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Mapping *Antony and Cleopatra*
Permanence and Mobility

edited by
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Editor's Foreword: "Here is my space"

Rosy Colombo

The seeds of the present issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies* were sown in the course of the International IV Centennial Conference, "Shakespeare 2016. The Memory of Rome", a joint venture of Sapienza University of Rome, The University of Rome Tor Vergata, and Roma Tre University, which was held in April 2016. However, the spectrum of its contents and contributors has considerably changed in the meantime, including the choice to re-publish essays by Tony Tanner and Agostino Lombardo as classics of twentieth-century literary criticism on *Antony and Cleopatra*. This issue is dedicated to their memory, and to the memory of another friend of our journal, the late Alessandro Serpieri, for his passionate and innovative role in the field of Shakespearean studies.

The thematic part of this issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearian Studies* addresses the memory of ancient Egypt as a dual site of permanence and change in the imagination of Imperial Rome as reworked in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*: here Egypt is viewed anamorphically, and not only perceived in terms of a love-hate relationship between the cultures of Western Europe and the East – in which Egypt, projected as "Other", is part and parcel of Roman history according to a tradition handed down to Renaissance

through Latin and Greek sources[1] – but also as a key player, with Hellenistic culture, in the foundational myth of the Empire itself. As a space of desire, Egypt is crucial in Antony's vision of a political and existential space without bounds – including gender-based and linguistic boundaries – nurtured in the glorious Alexandrian melting pot which extended from Greece to Africa to the Ancient Near East (but its shadow/ghost still abides, after the collapse at Actium battle, in Octavius Caesar's prediction of a "time of universal peace", IV.vi.4)[2] and in the aesthetic heritage originated from the silence of a monumental grave in Egypt:

> Take up her bed,
> And bear her women from the monument;
> She shall be buried by her Antony –
> No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
> A pair so famous. (V.ii.354-57)

The old adage "Graecia capta ferum victorem coepit" (explored in Robert Miola and Maria Valentini's contributions to the issue) could also be said to apply to Egypt, following Keir Elam's reflections on the passage of the Cleopatra myth across the Mediterranean – from Alexandria, to Rome, to London, providing further evidence for Fernand Braudel's statement that the Mediterranean can be defined as a 'movement-space', that is a place characterized not so much by being inhabited by men as by being traversed by History[3].

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1 Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book VIII, vv.675-731. On Virgil's relevance see David Quint, "Epic and Empire", *Comparative Literature*, 41:1 (Winter 1989), pp. 1-32. On Shakespeare's familiarity with Plutarch see *I drammi romani*, in *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare. Dalle fonti ai drammi*, eds. Alessandro Serpieri, Keir Elam and Claudia Corti, vol. IV, Parma, Pratiche, 1988. On Shakespeare's deconstruction of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* cf., in the current issue, Rosy Colombo, *Cleopatra's 'Roman' Death*, pp. 73-86.

2 All quotations are from *Anthony and Cleopatra*, ed. Michael Neill, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994. On Cleopatra's monumental death see the seminal study by Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, rpt. 2005, pp. 305-27. On her metamorphosis into an aesthetic object see, in this issue, the essays by Keir Elam and Rosy Colombo.

3 Cf. Fernand Braudel, *Memorie del Mediterraneo*, Milano, Bompiani, 2004; original title: *Les Mémoires de la Méditerranée*, Paris, Editions de Fallois, 1998.

Nevertheless, if mobility is encoded in the map of Egyptian life and memory inscribed in the legend of Cleopatra, constitutive as it is of her "infinite variety" (II.ii.243)

> Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
> To weep – how every passion fully strives
> To make itself in thee fair and admired! (I.i.51-53)

from a strictly Egyptian point of view it does not contemplate departure. "Here is my space", says Antony, for whom parting is a duty but also a trauma, while Cleopatra's inclination – as Keir Elam notes – is to stay: she is always represented by Shakespeare as sitting, or lying, in bed, or even on a mattress. She is physically associated with objects that denote static or permanent architectonic structure – like her Mausoleum, in contrast to the Western ideological stigma of nomadism as a hallmark of her inconstant, gypsy-like attitude. Even on the Cydnus (on the move to greet Antony) she appears sitting on the barge, while her flight at Actium, the climax of her variety in assuming the role of Fortune, is a disgrace. It is however consistent with her refusal to part with Egypt – the land to die in, be buried in for eternity.

The drawing by David Hockney[4] on the cover of this issue provides a visual guide into the time/space symbolic map of *Antony and Cleopatra*, both with regard to the text and to its reception history, as it seems to recall Shakespeare's tracing of the different civilizations in which Egypt plays a significant role, due to its contamination with a number of traditions: Graeco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and African (the latter relating to the heritage of the Pharaohs' tradition and surviving in the dark colour of Cleopatra's skin).

At a first reading, the picture is undoubtedly an ironical interpretation of a conventional Egyptian landscape appealing to the contemporary mass tourist imagination, showing the prospect of a drive across the desert in an open car to experience an Oriental past which is identified with the perfect triangular shape of the pyramids: a true icon of the contemporary travel industry. At a closer

[4] On a (pretty rare) triangular coordinate graph paper supplied by the Keuffel and Esser Co, nn. 358-32.

inspection, however, the image appears to be a representation of totality: the car and the cloud communicate a sense of mobility, therefore of time – in the sense of its passing, with a certain speed, but also of the vanity of earthly things, which are all destined to pass. Time here is not in conflict with the stable proportions of the triangle (and, by metonymy, of the pyramid), and with the eternal cycle of natural life, signified by the evergreen palm, which also suggests the presence of water (perhaps the Nile?) nearby. *Sein und Zeit*, being and becoming, coexist in a physical space in which traces of a mythical Egypt are inscribed onto a geometrical pattern, on triangular coordinate graph paper: "here is my space". A space which, for Antony, is both political and existential, a chance at being re-born as well as achieving a heroic self-representation; it is of course above all an aesthetic space for a contemporary artist such as David Hockney, inspired by ancient and modern symbols of time.

A similar movement pervades the map of the critical appreciations of *Antony and Cleopatra* here presented: critical revision of what has at times appeared as a firm identity of Rome through time within the boundaries of *Romanitas* is interwoven with an interest in the cultural mobility of the play – and with the memory of Shakespeare's Egypt in his early modern deconstruction of Virgil and Plutarch's Roman history at the eve of the Empire, fashioned as a conflict between a civilized West and a barbarian East which was in fact a civil war within the orbit of Roman power; displaced, moreover, into a tragic love story for the sake of Augustan propaganda, according to Virgil's epic, which was ideologically committed to the hegemony of the Roman Empire. Such mobility leads to different places and times: back to Greece (in Robert Miola's essay) and forward to Verona (as in Ramie Targoff's); in flux from Alexandria to Rome and London (Keir Elam), across Virgil's Carthage (Rosy Colombo) and early modern reinventions of the heroes of classical mythology (Maria Valentini). Time stretches before and after in the absolute present of the theatre (Agostino Lombardo). Indeed, it is within the play itself that temporality is orchestrated according to a triple scheme, as Keir Elam argues when commenting on Cleopatra's self-performing prophecy about her greatness being "boyed" in Rome, a scene actually recreated by an adolescent actor on the stage of the London

Globe theatre: "a speech which projects into the future an event that actually took place in the distant historical past and is now being theatrically recreated in the present"[5]. Shakespeare's Roman representation of Egypt as Other is an intrinsic part of the play's memory of Rome; like Cleopatra, it is a seductive image of power and fertility; both doomed to become icons of the Roman Imperial power, with death acting as the agent of their metamorphosis into aesthetic objects, fit for consumption.

The palm at the fore in Hockney's painting has more than one meaning. A standard ingredient in any travel advertisement, it also features as a traditional symbol of festivity and victory. Yet with reference to the epochal war of Mediterranean history, in which categories such as boundaries and excess were at stake (Tony Tanner), the symbol is in itself ambivalent: the aristocratic codes of the Republican forefathers celebrated by Octavius and Antony's fantasies of an Oriental Rome "stirred by Cleopatra" (I.i.45)

> could not stall together
> In the whole world. (V.i.39-40)

On the other hand, the palm which may point to Octavius' military and political victory of 31 BC at Actium (leading to the supremacy of the West in the Mediterranean) may also suggest the symbolic triumph of the Egyptian queen through her monumental death – in fact a challenge of contemporary art to the traditional, classical and Christian, centrality of the logos. In Hockney's picture the symbols of temporality – tomb, cloud, car, palm – coalesce to constitute a map of totality. This is why it is offered on the cover of this issue as a sort of prologue to Shakespeare's treatment of space in Antony and Cleopatra, an explicitly manneristic challenge to the neoclassical, linear perspective of the early Renaissance, which placed the origins of meaning in the authority of one point of view, a fixed one, projected towards infinite space[6].

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[5] As Keir Elam observes on p. 52, Cleopatra imagines herself being represented in Rome as a gipsy in all its senses, namely as an Egyptian puppet, "I'th'posture of a whore" (V.ii.221): the well-known irony of this passage is that as she speaks she is already being represented in early modern London.

[6] Richard Wilson, "'Your crown's awry': The Visual Turn in *Antony and Cleopatra*", in *Free Will: Art and Power on Shakespeare's Stage*, Manchester, Manchester

Such a challenge is launched from the very start of the play, in fact a programmatic exposition of Shakespeare's strategy of representation – and composition – that displaces the geometric perspective of mimetic illusion into an oblique, inclined perception of the scene brought about by anamorphosis. In the first act, two Roman soldiers, Demetrio and Philo, perform a kind of theatre that is based on empirical seeing ("behold and see", I.i.13), which subsequently shifts towards a theatre of knowing, inaugurated by Cleopatra's question about the essence of love in terms of a provocative distance from the Roman syntax of measure, both in terms of quantity ("how much", I.i.14) and limit, within the categories of space and time ("I'll set a bourne how far to be beloved", I.i.16) . A poor perspective, inadequate as far as knowledge is concerned ("There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned", I.i.15), as Antony radically shows when he argues in favour of the primacy of the body ("The nobleness of life / Is to do thus [*embracing Cleopatra*]", I.i.39) and of the pleasures of the imagination ("Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth", I.i.17). Such a challenge includes language: language involving the invention of words (see Tony Tanner's inspiring comments on Plutarch's reference to the lovers' manipulation of Greek, their basic language of communication); but also language fashioned to become a device of defamiliarization, a rhetorical resource used both by Enobarbus, who applies it to his oblique approach to truth, and by Antony, for example when he stimulates the Romans' naive curiosity about Egypt:

> LEPIDUS
> What manner o'thing is your crocodile?
>
> ANTONY
> It is shaped, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as it hath breadth. It is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth it, and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.

University Press, 2013. For a useful analysis of anamorphosis in this play, applied to Cleopatra's visual perspective ("Let him forever go – let him not, Charmian! / Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, / The other way's a Mars", II.v.116-18), see Virginia Mason Vaughan, Antony and Cleopatra*: Language and Writing*, London, The Arden Shakespeare, 2016, particularly the pages on "Shakespeare's Perspective Art", pp. 1-3.

LEPIDUS
What colour is it of?

ANTONY
Of its own colour too.

LEPIDUS
'Tis a strange serpent.

ANTONY
'Tis so, and the tears of it are wet. (II.vii.40-48)

Above all, the use of ironical language is a characteristic weapon of Cleopatra's intelligence, until the very end, as shown by her playful dialogue with the clown about the natural disposition of the serpent:

CLOWN
Give it nothing I pray you, for it is not worth the feeding.

CLEOPATRA
Will it eat me? (V.ii.268-70)

Along with the language of the body, the very act of uttering words is seen by the lovers as a vital space of agency to be conquered:

ANTONY
I am dying, Egypt, dying.
Give me some wine, and let me speak a little.

CLEOPATRA
No, let me speak […].

ANTONY
One word, sweet queen […]. (IV.xvi.43-47)

Of course, as Tony Tanner points out, Antony and Cleopatra do not want to be understood 'literally' – they do not work, or play, or love, or live, by the 'letter'. It is precisely the 'letter', and all fixed

alphabetical restrictions, that they wish to dissolve, using language as a mobile instrument, shifting from hyperbole to irony. Excess belongs mainly to Antony ("we stand up peerless", I.i.42), but it is taken over by Cleopatra to make up for his loss, in her imaginative recreation of his heroic status. Once "withered is the garland of the war" (IV.xvi.66), after "the odds is gone" (IV.xvi.68), she reaches a climax of excess in a visionary sublime vein, telling her dream of "an Emperor Antony", extolled as a mythical divinity:

> I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony –
> […]
> His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck
> A sun and moon […]
> His legs bestrid the Ocean; his reared arm
> Crested the world […]
> For his bounty,
> There was no winter in't – an autumn 'twas
> That grew the more by reaping. (V.ii.76-88)

As Nadia Fusini argues: "It is with words […] that Cleopatra transports Antony from the position of a hero to the condition/status of a god. […] Against Octavius' masculine realism, the history of the Empire, the story of a great protagonist of the greatness of Rome, is rewritten from the point of view of a woman's desire"[7].

As the essays here presented collectively show, it is another Egypt[8], a space between history and myth – suspended between different perspectives of representation – that provides Shakespeare with an occasion to radically question the foundations of temporality and beauty.

This issue, like the preceding one (3/2016), also features a Miscellany section, which collects essays of current interest and broader research on Shakespearean and early modern topics. We are happy to be able to publish here contributions by Paul A. Kottman on Othello *and Giuliano Pascucci on* The Tempest.

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[7] Nadia Fusini, *Il sogno di Cleopatra*, in *Donne fatali. Ofelia, Desdemona, Cleopatra*, Roma, Bulzoni, 2005, p. 76, my translation.

[8] Emanuele M. Ciampini, *Cercando un altro Egitto. Sopravvivenza di un'antica civiltà nella cultura europea*, Milano, Unicopli, 2013.

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Antony and Cleopatra: Boundaries and Excess*

Tony Tanner

This, from North's translation of Plutarch's *Life of Antonius*:

> For they [Antony and Cleopatra] made an order between them, which they called AMIMETOBION (as much as to say, no life comparable and matcheable with it). Later, they invented another word – SYNAPOTHANUMENON (signifying the order and agreement of those that will die together)[1].

* This essay was first published in *Hebrew University Studies in Literature* 15 (1987), pp. 78-104, and later in Tony Tanner, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, foreword by Stephen Heath, Cambridge and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997 ff., pp. 622-640. Tanner's quotations are from *The Complete Plays of Shakespeare*, Everyman's Library. This abridged version is published by kind permission of Stephen Heath, Literary Executor of Tony Tanner's estate for King's College, Cambridge, UK. Editorial notes have been added throughout the text when clarification has been considered necessary.

1 Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans […] Translated out of Greek into French by James Amyot […] and out of French into English by Thomas North*, London, Printed by Richard Field, 1579, p. 1004.

They invented words. That is, from what was available they put together special terms which would apply to them alone – using language as a repository of possibilities, trying to transcend the limitations of the available formulations, re-rehearsing reality by stretching language in new directions and combinations. Shakespeare gloriously takes the hint. His Antony and Cleopatra seem intent on pre-empting language to establish new words to describe their love. New words, new worlds – this is the linguistic atmosphere of the play; ordinary language must be 'melted' (a key word) and reconstituted, so that new propositions and descriptions can be articulated to project and express their emotions. In their speech, everything tends towards hyperbole – i.e. 'excess, exaggeration'. Rhetorically this is related to *Superlatio*, which a dictionary of rhetorical terms glosses as "exaggerated or extravagant terms used for emphasis and not intended to be understood literally". Of course, Antony and Cleopatra do not want to be understood 'literally' – they do not work, or play, or love, or live, by the 'letter'. It is precisely the 'letter', and all fixed alphabetical restrictions, that they talk, and love, to dissolve, so that, as it were, they can live and speak in a 'higher' language of their own inventing. For Antony, to burst his armour and his alphabet are, alike, related modes of energy moving towards transcendence.

In his introductory *Lectures on Philosophy*, Hegel wrote that "alphabetic writing is in itself and for itself the most intelligent"; he also wrote "everything oriental must be excluded from the history of philosophy". Alphabetic writing is transparent, an instrument of clarity, it maintains the unity of consciousness; the oriental thus becomes an opaque script, another, more iconic, language altogether, another mode of writing and thus of being-in-the-world, which threatens to disturb and disrupt, even destroy, the alphabetic clarity of consciousness. We can apply this opposition to the play. Caesar is nothing if not 'alphabetic'. He instructs Taurus and his army as he hands out his written orders before the battle of Actium – "Do not exceed / The prescript of this scroll" (III.viii.4-5). He never deviates from exact 'pre-scriptions' – the already written – and lives by and from within the orderings of his 'scroll'. Cleopatra, on the other hand, is quintessentially oriental – in Hegel's terms: her actions, like her temperament, are impossible to

'read' in any alphabetic way. She is, from Caesar's point of view, illegible; hardly to be 'read' in his Roman language. She is an ultimate opacity – from Rome's point of view – confounding all customary alphabetic descriptions and decodings. She is in no way 'prescribed' or prescribable, and can no more be held within Caesar's 'scroll' than she can be trapped by his plots and policies.

But first, let me turn to the question of armour, the steel second skin of the man, the soldier, the Roman. As so often in Shakespeare, the opening lines set up terms and problems which will reverberate throughout the play. Philo, a Roman soldier with Antony in Egypt, opens:

> Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure.
> (I.i.1-2)

The play, unlike any other by Shakespeare, opens with a negative. It thus implies the denial of a previous assertion – perhaps more affirmative – and his speech goes on to negate, or attempt to degrade and belittle, Antony's behaviour since he has been in Egypt. "Overflowing the measure" immediately opposes the flooding Nile of Egypt to the concept of 'measure' – control, constraint, containment – which is the very language of Rome. The contest of the play is to be between overflow (excess) and measure (boundaries). Philo goes on to describe the transformation – or rather, in his terms, the deformation – of Antony the soldier into Antony the "strumpet's fool", the victim of 'lust'. Philo always chooses the diminishing, pejorative word when referring to anything to do with Cleopatra and Egypt, anything which is not connected with Rome, Mars, and the "office and devotion" of the warrior's code. Thus it is that he goes on to recall the great *soldier* Antony, to contrast him with the man who now serves Eros and Venus-Cleopatra. Again, his terms anticipate much that is to follow:

> His captain's heart
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
> The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper
> And is become the bellows and the fan
> To cool a gypsy's lust.

(I.i.6-10)

In battle, then, Antony could not be confined within his own armour; such was his force and energy that it broke out of his soldier's attire – it burst the buckles. […] To be sure, he occasionally tries to stay within Roman rules; but in whatever he does-in war, in love – he is driven to burst whatever is 'buckling' him.

In Act IV, Antony is preparing for battle and calls for his armour. The aptly named Eros (as in Plutarch) brings it; but Cleopatra wants to help. She thus becomes, in Antony's words, "the armourer of my heart" as she fastens the buckles and asks – "Is this not buckled well?" Antony:

> Rarely, rarely:
> He that unbuckles this, till we do please
> To daff't for our repose, shall hear a storm.
> Thou fumblest, Eros, and my queen's a squire
> More tight at this than thou.
> (IV.iv.11-15)

Armour – amour: there is no etymological connection, but phonetically the words are close. And what we see here, with Cleopatra buckling Antony's armour, almost while they are still in bed, is an overlaying of amour onto armour, so that the armour is eroticized and sensualized – the *business* of war (often referred to) here subsumed into the more all-embracing game of love. […]

As he moves towards […] death, Antony says to Eros:

> Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
> A vapor sometime like a bear or lion […]
> […] Thou hast seen these signs:
> They are black vesper's pageants […]
> That which is now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
> As water is in water.
> (IV.xiv.2-11)

"Dis-limn" – that is, un-paint, efface – is Shakespeare's own invention; it is part of the 'reversal' which is happening to Antony, whose role in the 'pageant' (which also meant a mobile play or

stage) is nearly over. He is moving towards 'indistinctness' – he, the man of the greatest 'distinction' in the world: he is being physically 'dis-limned' (which sounds the homophone 'dislim*b*ed'), effaced by Caesar, by nature, by himself (Cleopatra will 'paint' him again after his death, but we will come to that dazzling act of retrieval and recuperation). Antony continues:

> My good knave Eros, now thy captain is
> Even such a body: here I am Antony,
> Yet cannot hold this visible shape. . .
> (IV.xiv.12-14)

He is in fact moving towards physical invisibility, because Antony, the name, the individual, the specific and world-famous identity, can no longer 'hold' onto his bodily shape. He is moving out, moving through, moving beyond; melting, but also transcending the final barrier – the body itself. […] The body is the final boundary.

Boundary; bounty; bound; bond; band – these are words of varying importance in the play, but they all serve to set up a crucial series of echoes, half-echoes, indeed anti-echoes, if one can imagine such a thing. Rome is the place of bonds (Caesar: "I know it for my bond2); and bounds ("He's bound unto Octavia", the luckless messenger tells Cleopatra); and bands (Caesar says to Octavia – "prove such a wife […] as my farthest band / Shall pass on thy aproof"). It is also the place of 'hoops' and 'knots' (in relation to the problem of what can bind Caesar and Antony together), and of 'squares', 'rules', and 'measures'. Antony tries to make a return to this Roman world, but no matter what 'bonds' he enters into, no matter how much he intends to try to live 'by the rule', it is, for him, finally not possible. This is not because he is a traitorous man, making and breaking promises for devious purposes. He simply cannot, as we say, be held 'within bounds'. […] Antony is most remarkable for his 'bounty', with all that that word suggests of generosity, an endless spending and giving of a superabundant nature. In North's Plutarch, this 'liberality' is often referred to – and with admiration, even when Plutarch is criticizing Antony for his riotous feasting and wasteful negligence. Antony, whatever else, is an example of *magnanimitas*.

In the play, this 'bounty' is constantly referred to and made manifest. I shall single out three notable occasions. On the night before the critical battle of Actium, Antony reasserts himself as 'Antony'. "Come, / Let's have one other gaudy night: call to me / All my sad captains; fill our bowls once more", and Cleopatra joins in the spirit of the occasion, reasserting the *role* which in this case is the *reality*, of both of them: "But since my lord / Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra" (III.xiii.182-7). They are most themselves when playing themselves. They are outplaying history, as I shall suggest later. But we then immediately go over to Caesar's camp and hear Caesar give his instructions on this important night: "And feast the army; we have store to do't, / And they have earned the waste. Poor Antony!" (IV.i.15-16). Then we are back in Cleopatra's palace, and hear Antony saying – "Be bounteous at our meal […]" (IV.ii.10). In the context and frame of Antony's 'bounty', Caesar's arid, quantifying speech seems like the utterance of a very small soul indeed – the epitome of cynical parsimony, so that 'feast' is translated into 'store', and then further degraded into 'waste'. Here is another absolutely basic opposition in the play, a confrontation and contestation of vocabularies so that what is 'feast' in one, is regarded as 'waste' in the other. Antony gives from bounty; Caesar works from inventories. "Poor Antony!" – yes, from one point of view; from another he is rich Antony, since he gives unthinkingly from his spirit, while Caesar – poor Caesar – distributes carefully from his 'store'. 'Feast' celebrates excess: 'waste' defers to boundaries.

In North's Plutarch (and Shakespeare took almost as much from Plutarch for this play as he did for *Julius Caesar*) there is a little incident during the battle of Actium recorded thus:

> Furthermore, he dealt very friendly and courteously with Domitius, and against Cleopatra's mind. For, he being sick of an ague when he went and took a little boat to go to Caesar's camp, Antonius was very sorry for it, but yet he sent after him all his carriage, train, and men; and the same Domitius, as though he gave him to understand that he repented his open treason, he died immediately after[2].

[2] Plutarch, *The Lives of Caesar, Brutus, and Antony*, London, Macmillan, 1906, p. 221.

Shakespeare amplifies this in his account of the defection and death of Enobarbus. Enobarbus, a good though cynical soldier, begins to feel that it is foolish to remain loyal to Antony in his visible decline:

> Mine honesty and I begin to square.
> The loyalty well held to fools does make
> Our faith mere folly: yet he that can endure
> To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord
> Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
> And earns a place i' th' story.
> (III.xiii.41-6)

But shortly thereafter he leaves Antony and goes over to Caesar. Antony's reaction is immediate. He sends 'gentle adieus, and greetings', and soon a Roman soldier is telling Enobarbus:

> Antony
> Hath after thee sent all thy treasure, with
> *His bounty overplus.*
> (IV.vi.20-23: my italics)

Bounty *overplus* – superabundant abundance, excessive excess. This is the mark of Antony. Enobarbus has no ague; but this act of bounty effectively kills him. His reaction:

> I am alone the villain of the earth,
> And feel I am so most. O Antony,
> Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
> My better service, when my turpitude
> Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart […]
> I fight against thee! No, I will go seek
> Some ditch wherein to die: the foul'st best fits
> My latter part of life.
> (IV.vi.30-39)

His last words are:

> O, Antony,
> Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
> Forgive me in thine own particular,
> But let the world rank me in register

A master-leaver and a fugitive.
O, Antony! O, Antony!
(IV.ix.18-23)

Thus Enobarbus dies in a ditch – the lowest earth – untranscended; unlike Antony and Cleopatra, who move towards fire and air from the mud of the Nile. To be 'politic' with Caesar after being loyal to Antony, is a degenerative deformation which cannot be endured. And Enobarbus effectively 'loses his place in the story' – he cancels himself, writes himself out of the poetic termination of Antony's life, annihilates himself in a ditch. And his parting word is – not "Poor Antony!"; but the far more expressive "O, Antony!". This Antony is the measureless measure of all that Enobarbus has deserted. After such bounty – what forgiveness?

My third reference is to Cleopatra's imaginative re-creation and recuperation of Antony after his death. It takes place in the presence of Dolabella, and leads to one of the most crucial exchanges in the play. Cleopatra has her own oriental bounty, and she now speaks with an overflowing superabundance of language which makes her final speeches perhaps the most poetically powerful and coruscating in the whole of Shakespeare. Her recreation of Antony concludes:

For his bounty,
There was no winter in't: an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphinlike, they show'd his back above
The element they lived in. In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets: realms and islands were
As plates dropped from his pocket.
(V.ii.86-93)

Such a way of speaking, which goes beyond hyperbole into another realm of 'truth', is too much for the Roman-practical-empirical Dolabella, who interrupts her – 'Cleopatra' –. To which she says:

Think you there was or might be such a man
As this I dreamt or?

Dolabella is sure – "Gentle madam, no".

> You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.
> But if there be nor ever were one such,
> It's past the size of dreaming; nature wants stuff
> To vie strange forms with fancy, yet t'imagine
> An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
> Condemning shadows quite.
> (V.ii.93-100)

Cleopatra's image of Antony out-imagines the imagination, out-dreams dream. […]

There is a great stress on 'time' in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and it is well to remember that this is a history play. The outcome of the events it dramatized was the so-called 'Augustan peace', during which Christ was born and the pagan Empire – which Virgil called the Empire without end – was established, according to later writers, as a divine preparation for the Christian Empire. Octavius Caesar, himself a pagan, unknowingly laid the way for the True City, so in Christian terms the struggles and battles in the play affect, not merely his society, but all human society, the *orbis terrae* of Augustine. The events of the play are indeed of 'world' importance – world-shattering, world-remaking (the word 'world' occurs at least forty-five times in the play). By the same token, an earlier pagan world is being silenced, extinguished, and history – as the audience would know – is on Caesar's side. He is in time with Time. Antony and Cleopatra are out of time, in more than one sense. Thus, at the beginning, when Antony decides that he must return to Rome, Cleopatra silences his apologies, referring to the time-out-of-time when they were together – "Eternity was in our lips and eyes" – while Antony, thinking Romanly for the moment, refers to "the strong necessity of time". Egypt, in this play, is a timeless present, which is to say an Eternity.

It can hardly escape our attention that the play is full of messengers from the start – two in the first scene, some thirty-five in all, with nearly every scene having a messenger of some kind. The play itself is extremely episodic, with some forty-two scenes (no scene breaks at all in the Folio), which makes for a very rapid sequence of change of place. There are nearly two hundred entrances and exits, all contributing to what Dr Johnson called the

"continual hurry" and "quick succession" of events, which "call the mind forward without intermission". This can all be interpreted in different ways, but it certainly depicts a world in constant movement, in which time and place move and change so quickly that the whole world seems in a 'hurry' and in a state of flux – fluid, melting, re-forming. Messengers and messages bring information from the outside – they are interruptions, irruptions, precipitants of change. History is going on, and on, and at an ever accelerating pace. Yet the remarkable thing is that time seems somehow to stand still in Egypt – both within and without the reach of 'messages'; both vulnerable to history yet outside it. When Antony is away, Cleopatra simply wants to "sleep out this great gap of time" (I.v.6). (When she first approaches Antony in her 'barge', the city goes out to see her, leaving Antony alone "Whistling to th' air; which, but for vacancy, / Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra *too*, / And made a gap in nature" – II.ii.222-4. It is as if Cleopatra creates 'gaps' – gaps in time, gaps in nature.) For Rome, Egypt represents a great waste of time while the 'business' of history is going on. The word 'business', more often than not, carries pejorative connotations in Shakespeare. It is notable that Caesar interrupts his formulaic (as I hear it), elegiac 'praise' of the dead Antony because of – a messenger. "The *business* of this man looks out of him; / We'll hear him what he says" (V.i.50: my italics). He never completes the speech. Conversely, Cleopatra interrupts history to complete her poetic re-creation of Antony – from which no 'business' can distract her. From the Egyptian perspective, history itself is a "gap of time", and Cleopatra, though growing physically older ("wrinkled deep in time"), seems to linger in Eternity, waiting far Antony to return from the trivial – though world-shattering – distractions of history.

As well as being a history play, *Antony and Cleopatra* contains within it traces of the outlines of a morality play – for by the early Renaissance the 'moral' of the story of the illustrious lovers was well established. We can find it in Spenser's *Fairie Queene*, Book V, Canto VIII:

> Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure
> The sence of man, and all his minde possesse,
> As beauties lovely baite, that doth procure,
> Great warriours oft their rigour to represse,

> And mighty hands forget their manlinesse […]
> So also did that great Oetean Knight
> For his loves sake his Lions skin undight:

and

> so did warlike Antony neglect
> The worlds whole rule for Cleopatra's sight.
> Such wondrous powre hath womens fair aspect,
> To captive men, and make them all the world reject.

This 'moral' reading is there in Plutarch's version, in which Antony becomes 'effeminate' and made 'subject to a woman's will'. He is particularly critical of Antony's behaviour at the battle of Actium (when he followed the fleeing Cleopatra). "There Antonius showed plainly, that he had not only lost the courage and heart of an Emperor, but also of a valiant man, and that he was not his own man […] he has so carried away with the vain love of this woman, as if he had been glued unto her, and that she could not have removed without moving of him also"[3]. In Spenser's terms, Antony 'rejected' the world for the mere love of a woman. Whether he found or made a better world is not, of course, considered. But, while Shakespeare's play does include these historical-morality elements (unquestionably, his glue-like relationship with Cleopatra ruins him as a politician and spoils him as a soldier, and, in worldly terms, she does – as he recognizes – lead him "to the very heart of loss" – IV.xii.29) – it complicates any ethical 'reading' of the story, so there can be no question of seeing it simply as another version of a good soldier losing his empire because of a bad woman. To understand this more clearly, we have to take into account another figure. For, if Octavius Caesar is related to the onward and inexorable movement of History, Antony is related to a god, Hercules.

This relationship is suggested in Plutarch who, however, relates Antony more closely to Bacchus. Shakespeare strengthens the association with Hercules. Hercules was famous for his anger, and so is Antony. As his anger begins to rise, Cleopatra says: "Look,

3 Plutarch, *The Lives of Caesar, Brutus, and Antony*, p. 221.

prithee, Charmian, / How this Herculean Roman does become / The carriage of his chafe" (I.iii.84-5). Reacting in fury to Cleopatra's flight from the battle and what ensues, he cries out:

> The shirt of Nessus is upon me–teach me,
> Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage.
> (IV.xii.44-5)

Plutarch refers to Antony being deserted by a god:

> it is said that suddenly they heard a marvellous sweet harmony of sundry sorts of instruments of music […] as they use in Bacchus feasts […] Now, such as in reason sought the depth of the interpretation of this wonder, thought it was the god unto whom Antonius bare singular devotion to counterfeit and resemble him, that did forsake them[4].

Shakespeare takes the scene, and the interpretation, but makes one telling change. Late in the play, some soldiers hear "Music i' th' air" and decide "'Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved, / Now leaves him" (IV.iii.15-16). Where his Antony is concerned – despite his manifest taste for wine – Shakespeare wants us to think more of Hercules, less of Bacchus. Hercules was of course *the* hero – hero turned god – *par excellence.* There were many allegories concerning Hercules current by the Middle Ages. One (apparently from the Sophist Prodicus), has Hercules as a young man arriving at a place where the road branches into two paths, one leading up a steep hill, the other into a pleasant glade. At the dividing point, two fair women meet him: one, modest and sober, urges him to take the steep path; the other, seductive if meretricious, uses her arts in an attempt to attract him into the glade. The hero, of course, chooses the steep hill of Virtue over the beckoning glades of Pleasure. There were many medieval and Renaissance depictions of this struggle of Virtue and Pleasure over Hercules (there is a famous Dürer engraving of it – *Der Herculess*), with Pleasure, *hedone, voluptas,* sometimes associated with Venus. The implications, for us, are quite clear: if Antony is related to Hercules, Cleopatra is related to

4 Plutarch, *The Lives of Caesar, Brutus, and Antony*, p. 236.

Venus. The key difference, of course, is that Hercules – Antony chooses Pleasure, pays heed to the solicitations of Venus – thus inverting the traditional moral of this allegory. According then to the accumulated traditional lore which had grown up around the much metamorphosed and allegorized figure of Hercules, Antony is indeed a version of Hercules, but one who, as it were, decided to take the wrong road – not up the steep hill of (Roman) virtue, but off the track into the (oriental) glades of pleasure.

There are other divinities in the play, and if Hercules deserts Antony, he in turn goes on to play Osiris to Cleopatra's Isis. The union of these divinities assures the fertility of Egypt: in Plutarch's study of the myth (well known in Shakespeare's time), Osiris is the Nile which floods and makes fertile the land – he is form, the seminal principle, and Isis is matter. From their union are bred not only crops, but animals, such as the serpents of the Nile. Typhon the crocodile, born of Nile mud, represents for Plutarch the irrational, bestial part of the soul by which Osiris is deceived and torn to pieces. There are, of course, numerous references to the Nile, its floods, its serpents, and so on, in the play, and Shakespeare clearly has this myth actively in mind. But it is not a stable or fixed incorporation. Cleopatra is Isis but also Antony's "serpent of old Nile", and by a serpent of Nile will she die – a serpent by a serpent "valiantly vanquished", as Antony – Osiris is "a Roman by a Roman valiantly vanquished" (that second Roman is more Antony than Caesar – as Cleopatra says: "Not Caesar's valor hath o'erthrown Antony, / But Antony's hath triumphed on itself" – IV.xv.14-15). The monster-crocodile who destroys Antony is, in this play, Octavius Caesar – though he is hardly seen in those terms. He is a disguised Typhon for Antony and Cleopatra, who are playing at being Osiris and Isis – but, really, he is not in their self-mythologizing act, not in their 'play' at all. I use the word 'play' advisedly and deliberately. Cleopatra is, of course, above all a great actress. She can play with Antony to beguile him; she can play at being Isis, thus anticipating her own move towards transcendence; and she can 'play' at her death, easily outplaying Caesar's crafty political deviousness. In this way, she completely transforms her desolate state, not submitting to the downward turn of Fortune, but inverting it into the occasion of her own triumph of the imagination:

My desolation does begin to make
A better life. 'Tis paltry to be Caesar:
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,
A minister of her will […]
(V.ii.1-4)

Cleopatra will be her *own* Fortune – a triumph of the 'will'.

She is aware that Caesar will display her in Rome, and that her life with Antony will be 'staged' in a degraded form, in keeping with that tendency of Roman rhetoric to devalue and translate downwards the life associated with Egypt:

The quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels: Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' th' posture of a whore.
(V.ii.216-21)

(Which, of course, exactly describes what is going on in the Elizabethan theatre at that moment, with some boy 'squeaking' Cleopatra. This is not Nabokovian self-reflexivity. Rather, it is effectively as if the drama is so incandescent that it is scorning its own resources, shedding the very medium which has served to put its poetry into flight. It is as though 'representation' is scorching itself away to reveal the thing itself–an electrifying moment of astonishing histrionic audacity and magic). So, Cleopatra puts on her own play, on her own stage, with her own costume, speeches, and gestures:

Now, Charmian!
Show me, my women, like a queen: go fetch
My best attires. I am again for Cydnus,
To meet Mark Antony. Sirrah Iras, go […]
And when thou hast done this chare, I'll give thee leave
To play till doomsday. – Bring our crown and all.
(V.ii.227-32)

My resolution's placed, and I have nothing

> Of woman in me: now from head to foot
> I am marble-constant: now the fleeting moon
> No planet is of mine.
> (V.ii.238-41)

She is moving beyond the body, beyond time, beyond the whole world of transcience and decay, beyond her own planet the moon, with all that it implies of tidal periodicity. The clown enters with his figs, which contain the serpent she will use for her suicide (at the beginning, Charmian says "I love long life better than figs" – I.ii.32 – by the end this, like so much else, is reversed: Cleopatra likes figs better than long life). We move to her final self-apotheosis, played with great dignity and ceremony, at which Cleopatra is at once her own directress and her own priestess:

> Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have
> Immortal longings in me […]
> […] Husband, I come:
> Now to that name my courage prove my title!
> I am fire, and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life […]
> (V.ii.280-90)

Out of the earth, mud, dung, water associated with the Nile and its fertility, she has distilled an essence composed only of the higher elements, air and fire. She is 'marble' for the duration of the performance; she is also, like Antony, 'melting', dissolving, but melting into a higher atmosphere. She gives a farewell kiss to Iras who falls down dead – perhaps from poison, perhaps from grief – and Cleopatra comments:

> Dost thou lie still?
> If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world
> It is not worth leave-taking.
> (V.ii.296-8)

To the snake she says:

> O, couldst thou speak,

> That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
> Unpolicied!
> (V.ii.306-8)

She has seen through Caesar's tricks and stratagems – "He words me, girls, he words me, that I should not/Be noble to myself" (V.ii.191-2); she knows, too, that he uses language instrumentally, merely for devious political ends. And when Proculeus refers to Caesar's 'bounty', she knows that it is but a pitiful and transparent travesty of the real bounty of Antony. In her superbly performed death, we see the triumph of the 'oriental' imagination over the 'alphabetic' utilitarianism of Caesar. The world will indeed be his, and another kind of Empire inaugurated; but from the perspective of Cleopatra, and *just for the duration of the play*, it seems a world "not worth leave-taking". So her last words are an incomplete question: "What should I stay" – as she passes out of language, body, world, altogether. There is no *staying* her now. Charmian completes her question with her own final speech:

> In this vile world? So, fare thee well.
> Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
> A lass unparalleled. Downy windows, close;
> And golden Phoebus never be beheld
> Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry;
> I'll mend it, and then play–
> (V.ii.314-19)

Thus Cleopatra, and her girls, play their way out of the reach of history, with an intensity of self-sustaining, self-validating poetry which does indeed eclipse the policies and purposes of Caesar. (There are some recent readings which see Antony and Cleopatra as failed politicians who turn to aesthetics to gloss over their mistakes and cheer themselves up with poetry. I can imagine such a play, but this one is not it). Cleopatra was 'confined' in her monument, a prisoner of Caesar's force – apparently secure within the boundaries of his soldiers and his 'scroll'. It is by the unforgettable excess and bounty/beauty of her last 'Act' that she triumphs over all that would confine her, and turns death into 'play', *the* play that will take her into Eternity.

