

Extracting Truth From the Myth of Cleopatra's Distorted Representation by Roman Historians: With Special Emphasis on Postmodernism

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Abstract

Postmodernism encourages us to look for the historical facts and explore the happenings of the past. Cleopatra is one historical figure for whom we cannot convince ourselves to believe in everything we read in historical accounts of ancient historians or her portrayal in all genres of art. There is a need to investigate and look for evidence in the ancient world where Cleopatra, Caesar, Antony, and Octavian lived and left traces of the truth in the past hidden in several myths and the adaptation of their story. One of the most spectacular biographers, Roller (2010), opines that the biography of Cleopatra remained the center of attention for the people during the last two millennia. This Queen of Egypt remains one of the most famous figures in world history. A variety of scholars, for numerous reasons, have a particular interest in Cleopatra and her life. The scholar continues to explain that historians dealing with art forms, students/readers of renaissance plays, filmographies, and musicologists remained attracted to Cleopatra as the representative of cultural history rather than the representative of the historical being from the Hellenistic period. The restating of the characteristics of Cleopatra's personage does not concern the Queen as herself, besides signifying the supremacy of her position and reputation. Unfortunately, all of this was blemished and distorted by the Roman historian under the influence of Octavian, who declared himself King Augustus after gaining the throne. However, her afterlife influence started to glow after her departure, so vividly that the best scholars of antiquity cannot avoid it as only one quotation from a play or a little discussion on 19th century Art drew their attention to indulge them in the charms of the queen. Moreover, Cleopatra's romantic life is more of a myth than reality, with many added concoctions to present her as an unworthy, complicated, sentimental, comical, and seductive manipulator. This paper aims to extract the truth from the myth and present the facts about the diseased queen of Egypt.

Keywords: Truth, Myth, Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Julius Caesar, Postmodernism.

Introduction

The discussion on literature is heavily related to "Truth and Reality" in literary and constructed history. The first genre of performing art was the myth fully embedded in Epic, which occupied drama that was the initial visual performing art ever staged to benefit the body of spectators in the yearly festival in Greece and afterward in Rome. Thespis, Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and on the other hand in Rome, Annius, Accius, Pecuvius, Terence, and Plautus were the dramatists who introduced modern elements that made the genre more real. Later,

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Richardson introduced the novel genre, which became more realistic and truthful in the hands of Henry Fielding. The evolution of epic is the same as it spoke of myths, and then Milton and later Wordsworth turned them fully practical, handling the grandest topics ever known by human beings. The genres gradually and slowly embrace reality and deal with the truth rather than myth. This paper explores the real personality of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, whose truth was lost in time by Roman historians. Unfortunately, these myths were so beautiful that they overshadowed the facts written by Arab historians.

In addition to this, Miles (2011), Cleopatra exhibits an actual, historical, and heroic figure who was extraordinarily quick-witted and valiant, a queen who protected her country with all it took, extended its territory, and stood firm to hold the Roman threat as long she lived. She was strong, compassionate, and charming and represented Egypt, but when she was conquered, this symbolism took another meaning that appeared in advertisements, movies, and television programs/shows. According to Shakespeare, Cleopatra's personality and life always remained fresh of a person from the Hellenistic Mediterranean, one of the most complex eras of all times (Hammer, 1993, as cited in Riad, 2011, July). For an extended time duration, Cleopatra was represented as the symbol of another person's victory, and if the meaning of this symbol is taken out of her, then the presentation of herself will reverse. According to Hutcheon (2013) the critics of postmodernism refer to and associate it with 'style'; some associate it with 'historical period,' some with 'moment,' and lastly with 'condition.' Thus, all of these four orders fall appropriate for retelling Cleopatra.

On the other hand, postmodernism consistently exhibits the idea that art forms have their links to the past. Of course, all the literature concerning the life or any aspect of Cleopatra has their roots in the past, which is 2000 years ago. Furthermore, Hutcheon (2003) believes it's impossible to attain absolute truth from history, for some elements will always be painted with fiction. Historiography, for instance, leads the researcher to historiographic meta fiction that precisely deals with the darker areas of history. So, there is a strong chance that if we trace the reality of Cleopatra's personality, we may find her truth.

