

The Evolution of Cleopatra in English Drama: A Post-Colonial Perspective

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Abstract

The queen of Egypt, Cleopatra, has been depicted differently in English drama. The different representations of Cleopatra in William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (1594), John Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), and George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898) raise the controversial question of each playwright's different depiction. Nonetheless, the portrayal of Cleopatra has been slightly similar in all of the aforementioned plays. For example, the depiction of Cleopatra as a manipulative, cunning, and betraying could be easily recognized in all of the plays. The story of Cleopatra has been written by historians approximately in the same way and details. In terms of literature, the rhetoric language of each of the aforementioned authors has played a pivotal role in representing Cleopatra in different ways.

The historical and social contextualization of each play would extend the scope of the study in order to make it possible to critically study each work from a postcolonial point of view. The West- Orient relations have been different in each play's era. The 'evolution' or development of the historical figure, Cleopatra, in the aforementioned plays parallels the development of the West- Orient relations as well. Furthermore, the thesis raises the question of why Cleopatra has been chosen among all the other Oriental historical figures.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Orientalism, History, Representation, Cleopatra.