
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Shakespeare's and Shawqi's Cleopatra: Portrayals of a Woman's Moral Dilemma

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a comparative reading of Cleopatra, the most famous Egyptian queen in history, as portrayed by William Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606) and Ahmad Shawqi in *Mas'ra' Cleopatra, (Death of Cleopatra)* (1927). It aims at analyzing both portrayals from developmental psychological and feminist perspectives demonstrated particularly in Carol Gilligan's theories. Gilligan explored the development of women's morality and ethics of care in her influential book *In a Different Voice* (1982) and other subsequent publications. The aim is to investigate how Shakespeare and Shawqi portray her as a female protagonist, her manner of thinking, and her system of values. Cleopatra's dilemma as a woman in her different roles as a queen, political leader, wife, mother, and lover is examined in the light of these theories of ethics of care/ justice and the power im/balance between the sexes. The methodology used in this study integrates Gilligan's perspectives of women's concepts of the self, morality, and how women handle issues of conflict and moral choices. The study reveals how both dramatists successfully portray Cleopatra's moral reasoning with its different dynamics, struggling with her conflicts, choices, and decisions to find her own moral voice and self.

KEYWORDS

Ahmad Shawqi, Carol Gilligan, Cleopatra, Developmental Psychology, difference feminism, gender studies, Shakespeare

ARTICLE DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.4.10

1. Introduction

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety" (Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, II.ii. 235-240). In these lines, as Schiff states, Shakespeare "attested to Cleopatra's infinite variety" as one of the most recognizable figures in history (2010, p. 8). Cleopatra, at the same time, "sent even Shakespeare over the top, eliciting from him his greatest female role, his richest poetry" (p. 246). As has been noted, Shakespeare, who approached Cleopatra in his masterpiece, *Antony and Cleopatra*, is a global phenomenon being the most universally performed, translated, echoed, adapted, rewritten in different multicultural visions and revisions. As Bloom (1999) states, "Shakespeare is an international possession" who transcends nations and languages and who cannot be confined to his historical, political, social, economic, of unique influence that cannot be reduced to his own time and place. Bloom describes him as the "Western canon, and now becoming central to the world's implicit canon," with an overwhelming influence on literature, being larger on life, and surpassing the effect of Homer and Plato, challenging "the scriptures of West and East alike in the modification of human character and personality" (*Shakespeare*, p. 717).

The legendary ancient Egyptian Ptolemaic Queen Cleopatra XII (69-30 B.C.E), the Macedonian Alexander the Great descendant, has been a field of rich insights and inspiration. Her portrayal as a cultural and mythical figure is not a new topic of conversation in Global Shakespearean scholarship, providing rich visions of culture, history, race, and gender. Shakespeare's Cleopatra outlives his female heroines because she is a charismatic, inspiring woman of strength, indomitable will, and captivating dramatic grandeur. Bloom (2017) observes that no character in Shakespeare is "so metamorphic as Cleopatra," overflowing as the Nile, flowing, returning in her cycle of fecundity and renewal. She sustains all life with her exuberance. Her "ardor, supremely sexual, transfigures her politically acute wisdom. She seduces world conquerors because it is her pleasure, yet also her design to preserve Egypt and her dynasty." An aura surrounds her as a woman of both sustenance and destruction, earthy and celestial radiance, and "energizing

glory" (*Cleopatra*, pp.12-13). Bloom sheds light also on Shakespeare's representation of Cleopatra as "the most subtle and formidable, by universal consent" because of his "control of the various perspectives on her," which is so astute more perhaps than in any other. She is the "archetype of the star, the world's first celebrity" who surpasses her lovers: Pompey, Caesar, and Antony, who are known only for their achievements and their final tragedies, while she needs no achievements for "her death is triumphant rather than tragic, and she forever is known best for being well known" (*Shakespeare*, p. 546-547).

With her charming magic of beauty and mystery, Cleopatra has fascinated writers of different ages and cultures. As Schiff (2010) explains, Cleopatra is more mythical and fascinating with her disappearance. The holes in her story keep us under her spell with her female ambition, authority, and accomplishments (pp. 264-265). Many Arab authors approached that mythical figure because, as Hanoune (1998) states, Cleopatra is the single literary myth thoroughly studied in the Arab World. Her myth met great success on different cultural levels because of its symbolic richness, the absence of religious implications, and because Cleopatra is a non-Egyptian and an Egyptian at the same time. Hanoune stresses that this myth will be culturally and creatively a field of more thorough studies (p.86). As Trow (2013) observes, the Islamic culture resurrected Cleopatra, whose reign witnessed no revolts, and she had never threatened to topple an idea, as the Romans had charged her with. The Arabic scholars of the Middle Ages, as Trow notes, could look at the queen in a more detached and positive light. They highlighted her generosity to her people, her scholarship, and her great building programs (p.164).

