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## **“LET’S DO ’T AFTER THE HIGH ROMAN FASHION AND MAKE DEATH PROUD TO TAKE US”: THE FINALE OF SHAKESPEARE’S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA***

The article is dedicated to the interpretation of the finale of William Shakespeare’s Roman play *Antony and Cleopatra* through the lens of liminality — the marginal, transitional state in which the main characters find themselves before death. This study is relevant in light of the increasing attention paid in contemporary humanities to such concepts as boundary experience, psychological breakdown, and identity transformation in literature.

The novelty of this literary research lies in reading the play’s ending within the context of liminality theory as a ritual initiation, where the heroes’ deaths acquire existential and symbolic meaning. The subject of analysis is the behaviour and psychological reflections of Antony and Cleopatra, who consciously choose suicide as a way out of an irreversible situation arising from the conflict between the political and the erotic.

The goal of this article is to outline the interpretation of the protagonists’ psychological self-reflections in a liminal situation that ends in suicide. To achieve this goal, methods of psychoanalytic criticism, hermeneutics, and “close reading” of the literary text were used.

The study results in the conclusion that, in the play’s finale, death for the protagonists is not a defeat but an act of dignity. It is shown that the characters, fearing the triumph of their adversary (Octavius Caesar) and public disgrace, and also unable to imagine their lives without their beloved, recognize the inevitability of death, which they perceive as the only acceptable outcome. Shakespeare emphasises that through this act, Antony and Cleopatra not only thwart Octavius Caesar’s plans but also force him to acknowledge their human dignity, ultimately becoming a triumph of love over vain earthly affairs. The lovers’ final actions (changing attire, farewells, the ritualization of death) are perceived as a sacred preparation for a transition to another state of being.

Prospects for further study include expanding the analysis of liminal states and the ritualisation of death in the works of Shakespeare and other Renaissance writers, as well as a deeper exploration of the psychoanalytic aspects of choosing death and identity transformation in fiction.

**Keywords:** Shakespeare; *Antony and Cleopatra*; Renaissance; liminality; suicide; psychoanalysis; gender studies; erotic; political.

### **Introduction**

The history of Ancient Rome served as an extremely interesting source base for William Shakespeare’s plays such as *Julius Caesar* (1599–1600), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–1607), *Coriolanus* (1607–1608), and the poem *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593). In Renaissance England, an interest in Roman history was entirely natural. Elizabethans owed their familiarity with the texts of ancient historians to translations from ancient Greek and Latin, as well as to a specific attitude towards history, which for artists of the Renaissance era was “a school of politics and a school of morals” (Torkut, 2004, p. 19). It is therefore entirely logical that Elizabethan “men of letters” turned their attention to well-known historical figures, who in most fictional works appear simultaneously as public figures and as private individuals, whose fate is interesting from both historical and psychological perspectives.

The military leader and member of the Second Triumvirate, Mark Antony, and Queen Cleopatra VII Philopator of Egypt, whose life and death turn out to be closely related, occupy an important place

among the famous figures of ancient Roman history. Both protagonists have real prototypes. Researchers proved that Shakespeare borrowed the story from Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, translated by Thomas North in 1579. Shakespeare’s interpretation of the tragic passion of two public figures has repeatedly attracted the attention of scholars (Franko, 1901; Mehl, 1986). The images of these historical figures were widely known to the Elizabethan public. As Yvonne Hann argues in her thesis (Hann, 2009), in the literature of the English Renaissance, there are works in which plots correlate with the lives and activities of these prominent figures. These texts include: *Antonius* (1592) by Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) by Samuel Daniel, *The Tragicomedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598) by Samuel Brandon, William Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–1608), Thomas May’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra: Queen of Aegypt* (1626), and John Dryden’s *All For Love* (1678). The comparison of the latter drama and the Shakespeare’s version of Antony and Cleopatra’s story is the object of Sanjeev Kumar’s (2023) article.

The representatives of various critical approaches, such as gender and feminism (Charlton, 2020; Randazzo, 2012), orientalism (Fadaei Heidari, 2020; Kurtuluş, 2021), psychoanalysis (Suprihandani and Jacinda, 2017), translation studies (Boikarova, 2017) focused on different aspects of this play and suggested numerous observations and conclusions dealing with the nature of conflict, the peculiarities of the characters. Much attention was given to the political aspects of the play (Logan, 2018; Sousa, 2007; Ferguson, 2024) as well as to its correlation with Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (Kostuch, 2014; Burliga, 2013).

