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Constructive Power and Discordant Discourses in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

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ABSTRACT The present paper aims to focus on how the circuit of different discourses in Alexandria and Rome contributes to the subject formation in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Identity, which acts as trap in this play, precipitates the characters from two different countries or contexts into a war through creating binarized categories with heterogeneous possibilities. Mark Antony – one of the Triumvirs of Rome in search for self-actualization strives against his country's discourse in the beginning, he places himself in the warring discourses of Rome and Alexandria. When in Alexandria, he is inside the discourses of Rome, and when in Rome, he is inside the discourses of Alexandria. Like the nature of the signifier as it can happen and be determined by other contexts, Antony retains references to Rome when he is Alexandria, and establishes himself as a subject and makes his signification possible in this foreign country by relating himself to epicurean concepts other than his own former stoic attitudes. Thus, mark of the past element remains in him. Through discourse analysis, this study aims to analyze how the loop of selfhood is firmly tied by the signifiers, and how power, which is not solely negative and repressive, but positive and productive, shapes Antony's capricious personality as he both challenges and is challenged by power. In the end it is revealed that Mark Anthony refashions his identity and perspective by admitting and embracing multiplicity between Rome's stoicism and Alexandria's Epicureanism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional thinkers tended to view identity as independent and self-contained which was a notion of reason as free from established customs and locally dominant authority (Taylor, 1939). An example can be John Locke term "punctual self" in seventeenth century, and it was a way of objectifying component of our subjective experience (Taylor, 1939). Saussurean concept of *langue* generated a system from which all narratives would be drawn, ignoring each narrative as *parole* in itself. Their aim was to seek a universal code, based on Noam Chomsky's "universal grammar" (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2007)

Poststructuralism with its respect for local multiplicity, for the plurality of people's way of life tended to decline universalizing and stabilizing notions of narratives. It has rejected "grand narratives" in favor of "local narratives." Notwithstanding Poststructuralism acceptance of notion of 'constructedness of texts' mentioned by Structuralism, it denied structure's possibility for gaining final meaning. Unlike what structuralism believed as existence of a stable relationship between signifier and the signified, Post-structuralism postulated that every signified could be viewed as a signifier. Meaning was deferred in the direction of endless chain of signifiers (Edward Said, 2001). Thus, to see how multiplicity contributes to our latitude so that we could delve more into the stark differences in contexts that forge Antony's identity as a trap, we tend to refer to discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis is quintessential for understanding the concept of power which has been hotly debated among different schools of thought like that of Marxism. As Foucault states 'power is always already there,' that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break with the style to gambol in (Foucault, 1980).

Universal attitude towards this play fails to understand the warring perspectives underlying the discourse analysis helps us analyze how local outlooks dominate two different countries.

Vast leaps in perspectives help to create portrait of characters and local multiplicities, and constitute one of the *Antony and Cleopatra's* famous characteristics. This unique play of Shakespeare make such vast leaps, from one edge of the known world to the other, and back again. Leaps in space parallel the jumps in discourses of each country: for example, in scene four and five, we get two completely different descriptions of Antony compared to other scenes before.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* we leap from Egypt to Rome, and we encounter acknowledged discourses each country tends to live by. The play Begins in Alexandria where portraits Antony indulging himself in the royalty, life of senses and pleasure, he is quite epicurean in comparison with stoicism which resides in Rome as the play shows. In Epicureanism, a system philosophy based on the teachings of Epicurus, *senses* are the first criterion of truth. Contrary to Epicureanism, Stoicism is about the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions (Russell, 254).

In this play we are confronted with highly fickle perspectives percolated through the play, which tend to find a stability triggered by the very power. We tend to show that the power in which *Antony* himself resides is not venom to demolish him or the other characters without causing them to resist and seek for reason in their lives; all the characters in this play both challenge and are challenged by power in a dialectical manner, and this way Antony comes to confess how he has found who he is before he dies.

2. ANTONY AS BRICOLAGE

Antony is a center from which Shakespeare's play emanates, however, he is an unstable center composed of contrary customs, and believes, and attitudes that substitute one another during the journeys he takes to Rome and Alexandria.

Claude Lévi-Strauss used bricolage to characterize the common patterns of mythological thought in contrast with engineer's creative thinking. According to Strauss, mythological thought utilizes available materials again to solve new problems (The Stavage Mind, 1966). If *bricolage* involves the need to borrow one's concepts, from the very heritage one is challenging, *every* discourse is *bricoleur* (Derrida, 1978).

