

What Will It Be Next?": The Process of 'Dramatic Child' in Edward Bond's *Eleven Vests**

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Abstract

In this study, the concept of 'Dramatic Child' will be examined within the framework of the play, *Eleven Vests* written by Edward Bond, one of the prominent playwrights of post-war British theatre. The concept put forward by the playwright comes to the fore as a process that reveals the conflicts experienced by children as individuals in society – structured by adults – with their environment. The process, which is fictionalized through the main character's (Student) experiences during his training at school and in the army, scrutinizes the situations in which children are isolated, marginalized, and eventually become perpetrators/victims of violence in today's world which does not allow them to realize themselves. Reflecting the insensitive and hypocritical attitudes of adults, the playwright criticizes the social order which converts children into passive individuals and thus makes them part of an order dominated by unilateral consensus. Even though adults fail to fulfill their responsibilities, the playwright avoids presenting a hopeless message for the future. At the end of the play, Student, now an adult, reflects the need to create a new language of his own and order in which the meaning of humanity can be sustained. In this study, it is aimed to analyze this creation process within the framework of 'Dramatic Child' conceptualized by the playwright.

Keywords: contemporary British theatre, Edward Bond, *Eleven Vests*, Dramatic Child, violence

"SIRADAKİ NE OLACAK?": EDWARD BOND'UN *ELEVEN VESTS/ON BİR ATLET* OYUNUNDA
'DRAMATİK ÇOCUK'UN YOLCULUĞU

Öz

Bu çalışmada savaş sonrası İngiliz tiyatrosunun önde gelen oyun yazarlarından biri olan Edward Bond'un *Eleven Vests/On Bir Atlet* adlı oyunu çerçevesinde 'Dramatik Çocuk' kavramı incelenecektir. Oyun yazarı tarafından öne sürülen söz konusu kavram, bir birey olarak çocukların yetişkinler tarafından yapılandırılan toplumda kendi içinde ve çevresiyle yaşadığı çatışmaları ve bunun olası sonuçlarını ortaya koyan bir süreç olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Oyunun ana karakteri olan Öğrenci'nin okul ve orduda aldığı eğitim süresince edindiği deneyimler aracılığıyla kurgulanan bu süreç, günümüz dünyasında çocukların kendilerini gerçekleştiremedikleri ortamlarda yalnızlaştırılma, ötekileştirilme ve sonunda şiddet eylemlerinin tarafı olma

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durumlarını irdelemektedir. Yetişkinlerin duyarsız ve ikiyüzlü tutumlarını yansıtan oyun yazarı, geleceğin yetişkinlerinin edilgenleştirilmesini ve dolayısıyla tek taraflı uzlaşının egemen olduğu bir düzenin parçası haline getirilmesini eleştirir. Sorumluluklarını yerine getirmede başarısız olan yetişkinlere rağmen oyun yazarı, gelecek için umutsuz bir ileti sunmaktan kaçınmaktadır. Oyunun sonunda Öğrenci, artık bir yetişkin olarak kendine ait yeni bir dil ve insanlığın anlamının sürdürülebileceği bir düzen yaratma gerekliliğini yansıtır. Bu çalışmada söz konusu yaratım sürecinin oyun yazarı tarafından kavramlaştırılan 'Dramatik Çocuk' ifadesi çerçevesinde incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: çağdaş İngiliz tiyatrosu, Edward Bond, Eleven Vests/On Bir Atlet, Dramatik Çocuk, şiddet

INTRODUCTION

Born on July 18, 1934 in Holloway, London, Edward Bond comes into prominence as one of the most controversial and prolific playwrights of post-war British theatre. With sixty plays (including adaptations and translations) up to the present, which have caused different reactions from theatre critics, audiences and researchers – i.e., provocative, shocking, creative, radical, he is regarded as the greatest living playwright of contemporary British theatre (Billingham, 2013, p.1; Coult, 1977, p.11; Nicolás, 2016, p.258; Tuailon, 2015, p.3). Translated into different languages such as Turkish, French, Spanish and German, his plays were staged by prominent theatre institutions in more than sixty countries.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Bond's disappointment in British theatre¹, which caused his plays to be no longer staged in mainstream theatre centers in London (Saunders, 2004), was transformed into passion and enthusiasm for drama for children and youth (Davis, 2005, p.xvii). Since 1995, Bond has brought children both as characters and spectators to the focus of his plays. The plays, which are also described as "Theatre in Education (TiE) rather than theatre for children or young people" (Nicholson, 2009, p.56) by the playwright, have been staged by regional or local theatre groups such as Big Brum Theatre in Education group and they reflect the playwright's constant thoughts and attempts on the true meaning of drama (Nicholson, 2003, p.10).

