



Cleopatra the Serpent Goddess in Anthony and Cleopatra

Anthony ve Cleopatra'da Yılan Tanrıça Cleopatra

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Abstract

Without doubt, Cleopatra is one of the most important female figures of the history and she is also among the most prominent female characters of Shakespearean drama; however she differs from the other females of Shakespeare with the characteristics of serpent goddess spilled throughout this play. These characteristics make her the object of the 'male gaze', a concept coined by Laura Mulvey (1975), therefore she influences every single male around her. The play seemingly tells the story of two lovers; yet it is like the manifesto of Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' which is the most proper phrase to define her character. Taking into account all of these, this paper looks for Cleopatra's mythological serpentine figure and how it reflects to the relationships of main characters of the play by delving into similar literary works dealing with serpentine figure of female characters. It also tries to shed light upon how 'male gaze' and 'infinite variety' are related to her character by focusing on some critical articles.

Keywords: Anthony, Cleopatra, Male-gaze, Serpent goddess, Infinite variety

Özet

Kuşkusuz Cleopatra, tarihin en önemli kadın figürlerinden biridir ve aynı zamanda Shakespeare dramasının en belirgin kadın karakterlerinin arasındadır; ancak bu oyun boyunca görülen 'yılan tanrıça' özelliği ile Shakespeare'in diğer kadın karakterlerinden farklıdır. Bu özellik, onu Laura Mulvey (1975) tarafından ortaya atılan bir kavram olan "erkek bakışı"nın nesnesi yapar, bu nedenle etrafındaki her erkeği etkiler. Oyun ilk bakışta iki sevgilinin hikâyesini anlatır; ancak hikâye onun karakterini tanımlamak için en uygun ifade olan Cleopatra'nın "sonsuz çeşitlilik" tasvirinin manifestosu gibidir. Bunların hepsini göz önüne alarak, bu makale Cleopatra'nın mitolojik yılan figürünün, yılan kadın figürleriyle ilgilenen benzer edebi eserleri inceleyerek, oyunun ana karakterlerinin ilişkilerine nasıl yansıdığını araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca bazı eleştirel makalelere odaklanarak "erkek bakışı" ve "sınırsız çeşitlilik" kavramlarının onun karakteriyle nasıl ilişkili olduğuna ışık tutmaya çalışıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anthony, Cleopatra, Eril bakışı, Yılan tanrıça, Sınırsız çeşitlilik

Anthony and Cleopatra is one of Shakespeare's tragedies which take place in Roman history. Its source is Plutarch's Lives of the noble Grecians and Romans. Shakespeare used Thomas North's translation and the play is very similar with North's translation so Anthony and Cleopatra in the play reflects the reality to an extent. Although the play, which includes Shakespeare's unforgettable characters and poetic genius, has always attracted the interests of the critics, it couldn't be as successful on stage as on paper. Seemingly, the directors couldn't succeed in reflecting this striking artwork on to stage. To refer to a Turkish actress here: Zerrin Tekindor, who played the role of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's Globe's 2012 International Shakespeare Festival as a part of London Olympics, talked about Cleopatra's character in an interview of the play and said that:

It is a really difficult role. It is such a deep role and the character is so colorful that it can go up to anywhere. Very ambitious, very jealous, deeply in love, childish. A character who can meet every feeling, which you can think of, with just one sentence because she is not just at a point, she can fly to anywhere. (Londra'da Türkçe Shakespeare - BBC News Turkish)

While only one character in the play is such an inexplicable one, how can a director reflect all the heavy burden of this marvelous play on to stage? Huge geographical change, several vital characters like Anthony, Cleopatra, Caesar and even Enobarbus, and whole plotline are evidence for both difficulty of playing it on stage and Shakespeare's genius. Despite all these, it is obvious that Anthony and Cleopatra became themselves and gained their reputation for the sake of Shakespeare's play. If the play hadn't been so popular, most people may not have known this love story or, wonderful Queen Cleopatra. With the help of the play, it emerges, on one side, a woman who ruled over continents, Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra who wrote her name in the history with her beauty as well as her genius. On the other side, General Anthony,

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who was blinded by her love, faltered between his duty and love, poor but honorable. The story of the two leading characters, Antony and Cleopatra, evokes ideas of love and the extreme measures taken in pursuit of love. It is obviously a great love story and even one of the leading characters of the play, Octavius Caesar admits it by saying that: 'No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous' (183). It is, eventually, accepted by the characters that it is a great love story. Some others say that it is not only a love story, but also a story of how a noble Roman general and an Egyptian queen are destroyed. But it is agreed that it includes in itself a great love story which is going to be the starting point of this article.

