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Review Article

Decoding Renaissance 'Commonplaces' and Gendered Dichotomies of Authentic Knowledge: A Review of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida

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ABSTRACT

The question of what is authentic knowledge is an intriguing inquiry that can never be fully resolved however efforts can surely be made to get closer to the nature of true learning. Renaissance era was dominated with the ideals of masculinity and that obviously had similar impact on the domain of knowledge. True knowledge then was the male territory where women were denied any authority. This paper makes an effort to deconstruct the masculine commonplaces of authentic knowledge by reviewing Shakespeare's play Troilus and Cressida in light of gendered dichotomies of the Elizabethan age. First, the dominant trends of authoritative knowledge are highlighted thereafter the play is reviewed with the intent to dismantle the gendered dichotomies and perceive the role and essence of women in creation and communication of authentic knowledge.

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1. Introduction

Reliable knowledge is a complicated term, as the lens to determine it varies with the shift in context, time, place and culture. The simplest method to get nearer is to accept one's knowledge and ignorance in its true state, without deceiving the self. The closest one can get with oneself is the key to resolve the puzzle of authentic knowledge. Developing on the idea of understanding the dynamics of right knowledge, this paper espouses to study the patterns of authoritative knowledge that dominated the Renaissance era. The aim is not just to lay bare the Renaissance hegemonies of knowledge but also to specifically locate the gendered dichotomies of the time, thereby exposing the contradictory means of knowing. The intent is to listen in specific to the female voices in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* to expose the dominating trends of the Renaissance society and to focus on women's innate 'special' ways of knowing and interpreting the real world. The approach is a variant historical one as it attempts to challenge the implicit notions that the production of authoritative knowledge was not complex and could be reduced to some important discourses and that certain fixed assumptions could be made on who supposedly had the access to certain types of knowledge production or their resulting truths. The paper will try to decode the implicit societal structures of the Renaissance that value masculinity and the traits associated with it and relegate feminine and its associates to the verge of invisibility. The text in consideration will be studied to support the dual perception of the Renaissance society with a special focus on alternative or the non-rational ways of knowing. The effort is to locate the gap in comparative work on early modern epistemologies to signify the often relegated sphere of women's way of getting and disseminating knowledge.

Although this period had a remarkable impact on the social, political, and religious spheres of the Renaissance society, women and their limited world surprisingly witnessed no growth. In fact, they were left untouched by the sweeping change as if their world was separate from the male counterparts. The significance and influence of Renaissance on the male dominated spheres of society has been treated in multiple scholarly works, but there has been limited perusal of the position and portrayal of women and the other weaker sections of the society. Embracing the erased interpretations of the female voices from the literary canon of the critics of Renaissance England, the intent to perceive the patriarchal portrayal of women in contrast to the self-worth and essence they actually possessed demands an understanding of the authoritative knowledge of those times.

There are multiple alternatives of knowing: the early modern discourses; authentic knowledge; the significant rhetorical texts that define the principle of reason and eloquence as superior. Along with these there are some contrary rich ways where passions have a role to play and women predominantly rule this realm possessing the subtle means other than formal education, learned rhetoric and even the language. The contrast between academic means of acquiring and communicating knowledge (that mainly rests on scientific methods, rhetoric, humanist ideals of learning and reading practices) and non-rational means of obtaining and disseminating knowledge, (primarily possessed and used by less educated audiences without formal education, visions, dreams, intuition and at times even without languages) defines the divide between the masculine and the feminine territory. In the Renaissance period the contradictions about knowledge formation was based on the gender-divergent methods

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of discerning truth. The misogyny that featured in Renaissance thought is alive even today though is a much subtler and refined manner. The fundamentals associate more to being women than relating to the intellectual weakness

Decoding The epistemologies of Shakespeare's England

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge is a philosophical discipline that deals with the systematic investigation of knowing- an effort to comprehend how we know what we know as humans. In fact, knowledge, knowing, and that which is known is a kind of mystery or an approximation that is capable of inexhaustible analysis from countless points of view. It thus is a type of justification of knowledge-indefinitive, open ended and ongoing process of reasoning that furthers the way towards new revelations and refinements. There has never been a single unified theory of knowledge that is inclusive of all the literary, social and academic trends of a period and this stands true also for the early modern period of the 15th century. However it is also imperative to note that these inclusive contradictory discourses definitely signify the dominant trends of a period reflecting on the inclination of the acceptable, favored and the ruling ideology that undercuts the second rated beliefs relegating them to the spheres of negligence and unproductively.

What is authoritative knowledge? In simple terms it comprises of some guidelines that assist members of a sane society to conduct themselves and lead a productive and peaceful life. These norms have the power to dictate terms with the belief that it would be for the benefit of all. The castle of knowledge is guarded with the gates of exclusivity and inclusivity. Who have access to it, who are the elite members, what is the real aim of the possessed knowledge, how is it transmitted, and what are its supportive measures, are questions of significance.

In the Elizabethan period the authority of knowledge rested in the hands of masculinity. The epistemologies of this period show that there was no meaningful mention of the word woman and that the field was out of the reach of feminine involvement and influence of any kind. The concept of mind, thought and knowledge fell within the male premises pertaining to the western model of male and the female dichotomies. The subjective preoccupations- what was authentic knowledge, how was it obtained and what occluded it solely fell within the reasoned masculine territory. Rights and influence of women in the field of rhetoric, knowledge creation and right knowing is unconceivable in the literary archives and therefore questionable. It fuels the idea that women were erased on purpose to continue uninterrupted male influence and prominence in the significant fields of history, science, literature, epistemologies, rhetoric etc. The process is structured so that being defined by the imposed exclusion from the social, political and academic spheres and being confined to the domestic territory; women settled unconditionally and thus gave silent consent to the patriarchal endeavors to erase their mark on the grounds of unworthiness and insignificance.

Amidst the supremacy of males in the field of knowledge there were varied ways of acquiring and communicating it. Academic practices included the scientific methods, rhetoric, humanist ideas, reading practices etc. While the non-rational ways included less educated ways, without learned rhetoric or even without language-sign, intuition, cries, common sense etc. These ways of disseminating knowledge were gendered. Women and the less privileged occupied the non-rational realm supported by the measures like passions, soul, visions, dreams while men used rhetoric, honor, reason, debate, intellect, body, continent argument etc. to transmit knowledge.