Theoretical Framework

Duvall (2002) believes that history literary history varies from the textually contemplated and reconstructed history. Furthermore, the scholar opines that post-modernism is historical and political at the same time due to its parodical essence. When there, reality is deliberately hidden; it's no longer profound or sublime. Similarities to actual events become weak. Hutcheon (2003) opines that we construct out of the ferocious past events as well as with the historical facts. Thus, the meditated and concocted history (to justify and veil Octavian's actions), such as the myths about Cleopatra's real persona and personal characteristics, may differ from the actual incidents and who she was.

Moreover, the scholar stresses that all fiction is featured on elements of selection and a mechanical process. Thus, the scholar suggests a sense of rewriting/retelling history and exploring what was constructed and concocted. In the light of the theories mentioned above, the conclusion might be as follows. Furthermore, Roller (2010) states;

According to the information from Greek and Roman sources about Cleopatra herself, it is surprisingly sparse and generally misinterpreted. She is familiar today largely through her representation by Shakespeare and in modern film, as a seductress who ruined the men in her life and destroyed her kingdom, an erroneous depiction largely resulting from extremely eloquent opponents and male-dominated historiography.

This is the myth that hid the truth. The reality may be this, “More accurately, she was a capable administrator and military commander, a linguist who knew a dozen languages, and a published scholarly author. Yet she was also the last ruler of her kingdom, and her defeat by the Romans destroyed her reputation (Roller, 2010).”

Postmodernism insists on the need to explore two different worlds/times in order to draw the line that segregates truth from myth. As postmodernism always finds the roots of modern history rooted in the past, this paper aims to retrieve the reality/truth long hidden in the garb of inscribed history, public retelling, and adaptation by the need of the time that is not more than the myth.

Objective

To find out the truth behind the mythical portrayal of Egyptian queen Cleopatra as weak, seductress and a vile being, in the light of post-modernism

Discussion

Following is the detailed discussion of the topic. Cleopatra was the last pharaoh of the Potbelly dynasty, and her personality had traits that remained hidden for at least two millennia. This is when we trace that constructed element from her story so that the truth fully reveals itself.

Retelling Cleopatra

Cleopatra of-course has been described by men in light of her affairs with men but nobody tried to put himself in her shoes and then judge her; thinking like her in accordance to the circumstances she was indulged in, of-course not by own choice. She needs to be redefined and rewritten, for she was never judged on the correct scale. She got onto the throne when Egypt was bankrupt. She was facing the worst time of her country’s economy, but it was made to rule and to command, even if she had to overlook the coquettish decisions of her 10-year-old husband's brother and drift away from the family bonds. She had to decide how she could bring her country's economy back on track and uplift Egypt to the zenith once again.

The Views of the Islamic World on Cleopatra

The Islamic world, unaffected by Roman propaganda, has an obvious, distinctive point of view about Cleopatra, which portrays her as a scholar, thinker, and pure woman who is intelligent enough to learn eight languages and complicated branches of knowledge such as math, medicine, and philosophy. Al-Masudi, a historian from the 10th century, writes very positively about her intellectual capabilities by calling her sage. He further writes of her as the philosopher queen who was giving the needed strength to branches of knowledge to elevate them. Al-Masudi informs the readers that Cleopatra was a great writer who practiced her writing skills to compile books on medicine, charms, cosmetics, and many other topics. Al-Masudi acknowledges her intellectual insight and desire to take care of Egypt and make it the superpower of that time again.

Furthermore, she is described as a great ruler, a clever politician, a great architect, and a scientist; she has knowledge of medicine and was a kind doctor. Some critics have critics believe that these writers and historians who appreciate her are from Egypt, and so they celebrate her as their national heroine. The other side of the picture may be that these people knew her far better than the Roman propagandists. Now, here again, two different worlds are being compared. When we compare historians of two other countries, two opinions contradict a famous woman's life, abilities, and capabilities.

In addition, Burstein (2007) also says that the historical legend is that Cleopatra gained success through her beauty and sexuality. Still, her tangible assets were her charm and intellect, and her physical beauty was just ordinary. She knew eight languages and also Egyptian, the language of her subjects. She was the first in her dynasty to have command over Egyptian. She wrote several books on various topics, such as beauty, weight, science, and magic.

Thus, the way Cleopatra was trained to become a powerful monarch cannot support the idea that she killed herself as well. She was a seductress, vile, and weak woman. Roller (2010) states, "She ruled for twenty-one years, from 51 to 30 BCE, and skillfully attempted to salvage her dying kingdom in the face of growing Roman power and involvement in the affairs of the eastern Mediterranean." Furthermore, according to Roller (2010), "Although the Roman literary machine turned her into a dangerous monster who almost destroyed Rome, within Egypt, she was honored for centuries." Myths cannot be disguised as truth for long. Even today, it is coming to light, and critics and scholars support retelling such events in the past.