Let me return to the opposition between feast and waste. Feast derives from *festa* – holiday – and in one sense, Antony and Cleopatra turn life in Egypt into a perpetual holiday. 'Waste' is more interesting. Just as 'dirt' has been defined as "matter out of place", so the idea of 'waste' presupposes a boundary or classification mark which enables one to draw a distinction between what is necessary, valuable, usable in some way, and what lies outside these categories – 'waste'. Antony, we may say, recognizes no such boundary. Indeed, he 'wastes' himself, in the sense that he is endlessly prodigal of all he has and does not count the cost. From Antony's point of view, all life in Egypt can be seen as a feast; in Caesar's eyes – the Roman perspective – it is all 'waste'. From the etymology of the word (*uacare,* to be empty or vacant; *uanus*, hollow, vain; *uastus,* desolated, desert, vast; up to Old English *weste* – see Eric Partridge's *Origins*), we can say that there is a connection between vastness, vacancy, vanity, and waste. Antony is inhabiting a realm of vastness, vanity, vacancy – the 'great gap' named by Cleopatra (Caesar, indeed, refers to Antony's 'vacancy'). From Caesar's point of view, and those who see with the Roman eye, Antony is indeed 'empty' while Caesar is referred to as "the fullest man". Thus Enobarbus, commenting on Antony's challenge to Caesar to meet him in single battle: "that he should dream, / Knowing all measures, the full Caesar will / Answer his emptiness!" Caesar is, from one point of view, *full* – full of history, of Fortune, of time. Antony is 'empty'– committed to vacancy, vanity, waste. The question implicitly posed is whether he and Cleopatra, and their way of life, are not 'full' of something quite outside of Caesar's discourse and his measurements, something which makes *him* the empty man. Caesar is full of politics, empty of poetry: Antony and Cleopatra reach a point where they are empty of politics, but full of poetry. Which is the real 'vacancy'? It depends where you are standing, how you are looking. But there is nothing 'vast' about Caesar: even if he conquers the whole world, everything is done with 'measure' and 'temper' (temperance). If Antony and Cleopatra melt and dissolve, it is into a 'vastness' which is the necessary space for their exceeding, their excess – "beyond the size of dreaming". In this play, Shakespeare compels a complete revaluation of 'waste'. Historically, it was *not* paltry to be Caesar, certainly not this Caesar, who is insured of, and will

ensure, a 'temperate' imperial future, during which time Christ would be born. This Caesar certainly has his place in the story of history. But in this play, his conquest is registered as a gradual diminishment as he – alphabetically – takes over the Orient, but in doing so merely imposes Roman 'prescriptions' on a vast world of pagan fecundity, spilled plenty, and an oriental magnificence which transforms 'waste' into 'bounty', and makes Caesar seem like the 'merchant' he is, a calculating Machiavel–an ass unpolicied.

Boundaries are, of course, of central importance for civilization. For Vico, in *The New Science*, civilized man is precisely one who creates and guards 'confines' – "for it was necessary to set up boundaries to the field in order to put a stop to the infamous promiscuity of things in the bestial state. On these boundaries were to be fixed the confines first of families, then of gentes or houses, later of peoples, and finally of nations"[5]. There is much in Shakespeare which honours and defends the importance of recognizing the need for boundaries. But in this play, writing against the recorded, inexorable grain and movement of history, Shakespeare makes us re-value what might have been lost in the triumph of Caesar:

> O, see, my women,
> The crown o' th' earth doth melt. My lord!
> O, withered is the garland of the war,
> The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
> Are level now with men. The odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon.
> (IV.xv.62-8)

This is 'waste'? Rather, the fecundity, plenitude and bounty associated with Egypt, and Antony in Egypt, have fed into and nourished Cleopatra's speech, until she is speaking a kind of language of pure poetry about which alphabetic man can have

[5] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. and intr. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fish, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1984 (third edition), p. 363.

nothing to say. A whole pagan age is over; the future belongs to Caesar–and Christ. But confronted with this kind of transcendent poetry, which is indeed all 'excess', that future seems merely trivial, temporal, temperate. "The road of excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom", wrote Blake. In this play, the poetry of excess leads to the unbounded, unboundaried, spaces of infinity. Saving leads to earthly empire: squandering opens an avenue to Eternity. All air and fire – and poetry. Bounty overplus.

Mapping Antony and Cleopatra
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Remembering Greece in Shakespeare's Rome

Robert S. Miola

For Shakespeare remembering Rome meant largely remembering Plutarch, a first-century Greek philosopher, magistrate in his home town of Chaeronea, priest of Apollo at Delphi, and, later in his life, citizen of conquering Rome. Plutarch's *Lives* polemically pit Greek soldiers, statesmen, and orators against parallel Roman figures; to recall the glory and tragedy of the past, they draw upon many Greek historical and literary sources. Plutarch's frequent quotation of Greek literature, in fact, represents a significant and largely unexplored point of intermediated contact for Shakespeare. The biographer's recollection of Homer's Hector and Andromache shapes the playwright's depiction of Brutus and Portia, and the extraordinary sequence of Homeric citation in the *Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus* (six consecutive quotations in a focused discussion[1]) deeply informs Shakespeare's play, particularly its depiction of fate and free will[2]. Gordon Braden makes a parallel case for the tragedians, noting at the outset that there are 547 quotations of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in the *Moralia* and 61 in the

1 Plutarch, *Lives*, trans. Thomas North, London, 1595, STC 20067, *Early English Books Online*, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/, pp. 252-53.

2 See Robert S. Miola, "Lesse Greek? Homer in Jonson and Shakespeare", *The Ben Jonson Journal*, 23:1 (2016), pp. 101-26.

Lives, these last totaling approximately 90 lines[3]. Remembering Rome through the good offices of Plutarch necessarily meant remembering Greece.

But of course Shakespeare never read Plutarch directly at all; he read North's English translation (probably 1595) of Amyot's French rendering (1559) of Plutarch's Greek *Lives*. Thus his contact with ancient Rome was three hands and three tongues removed, distanced further by fifteen centuries of linguistic, historical, and cultural drift. Shakespeare reading North reading Amyot reading Plutarch reading (and writing) Rome constitutes a significant chapter in the history of classical reception. Moving beyond the limitations of traditional source study and the open-endedness of *intertextualité*, reception study focuses attention on the diachronic transformations of classical texts and ideas, enabling us to tune in more precisely to specific continuities and departures, to resultant harmonies and dissonances.

Let's listen again to Antony's grim prophecy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

> And *Cæsars* Spirit ranging for Reuenge,
> With *Ate* by his side, come hot from Hell,
> Shall in these Confines, with a Monarkes voyce,
> Cry hauocke, and let slip the Dogges of Warre,
> That this foule deede, shall smell aboue the earth
> With Carrion men, groaning for Buriall. (1498-1503)[4]

Antony predicts the unleashing of two supernatural forces on Italy as punishment for the assassination – Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge, and *Atē*, hot from hell (we recall the powerful malevolence of Brando's Antony in Mankiewicz' film, 1953). But Plutarch's Antony makes no such prediction and there is no mention of *Atē* at all in any of the *Lives* Shakespeare read. The allusion to this Greek figure is a conspicuous bit of Hellenizing, drawn from the capacious Elizabethan storehouse of classical miscellanea. According to

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[3] Gordon Braden, "Classical Greek Tragedy and Shakespeare", *Classical Receptions Journal*, 9:1 (2017), pp. 103-19.

[4] All quotations from *Julius Caesar* refer to William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623, Old-Spelling Transcription)*, ed. John D. Cox, *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, University of Victoria, http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Texts/JC/.

Richard E. Doyle, *Atē* in Greek epic and lyric poetry usually means "blindness, infatuation, or folly", often caused by an external supernatural agency, sometimes as punishment; in Aeschylus and Euripides *Atē* generally means "ruin, calamity, disaster"[5]. Sophocles, as usual, is ambivalent. Derived from the Sanskrit *á-vā-tah* (curiously, 'not injured'), *Atē* also appears in cognate formations (ἀπάτα or ἀάω) and sometimes, as in *Julius Caesar*, personified as a goddess.

Hesiod's *Theogony* numbers the personified *Atē* among the baleful daughters of Eris (Strife):

> αὐτὰρ Ἔρις στυγερὴ τέκε μὲν Πόνον ἀλγινόεντα
> Λήθην τε Λιμόν τε καὶ Ἄλγεα δακρυόεντα
> Ὑσμίνας τε Μάχας τε Φόνους τ᾽ Ἀνδροκτασίας τε
> Νείκεά τε Ψεύδεά τε Λόγους τ᾽ Ἀμφιλλογίας τε
> Δυσνομίην τ᾽ Ἄτην τε, συνήθεας ἀλλήλῃσιν (226-30)[6]
>
> And loathsome Strife bore painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Hunger and tearful Pains, and Combats and Battles and Murders and Slaughters, and Strifes and Lies and Tales and Disputes, and Lawlessness and Recklessness [here *Atē*], much like one another. (trans. Glenn W. Most)

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra swears by *Atē* as retributive Ruin, companion to Dike (Justice), and Erinys (the Avenging Spirit) to justify the murder of Agamemnon:

> καὶ τήνδ᾽ ἀκούσῃ γ᾽ ὁρκίων ἐμῶν θέμιν·
> μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην
> Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ᾽, αἷσι τόνδ᾽ ἔσφαξ᾽ ἐγώ,
> οὔ μοι φόβου μέλαθρον ἐλπὶς ἐμπατεῖ (1431-34)[7]

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5 Richard E. Doyle, *ATH: Its Use and Meaning: A Study in the Greek Poetic Tradition from Homer to Euripides*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1989, p. 3.

6 Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2007, *Digital Loeb Classical Library Online*, https://www.loebclassics.com/.

7 Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Agamemnon, Libation-Bearers, Eumenides*, ed. and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2009, *Digital Loeb Classical Library Online*, https://www.loebclassics.com/.

> You will now also hear this righteous oath I swear: by the fulfilled Justice that was due for my child, by Ruin and by the Fury, through whose aid I slew this man, no fearful apprehension stalks my house (trans. Alan H. Sommerstein)

But in *Libation-Bearers* the Chorus sees *Atē* as avenging this murder in the person of Orestes:

> ὦ πόνος ἐγγενὴς
> καὶ παράμουσος Ἄτας
> αἱματόεσσα πλαγά· (466-68)[8]
>
> O misery bred in the family!
> O bloody, discordant
> stroke of Ruin! (trans. Alan H. Sommerstein)

The Furies of *Eumenides* in turn threaten Orestes with δύσφορον ἄταν (376), "unendurable ruin" (trans. Sommerstein). The invocation of *Atē* in the *Oresteia* both as prompter and punisher of Agamemnon's murder suggests the grim inscrutability and fatality of the Aeschylean universe, wherein humans are doomed to grievous sorrows, wherein they suffer shipwreck on the unfathomable shoals of fate and free will.

The personified *Atē* of *Julius Caesar* has an influential *locus classicus* closer to Shakespeare than Hesiod or Aeschylus, Homer's *Iliad*. In Book IX (496-512) Phoenix begs Achilles to relent by telling of the Litae (Prayers), who, lame and wrinkled, follow *Atē* (here Blindness), who "strong and fleet of foot" outruns them, "making men to fall". Whoever listens to the supplications of the Litae greatly benefits, but whoever does not, pays the penalty:

> λίσσονται δ᾽ ἄρα ταί γε Δία Κρονίωνα κιοῦσαι
> τῷ Ἄτην ἅμ᾽ ἕπεσθαι, ἵνα βλαφθεὶς ἀποτίσῃ. (511-12)[9]
>
> then they go and beg Zeus, son of Cronos, that Blindness may follow that man so that he may fall and pay full recompense.

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[8] See note 7.

[9] Homer, *Iliad*, ed. and trans. A. T. Murray, rev. William F. Wyatt, 2 vols, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1924-25, *Digital Loeb Classical Library*, https://www.loebclassics.com/.

(trans. A. T. Murray, rev. William F. Wyatt)

In 1598 Chapman translated *Atē* in this passage as "Goddesse Calamitie" and then later as "goddesse penaltie":

> they straight pray Iove this goddesse penaltie,
> May follow him, as he pursues the man hath done him wrong,
> Working reuenge and wounding him with a contempt as strong. (p. 90)[10]

Homer's *Atē* thus appears as a revenger in a translation published just one year before Antony invoked her as such on stage; revising this translation in 1611, Chapman renamed *Atē* Injury and replaced her agency with that of the wrongdoer's own wrongs:

> they flie to *Iove*, and vse
> Their powres against him; that the wrongs, he doth to them, may fall
> On his owne head, and pay those paines, whose cure he failes to call. (p. 126)[11]

This passage rewrites the Homeric fable to depict an inevitable sequence of guilt and condign punishment; the wrongs themselves, as Macbeth feared, commend the ingredience of the poisoned chalice to the poisoner's own lips.

In both translations what Richard E. Doyle has called the subjective meaning for *Atē* (blindness, infatuation, folly) gets replaced by the later objective meaning (ruin, calamity, disaster); and in both the mysterious workings of the malevolent goddess become integrated into comprehensible scheme of sin and punishment. In this context Antony naturally invokes *Atē* to wreak deserved ruin on those who struck down "the Noblest man / That euer liued in the Tide of Times" (1484-5). His usage is consistent with other allusions in Shakespeare, wherein others invoke *Atē* as a spirit of discord and retributive war. Berowne comically spurs

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[10] Homer, *Seauen Bookes of the Iliades of Homere*, trans. George Chapman, London, 1598, STC 13632, *Early English Books Online*, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/.

[11] Homer, *The Iliads of Homer Prince of Poets*, trans. George Chapman, London, 1611, STC 13634, *Early English Books Online*, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/.

Armado and Costard: "more Atees more Atees stirre them, or stirre them on" (*Love's Labor's Lost*, 2644-45); Chatillon calls Queen Eleanor "an A[t]e" who moves King John "to bloud and strife" (*King John*, 357); Benedick thinks Beatrice "the infernall Ate in good apparell" (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 657)[12]. *Atē* appears similarly linked to strife in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, though she there serves also as "legitimate minister of Justice"[13].

But why is Shakespeare's *Atē* "infernal," or as Antony put it "come hot from hell"? In Book 19 of the *Iliad*, Homer had assigned *Atē* celestial origins, identifying her as the eldest daughter of Zeus:

> θεὸς διὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ.
> πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄτη, ἣ πάντας ἀᾶται,
> οὐλομένη· τῇ μέν θ᾽ ἁπαλοὶ πόδες· οὐ γὰρ ἐπ᾽ οὔδει
> πίλναται, ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα ἥ γε κατ᾽ ἀνδρῶν κράατα βαίνει
> βλάπτουσ᾽ ἀνθρώπους· (90-94)
>
> All things are done by strife: that ancient seed of *Iove Ate*, that hurts all, perfects all. Her feete, are soft; and moue Not on the earth; they beare her still, aloft men heads; and there, The harmefull hurts them. (trans. Chapman, 1611, 269)

Chapman here names *Atē* "strife" and then "the harmefull". Latin translators and commentators, notably Spondanus[14], called *Atē Noxa*, "injury, harm, damage". The vision of *Noxa* walking the world βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους, "harming men", inevitably recalled other harmful spirits, namely the devils of Christian dispensation. In *Daemonolatreiae libri tres*, Nicolas Remi described the devil as eager for the ruin of men and always searching for occasions for

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12 All references are to the editions made available by *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, University of Victoria, http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/: *King John (Folio 1, 1623, Old-Spelling Transcription)*, ed. Michael Best; *Love's Labor's Lost (Folio 1, 1623, Old-Spelling Transcription)*, ed. Timothy Billings; *Macbeth (Folio 1, 1623, Old-Spelling Transcription)*, eds Anthony Dawson and Gavin Paul; *Much Ado About Nothing (Folio 1, 1623, Old-Spelling Transcription)*, eds Gretchen Minton and Cliff Werier.

13 Jessica Wolfe, *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2015, p. 239.

14 Spondanus (Jean de Sponde), ed., *Homeri quae extant omnia*, Basle, 1583, *Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum (MDZ)* https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/, p. 166.

rousing terrors (*quavis ratione diuexatos homines habeat, adque omnes concitandorum terriculorum occasiones ob id semper est intentus*); he cites Homer's *Atē* and Suidas' interpretation: ὁ διὰβολος, ὁ αντικείμενος ("the devil, the adverse one")[15]. After all, Homer had said that *Atē*'s deception of her father caused the angry Zeus to hurl her from heaven to earth. Among others Erasmus commented on the inevitable parallel with the expulsion of the fallen angels: *Hoc Homeri figmentum quidam existimant esse finitimum ei, quod de Lucefero coelis deturbato credunt Christiani* ("Some believe this invention of Homer to be close to that which Christians believe of Lucifer, namely that he was hurled down from heaven"[16]).

So early modern writers easily identified the personified *Atē*, Homer's seed of Jove, with a devil or the devil from hell now on earth. Ben Jonson featured *Atē* in *The Masque of Queenes* (1609) as head of eleven witches who come from a smoking, blazing hell, "some with rats on their heads, some on their shoulders, others with ointment pots at their girdles; all with spindles, timbrels, rattles, or other venefical instruments, making a confused noise, with strange gestures" (ll. 21-23)[17]. They (Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, Falsehood, Murmur, Malice Impudence, Slander, Execration, Bitterness, and Rage) chant eerily of owls, cats, and dogs, of gathering bits of flesh, wolves' hairs, mad dogs' foam, and of murdering an infant for his fat. These witches all obey the Dame, whom Jonson introduces with reference to this very passage of Homer:

> This Dame I make to bear the person of Ate, or Mischief, for so I interpret it, out of Homer's description of her, *Iliad* 9. [505-12], where he makes her swift to hurt mankind, strong, and sound of feet; and *Iliad* 19. [91-4], walking upon men's heads; in both places using one and the same phrase to signify her power, βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπουσ , *laedens homines* ["harming men"] (3: 336).

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15 Nicolas Remi, *Daemonolatreiae libri tres*, Lyons, 1595, *Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum (MDZ)*, https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/, p. 172.

16 Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagiorum chiliades des. Erasmi*, Basle, 1536, *Erasmus Center for Early Modern Studies*, http://www.erasmus.org/, p. 236.

17 Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queens*, ed. David Lindley, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 7 vols, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, vol. III.

Atē, here as Mischief, serves the devil, "little Martin" (l. 71) and enters, "her hair knotted and folded with vipers; in her hand a torch made of a dead man's arm, lighted; girded with a snake" (ll. 78-80).

Summoning an avenging *Atē* come hot from hell, Antony shows himself a perfectly orthodox early modern reader of classical mythology. The prevailing hermeneutic and Jonson's example also illuminate Antony's later invocation, spoken to the maddened mob about to burn the conspirators' houses: "Now let it worke: Mischeefe thou art a-foot, / Take thou what course thou wilt" (1799-1800). By the name Mischief *Atē* ranges throughout the Rome of *Julius Caesar*, evident in the very next scene wherein the plebeians commit the chilling, blackly comic murder of Cinna the Poet, a focal point of Orson Welles' landmark 1937 production[18]. Departing from Plutarch in this scene, Shakespeare here alludes to the other supernatural agency Antony had invoked:

> CINNA
> I dreamt to night, that I did feast with *Cæsar*,
> And things vnluckily charge my Fantasie:
> I haue no will to wander foorth of doores,
> Yet something leads me foorth. (1814-17)

In both the *Lives* of Caesar and Brutus Plutarch's Cinna dreamt that Caesar led him forth to a feast against his will. "*Caesar* tooke him by the hand, and led him against his will"; "*Caesar* was very importunate with him, and compelled him, so that at length he led him by the hand into a great darke place, where being maruellously affrayd, he was driuen to follow him in spite of his hart"[19] (1595, 790, 1062). After waking, despite his misgivings, Cinna goes out for a different reason, "to honor his [Caesar's] funerals", "being ashamed not to accompany his funerals" (1595, 790, 1062). Shakespeare ignores this mundane motive and remembers instead the ominous dream Caesar leading Cinna by the hand against his will, here transformed into a vaguely supernatural force, "Yet something leads me foorth". The first Cinna's dream becomes the second's waking nightmare.

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[18] Andrew James Hartley, *Shakespeare in Performance: Julius Caesar*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014, pp. 43-47.

[19] See note 1.

The phantom Caesar who flits just below the surface of the text here recalls the second supernatural personage of Antony's prophecy, Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge, who actually appears on stage to Brutus in IV.iii:

> *Enter the Ghost of Cæsar.*
> How ill this Taper burnes. Ha! Who comes heere?
> I thinke it is the weakenesse of mine eyes
> That shapes this monstrous Apparition.
> It comes vpon me: Art thou any thing?
> Art thou some God, some Angell, or some Diuell,
> That mak'st my blood cold, and my haire to stare?
> Speake to me, what thou art.
> *Ghost.* Thy euill Spirit *Brutus?*
> *Bru.* Why com'st thou?
> *Ghost.* To tell thee thou shalt see me at *Philippi.*
> *Brut.* Well: then I shall see thee againe?
> *Ghost.* I, at *Philippi.*
> *Brut.* Why I will see thee at *Philippi* then:
> Now I haue taken heart, thou vanishest.
> Ill Spirit, I would hold more talke with thee. (2287-2302)

Here Brutus' earlier words come back to haunt him, quite literally:

> We all stand vp against the spirit of *Cæsar,*
> And in the Spirit of men, there is no blood:
> O that we then could come by *Cæsars* Spirit,
> And not dismember *Cæsar*! (800-3)

In this appearance Shakespeare follows closely two passages from Plutarch but makes significant changes. What appears to Plutarch's Brutus is not Caesar's ghost but at first an unidentified ὄψιν ("vision") and a φάσμα ("apparition, phantom"). Amyot translates as "une vision horrible" and "fantasme"; "une merueilleuse & monstrueuse figure" and "fantasme" (1565, fols. 515r, 697r)[20]; North as "vision" and "image", then as "shape" and "spirit" (1595, 790, 791, 1070). In both *Lives* Brutus asks who the visitor is, the *Life* of Brutus supplying the direct question: "So *Brutus* boldly asked what

[20] Plutarch, *Les Vies des Hommes Illustres, Grecs & Romans*, trans. Jacques Amyot, Paris, 1565.

he was, a god or a man, and what cause brought him thither" (1595, 1070). Shakespeare's Brutus expands the range of supernatural possibilities: "Art thou some God, some Angell, or some Divell?"

Brutus might well be perplexed as Shakespeare, in fact, here translates to the stage Caesar's untranslatable *daimōn* from Plutarch's *Life* of Caesar:

> ὁ μέντοι μέγας αὐτοῦ δαίμων, ᾧ παρὰ τὸν βίον ἐχρήσατο, καὶ τελευτήσαντος ἐπηκολούθησε τιμωρὸς τοῦ φόνου, διά τε γῆς πάσης καὶ θαλάττης ἐλαύνων καὶ ἀνιχνεύων ἄχρι τοῦ μηδένα λιπεῖν τῶν ἀπεκτονότων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς καθ᾽ ὁτιοῦν ἢ χειρὶ τοῦ ἔργου θιγόντας ἢ γνώμης μετασχόντας ἐπεξελθεῖν. (*Caesar* 69.2)[21]

> However, the great guardian-genius of the man, whose help he had enjoyed through life, followed upon him even after death as an avenger of his murder, driving and tracking down his slayers over every land and sea until not one of them was left, but even those who in any way soever either put hand to the deed or took part in the plot were punished. (trans. Perrin)

In Greek the intransigently alien δαίμων can mean "god, goddess, divine power, destiny, fortune, good or evil genius, tutelary divinity, lesser god, or evil spirit". Both Amyot and North depersonalized Caesar's *daimōn* into "celle grande fortune & faueur du ciel" (1565, fol. 514v), "his great prosperity and good fortune" (1595, 790). Creating Caesar's ghost, Shakespeare gets closer to Plutarch, here importing the conventions of the popular revenge play descending from Seneca, perhaps particularly from *Caesar's Revenge*, which likewise features two vengeful spirits, a hellish presiding figure named Discord and Caesar's ghost.

Leaving for another day the implications of 'Desdemona', 'ill fated', we recall that the *daimōn* appears elsewhere in Shakespeare's Rome, significantly shadowing another Caesar, Octavius, in the soothsayer's warning to Antony:

> Thy Dæmon that thy spirit which keepes thee, is
> Noble, Couragious, high vnmatchable,

[21] Plutarch, *Lives*, ed. and trans. Bernadotte Perrin, 11 vols, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1914-26, *Loeb Digital Classical Library*, https://www.loebclassics.com/.

> Where *Cæsars* is not. But neere him, thy Angell
> Becomes a feare: as being o're-powr'd, therefore
> Make space enough betweene you. (984-8)

Closely following North's definition, "the good angell and spirit that keepeth thee" (1595, 983), Shakespeare here represents the *daimōn* as a tutelary spirit, the "*Genius*" Macbeth refers to, recalling this passage (1046), or in Christian terms, as a guardian angel. Elsewhere, following Amyot, North translates *daimōnes* as "spirits or angels" (1595, 1070). The appearance of the *daimōn* in *Julius Caesar* may thus recall ironically Antony's earlier statement, "*Brutus*, as you know, was *Caesars* Angel" (1718). But Caesar's *daimōn* (now his Ghost) in *Julius Caesar* plays the role of avenger, not protector.

So what sort of angel or spirit might this *daimōn* staged as Caesar's ghost be? Plutarch's visitant spirit identifies itself in both lives as an evil *daimōn*: Ὁ σός, ὦ Βροῦτε, δαίμων κακός ("your evil *daimōn*, Brutus", *Caesar* 69.11; *Brutus* 36.7). Amyot renders this, "Ie suis ton mauuais ange & esprit, Brutus" and "Ie suis ton mauuais ange, Brutus" (1565, fols. 515r, 697r). North translates, "I am thy ill angell, Brutus"; "I am thy euill spirit, *Brutus*" (1595, 791, 1070), the last 4 words echoed verbatim by Shakespeare. The diachronic movement of the text through the different languages, centuries, and theologies inevitably accretes meanings. The δαίμων κακός becoming "mauuais ange & esprit", "ill angel" and "evil spirit" inevitably conjures the devil, the fallen angel, as the lexical ambivalence of daimōn/demon attests. Witness Thomas Cooper's entry for *daemon* in his *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae* (1584): "Sometime it is taken for God, sometime the soule, or some other spirite. *Daemones dicuntur a Christiania spiritus in caelo a Deo creati, qui de caelo deiecti, partim in terrae infimo, partim in hoc aere damnati* sun"t (sig. I.i.1v, "Daemons are said by Christianity to be spirits God created in heaven, who were thrown down from heaven, some damned to the lower earth, some to the air")[22]. The ghostly *daemon* may be a wicked demon. We recall Hamlet's fear:

> The spirit that I haue seene
> May be a deale, and the deale hath power

[22] Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae*, London, 1584, STC 5689, *Early English Books Online*, https://eebo.chadwyck.com/.

> T'assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,
> Out of my weakenes, and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damne me […]. (*Hamlet* 2nd Quarto, 1638-43)

Antony's prophecy, furthermore, pairs Caesar's spirit with *Atē* from hell, and the Ghost's enigmatic reply, "Thy euill Spirit, *Brutus*", fits well with other passages wherein "spirit" is associated with conjuration, the black art of necromancy. Cassius tells Brutus to "Coniure" with his name: "*Brutus* will start a Spirit as soone as *Caesar*" (245-6). Ligarius says, "Thou like an Exorcist, hast coniur'd vp / My mortified Spirit" (968-9), explicitly connecting the raising of spirits to the summoning of demons. Like the infernal *Até*, Caesar's spirit stalks the world of the play, βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπουσ, "harming men". Stabbing himself Cassius says: "*Cæsar*, thou art reueng'd, / Euen with the Sword that kill'd thee" (2526-27). Brutus comments: "O *Iulius Cæsar*, thou art mighty yet, / Thy Spirit walkes abroad, and turnes our Swords / In our owne proper Entrailes" (2583-85). Brutus reports two more appearances:

> The Ghost of *Cæsar* hath appear'd to me
> Two seuerall times by Night: at Sardis, once;
> And this last Night, here in Philippi fields:
> I know my houre is come. (2660-63)

He addresses his last words to the triumphant revenging spirit: "*Caesar*, now be still, / I kill'd not thee with halfe so good a will" (2697-98).

Of course, Shakespeare is not really bringing a devil onstage here so much as he is deploying all the resources of a later supernaturalism, that distinctly non-classical remix of hell, ghosts, devils, conjuration, exorcism, and walking spirits, to create what MacCallum called a "paroxysm of dread" and an "atmosphere of weird presentiment"[23]. But, there is one final puzzle worth contemplating. Since some unidentified ὄψιν ("vision") or φάσμα ("apparition, phantom") appears to Plutarch's Brutus, which inevitably recalls Caesar's revenge-seeking *daimōn*, why does this

[23] M. W. MacCallum, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background*, London, Macmillan, 1910, p. 196.

visitant spirit identify itself in both *Lives* as Brutus' (not Caesar's) *daimōn*? According to Christopher Pelling, Plutarch here "plays with the notion that two people's fates can become one"; he suggests "that Brutus' and Caesar's *daimones* are either identical, or at least inextricably and catastrophically linked"[24]. Caesar's *daimōn* punishes his executioners and seems to become or to collude with Brutus's *daimōn* who appears to him. Shakespeare, Pelling suggests further, retains the Plutarchan idea that the supernatural agencies guiding these two mighty opposites may be tragically identical or interlinked. At this point we feel the force of A. D. Nuttall's insight that Shakespeare sometimes exhibits a "faculty for driving through the available un-Greek transmitting text to whatever lay on the other side"[25].

Nuttall's comment certainly rings true in this individual instance. But over all Shakespeare contradicts Plutarch and his translators even as he closely follows them. Focusing on the manners and characters of men, Plutarch's *Lives* everywhere show a purposeful supernaturalism. F. E. Brenk concluded that the *Lives* "represent a great historical and theological thesis in their insistence on divine retribution in this life"[26], whether brought about by vice itself or the direct intervention of the gods. Furthermore, persuasively analyzing the language of the *Lives*, particularly ὁ θεός, οἱ θεοί, δαίμονες, πρόνοια, τύχη, τὸ αὐτόματον, τὸ πεπρωμένον (God, gods, *daimōnes*, providence, fortune, chance, fate), Simon Swain showed that divine Providence therein pervasively guides both the decline of Greece and the rise of Rome[27]. Amyot and North amplified and Christianized this divine direction. Plutarch's Brutus, for example, says he used to think it was "impious and unmanly to yield to one's *daimōn*" (40), that is the

[24] Plutarch, *Caesar*, trans. and ed. Christopher Pelling, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 496. See, alternatively, Hannu Poutiainen, "Autoapotropaics: *Daimon* and *Psuché* between Plutarch and Shakespeare", *Oxford Literary Review*, 34 (2012), pp. 51-70.

[25] A. D. Nuttall, "Action at a Distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks", in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, eds Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 209-22: 214.

[26] F. E. Brenk, S. J., *In Mist Apparelled: Religious Themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives*, Leiden, Brill, 1977, p. 272.

[27] Simon Swain, "Plutarch: Chance, Providence, and History", *American Journal of Philology*, 110 (1989), pp. 272-302.

evil spirit prompting suicide; Amyot and North convert this into a little sermon, not about resisting evil impulses but about the necessity of yielding to God's will, "l'ordonnance diuine" (1565, fol. 698v); humans must "give place and yeeld to diuine prouidence" and dispose themselves "constantly & patiently to take whatsoever it pleaseth him to send us" (1595, 1072), "ce qui luy plaist nous enuoyer" (1565, fol. 698v). The evil *daimōn* to be resisted gets replaced by the Judaeo-Christian God to be obeyed.

This God appears also in the larger sweep of Roman history:

> ἀλλὰ καὶ δεομένοις ἔδοξε τοῖς πράγμασι μοναρχίας πρᾳότατος ὥσπερ ἰατρὸς ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τοῦ δαίμονος δεδόσθαι. διὸ Καίσαρα μὲν εὐθὺς ἐπόθησεν ὁ Ῥωμαίων δῆμος, ὥστε χαλεπὸς γενέσθαι καὶ ἀπαραίτητος τοῖς ἀπεκτονόσι (Comparison of Dion and Brutus, 2)
>
> but it was clear that the ills of the state required a monarchy, and that Caesar, like a most gentle physician, had been assigned to them by Heaven itself. Therefore the Roman people felt at once a yearning for Caesar and in consequence became harsh and implacable towards his murderers (trans. Perrin)

Amyot renders Caesar's appointment to Rome by the guiding *daimōn* as "que Dieu de grace speciale eust donné à l'Empire Romain" (1565, fol. 703), "whom God had ordeined of speciall grace to be Gouernor of the Empire of Rome" (1595, 1079) in North's faithful translation. Divergence from the divine plan results in civil war (and even the modern translator has chosen "Heaven"). Roman history rises and falls under the Judaeo-Christian God's watchful eye and purposeful hand.

This God, however, is conspicuously absent from the Rome of *Julius Caesar*. In 25 of 28 recurrences "god" appears in the plural, the singular occurring only in Cassius' contemptuous denial of Caesar as "god" and in Brutus' query to the Ghost. What is more, Shakespeare amplifies the pagan supernaturalism of the *Lives*, adding to Plutarch's many portents the earthquake, the lion in the Capitol, the lioness whelping in the streets, and the rain of blood (435-6, 452-3, 1004, 1008). Diverging from Plutarch's mere listing, Shakespeare has Casca and Calphurnia fearfully recount the portents in two separate scenes (I.iii and II.ii). Shakespeare gives the

Soothsayer two appearances and replicates the eerie bleeding of Pompey's statue (1725-26) in Calphurnia's dream of Caesar's statue (1069-72). He makes Cinna's dream Caesar a daylight force leading to the poet's destruction. And he invents for Antony the prophecy of a curse lighting on the limbs of men, domestic fury and civil strife, the reign of Caesar's spirit, with all its demonic overtones, ranging for revenge, with *Atē*, hot from hell. Shakespeare's reception of Greek elements in *Julius Caesar* darkens the vision of Rome he found in his sources. Unlike Plutarch and his translators, the playwright never orders the assassination and the aftermath into a comforting, comprehensible divine scheme. Perhaps that is why it has attracted translocation to non-Christian cultures, such as Greg Doran's movement of the play to an African setting in 2012: "I guess the one that thing that also the African context has no problem with at all: the whole sense of the spirit world and the soothsayer and lions walking around in the streets and terrible thunderstorms. Somehow the soothsayer is in touch with something that most of the population really believe in"[28]. Those who would read Christian Providential purpose in such a bleak and terrifying history must attend Cicero's rebuke: "Indeed, it is a strange disposed time: / But men may construe things after their fashion, / Cleane from the purpose of the things themselues" (465-68).

[28] Gregor Doran, Interview, in Emma Brown, "Shakespeare's African Play", *Interview Magazine* (12 April 2013), https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/gregory-doran-julius-caesar-bam.

Mapping Antony and Cleopatra
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"Cleopatra a gypsy": Performing the Nomadic Subject in Shakespeare's Alexandria, Rome and London

Keir Elam

1. Gypsy Queen

In the opening speech of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Roman soldier Philo gives the audience an unflattering introduction to the Egyptian queen, as yet unnamed and unseen on stage:

> His [Antony's] captain's heart […]
> is become the bellows and the fan
> To cool a gypsy's lust. (I.i.6-10)[1]

A lustful gypsy: this is not a good visiting card for Cleopatra. There were three meanings available for 'gypsy' in early modern English, none of them positive. The first is the pseudo-ethnographic attribute "of Egyptian nationality or origin" (*OED* 1b). The second meaning, which confines with the first, is "member of a nomadic people" – still the current meaning of the term – in particular what would later be known as the Romanies, who at the time were

[1] All quotations are taken from William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. John Wilders, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 1995.

erroneously thought to be of Egyptian origin, hence the term 'gypsy' (*OED* 1a). The third is the still less polite attribute "whore" (*OED* 2b), which seems to be Philo's predominant meaning (hence "a gypsy's lust"). There is an inevitable semantic overlap, in the play and in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture at large, between these three competing meanings[2]. This paper addresses the relationship between these three attributes – nomad, Egyptian and whore – in *Antony and Cleopatra* and in cultural history. My enquiry also tells a tale of the three cities invoked by Shakespeare: Alexandria, Rome and London.

The term 'gypsy' attributed to Cleopatra is both a pun and a tautology, given the fact that it is an aphetic form for 'Egyptian'. The semantic migration of 'gypsy' into English took place via Latin *Aegyptius*, which influenced Middle English *gipcyan* (*OED*). This derivation betrays, in the first place, the fact that the perception of the Egyptians as a morally questionable ethnic group ultimately stems from the Roman colonial attitude to a subaltern people, since Egypt was a subjugated province of the Roman Empire. Augustan propaganda strategy was to represent the Egyptians as *other* with respect to Roman military and political order. The Egyptians – like gypsies in later cultures – were viewed in Rome as a devious and unreliable people, as testified by the anonymous *Bellum Alexandrinum* (c. 45 B.C.) narrating Julius Caesar's campaigns in Egypt and Asia:

> Yet, as far as I am concerned, had I now the task of defending the Alexandrians and proving them to be neither untrustworthy nor hot-headed, it would be a waste of many words: indeed when one gets to know both the people and its nature there can be no doubt whatever that their kind is extremely prone to treachery.[3]

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[2] On the three converging meanings of 'gypsy', see John Wilders's comment at I.i.10 in the Arden edition.

[3] "At mihi si defendendi essent Alexandrini neque fallaces esse neque temerarii, multa oratio frustra absumeretur; dum vero uno tempore et natio eorum et natura cognoscaiur, aptissimum esse hoc genus ad proditionem dubitare nemo potest", *Bellum Alexandrinum* 7.2, quoted in Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 358. See also Meyer Reinhold, "Roman Attitudes Towards Egyptians", *Ancient World*, 3 (1980), pp. 97-103.

Egyptians are untrustworthy and treacherous: this suspicious attitude is reflected in Plutarch, for example in his account of how Antony "did defend the loue he bare unto this Aegyptian *Cleopatra*", as he somewhat dismissively calls her[4], and in his general attribution of Antony's downfall to the deceitful behaviour of the Egyptian queen. Not by chance, in Shakespeare's play, it is Antony's Roman follower Philo who expresses the ideology of inflexible masculine *romanitas*, defined in contrast with untrustworthy feminine Egyptian promiscuity and mutability, qualities that are seen to threaten the Empire itself, especially given Cleopatra's proven powers of seduction. There may be the added implication that Cleopatra is a foreigner, an ethnic other, like all gypsies, in the country she happens to rule over. Which in turn implies that Egypt itself is politically and nationally Roman.

The English *gipcyan-gypsy* is the result not of a false etymology – since the derivation from *Aegyptius* is true – but of a false historical reference, since the Romanies had nothing to do with Egypt, and still less with Ptolemaic Egypt. Historically, the first news we have of the ethnic group, namely their arrival in Persia, dates from around 224 A.D., about 250 years after the death of Cleopatra[5]. The Romanies were not in fact of Egyptian but probably of Indian origin, although the early modern English did not have access to this information. And they never reached Egypt or Africa in general. 'Gypsy' is thus an anachronism and an anatopism, out of time and out of place. Shakespeare exploits the misnomer for the purposes of dramatizing Egypt simultaneously from a Roman and from an English perspective: Cleopatra is an *Aegyptia* for Shakespeare's Romans and Shakespeare's London audience alike.

Philo is not the only Roman in Shakespeare's play to accuse Cleopatra of being a gypsy. Antony himself, in his anger after the defeat at Actium, curses Cleopatra not only through the wh-word ("Triple-turned whore", as he calls her at IV.xii.13: see below, p. 38) but also through the g-word:

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4 Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans […] Translated out of Greek into French by James Amyot […] and out of French into English by Thomas North*, London, Printed by Richard Field, 1579, p. 984.

