



EDWARD BOND AND LEAR-A STUDY

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This is a well-known play by Shakespeare, known as King Lear. A British playwright Edward Bond rewrote the play. It was written in 1971. The play was first produced in the Royal Court theatre in England in 1971, and the lead actor for this play in the lead role is Harry Andrews. In 1982 the drama or the play was revived, and the Royal Shakespeare company. The Crucible theatre in 2005, it was again restored in Sheffield with Ian McDiarmid (Khafaga, 2019).

Edward Bond was a socialist who tried to reverse the modern trend of the plays, so he started adopting rather than rewriting the famous plays Shakespeare wrote. The writer wrote those politically powerful plays because he wanted the people to start questioning the government and the system, and the society must be aware of their political and social demands. Aesthetic experiences can be gathered from any play, but he wanted to question society. The play is not for entertainment purposes, but the play was created to make society aware and to bring a change in society.

1.2 Background

The play is rewritten of Shakespeare's original play, "King Lear". It is a tragedy, and it is based on the mythological Lear of Britain. The background of the play is the original Shakespeare drama. A king wanted to divide his kingdom among his three daughters (Hernández, 2021). He wanted his daughters to praise and impress him, and on that basis, he would give them their shares. The 1st two daughters tried to impress him by saying how much they love their father even though they don't love anyone rather than their father.

On the other hand, the youngest daughter, whom the king loved the most, said nothing. When she was forced to say something, she said her love for his father couldn't be expressed by words, but as well as half of her love was for her father, and the other half was for his future husband. This made them angry, and the king decided not to give her his kingdom; her share for the kingdom was given to her other sisters. Then the king's younger daughter married the king of France and left the kingdom. Then gradually, the king became aware of the original love of their daughters and came to know her younger daughter was honest.

Based on the background, the play was created where the king, Lear, is a paranoid autocrat who wanted to build a wall to protect his kingdom from the attack of outer enemies. But his daughters got married to his enemies. The background of the play's story is based on the rulers' exploitation of society (Gungor, 2021). The play shows brutality and cruelty on stage because of conducting the actual situation of the community in that context which the writer tried to present.

1.3 Research Rationale

The work is very important as the play is a rewritten form of Shakespeare's drama, but the two are different in some aspects. It is very important to differentiate between them. This is not an adoption of King Lear's play and is not a copy version. This is a rewritten story taking some aspects from the original, and the story was created on the basis of betrayal and trust which is very important for the current situation. In today's world good decisions and trusting to one's own is another big issue because the king in two plays trusted their daughters and he was blind about his deeds (Bladen *et al.*, 2019). He did many bad things when he had everything. He ignored the death of the poor worker of the wall and then he got his punishment. This research is important to understand that the writer is not presenting the aesthetic aspects which the other writers tried to present in their plays, rather the writer wanted to present the harsh reality and the political facts of the society so that through his writing a social reform can be brought.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The research is about the study of a play by Edward Bond. The main aim of the study is to analyze the play critically. The play has three acts. Each act has different scenes and through analyzing the individual acts and scenes the research can give a clear view about the situation of the plot or the society when the writer wrote the play. The objectives of the research are discussed below (Shanon, 2020).

The primary objective is to analyze the entire play. The play is about the tragedy of a king. The king was once a powerful one and believed in autocracy and he was blind because of his power and his ego. He never gave priority to the poor's life and always thought of him and his safety. He always distrusted the outer world where it is found that his own daughters are his main enemy. Then the poor situation of the king and the ultimate death of him are full of

sorrow so the play can be analyzed to give a message to the society that there are various people within the society who are in disguise of noble people but they are always ready to harm the others.

Another objective of the research is to understand the differences between the original play of Shakespeare and the play by Edward Bond. In the play of Shakespeare there was a king who was a fool and he was very egoistic and in this play the king was initially very egoistic (Mohammad and Aqla, 2022). The king in Shakespeare's play was exploited and betrayed by his two elder daughters when he ignored his most honest younger daughter. In this play, the king was cheated by his daughters and his daughters married his enemies. So, there are many similarities and various differences which are presented through the research.

1.6 Research Significance

The research is very significant in every form because now the world and the society reaches to a stage, where the very close one or the own members of the family who are most trusted can cheat and because of a bad decision or unkindness the almighty can give punishment to the rulers and the rulers who are involved in the corruptions must be punished by almighty. The main significance is to critically analyze the play and the inner meaning and what message the writer wanted to give to the society must be brought through the play. By analyzing critically, the play, the research gives the inner meaning and the original thinking of the writer behind the play. It is significant in this way that after reading the research paper, one can understand that society has various flaws and because of the societal system, various issues are generated (Horn, 2023). The wrong decision making by the higher authorities of the society can lead to the destruction of the entire society.

