

**Erdinç PARLAK**

İğdır Üniversitesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü

[erdincparlak@gmail.com](mailto:erdincparlak@gmail.com)

ORCID Numarası|ORCID Numbers: 0000-0002-7184-8709

**Güzin ŞARMAN**[guzin.srmn@gmail.com](mailto:guzin.srmn@gmail.com)

ORCID Numarası|ORCID Numbers: 0000-0001-6306-0324

**Enslaved ‘Self’ Looking For a Way Out in *Olly’s Prison* by Edward Bond**  
*Edward Bond’un Olly’s Prison Eserinde Çıkış Yolu Arayan Esir Edilmiş ‘Öz’***Abstract**

Reputed as one of the most notable and sharp-tongued playwrights in the history of playwriting, Edward Bond maintains a critical stance against socio-political issues pervading through the society in his drama in which he invites his audience to a world of ‘imagination’. His approach towards the concept of ‘human being’ in his works is rather different when compared to the ones of many other playwrights since it opposes against the settled thought which propounds ‘man is innately evil and violent’. Even though the act of violence consistently dominates his plays, he depicts his characters perpetrating violence to one another as both victimizer and victimized by the ideological structures of unjust society. Likewise, the playwright saliently expresses the enslavement of human being which is in a constant conflict with both himself/herself and the other one in his shocking plays such as *Olly’s Prison* (1993) which has not been studied in detail so far. This present paper discusses *Olly’s Prison*, which reveals the enslavement and permanent agony of dehumanized man, through the content analysis of the play and the examination of characters with regard to Bond’s distinctive ideas on enslavement, humanness, injustice and violence as well. The evaluations are presented in the conclusion part of the study.

**Key Words:** Enslavement, Injustice, Humanness, Dehumanized, Violence**Öz**

Oyun yazarlığı tarihinde en göze çarpan ve sivri dilli yazarlardan biri olarak tanınan Edward Bond seyircilerini bir hayal dünyasına davet ettiği oyunlarında toplumdaki sosyo-politik meselelere karşı ciddi bir duruş sergiler. Değişmez ‘insan doğuştan kötü ve şiddet yanlısıdır’ düşüncesine karşı olduğu için eserlerinde ‘insan’ kavramına karşı yaklaşımı diğer birçok oyun yazarlarının düşüncesiyle kıyaslandığında farklıdır. Şiddet eylemi oyunlarında sürekli baskın olsa da birbirlerine şiddet uygulayan karakterlerini hem adaletsiz toplumun ideolojik kuruluşlarının kurbanı hem de kurban eden olarak resmeder. Ayrıca yazar şu ana kadar detaylı bir şekilde incelenmemiş *Olly’s Prison* (1993) gibi şok edici oyunlarında kendisiyle ve bir başkasıyla sürekli çatışma içerisinde olan insanın esaretini açık bir şekilde ifade eder. Bu çalışma insanlıktan çıkarılmış bireyin esaretini ve daimi acısını gözler önüne seren *Olly’s Prison* oyununu içerik analizi ve Bond’un esaret, insanlık, adaletsizlik ve şiddet üzerine düşüncelerine göre karakterlerin incelemesi üzerinden tartışmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları sonuç kısmında verilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Esaret, Adaletsizlik, İnsanlık, İnsanlıktan çıkarılmış, Şiddet