5 Donald Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)*, Lanham, The Scarecrow Press, 2007, p. xix.

> O, this false soul of Egypt! [...]
> Like a right gypsy hath at fast and loose
> Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (IV.xii.27-32)

Cleopatra is a right gypsy, a true or proper gypsy (or perhaps an improper gypsy) because of her irresponsible behaviour during the battle: she has played "fast and loose" militarily as well as morally. Like Philo, Antony brings together here the triple meanings gypsy, Egyptian ("soul of Egypt") and whore. He literalizes the lexical history of 'gypsy', rendering it interchangeable with 'Egyptian', so much so that he begins the same speech by invoking Cleopatra's nationality:

> All is lost!
> This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me. (IV.xii.9-10)

For Antony, therefore, the two terms are synonymous. In both there is also an implication not only of whoredom but of nomadism: the accusation is that it is Cleopatra's excessive mobility during the battle – from which she fled with her fleet, promptly followed by Antony himself (see below, p. 47) – to have caused the disaster. The phrase "right gipsy" therefore portrays a seductive, capricious and peripatetic *Aegyptia* from the viewpoint of an enamoured but humiliated Roman general. Antony's Roman perspective on Cleopatra is in turn mediated and contaminated by the popular English understanding of 'Egyptians' as itinerant Romanies. This sets up a triangular perceptual relationship between Alexandria, Rome and London, where Cleopatra in Shakespeare's Egypt is judged by the Romans, but from the lexical and semantic viewpoint of early modern England and of early modern English.

Antony's interchangeable epithets 'gypsy' and 'Egyptian' are further conditioned by the language of bureaucracy and legislation, as well as popular literature, in Shakespeare's day. 'Gypsy' was the most common popular word for the Romanies, but the 'official' public term was precisely 'Egyptian'. The latter epithet – which may have been a kind of etymological loop, translating the aphetic idiomatic English 'gypsy' back to its Latin etymon – entered into English language and culture in the early

sixteenth century[6], not long after the first documented evidence of Romany presence in England around 1513. The first Tudor 'Egyptians' were apparently well-received as pilgrims[7], but this welcome was very short-lived. The story of their initial acceptance in England is told by Samuel Rid in his *Art of Jugling or Legerdemaine* (1612):

> Certaine Egitians banished their country (belike not for their good conditions) ariued here in England, who being excellent in quaint trickes and deusies, not known here at that time among is, were esteemed and had in great admiration, for what strangenesse of their attire and garments, together with their sleights and legerdemaines, theye were spoke of farre and neere, insomuch that many of our English loyteres ioyned with them, and in time learned their craft and cozening.[8]

Rid's 'historical' account is a thinly-disguised justification for the later persecution of the "Egyptians", due to their supposedly devious and dangerous skills as tricksters, and their negative influence on native English "loiterers", in some ways recalling the Roman attribution of untrustworthiness and treachery to the ancient Egyptians. In England, welcome gave way very rapidly to discrimination. In 1530, only sixteen years after their first recorded presence in England, Henry VIII issued an order, the so-called 'Egyptians Act', expelling 'Egyptians' from the country, on pain of imprisonment and confiscation of their goods[9]. This Act was crucial in defining the official English attitude to Romanies:

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6 The *OED*'s first example is from 1538, but there are earlier uses, including the 1530 Act mentioned below.

7 Paola Pugliatti, "A Lost Lore: The Activity of Gypsies as Performers on the Stage of Elizabethan-Jacobean Street Theatre", in Paola Pugliatti and Alessandro Serpieri, eds, *English Renaissance Scenes: From Canon to Margins*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2008, pp. 259-310: 277.

8 Samuel Rid, *The Art of Jugling or Legerdemaine*, London, 1612, B1^{v}.

9 On gypsies in early modern England, see *Gypsies and Other Travelers: A Report of a Study Carried out in 1965 and 1966 by a Sociological Research Section of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967, https://archive.org/stream/op1269530-1001/op1269530-1001_djvu.txt (accessed 1 December 2017); Peter Clark and David Souden, eds, *Migration and Society in Early Modern England*, London, Hutchinson, 1987; Mark Netzloff, "'Counterfeit Egyptians' and Imagined Borders: Jonson's *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*", *English Literary History*, 68:4 (2001), pp. 763-93; David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000:*

> Forasmuch as before this tyme divers and many owtlandisshe people calling themselfes Egiptsions using no craft nor faict of merchandise, have comen in to thys realme and goon from Shyre to Shyre and place to place in grete companye and used grete subtile and craftye meanys to deceyve the people bearing them in hande that they by palmestrye could tell menne and Womens Fortunes and soo many Tymes by craft and subtiltie hath deceyved the people of theyr Money & alsoo have comitted many haynous Felonyes and Robberyes to the grete hurt and Disceipt of the people that they have comyn among: Be it therfore by the King our Souveraigne Lord the Lords Sp[irit]uall and temporal and by the comons in this present parliament assembled and by the auctorite of the same, ordeigned establisshed and enacted that from henceforth noo suche persons be suffred to come within this the Kinges realme; And if they doo, then they and every of them soo doing shall forfaict to the King our Souveraigne Lorde all theyr goods and catalls, and then to be comaunded to avoide the realme within xv daies next aftre the comaundement upon payn of Imprisonnement.[10]

Henry's Egyptians Act not only makes explicit the synonymy between gypsies and Egyptians, but spells out the negative moral connotations of this ethnicity: they are "outlandish", i.e. literally foreign or alien, but also bizarre or outrageous, far removed from civilization. Such outlandishness is associated with their "crafty" skills in fortune telling, and their idleness and reluctance to work. According to Henry's Act, it is the Romanies themselves who "[call] themselfes Egiptsions". As Yaron Matras and John Morgan have shown, the term was in reality an "outward-facing self-descriptor", used only for purposes of communication with outsiders[11]. In other

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From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany, London, Routledge, 2004; Kenrick (cit.); Pugliatti (cit.); Becky Taylor, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers*, London, Reaktion, 2014; Yaron Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2015; David Cressy, "Trouble with Gypsies in Early Modern England", *The Historical Journal*, 59:1 (2016), pp. 45-70; John Morgan, "'Counterfeit Egyptians': The Construction and Implementation of a Criminal Identity in Early Modern England", *Romani Studies*, 5, 26:2 (2016), pp. 105-28.

10 *Act concerning Egyptians*, 1530, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/citizen_subject/transcripts/egyptians_act.htm (accessed 1 December 2017).

11 Morgan, p. 106; see also Matras, pp. 136-37.

words, they called themselves Egyptians only to English authorities, such as magistrates, and as Morgan goes on to warn: "we must remain sceptical even to these self-definitions, as they were frequently elicited through state-directed interpellations"[12]. They were called – rather than being self-called – Egyptians, especially in official legislation, and were thus obliged to name themselves such in their dealings with officialdom.

The 1530 Egyptians Act was part of a mass persecution of Romanies across Europe, that resulted in their expulsion from the Holy Roman Empire in 1482, from Milan in 1493, from France in 1504, etc.[13]. Henry VIII's Act, however, appears to have been ineffective, as is suggested by the new Egyptians Act signed by Queen Mary in 1554. The new Act allowed Romanies to reside in England on condition that they "leave that naughty, idle and ungodly Life and Company"[14]: i.e. settle as honest workers, and thereby cease to be gypsies. The punishment for failing to do so is made more severe, namely the death penalty. The persecution of the Egyptians continued unabated in Elizabeth's reign, and indeed in 1596 106 men and women were condemned to death at York just for being Romani, although most were later reprieved for the sake of their children[15].

Implicit in the second Act's invitation to the Egyptians to become settled workers is the charge of vagrancy or nomadism. Indeed, legislation on Egyptians intersected with contemporary vagrancy laws. In the same year as the first 'Egyptians Act', 1530, Parliament passed the so-called 'Vagabonds Act', which outlawed travelers

> using divers and subtle crafty and unlawful games and plays, and some of them feigning themselves to have knowledge in physic, physiognomy, palmistry, or other crafty sciences, whereby they bear the people in hand, that they can tell their destinies, deceases and

12 Morgan, p. 123.

13 Kenrick, p. xxi.

14 Danby Pickering, ed., *The Statutes at Large, from the First Year of Queen Mary, to the Thirty-fifth Year of Queen Elizabeth*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1763, vol. VI, p. 29; see also Mayall, p. 21.

15 *Gypsies and Other Travelers*, p. 2.

> fortunes, and such other like fantastical imaginations, to the great deceit of the king's subjects.[16]

Although the 'Vagabonds Act' does not explicitly name Egyptians, the "crafty" activities it legislates against, such as palmistry and fortune telling (fortune tellers were liable to be whipped) are the very crimes cited against Egyptians. By association, the Egyptians become a category of vagabonds or nomadic vagrants.

The accusation of habitual and menacing nomadism is also present in popular literature. In his antivagrant pamphlet *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608) Thomas Dekker describes the quasi-military movements of the Egyptians the length and breadth of England:

> They are commonly an army about foure-score strong, yet they neuer march with all their bagges and baggages together, but (like boot-halers) they forage up and downe countries, 4. 5. or 6. In a company.[17]

Ben Jonson's masque *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621) begins with the itinerant gypsy Jackman and family coming onstage with two horses, the sign and means of their nomadism:

> *Enter a Gipsy, being the* JACKMAN**,** *leading a horse laden with Five little children bound in a trace of scarfs upon him; followed by a* SECOND*, leading another horse laden with stolen poultry, &c.*[18]

This recalls Shakespeare's own allusion to horse-riding gypsies in *As You Like It*:

> 2 PAGE
> I'faith, i'faith, and both in a tune like two gipsies on a horse. (V.iii.14-15)[19]

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16 Cressy, p. 48.

17 Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candle-light*, London, 1608, G5r.

18 *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First*, London, J. B. Nichols, 1828, vol. IV, pp. 674-75.

19 William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2006.

The two gypsies in question, in Shakespeare's comedy, may indeed be, as Juliet Dusinberre suggests, "skilled riders" [20], as well as jig-singers, but they are surely also vagrant travellers, like Jonson's Jackman. In the opening speech of the masque, Jonson – explicitly invoking the figure of Cleopatra in mocking the supposed origins of gypsies in Ptolemaic Egypt – turns the Jackmans' nomadism into a kind of cross-country promiscuity:

> JACKMAN
> Room for the five Princes of Ægypt, mounted all upon one horse, like the four sons of Aymon, to make the miracle the more by a head, if it may be! Gaze upon them, as on the offspring of Ptolemy, begotten upon several Cleopatras, in their several Counties.[21]

Jonson's "several Cleopatras" are all strictly English, giving birth to "Princes" across the counties of their native homeland, "from Shyre to Shyre and place to place", as the 1530 Egyptians Act puts it. This image of an English-born Queen of Egypt is similarly invoked by Samuel Rid:

> This Giles Hather (for so was his name) together with his whore Kit Calot, in short space had following them a pretty traine, he tearming himselfe the King of Egiptians, and she the Queene, ryding about the country at their pleasures uncontrolled.[22]

Rid's use of "queen" doubtless puns on the slang word 'quean', prostitute (or "whore", as Rid graciously calls Kit Calot). Since gypsy women were considered to be by definition whores, the expression 'gypsy queen' becomes another tautology, as indeed – in the Jacobean context – does 'Egyptian queen'.

The early modern lexical field of Egyptian vagrants and their queens could not fail to condition further the English audience's perception of Shakespeare's Egyptian queen, accused by her own husband of being both "gypsy" and "whore". Antony calls Cleopatra "queen" some sixteen times in *Antony and Cleopatra*, out of a total of forty-three uses of the epithet in the play. This

[20] See Juliet Dusinberre's comment at V.iii.14 in the Arden edition.

[21] *The Progresses*, p. 675.

[22] Rid, B1^{v}.

appellation is usually reverential and affectionate, the more so since it reflects Antony's own status ("Come on, my queen", III.xiii.196), but on occasion it becomes more ambiguous: "I must from this enchanting queen break off" (I.ii.135). Analogously, when Octavius in Rome describes Antony as being – under the effeminizing power of Cleopatra – "not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the Queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (I.iv.5-7), his use of the royal epithet may not be altogether respectful, anticipating as it does Jonson's "offspring of Ptolemy, begotten upon several Cleopatras"[23].

2. Counterfeit Egyptians

A further issue raised by both Jonson and Rid is that of the so-called 'counterfeit Egyptians', namely English-born beggars or displaced labourers who passed themselves off as gypsies, perhaps in the hope of evading anti-vagrant legislation. The 1562 Act 'for further Punishment of Vagabonds, calling themselves Egyptians' singled out false Egyptians for severe punishment, ranging from loss of goods to death[24]. This Act thus apparently affords *alien* nomads calling themselves Egyptians a certain authenticity, even if they were already liable to punishment by existing legislation. In introducing the newer category of *English* vagrants calling themselves Egyptians, the 1562 Act identifies a different crime worthy of separate punishment. Counterfeit Egyptians are rife in Jacobean literature. The falseness of their claimed national origins in 'Ptolemaic' Egypt – again as if they were the offspring of Cleopatra – is one of the gypsy tricks denounced by Dekker:

> If they be Egyptians, sure I am they never descended from the tribes of any of those people that came out of the land of Egypt. Ptolemy king of the Egyptians, I warrant, never called them his subjects; no, nor Pharaoh before him.[25]

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23 *The Progresses*, p. 675.

24 Netzloff, p. 771.

25 Dekker, G4^{v}.

The category of the counterfeit Egyptian is somewhat controversial issue in recent scholarship. The adjective 'counterfeit' may be interpreted as meaning dishonest and deceptive or – as in the Dekker passage – fraudulent, false. According to David Cressy, both meanings are implied in the legislation: "They were 'counterfeit' because of their fraudulent practices, and because they passed themselves as 'Egyptians'"[26]. Paola Pugliatti likewise discerns a double form of deception and disguise:

> It is evident, therefore, that the statutes are recording two different levels of disguise observed in two different groups of vagrants: that of Gypsies who 'pretend[ed] to be Egypcians', and that of local beggars who 'wander[ed] in the Habite, Forme or Atture' of the former (i.e., of 'counterfeited Egipcians').[27]

John Morgan, instead, maintains that 'counterfeit' refers to dishonest gypsies as a whole, and that, especially after further legislation in 1598, there was no legal difference between alien Egyptians and 'pretend' English Egyptians:

> The distinction between pretending to be 'Egyptian' and wandering in the form of 'counterfeit Egyptains' is the final semantic shift, stripping the originally defined group of a specific geographical label. All 'alien' wanderers are now said to be 'ptending themselves to be Egipcyans' and those deemed to be imitating them are now, in the final analysis, double counterfeiters. The Egyptian identity after 1598 is always a deceitful imposture, and no punitive distinction is drawn between the 'natural subject' and the alien.[28]

Be this as it may from a strictly legislative point of view, there is nevertheless no doubt that in the anti-gypsy literature – as the Dekker, Rid and Jonson passages show – 'counterfeit' is interpreted with reference to false nationality. 'Egyptian' becomes a performative category, acted out by supposed aliens and fraudulent natives alike. This is doubtless one of the reasons why gypsies ended up on the early modern English stage, not only in

[26] Cressy, p. 57.
[27] Pugliatti, p. 275.
[28] Morgan, p. 118.

Jonson's masque but also in plays such as Thomas Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (c. 1622), and Middleton and Rowley's *The Spanish Gypsie* (c. 1623)[29].

Shakespeare's Cleopatra is not liable to punishment for dissembling her nationality: she not only calls herself Egyptian ("As I am Egypt's queen", I.i.30) but is called Egyptian, in all senses, by others, especially the Romans. If she can be considered counterfeit, it is in the performative sense of playing or being a theatrical role, that of a foreign queen in ancient times. Such counterfeit performativity is made most explicit in her fear of having an adolescent actor "boy my greatness / I' th' posture of a whore" (V.ii.219-20: see below, p. 52). On Shakespeare's stage it was the actor boying her greatness who, in the words of the 1562 Act, 'pretend[ed] to be Egypcian', as well as pretending to be a woman. Cleopatra is at once a 'true' Egyptian and a 'counterfeit' Egyptian. Her ethnic identity, as Pascale Aebischer writes in her essay on Renaissance Cleopatras, is a continually renewed and strategically unstable performative construct:

> It becomes obvious that Cleopatra's politically and sexually motivated performances of race dismantle the binaries of Rome vs. Egypt, self vs. other which Romans and critical tradition alike have used as a means of fixing her identity. For Shakespeare's theatrical queen, a 'wonderful piece of work' that carefully constructs itself anew in every scene (I.ii.145-46), racial attributes are not properties that are embodied, but theatrical properties to be deployed and discarded at will[30].

3. "Like to a vagabond": on Cleopatra's nomadism

Recent historical commentators have questioned another aspect of Cleopatra's Egyptian ethnicity. As Adrian Goldsworthy underlines she was culturally Greek rather than Egyptian[31]; Greek was her first language and she had been educated in Greek literature and

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29 Pugliatti, p. 296.

30 Pascale Aebischer, "The Properties of Whiteness: Renaissance Cleopatras from Jodelle to Shakespeare", *Shakespeare Survey*, 65 (2012), pp. 221-38: 237-38.

31 Adrian Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010, passim.

culture. Imagining her as exotically African was again part of Roman propaganda. So was imagining her as erotically African, as the whore or *Aegyptia* of Alexandria. The same might be said of Shakespeare's Romans. Antony, after the defeat at Actium, accuses her of repetitive promiscuity, alluding to her earlier love affairs with prominent Romans (the "credit she had", as Plutarch delicately puts it in North's translation, "with *Iulius Caesar*, and *Cneus Pompey* (the sonne of *Pompey* the great)"[32]:

> All is lost;
> This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me.
> My fleet hath yielded to the foe, and yonder
> They cast their caps up and carouse together
> Like friends long lost. Triple-turned whore! (IV.xii.9-13)

Cleopatra is triple-turned in her amorous and military affairs alike, turning, as she does, from the battle, from one sea to another (she lifts her ships, as Plutarch narrates, from the Mediterranean to the gulf of Arabia) and from Antony himself.

Antony's "triple-turned whore" raises the related issue of Cleopatra's supposed gypsy-like nomadism, his other main accusation against her in the play. Cleopatra, in this narration, moves from lover to lover and from place to place: she is, to use Octavius's metaphor, "Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream" (I.iv.45)[33]. Plutarch gives some credit to the image of Cleopatra as a nomadic seductress: he first presents her on the move, in her barge on the river Cydnus, taking her from Alexandria to Tarsus, although, as Plutarch's own account makes clear, it actually was her fascinated Roman visitors, from Julius Caesar to Antony to Octavius, who came and went, while she stayed put in Alexandria to receive them.

Shakespeare himself seems to defend Cleopatra from the charge of gypsy-like nomadism, not in *Antony and Cleopatra* but in an earlier play, *Romeo and Juliet*, where he makes his first proleptic mention of his future heroine. In Act II scene iv, Mercutio makes fun of Romeo in love:

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[32] Plutarch, p. 981.

[33] Compare Jonson's scoffing allusion to "the offspring of Ptolemy, begotten upon several Cleopatras, in their several Counties", *The Progresses*, p. 675.

> Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench […] Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gypsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose. (II.iv.39-43)[34]

The famous women mentioned by Mercutio – none of them comparable to Juliet – are paradoxically associated either with low rank ("kitchen-wench"), shabbiness ("dowdiness"), or with dubious moral behaviour: "hildings", "harlots" and "grey eye", as well as "gypsy" are all more or less synonymous with 'whore'. The point of Mercutio's joke, however, is that these attributions are outrageously false, since all the heroines – including, in this context, Cleopatra – are taken instead as models of fidelity, if not of chastity, making it hard for Romeo's beloved to match them. Mercutio's use of "gypsy" is thus counterfactual: in other words, to consider Cleopatra a mere gypsy, i.e. a whore and a nomad, is a travesty of historical truth, like considering Hero a harlot. Mercutio is thus defending the honour of the Egyptian queen, rather like Chaucer in *The Legend of Good Women* (of which Mercutio's 'good women' speech may be a parody):

> Ye men, that falsly sweren many an oth
> That ye wol deye, if that your love be wroth,
> Here may ye seen of women whiche a trouthe![35]

Mercutio's defence regards both Cleopatra's supposed promiscuity, and, more in particular, her putative nomadism. Dido, Hero and the other good women were essentially infatuated domestic heroines, faithful to their respective visiting lovers (Aeneas landing in Carthage, Leander crossing the Hellespont) and killed themselves for love at home. Much the same, Shakespeare implies, is true of Cleopatra, who remains and dies in Alexandria.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, likewise, the heroine's behaviour can hardly be described as nomadic in any literal sense. Apart from the two 'aquatic' episodes on the river Cydnus and on the sea at

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34 William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. René Weis, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2012.

35 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Poetical Works*, ed. F. N. Robinson, London, Oxford University Press, 1957 (second edition), p. 584.

Actium, the tragedy always shows her stably at home in Alexandria until her death. She is, moreover, physically and symbolically associated with ponderously static and permanent architectonic structures, characteristic of the Ptolemaic dynasty of which she is the last representative, in particular the monument that she herself has constructed, and which will become her own tomb. She similarly associates herself with the pyramids, by which she probably means monumental obelisks of the kind later known as Cleopatra's needles, and which she again relates to her own death:

> Rather make
> My country's high pyramides my gibbet
> And hang me up in chains! (V.ii.60-62)

Cleopatra is also metonymically connected in the play with furniture and household objects that likewise denote static domesticity rather than mobility. She is shown and described in chairs, notably the so-called 'chair of gold' on which, according to Octavius, she was publicly enthroned (III.vi.3-5). Otherwise, as object of Roman desire, she is recurrently associated with the bed. Enobarbus narrates that "She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed" and that "[Apollodorus carried] A certain queen to Caesar in a mattress" (II.vi.70). "I drunk him to his bed", she boasts of Antony (II.v.21). Even at her death, Octavius orders his guards to "Take up her bed" (V.ii.355). The poses or positions in which she is consequently described are those of sitting and reclining. Enobarbus famously describes "The barge she *sat* in" at Cydnus (II.ii.200). "Let me sit down. O Juno!" she pleads to the angry Antony after Actium; "No, no, no, no, no!", he exclaims, but sit down she does (III.xi.28-29). Or alternatively, she lies down, dreaming of eternal Egyptian recumbence:

> on Nilus' mud
> Lay me stark naked […]. (V.ii.57-58)

and indeed she explicitly contrasts Egyptian reclination or horizontality with the prospect of enforced verticality in Rome:

> Shall they hoist me up

> And show me to the shouting varletry
> Of censuring Rome? (V.ii.54-56)

One of the play's central dramatic antinomies is that between moving and sitting, or between mobility and what is known in cultural anthropology as sedentism. Even today, among scholars of nomadism, as Susan Kent has observed:

> There is sometimes a failure to recognize a basic semantic difference between the terms mobility, sedentism, and nomadism. The terms are used here to denote conditions of group movement. Nomadism is the movement of a group on a landscape and sedentism is the lack of movement. Mobility is simply the movement of a group (not a camp) through space. Nomadism and sedentism, then, denote the amount of movement or mobility involved. […] Nomadism and sedentism represent the extremes of the mobility continuum.[36]

In the case of Cleopatra, this semantic confusion between mobility and nomadism is strategically exploited by the Romans. The Egyptians were a decidedly non-nomadic people, indeed one of the prime examples of a sedentic community whose achievements included, as Shakespeare underlines, the creation of monumental architecture. Even the Egyptian cult of the dead implied the eternal sedentism of the mummified body as a means to the preservation of the soul. At the same time, Egypt was culturally and militarily mobile, intent on extending its influence well beyond national boundaries (not least through Cleopatra's "triple-turned" Realpolitik towards Roman leaders). Shakespeare's Cleopatra is a perfect expression of such mobile sedentism.

It is precisely her sedentism, her reluctance to stand and to move, and especially to move to Rome, that characterizes the finale of Shakespeare's play, as of earlier narrative and dramatic representations. In all versions of the Cleopatra story she is determinedly sedentic and anti-nomadic, in that her one desire is to stay and die in Alexandria. In Plutarch she is anxious not to be buried in Rome, while Antony, paradoxically, is buried in Egypt:

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[36] Susan Kent, *Farmers as Hunters: The Implications of Sedentism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,1989, p. 2.

> Whilest we liued together, nothing could seuer our companies: but now at our death, I feare me they will make us change our contries. For as thou being a ROMANE, hast bene buried in *Æ*GYPT: euen so wretched creature I, an *Æ*GYPTIAN, shall be buried in ITALIE, which shall be all the good that I haue receiued by thy countrie.[37]

Being 'an *Æ*gyptian' means to stay put in Alexandria, even posthumously. In Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (1594), she fears being the object, in Rome, of the vengeful gaze of Octavia.

> That Rome should see my scepter-bearing hands
> Behind me bound, and glory in my teares,
> That I should passe whereas *Octauia* stands,
> To view my misery, that purchas'd hers?[38]

In Mary Sidney's *Tragedy of Antony* (1592) she likewise resists the journey to Rome, prophesying to her children public humiliation there as cheap manual labour imported from the east:

> Who knows if that your hands false *Destinie*
> The Scepters promis'd of imperious *Rome*,
> In stede of them shall crooked shepehookes beare,
> Needles or forks, or guide the carte, or plough?[39]

Shakespeare's Cleopatra likewise foresees the mobility that the Romans intend to impose on her, by way of geopolitical conquest: "he'll lead me, then, in triumph", she says of Octavius (V.ii.108). This raises the spectre of a different form of nomadism, namely enforced cultural, as well as physical, mobility as a Roman trophy. In the words of Stephen Greenblatt:

> Mobility is not incidental here: physically displacing conquered chieftains, compelling them to parade through the streets, exposing them to the gaze of strangers are all key elements in what it means

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37 Plutarch, p. 1009.

38 Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, in *Dramaticke Poems*, London, John Waterson, 1635, pp. 429-79: 431.

39 Mary Sidney, *Tragedy of Antony*, 1592, G3^{v}; on Cleopatra's 'needles', in quite a different sense, see below, p. 52.

> for the Romans to make a much larger cultural field available for transfer to themselves.[40]

Shakespeare's Cleopatra, unlike Mary Sidney's, fears not Roman needles but Roman representation. She fears having *self*-representation imposed on her in Rome, her living body placed on public display as an "Egyptian puppet" (V.ii.207) to the populace, and she likewise fears representation by *others*, particularly by boy actors in the Roman amphitheatre, and being then obliged to witness the spectacle as member of the audience. In this case, therefore, not self-representation but as it were self-spectatorship:

> I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th'posture of a whore. (V.ii.218-20)

Cleopatra therefore imagines being represented in Rome as a gypsy in all its senses, namely as an Egyptian 'puppet', "I'th'posture of a whore", an exotic and erotic nomadic stranger brought from afar.

The well-known irony in this passage, of course, is that as she speaks she is already being represented far from home, her greatness performed or 'boyed' by an adolescent actor squeaking her lines not in the Roman amphitheatre but on the stage of the London Globe theatre. Her speech is a kind of self-performing prophecy, which projects into the future an event that actually took place in the distant historical past and is now being theatrically recreated in the present. This triple time scheme also involves a triangular spatial relationship, again between the Alexandria where she is supposedly speaking, the Rome she fears being taken to, and the early modern London where the feared performance is currently taking place. In this sense, Cleopatra's geographic and domestic anti-nomadism is belied by her conspicuous cultural mobility. She would like to stay home, but she is already elsewhere. In the event, Cleopatra may avoid travel through her suicide, thereby averting self-performance in Rome, but as she foresees she

[40] Stephen Greenblatt, "Cultural Mobility: An Introduction", in Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 1-23: 8.

cannot avoid posthumous representation and posthumous nomadism.

In Plutarch, the public exhibiting of Cleopatra's body does take place in Rome, post-mortem, and indeed shows her – like the finale of Shakespeare's play – at the very moment of her death, but in the form of a painting:

> in his triumphe [Caesar] caried *Cleopatraes* image, with an Aspicke byting of her arme.[41]

If Cleopatra gets *her* way by means of the deadly asp, Octavius gets *his* way by taking both queen and asp to Rome, albeit in symbolic form. She is publicly exhibited in the streets of Rome performing her last act and becomes literally an icon of Roman imperial power.

The attribution of 'Egyptian' nomadism or vagrancy to Cleopatra is therefore justified only post-mortem, and in pictorial form. Otherwise, if she is to be considered nomadic at all, it is only in the performative sense that Rosi Braidotti gives the adjective in her definition of the nomadic subject:

> nomadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness. […] Nomadic shifts designate therefore a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge.[42]

The nomadic self is a subject in flux, intrinsically other, always in the process of becoming, not – from Braidotti's perspective – in direct opposition to the dominant power (in Cleopatra's case Rome), but nevertheless independent and indeed insubordinate, as her resistance to Octavius's attempts to subjugate her suggests. Cleopatra is a nomad only to the extent that she is determinedly other, outlandish, with regard to the hegemonic power of Rome. It is this insubordinate resistance to Roman supremacy that

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41 Plutarch, p. 1010.

42 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 5-6.

constitutes Cleopatra's true 'gypsy'-like nomadism; in the words of Carol Mejia LaPerle:

> Scenes of Egyptian idleness are considered wasteful and indolent by the Roman critics in Shakespeare's play. However, as a "right gypsy", Cleopatra performs insubordination: resisting the supremacy of Rome, defying the tyranny of function, mocking the duties of royal privilege, and refusing to be a lawful race.[43]

4. Coda: Cleopatra's nomadic cultural afterlife

Cleopatra, therefore, finally leaves her native Alexandria only in the form of a picture. There is a certain poetic or artistic justice to this, since in both Plutarch and Shakespeare Cleopatra presents herself precisely as a painted image in her successful bid to seduce Antony on the river Cydnus:

> She was layed under a pauillion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddesse Venus, commonly drawen in picture.[44]

> ENOBARBUS
> […] she did lie
> In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,
> O'erpicturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature. (II.ii.208-11)

Her conceit of becoming an erotic picture, a seductive self-portrait, is literalized by Octavius's carrying of her icon in Rome. It is also prophetic of her later cultural afterlife in early modern art, which leads me to consider the artistic nomadism or cultural mobility to which Cleopatra was subjected in late Renaissance Europe.

There are countless sixteenth and seventeenth-century painted images of the queen either sitting seductively in her barge, as in Agostino Tassi's celebrated 1578 painting, or nakedly and erotically

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43 Carol Mejia LaPerle, "An Unlawful Race: Shakespeare's Cleopatra and the Crimes of Early Modern Gypsies", *Shakespeare* (May 2016), pp. 226-38: 236.

44 Plutarch, p. 981.

recumbent with her asp, in Italian paintings from Michelangelo to Guido Reni to Artemisia Gentileschi. It is to this early modern iconographic tradition of pictorial Cleopatras that Shakespeare alludes in another intertextual episode, this time in a later play, *Cymbeline*, set in an ancient Britain province of the Roman empire. In Act II scene iv, the Machiavellian Italian Iachimo describes to the credulous Briton Posthumus the pictures and furnishings he noted in the bedchamber of Posthumus's wife Imogen, so as to convince him of her infidelity. Among the clues to her guilt, pride of place goes to a tapestry representation of the Egyptian queen on her barge at Cydnus, in what is in effect a Shakespearian reworking, just a few years later, of Enobarbus's description:

> First, her bedchamber—
> […] it was hanged
> With tapestry of silk and silver, the story
> Proud Cleopatra when she met her Roman
> And Cydnus swelled above the banks.
> (*Cymbeline* II.iv.83-94)[45]

Since Iachimo's intention is to convince Posthumus of his sexual liaison with Imogen, his underlining of the presence of Cleopatra in her chamber is not casual: she becomes again the erotic object of the Roman gaze associated metonymically with the bed of Iachimo's object of desire, the British princess Imogen. In so doing, he bears witness to Cleopatra's early modern cultural nomadism, the circulation of art objects and domestic items celebrating the cult of Cleopatra across Europe from the sixteenth century onwards.

As in *Cymbeline*, the nomadic geographical trajectory of these objects involved both Rome and London, as for example in the case of the Italian playing card showing the half-naked Cleopatra and her asp, that was imported from Italy to seventeenth-century England and is now found in the British Museum (fig. 1):

[45] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. Valerie Wayne, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2017.

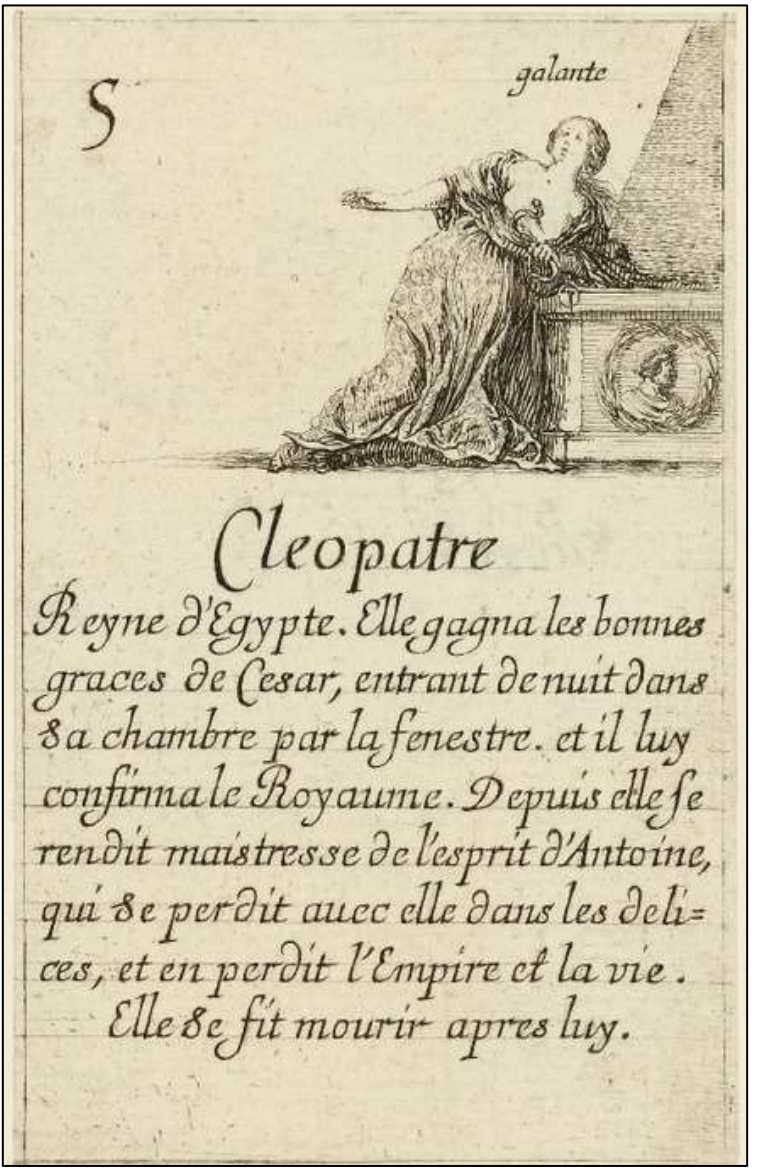

Fig. 1 Cleopatra playing card, Italian school, 1644
(courtesy of the British Museum)

Cleopatra is once again the object of Roman and English cultural desire. At the same time, Shakespeare's allusion in *Cymbeline* to his own earlier play may suggest that *Antony and Cleopatra* helped inaugurate the specifically English cult of Cleopatra. Shakespeare's

play certainly influenced the flourishing Cleopatra industry in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, which produced countless reclining household Cleopatras, complete with asp, in three-dimensional forms, from Staffordshire earthenware (see fig. 2) to Swansea pearlware[46], preferably to be placed next to analogous china figures of Shakespeare himself.

Fig. 2 Figure of Cleopatra in glazed earthenware, early nineteenth century (courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum)

I cannot conclude this discussion of the gypsy queen's posthumous nomadic progress from Alexandria to London, via Rome, without returning for a moment to Cleopatra's needle. The so-called pyramids or monumental obelisks that in *Antony and Cleopatra* symbolize immovable permanence become in turn the objects of enforced cultural mobility. The first obelisk taken from Alexandria to Rome, in 40 A.D., as colonial trophy, was well-known in England at the time of Shakespeare, especially after Pope Sixtus V had it moved to St Peter's Square to great international (especially Catholic)

[46] See https://www.skinnerinc.com/auctions/2616M/lots/801 (accessed 1 December 2017).

acclaim in 1586[47]. It was popularly known in England as St Peter's needle, but in the seventeenth century it and other obelisks came increasingly to be associated, by the English, with Cleopatra herself (see fig. 2). The orientalist Robert Huntington mentions in his 1684 letter to the Royal Society on "the Porphyry Pillars in Egypt" that "The *Franks* [the Germans] call them *Aguglia's*, the *English* in particular *Cleopatra's* needles, but the inhabitants content themselves with the general name of pillars"[48]. Again, the anachronistic English attribution of the obelisks to Cleopatra may have been in part influenced by Shakespeare's heroine and by later adaptations of the play such as Dryden's 1677 version.

Fig. 3 Francis Frith, *Cleopatra's Needle*, c. 1850
(courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum)

47 See Jason Thompson, *Wonderful Things: A History of Egyptology 1: From Antiquity to 1881*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 2015, vol. III, p. 65.

48 Robert Huntington, "An Account of the Porphyry Pillars in Egypt" (1684), in *Memoirs of the Royal Society*, London, G. Smith, 1739, vol. II, pp. 286-87: 286.

The culmination of the British cult of Cleopatra is without doubt the notorious transportation of another obelisk from Alexandria to London in 1877. This event also involved again a triangular relationship between Alexandria, London and Rome, since it was the great Italian Egyptologist Giovanni Battista Belzoni who persuaded Muhammad Ali Pasha, khedive of Egypt and Sudan, to present Cleopatra's Needle to the British Government in 1819, and then succeeded in having it delivered to Alexandria, where it remained for nearly sixty years by the Nile, waiting to be shipped to London. The appropriation of the obelisk symbolically anticipated the colonial future of Egypt as a British protectorate, although the needle, like Cleopatra herself, seemed reluctant to leave home. For the British, however, it was an object of cultural and colonial desire worth waiting for.

Fig. 4 Edward William Cooke, T*he Cleopatra Cylinder Vessel*, 1878
(courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum)

The extraordinary feat of naval engineering that finally moved the monument some 3600 nautical miles from Egypt to Victorian England involved an enormous 28 metre iron cylinder

container, nicknamed, unsurprisingly but unflatteringly, the Cleopatra (fig. 4)[49]. In a kind of large-scale restaging of Shakespeare's Cydnus episode, the Cleopatra set out from the port of Alexandria in September 1877 and triumphantly completed her journey in just under a year, surviving en route a nearly fatal tempest in the Bay of Biscay. By September 1878 Britain finally had its own conquered Cleopatra, her needle erected on the embankment, on the other side of the river from Shakespeare's Globe, thereby calling on the Thames itself to recreate or represent the fertile Nile. Cleopatra the gipsy had arrived in London to stay, a sedentic nomad to the end.

[49] See Aubrey Noakes, *Cleopatra's Needles*, London, H. F. & G. Witherby, 1962, p. 35.

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Love and Death in Egypt and Rome

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In the National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia in Rome lies one of the most evocative ancient sarcophagi, known as the 'Bride and Bridegroom' of Cerveteri. The sculptures, which date to the second half of the sixth century B.C.E., startle us in their vivacity: the husband and wife seem more likely to rise and cross the gallery than to remain frozen in time for all eternity. The tomb startles us as well in its suggestion of marital intimacy: here are a husband and wife so comfortable in their proximity, so relaxed in their posture, that they seem to exude an erotic contentedness, as if they needed no other afterlife besides the warmth of their shared terracotta bed.

The 'Bride and Bridegroom' from Cerveteri is one of the most compelling of all Etruscan sarcophagi, but it is by no means an unusual example[1]. Etruscan couples were regularly buried together and were also regularly depicted in effigies on the lids of their sarcophagus. How the Etruscans understood this joint burial, and what it tells us about their expectations for the afterlife, remains a

[1] There is a nearly identical tomb, also from Cerveteri and dated to the sixth century B.C.E., in the Louvre Museum in Paris, known as 'The Sarcophagus of the Spouses'.

matter of speculation[2]. Did they envision a shared fate for their souls as well as their bodies? Where did they think the afterlife would transpire – at the site of their graves in the necropolis, or in a special land of the dead? Did they hope that the joint effigies on their tombs would influence their chances of a future together, or did they intend the sculptures merely as a form of commemoration?[3]

There are no clear answers to these questions for the Etruscans, nor does Shakespeare concern himself directly with Etruscan burials in his plays. But there are two occasions when he thinks about couples' shared posthumous fates, and in both cases, he turns to Italy and its past. Indeed, Shakespeare never imagines the joint burial of a couple in his native England – burial in England seems on the whole to be a solitary and lonely affair, perhaps best captured by the melancholic lines addressed to his male lover in Sonnet 71:

> No longer mourn for me when I am dead
> Then you shall hear the surly sullen bell
> Give warning to the world that I am fled
> From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell.[4]

These lines resonate powerfully with Andrew Marvell's account of what happens to English lovers once their opportunities for mortal love have passed. "Thy beauty shall no more be found", Marvell warns his coy mistress:

> Thy beauty shall no more be found;
> Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
> My echoing song: then worms shall try
> That long-preserved virginity:
> And your quaint honour turn to dust;

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2 On Etruscan burial, see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

3 This opening discussion of Etruscan tombs is slightly altered from its appearance in *Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2018, pp. 1-2.

