

Navigating Between Necrocene and Hope in Edward Bond's Dramaturgy

Susana Nicolás

Philology Department, University of Almería

Ctra Sacramento s/n, 04120 La Cañada, Almería, Spain

Email: snroman@ual.es

Abstract In recent years, there has been a claim in contemporary dramaturgy about the shift from the state of the nation to the state of the mind. The production of the biopolitical body as the original activity of sovereign power is related to understanding the nature of contemporary human beings and the society in which they live (Agamben 1998). In response to the contemporary questions of citizenship, grief and madness in society, this paper aims at exploring our exposure to death and human catastrophism in the present Capitalocene through selected plays by the recently deceased playwright Edward Bond. Coined as 'rational' theatre, his latest productions explore hope and optimism for the salvation of the human being through radical aesthetics and narratives of death. My approach in this paper delves into his concept of social madness as illustrative of the politics of society and evaluates hope as an ontological human characteristic that embraces more inclusive conceptualizations of distributive justice. Following the framework of this analysis, I will approach the literary corpus of this paper, the plays *Chair* (2006) and *Dea* (2018), from the lenses of anthropological and hope studies.

Keywords hope; Necrocene; Edward Bond; British contemporary drama.

Author **Susana Nicolás** is Professor at the Philology Department, University of Almeria (Spain). She holds a PhD in English contemporary theatre. She has published extensively on educational drama and Edward Bond's plays. Her main research areas principally delve into the connection between theatre, social education, precarity and violence.

Introduction

This research paper explores Edward Bond's rational theatre, specifically the plays *Chair* (2006) and *Dea* (2018), to address contemporary issues of citizenship, grief, and madness in the "Necrocene". The paper will analyze Bond's concept of social madness, evaluate hope as an ontological human trait related to distributive justice,

and apply frameworks from anthropology and hope studies. The proposed paper compiles strong relevance and significant novelty. It uniquely connects Edward Bond's later work with contemporary concepts, offering a fresh re-evaluation of his legacy after his recent death in 2024. The ideas explore current conversations and discussions among experts on this field about his place in theatrical history, especially in relation to his later, less-studied work. While scholars have analyzed Bond's social and political critiques, an anthropological approach explicitly examining issues like hope/unhope and the sociocultural implications of Necrocene is an unconventional and fresh perspective.

Necrocene, Hope and Oppression

In 2016, Justin McBrien proposed the recognition of Necrocene as the biogeological moment of our era through the process of becoming extinction. This extinction is explained due to the accumulation of capital and will eventually imply not only the biological extinction for species but also for cultures and languages. He argues Necrosis as the explanatory example of a cell destroyed itself through its own enzymes action. For McBrien, "the Necrocene traces the relation between the material unfolding of extinction and the history of its scientific enquiry" (118). This ontological idea of extinction clearly recalls Edward Bond's philosophy and his writings about the Third Crisis (a clear reference to a potential Third World War). Indeed, most Bondian productions are set in apocalyptic scenarios with constant war conflicts: the trilogy of the *War Plays*, *A Window*, *Chair*, *Dea*, and a long etc.

McBrien traces the origins of Necrocene after Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. This was the birth of the biosecurity state and the appropriation of a new technoutopian ideology that would justify the contradictions of savage capitalism. The Promethean belief that humans could control nature is inexorably interconnected with catastrophism. Environmental disasters, the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, the increased population and regimental governments encapsulate a deepening popular anxiety over the end of humanity through deformity and mutation: an "end" that is fundamentally tangled to the practice of modern life. The concept of the "Necrocene" emerges as a provocative term to describe an epoch in which human actions, particularly through environmental degradation and the ongoing climate crisis, lead to the collapse of ecosystems and the extinction of species. In his work, McBrien discusses the Necrocene as a potential successor to the Anthropocene, emphasizing that the Anthropocene—marked by human influence on the Earth's geology—may soon be recognized not just as a period of human-driven environmental change, but also as a period that culminates in the destruction

of life as we know it. In this sense, the Necrocene is an acknowledgment that the Anthropocene could culminate in the end of ecosystems, the death of species, and the potential collapse of civilization itself as the fabric of life unravels due to environmental devastation. This era evokes not just the demise of ecosystems but also the death of an entire way of life that was built on disregard for the natural world.