### Introduction

Notably as a critical playwright of his time, which he delineates totally 'irrational', Edward Bond offers his audience a sort of 'rational' atmosphere the purpose of which is to invite them to an act of 'reasoning'. In his view, theatre is a medium of use to trigger audience to ponder the unjust society with its oppressors which both stimulate and punish violent acts explicitly presented in his plays. Bond's approach towards his theatre, which is entitled as rational, has a basic intention to evoke the rationality of human beings, all of whom are forcefully transformed into irrational entities by the society itself. In most basic sense, the society he depicts in his works is a sort of system spoiled and corrupted by its unjust socio-political structures. Bond puts forward a society being in struggle with itself as well as with its moral value, principles and irritating inefficacies<sup>1</sup>. Succumbed to irrationality led by false politics, the society is governed through aggression. Herewith, as an outcome of this irrational society, violence captures the minds of human beings who can merely sustain their existence in this way. Bearing an opposing voice against the source of violence as discrepant from many other perspectives, Bond addresses this concept in a distinctive manner. In his rational theatre, violence is presented to be generated through ideological structures by virtue of the society governed by injustice as well as its oppressive apparatuses<sup>2</sup>. Concerning his seemingly stern stance towards capitalist logic, he calls for a kind of reformation in a diseased society. He endeavors to alert audience with regard to the future of humankind, as indicated in his statements: "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"<sup>3</sup>. Akin to his standpoint towards violence, he treats human nature in a different manner. Widely postulated view that man is evil and violent by birth is deliberately refuted by means of his characters depicted as sufferers and victimized by the injustices of society. Human beings are completely ineffective in self-autonomy and helpless due to the social structures, most of whom are in the search of transforming them into aggressive creatures without reasoning and prone to violence as well. Captured by violent thoughts, they lose human values and 'radical innocence'. In a sense, gradually dehumanized and desensitized, they nearly become addicted to perpetrate violence as a "release of aggression created by the dehumanizing restrictions of an industrialized society"<sup>4</sup>. Defending the idea man is 'radically innocent', which means s/he is innocent in essence, the playwright explicitly criticizes the harsh conditions that human beings are obliged to undergo in the social process. In very deed, this approach towards violence derives its source from his tough past laden with encountering with violent acts and war itself at first hand. His direct observation on violence is well detailed in his statements:

I was first bombed when I was five. The bombing went on till I was eleven. Later the army taught me ten ways to kill my enemy. And the community taught me a hundred ways to kill my neighbour. I saw there was no justice between one part of the community and another. An injustice is like a pebble dropped in the centre of the ocean<sup>5</sup>.

As a post-war and sharp-tongued playwright, Bond blends his theatrical talent with an insightful observation targeting the flaws of society. These flaws have a remarkable control over shaping human nature in such a way as to change a being into good or evil, no matter how s/he is at war with 'self'. In his words, man may gain or most probably lose 'humanness' through the life experiences, as compared to the established thought that humanness is a property springing from birth and man is either born good or evil. His theatre creates an atmosphere which "centres upon the human and our human responsibility to create 'humanness'"<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in objecting to the rooted aspect on this matter, he portrays his characters as succumbed to an unjust order, incapable of self-control and victims searching for a way out to cope with the hardship of society in which they are helplessly stuck. Through the depiction of an "image of a dark, devastated, and sealed-in claustrophobic space haunted by violence and insane spectral figures all of whom are victims of aggression and irrational conflicts

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<sup>1</sup> Gritzner 2015, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Bond 2000

<sup>3</sup> Bond 1994, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Scharine 1976, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Bond 2000, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Billingham 2014, 17.

and wars”<sup>7</sup>, his characters are changed into ineffective ones to assume responsibility for their actions. Utterly deprived of love and care, they are pictured as the ones who resort to violence considered as the only and ultimate way to comply with the social order which consolidates its place with the aid of blatant injustice. They are expected to survive in an irrational and unjust society by way of adopting their social roles, thereby becoming alienated from their reasoning nature<sup>8</sup>. In the portrayal of Bondian characters, as they fit into society, they turn into more violent and inhumane beings. Since they are severely anxious about the sense of desolateness, which is a result of modern world, they are rendered incapable of challenging the authoritarian institutions. Davis, in this point, remarks “standing out against the domination of human thinking by forms of ideology, forms of transcendental authority, whether they be religious, national or political in form, can be a lonely and frightening experience”<sup>9</sup>. Inasmuch as they lose their humanness and questioning nature, they aspire after gaining their self-autonomy through the agency of aggression and cruelty in very deed.

