

The Many Faces of Cleopatra

From Propaganda to Myth

By

NAOMI SUSAN HARDMAN

SEPTEMBER 2003
PIETERMARITZBURG

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
(CLASSICAL CIVILIZATION)

in the

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this dissertation is the result of my own original work, which has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Signed: _____

Naomi Susan Hardman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following persons who made this study possible:

Mr Michael Lambert

Thank you for your committed and enthusiastic supervision of this dissertation – for your speedy return of draft copies, attention to detail, and your tireless efforts to make this dissertation better. Thank you, also, for all your assistance throughout my post-graduate years of study, and for leading us through the fundamental stages in the exciting adventure of learning Greek!

Professor Peter Tennant

Thank you for reading through this dissertation in its final stages, and for your helpful suggestions. Thank you for your encouragement and participation in my university studies.

Professor David Pike

Thank you for your confidence in, and support of, me, during the years I have spent in Classics, the best department on campus!

Dr Catherine Woeber

Thank you for so generously reading through the third chapter of this dissertation, and for the most insightful suggestions you offered towards refining it.

My husband, Paul Hardman

Thank you for believing so intensely in me, for your example of diligence, and for all your support, prayer and understanding while I have been studying.

My parents, Howard and Helen Gee

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for your unconditional support of me during the past twenty-three years, and for being so interested in my studies.

The Lord Jesus Christ

You are a mighty God – always my inspiration and hope. Thank you for Your faithfulness to me.

ABSTRACT

Few women of antiquity have gripped the public imagination as Cleopatra has. For centuries, she has inspired playwrights, poets, artists and film-makers, with the result that she and Antony are arguably history's most famous lovers. However, I have not yet encountered a study which discusses, in one work, the multiple constructions of Cleopatra across the range of genres in which she has been represented. Certainly, many books and articles are devoted to revealing how Cleopatra has been constructed in one or other specific genre, but it seems as though no attempts have been made to portray, in juxtaposition to one another, the many faces of Cleopatra.

This dissertation seeks to do just that. Although I could not possibly include a discussion of *every* genre in which Cleopatra has been constructed, I have chosen six areas for study: ancient Greek biography (using Plutarch's *Life of Antony*); the poetry of the Augustan poets: Vergil (the *Aeneid*), Horace (*Ode* 1.37) and Propertius (*Elegies* 3.11); Shakespearean tragedy (*Antony and Cleopatra*); art (numismatics and ancient sculpture); film (Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra*), and, briefly, Africanist historiography. I have chosen these areas because each offers such diverse constructions of Cleopatra that one begins to appreciate how historiography, propaganda and representation have contributed to the shaping of the Cleopatra myth, coloured by the ideology of the age in which she has been interpreted afresh. Current Africanist appropriations of Cleopatra suggest that historiography is never neutral: race and gender often intersect to create 'historical' identities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| DECLARATION | i |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | ii |
| ABSTRACT | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iv |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER ONE | 3 |
| 1.1. Introduction to Plutarch | 3 |
| 1.2. The Choice of Genre – Biography | 5 |
| 1.3. Ancient Views on Character | 7 |
| 1.4. Plutarch’s Audience and the Nature of his Sources | 11 |
| 1.5. Antony as constructed by Plutarch | 23 |
| 1.6. Cleopatra as constructed by Plutarch | 35 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 46 |
| 2.1. Introduction to the Roman Sources | 46 |
| 2.2. Vergil | 48 |
| 2.3. Horace | 66 |
| 2.4. Propertius | 81 |
| CHAPTER THREE | 92 |
| 3.1. Introduction to William Shakespeare’s <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> | 92 |
| 3.2. Shakespeare’s Use of the Roman Sources | 96 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.3. Shakespeare's Use of Plutarch | 108 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | 165 |
| 4.1. Introduction to Cleopatra in Numismatics and Sculpture | 165 |
| 4.2. Cleopatra's National Image | 172 |
| 4.3. Cleopatra's International Image | 185 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | 193 |
| 5.1. Introduction to <i>Cleopatra</i> (1963) | 193 |
| 5.2. Joseph Mankiewicz's <i>Cleopatra</i> (1963) | 198 |
| 5.3. Mankiewicz's construction of Cleopatra | 201 |
| CONCLUSION | 211 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 222 |

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I shall explore how Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt has been constructed in a range of genres spanning ancient biography, nationalist poetry, Renaissance tragedy, art, coinage, film and Africanist historiography.

In chapter one, I shall investigate how the ancient Greek biographer, Plutarch, characterized Antony and Cleopatra in his *Life of Antony*, written in the early second century A.D. I shall discuss why Plutarch chose, for his *Life of Antony*, the genre of biography, and how this work was influenced by ancient views on character. I shall also investigate how Plutarch's sources shaped his representations of Antony and Cleopatra.

The second chapter of this dissertation examines how Cleopatra is portrayed in the Latin poetry of the Augustan poets, Vergil, Horace and Propertius. Starting with Vergil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*, I shall evaluate how Vergil's Cleopatra has been allegorically linked to another African queen, Dido, and whether this zeugma is credible. I shall then discuss how Cleopatra and Egypt are characterized by Vergil in the shield of Aeneas, in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*. I shall conclude my study of Vergil by discussing the contribution of his poem to Roman society, before focussing on the poetry of Horace and Propertius. Having explained the personal contexts in which both Horace and Propertius composed their poetry during the Principate of Augustus, I shall first explore how Cleopatra is demonized in Horace's *Ode* 1.37, commonly known as the '*Cleopatra Ode*,' and then how she is constructed by Propertius in *Elegies* 3.11.

I shall devote the most substantial part of this dissertation to the exploration of William Shakespeare's construction of Cleopatra in his fine tragedy, *Antony and Cleopatra*, in chapter three. Since Shakespeare used, for this play, Sir Thomas North's mediated translation of Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, in chapter three, I will use North's *Life of Marcus Antonius*, as opposed to a modern translation of the original Greek. I shall then summarize how the Augustan poetry of chapter two influenced Shakespeare in his constructions of Cleopatra and Antony, and Egypt and Rome, in *Antony and Cleopatra*. I then intend to reveal to what extent the Renaissance playwright was similarly inspired by Plutarch in his portrayal of the famous lovers.

In chapter four I shall deviate from the literary sources and concentrate on how Cleopatra is portrayed (and her political and social ideology conveyed) in visual representations on coins and in sculpture from the first century B.C. I shall describe how Cleopatra had her own image and identity manipulated for both national and international consumption. In 2001, the British Museum Press published a comprehensive catalogue of coins, statues, and numerous other artefacts to accompany a touring exhibition celebrating the life of Cleopatra. In this chapter of my dissertation, all visual representations are reproduced from this catalogue.

The final chapter of this dissertation discusses how Cleopatra is constructed in twentieth-century film. Although I will briefly examine how the Ptolemaic queen is portrayed in a range of 'Cleopatra films' of both American and Italian production, my case-study for this chapter is Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra*, starring as its heroine Elizabeth Taylor. In this chapter I shall discuss how Taylor's off-screen behaviour influenced modern interpretations of Cleopatra, as well as how the myth of Cleopatra's sexuality glamorously shaped the reception of Taylor's adulterous affair with her co-star, Richard Burton.

In my conclusion I shall also briefly examine how scholars engaged in Afrocentric studies have responded to these historical and artistic interpretations of Cleopatra. Although this is a comparatively new field of scholarship and debate, its challenges to accepted conventions and versions of history offer exciting research opportunities for South African scholars today. My hope is that this dissertation might encourage such a scholar to explore further the legacy of Cleopatra in a local context.

1.1. Introduction to Plutarch

The most important extant source (Greek or Roman) for Cleopatra which we possess is Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Described by one modern scholar as 'an unforgettable masterpiece of Greek literature,'¹ Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (in the greater context of his *Parallel Lives*) holds, according to C. P. Jones (1971:81), as dominant a place today in the study of ancient biography as it did in antiquity. Although, as the title suggests, this is a work whose main subject is Mark Antony, it is also the most extensive and eloquent source for the study of Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt.

Born about seventy-five years after Actium,² Plutarch lived in a period in which the Greek and Roman worlds were politically more unified: well-born men from the Greek-speaking East were increasingly entering the Roman imperial services, and Plutarch was one such man. Although Plutarch was by nationality Greek, he was also a Roman citizen and could claim to have acquaintances in high positions in the Roman Imperial government. His *Parallel Lives* were dedicated to one such figure, Q. Sossius Senecio, twice consul of Rome.³ Although Sossius clearly wielded much influence in Roman politics, it is unlikely Plutarch sought to influence him (or others in the imperial service), since not only is Plutarch's tone (when he refers to Sossius) not that of a flatterer, but flattery would not accord with one's general impression of him.⁴ Instead, it is likely that Sossius was singled out for dedication by Plutarch for the reason described by Wardman (1974:38-39): 'the sincerity of the dedication to Sossius need not be doubted and we may suppose, whatever his origin, that his knowledge of Greek was considerable. ...Sossius is, rather, the reader who exemplifies by his life and achievement the kind of activity to which the *Lives* exhort us. He has been mellowed by philosophy, with an active political life of which any Greek or Roman might be proud. He is therefore typical of the fulfilment rather than the hope.' Sossius, then, epitomised for Plutarch the morality which Plutarch sought to encourage in his audience.

¹ Brenk (1992:159).

² Approximately A.D. 45.

³ Wardman (1974:37-38). Sossius Senecio was also a close adviser of the emperor Trajan.

⁴ *ibid*, 38.

Thus Plutarch, although fiercely loyal to his Hellenic past and present,⁵ was interested not only in Greek, but also Roman history, and as Pelling (1988:5) offers, ‘it is tempting to think of Plutarch as actively involved in a unified Greco-Roman world, a Greek writing about Rome from the inside in a way which would have been impossible [one hundred and fifty] years before.’ However, although Plutarch was interested in Roman antiquity, he knew Latin literature no better than his Roman counterparts knew Greek; and although he did read the Latin sources for his *Lives*, he had never perfected the acquisition of the language.⁶ Thus despite his dedication to Senecio, Plutarch had a Greek audience in mind when he wrote his *Lives*.⁷ His choice to pair together a Greek and Roman hero for his *Lives*, then, was not simply to encourage a Greco-Roman sharing of ideas and moral truths, but more pointedly to encourage his Greek readers ‘to live up to their connexion with Greek heroes of the past, by excelling in that activity which he commemorates. ...The Greek readership of the *Lives*, ideally, would include those whose aptitude for politics would be called into action by the paradigms of virtue described by Plutarch, ...[for] Plutarch and his readers know that while fortune does play a part in human affairs, the significant part is to be ascribed to the virtue and failings of men.’⁸

Thus for this compilation Plutarch chose as his genre biography: it suited both his purposes and his audience best. For unlike Appian or Dio Cassius, Plutarch was not interested in analysing the machinations of politics in the Roman Empire, choosing rather to centre his creative energies on the study of individual moral virtue and vice, and biography clearly suited this purpose better.⁹ Plutarch therefore constructs his *Lives* for an audience who agrees that the right aim of political life is virtue, not the achievement of an exalted name.

⁵ Plutarch was not only actively involved in the civic and public life of his hometown, Chaeronea, but also held the sacred priesthood at Delphi (Pelling 1988:2; Russell 1993:ix).

⁶ Pelling (1988:6).

⁷ *ibid.*, 8.

⁸ Wardman (1974:41-43).

⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 1.1-2; Pelling (1988:9). In this dissertation, all abbreviations of ancient sources are taken from *OCD*³ (1996).

1.2. The Choice of Genre – Biography

In this *Life*, Antony, chronologically the last Roman in Plutarch's forty-six surviving biographies making up his *Parallel Lives*, is coupled with the Greek, Demetrius, in order to illustrate not only Plutarch's holistic belief in the existence of a partnership or compatibility between Greece, the educator, and Rome, the military and political world super-power of the first century A.D.,¹⁰ but also to demonstrate the character of his subjects (in this instance Demetrius and Antony) and to encourage both himself and his audience to imitate them.¹¹ Plutarch expands on his reasons for pairing these two men together, stating:

‘This book will therefore contain the Lives of Demetrius the City-Besieger and Antony the *Imperator*, men who bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato's saying that great natures exhibit great vices also, as well as great virtues. Both alike were amorous, bibulous, warlike, munificent, extravagant, and domineering, and they had corresponding resemblances in their fortunes. For not only were they all through their lives winning great successes, but meeting with great reverses; making innumerable conquests, but suffering innumerable losses; unexpectedly falling low, but unexpectedly recovering themselves again; but they also came to their end, the one in captivity to his enemies, and the other on the verge of this calamity.’¹²

It is important to note, however, that biography in antiquity was not a rigidly-defined genre. A life (βίος) or lives (βίαι) could span a wide range of different types of writing, and Plutarch's cradle-to-grave account of the life of Antony is one example of this. Indeed, ‘one should not think of a single biographical ‘genre’ with acknowledged conventions, but rather of a complicated picture of overlapping traditions, embracing works of varying form, style, length, and truthfulness.’¹³ Thus while Plutarch claims to be writing Lives, not Histories, his methods and the complete *Lives* themselves contribute much to our understanding of Roman history, social identity and gender constructions.

¹⁰ Grant (1972:241).

¹¹ Jones, C. P. (1971:103).

¹² *Demetr.* 1.7-8 (Perrin). All translations in this chapter, unless stated otherwise, are my own.

¹³ *OCD*³, 241, s.v. biography, Greek.

However, the genre of biography under which Plutarch's *Lives* have been loosely categorized by modern scholars has its roots in Plato and Aristotle. Under the latter's influence (resulting from his analysis of human character), interest in ethical and cultural history and the celebration of the individual encouraged the writing of more generalized βίαι. But as Misch (1973:289) explains, in Aristotle's 'thoroughly clear mind the way of seeing things plastically that characterised the classical Greeks... became a method of comprehending the individual philosophically. This method assumes that at the back of a man's actions a consistent self-determined character is to be sought; his various states of mind and activities, which often appear to us to be at variance with each other, are all referred to some few characteristics, considered to represent his nature. Static though it was, this vision of human nature was the first methodical philosophical approach to the problem of the unity of life in the individual person.'¹⁴

This then, was the inherited moral philosophy which was to reflect itself in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. As shall be explored later, the inner links in that process which led from Aristotelian psychology to the shaping of Plutarch's biography can be traced in Plutarch's construction of the development of the psychology of both Antony and Cleopatra.¹⁵

Thus, although as early as Aristotle the embryonic stages of biography were already present, from the third century B.C. onwards, biography had established itself as a literary genre, albeit with weakly defined parameters.¹⁶ However, Plutarch, in his *Parallel Lives*, was not simply writing biography. He was – and especially in his study of Antony and Cleopatra – displaying a distinctive moral earnestness. In the scale, depth of characterization and historical solemnity of his *Life of Antony*, Plutarch's moralizing was subtle and his psychological interest in his subjects deeply penetrating.¹⁷

¹⁴ For modern theories on ancient biography, including those of Misch (1973), see Momigliano (1971:8-22).

¹⁵ See this dissertation, 1.3. *Ancient Views of Character*.

¹⁶ Misch (1973:292).

¹⁷ *OCD*³, 242, s. v. biography, Greek.

1.3. Ancient Views on Character

Gill (1996:2-5) argues that in order to understand the origins and development of ancient Greek conceptions of selfhood, personality and character, it is necessary for modern scholars to counteract our own subjective theories and interpretations of self. In our present-day understanding, character is a broad term which suggests an interest in recognizing patterns in human behaviour and in analysing the psychological structures and processes underlying these patterns.¹⁸ While it is simple to point out the ancient theories and philosophies of Aristotle or Plato which reflect this interest, it is far harder to define the conspicuous differences between ancient and modern thought regarding character.¹⁹

However, as has already been noted, most strands of ancient theory concerning character are found in works ascribed to Aristotle,²⁰ whose dominant interest was in analysing ethically good and bad character – virtue and vice. This same interest is frequently mirrored in Plutarch’s construction of Antony’s character in his *Life of Antony*. Indeed, Plutarch was a great moralist, and favoured the title of ‘biographer’ to that of ‘historian’, preferring to set aside political significance for romance, glamour and moral enquiry:

‘For I am writing not Histories, but Lives; and in the most acclaimed actions there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice. No, instead a slight thing like a phrase or a joke often reveals more about character than battles in which thousands fall, or the great defences, or sieges of cities. Accordingly, just as painters get the resemblances in their portraits from the face and expression of the eyes, which reveal the character within, but which describe very little about the other parts of the body, so must I be allowed to apply myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by having means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the narrative of their great disputes.’²¹

Plutarch’s motive, then, for recording the *Lives* (including that of both Antony and, indirectly,

¹⁸ For a modern construction of character and the process of making moral judgements, see Gill (1996:2-9).

¹⁹ *OCD*³, 317, s.v. character.

²⁰ Arist. *Rh.* 2.12-17; *Eth. Eud.* 2-3; *Eth. Nic.* 2-4.

²¹ Plut. *Alex.* 1.1 (Perrin).

Cleopatra), is derived primarily from an interest in character. Similarly, his arrangement of Greeks and Romans in parallel sequence has not only an artistic, but also a moral purpose. The use of comparisons to enhance or ridicule not only held the audience's attention, but also encouraged Greek and Roman audiences trained in rhetoric to compare their respective heroes. Plutarch hoped that such contemplation and comparison automatically inspired imitation (where virtue was exposed as essential as opposed to accidental) and that when the audience understood the motives behind such virtue, it would gradually acquire its own inclination to virtue. Furthermore, this bi-national pairing was especially effective since the difference in the backgrounds of the audience and the subjects contributed to a clearer view of the virtue which they had in common.²²

Besides Plutarch's obvious interest in virtuous character lay an equally important interest in negative moral examples. In his introduction to *Demetrius-Antony*, Plutarch writes that it is as a result of this interest that he has included the *Lives* of these two men, for in their negative moral behaviour, he hopes his audience may be similarly schooled in the avoidance of succumbing to the same character traits which proved (in Plutarch's mind) to be the cause of Antony's and Demetrius' ruin:

'The most consummate arts, self-control, justice and wisdom, involve judgements not only of what is good, just, and useful, but also of what is harmful, disgraceful and wrong... Perhaps, then, it is no bad thing to include in our examples of *Lives* one or two pairs of those who have behaved recklessly or have become conspicuous for evil in positions of power or in great affairs. Of course, this is not to vary my writing for reasons of pleasure, or to divert my readers; it is more in the manner of Ismenias the Theban, who would show his pupils both good and bad flute players, and say "*That* is how you should play", and "*That* is how you should not..." So it seems to me that we will be more enthusiastic in our admiration and imitation of good lives if we examine the bad and blameworthy as well.'²³

Plutarch's exploration of Antony's character – as he perceives it – is based upon Aristotle's tabulation of virtues and vices, conceived both as modes of behaviour and as psychological structures. Aristotle argued that the determinants of character were emotion (anger and desire under the habits of virtues and vices), psychological condition, age (divided into youth, prime and old age)

²² Jones, C. P. (1971:103-106).

²³ *Demetr.* 1.4-6 (Perrin).

and fortune (including birth, wealth and misfortune), with age and fortune lying outside of a man's control.²⁴ His implication, though, was that character is not static but evolves in a man over a period of time. Plutarch appears to accept this hypothesis, since it is over time that the 'greatness' of Antony (in his capacity as general and politician) is reduced to pitiful dependence on a woman – Cleopatra. His character reflects both great and dismal components, but eventually it is the vices in his character (as Plutarch perceives them) which will destroy him.

Aristotle's thought-world regarding the polarity of vices and virtues, and his assigning of each to different groups or types of people, ignores the unique individuality and the subjective viewpoint which figures in modern conceptions about character.²⁵ He attributes wholesale virtues and vices to specific groups of people – for example, the character of the young is such that a youth has no control of his bodily appetites connected to sex, whereas the old are moderate in their passions which have been chilled by time.²⁶ Many of these attributes which Aristotle confers upon the typical character of the young (being easily sated in one's desires, desiring another intensely, living in a naive state of hope regarding the future, being easily deceived and loving fun and laughter), Plutarch accords the character of Antony as well. Aristotle perceives virtues as lying between two kinds of vice: one of excess and the other of deficiency, with virtue discovering the mean between the two, and choosing it.²⁷ In this way, one can argue that he perceives youth and old age lying at antithetic points of his character scale, with virtuous behaviour being associated with the mean which is the prime of life. Antony, by 31 B.C. at least,²⁸ must have been perceived to have been in this prime age bracket, yet he fails to reflect the virtues associated with his expected character as a middle-aged man. For Aristotle perceives those in the period of prime to be mid-way in character between the two groups (young and old): avoiding excess, not greatly confident nor excessively fearful, and neither trusting all nor trusting none.²⁹ Here Antony fails, for Plutarch constructs a man with an abundance of confidence in his military prowess, with an unfortunate trustfulness in those around him irrespective of their private or political agenda, and with a hedonistic lifestyle of debauchery in sex,

²⁴ *Rh.* 2.12.

²⁵ *OCD*³, 317, s.v. character.

²⁶ *Rh.* 2.12-13.

²⁷ *Eth. Nic.* 2.6.

²⁸ This being the year in which Antony engaged Octavian in a battle at Actium which was to decide the fate of Rome and much of the ancient world.

²⁹ *Rh.* 2.14.

food and the spending of money.³⁰ Antony's character is flawed because he fails to recognize and adopt in his behaviour the mean between the polarities of excess and deficiency. For in the sphere of fear and confidence, if rashness is the excess, cowardice the deficiency, and courage the mean, Antony will be rash;³¹ for in the sphere of pleasure and pain, if licentiousness is the excess, insensibility the deficiency and temperance the mean, Antony will choose the excess;³² and in the sphere of conversation, if buffoonery is the excess, boorishness the deficiency, and wittiness the mean, Antony will play the buffoon.³³

Thus Plutarch's biography of Antony reflects throughout its narrative, traces of Aristotelian constructions of character. Where Aristotle denounced deficiency and excess as being the destructive agents of virtue or moral goodness,³⁴ Plutarch constructs an Antony whose leadership as a general is useless once he is enslaved by his passions for Cleopatra. Thus Antony, who indulges in every pleasure and refrains from few, becomes licentious and condemned by vice.³⁵

³⁰ *Ant.* 26.6-27.2.

³¹ In his Parthian campaign in *Ant.* 37-52, and especially at 37.5-38.1.

³² *Ant.* 2.4-8.

³³ *ibid.*, 29.2-7, 33.

³⁴ *Eth. Nic.* 2.2.

³⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the vulnerability of Antony's character to Cleopatra, see Pelling (1990:231-32, 235-36).

1.4. Plutarch's Audience and the Nature of his Sources

For one whose interest is in the formation and destruction of character, Plutarch envisages an audience which is not only knowledgeable and philosophically educated, but also prepared to adopt his moral philosophy as the one to emulate. Wardman (1974:47-48) encapsulates Plutarch's aims and audience well:

'The *Lives*, then, were for a minority, if not an élite; they imply a readership with sufficient leisure and social status to have spent time studying philosophy. ...Plutarch was not the man, either by background or purpose, to create a non-didactic biography. Yet, he sketched a theory which would account for a different form of biography; and he had talents that enabled him at times to write free and self-sustaining narrative, not wholly compatible with the desire to draw a moral.'

Plutarch was not a formal historian, and for his purposes it was not necessary to consult all the sources available to him regarding the subjects of his *Lives*. Neither was it necessary for him to acquire a thorough knowledge of Latin, and though he makes use of at least twenty Latin sources for his *Lives*, there is no sign 'that he felt impeded by his lack of fluency or that he systematically tried to remedy it. ...If he himself was not fluent in Latin, that was in part a result of his western friends' fluency in Greek.'³⁶

While a modern researcher might be handicapped by an incomplete understanding of Greek or Latin, in the ancient world that was Plutarch's, a different research code existed – one in which a writer could shamelessly adapt large portions of another's work without the necessity of acknowledging his source. Similarly, a writer might also rely extensively on his own memory and his inherited oral tradition, committing blatant errors when he could not accurately recall the exact words or events cited. Yet for Plutarch's purposes, such freedom suited his aims and means, since, as he himself mentions in his introduction to his *Life of Alexander*, his primary aim was 'to depict character and provide examples for imitation, not to write history or compete with the standard authors. [Thus,

³⁶ Jones, C. P. (1971:83-84).

though] he abhors deliberate falsehood, he is not bothered by casual inaccuracy.’³⁷ Such minor (and, at times, major) impediments preventing the reader from gaining a knowledge of historical truth were compounded by the author’s liberty in employing poetic licence, referred to in Lucian’s *How to Write History*:

‘[The writer] shouldn’t gather his actual facts haphazardly but labouriously and painfully, examining the same matters many times. Ideally he should visit the places and see for himself; failing that, he should pay close attention to those giving the more disinterested accounts and those whom one would least expect to subtract from the facts or add to them through partiality or hostility. Now at this point he must show skill in using his intuition and putting together the more credible account. When he has assembled all or most of the facts, first of all he must weave them into a summary framework and produce the body of the text, still lacking embellishment and articulation. Then after arranging it, *he must embellish it, using diction to produce colour, and introducing stylistic figures and rhythm.*’³⁸

This approach Plutarch clearly demonstrates in his *Life of Antony*. Cleopatra’s arrival on her majestic barge in Tarsus, her flattery of Antony in response to her jealousy of Octavia, her lament for Antony at the tomb, and the events leading up to her death, are all described in rich and exotic detail – most of which is presumably drawn from Plutarch’s own imagination to titillate the audience’s visual register in these crucial moments of the narrative.

But what of Plutarch’s sources for his *Life of Antony*?³⁹ Though Plutarch clearly depended on others for information, when his sources are extant he is shown to have ‘adapted them to his own purpose, clothing them in his style and vocabulary and imposing his own interpretation on the material before him.’⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his sources are rich and varied, ranging from oral sources in the Egyptian civil service,⁴¹ to the autobiographies of great Roman statesmen.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 85.

³⁸ 47-48 (MacLeod). My italics.

³⁹ For a detailed analysis of Plutarch’s sources, see Pelling (1988:26-31).

⁴⁰ Jones, C. P. (1971:87).

⁴¹ Such as Cleopatra’s doctor, Olympus, in *Ant.* 82.4.

Arguably his most important source for this work was Augustus' *Autobiography*, published approximately ten years after Actium and obviously hostile to both Antony and Cleopatra. Sadly, the fragments of this autobiography which remain, even when arranged in an attempt to reconstruct the whole work, are not sufficient to provide Augustus' exact words regarding his relationship with Antony. However, even if one examines most quotations which survive in the works of ancient authors (and which, even if they were not the exact words of Augustus were at least the product of some obscure intermediate source), and if the authenticity of some of these passages is to be wholly rejected, there is still enough evidence showing that conscious and detectable efforts were made by Augustus 'to project a public image different from that which prevailed in his enemies' propaganda.'⁴²

Yavetz (1984:1-8) explains that a portion of Augustus' autobiography must have been dedicated to explaining his behaviour against his former allies (Cicero and Antony) – behaviour which may have been condemned by Romans as not only inconsistent, but also treacherous. In order to do this, Yavetz writes, all means had seemed justifiable to the first *Princeps*. First there were the rumours of his cowardice on the battlefield which Augustus had to explain. For at the battle of Philippi, Octavian was found to have disappeared from his litter in the heat of battle. His excuse, Yavetz reminds the reader, was that one of his friends had shared with him a foreshadowing dream, telling Octavian to get out of his bed and flee the camp, and, on this advice, he acted promptly.⁴³

In his *Autobiography*, as in his building of the Mausoleum in Rome, it appears as though Augustus was still reacting to slander and vicious rumour circulated by one such as Antony. Yavetz (1984:3-6) writes that where Augustus' 'enemies vilified his performance in war – he represented himself as a man of *virtus*. His enemies depicted him as cruel and savage – he emphasized his *clementia*. His enemies charged him with defiance of legal procedures – he paraded his *justitia*. His enemies condemned his treacherous behaviour towards former friends, benefactors, and even members of his own family – Augustus stressed his loyalty. ...The Mausoleum served a similar purpose. ...Octavian had fallen prey to his own propaganda, in which he vilified Antonius for *externi mores* and *vitia non Romana*, above all because the latter's last wish was to be buried in Alexandria. The building of the Mausoleum... was intended to remind everyone that, as opposed to Antonius, Octavian and his family

⁴² Yavetz (1984:1).

⁴³ This account is documented in numerous sources, such as in Plut. *Brut.* 41.

were to be buried in Rome.’

Similarly, as soon as he was safely established as the *Princeps* of Rome, Augustus undertook to change his public image not only through literature and architecture, but also through imperial Roman coinage too. The image of a young, bearded (grieving) Octavian was replaced with an idealized image of a great man and a great warrior. Augustus was careful, in a wide-spread and sustained propaganda campaign, to portray himself as the saviour of citizens’ lives, the father of the *pax Romana*, Rome’s victorious freedom fighter against miscreants like Antony. Thus from the very opening of the *Res Gestae*, Augustus’ language is that of the deliverer and not the usurper:

‘At the age of nineteen, on my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an army by means of which I restored liberty to the republic, which had been oppressed by the tyranny of a faction.’⁴⁴

However, this work of Augustus’ was not the beginning of his anti-Antonian propaganda. As early as 36 B.C., Octavian (as he was then still known) consistently contrasted his defence of the Roman homeland and its values ‘with the corrupt Orientalism to which he argued that Antony was succumbing in his relationship with his Egyptian mistress, Cleopatra.’⁴⁵ Offence and suspicion caused by Antony’s liaison with Cleopatra had led to increasing strain on the relationship between Octavian and Antony. In 40 B.C., Antony had married Octavia (sister to Octavian), and his simultaneous relationship with the Ptolemaic queen, ‘a descendant of formidable queens who had more ambitious ideas than any Roman matron was unacceptable not only to Octavian, whose family was insulted, but to conservative Roman opinion in general. Caesar’s affair with her had passed muster, because it was he who remained in control. But people suspected that the more easy-going Antony, by whom she had two boys and a girl, was under her thumb – and Octavian spread the word that this was so.’⁴⁶

By 33 B.C., the virulence of the two leaders climaxed in the exchange of vicious propaganda attacks: Antony formally divorced Octavia, and Octavian published what was alleged to have been Antony’s will, but which contained evidence damning his relationship with Cleopatra in Roman opinion.

⁴⁴ Aug. *RG* 1 (Shipley).

⁴⁵ Shotter (1991:22).

⁴⁶ Grant (1978:201).

Previously, when the scandal of Octavian's own marriage to the pregnant Livia Drusilla threatened his public image, the future *Princeps* had cleverly responded by 'throwing the weight of his invective against Antony's relationship with Cleopatra; he was able to point out not only the inherent undesirability of such a union, but also the fact that its chief victim was Antony's wife and his sister, Octavia. ...Octavian [became] the champion of Republicans and the defender of patriotism, nationalism and traditional respectability.'⁴⁷

Indeed, this drawn-out propaganda war between Antony and Octavian – the two men vying for sole leadership of Rome – requires further scrutiny. With Caesar having died in 44 B.C., a power vacuum was opened – one which lasted for thirteen years and in which time a silent war through art, architecture, public speech and written invective was waged between the two men. From the moment his adoptive father had died, Octavian had made it clear that he was ambitious and would settle for nothing less than those same honours and positions Caesar had held in his life – positions to which Octavian believed he was entitled.⁴⁸ From 44 B.C. until after even Actium, Octavian carefully employed a spectrum of political, psychological and religious images to justify to the people their need for him as the saviour of Rome. Having first changed his name to C. Caesar (omitting his *cognomen*, Octavianus), he then promulgated the deification of his late foster-father, Julius Caesar, using in coins the symbol of the comet (the *sidus Iulium*) as the symbol of this deification. When, in 44 B.C., he staged the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris* and a comet appeared in the sky, Octavian cleverly capitalized on this appearance to be a sign of Caesar's apotheosis. His image as the divine son, the *divi filius*, was conceived and milked for all its religious and emotional value.⁴⁹ Coins played an important part in Octavian's propaganda campaign too. Besides the image of the star, other images which reflected Julius Caesar's claim of divine ancestry for the Julian *gens* (most obviously Venus and Aeneas, in contrast to which Mark Antony had nothing of equal grandeur to compare)⁵⁰ were also used to grace the coins minted in this same period, and when Octavian's face appeared on coins,

⁴⁷ Shotter (1991:22-23).

⁴⁸ Cic. *Att.* 16.15.3.

⁴⁹ Zanker (1988:34).

⁵⁰ This tendency to affiliate oneself to particular gods was by no means a new or uncommon tool of propaganda. In the years after Caesar's death, Sextus Pompey had emerged as the leader of a powerful naval force. Having obtained early victories over Octavian, he declared (like his father, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, before) that he was the special protégé of Neptune. His deliberate assimilation to this god resulted in all marine imagery being consequently associated with him in this period, and from 42 B.C., he had coins minted with Neptune and Scylla upon them (Zanker 1988:39-40).

he made sure that it bore a strong resemblance to his late foster-father.

The erection of statues across Italy further aided Octavian in his crusade of creating a powerful and popular image. Ironically, those statues raised in Rome of Octavian during this struggle period were strongly reminiscent of Hellenistic ruler portraits, devoid of any reminders of the traditions of the Republic.⁵¹ Zanker (1988:42) offers that ‘the same man who, in 36 B.C., in a speech to the Senate, promised the restoration of the state, had himself commemorated in these statues like one of the “saviours” of the Greek East.’ The statues stressed the might of the *divi filius*, but proved problematic since Octavian was no Hellenistic ruler, and his charges against Antony, of un-Roman orientalism, bore uncomfortable parallels.

Perhaps the most effective borrowing in this propaganda war between Octavian and Antony was from mythology, as both tried to compete with one another through deliberate assimilations to various gods and mythological figures. In time, both men seemed to fall somewhat under the spell of their chosen heroes (Antony, under Dionysus, and Octavian, under Apollo), whose imagery not only shaped their own views of themselves but began to influence their behaviour as each attached hopes of deliverance to their respective gods. The uncertainty of the political climate of Rome proved fertile ground for prophecies of a new and blessed era, and any ‘serious contender for power had somehow to deal with these expectations of salvation and proclaim himself the saviour.’⁵² While Antony’s seemingly carefree and hedonistic lifestyle may have offered hope, especially to the elegists, his assimilation to Dionysus, which conflicted with old Roman traditions, ultimately proved fatal for his image in Rome.

Antony’s association with Heracles was reflected in coins minted with images of his mythological ancestor,⁵³ but in time this association gave way to his assimilation to Dionysus, which his playboy nature ideally suited. On the other hand, Octavian’s identification as the *divi filius* was not a sustainable association, for while he had inherited much of the charisma and support of Caesar, this image was also associated with years of bloody civil war. And so as Antony chose as his protector,

⁵¹ Cleopatra, Octavian’s adversary at Actium, was herself a descendant of Hellenistic rulers, and as such she was displayed in some statues in a Hellenistic style (see Chapter 4 of this dissertation).

⁵² Zanker (1988:44).

⁵³ Plut. *Ant.* 4.

Dionysus, Octavian chose to be, for his new role, the protégé of Apollo. Ironically, the battle cry which came from both opposing sides at Philippi in 42 B.C., was “Apollo,” and in Roman minds, the outcome of the battle showed whose side the god was on.⁵⁴ As Antony was embraced in Greece as the New Dionysus, Octavian not only appeared more and more frequently in public meetings wearing the laurel wreath of Apollo, but he also built the new temple of Apollo right next to his house on the Palatine hill and linked both buildings with a ramp.

In time, and as Octavian’s struggle with Mark Antony gained in momentum and animosity, Apollo seemed to be an increasingly more suitable patron-god, as the Octavian-Apollo assimilation became the very antithesis of that represented by the Antony-Dionysus identification. Where Apollo represented discipline and morality, Dionysus represented abandon and licentiousness. Where Apollo stood for purification and the punishment of excess, Dionysus represented immorality and decadence. As such, Octavian ‘could well represent Italy’s position during the civil war with Antony with the motto “Italy versus the Orient with its *luxuria*, against Egypt with its animal-headed gods and its decadence.”’⁵⁵ Finally, when Actium decided the victor of the thirteen years’ struggle, Octavian conveniently promoted Apollo as the god of peace and reconciliation.

In his political shrewdness, Octavian ensured that his identification with Apollo should get maximum publicity and exposure in the months leading up to Actium. Zanker (1988:53) argues that ‘Apollo offered a much greater range of possibilities than Dionysus, who dictated a rather narrow and one-sided persona for Antony, especially in the cultural climate of Alexandria. And there was room for other gods’ help beside that of Apollo and Diana. Neptune had obviously abandoned Sextus Pompey at Nauchoi and gone over to Octavian’s side, and his ancestress Venus, Mars the avenger, Mercury, and Jupiter himself were all arrayed behind the *dux Italiae* when it came down to the final confrontation. At least this was the message of the handsome silver denarii that Octavian began to mint even before Actium and used to pay his troops.’ On these denarii, Octavian promoted himself as ‘*Caesar Divi Filius*’ and associated himself with the goddesses *Pax* (peace being the goal of each battle), Venus (his protectress) and *Victoria* (to prefigure his imminent victory). Never before in Rome’s history had such beautiful coins been minted, but here the aesthetics most definitely served

⁵⁴ Zanker (1988:49).

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 52.

a political end.⁵⁶ The largeness of these coins, the relative rareness of these images in this period, the visual simplicity and quality of their design, and their circulation all over the western half of the Roman Empire on the eve of Actium meant that they undoubtedly captivated widespread attention.⁵⁷

Antony's approach to the propaganda battle preceding Actium was seemingly more casual and ill-devised than Octavian's. Not only did he not seem to care what impact his use of Dionysiac symbols would have on the Romans, but he also resorted to stale and uninventive measures to attack Octavian. He accused him with the over-used charges of cowardice in battle and of breaking his word, while Octavian's supporters made use of age-old slogans (used formerly to attack those devotees of the Dionysiac mysteries) to condemn Antony's oriental luxury. Octavian's followers protested in pamphlets and speeches that Antony had become godless, enslaved to Cleopatra, and that since Antony was no longer a Roman, their impending showdown would be no civil war.⁵⁸

In a work no longer extant, Antony attempted to refute the charges brought against him, publishing his work, *De ebrietate sua* (*On His Own Drunkenness*). This work probably delighted his supporters in Rome – that community which exulted in the love elegies of Propertius and Tibullus and those who shared in his hedonistic associations with the East, devoting themselves to the life of Hellenistic art and culture.⁵⁹ The appearance of Cleopatra on Antony's coins must have delighted them likewise,⁶⁰ as well as Octavian's supporters who had visual ammunition to aid their own invective against Antony. In an interesting discussion of the effects this propaganda had not only on Antony, but also on the Roman public, Griffin (1985:38) states that 'accusations of every kind of wantonness had always been part of the standard material of Greek oratory, and Roman polemic was no less scandalous. Yet even lies, as a constant atmosphere to live in, have an effect on public morale and in the long run influence behaviour. The accusations made against ...Antony... – accusations of a life of reckless, profligate debauchery – were calculated to arouse in the audience a prurient envy familiar to anyone who opens one of the more vulgar Sunday newspapers. That it was expected by

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* With Rome having been engaged in countless civil wars for more than a century, its people were tired of civil war. Therefore, on the eve of Actium, it was important for Octavian to legitimize, in Roman opinion at least, the need for two *Imperatores* to meet in yet another civil war.

⁵⁹ For a detailed examination of Antony's place in the world of the elegists, see Griffin (1985:32-47).

⁶⁰ See Zanker (1988:62) for a denarius of Antony and Cleopatra, 32 B.C.

competent judges to produce an effect emerges clearly from the war of propaganda between Antony on the one hand, and Cicero and Octavian on the other. It emerges from that episode also that it did have an effect. Not only was Antony obliged to write *On His Own Drunkenness* in self-defence, but his eventual ruin was partly brought about by skilful propaganda against him.’

How much of Octavian’s propaganda against Antony and his luxurious life in Alexandria was based on truth and how much was invention one cannot tell from the extant ancient sources. It is clear that there was certainly a degree of pure fabrication, for Plutarch testifies that, ‘Calvisius was generally believed to have invented most of these accusations.’⁶¹ However, the nature of the picture being presented (of a hedonistic Antony, devoted to a life consumed by sex and alcohol) was most likely at least partly believed by most Romans, and perhaps Antony’s counter-accusations were equally easily swallowed by those who heard them.⁶² However, Octavian’s propaganda against Antony ‘went one step further and with brilliant success represented Antony as enslaved and bewitched by Cleopatra; officially, he was reduced to her degraded appendage. Not only was war declared on her, not on him, but his conduct was systematically interpreted as that of an enslaved sensualist throwing away military glory and self-respect for her. Thus he remained inactive during the Perusine War because she ‘carried him off to Alexandria,’⁶³ and ‘gave the orders;’⁶⁴ he threw up the Parthian campaign ‘through his own fault, since in his eagerness to return to Cleopatra he would not spend the winter in Armenia;’⁶⁵ and in the end he flung away everything for her at Actium, ‘being dragged along by the woman as if he had become incorporate with her and must go where she did.’⁶⁶ For each one of these charges Plutarch relied on the propaganda of Octavian.

Even styles of rhetoric were attacked in this mud-slinging campaign between Antony and Octavian. The former was ridiculed for his Asiatic style popular in the Greek east,⁶⁷ and criticized by Octavian’s supporters as reflecting a complete lack of aesthetics.⁶⁸ Zanker (1988:64-65) explains that while the

⁶¹ *Ant.* 59.1.; Calvisius being a friend of Octavian (*Plut. Ant.* 58).

⁶² *ibid.*, 55.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁴ *App.* 5.9.

⁶⁵ *Livy Per.* 130 (Schlesinger).

⁶⁶ *Plut. Ant.* 66; Griffin (1985:41).

⁶⁷ *Suet. Aug.* 86.2.

⁶⁸ Zanker (1988:64).

Asiatic style and the Atticizing style (to which Octavian subscribed) had long been topics of debate in Rome, now the debate reflected a political question which was to be decided by Actium. For once Antony had been defeated, forms of Hellenistic art, with their emphases on the emotive, became out-of-date and 'Asiatic' rhetoric 'now epitomised the decadence and debauchery of the East, to which Antony had fallen victim. ...[Furthermore], it is significant that Dionysus is not among the many divinities with whom Roman emperors would later identify themselves, although he was the favourite of Hellenistic rulers. The association was ruled out by the role it played in the struggle with [Mark] Antony.'⁶⁹

Finally, Octavian made use even of architecture to display his power and virtue over what he portrayed to be Antony's weakness and immorality. While the temple of Apollo on the Palatine was instrumental in reinforcing Octavian's affiliation with the archer god, it was his Mausoleum which made the biggest statement. It is clear that the thirty-year old Octavian had no practical need to erect this funereal structure before he had even won sole power. Is it possible that the building of this monument in Rome coincided, and was made deliberately to contrast, with Antony's illegally-publicized desire to be buried in Alexandria, next to Cleopatra?⁷⁰ The Mausoleum was first and foremost a demonstration of Octavian's power, resembling a triumphal monument in its sheer size – eighty-seven metres wide and nearly forty metres high.⁷¹ Octavian's statement of power was finally justified after Actium, for as in death Antony and Cleopatra shared a tomb in Alexandria, Octavian's Mausoleum was erected in Rome.

Thus it was through this prolonged propaganda campaign against Antony, and reinforced in his later and supposedly apologetic (if Yavetz is correct) and justification-seeking autobiography, that Octavian-Augustus succeeded in painting Antony as little short of an Oriental despot, and then encouraged Romans to see the battle of Actium (in which Octavian's personal performance was not too distinguished) as the climax of a crusade, at which Octavian appeared as Rome's personal saviour. Actium was, through the efforts of Octavian's propaganda, carefully portrayed as a great national crusade to defend Rome's integrity against Oriental barbarism and corruption, and not (as

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁰ See Plut. *Ant.* 58 for a description of the reading of Antony's will in the Senate.

⁷¹ Zanker (1988:75-76).

seems to have been the case in reality) a civil war between two rivals for political supremacy.⁷² In all his efforts to attract his countrymen to the lifestyle that Dionysus represented, Antony (thanks largely to the efforts of Octavian) failed. Indeed, ‘Antony’s tragedy was a result of the unbridgeable gulf between the traditional Roman character and the Hellenistic sense of *joie de vivre*,’⁷³ and Octavian’s victory had come through his very efforts to define that continuum with Antony, Dionysus, and the ills of the East on one end and he, Apollo, and the glory of Rome on the other.

Having examined in some length the details of this propaganda war, it now remains to be seen how Octavian’s propaganda influenced and shaped Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*.

When the carefully retouched version of events supplied by Augustus (and likewise by Cicero in his *Philippics*) suited the grander moral purpose of Plutarch’s narration, then they would be included or at least referred to in *Antony*. One such example is Plutarch’s narration of Antony’s gift of territory to Cleopatra, in which it sounds as though Antony tosses away Rome’s empire without too much thought or concern.⁷⁴ Although Dio Cassius agrees with this interpretation,⁷⁵ it has already been shown that this is probably the by-product of Octavian’s propaganda. However, when it suits Plutarch’s purposes to exaggerate the contrast between Antony and his enemies by using Octavian’s propaganda to portray a weakened Antony, and when a different moral lesson can be drawn, Plutarch is equally ready to condemn.

Two other important sources in Plutarch’s *Life of Antony* – who were both initially Antonian supporters – are C. Asinius Pollio and Q. Dellius. The former, a principle source of both Appian and Dio Cassius, and an Antonian until perhaps 40 B.C.,⁷⁶ wrote an influential history of the Civil Wars, and his account was probably less hostile to Antony than most other sources of the same period.⁷⁷ His work was well supplemented by that of Dellius, the man who arranged the meeting between

⁷² Shotter (1991:23-25).

⁷³ Zanker (1988:62).

⁷⁴ *Ant.* 36.3-4.

⁷⁵ 49.32.

⁷⁶ Pelling (1988:27).

⁷⁷ Grant (1972:239) records that ‘this work... does not survive at all except in a number of facts and opinions paraded by later writers. But, even so, this tradition forms a valuable corrective to the generally pro-Augustan nature of our evidence.’

Antony and Cleopatra at Tarsus,⁷⁸ and who, having written about Antony after his own defection from Antony to Octavian, was at times in his own writings critical of the couple.

Rich and outlandish detail apparent throughout Plutarch's *Life of Antony* seems to have been drawn from eyewitness accounts of the events described in the narrative,⁷⁹ indigenous Alexandrian sources and local traditions,⁸⁰ as well as from those in Cleopatra's service – such as her physician, Olympus.⁸¹

Finally, Plutarch would also have drawn upon the traditions he had grown up with, such as his tale of the wagers in *Antony* 33. Similarly, his own family traditions passed down to him orally through his great-grandfather, Nicharchus, and grandfather, Lamprias,⁸² are also relied upon to supplement his narrative.⁸³

⁷⁸ *Ant.* 25.3.

⁷⁹ 77.3.

⁸⁰ These may have contributed to the construction of Cleopatra's death in Plutarch's narrative.

⁸¹ 82.3-4.

⁸² Grant (1972:242).

⁸³ *Ant.* 28.3-12.

1.5. Antony as constructed by Plutarch

Plutarch begins his *Life of Antony* by illuminating both the noble qualities of Antony and the defects of his character, both of which Plutarch exaggerates to sharpen the contrast between them, the latter of which, previously concealed beneath an attractive and Herculean veneer,⁸⁴ time was to illuminate in fatal abundance. In this vein Plutarch constructs for the reader the man who was to become the lover and husband of Cleopatra. Within the opening paragraphs of *Antony*, the audience is introduced to the strong characteristics of this hero: submissiveness, extravagance and excess,⁸⁵ dashing leadership,⁸⁶ generosity, and intense loyalty⁸⁷ – the very character traits which were to endear him to his soldiers, friends and Cleopatra, and which, when allowed or encouraged to grow under the influence of the Ptolemaic queen, combined, in Plutarch's view at least, to be the same flaws which would expose his vulnerability and innate weaknesses.

Pelling (1988:13) describes how these paradoxes are manifested in Antony. While Antony's guileless warmth, simple congeniality and impressionability win him the loyalty of his soldiers,⁸⁸ they leave him stricken when confronted with Cleopatra's flattery. His Herculean qualities ('the things which seemed vulgar to the others – his excessive arrogance, his scoffing speech, his drinking in public, and his sitting down with his men as they ate, and eating while standing around the table where the soldiers ate – the type of behaviour which began to create in his troops admiration and a yearning to be with him'),⁸⁹ were those same traits which, according to Plutarch, directed Cleopatra's passions

⁸⁴ *Ant.* 4.2-3: 'There was also an ancient tradition that the Antonians were Heracleidae, since they descended from Anton, a son of Heracles, and Antony thought that this tradition was reflected in his own physique. He cultivated the legend in his clothing, for always, if he was to be seen by a crowd, he belted his undergarment around the upper part of his thigh, kept a large sword with him, and wore a heavy cloak.'

⁸⁵ 2.4-8.

⁸⁶ 3.2-11.

⁸⁷ 3.10-11.

⁸⁸ Reasons which inspired the devotion of Antony's men were 'his noble birth, the power of his speech, his frankness, his generosity which amounted to munificence, and his coarse jesting in the company of his friends and those he conversed with' (*Ant.* 43.5).

⁸⁹ *Plut. Ant.* 4.4-5. While much of this description reflects stereotypical traits, Plutarch portrays Antony's camaraderie not as a cliché of the general who wishes to win over the support of his troops, but as a genuine character trait of Antony's. In one particular battle in the Parthian War in which three thousand of Antony's men were apparently killed, 'Antony, walking around [the camp] examined the other wounded men, and empathizing with them and sharing with them in their suffering brought tears to his eyes... For on the whole, no other commander of that age ever seemed to gather together an army more glorious... But most of all was the respect, the obedience with goodwill which they showed towards him, their general...' (43.2-4).

towards Antony and which reduced him to a naive quasi-puppet when faced with her desire to enchant and conquer him through, among other means, the ‘cleverness and trickery in her conversation.’⁹⁰ Plutarch writes that ‘Cleopatra placed her hope most of all in her physical presence, and in her enchantment and love-charms,’⁹¹ and that ‘she had already perceived from earlier examples how she had seduced Julius Caesar and Gnaeus, the son of Pompey, and she anticipated bringing Antony under her yoke of power with even greater ease.’⁹² Plutarch would have his audience believe that time was to prove the guileless Antony was no match for the flattery and wiles of Cleopatra.

As each passing year brought the two lovers and Actium irrevocably closer, Antony succumbed like a musical instrument in its player’s arms, the passive strings of which Cleopatra plucked to make the melody she chose to hear. It is in this type of responsive behaviour and the change it brings in Antony’s own character, once he has fallen under the spell and influence of Cleopatra, that the audience gradually constructs its own understanding of the character of the Egyptian queen herself. Indeed, Plutarch is slow in defining *his* Cleopatra for the audience; instead, by delaying the turning of the full light of his narrative onto Cleopatra following the death of Antony, he encourages one’s own construction of her in response to Antony’s behaviour. For the last ten chapters of the *Life* are Cleopatra’s, and while it is not unusual for Plutarch to continue his narration following the point of death of his hero, in no other *Life* does he do so as elaborately as this.

Similarly, the excesses and generosity of Antony which endear him to his soldiers prove to be reputation-destroying when they are shared with Cleopatra.⁹³ Having arrived in Syria and having been united with Cleopatra shortly preceding the Parthian War, Antony, ‘like the ill-trained and undisciplined animal,’⁹⁴ and against his better judgement, shows his munificence by showering upon

⁹⁰ *Ant.* 25.3: ‘...τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις δεινότητα καὶ πανουργίαν...’ The Greek text of Plutarch’s *Life of Antony* is from Pelling (1988).

⁹¹ *ibid.*, 25.6: ‘...τὰς δὲ πλείστας ἐν ἑαυτῇ καὶ τοῖς περὶ αὐτὴν μαγγανεύμασι καὶ φίλτροις ἐλπίδας θεμένη παρεγένετο.’

⁹² *ibid.*, 25.4. For further insight into Cleopatra’s relationship with Julius Caesar, see *Plut. Caes.* 48.3-49.

⁹³ *Ant.* 8.4-5.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 36.2: ‘ὥσπερ ...τὸ δυσπειθὲς καὶ ἀκόλαστον...’ Pelling (1988:217) explains that this analogy is borrowed from Plato’s *Phaedrus* 254a, in which Plato compares the soul to a chariot-team. This metaphor is extremely effective in describing the moral dimension to Antony’s sexual attraction to Cleopatra and his seeming powerlessness to resist her: ‘at the sight of a lovely boy, the one horse – the higher part of the soul – reacts with self-control and is obedient ...to the reins; the other ...ignores whips and restraints, fights against his driver and his yokefellow, and hurls

the queen the dominions of Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, a portion of Judea, and a large part of Cilicia. Plutarch writes that the giving of these territories aroused deep resentment among the Romans: indeed, while his generosity (which in Rome, and when displayed to his Roman friends had won him the support and friendship of men of influence) may well have shocked Roman opinion, nothing except Octavian propaganda confirms that Romans did truly find this eastern settlement so appalling.⁹⁵ However, Plutarch chooses to highlight Antony's behaviour in a negative light so as to contrast the generous attitudes and behaviour of his virtuous, paradigm-of-a-Roman wife, Octavia,⁹⁶ with his own excessive generosity to Cleopatra, and so as to reinforce the perception of Roman disgust at Antony's oriental excesses. Plutarch describes one of many examples of Antony's perceived shameful integration of oriental and Roman practices in *Antony* 50.7. For when Antony deviously captures Artavasdes during his second invasion of Armenia, and returns to Alexandria, he stages a triumph, which grieves the Romans because 'it was felt that he was celebrating the honourable and solemn rites of his own country for the benefit of the Egyptians and for the sake of Cleopatra.'⁹⁷ Plutarch condemns Cleopatra's 'de-Romanizing' influence on Antony, returning his focus to the dominant theme of his narrative – the brilliant soldier infatuated and destroyed by love.⁹⁸ In his *Roman History*, Dio Cassius reinforced this perception, adding that Antony's adoption of Egyptian practices and titles 'gave the impression that [Cleopatra] had laid him under some spell and deprived him of his wits.'⁹⁹

Perhaps the most notorious example of Antony's generosity perceived to have perverted all Roman

himself at the boy for sexual fulfilment. The turbulent effects of ἔρωϛ and the struggle of higher and lower elements are both apposite for [Antony].'

⁹⁵ Pelling (1988:217). Dio Cassius (49.32) similarly expresses this view but Pelling attributes this also to Octavian's propaganda. Syme (1939:260-61) offers a more credible interpretation of Antony's gift-giving: Egypt – the last and richest of Alexander's kingdoms – was, to Rome, 'a loss if destroyed, a risk to annex, a problem to govern. Antonius resolved to augment the territories of Egypt.' He consequently gave Cleopatra these eastern territories. He writes, 'these grants did not seem to have excited alarm or criticism at Rome: only later did they become a sore point and pretext for defamation.' Pelling (1988:217) adds that 'Cleopatra's gifts were only a part of the reorganisation of the East, which began to fall into a number of large client kingdoms, each ruled by a reliable priest... It was a wise policy, and Antony chose his men well.' See this dissertation, 1.4., for a discussion of the propaganda campaign of Octavian against Antony.

⁹⁶ *Ant.* 35. Octavia is traditionally given the credit for the amicable outcome of the conference of Tarentum, described in *Ant.* 35. By juxtaposing Cleopatra and Octavia together in the narrative (and again at 54.4-9), Plutarch contrasts the East and Rome, and Antony's extravagance with Roman reservation and avoidance of extreme excess.

⁹⁷ Scott-Kilvert (1965:318).

⁹⁸ Pelling (1988:240).

⁹⁹ 50.5 (Scott-Kilvert).

interests and favoured the ways of the East, is seen in his ‘donations of Alexandria,’ the consequences of which led to the outbreak of the propaganda war between the two Roman *Imperatores*, Antony and Octavian. Plutarch writes,

‘For having filled the [Alexandrian] γυμνάσιον with a mob of people, Antony placed on a silver step two golden thrones – one for himself and one for Cleopatra – and two humbler thrones for his children. First, he declared Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya and Coele Syria, with Caesarion to rule with her... Then he proclaimed his sons from Cleopatra King of Kings. To Alexander he distributed Armenia, Media and the land of the Parthians (as soon as it was conquered); and to Ptolemy – Phoenicia, Syria and Cilicia. At the same time, he brought forward his sons: Alexander in a Median garment crowned with a tiara, and Ptolemy in boots, a short, military cloak, and a broad-brimmed, Macedonian hat adorned with a diadem. For this was the attire worn by the descendant kings of Alexander [the Great], and the former worn by the Medes and Armenians. When the children had embraced their parents, one was surrounded by an Armenian bodyguard, and the other, by a Macedonian. Cleopatra, then and at another public occasion, brought out and received the robe sacred to Isis, and took the title of New Isis.’¹⁰⁰

Pelling (1988:249) contends that both Dio Cassius (49.41) and Plutarch exaggerate this event, their own accounts probably coloured by Octavian’s propaganda which focussed on this affair. He adds that while Antony probably hoped to create ‘some new blend of Roman and oriental ceremonial’, the donations in reality made very little difference to the Roman administration since most of the territories publicly donated to Cleopatra were hers already.¹⁰¹ Instead, these gifts were simply gestures and Antony made no move to enthrone himself publicly as Cleopatra’s co-regent of Egypt.

Dio Cassius, who was so ready to paint Octavian favourably and Antony negatively, nevertheless offers the reader further insight into the manner in which Antony’s Eastern compulsions and practices offended Romans so gravely:

¹⁰⁰ *Ant.* 54.6-9.

