

Tragic Downfall of Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

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Abstract

Although there have been lots of debates about the reason of downfall of the great Roman general Antony, there is exactly one forefront reason in his destruction, it is Cleopatra herself. Her subversive power over Antony together with her manipulative and seductive power leads to the gradual breakdown of the male protagonist Antony and his destruction at the end. Thus, to understand all aspects of his downfall as one of the triumvirs of the great Roman Empire, we have to know exactly, who Cleopatra is and the role she played in Antony's downfall as a woman. Shakespeare's Cleopatra even today regarded by some as the source of beauty and by some as the source of manipulation but the common point for most people; it would not be possible to describe her within the limited definitions of woman in patriarchal society and one would need more than these, at least, for Cleopatra. Regarding the different approaches and criticisms about the downfall of the protagonist Antony, my aim in this article is to show how Cleopatra as an outstanding female model in ancient ages led to the downfall of the male protagonist of Shakespeare's play the great Roman general Antony by using her special feminine characteristic features such as her beauty, her tempting words and speeches and also her seductive wiles against patriarchal assumptions that leads her to being condemned as a femme fatale. In this perspective, in the play of Shakespeare Cleopatra's character is worth being analyzed whether she plays a submissive or a subversive role in the collapse of Antony.

Key Words: Antony, Cleopatra, Submissive, Subversive, Power

Shakespeare'in *Antony ve Kleopatra*'sında Antonius'un Trajik Çöküşü

Özet

Büyük Romalı General Antonius'un çöküşü hakkında her ne kadar çeşitli tartışmalar olsa da öne çıkan ilk sebeplerden biri Kleopatra'nın kendisidir. Kleopatra'nın Antonius üzerindeki yıkıcı gücünün yanında manipülatif ve ayartıcı gücünün de etkisiyle erkek başkahraman Antonius'un yavaş yavaş çöküşüne ve sonunda yok oluşuna neden olmuştur. Bu sebeple Büyük Roma İmparatorluğunun üç kurucu hükümdarından biri olarak Antonius'un çöküşünü tam olarak anlayabilmek için Kleopatra'nın tam olarak kim olduğunu ve Antonius üzerinde hangi karakteristik özelliklerinin etkili olduğunu bilmek gerekir. Shakespeare'in Kleopatrasını bugün bile bazıları için güzellik kaynağı olarak görülürken bazıları için ise manipülasyon kaynağıdır. Fakat çoğu insan için ortak nokta ise onu ataeril toplumdaki kadının sınırlı tanımıyla ifade edebilmenin mümkün olmadığı ve en azından Kleopatra için bu tanımlardan fazlasına gereksinim duyulmasıdır. Bu makalenin amacı Shakespeare'in oyunundaki başkahraman Büyük Roma İmparatoru Antonius'un çöküşü hakkındaki farklı yaklaşım ve eleştirileri dikkate alarak eski çağlarda sıra dışı kadın örneği olarak Kleopatra'nın kendine has kadımsı güzellik, ayartıcı söz, konuşmaları ve ataeril değerlere karşı sergilediği ayartıcı tavırlarıyla nasıl Antonius'un çöküşüne zemin hazırladığı ve nasıl entrikacı bir kadın olarak kınandığını göstermektir. Bu bakımdan Shakespeare'in oyununda Kleopatra'nın Antonius'un çöküşünde yıkıcı ya da itaatkâr bir rol oynayıp oynamadığının incelenmesi araştırmaya değer bir konudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antonius, Kleopatra, İtaatkâr, Yıkıcı, Güç

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PHILO

Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust. (1.1.1-10)

The play of William Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, is both a political but dominantly a passionate love affair. Antony's illicit love affair with Cleopatra leads to the great Roman Emperor Antony's downfall who interlaces his political and state duties with his desire for "licentious sexuality and lust."

