Review Article

"Power and Ethics: A Study of William Shakespeare's *King Lear and Macbeth*"

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Abstract: This research paper examines power and ethics in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, focusing on how the playwright portrays power dynamics and authority structures within these works. This study reveals the complexities and the impact of power on personal and political spheres. The paper explores how Shakespeare's characters represent power and ethical norms in society. We used Foucault's power theory as a framework to analyse the plays selected. The findings underscore the nuanced approach Shakespeare takes to ethics and power, offering insights into the historical context of his plays and their relevance to contemporary discussions on gender and authority. Human beings despite moral education have remain or become amoral. Such people tend to be found among certain criminal types who cannot seem to realise they have done anything wrong. They tend not to have any remorse, regret or concern for what they have done. It seems an underlying factor that the binding tie between good and bad governance lies in ethical consideration and moral judgement by those on whom power is being exercise.
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INTRODUCTION

In the early years of the new Stuart king's reign, Shakespeare wrote three plays in which questions of power and ethics are important. *King Lear* (ca. 1605-06), *Macbeth* (ca. 1605-06), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (ca. 1606-07) restore to prominence the political concerns of the English history plays of the 1590s, even as they follow the early tragedies' lead in making the individual central. Our scope is limited to *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. The late tragedies are less rich in that they lack the portrayal of the wider, living societies whose everyday life is evoked in the history plays, but this lack is balanced by the increased complexity of individual development. The history plays are in many ways closer to the realities of England at the time they were written. They note the crowd's reactions to exercises of kingship and the consequent usefulness of a common touch to anyone who wishes to reinforce a claim through popular support. Indeed, even the plays set in the Roman republic stress this aspect of rulership – an aspect that Shakespeare sets aside in the late tragedies here under consideration. There is a marked development in these plays' approach to rule, which is conceived of as essentially a very intimate experience: those who are already powerful and in close contact with the monarch are the ones being persuaded to obey. On the whole, the individual subjects of the monarch matter more than the subjects as the populace of the realm.

Power and its historical influence on a community and its people have been a prominent debate of the 20th century (Shamsie, 2016) but only Foucault solely delves into the psyche of the human subject that how changing power dynamics affect

them. Theorists like Edward Said, Michel Foucault, and Noam Chomsky have deliberated on the problem. Moreover, prominent philosophers have delved into the question of the historical materialisation of power in society in one way or the other. All of them have looked upon the past that how it materialises the future and in doing so creates certain hierarchies in society. Nonetheless, they partly analysed the past from an explicit lens of power. However, the work of Michel Foucault is central in this regard who says that it is 'Power' which shapes everything whether it is 'Truth' or 'Identity'. According to Foucault power make us who we are. There was a big change in the concept of power after he gave his concept of power, which is different from the concepts of power given at that time. For him, Power is diffused instead of coercive (Gaventa, 2003).

Foucault claims that power is inside every individual and is represented by the sovereign representation of control or dominance rather than as something which cannot be avoided. Power is present in everything and is present in everything. It also comes from everything, thus making it a free concept rather than done by any organisation (Foucault 1982). For him, power is a system of truth that is constructed by society and is keep on changing. Foucault utilised the concept of power with information, whoever so ever has information or truth, he is powerful.

From a philosophical standpoint, ethics refers to that branch of thinking in line with philosophical principles and values that characterise, align, and realign human behaviour. It sets the binding tie between right and wrong, good and evil, black and white and the universal acceptance or appeal to each of these standpoints. Ethics is guided by key moral principles such as Morality, Values, Virtues, etc. There are however different categories of ethics such as descriptive ethics, normative ethics, metaethics, etc. It most often times faces a lot of challenges such as cultural relativism, moral ambiguity, values contradictions, and power in balance. In their quest to study and write on ethics, some theoreticians came up with some ethical concepts such as Utiliterianism, deontology, vitue ethics, and care ethics. Analysing leadership power often leads to negative examples of when power has led to corruption or negative consequences. Coercive power, ruling by fear, has been used throughout history to unimaginable repercussion. In the corporate realm the two main ingredients that lead to negative outcomes are power and ethics. There are many infamous examples where charismatic leaders lead organisations, countries, or groups of eager disciples to catastrophic results. In business poor leadership can lead to unethical practices in order to cut corners or inflate earnings.

When unethical behaviour and power are used in leadership this is the type of outcome that follows. The behaviour is ego driven and usually influenced by personal gain or status. As a researcher, I have witnessed a lot of behaviours that would match this example of power leading to unethical behaviour. I had a job experience and the leadership culture in that organisation was not friendly at all. Employees were soaked in so much contempt and disdain with repeated threats becoming a daily culture. In the opening Scene of King Lear, Shakeaspeare throws light on this unethical behaviour in leadership when Lear uses threats to influence the decision of Cordelia his way and this precipitated his own catastrophe for the misuse of power. Lear in acting this way never took band not taking into consideration her ethical values based on virtue and royalty.