This article is going to start with elaborating the love between Anthony and Cleopatra, and the consequences it creates. As Cleopatra is interpreted as a serpent goddess, complicated issues in their love are going to be related with this concept because it is also clear that all complications that happen in the play arise around Cleopatra's actions. Antony's downfall seems to be caused by his forgetting his duties which is also because of his sometimes inexplicable actions caused by the love of Cleopatra. On the other hand 'The male gaze' which makes Cleopatra an object in the eyes of the male characters is also going to be discussed. Eventually, all these issues at stake are going to be related to serpent goddess issue which helps Cleopatra to be a unique character that affects everything around her, controls and manipulates everything like a Goddess.

Antony's actions are a good starting point. From Anthony's point of view, the reason for some of his inexplicable behaviors is his love for Cleopatra. He leaves the duties once he was much attached, and runs after his lover. His giving up everything and returning to Cleopatra is one of the evidences for his love. Sometimes in the play he remembers his old days and tries to return to his duties of Rome. In the beginning of the play Cleopatra emphasizes this by saying that: 'He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden /

A Roman thought hath struck him' (13). Nevertheless, he cannot succeed it all through the play and finds the relief at Cleopatra's arms again. In one of the scenes Antony returns to Rome and in order to repair his relationship with Caesar, he accepts Lepidus' suggestion and marries Caesar's sister Octavia. Obviously, he does this action because his duties of Rome outweighed his love for Cleopatra. But soon he realizes the truth and says:

When it is all to nought; and his quails ever
Beat mine, inhoop'd, at odds. I will to Egypt:
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I' the east my pleasure lies. (51)

He realizes that Roman life no longer suits him. He knows that he cannot survive without his 'Egyptian dish' (2.6.148). Cleopatra also knows that if she releases him for a while he will return to his duties at once. She knows that he is still attached to Rome in deep. When a messenger comes with news from Caesar, Cleopatra realizes that he is still loyal both to Rome and his wife, Fulvia. She says:

Nay, hear them, Antony:
Fulvia perchance is angry; or, who knows
If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you, 'Do this, or this;
Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;
Perform 't, or else we damn thee.' (6)

And after that, she does not stop but instead keeps on pushing Antony about the matter. Obviously, Cleopatra cannot stand the people who have the possibility to take Antony from her. So in the play she always tries to persuade Antony to stay with her. She tries to make him stay even when she tells him to go. In another scene, she understands that the arriving messenger has brought news from either Caesar or Antony's wife Fulvia, she gets lots of feelings at the same time, she becomes jealous, she becomes angry, she scolds him, at the same time she begs him:

Perchance! nay, and most like:
You must not stay here longer, your dismissal
Is come from Caesar; therefore hear it, Antony.
Where's Fulvia's process? Caesar's I would say? both?
Call in the messengers. As I am Egypt's queen,
Thou blushest, Antony; and that blood of thine
Is Caesar's homager: else so thy cheek pays shame
When shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds. The messengers! (6)

Here, she both shows realization of Antony's loyalty and, at the same time, she tries to make him stay in Egypt by pushing him into the matter. It works at a level because Antony cannot admit his desire for Rome to himself and responds to her: 'Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space' (7). As seen here, Cleopatra performs her character to control everything around her very well and make Antony feel guilty about the situation. The examples of this kind is often seen throughout the play. No matter what happens or who does something wrong, it is obviously Antony who says he is sorry. What is intriguing is that there are several moments in which the reader cannot understand the reason why Antony continue to love him. Cleopatra does not represent a loyal lover for Antony in her actions. She shows some behaviors that cannot be referred to as love. For example she says:

See where he is, who's with him, what he does:
I did not send you: if you find him sad,

Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick: quick, and return. (19)

It is argued that a true lover does not make her lover suffer with such words. These words make her more desirable so it is one of her tools to make Antony feel attached to her. Another example is that, Cleopatra runs away from battle of Actium but Antony only feels anger at her for a short time. She again finds a way to make him relax and forgive her. Only her tears make that Great General take back all his anger and he forgives her by saying:

Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost: give me a kiss;
Even this repays me (108).

