Chapter - II

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I

In the previous chapter we saw that the primal self of woman emerges in its totality in two important roles, out of the several played by her in society, either choicelessly or willfully, which absorb her full capacity: the roles are those of the lover and wife. In these two roles woman’s soul reaches its full potential. The other roles which she plays like the mother, sister, friend, nurse do not bring out all her energies to creative fulfilment. In the myths discussed already, it is seen that woman like the earth receives the time-space manifestation of life-forms, and issues forth life-forms. She displays them in her body and soul. But it is as lover that a woman gains quality space-time.

The receiving, absorbing and displaying aspects of woman are reflected in the social role of wife. But woman is also a giver. What she gives and inspires in her surrounding world, even beyond the social or natural worlds, is love. The role of woman as lover is the feminine essence in its creative anima which satisfies her more than the other roles. The lover in woman brings to the fore, penetrating the other masked identities of social veracity, the real woman; or to use a conventional figure, the woman deep inside woman, unmanipulated by patriarchy. Woman as lover has not often been
allowed to play her creative role in society; she has been made a sort of recipient of the male love; the male lover often surrenders his pride and achievements to the woman he loves and speaks like Hamlet, "Nymph, in thy orisons all my sins/Be remembered (Shakespeare, III, i, 88-89, 61). Man seldom permits himself to be played upon. Woman almost always, is the goal or object of love.

In this chapter we propose to show that woman as lover is not a mere absorbing agent or a deified shrine at whose altar male pride is offered as tribute to beauty and love. Woman is a great lover in herself, and only through her love she fulfils her destiny. But the nature of social life has been such that woman has never been able to love in the full splendour of her being. She has contented herself, helplessly, in inspiring her man to launch dreamships in the unfathomed seas, satisfying therein her own love of venturesome creativity. Like Lady Macbeth she has "chastised with the valour of her tongue" (Macbeth, I, v, 28, 849) her lord's manly ambitions to criminal and bloody fulfilment, sacrificing her femininity. But barring such extreme cases like that of Lady Macbeth, the majority of women in history have only inspired their lovers to reach and overreach their soul's ecstasy. Women have made sacrifices at the fulfilling moments of their love to orient a world of their liking, through their men. Their 'sacrifice' has often been the expression
of their love. It is not only because the world of men always treats women as
objects of love, and very rarely allows them free exercise of their own
imaginative projection but also because, as focussed areas of male
consciousness and ego, women remain a blurred vision of self, viewed and
identified by another consciousness, that is to say, male consciousness. Woman
loses her activating and active self under the glare of imposed patterns.

Woman is, therfore, compelled as it were, to accept patterns. (D.H. Lawrence :
"Give Her a Pattern"). The lover in her has always identified herself with
man's dreams and aspirations. It must, however, be admitted that this merging
of the feminine self in the male ambition is not an illustration of surrender.

Often by merging in the male ego woman turns into a victorious self, which
she pursues on her own. All human societies have noticed the dominating self
of woman in full cry in the shaping of male consciousness. And for that
woman has been condemned in history and poetry as manipulator and player.

If she manipulates the reality of her man like Helen, setting norms and
standards of excellence for Paris and challenging him to show himself as a
better man, she does so because she cannot herself accomplish what she
desires. When Paris escapes the fury of Menelaus in single combat and enters
the inner chamber for the pleasures of the bed, Helen almost contemptuously
speaks:
Home from the war? You should have perished there, 
brought down by that strong soldier, once my husband.
You used to say you were the better man, 
more skilful with your hands, your spear. So why not
challenge him to fight again?

(Homer, III, 411-415, 55)

She speaks thus only to send him to the combat again as she is ashamed of
her love running away from the battle field. She wants her love and honour
vindicated through Paris again.

This kind of challenging stance to poke the fire in man has been
woman's lot in society. She is never free to act and operate as lover because of
her biological limitations in a worldview created by man. The common lot of
woman is that of the goal setter, the tantalizing sex-doll who goads (if not
blackmails) her man to achievements, using her love as prize. Our purpose in
this dissertation is not to consider such women as lovers. But the other
category, rare and unique is that of woman as the active lover, exploring,
exploiting and event-making; absorbing the universe in her self and soul to
draw her own patterns of reality.

That is to say, a lover, instead of being played upon, plays upon,
etching out a new reality on the available space-time of her being. She not
only wills through life but gives her man, a purpose and goal in the
infiniteness of moments, an intense desire to connect himself with the whole universe which she becomes for him. Love for such a woman, is not a mere romantic passion and not necessarily a libidinous attraction for the other sex. The personality whole is never completely immersed in casual love. Love, in this case, is a connection, a relational proximity between the artist and his art, the creator and his creation; in other words God and His Universe. When a human being loves, he or she loves the whole world, the whole universe, the whole of creation, as God "is" and connects himself or herself with it through the loved object. Likewise, the woman as a lover, envisions the whole of this vast universe in her man.

Through such envisioning perceptions she carves, moulds the creative being of her man; challenges him to greater heights; stretches the contours of reality; strives to create a new world; elicits the primal self in him binding her 'self' and his self (self, here including all the desires of the body, the faculties of the mind and the energy of soul), with the universe, into a holy trinity that is true, good and beautiful. And from thence, ultimately grows into a psychospiritual identity that embraces the whole perspective of creation, identifying the self with the reality around.

To this category belongs only one woman in recorded history; the Serpent of the Old Nile, Cleopatra, who loved as no woman did or could ever
do and illustrated the possibilities of woman's love. In this chapter, we propose to study the Cleopatra of history and literature as lover, a lover at all levels. We expect to show that Eve as lover displays passions and intellect no less celebrated in man.
II

Tracing the course of Cleopatra's life as a lover involves two levels of assessment: the level of history and that of literature. Although these two levels are not factually contradictory Cleopatra in literature is not envisaged as a total woman with details of her biography making the contours sharp and orderly. The plays on the Cleopatra theme, especially Daniel's *Cleopatra*, Dryden's *All for Love*, Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* and also Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* do not take into account the experiences and reality-tensions of her eventful early life. Out of the full thirty nine years of her total life span most dramatists focus only on the last phase; on her association with Antony. For the purpose of this dissertation we propose to build up the biopsychic stature of Cleopatra basing upon historical evidence as detailed in the biographies of Cleopatra.

Historical evidence provides a curtain raiser to the drama of Cleopatra's life only after her tenth year. We do not have any information about her before that. And even at that tender age she was imprisoned or exiled by her elder sister Berenice IV, who ruled Egypt. Her father Auletes was driven out of the Kingdom by his people for his disgraceful, irresponsible conduct and weak political mind:
Cleopatra's father, Ptolemy XIII, who went by the nickname of Auletes "the Piper" was a degenerate little man, who passes across Egypt's political stage in a condition of almost continuous inebriety.

(Arthur Weigall, The Life and Times of Cleopatra : Queen of Egypt 21)

The socio-political background that goes into the bio-psychic formation of Cleopatra is clouded mostly by her father who was famous for his drunken antics. It is an irony of history that so illustrious a world-shaker as Cleopatra had so shadowy a background. Her father, an illegitimate opportunist, called Auletes is little known in Egyptian history as Ptolemy XIII, for his royal exploits. He is remembered snidely, as a fluteplayer, from which his name derives. Cleopatra's mother is lost to history; she is more like a mysterious womb that disappears into the walls of the palace, after delivering the greatest woman in history. The early childhood of Cleopatra is a nightmare of intrigue, rebellion and bloodshed. Her father rules, not by any law books, divine or human, but by a clause in a Will bequeathed to the Romans that empowered the Egyptians to turn to Rome whenever any civil disorder beyond their repairment occured. But the full implementation of the Will being possible only in the event of a crisis of heirlessness, the Alexandrians had no choice but to accept Auletes (Ptolemy XIII), as their ruler, for "he alone stood between their liberty and the stern domination of Rome" (Weigall 22). Romans, on the other hand,
...had preferred to give Egypt and Cypres to the two illegitimate sons of the royal testator, confident that they would prove to be drunken and dissolute rulers. The more one squeezed out of them, the weaker would they become. Each of the three or four potentates of Rome waited secretly for the day which would find him powerful enough to seize and hold the wonderful country.

(Emil Ludwig, Cleopatra, The Story of a Queen 21)

Hence, they chose to squeeze gold from Auletes as much as they could, who suffered from a sense of insecurity because of the existence of such a document: "...his reign was continuously overshadowed by this knowledge that the Romans might at any moment dethrone him" (Weigall 23).

Cleopatra, grew up with this sense of insecurity which turned into a rebellion by the Alexandrians who threw out their degenerate king, who fluted away the fleeting moments of sobriety, taxing his people heavily to buy off the anticipated Roman interference. Nothing is known about Cleopatra in this period while her step sister ruled the country. Whether she accompanied her father or stayed back in exile with her younger sister and two brothers - historical records vary. However, one can well understand the deepening insecurity she was enveloped in by not knowing whether her father could come back as king or she would be put to death by her queen sister, for, in the history of the Ptolemies, dagger and poison often worked mysterious changes:
She had seen how poison and dagger had worked havoc in the lives of her forebears; how brothers had slain sisters, princes their fathers and queens their consorts, who were also their brothers. And all these things were done for the sake of power, for the sake of an intense life; often merely because he who did not strike quickly would himself be struck down.

(Emil Ludwig 22-23)

A childhood in a royal palace where danger lurked at every dark nook of corridors and spacious halls, perhaps, strengthened her resolve for survival and hardened her grip on life which threatened to slip away at any moment. It taught her the preciousness of moments; quickness and daring, venturesomeness even in the face of death, which she displays in the later years when she ascends the throne after her father. Auletes' succession to the throne with Roman assistance had marked the beginning of Cleopatra’s life as queen, as she was made her father’s coregnant. Even while a queen under the parental shadow, she became aware that she is now the rightful owner of the throne in the event of her father's death, the other heirs being too young. The knowledge of the bloody incidents of the past, had not, of course, taught her the morbidity and sadistic temper of a murderer. She did not think of either dispensing with her father or doing away with the remaining three heirs who
would be her prospective rivals. She was well aware that she would inherit the Egyptian throne and along with that Roman interference and political patronage and also the matriarchal formalities. Her father's will that was sealed and kept with Pompey in Rome who was authorised to see to its fullest implementation, proclaimed her the joint ruler of Egypt with her fourteen year old brother Ptolemy XIV whom she was to marry as per the family traditions of the Ptolemies. Along with the throne and the royal diadem, she also inherited a husband.

The loneliness, the sense of insecurity in her childhood and the consequent determination and survival instinct developed an assertiveness in her. A queen in her very teens, and as the head of a country Cleopatra discovers her 'self'. The 'woman' in her develops an unusual insight, rare among her sex, into things around her.

The experience of the past, the tentativeness of the existence she lived hitherto, show her, the self's intense love for life. The first manifestation of this intense love for life shows itself in her self assertion. It is natural for a young and ambitious girl who becomes a queen to be assertive. Moreover, assertion in a woman like Cleopatra, is a confidence building trait, natural and spontaneous. Germaine Greer puts it as "An assertion of confidence in the self, an extension of narcissism to include one's own kind, variously considered" (*The Female Eunuch* 160).
Cleopatra's awakening to her self begins with her awareness that existence for her is either that of a queen or nothing; for in the Ptolemy dynasty a mere royal member is a non-entity unless the diadem sat on his/her head. Besides, here is a country which is not only the wealthiest of nations but the key to Eastern countries of the world:

Egypt was regarded as a very wealthy and important country, second only to Rome in the extent of its power. It held the keys to the rich lands of the south, and to Arabia and India it seemed to be one of the main gateways. The revenues of the palace of Alexandria were quite equal to the public income of Rome at this time.

(Arthur Weigall 22)

And Egypt was the, ...granary of the world, the most important commercial market of the Mediterranean, the most powerful factor in eastern politics, and the gateway of the unconquered Kingdoms of the Orient.