Ethics is invisible. It is a silent contract existing in people's sub-consciousness, governing our behaviours unwittingly. Once trespassing the bottom line, the relationships that bind people together will be broken into pieces. What is worse, the community we live in will be in a disorder. Political ethics is not only the theoretical foundation of political civilisation establishment, but also the value aim of political civilisation. The so-called political ethics is a political life of a socio-political community, including ethical regulations of its basic political structure, political system, political relationship, political behaviour and political ideal (5). Therefore, political ethics has something to do with the futuristic fate of a nation, which all citizens depend upon. It is witnessed that the evolution of politics usually accompanies the performance of the political ethics.

During the middle Ages, the Church owned the power, the Pope being the highest authority. They stood for God, delivering the will of God. Kings controlled the Kingdoms by the support of the Church. Therefore, the hierarchy was formed: God - the Church - the King. The King then was merely a symbol. Until the Renaissance, the trend began to change. Men were at the centre of attention. More and more minorities called upon the need of establishing a centralised government. Since then, the real power was endowed to King, who enforced the right on behalf of the whole country. The period of autocratic monarchy came into being then. (Zhuang, O010) At the beginning of the play, Lear excuses himself that it is time for him "to shake all cares and business from our age." Spreading the map, he set a love-test for his daughters; the rule being who expresses the most love for him could get the most proportion of land. A country consists of land, minorities, culture and government.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Shakespeare's exploration of power and ethics has garnered significant attention in scholarly circles, revealing diverse interpretations and analyses of his tragic works. In "William Shakespeare's *King Lear*: A Psychological Approach to Power Relations", Zeynep Hazal Yildiz examines gender roles and power dynamics in Shakespeare's tragedies, focusing on how the playwright portrays gender relations and authority structures within his dramatic works. By analysing selected tragedies such as Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet, and King Lear, his study reveals the complexities of gender representation and the impact of power on personal and political spheres. The paper explores how Shakespeare's characters navigate and subvert traditional gender roles, the implications of these portrayals for understanding power dynamics, and the ways in which these dynamics reflect broader societal norms. The findings underscore the nuanced approach Shakespeare takes to gender and power, offering insights into the historical context of his plays and their relevance to contemporary discussions on gender and authority.

Shakespeare's exploration of gender and power dynamics has garnered significant attention in scholarly circles, revealing diverse interpretations and analyses of his tragic works. In "Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender", Susan Snyder delves into how Shakespeare's tragedies feature female characters who challenge conventional gender roles, reflecting the playwright's engagement with the gender issues of his time. Snyder highlights how characters like Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra disrupt traditional expectations, offering a lens through which to understand Shakespeare's nuanced portrayal of gender dynamics (Snyder, 2007, pp. 45-67). This work underscores Shakespeare's ability to question and redefine gender norms through his characters' complex behaviours and ambitions.

Richard Dutton's Macbeth: A Critical Reader (2009) provides a focused analysis of Macbeth, particularly examining how Lady Macbeth's character challenges patriarchal norms and destabilises traditional gender hierarchies (Dutton, 2009, pp. 123-145). This critical study highlights how Lady Macbeth's ambition and manipulation disrupt established gender roles, contributing to the play's exploration of power dynamics. Additionally, Patricia Parker's Shakespeare from the Margins (2006) explores how Shakespeare's depiction of female characters intersects with broader social and political power structures, emphasising the playwright's critical perspective on gender dynamics and authority (Parker, 2006, pp. 56-78). These works collectively offer a comprehensive view of Shakespeare's engagement with gender and power,

reflecting the depth and complexity of his tragic narratives.

Theoretical Frame Work

The framework that will be used to analyse the plays selected is Foucault's power theory. Power theory, drawing on Michel Foucault's concepts of power and discourse, will be used to examine how authority is established, maintained, and contested in the tragedies. This approach aids in analysing how political and personal power intersects with gender, offering insights into the broader implications of power relations.

Foucault is among a few philosophers who realise that power can be a necessary, creative, and constructive force in society rather than a negative, coercive, or repressive force that compels us to act against our will. (Gaventa 3). However, Foucault disputes that power is held by individuals or organisations through episodic or sovereign acts of dominance or coercion, arguing that power is pervades society and which is in constant flux and negotiation(Foucault 63). Foucault claims that the study of power and power's functions has been suppressed or simplified throughout history due to many factors. He outlines three different approaches to understanding power. Two of them are old and antiquated, namely the state or sovereign's role and the agent's role in the economically dominating sector of society. Thus, to comprehend how power operates in contemporary cultures, Foucault proposes an alternative one, which social services developed in eighteenth-century Europe, such as prisons, schools, and mental hospitals. Their surveillance and assessment systems ceased to require force or violence as people learnt to self-discipline and act in predictable ways (Foucault 155).