When looked at Antony's history, it is seen that he is a great Roman general and a leader who has been an excellent warrior to command in battle. Instances of his glorious Roman life are seen in other characters' description. For example, Philo says:

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 glow'd like plated Mars (5).

Here he is associated with the god Mars and this shows us how great he was once. Mars, according to the Roman mythology, was the god of war. Mars was believed to be the legendary father of founder of Rome, Romulus so the Romans believed that their ancestor is Mars. Philo resembles Antony to Mars because in the past he was such a great general that in front of his army, he stood like Mars once and this shows his greatness at past. Even his opponent Octavius Caesar accepts his glory:

The breaking of so great a thing should make
A greater crack: the round world
Should have shook lions into civil streets,
And citizens to their dens: the death of Antony
Is not a single doom; in the name lay
A moiety of the world. (160)

The description that 'moiety of the world' is not just because Antony was a triumvir (one of the three people who control Rome), but because, Caesar believed him to be a great person and a noble Roman who was once much attached to his duties as well. These lines shows how a glorious life Antony has lived in Roman lands but they also make us think of the possible reasons behind Antony's downfall. It is quite strange that a man who was once very attached to his duties, gives up everything and walks to his downfall, seemingly, with his own will. For this reason, it is argued that our eyes must be set upon Cleopatra who blinds Antony with her attraction. Enobarbus makes very impressive descriptions of Cleopatra through the play and in one of them he says:

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. (48)

As it is assumed in the description, Enobarbus, interestingly, talks about Cleopatra as he is another lover of her. He speaks as if he knew every aspect of her personality. The description is more about her spirituality rather than her physical appearance which makes us think how Enobarbus comes to know all these characteristics about Cleopatra. Enobarbus' description must be connected with something else. The argument here is that it is connected with the male gaze which, with Cleopatra's spiritual charm, makes Enobarbus stand on a different point towards Cleopatra while even, her lover, Antony does not. Laura Mulvey states in her article Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema: 'In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly' (1975: 11). As they live in 'a sexually imbalanced world', Enobarbus is the determining part here. So, it is argued that Enobarbus' description is all about his fantasies about Cleopatra as there is no way he is able to know such intimate feelings. He is a very close observer of the love between Antony and Cleopatra and it is obvious that he is a much closer observer of Cleopatra, too. He makes such descriptions throughout the play and most of them prove the argument. For example when talking to Antony about Cleopatra, he says:

Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but
the finest part of pure love: we cannot call her
winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater
storms and tempests than almanacs can report: this
cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a
shower of rain as well as Jove.(16)

The deepness of his description reveals his subconscious desires for Cleopatra. It is proof to my argument that he talks about 'her passions' which are 'the finest parts of pure love' but there is no possibility that he can be so sure about Cleopatra's inner characteristics. With all these we see the objectification of woman body by the male part. It is not only Cleopatra who is projected to the gaze. Enobarbus also makes general statements about women which are other proofs for the objectification of woman. For example, he says: 'But there is never a fair woman has a true face' (66). It is not only

him who makes such objectifications. Even a clown in the last act states similar ideas about women but difference is that his statement is far more beyond this substantial one. The clown says:

You must not think I am so simple but I know the
devil himself will not eat a woman: I know that a
woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her
not. But, truly, these same whoreson devils do the
gods great harm in their women; for in every ten
that they make, the devils mar five. (178)

It is intriguing to hear these words from a clown because how could a simple man know all these things. It is argued that this gives us a general perception of woman in Roman times but specifically, this is actually Shakespearean England which is at stake.