¹⁰¹ Local princes of these territories were not deposed: Alexander Helios’ acquisition of Media rested on his future as the son-in-law of Artavasdes; Parthia wasn’t Antony’s to give; and Syria, although seemingly a new gift to Cleopatra, continued to have a Roman proconsul (Pelling 1988:249-50).

‘Who would not weep when he sees and hears what Antony has become? This man has twice been consul and many times *Imperator*. He was appointed... to take charge of the affairs of state and entrusted with the government of many cities and the command of many legions. Now he has abandoned his whole ancestral way of life, has embraced alien and barbaric customs, has ceased to honour us, his fellow-countrymen, or our laws, or his fathers’ gods. Instead, he makes obeisance to that creature as if she were an Isis or a Selene, names her children Sun and Moon, and finally adopts for himself the title of Osiris or Dionysus.’¹⁰²

In this way, then, Dio Cassius draws the reader’s attention to the belief that where once Antony’s philhellenism might have been attractive (most of all to the Greek Plutarch), his eastern preoccupations were later to expose him to the disastrous charge of hating Rome.¹⁰³

In a similar vein, the reader witnesses again how through Plutarch’s gradual characterization of Antony in the opening chapters of this *Life*, Plutarch provides the framework of character that will be the source not only of Antony’s rise to power and greatness, but also (under the sensual spell of Cleopatra) the source of his destruction.

However, Plutarch’s interest in Antony’s (or Cleopatra’s) character is not to be limited to so simple a paradox. As Cleopatra enters the narrative in person,¹⁰⁴ Plutarch’s psychological interest in his hero and in the human source of his hero’s downfall grow. His narrative is careful in its juxtaposition of events and descriptions. It is no accident, therefore, that Plutarch records Antony’s relations with Octavia directly preceding or following his with Cleopatra:¹⁰⁵ he wishes to contrast the two women so as to highlight not only the tensions between Roman and Eastern influences on Antony, but also the mental torment within Antony, the outcome of which will dictate which woman he shall choose; which set of values he will settle for; and what context will seal his fate. While Appian (5.76) represents Antony as a man torn by his love for both women,¹⁰⁶ Plutarch makes Antony’s choice

¹⁰² Dio Cass. 50.25.2-4 (Scott-Kilvert).

¹⁰³ Pelling (1988:13). Plut. *Ant.* 54.5-6 expands such a charge: ‘He was hated also because of the distribution [of the provinces], done for his children in Alexandria as a pompous, extravagant and Roman-hating [μισορρώματιον] gesture.’

¹⁰⁴ *Ant.* 24.

¹⁰⁵ 35-36; 53; 54.1-5; 57.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Having made these dispositions, he spent the winter at Athens with Octavia just as he had spent the previous one at Alexandria with Cleopatra... He took his meals in the Greek fashion, passed his leisure time with

easier. While he portrays the character and virtue of Octavia in a most impressive light, he never constructs a reality in which Antony truly loves her. If Antony's choice was Octavia, the audience imagines, it would only have been so as to avoid the hatred of Roman public opinion, the likes of which glorified the benevolent Octavia. When Antony snubs Octavia by choosing Cleopatra over her, Octavia remains loyal to Antony and 'because of these things, she harmed [Antony's reputation], for he was hated for wronging such a wife.'¹⁰⁷ Yet while he chooses Cleopatra (and all that this union shall stand for and demand of him), he does so only after Cleopatra's flatterers (and her own manipulative wiles) have convinced him that should he not choose Cleopatra, she would surely kill herself: 'and so finally, they so melted and unmanned the man, that he began to fear Cleopatra would take her own life [if he left her].'¹⁰⁸

However, before accepting Plutarch's representations as reality, one needs to take into account the context of the opposing propaganda campaigns of Antony and Octavian, which for narrative purposes certainly added spice to his construction of Antony's, Octavian's and Cleopatra's characters. Unlike so many imperial historians and biographers (such as Dio Cassius), Plutarch seems not to have been constricted and dictated to by the historical and political milieu surrounding him, although he was willing to employ any political propaganda which might suit his moral purposes best. It is this patriotic propaganda (of Antony's rival, Octavian, and the Republican, Cicero),¹⁰⁹ using as its ammunition Antony's policy in the East and his relationship with Cleopatra, and against which the frank and chivalrous Antony was so vulnerable,¹¹⁰ which was to inflict multiple and irreparable damage to that memory of Antony which has survived until the present. In this account of Antony's rejection of Octavia for Cleopatra, Plutarch employs Octavian's propaganda, which in all likelihood sought to exploit his sister's treatment by Antony as a motive and justification for war. Pelling (1988:243-248) adds that much of Plutarch's account of this event was most likely fictional. Indeed, it was unlikely that Cleopatra was even present when Octavia arrived in Athens, and the description of Cleopatra's desperate and undignified manipulation of Antony to prevent him from

Greeks, and enjoyed their festivals in company with Octavia, with whom he was very much in love...' (White).

¹⁰⁷ *Ant.* 54.5. This can also be interpreted as, '...for he was hated for wronging such a woman [γυναῖκα].'

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 53.11.

¹⁰⁹ In spite of his growing power and popularity in the wake of Philippi, and despite his obvious successes as both a politician and general, Antony (and his decadent taste for living) was attacked by Cicero in a series of biting speeches, the *Philippics*. Not-too-incidentally, then, it was largely with Cicero's encouragement that Octavian gradually emerged as Antony's principal rival.

¹¹⁰ Syme (1939:104).

leaving her is, in Pelling's opinion, imagined. Instead, the consequences and events stemming from this period were rooted rather in Octavian's decisions, not Antony's. Octavian probably saw Antony's order to Octavia to return to Rome as an opportunity to be exploited in his propaganda, and Plutarch was happy to employ Octavian's chosen interpretation of these events since it well suited his narrative and moral purposes. Plutarch uses this vital decision of Antony's in 35 B.C. as the critical catalyst for the war which is to follow, and Octavian (with some added imaginative fabrication on Plutarch's part) provides a perfect justification for it – one which adds a juicy dimension of scheming wiliness to Cleopatra's character. Nevertheless, despite all this, Plutarch was primarily a man interested in Roman heroes and anti-heroes, not in the flattery of bygone emperors or well-versed orators, and thus when he adopts Octavian's propaganda as his narrative, it is for moral and artistic purposes only.¹¹¹

As Plutarch's psychological interest in his characters deepens and mutates through the course of this *Life*, so should his readers anticipate the painting of a colourful canvas of human character, as opposed to a narrative of well-documented historical events. Emphasis on personal details, which condenses the *Life's* historical narrative, also reflects Plutarch's minimal interest in history as a chosen genre for recording the life of Antony. As his narrative unfolds, the reader realizes that the political struggle between Octavian and Plutarch's subject is becoming less related to any wider context, focussing more on the personal attributes and cornerstones of each individual's moral character.¹¹² The crude and explicit praise that Plutarch accords each character at the start of *Antony* evaporates by the later stages, so that by the death of Cleopatra, the reader has moved to a privileged position of significant insight into human frailty.¹¹³

However, a crucial theme in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, which has already been highlighted in passages of Dio Cassius and Plutarch referred to previously in this chapter,¹¹⁴ and which demands careful scrutiny, is Plutarch's delicate assimilation of Antony to Dionysus and Cleopatra to Isis.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Jones, C. P. (1971:107) reinforces this perception, stating that 'the freedom with which Plutarch expresses his opinions in the *Lives*, untrammelled by requirements of tact, disproves the theory of a diplomatic purpose.'

¹¹² Pelling (1988:12).

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 16.

¹¹⁴ See pages 26-27 of this dissertation.

¹¹⁵ Although Osiris is traditionally Isis' consort, Herodotus (2.42.2) notes that Osiris became associated with and eventually assimilated to Dionysus. Diodorus Siculus in his *Bibliothèque* (1.11.3) supports this view, stating, 'and of the ancient Greek writers of mythology some give to Osiris the name Dionysus', and, later, 'Osiris translated is

Back in Rome, Antony had flaunted his Herculean dress and manner,¹¹⁶ and by 43-42 B.C., Antony's coins were bearing a motif associated with both Heracles and Dionysus – the lion.¹¹⁷ However, by 41 B.C., while in Ephesus, Antony continued to display his hedonist indulgences and demonstrative generosity, revelling in a life of leisure and squander, surrounded by women dressed as Bacchantes, men as satyrs, and 'such another company of Asiatic revellers' and buffoons,¹¹⁸ and here he acquired the title of Dionysus.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Plutarch will have his reader believe that from Antony's first recorded meeting with Cleopatra at Tarsus, his mythological identification as Antony-Dionysus with Cleopatra-Isis (and subsequent unification in marriage) was designed, almost as if by fate, rather than choice.¹²⁰ For when Cleopatra sailed up the river Cydnus in her exquisite barge, she was dressed like Venus,¹²¹ 'her waiting-maidens were attired as the most beautiful of the Nereids and Graces... When the crowds streamed out through the market-place, finally Antony himself was left sitting on his throne, alone, and a certain rumour spread on every side that Aphrodite would revel with Bacchus for the goodwill of Asia.'¹²² Furthermore, Brenk (1992:166), in his revealing study of this divine Osiris-Isis assimilation, explains that 'an important element in the Ptolemaic cult of Isis was music and dance... [and the] musical accompaniment of Cleopatra's sailing into Tarsus might reflect a festival of Isis-Hathor at Alexandria.'¹²³

While Pelling (1988:179) suggests that 'Antony and Cleopatra are complementary characters [who] share a similar temper and magnificence and excite a similar devotion,' it is not simply for this reason that Plutarch describes this meeting with such rich innuendo, assimilating the two to the Egyptian deities (or their Greco-Roman counterparts). The assimilation must be traced throughout the full narrative in order to understand how important a theme it is to become: indeed, one that will unite

Dionysus' (1.13.4). Later, Plutarch collaborated with his predecessors, writing that the Greeks came to identify Osiris with Dionysus (*De Iside et Osiride* 356 A-B).

¹¹⁶ *Ant.* 4.1-3.

¹¹⁷ Pelling (1988:139).

¹¹⁸ *Ant.* 24.2.

¹¹⁹ Plutarch (*Ant.* 24) records that in Greece, Antony caused untold suffering, earning himself the title of not only Dionysus the Benefactor (by those to whom his generosity extended), but also the title of Dionysus the Cruel (by those whom Antony stripped of property, giving it to the flatterers to whose influences he was so vulnerable).

¹²⁰ His entry into Ephesus as Dionysus occurs chronologically before his meeting with Cleopatra and it is as though their individual associations with Dionysus and Isis lead them inevitably towards one another.

¹²¹ Aphrodite (or Venus) was one of the Greek equivalents of Isis. Her assimilation to Isis, then, is synonymous with Venus too.

¹²² *Ant.* 26.3-5.

¹²³ Hathor was the Egyptian equivalent of Venus or Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Antony and Cleopatra inseparably.

Up until this point, Antony has only been associated with Dionysus by others, and does not seem himself to have encouraged this association to any significant degree. However, by 39 B.C., and after the pact of Brundisium, Antony had accepted a distinctively Eastern future and it was perhaps natural that he should adopt a cohesive religious policy espousing this Dionysus-Isis assimilation. Thus, by his return to Greece in 39 B.C., he seems to have begun to insist on a close personal acculturation with Dionysus, and certainly by 31 B.C., Antony, perhaps partly because of his carefree life of excess but principally because of his position as Cleopatra's (the New Isis) consort, had been given the name of the New Dionysus.¹²⁴ By now, Antony's identification (and fusion) with Cleopatra had thus been extended to an exotic mythological association – and one that once again rejected Roman standards, opting instead for those of the East.¹²⁵ But here the reader must at least attempt to distinguish between Plutarch's level of interpretation and reality (if such a separation is possible), questioning to what degree the lovers really encouraged this religio-mythological identification.

Brenk (1992:160) argues that 'Cleopatra seems to have taken her assimilation to Isis very seriously. ...[However], Antony could hardly have been much interested in assimilating himself to Osiris,¹²⁶ except where unavoidable in Egypt. But as consort of the New Isis, as the successor to the pharaohs, and with children called Helios and Selene,¹²⁷ he was more than just a New Dionysus, and fatally exposed to hostile propaganda. ...Overtly – though [Plutarch] magnifies Cleopatra's assimilation to Isis – he never refers to Antony as Osiris. For him Antony is Dionysus, or to a minor extent, Heracles, and without this assimilation the entry into Ephesus and the Battle of Alexandria make no sense.¹²⁸ The Isiac themes are explicitly relegated mostly to the very funereal end of the

¹²⁴ *Ant.* 60. Brenk (1992:161) adds that Auletes, Cleopatra's father, also claimed this title for himself and promoted the cult of Dionysus in Alexandria.

¹²⁵ Pelling (1988:265) also states that the formulation 'new Dionysus' was also used by Cleopatra's father, Ptolemy XII. He adds (1988:180) that while Plutarch himself rejected such divine imitation, his *Life* avoids simplistic praise or condemnation; instead, he wished to underline the magnificence of Antony and Cleopatra since this illumination would add a further dimension to their catastrophic fall.

¹²⁶ See footnote 115; Brenk (1992:163) relies on the ancient sources' assimilation of Dionysus to Osiris, including that Dionysus was considered the Greek form of Osiris. Thus from now on in this dissertation and for purposes of this argument, Antony's assimilation may be interpreted to be to Dionysus-Osiris.

¹²⁷ Their names mean 'Sun' and 'Moon.' Diodorus Siculus describes how Osiris was the sun god and Isis, the moon deity (1.11.3.).

¹²⁸ *Plut. Ant.* 24.4.

Life.' Thus it appears as though Plutarch's identification of the doomed couple with Dionysus-Osiris and Isis is initially for artistic purposes. The analogy works beautifully in Plutarch's eloquent description of Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony at Tarsus, and it will add tragic and theatrical undertones to the final chapters of his *Life* as well. For, towards the close of the narrative, Plutarch's reference to the lovers' 'Order of Inseparable in Death' merely weaves the artistic use of the mythological assimilation in his narrative closer together with his deeper moral purpose.¹²⁹ Here Plutarch's influence is the mythological feast of Isis, the 'Finding of Osiris,' which recalls Isis' discovery of the lifeless and dismembered body of her spouse, Osiris.¹³⁰ In an eerily-similar fashion, the mutilated body of Antony is brought before Cleopatra who weeps over him as he dies in her arms:

'Those who were present say that there was never a more lamentable sight. For he was being hoisted up, having been soiled with blood and in the throes of death, his hands grasping at Cleopatra as he hung helplessly in the air. ...But having received him in this way, and having laid him upon a couch, she tore her robe and spread it over him, and striking and tearing at her breasts with her hands, she plastered her face with the blood [from his wounds].'¹³¹

Nowhere else is Cleopatra's association with Isis stronger than in her death, for in Plutarch's version, her agent of death – the asp or Egyptian cobra – is the very symbol of the divine Isis which Cleopatra historically wore so proudly on her royal diadem. After her husband has died, she majestically prepares herself for death near the temple of her revered goddess.¹³² Her conduct as the inverse Isis who is responsible for her partner's disgrace at Actium has been replaced by her conduct as the Isis who prepares her Osiris for burial, and with her own death beckoning, she retires to her monument

¹²⁹ *Ant.* 71.4: 'Cleopatra and Antony now dissolved their celebrated society of Inimitable Livers [τῶν Ἀμιμητοβίων] and instituted another, which was at least its equal in elegance, luxury, and extravagance, and which they called the Order of the Inseparable in Death [Συναποθανουμένων]. Their friends joined it on the understanding that they would end their lives together, and they set themselves to charm away the days with a succession of exquisite supper parties' (Scott-Kilvert). The theatrical element of this newly-formed group is described by Pelling (1988:295), who explains that the title was probably drawn from *Συναποθνήσκοντες*, 'a play by Diphilus which Plautus adapted as *Commorientes* (Ter. *Ad.* 6-7). But this was a romantic *comedy*, presumably telling of two lovers saved from death in the nick of time. [Antony and Cleopatra] copy the idea more grimly.'

¹³⁰ Brenk (1992:159-60); cf. Herodotus *Histories* 2.52.

¹³¹ *Ant.* 77.3, 5.

¹³² *ibid.*, 74.2; Brenk (1992:162-63).

to prepare to depart from her life to join Antony in death.¹³³ Thus the allusion and assimilation of Antony-Dionysus-Osiris and Cleopatra-Aphrodite-Isis is concluded with great pathos, with the bite of the *uræus*. As Plutarch's *Life* has developed in complexity, with its increased interest in character and allusion, Antony has been transformed from 'the life-giving Dionysus at home in Greek myth, religion and literature, into a chthonic Dionysus or funereal Osiris more acclimatized in Egypt and Isism. ...The final scenes, though almost farcically replaying the Isis-Osiris myth, are tinged with genuine pathos, where mutual love overcomes the sorrows of life and death.'¹³⁴

Incidentally, Plutarch was not alone in assimilating Antony and Cleopatra to Dionysus and Isis. These Egyptian deities, while popular in Egypt and Greece, enjoyed isolated support in Rome as well, and later imperial coins under Claudius and Nero both bear the male deity's head.¹³⁵ In the Greco-Egyptian culture of Egypt, both Isis and Osiris had long been identified with the Hellenistic rulers of Egypt, and for the ancient sources, especially in the light of Augustan propaganda which encouraged this assimilation, the superimposition of Osiris on Antony was tempting, if not natural. Even Dio Cassius, born after Plutarch's death, was to adopt the same assimilation in his tirade against Antony, writing not only that he posed with Cleopatra as Dionysus and Isis,¹³⁶ but also declaring, '[Antony] makes obeisance to that creature as if she were an Isis... and finally adopts for himself the title of Osiris or Dionysus.'¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the assimilation is fulfilled and justified in the poignancy of Cleopatra's death and supposed reunion with Antony in the afterlife. Where once Plutarch had portrayed their relationship as that of pretender-lover (Cleopatra-Antony), by the final death scene, so intricately described by Plutarch, there is no longer any pretence in, or question of authenticity of, Cleopatra's love for Antony.

Actium was a battle which really mattered: Antony might well have won it and had he done so not only might Roman and world history – and religion even – have taken a different course, but Antony would surely have been remembered very differently. Yet as was almost always the case with

¹³³ In his *Histories*, Herodotus (2.59.2-3) assimilates Isis to Demeter, and later writes that the Egyptians believed Demeter (Isis) and Dionysus to be the chief powers in the underworld (2.129). It is apt that Plutarch's Cleopatra is preparing to descend to one of her dominions in death, beside Antony (Dionysus).

¹³⁴ Brenk (1992:164, 171).

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 163.

¹³⁶ Dio Cass. 50.5.3: 'Artists depicted him with Cleopatra, he being represented as Osiris or Dionysus, and she as Selene or Isis' (Scott-Kilvert).

¹³⁷ 50.25.3 (Scott-Kilvert).

Plutarch, whose primary interest was in people, not historical events, he did not see such events within their political context, and thus Actium was not a turning-point in world history, but rather the cataclysm of a man and a woman, lost in, and destroyed by, one another.¹³⁸ For Antony, then, his battle is a mental and moral one, and following his betrayal of his devoted army as a result of his flight from Actium, and after his fleet has deserted him, Antony can only sit at the bow of his ship with his head in his lap, inconsolably aware of his personal humiliation.¹³⁹ But in the end, Antony's hopelessness gives way to grandiose bravado, and on his death-bed he remembers what Roman virtue really is, and he is familiar with his shame.¹⁴⁰ Now, no matter how intertwined his and Cleopatra's fates have become, he dies nobly acknowledging his Roman virtues, and Cleopatra, hers. Though their union will secure for them a shared fate – defeat and death – their life values will ultimately (and ironically) prove to be different. Antony stabs himself in a manner befitting a Roman general, acknowledging his public achievements to be his source of greatness, and consoling Cleopatra with the words that 'he has become the most famous and mighty of men, and now a not-undistinguished Roman, having been conquered by a Roman.'¹⁴¹ Plutarch's Cleopatra says nothing in reply, and when she meets her death it is, by way of contrast, in the royal dress and adornment of an *Egyptian* queen and by the poison of her Egyptian emblem, the *uraeus*. According to Plutarch, then, each dies embracing the national values they have come to acknowledge as being morally and fundamentally most important.

¹³⁸ Pelling (1988:1).

¹³⁹ *Ant.* 76.1.

¹⁴⁰ Pelling (1988:23).

¹⁴¹ *Ant.* 77.7: '...ἐπιφανέστατος ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος καὶ πλεῖστον ἰσχύσας, καὶ νῦν οὐκ ἀγεννῶς Ῥωμαῖος ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίου κρατηθεὶς.'

1.6. Cleopatra as constructed by Plutarch

Plutarch is slow in revealing his interpretation of Cleopatra's character in his *Life of Antony*. Instead, what we learn of Cleopatra in the first twenty-five chapters of the biography is more as a result of Plutarch's reference to her by way of passing, than by his direct focus on her character and personality. In these opening chapters Cleopatra is constructed in relation to that which Antony says or does: her actions and behaviour are merely responses to those of Antony, and her identity is constructed primarily in the context of the political world which is his.

However, when Cleopatra directly enters the narrative on her luxurious barge of gold, rich silks and Eastern perfumes, Plutarch emphasizes that there is no getting away from her powers of captivation and enchantment. The reader, like Antony, is seduced by her inescapable and overpowering presence. Her initial impression on the reader embraces all the senses and it is only later that her image constructed by Plutarch acquires psychological depth.

Indeed, Plutarch's poetic description of this scene in chapter twenty-six, visually as effective as any painting, is extremely sensuous in content, with the reader's senses of sight, smell, touch and hearing boldly engaged:

'She came sailing up the river Cydnus in a barge with a poop of gold, its purple sails billowing in the wind, while her rowers caressed the water with oars of silver which dipped in time to the music of the flute, accompanied by pipes and lutes. Cleopatra herself reclined beneath a canopy of cloth of gold, ...while on either side to complete the picture stood boys costumed as Cupids, who cooled her with their fans. Instead of a crew the barge was lined with the most beautiful of waiting-women, ...and all the while an indescribably rich perfume, exhaled from innumerable censers, was wafted from the vessel to the river-banks' (Scott-Kilvert).

Here Plutarch introduces his audience to Cleopatra: a woman whose confidence is invested in the eroticism of her physical presence, the wealth of her culture and historical heritage, and in her own abilities to seduce even the most powerful men of her political world: first Caesar and now Antony. One cannot but envisage a woman whose powers of seduction and cunning anticipate an easy

conquest of Antony. What her body, charm, intelligence and extravagance cannot contribute to this victory, her wiles and flattery surely will.

For Plutarch records that while Plato spoke of only four types of flattery, Cleopatra ‘knew a thousand;’¹⁴² and the naive and trusting Antony proves time and again to be an easy victim of her charms. In *Antony* 53.5, 7-9, Plutarch depicts the potency of Cleopatra’s opportunist nature, especially when challenged by her beautiful rival, Octavia:

‘But Cleopatra perceived that Octavia was pursuing the same thing as herself – Antony. ...[And so] she pretended to be in love with Antony, and by a strict diet she began to make her body waste away. ...And she took great trouble that she should often be seen crying, and then, as if she wished indeed for her tears to escape [Antony’s] notice, she would be quick to wipe them away and hide them from him. Cleopatra did this while Antony was intending to march from Syria to join the Median king. And her flatterers, hurrying about on her behalf, lambasted Antony for being insensitive, hard-hearted, and for ruining a little woman who was utterly dependent upon him alone.’

Plutarch (*Ant.* 29.1) creates a reality in which Cleopatra’s responsive cajoling and flattery of the egotistical Antony extend to meet his every need to feel accepted and cherished:

‘And irrespective of whether Antony was preoccupied with something serious or playful, Cleopatra, always falling upon some innovative delight or charm, captivated Antony and neither by day nor night did she release him.’

Indeed, by following the development of Cleopatra throughout Plutarch’s narrative, the reader gains a broader understanding not only of Plutarch’s deeper moral quest, but also of Cleopatra’s complex human nature. At first Plutarch presents to the reader a polished but proverbial flatterer whose psychology he deliberately leaves unexplored, for following her first meeting with Antony, Cleopatra is revealed by Plutarch as something of a chameleon, mimicking Antony’s behaviour to secure his

¹⁴² *Ant.* 29.1 (Scott-Kilvert). This is a spicy, free translation of the Greek, which reads ‘πολλαχῆι δὲ διελοῦσα.’

favour.¹⁴³ However in his text, Plutarch, unlike many of the sources which follow, significantly opts not to make his Antony vulnerable to anything so obvious as Cleopatra's beauty and licentiousness.¹⁴⁴ Instead, Plutarch states that it was not Cleopatra's age nor her beauty which were to entice Antony to her (for he claims that her beauty was not of such a superlative degree that it might hold a man's attentions long), but rather her irresistible charm and force of character, which 'pervaded her every word and action, and laid all who associated with her under its spell.'¹⁴⁵ Even Antony's friend, Dellius, on meeting the Ptolemaic Queen, 'when he observed well the natural ability and treachery of her conversation, immediately perceived that such a woman, not having anything to fear from Antony, would be the biggest trap for him.'¹⁴⁶ How better is her charm displayed, than in Plutarch's borrowing of the anecdote of how, on a day's fishing trip, Cleopatra turned Antony's embarrassment at failing to catch fish in the presence of his admirer into a majestic compliment in *Antony* 29? For having seen that he was not hooking any fish, Antony sends a diver to attach to the hook, underwater, fish that had already been caught. Plutarch's Cleopatra, however, never to be outdone in wit by Antony, sees through Antony's proud devices, exclaiming, "Surrender your fishing rod to us the rulers of Pharos and Canopus, Emperor [αὐτόκρατορ]! Your prey is cities and kingdoms and continents."

Plutarch will have the reader believe that not even the beautiful, refined Octavia, 'a quite unbelievable woman [χρῆμα θαυμαστὸν ...γυναικὸς γενομένην],... who besides her beauty possessed such great dignity and a good mind,'¹⁴⁷ could displace Cleopatra from Antony's affections. Octavia is developed throughout his narrative as the foil to Cleopatra, 'all that is best in Roman women, [and] the two marvels of womankind will contend for Antony, and bring him torment.'¹⁴⁸ However in reality, apart from the events he relates in *Antony*, it is unlikely that Plutarch had much evidence of

¹⁴³ *Ant.* 27.4.

¹⁴⁴ Pelling (1988:16).

¹⁴⁵ *Ant.* 27.3 (Scott-Kilvert). If Plutarch's account is correct and the meeting at Tarsus took place in 41 B.C., Antony would have been perhaps ten years older than Cleopatra, who would have been twenty-eight, and which by Roman standards, would have made her something of an old maid.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 25.3.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 31.2-4. But Pelling (1988:202) contends that from several coin portraits surviving of Octavia, she possessed not the type of beauty that Plutarch describes, but rather a 'kindly, rather round, face; "beauty" is an overstatement.' Dio Cassius does not show the same generosity of spirit as does Plutarch in his descriptions of Octavia. He tends to avoid ascribing any beauty to her (50.3.4) and neither does he allude to her glorification by the Roman people for her exemplary virtue and dignity (54.35).

¹⁴⁸ Pelling (1988:202).

the marvellous qualities he ascribes to Octavia, Antony's legitimate (by Roman law) wife. The most likely truth is that Octavia was no serious threat to Plutarch's enigmatic and resourceful Egyptian queen. After all, who could compare to a woman one of whose intellectual faculties included the ability to speak possibly as many as ten languages?¹⁴⁹ Plutarch writes:

'It was a delight merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another, so that in her interviews with barbarians she seldom required an interpreter, but conversed with them quite unaided, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, or Parthians. In fact, she is said to have become familiar with the speech of many other peoples besides, although the rulers of Egypt before her had never even troubled to learn the Egyptian language, and some of them had given up their native Macedonian dialect'¹⁵⁰ (Scott-Kilvert).

The audience's first impression of Plutarch's Cleopatra is that of a shrewd and astutely influential woman; her diplomatic weapons being not beauty, but intelligence, discernment and charm – the perfect means needed to conquer Antony's heart, mind and soul. Captivate him she does, and so completely that while war around him demands his attention and participation, Antony instead allows 'himself to be swept along by Cleopatra to Alexandria,'¹⁵¹ and while he incurs the wrath of his countrymen because of his liaison with Cleopatra, here he feels accepted and liked.¹⁵² Whatever Cleopatra's true nature and designs are, it is clear that Antony's initial passion for the Ptolemaic queen gradually gives way to a complete preoccupation with her that defies all Roman sense of balance and reason.¹⁵³ For when, following his defeat by Octavian, Antony finally receives a false message that Cleopatra is dead, he acknowledges that although Cleopatra has robbed him of his manly courage and dignity, she remains the one reason which could still make him desire to live.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ The seven languages of the ethnic groups listed in the passage cited, with, presumably, Egyptian, Latin and Greek, would have taken Cleopatra's linguistic tally to ten languages.

¹⁵⁰ *Ant.* 27.4-5.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, 28.1.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, 29.4.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 36.1: 'But now the fatal influence, that is his passion for Cleopatra, which for a long while had lain dormant in his heart, and which appeared to have been charmed away or at least lulled into oblivion by wiser counsels, suddenly gathered strength and blazed once more into life as he approached [Cleopatra]' (Scott-Kilvert). See also *Antony*, chapters 39, 51, 60, 62 and 76, for further examples of his complete obsession with Cleopatra.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 76.5-6.

However, Plutarch, unlike Dio Cassius,¹⁵⁵ does not simply depict Cleopatra as a sort of semi-witch, whose confidence in her enchanting nature and alluring charm are to establish her relationship with Antony as one of mistress and slave. Cleopatra has her insecurities, and when Octavia is near, she is most vulnerable to them.¹⁵⁶ When Octavia arrives in Greece, Cleopatra not only starves herself to secure Antony's concern for her health, but she also employs a horde of like-minded and equally-skilled flatterers to besmirch Octavia's name until such time that Antony gives in and rejects his Roman wife for his Egyptian 'mistress.'¹⁵⁷ Similarly, in 33 B.C., as the Actium campaign gathers momentum and Antony orders Cleopatra to sail to Egypt and to wait there for the outcome of the war, Cleopatra, fearing that Octavia might intervene in the tense political climate separating Antony and Octavian, resorts to bribery so as to ensure that she should not be separated from her husband's side.¹⁵⁸ Cleopatra's insecurities extend even to the reputation Octavia enjoyed in Athens, for when Cleopatra feels jealous of the honours Athens has paid to Octavia, she 'tried desperately to gain the reverence of the people.'¹⁵⁹

Cleopatra's jealousy of the influence of those closest to Antony does not end with Octavia: Plutarch records her as having been responsible for more than one rift in Antony's friendships with supporters and political allies.¹⁶⁰ In 32 B.C., with the potential perils of Actium looming ever closer, Cleopatra 'fouly abused Titius and Plancus, friends of Antony of consular rank, since they were strongly opposed to her joining in the campaign.'¹⁶¹ If Antony's publicly-acknowledged acceptance of Cleopatra and her Eastern ways has not damaged his reputation in Rome enough, the consequences of Cleopatra's interference certainly do. The two men defect to Antony's enemy and brother-in-law, and, based on the information they supply to him, Octavian seizes Antony's will from the Vestal Virgins and reads it in the Senate. From this point on, Antony's leanings become transparent to all Rome: not only is his body to be given to Cleopatra should he die in Rome, but he is also charged with having given her libraries at Pergamum, anointed her feet, honoured her as sovereign, written

¹⁵⁵ 49.34.1: 'As for Antony, he became more than ever a slave to the passion and the witchery of Cleopatra.'

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 53-54.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 53.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 56.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 57.2.

¹⁶⁰ For another example of Cleopatra's role in the establishment of a rift between Antony and his friends, see *Ant.* 59.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, 58.4.

her extravagant love letters and rudely disrupted a Roman nobleman pleading a case when Cleopatra passed him in the Forum.

Yet it is this same Cleopatra who despite her insecurities and petty jealousies not only remains the flatterer and captor of Antony's will and resolution, but who, in the early stages of Plutarch's *Antony*, ironically *pretends* (προσεποιεῖτο) to be in love with Antony:

'She pretended to be in love with Antony, and by a strict diet she began to make her body waste away. ...And she took great trouble that she should often be seen crying, and then, as if she wished indeed for her tears to escape [Antony's] notice, she would be quick to wipe them away and hide them from him. Cleopatra did this while Antony was intending to march from Syria to join the Median king.'¹⁶²

This is Cleopatra the Flatterer, the Actress, the Conniving Courtesan and the Desperate Lover, and the construction of her as such is crucial if Plutarch is to arouse genuine sympathy from his audience following her metamorphosis at Antony's death into a woman whose love is real. Here Cleopatra's mental suffering is pretended, but soon the apparent hyperbole of staged emotion will give way to seemingly genuine mental, emotional and physical anguish; the symptoms of which will reflect a love for Antony that is as patently real as Plutarch's biographical construction can allow. As Plutarch knits his narrative of Antony and Cleopatra closer together, and while Cleopatra's theatrical infatuation appears to gain the nobler qualities synonymous with love and true devotion, Cleopatra's weaknesses and human frailties also come into view, bringing her nature and relationship with Antony into clearer perspective. The reader is introduced not only to a lover and wife, then, but also to a mother deeply concerned for the welfare of her children.¹⁶³ She is no longer the one-dimensional, ambitious Eastern harlot who has corrupted Rome's greatest *Imperator*. She becomes a passionate and loyal wife to her husband, yet simultaneously one who, when danger threatens, will defend her own safety before any other's. Cleopatra becomes 'both faithless in battle *and* magnificent in love.'¹⁶⁴ She is the woman who, when Actium looms, will quake in fear,¹⁶⁵ and who,

¹⁶² *Ant.* 53.5-7.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 72.1, 78.6, 82.4; Pelling (1988:16).

¹⁶⁴ Pelling (1988:16).

¹⁶⁵ Dio Cass. 50.15.3.

Plutarch will have the audience believe, will even consider deserting her husband in battle so as to secure her safety in the face of defeat.¹⁶⁶ For by the time Antony deserts the Battle of Actium to chase after Cleopatra, Plutarch has moulded a woman whose influence over Antony is fatal:

‘And it was now that Antony revealed to all the world that he was no longer guided by the motives of a commander nor of a brave man nor indeed by his own judgement at all: instead, he proved the truth of the saying which was once uttered as a jest, namely that a lover’s soul dwells in the body of another, and he allowed himself to be dragged along after the woman, as if he had become a part of her flesh and must go everywhere she led him. No sooner did he see her ships sailing away than every other consideration was blotted out of his mind, and he abandoned and betrayed the men who were fighting and dying for his cause. He got into a five-banked galley, and...he hurried after the woman who had already ruined him and would soon complete his destruction.’¹⁶⁷

This is very powerful and dramatic narration which confirms all the charges Octavian propaganda had previously levelled (and would continue to direct) at Cleopatra and Antony’s absorption in her. Now all Antony’s best qualities, which had formerly distinguished him in extreme adversity,¹⁶⁸ have in Cleopatra’s presence robbed him of that which is needed to secure his survival; whatever traces of brilliant generalship Antony might have earlier boasted of have been overshadowed by the only force now left in Antony’s life: his life-consuming preoccupation with Cleopatra. Plutarch’s narrative has reached that point which no longer dwells on the shallow infatuation of the two lovers, but which now defines the deeper psychological (yet constructed) reality of Antony’s and Cleopatra’s relationship; a truth in which the fates of two heroes have become one.¹⁶⁹ The *Life of Antony* is no longer simply Plutarch’s biography of a brilliant (but flawed) Roman general who, in the course of his life succumbs to the charms of an Egyptian queen;¹⁷⁰ this is now the tale of Antony *and* Cleopatra, united in life and inseparable even in death.

¹⁶⁶ *Ant.* 66.5-6.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 66.7-8 (Scott-Kilvert).

¹⁶⁸ Such as in Plutarch’s description of the Parthian campaign of *Ant.* 43.

¹⁶⁹ Pelling (1988:16).

¹⁷⁰ Josephus (*AJ* 15.93) charges that Cleopatra charmed Antony literally through the use of drugs: ‘he succumbed to her every wish not only because he was intimate with her but also because he was under the influence of her drugs’ (Marcus).

While Plutarch's description of Cleopatra's initial arrival at Tarsus in 41 B.C. remains sensually and theatrically his most profound piece of narrative in this *Life*, the closing scenes describing Cleopatra's preparation for death and the act itself must surely rank a close second. For in these chapters, the differences and bonds between the hero and heroine are most subtly drawn. While Antony's men have deserted him, Cleopatra's maidservants remain loyal to her even unto death; while Antony has displayed little thought of an easy death, Cleopatra has used her time in Alexandria, awaiting Octavian's inevitable capture of her city, to find out not only which poison will grant her the most painless death,¹⁷¹ but also to gather together her worldly treasures to take with her into that world like a true Egyptian queen.¹⁷² The doomed lovers' last meal together is characterized by the serving of more generous portions than usual, and much later in the evening, the cries of Bacchanals and satyrs are heard leaving Alexandria as the god Dionysus, with whom Antony has not only claimed kinship but has also sought to imitate, finally deserts him.¹⁷³ The next day witnesses Antony's suicide preceded by a vicious argument between himself and Cleopatra,¹⁷⁴ which sees the couple's exchange of farewells being underlined not by the harmony they had desired,¹⁷⁵ but by a division which merely highlights the tragic poignancy of their fate. Even in the act of death itself, where Cleopatra experiences victory, Antony encounters further desertion and failure. For while Antony fails to get his slave to strike him dead (Eros instead turns the sword on himself and dies),¹⁷⁶ Cleopatra outmanoeuvres all Octavian's schemes to keep her alive for his triumph in Rome, and she succeeds in taking her life by that chosen means discovered through her experimentation with various poisons. Where Antony's death throes are described in humiliating detail,¹⁷⁷ Cleopatra's death is regal and befitting that of a dignified Queen.

However, despite the contrast between the broken and humbled Antony and the exalted and restored Cleopatra, Plutarch appears to have been determined that Cleopatra should share in Antony's agonies. Her grief and heartbreak are genuine: she tears her dress, lacerates her breasts and smears

¹⁷¹ *Ant.* 71.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 74.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 75.6.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 76.

¹⁷⁵ In their 'Order of the Inseparable in Death' (71.4-5).

¹⁷⁶ *Ant.* 76.7.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 77.

her face with his blood, calling him 'her master and husband and emperor.'¹⁷⁸ When Octavian visits Cleopatra seven days later,¹⁷⁹ 'her hair and her expression were wild, her voice trembled and her eyes had sunken into her face. Lacerations were visible all over her chest, and in short, it did not seem that her body was any better off than her spirit.'¹⁸⁰ But Cleopatra's love for Antony is consummated in her lament at his tomb two days after her meeting with Octavian, on the day of her own suicide. Claspng the urn with Antony's ashes, she mourns,

'My beloved Antony, it is only a little while ago that I buried you with these hands. ...[Now] do not abandon your wife while she lives, and do not let me be led in a triumph to your shame. Hide me and let me be buried here with you, for I know now that the thousand griefs I have suffered are as nothing beside the few days that I have lived without you.'¹⁸¹

Whatever evils Octavian's propaganda may have attributed to Cleopatra, by the day of her suicide, Plutarch has redeemed her as a woman worthy of the sympathy her heartbroken lament demands.¹⁸² No other source describes this occasion as sensitively as Plutarch, and it is likely that he has fabricated the entire episode. Pelling (1988:316-17) describes how 'Plutarch's heroes are individuals, and public men: but this sensibility to... private love and grief, is typical of his humanity.' While Plutarch has in the earlier chapters of *Antony*, in its clear moral commentary, offered explicit condemnation of Cleopatra's behaviour, by now it is clear to the reader that such blame (and praise) is irrelevant to this *Life*. Pelling (1988:15) explains why: 'Just as Plutarch's characterisation has deepened, so has the nature of his moralism. By now he is less concerned with *protreptic* moralism... than with *descriptive* moralism, pointing [out ethical truths] about human nature.'

In this vein the audience comes to view Cleopatra, in these final chapters of the narrative, through a more sympathetic lens which invites the reader to adopt a deeper insight into human frailty. Her end is premeditated, but utterly lonely without Antony. The unsettling calmness with which

¹⁷⁸ *Ant.* 77.5.

¹⁷⁹ For a detailed description of the chronological sequence of the last days of Cleopatra, see Skeat (1953:98-100).

¹⁸⁰ *Ant.* 83.1-2. Dio Cassius (51.12-13) offers a much cruder version of Cleopatra's meeting with Octavian, attributing seductive words and overtures to the suppliant Egyptian queen.

¹⁸¹ *Ant.* 84.4, 6-7 (Scott-Kilvert).

¹⁸² Compare this restoration of character with Horace's grudging admiration of Cleopatra at the end of *Carm.* 1.37.

Cleopatra bathes and dines before dismissing all her servants (save for her two faithful waiting-women, Iras and Charmian) contributes to the atmosphere of impending tragedy and Cleopatra's inescapable fate. Cleopatra is dressed and adorned as Queen of Egypt. The basket of figs (carrying the asp) arrives and Cleopatra closes the door to her tomb.¹⁸³

When Octavian's messengers open the doors of the monument, they find Cleopatra lying dead upon a golden couch, dressed in her royal robes. The means by which Cleopatra succeeds in killing herself excite not only Octavian's vexation, because he has been so cunningly outwitted, but also his admiration for her nobility of spirit, and he accordingly orders that she should be buried 'with Antony, in a magnificent manner fit for royalty.'¹⁸⁴ Thus, in her regal and dignified death, Cleopatra is not only united once again with Antony, but she is now glorified, having outwitted, and been honoured, by the same man whose propaganda sought to destroy any virtue or dignity which, in life, she might have had.

Thus ends Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. For one who had been so reviled in the Roman literary tradition, Cleopatra is treated by Plutarch's moral enquiry with considerable empathy and involvement. While he succeeds in exposing that moral behaviour which destroys Antony, he does not permit Cleopatra to be viewed simply as a condemned temptress and destroyer of Roman values. For where she fails to gain the admiration of Romans in life, she is honoured by the *Princes* of Rome in death. Antony dies desperately seeking to reclaim Roman values, but Cleopatra dies proud in her Egyptianness. The shame and condemnation of her earlier betrayal of Antony and his army at Actium are forgotten when the depth of her anguish at Antony's death is revealed. By her death, Cleopatra has become not only central to Antony's disgrace but also to his splendour, and through her death, something of Antony's nobility is restored. Thus, by the close of the *Life*, as Pelling (1988:15) so aptly notes, 'the interests of writer and audience are far from crude denunciation. ...[In Antony, we] are gradually shown a noble and brilliant nature, a man torn by psychological struggle and cruelly outdone by his flaws: by his weakness of will, by his susceptibility, by his sad and conscious submission to his own lowest traits. This awareness of the fragility of a great man, and of his vulnerability to the exploitation of his own warmest qualities, suggests something about

¹⁸³ Plutarch goes on in the next chapter to relate the different versions of Cleopatra's death. In one account, the asp lay hidden in the basket of figs, while in another, Cleopatra provoked the snake to come out of a pitcher to administer its lethal injection. Cleopatra's death is described in *Ant.* 85-86.

¹⁸⁴ *Ant.* 86.7.

humanity.’ Antony’s psychological and moral decline is by no means a simple process – he struggles against the course his life takes, and the audience is gradually accustomed to his real mental torment. When he finally succumbs, it is no longer to the vices of Cleopatra but to the pitfalls in his own character: he dies pitiful and condemned; Cleopatra, resplendent and vindicated.

I will now turn to the Roman poets, whose constructions of Cleopatra were created during, and under the influence of, the Augustan principate. While Plutarch creates a sumptuous legend in which Cleopatra magnificently transcends the unfortunate circumstances of mortal life, fate and a love with Antony which cannot comply with the demands of Roman leadership, the imperial poets each produce their own invective which strips the memory of Cleopatra of all glory, virtue and credibility, so that she is portrayed as a despicable object of vice and loathing. I will then, in chapter three, discuss how both the ancient Greek (in Plutarch) and Roman (in Vergil, Horace and Propertius) constructions of Cleopatra find strong reflection in Shakespeare’s glorious play, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

2.1. Introduction to the Roman Sources

Plutarch informs us that Rome never witnessed Cleopatra humiliated in Octavian's triumph: her death pre-empted that.¹ While pro-Octavian propaganda succeeded in reviling the Egyptian queen to Roman audiences during her life, the Roman sources show us that in death Cleopatra could be even more demonized. To the poets and elegists, Cleopatra's roles were multiplied and embellished – she was portrayed (never by name) not only as an insatiable lover and power-crazed queen, but also as a controversial subject to be inveighed against in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Horace's *Odes*, and Propertius' *Elegies*.² Indeed, the reputation she was commonly to have in later centuries (as guileful arch-seductress and royal courtesan) was almost entirely a creation of this propaganda and scathing Roman traditions of her. Bradford (1971:11) explains that 'those who are defeated rarely have the opportunity of writing their own version of history, since it is usually written by the victors. As with Carthage, so with Cleopatra: the biased accounts we possess were written by the conquering Romans. That she was finally defeated in her attempt to keep Egypt free from Roman rule is recorded by the poets and historians who lived under the Roman Emperors, the first of whom was the Octavian/Augustus who achieved her ruin. In those days of imperial patronage it was inevitable that writers should be sycophants, and in extolling the virtues of Augustus it was natural that they should portray the woman who had tried to prevent Rome from dominating the Mediterranean as evil, treacherous, and given to sexual excess.'

While the propaganda of Octavian seemed to suit Plutarch's aims best in the narration of his *Life of Antony*, I have attempted to show, in chapter one of this dissertation, that Plutarch was by no means unsympathetic towards her. Not so with the earlier Roman sources. Their repugnance for a woman who, next to Hannibal, came closest to subjecting Rome to foreign rule, is almost without exception undiluted, and save for a few, fleeting glimpses of admiration for Egypt's last Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra was remembered as a *fatale monstrum*. Actium was interpreted essentially as a war between two Roman *Imperatores* vying for Rome, but, for Octavian who, in the years preceding

¹ *Ant.* 85-6.

² Pelling (2001:294-95).

Actium, had been trying to canvas the support of Romans and Italians, it would be easiest to declare Cleopatra as the national enemy instead of another Roman citizen who was still remembered favourably by many influential Romans. Later historians, including Plutarch, attempted to review history through a new lens of truthfulness, admitting that Actium was essentially a battle between Romans, one of whom was married to Cleopatra. Roman poets, on the other hand, were 'not committed even to a semblance of truth and consequently found the figure of the Eastern queen, by turns a drunken whore and a formidable fury, too good to resist. Antony, if he appears at all, becomes a barbarized Eastern potentate, in Vergil's words, a "victor from the peoples of the Dawn and the Red Sea, bringing with him Egypt and the strength of the orient and remote Bactria"³ – no mention of his Roman allies or of civil wars...'⁴

In the aftermath of Actium, Octavian, and consequently the imperial poets of his day, made the most of Cleopatra's defeat, hailing the new emperor as the saviour of Rome, worthy son of the deified Caesar, and protégé of Apollo. As he had done in Antony's absence from Rome, so Octavian allowed writers to shape people's perceptions of Cleopatra in her absence.⁵ Romans had witnessed and laboured through enough years of civil war, conscriptions, assassinations and death to welcome any era of peace that Octavian's victory might represent, and Roman writers such as Vergil were only too happy to glorify their leader and victor as the bringer of peace to Rome. If that meant damning the memory of Cleopatra and Antony in order to exalt Octavian, so be it. Thus in the allusions of the Augustan poets, 'though they may have been willing to see a certain grandeur in Cleopatra's death, they were wholeheartedly of the opinion that Augustus was right and Antony and Cleopatra wrong. For these writers were Italians, and the policy of Antony and Cleopatra would have meant the end of Italy's complete supremacy over the Greek east. ...So each of them was ready enough to celebrate the crowning mercy of Actium, and each of them did so, in his own poetically memorable and historically misleading fashion.'⁶

³ Verg. *Aen.* 8.686-88.

⁴ Williams (2001:198-99).

⁵ *ibid.*, 199.

⁶ Grant (1972:244).

2.2. Vergil

As with most other Roman sources, with the exception of Velleius Paterculus, Vergil did not write much about Cleopatra. Numerous attempts have been made to view his *Aeneid* as some kind of allegory,⁷ in which Dido represents Cleopatra, but not once does he refer to her by name and there is only one passage in his great epic poem which we can conclusively state refers to Cleopatra.

In order to understand Vergil's views on Cleopatra and Egypt, one needs to understand the context of Vergil's life, his literary aims, and his standing in Roman society.

Born in c. 70 B.C. in Mantua, Vergil entered life at a time Italy was handicapped by war, civil unrest and an absence of hope for the future, and although of farming parents, he was nevertheless afforded an excellent education, first in Milan and later in Rome. As a student of rhetoric under the same man who taught Augustus, Vergil was destined for a public career.⁸ However, his shyness proved his unsuitability for public speaking – Vergil pleaded just one case in court and there spoke very unimpressively,⁹ and, instead he turned to poetry (inspired by the Hellenistic writer, Theocritus) and to the escapist philosophy of Epicurus.¹⁰ The slave revolt under Spartacus, with its legacy of miles of crucified slaves;¹¹ the Catilinarian conspiracy; the wars between Marius and Sulla, and Julius Caesar and Pompey; the assassination of Caesar; the Battle of Philippi; the beheading of Cicero; the battle against Sextus Pompeius; and, finally, Actium; represented the political context in which Vergil's life unfolded. Vergil himself took no part in the civil wars, in politics or in Roman society. Apart from his brief appearance in court, he had no ambition as a lawyer or senator. In fact, his only recorded public appearances were to present readings of his work in its developmental stages. Interestingly however, Vergil did write a hymn to be sung for Antony's wedding to Octavia,¹² but on what further terms he was acquainted with Antony is uncertain. In his personal context, Vergil had witnessed in 41 B.C. the confiscation of his family property, for the resettlement of demobilised

⁷ See Griffin (1985:187) for a discussion of such an allegory, as well as pages 51-55 of this dissertation.

⁸ Levi (1998:23).

⁹ Williams (1987:1).

¹⁰ Ogilvie (1980:116).

¹¹ This happened just before his birth.

¹² Vergil's Fourth *Eclogue*; Levi (1998:51).

soldiers after Philippi, and it was hardly surprising, then, that Vergil appeared to be disillusioned with the world of politics and military arbitration. However, it was this event which obliged Vergil to travel to Rome to negotiate for his property's return, and while in Rome he met with Octavian, and secured not only the return of his land but also a meeting with the Roman patron of the arts, Maecenas, who became Vergil's patron for the rest of his life.

But it is in his enormously successful epic poem, the *Aeneid*, that our interest, for purposes of this study, lies.

The Aeneid

Vergil began to compose the *Aeneid* immediately following Octavian's victory at Actium. His despair over Rome's future and the hopes he pinned on Octavian saving Rome from any further bloodshed had been reflected in *Georgics* 1:

'O God of our fathers, native Gods, Romulus, Vesta
Who mothers our Tuscan Tiber and the Roman Palatine,
At least allow our young prince to rescue this shipwrecked era!
Long enough now have we
Paid in our blood for the promise Laomedon broke at Troy.
Long now has the court of heaven grudged you to us, Caesar,
Complaining because you care only for mortal triumphs.
For Right and Wrong are confused here, there's so much war in the world,
Evil has so many faces, the plough so little
Honour, the labourers are taken, the fields untended,
And the curving sickle is beaten into the sword that yields not.
There the East is in arms, here Germany marches:
Neighbour cities, breaking their treaties, attack each other:
The wicked War-god runs amok through all the world.'¹³

¹³ 1.498-511 (Day-Lewis).

Finally, after a period of over fifty years of civil war and unrest, Octavian's defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony exchanged the horror and guilt of the bloody civil war period for a new golden age of stability, which was to be reflected in Latin literature during the first dozen years of Augustus' principate. The 20s B.C. were a time of celebration heralded by the patronage of literature under Maecenas and Messalla, and prospects suddenly seemed (for most) bright and exciting. It was this new regime that was celebrated in the *Aeneid*.

Octavian-Augustus' ambitious claim to restore the Republic (politically and morally) by encouraging Romans to return to the old values and traditions of their forefathers, fuelled the patriotic spirit in the traditionalist, Vergil. Indeed, the similarities in the priorities of Octavian and Vergil – their shared esteem for the age-old qualities of religion, devotion to duty, loyalty and family affection by which they believed Rome had, in the past, grown great – united the two men as friends, and it is thus not surprising that Vergil's epic poem reflects the moral, social and religious policy of Augustus' principate.¹⁴ At times, the imagery Vergil chooses to express gratitude to Octavian is excessive:

'His empire's boundary shall be the Ocean;
the only border to his fame, the stars.
His name shall be derived from great Iūlus,
and shall be Julius.'¹⁵

However, such praise was genuine, reflecting the high levels of optimism in Rome. Thus the *Aeneid* was never simply a piece of governmental propaganda, the product of political pressure exerted on Vergil. Like all poets, Vergil was in part a product of his times, and he must have been influenced by his political and social environment. However, his genius lay in his ability to remove himself from the ideology of his day, and in so doing to portray his history, his present, and his perceived future in an imaginative manner.¹⁶

The ancient sources tell us that in writing the *Aeneid*, Vergil first drafted the epic in prose form,

¹⁴ Williams (1973:16).

¹⁵ *Aen.* 1.287-288 (Mandelbaum). All further translations of the *Aeneid* in this chapter will be Allen Mandelbaum's, unless stated otherwise.

¹⁶ Williams (1987:1).

before dividing it into twelve sections. Having arranged his twelve books, Vergil then tackled each, section by section.¹⁷ His aims in writing the *Aeneid* were twofold: to recount the greatness of Rome, and to produce a work that would compare with the epics of Homer.¹⁸ The *Aeneid* falls into two distinct parts: the first six books being likened to an '*Odyssey*' (describing Aeneas' journey to Italy), and the last six books, an '*Iliad*' (relating Aeneas' events and battles in Italy). Williams (1987:29-30) states that the narrative also divides naturally into three sections each: Books 1 to 4 narrate the tragic love story of Dido and Aeneas; Books 5 to 8 contain crucial passages about the destiny of Rome; and Books 9 to 12 describe the tragic defeat of Turnus at Aeneas' hands. Dido, as one of the greatest enemies opposing the fulfilment of Roman destiny, has been interpreted as allegorically representing Rome's contemporary arch-enemy, Cleopatra.

Dido and Cleopatra

While McKay (1970:43) argues that Dido is partly the embodiment of Cleopatra, Levi (1998:173) believes, 'there is no likeness by the way between Dido and Cleopatra, intended or unintended.' Griffin (1985:194) contends that Dido is not simply a unique individual but an assimilation of multiple historical heroines – Nausicaa, Arete, Calypso, Medea, Ariadne and Cleopatra. Unfortunately one can only debate which theory is most accurate. As with all the ancient sources, Levi (1998:3-11) reminds us that not only are we forced to see Vergil through a haze of derivative writers, but also that he was an intensely personal poet who delighted in covering his tracks, and thus it is unlikely that we will ever understand to what extent, if any, he wished to arouse in his audience memories of Cleopatra. I will argue that if there are any links in the narrative between the two African queens, they are more circumstantial and incidental than they ought to be if Vergil intended them to be taken allegorically.

When Aeneas arrives at Carthage in Book 1 and is welcomed by Dido, who holds a banquet for the Trojans, she is portrayed as the gracious and beloved queen of the Carthaginian people. She is an example of an industrious, level-headed and far-sighted monarch who inspires her citizens to build

¹⁷ Suet. *Poet.* 23-4.

¹⁸ Williams (1987:26-27).

their identity through the construction of a new city, a forum for cultural events, and a new government structure. When Aeneas and his men arrive on the outskirts of Carthage, they marvel at the work taking place, and in envy, he exclaims, 'How fortunate are those whose walls already rise!'¹⁹ We are reminded that what Dido and her people are achieving, Aeneas has still to do. Vergil constructs in Dido, in Book 1, a very positive and likeable woman who seems to reflect the very character traits Aeneas will need to fulfil his (and Rome's) destiny. At this point in the narrative, there can be very few (and weak) similarities drawn between Dido and Cleopatra. Both are African queens and both have recently lost their partners (Dido, her husband, Sychaeus, and Cleopatra, Caesar) but this is about where the similarities end. As has already been mentioned, in the post-Actium period in which the *Aeneid* was written, Cleopatra was reviled in Augustan propaganda and we have no evidence of there being any attempts made to defend her before the Roman public. Where Antony was still spoken of in positive terms, Cleopatra would no doubt have been hated for stealing from Rome her second-greatest *Imperator*. In the absence of her presence, there was no reason to defend or sympathize with her. As Williams (2001:199) states, 'in retrospect, Octavian was perhaps rather relieved by Cleopatra's timely suicide, which meant that he did not have to drag her in chains through the streets of Rome in his triumphal procession. The Roman people were notoriously sentimental towards defeated enemies and loved to indulge in displays of magnanimous sympathy, as indeed they had towards Arsinoe, Cleopatra's elder sister, when she was led captive in Julius Caesar's triumph of 46 B.C. As in the case of Antony in the 30s B.C., it was far easier for Octavian as Augustus to shape people's perceptions of Cleopatra in her absence. In the end, he had a lot to thank those asps for.' Thus there is little evidence to suggest that Cleopatra should be linked to the Dido constructed by Vergil in Book 1.

However, as the narrative of the *Aeneid* develops, the character of Dido changes as Aeneas (compelled by a divine purpose) leaves her, and Carthage, to make for Rome. Traces of the influence of Greek tragedy on Vergil's style manifest themselves in the melancholic fate that the gods have mapped for Aeneas, and, in consequence, Dido. The great and glorious queen of Carthage is brought to utter destruction by her infatuation for Aeneas, whose *pietas* dictates that he must reject her for Rome.²⁰ Williams (1987:106) argues that this rejection transforms Dido into a bereft lover, and then into a terrifying figure of vengeance. McKay (1970:43) adds that 'Dido's tragedy is that she sought

¹⁹ *Aen.* 1.437.