2. Literature Review

Of all, the use of rhetoric was highly valued. Paul Oskar Kristeller (1990) in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* claims that "It has been stated more than once in recent years that rhetoric holds the key to Renaissance thought and civilization in general" (p. 229). The fact that this form of speech had access only to the educated elite men speaks for its high esteem. Thomas Wilson (1994) defines rhetoric as "a learned or rather an artificial, declaration of the mind" (p. 45), something that requires both education and a certain amount of reason to execute. He further asserts that God "gave his appointed ministers knowledge both to see the natures of men and also granted them the gift of utterance, that they might with ease win folk at their will and frame them by reason to all good order" (p. 175). On the same lines, Henry Peacham (1954) illustrates amplification as a "very great and weighty [device], which by large and plentiful speech mouth the minds of the hearers, and causes them to believe that which is said" (p. 120), and that "indeed it is a singular art and mighty to delight and persuade the minds of men to the purpose and drift of the speaker" (p. 121). Then the realm of authoritative speech falls within the masculine territory and coupled with the rhetoric techniques it is used to direct and influence women and the other subjugated class. Rhetoric technique, a potent masculine tool with persuasive abilities to significantly affect the minds and opinions of the listener, altering the initial thoughts in line with the speaker's mindset is thus a well-tested method to rule the mind and the body in unison.

The use of Rhetoric to bring good order stated a seeming connect between morals and rhetoric. However this too was self-serving in disguise. The proposed outcome of the union was to promote virtue, inspire the audience and leave positive influence on the lives of the people. Brian Vickers (1988) notes that, "the general trend in Renaissance rhetoric towards epideictic, the specific goal being to direct the audience to ethical conduct" was of significance (p. 291). For him "of the three goals of rhetoric, movere, docere, and delectare, movere became the most sought after" during the Renaissance times (p. 282). The stated purpose was common good but in essence it was self-serving. The critic's opinion fails to note the hidden objectives of the rhetoricians; their knowledge, character and manipulative intention to play with the will and emotions of the audience. There are innate dangers of misguiding and self-serving intentions in such cases and the masses can be exploited in the name of morals and ethics. Neil Rhodes (1992) in *The Power of Eloquence* remarks that there has been classical notions that depict how eloquence can perform varied functions like revealing and obscuring truth; the rhetor could charm the simple minded people (p. 11), display exemplary wisdom (p. 13), and that there have been Renaissance texts that chart rhetoric's relationship with wisdom and reason (p. 62), logic (p. 107), and self-deception (p. 111). Overall the period valued rhetoric and eloquence as an efficient masculine tools that provided means to sound judgment and advancement of knowledge, but women were banished from this field,not because women were not practicing rhetoric- the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication- but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women as "rhetorical" (Lunsford, 1995, p. 6). Rhetoric was then out of reach of women and they had to resort to other sublime methods to communicate knowledge.

Being analytical way of dispensing knowledge, rhetoric happens to be a reason-based approach. Peter Harrison (2001) acknowledges that, "the acquisition of knowledge was not… a morally neutral activity" (p. 273) and that reason had a dominant role to play. Reason acted as a guiding force to enable the rhetor to make decisions regarding the intended or self-serving influence on the audience. It played a filter to communicate only the useful

content defining the end of the proposed activity. Luther asserts that reason was, "the invented mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life" (Luther, as cited in Bergvall, 1992, p. 117). The absolute power and control it had on subjects of Renaissance period is evident in the celebrated literary works of the time.

3. Methodology

The hegemonies of knowledge of the early modern period marked a clear divide between the role of reason and passions in the attainment of authoritative knowledge. As Michael Schoenfeldt (1999) remarks, the "renaissance inherits and elaborates an enormous dissonance and inconsistency in the available doctrines of the relationship between bodies and souls, and between reason and the passions" (p. 8), the role of normative body and its passions depict extreme marginality of the flesh. Women were despised for the abundance of passions in contrast to men who ruled with reason, mind and physical strength. Thomas Wright (1973) asserts that, "the passions…blind reason" (p. 3). He rates passion as a low trait as it is shared by the beasts too but reason holds the highest standing as humans share it with angels (p. 12). Similarly Stephen Gaukroger (1998) feels that passions have effect on moral judgment debating the role of passions in the attainment of authoritative knowledge, "core questions that can be identified in discussions of the passions from antiquity to the present is their effect on 'moral judgment'," where it is supposed that there is a "central contrast ….between reason and the passions" (p. 4). He believes that passions "result in confused judgments and therefore they need to be controlled" (p. 5). On the same lines Peter Harrison (2001) also remarks that passions are unsound sources of information as they portray "confused judgments expressed by particular signs," that may "be interpreted or deciphered, rather than read at face value" (p. 68). Thus the common proposition from the males is that passions needed to be controlled (Gaukroger, 1998, p. 5; Harrison, 2001, p. 68) making a call for masculinity to intervene in the so viewed fragile and excessive fleshy terrain of femininity.

The split of reason and passion is mainly situated on the fundamental divide of male and female bodies. Women were tagged as inferior to men because of their biological constitution and the early modern discourses duly addressed how the female bodies were outrageous "target[s] of …displaced resentment, subdued for their biological constitution (leakiness)" (Stallybrass, 1986, p. 142). In *Making Sex*, Thomas Laqueur (1990) depicts how women were charted as weak and unruly bodies and minds requiring male strength and guidance for sustenance (p. 59). Their perception of women as a bundles of passion to which men brought form reflected that, "woman's inferiority to man was assumed, a text that proposed to defend her and praise her excellence or superiority was attempting to defend the indefensible and praise the unpraisable" (Benson, 1992, p. 3). Thus this sorry picture of women where their bodies were sites of eroticized dismemberment; where they played the objects rather than being the producers of intellectual and artistic consumption, where they were prevented from intellectual and civil pursuits by their own excessive material was mere masculine way of conceiving, which indeed was far from the reality. However there were some writers of substance who did show awareness of the wrong portrayal and dared to sail against the tide by challenging the set norms and laying forth the counter possibilities.