1.7 Research Structure

The research structure is completely analytical. In this research the overview of the play and its background is given. In the background the context of the play and reason behind the context is also analyzed. Then the brief introduction of the writer and the play from which the play is adopted is also discussed. The play is adopted rather than adopted; it is rewritten by Edward Bond of the famous play King Lear by Shakespeare. The writer rewrote the play in the current context of his time to give a social message to the society through the play. Then in the literature review part, the individual acts of the play, the play has three acts and all the acts are discussed and analyzed (O'Niell, 2019). The play is rewritten from a play which was written in the 16th century but the play was rewrote in 1971 so how the drama is relevant to modern society is discussed. The differences or the comparison of the drama with Shakespeare's King Lear is discussed here to understand there are similarities but there are huge differences in their society arrangement. The theme of the play, it is significant and the significance of the wall in this play which bears a good societal message is also discussed. Then there are various criticisms of the drama and the criticisms are discussed. Thus, a complete critical analysis along with the summary is given which is very helpful for a reader to understand the positive and negative aspects of the play.

1.8 Summary

The play Lear is the rewritten version of Shakespeare's original play "King Lear" which was written and performed in 1600 century and it was written in 1971 by Edward Bond who was a British writer. The main plot of the play is a king Lear who wanted to build a wall to protect his kingdom from his most powerful enemies but his daughters married to his enemies in protest of building the wall. Because of building the wall, workers got affected and died. Thus the king called for a war against his enemies who are the daughters of his own and lost the war then he was brutally tortured. In this introduction section, the overview of the play is given along with the background. In the background the context of the play and the situation was discussed. Then the rationale of the research, the significance of the research means who will benefited for this research and how the society or the reader can be benefitted is discussed. The main aim and objectives of the research is discussed thoroughly.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There are three acts of the play "Lear " and through the three acts the poor ultimate death of a powerful king is shown. The tragedy and the power of almighty is shown where a powerful egoistic autocrat king who never thought about his collins. As a result, he got what he deserved and he died in sorrow. He became a prisoner and tortured brutally and in front of his eyes, his daughters were dead and ultimately when the wall was demolished, he was then dead. So, in this literature review the various different analyses and comparisons of the play is reflected and then the critical analysis of the play is shown.

2.2 Lear- an overview

In the play, there are three acts and each act, there are various different scenes. In act 1 the king decided to build a wall to protect his kingdom from his enemies. But during the construction one worker died but the king ignored the death and because of his unkind behavior his daughters protested against it and they decided to marry the enemy of the king. Then the daughters suggested their husbands attack their father's army and a war got started where the king was defeated (GÜNAYDIN YILDIRIM, 2022). Then ultimately the daughters revealed their plans to kill their husbands. Then they tortured Warrington brutally. Then Lear and Warrington fled in a forest in search of bread and got a shelter. In that house the army attacked and Warrington was killed and the boy was killed too.

In the second act, Lear is presented as a madman. The ghost of the dead boy appeared and conversed with Lear. Then the daughters revealed their ultimate plan is to demolish the wall and the workers can be their army. Then one of his daughters is sentenced and sought help from her father as her sister betrayed her. Fontanella died as the command of carpenter Bodice was also killed by Cordelia (ASHMAWY, 2022).

In act three Lier turned into prophet and Cordelia wanted to stop his speeches and ultimately Lier was killed by the son who wanted to be an army in front of the wall and the wall would also be demolished.

2.3 How is Edward Bond's Lear a modern drama?

Edward Bond's reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" is considered a modern drama for several reasons.

- **Relevance to contemporary issues:** Bond's version of the play addresses contemporary issues such as political power, social justice and mental health, making it relevant to modern audiences (Khafaga1, 2020)
- **Exploration of new themes:** Bond expands on Shakespeare's themes, exploring new and previously unaddressed issues such as environmental destruction and the abuse of power.
- **Avant-garde style:** Bond's writing style is experimental, breaking with traditional conventions to create a unique and contemporary aesthetic. This includes the use of non-linear storytelling, unconventional stage directions and experimental use of language.
- **Challenging of traditional expectations:** Bond subverts traditional expectations by reimagining the characters and relationships in the play. For example, the character of Cordelia is portrayed as a more assertive and powerful figure, challenging traditional notions of gender and power dynamics.
- **Exploration of psychological realism:** Bond's interpretation of the play delves into the inner lives and motivations of the characters, exploring their psychological realism in a way that is unique and contemporary.
- **Reinterpretation of historical context:** Bond's interpretation of the play places it in a contemporary context, allowing for a new interpretation of historical events and their relevance to modern society.