There are also other characters that see Cleopatra as a sexual object for Antony. In Mulvey's article we see another explanation by Budd Boetticher about this objectification:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (qtd. in Mulvey, 1975: 11)

Several characters in the play see Cleopatra like this. She has not the slightest importance for them. What counts for Lepidus and Caesar is the glory of Rome for example. Cleopatra interpreted by this quotation represents an object of desire in the eyes of other characters.

There happens a strange dialogue between Lepidus and Antony in the Act 2. It is obvious that the dialogue is about Cleopatra:

LEPIDUS.	What manner o' thing is your crocodile?
MARK ANTONY.	It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth: it is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs: it lives by that which nourisheth it; and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.
LEPIDUS.	What colour is it of?
MARK ANTONY.	Of it own colour too.
LEPIDUS.	'Tis a strange serpent. (70)

Obviously, they are talking about Cleopatra and Lepidus objectifies her by making a word trick and relating her to a crocodile. Antony responds similarly and makes an explanation but actually he tells nothing. He rescues Cleopatra from objectification by making such a description of her. He does not give that joy to Lepidus. "'Tis a strange serpent'. Lepidus concludes, but this serpent is certainly no stranger than the other Serpent of Old Nile, Cleopatra herself' (Hammersmith, 1982:11). This quotation substantiates the argument that they are talking about Cleopatra and this is an example of Cleopatra's alienating herself from objectification. It is with Antony's hand of course but we know that Antony rescues her because of his love which is Cleopatra's virtue.

The quotation from Mulvey also explains a lot for the argument because Antony's inexplicable actions may be because of his objectification of Cleopatra.

It is also more curious to see that most of the descriptions Enobarbus made about Cleopatra seem to be wrong as Cleopatra does not seem, in the rest of the play, much in love with Antony. She, instead, seems to be in pursuit of her own benefits. She leaves Antony in the lurch and tries to make agreement with Caesar. She tries to give Antony courage to fight against Caesar, at the same time, she runs away from the battle. It is rather complicated to understand her motion in this part of the story. At that point, Antony understands, when he is betrayed by Cleopatra the second time, that he is wrong and says to Eros: 'she, Eros, has / Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false-play'd my glory / Unto an enemy's triumph' (146). However, eventually, Antony forgives Cleopatra again when he hears that she is dead in a monument and tries to kill himself but only succeeds in wounding himself. It is also surprising that Antony tries to kill himself. Anthony Miller states in his article *Metamorphic Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* that: 'The lovers believe that in death they will be received into a lovers' elysium' (1992:40). So Antony believes that he will reconcile with Cleopatra in the afterlife just like Cleopatra does in the final scene. She clothes in her best and acts as if she will meet Antony in the afterlife. This scene exemplifies it:

Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have
Immortal longings in me: now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip:
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men
To excuse their after wrath: husband, I come. (178-179)

After this scene, the idea of immortality continues when Iras dies because of the snake's poison. Cleopatra believes that Iras will see Antony first, and unfortunately she will take the first kiss from him:

This proves me base:
If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have. (179)

And of course, just as they believe, their death is not the end. It is the beginning of their eternal life of fame. In Shakespeare's *Tragic Cosmos*, Thomas McAlindon states the same thing:

Of course the idea of renewal is associated primarily with the lovers who represent the old order rather than with the young man who heralds the new: through suffering and death they are purged of their defects, attain the fullness of their natural nobility, and in that way win an undying fame. (McAlindon, 1996: 223)

As stated before, they are Antony and Cleopatra because of Shakespeare's play. As Antony and Cleopatra is undoubtedly a tragedy, and the characters suffers much in the plot of the play, it can be said that their death serves to their reconciliation in the afterlife and they become immortal in this life. Their names will always be remembered thanks to Shakespeare.

With all these in hand, Antony's downfall seems very strange so there must be another reason behind his blindness of love. Though Antony suffers much from Cleopatra's hands, he continues to love her inexplicably. Apparently, there seem two possible reasons. First of them, as Enobarbus does, it is about the male gaze issue in which Antony places his own fantasies on to Cleopatra's women image and objectifies her so he cannot avoid his own irresistible desire. Second, it is because of Cleopatra's own spirituality and her superior characteristic which makes Antony become so blinded in her love. As the argument is set upon the Serpent Goddess figure of Cleopatra, then, it is something about Cleopatra that makes Antony 'overflow the measure'.