Ahmad Shawqi (1870-1932), the renowned Egyptian poet and 'the Prince of Poets', was one of the Arab authors who adapted Shakespeare's Cleopatra. His poetic drama *Mas'ra' Cleopatra (Death of Cleopatra)* (1927) is still one of the most outstanding of these adaptations. His play is an appropriation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. He altered some details but kept the major ones of the battle of Actium and its aftermath, with Cleopatra given the center-stage role as the main heroine of his play. His text received significant critical attention for being the leading Arab poet of his time and the pioneer of Arab theatre. His text has been recently studied as a subversive or counter text from the perspectives of postcolonialism and New Historicism.

This study investigates the portrayals of William Shakespeare and Ahmad Shawqi of Cleopatra as the last Egyptian queen and how they differ from the biased accounts of the Greek historian, Plutarch, who portrayed Cleopatra as a sinful, lustful, immoral foreign treacherous woman who tempted Roman rulers. The study examines how Cleopatra struggles with her moral dilemma as a lover and queen, her moral decisions, and the im/balance of the dynamics and values of love and duty, care, and responsibility ethics, to find her own moral voice and self.

2. Review of Literature

Several studies have shown significant interest in tackling the adaptations of Shakespeare's Cleopatra from different perspectives, examining how Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* influenced Shawqi. Aldoory's "William Shakespeare in the Eyes of Modern Arab Poets" (2019) studied how Shakespeare's works have influenced Arab poets consciously and unconsciously through adaptation, appropriation, and intertextuality, namely Ahmed Shawqi, Salah Abdel Sabur, and Badr Shakir Alsayyab. Al-Khatib's "Rewriting History, Unwriting Literature: Shawqi's Mirror-Image Response to Shakespeare" (2001), on the other hand, studied Shawqi's Cleopatra as an encounter between the British Empire and the Egyptians, negotiating a dramatic reconstitution of the conflict between the dominant European powers of the time, and Egypt, as the epitome of African/ Arab/Eastern aspirations to subvert these powers. Al-Khatib added that the representations of Egypt in *Antony and Cleopatra* reflect an attitude toward depicting the Other historically, further revealing an imaginary construct of the Self, and an equally imaginary view of the Other, of opposing literary tradition of Orientalism and of Occidentalism. On the representational level, Al-Khatib claimed that Shawqi attempts to achieve three goals: the de-eroticization of Cleopatra, the de-exoticization of Egypt, and the demonization of Rome.

Similarly, Pak's study "Re-Presenting the Other: Cleopatra and Othello in Shakespeare Intertexts, 1678-2016" (2020) analyzed the depiction of Cleopatra and Othello in Shakespeare intertexts in British and world theatre from the seventeenth century to the present. It examined how these two characters, who explicitly represent the racial and cultural "Other" in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606) and *Othello* (1604), respectively, are reframed to voice each adapter's cultural and political views. The study juxtaposed intra- and intercultural variations and demonstrated how the adapted texts take similar advantage of Shakespeare's canonicity while problematizing the claims of the canon's universality. The author studied Shawqi's Cleopatra compared to Shaw's portrayal. Shawqi, as Pak concluded, deliberately uses Shakespeare to "talk back" to the established image of Cleopatra in Western literary tradition by recreating Cleopatra as an honorable and worthy queen, a counter-image of a competent and dignified Egypt, along with a capable leader.

El-Sawy's "Encountering Shakespeare's Cleopatra: The Subversion of The Occident's Threat of Objectification" (2016) attempted as well to investigate how Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* construct an epistemological paradigm that fragments the Western monoglossic discourse and obliterates the dialectical tenets of its episteme as it deconstructs the West's ontological and teleological basis. El-Sawy concluded that Cleopatra is perceived as "differance" where Western imperial metaphors such as race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity are epistemologically resisted and disrupted. Cleopatra subverts Rome's univocal reality by occupying a subjective position, using her erotic proclivities as a political tool of resistance to Rome's patriarchal ideology.

Likewise, Al-Shetawi's "Arabic Adaptations of Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory" (2013) compared known postcolonial 'Shakespeares,' and Arabic appropriations of his plays, commenting on the postcolonial aspects of these plays and showing whether Arab dramatists have been 'writing back,' so to speak, in response to the colonial experience. As the author claimed, Ahmad Shawqi's play *Masra' Kliubatra (Death of Cleopatra)* is an outstanding example of adaptation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, where Shawqi rewrites back to Shakespeare and expresses his position on colonization. This article illustrated the cultural impact of the West, Britain in this case, on Arabic drama and literature.