The rationale of the playwright's relationship with TiE since the 1990s dates back to the Second World War (Cooper, 2005, p.49). Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker, and Peter Nicholls; Bond's childhood was "marked by direct war experience" (Coult, 2005, p.14). When the air raids began in 1940, the playwright had to leave his family in London and move to Cornwall and then to Elly where his grandfather lived (Parlak, 2018, p.305). The devastation and trauma of the large-scale violence within this period – the playwright initially found exciting, narrative and even heroic, peculiar to children (Coult, 1977, pp. 11-12) – revealed impressive imageries in creative plays written for children (Takkaç & Biçer, 2009, p.168). The playwright reveals the hidden narratives

¹ According to the playwright, British theatre has lost its beneficial, social and creative function (as cited in Hutchinson, 2016, parag.4). Theatre, which is under the corrupting influence of the market economy, is related with entertainment and commercial attitude and is devoid of seriousness, rather than being the trigger of social change (Bond, 2013, parag.1).

and experiences of ordinary people from the perspective of child characters, actors, or audience by combining art with the innocent imaginative power of children (Coult, 1977, p.11).

While the Second World War “aroused writing instinct in him” (Trussler, 1976, p.4), the short-term formal education experience that began under the influence of the war also stimulated the playwright’s writing impulse and was influential in writing plays for children that reflect their original and creative worlds. Returning to London immediately after the war, the playwright began studying at Crouch End Secondary Modern School. His formal education ended at the age of fifteen, as he was not allowed to attend the 11+ Exam after being “not considered academically able enough” (Billingham, p.3). Referring to war as a kind of education in itself (as cited in Mulligan, 1993, para. 5), the playwright considers the teaching of his time as a necessary “distraction and reassurance” (Bond, 2005, p.3) for children whom he defines as “the defenseless creatures at the bottom of the violence pyramid” (as cited in Biçer, 2008, p.30). Bond sees school life as a problem that “organizes children into some sort of passive obedience” (as cited in Trussler, p.5) and underlines that “you are ruined once you let them send you to grammar school and university” (as cited in Hay & Roberts, p.7). According to Bond, the most realistic and inspiring experience of his school life is his first encounter with the theatre through a school visit. “The first thing that made sense of his life for him” (p.7) is the play – Macbeth – staged by actor/director Donald Wolfit at the Bedford Theatre in Camden. Desiring to have “more teachers like Macbeth” (Bond, 2005, p.4), Bond encapsulates this art experience as “the sum total of his school life” (Trussler, p.5).

Bond’s awareness raising theatre experience during the war ensured TiE a respective proponent. The playwright, who play an active role in the devising process of TiE (Bond, 2015a, p.50), gave a new direction to TiE programs by preparing instructive notes revealing his distinctive drama approach, experiencing them in rehearsals or workshops and then putting them in practice by means of performances. Bond, who published articles in journals such as Theatre and Education Journal and SCYPT Journal to which drama theorists such as D. Heathcote and G. Bolton contributed, and who attended to conferences organized by SCYPT and NATD [1989, 1999, 2004] is leading the sustainability of TiE in the 2000s (Davis, 2007, p.93).

‘DRAMATIC CHILD’

Edward Bond’s theoretical considerations on young people in the prefaces, letters, and personal notes of his early plays have become evident with Big Brum plays written especially for young audience/performers (as cited in Ada & Parlak, 2020, p.35). According to Bond (2000), children, who are the origin of drama, are not born as ‘human’. Nor are they primitive people or animals. This is because animals and other primates solve their problems by relying on their instincts. They reason with the questions of what and when. They do not question the reason by only making choices about the realities (pp. 14, 113).

Bond argues that humanity, which is a process that needs to be learned by children, becomes meaningful with the trigger of imagination that requires a self-creative action (Nicholson, 2003, p.13). “Neonate (newborn children) does not know that it is in the world; it thinks that it is the

world" (Bond, 2011, p.xiii). This universal selfishness does not comprise the concepts of space and time. Accordingly, there is no before and after. The infinite, universal but unilateral relationship between mind, body, and the world has no window to the real world (p.xiv). Children in this closed world encounter 'things' such as table, food, mother, father, door, and later, school (Bond, 2000, p.136). On the other hand, there is nothing in their world, or in other words in their mind. They do not have a relationship between these things, and/or do not have statistics or law books with which they can relate (p.136). Contrary to adults, children's first duty is to interpret the world and make sense of the things around them since there is no escape. (Bond, 2011, p.xiv). They use their imagination to come to terms with the world. Through imagination, they question those around them and prepare their maps [their relationship with themselves and environment] by attributing imaginary meanings. Before the real world, they create their world with their radical innocence (Bond, 2000, p.56).

Bond defines radical innocence as the state in which children discover and make sense of the world. The radical innocence is children's "right to exist and the desire to be at home" (Bond, 2009, p.70). Children, who have a survival instinct, create a world where they can meet their basic needs such as nutrition and emotional security and know how to preserve them (Bond, 1994a, p.ix). Within that particular period, which is unique to human nature, children create values, acquire responsibilities, and thus acting with a disposition for justice with what they have. Thereafter, the awareness of justice becomes a desire to transform the world into a place of peace and equity shared by everyone (Bond, 2004, p.25). The desire for justice, which is not a psychological requirement and/or an idealistic expectation (Allen & Handley, 2017, p.309), is an existential imperative of humanity that begins in childhood (Allen, 2007, p.116). Children born with an innate sense of justice instinctively claim to preserve the need for justice (Bond, 2000, p.142).

