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A POST-TRUTH SHAKESPEAREAN READING IN MIKE BARTLETT'S THE 47TH: TO WIN OR NOT TO WIN

Mike Bartlett'in the 47th Oyununda Post-Truth Bir Shakespeare Okuması:
Kazanmak ya da Kazanmamak

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Abstract

Lee McIntyre defines the post-truth age as a period in which, rather than determining how we might discern the truth, -the existence of reality itself became questionable. McIntyre points out that emotions perceived in this context as more important than facts. Post-truth discourse, seen as characterises European and world politics, the Iraq War, the election of Donald Trump, and Brexit ("Take Back Control"), affects presidents' actions and the fate of nations by foregrounding the insignificance of truth. The theatre offers the antidote to a world where people experience a poisoning of their auditory and visual senses by trying to show the truth. Within this context, the impetus behind this study is to demonstrate how Mike Bartlett's second future-history play, *The 47th* (2022) exemplifies Trump's struggle to regain power through propaganda and manipulating his supporters with the help of the media, echoing Shakespeare's tragic characters, specifically Richard III's rhetoric and King Lear's decisions. This paper focuses on Mike Bartlett's play to demonstrate how he uses Shakespearean motifs associated with post-truth rhetoric.

Keywords: Mike Bartlett, *The 47th*, Post-Truth, Shakespearean Reading.

Öz

Lee McIntyre, Post-Truth (hakikati değersizleştiren) çağı, hakikati nasıl ayırt edebileceğimizi belirlemekten ziyade gerçekliğin bizzat varlığının sorgulanır hale geldiği bir dönem olarak tanımlar. McIntyre, bu bağlamda duyguların gerçeklerden daha önemli olarak algılandığına dikkat çeker. Avrupa ve dünya siyasetini, Irak Savaşı'nı, Donald Trump'ın seçilmesini ve Brexit'i ("Kontrolü Geri Al") karakterize ettiği düşünülen post-truth söylem, hakikatin önemsizliğini ön plana çıkararak, başkanların eylemlerini ve ulusların kaderini etkiler. Tiyatro, hakikati göstermeye çalışarak insanların işitsel ve görsel anlamda duyularının zehirlendiği bir dünyaya panzehir sunar. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın arkasındaki itici güç, Mike Bartlett'in ikinci gelecek-tarih oyunu olan *The 47th*'in (2022)- Shakespeare'in trajik karakterlerini, özellikle Richard III'ün retoriklerini ve Kral Lear'ın kararlarını yansıtarak, Trump'ın propaganda yoluyla gücü yeniden kazanma ve destekçilerini medya yardımıyla manipüle etme mücadelesini nasıl örneklediğini göstermektedir. Bu makale, hakikat sonrası retorikle ilgili Shakespeare motiflerini nasıl kullandığını göstermek için Mike Bartlett'in *The 47th* oyununa odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mike Bartlett, *The 47th*, Hakikatin Değersizleşmesi/Hakikat Sonrası, Shakespeare Okuması.

1. DEFINITION OF POST-TRUTH

When the societies of the Ancient period, the Middle Ages or today are scrutinised, it is very difficult to find an era that can be defined as a society of truth. Decisions of Senate, rulers and kings do not command confidence (Günenç, 2020:11). The truths adopted by societies are the truths defined and implemented by state rulers. Today, lecturers, critics, artists, and playwrights are more sceptical about the truth. The insignificance of truth also impacts whole generations. The concept of post-truth was first used by Steve Tesich in 1992: “in a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world” (1992: 13). In his article “A Government of Lies”, Tesich clarifies that “We came to equate truth with bad news, and we did not want bad news anymore, no matter how true or vital to our health as a nation. We looked to our government to protect us from the truth” (1992: 12). According to Tesich, people are actually running away from the truth itself. They are running away from the channels and newspapers that report on destruction, war and corruption. They turn away from the truth because people do not want to jeopardise their comfort zone. Indicating the significance of truth, post-truth has been used to describe European and world politics, Richard Nixon's presidency, the Vietnam and Iraq Wars, the election of Donald Trump, and Brexit. It was identified as the word of the year by Oxford English Dictionary in 2016. The Oxford Dictionary defines the word as: “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” In *The Guardian*, Jonathan Freedland focusing on the relationship between lies and post-truth in politics, clarifies the word as follows: “Trump and those like him not only lie: they imply that the truth does not matter, showing a blithe indifference to whether what they say is grounded in reality and evidence” (2016). In addition to normalizing their lying, politicians exploit society's feelings without checking whether what they say is true and lie without caring about these feelings.

