

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

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SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY AND PRODUCTION

24

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HEARING SHAKESPEARE: SOUND AND MEANING IN 'ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA'

ROBERT HAPGOOD

Shakespeare the theater poet was certainly writing his lines to be heard – as spoken by actors with appropriate intonation, pace, rhythm and volume. Yet when one seeks to hear *Antony and Cleopatra* in one's mind's ear one finds remarkably little help from commentators. Bradley and Wilson Knight have several fine paragraphs each on the overall tone of the play.¹ Granville-Barker has a valuable page on the range of tones that Cleopatra deploys.² Now and again a critical interpreter will follow the changing tones and rhythms of a scene or episode. Editors occasionally suggest the manner in which they think a word or speech should be spoken. But the upshot of this commentary is incidental and fragmentary. Nowhere in print is there a sustained effort to hear the whole play.

Why this neglect? One reason is that the commentators' interest has been elsewhere. In their search for Shakespeare's meanings, scholars have focused either on the very small areas of glossing words and phrases or on the very large areas of tracing themes which extend through the whole play. It is quite possible, though risky, to deal with these matters tonelessly, not 'hearing' the lines at all but merely gathering their bare gist. It is in the middle-sized areas of meaning – of speeches and groups of speeches – that matters of tone are most important. These too have been relatively neglected. This is true even of 'close readings' which proceed sequentially through the play.³ Although they have more to say

than most about the sound of *Antony and Cleopatra*, their point of view is ultimately the same as that of other critical interpretations: they are more concerned with looking back over the play and stating what it all adds up to than with following the moment-by-moment process through which its meanings unfold.

Scholars may also have felt that hearing the lines is too elementary a matter to call for much comment, something that an intelligent reader can do for himself, or for which he can resort to a popularized 'Reader's Shakespeare' narrative or study-guide.⁴ Perhaps that is why remarks about verbal sound effects are often

¹ A. C. Bradley, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London, 1926), pp. 283–7; G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (1931; rpt London, 1936), pp. 200–5.

² Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1930; Princeton, 1946), I, 438–9.

³ Specifically, Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Roman Plays* (Stanford, 1936); and A. P. Riemer, *A Reading of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra* (Sydney, 1958).

⁴ Such as Babette Deutsch, *The Reader's Shakespeare* (New York, 1946); Marchette Chute, *Stories From Shakespeare* (New York, 1956); *Antony and Cleopatra: Notes* (Cliff's Notes, Lincoln, Neb., 1960); William Walsh, *Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra* (Monarch Notes, New York, 1966). These are scarcely more than plot summaries, their comments on tone being sometimes mistaken, often arbitrary or eccentric, always cursory. The Cliff's Notes study-guide is particularly debased, making the play sound like a scandal sheet. Unfortunately, Charles and Mary Lamb (who often have fascinating remarks about tone) did not include *Antony and Cleopatra* among their *Tales From Shakespeare*.

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summary and arbitrary. How are we to hear Caesar's 'Poor Antony'? Traversi pronounces it 'an offhand and contemptuous statement of pity'; Kittredge, 'an expression rather of pity and regret than of scorn'.¹ Either tone is defensible but neither is defended. Surely the whole truth requires some discussion of alternatives and the bases for the commentator's preference?

For in fact such questions of tone are anything but obvious and easy. Even our closest readers have made gross errors, especially in hearing Cleopatra. From many examples, I cite two. Traversi completely misses her irony in the first scene when she repeatedly pretends to urge Antony to hear the messengers from Rome; everything indicates that she intends just the opposite, but Traversi supposes that she 'is determined to force the messengers upon her unwilling lover' (p. 82). Wilson Knight misses her mockery in observing 'How this Herculean Roman does become/The carriage of his chafe'. Without qualification, he groups this 'lovely phrase' with 'those stressed and highly-coloured phrases which continually emphasize Antony's nobility in war' (p. 211).

The truth is that fully hearing a Shakespeare play is a highly sophisticated undertaking. There are certain external aids. We do not, of course, have Shavian captions preceding the speeches with explicit directions for their delivery. But characters do at times comment directly on their own manner of speech and that of others. The use of pronouns is often a barometer of tone, as with the royal plural or the intimate or condescending *thou*.² The use of an epithet of address often sets the tone of a whole speech.³ The reactions of other characters to a speech are often indicative. But these provide only the sketchiest guide-lines. A full imaginative hearing of a play depends on one's whole understanding of it, and vice versa. Like character and structure, the sound of

the lines is one of those integers of interpretation with which the study of a play both begins and ends. As such – I say it one last time – the matter deserves much more attention than it has received.

The best current guides to the sound of *Antony and Cleopatra* are not in print but on recordings. Here is yet another neglected area. Although the latest Schwann catalog lists over one hundred separate Shakespeare recordings currently available, these have scarcely been noticed in learned journals, let alone thoroughly reviewed.⁴ They invite a wide variety of scholarly activities. We ought to have complete archives of the Shakespeare recordings, including all of the rare early ones; a history of their production; and a complete and up-to-date discography. We should be taping important productions. We should have studies of the changing stage conventions for speaking the lines⁵ and a theoretical literature on the nature of 'the recorded play' as a distinct art-

¹ Traversi, *Roman Plays*, p. 156; *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. G. L. Kittredge, rev. I. Ribner (Waltham, 1966), p. 98.

² Sister St Geraldine Byrne, *Shakespeare's Use of the Pronoun of Address* (Washington, D.C., 1936) provides a compilation of instances that is useful but incomplete and insufficiently detailed and subtle.

³ In *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London, 1951), p. 167, Wolfgang Clemen collects the epithets applied to Cleopatra as a deft way of showing the many facets of her personality. These epithets tell even more, however, about the tone and attitude of the speaker using them.

⁴ Honorable exceptions include J. Dover Wilson, 'The Marlowe Society Records', *Review of English Literature*, v (1964), 115–19 and a series of reviews beginning in 1960 of 'Poetry and Drama on Records' by Margaret Willey in *English*.

⁵ Pioneer efforts in this direction are a tape-recording by Frederick C. Packard, Jr, *Styles in Shakespearian Acting from 1890–1950* (Creative Associates, Boston, n.d.) and a series of BBC broadcasts in 1968–9 by Richard Bebb on such topics as 'Acting Then and Now', 'The Voice of John Gielgud', 'Gielgud's Hamlet'. Both Packard and Bebb illustrate their observations with rare, early recordings.

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form.¹ Above all, we need a series of studies which take the recordings seriously as a body of interpretation, especially capitalizing on what they can tell us about the sound of the plays.

There is some urgency about these projects. The early recordings grow more rare and expensive by the year. Productions worth remembering pass by without a record.² And our own ears change. For communicative sound is not only something spoken; it is something understandingly *heard*. And as the necessary rapport between speaker and listener fades, it becomes increasingly difficult for this communication to take place. Old recordings, even to the initiated, can sound merely quaint and artificial. My undergraduates enjoy Richard Burton on record, but they simply cannot hear the expressiveness of John Gielgud. To them he is no more than an elocutionist.

That is one reason that the job of hearing Shakespeare cannot simply be left to the recording artist. Words in print are a more durable medium than the perishable rapport between an actor and his auditor. Another is that directors and actors in rehearsal obviously have less time than scholars do, to analyze and research and ponder. Furthermore, the performer's purposes are limited and practical: what he wants is a manner of speech that he has it in him to render convincingly, that suits his conception of his role generally, and that fits into the whole production.³ The scholar can range much more widely, surveying the tones that various actors have used for a given speech and scouting out further valid possibilities. The two activities are thus parallel but distinct. And they ought to be mutually helpful.

I should like now to try to hear *Antony and Cleopatra*, using as aids excerpts from the only two complete recordings of the play.⁴ I will begin by recalling some sounds that seem to me characteristic of the whole play and then comment in detail on a few episodes.

I

One's first impression of *Antony and Cleopatra* is of size and breadth, of extreme contrasts boldly juxtaposed; and these features are as evident in the sounds of the play as in every other aspect. In pace, the play can idle with bored Cleopatra:

Cleopatra. Charmian!

Charmian. Madam?

Cleopatra. Ha, ha!

Give me to drink mandragora.

Charmian.

Why, madam?

Cleopatra. That I might sleep out this great gap of time

My Antony is away.

(I, v, 1-6)⁵

¹ Interesting comments on such matters are included in a set of statements by Peter Wood, Howard Sackler, and Peter Orr (often quoting George Rylands) concerning 'Theater on Record', *Plays and Players* (January 1964), pp. 16-18.

² Of the most recent important productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*, neither the Zoe Caldwell-Christopher Plummer production at Ontario nor the Margaret Leighton-John Clements production at Chichester was taped.

³ The same limitations apply to the practice of 'oral interpretation', where the governing emphasis is on techniques for effective performance rather than on analysis of the author's intentions as to tone.

⁴ When given as a talk at the International Shakespeare Conference at the Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon Avon, in September 1970, the various verbal sound-effects under discussion were illustrated by excerpts from the two complete recorded versions of the play: *Antony and Cleopatra* (Phonodisc, directed by George Rylands, Argo, Lond A4427 (5746-9), 1963), with Irene Worth as Cleopatra, Richard Johnson as Antony, and Robert Eddison as Caesar; and *Antony and Cleopatra* (Phonodisc, directed by Howard Sackler, Shakespeare Recording Society, SRS 235, 1963), with Pamela Brown as Cleopatra and Anthony Quayle as Antony. Except where noted, all excerpts used were from the Argo (Marlowe Society) recording. A reader who has access to these recordings may wish to play the relevant passages for himself. But the discussion here is, I believe, intelligible without them.

⁵ All line references are to the new Arden edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. M. R. Ridley (London, 1968).

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It was Kittredge who suggested Cleopatra's 'Yawn of ennui' at 'Ha, ha'. Is there a play on 'gap' as 'gape' in 'great gap of time'? Then, in contrast to this idleness, the next scene brings on resolute Pompey and others 'in war-like manner'.

In volume, the play can shift from the silence of Octavia, so submissive that she whispers her farewells to her brother and says no more for the rest of that scene, to the outspoken imperiousness of Cleopatra in the next scene:

Cleopatra. Where is the fellow?
Alexas. Half afeard to come.
Cleopatra. Go to, go to . . .
 Come thou near.
Messenger. Most gracious majesty!
Cleopatra. Didst thou behold
 Octavia?
Messenger. Ay, dread queen.
(III, iii, 1-3, 7-9)

In tone there are all sorts of polarities juxtaposed. Cleopatra defines one of them in her dream of Antony:

his voice was propertied
 As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
 But when he meant to quail, and shake the orb,
 He was as rattling thunder.
(v, ii, 83-6)

Notice how Irene Worth's voice subtly reflects the tone-qualities her words extoll, becoming musically iambic with 'As all the tuned spheres' and then capitalizing on the onomatopoeia of 'rattling thunder'.

The point of view of the speakers ranges from the drily ironic detachment of Enobarbus to the utter subjectivity of Cleopatra persuading herself that Octavia is 'dull of tongue, and dwarfish'. Caesar combines the two attitudes in a single speech:

If they had swallow'd poison, 'twould appear
 By external swelling: but she looks like sleep,
 As she would catch another Antony
 In her strong toil of grace.
(v, ii, 343-6)

Here his diagnosis that there is no 'external swelling' is so objective as to sound clinical; yet it gives way to a pair of similes that show a surprising empathy.

Where Cleopatra is concerned, the dialogue is full of *double entendres*:

Agrippa. Royal wench!
 She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed;
 He plough'd her, and she cropp'd.
(II, ii, 226-8)

Such earthy innuendo contrasts with the awe of the soldiers who hear unearthly 'Music i' the air': and the two tones meet when the eerie prophecies of the Soothsayer are interrupted by the trifling bawdy of Cleopatra's *ménage*:

Soothsayer. Your fortunes are alike.
Iras. But how, but how? Give me particulars.
Soothsayer. I have said.
Iras. Am I not an inch of fortune better than she?
Charmian. Well, if you were but an inch of fortune
 better than I, where would you choose it?
Iras. Not in my husband's nose.
(I, ii, 52-8)

Yet the impression of all-inclusive scope – of a grand passion being acted out within a global, in fact cosmic, scene – can be misleading. For one thing, the extreme tones are not sustained: the scenes are very numerous and relatively short, and so are the individual speeches.¹ Nor do the extremes go as deep as in other tragedies. Antony becomes angry to the point of madness, but we do not hear the raging madness of Lear. He is frequently sententious and has some acute psychological perceptions; but we do not hear the metaphysical speculations of Hamlet. He expresses shame but little guilt: he is not a Macbeth. Like many of the other characters, he explodes into scorn and hatred; but nowhere in the play do we hear the confirmed malignity of Aaron or Iago.

In fact, most of the verbal sound-effects in *Antony and Cleopatra* fall within quite a limited

¹ Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare* (New York, 1939), p. 269.

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range. These are sophisticated people. Their talk is intense but controlled, and always self-conscious. It is almost always calculated – rarely is speech a simple expression of feeling or observation. Often it is forced, as when reluctant messengers bring bad news. And often the listeners do not want to listen. For these people are constantly engaged in exploiting speech, trying to use it as a way of imposing their wills on a recalcitrant world – whether to transform the world or merely make it appear better to others and themselves.

When in soliloquy or confidence a feeling is directly expressed, its tonal coloring is likely to be complex, often ambivalent. Even so ostensibly carefree a scene as when Cleopatra plays 'squire' and helps Eros arm Antony must be heard with contradictory undertones; for at its end she needs to be led to her chamber, wishing that Caesar and Antony might clash 'in single fight': 'Then Antony – ; but now – Well on' (IV, iv, 38).

This is not the stuff of grand opera – as Samuel Barber was to learn.¹ Nor will these situations sustain the spectacularly visual productions with which the play has regularly failed during the past century. The immense scope of the background is certainly there in Shakespeare's text, but it may be time to try a different sort of immediate context for the action, something less grand. For most of the tones we hear in *Antony and Cleopatra* are those that might be overheard through the walls of the luxury apartment next door. The three principals are locked in a strange triangle. They are engaged in a constant struggle for sovereignty – less for rule of the world, one often feels, than for personal primacy over one another. Scene after scene is given over to their accusations of infidelity, vows of loyalty, pleas for pardon, and words of reconciliation. Even when they are not in direct confrontation, these patterns are developed through messengers and invocations.

Not that the play verges on domestic tragedy. It comes closer to drawing-room tragedy – such as *Uncle Vanya* or *Rosmersholm* or *Dance of Death* or *Heartbreak House*. Yet it is more public than these. It is Shakespeare's most persistently *courtly* tragedy. Other Shakespeare tragedies leave the court for the wilds of the heath or the intimacies of the private chamber or the inner landscape of the soliloquy. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, even the battle scenes tend to begin and end in the royal palace. It is the small scene at court – where we are in the 'presence' of one or two of the principals, where a few 'others' are almost always involved or looking on, where the tones are always personal but rarely intimate – that is the defining context for these wars of the heart.

Down deep, *Antony and Cleopatra* is perhaps closest to John Ford's *The Broken Heart*. The feelings and words of Shakespeare's characters are, of course, much less subdued than those of Ford's characters – with Shakespeare there is no room for doubt that the powerful feelings being controlled are truly there. Yet beneath its flamboyance, *Antony and Cleopatra* is like *The Broken Heart* in making a sensitive yet rigorous incision into 'the very heart of loss', both plays being centrally concerned with doomed love, the prolonged con-

¹ There is a privately made tape of the NBC broadcast of the first performance of Barber's opera *Antony and Cleopatra* (16 September 1966) in the Harvard Music Library. To listen to it is to hear the complexity of Shakespeare's tones simplified to conventionally operatic ones: at Antony's departure, it is Cleopatra's few lyric moments that dominate ('Eternity was in our lips', 'You and I must part'); at his return, the 'If it be love indeed' passage (transposed from the beginning) is rendered simply as soaring love music; there is no undercurrent of regret in the episode in which Cleopatra helps to arm Antony. The choppy first part of the opera suggests the incidental music of a movie sound-track; only in the brooding latter part does the music find its integrity, with its minor-keyed laments by Antony, Cleopatra, Enobarbus, and Caesar. Caesar's mourning 'I have followed thee to this' is especially powerful.

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sequences of betrayal, the gradual draining away of the life-blood ability to master one's self and the world, the stoic endurance of heart-ache.

Of course, Shakespeare makes it clear that the hearts of his principals do not break. The hearts of Enobarbus and Iras break; Charmian wishes that hers would; and Antony implores his heart to crack its frail case. But there is a valiancy about the heart of the two lovers that not only withstands misfortune but makes their deaths something much more affirmative than the spartan wedding of 'the Broken Heart' to 'the Lifeless Trunk'. Ultimately, as Gide – who translated *Antony and Cleopatra* – observed: 'all is conquest; there is no submission'.¹ The finales in Shakespeare and Ford thus differ fundamentally; but the emotional milieu from which they issue seems to me very much the same.

II

Let us try to hear the first scene.

Philo's opening speech illustrates one of the play's most important tonal polarities: rhapsodic praise for Antony as he was versus acrid dispraise for Antony as he is:

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

There is also an argumentative tone heightening Philo's language. Responding to whatever Demetrius has been saying in Antony's defense offstage, he is making a point, and to that extent the apparent choric authority of his judgments is limited by his tone.

I should like to dwell a bit on the first exchange between Antony and Cleopatra:

Cleopatra. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
Antony. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
Cleopatra. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.
Antony. Then must thou needs find out new heaven,
new earth. (14-17)

This is not just conventional love talk. The sheer fact that the lovers are self-consciously talking about their love is in character; as Coleridge remarked, their passion 'is supported and reinforced by voluntary stimulus and sought-for associations, instead of blossoming out of spontaneous emotion.'² Their tone is light. Instead of the supercharged exchange of home-truths in classical stichomythia, their give-and-take has the quality of quick-witted fencing, of repartee – yet it is by no means inconsequential. This is the kind of idle but meaningful banter through which a relationship can feel free to define itself.

As usual in the first part of the play, the initiative is with Cleopatra, and she is making herself engaging by her self-defined method of contrariness. King Lear simply wants his daughters to tell him how much they love him. Cleopatra needs reassurance, too; but she asks Antony to 'tell me how much' because she knows that such quantifying will provoke his natural expansiveness.

Antony's response (that 'There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd') shows considerable poise. Note how his 'reckon'd' plays on Cleopatra's 'tell'. This is the first of the play's numerous (yet unstudied) economic metaphors. Cleopatra's riposte seems to me very witty indeed. Her offer to 'set a bourn how far to be belov'd' completely shifts her ground, no longer questioning Antony's love and its extent but assuming it and seeking to set its limits! 'Bourn' may suggest a very distant boundary – as if to invite the answer: 'How deep is the ocean?' Or perhaps she is thinking of a self-limited intimacy, as in the marriage contract of Millamant and Mirabell. Or perhaps she would stipulate that Antony should not

¹ Philip Roddman, 'André Gide on Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Encomium*, ed. Anne Paolucci (New York, 1964), p. 80.

² Coleridge on *Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 269.

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love to the extent of losing his imperial power. Certainly, her speech is highly provocative to Antony's expansiveness, with its limiting words: 'set', 'bourn', 'how far'. And it achieves the desired result, for Antony's reply makes a splendid vault to the visionary ('new heaven, new earth'), plus a new intimacy: whereas before their talk had been about abstract 'love', Antony now uses a warm 'thou'.

When the Attendant interrupts, deferring the key words 'from Rome' until last (whether for emphasis or from fear or both), Antony is terse – as he can be when irritated. But he does ask to hear a summary. Cleopatra immediately intercedes to prevent this; playing on contraries, she defers the news by insisting – at length – upon hearing it (19–32)!

The impulses behind Cleopatra's outburst are complex. In part, her words are simply expressive. Her psychic metabolism is much faster than most – she often interrupts, her fears breaking forth uncontrollably. One sometimes wonders what Antony 'sees' in Cleopatra, beyond her sexual attractions. Part of her appeal to him is shown here: their love matters so much to her that she compulsively ventilates every last aspect of every crisis.

At the same time she is manipulating Antony, appealing to his pride and will, trying to make him blush at any shame he may feel toward Fulvia and Caesar. In a strange way she becomes the voice of the worst Roman thoughts she can imagine. Is it an accident that all of the words she uses for the message have Latin roots – mandate, dismissal, process? Certainly, she becomes as shrill as Fulvia. She strikes a response from Antony with 'Perform't, or else we damn thee', imagining that Caesar is assuming the royal 'we' and employing the insulting 'thee' toward Antony, as toward an inferior. At first she does no more than urge Antony 'to hear the messengers', but as she becomes sure of her ground, she

then goes further and calls them in herself. As before, this produces the desired response (33–9). Again vaulting to a spacious extreme, Antony not only thrusts aside Caesar and Fulvia but all Rome and its empire. To me his first clause ('Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch/Of the rang'd empire fall') rings true, hyperbolic as it is. But an element of play-acting immediately enters, for he not only makes the physical gesture of rapport ('do thus'), but holds it as a pose and expounds it. And his extravagant protestation of devotion turns into a rather easy rhetorical challenge to the world. He deserves Cleopatra's oxymoron 'excellent falsehood'. Shortly she will urge him to play another scene of 'excellent dissembling'.

No one is more suspicious of dissembling than she is, being such a dissembler herself. Whether or not 'Why did he marry Fulvia, and not love her?' is heard as an aside, it shows an extreme self-consciousness, an ability to see herself as a role-player: 'I'll seem the fool I am not'. For her way of holding Antony is very like that which Falstaff uses to beguile Prince Hal from his responsibilities. They both assume a series of diverting roles, 'becoming' whatever they think will 'eye well' to their loved one. But what is most attractive about Cleopatra to Antony he sums up when he follows her 'Antony will be himself', with 'But stirr'd by Cleopatra'. 'Stir' here meaning 'arouse sexually', 'inspire', and 'provoke'. Shakespeare elsewhere uses the word in these senses, and they all apply here; for in all these ways, Cleopatra enlarges Antony's potency, releases his bounteousness to new limits. He is most 'himself' when joined with her.

Having stirred Antony to truly imaginative utterance, Cleopatra relaxes; and he subsides into grandiose conventionalities. He takes her final joking challenge to 'Hear the ambassadors' (humorously elevating their status) as the occasion to make yet another vault. In a speech filled with absolutes (44–55), he goes

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beyond rejecting the Roman empire to exclude the whole world – to be ‘all alone’ with her and hear ‘No messenger but thine’. Yet his language is now abstract; there is something ‘warmed over’ about his invitation to do what Cleopatra desired last night; the poetry is gone. I find the same pattern in the forthcoming departure scene, where Antony rises to a fresh and concrete declaration of his fealty, swearing ‘By the fire/That quickens Nilus’ slime’ (I, iii, 69–70) but ends with a pat couplet:

That thou, residing here, goes yet with me;
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee.

(104–5)

The pattern is there, too, in Antony’s death scene, where ‘I am dying, Egypt, dying’ (IV, xv, 18) gives way to a final speech which is full of the Roman conventionalities Shakespeare found in Plutarch (50–9).

How ‘wrangling’ should Cleopatra be? To me, both recordings seem timid about her tone, softening it. There is a great deal of playfulness throughout this episode. But I find Pamela Brown and Anthony Quayle on the Shakespeare Recording Society version too playful. I do not hear any insecurity in their voices: this Antony is totally devoted and this Cleopatra seems to have no doubt about it; yet in the next scene Antony will be leaving.

On the Marlowe Society recording, Richard Johnson is less the glib and ardent lover than is Quayle. He has a more independent existence. It may be that, as Samuel Barber decided, Antony’s baritone should incline more to the bass than to the tenor. Irene Worth is less gay than Pamela Brown, but she might let more anxiety show through; and she might be more disagreeable, too. Antony after all speaks of ‘conference harsh’. For the most part, Miss Worth is caressing Antony with her voice, not challenging him. And Antony finds a dare irresistible, whether from Cleopatra or Caesar. Although he can stand only so much of it, he

loves her in part because she chides him, not merely in spite of it.

Since Strindberg, it should be easier for us to recognize mutual hatred as part of what holds these two together. In one of his *Open Letters to the Intimate Theater*, Strindberg in fact has a thoroughly characteristic commentary on *Antony and Cleopatra*. In his view, Cleopatra is Antony’s ‘dear fury’, sharing with him a ‘mixture of will to power, hate, contempt, cruel sensual pleasure, the need to debase [each other], faithlessness, in a word – enmity; and in the midst of the hatred both of them are whipped by the demon fear-of-losing (jealousy)’.¹ As he hears the first scene, Cleopatra comes on furious and continues her ‘raging as usual’ throughout! One need not go this far to see a kinship between Shakespeare’s play and such post-Strindberg plays as *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, where hatred is seen as an aspect of love and quarreling as a form of love talk.

III

Antony’s first encounter with Caesar is reminiscent of his first encounters with Cleopatra. Although Caesar and Cleopatra are customarily contrasted, they have some striking resemblances, especially in their relationships with Antony. Both are engaged in a loving rivalry with him. They have seen Antony’s visage in his mind and are deeply attached to it; in parallel scenes they have in their own ways just celebrated Antony at length: she envying the ‘happy horse’ that bears the weight of Antony (I, v, 21); he recalling the hardy soldier who ‘didst drink/The stale of horses’ (I, iv, 61–2). Yet they are both possessive of Antony (both hate Fulvia); and they both want to dominate him utterly. Cleopatra envies Antony his ‘inches’ and takes his potent sword away

¹ *Open Letters to the Intimate Theater*, trans. Walter Johnson (Seattle, n.d.), p. 275.

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from him, metaphorically as well as actually. And if Caesar completely had his way he would not only subjugate his 'mate in empire' but turn his men and Cleopatra against him, and then scorn them.

To Antony and others his two loving rivals have uncanny powers, especially over him: Cleopatra is literally 'enchanting' and Caesar is 'beguiling', with a daemon that takes mysterious precedence over his. They live at a faster pace than does Antony. Verbally, this is shown in Cleopatra's constant interruptions and Caesar's laconic impatience with verbiage (as with Pompey, II, vi, 32). They seem more intelligent than he, cunning past men's thought, especially in their manipulation of appearances. Given to role-playing, as they are, they are both ever conscious of decorum.

The present scene (II, ii) is an exercise in role-playing. Although it takes the form of a quarrel over the past, it is really a struggle for primacy in the present. Both men want to patch up an alliance against Pompey. The question is, on what terms? Antony's poise is being tested. He must maintain his own honor without seriously insulting Caesar's, a subject about which Caesar is very touchy indeed. Everything, thus, depends on Antony's tone.

The opening interchange sets out the two extremes available to Antony: Lepidus' way of appeasing 'soft and gentle speech' versus Enobarbus' way of bravado, speaking 'as loud as Mars'. Note that both men not only advocate a tone but themselves illustrate it.

Everything that follows can be heard as part of the war of nerves. Are the adversaries truly concerned with other affairs or merely making a show of preoccupation? The neatness of the parallel between their exchanges suggests the latter. Is the business of sitting down merely a polite formality, or does it reflect the struggle for precedence? Since Antony is at this point trying to take the offensive, I hear him resisting Caesar's attempt to play the host

(Caesar has presumed to welcome Antony to Rome) and himself taking over that role, prevailing on Caesar to 'sit'.

The next exchange shows Antony trying to hold the initiative, but with Octavius countering skillfully, speaking very cautiously and precisely, and taking it away from him. For instance, Octavius' rejoinder to Antony's charge (30-5), deliberately answers Antony's first line first, his second line second, with a rhetorical play on being 'laugh'd at' (a constant fear of Caesar's). Is there a genuine expression of feeling in 'with you/Chiefly i' the world'? Only gradually does Caesar edge into his first charge against Antony, his language at this point being full of conditionals like 'if' and 'might'. Caesar then continues to make a series of increasingly personal and direct charges, each time extracting an apology or excuse from Antony and then moving abruptly on to the next. Although Antony is awkward (contrast the clarity of his speech when he is on the offensive with the obscurity of his defenses), he does manage to keep both his head and his dignity, going to neither Enobarbus' nor Lepidus' extremes. The relation of 'brothers' is then fabricated. Query: Who married Antony? Octavia? Or Octavius?

Although Antony can hold up his end in the complicated games that Cleopatra and Caesar play, he is not 'good at them'. They do not seem his natural idiom. His instinct is to break through to something simpler and more physical: to 'do thus'. Part of what is appealing about Antony is that Shakespeare repeatedly shows his warm and expansive nature having to deal with impossibly demanding people on their own grounds.

The points that his loving rivals score off Antony in these early encounters are small, but – like banderillas – they begin and portend his eventual diminution. Like Othello, Antony has added a great love to his greatness as a general. As the play begins this combination