Afterwards, children discover an outer world different from their own which was built with their imagination and sense of justice. In this divergent environment, which can be described as the social or adult world, they develop relationships with family, society, and authority in a broader sense. However, this complex and industrialized world is structured by adults (Bond, 2000, p.6). Against the values children create themselves, there is the technology used by capitalism for the benefit of a certain minority, truths maintained by an economic system, or as Edward Bond puts it, political lies (Stuart, 1998, p.xii). Therefore, the adult world is unfair. Children and their imagination and/or the world of which they are a part come face to face with the fictionalized realities of adults (Bond, 1998b, p.24).

Bond (1998b) underlines that there are initiation ceremonies that prepare the ground for the transition of children to the world of adults in simple social forms such as hunting and agricultural societies. The map that children created in their minds is applied to the real world in these societies (Bond, 1998b, p.60). The social acceptance of children in modern society is achieved through the corruption of their radical innocence. Bond emphasizes that children cannot leave their maps, selves, and the world they have created behind when they grow up, (p.53). Through the values created in their childhood, they constantly question the realities and seek new answers about society. Society does not reject the narratives created during childhood but changes their purposes

by creating new contexts (Bond, 2000, p.123). Society does not reply to children's questions about the adult world but explains the notions behind the reality that perpetuate the distorted sense of justice [corruption] of the social order and uses transcendentalism for this (p.123).

Transcendentalism is the hidden force that tries to control us all (Davis 2007, p.96). Transcendentalism, which includes elements such as the devil, spirit, resurrection, reincarnation, ghost, miracle, telepathy, superstition, patriotism, nationalism, obedience, punishment, and discipline (Bond, 2000, p.127), allows society to lead children by threatening or seducing them. In general, the elements that can be brought together under inclusive concepts such as religion and ideology dominate children through family, education, television, film, or religious institutions. These elements convey the traditions, habits, skills, and beliefs of the society and fulfill an instrumental function. To be more precise, they perplex children, hinder their imagination, and prevent them from questioning themselves (Davis, 2007, p.96) in support of social benefit (Bond, 2009, p.74).

Bond underlines that social reality is found neither in children's world nor in distorted values under the rule of a certain minority. Social reality takes place in the gap between both concepts; in other words, imagination and reason, society and self or children and the outside world (Bond, 2000, p.181; Bond, 1996, p.58). This gap, which expresses more than absence, is the quest for justice, which is the most fundamental activity of children, and this quest is realized through drama (Bond, 2011, p.xviii). The drama that bridges the blank space between both worlds is reality itself and represents the human journey that restores children's radical innocence. Reflecting contradictions and dilemmas, it encourages the children to act responsibly, thus defining themselves in free space.

Drama is an inherent part of the innate child (Bond, 1998b, p.6). In fact, children's minds have drama-related qualities which cannot be improved afterwards (p.6). Children map their world with drama (Bond, 1996, p.58). They interpret the world via anthropomorphism. For children, trees talk, storms are angry, chairs are mischievous, toys are alive, and animals drive vehicles. Everything around them comes alive and gains value with the imagination. By playing games, they clarify the world that they do not understand on their own. They create a cause-effect relationship in variable conditions and manage to remain consistent by associating images such as a car or a dog on any piece of wood (Bond, 2000, pp. 119-121).

Children need a humanizing education to sustain their play-based inner effort during the transition to the adult world. Until a few hundred years ago, this process was supported by widespread cultural events with elements of drama such as folk or church festivals, pantomime, cultural traditions, and rituals (Bond, 2000, p.56). Drama was the basis of education and cultural values. It was a democratic responsibility that associated with children to their place in the world or society. For them to be conscious of non-political freedom, children should be educated in a democratic way and the basis of democratic education should be drama instead of pure discipline, love, or knowledge (Bond, 1997a, p.87, 93; Bond, 1998b, p.34). This is why the ancient Greeks built the first theatre:

The Greeks were the first democracy not because they founded a public legislature but because they founded drama. ... They created drama to find justice. Their drama used the means ... to create humanness on the boundary between society and self, between social self and its 'opposite'. Because the Greeks were collectively responsible for the burden of democracy they locked with unprecedented closeness at the extremes of the human paradox. Their theatre ... created the basis of all future drama. Our civilization is based on it (Bond, 2011, p.xxii).

Playwright (2011) claims that drama-based cultural education that came to the fore in the Ancient Greek period could not last longer (p.xxii). In the complexity of today's society, the modern education system has broken its ties with traditional culture and has become a part of a certain system in parallel with economic and/or technological developments (Bond, 1997a, p.91). Children are educated to adapt to a certain authority rather than being a specific authority in formal education at an early age (Bond, 1998b, p.1). Theatre, on the other hand, is exploited commercially, similar to educational institutions, and is used as a means of control and oppression for the society in search of a human image. National theatre institutions have lost their emancipatory quality and have assumed a discriminatory responsibility to a certain class (Bond, 2009, pp. 75-76).