(Arthur Weigall 43)

To queen over such a country is no mean task. It is not this commercial opulence mentioned above that gave Egypt its glamour but influx of Greek and Macedonian cultures which enriched it and made it a pilgrimage for scholars:
The Unique Pharos light house outside Alexandria harbour towered into the sky, and directed the shipping that brought property. The Museum and adjacent library, with their fine gardens, fountains, colonnades and restaurants, became the research centre of the Mediterranean world, where scholars lived tax-free and at the state's expense, as befitted the subjects of a monarch who himself was learned in geography and zoology.

(Michael Grant, Cleopatra 8)

Cleopatra was a part of this tradition and the last of the pharoh monarchy which went back as far as Alexander. Although the time at which she came to power was not as peaceful as that of Ptolemy I, and it was more turbulent and degenerate than his, Cleopatra realized the full import of herself as the queen of this culturally, commercially rich and important nation. Her existence as the queen is not merely tied with the Egyptian throne and crown, for she inherited it, but her existence is identified with that very throne and royal diadem which descended on her as a rich legacy. This regal heritage after fretful childhood awakened in her a keen sense of perception of the world situation. The furtherance of life and its very reality hung on queenhood. While the retention of queenhood depended on her acceptance of her father's will on its terms and conditions which demanded her marriage with her fourteen year old brother, however, unwelcome and unpalatable it may be for her; it also threw open the only possible route to the hearts of the nation and
people. An unintelligent, obstinate clinging to the throne like her father's is to no purpose. To own and to be owned by the populace, she must own their beliefs, convictions and faith, their religious and cultural beliefs and life patterns must be owned. Losing herself in the popular beliefs, she rises with a new sense of self assertion. Her new awareness stems from the myths and religion of her country. In Egypt as well as in the Greco-Roman world of that age the Osiris - Isis worship was highly prevalent. The king was the god Osiris and his consort was Isis: "Osiris, Us-yri (throne, eyes) means the occupier of the Monarchy, the Pharoah". If the king was the god Osiris, the queen was the god's partner Isis:

Osiris' consort was his sister Isis, representing fruitful Earth. Egypt was the kingdom of the sun. Its guardians and preservers were Isis and Osiris.

(H. Stadleman, Cleopatra, Egypt's Last Queen 43)

These cultural forces ingrained in the soil and spirit of Egypt, the people's faith in monarchical divinity which considered the rulers to be men who had exceptionally enormous powers to save or destroy, to make or mar, to do or undo—relegated absolute importance to the Egyptian rulers. They were deified:

In consequence, they were hailed as "Epiphanes", God made manifest in living kings. or 'Neos Theos' the New God, young and approachable
incarnation of the Olympians, his "newness" incorporating divine magic power. And the new manifest God was also 'Soter', the Saviour. Or Euergetes, the Benefactor, terms which acknowledge past protection and benefit and express the hope that these will continue in the future.

(Michael Grant 21)

Cleopatra thus, found herself as the goddess-queen, the deified monarch, the absolute power of her nation. It is in this image she starts seeing herself. It is in this image of herself she grows into a woman: "The Queen", the queen of her race, the feminine and also the human race. Cleopatra's early insecurity deepening into determined survival instincts imbues her with a psychic supremacy over others, even over the other sex; not alone her own sex. This sense of superiority filled her with a very poignant perception of her 'self' and its longings. The constant exposure to palace intrigues, tentativeness of life and threats of death and exile, in short, the uglier and baser aspects of the little world around her, intensified her love of life. This grip on life, this love for life make her passionately possessive, absorbing all facets of reality around her. The assertive self formed very easily as it was, manifested itself in her desire to project herself on everything, to play upon the reality about her. The immediate reality around her and within her reach being the body politik, this great nation which she was jointly ruling with her father at first - she desired its possession. The first manifestations of the love for "self", an extension of
narcissism, can be seen in her desire to absorb the body politik. The self's urge for possession makes her explorative; observant; open herself to take in the nation into herself so that she would firmly establish herself as the Queen, by connecting herself with the nation - her immediate reality - the medium through which she could show her 'self'. This evidently is the motive with which she begins to appear in public, participating in public life independently without her coregnant father or brother. The famous divinity at Hermonthis — a bull named Buchis having died, a new animal had to be installed, she independently participates in the installation ceremony of the Bull after the death of Buchis in the festival on 22 March, 51 BC as corroborated by an inscription:

...an inscription on the shrine of Buchis, the Bucheum of Hermonthis, declares that "the Queen, the Lady of the Two Lands, the goddess who loves her father, rowed the Bull in the barge of Amon to Hermonthis".

(Michael Grant 47)

The inscription bearing no mention of Auletes or even her brother Ptolemy XIII, authenticates the fact that Cleopatra herself, "led the river procession upon the sacred vessel, and conducted the new Bull to its sacred home amid a vast concourse of priests and state officials" (Michael Grant 47).

This determination to take control over things independently, to assert, to gain mastery over others, to possess, to own completely the nation of which
she was the head are the indications which Cleopatra displays as the first evermost signs of the love for her self. Cleopatra, then, perceives herself as the Goddess-Queen who is to shape up, carve out and contain this little world, Egypt. And the first step to this was to emerge as an independent woman, not modelled on the social patterns; and to be the sole monarch shaking off the joint ruler. Consequently, she allows her coregnant brother, a king in name, a mere nonentity, by refusing to consummate her marriage with him. As an independent woman imbued with a sense of superiority, she refuses to be a shadow, a spineless average being, contented to be the wife of and co-ruler with her brother-husband:

There is no evidence of this marriage, and one may suppose that it was postponed by Cleopatra's desire, on the grounds of the extreme youth of the King.

(Arthur Weigall 30)

Cleopatra cannot accept the humiliation of being wife to a boy, her own brother. Her assertiveness shows itself in her refusal to consummate the marriage. She does not stay content as someone's wife: she functions as a royal woman pursuing her own visions. As she grows up with a deified consciousness of her position as woman and monarch, she does not wish to share it with any one. Her psychic identification with the national goddess and social identification with the queen, naturally give her the confidence that
she can do things on her own, alone. She emerges in her tender teens as a confident self, moulding and shaping everything to her own specifications. She thinks sharp and acts fast to achieve her targets. Her first target at this stage was to get rid of her boy-friend. She could have done that by hired daggers or poison. But she devises ingeneous political ways of rendering her co-regnant and husband a cipher. She never allowed the picture of her brother-husband to appear on the legal tenders and coins:

...she left in no doubt at all stages of her reign that even if convention required her to have a younger male co-monarch, she was never disposed to allow him superiority or even equality. Unlike previous Ptolemic queens, whose portraits had never normally appeared alone on Egyptian coins, she habitually coined with her own head and name, omitting any mention of her juvenile male colleagues.

(Michael Grant 47-48)

That Cleopatra believed and tried to establish her identity with Egypt could be seen in her efforts to emerge as the sole monarch. She now sets herself upon the goal of shaping her image, career, and fate as queen as well as the hope and fate of Egypt. Thus, it is not by appearing on the nation's coins alone that she establishes herself as its sole monarch; it is by deciding the state's policies and taking important decisions that she begins to emerge as Egypt: the Queen and the country coalescing into an inseparable identity.
That she herself is Egypt is now taking shape in her mind and this she displays in her actions of which two may be cited for our purpose. Arresting and sending the two Roman soldiers who murdered the son of Bibulus, the pro-consular of Syria, who was in Alexandria to call back the Roman Army garrisoned there since her father's time, is the first of the two political actions. Politically, this might be a move of tactful deliberation and fair deal with her Roman neighbours. But psychically, by arresting the Roman soldiers and sending them as prisoners for punishment indicates Egypt's reaching out to control Romans and Egypt here means Cleopatra. But she was snubbed by Bibulus who resentfully sent back the prisoners saying "the right of inflicting punishment in such cases belonged only to the senate" (Arthur Weigall 31). The second incident occurs a short while after this, when she decides to help Pompey who sent his son for assistance in wars against Julius Caesar. In both the cases, Cleopatra never thought of taking the Alexandrian grey heads or her brother's Regency Council into consultation. In the former incident she was snubbed by the Roman pro-consular and in the later case she was confronted with a civil war raised by her brother's protectors who thought of her to be too independent, too intelligent and too powerful for them. There was an engineered revolt against her in the palace and she had to flee for survival.

Cleopatra however, learnt her lesson as she fled. That to emerge as the greatest woman in the sexual politics and power politics of this male oriented
society, she not only needs talents, but utmost caution while using her talents. Whatever potential she possessed, she had to wait for the right breaks and the right medium through which she could operate.

Before she crossed twenty, the woman in her completes a career of queenhood, an ill-mated marriage, a rebellion and an exile. But here is not a woman who could be played upon by the male world; who could be forced to defeat either in sexual or national politics; who could be made to surrender. She is too much in love with herself to give up her efforts, pursuits and tact. Each incident that threatens her existence and thwarts her purposes, intensifies this love for her 'self' which makes her further explore and prove her self. The world, thus, sees the emergence of a woman who rejects banal ordinariness and common servillity. Anybody in the place of this out-thrown queen would have appealed to the Romans for help as was the Ptolemy practice, especially after the assistance rendered to Pompey. But this would not have freed Egypt from Roman domination. She must emerge as the Ultimate, an independent woman unfettered by social bondage, and the absolute Queen: so must Egypt her alter ego, emerge as an independent nation leading the world. The queen then, turns to herself for help and raises an army to seige Egypt:

There is something which appeals very greatly to the imagination in the thought of this spirited young Queen's rapid return to the perilous scenes
from which she had so recently escaped, and the historian feels at once that he is dealing with a powerful character in this woman who could so speedily raise an army of mercenaries, and could dare to march back in battle array across the desert, towards the land which had cast her out.

(Weigall 32)

It is not a historian or a poet alone who feels that there is a powerful character in this woman but the woman herself senses it. There is a difference between Cleopatra and the other rulers of Egypt. For her, Egypt is the means of her self-expression, an artist's medium. She wants to absorb, contain and spread over it. Egypt is the base she has in her reach to perform herself. So immersed was she in this identity, so obsessed was she with this idea, that, she was surprised when Caesar, who came on the heels of the murderer of Pompey, sent for her, to appear before him. For he came to set order in the country. Symbolically, that is true. Cleopatra's perceptions of the necessity of a medium to work herself through, a base to perform and display on, are yet vaguely stirring. The 'woman' in her, the creative anima needs avenues for shaping up. Egypt, hitherto has been the theatre on which she tried to project herself and very un成功fully, she knew it. She must now steer the course of events in such a manner that she would forever eliminate the menace of hostilities at home and Rome, and finally discover the means of launching for herself into the world beyond. The person through whom this could be effected was
Caesar, who was now the most powerful man, Pompey being dead. Though the 'woman' in her, independent, proud and unconquerable, revolted at Caesar's summons, her past experiences and her sharp senses made it clear that her meeting with Caesar was inevitable.

Cleopatra from hereon displays herself as a woman with a farseeing mind. She demonstrates the vision of a woman who refuses to be a disposable object, she has the vision of a lover who could comprehend the entirety of her destiny. Hers is an amazingly innovative, inventive, inventing and informed mind. Once she perceives that the need of the moment is to meet Caesar, for her very existence both as queen and woman, she sets herself to know all about him, "...the degree, the form, the nature and suggestive power of virility which she must understand and play upon" (Emil Ludwig 38).

Much before she meets Caesar, she collects every detail about him. In getting these details she reveals how far-reaching a woman's mind could be. First, she sets about to gather information about his life "A great connoisseur of women, yet half way through the fifties; three or four times married, yet still without a son" (Emil Ludwig 38).

She learns about his physique and habits and his sense of elegance, like a lover preparing for conquest:

He is tall, that is certain, and they say his skin is quite white, like mine and that he washes often, even when he is fighting; he is always loosely
girt, just above the purple stripe, but he is definitely elegant; on his campaigns he is said to take marble flags and mosaic floors along with him; he must always live like an aristocrat, yet the common people love him.