In a similar vein to McBrien, Elizabeth Kolbert acknowledged the concept of the “Sixth Extinction” in 2014 coined as the Necrocene’s convergence through the actually existing processes of extinction and necrosis under capital (in McBrien 134). She documents the accelerating mass extinction event that is currently unfolding due to human activity. Kolbert explores the deep, often irreversible impacts that human civilization has on biodiversity, and highlights the possibility that we are living through a sixth mass extinction, driven largely by climate change, habitat destruction, and other anthropogenic factors. Together, McBrien and Kolbert offer an illuminating reflection on the destructive trajectory of humanity’s environmental footprint, with the Necrocene as a dark lens through which we might view our future—one where life on Earth is irreversibly altered, and potentially erased, by the very forces we have unleashed. These works shed light on the irreversible damage that humans have inflicted on the planet, urging us to reconsider our relationship with nature and the trajectory we are on. Yet, McBrien concludes that there is hope for humans since “the human being can be decoupled from Capital. Capital is extinction. We are not” (135).

This recognition of the Necrocene brings with it both a warning and a call to action. If the Necrocene is to be avoided or mitigated, humanity must address the root causes of ecological decline: overconsumption, fossil fuel dependence, habitat destruction, and climate change. The possibility of the Necrocene serves as a distressing reminder that the time for action is now, as the planet moves ever closer to an irreversible tipping point where the loss of life may be permanent, and the Earth’s ecosystems may never recover. The Necrocene, then, is not just a theoretical period of historical significance— it is a looming future that we have the power to either prevent or exacerbate, depending on the choices we make in the present.

However, within this bleak narrative emerges a crucial question: how can hope persist in the face of such overwhelming destruction? This question is deeply explored by Katie Stockdale (2021), who examines the concept of “hope under oppression” providing a philosophical and psychological lens through which we can understand human resilience amidst collapse. Stockdale’s work delves into the possibility of hope not as a naive idealism, but as a critical means of survival and

resistance in oppressive or dire conditions, where even in the face of imminent destruction, individuals and communities can find ways to persevere, act, and seek transformation. In times of overwhelming crisis, whether personal, political, or ecological, hope is not simply a waiting for external change or a better future, but a conscious, self-determined act that sustains individuals and communities. This hope is not escapist but grounded in a profound understanding of the suffering and destruction surrounding us.

For Stockdale, hope under oppression becomes a survival mechanism, a means of engaging with and resisting the forces that seek to crush both human dignity and agency. In the face of extreme adversity, whether that be political repression, ecological collapse, or social injustice, Stockdale posits that hope enables individuals to continue to resist and create possibilities for change, even when the immediate circumstances seem insurmountable. Her perspective is shaped by the acknowledgment that, while oppressive systems may seem all-encompassing, they are not invincible. Hope becomes a way of maintaining human agency, a refusal to be fully defined or defeated by oppressive forces. Hope in oppressive environments, as Stockdale envisions it, also becomes a powerful tool for solidarity. In contexts of collective struggle—whether for environmental justice, social equity, or the fight against authoritarian regimes—hope fosters a sense of shared purpose and interconnection. Rather than simply being an individual pursuit, hope in such contexts is deeply communal, emerging through collective action, mutual support, and the creation of spaces where alternative futures can be imagined and acted upon. In the case of the Necrocene, hope may emerge from collaborative efforts to resist the forces driving ecological collapse, to protect vulnerable communities, and to rebuild systems that are more attuned to sustainability, justice, and intergenerational responsibility. In this sense, Stockdale presents hope not as a submissive force waiting for circumstances to change, but as an active, transformative power that emerges in response to and in defiance of oppression. This understanding of hope is vital not only for individual survival, but for collective action in addressing the environmental and social crises that threaten the future of both human society and the planet.

