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Josephine Stewart

Kansas State Teachers College of Pittsburg

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA AND ALL FOR LOVE: A COMPARISON

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science

By
Josephine Stewart

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

The following study of Antony and Cleopatra and All For Love was made for the purpose of comparing an Elizabethan drama with a neo-classic play of the Restoration period. Reference was made to the history of the chief characters, and sources of the common plot were examined. Analysis of plot structure of each work furthered the comparison. The central characters as pictured by Dryden and Shakespeare have been contrasted.

Comparison of a well-constructed play of the seventeenth century and a masterpiece of the Elizabethan era confirms in the mind of the writer the universal appeal and preeminence of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY

The love story of Antony and Cleopatra has fired the imagination of many European writers. The life and loves of Cleopatra have furnished the subject of two Latin, four Italian, sixteen French, and six English tragedies.¹ The two English plays best known are Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Dryden's All For Love. Though quite different in form and style, both plays are drawn from history. Dryden translated Plutarch's Lives, including the biography of Antony; Shakespeare followed Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch for the historical background of his play.

Modern historians have drawn upon many sources to bring us details of the ancient world. J. E. M. White in his volume, Ancient Egypt, tells of the origin of the dynasty of the Ptolemies, of whom Cleopatra was a descendant. He writes:

When Alexander chased Darius through burning Persepolis after destroying the hegemony of the Persians at Issus, 332 B.C., the Egyptians invited the young hero to take the Nile valley under his protection. The new king made the gesture of worshipping Zeus-Ammon, and it was the Egyptian god who first revealed to him the fact that he was divine. After founding the city of Alexandria, the conqueror marched away to die at Babylon of the ungodlike illness, typhoid fever. After his death Egypt was administered by one of his generals, Ptolemy Lagos, who in 305 B.C. became the founder of the Greek dynasty.

¹ Anna Jameson, Shakespeare's Heroines (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1906), p. 278.

In 51 B.C. Ptolemy XIV ascended the throne with his wife and sister Cleopatra. The pair was under the protection of the Roman Senate, which nominated Pompey as guardian. Soon afterward Ptolemy banished Cleopatra. After the battle of Pharsalia the defeated Pompey escaped to Egypt where Ptolemy caused him to be murdered. In 48 B.C. Caesar crushed Ptolemy's forces. He himself was drowned. Caesar restored Cleopatra to the throne and appointed Ptolemy XV (her youngest brother) as her co-regent.²

Of Cleopatra and the Ptolemies White says:

In 45 B.C. Cleopatra ordered Ptolemy XV to be killed and elected her son by Caesar, Ptolemy XVI, as co-regent in his place. Fifteen years later when Antony lost the battle of Actium to his fellow triumvir Octavian, Egypt was declared a Roman province.

The Ptolemies ... had made a whole-hearted attempt to copy the manners of the true Pharaohs. They proclaimed themselves gods and even went so far as to practice incestuous marriage. The Egyptians never ceased throughout to look upon them as interlopers. The Ptolemies tried hard to conform to Egyptian standards; much harder than their Greek subjects who flocked there ... after the collapse of the Greek city states.

The Ptolemies had continued to extend pious patronage to the Egyptian temples. Their Greek followers had a derisive proverb: 'Like an Egyptian temple, magnificent to look at, and inside a priest singing a hymn to a cat or a crocodile.'

The Greeks were indifferent to indignities suffered by dispossessed nobles. They mocked the plight of the Egyptian masses--reduced to dire poverty in the midst of plenty. There were strikes, riots and appeals to Rome.

At Alexandria, described by Strabo as a 'universal reservoir,' were to be found Greeks, Italians, Libyans, Arabs, Ethiopians, Jews, Cilicians, Phrygians, Phoenicians, Lydians, Persians, Scythians, Bactrians, and even Indians.³

² J. E. M. White, Ancient Egypt (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1952), p. 205.

³ Ibid., p. 206.

There was no unity in this polyglot population and eventually Egypt fell as a rich prize to the predatory Romans. Egyptian history coalesces with the general history of the Roman world during the lifetime of Cleopatra.

Modern historians present Cleopatra as a clever woman determined to retain her throne at any cost. Because of internal strife in her kingdom she often needed the power of Rome to maintain her as Queen. Both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, consumed with mad ambitions to hew wide-flung empires from the Near East, coveted the wealth of Egypt.

During the war between Julius Caesar and Pompey in 48 B.C., Pompey took refuge in Egypt. Caesar pursued him there, expecting a decisive battle. When Pompey arrived at Pelusium a small boat was sent out to Pompey's ship by Ptolemy Dionysius, who had been dethroned by Cleopatra. Pompey was not without his suspicions, remarking that whoever passed the threshold of a royal dwelling became a slave. Ferrero relates this: "When the boat approached the bank and Pompey rose to disembark, Cornelia, watching from the admiral's vessel, saw a soldier who was in the boat strike him down from behind."⁴ Ptolemy had feared that Pompey might take Cleopatra's part in their dispute.

With his rival out of the way Caesar became in 47 B.C. dictator of Rome and master of the Republic. Caesar needed

⁴ Guglielmo Ferrero, The Greatness and Decline of Rome (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), II, 283.

money. Ferrero quotes Dion in telling how Caesar as consul claimed the right of settling the dispute between Cleopatra and her brother. With a few thousand soldiers, Caesar entered Alexandria, took over the royal palace, levied a tribute upon the citizens, and sent word to the royal siblings to submit themselves to his judgment.⁵ Ferrero reveals the results:

But while the king's ministers were haggling with Caesar, and while the restless populace ... was beginning to break out in rioting, a woman, single-handed, carried the day against them all. The young queen slipped secretly into the palace and penetrated suddenly one evening into Caesar's apartments. Herself utterly cold and callous, insensitive by nature to the flame of true devotion, Cleopatra was one of those women gifted with an unerring instinct for all the various roads to men's affections. She could be the shrinking modest girl, too shy to reveal her half-unconscious emotions of jealousy and self-abandonment; or a woman carried away by the sweep of a fiery and uncontrollable passion. She could tickle the aesthetic sensibilities of her victims by rich and gorgeous festivals, by the fantastic adornment of her own person and her palace, or by brilliant discussions on literature and art; she could conjure up all their grossest instincts with the vilest obscenities of conversation, with the free and easy jocularities of a woman of the camps. Caesar had just emerged from one of the most tempestuous periods of his life; his faculties of enjoyment were heightened by his recent successes and the high promise of his future, by a long period of continence and the severe hardships of his campaigning. It was easy for Cleopatra to persuade him in a single interview, between night and morning, that her cause was the just one.⁶

While Caesar sailed the Nile with Cleopatra, Mark Antony, his Master of the Horse, had almost supreme power in Rome. Antony was young, frivolous, and debauched. Rome was on the

⁵ Ibid., II, 286.

⁶ Ibid., II, 288.

verge of a social revolution. When Caesar returned in 47 B.C., he was coldly received by a disrupted Italy. His long absence and relation with Cleopatra had damaged his reputation. In a series of brilliant reforms he regained supremacy, but according to Ferrero he became the prisoner of his own victory. He made extravagant promises of money and lands to 30,000 soldiers who trusted him. They waited impatiently at a dangerous pitch of excitement. Antony had lost Caesar's trust. At this time Caesar sent his nephew, Octavian Caius, to Greece for schooling and made him his heir in his will.

Cleopatra played a strange and significant part in the tragic decline of the Roman empire. She had regained her throne at the hands of a Roman dictator; now she conceived a new diplomacy for the preservation of her kingdom. Ferrero concludes, "She desired to become Caesar's wife; ... that she hoped to awaken in him the passion for kingship is an equally justifiable assumption."⁷

Caesar scandalized Rome by displaying in a temple to Venus a statue of Cleopatra by the famous sculptor, Arcesilaus. With a large suite of slaves and ministers, in December, 46 B.C., Cleopatra came to Rome with her infant son to win Caesar's permission to call him after his father. She obtained this precious concession, and Rome bitterly criticized Caesar. Every Roman seemed to sympathize with Calpurnia, who was an example

⁷ Ibid., II, 318.

of the lot suffered by Roman women of the highest classes. She had been married to Caesar in 59 B.C. for a political intrigue, left alone for years, and then compelled to receive in her house as a guest her rival. Pawns of their families, Roman women were often married and divorced and married again to cement political ties of a family.

Caesar's health was failing. Seizures of epilepsy were more frequent. In 44 B.C. he restored Mark Antony to favor and made him a consul. Caesar was now a king in all but name, and Rome was in a state of confusion. There were revolutionary dreams among the poor.

Caesar had desired since 56 B.C. to conquer Parthia and add this mysterious kingdom to the Roman East. Beset by political and economic difficulties in Rome, Caesar hoped to find a solution in the conquest of this rich land. Roman conservatives had opposed his plan because they feared that he would establish an open kingship were he successful in Parthia. On the Ides of March 44 B.C. sixty conspiring senators assassinated Caesar, presumably for the good of Rome. Two days later he would have set sail for Parthia.

Mark Antony, vice-consul, made himself sole ruler. The conspirators fled; Antony demanded their provinces and attacked them. Octavian returned to Rome to claim his inheritance according to Caesar's will. A reign of terror ensued. Then later Antony and Octavian joined forces and in 42 B.C. defeated

the senatorial and republican parties in two battles at Philippi. Ferrero says that the credit for these victories rightfully belongs to Antony; other historians remark about the military skill of the young Octavian.

During the last eight months of Caesar's life Mark Antony had been his confidant and had had full knowledge of Caesar's plans. After the assassination he was able to secure all Caesar's papers; he only knew their importance. Ferrero writes, "Others might inherit Caesar's name and fortune, but Antony had secured his last great idea."⁸ With lawlessness rising in Rome, Antony concluded that only by conquering Persia could he hope to dominate the Roman world. After Philippi, Octavian returned to Rome; Antony sailed to Greece and then to Asia Minor. In Cilicia, 41 B.C., he met Cleopatra at Tarsus.

That Antony had been debauched in Rome is known, but the victories at Philippi and the Parthian campaign plans prove him a man of energy and power. Though ancient historians are severe in their judgment of him, they admit his abilities up to this time and place, the starting point of his deterioration in the winter of 41-40 when he met Cleopatra.

Yet Antony, sensualist that he was, spent only a few months of 41 B.C. at Alexandria. From 40 to 37 he employed his great energy in his scheme for the conquest of Persia. Of this period Ferrero writes: "He might have seized, like

⁸ Ibid., II, 319.

Octavian, the highest position by petty deceit and underhand aggression; he preferred, however, to secure it by means of a great and dangerous exploit."⁹ For two years Antony garnered money, organized chieftains of Asia Minor, and arranged for the invasion of Persia by the road indicated by Caesar.

When Antony was recalled to Italy by civil war, he effected a reconciliation with Octavian, who cemented the bargain by giving his sister Octavia to Antony in marriage. In the new division of the Roman world at Brundisium, Antony received the East. In 39 B.C. he visited Athens, and according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, he behaved in an extravagant manner, "assuming the attributes of the god, Dionysus."¹⁰

In the spring of 37 B.C., after interminable negotiations with Octavian, Antony returned to Syria and sent Octavia and their children back to Rome. Cleopatra soon joined Antony at Antioch. It was not men but money that Antony needed now to conquer Persia and make himself master of an empire. He considered that the moment had come for him to accept a previous offer made him by Cleopatra to become king of Egypt by marriage to her.¹¹

Ferrero comments on the traditional love story:

9 Ibid., IV, 263.

10 Encyclopaedia Britannica, II, 83, article, "Marcus Antonius."

11 Ferrero, op. cit., IV, 264.

The man who is represented by ancient historians as the hero of a love-story had contrived to endure three years of separation from Cleopatra; he was returning to her because she was queen of the only eastern country which had not been desolated by war.... At the beginning of the year 36, an event takes place at Antioch which was never suspected by Shakespeare, who has depicted this loving couple in such glowing colours. The lovers who 'gave a kingdom for mirth' are married like two respectable citizens. M. Letronne has the credit for elucidating, by the study of numismatics, this point which is obscure in the historians' narratives.¹²

More details of the wedding are given by Ferrero:

As a wedding present and as compensation for his drafts upon the treasury at Alexandria, Antony had given the queen certain lands ... Cleopatra had followed the customs of Egyptian kings when they contracted a new marriage and had inaugurated a new era, beginning to count the years of her reign from September 1 in the year 37.

The date of the marriage was determined by M. Letronne by a study of Egyptian coins which Cleopatra had struck to provide her nation with tangible evidence of the accession of Antony as a protector and sovereign of Egypt.

Antony did not disavow this action, but neither did he proclaim his marriage in Rome for fear of outraging public opinion ... He did not assume the title of king of Egypt. It was far more important to him to remain proconsul, but as an eastern king he would have the right to practice polygamy....

Marriage with Cleopatra could not be reconciled with the Roman constitution ... and was a most serious and revolutionary act, proceeding against every tradition of Roman policy ... Antony's extravagant optimism induced him to take hurriedly this step which was to decide the whole of his future career.¹³

Cleopatra and Antony wished to make use of each other for purposes of self interest. Cleopatra wished through

¹² Ibid., IV, 264.

¹³ Ibid., IV, 8.

Antony's power to extend her Egyptian empire and to crush any domestic opposition to her rule; Antony needed Cleopatra to provide the necessary funds for his Parthian campaign.¹⁴ With indefatigable cunning, the queen urged Antony to abandon that project, openly declare himself king of Egypt, divorce Octavia, and build a new empire to be divided between the sons of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony wavered; but in the autumn of 34 B.C. he made a great concession--The Donations of Alexandria.

In a resplendent setting, a gold and silver throne room, Antony declared Cleopatra ruler of Egypt, Cyprus, Africa, Syria; other provinces were given to their sons and Caesarion, son of Caesar and the queen. As for Antony, if a second Persian expedition failed, this new Egyptian empire would be his refuge. Thus he was forming an empire at the expense of Rome and was dividing it between Cleopatra and her children.¹⁵ Rome was angry; relations with Octavian were cold. After long consideration, Antony sent articles of divorce to Rome to free him from Octavia. This divorce brought on war.

Antony sent his fleet and nineteen legions to Actium, Greece, in the spring of 31 B.C. Octavian's fleet anchored in the Bay of Komaros near by.¹⁶ Antony's Roman friends urged him to send Cleopatra back to Egypt and to conquer Octavian. On the other hand the queen held to a program that

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., IV, 51.