Views sustaining gender bias are also present in the Renaissance medical theory where masculine heat is seen as part of masculine superiority. In words of Huarte (1959), masculine heat, rather than feminine coolness is of greater benefit to the state, as it is required in war, "for the powers which consist in heat perform speedily their work. And for this cause men of great understanding are little worth for the war, for this power is very slow in his operation" (p. 204). Also women, "through the cold and moist of their sex, cannot be endowed with any profound judgment. Only we see, that they talk with some appearance of knowledge, in slight and easy matters" (Huarte, 1959, p. 286) and that "for which dullness, themselves are not in blame, but that cold and moist, which made them women" (pp. 286–287). However contrarily Pamela Benson (1992), in *A Dialogue Defensive for Women*, a 1542 text by Robert Surdet notes that a speaker "proves women steadfast, blames men for their lust and for the destruction their 'hot' composition causes, [and] praises women for their 'cool' composition and their efforts to bring peace" (p. 208). Heat relates to acts of bodily strength and to the folly required to motivate them; it may also refer to the combination of strength and anger. While cool conversely stands for pacification and sound thinking. The opposites of hot and cold also relate to reason and emotion, where reason intensifies the heat and emotion pacifies and sustains with peace. So placing masculine traits above the feminine seems impractical because both attributes are required to survive in a balanced way; as yin and yang concept relates to the interdependence and interconnection of contrary forces to form a sustaining whole, so does feminine and masculine signify the two opposite yet complementary forces of a unit that sustain life on this earth.

Another inclusive way to decode the theory of knowledge of the Elizabethan period is to comprehend the ingrained societal norms or the components of the cultural framework. The approach to view culture beyond the division of oppressors and oppressed, where the subjects transform into what they recognize or mis-recognize the cultural message they consume. Jonathan Dollimore (1984) believes that the "political and sexual ordering is always internally disordered by the deviations it produces and displaces and defines itself against" (p. 160). His perverse dynamic focuses on the internal setting and resetting of a thought which gradually establishes itself as the order of the times. Similarly, de Certeau (1984) makes a distinction between the "strategies," used by hegemonic cultural entities to reinforce hegemonic discourses and "tactics," used by the relegated subjects to change these authoritative exchanges into counter dialogues (p. 30, 36-37). He locates cultural consumption as a form of production (p. 31) that obviously includes writing, an activity that draws on commonplaces and transforms them into a novelty evaded all over by the influence of the creator's mind. The literary work can thus be lifted from the camps of containment and resistance, us-them dichotomy, subversion and repression binary to a place where it is viewed as a creation in response to those producing and consuming it. This mode of observation though does not evade the harsh gendered realities of the period but it definitely gives another comprehensive way to perceive literary creation.

4. Results

Shakespeare focuses on some fundamentals in *Troilus and Cressida*. The war is portrayed as corrupt by very nature in terms of material consequences. Death is inevitable irrespective of heroic or non-heroic violent acts and good principles do not atone for bad results; in fact they are dangerous in every respect. Honor may sound good outside but it clouds ones judgment and leads to destruction; tragedy for themselves and the people around them. The masculine failure to differentiate between heroic and right behavior proves to be foolish at best and fatal as worst. The playwright exposes the world of male subjectivity which has fair exterior but totally a rotten center. The Renaissance commonplaces that define ideal masculinity merely refer to the male "botchy core" where sustenance is denied in all respects.

The play focuses on human corruption and the inability to recognize the same. The soldiers are constantly driven by the

desire for honor and aggression but they fail to see what follows. In the heart of the war lie inevitable desire, self-deception, honor, and aggression. Male characters lack the self-knowledge and make themselves liable for the horrific physical outcome in the play. For instance Troilus' lack of self-knowledge and stability leads his transformation from a lover to a conqueror. He uses love for wrong self-portrayal- as pure, simple, honest, feeble and ardent lover. Men have something common to share in the play- the unawareness of motivations and consequences of their actions to themselves, others and the physical world around them, the misguided and unrealistic principles lead only to destruction. Shakespeare focuses on the material outcomes of the character's folly. The sane choice would have been to return Helen but the desire of high social ideals lead to a wrong choice with fatal results.

Audience's self-awareness between right and wrong is activated by the playwright. He intentionally leaves it for them to decide the best way to survive in a chaotic world where meaning is slippery and cannot be attached to a single way of life. What befits all could be the use of common sense to locate the best possible way of survival. But this may also not serve the purpose at times. The female characters and the audience do possess common sense and moral awareness but it is of no use. They indeed lack the power to affect the action's outcome. The play points out that people are generally unadmirable, cowardly, tempted, unfaithful in love, and self- centered. The women; Cassandra, Andromache, Priam, Polyxena and Hecuba exist outside the realm of the rational where their sources of knowledge are ineffective and their dreams and cries operate on a different system of values. Their belief that action ought to be measured by its material consequences disregarding the intangibles of honor and glory is ignored by the male counterparts. Men contrarily favor action and honor as depicted in choices made by Troilus and Hector in fighting for Helen's beauty and Troy's honor. In fact they feature as universal wolves misguided by the Renaissance commonplaces (urge to action, their heat and courage), consuming the self and the others.

Writings of Shakespeare are not just true pictures of the Elizabethan times but much more. In fact, they are presentations that delve deep into the complexities of daily existence rooted in the cultural, social, and political setup of the times. Shakespeare follows the pattern of conjuring up world views based on first observing intently and then inverting the observed realities to highlight the embedded limitations, with an aim to reflect on what else existed, "If there is an Elizabethan world picture, Shakespeare questions it, so shatters it, as surely as the new science did. No 'source,' no received conception, survives its incorporation in Shakespeare without sea-change" (Cavell, 1987, p. 36). He draws on the commonplaces, say the women, and they are "made something else" out of those inputs, "not by rejecting them or by transforming them (though that occurred as well), but by many different ways of using them…. The imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practitioners" (Cavell, 1987, p. 32). He weaves a whole new complex, lively and entertaining world out of the raw material gathered from the contemporary settings.

5. Discussion

In the most ambiguous of his plays, *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare produces the images of women incompatible with patriarchal stereotypes. The work is regarded complex as it denies fitting perfectly in the tight compartmentalization of a pure comedy, tragedy or a combination of both. Robert Cummings (1994) labels it as having an 'ambiguous reputation' adding that Shakespeare's contemporaries were unsure about the kind of a play it was and ever since the classification has "multiplied into something like Polonius's parodic list of dramatic kinds: various compound genres- tragic satire, comical satire, problem play, heroic farce and the like- are regularly invoked" (p. 830). The play states the effeminate dilemma of being powerless in the world of masculine authority. The fact that the work projects a messy world instead of an unreal-sorted-one enables its timeless applicability to study the real life issues in a familiar distorted scenario. The focus here is: to question the canonical representation of women as incompatible, inferior and limited to focus on the variant images of them that threatens the hegemony of patriarchal stereotypes (interpretations); rethink early modern portrayal of the images of women incompatible with patriarchal stereotypes; to confront the question of hegemony of patriarchal interpretations and women's access to authoritative knowledge. The play recognizes the value of life in general and worthlessness of each individual character's actions.