Edward Bond and Social Madness

Edward Bond is a British playwright and dramatist renowned for his provocative and often challenging works that explore the darker aspects of human nature, social injustice, and the consequences of violence. Born in 1934, Bond's plays gained significant recognition in the 1960s and 1970s for their resolute portrayals

of societal and personal breakdown. Bond's early works, such as *Saved* (1965), shocked audiences with their graphic depictions of brutality, while also offering a critical commentary on the disintegration of social values and the alienation of individuals in modern society. His plays are often marked by a brutal realism, addressing themes such as the abuse of power, the destructiveness of violence, and the collapse of moral and social structures.

Throughout his career, Bond's works have pushed the boundaries of theatre, challenging traditional theatrical conventions and provoking debate on the role of art in confronting societal issues. His writing is deeply influenced by his interest in political theory, ethics, and the human condition, making his plays not only a critique of contemporary society but also a call for social change. Beyond just portraying the violence and despair in society, Bond is concerned with offering a vision of hope and the potential for redemption, even in the face of extreme adversity.

One of Bond's most important contributions to theatre is his exploration of what he calls "social madness"—the idea that societies often function under a kind of collective madness driven by destructive systems of power, which contribute to the oppression and dehumanization of individuals. Bond uses his plays to demonstrate how oppressive systems of violence, inequality, and corruption shape individuals' lives and perceptions, ultimately making them complicit in the harm they suffer. His exploration of "social madness" provides a poignant critique of contemporary society's structures, revealing the destructive forces of social oppression and institutional failure. Bond argues that societal systems—dominated by violence, inequality, and systemic breakdown—create a state of "madness" where individuals, dehumanized by these forces, are driven to destructive and irrational behaviors. This concept, explored in his works, is accurately relevant to the discussions surrounding the Necrocene, as it underscores how ecological collapse and the resulting societal destabilization are often driven by deeply entrenched social and political structures that perpetuate exploitation and disregard for life. Bond's critique suggests that humanity, rather than responding with wisdom and care to the crises at hand, may continue to exacerbate the conditions leading to societal and ecological breakdown.

Bond, like Giorgio Agamben (1998), claims that social madness originated from the advent of democracy in ancient Greece and presents effects today in the Third Crisis of society. The concept of social madness dramatizes the psychological process of the modern man/woman to survive in the present environment. Bond contrasts clinical madness—an alternative reality/world that challenges the

legitimacy of what is regarded as real—to social madness—the result by which “people who seek the rational logic of society are mad since society itself, due to its structural injustice, becomes intrinsically mad” (Chen 89). Therefore, Bond attempts to reestablish man’s bond with his self by criticizing the identity of society today, the Necrocene society. For him, only drama through radical experiences might demonstrate the present disassociation between mind and society and the consequent urgency of change. In Bond’s ‘Madhouse tragedies’, the spectator delves into the psyche of traumatized characters struggling for hope and survival through dramatizations of death. In fact, Bond’s plays grapple with the possibility of resistance and transformation, urging audiences to confront the ethical and moral implications of their actions within these systems.

Bond’s later production delves into post-apocalyptic settings that reflect on the collapse of both human civilization and the environment. In these plays, Bond’s characters often wrestle with the consequences of their actions, as well as the possibility of moral redemption in a world ravaged by ecological destruction and societal breakdown. His work remains deeply relevant, particularly as the world struggles with issues of climate change, political corruption, and social upheaval.

Chair and Dea: Hope in the Necrocene?

Chair was first broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 7 April 2000 and was staged at the Avignon Festival on 18 July 2006, directed by Alain Françon. Set in 2077, the play explores an austere theatricality of fear and horror, envisioning a haunting Orwellian dystopia in which security superimposes freedom. Bond fictionalizes a controlling system in which characters internalize the entire loss of sovereignty and the prohibition of all the actions activated by imagination. The unfolding plot suggests that only by confronting traumatizing structural anxiety can alternative political and ethical envisioning of freedom and justice be made possible (Chen 150). His portrayal of a fractured, morally bankrupt world aligns in many ways with the concept of the Necrocene—an era characterized by environmental decay and ecological destruction driven by human actions. Bond creates a dystopian world where the protagonists are caught in a cycle of moral and psychological degradation, emphasizing how oppressive systems of violence and exploitation erode human dignity, leading to the breakdown of social and individual consciousness.

