

Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' in *Antony and Cleopatra*

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Introduction

Shakespeare's main source for *Antony and Cleopatra* is Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of the Greeks and Romans*. This was written in Greece in the first Century AD, translated into French by Jacques Amyot in 1559, and then into English by Sir Thomas North in 1579.^① The remarkable point is that Plutarch saw history in terms of human character. Shakespeare plundered many facts, details and phrases from North's translation, especially many cases of opposition, such as Rome versus Egypt, public duty vs. private happiness and honour vs. pleasure. He also focused on human character as Plutarch did. He depicted Antony's paradoxical character, which is noble but also ignoble at the same time. As for Cleopatra, however, though he also made use of Plutarch's account of her, he tried to represent her unique character against the background of history. The theme of the play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, seems to be Antony's conflict when given a choice between Roman behavior and Egyptian. Shakespeare, however, also turned his efforts into making an incomparable woman, Cleopatra, who has charms as well as faults. He must have intended to express the heroine's mature beauty and her dangerously unique or abnormal character.

Some seventy years after Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, John Dryden wrote *All for Love* in 1678, focusing on the love of Antony and Cleopatra. He says in the 'Preface' to *All for Love*, "The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it, and the unities of time, place, and action more exactly observed than, perhaps, the English theatre requires." He also says that he has "--- drawn the character of Antony as favorably as Plutarch, Appian, and Dion Cassius would give me leave; the

like I have observed in Cleopatra.^② But he added on the title page, 'Written in Imitation of Shakespeare's Stile'. Obviously, parts of some scenes are very similar to Shakespeare's. His description of Cleopatra in her barge on the River Cydnus is one example. Alan Roper says, "*All for Love* was written at a time when Dryden had not only renewed his admiration for Shakespeare but believed he had found the secret of Shakespeare's genius."^③

Here I am going to take up Cleopatra as the object of my study in order to find out what effect Shakespeare's characterization of Cleopatra brought to the play by making a comparison with the descriptions of Cleopatra in Plutarch and Dryden's *All for Love*.

1. Cleopatra's complex and paradoxical character

At the very beginning of the play, Shakespeare shows how changeable human minds are, and it is one of the important themes of the play. In fact the play has 42 scenes, and they change very fast like Antony's and Cleopatra's feelings. In Act I Antony declares his infinite love for Cleopatra, but he seems to change his mind in no time. Cleopatra says, "He was disposed to mirth, but on the sudden / A Roman thought hath struck him." (1.2.77-8) But it is not only his mind but also her mind that changes perpetually. She says, "Give me some music; music, moody food / Of us that trade in love." (2.5.1-2) But she changes her mind sharply and says, "Let it alone. Let's to billiards." (2.5.3) Yet again she changes her mind and says, "I'll none now. / Give me mine angle; we'll to the river." (2.5.9-10) Cleopatra moves with astonishing speed from emotion to emotion throughout the play. But what changes in the course of the play may be not only her character, but also the circumstances. She cannot help acting in consonance with the circumstances around her and it makes her character more changeable and more paradoxical.

As for the description of Cleopatra in Plutarch's text, there seems to be a lack of continuity between her cunning image before the battle of Actium and her noble image after the battle. On the other hand Shakespeare represents her paradoxical character sufficiently throughout the play and creates an incomparable woman whose weakness itself is charming. G. Wilson Knight says:

Cleopatra's 'variety' is so vividly depicted that it is easy to understand. Thus her two main qualities are: (i) the essential femininity we have continually observed, and (ii) her profuse variety of psychic modes: which two are clearly one, since a profound and comprehensive delineation of essential woman is necessarily very varied, and built of contradictions.^④

First I examine Cleopatra's essential femininity. Shakespeare's plays are written mainly in 'blank verse'. Naturally, *Antony and Cleopatra* is written mostly in 'blank verse'. The finest example in the play perhaps is the description of Antony's first meeting with Cleopatra on the River Cydnus, which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Enobarbus who is a down-to-earth soldier, when his friend Maecenas is trying to get the latest scandal about Cleopatra. Cleopatra's royal barge, with its dazzling queen, sails up the River Cydnus. Shakespeare followed those lines in North's translation closely, but he changed North's words into 'blank verse' and added some elements which show reverence for the beauty of the grand queen. Shakespeare tried to extend the character of Enobarbus to a commentator. He voices opinions with common sense and tells the audience the main characters' personalities.

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
 Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. 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. On each side her
 Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
 With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,

And what they undid did. (2.2.201-14)

(I underlined the phrases Shakespeare added.)

Agrippa and Maecenas are fascinated by the event on the River Cydnus. Shakespeare tried to depict a scene which makes the audience imagine a gorgeous painting. He aimed at visual effects to represent her dignity and beauty using North's prose, but also added some elements and altered the style to the forceful oratory of 'blank verse'. The verse of the play has a kind of resonance and it has a deep beauty all of its own. Before the scene Enobarbus speaks in prose and shifts into verse to describe Cleopatra's magnificence. In this way he dazzles the mind of audience with his pregnant imagery very effectively.