Cleopatra or Julius; The Seducing One

Even the blame on Cleopatra for seducing two significant, mighty men of the Roman Empire, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, holds lesser truth, for it was not Cleopatra who seduced Julius Caesar. Still, it was she drawn by him. Cleopatra, at that time, was only 22 and Julius Caesar was 52. He was a known womanizer, notorious for taking queens to his bed chamber and mating in them. So, as we know, Cleopatra was fully equipped with communication skills and knowledge. She didn't need to seduce a man to get him to agree with her on a topic of discussion unless it was what was demanded by the man himself.

Octavian's Intentions

Octavian had a deep hatred for Cleopatra. He asked for the Roman Senate's consent to wage a war against Cleopatra but not on Mark Antony. Prior to this, Cleopatra was blamed for numerous sins such as adultery, magic, seduction, drugs, animal worship, whoring, drunkenness, and abundance of the use of luxury, through a propaganda directed by Octavian. He aimed at the distortion of her personality as well as proved her a weak monarch who could take her life when found herself in hot waters. According to Almas and Mazhar (2023), "This is not impossible for the Octavian to create a deception about Cleopatra's demise that deluded Egyptians to get rid of Cleopatra who was the pharaoh of a historical nation direct rival of the Rome and threat to Octavian's reign that in Egypt was just begun."

The Role of Roman Historians

Egypt was inferior to Rome, and so was the Egyptians. On the other hand, Cleopatra stole two of the great Roman's hearts, and the second one, Mark Antony, was Octavian's brother-in-law. Beside Octavian's hatred was also the hatred of the people of Rome for Cleopatra, who was never been genuinely portrayed to them. So, Cleopatra stole a woman's husband, who later divorced his first Roman wife Octavia, and this was a strong point for the Romans to detest her. Almas and Mazhar (2023) opine, "There are several props and software that make models and actors look extremely different from what they are in their lives. This applies to the media and social media who create this illusion for their gains to their everyday audience." Hutcheon (2003) opines that amid the historical facts and brut events of the past, we construct out of them. Furthermore, Duvall (2012) explains that this kind of construction gives a historical representation of events a

problematic status. There had been propaganda about Cleopatra, and later, Roman historians did the remaining damage to her name and personality.

Brown (2023) opines that the historians of the Octavian's time wrote to please him, and thus, a lot of truth about Cleopatra disappeared within the myths they created. Knippschild et al. (2013) continued to say she was portrayed as "a beautiful, seductive and cruel woman." The scholar continued to explain that This was a continuous depiction carried after the inscribed history of Octavian era and specially after 17th century art this was at its verge which was most by the influence of the Plutarch's biographies, he wrote of the Ceasar and Antony. For instance, Ottmar Elliger paints her with bare breasts while Antony is in full military uniform with the helmet on as well, and other people are also fully dressed on the table. This was utterly an exhibition of queen Cleopatra as full of eroticism and sensuality. Even in her death, she is not left out of eroticism as she is shown wholly naked or at-least one or both of her breasts were shown naked that she offered to the snake, though it cannot be proven through ancient historical records that she died like that. Roller (2010) states, "The poetry of the Augustan period, although eloquent, helped to destroy her reputation. For example, in Book 8 of the Aeneid (Vergil, 2000), the Battle of Actium is described, but Cleopatra is not named, only called the "Egyptian mate" of Antony." Thus, the Roman historians left no stone unturned to make Cleopatra's personality dishonored and full of blemishes.