Shakespeare's three plays Antony and Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and Coriolanus take their themes from the history of Rome. In all these three tragedies Shakespeare got his thematic contents from the translation of "Lives of Plutarch" by Sir Thomas North. Although the play Antony and Cleopatra is considered as the continuation of his preceding play Julius Caesar, the thematic aura in the play is very different from both Julius Caesar and his later play Coriolanus. The dominant political issues in these two plays become of secondary importance and the licentious intimacy and love between the Roman general Antony and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra comes to the forefront. There have been long debates on Shakespeare's play Antony and Cleopatra. Critics could not determine whether the play could be considered as showing the downfall of the great general of Rome who is betrayed several times by his passionate and cunning lover the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, or else could be taken as a 'transcendental love' occurring between the East and West or Rome and Egypt.

The play, as Michael Magoulias said, includes the most adorned and glorious words and speeches within all Shakespeare's plays with the use of hyperbolic language such as reviving the feelings and "a sense of ideal and the unusual vitality of the protagonists, and to express the rarity and historical significance of the experience described. Overreaching language abounds throughout the work in vast images of the natural world, descriptions of political greatness and power, and extreme

declarations of passion” (Magoulias 1995). For many critics it is the use of hyperbolic language together with the hyperbolic nature of the protagonists in the play that leads to the tragic downfall of Antony. Others consider Cleopatra’s self-conceited, confounding and indeterminable qualities either as faults or a dramatic flaw in her character together with “[Cleopatra’s] morally reprehensible traits contribute to Antony’s demise” (Magoulias 1995). Maynard Mack, a world-renowned expert on Shakespeare plays, claims that the play Antony and Cleopatra leads to a kind of subordination of the protagonist Antony as a result of Cleopatra’s fatalistic and supernatural quality.

Though Antony chooses her and we are shown the familiar feminine skills with which she draws him, the play keeps alive a complementary assurance that a power works through her which is also, in some sense, a fate. She is for everyone an ‘enchantress,’ a ‘fairy,’ a ‘witch,’ a ‘charm,’ a ‘spell,’ and she moves, even for the Romans, in an ambience of suggestion that seems to give these terms a reach beyond their conventional horizons of gallantry and erotic praise (Mack 1973:57).

However much the play has been considered by some critics as one of the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare, the others claim that the play retains an ambiguity in its content, structure and character roles, and in this regard, they called the play Antony and Cleopatra a ‘problem play’. But the importance of the play for feminist critics arises from Shakespeare’s having paved the way for a reconsideration of gender roles in this play with the help of the protagonists in a patriarchal world and in male dominated literary criticism.

According to A. H. Nason and L. Bamber, Shakespeare’s approach to his female heroines is different in tragedies and comedies. In this perspective, Shakespeare is considered to act in a feminist perspective in his comedies while he gives the credit of being the protagonist of the tragedies only to male characters in his plays.

In the comedies Shakespeare seems if not a feminist then at least a man who takes the woman’s part. Often the women in the comedies are more brilliant than the man, more aware of themselves and their world, saner, livelier, more gay. In the tragedies, however, Shakespeare creates such nightmare female figures as Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, and Volumnia. How are we to account for these terrible portraits, charged as they are with sexual antagonism? For these characters are not just women who happen to be evil; their evil is inseparable from their failures as women. Again and again Shakespeare darkens their cruelty by locating it on the very site of our expectations of a woman’s kindness (Bamber 1982: 2)

Regarding all the different approaches and criticisms about the downfall of the protagonist Antony, my aim in this article is to show how Cleopatra as an outstanding female model in ancient ages led to the downfall of the great Roman general Antony by using her special feminine characteristic features such as her beauty, her tempting words and speeches and also her seductive wiles against patriarchal assumptions leading her to being condemned as a femme fatale. Cleopatra

can be considered as a fickle woman and also a kind of opportunist who uses her power, her experience of men and also her femininity to manipulate every situation for her own advantage and the Egyptian crown. In this perspective, Cleopatra is worth being analyzed whether she plays a submissive or a subversive role in the downfall of Antony in the play. For instance, when Antony learnt that Rome was on the brink of war with Pompey he explains to Cleopatra his wish to return to Rome for his duty as one of the triumvirs of Rome. Cleopatra directly plays submissive woman role saying:

Since my becoming kill me when they do not
Eye well to you. Your honor calls you hence;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you. Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory, and smooth success
Be strewed before your feet (1.4.177-122)

But when we read Act 1 Scene 1, Cleopatra mocks Antony, rebuking him that he is under the command of Fulvia and Caesar and does whatever they want him to, "Do this, or this" (1.1.25). And after Cleopatra's subversive speech to him, he replies to her saying, "Let Rome in Tiber melt... Here is my space" (1.1.38-39) and he further claims that he loves only Cleopatra. She states his words and mocks him, and saying to her companions:

Excellent falsehood!
Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?
I'll seem the fool I am not (1.1.46-48)

The inconsistency in Cleopatra's character together with her permanently cunning ability plays both a submissive or subversive role in different moments and situations toward Antony. On the other hand, Antony as a Roman general is "so enchanted" by Cleopatra's beauty and his obsession with beauty and sexuality are the crucial points in understanding the downfall of the great Roman general.

We see that Antony is the great commander at the beginning of the play and a responsible general, at least knowing some of his own mistakes, saying for instance in Act 1 Scene 1 that "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break/Or lose myself in dotage" (1.1.128). While the play continues this

moral and dutiful general gets so involved in his love affair with Cleopatra. Despite the fear he felt about dotage in his love for her at the beginning he still becomes blind toward his responsibilities as a great Roman general. The inconsistent nature of Cleopatra drives him to do immoral acts against the Roman moral codes such as loyalty and obedience. Later he admits his own mistake in his dotage with these words “She is cunning past man’s thought /Would I had never seen her!” (1.2.161-168) So he in a sense finds himself torn between Rome and Egypt, in other words, between his duty and his pleasure.

Today we may witness the oppression and dominancy of male patriarchy over woman. From this perspective, no one needs to be assured about male critical dominancy and perspective in literary criticism. History reveals that woman had a notable, miserable position in society, and the idea of women being inferior to men was a common belief (Das 2012: 37). For a patriarchal society, social definition and understanding of a woman is that a woman is “her husband’s property; she was born to be at home, fulfilling her domestic duties, isolated from the world and depending on her father until she was married to a man to whom she was entrusted in order to make him happy” (Cantarella 1987: 123). And the same reality can be also experienced in literature, and in this regard, traditional inclinations do not differ regarding the social understanding of woman and her status in society. According to Pope, “Most women have no characters at all” (Pope 1743:1). They are as heroines of literature either not defined well or described as less important than heroes seen as a kind of trophy for the male figures. But in Shakespeare’s play Antony and Cleopatra while Antony represents muscular power, Cleopatra represents the power of the mind. In this regard, Cleopatra who always feels the necessity to exercise her military power together with her intelligence finds a way for Antony to become her main target to maintain her position as the Egyptian queen, which is itself against the patriarchal women characteristic. Antony’s devotion means little more than her pleasure for Cleopatra. Cleopatra’s determinism is mainly based on his military power back her up during her reign in Egypt. So there is no possibility for Antony to escape and resist against the lustfull and attractive Cleopatra’s wishes once she sets her mind to him. Although Enobarbus seems to be a misogynist, even he admits the irresistability of Cleopatra.