C. F. E. Spurgeon says about the description of Cleopatra, "what it is that Shakespeare has added: Movement, the elements making obeisance to the beauty of the great queen."^⑤ As Spurgeon says, the lines "and made / The water which they beat to follow faster, / As amorous of their strokes" add movement to the image which readers have in their minds. Shakespeare needed to emphasize her splendour to the audience to make them accept Antony's blind devotion to her. He says to Octavia, "I have not kept my square, but that to come / Shall all be done by th'rule." (2.3.6-7) But he suddenly changes his mind and says, "I will to Egypt; / And though I make this marriage for my peace, / I'th'East my pleasure lies" (2.3.38-40) right after he has been told by a soothsayer that fortune smiles on Caesar. At this point the audience recalls the beautiful verses of Enobarbus. Although Shakespeare repeatedly represents Cleopatra's weakness, the audience can accept the magnificent image which has been given by Enobarbus. But A. C. Bradley argues about the lines of Enobarbus which describe Cleopatra on the River Cydnus and the most famous in the play, "We hear wonderful talk; but it is not talk, like that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, or that of Othello and Iago, at which we hold our breath."^⑥ As Bradley says, the audience may not hold their breath when they hear Enobarbus' lines. I agree with his opinion. It is a big difference between the play and 'the Four Greatest tragedies'. But the audience will be fascinated with Cleopatra's beauty as described by Enobarbus. Her glamour which is also described by Enobarbus as, "the holy priests / Bless her when she is riggish." (2.2.249-50) is essential to represent Antony's fascination.

Dryden borrowed Shakespeare's speeches from Enobarbus's lines and put them into Antony's mouth. Alan Roper explains as follows:

Dryden changes this speech into a statement that characterizes Cleopatra in a way not borne out by the knowledge we have of her in the play. While adding to our admiration of her beauty, the speech functions more directly as an insight into Ventidius, who delivers the parallel one in *All for Love*.^⑦

Shakespeare represents Cleopatra's beauty by letting Enobarbus talk objectively. Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra on the River Cydnus makes Agrippa and Maecenas excited. Undoubtedly, Dryden borrowed these lines from Plutarch's account, but I suppose that he had been attracted by the beauty of Shakespeare's verses.

Next I examine her profuse variety of psychic modes. At the beginning of the play, Philo describes Cleopatra in terms of her impact on Antony. He says that she is 'a gipsy' and 'a strumpet', while Antony is 'the bellows', 'the fan to cool a gipsy's lust' and 'a strumpet's fool'. Her character is also revealed through her own lines. In earlier parts of the play Shakespeare depicts her character through her own lines so the audience can grasp her personality very clearly. She says to Charmian indulging in flights of fancy:

Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
 Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?
 O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!
 Do bravely, horse, for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st?
 The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm
 And burgonet of men. He's speaking now,
 Or murmuring 'Where's my serpent of old Nile?'
 For so he calls me. Now I feed myself
 With most delicious poison. Think on me,
 That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black
 And wrinkled deep in time. Broad-fronted Caesar,
 When thou wast here above the ground I was

A morsel for a monarch. And great Pompey
 Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;
 There would he anchor his aspect, and die
 With looking on his life. (1.5.20-35)

She recalls Antony and mentions his power, and the other great men, Caesar and great Pompey, who have been her lovers. The 'demi-Atlas' was said to support the whole world on his shoulders in Classical mythology, and Cleopatra recognizes that Antony shares responsibility with Octavius Caesar. Also her lines about Antony connote sexual meaning. She is flattering herself how she enchants great men. Pompey says:

But all the charms of love,
 Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!
 Let witchcraft joined with beauty, lust with both,
 Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
 Keep his brain fuming. (2.1.20-4)

Cleopatra's love is also 'most delicious poison' for men. Agrippa calls her 'Royal Wench!' and says, "Royal wench! / She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed; / He ploughed her, and she cropped." (2.2.236-8) He realizes that she is a politician who bewitches powerful leaders with her sexual attraction. His speech involves metaphors, which refer to sexual meaning. But Agrippa praises her charm, even if it depends on her sexual attraction. The praises of Enobarbus and Agrippa are for Cleopatra's past beauty and not for her present one. Cleopatra says, "Think on me, / That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black / And wrinkled deep in time." (1.5.28-30) But the source of her charm is her 'infinite variety' (2.2.246) and her sexual attraction based on her physical movement and her femininity. Enobarbus refers to this:

I saw her once
 Hop forty paces through the public street,
 And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
 That she did make defect perfection

And, breathless, power breathe forth. (2.2.238-42)

Enobarbus asserts not only her past charm but also her present one even if her charm bewitches his superior Antony. Her charm transcends destructions by time, and morality. 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. For vilest things
 Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
 Bless her when she is riggish. (2.2.245-50)

As for these lines, there is something very similar in *All for Love* written by Dryden. He uses the mouth of Ventidius, Antony's general, who says, "The holy Priests gaze on her when she smiles; / And with heav'd hands, forgetting gravity, / They bless her wanton eyes:"(4.239-41) These descriptions seem to be Shakespeare's own idea and very persuasive to make the audience accept her personality, even if she is 'riggish' and 'wanton'. S. T. Coleridge says:

--- the sense of criminality in her passion is lessened by our insight into its depth and energy, at the very moment that we cannot but perceive that the passion itself spring out of the habitual craving of licentious nature, and that it is supported and reinforced by voluntary stimulus and sought-for association, instead of blossoming out of spontaneous emotion.[®]

We can realize gradually that the Enobarbus' lines are not a satire on Cleopatra but his admiration for her as Coleridge says. Also Antony admires her, as can be seen when he says:

Fie, wrangling queen,
 Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,

To weep, whose every passion fully strives
 To make itself, in thee, fair and admired! (1.1.50-3)