4 William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1977.

> And into ashes all my lust.
> The grave's a fine and private place,
> But none I think do there embrace.[5]

Dusty, wormy, solitary graves – this is what it means to die in England.

In this essay I want to discuss, however, not Shakespeare's representation of love after death in England, but about his idea of posthumous love in Italy, in both its ancient and early modern manifestations. It is no coincidence, I would argue, that when the playwright wants to think about an afterlife for love, he shifts his imagination to Catholic Italy, and to pagan Rome and Egypt – we never hear, for example, about the Macbeths' fantasies for a shared afterlife, nor does Lear describe his longings to join the deceased mother of his daughters. But in both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare expresses a range of possibilities for what might lie for the lovers on the other side of this world. Although the plays were written in the opposite order I want to begin with the Roman, or in this respect more accurately Egyptian play, in which Shakespeare embraces the possibility of a meaningful afterlife for love, before turning to the Italian play, in which any idea of a future for the lovers after death meets with serious resistance. Despite the sources for the plays, which suggest something very different, the idea of immortal love corresponds only to the Roman-Egyptian pair, and not to the Veronese.

In his magisterial survey of funerary sculpture from the ancient world through the Renaissance, Erwin Panofsky identifies two dominant traditions for thinking about burial and the afterlife. On the one hand, there was the "prospective" tradition epitomized by the burials of the ancient Egyptians. These were tombs whose reliefs and sculptures focused on the future of the dead with no eye toward the past. Such prospective tombs not only looked forward to the posthumous future: they also attempted to shape that future, to perform, through their representations of the deceased and the

[5] Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress", in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith, London, Pearson Longman, 2003, ll. 25-32.

deceased's possessions, what Panofsky describes as a type of "magic manipulation"[6].

Panofsky contrasts the "prospective" with the "retrospective" tradition, whose origins he locates in ancient Greece, where the tomb served as a monument, a record of the earthly fame of the deceased. The ancient Roman tombs largely followed the tradition of their Greek predecessors, whereby surviving family members offered loving care to funerary monuments in order to preserve the dead's earthly fame and memory[7]. In Greek and Roman attitudes towards the dead, the emphasis fell on commemoration, rather than on anticipation.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare seems to grasp the distinction between Roman and Egyptian attitudes towards death and the afterlife, and part of Antony's transformation in his play from a Roman to an Egyptian involves his embrace of a prospective, rather than retrospective account of his future with Cleopatra. Upon hearing of Cleopatra's supposed death, Antony announces his plans to meet her anew in the afterlife:

> Unarm, Eros. The long day's task is done,
> And we must sleep.
> […]
> I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
> Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now
> All length is torture. Since the torch is out,
> Lie down, and stray no farther.
> […]
> Eros! – I come, my queen. – Eros! – Stay for me.
> Where souls do couch on flowers we'll hand in hand,

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6 Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Four Lectures on Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, ed. H. W. Janson, New York, H. N. Abrams, 1964, p. 16.

7 To a greater degree than Panofsky acknowledges, Roman tombs also include prospective features: sarcophagi figuring Elysian banquets and celebrations are relatively common, for example, as are images of gods or cosmic figures connected with one's posthumous life. Consider, for example, the twin mausoleums in the Vatican cemetery with a vivid wall painting of Lucifer and Hesperus, whose depiction was associated with the idea of rebirth after death; or the regular appearance of souls carried to safety in the next world on the backs of dolphins. For further discussion of this, see Jocelyn Toynbee and John Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter and the Vatican Excavations*, London-New York, Longmans, Green, 1956, p. 79.

> And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
> Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
> And all the haunt be ours.
> (IV.xv.35-36, 44-47, 50-54)[8]

This anticipation of being "where souls do couch on flowers" is a reference to the Elysian fields, and the further invocation of Dido and Aeneas conjures up more specifically the *lugentes campi*, or fields of mourning, where the victims of love forever dwell. As Virgil relates in book 6 of the *Aeneid*,

> And here, concealed by secret paths, are those
> whom bitter love consumed with brutal waste;
> a myrtle grove encloses them, their pains
> remain with them in death. (6.583-86)[9]

Antony's allusion to Dido and Aeneas reflects a poignant revision of the circumstances Virgil describes. As readers of the *Aeneid* knew well, Dido is not reunited with Aeneas when they meet each other again during his visit to the underworld and refuses even to answer Aeneas when he finds her walking "with her wound still fresh" (6.594). Antony's invocation, then, of the only other classical (and similarly imperial) lovers who might rival Cleopatra and himself in fame – the (soon to be Roman) Aeneas and his African queen, Dido – involves a hopeful rewriting of that poem. In his imagining, Dido's sorrows would be undone by her joyful meeting with the lover who provoked her suicide, rather than assuaged, as Virgil has it, by her former husband, Sychaeus, who "answers her sorrows, gives her love for love" (6.623). Antony has made the tragic scene in the underworld into a moment of public triumph, where the lovers will be forever on display as they were in the streets of Alexandria.

Cleopatra, for her part, fully reciprocates Antony's wish for an afterlife together, or rather, she possesses the exact same wish herself. It is important that they never discuss their hopes for a

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[8] William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, New York, W. W. Norton, 2016 (third edition). All references to Shakespeare's plays are from this edition.

[9] Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981.

posthumous life together, but that each of them expresses the same desire independently. In other words, the promise to meet in the afterlife is not made to convey the depth of love to the other; it is not part of the love test that Cleopatra sets out in her very first utterance, "If it be love indeed, tell me how much" (I.i.14), but instead reflects what both of them privately desire. This is an interesting departure on Shakespeare's part from Plutarch's text, in which only Antony hopes for a posthumous reunion. After the report of Cleopatra's death, he berates himself for further delay in dispatching with his own life: "Why dost thou longer delay, Antony? Fortune has taken away thy sole remaining excuse for clinging to life"[10]. Then, Plutarch relates, Antony "went into his chamber. Here, as he unfastened his breastplate and laid it aside, he said, 'O Cleopatra, I am not grieved to be bereft of thee, for I shall straightway join thee'".

Plutarch's Cleopatra makes no comparable declaration – in fact she anticipates something quite to the contrary:

> For though in life nothing could part us from each other, in death we are likely to change places; thou, the Roman, lying buried here, while I, the hapless woman, lie in Italy, and get only so much of thy country as my portion.

Cleopatra's regret that Antony is likely to be buried in Egypt while she will be buried in Italy, and her desire to "embrac[e] the urn which held [Antony's] ashes", shows her to be firmly in what Panofsky would consider the Roman camp: she is concerned only with the mortal remains of her lover, and not with the possibility of a shared, posthumous fate.

In Shakespeare's hands, Cleopatra is not concerned with Antony's burial, and indeed claims to have no interest in anything the mortal realm might offer:

> Shall I abide
> In this dull world, which in thy absence is
> No better than a sty? O see, my women,
> The crown o'th' earth doth melt. My lord!

[10] All quotations from the *Life of Antony* refer to Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, ed. C. B. R. Pelling, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

> O, withered is the garland of the war.
> The soldier's pole is fall'n. Young boys and girls
> Are level now with men. The odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon. (IV.xvi.62-70)

As she herself prepares for her own death, she utters first, "I am again for Cydnus / To meet Mark Antony" (V.ii.224-25), reminding us of the location of their first encounter as if Cydnus were itself magically transposed to the afterlife, and then initiates what she hopes will be her complete transformation from matter to spirit:

> Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have
> Immortal longings in me. Now no more
> The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
> Yare, yare, good Iras, quick – methinks I hear
> Antony call. I see him rouse himself
> To praise my noble act; I hear him mock
> The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men
> To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come!
> Now to that name my courage prove my title.
> I am fire and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life. (V.ii.271-81)

"I have immortal longings in me", "Husband, I come": these are sentiments that Shakespeare found, surprisingly, not in his sources for *Antony and Cleopatra,* but instead – more or less verbatim – in his sources for *Romeo and Juliet.* Shakespeare reserves for his Egyptian Queen the aspirations that he denies his Italian heroine.

The Italian story of Romeo and Giulietta has in all of its versions what Panofsky would term a "prospective" attitude toward the afterlife: it softens the tragic consequences of the young lovers' deaths by granting them a heavenly future together. In the primary source for the tale, Matteo Bandello's mid-sixteenth century novella, Romeo berates himself for not taking his own life immediately upon hearing of Giulietta's death, and imagines that her spirit is already in heaven, growing impatient with his delay: "Marry, she goeth yonder wandering and waiteth for thee to follow

her"[11]. Giulietta's final words similarly address the imminent reunion of her soul with that of her husband:

> Do I not feel that thy spirit goeth wandering hereabout and already marvelleth, nay, complaineth, that I tarry so long? Seignior mine, I see thee, I feel thee, I know thee and I know that thou awaitest no other than my coming.[12]

Similar dialogue characterizes all of the subsequent versions of the story, even in its loosest adaptations. In Luigi Groto's 1578 play, *La Hadriana*, for example, the last words of the Juliet figure (Hadriana) are: "Wait for me, husband, I follow you"[13].

What Shakespeare creates between Romeo and Juliet, by contrast, is a distinctly mortal conception of love, governed by two central premises. First, that love is fleeting, brief, and restricted to this world; and second, that this temporal restriction intensifies and renders more precious the nature of erotic experience.

Upon learning of each other's deaths, Shakespeare's lovers respond with no hope whatever for a heavenly life together. Romeo's immediate concern is with entering – and remaining within – the Capulet tomb. When he arrives at the monument, he addresses it as a devouring rival that stands in his way:

> Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
> Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth,
> Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,
> And in despite I'll cram thee with more food. (V.iii.45-48)

Like Mercutio's description earlier in the play of his flesh as "worms' meat" (III.i.102), Romeo envisions the Capulet's corpses as food, differentiating Juliet's from the others not in kind, but only in degree: she is the "dearest morsel" (V.iii.46), but substantially no different from the rest. There is no mention of a soul that has

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11 Matteo Bandello, *The Novels of Matteo Bandello, Bishop of Agen, now first done into English prose and verse by John Payne*, London, Villon Society, 1890, vol. III, p. 156.

12 Bandello, p. 166.

13 "Aspettatemi, Sposo, ch'io vi seguo", Luigi Groto, *La Hadriana*, Act V, scene vii, my translation.

recently departed and whom he wishes to join; his only concern is with protecting her corpse.

When Romeo declares his intention to lie beside Juliet, he does so in the context of preventing Death from having Juliet's flesh all to himself. The perceived threat of Death as a necrophiliac preying on his bride is what propels him forward, and prompts his decision never to "depart again":

> Here, here will I remain
> With worms that are thy chambermaids. O, here
> Will I set up my everlasting rest,
> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last.
> Arms, take your last embrace, and lips, O you
> The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
> A dateless bargain to engrossing death. (V.iii.108-15)

Romeo invokes the terms of a Christian afterlife – he asks for "everlasting rest" (V.iii.110) or "*requiem eternam*", the formula used on countless epitaphs over many centuries to describe the repose of the blessed dead. But he immediately qualifies this request, indicating that he means nothing more than the "everlasting rest" the vermiculated earth will provide, not a rest that will lead to heavenly bliss[14].

Romeo does not, moreover, turn to God, nor does he mention his soul's imminent liberation from his flesh, as he does in what is believed to be Shakespeare's immediate source for the play, Arthur Brooke's 1562 English poem, *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, which was itself based upon a French version of the Italian story written by Pierre Boiastuau. Upon discovering the seemingly dead Juliet, Brooke's Romeus first instinct is to pray to Christ for forgiveness:

> Lord Christ,
> Take pity on my sinnefull and my poore afflicted mynde.
> For well enough I know, this body is but clay,

[14] The phrase "*cuius anima requiescat in pace*" surfaces repeatedly in John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, London, 1631.

> Nought but a masse of sinne, to frayle, and subject to decay.[15]

Shakespeare's Romeo, by contrast, emphasizes only his material, corporeal fate: he repeats three times in the space of two lines that he will remain "here".

When Juliet awakens to find Romeo dead beside her, she likewise makes no mention of their posthumous heavenly prospects. Gone are the words given to her by Brooke, whose Juliet petitions: "That so our parted sprites, from light that we see here / In place of endlesse light and blisse, may ever live yfere" (ll. 2787-88). The compromised pleasures of earth are replaced with "endlesse light and blisse"; the separations that the lovers have endured are erased by an eternity of life "yfere", an archaic English word for "together".

In Shakespeare's hands, there is no prospect of a heavenly reunion, nor is there any mention of the possibility that the couple might enjoy each other's company in the tomb. Juliet, it would seem, lacks even Romeo's desire to lie together as corpses. Instead, she concerns herself exclusively with bringing her life to a quick end before the Friar might take her away; she longs for death itself, and not what might follow upon it. Shakespeare's Juliet dies with an apostrophe not to the heavens above, nor to the husband lying in her bosom, but only to the knife that she thrusts into her breast: "O happy dagger / This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die" (V.iii.168-69).

It is not only the tragic lovers, but also their families, who regard the afterlife in a strictly materialist, and commemorative vein. The funerary statues that Romeo and Juliet's fathers propose to erect are described not in terms of a new burial ground, but as a separate monument. "I will raise her statue in pure gold", boasts Montague:

> That whiles Verona by that name is known
> There shall no figure at such rate be set
> As that of true and faithful Juliet. (V.iii.299-302)

to which Capulet, not to be undone, replies "As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie / Poor sacrifices of our enmity" (V.iii.303-4). The

[15] Arthur Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, London, 1562, ll. 2674-80.

statues are in effect a form of cenotaph: literally an empty (*kenos*) tomb (*taphos)* that commemorates the bodies in their absence. There is no relationship established between the sculptures honoring their love and the lovers' physical remains. Nor is there any sense of what Panofsky calls "magical manipulation", so powerfully conveyed in the 'Bride and Bridegroom' of Cerveteri: namely, that somehow the fact of the monument itself will help to shape a more satisfying future for the couple. The monument for Romeo and Juliet is pure civic architecture, with no ambition beyond Verona.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare discovered that by stripping any possibility of an afterlife for love he could achieve a much greater tragic effect than any of the earlier stories. This is not to say that Shakespeare was by any means the first poet to deny lovers an afterlife for love, but rather that the idea of setting erotic limits, of making love belong exclusively to this world, and none other, did not belong to the Renaissance tradition he had inherited, but was instead a gesture back to an earlier, pre-Christian model. For the origins of that model, we need to return to the ancient Roman elegists, to Catullus and Ovid and Horace. Here is Horace's Eleventh Ode, which first introduced the phrase, *carpe diem*:

> Don't you ask, Leuconoe – the gods do not wish it to be known –
> what end they have given to me or to you, and don't meddle with
> Babylonian calculations. How much better to accept whatever comes,
> whether Jupiter gives us other winters or whether this is our last
> now wearying the Tyrrhenian Sea on the pumice stones
> opposing it. Be wise, strain the wine and cut back long hope
> into a small space. While we speak, envious time will have
> flown past. Harvest the day and leave as little as possible for tomorrow.[16]

And here is Shakespeare's Romeo:

> Amen, amen! but come what sorrow can,
> It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
> That one short minute gives me in her sight:
> Do thou but close our hands with holy words

[16] David West, *Horace Odes I: Carpe Diem*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995.

> Then love-devouring death do what he dare;
> It is enough I may but call her mine. (II.v.3-8)

What Shakespeare gives us in *Romeo and Juliet* is a couple who does not meddle with Babylonian calculations, who accepts whatever comes, and who resists any standard consolation available for lovers confronting their deaths. *Romeo and Juliet* becomes, in the end, Shakespeare's greatest Roman play.

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Cleopatra's 'Roman' Death

Rosy Colombo

Compared to the Oriental glamour and erotic drive of Cleopatra's performance of her own death, the solemnity with which she proclaims her decision to take her life – "And then what's brave, what's noble, / Let's do't after the high Roman fashion" (IV.xv.86-87)[1] – sounds paradoxical and perhaps even ironical[2]. Her plan to end her life with a view to cheating Octavius of his triumphal project of exhibiting her in Rome as a captive is surprisingly announced in terms of a symbolic negotiation with a seminal paradigm in the cultural code of ancient Rome, according to which the act of suicide is the hallmark of the hero's integrity and identity. Although Antony 'unmakes' his martial self by asking Eros to remove his armour, he still consigns the memory of his death to the

1 All quotations in this essay are from William Shakespeare, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, ed. Michael Neill, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008 (1st edition 1994), with the sole exception of replacing the Folio spelling of 'Anthony', adopted by Neill, with 'Antony', as used by Nicholas Rowe (*The Works of William Shakespear* [sic], *Revis'd and Corrected*, 1709, six volumes essentially based on the Fourth Folio edition, 1685) and later editors, including Samuel Johnson (*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 1765).

2 On Cleopatra's (Falstaff like) sweeping vitality merging with a consummate deconstructive irony see Harold Bloom, "*Antony and Cleopatra*", in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York, Riverhead Books, 1998, pp. 546-77; followed by Harold Bloom, *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air*, New York, Scribner, 2017.

image of "A Roman, by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished" (IV.xvi.59-60); but Cleopatra's 'monumental death' in her Egyptian Mausoleum in Alexandria[3] takes the form of a negotiation between paradigms that are constitutive of Western and Eastern cultures respectively, thereby challenging their ideological (and political) incompatibility explored in the play, until the final blow up at Actium[4]. A challenge that culminates in the transferral of her constitutive 'gypsy' mobility to the assumption of a self-made myth of stony firmness – "I am marble constant; now the fleeting moon / No planet is of mine" (V.ii.239-40) – is also a swerve that expands to encompass the entire play, creating a bridge between the shifting quality – and vanity – of performance and the permanent status which only art can attain, transcending the agency of time and discarding the material circumstances of 'baser life'.

It is within such an 'aesthetic of dying' that this paper tackles Shakespeare's inquiry into the category of suicide as the hallmark of a heroic identity and a generator of meaning. In *Julius Caesar* (1599), for example, which may be considered as a primary source for the later tragedy (1606/7)[5], in spite of their differences in terms of words and actions, both Cassius and Brutus, in accordance with the stoic code of Cato and Seneca, share the *virtus* of an honourable death. Actually, gender makes a difference in the case of Portia, since her feminine suicide, however compelling, is kept off stage, doomed to invisibility like the rest of her life. It is only reported, an

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3 Michael Neill, "*Finis coronat opus*: The Monumental Ending of *Anthony and Cleopatra*", in *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, rpt. 2005, pp. 305-27. I am indebted to this seminal study, particularly with regard to the play's themes of theatricality and metatheatricality.

4 See the "Editorial" to this issue. At an ontological level, in my view the classic study on this ideological dichotomy is Tony Tanner, "*Antony and Cleopatra*: Boundaries and Excess", *Hebrew University Studies in Literature*, 15 (1987), pp. 78-104; later in *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Mass.-London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010, pp. 622-39. For this reason, I have chosen to partly reprint it in this issue.

5 Both in the thematic sense and as a sequel in the chronology of Shakespeare's compositions. See Neill, "Introduction" to *Anthony and Cleopatra*, p. 7, and, in this issue, Agostino Lombardo, *A Tragedy of Memory*. Robert S. Miola (*Shakespeare's Rome*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983) probes the link between the Roman plays, owing to his interpretation of 'Rome' as the plays' central protagonist.

event far off and interiorized in the act of swallowing fire; not recorded as a deed of phallic symbolism – with a sword penetrating the body (like Lucrece's knife) – but as a purifying ritual. Catastrophe is the prerogative of Brutus; the ultimate meaning of the tragic form of *Julius Caesar* is inscribed in his suicide. In contrast, suicide in *Antony and Cleopatra* as the canonical act conferring meaning to life undergoes a profound crisis.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* the act of suicide is played out in a repetitive pattern, obsessive to the extent of appearing six times in the course of the last two acts. Domitius Enobarbus initiates the sequence, followed by Eros; then, in a crescendo, comes Antony, handing the torch over to three female characters: Cleopatra and her maids, who in a minor key share her destiny in the guise of physical contagion ("Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?" is her comment at Iras' dying after receiving her last fulfilment kiss, V.ii.290-91). To the list we must also add the erotic deaths relished by Cleopatra in a crescendo of pleasure, wittily commented by Enobarbus – "I have seen her die twenty times […] she has such a celerity in dying" (I.ii.140-43)[6] – as well as her frequent pretence at fainting, culminating in the mock suicide designed to be reported to Antony:

> Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself;
> Say that the last I spoke was 'Antony',
> And word it, prithee, piteously. (IV.xiv.7-9)

This scene of life-taking, however, contrived originally as a script to appease Antony's rage towards her after the Actium debacle, in fact triggers his decision to take his own life in turn.

The dynamic sequence initially follows a horizontal line, consistent with the play's constitutive elements of earth and water, the

[6] There is an interesting connection between Cleopatra's celerity in achieving an orgasm and her craving haste to die in her last performance, quickly dismissing the clown ("Well, get thee gone, farewell", V.ii.277) and urging her assistant to help: "Yare, yare, good Iras, quick – methinks I hear / Antony call; I see him rouse himself" (V.ii.282-83). A similar haste connotes the quick rhythm of her famous last speech ("Give me my robe, put on my crown […]. So, have you done?", V.ii.278-89).

symbols of the structural polarity of the play and of the two main characters. The first relates to Antony's exceptional physicality coherent with the pagan myth of his ancestor Hercules[7]. The second is linked to Cleopatra's drifting of forms, a 'melting' which is in keeping with the recurrent image of the Nile as archetype of the Heraclitean ceaseless mutability of things, but also of the natural agent of mediation between death and life:

> The higher Nilus swells,
> The more it promises: as it ebbs, the seedsman
> Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
> And shortly comes to harvest. (II.vii.22-23)[8]

This offers a double perspective of death and rebirth, along with the paradigm of metaphysical transmutation of death into a new beginning, that *Antony and Cleopatra* shares with some of Shakespeare's canonical late plays.

In accordance with a reversal of paradigms Shakespeare had tested out in *King Lear* just a year previously (1605), in the last two acts of *Antony and Cleopatra* the line takes a vertical turn, with a rupture in the upward direction, and a further breaking of the rules of dramatic construction with regard to the climactic and anti-climactic hierarchy in the traditional performance of dying. As with *King Lear*, a grotesque ending comes first: the "miserable change" of Antony's agony[9], consisting of his large body being hauled up with chains or ropes (an echo of Cleopatra's favourite sport – fishing – seasoned with wit)[10] to reach the queen, upstage, in her

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7 See, in this issue, Maria Valentini's "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the Uses of Mythology".

8 For 'melting' as a keyword of the play see Tanner's essay in this issue and Agostino Lombardo, "Le immagini dell'acqua", in *Il fuoco e l'aria. Quattro studi su* Antonio e Cleopatra, Roma, Bulzoni, 1995, pp. 41-67. As to Cleopatra's transmutation into a higher life in an aesthetic sense through the performance of taking her life, and the ensuing reification of her suicide into a thing of beauty, see my argument below.

9 "The miserable change now at my end" (IV.xvi.53).

10 "CLEOPATRA: Give me mine angle, we'll to th'river; there, / My music playing far off, I will betray / Tawny-fine fishes, my bended hook shall pierce / Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up, / I'll think them every one an Antony, / And say 'Ah,ha! You're caught'. CHARMIAN: 'Twas merry when / you wagered on

Mausoleum: "Here's sport indeed! How heavy weighs my lord!" (IV.xvi.34). Only later does Cleopatra's sublime claim for lightness come, through a holy transcendence of her mortal remains: "I am fire and air – my other elements / I give to baser life" (V.ii.288-89). The vertical tension inscribed in the soaring, skyward movement of free elements into an infinite cosmos may have a Neoplatonic connotation[11], while the longing for a split of body and soul is prophetic of the Christian code of dying.

In this way, the rhetorical pattern of the suicidal strain mimics the figure of a cross, with the desire of, and for, Cleopatra at the top. Cleopatra's death wish – "The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch / That hurts, and is desired" (V.ii.294-95) – is reconciled with other visions of dying besides her 'Roman' challenge to Rome to prevent her from the humiliation of being shown on a Roman stage in a bawdy play for the entertainment of a gross audience:

> The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us, and present
> Our Alexandrian revels – Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th'posture of a whore. (V.ii.216-21)

This scenario is not only at odds with her aristocratic greatness, but also with both the private and public memory of her having been welcome in her "salad days" (I.v.73) among such powerful leaders of the Roman establishment as Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great:

> Broad-fronted Caesar,

your angling, when your diver / Did hang a salt fish on his hook which he / With fervency drew" (II.v.10-18).

[11] On Shakespeare's familiarity with Neoplatonic thought as well as with the hermetic Oriental tradition through the philosophy of Giordano Bruno, see Gilberto Sacerdoti's challenging study, *Nuovo cielo, nuova terra. La rivoluzione copernicana di* Antonio e Cleopatra *di Shakespeare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990. See also, on "the esotericism of the 'Egyptian' mystery restored", Richard Wilson, "Your Crown's Awry: The Visual Turn in *Antony and Cleopatra*", in *Free Will: Art and Power on Shakespeare's Stage*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 310-370: 351. On the play's double ending see Neill, "*Finis coronat opus*", p. 323, quoting Anne Barton, *"Nature's Piece against Fancy": The Divided Catastrophe of* Antony and Cleopatra, London, Bedford College, 1973.

> When thou wast here above the ground, I was
> A morsel for a monarch; and great Pompey
> Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow –
> There would he anchor his aspect, and die
> With looking on his life. (I.v.28-34)[12]

Yet in the change awaiting her, the taking of her own life figures as a ritual sacrifice, inscribed in the foundational myth of imperial Rome as an avatar of Christianity. The latter, prefigured in the famous quotation from the book of Revelation at the beginning of the play (the "new heaven, new earth" which it is Cleopatra's lot to "find", I.i.17), is repeatedly referenced by means of allusions to Christ's nativity and passion. It is testified by Cleopatra's blending an erotic fantasy of the worm suckling at her breast with a maternal fantasy of nursing one's own baby – "Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?" (V.ii.308-9) – by the analogy between her rage at the news of Antony being married to Octavia and Herod's wrath – "Herod of Jewry dare not look upon you, / But when you are well pleased" (III.iii.3-4) – and by Antony's 'last supper', when he parts from his fellow soldiers before his final ordeal in Alexandria: "I look on you / As one that takes his leave" (IV.ii.28-29). An uncanny allusion occurs, however, in Octavius Caesar's statement after his victory at Actium: "The time of universal peace is near" (IV.vi.4), sounding like a prophecy of a chronological as well as cultural continuity between the empire of Rome and the universal kingdom of the Christian Catholic Church.

The price of this alleged providential continuity is paid for by the "pair so famous" on the altar of the Mausoleum: here, Cleopatra celebrates the sacrifice of the erotic through its transubstantiation into aesthetic value. The bodies of the lovers are buried in the darkness of a monument that treasures the mystery of their absolute love as well as its utter impossibility, offering the image of

[12] There are several references in the play to Cleopatra's affairs with powerful Romans before her fatal encounter with Antony. For instance: "Did I, Charmian, / Ever love Caesar so?" (I.v.66-67); and "Your Caesar's father oft, / When he hath mused of taking kingdoms in, / Bestowed his lips on that unworthy place [Cleopatra's hand] / As it rained kisses" (III.xiii.81-84). For the "vulgar fame" in Rome, attached to Julius Caesar's affair with "a certain queen carried to him in a mattress", see II.vi.71.

a perfection never to be achieved, except in a dream-like representation:

> I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony –
> O, such another sleep, that I might see
> But such another man! (V.ii.76-78)

and in a marriage dirge: "Husband, I come! / Now to that name my courage prove my title!" (V.ii.286-87).

Cleopatra imagines her final performance "to meet Mark Antony" as a repetition of the show she had put on for their first meeting: "I am again for Cydnus, / To meet Mark Antony" (V.ii.228-29). It is inscribed into an aesthetic liturgy based on the metamorphosis of life into art, a testimony to Shakespeare's familiarity with Ovid. As with Romeo and Juliet's crucified love posthumously celebrated in the forms of golden statues, Cleopatra's stirring beauty will achieve immortality if and when transformed by death into a harmless picture for the benefit of powerful political and religious institutions:

> [S]he looks like sleep,
> As she would catch another Antony
> In her strong toil of grace. (V.ii.344-46)[13]

Only so far as she undergoes a process of reification into a beautiful form will she be remembered, first in Rome, then in early modern London[14], her fate being that of a commodity and even a cliché, an object fit for aesthetic consumption as well as suited to the needs of imperial Roman propaganda:

> [T]heir story is
> No less in pity than his glory which
> Brought them to be lamented. (V.ii.359-61)

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13 Cf. Silvano Sabbadini's compelling introduction to his translation of *Romeo and Juliet* (Milano, Garzanti, 1991, pp. XLV-XLVI). See also Ramie Targoff's essay in this issue, highlighting the analogy between the two plays with regard to the issue of the lovers' death.

14 See Keir Elam's essay in this issue.

I am indebted to a number of critics, from Tony Tanner and Agostino Lombardo to Michael Neill, for the idea that the theatricality involved in the erotic and political issues of suicide is a most compelling motif of the play, an issue *per se*. Tony Tanner, for instance, rightly claims that Cleopatra is authentic only when performing. For my part, I would like to draw attention to Agostino Lombardo's emphasis on the invisibility of Cleopatra's body no less than her emotions at the Cydnus water pageant:

> The picture lacks a 'portrait' of Cleopatra. We see Cupids, Nereids, their gestures and colours in the same way as the colours and the strokes of the oars; but we do not see, do not distinguish Cleopatra's features. Enobarbus was unable to draw her face[15].

Compared with the event which marked the beginning of their story, the parting and greeting paradigm re-enacted at the end[16] lends itself to a change with regard to performance practice. Priority is now given to the mature self-consciousness of the performer, caught in the process of acting out a fatal event of her past (I'll return to this later). If in the Cydnus watery pageant Cleopatra might be said to endorse Diderot's paradox of the actor about the dissociation of persona from impersonator – assumed by the neoclassical canon as the basic paradigm of theatrical performance – in the representation of her suicide, the two states, "love-as-an emotion" and "love-as-a performance" become inextricable[17]. Person and persona, form and matter are reconciled in the tragic episode of self-dramatization that overcomes the prescribed classical boundaries, giving way to the abrupt interruption of both life and discourse in a mutual climax: "Why should I stay –" (V.ii.311). Paradoxically enough, it is only in the ceremony of parting from her body that Cleopatra becomes authentically – visibly – herself.

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15 Lombardo, "Una tragedia dell'arte", in *Il fuoco e l'aria*, p. 95, my translation.

16 Cf. David Hillman, "'O, these encounterers': On Shakespeare's Meetings and Partings", *Shakespeare Survey*, 62 (2009), ed. Peter Holland, pp. 58-68. I am looking forward to Hillman's monograph, *Greetings and Partings in Shakespeare and Early Modern England,* on which he is currently working.

17 David Hillman, "'If it be love indeed': Transference, Love, and *Anthony* [sic] *and Cleopatra*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 64:3 (Fall 2013), pp. 301-333: 330.

In many ways, then, suicide is necessary to the dramatic architecture of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Like a prism, exposing different facets in rotation, it responds to the multiple needs of this play, including the tripartite configuration of the Elizabethan theatre: the ground, the pit and the heavens. The ground provides a proper setting for Antony's original earthly identity; the pit offers Enobarbus a ditch fit for his atonement: "I will go seek / Some ditch wherein to die" (IV.vi.36-37); and the heavens can host Cleopatra's monument according to a variety of functions: a palatial setting for the public display of her mundane power and royal status, and a private space into which to withdraw when in danger from Antony's frenzy at her alleged betrayals during and soon after Actium:

> Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving,
> And blemish Caesar's triumph. Let him take thee,
> And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians –
> Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot
> Of all thy sex; […]
> and let
> Patient Octavia plough thy visage up
> With her prepared nails. (IV.xiii.32-39)

together with her "fear of being taken" by the Roman soldiers (IV.xvi.25). Moreover, the monument is the site where the queen can simultaneously come to terms with her inner self, thereby encountering in death the Other as a secret object of desire *within*, replacing the ghost of an overt threat *without.* Courtly palace and pyramidal tomb, temple for the display of absolute power as well as "secret house of death" (IV.ii.83)[18], the Mausoleum is consecrated to the promise of an unbounded totality and infinity that Cleopatra receives from Antony's prophecy at the start of the play, now taken over in her ambition to transcend the body as the final boundary, thus making possible the liberation of art[19].

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[18] Wilson, p. 351.

[19] Tanner, "Antony and Cleopatra". See footnote 4 in this essay and Wilson, p. 311.

Though in many respects different from each other, one factor shared by all the suicides in the play is that they feature as incomplete acts. Enobarbus' death unmakes his Roman identity already shaken by having betrayed his master: it does not comply with the Roman protocol of the sword, but rather wallows in melancholy – a symptom of illness of the soul as well as of a conscience that can find no relief to a biting sense of guilt. It is not surprising that such a gesture should appear as alien to the soldiers in Caesar's camp who misunderstand its form and meaning, preferring to interpret it as sleep in order to postpone acknowledging it as true:

> [H]e sleeps.
> Swoons rather […]
> The hand of death has raught him […]
> Come on then, he may recover yet. (IV.x.25-33)

Then comes Antony's clumsy performance, creeping on stage, and dramatizing the early modern crisis of the tragic hero in the wider context of the decay of the aristocracy, both in Britain and within the Roman republic[20]. The scene in which he asks the boy Eros to replace him in doing the fatal deed[21] confirms the fragility of Antony's identity, an identity which is reflected sadly in the mirror of the sky, and echoed, too, in the indistinct vision of drifting cloud formations.

> Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
> A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,
> A towered citadel, a pendant rock,
> A forked mountain, or blue promontory
> With trees upon't that nod unto the world
> And mock our eyes with air.

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[20] See, in particular, David Quint, "The Tragedy of Nobility on the Seventeenth-Century Stage", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67 (2006), pp. 7-29.

[21] The scene, in effect, revisits Brutus' protracted attempts to find a partner in taking his life (*Julius Caesar*, V.v.1-51): this is only one example among others of the playwright's dealing with the intertextual memory of his own production. For Shakespeare's self-reference as an intriguing aspect of *Antony and Cleopatra* see Neill, "Introduction" to *Anthony and Cleopatra*, p. 7, and, in this issue, Lombardo, "A Tragedy of Memory". See also footnote 5 above.

> […]
> That which is now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
> As water in water.
> […]
> [N]ow thy captain is
> Even such a body. (IV.xv.2-13)

In failing to accomplish the fatal task – "How? Not dead? Not dead?" (IV.xv.103) – Antony proves, in fact, to be a bad actor. His unsuccessful, pathetic suicide undermines the lofty status of the classic tragic hero; therefore, understatedly, the grotesque event can happen only in the fourth act.

Once the spectacle of male suicide is over, the fifth act hosts the female agency, providing an exclusive space for Cleopatra's *grand finale,* but one which allows for a number of interpretations. On psychoanalytical grounds, David Hillman argues that in the scene of her suicide "to meet Mark Antony", Cleopatra in fact complies with a paradigmatic transference of love from its original object to a new one, in this case Death: a transference of virile objects, dramatized by Shakespeare through the gender connotation of Death (in the then current English usage). In Death as the Other, she displaces her desire for an absent Antony onto the absolute desire for an ontological absence, according to the pattern of repetition and compulsive re-enactment involved in transference[22]. The last performance in the tomb misses the encounter, as did the theatrical event on the Cydnus waters.

Another fertile interpretation focuses on some intertextual and intercultural issues explored in the play. Antony's fantasy of a posthumous reunion with his Egyptian queen in the underworld is clearly an echo of Virgil's description of Dido and Aeneas in the Elysian fields, yet reconciled by Shakespeare's hand:

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[22] Hillman quotes from Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts*: "If the transference is only repetition, it will always be repetition of the same missed encounter" ("If it be love indeed", p. 309) – an idea leading to Derrida's concept of the past not as a time that *was*, but as a past to come, to be acted out in the future.

> I come, my queen. […] Stay for me.
> Where souls do couch 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. (IV.xv.49-53)

The lines are an echo of the *Aeneid*, but they also challenge the prestigious role of Virgil's epic in giving form and meaning to the birth of the Roman Empire. This is achieved both by reinscribing in the protagonist the mythical hero torn between public duty and private passion for "the tawny front" of an African queen, and by making Cleopatra's suicide a reincarnation of Dido's, in the perspective of a foundational myth[23]. Virgil's narration of the myth tells the story of a second foundation of Rome, i.e. the foundation of the city's cultural origin in the blending of classical and local heritage. The African queen Dido served as a scapegoat, where her suicide was re-told as a sacrifice of the Other on the altar of the foundation of Roman culture, thus concealing Rome's original sin. Cleopatra's suicide is shown to serve a similar ideological purpose, instrumental to the power of a "sole sir o'th'world" (V.ii.120). One may infer that Shakespeare's revisiting of the *Aeneid* in *Antony and Cleopatra*, besides aiming to emulate Virgil's authority, was also meant to deconstruct the hegemony of the classics in the cultural establishment of the Renaissance. The 'Roman' death of Shakespeare's Cleopatra shows a basic contradiction inherent in the foundation myth of Imperial Rome. It is a myth proclaimed as one which adheres to traditional republican values of law and order, but in fact works out as a mystifying representation of diversity. This can be seen in the anamorphosis that features in the two opening scenes of the play as well as in the closing statement of Octavius Caesar, where he hypocritically mourns "a pair so famous" (V.ii.357) while at the same time appropriates their fate to celebrate his own glory:

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[23] David Quint, "Epic and Empire", *Comparative Literature*, 41:1 (Winter, 1989), pp. 1-32. This important study highlights the ideological strain that in the *Aeneid* translates what was in fact a civil war in Rome into a contest between civilization and barbarism, rational and irrational agencies in order to give credit to the foundation of the Roman Empire. See the "Editorial" to this issue. On this study is based the later *Antony and Cleopatra*, edited by David Quint, New York, Longman Cultural Edition, 2008.

> [A]nd their story is
> No less in pity than his glory which
> Brought them to be lamented. (V.ii.359-61)

In making Cleopatra survive as an icon of eros and as a thing of beauty, divested of regal identity, her future memory will lose its outstanding historical significance. Instead it is manipulated to transform Rome's internal struggle and traumatic civil war into a conflict with an exotic Other.

No wonder, then, that the ending of the play should be left at Octavius' disposal[24]. True, the "eastern star" (V.ii.307)[25] has prepared for her *pièce de resistance* with utmost care and the pride of a diva, according to a precise script complete with stage directions:

> Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch
> My best attires. (V.ii.227-28)

> Give me my robe, put on my crown. (V.ii.279)

and with absolute flawlessness she re-interprets in one instant each of the roles she had taken on in the unfolding of the plot: the feminine tenderness of the mother, the sensuousness of the lover, the majesty of the queen, the perceptive insight and wit of a woman's intelligence – in short her woman's difference. Yet the absolute power onstage granted to the artist through the performance of suicide also reveals its limits – the same that attend the poetry of transcendence in the tragic interruption of Cleopatra's last speech. Cleopatra is doomed to shift away from the heroic mode: the climax of her glorious Passover is marred by her broken voice, unable to finish her final line, and by her crown tilting to the side, needing the touch of a servant's hand, and the voice of another to complete her exit:

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24 Neill, "*Finis coronat opus*", p. 325.

25 I'm here extending in a theatrical sense the reference to Syrius connoted as herald of a messianic advent, replacing in the religious sense the metaphor of Venus with whom Cleopatra is often compared throughout the play. Cf. Wilson, p. 355.