(Emil Ludwig 38)

She learns the reasons of his popularity with the masses, how he speaks, how swiftly he acts; and the sort of man he is:

So what sort of a man is this Caesar? Who loves him? Strange: the rabble love him, the freeman and the artisans, the little people, for he gives them corn and gladiatorial shows: Once, before a festival, he had every plebian shaved free of charge, which earned him a few thousand votes. In the field he sits among the soldiers and eats their groats and calls them comrade. How does he speak? In a deep, full tone; not wittily, like the tribunes, not showily, like Cicero, but plainly and naturally. But what all commend, though none can understand, is the speed with which he appears wherever he wishes to be; the rapidity with which he obtains information — every where in the Mediterranean he has posted his slaves and his runners — and laconic speech with which he seems to waft through the air, so quickly does it reach its destination and become an order. Caesar, they say is the quickest man alive.

(Emil Lidwig 39)
It is such a man - a man who has seen a variety of women; elegant and aristocratic, the quickest man alive, a man loved by the masses and "the greatest of generals, now without a rival, the representative of a world-wide empire" (Emil Ludwig 34) — that she was to meet.

It is neither the fear of war nor death that influences her decision to meet Caesar. It is not even a political manoeuvre to win Egypt from her brother and buy the Roman's favours which may free Egypt from the fears of Roman annexation. It is more of a challenge thrown by time at her; a challenge to the woman's mind. She must be able to play upon and conquer the most virile and powerful male force, the unrivalled "representative of a world-wide empire". Besides, Cleopatra's inquisitive mind probing into the various reasons for his sending for her suggested a possibility (however remote it may be) of Caesar expecting her:

The wealth he coveted was not here, on the edge of the desert, it lay in the treasury, in Alexandria, and in the form of grain, and woven fabrics, and taxes; where he was and she was not, there lay the gold — and yet he had sent for her, not once but twice! Now, she saw it clearly; he was expecting her!

(Emil Ludwig 41)

This thought makes her aware of her feminine power — making her woman's magic match the brain of the greatest general's. So her very first appearance
before Caesar must be spectacular and she must reveal her woman's charms to this connoisseur of women. This determines the manner, mode and the hour of her appearance in his presence. Cleopatra, now deciding the mode of meeting Caesar displays how rich, graceful and playful a woman's mind could be. She has not gone to meet Caesar as the wronged sister, piteously appealing to the generosity of the Roman consul, begging or buying his favours like her father. She goes not as the serpentine seductress either, pawning her youthful beauty for a kingdom, not even as the proud queen displaying her royal shenanigans asserting her supremacy over her coregant brother-husband. She went as a woman irresistible, challenging, showing not passion but a mind. She shows the woman that she was, as she rolled, just at night fall, out of the carpet carried by Appollodorus as the gift of King Ptolemy to Caesar. And Caesar was at once "captivated by this proof of Cleopatra's bold wit" (Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Romans* 224).

She presents herself, prankishly, from a rolled carpet at the eerie Egyptian dusk, as a marvel of a woman; a challenge to men. Outwitting her rivals who waited to murder her at the gate, she shows herself as a woman with a daring adventurous spirit. She shows her determination that could turn any adversity into her favour and an impish spirit tempered by childish gaiety:
One pictures her bursting with laughter at her adventure and speedily winning the admiration of the susceptible Roman, who delighted almost as keenly in deeds of daring as he did in feminine beauty.

(Weigall 42)

For the first time Cleopatra faces Caesar, the mighty Roman hero. The reports which she had heard about him and the information she had collected, at that fateful encounter, hang about the air as legend. The reality was there for her. Cleopatra watched the reality not as queen which in her exile too she was every inch. But as woman she watched Caesar, at a close range, when they both were threatened by the Egyptian rebels; his efforts to win the rebels with sparse forces at his disposal, his ingenuity in making the enemy stall their attacks, his tenacity of purpose, his obstinate clinging to life even in the face of threatening death:

...we are then presented with the dramatic picture of the ruler of the world swimming for his life through the quiet waters of the harbour, holding aloft in one hand a bundle of important papers which he happened to be carrying at the moment of the catastrophe, dragging his scarlet military cloak along by his teeth, and at the same time constantly ducking his rather bald head under the water to avoid the missiles which were hurled at him by the victorious Egyptians,...

(Arthur Weigall 51)
She could visualize a future for herself, her dream to become queen of the world. Casear was the man she could wave as her flag to the world. Only such a man is worthy of her vastness and vision. At the same time Caesar, a much married man and a great favourite of women, could see in her what he had never seen in women. He learnt from Cleopatra, in the words of Stadleman "the fascination of a woman's soul" (70). The Conquerer of the world was conquered by this rare woman for whom the universe and its socio-political institutions held no secrets. She was more than a man in her knowledge, perception and performance. Ludwig pays a great tribute to this woman who knew the secret of land, water and sky:

...a woman who seemed to unite all antitheses by the power of her sex. Valiant, inventive, bold and cunning, for every plan that failed she had three more in reserve. Objective and unmoved in battle and in danger, when the day was over she was so changed that she might have been another woman; dismounting from her horse and doffing her helmet, she seemed to have changed her sex. If he wanted information concerning a canal by which he could reach an arm of Nile, she was able to furnish it. If his horse fell under him, and a second and third were not to his liking, she found a fourth which excelled his favourite charger. If a sea-captain should ask what he was to do with his heavy sails, she knew of a shed in which they could be stored. If the war council asked whether a man
who offered his aid could be trusted, she knew his character. On the
verge of the desert she could recognize a camel-rider long before a single
Roman could distinguish him. At a thousand paces she could smell
whether a ship was caulked with Greek or Roman tar and lying flat on
the ground, she could estimate by the quivering of the soil, the strength
of the enemy horse.

(Emil Ludwing 56-57).

Cleopatra unmasked to Caesar a mind that can take in and hold
everything in it; how her wide ranged, far-going and objective woman's mind
could be, spreading over everything around her. She shows to Caesar the
'being' in her — how she wants to embrace the whole universe:

For here was no sly foreign ruler, seeking to seduce the Roman potentate
by her charms in order to become a still greater queen. Here, he knew
well, was a woman whose mystical longings reached out towards the
stars, though at the same time she was resolute to drain the cup of every
earthly pleasure.

(Emil Ludwig 124)

As a prelude to this reaching out and absorbing the universe she takes
in Caesar and begins to shape him up as her medium. Caesar, now, for her is
the whole world. He is the medium, the subjective and objective connection
with the available reality and a universe which she envisions queened by her.
Love born in the heart of this little woman glows with such warmth that it lights up all the aspects of their inner beings, bringing to forefront their inherent capabilities and awareness of each other's potentials. Cleopatra's awareness of her self's capability increases with each of her experiences. She learns to lift every personal exigency above the common levels to universal grace. She now begins to demonstrate love and its power. She now sets herself the task of rising above social institutions by stretching the contours of reality on social, political and personal terms. A woman lover, as already said in the beginning of this chapter, is often rejected to be admitted into the social framework and is forced to remain in the shadow. But, Cleopatra considered herself far too superior either to be patterned or elbowed out into the background. As she refused to play wife to a child-husband, so does she refuse to be mistress to Caesar. She loves Caesar, shows him the ways of love, sex and glitter not to simply use him for her purpose. She rises above the personal to the love of her country, Egypt. She knew that if she was kicked, after her, Egypt would come to a state of civil war which would ruin her future. The interest of the nation lies in having a protector who would ensure peace, hence prosperity. Cleopatra weaves the interest of the nation with her own dream of World Empress. Her love for Caesar was not appetite. If she craved for the pleasures of the flesh, there were many young princes and soldiers in Egypt and Rome to satisfy her. She loved Caesar to express the full
splendour of her womanhood; to show the world conqueror that his political dreams were content only with the laurel crown. She loved to show the great perception of a world-empire under the leadership of a true conqueror. For, Cleopatra's love was not for the person of the great world shaker or his present exploits. The present state of Caesar could be shaped up to suit her dreams which a woman alone can fashion by love. This love is more than romantic passion. It is a spiritual force that can envelop larger realities. Cleopatra's love is of this ardour. She projects Caesar as god of Egypt and announces her conception to her people:

As soon, therefore, as her brother and formal husband Ptolemy XIV had died, she had begun to circulate the belief that Julius Caesar was the great god of Egypt himself came to earth, and that the child which was about to make its appearance was the offspring of a divine union. Upon the walls of the temples of Egypt notably at Hermonthis, near Thebes, bas-reliefs were afterward scupltured in which Cleopatra was represented in converse with the god Amon, who appears in human form, and in which the gods are shown assisting at the celestial birth of the child.

(Arthur Weigall 59)

The social parameters are thus stretched enough to admit the lovers as divinities. With this one act she wins the approval and faith of her nation and Caesar's entire being. She has now freed Egypt from the dubious state of political servillity to Rome:
...now there was a possibility that Egypt, and the lands to which the Nile Valley was the gateway, would become the equal of Rome at the head of the great amalgamation of the nations of the earth; Egypt, it must be remembered, was still unconquered by Rome, and was, at the time the most wealthy and important nation outside the Republic. All Alexandrians and Egyptians believed themselves to be the foremost people in the world, and thus to Cleopatra the dream that Egypt might play the leading part in an Egypto-Roman empire was in no wise fantastic.

(Arthur Weigall 62)

To form an Egypto-Roman world empire is now Cleopatra's dream. Her first ever manifestations of love are now full and mature. She has projected herself on the world, which we believe, is the privilege of only a great lover. She has now conquered Egypt and has fully identified herself with Egypt. The 'being' in her is growing constantly enlarging its vastness. Symbolically, her soul's vastness is now projected upon Caesar and she takes in his whole being. She plays upon Caesar through her love. She cajoles his male virility. She boosts up his male pride and monorchical ambitions with his approaching fatherhood. The childless Caesar, waits for his progeny. Cleopatra like the earth, holds in her, his seed, his child, his future. Caesar's dreams of becoming Alexander - the greatest conqueror of the world -- are sensed by Cleopatra's sharp mind:
When free from business in Spain, after reading some part of the history of Alexander, he sat a great while very thoughtful, and at last burst out into tears. His friends were surprised, and asked him the reason of it.

"Do you think", said he, "I have not just cause to weep, when I consider that Alexander at my age had conquered so many nations, and I have all this time done nothing that is memorable".

(Plutarch 190-191)

Cleopatra playing upon this Alexander-complex in Caesar brings out the sense of divinity latent in Caesar by identifying him with God Amon:

Caesar had always boasted of his divine descent, his family tracing their genealogy of Iulus, the son of Aeneas; the son of the Anchises and the goddess Venus; and there is every reason to suppose that Cleopatra had attempted to encourage him to think of himself as being in very truth a god upon earth.

(Arthur Weigall 60)

She now sets before him the challenge of the world empire, thus defining sharply his desire for monarchical powers, of godhood, the Supreme Divine which no consul or potentate of Rome had ever dreamed to enjoy. A Roman consul, however great and powerful he might be, is only an instrument implementing people's powers, a spokesman of the country not a god or a representative of god. But Cleopatra in Egypt was god:
...she was the representative of the Sun-god here below, the mediator between man and his creator. The Egyptians, if not the Alexandrians, fell flat upon their faces when they saw her, and hailed her as god in the manner in which their fathers had hailed the ancient Pharoahs.

(Arthur Weigall 60)

Cleopatra thus nurtures Caesar's ambitions, fans to brilliance his desires to be the absolute monarch, to ascend behind him the world-throne as his queen. She is now the unquestionable queen of Egypt. She now longs to take in Rome and the world through this man of hers. The world has two coordinates: Absolute and Reality. The absolute is the energy dynamism playing upon a medium for revelations of reality. Cleopatra is the absolute. Caesar the reality-maker, the dream-chaser. And the reality to emerge by Cleopatra's love is the world-empire. This is not a vague dream; this, Cleopatra believes, she deserves; she deserves to be the queen of the universe as she is a definite manifestation of the feminine principle. She acts as the active lover on Caesar, the achiever of the times:

Her policy, then, was obvious. She must attempt to retain Caesar's affection, and at the same time must nurse with care the growing aspirations towards monarchy which were developing in his mind. She must bind him to her so that, when the time came, she might ascend the throne of the world by his side.