But when Antony regains his reason, he blames Cleopatra by saying, "She is cunning past man's thought." (1.2.141) Enobarbus has a clear understanding of her performance and defends her, however:

--- 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 conning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove. (1.2.142-6)

Enobarbus says that she is a wonderful piece of work to Antony who feels regret for having seen her. He already notices that Cleopatra is a fetter which makes him lose control of himself. Thus Shakespeare makes Enobarbus a chorus based on Roman realism. He is sometimes a sardonic commentator and is not afraid to speak his mind to his superior. He describes Cleopatra's character cynically but with a soft heart. Many characters in the play make comments on the behavior of Cleopatra in different ways. It shows her diverse aspects; as Knight says, "a profound and comprehensive delineation of essential woman is necessarily very varied, and built of contradictions."^⑨

2. The contrasts between Cleopatra and Octavia

Octavia is presented as 'a gem of women' (3.13.110), and according to Plutarch, she was a brilliant woman who was loved by a lot of people. He also tells us that Antony and Octavia were married for many years and they had children. But Shakespeare does not refer to her so much. Octavia is in the shade and one of the unhappy women in the play. She is depicted as a Roman who is a sister of Caesar with beauty, wisdom, modesty and a paragon of virtue. Her character is the exact opposite of Cleopatra's. In spite of Octavia's virtue, Antony does not have genuine affection for her. Cleopatra is the most attractive woman for him. He thinks that a measurable love is less than infinite, and therefore worthless. It means that his love for Cleopatra is unmeasured.

In Act III, Shakespeare has created a scene, which describes Cleopatra's jealousy toward Octavia. She calls the messenger and commands him to tell her about Octavia. She asks him Octavia's age, and when she hears her age, she suddenly changes the subject and asks about her appearance. The messenger replies to her inquiries about Octavia. He reports her appearance in unflattering terms except one thing, which is about Octavia's voice. Cleopatra asks; "Is she shrill-tongued or low?" (3.3.12) The messenger replies, "She is low-voiced." (3.3.13) He might have made a slip of his tongue. Cleopatra shrugs off his intended meaning and says, "That's not so good." (3.3.14) But she ought to dislike 'shrill-tongued Fulvia' (1.1.34) so she must have expected him to answer, that Octavia is 'shrill-tongued', but it does not meet her expectation. She puts herself at ease by twisting the meaning of the words, low-voiced, into 'dull of tongue'. (3.3.16) According to Plutarch, her tongue is depicted as an instrument of music to divers sports and pastimes. Shakespeare might have altered the common idea about an ideal women's voice, which is airy like music, to a low voice to create a new type of woman.

In the battle scene, Shakespeare shows not only Cleopatra's changeable mood but also a comparison between the Egyptian and the Roman woman. Compared with Octavia, Cleopatra is undoubtedly a great lover of Antony, but Shakespeare also represents Cleopatra as a noble woman who longs to be Antony's wife and help him in armoring for battle. Antony asks Eros for help to put his armour on. Antony and Cleopatra's conversation is like that of a couple:

Cleopatra:	Nay, I'll help too.
	What's this for?
Antony:	Ah, let be, let be! Thou art
	The armourer of my heart. False, false; this, this.
Cleopatra:	Sooth, la, I'll help. Thus it must be.
Antony:	Well, well,
	We shall thrive now. (4.4.5-9)

On the other hand, Dryden included a scene of confrontation between Cleopatra and Octavia. As A. Roper says, "Dryden's Antony has often been criticized as a slightly absurd figure, and *All for Love* as a play bordering on domestic comedy." Octavia is

depicted as a wife of Antony and mother of their children. Needless to say, Shakespeare aimed to intensify Cleopatra's character by the evasive description of Octavia, and also to emphasize Cleopatra's charm. Antony loves Cleopatra who has beauty with faults, not Octavia who is 'a gem of women'.

3. Cleopatra's moods represented by using 'you' and 'thou'

During the twenty-five years that Shakespeare was writing his plays the use of 'you' and 'thou' was changing: 'thou' was already beginning the decline that would end in its disappearance.¹² But it is impossible to distinguish what year his plays were written or what kind of play they are by the ratio of 'you' and 'thou'. Also, it is very difficult to conclude what emotion the second personal pronoun represents. But Shakespeare uses both 'you' and 'thou' in his plays. He uses the distinction effectively between 'you' and 'thou' to express emotions of characters. In his time, it was usual for 'you' to be used by inferiors to superiors and 'thou' would be used in return. But 'thou' was also used to express special intimacy. The technique is used in the conversation between Antony and Cleopatra. The relationship between them is reflected in rapid shifts between 'you' and 'thou'. Cleopatra's mood and behavior change easily all the time. Sometimes, it is savage, irrational, undignified and comical. She pushes him away, then pulls him back with verbal enticements and repetition. Their conversation in Act I Scene III is a typical example.