¹⁶ Ibid., IV, 272.

was to prove disastrous, of neither peace nor war. Personal conflict between the royal pair was deep-seated. Ferrero quotes Pliny as saying that Antony sometimes feared that Cleopatra would poison him.¹⁷

Antony resolved to return to Egypt without a fight, thinking that Octavian would not dare to pursue him. He knew that he could not expect his Roman followers to plan to spend their lives in hated Egypt. As a feint, he pretended to start a naval battle in the Bay of Actium and then fled. Ferrero quotes Dion on this point: "Dion tells us that in order not to frighten their allies, Antony and Cleopatra resolved to depart as if in flight, but like people inclined to force a passage if obstacles were placed in their way."¹⁸ So at the height of the Battle of Actium, Cleopatra and her fleet carried the Roman consul back to her land to become, presumably, King of Egypt and successor to the Ptolemies.

For a week Octavian vainly endeavored to persuade Antony's army to surrender. They refused and firmly believed their general would return. When the evidence of Antony's flight became incontrovertible, the angry army surrendered. Their fury was echoed in Rome against Antony and Cleopatra, who had not foreseen this national and formidable hatred which was to prove their ruin.

¹⁷ Ibid., IV, 274.

¹⁸ Ibid., IV, 275.

It was easy for Octavian to return to Rome with stories of Antony's treason, his enchantment by Cleopatra, their plot to make Rome a province of Egypt, and of their overwhelming defeat at Actium. The truth of the matter is that the Battle of Actium cannot be considered one of the decisive battles in the history of the world. Ferrero quotes Plutarch as noting that Antony's ships returned to the Bay in good order after the consul's flight.¹⁹ In Rome Octavian made the most of his victory. Within a few days Antony's name was blackened with that of Cleopatra, and the once admired triumvir became, in the eyes of the people, a great traitor to a national cause. Ferrero says, "Horace himself abandoned his non-political attitude and composed his Ninth Epode in honor of Octavian's victory...."²⁰

The conquest and annexation of Egypt were demanded in return for Cleopatra's dastardly plan of founding an eastern empire at the expense of Italy. Realizing that here was a chance to increase his popularity, Octavian began to prepare for an Egyptian conquest. Antony reorganized his defense. He had left eleven legions, a large treasure, and a few friends. Yet at this time he had neither the power of a Roman consul nor the authority of an Egyptian king. Herod, The Great, king of Jews, advised him to kill Cleopatra, to annex Egypt on behalf of Rome, and thus prove gossip a lie that said

¹⁹ Ibid., IV, 276.

²⁰ Ibid., IV, 108.

that he had plotted against his native land. Antony, however, remained loyal to Cleopatra and arranged with her to defend Egypt. They built a fleet for the Red Sea, prepared for flight, if necessary, with their treasure, and tried to confirm former alliances. They left four legions in Cyrene and three in Syria.

For Octavian the conquest of Egypt had become a necessity, more for financial need than for political reasons. Public debts were due, and the veterans waited impatiently to be paid. First of all the Roman triumvir desired to obtain the Egyptian treasure. Ferrero refers to Dion, who wrote that Octavian sent Thyrsius to Cleopatra to intimate that he would leave her in possession of Egypt if she would secure the death of Antony.²¹ Such ancient historians as Dion, Josephus, and Plutarch relate conflicting stories of the exchange of diplomatic lies between Cleopatra, Octavian, and Antony. The story of the defense of Alexandria is also told by them with several variations.

Ferrero writes that it is certain, however, that on August 1, 30 B.C., "at the last moment Antony's army and fleet betrayed him, apparently in obedience to Cleopatra's secret orders; the Queen fearing the rage of the man she had betrayed, took refuge in her tomb, and Antony, considering that all was lost, committed suicide."²²

21 Ibid., IV, 114.

22 Ibid., IV, 115.

Octavian entered Alexandria, executed Caesarion and also Antyllus, son of Antony and his third wife, Fulvia; both sons had been given royal honors. The triumvir ordered the death of Canidius, who knew the secret of Octavian's victory at Actium, which must not be repeated at Rome. Cleopatra attempted to bargain for peace with threats that she would burn her treasure, but Octavian confined her to the royal palace while he plied her with ambiguous proposals. When she realized that Octavian would exhibit her in the streets of Rome in his triumph, she adorned herself in the splendor of her royal robes and took her throne. She was found dead with two slaves by her in their death agonies. Ferrero says that how she killed herself has never been known. He also writes that the story of how she applied venomous serpents to her veins was given credence by Orosius, by Dion, and by Plutarch.²³

With the death of Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, Egypt was added to the Mediterranean empire of Rome. Octavian was honored with wonderful festivals and elevated to the pinnacle of fame. Posterity has judged Antony with severity; nevertheless, he was Caesar's political heir. Ferrero characterizes Antony in this way: "Doubtless his ill-balanced and sensual character, his powerful but inconsistent mind, which rendered his every effort abortive, were responsible for his failure to achieve Caesar's programme."²⁴ Although Antony

23 Ibid., IV, 117.

24 Ibid., IV, 116.

did not possess Caesar's mighty intellect, his failure was due not only to his mistakes but also to the fact that no one man in that time could found an eastern monarchy with the obstacles and traditions that stood in the way.

Thus twentieth century historians, with the help of the ancients, have pieced together the tragic careers of a renowned conqueror and an Egyptian queen. It is easy to see that a story of such dramatic conflicts and on so grand a scale would attract many dramatists.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES

Both Dryden and Shakespeare have used Plutarch's Lives as a direct source of plot in their plays All For Love and Antony and Cleopatra. Plutarch, who saw history as the record of the deeds of great men against the background of their times, became very popular in Elizabethan England through a translator of unusual ability, Sir Thomas North. North's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans appeared in 1579, not as a direct translation but through the works of a French scholar, Jacques Amyot.¹

The first mention of North's translation was this entry in the Stationers' Register for 1579: "Vi Die Aprilis--Thomas Vautrollier, master Wighte--Lycenced unto hem a booke in Englishe Called Plutarks Lyves--XV and a copie." Parallel Lives became a source of anecdotes, aphorisms, history, and philosophy in Elizabethan England. Borrowing was undisguised. C. F. Tucker Brooke expresses the opinion that the influence of Plutarch on English literature is one of the most important elements in the debt of moderns to ancients. Brooke writes of Plutarch's works, "... we see so plainly that rare electric flash of sympathy where the spirit of classical literature

¹ B. D. Grebanier and others, English Literature and Its Backgrounds (New York: The Dryden Press, 1951), I, 269.

blends with the modern spirit, and the renascence becomes a living reality."²

Writing in the introduction to Plutarch's Lives of Coriolanus, Caesar, Brutus, and Antonius in North's Translation, R. H. Carr has this to say of the accuracy of North:

It was the fashion formerly to decry North's version of the Lives as inaccurate and untrustworthy, whereas the fact is ... that it is in the main marvelously faithful to the original, especially when the various stages that intervened between the Greek and the English are borne in mind ... But after all the question of North's literal accuracy is only of secondary importance. Like all the great English translators of the classics ... he made it his purpose, not to produce a 'slavish crib' ... but to bring a great work within the comprehension of men of his own day. The contact of such a man in such an age produced necessarily a new Plutarch, new in style and temper, yet the same in substance.

North spared no pains to bring the narrative home to the minds and hearts of his readers. Thus he always rejected a technical term when a vivid paraphrase would give his meaning better ... It would be easy to multiply instances of his vivid power of description, but no further testimony is needed than that of Shakespeare, who often refrained from any attempt to alter or improve upon North's language. The whole temper of the Elizabethan age, with all its poetry, its enthusiasm, its love of adventure, its eager hero-worship, is incarnate in his pages. So easy and so full of life; moreover, is his prose style that it requires an effort on the reader's part to remember that it is a translation at all. Yet a comparison of it with the Vies des Hommes Illustres of Amyot shows that North rendered the French almost word for word. The part played by Amyot, then, was an important factor in the introduction of Plutarch to Shakespeare.³

² C. F. Tucker Brooke, editor, Shakespeare's Plutarch (New York: Duffield and Company, 1909), I, x.

³ R. H. Carr, editor, Plutarch's Lives of Coriolanus, Caesar, Brutus, and Antonius in North's Translation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. xiv.

When Jacques Amyot published his translation of Plutarch's Lives in 1559, he was Abbot of Bellozane. Early Latin translations of the Lives were among the first productions of the printing press. One edition had been published in Rome about 1470. Brooke writes, "It was almost certainly in this Latin form that they attracted the attention and pious study of Jacques Amyot (1514-93). No writer of one age has ever received more devoted service from a writer of another than Plutarch owes to Amyot."⁴ The Abbot had spent years in the purification of the text before his first large folio volume was published by the famous Parisian house of Vascosan. North quite possibly used Amyot's second edition of 1565, a copy of which is now in the Bodleian Library.

The dependence of North on Amyot cannot be questioned. Phrase for phrase, generally word for word, the English translation follows the French. Shakespeare did not borrow from North to this degree. Any charge of plagiarism in either case is irrelevant, for the spirit of North is not the spirit of Amyot. Each book is characteristic of its author and its age.

Amyot, who ranks as one of the foremost creators of modern French prose, is highly praised by Montaigne for his purity of style and 'pure elegancie' of the tongue. Brooke, who says that these qualities are not characteristic of

⁴ Brooke, op. cit., p. xi.

North, adds "... his use of words tends more towards raciness than elegance. North is something more than Amyot and different; it is peculiarly the words of North ... and not of Amyot, which have touched the imagination of Shakespeare in a way the words of no other man, save possibly Marlowe, seem ever to have done."⁵

Dryden knew North's translations and probably those of the Frenchman, Dacier, which were published in 1694. He also read the ancients in the original. In the Preface to All For Love, which was printed in March, 1678, Dryden wrote:

The death of Antony and Cleopatra is a subject which has been treated by the greatest wits of our nation, after Shakespeare; and by all so variously, that their example has given me the confidence to try myself in this bow of Ulysses amongst the crowd of suitors; and withal to take my own measure in aiming at the mark ... All reasonable men have long since concluded that the hero of a poem ought not to be a character of perfect virtue, for then he could not, without injustice be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied. I have therefore steered the middle course; and have drawn the character of Antony as favourably as Plutarch, Appian, and Dion Cassius would give me leave; the like I have observed in Cleopatra ...

I have endeavored in this play to follow the practice of the ancients ... In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare ... I hope I need not to explain myself, that I have not copied my author servilely. Words and phrases must of necessity receive a change in succeeding ages; but it is almost a miracle that much of his language remains so pure; and that he who began dramatic poetry amongst us, untaught by any, and as Ben Jonson tells us, without learning, should by the force of his own genius perform so much,

⁵ Ibid., p. xvii.

that in a manner he has left no praise for any who come after him ... Yet, I hope, and without vanity, that, by imitating him, I have excelled myself throughout the play;⁶

In this Preface then, Dryden has told us that his sources for All For Love have included Plutarch, Appian, and Dion Cassius among the ancients. The plays that he knew by "the greatest wits of our nation after Shakespeare" were probably these: The False One by Beaumont and Fletcher; The Tragedie of Cleopatra by Samuel Daniel; The Tragedie of Caesar and Pompey, or Caesar's Revenge, author unknown but acted by Oxford students in 1607; Catalin's Conspiracies by Stephen Gosson; Seser and Pompie, author unknown but found in Henslowe's Diary of 1594; and Seser's Falle, 1603, by Munday, Drayton, and Webster. Concerning the sources of all these plays, Carr concludes: "Among all the classical subjects of the drama none have proved more adaptable or more popular than Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, and Plutarch is the fountainhead of information about their lives."⁷

Arthur Symons imagines that Shakespeare found delight in the biography of Marcus Antonius as told by Plutarch. He says that Shakespeare constructed Antony and Cleopatra on the very lines of Plutarch. He adds:

⁶ John Dryden, All For Love in The Outline of Knowledge (New York: J. A. Richards Inc., 1924), XVII, 367.

⁷ Carr, op. cit., p. xxxii.

Plutarch was, for Shakespeare, the repository of actual fact; in those pages he found the liveliest image attainable of things as they really happened, and in the comments outlining the characters, something far more likely to be right than the hazard of any guess of his, so long after. And so fully aware was he of the priceless value of every hint art can extort from nature, of the priceless value of all we can get of real nature, that he was content here to copy merely, to reconstruct after a given plan, and almost without altering a single outline. He gave the outlines life, that was all; and it is a real Antony, a real Cleopatra, that come before us on the romantic stage.⁸

Brooke warns that it is difficult to set limits on Shakespeare's erudition and that it is easy to misinterpret woefully his debt to other writers. Brooke writes:

But the indebtedness of Shakespeare to North is most striking in the latest of his Roman plays, Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus ... the dramatist was satisfied in no small number of cases to incorporate whole speeches from North with the least change consistent with the production of blank verse. The description of Cleopatra's first visit to Antony, the dying speech of Antony, and the few noble lines that glorify the passing of Cleopatra ... these passages, all of which rank among the special treasures of Shakespearean poetry, come straight and essentially unaltered out of North.

Nowhere else in Shakespeare is there an instance of verbal borrowing at the height of dramatic intensity which is comparable to these.⁹

It is Carr's opinion that Shakespeare recognized in Plutarch's Lives an artistic work of high polish and refinement. In using this classic the Great Elizabethan found in

⁸ Arthur Symons, Studies in Elizabethan Drama (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919), p. 4.