Overall, Edward Bond's "Lear" is a modern drama that pushes the boundaries of traditional theater and engages with contemporary issues in new and innovative ways. Through its experimental style, challenging of traditional expectations, and exploration of psychological realism, Bond creates a unique and contemporary interpretation of Shakespeare's classic play.

2.4 Comparison with Shakespeare's "King Lear"

Edward Bond's reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" differs significantly from the original play in several ways.

Themes: While both plays explore themes of power, family, and madness, Bond expands on these themes, addressing contemporary issues such as environmental destruction and the abuse of power (Şerban, 2022).

- **Characterization:** Bond reimagines the characters in the play, giving them new motivations, relationships and personalities. For example, the character of Cordelia is portrayed as a more assertive and powerful figure, challenging traditional notions of gender and power dynamics (Kesavan, 2021).

- **Writing style:** Bond's writing style is experimental and breaks with traditional conventions, using non-linear storytelling, unconventional stage directions, and experimental use of language. In contrast, Shakespeare's writing style is more traditional, using formal language and strict meter.
- **Historical context:** Bond's interpretation of the play places it in a contemporary context, allowing for a new interpretation of historical events and their relevance to modern society. In contrast, Shakespeare's play is set in a historical context, reflecting the social and political norms of his time.
- **Emphasis on psychological realism:** Bond's interpretation of the play delves into the inner lives and motivations of the characters, exploring their psychological realism in a way that is unique and contemporary. Shakespeare's play also explores psychological realism, but in a more traditional and symbolic manner.
- **Treatment of the ending:** The endings of the two plays differ significantly, with Bond's interpretation offering a more hopeful and optimistic resolution, whereas Shakespeare's play ends on a tragic note.

In conclusion, while both "King Lear" by Shakespeare and "Lear" by Edward Bond share similar themes, the two plays differ significantly in terms of writing style, characterization, historical context, and treatment of the ending. Bond's reinterpretation offers a unique and contemporary take on the classic play, challenging traditional expectations and engaging with contemporary issues in new and innovative ways.

2.5 What is the significance of the wall in Bond's Lear?

The wall in Edward Bond's reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" holds significant meaning and symbolism throughout the play.

- **Separation:** The wall separates the characters from one another and from the world outside, representing the physical and emotional barriers that prevent them from connecting with each other and the world around them (Kesavan, 2021).
- **Power dynamics:** The wall also represents the power dynamics within the play, symbolizing the division of power between the characters and their respective positions in society. The wall acts as a boundary that separates those who hold power from those who do not, reflecting the unequal distribution of power in society.
- **Symbol of oppression:** The wall can also be seen as a symbol of oppression, representing the ways in which the state and those in power use physical barriers to control and manipulate the masses.
- **Metaphor for mental illness:** The wall can also be interpreted as a metaphor for mental illness, symbolizing the mental and emotional barriers that prevent characters from connecting with themselves and others. In this way, the wall symbolizes the isolation and fragmentation that often accompany mental illness.
- **Reflection of environmental destruction:** The wall can also be seen as a symbol of environmental destruction, representing the ways in which humans destroy the natural world and build physical barriers between themselves and nature (Kruhoberec, 2019).
- **Hope for reconciliation:** Despite the wall's many negative connotations, it also holds a more hopeful meaning in the play. Through the character of Lear, the play suggests that the wall can be overcome and that people can come together and reconcile despite their differences.

Overall, the wall in Edward Bond's "Lear" holds a rich and complex significance, symbolizing the physical, emotional, and psychological barriers that prevent characters from connecting with each other and the world around them. Through its multifaceted meaning, the wall serves as a powerful metaphor for the themes of power, mental illness, environmental destruction, and hope for reconciliation that run throughout the play.