The dark atmosphere significantly epitomizes the control of the army to the point of voluntary imprisonment. The beginning of the play shows Alice looking through the window while Billy draws pictures. Billy was abandoned and found by Alice, the mother figure of the play, who obsessively entraps him in a Bondian

“madhouse” as protection from society and its evils. Billy is always scared of being discovered by the state institutions so he cannot go out, living secluded in a permanent state of terror. No light, closed curtains and low voice appear as the natural setting of this inhuman future of perpetual alert. The interaction between the maternal figure and the adoptive son exhibits how the intersubjective relationship is conditioned by the external world of totalitarian control (Chen 143). Billy argues: “(*crying*) Why can’t I go out? I want to play in the street. You never let me do anything” (Bond, *Plays*:8 114).

This suffocating scenario responds on the structural grounds producing a narrative of Necrocene where extinction and the end of civilizations become more than plausible. Following Bond’s views, totalitarian control encapsulates a real possibility in which social madness flourishes by assuming that power decides fate and death in the life of the subject because biopower dominates the biopolitical environments (Agamben 1998). By building this prison-like condition around the idea of power, the playwright explores the instrumentalization of vulnerability under a politically induced condition. This narrative of oppression reconceptualizes the possibilities of resistance, survival and hope. As Stockdale reminds us: “Oppression can become internalized in the minds of the oppressed. So how might oppression shape what people hope for or diminish their hopes, preventing them from forming hopes for a better life and world?” (7)

In a turning point of the play, Alice abandons her safe/mad house and offers a chair to a soldier who was guarding a prisoner in the street. This unexpected act of compassion conveys a particular visibility out of the social prescriptions signifying an example of hope. The central metaphor in the play is embodied by this chair— a symbol of hope against the power structures that both oppress and dehumanize those subjected to them. The chair challenges the societal forces that force individuals to face the consequences of their own complicity in maintaining destructive systems. In the next section of the play, the Welfare Officer’s investigation deciphers all the details of the chair incident in the atmosphere of authoritarian and repressed regimes. In addressing the cultural memory of historical events of the Holocaust, the empathy of the spectator and the process onstage is considered to explore the effect of totalitarian governments (Arendt). In this scene, the investigator never manages to be a human and acts in accordance with the authority. Bond here discusses the definition and understanding of pity: “It was the kindness that frightened her” (Bond, *Plays*: 8 136).

Bond’s exploration of the destructive power of social systems ties directly into the concept of the Necrocene, where environmental collapse is inextricably linked

to the larger social, political, and economic systems that perpetuate harm. In this context, the destruction of nature is not a separate event from the destruction of social structures; rather, the two are deeply interconnected. Just as Bond's characters are entangled in the mechanisms of social oppression and violence, so too are we bound by the structures that drive climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

Yet, Bond presumes that there exists the psychic potentiality that is not completely ideologically determined. Consequently, radical innocence designates the possibility of defying the established legitimate order. That is the example of Alice and Billy who aim to survive their biological moment through a new ontology of radical actions. Thus, I address the debate about what engages with the question that hope involves an explicit or implicit acknowledgment of the deficiency of one's own intervention in bringing about the hoped-for outcome. In other words, when we hope, we recognize our limitations as agents in our capacities to affect the world (Stockdale 10). While the world in *Chair* is bleak, Bond suggests that the characters still have the possibility of change, of confronting their complicity and moving toward transformation. This glimmer of hope amid despair resonates with the notion that, even in the face of the Necrocene, there is room for resistance, rebuilding, and a reimagining of how humanity might act differently to avert ecological and social collapse. The possibility of change is not presented as easy or guaranteed, but it is a call to action, urging individuals and societies to take responsibility for the world they have created and to work towards a more just and sustainable future. Bond's characters in *Chair* firmly *hope* that there exists a possibility of navigating the unjust and oppressed world in which they live although the end of the play will unfold uncertain *unhopeful* consequences such as Alice's suicide and Billy's assassination by the police.

