

Antony and Cleopatra analysis essay



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In this scene Cleopatra is portrayed as a very bewitching and seductive woman. The just and unbiased Roman, Enobarbus, the truth teller of the play explains, to two followers of Caesar, his thoughts and feelings regarding Cleopatra. Enobarbus begins by telling us “ the barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, Burned on the water.

” Shakespeare immediately uses language that enlightens us about Cleopatra’s personality and figure. He uses this metaphor to tell us that Cleopatra is so seductive and fiery that she sets barges on fire with her amazingly seductive looks and unlimited lust. This action of water being on fire is transcending the impossible; this could be a reference to Cleopatra’s capability to surpass the impossible, that she is such a woman that could do this. It is also a paradoxical statement, linking to Cleopatra’s paradoxical and contradictory personality.

The concept that an individual can be paradoxical implies a supernatural character. A physical depiction of this paradox is shown in this quotation. Enobarbus then goes on to use a lot of colour in his speech. For example, “ purple,” “ silver,” and “ gold” are all very deep, royal and rich colours, adding to her sensuality.

Gold and Silver are two very precious metals, they are rare and wanted by so many. The thought of possessing these riches can become compelling, and people can become obsessed with its beauty. By using Gold and Silver as colours that she wears and is surrounded by, we make the link of her having the ability to make people around her obsessed with her compelling looks, this supported by the quotation “ rare Egyptian! ” referring to Cleopatra.”

The winds were lovesick with them. This quotation uses personification, even the wind becomes enthralled by her beauty. Cleopatra even has control over the elements, giving her the status and control of a Goddess as she is much referred to.

“ that Venus where we see. ” The elements are literally coming alive around this supernatural being. This reference to her being the goddess ‘ Venus’ also enhances her sexual appeal and reputation as Venus or Cleopatra is the goddess of love. She is referred to as a “ royal wench”, and this is the one section of the scene where Cleopatra’s ability is undermined. She is more than a wench and a temptress, but a goddess of love.

Throughout the scene Shakespeare uses language that refers to Gods and Goddesses and religious heavenly themes. He uses “ Venus”, “ Cupids” and “ holy priests,” which add to the scenes many celestial and divine images and we are led to believe, to be around and live with Cleopatra, and to be her lover must be like living in nirvana, a paradise that only Cleopatra withholds. Shakespeare also uses language that refers to mythical and legendary beings. Such as, “ mermaids,” and “ nereides,” this creates the world of fantasy that surrounds Cleopatra.

Mermaids are known for their myth of being bewitching characters, they sing melodies that lure sailors close to their grasp and then their beauty of voice and body enthralls the sailors as they enter the trap. They are lost forever as they drown into oblivion. Cleopatra is also a very bewitching woman and this comparison to the mermaids transcends Cleopatra into the mythical and supernatural. She lures and entices men and very powerful men with no

effort. Another reference to Cleopatra's lust is, "To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, And what they undid did."

"This tells us that as they try to cool her down only the opposite will happen, and her lust and passion keep heating her body more. Enobarbus who we accept as our truth teller, who keeps everything in perspective, then describes a dreamlike scene of Cleopatra's appearance in the city.

Enobarbus talks of the "invisible perfume" that hits the city upon arrival and it almost hypnotizes the people of the city, as like zombies they are lured to her presence. Whistling to th'air; which, but for vacancy, had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too," This hyperbole goes to the extent where we see Antony on his grand throne, one third of the triumvirate of the world, alone and as he tries to whistle, he finds cannot as there is no air with which to whistle with, because the air has also left to gaze on Cleopatra. This extremely exaggerated statement is Enobarbus trying to explain the extent of her bewitching faculty.

Another reference to Cleopatra's supernatural power is when, she "hops forty paces through the public street;" and is not even breathless or fatigued. Maecenas then interrupts and breaks up Enobarbus' speech and says, "Now Antony must leave her utterly." Enobarbus replies that he will not and could not, her influence and magnetism upon him is too strong. He is infatuated with Cleopatra and Enobarbus throws a sequence of reasons why she has Antony wrapped around her little finger.

He uses paradoxes, hyperbole and religious references to prove his line of reasoning. Cleopatra already has control over the elements and the people.

Now Enobarbus tells us that Cleopatra has control over the seemingly uncontrollable. She Controls the Gods, although directly this is not implied, it is said; that even, “ the holy priests.

Bless her, when she is riggish. ” To be lusty and erotic as she is, in the presence of a priest, who has the highest moral values and would be considered to be the closest thing to Gods on earth would be considered an incomprehensible sin. Yet the priest bless her, this is extremely shocking. The Gods have power over the holy priests and yet she is blessed, is this insinuating that Cleopatra has power over the Gods.

Shakespeare has not dressed up the statement with hyperbole, but he still delivers a fantastically shocking line, by using this simple use of language in itself it is a paradox to the hyperbole and surrealism in the first half of the scene. Cleopatra in this scene is presented as existing as an immortal being. She is the controller of the Gods and of the world. She has reached the zenith, the peak that is impossible to reach.

Her power is incomprehensible and untouchable, but as we all know this divine Goddess falls sharply to the nadir, the pits of hell, where she cannot control anything and is driven to suicide.