instead, as I have shown in his treatment of Merlin, was to fiercely reject servile and time-serving artists and was, like Bond, to champion the cause of the masses, setting out from now on, as the next chapter will reveal, to celebrate revolutionary icons, both political and artistic, in whom he came to find reflected his own new identity.

III. Iconolatry Versus Iconoclasm

III. Iconolatry Versus Iconoclasm

Even in the...realms of radical-syndicalist-insurrectionary leftism there are the potent mythical figures of Che Guevara and Mao Tse Tung and-and so on and so forth.

John Arden

~~The Hero Rises Up~~

Whereas traditionally, Aristophanic iconoclasm has been used to satirize and degrade war-heroes and living politicians, and indeed continued to be so used in modern British drama, Marxist iconoclastic dramatists of the 1970s, being at that time optimistic about the possibility of a working class revolution, felt some need not only to demythify icons of the past and their associated ideology, but also in order to fill the vacuum left by their removal with an appropriate iconography of the Left. The shooting down of classical, feudal, capitalist, religious and alienated artistic figures was thus paralleled by the celebration of revolutionary idols, both political and artistic, who unlike the former, struggled for their people, militated against capitalism and feudalism, spearheaded the class struggle, denounced religion, wrote for and about the people, and who, in some cases, ultimately died as martyrs for the cause of socialism or its equivalents. Such themes are at the heart of Marxist plays such as The Non-Stop Connolly Show and The Island of the Mighty by the Ardens, The Game's a Bogey by John McGrath, Occupations by Trevor Griffiths, Will Wat...? by Steve Gooch, Orpheus by Edward Bond and Bloody Poetry by Howard Brenton. I shall divide my examination of these plays into two parts. In the first chapter, I shall consider the revolutionary hero and in the second will deal with the people's artists.

III. 1. The Revolutionary Hero

In the Connolly Show, the Ardens set out to commemorate the life and deeds of the socialist Irish hero, James Connolly in a six-part dramatic cycle which was performed first at the Liberty Hall, Dublin, the Headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. It lasted about twenty six hours, following the life and career of what the playwrights call "Ireland's greatest revolutionary".

Unlike in The Island, in The Connolly Show the Ardens go to great lengths to do their hero full justice. Whereas King Arthur is reduced to a hobbling cripple, Connolly is celebrated with poetry, and his life is "built on a traditionally heroic scale."¹ Part one of the cycle introduces the hero poetically. As a baby, Connolly was born in a poverty-stricken town:

"In eighteen hundred and sixty eight
In a dark and smoky hole
In Edinburgh town a child was born
Who was both pale and small:
His mother came from Monaghan
And his father from God knows where-
But that they both were Irish folk
Their poverty did declare."²

Although the playwrights are Marxist atheists, their introduction of their hero has a Christian aura about it which is reminiscent of their treatment of Christ in The Business of Good Government, a nativity play. Connolly is represented as a Christ-figure. Like the latter, he was born in seedy surroundings. Both were born to poor "honest" folk, the one in an "ox's stall", the other in a rundown area. Both were destined to burst out of "the dark" into the

"light" to become famous, Connolly's parents, like Christ's, were nobodies. Just as Mary sings in The Business of Good Government that they "live unknown",³ in The Connolly Show Connolly's father relates that he is from "God knows where".⁴ In the play Connolly's birth into the world is warmly welcomed as if he were The Saviour himself in his Second Coming. When Father Connolly sings "In Edinburgh town a child was born", he brings to mind traditional nativity stories, "In Bethlehem a child was born" the latter a subject of veneration. As a would-be socialist Connolly is, therefore, also portrayed as a potential redeemer.

If Connolly is likened to Christ, Grabitall, a capitalist demon whose name indicates his grasping nature (grab-it-all) is identified with King Herod. Just as the latter is shown in The Business of Good Government and in other nativity tales seeking newly-born babies in order to annihilate them in the hope that one of them will be the prophesied messiah, Grabitall in The Connolly Show, interestingly enough, tells Mother Connolly that he will "confound all my enemies before they are born".⁵ Just as Herod regards Christ as his enemy, Connolly, as the cycle moves on, becomes Grabitall's main antagonist both dramatically and politically. Like Christ, Connolly becomes a target of destruction and just as Christ is crucified by Herod, Connolly is executed by Grabitall's agents, the British Army, at the end of the cycle. In other words, the dramatists carefully associate capitalism with Herodianism, and to them, both are inhuman. Indeed theatrically, Grabitall is even presented as a monster with a horrible

mask.

However, it should be noted that the Ardens' iconization of Connolly as a Christ figure is not meant to be understood religiously. The dramatists draw an analogy between Christ and Connolly in order to show that the latter is the type of modern Christ that they would love to celebrate and worship. In other words, if Jesus Christ is the idol of devout Christians, the socialist revolutionary hero is the icon of true Marxists such as the Ardens. The dramatists' point is that if Christ can be dramatized and celebrated endlessly, then why not Connolly who also merits such idolization for his contribution to the peoples' cause. Dramatically, the Ardens find in traditional Christian literature a parallel which adds resonance to their cycle, thus offering such textual associations to an audience which, particularly in Ireland, is already familiar with such myths.

Viewing Connolly from a Marxist angle, the Ardens find in the former an ideal socialist hero who should be imitated and glorified. Amongst Connolly's most salient socialist virtues, as the playwrights write in the introduction to their work, are "genuine proletarian origins", "a consistent record of work amongst the international socialist movement in several countries (Britain, Ireland, America)", "involvement.... with revolutionary, political parties" and rejection of "reform" in favour of "revolution",⁶ thus echoing Marx's suggestion to Lassalle that "The hero must be sought for amongst the revolutionaries of the past, among the

plebs in revolt ",⁷ and that he must avoid being a "half - hearted revolutionary",⁸ who is, to him, "worse than reactionaries".⁹ Just as the Ardens laud Connolly's preference for revolutionary action rather than reform, Marx criticises Lassalle's Sickingen for misunderstanding his job and for failing to realize that the instruments of revolution are blood and iron. Sickingen wanted to revolutionize the world without causing harm to "anyone in the old",¹⁰ "What's great you could have done, but lesser things you try, and fail".¹¹ To Marx, a revolutionary is a Bismarck-like man "who bluntly exalts the sword as a diplomatic instrument ".¹² It is not surprising then to find Marx expressing in one of his letters to Lassalle great satisfaction over (the character), Hutten's following "sententiae about the sword" in Franz Von Sickingen, calling it "very fine"¹³

"My worthy Sir! Think better of the sword!
 A sword, for freedom swung on high, that,
 Sir, The WORD INCARNATE is of which you preach;
 It is the GOD, born of REALITY.
 Christianity was by the SWORD extended-
 The SWORD was the baptismal waters, that
 The Charles we still with wonder name the Great,
 Baptizes Germania with; the SWORD smote down
 Old heathendom; the SWORD the saviour's tomb
 Redeemed! And further back, it was the SWORD
 That Tarquin drove from Rome, the SWORD that back
 From Hellas Xerxes whipped, and for our Arts
 And sciences ploughed up the ground. It was the SWORD
 That David, Samson, Gideon labored with
 Thus, long ago, as well as since, the SWORD
 Achieved the glories told by history;
 And all that's great, as yet to be achieved,
 Owes, in the end, its triumph to the sword!"¹⁴

(Hutten's above harangue is addressed to Sickingen) As I shall show later, like Marx, the Ardens, Griffiths, Gooch and Bond place revolutionary violence at the heart of socialist struggle. Strangely enough, Marx and the above dramatists

only approve of violence when it is used by the people. When it is practised by the ruling class, as we have seen earlier, it is, however branded oppression. The justification given by such as Bond is that the ruling class already uses violence in order to maintain its dominance and therefore it is reasonable and necessary for the oppressed to respond with similar violence to overthrow their oppressors.

Having established their hero's most celebrated revolutionary merits, and heralded his birth as a propitious advent, the Ardens set out to commemorate what they call Connolly's cycle of "continuous struggle". To this effect, the dramatists state in their book To Present the Pretence, "Connolly, in fact, had worked very hard with little thanks and no apparent reward through his adult life; and it would have been a kind of insult to his memory to fail to present his toil as the chief matter of the story".¹⁵ As an indigent family, the Connollys took up rebellion and Connolly's uncle, McBride, was always a wanted man for his militant activities.¹⁶ In the play, forced to earn his living, Connolly starts work as a child. He serves in shops, works as a printer's assistant and a baker's boy.¹⁷ To foreshadow Connolly's struggle for his people, his mother is made to egg on the young Connolly, to "Be a credit to your people", ¹⁸ and as the cycle moves on, we are shown how the hero dedicates himself completely to the cause of his class.

Connolly has something in common with Brecht's heroine, Pelageya Niclova Vlassova of The Mother. Both educate themselves in the revolutionary struggle. Just as the Ardens present Connolly as a socialist example to be followed,

Brecht wrote to the Theatre Union that his "task" in his play, The Mother was "to report a great historical figure; To the advance guard of humanity; For emulation".¹⁹ Like The Mother, The Connolly Show is didactic in nature. Both plays are intended to present a glamorous picture of the Marxist hero.

Like Vlassova, Connolly begins to educate himself for the struggle. Although the two characters are different in age, they are the same in education. In other words, their educational standard when they start to learn is similar. Even though Vlassova is much older when she takes up learning, she has the mind of a child. When in a printing-house, the child, Connolly recognises the importance of education. He realises that papers are printed for men to read, to think and to change the world, a realization which overshadows his future activities in opposition to the status quo.²⁰ After a series of jobs, Connolly joins the army and during his military service, expands his political horizons.²¹ His brain, as he says, grows, and what he learns runs down to his heart.²² He begins to learn basic Marxist concepts, a process similar to Vlassova's education in Marxist economics. He rejects the army because he discovers that it is used by the ruling class as a means of suppression to put down outbreaks and strikes.²³ Hence his argument later that Murphy, another name for the capitalist Grabitall, "has the police to himself and he will rule".²⁴

Connolly learns his first lesson in socialism when he attends a lecture delivered by a Socialist Agitator. He

learns about the oppressed and about the capitalist system where the workers sell their labour as a commodity.²⁵ Deeply impressed by the agitator, Connolly begins to inquire about "socialism".²⁶

Interestingly enough, like Vlassova, Connolly starts his struggle by distributing socialist literature amongst the people. While the former wraps sandwiches with revolutionary pamphlets and sells them to the workers at the factories to incite them to strike, the latter takes socialist literature from the Agitator to get it "into an army barracks".²⁷ Marxist thought appeals to him especially when he hears the Agitator quoting Marx's call to the proletariat for revolution, "Let the ruling classes tremble at the thought of revolution! We the proletarians have nothing to lose but our chains".²⁸ Impressed by that, he repeats the quotation to his wife at the close of part one.