Dea, the last production of Edward Bond alive, was premiered at Sutton Theatre in 2016 and should be acknowledged as one of the most extreme examples of violent theatre. Set in a post-apocalyptic world, *Dea* portrays a society that has been ravaged by environmental collapse and societal breakdown, much like the envisioned future of the Necrocene. In this world, the characters are forced to confront the dire consequences of human actions—violence, exploitation, and disregard for the natural world—that have led to widespread human collapse. Bond's characters, living in the aftermath of this destruction, cope with the haunting realities of survival, loss, and the profound moral dilemmas brought about by their complicity in the destruction of the environment. Through three acts, Bond construes a house, an asylum, a tent and a caravan as frameworks of war in the inside-outside

dynamics of a micro-cosmic madhouse. By revisiting the classical Medea, the play begins with Dea killing her twins before being raped by her husband Johnson. It then advances sixteen years after Dea's return from a mental asylum. She meets her son Oliver, product of her rape and will kill both her ex-husband and Oliver. Later, Act two takes place in a war zone similar to Iraq where now the completely insane Dea will experience innumerable violent events convinced that one of her dead twins is the lead of the regiment, John. Wars in *Dea* unfold the argument of the playwright that they portray the condition of both modern/mad man/woman and the insane society.

At the heart of the play is the character of Dea, a figure who symbolizes the potential for hope and redemption in a world that seems completely destroyed. In the aftermath of a deadly world, Dea's role as a potential *savior* offers a glimpse into the possibility of renewal, even amidst profound despair. Her evolution along the play suggests that, even in a world where ecosystems have been annihilated and human values are on the brink of collapse, the seeds of hope and renewal can still emerge. Dea is not merely a bleak depiction of a destroyed world; she mainly addresses the potential for transformation and the resilience of the human spirit. Her figure embodies the possibility of hope as an active, defiant force. Stockdale's understanding of hope—one that is forged in the crucible of oppression, not through passive optimism but as an active choice to resist and rebuild—is evident in the narrative portrayal of Dea. Despite the overwhelming events, the character of Dea suggests that hope is not lost, even in a world that seems to have reached its breaking point. In Stockdale's terms (2021), hope becomes a tool for survival, for finding meaning and purpose even when external conditions appear hopeless.

Inspired by an irrational hope, the protagonist keeps the head of his son until the end of the play imagining that it is alive. In this regard, the main conflict posits that desiring an outcome and believing that it is possible that the outcome will obtain is compatible with different degrees of hope, and even despair (Stockdale 14). As Peter Goldie examines, "When an emotion is directed toward its object, then this is a sort of feeling toward the object" (96); thus, hope is not just a cognitive state but also affective in character. Dea, then, seems to correlate her complex mental state with her feelings and emotions by validating analogously sense perception and mental discernment. The duality sanity/madness configures the social and philosophical background of the play. Bond points out that "theatre is the madhouse where the audience go to find their sanity, just as madmen go mad in reality to find theirs" (Bond, *The Hidden Plot* 95). Bond's description of the world as 'a bigger madhouse', a constant war inside and outside, dramatizes a connection

between the holocausts, the state authorized violence in the play and politics. Dea embodies a figure reduced to physical existence—a “homo sacer” in front of the soldiers wandering in a war zone just turned into a space where “materialization of the state of exception” is clearly dominant (Agamben 174).

This haunting Necrocene suggests a future defined by human collapse and the erosion of the systems that sustain life, but it also challenges us to reconsider our relationship with the planet and each other. Bond's Dea offers a way forward—a vision that, while rooted in the harsh realities of collapse, still holds out the possibility of hope and awareness. The presence of hope in the military world of Dea serves as a reminder that even in the most oppressive conditions, individuals and communities can resist, transform, and rebuild. Through Dea, Bond suggests that humanity's potential to face its darkest hour is not defined solely by destruction, but by the willingness to engage with the world, to confront its flaws, and to forge new paths in the face of systemic failure.

