

David Hare's Teeth 'n' Smiles:
A Drama of Disintegration
ابتسامات خادعة دراما التفكك

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David Hare (b.1947) is one of the most critically acclaimed, contemporary British dramatists. A playwright, director and filmmaker, he has written more than thirty plays for the stage and seven original screen plays for cinema and TV (Susan Emerling, p.1). He began his dramatic career in the late sixties. Along with such dramatists as Howard Brenton and Trevor Griffiths, he writes in the aftermath of the "Angry Young Men" tradition of John Osborne. It is a well-known fact that the element of anger continued in the drama of the 1960s and became even more radicalized after the social, cultural and political unrests of 1968 by the dramatists of the "second wave" to whom Hare belongs (John Russell Taylor, p.14). Setting his plays in a variety of microcosmic societies, Hare exposes the inadequacies of capitalism and imperialism and the decay of civilization in England. The societies he portrays, ranging from an isolated girls' school in Slag (1971) to a Chinese village in Fanshen (1976), parallel the problems of his country and demonstrate the impact of individual lives of recent English history. In this respect, Ronald Hayman remarks that Hare's plays invariably chronicle the state of British society and "depicted England in state of moral collapse."(Hayman & et al., p.6)

This comes in conformity with Hare's unshakeable conviction that it is the writer's duty to interpret the society where he lives and to diagnose its ills dramatically (Michael Billington, p.5). Collectively, Hare's plays provide an

authentic and remarkably well-sustained picture of the convulsions that have taken place in British life over the past half century (Ibid.).

Teeth 'n' Smiles (1975)(hereafter Teeth) is one of Hare's early dramatic pieces. He was twenty eight years old when he wrote it. This may account for the sympathetic attitude and intense interest in the presentation of the mood of dissatisfaction and aimlessness prevailing among the under-thirty generation. It may also explain the reason behind his choosing one of the most popular forms at that time, i.e Rock 'n' Roll, to comment on the some of the social and cultural problems of his generation. In fact, it makes him an authentic witness to the various changes that befell England at that time.

Sociologically speaking, 'Rock 'n' Roll' is closely associated with young generation. It was played by young artists for young audience and addressed young people's interests such as quick sex and puppy love ("What is Rock?" p.4). It is, as a matter of fact, "an authentic representation of a social situation."(Ibid.) It is at once, the mainstream of commercial music and a romantic art form; and in Peter Wollen's words, a voice "from below" or from the social margins, (p.176) whose radical claim to advocate anti-establishment values was sustained by "adolescent irresponsibility, a commitment to the immediate thrills of sex 'n' drugs 'n' outrage and never mind the consequences."("What is Rock?" p.5)

Teeth perfectly captures this situation as it sheds light on the problems that usually accompany the adherence to these new anti-establishment values. In startlingly shocking verbal and physical images, Teeth documents the various moods of frustration, aimlessness, bitterness, and loss of direction the members of a musical band experience in the materialistically affluent and spiritually empty post-war England. In fact, the characters' engagement in a desperate search for meaning and happiness even at the cost of risking their health, profession and future betokens the seriousness of the problem and the necessity of properly dealing with it. The play,

moreover, shows the inability of people to effect change as it projects a vision of a world in a continuous dissolution. Also, in stressing the idea that the characters are borne out of their turbulent times, Hare proposes a cultural diagnosis of British society as he perceives it in the critical decade of the 1960s.

Hare dates the action of his play very precisely during the night of 9 June, 1969 at the annual May Ball of Jesus College, Cambridge, which is held to keep up with the times. He wants, according to John Russell Brown, to "catch an exact moment in the history of pop music and to give an exact 'feel' of living in England." (p.69) It is believed that the play is intended to commemorate two emblematic moments in the history of pop music: The Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 which was the apex of the 'Summer of Love' in San Francisco and The Woodstock Festival, and four months later, the Altamont Free Concert in 1969 ("1960s", p.3).