The question to be asked here is what a Serpent Goddess is and what connection a serpent and a goddess have in this story? The snake figure and symbol has been consistently used in literature by many writers as well as artists. The snake is an ancient symbol, and has been used by many cultures for many years. Although recently, the snake has been related with evil and it is seen as a deceitful creature. This new view of a once holy creature may be imposed on us by the tale of Adam and Eve. But many cultures including the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and many more, worshipped the snake as a symbol of rebirth and fertility. But then snake started to be seen as a deceitful and unreliable creature. There are also several literary works about snake women. One of the most important of them is Jean D'arras' book *Melusine*; or, *The Noble History of Lusignan*, in which he depicts the story of Melusine, a water-nymph (in ancient Greek and Roman traditional stories a goddess or spirit in the form of a young woman, living in a tree, river, mountain, etc.) with a serpentine tail, who marries a mortal and paves the way for the rise and fall of the House of Lusignan with many inner stories. In the plot, one day, Melusine and her two subjects were guarding a fountain when a young man, Raimondin, came out of the forest. He met Melusine and they spent the night talking to each other and when dawn arrived, they were engaged with a condition. Melusine urged Raimondin to never search for her and see her on Saturdays because, according to the prophecy, Melusine returns to her snake form on Saturdays and if someone sees her in this changing state, she will be cursed to stay in her snake form forever. With promising not to see her on Saturdays, Raimondin marries her and they started to build their life. As time passed, Melusine built palaces, castles, churches, fortresses, towns and cities, each in a single night throughout the country. She and Raimondin had ten children but each of the children had some deformities in their bodies. For example, one of them had one red eye and one blue eye, another one had an ear larger than the other, and another one had lion's foot growing from his cheek. In spite of their deformities, all their children were strong and lots of people loved them throughout the country. All these things seemed to be done by magic but nobody seemed to care about it. Antony's situation is similar to Raimondin's because, as Melusine made impossible things in rather short time with magic, Cleopatra impressed Antony in such a way that it seems magic but nobody cares about it. This magical issue is going to be discussed later. Then one day Raimondin's brother came to visit him. They had long conversations and his brother made him to feel suspicious about Melusine's Saturday activities. So, on a Saturday Raimondin decided to search for his wife. He searched for her and found her in a bath but he did not reveal himself. He only watched her and got horrified to see that his wife had got a snake tail from her waist to down. Raimondin learned everything but did not tell anything until one of their sons killed a hundred monks in a church. One of Raimondin's brothers was in the church too. Just then, Raimondin accused Melusine of being the true criminal of all the events so that his breaking of his promise was revealed. Just as the prophecy foretold, Melusine transformed into a huge snake, and fled away from the country. It is told that she would sometimes turn back and visit her children. It is said that the noble line of blood beginning with Melusine will reign until the end of the world. After all, Raimondin was never happy again and it is said that he died of sorrow in the end.

Another work similar to this one is John Keats' poetic work *Lamia*. It is another work which includes a powerful snake which charms a human being and brings him downfall. In the story, the god Hermes, also known as Mercury, one of the major Roman gods, was looking for a nymph who was hidden from him. At that time, he comes across a mourning snake which is complaining about being imprisoned into its snake form. The snake tells Hermes that she knows he has been looking for a nymph. She suggests giving him the nymph, to whom she gave the power to be invisible, if he agrees to transform her into a woman body. Hermes, of course, accepts the offer and she gives him the nymph and he turns her into a woman. In her woman form, she goes to the city of Corinth, an ancient city in Greece, where she meets young Lycius. As soon as she sees Lycius, she stands at one side of the road knowing that Lycius will come to meet her. Just as she predicted, Lycius sees her and falls in love with her at the very time he saw her. Then they go to Corinth and start to live in a mansion which Lamia takes them and they lived without the company of other people. They lived happily for a long time until when Lycius decides that they should marry and invite all their friends but Lamia is opposed to the idea. But in the end, Lycius wins the argument with one condition. She agreed to have the wedding if Lycius does not invite his philosopher friend

