

# Mask beneath the Face and the Dialectics of Confinement in Edward Bond's Plays

**\*Dr Iffat Khatoon**  
**Dr Salma Khatoon**

---

**ABSTRACT:** *Edward Bond's works characterize a complex array of recurring structural elements that tunnel into all his works leaving a lasting impression of continuity. Recognition of the entrapment of life and humanity in the problems of the contemporary world constitutes Bond's theatrical idiom. This essay explores the dialectics of confinement in Edward Bond's plays by focusing on various aspects of physical, mental and societal masks as forms of incarceration. By equating society with an "over determined structure" and in transforming stage into its theatrical counterpart, a confined and sealed place, Bond's political purpose is to explore life within invisible confines and to discover the sources of human decadence and dehumanization (Rosen 9). This article contends that Bond demystifies the invisible workings of power structures by portraying various forms of confinement and inhibiting forces that pose a constant threat to individual self-hood and the process of dehumanization as a necessary corollary of the process of institutionalization.*

---

Email: [salmakhatoon@gcu.edu.pk](mailto:salmakhatoon@gcu.edu.pk)

*The structure of the play actually lays down your view of the world. The thing about the structure of a play is that what is vital to human beings is their relationship to society and the sort of society in which they live. That's the real problem of our species at the moment, because if we don't solve that, we'll just blow ourselves to bits (Bond 419)*

Edward Bond's works characterize a complex network of recurring structural elements that tunnel into all his works leaving a lasting impression of continuity. Dispensing with his former philosophies or acceptance of formerly rejected credos, Bond illuminates the breadth and stretch of his artistic vision (Innes 69). This dialectical relationship of the artistic philosophy with the theatre as a medium of concretizing the artist's creative vision colours all his plays. Recognition of the entrapment of life and humanity in the problems of the contemporary world determines Bond's theatrical idiom. As a radical artist, he is well aware of the role art can play as its function is "to determine the necessity of human rationality by objectivity with which it observes and records, and at the same time to criticize the irrational imperfections which result from its class structure" (Bond 14). This article contends that Bond demystifies the invisible workings of power structures by exploring various forms of confinement and inhibiting forces that pose a constant threat to individual self-hood and the process of dehumanization that is a necessary corollary of the process of institutionalization.

Bond touches on all contemporary issues with great seriousness and force, and the powerful metaphors of abnormality, irrationality, and social injustice in his dramatic world constantly illuminate the "situations of injustice" (Bond 13). He apprehends that merely a political ideology or philosophic framework will not suffice; rather, an artist must demonstrate on stage the "motive for creating a work of art" (Bond v-vi) and "the desire, the possibility, the action necessary to achieve it..." (Bond 128). Consequently, he tightly weaves his political philosophy and socialist concerns in the dramatic texture of his plays, and what makes his plays theatrically effective is his laborious efforts to formulate "a comprehensive notion of how the local detail of a play (its texture) relates to its overall thematic shape (its structure), to its use of

performance space (its theatrical function), and to its role in the social structure outside the theatre (its social function)" (Bond 6).

In an interview with John Tusa, Bond declared: "I think what concerns me most is inhuman" (Bond Interview xxv). He finds the origin of inhumanity in the denial of a free social expression of selfhood perpetrated by unjust social situations. Like Shaw's, his lengthy prefaces explicate his views on the social environment that causes decadence and decay. The language of theatre to him is not "a literary, grammatical thing. It's a physical thing. The words have to be physical on the stage." In order to make his dramatic language theatrically effective and "physically suggestive . . . [that] works on various layers of inference and meaning and irony, Bond experiments with the dramatic form and employs divergent dramatic devices that culminate in Bond's manipulation of the stage to its fullest possible extent (Bond Interview). This corresponds to Bond's transforming the empty stage into "total institutions . . . which become[s] in stage poetry" (Rosen 9). The theatrical space comes to signify the contemporary society that engulfs the human beings and consequently, on stage:

The Immoveable Structure is the villain. Whether that structure calls itself a prison or a school or a factory or a family or a government or The World As It Is. That structure asks each man what he can do for it, not what it can do for him, and for those who do not do for it, there is the pain of death or imprisonment, or social degradation, or the loss of animal rights. (Rosen 13)