CLEOPATRA
What should I stay –

She dies

CHARMIAN
In this wild world? (V.ii.312)

The play will possibly continue elsewhere – "Your crown's awry, / I'll mend it, and then play" (V.ii.316-17) – but the last lines are not assigned to her. The ultimate irony is that, in failing to play out an entirely heroic end, Shakespeare's Cleopatra bequeaths to Rome the tragedy it never had.

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Antony and Cleopatra and the Uses of Mythology

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Antony and Cleopatra reach the Shakespearean stage lumbered with an ambiguous legacy which stretches back to their own historical times and continues to the time of Shakespeare's play. Roman Imperial culture[1], for instance, sees Antony as having become a slave to female power whereas Tacitus[2] considers the reign of Augustus as the end of freedom. Plutarch[3], Shakespeare's prime source, emphasizes Antony's generosity, his passion and military ability, but particularly his tendency for vice, his fondness for revelry and self-indulgence, an ambivalence which is more than manifest in this Roman play. Cleopatra enjoys even more extreme evaluations. Lucy Hughes-Hallett begins her book dedicated to the Egyptian queen in this way: "she is the wickedest woman in history; she is the pattern of female virtue. She is a sexual glutton; she is a true and tender lover who died for her man"[4] and traces her literary background: "to Boccaccio, writing in the 1350s, Cleopatra was 'known throughout

1 For example, Horace claims that Antony has become a slave to the eunuchs, see *Epodes*, 9.13-14.

2 Tacitus, *Annals*, I:1.

3 Cf. Plutarch, *The Life of Marcus Antonius*, in *Shakespeare's Plutarch*, ed. Terence J. B. Spencer, London, Penguin, 1964, rpt. 1968, pp. 174-295.

4 Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions*, London, Vintage, 1991, p. 11.

the world for her greed, cruelty and lustfulness'. To Chaucer, writing only thirty years later […] she was an exemplar of chastity and steadfastness, the first and best of the 'Good Women' who demonstrated their virtue by dying for love"[5]. Classical and medieval tradition provides a series of descriptions of the two lovers, mainly depicting and deploring the results of a strong man's subjection to a woman and accentuating the extravagance and intemperance of the couple. The playwrights Jodelle, Garnier and Daniel provided versions of the story in the second half of the sixteenth century[6], which added further material for the Renaissance construction of what we can call the 'Antony and Cleopatra myth'. In their plays the lovers are given a chance to repent and pity is invoked, human passion fights with fate, monarchs are seen to be destroyed by lust, but the virtues of the protagonists and the concept of dying for love are also present. The first two plays are in French, Jodelle's *Cleopatre Captive* and Garnier's *Marc Antoine*; the latter was translated into English under the title of *Antonius* in 1592 by the duchess of Pembroke and became the first English drama on Antony and Cleopatra. Whether Shakespeare was familiar with it we do not know, but it contains themes from Plutarch which Shakespeare was to adopt in his play. The other noteworthy element in Garnier/Pembroke's play is that his Cleopatra is "indistinguishable from Chaucer's, the martyr and one of the saints of love"[7] and whilst Antony's part in the love affair is condemned, she remains untarnished thus providing, after Chaucer, a rare positive picture of the queen. Garnier's play, nevertheless, confirms the commonplace notion that lust destroys great men and their states, a concept taken up by the third of these plays, Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra* (1594), which is partly inspired by it, but where the destruction of the empire appears more as the working out of a universal plan. Daniel's Antony is presented as having few faults before he is entrapped by Cleopatra's lascivious court.

An Elizabethan audience would have been familiar with most of these controversial aspects of the two protagonists and in 1607

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5 Hughes-Hallett, p. 12.

6 Cf. Franklin M. Dickey, *Not Wisely but Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies*, San Marino, The Huntington Library, 1957, p. 161, but see chapters X and XI.

7 Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 151.

Shakespeare's play presents them as carrying their ambiguous past which is constantly set against their actions. In this sense Antony and Cleopatra appear on stage as characters who are, in some way, already 'myths', but not univocal ones, and the numerous classical myths to which they are compared will serve also to accentuate these often contradictory interpretations.

Antony and Cleopatra, in fact, contains a surprisingly large number of mythological allusions when compared to a play like *Julius Caesar*, dealing with very similar historical matter, which contains virtually none. R. K. Root, in his pioneering study on the subject, observes that in the great tragedies references to classical mythology are scant but "from the 7 allusions of *Lear* and the 11 of *Timon of Athens*, we jump in *Antony* to 39 allusions"[8]. It is not merely the number of these references which is remarkable, but their use: Venus, Isis, Mars, Hercules and others may appear almost as analogues of the protagonists, as though the two lovers may replace them in their realm, though some critics have remarked that these allusions serve also to debunk[9] the stature of the Shakespearean characters or to demonstrate that the myth analogy must be replaced by a new mythology created by the lovers[10]. Through the analysis of the myths we will try to assess their function in the drama.

The first myth association appears in the opening lines of the play: Philo, who represents the Roman view of Antony, immediately compares him with the god of war, the "plated Mars" (I.i.4)[11], pointing out, though, that the analogy no longer holds since the general has become a "strumpet's fool" (I.i.13). In Philo's mind Antony has lost his unparalleled military stature and here he anticipates all the Roman views which throughout the play will express regret for the lost model warrior. When we witness Antony's encounter with Cleopatra, though Venus is not yet explicitly

8 Cf. Robert K. Root, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*, 1903 (reproduced by General Books LLC™, Memphis USA, 2012), p. 40.

9 Cf. Harold Fisch, "*Antony and Cleopatra* and the Limits of Mythology", *Shakespeare Survey*, 23 (1970).

10 Cf. Clayton G. MacKenzie, "*Antony and Cleopatra*: A Mythological Perspective", *Orbis Litterarum*, 45:2 (1990).

11 All quotations are from William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. M. R. Ridley, London-New York, The Arden Shakespeare (Second Series), 1954, rpt. 1993.

mentioned, his role as a captive to love evokes her figure ("the bellows and the fan / To cool a gypsy's lust", I.i.9-10). These associations have led John Danby to assert that the play is "Shakespeare's study of Mars and Venus – the presiding deities of Baroque society, painted for us again and again on the canvasses of his time"[12]. The full connection of Cleopatra with the goddess of love will occur in Enobarbus' barge speech in the second scene of the second act ("o'er picturing that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature", ll. 200-1), but before that the eunuch Mardian, who is trying to entertain the queen during Antony's absence, says: "Yet I have fierce affections, and think / What Venus did with Mars" (I.v.17-18). The reference here is clearly to the adulterous relationship between Venus and Mars[13], thus the eunuch here moves the parallel from the warrior to the lover, and Mars is no longer just the strongest of the gods but also the adulterer. Similarly Venus is subject to varied and at times contradictory interpretations; Christopher Wortham, in his study of the emblem tradition in relation to Shakespeare's use of classical mythology, quotes a contemporary of Shakespeare, the poet and translator Richard Linche who, in his *The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction* (1599) which describes ancient gods, says, in the same passage, that Venus is "the goddesse of wantonness and amorous delights" who inspires in men "libidinous desires, and lustful appetites" but is also "the mother of love"[14]. The relationship of Mars with Venus had been described by Shakespeare himself in *Venus and Adonis* (1593). The "stern and direful god of war", Venus explains to the reluctant Adonis in the poem, had become her "captive" and her "slave" and begged her for her love. She continues:

> Over my altars hath he hung his lance
> His batter'd shield, his uncontrolled crest,
> And for my sake hath learn'd to sport and dance,
> To toy, to wanton, dally, smile and jest,
> Scorning his churlish drum and ensign red,

[12] John F. Danby, *Poets on Fortune's Hill*, London, Faber and Faber, 1952, p. 150.

[13] Venus was Vulcan's wife and the lover of Mars. Vulcan pretended to go away and set a trap for the two lovers who were caught under a net which was placed over the bed. Vulcan then called all the gods to witness the scene.

[14] Quoted in Cristopher Wortham, "Temperance and the End of Time: Emblematic *Antony and Cleopatra*", *Comparative Drama*, 29:1 (Spring 1995), p. 9.

Making my arms his field, his tent my bed. (ll. 102-8)[15]

As Janet Adelman, amongst others, reminds us, "the union of these divine adulterers was one of the ruling mythological commonplaces of the English Renaissance"[16] and this image of the potent god unarmed and subjected to the powers of love is present throughout Shakespeare's play where Antony is portrayed as the great general made effeminate and martially weak in the hands of Cleopatra. This vision is particularly noticeable in the description Cleopatra makes when, boasting with her girls, she remembers how having "drunk him to his bed" she dressed him up in her clothes whilst she wore "his sword Philippan" (II.v.21-23), where the phallic sword, memory and symbol of his military glory and virility, is turned to an erotic toy. This scene calls up yet another important analogue for Antony recurrent in the play, the figure of Hercules, who, like Mars, as we shall see, symbolizes strength and power, but has also been subjugated by a woman. Nevertheless Mars continues to appear in the play as a vigorous god; Cleopatra herself, in expressing Antony's duality, declares: "Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, / The other way's a Mars" (II.ii.117-18) and Enobarbus had hoped that in confronting Octavius Antony would "speak as loud as Mars" (II.ii.6). There is however yet another dominant Renaissance interpretation which, as Raymond B. Waddington states, "regarded the legend of Mars and Venus as embodying the significant concept of *concordia discors*"[17]. Philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato believed that order in the world is maintained through the mediation of two opposing principles and the whole play can certainly be seen – and is seen by most critics – as an exposition of oppositions (clearly in the conflicting values of Rome and Egypt, in the choice between Roman temperance and Egyptian excesses, in the contrast between the

[15] William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, in *Shakespeare Complete Works*, London-New York, The Arden Shakespeare, 1998, p. 51.

[16] Janet Adelman, *The Common Liar: An Essay on* Antony and Cleopatra, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1973, p. 83.

[17] Raymond B. Waddington, "*Antony and Cleopatra*: 'What Venus did with Mars'", *Shakespeare Studies*, 2 (1966), p. 221.

virtuous Octavia and the voluptuous Cleopatra and many others[18]) which may be necessary for harmony to ensue. More recent criticism, particularly, has insisted that a correct interpretation of the play lies not in the individuation of the 'right perspective' but rather in the acceptance that a double or multiple perception must be taken because no clear-cut distinctions are possible: the Roman world with its discipline and honour contains its hypocrisies and manipulations and Cleopatra's court is not merely a world of revelry and drunkenness: the queen herself chooses to take her life in the "high Roman fashion" (IV.xv.86) in order to save her honour. In this sense the play as a whole could be seen as an exposition of *concordia discors*[19]. The iconographic tradition confirms this view and, as Panofsky concludes in commenting on a painting by Titian, "in identifying a distinguished couple with Mars and Venus, Titian compares their union, not to the furtive passion of the Homeric lovers but to the auspicious fusion of two cosmic forces begetting harmony"[20]. Wortham indicates that Venus is not much approved of among emblematic mythographers and that Philo, in pointing out the decline of Antony/Mars in the hands of a woman, has iconography on his side. Nevertheless he considers it a mistake to take the god and goddess in isolation; the pair must be considered together. Like Waddington he records that the union of Mars and Venus brings forth Harmonia, but unlike him, he believes the play should not be read in these terms: "the subtle power of the myth of Mars and Venus as a point of reference in *Antony and Cleopatra* is to suggest a diversity of justifications for – as well as disapprobations of – the lovers"[21] concluding that two different outcomes are possible, a mystical union

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18 These basic oppositions are present in Virgil's *Aeneid,* particularly when he describes the battle of Actium; in spite of it being a civil war, the sides between Antony and Augustus are sharply drawn and a binary opposition is set out between west and east, where the west is associated with 'maleness', control, permanence as opposed to eastern 'femaleness', chaos, flux, a pattern which would be repeated in Renaissance epics and is prevalent in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cf. David Quint, "Epic and Empire", *Comparative Literature*, 41:1 (Winter 1989), pp. 1-32. See also Quint's introduction to his edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Longman Cultural Edition, New York, Pearson Education, 2008.

19 Waddington, p. 223.

20 Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939, rpt. Icon Editions, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1962, p. 164.

21 Wortham, p. 7.

or a bloody catastrophe, and in the end self-destruction prevails, albeit ennobled. Wortham, among others, feels that the Mars/Venus story is not the dominant mythic correlative for the protagonists and as the play proceeds there is a change in direction with Antony becoming more akin to Hercules and Cleopatra to Isis. However, in order to interpret these further identifications, I believe, we must recall that Hercules and Isis also had partners, unmentioned in the play, but present in the minds of a Jacobean audience and that they too convey diverse associations.

North's Plutarch links Antony both to Bacchus and to Hercules but, unlike Shakespeare, sets more emphasis on the association with the former. In the play, in fact, Bacchus appears only in the celebration scene on Pompey's galley and is linked with the occasion and the allusions to the Egyptian qualities of the feast rather than with Antony himself[22]. Hercules is said to be Antony's ancestor and Cleopatra refers to him as "Herculean Roman" (I.iii.84). Thus North's translation of Plutarch:

> Now it had been a speech of old time that the family of the Antonii were descendend from one Anton, the son of Hercules, wherof the family took name. This opinion did Antonius seek to confirm in all his doings, not only resembling him in the likeness of his body […] but also in the wearing of his garments.[23]

Similarly the legends associated with Hercules in the Renaissance point to different aspects: he is the symbol of strength and virtue but also able to exhibit great folly. Eugene Waith in his *The Herculean Hero* traces the history of this demigod concluding that "the stories of Hercules continue to suggest terrifying excesses as well as superb self-mastery" and that "the meaning of Hercules in the Renaissance approaches a paradox when it includes both justifiable pride and reason subduing passion"[24]. When he was faced with the choice

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22 Harold Fisch, however, recalls that Antony "combines in himself aspects of both Mars and Bacchus, the god of war as well as the god of wine, Venus having been at various times consort to both", Fisch, p. 60.

23 Plutarch, p. 177.

24 Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1962, pp. 40-41. On the function of the Hercules myth in *Antony and Cleopatra*, see Anna Anzi's precious study *La ragione e l'appetito. Il*

between pleasure and virtue, he chose virtue; but for a period of time he was transformed into Omphale's servant and, as such, dressed up in women's clothes performing domestic chores. These two aspects are most prominent in Shakespeare's play and Antony can appear as Hercules' analogue but also as his antitype. Ernest Schanzer in dealing with the question of Antony's decision points to the choice of Hercules and to that of Aeneas (which I will come to). The story of *Hercules in bivio* was rediscovered by fifteenth century humanists and was popular in the Renaissance "chiefly owing to Cicero's reference to it in the first book of *De Officis* (I. 32) and its inclusion in a number of emblem books"[25]. Xenophon's version of it in his *Memorabilia* (available only in Latin) is closest to Shakespeare's possible allusion to it when presenting Antony's choice – at least from the Roman point of view – between "the path of *virtus* and of *voluptas*"[26]. Hercules coming to a fork in the road is forced to choose between the path of virtue and that of pleasure, each represented by a woman who expounds the advantages of one choice over the other, and the hero chooses virtue. The analogy is clearly with the Roman general's need to decide between his duties towards Rome and his eastern pleasures made all the more concrete in Antony's choice between the virtuous Roman Octavia and the pleasure giving Cleopatra. In this case Antony falls short of his ancestor opting for his "Egyptian dish" (II.vi.123). The second association is with Hercules' temporary subjection to a woman and his loss of manliness. Of the many accusations the Romans launch at Antony one is certainly his loss of virility and fighting skills under Egyptian influence, a kind of effeminacy which has taken him over and contributes to his distraction, he "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (I.iv.5-6). This Roman view is confirmed by the aforementioned reference of Cleopatra to their game of cross-dressing, a performance evoking Hercules' submission to Omphale, the queen of Lidia[27]. The unmanned hero fallen to effeminate subjection enriches the Hercules myth and, though

mito di Ercole in Antonio e Cleopatra *di William Shakespeare*, Milano, Madis Edizioni, 1987.

25 Schanzer, pp. 155-56.

26 Schanzer, p. 156.

27 Hercules was made slave there and, according to legend, she wore his lion's skin whilst he wore her dress and weaved linen at her feet.

Omphale is not mentioned in the play, echoes of the story are traceable in Cleopatra's recounting of the episode[28]. Moreover Plutarch himself, in his *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony* which follows the *Lives*, alludes to the parallel:

> As we see in painted tables, where Omphale secretlie stealeth away Hercules clubbe, and took his Lyons skinne from him. Even so Cleopatra often times unarmed Antonius, and intised him to her, making him lose matters of great importance.[29]

Antony and Hercules can be seen to appear as love victims (Spenser couples them in Book V of his *Faerie Queen*) and the picture serves to remind the audience of one of the conventional readings of this play: that failure to restrain one's passion can lead even the strongest men to a state of helplessness merging the theme of female mastery with the myth of Mars and Venus. Hercules, however, appears significantly in two other episodes in the play. In the short third scene of the fourth act – a scene with an air of mystery about it whose atmosphere recalls the opening scene of *Hamlet* – before the battle, the soldiers hear music from the air and from under the earth concluding that "'tis the god Hercules, whom Antony love'd / Now leaves him" (IV.iii.15-16). Here Shakespeare departs from Plutarch who describes Bacchus forsaking Antony rather than Hercules, and the hero's abandonment will prove to be a bad omen, anticipating Enobarbus' defection and Antony's defeat. Antony is likened to or associated with Hercules by others and it is only after the defeat at Actium that he allows himself a direct comparison, but this time it is with the maddened hero. Convinced that Cleopatra has betrayed him, he says to Eros:

> The shirt of Nessus is upon me, teach me,
> Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage.
> Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' the moon,

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[28] MacKenzie sees the attraction of a possible Cleopatra/Omphale association but claims that an equation of the two is not possible since references to slavery and emasculation are prominent in the whole play and Omphale is never mentioned. See MacKenzie, p. 315. I believe the echo is present and reinforced by Plutarch's reference to it in the above quotation.

[29] Quoted in Waddington, p. 211.

> And with those hands that grasp'd the heaviest club,
> Subdue my worthiest self. The witch shall die. (IV.xii.43-47)[30]

Here the intended Herculean characteristic is rage, famously embodied in Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, "the characteristic response of the Herculean hero to an attack on his honour", as Waith notes, adding that "both Hercules and Antony want more than anything to recover some part of their lost honour in order to make themselves worthy of a hero's death"[31]. This is the least general of the mythical allusions in the play and, according to Root, is evidence of Shakespeare's first-hand knowledge of the myth. Root claims:

> […] an allusion to the death of Hercules with mention of the poisoned shirt of Nessus and the fate of the page Lichas, lodged by his master on the horns of the moon, is possible only to one who had read a detailed account of the fable, such as that given by Ovid or Seneca.[32]

Doubts on Shakespeare's direct knowledge of classical mythology are often variously expressed by critics, but this instance is proof of his familiarity with the sources of the Hercules myth. It is also the moment in the play which signals Antony's final downfall, his loss of certainties, his reaction to the false news of Cleopatra's death and his own bungled suicide. This rage, in fact, ends, both in Hercules' case and in Antony's, with the news of Deianira and Cleopatra's suicides but with a difference: whereas Hercules sees it as the outcome of a prophecy and, fortified, gets ready to meet a heroic death forgetting her, Antony ludicrously interprets the false news of Cleopatra's suicide as a heroic gesture to imitate yet "there is Herculean fortitude in his suicide; there is also the final assertion of love"[33]. Mackenzie on the other hand, sees the whole 'Nessus tirade' as working against the "equation with a dying Hercules" but rather

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30 The reference is to the legend according to which Hercules shot the centaur Nessus with a poisoned arrow; Nessus gave Hercules' wife, Deianira, a shirt soaked with his poisoned blood to be used as a love charm but in fact when given to Hercules it caused him torture; Lichas, the innocent bearer of the shirt, was flung up into the sky by his infuriated master.

31 Waith, p. 119.

32 Root, p. 2.

33 Cf. Waith, p. 120.

as representing excessive theatricality which Antony has learned from Cleopatra herself[34]. There is no doubt that theatricality and acting are exhibited throughout the play[35], but whether the tirade is staged or not, its full impact, I believe, comes from its precise reference to the Hercules myth and would have done for a Jacobean audience. According to Ted Hughes, after Hercules' abandonment of his Roman descendant, what remains is an "Osirian Antony" who must "free himself wholly and finally, from the obsolete Herculean Roman Antony, and emerge as his true self, the universal love God, consort of the Goddess of Complete being"[36].The myth pattern expands beyond the Greek and Roman sphere to include other spaces and times and embrace Oriental culture[37].

There are many associations, direct and indirect, between Cleopatra and the goddess Isis. Fisch sees the Venus-Mars theme merging into one he considers of greater significance, that is the Isis and Osiris myth with "Cleopatra functioning as Isis, goddess of nature and fertility, and Antony as Osiris, the dying Sun-god who is resurrected in eternity"[38]. Shakespeare was probably familiar with the legend from Plutarch's *Of Isis and Osiris* published in Holland's translation of the *Moralia* in 1603 and also, possibly, from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* translated by Adlington[39]. Traditionally Isis is the Egyptian mother goddess, sister and consort of Osiris. She is associated with

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34 Cf. MacKenzie, p. 314.

35 Numerous critics have dealt with the 'theatrical' aspect of the play, with the protagonists' constant 'acting'; see, amongst others, Michael Neill's exhaustive introduction to his edition of *The Tragedy of Anthony and Cleopatra*, Oxford World Classics, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

36 Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, London, Faber and Faber, 1992, p. 316.

37 See Gilberto Sacerdoti, *Nuovo Cielo, Nuova Terra*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990, who provides an original reading of the play through the mediation of Giordano Bruno, but also gives insight into the strong presence of Egyptian culture. On this subject see also Harold Bloom, *Cleopatra: I Am Fire and Air*, New York, Scribner, 2017 and Rosy Colombo and Alessandro Roccati, "Back from the Dead. An Encounter with Domitius Enobarbus", *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies*, 3 (2016), pp. 135-48, https://ojs.uniroma1.it/index.php/MemShakespeare/article/view/14173, which offers a fictional conversation with the ghost of Enobarbus in which the Roman Empire is fashioned within Egyptian culture.

38 Fisch, p. 61.

39 Fisch, p. 61.

the moon and the sea and absorbs qualities of other goddesses including the gift of bringing life to the dead. Osiris is cut to pieces by his rival Seth, and Isis, distraught, searches for her lost husband and recovering his fragments brings him back to life: Osiris becomes immortal and reigns in the underworld. Isis, like Cleopatra, is also connected with the Nile waters whose rise and fall guarantee the continuity of life. The name of Isis is invoked directly mostly in the 'Egyptian' scenes where Charmian refers to Cleopatra as: "sweet Isis" (I.ii.61), "O Isis" (III.iii.15) or when Cleopatra herself invokes the goddess, "By Isis, I will give thee bloody teeth" (I.v.70). As Adelman notes, the name is used mostly in semi-comic scenes which emphasize the exotic strangeness of the Egyptians and then in the "unflattering portrait" of the queen offered by Octavius when he complains to his men that Cleopatra has publicly proclaimed her sons kings and assigned them territories herself appearing "in the habiliments of the goddess Isis" (III.vi.17)[40]. Once again the parallel is suggested by Plutarch:

> Now, for Cleopatra, she did not only wear at that time, but at all other times else when she went abroad, the apparel of the goddess Isis, and so gave audience unto all her subjects as a new Isis.[41]

As Barbara Bono observes "this coronation of the earthly Isis and her Bacchic consort provokes full-scale Roman opposition. The Romans attempt to literalize the myth, to turn it into a merely human action that can be destroyed"[42]. Further identifications occur where the Egyptian queen is likened to the moon, such as when Antony, after having witnessed Caesar's man Thidias kissing Cleopatra's hand and imagining her betrayal, exclaims: "Alack, our terrene moon / Is now eclips'd, and it portends alone / The fall of Antony" (III.xiii.153-55), or when Cleopatra, planning to take leave from life, cries out that "now the fleeting moon / No planet is of mine" (V.ii.238-39), a line which Waddington sees in the same light as Antony's abandonment by Hercules. Both episodes, Waddington argues, signal "the casting

40 Cf. Adelman, note 68, p. 209.

41 Plutarch, p. 243.

42 Barbara J. Bono, *Literary Transvaluation. From Vergilian Epic to Shakespearian Tragicomedy*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1984, p. 207.

off of the false and the assumption of the true mythical identity" which, in Cleopatra's case, is that of Venus[43], whereas Bono believes that Cleopatra's decision to die "is not a denial of her identification with Isis, but a transcendent redefinition" and the "myth of Isis and Osiris becomes the highest interpretation of the dramatic actions they have performed"[44]. Opinions about an unmentioned analogy of Antony with Osiris vary: according to Fisch, who highlights the connections in the latter part of the play between Antony and the sun god, Antony, like Osiris, can be seen as gaining his immortality in the memories and the reported dream of his Egyptian lover; in fact the union of god and goddess as eternally united after death is a commonplace interpretation of the play's final act. On the other hand, Michael Llyod, in a study uniquely dedicated to the subject of Cleopatra as Isis, points to a direct identification of Cleopatra with the goddess Isis, but refutes – unlike Hughes and Fisch – a conscious intention to identify Antony with Osiris: "we should expect to find something of the relationship between Antony and Osiris if Shakespeare considered it relevant to the portrait: but he clearly did not […] Osiris commands a field of association (chiefly that which he shares with Isis) which cannot be annexed to Antony"[45]. Adelman, instead, affirms that Cleopatra is not an analogue of Isis; the function of the association serves rather, in her view, to suggest discrepancies as well as likenesses[46]. As with the other myth patterns seen so far, we are given competing mythological significances; just as Hercules was both a moral and military paradigm and an effeminate slave, and Mars the archetypal or emasculated soldier, so Isis can function as an analogue or an antitype. It seems to me that Shakespeare relies on the controversial aspects of the legends themselves and their possible applications in order to present a play in which a known historical period with renowned historical characters is subject to differing, and often equally defendable, interpretations which are justified according to perspective. I agree with Janet Adelman's reading of the play when she claims that in *Antony and Cleopatra* "both the presentation of character and the dramatic structure work to frustrate

43 Waddington, p. 216.
44 Bono, pp. 212-13.
45 Michael Lloyd, "Cleopatra as Isis", *Shakespeare Survey*, 12 (1959), p. 94.
46 Adelman, note 68, p. 209.

our reasonable desire for certainty" and "although the play continually raises questions about motives, it simply does not give any clear answers to them"; as most critics have noted the play lacks monologues which would give insight into the main characters "true" purposes and feelings and we are simply "not told the motives of the protagonists at the most critical points in the action"[47]. The allusion to these various multifaceted myths, in my view, emphasizes a deliberate choice of ambiguity and challenges the adoption of a single point of view. The last act of the play is, in fact, primarily concerned with whose story will reach posterity: this is Cleopatra's fundamental fear and Octavius Caesar's chief concern.

It is Antony himself to propose the last of the principal myth patterns in the play which hark back to classical sources. Persuaded that Cleopatra is now dead he is now planning to join her with the help of his faithful servant Eros. In one of the rare soliloquies he exclaims:

> 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. (IV.xiv.51-54)

Shakespeare was probably acquainted with the story at least from three sources: Virgil, Chaucer and Marlowe. Chaucer, in fact, placed Dido with Cleopatra as a love martyr in his *Legend of Good Women* and a series of echoes of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* – such as the association of love with eternity but also with effeminacy and Dido's universe of love subsuming all space – are undoubtedly present in *Antony and Cleopatra*[48]. The image recalled by Antony, however, does not correspond to Virgil's, in Book VI of the *Aeneid*[49].

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47 Adelman, pp.15-16.

48 Schanzer writes: "Apart from their similarity as *exempla* of the hero's choice between Love and Empire, the two stories have so many other points in common that a number of commentators on Book IV of the *Aeneid* have suspected Virgil to be glancing at Cleopatra's relations with Antony and Julius Caesar", Schanzer, p. 160.

49 Aeneas, the Trojan hero, had become a favourite amongst the Romans who considered him their ancestor. On his way to Italy he ended up in Carthage and fell in love with Dido where she was queen, but Jupiter sent Mercury to remind

When Aeneas later visits the underworld and sees Dido, she turns away from him rather than joining him but Shakespeare instead opts for an image of posthumous love. For a Renaissance audience the myth represented an archetypal conflict between public and private values, and the threat of Dido's passion which keeps Aeneas from his duties is a threat to the values of civilization. In this sense, if Cleopatra is a new Dido, Antony's passion – also 'foreign' passion – is a new threat to the consolidation of the empire. But there are differences: Antony will return to Cleopatra, unlike Aeneas with Dido, and Dido will reject him in the afterlife, whereas Cleopatra's aspiration is to meet Antony there. Further, the most beautiful imagery in Virgil is connected with political issues, where in Shakespeare it is reserved to the world of the lovers, and whereas the prevailing values of the *Aenid* are temporal, Cleopatra seeks transcendence in a world outside space and time. The Virgilian influence provides Shakespeare with a structure that can be traced and subverted, and contributes to the multilayered perceptions of the play.

Harold Fisch, after his excursion of mythological analogies in the play, concludes that towards the end of the play the entrance of the clown and the subsequent conversation with Cleopatra signals more than "a comic deflation of the whole mythical hyperbole on which the play is based: it brings a Biblical realism vigorously to bear on the dream world of paganism". He sees Cleopatra as becoming Eve, no longer the goddess of love and nature, but the "erring female who leads men into sin and consequently forfeits the gift of immortality"[50]. The closed myth world of tragedy, for him, is exploded and world history has taken its place. Mackenzie, writing some twenty years later on the same subject, considers classic mythology discredited in favour of an emerging new myth in which the "participants are distinguished by qualities other than military prowess or moral righteousness". For him Antony has failed to live up to the myths of Hercules and Mars and yet, through the language of Cleopatra, he is lifted into a realm of "imagined excellencies" and in this sense he is turned into a god. What emerges is a "love myth

him of his duties and the hero Aeneas gave up love for empire. As a result Dido killed herself.

[50] Fisch, p. 64.

which challenges the Roman military ethos"[51]. Both critics propose the emergence of a new myth and there is no doubt that at the end of the play another 'myth' is formed; in spite of the human failings we have witnessed throughout the play, and the knowledge that Augustus will rule, the "pair so famous" (V.ii.358) gains its own position alongside the mythical figures it has evoked. But what exactly constitutes the Shakespearian myth which surfaces from the play?

Antony and Cleopatra reached the Shakespearian stage as somehow already 'myths'; their historical, literary and theatrical controversial pasts had created an image, albeit a controversial one, familiar to a Shakespearean audience. Throughout the play the mythological references provided yet another framework against which to measure the largeness or the inadequacy of the protagonists and the myths themselves are subject to multiple interpretations. Shakespeare's play does not offer answers to the fundamental ambivalence with which his characters are encumbered yet it broadens the ideological horizons of conventional interpretation exemplified by Philo's opening remarks; the mythical expansion of the historical characters is one with the extension of the classic tragic form which so particularly characterizes this play.

[51] Cf. MacKenzie, pp. 323-27.

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A Tragedy of Memory*

Agostino Lombardo

Theatre is all in the present and *Antony and Cleopatra* is made up of a "series of presents", to use Peter Szondi's famous definition[1]. In this play, however, more than in any other by Shakespeare, memory, not implicit but the explicit memory of the past, becomes part and parcel of what, not by chance, we call re-presentation. In fact, a sign that memory should be included amongst the different strands which make up the varied fabric of this play is its most famous passage concerning the description of Cleopatra on the Cydnus made by Enobarbus; a description ("The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne […]" II.ii.191-226[2]) which is the memory of an event evoked by Enobarbus for himself and for the Romans. The fatal encounter between the "peerless couple" which triggers off the tragedy and determines the history of the world is a staged as a memory which Enobarbus delivers to himself, to the other characters and to us; we have made it our own, made it part of our

* This article, adapted from Agostino Lombardo's *Il fuoco e l'aria. Quattro studi su* Antonio e Cleopatra, Roma, Bulzoni, 1995, is presented here in acknowledgement of the author's many innovating contributions that changed the perspective of reading *Antony and Cleopatra* in Italy.

1 See Peter Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, trans. Paul Fleming, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002 (originally published in German in 1961).

2 All quotations are from William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. M. R. Ridley, London-New York, The Arden Shakespeare (Second Series), 1954, rpt. 1993.

lives. Precisely because it is memory, the passage loses, I believe, its literary sumptuousness and takes part in the supreme theatricality of the play. Supreme because the inclusion of memory in the theatrical discourse not only enriches the specific experience of *Antony and Cleopatra*, but also remarkably expands the possibility for the theatre to be an image of life, to be *present* but, as it happens in life, to be crossed and nurtured by the past.

Clearly, a first level of representation of the past appears in other plays as well; that is, in all those plays which are based on events known to the public – such as the histories or the Roman plays. The playwright in fact, whilst putting a past event into the present, is also counting on the knowledge of the audience (which is always one of the protagonists of the drama); he is counting – and this is the case with *Antony and Cleopatra*, a story which is part of the historical and literary tradition and has become part of the collective imagination – on the audience's *memory*.

There is, however, another level which must be mentioned in the case of this play and it is the memory, apart from all other Shakespeare plays, of *Julius Caesar* in particular. Written in 1599, that is about eight years earlier, it was certainly known to the audience as 'drama', as well as 'history', or 'legend' or 'tradition'. For an Elizabethan spectator some of the characters in *Antony and Cleopatra* do not simply belong to history but to a precise performance in which, with the exception of Cleopatra, they had already acted and with whom they can be compared. *Julius Caesar*, then, is the theatrical past, as well as the historical past, of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and one realizes this particularly through the character of Antony who appears in the earlier play at the outset of his great adventure and is depicted, in the later one, in his path towards decay and an unheroic, grotesque, death. In this sense, the opening of the tragedy with Philo and Demetrius who, in a kind of *tableau*, comment upon Antony's situation, points to this comparison, to the presence of a theatrical memory:

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

Upon a Tawny front. (I.i.1-6)

And later the encouragement to a comparison is direct (hinting at the same time to a past of Antony's which *Julius Caesar* could not provide): "you shall see in him / The triple pillar of the world transform'd / Into a strumpet's fool", I.i.11-13).

But we are now facing an aspect of memory which does not rely simply on tradition and on *Julius Caesar* but becomes intrinsic to *Antony and Cleopatra* itself. The memory of an Antony of the past, in this sense, lives in all the characters (from Enobarbus to Pompey, from Lepidus to Cleopatra herself as we shall see) but is an essential part of the consciousness and of the stage actions of Antony's opponent, his antagonist Octavius Caesar (the same Octavius who had begun his career when very young in *Julius Caesar*). In the fourth scene of the first act not only does Octavius denounce Antony's debauched, 'Egyptian' behaviour, but he remembers a great and heroic Antony who had been able to brave the harshest difficulties, to fight famine "more / Than savages could suffer" (I.iv.60-61):

Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets,
The barks of trees thou browsed. On the Alps
It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
Which some did die to look on. (I.iv.65-68)

Memory, in Octavius, becomes celebration at the news, in the fifth act, of Antony's death: "The breaking of so great a thing should make / A greater crack [...] The death of Antony / Is not a single doom, in the name lay / A moiety of the world" (V.i.15-19). The Antony of the present gives way, in the mind and in the heart of Octavius, to that of the past; the present enemy yields to the brother and former companion: "Friend and companion in the front of war, / The arm of mine own body, and the heart / Where mine his thoughts did kindle" (V.i.44-46). It is the memory of such Antony which leads him to speak the final words: "No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous" (V.ii.357-58).

The memory of that Antony is, however, continuously, dramatically alive in Antony himself and constitutes one of his fundamental traits. He is immersed in the present, in his passion

for Cleopatra, but within him is the constant, and often anguishing, recollection of the Antony of the past. It is true that his refusal of the past seems absolute and all-absorbing – "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space" (I.i.33-34) – but the "Roman thought", as Cleopatra calls it (I.ii.80), often strikes him, and it is not just a sense of duty, an awareness of the responsibilities he should be taking, but also, and especially, a secret desire to recover his lost self. "Things that are past are done, with me" (I.ii.94) he says, but in fact it is not so; there is a deep laceration within him which, whilst making him love Cleopatra, and Egypt, presses him to declare he must break "These strong Egyptian fetters" (I.ii.113) and soon after the news of Fulvia's death that he "must from this enchanting queen break off" (I.ii.125). He will go back to Egypt where his "pleasure lies" (II.iii.39), but right after his return to Egypt the sense of a great and glorious past as a triumvir and a soldier opposed to a present of decadence becomes stronger. After the first defeat he is actually harrowing ("Hark, the land bids me tread no more upon't / It is asham'd to bear me", III.xi.1-2) and the vision of himself as opposed to Octavius takes concrete shape:

> He at Philippi kept
> His sword e'en like a dancer, while I struck
> The lean and wrinkled Cassius, and 'twas I
> That the mad Brutus ended. (III.xi.353-8)

And later:

> Now I must
> To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
> And palter in the shifts of lowness, who
> With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleas'd,
> Making and marring fortunes. (III.xi.61-65)

Even his actions, challenging Caesar, or punishing Thidias, are fundamentally motivated and dictated by his regret, mixed with anger, for a past (which is also his youth) which has gone by and for a present of decadence: "me declin'd" (III.xiii.27), "of late, when I cried 'Ho!' / Like boys unto a muss, kings would start forth, / And

cry 'Your will?'" (III.xiii.90-92) until the highly significant and painful verses of the message sent to Octavius:

> Look thou say
> He makes me angry with him. For he seems
> Proud and disdainful, harping on what I am
> Not what he knew I was. He makes me angry,
> And at this time most easy 'tis to do 't:
> When my good starts, that were my former guides,
> Have empty left their orbs, and shot their fires
> Into the abysm of hell. (III.xiii.140-47)

And soon after he says:

> Alack, our terrene moon
> Is now eclips'd, and it portends alone
> The fall of Antony! (III.xiii.152-54)

From this moment on the conflict will materially be with Octavius but internally between the declining Antony of the present and the heroic Antony of the past. The dramatic burden of memory becomes stronger and stronger and Antony's tragedy may well be defined here, especially, as a tragedy of memory. It is this, in fact, that drives him to construct visionary images of greatness and strength of himself in order to retrieve his lost identity. When preparing for the battle he says: "but now, I'll set my teeth, / And send to darkness all that stop me" (III.xiii.181-82); and then: "The next time I do fight / I'll make death love me; for I will contend / Even with his pestilent scythe" (III.xiii.192-94). And whilst going to battle he will take his leave from Cleopatra "like a man of steel" (IV.iv.33).

