THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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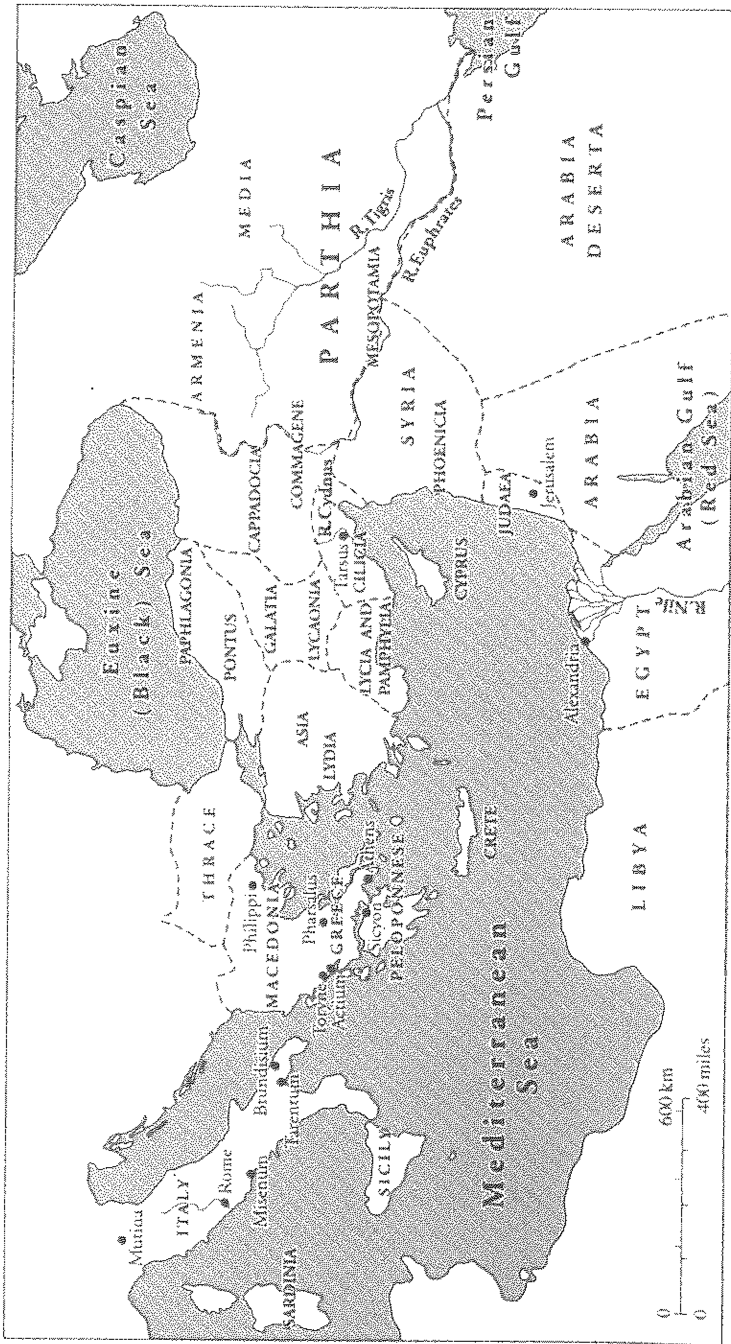
* Second series

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Edited by
JOHN WILDERS

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY



1 The Eastern Mediterranean, *c.* 31 BC

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare probably completed *Antony and Cleopatra* towards the end of 1606 or early in 1607, after he had finished *Macbeth* and before he embarked on *Coriolanus* (see pages 69–75). He was then in his early forties and had been writing for the theatre for about seventeen years. The play is a dramatization of a tragic and celebrated love affair, the story of which had been well known to writers and readers for centuries before Shakespeare created his version of it. The story had been told in detail by the first-century biographer Plutarch and his account translated into both French and English. Virgil had referred to it in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, Horace had written an ode on the courage and dignity of Cleopatra's suicide (*Odes* 1.37), and Chaucer had described her death in *The Legend of Good Women*. The story had been the subject of many paintings, and at least two dramatizations had been written in English before Shakespeare embarked on his. In attempting to write a play on such a celebrated subject, Shakespeare clearly set a challenge for himself. He rose to it so splendidly that in most of our minds Antony and Cleopatra actually were the people he created.

They impress us as exceptional people partly because we are conscious of their legendary status, a status which, in the play, they cultivate by the public extravagance of their lives. They are also extravagant in the range and intensity of their feelings. Both of them, but especially Cleopatra, shift rapidly from tenderness to fury and grief and the emotions of the one are largely determined by those of the other. What they seldom express, however, is love and when they do so it is a love

which is seldom experienced in the present but remembered from the past:

> When you sued staying,
> Then was the time for words; no going then.
> Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
> Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
> But was a race of heaven.
>
> (1.3.34–8)

We are willing to believe in their love, moreover, not simply because they recollect it so movingly but because the violence of their frequent quarrels testifies to their total absorption in each other. At a much lower emotional pitch, we sense Beatrice and Benedick's fascination with each other because of their repeated denials that they are fascinated.

Unlike Shakespeare's early romantic tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra* is also a play about international politics, a public as well as a private drama in which Antony and Octavius compete for mastery over the Roman empire which, at the time, extended from Britain in the west to what is now Turkey in the east, and the battles in which this contest was fought out occupy much of the third and fourth acts. As in all his political plays, Shakespeare portrays this struggle in terms of the central personalities engaged in it. In other words, Caesar ultimately wins and Antony loses because of the kind of people they are and because of the irresistible power which Cleopatra exercises over Antony. This gives to the relationship between the lovers a sense of unusual weight and risk. Because Antony takes flight from the sea battle when Cleopatra has fled, we are readily convinced that a mere gesture from her would induce him to defy 'the bidding of the gods'. His dependency on her leads him to lose a battle the outcome of which affects the government of the Roman world. The political element in the drama is therefore not simply a background

against which the love tragedy is played out but an inseparable part of it. Antony and Cleopatra seem to us larger than life because the future of the known world appears to depend on their relationship. They also see themselves as larger than life and it is typical of their self-dramatization that when Antony distributes the countries of the eastern empire to Cleopatra and her children he does so in a public ceremony at which the two of them sit in 'chairs of gold' on a silver platform and she is decked out in the habiliments of the goddess Isis (3.6.1–19). Her suicide, dressed in her royal vestments, is a last and entirely characteristic attempt to display herself as an extraordinary phenomenon, a 'wonderful piece of work'.

This last scene is unlike anything in Shakespeare's other tragedies and its uniqueness arises in part from the deliberately spectacular nature of Cleopatra's death. On the one hand it is a scene of absolute defeat in which the queen is shown as having lost everything apart from the two waiting women who have supported her throughout the play and when it concludes, all three of them are dead. In her last moments, however, she asserts that by her death she will be reunited with her lover in a world where they will be immune to time and change:

> 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. Husband, I come!
>
> (5.2.282–6)

What Caesar, the Roman onlooker, regards as a tragedy is seen by Cleopatra as an apotheosis and we are left in doubt as to whether her death is a defeat or a kind of victory. The end of *Antony and Cleopatra* seems also like a beginning and it leaves us with simultaneous feelings of loss and exhilaration.

Shakespeare, then, created his two central characters as

people who are conscious of and seek to perpetuate their legendary status. At the same time they are intimately human. In the aftermath of their most violent row, Cleopatra remembers that it is her birthday (3.13.190). She is not only the more-than-Venus who contrives an astonishing entrance in her barge but the woman who hops forty paces in the public street and was carried to Julius Caesar in a mattress. Similarly Antony can join boisterously in the drinking bout on Pompey's galley and tease the drunken Lepidus. Left alone on his throne in the empty market place near Cydnus, we are told, he shows his embarrassment by whistling to the air (2.2.226).

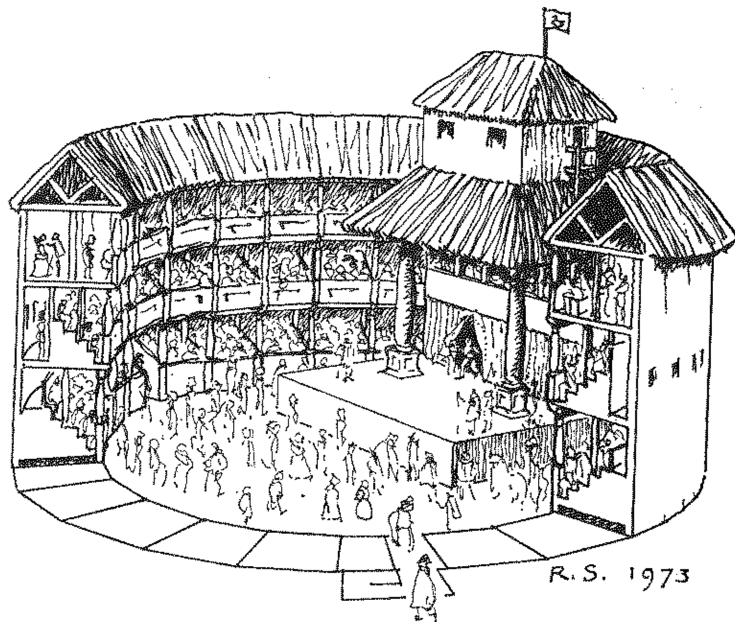
Extraordinary though the tragedy is, it has seldom been performed satisfactorily on the stage. This is partly because few actresses have managed to encompass the full range of Cleopatra's personality, but much more damaging has been the ponderous, grandiose style in which, for over a century, it was produced. Such heavy-handedness tended to swamp the fineness of Shakespeare's dialogue which, for all the geographical scope of the play, is often private and intimate. It also stretched out the playing time to an intolerable length, as the reviewers complained, and broke up into disconnected episodes a work which was designed to be acted without interruption. The most successful productions have been on the uncluttered kind of stage for which Shakespeare designed it, and the likely features of a production in his own time are the subject of the next part of this introduction. Closely related to questions of staging are the objections made to the play by academic critics who thought it lacked unity and coherence and these criticisms are the subject of the section which follows. Criticism of the play's coherence is essentially criticism of its construction, the next general topic to be discussed, and the complexity of its structure gives rise to the complex, ambiguous impressions which it creates on an audience – our uncertainty as to how we should judge the major characters, the subject of another section. Such ambiguities, which are deeper and more

sustained than those created by Shakespeare's other tragedies, preclude the possibility of any clear, simple response to the play, to the extent that some critics, notably A. C. Bradley, have doubted whether it is actually tragic, a subject considered in the next section. The introduction proceeds to a discussion of the play's distinctive language and style and an account of the sources from which Shakespeare took his material. It concludes with the more specialized topics of the probable date when the play was written and the state of the text as it was printed in the First Folio.

JACOBEAN PERFORMANCE

Continuity and speed

Jacobean public stages were very simple – not much more than an empty wooden platform about 43 feet wide and 27 feet deep thrust into the middle of the spectators with no scenery to raise or lower. There was a wall at the back with two doors through which the actors could make swift entrances and exits so that one group could walk on as another went off. The division of *Antony and Cleopatra* into five acts and forty-two scenes, begun by Nicholas Rowe in his edition of Shakespeare's works in 1709 and elaborated by subsequent editors, conveys an entirely false impression of the continuity and speed of performance which was possible in the theatre of Shakespeare's time. In the first printed text, the Folio of 1623, there are no act or scene divisions, and it is not difficult to imagine how in a Jacobean playhouse it could be performed as one single, uninterrupted action. Although in *Romeo and Juliet* (1. Prologue 12) the Chorus refers to 'the two hours' traffic of our stage', some of Shakespeare's contemporaries estimate three hours as the average playing time (Gurr, 33), and *Antony and Cleopatra* when performed on the Jacobean stage would have lasted no longer than that. A recent English production (by the Royal

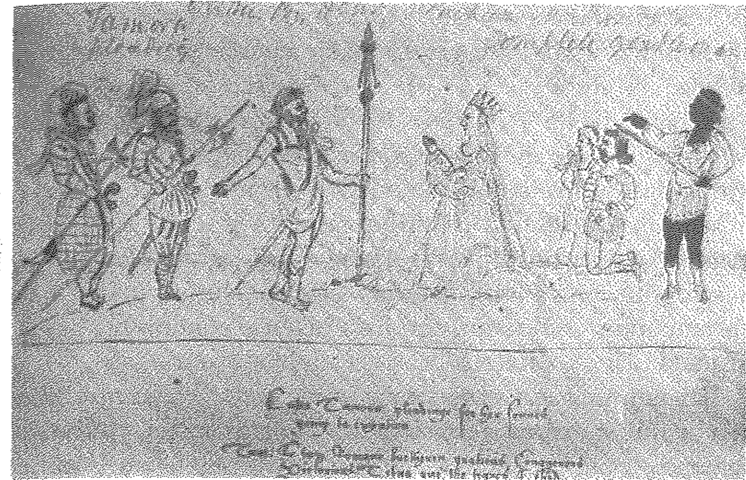


2 An artist's impression of the kind of playhouse (the Swan) for which *Antony and Cleopatra* was written (see also p. 21 and p. 24, Fig. 5)

Shakespeare Company in 1992) in which the scene changes were quick and simple lasted three and a quarter hours.

Visual language

The sheer emptiness of Shakespeare's stage and the absence of scenery focused the audience's attention on the actors, who were, presumably, dressed in a combination of contemporary and 'classical' costumes of the kind depicted in the Longleat manuscript (Fig. 3). This drawing, by Henry Peacham, the only known portrayal of a performance in Shakespeare's own time, shows an episode from *Titus Andronicus*, in which Queen Tamora pleads with Titus for the lives of two of her sons. The two pikemen on the left of the drawing wear the normal dress



3 Drawing of a scene from *Titus Andronicus* dated 1595

of soldiers of the time, including breeches and feathered helmets. Titus, Aaron and the two sons, however, wear stage versions of classical costume: buskins, cuirasses and, in the case of Titus and one of the sons, cloaks or skimpy togas. Titus wears a laurel wreath on his head, the Roman token of victory in battle. Tamora is dressed in a tall crown and an ample, full-length gown with embroidered sleeves, which, according to Muriel St Clare Byrne, 'characterise the stage heroine or tragedy queen until the end of the eighteenth century. There is nothing classical about her' (Byrne, 3.291). Although Cleopatra's command to Charmian, 'cut my lace', indicates that she wore the kind of tight bodice recently favoured by Queen Elizabeth and other fashionable ladies, there was probably some attempt to provide her and her entourage with 'Egyptian' clothes as well as the 'divers coloured fans' held by the eunuchs who attend her on her first entrance. Clothing is significant as an indication of nationality, rank and gender, as when an episode is devoted to the arming of Antony by Cleopatra before battle (4.4) and another to his disarming

by Eros after his defeat (4.14). Antony and Cleopatra's exchange of clothing which she recalls with amusement during his absence in Rome (2.5.21–3) is, to Caesar, a sign of their degeneracy (1.4.5–7). Dress conveys information as well as creating spectacle and it is important that Philo and Demetrius, with whose conversation the tragedy begins, should be identifiably Roman soldiers commenting on their leader's enslavement by an Egyptian queen. Again, when, as the play moves towards its conclusion, Cleopatra ceremoniously puts on her queenly robes and crown, her dress helps to confirm her belief that she is not a defeated but a triumphant woman.

Though no visual impressions were created by scenery, the play is full of expressive groupings of characters on which the audience could concentrate without distraction, most notably when Cleopatra and her gentlewomen raise Antony aloft into the temporarily private haven of her monument. Shakespeare is, moreover, often quite specific in his stage directions, as when Pompey and Menas enter '*at one door with drum and trumpet*' and the triumvirs and their supporters come on '*at another ... with Soldiers marching*' (2.6). This first encounter between the opposing sides is thus accompanied by the sounds and sights of war. In their next (and last) meeting (2.7) the representatives of both sides, placed 'hand in hand', join in the singing of a drunken song before helping one another to stagger off Pompey's galley. Again, the entry direction to 2.3 specifically instructs Antony and Caesar to come on with Octavia '*between them*', a visible expression of the divided loyalties which are to trouble her more deeply as the action develops. The Longleat manuscript, which shows the two Roman soldiers to the left and the two captive sons to the right of the principal characters, suggests that 'the stage groupings were kept symmetrical as much as possible' (Lamb, 28). Such normally symmetrical arrangements would, of course, have highlighted occasional asymmetries, as at the end of Pompey's feast when a conference which has begun formally concludes in disorder.