The basic argument in his aggressive plays filled with violent characters, even the victimizers are essentially the victims of this cruel system since they are forced to be evil to somehow express themselves. On the other side, they are introduced as revenge seekers by the reason of their pathetic conditions for which he accuses society. Regardless of their evil deeds shocking audience, they are described as in the pursuit of merely existing while feeling the deficiency of their lost innocent nature in a politicised sphere. In a sense, Bond’s “focus of investigation is nothing less than the survival of all the human, humane qualities of the political animal, the dweller in a contemporary polis”<sup>10</sup>. From a Bondian perspective, it is a must to restore and reform this sickly society to cure its subjects inclined to violence, thus starting restoration from its institutions such as state, church, school and family. Insistently questioning the inhumane nature of society, he lays stress on “the inhumanity of modern society, epitomised by consummate physical and psychological violence, needs to be comprehended in order to be fought”<sup>11</sup>. Only when an insightful study on the deeply-rooted dehumanized society was conducted, may this deterioration be solved. In other words, rather than examining the inner side of human, Bond approaches this ill condition in a more social context as Patterson asserts that he “perceives the social function of ‘individuals’ rather than their psychology as important”<sup>12</sup>. Provided that the society is transformed into a just one, human beings are also relieved from their lasting agony, regaining their humanness as much as abandoning their violent nature. Besides his pessimistic stance, yet indeed partially optimistic, the playwright alleges that a world over which justice has dominion is a dream, a sort of utopia. Having two choices in front of themselves, human beings struggle to maintain their livings, which is pointed out in the statements of Bond; “Justice is utopian. Society is unjust. We maintain ourselves in society only by use of its unjust procedures or in conflict with them”<sup>13</sup>. However, considering his stark vision about the modern world, he does not offer a concrete solution to this injustice and aggression surrounding every layers of the society while invoking his audience to a rational thinking through their imagination. He basically underlines the “deeply rooted problems of today’s world in his description and truthful representation of the issues concerning human life”<sup>14</sup>. With the strong rejection of passive position of his audience, he pursues to draw their attention towards serious issues, activating their consciousness. In benefiting from the imaginative power of his theatre, he prepares an optimistic future for audience despite the dark atmosphere in the society. Since “imagination creates reality”<sup>15</sup>, he still sees hope for the future of humankind. In a similar vein, Sharma explicates:

Edward Bond, a British playwright offers many invaluable insights into low destructive ideologies that can be transcended by imagination, which he believes still, has the potential to revive humanity and restore the lost dignity of man. He rather lays

<sup>7</sup> Khatoon & Khatoon 2018, 286-287.

<sup>8</sup> Örmengül 2008, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Davis 2005, xv.

<sup>10</sup> Castillo 1986, 77.

<sup>11</sup> Gritzner 2015, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Patterson 2003, 144.

<sup>13</sup> Bond 2000, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Naqzi 2003, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Bond 2005, 7.

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stress on the need to think and act rationally and develop consciousness of the audience towards those problems of life that require serious attention<sup>16</sup>.

He awakens imagination in audience to save human soul and to maintain order the morals of which have been lost whereby raising their consciousness. In the course of this consciousness-raising process, he does not hesitate to demonstrate the problematic issues in the society embodied as 'prison' to confront his audience with brutal facts. He creates his characters as trapped in either concrete or abstract prisons where they become isolated from the outer world and try to sustain their existence through aggression. Each human being, in his opinion, must turn into evil to survive in this prison which stands for the society. Only if they renounce their rational nature and to behave irrationally, may they govern their prisons. This point is emphasized in his remark:

Those who govern do not know what a person is and the governed do not know what a government should be. Instead the evil do evil and because there is no justice, the good must also do evil. How else can they govern the prison they live in?<sup>17</sup>.

Within the scope of his perspectives towards human nature, as with other theatrical works of him, Bond presents his audience an investigation of the blurred line between 'victimized' and 'victimizer' in *Olly's Prison* (1993), a teleplay the stage production of which was first set in Berlin by the Berliner Ensemble. The play basically discusses the prison and enslavement of man, both in literal and metaphorical context, along with the corrupted human soul by society<sup>18</sup>. As a contribution to the bleak tone of the play, Bond places his desperate characters into either a concrete or an abstract prison in which their discernment is captured in a way to turn them into enslaved. Intentionally selecting the title *Olly's Prison* for his play, Bond points out the society pictured like a prison the target of which is to exploit its permanent prisoners as well as to restrain them into numbness and passivity to act in a rational manner. Regarding this, the present study aims to analyze this play through content analysis, focusing on specific topics such as enslavement, dehumanization, and injustice in the society.