The opposite of the *bricoleur*, who works gradually and in an experimental manner, would be the *engineer*, someone who visualizes and designs his whole project in advance, constructing "the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon" (ibid). But as far as discourse is concerned, such an engineer is a myth: a subject who would be the "absolute origin of his own discourse," constructing it out of nothing (ibid).

Antony's fickle and unstable identity is amalgamation of the opposites, he doesn't seem to have control over himself and is tantalized by discourses' cruel play, he is not the engineer of his own identity, and every contingent event drives in different directions. So, to look further on how differing concepts defer Antony's identity and make him a bricolage, we analyze dominant discourses:

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, two dominant discourses exist from which the signification of life of the characters originates; the way the characters tend to look at the world, their experiences of life is shaped by them. They are epicurean discourse and stoic discourse that can be elucidated in respect to *Epicureanism* and *Stoicism*.

There are three criteria of truth in Epicurean epistemology: sensations (*aisthêsis*), preconceptions (*prolepsis*), and feelings (*pathê*). The first criteria of truth are sensations (*aisthêsis*), Epicurus recognized sensations as the 'direct physical contacts between the living being and the external physical reality' (DeWitt, 1954, 134). In order to achieve this aim, he argued that sense-perceptions are always true, although our judgements about them can be false. *Prolepsis* can be translated as "basic understanding" like the word "man" since everybody has a preconceived notion of that. Feelings (*pathê*) provide man with a direct insight into the operations of nature, which is why anything congenial to nature is experienced as pleasurable, while anything uncongenial is experienced as pain (Laertes, 10, 34). Epicurus takes this as irrefutable evidence that the goal of life is the active removal of pain.

In the beginning of the play, it is ascertained that Antony is a pleasure seeker without considering any measure. The play starts with *Philo*, friends of Antony, mentioning how Antony has grown immoderate:

His captain's heart, which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst the buckles on his breast, reneges all temper

Cleopatra asks Antony to determine the measure of his love towards her, but whatever comes to senses are deemed to be true for epicurean attitude, having a measure of something is not pleasant, it falls into the realm of reason, it is this basic preconception that Antony sticks to, he doesn't intend to expatiate upon the concept love, it is what he already knows masterfully, or it is what can be viewed as the prolepsis in Epicureanism:

CLEOPATRA. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

ANTONY. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.

CLEOPATRA. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

ANTONY. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth. (I, I, 13-16).

Following this conversation, a messenger enters with the news of Rome, but Antony dismisses him, not even bothering himself to be cognizant of conditions of Rome, it is not congenial to the situation that he is. Antony goes on to clarify his goal in life so as to ward off any trouble that might ail his current life with Cleopatra in Alexandria, and his Dionysian inclination. It is *pathê* which Antony voices:

ANTONY. Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch of the rang'd empire fall!

Here is my space.

Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike

Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life

Is to do thus [emhracing], when such a mutual pair

And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,

On pain of punishment, the world to weet

We stand up peerless.

Throughout the play the characters are in state of flux, particularly those who experience both Alexandria and Rome, with their warring discourses; how characters are considered as subject is important; therefore, we intend to look at the exposition of the notion of the term “sign,” “signifier,” and “signified.”

The sign, which unites signifier (the word or sound-image “table”) and (Signified (the concept of “table”) refers to an actual object in the world. Saussure sees no inner or natural relationship between signifier and the signifier, the bond hinges upon collective behavior or convention, so the relation is what he designates as arbitrary (Saussure, 1966).

In part II of his *Course*, Saussure goes on to explicate the essential link between thought and language. He views thought as formless prior to thought, i.e. there are no ideas, he insists, before the appearance of language (ibid).

Informed by Saussure's treatment of language, Jacques Derrida unravels the oppositions which have enjoyed the privileged place in Western Metaphysics. Derrida points out binarized categories such as soul and body, master and slave, female and male as “violent hierarchy”. Unlike Saussure's notion of signified, Derrida views posits signified as a mirage caused by our position within language, he goes on to view signified as essentially trace in the position of signifier. The mirage of presence of signified is created by the signifier:

Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived. (Derrida, 1976).

Switching scenes from Rome to Alexandria elucidates the opaque function of signifier, and how context bound it is. The immediacy of the assumed signifier is subordinated to the diaphaneity

of the signified, for instance, the signifier “love” is assumed as unworldly that cannot be measured and known, it can be shown in the conversation between Antony and Cleopatra in ACT I. SCENE I.