Furthermore, rather than focusing just on the oppression of the powerless, Foucault investigates how power operates in the everyday interactions between cannot be obtained, seized, or acquired. In this sense, power operates and behaves more like a technique than a means of control. Additionally, he sees power ties extend to include economic, cognitive, and sexual interactions intertwined with one another. In this regard, Foucault extends that genuine parties attempt to give structure to the action of others and the others, in turn, Power rises from the bottom to the top, implying that the thorough double struggle between the powerful and powerless does not begin at the top and gradually narrows until it reaches the social body's depths (Shiner 391).

In *King Lear*, Lear as the owner and conductor of the highest authority should have represented the shared wills of all citizens. However,

Lear regards himself as one who owns absolute power, nothing equivalents to him under God. He takes the country as his personal belonging and enjoys the right of deciding everything, including the ownership of the country. As a King, he willingly separates the country instead of preserving it as an entity, which distinctly violates the ideal of politics. One of the purposes of Lear to divide the land is to avoid future wars between sisters. But division is often the "admission ticket" of conflicts, even wars, which are the tricks of upper class but the disasters of common people. Indeed, as it is shown, division conducted by his absolutism brings nothing but endless conflicts and wars between Britain and France in the latter story.

Moreover, Lear does not handle his double identity as father and king. Different identity means different obligations and responsibilities. But Lear intermingles them totally. He sets a love test whose rule being that who expresses the sweetest words and deepest love can win a larger proportion of land, as a criterion to measure their love and decide how to divide his Kingdom. Then, Goneril and Regan who do well in catering to their father are eager to take part in this prepared "plot". As Goneril speaks highly of her love in the most rhetoric words, I love you more than word can wield the matter;/ Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty;/ Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;/ No less than life with grace, health, beauty, honour;/ As much as child e'er loved, or father found: / A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable. (34) Hearing this, the competitive Regan would not allow her sister to overshadow her love undoubtedly. Thus, she voices in the most affectionate tone, "...that I profess / Myself an enemy to all other joys/ Which the most precious square of sense possesses, / And find I am alone felicitate/ In your dear Highness' love." (35) With these empty but pleasant words, then, Lear extravagantly gives them each a large portion of land. "Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, / With shadowy forests and with campaigns riched,/ With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,/ We make thee lady." (34) His obscure boundary between his two identities leads to his unethical political behaviour that takes the country as a personal gift to his daughters.

According to Giuseppina Restivo (2008), Lear is, actually, the mirror of King James I in British history. Under his governance, the conflict between monarch and subjects became so sharp that a revolution led by Charles I son of King James I in 1640 was launched. In reality, the division also implied the division of England and Scotland. Shakespeare here indirectly points out the latent consequence of division of Britain so as to arouse broader social concern.

The desire for power could alienate people, just as Lear himself. Having ruled for long on the throne, Lear is accustomed to inexhaustible compliments so that he becomes wayward, headstrong and suffers from self-pride. He acts as a Godlike person; no one could violate his will. Therefore, when Cordelia refuses to comply with him, "I love your Majesty / According to my bond, no more or less," (35) Lear becomes extremely wrathful: "With my two daughters' dowers digest the third / Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her" (36) and even "we have no such daughter, nor shall be ever see / That face of hers again.(40) His words and misconducts breed certain discontent of some loyal counsellors as Kent who stands out to carry his duty of giving proper suggestions: Kent: ...Reserve thy state, / And, in thy best consideration check / This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement: / Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, / nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds / Reverb no hollowness. (37)

Lear does not care about the political system which the counsellor plays an indispensable consultative role in King's decision. Instead, he threatens Kent, and banishes the dissenter. He regards him as "recreant" and ordered him not to appear within sights, or he will be executed. Lear is so immersed in playing his character as a King that he does not allow anyone to challenge his absolute authority which violates the structure and system of politics. The "sovereign in King" is deeply rooted in his mind and a critical rallying point of the play. After the division, Goneril and Regan become rampant to the extent that they attempt every means to build Lear's power in stilt and brew their conspiracies under the surface. Their nature are metamorphosed by desire so that Goneril even publicly makes clear, "the laws are mine, not thine; / who can arraign me for't?" (106)

Law initially functions prescribing what could be done and what could not. The ignorance of law will lead to the chaos of the society. But what Goneril said has evidently subverted the function of the law. Her words guide her behaviour. She, together with Regan, instigates the renegade of Gloucester and Edmund on their side by offering condition that they would spare no efforts to help them to catch Edgar, the "traitor" of Gloucester family. Their governance also depends much on absolute compliance and abnormal punishment. When Gloucester awakes from their conspiracy and turns to stand by the righteous side, they pluck his two eyes without mercy. And upon knowing Kent as an emissary of Lear, they deliberately put him in the stocks to exasperate Lear. From beginning to the end, with their bloated desire, they design conspiracy one after another so that their misconducts break political ethics into debris.