Apollonius to the wedding. While Lycius was busy inviting all her friends to the wedding, Lamia was decorating the house with her magical powers just as Melusine built castles and palaces. When the guests among which there are none for Lamia arrive, they become surprised by the marvelous mansion. They did not know before there was such a beautiful mansion in the city. Then the wedding begins and Apollonius comes to the wedding, too, uninvited. In the climax of the wedding feast, Apollonius directs his looks on to Lamia and she starts to feel uncomfortable about it. She does not answer Lycius' questions about what discomfords her. Then music and feast stops suddenly and Lycius turns to Apollonius and tells him to stop staring at Lamia. Apollonius looks at him contemptuously and says: 'Fool!' (1884: 291). He continues: 'from every ill / Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day, / And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?' (1884: 296-98). And then he looks at Lamia again and utters two words: 'A Serpent!' (1884: 305). Upon these words Lamia turns into her natural form which is a snake, and she vanishes. Then Lycius dies in grief and sorrow. There are two examples of the argument here. One of them is, as stated before, the snake woman, who blinds her lover. The other example is Apollonius' male gaze on Lamia which ruins everything. Apollonius is described as a philosopher, a sage and a wise man but he turns out to be the destroyer of the entire event. He revealed the truth but that truth killed his friend. Can he be still called a wise man or a sage? Can it be said that the truth should always be brought to light? Even in the poem it is asked: 'Do not all charms fly / At the mere touch of cold philosophy?' (1884: 229-30). It is obvious that Apollonius destroys everything with his cold philosophy; his wisdom brings nothing but destruction.

Both of the stories depict a similar figure of snake which creates an illusion for those who are in contact with them. Cleopatra's case is somewhat similar to these stories because, throughout the play Antony seems to be in an illusion created by Cleopatra herself.

Snake is usually seen dual, carrying in itself both the good and the evil. It is also associated with productivity and life force. It changes its skin periodically and this associates it with rebirth or renewal which represents the removal of old things that do not work in our life and creation of new things to live a better life.

Melusine's snake tail represents the life force women possessed in pagan times; as snakes slough their skin in self-renewal, so women renew the race in giving birth. Such ancient theriomorphic goddesses from around the Mediterranean were later subjugated and replaced with gods, and by the Judaic era the snake goddess was cursed because of her role in the fall. (Alban, 2010: 23)

In ancient times, female figures were seen as Goddesses and also Melusine was depicted alongside Virgin Mary in Breton icons (Alban, 2010: 23). But later these goddesses were replaced by the gods because of misinterpretations by the people that snake is a deceitful creature. As Alban states:

Goddess-like, she prohibited her lover from seeing her, which taboo he finally broke. She created many artefacts, and like mother earth bore strange progeny. However, Christian patriarchy interpreted her snake's tail as punishment for imprisoning her father under the earth in death, thus bringing the story full circle like an ouroboros, from power to chastisement, her ophidian force being regarded as a curse. (2010: 23)

When compared to Antony and Cleopatra, it is seen that Cleopatra carries in itself both the good and the evil. She both houses love and treachery. As the Nile gives life to whole Egypt, Cleopatra gives life to Antony. She is his life force. She also plans her actions pragmatically. According to the development of events, she changes her course of action just like a snake changing its skin. And lastly, she does all these things on her own. All these are similar to a description of Melusine in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*:

Melusina, singing to herself on the brink of this mystic fountain, is a potent being of great authority who knows the beginnings and ends of things - and is, as has been pointed out, in her aspect of water-serpent, a complete being, capable of generating life, or meanings, on her own, without need for external help. (qtd. in Alban, 2003: 1)