For her own person,

It beggared all description: she did lie

In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold, of tissue—

O’erpicturing that Venus where we see

The fancy outwork nature (2.2.234-238)

So, Antony's turning away from his military duties can be only explained by his getting lost in the delusion of the wicked attractive beauty of Cleopatra. Enobarbus claims that her beauty leaves unceasing desire in the mind of her lovers; even the most sacred people can not withstand her beauty and her tempting words:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish (2.3.276-281)

Plutarch in his writing describes Cleopatra as having no conscience and being ready to manipulate anyone in favor of herself in order to keep her throne. Isabelle Vignier, in her essay *The Tragic in Antony and Cleopatra* describes Cleopatra saying that "To her, Antony was nothing more than a puppet she had to seduce for political reasons. She did not care about his person but only about his power" (2000).

According to Mary Beard, Cleopatra is "best known for her alliance, political and romantic, with Mark Antony.... [though before him, her] interests lay with Caesar, with whom she had an open affair" (2016: 163). Beard claims that Cleopatra, as the symbol of lust and cunning desire, has seduced two Romans which essentially show us how she is dangerous as a deceptive and seductive woman. As one of the triumvirs of Rome the destiny of Antony is not only linked to his own personal life but also to Rome. So the fall of Antony at the hand of manipulative and cunning Cleopatra means it will cause great consequences for Rome. So Caesar says after learning the suicide of Antony "The death of Antony/ Is not a single doom; in the name lay/ A moiety of the world" (5.1.20-22). In the play the Soothsayer also foreshadows the fate of Antony that awaits him in the future in the hands of Cleopatra.

Thy luster thickens
When he shines by. I say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him;
But he away, 'tis noble (2.3.32-35)

The destiny of these two is determined by their characters. In Antony's case we know the outcome that awaits him in his fight against Caesar by the prophecy of the Soothsayer, but whatever he does to escape his cursed fate results is futile which shows the events are out of his control.

According to Freud, "There is no doubt that the resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed" (2015: 14). However, much Antony tries to escape his doomed fate as the Soothsayer said in the play, it is impossible for him to escape from the lure and seductive power of Cleopatra under the two contradictory elements in the mind of Antony which are conscious and unconscious ego. Antony however is aware of this reality, still continues to act in the pursuit of pleasure that he enjoyed in "The beds i' [he] th' East [which] are soft" (2.6.63). As Enobarbus describes Cleopatra's feminine attractiveness: "Her infinite variety. Other women cloy, /The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry" (2.3.276-277). Thus, Cleopatra satisfies Antony's unconscious longings through her lure and sexual seductivity.

Agrippa also plays an important role to salvage Antony's honorable reputation as a Roman general by asking his return from Egypt to Rome and to continue to take care of his Empire for the wealth of his nation. In Agrippa's eyes, Antony is "the best of men; whose virtues and whose general graces speak that which none else can utter" (2.2.133-137). So the continuation of this great character's nobility and virility as a moral and responsible Roman general is only possible "By this marriage /All little jealousies, which now seem great, /And all great fears, which now import their dangers, /Would then be nothing" (2.2.156-159). So, Agrippa suggests that only the reconciliation between Antony and Octavia upon the marriage of Antony with the moral, submissive and loyal Octavia can reclaim the forgetful Cleopatrean Antony to his civic duty to the Roman Empire.

To Nicola Onyett, Octavia symbolizes "Rome itself. She embodies all the characteristics of a proper Roman wife: beauty, grace, wisdom, and above all obedience to her husband. [she is] a character foil for Cleopatra, highlighting Cleopatra's foreign nature and her sexuality, which the Romans find unattractive and unacceptable" (2010: 2). Maecenas claims in Act 2 Scene 2 the unique Roman characteristic of Octavia that may alter Antony's heart, "If beauty, wisdom, modesty, can settle, /The heart of Antony, Octavia is, /A blessed lottery to him" (2.2.282-284). But however, Octavia is the right woman for Antony. Her seductive power is incomparable to the Egyptian queen. Octavia as described by the messenger to Cleopatra in Act 3 Scene 3 is low-voiced, dull of tongue, and dwarfish. She creeps and her face is round even to faultiness. Her hair is brown and her forehead as low as she would wish it, which essentially shows us that Octavia lacks female sexual attractiveness. From this perspective; Octavia can not be compared with Cleopatra's beauty and attractiveness. In contrast, Cleopatra was:

A woman of surpassing beauty, and at that time, when she was in the prime of her youth, she was most striking; she also possessed a most charming voice and a knowledge of how to make herself agreeable to everyone. Being brilliant to look upon and to listen to, with the power to subjugate every one, even a love-sated man already past his prime, she thought that it would be in keeping with her role to meet Caesar, and she reposed in her beauty all her claims to the throne. She asked therefore for admission to his presence, and on obtaining permission adorned and beautified herself so as to appear before him in the most majestic and at the same time pity-inspiring guise. When she had perfected her schemes, she entered the city, and by night without Ptolemy's knowledge went into the palace (Dio, Roman History, XLII.34.4-6).

According to Adrian Montrose "Shakespeare's public play-text embodies a culture-specific dialect between personal and public images of gender and power; both are characteristically Elizabethan culture forms" (1983: 65). Another assumption on Shakespeare's play Antony and Cleopatra is that

[the play] reveals the political and cultural angst of the Elizabethan era specifically through Cleopatra. Portrayed as a highly theatrical, sexualized woman ruler, Cleopatra goes against the European model of feminine virtue. This model of virtue is associated with purity, obedience, and whiteness or Europeaness. Therefore, as a powerful, non-white Egyptian woman, Cleopatra is viewed as threatening and as an object of scrutiny (Randazzo 2012: 3)

Even after Antony learnt his wife Fulvia's death, he still shows his dependency and passion for Cleopatra and he says, "My precious queen, forbear, and give true evidence to this love, which stands an honorable trial" (1.3.75). But her cunning Queen's answer to Antony's claim about his love for her is just underestimated by her. She says "So Fulvia told me" (1.3.78) which shows her doubt in his words and love while Antony doesn't have any tears in his eyes for the death his moral Roman wife. Whatever Cleopatra says to Antony, he acts as if he takes no offense to her words. In a way, it shows us that his link to her is not only emotional. Enobarbus, who is a loyal and trusted friend of Antony, acts as an intelligent commentator in the play and concludes that since Antony has his Egyptian queen, the death of his wife Fulvia means nothing to him. Enobarbus says "Why, then we kill all our women. We see how mortal and unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death's the word" (1.2.121-23). Despite Enobarbus' various warnings regarding leaving Egypt, Antony ignores all of them and he replies to him "The business she hath broachéd in the state cannot endure my absence" (1.2.155-56), which gives the powerful Cleopatra a chance to start an argument and question the degree of his love and passion for her, as he claimed when Cleopatra asked at the first scene of the play. Firstly, she instructs him using her manipulative power to make him feel pity for herself "I prithee turn aside and weep for her, then bid adieu to me, and say the tears belong to Egypt. Good now, play one scene of excellent dissembling, and let it look like perfect honour" (1.3.76-80). Then she encourages him to play a deceitful role by mimicking Roman masculine honor because of

the death of his wife. Despite Cleopatra's harsh and insulting criticism and her negativism to him Antony still indicates his love for her and says, "And I hence fleeting, here remain with thee. Away" (1.3.105-06). However much the words they use to each other seem to be harsh or might be considered as debatable between them it may also be considered to serve their extraordinary love and flirtation.

Antony's unwillingness and lack of potency in confronting the wicked, lustful and manipulative Cleopatra his role is nothing more than submissive while Cleopatra assumes the subversive role. In this regard, Antony's acting a submissive role allows the Egyptian queen to satisfy her womanly wiles, wickedness and her sadism. In the play, she shows her subversive role on Antony saying that

That time-O times!-
I laughed him out of patience, and that night
I laughed him into patience, and next morn
Ere the ninth hour, I drank him to his bed,
Then put my tires and mantles on him whist
I wore his sword Phillippan
O, from Italy.
Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears,
That long time have been barren (2.5.18-24)

According to Marsha A. Decker, Cleopatra's recalling the particular moments in the play that she enjoyed shows her loving subversive power on Antony and his submissiveness. In this regard, Decker claims that she represents a "vibrant, passionate woman who uses sex and cunning manipulation to control the political male environment" (2012: 10).

