

Mimetic Desire of Cassius' Rival in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

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Abstract

Desire is always produced by the imitation of the desire of other. Cassius' position and character has driven the present study which describes his desire to become the main rival in the political rivalry in Rome. The data are collected by heuristic reading of 773 dialogues in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Content analysis is applied to get the themes and contexts. The main discussion is to understand how mimetic desire theory performed by Cassius through the mimetic mechanism. The findings indicate that Julius Caesar becomes his model. Furthermore, there are ten ways of him to reach his goal through mimetic mechanism.

Keywords: *mimetic desire; mimetic mechanism; scapegoat*

A. Introduction

Mimesis or imitate, in another term; is the word that has been known since Plato. Mimesis is an action conducted by a creature or even human life to survive. Human beings are always full of needs to make them alive. To get what they need they imitate from nature or from another person. Therefore, in theory, mimesis desire is the basic drive in human beings, and therefore a phenomenon presents in all aspects of society (Grande, 2001: 10). All those words related to mimesis are traditionally connected to imitation.

To understand the mimetic theory proposed by Girard (2010: 56

– 69), it is necessary to deepen Girard's thinking, especially if this theory is used as a theoretical basis for literary study. According to him, the way this mimetic theory works is through a mimetic mechanism that involves a phenomenological sequences. This mechanism works in stages starting with mimetic desire (MD). The MD stage is characterized by the presence of a model that is within reach or within its environment. The second stage is mimetic rivalry (MR) which is characterized by internal mediation that tends to be symmetrical. That is, the subject imitates the model, as well as the model imitates the subject

which leads to conflict or is in a moment of increased competition. This symmetry tends to produce doubles. Doubles means that the subject and the model compete with each other to defeat each other rather than trying to achieve their goals. The competition actually has nothing to do with the desire to achieve its goals, but it causes conflict. In this competition, both of them gets more undifferentiated (rivalry): doubles. When the stage comes to the doubles moment, the stage begins to enter the mimetic rivalry (MR) stage. So the indicator of the MR stage is when there is a similarity between the subject and the model which leads to rivalry. Furthermore, competition does not only happen to them, but also spreads to the groups that each support them. Bystanders are more interested in seeing the goal as a valuable thing, but instead increase competition. The principle of this mimesis, if you cannot get the (valuable thing) goal that somebody else wants too, it is better to get rid of the goal altogether. As antagonism and violence escalate, there will be a crisis: all against all. In this case, the

stage goes to mimetic crisis (MC). To stop the crisis, the form of protecting society from destruction due to its own actions is to create a channel of collective anger, then it is directed at the victim chosen (by the mimetic itself) at random or making it as a scapegoat. In such an uproar, suddenly a character appears in the form of a culprit who causes an uproar and brings the crisis to the surface. He is unanimously appointed to be killed. Though, in truth, he has no guilt than the others. But it can't be avoided because people believe that he is guilty. Finally the murder of the scapegoated put an end to the crisis. Killing a scapegoat is a form of reconciliation that ends the crisis; last stage, or Scapegoat Resolution stage (SR). The purpose of this study is to describe who is actually a rival (model) for Cassius and what Cassius performs to realize his desire in *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare.

In various studies Cassius is positioned as a less well-known figure than Brutus, Caesar, and even Antony. In *Julius Caesar*, he appears only once. In contrast with Antony who appears time after time. He is not

considered a hero or any other character that attracts attention. He does not make public speeches like Brutus and Antony. He is also not a fulcrum of action in the drama, like Brutus and Caesar. Despite the close relationship between Cassius and Brutus, Brutus is always misunderstood Cassius' desire. So, from that explanation, Cassius' position and character (including desire) are important to study (Alexander, 2015: 6).

B. Research Method

The present study intends to explore how mimetic desire performed by Cassius and how Cassius drives his mimetic rivalry through the mimetic mechanism. Data were drawn from the source of Julius Caesar' Shakespeare dialogues. There are 773 dialogues in Julius Caesar's play, which starts from act one scene 1; which Flavius spoke; up to act 5 scene 1, which Octavius says. From the source of data, it is separated into two parts (data sources), the first is data from the first dialogue to the dialogue of Caesar's death or before Caesar killed (315

dialogues) and the second part, data from the dialogue after Caesar's death to the last dialogue or after Caesar killed (458 dialogues). This division is intended to get a more specific picture of each stage of the mimetic mechanism, especially from the previous and at the time of Caesar's death (before Caesar killed).