Another significant study is Mahfouz's "Challenging Hegemonic Patriarchy: A Feminist Reading of Arab Shakespeare Appropriations" (2020), which offered new interpretations of the various Arab appropriations, renditions and offshoots of Shakespeare's plays from a feminist perspective. Mahfouz also investigates whether or not such plays can be considered feminist Shakespeare re-visions. Mahfouz concluded that only Ahmad Shawqi's *Mas'ra' Kileopatrah* and Nabyl Lahlou's *Ophelia Is Not Dead* can be considered feminist Shakespeare re-visions. Others do not qualify as feminist Shakespeare re-visions; their silenced female characters are not given a voice because they are not given center-stage roles in the performances and consequently remain within the grip of patriarchal structures.

There are other significant studies of Cleopatra as a mythical figure as that of Miles (2011), who argued that Cleopatra stood "as a scheming, "oriental" queen," with whom was the literary heritage of the "ideological dichotomy between East and West that still resurfaces" (p.19). Smith (2011) also claimed that Cleopatra's artistic images as the last of the Ptolemaic rulers of ancient Egypt provided a natural vehicle for artistic appropriation and philosophizing about the nature of a monarchy ruled by a female ruler. Riad (2011), on the other hand, focused on manifestations of gendered power that elicited changes in Cleopatra's appraisals. The essay examined historical, literary writings, art, and film to illustrate gendered paradoxes, the criteria that had traditionally defined leaders from followers. The paper explored the implications for leadership studies.

In general, most of these studies examined the appropriations of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Shawqi's version as writing back at Shakespeare, focusing on his counter-image of Cleopatra and the contrast between West and East, and Rome and Egypt as the exotic Other and its cultural representations. Most of these studies analyzed the texts from political, colonial, and postcolonial perspectives but rarely from a feminist perspective. Therefore, this paper will hopefully fill the gap left by Shakespeare scholars in the field of feminist gender studies and developmental psychology.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this study integrates both developmental psychology and feminism to investigate how both writers portray Cleopatra's moral dilemma in her different roles and the dynamics behind her actions as a woman and a queen. This is done in the light of Carol Gilligan's theories in this field. Carol Gilligan (b. 1936) is an American psychologist, professor, and feminist whose groundbreaking and revolutionary book *In A Different Voice*, published in 1982, and subsequent works established her as a pioneer in the field of gender studies, developmental psychology of girls and women, and as an inspiration for the feminist movement. In that book, Gilligan explored women's concepts of the self, morality, and how they handle issues of conflict and moral choices. She Gilligan refuted the theories of moral development of renowned psychologists, following the Freudian tradition, which confirmed female inferiority and women's deficiency in development.

According to Gilligan (2011), the culture assumed by those psychologists considered men the measure of humanity, rationality, and autonomy; their masculine qualities were the markers of maturity. In that culture, women could not speak for themselves; their emotional responsiveness compromised their clear sense of self and their capacity to think rationally and judge objectively. Gilligan claims that "the very qualities that distinguished women's moral goodness, their relational sensitivity, and empathic concern, marked them as deficient in development (*Looking Back*, p.3). In such cultures, women are considered selfless because of their devotion to others, responsiveness to their needs, and attentiveness to others' voices. Gilligan believes that ethics of caring require "paying attention, seeing, listening, responding with respect. Its logic is contextual, psychological. Care is a relational ethic, grounded in a premise of interdependence. But it is not selfless" (*Looking Back*, pp. 3-4).

Gilligan (2011) also claims that the central focus of a traditionally female understanding of morality is to take care of others; women consistently define themselves through their relationships with others according to their different social roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. That orientation of females to consider the needs of everyone is described as 'ethics of care.' Gilligan also developed the notion of 'ethics of responsibility' that men are socialized to develop identities as individuals responsible for their actions. In contrast, women are socialized to rely on other people they are in relationships with. As women face many challenges and endure these moral crises, they begin to understand that they need to prioritize their own choices and well-being, learning to develop a sense of their identities and voices. These crises, according to Gilligan, can either be sources of strength or sources of harm.

Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) stress that inequality and attachment, from a developmental standpoint, are universal human experiences where all children are born into a situation of inequality, and no child survives in the absence of adult attachment. These equality and attachment dimensions characterize all forms of human relationships. All relationships can be described in both

sets of terms: as unequal or equal and as attached or detached. They add that “since everyone has been vulnerable both to the oppression and to abandonment, two moral visions – one of justice and one of care – recur in human experience” (*Orientations*, pp.73-74). They assert that the balance of care and justice moral orientations constitutes mature moral thinking and reasoning. What decides the choice of moral standpoint, according to them, “may be a dimension of identity or self-definition, especially when moral decisions become more reflective or “post-conventional” and the choice of moral principle becomes correspondingly more self-conscious” (*Orientations*, pp.82-84).