²⁰ Williams (1987:19).

to lead a private life at an impossible juncture. She is the embodiment of the great and passionate Eastern queens, as much Medea as Cleopatra... Dido is an instrument, a stage in the spiritual history of Aeneas. Like Latinus later, she suffers for her simple nature ...and for her generosity; her tenderness and love are hopeless in the face of destiny.' Perhaps it is in this that Cleopatra and Dido reflect a shared experience, but if Vergil intends us to detect it, it is so that we will compare just how different the two women really are. While both women attempt to pursue romantic relationships with men whose destinies dictate that such a relationship will be unsustainable, Cleopatra's political agenda is far more demanding on that relationship, and threatening to Rome, than is Dido's. All Roman readers of the *Aeneid* would likely recall the lengths to which Cleopatra had already gone to ensure her rise to power as head of Ptolemaic Egypt: how she had been smuggled into the Alexandrian palace in a carpet to petition Caesar to place her on the throne; how, at the age of eighteen, she had pursued a relationship with Caesar, had followed him to Rome, and had dared to acknowledge her child as his. Dido, on the other hand, was never constructed by Vergil as so conniving or ambitious a woman. Her devotion to Aeneas, Vergil will have us believe, is based on emotional love alone, and her interest in political conquest and Rome is merely subdued by that love.

In the light of Vergil's later interpretation and characterization of Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium as it is shown on the shield of Aeneas in Book 8, I fail to see how the rejection and the tragic decline of Dido (the depiction of which brought tears to St. Augustine)²¹ can be linked in any meaningful way to Cleopatra. Dido and Cleopatra both share a pride and familiarity with power which they invest in their relationships with Aeneas and Antony respectively, but this is not enough to link the two women, even in an allegorical manner. Richmond (1990:35) describes how attempts have been made to see in Aeneas and Dido symbols of Octavian and Cleopatra. Dio Cassius had been quick to relate how Cleopatra, after Actium and the fall of Alexandria, had tried to muster all her seductive charms to lure Octavian into bed, and had met with rejection from the *Imperator*. Plutarch refuses to subscribe to this view, which, even if true, would hardly place Aeneas and Octavian, and Dido and Cleopatra, in comparative situations. Vergil deliberately constructs in Dido's and Aeneas' relationship an emotional love which is real and beautiful, but one that simply cannot stand the cruel demands of Fate on the lovers. Aeneas' dilemma in Book 4, when he has to choose between obedience to the gods' will that he be the one to found Rome, or relinquish that role so that he can

²¹ McKay (1970:43).

remain with Dido, is a very personal one which, once the choice has been made, is not without regret. Before leaving her, he struggles with emotion and admits his love was real, stating:

‘I’ll never pretend
You have not been good to me, deserving everything
You can claim. I shall not regret my memories of [you],
As long as I breathe, as long as I remember my own self.’²²

Vergil is careful to portray Dido as a woman who cares nothing for the future of Rome or the requirements the founding of that city will demand: she is desperate to win a future with the man she loves and is prevented from obtaining this not by Aeneas but by the destiny of Rome as willed by the gods.²³ Cleopatra, if Roman nationalist propaganda is to be believed, was interested not only in capturing the affections of first Julius Caesar and then Antony, but also Rome and Italy to add to her Eastern dominions. In the immediate context of Augustan Rome, if it had been Vergil’s intention to draw an analogy between Dido and Cleopatra, it is doubtful that he would have presented the queen of Carthage in such a sympathetic light. Williams (1987:105) reminds us that Dido has almost always been favourably depicted by the multitude of writers and musicians who have been inspired to relate her story, and many who have read the *Aeneid* have denounced Aeneas for his callous rejection of her.²⁴

So how does one most accurately interpret Vergil’s characterization of Dido? While his intention in writing the *Aeneid* had always been to portray the hopes of his fellow citizens after Actium, he also desired to show that greatness cannot be achieved without great devotion and sacrifice, as well as disaster to those who oppose the Roman destiny.²⁵ Not even in this, though, can Cleopatra be

²² *Aen.* 4.334-36 (Day-Lewis). This conflict between genuine affection, which Vergil constructs in Aeneas for Dido, and obedience to the gods, is reinforced later in Book 6 (lines 451-63), when Aeneas descends to the Underworld and meets Dido there: ‘And when the Trojan hero recognized her/ dim shape among the shadows (just as one/ who either sees or thinks he sees among the cloud banks,.../...he wept and said with tender love:/ “Unhappy Dido, then the word I had/ was true? That you were dead? That you pursued/ your final moment with the sword? Did I/ bring only death to you? Queen, I swear by/ the stars, the gods above, and any trust/ that may be in this underearth, I was/ unwilling when I had to leave your shores./ But those same orders of the gods that now/ urge on my journey through the shadows, through/ abandoned, thorny lands and deepest night,/ drove me by their decrees.”’

²³ Williams (1973:61).

²⁴ Incidentally, Quinn (1963:35) makes an interesting comment that ‘those who think ill of Aeneas for deserting Dido are often the same people who think ill of Mark Antony for not deserting Cleopatra.’

²⁵ Williams (1973:17).

suitably compared to Dido. While Cleopatra's ruin might be seen as a result of her opposition to the Roman destiny as Vergil envisaged it, her political goals were far more devious and threatening to the safety and security of Rome than were Dido's. Where Dido's destruction was a consequence of the divine pre-destination of Rome, Cleopatra proved to be an opposition to that destiny, an enemy to be conquered if Rome was to enjoy the peace and stability designated for her by the gods.

Vergil never shows any sympathy towards Egypt (or Cleopatra) in his views on Actium or the East's interference in that Roman destiny. Yet while he was moved by the great vision of Rome's future, and Roman nationalism, in Dido he showed that he still sympathized with private and personal sorrow.²⁶ Griffin (1985:196) thus argues that 'the doom of Dido is fundamentally complex and meant to be felt as such. This was the price of Rome: the hero does right to sail away and let her die, but he does so in the wake of too many mythological seducers for us not to feel that his hands, like theirs, are dirty.' However, Vergil, as a friend and admirer of Augustus, would presumably never have wished to offend the emperor by linking, deliberately and obviously, his tragic heroine with Cleopatra.²⁷ The context in which the *Aeneid* was written meant that affording Cleopatra sympathy might yet be inappropriate, especially when her conqueror was also the hero who brought peace and stability to Rome. Thus although the *Aeneid* is fundamentally a poem about the migration of Trojan refugees to found a new home, as Vergil reminds us, 'it was so hard to found the race of Rome,'²⁸ and on that road, failure, tragedy and loss seem implicit in every success.²⁹

Cleopatra and Egypt in the Shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.626 - 731)

But it is in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* that Vergil's views on Actium and Cleopatra's opposition to Octavian are most unambiguously reflected. In an extended compliment to Augustus for his victory at Actium in 31 B.C., Vergil offers a pictorial prophecy to Aeneas (on the gift to him of a shield) of

²⁶ *ibid.*, 62.

²⁷ It is clear that Augustus was certainly aware of the content of at least parts of the *Aeneid*, for Suetonius, in his *Life of Vergil*, 31-2, records that 'Augustus indeed ...demanded in entreating and even jocosely threatening letters that Vergil send him "something from the 'Aeneid'"; to use his own words, "either the first draft of the poem or any section of it that he pleased." But it was not until long afterwards, when the material was at last in shape, that Vergil read to him three books in all, the second, fourth, and sixth' (Rolfe).

²⁸ *Aen.* 1.33.

²⁹ McKay (1970:49).

the future triumphs in the history of Rome to come. It is a passage laced with allusion and symbolism, and gives an account of Rome's rise to power as leader of a world empire.³⁰ Aeneas had been given the shield, together with a helmet, sword, corselet, greaves and spear (crafted by Vulcan) as a gift from his mother to aid him in his future conquests.³¹ The idea of describing images on a shield in this manner is borrowed from Homer, and the shield is similar to the one made by Hephaistos for Achilles in *Iliad* 18. However, while Achilles had lost his and needed another, there is no apparent reason for Aeneas to have a new shield. Instead, the shield gives opportunity at this point in the narrative to present pictorially a review of Roman history and future Roman glory.³² In *Aeneid* 8.626-70, Vergil depicts various scenes around the edge of this shield, and in 8.675-731 (our focus for purposes of this dissertation), he concentrates on Octavian's victory at Actium, described in three distinct scenes, and Aeneas' response to the gift of the shield. I intend to examine each of these scenes individually, assessing how, in each, Vergil's views of Cleopatra are reflected.

In the first scene, Vergil creates a picture of the opposing forces: the East against Rome:

‘Across the centre of the shield were shown
the ships of brass, the strife of Actium:
you might have seen all of Leucata's bay
teeming with war's array, waves glistening
with gold. On his high stern Augustus Caesar
is leading the Italians to battle,
together with the senate and the people,
the household gods and Great Gods; his bright brows
pour out a twin flame, and upon his head
his father's Julian star is glittering.
Elsewhere Agrippa towers on the stern;
with kindly winds and gods he leads his squadron;
around his temples, glowing bright, he wears
the naval crown, magnificent device,

³⁰ Hardie (1986:97).

³¹ *Aen.* 8.615-25.

³² Williams (1987:41).

with its ships' beaks. And facing them, just come
from conquering the peoples of the dawn,
from the red shores of the Erythraean Sea –
together with barbaric riches, varied
arms – is Antonius. He brings with him
Egypt and every power of the East
and farthest Bactria; and – shamefully –
behind him follows his Egyptian wife.
The squadrons close headlong; and all the waters
foam, torn by drawn-back oars and by the prows
with triple prongs. They seek the open seas;
you could believe the Cyclades, uprooted,
now swam upon the waters or steep mountains
had clashed with mountains as the crewmen thrust
in their great galleys at the towering sterns.
Torches of hemp and flying darts of steel
are flung by hand, and Neptune's fields are red
with strange bloodshed.³³

It is fitting that Actium should occupy the central position of this supernatural shield: not only was it an event freshly engraved on the minds of Romans, but it was also a decisive battle which symbolized a moral and material peril to Rome and one which she had so victoriously overcome.³⁴ It was apt, therefore, that Vergil should glorify Augustus' role in Roman history by giving it the place of honour on the shield. However, as West (1990:300) reminds us, although it would have been impossible to draw the indescribable composition on the shield, Vergil compels us to visualize the relative positions of the events described.

On the one side of the scene stands Augustus, behind whom is Marcus Agrippa (the *Imperator's* right-hand man and son-in-law), as well as all Italians, the Senate, the people of Rome, the household gods, and the Olympian gods. Significantly, there is no reference to those in Rome who either

³³ *Aen.* 8.675-95.

³⁴ West (1990:296).

supported Antony or who were simply politically opposed to Octavian; instead, Vergil presents an image of *all* of Rome united in support of Octavian. Furthermore, this is one of only two instances in the poem where Augustus is mentioned by name.³⁵ The Julian star on Augustus' head,³⁶ which shines the way towards victory, is accompanied by the comet twin flames appearing from his brows.³⁷ Augustus has an aura of the supernatural, and as Hardie (1986:109) offers, Vergil will have his audience believe that 'it is clear that this manipulation of nature is in accordance with the economy of providence.' Vergil stresses the father-son relationship between Julius Caesar and Augustus, and their affiliation to the Julian *gens*, said to have descended from Venus herself and Aeneas, her son.

Agrippa (682), too, is formidable, towering on the stern next to or behind Augustus. He is not only courageous, but also benevolent, leading his squadron with encouraging words. He also wears a crown that was awarded him for his success as a naval commander against Sextus Pompeius at Nauochos in 36 B.C., and it burns brightly with the good favour of the gods. Thus the description of the Roman generals, Augustus and Agrippa, is laced with political symbolism used by Octavian throughout his alleged propaganda campaign to canvas support in Rome and elsewhere in Italy.³⁸

On the opposite side of the fray is Antony (685). He is depicted as having conquered lands in the East from which he has attained 'barbaric riches.' With him are a heterogeneous following of Oriental races in his navy (687-88), and behind, follows Cleopatra (688), referred to simply as his *Aegyptia coniunx* (Egyptian wife). Vergil is adamant that this is hardly the place for wives – she is 'shamefully' present at a battle between Augustus (and the West) and Antony (and the East).

In line 689 the battle begins and the opposing squadrons clash at full speed and force. We read that Cleopatra's huge galleys, each with three rams, charge into battle, the power of their oarsmen causing the water to foam (689-90). Vergil's Battle of Actium (unlike Plutarch's) is ferocious, with grand imagery being employed. Flaming torches are thrown, spears are flung by hand, and the sea is turned red with blood. It is interesting to note Neptune's presence in the battle, on the side of Augustus' classical gods, and we are made to remember his divine patronage once to Sextus Pompeius, and the

³⁵ The other instance being at 1.286.

³⁶ cf. 2.682-84 where the same image is used in a vision to Aeneas about the future before him.

³⁷ See page 15 of this dissertation for a discussion of the symbolism that Octavian believed this comet appeared to represent.

³⁸ See chapter 1 of this dissertation for a more extensive study of Octavian's supposed propaganda tactics.

outcome of that skirmish, where Apollo led Octavian to victory.

The second scene's focus is on Cleopatra and her Eastern deities:

‘Among all this the queen
calls to her squadrons with their native sistrum;
she has not yet looked back at the twin serpents
that swim behind her. Every kind of monster
god – and the barking god, Anubis, too –
stands ready to cast shafts against Minerva
and Venus and at Neptune. In the middle
of all the struggle, Mars, engraved in steel,
rages beside fierce Furies from the sky;
and Discord, joyous, strides in her rent robe;
Bellona follows with a bloodstained whip.
But Actian Apollo, overhead,
had seen these things; he stretched his bow; and all
of Egypt and of India, and all
the Arabs and Sabaeans, turned their backs
and fled before this terror. The queen herself
was seen to woo the winds, to spread her sails,
and now, yes now, let fall the slackened ropes.
The Lord of Fire had fashioned her within
the slaughter, driven on by wave and west wind,
pale with approaching death; but facing this,
he set the Nile, his giant body mourning,
opening wide his folds and all his robes,
inviting the defeated to his blue-gray
breast and sheltering streams.’³⁹

³⁹ *Aen.* 8.696-713.

As Vergil's emphasis falls on Cleopatra, there is no trace whatsoever in his analysis of that same compassion he felt in his earlier portrayal of Dido. His tone is not only contemptuous, but also threateningly prophetic. Cleopatra, we read, controls her squadrons with the shaking of her eastern rattle, the *sistrum*. She is oblivious to her approaching death represented by the two asps which are swimming towards her from behind. Vergil's warning is that death will come to her by devious surprise, and the prophecy of it is certain even before the outcome of the battle has been decided.

However, in this passage it is clear that for Vergil, Actium is not simply a battle between humans, but also between the two distinct races of the gods of the West and the gods of the barbaric East. West (1990:301) goes on to declare that 'this whole central panel is a virtuoso evocation of the iconography of foreign peoples, their dress, their arms, and their religions. Against the *Iulium Sidus*, and the *corona naualis* of Agrippa we can set *inter alia* the *sistrum* of Cleopatra from the worship of Isis, the dog-faced Anubis, the Afri with their naked chests, the Euphrates visibly subdued, ...the two-horned Rhine, and the God Araxes fretting at the new Roman bridge.'

Where Rome's gods are ordered under the stately Jupiter, Egypt's are a horde of non-anthropomorphic monster deities, and the yapping of Anubis (698-9) in vain against the classical gods, Minerva,⁴⁰ Venus and Neptune, goes beyond even the boundaries of baroque.⁴¹ Indeed, most of the pantheon of the classical gods are participating in this battle – into the fray enters Mars (700), Discord (702), Bellona (703) and even the Furies (701). This, Vergil repeatedly emphasizes, is no minor battle. It is one which has summoned the insulted gods of Rome who have come to seek justice and natural order for Rome.

However, Vergil then draws our attention to the archer god, Apollo, overseeing the battle from what is perhaps his temple at the headland of Actium.⁴² We remember that this is the god who secured victory for Octavian at Philippi and Naulochos. He is Octavian's faithful patron god, represented on coins minted before Actium to foretell Rome's imminent victory there under Octavian. Up until this

⁴⁰ Hardie (1986:99) explains Minerva's presence in the narrative: 'It is tempting ... to see in Minerva a representative of reason or wisdom, fighting on the side of the legitimate champion of Rome. There is also a particular aptness in the presence of the goddess in a theomachy depicted on a shield. The most famous shield in ancient art was that of the Pheidias statue of Athena Parthenos in the Parthenon.'

⁴¹ Levi (1998:205).

⁴² West (1990:300).

point in the narrative he has not been participating, but his sudden presence will inspire wholesale panic in the enemy. With a stretch of his bow (704), all of the East from Egypt to India turn, and in terror depart.

Indeed, Vergil will not have his audience believe that Actium was won by mere human action; the result of the cowardly retreat of Cleopatra with Antony racing after her in desperate pursuit. The outcome of the Battle of Actium was, for Vergil, as divinely intended as was Aeneas' odyssey to found Rome. Vergil relates how, with the calm and decisive intervention of Apollo, Cleopatra pales in fear, turns her fleet and escapes towards the recumbent deity, the Nile, who, implicated in the defeat of its monarch, opens its mourning delta's body to call the queen to refuge.⁴³ Vergil's manipulation of events lets his audience know that the outcome of Actium was pre-destined by the gods. Hardie (1986:98) collaborates with this view, stating that Actium represented the fate of the balance of heavenly power itself, with 'the defeat of the Egyptian gods relegating the Egyptian pantheon to obscurity.' Thus, 'the physical struggle of the elements is superseded by a theological affirmation of the superiority of the gods of light over the monstrous and demonic idols of Egypt. The final resolution of the battle is left to the effortless archery of Apollo, ...and [he] instantly routs the forces of the east. This easy Olympian confusion of the enemy is a sign both of a sense of what is decorous for the gods in their most serious function and of a basic conviction that the divine order of the cosmos is inherently superior to the forces which threaten its disruption. ...Apollo simultaneously restores Olympian order and establishes Roman world-empire.'⁴⁴

In the third sequence, Vergil's narrative moves to Rome:

'But entering
the walls of Rome in triple triumph, Caesar
was dedicating his immortal gift
to the Italian gods: three hundred shrines
throughout the city. And the streets reechoed
with gladness, games, applause; in all the temples
were bands of matrons, and in all were altars;

⁴³ West (1970:302).

⁴⁴ Hardie (1986:110).

and there, before these altars, slaughtered steers
were scattered on the ground. Caesar himself
is seated at bright Phoebus' snow-white porch,
and he reviews the spoils of nations and
he fastens them upon the proud doorposts.
The conquered nations march in long procession,
as varied in their armour and their dress
as in their languages. Here Mulciber
had modeled Nomad tribes and Africans,
loose-robed; the Carians; the Leleges;
Geloni armed with arrows. And he showed
Euphrates, moving now with humbler waves;
the most remote of men, the Morini;
the Rhine with double horns; the untamed Dahae;
and, river that resents its bridge, the Araxes.

Aeneas marvels at his mother's gift,
the scenes on Vulcan's shield; and he is glad
for all these images, though he does not
know what they mean. Upon his shoulder he
lifts up the fame and fate of his sons' sons.'⁴⁵

Actium has been won by the Romans; Cleopatra and Antony are dead; and Augustus enters the city in triple triumph. Rome's response is unequivocal: it is one of jubilant celebration and religious revival as all her altars are thankfully piled with sacrifices to their faithful gods. The emperor is seated in the shade of Apollo's presence at the temple he dedicated to the god in 28 B.C., and benevolently he examines the booty of his triple victories. His triumph represents the boundless might of Roman Empire, and all the nations he has conquered pay tribute to him in humbled procession.

Thus the shield of Aeneas reminds us of the glory of Rome, accomplished through the power and

⁴⁵ *Aen.* 714-31.

foresight of Octavian-Augustus. We are reminded of his place in Roman history alongside the legend of Romulus and Remus, and of his conquests over Sextus Pompeius in 36 B.C. and Cleopatra and the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East. We may also be reminded that Augustus, too, received a shield, the *Clipeus Virtutis*, for his victories on behalf of Rome in 27 B.C.⁴⁶

In Aeneas' response we are furthermore reminded that *pietas* and devotion to the ends of the state are the qualities that great nations and empires are founded upon. The Roman hero gazes with delight at the illustrations on the shield, not knowing what they mean, but nevertheless he physically and symbolically hoists the shield, Rome's destiny, and the fate of his descendants onto his shoulder and looks towards the bright future ahead. If one is to try to interpret undercurrents of symbolism beneath this picture that Vergil has created for us – as one might similarly try to link Vergil's characterizations of Cleopatra and Dido in the *Aeneid* – one is tempted to conclude, like Pelling (2001:296), that had Vergil intended for us to see in Dido, Cleopatra, and her threat to the fulfilment of Rome's destiny, then perhaps we ought also to conclude that 'had Aeneas been an Antony, he might have stayed with Dido, and Rome would never have happened.'⁴⁷

Finally, the portrayal of Actium in the shield of Aeneas reminds us of the interference of the gods in mortal affairs. We realize that not only Actium, but much of the action in the *Aeneid* is merely the result of the will of the gods. Venus and Juno are always antagonistically present and manipulating events in the course of the narrative, often against the wishes of Jupiter, whose will equates with destiny. But it is the god of moderation and wise counsel, Apollo, who is significantly revered by Aeneas, who relies on the archer god as his patron deity during his wanderings.⁴⁸ This is no narrative coincidence on the part of Vergil: he wishes deliberately to draw our attention to Apollo's role in recent Roman history, and particularly in Octavian's battles against Sextus Pompeius, and Antony and Cleopatra. In this way, then, Vergil directs special reverence towards Augustus as we are reminded that as a result of Actium, the Hellenistic-Ptolemaic kingdom yielded to a new kind of god-man ruler.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Aug. *RG* 34: '...when I had extinguished the flames of civil war,... I was given the title of Augustus... and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia...' (Shipley); West (1990:303).

⁴⁷ Pelling (2001:296).

⁴⁸ McKay (1970:47).

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 50.

The Contribution of the *Aeneid* to Roman Society

Vergil's influence during his life and immediately following his death (and even in the centuries that followed) was enormous. Having concentrated the last ten years of his life solely on the *Aeneid*, Vergil died before he could complete his masterpiece. On his deathbed he asked that his epic poem should be destroyed, but Augustus, named in Vergil's will to inherit the second largest share of his estate,⁵⁰ commissioned Varius and Tucca (two friends of the poet) to edit the work without adding anything to it, and the result of their work was published as the *Aeneid* we are familiar with today.

On its publication, the *Aeneid* was hailed as a state poem and was subsequently adopted as a textbook and source of inspiration for poets, critics and thinkers alike. As little as eighty years after his death, Vergil was read all over the Empire,⁵¹ and he was adored like a god.⁵² Vergil succeeded in reflecting the very political views Augustan propaganda had been circulating in the years before and after Actium, and there is no evidence to suggest that Vergil contradicted that invective aimed at Antony and Cleopatra. However, Vergil's *Aeneid* was as much a child of Augustan propaganda (and Augustan peace) as it was the child of the literature of the past: Homeric epic, Greek tragedy, the post-classical Alexandrian tradition and the Latin literature of Ennius and Catullus.⁵³ His literary contemporaries Livy, Horace (a friend of Vergil), and Propertius all acknowledged in their work their admiration for Vergil and his influence upon their work.⁵⁴

Perhaps the greatest feat of the *Aeneid* was to show both the greatness of Rome and its human cost – a contradiction which was reflected in Vergil's own life and human experience.⁵⁵ Williams (1987:34) argues that while Vergil succeeded in his aim to use the *Aeneid* to glorify Rome, and while he was in love with the history of his country and his idealistic vision of what was yet to come, he also succeeded in creating that tension which exists between the actual and potential greatness of Golden Age Rome, and the voice of sympathy and sorrow over the fate of the tiny and private world

⁵⁰ White (1993:258-59).

⁵¹ Levi (1998:2).

⁵² *ibid.*, 125.

⁵³ Williams (1987:11-23).

⁵⁴ Livy 1.29; Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.40; Prop. 2.34.61-66.

⁵⁵ Griffin (1985:196).

of the lonely individual. Unfortunately there is no unambiguous evidence in Vergil's writing to suggest that Cleopatra was one such individual to whom he offered sympathy. She is only ever portrayed as the final obstacle to be overcome on Rome's path to exalted honour and glory. Thus as Hardie (1986:98) reminds us, while the final scene on the shield of Aeneas offers an image of the Empire under the *pax Augusta* – the continuance of which was sustained by divine patronage of the *Princeps* – Vergil's interest in Cleopatra was limited simply to her existence as an enemy of Rome, the victory over whom served to glorify the Age of Augustus.

2.3. Horace

As with Vergil, it is necessary to be aware of Horace's personal and political climate and context in order to understand his poetry. Born in Venusia, a town in Apulia, in 65 B.C. Horace was five years younger than Vergil and two years older than Augustus, but belonged to a social circle vastly different from both. Roman society was, in the first century B.C., highly stratified on the basis of birth and wealth, with wealth being the prime criterion in the assigning of individuals to the various status groups (*ordines*) in Rome.⁵⁶ As the son of a freedman, Horace never enjoyed the same social and political opportunities as did Vergil, Propertius or Tibullus, and for the duration of his life he was to remain painfully conscious of his social position and lack of political ambition:

‘Now I revert to myself, a freedman’s son, carped at by
everyone because I’m a freedman’s son...’⁵⁷

Yet despite his humble background and social standing, Horace's was an age of considerable social mobility, and the sacrifices his father made on his behalf meant that Horace was afforded the opportunity to study philosophy in Athens. While there, during a visit of Marcus Brutus, he was attracted to the Republican liberation cause. Following Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., Brutus and Cassius had been received in Greece as liberators, and had come to persuade young men like Horace to join their cause. Thus at the age of twenty-two, Horace enjoyed a good promotion for a freedman's son, becoming a military tribune in Brutus' army.⁵⁸ From the Battle of Philippi, at which the Republican cause was snuffed out with the deaths of Brutus and Cassius, Horace managed to escape, whereupon he returned to Rome under the amnesty offered by Octavian. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978:106-7) assert that Horace had joined the Republican army out of youthful idealism, and the defeat of its cause had left the young man angry. It is likely that, when chosen by Brutus for his exalted position in the Republican forces, Horace was greatly flattered. However, favourable references to the late Republic in his writings are not easy to find and when Horace later referred to his involvement in the Philippi campaign, his tone reflected a mixture of apology, evasiveness, irony and pride. However, Griffin (1993:2) suspects that, ‘for what such guesses are worth, ...Horace

⁵⁶ Goodman (1997:10-11).

⁵⁷ *Sat.* 1.6.45-46 (Ogilvie, 1980).

⁵⁸ Griffin (1993:1); the position of military tribune was usually reserved for men of equestrian rank.

would have been no less responsive to a similarly fleeting call from Antony to join Caesarean armies, had events put him in a place to receive it.’

On his return to Rome, Horace did not pursue a career in the military or politics (partly because his social position did not allow it), but instead, at the age of twenty-five, purchased a position as the keeper of the *quaestor*’s records. However, between 42 and 39 B.C., Horace fell on hard times. The Rome to which he had returned was characterized by the settling of old scores by proscriptions and legal murders, by food riots, the enrichment of amoral prosecutors and their sycophants, brigandage and general lawlessness; and all this against a backdrop of fear for what lay ahead and the constant threat of war between generals.⁵⁹ With the confiscation of his property, Horace’s destitution and disillusionment deepened, and the recklessness of poverty drove him to compose verses.⁶⁰ Griffin (1993:11) explains that ‘Horace really was angry. What had looked like the beginning of a dazzling career had led to humiliation, loss of status and of property. A proud and self-conscious man found himself in a humdrum occupation, without glamour or prospects, and surrounded by profiteers, arrivistes, and people suddenly and dramatically enriched by civil war, proscriptions and the spoils of office. He, by contrast, was poorer than he had been, and much poorer than he had hoped to be. He saw, or imagined, sneers and satisfaction at his fall. He sought ways of expressing his anger and distrust; but did not forget the risks of speaking up in such a period.’

His early poetry attracted the attention of Vergil, a member of Maecenas’ literary clique. Vergil arranged for Horace to meet with his patron, and eight months later Horace was invited to join the coterie. Through Maecenas, who became and remained Horace’s friend right up until their deaths a few weeks apart from one another, Horace received not only employment but, in 34 B.C., a small Sabine farm, to which Horace increasingly retreated towards the end of his life.⁶¹ Furthermore, the acceptance into this esteemed patron’s company, coupled with the financial assistance that came with his new estate, began to assuage Horace’s anger and resentment of the political institutions governing Rome.⁶² Through Maecenas, Horace was also introduced to Augustus, who eventually asked him

⁵⁹ Griffin (1993:3).

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 2.

⁶¹ Rayer and Batstone (1995:136) state that after Maecenas’ fall from Augustus’ favour, Horace, disillusioned again perhaps, retired more and more frequently to his farm, his books and his friends.

⁶² Griffin (1993:13).

to be his personal secretary, a position Horace declined.⁶³

Under Maecenas, Horace's creative output in diverse genres and styles was extraordinary, including as it did epodes, satires, odes and epistles.⁶⁴ But unlike Vergil, who had 'set out to create a single masterpiece which should do justice to the whole of the complex phenomenon of Rome, her history and empire,' Horace's aim was to achieve perfection within each poem, even if that meant that his attitudes towards life, love and politics might seem inconsistent from poem to poem.⁶⁵ Horace had been vastly impressed by Vergil, who had composed his *Eclogues* before Horace was known as a poet at all. However, even though he alludes to the *Aeneid* in his own *Carmen Saeculare*, Aeneas' supreme quality (his *pietas*) is mentioned in Horace's own work three times in a negative light.⁶⁶ Griffin (1993:20) remarks that 'these devices, of self-contradiction and irony, and of seeing inconsistency not as a political failing, ...but as the loveable characteristic of Horace's varied personality: these are at the heart of Horace's poetry.'

By the age of thirty, Horace had published his *Epodes*, a trivial genre of artificially-acrimonious attacks on individuals. As was the case with most of the literature published after Actium, Horace's first three books of the *Odes*, published in 23 B.C., reflected something of the optimistic change of mood that the outcome of Actium had ushered in. Through a range of love poems, party poems, and poems about politics and religion, Horace expressed a growing sympathy with the ideals of Augustus,⁶⁷ and it was in this compilation that his famous '*Cleopatra Ode*' was included. The public response to his *Odes* was lukewarm – Horace implies that apart from his own circle of friends, the public was hostile to his new work. Horace consequently abandoned the ode form until he was asked by Augustus to compose the *Carmen Saeculare* for the Secular Games of 17 B.C., and hereafter, he was encouraged to write a Fourth Book of *Odes*.

The influence of Horace in his own lifetime was nothing like that of Vergil. During the early years of Augustus' regime, Horace, like Vergil, displayed considerable enthusiasm for that legislation and

⁶³ Rayor and Batstone (1995:135).

⁶⁴ Ogilvie (1980:141).

⁶⁵ Griffin (1993:19).

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁷ Ogilvie (1980:147-49).

those moral values the *Princeps* was trying to impress upon Roman society. While his tone or manner was sometimes jesting, Horace never undermined the Empire's moral ideology. However, Horace was no sycophant and was never too comfortable writing political poetry. As one scholar comments, 'one gets the impression that Horace was interested in the spiritual revival of Italy but that his heart was not in the role of poet laureate.'⁶⁸

Seager (1993:39) contends that over the next decade, Horace became increasingly disillusioned with the imperial government, seemingly vexed by the constraints put on his (and others') freedom. Although Augustus and Maecenas would have become aware of his disapproval, they allowed Horace to continue writing: after all, Augustus was not a tyrant, and it did not really matter what Horace said. For one who gave recitations only when obliged, and to friends,⁶⁹ his influence was limited and the more important members were not likely to have had their opinions of Augustus and his administration moulded by Horace. Or as Seagar (1993:39) explains, 'for most of his career, he did at least show a lively and intelligent interest in what, for Augustus, were the burning issues of the day, even if his attitudes at times left something to be desired. ...And when he became more disgruntled and subversive, he was clever enough to cover himself well. It is hard to see how Augustus could have found plausible grounds for suppressing any poem that survives, even had he wished to do so. But nobody asked Horace to compose a fifth book of Odes.'

Horace's 'Cleopatra Ode' (1.37)

It was in his first compilation of the *Odes* that Horace's attitudes to Cleopatra were made known, in an odd piece of invective tinted with admiration, commonly called his '*Cleopatra Ode*.' This thirty-seventh poem in his first book of *Odes* marks the death of Cleopatra after Actium, and a call to celebrate that death and Roman victory. Having invited his audience to join him in celebration, he briefly describes his version of the Battle of Actium, and, in more detail, Cleopatra's suicide to avoid being taken hostage for Octavian's triumph in Rome. Antony, unlike in Vergil's reflection on Actium on the shield of Aeneas, is not mentioned in this ode, although in an earlier poem, *Epode* 9,

⁶⁸ Harrison (1988:88-89).

⁶⁹ *Sat.* 1.4.73.

Horace had made known his loathing for the Roman general. West (1995:184) explains that ‘Antony himself is not even mentioned [since] that too is a part of Octavian’s strategy before and after Actium, for example in the *Res Gestae*, in order to give the impression that this was no civil war but a war against a foreign enemy.’ Indeed, Antony is simply overlooked and Cleopatra too despicable to be named. She is referred to by Horace, simply as the ‘*fatale monstrum*’ (21) who had planned the ‘ruin of our Capitol and the destruction of our power’ (6-8).

The ode opens in the following way:

‘Now we must drink, now we must
beat the earth with unfettered feet, now,
my friends, is the time to load the couches
of the gods with Salian feasts.’⁷⁰

The rhythm in this first stanza is buoyant, the tone one of exuberant celebration. Horace begins the ode with a phrase from a poem written by the Greek poet, Alcaeus, nearly seven hundred years before, to celebrate the death of a hated tyrant killed in battle:

‘Now we must get drunk, we must drink
with some vigour since Myrsilus is dead.’⁷¹

Horace chooses this piece of verse to model his opening lines upon in order to liken Cleopatra to the tyrant Myrsilus and to encourage his audience to celebrate her death in similar fashion.⁷² The tone is insistent, with emphasis being placed on the immediacy of the call to celebration: three times in two lines is the word *nunc* (‘now’) repeated. It is interesting that Horace is perhaps more restrained than Alcaeus, calling his audience to drink as opposed to getting down-right drunk. In the light of propaganda labelling Cleopatra and her Roman husband as revellers and drunkards, it must have seemed inappropriate for Horace to call his audience to similar abandon in their celebrations.

⁷⁰ Unless stated otherwise, all translations of 1.37 will be by West (1997).

⁷¹ Frag. 332 LP (West, 1995).

⁷² West (1995:182-83).

In this first stanza, then, Horace calls his friends and fellow country-men to drink, dance and to load the couches (*pulvinaria*) with Salian feasts. The couches to which Horace refers were, in a thanksgiving ceremony for victory called the *lectisternium*, traditionally used for displaying images of the gods. In his *Res Gestae* 4, Augustus describes such feasts of supplication: ‘For successful operations on land and sea, conducted either by myself or by my lieutenants under my auspices, the senate on fifty-five occasions decreed that thanks should be rendered to the immortal gods’ (Shipley). West (1995:184) adds that ‘there is little doubt that the death of Cleopatra would have been celebrated in this way in Rome. This ode is celebrating not only the death of an enemy, but the splendid celebrations of the event.’ Furthermore, it is fitting that in giving thanks to the gods, these Roman merrymakers should demonstrate the *pietas* on which Rome’s global *imperium* was founded.⁷³

Horace describes, in stanza one, a celebratory banquet of the same stature and luxuriousness as a Salian feast. The Salii were priests of Mars, who, significantly in the context of this ode, was the god of war as well as the father of Romulus, legendary founder of Rome. The priests are recorded to have enjoyed a lively ritual dance, and their feasts were notoriously lavish.⁷⁴ Suetonius describes, in *Claudius* 33.1., how the emperor Claudius, having smelt the aroma of a feast being prepared by the Salii, is said to have left the tribunal to take his place at their table. Horace reminds his comrades that since Cleopatra has been vanquished, their feet are free to dance, as the threat of the chains of Eastern subjection is over. As with Plutarch’s later description of Cleopatra’s voyage to Tarsus upon her golden barge, Horace’s first stanza too, is loaded with imagery which engages the senses of smell, taste, sound, sight (in the preparation of the victory banquet), and touch (in the music and dancing to accompany the celebrations).

In the second and third stanzas (5-12), we are reminded of the potential threat Cleopatra represented to Rome, as the polarities associated with East and West are referred to in this piece of barbed invective:

‘Before this it was a sin to take the Caecuban
down from its ancient racks, while the mad queen

⁷³ Oliensis (1998:138).

⁷⁴ Garrison (1991:254).

with her contaminated flock of men
diseased by vice, was preparing

the ruin of the Capitol and the destruction
of our power, crazed with hope
unlimited and drunk
with sweet fortune...'

In these stanzas, with their emotively-charged words, we are reminded of the threat Romans attached to monarch-rule. Garrison (1991:255) explains that 'although powerful queens were not unknown in the Hellenistic world, the patriarchal Romans perceived the idea of a woman in power as perverted; moreover the very name *rex* had been odious since the days of the Tarquins.' Horace suggests that this mad queen with an animal-like flock of eunuchs, foul with disease, immorality and vice, had planned her march on the Capitol to rob Rome of her power. That Cleopatra intended to usurp the power of Rome is, according to West (1995:184), associated with the Donations of Alexandria of 34 B.C., 'whereby her son Caesarion was officially declared to be the son of Julius Caesar, and at the same time Egypt, Cyprus, and all the Roman territories in Asia were donated to Caesarion, Cleopatra, and her three children by Antony. [However, the] suggestion that she wanted to destroy the Capitol may well be a slight exaggeration.' Horace's choice of the Capitol calls to mind images of the worship of the Olympian gods, Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, being superceded by that of the ostensibly monstrous animal deities of Egypt. Such an image would surely have struck terror in the heart of any true, pious Roman. Garrison (1991:255) adds that Cleopatra was 'reputed to have made frequent boasts that she would issue her foreign decrees from the Capitol,' an oath which Dio Cassius registered in his *Roman History* about three hundred years later.⁷⁵ West (1995:184-5) disputes this as most likely a 'dramatized version, if not a propaganda lie.'

Whatever the case, Horace portrays Cleopatra as 'crazed with hope/ unlimited and drunk/ with sweet fortune' (10-12). She is everything a Roman should not be – irrational, unrestrained, disorderly and, although metaphorically drunk with grandiose and unrealistic ambitions, Horace may well also be

⁷⁵ 50.5.

referring to her (and Antony's) reputed love of a good party.⁷⁶ Although Antony is not referred to by name, Horace may well refer to him as one of her flock of filthy men 'diseased by vice' (8). West (1995:185) explains that the word *morbis*, 'disease,' which Horace uses, often refers to sexual perversion and that the Latin phrase in which it occurs, *contaminato cum grege turpium morbo virorum*, with the letter 'r' appearing five times in the last four words 'surely encourages us to read the last word *virorum*, 'men' as a sarcastic allusion to the eunuchs who were conspicuous in the court of the Ptolemies in Alexandria.' He adds, though, that 'the general import of the phrase is to suggest sexual licence, including the royal marriages between brother and sister such as Cleopatra's with her brother Ptolemy VII, and her other liaisons including those with Julius Caesar and now with Antony.'

In the fourth stanza (13-16), the insinuation of Cleopatra's dypsomaniacal tendencies is fortified with a reference to Mareotic wine:

'...But her madness

decreased when scarce a ship escaped the flames
and her mind, which had been deranged by Mareotic wine,
was made to face real fears
as she flew from Italy...'

West (1995:185) explains that Mareotic was a sweet wine, 'so when we are told that she was crazed with it, this strengthens the insinuation that she was drunk not only with sweet fortune but also with sweet Mareotic.' Horace states that when Cleopatra retreats from the naval battle of Actium, then her rationality and reason return and, for the first time, she understands and fears the power and danger that Octavian represents, not only to her dreams of taking Rome for herself, but to the very security of Egypt. However, here Horace deserts historical fact for literary embellishment. Firstly, we know that Actium hardly turned the sea red with blood, as Vergil will have us believe. We know, too, that Antony and Cleopatra escaped with most of her 60-ship fleet,⁷⁷ and not with 'scarce a ship' as Horace states in line thirteen. Furthermore, Cleopatra and Antony did not flee from Italy but from

⁷⁶ We remember that Antony had to write a rebuttal, *On His Own Drunkenness*, in response to charges levelled against him regarding his love of alcohol.

⁷⁷ Plut. *Ant.* 66.5; Dio Cass. 50.33.2-3.

the west coast of Greece. Horace obviously knew this and chose to ignore the inaccuracy, so as to remind his comrades of the threat Cleopatra posed to their homeland, and just how close she came to achieving it.⁷⁸ However, Horace's depiction of Cleopatra escaping by the skin of her teeth, with Octavian in hot pursuit, creates a grand and tragic climax in which she is forced, like many a good but vanquished Roman general, to kill herself, and through his ornamentation of the Battle of Actium, Horace contributes to the effect by which, in the last stanza, we are made to admire the noble fate of the Egyptian queen.

It is noticeable that at the end of this stanza, Octavian makes his appearance, exactly in the middle of the ode (16-21):

‘...and Caesar

pressed on the oars (like a hawk
after gentle doves or a swift hunter
after a hare on the snowy plains
of Thrace) to put in chains

this monster sent by fate...’

This is the central section of the poem, and in this stanza Cleopatra changes from a lunatic into a fear-stricken fugitive. Horace's choice of similes in this stanza is very interesting, for both portray Cleopatra in an arguably sympathetic light. For one who is referred to three lines later as a ‘monster sent by fate’ and, earlier, as a crazed and mad queen, now to be likened to a helpless, and, moreover, ‘gentle’ dove being pursued by a hawk reflects a dramatic change in perspective. There must be one of two reasons for this – either Horace has discovered in himself a new sympathy for the queen or else he has identified a hardness in Octavian to which he now alludes. The simile of Octavian as a swift hunter and Cleopatra as a hare is likewise confusing. Surely equating Cleopatra with a wild beast (or something a little more ferocious than a hare, perhaps) would have glorified Octavian's conquest of her in loftier terms, as well as highlighted Cleopatra's allegedly dangerous and evil

⁷⁸ West (1995:186).

character? Or is Horace simply paying Octavian a grand compliment – who was Cleopatra to think she stood any chance against the might of Octavian, and, behind him, Rome? Oliensis (1998:138) expands on the latter, offering that ‘the Roman general who reduces this male impersonator [Cleopatra] to the status of a properly feminine “soft dove” or fugitive “hare” (*mollis columbas aut leporem*, 18) figures, accordingly, as the champion of both sexual and political decorum. If the drunken queen embodies *impotentia*, Caesar is the very incarnation of Roman power.’ What follows these epic similes makes the context and content of the allusions even more confusing. We are told that Octavian (like a hunter, perhaps even like Achilles)⁷⁹ is pursuing Cleopatra (the frightened hare) so as to put this ‘monster sent by fate’ in chains. West (1995:187) argues that ‘it is very difficult to read this passage, either aloud or silently, without seeing the fatal picture of a huntsman struggling to put chains around a monstrous hare. ...It seems that in straining to make the episode as impressive as possible, Horace has run into a problem which he has not been able to solve. In addition to what we have noticed, Augustus did not pursue Cleopatra personally and the eleven months between Actium and the death of Cleopatra are dramatically telescoped. All in all, then, Horace has made full use of the motifs of Octavian’s propaganda, and has at several points even gone beyond it to heighten the case against Cleopatra.’⁸⁰

With the first five stanzas having reflected the satisfactions Romans would have felt at the death of this audacious and perverse enemy, the next three stanzas (21-32) reflect a shift in Horace’s tone. From now, a voice of muffled admiration transforms the poem into a grudging tribute to Cleopatra’s courageous spirit.⁸¹

‘...But she looked
for a nobler death. She did not have a woman’s fear
of the sword, nor did she make
for secret shores with her swift fleet.

⁷⁹ West (1995:186) describes the meaning of Horace’s choice of Thrace (or Haemonia), in line twenty, as the setting for his second simile: ‘Horace keeps up this epic tone by setting the hunting scene in Haemonia, which in Latin poetry is another name for Thessaly. The great warrior who learned his hunting on the slopes of Mount Pelion in Thessaly was Achilles... who, according to Pindar, ...could catch deer without dogs or traps by the speed of his running.’

⁸⁰ For a different perspective on these similes, see Lyne (1995:182-83).

⁸¹ Garrison (1991:254).

Daring to gaze with face serene upon her ruined palace,
and brave enough to take deadly serpents
in her hand, and let her body
drink their black poison,

fiercer she was in the death she chose, as though
she did not wish to cease to be a queen, taken to Rome
on the galleys of savage Liburnians,
to be a humble woman in a proud triumph.'

In the first five stanzas, Horace has done everything possible to contaminate the memory of Cleopatra, and this has, no doubt, been done for Augustus' enjoyment. However, in the very next sentence after which Cleopatra has been called a *fatale monstrum*,⁸² Horace credits her desire to die a noble death. Cleopatra has sought a death that is suitable for her royal ancestry, refusing to die like a hare or a dove at the hands of its predator, and refusing the fate Octavian has in store for her: being displayed in his triumphal procession and afterward executed in the Tullianum.⁸³

From this point on, Horace's ode changes from pedestrian to moving poetry, as his admiration for Cleopatra's final days outweighs the hatred of his earlier invective. Horace ignores, in these final stanzas, those traditions which portrayed Cleopatra as a coward at her end, preferring to construct her as a woman who remained loyal to her country unto death. There was the tradition that Cleopatra had decided to leave her palace in Alexandria and escape to the south by dragging her ships across the isthmus of Suez, and that she had been thwarted in this by the Arabs from Petra, who burnt her ships when they reached the eastern coast.⁸⁴ Horace could have referred to this oral tradition as Plutarch did later, or to the traditions that told of her betrayal of Antony in the final battle, and of her desperate attempts to seduce Octavian in the final days, but he chooses not to, and significantly, constructs Cleopatra as an honourable woman. Horace, in the true vein of Stoic attitudes towards suicide, constructs (21-24) a Cleopatra as brave as a Roman man in choosing suicide as her just fate,

⁸² Oliensis (1998:138) explains that this untranslatable phrase combines 'fateful portent', 'deadly monster' and *femme fatale*. To Horace, she was all these things, and yet still worthy of praise.

⁸³ Garrison (1991:256).

⁸⁴ Plut. *Ant.* 69.

and although she would have known that her defeat at Actium signalled Egypt's imminent subjection to Rome, now she does not desert her country. In his allusion to her lack of a womanly fear of the sword (22-23), Horace refers to the tradition that she attempted to stab herself in her tomb at Alexandria, but was prevented from doing so by Proculeius.⁸⁵ Thus, through this allusion, Horace confers the highest level of praise upon her.

In the seventh stanza (25-28), Horace describes how Cleopatra had the courage to gaze, with serenity, upon the ruin of her palace which represented the Hellenistic kingdom her Ptolemaic ancestors had built, but West (1995:188) indicates that there is no other record of such damage being done, or of Cleopatra watching it. The rest of this stanza is taken up with a description of the death Cleopatra chose for herself, with its 'philosophic equanimity that the Stoic Romans admired.'⁸⁶ Indeed, Cleopatra's suicide places her squarely in the tradition of the Roman noble death – a tradition that includes Cato, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius and Antony. Oliensis (1998:143) adds that as Cleopatra is Romanized, the comrades whom Horace calls to drink to her defeat are Egyptianized. Oliensis argues that "now" it is time to drink, to relax, to luxuriate – "now" is, in other words, the time for lyric and for Egypt. "Before," such indulgence would have been a sin – not only because it would have shown a lack of concern for the imperiled Republic, but because it would have blurred the distinction between sober Rome and inebriated Egypt. But in the new lyric era, such distinctions no longer need to be so zealously guarded. Horace's Roman comrades can enter into the Egyptian present because Cleopatra has disappeared into the Roman past.'⁸⁷

In this same stanza, first Horace has praised her for lacking a woman's fear, for seeking a noble death, for remaining faithful to that fate, and for gazing serenely on the ruin of her royal home; but now he praises her for her bravery (contrasted sharply with her fear at Actium) in handling the deadly asps that tradition dictates were her instruments of death.⁸⁸ The word that Horace uses to describe the snakes' heinousness (*asperas*) also means 'rough to the touch,' and thus this economical expression describes both the horror which touching the skin of the snakes might arouse in their

⁸⁵ Plut. *Ant.* 79.

⁸⁶ Garrison (1991:256).

⁸⁷ Oliensis (1998:143-44).

⁸⁸ Plutarch (*Ant.* 85-6) describes how in Octavian's triumph, an effigy of Cleopatra with asps clasped to her body was carried in lieu of her presence. Propertius reinforced this tradition, claiming that he had seen snakebites on her arm (3.11.53).

holder, as well as the ease with which the reptiles are provoked to attack with their deadly bite. The repetition of the 's' and 't' sounds in the Latin in lines twenty-six and twenty-seven (*fortis et asperas / tractare serpentis*) further adds to the scaly and sinister image of the snakes which engages the reader's senses so dramatically.⁸⁹ Thus, Horace creates an abhorrent atmosphere in which Cleopatra was willing not only to handle the snakes but also, once their bite in her flesh was secure, to drink their 'black poison' (line 27-28). This line (28) is a subtle reference to the opening line of the ode, in which Horace calls on his comrades to drink in celebration of Cleopatra's death. But whatever feeling of anticipation Horace might have aroused in the reader then is now extinguished in the image of Cleopatra's final moments, and the party atmosphere and scene described in the beginning will not be felt or alluded to again.

Cleopatra's grim route to self-destruction warrants and receives from Horace, in the final stanza, the unstifled appreciation so characteristic of Roman magnanimity towards the conquered. The tragic tone of the dramatic epitaph Horace offers her restores her from the mad woman she was in stanza two and the fugitive of stanza five, to the proud queen in the final stanza. Cleopatra perishes, fiercer and more regal in death than in battle. The Liburnians to which Horace refers in this final stanza are those same ships of Octavian's which had at Actium out-manoeuvred Cleopatra's own massive galleys, and which would have ferried her to Rome as a prisoner in Octavian's triumph. Ironically, in death she evades them and remains true to her vow: "οὐ θριαμβεύσομαι."

Although in the first half of the poem Horace goes out of his way to damage the character of Cleopatra, and in the second half does everything in his power to present her in a credible or sympathetic light,⁹⁰ Ode 1.37 is, in the opinion of scholars such as Levi, not an ode of honour to the Egyptian queen, even though it does greatly honour her.⁹¹ For Levi (1997:89) argues that the ode's 'hero is Caesar, and Cleopatra comes in only as his honoured victim...' However, Oliensis (1998:139-140) conceives of Horace's aims in this ode differently, stating that Horace could have continued in the same 'quasi-official' tone with which he began his ode until the close of the poem, with the death of Cleopatra, for this would have been the route of 'least resistance,' but instead he deserts this impersonal path by the sixth stanza. She states that Horace could have described the

⁸⁹ Garrison (1991:256).

⁹⁰ West (1995:188).

⁹¹ Levi (1997:89).

death of Cleopatra in terms as forceful as Propertius,⁹² or as gently as Vergil, whose defeated queen is embraced in the arms of the mournful Nile. Oliensis argues that in ‘returning to his convivial theme, he might have discovered a kind of poetic justice in Cleopatra’s suicidal drink: the wine-loving queen enjoys one last drink, yes, but a bitter one. ... We might also have expected some description of Caesar’s triumph – the triumph that Horace impatiently anticipated, along with the consumption of celebratory [wine]. “And so let us drink, friends,” he might have concluded, closing the ode with a reprise of its opening, “now that Caesar has banished our cares!”’⁹³

However, Horace has deliberately not done this and instead of accompanying the triumphant Octavian back to Rome, his ode has ended with the death of Cleopatra. As Oliensis (1998:140) concludes, ‘what these final stanzas give us, moreover, is a radically transformed Cleopatra, not a monster of vicious depravity but an emblem of virtuous nobility. In the midline gap between the objectified dehumanized neuter *monstrum* and the subjective feminine *quae*, Cleopatra’s transgression of natural categories is rearticulated as a form of transcendence. Instead of ruling a herd of unmanly men, Cleopatra – or rather the “man” in Cleopatra... – now rules herself. By committing suicide, by exercising unwomanly force upon her woman’s body, the once-impotent queen succeeds in ending her life in perfect self-possession.’

Thus Horace’s ode, 1.37, is aptly named by us the ‘*Cleopatra Ode*’ since its major interest lies in the metamorphosis of the barbarized Egyptian monarch into a person more Roman than Eastern in the reflection of her attitudes at death. While Octavian is certainly praised as the defender of Roman peace and security, Cleopatra displaces him as Horace’s centre of focus and praise. Thus while ‘Horace’s syntax may assign the “proud triumph” of the closing lines to Caesar, ...his rhetoric assigns it to Cleopatra, who thus acquires a glorious epitaph: *superbo / non humilis mulier triumpho*, “in proud triumph, no humble woman”[*Carm.* 1.37.31-2].⁹⁴ Caesar may have appreciated the obliquity of this poetic tribute, which lets him participate in an act of exemplary magnanimity while shielding him from the *invidia* to which the *triumphator* is especially vulnerable. But the obliquity serves the poet’s interests well. Horace uses Cleopatra ...to fend the emperor off; he celebrates her triumph so

⁹² 4.6.63-4.

⁹³ 1998:139-40.

⁹⁴ Or West’s literal translation: ‘of being taken unqueened to a proud triumph – no humble woman she.’ (1995:189).

as to avoid celebrating Caesar's.⁹⁵ Oliensis adds (1998:145) that 'while Cleopatra avoids being displayed at Caesar's triumph, she cannot avoid being made the subject of Horace's song. ...The *Princeps* of poets here fashions his own triumph at the expense of Caesar's and in the image of Cleopatra's.'

But as a court poet, whose poetry was created in part for the enjoyment of his patron and Augustus, why would Horace have constructed an ode which turns so unexpectedly away from its hero, Octavian, to sympathise with his enemy, Cleopatra? As has already been mentioned, in the first half of the ode, Horace had, by statement, insinuation and inaccuracy, exploited current propaganda to ruin, as best he could, her character. This invective exploits deep-seated Roman prejudices against female monarchs (6), Orientals (7) and their cowardice (16), and luxurious living (10-12), and Horace knew that Augustus would welcome such an attack.⁹⁶ So what brings about, in Horace, such a change of attitude and tone in his ode in the sixth stanza? West (1995:188-89) provides a range of possible answers to this question. For West concedes that while Horace's change in tone might derive from that Roman propensity to admire, with grudging compassion, this brave woman who suffers death in such adversity, this change of attitude in the poet is merely for artistic and melodramatic purposes. For in Horace, he sees no trace of any 'particularized understanding of Cleopatra's predicament.'⁹⁷ West believes that Horace's interpretation of the doom of Cleopatra is not insensitive to Octavian or at his expense. He argues, 'I think rather that Octavian and his advisers realized that little was to be gained by gloating over the death of a woman. He knew that even Romans were capable of pity and that Antony had been loved and admired. Clemency and civilization were to be planks in the new settlement and the public humiliation of Cleopatra would have been no way to demonstrate the magnanimity of the new regime. Certainly he arranged that the bodies of Antony and Cleopatra should be embalmed and buried in the same tomb.' As Nisbet and Hubbard conclude, 'The tale of Cleopatra's barbaric death was a godsend to Octavian's propaganda, and Horace certainly gives it centre stage. It is no bad thing in panegyric to exaggerate the pride and the ferocity of a patron's enemies after they are dead.'⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Oliensis (1998:140).

⁹⁶ West (1995:188-89).

⁹⁷ For a discussion of the artistic use of the antithetic images in the first and second halves of the ode, see West (1995:185).

⁹⁸ West (1995:189). *Clementia* was to be so promulgated in the *pax Augusta*, and reflected in such public monuments as the *Ara Pacis*.

2.4. Propertius

The last of the Roman poets to be discussed in this chapter is the elegist, Propertius. A generation younger than Vergil, but a great admirer of his work, Propertius was born in c. 50 B.C. Like Horace, Propertius also lost property in the confiscations of 41 B.C., but his equestrian family was never reduced to poverty. Lee (1996:ix) explains that Propertius was never burdened by the need to earn a living and that ‘while his spirit was naturally independent and irreverent, ...it was buttressed by the confidence that money and class tend to bring.’ Thus the elegist, unlike Horace and perhaps even Vergil, never needed to seek a patron under whom he could find economic protection, even though he did later join the literary circle presided over by Maecenas. But while this patron-client relationship, with the house of Maecenas offering a wonderful venue for recitations, served Propertius’ desire for exposure well, the elegist refused the requests of both Maecenas and the *Princeps* to write an epic poem glorifying Augustus. Indeed, of the three poets, Propertius, with his poetry which not infrequently undermined Roman patriotism, was likely the weakest conformist and supporter of Augustan legislation and military convention. An example of this defiance of principate propaganda is seen in 3.4.1, in which Propertius announces that ‘Caesar the God plans war;’⁹⁹ while in 3.5 he opens with ‘Love is the God of peace; we lovers venerate peace...’ Lee (1996:xiii) adds that in other poems, the elegist is openly mutinous in his political stance – even in the entourage of Maecenas; an example of this is 2.7, which celebrates the failure of that Augustan marriage legislation which might have jeopardized his relationship with his lover, Cynthia.