Antony comes and says to her, "Now, my dearest queen—". (1.3.17) Cleopatra is pretending to faint and says to him coldly, "Pray **you**, stand farther from me!" (1.3.18) (The emphasis is mine.) She continues the conversation about his wife, Fulvia in Rome using 'you', which has a feeling of coldness and a sense of distance. She says:

What , says the married woman **you** may go?
 Would she had never given **you** leave to come!
 Let her not say 'tis I that keep **you** here.
 I have no power upon **you**; hers **you** are. (1.3.20-3)

She goes on saying with assumed coldness and anger using 'you'. She says, "Nay, play

you seek no colour for **your** going, / But bid farewell and go.” (1.3.32-3) Penelope Freedman considers that after the lines “she executes one of her deft emotional swerves, using the bridge¹⁹” to move into an intense evocation of the heyday of their passion. The bridge is; “When **you** sued staying, / Then was the time for words. No going then.” (1.3.33-5) Cleopatra goes on to use ‘you’ intending passion of anger, and then she uses royal ‘we’ to emphasize her position as a queen:

Eternity was in **our** lips and eyes,
 Bliss in **our** brows’ bent; none **our** parts so poor
 But was a race of heaven. They are so still,
 Or **thou**, the greatest soldier of the world,
 Art turned the greatest liar. (1.3.35-9)

She shifts from ‘you’ to ‘thou’ to make him understand her love for him. It is her tactic to keep him from going. She uses tricks but it seems histrionic. He tries to persuade her by changing the honorific to ‘my dearest queen’, ‘Cleopatra’, ‘Most sweet queen’, ‘lady’, ‘queen’ and ‘my queen’. She does not give Antony a chance to talk about his departure, but eventually he is able to tell her his situation. Antony explains his excuse to go back to Rome, saying:

Hear me, queen:
 The strong necessity of time commands
 Our services awhile, but my full heart
 Remains in use with **you**. (1.3.41-4)

He talks to her using ‘you’ and royal ‘we’ as one of the rulers of the Roman world, but when he mentions Fulvia, he shifts to ‘thou’ to express his love for Cleopatra. Here, the balance of power between them changes. From the beginning Cleopatra dominates their discussion, but the situation changes. Antony says to her who accuses him of disloyalty, “Quarrel no more, but be prepared to know / The purposes I bear, which are, or cease, / As **you** shall give th’advice.” (1.3.66-8) Using ‘you’ as if he is talking to her as an honorable queen’s servant, he then shifts to ‘thou’ rapidly. He talks to her:

By the fire

That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence

Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war

As **thou** affects. (1.3.68-71)

His lines are very complicated. He tells her that he is her servant but he uses 'thou'. This means that he expresses his affection for her to make her consent to his going. Cleopatra knows that he has determined to leave her, and mocks him for making a show of perfect honour. Knowing her refusal of him, he shifts 'thou' to 'you' and says, "**You**'ll heat my blood. No more." (1.3.80), and "I'll leave **you**, lady." (1.3.86) Antony talks to her as a ruler of Rome and a Queen of Egypt. They continue the conversation using 'you'. At last Cleopatra unwillingly accepts his departure saying "Upon **your** sword / Sit laurel victory, and smooth success / Be strewed before **your** feet!" (1.3.100-2) Her lines with 'you' represent her reconciliation with Antony and her state as a queen, while Antony has persuaded her that it is his duty to go back to Rome and leaves her with these parting words "That **thou**, residing here, goes yet with me, / And I, hence fleeing, here remain with **thee**." (1.3.104-5) He shows his affection to her using 'thou'. At the beginning of the scene, there was a marked distance between them but they continue to talk using 'you' and 'thou' to try to persuade and dominate each other. Eventually Antony dominates her.

In Act III Scene IV, Shakespeare represents the difference between Antony's love for Cleopatra and Octavia by also using the differences between 'you' and 'thou'. Antony and Octavia talk with each other about the bad relations between him and Octavius. They never use 'thou' to each other, because their marriage is a game of politics, so there is no place for affection in their conversation.

In Act III Scene II, when Octavia and Antony leave Rome, Octavius says farewell using 'thou'. He represents his artificial family affection toward her in front of Antony. In Act III Scene IV, Octavia returns unannounced to Octavius without ceremony, and he talks to her only once with 'thou': "That ever I shall call **thee** castaway". (3.6.41) They continue to talk to each other with 'you' and royal 'we'. These second personal pronouns suggest distance and formality. He expresses concern for her, but he might be pleased to have a chance to attack Antony.

There is another scene in which Shakespeare represents the balance of power between Antony and Cleopatra using a subtle difference between 'you' and 'thou'. When they meet again after the surrender of Egyptian Fleet in Act III Scene XI, she asks forgiveness using 'you' : "O my lord, my lord, / Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought / **You** would have followed." (3.11.53-5) She uses a trick to pretend obedience to him calling him 'my lord' and using 'you' because she knows that she is in a difficult situation. He boils with rage at her betrayal and uses 'thou' in response:

Egypt, **thou** knew'st too well
 My heart was to **thy** rudder tied by th'strings,
 And **thou** shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit
Thy full supremacy **thou** knew'st, and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
 Command me. (3.11.55-60)

Here 'thou' is used to express his anger at Cleopatra. But his anger is for his dearest lover. The use of 'thou' expresses his frustration with her treacherous act. In spite of her asking for forgiveness, he blames her fiercely, shifting from 'thou' to 'you':

Now I must
 To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
 And palter in the shifts of lowness, ---
You did know
 How much **you** were my conqueror, and that
 My sword, made weak by my affection, would
 Obey it on all cause. (3.11.60-7)

The shift from 'thou' to 'you' does not show a change of mind toward her. Knowing the consequence of defeat, he seems to try to calm himself down and this seems to make him use 'you' which suppresses his feeling. But Cleopatra reads coldness and a sense of distance in his words and manner. She grasps her condition and asks for forgiveness.