The necessity of reviving education and theatre, which experienced a cultural and social break, brought out Theatre in Education (TiE) in the twentieth century (Bond, 1998, p.114). Theatre in Education, "which was not created by coincidence" (Bond, 2000, p.56), fulfills the most basic function of theatre and education. It offers a realistic experience by placing children, who are the first source of the cultural renewal of the society, at the center of the dramatic activity. It functions as a window opening from children's world to the outside world, allowing children to discover themselves irrespective of environmental factors and at the same time to directly recognize society (Bond, 1994b, p.36).

Theatre in Education, which the playwright defines as "the most valuable cultural institution" (Bond, 2000, p.58), does not take place as a transcendental element in children's social life (pp. 146-169). It has an educational and dramatic quality, but it does not teach right and/or wrong or defend and/or reject a certain value (Bond, 1998a, p.118; Lane, 2010, p.140). It does not provide an escape from the reality of the outside world for children (Nicholson, 2003, p.14) by offering ready-made solutions. Instead, it enables children to take on responsibilities by creating an ethical and free space. By transforming real values into multi-faceted human narratives, it makes the dramatic process unique and ensures the sustainability of the sense of justice. By offering a cultural, educational, and aesthetic creative alternative to the injustices most of which turn into acts of violence in the world, "it helps children to explore the creation of a different model of social interaction" (Nicolás, p.259) today and in the future. Theatre in Education, which transforms the search for humanity into a participatory process, supports the mutual share of values and beliefs (Nicholson, 2003, p.14).

ELEVEN VESTS

Big Brum Theatre in Education group first staged *Eleven Vests* in the Midlands region of England on October 7, 1997 and then on the national theatre stages. The play – seven scenes for

seven characters – can be staged with three actor/teachers in accordance with the conditions of the Big Brum Theatre in Education group. Edward Bond reflects the student [youth] and military [adulthood] years of the same character [Student] in two different fictionalized worlds. The playwright argues the protagonist's experiences with authority, based on daily events, within the framework of violence and responsibility in today's world.

Bond, who "presents familiar thematic territory" (Billingham, p.113) for the audience in his plays, brings the characters together in Head's office in the first scene of the play. 'Student', the protagonist of the play, is accused of damaging a book belonging to the library by 'Head' (The School Principal). Student, who is alleged to have randomly cut the book with a knife although it is not clearly stated in the play, neither denies nor accepts the accusations against him. Despite the absence of any witnesses, he remains silent against the absolute judgment of Head. Nevertheless, the silence creates a space where pressure can be put on Student (Busby, 2013, p.252) and thereby increasing the accusations of Head. Head, who accepts Student's silence as a kind of confession, transforms his long and uninterrupted speech into fierce and threatening statements, which can also be described as verbal violence:

Head: Why? D'you know why? What did you gain by it? Answer me. ... I didn't see you do it. No one did. I accuse you because I know none of my other pupils would do it. It has your trademark all over it. And you did it on your own. You couldn't involve anyone else. The others wouldn't be so stupid. ... You know you wouldn't get away with this. Why did you do it? I'd like an explanation – or at least an excuse. Take your time. I can wait. ... D'you want to be expelled? ... Pick up the book and tell me why you vandalized it. ... I can't spare you any more time. ... I shall write to your parents. If you commit any further nuisance you will be expelled. This is the final warning (Bond, 1997b, pp. 3-5).

According to Cooper (2005), Student's individual act of harming is an attempt to attack not only school rules and regulations but also authority in a broader sense. Head is the literary representative of the authority as well as the institution he is in charge. Head's monologue, and also the play's beginning and continuation with the question of 'why', inquire disregarding the values of authority (p.59). Head, who states that he doesn't "like ... exercising his power" (Bond, 1997b, p.4), offers the student to apologize and pay for the book in installments. Under Head's seemingly mutual empathy and communication effort, there is the necessity of recognizing the power of authority. Head does not want to feel shame in front of his superiors when the events are heard. He acts with 'ideological madness' and strives to adhere to the values of a corrupt social hierarchy that is consistent within itself (Bond, 2000, p.139). Herewith, Bond emphasizes that this hierarchy of power in the play also has a historical source:

In the medieval age there was a model of the universe called 'the great chain of being'. God was at the top. After Him, the archangels and angels. Then the saints and the Blessed. Below, the Pope. Then the cardinals, priests ... Then emperors and kings ... All life was chained together as tightly as the slave was chained to his master. ... Below God each link was joined to the one above and the one below not just by practical necessity but also by moral obligation. ... We have replaced the great chain of being by the great net of being. The net is democratic. ... In a democracy God cannot define the meaning of being human. In a democracy the voice of authority is the voice of people. Then why do

the people define humanness as 'living in injustice'? Injustice destroys social meaning. This corrupts all action and society falls into misery. ... The problem is that people cannot see the problem (Bond, 2006, pp. i-ii).

The unilateral reconciliation ensured by Head owing to his social privilege does not last long in the play. Student and Head are confronted with another act of violence. The jacket of the 'Other Student' in the cloakroom at school is damaged for no reason. Disturbed by the direction of violence to a random student at the school, Head is confident that this attempt is closely connected with the previous event. The book and jacket are damaged by the same crime weapon. Student continues to challenge the authority by cutting the school crest on the jacket. As to Head, Student who turns the school into a playground where he fulfills his own will should be alienated from everyone. For this reason, Student, who remains silent during this continual power relations, is expelled from the school, where he does not receive the necessary concern outside Head's office (Bond, 1997b, pp. 5-9).