And when this momentary victory seems to give him the feeling of having stopped time, of having exorcised the present and recovered the past, his language becomes epic; he calls his soldiers all Hectors, he urges Cleopatra, who calls him "Lord of lords" (IV.xiii.17) to embrace an Antony whom he sees as an armed Mars (much like the one evoked by Philo at the beginning):

> O thou day o' the world,
> Chain mine arm'd neck, leap thou, attire and all,

> Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
> Ride on the pants triumphing! (IV.viii.13-16)

He celebrates his triumph with words:

> Trumpeters,
> With brazen din blast you the city's ear,
> Make mingle with our rattling tambourines,
> That heaven and earth may strike their sounds together,
> Applauding our approach. (IV.viii.35-39)

But the victory is short-lived, this recovering of lost time is but an illusion and the battle at sea will bring defeat. The anger against Cleopatra who, in his view has betrayed him by fleeing with her boats, is followed by the false news of Cleopatra's death. And it is through the thought of death that Antony pursues the memory of himself. The greatness which he has not been able to win back, he will now try to attain with a noble death such as the one he asks Eros to provide for him (IV.xiv.55-68) not having "the courage of a woman" (IV.xiv.60), he who had "quarter'd the world" (IV.xiv.58). However, this too proves to be difficult. Eros kills himself and Antony is incapable of accomplishing that final deed that would annul the present and bring him back to the past. He does manage to inflict a mortal wound on himself, but death is slow to come and the predicament becomes grotesque: before us is not the hero but a poor man dragging himself on the ground, crying out for a final blow and then, after having discovered that Cleopatra is alive, asking to be taken up to the monument where she is hiding. The present loses its greatness: Cleopatra, helped by her maids, draws him up to her ("Here's sport indeed! How heavy weighs my lord!", IV.xv.33). The endeavour is entrusted, then, to the final words of the dying Antony, words which give substance to the conflict which has run through the final sequence of events:

> The miserable change now at my end
> Lament nor sorrow at: but please your thoughts
> In feeding them with those my former fortunes
> Wherein I liv'd: the greatest prince o' the world,
> The noblest; and do now not basely die,
> Not cowardly put off my helmet to

> My countryman: a Roman, by a Roman
> Valiantly vanquish'd. Now my spirit is going,
> I can no more. (IV.xv.51-59)

But even more than with Antony, this process of recovering the past is implemented by Cleopatra whose words, after Antony's death, are certainly a mourning celebration, but are also, and particularly, an attempt to recreate, with words, the Antony of the past, his memory (which now becomes *hers* as well):

> The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord?
> O, wither'd is the garland of war,
> The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
> Are level now with men: the odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon. (IV.xv.63-68)

A mood which culminates in the memorable exchange with Dolabella (V.ii) where Antony's memory is transfigured into an image which is not simply heroic but divine ("His face was as the heavens, and therein stuck / A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted / The little O, the earth. [...] / His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear's arm / Crested the world: his voice was propertied / As all the tuned spheres [...] / He was a rattling thunder", V.ii.78-86): the present is truly annulled, and words create that sense of the absolute which Antony, whilst living, had not been able to attain. And later, with words which are perfectly suited not only to the discourse on memory but also to that of art (another central theme of the tragedy – for how could they be separated?):

> Nature wants stuff
> To vie strange forms with fancy, yet to imagine
> An Antony were nature's piece, 'gainst fancy,
> Condemning shadows quite. (V.ii.97-100)

Finally, for her memory becomes reality, she asks to be dressed up as a queen to return to the Cydnus: "Show me, my women, like a queen: go fetch / My best attires. I am again for Cydnus, / To meet Mark Antony" (V.ii.226-28).

Memory, then, acts on Cleopatra as well and it is not just the one she shares with Antony. Amongst the many facets of this extraordinary character, amongst the elements which form her "infinite variety", there is, in fact, the constant memory of a Cleopatra of the past. Memory of events linked to Antony and to their now threatened love:

> 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. (I.iii.33-37)

Memory of past, carefree days, spent fishing and playing in the water, and performing loving skirmishes (II.v.10-20). But also the memory of her youth, her "salad days" as she calls them (I.v.75) in which her hand was "a hand that kings / Have lipp'd, and trembled kissing" (II.v.29-30), a hand upon which Julius Caesar "Bestow'd his lips" and "it rain'd kisses" (III.xiii.83-84). The years of a beauty she feels is waning, and fears is fading: see for instance the moment in which Antony is away and the thought of their love mingles with the awareness of the contrast between past and present:

> Think on me
> That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black,
> And wrinkled deep in time. Broad-fronted Caesar,
> When thou wast here above the ground, I was
> A morsel for a monarch: and great Pompey
> Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow,
> There would he anchor his aspect, and die
> With looking on his life. (I.v.27-34)

If Antony could hope to return to the past, to regain his lost greatness, Cleopatra knows that the decline brought on by years is irremediable; her death is not, as in Antony's case, a way to retrieve the past, but a way to abolish time. When, wearing the regal attire which her maids have brought her, she acts out that scene which Antony had not been able to recite: "Give me my robe, put on my

crown, I have / Immortal longings in me" (V.ii.279-80), she – and it is here that the use of meta-theatre becomes crucial – kills herself, and with herself, she kills memory. In the supreme, mysterious and sacred act of suicide, time is one, absolute. There is no past, no present, no future. Cleopatra's death is also the death of memory, the deliverance from recollection, the conquering of an eternal space of freedom: "I am fire and air; my other elements / I give to baser life" (V.ii.288-89). In fact the prophecy of a new heaven, new earth, finally enacted.

(Translation by Maria Valentini)

MISCELLANY

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On Othello and Desdemona

Paul A. Kottman

Lie with her? lie on her?
Othello, IV.i.35[1]

In his book, *The Claim of Reason*, which concludes with a well-known interpretation of *Othello*, the philosopher Stanley Cavell discusses what he calls "the truth of skepticism"[2]. Following Wittgenstein (and, before him, David Hume) Cavell claims that the real issue in skepticism is not the limitations of our knowledge of the world out there – the confines of our senses, say, or the finitude of our consciousness. Descartes notwithstanding, we pretty much accept that there are sidewalk curbs on which we might trip, trains and planes we might catch or miss. As Hume drily put it, "the great subverter of […] excessive scepticisme is […] the occupation of life"[3]. At the same time, Cavell claims (again following Hume and Wittgenstein), skepticism is not just a matter of *self*-knowledge – if by

1 All quotations are from William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, with a new introduction by Ayanna Thompson, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2016.

2 Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, rpt. with a new preface 1999, p. 7 and passim.

3 Hume rejected what he called "excessive scepticisme" on the simple grounds that it makes life unlivable, practically. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning HuUnderstanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 158-59.

self-knowledge we mean some sort of boot-strapping, solipsistic circuitry in which I take myself to be both the subject and object of my thinking.

Instead, for Cavell, the primary issue raised by skepticism is an abiding uncertainty concerning *other people* – doubts about who they are, about how to deal with them, or how to live with the worry that we can probably never know them fully. Some philosophers call this the 'problem of other minds'. ("Men should be what they seem, / Or those that be not, would they might seem none", *Othello*, III.iii.129-30.) Because this problem can never be overcome by amassing knowledge or evidence about other people, getting to know another person is shot through with skepticism. By the same token, skepticism is especially pressing wherever exposure to one another is heightened – in intimate relationships, like love affairs[4]. Further, if we can never fully 'know' another person, then it does not take much for the skeptic to begin questioning whether others are truly as they seem to be. Is this other person *really* another person – independent, desiring, and self-aware like I think I am? How can I know that she is real, authentic? And, if so, how? These are issues, I will suggest, that explain Othello's violence against Desdemona.

Cavell also suggests that this uncertainty about others cannot be separated from a deep anxiety about ourselves: Do *I* exist? Am *I* true, authentic and real – and how can I be sure? If my own self-certainty is bound up with my doubts about other people, then "the integrity of *my* existence […] may depend on the fact and on the idea of another being's existence, and on the possibility of proving that existence"[5]. Which means – to put it the other way around – finding another authentic, true human being amounts to discovering whether anyone really *knows or understands me*. (Am I just a walking shadow? "Does any here know me?" – to borrow King Lear's succinct question – "Who is it that can tell me who I am?"). And this anxiety tumbles into other problems pursued by Cavell as well[6]. Shouldn't *I* be in the best position to judge whether someone else really knows *me*? Shouldn't I

4 See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 341 and passim.
5 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 422.
6 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, pp. 384-93.

know myself – what it is like being me – better than (or, at least, different than) anyone? After all, if I am *fully* knowable by someone else – if the gap between how others might know me and how I know myself were erased – then the difference between myself and others starts to break down: I lose myself. "You cannot [know my thoughts]", as Iago puts it, "if my heart were in your hand, / Nor shall not whilst 'tis in my custody" (III.iii.165-66). At any rate, Cavell's intriguing suggestion is that the achievement of first-personal experience – the feeling of 'leading one's life' – arises as objective efforts to know or understand others, from my concrete efforts to make others know or understand me (to "say what I mean", in Cavell's phrasing)[7]. All this is worth bearing in mind.

Now, in his reading of *Othello*, Cavell argues that Othello "avoids acknowledging" Desdemona's independence, her desires and vitality, by murdering her[8]. While suffocating one's lover in bed may seem an extreme manifestation of such failure, nevertheless its possibility belongs, according to Cavell, to "the way human sexuality is the field in which the fantasy of finitude, of its acceptance and its repetitious overcoming, is worked out; the way human separateness is turned equally toward splendor and toward horror"[9]. According to Cavell, Desdemona confronts Othello with something he cannot tolerate – the independence of her vitality, of her desire, awaiting him stretched upon the bed. ("O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites!", III.iii.272-74.) She presents

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[7] Cavell also presents this as the inseparability of what he calls "active" and "passive" skepticism – active skepticism being the way I deal with trying to know another; passive skepticism being the way I try to make myself known to another. See Richard Moran, "Cavell on Outsiders and Others", *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 2 (September 2011), p. 256, and Robert Pippin, "Active and Passive Skepticism in Nicholas Ray's *In a Lonely Place*", nonsite.org, 5 (March 18, 2012).

[8] "He cannot forgive Desdemona for existing, for being separate from him, outside, beyond command, commanding, her captain's captain", Stanley Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", in *Philosophers on Shakespeare*, ed. Paul A. Kottman, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 164. The avoidance of acknowledgment is the key to Cavell's reading of Shakespearean tragedy, as in his essay on *King Lear*, called "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*", in *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, updated edition 2003, pp. 38-123.

[9] Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 165.

Othello with his limits: both *her* desire and, perhaps worse, the urgings of *his own* desire[10]. In Cavell's words, Othello is "surprised by [Desdemona], at what he has elicited from her; at, so to speak, a success rather than a failure"[11]. In some respects, Cavell's interpretation is helpful, not least because it counters a common misunderstanding of the play according to which Othello is a kind of puppet or "credulous fool" (IV.i.45) whose strings are pulled by Iago[12]. To return to the terms of my discussion we could say that, if Desdemona *wants* to make love to him – to *him*, Othello (not just to him as 'male', or as 'general') – then Othello cannot make sense of his sexual interactions with Desdemona as *either* his sexual domination of her, or as their entanglement with the demands of natural appetite and procreation. Shakespeare's play begins, then, with the profound threat to sense that adheres in lovemaking: namely, *prior self-conceptions* in our historical sexual self-education – that human beings sexually reproduce, and that human beings 'act' by sexually dominating other human beings – start to lose their explanatory force when lovers cannot explain to themselves what they are experiencing in terms of either biology or coercive force[13].

However, Cavell points not only to Othello's 'surprise' at eliciting Desdemona's desire. Cavell also sees Othello's 'surprise' as that which renders him murderous, as the reason Othello accepts the idea of Desdemona's infidelity and smothers her in their bed[14]. Here, I am left with questions about Cavell's interpretation. How can Othello apprehend – that is, how can he even identify, and thus be 'surprised'

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10 Cf. Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 165.

11 Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 164. This is what Cavell means when he asserts that "the idea of Desdemona as an adulterous whore is more convenient to [Othello] than the idea of her as chaste", or when he claims that Desdemona's faithfulness is worse than her faithlessness. Desdemona's adultery is convenient in that it gives Othello cover, a chance to doubt what he knows – that Desdemona desires him (pp. 161-62).

12 After all, if Othello is nothing more than the gullible victim of a nefarious villain, then the entire story starts to look like just a sad misfortune. Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 162.

13 This is given a fuller elaboration in Paul A. Kottman, *Love as Human Freedom*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2017.

14 Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 164.

by – the independence of Desdemona's desire as something that he elicits, unless he is already engaged sexually with Desdemona in a non-domineering, non-appetitous way? If Othello has no experience – however fleeting, however preliminary – of making love with Desdemona, or at least of imagining it, then how could Othello be 'surprised', in the way Cavell suggests, by a "success rather than a failure"?[15]

Moreover, why should the 'surprise' of lovemaking – the prospect of a genuine seduction – lead Othello to murderously "avoid acknowledging" that surprise, and to take refuge instead in the "convenient idea" that Desdemona is "an adulterous whore" by, ultimately, smothering her in their bed?[16] Cavell's answer to this is that Othello "is rendered impotent and murderous by aroused, or by having aroused, female sexuality – or let us say […] horrified by human sexuality, in himself and in others"[17]. But then why should the experience of lovemaking – or the experience of imagining it – lead to impotence, or arouse murderousness? Whence this horror in the face of "human sexuality" in general, or in response to "female sexuality" in particular? Cavell seems to see this as a kind of ahistorical, psychic necessity: "human sexuality" or "female sexuality" can be horror-inducing, to the point of arousing murderousness, Cavell thinks, because "accepting one's individuality or individuation" involves what he calls "the necessity of a double acceptance" – accepting "one's mother as an independent sexual being" and accepting "one's father as a dependent sexual being"[18]. If I understand Cavell here, to be "horrified" by "human" or "female sexuality" is part of the challenge of accepting one's separateness from others, a work of mourning; in particular of acknowledging male dependence on

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15 Cavell suggests, further, that Othello and Desdemona might not have made love, asking: "Well, were the sheets stained or not? Was she a virgin or not?", Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 163.

16 Harry Berger Jr. follows Cavell's reading, casting it in terms of sinning, in "Three's Company: The Specter of Contaminated Intimacy in *Othello*", *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* (2004), pp. 235-63.

17 Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 165.

18 See Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, pp. 188-89.

female sexual independence[19].

I confess that it is easier for me to see sexual disgust (or the work of mourning) as an explanation for, say, Hamlet's behavior toward Gertrude than as an explanation for Othello's murder of Desdemona. In *Othello*, Shakespeare seems to have had a different dynamic in mind, another dramatic stake. Othello does not seem horrified by sex as such, the way that Hamlet seems to be when he speaks of Gertrude and Claudius "[i]n the rank sweat of an enseamed bed / Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty" (III.iv.90-92)[20]. If Othello is unsettled by Iago's image of Desdemona and Cassio "as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys" (III.iii.406), then this has less to do with Othello's 'acceptance' of Desdemona's independence than with his efforts at proving her independence.

And in the murder scene are we not invited, even tempted, by Shakespeare to imagine Othello doing something else with Desdemona in bed, besides smothering her? Moreover, what was Desdemona thinking, as she lay in bed under Othello, as he put his hands on her? Desdemona did not try to escape, or scream for help – as Gertrude cried out ("Help, ho!", III.iv.21) when Hamlet sat her down in her bedchamber. Does not Desdemona play a role in this, beyond the one Cavell assigns to her?

Let me, then, look again at Shakespeare's drama to see what else the play might help us to explain and understand.

First, consider that Othello's early courtship of Desdemona required Othello to question a deep-seated conception of himself as 'master'. As a high-ranking officer, Othello was of course accustomed to exerting mastery over his own bodily life as well the bodies of others; institutional domination and the satisfaction of his desires had gone hand in hand. Indeed, Othello thinks that Desdemona loves him

[19] "Nothing could be more certain to Othello than that Desdemona […] is flesh and blood; is separate from him; other. This is precisely the possibility that tortures him. The content of his torture *is* the premonition of the existence of another, hence of his own […] as dependent, as partial", Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, p. 138.

[20] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2006.

for this very reason: "She loved me for the dangers I had passed / And I loved her that she did pity them" (I.iii.168-69). Given this, it is striking that Othello does not simply look upon Desdemona the way he regards his soldiers – as a body to be commanded, as the instrument for the fulfillment of his orders, as his property or chattel.

Having won Desdemona with his tales and displays of mastery in the world, Othello discovers that he does not want to be *her* master. Not that Othello is physically or socially or economically incapable of coercing Desdemona. Sexual domination is just not what he desires with her. It matters to him – quite a lot, in fact – that Desdemona turn out to be an independent being, acting on her own desires. He finds that *his* desire for her is not indifferent to *her* desires, whatever they may be. He cares about what she wants, because he also wants to be known that *he* has seduced *her* – that each is acting freely. Indeed, by courting Desdemona, Othello has learned that institutionalized forms of sexual domination cannot provide the freedom (the love) he seeks. He has absorbed the lessons of courtship, discussed above. Othello would rather see Desdemona dead at his feet than bent before him on her knees. If this is not wrong, then at least a few things follow.

First, although it is true that Othello is concerned with Desdemona's sexual fidelity or "honor", to the extent that this touches on his own social standing, this is not his primary concern[21]. Contrary to a common misunderstanding about the play, it is not the objective *fact* of Desdemona's behavior – her supposed sexual infidelity – that most disturbs Othello. Nor is cuckolding beyond bearing[22]. It is rather Othello's first-person experience of her sexual adventures that upsets him. He makes this clear:

> I swear 'tis better to be much abused
> Than but to know't a little.

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[21] For one expression of this concern about public honor, see *Othello*, IV.i.190ff. Another comes at III.iii.389ff.

[22] Othello notes this: "to make me / The fixed figure for the time of scorn / To point his slow and moving finger at! / Yet could I bear that too, well, very well: / But there where I have garnered up my heart, / Where either I must live or bear no life / The fountain from the which my current runs / Or else dries up – to be discarded thence!" (IV.ii.54-61).

> […]
> What sense had *I* of her stol'n hours of lust?
> *I* saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not *me*,
> *I* slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry;
> *I* found not Cassio's kisses on her lips;
> He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen,
> Let him not know't, and he's not robbed at all.
> […]
> *I* had been happy if the general camp,
> Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
> So *I* had nothing known.
> (III.iii.339-50, my emphases)

Or, as Iago says, "if it touch not you it comes near nobody" (IV.i.195-96). But why should such first-person knowledge unsettle Othello, if whatever is known (objectively, as it were) is not disturbing in itself – if it is disturbing only because it is known *by him*? What is the difference between facts being known, and *knowing* the facts?

Consider – as a way of providing an answer – the difference between Iago's and Othello's preoccupations. From Iago's perspective, jealousy – the "green-eyed monster" (III.iii.168) – expresses a lack of certainty about the way things stand 'out there' in the world, a nagging sense that one is ignorant about some objective reality that touches directly upon one's own standing before others. Put in terms of my discussion thus far, Iago thinks that jealousy targets clandestine lovers (the 'adulterous' lovers I discussed above, whose only 'reality' is their passionate lovemaking) – those whose affairs threaten or undermine institutionalized forms of sexual domination, and hence require stamping out.

Precisely because cuckolding or passionate, adulterous affairs have so little 'objective' standing in the world, for reasons I gave earlier, Iago can goad Othello with his sheer lack of concrete evidence. This is why Iago tempts Othello with (semi)concrete evidence of a passion that cannot be objectively 'proven' from the outside: lovemaking. And it is why Iago thinks that he can manipulate Othello with the promise of further testimony that "speaks against [Desdemona] with the other proofs" (III.iii.444):

> That cuckold lives in bliss
> Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger,
> But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
> Who dotes yet doubts, suspects yet fondly loves!
> (III.iii.169-172)

Or, again, as he later says to Othello:

> O, 'tis the spite of hell, the fiend's arch-mock,
> To lip a wanton in a secure couch
> And to suppose her chaste. No, let me know,
> And, knowing what I am, I know what she shall be.
> (IV.i.70-73)

For Iago, then, it is clear that 'love' amounts to what I have been calling 'sexual domination'. Othello's sexual agency (for Iago) hinges on the objective 'proof' of, the institutional demand for, Desdemona's chastity and subjugation – just as Othello's standing as an officer demands his soldiers' loyalty, just as a daughter's obedience demonstrates a father's ability to command. 'Love', for Iago, names a bond or fidelity that must be publically demonstrated through sexual dominance – and, hence, that would be publically undone when such fidelity cannot be demonstrated[23]. Love and jealousy are mutually exclusive; for Iago, it would be a straightforward contradiction to love jealously[24].

And yet – to repeat – the 'objective facts' of Desdemona's interactions with Cassio are not what ultimately unsettle Othello. It is Othello's subjective viewpoint – the unavoidability of his first-person stance (*knowing* the facts) – that upsets him. If this is right, then Othello does not interrogate Iago because he craves the sort of evidence that might convince a jury, or to establish Desdemona's

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[23] Iago draws attention to these different kinds of 'bonds' through his repeated use of the words 'bound' or 'bond'. See David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 275.

[24] Following through on this logic, of course, would require Othello to enforce strict control over Desdemona's movements, her sexual agency, and ultimately over her life.

sexual fidelity to him. Just as no one could ever convince Othello of Desdemona's innocence, so too no one else could convince him of her guilt. Which is to say, no one can demonstrate to him Desdemona's love – any more than he can objectively prove to others his love of her. This should be obvious; otherwise, all we are witnessing is the depressing soap opera of a jealous husband who enlists a devious detective to do the work of deciding for him whether his love is merited, whether his wife has been subjugated to him.

But if – for Othello – 'love' does not mean sexual domination, or a publically verifiable bond rooted in objective evidence, then what does he mean when he says he 'loves' Desdemona? What does he mean when he says things like "My life upon her faith" (I.iii.295), if he does not mean that he prizes her obedience of fidelity above all?

Well, he clarifies somewhat when he says things like "perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (III.iii.90-92). By "chaos", Othello seems to mean a profound threat to any sense he might make of his life and its conditions. Hence, it is not his honor, but the intelligibility of anything at all that he sets upon Desdemona's faith and his love for her. "If she be false, O then heaven mocks itself" (III.iii.282). The question, then, is how did the intelligibility of Othello's life and worldly conditions come – for him – to depend upon the fate of his courtship of Desdemona?

We have already identified one reason. Because mastery and sexual domination are not what Othello wants with Desdemona, it is not her disobedience – but rather the cessation of his love – that would render his actions unintelligible, that would make "chaos come again". Othello intuits that his freedom *is* his love of Desdemona. Without mutual recognition, without genuine seduction between two independent beings, what is there? If before Desdemona came into his life, Othello could reassure himself that the life he was leading was 'his' by means of conquering and subduing – military life, sexual domination – here such reassurance is not possible. He cannot love Desdemona by conquering her because, to repeat, he is not indifferent to what she wants. If his desire is thus entangled with hers, then his self-conception as a 'free' being depends upon demonstrating *her* independence. In order to be sure that he is living

his life, realizing his desires, Othello now needs to be certain that Desdemona is doing the same. This is his predicament, the meaning of his jealousy.

Othello aims to demonstrate the independence and vitality of Desdemona's desire – not, as Cavell has it, to "avoid" or "deny" that independent vitality. But why should this demonstration turn out to be murderous?

I am not suggesting that Othello is fully aware of everything I am saying here. I understand Othello to be finding out what he wants as he goes along – especially, through the slow discovery of the difference between Iago's offered evidence and the 'proof' he really seeks. This is the stuff of their well-known exchanges, during which Iago and Othello talk past each other. Iago, for example, admonishes Othello to "beware […] of jealousy" (III.iii.167) – meaning, again, that Othello should seek public proof of his sexual domination of Desdemona.

Othello, however, hears Iago to be suggesting that he, Othello, should take care to be sure of what *he himself* is doing. Othello hears a warning not to doubt *himself*. Here is the exchange:

IAGO
That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger,
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes yet doubts, suspects yet fondly loves!
[…]
Good God, the souls of all my tribe defend
From jealousy.

OTHELLO
Why – why is this?
Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy
To follow still the changes of the moon
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolved.
[…]
No, Iago,
I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove,

> And on the proof there is no more but this:
> Away at once with love or jealousy!
> (III.iii.169-95)

I hear Othello to be saying that the sense he makes of the world will come from what *he himself* demonstrates to his own satisfaction, from what *he* accepts as proof or knowledge. While Othello will listen to Iago's counsel, he will think and decide for himself on the worth of that counsel; Iago may give him evidence, but it is evidence whose meaning Othello will adjudicate. Jealousy, for Othello, means the search for proof that *he* accepts.

For the time being, however, Othello fails to see that there is no objective evidence or proof that can furnish for him this first-person certainty. Getting proof – and *accepting* that proof – is going to be a lot more wrenching than merely looking upon this or that bit of evidence and making a detached judgment. Nevertheless, for the moment, Othello continues to hope that Iago might at least furnish him with the evidence to be judged. And this, of course, tumbles directly into the farcical exchange in which Iago is all too happy to participate. "Villain!" cries Othello, taking Iago by the throat, "be sure thou prove my love a whore, / Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof […] Make me to see't" (III.iii.362-67). "You would be satisfied?" (III.iii.396) taunts Iago. "Would? Nay, and I will" (III.iii.396), bellows Othello, setting the ball on the tee for Iago:

> And may – but how? how satisfied, my lord?
> Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape on?
> Behold her topped?
> […]
> It were a tedious difficulty, I think,
> To bring them to that prospect. Damn them then
> If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster
> More than their own. What then? how then?
> What shall I say? where's satisfaction?
> It is impossible you should see this
> Were they as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,
> As salt as wolves in pride, and fools as gross
> As ignorance made drunk.

(III.iii.397-408)

The image of this farce – of all bedroom farces, probably – is the perfect depiction of Othello's impasse. For even if he were to "behold her topped", he would still not have the proof he seeks – an objective demonstration of Desdemona's independence (and hence of his own). Moreover, the extant institutions of patriarchal, sexual domination would leave Othello with an empty choice: either deny the reality before his eyes by proclaiming the lovers innocent (as King Mark did, when he found Tristan and Iseult in the woods); or, deny the reality through violent punishment (as with the Sultan's murderous rage in the *Thousand and One Nights*). Either option would leave Othello's love of Desdemona, his desire to have *her* independence demonstrated, unrealized.

Why, then, does Shakespeare ask us to imagine the farce? Not to furnish, once and for all, concrete evidence of who is having sex with whom[25]. The image of the farce, rather, places the cuckold on the spot; it requires him to perform a self-expressive deed, to make clear through his action or response how he sees himself and others, to express his understanding of the situation in which he finds himself.

So, Othello finds himself pressed.

The question is no longer what Desdemona and Cassio objectively did, but what Othello himself will do with them. Which means that Othello's search for external evidence itself – for a wholly third-personal, institutional perspective that might remove the need for first-person experience and second-person intimacy – must grind to a halt. This, I think, explains why the circumstantial evidence of the handkerchief, and not concrete proof, finally concludes Othello's interrogations of Iago. Because the insinuations around the handkerchief require Othello himself to take action, to take up the matter with Desdemona, he has no further need of Iago. Which is also

[25] No one in the play – with the possible exception of Emilia – is really interested in objectively establishing Desdemona's guilt or innocence, her honor or her shame. And it is not entirely clear that Emilia's interest in this is altruistic. To a large extent, her own public standing is bound up with that of Desdemona.

to say, Othello never needed Iago for the reasons Iago believed – to decide on Desdemona's guilt or innocence. The proof Othello seeks – the independence and vitality of Desdemona's desire, that she is not merely an extension of *his* desire – is something that he cannot furnish unless he engages her. He must somehow confront Desdemona. But how?

I understand Othello's shift into the first-person hot seat to be signaled, in Shakespeare, by the trance or 'fit' into which he falls at precisely this moment. ("Lie with her? lie on her?", IV.i.35.) According to Cavell, Othello's trance expresses not "conviction in a piece of knowledge" but "an effort to stave the knowledge off"[26]. But again, I do not think that the only issue here is Othello's difficulty in accepting Desdemona's literal innocence – his failure to 'acknowledge' Desdemona's adoration of him.

At issue is the moral imagination required of Othello, subjectively, if he is to acknowledge Desdemona as an independent being. In order to perceive (or imagine) Cassio and Desdemona in an intimate embrace, Othello must also perceive (or imagine) such intimacy *for himself*. Iago cannot do *that* for him – no matter how carefully he sets or describes the scene. Even as spectator – indeed, precisely as ideal spectator – Othello simply cannot remove himself from the picture. He cannot let Iago's perspective replace his own. His fantasies must take over (or not), as is suggested by the preceding exchange:

[26] In other words, Othello "*knows* (Iago's insinuations) to be false" – so, for Cavell, the trance is something like Othello's "massive denial" of what he knows. The full passage reads: "the words of a man in a trance, in a dream state, fighting not to awaken; willing for anything but light. By 'denial' I do not initially mean something requiring psychoanalytical, or any other theory. I mean merely to ask that we not, conventionally but insufferably, assume that we know this woman better than this man knows her – making Othello some kind of erotic, gorgeous, superstitious lunkhead; which is about what Iago thinks. However much Othello deserves each of these titles, however far he believes Iago's tidings, he cannot just believe them; somewhere he also *knows* them to be false", Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", pp. 157, 161.

OTHELLO
What hath [Cassio] said?

IAGO
Faith, that he did – I know not what he did –

OTHELLO
What? what?

IAGO
Lie.

OTHELLO
With her?

IAGO
With her, on her, *what you will*.
(IV.i.31-34, my emphasis)

At which point, Othello's own sense making is engaged. Is Othello envisioning himself with Desdemona when he says the following?

OTHELLO
Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her'when they belie her! Lie with her, zounds, that's fulsome! – Handkerchief! confessions! handkerchief! – To confess, and be hanged for his labour! First to be hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible? Confess! handkerchief! O devil! (IV.i.35-43)

Where might such fantasies lead? What would it be to live out the sense Othello is making of things?

In the next scene, then, Othello externalizes his fantasies. He strikes Desdemona, using the same word "devil" repeatedly – as if literally acting out the 'subjective' fantasies expressed in his trance[27]. Because we often forget this moment of naked aggression – which

[27] Othello refers to Desdemona as "devil" at several points. See, for example, III.iii.481. The term is also applied to others in the play – indeed, it is frequently repeated. But Othello uses the term only in reference to Desdemona. Even after Iago's deception has come to light, Othello calls him only "demi-devil" (V.ii.298).

presages, and might help explain, the final tableau – let me recall the exchange, which confuses Othello's violence against Desdemona with his reaction to the message contained in a letter delivered by Lodovico:

DESDEMONA
Cousin, there's fallen between him and my lord
An unkind breach, but you shall make all well –

OTHELLO
Are you sure of that?
DESDEMONA
My lord?

OTHELLO
[Reads.] This fail you not to do, as you will –

LODOVICO
He did not call, he's busy in the paper.
Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?

DESDEMONA
A most unhappy one: I would do much
T'atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.

OTHELLO
Fire and brimstone!

DESDEMONA
My lord?

OTHELLO
Are you wise?

DESDEMONA
What, is he angry?

LODOVICO
May be the letter moved him;
For, as I think, they do command him home,

Deputing Cassio in his government.

DESDEMONA
By my thorth, I am glad on't.

OTHELLO
Indeed!

DESDEMONA
My lord?

OTHELLO
I am glad… to see you mad.

DESDEMONA
Why, sweet Othello?

OTHELLO
Devil! *[Striking her]*
(IV.i.224-39)

As I see it, Othello's actions might be made intelligible along the lines I suggested earlier – as Othello's attempt to 'know' whether Desdemona acts independently[28]. Othello, I am suggesting, wants to know that he has seduced, not mastered, Desdemona; that this is a love affair, not military life. Striking and debasing one's lover in front of others might seem a counter-intuitive – if not counter-productive – way to demonstrate her independence. But perhaps it looks less mysterious if we remember that lovers' quarrels are often nothing more than bald-faced provocations – attempts to 'get a rise' out of the other, to bring one another back to life, to achieve a confrontation

[28] To Lodovico and Desdemona, and to the others present, Othello's actions and motives are unclear. Othello makes no explicit accusation – nor does he attempt to justify his actions. "Is it his use? [to strike Desdemona] / Or did the letters work upon his blood / And new-create his fault?" (IV.i.274-76). Hence, Lodovico's bewilderment – "My lord, this would not be believed in Venice / Though I should swear I saw't. 'Tis very much; / Make her amends, she weeps" (IV.i.241-43). And after Othello departs, Lodovico inquires, "Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain? [...] What, strike his wife?" (IV.i.269-72).

between two independent living, desiring people[29]. Of course, if the provocation continues to be merely abusive, then there remains only straightforward opposition, contempt, or the domination of one by the other. On the other hand, the conflict could lead to reconciliation *with* the other's independence – which might be why such provocations and squabbles can lead so immediately to kissing and making up. As everyone knows, lovemaking can result from – even accomplish, or finish – a quarrel[30].

At any rate, by slapping and berating Desdemona, I understand Othello to be testing her independence – to be looking for 'objective' proof of her independence that he can accept. She responds evasively – "I have not deserved this" (IV.i.240), she says tearfully. Othello tries again, this time mocking her tears as false:

> O, devil, devil!
> If that the earth could teem with woman's tears
> Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile:
> Out of my sight!
> (IV.i.243-46)

Desdemona demurs, slinking away: "I will not stay to offend you", she says (IV.i.246). "Truly, an obedient lady", says Lodovico (IV.i.247) – unaware that it is precisely such servility that Othello wishes to disprove. Hence, Othello tests her again, demanding that Desdemona return – "Mistress!", "My lord?" she repeats for the fourth time in the exchange, obedient as ever. "What would you with her, sir?" says Othello to Lodovico (IV.i.249-51) – underscoring that Desdemona's obedience makes her attachment to him, Othello, interchangeable with her attachment to any master or man:

> […] you did wish that I would make her turn.

[29] Where physical violence is not effective or possible or desirable, one might nag or harangue. To be clear, I am not defending such actions myself (I hope this is understood); I am trying to explain Othello's actions in view of the historical possibilities open to him.

[30] Provided, however, that the quarrel is not a genuine duel or battle to the death, wherein destructuve intent or a will to mastery is recognized on both sides.

> Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on
> And turn again. And she can weep, sir, weep.
> And she's obedient: as you say, obedient.
> Very obedient. (IV.i.252-56)

Desdemona shows herself to be obedient, dominated sexually and otherwise[31]. Where the others see in this a virtue, Othello sees vacuity.

Anything but your obedience! Your obedience makes me *interchangeable, one of many possible masters in a game of sexual domination. Unless you demonstrate that your actions are not extensions of my authority, of sexual domination, then we are not lovers.* This is the thrust of Othello's pursuit, when he next confronts Desdemona. In the face of her confusion – "I understand a fury in your words, / But not the words" (IV.ii.32-33) – he demands to know: "Why, *what art thou*?" (IV.ii.34, my emphasis); "Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife" (IV.ii.35), comes the (to Othello) maddeningly routine response. Othello tries again:

> OTHELLO
> Come, swear it, damn thyself,
> Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
> Should fear to seize thee: therefore be double-damned,
> Swear thou are honest!
>
> DESDEMONA
> Heaven doth truly know it.
>
> OTHELLO
> Heaven truly knows that thou are false as hell.
> (IV.ii.36-40)

[31] As the Norton editors point out, the line "she can turn and turn" refers to sex. Michael Neill notes, in the Oxford edition, that "the seventeenth-century pronunciation of *obedient* would allow an actor to disclose the mocking word *bed* concealed in its second syllable". See also his remarks in the Introduction to that edition, pp. 172-73.

How he jabs at her! – declaring her as honest "as summer flies are in the shambles, / That quicken even with the blowing" (IV.ii.67-68)[32]. Just as Hamlet accuses Ophelia of making "wantonness [her] ignorance" (III.i.145), so Othello musters his considerable eloquence in order to call Desdemona a whore[33]:

> Was this fair paper, this most goodly boo,
> Made to write 'whore' upon? What committed!
> Committed? O thou public commoner!
> I should make the very forges of my cheeks That
> would to cinders burn up modesty
> Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed!
> Heaven stops the nose at it, and the moon
> winks, The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets
> Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth
> And will not hear't. What committed!
> […]
> Are you not a strumpet?
> […]

[32] If – as Cavell has it – Othello is 'denying' Desdemona's innocence by calling her 'whore' or 'strumpet', then we have to wonder: why should Othello bother to involve Desdemona in this denial, by baldly provoking her repeatedly? If Othello is denying what he knows about Desdemona, then why seek to engage her at all, let alone in this direct and intimate manner? Why not just go straight to erasing her?

[33] When Othello mocks Desdemona for weeping – "O well-painted passion!" (IV.i.257) – we should, I think, hear echoes of Hamlet's provocation of Ophelia: "I have heard of your paintings well enough" (*Hamlet*, III.i.141). Like Desdemona, Ophelia had been confused by Hamlet's outburst – "O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" (*Hamlet*, III.i.149). By accusing Ophelia of falsity – "God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another" (III.i.142-43) – was not Hamlet challenging Ophelia to demonstrate that she was an *authentic*, independent, creature, not merely the obedient extension of Hamlet's own (or of Polonius' or some other man's) desire? Hamlet seems to have frightened Ophelia with his earlier use of force against her – which I am tempted to understand as another attempt to 'get a rise' out of her, to demonstrate *her* self-certainty. ("He took me by the wrist and held me hard, / Then goes he to the length of all his arm / And with his other hand thus o'er his brow / He falls to such perusal of my face / As 'a would draw it. Long stayed he so; / At last, a little shaking of mine arm / And thrice his head thus waving up and down, / He raised a sigh so piteous and profound / That it did seem to shatter all his bulk / And end his being", *Hamlet* II.i.84-93). It used to be believed that *Othello* was written just after *Hamlet*, as "confirmed by similarities of style, diction and versification", A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, New York, Penguin, 1990, p. 175.

What, not a whore?
(IV.ii.72-88)

Why does Othello prod Desdemona thus? "A beggar in his drink / Could not have laid such terms upon his callat", says Emilia (IV.ii.122-23).

I agree with Cavell when he says that Othello 'knows' Desdemona to be innocent of Iago's slander. But I do not hear Othello trying to 'avoid' this knowledge. Rather, I hear him *testing* or challenging Desdemona's innocence, trying to make sense of it as something other than obedience and fidelity to command[34]. How better (he thinks) to upend the institution of sexual domination than to call one's innocent, obedient wife a whore, strumpet? How better to find out if she is anything more than obedient? How better, that is, to see if and how *she* reacts?

"Are not you a strumpet?" (IV.ii.83), insists Othello.

DESDEMONA
No, as I am a Christian.
If to preserve this vessel for my lord
From any hated foul unlawful touch
Be not to be a strumpet, I am none.
(IV.ii.84-87)

"What, not a whore?", Othello tries one last time. "No, as I shall be saved" (IV.ii.88), affirms Desdemona piously. "Is't possible?" (IV.ii.89), Othello throws up his hands in frustration, leaving with her one last zinger – "I cry you mercy then, / I took you for that cunning whore of Venice / That married with Othello" (IV.ii.90-92). Am I alone in sensing Othello's disappointment at not having had his volley returned?

If Othello fails to incite her with words and blows – if he perceives only obedience ("My lord") – then *how* to know the independence of

[34] I also hear this in Hamlet's berating of Ophelia. "You jig and amble and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness your ignorance" (*Hamlet*, III.i.143-45).

Desdemona's desire? How to demonstrate that he has seduced and not mastered her? This is why her obedience is unnerving – her acquiescence effaces her, it makes her (and him) interchangeable parts of a social hierarchy. If she merely obeys, then he has mastered, not seduced her.

And that is not all. Othello also finds Desdemona irresistibly attractive, intoxicating. But her beauty and his arousal only leave him asking: *By whom or what am I seduced?* If it is just her feminine beauty and sensuous charm, then *she* – Desdemona – has no independent existence: there is only 'woman', witchcraft, voluptuousness, impersonal appetites. Seduction starts to look like compulsion or impulse, not freedom. The threats to sense mount. But how to prove that she is not a witch? How to know that he desires her – Desdemona, the real live person, someone who might accept or refuse him? There is, Othello concludes, only one way to find out:

> Get you to bed
> On th'instant, I will be returned forthwith.
> Dismiss your attendant there: look't be done.
> (IV.iii.5-7)

With this, let me return to the questions with which my discussion of *Othello* began. Can a seduction be known? Can we *know* that we are lovers? Can the achievement of such knowledge be something other than its sexual consummation, a subjectively felt passion?

Othello enters their bedroom and gazes upon Desdemona, "that whiter skin of hers than snow / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (V.ii.4-5), inhaling her "balmy breath" (V.ii.16)[35]. Othello is surely self-aware enough to know that there is no use denying his sexual desire for Desdemona, that even

[35] Whereas Cavell sees the invocation of "monumental alabaster" – and, indeed, the murder – as the "turning of Desdemona to stone", it seems to me that matters unfold in just the opposite direction. Othello wants to rouse her with his kisses – he wants reassurance that she is not only pleasing to the senses, or a breathing monument, but that she also acts independently. See Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other", p. 162. Cavell also begins his reflections on *Othello* by invoking the end of *The Winter's Tale* – the fact that Leontes had accepted Hermione's having become a statue as "the right fate for her disappearance from life" (p. 154).

killing Desdemona will not free him from wanting her[36]. He even says so – "Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee / And love thee after" (V.ii.18-19). So, I cannot believe that Othello does not want to get into bed; I also cannot believe that he does not know that this is what he wants. Yet he fights the urge[37].