In Act IV Scene XIII following the advice of Charmian, Cleopatra decides to lock

herself in her monument and send a word to Antony that she has killed herself. Hearing this, he attempts suicide but his wound is not immediately fatal. Cleopatra, and Antony who is going to die, talk to each other using 'thou'. Here, 'thou' is totally to express their love. Antony says:

I am dying, Egypt, dying; only
 I here importune death awhile, until
 Of many thousand kisses the poor last
 I lay upon **thy** lips. (4.15.19-22)

Cleopatra says she will never leave her monument and refuses to be comforted and grieves over the mortally wounded Antony. In the scene, Shakespeare represents their love and therefore they talk to each other using 'thou' basically, but when they mention a third person they use 'you'. She says, "**Your** wife Octavia, with her modest eyes / And still conclusion, shall acquire no honour / Demuring upon me." (4.15.28-30) Also Antony calls Cleopatra 'you' when he mentions Caesar. He tells her "One word, sweet queen: / Of Caesar seek **your** honour, with **your** safety. O!" (4.15.47-8) And also in his very end lines in the play, he says to Cleopatra:

The miserable change now at my end
 Lament nor sorrow at, but please **your** thoughts
 In feeding them with those my former fortunes,
 Wherein I lived the greatest prince o'th' world," (4.15.53-6)

Shakespeare made up the scene of their love, but he didn't forget to tell his readers and audience that Antony was the greatest prince of the world. Shakespeare used 'you' in Antony's last lines to make him a great Roman leader on his death. His lines "a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished." (4.15.59-60) show it. On the other hand Cleopatra faints from the sudden shock of emptiness and loss. She says to Antony:

Noblest of men, woo't die?
 Hast **thou** no care of me? Shall I abide

In this dull world, which in **thy** absence is
 No better than a sty? (4.15.61-4)

Here, judging from the use of the second personal pronoun, it seems to depict her affection toward Antony. P. Freedman concludes her idea of pronouns in *Antony and Cleopatra* with the words that “every use has its own rationale, and V (you) returns as the norm when T (thou) is not specifically justified.”^⑬

Dryden also uses ‘you’ and ‘thou’ in *All for Love*. The play was written in 1678, and it was 70 years after Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*. At that time, ‘thou’ was not commonly used. But if Dryden wrote the play ‘in imitation of Shakespeare’s style’, as he stated on the cover for *All for Love*, he might have used ‘you’ and ‘thou’ following Shakespeare’s style. But his way to use both ‘you’ and ‘thou’ is different from that of Shakespeare. Dryden uses ‘you’ and ‘thou’ to represent the balance of power and the emotions of characters as Shakespeare does, but he does not use them to represent an emotional game and tactic among the lovers.

Amazingly Shakespeare has made the most of the power of words. His outstanding technique in using the second personal pronouns lies in the shifts between ‘you’ and ‘thou’ to represent the love game as the characters’ pull and loosen each other’s reins.

4. Transformation of Antony’s and Cleopatra’s gender

Cleopatra shows various faces in accordance with the circumstances. She sometimes acts femininely, but in reverse she behaves like a man accordingly. Shakespeare uses the word of ‘transform’ to describe the loss of characteristic of gender in Enobarbus’ line. He talks to Antony, “For shame, / Transform us not to women.” (4.2.36-7) Antony is depicted as a descendant of Hercules and it is copied from North’s translation. He is represented as an honorable man with his beard. Cleopatra says, “Look, prithee, Charmian, / How this herculean Roman does become / The carriage of his chafe.” (1.3.83-5) But he becomes more womanly and comes to a miserable end. He is losing masculinity by association with Cleopatra. Antony’s loss of manliness is represented by North very clearly. He says, “He was so carried away with the vain love of this woman, as if he had been glued unto her and that she could not have removed

without moving of him also.”¹⁵ In *Julius Caesar*, Antony gains political power, but in this play he loses all his power through love. Moreover Shakespeare evolved the story and represented the reversal of roles between Antony and Cleopatra.

Caesar blames his behavior saying:

...he fishes, drinks and wastes
 The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
 Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
 More womanly than he...” (1.4.4-7)

Caesar mentions Antony's loss of masculinity and public duty as one of the rulers of Rome. In contrast, Cleopatra occasionally behaves like a man, though she fascinates Antony with her sexual charm, which is a woman's weapon. During his absence, she muses over past pleasant memories with him. She says, “I drunk him to his bed; / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan.” (2.5.21-3) Her behavior is just a joke, but it is an intimation of their inverted sexuality. In Act III Scene VII Cleopatra argues with Enobarbus about the fight at Actium. He says that the battlefield is no place for a woman. As might be expected, She disagrees saying, “A charge we bear i'th'war, / And as the president of my kingdom will / Appear there for a man.” (3.7.16-8) Antony who has been attracted to her decides to fight at sea, ignoring the advice of Enobarbus and Canidius, and following her advice. One of his soldiers advises Antony not to fight at sea and says mentioning Hercules; “By Hercules, I think I am i'th' right.” (3.7.67) Canidius answers, “Soldier, thou art; but his whole action grows / Not in the power on't. So our leader's led, / And we are women's men.” (3.7. 68-70) Now their leader has become Cleopatra, not Antony any more, but in the middle of the fight she flees from the battle, also he flies after her. Scarus, one of his friends describes his cowardliness:

She once being loofed,
 The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
 Claps on his sea wing, and, like a doting mallard,
 Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.