Dea's physical spaces explore irrational/rational environments. Her true self emerges when she kills her babies, breaking her chains, in order to become a liberated subject woman (Kaya 79). Dea's ontological interior war disrupts Johnson's habitual military life. She does not reveal an ethical conviction of acting wrong. In fact, she commits the crime for the sake of saving humanity by killing her babies intentionally rejecting the idea of being clinically mad: “I thought I was mad till I was put in a madhouse. Now I know. I'm not mad” (Bond, *Plays: 10* 19). In her mind, the act of killing exhibits liberation since society (Johnson) labels people as mad minimising the specific reasons and circumstances behind. In light of the ubiquity of morality and the significance of hope to moral life, Bond questions how moral considerations affect the value of our hopes. Is it morally acceptable to base hope in the future through murdering? The audience is confronted here with the problematization of moral constraints on resistance over opposition. Not only are moral reasons decisive in overriding other considerations about what agents should do, but they are also decisive in determining the perception we hold about the characters and their actions. Hope is not a denial of the harsh realities of the present but an act of resistance against the forces that drive destruction. In *Dea*, the character's journey toward healing and transformation reflects the resilience of the human spirit and the potential for collective action, even when the larger systems seem beyond repair.

Parts Two and Three intentionally present a more ambiguous setting, where themes of totalitarianism, war zones, and military madness are explored. In this spectral Necrocene, dominated by Agambian concepts of wasted lives, the soldiers

are unable to maintain their humanity. The regiments follow institutional orders blindly, detached from reason or compassion, even when given the chance to act independently. In the play's tragic conclusion, Cliff, a soldier in the regiment, kills Dea, sealing her fate and exacerbating her trauma. The central moral of the play is encapsulated by Cliff's reworking of Hamlet's famous aphorism: "To be sane or not to be sane, that's the question. And if not, then be mad and all that follows" (Bond, *Plays: 10* 78). This line underscores the theme that in a world where reason and humanity are forsaken, sanity itself becomes questionable, and madness is an inevitable consequence of the system's inhumanity.

The "slow death"¹ of Dea challenges the legitimacy of what is regarded as real or moral. In physical and mental pain, the female character struggles to relieve her soul in an animalistic setting with constant references to child's experiences in war and sexual abuses. "Death's nothing for the mad!" (Bond, *Plays: 10* 85), she asserts, revealing the Bondian link between the state of the mind and the state of society. By connecting with voices of suffering, subjects can revise the norms that normatively prescribe both *who* can be mourned and *how* those others can be mourned (Butler; McIvor). Dea's character being a killer of babies directly transgresses the mournable subject for the spectator but Bond transcends the enclosed structure of madness and psychosis through the process of deconstructive self-dramatizing.

Conclusions

Chair (2006) and *Dea* (2018) propose apocalyptic realities revealing the destruction of globalization, further establishing a symbiosis between space and power in endless war scenarios. It is the claim of this paper that a new form of "madhouse" arises from the microcosm of the plays to a broader condition of the actual insane society. On the one hand, *Chair* presents a suffocating house atmosphere in which Alice entraps the mentally disabled Billy as an extreme example of overprotection. Along the play, Bond's imperative for freedom is posited in the acts of resilience and hope powerfully depicted by the characters. Bond's critique of systems of violence and oppression, along with his exploration of human suffering and potential redemption, serves as both a warning and a call to action in the face of environmental destruction. By highlighting the destructive consequences of our actions, *Chair* challenges us to confront our own complicity and to recognize that the future of the planet—and humanity itself—depends on our ability to break free from the cycles of exploitation and begin anew. On the other hand, *Dea* is initiated

1 I am alluding here to the concept of 'slow violence' developed by Richard Nixon in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011). Harvard UP.

with the slaughtering of her twins before being raped. Exploring the concept of war everywhere, this contemporary Medea will eventually undergo a process of madness in which extremity and spiral of death integrate the questions debated in the play.