Head, who enables the necessary order in the school for the students, meets Student again after three months. After leaving the school, Student, who isolates himself from his family and society as desired (Bond, 1997b, p.12), suddenly appears at the entrance of the school while Other Student is leaving the school. It is not clear why Student, who is declared missing in the newspapers, returns to where he should belong (Cooper, p.59), but his presence here is enough to anger Head. Despite the warnings of Other Student, he maintains his aggressive attitude towards Student who listens to him in silence. Taking a knife out of his pocket, Student stabs Head who considers it stupid to return by stating that he will never let him into the school (Bond, 1997b, pp. 10-15). The scene, where the focus of the violent act shifts from individual or institutional objects to people, bears the traces of a real event that aroused discomfort in British society in 1995:

The real event happened in a catholic school in Kilburn. So far as I remember, the headmaster intervened in a quarrel between pupils involving a knife – he got stabbed and he died. ... Here, it was a figure of authority, so I used the incident to examine the working of authority, which is the play's subject. ... But I remember from a picture I saw that he had in his office a large image of a very graphic and aggressive Crucifixion. It is a very odd image of violence to be put where young people see it constantly. I also remember his wife not saying love your neighbour and so on, but only asking for the penal apparatus to punish the boy. In these two stories, there was absolutely no understanding for the children at all (Bond, 2015a, p.56).

Bond does not blame or target any party of neither real nor fictional act of violence that results in death. What matters is not the people/characters, but the situations that the people/characters have to face (Bond, 2001, p.17). In the play, Head's effort to keep Student away from the school despite the social expectations is consistent with the corrupt adult world that does not accept the questioning of authority. For this reason, Head is not actually guilty although he displays a provocative attitude towards Student who takes out a knife from his pocket just to intimidate him. His verbal and physical actions cannot be individualized and can be justified considering his situation (Nicholson, 2003, p.18). This personal/social conflict presented by Head to the audience also manifests itself in his efforts to create a dialogue with Student:

Head: ... When you entered this school with your intake I had hopes for all of you. I didn't make the world what it is. I hoped I could help you and the others to survive in it. I even hoped that when the time came for you to leave some of you would go out make it a better place. That's why I became a teacher. There! – I confessed something to you about my life (Bond, 1997b, p.4).

Bond (1997c) signifies that individual violence involving young people as victims or perpetrators in Britain stems from society's indifference towards young people (p.35). Child characters in his plays are often on the verge of adulthood and seek inner justice. The values that the adolescent characters have created with the power of imagination until now are in conflict with the rules and order presented in the real world. They struggle to maintain their own values or to create new values in the face of corrupt social consensus. This effort of young people is ignored by the society in which they are not yet considered as individuals. For this reason, young people feel lost or abandoned in the society they have just become familiar, and the loneliness rooted in wanting to create a sense of belonging brings fear and anxiety (as cited in Allen, p.127).

The playwright (1998b) gives prominence to the need for 'humane education' in getting rid of the individual's fears and concerns. Humane education creates a space for young people to experience their inevitable conflicts and necessary tensions. It helps children overcome their bewilderment and inner tension in the face of reality by allowing them to express themselves while conveying information that will enable them to survive in the real world. It improves their affective, cultural and cognitive competences and supports them to solve the problems. It creates an ethical space where everyone can share, so it enables young people to live humanely and to take on responsibilities creatively and independently (pp. 26-27).

Educational institutions known to be responsible for dealing with children in Bond's *Big Brum* plays fail to fulfill the expected function. The playwright, who often draws on his own experiences, declares that "universal education is one of the worst disasters to affect Western society since the plague" (as cited in Coult, 1977, p.53). The playwright (1998b) considers educational institutions as places where children come together to learn the facts given to them, rather than to seek answers to their questions or to make sense of the answers given. The mere discipline of many children in these physical places, where the rules determined by the authority/society are conveyed, is a barbarizing process (pp. 1-20). Education, which suppresses the power of imagination, prevents children from questioning what is happening beyond or within themselves, causing fear and anxiety to turn into panic and trauma, and then into anger and violence (Bond, 2000, p.58).

In *Eleven Vests*, Bond (2015a) reveals the desire of Student to truly express himself against the anti-social order of the school by first damaging a book belonging to the library. The book, which is not a random choice, is the source and symbol of knowledge, but it does not contain the answers Student is looking for. It conveys traditional discourses and one-sided narratives created by authority. The jacket, which was the target of the second violence attempt, bears the school's crest. By removing the coat of arms, which is a false heraldic image but with historical meaning, Student attacked the institutional and ideological status of the school as well as knowledge. The inability to understand the message intended to be conveyed by the first and then the second act of violence

has made Head the new target of the violence attempt. Student breaks his silence with the knife he throws in the garden of the school and experiences a kind of freedom by walking through the school garden gate. It is as if Student, who stabbing the school, society, and the world as a representation, radically breaks the rules, while the other students at the school - who are not yet aware of freedom - are greeted with screams of fear by the other students or demonstrations of joy among the young audience in some performances (pp. 65-67).