In our opinion, the ending of Shakespeare's play, which at the plot level completely coincides with the generally accepted version of the dramatic demise of Antony and Cleopatra, deserves deeper, multifaceted research attention. The previous scholarly investigations are dedicated only to certain details of the play's tragic ending, particularly historical ones. For example, in Michael Kremenik's work "Shame and Betrayal in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*" (2020) the double suicide of the lovers is analysed with regard to the correspondence of Shakespeare's version to the historical information available to the playwright in his time. In the article "The Death of Cleopatra" by Francois Pieter Retief and Louise Cilliers (2006), the biography of the Egyptian queen, her relationship with Antony, their last days, and the probable causes of Cleopatra's death (a snakebite and poisoning) are examined. Interestingly, even in the medical realm, there are studies on the cause of Cleopatra's death. For example, the study by William Maloney "The Death of Cleopatra, a Medical Analysis of the Theory of Suicide by Naja Haje" (2010), is a complete refutation of the possible death of Cleopatra and her two maids, Charmian and Iras, from the bite of an Egyptian cobra. Instead, the author of the article insists on Octavius Caesar's involvement in Cleopatra's demise.

However, Shakespeare's ending is also interesting from a psychological perspective, as the characters reflect on the motivation behind their own decisions. Thus, an analysis of the double suicide of Antony and Cleopatra through the prism of the theory of liminality seems productive, as it will allow for a deeper understanding of both the characters and the specifics of Shakespeare's artistic representation of the theme of the famous death choice. Helpful for our study also appear to be the literary methodology of psychoanalysis, based on Sigmund Freud's theory (Zborovska, 2003), and the analytical experience of gender studies (Khrabrova, 2012; Hillman, 2013).

The theory of liminality occupies a prominent place in modern scholarly discourse. The notion of liminality as well as the classification of rites was introduced by the ethnographer Arnold van Gennep in his 1909 book *Rites de passage*. He argues that "a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)" (Gennep, 1960, p. 11). In the

1960–1980s the anthropologist Victor Turner (1967, 1982, 1991) developed this concept in his numerous research works. Today it is in the focus of scholars' attention, both Ukrainian (Sukhomlynov, 2012; Naumovska, 2022; Soletskyi, 2010, 2018; Bortnik 2017, 2022 etc.) and foreign (Hollebon, 1986; Thomassen, 2009, including Shakespeareans, such as Haworth, 2021; McLelland, 2023 and others).

Among the terms used by the representatives of the theory of liminality, the concept of a liminal situation deserves special attention in the context of this study. According to Victor Turner's definition, liminal situations are "phases betwixt and between states where social-structural role-playing is dominant" (Turner, 1991, p. 138).

Drawing on Arnold van Gennep's concept of liminality, Victor Turner characterizes what he calls "liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority" (1991, p. 128). Brian Sutton-Smith views liminal and liminoid situations as conditions in which new symbols, models, and paradigms emerge — essentially, as fertile ground for cultural creativity (Sutton-Smith, 1972).

**The aim** of this article is to outline the interpretation of the protagonists' psychological self-reflections in a liminal situation that ends in suicide.

### Presentation of the textual analysis

*Antony and Cleopatra* is one of the most emotional, passionate, and sensual among the cycle of Roman plays. The key conflict here is not only the struggle between the political and the erotic, between duty and feeling, but also the gender roles played by the protagonists and the internal transformations they undergo, as well as the states they experience during various situations.

Throughout the whole play, Roman politician and military leader Mark Antony lives through a wide range of emotions towards Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. He is passionately in love with her, spends most of the time in her palace in Alexandria and thinks nothing of the political matters of Rome:

His captain's heart,  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gypsy's lust. (Act 1 Scene 1, 6–10)

If we consider Antony's behaviour through the prism of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, we see that his "Ego" submits to his "Id" particularly in those scenes of the play when the protagonist is in Egypt, while his "Superego" "activates" during resolving political issues, especially when Antony returns to Rome.