However, when the context changes, love will be the measure for solving the strife between Antony and Caesar when Agrippa comes up with the idea of the marriage between Antony and Octavia, it is means to an end:

AGRIPPA. To hold you in perpetual amity,
 To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts
 With an unslipping knot, take Antony
 Octavia to his wife; whose beauty claims
 No worse a husband than the best of men;
 Whose virtue and whose general graces speak
 That which none else can utter. By this marriage
 All little jealousies, which now seem great,
 And all great fears, which now import their dangers,
 Would then be nothing. Truths would be tales,
 Where now half tales be truths. Her love to both
 Would each to other, and all loves to both,
 Draw after her. Pardon what I have spoke;
 For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
 By duty ruminated. (II , II, 132-144).

In order to know more about the way the truth in which characters live is context-bound, we intend to analyze Stoicism:

Occurring at the same time with Epicureanism, Stoicism, founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in early third century (Russel, 242). The Stoics posited that knowledge can be obtained through the use of reason. Stoicism teaches the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of rising above destructive emotions; the philosophy maintains that becoming a clear and impartial thinker allows one to fathom the universal reason (logos). A primary aspect of Stoicism involves improving the individual's ethical and moral well-being (Russell, p.254). Truth can be distinguished from fallacy for stoics; even if, in practice, only an approximation can be made (Laërtius, 2000, VII.49).

In contrast to Egypt, Rome embodies pain, business, duty, discipline, austerity, care, factiousness, the head, and the life of calculation. Rome has its absolute orders and demands. Roman Antony's actions and manners, and his responses to these demands are just the opposite of Alexandria when he has a conversation with Octavia:

'I have not kept my square, but that to come / Shall all be done by the rule' [II, III, 6-7]. These two opposite lands, with their differing customs, imagery become the ground pattern of the play's meaning. As is clear when Antony talks in retrospect, he wants to embrace the rule, it is as if his personality has undergone a dramatic change since the beginning of the play, he is inside the discourse of Rome, and stoic attitude is lucid the way he talks to Octavia. Mystery, strangeness, infinite possibilities have dwelled in Alexandria; Rome of that which is fixed, known, calculable, predictable. The Nile presents source of all life forms, but the Tiber is merely a river on which to launch warships. Rome is rigidly male, Egypt seductively female, Egypt is linked with pleasure, holiday, sport, excess, intoxication, extravagance, conviviality, the heart, and the life of the senses.

Antony comes from a world of duty, where power means responsibility. Cleopatra sees royalty as an entitlement to the fullest pleasures life and wealth can offer. She does not come from anything remotely approaching the traditions of the Roman Republic; her lineage, for centuries, has been royal. She can mistreat others as she sees fit, because she is dealing with subjects, while a Roman, even one in power, is dealing with citizens, when a messenger arrives from Rome. For instance, Cleopatra toys with the poor man as a cat with a mouse, promising rich reward for good news and punishment for bad news:

CLEOPATRA: Antony's dead! If thou say so, villain,
 Thou kill'st thy mistress; but well and free,
 If thou so yield him, there is gold, and here
 My bluest veins to kiss- a hand that kings
 Have lipp'd, and trembled kissing. (II, V, 26-29)

Egypt is changeless compared to Rome, far older, and with a far more stable and static structure of power; by this time, pharaohs have ruled Egypt for three thousand years. Cleopatra does not need to do anything to earn her throne. Not once do we see Cleopatra making an important, effective decision of state. Rule means pleasure; the contrast is not only to Antony, but to Octavius, who would surely use power for different ends. Throughout the play Antony's multiple changes of attitude between Alexandria's epicureanism and Rome's stoicism make it hard to define his nature of being; he is moving between these two discourses until he is dead.

Between this dichotomy, by relating themselves to others, characters make signification possible by letting themselves be weakened by mark of their relation to the future element, thereby constructing signified by means of this relation to what is not. Thus, as a bricolage, Antony is the locus of two contrary discourses, in one scene he borrows his concepts from what he is challenging. In another word, Rome provides the heritage of his words, or his understanding about the world, as already explained, thought is formless prior to language. Antony, unlike Cleopatra, moves between two contrary places, and by confronting two different languages, it is lucidly shown how signifiers are subordinated to be transitory context bound signified by means of the other. The effects of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside of them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason (Young, 1981,48). As can be seen throughout the play, Antony's friends cannot understand the way he indulges himself in Alexandria's epicurean way of life, Philo, as a Roman cannot fathom this epicurean attitude of Antony, and calls him a fool:

Look where they come!
 Take but good note, and you shall see in him
 The triple pillar of the world transform'd
 Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see (I, I, 12-13)

As mentioned before, it is impossible to think outside of discourse, Antony tries to free himself from stoic life of Rome, but as soon as messenger lets him to know about the conditions of Rome, particularly his wife's death Fulvia, he dramatically changes his views, and it is clear that he can never get out of Rome's discourse:

These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
 Or lose myself in dotage. (I, II, 125)

3. POWER

Although Antony and other characters are bound to the prevailing discourses of Rome and Alexandria, they are not just like a puppet to be controlled in a certain and predetermined way, we intend to show how power is dialectic through which the characters both challenge and are challenged by it. Thus, we refer to Foucault's view towards power and how he finds it positive and productive. He vehemently utters this point in the following passage:

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1977).

To see how positive power can be, and how it brings forth a set of moral principles and values, we tend to look at the conversation between Pompey and Menas. Following drunken celebration on Pompey's galley, Menas comes up with the idea of killing the three triumvirs and Pompey making himself ruler of Rome. However, Pompey turns it down, and finds it dishonorable. Notwithstanding the power with its enticement, Pompey resists the suggestion:

MENAS. These three world-sharers, these competitors,
Are in thy vessel. Let me cut the cable;
And when we are put off, fall to their throats.
All there is thine.

POMPEY. Ah, this thou shouldst have done,
And not have spoke on't. In me 'tis villainy:
In thee't had been good service. Thou must know
'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour:
Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue
Hath so betray'd thine act. Being done unknown,
I should have found it afterwards well done,
But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink. (II, VII, 77-87)

How Pompey abstains from this opportunity of being a ruler needs further analysis in terms of the notion of resistance. Foucault finds resistance not in a position of exteriority in relation to power; therefore, for Foucault power is is “coextensive with resistance; productive, producing positive effects; it is ubiquitous, it can be found in every kind of relationship, as a condition of the possibility of any kind of relationship.” (Kelly, 38).

As it is clear in from the preceding conversation, power is *productive* of truths, rights, and the conceptualization of individuals through discourse. The importance of discourse is evident, it is due to stoic attitude of Pompey that the suggestion of slaughtering the three triumvirs doesn't happen. Pompey would have found Menas's act 'good service' if he had done it without his awareness, however, he finds Menas's act vile since honor is graver and far more critical than just the throne. Honor is relative in Rome, but in Alexandria rule is essential, it originates from itself, the ruler is like a god or goddess who decrees the values himself/herself. In Rome, as mentioned before, people are viewed as citizen, but in Alexandria they are subjects. This results in a mutual definition of state between authorities and people, but this relativity doesn't have any meaning as regards Alexandria, since no reciprocal definition is defined. So, what would happen if Pompey were an Alexandrian and killed the three triumvirs?

Throughout the play we see how parochial and narrow minded Antony acts. In one scene he seems like a Roman, in another as an Alexandrians, but these unstable states reach a rather stable state between two different countries' prevailing discourses through resistance to power. It seemed as if he reconciled two warring sides in him when he prepared to battle against Octavian in IV, II:

ANTONY. To-morrow, soldier,
By sea and land I'll fight. Or I will live,
Or bathe my dying honour in the blood
Shall make it live again. Woo't thou fight well?

ANTONY. Ho, ho, ho! (IV, II, 4-6)

The passage above shows how his stoic side still remains, and the passage below shows his epicurean side and how he intends to drown himself in festivity and enjoy the fleeting moments:

Antony: Now the witch take me if I meant it thus!
Grace grow where those drops fall! My hearty friends,
You take me in too dolorous a sense;
For I spake to you for your comfort, did desire you
To burn this night with torches. Know, my hearts,
I hope well of to-morrow, and will lead you
Where rather I'll expect victorious life
Than death and honour. Let's to supper, come,
And drown consideration. Exeunt (IV, II, 37-44)

4. CONCLUSION

When read for the first time, *Antony and Cleopatra* seems to be a play about thirst for power in which there is a victor, Octavian, and the vanquished, Antony and Cleopatra. But there is more to this play than meets the eye. By analyzing contrasting outlooks of two countries Rome and Alexandria, it became ascertained that this play is more about the battle of ideas and social beliefs than other issues. From the beginning of the play Roman characters, friends of Antony seem to be appalled by the way their commander acts, they value things that have no meaning for Alexandrians. With recourse to principles of ancient philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism we showed how ideology reigns supreme. As explained before, the concepts that give value to these characters differ in these two different contexts, they are relative, like love and honor as signifiers. It seems that every value for which they strive for is contextualized and they live in a prison of ideas, so reality is under question; however, the appropriation of outside of the contexts can be analyzed through the contexts. The reconciliation that Antony created between these contraries before the main battle shows that among plurality of imposing ideas, an almost firm personality can be written by human himself with free will in the very contexts in which he or she is bounded.

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