All these characteristics contribute to Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' which is a concept used by many writers who study Antony and Cleopatra and it is argued that this variety enables her to be both a serpent with emphasizing its powerful sides and a goddess who can affect every single thing around her. From Antony to Eros, from Caesar to Fulvia, the destiny of every single character is decided by her actions. Her infinite variety embodies lots of different characteristics. And she is a Serpent Goddess because of all these characteristics. For example, in the play, she changes from feeling to feeling very fast which symbolizes her diverse nature. She says: 'Give me some music; music, moody food / Of us that trade in love' (52), but then she suddenly changes her mind: 'Let it alone; let's to billiards: come, Charmian' (52). But it is also not enough for her so she changes again: 'I'll none now: / Give me mine angle; we'll to the river' (53). This is just an example but she changes from one state to another throughout the play that it gives us a difficult to follow feeling. One of her varieties is her seduction of men around her. It is clear and agreed by all that she seduces Antony very well. She also performs the same to other men around her. Enobarbus makes a good description about this:

For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion--cloth-of-gold of tissue--
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature. (46)

Her being resembled to Venus represents her power as well as her godly nature. Her love is also seen as a poisonous thing because her previous lovers were all powerful men and Agrippa says about this: 'Royal wench! / She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed: / He plough'd her, and she cropp'd' (48). He thinks that she seduces powerful men with her

sexual attraction but his words include metaphors, too. By referring to her as 'royal wench', he both states her noble birth, social position, power and at the same time puts her into a lower class status.

As stated before, the serpent changes its skin periodically which symbolizes renewal and rebirth. Cleopatra does the same thing by changing her course of action according to the course of events. One of her varieties arises here. As stated before, she changes mood and mind often; she sometimes emphasize her power as in the last act when she asks for her crown and her robe to reflect that she is a queen and must die like a queen. And sometimes she acts as if she was weak but it is all for her planning of actions, nothing else. She acts out her personality very well in this scene: 'Cut my lace, Charmian, come; / But let it be: I am quickly ill, and well, / So Antony loves' (22). She changes her mood sharply and at the same time she tries to show herself weak in order for Antony to stay in Egypt. And she states that it depends on Antony's love so that she leaves Antony in between his duty and love. It is obviously a very clever act of her.

Also in the last act, she acts out as if she was very weak after their defeat to Caesar. She had already realized that Caesar 'shall / Hang in what place you please' (171), as a celebration of his 'scutcheons and ... signs of conquest' (171). She had already decided to die and reach her love Antony in the afterlife so she behaves as if she was weak in order not for Caesar to keep her in captivity so that she can perform her plan. For that course, she says to Caesar: 'To make it clear; but do confess I have / Been laden with like frailties which before / Have often shamed our sex' (170). She acts as an archetype of women in those times so that Caesar will believe she accepts his victory and acknowledges the destiny he plans for her. Cleopatra's plan processes very well and Caesar leaves her on her own and she, clothing in her best outfit like a Queen, puts two snakes in her breasts and walks to her death as if she was milking the two snakes.