Cleopatra Presented in England by The Greatest Authors of all Time

There have been many portrayals of Cleopatra by artists, dramatists, and painters, and out of all, we would like to emphasize the best of the dramatists of England who have displayed some specific characteristics in the field of drama and also share unique references to Cleopatra's story. They are Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden. According to Chatham (2015) as she explains that Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden characterize Cleopatra differently as a martyr who sacrificed herself, a lovesick lady, a scheming woman, authoritative as well as erotically sensual monarch. The spectators of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Restoration were acquainted (through retellings by generation and through cultural memory) with Roman's historical antiquity. So, the audiences of these three authors were familiar with Cleopatra and Antony's story to the maximum. If retold, performed, or exhibited, these spectators could note particular changes to the account. Similarly, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden were acquainted with the story of Cleopatra and Antony by Virgil and Plutarch's historical inscription. So, they were pretty knowledgeable about purposefully changing the historical models and making amendments to their adaptation. Thus, the knowledge reaching the people, readers, and spectators is trimmed and tailored. It is essential to look deeper to find out the truth about the reality of the queen, for we cannot simply trust the representation of the mere adaptations of the authors. Furthermore, Chatham (2015) explores that "each step in this development depended on several factors. Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden navigated differing English courts, changing performance conditions, and ever-broadening audiences." Thus, this resulted in Cleopatra's complex and multi-layered representation that was the result of every author's portrayal of the character for their benefit. There had been several reasons for them doing so, but this added layers to Cleopatra's character. According to Hutcheon's (1986) theory of postmodernism, this is where modern art has a parodic relation to the past. Its process of production is more critical than its reception. Thus, it can be concluded that, "Chaucer presented Cleopatra as comic, Shakespeare as complex, and Dryden as sentimental" (Chatham, 2015). I here have to say with a heavy heart that even the greatest writers of all times did not do justice to the character of Cleopatra. Most of them were unanimous on the method of her suicide,

which was never proven that she died that way, as well as her being a seductress and manipulator who could mate with anyone to gain power.

Octavian Detested Cleopatra

He has all the motifs to kill Cleopatra. According to Burstein (2007), Antony divorced Octavian's sister Octavia and married Cleopatra in 32-33 BCE. He hated her so much that he killed one of her sons. The second one also seems to have met his death. And the last three of her children, tied in golden chains, walked on the streets of Rome behind their mother's puppet. It is important to note that these children Cleopatra had with Antony. Octavian later gave them in his sister Octavia's care. Cleopatra, the mother of these children, was found dead in her chamber from the snake bite. This news was revealed for the first time while Octavian was celebrating the triumph over Cleopatra in Rome. This information about Cleopatra's suicide seems devised as Almas and Mazhar (2023), "Octavian concocted the myth of Cleopatra's demise to achieve high political and capital-oriented benefits." Knippschild et al. (2013) explored that queen Cleopatra's character was displayed as a seducer who uses it as a tool to gain power. The majority of the ancient historical sources, since after the success of Octavian's propaganda, propagated time and again the negative features of Cleopatra's personality. For instance, the 'femme fatale'³ could use seduction to manipulate Roman monarchs such as Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Again, a woman of higher status, such as the pharaoh and of higher education, would not want to use her body to lure the powerful instead of using her negotiation and communication skills.

Cleopatra on Coin

Cleopatra's face appeared on the coin of her time. According to Knippschild et al. (2013) "Above all, she wished to be seen as the queen of Egypt." The scholars said that her image appeared in contemporary and modern art contrary to Augustus/Octavia's propaganda of a charming woman who seduced to conquer the mighty men. There is a lot of art depicting Cleopatra, showing her two most famous encounters with Caesar and Antony. The scholars continued, "Cleopatra has been often depicted in her famous encounters with Caesar and Antony, but above all at the moment of her death. Seldom is Cleopatra presented as a respectable figure in her role as a queen." The scholars said that this depiction displays her, a woman can earn her objective through tactics and seduction rather than by her intellect, knowledge, and education. This description of her became more intense in the modern time.

On the other hand, Plutarch's description of Cleopatra and Antony's meeting reveals that she was a learned, cultured, and cultivated woman with an astonishing ability to fully master the different languages of her time. She was so equipped with this skill of mastering languages that she could speak to the ambassadors without the assistance of the translators. Furthermore, Mile (2011) opines that Cleopatra presented herself as the goddess, this is the image she wanted to be carried out for the public and historical profile and not that of a seductress or manipulator, as the Roman historians exhibited her.

Cleopatra Was Portrayed as Weak

Cleopatra used tactics and manipulated the two significant figures of Rome one after another. Her best tools were her beauty, seducing abilities and eroticism despite her intellectual skills and education. The reason behind this was her motives. That might be true, but unfortunately, we forget to understand one thing that has been explained by (Kleiner, 2005, as cited in Riad, 2011) that,

³ The Vamp

"Cleopatra, Caesar, Antony, and Octavian came together in the natural course of human history because they were contemporary leaders, although each had a defined political and personal agenda." Caesar indulged himself in an affair with Cleopatra even though he was married, and he was forbidden to marry someone outside Rome. He and Cleopatra still had a son named Caesarion together. He wanted his command over Egypt and Cleopatra, and thus, he succeeded.