Shakespeare does not recreate or undermine cultural power in a good-versus- evil battle- but draws on discourses that are subversive, hegemonic, and presumably recognizable to the audience to some degree. While in Renaissance England the prevailing epistemologies and traditional linguistic patterns were dictated and regulated by the dominant masculine forces, Shakespeare chose to display the other side of the story. The debates on rationality, early modern views on women and the bodies of knowledge that existed find a significant place in Shakespeare's play *Troilus and Cressida*. It presents knowledge making as an individual phenomena; what knowledge meant on a more microcosmic and less clearly on an institutional level in particular reference to women is highlighted. Shakespeare depicts the conflicting issues of the age with a difference by engaging and imbibing the often negated spheres and attributes of the Elizabethan period. In words of Agnes Heller (2002);

> Shakespeare lights some spots in this darkness. He explores the extremes. He knows that for men and women everything is possible, that all 'combinations' are options that are perhaps no limits. Or are there limits? I think that there are and that Shakespeare will make us turn back to face those limits again and again. Shakespeare confronts honesty with honor; honesty in a matter of conscience, of obeying the call of conscience. But what is the content of conscience? What does conscience know? And how does it know what it knows? (p. 27)

He identifies and explores the contradicting modals of knowledge by depicting the subject's (mainly the women) place in the overwhelming matrix of persuasion and how the characters establish and relate in the given context. The play highlights the subtle considerations of the women's world from the well of insignificance. The playwright uses the space offered by the tradition to reinvent his characters. The female portrayal is a wholesome representation of flesh and blood characters as it presents the follies and limitations of the fair sex to give the comprehensive and real picture of women in everyday existence.

5.1. Shattering the Model of Male Subjectivity; Questioning the Male Commonplaces-Rhetoric, Reason, Honor, Principle Driven Action, Anger, and Pride

The representative 'male' of the early modern period was a mix of polished rhetorical skills, sound reasoning, honor, action, anger and pride. Most of the literary heroes of the times were drawn on these dimensions and the audience and the readers were tuned to enjoy and celebrate this human composition. Shakespeare however saw beyond the dominant representation and presented a novel world that inverted the contemporary beliefs and ideas to shed light on what else existed and how ideal of masculinity needed to be questioned to counter the challenges

that resulted from the male monopoly on the different sectors of the society.

The comparison of male and female rhetoric in the play depicts the different masculine and feminine ways of using language to dispense knowledge and to communicate the physical reality. Men - Troilus, Ulysses, Hector and Achilles use long, measured, self-conscious, rich and learned speech to convey the intended message and influence. While women- Cressida, Cassandra and Andromache depart from the neat structures and measured tones of ideal rhetoric and take refuge in simple, short, mindless speech intervened with tears and cries to make them heard. Ulysses' long speeches(manipulative and bombastic copia, spends 74-136 lines of act one scene two just to locate the dilemma of subverted social hierarchy in the Greek camp using commonplace ideas, drawing on microcosmic conclusions from macrocosmic examples) . His rhetoric is devoid of real essence and has other more self-serving purposes underneath the magnificent body of expansive wordings of his language. He uses reason to manipulate the truth (in his case that the Greek generals do not inherently deserve respect). His speeches demonstrates that rational language (contained, learned) is not necessarily put to rational use (right knowing). In fact he uses rational abilities to manipulate others. In this regard, W.R. Elton (2000) remarks that, "…Ulysses' oration thus suggests grounds to question it as unqualified endorsement of orthodox degree-doctrine" (p. 54). Contrary to this Cressida's use of language is closer to actuality. She employs clever speech that is based on real issues and is devoid of manipulation and bombastic Copia. Unlike her male counterpart it is not backed by learning but by wit, commonsense and truth of daily existence. Like in order to deflate Pandarus' lies of language when he claims that Troilus is, "to say truth, brown and not brown" she counters his claim as "To say the truth, true and not true"(Shakespeare, 1984, 1.2.92–93) referring to the emptiness of sophistry, the result of hiding the real and amplifying the scant content.

The use of rhetoric devices was accompanied with a strong reliance on reason to communicate in an effective and productive manner. The men tried to portray themselves correctly by attaching a reason based approach that offered authenticity and meaning to their actions. Ulysses act of misusing rhetoric and reason to draw the masses towards a wrong conclusion about Achilles' nature, saying that he "count wisdom as no member of the war… and esteem no act/ But that of hand" (Shakespeare, 1984, 1.3.197–199) displays how reason and rhetoric can together be used to mislead people. Here the unjust standards of judgment hidden behind the mask of reasoned interpretation is evident as Ulysses first portrays Achilles as someone who acts rather than thinks and then goes on to suspect that he strategizes against them refusing to be just a potent tool in the service of the brainy general.

Troilus unlike Ulysses disavows reason labeling it to be effeminate and luxurious for the fury of war. He believes that reason encourages unnatural and unpraiseworthy activities; it provides an excuse for cowardice. In a conversation between Troilus and Helenus where Helenus tells Ulysses that his argument is devoid of reason, Troilus reverts showing his disbelief in reason:

> You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest;
> Your fur your gloves with reason. Here are your reasons:
> You know an enemy intends harm;
> You know a sword employed is perilous,
> And reason flies the object of all harm.
> Who marvels, then, when Helenus beholds
> A Grecian and his sword, if he do set
> The very wings of reason to his heels
> And fly like chidden Mercury from Jove,
> Or like a star disorbed? Nay, if we talk of reason,
> Let's shut our gates and sleep. Manhood and honor
> Should have hare hearts, would they but fat their thoughts
> With this crammed reason. Reason and respect
> Make livers pale and lustihood deject. (Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.36–37)

Troilus undermines the standard belief of masculine subjectivity asserting that reason and manliness are incompatible. He states that Helenus evades the hard realities of an actual fight by reasoning it out; seems overly luxurious in his desire for comfort and uses reason to "fur your gloves with". The hand with gloves is protected and thus is free from real danger. For him Helenus' position where he luxuriates in rich apparel and connects with cautious reason is of shame to his masculinity. The import here being that the inverted social assumption that reason and manliness are two independent traits and they need not always be clubbed to define a true masculine identity. Shakespeare diverges from the mainstream thinking for a while showing Troilus' disbelief in reason-based masculinity.