In the opening scene of the play, a gloomy room deliberately organized as a typical working-class flat, where Bond puts emphasis on the class distinction, is presented to audience. Mike, the main character of the play, approaches his silent and motionless daughter, Sheila sitting around a table. With an intention to start a conversation, he directs some questions to her, he receives neither oral nor bodily reaction from her though. Persisting in her silence and indifference towards his father, Sheila is described as a soulless body which annoys Mike at last. His statements about the unresponsiveness of Sheila are a sort of rebellion against the insensitivity, injustice and dehumanizing factors of society:

God I hate this carry-on. Work all day, come home, cook a meal, tidy up – then this. 'S not human. Don't you get enough of it outside? Least we can treat each other like human beings in our own place. Suppose I should've asked if you wanted it: 'Want a cup a' tea?' No one's forcin you to drink it. You heard the keettle. If you didnt want it you should've said. If somethin's botherin you tell me. I'll listen<sup>19</sup>

As indicated above, Bond presents Mike as a rebellious being against the insensitized and unjust world order paying regard to the capitalist stance whereas Sheila is introduced as a prisoner of her mind as well as the embodiment of a dehumanized society. She is kept in long-lasting silence, representing herself as a victimized and lost human being severely lacking for a family bond in that a mother figure is absent in the play. As a materialized being, she finds the only coping way with her meaningless existence in indifference and silence. Castillo touches upon this issue in this manner; "In his dehumanized characters, then, Bond gives voice to a painful silence and provides a fabulous, or fantastic, presence to elements which are recognized and repressed in "civilized" society"<sup>20</sup>. Drawing a picture to be repressed and unresponsive, she pushes Mike's patience at last. Her ongoing indifference disturbs Mike who wanders around the room while changing the places of furniture and begging to

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<sup>16</sup> Sharma 2020, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Bond 2000, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Bond 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Bond 2003, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Castillo 1986, 79.

receive a response from his daughter. In this scene, Bond makes his pathetic father figure speak of the cruelty in the society as put into words by Mike; “Help me Sheila. You don’t know what’s happenin. People are cruel. I don’t know why. They make you suffer”<sup>21</sup>. No matter how Mike urges Sheila to react, the stable position of her calls forth Mike’s inevitable rage, thereby leading him to lose his mind to the degree of strangling her daughter. From the beginning to the end of her life, Sheila is kept desensitized in the room which is designed as her concrete prison. However, her abstract prison has already been built in her mind in which she is caged, thereby preventing her from escaping. Her silence in her own mind prison is a direct message and a sort of reaction to the repressive and alienating nature of the society. If she was not positioned as numb and silent, her reaction in the play would possibly be different, most probably showing tendency to violence.

Her murder is, in fact, presented like an assault to an object, not to a living being. In other words, “in Bond's plays, murder is frequently, pointedly, an act of violence done to a mere body, a soul-less post-industrial entity”<sup>22</sup>. Even after her instantaneous death, Mike does not embrace the reality in such a manner to sustain his vain talking with her for a while. His action is indeed a self-expression as he remains incapable of communicating with her. Renouncing his rational attitude, he instantly becomes an irrational being the reason of which is no longer existing. The concept of humanness is quite questionable in this scene where a father figure kills her daughter without hesitation. In point of fact, through this brutal exposition in the play, Bond introduces Mike as a sufferer, prisoner, and victim of ideological systems building an abstract prison in which human beings are relentlessly desensitized and dehumanized<sup>23</sup>. The power structures constructing ideology as well as placing it in man’s mind trigger their subjects into perpetrating violence which emerges with a sudden aggression. This case is clarified by Bond in this way:

I don't think people are biologically violent in the sense that they have to be violent. It is just in certain situations they can be violent. So our problem is not to deal with the weaknesses of human nature, but to create a society in which it is possible for people to function in a way which would be natural for them. And the only sort of society where that is possible is a society in which people have initiative for their own lives and have to accept the responsibilities for their actions. We can't do that in the sort of power structures we have<sup>24</sup>.