By equating society with an "overdetermined Structure" and subsequently, transforming stage into its theatrical counterpart--a confined and sealed place "a massive, deenergizing social model" (Rosen 9-14)" that rules out the possibility of free meaningful action, Bond's political purpose is to explore life within invisible confines and to discover the sources of human decadence and dehumanization. Tragedies are written when life is locked up and broken by large impersonal invisible capitalist forces, and when life reaches such an impasse where there is no exit. Bond demystifies the invisible workings of power structures that pose a constant threat to individual self-hood and the process of dehumanization that is a necessary corollary of the process of institutionalization. Consequently, in his plays, there is a dramatization of tension between individual self-consciousness leading to self-actualization and society's efforts to circumscribe self-creation

by confining human existence. In Bond's works, 'total institutions' occupy quite a significant place as prisons, concentration camps and asylums, which frequently feature in Bond's world. Generally considered to be providing safety and care, these, in fact, are enclosed and closely monitored spaces to shut away the social deviants from the outside world. Asylums, jails and concentration camps alike are the training spaces where social threats are treated and cured of excessive mental energies, passions and all symptoms of moral degeneracy. Bond's plays such as *Lear*, *Fool*, *The Sea*, *The Summer* play out the dialectics of trapment at divergent literal and figurative levels. Lear, Clare and Hatch in *Lear*, *Fool* and *The Sea* respectively being committed to the asylums, Marthe in *Summer* as one of the prisoners of the concentration camps all characterize Bond's intention to penetrate deep into the limiting cultural, intellectual, and political constructs of a society. These social confines circumvent a free expression of human potentials by narrowing down the space for the social dissidents--who try to open up and grow out of the limiting structure of society--with an intension to tame and discipline them.

Prison houses, asylums, concentration camps and other structures of confinement occupy quite a prominent place in Bond's plays. Consequently, the intense focus on the structure is shared by the confined and suffering figures occupying stage all the time and asserting their "physicality within Bond's dramatic world" and all the while, making the structure real "through sheer number, and through the subjective weight of its pain" (Garner 158). In other words, a vast body of the vibrant imagery of violence, imprisonment, immurement, confinement, prisons, cages, barriers, madness, disease etc. support, strengthen, and testify to the image of stage as an enclosed space, "a sort of cage," as Carol Rosen terms it, and at the same time, splits open the surface crust of life, revealing within the bleeding humanity, reduced to the level of bestiality, made trivial by unseen forces and caught in the vicious web of violence, in need of constant guard (Rosen 13). And a close scrutiny of the network of these working images reveals that Bond portrays confinement through certain motifs, images, and metaphors.

In "Notes on Dramatic Method," Bond introduces a powerful metaphor of "mask under the face" (Bond 133). (We should discover face under the mask) that determines and controls the "verbal-visual-poetry" of almost all his work (Spencer 124). The very fact that face serves as a top

layer to the mask registers a subversion of normal order and a reversal of the theatrical conventions that traditionally place mask prior to the face and associate mask with a dominant controlling force, which distorts reality by hiding or magnifying the truth. By reversing the order and putting the mask beneath the face, Bond unearths the advantage and power that mask has over the face. The situation becomes more critical as in case of mask covering the face, there is still some possibility of unmasking the mask; but if mask is beneath the face then the control is absolute, damage irreparable, and chances of escape or survival minimal. It is, in fact, a triumph of invisible over visible and of mechanical determinism over human values (Bond's Preface 213). Resultantly, this reversal of roles and all values associated with them can aptly be applied to a world where confinement is regarded as freedom, abnormality replaces normality, and irrationality becomes rationality. Bond presents such a chaotic world controlled by inhuman and dehumanizing forces through this mask beneath the face in his *Early Morning*, *Lear*, *Saved* and *The Sea*. The reversal of normal and natural here becomes a measure of normality--a world where men eat men (*Early Morning*), fathers become accomplices in infanticide (*Saved*), wives and daughters conspire against their husbands and fathers (*Early Morning*, *Lear*), "The living haunt the dead," and existence becomes a blight as one of the characters in *Early Morning* desperately cries "To live! Live is evil spelt backwards. It is also an anagram of vile" (Bond, *Early Morning* 189). The overturned logic of the subverted situation illuminates the failure and corruption of the whole civilization as here "Souls die first and bodies live. They wander round like ghosts, they bump into each other, tread on each other, haunt each other" (Bond, *Early Morning* 209). Merely physical existence reflects characters caught in moral dilemmas, constantly wondering "Who came first, the man or his shadow? The shadow, of course. I undressed a shadow once: it was white underneath and cried: it was cold" (Bond, *Early Morning* 179). And by accepting the reality of mask and its projected reflection on to the face, they negate their own humanity turning themselves into shadows having merely a facade of humanity. They are none better than the ghosts, the symbols of surreality and irrationality, purely insubstantial, shadowy beings.