Even with regards to Rome’s victory at Actium, Propertius, in 2.15, defies the official stance of Augustus which described the battle as a war between the barbaric East and Rome, by writing blatantly about the *civil* war that Actium historically was:

‘If all were keen to engage in such a life [as Cynthia’s and mine]
And lie back, charging limbs with wine,
There’d be no cruel steel or men-of-war – no bones
Of ours would welter in Actium’s waves,

⁹⁹ Translation by Lee (1996). Unless mentioned otherwise, all translations of Propertius will be by Lee (1996).

Nor Rome, beset so often by her own successes,
Grow tired of loosening her hair in grief.
For this at least posterity can justly praise us:
Our battles have not yet grieved the Gods.’¹⁰⁰

However, by the release of Propertius’ fourth book of elegies, a patriotic flavour seasons his work even while the old hints of irreverence, mocking the ‘god Caesar’ in flippant tones, remain. As Ogilvie (1980:129-30) explains, in the short spell of thirteen years between the ‘publication’ of Book 1 in 29 B.C. and Book 4 in 16 B.C., Propertius’ attitudes are seen to undergo a radical transformation, and that, by the time 4.6 (with its castigating reference to Cleopatra) would have become known to the public, Propertius had already become an ‘apostle of the new regime.’

In a most interesting comparative analysis of Propertius and Mark Antony, Griffin (1985) explains that in order to understand the political and social flavour of Propertius’ elegies, and the lens through which the elegist interprets Cleopatra, one must first understand the close relationship between the literature and life of Rome in the first century B.C. For during this century, eastern influences in Rome were abundantly evident and manifest in day-to-day activities, buildings and cultural practices. Not only was Rome full of Greek intellectuals, but the city with its layout, aqueducts, basilicas, public baths, works of art on show, and its magnificent buildings of which Augustus boasted, were all unthinkable without Eastern influence.¹⁰¹ Prominent Romans’ love for Greece and Greek clothes, games, wines, cosmetics, perfumes and jewellery are likewise well-documented in the ancient sources,¹⁰² and the very circles in which the elegists mingled reflected a similar hankering towards the ‘*amours*, parties, drinking, jealousy and ...poetry and music’ so characteristic of the East.¹⁰³

It is well worth noting that this life of sloth and debauchery, *inertia* and *nequitia*, which Griffin (1985:6) claims the Augustan elegists proclaimed as their own, was that same lifestyle so generously subscribed to by Antony himself. As Propertius’ life of pleasure led naturally to the company of courtesans, so Antony’s led to that of disreputable comics, mimers and actors. Cicero claimed to

¹⁰⁰ 2.15.41-8.

¹⁰¹ Griffin (1985:6).

¹⁰² Prop. 1.8.39; 1.14.2; 2.29.17; Ovid *Ars am.* 3.133-68; Pliny *HN* 14.87; Suet. *Aug.* 98.

¹⁰³ Griffin (1985:6).

have been inflamed by the *mima uxor* of Antony and by his troops of mime actors of both sexes,¹⁰⁴ while even Augustus discreetly acknowledged his association with actors and his fondness of dicing,¹⁰⁵ a past-time similarly Eastern in inspiration.¹⁰⁶ This was reality for much of Roman upper-class society; that environment in which Antony delighted and in which Propertius' literary utopia with Cynthia was sustained. Antony was certainly not isolated in his love of luxurious imports from the East, wine and women – Griffin (1985:13) reminds us that Maecenas also delighted in eastern fabrics, jewels, wine, women, and his liaison with actors such as Bathyllus. Thus Griffin concludes that not only does literature imitate life, but life imitates literature, with the central question in Augustan poetry remaining that of the degree and manner of its removal from reality.¹⁰⁷ He concludes (1985:26) that 'in this we can make out ...a world thoroughly permeated with Hellenistic elements of every sort. They are not transporting the reader into a realm of pure fantasy, but making poetical ...a mode of life familiar to their readers.'

Is it possible then, that in Antony Propertius could empathize with one whose lifestyle closely resembled his own? Is it not likely, as Griffin argues later, that Propertius' presentation of himself in poetry as a romantic, reckless and obsessed paramour is closely related to the figure in history of Mark Antony?¹⁰⁸ Such surmises are certainly not wholly removed from the truth – Antony's relationship with the disreputable Volumnia Lycoris (who was later to become the mistress of Gallus) brought him into contact with the elegists, and it is not unlikely that Propertius would have heard from his predecessors in the genre of Roman elegy, tales and orally-transmitted anecdotes of Antony's hedonistic life of romance and luxury. Griffin (1985:42) points out that Propertius' life (as described in his poetry) bore far closer resemblance to Antony's than to that of a 'good Augustan citizen.' Like Antony, Propertius lived (or claimed to live) impulsively, renouncing Roman marriage for a relationship with a woman unrespectable by upper-class, Roman standards. Just as Antony's friends attempted to draw him away from Cleopatra, an influence in his destruction,¹⁰⁹ so did Propertius' friends attempt to lure him from Cynthia;¹¹⁰ as senatorial Romans criticized the lifestyle

¹⁰⁴ Cic. *Phil.* 2.20, 8.26.

¹⁰⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 45, 74.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Griffin (1985:19, 26).

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Plut. *Ant.* 68-69.

¹¹⁰ Prop. 1.1.25.

adhered to by Antony,¹¹¹ so was Propertius similarly condemned.¹¹² Griffin (1985:43) adds that above all, Antony was the slave of a woman, but that where this was, for some, a shameful state, it was, for an elegist, a great boast. Furthermore, in the early tradition of Cleopatra's death, as recorded by her physician, Olympus, Antony is shown dying 'a romantic Propertian death, after living, in many respects, the life which Propertius wished to live.'¹¹³ Griffin (1985:47) concludes that 'after all, if Antony had won the Battle of Actium, Propertius would have been an Antonian poet.'

Nevertheless, Actium was not won by Antony, and Propertius – like all the Augustan poets – follows largely the Augustan interpretation of Actium, as a war between Octavian and Rome, on the one hand, and Cleopatra and the East, on the other.

Propertius 3.11

'Why be surprised that a woman manages my life,
Leading my manhood captive as her slave,
Or frame a shameful charge of cowardice against me
Because I can't snap the yoke and break my chains?
The sailor better forecasts the movement of the winds,
The soldier has learnt from wounds to be afraid.
I too in past youth used your boastful language;
Let my present plight teach *you* to fear.

A Colchian girl yoked fiery bulls with adamant,
Sowed fights in armour-bearing ground,
And closed the guardian serpent's savage jaws
So golden wool could go to Aeson's house.
Proud Amazon Penthesilea once dared from horseback
Attack the Dánaän fleet with arrows,

¹¹¹ Plut. *Ant.* 9.

¹¹² Prop. 2.24; 2.30.13-14.

¹¹³ Griffin (1985:46).

And when the golden helmet had exposed her brow
Conquered the conqueror with her beauty.
Omphale advanced to such renown for beauty
(The Lydian girl who dipped in Gyges' lake)
That he who had raised his pillars in a world at peace
Spun her soft wool with horny hand.
Semiramis built the Persian city of Babylon,
Rearing a massive work with walls of brick
On which two chariots could be sent to pass each other
Without their sides being grazed by touching axles,
And she led Euphrates through the citadel she founded
And bade the Bactrians bow down to her rule.
For why should I drag heroes and why Gods into court?
Jove disgraces himself and his own house.

What of her who lately brought scandal on our arms,
A woman even laid by her own slaves?
As price of her foul marriage she demanded that Rome's walls
And Senators should pass into her power.
Delinquent Alexandria, land most attached to guile,
And Memphis, to our cost so often blood-stained,
Where sand denuded Pompey of three Triumphs,
That stigma Rome will bear for ever!
Better for you to have died on the Phlegrean plain
Or bowed the neck to your father-in-law.
The harlot queen forsooth of incestuous Canopus,
Sole stigma branded on us by Philip's blood,
Even dared oppose our Jove with her yelping Anubis,
Force Tiber to endure the threats of Nile,
Repulse the Roman trumpet with her jangling sistrum,
Chase beaked Liburnians with punt-poled barges,
Tent the Tarpeian rock with vile mosquito nets

And hold court next to Marius' arms and statues!
What was the use of breaking Tarquin's axes
(Whose proud life marks him with like name)
If now we had to endure a woman? Sing *Triumph*, Rome,
You're safe, and pray 'Long Live Augustus!'
You fled, though, to the wandering streams of frightened Nile;
Your hands accepted Romulus' fetters.
I saw your forearms bitten by the sacred snakes
And your limbs channelling sleep's hidden progress.
'With this great citizen, Rome, you need not have feared me',
So spoke even the tongue much wine had buried.

The lofty city on seven hills that rules the world
In terror feared the threat of a female Mars.
But Gods were founders of these walls and Gods protect them;
While Caesar lives Rome hardly need fear Jove.
...But, sailor, whether bound for port of leaving it,
On all the Ionian main remember Caesar.¹¹⁴

This is surely Propertius' most eloquent commentary on Cleopatra, and implicit in this elegy is the notion that Cynthia is to Propertius what Cleopatra is to Antony, and that Cleopatra has done to Rome what Cynthia has done to Propertius.¹¹⁵ It is also, like much of Propertian poetry, ambiguous, opening with a reminder of men dominated by women, but ending with a call to an anonymous Roman soldier to show gratitude to Augustus for his victory at Actium. Stahl (1985:235) argues that 'somewhere in between [the beginning and close of the elegy] the surface emphasis changes, from the Propertian to the Augustan point of view.'

Propertius begins his elegy describing his condition of bondage to his lover, Cynthia, and calls upon his censorer to learn from his example. He portrays how his love for this woman is so helpless, that she not only manages his life and leads her manhood captive as slave, but she is also the yoke and

¹¹⁴ 3.11.1-66, 71-2.

¹¹⁵ Stahl (1985:239).

chains from which he cannot break free. Yet Propertius refuses to acknowledge that his condition is wholly abnormal, and he gives a list of other equally compelling women, under whom heroic warriors were held captive by love. Medea (9-12) performed an array of supernatural feats – those which properly belonged to her lover – so that her love for Jason might be sustained. Penthesilea the Amazon (13-16) ‘dared attack the Greek ships; defeated, she won a victory over her conqueror, the hero of heroes, Achilles through the beauty which she still possessed in death. Queen Omphale of Lydia was so beautiful that the victorious Heracles, who had pacified the *world* and set up his trophies in the far west, helped her spin wool – with his warrior’s hands (17-20)! Semiramis built the strong city and citadel of Babylon and bade Bactra bow its head to her power: just as, we recall from line [two], Cynthia has extended her jurisdiction over Propertius (21-26).’¹¹⁶ Juxtaposed with these powerful women are placed both Cynthia and Cleopatra. Similarly, against the list of famous men conquered by such women (men the likes of Jason, Achilles and Heracles), Propertius compares himself and Antony. Not only does he appear to be insinuating that Cleopatra and Antony are worthy of being compared to such heroic mythological characters, but he is stating, as Stahl (1985:236-7) phrases it, that ‘there is no cowardice and nothing astonishing or abnormal in his [own] surrender to Cynthia, because enough instances are known, in which women ruled not only unimportant figures like poets, but held sway over undefeated warriors..., handled a man’s affairs..., acted as successful statesmen (Babylon), even bade other countries bow to their own (as Semiramis bade Bactra).’

Yet having described in epic terms a list of commanding women and heroic men, it is noticeably odd that Propertius describes Cleopatra in such scathing and scornful words. Instead of using the glamorizing tone he uses of Medea and the others, Propertius rather develops a lengthy attack on Cleopatra, glorifying Augustus for his victory over her, insinuating, ‘No wonder if I am dominated by a woman – look at Cleopatra.’¹¹⁷ We are reminded of Propertius’ earlier description of Antony in 2.16.37-40:

‘Look at the leader who lately, amid vain alarms, filled Actium’s bay with his doomed soldiers: a base love made him turn his ships in flight and seek refuge at the ends of the world.’¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Stahl (1985:236).

¹¹⁷ Griffin (1985:33-34).

¹¹⁸ Translated by Goold (1990).

Propertius' tone in this comparison of Cleopatra and Antony is clearly denigrating – 'Look at Antony: *infamis amor* was his ruin; glory to Octavian for his clemency.'¹¹⁹ Stahl (1985:237) adds that in 3.11.29-56, 'it appears strange that the *woman* shall be considered a possible object of *crimina*; even more strange that the poet allows her man (*coniugii*) to share the blame (*obsceni*, 31) – has Propertius not been on an excusing mission for himself, the man, rather than on an accusing one? ...Is Propertius torpedoing his own argument? Has he suddenly changed sides and accepted the censor's terms?'

In these lines, Propertius has moved from mythology into recent history, to include in his list of *exempla* his last couple, Antony and Cleopatra, of whose affair an official contemporary version already existed. Under an ambiguous veil of political sycophancy, Propertius now continues his original argument regarding the slavery of men to women in love. He is not torpedoing his earlier argument and he is certainly not changing sides as Stahl earlier questioned. In an excellent analysis of the intended meaning and implication of the second half of 3.11, Stahl (1985:238-47) explains that Propertius' own moral position 'has always been that responsibility towards the beloved ranks higher than responsibility towards the regime,' and yet the elegist still chooses to follow the charge levelled against Antony by official propaganda that 'to win Cleopatra's love, Antony even traded in his fatherland and allowed her to wage war against Rome. To understand the outrage fully, one must consider the male chauvinist ingredient in Roman political thinking. The point in our passage is that a woman who selects her own lovers from the flock of her slaves (30) and even includes a Roman citizen in this group (31) annihilates the traditional position of the Roman *pater familias* by inventing a female counterpart to it.'¹²⁰

But far more disturbing, Stahl goes on to argue, is the threat that Cleopatra posed to Rome, illustrated through Propertius' portrayal of Semiramis as the successful female statesman and conqueror. Through this *exemplum*, Propertius broadens his view from private (erotic) to public (political) rule exercised by women over men, hereby preparing the way for Cleopatra's political challenge to Rome. Thus 'Propertius, correspondingly, can implicitly compare himself not only to Antony but also to threatened Rome herself (58). ...We find him saying that there is nothing

¹¹⁹ Griffin (1985:34).

¹²⁰ Stahl (1985:238).

astonishing in subjugation to (or by) a woman, since, apart from the cases already mentioned, this has already happened to a Roman *triumvir*, and would have happened to Rome itself and its senators if this other woman had only had her own way...'¹²¹

Propertius goes on to include, very subtly and in a manner most politically correct – if one can use this term to reflect the politics of Rome in the first century B.C. – Julius Caesar in the list of men dominated by women, with Cleopatra being the seductress once again. In only six lines, Propertius manages not only to provide a geographical background to the rule of Cleopatra, but a sly mention of her lover, whose liaison with Cleopatra was not too dissimilar to Antony's.

‘Delinquent Alexandria, land most attached to guile,
And Memphis, to our cost so often blood-stained,
Where sand denuded Pompey of three Triumphs,
That stigma Rome will bear for ever!
Better for you to have died on the Phlegrean plain
Or bowed the neck to your father-in-law [Julius Caesar].'¹²²

This arch-seductress, Propertius will have us remember, not only caused Julius Caesar (Augustus' adoptive father) to fall under her spell such that 'he reinstated her as queen..., but also, when being besieged with her in Alexandria in the winter of 48/47 B.C., was himself on the brink of having to give up Rome, political career, and even his physical existence.'¹²³ Furthermore, her threat to Rome was made even more acute by her presence there from that time on until Caesar's death in 44 B.C. So, why then, if to mention the affair of Cleopatra and Augustus' predecessor would simply not have been appropriate in the Augustan age, does Propertius so elusively include a reference to Julius Caesar in 3.11? Stahl (1985:242) argues that to include this reference 'would be the most beautiful confirmation of Propertius' original thesis that surrender of a man to a woman, even at the price of his career, is nothing extraordinary if the poet could include Caesar ...among his examples. ...It must have been a deep satisfaction to the poet that his talent allowed him to enlist the Emperor's "father" as a witness for the defence against the charges he had to face from circles close to Augustus' moral

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 239.

¹²² Prop. 3.11.33-38.

¹²³ Stahl (1985:240).

restoration because of his all-consuming love for Cynthia.’

In conclusion, then, Propertius has not strayed from his original argument examining the power of female influence over men. Cleopatra’s ambitious desire to exercise jurisdiction over Roman men and Rome itself, is expanded upon throughout the course of the elegy, so as to justify the poet’s feelings of helplessness caused by Cynthia’s similar power over him. By directing attention to the abominable Cleopatra, Propertius distracts the sole blame and criticism away from himself, arguing ‘before blaming me, direct your criticism against the influence which Caesar’s mistress exercised in Rome!’¹²⁴ Similarly, Propertius, by using and expanding upon the example offered by Cleopatra’s relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, further defends his ‘Romanness’ and his manhood as defined by his culture and the expectations it placed on him in the context of his relating to women. The mythological examples offered in 3.11.9-26 had done well to prove that his subjugation by a woman was certainly not abnormal, but the victims of Cleopatra – Caesar, Antony and Rome itself – have disclosed that he cannot even be called un-Roman.¹²⁵

Finally, the elegy succeeds in not only offering a delightful defence for Propertius against his perceived accuser, but it also manages to include a deferential compliment to the *Princeps* himself:

‘Sing *Triumph*, Rome,
You’re safe, and pray ‘Long Live Augustus!’¹²⁶
...But Gods were founders of these walls and Gods protect them;
While Caesar lives Rome hardly need fear Jove.’¹²⁷

Propertius calls upon the anonymous sailor to whom his poem is directed to extol the glory and invincibility of the *Princeps*, and reminds him that while the gods, supporting and directing Romulus, founded the greatness of Rome, Augustus continues to protect and save Rome and her citizens from the rule of, and subjection to, foreign women the likes of Cleopatra.

¹²⁴ Stahl (1985:243).

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 244.

¹²⁶ 3.11.49-50.

¹²⁷ 3.11.65-6.

Thus 3.11, while being the elegy which refers to Cleopatra most directly and pointedly, does not really reflect Propertius' personal views on her character in any conclusive manner. Cleopatra's presence in the poem exists solely to offer a philosophical example by which Propertius may defend his own relationship with Cynthia. The elegist is not interested in the details of Cleopatra's personality, rule or relationship with Antony. His sole motive for the poem is to explain and justify why his woman manages his life (1), leads his manhood captive as slave (2), and why he cannot break free from the yoke of her domination (4). Cleopatra serves as a wonderful contemporary example by which he can free himself of guilt and blame, and from the charges of cowardice and unmanliness. Thus while she is termed *meretrix regina* ('harlot queen' [39]), *famulos inter femina trita suos* ('laid by her own slaves' [30]), Propertius seems to be happy to employ that invective levelled against Cleopatra following Actium, while remaining seemingly disinterested in, and even indifferent to, her actual character. Like all the Augustan poets, Propertius follows the Augustan interpretation of Actium, and is committed to employing that spiteful hostility and loathing for Cleopatra that was almost expected of Romans following her defeat and death in 30 B.C. However, this willingness to oblige Augustan expectation could simply have been to humour his patron and the current Roman ideology circulating Roman society two decades after Actium.

Having examined ancient literary constructions of Cleopatra in Plutarch, Vergil, Horace and Propertius, in my next chapter I will examine William Shakespeare's play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, to discuss how Cleopatra's identity evolved over the approximate fifteen-century period separating the Greek and Roman writers and the Renaissance playwright. In the course of the chapter I will discuss to what extent Shakespeare relied on the Greek and Roman constructions of Cleopatra examined in the first two chapters of this dissertation, in his own depiction of Antony and Cleopatra.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1. Introduction to Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Although *Antony and Cleopatra*, the second of William Shakespeare's love-tragedies, was listed in *The Stationer's Register* in May 1608, it did not appear in print until 1623.¹ It is generally accepted that the play was written in 1606 or 1607,² shortly after *King Lear* (1605) and *Macbeth* (1606), and probably before *Coriolanus* (1607-8). Described by Coleridge as 'of all perhaps of Shakespeare's plays the most wonderful,'³ but by a more contemporary scholar as 'the delight of audiences and the despair of critics,'⁴ there exists an undeniable plurality of critical response to the play, which testifies not only to the complexity and richness of Shakespeare's characters and dramatic technique, but also to scholars' inability to agree upon the nature and success of Shakespeare's creation and depiction of, most importantly, Cleopatra, Antony, Caesar, Rome and Egypt. In writing *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare was dealing with one of the best-known love stories in the world, one already alluded to in every kind of literary genre, and he rose to the challenge to create a daringly original interpretation of the sources. Regarding the play Muir (1972:156) states that 'those who allow that it is one of the greatest of Shakespeare's tragedies are divided between those who think that the protagonists are *exempla* of transcendental humanism, and those who believe that the world was ill lost.' It is worth remembering, however, that this conflict in response to Cleopatra and her doomed relationship with Antony was already prevalent in the ancient sources, as even Horace, arguably Augustus' *poet laureate*, grudgingly praises Cleopatra in Ode 1.37, which otherwise celebrates the defeat of Antony at Actium.⁵

Although in theme, structure, and rhetoric, *Antony and Cleopatra* is strikingly different from Shakespeare's earlier plays, the play is also, to a degree, a sequel to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, with both plays sharing a similar focus on a critical period in Roman history: the intersection of the

¹ de Sousa (2002:129).

² MacCallum (1967:300); Mack (1973:79); Quennell and Johnson (1973:15); Mangan (1991:213); Kernan (1995:106, 120); Honan (1999:343); Kermode (2000:217).

³ Coleridge (1907:316).

⁴ Mack (1973:79).

⁵ See chapter 2 of this dissertation for a detailed interpretation of Horace's attitudes towards Cleopatra.

collapse of the Republic and the birth of the Augustan Empire. Like *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* is modelled largely on Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, which was available to Shakespeare in the English translation of Sir Thomas North, made from Amyot's French translation (1559) of the Greek.⁶ The general incidents of Shakespeare's play are drawn from Plutarch, but while this play relies upon information gleaned from other ancient sources, particularly from Appian, and, to a lesser degree, Vergil, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals an independence from any source he may have used, opting for a blend of fidelity and freedom in his treatment of the sources.⁷ Furthermore, as Miola (1983:117-8) explains: 'the ten years or so that separate *Antony and Cleopatra* from *Julius Caesar* span the most creative period in Shakespeare's life and mark the height of his poetic development. ...As before, Shakespeare practices an eclectic syncretism: he borrows incidents, themes and images from various sources – classical and contemporary – and combines them into new wholes. The fusing process remains essentially the same, but the final product is different, created by a higher level of imaginative energy acting on a wider range of diverse elements. These elements – variously popular, recondite, historical, literary, iconographical, and mythological – combine to create moments of extraordinary poetic texture and resonance, moments very different from any of the parts in their making.' Apart from the rich melting pot of traditions and elements upon which the play draws, *Antony and Cleopatra* is made even more accessible and attractive to modern audiences by the plausibility of the narrative, for as Mack (1973:79) contends, 'there are no witches in *Antony and Cleopatra* to require a mild suspension of disbelief, no ghosts, no antic madmen, no personages who are paragons of good or evil, nor even any passions ...which require of today's spectator an act of imaginative adjustment.'

As with Plutarch and the Roman sources, Shakespeare, in redefining historical characters for his construction of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, must be held under the scrutiny of the lens of historicity. In this light, I cannot agree with Jameson, who offers that 'the reverence and the simpleness of heart with which Shakespeare has treated the received and admitted truths of history – I mean according to the imperfect knowledge of his time – is admirable: his inaccuracies are

⁶ Sandler (1986:125). Although Plutarch was Shakespeare's main source, it is important to remember that this was a source mediated through the Elizabethan translation of North, an indirect translation of the original Greek. In this chapter, Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (mediated through Amyot's French translation) will be used, since this is the translation Shakespeare used in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Sir Thomas North's *Life of Marcus Antonius* is taken from Bullough (1964).

⁷ Miola (1983:116); Kermode (2000:217). Pelling (1988:37) notes that the information Shakespeare drew from Appian relates particularly to Sextus Pompeius, dismissed very rapidly in Plutarch (*Ant.* 32).

few; his general accuracy, allowing for the distinction between the narrative and the dramatic form, is acknowledged to be wonderful. He did not steal the precious material from the treasury of History to debase its purity, new-stamp it arbitrarily with effigies and legends of his own devising, and then attempt to pass it current, like Dryden, Racine, and the rest of those poetic coiners: he only rubbed off the rust, purified and brightened it, so that History herself has been known to receive it back as sterling.⁸ While Jameson is correct in drawing attention to the uniqueness of Shakespeare's portrayal of his historical characters of the play, such rhetorical descriptions of Shakespeare's contribution to history in the context of this play can hardly dim one truth that has already been established thus far: that whatever Cleopatra was really like we will never know, for whatever we perceive in her character – her wiles, the authenticity of her love for Antony and the maternal aspect of her personality – is simply the reconstruction and presentation of her by one or another writer, artist or playwright, and each with his own artistic motives in mind. To what extent Shakespeare subscribes loyally to his ancient sources – Plutarch in particular – is far easier to gauge, and in this assessment, Jameson is perhaps more accurate. As has already been established, Shakespeare does follow closely the historical account of Plutarch (filtered, of course, through North's translation), even though he places his emphases on different events. For example, while Plutarch discusses the motherhood of Cleopatra and, like Appian, Antony's relationship with Fulvia and her revolt against Octavian in detail,⁹ Shakespeare dramatizes none of this, since the focus of his play remains essentially the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra and the dynamics sustaining that relationship. We will see, too, how Shakespeare departs from Plutarch's construction of Cleopatra, preferring to pursue an independent (and, in comparison to Plutarch, a more lively) characterization of the Egyptian queen. It must also be remembered that some parts of Plutarch's narrative simply could not be translated into a dramatic script. While individual scenes from Plutarch (such as Cleopatra's death) transpose very readily for the stage, the first third of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* – with its list of Antony's youthful excesses – was least suitable for dramatic transposition.¹⁰ However, what remains and what we must recognize, as Scott-Kilvert (1965:351) aptly encapsulates it, is that 'we are confronted as it were with a triptych of the subject – the partial portrait of Plutarch, the dramatized portrait of Shakespeare, and the shadowy but far from identical portrait of history.'

⁸ Jameson (1913:219).

⁹ App. 5.14, 19, 21, 52, 59, 66; Plut. *Ant.* 28.1, 30.1, 72.1, 82; see also chapter 1 of this dissertation for a discussion of Cleopatra in these contexts.

¹⁰ Pelling (1988:38).

But perhaps most striking in contrast to Plutarch's *Life of Antony* is Shakespeare's critical conception of Rome and Roman values in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Following closely the example of the Roman poets, Vergil, Horace and Propertius, Rome and Egypt are constructed in Shakespeare's play as both physical localities and imagined ideals, with the play exploring the 'struggles of Romans with Rome, ...the resulting conflict between private needs and public responsibilities by again focussing on the Roman code of honour, shame, and fame; the paradoxes implicit in Roman ceremony and ritual; the political motifs of rebellion and invasion. ...*Antony and Cleopatra* explores the predicament of the living human beings who must define themselves against the oppressive background of Roman tradition and history.'¹¹ Plutarch, admittedly relying on the evidence provided by the imperial poets, glorifies the grandeur of Rome through his construction of Octavian, whereas Shakespeare will have us believe that 'kingdoms are clay, [and] it is paltry to be Caesar.'¹² In Shakespeare's tragedy, where, incidentally, the playwright ignores Greece to develop the contrast between the spheres of Cleopatra and Caesar more acutely,¹³ Rome and Alexandria are set apart as binary opposites, each with its own distinctive style and values. However, the contrasts of the play are not limited to Rome and Egypt but include the tensions between, and the shared affinities of, those opposing energies of the heroic and the amorous (and the amorous and the impotent), love and war, hedonism and virtuous restraint, lust and love, seduction and sex, the socially elevated and the socially confined, and defeat and exulted restoration. In no other account of Antony and Cleopatra are such tensions manifest or so maturely developed – indeed, we are made to realize that Antony's tragic fall results more from a complex relationship than simply an affair between a man and a woman, even though this is, for Shakespeare, the main theme of *Antony and Cleopatra*. However, as Sandler (1986:124) reminds us, 'the most elementary way of misreading this play is to turn it into either a moral or a romantic melodrama, against or for Cleopatra. ...Both views are cop-outs: what we have to make sense of is a tragedy, not a morality play or a sentimental love story.'

¹¹ Miola (1983:116).

¹² Scott-Kilvert (1965:351).

¹³ In this chapter, I have followed Shakespeare's practice, referring to Octavian, in reference to the play, as 'Caesar.'

3.2. Shakespeare's Use of the Roman Sources

Although Shakespeare unarguably uses as his primary source Plutarch, there is plenty of evidence – especially in his portrayal of Rome and Egypt in *Antony and Cleopatra* – to suggest that Shakespeare was indebted to the ideology inherent in the works of Vergil, Horace and Propertius. With the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium and their deaths the following year, a vacuum in biographical literature existed, in which their story was left, in the years following Actium, to the pens of the imperial Roman poets. Cleopatra's roles in challenging the god-ordained destiny of Rome were, as chapter two has shown, embellished and multiplied, as she was portrayed as a power-possessed queen with the irrational and unfathomable animal deities of Egypt acting as her support. Antony was barely mentioned by these poets: while Vergil reduces him simply to the status of Cleopatra's barbaric appendage, bringing with him 'Egypt and every power of the East,'¹⁴ Horace does not even mention his name, although he may be implied to be one of Cleopatra's 'contaminated flock of men/ diseased by vice.'¹⁵ However Plutarch's interest in Antony and Cleopatra is invested in each individual's character, and in his aims to draw, from their lives, a moral example his audience could learn from. Egypt and Rome, while possessing distinctly different cultures and races of people, exist, for Plutarch, as mere geographical entities, not ideological and symbolic worlds of their own.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, fluctuates in his play between the two different constructions of Egypt and Rome offered by his Greek source, Plutarch, and by the earlier Roman poets, Vergil, Horace and Propertius; portraying Rome and Egypt not simply as distinct geographical entities, but as regions as rich in character as Antony, Cleopatra and Caesar themselves. Although Rome and Egypt are comparatively created by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* as the antitheses of the other, the Renaissance playwright, like Plutarch, is nevertheless careful, in his construction of Antony, not to categorize his hero solely in terms of either place's values.¹⁶ In Plutarch, we read how in Rome, Antony displays those same behavioural delinquencies so often associated, in Roman poetry and literature, with the East – debauchery, excessive spending, gambling, and sexual immoderation. In Alexandria, however, Antony dies the most Roman death, proudly reclaiming the values embraced by his fatherland. In Shakespeare, these paradoxes are even more sharply contrasted, as are the

¹⁴ *Aen.* 8.687 (Mandelbaum).

¹⁵ *Carm.* 1.37.7-8 (West).

¹⁶ Pelling (1988:39).

characteristic distinctions between Rome and Egypt.

In this world, Shakespeare (inspired by the Roman poets) creates a reality with the poles of sensual Egypt and repressed Rome defining the boundaries of all action and thought within the play. Following Octavian's victory at Actium, Vergil, in his *Aeneid*, had been careful to categorize the protagonists of the battle – Antony and Octavian – in terms of either character's distinct national and cultural identity. Thus we read that Augustus Caesar leads the Italian race – including the gods and political structures of Rome – to war against Antony, who is constructed as having his dominions in the East, supported with its barbaric riches and the love of Cleopatra and Egypt.¹⁷ Similarly, in Horace's 'Cleopatra Ode' (1.37), the East is symbolized by moral, intellectual and cultural perversion, with its mad queen (Cleopatra) crazed and drunk with unrealistic political ambition, and with its eunuchs contaminated by vice. Antony is too despicable to be mentioned, and Cleopatra – again, not mentioned by name – is reviled as the monster sent by fate, the *fatale monstrum*. In Propertius' elegy (3.11), the Egyptian queen is categorized in a class with intimidating, mythological, foreign women – such as Medea, Penthesilea and Omphale. Yet she is worse than these women for she is a queen who publicly, Propertius would have us believe, defies normal social boundaries by engaging in intercourse with her slaves. While the gods are described as being incestuous, the city of Alexandria, too, is vilified as a delinquent land most attached to guile. Thus Shakespeare identifies in the Roman sources a literal and figurative polarization of the two worlds of Egypt and Rome (East and West), and like Vergil, Horace and Propertius, Shakespeare also develops the tensions set up by, and latent in, the antithetical constructions of each.

Choosing not to be bound by the prosaic parameters of Plutarch, Shakespeare achieves a sense of expansiveness in his created worlds of Egypt and Rome, punctuated often by the presence of messengers traversing the geographical boundaries in the play, whose lack of involvement in the action ensures that the narrative remains uncluttered. In this manner, Shakespeare makes us aware not merely of the diplomatic activities, but of the great world which depends on them, with the power of the principals, the 'pillars of the world,' being repeatedly emphasized.¹⁸

However, the Roman poets create a historical reality in which there can never be anything but one

¹⁷ *Aen.* 8.678-89 (Mandelbaum).

¹⁸ Pelling (1988:40).

world leader – Caesar. While Vergil is not excessively complimentary to Octavian in his depiction of Cleopatra and Egypt in the shield of Aeneas in the eighth book of the *Aeneid*, earlier on in the same work, the poet is emphatic that Octavian shall be the only world leader:

‘[He] shall extend his empire to the ocean,
his glory to the stars, a Julius, name descended from great Iulus!’¹⁹

At the battle of Actium, Vergil portrays Octavian as having the support not only of the entire political and social systems of Rome, but also that of the Roman gods, not to mention the divine providence of the Julian *gens*, represented by the twin flame and Julian star adorning the Roman leader’s head. Cleopatra (Antony’s ‘Egyptian wife’) is damned by Fate (symbolized by the twin serpents approaching her vessel in the waters at the Bay of Actium) before the battle has even been decided. At Horace’s contrived battle of Actium, Cleopatra’s political ambitions (to beat Octavian, to ruin the Roman Capitol and annex it for herself) are portrayed as being unrealistically absurd, and as the ode opens we already know from the celebratory call that Cleopatra has long since been vanquished. Horace constructs an Actium so weighed in Rome’s favour that scarcely an enemy ship escapes the flames, and, like a helpless dove pursued by a hawk, Cleopatra flees Actium for Italy, pursued by Octavian. Finally, Propertius too, alludes to the inevitability of Rome (and Octavian) ruling as the superpower of the ancient world:

‘But Gods were founders of these walls and Gods protect them;
While Caesar lives Rome hardly need fear Jove.’²⁰

However, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the pillars of the world are not restricted to the might of one man, but they are embodied in Caesar, *and* in Antony and Cleopatra. Caesar represents Rome; Cleopatra, Egypt; and Antony seems to spend his energies vacillating between the two. While Caesar is portrayed in this play as a man ‘so terrified of losing control he must ‘possess’ time and never submit to it,’²¹ Antony’s identity is so dislocated that he cannot decide which set of values affirm his sense of self best. While Antony attempts to assimilate an identity from either world, he will find in

¹⁹ 1.287-88 (Fairclough).

²⁰ 3.11.65-66 (Lee).

²¹ Kiernan (1996:162).

Cleopatra not an 'Egyptian identity to replace his Romanness but an escape from the Roman principle of identity itself.'²² And while Caesar succeeds in subduing the world to one super-power, Cleopatra represents – even and especially in her death – a world that eludes the Roman drive towards unification and control, and an identity which testifies that Rome's dominion is not all.²³

Thus Shakespeare's Rome, like that of Horace and Vergil, is not merely a city but a worldwide Empire in itself.²⁴ However, while in the Roman sources this empire is based on war and territorial expansion, the empire which is Antony and Cleopatra's relationship in the play is an empire based on love; a territory to be discovered, explored, claimed and possessed. It is an empire in which '[b]oth lovers write large, in the marketplace of Alexandria and on the maps of Asia, the erotic energies of their union, as Caesar's description of the occasion seems to understand.'²⁵

'Contemning Rome, he has done all this and more
In Alexandria. Here's the manner of't:
I' th' market-place, on a tribunal silver'd,
Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
Were publicly enthron'd...' (III, vi, 1-5)²⁶

In Shakespeare's depiction of the world of love in the play, Cleopatra and Antony are rulers, and Caesar poses no threat to their leadership:

CLEOPATRA. I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony – (V, ii, 76)
.....
His face was as the heav'ns; and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O, the earth. (V, ii, 79-81)
.....

²² Cook (1996:246).

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Miola (1983:117).

²⁵ Mack (1973:109).

²⁶ In this dissertation, unless stated otherwise, all excerpts from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* are taken from Alexander (1985).

His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
Crested the world... (V, ii, 82-83)

.....

...In his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket. (V, ii, 90-92).

Thus Shakespeare's empire of love – so intertwined with Antony's identity as a soldier – introduces yet another dimension of spaciousness absent from the Roman sources. Shakespeare's world in the play is not simply a geographical, territorial empire (even though its context is the palace of Alexandria in the land of Egypt), but an emotional and sexual world, in which, as Antony acknowledges, no-one, not even the historical heroes of past or present, can equal or diminish the couple's fame, nor take away from its empire, territory:

ANTONY. ...The nobleness of life
Is to do thus [*embracing*], when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless (I, i, 36-40);

and, later, as Antony, having been deliberately misinformed of Cleopatra's 'death,' prepares to join her:

'Eros! – I come, my queen. – Eros! – Stay for me;
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours. – Come, Eros, Eros!' (IV, xiv, 50-54).

Again, it should be reiterated that the paradoxical worlds of Egypt and Rome, the empires of love and war, which Shakespeare borrows from the Roman sources and expands upon, cannot act as concrete parameters within which the identity of each character of the play is defined. For example,

inasmuch as Rome is depicted as abhorring and even fearing the powerful, living identity of Egypt, Rome was, contrary to what the imperial poets of the Augustan Age would have us believe, simultaneously drawn to her: the allure of Egypt for Rome lay in her territory, which, with its abundance of corn,²⁷ epitomized the most enticing trophy in the Mediterranean.²⁸ Thus even as the play opens, it is clear that the worlds of Egypt and Rome cannot simply exist as the exclusive poles wholly separate from the other as depicted by Horace – for as much as they represent ideals diametrically opposite to the other, a simultaneous pluralism in identity exists for those who venture between them. Indeed, wholesale schematization, ‘with its orderly symmetries, seems itself a Roman principle to which this extravagant play [and its characters, Antony and Cleopatra] cannot be quite reduced.’²⁹

Thus the construction of Rome, in Vergil, Horace and Propertius, as the only real world super-power, is borrowed by Shakespeare, but so as to set it in opposition to the supernatural super-power of Egypt. For while ‘Rome extends its power to subdue all cultural, political, and geographical difference to one rule,’³⁰ Shakespeare’s Egypt, on the other hand, seems to possess a supernatural identity which exists independently of the circumstantial making of history, with even the natural ecology of the land breathing its own expansive life.³¹ Caesar’s sense of purpose and social responsibility stands in direct opposition to Cleopatra’s love of idleness and luxury,³² and where Rome is cold, hard, sterile and ‘ruled by the exigencies of time and history,’ Egypt is a land of variety

²⁷ See Garnsey (1988:218-27) for a discussion of the food crises in post-Republican and Imperial Rome, and food supply, for Rome, from Egypt.

²⁸ Scott-Kilvert (1965:352).

²⁹ Cook (1996:251).

³⁰ *ibid.*, 246.

³¹ This concept of Egypt as a land breathing its own life is found also in Tibullus (1.7.23-28): ‘Oh where hast thou hid thy head, Father Nile? ’Tis because of thee that thy land thirsts not for rain: thee the youth worship, with Osiris and with Apis’ (Ramsay).

³² Miola (1983:129).

and flux:³³ lush, sensual, fertile; ‘a place less of time and history than of myth and dream.’³⁴

In the tension created by the two incompatible life systems meeting together in and because of the figure of Antony, what Rome threatens and what Cleopatra fears, is sterility. Conversely, what Cleopatra threatens and what Rome fears, is fecundity.³⁵ Nevertheless, the outcome of this power struggle between Shakespeare’s life-giving land of Egypt and his life-restricting empire of Rome is almost predictable, for ‘in the course of the play Pompey, the Parthians, Egypt, and the triumvirate itself – the heterogeneous political forces of the world – are subsumed by Caesar’s political supremacy... [as] he becomes the “universal landlord.”’³⁶

The Roman poets have already revealed how the fundamental principle of Roman masculinity is founded, in Aeneas and Augustus, on a premise of ‘self-conquest, denial of the body, and creation of the self in the abstract image of the state.’³⁷ Shakespeare, in alluding closely to Plutarch’s account of Antony’s example to his troops in the face of extreme adversity (I, iv, 56-71) colludes then with the Roman sources that if these attributes – conquest, self-denial, virility, and the subjugation of the body to the ends of the state – are the values by which ‘Romanness’ is recognized, then Antony has proven himself to be the exemplary Roman citizen. The depiction of him as such serves to magnify the distance Shakespeare’s hero will later fall in his pursuit of love and a life with Cleopatra in Egypt.

Shakespeare, however, does not simply polarize Rome and Egypt ideologically, ecologically and supernaturally in opposition to one another. Like Vergil, Propertius and Horace, Shakespeare defines his Egypt also (most especially to the Romans of the play) as a land of cultural and sexual inversion. This concept of cultural inversion in Egypt derives, ultimately, from the *Histories* of Herodotus,

³³ Antony (II, vii, 20-26) depicts the cycles of the Nile as part of a sexual, procreative process:

‘...they take the flow o’ th’ Nile
By certain scales i’ th’ pyramid; they know
By th’ height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth
Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells
The more it promises; as it ebbs, the seedsman
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,
And shortly comes to harvest.’ (cf. Tibullus 1.7.23-48).

³⁴ Cook (1996:251).

³⁵ Kiernan (1996:162).

³⁶ Cook (1996:246-7).

³⁷ *ibid.*, 247.

whose ideological definition of Egypt may well have served as a stimulus in the imperial writers' own invective against Cleopatra and the land over which she ruled:

'The Egyptians themselves in their manners and customs seem to have reversed the ordinary practises of mankind. For instance, women attend market and are employed in trade, while men stay at home and do the weaving. In weaving the normal way is to work the threads of the weft upwards, but the Egyptians work them downwards. Men in Egypt carry loads on their heads, women on their shoulders; women pass water standing up, men sitting down. ...Elsewhere priests grow their hair long: in Egypt they shave their heads.'³⁸

In the narrative of the play, both Cleopatra and Caesar refer to the inversion of gender roles (as constructed by the Romans) in the context of her relationship with Antony. However, while Cleopatra can justify such behaviour as her natural right, Caesar, like Horace, can only scorn such conduct. Cleopatra sees her kingdom as a place in which she is conceived, in Egyptian terms at least, as a supernatural creation, and for her, 'it is a region of trans-shifting shapes and forms where men behave like women, women behave like men, and both act like gods.'³⁹ Rome's attitude to Antony's perceived integration into the inverted, orgiastic and copious life of Egypt is reflected in the scathing words of Caesar:

'This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
More womanly than he...' (I, iv, 4-7).

To Shakespeare's Caesar (who has been regarded by many scholars conversely to epitomise the values of the Roman world in *Antony and Cleopatra*) and to the Roman poets, Antony's epicurean tastes are simply seen to be inverted, irrational and intolerable. Caesar cannot see Antony's relationship with Cleopatra in any terms other than an uncontrolled kinsman who has combined forces

³⁸ 2.35 (de Sélincourt).

³⁹ Miola (1983:129). Miola adds here that 'in her interview with the messenger, for example, Cleopatra sees herself as Jove, promising to rain down a "shower of gold" (II, v, 45), and then threatening to use Jove's weapon: "Some innocents escape not the thunderbolt" (II, v, 77).'

with a turbulent, foreign witch. Philo, too, in the first scene of the play, echoes the typically Roman xenophobia towards Cleopatra and Egypt:

‘Nay, but this dotage of our general’s
O’erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
That o’er the files and musters of the war
Have glow’d like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front. His captain’s heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy’s lust.’ (I, i, 1-10).⁴⁰

The same spirit of criticism so integral to Roman concepts of inverted or perverted gender roles, is present in the words of Propertius, as he attempts to justify the master-slave relationship he is involved in with his lover:

‘Why be surprised that a woman manages my life,
Leading my manhood captive as her slave,
And frame a shameful charge of cowardice against me
Because I can’t snap the yoke and break my chains?
The sailor better forecasts the movement of the winds,
The soldier has learnt from wounds to be afraid.
I too in past youth used your boastful language;

⁴⁰ While the word ‘gypsy’ was an Elizabethan term for a whore, de Sousa (2002:141-6) explains that Philo’s association of Cleopatra with gypsies reflects a confusion between Egyptians and gypsies reflected by Elizabethan writers, for whom these two unrelated ethnic groups became one. He writes, ‘[f]or the Elizabethans, the inhabitants of Egypt were not only ancient Egyptians but also gypsies.’ He adds that while the historic gypsies originated in northwest India, in Renaissance England, gypsies were thought to have come from Egypt. Thus, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the words ‘gypsy’ and ‘Egyptian’ were interchangeable. Gypsies were stereotyped as thieves and seductive dancers (Boorde, 1548), given to sloth and luxury (Heylen, 1625). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, ‘Shakespeare incorporates Elizabethan notions of the stereotypical gypsies into his representation of ancient Egyptians... Cleopatra in fact becomes both the attractive, mysterious gypsy and the idle, foul vagabond [although] ...Shakespeare presents this metamorphosis as a *Roman* ideological formulation, which he will deconstruct in order to unsettle all categories based upon demonization and binary opposition’ (italics added).

Let my present plight teach *you* to fear.’⁴¹

Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, however, exists not only as a gypsy who leads Antony’s manhood captive as her slave, like Propertius’ lover, but exists in addition, as a ‘fluid principle which destabilizes principles, overflowing the confines of categories as the Nile overflows its banks.’⁴² Where Rome depends on Fate and circumstance to endorse and sustain its power, Egypt seems to be innately interwoven with nature and the supernatural life found in the elements of water, the creatures, and gods of the land. Furthermore, through Cleopatra’s assimilation to Isis, by which she seems to inherit immortality, Egypt claims for itself a kind of permanence. In this context, then, Cleopatra ‘seems more ancient than Rome, older than time itself, elemental as the Nile and the sun’ and, while the Roman men she knows seek glory and permanence through war, ‘she loves and outlasts these men who conquer the world and die.’⁴³

Thus despite allusions to either city’s streets, courts and leaders, both Rome and Egypt exist in *Antony and Cleopatra* not so much as geographical locations but as ideological antitheses. As Miola (1983:158) argues, even though ‘initially, Rome appears to be the place of *gravitas* in conflict with Egyptian *voluptas*, ...the dichotomy between these places and these values does not remain absolute and unqualified.’ Ironically, the tension between each city’s identity and values exposes the flaws in the other. In the Roman sources, Rome is defined only as the archetypal and ideal state, whose power is invested in its glorious leader, Octavian. However, in Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, Rome may be the superpower of the pre-Christian era, with a set of values which endorse honour, glory and courage in the battle-field, but it is also a vicious political arena pitted against itself in civil war, whose set of values, reflected in selfish and devious action, prove that honour is meaningless and only comes to those who don’t deserve it. The brief scene with Ventidius on the plains of Parthia (III, i) reveals the supposed honour of military heroism as an ignoble sphere of self-interested bargaining. Ventidius, entering the stage as though in a triumph for his avenging of the death of Marcus Crassus, acknowledges that he would do well to curb his hunger for fame lest he become greater than his commander and consequently experience a painful fall from grace as a result. Egypt, too, is exposed as a land with two faces: it is the transcendent world of love and procreative life in

⁴¹ 3.11.1-8 (Lee).

⁴² Cook (1996:246).

⁴³ *ibid.*, 258.

abundance, but it is also a trap that drowns its victims in inertia and conflict of identity.⁴⁴

Furthermore, the struggle between Antony and Caesar in Shakespeare's play cannot simply be reduced, as in Vergil's *Aeneid*, to a struggle between Rome and Egypt, virtue and depravity, honour and love, or reason and passion. Shakespeare's Caesar, for example, is a multi-faceted character who proves himself to be conspiring in his desire to lead Cleopatra in triumph, brutal in his disposal of Alexas, Pompey, and Lepidus, politic in his manipulation of Octavia, and yet, at times, such as when he grieves for Antony in V, i, he displays genuine warmth and strong emotion in his speech and conduct.⁴⁵ Miola (1983:159-60) reminds us that Antony is equally paradoxical and complex, arguing that 'Antony's struggle to maintain a noble conception of himself – wholly admirable and wholly ridiculous though it appears by turns – is the struggle of Shakespeare's Rome writ small.'

Finally, although Caesar leads Rome to triumph over Egypt in the final act of the play, neither he nor Rome are accorded any glory by Shakespeare, as they are in the poems of Vergil, Horace and Propertius. As with so many other paradoxical relationships in the play, *Antony and Cleopatra* closes with death and defeat bringing new life and glory – but to Cleopatra, not Caesar. In the death that Shakespeare constructs for Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen ascends to the realms of immortality, and thus escapes the humiliation she so feared (of being mocked in a triumphal procession by all of Rome):

CLEOPATRA. Now, Iras, what think'st thou?

Thou an Egyptian puppet shall be shown

In Rome as well as I. Mechanic slaves,

With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers, shall

Uplift us to the view; in their thick breaths,

Rank of gross diet, shall we be enclouded,

And forc'd to drink their vapour

(V, ii, 207-13)

.....

...Saucy lictors

Will catch at us like strumpets, and scald rhymers

⁴⁴ Miola (1983:158-59).

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 159.

Ballad us out o' tune; the quick comedians,
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' th' posture of a whore. (V, ii, 214-221).

Cleopatra succeeds, through her death, in escaping such a fate. As the play closes, her monument in Alexandria, and not Caesar's anticipated triumph in Rome, demands and receives our sympathy and admiration, while the victorious Romans exit the stage as cruel invaders.

Thus Shakespeare's depiction of the personality of Antony owes little to the Roman sources. While Shakespeare clearly employs constructions of Antony as a drunken debauchee in Cicero's *Philippics* and Octavian-Augustus' propaganda, in the works of the imperial poets, Vergil, Horace and Propertius, Antony is personality-less, portrayed as a silent identity lost to the evil charms of the eastern harlot, Cleopatra. Cleopatra, too, although categorized in Shakespeare's play in terms of so many of the stereotypical charges brought against Egypt and the East (which were so inherent a part of post-Actium, Roman ideology and propaganda), is not reduced simply to the status of a foreign witch from a land of inverted gender norms and ridiculous animal gods – as seems primarily to be the case in the Roman sources. Shakespeare instead turns to Plutarch for clues to Cleopatra's (and Antony's) character, and based on the anecdotes so insightfully depicted in this Greek source, Shakespeare creates a more complex (and arguably more charming) portrait of the Egyptian queen, so foreign to that in the Roman sources.

3.3. Shakespeare's Use of Plutarch

For a play which relies so heavily on Plutarch as its main source, it is surprising that Shakespeare's opening constructions of the two main protagonists of his play should reflect so significantly the invective of the Roman imperial poets. In Plutarch, our initial interpretation of Antony is staked on the anecdotes of his irresponsible youth. We learn that he is a reckless, but thoroughly likeable soldier, whose Herculean braggadocio not only earns him the loyalty of his troops but the enmity of leading Roman citizens, such as the orator and politician, Cicero. Antony's dependability in the realm of politics is unsteady – he both excels in political office under Julius Caesar, but is also deposed for his unreliability. Plutarch draws on examples of his love of wine and women, detailing a number of affairs Antony engaged in with famous Roman women, and we gain the understanding that faithfulness to one lover is not Antony's strong point. However, our first impressions of both Antony and Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play are created from the description we are given of him by his friend and fellow-countryman, Philo, who sees Antony as a parody of a dominated male:

'Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust.

Flourish. Enter ANTONY, CLEOPATRA, her Ladies, the Train, with Eunuchs fanning her.

Look where they come!
Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see...'
(I, i, 1-13).

It is clear that in this speech Shakespeare relies primarily not on Plutarch's construction of Antony

and Cleopatra, but rather on Roman constructions of the lovers, such as those of Vergil, Horace and Propertius. Philo's opening speech 'enunciates the central antinomy between Rome – place of order, measure and self-control – and Egypt – place of disorder, excess and indulgence,'⁴⁶ and according to the Roman, the energies of Antony's infatuation for Cleopatra have spilled over and swamped what should be his preoccupation with war, so that his eyes no longer burn with the hunger of victory for Rome and personal glory on the battlefield, but with the hunger of lust for his 'tawny front.' Summers (1984:119) suggests that Philo's shocking suggestion of a true association in the lovers' relationship between 'the boasted sexual powers of the enthralled lover and impotence ...reflects the paradoxical insight of the Circe myth: those enchanted by Circe are reduced to less than men, beasts totally within the power of another; however they may rejoice in their state, they have lost their freedom and individuality; and however much Circe asserts her power over them, there is little question of her "loving" them – or even being satisfied by them for long.'

However, if Shakespeare relies primarily on Plutarch for his characterizations of his heroes, why does his play open with a very Roman introduction of Antony? The Antony Shakespeare introduces us to is not the boyish, relative simpleton we first meet in Plutarch. Instead, Shakespeare's Antony is characterized by a devotion to one woman, the likes of which is so powerful that all his other mental faculties and physical resources seem to evaporate as a result of his preoccupation (or, rather, loss of identity) when he is with her. Plutarch's Antony's seeming inability to commit or be faithful to one woman is dismissed in the first scene of Shakespeare's play, in which Antony is portrayed as sharing a deep affection for Cleopatra:

CLEOPATRA. If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

ANTONY. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.

CLEOPATRA. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.

ANTONY. Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth.' (I, i, 14-17).

In this short and teasing exchange, Antony confirms that his love for Cleopatra has no bounds – their mutual devotion is such that 'there is a lilt, almost a caress, in the simple directness with which the Queen of Egypt puts the question that women have been asking their lovers since the beginning of

⁴⁶ Miola (1983:118).

time; and Antony's reply to it has all the weight of a long tradition of love poetry behind it. ...It is already clear that the relationship between the lovers is something other than and bigger than the sordid affair which so disgusts and pains the soldier, ...[and] we are faced with the question, which are the most important and likely to be the most rewarding, the claims of Rome and empire or the claims of Egypt and love, the pursuit of fame or the pursuit of pleasure and happiness?'⁴⁷ Indeed, Philo's reference to Antony's position as triumvir and the later arrival of the messenger from Rome foreshadow the inevitable realization that for one with such elevated public responsibility there can be no perpetual departure into private life.

Similarly, Shakespeare, although following almost exactly Plutarch's description of Cleopatra's meeting with Antony on the Cydnus river at Tarsus, chooses (unlike Plutarch) not to use this scene as a direct introduction of Cleopatra into his narrative. Instead, the Cleopatra Shakespeare introduces his audience to is a woman not afraid to tease, mockingly, her lover in his neglect of his Roman duties and relationships. For when a messenger from Rome arrives at her palace in Alexandria bringing news of Antony's domestic and diplomatic affairs back home, Cleopatra gently taunts:

'Nay, hear them, Antony.

Fulvia perchance is angry; or who knows

If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent

His pow'rful mandate to you: "Do this, or this;

Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that;

Perform't, or else we damn thee."⁴⁸

(I, i, 19-24).

Antony's naive response to Cleopatra's supposedly affectionate mockery is one of confusion, laced with tinges of pain: 'How, my love!' (I, i, 24). He interprets their relationship to be one of loving unity and mutual affirmation, and he is by no means the faithless soldier we are introduced to in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Indeed, at this stage in the play Cleopatra seems to be the dominant partner in her relationship with Antony. She has the confidence both to mock him without really respecting the limits to which she may go, as well as to demand an audience with him when she

⁴⁷ Hibbard (1980:105-6).

⁴⁸ Miola (1983:119) states that as Cleopatra, in the role of a critic of Roman values, levels sarcastic scorn at 'scarce-bearded Caesar' and, eleven lines later at 'shrill-tongu'd Fulvia,' she 'mocks Caesar's manhood, Fulvia's womanhood, and, by implication, Roman marriage.'

desires to see or speak to him:

CLEOPATRA (to Enobarbus). Seek [Antony], and bring him hither...⁴⁹

Although she is not the desperate and sophisticated schemer and κόλαξ with the arts of the courtesan that Plutarch constructs in his *Life of Antony* (53.5-9), Shakespeare's Cleopatra is still a manipulative lover, although her conspiring to win favour for herself with Antony seems to be based not so much on insecurity (caused by the presence of Octavia in Antony's life) as on a calculating ambition which desires to consume (and be consumed) by all of Antony's heart and love:

CLEOPATRA. See where he is, who's with him, what he does.

I did not send you. If you find him sad,

Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report

That I am sudden sick. Quick, and return.

(I, iii, 3-6).

However, Shakespeare's Cleopatra, like Plutarch's, appears similarly to know a thousand types of flattery,⁵⁰ and like her Greek counterpart, Shakespeare's queen can quite easily play a chameleon role, manipulating her behaviour to humour her lover. Nevertheless, she is not reduced by the Renaissance playwright to the level of Plutarch's Cleopatra, who will starve herself and pretend to be consumed with the most passionate love for Antony so as to win his affections.⁵¹ However, the Cleopatra that Shakespeare constructs in the first act of his play knows full well how to engage in subtle mind-games to ensure that she maintains Antony's affections. Thus the advice of her maidservant, Charmian, that if Cleopatra really loved Antony she would not lie to him nor tempt him, but would give him whatever he asked for (behaviour epitomised by Octavia later in the play), is scorned by Cleopatra:

'Thou teachest like a fool — the way to lose him.'

(I, iii, 10).

In the light of Cleopatra's confidence in her powers of manipulation, her act at being 'sick and sullen' (I, iii, 13) when Antony approaches, seems almost comical. This Cleopatra is not the desperate and

⁴⁹ I, ii, 82.