Bond (2015a) underlines that it is not unusual for young people to resort to violence during their orientation from imagination [individual] to degeneration [societal]. Because inequality dominates the world, acts of violence do not appear as a 'problem' either in play or in the real world. As a social situation it creates problems, but it is just one of the challenges that young people have to grow up with and know more about than adults. The acts of violence they witness in daily life always take on a new meaning, in one way or another, with the creativity of young people, in order to unleash the anger at the social indifference that first created it (pp. 56-57). This new meaning which outbursts opposing reactions causes the disciplining process, which they cannot provide through educational institutions, to be re-established in a differently through the will of society and the state:

The government knows how to deal with disaffected children when they grow up. Put them in prison and keep them there. Interestingly, in schools where the trouble starts we do the opposite: we chunk them out. Expulsion from school is a magical, shamanistic reversal of truanting. Truanting is bad, expulsion good! Shouldn't we cut out this hypocrisy and when we expel children just truck them straight off to prison? (Bond, 1998d, p.118).

Although there is a linear narrative flow, there are no prison scenes in the play where narrative gaps are created (Busby, p.256). This part of his life is left to the imagination of the audience so that a critical point of view can be developed. Facing limited opportunities to find a job after his release from prison, Student is now a recruit in the army. Joining the army is the social duty considered the most suitable for him by everyone (p.254). The process of repeated discipline in prison for Student who cannot be controlled at school will now be revealed in the army.

The education of Student to become a functional adult for society begins this time by learning how to use a rifle under the supervision of a 'Weapons Instructor.' The rifle is a crucial tool of the dominant ideology in his eyes. He proposes that TV, computers, airplanes, and even themselves would not be here today without the rifle he associates with human history. Due to Student's success, target practice turns into training to effectively kill enemies face-to-face by attaching a bayonet to the rifle (Bond, 1997b, pp. 15-19). In the tests carried out on a straw-filled sack as if he had actually encountered Enemy, Weapons Instructor exhibits a similar attitude to Head (Bond, 2015a, p.67). He barks orders at Student to kill and try harder. He utters his orders aloud and asks Student to repeat them. The language that Student tries to repeat in the scene where he keeps as quiet as possible is harsh. Such an inhumane environment based solely on killing and hate speech (Bond, 1993) is inevitably a reflection of the playwright's two-year conscription experience in Vienna:

... I then became a trained killer: I wore a uniform, I had a gun, I learned how to throw a hand grenade, how to bayonet somebody. I used a lot of that in the bayonet lesson in my play *Eleven Vests*: the screaming, the violence you have to use to cut out the enemy's guts – though the instructor would put the language into obscenities which I couldn't use as I was writing for a young audience. I also knew the camaraderie of killing: how people would support the demand to kill made on them by inventing some unity within a group. I didn't kill anyone but I was aware of it. I was faced with a new problem: 'You are now a killer. What do you think of that?' (Bond, 2015b, p.19).

The growing pressure of the Weapons Instructor is closely related to Student's background. Considering the previous experiences of Student, it is a disappointment for him that he did not show the expected success in military training. And he reveals this by stating that, despite his hints and instructions, he would have already died in battle. Weapon Instructor's point of view on Student parallels Bond's thoughts on the development of the individual. According to Bond (2000), newly created meanings, values, and narratives are not independent of previous experiences such as learning a new grammatical form. While learning a new grammatical form, the previous knowledge is not deleted, nor is the past that makes the self. The mind cannot be separated from the origins/previous experiences that compose it (pp. 116-117).

The inability of the individual to be separated from his experiences creates a new conflict in every unique experience, but the mentioned conflict arises from society, not from the expectations of Student during military training. The violence and anger shown by Student to Head gains a new meaning during military training and turned into a value that should be used for the good of society (Busby, 255). While the act of killing causes Student to lose his freedom for a certain period of time and is excluded from society, it is now a method of violence taught by society for protection. The knife used to commit a crime has turned into a bayonet, which is a war tool, and the book and jacket that are not right to be damaged have turned into a bag full of straw, which is legal to be stabbed.

Student, who has completed his military training, is faced with the first realistic war experience in a short time. Together with another 'Soldier', they have to capture the enemies waving the surrender flag in a house they watch for a certain period of time and wait until the rest of the army arrives. Realizing that the surrender flag consists of vests knotted together, Student determines from the number of vests that the number of enemies inside is ten and takes action with Soldier. While taking over the enemies without any problem in the house in the middle of nowhere, suddenly a gunshot is heard and Soldier accompanying Student falls to the ground and loses his life (Bond, 1997b, pp. 19-23).

'Enemy', who killed Soldier by shooting, hid in the tower before his friends were taken prisoner. According to Bond (2015c), he distanced himself from the reality of the outside world for a short time on the roof of the tower by isolating himself from others. He wanted to sleep and be on his own. Unlike the other characters in the play, he talks about himself directly and sincerely. Unlike the school and headquarters, which are surrounded by walls, the roof of the tower, located in the middle of a large green area, seems to reflect the mind of Enemy. While seeing the corpse of his friend around him, he also encounters a toy train and childishly communicates with the toy,

which he does not understand why it was left behind. Enemy, who turns into a boy in a soldier's uniform, surrenders after his action unaware of what is going on outside and is bayoneted by Student despite his and the captives' persuasion efforts (p.120).