In Egypt, Antony succumbs to his passionate desire to spend time with Cleopatra; he seemingly loses an important component of his identity (Roman general and politician). Antony's supporter named Philo notices that:

Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony  
He comes too short of that great property  
Which still should go with Antony.  
(Act 1 Scene 1, 66–68)

However, one cannot speak of the complete dominance of the “Id” over the “Ego” and “Superego” of the protagonist. This is evidenced, for example, by the fact that at times Antony still participates in political and military affairs; he occasionally leaves Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria. This is also proved by Antony’s marriage to Caesar’s sister, Octavia. Cold reason, not love or passion, leads him to this marriage. Shakespeare puts a very telling remark into the mouth of Menas, one of Pompey’s adherents: “I think the policy of that purpose made more in / the marriage than the love of the parties” (Act 2 Scene 2, 148–149).

David Hillman (2013) claims that “his dutiful adherence to Rome (whether in the shape of Fulvia or Octavia) serves as a counterweight to his devotion to the pleasures of Egypt, and his reversion to Cleopatra counters the weight of his Roman duties” (312).

Antony repeatedly quarrels with the Egyptian queen, is jealous of her, but in most cases proves unable to resist his own passion. As is rightly noted by Marianne Novy, “although Antony and Cleopatra have their fights, including some sparked by Antony’s jealousy, they always forgive each other” (2017, p. 95). The Battle of Actium is evidence not only of Antony’s illogical behavior but also of how, after a shameful defeat on the battlefield, he forgives his beloved. Having turned his ships to follow Cleopatra and lost the battle, Antony blames his beloved for everything:

O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See  
How I convey my shame out of thine eyes,  
By looking back what I have left behind  
’Stroyed in dishonor. (Act 3 Scene 1, 53–56)

In this liminal situation, “Id” led Antony not towards military victories, but towards emotion and pleasure:

Egypt, thou knew’st too well  
My heart was to thy rudder tied by th’ strings,  
And thou shouldst tow me after. O’er my spirit  
Thy full supremacy thou knew’st, and that  
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods  
Command me. (Act 3 Scene 11, 60–65)

But in a while the pendulum of liminality turns back again and Antony is no longer angry with Cleopatra:

Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates  
All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss.  
(Act 3 Scene 11, 76–77)

Gender studies representatives (Grams, 2016; Charlton, 2020; Smith, 2000 and others) have somewhat

contradictory opinions regarding the masculinity of the play’s main characters. For instance, Timothy Grams describes the protagonists’ relationship as sadomasochistic, in which he sees Antony as a masochist and Cleopatra as a sadist (Grams). According to Bruce Smith, who distinguishes five categories of characters in Shakespeare’s works, Antony belongs to the Hercules class: “a warrior of great stature who is guilty of striking departures from the morality of the society in which he lives” (Charlton, 2020, p. 22). Unlike Bruce Smith, Jordan Charlton sees Cleopatra as Hercules, who “performs as a lover, a militant leader, and the destroyer of the Roman triumvirate” (2020, p. 23).

To all this, it’s worth adding the perception of Cleopatra in the world of that time not just as a woman, but as an Egyptian and even as a gypsy. Keir Elam writes about three different meanings of the word “gypsy” in early modern English, and none of them had a positive connotation: 1) Egyptian nationality or origin; 2) a representative of a nomadic people; 3) “whore”, whose lust Antony’s adherent Philo speaks of at the beginning of the play as “a gypsy’s lust” (2017, pp. 35–36).

But it would be too inappropriate to assume that Shakespeare deliberately demeans his heroine. On the contrary, “Cleopatra is the one sexually active woman in Shakespeare whose lover or husband forgives her for her past affairs” (Novy, 2017, p. 141). Moreover, the playwright referred to other Roman plays only by the name of the male protagonist (*Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*), and in the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Egyptian queen was also mentioned, which indicates the equality of the two characters.