On the other hand, Mark Antony first married Octavia, the sister of Octavian, and it was all strategic for Antony. Egypt was always very wealthy, but it was declining when Cleopatra came to the throne. She needed power and wealth, and Antony found mutual intentions between them and joined with Cleopatra. Once again, Antony, a married Roman wanting wealth, energy, and command over more significant territories, got engaged in a Romantic affair with a foreigner. However, the whole blame is set on Cleopatra's head that she seduced two great Roman leaders.

These two and Octavian also had agendas when he sought permission from the senate to march an army on the land of Egypt against Cleopatra. Just after he triumphed over Cleopatra and Egypt, he declared himself the Augustus and ruled for forty years. Octavian's birth month was September, and he chose Augustus to be his name for August was the month, he defeated Cleopatra. According to Brown (2023), Octavian, an organized being, smoothed his way as he planned and achieved what he wanted. Cleopatra was charged with, According to Reinhold (1981), lust, whoring, drunkenness, use of drugs and magic (black), animal worship, and excessive use of luxury. These were not enough to rage a war against her, but by some means, Octavian managed to get the consent of the senate to attack her on her lands. This was Octavian's wrath and hatred towards Cleopatra, and the main reason behind this was that she stole Mark Antony, the love of Octavia's sister's life.

Cleopatra Was Educated and Mastered the Art of Communication

Knippschild et al. (2013) explained that Dryden (1859) translated Plutarch, her physical beauty was not incredibly striking or incomparable, but her presence was enticing and/or if you ever lived with her, she was impossible to resist. Her personality was attractive, her conversation was charming, and her character, revealing all she said and did, was fascinating. Her voice was pleasurable and musical, and her ability to switch from one language to another depicted her as a learned queen. She knew Troglodytes, Arabians, Hebrews, Ethiopians, Syrians, Parthians, and Medes. She spoke with them without needing an interpreter.

Furthermore, Cary as cited in Knippschild et al. (2013) explained that she was uncommonly beautiful and incredibly striking in her youth, with the most charming voice, and her communication skills were so polished that she, with her knowledge and verbosity could make anyone agree to her point of view. She could look upon and listen to anyone, but at the same time, she could subjugate them, too. With her repose beauty, she could overpower anyone in their prime, even a man such as Ceasar.

Knippschild et al. (2013) opined that the two greatest historians agree on the seductive nature of Cleopatra, but they disagree on the notion that she was beautiful; for Cassius Dio, she was terrific, but for Plutarch, she wasn't excellent. We can also form our own opinion by carefully observing her printed-on coins and saved effigy. Cleopatra's portrait on the coin depicts her as a mature woman in her thirties. The quality of coinage is debatable, but these were minted in twelve cities for an extended period consisting of many years. This depicts that Cleopatra saw and presented an official image of herself. She wanted to be known and remembered as the queen.

The most important thing here is that they agree that Cleopatra was a well-educated and intelligent woman who was well-equipped with the art of conversation and knew how to turn the table with

her verbal skills. If a person can do that verbally, it seems unlikely that using beauty as the seducing agent to conquer a man unless that man makes this a condition for her.

Cleopatra's Attempts to Save Her Country

Furthermore, according to Roller (2010), Cleopatra is "Best remembered for her liaisons with Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony); she carefully chose her partners to produce heirs who could carry on the kingdom." Its purpose was to take care of her country and her nation. She was clever enough to decide what was beneficial to her country. This may be her intellect rather than seducing a man. She even visited Rome to settle the matters between both countries. Unfortunately, Caesar was murdered, and the matters started to go out of control. Furthermore, Roller (2010) explains,

Her original relations with Antonius were a matter of stabilizing her kingdom and creating a mutually beneficial relationship between Egypt and Rome. Still, the personal involvement between the two eventually hampered these plans. It allowed Octavian (the future emperor Augustus), who was in power in Rome, to marginalize Antonius (his brother-in-law) and claim that an eastern seductress was destroying him.