⁵⁰ *Ant.* 29.1.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 53.5-7.

jealous lover of Plutarch (53.5-9) but the totally self-assured monarch of Egypt, who has her past love affairs with Pompey and Julius Caesar as adequate qualifications to secure her affections with Antony.

Whatever Cleopatra's motivation for accepting Antony (and the news he brings of Fulvia's death) the way she does, she soon engages in a cat-and-mouse game with Antony, in which she makes a play at being the scorned and powerless lover of the 'greatest soldier of the world, /...turn'd the greatest liar' (I, iii, 38-9), so as to invoke Antony's guilt, which, she hopes, will make him stay with her in Egypt. When at last Antony gets a chance to tell Cleopatra of the events which have unfolded in the Roman parts of the world, he reveals that he has chosen to split his commitments: Rome will receive the devotion and energies of his military prowess, but Cleopatra will retain the devotions of his heart. This is Antony's first attempt towards dealing with the conflicting demands Rome (and war) and Egypt (and love) make of his identity, but we know by the nature and demands of tragedy (according to the Renaissance interpretation of Aristotle) that he will inevitably choose in favour of his ἀμαρτία, which is his addictive love for Cleopatra.

The struggles within Antony's mind as to whether he should align his loyalties with Cleopatra (and Egypt) or with his affairs in Rome are far more developed in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* than they are in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. In Act I, scene iii, and again in the next scene, we witness how Antony struggles to choose between the two irreconcilable worlds of Egypt and Rome. At first he identifies himself with the empire of love that is in Egypt, declaring boldly, when a messenger arrives at the Alexandrian court with what Antony knows will effectively be news that will draw him back home:

'Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
Is to do thus [*embracing*], when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.'

(I, i, 33-40).

However, while this speech of Antony's confirms his loyalty to, and love for, Cleopatra, it is only a scene later that Antony's mental and emotional quandary lures him into an acceptance of those very Roman values he has just rejected. For as much as Antony desires to indulge his hedonist tendencies in Alexandria, he is inextricably and simultaneously attached to the ideals of a Roman concept of self. He knows, and later states, that away from Rome and away from the glory of war, his personal sense of self-worth is at stake:

'...If I lose mine honour,
I lose myself...'

(III, iv, 22-23).

Thus when he learns from the messenger not only that his wife, Fulvia, is dead (having warred against first Antony's brother and then Caesar) but also that the Parthians have invaded Asia Minor while he has been frolicking in Alexandria with Cleopatra, he is reminded of his responsibilities as triumvir in the East and finds his Roman conscience challenging his identity in the Alexandrian palace:

'These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
Or lose myself in dotage.'

(I, ii, 113-14).

In the context of Roman gender constructs and behaviour defining masculinity, such dotage on a woman not only precipitates an identity exchange, but an inversion and subversion of Antony's own masculinity. Shakespeare's visual imagery of chains binding Antony's identity serves to illustrate how the passive act of dotage (his fatal *otium*) undermines a Roman's masculinity, so innately entrenched in the active and dominant pursuits of war and conquest (his real *negotium*).⁵²

On hearing of Fulvia's death a few lines later, Antony admires her Roman spirit of courage and offers words of contrition towards his dead wife. Thinking of Fulvia and Antony's domestic concerns in Rome resuscitates in him the preoccupations of his Roman identity, and again he exclaims:

⁵² Philo's speech in I, i, 1-13 similarly refers to the dotage of Antony, whom the Roman soldier reduces to a 'fool.' Hibbard (1980:102-3) argues that Shakespeare's 'mastery of concentrated and significant word-play is evident in 'dotage,' meaning primarily 'sexual infatuation' but also carrying overtones of 'the lack of judgement that comes with old age,' and again in 'fool,' denoting both 'amorous plaything' and 'dope.'" Shakespeare's deliberate choice of words to describe the symptoms of Antony's love for Cleopatra highlights the tensions involved in Roman definitions of gender.

‘I must from this enchanting queen break off.

Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,

My idleness doth hatch.’

(I, ii, 125-7).

These lines reflect the typically Roman concerns that Shakespeare has made Philo utter only a scene earlier. Here, instead of Philo, however, Antony voices the threat the Egyptian, Cleopatran world of love and sensuality poses to the deliberate and logical Roman world of war and political necessity. Those inner tensions pulling Antony towards Cleopatra’s bed, on the one hand, and to his military position within the triumvirate, on the other, are translated into speech which indicates his need to flee Cleopatra for Rome. Thus even Antony is aware now of the struggles within his own identity, of the imminent death-throes his Roman identity faces with each day he remains in Alexandria, and he chooses now to attempt to salvage that identity by returning to Rome. Not even Enobarbus’ words of reminder of the sexual titillations Egypt offers can entice Antony to stay in Cleopatra’s palace, and Cleopatra herself is now seen as something of an enemy, referred to by Antony as being

‘...cunning past man’s thought.’

(I, ii, 141).

Indeed Antony’s enchantment with Cleopatra, whose quicksilver shifts of mood bewilder and captivate Antony, seems to work only when he is in her presence:⁵³ ‘alone or with other Romans he feels his nature as man, warrior and ruler threatened by her. ...[However, in Cleopatra’s absence,] Antony imagines his return to Rome precisely as a recovery of the ‘self,’ an affirmation of responsible action against enslaved self-indulgence,’⁵⁴ and the world of love is now, to Antony’s Roman mind, the domain of tricks, devious seduction, witchcraft and mental manipulation. Antony, wishing that he had never seen Cleopatra (I, ii, 157), diplomatically assumes his Roman responsibilities, announcing,

‘The business [Fulvia] hath broached in the state

Cannot endure my absence.’

(I, ii, 165-7).

The tone that Antony adopts is now brisk and judicious, and Cleopatra is no longer intimately

⁵³ Miola (1983:127).

⁵⁴ Summers (1984:121).

referred to as 'my love' (I, i, 24), but impersonally as 'the queen' (I, ii, 185). However, barely has he said these words than Antony's firm resolve to act the role of the Roman triumvir he really is, is weakened when he comes to tell Cleopatra that he is to depart. His clinical Roman facade crumbles and again she becomes 'my dearest queen' (I, iii, 17), 'most sweet queen' (I, iii, 31), and he reassures her that although he is to leave her, he does so as 'thy soldier, servant; making peace of war/ As thou affect'st' (I, iii, 70-1). Again, through Antony's words, Shakespeare explores the tensions between Roman concepts of masculinity and femininity, activity and passivity, and Antony inevitably gravitates towards a fatal confusion of roles and identity, as he increasingly becomes the passive and doting triumvir, magnetically drawn to the dominant queen of Egypt. It is not surprising that having returned to Rome (and to the *active* side of his Roman nature), Antony remains there for what seems, by the pace of Shakespeare's narrative, to be only a momentary period of time, but which is, in reality, closer to four years, before he returns to Cleopatra and the sensual Egyptian side of his nature.⁵⁵

Thus Shakespeare, unlike Plutarch (whose narrative technique involves a crude initial statement, and only a later redefinition of character), wastes no time in developing the mental struggle consuming Antony. While Plutarch develops the psychology of his hero as his narrative nears the battle of Actium, at no stage in his *Life of Antony* is Antony's mental anguish so complicated and emotional as this. Thus we realize that in opposition to Plutarch's Cleopatra, who is the highly complex character of the narrative, the Antony marked out in Plutarch for his simplicity, the man who cannot be anything other than he is – a bluff and genial soldier⁵⁶ – is a far cry from the Antony Shakespeare introduces us to in the first scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*, for in Shakespeare, the torment tearing at the inner mind belongs to his tragic hero more so than it does to Cleopatra, and the progression of his mental struggle is thus portrayed as being more complex than Cleopatra's. As Shakespeare's play progresses, we sense that Antony has no inner resources which can save him from self-destruction: all action in the play seems to be heading in the direction of an inevitable showdown between antitheses greater than, and far removed from, the control of humankind, and oppositions developed far stronger in this Renaissance work than in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*: the outplaying of the irreconcilable measures of love and war, sexual indulgence for the gratification of self and self-denying bondage to the ends of state, and the confines of humanity as opposed to the liberation of

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁶ Pelling (2000:298).

divinity and immortality. Throughout the play, Antony remains free to make choices between these values, and yet whatever choice he makes will result in a loss of self-identity and morale, since his identity can never be one or the other, as he is always innately both the one and the other – both lover and warrior; both bond-servant of Cleopatra and hostage to the political machinations of Rome; both human and yet assimilated to the gods. All other factors and relationships in the play – such as his marriage to Octavia – prefigure the inevitability of, first, his inability to leave Cleopatra, and, secondly, the worldly condemnation and sentencing to death of his love relationship with Cleopatra.

In Shakespeare's play, the inevitability of Antony rejecting the Roman values (which have so contributed to his identity), for the ideals of love encapsulated in Cleopatra's world in Egypt, is far more developed than in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Thus while Plutarch juxtaposes Cleopatra and Octavia in the narrative to allude to this imminent point of departure from one set of values to the next, the representation of characters such as Octavia in *Antony and Cleopatra* is even further manipulated to make Antony's choice of Cleopatra and the temptations her life can offer him all the more obvious. For this reason, while in Plutarch the interest in Antony's psychology deepens after the entry of Octavia (who is portrayed as an almost real threat to the place of Cleopatra in Antony's heart), in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Octavia is a distinctly paler character.⁵⁷ In Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, Octavia is described as a 'noble Ladie' (*Ant.* 31.2), the wife who accompanied him to Greece (33.5) and who bore him three children (35.2). She is the wife who is spurned by her husband (53.11) yet nevertheless organizes to have him sent men, clothes, pack animals, money and presents. She is described in the same chapter as being worthy of compliments, a challenge to Cleopatra, who fears that Octavia's 'vertue and honest behavior,' and 'modest kind love' would 'be too stronge for her, and in the end winne [Antony] away.' Octavia is the noble wife who, when Antony leaves her for Cleopatra, 'very honestly and honorably kept [Antony's] children, not those onely she had by him, but the other which her husband had by Fulvia' (54.3). Indeed her virtue is so admired by the Romans, that they hate Antony 'when they sawe he did so unkindly use so noble a Lady.' However, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Octavia barely features on stage, and while there are three brief exchanges between her and Antony in the play, her character remains undeveloped through much of the play. Whatever praiseworthy virtues Shakespeare borrows from Plutarch and attributes to her, are revealed not so much in her own actions and speech as in the

⁵⁷ Pelling (1988:42).

speech of others, particularly her brother, Caesar.

In contrast to the eulogizing of Octavia in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, in a direct parody in III, iii, 11-21, Octavia is reconstructed by Shakespeare in her absence, in an exchange between a messenger and Cleopatra, as something of an ogre, too far removed from the beauty and charm ascribed her in Plutarch to offer any real threat to Shakespeare's Cleopatra:

CLEOPATRA. Is she as tall as me?
MESSENGER. She is not, madam.
CLEOPATRA. Didst hear her speak? Is she shrill-tongu'd or low?
MESSENGER. Madam, I heard her speak: she is low voic'd.
CLEOPATRA. That's not so good. He cannot like her long.
CHARMIAN. Like her? O Isis! 'tis impossible.
CLEOPATRA. I think so, Charmian. Dull of tongue and dwarfish!
What majesty is in her gait? Remember,
If e'er thou look'dst on majesty.
MESSENGER. She creeps.
Her motion and her station are as one;
She shows a body rather than a life,
A statue than a breather.

However, the very next scene shows us Octavia as she really is in Shakespeare's world of *Antony and Cleopatra*: a compassionate woman with a deep sense of responsibility, concerned as no one else in the play is for the suffering a war between her brother and husband will cause, and offering to act as peacemaker:

OCTAVIA. '...A more unhappy lady,
If this division chance, ne'er stood between,
Praying for both parts... (III, iv, 12-14)
.....
The Jove of power make me, most weak, most weak,
Your reconciler! Wars 'twixt you twain would be

As if the world should cleave, and that slain men
Should solder up the rift.'

(III, iv, 29-32).

As noble as Octavia may appear to be here, she can barely be taken seriously, for Leggatt (1988:166-7) makes the point that elsewhere in Shakespeare 'the full reality of the characters [overshadows] the caricatures they [make] of each other; but that is not what happens here. Such is the unfairness of Shakespeare's art at this point that we find it hard to concentrate on the real [Octavia], ...and Octavia's concern for the casualties of war ...finds no echo.' Furthermore, although her noble speech distinguishes her virtue in relation to the other characters, it is only the sentiment of the lines directed at Antony that marks them out as Octavia's; in their movement, their appeal to Jove, their resort to the repeated superlative, and in the magnitude and energy of their imagery they could equally well belong to almost anyone else in the play.⁵⁸ As a woman and as a wife, Shakespeare's Octavia can offer no threat to Cleopatra, for her wit, passion and hold over Antony are never magnified as are Cleopatra's. Like Plutarch, Shakespeare wards off the notion that Antony might genuinely be attracted by Octavia, but he gives more stress to the *inevitability* that Antony will actually prefer Cleopatra, and thus he 'places the description of Cleopatra at the Cydnus just after the moment when the marriage with Octavia is arranged, and quickly moves on to the soothsayer's warning (Plut. *Ant.* 33.2-4) and to the memories of the lovers' early revels (28-9). We, like Enobarbus, know that the marriage is doomed: 'he will to his Egyptian dish again' (II, iv, 124). ...And Shakespeare's emphasis on the inevitable outcome gives tension to the action without relying on Antony's mentality for its effect. His reaction to the soothsayer is almost casual – 'I will to Egypt; /And though I make this marriage for my peace,/ I' th' East my pleasure lies' (II, iii, 39-41) – and any mental battle remains unexplored. It is indeed already lost, at a point of the story where Plutarch has barely begun to examine it.'⁵⁹

Thus in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, there is already, by the third act, a developed sense not stressed so emphatically in Plutarch that, firstly, no-one and nothing can permanently separate the Egyptian queen and her Roman lover, and that, secondly, there is simultaneously no credible and permanent position for Antony as a representative of Rome and the ideals it represents, no matter how much he desires to epitomize that in his infrequent rejections of Cleopatra and Egypt.

⁵⁸ Hibbard (1980:101).

⁵⁹ Pelling (1988:42-3).

Shakespeare suggests that neither marriage nor war (and, ultimately, neither death) will keep the lovers' destinies apart .

Another powerful force in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the world of the gods, whose presence and intervention in the lives of the play's heroes is pervasive, yet understated. In this, Shakespeare draws on, but further embellishes, the traditions subscribed to in Plutarch, in which the religious associations of Rome and Egypt respectively leave their mark on Antony's identity. Plutarch informs us that Antony, the never lust-wearied libertine, devoted to riotous feasting and love, is the descendant of Hercules. As such, Shakespeare constructs Antony as the esteemed combatant, the handsome and infectiously likeable role model who defends the freedom of Rome. And when Antony is infuriated with Cleopatra, he compares himself to Hercules, stating:

‘The shirt of Nessus is upon me; teach me,
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage;
Let me lodge Lichas on the horn o’ th’ moon,⁶⁰
And with those hands, that grasp’d the heaviest club,
Subdue my worthiest self.’

(IV, xii, 43-47).

Yet Plutarch informs us that Antony was also the New Dionysus, Isis' (Cleopatra's) Osiris. In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, with his fellow triumvirs on Pompey's barge, the triumvir of the East revels briefly in his Egyptian Bacchus persona, for Shakespeare does not pay as much attention to this assimilation as does Plutarch. Nevertheless, as Antony hovers between allegiance to either geographical and ideological world, so he hovers between identities, and, thus, when he rejects Octavia and Rome after Act III, scene iv, he may be seen to accept and endorse his Egyptian identity. He becomes both the consort of the 'avatar of Isis, ...[and] the avatar of Osiris – the Egyptian Dionysus, the African Bacchus, the black Adonis.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Goldstone (1968:222) explains that 'Alcides is another name for Hercules, from whom Antony claimed to be descended. The shirt of Nessus was a shirt soaked in the poisoned blood of the Centaur Nessus. Believing it to be a love-charm, Hercules' wife Deianira sent it to her husband by Lichas, one of his companions. When Hercules donned it, the agony caused by the effect of the poison on his skin drove him to frenzy. He hurled Lichas into the sea and then killed himself.' Antony's heroic speech and use of the patronymic 'Alcides' reinstates – momentarily – Antony's Roman masculinity, but as soon as his anger towards Cleopatra fades, and his dotage envelops him once more, he returns to using passive utterances of adoration.

⁶¹ Hughes (1993:315).

Unlike in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, there are other gods, too, whose ubiquitous presence is relied upon by Shakespeare. For example, the role of the Roman goddess, Fortune, (barely alluded to in Plutarch) in the play reminds us again that the humanity of Antony stands vulnerable before the larger antithetic forces operating in the play.⁶² Whatever role Fortune or Chance plays in *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is always on the side of Caesar and not Antony. When Antony is defeated at Actium, his friend, Enobarbus, understands the crippling role Fortune plays in Antony's destiny, and, speaking against his better judgement, declares:

‘...I’ll yet follow

The wounded chance of Antony, though my reason

Sits in the wind against me.’

(III, x, 35-37).

While Caesar seems to have all the luck in the play, Cleopatra, preparing to join Antony in death in Act V, scene ii, interprets the benevolence of Fortune's intervention in Caesar's destiny in a scornful manner, stating, as Iras robes her:

‘Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear

Antony call. I see him rouse himself

To praise my noble act. I hear him mock

The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men

To excuse their after wrath.’

(V, ii, 281-85).

Only Shakespeare's Cleopatra can justify so irreverent a playing down of the fortunes of Caesar as she does in this speech, for she alone ultimately creates her own luck which will save her from the destiny Caesar has planned for her in Rome. Indeed, in contrast to Antony, in the thought-world which is Cleopatra's, the role of the Greco-Roman gods of Fortune and Destiny are irrelevant in her greater destiny, since she transcends the human boundaries in which these deities wield power.

⁶² Mack (1973:87) states that the word “fortune,” “with its cognates and synonyms, appears some forty times in *Antony and Cleopatra*, more than twice as often as in any other of the major tragedies, and repeatedly in connection with Caesar, whose invisible “genius” it appears to be.” In his allusions to Fortune, Shakespeare evidently borrows from the Hellenistic tradition, in which *Fortuna*, or *Tyche*, plays a prominent role in the works of literary figures such as Theocritus. However, in reading through this chapter of my dissertation, Dr Catherine Woeber (English Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg) points out that Fortune was not only a Roman or Hellenistic goddess, but a mediaeval concern as well: this may explain the abundance of references within the play to the role of Fortune.

Ultimately, even though ‘the full-fortun’d Caesar’ is not merely fortunate,⁶³ but also single-minded in his pursuit of power, and remains, after all the others have fallen, to rule the world, his luck doesn’t quite hold out, for he is thwarted by Cleopatra who dies before he can enjoy the full fruits of his labours.⁶⁴ When Caesar finds her lifeless body, he can only say:

‘Bravest at the last,
She levell’d at our purposes, and being royal,
Took her own way.’

(V, ii, 332-4).

However, in the culmination of Antony’s destiny, we perceive that Shakespeare has constructed a reality in which the Roman gods who hold the futures of its heroes have decided, from at least the beginning of the action of the play, that just as Antony will always return to Cleopatra, so will he be defeated by the youngest triumvir, Caesar, and he never seems to be able to escape the fate laid out for him by these prophetic forces. It is ironic that the Roman goddess of chance, Fortuna, who is referred to so scathingly by Cleopatra as a ‘false huswife’⁶⁵ because she ‘never remains true to one man,’⁶⁶ should, in *Antony and Cleopatra* remain loyal to, and constant in, her resolve to destroy Antony in the world of the play.

Thus, based on Plutarch’s account of the life of Antony, even though Shakespeare’s Antony is assimilated to Hercules, and to a lesser degree, Dionysus-Osiris, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Caesar, especially after Actium still has Fortune on his side. While in Plutarch Antony is the one who ultimately chooses his fate, in Shakespeare’s play there is a pervading sense that Antony remains a pawn in the greater cosmic whims of the gods, and that he cannot escape the fate they have ordained for him. It is interesting to note how Shakespeare, in his remodelling of Plutarch’s description of Dionysus leaving Antony in Alexandria, chooses to substitute the Greek and Roman god of orgiastic frenzy for Hercules, the essentially Roman hero. Plutarch (*Ant.* 75) writes that on the eve of the final showdown between Antony and Caesar,

⁶³ IV, xv, 24.

⁶⁴ Muir (1972:168); Kermode (2000:227).

⁶⁵ IV, xv, 44.

⁶⁶ Goldstone (1968:223).

‘...within litle of midnight, when all the citie was quiet, full of feare and sorrowe, thinking that would be the issue and ende of this warre: it is said that sodainly they heard a marvelous sweete harmonie of sundrie sortes of instrumentes of musicke, with the crie of a multitude of people, as they had bene dauncing, and had song as they use in Bacchus feastes, with movinges and turninges after the maner of the Satyres... Now, such as in reason sought the god unto whom Antonius bare singular devotion to counterfeate and resemble him, that did forsake them.’

Shakespeare, however, transfers the betrayal of Antony’s patron god to Hercules, perhaps mainly for the reason that he wishes to emphasize the final bankruptcy of Antony’s Roman identity brought about by desertion of this *Roman* deity from whom Antony claimed descent.⁶⁷ Shakespeare’s implication is thus that from this point on in the play, Antony has been ostracized from the favour and loyalty of not only his most loyal men, but also his country’s gods:

FOURTH SOLDIER. Peace, what noise?... (IV, iii, 12)
.....
SECOND SOLDIER. ’Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony lov’d,
Now leaves him. (IV, iii, 16-7).

Perhaps the most striking construction of Cleopatra that Plutarch offers us, and certainly the tradition of Cleopatra made most famous by his *Life of Antony*, is the episode in which Cleopatra sails in her exquisite barge up the Cydnus River to meet Antony. Plutarch’s language is sensual and exotic, rich with colours, scents, sound and seductive emotion. Shakespeare, working from Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch, follows the Greek description almost exactly, and his Cleopatra is constructed as ‘a biological magnet that draws all the elements of nature to her body.’⁶⁸ However, in the way in which Euripides uses messenger speeches in tragedies,⁶⁹ so Shakespeare uses a Roman, Enobarbus, to describe the event at Cydnus, and he places the narrative in a scene steeped in tension, as Antony and Caesar confront one another for the first time since Antony has returned to Rome from

⁶⁷ In Theocritus’ *Idyll* 17.13-33, Hercules was historically also linked to the Ptolemies, and perhaps in choosing to stress Antony’s identification with the same mythological hero, Shakespeare may well have been highlighting the association of Antony’s loyalties with the Egyptian royal house.

⁶⁸ Kiernan (1996:154).

⁶⁹ Such as in *Medea*, *Andromache*, *Electra*, *Heracles* or *Helen*.

Alexandria, following the death of Fulvia. The Tarsus description follows immediately after the marriage arrangement of Antony and Octavia by Caesar and Antony, and we, like Enobarbus, now know the marriage is hopeless.⁷⁰

Shakespeare's Tarsus description of the erotic magnetism of Cleopatra which follows, simply serves to confirm that Antony cannot be anything but lost to her allure and all-embracing world of love. Antony is not present at Enobarbus' recollection of Cleopatra's arrival on the Cydnus River to meet Antony, and, significantly, Enobarbus' audience is strictly Roman and male – Maecenas and Agrippa. These men are Caesar's most trusted and influential companions, and they, like Caesar, are manifest representations of all that the world of Rome epitomizes. It is not unlikely that Maecenas and Agrippa had met Cleopatra in Rome, when she was the guest of Julius Caesar prior to his assassination in 44 B.C., but unlikely that if they did, they would have seen her since. The words Shakespeare gives Maecenas, however, suggest that the men have never seen her, but that what they understand of her has been gathered from rumours which have reached them about her splendour:

MAECENAS. She's a most triumphant lady, if report be square to her.

ENOBARBUS. When she first met Mark Antony, she purs'd up his heart,
upon the river of Cydnus.

AGRIPPA. There she appear'd indeed! Or my reporter devis'd well for her.

ENOBARBUS. I will tell you.

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description. She did lie
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold, of tissue,
O'erpicturing that Venus where we see

⁷⁰ II, vi, 131-40.

The fancy out-work nature.⁷¹ On each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

AGRIPPA. O, rare for Antony!

ENOBARBUS. Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' th' eyes,
And made their bends adornings. At the helm
A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands
That yarely frame the office. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthron'd i' th' market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to th' air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in nature.

AGRIPPA. Rare Egyptian! (II, ii, 189-222).

Pelling (1988:187-8), writing about Plutarch's account of this same incident, states that 'pleasingly, most of Plutarch's account may be true. Cleopatra would naturally come to Cilicia by sea, and this is precisely the sort of ship she would use. The Ptolemies travelled in sumptuous *θαλαμηγοί* ('cabin-carriers') of extraordinary beauty and size. The most famous was the monstrous 300-foot vessel of Ptolemy IV. Cleopatra's ship would be smaller, but no less luxurious. Her 'gilded poop' is credible: Ptolemy's ship was gloriously decorated in gold and silver... The 'purple sails' were a mark of a royal vessel, and they are again attested for Cleopatra's flagship at Actium (Pliny *NH* 19.22). Such a ship could stage lavish banquets ...[and] it could manage the coastal voyage from Egypt to Cilicia.'

⁷¹Goldstone (1968:217) explains that 'the cloth was made of interwoven threads of silk and gold. Shakespeare apparently had in mind a picture of Venus rising from the sea, painted by the Greek artist Apelles (c. 330 B.C.), as mentioned in Pliny's *Natural History*.'

However, even if Plutarch offers a plausible description of Cleopatra's barge, Shakespeare embellishes upon Plutarch's portrait, and offers us a magnificent poetic account so rich with supernatural wonders, mythological allusions and sensual descriptions that he inadvertently casts Plutarch's account into the realm of the prosaic. Shakespeare's Cleopatra causes the elements of nature to betray even their natural tasks to fawn upon the Egyptian queen, so beautiful is she and her entourage. Belsey (1996:44) argues that 'if the speech recounts a dream of wealth and royalty, it also presents the staging of an erotic fantasy, in which the props are as much in love as the actors.' Indeed, we are made to understand by the close of this speech that Shakespeare's Antony – the mighty triumvir of the East – is justified in falling so deeply under the spell of Cleopatra:

| Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony</i> 26.1-5 | Shakespeare's <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> II, ii, 195-223 |
|---|---|
| <p>Cleopatra's vessel 'ὥστε πλεῖν ἀνὰ τὸν Κύδνον ποταμὸν ἐν πορθμείῳ χρυσοπρύμνῳ...' (26.1).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony</i>: '...she disdained to set forward otherwise, but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus, the poop whereof was gold...' ⁷²</p> | <p>Plutarch's description is elaborated to: 'The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold...' (II, ii, 195-6).</p> <p>The choice and repetition of 'burn' in the verbs to describe Cleopatra's barge (and the placement of 'the barge' at the front of the sentence) contrasts dramatically with Plutarch's use of the more prosaic 'sailing' to describe the appearance of Cleopatra's entry to Tarsus. In Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony</i>, the barge is static, whereas Shakespeare's rendition of the same scene suggests that the barge is alive because Cleopatra sits in it. Similarly, the poop in II, ii, 196 is not simply gold, but elaborated to 'beaten gold.'</p> |

⁷² Bullough (1964:274).

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>The vessel's sails 'τῶν μὲν ιστίων ἀλουργῶν ἐκπεπετασμένων...' (26.1).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony:</i> '<i>...the sailes of purple...</i>'</p> | <p>The winds are personified such that: 'Purple the sails, and so perfumed that The winds were love-sick with them...' (II, ii, 197-8).</p> <p>The rich, dense colour of the sails evokes a heraldic portraiture of Cleopatra's royalty and wealth and Shakespeare's placement of the adjective 'purple' at the beginning of the line further draws attention to the visual impact and symbolism of the sails. However, the sails in Shakespeare's scene are not simply purple, but in addition, so pungent with expensive perfumes that the sea breezes cannot but fall in love with them. Thus both the sails and elements (described so plainly by Plutarch) possess in Shakespeare a life and emotional capacity of their own.</p> |
| <p>The rowers 'τῆς δ' εἰρεσίας ἀργυραῖς κώπαις ἀναφερομένης πρὸς αὐλὸν ἅμα σύριγγι καὶ κιθάραις συνηρμοσμένον' (26.1-2).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony:</i> '<i>...and the owers of silver, which kept stroke in rowing after the sounde of the musicke of flutes, howboyes, citherns, violls, and other such instruments as they played upon in the barge.</i>'</p> | <p>The oars similarly have an erotic life of their own: '...the oars were silver, Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made The water which they beat to follow faster, As amorous of their strokes' (II, ii, 198-201).</p> <p>Shakespeare elects to direct attention to the oars which he places at the beginning of the line and which appear to have their <i>own</i> energy source stimulating them to move to the tune of flutes. The oars are not simply the colour silver, but made entirely of silver and the water is not simply an inorganic substance through which the barge moves but is portrayed as a sensual being, delighting in the amorous strokes of the oars.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Cleopatra ‘αὐτὴ δὲ κατέκειτο μὲν ὑπὸ σκιάδι χρυσοπάστωι, κεκοσμημένη γραφικῶς ὥσπερ Ἀφροδίτη...’ (26.2).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i>: ‘<i>And now for the person of her self: she was layed under a pavillion of cloth of gold tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddesse Venus, commonly drawen in picture...</i>’</p> | <p>‘...For her own person, It beggar’d all description. She did lie In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold, of tissue, O’er picturing that Venus where we see The fancy out-work nature’ (II, ii, 201-5).</p> <p>Shakespeare’s emphatic ‘did lie’ draws attention to the sensual position of Cleopatra stretched seductively inside of her pavilion. The canopy beneath which she lies is not simply made of cloth, but crafted from seeming strands of gold, woven together to form the most delicate frame for Cleopatra’s beauty. While Shakespeare directs us to artistic renditions of Venus, it is to reveal that this is <i>not</i> what Cleopatra looks like; rather, Cleopatra <i>outshines</i> Venus.</p> |
| <p>Cleopatra’s boy attendants ‘παῖδες δὲ τοῖς γραφικοῖς Ἔρωσιν εἰκασμένοι παρ’ ἑκάτερον ἐστῶτες ἐρρίπιζον’ (26.2-3).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i>: ‘...and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretie faire boyes apparelled as painters doe set forth god Cupide, with little fannes in their hands, with the which they fanned wind upon her.’</p> | <p>‘...On each side her Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids, With divers-colour’d fans, whose wind did seem To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, And what they undid did’ (II, ii, 205-9).</p> <p>Once again, Cleopatra appears to possess mastery over the elements: the wind, instead of cooling her cheeks with the movement of the fans, has its own living energy and makes the blood within her cheeks glow such that Cleopatra’s beauty dumbfounds even the laws of nature.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Cleopatra's waiting-women 'ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ θεραπαινίδες αἱ καλλιστεύουσαι Νηρηίδων ἔχουσαι καὶ Χαρίτων στολάς...' (26.3)</p> | <p>'Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides, So many mermaids, tended her i' th' eyes, And made their bends adornings' (II, ii, 210-12).</p> |
| <p>Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony:</i> '<i>Her Ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the nymphes Nereides (which are the mermaidess of the waters) and like the Graces...</i>'</p> | <p>Shakespeare is following North closely here: the waiting-women are so enthralled with their queen that their very prostrations beautify Cleopatra. Indeed, even these servants are exalted from 'waiting-women' (Plutarch) to 'gentle-women', and then, even more poetically, as the mythical creatures of the sea – mermaids.</p> |
| <p>'αἱ μὲν πρὸς οἴαξιν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς κάλοις ἦσαν' (26.3).</p> | <p>'...At the helm A seeming mermaid steers. The silken tackle Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands, That yarely frame the office' (II, ii, 212-15).</p> |
| <p>Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's <i>Life of Antony:</i> '<i>...some steering the helme, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge...</i>'</p> | <p>The imagery describing the positions and activities of Cleopatra's lady attendants enters the realm of mere fairy-tale: the tackle evolves into strands of interwoven silk, and the hands manipulating it, not only skilful but also flower-soft. Again, Cleopatra's entourage and its effect on nature enter the realm of the supernatural as tasks which generally require men (and which reveal the physical demands of the job on their bodies and hands) are performed by the most graceful of women whose bodies bear no sign of the natural strain of the work.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The city-dwellers</p> <p>‘τῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων οἱ μὲν εὐθύς ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ παρωμάρτουν ἑκατέρωθεν, οἱ δ’ ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως κατέβαινον ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν’ (26.4).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i>:</p> <p><i>‘...the wharfes side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people. Some of them followed the barge all alongest the rivers side: others also ranne out of the citie to see her comming in.’</i></p> | <p>‘...The city cast Her people out upon her...’ (II, ii, 217-18).</p> <p>Plutarch’s version of the response of the city and its inhabitants is abridged by Shakespeare, but the city is personified to cast its people upon Cleopatra, so greatly is it honoured by her presence. Shakespeare’s use of this verb suggests all the inhabitants of Tarsus engaged in an act of worship.</p> |
| <p>Antony awaits Cleopatra</p> <p>‘ἐκχεομένου δὲ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν ὄχλου, τέλος αὐτὸς ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐπὶ βήματος καθεζόμενος ἀπελείφθη μόνος. καὶ τις λόγος ἔχῳρει διὰ πάντων, ὡς ἡ Ἀφροδίτη κωμάζοι πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον ἐπ’ ἀγαθῶι τῆς Ἀσίας’ (26.4-5).</p> <p>Sir Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i>:</p> <p><i>‘So that in thend, there ranne such multitudes of people one after an other to see her, that Antonius was left post alone in the market place, in his Imperiall seate to geve audience: and there went a rumour in the peoples mouthes, that the goddesse Venus was come to play with the god Bacchus, for the generall good of all Asia.’</i></p> | <p>‘...and Antony, Enthron’d i’ th’ market-place, did sit alone, Whistling to th’ air; which, but for vacancy, Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too, And made a gap in nature’ (II, ii, 218-22).</p> <p>Finally, Shakespeare offers Cleopatra a more glorious compliment than does Plutarch in his earlier account of Antony awaiting the queen. The placing of Antony in the forefront of this description heightens our sense of expectancy as we wonder what his response to this fantastical entrance will be. Similarly, Shakespeare’s placement of the verb ‘[e]nthron’d’ at the beginning of the line exalts Antony’s status to royalty, and the emphatic use of the verb ‘<i>did sit alone</i>’ highlights his vulnerability to Cleopatra’s apparent ability to charm the world into her sensuous presence. Finally, we are led to suspect that the air, which can make wind and water move, will aid Cleopatra in casting her irresistible spell on Antony too. Thus Shakespeare constructs a reality in which the air, but for fear of violating natural laws by forming a vacuum, creates a ‘gap in nature’ as it goes to gaze upon the queen.</p> |

In Shakespeare, in the words of Enobarbus and the awestruck Agrippa, we gain the impression that never before was such a panoramic spectacle performed for the benefit of a man: indeed, how could Antony not fall for such a woman after such an entrance? Shakespeare takes from Plutarch an already resplendent account of Cleopatra's meeting with Antony on the Cydnus, and translating it into a piece of exquisite poetry to glamorize the Egyptian queen, describes how even the elements of nature fawn upon Cleopatra, such is the rare spectacle of Cleopatra and her luxurious entourage. In Shakespeare's account, 'a barge is a throne, fire burns on water, perfume hits with the impact of something *felt*. ...The speech is not overtly about Cleopatra, yet in a deeper sense she is its centre and subject. Though she is hidden beyond description, glimpsed only in the role of Venus, the sensual artifice of the whole scene radiates outward from her, expressing her power to delight and fascinate through deception.'⁷³ Whatever hope we might have entertained in *Antony and Cleopatra* that Octavia might win Antony back over to the ideals and world of Rome in the parameters of their betrothal and impending marriage, vaporizes as we, too, encounter the majesty of Cleopatra and fall under her captivating spell. Thus Shakespeare creates this beautiful piece of poetry not only to describe the infinite variety of Cleopatra but also to account for the inescapable union of Antony and Cleopatra, and Antony's un-masculine infatuation with her. Enobarbus merely describes what we know – from Plutarch – will follow when Antony is lured into the enchanting presence of Cleopatra. Referring to, but defying, the tradition so prevalent in Plutarch – of Antony's notorious reputation with women – Shakespeare's Enobarbus, reflecting a masculinist view of the queen, portrays Cleopatra as a sex-icon, a magnificent object of consumption:

'Upon her landing, Antony sent to her,
Invited her to supper. She replied
It should be better he became her guest;
Which she entreated. Our courteous Antony,
Whom ne'er the word of "No" woman heard speak,
Being barber'd ten times o'er, goes to the feast,
And for his ordinary pays his heart
For what his eyes eat only.'

(II, ii, 223-30).

⁷³ Leggatt (1988:164).

As with Plutarch, so Shakespeare portrays Cleopatra as an extraordinary woman of ‘infinite variety’ when it comes to her range of talents and interests. While Shakespeare may not refer to her ability to speak countless languages, he does, through the words of Enobarbus, construct a woman whose wondrous manner defies even natural boundaries and again, through the use of allusions to food, Cleopatra is constructed as an object to be devoured:

‘Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish.’ (II, ii, 239-45).

Thus like Caesar who seems to be accompanied by the invisible but recognizable presence of divinity (in the form and role of ‘fortune’), so Cleopatra possesses her own mystery which exudes beyond her skills of seduction with which she draws Antony. She is ‘for everyone an “enchantress,” a “fairy,” a “witch,” a “charm,” a “spell,” and she moves, even for the Romans, in an ambience of suggestion that seems to give these terms a reach beyond their conventional horizons of gallantry and erotic praise. The sun makes love to her, the air, “except for vacancy,” would have gone to see her triumphant landing from the Cydnus; her sighs and tears are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report; she is cunning past man’s thought; her variety is infinite; and the fetters in which she binds ... are “strong,” as is also...her “toil of grace.”’⁷⁴ In constructing Cleopatra as a woman with supernatural powers of captivation, Shakespeare, like the earlier Roman sources, may well have been motivated by the desire to justify why Antony fell so easily to Cleopatra’s charms – after all, the Roman sources imply, what man when faced with the magic spells of a lustful woman has any chance of escaping her clutches with his will and masculinity intact?⁷⁵ Thus Cleopatra’s mystery and charm are altogether unfathomable, and we can only marvel at the creation which is Shakespeare’s heroine.

Although Shakespeare borrows most of his narrative material from Plutarch to develop the characters

⁷⁴ Mack (1973:88).

⁷⁵ This belief is entrenched in ancient writings such as Homer’s *Odyssey* (10. 337-86), in which Odysseus is delayed – seemingly against his will – and his masculinity compromised, by the seductress and witch, Circe.

of his subjects of his play, he develops certain themes more than his Greek source does. For example, we read in Plutarch how Cleopatra outwits Antony one day while the pair are fishing with their attendants; Shakespeare borrows this anecdote (II, v, 15-8), and then develops the theme of Cleopatra's one-upmanship over Antony to extend to other realms of her relationship with Antony:

CLEOPATRA. That time? Oh times!
I laugh'd him out of patience; and that night
I laugh'd him into patience; and next morn,
Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed,
Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst
I wore his sword Philippan.⁷⁶ (II, v, 18-23).

This is the first overt reference to the exchange of gender roles as defined by the Romans. It has already been mentioned that Herodotus had recorded the perceived inversions of the Egyptian people with regards to cultural mores and gender roles. However Antony's exchange of his military garb for Cleopatra's dress prefigures a more ominous exchange of roles that is to follow later in the play.⁷⁷ Maecenas echoes Caesar's earlier sentiments when, on welcoming Octavia back to Rome once Antony has returned to Cleopatra, he prophetically states:

'Welcome, dear madam.
Each heart in Rome does love and pity you;
Only th' adulterous Antony, most large
In his abominations, turns you off,

⁷⁶ Shakespeare's deliberate description of Antony's sword refers to the triumvir's most famous victory against Brutus and Cassius at Philippi (42 B.C.). Antony's role and success in this battle as the aggressor and victor, not only on behalf of a personal desire for vengeance but for the glory of Rome as well, would have confirmed in Roman opinion his masculinity. Shakespeare's terse description of Cleopatra donning this symbol of Roman pride and archetypical masculinity, while Antony wears her 'tires and mantles,' reinforces Roman outrage at Antony's passivity and the eclipse of his masculinity as he voluntarily submits to feminine domination. Philo's opening words of the play are corroborated by Antony's behaviour here.

⁷⁷ It must be remembered that *Antony and Cleopatra* was an Elizabethan product, staged under King James I. In reading through this chapter, Dr Catherine Woeber (English Studies, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg) noted that not only was analogizing between past and present an Elizabethan habit, but the Elizabethan audience, reading history with a contemporary eye, would have found in Cleopatra a strong parallel with their own Virgin Queen: both are immortalized as being irresistible to the men of their day, both unpredictable, and both possessed the power and inclination to turn contemporary gender conventions upside down.

And gives his potent regiment to a trull
That noises it against us.'

(III, vi, 91-6).

Similarly, at the battle of Actium, Enobarbus, reflecting Roman beliefs that the place for women is certainly not on the battlefield, objects at Cleopatra even being present at Actium, offering a sexually-charged practical analogy, echoing comparisons common in archaic Greek lyric to illustrate his concerns:

'If we should serve with horse and mares together
The horse were merely lost; the mares would bear
A soldier and his horse.'

(III, vii, 7-9).⁷⁸

This statement of Enobarbus' contrasts sharply to his jesting claim earlier, when Antony tried to absolve himself of Fulvia's participation in civil war against Rome, and Enobarbus replied: 'Would we had all such wives, that the men might / Go to wars with the women!' (II, ii, 65-66). Now, when Rome is about to engage in war against a woman with an army led by Antony, and Cleopatra still cannot understand why her presence in the battle is unwelcome, Enobarbus bluntly exclaims:

'Your presence needs must puzzle Antony;
Take from his heart, take from his brain, from 's time,
What should not then be spar'd. He is already
Traduc'd for levity; and 'tis said in Rome
That Photinus an eunuch and your maids
Manage this war.'

(III, vii, 10-15).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Miola (1983:139) contends that here Shakespeare draws upon Vergil's *Georgics* 3.209-17 to illustrate the power of sexual passion. This poem reflects the Roman notion that 'sexual desire wastes away the strength, *vires*, needed for war and male work. It is *caeca*, hidden and unfathomable, as well as blind to other considerations and to its own power. [Thus,] Enobarbus's joking aside draws upon this vision of sexual passion as emasculating and antithetical to the male business of war.'

⁷⁹ Here, Shakespeare borrows from Plutarch (60.1): 'Caesar...made the people to abolishe the power and Empire of Antonius, bicause he had before given it uppe unto a woman. And Caesar sayde furthermore, that Antonius was not Maister of him selfe, but that Cleopatra had brought him beside him selfe, by her charmes and amorous poysons: and that they should make warre with them should be Mardian the Euenuke, Photinus, and Iras, a woman of Cleopatraes bed-chamber, that friseled her heare, and dressed her head, and Charmion, the which were those that ruled all the affaires of Antonius Empire.'

Thus Shakespeare follows Plutarch's tradition that Cleopatra's presence at Actium is not 'natural' (by Roman gender definitions), and that their exchange of roles prefigures Antony's doom. Shakespeare, however, seems to highlight the interpretation of such behaviour (in the speeches of Enobarbus and Philo) in more negative terms than does Plutarch, but this is so as to contrast the tensions between Egypt and Rome, and Antony and Caesar, yet further.

There are other important events drawn from Plutarch that Shakespeare adapts to suit his artistic aims. For example, Shakespeare makes much less of Actium than Plutarch, and Pelling (1988:274) offers the reason that 'with his reduced canvas he could not afford so many climaxes – two great battles, Antony's death, [and] Cleopatra's suicide.' Thus he prefers to concentrate his action in the later scenes, and the battle of Actium is, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, interpreted through the reports of others.

Similarly, Shakespeare's treatment of Antony's decision to fight by sea contrasts sharply with the tradition offered by Plutarch, and the difference in accounts absolves, to a large extent, Shakespeare's Cleopatra of the instrumental role she plays in the consequent defeat of Antony's forces at Actium. For Plutarch (62.1– 63.6-8) maintains that

'Now Antonius was made so subject to a womans will, that though he was a great deale the stronger by land, yet for Cleopatraes sake, he would needes have this battell tryed by sea... ...And Canidius also, who had charge of his army by land, when time came to follow Antonius determination: he turned him cleane contrary, and counselled him to send Cleopatra backe againe, and him selfe to retyre into Macedon, to fight there on the maine land... ...But now, notwithstanding all these good persuasions, Cleopatra forced him to put all to the hazard of battel by sea.'

In reality however, 'Antony had the superiority in ships, some 500 against 400: he could muster some 60000 legionaries against Octavius's 80000 and some 70000 Asiatic troops.'⁸⁰ ...Canidius' advice was to abandon the fleet, move into Macedonia, and engage the army in the open field, probably an impossible task, in view of the deteriorating condition of Antony's troops. Cleopatra wished to man

⁸⁰ It is worth remembering that recorded numbers in the ancient sources would likely have been inflated or reduced to suit the artistic aims of the historians recording such details.

the fleet with part of the army and fight a way out. If they were defeated, they could still escape to Egypt and defend the East against Octavius, leaving the rest of the army to make its way back. Antony... may have conceived a more ambitious scheme. His plan was to sail out, and then, when the wind shifted at noon, as it regularly did on this coast, to turn Agrippa's left with his own right wing and drive the enemy's fleet away from its base. If this manoeuvre succeeded, the tables would be turned and Octavius' camp would be blockaded. This would explain the order to ship the sails (Plut. *Ant.* 64), since it would be impossible to pursue the enemy if the galleys relied only on their oarsmen.'⁸¹ This has been one attempt to explain, why, with good reason, Antony and not Cleopatra may have made the decision to fight Caesar by sea. Plutarch refuses to accept such an explanation, preferring to offer that Antony's choice to fight by sea derived merely from his inability to refuse the wishes of Cleopatra, even if such wishes contradicted what he, with his knowledge of war tactics, knew to be most feasible. Thus the final outcome of Actium offered a convenient reason for Plutarch to attribute Antony's decisions to the headstrong will of Cleopatra.

Shakespeare, however, while ignoring any logical explanation for Antony's decision to fight by sea, simultaneously refuses to subscribe to Plutarch's account which portrays Antony fatally giving in to what the Romans perceive as Cleopatra's shameful reasoning. Pelling (1988:275) states that 'Plutarch again connects the decision with Cleopatra, but his Cleopatra has already despaired of victory, and he has to find another reason for her insistence. He therefore has to regard her 'treachery' (66.6-8) as long premeditated. ...[T]he real purpose of the battle order which she drew up for her forces was not to win a victory but to ensure her escape in event of defeat.' Shakespeare, however, constructs the decision to fight by sea as having originated in *Antony's* mind, stemming from a direct challenge laid before him by Caesar (in the same vein as Antony will later challenge Caesar to single combat); Cleopatra merely supports his decision and later offers him her sixty ships:

ANTONY. Canidius, we
Will fight with [Caesar] by sea.
CLEOPATRA. By sea! What else?
CANIDIUS. Why will my lord do so?
ANTONY. For that he dares us to 't. (III, vii, 27-9).

⁸¹ Scott-Kilvert (1965:358)

When both Enobarbus and Canidius attempt to convince Antony that such a decision would prove not only illogical but fatal, Antony can only reply 'By sea, by sea' (line 41) and again, later, with added emphasis, 'I'll fight at sea' (line 49). The responsibility for, and consequences of, this decision, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, rest primarily on Antony's shoulders, and while Canidius refers to Antony's subservience to Cleopatra,⁸² Cleopatra is by no means condemned for her role in the making of this catastrophic decision as she is in Plutarch.⁸³

Furthermore, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the battle of Actium is placed in the middle of the play, in the third act, whereas in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, it represents the climax of the narrative, and is thus positioned closer to the end of the biography,⁸⁴ occupying thirteen chapters devoted to the whole Actium campaign. Shakespeare's interest in the battle seems to lie primarily in Antony's foolishness in refusing to hear the sound advice of his soldiers, Canidius and Enobarbus, and, like Plutarch, he draws attention to Antony's simultaneous increasing reliance on Cleopatra, and his divorce from Roman ideals and manner of reasoning. Unlike Plutarch, Shakespeare chooses not to place the major climax of his play at Actium, but instead he places far more stress on later events, such as Cleopatra's potential betrayal of Antony in the Thidias scene (III, xiii), Antony's death, and Cleopatra's final, but glorious, speech before she too dies. In terms of Shakespeare's artistic motives, Actium is important for different reasons to those Plutarch gives: for Shakespeare, Actium was virtually lost before it was fought, and Antony's defeat 'was brought about not by the cowardice imputed to him by Plutarch, but by a fatal weakness of judgement which led him to suppose that his supporters could not see through the disguises of his policy and the confusion of his aims, and so cost him the loyalty of his troops. At any rate, his flight to Egypt made his position clear and further deception impossible.'⁸⁵ For this reason, then, Shakespeare's portrayal of the battle itself, Cleopatra's flight from the fray with Antony following, and the start of the desertion of Antony's men, is not unfolded in the action of the

⁸² 'So our leader's led /And we are women's men' (III, vii, 70-1).

⁸³ Miola (1983:137-8) contends that 'Shakespeare's earlier portrait of Brutus [in *Julius Caesar*] – noble, flawed and doomed – contributes much to his portrait of Antony before Actium. Like Brutus, Antony seeks to re-enact the heroic past, hoping to fight again at Pharsalia, "Where Caesar fought with Pompey" (III, vii, 32). Like Brutus on the eve of Philippi, Antony rejects the warnings of his comrades, repudiating mechanically the shocked questioning of Canidius, the clear reasoning of Enobarbus, the forthright candour of the soldier. Brutus's rhetoric before battle – his confidence in the rising tide and his eagerness to venture out onto the flood for future glory – comes to life in dramatic action as Antony resolves to fight by sea. And once again, the resulting sea voyage proves disastrous for the hopeful Roman soldier just as it proves fortunate for Octavius.'

⁸⁴ *Ant.* 65-66.

⁸⁵ Scott-Kilvert (1965:360).

purging.⁸⁷ Instead, for Shakespeare, Actium represents the nadir in Antony's struggle to regain lost honour. Following Actium, at which Antony deals a cruel blow to the authenticity of his Roman identity, he will act on the belief that valiant deeds can remedy past failures and win future glory (III, xiii, 173-5), and he increasingly resembles Shakespeare's 'other Romans – Lucrece, Titus Andronicus, Brutus, Cassius, Caesar, Coriolanus – all of whom subscribe to the same ethical code of honour, shame and fame and earn their chronicles with strong right arm and sword.'⁸⁸ From this point on in the play, Antony will see himself and his struggle in epic terms as he prepares to assert his worth.

It is in the action of the play following Actium that Shakespeare reveals the true dynamics and depth of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra. Like Plutarch's narrative, which likens Antony's behaviour following Actium to that of Timon,⁸⁹ Shakespeare describes in detail the anguish of Antony's identity torn apart by the two such contrasting demands the sets of values of love and war make of him. His identity as an exalted Roman general, whose reputation has been built upon his defence of Roman territory and ideals, has finally, at the battle of Actium, been shattered and exposed as a myth, and in this speech Antony realizes that he has likely lost his Roman identity forever:

'Hark! The land bids me tread no more upon't;
It is asham'd to bear me. Friends, come hither.
I am so lated in the world that I
Have lost my way for ever... (III, xi, 1-4)
.....
I have fled myself, and have instructed cowards
To run and show their shoulders. Friends, be gone;
I have myself resolv'd upon a course
Which has no need of you; be gone.
...O,
I follow'd that I blush to look upon.
My very hairs do mutiny; for the white

⁸⁷ Miola (1983:137).

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 143.

⁸⁹ *Ant.* 69-70.

Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them
 For fear and doting... (III, xi, 7-15);

 Leave me, I pray, a little; pray you now;
 Nay, do so, for indeed I have lost command;
 Therefore I pray you. I'll see you by and by.' (III, xi, 22-24).

Shakespeare's Antony, in this speech, like Plutarch's Antony who temporarily withdraws from all human company, still judges himself by Roman values, and therefore finds himself condemned, just as he still negotiates as a Roman – offering warships and money as compensation to his men for his own desertion. However, he simultaneously recognizes his identity, based on 'fear and doting' which is so intertwined with Cleopatra and Egypt, and which, as he enters a future resigned to that identity, will no longer have any need for his Roman men (lines 9-10). Similarly, as in Plutarch, the pathos of this scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* is made most acute by the earlier faithfulness of Antony's men,⁹⁰ which stands in sharp contrast to his desertion of Roman values:

ALL. Fly? Not we! (III, xi, 6),

as well as by the crushing realization within Antony – as though he is realizing only for the first time – that an outcome has been forced which will prevent him from identifying himself with that world, with which his masculinity is so inextricably intertwined, and which for most of Antony's life has been the very world worth fighting to the death for.

Shakespeare's Cleopatra, like Plutarch's Cleopatra, hearing the expression of his inner torment, and as the representative of those values which have lured Antony to this point of a showdown between identities, is too fearful to approach him,⁹¹ realizing that she is witnessing the death-throes of the Roman identity of her lover which has, up until this point in the play, in her mind, represented the only obstacle between their complete unity of purpose, values and dreams. While Antony remembers

⁹⁰ Plutarch narrates (*Ant.* 68) that in the battle fray at Actium, following Antony's desertion of his fleet as he pursued Cleopatra, '...yet his souldiers still wished for him, and ever hoped that he would come by some meanes or other unto them. Furthermore, they shewed them selves so valliant and faithfull unto him, that after they certainly knewe he was fled, they kept them selves whole together seven daies.'

⁹¹ *Ant.* 67.6.

his military feats of glory – killing both Cassius and Brutus at Philippi while the inexperienced Caesar handled his sword like a dancer (III, xi, 35-6) – both Antony’s and Cleopatra’s attendants urge her to comfort her stricken lover as they realize he ‘is unqualified with very shame’ (III, xi, 44).

While Shakespeare follows loosely the tradition of Plutarch (67.6), which records that ‘Antonius...returned againe to his place, and sate downe, speaking never a word as he did before: and so lived three dayes alone, without speaking to any man,’ he portrays a forgiving Antony who instead of shutting himself away from all human company on the island of Pharos, following the example of Timon,⁹² turns to Cleopatra and whispers that a mere kiss from her will comfort him in his grief:

‘Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss;
Even this repays me.’ (III, xi, 69-71).

This is the lowest point for Antony in the play – he feels as though he is an outcast of Rome, a man unworthy of the honour and glory which previously constituted his reputation and identity. His heart, too, is broken by his painful realization of his total dependency on Cleopatra and of his fatal mistake (by Roman definitions of masculinity) in making his desire lord of his reason (III, xiii, 3-4). Indeed he is a man empty of self-confidence, hope and dignity, and yet he realizes, too, that the only future left for him is one with Cleopatra, and behind the words, ‘Love, I am full of lead’ (III, xi, 72), is his surrender to that destiny. Although, like Plutarch’s Antony, he will try again to restore his dignity by Roman means, by daring Caesar to one-on-one combat (III, xiii, 25-8), and although he will experience minor victories on the battlefield again, the only greatness Shakespeare’s Antony will yet experience in his life is by the transcendent power of his love.

In Act III, scene xii, Shakespeare follows closely the narrative of Plutarch, setting the stage for what appears to be, in the next scene, the betrayal of Antony by Cleopatra. However, in this earlier scene, we witness Caesar priming his servant, Thyreus, to go to the Alexandrian palace and ‘[f]rom Antony [to]win Cleopatra’ (line 27) by offering her whatever she desires if she will either kill Antony in Egypt

⁹² Plutarch (*Ant.* 69:6-7) writes that Antony shut himself away like Timon ‘because he had the like wrong offered him, that was affore offered unto Timon: and that for the unthankfulness of those he had done good unto, and whom he tooke to be his frendes, he was angry with all men, and would trust no man.’

or surrender him to Caesar.⁹³ In the tradition of Plutarch, Actium was portrayed as a war waged by Caesar against Cleopatra, and not Antony (a fellow Roman), so that Caesar should not risk offending those Romans who maintained that further civil war between Romans could not be tolerated or justified. It is thus surprising that both Plutarch and Shakespeare would highlight this account in which Caesar offers Cleopatra immunity from the punishment which a loser in war deserves, and yet later choose to have Antony killed for his association with her. I find it even more surprising that Cleopatra does not question Caesar's terms: that, according to both Plutarch and Shakespeare, she would agree to, or play along with, the deal, all the while knowing Caesar had declared her his public enemy, and without apparently interrogating his real motives.

The scene in which Cleopatra hears Thyreus and, explaining her defiance of Caesar, agrees that she simply went along with Antony's wishes since she feared him – a scene so laced with references to the values of the Roman shame culture – is open to interpretation in two ways.

THYREUS. [Caesar] knows that you embrace not Antony

As you did love, but as you fear'd him.

CLEOPATRA. O!

THYREUS. The scars upon your honour, therefore, he

Does pity, as constrained blemishes,

Not as deserv'd.

CLEOPATRA. He is a god, and knows

What is most right. Mine honour was not yielded,

But conquer'd merely.

(III, xiii, 56-62).