Cleopatra’s dilemma as a woman in her different roles as a queen, political leader, wife, mother, and lover is examined in the light of these theories of ethics of care and ethics of justice. The aim is to reveal how both dramatists successfully portray Cleopatra, struggling with her dilemma, conflicts, and moral choices, to find her own moral voice and self. The paper also attempts to analyze the dynamics that lead Cleopatra to moral judgment: others’ needs, voices, and points of view or her own voice. If she faces conflict, does she avoid it by considering the needs of others instead of her own, or confront it, making a moral choice? The study questions Cleopatra’s moral maturity and her self-consciousness about the perspectives of care and justice together.

4. Discussion & Results

4.1. Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*

In his canonical Roman tragedy, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), William Shakespeare gives a new life to the story of this queen, full of insights that enriched the public imagination till now. His great heroine is introduced in the play through her enemies, the Roman soldiers. One of them is Philo, who describes Cleopatra as a lustful “gypsy” (2008, I.i.10), and Antony, the great master of war, “The triple pillar of the world”, as “a strumpet’s fool” (I.i.13) because of neglecting his duties to the Roman Empire, engaged in Cleopatra’s love which will risk his reputation and position as a ruler. She is also described as a “wrangling queen” (I.i.50), a “slave” (I.iv.19), and a “whore” (III.vi.67). However, Shakespeare, who prepared his audience with these negative attributes, releases Cleopatra from these confines to play her role as the most elevated captivating female theatrical creation. She is presented as the enchantress of all rulers and men who love her and a woman who deeply loves. Antony asserts his love for Cleopatra and is ready to reject his Roman responsibility and his wife, Fulvia.

Enobarbus, Antony’s friend, defends Cleopatra when Antony accuses her of ‘cunning past man’s thought.’ To Enobarbus, she is a wonderful piece of art, with her passions made of the finest part of pure love. He adds, “We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove” (I.ii.147-153). Enobarbus goes on describing Cleopatra’s beauty and attraction, saying:

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. 235-240).

Shakespeare’s Cleopatra is a charismatic woman torn by her passion and love for Antonio, jealousy of his wives, and the threat of losing her honor and throne. In Rome, Antony marries Octavia for peace and reconciliation with her brother Octavius Caesar. At the same time, he admits that his pleasure lies in the East with Cleopatra. When Cleopatra knows of his marriage, she gets furious and thinks it is rogue and intends to kill the messenger. Like many women, she feels jealous, and she asks him about Octavia’s age, inclination, face, and hair color. Antony and Caesar’s hostility intensifies when the first leaves for Egypt, and Caesar accuses him of giving “his empire,” as he says, “Up to a whore” (III, vi, 67-69).

Both Cleopatra and Antony display their love in public, aware and confident of that relationship. That love relationship is not just a private intimate one, but one which becomes their “new heaven, new earth” (I.i.117). Antony, the great military hero, experiences the same dilemma of Cleopatra of divided loyalty between love and duty. He abandons his duties to the Empire, struggling between his military glory and his passion for Cleopatra. He sacrifices his military responsibilities, following Cleopatra, but decides to die as a true, noble Roman soldier by the end.

The battle of Actium was a decisive incident where Antony was defeated, Cleopatra’s navy abandoned him, then he fled following her. Antony feels ashamed of betraying his image as a noble Roman. He blames her for betraying him, and he threatens to kill her. Although Antony lost the battle, Cleopatra believes that she has won him. She says: “Tie is a god, and knows/ What is most right. Mine honour was not yielded,/ But conquered merely” (III. xiii. 60-63). After the defeat, Cleopatra is ready to reconcile with Caesar,

saying: "Tell him I am prompt/ To lay my crown at's feet, and there to kneel,/ Till from his all-obeying breath I hear/ The doom of Egypt." (III. xiii. 75-78).

Antony is defeated again by Caesar in the sea-fight. When Antony realizes that he has lost everything, he blames Cleopatra, the 'foul Egyptian' who betrayed him, saying:

All is lost!

This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me.

My fleet hath yielded to the foe and yonder

..... Betrayed I am.

O this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm, whose eye becked forth my

wars and called them home,

Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,

Like a right gypsy hath at fast and loose

Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (IV.xii. 10-29)

On hearing the false news of her death, Antony decides, 'since the torch is out, to die like her because he is the courageous leader who, 'with his sword quartered the world' and 'with ships made cities'. He condemns himself to lack "the courage of a woman; less noble mind/ Than she which by her death our Caesar tells/ 'I am conqueror of myself.' [...]A bridegroom in my death, and run into't/ As to a lover's bed" (IV. xiv. 55-100). Before his death, Antony advises Cleopatra to seek her honor and safety with Caesar, though she will trust nobody but her resolution and her hands. After Antony's death, Caesar sends Cleopatra his offer, but she begs him to give her son Caesarion her 'conquered Egypt.' When Caesar's soldiers seize her, Cleopatra draws a dagger trying to kill herself. She thinks that she will be enslaved in Caesar's court and displayed in front of the Roman public, while a ditch in Egypt is a gentle grave for her. After meeting Caesar, Cleopatra is sure of his intentions that she will be taken to Rome and displayed in his triumphal march as a puppet and a whore. She realizes that she has lost her kingdom; thus, the only solution is to follow Antony honorably. She prepares for her death, and a rural fellow brings her the instrument of that death, the basket of figs she has asked for with the poisonous snakes. She says:

What poor instrument

May do a noble deed! He brings me liberty.