This is untrue for sure, as Antony himself was in want of power and kingship. He found tremendous potential in getting into an affair with Cleopatra and would fulfill his dreams with this relationship. Here again, Cleopatra was also thinking of strengthening her country, and it was her political kinship. At several other occasions we find examples, when Cleopatra made sacrifices in order to benefit her country. Cleopatra was a great queen and leader who nourished her subjects and her nation and provided for them. She strengthened her country's economy and widened its territory.

Furthermore, she took the pain of giving birth to her first child out of wedlock with a man in his prime age who happened to be superior to her and to her country. By doing so, she saved her country. On the other hand, with Antony, the relationship was a bit different; in the end, he married her. She was a knowledgeable woman, and to disrespect her, to gain some material and capital benefits by Octavian, is not beyond suspect, for he is the one who removed everyone from his way to the throne. She struggled to get recognition from the Roman Empire. I expect the least from her to commit cowardly acts (suicide or seduction). Fight till her breath suits more to her personality (Sabahat, 2023). This reveals that it is not unlikely that the Romans misrepresented her, and unfortunately, this propaganda lasted for more than two millennia.

The Protector of Egypt and her Challenges

Miles (2011) explains that Cleopatra, like her predecessors, was bound to have a male consort, her brother Ptolemy, the XIII. He had an alliance with ministers who wanted to remove Cleopatra from the throne and wanted her consort to be the prime monarch. Getting closer to Caesar was better for Cleopatra as she escaped from her fate to be with her brother as his wife and later from her younger brother, Ptolemy the XIV. This pharaonic system believed in male and female pairing, so Cleopatra had to have her consort share a parallel status with her during her offerings to the gods. *Philometor*, *philopator*, and *Philadelphia* were her paternal, maternal, and sibling relationships, but Caesar and Antony emerged as a problem for the priesthood of that time. How should this relationship of the two Romans with the pharaoh queen be represented in Egypt, though they fathered her children? Egyptians had the 3000-year-old conservation and formulating tradition in Egyptian religion to

present the visual representation that exhibits reality. This was an artistic dilemma and a problem in the official nomenclator. Her life was beyond the simple definition of complex.

During her reign, a demotic script under the title *Glorification of Cleopatra Philopator* was written, declaring her as the protector of Egypt. This carried her good deeds for the benefit of the country. Miles (2011) opines that "Within the Egypt Cleopatra the VII was presented as the Egyptian queen, mother and protectress and goddess, who promotes her son as her consort and rightful heir, but the queen's representation in the Greek world offers a different insight into her aspiration." Furthermore, Roller (2010) opines that Roman presence made her fulfilling her tasks difficult, but it was manageable for her as she devoted herself to paying her father's debts and stabilizing her country.

She had a massive duty over her shoulders to protect her country and her people. What she had been through and the time she lived was tough, and she stood it with all it could take. If we carefully examine everything, we would not be surprised to conclude that she sacrificed herself to protect her country and people. In the annals of history, the princesses and queens had to make sacrifices to gain favor for their country. Sometimes, they are given in marriage for political alliances with other countries. This is practiced today even when daughters and sisters are married to the men of the other family and the decision is made by their male relatives/paterfamilias. There are many motives behind such marriages, for instance, to make their families more powerful, rich, and influential. In this situation, she was the one who had to make these decisions on her own.

Moreover, Cleopatra must have faced more challenges than we can decipher from the accounts of the historians of that time or extract from the myths written 2000 years ago about this woman. She must be a woman of great mental strength who stood firm in the times of her plight and the country's falling economy. She was a woman of higher IQ and supreme intellect. Thus, such a woman cannot be vulgar or lowly regarding modesty (Yawar, 2023).

The Truth and Myth About Cleopatra's Death

Cleopatra was portrayed as a woman who could take her life. Cleopatra was not an ordinary woman. She had the spirit of a warrior. She knew to stand firm and do what it takes to save her country and people. Almas and Mazhar (2023) opine, "This is not impossible for the Octavian to create a deception about Cleopatra's demise that deluded Egyptians to get rid of Cleopatra who was the pharaoh of a historical nation, direct rival of the Rome and threat to Octavian's reign that in Egypt just began." Hutcheon (2003) believes that inferior people who could not come forward to tell the truth or voice the reality of their lives must also be given a voice in postmodernism. Cleopatra also cannot come forward now to reveal her truth from the myths that engulfed her reality for at least 2000 years.