One interpretation of this exchange (reflected in Enobarbus' cynical reaction to the queen's words) is that Cleopatra really was betraying Antony, having realized that a possible asylum from prosecution by her conquerors lay in a simple acknowledgement of Antony's manipulation of her. The other interpretation is that Cleopatra saw Thyreus' terms as an opportunity, at the very least, to gain a few extra days or weeks in which she could appear to be cooperating with Caesar, while, in reality, she and Antony could use this time to plan an escape together into death, the only place where their love

⁹³ These terms as well as the choice of the messengers, Euphronius and Thyreus (Thyrus in Plutarch), Shakespeare derived from Plutarch (72-3).

could be uninterrupted. Plutarch makes it clear that at this stage the lovers had committed themselves to this fate, for he writes (71.4-5):

‘In deede [Antony and Cleopatra] did breake their first order they had set downe, which they called Amimetobion, (as much to say, no life comparable) and did set up an other which they called Synapothanumenon (signifying the order and agreement of those that will dye together) the which in exceeding sumptuousnes and cost was not inferior to the first. For their frendes made them selves to be inrolled in this order of those that would dye together, and so made great feastes one to an other: for everie man when it came to his turne, feasted their whole companie and fraternitie.’

When Antony, having been informed by Enobarbus of the words of Cleopatra above, turns on her in fury, believing for a moment, devoid as he is of all self-confidence, trust and hope, that his lover has betrayed him, Cleopatra answers in increasing hurt and bewilderment:

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| ‘Good my lord –’ | (III, xiii, 109), |
| | |
| ‘Oh, is’t come to this?’ | (line 115), |
| | |
| ‘Wherefore is this?’ | (line 122), |
| | |
| ‘Have you done yet?’ | (line 153), |

before, asking him finally, ‘Not know me yet?’ (line 157). She is adamant that Antony has misunderstood her act in front of Thyreus, that she, together with her offspring and the whole Egyptian race, would have to die before she would betray him in the manner he believes she has (lines 158-67). To Antony, Cleopatra’s faithfulness has not been obvious, but to the reader, it is clear from Cleopatra’s words above that at no time did Cleopatra desert Antony to seek political asylum on Caesar’s terms. Our knowledge of the headstrong resolution of Cleopatra, drawn from the Roman sources and Plutarch, and based on Shakespeare’s earlier depictions of her self-perceptions of immortal grandeur and the regal birth of which she is so proud, tells us that now, even though she faces as dismal an earthly future as Antony, she will never capitulate to Rome or Caesar, by whom

she knows she will be humiliated as war booty. Her words to Thyreus,

‘Most kind messenger,
Say to great Caesar this: in deputation
I kiss his conqu’ring hand; tell him I am prompt
To lay my crown at ’s feet, and there to kneel.
Tell him, from his all-obeying breath I hear
The doom of Egypt...’

(III, xiii, 73-8),

are thick both with sarcasm (to which the Roman soldier is so oblivious) and pride: we know already that she will never live to cower at Caesar’s feet, and nor will she allow herself to be a victim to the destiny she perceives fate has planned for her following her humiliation in Caesar’s triumph:⁹⁴

‘Nay, ‘tis most certain, Iras. Saucy lictors
Will catch at us like strumpets, and scald rhymers
Ballad us out o’ tune; the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I’ th’ posture of a whore.’

(V, ii, 213-20).

For the context and content of this speech, Shakespeare undoubtedly draws upon both the traditions in Plutarch and the Roman sources. Horace had invited his Roman audience to join in the celebrations to mark Octavian’s defeat of Antony, Cleopatra and Egypt, but had also acknowledged that

‘...fiercer she was in the death she chose, as though
she did not wish to cease to be a queen, taken to Rome
on the galleys of savage Liburnians,

⁹⁴ Dolabella (V, ii, 105-10) reluctantly confirms, on Cleopatra’s questioning, that Caesar undoubtedly plans to lead Cleopatra in his triumph.

to be a humble woman in a proud triumph.’ (West) (1.37.29-32).

Plutarch, too, narrates that after Antony’s death, Octavian ‘sent Proculeius, and commanded him to do what he could possible to get Cleopatra alive, fearing lest otherwise all the treasure would be lost: and furthermore, he thought that if he could take Cleopatra, and bring her alive to Rome, she would marvellously beautifie and sette out his triumphe.’⁹⁵ Later, Plutarch, through the words of Octavian’s soldier, Dolabella, refers to the *Imperator*’s intention to take Cleopatra secretly from Egypt, through Syria back to Rome, so as to lead her in his triumph.⁹⁶ Finally, Cleopatra herself, at her lament at Antony’s tomb, acknowledges that ‘I am forbidden and kept from tearing and murdering this captive body of mine with blowes, which they carefully gard and keepe, onely to triumphe of thee.’⁹⁷ Thus Shakespeare draws upon these traditions in Plutarch to construct, in the words of Cleopatra, a warning to her waiting-women what a future in Rome might hold for them all.

Yet while we witness triumph radiating from the words and manner of Cleopatra at this later stage of the play, in Antony we recognize a crippling need to restore himself to that thoroughly Roman, war-embracing reputation he once enjoyed. Like Plutarch’s construction of Antony in the later chapters of his *Life*, Shakespeare’s hero will also look to war (even in the face of abysmal odds), through one-on-one combat with Caesar to restore to himself some of his former glory.

While Enobarbus looks upon his ambitions as complete folly (III, xiii, 195-201), Caesar views Antony’s foolhardiness with contempt, laughing at his challenge (IV, i, 6) and exclaiming, ‘Poor Antony!’ (IV, i, 16). Even when Caesar rejects Antony’s challenge to fight him single handedly, Antony places his hope in restoring his honour in his remaining men and in the battle to follow the subsequent day:

‘To-morrow, soldier,
By sea and land I’ll fight. Or I will live,
Or bathe my dying honour in the blood
Shall make it live again... (IV, ii, 4-7)

⁹⁵ *Ant.* 78.4.

⁹⁶ 84.2.

⁹⁷ 84.4.

.....

I hope well of to-morrow; and will lead you
Where rather I'll expect victorious life
Than death and honour.'

(IV, ii, 42-4).

In reality, at the dénouement of the play, the true reflection of divinity in Antony's character is really exposed, as in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, not by any assimilation to any god – for they all let him down – and certainly not on the battlefield, but by a gentility of spirit, which lifts him beyond the consequences of his misjudgements and foolish actions (such as his pursuing of Cleopatra from the waves of the battle of Actium) into the realm of immortal life in love.

Instead Antony's true greatness is brought home to us by the remorse of Enobarbus when he has betrayed Antony and sided with Caesar, and by Antony's treatment of him in the aftermath of such disloyalty. Unlike Plutarch, Shakespeare invests much energy in developing the character of Enobarbus, such that when he betrays Antony and deserts to Caesar, the pathos of the treachery is made all the more significant, for Enobarbus is constructed throughout the play as shrewd and cynical, but fundamentally loyal. The poignancy of Antony's destitution, once even his closest friends have deserted him (including Eros, who disobeys Antony's orders to kill him), is highlighted all the more by the last utterance of the broken-hearted Enobarbus:

ENOBARBUS. O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,
The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,
That life, a very rebel to my will,
May hang no longer on me. Throw my heart
Against the flint and hardness of my fault,
Which, being dried with grief, will break to powder,
And finish all foul thoughts. O Antony,
Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
Forgive me in thine own particular,
But let the world rank me in register
A master-leaver and a fugitive!
O Antony! O Antony!

(IV, ix, 12-23).

The nobility of Shakespeare's Antony is simultaneously unveiled in his response to Enobarbus' betrayal:

'Go, Eros, send his treasure after; do it;
Detain no jot, I charge thee. Write to him –
I will subscribe – gentle adieus and greetings;
Say that I wish he never find more cause
To change a master. O, my fortunes have
Corrupted honest men!...' (IV, v, 12-7).

In this account, Shakespeare follows closely the tradition of Plutarch: 'Antonius was very sorry for it, but yet he sent after him all his caryage, trayne, and men: and the same Domitius, as though he gave him to understand that he repented his open treason, he died immediatly after.'⁹⁸ Pelling (1988:274) explains that '[Plutarch] prefers to concentrate on the final scenes, stressing Alexandria rather than Actium. [He therefore]...delays Enobarbus' defection to Alexandria.'

Temporarily, although Antony, with his general, Scarus, in Act V achieves momentary resplendence on the battle-field, returning victorious, and, in the words of Cleopatra, 'smiling from /The world's great snare uncaught,'⁹⁹ this is not the manner of greatness through which Shakespeare chooses Antony will attain theophany: while Shakespeare describes Antony instructing Cleopatra to 'commend unto [Scarus'] lips [her] favouring hand' (line 23) and Cleopatra not only obliges in this but gives Scarus, as a reward for his valour, a king's armour of gold (line 27), Plutarch's narrative of this same account describes how, 'when he had received this rich gift, [he] stole away by night, and went to Caesar.'¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Plutarch's narrative does not name Scarus as the soldier to whom Cleopatra gives the suit of armour, yet Shakespeare borrows this account and substitutes Plutarch's anonymous soldier for Scarus, while choosing not to subscribe to the later reference to his desertion. However, the strong associations between both writers' accounts evokes, in the audience, a realization that the world of war will remain, for Antony, a world of disillusionment, the realm of deceit and rejection, the glories and honours of which he can no longer attain, while the empire of

⁹⁸ *Ant.* 63.3-4.

⁹⁹ IV, viii, 17-18.

¹⁰⁰ *Ant.* 74.6.

love which Cleopatra offers him, will exist to restore and to exalt him.

Similarly, just before Antony dies, his nobility of character is acknowledged by both Cleopatra and, ironically, by his enemy, Caesar:

CLEOPATRA. ...Had I great Juno's power,
The strong-wing'd Mercury should fetch thee up,
And set thee by Jove's side. (IV, xv, 34-36);

CAESAR. The breaking of so great a thing should make
A greater crack... (V, i, 14-15)

.....

...The death of Antony
Is not a single doom: in the name lay
A moiety of the world... (V, i, 17-19);

and, a few lines later:

O Antony!
I have follow'd thee to this! (V, i, 35-6)

.....

...we could not stall together
In the whole world. But yet let me lament,
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts,
That thou, my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
Friend and companion in the front of war,
The arm of mine own body, and the heart
Where mine his thoughts did kindle – that our stars,
Unreconcilable, should divide
Our equalness to this... (V, i, 39-48).

Shakespeare noticeably chooses not to subscribe to Plutarch's account of the brokenness of Cleopatra's spirit following Antony's death, coupled with her total disregard for her body, even though both Dio Cassius and Josephus offer similar versions.¹⁰¹ While Plutarch writes that following Antony's death, Cleopatra 'had plucked her heare from her head, ...[and] had martired all her face with her nailes, and besides, her voyce was small and trembling, her eyes sonke into her heade with continuall blubbering,'¹⁰² Shakespeare's Cleopatra is far stronger and more dignified in her death, and her lament for him reveals the veracity of her love for Antony.

In contrast, Shakespeare's Antony dies humbly, seemingly totally unaware of both the high regard other Romans have of him in spite of their perceptions of his failings, as well as the grief they feel when he dies. Antony dreams of the apotheosis-in-love he will enter into on his death, but in his mind, the only glory he shall be given will be the honour he gained on the battlefield as a Roman:

(To Cleopatra) 'The miserable change now at my end
Lament nor sorrow at; but please your thoughts
In feeding them with those my former fortunes
Wherein I liv'd the greatest prince o' th' world,
The noblest; and do now not basely die,
Not cowardly put off my helmet to
My countryman – a Roman by a Roman
Valiantly vanquish'd...' (IV, xv, 51-8).

Shakespeare chooses, in this speech, to follow closely the heroic last words of Antony recorded in and by Plutarch: 'When he had drone, he earnestly prayed her, and perswaded her, ...that she should not lament nor sorowe for the miserable chaunge of his fortune at the end of his dayes: but rather that she should thinke him the more fortunate, for the former triumphes and honors he had received, considering that while he lived he was the noblest and greatest Prince of the world, and that now he was overcome, not cowardly, but valiantly, a Romane by an other Romane.'¹⁰³ Pelling (1988:307) argues that Antony's dying words are doubtless imaginary, and that here Plutarch credits him with

¹⁰¹ Dio Cass. 51.12-13; Joseph. *AJ* 15.97.

¹⁰² *Ant.* 83.1-3.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 77.7

admirable sentiments. Nevertheless, while Antony dies, acknowledged, in his own mind, as having lived a truly Roman life, and having died a noble Roman death, to Cleopatra, he is 'noblest of men' (IV, xv, 59); to Caesar he is 'my mate in empire' (X, i, 43); and in the opinion of Caesar's right-hand-man, Agrippa, 'a rarer spirit never / Did steer humanity' (V, i, 31-2). In death and by the standards of Cleopatra and Egypt, he is exalted beyond the boundaries even he set for himself, and it is in spite of the bodily defeat and death brought about by Fortune. However, it is only on the brink of death that Antony realizes the triumph of his and Cleopatra's love, and that this triumph gives his life's end rich meaning. Consequently, Antony's comfort in death is not simply that he died the noble Roman death, so much as it is the thought of the empire into which he will enter and in which he will soon be united with Cleopatra: the world where admiring ghosts will leave the former most famous lovers, Dido and Aeneas, to honour its new lovers, Cleopatra and Antony (IV, 14, 53-4). We here recall the argument that Vergil supplied an important poetic precedent for comparing Cleopatra and Dido. Miola (1983:123) offers, with regards to this allusion, 'classical authorities believe that the African queens [Cleopatra and Dido] were probably perceived as parallel figures by [Vergil's] audiences. Both appear as proud and powerful widows, versed in the arts of black magic. Threatened on all sides by hostile forces, both Dido and Cleopatra ensnare important Roman soldiers in nets of luxury and concupiscence. [However, stalwart] Roman virtue, embodied variously in Aeneas and his successor, Octavius, eventually triumphs and both queens, consequently, commit suicide.'

Thus while *Antony and Cleopatra* portrays on the tragic plane the destruction of the great Roman Antony, it becomes on the symbolic plane a testimony of how a man can recover his lost heroism not on the battle-field, but in love. In the last act, within the language of his wife and lover, Cleopatra, Antony achieves a full apotheosis in a speech not recorded in Plutarch or any of the other ancient sources:¹⁰⁴

'I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony –
Oh, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!...

.....

His face was as the heav'ns; and therein stuck

¹⁰⁴ Summers (1984:117).

A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O, the earth...

.....

His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
Crested the world. His voice was propertyed
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like: they showed his back above
The elements they liv'd in. In his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.'

(V, ii, 76-92).

In this speech, Antony is an Emperor to Cleopatra, the victor and conqueror in the world of love over the world of war, represented by Caesar. In the religious and cultural systems of Egypt, emperors and pharaohs became deified in death, and while Hercules may have deserted Antony in life, Cleopatra's words reflect an assurance that death would not rob her Roman husband of a full apotheosis. However, a restoration to glory and splendence is certainly not reserved in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* for Antony alone. Like Plutarch, Shakespeare is equally interested in Cleopatra's apotheosis, and while Antony is still brooding over lost identity and self-esteem following Actium, Cleopatra's rehabilitation of dignity, passion and pride has already begun. However, Shakespeare develops the magnitude of Cleopatra's character even further than does Plutarch, and the overall construction we are given of her is of a far more fragile woman, realistically bound by the constraints of humanity and the bonds of fear, love and self-protection. Her lowest moral point in the play is undoubtedly at Actium, when she flees the battle scene selfishly unconscious of the effect this is going to have on Antony. At this stage of the play, her love is still demanding and inconsiderate, and when Antony brokenly enquires why she led him to destroy his honour in flight from Actium, she can only offer this bewildered reply:

'...O my lord, my lord,

Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
You would have followed.'

(III, xi, 54-6).

The scenes which follow as the play draws towards its tragic, but exultant close, affirm Cleopatra's love and tenderness towards Antony. Perhaps one of the most tender and beautiful moments shared between the lovers is the scene (uniquely described by Shakespeare) in which Cleopatra helps in the armouring of Antony. Their tenderness towards one another is revealed not only in the affectionate manner they refer to one another ('my chuck' and 'my love'), but in the simple and unaffected communication, free of any pretence, bravado or deception:

ANTONY. Eros! mine armour, Eros!

CLEOPATRA. Sleep a little.

ANTONY. No, my chuck. Eros! Come, mine armour, Eros!

Enter EROS with armour. (IV, iv, 1-2)

.....

CLEOPATRA. Nay, I'll help too.

What's this for?

ANTONY. Ah, let be, let be! Thou art

The armourer of my heart. False, false; this, this.

CLEOPATRA. Sooth, la, I'll help. Thus, it must be. (IV, iv, 5-8)

.....

ANTONY. Thou fumblest, Eros, and my queen's a squire

More tight at this than thou. Dispatch. O love,

That thou couldst see my wars to-day, and knew'st

The royal occupation! Thou shouldst see

A workman in't. (IV, iv, 14-18).

It is her love which will eventually lift him from his lost and broken identity and set him, alongside her, in immortality. Indeed the remainder of her life is devoted to this purpose and when the balance of Antony's men desert to Caesar and he believes that Cleopatra has betrayed him again,¹⁰⁵ he wills

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch (*Ant.* 76) explains that Antony's rage towards Cleopatra was reactively engaged in response to the desertion of first the remainder of his fleet, and then his cavalry. Following the rout of his infantry, Antony 'fled

not only that Octavia might scratch open Cleopatra's face for her treachery, but that he himself may kill her. Cleopatra is first bewildered, then broken in spirit and emotion by the cruel accusations of her lover:

ANTONY. Ah, thou spell! Avaunt!

CLEOPATRA. Why is my lord enrag'd against his love?

ANTONY. Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving

And blemish Caesar's triumph. Let him take thee

And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians;

Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot

Of all thy sex; most monster-like, be shown

For poor'st diminutives, for dolts, and let

Patient Octavia plough thy visage up

With her prepared nails.

(IV, xii, 30-9).

Shakespeare follows the tradition of Plutarch, and his terror-stricken Cleopatra, unable to answer Antony's fury and despair, flees to her monument, from where (on the advice of Charmian) she sends word to Antony that she has killed herself.¹⁰⁶ Like the Roman identity of Antony who believed all was lost when he betrayed the ideals of Rome in his desertion of his forces at Actium, so Cleopatra believes all is meaningless if she cannot have the love of Antony or secure, in his mind, her love for him. In a moment of impulsive panic, Cleopatra fabricates a story which she hopes will make Antony realize her true devotion to him. Meanwhile, in a room in Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria, Antony prepares to end his life, since he believes his last remaining reason for living – Cleopatra – is lost:

'I made these wars for Egypt; and the Queen –
Whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine,
Which, whilst it was mine, had annex'd unto't
A million moe, now lost – she, Eros, has
Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false-play'd my glory
Unto an enemy's triumph.

into the citie, crying out that Cleopatra had betrayed him unto them, with whom he had made warre for her sake.'

¹⁰⁶ IV, xiii; Plut. *Ant.* 76.

Nay, weep not, gentle Eros; there is left us
Ourselves to end ourselves.'

(IV, xiv, 15-21).

Antony's anger and desire to punish Cleopatra's supposed treachery evaporates when he hears from Mardian that his wife is dead, and there is total resignation in his words,

'Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done,
And we must sleep.'

(IV, xiv, 35-6).

The dialogues between Antony and Cleopatra in these final scenes, while following the traditions of Plutarch, are nevertheless embellished constructions of Shakespeare's. Whatever brief words Plutarch attributes to Antony and Cleopatra in these final chapters of his *Life of Antony* are dramatized and expanded upon by Shakespeare, who chooses as the major climax of the play not Actium, but these final moments for the lovers in Alexandria.

Thus at the end of Antony's life (as portrayed by Shakespeare), Antony will choose the Roman, Stoic way of suicide, as if by this act he can restore his own Roman self-respect. The greatest irony, however, is that Antony fails to die in the proper Roman manner, since the love of his servant for the master is greater than Eros' obedience to Roman authority, and Eros cannot bring himself to end that life he loves more than his own.¹⁰⁷

When Diomedes enters and explains that he has come from Cleopatra, who has prophetically realized how the misinformation about her death might lead Antony to seek to follow her and has thus sent him to proclaim the truth, Antony is not angered by Cleopatra's final deception but simply longs to be with her and has his men carry his dying body to her.

Cleopatra is stricken with remorse, and yet she resolves to affirm the last moments of Antony's life with her love. Shakespeare's language in this final dialogue between Antony and Cleopatra is beautiful, heroic and embodies courage and dignity, and again, the words are those of Shakespeare,

¹⁰⁷ There is obvious significance in Eros' name, which means 'love,' and borrowing this account from Plutarch, Shakespeare's depiction of Eros deserting Antony (with the conspicuous symbolism inherent in the servant's name) merely adds to the poignancy of Antony's fate.

not found in the earlier Roman or Greek sources:

ANTONY. Peace!
Not Caesar's valour hath o'erthrown Antony,
But Antony's hath triumph'd on itself.
CLEOPATRA. So it should be, that none but Antony
Should conquer Antony; but woe 'tis so!
ANTONY. 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, 13-21).

With the help of Antony's guards and Cleopatra's waiting-women, she lifts Antony's body into the monument, and, kneeling to embrace Antony, Cleopatra exhorts her husband

'Die where thou hast liv'd.
Quicken with kissing. Had my lips that power,
Thus would I wear them out.' (IV, xv, 38-40).

As Antony dies in his lover's arms – the only space now left him in the play – Cleopatra bravely laments before fainting:

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

None of these words of Cleopatra's is found in Plutarch – indeed, this scene is re-worked and

embroidered in rich detail by Shakespeare, so as to add further dimension and depth to the character of his Ptolemaic queen.

It is in her preparations for death and in the death itself, that Shakespeare creates in Cleopatra a truly noble spirit. As in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, the last ten chapters of which are almost exclusively Cleopatra's, so Shakespeare commits the final act of his play to the theophany of the Ptolemaic queen. Cleopatra resolves to 'make death proud to take [her]' (IV, xv, 88), and Shakespeare portrays her doing just that. Her final days offer Cleopatra time for reflection, and through this meditation she concludes that the glories of the earthly world as defined by Roman ideals are not a future she hankers after.¹⁰⁸ However, she purposes that if she is to die in the manner she has singled out for herself, she must yet deceive Caesar by seemingly negotiating according to his terms. However, in an almost sardonically humorous manner, even though she knows she has no power to bargain with the world's now sole leader, she tells Proculeius, Caesar's messenger, that she will only be Caesar's beggar if he will give her conquered Egypt for her son (line 19). Unlike Plutarch, Shakespeare does not develop the maternal character of Cleopatra and thus this demand of hers seems strangely dislocated from the reality which is Cleopatra's, and an essentially empty attempt at any credible bargaining with Caesar. Cleopatra, like Proculeius, knows the fate Caesar has in store, in his triumph, for the Egyptian queen, and she will pretend to play Caesar's game of deceptive negotiating so long as it will give her time to organize her death, her way. Thus she will lie to Proculeius, saying:

'Pray you tell him
I am his fortune's vassal and I send him
The greatness he has got. I hourly learn
A doctrine of obedience, and would gladly
Look him i' th' face.'

(V, ii, 28-32).

Such is the strength of Cleopatra's will to defy the destiny Caesar plans for her that she is provided with a Roman guard, Dolabella. However, even though Cleopatra is under the vigilant gaze of the

¹⁰⁸ '...'[t]is paltry to be Caesar:
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,
A minister of her will.' (V, ii, 2-4).

Roman military, she yet manages to run circles around its men, and in this wonderful encounter with the likeable and gentle Dolabella, Cleopatra refuses to affirm the soldier's ego, but instead offers him a rousing eulogy to Antony, found only in Shakespeare. Cleopatra will have Rome know that in her world, Antony is emperor (line 77), with a retinue of royal kings and queens (lines 90-1), with a countenance as regal as the heavens (line 79), an empire stretching over the entire world (lines 82-3), and with a voice as authoritative as thunder (line 86). Dolabella cannot imagine that such a man could exist, but Cleopatra answers simply:

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

DOLABELLA. Gentle madam, no.

CLEOPATRA. You lie, up to the hearing of the gods.

But if there be nor ever were one such

It's past the size of dreaming. Nature wants stuff

To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t' imagine

An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy,

Condemning shadows quite.

(V, ii, 93-100).

The entrance of Caesar a few lines later reminds us that what Rome offers to Cleopatra, and what it intends for her, are two vastly separate fates, and we cannot but appreciate the manner of Cleopatra's subsequent deception of Caesar. Cleopatra, knowing full well the need to trick Caesar into believing she wishes to spare her own life so that she may seize the apparent promises of Caesar and thereby escape a humiliating end in Rome, cunningly hides a portion of her wealth from Caesar, pretending to have had in mind the use of this to further her private aims. When her treasurer, Seleucus, exposes her deceit, she feigns anger that her supposedly secret purposes have been uncovered, and Caesar believes her act:

CAESAR. Nay, blush not, Cleopatra; I approve
Your wisdom in the deed.

CLEOPATRA. See, Caesar! O, behold,
How pomp is followed! Mine will now be yours;
And, should we shift estates, yours would be mine.

The ingratitude of this Seleucus does
Even make me wild.

(V, ii, 148-53).

Interestingly, Shakespeare does not follow Plutarch's portrayal (*Ant.* 83) of this same meeting, which depicts Cleopatra as a desperate woman who is outfoxed by Caesar:

'Shortly after, Caesar came him selfe in person to see her, and to comfort her. Cleopatra being layed upon a litle low bed in poor estate, when she sawe Caesar come in to her chamber, she sodainly rose up, naked in her smocke, and fell downe at his feete marvelously disfigured... When Caesar had made her lye downe again, and sate by her beddes side: Cleopatra began to cleere and excuse her selfe for what she had done, laying all to the feare she had of Antonius. Caesar, in contrarie maner, reproved her in every poynt. Then she sodainly altered her speache, and prayed him to pardon her, as though she were affrayed to dye, and desirous to live. At length, she gave him a breefe and memoriall of all the readie money and treasure she had. But by chaunce there stode Seleucus by, one of her Treasurers, who to seeme a good servant, came straight to Caesar to disprove Cleopatra, that she had not set in al, but kept things back of purpose. Cleopatra was in such a rage with him, that she flew upon him, and tooke him by the heare of the head, and boxed him wellfavouredly. Caesar fell a laughing, and parted the fray. Alas, said she, O Caesar: is not this a great shame and reproche, that thou having vouchesaved to take the peines to come unto me, and hast done me this honor, poor wretche, and caitife creature, brought into this pitiefull and miserable estate: and that mine owne servaunts should come now to accuse me, though it may be I have reserved some juells and trifles meete for women, but not for me (poore soule) to set out my selfe withall, but meaning to give some pretie presents and gifts unto Octavia and Livia, that they making meanes and intercession for me to thee, thou mightest yet extend thy favour and mercie upon me?'

While Plutarch's construction of Cleopatra in this incident is of a desperate opportunist who willingly sacrifices personal pride to grovel before Caesar who tricks her time and again, Shakespeare constructs a noble Cleopatra, who deceives Caesar through civil language and a noble countenance. While Plutarch constructs a Cleopatra who cries out that her behaviour in the war grew out of

necessity and fear of Antony, Shakespeare constructs Caesar as offering these excuses to Cleopatra in the earlier scene with Thyreus, thereby shifting negative moral judgement onto Caesar's character. The Cleopatra of Plutarch's account cannot restrain her fury at Seleucus' betrayal: in Shakespeare's account we are not even certain that Seleucus is not protecting his mistress so that she can outwit Caesar. Plutarch's Cleopatra desperately explains that the hiding of her assets from Caesar was simply so that she could offer gifts to the women of Caesar's family; as Shakespeare's Cleopatra smoothly offers this reason, we chuckle at the irony and wit of the Egyptian queen. Ultimately, Plutarch's Cleopatra is outwitted by an astute Caesar; Shakespeare's Cleopatra so quietly deceives a gullible Caesar. In short, then, Shakespeare uses this incident to portray the nobility and variety of Cleopatra's character.

Having outwitted Caesar, Cleopatra is free to embrace death nobly and in the manner she chooses. As in Plutarch, her preparations for death in *Antony and Cleopatra* are in true Alexandrian fashion: regal, extravagant, with a touch of fantasy to add colour and vibrancy to an otherwise morbid task. Shakespeare's Cleopatra, recalling Enobarbus' earlier heroic description (II, ii, 195-231) calls for her finest clothes and crown, declaring 'I am again for Cydnus, /To meet Mark Antony' (lines 228-9). Cleopatra, like Antony earlier, seems to imagine that she will be the regent queen in the life she will soon be entering, for she tells Charmian that if she will just complete these final chores Cleopatra will grant her permission, in the afterlife, 'to play till doomsday' (line 232).

Shakespeare's scene is now rich with tension, so much so that, save for Cleopatra's conversation with the clown who brings her the agents by which she will kill herself, it threatens to dominate the close of the play. The clown releases this tension through his humorous but mindless chatter describing the nature of the snakes he carries, as well as those who have similarly used them for suicide. Indeed, the paradoxical speech of the clown (V, ii, 243-56) finds an echo in much of the action of the play, and not least so in the manner of Cleopatra's death. The action of the play which then follows, portrays a woman vanquished in war but victorious in death; a woman grief-stricken and devoid of the hope her earthly life can still offer her, yet triumphantly expectant of the life death shall offer. Here, Shakespeare constructs a woman who has been separated from her husband by death, yet will be reunited with him for eternity. Death thus takes away from Cleopatra her most cherished possession, yet simultaneously restores Antony to her.

Cleopatra's death scene, as described by Shakespeare, is eerily calm and quiet as each woman puts her mind to, and hopes in, the respective tasks ahead. While Plutarch does not record any words exchanged between Cleopatra and her waiting-women in their shared moments in the queen's monument before each dies, Shakespeare's Cleopatra is again majestic and purposeful, asking again for her robe and crown, confessing that she has 'immortal longings' in her (line 283). She has placed the energies of all her resources – mind, emotion, and body – into her sombre (yet in her mind, liberating) task, and she grows increasingly impatient at the thought of being reunited with Antony soon:

'Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock
The luck of Caesar...

...Husband, I come!

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

I am fire and air; my other elements

I give to baser life.'

(V, ii, 281-8).

Having witnessed Iras' peaceful manner of death, she likens death to 'a lover's pinch, /Which hurts, and is desired' (lines 298-9). While Plutarch in his penultimate chapter of his *Life of Antony* (86) discusses the various traditions regarding Cleopatra's death, Shakespeare employs that tradition which states that Cleopatra used two asps: the first for her breast and the second for her arm. For a brief moment, Shakespeare offers us another maternal glimpse of Cleopatra, but this time, the babe which she holds so tenderly to her breast is the asp:

'Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast

That sucks the nurse asleep?'

(V, ii, 306-8).

Despite the weeping of Charmian and her supplications to Cleopatra to remove the deadly snake from her bosom, Cleopatra peacefully applies another to her arm, and like Antony in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, Cleopatra asks what reason she has left to stay, before dying. As Cleopatra had earlier

purposed to do, she dies in a manner that would even make death proud to receive her, and her maidservant exclaims:

CHARMIAN. Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close;
And golden Phoebus never be beheld
Of eyes again so royal! (V, ii, 313-16).

Cook (1996:264) thinks that 'Cleopatra's death is the final paradox of the play. For while it marks Caesar's victory and leaves the Roman claim to universal power without a challenger, it is also marking out of an "elsewhere" which announces that Rome and its empire are "not all." This is Cleopatra's theophany: that while she is conquered (by earthly, Roman definitions), she triumphs over Rome and Caesar by entering an eternity where she believes that she and Antony will rule together.¹⁰⁹

Shakespeare follows Plutarch's example (*Ant.* 85) exactly, placing a brief eulogy for Cleopatra in the mouth of Charmian, for as the Roman guards burst into Cleopatra's monument and realize 'all's not well' (line 326), they ask Charmian 'is this well done?' (Line 328), to which she replies:

'It is well done, and fitting for a princess
Descended of so many royal kings...'
(V, ii, 324-5),

before dying herself. Caesar, on realizing that Cleopatra has managed to outwit him and has died a most noble death, also has words of honour for her, admitting,

'Bravest at the last,
She levell'd at our purposes, and being royal,
Took her own way...'
(V, ii, 332-4);

¹⁰⁹ This concept of a metaphysical world in which lovers reign together in a newly-created space is found not only in the Jacobean *Antony and Cleopatra*, but in other contemporary works, such as Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*. As Dr Woeber kindly contributed, in reading through this chapter, '[this] may even give some weight to a reading of the nobility of the lovers over and above the Roman idea of heroism, because the play should also be seen against a background biased towards the mediaeval courtly love tradition and Renaissance/Petrarchan celebration of love.'

and, later, words of admiration too:

‘... but she looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace.’ (V, ii, 343-5).

In this tradition which Shakespeare’s dramatic sensibility used so effectively, Plutarch relates that ‘Caesar, though he was marvelous sorry for the death of Cleopatra, ...wondred at her noble minde and corage, and therefore commaunded she should be nobly buried, and layed by Antonius.’¹¹⁰ Shakespeare follows this account and, as the play closes, Caesar orders his men to

‘Take up her bed;
And bear her women from the monument.
She shall be buried by her Antony;
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous...’ (V, ii, 353-7).

Thus ends Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cleopatra’s earlier words to the dying Antony (‘So it should be, that none but Antony /Should conquer Antony’)¹¹¹ are appropriate to her own death, for as Pelling (1988:319) states, ‘the double cobra (*uraeus*) was a symbol both of Isis and the royal house, rearing up on the front of a king’s head-dress to strike his enemies. If Cleopatra now turned this on herself, it was majestically appropriate.’

Furthermore, true to the paradoxical nature of much of the play’s action, Cleopatra’s monument in which the lovers’ bodies lie at the end of the play serves not as a tomb, but as a marital chamber, just as Cleopatra’s throne on which she dies is also a bed. This metaphor, while perhaps being alluded to in Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*, transposes readily to stage, for having been hoisted aloft to Cleopatra, the dying Antony has risen above the world of Caesar and Rome; and while his death separates him from the world and ends his Roman life, it also unites him with his Egyptian wife, spiritually and

¹¹⁰ *Ant.* 86.7.

¹¹¹ IV, xv, 16-7.

sexually, and marks the start of new, immortal life for the pair.¹¹² As Mack (1973:110) explains, ‘the paths of glory have led (like all paths) to a grave. And love has been dissolved in death, except that dying has proved to be a manifestation of love.’ Although saddened by the lovers’ deaths, Caesar remains purpose-driven in his dreams to extend his Roman empire, geographically and ideologically. However, while he will order a funeral rite for the pair before returning to Rome to reign triumphantly over the world, Caesar, argues Miola (1983:158), ‘can only dimly perceive [that] the world he now rules is a changed one, ineffably diminished and impoverished by what it has lost.’

Thus, in assessing Shakespeare’s contribution to literary constructions of Cleopatra and Antony, we must acknowledge that Shakespeare essentially follows the narrative of Plutarch, even when the Greek source may seem obviously legendary. For example, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare follows the tradition of Plutarch, which portrays the couple as being already deeply in love at the time of the Parthian invasion of Asia Minor in 40 B.C. Yet Scott-Kilvert (1965:353-4) claims that it is by no means certain that Antony lost his heart upon the river Cydnus in the autumn of 41 B.C., nor in the winter that followed, spent among the Inimitable Livers in Alexandria. In reality ‘Cleopatra certainly needed to exert her charms upon him, partly to account for her dealings with Cassius, and partly to enlist his help in ridding herself of her sister and rival Arsinoe. Antony, it seems more likely, was merely enjoying the fruits of victory as the new conqueror of the East, and still regarded himself as a free agent in his dealings with Fulvia and the Triumvirate. At any rate, when in the spring of 40 he received the news of Fulvia’s clash with Octavius and of the Parthian invasion of Asia Minor, he left Cleopatra abruptly and did not see her again for three and a half years.’

Instead, while Shakespeare relies on Plutarch for his own interpretation of Fulvia (10.5, 30.4), Cleopatra’s barge (26), Rome and Alexandria and the stories of the lovers’ frolicking (28-9), the dinner on Sextus’ flagship (32.5-8), constructions of Octavia (31.2, 33.5, 35.3) and Cleopatra’s wiles (53.6-7), Enobarbus’ desertion of Antony (63.3-4), Antony’s last supper with his men (75.2-3), Hercules/Dionysus abandoning Antony (75.4-5), Antony’s dying words (77.7), Cleopatra’s death and her final words (85.6), as well as other minor anecdotes, for Shakespeare, the all-consuming emotional, spiritual and physical love between the ill-fated (by his account) pair are what constitute the essence of his tragedy, and the history and the chronology of the events which result in this are

¹¹² Miola (1983:151).

really immaterial. Thus while Shakespeare often borrows material, emphasis and characterization from Plutarch, he transforms his source in many ways.

Shakespeare's Cleopatra, however, is certainly a more complex (and arguably, to Shakespeare's audience, a more endearing) character than Plutarch's Cleopatra. Indeed the Cleopatra constructed by Shakespeare is not only the incarnate representation of the world that stands in opposition to Caesar and Rome, but she possesses, in addition, distinctly Roman attributes too: 'like Calphurnia, Cleopatra opposes the Roman military and masculine code of honour and asserts the importance of personal obligations. Like Portia, she abandons this opposition and tries to follow the Roman fashion. Like Lucrece, she finally asserts her loyalty and her love through suicide, an act of marriage as well as self-destruction. In Vergilian terms Cleopatra is Dido, Circe, Amata, and Juno – the exotic and powerful female who threatens the march of Roman history. But if she is Vergil's Dido, Cleopatra is finally Vergil's Lavinia, the destined Roman bride who embodies the promise and possibility of a peaceful future. Least Roman of all Shakespearean women, Cleopatra is, paradoxically, most Roman as well.'¹¹³ In these roles, then, Shakespeare embellishes the construction of Cleopatra and Antony; and his heroine, with her multi-faceted personality and character exists in the play almost to elude classification. We gain the impression in *Antony and Cleopatra*, far more than we do in Plutarch, that death is the only realm left where Antony and Cleopatra may consummate their love, for death is the only state free from the oppressive grasp of the Roman need to define, control and conquer.

Thus Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, with some scenes transposing very readily to the stage, serves as a very useful and practical source for Shakespeare. Even though he chooses not to exploit certain tableaux in Plutarch (such as Cleopatra's lament at Antony's tomb), Shakespeare identifies in Plutarch dramatic potential, and he develops and expands upon these in his own constructions of Antony and Cleopatra. From Plutarch (as with the Roman sources), Shakespeare adopts Rome and Alexandria as geographical and ideological poles, each with its distinctive atmosphere. Historical time, in Shakespeare, is largely immaterial, for while the events in Plutarch which Shakespeare draws upon occupy at least a decade, in *Antony and Cleopatra* events seem to move far more quickly.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 161.

Finally, in Shakespeare's construction of Antony, the playwright relies upon the traditions in Plutarch: there is the same expansiveness, munificence and largeness of spirit, although not quite the simplicity which is important in Plutarch.¹¹⁴ Shakespeare chooses also to introduce Antony's mental struggle in the opening scenes of his play, while Plutarch leaves this to much later in his narrative. In Cleopatra, Shakespeare constructs a woman with incredible enigmatic charm, and unlike Plutarch's Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra's methods of manipulation in Shakespeare are highly unsophisticated but highly effective. Pelling (1988:44) argues that 'throughout the play Cleopatra has been described in paradoxical language and been utterly paradoxical herself: in such a bewildering figure that final transformation does not seem unnatural.'

Indeed, Shakespeare's play is riddled with apparent contradictions not as fully developed in Plutarch, and this surely accounts for scholars' mixed reactions to the play's success. For example, the greatest paradox implicit in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and reflected in the wide range of responses and interpretations of the play, is the inability for any one critic to attempt to explain, with certainty, the aims and motives of Shakespeare's Antony, Cleopatra, or even the playwright himself. For as Mack (1973:84-5) reveals: 'we know far less of ...Shakespeare's intentions because we know far less of him. But whatever they were, it is safe to say that he has left us a pair of reckless and irresponsible lovers so well praised that audience and critic alike still find it impossible to sort out their sympathies.'

Having discussed how Cleopatra has been constructed in three diverse literary sources (ancient Greek biography, ancient Roman poetry and Renaissance tragedy), I will now return my focus to the first century B.C. to examine how Cleopatra was portrayed (and her political and social ideology conveyed) in visual representations on coins and in sculpture. While Shakespeare might have constructed a queen whose paradoxical identity has left scholars confused with regards to their opinions of her, the visual representations I have chosen of her in chapter four will reveal that Cleopatra herself, depending on diplomatic, religious or political motives, may well have created and exploited some of these paradoxical identities.

¹¹⁴ Pelling (1988:42).

4.1. Introduction to Cleopatra in Numismatics and Sculpture

However eloquently the literary sources may have portrayed this enigmatic queen, one is aware that since Cleopatra's suicide occurred before the creation of these constructions, Cleopatra had no direct influence on how these men chose to construct her. Indeed, their works are but distant reflections of the Ptolemaic queen – culturally, religiously and chronologically. However, the coins that Cleopatra had minted and the sculptures which she had created, although few are extant, offer us an arguably more Cleopatran view not only of her physical attributes, but, more significantly, of her political and religious ideology. Coins and statues certainly do not possess the emotional energy or complexity reverberating in the words of Plutarch and Shakespeare, and they also offer far paler features of a personality behind a face. Nevertheless, one cannot attempt a fair or holistic study of Cleopatra without analysing both the Ptolemaic coins issued, and the heads and statues commissioned, by the queen and her advisers.

However, in order to understand the type of coinage issued by Cleopatra, and the statues commissioned of her, it is necessary first to have some understanding of the history of the Ptolemaic dynasty culminating in Cleopatra's rule, since the manner in which the Ptolemies represented themselves to Egyptian and Greek audiences was inseparably linked to the political, religious and ideological context of each monarch's rule.

When Cleopatra inherited the throne of Egypt, she did so in a difficult moment in Egypt's history. Almost two centuries of inter-dynastic wrangling between the Hellenistic royal houses of the Antigonids (of Macedon), the Seleucids (of Syria) and the Ptolemies, coupled with internal dissension within the largely incompetent ruling family itself, had initiated the process of Ptolemaic decline, which had begun well before 200 B.C.¹ Roman interference in the political machinations of the Ptolemaic house, beginning in c. 205 B.C., simultaneously contributed to the gradual undermining of

¹ Meadows (2001:17).

the influence of this Hellenistic power.² By 180 B.C., and with the death of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, the formerly proud Ptolemaic empire overseas (which, at its widest extent, had stretched from Cyrenaica in the west to Damascus in the East, and to Maroneta in the north) was essentially reduced to the core areas of Egypt, Cyprus and Cyrenaica. But in 96 B.C., when Cyrenaica was bequeathed by Ptolemy Apion to the Romans, and when, within two decades, the last legitimate heir to the Egyptian throne was murdered, Egypt experienced a severe shortage of capable leaders on whom could be pinned the hopes of the Ptolemaic kingdom. In addition to these crises facing the Ptolemaic house, when Auletes (the elder of two illegitimate sons of Ptolemy IX, and the father of Cleopatra) inherited the throne, the instability of the dynasty was further compounded by the refusal of Rome to recognize the new king. Thus when Cleopatra became ruler of Egypt in 51 B.C. together with her brother, Ptolemy XIII, the Ptolemaic empire was but a shadow of the once mighty principality it had been under the rule of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) and Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222 B.C.): gone were the overseas provinces and the territories of Phoenicia, Palestine, Cyrenaica and Cyprus; and the treasures of Egypt were constantly overshadowed both by the presence of Roman troops, living in the country itself, and the massive debt to Rome which Auletes had accumulated during his unstable reign.³ Furthermore, through the interactions of Roman politicians with bickering Ptolemaic challengers to the Egyptian throne,⁴ certain Romans had begun to see Egypt as a source of great wealth and a means of personal enrichment, and, from 64 B.C. the future of the kingdom would be decided at Rome. By Cleopatra's ascension, as Meadows (2001:22) phrases it, 'the drama of the Ptolemaic empire had been largely played out, the main parts in the final act reserved for the great men of Rome.'

It was into this insecure milieu menaced by the constant threat of foreign occupation, the demands of debt and the pressures these placed on her land and people, that Cleopatra became co-regent in 51 B.C. The rivalry of her siblings,⁵ who each lusted after the throne of Egypt, placed yet further

² For a more detailed analysis of the role of Rome and the other Hellenistic royal houses in the decline of the Ptolemaic empire, see Meadows (2001:17-19).

³ Auletes, having been removed from the throne in 58 B.C. by the people of Alexandria, borrowed money from the Romans to purchase military support to regain his kingdom in 55 B.C. (Plut. *Caes.* 48.4).

⁴ Such as during the contention between the two co-regents, Ptolemy IV Philometor (180-145 B.C.) and Ptolemy Physkon (170-164 B.C.) for the throne. To resolve this power struggle the Roman Senate, in 163 B.C., imposed a settlement splitting the dominions of Egypt, whereby Philometor was given Egypt and Cyprus to rule, and Physkon, Cyrenaica.

⁵ This rivalry had already resulted in the execution of one of Cleopatra's sisters in 55 B.C.

pressure on Cleopatra to consolidate her position on the throne, and to this end Cleopatra made use of all the tools of propaganda available to her. Meadows (2001:23) argues, ‘by this stage of the dynasty, surviving as a Ptolemaic monarch was a matter of performing a delicate juggling act between various influential Romans outside the kingdom, the Egyptians, the Alexandrian mob and ambitious courtiers within. Cleopatra did not so much ascend a throne as descend into a snake-pit.’⁶

Having held the throne of Egypt together with her brother for less than three years, Cleopatra was deposed in 49 B.C. by her youngest brother and his henchmen, and in 48 B.C. she was compelled to leave Egypt and flee to Syria, from where she hoped to regain the throne.⁷ Interestingly, during this period of exclusion, the city of Ascalon appears to have supported her, since in both 50/49 B.C., and 49-48 B.C., coins were minted by this city, displaying Cleopatra’s portrait.⁸ In November of 48 B.C., Cleopatra, aided by Roman arms supplied by Julius Caesar, reclaimed the throne of Egypt (Plut. *Caes.* 49.2-5; Dio Cass. 42.44.1), while outside the palace complex the crowds of Alexandria hailed her younger sister, Arsinoe, as queen (Dio Cass. 42.39.1-2).⁹ With Arsinoe taken captive for Caesar’s triumph (over Gaul, Egypt, Pontus and Mauretania) in Rome (Plut. *Caes.* 55.1; Dio Cass. 43.19.1-4), and with Cleopatra’s co-regent, Ptolemy XIII, fleeing Alexandria only to be drowned in the Nile (Dio Cass. 42.43.4), Cleopatra, in an attempt to safeguard her position as queen, married her eleven-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIV (Dio Cass. 42.44.2-3). However, within less than a year, Cleopatra had given birth to the child of Julius Caesar, whom she named Ptolemy Caesarion (Plut. *Caes.* 49.5).

The following year Cleopatra, constantly aware of the need to align herself with the winning players

⁶ It is worth recalling Plutarch’s admission (*Ant.* 27) that Cleopatra, unlike the Ptolemaic rulers before her who ‘had never even troubled to learn the ... language’, took great care to learn Egyptian, most likely motivated by a concern she may have harboured regarding the domestic instability of her kingdom.

⁷ *Caes. Civ.* 3.103.2; App. 2.84; Str. 6.4.2; Hölbl (2001:232).

⁸ See pages 179-80 of this dissertation for a discussion of these coins.

⁹ The apparent fickleness of the Alexandrian people must be understood not only in the context of their dislike of Caesar (*Caes. Civ.* 3.106.4; Hölbl, 2001:233) but in the greater context of Alexandrian life. Not only was the city languid but also restless. Ray (2001:36) explains that in Alexandria, ‘there were passenger terminals, world-class libraries, and financial houses. Automatic doors were designed for some of the buildings, and there were rudimentary coin machines. Its quarters were named after the letters of the alphabet, and it may have been the first place in history to have addresses in the modern sense. ...The city drew immigrants from most of the Greek world, and most of everywhere else, and race riots were frequent, as, one suspects, were fast food and street crime. The place was a magnet for soothsayers, charmers, storytellers, people offering an easy route to personal salvation, people come from somewhere that they were not in a hurry to go back to, and cranks. ...The Ptolemaic rulers and Roman emperors were popular only fitfully, and the Alexandrians had some witty derogatory nicknames. As the emperor Hadrian put it in retaliation, “I wish this body of men were better behaved.”’

of world politics, yet simultaneously mindful of the threat of internal uprisings within Egypt itself – and particularly in her absence from the state – went, with her husband-brother, to Rome, to be the guest of Julius Caesar.¹⁰ Cleopatra returned to Egypt two years later, following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.¹¹ Even though this extended visit had forged for Cleopatra a formal alliance of the Romans, within a month of her return to Egypt, the stability of Cleopatra’s rule was undermined yet again by the death of her brother-husband (Joseph. *AJ* 15.89). Taking a calculated risk, Cleopatra installed her three-year-old son by Julius Caesar, now with the royal title of ‘Ptolemy XV,’ on the throne alongside her (Dio Cass. 47.31.5). However, these proceedings did not ensure that she was now invulnerable to both internal and external threats to her position as queen. On the contrary, outside of Egypt, tension was mounting as the Roman triumvirate, led primarily by Mark Antony and Octavian, prepared their forces for battle against those of the Republicans, led by Brutus and Cassius, and Cleopatra’s military aid was being sought by Cassius (Plut. *Ant.* 25.2-3). Closer to home, Cleopatra’s governor of Cyprus had defected,¹² and Cleopatra probably feared that he would return with her sister Arsinoe, now released and living in Asia Minor,¹³ to overthrow Cleopatra.¹⁴

Luckily for Cleopatra, she had backed the victors at Philippi, and her allegiance to them was capitalized upon by Mark Antony in the same year (42 B.C.): Antony needed Egypt as a base for his invasions of Parthia, and in order to secure her favour and help, Cleopatra was commanded to meet him at Tarsus (Plut. *Ant.* 25).¹⁵ While Plutarch’s account of this meeting is without doubt an embellished version of reality, Cleopatra’s union with the triumvir was certainly fruitful as, in 40 B.C., she gave birth to twins fathered by Antony. Nevertheless, political and personal differences in Rome between the two *Imperatores*, Antony and Octavian, led to the expedient marriage of Octavia and Antony in the same year, and coins produced by an unidentified mint in western Asia Minor one to two years later, with the pair portrayed side by side and surrounded by a Latin legend, seemed to

¹⁰ Suet. *Iul.* 52; Cic. *Att.* 15.15.2.

¹¹ However, Gruen (2003:269-73) argues that Cleopatra did *not* stay in Rome for this long, but that having received her official *imprimatur* from Roman authorities, she went straight back to Egypt and returned to Rome just before the Ides of March, in 44 B.C. He claims, ‘[this] would explain very nicely why matters remained stable and under control in Egypt. The queen was there.’

¹² In the same year Cleopatra had given birth to Caesarion (47 B.C.), Julius Caesar had restored Cyprus to the Ptolemaic kingdom.

¹³ Joseph. *AJ* 15.89; Dio Cass. 43.19.2-3; App. 5.9.

¹⁴ Meadows (2001:26).

¹⁵ This was no doubt the real purpose of Antony’s summons of Cleopatra to Tarsus. However, the official pretext for the summons was so that she could justify to him her alleged support of the Republicans.

suggest that Antony had, for the time being, at least, expediently forgotten his union with Cleopatra.¹⁶

However, as Antony's relations with Octavian continued to deteriorate in Rome, the former turned his attentions back to the Parthian campaign. Leaving his wife at home in Rome, and in need of financial and food aid from Egypt again, he summoned Cleopatra and the two spent the winter of 37/36 B.C. together. During this time he finalized his arbitration of the East, donating Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, Judaea, and a large part of Cilicia to Cleopatra.¹⁷ Meadows (2001:27) reports that '...Cleopatra clearly revelled in her new territories, and cities within them responded to her. Some of them began to adopt her portrait for their coinages.' He adds that it is perhaps to 37/36 B.C. that the remarkable silver coinage of Antioch belongs, with Cleopatra on the obverse and Antony on the reverse, giving the queen the title Cleopatra Thea Neotera,¹⁸ a deliberate reference to Cleopatra's great-great-aunt, Cleopatra Thea, the daughter of Ptolemy VI Philometor.¹⁹ Meadows explains that 'the allusion was not just an awesome namesake, but also to a queen of Ptolemaic blood who had previously ruled in Syria. Cleopatra was proud of the extent to which she had increased her inheritance.' Cleopatra not only associated herself with this fierce ancestor because she was proud of her lineage: announcing herself as the second Cleopatra Thea must surely have represented a warning to any potential usurpers of her royal position. Not only did Cleopatra Thea lead a rebellion to oust her former husband from the throne, but having succeeded in it she had him tortured and put to death; furthermore, when her son ascended the throne and proved to be a poor leader, she 'killed him using him for archery practice.'²⁰

Antony's infamous triumph in Alexandria (Plut. *Ant.* 54),²¹ to celebrate his military successes in Armenia in 34 B.C., followed by his divorce of Octavia two years later (Plut. *Ant.* 57), led to the commencement of hostilities between Octavian and Antony in the spring of 32 B.C., culminating in the battle at Actium in September the following year. The subsequent details are well-documented in Plutarch, the Roman poems and in Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra fled to Africa from Actium,

¹⁶ Higgs and Walker (2001:238, cat. no. 250; 259, cat. no. 259).

¹⁷ Plut. *Ant.* 36.

¹⁸ See page 185, coins 221-222. For purposes of this dissertation, I have used the catalogue numbering of Higgs and Walker (2001).

¹⁹ Cleopatra Thea was also the wife of the Seleucid kings Alexander I Balas, Demetrius II and Antiochus VII.

²⁰ Meadows (2001:87).

²¹ As it was perceived in Rome by his enemies.

and in the late summer of 30 B.C., when Octavian's troops surrounded Alexandria, opted for suicide rather than the fate Octavian had in store for them.

The preceding paragraphs attempt to summarize the complex political dynamics affecting the course of Cleopatra's life, as well as the presentation of her image through art and coinage in response to these pressures. However, religion also played a crucial role in the way Cleopatra portrayed herself both locally and abroad. Since the lives of the Egyptians were profoundly intertwined with religious ritual and belief (Dio Cassius labelled them 'the most religious people on earth in many respects'),²² Cleopatra was wise to formulate and adopt a distinctive religious strategy, which was to form the cornerstone of her domestic policy and diplomacy. The Egyptian priests held immense influence in society, and their services (both religious and economic),²³ were vital to the smooth administration of the kingdom. For this reason, there exists in history evidence of the Ptolemaic royal family playing out religious roles,²⁴ such as the construction of temples and the undertaking of the decoration of their walls.²⁵ Since the priests historically enjoyed not simply land grants and tax benefits, but immense political influence, Cleopatra would have been foolish to ignore such a wealthy patrimony.

Furthermore, like her Hellenistic predecessors from the time of Ptolemy II, Cleopatra made good use of the opportunities the deification of the Ptolemaic family offered her, and this is seen clearly both in the coins minted, and statues commissioned, by her. Plutarch writes prolifically of Cleopatra's assimilation to Isis – of her attempts to portray her marriage to Antony in religious terms as a union of Isis and Osiris, and of her care to dress in the Egyptian fashion of Isis.²⁶ This assimilation was a wisely-chosen one: the cult of Isis was spreading in the Mediterranean, and during the second century B.C., Isis had become the most revered goddess of Roman merchants on their way to the Delian

²² 42.34.

²³ Goudchaux (2001:129) notes that the temple of Ptah, god of metals, was 'the country's leading factory for the production of bronze statues, arms, and objects made of metals. ...[Similarly, it held] a considerable amount of land and number of titles granted by the kings.'

²⁴ The 'Canopus Decree' (*OGIS* I.56, lines 8-10) records that from at least 238 B.C. Ptolemaic rulers and their wives 'continually [bestowed] many honours made to the gods, [showed] constant concern, combined with heavy outlay and expense' for aspects of religious life in the state.

²⁵ Such as the Mammisi (temple of birth) – purely Egyptian in style – which Cleopatra had built in Hermonthis, or the temple, named the Caesareum, which the queen had dedicated to the slain father of her first child (*Philo Leg.* 15; Goudchaux, 2001:136).

²⁶ Such as at the celebration of the 'Donations of Alexandria' (*Plut. Ant.* 54.6-9), in which Cleopatra 'brought out and received the robe sacred to Isis, and took the title of New Isis.' See the first chapter of this dissertation for an analysis of this religious assimilation.

market.²⁷ Cleopatra, a goddess by virtue of her birthright, had chosen to bolster her divine status with an identification with one of the most popular icons of her age. Furthermore, while she and her siblings would have been viewed equally as children of the god, Ptolemy XII,²⁸ Cleopatra sought added status: through her knowledge and use of the Egyptian language, Cleopatra would have won, in addition, the favour of the most powerful sect of society – the priests, as she displayed a commitment to her Egyptian heritage through learning the native language of the land. An example of this favour is recorded in Plutarch (*Ant.* 86), in which one of Cleopatra's friends, Archibios, after her suicide in 30 B.C., paid Octavian two thousand talents to save Cleopatra's statues from being torn down. Goudchaux (2001:140) explains that this amount of money was so large that it could have maintained Octavian's army for an entire year. He continues, '[h]ad Archibios personally been the owner of such a fortune, in a best-case scenario he would have immediately been deprived of it by Octavian, and in the worst of cases he would have been killed for it. Thus the talents must have come from the temple's treasuries. The fact that the queen's death provoked such financial sacrifice shows us just how much she was venerated.' Consequently, Cleopatra's religious strategy must have worked to the degree that it won her the crucial support of the Egyptian priesthood.²⁹ It is not improbable that in the face of the pressures of internal rebellion and strife it was this affiliation which may have justified and protected her position as ruler of Egypt for twenty-one years.

