Blinded by Passion: Antony's Disillusionment and Downfall

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Abstract

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* shares with *Troilus and Cressida* the obsessive and self-consuming rage of the tragic figure as he confronts and attempts to define "reality." But, more extravagantly than *Troilus and Cressida*, this reality is layered with masquerade; forms that are often as lyric as brutal shift and change and baffle expectation. The constant refinement of brute reality into lyric illusion is the work not simply of Antony, Shakespeare's hero, but the lifelong work of Shakespeare himself. Thus, there is a curious, rather decadent air in this play of flamboyant desires having as much import—if not ultimately as much political strength—as events themselves. It is reality that is defeated in this play, and its defeat goes unmounted. The uses of poetry are nowhere in Shakespeare so well imagined as in this work about godly creatures who delight in their humanity, and who leave their traces upon all comers of their gigantic world. Illusion could not be sustained in Hamlet's gloomy Denmark, or on the wild fields of Scotland; it requires the light-drenched world of old Egypt, a world that exists nowhere except in this play and then only within its words, by the strenuous magic of its language. In Shakespeare's works after *Antony and Cleopatra*, language will expand its uses to become both "action" and "theme," moving toward the purely lyric.

Key Words: Antony; Cleopatra; Othello; Macbeth; Oedipus Rex

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Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* shares with *Troilus and Cressida* the obsessive and elf-consuming rage of the tragic figure as he confronts and attempts to define "reality." But, more extravagantly than *Troilus and Cressida*, this reality is layered with masquerade; forms that are often as lyric as brutal shift and change and baffle expectation. The constant refinement of brute reality into lyric illusion is the work not simply of Antony, Shakespeare's hero, but the lifelong work of Shakespeare himself. Thus there is a curious, rather decadent air in this play of flamboyant desires having as much import-if not ultimately as much political strength-as events themselves. Lionel Abel states that among the characters of *Hamlet* there are four playwrights: Claudius, the Ghost, Polonius, and Hamlet. 1 Among the characters of *Antony and Cleopatra* there are any number of mythologizing poets and/or playwrights, but the most important is Antony. Snared within the net of appearances and forced by politics (that most extreme form of fantasy) to break free, Antony's agony is curiously muted for someone who has achieved and lost so much; but this fact can be better understood if we examine the basis of the play and its relationship to "tragedy."

The movement of most works of literature-whether the simple medieval morality play or the ambiguous *Troilus and Cressida*-is toward a dramatic confrontation with reality, with objective truth. The hero's downfall (or, in happier works, his conversion or enlightenment) is determined by the success with which reality overcomes appearances. If there is any great theme of literature this is it: the destruction of the *faux-semblant* and attendant illusions by the intervention, bitter or glorious, of reality. Tragedy works with this theme and is inseparable from it, and the problem of *Antony and Cleopatra* seems to be that the lovers either do not have illusions or, if they do, they never learn to substitute for them other visions of their predicament, in the classical way that Creon of Sophocles' *Antigone* does, or in the way Othello and Macbeth do. Orthodox and recognizable tragedy necessarily involves a process of learning and exorcism, which is manipulated by the tragic figure himself, as in *Oedipus Rex*, or by surrounding characters who mayor may not be fragmented aspects of the hero himself, as in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, or by fate or external social forces, as in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. In *Antony and Cleopatra* all exorcism fails: just as Antony cannot rid himself of his obsession with Cleopatra, so Cleopatra cannot quite rid herself
of the earth-bound and, in a crude sense, comic aspects of her own mortality. Exorcism works to dispel illusion, but the poetry of *Antony and Cleopatra* works to create illusion. The play is sustained by words alone, for its plot is certainly incidental; we are never interested in what a character does, but only in how he expresses his consciousness of what he has done, and what this evokes in the mirroring rhetoric of his witnesses. Here reality does not defeat appearances; appearances are made-through a pressure that approaches magic-i-to defeat reality or at least render it irrelevant.

Comedy also traditionally penetrates illusions; it is the incongruity of what is supposed and what is that produces laughter. But *Antony and Cleopatra* relates most immediately and most helpfully to comedy, since its tragic dimensions are attained (in acts 4 and 5) by an excess and concentration of emotion that is not anticipated in the earlier acts. The first act is comic in intention: the lovers insist upon their love's hyperbole and most specifically upon Antony's rejection of his former life. In a pretense of negatives, he states his real concerns:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man.
(1. 1. 33-36)

At the end of the act he leaves for Rome to strengthen his hold on the empire and to escape Egyptian "dotage." The banter and playacting of the first scene show Antony and Cleopatra at their worst, and this self-caricaturing, since it cannot be so judged until much later, gives a credulity to the opening speech that would not ordinarily belong to it. This is Philo's judgment of Antony, which may be equated exactly with the judgment of the Roman world: Antony is the "triple pillar of the world transfonn'dJ Into a strumpet's fool" (1. 1. 12-13). The paradoxical nature of Antony's infatuation is vividly suggested by these lines:

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.
(1.1. 6-10)

The surrender of the militant must constitute for the Romans an unqualified surrender; the problem for the spectator or reader is the extent to which Roman judgment may be trusted. But the central image here works for the Antony of the entire play: what is unforgettable in this Antony is his "heart" on any level, the organ of courage, of magnanimity, of loyalty, of love, of hysterical valor possible only by a "diminution in [his] brain." Antony is his heart, as Caesar is his reason, and the heart, being blind, may understand the complexities of the "tawny front" (Philo's description of Cleopatra) by other means. The "front" has its obvious irony in that Antony is a military man; it has its obvious accusation in that it is but a mask, a facade; but not so obvious is the fact that, since it is a facade, there may be dimensions enjoyed by it that would baffle the Roman mind. The image works, then, in two directions, and the Roman Philo, speaking scornfully, is allowed to say more than he means. Antony's heart, apparently having met defeat on this battle front, has become a bellows, so retaining its pulsing, contracting and expanding motions, but having undergone a metamorphosis that cannot be admired. The paradox is that the bellows and the fan which "cool a gipsy's lust" do not cool but enflame; their purpose, as instruments, is to do so. The image of the cyclical cooling and enflaming, then, can suggest that fluctuating course Antony will follow, and, in its apparent preoccupation with a single object, the man himself: a man of complexity, a colossus and a ruffian who consumes himself in the love that, by devouring him, transforms him into a being the military Antony, noble as he might be, could not imagine. The image suggests, further, a shameful helplessness; it suggests entrapment, the commitment of the passionate being to his passion, but never the commitment of the passive being to his "fate." Common judgments of Antony are perplexed, or at best mixed. He is not a tragic figure in any recognizable sense; he may yearn for "the love of Love, and her soft hours" in act 1, but in act 4, at death, he will not yearn for more than this.

The bantering first scene is followed by an interlude of sophisticated joking among lesser people-Cleopatra's servants and the Roman friend of Antony, Enobarbus. The click
of the anticipation of death in the midst of life, or luxurious gaiety, and the prophecies of
the soothsayer are as close in *Antony and Cleopatra* as one comes to the conventionalities
of tragedy. Does this argue for supernatural design or is it introduced to strengthen,
structurally, the meandering energy of the play? Later Antony's god, Hercules, will desert
him (in Plutarch, it is Bacchus), but Antony registers no consciousness of this symbolic
act. It does not work-as do the garden scene of *Richard II* or the scene in *Troilus and
Cressida* in which Hector slaughters the strange knight "for his hide"-to relate directly to
the hero's interpretation of his plight or to add to the audience's understanding of its
dimensions. It is eerie; it is mystical; it is a possibility-just as anything in the enchanted
Egypt is a possibility-but its suggestion of divine force or fate is never taken up by
anyone in the play. *Antony and Cleopatra* is the most godless of Shakespeare's plays,
because it is about human beings for whom anything less than self-divinity will be failure.

It is not only Cleopatra who suggests a mysterious variety, but Antony as well. Much as he reveals himself in his words, his half-false sincerities and his half-truthful lies, there is mystery in him because he is in a process of change. His variety is suggested by the differing men who see him, and, most famously, 3 by Cleopatra after his death. To his officer, Ventidius, he is a captain generous only to those who keep themselves, cautiously and wisely, inferior to him (act 3, scene 1); to Enobarbus he is a "fool" (3. 11. 42) and yet a "mine of bounty" for whom one might give his life (4.6.32); to Caesar, the Antony of old was a great soldier who fought "with patience morel Than savages could suffer" (1. 4. 60-61), but who is now "a man who is the abstract of all faults! That all men follow" (1. 4. 9-10). Caesar might have gone on to see that Antony is not flawed by his faults but is his
faults; in him, as in Cleopatra, the vilest things become themselves. Yet to Lepidus, there
are not "evils enow to darken all his goodness;/ His faults in him seem as the spots of
heaven) More fiery by night's blackness" (1. 4. 11-13). Antony is to be considered,
frequently, in terms of light and dark imagery; what is perplexing is the ease with which
the polar values of light and dark may be confused. Antony "is," in Cleopatra's famous
speech, light itself: he is the sun and the moon and the heavens. Yet his faults in him seem
as the spots (stars) of heaven -again light, and perhaps the same light. This cosmic light
blinks good and evil; when one leaves the atmosphere of the human condition, the two
become indistinguishable.

But Caesar's point here is earthbound:
If the fill'd His vacancy with his voluptuousness,  
Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones Calion  
him for 't; but to confound such time  
That drums him from his sport, and speaks as loud  
As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid.  
(1.4. 25-30)

The tension in *Antony and Cleopatra* is, clearly, not between good and evil and not between appearances and reality. It is simply between two views of the world, the Roman and the Egyptian, the cold Machiavellianism of those who deal in lieutenancy (3.9. 39) and the unfixed, pulsating, undignified voluptuousness of those to whom passion has become a world. I speak of tension, but really this contention between opposites counts for little more than the formal plot. There is never any doubt about the impending victory of reason—if it is a victory; the tension is not, as in *Troilus and Cressida* exploited as mock tension and made to demonstrate the shabbiness of both love-worshiping Trojans and reason-worshiping Greeks. In *Antony and Cleopatra* both ways of viewing the world are given generous consideration, the final point being that they are simply different and that anyone world threatens or suffers opposing worlds. The one necessarily moves out of itself, bent upon conquering; the other moves in upon itself and draws the world in after, so that to the great soldier Antony, the absurdity of challenging Caesar to a duel is never recognizable. The political must resist emotions, though they may trade upon them; the passionate recognize only emotions, though they may recognize at the same time their serious limitations. What is interesting is that for both species of man, faith in appearances supercedes faith in reality, or it may be that, for both, appearances turn into reality.

Thus the sacrifice of the limpid Octavia: Caesar and Antony cannot understand each other, and do not want to, but their accustomed faith in ceremony meets in the proposal of the political marriage between Antony and Octavia. They are role-takers; therefore, we feel no distaste for Antony as he dismisses his love of Cleopatra as "poison'd hours," since we know he does not tell the truth but speaks only ceremonially. We take our cues in the play from Enobarbus, the plain dealer who is
out of place in this meeting:

if you borrow one another's love for the instant, you may, when you hear no more words
of Pompey, return it again: you shall have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do
(2.2. 107-111)

Enobarbus pretends not to understand the decorum of this world. Instead, the doomed Lepidus interprets it: "Her love to both! Would each to other and all loves to both! Draw after her" (2. 2. 141-143). History is too fraudulent to be telescoped into anything but comedy. So Antony, newly contracted to Caesar through the political marriage, recognizes no change in relationships but, inspired by the catalytic words of the soothsayer, foresees his doom in Caesar's alienness:

The very dice obey him.
And in our Sports my better cunning faints
Under his chance.
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I' the east my pleasure lies.
(2. 3. 33-40)

The relationship of Antony and Cleopatra is as apparently ignoble as nobility will allow. We see them as lovers in fragments: they wander through the streets and "note the qualities of people"; they lie brilliantly and passionately to each other; they swear their love in impossibly exaggerated terms; they do not trust each other. Above all, they are not youthful lovers: Cleopatra sees herself as "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black,! And wrinkled deep in time" ( 1. 5. 28-29 ); Antony speaks angrily of sending to "the boy Caesar ... this grizzled head" (3. 11. 17). But in them surface conventions and the reality of spirit are blurred, as the good and evil of Antony become one in the dazzling light he embodies. So Cleopatra, with "wann'd" lip, is still the queen of her exotic land, and is evoked in the famous set-piece in which
Enobarbus describes her to an awe-stricken Roman as an impression rather than a reality—and it is the impression, finally, that matters. The scene upon the barge—the air love-sick with perfume, the rich imagery of gold and purple and silver, the transformation of attendants into cupids and mermaids, most of all the transformation of the perhaps desperate Cleopatra into Venus—may just miss being absurd; delivered by a Thersites, this would come to us differently. But Enobarbus? whose sense of reality we are to trust, understands that she does "make defect perfection" and that, given this alchemy, the logical Roman world and its judgments are irrelevant. The paradox Cleopatra embodies is suggested most succinctly in Agrippa's exclamation, "Royal wench!" Cleopatra's majesty is such that so crude a comic scene as the one in which she assaults the messenger of ill news does not destroy it; she is described in terms of food and eating, and describes herself so, but this counts, ultimately, as one of the symptoms of her complexity and not simply of her baseness. Recurring in her, even at her death, is a propensity to view matters comically.

History as possible comedy (when enacted, as it must be, by mortal men) is one of the motifs of *Antony and Cleopatra*; it comes out most successfully abroad Pompey's galley (act 2, scene 7), where the pillars of the world end their banquet in a drunken communion that means, of course, nothing. The Roman disposition is more recognizably admirable than the Egyptian, because it is normally ambitious. But in the end it is no more meaningful, and its ceremonies, though usually sober, come to the same thing as the illusion of the cupids and mermaids attending their scheming Venus. *Antony and Cleopatra* is as ceremonial a play as *Richard II* and *Troilus and Cressida*, but though all ceremonies come to nothing finally, the abandonment of these forms in *Antony and Cleopatra* does not constitute the education it does in the other plays; realizing the sham of ceremonies is quite equivalent to realizing the sham of one's self and the world. If there is a difference between what the world (at its crudest, biological) suggests and what ceremony demands, then it is clearly the world that must be abandoned, since it becomes "no better than a sty." This is the curious point: suicide here is an escape from the disappointing world, but not an escape from the self: whose nobility is never diminished.

The people of both worlds, Roman and Egyptian, live according to ceremony. Enobarbus dies out of grief at the fulfillment of a ritual of friendship, when Antony sends his treasure and more after him; indeed, his death itself is ceremonial. Caesar, disgusted,
may scorn Antony's vulgar performance when Antony at last flees back to Egypt:

    I' the market-place, on a tribunal silver'd,
    Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
    Were publicly enthron'd; at the feet sat
    Caesarion, whom they call my father's son,
    And all the unlawful issue that their lust
    Since then hath made between them.
    I' the common show-place, where they exercise.
    (3.6.3-12)

But he will, minutes later, attack bitterly the manner of his sister's arrival because it has not enough of show in it:

    You come not
    Like Caesar's sister; the wife of Antony
    Should have an army for an usher, and
    The neighs of horse to tell of her approach
    Long ere she did appear; the trees by the way
    Should have borne men; and expectation fainted, Longing for
    what it had not.
    But you are come
    A market-maid to Rome, and have prevented The
    ostentation of our love, which, left unshown, Is often
    left unlov'd.
    (3. 6. 42-53)

There is no distinction on this level between the Roman and the Egyptian: reality loses itself in appearance.

Later Antony, preparing for his suicide, will dream of his reunion with Cleopatra after death in terms of this "show." It is not enough for the lovers to dwell together in romantic bliss for eternity; their love exists, clearly enough, at least in part in the awe of witnesses:
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand, And
with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze; Dido and
her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours.
(4. 12. 51-54)

This does not subtract from their love, but rather qualifies it as a particular sort of love that gives more of itself to supposed irrelevancies than romantic love can afford to surrender. This love is not orthodox, and so it is suspect; it has always been suspect in regard to Cleopatra. After the defeat at Actium, however, with their world shaken and its vastness for the first time questioned, Antony and Cleopatra become recognizably human. Ceremony is forgotten in the urgency of the moment, and they are reconciled, though the loyal Enobarbus, the spokesman or chorus for the action, has lost his faith in the world of passion and its excesses: one must simply "think, and die" (3. 11. 2). Enobarbus' reason tells him to abandon his failing master, envisioned as a dangerous, dying old lion, but if we have assumed Enobarbus' wisdom, we are forced at his death to assume also his guilt. He dies of disloyalty, and the fact of disloyalty is in itself sinful, despite the important fact that "loyalty well held to fools does make ... faith mere folly" (3. 11. 42).

The several climaxes of the play battle expectation. If the processes of exorcism are to be completed, Antony as the deluded lover must collide with reality and must see his folly. But the movement toward tragic enlightenment is always thwarted, and Antony withdraws from these encounters with his faith in his condition untouched. So after the battle at Actium when Antony seems a defeated man-"I am so late in the world that I Have lost my way for ever" (3. 9. 3 )-it is not the temptation of suicide that masters him but the totality of his commitment to Cleopatra. He is able to say:

Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost.
Love, I am full of lead
Some wine, within there, and our viands! Fortune knows,
We scorn her most when most she offers blows.
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(3.9.69-74)

So he makes his early speech about his indifference to worldly fortune come true.
The next climax comes when Antony sees Caesar's messenger kissing Cleopatra's hand; he does not see that she is acting a part. His judgment on her turns back upon himself in a passage that should work as a catharsis of his love and his bondage:

when we in our viciousness grow hard, o
misery on't!-the wise gods seel our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
Adore our errors; laugh at's, while we strut
To our confusion.
(3. 11. 111-115)

He is maddened by Caesar's "harping on what I am) Not what he knew I was" as if his life were over. But he is again reconciled to Cleopatra, whose dignity grows when his diminishes, and believes they will yet do well. Enobarbus sees Antony as so furious that he is "frighted out of fear," and consequently not the old Antony. His bravado has a new sound of hollowness:

I will be treble-sinew'd, hearted, breath'd, And
fight maliciously; for when mine hours
Were nice and lucky, men did ransom lives Of me
or jests; but now I'll set my teeth, And send to
darkness all that stop me. Come, Let's have
one other gaudy night: call to me All my sad
captains.
(3. 11. 177-183)

The apparent change of fortune that follows (they beat back Caesars men) makes the final catastrophe more complete.

After the last defeat, when Cleopatra's men desert to the enemy, Antony is brought to a revelation of what reality is for him, but again this revelation is discarded. The apparent
betrayal of Cleopatra constitutes a betrayal of all appearance:

Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish;
A vapour 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.
(4. 12.2-11)

The protean condition of man and his world, a vision presented here with deadly vividness, is offset for Antony only by the false report that Cleopatra has killed herself. His commitment to love is again realized, and he prepares for death. It is the final restoration of faith in love that justifies the expenditure of passion the play has permitted. Death is neither escape nor self-punishment; it is, of course, a mistake, yet it is at the same time a willful surrender to something very like love. Eros is Antony's knave and Antony's god: Antony will "make death love me" and will "run into'tJ As to a lover's bed." Brutus dies because he has awakened from delusion; Othello dies when freed from the delusion of what he is; Troilus, not a tragic figure, perhaps, nevertheless goes into battle to die when confronted with the prospect of a world totally corrupted. But Antony dies with his faith in love renewed. This long death scene avoids a ghastly sentimentality partially by Cleopatra's unromantic wariness (fearing capture, she will not leave the monument to come to the dying Antony), partially by the confidence with which the lovers affirm themselves and their love, partially by the sheer hyperbolic force of the poetry itself.

The play is conceived in hyperbole, the controlled hysteria of Renaissance language to which no world was ever equal. If the confines of this Roman-Egyptian world are not admittedly fake, then they are, by necessity, without limitation. The known world is collapsed into Antony, Cleopatra, and Caesar; nothing is missing from it, since they combine among them all its brilliance and its stupidity. Antony can say of himself that with his sword he "quarter'd the world" (4. 12. 58); Cleopatra can say of him-beginning
the extended creation and re-creation of her lover that must be unmatched in literature for its audacity and beauty—that he destroys with himself all order in the world: "Young boys and girls/

Are level now with men; the odds is gone) And there is nothing left remarkable! Beneath the visiting moon" (4. 13.65-68).

Even Caesar can say "the death of Antony/ Is not a single doom; in the name lay/ A moiety of the world" (5. 1. 16-18). The play is finally Antony's, for Cleopatra is priestess to his apotheosis in the speech toward which all earlier poetry moves:

His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
Crested the world; 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. For his bounty, There was no winter in't, an autumn 'twas That grew the more by reaping; his delights Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above The element they liv'd in; in his livery Walk'd crowns and crownets, realms and islands were As plates dropp'd from his pocket.
(5. 2. 82-92)

The wonder of these flights of poetry is that they seem to give nothing of their certainty to the ceremony of the earlier acts of the play. If it is not possible that Antony was as he is dreamed, then it is not the lapsed Antony this play is about. If their "strength is all gone into heaviness," this heaviness testifies simply for the magnitude of that former strength that has now destroyed itself. Antony's death teaches Cleopatra the vanity of life, subject to fortune; the betrayal of her treasurer renders this education immediately suspect, just as the knowledge that Caesar will lead her in triumph obscures forever Cleopatra's motives for dying. Shakespeare balances hyperbole with comic suggestion: the Antony as colossus and the Antony as ruffian, the Cleopatra equal to all visions of herself and the Cleopatra raging at the servant who has betrayed her. But the counterpoint does not work
here-as it does, for instance, in Dr. Faustus with its vaudeville scenes of Wagner playing magician-to qualify the grandeur of these people and to cheat them of their incredible dignity. Instead, it works to suggest by contrast the range of behavior this dignity allows itself, and the heights to which it succeeds. Thus Cleopatra becomes unforgettable precisely because she is a woman, and at times a small woman; what is insisted upon is her humanity, the ascent of angels or demonic gods being too easy. The baseness of Cleopatra does not preclude her greatness but assures it, since without this her presence would be no more than a flight of words. This magic, admittedly, will not work for everyone. Though the modem temperament admires passion and individuality more than the older virtues of prudence, modesty, and chastity, Cleopatra may still be interpreted as Shakespeare's Romans see her, and Antony's death may be seen as simply the necessary result of his having surrendered his reason to immoral passion. But the magic works for Antony and Cleopatra, and it need not do more.

The denial of prosaic reality and its metamorphosis into something rich and strange are possible through the language Shakespeare uses. Thus the chilling vision Antony has of the cloud formations that battle the eye and that extend, in their impermanence, into the lives of men is a vision that may be utilized profitably by the victims of this world of appearances. Antony dies with his belief in Cleopatra and himself secure (and it is surely Shakespeare's Antony that William Carlos Williams has in mind in his whimsical poem, "To Mark Anthony in Heaven," the sense of the poem being that Antony's experience and his commitment to love are "heaven," man's highest achievement). Cleopatra asks, after her envisioning of Antony as a colossus, whether there was such a man as that of whom she speaks; when told there was not, she replies:

You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.
But, if there be, or ever were, one such,
It's past the size of dreaming; nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet to imagine
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,
Condemning shadows quite.
(5. 2. 94-99)
This condemnation of "shadows" is the metaphorical basis upon which the entire play works. These lines propose a question they do not answer, since by the choice of words (nature "imagines") the meaning is made ambiguous. Clearly there has been an Antony, and there is doubt about his being past the size of dreaming, but-and this is the irony-if there has been this Antony, it is the highest achievement of nature's own imagining, or creating; it falls beyond man's capacity for understanding. At her own death Cleopatra is able to transform by her imagination the snake to a "baby asleep at my breast) That sucks the nurse asleep," this final alchemy no more wonderful than that which has lighted the entire play. We must turn to a Prospero to encounter equal omnipotence.

It is reality that is defeated in this play, and its defeat goes unmounted. The uses of poetry are nowhere in Shakespeare so well imagined as in this work about godly creatures who delight in their humanity, and who leave their traces upon all comers of their gigantic world. Illusion could not be sustained in Hamlet's gloomy Denmark, or on the wild fields of Scotland; it requires the light-drenched world of old Egypt, a world that exists nowhere except in this play and then only within its words, by the strenuous magic of its language. In Shakespeare's works after Antony and Cleopatra, language will expand its uses to become both "action" and "theme," moving toward the purely lyric.
Works Cited

情令智昏—安東尼之幻滅與墮落

許玉長*

摘要

感情在文學上是常被討論之主題，若再將感情與現實一併討論，其勢必引發讀者之心境困惑與矛盾衝突，實有增無減。莎士比亞之戲劇中之安東尼與克利歐佩特拉所討論現實之問題。如同題目所暗示讀者之感情有可能被現實所掩蓋。申言之，利令智昏與情令智昏大有其差異性，因利令智昏是人類一般常情，然而情令智昏乃是人在愛情中沖昏過頭，因而造成諸多現實面在愛情沖擊下產生幻滅與墮落。

安東尼與克利歐佩特拉是莎士比亞之戲劇中最長一部，既有 3,964 行，易是分景數目最多一部，此齣戲是莎士比亞三大羅馬劇之一，就整體而言，其可能比莎士比亞被公認之四大悲劇略有遜色，然其絢爛多資之處在全集中仍有傑出之地位。

本劇之故事自西撒被刺後四年開始，即紀元前四十年，至安東尼之死；亦即紀元前四十年，前後十年，於開始時，安東尼是羅馬三巨頭之一，統治富饒之東方，正值其鼎盛時代，此經普魯塔克有相當完備之記載，然莎士比亞援例之選擇數個片段加以安排，有時非常忠於普魯塔克，幾乎採用精緻散文為更細膩之無韻詩。譬如對安東尼初次見面克利歐佩特拉之一段絢爛描述，預諸與安東尼之一段對話，以及最後克利歐佩特拉死時之情景，皆明顯可見莎士比亞發揮高度之精闢創作。

安東尼與克利歐佩特拉在莎士比亞所有之歷史劇中，其絕對是最令人所驚嘆，因其在細節是一部最終於史實之劇，同時亦再很少作品中具有如此深刻令人感覺到一種美妙之力量。

關鍵字：安東尼、克利歐佩特拉、奧塞羅、馬克白、埃狄帕斯王

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