

The struggle in antony's mind

Literature



The opening scene it was very much Egypt heavy with Antony " pleasure"- seeking despite of all the problems in Rome and it is Cleopatra who urges him to act upon " Caesar's dismissal. " By opening the scene like this, the audience has a clear grasp on Antony's " lust" for Cleopatra so that they will be alert to changes in his attitude. By the end of scene two his mind is clearly suffused with roman thoughts, telling himself that Cleopatra " is cunning past man's thought. "

So already we are introduced or hinted of Antony's squitzofrenic character in both love and fighting behaviour where at times, the two seems to influence eachother. We are introduced to the problems Antony endorses in his love life where due to Fulvia rebelling against Caesar he is frightened that Cleopatra may " rail him in Fulvia's phrase. " Upon hearing of his wife's death, his true thoughts on fulvia is revealed, again expressing a fickle opinion on her death, he " wished" this " great spirit gone" but now " desires to " pluck her back.. The tugging in his mind is further reinforced by the roman thoughts he has towards Cleopatra.

He strives to " break-off" the " strong Egyptian fetters" the " enchanting queen" pocesses as " she is cunning past man's thought. " Enobarbus, who knows Antony well compares Fulvia's death as a " tailer" where she is the " old-smock" and Cleopatra the " new petticoat" he tries to encourage him to realize " gods a thankful sacrifice" and his " tears" are are injuced by an " onion. This, however bears no effect on Antony as he relizes what's going on with the romans is potentially dangerous, which he describes as " serpent's poison. "

What impression do the audience have of Cleopatra so far? Throughout the scenes read so far there seems to be a clear cut representation of Cleopatra in terms of the Roman's perspective of her which interacts with Lucan's, he calls her a "witch and a whore" and Philo claims that she is a "gypsy and strumpet" with "a tawny front."

Here we are given a pejorative picture of her but we cannot take these words at face-value, Philo is speaking out of anger, even hatred of Cleopatra's control over Antony so it would've been unlikely to be an unbiased opinion. However, like Enobarbus, we recognize she is an emotionally polarised character, we have seen her "die twenty times." It is this melodramatic personality combined with her psychological inconsistency that emphasizes the emotional pressure required of Antony and the annoyance we may feel towards her.

But this is understandable, she is used to being an "enchanted queen" but now she is approaching middle-age her actions are partly fuelled by her insecurities. Shakespeare encourages us to sympathize with Cleopatra, Enobarbus maybe used here as a go-between. He recognizes she is emotionally unstable but still thinks is "a wonderful piece of work," an elaborate description which counteracts the Roman picture created of her. Cleopatra encourages Antony to "hear Caesar's dismissal," despite there being a mocking tone it requires the audience to think, perhaps she is not as politically empty-headed as she is thought to be.