Indoctrinated with Marxism, Connolly sets out to continue his struggle amongst the workers. He calls for a big celebration of May Day in Edinburgh to honour labour. Highly conscious of the class structure of his town, he calls for the writing of articles to analyse "the city of Edinburgh on a strictly class basis",²⁹ which foreshadows his future struggle for a classless society and which relates to the Ardens writing in To Present the Pretence, of the historical Connolly that he was "a socialist activist familiar with the ideas of Karl Marx, was impregnated with a philosophy that assumes the class-position of any individual to be the main spring of his or her activity, and the mode of production within any society to be determinant of class-

relationships".³⁰ As a writer of articles and socialist literature, Connolly abides by Marxist aesthetics. He objects to writing in a flowery language that cannot be understood by the working class. When his wife tells him that the word "FORBYE is not good grammar" to use in his article, he says "we don't have to be la-di-dah. Forbye is what the folk here say."³¹ Unlike Arthur's Merlin therefore, he writes for the people in their own dialect. Throughout part two, he continues to organize meetings and issue pamphlets to the people, adopting Marxism as the saviour of the working class. His active struggle against capitalism and its manipulators begins, however, towards the end of part two, where he opposes Grabitall and the employers, "I stand against slum landlords, against one-room rotten apartments, and against the ruling class of property that makes such evils possible."³²

Strongly opposed by the capitalists, Connolly entertains migrating to America. At first he thinks of Chile. When Leslie, a comrade in the play, tells him that you will be lecturing on socialism to the red Indians there, Connolly says "why not? It applies to them just as much as it does to us".³³ Here the Ardens celebrate their hero as an international socialist who struggles for all the dispossessed and oppressed of the earth. To this effect the playwrights, wished that "if the plays were shown in Ireland", they would try to demonstrate "the INTERNATIONALISM of Connolly (in contrast to his traditional image as a national martyr)".³⁴

In part three, scene three, Connolly vehemently calls for a "properly organised revolutionary party".³⁵ He proves a great organiser for his colleagues who laud his proletarian origin and socialist teachings which are likened to Moses' "tablets... on the rock".³⁶ Again, the Ardens draw analogies between Connolly and the biblical prophets. In scene four of this part, Connolly calls for the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist republic "based upon the public ownership of the land and of all instruments of production, distribution and exchange".³⁷ In the same scene, he, as mentioned earlier, rejects reform in favour of revolution. He stands opposed to "middle-class revolution" which is there to protect "their own property".³⁸ He also rejects unionist revolution which he describes as "sectarian: and in the end amalgamated with Tory bosses of the City of London".³⁹ As regards Fabian socialism which supports "evolution rather than revolution", Connolly expresses the same opposition, maintaining that "evolution will in the long run never be socialist".⁴⁰ As far as Pure Socialism is concerned, he describes it as "All theory and damn-all else",⁴¹ stressing at the end of the debate that Marxist revolutionary violence and struggle are the only way to destroy capitalism and to create a socialist society, thereby echoing Marx' and Engels' deflations of non-Marxist socialist theories in the Communist Manifesto. Just as Connolly was an arch enemy of reform, the Ardens themselves rejected Ghandi's non-violence philosophy and its reformational concepts when they came back from India, turned down an offer to dramatize his life in a play, and consequently chose Connolly as a hero who believed in revolution as the only solution for change.⁴²

Thus, unlike Sickingen, Connolly is a true revolutionary who does not believe in partial solutions and who is made to say later that "True revolution is the enemy of reform".⁴³

In part three, scene ten, Connolly relates to Ellie Milligan, an Irish publisher of a political paper, what Lalor related to Karl Marx, "Develop the concept of primitive communism as the basic original arrangement of land-tenure in this country",⁴⁴ which echoes Engels' lavishing of praise upon the Asiatic era otherwise known as the period of primitive communism. In this scene, Connolly is again compared to Christ, and W.B. Yeats is also here represented by the playwrights as a member of the Herod dynasty. He calls Connolly a "dangerous man; Slouching, as it were, towards Bethlehem to be born", ⁴⁵ a quotation from his poem, The Second Coming, which is also reminiscent of Herod's and his followers' expression of doubts and anxiety over the birth of Christ.

In the following scene, Connolly cries out against British Imperialism and heralds its destruction, "Here goes the coffin of the British Empire; To hell with the British Empire; Into the Liffey and out into the sea-!".⁴⁶ The Empire is significantly rejected here not in nationalist terms but as a product of capitalism, for at the beginning of the scene, we are presented with the capitalist demon, Grabitall, hailing imperialism as an advancement of his capital in "Australia" "New Zealand" "Canada, the far-flung northern snows", "The African" and "the Indian countries".⁴⁷ Connolly regards the Queen as an imperialist capitalist

symbol. Hence his efforts to disrupt her jubilee in part three, act two, scene one. Grabitall is shown to be the defender of monarchy, trying to organise a successful jubilee. At the same time the Ardens present royalty as Grabitall's beneficiaries and tools, "Bring on the Duke of York",⁴⁸ he says to the civil servants, thus exposing political institutions including the royal family as puppets in the hands of the capitalists and branding monarchy as the "survival of the tyranny imposed by the hand of greed and treachery in the darkest and most ignorant days of our history".⁴⁹ Even the judiciary is shown to be corrupted by capitalism - Connolly agrees with the Countess who maintains that "the magistrate.... held too many shares in Murphy's company".⁵⁰

In part three, act two, scene eight, Connolly rages against the Boer War, regarding it as a capitalist enterprise and calling for the destruction of its perpetrators, "Both the war itself, in South Africa, and the condition of this country are the work of a beast of prey that is not to be moralised, converted, or conciliated".⁵¹ It can only be "destroyed",⁵² repeating here his Marxist call for uncompromising revolutionary action. To the same effect, Lenin is quoted in part six, act one, scene one, denouncing imperialist war which he claims, is "waged for the sake of profits, the ambitions of dynasties, the power of the ruling class".⁵³ He goes on to explain that imperialism is the product of "bank capital" and "gigantic capitalist monopolies"⁵⁴ and Lenin's words are repeated by Connolly at the end of part six, act one.

In part four of the cycle, Connolly is discovered in America there fighting for the cause of socialism by combating capitalist employers represented here by Gompers. He tries to rally the "Industrial workers of the world" by telling them that "The working-class and the employing-class have nothing in common",⁵⁵ and declares American capitalism as nothing but "the promotion of individual enterprise".⁵⁶

In part four, act two, scene eight, Connolly strongly refuses to be diverted from the path of socialism by being bought over and instead puts the interests of the cause of the working-class before his own. When a publican offers him money in order to win him to his side, Connolly denounces what he calls "wheeling-dealing dollars" and kicks the publican out, calling him a "parasite",⁵⁷ a complete contrast in behaviour with Grabitall's maxim that "We prize; Our individual advantages above all else".⁵⁸

In part five, Connolly engages in a series of strikes, fighting the employers for better pay for the workers. Here perhaps undoubtedly he is also celebrated as a feminist who fights for womens' rights. It is, no doubt, D'Arcy's idea to dramatise Connolly's activities for the cause of women as she is herself a flaming feminist. In scene two, act two, Connolly echoes Marx clearly when he says that women are "the slaves of slaves".⁵⁹ Marx maintained that, under capitalism, it is not only the workers who suffer but also their wives and children who become targets of capitalist exploitation. At the end of part five, however, the playwrights recognize that the socialist struggle still continues in spite of its

ups and downs, and they look to a successful end, "Oh long is still the fight and dark is the night; But surely the sun will appear; Every time that you begin to believe you can not win..."⁶⁰

As a Marxist thinker and activist, Connolly, unlike the feudalists and capitalists who use religion to mislead the people, condemns the church and its complicity with the ruling-class. In the play, for him, religion is described to be a "confidence trick".⁶¹ Unlike Basho, Arthur, Georgina, Merlin and others, he bitterly indicts the complacency of the church towards the cause of the working-class:

"I ask every man in Ulster, what loyalty is due to a church; That is not alone content to leave its people in the lurch; But works in the name of the Lord to augment the trouble and harm; Heaped upon them by their masters? Catholic and Prods; Both over-ruled together by the chartered accountants' God..."⁶²

Connolly's outbursts echoes Marx's arraignment of the Church's connivance referred to earlier over the atrocities in the colonies. It also lays bare its collaboration with the capitalists in the name of God; an accusation repeated in part four, act three, scene nine, where Connolly ridicules the cleric, Matt Talbot. When the former asks Talbot to help in picketing, the latter justifies his neutral position by claiming that he does not want to "be involved in coercion".⁶³ And when he is asked by Connolly if it goes against his "conscience to have Murphy, (the Capitalist) put your" people "into the workhouse for ever?", he quotes the Bible, "So that their souls are in a state of grace, it matters little when they die".⁶⁴ He goes on to say that "I render unto Caesar the things that are his",⁶⁵ to which verse

Connolly replies, "By Caesar, you mean Murphy?"⁶⁶, thus exposing the church's collusion with the establishment or what he calls "the ultimate identity of church and state".⁶⁷

In part six, act one, scene eleven Connolly echoes the Ardens' denunciation of Hindu-landlords who use religion to keep the peasants in a state of ignorance.⁶⁸ The scene presents us with Connolly and Devlin, a Catholic from the Nationalist party. The latter is condemned as a separatist, conniving with the English to partition Ireland so that he remains in power. He also opposes Connolly's socialist propaganda which he regards as a danger because it enlightens his people and breaks the circles of ignorance imposed upon them through religion. When Connolly gives a socialist leaflet to Devlin's henchman, Devlin snatches it so that his servant does not read it.⁶⁹ Connolly here unmasks the lie. He sings:

"You do not dare to have read it.
You do not dare to believe
That the poorest, most stupid, most
superstitious man
Has none the less a brain.
For if you recognize that, you must also recognize
That the day will shortly come
When two and two do not make five.
When your people, as you call them,
Add them up and at last find FOUR,
Your entire Hibernian Saints' Parade
Will for ever be kicked out at the door."⁷⁰

In the above passage, Connolly, echoing the Ardens themselves, indicts using religion as an "opium" to delude the people with, and calls for a culture free from religious deception.

However, in the final part of the cycle, scene seven in

1916, Connolly begins to put his Marxist idea of revolution into practice. Like Lenin, he calls for a "people's army", a "red army"⁷¹ and sets out to anticipate the Russian Revolution by, like Lenin, calling for a people in arms to march against the Monarchist troops. In part six, act two, scene ten, Connolly is shown to be preoccupied with what he calls "our military training and proficiency as the defence force of the working-class".⁷² He also thinks of following the example of the Paris Commune. However, his revolution is to culminate in the 1916 Irish Easter Rising led by him and his fellow socialists, which brings their revolutionary struggle full circle and is evocative of Brecht's Vlassova marching with the Bolsheviki during the Russian Revolution.

However, Connolly's rebellion proves to be doomed. The Rising is brutally put down, and Connolly's crucifixion follows. The Ardens' Christian cycle is thereby brought to a close and Grabitall, the Herod figure wins the day. He demands that Connolly "must be shot",⁷³ which reminds us of Herod ordering the destruction of Christ on a cross. With his death in front of a British firing squad, Connolly brings his "continuous struggle" to a close, passing away, but threatening that the struggle is not over:

"For nearly thirty years I tried
To clear the world of those who now have had me tied
Into my chair and shot at till I die.
They always claimed that they were here to stay.
They did not ask if they may.
And altogether they ask so very few
That when the fire and sword and fury flew
At them in Russia, China, Cuba, Africa, Vietnam
And indeed once more in Ireland, my own home,
They could not credit what it was they'd done,
Or what it was in Dublin we'd begun
At Easter nineteen hundred and sixteen-

We were the first to roll away the stone
From the leprous wall of the whitened tomb
We were the first to show the dark deep hole within
Could be thrown open to the living sun.
We were the first to feel their loaded gun
That would prevent us doing it any more-
Or so they hoped. We were the first.
We shall not be the last.
This was not history. It has not passed."⁷⁴

The Ardens' final three lines in the cycle echo Marx's comment on the peasant revolt of Thomas Münzer which broke out in an attempt to end feudalism, but, as I have mentioned earlier, was defeated in May 1525, and its leader, a Connolly-like figure captured and killed. Just as the Ardens maintain that Connolly's death does not mark the end of socialist revolution, and that history will be repeated again and again until the socialist era is established, Marx contends that Münzer's defeat is "never final, the heroic dream that spurs him on is only the first faint glimpse of a future that will dawn sooner or later".⁷⁵ To stress the dialectical movement of history, the Ardens called their cycle "Non-Stop", thus favouring an open-ended drama where history is in a continuous state of progress.