2.6 What are the major themes in Bond's Lear?

Edward Bond's reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" explores a range of themes that are relevant to modern society. Here are some of the major themes in Bond's "Lear":

- **Power:** One of the central themes of the play is the abuse of power and the way it affects those around it. Bond's version of Lear is a tyrannical ruler who uses his power to control and manipulate his subjects, ultimately leading to his downfall. The play explores the consequences of unchecked power and the devastating effects it can have on individuals and society (Khafaga1&2, 2020).
- **Mental Illness:** Bond's "Lear" also explores the theme of mental illness, using the character of Lear as a symbol for the ways in which mental illness can lead to isolation and fragmentation. The play suggests that mental illness is often misunderstood and ignored, leading to further suffering for those who suffer from it (Kesavan, 2021).
- **Environmental Destruction:** Bond's "Lear" also explores the theme of environmental destruction, reflecting the ways in which humans destroy the natural world and build physical barriers between themselves and nature. The play suggests that environmental destruction is a consequence of unchecked power and greed, and that it is essential for humanity to reconcile with the natural world in order to survive.
- **Class Struggle:** Bond's "Lear" explores the theme of class struggle, reflecting the ways in which the rich and powerful manipulate and control the working class. The play suggests that class struggle is a product of an unequal distribution of power and wealth, and that it is essential for society to work towards greater equality in order to create a more just and equitable world.
- **Reconciliation:** Despite its many negative themes, Bond's "Lear" also holds a message of hope for reconciliation and healing. The play suggests that people can come together and reconcile despite their differences, and that it is possible for individuals and society to heal from the wounds inflicted by unchecked power and mental illness.

Overall, Bond's "Lear" explores a range of themes that are relevant to modern society, including the abuse of power, mental illness, environmental destruction, class struggle, and the possibility for reconciliation and healing. Through its powerful characters and dramatic plot, the play offers a thought-provoking commentary on the issues that face our world today.

2.7 Critical study of Bond's Lear

Edward Bond's *Lear* is a retelling of William Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, set in a dystopian world and exploring themes of power, justice, and humanity. The play is known for its critique of modern society and its political commentary, as well as its brutal and unflinching depiction of violence. One critical aspect of Bond's *Lear* is its portrayal of power. In the play, Lear is depicted as a tyrannical ruler who is eventually overthrown, and his downfall is a result of his own hubris and cruelty. Bond's *Lear* highlights the dangers of absolute power and the need for accountability, suggesting that unchecked power leads to corruption and tyranny. This portrayal of power serves as a commentary on contemporary society, where those in positions of authority often abuse their power for their own benefit.

Another significant aspect of Bond's *Lear* is its treatment of justice. The play portrays a world where justice is arbitrary and often cruel, with the poor and vulnerable suffering at the hands of the powerful. Lear himself is punished for his crimes, but the punishment is disproportionate to his actions, and it is clear that the system of justice in the play is fundamentally flawed. This depiction of justice serves as a critique of the real-world justice system and its failures, particularly its tendency to protect the powerful and punish the marginalized. The characters in Bond's *Lear* are also noteworthy for their depth and complexity. Lear himself is depicted as a tragic figure, torn between his desire for power and his sense of humanity. The Fool is a voice of reason in the play, offering insightful commentary on the events unfolding around him. Other characters, such as the Duke and the King of France, are portrayed as complex figures who are both villainous and sympathetic. This nuance in the characterization of the play's characters serves to reinforce its themes and critique of society.

Edward Bond's *Lear* has received both praise and criticism from audiences and scholars alike (Andreas). Some of the common criticisms of the play including Bond's *Lear* is known for its brutal and unflinching depiction of violence, which has been criticized by some as gratuitous and disturbing. Some viewers find the play's violence to be excessive and unneeded, detracting from its overall message. Some critics argue that the play lacks emotional depth, with characters and situations depicted in a simplified and straightforward manner. They argue that this approach detracts from the power of the play and makes it difficult for audiences to connect with the characters on an emotional level. As a reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Bond's *Lear* has been criticized for its departure from the original text (Kesavan, 2021). Some critics argue that the play's modern setting and political themes detract from the original's timeless relevance, while others argue that these changes serve to strengthen the play's message and make it more relevant to contemporary audiences. Bond's *Lear* is known for its complex themes and allegorical elements, which have led some to argue that the play is difficult to interpret and understand. Some viewers find the play's dense and allegorical nature to be off-putting and confusing, making it difficult to fully engage with the play's message.

In conclusion, Bond's *Lear* is a powerful and thought-provoking play that critiques the issues of power, justice, and humanity in contemporary society. Through its brutal and unflinching portrayal of violence and its nuanced characterization of its characters, the play serves as a powerful commentary on the world around us and encourages

to question the systems of power and justice that shape lives. While Bond's *Lear* is widely regarded as a powerful and thought-provoking play, it has also faced criticism for its excessive violence, lack of emotional depth, departure from the source material, and difficulty in interpretation. Nevertheless, the play remains an important work in modern theater, and its impact and relevance continue to be studied and debated by audiences and scholars alike.

