

Abstracts

Cleopatra's 'Roman' Death

ROSY COLOMBO

Suicide is necessary to the dramaturgical structure of *Antony and Cleopatra* – and to the ‘infinite variety’ of the play. Like a prism, rotating and exposing different faces to the light, it is a vital principle that responds to the play’s needs as well as the tripartite configuration of Elizabethan theatre: the stage, the pit and the heavens. That is, in this play: earth, the region of originary identity for Antonio; the ditch, where Enobarbus will atone for his treason; the Mausoleum (palace and tomb), a place of sacredness and art which shields the mystery of Cleopatra.

The current paper, however, deals with the crisis of suicide as the quintessential Roman gesture, that is as the paradigm of a stable, manly identity, fully coherent with the soldier’s code of honour. *Antony and Cleopatra* interrogates that very gesture, by modulating it within an anamorphic perspective that dislocates and dissolves its value as a means to forge an identity, emptying it of all heroic meaning. For the Romans, such meaning is a thing of the past: it is the trace of a wounded conscience, yearningly implied in the ambiguous end of Enobarbus; it is the illusion of sexual and warlike potency in the incomplete and grotesque performance of Antony’s death. In Cleopatra’s refashioning of Roman ethics her vision does not shackle her to pre-existing models; it rather takes the form of a sublime rite of passage into a metaphysical space, in which the dispersion of the self into an infinite cosmos merges with Christian afterlife and with the eternal permanence of an artwork.

In Cleopatra’s early modern suicide the geometry of the centre no longer holds. The Aristotelian ‘coherence’ of the world is superseded by a Copernican revolution of perspective, according to which anamorphosis prevails as a mode of representation.

Keywords: Suicide, Monument, Christianity, Theatricality, Foundation myth, *Aeneid*

“Cleopatra a gypsy”: *Performing the Nomadic Subject in Shakespeare’s Alexandria, Rome and London*

KEIR ELAM

At the beginning of *Antony and Cleopatra* the Egyptian queen is referred to as a ‘gypsy’. This term had different negative meanings in early modern English, from nomad to Egyptian to whore. The epithet evokes, among other things, the persecution of ‘Egyptians’, or gypsies, in Tudor and Stuart England, as well as the anti-vagrancy legislation and literature. This paper explores the ‘Egyptian’ qualities attributed to Cleopatra, especially her supposed nomadism, both in Shakespeare’s tragedy and in cultural history.

Keywords: Cleopatra, Gypsies, Vagrancy laws, Nomadism, Cultural history

On Othello and Desdemona

PAUL A. KOTTMAN

Kottman argues, against Stanley Cavell’s reading of *Othello*, that Othello’s murder of Desdemona stems from his need to demonstrate Desdemona’s independent desire and autonomy – rather than, as Cavell has it, to “avoid” or “deny” that independent vitality. Othello would rather see Desdemona dead at his feet than bent before him on her knees; his own freedom (as he understands it) depends upon Desdemona’s freedom, on her not being merely obedient. Kottman also argues that Desdemona herself plays a role in her own undoing; by risking her life to make love to Othello, she gives him the right to destroy her. Under the circumstances, it is the only action she can make sense of as her own.

Keywords: Sexual love, Freedom, Stanley Cavell, Skepticism, Othello, Jealousy

A Tragedy of Memory

AGOSTINO LOMBARDO

Agostino Lombardo investigates the manifold uses of memory in *Antony and Cleopatra* which range from the historical and literary tradition, which lie behind the play, with which an Elizabethan audience would have been familiar, to the specific theatrical recollection of the performance of Shakespeare’s own *Julius Caesar*. The inclusion of memory as well as enriching the experience of the play itself expands the possibility for the theatre to be an image of life which, like the theatre, takes place in the present but is nurtured by the past.

Keywords: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, Memory, Theatre, Collective imagination

Remembering Greece in Shakespeare's Rome

ROBERT S. MIOLA

This paper examines Shakespeare's reception of Plutarch, whose *Lives* furnished his vision of ancient Rome. Examination of Antony's prophecy of revenge in *Julius Caesar* reveals significant continuities as well as revealing departures. Among other changes Shakespeare imports into this speech *Atē* ("blindness, disaster"), which he reads as an infernal spirit of discord. Shakespeare also translates the mysterious, intransigently alien *daimōn* ("god, tutelary spirit, fortune") into Caesar's ghost, a Senecan revenge spirit. George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and the author of *Caesar's Revenge* show similar patterns of adoption. But Shakespeare shows a remarkable independence from Plutarch and from early modern translators and playwrights. He rejects the purposeful supernaturalism in Plutarch that renders Roman and Greek history moral and comprehensible; he also rejects the contemporary adaptation of this supernaturalism into a Christian hermeneutic. The march of Roman history in *Julius Caesar* does not manifest God's controlling hand.

Keywords: *Julius Caesar*, Plutarch, Sir Thomas North, *Atē*, *Daimōn*, Classical reception

Ears to See: Music in The Tempest

GIULIANO PASCUCCI

With regard to the aural universe of *The Tempest*, scholarly interest has mainly focused on music. "The isle is full of noises"; yet music is the most formal experience of sounds across its map. The aim of this essay is to investigate Shakespeare's exploration of the language of sounds with reference to his involvement in the close theatrical space of the Blackfriars, which allowed for a more sophisticated use of music on stage, particularly significant for the unfolding of the plot and character building. The specific focus on the score of *Full Fathom Five* and its alleged sources (Robert Johnson, John Dowland) tackles the song according to a triple perspective: historical, philological, semiotic.

Keywords: Blackfriars, John Dowland, Full Fathom Five, Robert Johnson, Masque, Multi-discursiveness

Antony and Cleopatra: *Boundaries and Excess*

TONY TANNER

Reading the play in the light of the fundamental opposition between measure (control, constraint) and excess (bounty), Tony Tanner focuses on how *Antony and Cleopatra* constantly seeks to transcend the limitations of language. The body is seen as the final boundary by the lovers who cannot be contained, even by words, and who triumph as they move towards the unbounded spaces of infinity.

Keywords: *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's Rome, Boundaries, Excess, The limits of language, The body

Love and Death in Egypt and Rome

RAMIE TARGOFF

This paper looks at Shakespeare's use of Italian sources in writing *Romeo and Juliet*. My emphasis will be on the ways in which Shakespeare understood Italian ideas about death and burial to differ from those prevalent in England, and to explore what he gained by refuting the central premise of all of *Romeo and Juliet's* Italian sources: that their love would have an afterlife beyond the grave. The paper will also consider Shakespeare's return to the topic in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which he imagines an alternative model for conceiving of posthumous love.

Keywords: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Death, Burial, Posthumous love

Antony and Cleopatra and the Uses of Mythology

MARIA VALENTINI

This article discusses the uses of mythological allusions in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* whose eponymous protagonists seem at times to re-enact such myths as those of Mars and Hercules, or of Venus and Isis, yet at other times to debunk them. The chosen myths, however, are controversial in themselves and enhance the well-known ambiguities of the main characters and the multiple perspectives of interpretation of the play as a whole.

Keywords: *Antony and Cleopatra*, Plutarch, Hercules, Isis, Venus, Mars