⁹ Brooke, op. cit., p. ix.

certain passages that it was necessary only to transmute, not to create. In speaking more specifically of Antony and Cleopatra, Carr says that Shakespeare was attracted to Plutarch by the great picture of "Oriental splendor and luxury that he drew on so wide a canvas." Through his Greek temperament, Plutarch expressed in vivid descriptions the magnificence of Egypt, and so in this play Shakespeare could easily follow the original with closer fidelity than he usually did. In discussing sources Carr gives these examples:

Not only is there scarcely an incident in the play which is not drawn from Plutarch, but there is hardly a detail in the later part of Antony which Shakespeare has failed to incorporate in the play, except the long narrative of Antony's campaign against the Parthians. . . . for dramatic reasons, events in the play follow one another with startling rapidity. Thus according to Shakespeare Caesar pursues Antony to Egypt immediately after the battle of Actium, though in Plutarch's narrative at least a year elapses between the sea fight and Caesar's landing in Egypt.¹⁰

Dryden also chooses his own timing in All For Love. He admits in the "Preface" to the play that he takes the privilege of bringing Octavia to Alexandria and thus departs from history and Plutarch. Carr does not approve of Dryden's innovations with the classic plot. He states:

One more play must be mentioned, Dryden's splendidly named All For Love or The World Well Lost. This is an avowed modernization of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, and judged

¹⁰ Carr, op. cit., p. xxvi.

by the present day standards a lamentable production. Dryden takes credit for himself for an inventive flight which evolved a fine ranting scene between Cleopatra and Octavia, and the arguments by which he justifies the innovations are a sufficient verdict upon his work.¹¹

That Shakespeare follows Plutarch rather closely in writing of the characters is a view expressed by Carr:

In the character of Antonius, Plutarch achieved a masterpiece; and this manly broad-fronted, Herculean figure, endowed with Asiatic magniloquence and gigantic ambition, is the very Antony of Shakespeare ... Shakespeare had only to put the finishing touches to the sure lines of Plutarch's work. Nor is the case different with Cleopatra. 'Her beauty' Plutarch tells us 'was not so passing as unmatchable of other women' ... Shakespeare never insists, never implies even, that she is beautiful ... Shakespeare's profound knowledge of the world led him to insist more than Plutarch on her coquetry ... Yet in the play, no less than in the Life, the manner of her end shows the depth and reality of her passion. The fear when Iras dies before her, lest she should meet Antony first and 'steal that kiss which is her heaven to have' is a rare psychological touch of Shakespeare's own, yet wholly consistent with her character as drawn by Plutarch.¹²

With this consistency Levin L. Schucking does not at all agree. He says that Shakespeare founded his play on North's translation of Plutarch, but the Englishman's conception of the Queen differed from that of the historian. Plutarch presented Cleopatra as a woman who united all the refined sensuality of the Orient with much of the culture of the western world. Plutarch mentions her high mental qualities, her success as a ruler of a polyglot kingdom, the

¹¹ Ibid., p. xxxiii.

¹² Ibid., p. xxviii.

infinite agility of her mind as shown in her love of adventure, her refinement, and the indescribable charm of her manner. Of Shakespeare's Cleopatra Schucking writes, "We are astonished to find how inferior she is to the original." To him Shakespeare's Queen is a "great courtesan."¹³

Schucking opines that love seems to be Cleopatra's only aim in life; he considers that Shakespeare meant her to appear as the type of the "artist in love," which implies a certain amount of vulgarity. Schucking adds:

This vulgar trait, which separates irreconcilably the Cleopatra of Shakespeare from that of Plutarch, reaches its culminating point in the hysterical fits which are so excellently represented ... When she hears of the marriage of Antony and Octavia she gets into such a rage that ... she loses all self-control, and mad with fury, beats and stabs the messenger....

Shakespearean critics have traced this passage back to the account Plutarch gives of the interview which Cleopatra has with Octavius, and say that Shakespeare has drawn from it the trait just described ... It is easy to see ... how little real connexion there is between the two incidents. That described by Plutarch shows the woman's ungovernable temper ... Shakespeare, on the other hand, shows us a mere shrew, devoid of all power of self-control, who ... vents her annoyance and rage upon innocent people in order to find distraction in their sufferings.¹⁴

In explaining that Shakespeare had to deal with a public whose thinking was fettered by conventional standards, Schucking says that the dramatist was obliged to represent a great courtesan as morally deficient in other respects.¹⁵

¹³ Levin L. Schucking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays (New York: Peter Smith, 1948), p. 121.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 137.

From another point of view it may be said that Shakespeare owed no more to his source than a sculptor owes to the mountain which furnished him Carrara for an exquisite statue. That Shakespeare veers from Plutarch in the development of minor characters is commendable in the judgment of Carr, who writes this of Enobarbus:

On the other hand Enobarbus is practically created by Shakespeare; he is referred to three times only in the Life of Antonius ... Upon this scanty framework Shakespeare built up the blunt, rugged warrior, whose dry wit and shrewd aphorisms provide the seasoning of Antony's imaginative flights. So successful was the portrait of Enobarbus that both Fletcher and Dryden in their Cleopatra plays imitated the character in Septimus and Sceva, respectively.

The character of Lepidus again is wonderfully developed in the play. Plutarch gives but a bare sketch of the weak-minded puppet ... who is carelessly flung aside by Caesar when he is no longer needed. From the slender details Shakespeare evolved the Lepidus who in the banquet scene ... aims his clumsy shafts of sarcasm at Antonius, and is finally carried off helplessly drunk ... The whole scene is handled with rare zest and vigor, and doubtless the host and his rascally lieutenant Menas were modeled on the hardy sea dogs of Shakespeare's day.¹⁶

In Brooke's estimation Shakespeare has rendered a deservedly high compliment to "North's magnificent version of Plutarch." For Shakespeare to fit the dying speech of Charmian "indistinguishably into a setting worthy of it" is to Brooke a greater achievement than writing a new scene. In his early historical plays Shakespeare had drawn from Holinshed to invest

¹⁶ Carr, op. cit., p. xxviii.

English history with a continuous purpose and a philosophic import. This was already done for him in North's Plutarch, which has a grave note of fatalism, the essence of tragedy. The narration of historical incident goes everywhere hand in hand with the true spirit of humanism and the deepest sense of resistless and powerful destiny.¹⁷

George Brandes, who thinks that Shakespeare executed Antony and Cleopatra on what he read in Plutarch's Life of Marcus Antonius, says:

The further the drama progresses the more closely does he keep to Plutarch's narrative, ingeniously and carefully making use of every touch, great or small, that appears to him characteristic ... At times, he introduces quite unnecessary personages, like Dolabella, simply because he will not put into the mouth of another the message which Plutarch assigns him; and it is very seldom that he permits the most trifling alteration.¹⁸

To another scholar, Montague Summers, All For Love is decidedly a different type of drama and an original work. He speaks of how little Shakespeare owed and how little Dryden was indebted to the Bard:

As Dryden himself avowed when he declared that his play was 'Written in imitation of Shakespeare's stile,' he has modeled his manner upon that of Shakespeare, but in no sense whatsoever is All For Love a mere copy of, or an adaptation from, Antony and Cleopatra. The story is the world's possession, and Dryden could ... justly claim his right to treat it ... All For Love is a drama of sheer originality,

17 Brooke, op. cit., p. xiii.

18 George Brandes, William Shakespeare (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 464.

and to fail to recognize this argues little discernment and less literary intuition.

That there are faint echoes of Shakespearean phrase is nothing ... Dryden was steeped in the 'divine Shakespeare.'

As I have pointed out ... a few passages toward the conclusion of act five were suggested from Daniel's The Tragedie of Cleopatra.¹⁹

As to the ancients, Summers considers that Dryden took very little from them. In checking scenes he makes these comments:

Plutarch he most certainly read with care, but it may be remarked that in several passages when Shakespeare, possibly by accident, has deviated from ancient authority Dryden has followed Shakespeare. Thus in Plutarch's account Antony challenges Caesar to a duel after the successful sally against the Romans. In Shakespeare the challenge is made before the event ... In Dryden the challenge is also made before the sortie ... Plutarch says that Antony dared Caesar to the duello after the sally.²⁰

To draw the fine thread of demarcation between the borrowed and the new is often difficult. To recognize both is David N. Smith's accomplishment. He presents his view on Dryden's originality in this comment:

In passages he [Dryden] did definitely imitate; he worked on many of Shakespeare's ideas and descriptions. But the play is not an imitation. It is a transmutation by a gifted artist who knew his powers and their limits.²¹

Dryden was always sharply aware of literary merit; he was a devoted admirer of Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, and

¹⁹ Montague Summers, Dryden, The Dramatic Works (London: Nonesuch Press, 1932), IV, 167.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 508.

²¹ David N. Smith, John Dryden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 42.

Ben Jonson. The Restoration dramatist often combines elements characteristic of the works of all four writers mentioned. Of Dryden's relation to Shakespeare in heroic tragedy Allardyce Nicoll makes this evaluation:

In general scope this heroic tragedy of Dryden's is surprisingly like the general scope of Shakespearean drama, if we make allowances for the frequent happy endings which the Restoration author, probably influenced by the structure of the epic and heroic poetry, saw fit to give his plays.... If the heroic tragedy is a development of earlier forms of tragic endeavor, it is a development carried to excess. Dryden's plays bear the same relation to those of Shakespeare as a gramophone record bears to the voice of a celebrated singer. The tones are exaggerated and made harsh; there is a continual drone of unrefined harmonies; a lack of delicacy and subtlety pervades the whole. Unquestionably Dryden realized the sphere of true tragedy; he had some conception of the genuine idea of this type of drama; but his age would not permit him to work that idea out in its correct forms.²²

Because of its background of historical tradition, Antony and Cleopatra is by some critics classed as historical drama. Its chief male characters also appeared in Julius Caesar seven years earlier, in 1601. Though both plays deal with Roman history, Frederick S. Boas says that Plutarch is responsible for the definite change in Shakespeare's method when he wrote Antony and Cleopatra in 1608.

Thus, though historically the play is a sequel to Julius Caesar, it differs from it widely in metrical qualities, and no less widely in its

²² Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama, An Historical Survey From the Beginnings to the Present Time (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1925), p. 228.

general spirit. The transition from the one to the other produces in us, as Dowden has said, 'the change in pulse and temper experienced in passing from a gallery of antique sculpture to a room splendid with the colors of Titian and Paul Veronese.' This change is due in large measure to Plutarch whose Greek origin gave him a special insight into the social conditions of the semi-Greek city of Alexandria, and whose Life of Antonius is a brilliant historical romance, full of glow and movement. Shakespeare never had more attractive material to work on, and in the main, he turned his opportunities to magnificent account....

We are shown in turn every aspect of the most materialistic age in the history of the world, the age in which Roman civic virtue was, in its death-throes, suffocated by the plethora of its golden spoils from the South and the East....

But the East as beheld in Shakespeare's play ... is holding revel amidst her palaces, and the opening scenes transport us into the centre of a society whose sole divinity is the pleasure of the passing hour.²³

In comparison, Dryden covered no such world-wide setting. Rather in order to follow the unities of time, Dryden was forced to take only the concluding material of Antony and Cleopatra--mainly the last two acts--and expand that material into a five-act play.

This at once brings us to a realization that the ultimate aims of Dryden and Shakespeare in writing dramas about the Roman conqueror and the Egyptian Queen were different. The fact that common material was used by each author in his own fashion is shown in a comparison of the plots of Antony and Cleopatra and All For Love. From the same story Dryden and Shakespeare produced works of art at variance in type and style.

²³ Frederick S. Boas, Shakspeare and His Predecessors (New York: Charles Scribner, 1896), pp. 473-475.

CHAPTER III

THE PLOTS

Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra reflects the traditions of the Elizabethan stage; Dryden's heroic drama of 1677 is a product of the Restoration and of French criticism of that time. Each man was a practical dramatist who strove to please his audience.

Allardyce Nicoll says that drama continually advances to meet the needs of a particular age. The popular theater expresses attitudes and ideas held and approved by the spectators. The mystery plays had given to the English a taste for theatrical shows that developed later into the Elizabethan enthusiasm for the theater. Although the English mysteries may have borrowed much from the French plays of that age, Nicoll says that "fundamentally they breathed of English soil" and "that this freshness, added to a sense of form borrowed from a study of classic art, gave to us the glories of the Shakespearian drama."¹

Early in the sixteenth century there arose a break between the classic and romantic theorists. Of this period Nicoll writes:

The neo-classical writers forbade the intermixture of comedy and tragedy.... Both realized that nature was the true basis of comedy not tragedy.... In the realm of tragedy ... we find a distinct cleavage, for the neo-classicists demanded dignified rhetoric rather than free

¹ Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama, An Historical Survey From the Beginnings to the Present Time (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1925), p. 40.

expression of emotion, narration rather than the display of action, static qualities rather than movement. The popular audiences were wholly on the side of lyricism, liberty, and action.... We discover, therefore, a complete break between the tragi-comedies written for the more popular audiences and the neo-classical tragedies written for the spectators of a more humanistic type. From the very first there could be no doubt that popular opinion was to win in the end.²

A universal appeal, richness of theme, and the eternal charm in the plays of Shakespeare are due in part to his employing varied and unusual dramatic elements. Literary precedents and conventional rules did not greatly hamper popular Elizabethan dramatists. William R. Thayer writes this of the evolution of a new dramatic type:

Taking the implements at hand--the tedious moralities and the loosely spun miracle plays--they soon improved upon them, soon invented a drama form not so rigid as to be cramped, nor so loose as to be redundant, but articulate like a highly developed organism, and as elastic as the various materials furnished by nature required. And for their metre they adopted a line susceptible of almost infinite modulations, suited alike to the simplest narration and to the highest outbursts of passion ... In their hands blank verse became a metre superior to that which any other modern language offers to its dramatic writers.³

Although the world credits Marlowe with originating the "mighty line," it was Shakespeare who brought blank verse to a rare perfection. It was also Shakespeare who blended with artistry the strength and freshness, the courage and breadth of appeal found in the Elizabethan drama to produce the world's

² Ibid., p. 60.

³ William R. Thayer, editor, The Best Elizabethan Plays (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1890), p. 7.

most celebrated plays. Among types stemming down from earlier periods were the chronicle and historical plays. After he had written many of these types and a series of great tragedies, Shakespeare, in his great third period, once again looked to history for the story of Antony and Cleopatra. Of this drama's plot Nicoll expresses this opinion:

In structure Antony and Cleopatra belongs to the type of King Lear. It is formed on the plan of the chronicle history, and fine as the drama is ... had it been written alongside of Othello it would have taken on an added dignity and majesty of conception. This ... is the only one tragedy of Shakespeare's maturity which deals with the theme of love. Love in general is fatal to the true tragic atmosphere ... and Shakespeare, consciously or unconsciously, has sought to make harder the impression of the play as a whole by emphasizing the essential nobility of the hero and heroine at the close. The tragedy lies in Cleopatra's ill use of that charm which even her critics could not but realize would never be withered by age or staled by custom.... So, too, Antony's greatness is revealed to us even in the moments of his vacillation ... Antony and Cleopatra will assuredly remain one of the most tremendous of all love tragedies; yet even Shakespeare could not raise the type to the height of his other masterpieces. It is beautiful; but it has not the rich gloom and august coloring of his other works.⁴

The literary and dramatic inheritance of Shakespeare from the sixteenth century was in part from the University wits, who created the basic type of drama which Shakespeare, through his genius, would lift to the level of great art. In writing of the drama, 1558 to 1588, Seccombe and Allen tell what the public demanded of the playwright:

⁴ Nicoll, op. cit., p. 177.