2. POST-TRUTH POLITICS

When post-truth politicians prioritize feelings over facts, they seize control of democratic institutions. Lecturers, scholars, and even artists who lie and make up stories for the media, all deconstruct reality and truth, thereby promoting post-truth politics. “The post-truth on mass immigration is that it's driven people who want a piece of our pie but who don't understand the values of doing the right thing'-hard work, family life and self-advancement. The post truth is that the media lie whenever the reported

facts are inconvenient” (Kinna, 2017: 6). Misinformation and propaganda characterise historical periods that correspond to post-truth politics. d’Ancona (2017) gives examples of politicians’ lies focusing on British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Blair’s Iraq War record puts him in serious trouble. In response to the Iraq War and the fake and fabricated evidence justifying the war, the British changed the prime minister’s surname from ‘Blair’ to ‘Bliar.’ (26). Another political leader who did not hesitate to lie is George W. Bush. Bush invaded Iraq with the rhetoric of ‘bringing universal core values to Iraq’ and ‘liberating Iraq.’ Bush demonstrated his readiness for invasion with the assertion that Saddam produced weapons of mass destruction.

Colin Wight analyses post-truth rhetoric as follows: “Post-truth resides not in the realm of production, but in the realm of reception. If lies, dissembling, spinning, propaganda and the production of bullshit have always been part and parcel of politics, then what has changed is how publics respond to them” (2018: 22). The change can be seen clearly in the public reaction to Trump’s rhetoric during his election and after his loss, where protests arose, among the angrier and, at times, violent segments of U.S. society. The rhetoric and, in turn, the backlash of public support was no longer based on Trump’s quoting of the truth but on how the public acted on emotions rather than reason in response to his statements.

Donald Trump is accepted as the most critical actor in post-truth politics and is even called the first president of the post-truth period. Compared to previous presidents, Trump has been described as the most prolific liar in the modern United States history (Güneç, 2020: 70). A key reason behind Trump’s victory in the 2016 elections is that he emotionally manipulated his voters with the help of the media (Hermida, 2016, Wagner and Boczkowski, 2019). Trump’s method, the language he uses, is entirely different. Trump’s method differs significantly, as he does not rely on existing language conventions but rather deconstructs them, and presents ‘alternative facts’ to those who then support Trump even more resoundingly. Analyses by PolitiFact, an independent research and monitoring institution, have revealed the seriousness of the situation. “PolitiFact rated 69 per cent of Donald Trump’s statements during the US presidential election as lies or mostly lies. For his rival Hilary Clinton, this rate was 26 per cent” (Şen and Taşdelen, 2020: 13). The Watergate Scandal, Brexit and, the election of Donald Trump may have been as political and social conditions preparing the post-truth period that shapes the present era. Casper Grathwohl describes the relationship between the era and post-truth discourse:

“It’s not surprising that our choice of reflects a year dominated by highly charged political and social discourse. Fuelled by the rise of social media as a new source and a growing distrust of facts offered up by the establishment, post-truth as a concept has been finding its linguistic footing for some time” (qtd in Flood 2016).

Murat Baç (2020: 18) refers to the Greek-derived concept of casistocracy, which corresponds to the opposite of the concept of aristocracy, and the Trump administration, which includes neither virtuous rulers nor the concept of morality, and easily devalues the truth. Drakakis refers to “Religion, economics, politics, domestic life, even language, all of which the modern world continues to conveniently separate as distinct fields of social and intellectual activity” (2020: 12). Political language is threatened because if language is used for lying then concepts of truth, honesty and virtue in social structures can be deconstructed.

The reality and truth that could not be reached in the politics of the new era lost their importance. They were replaced by irrational voter behaviors that matched perfectly with the politicians who defended their identity. These voters followed the populist leaders and gave their political will to them (Alpay, 2020: 14-16). Focusing on theoretical conceptualisation by some distinctive theorists, this study analyses that the play offers an alternative and autonomous interpretation of post-truth and portrays a Shakespearean reading. In the following part of the study, this paper focuses on Mike Bartlett’s play *The 47th* to demonstrate how he uses Shakespearean motifs related to post-truth discourse.