To "discover mask under the face" (Bond, A Note 133) is more than a writer's job but in "Notes on Dramatic Method," Bond makes a firm avowal that "We shall give them (audience) tools for historical hindsight and access to what is usually hidden, distorted or blurred" (Bond

129). The desire to expose the mask underlying the face serves as a metaphor for demystifying the unseen operations of power structures and social institutions causing degeneration.

In Bond's *Lear* (1978) the removal of the surface layer might be as violent and painful as Lear's surgical operation for the removal of his eyes that causes intense pain: "Tell me the pain will stop! This pain must stop! O stop, stop, stop!", but both processes alike bring insight into reality (97). Violence that is embedded in this theatrical operation, hence, emerges as an effective dramatic method for uncovering the truth about walls. In addition, redefining and readjusting the roles assigned to face and mask effectively communicate the truth about humanity and will-to-power-structures. Deception of Lear's daughters Bodice and Fontanelle and illusion of Lear and Cordelia is complete as face, not the mask conceals the truth instead of revealing it and at the same time, becomes an accomplice to power in power games to gain an absolute control over the individual selfhood.

Humanity, thus presented, in Bond's *Lear* is only skin-deep with no real substance. Blood relations only have the human faces of Bodice, Fontanelle, and Cordelia, both real and fake at the same time. The foundation of such humanity is illusory and elusive as mask keeps on shifting identities and can never become visible. In the meanwhile, the power to control the face makes mask more real than the face as humanity is just reduced to a function--a mechanical function. Moreover, by reducing humanity to merely a surface layer, Bond wants to communicate the interiority this mask has attained. Consequently, the gap between face and inner functions is widened that alludes to increasing gap between reason and its true function. In *Women in Love* presumably, such humanity creates in Birkin an irresistible desire of its annihilation: "I abhor humanity, I wish it was swept away. It could go, and there would be no *absolute* loss, if every human being perished tomorrow" (Lawrence 121). And he immediately dissociates himself from the dead lot of humanity by asserting his "free-proud singleness" (Lawrence 248).

Bond's *Early Morning* like his *Lear* graphically presents such civilization that is "just bigger heaps of dead" (186). The world of the play is a cannibalistic, violent world. The dead or near to dead civilization of unfeeling irrational monsters with human faces, engaged

in violent acts of eating one another, are apt metaphors for degenerating humanity and petrified life processes. Their every act of eating others makes us think of social pressures that create such culture of cannibalism and violence thriving on human abuse: "You don't eat anybody physically, but you eat their despair, you eat the waste of their lives . . . we clothe the sides of our cars with human skin, because people have been abused to make them (Nightingale 388). Moreover, Arthur's catastrophic scheme of destroying humanity in *Early Morning* draws upon the recognition that humanity obliterates any possibility of renewal by loathing life: "Why do men hate life? Is it the light? Is it more comfortable to be mud and ashes?". In his attempt to become "the great traitor: who kills both sides," he separates himself from the common humanity that absorbs everyone into it by repressing their true potentials and converts them into indistinguishable collectivity (Bond, *Early Morning* 186-87). Arthur's refusal to be the part of such humanity might grant him a non-human stature, yet it is the highest expression of a real human-self giving birth to real human values.