In part, this is because he seeks to prove to himself that he is not driven by desire alone – that he is not merely attracted by a sensuous body that feeds and stokes his appetite. However, if Othello *only* wanted to prove that he is not driven by blind desire, then it would have been enough to reject her advances – "Will you come to bed, my lord?" (V.ii.24) – or to leave the room, or to practice some other form of chaste restraint. So, what else is he trying to prove?

Othello, I think, wants *objective* proof that lovemaking is being achieved, that there is genuine 'subjective' seduction between two independent people. Indeed, he will refrain from making love with her until the independence of her desire is demonstrated. But this leaves Othello with the impossible task of parsing his own arousal while gauging the risks of intimacy with Desdemona. On the one hand, because he seeks an objective demonstration that *he* can accept, he must remain on the bed next to her – tarrying with his own arousal, searching her eyes for evidence. On the other hand, because he will not accept lovemaking itself (that subjective act) as objective

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[36] And if Othello knows *this*, then he must also realize that there is nothing that he can do on his own to 'prove' that his desire is not impulse or sensuous appetite. This is why simply robbing Desdemona of breath unilaterally, while she sleeps, will not suffice. To prove anything, he must rouse her.

[37] As mentioned, it can be tempting to see sex as one of those activities – like sleeping – to which we sometimes succumb, during which urges and impulses supplant full consciousness. But if sex entails a suspension of self-awareness, then in what sense am *I* the one having sex? Even if I 'succumb' to my desires, don't I need be able to say to myself, at a minimum, that *I* succumbed? If I cannot even affirm *that*, then of what can I be certain? Likewise, while I may fall asleep without fully intending to do so, I still have to be able to recognize that *I* slept or that I had such-and-such a dream. Otherwise, to twist a trope from Descartes, I cannot take myself to be awake, to be living my life. If Othello is acting out his fantasies about Desdemona here, then this is not in order to make his dreams come true, but rather as a bid to gain assurance that he is indeed awake, living his life. To live out a fantasy is to seek assurance that one was not simply fantasizing.

proof, he must not let himself get *into* bed with her.

Let me shine a light on this moment to make an important claim before going on.

I want to say that the untenability of Othello's position – the internal contradiction I just described – *is* the historical impasse under consideration at this point in my broader account of love and freedom. The subjective act of lovemaking – the mutual recognition of two independent people, achieved by lovers like Tristan and Iseult – has not yet made itself socially real, for reasons already explained. And, I now want to say, lovemaking *cannot* make itself real unless it becomes 'objective' – demonstrable, proven – in the way that Othello wants. Othello is not wrong to need a worldly demonstration of Desdemona's love, of his love – not of obedience, but of *love*. For, without objective proof that they are lovers, what do they have? Domination and subjugation, perhaps, or blind appetites – or, at best, fantastical lovemaking and exchanges of tokens (handkerchiefs, rings) that remain, like medieval romance, fantasies by the lights of Venice's reality. Othello cannot be satisfied with such unreality.

For Othello sees himself as central to Venetian life, just as Venice is essential to him. He wants his marriage to be real in the world – which is to say that he needs lovemaking to be the *core* of his *whole* existence, the source of its meaning and value: both his subjective passions and his objective commitments to a way of life. This is not an idle need, or pleasant daydream. Othello cannot make sense of anything he is doing with Desdemona unless he gets this objectivity. And, if he cannot make sense of what he is doing with her, then of what *can* he make sense? (Merely that he has objectively "done the state some service, and they know't" (V.ii.337) – which is where he, suicidally, ends up). Leading a desirable, intelligible life as something other than a cog in a social machine or natural process *requires* making lovemaking to be achieved as real, both to the lovers and objectively in the world.

Othello, thus, cannot make love to Desdemona unless their lovemaking gives him, not just assurance of their mutual recognition, but proof that this mutual recognition is the value on which their lives, their entire world, can be demonstrably based. But Desdemona

cannot give him that proof. How could she? Publically and objectively, and hence privately and subjectively, she can only offer to Othello that which Venice recognizes in her: obedience, sensuousness, willingness, desirability, impossible beauty. She can make love to Othello, even offer him her life, but she cannot – by making love to him, or by dying – give Othello a world in which lovemaking could have objective standing, demonstrable normative authority.

What, then, is required for the achievement of such a world? What does a *demonstration* that we are, really, lovers – truly free, independent desiring agents – require? We are, I think, today still working out the answer to that question, in our social practices and revised collective values. But I have already mentioned some of what is required. Recall the list of social commitments recited above: a sharp decrease in arranged or enforced marriages; sexual 'liberation', and the increasing acceptance of public, individual displays of affection; moral and legal codes according to which individuals can *refuse* the sexual advances of others; expanded possibilities for divorce and separation which render 'marriage' unions freer; the right of women to own property; economic equality; increased access to birth control and abortion by individuals; a total re-conception of what it means to have children; the disappearance of a gender-based division of labor[38].

Is it too much to consider each of these world-historical shifts, and others beside – all of whose implications and significance cannot be overestimated – as *rendered necessary* by the need to make lovemaking objective, real?

I do not think so, because each of these social changes answers directly to the challenges, the threats to sense, faced by Desdemona and Othello. Othello and Desdemona cannot make their lives and actions intelligible – to themselves, to one another, to the world – unless they manage to be lovers, subjectively-passionately and objectively in their shared way of life.

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[38] For my own understanding of the significance of these changes, and how best to explain them, see my *Love as Human Freedom*, cit.

So, we watch Othello on the edge of the bed – struggling to get the objective proof he seeks without making love. Because he must avoid accepting subjective passion for objective proof, he must resist Desdemona's entreaties: "I hope you will not kill me" (V.ii.35)[39]; "O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not!" (V.ii.77).

DESDEMONA
Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight!

OTHELLO
Nay, if you strive –

DESDEMONA
But half an hour!

OTHELLO
Being done, there is no pause –

DESDEMONA
But while I say one prayer!
(V.ii.79-82)

But in a world in which lovemaking has not yet achieved objective standing or normative authority, what could Othello hope to prove?

At most, Othello can have objective evidence that Desdemona wants him more than she wants to stay alive, that she wants him no matter what. He can sever her desire for him from both her impersonal appetite and her social obedience. To prove that she loves him, she can let him put his hands around her neck. It is a logic with which seducers are not unfamiliar: physical surrender is necessary in order to demonstrate independence and the freedom of love.

Here the seducer's logic reaches its apotheosis. Desdemona's dead body is the only objective proof of freedom, of their love, that Othello

[39] I hear this to mean, 'I hope *you* will not kill me'. If this is to be read as 'I hope you will not *kill* me', then I cannot understand why Desdemona does not call for help. If it is to be read as 'I hope you will not kill *me*', then we have to conclude that Desdemona does not understand the danger she is in – which, of course, she clearly does (as at V.ii.37ff).

will have. No shedding of blood, no ruining of the flesh. So as to kill her and love her after.

To accept a world in which lovemaking has no normative authority, no demonstrable standing in our practices – at the heart of our way of life – is to accept a world in which Desdemona can live only as the embodiment of procreative demands and sensuous appetites, or as a subjugated, obedient woman. Either that, or it is to accept the necessity of her death.

Shakespeare, I take it, is tallying the precise cost of a world in which lovemaking remains a subjective, passionate possibility, but not yet a social reality. The cost is a world in which killing one's lover, being killed by one's lover, is perhaps the only way to prove that one loves truly. Love is 'externalized' in this world through the lover's dead body. To fully weigh the cost, moreover, Shakespeare also needs to show Desdemona's experience of what happens to her. That is, Shakespeare needs to show us what Othello – and we – are *missing* if we accept the necessity of Desdemona's destruction, or if we accept her reduction to procreative being or subjugated woman. Put another way, Shakespeare must show us that Desdemona might have lived freely *not* just in virtue of being recognized or treasured by 'us' (or by Othello, or the men in her life) – but because she herself is capable of realizing a free life, of being Othello's lover, of *earning* her freedom.

What freedom does Desdemona earn "in the feminine condition", to borrow Beauvoir's formulation?[40]

So far as we perceive, Desdemona speaks only when addressing another. Shakespeare hears her only in dialogue. Not unlike Juliet, Desdemona was "bound" by duty to her father, "for life and education" (I.iii.182). What life she had, she owed to Brabantio and her family – in whose patriarchal bosom the independence of her desires had remained invisible. What was unthinkable to Brabantio

[40] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, New York, Knopf, 2009.

was not a union between Othello and his daughter, but that his "quiet" daughter should be the one to want it[41]. Not, of course, because Othello was thought to be disagreeable, but because Desdemona was seen as obedient, sexually dominated by patriarchy. If Othello 'won' Desdemona – thinks Brabantio – then it must have been "with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood / Or with some dram conjured to this effect / He wrought upon her" (I.iii.105-7)[42].

Of course, just as Juliet encountered Romeo at the Capulet masque, so too Desdemona came to know Othello within the family's routines without needing to relate to Othello as family. This offered Desdemona the chance to claim the independence of her desire before her father, without having to oppose him (I.iii.180ff). If circumstances required drastic actions from Juliet, all that Desdemona needed do in order to leave her family – as far as Brabantio and cosmopolitan Venice were concerned – was to indicate that she knew what she wanted:

> That I did love the Moor to live with him
> My downright violence and scorn of fortunes
> May trumpet to the world.
> (I.iii.249-51)

Once her desire came into view before all of Venice, Desdemona could no longer stay in her father's home (I.iii.242ff). Not because Desdemona's desires were seen as illegitimate, but because the cloister of patriarchy could no longer offer a context in which these desires might flourish. Brabantio was not expressing bitterness at having been 'deceived' by Desdemona when he told Othello "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee" (I.iii.293-94). He was merely advising Othello to attend to Desdemona's independence. As I have been claiming, Othello tried to

41 "A maiden never bold, / Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion / Blushed at herself" (I.iii.95-97).

42 Cavell seems to echo Brabantio's view of Desdemona's obedience when he writes, of the final tableau, that Desdemona "obediently shares [Othello's] sense that this is their final night", Cavell, "Othello and the Stake of the Other, p. 162.

do precisely this.

Some suspect that Desdemona wanted to die all along, that she sought death at Othello's hands[43]. More often, she is seen as "helplessly passive" or a psychological "type"[44]. Yet Desdemona is an individual, hence in a concrete historical predicament; and as she prepares to go to bed with Othello, she articulates her sexual desires against Emilia's disproval. Othello has abused her publically. He has called her a "whore" and has thrown money at her (IV.ii.91). And now he is demanding that she await him, alone.

I do not know what Othello meant to say by calling me 'whore', by tossing coins at me. "Am I that name […]? I am sure I am none such" (IV.ii.120, 125). Desdemona does not understand Othello's accusations; but she tries to understand his meaning. On the one hand, she cannot simply accept Othello's accusations, since she does not take herself to be a "whore"[45]. His words and actions sting her because they are at odds with her self-conception; she cannot just *be* (or become) what he calls her. On the other hand, what Othello calls her, how he treats her – well, these things matter deeply to her. She is

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[43] In 1980, the French philosopher Louis Althusser strangled his wife of 30 years, apparently while massaging her neck. (He was then declared mentally ill and institutionalized.) He later wrote about the events – wondering if his wife had wanted to die, if she had "passively accept[ed] death at [his] hands"; if it had been a case of "suicide via intermediary". See Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever*, trans. Richard Veasey, New York, The New Press, 1993, p. 281. For a reading of Shakespeare's *Othello* that entertains a similar supposition, see Elizabeth Gruber, "Erotic Politics Reconsidered: Desdemona's Challenge to Othello", *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, 3:2 (Spring/Summer 2008), https://www.borrowers.uga.edu/781790/pdf. A less circumspect proposal of the same thesis is advanced in Robert *Dickes*, "*Desdemona*: An Innocent Victim?", *American Imago*, 27 (1970), pp. 279-97.

[44] A rare occasion on which A. C. Bradley seems to me to be wildly off-the-mark: "Desdemona is helplessly passive. She can do nothing whatever. She cannot retaliate even in speech; no, not even in silent feeling […] [her] suffering is like that of the most loving of dumb creatures tortured without cause by the being [s]he adores". Both in the secondary literature and in the performance history, Desdemona is regularly presented as a passive victim. See William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Michael Neill, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 103 and passim.

[45] "I cannot say whore: / It does abhor me now I speak the word; / To do the act that might the addition earn / Not the world's mass of vanity could make me" (IV.ii.163-66).

not immune to his gaze or accusations. She is not at all sure, then – either of herself, or of Othello[46].

In her exchange with Emilia, Desdemona weighs her own desires – and tries to arrive at *her* view of the meaning of sexual engagement with Othello. When she asks Emilia whether she – or "any such woman" (IV.iii.82) – would "do such a deed for all the world" (IV.iii.63, 67), she is asking *for what reason* a woman has sex with men. For material gain? To satisfy an urge? For 'sport'? Out of 'frailty'? As part of a power struggle with one's partner – as a way of trying to control his behavior?[47] If none of these 'reasons' satisfy Desdemona, then it is because she sees them all as institutionalized forms of what I have been calling sexual domination, gendered hierarchy. And she is trying to understand what her dissatisfaction with sexual domination says about *her* – what *she* or any woman in her position, under patriarchal conditions, might reasonably seek by craving a different form of sexual engagement with a powerful man. *Why should* I *make love with Othello, rather than someone else? What satisfaction can lovemaking afford* me – *given the risks involved, given institutionalized sexual domination?*

I am not suggesting that Desdemona (or that any of us) finally arrives at *the* final answer to these questions – only that Desdemona's dissatisfaction with the available answers spur her onward. ("God me such uses send / Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!" (IV.iii.103-4).) Thus, having been commanded to await Othello in bed, Desdemona prepares herself. Not that she mechanically follows instructions. Desdemona wants to know whether she can make love with Othello, in this particular setting – given his rage and his abusive behavior; given Emilia's doubts; given her own excitement and misgivings; given the patriarchal institutions of sexual domination. Desdemona takes up these questions by undressing, by looking in the mirror. She is young and beautiful, and she knows it; she sees the evidence reflected in the mirror and feels it in her bones. The experience of her own body – of her anatomy, of the way her

46 This shows at IV.ii.97ff in her halting exchange with Emilia, which follows immediately upon Othello's accusation.

47 Each of these is named in the exchange. See IV.iii.59ff.

flesh betrays her excitement and desires, the way her voluptuousness signals her desirability – all this belongs to the sense she makes of herself and her conditions. "Shall I go fetch your night-gown?", asks Emilia. "No", answers Desdemona, "unpin me here" (IV.iii.32-33).

In order to know whether she can make love – negate natural impulses and sexual domination – she will give Othello the right to make love to her, or take her life. To have her own way, she will let him have his way with her. Is this freedom?

I hear one response in Giuseppe Verdi's arrangement – when the harsh, relentless strings of Othello's violence give way to Desdemona's voice, hanging in the air. Not even respiration is involuntary, if she can let it be stopped by another. *Nessuno* […] *io stessa*.

Verdi was right to hear the source of opera's 'undoing of women' in Shakespeare's play – echoes of which already begin to reverberate in Monteverdi's *Lasciatemi morire* (1607-8), and which resound in every subsequent opera in which a woman 'dies' at the hands of her lover. But if "on the opera stage women perpetually sing their own undoing", as Catherine Clément memorably put it, then this is not because opera stages the subjugation of women in a sequential plot or story[48]. Shakespeare and Verdi present not merely Desdemona's murder, but also the way Desdemona lives it out. The operatic voice (the *melo*) stages how the woman *feels* or experiences what is happening to her (the *drama*, or story) – it gives that subjective experience an objective, clamorous, undeniable reality[49].

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[48] Clément misdiagnoses opera as the "eternal undoing" of women precisely because she is "determined to pay attention to the language, the forgotten part of opera". "I am going to talk about women and their operatic stories", she writes, "I am going to commit the sacrilege of listening to the words, reading the libretti, following the twisted, tangled plots", Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988, pp. 5, 12. Had she heard Shakespeare's words as musically as Verdi did, she would not have so neatly separated the plot from the woman's vocalized experience of it. For a critique of Clément, see Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci. Per una filosofia dell'espressione vocale*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2003.

[49] W. H. Auden puts the thought this way: "The singer may be playing the role of a deserted bride who is about to kill herself, but we feel quite certain as we listen that not only we, but also she, is having a wonderful time […] whatever errors the

Her death is not experienced as sexual subjugation or obedience. She has given another the right to destroy her. Under the circumstances, it is the only action she can make sense of as her own.

characters make and whatever they suffer, they are doing exactly what they wish". In his commentary on this remark, Bernard Williams suggests that Auden's diagnosis is only correct insofar as it concerns the "musical artistry and achievement" of "the aesthetics of opera". I disagree: I think (and I think Auden thinks) that opera manages to present, and make sense of, the way in which sexual agency is achieved by women through their *self*-undoing – perhaps the only form of agency available to women under stark patriarchal conditions. See W. H. Auden, "Notes on Music and Opera", in *The Dyer's Hand*, New York, Random House, 1962; Bernard Williams, *On Opera*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.

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Ears to See: Music in *The Tempest*

Giuliano Pascucci

Foreword

This essay tackles Ariel's most celebrated song *Full Fathom Five*, within the map of *The Tempest* as a sort of symphony, in which the language of sounds is dominant not only as a theme but also as a metaphor of the multi-discursivity of the play, to which my critical discourse conforms. Part one of my argument is a recollection of the historical and cultural background of the Stuart dramaturgy, calling for a music more suitable to the close space of theatres like the Blackfriars. Part two, textually based, is an inquiry into Shakespeare's collaboration with contemporary musicians and imitation/recreation of pre-existing scores. All this leading to Shakespeare's alleged collaboration with Robert Johnson for the composition of *Full Fathom Five* as well as to the similarity to tunes by John Dowland: in fact, the core of my argument.

Historical background

In 1608, the King's Men were granted rights to act at the Blackfriars, a theatre in which boy choristers had begun to perform about two

decades earlier. Although Shakespeare's acting company continued to use the Globe in the summer, the new location, indoor and smaller, changed a great deal in the staging of plays written prior to 1608 and imposed new requirements on those composed with the Blackfriars' stage in mind, e.g. *Pericles*, *Measure for Measure*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*. In a recent essay, Mariko Ichikawa has described the architecture of the building, pointing out that it was about half the size of its outdoor counterpart[1]. At the same time, Andrew Gurr has argued that due to the more limited space, Shakespeare had to reduce the number of lines for entrances and exits, and consequently the length of the performance[2]. Undoubtedly the size of the Blackfriars required some sort of negotiation on different levels of the stage production. Music was a crucial element in such negotiation, as proved by the growing success of the court masque in Jacobean culture[3]. *The Tempest* testifies to the popularity of the genre, matching – perhaps challenging – the increasingly experimental role of music brought about by the masque in the verbal and visual paradigms of romantic comedy.

Shakespeare was indifferent to the Aristotelian and Puritan repudiation of music, notably in tragedy. In *Hamlet*'s act IV Ophelia sings, in the presence of other people or to herself, over ten song fragments; Desdemona sings the whole tune of *The Willow Song*; in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* although scanty, music is so

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1 Mariko Ichikawa, "Continuities and Innovations in Staging", in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean House*, eds Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 79-94.

2 Andrew Gurr, "*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars", *Shakespeare Survey*, 41 (1989), pp. 91-102.

3 It is generally acknowledged that in *The Tempest*, the Masque of Juno and Ceres was written later than 1611 and auspiciously inserted in the play's performance during the revels for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth with the Elector Palatine on November 1, 1613. If need be, such musical episode could easily be removed. Never in the text is one allowed to believe that the apparition was actually staged in the 1611 Blackfriars' production, as is testified by Prospero, who defines the vision "a trick", a "vanity of my art" (IV.i. 40-41). More on the masque in David Lindley, ed., *The Court Masque*, London, Manchester University Press, 1986; Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, rpt. 1992; Jerzy Limon, *The Masque of Stuart Culture*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1990.

powerful as to acquire a performative role[4]. In the comedies, the presence of music is even more outstanding and culminates in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, significantly composed for the Blackfriars. An increasing amount of music therefore marked the Jacobean productions and the life of the Blackfriars area.

Before 1608, a number of professional musicians had written music for plays held at that theatre. The boy actors who therein performed were all trained as choristers, some of them even as instrumentalists. Thanks to their celestial and sophisticated voices, they could provide remarkable renditions. Spectators, in their turn, were used to listening to professionally performed music during the pieces they attended, also as a consequence of the music played during the *entr'acte*, the interval which was necessary to trim the candles in the hall. Yet, at that time music was not only performed *entr'actes*. Concerts unrelated to the plays were given before the beginning of shows, a habit that turned theatres into the historical antecedent of concert halls[5].

At the Blackfriars, theatregoers had the opportunity to listen to all sorts of music. Composers usually lived nearby, and their careers pivoted around the theatre itself, as in the case of Richard Farrant, Nathaniel Giles, John Dowland, and Robert Johnson. All in all, the Blackfriars area was certainly the musical quintessence of the city – it was, in fact, London's most musical neighbourhood.

Since the audiences were avid consumers of music, it has been recently suggested that Shakespeare's collaboration with Johnson, author of *Full Fathom Five* and *Where the Bee Sucks*, must not have been limited to those pieces only but was rather extended to the whole play as in modern musical theatre show or in film[6].

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4 Giuliano Pascucci, "Music in Shakespeare's Roman Plays", in *Roman Shakespeare: Intersecting Times, Spaces, Languages*, ed. Daniela Guardamagna, Oxford, Peter Lang, forthcoming.

5 See John H. Long, ed., *Music in English Renaissance Drama*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1968; David C. Price, *Patrons and Musicians of the English Renaissance*, Cambridge Studies in Music, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

6 Jonathan Holmes, leading director and founder of the Jericho House, has recently suggested that the play was originally written as a musical or, differently put, it was intended as a masque-like entertainment containing other masques and in which music must have functioned as a film score or as a

According to some scholars, negotiation must have also affected the instruments used in the performance. They maintain that the indoor location encouraged the use of quieter instruments as opposed to the sonic environment of an open theatre, where music had to be louder, practically limited to trumpet flourishes and the like. This notion, first expressed by Andrew Gurr in his seminal 1970 essay *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*[7], was iterated in Bruce Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*[8] and is implicit in Sarah Dustagheer's claim that "a series of loud effects was perhaps unsuitable for such a 'live' space where sound bounced and travelled through the auditorium"[9]. Specifically, the claim is that woodwind replaced brass. Through repetition, such ideas have crystallised and it was only in a 2012 long and detailed essay, that David Mann debunked it by resorting to Linda Austern's studies[10], among others, thereby showing that the indoor musical tradition was not so very different from the Globe's. It is a fact, however, that thanks to the increasing use of music and of its related activities, music began to be "integral to the dramaturgy"[11], a necessary ingredient of plot and character development.

Actually, Sarah Dustagheer's claim that loud effects were unsuitable for the narrow space of the Blackfriars calls for reconsideration when it comes to *The Tempest*. What a shocking, tragic and awe-inspiring moment must have been when the enclosed space of the Blackfriars began to reverberate the roaring of the sea and the thunderbolts opening the play with an intensity unattainable in an outdoor theatre. And how soothing and calming must have sounded the abrupt shifting from plain and loud noise to the presumably sophisticated music accompanying the lyrics of *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* and of *Full Fathom Five*.

character. More on this subject on *The official website of BBC Music Magazine*, available at www.classical-music.com/news/tempest-early-musical.

7 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970.

8 Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

9 Sarah Dustagheer, "Acoustic and Visual Practices Indoors", in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, eds Gurr and Karim-Cooper, pp. 137-51: 138.

10 David Mann, "Reinstating Shakespeare's Instrumental Music", *Early Theatre*, 15:12 (2012), pp. 67-91.

11 Dustagheer, p. 139.

The collaboration with a professional musician such as Robert Johnson, established since the composition of *The Winter's Tale*, and the enclosed acoustic environment revealed new expressive means and possibilities to Shakespeare, who, in *The Tempest*, does not use music to simply unveil traits of the characters' inner life (as Shakespeare does with Desdemona or Ophelia), to affect feelings and passions, or even to highlight a comic relief.

The magic of music

Music in *The Tempest* is ineffable, it comes and goes unannounced, it often springs from an unseen source, thus creating confusion and displacement. Commenting on *Come Unto These Yellow Sands*, the first music piece that Shakespeare utilised in the play (for one of which, unfortunately, we do not possess any written notation), Ferdinand says:

> Where shold this Musick be? I' th aire, or th' earth?
> It sounds no more: and sure it waytes vpon
> Some God o th' Iland, sitting on a banke,
> Weeping againe the King my Fathers wracke.
> This Musicke crept by me vpon the waters
> Allaying both their fury, and my passion
> With it's sweet ayre: thence I haue follow'd it
> (Or it hath drawne me rather) but 'tis gone.
> No, it begins againe. (I.ii.388-96)[12]

Ferdinand is puzzled. He ignores both the source of and the reason for the music in the scene[13], and lacks a full understanding of the current event. The same happens when Ariel, resuming his singing,

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[12] All quotations are from *The New Oxford Shakespeare*. *The Complete Works: Critical Reference Edition*, eds Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, 2 vols, and from *The New Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition*, eds Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016.

[13] A similar situation occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra* (IV.iii.11-19), in connection with Enobarbus' mysterious death: "SECOND SOLDIER: Peace! What noise? / FIRST SOLDIER: List, list! / SECOND SOLDIER: Hark! / FIRST SOLDIER: Music i' th' air. / THIRD SOLDIER: Under the earth. / […] FIRST SOLDIER: Peace, I say! / What should this mean?" See, on this, Pascucci.

performs *Full Fathom Five*: in purporting to console Ferdinand of his father's loss, he actually reinforces the *illusion* of his death (I.ii.391).

From the start of the play music acquires a magic aura, a performative power whose origin is unknown to men. Shakespeare and Johnson breathed into this music a magical power, no longer mirroring the harmony of the celestial spheres, nor in accordance with the Greek modal scales (a view still maintained during the Elizabethan era). In *The Tempest*, the magic of music does not need any theoretical justification. Descriptions of musical islands are, in fact, well grounded in the literary tradition of the *mirabilia*: the enchanted rocks off the coast of Sicily described by Circe in the *Odyssey* recur along the routes connecting Naples to the same Tunis from which the characters of *The Tempest* set out on their journey home. In his *De Nuptiis*, Martianus Capella (ca. 410 AD) describes a number of musical islands later borrowed by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in his *De Occulta Philosophia* (1531). In Lydia, writes Agrippa, there are "Nymphs Islands […] A certain stone of Megaris makes a sound like a harpe every time the string of a harpe is struck; so great is the power of music, That it apeaseth the minde"[14] – precisely the effect it induces in Ferdinand, who thinks the music he hears is being played by some god of the island.

In an essay dating back to 1993, French scholar Pierre Iselin argues that music in *The Tempest* is ambivalent and uncanny[15], mostly deceitful when it seems to reveal reality. Lingering on the threshold between reality and imagination, it may cheat the senses (as in the Harpy's banquet and in the masque), and create a fake reality (Alonso's death). Moreover, characters often give themselves away when trying to describe the visions conjured up by the sounds they hear or have heard.

This mechanism of selective hearing is activated in several scenes of *The Tempest*. During the attempted regicide scene (II.i.300) Ariel sings into Gonzalo's ear the song *While You Here Do Snoring Lie*, thus awaking him before the betrayers can hatch their devious

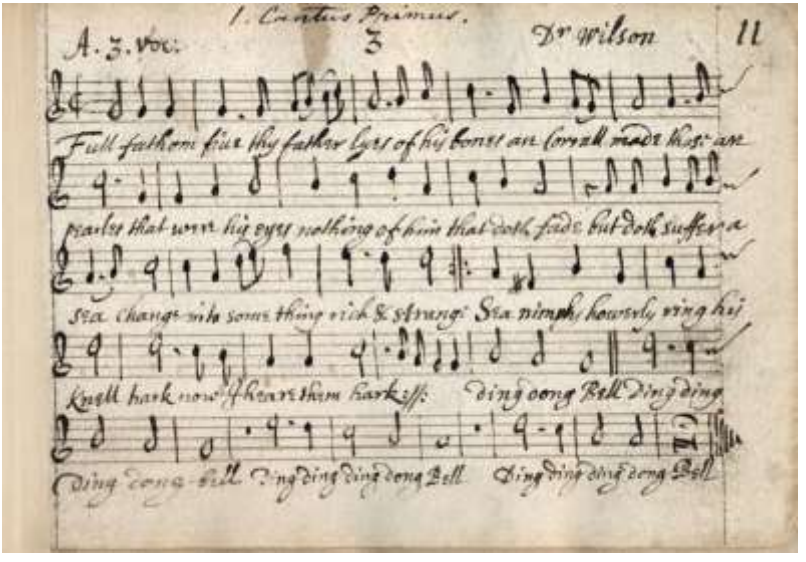
[14] Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three books of Occult Philosophy, or Magick*, vol. I, p. 125, trans. John French, *Early English Books Online TCP*, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A26565.0001.001/1:16.24?rgn=div2;view=fulltext.

[15] Pierre Iselin, "*The Tempest* et ses Musiques: Mythe et Dramaturgie", *Études Anglaises*, 46:4 (1993), pp. 385-97.

plan. In this scene, the performance of music differentiates three levels of perception. For the audience it is meant to wake up the sleepers, while the traitors Sebastian and Antonio maintain they have not heard any music, rather a roar of lions (an image reminiscent of the Age of Iron as portrayed by Cesare Ripa in his *Iconologia*). Finally, the innocent Gonzalo defines the "noise" he has heard as a humming, thus evoking the bees, a symbol of his longed-for Golden Age. In attaching a name to the sound they hear, the characters reveal the moral universe to which they belong. In Pierre Iselin's words:

> The allegorical reading of Ripa thus telescopes Ariel's discriminating, elective musical process: verbalizing one's response to music is tantamount to defining the symbolic age one belongs to. The co-existence of ages and their problematic dialogue is the emblematic version of the play's multi-discursive, polyphonic construction[16].

The polysemy of this polyphonic pattern is particularly evident in *Full Fathom Five* (I.ii.397-403) when Ariel describes Alonso's death to a grieving Ferdinand. Together with *Where the Bee Sucks* (I.ii.375-



[16] Pierre Iselin, "My Music for Nothing: Musical Negotiation in *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Survey*, 48 (1995), pp. 135-45: 144.

82) this song is the only piece whose original score has survived[17], thus allowing textual interpretation[18].

The sources of Full Fathom Five

In *Full Fathom Five* selective hearing is crucial. Unlike Prospero's report to Miranda on the events prior to their exile, the event of Alonso's alleged drowning is entrusted to a musical performance. Staging it would be all but easy. No verse could achieve the same result. The magic of the piece induces Ferdinand to believe in the metamorphosis of his father's physical body from nature into a jewel made of pearls and corals, a piece of art meant to turn Alonso's mortality into eternity:

> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange. (I.ii.398-402)

The ambivalence of this passage is that it is uncommitted on whether Alonso still lives; a significant reversal of the Counter-Reformation scenario, in which anamorphosis produces a displacement of sensual glamour to the naked truth of death.

The magic of music is not limited to convincing Ferdinand. On a metatheatrical level, it puts on stage the scene of a world elsewhere, which the eyes cannot see; a musical world with a specific popular tradition, built on imitation and refashioning of the sources.

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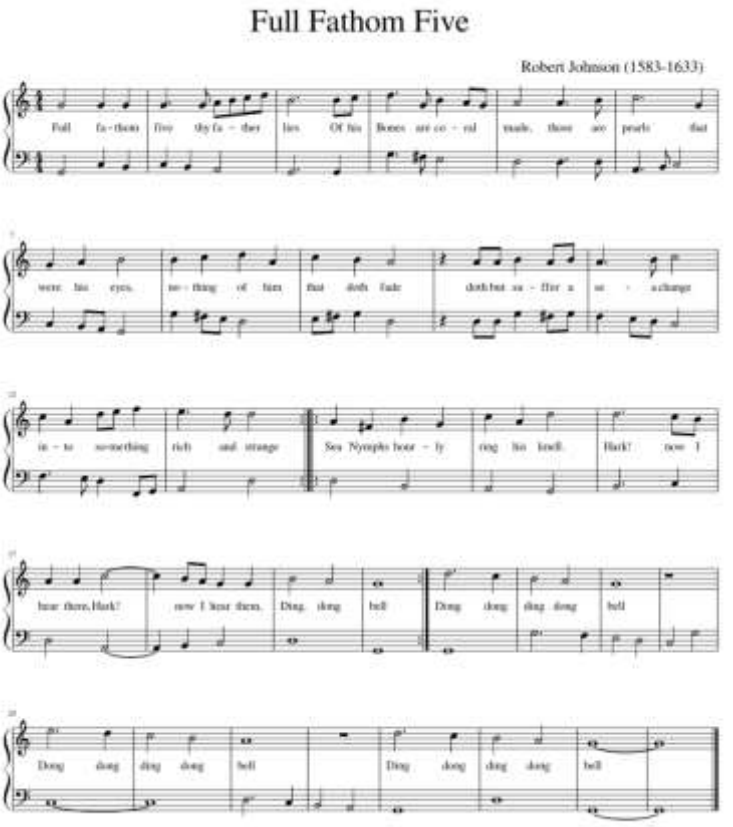
[17] The song, as well as *Where the Bee Sucks*, first appeared in print in John Wilson's collection *Cheerful ayres and Ballads First composed for one single Voice and since set for three Voices* published in Oxford in 1660. In Wilson's collection the name of Robert Johnson is appended to both songs, as it is in at least one of their manuscript sources (e.g. MS V.a.411 held at the Folger Shakespeare Library). The misguiding attribution to John Wilson in Manuscript Don.c.57, f. 75r, held at the Bodleian Library (Oxford), is nowadays considered a mistake by the copyist.

[18] I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my friend and teacher Maestro Anna De Martini for her precious comments and advice on the musical issues tackled in this paper.



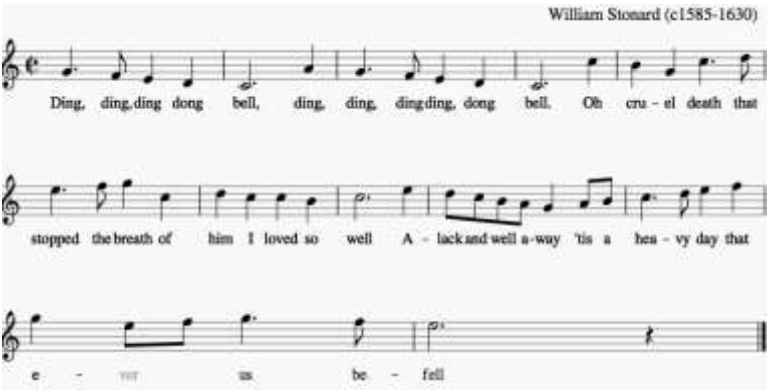
The above score notates the melody of the song as found in the manuscript held at The Folger Library, to be accompanied by a bass line. At a time when compositions were usually notated in individual parts, it is difficult to establish whether the melody was accompanied by other voices or by one or more instruments. Nor is it possible to ascertain whether the composer and the playwright wanted the song performed as written or ornamented with embellishments, according to a traditional practice. Nonetheless, other features of the song can be ascertained.

The refrain, "ding dong bell", first appeared in an old nursery rhyme dated 1580. It was printed in 1609 in the *Pammelia* miscellany by Thomas Ravenscroft in the form of a four-voiced canon which reads:

Jacke boy, ho boy newes,
The cat is in the well,
Let us ring now for her Knell,
Ding dong ding dong bell.

The lyrics of this refrain are echoed in the lines sung by Ariel: "Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell, / Hark now I hear them, ding dong bell" (I.ii.403-4). In *The Tempest*, however, they take on a parodic connotation. "The knell for a drowned cat", referred to the loss of a king and a father, must have sounded ironical: a tragedy for Ferdinand but a farce to *The Tempest*'s audience, thus providing two different levels of perception.

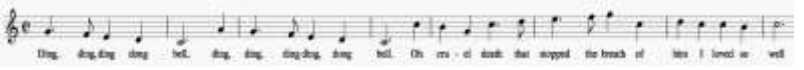
Jacke Boy is not the only antecedent to Ariel's song. A canon for four male voices titled *Ding Dong Bell* composed by William Stonard in the years when *Jacke Boy* was growing in popularity was another source of inspiration for Shakespeare and Johnson, who drew conspicuously from it.



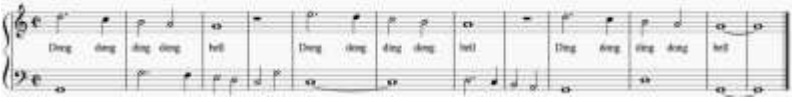
Stonard's lyrics, too, pay homage to a departed beloved. The piece has the circular pattern structure of a *round*, connecting the last line – "that we may ring his knell" (omitted in the above score) – to the first, "Ding dong bell". It could be argued that the similarity in the words of the three compositions might result from the common

theme; in the case of Stonard's catch, however, the music too is similar to Johnson's.

In modern terms, the songs are written in two different keys, respectively C major and G major; but in the above sections the melodies overlap:

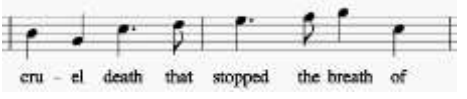


In Stonard's fragment reported above, the sound of the bell is clearly juxtaposed to a progression of five-note descending scales as in Ariel's song:

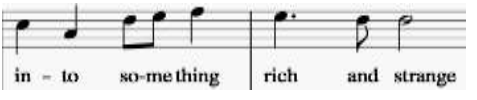


This is not the only similarity between Stonard's and Johnson's pieces. Generally speaking, they both tend to strictly revolve around the root note of the key and show a climactic phrase in which a descending third interval is followed by an ascending fourth and a few conjunct degrees. The passages look similar even graphic-wise:

Stonard's



mimics Johnson's



No less than the island of *The Tempest*, this song is full of echoes, both verbal and instrumental.

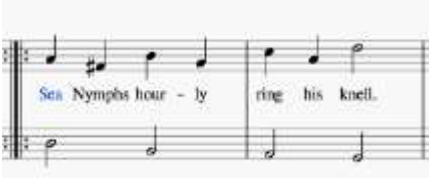
Multiple discursiveness

The song starts with an alliteration on the fricative unvoiced labiodental /f/ "Full fathom five thy father lies" followed by the liquid double /l/. Since the incipit, the phonosymbolism of these words evokes a rarefied ambience in which the presence of water is clearly signaled.

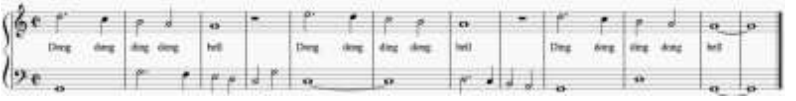
This concept is highlighted by the accompanying music. The dull *ostinato* of Gs, onto which Ariel's first phrase is juxtaposed, metaphorically reenacts the bottom of the ocean through the iteration of the root note of the key on which the piece is built, i.e. G major. At the same time, the flat and dull repetition of the note is proleptic to the monotonous knell for Alonso in the refrain we've discussed above.

Then Alonso's transformation begins: "nothing of him that doth fade […] strange" (I.ii.400-1). Musically speaking, here the song begins to fluctuate. After the first phrase, the melodic line changes, even though revolving around the same chords as the previous one. The transformation goes on until Alonso is completely turned into "something rich and strange", a point in which music reaches its climax by hitting the highest tones of the song's range (E4 and D4), while poetry follows in its footsteps resorting to rather simple, yet effective, rhetorical figures of speech such as assonance (nymphs / ring) and, again, alliteration ("suffer a sea change").

Once the metamorphosis is completed and Alonso has been changed from human into an aesthetic object, a new episode begins. The atmosphere of the piece changes too and an element of gaiety is introduced by the ascending melody skillfully obtained through descending third intervals.



The major and minor thirds intervals give the melody a movement of its own, possibly reminiscent of the swimming sea nymphs, a madrigalism[19] after the Italian fashion which had been introduced, at least theoretically, a few years before by Thomas Morley[20], who also wrote for Shakespeare. In the last three phrases the bells toll Alonso's knell on fifth interval scales ending with the most conventional of all possible cadences, namely the chord sequence V-I or *perfect cadence*.