This study uses a qualitative approach with content analysis method to analyze the theme and refrential of each dialogue (Eriyanto, 2011: 90 – 104). Data is collected through a heuristic reading, quoting, and analyzing process. Furthermore, the data are classified to get its appropriateness with, in terms of contexts, the theories underlying mimetic desire in the stages of mimetic mechanism, and described to get an idea of what Cassius did based on the mimetic desire inherent in him. The data samples are taken purposively more on the first part of the data source: the first dialogue until the dialogue when Caesar is killed. The result, as an in-depth analysis is done based on the stages of mimetic desire, mimetic rivalry, mimetic crisis, and scapegoat reconciliation.

C. Results and Discussion

The Ways of Cassius Performs in Stages of Mimetic Mechanism

The theme of mimetic desire emerges from 39 dialogues. These dialogues show that Cassius' desire which is originally a desire to associate or to be a friend turned into a mimetic desire because of the presence of a model, namely Caesar. Starting from mimetic desire, goes to mimetic rivalry (39 dialogues), continued to mimetic crisis (235 dialogues), and finally ends to the stage of scapegoat resolution (2 dialogues), the mimetic mechanism that Cassius goes through is clearly illustrated in the table below. It describes the distribution of themes to each stages of mimetic mechanism (as a contexts).

Table 1. Themes in stages (contexts)

Dialogues of theme	MD	MR	MC	SR
Before Caesar killed	39	39	235	2
After Caesar killed	0	0	0	53

The dialogues describe the emergence of themes at each stage or context of the underlying theory. At

the MC stage, the number of dialogues becomes the most. This explains that Cassius' mimetic rivalry is contagious to his followers as illustrated in a number of dialogues between Cassius and Brutus, Casca, Cinna, Trebonius, Decius Brutus, and Mettelus Cimber.

In this part, it is found that in each stage of the mimetic mechanism there are several actions of Cassius so that the goal of his mimetic desire is achieved.

a. Mimetic Desire (MD)

In this part, several explanations refer to the ways in which Cassius expressed his hidden desire to become king of Rome. The desire arises after knowing that Caesar would be crowned king of Rome. Girard (2010: 56) explains that all desires can be contaminated with mimetic once **(1) there is a presence or finding a model**. And then, for Cassius, Caesar's presence fueled his desire to rule the Republic of Rome. Because Caesar is presented as a model for Cassius, then Cassius and Caesar thus have the same desire, namely to rule the Republic of Rome.

After his desire becomes a

mimetic, and at the same time there is the presence of a model, Cassius looks for ways to imitate Caesar in order to dominate Republic of Rome. So the next way he does is **(2) provoking or doing propaganda to his close friend, Brutus**. On behalf of the interests of Republic of Rome, Brutus as a descendant of an important person in Republic of Rome would certainly be interested in discussing it. The following phrases demonstrate the above: *speaking of Brutus and groaning underneath this age's yoke, have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes; then must I think you would not have it so*. These phrases are a form of provocation: that many honorable people, sitting next to Caesar, talk about Brutus; complain about the tyranny in the current government. And hope that Brutus can pay attention to that.

b. Mimetic Rivalry (MR)

Cassius and Caesar's relationship, in fact, has been going on since they were young. They are good friends. Even though they are best friends, they are also already competing: wanting to prove which of them is the strongest and the smartest

and the most. Thus the rivalry becomes evidence of their close relationship. Girard (2010: 57) calls this competition the term mimetic rivalry. To evoke the competition, Cassius uses the method of **(3) recalling events in his youth**. Then, he **(4) retells the events to Brutus**. He carefully tells that in fact between him and Caesar there has been an incident that no one else knew about. Even the incident may be considered a shameful incident. That Caesar, the person who will be crowned king is a weak person, sickly and a crybaby or a coward. So according to Cassius, it is inappropriate for a sickly and whiny person like a woman to be King of Rome. At this stage Cassius has made it clear for himself, who his real rival is, he is Caesar. The following phrases demonstrate the above theme: *well, honor is subject of my story, I was born free as Caesar, so were you, we both have fed as well, endure the winter's cold as well as he... Caesar sad to me, Darest thou, Cassius, now leap in with me into this angry flood and swim to yonder point?"...I plunged in... and stemming it with hearts of controversy, Caesar*

cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"