Aural language

To be present at a performance of this tragedy is an aural as well as a visual experience created not simply by the counterpointing of the various voices but by the musical accompaniment which Shakespeare's stage directions require. The initial entrance of Antony and Cleopatra is heralded by a 'Flourish' which (ironically, in its context) 'proclaims the imperial theme' (Long, 202), as does the flourish which accompanies the exit of the triumvirs at the end of their conference (2.2.180). Drums and trumpets are brought playing on to the stage after the initial flourish which signals the arrival of Pompey, Menas and the triumvirs in 2.6. Music of a different kind – probably hautboys (ancestors of the modern oboe) – introduces the banquet on Pompey's galley, and the dance which concludes it was probably played by a 'loud consort' combining hautboys, fifes, drums and trumpets (Long, 212). '*Hautboys ... under the stage*' are specifically asked for in the eerie, mysterious episode (4.3) in which the 'god Hercules' is said to desert Antony on the night before battle. This may be compared to another supernatural moment when, in *Macbeth*, the witches' cauldron sinks beneath the stage and 'hautboys' are again required (Jones, 255). When, in the next scene (4.4.23) Antony, having been armed, greets his troops on the morning of battle, there is a flourish of trumpets, and each one of the battle scenes which follow is introduced by the sound either of drums and trumpets or of trumpets alone. The music not only creates a suitably martial impression but provides bridges which link these short, swiftly moving episodes together (Long, 217). Hence, although the resources of the Shakespearean playhouse were limited, Shakespeare used them with an expressive variety which nevertheless did not prevent the performance from moving quickly and without interruption.

Casting

Antony and Cleopatra is one of the longest of Shakespeare's plays (only *Richard III*, the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline* are longer) and, in addition to an indeterminate number of extras (the sentries, soldiers and messengers who make brief, sometimes silent appearances), has an unusually large number of speaking parts. There is, however, ample evidence to show that in the Jacobean playhouse the doubling of roles was customary. Some of the characters, such as Philo, Demetrius, the Soothsayer, Menecrates and Menas, appear only in the early scenes, and the actors who played them could reappear as Taurus, Diomedes, Seleucus, the Ambassador or the Clown. In the most recent and detailed study of the casting of Shakespeare's plays, it is estimated that twelve men could play the nineteen principal male roles and four boys the four female roles (King, 91). This corresponds to what appears to have been the average number of principal actors in the company (ibid., 6). The minor roles would be played by hired men or playhouse attendants who probably joined the company late in the rehearsal period. In Adrian Noble's production for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1982 in which there was some doubling, the company consisted of nineteen men and four women.

The role of Cleopatra was presumably designed for a boy. If it were not, her reference to some future 'squeaking Cleopatra' who would 'boy' her greatness 'i'th' posture of a whore' would lose most of its point. This extraordinarily daring image of an incompetent boy actor failing to do justice to the stature of the actual woman shows that the adolescent for whom Shakespeare created the role would be well able to fulfil the demands it made on him.[1] Our sense of Cleopatra's uniqueness, her power, is created as much by what the other characters – especially Enobarbus – say about her as by what she herself says and does. Shakespeare would not have written such accounts of her effect on others, however, unless he had known that the boy could himself convey something of her magic to the audience, and in the prolonged final scene he had to display Cleopatra's greatness more or less on his own. If we are sceptical about an adolescent boy's ability to do justice to the role, it is probably because we underestimate the intelligence of children of that age. Moreover the boy actors were the products of a tradition which went back well beyond the playing of John Lyly's sophisticated court comedies to the performances put on by choristers during the course of the two previous centuries. With the introduction of women on to the stage this tradition was broken, but a comparable musical tradition still survives in the choir schools of British colleges and cathedrals. In the ease and professionalism with which these diminutive singers perform Renaissance polyphonic music we can still glimpse something of the skill of the original Cleopatra.

The foregoing attempt to reconstruct some of the features of the earliest performances must, of necessity, be hypothetical not simply because our knowledge of theatrical conditions in Shakespeare's time is very limited but because no record exists of any performance of the play before the middle of the eighteenth century. It is possible, but unlikely, that it was never put on at all during Shakespeare's lifetime. Two early seventeenth-century writers, however, seem to allude to performances of a play about Antony and Cleopatra. Robert Anton in *The Philosophers Satyrs* talks about immodest women who 'gad' to 'base *Playes*' where 'They shall see the *vices* of the *times*, / *Orestes* incest, *Cleopatres* crimes' (Anton, 46), and Richard Brathwait in *The English Gentlewoman* remarks that 'Loues enteruiew betwixt *Cleopatra* and *Marke Anthony*, promised to it selfe as much secure freedome as fading fancy could tender; yet the last Scene clozed all those Comicke passages with a Tragicke conclusion' (Brathwait, 196–7). The first of

1 Three of the most challenging women's roles that Shakespeare created – Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra and Volumnia – were in plays written within the same period. They may have been created for the same actor, a boy of exceptional talent.

these comments was made before the publication of the First Folio, but the second (if it does refer to Shakespeare's play) could have been based on a reading rather than a performance.

With the closing of the theatres by Act of Parliament in 1642 the kinds of playhouse for which Shakespeare wrote were obliterated. The Globe was demolished in 1644 and the Blackfriars was pulled down eleven years later in order to make way for 'tenements'. When, after the restoration of Charles II, new theatres were built, they were of a different design and served audiences of different tastes.

THE QUESTION OF UNITY

Unities of place and time

After the Restoration, criticism of the drama, and especially of tragedy, was still dominated by a respect for the 'rules' or 'unities', often attributed to Aristotle but fully formulated in the late sixteenth century by the Italian scholar Castelvetro. The drama, he declared, 'cannot represent places very far apart, while the narrative method joins together places which are widely separated'. Similarly, whereas 'the narrative method joins together diverse times', this is something which the drama cannot do, since it 'cannot represent more things than those which come about in the space of time that the comedies and tragedies themselves require' (Castelvetro, 309). As Sir Philip Sidney put it, 'the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day' (Sidney, *Defence*, 113). With its constant shifting from one part of the Mediterranean to another and its time-span of ten years, *Antony and Cleopatra* clearly violated these principles and thereby offended contemporary educated tastes.

Before *Antony and Cleopatra* was written, several tragedies on the same subject had already been published both in England

and on the continent in which Castelvetro's principles had been faithfully observed. These included *Antonius* (1592) by Mary, Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister (an adaptation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, 1578), and Samuel Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594), with both of which Shakespeare was probably acquainted (see pages 61–3). If we consider how influential the rules were, it is clear, as Bevington points out (Cam^2 46), that Shakespeare's was 'the truly innovative interpretation'.

John Dryden had the greatest admiration for Shakespeare but also realized, of course, that he was always breaking the rules, and especially in *Antony and Cleopatra*. As a kind of tribute, but also an implied criticism of Shakespeare, he wrote his own version of the tragedy, *All for Love*, a play based on Shakespeare's source, North's translation of Plutarch, and much influenced by Shakespeare but so radically rewritten as to constitute an original work and designed to suit contemporary taste. Dryden recast the action so as to keep it within the neoclassical unities and rewrote the dialogue in plainer, more lucid, decorous language. His tragedy occupies only the last day of the protagonists' lives and is confined throughout to Alexandria. Dryden also congratulated himself on maintaining the unity of action which is, as he himself wrote, 'so much one, that it is the only of the kind without Episode, or Underplot; every Scene in the Tragedy conducing to the main design, and every Act concluding with a turn of it' (Dryden, *Love*, 10). There is therefore no tragedy of Enobarbus, who is, indeed, absent from the play. Although *All for Love* cannot help but suffer by comparison with Shakespeare's play, it is an excellent tragedy of its kind and Dryden had good reason to be satisfied with it. It contains some of his most vigorous writing, as in Antony's expression of his deep affection for Dolabella:

> I was his Soul; he liv'd not but in me:
> We were so clos'd within each other's brests,

> The rivets were not found, that join'd us first.
> That does not reach us yet: we were so mixt,
> As meeting streams, both to ourselves were lost;
> We were one mass; we could not give or take,
> But from the same; for he was I, I he.
> (3.1.91–7; Dryden, *Love*, 58)

Although the language is plainer than Shakespeare's, it is seldom prosaic. It is more 'natural' but, as Dryden said in another context, it is 'exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination can carry [it] with proportion to verisimility' (Dryden, *Essays*, 1.100–1). *All for Love* was first performed in 1677 and, though it was not successful initially, it grew in popularity and was played fairly regularly until the early nineteenth century. In 1977 the Prospect Theatre Company alternated performances of Dryden's tragedy with Shakespeare's and Barbara Jefford played Cleopatra in both plays.

The eighteenth century

The first critics of *Antony and Cleopatra* deplored Shakespeare's violation of the rules. 'Almost all his Historical Plays', Nicholas Rowe complained in 1709, 'comprehend a great length of Time, and very different and distinct Places: And in his *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, the Scene travels over the greatest Part of the *Roman* Empire' (Rowe, 1.xviii). 'If one undertook to examine the greatest part of these [tragedies] by those Rules which are establish'd by Aristotle ... it would be no very hard Task to find a great many Faults' (Rowe, 1.xxvi). Such 'faults' could be explained, though not justified, by Shakespeare's having lived in 'a state of almost universal licence and ignorance'. His was a time in which everyone 'took the liberty to write according to the dictates of his own fancy.' Under the circumstances it was surprising that he managed to write as well as he did.

It is significant that Rowe, the first critical biographer of Shakespeare, was also his first scholarly editor. It was he who first divided the text consistently into acts and scenes, thereby breaking up the continuity which it had displayed in the First Folio, and he who gave to each scene a geographical location (Charney, 94). Hence the first scene, according to Rowe, is set in 'Alexandria in Egypt', the fourth in 'Rome' and 4.15 in 'A magnificent Monument'. Subsequent editors became more specific. Theobald in 1733 notes at the beginning of 1.4 that '*the scene changes to* Caesar's *Palace in* Rome' and in 4.5 that it '*changes to a Camp*'. Clearly the editors were beginning to visualise the play in terms of performance on the eighteenth-century and not the Jacobean stage. In printed editions such irrelevant directions for staging became increasingly elaborate to the extent that by 1950 Dover Wilson located 4.15 in 'Cleopatra's monument; a square stone building with a flat roof and a heavily barred gateway in the centre of the outer wall'.

The increasing fragmentation of the play as it appeared in print happened simultaneously with the growing realism of theatrical scenery. By the time David Garrick mounted what was the first recorded production (at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1759), movable scenery had been introduced into the London theatres, consisting both of 'flats' which could be rolled on and off the stage in grooves, and 'drops' which were lowered from above (Southern, 32–4, 269, plates 39–41). Some adaptation of the text had therefore to be made in order to reduce the number of scenes and to avoid frequent scene changes, a process which went on up to the end of the nineteenth century. Hence some of the Roman scenes were omitted and the many short battle scenes conflated. Since the role of Cleopatra remained substantially intact, however (the last act was performed in its entirety), the emphasis of the play was significantly altered. It became essentially a tragedy of love played out within a sketchy political context. The failure of the production – which was given only six times – was attributed by

one of the actors, Thomas Davies, to Garrick's inadequacy as Antony. Garrick, he recalled, 'from his passionate desire to give the public as much of their admired poet as possible, revived it ... with all the advantages of new scenes, habits, and other decorations proper to the play.' Nevertheless 'it did not answer his own and the public expectation' because Garrick 'wanted one necessary accomplishment: his person was not sufficiently important and commanding to represent the part' (T. Davies, 2.368). Garrick was a small man but his height was not, apparently, a handicap when he played Hamlet and Richard III, his most successful Shakespearean roles.

Of the style of Garrick's production we know practically nothing, but the only published notice suggests that it was visually striking: 'Upon the whole we think this play now better suited for the stage, than the closet, as scenery, dresses, and parade strike the eye, and divert one's attention from the poet.'[1] The prompter at Drury Lane, Richard Cross, noted in his record book that the play was 'all new dress'd and had fine Scenes' but 'did not seem to give the audience any great pleasure or draw any Applause' (Stone, 27). We have no pictures of the costumes but there are drawings of a Drury Lane *Julius Caesar* from that period which show that care was taken to reproduce Roman military dress (Merchant, 72–3), a first step towards the historical authenticity which much preoccupied nineteenth-century designers.

It may be that, when Samuel Johnson commented on *Antony and Cleopatra* in his edition of Shakespeare published six years later, he was influenced by the production put on by his close friend and former pupil David Garrick. Although he elsewhere dismissed the unities as irrelevant to the experience of a play in the theatre and used *Antony and Cleopatra* to illustrate his argument, he nevertheless protested that 'the events, of which the principal are described according to history, are produced

1 *A letter to the Hon. Author of the New Farce, Called the Rout ... Containing some remarks upon the New-revived Play of Antony and Cleopatra*, 1759 (Lamb, 45).

without any art of connection or care of disposition' (Johnson, 180).

The nineteenth century

During the course of the nineteenth century, productions became increasingly elaborate. John Philip Kemble's at Covent Garden in 1813, according to a correspondent in *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (19 December), was 'accompanied with a peculiar pomp and taste in the scenery and decorations' and he doubted whether 'Greece in all her elegance, and Rome, in all her luxury, possessed a stage which could rival Covent Garden, in pure refinement, and classical splendour'. There was an actual sea fight in which galleys were brought on to the stage and, at the conclusion of the performance, a funeral oration delivered by Dolabella ('His legs bestrid the ocean ...') was followed by a 'grand funeral procession' and an Epicedium sung by a choir of forty-five singers grouped round the sarcophagus (Davies; Lamb, 54–9). To accommodate this additional spectacle, Shakespeare's text had to be substantially cut, but further excisions were needed to make room for extracts from *All for Love*. Kemble no doubt hoped that his extravagant entertainment would fill the three thousand seats at the theatre (Odell, 2.13) but he was disappointed. The production, which was followed (as was the custom) by a comedy, *The Invisible Bridegroom*, was performed only nine times. Hazlitt, in the *Morning Chronicle* (16 November 1813), devoted most of his review to attacking the rearrangement and cutting of the text and the mixing of Shakespeare with Dryden.

Further extravaganzas followed. The most striking feature of the revival at Drury Lane in 1833, in which Macready appeared as Antony, was the designs of Charles Stanfield which, according to the playbill, included 'A Garden of Cleopatra's palace', 'a portico attached to the house of Octavius Caesar with the Capitol in the distance' and 'the promontory

of Actium with views of the fleets of Caesar and Antony' (Odell, 2.176). Samuel Phelps at Sadler's Wells in 1849 created a vast procession (unsupported by the text, of course) out of Antony's victorious return to Alexandria (4.8). 'Phelps entered marching, followed by his lieutenants, many officers in ranks of four, trophies, then "*21 troops 3 abreast*". To greet him Miss Glyn [the Cleopatra] entered with "*12 Amazonian guards*" as well as her Egyptian guards, who ranged across the back of the stage' (Lamb, 67). To accommodate such lavish additions twelve of the forty-two scenes (mostly the political and military ones) were cut.

Opulent spectacle had, however, not yet reached its greatest extravagance and, as Lamb points out, with 'the increasing use of three-dimensional pieces for realistically detailed scenery, the sets could no longer be changed in view of the audience' (73). The number of scenes had, consequently, to be further reduced, the number of intervals increased and the continuity of playing further abandoned. The audiences were, in general, delighted. After the naval battle, again performed in full view, in Frederick Chatterton's 1873 production (Fig. 4), they reached a pitch of excitement 'which would not be calmed till Mr. Chatterton came before the curtain' (*The Times*, 22 September 1873). The critics, however, were not enthusiastic. The *Illustrated London News* protested 'we cannot but suffer with regret the mutilation of a classic and colossal work.... We venture to hope that in these days of spiritualism, the shade of the Bard of Avon was not present to witness these proceedings that pay so little respect to the gorgeous poetry which they interrupt and show a disposition to substitute' (27 September). Dutton Cook observed that, with so many stage effects, the actors 'occupy a rather subordinate position. Their services cannot be wholly dispensed with; still they are felt to be but the stopgaps of the representation, the aids and vehicles of the scene painter and the designer' (Cook, 208).