3. THE 47TH

Seven years after *King Charles III*, Mike Bartlett wrote his second future-history play, *The 47th*, in Shakespearean blank verse, about a succession crisis (Benedict 2022). Jill Lawless clarifies Shakespearean motifs in Mike Bartlett’s play: “The theatre piece is written in deliberately Bard-like blank verse and alludes to Shakespearean plots. One moment Trump is like King Lear, deciding which of his children deserves to succeed him; the next he is Richard III, scheming to seize the crown” (2022). Maryam Philpott, on the other hand, expresses how Bartlett's latest play has the particular characteristics of *Charles III* and draws on a Shakespearean structures: “Bartlett sets himself the same challenges as he did with Charles III, setting almost the entire play in iambic pentameter and drawing on grand Shakespearean structures to shape this story of dynastic rivalry, power, war and hubris” (2022). As Shakespeare uses in many of his plays, Bartlett uses

iambic pentameter “to point up the disparity between petty-minded behaviour and grandiose dreams of a return to power” (Benedict, 2022).

The 47th, which premiered at the London Old Vic Theatre in 2022, continued to be staged until 28 May 2022. The play deals with the period after Trump's four years of solitary exile: “To four years lonely exile here, four years” (Bartlett, 2022: 10). At the same time, Republicans are on the threshold of nominating a new Republican nominee “to take on President Biden in the 2024 election” (Crompton, 2022). Trump, who enters the stage in a golf cart, starts the play by referring to Richard III: “I know, I know. You hate me. So much right? My face, this hair, my wife, you loathe the way” (Crompton 2022, Bartlett, 2022: 9). The first part of Act One also echoes *King Lear*. In a setup similar to the first scene in which King Lear tries to divide his land among his daughters, Trump discusses the division of his fortune between his three eldest children, Don Jr, Eric and Ivanka:

*“Attention wanes, let’s speak ‘bout why I called
You here. For I’ve been thinking hard upon
My legacy. To whom I’ll leave it all.
Tradition would suggest I share myself
Between all three, in equal measure bound
With equal love. ...
Just one alone will be my right heir” (Barlett, 2022: 11-12).*

Don JR and Eric answer why they will be King Lear’s legitimate heirs just as Goneril and Regan, however, Ivanka answers: Nothing, Father. Trump: Nothing? Ivanka Nothing” (13), mirroring the conversation between Cordelia and Lear about the division of Lear’s kingdom: Cordelia: “Nothing, my lord, Lear: Nothing?, Cordelia: Nothing. Lear: Nothing will come of nothing” (Wells and Taylor, 1998: 945) in *King Lear*. However, Ivanka's situation is different from Cordelia’s. Identical to King Lear, Trump wants to fard his three children, Donald Jr, Eric, and Ivanka, are all potentially in line for the role of heir, and Ivanka earns this dubious honour. In the second act Trump, along with his appointed heir Ivanka, play a political trick on Ted Cruz, who thought that Trump would support him, humiliating Cruz with rhetorical discourse. As Demetrios Matheou (2022) puts it “After he pledges his endorsement of an oleaginous Ted Cruz as a Republican nominee, like Richard III he confides in the audience his intention”:

*“Trump: Our Ted? Well he’s an honourable man.
He’s honourable in so many ways.
So when he fought me in the primaries
He said awful things about me, yeah,*

*'A liar pathological', that too,
Until he saw how many votes I got!' (37).*

Trump's ardent supporters help him do his dirty work. He steals the Republican nomination from Ted Cruz for himself (Crompton, 2022) because he sees himself as vastly superior, which reflects his narcissistic personality. In the last act of the tragedy *Richard III*, while Richard is praying for mercy, he also does not realize that he will be a reflection of later ages and guide Donald Trump: "What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by. Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I" (Wells and Taylor, 1998: 218). Trump, as the reflection of Richard, says that "Sorry losers and haters, but my I.Q. is one of the highest -and you all know it! Please don't feel so stupid or insecure; it's not your fault" (@realDonaldTrump, May 8 2013). Corresponding to Richard, who manipulates society to claim the throne, Trump tries to control everyone with his tweets and fake news. Despite being a billionaire with a considerable fortune, Trump acts the role of a citizen worn out by his political rivals, pretending to be a victim and victimized by the media. After getting the throne, Richard sees everyone around him as a threat and decides to abolish everyone killing his wife and his nephews. With his rhetoric, Trump claims he is going through the most hardworking, successful, and politically powerful period and is still greatly supported by society. He says he will not avoid a victorious war and bloodshed to regain the presidency and defeat Kamala Harris:

*"Harris. It's like you want your own defeat.
Trump. There's not much fun in only selling cars
To little ladies who'll pay sticker price.
I want a battle, blood and glorious war.
A vict'ry earned not seized and you- (Bartlett, 2022: 94).*

As in *King Lear*, Trump corrupts himself and his supporters by pitting his three children for his heir and deceiving those who believe in his rhetoric. While describing himself as a simple and straight man like Richard, he criticizes the current government by calling for 'more freedom' so as to 'make America great again'. However, Kamala Harris rejects Trump's claims and explains Trump's lies and the torrid time for the country:

*"Harris: Your faults are many yes, so why don't we
Revert the question back on you? Despite
Your claims to make us great, you left us with
A state of sorry disarray.
With China stronger, nothing done in North
Korea, and Covid deaths all soaring high. So what*

*Besides corrupted pardons, and some golf,
Did you achieve?" (72).*

Harris points out that Trump's political language is dangerous and consists of lies. Biden wants to appoint vice president Kamala Harris as the Democratic candidate against Trump and to lead the country as the 47th president: "I will resign tonight; you will accede, which means that with the twenty-fifth you will be made The forty-seventh" (57). After Harris' presidential candidacy is announced, Trump's heir Ivanka begins to campaign for the election:

*"Ivanka: Okay. Okay, well here's the plan. It's very clear.
Once heard, you'll have a choice. You're in. Or out.
The president will run again and win.
And standing as his running mate will be
A loyal, diverse, and energetic choice
In fact I was his instinct years ago" (47).*

Trump, on the other hand, encourages violence during protests. Trump's statements do not always reflect the truth; however, he shares everything with his supporters. Trump's supporters follow him not out of a sense of belief in him personally but rather out of a desire to buy into the story he has created: "Trump emulated the rhetorical device of lies used by politicians but as many have documented. Trump has always relied on lies to grow the stature of his public and business persona" (Boles, 2022: 9).

Bartlett also includes the candidate announcement and debate during the play, part of the presidential election process in the United States followed closely across the globe. Kamala Harris and Donald Trump participate in a debate in a live broadcast accompanied by a moderator. Trump's effort to effectively use discursive strategies such as the self-deprecation seen in the 2020 presidential elections, verbal attacks on the other candidate, the defensive style of blaming the opposite candidate and improving his own image (Nguyen and Sawalmeh, 2020) are all observed in Mike Bartlett's play.

Trump conducts himself in the presidential debate in an emotion-focused and subjective manner. In addition, he uses informal, everyday language, puts forward conspiracy theories, and suggests in a reply to Kamala Harris that there is evidence of electoral fraud without presenting that evidence:

*"Harris. After four years and many millions put in.
What evidence have all your people found*

To offer proof of electoral fraud?

Trump. We've evidence. A lot of evidence.

Harris. That's great. So can we see it then?

Trump. You... Sure.

Harris. You'll put it on your website/then, so we-

Trump. I've got another one for you.

Harris. Okay. The subject's changed" (70).

Their dialogue underscores the play's exploration of the phenomenon of post-truth politics, where emotions and subjective narratives often take precedence over objective facts. Ignoring the criticisms of his own time in office, Trump claims that Biden and Harris have achieved nothing, mentioning the Biden-era Covid law, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, and suggesting they have taken the country far back from the achievements of his presidency.

Harris states that while the debate continues, masked supporters of Trump have started protests across the country, and adds that if there is a public violation, they will intervene. On the other hand, Trump says that the protesters are reasonable people and just show their love for him. Emphasising that Americans will rule America, Trump wants to impose his own rules. A pro-Trump protester named Paul corners the character Charlie, who supports Harris, and forces him to tell the truth. The truth referred to is not the existing truth but the truth he wants to hear. Although Charlie claims to be telling the truth by checking sources and evidence, Paul forces Charlie to say such statements as "crooked Hillary. Her murdering husband. Stolen election. The Capitol and The vaccine" (77). Such oppression and coercion lead to violence and death without end, and the actions of Trump's supporters soon to reach an uncontrollable point. Thereupon, FBI and CIA officials and advisers arrange a meeting with Kamala Harris to assess the situation. In the conversation, Harris' advisers say that failure to, intervene will lead to significantly more loss of life, so Trump should be arrested as soon as possible. Actually the scene in the play can be understood as foreshadowing, because on March 18, 2023, the BBC pointed out that Trump may be arrested the following week, leading to Elon Musk tweeting in response that "if this happens, Trump will be re-elected in a landslide victory" in his tweet. In the play, Trump, who has raised militia and caused a bloody uprising, is arrested by Harris' order: "Lock him up" (Bartlett, 2022: 81). On the Trump side, Eric and Don Jr share their concerns with heir Ivanka, expressing that the crowds are armed and that if the protests continue in blood, the honour of the family will be forever tarnished.