The absolute control of power demonstrates the breakdown of political ethics. The political structure, political system, political relationship, political behaviour and political ideal find no shelters in the play. The country needs a leader without question. But it should be such a King who is generous and sympathetic for his people, and creates a safe and free circumstance for his people. A harmonious political environment leads country into prosperity, a fragmented one goes into suffering.

Power and Ethics: The Acquisition of Power

Political power is a social power and the focal point and objective of politics is the control of government. This explains the reasons behind the scheming, jostling and sometimes killing in order to win or acquire political power. The control is necessitated by the fact that it makes the people in the state to enjoy security in the accomplishment of their various objectives, and the implementation of their vision for a good society. Political power remains the basis of all security, all rights and privileges in a society and the maintenance of social order. This, however, depends on the kind of influence it has on the society, which can be either positive or negative. A positive influence of power in society reposes hope and confidence in the people. Also, peace and tranquillity are promoted, security is achieved and the citizens see every reason to support the government and exercise obligation to obey the law, order and instruments of the state. Their fears are alleged and a strong allegiance is maintained between the citizens and the state. Power can be sought for various purposes. To some, power is sought as a value, while to others it is sought as an end in itself. It is in the latter sense that Machiavelli considers the usefulness of power. However, we are faced with certain questions such as, what is the basis of political power? How can it be acquired? And how can it be misused? These fundamental questions of interest in socio- political philosophy have received attention from various philosophers most importantly Niccolò Machiavelli.

To Machiavelli, the end of politics is power conquest, maintenance and expansion, which is a work of art' to be performed. On the contrary according to the nature of things, the end of politics is the common good of a united people, whose end is essentially something concretely human, which will make human beings happy. This common good consists of the good life. The good life has been argued by Jacque Maritain to mean a life conformable to the essential exigencies and the essential dignity of human nature. It is a life characterised by virtue, a life that considers the good of other members of the public (TITLE 91).

Machiavelli begins the discussion on the acquisition of political power first by identifying the types of states or societies that we live in or the system of government that exists. These are either republic or principalities. Machiavelli uses the word principalities to represent either the territory of a particular prince or the prince himself and they are either hereditary, in which case, the family of the ruler rules from one generation to another. He, however, stresses that the means by which a prince acquires the territory or comes to power in a society is as important as the means that must be employed to retain the power. He identifies the following as ways by which political power could be acquired. First, he identifies war as one of the means by which political power can be acquired (Niccolò Machiavelli, 1984:8-10). In this circumstance, the ruler of a particular society may engage another society in a battle context with the aim of gaining the control of such a society. If he wins such battle, the citizens of the conquered society become his subjects, and he becomes their ruler. The colonial conquest of some nations suffices as an example. However, we should be quick to say that this mode of acquiring power is not pronounced in the contemporary society but common in the ancient time.

One important reason that could be responsible for employing this means to acquire political power has been the wish of some leaders to either prove their worth in the "art of war" or the desire to expand their geographical territory. Thus, Machiavelli argues that "the desire to acquire is truly a very natural and normal thing and when men who are able to do so exist, they will always be praised and not condemned" (Ibid: 8). An example of such a leader identified by Machiavelli was Louis XII, king of France who conquered Milan; much in the same manner as the Russian president Vladimir Putin seeks to conquer Ukraine. We must, however, note that the new wielder of power in the conquered society would be confronted with many difficulties, one of which may include the hostility of the citizens of the newly acquired territory. This arises because the new prince, Machiavelli notes, must have offended his new subjects both through the countless injuries that are involved in battle; thus, he had made enemies of all those he had injured in winning the political control of such society (Ibid: 10).

The effect of war as a means of acquiring political power is multidimensional. One important effect is that such power does not command voluntary obedience from citizens. This is because the new prince came to power not as the wish of the citizens. Hence, there is no obligation from the citizens to obey him. To gain the obedience of the people, such leadership resorts into dictatorship and his rule will be autocratic. This singular nature of

leadership may result into crisis within the society. It equally may end up in the promotion of corruption, injustice, favouritism and many other social vices, which may lead to the breakdown of public morality. The prince may then be unable to protect or retain the power that he has acquired. Or else, he has to be ruthless.

For such leader to be able to retain his power, Machiavelli suggests the following: first, the family line of the former prince must be extinguished and the new prince must not tamper with the existing law and taxes of the citizens. This will make the people to become in a little while one body together with their new ruler. Second, the new prince who has taken possession of the new territory should go and live in the new territory (Ibid: 21), most especially if the new territory differs in language, custom and laws from his own. Third, the new prince should send colonies into one or two places that will act as support for his own state; or he maintains a large number of infantries that will be responsible for the maintenance of law and order. The latter, however, will be very expensive. It should be noted that whichever of the methods suggested above the prince may want to adopt depends on the initial status of the newly acquired society. A point to note here is that neither war as a means of acquiring political power nor as a means of retaining it gives consideration to human value and opinion of the citizens.