Such protests, unheeded by the theatre managers, grew

4 The death of Antony in Frederick Chatterton's production at Drury Lane, 1873, with James Anderson as Antony and Ellen Wallis as Cleopatra

stronger. Both critics and audiences agreed that in his production of 1890 Lewis Wingfield had gone too far. According to *The Times* (19 November 1890) Shakespeare was 'merely the pretext for a huge Oriental pantomime' and by the end of the performance, which lasted for over four hours, 'the house was indifferent to all but its own exhaustion'. The critic of the *Illustrated London News* (22 November) agreed that, after 'an intolerable deal of pomp, procession, ballet, chorus, tableau and general glitter.... The mind slumbers and the eyes, weary with watching, gradually close.'

The twentieth century

At the time when the reviewers were objecting to the wearisome pomp of *Antony and Cleopatra* as it was presented in the theatre, the critics continued to say that the play lacked unity. A. C. Bradley singles out as the first of Shakespeare's 'real

defects' his tendency to 'string together a number of scenes in which the *dramatis personae* are frequently changed'. Like Castelvetro he finds such a method acceptable in a narrative but not in a play, and particularly 'where the historical material [is] undramatic, as in the middle part of *Antony and Cleopatra*'. He concedes that it 'was made possible by the absence of scenery' but insists that, 'considered abstractly, it is a defective method' (Bradley, 71). While admitting that the play might create a different effect on the Jacobean stage, he still seems to visualize it in terms of the realistic theatre of the late nineteenth century where *Antony and Cleopatra*, 'the most faultily constructed of all the tragedies', 'imposes the necessity of taking frequent and fatiguing journeys over thousands of miles' (ibid., 260).

It is astonishing to see that even E. K. Chambers, to whom, more than anyone, we owe our knowledge and understanding of the Elizabethan playhouse, should nevertheless continue to think of *Antony and Cleopatra* in terms of scenes and locations:

> Rome, Misenum, Athens, Actium, Syria, Egypt are the localities, with much further subdivision in the Egyptian scenes. The second act has four changes of locality, the third no less than eight, and it is noteworthy that these changes are often for quite short bits of dialogue, which no modern manager would regard as justifying a resetting of the stage. Shakespeare must surely have been in some danger, in this case, of outrunning the apprehension of his auditory.
>
> (Chambers, *Stage*, 3.124)

The discrepancy between Chambers's formidable knowledge of Elizabethan playhouses and his conception of a play in performance was thoroughly exposed in an article by Harley Granville-Barker:

> When [Chambers] speaks of 'the various types of scene which the sixteenth-century managers were called upon to produce' [and] of 'the degree of use which they make of a structural background' ... well, I protest that the sixteenth-century manager, at any rate, would not have known what he meant by such talk. The play was acted on a stage. The actors came on the stage and went off it. That was the basis of the business.... Having made use of it, the dramatist would neglect and obliterate a locality without further consideration.
>
> (Granville-Barker, 'Note', 63–4)

Paradoxically Granville-Barker owed his grasp of the Elizabethan stage largely to the researches of Chambers, though scholarly inquiry into the subject had begun in the eighteenth century with the work of Edmond Malone. It had taken a great leap forward in 1888 when the so-called De Witt drawing was discovered in the library of the University of Utrecht. This only surviving representation of the interior of an Elizabethan playhouse (the Swan) showed for the first time the thrust stage, the two entrance doors, the surrounding galleries and the auditorium open to the sky. The consequent impulse to mount the plays under conditions similar to those shown in the drawing came initially from William Poel, the founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society, who believed they should be acted with the same simplicity and pace as in Shakespeare's time. Poel himself never put on productions in a regular theatre. For lack of money, he had to be content with using mostly amateur actors and to construct temporary platform stages in halls designed for other purposes, but Granville-Barker, who had taken part in some of Poel's productions and was already distinguished for his performances in the plays of Shaw and Ibsen, took Poel's principles into the professional theatre with his simply staged, largely uncut versions of *The Winter's Tale* (1912), *Twelfth Night* (1912) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914) at the Savoy. Neither Poel nor Granville-Barker directed *Antony and Cleopatra*, but Barker wrote an

extensive Preface to it (and to eight of Shakespeare's other plays) which had a profound effect on the style of all subsequent productions and is still felt today. When the cast of *Antony and Cleopatra* assembled for rehearsals at the National Theatre in 1987, the director, Sir Peter Hall, began by reading to them extracts from Granville-Barker's Preface, and its influence was everywhere evident in the production (Lowen, 1–2).

In his Preface Granville-Barker insisted that a director must free his mind from the act and scene divisions imposed by Rowe. 'There is no juncture', he says, 'where the play's acting will be made more effective by a pause' (Granville-Barker, *Prefaces*, 127). The division of the Folio texts into scenes, he explains, did not commit the editors to 'an imagined change of place, nor connote any check to the action':

> By Rowe's time ... painted scenery, of a more or less conventional sort, was in current use. This defined locality; and a change of scene meant a change of place, was a diversion and a check to the action in every sense. The old fluidity of the Elizabethan stage, which really could 'call the mind forward without intermission', was gone.

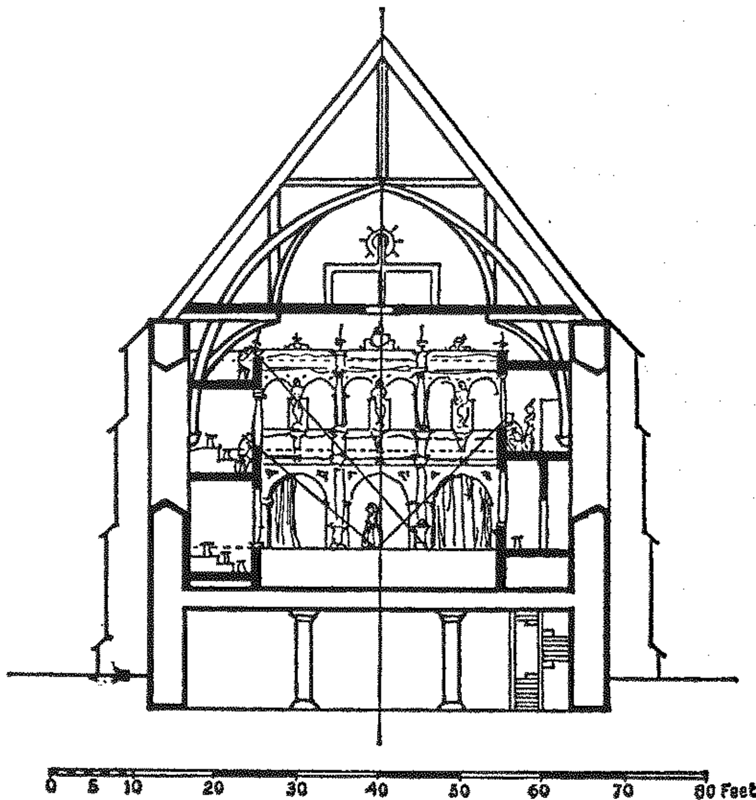
The Elizabethan stage, he continues, gave to its dramatists a freedom 'which the promise of the scenic stage gradually sapped; but Shakespeare, at least, never surrendered to it.' In *Antony and Cleopatra* 'we find him in the maturity of his craftsmanship, enjoying and exploiting it to the full' (135).

The first production of the tragedy to be done according to the principles of Poel and Granville-Barker was directed by Robert Atkins at the Old Vic in 1922. The scenery was very simple and consisted chiefly of wooden cut-outs and movable steps set against a cyclorama (Lamb, 106–7). The text was only slightly cut and the performance ran rapidly. It received few notices, however (presumably because the Waterloo Road was thought less worthy of attention than the West End), and

those who did review it seemed unaware that anything unusual had happened. The full effect of Granville-Barker's ideas was not evident until after the Second World War, in, for example, Glen Byam Shaw's production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1953. Working with the designers Motley, Shaw constructed a set of stairs close to the front of the stage and spanning its entire width, which brought the actors closer to the audience and created an impression of spaciousness appropriate for the 'ranged empire' which the action encompasses. This sense of space was further accentuated by limiting the furniture to a minimum and was most apparent when the entire depth of the stage was revealed to the cyclorama at the back. The emptiness of the stage also allowed the performance to be taken at speed. As the *New Statesman* reported (9 May 1953),

> The scenes shuttle in unbroken succession, the luxurious glow of the East giving instant place to the cold white of Rome, and it is only a second and closer look that assures one that this is pure illusion created by light alone on the cyclorama. Never again does one want to see the cluttered stage which most productions need to employ to suggest the necessary pomp.

Simplicity of setting and rapidity of performance also characterized the production at Stratford in 1972 when, under the direction of Trevor Nunn, *Antony and Cleopatra* was presented as part of a season which included all four of Shakespeare's Roman tragedies. The productions acquired a certain unity by being played within the same set, an austere white box. Locations were suggested by stage furniture (large, luxurious cushions in Egypt; a massive table for the political negotiations in Rome) and by the contrast between the military dress and white togas of the Romans and the pink, mauve and orange robes of the Egyptians (Fig. 6). This simplicity of style allowed it to be transferred very successfully to television, where, on



5 An artist's impression of a Jacobean indoor theatre, the Blackfriars

the small screen, it became a much more domestic drama. This may, in fact, have been closer to the style in which Shakespeare conceived it. Emrys Jones suggests that the play could have been designed originally for the Blackfriars theatre, a relatively small, indoor auditorium:

> [It] certainly should never be thought of in terms of cinematic or operatic spectacle. Although it abounds

6 Royal Shakespeare Company production by Trevor Nunn, 1972, with Janet Suzman as Cleopatra

> in imagery of cosmic vastness, it works through short scenes and small groups of characters and through effects of often minute delicacy. Unlike Shakespeare's other Roman plays, it has no crowd scenes: it is in many ways a quiet play, conversational rather than declamatory.
>
> (Jones, 7–8)

These were certainly the effects created by Nunn's television version and by Jonathan Miller's for the BBC in 1980. Both directors were compelled by the nature of the medium to reveal elements in the play which the Victorian actor managers had obscured.

Once a style of production approximating to that of Shakespeare's own time had been thoroughly established, the question of unity was not again raised by the critics, who now began to consider the construction of *Antony and Cleopatra* on its own terms. The extravagant nineteenth-century way of staging it did not die out entirely, however, but reappeared, complete with sea fight, in Charlton Heston's film (1972).

THE QUESTION OF STRUCTURE

Shifts of location

The dramatic construction of *Antony and Cleopatra*, with its constant shifts of location, is one which Shakespeare had already used in the two parts of *Henry IV* with their oscillations between the court, the tavern and the battlefield and their excursions into Wales and Gloucestershire. This in turn grew out of the mode he had used in the comedies, where one location is set off against another: the house of Baptista against that of Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the city and the wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Venice and Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice*. It had, in fact, been Shakespeare's way of working from the very beginning. As Emrys Jones points out,

> A striking feature of a play like *1 Henry VI* is the constant comparativeness of its method: we are never allowed to become identified with the point of view of any one of its characters. Although Talbot is a famous soldier-hero, he is only one of several main figures. The play's vision of reality is never less than complex:

> all viewpoints are partial. Hence the endless oscillation from one group, one individual, to another.
>
> (Jones, *Origins*, 13–14)

By the time he wrote the two *Henry IV* plays, this kind of construction was a means whereby he presented the audience with a number of different assumptions, attitudes and ways of life. The civil war, for example, which to King Henry is a source of continual anxiety, to Falstaff is an opportunity to line his own pockets, and the interview between the King and the Prince, which in the court takes place in earnest, is the subject of a charade in the tavern. The audience is offered several different and conflicting attitudes to the same experience, and is invited to weigh the public responsibilities of war and politics against the personal desire for pleasure, comradeship and self-satisfaction. During the greater part of the two plays the conflicting attitudes are kept equally in view, chiefly in the figure of the Prince, who manages to encompass both, but towards the end of each play he is compelled to make a choice, first when he pledges himself to defeat Hotspur in Part 1, and again when he casts off Falstaff in Part 2. On the second occasion, however, the impression is created that in dismissing Falstaff he repudiates a part of himself. There is no wholly 'correct' choice. England's gain is Falstaff's loss and, though we do not feel that his decision is wholly laudable, the alternative – to embrace Falstaff – would have been far worse.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare created a similar kind of structure but used it with greater complexity and carried its implications further. Throughout the play, Roman attitudes and principles, expressed mainly by Octavius Caesar, are placed in opposition to the Egyptian, represented chiefly by Cleopatra. Antony is in a similar position to Prince Hal, equally at home in either world but compelled eventually to choose between them, and the critics, as we shall see, have continued to argue whether or not he chose correctly. As Maurice Charney says,

Rome and Egypt 'represent crucial moral choices and they function as symbolic locales in a manner not unlike Henry James's Europe and America' (Charney, 93).

Egypt and Rome

Rome is represented by a predominantly male society in which the only woman, Octavia, is regarded as a '"cement" to promote and consolidate male relations' (Erickson, 128). For the Romans the ideal is measured in masculine, political, pragmatic, military terms, the subservience of the individual to the common good of the state, of personal pleasure to public duty, of private, domestic loyalties to the demands of empire. Alexandria, on the other hand, is a predominantly female society for which the ideal is measured in terms of the intensity of emotion, of physical sensation, the subservience of social responsibility to the demands of feeling. Hence Cleopatra must send to Antony every day a several greeting or she'll unpeople Egypt, and, at Actium, Antony deserts his own men and takes flight with Cleopatra because his heart is tied to her rudder. Adelman points out the extreme contrast between the two eulogies of Antony, the first delivered by Caesar in praise of the hardened soldier he once was (1.4.56–72), the second by Cleopatra in celebration of the Antony who has died (5.2.78–91). Since both are retrospective and neither corresponds with the man we are actually shown, both are idealizations, but, in describing the ideal, both speakers reveal the values they espouse. Whereas Caesar, says Adelman, 'locates Antony in the Timonesque landscape of absolute deprivation', a winter landscape in which he survives by exercising the manly virtues of fortitude and endurance, Cleopatra places him in a setting of 'immense abundance' with 'no winter in it': 'The contest between Caesar and Cleopatra, Rome and Egypt, is in part a contest between male scarcity and female bounty as the defining site of Antony's heroic masculinity' (Adelman, *Mothers*, 176–

7). For Caesar, as for Coriolanus, manliness entails the repression of all that is female, but for Cleopatra Antony is visualized as like herself, 'feeding and renewing the appetite in an endless cycle of gratification and desire, making hungry where most she satisfies' (ibid., 190). Caesar regards his 'great competitor' as a man who has betrayed his own ideals (as, indeed, does Antony from time to time) but Cleopatra sees him as a man who has become at one with herself. As Erickson puts it, 'Octavius finds in Antony a heightened image of his own abstemiousness, Cleopatra's celebration of the bountiful Antony projects a model in which she discovers her own bounty' (Erickson, 142). As so often in Shakespeare, every gain is a different kind of loss and every asset a different kind of liability. 'We are left at the end with a painfully divided response, for which there is no resolution' (ibid., 145).

Shifts within scenes

These contrasts and contradictions form the basis on which the play is constructed and also determine the shape of individual scenes. In the opening scene the 'flourish' or fanfare of trumpets leads us to expect the formal entry of some distinguished leader but it is followed by the arrival of Antony and Cleopatra with her maids, 'with eunuchs fanning her'. The 'triple pillar of the world' is exhibited to us as what the Roman Philo calls 'a strumpet's fool'. Again, the formal reconciliation between Antony and Caesar (2.2.18–180) is immediately followed by a private conversation between Maecenas and Enobarbus about the excesses of Alexandrian social life (2.2.185–99), and the former's belief that Antony must now leave Cleopatra is followed by the latter's assurance that he will not. The official feast which is held to celebrate the success of the peace conference (2.7) is preceded by the chatter among the servants about the drunkenness of the guests. The poignancy of Caesar's farewell to his sister (3.2) is undermined

by the cynical observations of Agrippa and Enobarbus which introduce it, and their sarcastic asides during the course of the scene prevent us from taking it wholly seriously. This counterpointing of the poignant, the solemn and the tragic against the ironical, the sceptical and the absurd is most apparent in Shakespeare's treatment of Antony's suicide. Believing that he has suffered his ultimate defeat and that Cleopatra has killed herself, he realizes that the two ideals to which he has devoted his life have been destroyed and he therefore resolves to die in the Roman, stoical manner by falling on his sword. His ineffectual attempt to do so, however, is both painful and ridiculous: his servant Eros, instead of assisting his master, falls on his own sword; when Antony tries to kill himself he fails; the guards, refusing to complete the job, walk away, and it is now when he is at his most abject that he learns that Cleopatra is still alive. Nevertheless he insists on giving her the heroic version of the story:

> [I] do now not basely die,
> Not cowardly put off my helmet to
> My countryman; a Roman by a Roman
> Valiantly vanquished.
> (4.15.57–60)

This is – and is not – a faithful account of the scene we have witnessed. Even the most transcendentally moving moment in the play, the suicide of Cleopatra towards which the whole of the final scene has been moving, is interrupted by the entry of the Clown with his basket of figs. His garrulous chatter and his reluctance to leave (perhaps, as Bowers suggests, he's hoping for a tip) delay Cleopatra's death and thereby create suspense but they also modify our impression of her final speeches during which, as Mack remarks, 'we also hear echoing between the lines the gritty accents of the opposing voice' (Mack, 23).