As a whole, the playgoers, with the Queen at their head, were demanding situation plays with ingenious devices from Italian novels spiced with plenty of native English wit and with a large element of juggling and clownage.... The playwright of that time set at naught the unities of classical and Aristotelian tradition. Sidney and his scholarly friends laughed at the absurdities of the popular theater. They ... wished ... a due observance of the unities of time and place.... The bulk of the play-going public cared for none of these. They liked their playwrights to leap lightly over great intervals of time and space, and thought themselves 'ill provided if they were not taken within the space of two hours from Genesis to the Day of Judgement.'⁵

Critics remind us that Shakespeare was writing to please his audience and with concessions to be made to his actors. Thus he paid little attention to formality of design or unity of time, place, or effect. He rarely subordinated all details to the main design. Any looseness in form is not due to his lack of artistic sense but rather to his overall purpose to entertain the audiences of that period.

Seccombe and Allen admit that Shakespeare's plots are faulty, full of incongruities, sometimes implausible, and that they contain "preposterous devices which are used to bring about a catastrophe." Of the construction of the plot of Antony and Cleopatra they have this to say:

This play is perhaps only not the greatest of all Shakespeare's tragedies, because the theme is smaller and has less reach than the themes of Hamlet and Lear, and because its construction is faulty and its unity imperfect....

⁵ Thomas Seccombe and J. W. Allen, The Age of Shakespeare (London: Bell and Sons, 1925), II, 18.

The play suffers from lack of concentration on the two principal figures; it is ill-constructed and contains much that is superfluous. Act III opens with a scene that has absolutely no relation to the action of the play and no interest of its own. If Shakespeare inserted this scene merely because the triumphant return of Ventidius is mentioned by Plutarch he must have thought that he was writing a chronicle play. In this not improbable case, Antony and Cleopatra became a great, though diffusely -constructed tragedy, only because Shakespeare's imagination was too intensely interested by the principal figures to allow him simply to dramatize the historical narrative. There is too much of Pompey and his friends; far more than is necessary to illustrate the confusion arising from Antony's abandonment of duty. But Shakespeare's power of characterization and his poetic force are at their height in this play. Octavius is an extremely fine foil to Antony; and Enobarbus, who is almost a chorus, is one of Shakespeare's best characterizations. There is nothing in Shakespeare finer than the last two acts, and the rise of the drama to a culmination of splendour is unique so far as Shakespeare is concerned.⁶

Perhaps a play by Shakespeare should be viewed from a distant balcony, as it is best to gaze at a painting of panoramic magnificence from a vantage spot not too close. Antony and Cleopatra is a vast canvas with many planes, spaces, distances and figures. The fact that some parts are not closely related does not mean that the spectator's interest is lost. Hazlitt says that this tragedy shows us "the winding and eventful march of human life"; and he also observes that the close adherence to the unities in drama may detract from perspective. He adds " ... it contracts our view of life from a strange and romantic dream, long, obscure, and infinite, into a smartly-

⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

contested, three hours' inaugural disputation on its merits by the different candidates for theatrical applause."⁷

Instead of adhering to unity of place, Shakespeare gave an expectant and highly appreciative audience a setting in Antony and Cleopatra which covered the whole civilized world: Alexandria, Rome, Athens, Messina, Egypt, Syria and the sea. Brandes sees this setting as a necessary background for a world catastrophe. His opinion of Shakespeare's plot design follows:

It was Shakespeare's design to evoke the conception of a world catastrophe. He required a throng of personages to make us think the action was taking place on a world stage, not in a corner of Europe. He required a constant coming and going of messengers, whose communications are awaited with anxiety, heard with bated breath. He required Enobarbus to serve as a sort of chorus and introduce an occasional touch of irony amid the high-flown passion of the play.⁸

In further praise of the drama Brandes says that its greatness proceeds from the genius with which Shakespeare has "entwined the relations of the two lovers with the course of history and the fate of empires." The fall of the Roman empire resulted from the contact of the simple hardihood of the West with the luxury of the East. When the Roman general failed because he had succumbed to the voluptuousness of the Orient, something of the greatness of the Roman tradition perished, too. Pursuing this as a theme of

⁷ William Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 82.

⁸ George Brandes, William Shakespeare (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 470.

Shakespeare's plot Brandes adds:

We are impressed with a sense of universal annihilation which Shakespeare aims at begetting ... the victory of Octavius brings glory to no one and promises nothing. No; the final picture is that which Shakespeare was bent on painting from the moment he felt himself attracted by this great theme--the picture of a world catastrophe.⁹

Levin L. Schucking, however, disagrees with Brandes and emphasizes the fact that Shakespeare was careful always to keep the desires of the general public before his eyes, since he wrote for the populace. In stating that Shakespeare shows a tendency to follow older dramatic forms, Schucking writes:

Thus he retains, or returns to, the old popular form of the epic drama, which the others had mostly given up. For example, in a piece like Antony and Cleopatra the ceaseless changes of scene--in the third act there are no fewer than twelve, in the fourtheven fifteen--counter-act that pulling together of the plot which the others, not unrightly, regarded as an important improvement in dramatic art.¹⁰

Perhaps Shakespeare did continue to use old devices, but according to Walter Raleigh he cleverly carried his plots along through a mastery of the craft of his particular stage. The Elizabethan stage, almost bare, spared the audience a hundred distractions and helped Shakespeare's poetry to do its work. Because the plot of a play was often unknown beforehand to his audience, Shakespeare created the background and environment of his characters early in a play.

⁹ Ibid., p. 475.

¹⁰ Levin L. Schucking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays (New York: Peter Smith, 1948), p. 19.

His all-important opening scenes often strike a keynote. In Antony and Cleopatra these lines make the theme especially clear:

Philo: 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, 10-14.

Ant: Now, for the love of Love and her soft
hours,
Let's not confound the time with
conference harsh.
There's not a minute of our lives
should stretch
Without some pleasure now. What sport
tonight?

Despite the multiplicity of characters and the shifting of scenes in the drama, this theme will not be lost.

Shakespeare attains a unity through subtle complexity. Raleigh thus compares his workmanship to a musical composition:

The development of Shakespeare's greater plays is curiously musical in its logic; the statement and interweaving of the themes, the variations and repetitions, the quiet melodies that are heard in the intervals, and the gradual increase of the complexity until the subtle discourse of the earlier scenes is swallowed up in the full blare of the reunited orchestra--all this ordered beauty was made possible by the strict subordination of stage effects to the needs and methods of poetry.¹¹

Neither is there apparent unity of characters. Shakespeare may present large groups in pageantry for the sheer delight of

11 Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 123.

his audience. In introducing independent groups, he may make one section serve as a commentary on the other. In Act one, scene one, Philo and Demetrius on the outer stage discuss their general's absorption with the Queen, as the lovers and their trains enter from the back of the stage. Through conversation, two soldiers, acting as did a classic chorus, interpret the significance of this scene. Shakespeare also relies on the ancient device of the messenger; he is usually unnamed but his words may carry on the action.

On Shakespeare's lack of adherence to the unities Raleigh includes this passage:

The day for discussing the notorious unities in connection with Shakespeare's drama is long past. Romantic poetry created its own drama, and acknowledges no unity save that which is equally binding on a poem or story--the unity of impression. Nowhere is the magic of Shakespeare's art greater than here. He reduces a wild diversity of means to a single purpose; and submits the wealth of his imagination and knowledge to be judged by this one test.¹²

Also in Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare lifted a female character to a plane of importance usually occupied by the hero. Tucker Brooke sees the construction of the play as necessitated by the vastness of the theme. This is his analysis:

... the tragedy is two-fold, treating the fate of a devoted pair so opposite in mind and temperament that each brings out the best in the other only at the cost of ruin. To make this clear, Shakespeare has ventured his very boldest experiment in structure, for he has

¹² Ibid., p. 126.

written two conclusions into Antony and Cleopatra. The fourth act is Antony's catastrophe, the fifth act Cleopatra's. To maintain this doubled tension was perhaps the hardest task his creative energy ever undertook. By all reason the fifth act should be an anti-climax; by all experience it is not. There is really no fourth act in the play, to build up for the great finales, and the middle portion is therefore so broken and synoptic that the modern stage can hardly attempt it. Here Shakespeare was obliged to construct with fragments, making lines do the work of scenes, and his genius responded extraordinarily to the challenge.¹³

Countless illustrations of Shakespeare's effective economy may be cited. In Act one, scene one, minor characters briefly tell us of Antony's infatuation, his disregard for Rome, of rumors there by "the common liar," and of the Queen's reputation. All this, plus characterization and pageantry, is given in sixty-two lines. In Act two, scene one, years of Roman political intrigue are condensed. In a few lines the sharp comments of Enobarbus present glittering facets of different personalities. In Act two, scene two, he speaks like a classical chorus, yet he knows that he must be restrained:

That the truth should be silent I had almost forgot.

His masterful description of Cleopatra and her barge presents to us vividly the glamor of the Queen.

Though Enobarbus may speak like the chorus in a Greek drama, no unity of impression is lost. Of this character,

¹³ Tucker Brooke, "The Renaissance" in A Literary History of England, edited by Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Crofts, 1948), p. 538.

originated by Shakespeare, E. C. Wilson says: "Yet his comment is so intimately expressive of his character that the detachment of his chorus-like voice never sounds extraneous to the immediate scene in which it rings."¹⁴

Again a few lines may take the place of an entire scene in this most episodic of all Shakespeare's plays. In Act three, scene eleven, we see part of Actium when Cleopatra says:

O my lord, my lord,
 Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
 You would have followed. III, xi, 59-61.

In addition to telling of action, the dramatist shows much of Cleopatra's temperament. She has succeeded in luring Antony back to Egypt and is satisfied and humble. Of this scene Brooke writes:

Whole acts have been written about less; but Shakespeare has achieved a brilliant economy by applying the wisdom of the Wife of Bath to one of the puzzles of classical history.... It is a play of such compacted power and understanding that one can hardly admit that Shakespeare wrote any greater.¹⁵

Harley Granville-Barker considers the play's scheme well-ordered with little that is superfluous when it is viewed in relation to the Elizabethan theater. He compares Shakespeare to a composer who improvises on a musical theme. Dominant qualities of the Bard's stagecraft are clarity of

¹⁴ E. C. Wilson, "Shakespeare's Enobarbus," Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies (Washington, D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1950), p. 391.

¹⁵ Brooke, op. cit., p. 538.

statement, sense of proportion, the value of contrast, justness of emphasis. The main lines of the story are firmly laid, complexities are eliminated, with most of the lines strengthening the concentrated interest.

The plot is simple: When Pompey threatens, Antony allies himself with Caesar and marries Octavia to seal the bargain. Deserting her, he returns to Cleopatra. When Caesar defeats them, they kill themselves.

Contrast is everywhere; it is Rome versus Egypt. Granville-Barker says "this opposition braces the whole body of the play, even as conflict between character and character will sustain each scene." Early we see a great difference between the passionate, profligate Antony and the coldly correct Octavius. Later there is irony and contrast when victorious soldiers under Ventidius bring news to drunken rulers. On this scene Granville-Barker comments with the open stage of Shakespeare in mind:

This set the contrast at its sharpest; yet, since change of scene did not mean change of scenery, there was no distraction of mind or eye, a unity of effect was kept, and the action flowed on unchecked....

Thus curiosity has been kept busy and the passions interested, and the continual hurry of the action, the variety of incidents and the quick succession of one personage to another have called the mind forward without intermission ... which is what Shakespeare has set out to do. He has told his story, woven his pattern, kept conflict alive and balance true, character prompting action, and action elucidating character, neither made to halt for the other.¹⁶

¹⁶ Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 375.

As in his other great tragedies, Shakespeare does not let his audience forget the master motive of the drama, the conflict of Rome and the East. He keeps a fine balance between opposing forces. Rather than let the Roman political material outweigh the Egyptian, he condenses into a few scenes the wars with Pompey, his murder, Caesar's new quarrel with Antony, the Octavia theme, and the extinction of Lepidus. Roman scenes that prepare for the crisis to come are kept low in tone. All this shows the dramatist's sense of proportion and emphasis.

The question of proportion may be discussed, since Shakespeare against all precedent gives half the play to its catastrophe. With Antony's return to Cleopatra we are half way through. The conflict between the Roman's advisers and the Queen shows us that the theme is greater than that of love, that it will include Antony's ruin as statesman and general, with a world lost to him.

With a long stretch of action to be presented, Shakespeare with true sense of form, aware of the fluidity of the Elizabethan stage, condenses the how and why of Antony's ruin into three days after Actium. First, there is the night's carouse after defeat. The next night, when Enobarbus is creeping out to die, is after victory. The third day brings the ebb of disaster. Here Shakespeare gains a unity of time, a greater clearness, and an increased tension. Act four is Antony's catastrophe. It is dominated by his passion and fury from the time he cries,

All is lost

This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me: IV, xii, 13-14. until his death. Despite diversity of action and changes of scene, the spectator follows Antony to victory, then to disaster, without distraction. Of Antony's death scene in Cleopatra's monument, IV, xv, Granville-Barker writes:

With his carrying to the monument the long phase of more particularly "unlocalized" action, germane to the three days of fighting, ends. We have been "ideal" spectators, we know what happened and why; and just such an impression has been made on us as the reality itself would leave behind. It is a great technical achievement, and one of great artistry, too.¹⁷

With the death of Antony in Act four, Shakespeare was faced with the problem of how to avoid an anti-climax in Act five, which is dominated by Cleopatra. In scene one the tension is continued with the reaction of Caesar to news of Antony's suicide. Also in Caesar's plan to capture Cleopatra, the old struggle, the master theme of Rome versus Egypt, is continued. The action is now localized to the monument, as suited to the intensity and cunning of Cleopatra's battle of wits with Caesar. There is no lag in interest. Caesar now faces a subtler struggle than he met with Antony; from here on is a duel of lies. But the cold, calculating Caesar is not to be tricked. After Dolabella's disclosure of Caesar's plan for a Roman triumph, Cleopatra realizes that death is her only

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 399.

solution. Now Shakespeare must lift her from trickery to nobility and a royal death. The very tempo of the end of the play expresses the awe with which all gaze on her. This is a fitting close to the dynasty of the Ptolemies. And so Shakespeare has presented a simplified plot from a multitude of historical details; he has used effectively contrast and emphasis to attain, subtly and unobtrusively, a unity of impression in this story of the last of the Ptolemies and of a Roman emperor who lost a world for love.

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the actors of his company and for his audiences. He was satisfied if the spectators were enthralled by the action. Edgar Stoll says that he was free from "those dread requirements of art which cow and confine the spirit." Shakespeare could ignore the critics as long as audiences remained spellbound at his words; so writing rapidly and with the white fire of genius he often disregarded rules, technique, and even plausibility. Of the difficulty of writing a play, Stoll remarks:

It is ... notoriously a difficult thing to write a play, to hold an audience ... fast and breathless in their seats, pack a significant story into the compass of three hours ... and meet all the exacting demands of stage, company and occasion; but it is immeasurably a more difficult thing to write a play which also conforms to the rules or requirements of literature.¹⁸

¹⁸ Edgar E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies-Historical and Comparative in Method (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 29.

This last feat was one that John Dryden attempted in writing All For Love. He recognized the difficulty and also the fact that the art that seems artless may become the greater task. In his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," 1665, he asks: "Now what, I beseech you, is more easy than to write a regular French play, or more difficult than write an irregular English one like those of Fletcher or Shakespeare?"¹⁹

Dryden felt that the plays of the last named authors had more masculine fancy and greater spirit than any of the French plays, but at the same time he admits that the principles of the French drama are superior to those of the English. Nearer in time to Dryden's age was the Jacobean drama, with its remarkable variety and strength, its brilliant rhetoric and gayety, mystery and melancholy. Although it struck an actuality, it was also crude, extravagant, and loosely constructed as to plot. Of the minor Jacobean dramatists Seccombe and Allen write: "What these writers lack is not the unities but unity, and they lack it ... by reason of defect of conception...."²⁰ With the keen eye of the critic Dryden pierced to the core of their trouble.

Although Dryden's plays are lineal descendants of these Jacobean forms, with grandiloquent sentiments of the heroic tragedy harking back to Beaumont and Fletcher, the French

¹⁹ John Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy" in The Art of Literary Criticism ed. P. R. Lieder (New York: Appleton-Century, 1940), p. 195.

²⁰ Seccombe and Allen, op. cit., II, 147.

theater affected him, too. After the Restoration of Charles II, literature reflected a stateliness and dignity of living which was termed neo-classicism. It implied a veneration for the Roman classics and way of life. English critics formulated a dogma out of ideas used earlier by Ben Jonson. Charles and his court had brought back from France a love of French wit, gallantry, elegance and artistic deftness. Dryden's plays were truly products of the Restoration and its various forces.

Dryden experimented in theatrical writing for a time and then he became a success in a new type of play--the heroic drama. In this work he was greatly influenced by the heroic poem. He said the design of such poetry was to form the mind to heroic virtue by example. In constructing his plays he looked to Corneille and Racine of the French school, but in style and character-drawing Shakespeare was ever his master. Dryden combined elements which he had found effective in other dramatists in a form that followed in some measure the dictates of current dramatic criticism. He presented to his public a form that he thought would bring applause. Of this practical dramatist writing for a sophisticated court group, Mark Van Doren says, "He had written to please hard-headed men of the world; he had labored to satisfy critics of poetry, not critics of souls."²¹

For the first twenty years of the Restoration the heroic mood dominated all others. It was characterized by

²¹ Mark Van Doren, John Dryden, A Study of His Poetry (New York: Henry Holt, 1946), p. 250.

violent ranting and inflammatory speeches, impossible psychology, and "an exalted idealism fossilized in the twin forces of love and honour."²² Nicoll insists that the limitations of the Restoration prevented Dryden from expressing emotions and ideas that might have entitled him to rank with the greatest of the post-Shakespearians had he been born forty years earlier.

Although Dryden is the greatest writer of the heroic tragedy, his five plays of this type are all built on the same plan. A hero of superhuman prowess and superhuman ideals is attracted to a heroine of unsurpassed constancy and beauty. The characters are animated by only two passions, chivalric honor and love; the chief conflict in the minds of the characters is between love and honor. Intensely dramatic stories of wars and battles are expressed in blank verse or heroic couplets in a bombastic style with no pretense at realism. The artificial gallantry pleased the French element in the audience, while the sound and fury thrilled the pit.

Cutting criticism drove Dryden to form new ideals of style. There appeared in France in 1674 three works that influenced Dryden. They were: Rapin's Reflexions sur la poetique, Boileau's Art poetique, and Boileau's translation of Longinus' treatise On the Sublime.²³

22 Nicoll, op. cit., p. 225.

23 George R. Noyes, editor, The Poetical Works of John Dryden (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1950), p. xxx.

In 1677 Dryden composed All For Love, a drama in blank verse on the historic theme of Antony and Cleopatra. With this drama, which Dryden said was the only work he had ever written for himself, he definitely advanced in rank. Most critics consider it his best contribution to the theater. Of its form Dryden wrote in his preface: "I have endeavored ... to follow the practice of the ancients.... Yet, though their models are regular, they are too little for English tragedy, which requires to be built in a larger compass...."

George R. Noyes comments on the form of All For Love:

In his All For Love he recasts the old story of Antony and Cleopatra into the form of a French tragedy, laying the emphasis not on action but on psychological analysis. He is no longer influenced by mechanical rules of Racine, but by the spirit of Racine. Each speech bears witness of his careful study of Shakespeare. The play is beyond doubt the finest of Dryden's dramatic works, and it contains some of his truest poetry. Fresh from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, we can still read with intense pleasure Dryden's version of the story ... All For Love is the happiest result of the French influence on English tragedy.²⁴

Of the dramatic rules generally accepted by Restoration critics, the most famous were the three unities of time, place, and action. These rules were supported by Corneille, Moliere, and Racine in France; many English critics concurred.

Shakespeare's dramatic action began in 40 B.C., the year of Fulvia's death, and continued to 30 B.C., the date of the suicide of Cleopatra. In modern versions the loosely-

²⁴ Ibid., p. xxx.

constructed plot contains forty-two scenes. Spencer expresses the opinion that Shakespeare "wrote without thinking of acts or scenes; to him the play unrolled like a continuous unbroken scroll."²⁵ Also Granville-Barker reminds us that there are no reliable scene divisions in the Quartos. Rowe turned Shakespeare's long, unchecked stretch of action into Acts three and four, with a total of sixteen localized scenes. Modern editors have added other scenes. Granville-Barker explains that Shakespeare had the privilege of detaching his characters from their surroundings. Thus the emotion of the audience was concentrated on them and the action.²⁶

In contrast, Dryden, in writing All For Love, gave heed to the unities, limiting the action to one day, the place a spot before the Temple of Isis, and the characters to seven.

Smith has said that unity of time controls the difference between Antony and Cleopatra and All For Love as it affects the subject, characterization, pace, and color of the heroic drama. Unity of time compels Dryden to limit his material for a five-act play to the content of Shakespeare's last two acts. If the action is limited to one day, it must be contrived to start it as near the catastrophe as possible. In order to accomplish this, Dryden greatly reduced the number of scenes and characters. Because he was to tell what

²⁵ Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York: Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 171.

²⁶ Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 385.

happened on one tragic day, Dryden toned his color to the impending catastrophe. Smith gives this comparison: "All For Love is sombre in comparison with Antony and Cleopatra which is suffused with the splendor of the Mediterranean sun. Of all Shakespeare's dramas none had so bright a coloring as Antony and Cleopatra."²⁷

Nicoll reminds us that All For Love is a classicized specimen of the heroic school, and that Dryden had written of it that here he had observed the unities more exactly than the English theater required. In eliminating the ultra-romantic scenes in Rome and Alexandria that Shakespeare has used, and in simplifying the passions and the plot, Dryden has lost variety and naturalness in gaining clearness.²⁸

The five acts of All For Love are, in the opinion of Nicoll, as clean-cut as five separate cameos. In Act one Ventidius warns Antony to break with Cleopatra. In Act two Cleopatra is spurned, but she wins back the love of Antony. When Octavia arrives in Act three, Antony is won back to Rome; Cleopatra has a word duel with her rival in the best Restoration style. In Act four Dolabella falls in love with Cleopatra, but honor triumphs; also Octavia departs. In Act five after Antony's defeat through the treachery of the Egyptian fleet, he hears erroneously that Cleopatra is dead;

²⁷ David N. Smith, John Dryden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 41.

²⁸ Allardyce Nicoll, Dryden As An Adapter of Shakespeare (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.), p. 10.

he and Ventidius commit suicide. When Cleopatra discovers her dying lover, she applies the asp to her arm.

Thus the action in Dryden's heroic drama is limited skillfully. The conflict in Antony's soul is between love for the Queen and his duty to Rome, as exemplified in Octavia. Here the prevailing theme of love and honor is brought in to show the nobility of Antony. Dryden has handled a psychological analysis that Nicoll ranks as definitely inferior to that of Shakespeare, but of All For Love Nicoll writes this: "... and yet, however we may criticize, it remains a great drama ... probably the finest of the Restoration, and we might almost say of the late Elizabethan tragedies."²⁹

As to unity of action, Spencer criticizes the plot of All For Love as being "only a series of confrontations" since one scene does not grow out of another or out of characterization. He writes: "Action is arbitrary with the dramatist, not spontaneous with the characters" and "Characterization has been dedicated to the great principle of consistency." In pointing to violence on the stage in the five deaths that occur, he adds that there is no poetic justice except in the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra. Neither does Spencer approve of Dryden's use of unity of place, since, as he says, "characters saunter in from all over the Roman world without bothering to make excuses."³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁰ Hazelton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 220.

With the art of a clear-sighted critic as well as a writer who understood the current technique for drama, Dryden combined the old and the new. His attainment is discussed by Nicoll:

Dryden's aim has here been to fuse the more formal elements of the pseudo-classic theory with the richer proportions of the Elizabethan theater. He has cut out the multiplicity of scene, which at once adds to and detracts from the force of Antony and Cleopatra, and he has reduced the feelings of the chief characters to such standards as his contemporaries could understand and appreciate. It is undeniable that he has lost all of that high ardor and passionate romance which breathes from every scene of Shakespeare's play, but it is equally undeniable that he has succeeded in giving to this theme a more coherent and formed treatment than is apparent in the earlier tragedy. All For Love in its own style, but only in its own style, is a drama worthy of being considered alongside of Antony and Cleopatra.³¹

George Sherburn finds All For Love a dignified classic.

He writes:

All For Love remains a tragedy but humanity is artificialized in heroic terms ... Yet All For Love is the best of the plays that pour Elizabethan material into neo-classic French molds. Its blank verse is noble, its unity effective; if Shakespeare had never written, it would seem one of the most impressive monuments in English drama. It remains, in fact, from a literary point of view, the most dignified English tragedy in the tradition of the three unities.³²

³¹ Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama, An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1925), p. 235.

³² George Sherburn, "The Restoration" in A Literary History of England edited by Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Crofts, 1948), p. 756.

Thus Sherburn and Nicoll agree that Dryden's tragedy is well-constructed, but both consider the characterization inferior. Garnett calls All For Love a play of "passion steeped in the atmosphere of nobility." He objects to the introduction of Octavia and writes: "Octavia is too late; the idea is contrary to history, truth and common reason that then she could have helped him [Antony] in his desperate extremity."³³

Garnett considers the intrigue of Dolabella nearer comedy than tragedy and says that the act of exciting Antony's jealousy is inconsistent with the manly character of Ventidius, who made the suggestion to Dolabella. In fact, Garnett thinks that Ventidius sometimes eclipses the two main characters and is of the opinion that Shakespeare would not have given this prominence to Ventidius. In praising Dryden's poetry, Garnett rates Octavia's speech to Antony as the only example of genuine pathos in Dryden's dramatic writings. The passage from All For Love follows:

Octavia:	Look on these; Are they not yours? or stand they thus neglected, As they are mine? Go to him, children, go; Kneel to him, take him by the hand, speak to him; For you may speak, and he may own you too, Without a blush; and so he cannot all his children:
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³³ Richard Garnett, The Age of Dryden (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1922), p. 95.

Go, I say, and pull him to me,
 And pull him to yourselves, for that
 bad woman.
 You, Agrippina, hang upon his arms;
 And you, Antonia, clasp about his
 waist;
 If he will shake you off, if he will
 dash you
 Against the pavement, you must bear
 it children;
 For you are mine, and I was born to
 suffer. III, i, 376-388.

In summing up Dryden as a dramatist, Garnett adds:

He became a dramatist as clever men in our day become journalists, discerning in the stage the shortest literary cut to fame and fortune. He can hardly be said to have possessed any strictly dramatic gift in any exceptional degree, but he had enough of all to make a tolerable figure on the stage, and was besides a great poet and admirable critic..... Dryden's manly sense, homely sagacity, piercing shrewdness are apparent in the "Preface" to All For Love in which he vindicates his breach of the conventions of the French stage.³⁴

Leavis quotes the French critic Dobree as saying that he considers All For Love "a proud and lovely masterpiece, the fine flower of Dryden's genius." Leavis adds these qualifying statements:

Dryden is a highly skilled craftsman, working at his job from the outside. The superior structure with which his play is credited as a theater piece is a matter of workmanship of the same external order as is represented by his verse. He aims at symmetry, a neat and obvious design, a balanced arrangement of heroic confrontations and big scenes. The satisfaction he offers his audience is that of an operatic exaltation and release from actuality, a ballet-like completeness of pattern, and an elegantly stylized decorum.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁵ F. R. Leavis, "Antony and Cleopatra and All For Love - A Critical Exercise," Survey, 5: 165, September, 1936.

It seems generally agreed that Dryden has given us a beautifully sculptured form of exquisite proportions; in comparison, Shakespeare's work of art, which lacks a cold, classical perfection, has attained instead a quality of actuality. The staginess of All For Love is due in part to the superhuman nobility of the characters and the atmosphere of frigid formality. Thus again, it is a product of the Restoration, even as Antony and Cleopatra reflects the Renaissance with its love of unlimited ambition in a great individual, with its uninhibited exuberance, and its passionate utterance.

Though Dryden and Shakespeare used the same sources for the plots of these plays, it is apparent that they had entirely different aims in mind as to plot construction. Shakespeare produced a glorious and magnificent pageant of many scenes for an Elizabethan audience of insatiable curiosity and enthusiasm. Dryden offered to a disillusioned society a "love and honor" drama, precise in construction, that appealed to the current admiration for French form. He presented in somewhat frigid characters the ideal of constancy in love, which the gay blades and court rouses fully understood it was not the fashion to follow.

Perhaps plot construction bears a greater significance to the critic than it does to the audience. An element of distinction that sets apart all plays by Shakespeare is

his magical power of characterization. Of this, the very foundation of drama, Seccombe and Allen comment:

Rhetorical and lyrical power, the power of passionate expression, and the power of penetrative generalization can adorn but cannot create great drama. The foundation of drama must be laid deep in human nature; for drama is the interaction of character.³⁶

Thus any discussion of a play by Shakespeare must include his great gift of presenting men and women who have become as well known to this world as historic personages.

³⁶ Seccombe and Allen, op. cit., p. 147.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERIZATION

"All felicitous characterization is a mystery; and characterization as practiced by the greatest of dramatists may well be more of a mystery than any other" writes Edgar E. Stoll¹ of Shakespeare. The methods of great art are generally simple. The marvel lies in applying the right touch at the right place. Seccombe and Allen say that Shakespeare can "hardly be matched in the realization of character" and that England's supreme dramatist has revealed himself "as the greatest of all poets who have dealt with human life, as the poet of universal humanity, supreme, solitary, omnipotent."²

William Allan Neilson offers this analysis of Shakespeare's genius: "The element in his plays which gave them marked distinction ... is his creation of characters. In range, in individuality, above all in the illusion of life, there had been nothing in dramatic literature comparable...."³ "Real people are baffling," says Stoll, "from their complexity and inconsistency; Shakespeare's people are the purest copies

1 Edgar E. Stoll, Shakespeare Studies--Historical and Comparative in Method (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 90.

2 Thomas Seccombe and J. W. Allen, The Age of Shakespeare (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1925), II, 86.

3 William Allan Neilson, editor, The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1942), p. xvi.

that we have of real people; hence they, too, are baffling."⁴ Shakespeare's convincing verisimilitude is produced, in the opinion of Stoll, "in part by the fact that the characters seem to live a larger life than that of the action, but above all else ... by the manner of their speech."⁵

George Bernard Shaw compliments the dialogue of the great Elizabethan:

The Shakespearean delineation of character owes all its magic to the turn of the line, which lets you into the secret of its utterer's mood and temperament, not by its commonplace meaning, but by some subtle exaltation, or stultification, or shyness, or delicacy, or hesitancy, or what not in the sound of it.⁶

Walter Raleigh feels that because of this convincing quality "the word once said is known to have been inevitable, and the character ceases to be a character of fiction, controlled by the plot. We are watching events of real life; from our hidden vantage ground we see into the mystery of things as if we were God's spies."⁷ Sometimes Shakespeare seems to have little care for probability, but when he releases his vital power, he may take away the reader's breath with an astonishing piece of insight.

"So swift and certain is Shakespeare's insight," says Stoll, that "he dares to follow his characters into those dim

⁴ Stoll, op. cit., p. 126.

⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

⁶ George Bernard Shaw, Dramatic Opinions and Essays (New York: Harpers, 1906), p. 24.

⁷ Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 144.

recesses of personality where the hunted soul stands at bay, and proclaims itself, naked as it is, for a greater thing than law or opinion."⁸ Shakespeare worked from the heart outward; intuitively the right word came. His condensed dialogue often gives us a glimpse of unspoken thoughts.

The most fully conceived characters are the heart of the play. In the tragedies Shakespeare lifts the curtain to mysteries and cruelties in human life. His characters meet with elemental forces, great powers and passions, and the dark abysses of suffering, but the dramatist offers no moral lesson. Raleigh adds: "They are presented with a choice, and the essence of the tragedy is that choice is impossible. Antony stands poised between love and empire ... but Shakespeare's tragic stress is laid on the hopelessness of the dilemma that follows, and his great pity for mortality makes the crime a lesser thing."⁹ As Stoll sees the whole picture, the "drama lies mainly in the imaginatively imposing spectacle of Antony's and Cleopatra's downfall--in their struggle for both power and love--before the relentless progress of Octavius."¹⁰

In All For Love Dryden has given us a drama fundamentally romantic in tone; yet the love affair of these

8 Stoll, op. cit., p. 147.

9 Raleigh, op. cit., p. 197.

10 Stoll, op. cit., p. 148.

ancients seems somewhat distorted as it is filtered through French court customs. George R. Noyes writes, "In conformity with Restoration tragic conventions which would not tolerate infidelity in a mistress, Dryden rehabilitated Cleopatra. Sir Walter Scott comments: "There appears something too fastidious in the critical rule which exacts that the hero and heroine ... shall be models of virtuous perfection."¹¹

In his Preface to All For Love Dryden discusses motive and characterization. Although he professes to prefer English to French methods, he shows Rymer's influence in saying "our passions ought to be within our power." The passage reads:

I doubt not that the same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the excellency of the moral. For the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. All reasonable men have long since concluded, that the hero of the poem ought not to be a character of perfect virtue, for then he could not, without injustice, be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied. I have therefore steered the middle course; and have drawn the character of Antony as favourably as Plutarch, Appian and Dion Cassius would give me leave; the like I have observed in Cleopatra. That which is wanting to work up the pity to a greater height, was not afforded me by the story; for the crimes of love, which they both committed, were not occasioned by any necessity ... but were wholly voluntary; since our passions are, or ought to be within our power.¹²

¹¹ George R. Noyes, editor, The Poetical Works of Dryden (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1950), p. xxxiv.

¹² John Dryden, All For Love in The Outline of Knowledge (New York: Richards, 1924), p. 361.

In a discussion of All For Love, Allardyce Nicoll says, "Much more than in Shakespeare we feel here the battledore and shuttlecock movement of Antony's emotions; and we seem to feel the conflict ... not between love for Cleopatra and 'a Roman thought', but between love for Cleopatra and duty as expressed in Octavia."¹³ Antony oscillates between two emotions: love and honor. This tends to reduce All For Love to a domestic tragedy, not a drama of world-wide political significance. Yet Dryden was a practical dramatist who knew his audience well.

The Restoration was an age essentially unheroic. Courtiers and hangers-on at the Court, especially, wished to keep heroism and honor in serious drama, with no nonsense about living up to heroic ideals. The Restoration beau would object to seeing before him on the stage what he might have been. For such an audience Shakespeare's tragedies were far too passionate and life-like. The thought of the age was not profound. Its tragic dialogue was often beautiful but never deep. This reaction took the form of a complete overthrow of passion in the theater. The intellectuals thirsted for a simplification of their existence; the dramatists adopted reason and common sense. Allardyce Nicoll says that tragedy can rarely be limited to an intellectual plane, and that Dryden is fettered with the consequence that his emotional scenes are stilted and unnatural.¹⁴

¹³ Allardyce Nicoll, Dryden As An Adapter (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 10.

¹⁴ Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama (New York: Crowell, 1925), p. 226.

Of Dryden's methods Hazelton Spencer writes: "Action is arbitrary with the dramatists, not spontaneous with the characters. Characterization has been dedicated to the principles of consistency."¹⁵ Dryden reduced the feelings of Antony and Cleopatra to such standards as his contemporaries could understand and appreciate. Nicoll says, "It is undeniable that Dryden has lost all of that high ardour and passionate romance that breathes from every scene of Shakespeare's play."¹⁶

In writing of Dryden's characters, Noyes gives these opinions:

As the portraits in "Absalom and Achitophel" amply prove, no man could, in a certain way, describe character better than Dryden. The central defect of his dramatic works is that they are too essentially descriptive. Dryden's men and women are figures made to order after the pattern of previous writers, rather than living beings, created by the poet from his immediate sympathy with human nature.... He expressed no great moral ideas; he had little intuitive knowledge of human nature, and no feeling for the beauty of the external world. Mark Van Doren, in "A Study of the Poetry of Dryden" says, 'He is virtually barren of illuminating comments on human life which move a reader to take a new account of himself.'¹⁷

This deficiency in characterization cited by Noyes is due in part to the combination of methods that Dryden used. He was highly sensitive to the happenings of his age and was open to the new Cartesian freedom in which Reason ruled.

¹⁵ Hazelton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 220.

¹⁶ Nicoll, British Drama, p. 234.

¹⁷ Noyes, op. cit., p. lxvii.

Restoration writers had cause to distrust the passions and imaginative rhetoric; hence the revolt against emotion and enthusiasm and the desire for Reason.¹⁸ Dryden admired Elizabethan character drawing but he heeded the French critics of his time. In the Preface to All For Love, Dryden says that heroes in French plays are "the most civil people breathing; but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense; all their wit is in their ceremony; they want the genius which animates our stage...." Thomas R. Lounsbury says that under the limitations imposed by French criticism no author could have produced the picture of life "which we find in the wonderful corresponding creation of the great poet of human nature."¹⁹

Antony

Although he recognizes difficulties, Dryden still bows to French critics in presenting Antony as the perfect gentleman. In so refining an ancient military leader he has devitalized him to a degree. F. R. Leavis says that he cannot imagine Dryden's hero whistling to the air in a deserted market place because his dignity would not have permitted it. Leavis adds, "To ask whether he could or not is to introduce a criterion of reality in the presence of which he doesn't exist."²⁰

¹⁸ George Williamson, "The Restoration Revolt Against Enthusiasm," Studies in Philology, 30: 588, July, 1933.

¹⁹ Thomas Lounsbury, "Appendix to Antony and Cleopatra," in A New Variorum Edition to Shakespeare (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1907), p. 477.

²⁰ F. R. Leavis, "Antony and Cleopatra, A Critical Exercise," Survey, 5: 158, September, 1936.

Following the unities, Dryden opens the play after the Battle of Actium. Thus we have no chance to see Antony at the height of his powers as we do in Shakespeare. David N. Smith thinks that we see "only the flickering embers of his dying manhood."²¹ This was no doubt in Dryden's design, since one of his aims was to evoke pity. Antony shows manliness in his declamatory speeches. Mark Van Doren expresses this opinion: "One who would see him [Dryden] at his best in dialogue should go to the scenes between Antony and Ventidius."²²

Sir Walter Scott, with understanding and keen judgment, writes, "Having adopted an idea of Antony's character, rather suitable to romance than to nature, or history, we must not deny Dryden the praise of having exquisitely brought out the picture he intended to draw ... Antony is throughout the piece what the author meant him to be: a victim to the omnipotence of love, or rather to the infatuation of one engrossing passion."²³ In contrast, Dryden's hero is considered a weak voluptuary by Henry Norman Hudson. He writes that Shakespeare's Cleopatra alone could have entangled his Mark Antony, "whilst an ordinary wanton could have enslaved Dryden's hero." He thinks that any moral expressed by Antony was suggested to him by Ventidius.²⁴

²¹ David N. Smith, John Dryden (London: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 42.

²² Mark Van Doren, John Dryden (New York: Henry Holt, 1946), p. 43.

²³ Sir Walter Scott, "Introduction to All For Love," in A New Variorum Edition to Shakespeare (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1907), p. 474.

²⁴ Henry Norman Hudson, editor, The Works of Shakespeare (New York: Bigelow, Smith and Company, 1909), p. xxxix.

Scott offers this penetrating comparison of the dissolute emperors:

Antony, the principal character in both plays, is incomparably grander in that of Shakespeare. The majesty and generosity of the military hero is happily expressed by both poets; but the awful ruin of grandeur, undermined by passion, and tottering to its fall, is far more striking in the Antony of Shakespeare..... But Dryden has taken a different view of Antony's character.... His whole thought and being are dedicated to his fatal passion: and though a spark of resentment is occasionally struck out by the reproaches of Ventidius, he instantly relapses into love-sick melancholy. The following beautiful speech exhibits the romance of despairing love, without the deep and mingled passion of a dishonored soldier, and dethroned emperor:

Vent: Lie there, thou shadow of an emperor;
 The place thou pressest on thy Mother
 Earth
 Is all thy empire now: now it contains
 thee;
 Some few days hence, and then twill be
 too large,
 When thou'rt contracted in the narrow
 Urn,
 Shrunk to a few cold ashes; ... I, i, 25.

After the loss of the Battle of Actium, Dryden presents Antony as deeply disturbed; the acting is broad. There is psychological analysis of Antony by himself and by Ventidius. Although Dryden said that he preferred this scene to other parts of the play, Spencer thinks that it is overdone. Antony, with abandon, throws himself to the floor in grief and despair. Spencer comments: "Yet Ventidius has to say

25 Scott, op. cit., p. 473.

'He lies on the ground.' The scene is hopelessly sentimental; they both cry." Spencer concluded that Antony is "the merest sentimentalist."²⁶ The tone may be too emotional, but the poetry is strong:

Ant: They tell me 'tis my birthday, and I'll
 keep it
 With double pomp and sadness.
 'Tis what the day deserves, which gave me
 breath.
 Why was I raised the meteor of the world,
 Hung in the skies, and blazing as I
 traveled,
 Till all my fires were spent: and then
 cast downward,
 To be trod out by Caesar?

.
 Give me some music: look that it be sad:
 I'll sooth my melancholy till I swell,
 And burst myself with sighing. I, i, 207-237.

Richard Garnett considers that Antony's jealousy of Dolabella is "more worthy of comedy than of heroic tragedy, besides being inconsistent with the manly character of its promoter, Ventidius." Dryden allows Antony to analyze his heart. The picture is not inspiring; here Antony wishes he were clever enough to be deceitful.

Scott remarks that even when Antony is facing ruin, it is jealousy that completes his despair, not defeat in arms by Caesar.²⁷ His ire, as aroused by Dolabella, cannot be

²⁶ Hazelton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved, p. 220.

²⁷ Scott, op. cit., p. 474.

compared to the force and fury of Shakespeare's Roman. With bathos the characters speak of abstract qualities--love, honor, friendship.

Ant.:

O Cleopatra!

O Dolabella! how could you betray
This tender heart, which with an infant
fondness
Lay lulled betwixt your bosoms, and
there slept,
Secure of injured faith?

.

I can forgive
A foe; but not a mistress and a friend.
Treason is there in its most horrid
shape,
Where trust is greatest; IV, i, 524-589.

All For Love has the effect of a domestic tragedy; yet this comparatively refined conversation can scarcely be called a scene of passionate jealousy. In contrast Shakespeare's Antony roars in the language of the vulgar as he orders Thidias whipped for kissing Cleopatra's hand.

Ant.: You were half blasted ere I knew you:

Ha?

Have I my pillow left unpressed in
Rome,
Forborne the getting of a lawful race,
And by a gem of women, to be abused
By one that looks on feeders.

.

I found you as a Morsell, cold upon
Dead Caesar's trencher: Nay, you were
a fragment
Of Gneius Pompey's, besides what hotter
hours
Unregistered in vulgar fame, you have
Luxuriously pickt out. For I am sure,
Though you can guess what temperance
should be,
You know not what it is. III, xiii, 129-148.

In Shakespeare the jealousy is based on departing fame and power; in Dryden, it is personal. For a Restoration audience it expresses the code of a French courtier, who is always kind to his mistress, who must never be faithless.