In conclusion, as stated before, Antony and Cleopatra are themselves thanks to Shakespeare's play and Cleopatra is Cleopatra because of her being a serpent and a goddess at the same time, her being a versatile character, her being an archetype on her own. Her varieties make her the person she is through the play. Then there remained only one sentence to say: 'Long live Queen Cleopatra'.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Kuşkusuz Cleopatra, tarihin en önemli kadın figürlerinden biridir ve aynı zamanda Shakespeare dramasının en belirgin kadın karakterlerinin arasındadır. Shakespeare bu eseri yazarken Thomas North'un çevirisini kullanmıştır ve bu sebeple hem Anthony hem de Cleopatra'nın bir ölçüde gerçeği yansıttığı söylenebilir. Yine, oyun gerçeği yansıttığından Roma'dan Mısır'a uzanan büyük bir coğrafi değişiklik içerir ve bu yüzden sahneye yansıtılması gerçekten zor bir oyundur. Shakespeare oyunlarında Leydi Macbeth, Juliet, Ophelia, Cordelia gibi birçok önemli kadın karakter yer alır ancak Cleopatra bu oyun boyunca görülen 'yılan tanrıça' özelliği ile Shakespeare'in diğer kadın karakterlerinden ayrılır. Yılan tanrıça kavramı tarih boyunca bazı eserlerde kullanılan bir kavramdır. Bunlara örnek vermek gerekirse Jean D'arras'ın Melusine ve John Keats'in Lamia adlı eserleri yılan tanrıça özelliği gösteren kadınlar içerir. Hem Melusine karakteri hem de Lamia karakteri yılan tanrıça olarak sihirli güçlere sahiptirler ve bu güçler sayesinde etraflarındaki erkekleri etkilemeyi başarmışlardır. Ancak bu sihirli güçler hikâyelerin sonunda kendilerine ve etraflarındaki yıkım getirir. Melusine hikâyesindeki kahramanımız Raimondin sihirli yılan tanrıçanın büyüyle harika bir hayat yaşar ancak onun kehanetini bozduğunda ise bu ona ve hanesine yıkım getirir. Benzer şekilde Lamia hikâyesindeki kahramanımız Lycius da bir yılan tanrıça tarafından büyülenerken günlerini geçirir. Evlendiği kadının gerçek kimliği arkadaşı tarafından ortaya çıkarıldığında o da Raimondin'in yaşadığı yıkımın aynısını yaşar ve keder içinde ölür. Bu bahsedilen örneklerdeki kadınların ikisi de birbirlerine benzer özellikler gösterir. Cleopatra da bu Shakespeare oyununda sihir kullanmasa da, sihirli denilebilecek bir şekilde etraflarındaki erkekleri etkilemeyi başarır. Bu onun yılan tanrıça olduğunun güçlü kanıtlarından biridir. Ayrıca ondan etkilenen bazı erkek karakterler de onun yılan tanrıça olduğunu itiraf etmişlerdir. Birçok erkeğin ilgisi üzerinde olduğu için Cleopatra, Laura Mulvey (1975) tarafından ortaya atılan bir kavram olan "eril bakış"ın nesnesidir, bu nedenle etraflarındaki her erkeği etkiler. Bu erkekler için Cleopatra kendi fantezilerinin yansımasıdır. Buna örnek olarak onun etkilediği karakterlerden biri olan Enobarbus'un onu tasvir etmesi gösterilebilir. Enobarbus onun sevgilisi olmasa da Cleopatra'yı şaşırtıcı bir anlatımla tasvir eder ki bu da onun Cleopatra'nın özelliklerini değil de kendi fantezisini tasvir ettiğinin göstergesidir. Bu çalışmada bahsedilen diğer bir durum ise; Cleopatra'nın karakterinin tanımlanmasında kullanılan "sonsuz çeşitlilik" kavramıdır. Bu özellik sayesinde hem yılan hem de tanrıça özelliği taşıyan davranışlar sergileyebilmiştir ve incelendiğinde etrafında kadın erkek tüm karakterlerin kaderlerinde Cleopatra'nın davranışlarının etkisi olduğu görülecektir. Burada aynı zamanda Cleopatra'nın 'sonsuz çeşitlilik' olarak tanımlanan davranışları yılanın mitolojik tasviri ve biyolojisiyle de bağdaştırılarak incelenmiştir. Örneğin yılan mitolojide hem iyiyi hem de kötüyü barındıran iki yönlü bir canlı olarak ele alınır. Aynı şekilde Cleopatra'da içinde hem iyilik hem kötülük hem aşk hem ihanet barındırır. Biyolojik olarak ise yılan deri değiştirir ve bu da yenilenme ve yeniden doğmayı simgeler. Cleopatra da olayların gidişatına göre davranış şeklini tamamen değiştirir ve bir yılanın deri değiştirip yenilenmesi gibi o da yenilenir. Bu sebeple bir sahnede Anthony'ye göndereceği elçiye onu üzüntülü bulursa dans ettiğini, keyifli bulursa üzüntüden hastalandığını söylemesini ister. Bunların hepsini göz önüne alarak, bu makale Cleopatra'nın mitolojik yılan figürünün, yılan kadın figürleriyle ilgilenen benzer edebi eserleri inceleyerek, oyunun ana karakterlerinin ilişkilerine nasıl yansıdığını araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca bazı eleştirel makalelere odaklanarak "eril bakış" kavramının onun üzerindeki etkisini inceleyecektir. Bunun yanında Cleopatra'nın karakterine atfen kullanılan "sınırsız çeşitlilik" kavramının onun karakteriyle ve diğer karakterlerle nasıl ilişkili olduğuna ışık tutmaya çalışıyor.