Moreover, Egypt was under the command of Rome, and so was she. Later, her lips were sealed by death, and Octavian said a concocted myth during the Roman celebration of their triumph over Egypt. The Egyptians were inferior to the Romans, so their pharaoh was the emperor/s of Rome. According to Almas and Mazhar (2023),

Being aware of the fact that she was inferior to her Roman husband Mark Antony, and so Cleopatra offered him her womb, to cultivate his children and in return she, from him, saved her country, her people, and her queenship. While bringing into discussion this myth of Cleopatra's suicide, which in reality, I believe truly was a murder, I connect within several of the worlds as well, serving the true essence of Post Modernism.

Burstein (2007) opines that in 30 BCE, Cleopatra, alongside her husband Antony, committed suicide. She killed herself was believed for centuries. This may be the myth and the truth; maybe Cleopatra was murdered by Caesar's nephew Octavian, who in 29 BCE arrived in Rome with Cleopatra's remaining children; the idea first was revealed during the celebrations of his triumph over Cleopatra that she died of snake bite. Octavian has all the motifs to kill Cleopatra. Firstly, she became the reason of his sister Octavian's humiliation when Antony fell in love with Cleopatra and had children with her. Secondly, Antony divorced Octavia, married Cleopatra and thus the conflicts between Antony and Octavian became public. Thirdly, she bore children to Antony while Octavia did not have children with Antony. This was the reason Octavian brought Cleopatra's remaining children to Rome, made them walk in golden chains behind their mother's effigy on the streets of Rome. Later he gave them in the custody of his sister Octavia Minor. Lastly, his biggest motive was to gain power in order to declare himself the monarch that he did. He took the name Augustus and ruled for 4 decades on Egypt, Rome and the other territories under the rule of Rome. To achieve his last goal, he tracked down and killed Cleopatra and Caesar's son Caesarion to put an end to the biggest threat to his access to the throne. Then there was no chance that Octavian would let Cleopatra live who also was a threat to his ambition for he knew Cleopatra's capabilities and her royal status as the pharaoh and queen of Egypt. She was not an ordinary woman but the queen of Egypt who bore five children; heirs who had Roman and Egyptian blood in their veins. Above all Cleopatra's son Caesarion whom she bought up as her consort and her heir to the throne next to her was grown up and mature. According to Filipin (2016), postmodernisms of rejecting theories." So, this theory, the myth about Cleopatra's demise, and the negative characteristics about her as the queen and person are also rejectable. Almas and Mazhar (2023) opine, "This exhibits his vengeance against the woman who stole his brother-in-law Antony. This was all personal, and he murdered Cleopatra." Cooking the myth about suicide had manifold benefits. If the pharaoh was killed/murdered, there could be possible riots in Egypt. Still, if she decided to commit suicide, it was the decision of a person who, for the Egyptians, was the human incarnation of the goddess Isis, and thus, her decision was unchallengeable. Secondly, in Rome, Cleopatra's personality would be depicted as a weak woman who couldn't seduce Octavian. This would give Octavian a higher reputation than a woman with her charms and charisma, which could draw two of Rome's most significant leaders but failed to lure Octavian into her trap. However, this may have been beneficial to Octavian and his propaganda at that time, but (Hudson, 2017) explained that the demises in Cleopatra's family history, all of her family members faced a miserable death, and none of them committed suicide at all. Thus, Cleopatra could never take her own life because she was genetically designed not to do so but to always look up to the future. And Octavian's capitalistic ambition was also one of the most significant motives behind this negative propaganda and the myth about Cleopatra's death. It, for Octavian, was like killing more than two birds with one stone.

Merging Two Different yet Similar things; Myth and Truth

Falck (1994) reveals, "Poetry or imaginative literature is our most fundamental mode of inscription of reality" (pg. 151). He continues to argue that, "as contrasted with true imagination or vision-fable and allegory are totally distinctive and inferior kind of poetry." (Coleridge, 1817, as cited by Falck, 1994). But even in poetry we do have a discussion about myth/illusion, truth/reality, When a lover says, "*Tera pyar he meri zindagi*⁴".

⁴Your love is my life.