Instability of characters

Such radically differing attitudes are expressed not only by different individuals but by the same person, depending on the mood and circumstances in which characters find themselves. To Antony, Cleopatra is at one moment 'this enchanting queen' and at another a 'triple-turned whore', and to Cleopatra the messenger from Rome is at first a 'horrible villain' and later 'a fellow of good judgement', 'a proper man'. These conflicting ways of interpreting experience had long preoccupied Shakespeare but in this play they are also a preoccupation of the characters. On hearing of Fulvia's death, Antony reflects, as though it were axiomatic.

> The present pleasure,
> By revolution lowering, does become
> The opposite of itself
> (1.2.131–3)

and Caesar, contemplating the growing support for Pompey, states it as a law of nature that

> he which is was wished until he were,
> And the ebbed man, ne'er loved till ne'er worth love,
> Comes deared by being lacked.
> (1.4.42–4)

It is when he himself hears of Antony's death that his contempt for the 'old ruffian' turns into grief and he weeps for the loss of his 'brother', his 'mate in empire' and the heart which kindled his own thoughts (5.1.40–8). Nowhere else in Shakespeare do we meet

> characters given to such persistent oscillation of feelings, such violent veering between emotional extremes. In the case of Cleopatra it is at times deliberately

> practised, part of her technique of exhibiting her infinite variety in order to keep monotony at bay, her method of tantalising Antony by providing moods that are emotional foils to his own.
>
> (Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 143)

The actress who by all accounts conveyed this quality most faithfully was Dorothy Green, who played the role in three major productions between 1912 and 1930. Of the second of these, the *Times* critic wrote (25 April 1921):

> She realises, as few players of the part in recent years have done, the 'infinite variety' of the Queen's moods. Stately, sinuous, arrogant, seductive, pleading, passionate – Miss Green is everything in turn, but she rises to her greatest height in the scene of sheer fury when she learns from the Messenger of Antony's marriage to Octavia, and all but strangles him in her madness.

Judging from the photographs, she was also sinister, a *femme fatale* like Swinburne's Dolores or Wilde's Salomé (Fig. 7), and the reviewers sensed this: 'What evil there is in the woman, gathered scene by scene as one might gather flowers, and what superb and dreadful tenderness when the asp is at her breast' (*The Times*, 25 November 1930). She was very much the actress, fascinating, temperamental, and dangerous, as was also the great nineteenth-century Cleopatra, Isabella Glyn, though she was a good deal more majestic:

> Gorgeous in person, in costume, and in her style of action, she moved, the Egyptian Venus, Minerva, Juno – now pleased, now angry, now eloquent, now silent – capricious and resolved, according to the situation and sentiment to be rendered. Withal she was

7 Dorothy Green as Cleopatra at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, 1912

> classical, and her *poses* severely statuesque. Her death was sublime.... Altogether Miss Glyn's performance of *Cleopatra* is the most superb thing ever witnessed on the modern stage.
>
> (*Illustrated London News*, 27 October 1849)

A contemporary illustration shows her in one of her poses offering her hand to Thidias (Fig. 8).

Images of instability

The sense of the inconstant, shifting nature of our impressions that is expressed by the structure of the play and the preoccupations of the characters extends also to its distinctive images, which, as Charney points out, are of 'melting, fading, dissolving, discandying, disponging and losing of form': 'Shakespeare seems to be creating his own vocabulary to establish the feeling of disintegration in the Roman world' (Charney, 140). Indeed the whole play portrays the gradual process of Antony's disintegration to the point when 'The crown o'th' earth doth melt' (4.15.65). Shakespeare's playhouse was probably better able than ours to convey this impression to an audience. What was in front of them was, of course, an empty platform with the tiring-house wall at the back, but Shakespeare could transform it into wherever he chose, as when in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (another play much preoccupied with the fluid nature of reality) Theseus' court melts into a forest. Similarly in *Antony and Cleopatra* Alexandria melts into Rome and the battlefield becomes Cleopatra's monument. This effect is well described by Granville-Barker, who says that the Elizabethan dramatist, having made use of a location, 'would neglect and obliterate it without further consideration. The consciousness of it in the audience's imagination might be compared to a mirage, suddenly appearing, imperceptibly fading' (Granville-

8 Isabella Glyn as Cleopatra with, in the background, Samuel Phelps as Antony at Sadler's Wells, 1849

Barker, 'Note', 64). On a realistic, nineteenth-century stage with its solid sets and frequent scene changes this was no longer possible. The actor in Chatterton's production, James Anderson, describes the effect of such scene changes on an actor:

> I must ... acknowledge my own inability to make a serious impression on the audience; I could do nothing, being stunned and cowed by the furious noise of preparation for 'heavy sets' behind the scenes that destroyed all power of acting in front.
>
> (J. Anderson, 316–17)

The fullest expression of the melting, dissolving nature of

perception is given by Antony in one of those insights which Shakespeare's tragic heroes experience shortly before their deaths. As a great soldier who knows he has undergone his final defeat, he contemplates the shifting patterns of the clouds and feels that he, too, is no longer 'himself':

> That which is now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct
> As water is in water.
>
> My good knave Eros, now thy captain is
> Even such a body. Here I am Antony,
> Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.
> (4.14.9–11, 12–14)

The philosophy of instability

This idea was not unique to Shakespeare but also preoccupied some of his contemporaries. Bacon was certainly aware of each individual's tendency to interpret the world subjectively, 'owing either to his own proper and peculiar nature' or 'to the differences of impression, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled'. 'The spirit of man', he concludes, 'is in fact a thing variable and full of perturbation' (Bacon, 54). The writer who most immediately comes to mind is, however, Montaigne, with whose *Essayes* Shakespeare was certainly acquainted by the time he came to write *The Tempest* and who contemplated with a melancholy curiosity the transience both of the world and of mankind:

> There is no constant existence, neither of our being, nor of the objects. And we and our judgement, and all mortall things else do uncessantly rowle, turne and passe away. Thus can be nothing certainely established, nor of the one, nor of the other; both the judgeing

> and the judged being in continuall alteration and motion.... Thus, seeing all things are subject to passe from one change to another; reason, which therein seeketh a reall subsistence, findes her selfe deceived as unable to apprehend any thing subsistent and permanent; forsomuch as each thing either commeth to a being, and is not yet altogether: or beginneth to dy before it be borne.
> (Montaigne, 323)

Both Bacon and Montaigne express the renewed influence of philosophical scepticism which appeared in Europe towards the end of the seventeenth century, but transformation is also the central theme of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, perhaps the most lasting influence on all Shakespeare's work and which he must have read as a schoolboy. The Roman poet's prolonged meditation in the last book of the *Metamorphoses* on the ceaseless flux of creation probably lies behind this distinctive element of the play.

The desire for stability

Against such an irresistible force, Shakespeare's characters attempt to create some sort of defence which will keep them stable and upon which they can rely. Caesar, foreseeing that his own and Antony's temperaments are so incompatible that their friendship is unlikely to last, longs for a 'hoop' which will hold them 'staunch' or watertight (2.2.121–3); Antony, ashamed of his lost reputation and his pitifully botched suicide, hopes that his fame as 'the greatest prince o'th' world' will remain intact (4.15.53–7), and Enobarbus recognizes that a servant willing to remain loyal to a 'fallen lord' will '[earn] a place i'th' story' (3.13.44–7) as, by his death, he does. Similarly the poet of the *Sonnets* hopes that the beauty of the fair youth will be eternalized in his verse when all other things have

changed or been forgotten. Finally, Cleopatra becomes 'marble-constant' in her resolve to leave 'the varying shore o'th' world' and find eternal stability with Antony in an existence beyond change. Whether or not she does so we have no means of knowing. We know only that she is convinced that she will, and that by her suicide she has earned a place in the story which Plutarch and Shakespeare and others have repeatedly told.

THE QUESTION OF MORAL JUDGEMENT

In the principal source of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the 'Life of Antony', Plutarch displays a disinterested attitude towards the two major figures (see page 60). He acknowledges their strengths and virtues – Antony's courage and magnanimity, Cleopatra's vitality, her magnetism – yet this responsive sympathy does not prevent him from judging them. Even in his youth, says Plutarch, Antony was lured into 'great follies and vain expences upon women, in rioting and banketing' (North, 255) and he lays the blame for Antony's decline squarely on Cleopatra (North, 273).

Shakespeare's judgement of his characters is less easy to discern. This is partly because, whereas Plutarch tells his story as a narrative on which he comments from time to time in his own person, Shakespeare transformed it into a play in which each character expresses him or her self and no character speaks with the voice of the dramatist. There are characters such as Philo, Pompey, Enobarbus and especially Caesar who unhesitatingly criticize Antony:

If he filled
His vacancy with his voluptuousness,
Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones
Call on him for't. But to confound such time
That drums him from his sport, and speaks as loud

As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid
As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,
Pawn their experience to their present pleasure
And so rebel to judgement.

(1.4.25–33)

Against such passages, however, Shakespeare places Cleopatra's adoration of 'my man of men':

Nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t'imagine
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite.

(5.2.96–9)

To complicate matters, these same characters change their opinions of one another. Although Enobarbus acts as a commentator on the characters and action of the play, his opinions are complex and he, too, changes his mind.

Clearly with a play as paradoxical and self-contradictory as this, any attempt to determine the opinion of the author is necessarily difficult if not impossible. The only account which does justice to its complexity is the play itself and, though criticism may (and often does) illuminate, in the face of this particular work it is almost bound to simplify. Nevertheless some critics, while admitting the play's intricacy, have attempted to locate and define Shakespeare's attitude towards his material. None has been more simple and reductive than Dryden, who approved 'the excellency of the moral' which he believed the story illustrated, 'for the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate' (Dryden, *Love*, 10). Dowden acknowledges that 'the passion and the pleasure of the Egyptian queen, and of her paramour, toil after the infinite', but concludes that, finally, what Shakespeare 'would seem to say to us ... is that this sensuous infinite is but a dream, a deceit, a snare.... The

severity of Shakespeare, in his own dramatic fashion, is as absolute as that of Milton' (Dowden, 311–13).

More recent critics have, after considerable hesitation, come to a similar conclusion. Franklin M. Dickey attempts to reach towards Shakespeare's judgement by examining *Antony and Cleopatra* in the context of earlier treatments of the same subject from Virgil's and Chaucer's onwards. He decides that, although, unlike his predecessors, the dramatist has little to say about the power of Fortune and the insecurity of princes, nevertheless, like them, he says a great deal about 'the dire consequences of indecorum on the part of princes and the terrible end of excessive passion' (Dickey, 76). For him, Antony and Cleopatra are examples of rulers who threw away a kingdom for lust, 'and this is how, despite the pity and terror that Shakespeare makes us feel, they appear in the play' (ibid., 179).

Such an interpretation was in part a protest against the opposite, romantic view, 'the elevation claimed by those critics who insist[ed] on seeing Cleopatra as a seventeenth-century precursor of Wagner's Isolde' (Riemer, 101). After all, Swinburne had called Cleopatra 'the perfect and everlasting woman' (Swinburne, *Shakespeare*, 76) and *Antony and Cleopatra* 'the greatest love-poem of all time' (Swinburne, *Study*, 191). Wilson Knight sometimes repeats what Swinburne has said, though at more length and with considerably more evidence. For him, Cleopatra is 'love absolute and incarnate' (Knight, 318), at once 'Rosalind, Beatrice, Ophelia, Gertrude, Cressida, Desdemona, Cordelia and Lady Macbeth' (ibid., 290). He arrives at his transcendental view of the tragedy by consciously discarding any attention to character and action, preferring to invoke 'certain symbolic images' which, for him, are 'the only elements in Shakespeare which will lead us from multiplicity and chaos towards unity, simplicity and coherence' (ibid., 19). He by no means overlooks the images of sensuality, eroticism and the physical but, largely by emphasizing Enobarbus' eulogy of

Cleopatra on the Cydnus and Cleopatra's idealizing vision of Antony after his death, comes to the conclusion that, in Shakespeare's treatment of them, the lovers are finally transfigured and thereby vindicated:

> We see the protagonists, in love and war and sport, in death or life or that mystery containing both, transfigured in a transfigured universe, themselves that universe and more, outpacing the wheeling orbs of earth and heaven. . . . So Cleopatra and Antony find not death but life.
>
> (Knight, 262)

Knight was certainly justified in calling our attention to the language and images of the play which the moralizing critics had tended generally to overlook, but in so doing he took little or no account of the characters who express themselves in these images and the context in which they occur. Enobarbus' 'barge' speech is placed immediately after Antony's agreement to marry Octavia, and the effect of this placing is to make us realize that Antony will ultimately desert her for Cleopatra and thereby give Caesar a pretext to turn against him. The magnetism of Cleopatra is shown to be disastrous politically. Again, Cleopatra's final vision of Antony, magnificent in itself, is also subjective (as is everyone's opinion in this play). As Janet Adelman pertinently asks, 'Is this the vision of the play or her own peculiar brand of delusion?' (Adelman, *Essay*, 7). The Antony she celebrates does not correspond with the one we have seen, nor is her view of him shared by any other character. Her final insight may be her ultimate delusion. Shakespeare's critics, like his characters, tend to interpret this play in accordance with the predispositions they bring to it. They can find ample support for their arguments in whatever evidence they care to select from the text.

Are all attempts to reach some final understanding simply otiose, an inevitable simplification of a challengingly complex

work? This may be so, but the desire to respond to the challenge is nevertheless irresistible. 'The whole play', as Adelman says, 'can be seen as a series of attempts on the part of the characters to understand and judge each other and themselves' (Adelman, *Essay*, 20). It is scarcely surprising, then, that we should be compelled to judge them ourselves – or, at any rate, to discover how Shakespeare judged them.

Ultimately the difficulty arises out of Shakespeare's uniquely copious powers of empathy, his capacity not simply to understand people unlike himself but in his imagination to become them, as Hazlitt observed:

> He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were, or that they could become. He not only had in himself the germs of every faculty and feeling, but he could follow them by anticipation, intuitively, into all their conceivable ramifications, through every change of fortune or conflict of passion, or turn of thought. . . . He had only to think of any thing in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it.
>
> (Hazlitt, 47–8)

Shakespeare could also identify himself with every kind of ideal, especially the Roman, with which he must have become familiar from his schooldays onwards. The two principles on which the play is built are irreconcilable, and to ask which of them Shakespeare favoured (which is what, essentially, some of the critics are doing) is not a question that should be asked.

A few critics, however, have done justice to the irreconcilable nature of the opposites with which Shakespeare presents us. Schanzer, for example, recognizes that, as a consequence of the structure of the play, 'we are confronted with these opposed evaluations, and in such a way as to exclude . . . a simple or consistent response' (Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 146), and

Bullough agrees that 'the breadth and intensity of Shakespeare's vision are such as to make us accept both moral judgements against and passionate approval of Antony and Cleopatra' (Bullough, 252). Adelman, who has explored the play more fully and subtly than anyone, concludes that 'this is the final contrariety that the play demands of us: that the extreme of skepticism must be balanced by an extreme of assent' (Adelman, *Essay*, 110).

THE QUESTION OF THE TRAGIC

In certain obvious and general ways *Antony and Cleopatra* resembles Shakespeare's other tragedies. Like *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* it is both a tragedy and a history play, a work of the imagination based largely on historical accounts and portraying people who once lived in situations in which they actually found themselves. Together with *Romeo and Juliet* it is a double tragedy, but, whereas in the earlier work the two principal characters die swiftly one after the other and for much the same reasons (a combination of self-sacrificial love and bad luck), in the later tragedy each of them undergoes a prolonged final suffering on which Shakespeare lingers. Each of their suicides constitutes a separate episode; their motives for suicide differ and produce different effects on an audience.