(Arthur Weigall 62)
Cleopatra had shown Caesar how she represented monarchy in its absolute form; how her word was law in Egypt. The splendour of her monarchy, the tone of her royal life, her autocratic actions in turning her union even with a foreigner and that too a Roman who has been hated and feared in Egypt, into a divine union have impressed upon Caesar's mind. Cleopatra inspires a passion in him to be the Ultimate, the Absolute achiever in the world. Penetrating into his consciousness and male psyche, she discovers a restless being in him, who cannot give himself up to leisurely pleasures. Cleopatra's love makes Caesar long for greater honours:

Caesar was born to do great things, and had a passion after honour, and the many noble exploits he had done did not now serve as an inducement to him to sit still and reap the fruit of his past labours, but were incentives and encouragements to go on, and raised in him ideas of still greater actions, and a desire of new glory, as if the present were all spent. It was in fact a sort of emulous struggle with himself as it has been with another, how he might outdo his past actions by his future.

(Plutarch 230-231)

To keep, to retain such an ambitious man impatient for action, restless to realize his dreams and desires, bound to her when she became shapeless with child was not easy. Cleopatra's fertile imagination had to invent ways of involving Caesar's mind and attention. Evoking love in a human heart is not
enough. To nourish and sustain it is the hallmark of a true lover. Cleopatra demonstrates a lover’s power and vision. Unlike Dido who fails to bind Aeneas to her, Cleopatra retains Caesar till his heir is born. This is done neither by force nor by seductive arts as the Romans have blamed her with. She displays the magic which a lover's imagination and a woman’s vision alone could have wrought. A woman’s mind, like its kin spirit Nature, often seeks beauty, grace and order. Cleopatra’s mind is one such beautiful, graceful order-seeking aspect of Nature, that sets every little thing in order, beautifully placed and arranged. As the artist plans out and etches out his artistic wonder, as God in his creative process envisions and effects his created object, so does the feminine being in love. So, Cleopatra conceives of a voyage upstream on the Nile to show Caesar her rich country. At the same time, she shows her growing belly holding the future of Caesar. Love, enriched by natural beauty and the artistic splendour of the yacht, grows into a large hope for glory. She shows how a woman loves not just a man but how love turns man into a god:

Thalameyos, the royal ship, such a yacht as no Pharoah had ever possessed, was a floating palace. In the Egyptian banqueting-saloon the carvings in cedar and cypress were reminiscent of originals to be seen on the banks of this oldest of all rivers. Elsewhere the queen’s taste had prevailed, and all was Grecian just as the life of her Greek line assumed
the style of the Pharoahs only on a few set days of festival. Aphrodite and Dionysos were there, in a chapel whose walls and floor were all of mosaic, and in Caesar's bedchamber was a frieze with scenes from the Iliad — scenes to incite the ageing hero to new achievements. There were sumptuous decks for every hour of the day, and a little garden; and a whole system of linen awnings sheltered the travellers from the sun, which now, in spring, and in this rainless country, was blazing down more fiercely with each day of their voyage upstream. Slaves and dancing-girls, actors, comic and tragic, the most experienced cooks, with the most fantastic implements, accompanied the floating palace, ...

(Emil Ludwig 63-64)

Not even the minutest detail was ignored. The pleasure, comfort and above all purpose - all the three are taken care of. She not only captures Caesar's mind and steers its line of thought, charts out a definite goal for his ambitious soul, gives him leisure to plan out his future course of action, but also she displays the splendour of her self. The woman, now on the bosom of the Nile, grown big with his and her dreams in her womb, becomes the activating principle like Nature or prakrti that energizes the purusa to act. She shows him not Egypt but shows him the whole world around them of which "Nile Valley was the gateway" (Arthur Weigall 62) and identifies herself with the vastness. The vastness of Cleopatra's self can be equal only to that of the cosmos:
She, Cleopatra, was the daughter of the Sun, the sister of the Moon, and the kinswoman of the heavenly beings; she was mated to the descendant of Venus and Olympian gods, and the unborn offspring of their union would be in very truth King of Earth and Heaven.

(Arthur Weigall 62)

The Caesar who launches forth his wars from Egypt and returns to Rome after his victories is a new man, impatient to change the Roman political and social scenario. And Cleopatra enters this scene, not as her undignified forefathers or her captivated sister Arsinoe, but as Caesar's queen; not mistress, but a young goddess. Caesar emphasises to the cynical Romans that she is an exception as woman and even superior to his legally wedded wife:

Towards the end of September Caesar caused a sensation in Rome by an act which shows clearly enough his attitude in this regard. He consecrated a magnificent temple in honour of Venus Genetrix, his divine ancestress; and there, in the splendour of its marble sanctuary, he placed the statue of Cleopatra.

(Arthur Weigall 75).

With this deification he affirmed that the foreign queen is no mistress but is the Mother of his race, a manifestation of Venus at whose dainty feet his conquests are dedicated. To make her his legal wife and acclaim his child as
his heir, he introduces a bill "which would allow him to marry several wives" 
(Emil Ludwig 125). Cleopatra's influence on Caesar has not stopped at this 
level. Egyptian involvement in setting right Roman inadequacies is on the rise. 
The improvisation of Roman Calendar, coinage and canals by Egyptian 
astronomers, coiners and architects started paving the way for transforming 
the Roman empire. Roman monarchy was the brain child of the Egyptian 
queen and was to be modelled on the Ptolemy's monarchy. Michael Grant 
informs the world "the practical ways in which Caesar was indebted to 
Cleopatra's Alexandria" (89) and lists out the many reforms and projects under 
the influence of Alexandria. The first was his reform of the calendar under the 
guidance of the Alexandrian astronomer Sosigenes; the 'second project in 
which Caesar evidently owed much to Egypt was the building of canals'. (89) 
and 'A third example of practical Alexandrian influence upon Caesar was his 
plan to create great public libraries in Rome'. (90) — Grant concludes: 

When Caesar owed practical measures of this kind to Cleopatra's 

Alexandria, one wonders whether he did not also owe her many of his 

more far-reaching and effervescent ideas, relating to the whole nature of 
government by one person. (90) 

Cleopatra sets the beginning of Egypto-Roman empire, the prelude to the 

world empire. Her presence in Rome was the stimulus that goaded Caesar to 

work towards their goal of world monarchy. It further facilitated the inflow of
the Egyptian cultural and intellectual supremacy into that degenerate Republic which she desired to transform to monarchy so that she could ascend its throne at Caesar's side. Hence, she sets herself to know the country, feel its pulses, understand its native sentiments, go deep to its grass root levels. The change is to be brought from the bottom, the ruled masses. To work it out, she discovered that she must shed the role of a goddess as it was in Egypt. After raising Caesar to a deified level, Cleopatra wished to identify herself with the common people. In other words, she now would like to be loved by the masses. The worship and adoration of a subject people did not satisfy her soul. She now loves common life and wishes to win all forms of life by her 'love':

While in Alexandria she never gave a thought to the lives of the poor and the slaves, and was hardly aware that she, with all her royal magnificence, was standing on their unnumbered heads, here she inquired into the life of the little man, for her Caesar's power was dependent upon vote, or at least upon his mood, which the hostile parties might reverse or at all events endeavour to reverse.

(Emil Ludwig 91-92)

The inherent resilience in Roman culture which did not support the ascendancy of a deified mortal in place of the equally privileged, resulted in the rise of opposition and hostilities bringing to nought the lover's efforts. She
failed in her endeavours to emerge as the absolute in Rome. Her love degenerated into authoritative power. She paid the price for it by losing her love, and the spiritual supremacy which love had endowed her with. The failure of the lover also resulted in the failure of the self, the feminine self.

But Cleopatra's failure was not final. She again rises as lover, the great lover celebrated in literature. In the next section we shall examine Cleopatra as lover, not in history but in literature.
If history presents Cleopatra as the most varied and culturally sophisticated queen, for she is every inch a queen, literature ranges her portrayal from harlot to divinity. George Bernard Shaw deliberately twists history and myth into an unromantic matter-of-factness showing Caesar as a self-critical man of the world and Cleopatra as childish and imitative of the adult ways. Dryden makes Cleopatra an ordinary and cheap voluptuous woman, self immersed and possessive. These writers, fail to appreciate the great lover in Cleopatra, Shaw by design and Dryden by inefficiency. But Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* although not always true to factual history, is an evaluation, portrayal and individuation of the two great figures without transgressing facts into imaginative abstractions. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is the visualisation of a Queen who loves every moment of her vast life and wants to stamp on them an attitude or pose of feminine creativity. She completes the arc of available experience in nature and civilization which includes even her death. She glorifies and loves "easeful death" making death a luxury and love. Shakespeare, unlike Shaw, begins his play at a time when Cleopatra's hopes to be the universal queen are almost over. With the death of Julius Caesar the idea of queening the world is no more a palpable reality: but Antony simmers again that possibility in her. She is aware of Antony's short-comings, his
drunken carousings and thickskulled maneuvrings; his lewdness and occasional ordinariness:

Antony was not Caesar, that was clear.

(Emil Ludwig 162-163)

For because Antony was so much less a king than Caesar, he could be more of a comedian, more of a child, and a spendthrift.

(Emil Ludwig 166)

But she also sees a poet's imagination and heroic ambition in Antony:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch

Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space,

Kingdoms are clay.

(Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, I, i, 33-35, 5-6)

Less dignified than Caesar but more passionate, Antony is the only man Cleopatra now has, in a world that rages under a sickly cynical and machiavellian Octavius:

Absolute master of the East, he was courted by kings and princes, who saw in him the future ruler of the entire Roman Empire.

(Arthur Weigall 120)

But, after Caesar, it is Caesarion alone that could realize her dreams.

And Caesarion is not ripe enough for such Herculean tasks. To pave the way for Caesarion, to prepare the stage for his performance Antony is necessary.
Ascending the throne of the world empire is possible only if Antony counterbalances and eliminates Octavius. Caesar and Pompey now stand substituted by Antony and Octavius, and unless Pompey - Octavius falls in the hands of a new Septimus, the Laurel Crown cannot sit on Antony’s head. And all her dreams for herself and her Caesarion may be hung upon some ineffectual peg. She, therefore, can not easily part company from Antony. She must now lure Antony to her with love and win him to her side. But, at the same time she should not compromise her woman’s dignity and queenliness and surrender to this man who has summoned her to appear on trial for trying to help Caesar’s and his enemies. Years ago, she was called to appear before Caesar for setting order in her country. Now again, she is called by another great man for a trial. The circumstances though different have called upon Cleopatra’s inventiveness to turn the course of events in her favour. As she had won the great Caesar’s admiration, so she must now win Antony’s, the only promising man to realize her dreams of mastering the world. And she sets out not for nothing as Venus sailing across Cydnus to Tarsus:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish’d throne
Burn’d on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion — cloth of gold, of tissue —
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature. On each side her,
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

(Shakespeare, II, ii, 190-204, 58-60)

The 'burnish'd throne' suggesting regality, the golden poop and silvery oars
displaying rich splendour, the perfumed purple sails infecting even the winds
- the barren space with love, the tuneful flutes awakening tender emotions
while the water with its faster rise and fall responding to the rhythmic strokes
of the oars (suggesting sexual overtures) Cleopatra came like Venus - the
Goddess of love creating an atmosphere of love - drawing everything into her.
She was Caesar's Isis: now going to be Antony's Venus. The water beaten by
the Oars is made "amorous of their strokes". The winds are love-sick with the
sails. "Pretty dimpled boys, like smiling cupids" attended the Goddess of love.
The wind of the divers - coloured fans cooled and yet roseated the cheeks of
the woman for love of her beauty. She was such a stately Venus that could cause a "gap in nature":

   Enthron'd i' the market-place, did sit alone,
   Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
   Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
   And made a gap in nature.

