

The Multifaceted Portrayal of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

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Abstract

This study explores the portrayal of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra* from multiple perspectives. It argues that though Cleopatra can be considered as a femme fatale, she can also be viewed as a tragic heroine. In my thesis I explain how Shakespeare portrays Cleopatra in the play and how his use of colorful language, imagery, action, and tone simultaneously manifests his condemnation and admiration of Cleopatra. Though Cleopatra appears as partly responsible for Antony's downfall, she also ultimately proves to be a faithful lover and a queen keen on saving her lover's and her own reputation and heroic stature.

The conclusion drawn in this study is that though Shakespeare adhered closely to his main source Plutarch's *Lives* for the greatest part of his play, he chose in the end to depart from the original source. The result was a depiction of his heroine as a multifaceted figure who has various traits to her character.