My resolution's placed, and I have nothing

Of woman in me. Now from head to foot

I am marble-constant; now the Meeting moon

No planet is of mine. (V.ii. 235-239)

Cleopatra refuses Caesar's offer and chooses to take her own life, wearing her royal robes, dying as a queen, defying Caesar's plans (V. ii.220-222). Before she dies, she orders her maids to dress her in her finest royal robes and puts on her crown. She believes that, by doing so, she overcomes Caesar, whom she describes as "ass and unpolicised" (V.ii. 306). Answering immortal longings in her, she is leaving to her husband, Antony, saying, "Husband I come:/ Now to that name my courage prove my title!/ I am fire and air; my other elements/I give to baser life"(V.ii.280-290). Kott (1964) believes that Cleopatra is brave and faithful but ready to betray, trying all possibilities to save her kingdom even if she sells herself to the new Caesar. Cleopatra loses the battle in the same way as Antony, but she "does not lose the battle with her own passion; she loses as a queen" (p.149). Though their final choice was compulsory, Shakespeare "does not detract from his heroes' greatness"; they are the great lovers whose love transcends "heaven and earth" (pp.149-150).

Caesar observes the dead Cleopatra, who has chosen to be brave at last. He says:

Bravest at the last

She leveled at our purposes and, being royal,

Took her own way. The manner of their deaths?

.....
 She shall be buried by her Antony.
 No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
 A pair so famous. High events as these
 Strike those that make them, and their story is
 No less in pity than his glory which
 Brought them to be lamented.....(V.ii. 331-362)

Commenting on Cleopatra's ritualistic death scene, Bloom (1991) praises Shakespeare for not taking the side of Octavius, who wants to triumph over Cleopatra. Shakespeare, as Bloom states, "takes sides, and denies the world its sadism, by appropriating Cleopatra for his play's triumph alone. No one else in Shakespeare makes so fine an end in a personal ritual of exaltation (*Shakespeare*, p. 566). Similarly, Goddard (1984) believes that Cleopatra deceived Caesar; playing his game, she utterly out plotted and outwitted him, dragging him behind "the chariot of her superior insight and power." In her death, "she proves more powerful than the most powerful of men alive. She makes him realize that there is something mightier than might, something stronger than death [...] She leads him in her triumph!" (p.205). In addition, Bloom believes that Cleopatra overcomes the catastrophic fate of Antony, who was so openly humiliated before he died. At the same time, Cleopatra "transcends any potential for humiliation by her ritually measured death." (*Shakespeare*, p.559). This Shakespearean genius "totally and wonderfully indulges itself in *Antony and Cleopatra*, which is certainly the richest of all the 39 plays" (p.559).

As many critics agree, love value and dynamics are the dominant ones for Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Antony. Both abandoned their responsibilities for their towering passion, though their honor called by the end, and both committed suicide honorably. Bloom believes that the value of familial love in Shakespeare is "overwhelming but negative" because the value of passionate love "depends upon a fusion of theatricality and narcissistic self-regard. The art itself is nature, and the value of love becomes wholly artful (*Shakespeare*, p.551). Similarly, Goddard (1984) believes that the dominant value of *Antony and Cleopatra* is love. All anger, violence, pride, and passion of Antony and Cleopatra are lifted to love. They lost the battle of Actium but won in their eternal love story. Goddard also claims that this Shakespearean tragic love makes Anthony and Cleopatra "recede from mere history into myth, or, if you will, to open out and mount above history into a cosmic sunset of imagination" (p.197).

Likewise, Bloom claims that the extraordinary genius of Shakespeare is demonstrated in "his ability to invent the human", and his *Antony and Cleopatra* "might be considered his masterwork" with its "kaleidoscopic shifting of perspectives" which give the audience "an enigmatic range of possible judgments and interpretations" (*Shakespeare*, pp. 546, 560). Similarly, Knight (2008) reflects on the human dimension given to Cleopatra, in a remarkable combination of diversity and unity, with her pride, humbleness, raging anger, faithfulness, and femininity. All these essences, according to Knight, are "fused and united in a single vision of universal and positive assertion, all equally blended in a finely-wrought, harmonious complexity" (p. 133). Knight stresses that the dynamic that motivates her is love, "the pivot of her gyrating personality, the light which illumines the phantasmagoria of her shifting moods" (p. 136). Love unites all her potential; thus, she is "undivided, a trader in love alone: whereas Antony serves two gods: 'love' and 'honour' Cleopatra's world, despite her queenship, is a woman's world: her mental horizon close bounded by love's infinity" (pp.138-139).