Against such forces that try to appear humanized, to split a character into two is an effective dramatic device to expose violence committed against humanity. The Ghost in *Lear*, Siamese twins, and Joyce and Len handcuffed together in *Early Morning*, Hecuba and Ismene in *The Woman*, and Len and Fred in *Saved* are the stage representations of this split, interpreted variously by different critics as "central thematic symbol: a double character, one being the corpse, alter ego or anti-type of the other" (Innes 158) or as Debra A. Castillo states, "The pure, unsocialized animal that is the double and secret self of man is thrust outside him, is perverted into beastliness. . . . (Castillo 80). The duality of these characters characterizes the masks beneath their civilized faces. Their faces begin to give way under the dehumanizing pressures, begin to disintegrate as soon as the characters manage to come out of confined environment. Resultantly, all illusions of perfection give way to the reality of a fragmented self that is a product of unseen forces. Moreover, this technique performs a dual function: if on the one hand, it splits open the self that is given a false social identity; on the other, it reveals that such an identity given by the janus-faced power structures acts only as a limitation--a limitation to the freedom of self-creation. As Dostoevsky's underground man articulates the truth about his split personality away from the confines of the city in an underground refuge, a place which grants him freedom to discover truth about his condition, Bond's *Lear* also traces a similar pattern. *Lear's* retreat from the society to the pastoral landscape and his subsequent rationalization of his former

irrational state reveals that the mythology of singular self is inextricably linked with the forces of enclosure and confinement. To move away from the sources of human confinement is in a way an assertion of one's humanity and a refusal for further dehumanization. This movement is consummately captured through the introduction of the central image of wall that emblemizes powerful thematic concerns of the play, with a wide range of associations. At once a symbol of individual empowerment and self-confinement, this ambivalent image constantly changes its associations through the course of the play until finally, with the transformation of Lear's vision, its singular image as a cage emerges.

The appearance of the wall on the stage in the play only in the final scene serves a significant theatrical function as initially in its material absence, characters' constant allusions to it reveal that it is the central concern of the play. It illuminates the playwright's desire to magnify the confinement and violence that this coercive structure has caused while it remains in the background. The unreal foundations of the wall are substantiated at the cost of human lives, every moment living beings are dying a "Wall death" and are turned into inanimate objects but wall's construction continues (*Lear* 39). The moment Lear is separated from the wall; his personality begins to fall apart. The appearance of the Grave Digger's Boy's Ghost at this point is highly functional as it is a metaphorical representation of Bond's separation from the wall as a symbol for incarceration. "Operating on the border between reality and hallucination, partaking of both and neither," this shadowy figure unfolds as well as continues the old claims of the wall. Its constant attempts to offer an escape into the green world echoes the safety previously ensured by the walled world. Lear's sympathetic attitude towards the Ghost of the Boy: "Yes, yes, poor boy. Lie down by me. Here I'll hold you. We'll help each other." and "You're like my son now," reveals that Lear's separation from the wall is only physical. He still needs something to free himself mentally from the wall's confining presence (*Lear* 56-69).

The motif of the mask beneath the face as a dramatic metaphor for confinement and as a controlling factor appears in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1978) where Shogo's use of pure naked force, in order not to be seen by others: "When I go out no one is allowed to look at me" is a dramatic metaphor for the desire of power structures to remain



invisible. As symbol of the tyranny of power, he “instead of relying on understanding . . . rely(s) on . . . force. . .” The use of brute force renders “the human body . . . inert by a degree of onstage suffering beyond anything attempted by Bond’s contemporaries” and comes to signify an effective tool to create fear through physical sufferings and hence, to curb any possibility of resistance (Bond 57). The sack-death is an apt metaphor for power that tightens its control around the individuals, pushing its victims towards the margins of free existence where, at every moment, the sack-mouth is ready to engulf the individuals. The bodies in the sacks and the prisoners holding sacks and having iron collars round their necks and “each collar is attached by a chain to a pole held by a Guard . . . [with] ‘Shogo is my friend’ . . . painted in red on the sacks,” in *Narrow Road*, the hanging dead body of the Young Woman, in *Bingo*, with a “sack . . . wrapped round her from hips to ankles all are metaphors of confinement and death. A rope is wound round the sack,” and the dead bodies thrown into the well in *Lear* are just few visual representations of the correlation between the images of violence and confinement (177). The mutual interchangeability of the image patterns of violence, mask, and confinement also repeatedly “reflect a more fundamental incarceration on the level of the body itself: the perceptual enclosure effected by pain, and a cancellation of the subject’s ability to extend itself within the space it inhabits and thereby, humanize this space according to its presence.” Victoria’s order to “chew off every sign of life the moment it appears” in *Early Morning* (207), Lear’s and Hecuba’s blindness in *Lear* and *The Woman*, Bodice’s hysterical shout, “shut him up inside himself,” at the extreme moment of violence as she pokes needles into Warrington’s ears in *Lear* and above all, deaths by violence--all instances register the desire to effect a close of all humanizing life processes by breaking a connection with the phenomenal and biological world; hence, turning humanity into a complete biological wreck (29).

The whole mosaic of “intellectual corruption” is complete when violence is made moralized<sup>33</sup> and accepted with utmost reverence. The moralizing trap of “doctrine of original violence” that “sees human beings as bestial,” succeeds in developing certain attitudes among the people: “Society requires its members to have certain attitudes to its institutions, to understand the justification of them, to respect and consent to them.” This acceptance leads to “self-denigration” (‘we’re all animals’) that negates their own humanity and shatters their confidence in their own natures by generating fear (Bond, Memorandum 88). The

recurring animal imagery tightly woven into the characters' dialogues foregrounds debasement and belittlement that human beings are trapped in down to the point of accepting their own bestiality. With every act of aggression, they are "frightened of [him]self as well as others", and their belief in "their weakness and limitations" is strengthened that justifies the existence of power structure" (Bond, Preface 72). The vicious cycle begins and with one act of violence "more force and control and scrutiny are necessary" (Bond preface 74). Hence is the circle that narrows down, turning individuals into complete nonentity. They accept the magic of morality as a sign of their own strength, and like conjuror of the "Song of the Conjuror" in *Restoration* (1992), they are doomed who ties his hands with "invisible rope," binds his "feet with a chain no one could see," shuts himself in a "sack that was not there," locks "it with an invisible key," and "with one fanfare he's free." But one day he cannot get free and dies an invisible death.

Taught by the power, human beings always relate the free expression of self to the "anarchic individualism" (Marinetti 248) and willingly accept the "Goneril-society with its prisons, work houses, whipping, starvation, mutilation, pulpit hysteria and all the rest of it" (Bond, Introduction 6). People witnessing these public spectacles, equate this expression of violence with divine justice, and sanction it collectively. The trial of Joyce and Len and the heavenly trial of Arthur in *Early Morning*, the shooting of Fred in *The Swing*, and the hanging of the Young Woman in *Bingo* (1987), and Shogo's trial by the angry mob in *Narrow Road* are "no more than the socially approved mode(s) of lynching" and in all these cases the people become a part of the process of penalization. War, the greatest of all public lynching is another instance of socially approved communal violence directed against "men in jungle" who "are even worse because they're as savage as animals and as cunning as men" so war is fought because there is a fear that this savage will "steal his vegetables and rape his grandmother" (Bond, Introduction 9). Violence, thus, is distributed among the people under the disguise of social justice, and people are trapped in these power structures.

Apart from physical violence, Bond regards this self-monitoring and turning inward as violence committed against being and highest form of confinement because in such sort of confinement men ruthlessly check themselves for any sign of irrationality and reaction and "act as his own goaler." This descent into being is "as if an animal was locked in the

cage and then fed with the key. It shakes the bars but can never get out” (Bond, Preface 39).

Warrington's mutilated body with cut tongue and damaged ear-drums in *Lear* is an extreme case when man's perceptual connection with the environment is destroyed by extreme violence and imprisonment. When directed outward, the fear of the self with violent propensities transforms into suspicion. This paranoia results in strong distrust of others, seeing them as potential threats. Consequently, “One person is set against another, and each one is divided against himself or herself” (Bond, *Four Pieces* xiv). Metaphorically, this fear and suspicion develops like the fast growing hand in Bond's story “A Hand” that first kills the man's neighbour and in the end, squeezes the man himself to death. On account of this mistrust and fear of betrayal, the social fabric of relationships is completely destroyed, and individuals are isolated. Hence on earth, it is a living hell for them. It is perhaps this state about which Garcin cries in *No Exit* that “Hell is--other people!” (Sartre 816). In Bond's dramatic universe, like Sartre's Hell, the being-for-others carries an intense awareness of the presence of others that makes relationships complex and isolated even though people are bound together. Every relationship in Bond's dramatic world is a trap. The isolated Old Alen, in *The Pope's Wedding* (1977), bolts the door, “puts his ear to the door,” and “spies through a hole in the wall” after Pat and Scopey's respective departures, the suspicious and the interrupting father and husband (Harry) by his constant unwanted arrivals into the rooms makes the whole environment tense, and Len constantly spies on Pam and Fred in *Saved* (261, 281). These instances in part disclose the relationships that are fast deteriorating through the threat of a constant watch; and in part, alienation that results from the lack of communication between the family members. Moreover, characters' paranoia is a response towards the social relations, and society that destroys instead of preserving them.

Bond embodies the exhaustion of creative and bodily energies in divergent image patterns of lack of mobility and images of circularity. Each pattern calls attention to physical and mental violence suspending and incarcerating mental and physical processes. The physical images, for instance, *Lear's* wall, Shogo's sacks, jails, gallows, asylums, wells that become a place of human refuge as well as human confinement, and the underground refuge of a woman and her daughter in etc., are instances of material barriers confining free movement often accompanied by violence and intense pain. The images of dead bodies,

ghosts, maimed bodies crawling on the stage, famished mother and daughter propping against each other, removal of Lear's eyes, Hecuba's self-inflicted blindness, war-blind Sweden who transfers his pains to Hoxton and Grace respectively by brutally killing them register the use of absolute violence to "make the body inert" (Innes 158). Death, in this connection, becomes the highest expression of suspension of all vital processes of life. Constraints on mobility become a measure of dehumanization presented very effectively in *Stone*, where a young man's increasing spiritual as well as intellectual corruption is measured by the continuous growth of the stone tied to his back, and it ultimate changes into a rock that gradually makes his movement more laborious.

On another level, characters' physical inertia points to another extreme form of confinement that is, creative or intellectual confinement. The reductive forces not only deform the body but also corrupt intellect and imagination by blocking the processes of rationalization and creation. Consequently, all thinking and imaginative processes of Bond's figures are withheld. Bond's Clare in *The Fool* (1987) exemplifies compressed and suppressed imaginative potentials. By juxtaposing the boxing match with Clare's literary activity, Bond exposes the risk that Clare's career as an artist involves. The initial fame becomes highly confining when Clare is forced to suppress the true artistic spirit to cater for the taste of the general public. Admiral Lord Radstock, Clare's benefactor, compels him to exclude the lines "which criticize[s] the land owning classes--smack of radicalism" and "Polite society (Bond, *The Fool* 124). Well, your verse undermines its authority. There'd be chaos" (*The Fool* 125). In this locked up state, his mental and physical health rapidly deteriorates until finally, it reaches its breaking point and with an explosion, all suppressed mental and creative energies are released. In his delirium, he is capable of producing "Hundreds a verse" (*The Fool* 135). But that is a useless creative activity, an indication of the fact that if creative propensities are not properly channelized, they become self-destructive. Hence, all destruction is creativity turned awry. But quite paradoxically, his so-called madness grants him a measure of freedom. Still, in his counter-productive state, as a true Bondian hero, he succeeds in avoiding the corrupting influence of the world that has now been narrowed down to an asylum. He retains his imaginative vitality though it has been denied a free contact with the world outside. Bond's professed purpose in *The Fool* is to show such triumph of imaginative potential over decay: "Image of Clare. He begins as a healthy, and

spunky young man and ends as a white-faced, red-cheeked, grey-haired clown with a nodding head; an image of decay and ruin, yet with some manic life in it" (Hay and Roberts 214).

Similarly, Bond's Lear's madness foregrounds all repressed impulses and signifies a crack in the human facade. His madness, in fact, is a destructive release because it tears apart socially constructed self, and breaks the vicious cycle of blind social obedience that inhibits a free access to the reasoning processes. Instead of signifying a state of moral or intellectual degeneracy, Lear's madness becomes a metaphor for reason, unlearning, and a new form of self scrutiny as Bond says: "We spend our life 'being ourself.' We're sure that we are our 'self,' only mad people doubt it" (Bond, *Four Pieces* xxiii). In Hatch and Trench both, the element of acceptance of socially constructed self is prominent as their madness is a response to their forced exile from the society, while in Lear doubt predominates. Beginning with being 'true to thyself,' Lear's inward turn or a descent into self is significant as Lear's madness is in search of sanity. "Lear becomes a critic of Lear..." says Bond, "He turns to attack; he attacks himself much more viciously than Cordelia or any of others have done. He destroys his mind in that quest for sanity" (Bond, *Interview* 42). Lear's nihilistic declaration in great negatives, "I know nothing, I can do nothing, I'm nothing," in fact, is the acceptance of the being as a void (*Lear* 95).

Intellectual incarceration is also portrayed very effectively through the patterns of circularity. Absence of dynamism puts a strong limitation on to the mobility of ideas and free thinking. Fixity to one particular set of ideas does not let the characters see the things as they really are, and they always think in the patterns of repetition. Bond's *The Sea* exemplifies this idea. Mrs. Rafi's failure of finding any alternatives for her present mode of life characterizes her inability to explore the possibilities and potentials that lie around her to be discovered: "I'm tired of being a side-show in their little world. Nothing else was open to me" (*The Sea* 160-61). She cannot break the cycle of her monotonous existence. Mrs. Rafi's return to her tea room, an instance of devolution, is a return to her grotesque routine existence; an anti-action as compared to the positive action of Willy. The return to the former state is also communicated effectively through Heros' return to the island with the same pursuit of finding the statue. Still chained to the image of the Goddess of Good Fortune, this second coming, if on the one hand, emblemizes a haunted movement of "tramp(ing) round and round"

and failure to get out of this vicious web; on the other, it elucidates the second wave of destruction that he intends to inflict on the innocent inhabitants of the island (*Early Morning* 167). Moreover, the fruitless cycles of revolutions explicate the cessation of true forward movement as every revolution, in fact, is a return of the old under the guise of the new--only a more rigorous return of force, control and violence. With every return the possibility of change is reduced and the state of devolution affirmed. Lear's authority challenged by his daughters and then Cordelia's taking over, characterizes the movement in circles that is substantiated with their concerted efforts to construct the wall. In *Early Morning*, the mechanical eating of one another, in a sinister pattern of repetition and circularity, is an apt metaphor for the processes of human existence that become just a habit. The world of *Early Morning* appears to be a familiar mechanical world with a habit to see the things happening as they always have happened, with no change. The dynamism of life comes to a stand still as all organic processes have been reduced to mechanical acts of eating one another. All of Bond's characters who cannot take meaningful stance are just repeating repetitions and are deprived of the freedom of the autonomous action, because the tendency to simulate characterizes the inability to perform the value-generating human function. The image of the movement of the windmill effectively conveys the grinding circularity and monotony of existence: "There are man and women and children and cattle and birds and horses pushing a mill, they're grinding other cattle and people and children... They go round and round... They're sure they are reaching the horizon" (68). All their laborious efforts instead of bringing a change affirm the order. The mindless acts of grinding round and round cannot break the circle of habit and suggest the dissociation of thinking and acting that finds its extreme expression in child battering in *Saved*.

In *Saved*, like in *Early Morning*, the stoning scene illuminates the dislocation between thinking processes and actions that finally results in acts of violence. As the central characters retreat to the background, the stage is transformed into a scenic arena where the repressed forces find an "explosive release" (Castillo 83). If on the one hand, the family members' lack of action for saving the baby shows "the corruption of their lives," as they've resigned to the oppressive conditions of existence; on the other, it exposes that the young boys' "atavistic fury fully unleashed" is unthinking and motiveless (Bond, Appendix 310). There seems to be little or no difference between throwing stones at the

baby and the priests' game of throwing sacred pot round in *Narrow Road* that finally catches Kiro's head in it; the throwing of Pat's bag to one another by the group of boys in *The Pope's Wedding* that eventually breaks it and the stoning at Alen's hut with Scopey inside in *The Pope's Wedding*, all unthinking acts alike are reduced to the level of "sport [that] releases energy" (Bond on Violence 113).

Bond's constant preoccupation with the recurrent image patterns of decay characterizes his endeavors to criticize all existing value-generating systems of culture, religion and social institutions etc. Even humanity portrayed by him is concocted, thriving on the principles of the negation of life, constituting a condition of existence that is highly confining. "I'm a limited person," (*Early Morning* 185). Arthur, brutally cut to fit into a fixed and homogeneous mould of contemporary world and leading a barred existence in *Early Morning* cries and yearns for freedom. On dramatic level, the correlation of the images of violence, madness, confinement and decay with the images of new worlds, renewal and rationality illuminates this concern. In the domain of theatre, this concern constantly refers to "the 'world' motif"<sup>71</sup> with stage as a boundary "that separate[s] and connect[s] contrasting worlds..." (Qigley 255).

Initially, Bond's study of contemporary world and its restrictive effects on individuals results in literal transformation of stage into a confined and claustrophobic space that poses constant threats to individual and social freedom. A host of Bond's plays, with the dramatic movement culminating in an enclosure, parallel the movement depicted in Eugene Ionesco's plays through the images of inanimate objects invading the stage and gradually ensnaring human beings. This movement underlines the strength of this closed system to break and defeat the individuals. For instance, in *The Pope's Wedding*, Scopey's free movement is circumscribed by gradually limiting him to one room in Alen's greatcoat sufficiently pictures a world that gradually closes down and finally, devours the individuals.

Though Bond begins with the real world, his plays eventually present the victory of constructed over real and of art over life in his own unconventional way. The images presented in Bond's dramatic world correspond to the logic of the writer in constituting a dramatic universe wherein images create various kinds of confinement. Various forms of imprisonment and inhibiting forces pose a constant threat to individual

self-hood and the process of dehumanization as a necessary corollary of the process of institutionalization in modern day world.



## Works Cited

- Bond, Edward. "Memorandum," *The Activist Papers, Edward Bond Plays: 4*. London: Methuen, 2002.
- . A Note on Dramatic Method, *Edward Bond Plays: 5*. Methuen Drama, 1978.
- . Appendix, *Edward Bond Plays: 1*. Methuen Drama, 1977.
- . *Early Morning. Edward Bond: Plays 1*. Methuen Drama, 1977, pp. 134-223.
- . *Lear. Edward Bond: Plays 2*. Methuen Drama, 1978, pp. 13-102.
- . "Interview: The First Cycle," by Glenn Loney, *Performing Arts Journal*, 1, 1976, pp. 44, *JSTOR*, 17 March 2007 <<http://www.jstor.org/search>>.
- . "Memorandum," *Activist Papers, Edward Bond Plays: 4*. London: Methuen, 2002..
- . *Narrow Road to the Deep North. Edward Bond: Plays 2*. Methuen Drama, 1978, pp. 170-225.
- . "On Violence," Author's Note, *Edward Bond Plays: 1*, 1977. London: Methuen, 1997.
- . *Saved. Edward Bond: Plays 1*. Methuen Drama, 1977, pp. 18-133.
- . *The Fool. Edward Bond: Plays 3*. Methuen Paperback, 1987, pp. 67-160.
- . "The John Tusa Interviews," *BBC Radio 3*.
- . "The John Tusa Interviews," *BBC Radio 4*.
- . *The Pope's Wedding. Edward Bond: Plays 1*. Methuen Drama, 1977, pp. 224-308.
- . "The Rational Theatre," introduction, *Edward Bond Plays: Three* xv.
- . *The Sea. Edward Bond: Plays 2*. Methuen Drama, 1978, pp. 103-69.
- Castillo, Debra A. "Dehumanized or Inhuman: Doubles in Edward Bond," *South Central Review*, 3, 1986, pp. 79, *JSTOR*, 17 March 2007, <http://www.jstor.org/search>.
- Garner, Stanton B. Jr., "Post-Brechtian Anatomies: Weiss, Bond and the Politics of Embodiment," *Theatre Journal*, 42 (1990): 158, *JSTOR*, 17 March, 2007, <http://www.jstor.org/search>.
- Hay, Malcolm and Philip Roberts, *Bond: A Study of His Plays*. Eyre Methuen: London, 1980.
- Innes, Christopher. "Edward Bond: rationalism, realism and radical solutions," *Modern British Drama: 1890-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Nightingale, Benedict. *A Readers' Guide to Fifty Modern British Plays*, Reader Guide Series, ed. Andrew Mylett. London: Heinemaun, 1982.

Quigley, Austin E. *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds*. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Rosen, Carol. Introduction, *Plays of Impasse: Contemporary Drama Set in Confining Institutions* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.

Sartre, Jean Paul. *No Exit, Masters of Modern Drama*, eds. Haskill M. Block and Robert G. Shedd. New York: Random House, 1962.

Spencer, Jenny S. "Edward Bond's Dramatic Strategies," *Contemporary English Drama*, asst. ed., C. W. E. Bigsby, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 19. London: Arnold, 1981.