As we can see through the Ardens' dramatization of a "Socialist Hero", the dramatic action, unlike that in what the playwrights might describe as bourgeois traditional plays, such as Robert Bolt's A Man for all Seasons, is concerned with the public and not private life of the hero, a characteristic feature of socialist drama. In contrast bourgeois playwrights worship their heroes as individuals, and seem to be more interested in their private responses to historical events than in the events themselves. In other words, they treat history as a backdrop to the hero's action

by isolating him from his environment and treating him as a psychological study. In contrast, The Connolly Show, a typically Marxist play, as the Ardens contend in To Present the Pretence, is not the story of Connolly's "personal affairs or inner emotions", but the story of his "political life and public activity".⁷⁶ It is no wonder then, that the cycle is based on a Marxist biography of the hero, The Life and Times of James Connolly by C. Desmond Graves, in which the author states his aim of avoiding approaching the life-history of the hero from a psychological viewpoint. The purpose of Greaves' book is rather "to explain why and how Connolly came to the opinions he did upon matters of public policy: what action he took as a result of those opinions: and the subsequent historical meaning of that action".⁷⁷ The Connolly Show, the playwrights hope, like Greave's book, will follow a similar course, i.e., its dramatic action be motivated not by the hero's "passions" or what "happened to him as an individual", "but by the success or failure of the working-class ... by the politico-economic connections between Great Britain and Ireland, by the problems of running a revolutionary party of producing a weekly newspaper with inadequate resources".⁷⁸

Personal issues are therefore suppressed in the cycle. In part four, act one, scene nine, when Connolly's wife, Lillie tells her husband on her arrival in America, that their daughter, Mona has been burned to death, he does not show any emotions,⁷⁹ and in the next scene, continues his political activities as if nothing happened. In part four, act two, scene three, the hero neglects his family in favour

of organizing what his wife calls "the starving millions" ⁸⁰ and again, at the end of act two, part six, Connolly declares that he has not got time for his "wife" who has, he admits, "got from him alive such little good".⁸¹

Connolly's life in The Connolly Show, unlike, say Coriolanus's in Shakespeare's Coriolanus, is closely related to its historical context. Whereas Shakespeare emphasises the personal and individual situation in a historical context by giving prominence to Coriolanus's wife receiving Valeria,⁸² by intensifying Coriolanus's personal rivalry with Aufidius,⁸³ his reluctance to stand for consul,⁸⁴ his aversion to complying with the traditional forms,⁸⁵ and the early introduction of Volumnia to egg him on to pacify the plebeians,⁸⁶ the Ardens avoid personal trappings by shifting the centre of the dramatic action from the inter-play of human personalities to the historical events that befell the world during Connolly's life. In other words, whereas Coriolanus is solely about the hero of the title who is the "noblest Roman of them all",⁸⁷ and who is completely isolated from the historical scene, Connolly is not divorced from history. The Ardens, as I have mentioned earlier, show the interaction between the hero and his times. The cycle presents us with a character who is the product of his era. To this effect, the dramatists state that:

"Connolly's political activities, considered with such a degree of year-by-year detail, present certain problems to the dramatist: because much of what he said and did depend on, and can only be explained by reference to, a number of things that were happening outside Ireland altogether. The Paris Commune of 1871, the Boer War, the 1905 Russian Revolution, the expansion of the U.S.A into Latin America and the West Pacific,

the militant unionization of the Colorado miners the ebb and flow of the socialist International throughout the whole period...."⁸⁸

Thus, unlike Coriolanus, Connolly is part and parcel of his time. He is not an isolated entity out of touch with the movement of history, but an atom in its orbit.

Whereas the dramatic conflict in the bourgeois theatre is between characters (protagonist versus antagonist) or inside the hero himself, in The Connolly Show, as in, say, Brecht's Coriolanus, it is between classes or between social forces such as "Capital and Labour". Connolly spearheads a working-class struggle against the capitalist class represented by Grabitall and the employers. Thus, the Ardens, faithful to Marxism, replaced single men by classes, and psychology by the "pathos of history". To further articulate the class nature of the dramatic action, the playwrights state that the "class conflict, in fact, can be demonstrated on a film as a true movement of masses — we mean, that the audience can actively WATCH THE MASSES MOVE".⁸⁹

Thus Connolly is celebrated as a representative hero, The Ardens appear to follow Maxim Gorky's example of "heroic theatre"⁹⁰ being that which presents "archetypal personifications of revolutionary ideals with whom the working-classes could identify",⁹¹ and which epitomize the "proletarian virtues".⁹²

Just as historical figures "who had already become established as symbols in Communist hagiography and therefore possessed an aura of emotive associations"⁹³ were celebrated

as proletarian heroes to be identified with by the audience, Connolly, as the Ardens state, is singled out for glorification as a bright "representative of Revolutionary International Socialism".⁹⁴ Like Rosa Luxemburg in Despite All! and Lenin in Rasputin by Erwin Piscator, Connolly is not celebrated as an individual, but as a representative of a heroic working-class. Quoted by Christopher Innes in Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre, Piscator contends that Lenin is commemorated as an embodiment of "the politically aware proletariat, consciously working towards the Revolution".⁹⁵ The same can be applied to Connolly who embodies the revolutionary socialist section of the Irish working-class. Hence his cry in part six, act three, scene one, that "God's voice within my conscience is the voice of the people",⁹⁶ again bringing to mind Brecht's other play about St. Joan, The Trial of Joan of Arc, where the "voices" that guide the heroine are the voices of the people and not, as the mythical traditional story relates, heavenly voices.⁹⁷ Like Brecht, the Ardens demonstrate here the interaction between the hero and the masses. The hero is not a separate entity, but part and parcel of the popular struggle. Joan as well as Connolly are taught and led by the people for whom they struggle; a subject broached by yet another Marxist modern British playwright, John McGrath.

In Working towards an alternative working-class culture, McGrath, like the Ardens, referred to the past in order to resurrect revolutionary socialist heroes with whom the working-class could identify. His heroes, like the Ardens' Connolly, are not commemorated as individuals, but as

examples and models of a revolutionary proletariat which has become "aware of ways and means of attacking the ruling class".⁹⁸ Indeed as a playwright who calls for "the need for militant organization by the working-class"⁹⁹, McGrath could not but celebrate the militancy of mythical leftist idols. As early as 1968, he wrote a poem in celebration of Che Guevara:

"I don't know what you were like.
I've looked at the photos,
Read what Fidel had to say,
Gone through your books, speeches.....
I just want to say that my mind is richer for your thoughts.
My humanity prouder for your actions,
My life less acceptable for your death,
My death more acceptable for your life."¹⁰⁰

However, catering for a Scottish working-class audience, McGrath did not travel as far as Bolivia and Cuba to discover an ideal Marxist hero to dramatize but looked closer to home and resurrected the Scottish Clydeside revolutionary, John Maclean, a staunch Marxist activist who preached Red revolution, suffered prosecution and imprisonment, became the Russian consul in Glasgow and died in 1923.¹⁰¹ Maclean appears in two plays by McGrath, The Game's a Bogey and Little Red Hen. He is also resurrected in the Ardens' The Connolly Show as a comrade of Connolly, supporting him from Scotland by organizing strikes and by fighting the capitalist establishment there. I shall comment on The Connolly Show's Maclean later.

The Game's a Bogey, subtitled The John Maclean Show does not only share with the Ardens' Connolly cycle a similar title (both being called shows), but also a celebration of

identical revolutionary values. Unlike in The Connolly Show, in The Game's a Bogey and Little Red Hen the action is not centered around the struggle of the hero, but around his speeches. Whereas the former traces the life of Connolly year-by-year until his martyrdom at the hands of a British firing squad, the latter bring the hero to life in a different theatrical manner, the one by adopting a variety show format, the other by means of flashback.

The Game's a Bogey is a parody of T.V quiz shows in which here the contestants are present-day Scottish folk, suffering under the yoke of capitalism. Throughout the quiz, McGrath inserts scenes about his hero to contrast his life with life in present-day Glasgow. In the first interval of the show, we are presented with a "grotesque" policeman, Lachie, searching for what he terms "The Red trouble-makers" who "are stirring up industrial strife amongst the peace-loving workers of Scotland".¹⁰² The target is, no doubt, Maclean who, like Connolly, was always on the move, organizing strikes and inciting the workers to take action against their capitalist employers. With the exit of Lachie, Alex, the presenter of the show proceeds to inform the audience about the hero, who is also of proletarian stock.¹⁰³ His parents were impoverished peasants badly effected by the Highland Clearance, "His father was a potter, his mother a weaver".¹⁰⁴ Born to a poverty-stricken working-class family, Maclean, like Connolly, took up work at an early age to support himself and his family, and harnessed his life to work for his people.¹⁰⁵ Just as Connolly is presented as a hard-working activist, fighting for the cause of the Irish

working-class, Maclean is reported in the play to have struggled hard "day after day" for "the engineers, the shipbuilders, the dockers - the ordinary people", the miners and the women, presenting them with a Marxist analysis of "how capitalism works" so that they can destroy it.¹⁰⁶ He is credited in the play with having raised the Scottish working-class to a high level of consciousness and as a socialist, Maclean travelled all over the country and abroad in the cause of socialism. In The Connolly Show, he is shown together with Connolly, Rosa Luxemburg, the German socialist and Lenin at the Socialist Internationale in Paris where he offers his full support to "Connolly and the Irish cause".¹⁰⁷

No sooner has Alex finished his introduction of Maclean than Bill, a co-presenter in the play puts on "a coat and a hat that will denote that he is playing John Maclean".¹⁰⁸ Here, McGrath fights on two fronts in his dramaturgy. He entertains the audience by offering it popular comic sketches, and, at the same time, educates it in history and its socialist heroes. As Maclean, Bill introduces Marxism to the audience in simple terms. Instead of presenting a complicated dialectical version of capitalism, he talks of robbers and robbed.¹⁰⁹ The Surplus Value theory is introduced in terms of shoe-making,¹¹⁰ a technique of simplification and comedy commonly used by McGrath's 7/84 company to reach a working-class audience; a point elaborated by the playwright in his paper at a weekend seminar in Cambridge in March 1978, entitled, "The Theory and Practice of Political Theatre", and published in Theatre Quarterly vol. ix No.35, Autumn 1979. In this paper, McGrath justifies

the directness and simplicity of his theatre by contending that "A working-class audience likes to know exactly what you are trying to do or say to it",¹¹¹ which reminds us of Connolly, writing articles in the dialect of his working-class town. The Marxist hero, activist or intellectual, McGrath and Connolly seem to argue, should not address his people from an ivory tower; he must be among them as one of them, talking to them in their own language.

In The Game's a Bogey as in The Connolly Show Maclean, like Connolly, is reported to have raged against the First World War, branding it as a capitalist enterprise. In The Connolly Show, at the Socialist International, Maclean introduces himself as an agitator "all down the Clyde for political strike in opposition to the war".¹¹² In The Game's a Bogey, Alex tells the audience that the hero was arrested for inciting European workers to oppose the war. With Alex's intervention the first Maclean sketch comes to an end. What follows is a quiz game about Scottish capitalism and its evils, where the dramatist draws an analogy between Maclean's time and the present by exposing the capitalist structure of the country. The quiz scenes talk of unemployment and proletarian misery.¹¹³ However, by inserting Maclean's speeches into the quiz series, McGrath tries to egg his oppressed audience on to follow in the steps of the hero with whom the former is indirectly asked to identify, as a model of working-class consciousness. In the face of unemployment and deteriorating living conditions, an impoverished working-class represented in the quiz by Georgey and his girlfriend Geordie, is stirred to action.¹¹⁴ And the course to follow is

Maclean's. Thus, didacticism and entertainment go hand in hand.

The capitalist target in the play is represented by Mr. Big, who, like Grabitall of The Connolly Show, is shown as a manipulator of the country, "he's the man the government's been working for all these years",¹¹⁵ a conclusion reminiscent of that presented by the Ardens' accusation that the Royal Family, the church and the judiciary were and are at the beck and call of Grabitall.

Maclean's second intervention is introduced to educate the audience in the importance of class-struggle and the suffering of the workers, a feature redolent of Connolly's railing at class contradictions and slums. As a Marxist playwright who believes in total revolution, McGrath inevitably celebrates Maclean's uncompromising stand towards capitalism. Just as Connolly rejects reform in favour of complete destruction of the capitalist system, Maclean, both in The Game's a Bogey and Little Red Hen, is shown to be stressing the necessity of revolutionary violence as the only means of achieving victory over capitalism. To him, "the day of social pottering or 'reform' is past". The "social reformer", he says, "must be absolutely crushed, for intolerance to him is but justice to humanity".¹¹⁶ He goes on to call for a revolution in the style of the Bolsheviks that will overthrow capitalism not only in Scotland, but all over the world, capitalism must be killed, he says.¹¹⁷

Like Connolly, Maclean is celebrated as an internationalist. Just as Connolly associates the Chilean

cause with the Irish one, Maclean opposes national wars, and calls for waging "the class war, workers against world exploiters".¹¹⁸ His call for a "Scottish Workers' Republic", like Connolly's struggle for an Irish socialist republic is not "based on tartan jingoism or mindless nationalism",¹¹⁹ as Bill is made to emphasise in the play. In other words, it is not meant "to divide the people of Scotland from the rest of the world, but to let them play their part to the full in international struggle against capital and its evils".¹²⁰ However, Maclean assures his comrades "That we in Glasgow are, internationalist first, last and all the time".¹²¹

At the end of the play, Maclean's struggle, like Connolly's in The Connolly Show, is brought to a close. Combated by the agents of capitalism, the hero is thrown in prison for his socialist activities. As Lachie, the policeman who was hunting for Maclean at the beginning of the play, tells the audience at the end of the play, Maclean's life was a series of struggles between him and the working-class on the one hand, and the capitalists on the other.¹²² He rose and was put down in 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, and 1919.¹²³ As a result of over-work, undernourishment and pneumonia,¹²⁴ he dies, completing a history of travail, but before he departs this life, he echoes Marx in calling for the workers of the world to unite, and like Connolly, predicts a proletarian coup de grace as a result of which the working-class will become the masters of the world.¹²⁵

As a revolutionary hero, Maclean, like Connolly, lives up to Marx's conception of the hero. He enjoys a proletarian

origin. He is an arch enemy of capitalism. He is a people's hero who bluntly exalts revolutionary violence as the surest means of establishing socialism. These characteristics can be also detected in the revolutionist Antonio Gramsci, the leader of the Italian Communist party, whose socialist merits and ideals are the subject of honour and dignification in Occupations by Trevor Griffiths who is himself described by Catherine Itzin in Stages in the Revolution as "the most important Marxist playwright of the seventies".¹²⁶

The play is set in Turin during the Italian Workers' occupation of factories in 1920 under the leadership of Gramsci. The Bolsheviks, in their attempt to consolidate their position all over the world, send to Gramsci, their representative in Italy, a communist organizer, Kabak, with the aim of helping the strikers and their leaders to widen the scale of their action against the capitalists here represented by the Fiat Company bosses. Most of the action of the play takes place in a hotel-room in the city where Kabak is staying accompanied by his Russian aristocratic mistress who is dying from cancer. During his stay in Turin, Kabak fails to bring about a successful ending to the strike, Gramsci and the workers are betrayed and their action is aborted. Proving to be an opportunist situationist, Kabak abandons the losers and negotiates a pact between Moscow and the Fiat bosses, which includes obtaining a loan from the Fiat Company in return for trading concessions in Russia. In other words, Kabak runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds. His pragmatic action is also set against a background of human suffering in which his mistress is

callously deserted by him in the throes of death.

In Occupations as in The Connolly Show and The Game's a Bogey, we are presented with a hero who is highly conscious of the question of exploitation by one class of another and of the conflict that ensues. Like Connolly and Maclean, Gramsci is described by the capitalist establishment as a "cause of our troubles"¹²⁷ for his incessant engagement in leading the workers into battles with their employers. In one of his meetings with Kabak, he bitterly condemns the impoverishment of the workers who are dying in thousands of "starvation and misery"¹²⁸ "while masters are working the rackets."¹²⁹ In the same scene, he, like Maclean, calls for crushing the liberal leaders of the trade unions, who fail to support him in his uncompromising action and consequently sign wage agreements with the employers, bringing to mind Connolly's jibes at the Labour Party and what he called its capitulatory members. "With socialist like that", says Gramsci in Occupations, "who needs a bourgeoisie? For the first time in our history, a proletariat undertook a struggle for the control of production, rather than for economic advantage. And they have their heads spat upon by their leaders, who themselves understood history about as profoundly as chickens understand soup".¹³⁰ Here Gramsci bitterly indicts liberal socialists who, to him, are worse than reactionaries.

In scene three, in a speech, Gramsci does not deal with his adversaries as "individuals" nor "as people with particular skills and functions, not as loose arrangements of reciprocal needs and interests, but nakedly, as a class,

organized against us, an army in war, capable of any heroism or treachery in the defence of their motherland".¹³¹ He goes on to say that "we can see, too, that their motherland is not Italy, that fatheaded, sorearsed sow: the motherland is Capital, sleek, darkeyed, bright, warm, passionate Capital".¹³² The hero here, therefore like Old Hen, McGrath's mouthpiece in Little Red Hen, and like Connolly, rejects nationalism as a bourgeois ideology which only serves the interests of the capitalists who pretend to fight for their country while, in fact, they are protecting their own business.

Just as Maclean harnesses his time to educate the Scottish working-class in the Marxist theory to build up a well-organized proletariat that is capable of fighting the capitalists, as a result of Gramsci's efforts, the Italian working-class which used to be "a sack of potatoes, a... generic unknown, a... shapeless gathering of individuals, without ideas, without will, above all without perspective... a blind boil on the arse of capitalism" is now an advanced proletariat ready to assume power and make good use of it.¹³³ To this end, the historical Gramsci stressed "the need for socialist consciousness to permeate the entire society".¹³⁴

Gramsci's sincere, warm, revolutionary zeal is contrasted with Kabak's wily expedient transactions. In other words, Griffiths presents us with two types of revolutionaries, the one to be followed and identified with, the other to be rejected. As a "pragmatic tactician", who, to the dramatist, has betrayed the ideals of a true

revolutionary, Kabak thinks in terms of means and ends. To him, the masses, for whose welfare, Griffiths seems to intimate, a genuine socialist should dedicate his struggle, become canon-fodder. "You cannot love an army, comrade", Kabak says to Gramsci, "An army is a machine. This one makes revolutions. If it breaks down, you get another one. Love has nothing to do with it".¹³⁵ Griffiths condemns this inhuman approach to the cause of the people. Kabak is as ready to betray the masses as he is his dying mistress. In the playwright's opinion, Christian W. Thomsen argues, he "stands for the dangers of a suffocatingly bureaucratic communism which may represent the interests of a clique of functionaries but hardly those of the people".¹³⁶

In contrast, Gramsci, like Connolly and Maclean, regards the people as ends in themselves. As a true revolutionary, he is notoriously opposed to Kabak's manipulative view of the masses. Whereas the latter claims that he cannot love an "army", the former places the love of the multitudes at the heart of his struggle. He tells Kabak that:

"There is nothing in the world more relevant than love... So perhaps I came to the masses with the same mechanical view of them, and my own relation to them, as you have just propounded. Use them. Tool them up. Keep them greased. Discard when they wear out. But I thought, how can a man bind himself to the masses, if he has never loved anyone himself, not even his mother or father. I thought, how can a man love a collectivity, when he has not profoundly loved single human creatures. And it was then I began to love them, in their particular, detailed, local, individual character. You would be wrong to see this... love... as the product of petit-bourgeois idealism. It is the correct, the only true dialectical relationship between leaders and led, vanguard and masses, that can ensure the political health of the new order the revolution seeks to create. Treat masses as expendable, as fodder, during the revolution, you will always treat them thus... I'll tell you this, comrade

Kabak, if you see masses that way, there can be no revolution worth the blood it spills."¹³⁷

Griffiths is not however presenting Gramsci in the above passage as a sentimentalist. Instead his intention is to celebrate him as an ideal revolutionary, and to hammer home his Marxist-based socialist dictum that a revolution in which there is no love between leaders and led is a worthless revolution. To this effect, the historical Gramsci is reported to have also stressed "the need for a broadly-based Communist party as the agent of social change, rather than the elitist party envisioned by Lenin".¹³⁸ He also wrote, "No mass action is possible unless the mass itself is convinced of the ends it wants to reach and the methods to be applied".¹³⁹ His reaction to Kabak's treatment of the people as tools in the hands of an engineer echoes what he always argued during his life, that seizing power from above will not create a new order; the new society should be led from below. Just as Marx castigated Lassalle's hero, Sickingen, for isolating the masses from his revolution against the emperor, the historical Gramsci was always of the opinion that a "vanguard" elitist communist party without "the active support of the working-class as a whole, poor farmers, and the educated leaders throughout society",¹⁴⁰ is totalitarian and anti-egalitarian. It is no wonder, then, that he is presented in Griffiths' play as the people's hero.

While the Ardens, McGrath and Griffiths revert to modern history to resurrect representative socialist idols, Gooch goes back to the feudal era to pick up a hero who, unlike Connolly, Maclean and Gramsci, who are relatively modern anti-capitalist activists, is the peasant rebel, Wat Tyler of

the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

Under what Gooch portrays as the oppressive and exploitative reign of King Edwards III and his successor, Richard II, the mass of the peasants found in Tyler a competent leader to lead them against the feudal lords of their time. At his first appearance in Will Wat, If Not What Will?, the hero recognizes the church and its men as the enemy of the serfs, an attitude which could have cost him dearly at the time. Just as Connolly rails at the Irish church, Tyler calls the monks "turds" and defies what he terms their "spell".¹⁴¹ Although he lived about six centuries ago, Gooch finds in him revolutionary socialist merits to be celebrated. Tyler is shown in the play fighting for equality amongst the people of his time. He condemns class distinctions and urges the distribution of the wealth of the country equally amongst the populace, "The goods of the Church will be returned to the people. Its priest, bishops and monks will be like other men. Those who protest will be executed and have their goods burned".¹⁴² Gooch here, like the Ardens, McGrath and Griffiths, lauds his hero's militancy and ruthlessness against his class enemies. Tyler tells Sterling later, he does not "believe in half-measures".¹⁴³ Like Connolly, Maclean and Gramsci, he engages in organizing popular action. He is shown rallying the serfs to storm the Tower of London. He lashes out at an oppressive Church and arrogant lords and their policies which, he declares, result in starvation and over-taxation.

While celebrating Tyler's uprising and its bravery,

Gooch tries to caricature the nobility by presenting it as a bunch of cowards, surrendering to the peasants. The Queen Mother and her clerical retinue tremble at the noise of the uprising.

Tyler's aide in the play is the lay preacher, John Ball, a revolutionary figure of the time, who is shown, calling for the elimination of "Bondage and Servitude" and "oppression".¹⁴⁴ His religious teachings therefore also having a socialist aura about them.

Under the threat of the uprising, in the play the King bows to the peasants' demands. Tyler orders Richard to respond to their request in writing, and adamant in his demands, presses for the promises to be put into immediate effect. He asks for all the lords and landed clergy to submit to the law of the Commons, and insists upon the repeal of serfdom and upon freedom for the people.¹⁴⁵ His uprising is, however, brought to a halt and, like Connolly and Thomas Münzer, the peasant rebel praised by Marx, Tyler is martyred at the hands of his enemies who outmanoeuvre him and abort his revolt.¹⁴⁶

In each of the plays, The Connolly Show, The Game's a Bogey, Occupations and Will Wat...?, the revolutionary hero is therefore honoured as a martyr. However, the playwrights concerned are not intent simply upon mulling over lost battles, but wish to use their examples to urge their audiences to follow in the steps of these "socialist" figures until victory is achieved.

III. 2. The People's Artist

The poet without the people is nothing.
The people without the poet will still be the people.
All we can do is to make loud and to make clear
their own proper voice.
They have so much to say.

Aneurin in The Island of the Mighty

The future is clearly one of struggle, and
absolute unremitting commitment to that struggle.

Trevor Griffiths

~~Stacy in the Revolution~~

I have mentioned earlier that Edward Bond and the Ardens use representative artists from history as measuring rods against which to compare themselves. While challenging Shakespeare and Merlin and ultimately condemning them, they seem to identify with revolutionary artists such as in the case of Bond, the Greek musician, Orpheus, in the ballet, Orpheus, and in the case of the Ardens, the Arthurian peasant poet, Aneurin in The Island. In like manner, Howard Brenton celebrates in his play Bloody Poetry artistic and political "virtues" such as "Radicalism", "defiance" and "intellectual rage"¹ in a renowned, English anarchic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Orpheus. A Story in Six Scenes was written between December 1977 - February 1978 in collaboration with the German composer Hans Werner Henze. It was first produced at the Stuttgard State Theatre, and then transferred to the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 25 June 1979. Bond's libretto is not yet published, and I shall therefore attempt in my examination of the play to offer a description of its

plot.

Like almost all Bond's plays, Orpheus is revolutionary in its approach to history. The playwright reworks the classic myth to suit his own dramatic and thematic purposes, or, as Laurence Shyer argues in his review of The Stuttgart Orpheus, "to amplify the Marxist doctrines that have galvanized his life and art".² The co-author of the piece, like Bond, is a Marxist who shares the latter's commitment to "world revolution" and the belief that art and politics must go hand in hand.³

In the first scene of Orpheus, we are presented with a group of women, dancing orgiastically in worshipping before Appollo. During the dance, Orpheus kills a man and tears off him "a blood-stained rag" to bind it round his arm.⁴ Appollo then appears with a lyre in his hand, and gives it to Orpheus. In this scene, Bond presents Appollo as a representative of an established order, which is still alive today in the rule of Western bourgeoisie, which, as I have shown earlier, draws its values from the Greeks. Bond seems also to apply here Arden's philosophy of "The Rectilinear" and "The Curvilinear" to Appollo and Orpheus. Appollo is shown as a as a champion of order and oppression. Like Lear, he is part of the "mythology of the past which", to Bond, "often lives on as the culture of the present",⁵ and he reigns over his people by curbing their freedom. When he hands the lyre to Orpheus, he also tells him how to use it. Hence Bond's dramatization of the "consequences of worshipping Appollo" as "a hell described in terms of the 'spectres of a concentration camp' "controlled by earless

guards".⁶ At this stage, Orpheus is presented as a tool in the hands of the ruling class and as an upholder of the status quo. He acts as he is told by Apollo.⁷ To indicate the oppressive nature of the god, Orpheus' Apollo-inspired tune in the first scene silences the merry-making countrymen and their commotion is silenced. Bond, here, therefore intimates that art is so important that it is a powerful weapon in the hands of the rulers with which the people can be suppressed.

The second scene reveals the growth of confrontation between two groups, the one wealthy, the other destitute. The producer of the ballet, William Forsythe, Shyer notes, represents the poor as a "group of workers wearing street clothes". The rich are "dressed in black tuxedos and 1950's style evening gowns, garishly covered with mink stoles and jewellery". The part of the stage where they are placed is covered with "Persian rugs".⁸ They face their opponents with contempt. Again, at the heart of this play, as of all his others, we are therefore presented with stark class antagonisms. The two groups are shown screaming at each other, and Eurydice is killed in the process of the confrontation. While Orpheus is grieving over the death of his beloved, the doors of hell are flung open, and three messengers come forward to take the dead body of Eurydice to the underworld. At this point, Orpheus plays his lyre whereupon Eurydice is resurrected, he takes her in his arms and thereby angers the emissaries of death.

In the third scene, Eurydice is snatched into hell while

dancing among a group of women. Orpheus is no longer in awe of Apollo. He defies the latter's orders not to go to the underworld and fights his way into hell to retrieve Eurydice. Theatrically, he is shown tearing the "white paper that lines the walls of the stage to reveal the blackness of hell underneath".⁹ Part one ends with him menacingly defiant of the established order.

In hell, Orpheus is shown to be a challenger of Hades and Persephone, the kings of the dead and in spite of them he takes Eurydice back to the living. Bond therefore celebrates his hero's rebelliousness and his challenging of the established order. The underworld is presented as an institution of the ruling class. Hades and Persephone are Apollo's agents and beneficiaries. "They are profiteers in human souls, the tyrannical overseers of a kind of sweatshop for the damned, and are characterized by Bond in terms of private ownership: 'their hands and robes are soiled from counting the dead'."¹⁰ Given the playwright's Marxist ideology, they are none but dominant capitalists, playing with people's lives and the suffering of the oppressed is shown when Hades and Persephone brutally torment the dead.

However, Orpheus' journey into hell does not end successfully. Eurydice is once more taken back again to the underworld by the kings of death, whereupon Orpheus goes through a state of melancholy and grief over his beloved's return to hell. He does not however despair and he tries again to restore her when he meets Apollo for the second time. Indeed his encounter with the latter gives him the momentum to rebel and his insurgence comes full circle when

he violently breaks his lyre to smithereens in the presence of his master, Apollo, who watches him aghast. Clement Crisp notes that "The god, too, is thus broken, making his way to his heaven in tottering, convulsive steps, like a machine that has lost all purpose and use".¹¹ The lyre also stands for the old system and its type of art and Orpheus' destruction of his instrument is symbolic of the destruction of the ruling class and the rejection of its culture. Bond identifies with Orpheus' revolt and sees in him "his own reflection as an artist".¹² Like Orpheus, he himself is, as I have illustrated, an iconoclast at absolute variance with the ruling class. Thus Apollonian inspiration is rejected by the hero who sets out now to make his own music. When touched, the smashed lyre produces a new tune, which is described by the playwright as "more beautiful, human, more contained in basic rhythm of sureness and subtlety".¹³

"The tractor broke the wooden plow
And Orpheus broke Apollo's lyre
The world was filled with new music."¹⁴

Orpheus is no longer depressed. He walks back into the "hell-mouth", where he sees Eurydice and the dead, walking out of hell to life, to a new world made from the rejection of the old mythology :¹⁵

"To the new music they rise out of hell
They are resurrected and changed
Calm happiness and contented joy
Children climbing over the edge of the world..
Hell is emptied
All dance"¹⁶

As a champion of the proletariat, Bond and his producer present the dead coming out of hell as a group of workers.¹⁷

Thus, in place of the traditional theatrical trick, the *deu ex machina*, we are presented with "a PROLETRIA EX MACHINA",¹⁸ thus, again, attesting to Bond's Marxist conviction that the world could only be changed at the hands of a proletarian upheaval rather than through providential intervention.

Like The Woman and The Bundle, Orpheus is an "answer" play, in which the dramatist offers his audiences solutions to the questions he earlier raised in his "problem" plays. However, Bond seems largely to repeat himself in the above-mentioned plays and by imposing on his drama his Marxist ideology he limits his scope of expression. Orpheus does not offer anything new; its hero is a similar version of The Miner of The Woman and Wang of The Bundle. Just as the latter defeat their oppressors and establish a classless community, Orpheus rejects the old order by defying its representative, Apollo. However, Orpheus does nonetheless differ from the other two plays in that it is an artist-drama and, for that reason, I have saved it for examination in this chapter.

Orpheus succeeded where Bingo's Shakespeare failed — hence his celebration in the ballet. As in The Island, we are presented with two types of artists in Orpheus; Orpheus the Appollo-inspired artist and Orpheus the people's artist, which is redolent of the Ardens' Merlin who followed a similar process in his artistic career. At the beginning, as I have shown earlier, he catered for Arthur and his regime in the same way as Orpheus did for Appollo. But just as the regenerated Merlin rejected Arthur and his oppressive system,

Orpheus breaks his links with Apollo and sets out to make a new music similar to Merlin's poetry which was sung in celebration of the cowman's wife. In other words, if Apollo stands for The Rectilinear, Orpheus, like the cured Merlin, represents The Curvilinear who, in the Ardens' as well as Bond's Marxist politics, stand for the oppressed who are eager for freedom and liberation.

As we can see, Bond attempts through Orpheus to construct a Marxist myth of the artist along proletarian lines. The lyricist is turned into a revolutionary who harnesses his art for the masses. The reproduction of the myth, Shyer rightly argues, is done in the form of a "revolutionary parable" that affirms "faith and commitment" to the cause of the disinherited:

"In his political re-evaluation, Orpheus becomes a freedom-fighter, a messianic hero who overthrows the totalitarian gods of Olympus and the underworld and leads the people of the earth to a new society."¹⁹

As a militant dramatist, Bond wants to revolutionize the artist in society. To him, a writer should not only write for the people but, as does Orpheus, and as did the Ardens' Connolly, must also engage with them in their fight against their exploiters. "In The Non-Stop Connolly Show", wrote Christian W. Thomsen in Contemporary English Drama, "Arden... chose a protagonist who was writer and thinker and a man of action, and also one whose conduct he could endorse: as such, he grew directly out of the conclusions Arden had drawn from The Bagman".²⁰ Thus, to the dramatists concerned, the artist should not separate himself from the masses; he must be one

of them. To this effect, Bond writes in a letter to Tony Coult (1978) that he can now "see more clearly" how the writer can participate in the revolutionary struggle. Hence Henze's and Bond's programme note for Orpheus:

"The nature of art in our times is controlled by the man in the street, and it's he who defines the responsibility of the artist - not through an act of goodwill or condescension by the artist but because art can now only be created by struggling to portray and understand the problems of the street."²¹

Thus, the "task" of the artist is "to create the image and consciousness of the working-class", a statement which brings to mind McGrath's question to Arnold Wesker in his letter of 1970, a question repeatedly asked by left-wing playwrights and groups during the 1970s:

"Are we going to create a revolutionary culture, whose task is to transform working-class culture, as it now exists, and to work with the political movement to create a revolutionary consciousness amongst the people? Or are we going to sit down on our arses and moan about the backwardness of the people?"²²

Orpheus lives up to Bond's and McGrath's concept of the artist. As a committed revolutionary, as he is made to say in the ballet, he dedicates his art to praising the world and the struggle of the crushed and celebrates them in music. McGrath's and Bond's notion of the writer is, however, not original but has its roots in the Russian artistic theory of the Proletcult, where writers work towards creating a proletarian culture in place of the tsarist "reactionary" culture. Bond's and McGrath's conclusions are similar to theirs. For the artist to be active and creative, he must

totally reject the bourgeois myth of the artist, and follow Orpheus' example. While Bingo's Shakespeare, a representative bourgeois writer, alienates himself from society and its concerns, Orpheus does the opposite. Voicing the dramatist's view, he is made to say that art is not "an act of private withdrawal,²³ thus calling for more interaction between the artist and the people. While Basho retreats into seclusion and seeks inspiration in mysticism, Orpheus resorts to the harsh, social, economic and political realities that brutalize his fellow countrymen. Basho avoids dirtying his hands with the filth and squalor of the material world, out of which, Bond seems to suggest, true art is made. While Shakespeare writes of the "Great", Orpheus sings of the "Many" who "have gone to hell", and who barely have a reason for living.

Unlike Basho, Orpheus rejects mysticism by defying the gods. In his maturation into a revolutionary artist, "He has the experience of hell" where he gains knowledge of the world of the oppressed.²⁴ To this effect, Crisp argues that "Visually as well as dramatically, the piece is concerned with the harsh poetry to be made from the materials of today".²⁵

Consciously or unconsciously, Orpheus is drawn in the image of the revolutionary Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, whose art, particularly his celebrated play, The Lower Depths, is the product of his harsh experience amongst Russian peasants, rivermen and factory-workers. The spirit of his writings is echoed through his name, Gorky, which means "bitter" in Russian. In like manner, Orpheus' music expresses the

consciousness of the denizens of hell, supposedly the lower order which he ultimately brings back to life, an action by which Bond emphasises the role of art and artists in changing the world, and in creating a classless society.

Like Orpheus, Aneurin, the peasant poet of The Island is presented as an ideal people's artist. The two conflicting classes in the play, the feudal lords and the peasants, have their representative poets. Merlin, as shown earlier, is the poet of the ruling class, and Aneurin is the plebeian poet who is "committed to the people and their dreams of political salvation".²⁶ The two types of poetry are in a state of conflict. The class antagonisms between the peasants and their lords is also echoed through the discord between their poets, a discord, as I have shown in the chapter about the artist as a hack, clearly dramatized in the meeting of the College Of Bards where Aneurin is looked at contemptuously by the poets of the establishment, and is denied the title of Chief Poet.²⁷

Aneurin can be best understood when compared with Merlin and the other subservient poets in the play. Unlike the latter, he refuses to be a lackey in the service of the princes. He leaves Gododdin's court and sets out to join the dispossessed and to sing for them. In part 3, scene 3, he, anticipating and scorning Merlin, says, "God in heaven, but I would not! Goods and gear the man gives me for the work that I perform".²⁸ In part 3, scene 6, Merlin echoes Aneurin's statement. But instead of refusing to accept being bought, as the former does, he unashamedly brags about being rewarded

for his services for Arthur with what he calls "goods and gear".

Aneurin reminds us of the Greek peasant poet, Hesiod, who is known to be the first bard in history who, unlike the poets of the time who catered for the aristocracy and celebrated its ideals and heroes, dedicated his poetry to the downtrodden peasantry. The "voice of the working people", Hauser notes, "is heard" for the first time in literature in his poetry.²⁹ Like Hesiod, Aneurin championed the cause of the people. Hence Merlin's remark in the play that the former "remained constant from the day of his birth; To the wild forest and the rain soaked earth",³⁰ supposedly the dispossessed masses. Speaking for his class, Aneurin tells Arthur, "General...you hold us in contempt that we should wish to make friends with the English",³¹ he does not see his country's enemies as any different from his class adversaries in his own country. In part 2, scene 9, Aneurin complains that "justice" has never been done to the poor. It is he who articulates the motif of the play that the poet must make the voice of the people loud and clear,³² and that a proletarian revolution will turn the world upside down.³³

While Merlin and his fellow lackey poets suppress the shortcomings of Arthur's rule, Aneurin exposes it, particularly in his iconoclastic poem which he sings to Gwenddydd in part 2, scene 9. Here, he calls for the demystifying of Arthur's reign and for the return of Queen Branwen whose lovely land, he says, "was held in common", where "no landlord gathered his gold" and where "All of the people ate what all of the people did grow".³⁴ As an anti-

feudalist, Aneurin, like Thomas M nzer and Wat Tyler, militates against the injustices of feudalism, in which the serfs are oppressed and exploited by their landlords, and calls for a communistic ownership of the land and its crops, thus anticipating a return to primitive communism praised by Engels.

While the rest of the poets are presented as hypocrites, Aneurin is shown as an honest blunt poet who always tells the "truth". Hence the suppression of his poetry. He tells Bedwyr, "when I did make music, that music was interrupted",³⁵ by which statement he echoes Arden in The Bagman, where the artist who does not cater for the ruling class is either combated or ignored, a situation, Brenton's hero, Shelley, also found himself in.

The celebrated English poet Shelley campaigned actively against the evils of industrialization and the pauperization of the workers. He supported the working-class in its struggle against the capitalists of the time, and, as Brenton mentions in his introduction of the dramatic personae of Bloody Poetry, the former's poem, Queen Mab, was "an inspirational text for early trade unionists and the Chartist Movement".³⁶ Hence Shelley's remark in the play that he is the poet of "the people of England".³⁷

As a revolutionary poet who "belonged to a small group of radicals",³⁸ Shelley was "preoccupied with the social milieu of the early 19th century", and attacked the "tyrannic"³⁹ ruling class of his time fiercely, an attack most revealed in his iconoclastic poetic play, Swellfoot. The

Tyrant, otherwise known as Oedipus Tyrannus, in which King George IV, his royal family and the members of government are subjected to a scathingly unsympathetic treatment. To articulate the economic injustices of his time, Shelley presents us with a pig-king with a bulging paunch, by which presentation he stresses the class distinctions and exploitation practised by the ruling class of the time. The king's people, presented as starving swine, complain that under the king's reign, they could not manage to get "Hog-wash or grains, or ruta бага" to feed themselves, and the oppressive nature of the regime is condemned. The "royal dogs", supposedly the police, tear the pigs' thatch down and the ruling class is described as rotten at heart. Shelley's dramatic piece was therefore, as might be expected, suppressed and banned.⁴⁰

The subject matter of Swellfoot, The Tyrant is clearly echoed in Bloody Poetry, where the play opens with Shelley fiercely lashing out at the ruling class of the time and sympathizing with the people:

"England, England.
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field.
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood.
Bump, bump, bump-
Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?"⁴¹

Identifying with Shelley, Brenton, a playwright of what Tony Mitchell calls "The Red Theatre",⁴² celebrates him as a "revolutionary. A communistical personality",⁴³ and as a

militant personage who is shown calling for a revolution in England, for which he will write every morning,⁴⁴ and is committed to stirring and provoking what Michael Billington calls "sullen, defeated bourgeois England".⁴⁵ Like Orpheus, he is glorified as a freedom-fighter for the oppressed of the earth. When Byron asks him if "Italian liberty" is your cause, he replies, "Liberty everywhere",⁴⁶ a view reminiscent of Connolly's identification with the crushed of Chile and all the downtrodden of the world.

In scene 10, Shelley cries out again at the oppressive ruling class of his time. He relates how a gathering of workers were brutally attacked and dispersed by militia men,⁴⁷ where hundreds are massacred and wounded at the hands of the tyrants and oppressors in England,⁴⁸ during what came to be known as "The Peterloo Massacre". There he echoes Brenton himself, railing at the erosion of freedom in Britain, and accusing the establishment of holding the working-class in subjection by the use of what he terms "concentration camps" and heavy-handed police; a charge, as mentioned earlier, levelled at Sir Winston Churchill and his successors in office, namely Mrs. Thatcher. Thus, Brenton finds in Shelley, who is described in Paul Foot's recent book as Red Shelley, his own reflection as a revolutionary artist.

Interestingly enough, Shelley's poem at the end of Bloody Poetry is very much redolent of Orpheus' and Aneurin's poems at the end of Orpheus and The Island. As a champion of the cause of the oppressed, Shelley glorifies the masses as "Heroes", and also predicts their victory over their oppressors, where the ruling classes are dethroned and

replaced by the people:

"Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,...
Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number-
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many-they are few...
The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing
The hoar-spray is dancing
The earth is like ocean
Wreck, strew and in motion:
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm-"49

Shelley's militant poem also clearly echoes Marx's call for the proletariat at the end of The Communist Manifesto, "Let the ruling classes tremble at the prospect of a communist revolution. Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. PROLETARIANS OF ALL LANDS, UNITE!"

Conclusion

Conclusion

As we have seen in the previous pages, iconoclasm has proved to be a major feature in modern British drama, where in a short period of time, the theatre has witnessed a host of iconoclastic dramatists, where demythologization has been widespread and fierce and where the icons of the present and the past have been subjected to a wholesale desecration in large numbers at the hands of the Ardens, Brenton, Bond, Churchill and others, who, as their dramatization of history and its idols has shown, have much in common.

Although the above playwrights and others were most active towards the end of the sixties and throughout the seventies, their assault, however, has not completely died away in the eighties. ¹ As I have shown, Berkoff in 1987 launched in Sink the Belgrano! a fierce onslaught on political sacred cows, including the present Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher who was mercilessly pilloried. On the 19th of February, 1988, Radio Three began broadcasting a nine part iconoclastic cycle by the Ardens, Whose Is The Kingdom? in which iconized personages from Roman history are revealed in a new light. In the above cycle, the playwrights set out to "demolish" "established notions"² about Christ, Christianity, and rewrite the history of the Roman Empire, exposing its heroes and icons such as Constantine as manipulators and hypocrites. In other words, the Ardens' iconoclasm does not seem to have subsided; indeed it is on the rise!

However, as mentioned earlier, iconoclasm is not merely the result of petty spite; it is a major aspect of political drama. It works towards changing the received images that the audience hold of history, the present and their icons the

latter of which represent both the former. However, like the political theatre of which it is part, iconoclasm has failed to achieve its objectives for a number of reasons, foremost of which is the fact that the denigration of a historic idolatrized figure amounts to attacking the audience itself in whose mind, the images of those assaulted are deeply ingrained as holy and untouchable. The audience sees in such figures its own reflection. Lindenberger, in his book Historical Drama rightly argues that historical playwrights could "present a historical character or action within a broad framework of accepted notions".³ In other words, a playwright dramatizing a historical figure should try to adhere as much as he can to what is handed down to him and to his audience about the figure by history. Lindenberger goes on to say that "Historical material had the same status as myth, both belonged to what Horace called 'publicly known matters'.... and both depended - indeed, still do depend - on an audience's willingness to assimilate the portrayal of a familiar story or personage". Any portrayal of Achilles as not "restless, irascible, unyielding, and hard" would appear to the audience as unacceptable.⁴ The above theory can be rightly applied to the iconoclastic modern British playwrights' treatment of venerated persons. The audience would certainly stick to the "accepted notions" about Lord Nelson, Queen Victoria, Sir Winston Churchill and others. Plays such as The Hero Rises Up, Early Morning, and The Churchill Play can only arouse indignation in the audience and not a renunciation of received images. As I have shown, many spectators and critics were offended by, say, Arden's

treatment of Nelson or Bond's degradation of Queen Victoria and William Shakespeare. The audience would rather adhere to what it already knows than revise its views, which brings to mind Marx's statement about the spell that the past casts upon the people, "The old has a strong grip on the people and, progress proceeds slowly". "Tradition is a great retarding force, is the vis inertiae of history". "The tradition of all past generations weighs like an Alp upon the brains of the living".⁵

The conflict between the audience and the iconoclastic dramatist as regards demythifying a historic personage is best revealed in the following statement by Brenton:

"People kept on stopping me in Nottingham and saying, 'I hear you're writing a play about Churchill. Great man, great man'. They always use that same phrase. But I don't think he was really a great man at all."⁶

Brenton's above statement therefore echoes Lindenberger's that the audience indeed expects the dramatist to stick to "accepted notions" about historical figures, particularly those who retain an iconic status.

However, although they may be considered to have failed politically to dislodge right-wing iconography, the modern British demythologizers have established iconoclasm as a major trend in modern British drama and have revived an old tradition and consolidated it.

Bond, a playwright who has constantly since 1968 called for the renunciation of the past and its icons is, however, only too aware of the difficulties that his iconoclasm faces, yet, as we have seen, he has not stopped producing iconoclastic plays. In his play, The Bundle, his

revolutionary hero, Wang works hard with his fellow rebels to rid themselves of the past. He eggs them on to think of the future. For that purpose, he narrates to them the story of a man who carried the king on his back all his life, who even "did not know the king had died long ago", and who "carried him always and wasted his life". He goes on to say that the worst thing is "to carry the dead on your back". What the iconoclasts have tried to do during the past two decades is to remove that dead man from their nation's shoulders.

Notes

Introduction

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3. G.B. Shaw, Ibid. p. 207.
4. John Arden, Ibid. p. 180.
5. Charles Wood, Ibid. p. 178.
6. Catherine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1980), p. 3.
7. Ibid. p. 3.
8. Howard Brenton, "Petrol Bombs Through the Proscenium Arch", interviewed by the editors of Theatre Quarterly, Vol. V, No.17, 1975, p. 20.
9. John McGrath, quoted in Itzin, op. cit., p. 120.
10. Itzin, Ibid. p. 5.
11. John Arden & Margaretta D'Arcy, The Island of the Mighty, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1974), p. 71.
12. Ibid. p. 47.

I. Aristophanic Iconoclasm

1. Aristophanes, quoted in Augusto Baol, Theatre of The Oppressed, (Pluto Press: London, 1979), p. xiii.
2. Coburn Gum, The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson, (Mouton: The Hague, 1969), p. 81.
3. Ibid, pp. 81-83. However, K.J. Dover, the author of Aristophanic Comedy, (B.T. Batsford LTD: London, 1972), mentions on page 13, that Aristophanes was "indicted by Kleon for ridiculing the elected magistrates of the city in front of an audience (at the City Dionysia) containing many foreign visitors" in his play Babylonians. But, "The indictment", Dover goes on to say, "does not seem to have been succesful".
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13. Aristophanes, The Acharnians in The Eleven Comedies, (Liverlight Publishing Corp.: New York, 1943), p. 114.
14. Cedric. H. Whitman, Aristophanes & The Comic Hero, (Harvard University Press: Harvard, 1964), p. 67.
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16. Whitman, op. cit., p. 68.
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19. Victor Ehrenberg, The People of Aristophanes, (Schocken Books: New York, 1962), p. 302.
20. Ibid. p. 302.
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22. Gum, op. cit., No. 2, p. 47.
23. Norwood, op. cit., p. 307.
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25. Aristophanes, The Acharnians, p. 91.
26. Whitman, op. cit., p. 80.
27. Dover mentions on page 89 in his already quoted book that Aristophanes did not attack Cleon directly. The actor who played him was disguised as a "Paphlagonian". But in all the editions that I have

consulted, including the one in question, Cleon is mentioned by name in the cast.

28. Thucydides, quoted in Murray, op. cit., p. 39.
29. Ibid. p. 40.
30. Ibid. p. 40.
31. It should be noted, however, that, Denis is not as fierce and vindictive as The Knights. Thatcher never bothered to see Shock.
32. Solomos, op. cit., No. 6, p. 89.
33. See the back cover of A Short Sharp Shock! in Thirteenth Night & A Short Sharp Shock! by Howard Brenton, (Methuen New Theatre Script: London, 1981).
34. Whitman, op. cit., No. 14, p. 89.
35. Aristophanes, The Knights in The Eleven Comedies, (Liverlight Publishing Corp,: New York, 1943), p. 12.
36. Ibid. p. 17.
37. Ibid. p. 20.
38. Ibid. p. 57.
39. Ibid. pp. 21-22.
40. Ibid. p. 24.
41. Ibid. p. 42.
42. Ibid. pp. 23-24.
43. Ibid. p. 34.
44. Ibid. p. 36.
45. Ibid. p. 27.
46. Solomos, op.cit., No. 6, p. 98.
47. Whitman, op.cit., No. 14, p. 89.
48. Aristophanes (a different version of The Knights, quoted in Murray, op.cit., p. 41.
49. Aristophanes, The Knights, p. 31.
50. Ibid. p. 79.
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52. Ibid. p. 41.

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11. Ibid. p. 5.
12. Ibid. p. 5.
13. Charles Wood, Dingo, (Penguin : Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 11.
14. Ibid. p. 13.
15. Ibid. p. 13.
16. Ibid. p. 13.
17. Ibid. p. 14.

18. Ibid. p. 14.
19. Ibid. p. 14.
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22. Dingo, p. 107.
23. Ibid., p. 108.
24. Roger Barnard, "Bolshy Bludgeon", New Society, July-December, 1967, p. 732.
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33. The Acharnians, p. 115.
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35. Ibid. p. 9.
36. See p. 15, Plays & Players, No.4, January, 1968, p. 14.
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223. Calder, op. cit., p. 97.
224. The Churchill Play, p. 81.
225. Calder, op. cit., p. 17.
226. Ibid. p. 17.
227. Ibid. p. 18. My italics.
228. Ibid. p. 18. My italics.
229. Peacock, op. cit., p. 206.
230. Calder, op. cit., p. 17.
231. The Churchill Play, p. 28.
232. Ibid. p. 76.
233. Calder, op. cit., p. 90.
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236. Ibid. p. 12.
237. Peacock, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

238. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, (Hill & Wang : 1972), p. 146.
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240. The Churchill Play, p. 80.
241. Ibid. p. 78.
242. Peacock, op. cit., p. 207.
243. The Churchill Play, p. 69.
244. Calder, op. cit., p. 78.
245. Ibid. p. 78.
246. The Churchill Play, p. 12.
247. Ibid. p. 29.
248. Ibid. p. 42.
249. Ibid. p. 89.

II. 2. Culpable Artists : The Artist As Bourgeois. The Artist As Mystic. & The Artist As Lackey.

1. Bond, quoted in Hay & Roberts, Bond : A Study of His Plays, (Eyre Methuen : London, 1980), p. 181.
2. Henry Arvon, Marxist aesthetics, trans. Helen R. Lane, (Cornell University Press : Ithaco & London, 1973) , p. 4.
3. G. B. Shaw Shaw on Shakespeare, ed. by Edwin Wilson, (Cassell : London, 1961), p. xvi.
4. Ibid. p. xii.
5. In addition to The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, as I have mentioned earlier, Shaw wrote The Man of Destiny and Caesar & Cleopatra where Napoleon & Caesar are reduced to laughingstocks. In Man & Superman, he ridicules hero worshippers, including Nietzsche, who is called a "madam". See Michael Mason, "Caesar and Cleopatra; A shavian Exercise in both Hero worship and Belittlement", Humanities Assn. Review, vol.25, 1974,, pp. 1-10.
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8. B. Nightingale, "The Bourgeois Bard" New Statesman, 23, November, 1973, p. 783.
9. Michael Anderson, "Exeter", Plays & Players, No.4 Jan., 1974 , p. 62.
10. O'Connnor, op. cit., pp. 27-28. Unlike O'connor, Pat Gems wholeheartedly approves of Bond's treatment of the bard, and powerfully defends Bingo. She also lashes out at O'connor, calling him a "daft" critic. Plays & Players, No. 14, November, 1974, p. 6.
12. Ibid. p. 27
13. Kenneth Hurren, "Review of The Arts", The Spectator, 24, August, 1974. p. 248.
14. Gareth & Barbara Lloyd Evans, Plays In Review, 1956-1980, (Batsford Academic & Educational: London, 1985), p. 35.
15. Raymond Goodlatte, "The Bingo Shakespeare", The Listener 5, September, 1974, p. 302.
- ~ 16. Ibid. p. 302.

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29. See Peter Demetz, Marx, Engels And The Poets, (the University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1959), p. 45.
30. Ibid. p. 45.
31. Hauser, op. cit., p. 404.
32. William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, (Airmont Publishing Company Inc.: New York, 1965), p. 16.
33. William Shakespeare, Coriolanus, ed. by philip Brockbank, (Methuen & Co Ltd: London, 1976), pp. 107, 128.
34. Edward Bond, Bingo, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1974) p. 38.
35. Ibid. p. 38.
36. Ibid. p. 38.
37. Bond: "Us, Our Drama and The National Theatre", Plays & Players, No.1, October, 1978, p. 8.
38. Bingo, p. 18.
39. Ibid. p. 2.
40. Ibid. p. 10.

41. Ibid. p. 11.
42. Ibid. p. 18.
43. Ibid. p. 19.
44. Ibid. p. 23.
45. Ibid. p. 19.
46. Brecht, quoted in Darko Suvin, To Brecht & Beyond, (The Harvester Press: Sussex, 1984), p. 189.
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49. Ibid. p. 1
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53. Ibid. p. 920.
54. Bingo, p. 6.
55. Ibid. p. 7.
56. See Dave Laing, The Marxist Theory of Art, (The Harvester Press: Sussex, 1978), pp. 4-5.
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73. Bingo, p. 1
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76. Ibid. p. 43.
77. Ibid. p. 43.
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79. Ibid. p. 44.
80. Ibid. p. 46.
81. Ibid. p. 46.
82. Ibid. p. 43.
83. Ibid. p. 50.
84. Ibid. p. 39.
85. Ibid. p. 42.
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90. Bond, Plays: Two p. xii.
91. Bingo, p. 48.
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93. Dr. D.K. "Matsuo Basho", The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 14, (William Benton: Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo, New York, 1972), p. 115.

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98. Ibid. p. 21.
99. Ibid. p. 28.
100. Ibid. p. 7. See Peter, op. cit., p. 28.
101. Basho, quoted in Peter, op. cit., p. 28.
102. Narrow Road To The Deep North p. 14.
103. Ibid. p. 14.
104. Ibid. p. 56.
105. Ibid. p. 53.
106. Ibid. p. 53.
107. Ibid. p. 53.
108. Ibid. p. 54.
109. E. Bond, quoted in M. Hay & P. Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1980), p. 90.
110. Matsuo Basho, "Records of a weather Exposed Skeleton", in The Narrow Road To The Deep North And Other Travel Sketches, trans. Nobuyuhi Yuasa, (Penguin: Baltimore, 1966), p. 52.
111. Bond in "A Discussion with Edward Bond", interviewed by Irving Wardle, Gambit, No.17, 1970, p.8. Basho is further degraded in The Bundle, where he is presented as a reactionary lackey to the land owners.
112. See G. Loney, "Edward Bond: the First Cycle", Performing Arts Journal, 1,2, Fall 1976, p. 43.
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114. See M.M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretations of History, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1962), p. 148.
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117. Bertolt Brecht, St. Joan of the Stockyard, in Seven Plays, ed. Eric Bentley, (Grove Press, inc: New York, 1961), p. 155.
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122. Brown, op. cit., No. 86, p. 153.
123. W. Scott Morton, quoted in Brown, Ibid., p. 153.
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128. See Bober, op. cit., p. 152.
129. Narrow Road To The Deep North p. 13.
130. See Bober, op. cit., p. 155.
131. Ibid. p. 151.
132. Ibid. p. 151.
133. Ibid. p. 152.
134. Ibid. p. 155.
135. Ibid. p. 155.
136. Narrow Road To The Deep North p. 42.
137. Ibid. p. 55.
138. Bingo. p. 26.
139. See Suvin, op. cit., No. 46, p. 157.
140. St. Joan of The Stockyard, p. 225.
141. Suvin, op. cit., p. 157.
142. Narrow Road To The Deep North. p. 56.
143. Richard Scharine, The Plays of Edward Bond (Bucknell University Press: Lewisberg, Penn, 1976), p. 129.

144. In The Bundle, the revolutionary hero, Wang, rejects isolated acts of kindness. Hence, his decision not to save the life of the baby he finds abandoned at the bank of the river. He argues that saving the life of one child will not solve the problems of society, "How many babies are left to dies by the river? How many?", he says, "I pick up a child? who picks the rest?" To him, as to Bond, revolutionary action is the best remedy. See the poems written for The Bundle.
145. Narrow Road To The Deep North. p. 10.
146. Ibid. p. 10.
147. Ibid. p. 16.
148. Suvin, op. cit., p. 140.
149. St. Joan of The Stockyard, p. 254.
150. Baron d'Holbach, quoted in Keith Dickson, Towards Utopia. A Study of Brecht (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1978), p. 131.
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152. Ibid. p. 254.
153. Narrow Road To The Deep North. p. 53.
154. See Bober, op. cit., No. 114, p. 77.
155. Ibid. p. 80.
156. See Gambit, 5, No.17, (1970) p. 11.
157. Narrow Road To The Deep North p. 24.
158. Ibid. p. 55.
159. Dickson, op. cit. p. 45.
160. Boal, Theatre of the the Oppressed, p. 99.
161. C.F Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights.
162. John Arden & M. D'Arcy, The Island of the Mighty, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1974), p. 86.
163. J.L.W, "Merlin" Encyclopaedia Britannica. A New Survey of University Knowledge, Vol. 15, Marlborough to Mushet Steel, (Encyclopaedia Britannica Ltd: Chicago, London, Toronto, 1962) p. 282.
164. Ibid. p. 282.
165. Albert Hunt, John Arden: A Study of His Plays, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1974), p. 160.

166. John Lahr, "The Island of the Mighty", Plays & Players, No. 5, Feb., 1973, p. 32.
167. The Island of The Mighty. p. 171.
168. Lahr, op. cit., p. 32.
169. The Island of The Mighty, p. 42.
170. Ibid. p. 42.
171. Ibid. p. 141.
172. Michael Anderson, Anger And Detachment, (Pitman Publishing: London, 1976), p. 70.
173. The Island of The Mighty, p. 175.
174. See E.K, "Merlin", Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. William Benton, publisher: Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo,, Manila, 1972) p. 195.
175. Gurdun Helwig, "Relations Between Political Topicality and Popular Form in Arden's Plays", in Political Development on The British Stage in the Sixties and Seventies. (Rostock: Wilhelm-Pieck Universitat, 1976), p. 123.
176. Anderson, op. cit., p. 70.
177. D.N. Jones, "David Jones Talks about his RSC production of The Island of The Mighty, Plays & Players, No. 5. February, 1973, p. 30.
178. The Island of The Mighty p. 35.
179. Ibid. p. 38.
180. Ibid. p. 86.
181. Ibid. p. 218.
182. Ibid. p. 106.
183. Ibid. p. 187.
184. Ibid. p. 188.
185. Javed Malick, "The polarized Universe of "The Island of The Mighty": The Dramaturgy of Arden and D'Arcy", New Theatre Quarterly, No. 5, February 1986, p. 50.
186. The Island of The Mighty p. 103.
187. Ibid. p. 104.
188. Ibid. p. 104.

189. Ibid. p. 105.
190. Ibid. p. 105.
191. Ibid. p. 105.
192. Malick. op. cit., p. 49.
193. The Island of The Mighty p. 141.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid.
196. Ibid. p. 86.
197. Ibid. p. 147.
198. Ibid. p. 57.
199. Ibid. p. 14.
200. Ibid. p. 175.
201. Ibid. p. 229.
202. Malick, op. cit., pp. 50, 51.
203. Ibid p. 51.
204. Ibid.
205. The Island of The Mighty p. 218.
206. Ibid.
207. The Island of The Mighty p. 219.
208. Ibid. p. 227.
209. Ibid. p. 221.
210. Malick. op. cit., p. 51.
211. The Island of The Mighty p. 227.
212. Ibid p. 233.
213. Ibid. pp. 232, 233.
214. Ibid. p. 233.
215. Ibid. p. 234.
216. Ibid. p. 187.
217. Ibid.

218. Anderson, op. cit., No. 172, p. 60.
219. John Arden, The Bagman, (Methuen: London, 1971), p.37.
220. F. Gray, John Arden, (MacMillan: London, 1982), p.67.
221. ibid. p.67.
222. The Bagman, p.56.
223. Ibid. p. 37.
224. Ibid. p.37.
225. Ibid. p. 37.
226. Ibid. p. 38.
227. Ibid. p. 42.
228. Ibid. p. 16.
229. Brenton's The Romans in Britain, for instance, was severely criticised by politicians who called for banning such plays.
230. The Bagman, p. 17.
231. Ibid. p. 61.
232. Ibid. p.63.
233. Ibid. p. 63.
234. Ibid. p. 65.
235. Ibid. p. 65.
236. Ibid. pp. 79, 80.
237. See Hunt, John Arden: A Study of his Plays, p150.
238. The Bagman, p.87.
239. The Bagman p. 87.
240. Henry I. Schvey, "From paradox to propaganda: The plays of John Arden", in Essays on Contemporary British Drama, (Hueber: Munich, 1981),p. 52.
241. The Bagman, p.17.

III. Iconolatry Versus Iconoclasm:

III. 1. The Revolutionary Hero

1. See "A socialist Hero on The Stage" in John Arden, To Present the Pretence, (Eyre Methuen: London, 1977), pp. 92-138.
2. Margaretta D'Arcy & John Arden, The Non-Stop Connolly Show, Vol. 1&2 , (Pluto Press: London, 1977), p. 2.
3. Arden & D'Arcy, The Business of Good Government (Methuen & Co Ltd.: London, 1963), p. 29.
4. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 1 & 2 p. 2.
5. Ibid. p. 2.
6. Ibid. p. v.
7. See Henry Arvon, Marxist Esthetics, trans. Helen. R. Lane, (Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London, 1973), p. 12.
8. See Arno Schirokauer, Lassalle - the Power of Illusion And The Illusion of Power, trans. by Eden & Cedar Paul, (George Allen & Unwin: London, 1931), p. 188.
9. Ibid. p. 188.
10. Ibid. p. 188.
11. Lassalle, Ibid. p. 188.
12. Bismarck, Ibid. p. 188.
13. Marx, quoted in S.S. Prawer, Karl Marx and World Literature, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York, Melbourne), p. 216.
14. F. Lassalle, Franz von Sickingen trans. by Daniel Delon, (New York Labor News Company: New York, 1904), p. 58.
15. To Present The Pretence pp. 99-100.
16. The Non-Stop Connolly Show (Vol. 1 & 2) p. 3.
17. Part one of the cycle goes through the childhood of the hero and the various jobs he did.
18. Ibid. p. 5.
19. Brecht, quoted in Frederic Ewen, Bertolt Brecht, His Life, His Art And His Times, (Calder & Boyars: London, 1970), p. 270.

20. The Non-Stop Connolly Show, Vol. 1 & 2 , p. 5.
21. See Scenes 7, 8, 8, Ibid.
22. Ibid. p. 22.
23. Ibid. p. 20.
24. Ibid. Vol.5 p. 59.
25. Ibid. Vol. 1 & 2. See pp. 24-25.
26. Ibid. p. 25.
27. Ibid. p. 26.
28. Ibid. p. 25.
29. Ibid. p. 46.
30. See To Present The Pretence p. 95.
31. the Non-Stop Connolly Show, Vol.1 & 2,p. 47.
32. Ibid. p. 60.
33. Ibid. p. 63.
34. To Present the Pretence p. 113.
35. The Non-Stop Connolly Show,Vol. 3,p. 6.
36. Ibid. p. 6.
37. Ibid. p. 7.
38. Ibid. p. 7.
39. Ibid. p. 7.
40. Ibid. p. 8.
41. Ibid. p. 8.
42. To Present The Pretence, pp. 101- 102.
43. The Non-Stop Connolly Show,Vol.3,p. 59.
44. Ibid., p. 20. In Origin of The Family, Engels can not lavish enough praise on the gens society, otherwise known as the Asiatic era, where people share everything amongst themselves, and where private ownership is absolutely absent.
45. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 3., p. 20. See Yeat's poem "The Second Coming".
46. Ibid. p. 22.

47. Ibid. p. 20.
48. Ibid. p. 26.
49. Ibid. p. 51.
50. Ibid. Vol. 5, p. 63.
51. Ibid. Vol. 3, p. 43.
52. Ibid. p. 43.
53. Ibid. Vol. 6, p. 9.
54. Ibid. p. 10.
55. Ibid. Vol. 4, p. 23.
56. Ibid. p. 35.
57. Ibid. p. 50.
58. Ibid. Vol. 5, p. 21.
59. See M.M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1948), p. 210.
60. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 5, p. 91.
61. Ibid. Vol. 6 p. 75.
62. Ibid. Vol. 5 p. 40.
63. Ibid. p. 78.
64. Ibid. p. 78.
65. Ibid. p. 78.
66. Ibid. p. 78.
67. Ibid. Vol. 3, p. 7.
68. See To Present The Pretence, p. 151.
69. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 6, p. 33.
70. Ibid. p. 33.
71. Ibid. p. 22.
72. Ibid. p. 55.
73. Ibid. p. 101.
74. Ibid. p. 106.
75. See Arvon, op. cit., No. 7, pp. 11-12.

76. To Present The Pretence, p. 92.
77. Ibid. pp. 93-94.
78. Ibid. pp. 95-96.
79. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 4, p. 24.
80. Ibid. p. 34.
81. Ibid. vol. 6, p. 72.
82. William Shakespeare, Coriolanus, ed. by Philip Brockbank, (Methuen & Co. Ltd: London, 1976), pp. 122-123.
83. Ibid. pp. 112-113, 140-141.
84. Ibid. p. 144.
85. Ibid. p. 108.
86. Ibid. p. 219.
87. Ibid. (cf. Brecht's Coriolan)
88. To Present The Pretence, p. 111.
89. Ibid. p. 97.
90. See Christopher Innes, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre . The Development of Modern German Drama, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1972), p.124.
91. Ibid. p. 124.
92. Ibid. p. 124.
93. Ibid. p. 126.
94. To Present The Pretence, pp. 100-101.
95. See Innes, op. cit., p. 127.
96. The Non-Stop Connolly Show, Vol. 6, p. 74.
97. See The Trial of Joan of Arc, where Brecht turns the traditional story of the French amazon-saint topsy-turvy. He replaces the angels with the people, who are directing the heroine to drive the enemies out of her country.
98. Christian. W. Thomsen, "Three Socialist Playwrights", in Contemporary English Drama, ed. by E.W.C. Bigsby, (Arnold: London, 1981), P. 158.
99. McGrath, cited in Thomsen, Ibid. p. 161.
100. John McGrath, "An Impersonal Note To Che Guevara", in

Marianne Alexander, Viva Che, (New York, 1968), p. 78.

101. John McGrath, The Game's A Bogey, (EUSPB: Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 42-44.
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103. Ibid. p. 3.
104. Ibid. p. 3.
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106. Ibid. p. 3.
107. The Non-Stop Connolly Show Vol. 6, p. 48.
108. The Game's A Bogey p. 4.
109. Ibid. pp. 4-5.
110. Ibid. p. 4.
111. John McGrath, "The Theory And Practice of Political Theatre", Theatre Quarterly No. 35, Autumn, 1979, p. 51.
112. The Non-Stop Connolly Show, Vol.6, p. 48.
113. The Game's A Bogey pp. 7-9.
114. Ibid. p. 13.
115. Ibid. p. 15.
116. John McGrath, Little Red Hen, (Pluto Press: London, 1977), p. 4.
117. Ibid. p. 4.
118. The Game's A Bogey p. 41.
119. Ibid. pp. 42-43.
120. Ibid. p. 43.
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123. Ibid. p. 52.
124. Ibid. p. 53.
125. Ibid. p. 53.
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Methuen : London, 1980),p. 164.

127. Trevor Griffiths, Occupations, (Calder & Boyars: London, 1972), p. 16.
128. Ibid. p. 28.
129. Ibid. p. 28.
130. Ibid. p. 31.
131. Ibid. p. 44.
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133. Ibid. p. 65.
134. See William Ebenstein & Edwin Fogelman, Today's Isms, (Prentice-Hall, Inc: New Jersey. 1980),p. 100.
135. Occupations pp. 49-50.
136. Christian W. Thomsen, "Three Socialist Playwrights", in Bigsby, op. cit., p. 171.
137. Occupations p. 50.
138. Ebenstein & Fogelman, op. cit., p. 100.
139. Ibid. p. 100.
140. Ibid. p. 101.
141. Steve Gooch, Will Wat. if Not. What Will, (Pluto Press: London, 1975),p. 42.
142. Ibid. p. 42.
143. Ibid. p. 49.
144. Ibid. p. 52.
145. Ibid. pp. 66-68.
146. Ibid. p. 72.

III 2. The People's Artist

1. Michael Billington, "Bloody Poetry", The Guardian 6, October, 1984. See also The Guardian, 9, Oct., 1984.
2. Laurence Shyer, "The Stuttgart Orpheus", Theatre, spring, 1980, p. 69.
3. Ibid. p. 69.
4. For a full summary of the plot of the ballet, see Philip Roberts, "The Search for Epic Drama: Edward Bond's Recent work", Modern Drama, No 4, December, 1981. See also Shyer, op. cit., and Clement Crisp, "Orpheus", The Financial Times, 17th March, 1979, The Arts Page.
5. Bond, quoted in Shyer, op. cit., p. 70.
6. See Roberts, op. cit., p. 460.
7. Compare with Merlin and the establishment poets in The Island.
8. Shyer, op. cit., p. 71.
9. Crisp, op. cit., The Arts Page.
10. Shyer, op. cit., p. 73.
11. Crisp, op. cit., The Arts Page.
12. Shyer, op. cit., p. 69.
13. Bond, quoted in Roberts, op. cit., p. 460 (extracts from Orpheus).
14. Bond, quoted in Shyer, op. cit., p. 74. (extracts from Orpheus).
15. Roberts, op. cit., p. 460.
16. Bond, quoted in Shyer, op. cit., p. 74. (extracts from Orpheus).
17. Shyer, op. cit., p. 74.
18. Ibid. p. 74.
19. Ibid. p. 70.
20. Julian Hilton, "The Court and its Favours", in Bigsby, op. cit., p. 154.
21. Bond & Henze, From The Programme To Orpheus (Stuttgart production), quoted in Shyer, op. cit., p. 69.
22. John McGrath, Letter to Arnold Wesker, quoted in Itzin, Stages in the Revolution, p. 107.

23. Bond, quoted in Shyer, op. cit., p. 69.
24. Roberts, op. cit., p. 460.
25. Crisp, op. cit., The Arts Page.
26. See Malick, op. cit., New Theatre Quarterly, No. 5, 1986, p. 44.
27. See The Island Of The Mighty, pp. 103-105.
28. Ibid. p. 117.
29. Hauser, The Social History of Art, Vol. 1, p. 80.
30. The Island of the Mighty, p. 227.
31. Ibid. p. 116.
32. Ibid. p. 232.
33. Ibid. p. 234-235.
34. Ibid. p. 157.
35. Ibid. p. 213.
36. Howard Brenton, Bloody Poetry, (Methuen: London & New York, 1985), p. 6.
37. Ibid. p. 70.
38. See Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge & Massachusetts, 1969).
39. Compare Swellfoot with George Orwell's Animal Farm. Both writers use dogs as symbols of oppression.
40. Desmond King-Hele, Shelley. His Thought And Work, (MacMillan & Co Ltd.: London & New York 1960), p. 266.
41. Shelley, quoted in Bloody Poetry, p. 11.
42. "The Red Theatre Under The Bed", interview with Brenton, New Theatre Quarterly, No. 11, August, 1987, p. 195.
43. Bloody Poetry, p. 29.
44. Ibid. p. 50.
45. Billington, The Guardian, 6, Nov, 1984.
46. Bloody Poetry p. 66.
47. Ibid. p. 72.
48. Ibid. p. 72.

49. Shelley, quoted in Bloody Poetry, p. 80.

Conclusion.

1. Even Wood's iconoclasm has not died away. Just as he presented the Second World War and its heroes in an unmistakably unsympathetic light in Dingo, he could lash out at the Falklands War and its manipulators in his new play, Tumbledown, (1987), which presents us with "scenes of disturbing ferocity and appalling realism". As a result of its anti-Thatcher views, the play, which was supposed to be shown by B.B.C. television, was postponed. Although Thatcher does not appear in the play, she takes her share of Wood's venom. See Hugh Herbert, "By the Left And Right To War", The Guardian, 4, July, 1987, p. 13.
2. See Michael Billington, "Arden of Eden", The Guardian, 19, February, 1988, p. 29.
3. Herbert Lindenberger, Historical Drama, p. 1.
4. Ibid. p. 1.
5. Karl Marx, quoted in M.M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History p. 71.
6. Brenton, interview by Hugh Herbert, The Guardian, 9, May, 1974.

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