On the other hand, Bloom sheds light on Cleopatra's other controlling dynamics. She is strongly concerned about Egypt and her children. Still, these considerations were set aside when she anticipates the consequences, for Egypt and for them, of her suffering the humiliation of being exhibited as a slave to the males of Rome (*Shakespeare*, p. 565). Considering this dilemma, Shakespeare balances the moral orientations of care/justice reasoning with Antony and Cleopatra and even with Caesar, who defeated Antony and Cleopatra and conquered Egypt. Caesar mourns the loss of a great soldier, controlling his conflicting feelings towards Antony and Cleopatra, commanding that they be buried beside one another. As Kott (1964) comments that history is cruel because of the tyrants, but the world arranged by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* "is arranged rationally; in the end, virtue and reason win. The world is a great place, after all" (p. 147).

4.2. Ahmad Shawqi's Mas'ra' Cleopatra

In the Arab world, the most distinguished literary portrayal of Cleopatra is that of Ahmad Shawqi in his famous play, *Mas'ra' Cleopatra* (Death of Cleopatra). His play is based on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, altering some details, but he kept some major events like the battle of Actium and its aftermath. Unlike Shakespeare's play which spans the last ten years of the lives of Antony and Cleopatra, covering the entire Roman Empire and Egypt, Shawqi's play takes place in the last days of Cleopatra's life in her palace in Alexandria after the battle of Actium. Cleopatra is the main protagonist of his play. Shawqi introduces Cleopatra and Antonio after the defeat in Actium, where people are deceived to hear of it as a victory. In the library, some of Cleopatra's followers comment on this deception. Xenon, the chief librarian Xenon, and his assistant Habi represents the negative image of Cleopatra and Antonio, who turn the history and civilization of Egypt into a bed of passion and prostitution (1946, pp. 7-8). They

also blame her for abandoning the duties of the kingdom for the sake of Antonio's love. They describe her as a "flirting woman," an "asp," and a "whore" (p.13).

Shawqi's Cleopatra is represented as an educated religious woman and a loving mother. She comes to the library, narrating the truth of what happened in the war and justifying to them why she retreated from the battle. She tells them that Antonio and Octavius are fighting each other. She thought that she would have dominated the whole sea; thus, she fled, leaving Antonio alone, setting aside the considerations of Antony's love. She admits her betrayal of Antonio, her lover, the father of her children, her supporter, and the one who sacrificed all thrones and countries for her sake. She proudly did that because she was "the daughter of Egypt and the queen of Egypt." Her nation and kingdom weighed all that (pp.19-20). She hates Rome, and she is proud of having Antonio, the great Roman soldier leading the world under her flag. He has completely rejected Rome; he is now her soldier, a loyal follower, being an Egyptian. Thus, his Roman soldiers think of leaving him because he is no longer their courageous leader but a drunken lover. They betrayed him the day after, and he lost the battle of Actium.

Antonio realizes that he has lost everything because he fled from the battle. He used to enslave kings, but now the playful woman enslaves him. Oros tells him that his soldiers did their best, but Cleopatra's army betrayed them. Thus, Antonio believes that Cleopatra has betrayed him to take sides with the winner so she can have both Egypt and Rome under control. Olympus, Cleopatra's Roman physician, tells him that Cleopatra has committed suicide. Thus, he is left alone, recalling his glorious past, which is now vanished after Cleopatra's death. He regrets his deeds and apologizes to Rome, asking for forgiveness because he was the disobedient son as he has rejected his responsibilities for the sake of Cleopatra. In a soliloquy-like, he also urges Cleopatra for forgiveness because he has done everything for her sake, although she has destroyed him.

Shakespeare's Cleopatra betrayed Antony twice, fleeing their battles with Caesar at sea with no justifications in the play: is it because of fear or a political maneuver to negotiate her own terms with Caesar. Shawqi, on the other hand, allows Cleopatra to justify her retreat from Actium. After the defeat in Actium, Cleopatra does not admit such defeat, but she blames her fleet for not assisting Antonio. Like any other woman, she expresses her fear of what is coming soon after the defeat, but as a queen, she is not afraid of death or impeachment. She is afraid of being displayed as a slave in the march in Rome. With the pride of an Egyptian queen, she tries to preserve Egypt's dignity, history, and throne till the end of her life (pp.71-72). Cleopatra laments Antonio's death gravely in a highly elevated poetic language. Observing her Alexandria, she does not think of her death but of her country left at the hands of the conquerors who need her alive and who will turn its civilization into ruins. She admits that she tried to deceive Octavius but failed though he is mistaken in his plans to enslave her (pp. 88-89).