While masculine rhetoric is backed by reason, Feminine language relies on passions and inner feelings to provide depth and substance to their speech. This opposite pairing where emotions are believed to impair reason is depicted by Shakespeare in Troilus' effort to dissuade Hector for being merciful, "Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you, which better fits a …mother (5.3.37–38, 45). Passion of any sort, in his opinion is to be left for women as men are destined for better things. Also, while men are "more rational, less subject to fluctuating emotions," women occupy the irrational and emotional seat (Maclean, 1980, p. 50). This is also evident in act two, scene two in a conversation between Troilus and Cassandra. While Troilus's speech has intelligent content, Cassandra's feminine utterances are mere sum of incontinent, unreasonable, unlearned and crazy words. When she says, "Cry, Trojans, cry,"(Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.96), Priam undercuts her saying "What noise, what shriek is this ?" and to which Troilus denounces her existence and speech lower to masculine language and intellect, "We may not ...once deject the courage of our minds,/ Because Cassandra's mad" (Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.97, 118–121). Similar opinions were supported in contemporary writing. It was believed that women apparently are more susceptible to the passion's influence as their "passions are most vehement and mutable," and can be manipulated by skilled orators to "persuade ... them what he listed" (Wright, 1973, p. 5). So, it was held that women being passionate qualified as subjects devoid of reason, to be led by men who probably possessed the higher qualities to guide and sustain women. This observation however is disqualified by the playwright as he focuses on the hidden aspects of women's speech. What the females in the play comprehend and foresee perhaps is not seen by the male counterparts as they are blinded by rhetorical devices, superficial reason and self-serving ends.

The principle of honor is yet another dominant offender that motivates males to act without thinking in the play. The standard belief that fighting for honor was a heroic deed in comparison with fighting for revenge or bloodlust left males with no equal alternative. Troilus believes that reason adversely effects bravery and that honor is the true guiding source for the soldiers who are made of blood and courage, manhood and honor- the manhood is solely in the body and its heroic deeds. The critics also tend to support the importance of honor as a driving force for continuous actions,

> …which follows, yea and is due unto virtue, encourages often noble spirits to attempt most dangerous exploits for the benefit of their countries…and to be brief, passions

are spurries that stir up sluggish and idle souls (Wright, 1973, p. 32)

Wright asserts that under the guidance of virtue honor can result in great triumph for one's country. However in the play honor is the sole dictator while virtue is used as a medium to hide real intensions. Troilus uses Helen as a catalyst for honorable action and places her something of moral good: "she is the theme of honor and renown, /a spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds" (Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.198–99). Helen is just an excuse to continue the drive of honor and fame that would wipe out the enemies and retain their undisputed lordship. Troilus tries to find honor a pretext to continue being in action. He again asserts the significance of honor while he tries to reason out with Hector why Helen was to be kept, "Weigh you the worth and honor of a king, / so great as our dread father's in a scale/ of common ounces' (2.2.25–27). Honor irrespective of the immense destruction of the war is sided and maintained as the 'reward' or the driving force of masculinity. Shattering this stagnant conviction Shakespeare exposes honor as a lacking end in the face of lives lost in its pursuit. The women in the play namely- Helen, Andromache and Cassandra understand the futility of the war and try their best to convince the men to return Helen to the Greeks and withdraw from all possibilities of fighting a battle. They comprehend the uselessness of honor and reason in comparison to the preciousness of every life that would be lost in the war.

Shakespeare questions the model of being a soldier that was praised in the courtesy books of his times. As already discussed the model demanded the masculine subject aided by reason to dwell in the action constantly to attain the golden reward-the honor. It was believed that this structure of being could be enhanced by anger and hatred as they support the process of deliberation. Anger was idealized as it aided the masculine mission of conquest by providing the necessary motivation and impulse to act. Graham (1994) though reveals a bit comprehensive variation but he still does not fail to stress the importance of anger as a masculine trait, "while one contemporary view held that there was no justification for anger, which was a form of disobedience," the traditional model makes a place for anger as it is done in satire as well (p. 24). The masculine structure is complete with hatred and anger as without these components reason would be weak and impact less. Adding on to this the role of praise finally completes the picture. Thomas Wilson (1994) in *Art of Rhetoric* asserts, "In praising a man, we shall exhort him to go forward, considering it agreeth with his wonted manhood….that he may end with honor, which hath so long continued in such renown" (pp. 100–101). In the play the heroic soldiers fit within the picture frame of masculinity adhering strictly to the norms in search of glorious future.

An exception to this is the portrayal of Achilles' character where the dramatist charts his transformation from a speaker to an actor. He initially shares the sphere of inactivity with the women characters by making a decision to not participate in the battle. However things change as he is ignored and made to feel essence less, unimportant and useless by his seniors. The officials aware of his heroism attack his ego by overlooking him on all fronts, he is viewed as, "strange' and "forgot[ten]" and thus he is forced to jump back into action. The system of significance is highlighted by Ulysses when Achilles questions his essence, "What, am I poor of late?" (Shakespeare, 1984, 3.3.74). Ulysses drives him towards the system of continuing signification:

A strange fellow here
Writes me that man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection;
As when his virtues, shining upon others,
Heat them and they retort that heat again
To the first giver.…
……no man is the lord of anything,
Though in and of him there be much consisting,
Till he communicate parts to others… (Shakespeare, 1984, 3.3.95–102, 115–117)

The value in the system can only be preserved by continuous accomplishments. The essence needs to be recreated by repeated achievements. When Achilles asks, "What, are my deeds forgot?" (Shakespeare, 1984, 3.3.144), Ulysses is quick to answer, "Time hath… a wallet at his back,/Wherein he puts alms of oblivion….to have done is to hang/ Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail/ In monumental mock'ry…" (Shakespeare, 1984, 3.3.145–153). Here the point of reflection is the difference between 'do' and done-the constant 'do' or the recreation of masculinity is the tested trajectory to safeguard masculine subjectivity.

Action and heroism are interconnected but "heroism… can resemble a death-wish" (Gil, 2001, p. 351). It may be a wish full of fame, honor and recognition but death cannot be ruled out. The prerequisite always is the need to act. In contrast to this the sphere that needs no action is occupied by women. They remain away from taking part in heroic deeds and thus are segregated as powerless speakers. Critic Laurie E. Maguire (2002) points out that as compared to men women are mere onlookers; men assign value and they just accept the value assigned-the consequences are tragic (p. 174). Not participating does not evade the misfortune of suffering. No one remains untouched by the tragic end. Male efforts to preserve their external image finally leads to bodily destruction- what remains is death-the mass bodily erasure and a vacuum that cannot be justified or compensated for by the dictates of honor, action and reason.