Cleopatra does not only imply her aggressive manipulative behaviour to Antony but even over others in the play. For instance, during the absence of Antony, Cleopatra's melodramatic situation still forces her to control over the messenger and she uses again her feminine and manipulative power in her speech towards the messenger by urging him to speak as she wants to hear, otherwise, she threatens to blame him as guilty.

CLEOPATRA

Antonio'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 lipped, and trembled kissing (2.5.26-30)

What news the messenger brings to the Egyptian queen from Antony is directly related to Cleopatra's fatality. So she says that the bad news would bring a negative consequence for the herald like losing his mistress. But the bad news would not only cause catastrophe for the herald himself, but also it would cause the metaphorical devastation and death of the Egyptian queen while she is losing her submissive hero who allows her to satisfy her feminine wiles and lust.

According to Lisa S. Starks, "submission, and humiliation that characterize the narrative of male masochism pervade Greek and Roman mythology and literature" (59). We cannot define masochism in a strict sense as sexuality. In Antony's case, it shows itself in a social masochism, though at times sexual masochism expresses itself in the play. Antony one of the triumvirs of the world, shows us his need to be connected with someone as a great authority as himself. So, he may be claimed to indulge in the magnetic attraction of Cleopatra, as once Caesar did. Peter Alexander in his work "Shakespeare's Life and Art" says that "[Antony] having enjoyed all the world can give to unlimited power and the richest physical endowment, he finds in Cleopatra's company a joy beyond anything he has known" (1961:176).

The attractive power of Cleopatra is not just based on her manipulative skills, but it arises from his willing submission to her lustful charm and her being the idol in the eyes of Antony. In this regard, he can never utter "No" to her wishes under her magnetic domain. So, it is her magnetic power which leads to his destruction. For instance, on the request of the Egyptian queen he goes and takes part in the Actium war by leading the Roman navy against one of the most powerful Western nations at the time which essentially can be considered as a suicide for Antony himself. In this regard, Cleopatra's persuasion of Antony to take active part in the war, in other words, leading him to commit suicide can be regarded as one of the most terrifying sadistic subversion that Cleopatra used on her passionate lover Antony. In a way, in his attempt to kill himself on Mardian's bringing the false news of Cleopatra's death, he admits the essence of their relationship with Cleopatra saying, "But I will be bridegroom in my death, and run into't as a lover's bed" (4.15.99-101). This shows us that even his death would be a kind of sadistic appeasement for his Egyptian queen. In other words, to commit

suicide after the news of Cleopatra's death is the only way for Antony to sustain his submissiveness to Cleopatra.

According to L.T. Fitz, the common tendency among literary scholars against Cleopatra in the play is that she has "feminine wiles" and "childlike" qualities. But while many scholars criticize Cleopatra's character, Fitz completely objects to their acting as if ignorant of Cleopatra's motivation and capability as the ruler and queen of Egypt in the play. Fitz argues that "[In] assessing the respective actions of Antony and Cleopatra, critics apply a clear double standard: what is praiseworthy in Antony is damnable in Cleopatra. The sexist assumption here is that for a woman, love should be everything; her showing an interest in anything but her man is reprehensible. For a man, on the other hand, love should be secondary to public duty or even self-interest" (Fitz 1977: 304). In this perspective, Fitz considers Cleopatra as 'a dual protagonist' of the play and praises her role against the patriarchal consideration and understanding of woman in society.