When Cleopatra realizes Caesar's plans, she thinks of committing suicide. She wishes she receives an honest judgment from her people after her death and from history. She believes that she is not fairly treated either by her contemporaries or enemies. She could foresee what would be said about her after her death of false stories of being a lustful woman who used to tempt men. She defends herself, saying that since she was a child, she was born with that genius that helped her live bravely, mobilizing all the sources imaginatively since this life and history glorify only heroes. She lived as a heroine and ruled heroes. She bids farewell to her kids though she knows that she will leave them orphaned, but she could not live in humiliation as a queen. She orders her maids to dress her in her royal robes, going to her husband Antonio as beautiful as she used to be (pp.98-99,102,104). Her withdrawal was a courageous strategic decision, not treachery or cowardice.

Gilligan (2003) states that the highly successful and achieving women feel challenged by the conflict they encounter between achievement and care, jeopardizing their own sense of themselves, feeling divided in the judgment of feeling betrayed (*Voice*, p. 159). This applies to Cleopatra, who felt challenged by the different conflicts she encountered between achievements as a political leader and care for her relationships. Meanwhile, she managed to focus on developing her own unique voice and identity. Gilligan also observes that the "notion that virtue for women lies in self-sacrifice has complicated the course of a women's development" (*Voice*, p.132). However, Cleopatra challenged and violated this concept, thinking of her own voice, self, values, history, and future. She encountered that conflict, thinking of her intimate relationships with her lover/husband and thinking of her reputation as a queen of Egypt not to be dragged as a captive in Rome. Having her own calculations, Cleopatra is envisioning and looked to her future rather than the past.

Shawqi provides Cleopatra with the space and chance to defend herself as a woman and queen, her policy, and her passion for Antonio. He portrays her as a charming woman, confident, eloquent, educated, compassionate mother, and virtuous, loyal wife. As a queen, she is a skillful leader and strategist, proud of herself, history, and kind to her court and subjects. Her dilemma is manifested in being torn by her divided loyalty to her throne and love of Antonio, her hate for Rome, and her ambition to rule the East. She is a fighter who found herself since she was a young girl suffering an impoverished and wretched life, going through diverse hardships, a lesson she has to learn every day to maintain her pride and throne. After Octavius' occupation of Alexandria, she decides to commit suicide, sacrificing her life for the sake of her country, ruining his dream of having her enslaved in his triumph parade in Rome. This decision is understood in the light of Gilligan's views which stress that those who listen to their own

internal voices in a crisis and depend on them when making decisions often emerge morally and psychologically stronger with more confidence, clarity, and a responsible integrated inner voice after a crisis (*Voice*, pp.106-127).

4.3. Results

In the light of Gilligan's ethics of moral dilemma, Cleopatra, in both texts, is in a dilemma with conflicting values: love and duty, struggling with the im/balance of these forces. In Shakespeare, Cleopatra's dominant value is love; she is portrayed as a highly emotional seductress woman with astonishing sexual power. Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra exalt love and pleasure above their duties and responsibilities, while Shawqi, on the other hand, glorifies her values of duty and responsibility to her country. She is a woman of superior mental strength in the most challenging situations. Shawqi gives her the space to defend herself and justify her political decisions as a brave, rational leader of acute political wisdom. Her retreat from the battle of Actium is wisely justified; it is a battle between two Roman leaders, and Egypt must be safe and free. However, Shawqi does not ignore the dynamic of love in his story. His Cleopatra is a caring mother and a sincere lover who loves Antonio and regrets that she left him alone in the battle. Her ethics of responsible duty to protect her country outweigh her ethics of personal attachments as a wife and a mother. That love of Caesar or Antonio served as one of the political gains she skillfully mobilizes for the sake of Egypt.

Both texts show the two writers' rational presentations and explanations of this great figure. Fletcher (2008) claims that this woman had proved "so terrifying to her enemies that their hostility still resonates to this day" (p. 362). He adds that despite all attempts "to erase her story, she had proved too memorable a figure to be easily destroyed and, like Alexander himself, became a legend" (p. 362). The new increasing information, archaeological reports, commemorative texts, her personal correspondence, and other clues from sites of her palace, as Fletcher claims, can contribute to the overall picture of her daily life and "add a further rich layer of detail to what is now known about the woman herself [...] to pinpoint Cleopatra's specific whereabouts at precise moments in her life" (pp.9-10).