Noyes says that Dryden in description of character is not content to let details speak for themselves; he also points out the qualities that are denoted. Noyes adds:

This fondness for abstraction is partly due to his own temperament, which loved reasoning, at the expense of observation. His passion for ratiocination shows itself in the fine-spun debates on love and honor in heroic plays ... Dryden originated no ideas, and in analysis he was not profound.... He excels primarily in expressing in clear, incisive melodious language thought he has borrowed from other men.²⁸

Dryden's Antony is noble and imposing. His farewell speech in Act one is manly; yet today the staging would be considered comic, as in the scene in which Antony returns three times before he finally gains power of decision and leaves. A dignity in the characters is sustained in the last act in the death scene. Antony's dying speech is not the immortal music of Shakespeare, but it is noble and evokes pity:

Ant.: Think we have had a clear and glorious
 day
 And Heaven did kindly to delay the
 storm,
 Just till our close of evening. Ten
 years' love,
 And not a moment lost,--what ages
 have we lived?

²⁸ Noyes, op. cit., p. lxvii.

And now to die each other's; and, so
 dying,
 While hand in hand we walk in groves
 below,
 Whole troops of lovers' ghosts shall
 flock about us,
 And all the train be ours. V, i, 421-428.

Minor characters in a drama may express the effect of the actions of their superiors; they usually reflect the characteristics of the hero or heroine. The chief aim of Ventidius is to urge Antony back to Rome. The magnitude of this satellite sometimes approaches the brilliance of his Sun. Shakespeare is careful to keep the speeches of Enobarbus short, incisive, and full of philosophy; he does not approach his master in importance. Scott says, "The inferior characters are better supported in Dryden than in Shakespeare. We have no low buffoonery in the former, such as disgraces Enobarbus, and is hardly redeemed by his affecting catastrophe."²⁹ It is to be remembered that Shakespeare was writing a popular drama, which, like an opera by Verdi, may be lavish with extraneous subject matter, unrelated scenes and minor characters; but they are all entertaining, we are sure of that. As Ventidius pointed up the qualities of Dryden's hero, so Enobarbus reflects Shakespeare's emperor.

E. C. Wilson, in discussing Enobarbus, says that nowhere in the play is there a more incisive judgment of the

²⁹ Scott, op. cit., p. 474.

conduct of Antony than in the remarks of Enobarbus. Although his words are filled with wit and irony they hit a bull's eye. In Act one, scene one, Antony asks him to desist. Wilson adds: "Through an acute eye for the comic aspects of things as they are, he beholds his master's infatuation with understanding, yet remarks upon it with detachment and justice." Terse and jocose, his comments are so intimately expressive of his character, "that the chorus-like voice of Enobarbus never sounds extraneous to the immediate scene in which it rings." This is the opinion of Wilson.³⁰

Enobarbus is Shakespeare's own creation. This character is sharply etched in small space, and the quality is sustained throughout the play. Significant of his importance in the mind of the dramatist is the fact that we well remember his lines. With exquisite imagery he shows us Cleopatra on her barge; with pungent irony he speaks of the triumvirs on Pompey's ship; with clever insight he analyzes Cleopatra's character. In Act four his remorse is a supreme expression of loyalty. As Antony's truest friend, he magnifies the tragic hero in our eyes.

One could imagine that Enobarbus was intended to serve as the author's mouthpiece to express judgment of characters; we may equally well imagine that he expressed opinions and

³⁰ E. C. Wilson, "Shakespeare's Enobarbus" in J. C. Adams Memorial Studies (Washington, D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1950), p. 391.

warnings that the Elizabethan audience would like to offer. Since there was a close relationship between the actors and the spectators, such a character could well furnish a deep satisfaction to many. Enobarbus may well be the noblest Roman in this play. When he listens to his intellect, not his heart, he deserts Antony, only to return broken-hearted, to seek his own death. Of his force in the drama, Hudson says, "His blunt, rough-spoken sagacity, mingled with a certain slyness of thought, a racy infusion of humor, and a pungent, searching irony of discourse, interpret with remorseless fidelity the moral import of the characters."³¹ Though he sees Antony's faults, Enobarbus continues to love him. This very human touch helps to vitalize both characters.

As we watch Antony through the play, we see him undergoing a long, painful struggle between the heroic element in his nature and his voluptuousness. He has many qualities that were esteemed by the Renaissance man: ambition; bold, reckless leadership in war; success; and generosity. His magnanimity was closely related to his pride. Shakespeare has softened the violence of this character as portrayed in Plutarch. When Antony and Cleopatra opens, this strong, heroic nature is on the wane. As if he had become disillusioned with Fame, in Act one, scene one, Antony exclaims, "Kingdoms are clay." Thus in his very first appearance

³¹ Hudson, op. cit., p. xl.

Antony is seen in the struggle between power and love. Of this conflict Harold C. Goddard writes:

The play has hardly opened when Antony, in the name of love and with a music that is unanswerable, hurls defiance once for all in the face of space and power:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my
space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life
Is to do thus. (Embracing) 32 I, i, 44-48.

Antony's false philosophy of life and love augurs his doom from the beginning. As in an overture Shakespeare strikes the keynote. Philo opens Act one, scene one:

May, but this dotage of our general's
Ore flowes the measure:
His captaine's heart
Which in the scuffles of great fights
hath burst
The Buckles on his brest, reneages all
temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a Gypsy's lust. I, i, 1-11.

Dotage it may be, but Antony can command, and when he meets the triumvirs at Rome, he is still the conqueror. Although Octavius expresses his ire at Antony's dissolution, he recalls his co-ruler's hardihood in early campaigns. Antony's better spirit speaks in his appreciation of the admirable qualities of Octavia, although the marriage to her is frankly one of expediency. That he is never bound by unbreakable fetters of love to Octavia indicates that she offered no challenge and did not stimulate his imagination.

32 Harold C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 578.

As a correct Roman wife, always loyal, she speaks with gentle dignity, and is taken for granted from the beginning. An aura of loveliness surrounds Octavia with the "modest eyes." She is the perfect foil for Cleopatra. This flower of Rome does not appear often, but Shakespeare has so delicately and precisely drawn her that her presence is felt after her departure like a lingering perfume. That Antony should turn from the perfect wife the more clearly shows his bent for sensuous living. Following the marriage in Rome, Antony remarks, after the soothsayer speaks of the superior luck of Octavius,

And though I make this marriage for my
 peace
 I' the East my pleasure lies. II, iii, 44-45.

Shakespeare presents Antony with a gift for friendship; he has no craft in his nature. In the banquet scene, Act two, scene seven, on Pompey's ship, Antony was superior to the other triumvirs. In this satire on warlords, so often praised as an example of Shakespeare's inventive genius, Pompey is the cowardly villain, holding up a cardboard shield marked 'Honor'; Octavius is the cold, calculating politician, patiently waiting for the dissolution of the others. Even the minor characters, Enobarbus and the villainous Menes, are clearly drawn with swift, masterful strokes.

It is true that Antony holds in low regard the personal bravery of Caesar, but he admits the superior luck of his rival: "... my better cunning faints under his chance." Antony's flight at Actium has been interpreted as the cowardice of a

"doting mallard." In challenging Caesar to a personal duel in Alexandria, Antony seems to regain his courage; but the action comes too late. Of Antony's challenge Enobarbus sagely comments:

Eno.: Yes, like enough: hye battl'd Caesar
 will
 Unstate his happiness, and be stag'd
 to the shew
 Against a sworder. I see men's judg-
 ments are
 A parcel of their fortunes, and things
 outward
 Do draw the inward quality after them
 To suffer all alike, that he should
 dream,
 Knowing all measures, the full Caesar
 will
 Answer his omptiness; Caesar thou hast
 subdued
 His judgment too. III, xiii, 33-42.

Seccombe and Allen look with some disdain on this Roman termed Herculean by Plutarch. Of his instability they write:

Antony is merely a man who throws away sovereignty for love; and that rather ignobly, for he is half-hearted about it, and hankers, almost in the arms of his mistress, after the political position that is slipping from him. He despises Caesar and yet is conscious of inferiority. He is unstable to the point of cowardice, and his marriage with Octavia is an act of disgusting meanness. There is nothing terrible or very piteous in the tragedy of this splendid but weak man.³³

Through the eyes of Cleopatra we see Antony quite differently. To this sharp-eyed ruler, Antony is the "demi-Atlas of this earth" and "the greatest soldier of this

33 Seccombe and Allen, op. cit., p. 98.

world." Hudson offers this explanation: "His heroism in his better hours, his eloquence of speech and person at all times, and his generous and magnificent disposition kindle whatever of womanhood there is in her nature;"³⁴ At the same time she knew his weakness: that she could by her sorcery overrule his sense of duty, honor, self-interest, and ambition.

This undulant diversity of mood in Antony fascinated Shakespeare evidently, for he built the Roman's character around both magnificence and prodigality. In defeat and misfortune Antony rose to his full height as an inspiring leader who kept up the courage of his men. Calamity raised him above himself. The power of his personality is shown in several ways. Rather than become Caesar's captive, Antony asks a Roman's death of Eros, who by his own suicide proves that he loved his master better than life itself. In this scene Shakespeare evokes swiftly all the pity he desires for an erring hero. With quiet despair Antony prepares for the blow that will release him:

Unarm me, Eros: the long day's task is done,
And we must sleep. IV, xiv, 45-46.

R. C. Trench says of the final scene in Antony's life:

... and when at the last we behold him
standing amid the wreck of fortunes and the
waste of gifts, all wrecked and wasted by
himself, penetrated through and through with

³⁴ Hudson, op. cit., p. xxxviii.

the infinite shame and sadness of such a close to such a life, the whole range of poetry offers no more tragical figure than he is, few that arouse a deeper pity;³⁵

When Death begins to free his spirit, the true gentleness of Antony's nature shines forth. Now worldly kingdoms are as nothing to him; there is only his love for Cleopatra, whom he plans to join "Where soules do couch on flowers." Love has overcome any malice he might have held for this Queen who had brought to him such misery. Death brings to him peace and love as he says:

I am dying Egypt, dying; only
I here importune Death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses, the poor last
I lay upon thy lips. IV, xv, 27-30.

Antony had met his fate in Cleopatra.

Cleopatra

With unerring intuition Shakespeare paints for us a tragic Queen, utterly charming and incomparable. In this subtle, psychological portrait Shakespeare preserves many characteristics found in Plutarch, such as selfishness and guile, but adds his own clever devices to develop a unique creation. Cleopatra is in no sense a type; she is distinctly and imperially individual. The lover for whom Antony was to lose a kingdom must be the epitome of all feminine attraction. Quiller-Couch comments:

³⁵ R. C. Trench, Plutarch in Appendix to Antony and Cleopatra, A New Variorum Edition (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1907), p. 499.

But I marvel in this play most of all ... at the incomparable lifelikeness of Cleopatra, which follows her through every bewildering trick and turn, caprice or gust of passion, equally when she queens it, or fools it, modulates her voice to true or to false passion, or beats her servants and curses like a drab--and she can do all within any given two minutes. It is not lime-lantern that follows Cleopatra about the stage: she carries everywhere with her the light--her own light--of a convincing if almost blinding realism.³⁶

First with grandeur and then with the frolics of a hoyden, Cleopatra stimulated the imagination of an Antony satiated with carnality; she could do this, for she was another incarnation of the same passions that moved him to daring and to voluptuousness. Basically they had much in common: ambition and a desire to drink life to the dregs. Although Antony's Roman training lingered with him, Cleopatra had no definite code of honor.

For Cleopatra, Boaz offers this unusual comparison:

Cleopatra is among Shakespeare's women what Falstaff is amongst his men. Both have the same infinite complexity of nature in which seemingly contradictory qualities are reconciled, and both have the same paradoxical grandeur compounded out of all that is most morally worthless. Fascination radiates equally from either personality and as Falstaff, when completely bankrupt in honor and fortune, is still the knight and the gentleman, so Cleopatra, guilty of the most detestable conduct, remains every inch a queen ... Falstaff had sought to defeat moral facts by the dazzling play of an inexhaustible humor; Cleopatra substitutes the no less dazzling play of an inexhaustible personal charm ... but she has

³⁶ Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Studies in Literature, Second Series (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922), p. 204.

the more talismanic gifts of perennial youth
and endless versatility of attraction. Antony
cries to her that she is one

Whom everything becomes, to chide, to laugh,
To weep; whose every passion fully strives
To make itself in thee, fair and admired.
And the dispassionate Enocharbus pronounces the
same verdict:

Age cannot wither her,
Nor custom stale her infinite variety;

For vilest things become themselves in her,
That the holy priests bless her when she is
riggish.³⁷

In analyzing Shakespeare's characters, Raleigh says,
"The middle region of character, where mixed motives predomi-
nate, belongs chiefly to the men. The women act, not on
thought, but on instinct, which, once it is accepted, admits
of no argument. The subtlety and breadth of Shakespeare's
knowledge of feminine instinct cannot be overpraised."³⁸

In Dryden's Queen we find no complexity, but a more
stately dignity is apparent, with very little passion. Did
Dryden fail to appreciate the many facets of character in
Shakespeare's Cleopatra? Why did this seventeenth century
dramatist present a Queen who says of herself:

a silly harmless household dove,
Fond without art, and kind without deceit ...?
IV, i, 97-99.

The most likely explanation is that this description would

³⁷ Frederick S. Boas, Shakspeare and His Predecessors
(New York: Charles Scribner, 1896), p. 476.

³⁸ Raleigh, op. cit., p. 176.

please the beaux in the theater, who saw her as an ideal and docile mistress. She would bring her lover no disillusionment, not having stirred his imagination in the first place.

In contrast to Shakespeare's highly vitalized and unpredictable individual, the Restoration queen is a type, simply and artistically drawn with classic precision. Spencer³⁹ thinks of her as "just a lay figure in love." He considers her a "puppet to a ruling passion," which is her blind devotion to Antony. In Dryden's simplified play *Cleopatra* is allowed to analyze her love and her ideals of conduct; in Shakespeare, action replaces discussion. The seventeenth-century version presents us with characters that speak glibly. Cleopatra, in Act two, convinces us and wins back Antony with this well-phrased argument:

Cleo.: How shall I plead my cause, when you,
 my judge,
 Already have condemned me? Shall I
 bring
 The love you bore me for my advocate?
 That now is turned against me, that
 destroys me;
 For love, once past, is at the best
 forgotten;
 But oftener sours to hate; 'twill
 please my lord
 To ruin me, and therefore I'll be
 guilty.
 But, could I once have thought it would
 have pleased you,
 That you would pry, with narrow searching
 eyes,
 Into my faults, severe to my destruction,

39 Hazelton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved, p. 220.

And watching all advantages with care,
 That serve to make me wretched? Speak,
 my lord,
 For I end here. Though I deserved this
 usage,
 Was it like you to give it? II, i, 356-369.

This queen has heard of the seventeenth century's trend toward Reason. Though she speaks beautifully, Cleopatra is not impassioned.

In order to present Antony in heroic light, the dramatists are called upon to create a heroine of such charm that even the spectators agree that the world would be well lost for such a lover. Shakespeare has been equal to the task: Cleopatra is the cleverest characterization of a woman in a Shakespeare play. It was an almost impossible undertaking for Dryden to place such a siren in a classical drama with its emphasis on code and dignity. Dryden's Cleopatra is fine, sensitive, honorable according to the French code for mistresses in the Restoration period; but she is only interesting, not fascinating. Garnett skillfully contrasts the characterization of the Queen by Dryden and Shakespeare:

Shakespeare's art is equal to the occasion; his Cleopatra is daemonic, and at the same time so intensely feminine that the purest and the meekest of her sex see much of themselves in her ... the reader can hardly despise Antony for being a slave of a spell which he feels so strongly himself. Dryden's Cleopatra wants this character of universality, which, indeed, none but Shakespeare could have given, and Shakespeare himself could not have given it if in bondage to the unities. She is a passionate, sensuous woman, a kind of Mary Stuart, interesting but not to the point at which it could be

felt that the world were well lost for her. The inferiority of Cleopatra reacts grievously upon Antony. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is so grand that her lover is exalted by the admiration, which, in spite of her perfidies, she manifestly feels for him. The beloved of such a woman must be heroic ... Dryden's Cleopatra can bestow no such patent of distinction.⁴⁰

With a disregard for history and time, Dryden introduces Octavia into Alexandria. She becomes a principal force, in direct conflict with Cleopatra. In defending Octavia's appearance Dryden writes in the Preface to All For Love that he considered it probable that "Octavia, proud of her new-gained conquest, would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her; and that Cleopatra, thus attacked, was not of a spirit to shun the encounter. And it is not unlikely that two exasperated rivals should use such satire as I have put into their mouths; ... for they were both women."⁴¹ In this famous scolding match both women lose dignity, although in the brief encounter they both appear more like human beings than they were before. The repartee is sharp.

From here to the end of the play, Cleopatra's chief conflict is found in her rivalry with Octavia. In a noble death scene the Queen discolors the beauty of the mood by mentioning her rival:

Cleo.: 'Tis sweet to die when they would force
 life on me,
 To rush into the dark abode of death,

⁴⁰ Richard Garnett, The Age of Dryden (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1922), p. 94.

⁴¹ John Dryden, op. cit., p. 362.

And seize him first; if he be like my
 love,
 He is not frightful sure.
 We're now alone, in secrecy and silence;
 And is not this like lovers? I may kiss
 These pale cold lips; Octavia does not
 see me:
 And oh! 'tis better far to have him thus,
 Than see him in her arms. V, i, 481-489.

Dryden has vivified the Queen in this farewell; yet Leavis, unconvinced of her individuality, writes: "His Cleopatra couldn't have hopped in the public street or anywhere. His tragic personae exist only in a world of stage postures; decorum gone, everything is gone."⁴²

In depicting Cleopatra in throes of jealousy of Octavia, Shakespeare displays a piercing insight. News of Antony's marriage to Octavia brings a violent emotional shock to Cleopatra, but she does not lose consciousness of herself--of how she acts, or of how she looks. With an instinct for posing, she says, "I am pale, Charmian." Though in fury she strikes the messenger who brings the news, she repents. After Charmian's admonition, "Good Madam, keep yourself within yourself" the Queen admits, "These hands do lack nobility, that they strike/A meaner than myself." She recalls the innocent messenger. Cleopatra can possess self-discipline when it is necessary. She never completely loses her wits.

Symons remarks of Cleopatra's exhibition of emotion in Act two, scene five:

⁴² Leavis, op. cit., p. 158.

We realize from this scene more than from anything else in the play, Shakespeare's insight into the secrets of Cleopatra's heart, the boundless empire of her caprice, the incalculable instability of her moods, and how entirely instinctive is the spirit of change and movement by which partly, she fascinates her lover. The scene brings out the tiger element in her, the union, which we find so often, of cruelty and voluptuousness.... At last exhausted with the violence of her emotion, she surprises us with humble words, full of real pathos: "Pity me, Charmian, but do not speak to me." One becomes aware of how deeply the blow has struck, how much there is in her to feel such a blow. She can never be quite simple--there is wounded vanity as well as wounded love in her cry. But it is the proudest as well as the most pitiless of women who asks for pity, and we cannot refuse her that.⁴³

Although Cleopatra's love seems entirely selfish and possessive, it is, nevertheless, a very real passion, intense and overwhelming. Her love requires her to possess and to absorb Antony. From the first scene Shakespeare brought out her every little anxiety when Antony left her for a moment; she shows no trust. Yet in his presence she is utterly confident; with frivolous irony she calls the conqueror to heel. She interests him by changing with or before his every mood. When he is arrogant, she is humble, crying, "My lord, my lord!" Although she plays her spells admirably, Cleopatra herself is deeply enthralled. The intoxication of loving is greater than that of being loved.

Did Cleopatra betray Antony at Actium? Seemingly she has no excuse except cowardice: "Forgive my fearful sails."

⁴³ Arthur Symons, Studies in the Elizabethan Drama (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919), p. 13.

Symons says that it is significant of Shakespeare's art that the Egyptian fascinates us even in her weakness. In Act III, xi, the dramatist lets us feel the tension between the characters after an ignoble defeat. Symons writes:

In the scene which follows the flight from Actium Shakespeare puts forth his full power. There are few more effective groupings than this of Cleopatra sitting silent over against Antony, neither daring to approach the other; he, crushed into an unspeakable shame, which can never be redeemed; she, incapable of shame, but seeing it in the eyes of Antony, and conscious that she has done him a deed which can never be forgiven. She is here as ever cunning. Excuses can be useless, and she attempts none, none but the faintest murmur: "I little thought you would have followed" ... and the lover, who has given the world for love, says, not without the saddest irony, as he takes her kiss: "Even this repays me."⁴⁴

Cleopatra's Love, however, may be deeper than that of Antony, at least more understanding. From the first she has given their love a boundless immensity:

Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows bent; none our parts
so poor
But was a race of heaven; they are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turn'd the greatest liar. I, iii, 48-52.

When Antony storms like a thousand hurricanes at sight of Caesar's messenger kissing his Queen's hand, Cleopatra, again humble, shows her understanding of Antony, with the effective, "Not know me yet?" She is superior in self-control yet never above trickery. In his last extremity, Antony receives false

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

news of her death; yet when he finds her living, he forgives her. Always selfish, Cleopatra is made sharply aware of what the loss of Antony will mean to her.

Noblest of men, woo't die?
Hast thou no care of me, shall I abide
In this dull world, which in thy absence
is
No better than a sty? Oh see my women:
(Antony dies.) IV, xv, 76-79.

Now Cleopatra expresses the realization that the one truth in her life was her love for Antony:

Oh Sunne,
Burn the great sphere thou mov'st in,
darkling stand
The varrying shore of the world.
O Antony, Antony, Antony
Help Charmian, help Iras: help Friends
Below, let's draw him thither. IV, xv, 15-19.

A new nobility arises in this remarkable woman as her destiny becomes apparent to her. With a feeling of overwhelming disaster, she says to her women:

Come we have no friend
But Resolution and the briefest end.
IV, xv, 110-111.

Only after Antony is lost to her forever does Cleopatra evaluate his devotion. When Antony lived, her life was filled with uncertainty and fear of his departure, which stimulated her to trickery. Now Cleopatra expresses the greater depth of love which she held for this man who was never hers in the eyes of the world. She undergoes a metamorphosis. Far too wise in the ways of human nature was Shakespeare to show the Serpent of the Nile as changing completely and

immediately. Cleopatra's innate craft and guile were displayed in her effort to keep her treasure and to thwart Caesar. When her wiles have no effect on the conqueror, she drops that role forever. Perhaps she was playing for time to arrange her suicide. Fearing a Roman triumph, she accepted death as a release. To triumph--that had been her life's game--no matter the methods. Thus she would still possess a sense of triumph over Caesar as she eluded him in death.

Now she turns the Attic power of a great mind to an ennobling remembrance of the splendor and glory of her lord; she plans a magnificent pageant of her own departure when she shall join him in Elysian Fields. In an interview with Dolabella, under the guise of a dream, Cleopatra, in poetry of imperial imagery, describes Antony as he was to her. She is enraptured, self-hypnotized, as she recalls her vision:

His face was as the Heav'ns, and therein
 stucke
 A Sunne and Moone, which kept their course,
 and lighted
 The little O' the earth.

.

His legges bestrid the ocean, his rear'd
 arme
 Crested the world: His voyce was propertied
 As all the tuned Spheres, and that to
 Friends:
 But when he meant to quaille, and shake
 the Orbe,
 He was as rattling Thunder. V, ii, 97-105.

Shakespeare was aware of our natural tendency to idealize the dead and the Past.

Cleopatra's decision is made, without hesitancy, without regret. To her devoted Charmian she says:

Shew my Women like a Queen: Go fetch
My best attyres. I am for Cidrus,
To meete Marke Anthony. V, ii, 273-275.

Surrounded by the riches of the East, in a room sumptuous in splendor, Cleopatra plans her death scene with a sense of dramatic and pictorial values. She recalls her celestial appearance when she met Antony on the Cydnus. Yet now she sees the values of life as never before. This Queen realizes that in the hands of Death she is only a woman. To Iras, ever loving and charming, she says:

No more, but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion, as the maid that
 milks,
And does the meanest chores. It were for me
To throw my scepter at the injurious gods,
To tell them that this world did equal
 theirs,
Till they had stolen our jewel. IV, xv, 93-98.

With felicity in conception and characterization, Shakespeare presents a last scene of such dramatic contrasts and pathos as to make it unforgettable. Cleopatra, in regal robes, prepares for death with courage, and is even able to jest with the fig-bearer. She looks with hasty eyes toward Antony in Elysium. Cleopatra's love for her devoted women adds a note of softness. Only Shakespeare could write the following speech in which she calms her weeping attendants:

Peace, peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse asleep. V, ii, 362-364.

There is an electrifying contrast between the terror we feel at sight of the stinging asp and the tender sentiment of this speech. This closing scene with its magnificent poetry leaves us quite dazzled. In wonderment we recall Shakespeare's superb understanding of human nature and the magic of his words and his music.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A comparison of All For Love and Antony and Cleopatra reveals that each is a masterpiece of its kind. Dryden and Shakespeare had access to the same historical references before they produced these plays on the story of the ancient lovers. How a writer develops a theme depends on his milieu, the medium in which he chooses to work, his literary taste, and his personality.

Dryden, an excellent craftsman, sought to follow the classic form of the past, to adhere to French theories of drama, and to attain a characterization and a style equal to the powerful Elizabethan art. In the first two aims he succeeded admirably. This versatile writer delighted in technique for its own sake; he often attained a perfect balance. To produce a more eloquent tone in language he substituted rhetoric for imagination. His verse is clear, fluent, regular, but not impassioned; nor are the speeches highly individualized. By introducing arguments and discussions of abstract qualities Dryden seems to be working from the outside. Dryden's blank verse lends itself well to stage delivery and expresses elegance and dignity, yet this descriptive eloquence is not truly poetic. Explicitness destroys emotion. All For Love is a work of exquisite form and symmetrical design; however, its simplified plot, with marked deference to the unities, presents an atmosphere of frigid formality.

Shakespeare saw the story of Antony and Cleopatra as part of a world catastrophe. He retained the loosely-constructed form of the older English drama; the fluidity of the Elizabethan stage allowed him to present many scenes in wide-flung spaces. Always before us, however, he keeps the master-motive of the play--Rome's struggle against the voluptuous East. Through a mastery of the craft of his particular stage Shakespeare cleverly manipulated his plot to entertain the varied audience in an Elizabethan theater. His chief interest was in producing reality through emotion; this he did superbly through the music of his poetry. Though Antony and Cleopatra lacks a cold and classical perfection, the author gives us colorful reality through uninhibited exuberance and a masterful handling of interaction of characters. A perfect union of thought and form presents an illusion of all-pervading life; and through the subtlest art Shakespeare leaves us a unity of impression.

History tells us that Antony and Cleopatra met their downfall in an effort to build a powerful empire of the East which would rival Rome. In defeating them, Octavian won high acclaim and came to be called Augustus. Plutarch, more moralist than historian, emphasizes character in retelling this story of Alexandria; he has given a picture of vivid personalities. The two plays of this study differ quite sharply in characterization and in style. In the creation

of characters all other dramatists are cruelly marked as mortals before the sparkling splendor of Shakespeare's genius.

In All For Love the characters are beautifully adjusted to the formality and elegance of heroic drama, but they are not highly individualized. The women are either definitely typed or vaguely drawn. We feel little of the power in Dryden's Cleopatra that the queen of history was said to wield; and none of the fascination of Shakespeare's siren is visible. Characterization of the men excels that of the women. In All For Love Dryden liked best a scene in Act one in which Antony and Ventidius quarrel. This conflict is handled with some force and compares favorably with a discussion between Cassius and Brutus in Julius Caesar. The style is distinctly manly, yet characterization is one of Dryden's weaker points.

The creation of almost three hundred characters had amplified not weakened Shakespeare's great gift of portraiture before he wrote Antony and Cleopatra. In this tragedy he worked from the heart with as full an understanding of Enobarbus as of Antony. With a few deft strokes he gives us an unforgettable Octavia, while at the same time he can lavish attention on the fascinating Cleopatra through her many moods. Shakespeare wrote blank verse as if he were accustomed to speaking it, and he did his thinking in metaphors. Each character speaks in his own voice--a style peculiar to the individual--to be recognized as his only. The listener

responds to a varied music--to chords of great emotional power and to themes of utmost delicacy. The Master's infinite complexity of style and music empowers him to produce scenes of reality, full of passionate utterances, with characters so life-like that they have come down to us as have leaders in the world's history.

As we return to the present, we can visualize the curtain falling in a Restoration theater on the last tragic scene of All For Love. Antony and Cleopatra return to their pedestals in the formal parterre of Hampton Court gardens. The silver light on their finely-chiseled features intensifies the passions for which each lived and died--love and honor.

In a large Elizabethan hall hangs a painting--for all the world like a panorama by Peter Paul Rubens--a glowing canvas of a Mediterranean world of dazzling sunlight. Shakespeare's inspirational fire highlights two tragic and passionate lovers before this background of their ancient empire. Antony is magnificent and god-like; Cleopatra is lambent as a flame. The passing of a thousand years will not fade these portraits by the Master.

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