In some ways Antony resembles Shakespeare's other tragic heroes, exceptional men in that their fate, as Bradley says, 'affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire' (Bradley, *Tragedy*, 10). Both he and Cleopatra are exceptional too in their capacity for extreme and spontaneous feeling which manifests itself most powerfully when they are responding, whether in fury or delight, to each other. For this reason Octavius, though he becomes the supreme ruler of the Roman empire, seems a lesser person. Antony, like Brutus, Macbeth and Coriolanus, finds himself in a position in which he must make a choice which has far-reaching consequences both for

himself and his country. His choice occurs fairly early in the play at the point when (2.3.37) he resolves to return from Rome to Egypt. Although his decision seems sudden, it is not, to the audience, unexpected in view of the hold which we know Cleopatra has over him, and especially because it occurs less than a hundred lines after Enobarbus' testimony to her magnetism (2.2.201–28). Unlike the other tragic heroes, however, he undergoes no apparent struggle, never defines or articulates the nature of his choice (which is, again, perfectly clear to the audience) or seems to foresee its consequences. Like Coriolanus, Shakespeare's other great Roman soldier, he never intellectualizes, has practically no soliloquies and acts always upon impulse. His decline is prolonged but follows no steady, descending line – his catastrophic flight at Actium is followed by a spectacular victory – and his insights into his predicament come to him spasmodically, in flashes:

> 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 dishonour.
> (3.11.51–4)

Within moments he casts such painful thoughts out of his mind. He buries them and prefers to think of what he has gained:

> Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
> All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss.
> (3.11.69–70)

It is only after his final defeat and what he believes to be Cleopatra's betrayal that he is forced to confront the truth of his situation and then he acts on it by committing suicide.

In his inability (or refusal) to recognize the momentous nature of his choice or to face up to and learn from its

consequences, Antony is unlike Shakespeare's other tragic heroes. Macbeth, by contrast, is entirely aware of the significance of Duncan's murder even before he commits it. Antony is shown to be limited intellectually and even imaginatively, and for this reason it was not difficult for the moralizing critics to see him as a great warrior who was blinded by the charms of a woman. These are, moreover, by no means his only limitations. He is often shown in situations in which he is overshadowed or worsted by sharper intellects such as Caesar's and especially by Cleopatra's. Whereas Plutarch depicted him as a sociable entertaining man, Shakespeare's Antony, as Honigmann points out, is in the early scenes not so self-assured:

> It is Cleopatra who rails and mocks, and Antony is always at the receiving end, and not amused. She laughs, he glooms. . . . Long before Actium . . . Antony impresses us in scene after scene as a loser; Herculean, but still a loser; and his defeats in conversation, added by Shakespeare, distinguish him equally from Plutarch's Antonius and from the other tragic heroes.
> (Honigmann, 150, 153)

He is most miserably degraded, of course, in his failure to perform the decorous suicide which he attempts and which, in retrospect, he likes to think he has accomplished. One has only to recall the death of Brutus to see the difference.

Superficially Cleopatra appears to be possessed of that 'fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion or habit of mind' which for Bradley distinguished Shakespeare's tragic figures (Bradley, *Tragedy*, 20–1). Certainly her attention in the first three scenes is fixed on Antony and on the means – any means – to discourage him from leaving her, and during his absence in Rome he is her exclusive preoccupation. His presence is necessary, however, in order to satisfy her political as well as her emotional needs. He is both

her lover and the commander of her military forces, and when his fortunes decline she at least toys with the idea of settling on favourable terms with Caesar. Her possible shift of allegiance appears first in the interview with Thidias (3.13) and, although her subsequent protestations of loyalty to Antony seem to satisfy him (3.13.163–72), the audience may not be so easily assured. As Adelman says, 'Is Cleopatra merely exercising her powers over Thidias for the sake of the game, or does she really hope to woo Octavius through him?' (Adelman, *Essay*, 15). Her uppermost thought may well be of self-preservation. This is undoubtedly her impulse when, terrified of Antony's rage against her, she flees to the monument and sends him the false news of her suicide (4.13), but whether or not it is self-preservation she has in mind after Antony's death is more difficult to determine. Certainly she begins to contemplate suicide immediately after he is gone:

> Then is it sin
> To rush into the secret house of death
> Ere death dare come to us?
> (4.15.84–6)

and at the beginning of the final scene she appears positively resolved to take this course (5.2.4–8). In the interview with Seleucus, however, her intentions are not so clear and Shakespeare here clouds the motives which in Plutarch's account were explicit. According to Plutarch, Cleopatra deliberately allowed Caesar to discover that she had kept half her treasure in order to create the false impression that she planned to survive. In Shakespeare's version, however, it is uncertain whether she wishes to give this impression or genuinely hopes to come to terms with Caesar. In other words, her intention may be to kill herself out of devotion to Antony or to 'pack cards with Caesar' and enjoy a comfortable life in retirement. It is only when she discovers from Dolabella that the latter

option is not open that she resolves finally on suicide. Honigmann sums up the situation admirably:

> Though Cleopatra's choice of death seems unconditional when Antony dies, she has time to think again, and her final decision affects us differently. She learns that Octavius will lead her in triumph, and that he can resist her charms, and again her vanity comes into play. Her actions, not necessarily all of a piece, suggest that she *may* still wish to live.
> (Honigmann, 166)

A similar inconsistency surrounds the suicide itself. Both she and Antony like to imagine themselves dying 'after the high Roman fashion'. Neither of them achieves this ideal and, moreover, the two suicides are utterly unlike, 'his – unplanned, messy, a man alone; hers – a basket of figs prepared with an asp, supported by her women – thrillingly beautiful. The difference is brought home to us by Antony's unbearable physical pain, succeeded by her death "As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle"' (Honigmann, 166–7). She had, we learn later, 'pursued conclusions infinite / Of *easy* ways to die' (5.2.354–5; my italics). Her final act may be seen, as she wants us to see it, as a supreme and glorious sacrifice or as an extreme self-indulgence. As in his portrayal of Antony, Shakespeare does not allow us to respond in any simple way. We are at the same time drawn to and distanced from them both. Such uncertainties have been perceived only in the twentieth century, when criticism has concentrated on tensions, ambiguities, counter-cultures and self-contradiction. It was these uncertainties, however, which made the play unsatisfactory to the great interpreter of tragedy of an earlier generation, A. C. Bradley.

Bradley excluded *Antony and Cleopatra* from his study of Shakespearean tragedy, and in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* he stated categorically that 'to regard this tragedy as a rival of the

famous four, is surely an error' (Bradley, *Lectures*, 282). He accounts for this conviction by saying that it is 'not painful', 'not as exciting dramatically' as the other four tragedies and has 'no scenes of action or passion which agitate the audience with alarm, horror, painful expectation, or absorbing sympathies and antipathies'. Eventually he identifies the quality in the play which causes his unease and, in so doing, glimpses the complex, paradoxical nature of its fabric:

> The first half of the play, though it forebodes tragedy, is not decisively tragic in tone. Certainly the Cleopatra scenes are not so. We read them, and we should witness them, in delighted wonder and even with amusement. The only scene that can vie with them, that of the revel on Pompey's ship, though full of menace, is in great part humorous. Enobarbus, in this part of the play, is always humorous. Even later, when the tragic tone is deepening, the whipping of Thyreus, in spite of Antony's rage, moves mirth.
>
> (Bradley, *Lectures*, 284–5)

He concedes that such a play may well be as 'masterly' as the four great tragedies and 'more delightful', but 'it cannot possibly excite the same emotions'. There is, he says 'something half-hearted in Shakespeare's appeal here, something even ironical in his presentation of this conflict' (ibid., 290).

That Bradley identified the distinguishing element in *Antony and Cleopatra* there can be little doubt. He senses the lack of that consistently tragic high seriousness to which he responded in *Lear* and *Macbeth*, but accepts the fact that in this play Shakespeare attempted 'something different'. One cannot help feeling, however, that by 'something different' Bradley really meant 'something inferior'. As G. K. Hunter points out in an illuminating essay on Bradley (Hunter, 270–85), he thought of himself as a philosopher-critic. As the son of an evangelical clergyman, he reacted violently against the kind of faith in

which he had been brought up and found that literature, and especially Shakespearean tragedy, could fill the void once occupied in his mind by religion. In so doing he fulfilled the prediction made almost thirty years earlier by Matthew Arnold that more and more 'mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us' (Arnold, 2). Bradley valued Shakespeare's tragedies for their capacity to interpret the world and man's place in it without recourse to Christian theology. 'We remain confronted', as he says at the end of his lecture on 'The Substance of Tragedy',

> with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact or appearance is tragedy.
>
> (Bradley, *Tragedy*, 39)

Such a description may well apply to *Othello* and *Macbeth*, where good and evil are precisely located, but to *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the perfection for which the two principal characters strive is also shown to be a waste and a delusion, it seems irrelevant. Nothing purely good or evil can be found in the play and what seems admirable in one context is shown as ridiculous in another – or, rather, appears as both admirable and ridiculous at one and the same time. A tragedy founded on such assumptions could not satisfy Victorian readers who looked to it to console and sustain them. In the sceptical twentieth century it has been better appreciated.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The 'Asiatic' style

The distinctive language and style in which Antony and

Cleopatra express themselves may have been created by Shakespeare in response to a remark made by Plutarch in his 'Life of Marcus Antonius'. As a young man, says Plutarch, Antony left Italy and went to Greece where he spent much of his time in 'the studie of eloquence'. As a result of this early training he 'used a manner of phrase in his speeche, called Asiatik which caried the best grace and estimation of that time, and was much like to his manners and life: for it was full of ostentation, foolish braverie, and vaine ambition' (North, 225). Plutarch, although a Greek, here speaks in the austerely disapproving tone of the Romans (whom he much admired) and, consistently with the rhetorical principles established by Aristotle, regards Antony's eloquence not simply as a verbal style but as a moral quality, an expression of his personality and way of life. Perhaps picking up this hint from Plutarch, Shakespeare fashioned for Antony and Cleopatra a way of speaking which he used in no other play and which contributes more than anything to the extreme contrast between Egypt and Rome discussed earlier (p. 28). As Rosalie Colie explains,

> The Greeks had, naturally enough, characterized Persians and others to the East of Athens as 'Asiatic', meaning sensuous, sybaritic, self-indulgent, rich, materialist, decorated, soft. According to the paradigm, Asiatics lived a life of ease, delicacy, even of sloth, surrounded by ornate works of art and elaborate amusements for body and spirit. Gradually the moral disapproval leveled at their eastern neighbors came to be applied to a style of oratory conceived as 'like' Persian life, a style formally complex, ornate, decorated and elaborate.
>
> (Colie, 171)

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare reversed the process and created an 'Asiatic' style to reflect the Alexandrian way of life.

Hyperbole

The most distinctive feature of this style is its hyperbole, its exaggeration. Cleopatra expresses every possible emotion from rapturous joy and uncontrollable rage to suicidal despair, but seems incapable of moderation, the Roman 'measure' or golden mean, and she expresses this intensity of feeling, which she cultivates and pursues as though it were a moral absolute, in a correspondingly heightened language. Looking back on the love she has shared with Antony, she conceives of it in terms which are nothing less than transcendental:

> Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
> Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
> But was a race of heaven.
>
> (1.3.36–8)

On hearing of Antony's marriage, she calls for the collapse of her empire into chaos:

> Melt Egypt into Nile, and kindly creatures
> Turn all to serpents!
>
> (2.5.78–9)

After Antony's death, she does not say, simply, that she has lost all sense of purpose, but that creation itself has ceased to exist:

> All's but naught;
> Patience is sottish, and impatience does
> Become a dog that's mad.
>
> (4.15.82–4)

It is, of course, her nature to change rapidly from one extreme of feeling to another but even when, in the final scene, she settles herself in her determination to die, she speaks of this newly-found stability in typically absolute terms:

> My resolution's placed, and I have nothing
> Of woman in me. Now from head to foot
> I am marble-constant.
>
> (5.2.237–9)

This heightened form of speech appears at its most extreme and prolonged in her eulogy of the dead Antony with its series of hyperbolic metaphors: Antony's legs 'bestrid the ocean; his reared arm / Crested the world' and his voice was 'as rattling thunder' (5.2.81–5).

World imagery

This passage is also notable for what Charney calls its 'words of cosmic reference' (80), the 'world imagery' which 'represents the most general pattern of imagery in the play' (93). This occurs so frequently that it is impossible to illustrate it fully here (but see Charney, 80–93). In the opening speech of the play Antony is described as 'The triple pillar of the world'; during the feast on Pompey's galley, Menas calls the triumvirs 'these three world-sharers' (2.7.71), and before his final victory, Caesar prophesies that a 'time of universal peace' is coming in which 'the three nooked world / Shall bear the olive freely' (4.6.5–7). In the mouths of the Romans such references are not simply metaphorical, for in their eyes the Roman empire, which the triumvirs governed, extended throughout the known world. For Antony and Cleopatra, on the other hand, their relationship itself constitutes the world, an all-encompassing universe of feeling which they see as an alternative to the lesser Roman world of conquest and empire. Hence, for Antony, Cleopatra is the 'day o'th' world' (4.8.13) and, for Cleopatra, Antony is 'the crown o'th' earth' without which it is 'no better than a sty' (4.15.64–5). The impression that the play encompasses vast expanses of territory and that the conflict is

one in which the politics of the world are at stake was one which the nineteenth-century actor–managers hoped to create by dramatic spectacle, but in fact such extravagant and cumbersome means were unnecessary. The impression is created more than sufficiently by Shakespeare's language.

Antony's kind of rhetoric, his 'Asiatic' style, is often as heightened as Cleopatra's to the extent that Shakespeare seems to imply that he has acquired it from her as a mode of expressing feelings which she, and only she, has awakened in him. His way of speaking to Octavia is a great deal more sober and factual. His grandiose dismissal of Rome and its messengers (an example of what Plutarch calls his 'foolish bravery') prefigures Cleopatra's injunction that Egypt should melt into the Nile:

> Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
> Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space!
>
> (1.1.34–5)

The oneness which they occasionally achieve is suggested by their tendency to use similar words and figures of speech. Like her he expresses himself in extreme and heightened language ('Kingdoms are clay') and the fury with which he attacks Thidias, the messenger from Caesar, is as violent as hers towards the messenger from Rome (3.13.100–9; 2.5.62–72). Such extremes of emotion, diction and behaviour unite them to each other and distinguish them from the Romans. They are a quality which Cleopatra recognizes in Antony and admires in him:

> Be'st thou sad or merry,
> The violence of either thee becomes,
> So does it no man else.
>
> (1.5.62–4)

Egyptian and Roman imagery

The language of Cleopatra and her court is distinguished by a series of recurring images which make us constantly aware of the way they live. Egypt is associated with the Nile as Rome is with the Tiber, and the Nile is visualized as the source both of fruitfulness and of carrion-eating insects, harvest and deadly serpents. Cleopatra is herself the 'serpent of old Nile' (1.5.26) and the river reflects something of her paradoxical nature, both life-enhancing and fatally poisonous. Egypt is also a place of feeding and drinking to excess, where eight wild boars are roasted for a breakfast for twelve people (2.2.189–90) and Antony calls for wine both in defiance of his defeat (3.13.189–90) and in celebration of his victory (4.8.32–5). When Pompey thinks of Antony in Egypt, he imagines him sitting at a dinner prepared by 'Epicurean cooks' who sharpen his appetite with 'cloyless sauce' (2.1.24–5). Cleopatra is also repeatedly described in terms of food which, according to Enobarbus, is always enticing and never satisfying:

> Other people cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.
>
> (2.2.246–8)

That there are relatively few distinctive images associated with Rome is itself significant, for the Romans are characterized by their moderation, their temperance and ability to control their feelings. Temperance is a virtue which Caesar admired in Antony before he encountered Cleopatra. In his campaigns in northern Italy the young Antony was able to endure famine 'with patience more / Than savages could suffer' and could survive on wild berries and 'the barks of trees' (1.4.59–69). Caesar's own intemperance at the feast on Pompey's galley disgusts him and he confesses that rather than drink so much

in a day he would prefer to fast for four (2.7.102–3). Whereas Egypt is associated with feeling and sensuality, as in the playful chatter among Cleopatra's servants (1.2.1–80) which is openly sexual, Rome is associated with action, especially military and political action. It is, says Charney, 'a place of conference tables, armor, political decisions and hard material objects' (102), and Caesar's speeches are much concerned with conveying information, devising strategy and issuing commands. The only woman to appear in the Roman scenes is Octavia who is of 'a holy, cold and still conversation' (2.6.124–5) whereas Cleopatra sees herself as black from the 'amorous pinches' of the sun god (1.5.29).