Enemy and Student, who meet only once in the play, perform similar tasks (Bond, 2015a, p.68). While Enemy is alone on the roof, he fires in response to the sounds coming from outside, giving the instantaneous reaction that comes to his mind and is expected of him. Student, on the other hand, tries to kill Enemy with the bayonet of the rifle thanks to his military training. The reason for Student's anger against Enemy, who surrenders and reports that he fires as a result of misunderstanding, is not that he kills his friend, but to what he is taught (Cooper, p.59). Although the education system at school is unsuccessful, the army is successful in raising a useful individual for the society (Busby, p.264). Described as a disappointment again by Weapons Instructor, Student learns violence and gains a qualification to commit a crime legally without questioning it. He has become inhuman in order to live in the corrupt world (as cited in Mangan, 1998, p.2):

... But by succeeding personally within the system you contribute to the system's failure of society – because the system is antisocial. So you have personal success at the cost of damaging society, it is no longer possible to succeed on society's terms (i.e, be successful) and at the same time belong to a good polis. By being a good member of your society you become a bad person and in the true sense you become antisocial. If you benefit your society you do so at the cost of its members. It is not that power corrupts: in our society power is given only to the corrupt (Bond, 2001, pp. 319-320).

Student, who “killed himself in a sense” (Cooper, p.59), failed in the first attempt, although he did everything in accordance with his military training. Enemy suddenly rises from where he fell and shocks Prisoners and Student, who react to his death with shouts. Instead of trying to defend himself, he picks up his vest from the ground and begins to carefully clean the blood from the bayonet. This meaningless behavior, which is not technically the responsibility of the so-called corpse (Katafiasz, 2005, p.43), parallels Student's previous experiences. While the clutter [books, jackets, sacks full of straw] caused by Student at school and headquarters is tried to be collected during the play, it is as if Enemy wants to collect the mess he is about to leave behind without any obligation (Davis, 2007, p.97). Just as it is assumed that if Student pays for it, he will ignore the damaged book, or that nothing will be left of the verbal and sensory violence applied by Weapons Instructor by cleaning the straws scattered from the sack, Enemy cleans the clutter he caused in the eyes of the characters with his remaining strength. He wanted to create the impression that there was no war or that all this never happened (Bond, 2015a, p.69).

According to Katafiasz (2005), the eleventh vest, who should be on the stage of surrender, is, in Bond's words, an object that conveys the current human narrative to the audience. The ‘invisible object’, which is too simple to be noticed in everyday life, activates our imagination instead of alienating or closely interested in extreme emotional states in the play. It encourages the audience to seek the imagination of the protagonist, by making non-symbolic objects visible instead of asking ‘why does he do that?’ through the acts of Enemy. This situation, which the playwright describes as facing a blank canvas, provides an opportunity for us to take on responsibilities by

moving away from the ideological/social one. Although it is quite frightening to have no trace on the canvas, facing the inevitable allows us to create human values (p.43).

Bond (2015b) wants to keep the mentioned moment of humanity as long as possible by including a conversation between the characters. Student uses Head's statements directed at him to communicate with Enemy. The answers of Enemy, fabricated by the playwright and described as the language of Big Brum, cannot be understood even if it is wanted to be learned with the help of Prisoners. It causes the heavily wounded Enemy to be bayoneted again and killed by Student. Immediately after the same act of killing, which took place for the second time, Student begins to make sense of what is happening around him. The experiences he had throughout his life eventually made him think about himself and the situation he was in. He is often unable to complete the sentences he tries to form in the last scene, and now it is time to create a language in which he can live his own life as an adult and express himself. The playwright emphasizes that this is the meaning of humanity, in which the innocence of the individual is re-discovered amid acts/situations of violence created by society/ideology (pp. 24-25).

CONCLUSION

Edward Bond reveals the subjects – ignored and not adequately represented in mainstream theatres – with Big Brum plays that were staged in Birmingham schools at first and then in many different countries such as Türkiye, Hungary, etc. Bringing together the different perspectives of teachers, students, and actors with his own experiences, the playwright aims to elicit radical facts as his previous plays, even though the intended audience is children. Big Brum plays, which differ from the traditional children's theatre plays in mainstream theatres, discuss the problems that children have to face in the adult world from the perspective of children, and therefore bring into question the stereotyped and ordinary solutions.

Eleven Vests, one of the Big Brum plays, deals with the conflict between the individual values that a child has created so far and the real world. It reveals the failure of institutions – managed by adults in today's world – in their responsibilities for the adults of the future. The play presents the acts of isolation, alienation, and ultimately violence which are derived from the lack of democratic environments, which restricts free speech rights of Student who is tried to be disciplined in accordance with the social expectations by organizational structures such as school, prison, and army. Student, who cannot find any solution in the textbooks to his internal conflicts with the social order, resorts to violence to express himself against the hierarchical structure which ignores him as an individual. Violence is an unacceptable reaction in this case of unilateral consensus, and Student, who has been passivated cognitively and affectively, should now be dissociated physically from society.