   (Shakespeare, II, ii, 215-218, 61)

The woman draws like the Earth the elements, the water, air, the space and even the surroundings around her, the human included. "The city cast/Her people out upon her" (II, ii, 214, 60) She assumes her being as the centre of the universe. She therefore goes to Antony as the centre moving to envelop larger territories. She visits Antony not like a theatre goddess, but like a true one to draw Antony to her royal barge.

Cleopatra's intentions were not to play the part of a seductress or a subordinate. She came down as Venus as she had been identified with Venus by Caesar while she was in Rome. She now assumes the same character, neither to display a glamorous visage, nor to entrap Antony but to be received as a goddess, as she was worshipped, the divine queen of Egypt; as Caesar had found her and honoured her by sculpting her as Venus. It is not again a posture of her political insolence or royal superiority but a splendid invitation to surrender. It is also an attempt at a revival of the past which had
stopped with Caesar's death. As Venus she demonstrates to Antony that she not
only aspires but also deserves to draw the whole universe to her and into her.

With this preparation she starts play-acting to draw Antony to her:

Upon her landing, Antony sent to her,
Invited her to supper: she replied,
It should be better he became her guest,
Which she entreated:

(Shakespeare, II, ii, 219-221, 61)

The extravaganza of the entertainments she held for Antony, the grandeur and
the richness of the repasts she gave, the luxury and the dazzling wealth she
flaunted all to captivate Antony, Shakespeare has not given these details of the
feasts. But Weigall writes how Cleopatra had seen in Antony the simmering of
her hopes for the world empire:

Here was the man who could conquer for her the empire which she had
lost by the premature death of the great Dictator. It was necessary to
make him understand the advantages of the partnership with her, and
hence it became needful for her to display to him the untold wealth that
she could command. There was no particular vanity in her actions, nor real
wastefulness: she was playing a great game, and the stakes were high.

(Arthur Weigall 127)
This is no mere political gimmick. With the identity of Venus she introduces herself as the goddess of love which the woman often becomes for her man. Hence, she establishes that her motives primarily are love-centred not absolutely politics oriented. This motive of a lover, who through her loved man wishes to conquer the world as a tribute to her being, is not merely to seduce a man to bed. But to raise that man to become a Caesar substitute for her.

Shakespeare's Cleopatra is a ranged world of passions. She is a woman who combines in her the cocquet, the jealous mistress, the termagant, the rash tigress as well as the Queen, the deified Venus. A woman quickly realizing her status and stature, with sharp perceptions and an unbeatable brain. Above all a woman sacrificing the world for the honour and glory of love. Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra sharply defines her as lover growing into maturity through vicissitudes. The plays on the Cleopatra theme like Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra, Dryden's All for Love and Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra are not only weak in content and construction but also superficial in their treatment of Cleopatra in her tragic moments. However, a brief analysis of these plays is relevant to our purpose.

Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra as well as Cinthio's Cleopatra (G.B. Giraldi Cinthio 1583) follow the classical unities and confine the entire action to the final phase in the life of Cleopatra. In fact, these plays begin and end
on the monument. In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, however, only the last Act has the monument as the place of action. Shakespeare makes history and myth alive by broadening the canvas to the entire Greco-Roman situation. The political reality unveils itself by the great men of the times like Pompey, Caesar, Antony manipulated by one great feminine soul that had a vision of integrating the world into one political administrative unit with the splendidous Egypt at the centre. In fact, Shakespeare visualizes the unfolding pictures of the heyday of the Roman empire, and Cleopatra's mind interacting with the Roman mind to change the course of the world; to a unitary whole. She desired to preside over the destiny of the world, sharing the rigours of life with the male gods from the same heights.

Daniel's Cleopatra is of lesser stuff. She does not display the integrating power of a woman nor does she show any "variety". Daniel's Cleopatra is only a Queen:

These spreading parts of pomp wherof w'are proud,
Are not our parts, but parts of others store:
Witness these gallant fortune-following traines,
These Summer Swallowes of felicitie.
Gone with the heate. Of all, see what remaines,
This monument, two maides, and wretched I.
And I, t'adorne their triumphs am reserv'd,
A captive, kept to honour others spoiles,
Whom Caesar labors so to have preserv'd,
And seekes to entertaine my life with wiles.
But Caesar, it is more then thou canst do,
Promise, flatter, threaten extreamitie,
Imploy thy wits and all thy force thereto,
I have both hands, and will, and I can die.
Though thou, of both my country and my crowne,
Of powere, of meanes and all dost quite bereave me :
Though thou hast wholy Egypt made thine owne,
Yet hast thou left me that which will deceive thee.
That courage with my bloud and birth innated,
Admir'd of all the earth as thou art now,
Can never be so abjectly abated
To be thy slave that rul'd as good as thou.
Thinke Caesar, I that liv'd and raign'd a Queene,
Doe scorne to buy my life at such a rate,
That I should underneath my selfe be seene,
Basely induring to survive my state :
That Rome should see my scepter-bearing hands
Behind me bound, and glory in my teares,
That I should passe whereas Octavia stands,
To view my miserie that purchas'd hers.
No, I disdaine that head which wore a crowne,
Should stoope to take up that which others give;
I must not be, unlesse I be mine owne.
T'is sweete to die when we are forc'd to live,
Nor had I staide behinde my selfe this space,
Nor paid such int'rest for this borrow'd breath,
But that hereby I seeke to purchase grace.
For my distressed seede after my death.
It's that which doth my deerest bloud controule,
That's it alas detaines me from my tombe,
Whiles Nature brings to contradict my soule
The argument of mine unhappy wombe.

(Daniel, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* I, 40-82, 409-410)

This Cleopatra is a limited woman. The entire argument of Cleopatra centres round self-preservation. She behaves like a woman who comes to realize her folly, a sort of tragic anagnorisis, that pomp and flattery are "but parts of other store". Like the proverbial rats deserting the sinking ship "These summer swallows of felicite/Gone with the heate", her people desert her, and she indulges in self-pity. She then rues over her fate and mourns the fall, the
captive state and builds herself up to a defiance of the victorious Octavius. She is afraid that she would be paraded in the streets of Rome, her “scepter-bearing hands/Behind me bound”. This pride in her royal state makes her think of suicide: But she suddenly falls off from that proud moment to “seeke to purchase grace/For my distressed seede after my death”. And in a moment she again rises up to a heroic stature forgetting her “unhappy wombe”. She is crafty in calamity and shifts her argument to justify her action:

Calamitie herein hath made me craftie.

But this is but to trie what may be done,

For come what will, this stands, I must die free,

And die my selfe uncaptiv'd, and unwonne.

Bloud, Children, Nature all must pardon me.

My soule yeeldes Honor up the victory,

And I must be a Queene, forget a mother,

Though mother would I be, were I not I;

(I, 90-97, 410)

This woman finally chooses the honour of an uncaptived Queen after sifting the values of several feminine identities like mother and wife. The Queen, however, is this woman’s chosen identity which she surrenders to her love:

But to bring in the witnesse of my bloud,

To testifie the faith and love that bindes
My equall shame, to fall with whom I stood.

Defects I grant I had, but this was worst,

That being the first to fall I dy'd not first.

(I, 124-128, 411)

But love she discovers now, at the last stage of her life after losing all realms.

And therefore I am bound to sacrifice

To death and thee, the life that doth reprove me:

Our like distresse I feele doth sympathize,

And even affliction makes me truly love thee.

Which Antony, I must confesse my fault

I never did sincerely untill now:

Now I protest I do, now am I taught

In death to love, in life that knew not how.

(I, 147-154, 411)

This Cleopatra has no convictions. Her perceptions move through confusions.

Love is her last realization; we may say redemption, for she moves through the maze of confused understanding of her self, to a true identity. Her assessment of herself is unladylike and vain:

And that I saw my state, and knew my beautie;

Saw how the world admir'd me, how they woo'd,
I then thought all men must love me of duetie;

And I love none : ....

That I to stay on Love had never leisure :

My vagabond desires no limites found,

For lust is endless, pleasure hath no bound.

(I, 156-164, 411)

Her appeal to Octavius Caesar is also not dignified to suit a professed Queen who sacrifices motherhood to die with honour and freedom :

But Caesar, sith thy right and cause is such,

Be not a heavy weight upon calamitie :

Depresse not the afflicted over-much,

The chiefest glorie is the Victors lenitie.

(III, iii, 653-656, 423)

Daniel's Cleopatra does not rise above her captors in intelligence and royalty. She displays weak womanhood.

Dryden's Cleopatra in *All for Love* is too sentimental, cheap and shows no mind. Writing a few years after Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Dryden uses the great theme of history-shattering love to please "himsel" as he declares. He sentimentalises family bonds to the disparagement of love. History records that Antony, on the pleadings of Octavia, was spared humiliation and death, and was allowed to live in Athens. Dryden uses this
material in Act III of the play in such a manner that all the three characters, Antony, Octavia and Cleopatra appear common and cheap. The play begins on Antony's birthday which he proposes to spend in sad aloneness, nursing the wounds of Actium. But Ventidius, his trusted general cheers him up with his garrisons and he prepares to dare Caesar on land. The march through Alexandria starts but Cleopatra through her eunuch Alexas causes a reversal in his resolve. The scene where Cleopatra and Antony make public accusation and counter accusation in the open street while the soldiers and commoners look on, is more descriptive than dramatic. The love of Antony and Cleopatra is cheapened by explanation and accusation:

Cleo. Yet may I speak?

Ant. If I have urged a falsehood, yes; else, not.

Your silence says, I have not. Fulvia died

(Pardon, you gods, with my unkindness died);

To set the world at peace, I took Octavia,

This Caesar's sister; in her pride of youth,

And flower of beauty, did I wed that lady,

Whom blushing I must praise, because I left her.

You called; my love obeyed the fatal summons:

This raised the Roman arms; the cause was yours.

I would have fought by land, where I was stronger;
You hindered it: yet, when I fought at sea,
Forsook me fighting; and (O stain to honour!
O lasting shame!) I knew not that I fled;
But fled to follow you.

...  

**Ant.** All this you caused.

And, would you multiply more ruins on me?

This honest man, my best, my only friend,

Has gathered up the shipwreck of my fortunes;

Twelve legions I have left, my last recruits.

And you have watched the news, and bring your eyes

To seize them too. If you have aught to answer,

Now speak, you have free leave.

**Cleo.** How shall I plead my cause, when you, my judge,

Already have condemned me? Shall I bring

The love you bore me for my advocate?

That now is turned against me, that destroys me;

For love, once past, is, at the best, forgotten;

But oftener sours to hate: 't will please my lord

To ruin me, and therefore I'll be guilty.

But, could I once have thought it would have pleased you,
That you would pry, with narrow searching eyes,
Into my faults, severe to my destruction.
And watching all advantages with care,
That serve to make me wretched? Speak, my lord,
For I end here. Though I deserved this usage,
Was it like you to give it?

(Dryden, *All for Love*, II, i, 299-341, 45-47)

And again

Cleo. You seemed grieved.

(And therein you are kind), that Caesar first
Enjoyed my love, though you deserved it better:
I grieve for that, my lord, much more than you;
For, had I first been yours, it would have saved
My second choice: I never had been his,
And ne'er had been but yours. But Caesar first,
You say, possessed my love. Not so, my lord:
He first possessed my person; you, my love:
Caesar loved me; but I loved Antony.
If I endured him after, 'twas because
I judged it due to the first name of men;
And, half constrained, I gave, as to a tyrant,
What he would take by force.

(II, i, 347-359, 47)
In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* there is a much subtler and dignified way of handling this painful situation. Shakespeare does not bring in these accusatory details to halt the dramatic progression nor does he lower the majesty of either Antony or Cleopatra. The scene depicts the gradual weakening of Antony, the slow but certain conquest of Cleopatra. Dryden conceives the scene as though Cleopatra was playing upon what Hamlet would call, the "stops" and "gaps" in his nature. The weakening of Antony and the softening of the soldier's resolve makes the whole of Act-I a mockery of both the heroic stature of Antony and the historical necessity of the hour.

Cleopatra drives the final nail saying:

Cleo. : ... leave me dying

Push me, all pale and panting, from your bosom,

And, when your march begins, let one run after,

Breathless almost for joy, and cry--She's dead.

(II, i, 413-416, 49)

Act II ends on Ventidius' poor generalization on woman's guiles:

Vent. O women ! women ! women ! all the gods

Have not such power of doing good to man,

As you of doing harm.

(II, i, 454-456, 50)
and Antony's longing for sexual union with Cleopatra:

Ant. How I long for night!

That both the sweets of mutual love may try,

And triumph once o'er Caesar ere we die.

(II, i, 462-464, 50)

Dryden demeans both Antony and Cleopatra reducing them to a lustful pair. But, the bitching scene between the mighty Caesar's sister and wife of the great Roman, Octavia and the Queen of Egypt virtually destroys the grandeur of the dramatic movement as well as the gravity of the situation. If Dryden was trying to please the back benches in the theatre it is pardonable considering the post Restoration aversion for greatness. Yet, the scene distorts history and degrades both love and the lovers. Octavia plays almost a dual role in this scene. She demolishes Antony's resolve and reduces him to an ordinary husband by sending her children to embrace him. Antony himself breaks down and confesses:

I am vanquished: take me,

Octavia; take me, children; share me all.

[Embracing them.

I've been a thriftless debtor to your loves,

And run out much, in riot, from your stock;

But all shall be amended.

(III, i, 365-369, 62)
Octavia then confronts Cleopatra as a conquerer, one who has vanquished Antony. The lawful wife meets with genuine triumph the forsaken mistress, Cleopatra. Immediately after their first encounter there is a great falling off not only in the heights of literature but also in the majesty of both Roman and Egyptian royalty:

Octav. He was a Roman, till he lost that name,
To be a slave in Egypt; but I come
To free him thence.

Cleo. Peace, peace, my lover's Juno.
When he grew weary of that household clog,
He chose my easier bonds.

Octav. I wonder not
Your bonds are easy: you have long been practised
In that lascivious art: He's not the first
For whom you spread your snares: Let Caesar witness.

Cleo. I loved not Caesar; 'twas but gratitude
I paid his love: The worst your malice can,
Is but to say the greatest of mankind
Has been my slave. The next, but far above him
In my esteem, is he whom law calls yours,
But whom his love made mine.
Octav. I would view nearer

(coming up close to her).

That face, which has so long usurped my right,

To find the inevitable charms, that catch

Mankind so sure, that ruined my dear lord.

(III, i, 425-441, 65)

The sickening comments on the beauty and lasciviousness of Cleopatra made by Octavia do not elevate either femininity at high places or justifiable anger in an irate wife and berated lover:

Octav. You do not; cannot: You have been his ruin.

Who made him cheap at Rome, but Cleopatra?

Who made him scorned abroad, but Cleopatra?

At Actium, who betrayed him? Cleopatra.

Who made his children orphans, and poor me

A wretched widow? only Cleopatra.

Cleo. Yet she, who loves him best, is Cleopatra.

If you have suffered, I have suffered more.

You bear the specious title of a wife,

To gild your cause, and draw the pitying world.

To favour it: the world condemns poor me.

For I have lost my honour, lost my fame,
And stained the glory of my royal house,
And all to bear the branded name of mistress.
There wants but life, and that too I would lose
For him I love.

(III, i, 455-469, 65-66)

The pride of Cleopatra as a lover which is apparent in the last speech of Cleopatra to Octavia, is an anti-climax coming soon after Antony's surrender to her on his birthday. Cleopatra loses her stature as lover and queen and wishes to be left alone, to cry out her life, till death. Such a depiction of Cleopatra does not go well with the earlier image of the queen encountered in the first act of the play. Dryden fails to maintain the internal balancing of Cleopatra in his attempts to please his sentiment-loving audience. Even in Act IV the suggestion that emerges in the conversation between Antony and Ventidius appears to be cruel and mischievous and does positive harm to Cleopatra's majesty, Dryden presents Cleopatra as a whore, who played with Caesar, Antony and Dolabella:

Vent. Your Cleopatra;

Dolabella's Cleopatra, every man's Cleopatra.

(IV, i, 300)

The other banal undramatic showdown which Antony has with Dolabella regarding his love for Cleopatra, is an unnecessary scene which
takes away the so called Roman honour and historical perspective from the play. Dryden makes *All for Love* a lust triangle, involving two Romans and an Egyptian in a bathetic family situation. As if that was not enough, the Dolabella-Cleopatra lust episode is given in details which further lowers the dignity of love and makes Cleopatra a harlot. Act IV ends on such a bitter note that the exalted theme and the high drama become bereft of nobility.

The last act does not occur at the monument as in Shakespeare and also in history. Although the last minute reconciliation and restoration of love redeems the play to a small extent and raises the stature of the lovers, it does injustice to Cleopatra. The queen's attempted suicide by a knife stopped by her age fellows, Iras and Charmian, is an unnecessary heat of the moment's exercise. Her final death by the asp appears to be a routine affair unsanctified by the lover's farewell, which in Shakespeare raises the queen to great Roman values. Dryden's Cleopatra is effete and common. The world shattering lover who played paramour to the great Romans, Caesar and Antony, in the hands of Dryden is no more than a coquette, base and ignoble.

On the other hand, Bernard Shaw's treatment of the history of the Ptolemy's is cynical and derogatory. Even Julius Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra* has no stature. The prose of Bernard Shaw makes the greatest man of Roman history and the greatest Queen of Alexandria appear like novices. The following stage direction in Act II at P. 51, after Cleopatra asks;
Cleo. [pushing Ftatateeta aside and standing haughtily on the brink of the steps] Am I to behave like a Queen?

Caes. Yes

*Cleopatra immediately comes down to the chair of state; seizes Plolemy, drags him out of his seat; then takes his place in the chair. Ftatateeta seats herself on the step of the loggia and sits there, watching the scene with sibylline intensity.*

(ii, 51)

is laughable:

This is a travestry of history and a caricature of Cleopatra. It is therefore proposed not to discuss, Shaw's *Caesar* and *Cleopatra* in detail as the contention in this dissertation is to show Cleopatra as the greatest lover in human history. An inter-textual approach to the 'lover' Cleopatra theme ought not include Bernard Shaw's play *Caesar and Cleopatra* as in the last scene of the play, Julius Caesar, in his almost farewell address, offers another Roman to Cleopatra:

Cae ... Come, Cleopatra: forgive me and bid me farewell; and I will send you a man, Roman from head to heel and Roman of the noblest; not old and ripe for the knife; not lean in the arms and cold in the heart; not hiding a bald head under his conqueror's laurels; not stooped with the weight of the world on his shoulders; but brisk and fresh, strong and
young, hoping in the morning, fighting in the day, and revelling in the 
evening. Will you take such an one in exchange for Caesar? (V, 139)

As though Cleopatra longed for a bed mate! There is no respect for 
femininity, no respect for history and no respect for love. Hence, Shaw will be 
out of the frame of this dissertation.
Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* presents a different woman. She is noble, grand, royal, witty and imaginative. Such a woman motivated by the fulfilment of the psycho-mythic identity of Isis-Venus, Queen of the world and physical - social earthly joys of life, has a sweep and range which Shakespeare alone understood perfectly. In the play, *Antony and Cleopatra* we see her almost enveloping the world, in the bed, at the feasting table, on the seas and at the monument. In the first scene, Cleopatra is shown as a nagging and jealous woman. She knows that messages have come from Rome which are somewhat grim. She fears that Antony may go back to Rome, never to come back again. She expresses the insecurity of a woman, likely to lose her dream - medium of a man, Antony. More than the physical - social need of a male, not fully accepted as husband, she needed Antony for her world empire. But, she had no authority of a queen to command Antony into obedience. She and Antony never shared politics from the same throne. Her power was exercised only in the bed:

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That, time? O times!
I laugh'd him out of patience; and that night
I laugh'd him into patience, and next morn,
Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed;
Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst
I wore his sword Philippan.
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*(II, v, 19-23, 67-68)*
It is obvious that her physical charms alone could draw Antony to her. But, as Antony symbolised for her the means to her true feminine fulfilment in queening the earth, she never wanted Antony to leave Egypt unless it was for her cause. At this juncture Shakespeare begins his play, and naturally Cleopatra by sulking reminds Antony of the charms (lasciviousness, lustfulness including) he would miss, away from Egypt. Hence, Cleopatra is shown in bedroom antics, as it were, by Shakespeare who later shows the same woman as Isis on the monument: perhaps the highest pedestal for woman. In this scene, she is playacting with a purpose, taunting Antony by spurring him on two levels - Antony's attraction for and allegiance to Rome;

Nay, hear them, Antony:

Fulvia perchance is angry; or who knows
If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent
His powerful mandate to you, 'Do this, or this;
Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;
Perform't, or else we damn thee'.

(I, i, 20-24, 5)

The first level is the physical-social relationship with his legally wedded wife Fulvia. Cleopatra at best is a foreign wife, if not a kept or concubine. Antony rightfully belongs to Fulvia, which she must guard against. Secondly, the status and position of Mark Antony is that of a Roman governor subservient
to the Roman High Command, headed by Octavius Caesar. Cleopatra never admitted to herself that Antony was a subordinate officer. She always wanted Antony, her man, lover, soldier, poet and the most beloved of all, to rule over the world. This has not happened although some purpose has been instilled into Antony. Cleopatra, therefore, in this speech taunts Antony on those two levels. But, she appears like a woman only with a body and the physical-social concerns. We see Cleopatra for the first time as a sulking lover. Her first words are:

Cleo. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

Ant. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.

Cleo. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

Ant. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.

(I, i, 14-17, 4)

Her love is measureless, that can contain, 'new heaven and new earth' and embrace an aristocracy of space without beggary. This Cleopatra, however, within the space of ten lines of glorious blank verse, in the hands of Shakespeare is changed into a small jealous woman whom we have already seen above. But the forms that her jealousy, insecurity and fear take, are definitely a wonderful range of reality, especially the reality of the woman in her instinctual and sophisticated range of moods. She sends Alexas to action after she knew about the contents of the messenger's report from Rome:
Cleo. See where he is, who's with him, what he does:
I did not send you. If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return.

(I, iii, 2-5, 24)

And when she is chastised by her age-fellow Charmian:

Char. Madam, methinks if you did love him dearly,
You do not hold the method, to enforce
The like from him.

(I, iii, 2-5, 24)

She replies:

Cleo. What should I do, I do not?

Char. In each thing give him way, cross him in nothing.

Cleo. Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him.

(I, iii, 6-10, 24)

She knows what she is doing. She cuts Charmian to commonness, subservience - "give him way, cross him in nothing". She knows that the ideal of a docile, gentle and tolerant woman would not appeal to Antony to react. She is therefore, "sick and sullen". She has already visualized the entire scenario that will be enacted, once Antony comes to her. Acting out the role she prepared for herself, she directs Antony's movements, motivates and
regulates his thoughts even. When Antony enters her prepared course she
"faints", the sides of her nature come to burst. She fights, repels and almost
charges by her sweet taunts Antony's vows of love to be hers and hers alone.
All this she does as a lover, not a "not too tempting wife":

Cleo. - I know by that same eye there's some good news.

What, says the married woman you may go?

Would she had never given you leave to come!

Let her not say'tis I that keep you here.

I have no power upon you; hers you are.

Ant. The gods best know -

Cleo. O, never was there queen

So mightily betray'd! yet at the first

I saw the treasons planted.

Ant. Cleopatra,-

Cleo. Why should I think you can be mine and true

(Though you in swearing shake the throned gods)

Who have been false to Fulvia? Riotous madness,

To be entangled with those mouth-made vows,

Which break themselves in swearing!