On the other hand, it turns out that Caesar also finds Cassius as a model (who must be defeated) so that he remains king. Caesar does not want any distractions for him to achieve his goal of becoming king of Republic of Rome. At this stage Cassius makes Caesar a model for himself, and Caesar makes Cassius a model for himself as well. Girard (2010: 57) mentions it symmetrical. And when the conflict escalates, the Republic of Rome that is the object contested disappeared; there is a conflict between them. Girard calls it is a double which becomes the culmination of the heat of competition. These dialogues show the conditions as above: *now is it Rome indeed, and room enough, when there is in it but one only man. And, he thinks too much. Such men are dangerous.* And what Cassius does is to **(5) make his character as mentioned by Caesar.**

c. Mimetic Crisis (MC)

By telling Caesar's weakness and glorifying the Republic of Rome, Cassius begins to incite Brutus. That Brutus is the one who deserves to be

King in Rome. And because of Cassius' praise, Brutus becomes Cassius' supporter. After Brutus, Cassius also uses the same method (which was done to Brutus) to approach Casca. Cassius **(6) makes alliances.** Finally Casca became Cassius' group. Then support for Cassius continued to flow from Trebonius, Ligarius, Decius Brutus, Mettallus Cimber, and Cinna. Cassius' group ultimately shares the same interest as Cassius. The following phrases support the above conditions: *My answer must be made. But I am arm'd, and dangers are to me indifferent. It must be by his death: and for my part; beware the Ides of March!*

d. Scapegoat Resolution (SR)

As the rivalry intensifies, Cassius convinces his group that Republic of Rome is headed for destruction if Caesar becomes king. Republic of Rome will be a destroyed city if Caesar becomes an arbitrary ruler. If that happens, then the one to blame would be Caesar. And that is **(7) sparked or created the anger of Cassius' group.** To prevent that from happening, they plotted to kill Caesar.

The murder is not something evil, because the one killed was a mischief or **(8) made Caesar a scapegoat**. In order for the murder to be considered correct by the people of Republic of Rome, they plan to kill Caesar before the Roman people's legislature. If the people of Republic Rome see the murder and cannot prevent it, then they are also responsible for the murder. Phrases that clearly indicate the above conditions are: *and I will bring him to the Capitol, nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him*.

Then Cassius and his group actually do what they has planned on the day of the Ides of March, that is **(9) killing Caesar**. Hadfield (2007: 284) explains that the interpretation of the 15th day of the Ides of March is confusing for experts. But what is certain, the fifteen (15) days of the Ides commemorate the day of strife in the Elizabethan England era which has a big impact on ordinary people who are bound by time and calendar. The sentence that shows the above condition is: *speak, hands, for me!* In order to avoid anger from Caesar's supporters, Cassius persuades Brutus to **(10) make a peace agreement**.

Brutus also gives assurances that Caesar's supporters would be safe. And Caesar's group, represented by Antony, agrees. The following sentences show the above conditions: *welcome, Mark Antony. O Antony, beg not your death of us*.

Based on the analysis, the researchers find ten (10) ways of Cassius in driving his mimetic rivalry.

Table 2. Ten Ways of How Cassius Performing his Mimetic Desire.

Stages	Ways to perform
MD	(there is a presence or) finding a model
	provoking or creating propaganda to his close friend
MR	recalling events in his youth
	retelling the events to Brutus
MC	creating his character as mentioned by Caesar
	making alliance
SR	sparking or creating the anger of Cassius' group
	making Caesar a scapegoat
	killing Caesar
	making a peace agreement

D. Conclusion

After analyzing the drama text, the reseachers conclude that the rival object of Cassius' desires is Caesar. Mimetic Mechanism clearly shows that Cassius has a desire to become

ruler of Republic of Rome after Caesar is mentioned by the public as the king. Then, the mimetic desire stage also clearly shows that Caesar becomes rival object of Cassius. In the stage of the mimetic crisis, Cassius is able to make his support group angry with Caesar. Caesar is created as scapegoat to whom to be exterminated. The murder of Caesar is not a crime, but it is considered true and justifiable.

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