Thus having provided the political and religious context in which Cleopatra reigned and sought to shape her divine and bureaucratic identity, I will now examine the presentation of her image in Egyptian and international contexts during Cleopatra's reign. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the study of such art and coins provides us with an invaluable insight into the identity of Cleopatra that one cannot obtain through the literary sources. These were the works commissioned largely by the queen herself, and though there are few clear and undamaged examples available to us today, these are nevertheless the images she chose to display to the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

²⁷ Josephus (*Ap.* 2. 60) writes that Cleopatra's assimilation to Isis worked against the Jews, since, during the food shortage in Egypt in 43-41 B.C., Cleopatra refused to distribute food to the monotheistic Jews who presumably angered her in their refusal to worship her as the incarnation of Isis. (For a discussion of Cleopatra's identification with Isis, see also Goudchaux 2001:130-37).

²⁸ Known as the 'New Dionysus,' or, 'Theos Neos Dionysus.'

²⁹ For a discussion of the relationship between Ptolemaic kingship and the Egyptian priesthoods, see Hölbl (2001:279-85).

4.2. Cleopatra's National Image

Perhaps the most prolific example of how Cleopatra presented her image for national consumption is her coinage. Like many of the Ptolemaic rulers before her, Cleopatra, throughout her twenty-one-year reign, presented her image on coins from a number of mints, from Alexandria to Cyprus to Ascalon (in modern-day Israel) and, less significantly, from Beirut, Chalkis, Tripoli, Antioch, Dora, Ortosia, Ptolemais Ake, probably Athens, Patras, and Anagni near Rome.³⁰ Indeed, by Cleopatra's ascension to the throne in 51 B.C., the Ptolemaic kingdom's closed currency system, which had proved to be a massive source of personal wealth for her predecessors, was firmly in place. Because of Egypt's fortunate status as one of the primary grain-producing regions of the ancient world, her influx of wealth through the trade of corn was immense. Egypt did not have its own source of precious metals on which it could rely for coinage, and so the sale of grain abroad brought into Egypt a steady (and much-needed) inundation of precious metal. Higgs and Walker (2001:82) reveal that 'the Ptolemaic kings were able to exploit the position of economic strength they derived from agriculture to maximise precious metal revenues by the establishment of a closed currency system. This imposed the use of Ptolemaic currency, and only Ptolemaic currency, within the borders of the kingdom. Traders from outside were forced to exchange their foreign coins for Ptolemaic issues. By setting the weight of their silver coinage seventeen percent lower than that of the most common standard outside Egypt, the Ptolemies were thus able to reap considerable benefit from the system.'

However, gold coinage (never a habitual ingredient of ancient Greek currencies), was not nearly as prolific an agent of legal tender in the Ptolemaic dynasty as was silver, and thus even though the early Ptolemaic kings, commencing with Ptolemy I, who enjoyed access to gold reserves in the southern peripheries of their kingdom (near Egypt's borders with Arabia and Ethiopia), produced gold coins and even monopolized the industry of gold mining in the third century B.C., by the time Cleopatra became queen the production of gold coins in Egypt was obsolete. Thus while gold octadrachms exist, minted by, among others, Ptolemy II Philadelphus,³¹ Ptolemy IV Philopator (225-205 B.C.)³²

³⁰ Goudchaux (2001:210).

³¹ See Higgs and Walker (2001:83), cat. no. 69.

³² See Higgs and Walker (2001:83), cat. no. 72.

and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (145-116 B.C.),³³ as well as gold decadrachms minted by Ptolemy III Euergetes,³⁴ no gold coins were produced by Cleopatra in the first century B.C.³⁵ Indeed, by 51 B.C.,³⁶ the days not only of gold coinage, but also high quality silver coinage were over. The economic and political demise of the once glorious Ptolemaic empire was well-reflected in its coinage, and while silver coins were the standard unit of payment, they were nevertheless heavily debased. Higgs and Walker (2001:177) explain that whereas ‘silver tetradrachms of the early Ptolemies had contained 98-99 percent silver, and even those of Ptolemy Auletes had contained 80-90 percent on average, the silver coins of Cleopatra typically contained less than forty percent silver.’

In terms of coinage design, during Cleopatra’s reign her own effigy appears on almost all her coins but, unfortunately (at least partly a result of the poor grade of her coinage), few minted during her reign have come down to us in very good condition.³⁷ Besides the fact that no two coins seem to portray an identical Cleopatra, most of her surviving coins are worn by time, and the bronze coins have suffered the added distortion brought about through oxidation. Since Cleopatra did not produce gold coins, we have to rely on the few silver and bronze ones that remain – and which cannot have preserved her image as well as gold coins would have. In short, when analysing the extant Cleopatra coins, one cannot dismiss the possibility that the image we have of her on them is of a transformed, and even disfigured face. As Goudchaux (2001:210) eloquently states, ‘it is true that from almost the totality of her coins, at a first superficial glance, we can discern crude caricature-like outlines, as if she were the model for the witch painted by Goya.’ Consequently, even though there is no, *one*, common portrait of Cleopatra – and thus attempting to re-construct her physical appearance seems futile – her coins are nevertheless crucial in indicating the political strategy behind the presentation of her image within the borders of her own kingdom.

In all of the coins I shall be examining Cleopatra is portrayed not as a canonical Egyptian queen, but

³³ See Higgs and Walker (2001:83), cat. no. 78.

³⁴ See Higgs and Walker (2001:83), cat. no. 70.

³⁵ Gold coins of such high denominations as these were not used in daily transactions, but were probably originally handed out on special occasions or for special favours.

³⁶ When Cleopatra became queen.

³⁷ Meadows (2001:177); Goudchaux (2001:210). Incidentally, the effigy of Ptolemy I, even though not the current ruler, remained the standard design for silver issues until the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, while bronze coinage was frequently adorned with the heads of divinities. However, there are examples of gold, silver and bronze coins decorated with family or individual portraits of subsequent Ptolemaic kings and queens, even though the production of such coins was probably for ceremonial occasions (Higgs and Walker 2001:85).

as a Hellenistic ruler. The first of the coins I shall examine, #178, produced by the mint of Alexandria in 47/46 B.C., is a silver drachm portraying a conventional image of Cleopatra.³⁸ On the obverse of the coin is an effigy of an attractive, young woman, with the sense that a smile may be imminent upon her face; on the reverse is the symbol of Ptolemaic power, the eagle, presumably with the thunderbolt traditionally accompanying it as on earlier Ptolemaic coins.³⁹ This (the sixth year of her rule) was the first of two occasions on which Cleopatra had silver drachms produced, the other being in 42/41 B.C. Cleopatra's eyes appear to be rather large; her nose, hooked, and her chin, prominent. On this coin, Cleopatra's hair is drawn back from her face in the *Melonenfrisur* manner (a Hellenistic hairstyle in which conventional braids were divided in a fashion similar in appearance to the segments of a melon),⁴⁰ and the braids, swept into a bun at the back of the neck, are pulled beneath a broad diadem. The diadem (διάδημα or, in Theocritus (*Id.* 17), αἰολομίτρας)⁴¹ was an attribute of Hellenistic kingship; a flat strip of white material knotted at the back of the head, with the loose ends falling on the nape of the neck. This royal headband seems to have originated with Alexander the Great, whom Theocritus (*Id.* 17.18-19) entitled 'god of the gay diadem.' Sources disagree on the exact historical origins of the fillet – late sources such as Xenophon (*Cyr.* 8.3.13) write of Persian kings wearing it around the tiara (τιάρα) and still others, such as Diodorus Siculus (17.77.6), portray the diadem as Alexander's adoption of Persian dress. However, contemporary scholars argue that archaeology suggests that Persian kings did not wear diadems after all.⁴² An ancient tale relates that it was discovered by the god Dionysus (Diod. Sic. 4.4.4), who wore it to mark his eastern conquests, and for this reason the seemingly invincible Alexander may well have adopted the symbol himself,⁴³ wearing it on the Macedonian καυσία, a type of broad-brimmed hat. Thus the καυσία διαδηματοφόρας became a distinguishing mark of Macedonian princes (Plut. *Ant.* 54), with the διάδημα being depicted prolifically on the coins of the Ptolemies, Hiero, and other Hellenistic

³⁸ See the end of this chapter for reproductions of the images discussed in this chapter.

³⁹ For an example of an earlier coin displaying the eagle and thunderbolt, see Higgs and Walker (2001:84), cat. no. 76.

⁴⁰ Walker (2001:142).

⁴¹ This latter form is usually associated with the god, Dionysus, such as in Diodorus Siculus (4.4.4), who writes: 'Furthermore, in order to ward off the headaches which every man gets from drinking too much wine, [Dionysus] bound about his head, they report, a band [μίτρα], which was the reason for his receiving the name Mitrephorus; and it was this headband, they say, that in later times led to the introduction of the diadem of the kings' (Oldfather).

⁴² *OCD*³, 460, s.v. diadem.

⁴³ *ibid.*

princes.⁴⁴ Most of the Ptolemaic rulers preceding Cleopatra represented on Hellenistic coins and rings – Ptolemy III, Ptolemy IV, Ptolemy V, Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy IX, Arsinoe III and Cleopatra III⁴⁵ – are depicted wearing the royal diadem,⁴⁶ whereas Roman men such as Caesar,⁴⁷ or Octavian,⁴⁸ when depicted on coins, simply wear the laurel wreath of a triumphal general, and the heads of matrons such as Fulvia or Octavia remain bare.⁴⁹ However, the wearing of the diadem was not restricted only to members of the Ptolemaic house, for while Roman statesmen may have avoided the practice, other Eastern leaders such as Herod are recorded as having worn the diadem as a symbol of supremacy.⁵⁰

Compared to the previous silver drachm (#178), the next coin (#179), a larger bronze eighty drachma coin (also from Alexandria) produced sometime during her reign (51-30 B.C.), portrays the profile of a more mature-looking and dignified Cleopatra.. Here, the queen is arguably more attractive, although the same strong features dominate her face once more. Again, the Ptolemaic diadem contains her braided hair (in the same Hellenistic hairstyle) and wisps of hair peak out from beneath the diadem. Although this coin is worn – particularly on the edges and over the hair – this is one of the clearest and best preserved bronze coins with Cleopatra’s image upon it.

Although the exact minting date of the next three bronze eighty drachma coins (#180-182) is uncertain, they belong to an early group of coins minted in Alexandria, also displaying the young queen’s profile. Unlike the previous coin, these are, in differing degree, extensively worn and corroded, and in juxtaposition give Cleopatra a different appearance on each coin. On the obverse of #180, she appears to have a somewhat witch-like, blemished face; on #181, which has been uniformly oxidized, she appears almost beautiful (certainly serene); and on the final coin, which has been completely cleaned with acid, Cleopatra possesses an amiable expression. While the shape of

⁴⁴ Gow (1973:329-30).

⁴⁵ See Higgs and Walker (2001: cat. nos. 72, 74, 87, 90, 45, 75, 43).

⁴⁶ Dio Cassius (42.35.2) also relates how, when Cleopatra, wrapped in a rug, was smuggled into her brother’s palace in Alexandria to see Julius Caesar, ‘because of the sight of his sister within the palace was so unexpected, the boy was filled with wrath and rushed out among the people crying out that he was being betrayed, and at last he tore the diadem from his head and cast it away’ (Cary). Thus, Cleopatra’s wearing of the diadem was an age-old Ptolemaic convention, sustained not only by her ancestors, but by her immediate family as well.

⁴⁷ See Higgs and Walker (2001: cat. no. 200).

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, cat. nos. 298-99.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, cat. nos. 223, 259.

⁵⁰ Josephus (*BJ* 1.390) records how Herod laid down his diadem before Octavian, in acknowledgement of his superiority.

her head differs on each coin, the facial features (particularly the nose and chin) are similar. Again, both the content and expression of her image mimic that of her Ptolemaic predecessors. From these coins, then, Cleopatra's ideological strategy seems obvious. Within the areas Ptolemaic coinage would have been used (largely within the Egypt's borders), Cleopatra is portrayed as a Hellenistic queen with strong affiliations to her Macedonian (and Ptolemaic) ancestors. Not only does her image reflect the same exaggerated features – significantly the large eyes and diadem – as Arsinoe II or Berenice before her, but the legends are in Greek and there is no native imagery on the coins to suggest that these were the coins of an essentially *Egyptian* queen. In the Ptolemaic kingdom's world of trade and economics (a world in which Romans and other foreigners would have bandied goods), Cleopatra appears to have been anxious to represent herself as an internationally relevant figure: a queen who could be identified not only with her ancestor kings and queens but with the fashions of a cosmopolitan society, where Hellenistic trends (such as the *Melonenfrisur* hairstyle) engaged women across the ancient world. Furthermore, it should be remembered that within the Egyptian capital and economic hub, Alexandria, many Egyptians of Greek descent would have likely felt a bond of solidarity with their queen, who portrayed herself in units of coinage as a Greek queen of Egypt.⁵¹

Although large quantities of bronze coinage had been produced by the early Ptolemies, production of bronze coins in the first century B.C. had gradually declined, and under Cleopatra's two predecessors, no bronze coins had been produced in Alexandria. When Cleopatra became queen of Egypt, she recommenced the production of bronze coins in the capital city, but added innovations of her own. One such innovation was the introduction of denominational marks – the larger value coins were marked with a Π (Pi), the symbol for the number eighty, and the smaller value coins were stamped with a Μ (Mu), the symbol for the number forty.⁵² Cleopatra made not only this innovation, but she also introduced a table of weight-standards for the use of bronze weights during her reign. Meadows (2001:178, cat. no. 183-185) states that 'since the third century B.C. constant inflation

⁵¹ Cleopatra's strong association with Greek imagery and culture within this Egyptian city is understood more clearly in the context of the special status of Alexandria. Although Alexandria was probably the largest city in the ancient world and overflowing with an ethnically-mixed population, the city was founded in 332 B.C. as a theoretically independent πόλις of the traditional Greek type, and as such had an exclusive hereditary citizenship organized by demes, with an ἐκκλησία, βουλή, and annually elected magistrates. In addition, the city was exempt from direct royal taxation, and it had its own coinage and laws, even though these, especially the former, were used throughout Egypt (*OCD*³, 61-62, s.v. Alexandria). Southern (1999:27) explains the separateness of ancient Alexandria from its neighbouring cities in the following way: 'People spoke of going from Alexandria to Egypt, ...which absurdity underlines the different ideology of the ancient Alexandrians.' In the capital of the Hellenistic world, then, Cleopatra was wise to portray herself not only as an Egyptian, but also as a Greek queen.

⁵² Meadows (2001:177).

within Egypt seems to have caused a dislocation between the metal value of bronze used in Ptolemaic coinage and its actual value in monetary transactions. The resulting instability may account for the cessation of production of bronze coinage in Alexandria in the late second and early first centuries. Cleopatra's reform seems to have sought to make explicit for the first time the fiduciary nature of bronze coinage: it took its value not from weight, but rather from the value she gave it and with which she marked it.' This, together with the deliberate debasement of her silver coinage to make Egypt's silver coins compatible with the Roman denarius, presumably to open further Egyptian trade to the Roman world, was a bold move on Cleopatra's part, yet it clearly reflects her healthy preoccupation (or that of her well-chosen advisers) with the current affairs and technology of her period, as she desired, unlike her predecessors, to adapt Egypt's monetary economy to world trends. An example of such a bronze coin produced with a denominational mark, is #184. This forty drachma coin (the exact minting date is uncertain) reflects Cleopatra on the obverse, and the Ptolemaic eagle on the reverse, with the M sign embossed slightly to the right of the royal bird.

However, it is clear from the coins above (#179-182) that not all of Cleopatra's bronze coins bore denominational marks. Cyprus, having been restored to Cleopatra's kingdom by Julius Caesar, was also the home of one of Cleopatra's imperial minting works, and coins produced here (such as #186) bore no denominational marks. Another important difference between this Cypriot coin (perhaps to commemorate the birth of her son in 47 B.C.) and Alexandrian coins may be found in the image on the obverse of the coin: instead of portraying Cleopatra alone, it included the image of her son, Caesarion, just in front of her. Meadows and Ashton (2001:178, cat. no. 186) offer that perhaps this design could be interpreted to be that of the mother-son combination of Aphrodite and Eros, or Isis and Harpokrates.⁵³ Cleopatra's assimilation with Isis is well-documented, and a history of Ptolemaic royal women associating themselves with Aphrodite suggests that it is not improbable that Cleopatra may have continued this association herself. Higgs (2001:111, cat. no. 135) records that Aphrodite was, of all the Greek goddesses, perhaps the most widely worshipped in Egypt and that many of the Egyptian Hellenistic queens (including Arsinoe II, Berenike II, and Cleopatra III) associated themselves with her, her Egyptian counter-part, Hathor, and with Isis. Thus with Cleopatra's

⁵³ Southern (1999:71) offers instead that the son of Isis to which Caesarion is assimilated is Horus, and that 'this was a particularly fortuitous circumstance since Horus was the avenger of his father ...so the parallel between Osiris-Horus and Caesar-Caesarion will have been crystal clear.'

religious assimilation to Isis being a force in her drive to remain on the throne,⁵⁴ and with a history of association with Aphrodite,⁵⁵ Cleopatra would have had ample reason and motivation to have developed such an assimilation on the coins issued from Cyprus, itself the home of Aphrodite at Paphos.⁵⁶ In addition, this assimilation does well to cement an image of Cleopatra not only as queen, and daughter of a long line of Egyptian kings, but as divine mother to Caesarion, presumably presented in these coins as her legitimate heir and co-regent, fit to rule in the Pharaonic tradition. As Wyke (2002:204) expounds, ‘the queen dressed her political and social powers in the eroticism of a divine mother nurturing her child. In Egypt, therefore, Cleopatra VII assumed positive, sacred powers as the loving mother of her dynasty and her country, whereas in Rome she would become a model of meretricious perversity who thereby challenged the good ordering of the western world.’ While the Augustan poets denied Cleopatra the reputation of a good wife and mother, Julius Caesar, at the same time as Cleopatra minted these Cyprian coins, portrayed Cleopatra in Rome ‘neither as his unlawful wife nor as his *meretrix*, but as a divine mother-figure,’ erecting a golden statue of Cleopatra in the temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum Julium; thus assimilating the Egyptian queen to the mother and founder of the Julian clan.⁵⁷

Thus it is possible that #186 was minted on Cyprus to commemorate a special occasion such as the birth of Caesarion. Although we cannot say with certainty that the image on the coin below Cleopatra’s chin is her son, there are other striking images which warrant inspection. Firstly, on the obverse, Cleopatra is wearing a crown (στέφανη), no doubt reinforcing her position as rightful ruler of the Hellenistic kingdom of Egypt. To the left of the image (barely visible because of erosion) is a sceptre, resting at an angle over Cleopatra’s left shoulder. Interestingly, both the sceptre and the double cornucopia are consistent features of Arsinoe II Philadelphus’ iconography. The gold octadrachm from the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, #69, minted in Tyre, displays these features, but in reference to Arsinoe II. The reverse of the coin shows the double cornucopia (δίκερας) filled with the fruits of Egypt, representing Arsinoe II’s provision as queen. This double form is always associated with her, and may refer either to her relationship with her brother and husband, Ptolemy

⁵⁴ Fantham et. al. (1994:154) write that ‘at least by the time of Ptolemy III, Isis was established in the role of divine protectress of the king, as she had been for the pharaohs.’

⁵⁵ If Plutarch’s account is to be taken truthfully, Cleopatra exploited her association with Aphrodite in a more Roman context, especially at Tarsus (*Ant.* 26), at her meeting with Mark Antony.

⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion of Cleopatra’s assimilation to Isis-Aphrodite, see Hölbl (2001:289-93).

⁵⁷ App. 2.102.; Wyke (2002:206-7).

II, or to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt.⁵⁸ The obverse of the same coin shows the profile of Arsinoe II, and like Cleopatra in #186, she also wears a crown and behind her head (seen to the right of her neck) is what may possibly be an Egyptian sceptre.⁵⁹ The motivation behind Cleopatra's borrowing of images usually associated with Arsinoe II is unclear, but one can assume that she wished to associate her own rule with the favourable rule of her predecessors, Ptolemy II and his wife/sister, Arsinoe II. Their reign had spanned the most prosperous period in Ptolemaic history, when the empire of Egypt was at its peak. Indeed, Arsinoe's popularity and prominence among her Greek and native subjects was such that she was the first Ptolemaic queen to be worshipped in her own lifetime as a goddess, and following her deification and death, the 'cult of individual queens was joined to cult of the living rulers and their ancestors to enhance such ruler cult as a long-term focus for loyalty to the dynasty.'⁶⁰ Furthermore, as a result of her favourably-received reign, Arsinoe became the first queen to receive cults in both Greek and native Egyptian temples; a festival (the Arsinoeia) was established and named in her honour, and towns and villages (such as Arsinoe, Philadelphia and the Arsinoite nome in the Fayum area) were similarly named after her.⁶¹ Thus for Cleopatra to borrow images associated with Arsinoe was not only deliberate, but politically shrewd as well. By relating her own rule to that of this period, Cleopatra no doubt hoped to persuade her people (despite the fragile security and independence of her land) that she too could be the source of prosperity for the kingdom of Egypt. Cleopatra had reasons to believe she might deliver on these expectations: she certainly appeared to be technologically more progressive in her coinage than the Ptolemies preceding her, and her alliances with great Roman *Imperatores* offered opportunity for the future stability of her land. Thus even though the images of Cleopatra on her coins were decidedly Greek in style and content, and would have been handled by the many Egyptians of Greek descent established in the capital,⁶² Cleopatra was careful not to alienate her Egyptian subjects, who would have known, by reputation, famous Ptolemaic queens such as Arsinoe II.

Another mint which produced coinage bearing Cleopatra's image is that of the free city of Ascalon. Having been emancipated from the Seleucid empire in 104/103 B.C., the city began producing silver

⁵⁸ In such a politically divided climate, Cleopatra may well have stressed such solidarity (in borrowing these traditional unification symbols) to encourage the role of the Ptolemies as a unifying and stabilizing force.

⁵⁹ Meadows (2001:83, cat. no. 69).

⁶⁰ Rowlandson (1998:25).

⁶¹ Theoc. *Id.* 15.106-11; Rowlandson (1998:28).

⁶² Similar to the Syracusan characters, Gorgo and Praxinoa, settled in Alexandria, in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15.

coinage with effigies of the Seleucid kings, before switching later in the first century (and coinciding with the fall of the Seleucids in Palestine under Pompey) to portraying Ptolemaic monarchs on its coins in 64/63 B.C. and 50/49 B.C., and later. Two such coins are #219-220, fine silver tetradrachms, the former produced in 50/49 B.C., and the latter in 39/38 B.C. While Meadows (2001:234, cat. no. 219-220) suggests that the issue of 50/49 B.C. was in support of Cleopatra during her period of exile before being reinstated by Julius Caesar, Walker (2001:142) thinks that these coins were minted in possible gratitude for Cleopatra's help in protecting the status of the city in times of local contention. Whatever the case, Ascalon's diplomatic affiliation with Cleopatra, in itself a common practice in political expedience, revealed that outside of Alexandria and Egypt Cleopatra enjoyed the support of foreign cities.

Thus on Cleopatra's coins the queen (like the Ptolemaic rulers before her) is presented overwhelmingly as a Greek ruler, on coins produced both locally and abroad. However, while the domestic coinage of Cleopatra presents a queen who both identified with her Ptolemaic ancestry, legacy and Macedonian culture, it also reflects a leader who sought to reform her kingdom's currency system so that it might be compatible with world (Roman) markets. Her association with past great kings and queens, as well as her subtle assimilation to the deities Isis and Aphrodite, offered the idea that her rule was as benevolent and promising as theirs, and that it was endorsed and championed by the gods.

However, Cleopatra did not use coinage alone to market her image for local consumption. While her coins are the most abundant visual source we have from the Egyptian queen's rule, other art pieces such as a dedicatory offering and a number of Egyptian-style statues have also survived. Indeed, the earliest extant image attributed to Cleopatra (#154) is a limestone stele, almost fifty-three centimetres in height, from the Arsinoite nome, which depicts Cleopatra as a man. Dedicated on Cleopatra's behalf on the year of her accession, the upper half of the stele illustrates a pharaoh (wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt) standing before a goddess at whose breast a child suckles. That this stele was dedicated by the queen Cleopatra is recorded in Greek, deeply engraved on the lower half of the stele: 'ΥΠΕΡΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ/ ΚΛΕΟΠΑΤΡΑΣΘΕ/ ΑΣΦΙΛΟΠΑΤΩΡΤΟ/ ΠΟΣΣΝΟΝΑΙΤΙΑ/ ΚΗΣΣΥΝΟΔΟΥ/ ΩΝΣΥΝΑΓΟΓΟΣ/ ΟΝΝΩΦΡΙΣΛΕΣΣΩΝΗ.../ ..ΑΕΠΦ...Α', which translates 'On behalf of Queen Cleopatra goddess [Thea] Philopator, the [holy] place of the association of [Isis] Snonaitiake, of whom the president is the chief priest [*Iesonis*] Onnophris. Year

1, Epeiph 1.⁶³ Similarly, that this is the earliest image we have of her is also indicated by the inscribed date (year one, the first of Epiphi).⁶⁴ It is appropriate that Cleopatra's first dedicatory stele as queen is in the context of Isis, for according to the dedication formula on the stone itself, state Higgs and Walker (2001:157, cat. no. 154), 'this stele was consecrated by the chief of the association of the devotees of the goddess Isis, who was also the administrator of her temple located in the Fayum oasis, according to the popular epithet of the goddess.'

However, Walker (2001:142) writes that Cleopatra's depiction as a man probably results from the hasty adaptation of a record of offerings to Isis, originally prepared on behalf of her father, Auletes. Since only the Greek text was amended (probably re-carved after Cleopatra became sole leader) Cleopatra was thus portrayed on the stele as a male pharaoh. Furthermore, since Cleopatra is not portrayed elsewhere as a man,⁶⁵ and since the lines of inscription appear to have been later tampered with, this deliberate alteration seems likely.⁶⁶ The image of goddess and suckling child finds echoes both in other Egyptian and Greco-Roman sculptures of Isis nursing her son, Harpokrates,⁶⁷ as well as in Cleopatra's later coins, in which she portrayed herself together with her son, Ptolemy Caesarion. However, unlike in these Hellenistic representations of Cleopatra on coins, this stele, apart from the Greek inscription, is distinctly Egyptian in style and content. Whereas Cleopatra, in Greco-Roman coinage and sculpture, is portrayed wearing the Hellenistic diadem or *στεφάνη*, here she is illustrated wearing the distinctive *pschent*, composed of both the *deshret* (basket crown of Lower Egypt) and the *hedjet* (the war helmet of Upper Egypt). As with most Egyptian art, the isocephaly of the figures is retained, and the sculptor of the stele preserves the frontal-profile aspect, with the head, legs and

⁶³ Rowlandson (1998:37, no. 12).

⁶⁴ 2 July 51 B.C.

⁶⁵ Except in the words of Octavian in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, I, iv, 5-7.

⁶⁶ However, Cleopatra was not the first Egyptian queen to be portrayed as a male pharaoh. Hatshepsut (c. 1472-1457) not only, like Cleopatra, appropriated earlier male pharaoh depictions, but defied tradition by abandoning the titles and insignia of a queen, opting instead to draw on kingly iconography, titlature, and actions. Establishing herself as co-ruler with her young step-son, Thutmose III, Hatshepsut appeared on monuments in male kingly costume with the figure of a man (see figure 9 in Robins 1993:45). However, Hatshepsut was not the first or last woman to occupy the throne of Egypt, although her rule as king for more than a decade was by far the longest out of these extraordinary women. A woman named Nefrusobk was the last king of the Twelfth Dynasty, and another, Tausret, the last of the Nineteenth. Nevertheless, in the latter part of Thutmose III's reign, Hatshepsut's names and figures were removed from her monuments, and were changed to those of either Thutmose or earlier kings. Since history indicates that women did not easily occupy the Egyptian throne (out of the two to three hundred pharaohs only four were female), it is likely that Thutmose did this to eradicate the memory of a woman who had improperly ascended the throne (Robins 1993:45-52).

⁶⁷ Higgs and Walker (2001:104, cat. no. 126; 106, cat. no. 128).

feet of Cleopatra shown in profile, and the shoulders in full width. Other canonical features include the wings of Horus (together with the twin cobras, representing Upper and Lower Egypt) above Cleopatra and the seated goddess, as well as the table of offerings between the two figures and the incense burner held by the Egyptian queen.

Identifying Cleopatra in statues is a little more difficult, especially where inscriptions revealing the identity of the subject, such as in the afore-mentioned stele, are absent. Similarly, attempting to relate individual statues to Cleopatra is complicated, since the features of a statue are often of a general nature – not idiosyncratic to any particular queen. From at least the time of Arsinoe II, statues had been commissioned to reflect the important role Ptolemaic queens played in the cults of rulers; the challenge remains in positively assigning a name to a face or bust. However, iconographic features used for decoration (such as the double or triple uraeus) certainly offer one greater clarity in identifying the subjects of Egyptian and Greco-Roman statues. For example, in Egyptian-style statues, Arsinoe II is always depicted wearing the double uraeus, possibly as a symbolic parallel to the double cornucopia which appears on her coins, to represent the close relationship the queen shared with Ptolemy II, or possibly, as was more common, to symbolize the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. Cleopatra, on the other hand, although she also adopted the double cornucopia on her coins, appears to be the first ruler in Egyptian art to wear the triple uraeus on her crown. There are at least six surviving images which show Cleopatra wearing this unique form of the uraeus, some statues purely Egyptian in style and others reflecting Greek attributes.⁶⁸

One such item is #164, a predominantly Egyptian-style statue of Cleopatra (with certain distinct Hellenistic features), identified by the cartouche on her right arm which contain hieroglyphs spelling 'Cleopatra'. Although the back pillar of this marble statue (which, in some cases, reveals the identity of the statue) is uninscribed, and although the authenticity of the cartouche inscription has been questioned,⁶⁹ the identity of this figure as Cleopatra rests predominantly on the triple form of the uraeus on a thin diadem around the queen's brow. Ashton (2001:154-5, 165) explains that Cleopatra may have chosen to distinguish herself by this triple form of the uraeus, since her resemblance to images of her popular ancestor, Arsinoe II, whose cult survived even the Roman occupation of Egypt, was so deliberate, that a stylistic idiosyncrasy was needed to separate the identity of the two queens

⁶⁸ Ashton (2001:150-2).

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 164, cat. no. 164.

in art. Whereas Arsinoe wore the double uraeus, most commonly associated with Upper and Lower Egypt, in the triple form Cleopatra may have tried to extend this image to include, thirdly, the old Seleucid kingdom (as illustrated by the coins of Cleopatra and Antony minted in Antioch). Ashton (2001:155) suggests that the triple uraeus may have been used to represent the triple rule of Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and Caesarion (or, symbolically, Isis, Osiris and Horus). However, since Julius Caesar never actually ruled Egypt, this association is problematic.

Besides the triple uraeus on Cleopatra's diadem, the statue (created some time during Cleopatra's twenty-one year rule) contains other unusual stylistic features such as the open right hand (instead of the usual clenched fist, held close to the side of the body), the single cornucopia in Cleopatra's left arm (a feature borrowed from Greek royal statues),⁷⁰ and the Hellenistic style of Egyptian dress, with the drapery being drawn over the right shoulder and knotted slightly to the right (as opposed to the knot of Isis, being traditionally tied above the breast). Another Greek attribute in an otherwise Egyptian-style statue is Cleopatra's corkscrew wig, framing a broad face, and decorated with the diadem. Unfortunately, this statue cannot be referred to as a representation of Cleopatra's real appearance – besides the stylized Egyptian and Greek attributes, the portrait features (her thin mouth and large eyes) are again typically the product of first-century art styles.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful of the Cleopatra statues, also commissioned some time between 51-30 B.C., is #160, the black basalt statue of the queen, originally identified as Arsinoe II. This 104-centimetre statue portrays a very Egyptian-style Cleopatra: besides her triple uraeus,⁷¹ other Egyptian stylistic features include the canonical pose of the queen (striding forward with the left leg slightly in front of the right); the thin sheath-like dress; the tripartite wig, falling behind the ears; the clenched right fist holding the ankh sign (the hieroglyphic symbol for 'life'); and the double cornucopia in the left arm.⁷²

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 164, cat. no. 164.

⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, the Egyptian symbol of royalty.

⁷² Ashton (2001:160) explains that although the cornucopia was originally associated with the Greek cult of ruler-worship in the third century B.C., in the second and first centuries B.C., this feature was also used by Egyptian sculptors for royal representations. This double form of the cornucopia (*δίκηρας*) is usually associated with Arsinoe II (which originally led scholars to identify this statue with the earlier queen), but because the triple form of the uraeus is exclusively associated with Cleopatra, who also used the *δίκηρας* on the reverse of her coinage, the statue is more likely to represent Cleopatra than Arsinoe.

Thus it is clear from these pieces that within Egypt's borders Cleopatra did not simply portray herself as a purely Hellenistic queen. Her interest in, and commitment to, her Egyptian heritage (reflected in her learning of the Egyptian language, and her engagement with Egyptian culture and religion) is manifested in these predominantly Egyptian-style works. The artists responsible for undertaking these pieces conform to Egyptian art conventions – making use of the canonical poses of earlier art periods; employing age-old Egyptian themes such as the queen coming before an Egyptian deity with votive offerings beneath the all-encompassing vulture god; using the cartouche (with its Egyptian hieroglyphics) as a means of identification of the subject; and portraying on Cleopatra's body customary Egyptian icons, such as the ankh sign, the uraeus, the wig, and the traditional Double Crown of Egypt. That Cleopatra would so deliberately portray her image in an Egyptian context highlights her awareness of a need to be seen not as one of a line of Greek colonists who invaded and stole the throne of Egypt, but as a queen with rights to a fully Egyptian heritage and identity. While Cleopatra's ideological strategy conforms closely to that of her predecessors (such as the Ptolemaic house's role in temple worship and decoration), from these extant art pieces and from the ancient sources, it is clear that her efforts to be recognized as an Egyptian queen went far further than did those of her ancestors. Cleopatra's willingness to learn the language of Egypt, and her attempts to reform Egyptian coinage to make the kingdom's economy competitive in world markets, reflect what appears to have been an additional, genuine concern for the continuance and political relevance of an independent Egyptian nation, as well as her contribution to, and role in, that process.

4.3. Cleopatra's International Image

Besides the Egyptian and Hellenistic images Cleopatra used to market herself ideologically for local consumption, there are those coins (minted exclusively abroad) and statues which we presume Cleopatra used to portray her image outside of the borders of Egypt and the Ptolemaic kingdom.

The first such example of Cleopatra's international image is found in two silver tetradrachms (#221-222), portraying Cleopatra on the obverse and Antony on the reverse. It appears that between 37-32 B.C., as Cleopatra's and Antony's showdown with Octavian grew inevitably closer, portraits of the two lovers were issued (denarii in Alexandria and tetradrachms elsewhere in the East)⁷³ celebrating their union. In the latter half of 37 B.C. (in that year Cleopatra would have been thirty-three) Mark Antony divorced Octavia, and until his death he remained with Cleopatra. From 37 B.C. the Egyptian queen had coins issued, always outside of Egypt – in areas where, by means of monetary policy, Cleopatra wished to promote her political power – with her own image on the obverse and that of her lover on the reverse. Now Cleopatra's coiffure and clothing are more detailed, with pearls edging the décolletage of her tunic – the somewhat naive construction of her on earlier coins now replaced with an almost imperial bearing.⁷⁴ The couple are portrayed as almost asexual splitting images of the other, each with hooked noses, thick necks, and prominent chins. The queen's *Melonensfrisur* is stylistic rather than naturalistic, with the braids being tightly confined in a Greek style beneath the diadem. On the obverse Cleopatra is referred to as 'Queen Cleopatra Thea II,' reflecting her desire to be seen possibly as the ruler of both Egypt and Syria. On the reverse, where the issuer of the coin is customarily recorded, Antony's portrait appears, with the legend 'Antonius Imperator for the third time and triumvir.' Meadows (2001:234, cat. no. 221-222) comments that the legends are in the nominative case (a generally Roman tradition) instead of the typically Greek genitive case, suggesting that the inspiration of these coins is Roman as opposed to Greek. Both the date and place of production are uncertain, yet the construction of the lovers' images (and the message they hoped to represent) on the coins had clearly involved careful thought and planning. That the two wished to be portrayed together is obvious – whether it was the romantic union or the political alliance they were celebrating (or both) is less so. Whatever the case, the production of these coins was obviously meant

⁷³ Walker (2001:145).

⁷⁴ Goudchaux (2001:212).

to augment eastern support for Cleopatra and Antony, in the face of growing opposition from Octavian and Rome. The legends on the coins likewise indicate that the pair wished to be associated with both people (Cleopatra Thea) and positions (triumvir) of extreme political power, and with East (Egypt) and West (Rome) preparing for war, it was crucial that the two should gather as much support as possible from overseas powers. Thus with the military backing of Egypt guaranteed, Cleopatra turned to the international arena, in which these coins were probably distributed and circulated. As Goudchaux (2001:212-3) comments, this warlike zeugma of Cleopatra and Antony on these tetradrachms succeeded in portraying her as an omnipotent 'Queen of Kings,' supported by a Herculean Mark Antony.

But perhaps the two most important international representations surviving of Cleopatra are those termed the 'Vatican Cleopatra' and the 'Berlin Cleopatra,' so named after the museums in which they are currently housed. Both statues, carved in Greek marble from Paros,⁷⁵ are associated with findspots not in Alexandria, but near Rome. Both date from *c.* 50-30 B.C., and since both are likely to have originated in sites of villas south of Rome, it is plausible that the statues may have been occasioned by Cleopatra's visit to Rome as the guest of Julius Caesar, from 46-44 B.C. Furthermore, these marble heads (which have since lost their torsos) reflect that Cleopatra must have been presented as a Hellenistic Greek queen at Rome, where the heads could have well been the work of Greek or Alexandrian artists working from the capital.⁷⁶ Both the Vatican Cleopatra (#196) and the Berlin Cleopatra (#198) portray a youthful queen, which suggests that these may have dated from the earlier years of her reign.

Until 1933, when a German scholar, Ludwig Curtius, published research on the head now termed the Vatican Cleopatra, no authoritative identification of a marble portrait of Cleopatra yet existed. However, his findings have resulted in scholars claiming confidently that, although this portrait bears none of the features previously seen to be idiosyncratic to Cleopatra in Greco-Egyptian statues, it is nevertheless a positive identification of the last of the Ptolemaic queens. Although both this head and a body were found at the site of the Villa of the Quintilii on the Via Appia in 1784, and the head was attached to the torso, when Curtius identified the head as belonging to Cleopatra he simultaneously claimed that the two did not belong together, and had them separated.

⁷⁵ Parian marble was used to represent flesh in Greek and Roman portraits (Walker 2001:142-43).

⁷⁶ Walker (2001:142-43).

In this statue, Cleopatra closely resembles the Greco-Roman portraits of her on coins from Alexandria and Ascalon: her hair is arranged in the Hellenistic *Melonenfrisur* hairstyle, drawn beneath the broad royal diadem favoured by late Hellenistic rulers, and gathered into a tight bun at the nape of her neck. As in the coins, her eyes are large and widely-opened, and her mouth is slightly down-turned. A reconstruction of her nose (closely resembling that on her coins) was replaced on the head in the late eighteenth century, but this has subsequently been removed. Curtius, however, maintained that enough of Cleopatra's original nose remained to ascertain, from the bridge, the original angle, and he concluded that it would have been hooked as in the Alexandrian and Ascalon coins.⁷⁷ Although the features of the head resemble earlier Ptolemaic portraits, Higgs (2001:218, cat. no. 196) explains that the general appearance and technique of the head do not correspond with other products of Alexandrian workshops. While Alexandrian sculptors would typically create a statue pieced together from separate marble sections, the Vatican head is made from one piece of marble, suggesting that it was probably made by a sculptor in Rome. Curtius proposed that the head originated from a copy of the gold statue erected by Julius Caesar in the Temple of Venus Genetrix in Caesar's Forum in Rome, and, furthermore, that it depicted Cleopatra as Venus, with Caesarion as Eros sitting on her shoulder. However appealing this theory sounds, Higgs (2001:218-9, cat. no. 196) dismisses it, stating that the ancient sources do not describe any features of the gilded statue from which we might positively link the two pieces.

The Berlin Cleopatra, also dated to *c.* 50-30 B.C., depicts a finely carved marble portrait of Cleopatra, now housed in the *Antikensammlung* in Berlin. This bust (#198) was excavated in the region of the town of Ariccia on the Via Appia, south of Rome, by a Cardinal D. Antonio Despuig y Damet, sometime between 1786 and 1797. Similarly, it seems unlikely that this portrait was the work of an Alexandrian sculptor: again, the head is carved from one piece of marble, and therefore is not analogous with the style and technique of Alexandrian sculpture. However, as Higgs (2001:207) remarks, 'we cannot, of course, completely dismiss the idea that the Berlin Cleopatra was the work of an Alexandrian sculptor. ...Cleopatra may have taken some of her court sculptors to Rome when she visited in 46 B.C.; she may even have taken finished portraits with her, and the Berlin head may be one such example.' Furthermore, this Romanized version of the queen's portrait also bears strong resemblance to the coins of Cleopatra issued at Alexandria and Ascalon, and thus it may well be true

⁷⁷ Higgs (2001:204).

that the Berlin statue, although inspired by Alexandrian portraits, because of its Italian provenance, was commissioned for a Roman context, like the Vatican Cleopatra.

The Berlin head, although being slightly more flattering, certainly bears further strong similarities to the Vatican portrait of Cleopatra. The Berlin head similarly portrays Cleopatra with the usual *Melonenfrisur* hairstyle, drawn beneath the Hellenistic royal diadem. However, here the diadem is set further back on her head, revealing more hair as well as curls which have escaped the formal arrangement of the hair. In terms of facial features, the Berlin Cleopatra has the advantage of having retained its nose, which possesses both a tip and nostrils similar to the portraits of Cleopatra on coins.

Thus from these local and international representations identified as belonging to Cleopatra, one can attempt to deduce something of Cleopatra's priorities and strategies. Certainly, Cleopatra desired to be portrayed in both Hellenistic, Greco-Roman, as well as Egyptian contexts. In the former cosmopolitan and international arena, she is portrayed with the Hellenistic headdress of the broad diadem and the *Melonenfrisur* hairstyle also depicted on Greco-Roman coins minted in Ascalon and Alexandria. This group of representations portrays an arguably more realistic rendition of Cleopatra, in that the stylized features of Egyptian statues tend to differentiate between Ptolemaic queens not by their unique physical appearance, but by iconographic symbols (such as the triple uraeus or double cornucopia) associated with each Ptolemaic queen. The Greco-Roman portraits of Cleopatra (the Vatican and Berlin Cleopatras) certainly resemble visual representations of Cleopatra on coins, not simply in the details unique to Hellenistic portrayal (such as the hairstyle and type of diadem) but probably in physical resemblance too. More importantly, though, in the Vatican and Berlin Cleopatras, as well as in the coins produced by local Egyptian mints (but which were no doubt circulated in foreign as well as Egyptian contexts), Cleopatra identifies herself as a culturally-attuned, powerful Greek queen, a credible force of contention – politically, socially and ideologically – in her links with Rome and the rest of the East. Yet as eager as Cleopatra was to be represented in the context of her native, Hellenistic Greek culture, she was equally keen to be identified as an Egyptian monarch, and the examples of the marble statue (#164), the basalt statue (#160), and the limestone stele (#154), all show, in increasing measure, her identification with her Egyptian heritage. Cleopatra was certainly aware of her religious duties and divinity imparted through Egyptian religion, and it was in her interests to take care not to alienate the priestly sect in her religio-political strategy. For this reason, then, she, like her Ptolemaic ancestors, respected Pharaonic ritual and represented herself on

temple walls, such as on a wall of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera in Egypt, on which she is illustrated making offerings to the Egyptian gods, wearing a vulture headdress and cobra crown, in the tradition of Egyptian representation.⁷⁸ As Wyke (2002:202) explains, ‘in her Ptolemaic context, Cleopatra was certainly a lover of Egypt, but no seducing *meretrix*.’

However, the accumulative material which we possess of Cleopatra today in the art, sculpture and (especially) the coinage of her reign, suggests that in the international spheres of trade, diplomacy and decorative art, Cleopatra preferred to be acknowledged as a Hellenistic ruler (with roots in Greek culture), whereas in the context of religion she was happy to conform to Egyptian representations of her as an Egyptian deified by right of her colonized heritage. This tentative generalization surely offers us some ground to speculate regarding Cleopatra’s religious and political strategy. For example, one may tentatively suggest that in the milieu of religion, Cleopatra prioritized seeking the affirmation and loyalty of the powerful priests in Egyptian society, and thus promoted associations which assimilated her to Isis, and Antony to Osiris/Dionysus. Similarly, in the framework of trade relations and monetary matters, Cleopatra was anxious to portray herself as a modern Hellenistic ruler, who could understand the demands of the current world environment, and in response sought to make her coinage, weights and measures compatible with the powerful Roman world that flexed its muscles both outside and within her own country’s borders.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, we are forced to draw such conjectural claims regarding the nature of Cleopatra’s rule and her religious and political strategy, since the extant representations of Cleopatra from the period of her reign are few, and at times even contradictory – as she was. Indeed, this ambiguity in art (in the contrasting Hellenistic and Egyptian manners in which Cleopatra is portrayed) finds echo in the

⁷⁸ See Figure 3.2, Goudchaux (2001:138).

⁷⁹ Alexandria was, of course, the capital of the Hellenistic world, with its famed intellectual centres, the Museum and the Library, both of which Cleopatra patronized. Due partly to Callimachus’ *Pinakes* which made its contents accessible, the Alexandrian library (which held nearly 500 000 scrolls) came to rank among the grandest civic institutions in the ancient world, with rivals at Pella, Antioch, and, especially, Pergamum – which, if Plutarch’s account (58.9) is to be believed, Antony gave as a gift to Cleopatra, with its 200 000 scrolls (*OCD*³, 854-55, *s.v.* Library). Similarly, by far the most famous of ancient museums was that in Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy I Soter, and which, like the Library, was located near the palace. Research and lecturing were the main activities of the institution, and in the Ptolemaic period the Museum was famous for scientific and literary scholarship. Although political upheavals in the mid-second century B.C. tarnished the reputation of the Museum, Cleopatra endorsed the Museum by taking part in its discussions (*OCD*³, 1002-3, *s.v.* Museum). Cleopatra’s own scholarly achievements, confirmed by Plutarch, suggest that the queen was an active participant in the intellectual atmosphere of Hellenistic Alexandria.

ambiguity of Cleopatra's political and social identity. However much she may have desired to have been recognized locally as an Egyptian queen, and however much she assumed positive powers through her identification with the goddess Isis, genetically (disregarding the uncertain identity of her paternal grandmother, a concubine) Cleopatra had little or no Egyptian blood in her veins. Conversely, however much she may have wished to be accepted as the prototype of a Hellenistic ruler, she could never escape her 'Egyptianness' – her identity being firmly rooted in, and inseparably linked with, the East and the stereotypes ascribed this part of the world, so eloquently portrayed in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. She may well have worn the hairstyles fashionable in global Hellenistic trends, and she could even boast a truly Macedonian Greek birthright; however, she had simultaneously chosen to be associated with the Egyptian deities, Isis, Hathor and Osiris, as well as with the theriomorphic aspects of Egyptian religion, such as barking Anubis spat at so contemptuously by the Roman imperial poets. Culturally, Cleopatra faced similar crises in identity: historically, Egyptian women were normally excluded from positions of political leadership (especially the leadership of Egypt), and like Hatshepsut more than a millennium before her, Cleopatra not only assumed the throne unnaturally (by displacing two brothers from the throne) and ran the country single-handedly, but she even publicly denied her feminine identity, portraying herself in art as a bare-chested and kilted pharaoh. Within Egypt itself, Cleopatra could not attain the credibility to secure fully the loyalty of its native people, for again, even though she became the first of the Ptolemies to speak Egyptian, not only was she undeniably the offspring of a colonizing power, but she also threatened (while ironically trying to secure) the fate of Egypt by having an affair with one, and marrying another, Roman, thereby extending her identity to include Roman features.⁸⁰ No matter how much she attempted to engage and open her Egyptian economy to Rome (through her coinage reforms and self-portrayal as a Hellenistic, Greco-Roman queen), her relationship with Antony encouraged the festering of Roman propaganda which constructed her as a *fatale monstrum*, a woman who inverted political and social conventions, emasculating Antony and seducing him into the excessive decadence of the East. Thus no matter how hard Cleopatra attempted to negotiate between these contradictory political and cultural identities through the construction of her identity in visual media, she could never be fully one or the other – neither Egyptian nor Greek, neither native nor international, neither male nor female.

⁸⁰ Historically, of course, Cleopatra was not the first Ptolemaic queen to marry outside of the family: Ptolemaic queens before her had also married into the Seleucid family: for example, Cleopatra Thea had married three Seleucid royals – Alexander Balas (150-149 B.C.), Demetrios II (146 B.C.) and Sidetes VII (138 B.C.), the latter two being brothers and sons of Demetrios I.

Cleopatra's attempts to manipulate ideology and art to consolidate political power were by no means a novel strategy: carefully deliberated identities were forged by her predecessors such as Arsinoe II,⁸¹ and the ideological campaign of Augustus, within the decade following Cleopatra's death, would prove to be the ideal case-study of identity manipulation. Similarly, the ancient sources (written and archaeological) inform us that Cleopatra's portrait was manipulated by the queen herself, Antony, her supporters, and certainly by her enemies, such as Octavian, who, in lieu of the queen herself, resorted to having an image of Cleopatra carried in his triumph in Rome.⁸² In the absence of Cleopatra herself, the visually literate populace of Rome would certainly have appreciated this image as the next best thing, and that Octavian resorted to this representation reveals the importance he himself attached to image-making, to legitimize and confirm his own rule and power.

However, in her own design to negotiate a new and appealing identity which could stand in contrast to her Ptolemaic predecessors, Cleopatra subscribed to both stereotypical and conservative features in art (such as in wearing the diadem coupled with the cornucopia), while simultaneously introducing innovations, such as visually associating herself with the inevitable colonizing force of Roman power, in the figure of Antony. Indeed, this was an age in which the politics of representation wielded the most political power, and not surprisingly, then, it was the tool used by Cleopatra and Octavian to negotiate identities which could be universally understood by the various peoples whose support they most sought.

Finally, in Cleopatra's art, the narratives of Plutarch, the Roman poets and Shakespeare all find a strong reverberation. On the limestone stele and Hellenistic coins we recognize from Plutarch the powerful religious and national leader who was astute enough (or politically shrewd enough) to learn the native language of the land over which she ruled; in the beautiful black basalt statue of an Egyptian Cleopatra, we acknowledge the seductive eastern woman Virgil, Propertius and Horace so feared would corrupt or invert the traditional values of Rome; and in the totality of the pieces examined in this chapter, we recognize the two worlds of Shakespeare's Rome and Egypt – worlds which Cleopatra tried so hard to straddle in her attempts to find love and forge a meaningful identity. While the study of art certainly enriches our appreciation of this paradoxical queen, it leaves us no more certain of who Cleopatra really was. For as Higgs (2001:209) concludes, 'the search for the

⁸¹ Such as in her 'Egyptianizing' of the Adonia in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15.

⁸² Plut. *Ant.* 86.; see also Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.26-28; Prop. 3.11.53-54.

image of Cleopatra will no doubt continue, and produce both matches and mismatches. [However, a] snake, a hooked nose, large eyes and a *Melonenfrisur* hairstyle do not a Cleopatra make.’

In the next chapter, I shall examine how Cleopatra’s image and identity has been manipulated through yet another visual source – this time, film. Having discussed how directors of this modern genre have appropriated Cleopatra in a number of productions, to further a particular society’s own political, sexual and social agenda, I shall examine how Cleopatra has been constructed in Joseph Mankiewicz’ *Cleopatra* (1963).

5.1. Introduction to *Cleopatra* (1963)

In the preceding chapters of this dissertation, I have attempted to discuss how Cleopatra has been constructed in Plutarch, the Augustan poets, Shakespeare, and art. However, in this chapter, I shall show how Cleopatra has been constructed in modern film, taking as my case-study the 1963 film, *Cleopatra*, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and starring, in its title role, Elizabeth Taylor.¹ The fame (or infamy) generated in and by the production and release of the film, while arguably indebted primarily to the scandalous off-scene love-affair between Taylor and her co-star, Richard Burton (Mark Antony), succeeded in attaining for Cleopatra, seven years short of two millennia after her death, a new audience of critics and admirers across the modern world.²

Indeed, the role film has played in the formation and wide dispersion of an historical awareness of the ancient world, and – for purposes of this dissertation – the world of Cleopatra, is important. While scholars have questioned whether film should have a place in the investigation of antiquity's modern reception,³ in the case of Cleopatra it becomes clear on inspection that this genre has been instrumental in creating its own range of Cleopatras for modern consumption. However, while this chapter chooses as its subject Mankiewicz's rendition of *Cleopatra*, this was by no means the first filmic construction of the Ptolemaic queen. A search of twentieth-century film productions reveals, in both Italian and American film companies, the manufacture of cinematic histories of the romances and military conquest of Cleopatra, with each film's aim usually being to link the respective country, government, culture or political climate with that of ancient Rome and Egypt to justify, vindicate or even question, in some way, the current order. For example, Wyke (1997:14-15) argues that 'the

¹ I have chosen to discuss this particular film because not only was it the only 'Cleopatra film' accessible to me, but also since this is largely the only Cleopatra (constructed in film) that my contemporaries have been exposed to and remember.

² Even though this film was released forty years ago, it is today regularly chosen for the Easter television broadcast in Spain, and, more recently, South Africa (personal communication, Michael Lambert).

³ For example, Wyke (1997:3) states that 'in the twentieth century, ...cinema has operated in tandem with, and sometimes in opposition to, more direct access to the surviving monuments and literary texts of antiquity to resurrect a vivid past intimately connected with present interests. Knowledges of "Rome" have become effects of its reconstruction in moving images. Is historical film, therefore, a proper study for classicists?'