5.2. Self-knowledge, Opaque Model of Subjectivity, the Self-Serving Morality, Means, and the End

The men in the play are seen deceiving themselves and the audience under the ploy of being useful to other people and the country. Troilus and Hector wrongly believe that war could be justified to safeguard their honor while the reality of the brutal consequences is left untouched. Troilus who in the beginning of the play was, "Mad/ In Cressida's love" (Shakespeare, 1984, 1.1.50–51), ends the play in "Mad and fantastic execution," certainly not "redeeming himself" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.5.38). The lack of self and stability is evident in his transformation from an ailing lover who is "weaker than a woman's tear" to a savage warrior who derives "comfort" in "Hope of revenge" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.10.30–31).He is blind to his own motivations as he confuses pleasure and revenge with honor; the truth of consequences is never dwelt upon. Hector's inability to distinguish heroic behavior from right behavior questions his self-awareness. He says,

Mine honor keeps the weather of my fate.
Life every man holds dear; but the dear man
Holds honor far more precious-dear than life.
(Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.25–28)

His words solidify the clear alliance with honor, aggression and war negating the attached ugly and bloody outcomes in form of mass material destruction- facing death challenges to uphold masculine honor overlooks the risk of erasing the self and the people involved in the war. Hector's biggest failure was his inability to identify the limits where honor ceased to have value. Acknowledging the fact that Helen was "not worth what she doth cost/ The keeping" in terms of lives lost, he is unable to see that she is not worth the cost of honor too (Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.50–51). His impractical, idealistic behavior is the only reason for

continuation of the war when he has a better option to end the bloodshed. Shakespeare's Hector appears merciful sometimes but the desire for honor and the ability to execute violence overpowers him. His lack of self-awareness is evident while he accuses Troilus of being a "savage" unaware of the fact that he belonged to the same category and that showing mercy at times couldn't justify the lives lost in the battle (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.48). His blind faith in performing, creating male subjectivity through bloody battle, living the Greek belief that a true soldier proves himself by being a "thing of /courage" by "rag[ing]", leaves him deceiving the self and being unaware of the true essence of life. His chivalry becomes "an image that served, however deceptively, to protect him", he is lost in the unreal world of values and beliefs (Mallin, 1995, p. 58). However in the case of sly Ulysses the knowledge of self is concealed behind the self-serving motives of immediate importance. The attempt to present personal gain as the general principles is itself being away from self-knowledge- the real is hidden or sacrificed for the unreal. Males have something in common in the play-the wrong motivations that lead them away from the consequences of their actions, themselves, others and the physical world around. The misguided and unrealistic principles definitely mislead in multiple ways, the results spare none irrespective of the gender and the motives.

Shakespeare questions the means adopted to meet specified ends in the play. Men use Rhetoric and self-modified ethics to achieve brutish ends. The ethically questionable approaches of Ajax, Troilus, Achilles, Hector and Ulysses are juxtaposed with the true knowledge of women to lay bare what is wrong and what is closer to reality. The dramatist urges his audience to value right knowing over mindless, misguided and unrealistic principles. The men try to subdue women in the play by focusing on relentless action and silencing the female voices, nevertheless truth is seen siding women who are better grounded to reality and can feel, foresee and function in close association with truth. When Troilus derogatory declares Cassandra as "mad," labeling her speech as inappropriate, unstructured release and an insane cry, Shakespeare leaves it to the audience to deduce the truth of the matter. If reason consists of being able to fashion rhetoric appropriate to the situation, her mad cries are more appropriate to the brutality of war than anything Troilus has to say, and if it is a matter of right knowing, her words are far closer to reason than are Troilus'. On another occasion when Hector reasons the necessity to fight the war as, "The Gods have heard me swear", Cassandra renounces his version as, "The Gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows;/They are polluted off rings, more abhorred/ Than spotted livers in the sacrifice" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.15–18). Her take that "hot and peevish" emotions that fuel such vows ought to be negated in all circumstances, even favoring cowardice is a better option. The stance of being inactive and cold is conceivably a far better choice than killing people in the name of heroism and duty. Through Cassandra, Shakespeare shows women's incontinent speech to have a firm grasp on right knowing.

Cressida is another clear-sighted character in the play. She is aware of the severe consequences of over emphasizing on action. She mocks Pandarus when he tries to explain the masculine subjectivity, "Do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and such like, the spice and salt that season a man?" (Shakespeare, 1984, 1.2.238–42). She conversely defines manhood as violence and finds Pandarus' ideal of being a "minced man". Women in the play have the insight but they lack the power to act, in fact they are denied the space to act, to materialize their conception into action. On rare occasions like when Cressida has a limited access to act, she chooses to survive than to fall prey to the societal norms of honor. She could have opted for the other alternative of committing suicide following the male footsteps of honorable living, but she values life to the shallow images of perfect way of life. Though she has to live a compromised life but life needs to flourish despite the adversity of any situation. Cressida's survival strategy requires her to confront the reality and choose wisely and practically-she does not sugar coat her betrayal of Troilus, her choices are limited, and none is appealing: she can commit suicide, futilely attempt to resist Diomedes or make a deal with him to protect her from other soldiers. In her soliloquy, she wishes Troilus:

> farewell! One eye yet looks on thee,
> But with my heart the other eye doth see.
> Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find,
> The error of our eye directs our mind:
> What error leads must err- O, then conclude
> Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.2.106–10)

Cressida's perception is associated with fear-her eyes tell her to love Diomedes as she sees "with my heart," and her insight causes her to recognize this fickleness as "turpitude". She again succeeds in viewing reality as it is and acknowledges her disloyalty towards her lover accepting her fickleness in love. However this perception of hers is contrasted with the contrary thoughts of the male counterparts. Thersites terms her as "A proof of strength she could not publish more,/ Unless she said 'My mind is now turned whore'" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.2.111–12). Her self-aware turpitude, however condemnable it seemed to the contemporary audience, is indeed remarkable in comparison to the lack of self-awareness the soldier's exhibit.