Both texts encapsulate the concept of Necrocene in their reframing of the expansion of capitalism through the process of becoming extinction. The accumulative deaths in Bond's dramaturgy coexist with the potential imaginative of hope urging for transformative actions and mobilizing people. Therefore, my conclusions put forward that ethico-political and ambivalent features of hope might be identified in the literary texts explored.

These dramatic texts expose the extreme forms of resistance to oppression that fall under the binary survival or death and reveals the complex nature of hope. By triggering concepts such as social madness, the Necrocene and hope, I attempt to draw attention to the potential of Bondian drama as productive to reflect on the critique of contemporary society through narratological textualities that explore deeper insight about contesting, challenging or visualizing realities of the 21st century. It is my view that *Chair* and *Dea* enact narratives of death and war while offering glimpses of hope from a wider spectrum. The performance of 'madhouses' and the moral ambivalence of the characters contribute to creating a pervasive sense of alternative hope/despair. The dramatic genre, and particularly Bondian drama, is more prone to develop issues of acknowledgement around the prospective Necrocene while alternatively creating spaces for reflective hope.

Conclusively, McBrien's and Kolbert's research on the ongoing mass extinction, Stockdale's exploration of hope under oppression, and Bond's analysis of social madness provide a multifaceted perspective on our contemporary condition. They challenge us to think critically about how we navigate the future in the face of accelerating ecological crises, and whether hope can function as a transformative force even when the systems of power are failing. Bond's dramaturgy compels us to confront the destructive nature of the very systems that contribute to ecological and social collapse, raising the question of whether true hope can arise from breaking free from these systems and forging new paths of social justice and human values. His narrative illuminates a path forward in which, despite the Necrocene's pending shadow, hope remains a tool for both survival and transformative change in the fight against ecological and societal oppression.

Through his work, Edward Bond remains an influential and controversial figure in contemporary theatre, offering a challenging but ultimately hopeful vision of human potential in the face of oppression and crisis. *Chair* and *Dea* offer a powerful allegory for the challenges humanity faces in the Necrocene. The plays' portrayal

of moral decay and societal collapse provides a dark mirror for the ecological and social crises we confront today. His legacy continues to inspire discussions on the power of art to not only reflect but also shape the course of social and political change.

Funding: This work was supported by the project “Resisting the Capitalocene: Narratives of Hope in the 21st Century” PID2023-147494NB-I00 funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (Spain), the State Investigation Agency, and the FEDER funds (European Union).

Works cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. California: Stanford UP, 1998.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt, 1973.
- Bond, Edward. *The Hidden Plot: Notes on Theatre and the State*. London: Methuen, 2000.
- . *Plays: 8. Born. People. Chair. Existence. The Under Room*. London: Methuen, 2006.
- . *Plays: 10. Dea. The Testament of this Day. The Price of One. The Angry Roads. The Hungry Bowl*. London: Methuen, 2018.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009.
- Chen, Chien-Cheng. *The Later Edward Bond: Subjectivity, Dramaturgy, and Performance*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Royal Holloway, University of London, 2018.
- Goldie, Peter. “Emotion, Feeling, and Knowledge of the World.” *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions*, edited by Robert C. Solomon. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. pp. 91-106.
- Kaya, Kagan. 2023. “Edward Bond’s Theatre of Desire: *Dea*, a new Madhouse Tragedy.” *Edward Bond. Bondian Drama and Young Audience*, edited by Ugur Ada. Delaware: Vernon Press, 2023. pp. 73-95.
- Kolbert, Elizabeth. *The Sixth Extinction: an Unnatural History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014.
- McBrien, Justin. “Accumulating Extinction: Planetary Catastrophism in the Necrocene.” *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason W. Moore. US: PM Press, 2016. pp. 116-137. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/33859344/Accumulating_Extinction_Planetary_Catastrophism_in_the_Necrocene.
- McIvor, David W. “Bringing Ourselves to Grief: Judith Butler and the Politics of Mourning.” *Political Theory* vol. 40, no. 4, 2012, pp. 409-436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591712444841>.
- Nixon, Robert. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2011.
- Stockdale, Katie. *Hope under Oppression*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2021.