



Reflecting the power: inevitable collapse of power without moral grounding in English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This article delves into the exploration of power fragility without the foundation of integrity and ethical conduct in the examples from English literature. The reflective surface of power has been employed by authors to convey profound insights and moral story. This analysis examines the use of power and the reasons why it often becomes corrupt, highlighting its association with a lack of morality, distorted truth, duality, and the blurred boundaries between good and evil in various literary works. Through an in-depth analysis of selected texts, this study seeks to illuminate the complex interplay between power and morality, demonstrating their enduring relevance in literature.

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Hokimiyatning aks sadosi: Ingliz adabiyotida axloqiy qadriyatlarisiz qudratning muqarrar qulashi

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

hokimiyat,
ma'naviyatsizlik,
korruptsiya,
axloqiy poydevor,
tengliksizlik,
adolatsizlik,
shaxsiy va ijtimoiy
yemirilish.

Ushbu maqolada halollik va axloqiy poydevordan mahrum bo'lgan hokimiyatning zaifligi ingliz adabiyotidagi misollar asosida tahlil qilinadi. Mualliflar hokimiyatning "aks ettiruvchi yuzasi" obrazidan foydalanib, chuqur g'oyalar va axloqiy xulosalarni yetkazadilar. Ushbu tadqiqot hokimiyatdan foydalanish va uning ko'pincha nima sababdan korruptsiyaga uchrashi sabablarini tahlil qiladi hamda uni axloqsizlik, haqiqatning buzilishi, ikkiyuzlamachilik va yaxshilik bilan yomonlik o'rtasidagi chegaralarning xiralashuvi bilan bog'liqligini yoritadi. Tanlab olingan matnlarni chuqur tahlil qilish orqali ushbu maqola hokimiyat va axloq o'rtasidagi murakkab o'zaro aloqani yoritishga, ularning adabiyotdagi doimiy dolzarbligini namoyish etishga intiladi.

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Отражение власти: неизбежный крах власти при отсутствии этических принципов в английской литературе

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

власть,
аморальность,
коррупция,
этический принцип,
неравенство,
несправедливость,
личностная и социальная
деградация.

В данной статье рассматривается хрупкость власти, лишённой основы в виде честности и этических принципов, на примерах из английской литературы. Образ «отражающей поверхности» власти используется авторами для передачи глубоких идей и нравственного послания. В этом исследовании анализируется использование власти и причины, по которым она часто подвергается коррупции, с акцентом на её связь с отсутствием морали, искажением истины, двойственностью и размытыми границами между добром и злом в различных литературных произведениях. Посредством углублённого анализа выбранных текстов данная работа стремится осветить сложное взаимодействие между властью и моралью, демонстрируя их неизменную актуальность в литературе.

INTRODUCTION

Power, in isolation, is neither long-lasting nor formidable. When deprived of ethical grounding, integrity, and morality, it becomes a hollow construct that incapable of sustaining equality, justice, and legitimacy. In society and literature, the corruption of power is not only a political issue but a challenge rooted in human nature, revealing the universal weaknesses of authority when deprived of ethical grounding. English literature, with its broad moral and political landscapes, offers a rich field for examining this principle.

RELATED WORKS

Several scholars have been studied selected novels and reasons of moral corruption in the characters.

Neumann (2022) examines the novel through the lens of aestheticism, explaining the decay of his human soul as a consequence of a life free from any norms. The article argues that Dorian being an 'object of art' lets the picture take over his soul remaining his beauty, since perfection can only be achieved through art for the main character of the novel.

The analysis of Jhatakia (2013) on William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* reveals how the novel serves as a commentary on the corruption that often emerges in the pursuit of power. It examines key moments in the novel, drawing parallels to real-life events to make it accessible and relatable to readers. The analysis also raises a central question of does power itself corrupt individuals, or is the desire for greater power rooted in a human nature.

The study of Gurung (2024) examines George Orwell's works *Animal Farm* and 1984, highlighting his critique of totalitarianism and its relevance even today. By connecting the ideas about power to both historical and the modern-day context, it shows how Orwell's writing continues to warn against the dangers of absolute power.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This paper uses **qualitative textual analysis** to explore how certain works of English literature show the corruption of power when it is not supported by civility, integrity, and morality. The approach focuses on careful reading, looking closely at characters and symbols around the idea of power corruption. Particularly, how characters lose or misuse power, and symbol of death that represent power's decay.

The main materials are well-known novels:

- “The Picture of Dorian Gray” by Oscar Wilde
- “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding
- “Animal Farm” by George Orwell

These works were chosen because they all examine the dangers of power without moral grounding.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A comparative analysis is employed to draw parallels between the themes in three different novels, particularly those related to power corruption, immorality, social or individual destruction.

In addition to reading the novels, secondary sources were used like academic articles, essays, and critical studies from online databases (JSTOR, ResearchGate, and Academia.edu).