Particular attention should be paid to the ending of the play *Antony and Cleopatra*, specifically the double suicide of the protagonists. Despite his ardent love, passion and irresistible sexual desire for Cleopatra, Antony instantly explodes when he learns of the political relationship between Octavius Caesar and the Egyptian queen. He even wishes her death:

The witch shall die.  
To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall  
Under this plot. She dies for’t.  
(Act 4 Scene 12, 53–56)

Antony demonstrates quite hysterical behaviour, which indicates the femininity of his character. Antony’s neurotic actions push him towards impulsive statements and deeds. He loses his masculinity, nearing Thanatos, humiliates his rival Octavius Caesar, and moreover, calls his beloved “witch”. In Elizabethan times, “the description of witches and how they use their power, however, reveal a distinct connection to the feminine senses of touch, taste, and smell, which were considered natural to women” (Kaninen, 2020, p. 5).

While wishing Cleopatra to die, the protagonist himself has no idea of his future life. Mentally, he is

already on the threshold between life and death, and this stage can be called preliminal, he is no longer the Antony he used to be, his identity is about to be lost:

My good knave Eros, now thy captain is  
Even such a body. Here I am Antony,  
Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.  
(Act 4 Scene 14, 16–18)

When Antony was informed of Cleopatra's death, who had in fact only hidden from him in the tomb, he felt that the future lost its meaning for him. This, in turn, caused a strong desire to end his life, and the character asks his subordinates to kill him. Receiving refusals, he falls on his own sword, but this impulsive act leads only to a mortal wound, but not to immediate death as he desired.

It is at this moment that the liminal phase begins — a state of slow dying, when the body is no longer able to return to life, but the brain and consciousness are still functioning. Half-dead, Antony is informed that Cleopatra is alive and calling for him. Realizing the irreversible nature of his act, the hero feels the full depth of the tragedy of the situation in which he found himself by his own will. He asks to be carried to his beloved and confesses his feelings to her one last time. Antony's final moments are filled with immense sadness and, at the same time, memories of a happy past, as he dies beside the woman he loves:

I am dying, Egypt, dying. Only  
I here importune death awhile until  
Of many thousand kisses the poor last  
I lay upon thy lips. (Act 4 Scene 15, 22–25)

Thanatos becomes increasingly powerful in Cleopatra's psyche after Antony's death. Thoughts of suicide are the harbingers of entering a liminal state. Unlike the glorious Roman, who loses his masculinity in the Battle of Actium and just after the defeat, Cleopatra acquires masculine traits. She wins over Antony in a psychological struggle, which leads to the collapse of his political career. However, her own life also loses meaning in the process. Cleopatra's ability to control Antony and hold power over him is a unique feature of the play as "Shakespeare goes further in his portrayal of the Egyptian queen than with most of the other women he writes" (Charlton, 2020, p. 21).

Antony joins the world of the dead, and this becomes the third, post-liminal phase. It is interesting that just before death the protagonist claims his Roman identity. Gül Kurtuluş argues that "the international love affair of Antony prevents him to fulfil his duties and forces him to alter his Roman identity" (2021, p. 108). The scholar adds that "his love affair with Cleopatra appears to be destructive for his Roman identity" (2021, p. 108). This statement needs more substantiation, because the protagonist was experiencing such transformations only for a certain period of time; finally, his Roman origin triumphed in

him and Antony died as a true Roman. Thus, he dies with honour and dignity:

I lived the greatest prince o' th' world,  
The noblest, and do now not basely die,  
Not cowardly put off my helmet to  
My countryman — a Roman by a Roman  
Valiantly vanquished. Now my spirit is going;  
I can no more. (Act 4 Scene 15, 63–68)

After Antony throws himself on his sword, Cleopatra realises that life without him is not attractive to her; she enters the preliminary phase, and she is threatened with disgrace from the triumphant Octavius Caesar. Cleopatra chooses death so as not to be humiliated by him. At the same time the world without Antony loses its value for her:

Noblest of men, woo't die?  
Hast thou no care of me? Shall I abide  
In this dull world, which in thy absence is  
No better than a sty? O see, my women,  
The crown o' th' Earth doth melt. — My lord!  
(Act 4 Scene 15, 69–73)

Preparing for her death, she is talking about the most terrible and humiliating things for a queen:

Sir, I will eat no meat; I'll not drink, sir.  
If idle talk will once be necessary —  
I'll not sleep neither. This mortal house I'll ruin,  
Do Caesar what he can. (Act 5 Scene 2, 59–62)