Although the two worlds of the play are thus differentiated by the kind of style and diction associated with them, the characters who inhabit them are at the same time individuals with their own distinctive forms of speech. Whereas Charmian, always loyal to her mistress, is frankly outspoken, Mardian is hesitant and deferential. Lepidus, the dupe among the triumvirs, scarcely says anything in the company of the other two and when he does it is in those balanced, antithetical clauses favoured by Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, which express thoughtfulness, rationality and moderation:

> That which combined us was most great, and let not
> A leaner action rend us. What's amiss,
> May it be gently heard. When we debate
> Our trivial difference loud, we do commit
> Murder in healing wounds. Then, noble partners,
> The rather for I earnestly beseech,
> Touch you the sourest points with sweetest terms,
> Nor curstness grow to th' matter.
>
> (2.2.19–26)

The two men whose lives and loyalties are initially divided between Egypt and Rome, Antony and Enobarbus, instinctively

shift from one mode to another depending on their circumstances and situation. Once Antony has heard the news from Rome, he reprimands Enobarbus for his sexual 'Egyptian' banter ('No more light answers') and embarks on a speech as factual and politically observant as any of Caesar's (1.2.183–203). Enobarbus, at any rate in the early scenes, tends to speak prose and as his first extensive interview with Antony begins, the dialogue changes abruptly from verse to prose, an appropriate medium for the knowing, pragmatic, experienced soldier (the kind of man which Iago, another tried campaigner, pretends to be), but once he recalls Cleopatra's spectacular arrival in her barge (2.2.201–28) he modulates into the heightened, figurative speech associated with Egypt. The divided personalities of the two men are reflected in the two distinct modes in which they speak. Shakespeare, like Aristotle and Plutarch, believed that style was an expression of character, conduct and morality. As Ben Jonson declared, 'Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee.'

THE SOURCES

Plutarch

The main source from which Shakespeare took the material for *Antony and Cleopatra* was the *Parallel Lives of the Greeks and Romans* by the first-century biographer and moralist Plutarch. He did not read the *Lives* in the original Greek but used an English translation by Sir Thomas North (1579), itself taken from a French version by Jacques Amyot (1559). He had already used North's Plutarch for some of the details in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and as a major source for *Julius Caesar* and *Timon of Athens*; after completing *Antony and Cleopatra*, he drew on it again for *Coriolanus*.

The two writers, though separated by a space of more than fifteen centuries, formed one of the most fruitful of all literary collaborations, and it is not difficult to see why Shakespeare found Plutarch's biographies congenial. They supplied him not only with narratives of some of the most critical periods in Roman history, but with detailed, intimate accounts of the protagonists. Hence we learn that Julius Caesar was 'leane, white, and soft skinned, and often subject to headache, and otherwhile to the falling sicknes' (North, 66), that Cleopatra was carried to Julius Caesar wrapped in a mattress (North, 74), and that Antony resembled Hercules not only 'in the likenes of his bodye . . . but also in the wearing of his garments' (North, 257). Such details were invaluable to the dramatist and he seized on them and incorporated them into his plays. Moreover, both men wrote on the assumption that the course of history was shaped by the actions of men in power and, for that reason, both were curious to penetrate into the subtleties of human character and to trace the alliances and rivalries between powerful people.

Shakespeare's reshaping of Plutarch

Plutarch's biography of Antony is the longest of the *Lives*. It begins with a description of his ancestry and education and ends with an account of his children. Although his relationship with Cleopatra is by far the most important element, Plutarch also describes Antony's alliance with Julius Caesar against Pompey, his campaign against Cassius following the murder of Caesar and his protracted and disastrous incursions into Parthia. Some of the looseness of Plutarch's narrative remains in the play with its ten-year time-span and its constant shifts between continents, but Shakespeare gives to his play a much tighter dramatic structure by concentrating his attention largely on the relationship between the two major characters. Hence it

opens with Antony already captivated by Cleopatra and all previous events are either omitted or, as in the case of the murder of Julius Caesar, mentioned briefly in retrospect (2.6.10–19; 3.2.53–6). Apart from the victory of Ventidius over Pacorus (3.1), the Parthian campaigns, which occupy about a fifth of the 'Life', are omitted entirely, and other events which in Plutarch occupy several years are tightly compressed, particularly in 1.2, where the wars of Lucius and Fulvia against Octavius, the conquests of Labienus, and Fulvia's death are dealt with in about forty lines (1.2.93–128). On the other hand the episodes in the 'Life' which lead up to Cleopatra's suicide are dramatized in full and unfolded gradually to extend almost over a complete act. With his emphasis on the two major characters, Shakespeare reduced the role of Octavia and moved her into the background. In Plutarch's version she is a much stronger, more independent figure. She has a daughter by Antony before leaving with him for Athens and is pregnant with a second when she goes to mediate between him and Octavius. It is she, moreover, who after Antony's death takes care of his children, including those he has had by Cleopatra. In the play it is implied that she is childless (3.13.111–14). Both writers create an implicit contrast between Octavia and Cleopatra, but, whereas Plutarch admires the former's matronly, domestic virtues, she is sometimes, in Shakespeare's play, the object of ridicule especially by Cleopatra (3.3). This shift of emphasis makes Antony's attraction to Cleopatra more understandable.

Shakespeare's task, however, was not simply to shorten and give shape to Plutarch's biography but to transpose a narrative into a play and that, of course, entailed the removal of the narrator. Plutarch frequently comments on and judges the major characters, as when he describes the 'wonderfull love' which Antony inspired among his soldiers or condemns his 'naughty life', and his 'extreme wasteful expences upon vaine light huswives' (North, 261). Such comments are, in the drama,

either exemplified in action, as when Antony's servants weep when he dismisses them (4.2.34–5), or placed in the mouths of the Roman characters, Philo, Demetrius, Pompey and especially Octavius. As a result of this transposition the unfavourable comments on Antony become distinctively Roman and lose something of the authoritative force and objectivity they had when delivered by Plutarch himself. They become only one of several ways in which he may be assessed.

It was presumably the need to incorporate into the play someone who would take on the role of Plutarch that led Shakespeare to create Enobarbus (Pelling, 41). In the 'Life' 'Domitius', as he is called, is a very minor figure who is 'sicke of an agewe' when he deserts to Caesar and is subsequently sent 'all his caryage, trayne, and men' by Antony, and 'though he gave [Antony] to understand that he repented his open treason, he died immediatly after' (North, 298). Out of this incident Shakespeare created Enobarbus, who has much of Plutarch's open-mindedness and detachment. It is he who, in what are almost entirely Plutarch's words, testifies in the 'barge' speech to Cleopatra's extravagance and magnetism (2.2.201–28), who, like Plutarch, foresees the folly of Antony's decision to fight by sea (3.7.34–48) and perceives his increasing foolhardiness (3.13.29–37) as Plutarch does throughout the latter part of the 'Life'. As an ironic and detached commentator he opens and closes many scenes, but he is, of course, far more than a choric figure who fulfils a dramatic function. He is a fully realized character, loyal, sociable, sceptical, pragmatic, popular and ultimately tragic. He dies not of an ague but of remorse at his own disloyalty.

Plutarch saw himself as a moralist. In his introduction to the 'Parallel Lives of Demetrius and Antony' he observes that

> the great Ladies of all [the] arts, Temperaunce, justice and wisdom, doe not only consider honestie, upright-

> nes, and profit: but examine withall, the nature and effects of lewdnes, corruption and damage.... So thinke I, we shall be the forwarder in reading and following the good, if we know the lives, and see the deformity of the wicked.
>
> (*Lives*, 5.372–3)

In other words he saw his function as an instructive one in which he exhibited to his readers examples of virtue or vice for them to follow or avoid. Hence he condemns Antony's degeneracy without hesitation and is in no doubt that Cleopatra's influence on him was disastrous: 'if any sparke of goodnesse or hope of rising were left in him, Cleopatra quenched it straight, and made it worse then before' (North, 273). Yet he is by no means a simple moralist. He is aware of and fascinated by the complex, paradoxical nature of his characters, the coexistence within the same person of strengths and weaknesses. Though certainly aware of Antony's flaws, he does full justice to his courage and stamina, his magnanimity towards his troops and the affection which he inspires in them. He shows a similar open-mindedness towards Cleopatra. Although he disapproves of the artfulness with which she gains control over her lover, he also shows how her early flirtation deepens into love and conveys very movingly her sense of desolation after Antony's death. Both of them illustrate 'the saying of Plato: That from great minds, both great vertues and great vices do procede' (*Lives*, 5.373). Something of the ambiguous, self-contradictory quality of *Antony and Cleopatra* was already present in Plutarch's narrative waiting to be developed.

Since the two writers were so similar in temperament and outlook – even in their sense of the theatrical – it is not surprising that at times Shakespeare incorporated quite long passages from the 'Life' into the dialogue with little alteration

(e.g. 2.2.201–28; 5.1.35–48). Nevertheless, as MacCallum points out, there is one major element in *Antony and Cleopatra* which Shakespeare did not find in Plutarch and that is the sense of transcendence which both lovers experience as their lives draw to a close. MacCallum pertinently reminds us that the title of Dryden's tragedy on the same subject is *All for Love, or the World Well Lost*. 'We have', he says, 'something of the same feeling in reading Shakespeare and we do not have it in reading Plutarch' (MacCallum, 340).

Octavius in the 'Life' is scarcely described at all but is revealed more by what he does than by what is said of him. In the glimpses we see of him he appears as a brilliantly efficient soldier and a careful politician who deliberately discredits Antony in order to win support for himself and tries to deceive Cleopatra, after her defeat, in order to dissuade her from committing suicide. Nevertheless he is unequivocally portrayed as the instrument of Fate, into whose hands 'the government of all the world' was predestined to fall (North, 292) at what Shakespeare's Octavius calls the 'time of universal peace' (4.6.5). It may be that Shakespeare formed an impression of his aloofness and restraint from Simon Goulart's *Life of Augustus*, translated by North for the 1603 edition of Plutarch's *Lives* (North, 247). Shakespeare has also been shown to have consulted the 1578 translation of Appian's *Civil Wars* for details of Pompey's rebellion and death and the uprisings of Lucius and Fulvia (MacCallum, 648–52; Appian, xxiii–xxviii).

Dramatic sources

It is clear, then, that in preparation for the writing of *Antony and Cleopatra*, as for his other historical plays, Shakespeare did a certain amount of research. He also appears to have read the Countess of Pembroke's tragedy *Antonius* (1592), an adaptation

of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (1578), itself based on Plutarch. There are enough verbal similarities to show that the countess's tragedy lingered in Shakespeare's mind (Wilson, x; Schanzer, 'Pembroke', 154–7; Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 150–2; Bullough, 228–31), but more significant is her portrayal of Cleopatra which, unlike Plutarch's, is consistently sympathetic. Antony alone is said to have been responsible for his downfall and the only condemnation of Cleopatra comes from herself. Moreover her suicide is motivated not, as in Plutarch and Shakespeare, by a desire to avoid public humiliation but by a simple, passionate wish to be reunited in death with her lover,

> To be in one selfe tombe, and one selfe chest,
> And wrapt with thee in one selfe sheete to rest.
> (Bullough, 405)

Although, as Schanzer remarks (*Problem Plays*, 151), Shakespeare could find nothing in *Antonius* of the calculating, self-indulgent woman he depicts in the first four acts, nevertheless he may have been influenced by it when he created the resolute, idealizing Cleopatra of the final scene.

It is more certain that he read and remembered Samuel Daniel's tragedy *Cleopatra* (1594), which was designed as a companion piece to *Antonius* and dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke. Once again, the influence is confined almost entirely to the final scene of Shakespeare's play, for *Cleopatra* opens after Antony's death and is devoted chiefly to the heroine's expression of her feelings as she contemplates suicide. There are quite a lot of phrases and expressions which bring *Antony and Cleopatra* to mind (Farnham, 157–71; Dickey, 169–71; Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 152–4; Bullough, 231–6; Brower, 346–8). For example, Cleopatra describes Antony as 'My *Atlas*, and supporter of my pride' (compare 'demi-Atlas', 1.5.24) and

declares: 'I have both hands, and will, and I can die' (Bullough, 408–9; compare 4.15.51). Like Shakespeare's heroine (5.2.69) she tells Proculeius that she wants 'leave to die' (ibid., 415), and when she prepares for death she dresses herself in her richest clothes,

> Even as she was when on thy crystall streames,
> Cleere *Cydnos* she did shew what earth could shew.
> (Bullough, 443; compare 5.2.227–8)

Daniel's Cleopatra is, moreover, driven to suicide for a variety of reasons: a desire to redeem her past infamy by choosing an honourable death, a longing to be with Antony, and, above all, a wish to avoid the shame of appearing in Caesar's triumph, an idea not much developed by Plutarch but repeated several times by Shakespeare (5.2.51–6; 5.2.206–20). She is therefore not a simple character, and her complexity is deepened by the fact that her emotional tensions are expressed both by herself and by the Chorus. The latter delivers a moralizing commentary at the end of each act, condemning her 'luxurie', remarking on the vanity of human wishes and observing the tendency of pride to destroy itself. Hence our impression of Cleopatra is created both subjectively by the heroine and objectively by the Chorus. It has to be said, however, that *Cleopatra* is an entirely different kind of play from *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is, like *Antonius*, a strictly classical Senecan tragedy which consists mostly of extended speeches like operatic arias. All action, including Cleopatra's death, takes place off the stage and the language is consistently decorous. Daniel's Cleopatra, as Riemer says (15), has none of the vulgarity of Shakespeare's heroine. Had Shakespeare not read Daniel or the Countess of Pembroke, *Antony and Cleopatra* would probably have been much as it is; without Plutarch it could not have existed.

Mythological sources

As well as drawing on these literary and dramatic sources, Shakespeare also associates his hero and heroine with several mythological archetypes, sometimes explicitly, sometimes by implication.[1] Several times in the play Antony is compared to Mars (1.1.4; 2.2.6; 2.5.117) and Cleopatra to Venus (2.2.210), and Mardian the eunuch confesses that he thinks 'What Venus did with Mars' (1.5.19). There are two myths, both very well known in the Renaissance, about the relationship between these deities. In one of them, told by Homer (*Odyssey*, 8.266–328), Venus and Mars, lying in bed together, are trapped in a net made by Vulcan, the husband of Venus, and are exposed to the laughter of the gods. Shakespeare is more probably thinking, however, of the story told by Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*, 1.29–40) where Mars, vanquished by love, lies unarmed in Venus' lap and is wooed to peace (Adelman, *Essay*, 91; Bono, 176; Waddington). Shakespeare had told this story at some length in *Venus and Adonis* (ll.97–114) and it was a popular subject of Renaissance iconography, where it shows the power of love to overcome strife (Wind, 89–90). On the other hand, the myth can also be interpreted in a contrary manner as an example of how valour can be enslaved by lust. In other words, it is capable of both an 'Egyptian' and a 'Roman' reading.

The story closely resembles another classical myth, the account given by Ovid (*Heroides*, 9.55–118; *Fasti*, 2.305–58) of Hercules' subjugation by Omphale, the Amazonian Queen of Lydia. Antony, according to Plutarch, claimed to be descended from 'one Anton, the sonne of Hercules', and he resembled his heroic ancestor both in 'the likenes of his bodye' and 'the wearing of his garments' (North, 257). Moreover in Shakespeare's play it is Hercules who leaves him on the night before battle (4.3.21–2) and not Bacchus as in Plutarch. While infatuated by Omphale, according to Ovid, Hercules allowed her to dress him in her clothes and was compelled to spin among her women while she wore his lion's skin and armed herself with his club (Adelman, *Essay*, 81–3; Bevington, 9–10). The similarity between Antony's and Hercules' predicaments had been pointed out by Plutarch in his 'Comparison of Demetrius with Antonius': 'We see in painted tables, where Omphale secretlie stealeth away Hercules clubbe, and tooke his Lyons skinne from him. Even so Cleopatra oftentimes unarmed Antonius, and intised him to her, making him lose matters of great importaunce' (North, 319). Hercules and Antony were also paired together as types of the lust-enslaved hero by Tasso (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, 16.3–7) and in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (5.8.2; Waddington, 225). The comparison appears to have been in Shakespeare's mind when Cleopatra recalls how she put her tires and mantles on Antony while she wore his sword Philippan (2.5.22–3).

