The Cleopatra and Julius Caesar connection was formed when Julius Caesar fled to Egypt in pursuit of his enemy Pompey (McManus, 2001). Pompey has already been executed by the Egyptians. Julius Caesar, however, is not threatened by the same fate for he carried a much greater army force.

Julius Caesar is smitten by the woman delivered through a carpet; it is smuggled through Alexandria and is presented as a gift for the Roman leader (Grochowski, 2005). Cleopatra is then about 21 or 22 years old. Julius Caesar immediately recognized the potential of being lovers and allies.

The relationship could have been for love among any other. However, there are also political agenda behind the union. They are both leaders of influential and powerful nations. They have people under them, armies that could fight battles and win them. Both Rome and Egypt needs intellectual leaders.

Specifically, for Cleopatra’s side, she saw how a Caesar’s fleet could easily return her to power which he eventually did. Julius Caesar killed Cleopatra’s brother and husband, Ptolemy XIII when his army drove them away only to drown in the Nile. This was during the Alexandrian War. Julius Caesar made sure that Cleopatra is firm in her position as the leader of Egypt. He even left three legions to protect Cleopatra’s reign of power (McManus, 2001). He made sure that any insurgencies could be dismissed by his powerful army.

For Julius Caesar, the union will unite two great lands, Egypt and Rome. He has an ultimate dream that his children would someday rule this land. Julius Caesar could have also seen Alexandria as a strategic location for his battles and as time pass by, Egypt could also form a powerful army to help him in his conquests.

Cleopatra, though said to still be in love Julius Caesar, married her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV, to return her rule over Egypt. However, she was also married to Julius Caesar because Egypt allows polygamy. Cleopatra and Julius Caesar spent time in Alexandria. The Roman leader, however, is called for to lead his army to battles. He emerged victorious but returned to Rome instead.

Julius Caesar and Cleopatra also had a son, Caesarion. Julius Caesar sent for his wife and son to be brought to Rome, with the great surprise of the Roman people. Out of respect for Julius Caesar, the people did not really give much attention to the fact that Julius Caesar married a foreign woman albeit having a Roman wife (McManus, 2001). The son was later executed for the fear that he can claim the land that is rightfully his father’s.

During Julius Caesar’s reign, he is able to claim much land for his people as well as established a well-settled society. He was then given the ultimate title as a dictator for life, thus bearing an unmatched power for the rest of his life. This was only a year after being declared a dictator or a ruler who has a complete power. However, Julius Caesar’s life was also threatened because of this title.

The title has earned him the people’s support but he also received the Senate’s unworthy action. Since Julius Caesar has made any changes without consulting the Senate, he became an unpopular person for them. Before he is to leave for yet another conquest, he met with the Senate. There he met his end as he is stabbed to his death by all sixty Senate people, lead by Brutus and Cassius.

Cleopatra and son, Caesarion left Rome, where a civil war broke. They returned to Egypt, there, Cleopatra allegedly poisoned her brother / husband / co-regent. Cleopatra then announced her son with Julius Caesar as a co-ruler and re-acquired rule of Egypt. This is when her rule was entirely secured locally, unlike the two previous co-regents.

Shakespeare offers an excellent contrast between the characters of Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony in Act 2, Scene 3 of the play. Antony asks the Soothsayer whose fortunes will rise higher in the future, his or Caesar, and the Soothsayer replies as follows:

SOOTHSAYER.  
Caesar's.  
Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side:  
Thy demon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,  
Where Caesar's is not; but near him thy angel  
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd: therefore  
Make space enough between you.

ANTONY.  
Speak this no more.

SOOTHSAYER.  
To none but thee; no more but when to thee.  
If thou dost play with him at any game,  
Thou art sure to lose; and of that natural luck  
He beats thee 'gainst the odds: thy lustre thickens  
When he shines by: I say again, thy spirit  
Is all afraid to govern thee near him;  
But, he away, 'tis noble.

Caesar is shrewd, cunning, cautious, secretive, watchful, selfish and calculating. Antony is notorious for his hedonism. He loves sports, drinking, eating, carousing. In Julius Caesar, Cassius calls Antony "a masker and a reveller." Antony is, as the Soothsayer tells him, a bigger and better man than Octavius Caesar in most respects. He is more courageous, a much better soldier, generous, a good friend and a passionate lover. But Caesar wins out in the end because he is a younger man, whereas Antony has passed his prime and is on a downhill course which is accelerated by his obsession with Cleopatra. Going to Egypt was probably the worst thing Antony could have chosen, because the queen and her kingdom are notorious for orgies and dissipation, the kinds of pleasures that Antony has always loved. Antony's dominant character trait is emotion; Caesar's dominant character trait is intellect. Antony relies on intuition. He is impulsive, rash, spontaneous. Caesar seems cold-blooded in comparison to Antony. Caesar really despises sensual indulgence because it interferes with his ability to reason. In all of his dialogue in the play, Caesar seems cool and self-possessed. Whatever feelings he has he keeps to himself. It is no wonder that Caesar, as the Soothsayer remarks, beats Antony at any game. Caesar is a man who "plays his cards right."

The main theme of Antony and Cleopatra is introduced in the very first lines of the play by a minor character named Philo:

PHILO.  
Nay, but this dotage of our general's  
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,  
That o'er the files and musters of the war  
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,  
The office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front: 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 gipsy's lust.

[Flourish within.]

Look where they come:  
Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transform'd  
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see.

The main theme has to do with the downfall of a famous historical figure whose fortitude and acumen are undermined by a fascinating but destructive woman who is an equally famous historical figure. Cleopatra manipulates Antony to serve her own purposes. He is totally infatuated with her. He makes fatal decisions because of her. He marries Caesar's sister Octavia in order to cement his relationship with Caesar, but then he outrages both of them by returning to Egypt and resuming his lustful and riotous behavior with Cleopatra. Antony seems to know that he is on a fatal course but is powerless to change his ways at this late stage of his life. Caesar is twenty years younger than Antony; he is on his way up, whereas Antony is obviously on his way down.