RESULTS

The analysis of the mentioned works clearly shows that when power is separated from civility and morality, it usually leads to personal or social destruction, corruption and harm.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, beauty is his power over others that allows him to be unnoticed even after all his sins, but his flawed soul that caters for only ‘aesthetic experience’ (Neumann, 2022) pays a terrible price at the end of the novel. *Lord of the Flies* shows how quickly social order can collapse when civility and shared values disappear, turning leadership into violence. *Animal Farm* similarly shows how immorality and injustice can weaken and even destroy the authorship of leaders such as James and Napoleon.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings from this work show how literature often treats power without morality. Across the novels, power is shown to corrupt societies and individuals when it is not balanced by morality and ethical norms.

The Picture of Dorian Gray. Dorian's power lies in his beauty, because it serves as a disguise. For example, when James Vane, the brother of Sibyl Vane, first encounters Dorian many years after his sister's death, he initially resolves to kill him in revenge. However, after seeing Dorian's face, still youthful since the time of Sibyl's death, James is convinced that this man cannot be the same person who treated his sister unfairly, and decides not to kill him.

“[...] for the face of the man he had sought to kill had all the bloom of boyhood, all the unstained purity of youth. He seemed little more than a lad of twenty summers, hardly older, if older indeed at all, than his sister had been when they had parted so many years ago. It was obvious that this was not the man who had destroyed her life.”

(Wilde, Chapter 16).

The sins he commits remain concealed by the unwillingness of others to associate moral corruption with such a physically perfect person as Dorian.

“Society, civilized society, at least, is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment of those who are both rich and fascinating. It feels instinctively that manners are of more importance than morals, [...].

(Wilde, Chapter 11).

People cannot believe that someone so attractive could do terrible things. People, confronted with accusations or suspicions about him, instinctively reject the possibility that Dorian could commit such vile acts.

"Dorian, this is horrible! Something has changed you completely. You look exactly the same wonderful boy who, day after day, used to come down to my studio to sit for his picture. But you were simple, natural, and affectionate then. You were the most unspoiled creature in the whole world. Now, I don't know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. [...]"

(Wilde, Chapter 9).

His beauty thus becomes a mask and powerful tool that enables him to continue his wrongdoings without being questioned. Dorian's moral corruption results in the destruction of his soul and ultimately drives him to suicide, clearly illustrating the harmful effects of a life without social and moral restraints (Neumann, 2022).

“But, surely, if one lives merely for one's self, Harry, one pays a terrible price for doing so?”

(Wilde, 168).

According to Neumann (2022) The Picture of Dorian Gray is a “test which is set up to fail” and it may show how immorality leads even a powerful person to a destruction.

LORD OF THE FLIES

Usually, a leader has been put to maintain civility and order between people. However, Jack in the novel Lord of the Flies by William Golding, becomes a corrupt person because of his addiction to absolute power, which presents the idea of authority that lacks of morals. The killing of innocent Simon and Piggy, shattering the conch, having no regret of what they have done, and brutal hunt of the pig are clear main signs of corruption in effect. Jhatakia (2013) stated “as Jack's level of power rises, his sense of responsibility decreases”. “The boys on the island don't see knowledge as power; instead, they see it more as a annoying factor” (Jhatakia, 2013). In order to eliminate all threats possible, boys kill Simon and Piggy, representatives of knowledge, peace and divinity.

“See? See? That's what you'll get! I mean that! There isn't a tribe for you anymore! The conch is gone--”

(Golding 224).

The eliminated conch, being the symbol of order, is another example of the degradation of society.

“... the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist”

(Golding 224).

ANIMAL FARM

After animal's revolution over their former master Mr. Jones, pigs, particularly Napoleon, rise to power. Initially, convinced to living in justice and equality, the animals' trust is gradually misused throughout the novel.

“He believed that he was right in saying that the lower animals on Animal Farm did more work and received less food than any animals in the county”

(Orwell 105)

The duplicity of pigs' leadership shows the depth of their corruption and power-hungry. They have become the new tyrants by silencing dissenters, being worse than their previous human oppressor, Mr. Jones.

“[...] in spite of their terror of the dogs, and of the habit, developed through long years, of never complaining, never criticizing, no matter what happened – they might have uttered some word of Protest”

(Orwell 102).

“The novel's central message is that even the most noble revolutions can be undermined by power and greed, and that the pursuit of utopia can, in practice, lead to an even harsher reality. It stands as a cautionary tale, emphasizing the need for constant vigilance against corruption”

(Gurung, 2024).

SYMBOL OF DEATH

Across all these works, the main pattern is a symbol of death that reveal the decay of a character or a social group. Death, in the mentioned novels, is a similarly repeated image that signals the start of a slow degradation of morality. For example, the death of Boxer in Animal Farm, Simon in Lord of the Flies, and Sybil Vane in The Picture of Dorian Gray all represent and warn a reader against the starting point of a degradation of moral social norms and ethical responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, power cannot endure alone. Without the guidance of civility, integrity, and morality, it loses its ability to protect justice, equality, and legitimacy, becoming a destructive tool. The narratives set in different periods that depict corrupted authority in English literature remind us that the struggle against moral decay in leadership is timeless, and its dangers threaten society.

Overall, themes of power and morality in these novels show that authors across different literary movements share a common concern. When power loses its moral compass, it not only harms the individual but can also destroy entire communities and threaten humanity.

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