Power and Ethics: The Exercise of Power

Lord Acton famously wrote that "power tends to corrupt." We see this every day in politics and in business, and researchers have proven Acton correct over and over again—often with disturbing results. A well-known example is Phillip Zimbardo's *Stanford Prison Experiment*. Zimbardo gave one group of students called "guards" power over and another group he called "prisoners." He was disturbed to find that the guards began to abuse their power immediately. The effect of power was so destructive that Zimbardo had to end the study after only six days. In the years following Zimbardo's study, other researchers have confirmed his findings about the corrupting effects of power. They have shown that power can lead to cheating, to self-interested acts, and to breaking the law (Lammers *et al.*, 2010; Piff, *et al.*, 2012; DuBois *et al.*, 2015). One recent study even found that a sudden increase in power can make a person more likely to engage in sexual harassment (Williams, 2017). And the list goes on and on.

But there is some good news in the power research. While researchers find that power comes with temptations, they also affirm that power only "tends to corrupt"; it doesn't have to corrupt. Here are four science-based strategies to moderate power ethically.

Recently a group of researchers at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Northwestern University, and Columbia University made the surprising discovery that power's effect on us may depend on our own expectations. The researchers asked for participants' opinions either about how powerful people tend to behave or how they ought to behave. Then they asked these participants to recall times they felt personally powerful. They found that the group who focused on how power holders ought to behave experienced a greater motivation to do the right thing and to use their power in positive ways (Hu *et al.*, 2016). So set your expectations for yourself on the basis of your ideals and values, not on the status quo. Take a cue from *The Amazing Spiderman*: "with great power comes great responsibility."

A research team led by Katherine DeCelles (2012) found that a person who has a strong moral identity—meaning a person who sees attributes like justice, caring, and generosity as central components of their character—is less likely to act out of self-interest at work, even when he or she receives power. These findings align with the findings of another study from 2001, which showed that people with a communal mindset tended to become more communal when they received more power, whereas those who did not have this mindset tended to use their power selfishly (Chen *et al.*, 2001). Similarly, Dacher Keltner reports that empathetic leaders are more likely to use power in a way that pushes their teams to the next level in terms of performance and results (2016). These researchers suggest that power does not corrupt your character—it reveals your character.

Powerlessness causes us to speak up less and hesitate in taking action when we see a problem (Keltner, 2016). If you want to create a culture in which people feel free to speak up, you need more than an open door and a suggestion box. Ask your followers to speak up, and actively solicit their thoughts and opinions. When you empower them to share their concerns, you reduce the risks that come with silent, conflict-avoidant employees. Rather than allowing power to be concentrated in the hands of just a few people, focus on sharing it.

Being in a position of power can disrupt how you collaborate with others and take a toll on your well-being. A 2017 study found that the psychological effects of power on leaders can come with harmful effects such as perceived negative relationships in the workplace and an inability to relax at home. (Foulk, *et al.*,). Avoid these consequences by finding a trusted, honest mentor that can offer support. They also can pop your power bubble by providing candid, honest feedback about your behaviour.

An individual outside your organisation can also effectively keep you humble in a position of power. Leaders can sometimes depend on family members to help them stay grounded and prevent psychological power from inflating their ego. In a recent article in *The Atlantic*, Jerry Useem tells the story of Indra Nooyi's interaction with her mother the day she was appointed CEO of PepsiCo:

> She arrived home percolating in her own sense of importance and vitality, when her mother asked whether, before she delivered her "great news, she would go out and get some milk. Fuming, Nooyi went out and got it. Leave that damn crown in the garage" was her mother's advice when she returned.

Finding your own personal anchors can help you, like Nooyi, stay grounded and avoid the negative effects of power (Useem 2017). Remember that sudden boosts in power and success are accompanied by temptations. But by focusing on your moral identity and responsibilities, empowering others, and finding a mentor, you can harness power in ways that keep you and your organisation thriving.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare explores the concept of natural and unnatural factors in society. By so doing, the playwright raises central issues, which are successfully resolved in the culmination of the plays plot. Two such central issues, both evident in the extract and the play throughout, are power and morality. The thoughts, actions and continual reference throughout the play of that which is natural and unnatural exemplify the two central issues chosen for discussion. The central issues raised in the extract continue throughout the play into a resolution whereby the natural or good, conquers the unnatural or evil.