The readers read the story or spectators watch the play in the theatre within the expectation of Antony's development similar to all Shakespearean tragic heroes. On the other hand, Cleopatra who is called by patriarchal societies as cunning, lustful and immoral is expected to fulfill her motif as a destroying force over the male protagonist Antony. However, we see that as the plot of the story begins to develop, Cleopatra also begins to come to the forefront and gets more attention of both reader and spectator. While Antony strives to justify himself to Cleopatra, she just acts selfishly and egoistically for herself. While he does his deeds for the sake of Cleopatra, he also loses his importance in the play. Essentially, he is a hero and protagonist of the play, but on the other hand, he is also a figure who is overwhelmed by the female protagonist. According to Michael Neill, contrary to the gradual breakdown of Antony's character as the main protagonist of the play, Cleopatra gains a sense of wholeness and comes to the forefront and acts as the protagonist of the play by the end of the play. "[What Cleopatra] claims is the androgynous wholeness at which Anthony's end gestures only falteringly. It is not for nothing that, in handing over to Cleopatra almost the whole last act, Shakespeare accords her the structural privilege conventionally granted to the male protagonist" (2000: 125).

Considering the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra in the play we can see that it has transgressed the traditional boundaries of male and female gender roles. While Cleopatra acts a manipulative, seductive and powerful role, Antony represents an indecisive, unsteady and a weaker character under Cleopatra's wings, so that it is Cleopatra's character that gets more attention of critics because of her personal treatment regarding male status and hierarchy in social structure. Let alone the critics, even Antony's men become worried about their great general's spending more time with Cleopatra under her control and they consider themselves as not Antony's men but "women's man" in the play. It is an irony and essentially can be also considered as a threat for patriarchy which leads critics to criticize Cleopatra so harshly. When Antony gets drunk with Cleopatra, they 'wear each

other's clothes for entertainment', and gender exchange between Antony and Cleopatra can be also observed in the Actium war in the play. Cleopatra pushes Antony to fight in the battle like a general or commander at the beginning of the war, but Antony flees from the war in a dishonorable way after Cleopatra, which shows us that the inconsistency in Cleopatra's nature also leads to perplexing the mind of Antony acting with the true judgement of a morally great Roman general.

When we considered the characters Octavia and her brother Octavius in the play the transgression of gender roles in the play becomes more implicit. Octavius represents loyalty, morality and masculinity which Antony should represent as protagonist; he stands as a foil for Antony. In the same sense, Octavia can be also regarded as a foil for Cleopatra herself with her moral codes. Their representation of traditional gender roles is considered as highly supreme and satisfactory for the traditional social hierarchy. In this regard, while Octavius defeats both Cleopatra and Antony, the traditional political structure and gender roles are reconstructed. While the dangerous and deathly fatal manipulative Cleopatra is destroyed, the play in a way represents her defeat and death for the male gender less "as a necessary return of power into male hands and more as a lamentable consequence of her having power in a world not ready for women to wield it" (Ruth 1990: 124). In this perspective, as Fitz mentioned that "critical attitudes go beyond the usual condescension toward female characters or the usual willingness to give critical approval only to female characters who are chaste, fair, loyal, and modest: critical attitudes toward Cleopatra seem to reveal deep personal fears of aggressive or manipulative women" (Fitz 1977: 298).

In short, although there have been lots of debates about the reason of downfall of the great Roman general Antony, there is exactly one forefront reason in his destruction, it is Cleopatra herself. Her subversive power over Antony together with her manipulative and seductive power leads to the gradual breakdown of the male protagonist Antony and his destruction at the end. Thus, to understand the full aspect of his downfall as one of the triumvirs of the great Roman Empire, we have to know exactly, who Cleopatra is and what role her characteristics played in Antony's downfall as a woman. And she is even today regarded by some as the source of beauty and by some as the source of manipulation but the common point for most people; it would not be possible to describe her within the limited definitions of patriarchal woman and one would need more than these, at least, for Cleopatra.

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