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TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE CHARACTERS ANTONY AND CAESAR EMBODY THE CONFLICTING WORLDS OF EGYPT AND ROME

The Shakespearian play 'Antony and Cleopatra' is a tragic love story between the two characters Antony a Triumvate Ruler of Rome and Cleopatra the Queen of Egypt. The play of Antony and Cleopatra is not just a tragic love story it also incorporates a storyline of international politics, therefore making it a public and also a private drama in which Antony and Octavius Caesar contend for control of the Roman Empire. The play commences in 40 BC during this time the Roman Empire was still in control of most of the world stretching between Britain in the west and what is now known as Turkey in the east. Due to the vast amount of land under control by the Roman Empire, the Roman Senate created a Triumvate. This consisted of three rulers of Rome to try to keep the peace between the people. During the play the three Triumvate rulers are Lepidus, Caesar and Antony. The characters of Antony and Caesar become more and more egoistic, where as Lepidus stays within his neutrality of all being equal persons. There are an endless amount of codes of behaviour in which the Romans and the Egyptians embody. Romans and Egyptians conflict in every way possible such as that Romans are private with their problems/meetings, whereas Egyptians are as public as can be they seem very much open with all of their troubles. Also, Romans are organised in time and always plan any occasions or battles in which they take part, they are very precise and take time to think over what they need to do. Where as, with the Egyptians they are very spontaneous and throw party's randomly when it pleases them as if they were timeless in all of the

things to do. Caesar throughout the play contains all of the new conventional mannerisms that the Romans embodied, these are such things as him being Ambitious and ruthless in his political matters, as well as how he plans battles. This is shown during the lead up to the battle scene and after the battle scene. During this scene we see how Caesar decides in that he shall not take the request of Antony to man-to-man battle, or ' Strike not by land; keep whole; provoke not battle till we have done at sea.', this helps prove that Caesar embodies the true Roman for he is ambitious to beat Antony, so that he may take the full throne of Rome for himself. It is said to achieve and maintain empire is to be practical, far-sighted, efficient, and ruthless if necessary, not romantic or chivalrous. This means having to know oneself, knowing one's enemy and being prepared to take advantage of the moment. These are all mannerisms embodied within Caesar. They are shown through the play by the few scenes in which Caesar takes place. Rome and Egypt in ' Antony and Cleopatra' symbolize the extreme definitions by which human beings can take stock of their lives Rome being the outer being and Egypt being the inner being . Taken together, they sum up the possibilities for human fulfilment. Throughout the whole of the play we only see one true Roman like act was when he proposed and agreed towards the political marriage when he returns to Rome the first time since he met Cleopatra. The second roman act that Antony tries to do but yet again fails on it is when he Eros would rather take his own life than Antony's and so Antony's only way out is to fall upon his sword as the final loyal act that of a true roman. Antony cannot even comply with this due to how he embodies Egypt more than

Rome itself. Antony also starts the play with betrayal wherein his own country sends him a messenger but he turns them down as to try to forget about his past life to move on with his new life with Cleopatra 'Grates me! The sum' within this line he confirms in what Philo said at the opening to the play that Antony shall turn away from Rome. We are then shown that it has begun from how he re-acts towards the news from Rome and that he actually dismisses the messenger even after Cleopatra tells Antony to hear what they have to say 'Nay, hear them, Antony', this is rather mocking towards Antony, as if she were saying you are wanted and cannot live without them, go to them. As once said by A. C Bradley in 1905 he said that, '[Caesar]...has fixed his eyes on the end, sacrifices everything for it, uses as a means to it. The other, [Antony], though far the greater soldier and worshipped by his followers, has no such singleness of aim; nor yet is power, however desirable to him, the most desirable thing in the world.' This quotation gives us a basic understanding of the difference between the two leaders. The proof of this statement is shown partly in the scene in which Caesar betrays the Triumvate and backstabs Lepidus and puts him in prison, thus showing us that he will sacrifice anyone for him to achieve his end fixture. Also, in the political marriage he sacrifices his own sister to try to rid Antony from him. Toward the end of the play when Antony falls upon his own sword to take his own life, due to his knowledge that Cleopatra has died, he fails at this, as this is a loyal way a true Roman can die, he fails at this because normally they should die instantly, but he does not die straight away portraying the major loss of his Roman status, as he did not die

instantly Diomedes found him after being sent from Cleopatra to tell him that she was alive. Antony then survived long enough to talk to his beloved Cleopatra, yet, in the end he does finally achieve death so in such a way he is Roman but for not dieing instantly this helps re-enforce that Antony has become partly Egyptian therefore he could not die fully Roman. Through Cleopatra and Caesar we can see the differences between the two mannerisms of Egypt and Rome. In Cleopatra we see bawdiness, spontaneous and passion, but with Caesar we are shown ambition, always planned, and cold through the way he deals with certain situations. These two put together we unearth the mannerisms in which embody within Antony, to show us that having been an old Roman and a newly conversion towards the Egyptian lifestyle that they have created this new personality of Antony and how easily lead he can be on either side. Antony lost to Caesar also because he was very old and he therefore still had the old Roman mannerisms which he embodied, where as Caesar was much younger and he had the more updated mannerisms in which out dated Antony's, consequently he had the advantage to be able to use Antony's weaknesses to defeat him as we see in the scene leading up to the battle in where Antony gets messengers to send to Caesar that they should fight man to man. Caesar then receives the message but denies it and says he will fight at sea. This is due to his ambition and his ruthlessness towards Antony and the betrayal of Antony, yet mostly just to reach his goal of becoming a single ruler of Rome by removing the other two members of the Triumvate. During the Party Scene after the truce with Pompey upon the ships of Pompey, we

see that Antony showing his Egyptian mannerisms as a celebrating drunk and taking part of the four banquets as a truce, where as Caesar rejects any drinks and to join in with the others and is very hedonistic in how he threatens to slit all the throats of the men whilst they are passed out from too much drink. Overall we see that Caesar embodies only the Roman mannerisms and through the play we see that he is ambitious this is mostly to get his own ruling over Rome, he is also very ruthless politically and uses his own family for example with the political marriage of his sister and Antony, also in the way he plans his battles to go against Antony's weaknesses. Yet, he still has this need for Antony in how he is prone for battle and is worshipped by all of the Roman people and they all are on his side. Where as, with Antony, he seems to be converting over towards Egyptian mannerisms, every time he does something in the play like at the start he rejects his own duty by rejecting the messenger, 'Grates me! The sum.' Also he is very passionate and he has honour within himself which is also Egyptian. The only most roman mannerism that Antony obtains throughout the whole play is the political marriage to Octavia, Caesars sister, no sooner does he marry her he leaves her and returns to Egypt showing that he is now almost fully Egyptian not being able to leave the country or his Egyptian lover. Antony also seems to be drunk by noon everyday in which the Egyptians being more laidback was acceptable to them but for the Romans this was very disgraceful because there was no time to get drunk with so much to take care of with their country. Antony and Cleopatra -

William Shakespeare