I never saw an action of such shame.
 Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before
 Did violate so itself. (3.10.17-23)

If Antony were representative of male chauvinism, he would rain down abuse on her, but he says to her:

You did know
 How much you were my conqueror, and that
 My sword, made weak by my affection, would
 Obey it on all cause. (3.11.64-7)

He regrets his own weakness and attributes it to love for her. Agrippa said formerly, "Royal wench! / She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed; / He ploughed her, and she cropped." (2.2.236-8) She once made great Caesar's sword weak by her glamour. The sword is a symbol of manliness. It is remarkable that her passion disarms men.

She apologizes to him with tears, saying "Pardon, pardon!" (3.11.67) but when Thidias comes to see her as a messenger from Caesar, she tells him:

Say to great Caesar this in deputation:
 I kiss his conqu'ring hand. Tell him I am prompt
 To lay my crown at's feet, and there to kneel.
 Tell him, from his all-obeying breath I hear
 The doom of Egypt. (3.13.75-9)

Hearing their conversation, Enobarbus speaks aside, " 'Tis better playing with a lion's whelp / Than with an old one dying." (3.13.96-7) Having a dread of her faithlessness, Antony gets back his manliness and challenges Caesar to a straight fight. He says, "If from the field I shall return once more / To kiss these lips, I will appear in blood; / I and my sword will earn our chronicle." (3.13.177-9) When he decides to bear a sword, she conversely regains femininity and says joyfully, "It is my birthday. / I had thought t'have held it poor; but since my lord / Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra." (3.13.189-

91) At last, he determined to fight to the death. He summons his servants, thanks them for their loyal service and bids them farewell. Enobarbus says:

What mean you, sir,
To give them this discomfort? Look, they weep,
And I, an ass, am onion-eyed. For shame,
Transform us not to women." (4.2.34-7)

Tears are associated with womanhood. He transforms himself, metaphorically speaking, to a woman and makes his followers women. Enobarbus thinks Antony has lost all judgment, and leaves him. Also Hercules leaves him. A soldier says, " 'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved, / Now leaves him." (4.3.21-2) North's Plutarch says that it is Bacchus who leaves Antony. Shakespeare changed it into Hercules and showed his loss of manliness. Antony's followers go over to the other side one after another, and at last he loses the fight against Caesar. He thinks that Cleopatra has betrayed him and remembers the end of Hercules. He considers that he will be killed by Cleopatra's treachery as Hercules has been killed by his wife's jealousy. Antony says, "The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me, / Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage." (4.12.43-4) Antony tries to keep manliness as a descendent of Hercules. Shakespeare's intention is to round off Antony's life by regaining his greatness and nobleness. He represented it using gender characteristics.

On the other hand, after Antony dies, Cleopatra who has acted like a man at the battle of Actium says that she is now simply a woman, and prepares for death. She says, "We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble, / Let's do't after the high Roman fashion / And make death proud to take us." (4.15.91-3) She hopes to die as the wife of a noble Roman. She asks Charmian, "Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch / My best attires. I am again for Cydnus, / To meet Mark Antony." (5.2.226-8) And when a Clown is coming with asps, she determines her mind and rejects womanliness, saying:

My resolution's placed, and I have nothing
Of woman in me. Now from head to foot

I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine. (5.2.237-40)

But she shows an aspect of a voluptuous woman when she is going to kill herself; “The stroke of death is as a lover’s pinch, / Which hurts, and is desired.” (5.2.289-90) What’s more, she impersonates a mother. She says, “Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?” (5.2.303-4) As Antony says, Egypt is described as fire, water, and slime. (1.3.68-9) Fire, water and slime are associated with soft and warm women’s bodies and the ultimate source of life. On the other hand, politics and war are representatives of Rome, men’s world. Antony’s emotion is swinging like a pendulum between Rome and Egypt and Cleopatra’s emotion is also swinging. The scene of Antony’s suspension also suggests his wavering between Rome and Egypt. And she also wavers between being a lover of Antony and a queen of Egypt. Shakespeare depicted Antony’s pain by mentioning their sexuality.

5. Cleopatra’s final battle in Act V

Antony dies in Act IV. Yet after the leading character has died, the story still continues. In Act V there are 437 lines which describe Cleopatra who is moving towards the realization of death. Shakespeare also plundered this scenario from Plutarch’s account. The main character of *Antony and Cleopatra* is obviously Antony. Why did Shakespeare continue the story, even if he was following Plutarch’s account?

In Act IV Scene XIV Antony readies himself for death, hearing of the death of Cleopatra. He faces a dishonour even greater than defeat in battle. He says as he commits suicide, “But I will be / A bridegroom in my death and run into’t / As to a lover’s bed.” (4.14.99-101) Shakespeare represents his tragedy to his end. She says at the death of Antony:

Our lamp is spent, it’s out. Good sirs, take heart.
We’ll bury him; and then, what’s brave, what’s noble,
Let’s do’t after the high Roman fashion
And make death proud to take us. Come, away.

This case of that huge spirit now is cold.