Beyond the selected extract, Shakespeare successfully introduces the issues of power (and the desire of) and morality. Shakespeare maintains the presence of these issues and resolves them in the plot of the play. The plot cumulates with Macbeth's tragic death, where the desire for his power and abandonment of morale fibres, remain as central issues as they appear in the selected extract. This is illustrated clearly, in the selected text; Macbeth is torn morally for his plan to take power, which he and his wife desire. Beyond Act1. Scene 5, Macbeth resolves all concern for morality by disbanding it altogether through his desire for power. It is a deliberate choice that accentuates the play's ethical values and denounces his desire as unnatural due to the actions Macbeth is willing to undertake. Macbeth is aware of the morality and social judgement for his actions. In Act 1, Scene 7, the protagonist delivers a speech:

> We still have judgement here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions which, being taught, return
> To Plague th' inventor. This even-handed justice
> Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips (1.7.8-12).

Despite social and moral constraints, Macbeth indicates he has a deep "vaulting ambition" which surpasses fear of recrimination from society.

Macbeth might also be read as a morality play with the tragic hero representing all of humankind while struggling, and failing, with temptation and fate. Just as with Lear, Shakespeare pushes the boundaries of the morality play with *Macbeth*. He is not redeemed at the end, but the audience learns various lessons about temptation, repentance, and sin. Consider these lines from Act 1, Scene 2, in which an injured soldier describes Macbeth for the audience:

> For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
> Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
> Which smoked with bloody execution?
> Like valour's minion carved out his passage
> Till he faced the slave. (76)

When the audience first meets Macbeth, he is a brave and moral man admired by many. But, as the play progresses and the vices of greed, envy, and power become more prevalent everything changes. Here are the famous lines from Act 5, Scene 5, where Macbeth truly realises what he is lost due to his unchecked ambition:

> "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death." (46)

While writing *King Lear*, Shakespeare used the standard structure of morality plays and other elements of their tradition. The protagonist makes preparations for his death, similarly to the events that play out in *Everyman*. Lear, like Everyman, finds himself hurtling towards his death with nothing and no one by his side. Lear is not nearly as religious as Everyman is; but the framework is the same. *King Lear* loses his family, his home, and even his sanity. Everything and everyone abandon him. As he comes closer to death, he learns more about his choices and the mistake he's made in the past. Unfortunately for Lear, he enters into death with no one by his side, not even "Good-Deeds"; so that throughout the play his mind becomes a battle ground between forces of

good and evil, vice and virtue. Although, there are no personified characters as we would find in morality plays, the interaction between father and daughters, as well as between king and subjects aids in highlighting commendable and detestable Elizabethan values and custom which appeal to our postmodernist society. We notice that Shakespeare's "morality" plays are nihilistic in a way that medieval mortality plays would never have been. There is no redemption for the characters in *King Lear*.

In the first act of *King Lear*, Lear claims that he is ready to relinquish power over his kingdom. Although he hopes that this early retirement will allow him an "Unburdened crawl toward death" (I.i.44), what actually follows is not a smooth and dignified journey through his final years, but a relapse into the helplessness of childhood. In his advanced age, Lear grows increasingly childlike in his obstinate demands ("bid them come forth and hear me / Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum / Till it cry sleep to death" - II.iv.117-9), physical dependency ("Who are you? Mine eyes are not o' th' best." - V.iii.335-6) and struggle to express himself ("Howl, howl, howl!" – V.iii.308). This regression has often been seen as the result of his frustration, due to the fact that he finds himself powerless against his will. Despite his ostensible enthusiasm in abdicating his throne, it becomes clear that Lear is not yet willing to release control entirely.

The test of loyalty he gives each of his daughters at the start of the play demonstrates that Lear is still determined to have some degree of emotional leverage over them. In demanding their assurances of love, he shows that he will let go of his land but not of his power or pride, and the very act of prematurely dividing up his kingdom points towards desperation to exert control over events that would naturally occur outside of his own lifetime.

Similarly, rather than allow Cordelia to deny him the parental affection he craves, Lear rejects her: "Here I disclaim all my paternal care, / Propinquity, and property of blood, / and as a stranger to my heart and me / Hold thee from this forever." (I.i.125-8). The king also attempts to retain part of his royal authority, exercising the power to banish subjects and demanding that he be allowed to keep an armed guard. His insistence that his band of knights should not be reduced in number has even been read by some as an elaborate pun on the word 'nights', implying a refusal to accept the shortening of his life.

Such reactions shed light on Lear's need for control, which in turn leads to his refusal to accept that which is outside of his purview. His rejection of Cordelia following her honest but unwelcome admission; his stubborn determination to cling onto the vestiges of kingship; and his denial of death as the ultimate end to his power, are the most important instances of this anxiety. But it is also manifested in the groundless rebuttals with which he contradicts other characters throughout the play. Self-deceiving and defensive, Lear offers a masterclass in how not to face old age, growing impotence and death.