2.8 Summarisation

Edward Bond, a socialist who sought to buck the current theatrical fashion, began using Shakespeare's well-known plays as models rather than reworking them. The author of those plays wanted people to start questioning the system and the government, and he also wanted society to be aware of the demands that people have for social and political change. *King Lear*, the original Shakespeare play, has been rewritten for this production. It is a tragedy that is based on Britain's legendary King Lear. The original drama by Shakespeare serves as the play's backdrop. There was an emperor who desired to divide his entire realm among his three daughters. The main character of the play is King Lear, who wished to construct a wall to defend his realm from his most formidable adversaries. However, his daughters wed his adversaries in opposition to the wall's construction. Construction workers were harmed and killed as a result of the wall. As a result, the king incited a war against his adversaries, who were his own daughters, and when the war was lost, he was subjected to cruel torture. The play's summary and historical context are provided in this introduction section. Discussions about the play's situation and setting were taking place in the background. The purpose of the study, its importance, who will benefit from it, and how the reader or society might gain from it are then discussed.

The play is relevant to modern audiences because Bond's adaptation covers modern concerns including political power, social justice, and mental health. By rethinking the play's characters and connections, Bond defies conventional wisdom. In contrast to conventional ideas about gender and power dynamics, Cordelia's character is shown to be more forceful and powerful. Overall, "*Lear*" by Edward Bond is a contemporary play that challenges conventional theatre conventions and addresses current themes in fresh and creative ways (Correa, 2021). Shakespeare's famous play is interpreted in a distinctive and modern way by Bond thanks to its experimental style, subversion of conventional assumptions, and study of psychological realism. The play's abuse of power and its effects on those around it is one of its main themes. In Bond's interpretation of *Lear*, the despotic ruler abuses his authority to oppress and exploit his people, which ultimately results in his demise. The play makes the argument that mental illness is frequently misunderstood and disregarded, which causes those who have it to suffer much more. The issue of environmental degradation is also explored in Bond's "*Lear*," illustrating the ways in which people damage the environment and erect walls between themselves and nature. The play makes the argument that class conflict results from an unequal distribution of wealth and power, and that society must strive for more equality in order to establish a more just and egalitarian world.

Generally speaking, Bond's "Lear" examines a variety of subjects that are pertinent to contemporary society, such as the abuse of power, mental illness, environmental degradation, class conflict, and the potential for rapprochement and healing. Bond's "Lear" has a lot of depressing themes, but it also has a message of hope for healing and reconciliation. The play makes the case that individuals and society may recover from the wounds caused by unbridled power and mental illness and can come together and be at peace despite their differences.

2.9 Conclusion

Shakespeare's great tragedy has been bravely and ambitiously adapted in Edward Bond's play Lear. It approaches the original material in a novel and risky way, defying conventional readings and providing an intense, visceral experience. It is a challenging and compelling piece of work that rewards those who make the effort to comprehend it. Bond's Lear stays loyal to its source material in terms of ideas and character development despite its unusual approach and experimental aspects. It is a significant and potent piece of writing that merits investigation and discussion. Bond's analysis of Lear offers an enlightening, provocative look at the play and its characters. He rejects the notion of a happy resolution, arguing that Lear's demise was the outcome of a greater tragedy. He also discusses the play's use of the gods, as well as the themes of power and honour. His analysis offers a thorough look at the play and its characters while being both intellectual and passionate. His analysis of the play is multifaceted and intricate, and his strategy is both motivating and enlightening.

The issues of power, gender, and class, as well as the nuanced character dynamics, are the main subjects of Bond's analysis of the play. He contends that the play examines the effects of unbridled authority and that Lear and Cordelia ultimately reflect a conflict between the forces of justice and power. Insightful and provocative, Bond's examination of the play leads him to the conclusion that Lear is fundamentally a tragedy of power, wherein unrestrained power ultimately brings about the destruction of individuals and society. While some critics contend that the play's current location and political topics lessen the original's eternal relevance, others contend that these alterations enrich the play's message and increase its applicability to modern audiences. Some have argued that Bond's Lear is challenging to analyze and comprehend due to its intricate themes and metaphorical components. The play's rich and metaphorical style can be intimidating to some viewers and make it challenging to completely comprehend the play's meaning.

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