5.3. Identification of Right Knowledge From Wrong Knowledge

The play does not state what is correct and what is incorrect, the audiences are left to decide this for themselves. Shakespeare believes in setting up the scenes with real life characters engaged in the task of daily physical existence. Their actions, speech, choices and outcomes display the right or the wrong doings, making it easy for the audience to comprehend. The characters however are greatly influenced by the embedded gendered distinctions and the traditionally lauded ways of the social order. Men are guided by factors like reason, continent argument, honor, praise, anger, intellect and debate while women follow the dictates of insights, dreams, intuition and visions. They are the gendered means used respectively by men and women to reach the destined end. In the case of males the real outcome or the end is the achievement of honor, glory and material success and they indiscriminately use these lauded means irrespective to the damage it would do the life in general. Women conversely witness the end more logically and realistically using the available means to dissuade the active men from participating in the bloodshed that would invariably result in grave material consequences.

In the debate between right and wrong means, the otherwise ethical trait of mercy also seems a wrong choice at times. It appears as if there is no viable alternative to aggression and brutality. When Achilles is tired during the battle Hector lets him , "Pause, if thou wilt," thus granting Achilles the chance to kill him later(Shakespeare, 1984, 5.6.14) Hector's mercy is not clear sighted and it is somewhat discriminatory. He does not show mercy to the fleeting soldier and kills him just for his armor, but he does spare Thersites who curses him, "God-a –mercy, that thou wilt believe me; but a /plague break thy neck for freighting me!" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.4.29–30). Honor is definitely misleading but even mercy seems erroneous as a conduct in this less than perfect world of Shakespeare that clearly shows resemblance to our own flesh and blood world.

The question of right choices and means is further dealt by the writer. Troilus's initial reluctance to fight by being stricken by

Cressida's love is not the right choice according to the ideals of masculinity. His portrayal where he shares the feminine space for a while (fluid, cold and inactive rather than heat alluding to humoral theory that men are hot and dry, women cool and moist) is demeaning for men. His hopes are "drowned" and "drenched"(Shakespeare, 1984, 1.1.48, 50); Cressida's praise "pour[s]" into "the open ulcer" that is his heart (Shakespeare, 1984, 1.1.52) ; he is "weaker than a women's tear" as compared to the Greeks who, "are strong and skillful to their strength,/ Fierce to their skill, and to their fierceness valiant" (Shakespeare, 1984, 1.1.7–9) show the unusual presentation of masculinity . The arrangement is short lived as the initial melodramatic love ceases and Troilus plunges into the bloody game to revenge his feelings. Troilus' swift course from a weakling to destructive warrior is intentional move by the writer to open two ways to choose from. First where a man can be useless in terms of masculine subjectivity and yet harmless to the society; and the second where he can be heroic, indulge in bloodshed and become harmful and destructive to the physical world. The effeminate and masculine traits (as a way to conduct oneself) are juxtaposes in a single character to arouse audiences likes and dislikes. Troilus' transition from a weakling to a savage warrior demanding Diomedes's life, "the life thou ow'st me for my horse" as a revenge for his wronged love, is a noteworthy masculine move. However Shakespeare refrains from giving the final verdict. The two versions of Troilus, the love-stricken comic lover and revenge-seeking warrior, are placed as two viable choices, the good and bad alternatives and the audiences are given a free choice. It is definitely easy to rate the effeminate portrayal higher than the masculine model because suffering love is harmless in comparison to the soldierly aggression in terms of outcomes-sustenance is paramount, it definitely is above all the models of material existence.

The character of Achilles stands differently in the play. He initially decides not to fight and asides himself for a while from brutality and death. He honors a promise made to Polyxena and Hecuba considering the pleas from the two women who wished him good. His decision is contrary to Hector who dismisses Cassandra and Andromache's attempt to keep him away from the war. In fact his promise and respect for women's words delay Hector' and Troy's destruction. His adherence to Ployxena's words whether "honor…go or stay" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.1.43) seems a right decision to evade mass slaughter. It is interesting to note that women whom he honors don't plead on stage. The message is conveyed through a letter. In doing so Shakespeare diplomatically places women as a guide to right knowing without disturbing the socially accepted dichotomy between male persuasive rhetoric and women's insightful but ineffective rhetoric. Patroclus, Achilles' 'male varlet' who has a connect to effeminate world in terms of shared traits, has a role in keeping Achilles away from the war field, "think my little stomach to the war/ And your great love to me restrains you thus" (Shakespeare, 1984, 3.3.219–20). However later it is the same love that forces Achilles to plunge into the war and incur mass slaughter. The individual's capacity to restrain from desires is the key here. While Ulysses slyness is self-serving as he gives in to the insights of hierarchy he stood for, his alternative is misguided and thus destructive. On the other side Achilles self-control and sacrifice of his honor is a possibility to choose outside the set model of subjectivity and embrace a feminine view of sustenance. The alternatives are short lived or momentary but the signification that reason, honor and self-serving attitude are far inferior to the passions of love, self-restraint, sacrifice of honor and heeding to women's words.

The ironical stance here is that women are just words while men are solid deeds. Cressida, Cassandra, Polyxena, Hecuba and Andromache have the right knowledge but that are powerless to act and influence the outcome in a practical way. While men are unaware or over consumed by the societal norms, they fail to recognize the truth that lies behind the deluded picture of perfect being. Doing in fact is problematic for women in the play. Cressida who gets some chance to act is deemed as inappropriate and useless as she shuns the honor's dictates and embraces the possibility of being alive even though it is a compromised live. Her awareness of the right conduct, courage to assign herself as a flawed self is praiseworthy as compared to Hector's unmasked self without the "goodly mask" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.8.1) killing a retreating soldier. Both men and women perform in their respective ways-women with words and men with armor- to reveal the difference of right knowing. Cassandra's mad words contrast the mad deeds of war but she is in no power to influence the brutal consequences of the war. Women may say what they will but men are bound to perform deeds. The reality is that women's words are preferable to men's brutal deeds but they are unproductive and remain a pleasant possibility throughout the play. Shakespeare criticizes Renaissance commonplaces that belittle women's essence as mere words without concrete deeds. He brings to forefront the unspoken ways used by women to comprehend and communicate the right knowledge. So heroines in the play are not mere words but women of substance who can see beyond men and make better and sane choices if credited with a chance to act.

