



Treatment of Love in Select Plays of Shakespeare and Dryden

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ABSTRACT

Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationship between two or more literature. Vitally it makes effort to understand the knowledge, taboos and beliefs of the same. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression." Henry Remark, *Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective* (1961)". The paper discusses the comparison about Cleopatra in two different plays. One is by William Shakespeare and by John Dryden. Even though it is written by two different authors, Cleopatra can be easily studied and compared. According to Shakespeare, Cleopatra is one of the unique characters and can be analyzed in terms of both as a woman in power and as a woman in love. These two criteria are sufficient to study and understand Cleopatra.

Keywords: Love, women, power, discrimination and beauty

INTRODUCTION

As everyone is familiar about William Shakespeare it is no way sensible to introduce him but it is his plays that need introduction because of its complexity, dialogue, psychological factors, tragic elements, tragic flaws, behaviour, characters and finally love. The same applies for John Dryden because of his voluminous works on love and women. The views of Shakespeare are entirely different from Dryden in this regard and have been discussed below.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra is an Egyptian Queen, who took Julius Caesar as her first lover, then Pompey the elder and ended up with Mark Antony as her most deeply loved man of the world. As a woman of strong emotions, at times she is fiercely desirous and with full of ardour

gets highly strung with anger. She quickly dispels and becomes loving and passionate which shows her fickleness. Her only true devotion is shown towards Antony as she braves her death in joining Antony. Cleopatra is a woman who loves power. Egypt is her empire and she will retain herself as the woman in reign. She is willing to flirt with Thidias to decide her powerful future.

She is ready to gamble for her throne. Thirst for power makes her a weak feminine and she loses her head. But when she decides to die with Antony and not be captured by the opposition she is courageous in death. Cleopatra feels she would rather die on the banks of Nile and eaten by worms than be conquered by Caesar. Her death indicates victory over the Roman leader. Even as she dies she wishes her death to be interpreted as a victory against Caesar, a contest of power. She contested never conceded. Cleopatra is a woman who is known not only for her beauty but also for her amorous desire. And she loved only the strong, powerful and the notable leaders.

Cleopatra wished to have the best without any weak physical submission and proved herself as a profoundly different female character and became a renowned personality down the lanes of history and has set herself apart as one of the most sought after legendary woman. Egypt is a glorious country and Shakespeare's presentation of an Egyptian woman in Cleopatra reveals a strong character symbolic of that unique culture which is sensual, earthly and dynamic. She becomes a testament to her own glory. Her death sees perish of her culture and brings an end to the heritage of the nation. Cleopatra surrounded herself with much splendour and is one of the best admired woman of beauty in all times so that if an awesome spectrum is measured one can see Caesar at one end and Cleopatra at the other while Antony may waver to the middle. As an Egypt woman she is famed for intellect and represents her country in a passionate and aesthetically gratifying nature. Unlike Romans she enjoyed her lovable qualities including her strong independence and pleasure habits. Shakespeare portrayed her as a complex woman but fully dimensional, blending all the subtle and strongest traits of female grace wiles and strength and makes her one of the most intriguingly attractive portrayed queen in the history of the world and thus giving Egypt a mysterious and mystical place in the ancient map.

ALL FOR LOVE

The highly charismatic and appealing queen of the Nile who once took pride in having won the desire of Julius Caesar and had him as her lover now again rejoices proudly to have won the heart of the courageous Antony who irresistibly fell into her hands like a slippery fish. She displays her love for him in a melodramatic manner. Cleopatra is highly expressive in her actions either in her treatment of lovers or her maids or the emperor himself, her high performance is exceptional.

She bares her soul to the audience becoming an emotional spectacle and conveys that she truly loves the General, though critics feel that her feelings are misplaced. Cleopatra is seen and understood from various aspects as an indulgent, bewitching extraordinary woman with a culture of profound desires for pleasure and ruin but at the same time illustrated as a queen filled with striking courage and transcendent nobleness.

In the play's opening ten lines Cleopatra is interpreted as a desirous and passionate "gipsy", which description repeats all through the drama, as may have been said like in a chorus. She is branded as an enchantress and a witch who brought the ruin of Antony, the brilliant warrior, by her occult practices; "the noble ruin of her magic". She is further characterized as a bickering woman like low class birth women; "a slave" and described as a "wrangling queen" who also strangles the energy out of her men. Just like an "Egyptian dish" her character is also narrated to be full of aromatic traits, all spicy and wooed by her men to become withered lipped as a "salt Cleopatra".

Critics during her period view her from a conservative and prejudiced angle and thus Cleopatra's character is condemned and reduced in a narrow perception when actually she stands tall and awe-inspiring according to Enobarbus description of her in Act ii scene ii. Most of the negative opinion in the narration has been presented by the men who lost their honor and kingdoms in their avarice feelings for her. Despite such pessimistic views because of her indulgence, sensuality and magical beauty, Cleopatra takes the centre stage in intellect as a great performer amidst the narrow minded Romans.

Whether whispering sweet words to her lover or baiting a messenger; as the drama unfolds, the audience become breathless when scene after scene presents a powerful character of Cleopatra, who loves her man deeply and passionately and at the same time takes firm action to chide an unfaithful servant. As Antony notes, she is a complete woman who becomes admirable in all feelings as to chide, to flirt, to laugh, to weep and to love. It is all this ability that gives her a supreme quality. It is this ability that attracts Caesar. Caesar ridicules her by parading her through the streets of Rome after his victory as his prize trophy.

Thus as men show vengeance on a woman who loves another, so also he intends to demean her character, to immortalize her to the public as a whore. If Antony cannot concede his defeat, then Cleopatra cannot allow hers to be stripped to the image of a boy actor "squeaking Cleopatra". Cleopatra is often childish and with relentless self-absorptions; nevertheless, her charisma, strength, and indomitable will make her one of Shakespeare's strongest, most awe-inspiring female character.

Thus Cleopatra has been noted as the most worst character in both the plays because of her desire and love towards Antony, which made him to change his fate and brought his downfall. It made her also to decide her own fate and finish her chapter's end by committing suicide.

CONCLUSION

It is proper and concrete that the writers have their own perspectives on Cleopatra. This is entirely subjective. It is also noted and analyzed that the conflict between the values of Rome and Egypt destroyed Antony. This analysis represents the conflict between duty and desire, between head and heart, and like most of the tragic results in legendary stories are caused by powerful and enticing women so also in this play the bewitching Cleopatra can be and is blamed by the authors for the tragedy.

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