Interestingly, Lear's suffering also serves as a partial solution to his unhealthy desire for control, and denial of his own weakness, as through it he learns to accept reality. He abandons Goneril and Reagan after they refuse to respect his requests, and standing on the lonely heath amid a storm with only a fool for company, he comes to the realisation that he, "A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man" (III.ii.22), no longer has the power to command authority as he once did. Lear's anagnorisis remains incomplete, however, until the final act of the play, in the aftermath of Cordelia's death.

From the beginning it is clear that Cordelia is to play a significant part in her father's struggles. Shakespeare takes full advantage of the etymology of her name, peppering the dialogue with heart imagery and metaphors (the Latin cord- stem means 'heart'), and thus hints at her fundamental role in matters of life and death. Lear himself acknowledges this mysterious power, anticipating early on that her absence will ultimately lead to his own end:

> Hence and avoid my sight!—
> So be my grave my peace as here I give
> Her father's heart from her. (I.1.139-141)

A Freudian reading of this excerpt relates to the critique of the "*electra*" complex that exists between father and daughter. According to a Psychoanalytical reading of the play, King Lear's love for his daughters, does not necessarily translate to the love of his subjects. Such love subtlety insinuates an incestuous relationship which Lear might have entertained with his daughters, to the extent that he foolishly partitions his kingdom according to the degree of love which Gonerill and Regan, ironically profess for him. Cordelia's [the youngest daughter] death presents the peripetia which leads to the reversal of fortunes, as Lear's son realises that the one whom he hated most, did actually love him; whereas, those whom he thought deeply loved him, rather hated him as their actions would later reveal. The ambiguity of the death of Cordelia foregrounds the very notion of mortality laws today which brandish some prisoners as "serial" death-row prisoners; and which legitimate the question of suicide as honourable death or not. Eternal wisdom, in the garb of primitive myth, bids the old man renounce love, choose death and make friends with the necessity of dying. (Sigmund Freud, *The Theme of the Three Caskets*, page number).

In *Macbeth*, gender ambiguity arises again as Macbeth admits his doubts over murdering Duncan. Lady *Macbeth* scorns him, telling him that "when you durst do it, then you were a man," suggesting that he is not, at that moment, a man, but something lesser because he lacks courage (1.7.49). She is confident where he is apprehensive; when he asks what will happen if they fail in their assassination, she tells him: "But screw your courage to the sticking-place / and we'll not fail" (1.7.60-61). Her lack of emotion again points to her subversion of nature; she shows no pangs of conscience or remorse as she plots a murder, as no woman might be expected to do. She is not kind or caring or maternal; on the contrary, she tells Macbeth that she would have "dashed the brains out" of an infant if she had sworn to do so, as Macbeth has sworn to carry out Duncan's murder (1.7.58). Even afterwards she remains calm, while Macbeth is shocked by what he has done. He agonizes over the blood on his hands, but she responds, "a little water clears us of this deed. How easy is it then?" (2.2.65-66). She shows no remorse, no kindness; and her cold reaction to the murder-simply brushing the deed aside once it is done-again suggests her twisted and "unsexed" state.

Once Macbeth assumes the throne in Duncan's place, he upsets the political and social order by taking a position that is not his by right. Macbeth is unable to be a good monarch because of his defiance of nature, and he commits further atrocities to keep himself on the throne: the murders of Banquo, Lady Macduff, and her son. James, I wrote in *The True Law of Free Monarchies* that the relationship of the king to his subjects may be compared "to a head of a body composed of divers members," because the head cares for the body as the king does for his people, "preventing all euill that may come to the body or any part thereof" (par. 29). Macbeth cannot fulfill this role; he does not prevent evil but causes it. Another contemporary theory of kingship was the idea that "the realm is in the king and the king in the realm" (Kantorowicz 223). If this is so, then the evil in *Macbeth* is represented by the changes that take place throughout his kingdom.

Power and Ethics: Gender Power Relationship

Sustainable development goal number five clearly emphasis on the need of Gender equality on earth. The coining of this goal is extremely egocentric and unethical because of two factors, Firstly it doesn't take into consideration the cultural heritage of the different nations of the world, Thus contextually, the title of the goal' Gender Equality 'is errounious. Secondly the title from conceptrion already creates a boxing ring between men and women. This is because instead of using the word gender equalility, they should have used gender faireness. It is the fairness of one gender unto another that can create a balance of power and to a larger extent gender consideration as far as the study of power is concerned. Literary scholars, philosophers, psychoanalysts and even sociologist need to address gender power relationship in line with moral and ethical consideration. Historically, the marginalisation of women in many cultural context has led to so much gender talks on planet earth. On the contrary, the reason for such marginality however has the least of all been verified. As observed above, gender equality is a very unethical coinage which must be replace by gender fairness. In Shakespeare's plays, ethical consideration with regards to gender must constitute the contributive elements owing to history and culture that redefines gender stands. From Adam and Eve to today's generations, it is my opinion that men don't hate women neither do women hate men. The underlying problem has been opinion and dominion. Who's opinion counts and what opinion dominates is the world's greatest challenge in the study of Gender Power relationship. Thus the clash between patriarchy and feminisms as observed in the works stems from psychological to physical. One of the characteristics of hard power in political science is the power of manipulation. Between women and men if one may ask, who controls the audacy of a manipulative tongue or holds the keys? Better still, if one may ask, who is responsible for the death of King Duncan, is it Lady Macbeth ofr Macbeth himself. Thiroux and Kresmann argue that,