Ant. Most sweet queen,-

Cleo. Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell, and go: when you sued staying,
Then was the time for words; no going then...

(I, iii, 19-34, 24-25)

She does not allow Antony to go beyond a phrase; does not allow him to intervene till she makes her point as a lover. The words of bliss, used by Antony during the ecstatic moments of love are now her weapons:

Eternity was in our lips, and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor,
But was a race of heaven. They are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turn'd the greatest liar.

(I, iii, 35-39, 25-26)

The same are now thrown at him, foreclosing his decision or intentions. The entire essence of her argument is: if bliss, eternity and heaven were our love, it has not changed. Antony will prove himself a liar, the "greatest soldier of the world" will be guilty of making false vows of love. The woman proud of her" "heart of Egypt" is accusing Antony of "infidelity" of a cosmic kind. Yet at no point does she appear less dignified. Even "vilest things/Become themselves in her" (II, iii, 238). The roles she plays in lightning succession make her regality grand and varied. She is changeful like nature; yet she can never be identified by one mood. If she uses the bed room love talk (or
garden, sea-shore, night-errant road dances) to charge Antony of infidelity or betrayal, and accuses him as a liar, she does not compromise mutual dignity. She is the "queen" and he "the greatest soldier of the world". They must rule the world, Antony cannot leave her for Rome.

Antony's defensive reply is what makes her accusation significant. Antony informs her about the latest political situation and the civil war in Rome necessitating his return. And finally informs her of Fulvia's death, to assure her of no physical-social disportion. But Cleopatra does not leave Antony at that. She again play-acts to get the full focus of his attention to her "interests" and her position alone:

Cleo. Cut my lace, Charmian, come
But let it be, I am quickly ill and well,
So Antony loves.

(I, iii, 71-72, 28)

She plays the irate lover in her vibrant moods of royalty, appearing momentarily in negative roles. But all roles become her, as these roles are the expressions of her love. She accuses him, further, for his apparent lack of love for Fulvia:

O most false love!
Where be the sacred vials thou should'st fill
With sorrowful water? Now I see, I see,
In Fulvia's death, how mine receiv'd shall be.

(I, iii, 63-65, 27-28)
She literally compels Antony to swear again of his unfailing love for her in the end. But she also gives the language of nobility and love which she alone can bestow:

But sir, forgive me,

Since my becomings kill me, when they do not

Eye well to you. Your honour calls you hence,

Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,

And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword

Sit laurel victory, and smooth success

Be strew'd before your feet!

(I, iii, 95-100, 30)

She conquers by love. All the sulking, quarrelling and nagging postures are fore-play antics to draw him to her side; they are the techniques of a lover in different images of formality. Wilson Knight rightly observes, "Love is ever the pivot of her gyrating personality, the light which illumes the phantasmagoria of her shifting moods" (The Crown of Life 294).

She therefore, deservedly wins Antony's last words before he goes to Rome:

Our separation so abides and flies,

That thou, residing here, goes yet with me;

And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee.

(I, iii, 102-104, 30-31)
Shakespeare creates the dramatic situation in such a manner that Antony had no choice but to leave for Rome as a Roman true to his country, and home. He had also to leave, on hearing Fulvia's death, otherwise he would lose the sympathy of Rome. Cleopatra cannot stop him and she knows it. But the lover must extract the lover's promise so that honour is never compromised. Moreover, she must live with hope that he would return as her man to conquer the world. She wants the greatest soldier to win as the greatest lover. She shows all faces of a woman, in her state of conflict, in a royal and dignified manner. She carves out alternative patterns for Antony. He must lead the world. Pompey and Caesar, Lepidus and all, must bow down to Antony. Cleopatra's love is cosmic like that of Venus. Her territory, therefore, is the starry heaven and the earth of plenitude. The imagery of *Antony and Cleopatra* moves between the zenith and the nadir. Antony is "the fan to cool a gypsy's lust". (I, i, 8-9) for the common Roman soldiers. But for Cleopatra he is the greatest soldier and he stands as the universe. In the last Act she describes him as the whole universe. But even in Act one Shakespeare's Cleopatra flashes through the shades of her being and character, as one in love with a universe which she does not want to part with. Antony is the total focus of her life, not an object of joy. Her love has sublimated casualty that faces situations with appropriate dramatic response, fulfilling every moment with some nuances of her love:
O Charmian!

Where think'st thou he is now? Stands he, or sits he?
Or does he walk? or is he on his horse?
O happy horse to bear the weight of Antony!
Do bravely, horse, for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st,
The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm
And burgonet of men. He's speaking now,
Or murmuring, 'Where's my serpent of old Nile?'
For so he calls me. Now I feed myself
With most delicious poison. Think on me,
That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black,
And wrinkled deep in time. Broad-fronted Caesar,
When thou wast here above the ground, I was
A morsel for a monarch: and great Pompey
Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow,
There would he anchor his aspect, and die
With looking on his life.

(I, v, 19-33, 38-39)

She is confident of herself as the woman who is desired by every one:

the Sun, Caesar, Pompey and all the proud monarchs of "small" worlds. She
would like to share the whole universe with Antony by her love. Her love has
the power to send heroes like Caesar and Antony to conquer the World.
Cleopatra, naturally, has her moods and faces. Her love had complete domination over Antony. While filling his moments with sports of love, she had always outwitted him. It was always Antony angled, "Ah, ha! your're caught" (II, v, 14). She was the lover leading Antony to excitement and bliss.

She was the active lover creating fantasies and drama in sport and seriousness. When she learns of Antony's marriage to Octavia, her immediate reaction was rage. She hits and strikes the messenger like an ordinary woman. But she recovers in no time to show her royal magnanimity. Her "man of men" marrying another woman in violation of the sacred oaths threw her into frenzy for a moment. But the Queen returns immediately:

These hands do lack nobility, that they strike
A meaner than myself; since I myself
Have given myself the cause.

(II, v, 82-84, 72)

But Antony's marriage to Octavia appears to her as a political compromise and betrayal. When she conquers her anger at the messenger by sober dignity she expresses her betrayed womanhood almost in a tone of regret "In praising Antony, I have disprais'd Caesar" (II, v, 108, 73). She combines in her words regret and anger. She is angry with herself for having accepted Antony instead of living with the glorious memory of her months with Caesar, who did not betray her upto the last moment. She regrets
this dishonour to her queenly state by Antony's political and selfish marriage to Caesar's sister, Octavia. Her political and personal worlds are now at a stake with Antony's alliance with Octavius. She stands all alone, her dreams of world-kingdom slipping out of her reach for ever; the 'greatest soldier', on whom she had put high stakes, now having gone to the other side. This enrages her and the fury she displays is more at herself than at the messenger.

Alex. Good Majesty,

Herod of Jewry dare not look upon you,

But when you are well pleas'd.

Cleo. That Herod's head

I'll have; but how, when Antony is gone,

Through whom I might command it?

(III, iii, 1-5, 101)

Cleopatra, however, is no mere goal setter nor a tantalizing sex goddess (as might very well be interpreted from the above illustrations). As a woman living amidst the male world she tried to give patterns to the men she chose. Her ambitious dreams of a world kingdom which she would queen, is a woman's vision of the world patterned by feminine intellect modelled on love. A woman beset with the age old social norms, her freedom limited, often treated as "second sex" cannot impose her power by force. Cleopatra realized this much before she was twenty, when she was driven out of her queendom
by her brother husband. Antony for her, as Caesar once was, is her very impersonation - "I put my tires and mantles on him, whilst/I wore his sword Philippian" (II, v, 22), through whom she would manifest herself all over the world as the "Isis-Venus-Queen". Hence, the range Cleopatra displays is not that of an ordinary courtesan losing her subsistence. On one hand it is that of a woman who knows her world, who is aware that she alone could give the joys of love to Antony, and hence she feels betrayed. On the other, it is that rage caused by helplessness, seeing her purposes defeated and dreams collapsing. When she calls back the messenger, it is with a woman's insight and also a queen's concern, to know how far she could go to put her stakes on Antony. Yet she feels a glimmer of deserted hope when Alexas reports Antony's last words before departing for Rome:

Say the firm Roman to great Egypt sends
This treasure of an oyster; at whose foot
To mend the petty present, I will piece
Her opulent throne with kingdoms. All the east,
(Say thou) shall call her mistress.

(I, v, 43-46, 40-41)

With Antony's alliance with Rome, her two worlds - both personal love and political reality - are somewhat shaky: For Cleopatra has always been identifying herself with Egypt, the immediate body politik. Showing an
average woman's spite in getting information about Octavia, her height, her complexion, her looks and appearance she makes a comparison mentally with herself. At the same time she assesses the chances of Antony's return.

Cleopatra is that playful principle of nature which never accepts a setback. It finds million ways for its varied expressions of liveliness. Cleopatra never got hopeless when she was driven out of her Egypt at the age of twenty. Cleopatra did not give up her dreams when Caesar was killed. She waited for her opportunities. She bided her time. Even now, at this juncture, when Antony marries Octavia she does not lose her hopes. She probes to know every thing about Octavia, her height, voice, posture and especially her majesty:

...What majesty is in her gait? Remember,

If e'er thou look'st on Majesty.

Mess. She creeps:

Her motion and her station are as one:

She shows a body, rather than a life,

A statue, than a breather.

(III, iii, 17-20, 102)

After getting this significant information or assessment of Octavia that she is a mere body, she does not stop her probe. She asks about the colour of her hair and whether her face is round. Even after thanking the messenger with gold
she is yet left with questions: her curiosity is endless:

I have one thing more to ask him yet, good Charmian:

But'tis no matter, thou shalt bring him to me

Where I will write; all may be well enough.

(III, iii, 44-46, 103)

At this critical moment she controls her rashness and rises in self-control to assess the intensity of the crisis, personal and political, arising out of Antony's shifting political allegiance and his marriage to Caesar's sister. She becomes less sprightly physically and more active mentally.

The next we hear from Caesar's mouth is that Antony has already declared himself Emperor with Cleopatra as the presiding consort:

I' the market-place, on a tribunal silver'd,

Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold

Were publicly enthron'd:

(III, vi, 3-5, 107)

Cleopatra has been made "absolute Queen" (III, vi, 10) "Of Lower Syria, Cypress, Lydia" (III, vi, 9) as well as "the establishment of Egypt".

Cleopatra wins him back: in word and deed there was no apparent betrayal in the "greatest general of the earth". She triumphs as lover. Her lovely beauty, political sagacity, earnest pursuit brought back Antony. This time Antony was purposive. He wished to deliver Rome of Caesar and the
world of Lepidus. Cleopatra perceived the final moment of the world empire ticking near. She opened her founts of love, care, concern and commitment to Antony, and his purpose. She cannot stay apart. When Antony is at war, she must be by his side to command. For Cleopatra Antony is the General. The *absolute* is she and he is the reality. She could command Antony for everything. Now at this great war with Caesar she must be by his side with her war paint on:

> A charge we bear i' the war,

> And as the president of my kingdom will

> Appear there for a man. Speak not against it,

> I will not stay behind.

(III, vii, 16-19, 115)

When they meet and plan for action, Cleopatra suggests (commands) a naval expedition after rebuking him for being negligent in stopping Caesar from "cutting" so quickly "the Ionian sea" (III, vii, 22). Antony accepts the sea battle against the wisdom of his captains and soldiers. Antony calls Cleopatra 'Thetis' (III, vii, 60) in admiration. Thetis is the daughter of Peleus and the mother of Achilles in Greek mythology and hence the tribute of Antony is to a sea-nymph for "commanding" naval engagement with Caesar. This decision of Antony, enforced by Cleopatra's "command" is resented by the soldiers:
Canidius. ...but his whole action grows
Not in the power on 't : so our leader's led
And we are women's men

(III, vii, 68-70, 117)

This proves the hold and command which Cleopatra had on Antony. This power to command the greatest general of the earth springs from love. No political or royal authority could have commanded Antony to brave something he is not good at. Antony always shone (Philippi) on the tented fields. Never at sea. Yet Antony decides to fight at sea much to the opposition of the soldiers.