Another episode in the legend of Hercules is implicit in *Antony and Cleopatra*. This is the story of *Hercules in Bivio* or 'Hercules at the Crossroads', originally told by Xenophon (Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 155–8; Coates, 45–52; Bevington, 9). Hercules, says Xenophon, went out to a quiet place and 'sat pondering which road to take'. He was approached by two women, one modest, sober and dressed in white, the other plump, soft and dressed 'so as to disclose all her charms'. Whereas the latter, Vice, invites him to follow her, offering a life free from hardship, effortlessly devoted to the pleasures of food, drink and love, Virtue offers only the toil and hardship which lead to glory (*Memorabilia*, 2.1.21–34). The legend was the subject of countless pictorial and literary representations (Panofsky, *passim*) including Ben Jonson's masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (performed 1618), where, as in some other versions, the two opposites are united. The situation is clearly analogous to Antony's in the first two acts of the play,

1 R. K. Root points out that 'in the series of great tragedies, classical mythology plays quite an insignificant part; but in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* it suddenly reasserts itself with surprising vigour. . . . A chief characteristic is the frequent allusion to the greater divinities' (Root, 130).

particularly when he has to choose between Cleopatra and Octavia, and the implied allusion reflects both favourably on him in that he is associated with a demi-god, and at the same time unfavourably, since, unlike his supposed ancestor, he ultimately chooses the path of 'Vice'. His predicament is such that he is unable to reconcile the two.

The most celebrated of such choices in classical literature, however, was that of Aeneas in the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Schanzer, *Problem Plays*, 158–9; Brower, 350–2; Adelman, 68–74), where, struggling between his love for Dido and his divinely appointed mission to found a new Troy, he follows his sacred destiny and forsakes Dido, who, in grief, destroys herself. Virgil himself had already made connections between the two pairs of lovers, for, as Pelling (17) points out, his Dido was in part modelled on the historical Cleopatra, and on the shield which is given to Aeneas by Venus is embossed a representation of Antony's defeat at Actium (*Aeneid*, 8.675–713). The similarities between Virgil's narrative and Shakespeare's play are quite close.[1] Not only is Antony, like Aeneas, lured from his duty to Rome by his love of a woman, but Cleopatra, like Dido (whom in her grief she much resembles), is a queen of a North African people and stages her own suicide after her lover has gone. Indeed, as Antony prepares for his own death, he imagines himself reunited with Cleopatra in the Elysian Fields in the presence of Dido and Aeneas:

> Where souls do couch on flowers we'll hand in hand
> And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
> Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
> And all the haunt be ours.
>
> (4.14.52–5)

1 There are enough detailed similarities between *Antony and Cleopatra* and Marlowe's treatment of the story of Dido and Aeneas, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, to indicate that Marlowe's tragedy as well as Virgil's epic poem were in Shakespeare's mind as he wrote the play (Spevack, 603–4; Adelman, *Essay*, 177–83).

Antony's recollection of Virgil, however, is highly selective – indeed distorted. In the *Aeneid*, as Adelman points out (*Essay*, 68–9), Dido and Aeneas do meet in the other world but he finds her wandering with other disconsolate lovers in the plains of mourning and, when she sees Aeneas, she turns away from him. He grieves for her only briefly before going on to the Elysian Fields where he is shown the spirits of the future heroes of Rome. 'The Aeneas whom [Antony] recalls is the lover, not the hero, Dido's Aeneas, not Rome's' (ibid., 68).

The association of Antony and Cleopatra with these classical archetypes creates a number of contradictory effects. The idea that Antony is another Hercules, another Aeneas, and that Cleopatra is a greater Venus, a second Dido, clearly adds to that sense of their own magnitude which they themselves deliberately create, both in Shakespeare's account of them and in Plutarch's, and it cannot help but make its impression on an audience. At the same time, if we reflect on these allusions, we realize that, by Roman standards, they discredit the protagonists, particularly Antony, who, like Mars with Venus and Hercules with Omphale, abandons heroic virtue for the blandishments of a woman but, unlike Hercules at the crossroads, turns away from the path of Roman virtue and, unlike Aeneas, gives up his obligations to his country for the sake of his love for a foreign queen. The paradoxical, ambivalent nature of the lovers which is central to Shakespeare's play is deepened by their association with their mythological archetypes.

There is another parallel which, according to Plutarch, Cleopatra created in her own lifetime, her identification with the Egyptian goddess Isis (Lloyd; Fisch; Bono, 199–219; Adelman, *Mothers*, 183–4). At the ceremony where Antony divides the Asian kingdoms between Cleopatra and her children, says Plutarch, she 'did not onely weare at that time (but at all other times els when she came abroad) the apparell of the goddesse Isis, and so gave audience unto all her subjects, as a new Isis' (North, 290–1). Whereas Plutarch's disapproval

of this ceremony is merely implicit, Shakespeare, by giving this passage almost verbatim to Caesar (3.6.1–19), turns it into an expression of outrage and contempt.[1] Both writers report the episode from a Roman standpoint but it may be that Shakespeare realized there was a significance to it of which Caesar was unaware but which Plutarch, as the author of the long essay *Concerning Isis and Osiris*, must have known. One of the characteristics which distinguishes the Egyptians in Shakespeare's play is their oaths by and prayers to Isis (1.2.66, 69, 75; 1.5.73; 3.3.15) and Cleopatra in certain ways resembles the Egyptian goddess. Plutarch, whose essay was available to Shakespeare in the English translation by Philemon Holland (1603), visited Alexandria himself and writes at length about the significance which she had for the Egyptians. They believe that the earth is 'the body of Isis' which is annually flooded and made fertile by the Nile which is her brother Osiris (Holland, 1300). Isis is a deity who presides over love affairs, and is the female principle of nature (ibid., 1309). The 'different tinctures and colours' of her robes perhaps suggested to Shakespeare the ever-changing moods of Cleopatra, 'for her whole power consisteth and is emploied in matter which receiveth all formes, and becommeth all maner of things, to wit, light, darkness, day, night, fire, water, life, death, beginning and end' (ibid., 1318). In her multi-faceted personality, Isis

1 In Beerbohm Tree's production at Her Majesty's theatre in 1906 this ceremony was actually shown on the stage. It was, recalled the Cleopatra, Constance Collier, 'the most spectacular scene in the play'.

> Cleopatra, robed in silver, crowned in silver, carrying a golden sceptre and a symbol of the sacred golden calf in her hand, went in procession through the streets of Alexandria, the ragged, screaming populace acclaiming the Queen, half in hate, half in superstitious fear and joy, as she made her sacrilegious ascent to her high throne in the market place.
>
> (Collier, 186)

By transforming Caesar's contemptuous account of the episode into a spectacular show, Tree totally changed its effect. In John Caird's 1992 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company the ceremony was again mounted on the stage but in the background and as an accompaniment to Caesar's words.

resembles Shakespeare's 'wrangling queen'.

Shakespeare was familiar with the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius which had been translated into English by William Adlington (1566) and was a source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Towards the end (Book 11) Apuleius describes a vision of Isis in which she appears to him wearing a crown woven of flowers and surrounded with coiled serpents and holds in her hand a golden cup 'out of the mouth wherof the serpent Aspis lifted up its head, with a swelling throat' (Apuleius, 192). The asp, it appears, was associated specifically with Isis, and Cleopatra may in fact have chosen to die from its sting partly for this reason. Shakespeare may not have known this but he could have read in *De Iside et Osiride* about the appearance and habits of the crocodile or 'serpent' which is discussed at the feast on Pompey's galley (2.7.24–8).

The central myth of Isis concerns her devotion to her husband and brother Osiris. Osiris was killed by their brother Typhon, who cut up his body into pieces and scattered them over the land. Isis searched for and found them, all except the genitals, of which she made a replica to take their place and thereby enabled him to gain immortality. It may be that Shakespeare had this legend in his mind in the final scene of the play where Cleopatra 'reconstructs' the dead Antony and, like Isis, looks forward to joining her lover in the afterlife (Bono, 199–219; Bevington, 11; Adelman, *Mothers*, 184). It would be highly appropriate if, in donning her robes and crown in preparation for suicide, Cleopatra once more appeared as 'the goddess Isis' about to be reunited with Osiris: 'Husband, I come.'

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION

When, having become king, Macbeth reveals a sense of inferiority towards Banquo, he recalls Mark Antony's similar uneasiness towards Octavius Caesar:

> under him
> My Genius is rebuk'd, as it is said
> Mark Antony's was by Caesar.
> (3.1.54–6)

As Shakespeare wrote these words, Plutarch's 'Life of Marcus Antonius' clearly came into his mind and he might already have been considering a play in which Antony and Octavius were brought into opposition. Indeed he probably wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* immediately after *Macbeth*, but precisely when he composed it is a matter for conjecture.

The only certain fact is that on 20 May 1608 the publisher Edward Blount acquired the rights to two works, one of which was called *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> **Edw. Blount.** Entred for his copie vnder thand*es* of S[r] Geo. Buck knight & m[r] warden Seton a booke called. The booke of Pericles Prynce of Tyre vj[d]
>
> **Edw. Blunt** Entred also for his copie by the lyke Aucthoritie. A booke Called. Anthony. & Cleopatra vj[d]
>
> (Greg, *Bibliography*, 24)

Neither work is described as a play, nor are they attributed to Shakespeare, and it is possible that either or both of them were written by someone else. Nevertheless they are almost certainly his, if only because Blount was unlikely to have acquired the rights to two non-Shakespearean works with titles identical to those of plays by Shakespeare (Spevack, 380). If they were, then the entry establishes that *Antony and Cleopatra* had been completed before 20 May 1608.

Having acquired the right to publish the play, however, Blount did not, apparently, do so, unless, of course, no copy of his edition has survived. A more likely explanation is that

Blount had no intention of publishing it and that the entry was a 'blocking' entry, 'an attempt on the part of Shakespeare's company to protect themselves against an anticipated piracy by employing a friendly publisher . . . to register his copyright in the plays named' (Cam[1], 1). It is also possible that, for some reason, Blount's entry was cancelled (Greg, *Pericles*, 1). If, incidentally, Blount did hope to forestall unauthorized publication, his attempt failed in the case of *Pericles* which was published twice in the following year without authorization.

Several scholars believe, however, that the play was written earlier. This theory was first put forward by R. H. Case, the editor of the first Arden edition (1906), who saw signs of the influence of *Antony and Cleopatra* on the revised version of Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra*. Daniel's Senecan tragedy, which had first appeared in 1594, was reissued three times with minor alterations and then published with extensive revisions in his *Certaine Small Workes* some time (exactly when is not known) in 1607. Shakespeare's influence on the last of these versions could be seen, according to Case, in the more dramatic nature of Daniel's revised text, 'the replacing of relation and soliloquy by dialogue', the greater part played by 'characters familiar to us in *Antony and Cleopatra*' such as Charmian and Iras, the introduction of two new characters, 'Dircetus' and Diomedes, and the addition of an episode in which 'Dircetus' brings to Ceasar the sword of Mark Antony as he does in Shakespeare's play (Ard[1], x–xi). If *Antony and Cleopatra* does lie behind these revisions but was not yet in print, then, Case concludes, Daniel must have seen a performance of Shakespeare's tragedy in 1606 or early 1607.

It would be misleading, however, to imagine that Daniel, suddenly inspired by a performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, radically transformed his tragedy into a more 'Shakespearean' drama. *Cleopatra* is only one of many works which he revised at this period, and even in its new form it is still a strictly

formal, neoclassical tragedy. As his biographer Joan Rees remarks, it 'hardly ranks as theatrical drama either in point of action presented or speed or liveliness of dialogue' (Rees, 107–8). Moreover it has been argued by Schanzer that the revisions could all have been derived not from Shakespeare but from Plutarch and another Senecan tragedy, *Antonius* (1592), by Daniel's patron, Mary, Countess of Pembroke, to whom *Cleopatra* was dedicated (Schanzer, 'Daniel's revision', 379).

A more plausible connection between Daniel's and Shakespeare's tragedy has been revealed by Barroll, and this consists not of any major revisions to *Cleopatra* of the kind adduced by Case, but of one small detail. In the revised version, as Barroll points out, Eros, the servant whom Antony asks to kill him, is described as Antony's 'late enfranchis'd servant', a detail supplied not by Plutarch, who calls him simply 'a man of his . . . whom he loved and trusted' (North, 309), but by Shakespeare, whose Antony says to Eros:

> When I did make thee free, swor'st thou not then
> To do this when I bade thee?
>
> (4.14.82–3)

Small though the connection is, it does indicate that Daniel had become acquainted with *Antony and Cleopatra* at some time before the publication of his revised *Cleopatra* in 1607 (Barroll, *Politics*, 161–4). The influence of Shakespeare is, incidentally, apparent in some of Daniel's other works. In his *Funeral Poem upon the Death of the late noble Earl of Devonshire* there are recognizable echoes of *Henry V*, and Daniel's editor, John Pitcher, remarks that 'many of the revised poems and plays in Daniel's 1607 collected edition (in which the *Funeral Poem* appeared) show signs of Shakespeare's influence' (Pitcher 1978).

There remains the question of how he could have become

familiar with Shakespeare's tragedy. Most scholars have assumed that he must have seen a performance of it at the Globe, but, as Barroll points out, there were few performances in 1607 at the public theatres, which were closed for long periods on account of the plague. He concludes that it was probably shown at court during the Christmas season of 1606–7. No one, however, seems to have considered the possibility that Daniel saw the play in manuscript. For just over a year (4 February 1604 to 28 April 1605) he held an appointment as the licenser of plays submitted for performance at court by the Children of the Queen's Revels (Rees, 96–7), and, as such, would regularly see the manuscripts of new plays. It may be that one of them was *Antony and Cleopatra*.[1] If this was so, then Shakespeare's tragedy must have been completed, though not necessarily performed, three or four years earlier than has hitherto been supposed.

Other evidence in favour of an earlier date – possible allusions to *Antony and Cleopatra* in the writings of other authors – is far from strong. The most striking is a passage in Barnabe Barnes's tragedy *The Devil's Charter* which was performed at court by Shakespeare's company on 2 February 1607 and printed later in the same year (Ard[1], xii–xiii). In one episode, Alexander Borgia murders two princes as they lie asleep by applying 'aspiks' to their breasts:

> *He draweth out of his boxes aspiks.*
> Come out here now you *Cleopatraes* birds.
> Fed fat and plump with proud *Egiptian* slime,
> Of seauen mouth'd *Nylus* but now turn'd leane:
> *He putteth to either of their brests an* Aspike.
> Take your repast vpon these Princely paps.
> Now *Ptolamies* wife is highly magnified,
> Ensigning these faire princely twins their death,

1 This idea was suggested to me privately by Dr John Pitcher.

And you my louely boys competitors,
With *Cleopatra* share in death and fate.
(Barnes, 71)

The passage is significant in that, whereas Plutarch says specifically that Cleopatra applied the asps to her arm (North, 316), Barnes seems to assume that she put them on her breasts. He need not necessarily have taken this detail from Shakespeare, however, for the notion had been widespread at least since the middle of the sixteenth century and was common in pictorial representations of Cleopatra's suicide (Hughes-Hallett, 193), as the physician James Primrose pointed out: '*Petrus Victorius* blames the Painters, that paint *Cleopatra* applying the Aspe to her paps, seeing it is manifest out of *Plutarch* in the life of *Antonius*, and out of *Plinie* likewise, that she applied it to her arme' (Primrose, 29).[1] Barnes's assumption could have been derived not from *Antony and Cleopatra* but simply from popular belief.

To summarize, the entry in the Stationers' Register, assuming that it refers to Shakespeare's play, shows that *Antony and Cleopatra* had been completed by 20 May 1608, and the revision made by Daniel to his *Cleopatra* strongly suggests that it was finished by the Christmas of 1606–7. If Daniel read the play in manuscript, however, it could have been completed between 4 February 1604 and 28 April 1605, the period during which he was the licenser of plays for the court, but this hypothesis is not strong enough to place the date of composition so early.