Being on the threshold between Caesar's humiliating triumph and the end of her earthly life, Cleopatra chooses death. She is guided by cold reason, acquiring masculine traits. She dresses in royal clothes and puts on a crown. A peasant brings her a basket of figs and poisonous serpents, whose bite is painless but deadly. The preparation for death is characterized by its dynamism and intensity; Cleopatra desires to quickly join the world of the dead, to her Antony. She is, as it were, marrying him (death and marriage are also considered rites of passage). In the rituals of many peoples, there are farewell ceremonies for premarital life on the eve of a wedding. For example, the bride is expected to cry the day before the wedding. This tradition dates back to times when a daughter would leave her parents' home and symbolically "die" to her relatives. Similarly, burial rites are accompanied by tears, changing clothes, and so on:

Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have  
Immortal longings in me. Now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.  
Yare, yare, good Iras, quick. Methinks I hear  
Antony call. I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath.  
(Act 5 Scene 2, 335–342)

An interesting example of “transitionalism” is also the fact that Cleopatra simultaneously communicates with Antony, as a representative of the dead, and with her supporters, who are still among the living. Furthermore, Cleopatra’s dual state is characterized by symbols such as “air” and “fire”. Air symbolizes life, lightness, and flight, while fire is a sign of passion, belligerence, and courage:

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. – So, have you done?  
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.  
Farewell, kind Charmian. — Iras, long farewell.  
(Act 5 Scene 2, 342–347)

Entering the liminal phase, Cleopatra applies one asp to her breast and another to her arm. Dying, she rejoices that she will soon be with her beloved again: “As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle — / O Antony” (Act 5 Scene 2, 371–372).

At the post-liminal stage, the dead Cleopatra remains as charming as she was in life: “she looks like sleep, / As she would catch another Antony / In her strong toil of grace” (Act 5 Scene 2, 415–417).

One of the rituals that accompany the transition is a change of clothes. As a rule, in many cultures it is customary to change the clothes of the deceased after death, as Arnold van Gennep wrote about: “the deceased is dressed in his best clothes” (162), and in the case of Antony and Cleopatra, they themselves change their clothes before committing suicide. Thus, Antony asks his supporter Eros to take off his armour: “Unarm, Eros. The long day’s task is done, / And we must sleep” (Act 4 Scene 14, 44–45) or “No more a soldier. Bruisèd pieces, go” (Act 4 Scene 14, 52). Contrary to him, Cleopatra asks for her royal robes and her crown: “Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have / Immortal longings in me” (Act 5 Scene 2, 335–336).

Thus, before his death, when Antony frees himself from his armour, he essentially loses his status of a warrior, while Cleopatra deliberately chooses to die in a magnificent outfit to maximally contrast her royal status with the shameful and humiliating status of a slave that Octavius Caesar’s triumph would have condemned her to.

So, losing their initial hierarchy, the play’s protagonists acquire a new one, transitioning into another dimension of existence, symbolically uniting their souls in the afterlife. Both Antony and Cleopatra do not die suddenly; they remain “on the threshold”. The protagonists depart from life with dignity, and they also have time to express their feelings and emotions. Each of them goes not simply into the embrace of death, but toward their love.

### Conclusions

The finale of William Shakespeare’s Roman play *Antony and Cleopatra*, which depicts the suicide of

the two main characters, vividly portrays a liminal situation, i. e., a transitional state in which they find themselves on the threshold of death. A notable feature of this situation is that both Antony and Cleopatra consciously choose suicide, and the playwright allows the audience to understand the motivation of their choices. Realising the irreversibility of the transition, each of the characters builds a hierarchy of value priorities that is oriented not towards the external world, but towards their own identity. The concepts of dignity and passionate love emerge as axiological dominants, the loss of which, for both Antony and Cleopatra, is equivalent to losing the meaning of life. In Shakespeare’s interpretation of the ending, liminality emerges as the result of a careful analysis of the situation the characters find themselves in, due to the conflict between the erotic and the political.