However, Mike’s ongoing denial of Sheila’s death is interrupted in the morning of the murderous act by a neighbour named Vera who loves Mike and fantasizes a ‘happily ever after’ marriage with him. Bond prepares another shocking exposition in which Vera is not aware of Sheila’s motionless body sitting on the chair, considering she is still asleep. Bond, by doing so, portrays Vera as a prisoner of her fantasy world where she merely dreams about a happy future with Mike with an absolute blindness towards aggression and cruelty surrounding the society. As an output of modern world, her self-deception in the face of the destructive and aggressive social order may be considered as a defense mechanism<sup>25</sup>. Living in a prison she intentionally creates, Vera suffers “an absence of psychological stability, deep-rooted desire for love, happiness and emotional stability”<sup>26</sup>. Her unexpected appearance in his flat renders Mike conscious of his evil deed in such a way as to hope for help from Frank, the boyfriend of Sheila. Bond, by means of Frank who turns into a police officer later, presents an authority figure expected to be a decent man, but somehow comes in sight as a corrupted one. He enters into the gloomy room, displaying no ethic behaviour of which he is considerably deprived. This circumstance is indicated in his dialogue with Mike who offers him to take the flat after the murder of Sheila:

**Frank** I always liked this flat. (*Doubt.*) Wait. What if people say Im mixed up in the...? It’s your idea. You said to help you.

<sup>21</sup> Bond 2003, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Castillo 1986, 84.

<sup>23</sup> Bond 2003.

<sup>24</sup> qtd in. Stoll 1976, 416.

<sup>25</sup> Bond 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Sharma 2020, 206.



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**Mike** It would've been hers one day. So when you married...

**Frank** She'd've wanted me to have it. I can't believe she's dead... people my age dont often get a chance to own their place. I need some cover. If you change your mind – I warn you –<sup>27</sup>.

The indifferent attitude and self-seeking approach of Frank towards the murderous act proves his greediness for a financial profit as a working-class member. The dead body in the room is trivialized in the eyes of him when compared to his financial condition. As with other characters, he is enslaved in his own abstract prison where money takes the lead and humanness is not dignified. He is conditioned as a mercenary man by the logic of capitalism which Bond explicitly criticizes in his works. On the other hand, the purpose of Mike's offer to give the flat may root in his vain effort to forget the murderous act and to escape from unpleasant memories and his prison. The dialogue between these two men basically signalizes the corruption, numbness, and aggression in society. Even though Frank appears as the embodiment of corrupted authority whereas Mike is the prisoner and output of inhumane society, Bond gives a shape to his play in a manner to pity both as they are also the victims of an unjust system. Soon after the arrangement about the flat, Mike steps into his concrete prison along with his abstract one in his mind. A sense of guilt for his evil deed captures his soul and haunts him. His previous denial of the murder is replaced by a sort of acceptance and confrontation with Sheila's death, thus provoking him to take the responsibility of his own action. This state is deliberately depicted by Bond aiming that human beings should be responsible for their actions, either good or evil though, as given in the statement of Vera who is in a visiting room with Mike: "You murdered your daughter. Say it to yourself every day. It's your only chance. If we cant face what we've done we'll all end up murderers!"<sup>28</sup>. As can be inferred, the characters are expected to regain their autonomy, which is already taken by authoritarian structures, since an autonomous being extricates him/herself from enslavement and abandons his/her violent nature. Similarly, Bond states:

We have to have a society which is truly democratic, in which people are responsible for the sort of life they live. Then instead of being told: "You must live like this, you must fit into this category, you must do this, you must do the other," they will make the decisions which affect the way they live. And then they are autonomous individuals. An autonomous individual has no need to be violent<sup>29</sup>.