On the one hand, Ivanka's siblings are critical and do not support their father due to his current actions and for his past attitudes. On the other hand, Ivanka expresses that even though her father is in prison; Trump trusts the mobs that support him, and the mobs must continue their actions to maintain Trump's visibility. Sarah Crompton establishes this moment as disclosing the intertextual relationship between Bartlett and Shakespeare: "It's then that the way in which it is shaped by the history plays is most fully revealed. Like Shakespeare, Bartlett is interested in the central question of what makes a good free society, in the tension between autocracy and liberty, in the key underpinnings of the state, the compromises imposed by power, the dangers of the mob" (2022). While Trump's sons want to be free and choose to live free, Ivanka represents the autocracy and Trump represents casistocracy. Ivanka, Trump and his administration actually deconstruct the truth alongside Eric and Don Jr's liberties. Ivanka accuses her brothers, who owe everything to their father of betrayal: "For your father's property, and if you will betray his love you must reject his gifts as well... and if you try to speak again to anyone about our father or myself, that roof above your heads will go as well, is all that clear?" (Bartlett, 2022: 85-86). Ivanka's words epitomise a reversal of angle from Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*. Ivanka describes her siblings as benevolent sons, like Lear's two daughters, or like Edmund, the bastard son of Gloucester. He expresses that he will reflect Trump's anger as he reflects Lear's anger. Ivanka, echoing Gloucester's loyalty to Lear, shows her loyalty to her father. However, both Ivanka and Gloucester cannot see the truth.

In the final act, after Trump is released from prison, he meets with Ivanka at her home in Washington to assess the situation. In their exchange, Trump expresses that great leaders such as Thatcher, Churchill, and Reagan have a brutality that people have come to love: "For all great leaders have a ruthlessness the people grow to love, yes Thatcher, Churchill, Reagan, all the kings from years ago Ivanka" (101). Prioritizing feelings over facts and deconstructing the truth, fear, lies, and propaganda create this brutality and post-truth politics. By referring to Machiavelli's *Prince*, which he confesses that he has not read because he found it too long and has only looked at the summary; Trump tries to explain how power should be consolidated through violence and intimidation to protect it and the throne. Like Richard III, who tried to deflect attention from his murders and make himself look more credible by talking about other people and their crimes during the War of the Roses, Trump deceives those around him with morally corrupt rhetoric and manipulates everyone in order to become the ultimate power figure, as an example of the Machiavellian type of leader. With fake news and lies Trump

tries to increase his power. Within this context, Richard III and Donald Trump subdue the truth through their narratives and rhetoric. They reinforce their campaigns by mobilizing emotions of fear and outrage (post-truth discourse) to gain critical power. As Daniel Talamantes reminds us, “Richard III was the last of the Yorkists, defeated in battle against Edward VI, the first Tudor” (2016). In Bartlett’s play, Donald Trump was defeated by Kamala Harris and died at the end of the play.

In the same way that Shakespeare depicts the pathology of a man ready to sacrifice everything to attain power and authority (Talamantes, 2016), Mike Bartlett portrays Donald Trump, who manipulates his supporters to be president again. Bartlett remarks that “I have known for a while that Trump was sort of a Shakespearean archetype, in the way that Charles was...and Trump, as a sort of seductive, show-biz, bitter, iconic figure is also quite Shakespearean-quite Richard III” (Mead, 2022). On a physical and emotional level, Trump can be compared to Richard III, who seized power by dominating the British political system, stirring up resentment among the nobility, and trying to appear as a virtuous, modest man to his fellow citizens (*How President Trump is Like Richard the Third*, 2019). Similar to Richard III, who dominated the British political system, Trump has seized power and aims to seize it once again by creating tensions between his own party’s and the Democrats’ nominees and by trying to appear like an honest man despite the lies he tells his citizens.