5.4. Concept Of Body and soul: The Role Of Body In Learning And Conveying To The Audience

Body forms the exterior of the material entity, while the soul provides the internal essence and life force to it. In fact a body is a medium that contains the soul and in unison they form a living entity. The body plays an imperative role in learning and communicating that knowledge to others. It provides a medium through which the soul encounters the world and collects information. Together the living entity becomes the facilitator of knowledge. Shakespeare plays with the standard conviction of the pre modern era by depicting function of a female body in new light. While Renaissance's gendered discourse depicts women entrapped in their excessive physicality with 'leaky' bodies, the playwright incorporates these bodies beyond their subversive value. When male bodies engage in outward accomplishments using rational methods (questioning, debate, evidence, rhetorically dazzling speeches), their communication and contact with the inner soul is deceived by the active masculine project and it's never ending demands. This significant disconnect between subject's inner perception has fatal results for the flesh and the body. Contrarily Women succeed in keeping a healthy collaboration between the inner and the outer self to witness a balanced exchange of knowledge. Women necessarily possess the rare gift of being active to the inner conscience resulting in acquiring a new method to disseminate authentic knowledge. Connecting the knowledge to conceive the self in true light is available and reliable as well. Women's powerful ways of knowing though are untraditional and less trodden approaches of acquiring, but they are sound sources to comprehend the deeper essence of life and ways of physical existence in light of cause and effect.

Women's ways of knowing then necessarily unfolds a contradictory methodology that coexists with traditional approaches of disseminating knowledge to perceive truth and attain salvation from the pool of amassed knowledge. Shakespeare's heroines seem to be the sole possessors of prophetic knowledge, outnumbering prophetic men. Cassandra's first prophecy presents the dreadful consequences of the war, "Practise your eyes with tears. / Cry, Cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go" (Shakespeare, 1984, 2.2.107, 111). Andromache visions Hector's end and tries to stop him from going to war, "My dreams will sure

prove ominous to the day" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.6). She repeatedly attempts to persuade others to see the brutal consequences of the war, "Consort with me in loud and dear petition; / Pursue we him on knees; for I have dreamed/ Of bloody turbulence" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.9–11). She tries to show Hector the reality that masculine principles like justice cannot redeem the violent acts from the horrific consequences,

> Be persuaded! Do not count it holy
> To hurt by being just; it is as lawful,
> For we would countenance give to violent thefts,
> And rob in the behalf of charity (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.19–22).

Her effort is to convey the right way to know oneself deep within and recognize the faulty methods of justifying wrong actions as good and just intentions. Meanwhile men ignore the warnings. They are blind to the real consequences and shun the words of caution. Troilus's dismisses women and their fears as, "This foolish, dreaming, superstitious girl/ Makes all these bodements" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.79). His disregard indicates the importance soldiers give to women's view in general; warning that does not favor action certainly falls outside the recesses of ideal masculinity. The only exception who contradicts the set standards is Priam. He tries to urge Hector to stay away from the battlefield, "Come, Hector…go back. / Thy wife hath dreamed; thy mother hath had visions; /Cassandra doth forsee" (Shakespeare, 1984, 5.3.62–4) but even the male intervention goes in vain. Hector disregards the advice based on women's dreams to direct his behavior and chooses to end his life fighting.

Fear plays an important role in guiding women towards the right path. Its importance is evident in a conversation between *Troilus and Cressida*. When Troilus tries to debase fear, "Fears make devils of cherubins; they never see truly", Cressida counters saying, "Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds safer footing than blind reason stumbling without fear. To fear oft cures the worse" (3.2.62–68). She repeatedly relates fear to sight. Fear is essential as it distinguishes "seeing reason," (the women possess) from the "blind reason," (that the soldiers seize) in the play. Women's dreams and visions are based on the dread of meeting destruction and death. They can foresee the horrors that lie ahead but fail to do anything worthwhile. This gap between saying and doing is filled with powerlessness. Although the self is aware but they fail convey the truth to men; their knowledge remains devoid of any practical influence. Conversely it is difficult for the men to be involved in honorable action and also distant themselves enough to distinguish right from wrong in the Trojan War. They have the power to perform but lack the insight to choose right from the wrong.

6. Conclusion

It may be observed that Shakespeare denies any connectivity between masculine ideals and authoritative knowledge. The accepted standards promise to sustain the society in all respects but the outcomes have a different story to tell. The grotesque end of the play necessarily features the recklessness of masculine model of knowledge but the dilemma of what is 'always' the right way to act still persists. The writer poses multiple questions but denies any one, accurate answer; failure of insight and overvaluing questionable ideals are extreme in their exaggeration but there is no invention of redeeming solutions. The crucial issues like how soldiers should become good citizens, how one should guide one's action in this uncertain world are left unanswered. The certainty that emerges is that there is no foolproof way to determine an action's virtuousness or even to act at all. The play is a pictorial display of men in action ending in destruction and women ruling with action-less words. In such a scenario where men dictate and women only kneel, plead and go mad with grief, there seems no alternative to their respective ways of communicating knowledge-men can't help being slave to the authoritative masculine knowledge while women can't avoid getting prophetic dreams. The choice between agency and knowledge precludes the other. The key takeaway is that there is no point in discussing or measuring the right from wrong, but it is crucial to determine the cause and affect equation on individual basis before plunging into action-considering the ends before choosing the means. In fact "The issue posed in no longer, or not alone, as with earlier skepticism; how to conduct oneself best in an uncertain world; the issue suggested is how to live at all in a groundless world" (Cavell, 1987, p. 3).

The play recommends that the war is essentially corrupt in material terms: violent acts, heroic or otherwise always lead to death. The good principles that are mainly displayed by the men of authority in the play, do not essentially atone for bad results. The advertised virtues of honor, heroism and self-esteem cannot to chosen over the value of life. The conflict is about human corruption and the inability to recognize that corruption, alternatively disguising it as honorable and highly placed social attributes. The core of the war that supports the deep rooted desire to conquer by indiscriminate killing in the name of victory, mis-directed aggression, and the strong sense of self-deception needs to be countered with better ways of sustenance.

Not being acknowledged is one thing but possessing the special knowledge that sustains cannot be undone. Shakespeare situates the possessors' of the right learning from oblivion and assigns a lot of importance to the insightful methods of knowing. He identifies that women with their dreams and mad cries operate on a different system of values. So, in *Troilus and Cressida*, the writer analyzes the moral truth through its intense and real life characters, depicting the human flaw of concealing one's own corruption of self-interest and locating no accessible methodology to overcome these flaws. Though the text engages with the subject's ability to authenticate knowledge of what is morally right, but accurate assessment of how transparent the truth is, and how one goes about accessing it varies with each character: it is an open-ended debate and will remain so for years to come.

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