Both Shakespeare and Shawqi gave Cleopatra the voice of their grand theatres and poetry, the space she deserves in both plays. As Frye (2008) admits, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* revolves around Cleopatra "because she's the essence of theatre. Besides having the fattest female role in the entire range of drama, she's a woman whose identity is an actress's identity" (p. 233). She is the grand actress where "the offstage does not exist in her life. Her love, like everything else about her, is theatrical [...] Incidentally, she never soliloquizes; she talks to herself occasionally, but someone else is always listening, and she always knows it" (p. 233).

5. Conclusion

Both Shakespeare and Shawqi have their own reading and interpretations of that legendary historical figure, Cleopatra. What is most captivating and significant in Shakespeare's Cleopatra is the woman in love but not the leader. Shawqi's Cleopatra, on the other hand, is struggling to defend herself as a queen against the biased accounts of the historians. Both Shakespeare and Shawqi, in varying degrees, cannot get rid of that historical biased image of Cleopatra as a woman of lust, greed, and betrayal. In one way or another, both succeed in depicting Cleopatra, fluctuating between the roles of a woman/queen in both but with varying value systems, with different potentialities of maternity, womanhood, and leadership.

As a leader, Cleopatra is ready to behave bravely to prove herself as a brilliant, quick-witted queen who had a genuine concern and devotion to her country and the ambition to rule the whole world. As a visionary ruler and a strategist, she married Caesar and Marc Antony to save her kingdom. When she felt that the queen would be enslaved and be sent to Rome, which she had ruled over, she committed suicide. Following the denouement of that crisis of losing her throne and fear of enslavement, Cleopatra is firmly anchored in her brave decision of failing Caesar's plans, seeing herself as queen, proud of herself, her country, and her past, responsible for caring for her throne and for herself; an integrated insight that transcends her into an eternal figure. The recognition of her defeat signals the discovery of a new way and a new vision.

Whatever ideological stances Shakespeare and Shawqi had, their endeavors in rewriting Cleopatra were not to correct Plutarch's accounts of that famous Egyptian queen but to redefine Cleopatra's character, giving her new life, consciousness, and psychological dimensions as a woman and as a queen, to give more authentic versions. Though Cleopatra's history was not accurately recorded, Shakespeare and Shawqi attempted to rewrite Cleopatra, listening to her voice, empowering her with life and energy to overcome her dilemmas in the queenly manner and respect she deserves. Cleopatra resisted that kind of patriarchal voice surrounding her, releasing her own ethics of justice and responsibility along with her ethics of care. In their endeavors to portray their versions of Cleopatra, both Shakespeare and Shawqi leave the audience to listen to that Cleopatra to find their own moral perspective on that queen and to spot the false, biased stories. Cleopatra is a woman who is aware of her strength, willing to deal with difficult choices, and ready for confrontation though surrounded by mixed messages of a patriarchal society and enemies that undervalue her. Finding herself in crisis, she can make the choice of a woman who developed her own identity, conscious sense of self, and moral responsibility for her own choice.

Both Shakespeare and Shawqi were also true to themselves in offering the audience a worldview in which one moral dimension of care/justice cannot be easily separated from each other. In Cleopatra's and Antony's honorable deaths, both remain true and honest to themselves, most uncompromised selves, defining themselves on their own terms of dignity, honor, and sacrifice and refusing to compromise their own identities and pride. Caesar might defeat Antony and conquered Egypt but did not conquer the spirit of that queen and their love, being bound inseparably and eternally in their tomb and in the collective memory of humanity. According to Gilligan's claims of care/justice ethics of moral reasoning, Cleopatra's voice in both texts, regardless of her motivating ethics, was different, morally mature, heard in its own right and its own terms. It is a human voice of both care and justice. Listening to her internal voice and declining Antony's advice to surrender to Caesar and her decision to commit suicide to end her life make her an eternal queen and myth. What Cleopatra prioritizes in making this decision is her own needs, not the needs of others, not as a selfish decision but as a responsible one.

To conclude, both Shakespeare and Shawqi had their own genuine readings, within their contexts, of Cleopatra as a queen, morally mature. She is a born leader whose intelligence and wit matched the greatest rulers of her time. Most of the past studies analyzed Cleopatra's texts from political, colonial, and postcolonial perspectives but rarely from a feminist perspective. The present study hopefully fills the gap left by Shakespeare scholars in the field of feminist gender studies and developmental psychology. The study is limited to issues of the intersection of the moral dilemma and the woman in power in Shakespeare's and Shawqi's texts. Other Cleopatra's representations need further research explorations in different works of art. This study can advance past research about Cleopatra in the light of increasing archeological clues and discoveries of that historical figure. More diverse readings and interpretations of Cleopatra, the history she represents and stands for, are highly needed and recommended. More psychological studies of Cleopatra and the woman in power are also required, with more women occupying top leadership positions worldwide.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements: I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Samar H. AlJahdali, whose thoughtful insights, support, and encouragement throughout the process have been invaluable.

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