An examination of the protagonists’ behaviour through the lens of psychoanalysis suggests that many of Antony’s actions reveal the conflict between sexual drive (libido) and personal identity (Roman, warrior, politician). Cleopatra, on the other hand, exhibits a certain masculinity, determined by her royal status. When Antony chooses Rome and his own political career, his “Superego” suppresses his “Id”, which creates a neurotic situation but does not destroy the sociopolitical components of his identity that are important to him. Instead, the victory of libido leads to a state of self-disappointment: the hero is unhappy with himself, wishing he could replay the scenes that led to shame and political defeat. In the finale, the hero consciously chooses suicide: initially, he wants to avoid Octavius Caesar’s humiliating triumph, and upon learning of Cleopatra’s “death”, he desires to reunite with his beloved. Cleopatra ends her life driven by similar impulses.

It is notable that the characters’ self-reflections in the liminal situation reflect their inner readiness to end their earthly journey as befits noble individuals — a Roman triumvir and an Egyptian queen. They are determined not just to pass into eternity, but to preserve the honour of their name through their death. While “between two worlds”, Mark Antony and Cleopatra continue to communicate with those around them and undergo a change of attire: Antony asks for his armour to be removed, while Cleopatra orders her royal robes and crown to be brought to her. This sacred moment is characterised by signs of ritual, as the Egyptian queen calls Antony her husband and seems to be preparing to marry him.

The triumph that Octavius Caesar had hoped for and sought did not materialise as a result of the double suicide of his enemies. Shakespeare emphasises that by their deaths Antony and Cleopatra not only destroyed Octavius Caesar’s plans, but also forced him to acknowledge their human dignity, and it becomes a triumph of love over vain earthly affairs. By ordering the renowned couple to be buried in one tomb, the triumvir prophesies that the memory of their love will live longer than the winner’s glory.

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**Світлана Дейнека**

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**«ВСЕ ЗРОБИМО ХОРОБРО Й БЛАГОРОДНО, ПО РИМСЬКОМУ ВИСОКОМУ ЗВИЧАЮ;  
І СМЕРТЬ ПИШАТИМЕТЬСЯ, ЩО НАС ПРИЙМЕ»:  
ФІНАЛ П'ЕСИ ШЕКСПІРА «АНТОНІЙ І КЛЕОПАТРА»**

Стаття присвячена інтерпретації фіналу римської п'єси Вільяма Шекспіра «Антоній і Клеопатра» крізь призму лімінальності — граничного, перехідного стану, в якому опиняються головні герої перед смертю. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростанням інтересу сучасної гуманітаристики до концептів межового досвіду, психологічного зламу і трансформації ідентичності в художньому тексті.

Новизна розвідки полягає в тому, що фінал Шекспірової п'єси прочитується в контексті теорії лімінальності як ритуальна ініціація, де смерть героїв набуває екзистенційного і символічного змісту. Предметом аналізу обрано поведінку і психічні рефлексії Антонія і Клеопатри, які усвідомлено обирають самогубство як вихід із незворотної ситуації, що виникає внаслідок конфлікту політичного та еротичного.

Метою цієї статті є виклад інтерпретації психологічних саморефлексій головних героїв у лімінальній ситуації, яка закінчується самогубством. Для досягнення мети використано методи психоаналітичної критики, герменевтики і «пильного читання» художнього тексту.

Результатом дослідження є висновок, що у фіналі п'єси смерть протагоністів постає не як поразка, а як акт гідності. Показано, що герої, остерігаючись тріумфу супротивника (Октавія Цезаря) і публічної ганьби, а також не уявляючи власного життя без об'єкта свого пристрасного кохання, усвідомлюють невідворотність смерті, яка сприймається ними як єдиний прийнятний вихід. Шекспір підкреслює, що цим актом Антоній і Клеопатра не лише руйнують плани Октавія Цезаря, а й змушують його визнати їхню людську гідність, і це, зрештою, стає тріумфом кохання над марнославними земними справами. Останні дії закоханих (зміна вбрання, прощання, ритуалізація смерті) сприймаються як сакральна підготовка до переходу в інший стан буття.

Перспективи подальшого вивчення включають розширення аналізу лімінальних станів та ритуалізації смерті у творчості Шекспіра й інших письменників епохи Ренесансу, а також поглиблене дослідження психоаналітичних аспектів вибору смерті та трансформації ідентичності у художній літературі.

*Ключові слова:* Шекспір; «Антоній і Клеопатра»; Ренесанс; лімінальність; самогубство; психоаналіз; гендерні студії; еротичне; політичне.

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