When the lover and the beloved are two separate beings; now when something which is lover's, how can that affect something which is beloved's, especially when both the things are different. In the beginning they contradict because the conflict occurs with one another but when they are reaching the end of the journey they become one. Love and life are synchronized. What is reality/truth then? What is myth here? Or is it containing both in one? *Pyar*/(Love) and *Zindagy*/(life) both, have contradiction in the beginning and by the end there is unification between the two. They seemingly become one though they were different. *Tera Pyar*/ (your love) hey/is *Meri Zindagy*/ (my life). Here in the end, they are not only unified but they involved the listeners of the song to get involved and see both the things as one. Two things/worlds are blending in as one and here the transcendence takes place, this process is classified and defined as post modernism. Similarly, Cleopatra reality was that of a seductress opportunist according to the ancient records but today it is debatable if she did for when we carefully examine both the historical record of Romans and Arabs we start to believe that something blended the myth and truth about her and some investigation is needed here.

This is Romans historians' portrayal of Cleopatra as the seductress, ruthless killer, a female enriched with beautiful feminine enchantments, who was a little more than a whore. Western world followed the trails set by the Roman historian till 16th century, but when it came to Shakespeare, he changed the whole existence of her persona from a seductive to a tragic, romantic lover queen of renaissance. How would he do so and how he saw her like this? And how would he write his play to set a zenith to the love of Antony and Cleopatra? This is what is known as looking into Another world, into another time: Truth, fiction, reality, and myth. Some, being lucky, like Shakespeare, may find the hidden truth in the masks of the tale but would not reveal all of it to the audience for they must consider the demand of the Era they write for. Dryden and Chaucer saw her reality the way it occurred to them and reveal what they thought suitable to their audience. But they did not do justice to one of the great historical figures of ancient times. Her truth by these giants hid in more layers of myths.

Romans portrayed her as a woman who was weak and could use her charming beauty to seduce powerful men, though, in reality, she was a powerful politician with a heart throbbing with love for love. It is the psyche of the patriarchal world that cannot see powerful, intelligent women taking control. Brown (2013) speaks highly of her in her book *The Murder of Cleopatra* that Cleopatra, "no longer seen as a seductive, overly emotional woman, who made poor choices and ended up cowering in her tomb, Cleopatra now can take her rightful place as a political figure with brains and brawns, equal to any man of her time or in any century after that (p. 238)."

Conclusion

Jameson (2016) also opines that postmodernism is closely associated with capitalism or instead linked with the cultural logic of late capitalism. Jameson was a Marxist and isn't a big supporter of postmodernism, for he opines that postmodernism is rooted in capitalistic society today. Capitalism, of course, is involved in Cleopatra's death, the myth regarding her suicide. So, suppose as it is said that Cleopatra was a woman who used tactics and manipulated the great Romans to achieve what she had to. In that case, it is also true that all the three Romans in her story also had their motives when they arrived in Egypt and advanced towards Cleopatra. Their biggest goals were to hold on to capitalism, power, and the throne. Secondly, the Roman historians wanted to please Octavian and thus wrote according to what Octavian desired. According to Almas and Mazhar (2023) "Even the reality shows are not real. One style is contrasted and contradicted with another, depicting a comparison of one world to that of another. Just as Cleopatra's persona and

character are contrasted when we go through the historical accounts of Cleopatra recollected and penned down by Roman and Arab historians. We find huge contradictions”. There are always two sides to a coin, so the other side of the coin was shown by the Arab historians, which is contrary to the Roman historian’s account that was influenced by the hatred of Octavia/Augustus. We know that the truth lies in the middle of two extremes, and this paper has brought out that point where Cleopatra can be seen without bias. Above, Cleopatra was called as well as accepted the role of the protector of her country and the people and the protectors of great nations do not indulge themselves in committing suicides or whoring. A queen with the skills of a great leader and the knowledge required to rule a historically profound country would not provide herself to the man in his prime age unless that man happens to be the womanizer and asks for the favors he shouldn’t have.

A woman who is Shakespeare's tragic complex heroine or a seductress cannot bring her powerful rule to such a zenith. A heroine with comic elements for Chaucer or a sentimental one for Dryden cannot be one of the greatest queens of all times. She was an influential leader with fierce thinking and killer strategies. Out of these myths, the truth is that Cleopatra was a strong-headed and cunning politician who knew not only how to survive but how to multiply her power. Cleopatra gave Caesar and Mark Antony her womb, and they both gave her children; they empowered one another on a reciprocal basis, strengthening their rules over their regions of reign.

Thus, it could be concluded that Cleopatra’s personality was stained with negative characteristics. The myths have their truths contrary to her being mean, manipulator, and seductive as well, and her suicide was also a concocted story.

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