> *Men and women think quite differently when it comes to ethics…The difference is that men's view of etrhics has to do with justice, rights, competition, being independent and living by rules whereas women view has to do with generosity, harmony, reconciliation and working to maintain close relationships."(47)*

Gender shapes people and their communities and how the outcome defines and redefines their individual or collective experiences. In some context, it idealise 'masculine' forms of behaviour and rely on men's power over women while in others, it projects feminist as a move associated with so much positive results and heroism as seen in the Butake plays. Thus, this tend to 'lock in' two types of power - men's power over women, and the power of the most 'masculine' men over everyone. Take political parties. They are key gatekeepers for women's political participation, but their male-dominated cultures often make them inaccessible. Take for instance the case of Africa, since the creation of independent states in Africa from Ghana in 1958 to present, only nine women have been able to taste absolute power as head of state, with only four as real Presidents and five either operating as acting or interim president. This on the one hand is marginality but on the other hand there is the need for the verification of the cultural history of a people to see

whether what happened in King Lear was not their experience which redefined their stand on women in power. In King Lear Shakespeare advocates for Gender Power by commanding Lear to relinguish power to women so that they too can exercise power. In the end he took back the power from them because it was an entire fiasco and catastrophe. Gender shapes how we understand what 'power' is in the first place. The widely accepted definition of power is getting someone else to do what you want them to do. Arguably this reflects a specifically male experience of the world: a place inhabited by hostile 'others' with whom, to survive, you are forced to forge some kind of social relationship. Women, particularly in their socially assigned roles of wife and mother, may more often understand themselves as being in continuity with the people around them rather than in opposition. They often aim to build capacity in others rather than to dominate. This would suggest an alternative idea of power: the capacity to transform and empower yourself and others. Amongst other things this alternative perspective highlights that women can sometimes have special forms of influence on decision-making because of their specific social status.

CONCLUSION

Thiroux and Krasemann argue that," Human beings despite moral education have remain or become amoral. Such people tend to be found among certain criminal types who can't seem to realise they have done anything wrong. They tend not to have any remorse, regret or concern for what they have done."(5). It seems an underlying factor that the binding tie between good and bad governance lies in ethical consideration and moral judgement by those on whom power is being exercise. The constitution serves as a control mechanism to define the exercise of power by any authority. Yet the control of this exercise of power sometimes gets out of hand especially when a tyrant is on the throne. For instance, King Lear uses his ego frustratioin to exercise power in a very bad way. One of them is the unruly principle of reverence and respect in utterances. The saying that goes," You must respect a leader and should not speak to him any how in public", and yet the leader can speak to people any how in public with so much anger and threats even when they are just trying to be true and real infront of him. This is the experience between Lear as Leader on the one hand and Cordelia with Kent on the other hand. Despite Lears moral education, he remained amoral as king even at old age. He is so bling to see the wrong he has done as cited above but concentrates more on the wrong of others towards him. Morally speaking, it is said that, if someone accuses you of wrong doing, even if you are 99percent right, you are one percent wrong and because of the one percent, there is an inevitable clash. Kent begins by speaking respectfully, loving

and calmly to Lear. Yet, Lear is so regid to his way of exercising power and gives ni room for correction. No doubt Shakespeare punishes when he regrets his foolishness in the storm scene and become attentive to the advise of the Fool who schools Lear on his blunders in the exercise of power, especially hard power. It just didn't work. By handling this unthecal misuse of power by Lear, Shakespear clearly stands on the New historistic hypothetical contention that Literature carries with it so much power to shape the course of history and vice versa. That is why Ngeh and Ayuk Etang emphasis that,''

'Literature can (re)shape and (re)direct history and vice versa''(104).The ethical and moral consideration highlighted by Shakespeare in *King Lear* and *Macbeth* remain timeless in correcting the leadership of upcoming leaders, be it through the exercise of soft power as is the case of King Hamlet and King Duncan whose soft power principles in the exercise of power was so shortlived ,and on the other hand the hard power principle in exercising power through King Lear and Macbeth to very miserable end. Thus these text reshape history because as Ngeh and Ayuketang rightly put it'', The historicity of texts refers to the socio political, historical and cultural realities that inform a literary text, the textuality of history corroborates Sigmund Freuds argument that history is usually stripped of all inconsistencies into fiction which incubates the ideology of the state.''(102).Thus the consideration of ethics and morality in the exercise of power remain an absolute necessity.

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