Hare has chosen his characters so that the play is an image of a wider world. Maggie, the heroine, is a psychologically disturbed and a failing singer and Hare uses the failure of the band to present an appropriate and a successful party as a metaphor for the decline of a nation's vitality. The action of the play concerns the fate of a 'Rock 'n' Roll' band which, when the play opens, is in the throes of "dissolution like the kind of alternative [or counter] culture it stands for," as J. W. Lambert points out (In Hayman & et al., p.11). In this sense, the play "offers a critique of counterculture illusions." (Alkes Sierz, p.3) Also important are the things that are of primary interest for the members of the band: "money and girls." Both reflect the new changing climate in England which characterized by the dominance of materialistic values and loose morality.

In sociology, counterculture is a term used to describe the values and norms of cultural groups or subcultures that run counter to those of the social mainstream of the day. It is the cultural equivalent of political opposition. A counterculture, thus,

expresses the ethos, aspirations and dreams of a specific population during a certain period of time- a social manifestation of the Zeitgeist ("Counterculture", p.1).

During the 1960s, which is often labeled "the Swinging Sixties" because of the libertine attitudes that emerged during it ("1960s," p.1), tension developed along generational lines regarding experimentation with drugs, race relations, sexual freedom and women's rights. New cultural norm emerged. The Hippies became the largest countercultural movement fighting for more openness within mainstream culture in civil rights especially in the field of using hallucinogens drugs such as LSD and the escalating involvement and conflict in Vietnam. The Hippies mostly expressed their views through the psychedelic rock genre of music ("Counterculture," p.2). In this context, 'Youth Generation', 'Love Generation' and 'Vietnam Generation' seem very appropriate descriptive terms for the young generation of the sixties (Philip K. Jason, p. 702). In this context, Hare's description of the 1960s as a time during which he "went through an intense period of bitterness and self-pity," (Emerling, p.4) is noteworthy here.

The opening scene is significant in the sense that it is intended to be an index of the extent to which the characters of the play have sunk in inertia and irresponsibility. Taking into consideration the financial problems the band faces, a more responsible behavior is expected from them. Instead, the members of the band "is all too obviously going nowhere as it lounges playing feeble word games, injecting itself, mocking the nobs," and ruminating the shiny dreams of fame and success (Lambert, in Hayman & et al.,p.11). Indeed, Lambert remarks that although Hare apparently wishes us to feel with and for that alternative culture, he can not, as an artist, conceal from himself or from us that "it is no good. For all concerned, it was a blind alley," from which there is no escape (Ibid.). Thus, the action of the play can be considered a journey of gradual disintegration which takes many forms and extends to every corner of the characters', and by implication, of English people's

lives such as language, moral responsibility, social relationships, and in relation to Teeth, the values that dominate art industry and naturally the artist-audience relationship.

The band is to produce three sets in the Ball but they fail to properly present the first two sets while the third is cancelled by the popular demands of the audience and the riots that take place in the marquee afterwards. The action of the first scene gives us the sense that the event is going to be a disaster. It starts ninety minutes late because a plug is not connected and "some bastard has put sugar in the petrol tank"(Hare, p.11) (All subsequent quotations refer to this edition). During that period and in the following intervals, the characters engage in silly and inconsequential conversations where "There are no answers and there is absolutely no point in the questions."(p.45) As a result, the audience is getting very restless having to wait. Maggie, the leading singer of the band gets desperately drunk. She starts drinking in the morning and Arthur, the song writer of the band and her ex-lover even suspects that she is addicted to heroin. As she appears, she is in a state of collapse, utterly unconscious. Snead, the porter, is seen carrying her into the room over his shoulder and Inch orders him to get her into the bath. Psychologically, Maggie believes drinking is necessary to help her keep going and usually only by fierce concentration does she drag music out in confrontation with an audience.

In the first set, the band starts an aggressive rock number whose title "Close to Me" is meant to be an ironic comment on the collapse of romantic ideals in modern age. The song talks of the feelings of abandonment and loneliness that keeps hold of Maggie as she "feels a touch of winter/ In the summer of [her] life."(p.27) 'Disaster,' the name of the café, where the lovers used to meet, foreshadows the tragic end of their relationship.

The second set was a failure too. Instead of singing as the band expected, Maggie holds the microphone, picks up a bottle of wine, insults the audience with

scurrilous language, and expresses her low opinion of them. She describes them as "kids, schlebs and secret assholes"(p.53) and firmly declares that she will not sing to "dead yids."(Ibid.) However, this failure to establish a proper relationship with the audience- the audience of the play, indeed- is used as a frame for a wider comment on English society. It is a reflection of a deep and inner suffering and instability. Painfully, Maggie yells out at the audience: "I am what? What is that word? I have not heard it before...(She holds up the whisky bottle). This is depressant; I take it to get depressed."(p.53) This event culminates in her attempt to climb on top of Wilson to rip his jeans off in front of the audience who begins to hoot loudly as an expression of disapproval and indignation. Here, Maggie is portrayed as a self-centered and irresponsible person as she acts irrespective of the communal interests of the band. The next number begins shatteringly loud with Maggie's emphatic repetition of 'Yeah', after which the music fades and falters.

Henceforward, the deterioration in the conditions of the band is beyond repair. Saraffain, the manager of the band, fires Maggie and declares the breaking up of the band. He strongly holds the view that this is not something special or unfamiliar. To the contrary, it is happening to everyone in England, not just the musical bands. He says

Bands just break up. Travel too much. Drop too much acid...Become too successful...They Break up because they don't feel any need. I don't mean fame, that's boring, or money, that's a cliché, of course...I mean- need. Maggie. Where's the need? (p.71)

Saraffain feels that there is something missing not only in the music industry, but also in the realm of social relationships. Both lack the warmth, intimacy, and social cohesion people once enjoyed in the past which was full of purpose and meaning. He nostalgically talks about "the golden days of the British

rack,"(p.52) and "the beauty of this profession when he was young."(p.47). In the past, this profession seemed to possess personality and promised a brighter future of ease and affluence. The problem with Saraffain is that he finds himself stranger in a world he can no longer understand and surrounded by people with whom he can not communicate. This makes Teeth "simultaneously a metaphor for British society and an elegy for the vanished visions of the late sixties."(Lambert, p.11)

As a result of the third set cancellation, Saraffain and his band won't get their much-needed fee paid. Another financial shock awaits him as he has to pay the cost of the damages Maggie causes as a result of her burning down the marquee- an event which she considers lightly and hopes college students would make it an annual event.

Despite these obvious signs of disintegration and collapse, Saraffain insists on playing the third set for it is their only way to get the cash. He does not care if nobody listens for the most important thing for him is to get "one's hand on the cash. That is the only skill. Really. The only skill in music."(p.73) In thinking so, he turns the whole musical show into a materialistic enterprise to be judged, like any other business, by materialistic standards alone.

Surprisingly enough and in an act that reflects his utter unscrupulousness and selfishness, Saraffain decides to compensate for his financial loss by stealing a silver candlestick and encouraging others to emulate him. Almost all the members of the band have a hand in the general looting of the place. Maggie becomes the only possible suspect since the police have found some of the stolen silver and drug in her bag. The police's suspicions intensify as a result of Maggie's disappearance at that time. Besides committing this act of vandalism, the members of the band betray Maggie by deliberately stashing some of the stolen stuff in her bag; a most shocking act that shows the abyss of degeneration to which they have sunk.

However, Maggie is not bothered by the possibility that she might go to prison. To the contrary, she is pleased because this might be the solution to her inner troubles. In her desperate search for happiness and meaning in her life, she goes so far as to be ready for going to the prison hoping that the novelty of the experience might give her a chance to find herself. Therefore, she refuses to have a lawyer to defend her. Lightly, she says

O.K. Try prison for a while, why not? So I go to jail. Nobody is to think about me, nobody is to say 'How is she these days?' Nobody to mention me...Nobody is to remember. Nobody is to feel guilty. Nobody is to feel they might have done better. Remember. I'm nobody's excuse. If you love me keep on the move. (p.85)

Maggie's, as this passage adumbrates, is an act of desperation that confirms the enormity of the problems the English youth is suffering from.

It is noteworthy that one of the central images in the play is of a bomb explosion that takes place in the Café de Paris in London in 1941, full, at the time of the rich and young officers, studiously declaring their immunity from the war. Saraffain was a witness to this terrible incident. What is interesting, according to him, is that the downstairs of the café is a perfect reproduction of the ballroom on the 'Titanic'. Unfortunately, this ominous accident passed unnoticed by Saraffain. As the clients of the café lay dead and wounded, two anonymous figures move along them, stealing and looting their money and jewels. Saraffain found this act totally repugnant and regard it as a sign of unforgivable meanness and lowness. However, about three decades later, the scene is in essence repeated in Jesus College, as it is stated above. The incident indicates a sever shortcoming in the moral fabric of English society since it takes place in an educational institution whose aims are to spread the values of responsibility and honesty. In a thoughtful commentary on the significance of this repetition, C. W. E. Bigsby remarks that

"the apocalypse is no longer deferred, it has arrived. But everyone is 'on' something-drugs, alcohol, pursuit of career, money; they all ignore the evidence of disintegration and decay. And their ability to ignore it is adduced as a further proof of its reality."(p.44)

At the end of the play, where there is no money and no girls, the characters share a need to go on. But their future is not brighter than the present for the seeds of dissolution are still within them. In a gesture that betokens their moral bankruptcy, Inch tells Laura that she must prostitute herself as quick as possible because they are short of money and petrol the result of which is that Laura goes into hysterics.

Then, during a blackout, short messages, are flashed on a screen in big letters: it is 1973, and while Peyote is dead- he inhales his own vomit-the rest are alive and well, living in England. However, everyone, Arthur tells us, seems to be frightened and insecure. Then comes one more song: it is Maggie's "Last Orders on the Titanic."

The significance of the song lies in the fact that it equates the destiny of England with that of 'Titanic' whose supposed immunity from sea dangers did not save it from sinking tragically in her first voyage. In this sense, Hare succeeds in associatively creating an image of a national decline. The theme of the song presents a very gloomy picture of life in post-war England. It talks of the inversion of the natural order of things in modern age. On board of the Titanic Maggie is talking about, there is no place for sympathy, responsibility or self-sacrifice. What is more painful and shocking is the fact that while Titanic is sinking, life goes oblivious of the catastrophe. The same situation is repeated in England for while the English youth are sinking because of drugs, free sex, and violence, the rest of society goes on complacently believing that every thing is all right. The following lines portray a frightening picture of man's life in modern age.

Last orders on the Titanic

 Put the life boats out to sea
 We've only got a few
 Let the women and children drown
 Man we've gotta save the crew

 I only want to tell you
 That you have my sympathy
 But there has to be a sacrifice
 And it isn't going to be me. (pp.91-92)

Besides offering apathy as a protective attitude, the lines suggest the impossibility of change since man, to use David Mercer's words, is still in the same "wrong bloody boat since Plato." (qtd in Gareth Llyod Evans, p.225) Therefore, "Expect nothing and you will not be disappointed,"(p.22) is Arthur's message to the audience. Moreover, Anson's declaration that "The whole system's totally corrupt an's gotta be totally replaced by a totally new system,"(p.58) is pointless since neither the dramatist nor the characters present any alternatives to the existing one. Their dreams of radically changing society remain a wish-fulfillment.

This makes Hare's England, Bigsby remarks, "a country whose energy is spasmodic, nervous, and artificial. It is a country in which private despair is the constant. There are no models of an alternative system, no calls for working class solidarity, only a clear-eyed analysis of moral entropy, the failure of the public myths and private values."(p.43) This comes in conformity with Arthur's prophetic vision about the future of his generation. Insightfully, he says:"I can see us all. Rolling down the highway into middle age. Complacency. Prurience. Sadism. Despair;"(p.88) a prophecy which clearly applies to the end of the play.

The professional bankruptcy of the members of the band is echoed by their failure in their domestic life and in having a balanced social life. Their inability to relate adequately to any of these two areas increases as a result of their mutual interaction. This affects the structure of the play which is constructed on the pattern of alternating sequences of 'rock 'n' roll' tunes and confessional scenes in which the characters vent their inner troubles and fears.

To alleviate the stifling conditions the characters are living in, they follow various, though sometimes, destructive paths. One of these paths is addiction which saps youth vitality and resources. The members of the band used to inject themselves with heroin and prelude, which, they believe, help to enlarge one's "sexual capacity" and to make things seem "little unreal." (p.20) Saraffain tries a psychological explanation of this disastrous phenomenon. He points out that people addict "so's to have something to blame. It's not me speaking. It's the drink. The drugs. It's not me can't manage. They want to be invaded, so there's an excuse." (p.69) This represents an escapist attitude which the characters adopt to avoid responsibility. It also nourishes the characters' disposition to feel victimized although neither the dramatist nor the characters are able to locate the real causes of this sense of victimization. It is, I think, a self-inflicted feeling to ward off the sense of impotence and frustration that keeps hold of them.

In addition to that, all the characters suffer from loneliness and the inability to communicate with others. As a result, they become, to use Howard Brenton's words, "internal exiles" and "loonies" (Steven Barfield, p.1), who can neither understand themselves nor those around them. As a result, instead of love and compassion, their familial life and social relationships are marked by tension, misunderstanding and bitterness.

Anson, Maggie and Arthur are a case in point here. Anson is a short and a stumbling undergraduate who tries to interview Maggie and make some sort of

impression. He is studying medicine. He keeps a real human finger which he cuts off a corpse in his pocket as "a conversational ploy,"(Brown, p.69) and he is determined to opt out of his profession and join a musical band in any menial capacity for he can not imagine spending the rest of his life working in a profession he dislikes. The problem with Anson, Saraffain believes, is his desire "to be interesting... Have some character. The man who goes round with a finger in his pocket. He just wants to be liked,"(p.62) in an answer to Anson's poignant and painful question: "Why have I no friends? And why does nobody talk to me? (*Pause. He looks round*). And, of course, I'm being boring."(p.62)

Unfortunately, it turns out that joining a band is not a better choice for him. His beliefs about the importance of popular music in man's life and its ability to effect change in society are shattered as a result of the band's disintegration and the absence of communication among its members. There are only two words to answer his question about the role of popular music in society: "Off and Fuck."(p.20)

Maggie experiences the same feelings of loneliness and frustration. All her life, she has noted

People in telephone booths, in restaurants, heads down, saying things like, 'I don't want to see you again.' Once you start looking, they're everywhere. People rushing out of rooms, asking each other to lower their voices, while they say, 'You've got to choose between her or me.' Or, 'Don't write me; don't phone me, I just don't want to see you again.' People bent over crawling into corners at parties, sweating away to have weasely tearful little chats about human relationships. God how I hate all that...I've finished with Arthur and I'm fed up with his songs. I'm resentful and jealous and I want to be left alone."(p.50)

It is crystal clear that this passage contains the gist of the play in the sense that it sheds light on the major problems English society is suffering from; namely, alienation, collapse of social relationships and frustration. Maggie's relationship with her family tends to be an extension of that with her audience. She must have been unhappy as a child. Bitterly, she talks about her memories of her hometown in Stevenage which she describes as a prison dominated by hatred, indifference and distrust. She says

Do you know how you survive in Stevenage? You say this isn't happening to me...You say I may appear to be stifling to death in this crabby over-heated mausoleum with these cringing waxworks who claim to be my parents. But it's not true. I'm not here. I'm really some way away. No nourishment in Stevenage. You draw no strength. (p.35)

It is crystal clear that the parents-daughter relationship is far from being harmonious or normal for "Every one in Stevenage hated [Maggie]...when [she] was a child. Cos...[she] took no shit from anyone. So they sent me to a convent...Everybody at the convent, they hate me too."(p.36)

This sense of non-belonging extends to affect Maggie's attitude towards her country. In fact, she never feels at ease to have been English. She tells Anson that if she has the freedom to choose, she would like to be American for no other reason save that "America is a crippled giant, England is a sick gnome."(p.38) It is noteworthy that Hare experiences the same feeling of alienation. In "Acting Up," he recalls that he was "exhausted, like everyone else, with...the lethargy of living in England."(Emerling, p.3) He also spent a period of time in a self-imposed exile in New York until he realized that "hating England is not a good enough reason to live in America. America may look freer, but the kind of freedom we all wanted we weren't going to get. You still spend everyday with who you are."(Ibid.) Hare accurately diagnoses the real cause of young people's inner suffering. It is a crisis

of identity. The young people are lost. They neither know who they are nor their place in the new ever-changing circumstances.

Moreover, the turmoil in Maggie's emotional life is an exact replica of that of her domestic life. In fact, her relationship with men is an example of modern 'free love' concept which is often associated with promiscuity and indiscriminate sex in the popular imagination especially in reference to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s ("Free Love," p.1). For Maggie, having a relationship with men is an adventure rather than a serious matter. It is intended to gratify immediate physical needs and to gain a sense of self-importance.

This unromantic view of love and promiscuous approach to it is reinforced by Saraffain who confirms man's ability to love two women at once and the fact that Peyote's girlfriend is a married woman. Saraffain believes that, like Anson, Maggie used to tell stories about the tragedy of her life, as she calls it, "To make you think it didn't matter to her. That's why she tells you. As a hedge against disaster. Like her whole life."(p.63) With respect to this, I believe that Maggie's tragedy is not her failure as a rock 'n' rock star, but her constant awareness of that failure.

Arthur essentially faces the same situation. Like the other characters, he leads an aimless life; a day by day existence without purpose or meaning. Arthur had been an undergraduate studying music in Jesus College before meeting Maggie singing ballads in the Red Lion Ball. He is still a romantic intellectual, seeking significance and despising almost everything. Like the others, he is an example of a rebel without cause and his is a revolt against all manifestations of authority. In his tirades, he spares nothing. As a sign of the impotence of man's life and its essentially repetitive nature, he says

And everyone told me: don't waste your energy because
that's what they want. They invent a few rules that don't

mean anything so that you can ruin your health trying to change them...One day it's a revolution to say fuck on the bus. Next day, it's the only way to get a ticket. That's how the system works. (p.22)

It is clear that Arthur and his generation are in front of a new changing reality. He simmers with fury and turmoil because of his inability to cope with the status quo. He realizes the futility of trying to change the conditions of his life. Unfortunately, the targets of his anger are not specified. As a result, he goes on leading a purposeless life. Like Hare, Arthur seems to grapple with the questions: "How do we change the world? And if we can't change the world, how can we live in the world as we find it?"(Emerling, p.1) These questions seem to be cries in the void since all the characters in Teeth fail to answer them properly.

He describes Jesus College, the place where he studied and met Maggie, gloomily as a "floating free, an airless, lightless, dayless, nightless, time-lock, a cosmic incident."(p.21) He also has a very low opinion of the college students for whom the Ball is hold. They are negatively described as "narcissists, yahoos... Rich complacent, self-loving self regarding self righteous phoney half-baked politically immature neurotic evil minded little shits."(p.22)

Arthur's relationship with Maggie reflects another side of his defiant attitude. At that time, college students were not allowed to bring their girlfriends to the hostels. When he was caught red-handed with Maggie, he tells the tutor that marriage is unthinkable for him and refuses to pay the ten pound fine on the premise that it is tantamount to a brothel charge (p.22).

It is noteworthy that Arthur's inner troubles and fears and the fragmentation of the world he lives in are reflected in the quality and themes of his songs. Naturally, they have a very strong beat and are usually played and sung loudly. He once warned an artist against playing loudly lest he might become stone deaf.

"That's why we play so loud, the louder we play, the sooner we won't be able to hear,"(p.80) was the artist's answer. Invariably, his songs talk of betrayal, selfishness, self-defeat, indifference, class division, the pointlessness of man's life and self-complacency. However, they are worth attention for the kind of satiric comment they contain on the social and cultural affairs. In 'Arthur's song,' he gives a very gloomy picture of life in England at that time:

Never seen faces so empty
Never spent money so fast
You can't touch the important things
They keep them under glass
Your good friend always tells you lies
Doing what your bad friends would never do
And nothing rhymes with orange
But I love you (p.89).

Nevertheless, Arthur is not totally pessimistic for there is a whiff of hope in the dreary and stifling picture he presents of modern life. This hope is located in his belief in the importance of love in man's life as a sustaining power and a source of happiness and regeneration; a belief that is shattered by Maggie's apathy and indifference. Arthur here is merely the mouthpiece of his creator who almost always writes 'love stories.' He more than once declares: "I write love stories. Most of my plays are that. Over and over again I have written about romantic love because it never goes away. And the view of the world it provides, the dislocation it offers, is the most intense experience that many people know on earth."("Profile: David Hare," p.3)

As for the art industry, it suffers from the same problems such as dishonesty, lack of social cohesion and the prevalence of materialistic values. For example, Saraffain made his money by cheating and swindling. He used to advertise the coming of a famous musical band from the United States. However, as soon as the tickets are sold out, the audience is surprised that the band members are not quite

the same people of the United States.(p.61) Besides, he considers the band as a financial investment and Maggie as a mere 'merchandise' to be guarded by him and consumed by the audience (p.51). Another problem is the deterioration in the artist-audience relationship as the events in the second set shows. It is also manifested in the opinion the members of the band hold of the audience. After the second show, Wilson and Nash describe the audience as 'necrophilious, corpses and bastards.'(p.33)

It is only natural, then, that almost all the characters look nostalgically to the past. In talking about Russia where the peasants can not speak of the past without crying, Maggie is actually talking of English people who yearn for regaining the old days of ideals and harmonious existence. She remembers her aunt's garden which overlooks the Thames where the sun was shining and of her going to the local priest to consecrate her little doll church. The priest's prophecy that Maggie "will think and feel the finest things in the world,"(p.71) is shattered for the 'fair-haired English child' turns into a psychological wreck. In this sense, nostalgia becomes an antidote to the cultural and moral dissolution of the present.

Teeth is both bleak and romantic. It is, Brown points out, "a bitter moral tale about decadence which is a vindication of the pursuit of meaning. It vibrates with rock music and also with teeming, tight-reined rhetoric."(p.70) It is also violent and restless; a drama which a mass audience would recognize, in its author's words, "as a situation in which they'd been."(Biggsby, p.44)

Hare uses the story of the disintegration of a musical band to illustrate the history of post-war Britain in a series of visually arresting incidents involving youth life styles, cheap living, poverty, art, sex, drugs, a huge range of interest for a single play, as Brown asserts. (p.22)

This draws attention to John Osborne's The Entertainer. In fact, after the first night of Teeth, there seemed to be one name on everyone's lips- John

Osborne. Both plays, Ronald Bryden remarks, "plugged deep into the rusty, defective socket of contemporary England, popping and sparkling with anger at the connection."(In Hayman & et al.,p.7)

Like Osborne, Hare is not concerned with showing the impact of the disintegration of the band on its members per se. Rather; he presents it as a manifestation of the state of degeneration and debasement to which the English society has sunk.

It is noteworthy that the characters in both plays are obsessed with "caring." Osborne himself admits that the purpose behind his characters' fierce attacks on everything is "to give people lessons in feeling."(Katherine J. Worth, p.111). In this sense, both dramatists discerned that the ills of modern societies are rooted in the prevailing cynical and detached indifference of people.

Moreover, characters in both plays, especially the members of the older generation like Billy Rice in The Entertainer and Saraffain in Teeth, look nostalgically to the past which often stands, in their opinion, for order and harmony.

Finally, both dramatists use popular forms, 'music hall' in The Entertainer and 'Rock 'n' Roll' in Teeth, to shed light on the dilemmas of man in modern age.

It is not surprising, then, Bryden points out, to call "David Hare the Osborne of the 1970s."(In Hayman & et al.,p.7)

In fact, although Hare always insists that he is not a social doctor prescribing remedies for the social ills of his society, he is a dedicated social commentator. In general, his plays offer a richly comprehensive portrait of contemporary England and its institutions. His range may be wider than that of Osborne, but like his mentor, "he seems to view his native land with a mixture of critical exasperation and baffled affection: he is one of those writers who feels constantly obliged to

take Britain's moral temperature through the chosen medium of drama."(Michael Billington, p.3)

Teeth is redolent of Hare's concern with human isolation and the dark wastes of non or partial communication (Evans, p.199). Like most of contemporary drama, it is strongly concerned with the seamier sides of life. The reasons for the prevalence of these unattractive and sordid aspects of life are various. They can be located, Evans, and I think Hare, observes in "the general permissiveness of contemporary life, a disregard for discipline, a dismissal of authority, and a gross slackening of personal and general moral standards. (p.205) In this sense, Teeth asserts Hare's belief that "the main reform needed is moral."(Hayman, p.4)

This makes Hare "a poet of disintegration,"(Biggsby, p.43) as the action of the play indicates only a continuing decay. The dominant fact is entropy. Language falls apart, as does the characters. Social cohesion collapses along the sustaining myths of the past. More important than this, the play offers no way of breaking out of this process (Ibid.).

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