Actually, nothing relevant happens in the song, even in its most climactic episode. However, in a world made of sound, sounds are necessarily the most concrete elements to be experienced by the senses. Unlike its antecedents, Ariel's song, which at times resembles them almost to the point of plagiarism, is much more sensual and physical. Through simple alliterations and rhymes, the partially obscure meaning of the lyrics materializes, becoming almost tangible and thoroughly convincing: though surely the song's lyrics leave doubt in the minds of the spectators, Ferdinand really believes that his father is dead. Music is the expedient through which he can make sense out of his experience, though only at a symbolic level, as the audience knows.

Musically speaking, the tune is not very different from others which were popular at the time, especially John Dowland's, the lutenist and composer whom Shakespeare had praised around 1599 in poem VIII of his *The Passionate Pilgrim*, but whose sorrowful *ayres* were soon to become old-fashioned. A testimony of this is to be found within Shakespeare's works (in Orsino's "dying fall" in *Twelfth Night*, for instance)[21] and in some contemporary musicians

[19] A musical feature characteristic of a madrigal, specifically a word or phrase set to music in a way that vividly illustrates its literal meaning. On coeval music see also Long and Price (cf. note 5 above).

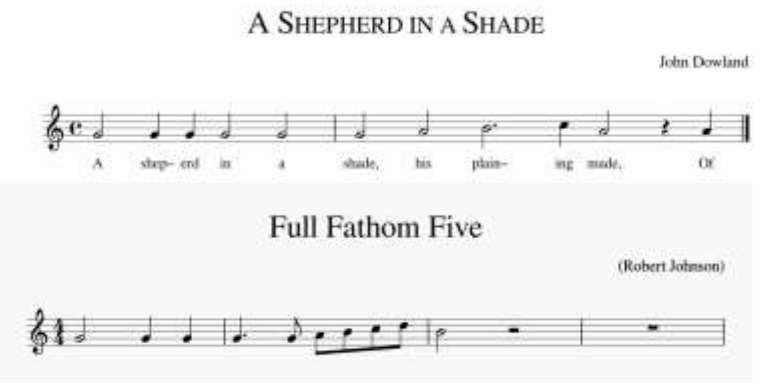
[20] Thomas Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*, London, Peter Short, 1597.

[21] See Rosy Colombo, "Un *play* e due titoli: una prospettiva shakespeariana", in Twelfth Night*: dal testo alla scena*, eds Mariangela Tempera and Keir Elam, Bologna, Emil, 2017, pp. 13-28.

such as Thomas Morley or Robert Johnson, who distanced themselves from Dowland's style. In his "Musical Introduction to The Tempest" included in the *The New Oxford Shakespeare* edition, John Cunningham claims that *Full Fathom Five* is stylistically similar to songs of the 1610s[22]. In my opinion, it is purposely conventional and reminiscent precisely of John Dowland's style.

Johnson is traditionally considered the author of eighteen songs meant for Shakespeare's company. Some of them have never been reliably attributed to him (e.g. *Hark, Hark the Lark* for *Cymbeline*; *Lawn as White as Driven Snow* written or possibly adapted for *The Winter's Tale* and several others). *Where the Bee Sucks* and *Woods, Rocks and Mountains*, presumably sung in *Cardenio* as well as *Endless Tears*, were nonetheless indubitably composed by Johnson. These pieces are much more elaborate than *Full Fathom Five*, they present madrigalisms and allow or even require ornamentation. Elements which are alien to *Full Fathom Five*, where the melody tends to develop through conjunct degrees, thus allowing little space for melodic diminutions or other sorts of embellishments. On the other hand, the similarity to John Dowland's musical production is striking. For reasons of space, I will limit my argument to a few yet significant examples.

In the *Second Book of Ayres* a remarkable resemblance is provided by song number 17, *A Shepherd in a Shade*:



[22] John Cunningham, "Musical Introduction to *The Tempest*", in *The New Oxford Shakespeare*. *The Complete Works: Critical Reference Edition*, eds Taylor, Jowett, Bourus and Egan, vol. II, pp. 1524-580: 1524.

The key in which the song is fashioned and the time signature (C major if you will) are the same as Ariel's song; both begin with a prolonged repetition of Gs; apart from their final note, the melodies of the first phrase sound the same; both compositions revolve around two major chords, G major and E major. Perfect cadences (V-I) abound in both pieces.

Something similar to song number 17 occurs in *Faction That Ever Dwells* (18), showing a similar incipit and lack of harmonic variety.

Time's Eldest Son, written about fifteen years before *Full Fathom Five*, is the first of a three-part song illustrating the proper behaviours of young and old men. It bears an even more astonishing resemblance to Ariel's song.

Similarities with Dowland's songs are neither limited to the second book of *ayres* nor to incipits of the pieces. I am not arguing that the most celebrated of the songs in *The Tempest* should be attributed to John Dowland rather than to Robert Johnson. Maybe the similarities shared by the songs herein mentioned are merely accidental. Yet one cannot deny that while composing music for *The Tempest*, Johnson decided to follow the conventional style which he had dismissed while writing music for *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, a fact which makes *Full Fathom Five* much closer to John Dowland that to Robert Johnson himself. The multi-discursiveness thus arising is not only a prerogative of the song in performance. The multidimensional composition includes a triple scheme: a homage to the popular tradition, an acknowledgement of John Dowland's style and the creation of an ambivalent narrative for the sake of Ferdinand's supposed orphanhood. The three aspects lead to three different levels of perception: for the erudite audience of the Blackfriars, the reference to the aforementioned nursery rhyme,

so overtly quoted in Ariel's song, must have signified that what Ferdinand perceives as a ritual dirge is also a parody of his loss; the reference to John Dowland could be either a mockery of an old-fashioned style, or a homage to the composer, who, after his return from Denmark, lived in the Blackfriars area and must have participated, at least as a spectator, in musical performances in the theatre. In other words, some generational dialogue between Johnson, Shakespeare, and Dowland is certainly taking place while the audience and the characters are focusing on the possible meaning of the tune they are listening to. Finally, the staging of the king's death through a song creates a sort of musical meta-narrative.

The island looks different to each character and so does music. In its multiverse none of the universes that language and music create for each character prevails over the others. At the centre of the island is a lack of meaning which resists ultimate interpretation. In this respect, the ear is not more reliable than the eye as a cognitive tool. Both music and language suggest meaning, yet they fall short of knowledge[23].

Coda

A whole cultural environment flows into the sounds of *The Tempest*. Its multi-dimensional discourse launches a new and alluring aesthetics to be developed not only on the early modern stage but in the theatres to come. The established space for the musicians (the historical antecedent of the orchestra pit) is typical of the Blackfriars as well as of the Sam Wanamaker House today. The growing role of music in Shakespeare's final Romances and its interweaving with the plot; the early modern form of masque and anti-masque requiring special effects (e.g., spectacular costumes, singing, dancing, moveable scenery, baroque paintings and decorations) and, above all, the playwright's acknowledged collaboration with lutenist and composer Robert Johnson point to *The Tempest* as a precursor of English Semi-opera or Restoration Spectacular, which

[23] Cf. Cavell and his idea of Shakespeare's skepticism in Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003 (2nd edition).

in its turn was to evolve, in the United Kingdom, into the form of modern musical theatre rather than into Opera as on the continent.

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Selected Publications in Shakespeare Studies (2016-2017)

Elam, Keir, *Shakespeare's Pictures: Visual Objects in the Drama*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, 380 pp.

"Ut pictura poësis", "pictura muta poësis", "poësis pictura loquens". It is in these canonic formulae that Italian and continental Renaissance aesthetic theorists initially – to be followed by their British counterparts – tried to synthesize the multiple relations between the traditional 'sister arts', poetry (i.e. literature and drama) and painting. Such relations acquired a new, original quality starting from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. This quality was the connection between ancient rhetoric and modern iconology: it is the combination of word and picture, their mutual semantic illumination that provides the full meaning and proper understanding of either a literary or artistic text. The link of a figure with a possible conceptual content was ever more perceived as anything but arbitrary. In England, in particular, there was an evident awareness of the deeper, far more than merely illustrative, possibilities of pictorial representation within a literary/dramatic text. This was due not only to the popular tradition of allegorical pageants and moralities, but also to the influence of the Neo-Platonists and their ideas concerning symbols and their signifying power. This awareness gave rise to a theoretical debate about the

major importance of either the linguistic or iconographic aspects of the word/picture relation. If John Hoskins, in his *Directions for Speech and Style*, seemed to privilege the verbal side, foregrounding allegories, similes and parables, Abraham Fraunce, in *Insignium, Armorum, Emblematum, Hierogliphicorum, et Symbolorum, quae ab Italis Imprese nominantur, explicatio*, preferred symbols and icons. Fraunce too laid great emphasis on the fact that it is the relation between word and figure that allows for the significance of the aesthetic text, which is not merely the sum of its parts, just as in a human being *forma* is more than the addition of *corpus* and *anima*. In this sense, Giordano Bruno's *De gl'eroici furori*, published in London during his persecution by the Catholic Church as a heretic, and dedicated to Philip Sidney, confirms a most suggestive link between Neo-Platonic thought and Elizabethan *episteme*.

Shakespeare's knowledge of the intensive argument about the sister arts comes to the fore – just to give an example that is akin to the contents of Elam's book – in the opening scene of *Timon of Athens*, a text thoroughly analyzed in this volume. There, a poet and a painter engage in a competition for the protagonist's patronage. While the poet calls attention to the limitations of portraiture according to the *analogical* model of, say, Lodovico Dolce or Benedetto Varchi – "To the dumbness of the gesture / One might interpret" (I.i.33-34) – the painter echoes Leonardo harshly confuting the supposed hegemony of the verbal over the figurative: a clash over the much discussed, accepted or refuted, idea of "dumbness" of visual arts, descending from Platonic prejudice. Leonte's skeptical question in *The Winter's Tale*, "What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath" (V.iii.78-79), is ironically confuted by his approaching a visual miracle such as Hermione's image being brought to life. In *Cymbeline* though, Iachimo convinces Posthumus that he was eagerly invited into Imogen's bedroom (whose upholstery invokes chaste Diana's myth) on the evidence of his familiarity with her room's decorative chimneypiece.

It was only George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) that deliberately aimed to ground a definitive mutual relation between word and picture in the polyvalent, multimedial 'discourse'

of the aesthetic experience. The same fundamental hypothesis of an inclusive, comprehensive knowledge seems to have oriented Keir Elam's excellent book, whose very title summons up the linguistic components of all the discussion about the *èkphrasis* tradition. Contemporary studies of Renaissance *èkphrasis*, although fundamentally sticking to the analogical model of *paragone*, seem to bypass the troublesome question of the hegemony between the sister arts. In particular, present day debates (this book included) tend to highlight the relevance of related modes of *èkphrasis* such as tableaux, speaking pictures, and emblems, in books as well as in coins, furniture, embroidery, not to mention pageants and masques. *Èkphrasis* brings time to a halt, arresting the dramatic movement to allow the beholder to enjoy moments of either contemplation of a character or exploration of the plot, the eye being understood as a channel between reality and imagination.

This book is beautiful in more than one sense, introduced as it is by the cover image of one of the handsomest young British players, Ben Whishaw (here as Hamlet, but unforgettable to me in his more recent hieratical, mystical portrait of Richard II for BBC2). A beautiful book also in its very rich and appropriately selected iconographic apparatus. Chiefly beautiful though in the elegance of style which accompanies the author's intellectually impressive textual analysis.

Elam insists that *his* Shakespeare picture book is *not* a book of either pictures of Shakespeare or about illustrations of characters and scenes taken from the plays, but a book primarily concerned with the *role* of pictures in Shakespearean drama, and the use to which the dramatist puts visual objects in the plays, as well as material objects in the plots. In the words of a well-known Renaissance *topos*, if 'the play is the thing', then what is this thing? Is it a physical object, previously observed by the dramatist in his own mind and transferred from there, by means of verbal or visual or technical devises, to the eyes of the spectators? Or is it just an illusion, a counterfeit? And what is a picture, a figure at the theatre? Is it real? Is it objectively seen by the actors? What do the public really see? Fascinating conjectures, that the reading of Elam's pages continuously provokes, stimulating one to enquire *more*, and more.

At the same time the author, following Shakespeare's lead, forces us to consider that a play is not a picture: never, ever could a visual object, or a figure, a painting, a portrait coincide with the global meaning of a play. A 'modern' drama cannot be the equivalent of a static Medieval morality play, which was made up of a succession of more or less *vivants tableaux.* Drama is movement, action, it is sensorial, and multimedial, linked as it is to the primary 'object' of the play, that is the actor's mobile and continuously reshaping physicality of the actor's *body* itself.

In any case, the visual 'objects' that Elam's research privileges here are not so much general 'pictures' as, far more specifically, *portraits.* Dramatic portraits like those of King Hamlet and Claudius in the famous closet scene (embodied in the cover illustration of this volume), or Portia's effigy in Bassanio's casket in *The Merchant of Venice,* or Olivia's miniature in *Twelfth Night.* But the theme of portraiture, in Renaissance dramas, inevitably calls for attention to the related problems of *perspective*, which Elam's meticulous analysis surely does not elude. What are the modalities of Shakespeare's perspectives? How are both actors and public (and readers as well) allowed to observe a painting? Can they have a 'natural' perspective, both frontal and linear, *à la* Alberti, or an artificial and distorted one, lopsided or slanting, *à la* Lomazzo? Or is the painting an anamorphosis *tout court*? The author's perspicuous capacity for focusing on details without losing control of his overall, systematic view of this particularly interesting literary/artistic phenomenon, makes his analysis of *Twelfth Night* exemplary in being both extremely functional and productive. Its center of interest is the 'double image'; double in many senses. It is double because Shakespeare elaborates two meanings of the term 'counterfeit', simultaneously being either a perfect copy or the false simulacrum of a given object. Double also (even triple!) because the dramatist uses the term 'perspective' as: 1. how the human physiological eye 'naturally' observes a thing; 2. how a lens or a mirror, or any technical device for that matter, if located between the eye and the object, can alter the vision; 3. what the beholder actually sees, when his eye is not in front of but one-sided to the object of vision.

And finally, what I find and mostly appreciate in this book is the author's appropriate and competent concern for the *emblematic* lineaments of the *pictures* or *figures* or *portraits* that are involved in Shakespeare's plays: one field of research which I have always particularly cherished. There are various ways of looking for figurative connections and emblematic elements in Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama. The easiest way is searching for direct borrowings or transparent quotations, although the emblematic image is frequently so closely integrated in the dramatic movement that it tends to lose static and/or pictorial quality. A different manner of emblematizing the theatrical object or scene is the insertion in plays of allegorical pieces, in the form of tableaux or dumb shows which provide figurative commentaries on the action, determining the same reciprocally explanatory combination of word and image that is functionally central to any emblematic method. In any case, as Elam clearly shows, emblematic images can often be the simplest of objects, banal stage properties, which nevertheless prove to be invested by the dramatist with an allegorical meaning that is ostensibly derived from his knowledge of emblem repertoires. Nevertheless, even without the use of stage properties, a fragment of the dramatic dialogue can become emblematic, when a well-known emblem is implied in theatrical discourse which presupposes a mimetic, corporeal interaction between words and gestures. In other words, to go back to the repeated dramatic and theatrical Renaissance introjection of the classic *èkphrasis* theme, what is either the real or the theatrical 'thing'?

As a further aspect of the richness of this book, it is impossible not to mention the very useful Appendix dedicated to 'Shakespeare's iconographic lexicon' – the first to appear so far, at least to my knowledge – which offers lots of information about the wide specter of terminology deployed by the dramatist, and the variety of genres implied in his drama as well.

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Findlay, Allison and Markidou, Vassiliki, eds, *Shakespeare and Greece*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, 304 pp.

Making an overdue yet vital contribution to early modern cultural and literary studies, the collected essays in *Shakespeare and Greece* are, paradoxically, quite timely. That is, while the contributors clearly agree with critics like Colin Burrow, Neill Rhodes, Simon Goldhill, and Tanya Pollard (among others) that it is high time we correct "the stock blindness" of literary criticism "to Shakespeare's Hellenism" and start to revise "the scholarly consensus on the place of Greece in Shakespeare's imagination as well as the Renaissance more broadly" (Pollard), the essays in this volume extend and amplify the current scholarly interest in reassessing the Latinate culture of sixteenth-century English humanism. Despite the many plays Shakespeare set in Greece – Athens, Thebes, Mytilene, Ephesus, Antioch, Tarsus, and Tyre – his awareness of certain Greek words and etymologies (e.g. *threnos* in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*), and his evident attraction to Greek romance, our understanding of Shakespeare's Hellenism and how it might have resonated among contemporaries has been blinkered by the fact that, until this book, there has been "no sustained examination of early modern perceptions of Greece" (p. 2). It is a worthy and timely project and these wide-ranging essays will, I believe, prompt others to pursue further investigation still.

Expanding the field of inquiry beyond the Latinate heritage within which recent assessments of humanism's unintended consequences have been conducted, this book brings a long absent party back to the table. The editors' introduction draws together the findings of those few scholars who have persisted in gathering evidence of Greek influence in early modern England. Kirstie Milne, for example, analyzed the impact of Erasmus's and Thomas Linacre's Hellenism to demonstrate that there were at least 23 Greek texts published in England between 1534 and 1603. Among them are the *Homilies* of Chrysostome as well as work by Homer, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Plato, Herodotus, and Plutarch. She therefore argues that Greek was "a live idiom among the Elizabethan political and cultural elite, a language freighted with religious and

political significance". To this observation, the essays in this volume add that it was freighted with literary significance as well. Between 1535 and 1590 there were 130 Greek grammar books inventoried at Cambridge with a similar pattern at Oxford; and the presence of a range of Greek writings in undergraduate curricula (most prominently Aesop, Lucian, Isocrates, Homer, and Aristotle) meant that when graduates moved into other professions, including school teaching, they brought that training with them. I would add that even Latin grammar school texts frequently rely on Greek writers and words: a Latin translation of Aesop inaugurated school language training; and the most popular rhetorical manual in the country, Reinhard Lorich's Latin translation and expansion of Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*, is filled with references to Greek authors and Latin-to-Greek explanations of rhetorical and literary terms.

But at the moment in which British writers struggled to put vernacular invention on par with the ancient texts offered to them as exemplary models, and thus transported so many Greek literary genres into English, Greece had at least two histories – ancient and early modern and they were not easily reconciled. As the editors rightly stress, Greece's early modern subjection to the Ottoman empire 'unsettled' ancient Greece's cultural capital as an idealized model for European civility, power, and letters. In *A Digression Touching the Hierarchie and miseries of Christians under the Turks* (1613), Samuel Purchas represents the turning point – the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 – as the degeneration of the city that once was "the New-Rome daughter and Imperiall heir" to "Old Rome", "a modell of Paradise", and "a terrestrial heaven", into "Mahometople […] the setting of Mahumetan dregs", "the stage of earthly and hellish Furies, the sink of blood and slaughterhouse of death" (p. 27). Given the wide spread figuration of London as a new Rome, Purchas's didactic purpose for narrating "this Tragedie" is clear: he offers Constantinople as a "mirrour of miserie" to touch Londoners with "fear in ourselves for like punishments" (p. 27). Humanist exemplarity and the cultural capital of that venerable ancient Greek genre, tragedy, meet the fearsome spectacle of the contemporary Turk. But in this and other texts, the editors argue,

when "the eastern 'other' is presented as a reflection of the self", the inversion unsettles the distinction between ancient and contemporary Greece while also disturbing the presumed difference between Englishness and the 'barbarism' of Ottoman rule.

Though no one mentions this, Rome occupied a similarly contradictory place in the English imagination: in any given text, one must ask, is this Cicero's Rome or that of the Papacy? One conclusion I drew from this volume is that to assess the complex literary and social terrain of British classicism requires one to remain sensitive to the contradictory associations surrounding both Greek and Roman imperial precedents as they mix and clash across sixteenth-century literary history as well as other discourses seeking to define English national identity and emergent aspirations for imperial authority. To take a resonant example from the editors' introduction: in *A Discourse of Civill Life containing the ethike part of morall philosophie* (1606) Lodowick Bryskett worries that the English language "has not the copiousness and sweetnes that both the Greeke and the Latine haue aboue all others". But he offers translations "taken from Greeke and Latine Philosophie" in the hope of allowing readers to "feel the true taste of the healthfull and delicious fruites" which can be beneficially digested without the reader being "constrained to fetch them from Athens or from Rome". By turns defensive and confident, Bryskett undertakes the translator's task in the belief that in the end, the mother tongue can, indeed, promote a civil society to rival ancient Athens or Rome.

The essays in *Shakespeare and Greece* address early modern perceptions, and adaptations, of Greek language and culture in light of the many tributaries that brought them to English shores. First, the editors usefully and carefully survey the Greek authors with entire texts translated into English in the sixteenth century: Thucydides (1550), Diodorus Siculus (1569), Heliodorus (1569; reprinted 1577, 1587, 1605, 1606, 1622, 1627), Demosthenes (1570), Herodotus (1584), "Longus", *Daphnis & Chloe* (1587), Theocritus (1588), Plato's *Axiochus* (1592), and a collection of works from Aristotle and Plato (translated from Amyot's French version in 1598). In addition, Gower translated *Apollonius of Tyre* in *Confessio Amantis*, which in turn went through

two editions in the sixteenth century and was then translated a second time in 1576. The introduction also reminds us to pay attention to the lively presence of Greek and Latin snippets in books of epigrams and excerpts, like John Sturm's *Ritch storehouse or treasurie for nobilitye and gentlemen* (1570), as well as to the numerous extracts from Greek philosophy and epic poetry in Montaigne. The least one might say is that the editors and contributors have marshaled an impressive evidentiary case for taking a much more careful look at British Hellenism than we have yet to do. But the volume as a whole aims to move beyond source study – with several writers arguing explicitly or implicitly that by contrast to the translation and transmission of whole works, the wide-spread humanist habit of excerpting and quoting Greek authors effected a "rhizomatic", "scattered" and "horizontal transmission" that the editors, along with Liz Oakley-Brown, compare to Deleuze and Guatarri's *A Thousand Plateaus*.

A further tributary for English Hellenism, of course, was Greek romance – a late form that emerged after "the relative decline of Greek nationality" by writers who emerged in a dispersed, cosmopolitan, and imperial framework (p. 24). The author of *Leucippe and Clitophon* lived and wrote in Alexandria; Heliodorus, in Syria. And so the editors, following Stephen Mentz, suggest that romance was an individualistic mode of writing deracinated from ancient communal values; and it sold well in London after 1570 to consumers of all kinds because these works had the potential to "dignify mercantile adventures in the New World" (Mentz). The evident appeal of Greek romance to Shakespeare and many other sixteenth-century writers lies beyond the scope of a volume seeking to track the various modes of literary and cultural influence. But as the editors suggest, it is clearly an area in need of future research and interpretive attention. I mention it here not merely as a goad to future work but because most of the essays in this volume turn on a similar interpretive move: each brings a strand of Greek culture, literature, or philosophy to light as it intersects with early modern English practices, desires, aspirations, and anxieties. Among the distinctive sixteenth-century English concerns to which numerous Greek

precedents are brought to bear: the commercial and geographic expansion of mercantile capital; anti-theatricalism and stage responses to it; humanist pedagogy and practice (in particular, *in utramque partem debate*); polemics about civic virtue and effective governance, including the lure and perils of republicanism; anxieties about the status and social value of vernacular literary invention; and the uneasiness resulting from the new science and rediscovery of philosophical materialism. These are familiar and still thriving fields of interrogation in early modern studies, but this volume has the distinct virtue of revealing how the English reception, imitation, and dissemination of Greek culture – ancient and early modern – played a crucial role in shaping each one of them.

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Further Reading

Burrow, Colin, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

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Pollard, Tanya, "Greek Playbooks and Dramatic Forms in Early Modern England", in *Forms of Early Modern Writing*, eds Allison Deuterman and Adras Kisery, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013, pp. 99-123.

Rhodes, Neill, "Pure and Common Greek in Early Modern England", in *The Culture of Translation in Early Modern England and France, 1500-1600*, eds Tania Demetriou and Rowan Tomlinson, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2015, pp. 22-70.

Laroche, Rebecca and Munroe, Jennifer, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, 216 pp.

This volume is the fruit of a successful project by two distinguished American scholars, Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe, on ecofeminist theory related to Shakespeare's work. It is part of the new Arden series "Shakespeare and Theory", which was started in 2015 with Evelyn Gajowski as editor. The authors emphasize how "valuing collaboration and polyvocality best illustrates what [they] believe is one of the greatest contributions of ecofeminism". Indeed, it is the complexity of the field of enquiry that calls for more than one mind and point of view to be included, albeit in concise form. As a matter of fact, the discourse of ecofeminism is held at the crossroads of many sectors of knowledge and study – literary, environmental, feminist, gender, post-colonial, social, cultural materialist, post-humanist, etc. – and not many a reader will find him- or herself completely at home in each one of them. Yet it is exactly this demanding aspect of the book that makes it even more compelling.

In a clearly written and very engaging history of ecofeminist scholarship, we learn that the term 'ecofeminism' was coined in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne in *Le Féminisme ou la mort*, a few years before William Rueckert used the word 'ecocriticism' to propose studying literature alongside ecology in 1978. Even what is considered as its founding text, Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, came as early as 1975. Thus, if ecocriticism and ecofeminism may in many ways be related to each other – in their both being offsprings of the environmentalist movement of the 1970s – "they each have their own unique trajectory", which is also shown by the fact that the Arden "Shakespeare and Theory" series has two separated volumes dedicated to them. To say it in the authors' words: "Too often relegated to being a subset of ecocriticism, ecofeminism has a scholarly history of its own […] – one that arguably precedes and whose interests extend beyond ecocriticism".

After positioning ecofeminism in the realm of critical theory in general, the book examines its vocation, its themes and its relevance

to Shakespearean studies. The strongest intellectual drive of the theory lies in the fact that it acknowledges the importance of expressing a female counterculture of "compassion for all living things, human and nonhuman alike", by means of a special focus on the ways in which the differences between the human and the nonhuman – in both their material and cultural dimensions – are represented and shaped by gender difference. Ecofeminism implies that there is a link, if not a unity, between all the "multiple and related forms of subjugation" of the female and the nonhuman by male authority, and therefore posits the need for political struggle to stand for a social equity that includes the voiceless unhuman natural world.

The book delves deep into past and present debates about the theories surrounding, feeding and, in a way, 'legitimizing' ecofeminism in the light of the most recent ecocritical, post-humanist and feminist/gender studies. If on the one hand the association between women and nature has made ecofeminism vulnerable to claims of essentialism, it is also true that by and large not all ecofeminist scholars do embrace the 'earth goddess' identity, or consider it as the core of the theory's project. On the contrary, ecofeminism is explained here as a necessary entanglement of environmentalism with feminism from a material point of view, which means mainly considering the different historical power relations connected to gender, race and class that permeate – in Shakespeare's case – early modern life. Its current horizon also unfolds a turn to the intimate, ordinary 'micro-practices' of everyday life (as found, for example, in recipe books), as a possible form of "resistance to the grand narrative of the rise of the market economy".

Some of the major ecofeminist themes discussed in this book are, firstly, the concept of home and domestic relation, in particular in the androcentric 'domestication' practices of women, animals and lands; secondly, the problem of valuing human learning and understanding, with a denial of exclusively Cartesian models of knowledge, agency, and subjectivity; and finally, the tradition of objectifying both women and nonhumans in humanist culture, and more precisely in so-called 'Petrarchism'. All these spheres emerge in

early modern history as containing an often-hidden dimension of what Rob Nixon describes as "slow violence": a devious form of violence that renders its destructive effects invisible and insignificant.

In this context Shakespeare's work is studied as a whole, or as a 'corpus' – sometimes with unconventional and very interesting juxtapositions of texts – providing all the meanings produced by its *material* immersion "in an environment where men, women, animals and plants lived necessarily in relations that were at once symbiotic and in tension". One becomes aware that Shakespeare – unfathomable as he was as a literary person – is not always typical for his age: the polyvocality of his genius, and of theatre in general, allows his audience to develop a highly articulated and non-stereotyped view of matters relevant to ecofeminism and beyond. The volume invites scholars and students to continue the quest for dialogic truth and social equity on this very path.

Caterina Salabè, Sapienza University of Rome

Nay, Charles, *Directing Shakespeare in America: Current Practices*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016, 362 pp.

America's long-standing engagement with Shakespeare is well documented: in 1835 Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his *Democracy in America* that "there is hardly a pioneer hut in which the odd volume of Shakespeare cannot be found". Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were among the first American tourists who visited the Bard's home at Stratford-upon-Avon – apparently Jefferson fell upon the ground and kissed it, while Adams cut a relic from a chair that supposedly belonged to the Bard himself, as a souvenir. To own a piece of Shakespeare – this has always been part of the American dream: for some time, the famous showman and entrepreneur P. T. Barnum seriously considered buying Shakespeare's birth house and transporting it to America, while in 1850 Herman Melville was sure that "Shakespeares are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio".

There is also an extensive tradition of notable American performances of Shakespeare's plays: in 1846, during a rehearsing of *Othello* at Corpus Christi, Texas – organized to keep the U.S. troops occupied during a standstill in the war against Mexico – Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant himself (the future president of the United States) was cast in the role of Desdemona. Three years later, twenty-two people were killed in New York after violent riots broke out during a performance of *Macbeth* at the Astor Opera House; the cause for the dispute was the rivalry between Edwin Forrest, one of the best-known American actors of the time, and the English Shakespearean actor William Charles Macready. If this were not enough, stage actor John Wilkes Booth justified his killing of president Abraham Lincoln in 1865 by quoting Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. One cannot fail to agree with James Shapiro that "the history of Shakespeare in America is also a history of America itself".

Charles Nay's *Directing Shakespeare in America* fits perfectly into this centuries-old tradition of Shakespearean performances in the New World. Drawing from a series of interviews conducted between 2004 and 2016 with over sixty American directors working at major theater companies, Nay presents a thorough "examination of the beliefs, methods and productions" used in the staging of Shakespeare's plays across the U.S. at the beginning of the twenty-first century. His analysis takes into account the specificities of the American multifaceted theatrical landscape, selecting examples from many site-specific productions – large well-supported institutions with considerable resources, as well as smaller productions linked with a university campus or located in the country, far from any larger city. Nay's book intends to be the first comprehensive study of the different ideas, concepts, and strategies employed by directors during the various phases of production: from the assessment of the basic context of a performance, through casting, rehearsal, to tech organization and previews. One of Nay's purposes is to answer the crucial question at the core of every Shakespearean staging: "How *can* the play be best communicated to a contemporary audience?".

The book's strength lies in the clever arrangement of such extremely heterogeneous material; instead of presenting each

interview one after the other, Nay organizes the volume according to the various stages of production, giving the reader an accurate idea of the arduous process of directing a Shakespeare play. After an introduction dealing with "each director's major beliefs, their aesthetic sensibilities, value systems, and how they impact a director's approach and production choices", the author goes on to describe, in part two, the issues related to preparations for rehearsal and production: how the director develops a particular approach, the type of analysis and linguistic research necessary to the preparation of the production text, the technical discussions with designers, and, finally, the organization of casting. This is a particularly delicate procedure, since every director must decide "how to handle race, gender, and perceived sexual orientation in the selection of the company", because every choice could be received in a different way by the diverse members of the audience. Part three focuses on rehearsing the production, from the first day of rehearsals to the final tech and dress rehearsals, discussed in part four. Here are also debated issues related to the word choice and the language structure to be adopted, as well as the rhythm and pacing of the performance, the various character issues, the possible problems arising from the physical space of the stage and the challenge offered by the specific design employed in the production.

Nay's book conveys very clearly the idea that any director involved in a Shakespearean play "must supervise a considerable number of complex and difficult issues", such as "conflating multiple versions and source texts; assuring comprehension of the text's meaning; shaping the delivery of language, verse and imagery; supervising considerably larger character lists than contemporary plays have; establishing the story's setting – historical or otherwise; staging crowd scenes, dances and battles; handling scene changes and special effects", etc. For this reason, *Directing Shakespeare in America* can be read as a useful handbook by directors, actors and theater students looking for some inspiration and willing to scrutinize directorial attitudes and production choices adopted around the U.S.; at the same time, the book will surely be appreciated by anyone eager to learn more about bringing Shakespeare alive in

America, ready "to discover resonances in Shakespeare's text that speak to the audience today".

Paolo Simonetti, Sapienza University of Rome

Sabatier, Armelle, *Shakespeare and Visual Culture: A Dictionary*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, 295 pp.

This volume is part of the "Arden Shakespeare Dictionary" series, directed by Sandra Clark, which follows the even longer standing "Continuum Shakespeare Dictionaries". The aim of the series is to provide "authoritative guides to the principal subject areas" covered by Shakespeare's work. Some of the more recent publications serve as introductions to Shakespeare's medical language, domestic life, national identity, economic, legal and religious language, plants and gardens, animals, insults, women and more. However, the reader should be alerted that in all cases the word 'dictionary' is to be intended as justifying the alphabetical order in which the keywords introducing to each topic are organized rather than as the real work of a lexicographer, which in a modern sense would imply the use of corpus linguistics and parsed corpora both of Shakespeare and Early Modern English.

That said, in this case Armelle Sabatier's specialization in legal English and, in particular, her experience as one of the compilers of a *Glossaire de droit anglais. Méthode, traduction et approche comparative* (2014) guarantee that her treatment of the subject area of this 'dictionary', if not quantitative, is not completely subjective. Ultimately based on her other field of expertise, Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, one is assured that her choice of 244 lexical items (from *alabaster* to *yellow*) is to be considered exhaustive of the topic of visual culture in Shakespeare's work. The organization of each entry in three sections (A. general and historical definitions; B. occurrences and use in Shakespeare; C. critical approaches and interpretations) promises that each entry has received due care as to all its occurrences, meanings and even semantic variations in Shakespeare's times and work.

Moreover, the bulk of extensive bibliographical references (both primary and secondary sources) which the author masters allows her an interpretive close-reading of Shakespeare's plays and poetical works through the chosen keywords in view of the long-debated question about visual arts in England and particularly about post-Reformation culture as supposedly affected by an 'anti-visual prejudice'. This in the end is the declared rationale of Sabatier's book, which puts itself on the tracks of Catherine Belsey's ground-breaking 2012 article on *èkphrasis* in Shakespeare and enlarges on Stuart Sillar's *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (2015) by supporting the idea of a much more diffused taste for and fruition of visual arts in a period of vast building renovation and private luxury.

The short but densely informative introduction testifies to both the different positions in the Elizabethan-Jacobean age and to the opposite critical contributions nourishing the debate since the 1980s. And so does the actual dictionary: on the one hand, a number of entries refer to suspicious attitudes towards visual perception (*look*, *vision*, *gaze*, *view*, etc.), religious iconoclasm (*saint*, *idol*, *superstition*, *mock*, *flatter*, *wanton*, etc.) and censorship (*varnish*, *gleam*, *glitter*, *gloss*, *gild*, etc.). On the other hand, the huge number of occurrences of colours, hues, nuances (not only the primary ones, but also *auburn*, *azure*, *ebony*, *tawny*, *crimson*, *scarlet*, *vermillion*, etc.) with all their cultural associations and rhetorical impact – undoubtedly the most detailed lexical chapter in Sabatier's dictionary – marks the special relation established between pictorial art, material culture (fashion and the 'graphic' production of the times) and Shakespeare's work. Finally, the richness of contemporary craftsmanship and the variety of its products well beyond religious art (*monument*, *statue*, *arras/tapestry*, *hangings/curtains*, *emblem*, *ornament*, *jewel*, *limn*, *portrait*, *miniature*, *chimney-pieces*, *tomb*, etc.), which are all present in Shakespeare's language, bear witness to the epistemic ambivalence of his times towards visual culture.

As we can also read in Keir Elam's book on *Shakespeare's Pictures* (2017), many of the above-mentioned artistic products become performative "visual objects in the drama": not only the so-often quoted living statue of Hermione sculpted by Giulio Romano in

Winter's Tale, but also the portraits of father and uncle in *Hamlet*, the pictures in Portia's boxes in *The Merchant of Venice*, or the miniature portrait set in a jewel exchanged on stage in *Twelfth Night*. With many more objects, which are not *showed* but *told*, even discussed, criticized and contextualized in the frame of contemporary aesthetic debates, like the one on *ut pictura poësis*, also known as the Italian debate of the *paragone*. Thus, the rhetorical device of *èkphrasis* – and off-stage *èkphrasis* – practiced by Shakespeare from as early as the "wanton pictures" in *The Taming of the Shrew* to as late as Iachimo's catalogue of Imogen's room in *Cymbeline*, becomes the hinge concept of what Sabatier defines "visual eloquence": "a major way of exploring the intricate relationship between Shakespeare and visual culture […] visual arts and literature", which challenges an antagonistic vision and overcomes any possible rivalry between the two in the name of the reality of the texts (pp. 7-9).

In this perspective Sabatier's dictionary proves a useful reference tool for historical linguists, art historians and literary critics.

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Tribble, Evelyn, *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre: Thinking with the Body*, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017, 240 pp.

Building upon her ground-breaking, lifelong research ("Distributing Cognition in the Globe", 2005; *Cognition in the Globe*, 2011; *Cognitive Ecologies and the History of Remembering*, 2011), the New Zealand scholar Evelyn Tribble applies her notion of "distributed cognitive ecology" (p. 4) to an accurate analysis of early modern actors' skills, "which links mind, body and environment in intelligent action" (p. 5). *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre: Thinking with the Body* is an in-depth exploration of Simon Jewell's box, which gives the title to Tribble's first paragraph of the introduction to this book and which metaphorically stands for the "Elizabethan actors' picture" – to paraphrase Tillyard's milestone work of the 1940s.

Notions such as "distributed cognitive ecology" (p. 4), "skill" (p. 5), "kinesic intelligence" (p. 11), "kinesic habits of mind" (p. 120) or

"skill ecology" (p. 148) reveal the transdisciplinary nature of this study, ranging from the semiotics of the body to neuroanthropology, from psychology to the philosophy of language. The research's transdisciplinarity is made more harmonious by Tribble's crystal clear and skilfully organised writing style. Moreover, *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre* draws frequent and accurate comparisons between early modern and contemporary actors/roles, which start with the cogent assertion that "[a]ny modern production of a Shakespearean play confronts history, memory and difference" (p. 147). Tribble aptly sheds some light on the significance of specific uses of the human body by Elizabethan actors on stage – especially gestures (chapter 2), fencing (chapter 3), dancing (chapter 4) and what is referred to as "skills behind the skills, qualities of concentration and attention" (chapter 5, p. 125). According to Tribble, this newly acquired bodily awareness should undermine the obsolete conception that "bodies, especially bodies in motion, tend to disappear in textual commentary; words are always privileged over skilful bodies" (p. 58). These are the very same skilful bodies that Thomas Heywood had fiercely defended in the three short treatises of his *Apology for Actors* (1612).

Despite an excellent balance between the critics' opinions, examples from early modern playwrights – not only Shakespeare, whose kinesic style is defined "synoptic" if compared to Jonson's "atomistic" one (p. 65) – and other miscellaneous texts, some parts of the book come across as chains of quotations from scholarly studies and Elizabethan plays. Such sessions sometimes make Tribble's readers lose sight of the primary analytical intent of the volume, so well summarised by its title and so elegantly expressed in its introduction, where the researcher declares her intention of studying the actors' body as a key to understanding/interpreting some critically-debated scenes in early modern drama (e.g. Imogen's awakening scene in *Cymbeline* IV.ii, or *Hamlet*'s fencing match in V.ii). Furthermore, early modern actors' memoirs or autobiographical works such as William Kempe's *Nine Days Wonder* are a rich source to study kinesic intelligence on the Elizabethan stage. These writings, however, are not taken into due consideration in the book, although

a few sporadic references to roles performed by famous actors are quoted (see, for instance, Kempe's clownish talent, pp. 126-27, or Edward Alleyn's interpretation of Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, pp. 132-40).

All in all, however, Tribble's study about actors' "skill as an independent category" (p. 145) successfully highlights the need to pay attention to any question that derives from the use of the body on the early modern stage, since "[t]he categories through which we view plays are often too firmly tied to the printed page" (p. 145).

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Mapping Antony and Cleopatra
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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

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