In the light of Bond's standpoint towards autonomy above, although the newly prisoner Mike appears to be the only decision maker in his action, he is devoid of autonomy in that he is constructed dependent and ineffective by ideology. He is situated in his own created 'mind-prison' the ultimate target of which is to desensitize and to enslave its prisoner. The image of utopian world, where society is just and human beings are autonomous, is shattered since "the affluent Utopia becomes a prison"<sup>30</sup>. As he is accustomed to his real prison, the outer world seems more dangerous and cruel for it reminds him of his wicked action which he does not desire to face until he is put there. He is unconsciously driven to forget to the extent that he is not aware of being a murderer, as presented in his conversation with Vera in the visiting room of the prison: "I was with her body all night. Then you rang and I opened the door. I forgot she was there. I didnt know I was a murderer"<sup>31</sup>. The incapability of Mike to take a responsibility for his violent action until he enters into the sphere of his real prison points out his dehumanized and desensitized being which is gained through the enforcement of socio-political order. The passage from his flat, which may be considered as his first prison, to concrete prison does not change anything, making him feel a lack of belongingness to anywhere. However, he feels more secure in the prison in a way to be frightened of stepping into outside once more by the reason of the obscurity in the outer world as Patterson agrees; "if the cage-door were left open, we would fear to step into freedom, because we would not know what lay beyond"<sup>32</sup>. The unknown future of Mike leads

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<sup>27</sup> Bond 2003, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Bond 2003, 24.

<sup>29</sup> qtd. in Stoll 1976, 416.

<sup>30</sup> Bond 2000, 81.

<sup>31</sup> Bond 2003, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Patterson 2003, 138-139.

him to be unwilling to be free from his chains and go outside. He has already been a captive of his mind-prison in either way.

As normal in a prisoner life in the modern world, Mike is not the only one who thinks the outer world is dangerous and filled with injustices. Smiler, a prisoner on the verge of release from prison, feels a sense of emptiness and pointlessness in life outside. Akin to the condition of Mike, no matter how he appears eager to be released, he is quite conscious of his incapability to accommodate himself to social order which is governed through materialistic values. Yet, he cannot help himself wish to sustain a proper living. Bond emphasizes this case through Smiler's statements:

...No Im not tellin you. Ain wasted time in 'ere – I learnt. Not the garbage they feed yer. I watched the lot that put us 'ere – thass where I learnt. They're the crooks – an they get away with it. They can't fail. It's their set-up – all that out there: the rich man's racket. From now on it's number one<sup>33</sup>.

In this cruel system generated through capitalist ideology, man evolves into an isolated being, thus becoming more suspicious of and opponent against the world order. In the depiction of Bond, Mike loses his way and cannot fit into both the inner and outer world, leading him to decide to end his pathetic life by hanging himself. Yet, he is shocked by a sudden and an unexpected interference of Smiler. The role of Smiler in his attempted suicide is indeed introduced as a turning point in Mike's life. In the course of Mike's indecisive moments to commit suicide, he finds Smiler hanging on the noose he has intended to use for himself. In this scene, Bond implies that the suicide of a prisoner on the verge of release is not that shocking in that s/he has already lost his hope for future and has been anxious about the ambiguous life experiences waiting for him outside. As an alien to the outer sphere, Smiler ends his life with an inability to comply with the world order. Occupied by a sense of guilt and helplessness he strongly feels in the face of Smiler's death, Mike is more withdrawn to his mind-prison. He appears to be more hesitant in his decision, being caught in the middle of rational and irrational act. As compared to Mike, Smiler embarks on a quest to discover himself as well as to search for a meaning which he cannot find in his life, no matter how his action seems irrational and takes him to his final doom. Gritzner explains this point as "the search for self and meaning is perverted into an attack on self and a loss of meaning. Self-discovery goes hand in hand with self-destruction"<sup>34</sup>. Although his unexpected move drags him into an end, he is no longer an enslaved self, thereby getting rid of his prison and the repressive cycle in the society to the extent that he regains his autonomy and freedom. He changes into a self-autonomous "when the self is free to dramatise its own experience, to confront and unwind the situations that bind it, to use the pains of repression to open the doors of freedom"<sup>35</sup>. After Smiler's search for a meaning results in death, Mike starts to think about his involvement in this act while blaming himself deep down inside. The most tragic part is, in point of fact, his confrontation with Ellen who is Smiler's mother coming to prison in the aim of talking to the person seemingly responsible for her son's death. She comes in sight as both an accuser and a forgiver in a tight situation to find out his son's real motive to end his life. Trapped in his own prison controlled by loneliness, Ellen strongly feels the emptiness in life and the absence of someone assisting her<sup>36</sup>. She appears to be horrified by being lonely as much as ready to ignore the role of Mike in Smiler's death despite her consuming anger:

**Ellen** ...O he's dead. Sit. Sit. Sit in his chair. (**Mike sits.**) Rather my enemy than that emptiness. I know what he did, but he was good. I want him back.