On 8 November 1623 *Antony and Cleopatra* reappeared in the Stationers' Register when, together with fifteen other plays by Shakespeare, it was again assigned to Blount and to the printer Isaac Jaggard. This entry was of Shakespeare's comedies, histories and tragedies, 'soe many of the said Copies as

1 Primrose's *Popular Errours, or the Errours of the People in Physick* was first published in Latin (Amsterdam, 1639) and then in an English translation (London, 1651).

are not formerly entred to other men' (Arber, 4.69). It was, in other words, part of the process whereby Blount and Jaggard prepared the way for the publication of the First Folio. Why *Antony and Cleopatra* was included in the list when Blount already held the right to it is a mystery. It may be, as Greg believed, that the original entry had been cancelled or, during the course of fifteen years, simply forgotten (Chambers, *Study*, 1.477). Be that as it may, the play first appeared in print in the First Folio and it is on this text that all subsequent editions must of necessity be based.

A copy of the First Folio has survived in which one page (352) has been proof-corrected in manuscript, and there are other copies in which the page appears in its corrected state. This and other pages which exist both in uncorrected and corrected states were once taken as evidence that considerable trouble had been taken to ensure that the text was as accurate as possible. Closer examination by Hinman, however, has revealed that few pages were actually corrected and that reference to the manuscript copy was seldom made. The errors corrected on page 352 were all obvious typographical ones and one error ('weepe' instead of 'wept' in TLN 1607) was left uncorrected. As Hinman concludes, 'textual accuracy was not the goal aimed at and ... the proof-correction to which the Folio was now and again subject did little to achieve it.' Nevertheless the Folio 'presents not only the only authoritative text of this great play but a reasonably satisfactory one as well' (Facsimile xxvii).

THE TEXT

Many features of the Folio text indicate that the copy used in Jaggard's printing house was not Shakespeare's 'foul papers' but a transcript of them, and not one prepared by the prompter for use in the theatre. The most obvious of these is the presence of the 'ghost' characters Lamprius, Rannius and Lucillius,

who, having been brought on to the stage at the opening of the second scene, are given nothing to say and make no further appearance in the play. It seems that the dramatist, having introduced them, found he had no use for them but omitted to remove their names from the entry direction. This oversight would have been remedied by the prompter when he prepared the script for performance. The prompter could also have sorted out the confusion, which has given much trouble to editors, later in the same scene (1.2.118–28) when the First Messenger is required to speak after he has left the stage and the Second Messenger is ordered by Antony to fetch the messenger from Sicyon who then appears without having been summoned (see Fig. 9). Shakespeare clearly wanted to create the bustle of messengers entering and leaving but failed to work out precisely when or how they should do it.

There are passages in which characters who have not entered are required to speak (as in the case of Iras at 3.11.26, Thidias at 3.12.33 and Proculeius at 5.1.68), and others where characters must obviously leave but are not provided with an exit (as with Alexas at 1.3.6, Gallus towards the end of 5.1 and Scarus at 4.12.17). Other oversights include the general *Exeunt* directions at 3.13.199 and 4.6.11 after which Enobarbus must remain to deliver his soliloquies. Such minor omissions could also be put right by the prompter and have caused no problems for the editors, but the absence of any instructions as to how Cleopatra should be captured in her monument (5.2.34) has compelled editors to devise a stage direction from the details supplied by Plutarch. This particular omission, however, was probably the responsibility not of the author but of the compositor, who, as a result of misjudgement in casting off his copy, found himself with too much material to fit on to the page and cut the stage direction as being more dispensable than the dialogue.[1]

1 Hinman points out that this is a very 'tight' page on which the entry directions have far fewer white lines above and below them than those on the page opposite. It is also (zzl recto) the last page to be composed in the first half of the quire (Hinman, 508–9).

Enter Anthony, with a Messenger.

Cleo. We will not looke vpon him:
Go with vs. *Exeunt.*
Messen. *Fulnia* thy Wife,
First came into the Field.
Ant. Against my Brother *Lucius*?
Messen. I: but soone that Warre had end,
And the times state
Made friends of them, ioyning their force 'gainst *Cæsar*,
Whose better issue in the warre from Italy,
Vpon the first encounter draue them.
Ant. Well, what worst.
Mess. The Nature of bad newes infects the Teller.
Ant. When it concernes the Foole or Coward: On.
Things that are past, are done, with me. 'Tis thus,
Who tels me true, though in his Tale lye death,
I heare him as he flatter'd.
Mes. *Labienus* (this is stiffe-newes)
Hath with his Parthian Force
Extended Asia: from Euphrates his conquering
Banner shooke, from Syria to Lydia,
And to Ionia, whil'st ——
Ant. *Anthony* thou would'st say.
Mes. Oh my Lord.
Ant. Speake to me home,
Mince not the generall tongue, name
Cleopatra as she is call'd in Rome:
Raile thou in *Fulnia's* phrase, and taunt my faults
With such full License, as both Truth and Malice
Haue power to vtter. Oh then we bring forth weeds,
When our quicke windes lye still, and our illes told vs
Is as our earing: fare thee well awhile.
Mes. At your Noble pleasure. *Exit Messenger.*
Enter another Messenger.
Ant. From *Scicion* how the newes? Speake there.
1. *Mes.* The man from *Scicion*,
Is there such an one?
2. *Mes.* He stayes vpon your will.
Ant. Let him appeare:
These strong Egyptian Fetters I must breake,
Or loose my selfe in dotage.

Enter another Messenger with a Letter.

What are you?
3. *Mes.* *Fulnia* thy wife is dead.
Ant. Where dyed she.
Mes. In *Scicion*, her length of sicknesse,
With what else more serious,
Importeth thee to know, this beares.
Antho. Forbeare me.
There's a great Spirit gone, thus did I desire it:
What our contempts doth often hurle from vs,
x

9 *Antony and Cleopatra* 1.2.92–130 (TLN 170–220), First Folio

Elsewhere there are what Greg calls 'indefinite and permissive stage directions' characteristic of foul papers (Greg, *First Folio*, 142), such as the entry of '*two or three Servants*' at the opening of 2.7 and of the '*Company of Soldiours*', and the '*Centerie, and his Company*' at the beginning of 4.3 and 4.9. In entries of this kind, Shakespeare supplied the general idea and left it to the players to decide how many people were available.

These features point strongly to a transcript of the author's manuscript as being the copy used for setting the Folio text, as do certain non-Shakespearean spellings, especially the predominant use of 'oh' instead of the shorter 'o' noted by the Oxford editors (Wells, *Companion*, 549). Since there are relatively few misreadings, however, the manuscript was not, by the standards of the day, difficult to decipher. 'It might', concludes Spevack, 'be the kind of transcript intermediate between foul papers and the promptbook' (Spevack, 379). The play is one of six in the Folio which are not divided into acts or scenes (the others are *Troilus and Cressida, 2* and *3 Henry VI, Romeo and Juliet* and *Timon of Athens*).

Antony and Cleopatra was printed in twenty-nine double-column pages: signatures vv6 verso (page 340), quire xx, mistakenly signed x (pages 341-52), quire yy (yy2 and yy3, mistakenly signed y2 and y3) (pages 353-64) and signatures zz1-zz2 verso (pages 365-8). Hinman has shown that, like the rest of the Folio, it was not set page by page in sequence, but by formes, and that the formes were composed and printed 'from the inside outward', starting with the two immediately contiguous pages, 4 recto and 3 verso, and finishing with 1 recto and 6 verso of each quire. Developing a method which had been applied by previous scholars, Hinman was also able to discriminate, largely by their distinctive spelling habits, between the work of the various compositors, and, on this evidence, deduced that *Antony and Cleopatra* was composed entirely by compositor B, the man who set the greater part of the volume. More recently, however, Howard-Hill has shown

that part of the text was set by compositor E, whom Hinman had identified as a novice, competent to set from printed copy but not from manuscript. Howard-Hill's deduction was reached partly from the evidence of additional spelling habits and also from the use of spaces after commas. 'Whereas compositor B preferred to insert a space after a comma in a short line, compositor E even more consistently omitted spaces' (Howard-Hill, 7). His argument is particularly strong because it relies not simply on spelling, which could be influenced by the manuscript copy, but on habits which are distinctively personal. His conclusion is that compositor E was responsible for signatures xx3 verso to xx5 recto, xx6 recto and verso and yy1 recto (pages 346–9 and 351–3; TLN 744–1266 and 1395–1785; 2.2.59–2.6.72 and 2.7.57–3.6.33). Compositor B set the remainder – and by far the greater portion – of the text, as befitted the more experienced, faster workman.

It is difficult to compare their skills because some passages offer more possibilities for error than others. A large number of misreadings appear, for example, in 3.6.70–6, the work of compositor B, but these lines include the names and kingdoms of Antony's Near Eastern allies, words less familiar than those in the rest of the play. If, however, the first seven pages set by B are compared with the seven set by E, it becomes clear that E's punctuation is less accurate than B's. 'Errors in punctuation are common,' notes Bevington, 'suggesting that the compositors not only did what they could with Shakespeare's sparsely-pointed manuscript but regarded punctuation as their responsibility' (Cam^2, 266). The editor may therefore more confidently emend the punctuation of pages set by E. On the other hand, B was more inclined to make 'graphic errors' (simple misreadings of the manuscript), perhaps because, working faster, he read less accurately than E.

The text does contain a few notorious cruces, such as the problem of the 'Arm-gaunt Steede' in 1.5.50, the 'ribaudred Nagge of Egypt' in 3.10.10 and the question whether Antony's

bounty was, as the Folio says, 'An *Antony*' or, as Theobald proposed, 'an autumn' (5.2.86), but many of the other textual problems can be solved with some degree of certainty and, indeed, had been solved by the end of the eighteenth century.

These do not include problems of lineation. The text of *Antony and Cleopatra* contains an exceptionally large number of passages in which the lineation seems either odd or obviously wrong. As is usual in his later plays, Shakespeare does not write consistently in pentameters but often in short and, less frequently, hypermetric lines for expressive, dramatic effect. Moreover, in addition to episodes which are written entirely in prose, such as the dialogue between Enobarbus and Menas (2.6.82–138) and the conversation between the servants before the banquet on Pompey's galley (2.7.1–16), there are short prose interjections in scenes which are otherwise written in verse, of which those by Enobarbus at 2.2.109–12 and 114–15 are examples. In these passages, prose is appropriate for the plain-speaking soldier and gives substance to Caesar's complaint that he does not 'dislike the matter but the manner of his speech'. These alone should make the editor cautious of trying to arrange as verse any passage printed as prose. Yet, as McKerrow observed, 'modern editors have, as a general rule, tended to treat all lines which *could* be metrical, or could be *made* metrical by a slight alteration, as verse and to print them as such' (McKerrow, 45). This tendency is apparent in the editorial treatment of the following passage in the Folio (2.2.29–33; TLN 713–17):

> *Caes.* Welcome to Rome.
> *Ant.* Thanke you.
> *Caes.* Sit.
> *Ant.* Sit sir.
> *Caes.* Nay then.

Most editors have presented this as a single verse line (into

which it easily falls) but it is doubtful that the listener is conscious of the iambics and it could as well be printed, as in this edition, as a series of prose interjections.

On the other hand, at 2.6.62–5 (TLN 1254–6), the dialogue, which has hitherto been in verse, suddenly shifts into prose for no obvious dramatic reason:

> No *Anthony* take the lot: but first or last, your fine Egyptian cookerie shall haue the fame, I haue heard that *Iulius Caesar*, grew fat with feasting there.

Another feature of the text is the running on of what appear to be one line and one half-line to form a single hypermetric line, as in 2.2.35–6 (TLN 720):

> I must be laught at, if or for nothing, or a little, I

and 5.2.305–6 (TLN 3559):

> That I might heare thee call great *Caesar* Asse, vnpolicied.

Conversely, there are more frequent examples of what are presumably single lines of verse which are printed as two short lines, as in 2.7.119 (TLN 1472–3):

> What would you more?
> *Pompey* goodnight. Good Brother

and, a few lines later (2.7.130; TLN 1484–5),

> But what, we are Friends?
> Come downe into the Boate.

Again, the Folio sometimes presents the reader with a succession of short lines which may be regarded as split full lines of verse or brief exchanges of prose, such as the following (3.3.7–8; TLN 1630–4):

Mes. Most gratious Maiestie.
Cleo. Didst thou behold *Octauia?*
Mes. I dread Queene.
Cleo. Where?
Mes. Madam in Rome

This problem is compounded by the compositor's practice, normal in this period, of starting every new speech without indenting it, even if it begins in the middle of a verse line. In other words, half-lines which we are accustomed to seeing in modern editions at the right of the page are placed at the left, so that, for example, the following (presumably) divided line (1.3.25)

ANTONY The gods best know –
CLEOPATRA O, never was there queen

appears in the Folio (TLN 329–30) as

Ant. The Gods best know.
Cleo. Oh neuer was there Queene

It is not immediately clear whether these two short lines should be considered parts of a single line or simply short interjections which should stand on their own. Once the reader becomes accustomed to the compositors' practice of not indenting, this particular problem can be solved (it is a single, divided line), but it is harder to reach a decision when three short lines appear in succession, as in the following from the opening scene of the play (1.1.18–20; TLN 27–9; see Cam[2], 266):

Mes. Newes (my good Lord) from Rome.
Ant. Grates me, the summe.
Cleo. Nay heare them *Anthony.*

Cæsar. What would you more?
Pompey goodnight. Good Brother
Let me requeſt you of our grauer buſineſſe
Frownes at this leuitie. Gentle Lords let's part,
You ſee we haue burnt our cheekes. Strong *Enobarbe*
Is weaker then the Wine, and mine owne tongue
Spleet's what it ſpeakes: the wilde diſguiſe hath almoſt
Antickt vs all. What needs more words? goodnight.
Good *Anthony* your hand.
Pom. Ile try you on the ſhore.
Anth. And ſhall Sir, giues your hand.
Pom. Oh *Anthony*, you haue my Father houſe.
But what, we are Friends?
Come downe into the Boate.

Meſ. Moſt gratious Maieſtie.
Cleo. Did'ſt thou behold *Octauia*?
Meſ. I dread Queene.
Cleo. Where?
Meſ. Madam in Rome, I lookt her in the face: and
ſaw her led betweene her Brother, and *Marke Anthony*.

10 *Antony and Cleopatra* 2.7.119–30 (TLN 1472–85) and 3.3.7–10 (TLN 1630–5), First Folio

This particular problem is described by McKerrow:

> There are a number of passages consisting of an uneven number of part-lines in which little difference is made metrically if we begin with a part-line or if we rearrange the passage throughout so as to end with one.
> (McKerrow, 44)

Some of these problems have been clarified, though not necessarily solved, by the knowledge we have recently acquired about the working practices of the compositors. If we can understand why a compositor chose to depart from what we suppose to have been the lineation of the manuscript copy, we may be in a better position to emend it with some confidence. It was once thought that mislining was derived from the manuscript (Greg, *Editorial Problem*, 147), but, thanks to the work of Hinman, we now realise that it was often created by the need for the compositor to accommodate the text within the limits of the page. Mislining of this kind was brought

about for two reasons. The first was the necessity to fit long verse lines into the narrow double columns which were used throughout the Folio. Hence the two short lines quoted earlier were a way of dealing with one long line –

> What would you more? Pompey, goodnight. Good brother

– which was too long to fit into the Folio column. A similar solution was found by the compositor in dealing with the other long line:

> But what? We are friends! Come down into the boat.

The second reason was the need to fit the text not into the column but the page. Having divided up the manuscript copy into sections, each of which he thought could be accommodated on a page ('casting-off copy'), the compositor discovered when he came to set the pages that he had miscalculated and had to set more verse lines than the pages could accommodate. The solution was to set verse as prose, which occupies less space. This is almost certainly what happened when, in the passage quoted above, the dialogue suddenly changes from verse to prose. The manuscript was presumably lined as follows:

> No *Anthony* take the lot:
> But first or last, your fine Egyptian cookerie
> Shall haue the fame, I haue heard that *Iulius Caesar*
> Grew fat with feasting there.

Not all problems of lineation can be solved by this means, however, and in all cases where two or more equally acceptable solutions are possible (as in 1.1.18–20 quoted above) the editor must either choose between them, knowing that his choice may or may not reflect the manuscript copy, or, like Bevington and the Oxford editors, retain the lineation of the Folio.

THE TRAGEDY OF

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA