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# Struggle For Individual Reformation In The Plays Of Bond

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## ABSTRACT:

The area of Science and Technology also requires the good and ideal personality of its stake holders, apart from their theoretical and practical knowledge. It shows a lot of impact over the decision making and consequent benefits for the entire society. The relation between an individual and society is intertwined and so inseparable. Hence, a man of science and technology is also ought to have ideal, progressive and constructive mindset to make it effective and successful. Or else, the basic purpose of science and technology may be hardly accomplished. It stresses upon the urgency of individual reformation first. However, man has gradually become indifferent towards society. This unprecedented scenario impelled the intellectuals to find out the ways and means to set right the problem. Edward Bond, one of the contemporary British playwrights, is one among them. He is so concerned towards the social betterment. Hence, he was impelled to take up writing as a means of creating awareness over the society. He also highlights, the disastrous contemporary problems particularly the problem of violence, through his thought provoking plays, so as to instigate such serious social concern among the men of irrational and indifferent attitude. One can observe such element of individual reformation through his plays i.e. Saved (1965), and The Under Room (2003). This paper analyses how Len, and Joan, the protagonists from both these plays respectively, are seen struggling hard for reforming an individual, irrespective of success or failure in their tasks.

**KEYWORDS:** Irrationality; Responsibility; Obligations; Reformation, Innocent; Forefathers; Emphasize; Determination; Wellbeing; Struggle

## INTRODUCTION:

The plays of Bond mainly focus on the major contemporary problems of society and their consequences. They reflect the serious social concern of Bond. His adaptation of Shakespeare's play 'King Lear' (1605) shows his seriousness over the degradation of society and its values. He feels that this Shakespeare's play, in spite of being very successful, is not adequate to the contemporary social setting because it could not address the social problems and their consequences. Daniel. R. Jones quotes Bond saying:

Shakespeare took this character and I wanted to correct it so that it would become a viable model for me and . . . for society. Shakespeare does arrive at an answer to the problems of his particular society, and that was the idea of total resignation, accepting what comes, and discovering that a human being can accept an enormous lot and survive it. He can come through the storm. What I want to say is that this model is inadequate now; that it just does not work. Acceptance is not enough. Anybody can accept. You can go quietly into your gas chamber at Auschwitz, you can sit quietly at home and have an Hbomb dropped on you. Shakespeare had time. He must have thought that in time certain changes would be made. But time has speeded up enormously, and for us, time is running out. (505)

Saved (1965) is the play which became instrumental for the abolition of the British theatre censorship. The act of infanticide in this play created such furor and so not approved by censorship, during 1965. However, Bond was persistent enough not to cut the scene of infanticide from the play as suggested by the chamberlain. He feels that the scene reflects the real problem of society and so he was not willing to cut the scene from the play. Finally the court found fault with Chamberlain and abolished the theatre censorship.

Saved (1965) is the second play of Edward Bond written in 13 scenes. It deals with the life and conditions of the working-class people. Pam, one of the major characters of the play is seen reckless, indecent and undisciplined in the play whereas Len, the protagonist of the play, struggles all through the play to reform her and make her responsible towards herself and her family. He is persistent in his goal of changing her immature mindset.

The Under Room (2003) also has the element of struggle for individual reformation. This play reflects the conditions of the society in future in 2077. It reveals the greater capability of Bond, in dealing with the events in the imaginary world in an effective and acceptable way. Thus, one can say that Edward Bond is a visionary and man of practical thinking.

Protagonists from Bond's plays, 'Len' from Saved (1965) and 'Joan' from The Under Room (2003) stand exemplary showing their unruffled concern for reforming the individuals respectively.

**METHODOLOGY:** The discussion of this paper is based on reading the plays of Edward Bond and analysis, and reading various books and journal articles relevant to the topic concerned.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Creating awareness among the readers over the necessity of Individual transformation.
2. Emphasizing the significance of voluntary initiation in the process of reforming individuals for better society.
3. Advocating to let out the sense of indifferent attitude for the peaceful co-existence when the issue is seen disruptive for society.

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Pam and Fred, in *Saved* (1965), represent carelessness whereas Len is rational and responsible. Pam cares none and nothing except her extravagant life. Her parents become helpless and hopeless on the life and future of their daughter. This is the moment in which Len enters into her life. It was none but Pam invited him herself on the pretext of love to quench the thirst of her sexual pleasure. She is the perfect foil of an uncontrolled and unscrupulous individual who doesn't know even the meaning of life. Pam reflects the degrading tendency of the youth who are aimless and senseless due to lack of rational thinking. Through this character, Bond emphasizes that the values are being faded out day to day from society. On the other hand, the protagonist Len is quite contrary to her in many aspects. He is a man of rationality and responsibility. He is also the man of concerned towards others and their problems. He feels, at the beginning, that Pam is sincerely in love with him. He is therefore confident about his marriage with her. He doesn't know the real character and attitude of Pam. Hence, he becomes the paying guest of her family. However, he observes, in course of time, that Pam is after luxurious life sans responsibility. He feels a bit uncomfortable himself to see such unexpected and unbearable mindset. He is calculated. He wants to lead a reasonable and respectable life in society by which he can see himself and his family members dignified. Pam couldn't even imagine such calculated and controlled life style. It might be the reason why she dislikes Len and inclines towards one of his friends, Fred, a boat rower. Len knows the real and indecent attitude of Fred. Fred is also a man of recklessness and irresponsible. He opines that Fred and Pam are birds of same feather with respect to their mindset and attitude. Len is sure that Pam is going to be in trouble in a way or the other. He determines to save her life from Fred. However, he waits for a chance to change the mindset of Pam and to see her realize the greatness and importance of familial life and relations. She becomes apathetic towards Len since she moves with Fred. He warns her of her lusty behavior but she hardly cares him. Thenceforth, she insists on him to leave her home. Len pays rent to his room feeling that it would be helpful to her family. He becomes stubborn enough in his decision to change the attitude of Pam after listening to her mother. Since then, he starts motivating her seriously. In spite of his consistent precautions regarding indecent attitude of Fred and his friends, she doesn't care his words. He knows good and bad are two inevitable facets of one's personality. He is very clear that the Reformation starts with self-awareness. Hence, he is mentally prepared to bear with any humiliation for her life and her family. He is quite aware of the struggle and so gets ready to face it. He knows the saying 'Where there is a will there is a way'. His will is stronger enough to

change her life. In course of the play, Pam is blessed with a baby. She has had the boon of motherhood. It is a kind of divinity given by God only to ladies. Unfortunately, she couldn't recognize the value of such divinity. She doesn't feel of such divinity of motherhood and moreover she develops a kind of aversion towards newly born innocent baby. There is no change in her indecent attitude even after having a baby. Moreover, she feels that baby is burdensome to her. She shows neither affection nor attention for her baby. She becomes least bothered of her baby. One can never see such mother sans the feeling of motherhood in this world. On the other hand, Len shows lot of concern towards baby and takes care of him as she is seen so reckless. She feels that Len is a barrier to her luxurious and uncontrolled life style. She tries to get rid of him many times from her home in different ways. She complained to his father against Len many times. She also insisted on her father to send him (Len) out of her home.

PAM: Why don't yer turn \_im out? Dad.

HARRY: \_E pays 'is rent.

PAM: Fred'll pay.

HARRY: 'As \_e got a job?

PAM: 'E'll get one.

HARRY. Will 'e keep it? (83).

But her parents know the reason behind her complaints. They also know the real attitude of Len. They feel that Len is better option than Fred. So, her first attempt became futile. Then she started humiliating him every now and then so as to send him out. She continues her trials to send him out even by force. But he was determined to stay until she realizes herself and come out of her world of fantasy with the support of her parents.

Len was sure that Fred would definitely deceive Pam because he knows Fred very well. He is so optimistic that Pam can realize the real character of Fred at least in a day or the other. This confidence let him determined to face any challenge until the time comes. Hence, he often follows her not out of doubt but out of fear. But she feels that presence of Len was but detrimental to her free and uncontrolled life style. She decides to get rid of him by hook or crook. For this purpose, she wanted to take help of Fred. She also pressurizes Fred many a time to send Len out of her house by any means. Fred, on the other hand, is so opportunistic. He starts avoiding Pam since she became a mother. Still, Pam is after him. She couldn't understand the real and cunning mindset of Fred.

Once, Pam comes to the park with her baby in a perambulator. She looks at Fred and his friends in the same park. In a fit of rage against negligent concern of Fred towards her, she leaves the park by leaving her baby alone in the park. She didn't think of the safety and security of baby. An innocent baby alone in the park became an object of playing for the irrational and indecent friends of Fred. They started to show their

senseless act of playing with baby in an indecent way and in course of time it gradually led them to throw stones towards baby. Fred also got involved into this cultureless act of stoning a baby and finally the baby died for nothing. This act of cruelty shows the present lifeless position of the innocent in the hands of senseless individuals. It highlighted the urgency of rational thinking. It was the scene created furor at the time of its performance. It was the scene which Lord Chamberlain asked Bond to remove from the play. Bond refused to remove the scene of stoning a baby to death saying that it reflects the present irrational conditions of society. Finally, it led to the abolition of the British theatre censorship. Bond says in his Notebooks, volume 1:

I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society and if we do not stop being violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence. (34).

Fred was also arrested along with his friends for the crime. The regrettable turn in this point is that Pam doesn't bother of losing her own baby. Loss of a child is nothing but a death sentence to a mother. But, one can never find such feel of concern from Pam. Moreover, she wanted to resume her contact with the same person who killed her baby brutally. Moreover, she was enthusiastic to meet him by any means. She is elated when she comes to know that Fred is coming to cafeteria. She is not expected to meet Fred as she is aware of his brutal act of killing her innocent baby for nothing. But she goes to meet him in cafeteria. Len is so rational and analytical. Hence, he also follows her in spite of her antipathy. After meeting Fred in the cafeteria, she complains to Fred over Len: "E follersme everywhere." (Bond, Saved 104). She goes much further and encourages Fred to get rid of Len: "Tell 'im for me! 'It 'im! 'It 'im!" (Bond, Saved 105). She is confident enough that Fred will beat Len for her sake. But Fred refused to do what she asked him: "It's nothin' a do with me!" (Bond, Saved 105). Moreover, Fred rejects her relentlessly when she puts her hands upon him in a token of affection. She is shocked by this unexpected act of Fred. This is the major turn in the life of Pam: "Keep yer 'ands off me! So 'elp me I'll land yer so bloody 'ard they'll put me back for life!" (Bond, Saved 105). Fred hates her when she is about to touch him once again. She is least bothered by Fred or his friends. Then Fred leaves the cafeteria with his old girl friend, Liz. Pam remains alone. This situation has become an eye-opener to Pam. All hopes of Pam have been vanished at once and made her feel sad and helpless. She is in a despair condition. She doesn't know what to do. However, Len follows her leading to home even though she tried many times to desert him. At the end she is seen to be realized the importance of life and the greatness of Len and cunningness of Fred. However, this incident made Pam introspect herself. This introspection itself is the point for which Len has been waiting since the beginning of the play. This introspection is the optimistic note of the play. Len remained to be an individual reformer in the play. Her father realized the greatness of Len and asked him to stay back in his house itself. Len becomes, ultimately, the savior of her life. The purpose on which Len struggled hard and tolerated all the humiliations is fulfilled at the end. Len, still, is

ready to share his life with her if she feels responsible towards her family by getting rid of not Len but her irrational attitude: "Can't we try an'get on like before?" (He looks round.) (Bond, Saved 106).

The successful attempt of the playwright in the portrayal of Pam and her irrational attitude is exemplary and gives a lot of scope for further study to every researcher. He portrays the conditions of present society. The amazing quality of the writer lies in his disclosure of such concept and its influential nature on an individual's personal life as well as social life. The erroneous mindset of Pam troubles not her personal life alone but also her family. She hardly shows a sense of rationality and understanding. She leads her life so liberally not showing any sign of respect towards familial relations. She is concerned of her own benefits and enjoyment. Hilde Klein says:

Saved deals with the South London working class, culturally and morally deprived, who are not capable of any emotional response and who suffer from the difficulty of communicating between one another. The characters' mutual relationship is based on aggression, egotism, conceit and sex. In the play Bond wants to show how an industrialized society, which is based only on consumer values, is completely dehumanizing and creates states of tension which finally lead to violence. (97)

The play *The Under Room* (2003), is set in an unnamed English city in the cellar of a woman called Joan. She comes to know that an illegal immigrant has entered her cellar when she comes back from the market. For her surprise, the Dummy Actor doesn't move even after her entry. Moreover, he is tactically starts conversing with her to convince and not to make a complaint against him. Being an innocent, she becomes sympathetic by listening to his cock and bull story though he was a thief. On the other hand, the Dummy Actor is with every reason to mislead and deceive her. He is adept in persuading others. At the beginning she doesn't believe his words: "You expect me to believe that?" (Bond, Under Room 171). But a man of betrayal can have such talent of influencing anyone and everyone. He says that he is there only to escape from the soldiers as he is in need of required papers i.e., visa, passport etc. She comes to know through her interaction that he was an illegal immigrant and so frightened of the police patrolling outside her cellar. She threatens him saying that she would: "I shall call the soldiers." (Bond, Under Room 171). But he is cleverer than her and moreover preplanned and well prepared to get shelter at her cellar itself. He says her that the soldiers will catch him wherever he is found as he has no papers: "If the soldiers stopped me in the street, they would take me away. I have no papers." (Bond, Under Room 172). Joan becomes sympathetic by these sentimental words of the Dummy actor. Once, he tries to pay money for the broken pane of window to show that he is a man of good character: "I give you money to buy a new window. You may keep the rest if you wish." (Bond, Under Room 172). He takes out two bank notes to convince her that he has a lot of money with him. But she denies it. It is also a part of his plan of action to create such impression that he has lot of money in his box. But really there is no money in the box. A shoplifter i.e., a thief

is never expected to have such sense of compensating something damaged by him. So, the words of the Dummy Actor are quite unbelievable. It is nothing but a part of trick in his plan of action. It is only to make her believe that he is very much concerned towards the loss of others. However, Joan has no need to crave for money as she is leading a peaceful and comfortable life. So, she refuses it outright on the grounds that his money is earned by illegal means: "Your money is stolen. If I took it I would be involved in your crimes." (Bond, Under Room 172). This instance reveals that real character and attitude of Joan. In another instance, he assures that he never wants to harm anyone and at the same time he has a knife with him. Joan observes that he has a weapon and he points it out: "You have a weapon?" (Bond, Under Room 173). But he cleverly covers it up saying that it is meant only for his self-protection: "Knife would be used only to stop you going to soldiers." (Bond, Under Room 173). This is another misleading attempt by the Dummy actor to let her believe him to be innocent. Thus, he outwits Joan during their interaction and finally could be successful in his attempts with his cunning tactics. He lets her believe him to be so innocent. At last, she becomes compassionate towards him. She feels he is in very pathetic condition. As she has known the reason why his life is in such a problematic condition, she decides to help him so as to make him lead a comfortable and peaceful life with his family in Africa. She doesn't think of the consequences but of only reforming an individual to set right his life. She thinks of wellbeing of the Dummy Actor and forgets the safety of her own life. She knows that he is a shoplifter. Still, she is, being an optimistic, determined to transform him. His every response to her queries clearly indicates that he is going to do something wrong. But she couldn't recognize real cunning and treacherous mindset. At last, she is quite impressed by his tactical words and deeds and finally tells him to stay there in her cellar itself for that night on humanitarian grounds: "You had better stay here for the night." (Bond, Under Room 174). This is the moment for which he has been waiting for. It is pity that she could not recognize the mask behind him. Moreover, Joan compels him to stay even though he denies at first as the part of his tactics: "Till the soldiers have gone. They may still be in the area. If you go now they'll pick you up." (Bond, Under Room 175). In this way, The Dummy Actor got eventually sheltered in the cellar of Joan. He feels that it is very comfortable for being a secured hideout for the shoplifter like him. He feels very happy for having the chance through which he can implement his plan of action. It is worth noting that Joan herself got into his trap rather than saying that the Dummy actor trapped her. Thus, Bond projects the positive and negative attitudes of the society and leaves the audience to contemplate pros and cons of such attitudes. Thus, social awareness is seen to be the primary object of Bond in his plays. The Dummy Actor feels very happy as his primary purpose is fulfilled. But this is the first and foremost mistake of Joan through which she is, unwittingly, involved into a murky underworld. The real dramatic turn in the life of Joan takes place in the second scene. The real cunning nature of the Dummy actor also notices in this scene itself. Joan is determined enough to let the Dummy actor have his papers as soon as possible. She is also in such impression that he has much money to afford his papers like visa etc. But she doesn't know the provider of such papers. It has become a kind of golden opportunity to the Dummy actor to implement the real plan of action along with his accomplice named

Jack. He told to Joan that he is aware of a provider of such documents. She also feels happy that she can send the Dummy actor to his family as soon as possible and so his life will be safe and secure. She permits him to call his friend to provide the papers. Jack is highly complicated and deceptive people-smuggler. The Dummy Actor knows that Jack is more mischievous than him. However, Joan waits for Jack curiously intended to see the Dummy Actor settled as quickly as possible. She asks the Dummy actor about Jack: "what does he look like?" (Bond, Under Room 176). She doesn't know that she is waiting for a rogue and inviting a disastrous fate herself. In the very moment Jack comes on the pretext of supplying the papers. Joan feels that the problem is solved but she doesn't recognize that the real problem is started now. She doesn't involve Dummy Actor in this deal of getting papers. She takes the complete responsibility of the deal herself. The life of responsibility is a series of complications and struggles. But the responsibility gives us the life and makes us immortal. She doesn't like to disclose the money in the box. Moreover, she feels that Jack may deceive them if the total amount of money is paid before itself. She reveals her plan to Dummy Actor so as not to be deceived by Jack: "We mustn't tell him the rest of the money's here. We'll say I'll fetch it when he brings your papers." (Bond, Under Room 176). She gives a little amount of money, taken from the Dummy Actor, as a token of advance to Jack. She is confident that there is the rest of required amount of money in the box. She doesn't know whether there is money or not in the box. She is so confident upon the Dummy Actor. It is the major and decisive mistake that she has made in life. She is made herself surety for the balance amount of money to be paid. In this instance she seems to be hasty and overconfident. Even though the Dummy Actor is quite unknown and unfamiliar to her she involves herself in the money matters on behalf of him. She is not aware of the serious consequences of her act. She neither asked him for the remaining money nor looked into the box. She thinks simply that there is money in the box. She thinks simply that there is money in the box. She is so confident that the Dummy Actor would pay the balance amount of money for the papers. She is unaware that this act of giving surety becomes the life and death problem to her. She doesn't expect that it haunts her life and spoils her identity. But it is an unexpected chance and the best opportunity to the Dummy Actor to implement his plan of action so easily and successfully. At the same time, Joan tries to make him confident about his future: "When you're safe you'll make a normal life for yourself." (Bond, Under Room 176). She thinks of his life rather than her life and future. The disastrous fate of Joan starts in the third scene. She was shocked to know that there is no money in the box by the next morning. The box is empty. It cannot be stolen as the gates are double locked usually. The thief won't find much time and patience to take the money alone out of the box. So, it is sure that it is not stolen. Hence, she doesn't believe that the money is stolen: "I still can't believe it? . . . Are you sure? {No answer.} You might have put it somewhere else." (Bond, Under Room 181). The role of Dummy Actor, in this incident, cannot be denied. He is first of all a thief. The box has been under his chair. In that condition it is highly difficult to steal something, that too, from a thief. It makes the Dummy Actor suspicious. It's not possible at all without the help of the Dummy Actor. It might also be a part of his plan of action. The immediate problem is about the balance amount of money to be paid. This is the moment Joan starts

struggling and feeling entangled into the problems. Actually, she is intentionally intricate into this problem. But she is still not aware of it. She is excited because she has given surety for the balance amount of money. She has no such large amount of money to pay. On the other hand, the papers won't be given until and unless the balance amount of money is paid. It reminds of the prophetic saying, 'Count ten before you leap'. She feels pity of the Dummy Actor rather than herself: "Please not self-pity." (Bond, Under Room 181). She is unable to recognize that she is deceived. She thinks that the Dummy Actor is made penniless only due to his staying at her home. From this context she feels herself responsible for the stolen money. She, still, feels that the Dummy actor is an innocent. But at the same time, she doesn't understand about the way of missing the money from the box. She gets confused: "I don't understand the world." (Bond, Under Room 181). She feels insecure herself as an illegal immigrant at her house itself: "These things have been going on round me all these years and I didn't see them." (Bond, Under Room 181). She is very much speculative and blames upon herself for not being so aware of the developments in her house so far. She feels guilty for not being careful of money. She becomes regretful of her actions: "It's my fault. I should've hidden the money outside the house." (Bond, Under Room 182). It is very unfortunate that she still doesn't think of the Dummy Actor and his role in this incident. She could not realize the conspiracy and the real motive behind this. Moreover she tries to make the Dummy Actor confident: "Don't worry. Whatever happens I'm here to help." (Bond, Under Room 182). She is still committed to see him settled. Jack comes with the papers at the same moment. He demands for the balance amount of money. Joan tries to convince him and requests him for his kind consideration. But Jack is not ready to believe her. He raises his voice and demands her for the due. He doesn't ask Dummy Actor and insists her to pay his money. He blames on her as an opportunistic. Then she realizes at last that she is misled by the Dummy Actor. It is clear by her words with Jack: "He said he had all the money. He only had the money I gave you." (Bond, Under Room 182). She doesn't reveal that the money is stolen even at this moment. Thus, the Dummy Actor and Jack become successful in their plan of making her a victim only for her innocent and compassionate nature. She couldn't make a complaint against Jack and the Dummy actor because she has given shelter to a shoplifter. It was a crime. On the other hand, she is blackmailed by them. In this way she has become a victim for nothing and for being a humanitarian. In spite of being unsuccessful in her aim of reforming an individual, she struggled hard to see someone reformed. She was not concerned for her shelter and life but for the life of the Dummy Actor. She even lost her identity only for the sake of wellbeing of his life. The life of Joan becomes miserable only by her sense of compassion. Jack's opportunistic attitude is clearly evident here. He demands for the due or else he gets ready to kill Dummy Actor. He blackmails her. He plays a mind game over Joan. He wants to make use of her weakness. By giving shelter to an illegal immigrant i.e., Dummy Actor has made her life disastrous. Jack knows that Joan is more concerned of Dummy Actor rather than her life. That's why he plays a mind game to compel her to pay money. The criminals, generally, have a greater talent in dealing with the cunning and mischievous deeds. This foresight and smartness of the Dummy Actor made Joan a victim. Joan is strangled by the intricacies due to the lack of social awareness.

## **Conclusion:**

Len and Joan from the plays 'Saved' and the 'Under Room' respectively exhibit a sincere commitment for individual reformation. They were not found selfish at any instance in the respective plays. They expect nothing in return for their struggle. Len has no particular obligation to cling upon Pam's house. He silently bears with all the humiliations of Pam, throughout the play either for her love or out of concern towards the baby, but not for any other thing. He, through his sincere efforts, could get reliability and affection from Pam's parents where as she couldn't in spite of being their own daughter. Joan, in 'The Under Room', shows a lot of concern towards the safety of the Dummy Actor. She is seen so empathetic towards him until she realizes that she herself has been the scapegoat but not the Dummy Actor. She tries hard to get the illegal immigrant settled so as to see his family be happy and comfort. But, illegal immigrant in contrast trapped her. From this perspective, this play is an eye opener to the ignorant of such deceitful personalities.

Thus, both the plays remind us of the irrational attitude of the present youth and its serious repercussions. Depicting contradictory characters is one of the Bond's major dramatic techniques. Major characters in both the plays also represent good and bad respectively. Bond projected these characters in such a way that everyone thinks of analyzing themselves and understand the pros and cons of their styles of living. Bond also emphasizes the need of rationality and responsibility particularly among the youth. Where there is good there is also bad. But bad must be nipped in the bud. This kind of initiative for the wellbeing of others can hardly be found among society. Hence, Bond, through his plays, underlines the need of serious attention towards the burning problems of society like violence. Attitude of an individual is more important for the peace and prosperity of entire society. So, Bond elevates both the attitudes positive and negative and finally leaves the choice to the audiences. Thus, both the plays would be source of eye-openers for the society anywhere and everywhere.

Word count: (not more than 12, 000; includes references, footnotes, endnotes)

**Acknowledgments:** The author doesn't have any acknowledgments to express.

**Funding details:** This work was not supported by any grant or any funding agency.

**Disclosure statement:** The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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