**Mike** I cant 'elp.

**Ellen** (*order*) Sit there. It helps. (*Pause. Slow with hatred.*) You look at your watch? I'll tell you when it's time. You took his life, you can give me half an hour. You're breathing his air – everything you do now's a swindle. I'll hate you when Im dying<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Bond 2003, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Gritzner 2015, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Hartley 2012, X.

<sup>36</sup> Bond 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Bond 2003, 41.

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In addition to his rejected guilt, Mike does not accuse himself once more for both Smiler's and Sheila's death after he is released from prison, carrying his own in his mind. Smiler's death and the accusations of Ellen have an impact on the denial of his murderous act. He becomes more capable of analyzing the society which needs to bear the responsibility of changing its subjects into a violent, dehumanized, and desensitized being. He assigns this responsibility to the society on which he puts all the blame while stating "I didnt do it"<sup>38</sup>. In fact, Bond attempts to reshape Mike as a critic of the society by making him speak about the dehumanizing and enslaving factors of the social process. The prison in which they hardly struggle disposes them of feeling secure, humane and rational. As with Mike, Vera is the speaker of this cruel system in the play. When Mike returns his old flat, which is given to Vera by Frank later, she comes in sight as a more conscious woman about her fantasized world shattered by realities and also about her prison to which she has been blind so far:

... Ten years... in prison every day. Get up. Work. Save every penny. I couldn't afford to look at other people's faces. They were happy. The faces would've been a knife in me. (*She clenches her fist and presses the side of her index finger against her teeth.*) I've given my life up for today. That's what it cost me: you standin there. It's not murder. When you murdered her you paid. You murder me and I pay. She sent you – all those years ago – you've only just found what she wanted. You murdered the wrong one. It should've been me. You're evil – that's why you're always askin for the truth<sup>39</sup>.

Rejected and abandoned by Mike, Vera is more enslaved in her new flat which has acted as a concrete prison for each character from the very beginning to the end. As a victim of her fictitious world, she is driven to immense hopelessness. In addressing Mike as 'evil', she attacks his irrationality and irresponsibility in that he is not quite aware of what is true, not embracing his newly created self. Concerning Bond's view, a society treating its individuals equally and assigning them responsibility of their actions does not do groundwork for violence and lies. It creates a rational atmosphere in very deed as specified by him; "if you had a rational society in which people were responsible for their own lives, you wouldn't have any need for force or any need to tell lies"<sup>40</sup>. Stuck between rational and irrational sphere, Mike is gradually dragged into his self-destruction. Incapable of choosing one side, he becomes a captive of his mind-prison. In this respect, Bond remarks:

My plays exploit the difference between the two worlds, taking the character from one world to the other...All my characters have to struggle in two worlds, (rational & irrational) they have to take the journey from one world to the other world. If they don't do that, they are destroyed<sup>41</sup>.

In this fluctuant state, Mike is forced to find hope somewhere else; Ellen's house which seems safer than any other places. However, he encounters Frank whose aim is to destroy Mike. He continues his accusations about him to make Ellen believe and to revenge upon Mike as well. On the other side, Mike helplessly rejects the reality, thus denying his killing of Sheila and the death of Smiler. Distracted by the illusion of Sheila and Smiler in the room, he comes to the threshold of maddening. He is torn between the real and unreal, powerless to recall what he has done and to go out of his prison. Exasperated by all the accusations and threatening of Frank, he eventually revolts against the cruel society predicated on irrationality:

Forgot? 'E's mad! 'Ow could yer do that an' forget! Forget yer'd – No... it's not like that... I didnt 'urt 'im... I wouldnt 'arm a... Dont let them say I did it. Please give me some 'elp. A little 'elp. Accusing, accusing. On and on, always accusin... Someone speak for me. I didnt kill my daughter. We learn when we get older – we know what we've done. Dont we? Surely?<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Bond 2003, 49.