Ah, women, women! Come, we have no friend

But resolution and the briefest end. (4.15.90-6)

Judging from her lines, it seems that she has determined to kill herself after Antony. But in Act V Shakespeare's representation of her intention is ambiguous and her behavior and speeches lack consistency. While she is moving towards death, she acts as sly as a fox. When Caesar comes in his own person to comfort her, she kneels in submission to him. He says that no harm will come to her, but if she attempts suicide her children will suffer. She hands him the inventory of her personal wealth, but Seleucus discloses a truth, that she has concealed many things. She boils with rage at his betrayal and makes an excuse for it. As for Cleopatra's behavior, it is difficult to make a conjecture as to whether she is cheating Caesar to defend herself or really planning to commit suicide, even though she has declared her determination to kill herself. But Plutarch's account states very clearly that Cleopatra has made up her mind to kill herself, and that she and Caesar trick each other. Plutarch states:

Caesar was glad to hear her say so, persuading himself thereby that she had yet a desire to save her life. So he made her answer that he did not only give her that to dispose of at her pleasure which she had kept back, but further promised to use her more honourably and bountifully than she would think for. And so he took his leave of her, supposing he had deceived her. But indeed he was deceived himself.¹⁷

As for such notable critics as A. C. Bradley and John Dover Wilson, their views are different from each other. A. C. Bradley says, "She ruins a great man, but shows no sense of the tragedy of his ruin" and also says:

Her first thought, to follow him after the high Roman fashion, is too great for her. She would live on if she could, and would cheat her victor too of the best part of her fortune. The thing that drives her to die is the certainty that she will be carried to Rome to grace his triumph. That alone decides her."¹⁸

J. D. Wilson, however, protests against Bradley's assertion and says:

Shakespeare never neglects anything in North he can turn to dramatic use; and it is inconceivable that he overlooked a first-rate hint like this, or seeing it put it by. And once realize that Cleopatra is in this scene only pretending to desire to live lest Caesar should thwart her resolution for death, the resolution is left unquestionable.¹⁹

His explanation, in brief, is that the Seleucus episode is a performance to avoid her determination to kill herself being found out. As for the episode, it is very difficult to decide whose opinion is right. Emrys Jones says, "A consideration of the play's form will inevitably end in paradox. The play is in fact much interested in paradoxical formulations, many of which cluster around Cleopatra. The ultimate paradox perhaps is the play itself."²⁰

As for Cleopatra's role in Act V, Alexander Leggatt explains from a point of view of political drama:

Cleopatra goes one stage further. She has defined the heroic Antony for us; she must create for her own death a convincing heroic image of herself, something not just talked of but shown. She does this not by selection, as Hal defined his kingship by cutting out his former life, but a fusion of everything she has been, high and low, grand and comic. She centers it on a political point: it matters now, as never before, that she is Queen of Egypt.²¹

And J. D. Wilson admires Antony's magnanimity and Cleopatra's vitality, and saying, "The play is, in short, its author's Hymn to Man; a symphony in five acts, elaborating Hamlet's prose canticle", he quotes Hamlet's words (2.2.229-303) as follows: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form, and moving; how express and admirable in action; how like an angel in apprehension; how like a god! — the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals."²²

As for Act V, critics have developed different theories to explain it. Their opinions are sometimes very different from each other, and also their viewpoints are various. I

am going to form my own idea on the basis of these different theories. The act holds an important place in enhancing Antony's heroic aura. C. F. E. Spurgeon points out, in a word, "The grand images of the world, the firmament and the ocean are studded throughout the play. These images serve to stimulate our imagination of the colossal figure of Antony."²³ And she adds, "the use of the word 'world' occurs forty-two times, nearly double as often as in most other plays."²⁴ Antony's heroism is depicted by Cleopatra as 'Nature's piece 'gainst fancy.' (5.2.98) It means that Antony was far greater than anything imagination could conceive. Her following lines also show her admiration for heroic Antony. She says:

His face was as the heav'ns, and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O, the earth. (5.2.78-80)

His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm
Crested the world; his voice was propertied
As all the tunèd spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above
The element they lived in. In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropped from his pocket. (5.2.81-91)

The image of 'His legs bestrid the ocean' is god-like. The giant bronze statue of the sun god was thought to stand astride the entry to Rhodes harbour. Colossus of Rhodes was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.²⁵ Cleopatra imagines a god-like Antony with power, bounty, delight and extravagance. In this way she enhances Antony's heroic aura.

On the other hand Cleopatra behaves like a queen. She is going to show her own

heroism as Queen of Egypt and wife of Antony. Her following lines show her status as a Queen of Egypt. She tells Proculeius who is an aide of Caesar,

If your master
Would have a queen his beggar, you must tell him
That majesty, to keep decorum, must
No less beg than a kingdom.” (5.2.15-8)

In Act V, for the first time in the play, Cleopatra and Caesar meet face to face. He makes threats using the royal ‘we’. But she tricks Caesar by using the royal ‘we’ as well. As I explained, Plutarch’s account states very clearly that she was hoping to trick him. Shakespeare’s presentation is ambiguous whether her behavior is a failed attempt or a bluff. But I can see her intention to kill herself after Antony in her lines aside from the Seleucus episode. Cleopatra’s opening lines in Act V Scene II suggest that she is beginning to realize the worthlessness of her former glory and that even Caesar is merely Fortune’s servant. Cleopatra says:

My desolation does begin to make
A better life. ’Tis paltry to be Caesar;
Not being Fortune, he’s but Fortune’s knave,
A minister of her will. And it is great
To do that thing that ends all other deeds,
Which shackles accidents and bolts up change,
Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung,
The beggar’s nurse and Caesar’s. (5.2.1-8)