Near the end of the play Trump, in a military uniform, prepares for a military coup with his soldiers and guns. Despite Trump’s insistence, Ivanka does not wear the military uniform because she does not support the election, which is based on lies and will be won by the coup, but expresses that she is happy to be the heir to a great legacy. However, she does not support her father’s actions and believes every way should be tried to win: “That all relationships must be in play and so in play, must there be played, to win” (Bartlett, 2022: 114). She believes that her father’s attempted coup will fail, and as opposed to Cordelia in *King Lear*, she will take the throne herself. His trusted heir, Ivanka, does not go to the hospital after Trump’s accident and while her father is still alive because ‘death is his only legacy’. After Trump dies, she goes to the hospital. The emphasis on freedom in his speech with Kamala reflects the only truth in the play. Ivanka is now relieved to be the only strong and free heir. While Harris thinks that she will relax more in her speech at the end of the play, her question indicates that the dark and sinister days are not over, and that the danger may continue: “Should I have feared his daughter more?” (126).

4. CONCLUSION

Narratives of dynastic rivalry, power, war, and arrogance may be observed with Trump, just as with Shakespeare's tragic characters King Lear and Richard III. At the same time, his rhetoric and lies destroy his followers and his presidency. The characters in Shakespeare's two tragedies collapse under the weight of their bad choices or actions because they either lose their minds or go bad beyond borders. Richard III inexcusably resorts to slaughter without considering the children and is punished even if he ascends the throne. As in Shakespeare's plays, obedience and loyalty are demanded in blood; Bartlett's in the 47th demands obedience and fidelity in blood; they are however rarely given without resentment (Philpott, 2022). Trump may not commit murder, but he kills the truth with his lies and takes his place in history as the most effective post-truth leader.

The 47th is about Trump's denial of the election results after losing the presidency in 2020, the presidency he had won four years earlier with his post-truth discourse. Trump and his post-truth rhetoric caused attacks on the Capitol and the country's turn to civilian political violence. The resulting power struggle becomes the story of Bartlett's play. Bartlett tries to clarify how political power affects every single person's life through post-truth discourse. To analyse this discourse, he chooses to use the power of theatre and Shakespearean form because theatre asks and will go on asking existential questions: "Why were American people fascinated by Trump? How could he persistently lie before and during election?. Bartlett asserts that Trump "just writes himself. He is hilarious and devastating. And this has opened my eyes to exactly what his rhetorical tactics are, where his wit is, where he's intelligent, and where he's not intelligent" (Sherwood, 2022). In the play, Bartlett analyses Trump's behaviours and tendencies through the behaviours and tendencies of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, King Lear and Richard III. Just as both characters have prepared their ends, so is Trump preparing his own. The rhetoric he built on manipulation, like that of Richard III in particular, brought the end of Trump. When the latest news in March 2023 about Trump is examined, it is clear that Mike Bartlett is not wrong about Trump's intelligence.

5. SUMMARY

The concept of post-truth was first used by Steve Tesich in 1992: "in a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world" (1992: 13). Oxford Dictionary defines the term post-truth as: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which

objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” So post-truth politicians prioritize feelings over facts, they grab control of democratic institutions. Misinformation and propaganda characterise historical periods that correspond to post-truth politics. The change can be seen clearly in the public reaction to Trump's rhetoric during his election and after his loss, where protests arose, among the angrier and, at times, violent segments of U.S. society. Donald Trump is the most critical actor in post-truth politics and is even called the first president of the post-truth period. Compared to previous presidents, he has been described as the most terrific liar in the modern history of United States. Within this context, this paper focuses on Mike Barlett's play *The 47th* to demonstrate how he uses Shakespearean motifs related to post-truth discourse. In *The 47th*, Bartlett scrutinises Trump's behaviours and tendencies through the behaviours and tendencies of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, King Lear and Richard III. *The 47th* is about Trump's denial of the election results after losing the presidency in 2020, the presidency he had won four years earlier with his post-truth discourse. Trump and his post-truth rhetoric caused attacks on the Capitol and the country's turn to civilian political violence. *The 47th* exemplifies Trump's struggle to regain power through propaganda and manipulating his supporters with the help of the media, echoing Shakespeare's tragic characters, specifically Richard III's rhetoric and King Lear's decisions. This paper focuses on Mike Bartlett's play to demonstrate how he uses Shakespearean motifs related to post-truth rhetoric.

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