The sea battle, however, is ill-fated for Antony, not because he was unequal to the task. But he lost before the battle warmed up, as Cleopatra with her sixty ships left the waters of encounter and Antony weakly followed after her, much to the bewilderment of the soldiers:

She once being loof'd,
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
Claps on his sea-wing, and (like a doting mallard)
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her:
I never saw an action of such shame;
Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before,
Did violate so itself.

(III, x, 18-24, 122)
This episode in history and literature has invited comments unsavoury to both Antony and Cleopatra, and especially to Cleopatra for having betrayed Antony at a fateful moment. No explanation is offered by Cleopatra, except:

O my lord, my lord,

Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
You would have follow'd.

(III, xi, 54-56, 126)

And her begging pardon changes the theme to love. It is evident that Antony is the full focus of her love which he accepts as the only prize in life. But Cleopatra's love had challenged Antony to face Caesar in war for the crown of the world. She never wanted her man to dote on her body and physical company. Antony by following her has acted as if he cannot breathe in her absence. His words ring of the truth of love which for Antony was tied to her rudder:

Egypt, thou knew'st too well,

My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,

And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit

Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that

Thy back might from the bidding of the gods

Command me.

(III, xi, 56-60, 126-127)
A man whose heart is not in its own place naturally dissolves with her asking for "pardon". Antony considers a drop of her tear "All that is won and lost", (III, xi, 70, 127). Cleopatra is his total life. G. Wilson Knight rightly observes about the universal status of the theme of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and says that the play discloses a vision rather "Universalistic":

> Nature itself is here transfigured, and our view is directed not to the material alone, nor to the earth alone, but rather to the universal elements of earth, water, air, fire and music, and beyond these to the all-transcending visionary humanism which endows man with a supernal glory. (200)

The theme of the play stems from Cleopatra. The Egypto-Roman history in its process of making the love theme and the honour and divinity which man (including woman) can rise up to in this earth, is the play's universal focus. And Cleopatra is that rich universe taking in and manifesting heroism, politics, nature, water (the sea), earth and air. To add to it she has music, grace, lust, poise, coquetry and royalty. She is a 'gipsy', a nymph (Thetis), a 'morsel', 'fire and air' (V, ii, 292). She transcends the mutability of nature to a universal permanence.

She is the whole universe tempting, exciting, sulking, nagging, inspiring, challenging, rebuking, mocking, elevating and deifying her love, Antony, to win for her the total available reality of her times. Her love includes nature,
family, state, empire and the world. Antony stands for her, spread over and identified with the totality -- not perfection but completeness. After Antony's death, vacillating between the monument and Caesar's Court, she expresses her image of Antony, her *Post-mortem* dream of her lord, lover and husband:

I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony.

O such another sleep, that I might see

But such another man!

Dol. If it might please ye, —

Cleo. His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck

A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted

The little O, the earth.

Dol. Most sovereign creature, —

Cleo. His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm

Crested the world: his voice was propertied

As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends:

But when he meant to quail, and shake the orb,

He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,

There was no winter in 't: an autumn 't was

That grew the more by reaping: his delights

Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above

The element they lived in: in his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets: realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

(V, ii, 76-91, 199-201)

Cleopatra's Antony, in the imaginative word-picture of Shakespeare, is the
Universe visualized in the image of an Emperor. His face is all that one sees
above; the sky, heaven, sun, moon and stars. His legs cover the oceans, his
raised arm crests the world. The harmony of the spheres and the raging
thunder are his friendship and anger. There is perpetual autumn in his bounty,
no winter. He has a dolphin like interest in pleasure and play. Kings and
Chieftains are his servants. Even realms and islands dropped from his pockets
as "plates".

This picture of the universe is the greatest feminine vision of a lover;
there is hardly any parallel. No man in literature has projected his beloved as
the entire universe. The male vision of a woman is not so royal and majestic.
Helen in the eyes of Paris, Dido for Aeneas, Radha for Krishna and Juliet for
Romeo are never so full, complete and vital. No man has visualized his lover
to be the total, royal, and majestic universe. In this respect, in the literature of
the world and also history Cleopatra is the greatest lover. She loves the
majestic and grand and visualizes the universe to be an empire identified with
her Antony. This Universal Emperor combines the concord of the spheres and
the rattling of orb-shaking thunder. The binaries are so matched that the
bountiful nature and aristocratic bearing are never embarrassed; rather
overflow in perpetual autumn. Our contention that Cleopatra is the greatest
lover stems from the fact that she proposes to take into her soul the entire
universe in majestic poise. Her love sees richness and splendour in the
universe. The man she loves must be the whole universe. As a feminine vision
of love this surpasses 'male' visions. Admittedly Dante's Beatrice like the
Indian Sita, Sakuntala, Parvati, Lakshmi, and Durga are great visions of
angelic femininity envisaging a world beautiful, graceful and calm. Beatrice
has power and energy and motivates the male to a calm order of reality. We
have seen this in our opening chapter. Cleopatra provides the feminine
counterpart to man's dream of woman. Cleopatra's love is the majesty of life,
mature, graceful and varied. To win this majesty as a lover she is the universe
herself. Enobarbus could see the complete woman in Cleopatra, one of the
most imaginative perceptions of femininity:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety: other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry,
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her, when she is riggish.

(II, ii, 234-240, 62)
She is ever new, ever full, "That she did make defect perfection. And breathless, power breathe forth" (II, ii, 231-232). She is the absolute idea of a lover who envisions her man to be the majesty of the world in autumnal plenitude. As lover she excels even men. She is the perfect alternative to the male vision of woman, a befitting match to Antony.
It may be questioned that if Cleopatra is the most sprightly and varied woman presenting a complete vision of woman, how could she "betray" Antony at the sea battle by turning away her sixty "fearful sails"? (III, xi, 55). We have already referred to it above without, however, discussing the issue. At this point the issue seems to be a comparable female action to Antony's first betrayal by entering into a political alliance with Caesar and sealing it by his marriage to Octavia. This unlover-like action of Antony, compensated and atoned for by his declaring Cleopatra as his Empress at Alexandria, has however, been not questioned. If Antony could have a marriage of convenience for his political ambitions, Cleopatra too can turn away from the sea with her fearful sails. Cleopatra was more knowledgeable about sea battles and could foresee the fate of the battle. She could visualise the political consequences of a defeat. Naturally therefore the safety of Egypt and the future of her people weighed heavy on her soul. It was not a sacrifice of love on her part, rather it was a similar tribute to Antony's love when she married Octavia. The feminine mind and consciousness can as well think of and plan for personal and political security, by posing to be neutral in case of Caesar's victory. She is even with Antony.

It may be interesting to note that when Antony and Cleopatra quarrel after the battle was lost, Cleopatra does not use language that smacks of the
bitter sexual filth that Antony vomits:

Cleo. O, is't come to this?

Ant. I found you as a morsel, cold upon
Dead Caesar's trencher: nay, you were a fragment
Of Gnaeus Pompey's, besides what hotter hours,
Unregister'd in vulgar fame, you have
Luxuriously pick'd out. For I am sure,
Though you can guess what temperance should be,
You know not what it is.

Cleo. Wherefore is this?

(III, Xiii, 115-122, 139)

Cleopatra in her passionate reply does not use the imagery of vulgar sex or speak the language of accusation:

Ah, dear, if I be so,
From my cold heart let heaven engender hail,
And poison it in the source, and the first stone
Drop in my neck: as it determines, so
Dissolve my life; the next Caesarion smite
Till by degrees the memory of my womb,
Together with my brave Egyptians all,
By the discandying of this pelleted storm,
Lie graveless, till the flies and gnats of Nile
Have buried them for prey!

(III, xiii, 158-167, 141)

To satisfy Antony on the truth of her treatment to Caesar's messenger - who normally deserves courtesy and reception as the deputy of the master, Caesar — she stakes her own life, her children and her country and countrymen. She uses the language of a woman and Queen without countering Antony's vulgarity with equal ferocity, of which she is definitely capable. This shows her loyalty to her love. She has frail traits, true, and she uses the language of bare destruction: but she is not mean or undignified.

Such a woman that Cleopatra is, she remains unfulfilled and her vision turns to nought. Antony fails Cleopatra in returning her love. For Cleopatra's love was not revelry or passion: it was the whole universe which Antony was, but he failed to rise to his fullest majesty.

Yet she refuses to be browbeaten by her cursed spite. She turns Antony's failure, his ignominious death to glory. She, literally and symbolically lifts him up to heroic height and renders glory to his defeat by raising the dying Antony to the monument:

...that none but Antony

Should conquer Antony

(IV, xv, 16-17, 183)
Even the dying Antony could not make her give up her universe-absorbing self. She lifts up Antony inflicting more pain on him, but does not come out of the monument to meet him. She could give him an honourable end but could not give up her self-preserving instinct:

I dare not, dear,

Dear my lord, pardon: I dare not,

Lest I be taken:

(IV, xv, 22, 183)

She still explores the means of preserving her 'self' exploiting the chances she could get, desiring to steer the course of events in her favour, as she wants them to be. But, as she fails, we see Cleopatra rise in a lover's grandeur. Even her failures, like her viles, guiles and inadequacies are the projections of the woman in her; the woman who wishes and strives to create her own patterns of reality alternate to the immediately available reality.

Cleopatra stands alone, the man she possessed is gone, her world is now in her hands to be made afresh. The world has always been hers: she made Caesar and Antony conquerors of it. She moulded the conquering heroes in these two men. She set the male patterns to be emulated by them. She breathed and nurtured the dream of the world-kingdom in these two men. The chances of doing the same with the 'too paltry' Octavius are remote. And Caesarion, her son, is too young and immature. The image of the man she has
been visualising and nurturing in Antony is gone with Antony's death.

Ah, women, women. Look,

Our lamp is spent, it's out.

(IV, xv, 84-85, 188)

The vision of a glorious world which she could have created through
Antony is now dissolved, Her lover's vision, which encompassed Egypt at
first, as shown in section II, in this chapter, and next the world empire, now
grows to cosmic dimensions. The universe she envisioned in her man and the
empire she aspired to share with him, no longer contain the earth's
boundaries, but now extend beyond the realms of death and through those to
the Other world unknown and beyond human comprehension. She now
reaches out to the other end of the palpable reality of the universe. Even in
death, she is a lover : she cannot stoop down to surrender. At this final
moment of the glory of a lover she rises with grandeur to do,

...what's brave, what's noble,

Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,

And make death proud to take us.

(IV, xv, 85, 188)

Death is no defeat nor a release for her. Death is no escape from
Octavius Caesar who angles to captivate her as a trophy of his triumph, for a
Roman Holiday. Death, for her, is now Antony. She goes to meet him once
more:

...
I am again for Cydnus,

To meet Mark Antony.

(V, ii, 226, 211)

Not as a vanquished queen, but as a graceful, beautifully adorned beloved she would meet death. The Isis-Venus-Queen — Cleopatra reaches out to queen this other world:

Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have Immortal longings in me.

(V, ii, 279, 213)

And as she rises to realise her "immortal longings", she becomes 'fire and air', the rising elements:

I am fire, and air; my other elements

I give to baser life.

(V, ii, 289, 214)

Hence,

The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,

Which hurts, and is desir'd,

(V, ii, 295, 214)

From there it further grows to an asexual, desireless selfless level where the sacrificial stance of giving and dissolving the self comes:
Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,

That sucks the nurse asleep?

(V, ii, 306, 215)

That Cleopatra who was eager to take in, to receive; now gives, gives herself to the universe, to Death, to love. Cleopatra's "strong toil of grace" comes to an end, may be a nought for us, who place worldly success above every value. But, she triumphs as a woman, as a lover. Her triumph is in her failure.

All that she won, she lost: but she triumphs over every one, every thing, even death.

This is the most resplendent and vigorous face of Eve as lover. In the next chapter we would examine her other face, the face of wife.