Cleopatra realizes Caesar’s intention that she will be led in triumph through Rome, and decides to commit suicide. Her hope is to die as a queen and also as Antony’s real wife. She says:

Now, Charmian!
Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch

My best attires. I am again for Cydnus,
To meet Mark Antony. (5.2.225-8)

Husband, I come!
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. (5.2.281-4)

She hopes to be fire and air, and give her other elements, earth and water, to the lower region of mortality. She is going to meet Antony not in the earth but in the 'new heaven, new earth', (1.1.17) in "Where souls do couch on flowers, they will hand in hand." (4.14.51) Now we can say that Cleopatra truly loves Antony. When the poisonous snake, the worm of Nilus is brought by a rural fellow, she rejects womanliness and readies for death. She says:

My resolution's placed, and I have nothing
Of woman in me. Now from head to foot
I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine. (5.2.237-40)

But when she applies two asps to her breast, the asps transform into her babies which are symbols of life. Even though asps are instruments to commit suicide, the snake is the emblem of Egypt so her figure also represents a mother of the nation. In a sense the snake is herself too, as can be seen when Antony calls her 'my serpent of old Nile'. (1.5.26). She is absolutely a queen of Egypt. But she is not only a queen but also Antony's lover. At the moment of her death, she transforms from a seductress to Antony's loving wife. At the end even Caesar who has been indifferent to Cleopatra's charm is struck by her beauty and admires the love between Antony and Cleopatra. I conceive that Shakespeare's intention in Act V is to make the play a noble love story.

Conclusion

Many critics argue about the construction of the play. Samuel Johnson wrote, "The events of which the principal are described according to history, are produced without any art of connection or care of disposition."²⁶ Nearly a century and a half later, A. C. Bradley expressed a very similar view calling it, 'the most faultily constructed of all the tragedies.'²⁷ And he goes on to say, "It is, no doubt, in the third and forth Acts, very defective in construction."²⁸ But E. Schanzer points out, "Of all Shakespeare's plays this is probably the one in which the structural pattern is most perfectly adjusted to the theme and has, in fact, become one of the chief vehicles for its expression."²⁹

As I have shown in this thesis, the structure of the play is amazingly well-ordered even if the play has 42 scenes and the unities of time, place and action are not observed. And the series of contrasts between Rome and Egypt, that of parallels between Antony and Cleopatra and the characterization of the two main figures are well-developed.

I have tried to carry out this study by focusing on Cleopatra with the assumption that she has the key to showing us the theme of the play. Plutarch saw Cleopatra as a bad woman. Shakespeare also represented her as a skilled, deceitful and brazen middle-aged woman who resorts to every wile, but he represented her as a charming, attractive and ingenious real woman as well. He represented human nature by showing us Cleopatra's ambivalence and many faces which are described as her 'infinite variety'. 'Infinite variety' is, so to speak, the nature of human beings. In this way Shakespeare paid tribute not only to her 'infinite variety' but to that of all human beings. As J. D. Wilson insists, *Antony and Cleopatra* is, in short, Shakespeare's 'Hymn to Man'.³⁰

Notes

- ① J. B. Spencer, ed. *Shakespeare's Plutarch* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 7.
- ② John Dryden. *All for Love*. Ed. N. J. Andrew (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 10.
- ③ Alan Roper. "Commentary" *Volume XIII The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Maximillian Novak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 369.

- ④ G. Wilson Knight. "The Diadem of Love: An Essay on *Antony and Cleopatra*," *Major Literary Characters Cleopatra*. Ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), p.13.
- ⑤ Caroline F. E. Spurgeon. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 55.
- ⑥ A. C. Bradley. "Shakespeare's Works" *Shakespeare Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. John Russell Brown (Bristol: Macmillan, 1968), p. 67.
- ⑦ Roper, p. 370.
- ⑧ Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "*Antony and Cleopatra*" *Major Literary Characters Cleopatra*. Ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), p. 8.
- ⑨ Knight, p. 13.
- ⑩ Spencer, p. 203.
- ⑪ Roper, p. 383.
- ⑫ Penelope Freedman. *Power and Passion in Shakespeare's Pronouns* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), p. 18.
- ⑬ *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- ⑭ *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- ⑮ Spencer, p. 258.
- ⑯ *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- ⑰ *Ibid.*, p. 289.
- ⑱ A. C. Bradley. "*Antony and Cleopatra*" *Major Literary Characters: Cleopatra*. Ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), pp. 11-2.
- ⑲ J. D. Wilson. *The Works of Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra* (Cambridge: The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. xxxv.
- ⑳ Emrys Jones, ed. *William Shakespeare Antony and Cleopatra* (G. B.: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 31.
- ㉑ Alexander Leggatt. "*Antony and Cleopatra*" *Major Literary Characters Cleopatra*. Ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), p. 246.
- ㉒ Wilson, p. xxxvi.
- ㉓ Spurgeon, pp. 350-2.
- ㉔ *Ibid.*, p. 352.
- ㉕ William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 253.
- ㉖ Samuel Johnson "Shakespeare's Works" *Shakespeare Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. John Russell Brown (Bristol: Macmillan, 1968), p. 27.
- ㉗ A. C. Bradley. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 260.
- ㉘ A. C. Bradley. "Shakespeare's Works" *Shakespeare Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. John Russell Brown (Bristol: Macmillan, 1968), p. 66.
- ㉙ Schanzer, p. 133.
- ㉚ Wilson, p. xxxvi.

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