<sup>39</sup> Bond 2003, 52.

<sup>40</sup> qtd. in Stoll 1976, 417.

<sup>41</sup> Bond 1997, 104.

<sup>42</sup> Bond 2003, 60.



Bond paves the way for the crucial point in the play while benefiting from this increasing tension between the characters. Oliver, the key character and whose name points at the title of the play, comes to the forefront as another victim of the society ridden with aggression. He is the former victim of Smiler who puts his eye out. Following Smiler's violent attempt, Oliver is permitted to live in Smiler's room by Ellen. Yet, his miseries do not end at that point since he becomes a sort of puppet of Frank pursuing to ensure the justice on his own. After his deal with Oliver who will be beaten by Frank and will lie to police officers in exchange of money, declaring Mike is the evil-doer, Frank displays an immoral act in which he beats Oliver to death by putting his another eye out. The authority figure, who is expected to be decent and just, is intentionally changed into an aggressive being. The madness and indifference of Frank towards his evil act shows a disconnection with authoritarian values and justice. In this point, it may be appropriate to assert that "Frank's disturbing and unrelenting orgasm of violence toward play's end represents a horrifying perversion of justice and has echoes in contemporary chambers of authoritarian horror"<sup>43</sup>. Bond puts forward a portrayal of a corrupted authority figure unable to ensure justice and victimized by the system itself. No matter how he seems a victimizer and revenge seeker, Frank is in the position of a prisoner in the enslaving society. Abruptly losing his common sense, he exposes audience to such uncomfortable moments filled with rage and violence. In fact, "the disturbing detachment of the torturers reflects Bond's vision of modern society"<sup>44</sup>. As with other characters, Frank is too defeated by his irrationality, thereby turning into an enslaved being of his mind-prison governed through violence. Oliver's, namely Olly's agony signals the one of other characters, all of which are trapped in their prisons, either concrete or abstract one. This case is underlined in the last statement of Mike at the end of the play; "That's why we go sufferin. Olly's Prison. 'E'll never get out. We're all in it now"<sup>45</sup>. They all suffer the enslaving impact, violence, and injustice of the world order.

## Conclusion

Edward Bond, a post-war playwright and quite critical about his period, is concerned with socio-political issues and their immense impact on human beings. In his rational theatre, he does not abstain from making bitter statements related to society to which he feels anger for its unjust nature. Asserting that human beings are good by nature, but somehow change into the evil ones due to the social process in a violent society, he maintains an obvious stance against the world order with a demand for social transformation. The society operated by capitalistic principles is the embodiment of prison where its subjects are trapped to the end. Forced to evolve into something, human beings are stuck between rational and irrational side in this prison. *Olly's Prison* with which Bond aims to unveil this prison structure makes its audience conscious of the fact that they live in an unjust, aggressive, and insecure prisons. The main character, Mike tries to sustain his pathetic and uncontrolled life in his prison, eventually being captured by irrationality and killing his daughter. Vera is portrayed as the prisoner of her fantasized world in which she fancies a happy living whereas Sheila is kept numb and desensitized in her own mind-prison. In criticizing the immoral and unjust authority, Bond creates the character, Frank who is a corrupted and an aggressive police officer. He is also the victim and prisoner of the society for the reason that he admires capitalist living style as a working-class member. Even as an authority figure, he cannot ensure justice and loses himself by applying to violence and taking revenge from Oliver. On the other hand, Smiler chooses to die rather than living in an irrational society. Unable to accommodate himself to his prison, he takes the control of his life. As a victimized character by Smiler earlier and Frank later, Oliver lives in a money-driven prison which brings his end at last. All the characters in the play are urged to live in sorts of prison and they are described as desensitized, fearful, and prepared to perpetrate violence. In this bleak atmosphere, Edward Bond lays stress on the enslavement of human beings inclined to lose their humanness in the modern world. However, he finds the solution in a social transformation to be released from current prison, rather than in victimizing one another or being victimized. He aims to indicate the universality of 'Olly's prison' from which is possible to escape.

<sup>43</sup> Rizzo 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Patterson 2003, 146.

<sup>45</sup> Bond 2003, 71.

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