Discussing the social corruption from different aspects, Edward Bond argues the hypocrisy of adult individuals towards the acts of violence in the play. Student, who was re-disciplined in prison, has now acquired a profession in which he can live in society through violence, and thus the acts of violence in the school are now legitimized against people he does not know in an unknown country. While the acts of violence, which emerged as a result of Student's ignored

expectations, and then caused him to be punished by society, is now a valid ability and appreciated value. Student, who has become a functional citizen through social institutions, does not hesitate to actualize what is expected of him in his first war experience.

Edward Bond, who conveys the conflicts between corrupt social order and individual values through child characters, avoids presenting a hopeless message for the future. Dehumanized by losing his radical innocence during his military duty, Student re-questions himself and his life after killing Enemy as expected of him. The process, which resembles a kind of cognitive and affective initiation ceremony, reveals that Student cannot exist in his individual world and also that the world of adults is not sufficient. Therefore, as an adult, Student must create a new language of his own and an order in which the meaning of humanity can be sustained.

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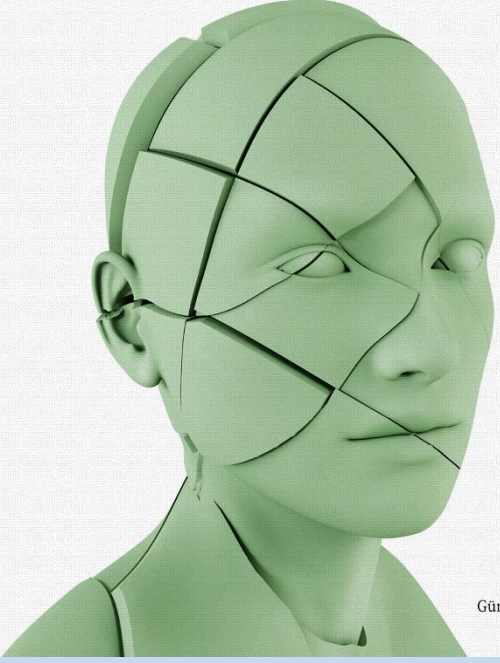
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TÜRK BİLİMKURGU EDEBİYATI VE ARKETİPLER

DR. VELİ UĞUR



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modern öykü ve yöntem



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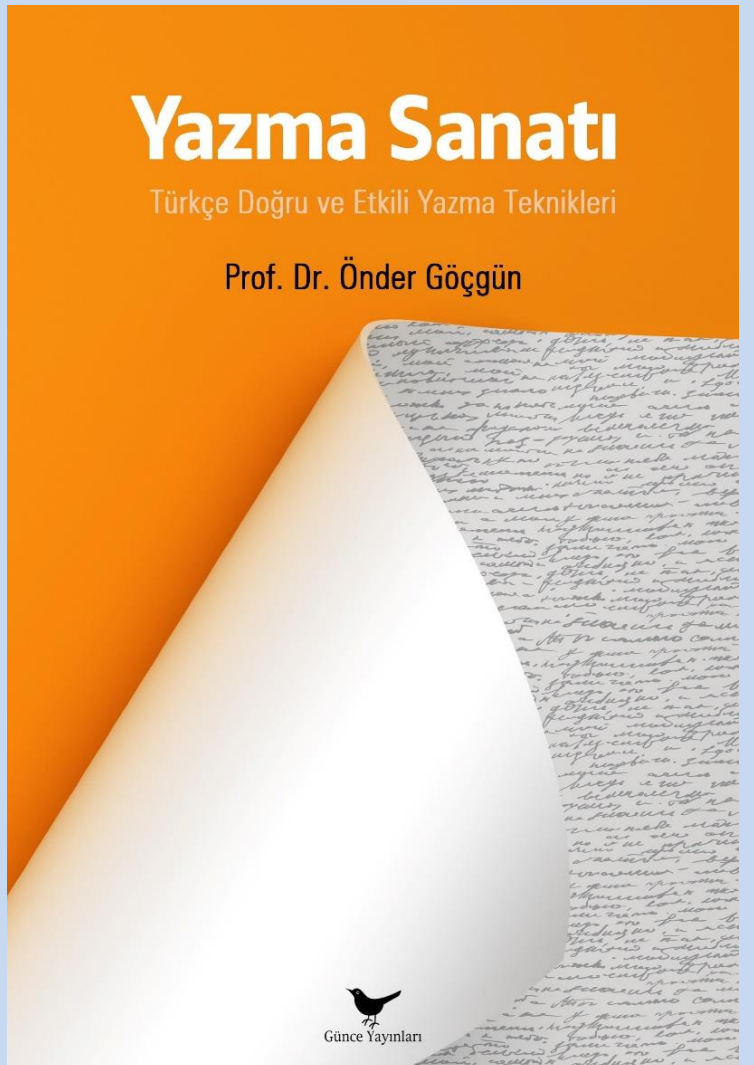


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