178



184



179



186



180



69



181



219



182



220





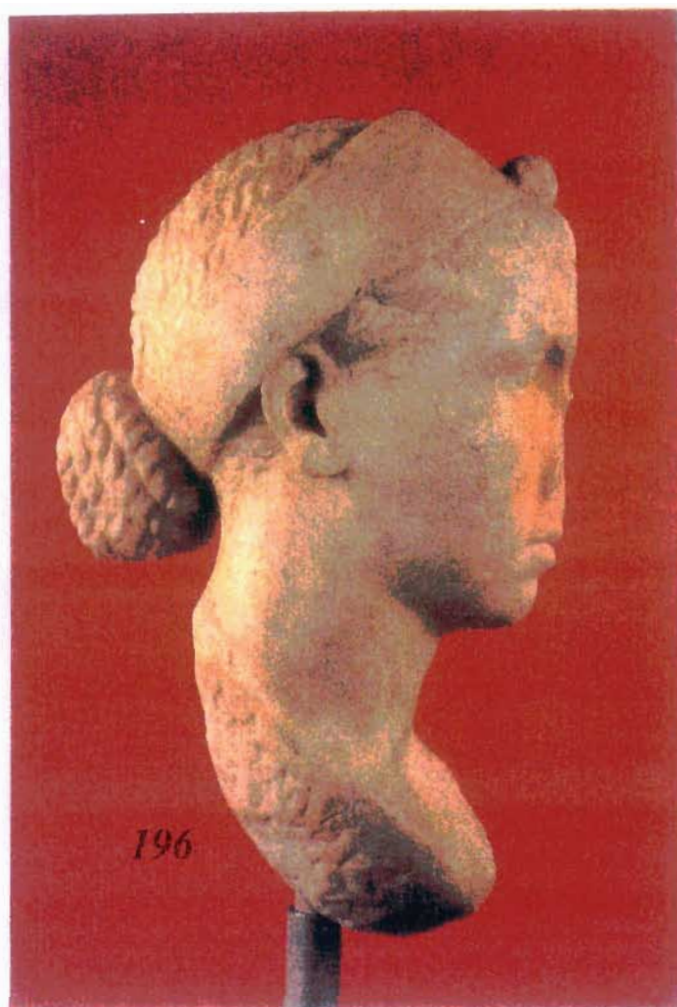
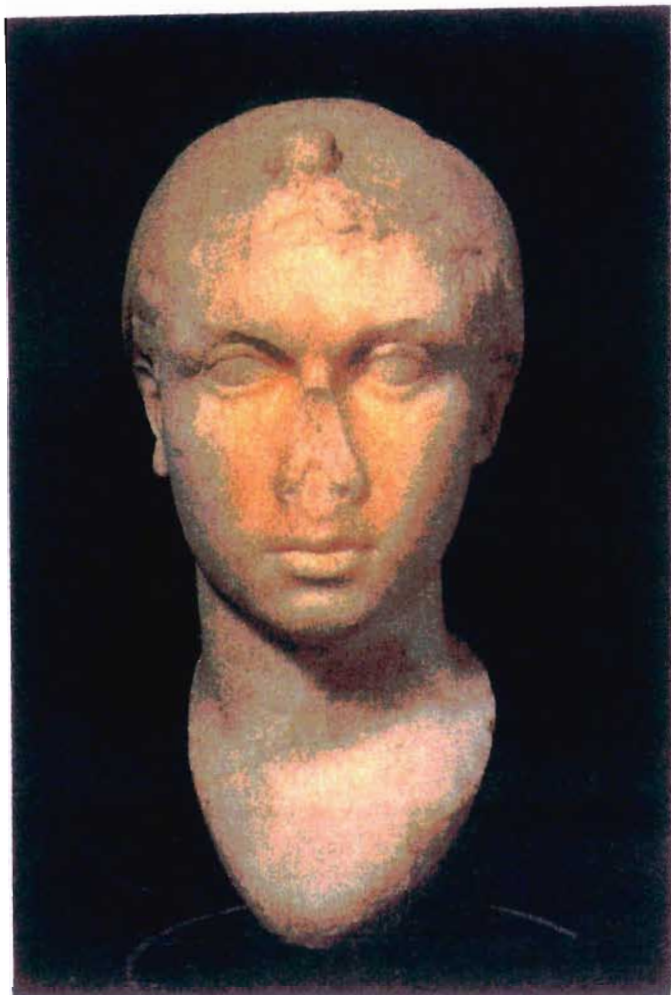


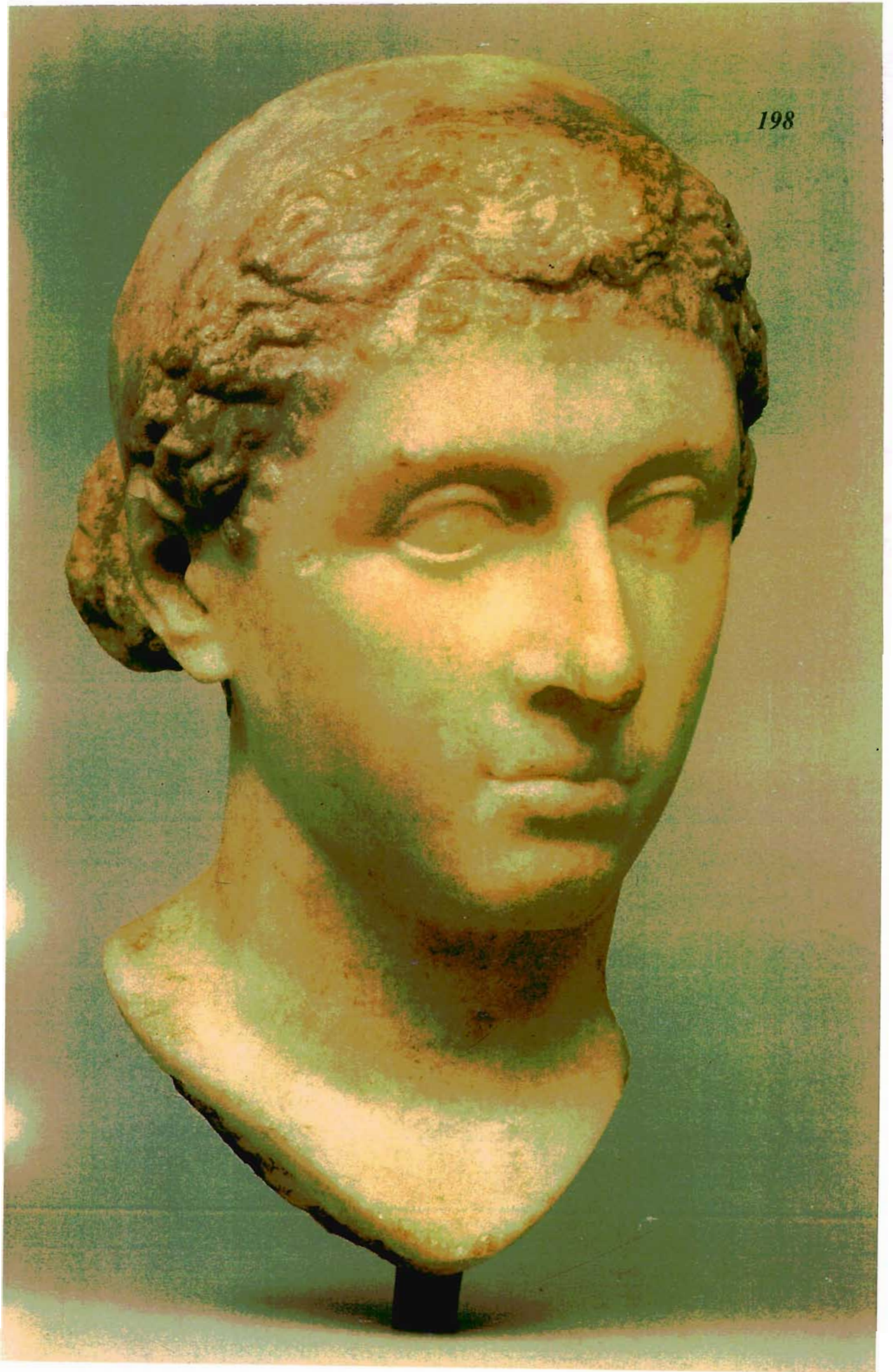


221



222





purpose of these traditions was to cement group cohesion and legitimate action through the use of history... The awareness of an historical continuity, the creation of a cultural patrimony, served to enhance a sense of communal identity, legitimising the nation and bolstering its sovereignty in the eyes of its own and other peoples.³ Thus during the early years of the Fascist regime, for example, the Italian film industry (with the financial backing of the government) exploited ancient classical traditions in film, such as in *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), in which the hero leads a unified, warlike nation to victory in Africa, to legitimize the ruling group's ambition to create a colonial empire in the Mediterranean region.⁴

Similarly, in a 1913 Italian production of a silent film about Cleopatra called *Marcantonio e Cleopatra*, directed by Enrico Guazzoni, and released by Cines, the most prestigious film company of the period in Italy,⁵ Cleopatra is deliberately contained and defined within a narrative of Roman conquest, again with a political motive. In this film, Cleopatra is portrayed as a murderous sorceress and jealous queen who is defeated by the indomitable Octavian. The film ends with a scene, adorned with *fascies* and standard bearers, of Octavian's triple triumph in 29 B.C.; a scene which closes with the *Imperator* standing beneath a statue of winged victory acknowledging the extolling crowds. With the Latin words "AVE ROMA IMMORTALIS"⁶ superimposed across this image, the film closes. Wyke (1997:78) contends that the film's historiographic procedure is linked to a wider set of discourses on empire, which had taken on a great intensity in Italy in the period leading up to the First World War. Two years previously, Italy had declared war on Turkey and a year after that annexed the Turkish province of modern Libya, thereby boasting possession of her first colony in Africa. Indeed, being controlled by the Banco di Roma, which held a number of investments in North Africa, the Cines production house certainly had its own motivation to propagate, in film, the nationalist impetus driving its government.⁷ Wyke (1997:79) concludes that, 'the discourse of historical continuity between the Roman conquests in Africa and the victory of the modern Italian state circulated widely, and the Italian film industry, with its already thriving reconstructions of Roman history, played a significant role in further disseminating this conception of a modern Italian empire arising out of the rediscovered traces of ancient Rome, and the cinematic narration of Cleopatra's

⁴ Wyke (1997:20-1).

⁵ *ibid.*, 76.

⁶ "Hail, Rome the Eternal City," *ibid.*, 78.

⁷ *ibid.*, 82.

defeat became a uniquely appropriate vehicle for both the legitimation and the celebration of Italy as once again mistress of the Mediterranean.’

However, not only the Italian film industry harboured a penchant for its Roman, classical roots. America, too, staked its own claim to the past grandeur of ancient Rome, in the early years of the nation’s own foundation. For a heterogenous, immigrant population which constituted the society of early America, a national identity was negotiated from the ancient past which gave the infant country its own set of rituals and historical discourses. Wyke (1997:15) asserts that ‘[c]lassical antiquity readily supplied America with a usable past – instant, communal history and cultural legitimacy in the eyes of Europe. America was thus created according to the model of an ideally conceived Roman republic. Roman republican ideals of liberty, civic virtue, and mixed government were densely evoked as precedent for and validation of the new republic during the struggle for independence and the subsequent constitutional debates of 1787-1788.’

In 1914, the year *Marcantonio e Cleopatra* was distributed in the United States, Cleopatra was being constructed there for an altogether different audience. From 1914, Fox Studio was creating in the actress, Theda Bara, through its publicity releases, an oriental seductress, who acted the title role in its *Cleopatra*, released in 1917. For this film, directed by J. Gordon Edwards, the historical character of the Egyptian queen served, in film, as a vehicle for the display of Theda Bara’s sensual eroticism. Instead of focussing on the avenues of imperialism and war that the historical tradition surrounding Cleopatra offered, Edwards instead manipulated the Cleopatra narrative as ‘an exotic setting within which to locate a tantalizing spectacle of transgressive female sexuality,’⁸ and thus, Fox Studio trebled the number of seductions to include three men – Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and an Egyptian, Pharon.

The Thirties witnessed a different type of Cleopatra packaged for cinematic consumption in the United States. Paramount Studios, under the direction of Cecil B. DeMille, released its version of *Cleopatra* in 1934, with Claudette Colbert in the role of Cleopatra. Already well-known for his sexual-romantic comedies, DeMille projected in his film-making the radical changes in family and sexual life (such as an increase of pre- and extra-marital sex, and in rates in divorce) which

⁸ *ibid.*, 89.

accompanied changes in the identity of women, as they increasingly entered the realms of paid labour, higher education and traditionally-male professions, from the 1890s into the 1930s. In response to the climate of ever-increasing national concern about the moral content and effects of Hollywood films, and the associated intensification of debates about women's roles, DeMille is observed as having established an astute film formula, namely 'romantic triangles, spiced with liberal displays of sex and consumption, and diluted by the triumph of marriage at the film's close.'⁹

Thus, the historical character and life of Cleopatra served not only to assert the conservative values of the patriarchal nuclear family, but also as a highly appropriate medium for the exploration of contemporary concerns about female sexuality in 1930s America. As a powerful female monarch challenging the stability of patriarchal, masculine Rome, the fears of gender role inversion expressed in the propaganda of Octavian and the Cleopatra-lambasting of his imperial poets in the first century B.C. found echoes in the contemporary American gender-consciousness of the early twentieth century. Thus, 'the message that social order could be disrupted by modern women's claims to political and sexual freedom is made more rhetorically pointed by the use of historical analogy' in DeMille's *Cleopatra*.¹⁰ The power – and threat – of Cleopatra's sexuality is explored by DeMille most effectively in his rendition of Mark Antony's meeting with Cleopatra at Tarsus, described in one film review in the following way:

'But [DeMille's] commercial genius demanded liberal doses of sexual fantasy mixed with the historically faithful set designs.

Nowhere in *Cleopatra* is this so obvious as in the infamous barge scene, where DeMille's rendition makes Shakespeare's description look like *Tugboat Annie*. While Wilcoxon [Mark Antony] and Colbert recline aboard the queen's bordello on the sea, a huge net is drawn up from the sea, holding dozens of squirming almost-naked girls – DeMille's catch of the day – who offer Wilcoxon giant sea shells which spill out priceless gems. Then a veil slowly descends around Colbert and the bedazzled Wilcoxon, and DeMille cuts to a shot of the enormous pleasure barge being rowed by hundreds of slaves into the darkened sea, a drummer beating out the cadence of the oarsmen and suggesting the additional rhythm

⁹ Wyke (2002:284).

¹⁰ Wyke (1997:97).

of the unseen seduction. It is DeMille's carnal poetry in action.¹¹

However, it is Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* which is the focus of this chapter, and while the above films illustrate that Cleopatra was by no means a novel film subject, the later version of *Cleopatra*, released by 20th Century-Fox in 1963, elicited an altogether different reception from the press and cinema-going public.

¹¹ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144).

5.2. Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* (1963)

Nominated for nine Academy Awards, including Best Actor¹² – and winner of four¹³ – one's initial response may be surprise when one reads that recent film critics have labelled Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* 'a mess,... acres of dreary spectacle,'¹⁴ and 'a Vegas-style history lesson, but dammit, a boring one, depriving us of a thousand laughs and cracks.'¹⁵ Clearly, this is a film which received – and continues to receive – a response as paradoxical as the character of the queen it takes as its primary subject. While Elizabeth Taylor, in the role of Cleopatra, received as much criticism for her off-scene bedroom antics with her co-star, Richard Burton (Mark Antony), as she did for her performance in the role of the Ptolemaic queen,¹⁶ she must be admired for taking on the challenge of portraying a woman whose wit, beauty, intelligence, power and charm (garnered from history's multiple constructions of her) have, over two thousand years, combined to create a legendary *femme fatale*, whose fabled ambiguities make a realistic rendition of Cleopatra impossible.

The challenge faced in filming *Cleopatra*, however, was by no means limited to the construction of the heroine alone. With the advent of television in the 1950s, offering a new world of visual entertainment conveniently available within the walls of one's home, film companies were forced to produce the type of diversion that could capture the public's interest (and money) again to recoup the relentless loss of earnings it had experienced as a result of the contention of television for cinema's audiences. Wyke (1997:28) expands, declaring that 'Hollywood's fight against television was conducted as a "duel of screens," in terms of the size of the budget and the size of the image. The industry invested heavily in the technological novelties of Technicolor, widescreen, and stereophonic sound, which it considered necessary to recapture the market, and privileged for big-budget production genres such as the musical, the adventure film, the Western, and the historical epic as those whose narratives were most capable of accommodating and naturalizing the new emphasis on

¹² for Rex Harrison in the role of Julius Caesar.

¹³ for Best Colour Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Art Direction – Set Decoration (Colour) and Best Special Visual Effects

¹⁴ Pym (1998:155).

¹⁵ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144).

¹⁶ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144) state that 'Chaucer's Wife of Bath plays Cleolizze, the million-dollar sultana of 60s jetset sirens, in enough eyeliner to resurrect Theda Bara, and ten costumes for every occasion. This is not a film – it's a deal, decorated with extensive publicity, but weighed down by listless direction and lots of nasal talk, talk, talk. ...Taylor brings notoriety and cleavage to her performance as Cleopatra...'

stylization and ostentatious spectacle.’

The historical narrative of Cleopatra (compiled from Plutarch, Appian, Dio Cassius and, to a lesser extent, the Roman poems of Virgil, Horace and Propertius) offered the harassed film industry a familiar legend (complete with romance, drama and action) with plausible exotic locations in which extravagant sets and high profile actors, graced with colourful and lavish costumes, could be employed. Elizabeth Taylor, although the second choice for the lead role,¹⁷ was an already accomplished actress (having won her first Oscar in 1960 for her role in *Butterfield*),¹⁸ and as she had negotiated a fee of one million dollars for acting the lead role of *Cleopatra*, the film was turning into a very ambitious project. Further publicity was generated for the film as a result of the long-drawn-out production of *Cleopatra* – not only did the project take two years to film, but because of the numerous delays in filming (brought about by Taylor’s various ailments,¹⁹ her blustery affair with Burton, and Mankiewicz’s major re-write of the script), *Cleopatra* experienced a change in direction (from Rouben Mamoulian to Mankiewicz) and actors to play the Roman leaders,²⁰ the firing of the film’s producer, and the resignation of the head of 20th Century-Fox.²¹ It is not surprising then, that by the time *Cleopatra* was finally released (a full year after the original studio deadline), it was the most expensive movie ever made (and remained so until the release of *Titanic*, in 1997), resulting in the loss of almost five million dollars and financial ruin for 20th Century-Fox; furthermore, it was thereafter marked as having ushered in the end of the usefulness of the historical epic genre in film.²²

For his characterization of Cleopatra, Mankiewicz turned his attention to the ancient sources – particularly to Plutarch, Appian, Suetonius and Dio Cassius – where the love affairs of Cleopatra had first been documented. In the narrative of the film, Mankiewicz follows the ancient accounts closely: Caesar comes to Egypt in pursuit of Pompey and to stop the internal wrangling of the country’s sibling leaders.²³ He is captivated by Cleopatra’s carpet-trick in the Alexandrian palace,²⁴ falls in love

¹⁷ The original choice was Susan Hayward (Monaco and Pallot, 1993:144).

¹⁸ <http://www.imdb.com/Credits?0056937>.

¹⁹ From the very first scene where Elizabeth Taylor enters the film’s narrative as Cleopatra, the scar of her tracheotomy, incurred during the production of the film, is quite noticeable.

²⁰ <http://video.barnesandnoble.com/search/product.asp?ean=24543014836>.

²¹ Wyke (1997:101).

²² *ibid.*, 101, 107; http://cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?PID=1598591&frm=sh_google.

²³ Plut. *Caes.* 48.1-2, *Brut.* 6, 33; App. 1.3, 2.84; Suet. *Iul.* 35.1.

²⁴ Plut. *Caes.* 49.2; Dio Cass. 42.35.1.

with her,²⁵ puts her enemies to death,²⁶ installs her on the throne of Egypt and fathers a son by her before leaving her behind in Egypt for Syria, and ultimately Rome.²⁷ After a few years have passed, Cleopatra enters Rome on Caesar's invitation,²⁸ he is assassinated within two years,²⁹ and Cleopatra returns to Egypt.³⁰ Following the battle of Philippi, Antony summons Cleopatra to Tarsus,³¹ and on board her state-galley, he falls under her erotic spell and soon loses his abilities as a soldier and strategist whenever he is with her.³² The pair return to Alexandria before Antony is called back to Rome,³³ and soon after he marries Octavia to cement political ties with her brother, his co-triumvir.³⁴ Ultimately, Antony returns to Cleopatra in Egypt, the pair go to war with Octavian at Actium on the coast of Greece, Cleopatra flees the battle-scene with Antony in hot pursuit,³⁵ and the pair are finally cornered in Alexandria, where Antony takes his life by his sword,³⁶ and Cleopatra kills herself with the poison of an asp.³⁷ These are really the essential elements of the plot of Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra*, and while he clearly sought to follow as closely as possible the historical tradition recorded in the ancient sources, the drawn-out love affairs and the development of the historical narrative rob the film of impetus and excitement.

²⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 52.1; Dio Cass. 43.27.3.

²⁶ Plut. *Caes.* 49.3; App. 2.86, 90; Dio Cass. 42.39.2.

²⁷ Plut. *Caes.* 49.5, *Ant.* 54; Dio Cass. 44.2-45.1, 48.31.5.

²⁸ Dio Cass. 43.27.3.

²⁹ Plut. *Caes.* 56-57.1, *Ant.* 14.1; App. 2.1, 2.111, 2.117; Suet. *Iul.* 83.

³⁰ Suet. *Iul.* 52.1. However, according to this tradition in Suetonius, Cleopatra left Rome before Caesar's assassination.

³¹ Plut. *Ant.* 26.1; App. 5.8.

³² Plut. *Ant.* 27-28; App. 5.8; Dio Cass. 48.24.2-3; 49.34.1.

³³ Dio Cass. 48.27.2.

³⁴ Plut. *Ant.* 31; App. 5.65; Dio Cass. 50.26.1.

³⁵ Plut. *Ant.* 64-67.

³⁶ Plut. *Ant.* 76, Dio Cass. 51.11.1.

³⁷ Plut. *Ant.* 85; Dio Cass. 51.14.1; Suet. *Aug.* 17.4.

4.3 Mankiewicz's construction of Cleopatra

Unlike Guazzoni (1913), whose interest in Cleopatra was related to the themes of conquest and colonialism, or Edwards (1917) and DeMille (1934), who in their respective constructions of Cleopatra focussed essentially on her eroticism and independence from patriarchal constructions of women, Mankiewicz desired instead to capture the multiple facets of the remarkable Queen of Egypt, fore-grounded in the various accounts offered by the above ancient writers; and a Cleopatra more suited to the social and political climate of the early 1960s. Wyke (1997:73) describes how a journalist from the *New York Times* recounted a visit he had paid to Mankiewicz's film studio in Rome in January 1962, while the filming of *Cleopatra* was in progress:

'He had been sent to investigate rumours that the 20th Century-Fox studio was continuing to encounter difficulties in the production of its film *Cleopatra*. Instead, the writer claimed to have found an optimism which stemmed from "the feeling that a film of import is taking shape." On set, the director ...described the importance and focal point of his new film as residing not so much in its impressive sets or in its imposing cast list as in its characterization of Cleopatra. She is to be depicted as "a vivid and many-sided personality, whom Mankiewicz calls 'a terribly exciting woman who nearly made it'" and her political climbing and intrigue is to be brought out in the "meat" of the film – the scenes of intimacy between Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony, which Mankiewicz was then shooting.'

With the various ancient accounts of the character and reception of Cleopatra being vastly different, and with the miscellaneous portrayals of Cleopatra in film standing in juxtaposition with one another, Mankiewicz attempts to construct Cleopatra primarily around her lust for power and her love for Caesar and Antony. In an era in which gender norms and social mores had been challenged and redefined – with women such as Eleanor Roosevelt exercising political freedom of speech in her own dream for one-world unity³⁸ – Mankiewicz enjoyed the liberty of being able to develop Cleopatra's own political ambition (in the historical context of a hostile Roman audience) for a desired positive reception in his own target audience. Thus from the third scene of the film, Mankiewicz, following

³⁸ Wyke (1997:101).

the ancient account in Plutarch,³⁹ in which Cleopatra (wrapped in a rug for Julius Caesar) and Apollodorus steal into Alexandria in a small skiff, begins to construct a queen who will risk her life in order to fulfill her political ambitions.

As the film's narrative unfolds, it is Cleopatra who entertains a vision for world unity (under her joint leadership with Caesar), and in a scene before the sarcophagus of Alexander, Cleopatra lays her political objectives before Caesar:

- CLEOPATRA: Make [Alexander's] dream yours, Caesar – his grand design. Pick it up where he left off. Out of the patchwork of conquests one world, not a one-world-own-nation; one people on earth living in peace.
- CAESAR: So you have told me at last what it is you want of me.
- CLEOPATRA: Of us!
- CAESAR: At the centre, the capital of this one world, one people, one nation – Alexandria?
- CLEOPATRA: He chose it!
- CAESAR: I am Rome!
- CLEOPATRA: He was Greek – what does it matter when we are all one people?⁴⁰

Similarly, it is Cleopatra who drives Caesar to aspire to become king of Rome; and when that dream dies with Caesar, she transports it to the context of her relationship with Antony. It is only after her flight from, and defeat at, Actium that Cleopatra will relinquish her aspirations to rule Rome and the ancient world, and then all she desires is to be left to love Antony ('Without you, Antony, this is not a world I want to live in, much less conquer'). Indeed, there is no other character in the play who, based on the strength of her desire to achieve her dream, warrants more the achievement of this political goal than Cleopatra – Mankiewicz's Julius Caesar is too tired of war and brow-beaten in the penumbra of Alexander's life achievements ever to realize seriously Cleopatra's dream;⁴¹ Mark

³⁹ *Caes.* 49.1.

⁴⁰ All excerpts of the script in this chapter have been transcribed from *Cleopatra* (1963).

⁴¹ Mankiewicz follows the tradition of Suetonius (*Jul.* 7.1) and Plutarch (*Caes.* 11.3), who narrates, '...we are told again that, in Spain, when he was at leisure and was reading from the history of Alexander, he was lost in thought for a long time, and then burst into tears. His friends were astonished, and asked the reason for his tears. "Do you not think," said he, "it is a matter for sorrow that while Alexander, at my age, was already king of so many peoples, I have as yet achieved no brilliant success?"' (Perrin).

Antony has the passion but not the intellect or foresight to achieve it; and Octavian is so paltry a character that if Agrippa had not won the naval battle of Actium for him (while he lay snoozing on a couch in the dark hollow of an anonymous ship), *Cleopatra's* Octavian may never have become *Princeps* of Rome. While in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra and Egypt are vilified by Roman characters as the effeminate, abnormal East, set in contrast against the masculine, virtuous war-machine of Rome, in Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra*, the East alone, represented by the queen, has the power, intelligence and commitment to seize legitimate control of a world-empire. In this film, Rome's women are deferential to men who lack the ability *really* to lead, and as much as Cleopatra's tantrums and haughty one-liners – regurgitated frequently in the almost four hours of the film – begin to irritate and bore one, she alone is constructed as being capable of fulfilling the dream of uniting the two political worlds of the film under one power.⁴²

However, ultimately other discourses in and outside of the film, such as Cleopatra's affairs on-screen with Caesar and Antony, and off-screen with Burton, overshadow any political discourse Mankiewicz may have hoped to develop in his construction of Cleopatra. Indeed, Taylor's private life became so analogous with her stage role that she gained the names 'Cleolizzie'⁴³ and 'Lizpatra,'⁴⁴ as the scandalous Cleopatra/Taylor affair with Antony/Burton raked in publicity – curious and negative⁴⁵ – for the film and 20th Century-Fox. Taylor had already become notorious in gossip celebrity columns for having broken up the marriage of Eddie Fisher⁴⁶ and Debbie Reynolds, whose star image epitomized the perfect, young, American wife; but as Mankiewicz included in his script the tradition of how Cleopatra destroyed Antony's marriage to the archetypical, virtuous Roman wife, Octavia, the parallels between Cleopatra and Taylor began to offer titillating income opportunities for the film studio's marketing department. Thus as Taylor's affair with Burton developed, Mankiewicz rewrote the script on numerous occasions to maximize the entertainment and financial opportunities the relationship provided,⁴⁷ and from early 1962 magazines and newspapers began to carry titbits of

⁴² Thus perhaps legitimizing the fears of the Augustan poets.

⁴³ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144).

⁴⁴ Wyke (2002:302).

⁴⁵ Wyke (1997:104) records that one such example of negative publicity was a letter printed on the 12 April, 1962, in the Vatican weekly, *Osservatore della domenica*, attacking Taylor for making a mockery of the sanctity of marriage.

⁴⁶ Cleopatra's husband at the time *Cleopatra* was being filmed. Not only were they currently married but he was in Italy with her for the shooting of the film (Wyke 1997:102).

⁴⁷ http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?PID=1598591&frm=sh_google.

information about the production process of the film, fed to them by 20th Century-Fox.⁴⁸ (Indeed, it seems that propaganda constructing the sexual escapades of Cleopatra works as powerfully today as it did for Octavian over two thousand years ago.)

Consequently, by means of an elision between Cleopatra and Elizabeth Taylor, the Hollywood beauty inherited – in the extra-cinematic circulations of studio publicity, advertisements and radio and talk shows – the Ptolemaic queen’s power, celebrity, eroticism and legendary lifestyle. Visual images of Taylor were exploited by film retail industries (and 20th Century-Fox studio itself) as a means of selling fashion and beauty products, with Taylor’s personality and lifestyle being organized around themes of consumption, success and sex.⁴⁹ Thus just as in the barge scene in *Cleopatra*, in which two Cleopatras vie for Antony’s attention (a mock Cleopatra who tantalizes the drunk Antony while the ‘real’ Cleopatra looks on), so also in the production and marketing of *Cleopatra* were there two Elizabeth Taylors, and as Wyke (1997:106) argues, ‘Antony’s search for the real queen behind the gauzy curtain [on board Cleopatra’s barge] mirrors the spectator’s search for the real Taylor behind the star image.’

Similarly, in an earlier scene in the film, when Caesar approaches Cleopatra’s boudoir where she is reclining beneath the pampering care of her attendants, the queen, having eavesdropped on an earlier conversation in which Caesar’s men relate stories to him of her bounteous sexual appetite,⁵⁰ manipulates her identity so that it might be compatible with the rumours he has heard of her. With a whimsical expression on her face, Cleopatra tells her waiting-women, ‘We must not disappoint the mighty Caesar; the Romans tell fabulous tales of my bath, and hand-maidens – and my morals.’

⁴⁸ Wyke (1997:101).

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 101-2. Similarly, Higgs and Walker (2001:384) declare that this economic manipulation of the character of Cleopatra in film was also employed by Paramount Studios, the makers of DeMille’s *Cleopatra*, who released pressbooks, the pages of which were displayed to show the ways in which female cinemagoers were encouraged to acquire the ‘Cleopatra look,’ as well as offering information on how the film had influenced current fashion trends. They write, ‘[p]ressbooks ...were a marketing tool devised by studio publicity departments for the exhibition arm of the industry. They instructed cinema managers in ways in which the film might be exploited and marketed to potential audiences, and included information about publicity aids such as posters, production stills and lobby cards that were available for hire or purchase from the distributing company. They included a variety of promotional ideas such as competitions, recipes, and links with local shops, as well as suggested copy for local newspapers.’

⁵⁰ Immediately following the scene in which Cleopatra is brought to Caesar in a carpet, Rufio describes to his leader and to Agrippa how ‘in attaining her objectives Cleopatra has been known to employ torture, poison and even her own sexual talents, which are said to be considerable. Her lovers, I am told, are listed more easily by number than by name. It is said that she chooses in the manner of a man... Well, there’s more reason than we thought for not wanting to leave you alone with her, hey, sir?’

Caesar enters to find a naked Cleopatra lying seductively positioned beneath a flimsy shroud of material, behind which the curves of her breasts and thighs invite Caesar to assume the role of the sexual voyeur. Not only does this scene allude to the multiple constructions of a libidinous Cleopatra which have circulated throughout time, but attention is also drawn to 'Hollywood cinema's mechanisms for fetishizing and objectifying its female stars for the desirous spectator.'⁵¹ Both scenes from the film position Cleopatra/Taylor as the object of male desire, but the scopophilia (pleasure of looking) displays Cleopatra/Taylor, like many women in popular film, not only as an erotic object for Caesar's (and later Antony's) consumption within the screen story, but also for the spectator within the cinema. Extending Storey's (2001:114) discussion of the characteristics of scopophilia to the film, Cleopatra/Taylor is captured by the camera lens and subjected to a controlling (male) gaze, which objectifies her as a voyeuristic fantasy.

In the light of Taylor's own identity construction by the media and the film itself as an adulteress and, to a far lesser extent, a powerful stateswoman, Mankiewicz's characterization of Cleopatra as a mother offers little credibility or emotional impact. No doubt pressured by the length of the film, the director chooses not to subscribe to the tradition in some of the ancient sources, that Cleopatra had three children by Mark Antony,⁵² but he nevertheless develops Cleopatra's relationship with Caesar to produce Caesarion, who features in numerous scenes of the film. What should be a poignant scene towards the end of the film (in which Cleopatra, recognizing the ring given to her son by Caesar on the hand of Octavian, and understanding it to mean that her son's attempted escape from Egypt had resulted in his death) is not, and at no stage in the film is one convinced that Cleopatra's desire to be a mother derives out of anything more tender than political ambition.

Indeed, ignoring Taylor's stunning outfits (sometimes more than one for each scene) and the occasional anecdotal scene which offers one a glimpse of an extraordinary personality, her character hardly evolves into the rich and complex woman one appreciates so much by the close of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* or Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. There are, however, a handful (and no more than that) of scenes in which one cannot but appreciate the mettle, shrewdness and outrageous confidence of Mankiewicz's Cleopatra. At the beginning of the film, when Cleopatra is smuggled into the Alexandrian palace where her brother resides and her life is in certain danger, Cleopatra is offered

⁵¹ Wyke (1997:107).

⁵² Plut. *Ant.* 36; Dio Cass. 49.32.4-5.

a guard to escort her to her room. The five-foot-four beauty casts her gaze on the armoured Roman soldiers surrounding her on all sides and confides, 'The corridors are dark, gentlemen, but you mustn't be afraid; I am with you.' Similarly, Cleopatra's sixth sense of ruthless self-preservation is splendidly portrayed in a scene in which her taster, Lotus, almost succeeds in giving her a poisoned drink. Iras, however, notices that Lotus has not tasted the drink properly, and Cleopatra's suspicion is aroused:

CLEOPATRA (*to LOTUS*):

Taste it again.

LOTUS *approaches, and falls to her feet before the cup and Cleopatra.*

LOTUS (*in a trembling voice*):

Potheinus said he'd have me killed! Forgive me, Majesty! Forgive me! Forgive me!

CLEOPATRA: I forgive you. (*And, after a long pause*) Now drink it.

But perhaps the most impressive construction of Cleopatra is that in which she is ushered into Rome to visit Caesar on a giant sphinx, dragged by countless rows of muscled Egyptian slaves, who follow endless waves of exotic belly-dancers, African warriors, and men dressed as mythological beasts. Here Cleopatra is at her most glorious, thanks to Taylor's costume designers, make-up artists and set designers, and one cannot but admire Cleopatra's constructed arrogance in daring to enter Rome in this way. Of course, the scene is probably wholly fictional, since none of the ancient sources describe so bold an account of her arrival at Rome to be the guest of Caesar, but the scene certainly adds excitement to a movie which is otherwise 'weighed down by listless direction and lots of nasal talk, talk, talk.'⁵³ While Sosigenes and Caesar await Cleopatra in the forum (Antony is characteristically flirting with a female bystander), three rows of trumpeters on white horses herald the approach of the queen. Diagonals of chariots acrobatically criss-cross the forum, and archers and dancers usher in black, African warriors in a cloud of yellow smoke. Dancers dressed as cows – symbolizing Hathor, the Egyptian love goddess – move to the rhythms of giant fans of silver, ostrich feathers and wings, before a huge pyramid opens to release doves into the skies of a glorious day in Rome. Roman trumpeters announce Cleopatra's arrival on a colossal black sphinx, and as Caesar, followed by the

⁵³ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144)

senators and Calpurnia, stands, the Roman mob breaks out into wild applause. Cleopatra (and Caesarion beside her) looks magnificent in a dress of shimmering gold cloth, and a giant hush of awe falls upon the thousands as Cleopatra is carried before the dictator of Rome. With the camera panning between Antony and Cleopatra, we know that he too, like Plutarch's and Shakespeare's Antony at Tarsus, has fallen under her spell, and his words to Sosigenes apply to himself: 'Your queen has conquered the people of Rome already.'

But perhaps most interesting in this scene is the way in which Cleopatra is constructed as thoroughly Egyptian. There is no hint of the Hellenistic queen which the historical Cleopatra seems to have preferred using for her international image (in sculpture and on coins): the dancers, the imagery and the dress are uniquely African. It is surprising (and disappointing) that Mankiewicz chooses to develop so fully Cleopatra's Egyptian image in this scene (and in the costumes and religion of the queen, and the decor in her Alexandrian palace in other scenes), while leaving the constructions of East (Egypt) and West (Rome), and the associated qualities ascribed to them in, for example, Shakespeare, so unexplored. In *Cleopatra*, it seems that Mankiewicz' interest in, and use of, the exotic Egyptian motifs, costumes, and religious oddities, is limited simply to the visual power such objects hold for the attention of his perceived audience.

Sadly, the excitement at watching Taylor acting the role of Cleopatra, and the enjoyment of engaging with her character construction on a sympathetic or admiring level, ends with the death of Caesar. According to one film guide, 'Harrison, doing his waspish don act as Caesar, alone rises above mediocrity'⁵⁴ in the film, and certainly, after his assassination in *Cleopatra*, the feisty commentary of Cleopatra degenerates to a 'spewing, mewling, pampered Roman housecoat who makes fusses because she can.'⁵⁵ Caesar alone is a believable character whose tiredness, cynicism and vulnerability are wholly credible. His characterization adheres to the historical charges of wishing to become king of Rome and the ancient world,⁵⁶ and he is killed for it, resulting in the stalling of Cleopatra's political vision. However, his credibility as leader of that world is from the start of the film undermined by the portrayal of his generals, Ventidius, Rufio, and even Antony, who are white-washed by Mankiewicz as quasi-puppets on Caesar's string – loyal but uniform followers-of-orders, and little else besides.

⁵⁴ Pym (1998:155)

⁵⁵ Monaco and Pallot (1993:144)

⁵⁶ Plut. *Caes.* 57-61, *Ant.* 12; App. 2.1, 14, 107-109; Suet. *Iul.* 79.2.

Indeed, their balding leader's bony knees (identified by Cleopatra) and clemency stand out far more than his brilliant leadership, but then *Cleopatra* is no war movie. However, Caesar's kindness, his vulnerability (induced by his epilepsy) and brokenness in reminiscing about his dead daughter and her husband's unpleasant end, all combine to make his death scene quite lamentable and his assassins look like demons in Roman togas.

If Julius Caesar is constructed in *Cleopatra* as something of a weak (but likeable) figure, then Antony is even weaker, always haunted by feelings of inadequacy induced not by Cleopatra's magnificent and infinite variety, but by the memory of Caesar's battle accomplishments:

ANTONY (*in Cleopatra's private quarters, on board her barge at Tarsus*):

Be braver than the bravest, wiser than the wisest, stronger than the strongest, still no Caesar! Do what you will, Caesar's done it first and done it better – moved better, loved better, fought better! Run where you will as far as you can, you still can't get out; there's no way out! The shadow of Caesar will cover you and cover the universe for all of time.

...Where is Antony? One step behind Caesar – at the right hand of Caesar, in the shadow of Caesar...

Mankiewicz milks the stereotypes in Plutarch of Antony's fondness for women and alcohol,⁵⁷ but where in Plutarch these weaknesses induce pity in the reader, in *Cleopatra* they induce scorn. The legitimacy of the love shared by Antony and Cleopatra, expressed so beautifully in Shakespeare, is not capitalized upon in the film – his children by her do not feature, and the processes involved in his psychological devastation and later, evolution, so sensitively managed by Plutarch, is poorly constructed by Mankiewicz, with the result that the brief Timon scene in the film, following Antony's defeat at Actium, is devoid of any pathos or credible context. Antony's love for Cleopatra is never really constructed as anything more noble than lust or the selfish fulfilment of an egotistical need, and therefore his flight from Actium aboard Cleopatra's flagship highlights his inferiority as an *Imperator*,

⁵⁷ *Caes.* 51.2, *Ant.* 6, 9, 21.

rather than it does his oneness in love with Cleopatra. Antony does not die begging Cleopatra to ‘count him happy for the glories he won and to remember that he had attained the greatest fame and power of any man in the world, so that now it was no dishonour to die a Roman, conquered only by a Roman,’ as he does in Plutarch.⁵⁸ Instead, he dies deserted by every last Roman soldier (presumably including his attendant, Eros, since it is to Apollodorus whom Antony appeals to end his life), and when he confronts Octavian and Agrippa in the desert on the outskirts of Alexandria and begs ‘Is there no-one who would grant Antony an honourable way to die?’, there is not a single soldier who will gratify his request. It is not surprising, then, that Mankiewicz excludes the tradition in Plutarch (*Ant.* 82) where Cleopatra buries Antony with her own hands, lacerates her breasts in grief, and in which Octavian visits her to find her ‘hair unkempt and her expression wild, while her eyes were sunken and her voice trembled uncontrollably, ...and in a word her body seemed to have suffered no less anguish than her spirit’ (Scott-Kilvert).⁵⁹ Sadly, as real as Cleopatra/Taylor’s love may have been in the context of this film for Antony/Burton, had Mankiewicz followed this historical tradition, the audience might not have believed Cleopatra’s response to be sincere.

The result of Mankiewicz’s ambition to create a complex, exciting Cleopatra resulted in a two-hundred-and-forty-three minute production finally being released to the public, and that was *after* the film had already been cut by twenty-three minutes.⁶⁰ This aim of the director’s – to construct all the character traits of the historical Cleopatra on film (her political ambition, eroticism, passion, beauty, sagacity, wit, scholarship, maternal drive and vulnerability), and then to develop these in the context of her relationships with *both* Caesar and Antony – is perhaps what ultimately causes the film to fail as the enthralling and essentially entertaining historical narrative 20th Century-Fox hoped would redeem the film industry. Quite simply, the narrative is too bogged down with historical detail, names, places, battles, events, and tantrums to give Cleopatra (or any of the characters, for that matter) any breathing space for any real character development. Furthermore, while a classical scholar might appreciate Mankiewicz’s loyal use of the ancient sources, brief interruptions by the narrator to depict battle scenes of Pharsalus and Philippi, for example, minimize events which had significant bearing not only on the main protagonists of the narrative of the film, but on world history itself.

⁵⁸ *Ant.* 77.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁰ http://cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?PID=1598591&frm=sh_google; Wyke (1997:100).

Mankiewicz's gender, race and empire discourses are too under-developed (or perhaps too overshadowed by extra-cinematic discourses) to warrant discussion of them, and his construction of Cleopatra falls somewhere between Plutarch's and those of the imperial Roman poets: although she is not as despicable as Horace's barbaric debauchee, she never quite transcends her own flaws of manipulation and self-centredness in the film, as she does in Plutarch. She never quite attains the status of being a political liberator or protective fertile mother-figure for Egypt – as she does in her own coinage – and Egypt's lushness and fecundity are left unexplored. Although the film mediates 'history' through yet another exegetical lens, it succeeds in presenting Cleopatra for interpretation by yet another audience.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to explore how Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt has been constructed by a variety of authors, across a range of genres, spanning two millenia. From the imperial poetry produced under Augustus in the first century B.C., to twentieth century film productions, Cleopatra has remained an object of historical, political, poetic and artistic interest and controversy; and yet despite the widespread attention given her, Cleopatra remains, today, elusive and mysterious, the subject of multiple myths and layered discourses.

Who was Cleopatra? The sexual enchantress of Plutarch whose arrival at Tarsus on the Egyptian state galley with its poop of gold seduced Antony's every sense and made him captive to her will? The mad queen with her contaminated flock of men diseased by vice, whom Horace describes as being crazed with a political 'hope unlimited' to become mistress of the ancient world?¹ The Ptolemaic queen of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* who inverted gender norms by assuming male dress and gender roles? A female monarch who preferred portraying herself in visual media as an African – or a Greek – queen? Or, using Mankiewicz's rendition of *Cleopatra* as a yardstick for measure, an ancient prototype for Chaucer's Wife of Bath, whose cleavage offered, in reality, more excitement than her alleged wit and charm?

Indeed, can any answer be given with any real certainty to these questions? The ancient historical traditions and other sources explored in this dissertation do not offer us one common construction of Cleopatra. While Cleopatra as an historical character certainly existed, the identity of this queen has been invented and re-invented (for political, nationalistic, social and ideological reasons) during the last two thousand years.

Although Plutarch is considered to be the most important ancient source for Cleopatra, even his account uses information derived from a myriad of sources, largely removed from any direct access to Cleopatra or the Alexandrian court, to construct his version of the Ptolemaic queen. With an interest in the complexities of human character – moral vice and virtue – permeating Plutarch's narrative aims, the Greek biographer manipulated his own sources to meet these aims, with the result

¹ *Ode* 1.37.

that his Cleopatra cannot be disinterred completely from the influences of author bias. Furthermore, like the Roman poets preceding Plutarch, Cleopatra was constructed in *The Life of Antony* in the context of a patriarchal world, and for an audience of men. With the queen having left no known journals or biographical documents, she was not afforded any opportunity to express her voice in the making of her story.

The bias latent in the poetry of Vergil, Horace and Propertius is so obvious that the reader easily acknowledges that this Roman version of Cleopatra can never be understood to offer us a wholly unbiassed reflection of Cleopatra. Disregarding an occasional hint of respect directed at a woman who dared to die like a Roman man, one is overwhelmed by the spitting denigration of the poets of Augustus' circle – Vergil's indignation prevents him calling Cleopatra by name;² to Horace she is a 'monster sent by fate,'³ and Propertius not only labels her 'a woman even laid by her own slaves,'⁴ but also 'the harlot queen.../ Sole stigma branded on us by Philip's blood.'⁵ The Augustan poets appear to have reflected what must have been the official Roman propaganda regarding Actium and the foreign queen who dared to challenge the military supremacy and social and gender mores of Rome.

Fifteen centuries later, the aims shaping Shakespeare's play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, were perhaps essentially artistic, and the tradition of Cleopatra's relationship with Antony offered Shakespeare one of the best-known love stories in the world to embellish and develop on stage. While he certainly made use of Plutarch and the Roman poets, his tradition, with its exploration of the worlds of Rome and Egypt, demonstrated both a creative independence from these ancient sources as well as the creation of new myths, or the poetic adornment of old legends, surrounding Cleopatra.

The ideological remnants found in extant coins and sculptures of Cleopatra reveal that Cleopatra was not simply a famous lover who could seduce two (or possibly three) *Imperatores* of Rome, but that she was also politically astute and profoundly aware of the necessity to manipulate her own image to be culturally and politically relevant in a world in which leaders came and went as naturally as the

² *Aen.* 8.685.

³ *Ode* 1.37.

⁴ 3.11.32.

⁵ 3.11.42-43.

seasons. Cleopatra had witnessed factional upheaval in her own country, having been the fourth member of her family to possess the throne of Egypt in her lifetime; she had also seen how easily mighty Roman generals the likes of Pompey and Caesar were toppled in the power struggles contesting governance of the ancient world. In response to these pressures, Cleopatra engineered for herself both national and international images, both African (Egyptian) and Hellenistic (Greek) identities, as she sought to engage with an Alexandrian, an Egyptian, and a more international, Greco-Roman audience. Selected examples of Cleopatra's coins and sculptures reveal an isolated and fleeting portrayal of an *African* queen – Plutarch had constructed Cleopatra governed by Greek social mores, while the Roman poets were so obviously influenced by typically Roman fears and social preoccupations. Cleopatra alone, it seems, constructed for herself an identity which was African, and proudly so.

In twentieth-century film, the Cleopatras in Guazzoni's *Marcantonio e Cleopatra* (1913) and Edwards' *Cleopatra* (1917) were constructed in response to extra-cinematic discourses of imperialism and war, and transgressive female sexuality, and with the artistic license allowed directors for the development of such expositions, it was inevitable that the identity of Cleopatra should be manufactured independent of a faithful reliance on the ancient sources. Mankiewicz, however, in his *Cleopatra* (1963) attempted, seemingly for the first time in film history, to portray all the facets of Cleopatra reflected in the many ancient sources – her personal magnetism, wit, intellect, sexuality, Egyptian identity and political ambition; however, in two-hundred-and-forty-three minutes, the film tries to cover too many events, details and relationships, with the result that Cleopatra remains a shallow character, more credible as a reflection of Elizabeth Taylor's own identity than that of any in the ancient sources.

However, the debates surrounding the truth of Cleopatra's identity are not simply limited to the areas of scholarship I have addressed in this dissertation. Indeed, the past two decades have witnessed the development of a new controversy in the sphere of Africanist historiography (or Afrocentrism), the arguments of which cannot be fairly discussed in the limited space accorded each genre in this dissertation, but which offer plenty of opportunity for further research by students in this country who are interested in African historiography. This conclusion seeks simply to introduce the components of each side of the debate – using the work of Mary Lefkowitz and Shelley Haley as examples of how this area of scholarship relates to Cleopatra – in the hope that it may serve as a catalyst for further

study on Cleopatra, in a more African context.

The publishing of Martin Bernal's controversial thesis, *Black Athena*, caused what must arguably be the biggest furore in the discipline of Classics during the last century, with some classicists welcoming Bernal's 'forceful critique of the profession's implicit prejudices' and its already palpable effect on the way Classics is taught and studied,⁶ and others, such as Mary Lefkowitz, vigorously refuting Bernal's claims.⁷ In his thesis, Bernal challenges what he perceives to be an essentially Anglo-German methodology (with its roots in eighteenth-century scholarship) shaping traditional assumptions underpinning an interpretation of ancient history, culture, civilization, language, race and gender.⁸ Bernal contends that the glorious legacy of ancient Greece owes far more to extra-European civilizations – Semitic, Phoenician, but especially Egyptian – than modernist historiography has previously allowed.

In 1991, after the first volume of *Black Athena* was published, Mary Lefkowitz, a Professor in the Humanities at Wellesley College, was asked to write a review-article about Bernal's thesis and its relation to the Afrocentrist movement,⁹ and in this assignment she uncovered literature claiming, among other things, that Cleopatra was of African descent – a charge she later denounces in her book, *Not Out of Africa*. Her article, published in the *New Republic*,¹⁰ received an intensely hostile response (as she was accused of being inspired by racist motives) and was denounced as an expression of white prejudice, revealing a lack of interest in understanding Afrocentricity.¹¹ Five years later, Lefkowitz published *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to teach Myth as History*, and in its preface she writes that her book is an attempt to refute Bernal's and Afrocentrists' claims and to show 'why these theories are based on false assumptions and faulty reasoning, and cannot be

⁶ Konstan (1997:263).

⁷ For a range of responses to this book, as well as counter-responses by Bernal, see: Bernal (1992:203-14); Hall (1992:181-98); Levine (1992:215-20); Bernal (1993:315-18); Keita (1993:295-314; 329-34); Snowden (1993:319-27); and Lambert (1996:117-20).

⁸ Muhly (1991:22).

⁹ Lefkowitz (1996:xi).

¹⁰ 10 February, 1992.

¹¹ *ibid.*, xii; in a letter to the Editor of *The Wellesley News* (5 May 1992, page 10) Lacet and Yasin attack Lefkowitz, stating, 'Of course it is hard for you to accept [that Africa did have a great influence on Greece] since for your entire life you have studied history which has been "whitened." Blacks do not need to fabricate or use information biasly [*sic*] to show that we have a brilliant past. The evidence we will present is merely a portion of that available for those willing to look at history objectively...'

supported by time-tested methods of intellectual inquiry. There is a need to explain why this misinformation about the ancient world is being circulated, and to indicate that the motives behind it are political, and that this politicizing is dangerous because it requires the end to justify the means.¹² Another concern she expresses in her book is a resistance she claims to have encountered among Afrocentrist scholars who, she argues, instead of engaging in an impartial analysis of documents, defend their views by castigating critics as racists.¹³

In her response to the question, ‘Was Cleopatra Black?’ Lefkowitz challenges the claims made by some Afrocentric scholars, such as Rogers (1972), Clarke (1987) and Haley (1993),¹⁴ who contend that because Cleopatra’s paternal grandmother’s identity is not revealed in ancient sources, Cleopatra may have been black. Lefkowitz identifies the assertion made by these scholars that Cleopatra was black as a statement of the skin colour and ethnicity of Cleopatra, and sets out to disprove Cleopatra’s ‘blackness.’ While she acknowledges the unknown identity of Cleopatra’s grandmother, she argues that in all likelihood, this grandmother was a Macedonian Greek. For the reasons behind this conjecture, Lefkowitz (1996:35) offers that the Ptolemies were wary of strangers, kept themselves apart from the native population to the extent that their marriages were largely incestuous, and that had Cleopatra’s grandmother, the mistress of Ptolemy IX, been black, it is likely that one of the Roman writers would have used this information as invective against Cleopatra. She adds (1996:37) that if Cleopatra’s grandmother was black (or of African descent), Auletes – Cleopatra’s father – would have been more likely to have learned the Egyptian language and customs.¹⁵

Lefkowitz challenges each of the three writers’ (Rogers, Clarke and Haley) claims in turn, and pronounces their respective reasoning flawed. While the former two writers have blatant inaccuracies and discrepancies disqualifying much of their argument, and while Lefkowitz is unrelenting in her accurate use of the ancient sources to support her hypothesis that Cleopatra was most likely of pure Macedonian blood, she fails to understand the essence of Haley’s argument, which, instead of proposing that Cleopatra was actually black, seeks to highlight the prejudices and limitations of accepted historical traditions. Encouraged, possibly, by the tenets of Bernal’s hypothesis called the

¹² *ibid.*, xiii.

¹³ Konstan (1997:261); Lefkowitz (1996:xiii).

¹⁴ These scholars are cited in Lefkowitz’s *Not Out of Africa* (1996:36-43).

¹⁵ Plutarch attests that Cleopatra was the first Ptolemaic ruler to learn the Egyptian language.

‘Revised Ancient Model,’ and in the wake of *Black Athena*’s publication, Shelley Haley, in an article entitled ‘Black Feminist Thought and Classics,’ challenges previous assumptions permeating classical scholarship, (assumptions defended vigorously by Lefkowitz) such as the premise that Cleopatra’s racial and ethnic identity was purely Macedonian, as a vehicle for calling for a new treatment of ancient traditions.

Haley, a Professor in the Department of Classics, the Women’s Studies Programme, and the Africana Studies Programme at Hamilton College, New York, argues in her article for a new method of interpreting Cleopatra and her racial identity. As a self-labelled ‘Black feminist classicist,’¹⁶ Haley identifies Cleopatra as ‘the crystallization of the tension between my yearning to fit in among classicists and my identity politics.’¹⁷ Despite Haley’s memory of her grandmother exhorting her as a young girl, ‘Remember, no matter what you learn in school, Cleopatra was black,’ she, in the manner of classical scholarship, recognized a need to evaluate such a claim in accordance with ‘the rigid criteria of documentary evidence upon which she understood her discipline to insist.’¹⁸ A study of ancient sources and a reading of modern compilations of Cleopatra’s genealogy in the *Cambridge Ancient History* revealed to her that Cleopatra could claim descent from the Macedonian general, Ptolemy, and that, with the exception of one family member, Cleopatra was of pure Macedonian – Greek – blood. Using these sources to rebut her grandmother’s assertion, Haley found herself frustrated with the reply ‘and who wrote those books?’ Yet while lecturing a course entitled ‘Women in the Ancient World,’ when a student confronted Haley with the same charge her grandmother did years before, and when, in response to Haley’s same answer the scholar said, ‘I understand, Professor Haley. You believe what you say is true, but you have bought a lie,’ Haley recognized for the first time that her black students interpreted Cleopatra on a different level to her – and most other classical scholars.¹⁹ And thus began a process for Haley by which she identified in Cleopatra a lost and found symbol, not so much of the racial identity of an Egyptian-Ptolemaic queen, but of a modern racial oppression of identity in the ancient world. Haley argues, ‘In the Black oral tradition, Cleopatra becomes a symbolic construction voicing our Black African heritage so long suppressed by racism and the ideology of miscegenation. When we say, in general, that the ancient Egyptians were Black

¹⁶ Haley (1993:24).

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 28-29.

and, more specifically, that Cleopatra was Black, we claim them as part of a culture and history that has known oppression and triumph, exploitation and survival.’²⁰

Accordingly, as Cleopatra’s identity to the imperial Roman poets was construed as a symbol of the threat of the overthrow of Rome (and thus Cleopatra was constructed as a whore-queen who wished to seize Rome with the support of barbaric deities), so also to scholars such as Haley, the possibility that Cleopatra’s grandmother may have been African symbolized a black historical consciousness distinct from the Eurocentric version of history (and thus Cleopatra’s ‘blackness’ becomes symbolically real). As each chapter of this dissertation has demonstrated, Cleopatra’s identity (not whether she existed or not) is, by necessity, at the mercy of interpretation, and thus becomes a tool for the artistic, historical, cultural or political aims of the interpreter. Just as one interpreter of Cleopatra (such as Plutarch) can differ substantially from another (such as Horace) in his aims and cultural context, so the identity of Cleopatra assumes entirely different meanings to each interpreter. As one scholar argues, ‘Ethnic identity is neither an objective condition nor an arbitrary construct that bears no relevance to contemporary circumstances. Rather, it is a concept that is subject to continual negotiation, and as its contours shift the image of the past is necessarily reconfigured.’²¹ In this vein, Haley (1993:29) maintains, that ‘My grandmother and [black] students were also reading Cleopatra on the level of their experience with miscegenation and the law of miscegenation... We had been told that if we have one Black ancestor, then we are Black. Films and plays have reinforced this idea. Our family histories and photographs proved this to us. My grandmother was white, had straight black hair, and the nose of her Onondagan grandmother, but she was “colored.” Even as a “Greco-Egyptian,” Cleopatra was a product of miscegenation. How is it that she is not Black? My grandmother and students were being logical; they were applying to Cleopatra the social decoding typically applied to them.’²²

However, Lefkowitz seems to argue that this type of logic which Haley applies to her argument in favour of Cleopatra’s ‘blackness’ is dangerous in the discipline of Classics, as it employs history to

²⁰ *ibid.*, 29.

²¹ Konstan (1997:268).

²² Ironically, this same method of social decoding was applied by the South African Department of Home Affairs during the previous government. If a white person was married to a person of colour he/she could assume the racial identity of his/her spouse. Thus, ‘blackness’ or ‘whiteness’ was not necessarily indicative of the colour of one’s skin.

serve purposes other than that of simply getting the facts right.²³ She challenges (1996:42) that ‘Some of my colleagues have argued that teaching Cleopatra is black can do no harm, particularly if it helps to instill pride in students who have been mistreated by the majority society. It is, after all, only a “myth.” The trouble is that a student who believes that such a myth is historically accurate will be reluctant to discuss or even unable to understand evidence to the contrary.’ Lefkowitz (1996:48) expands by arguing that some instructors in universities – by implication, instructors such as Haley – ‘are suspicious of the value of facts, or to put it another way, they think that facts are meaningless because they can be manipulated and reinterpreted.’ They thus create their own bias in interpretation of history as response to the values of the society in which the historical discourse is produced, and interpret that history as a cultural projection of the values of that society. Lefkowitz charges that

‘Such beliefs, if carried to their logical extreme, make it possible to say that all history is by definition fiction. If history is fiction, it is natural to deny or minimize the importance of all historical data (since it can be manipulated). Instead these writers concentrate on cultural *motives*. Historians, in their view, write what they *are*. ...Concentrating on cultural motivations (however inaccurately defined or however irrelevant they may be to the past) allows us to form judgements without the careful amassing of details that characterizes traditional research, and without even learning foreign languages. ...Academics ought to have seen right from the start that this “new historicism” has some serious shortcomings. But in fact most of us are just beginning to emerge from the fog far enough to see where history-without-facts can lead us, which is right back to the fictive history of the kind developed to serve the Third Reich. It is not coincidental that ours is the era not just of Holocaust denial but of denial that the ancient Greeks were ancient Greeks and creators of their own intellectual heritage.’²⁴

This is the essence of Lefkowitz’s retort to Haley’s article ‘Black Feminist Thought and Classics,’ and while Lefkowitz’s argument might be a fitting prosecution of other scholars’ claims attempting to support evidence of Cleopatra’s ‘blackness,’ it fails to apply justly to Haley. Not only does Haley, in her article, both defend the importance of historical facts based on rigorous research and study of

²³ Konstan (1997:262).

²⁴ Lefkowitz (1996:49-50).

the ancient texts,²⁵ and testify to her understanding and use of ancient Greek and Latin,²⁶ but at no time does she invent a version of history which denies that ‘ancient Greeks were ancient Greeks and creators of their own intellectual heritage.’ It is in this final charge that Lefkowitz misses the point of Haley’s argument.

But even if Lefkowitz, in her book *Not Out of Africa*, does misunderstand the figurative interpretation of Haley’s response to the question ‘Was Cleopatra black?’ she manages to put forward a very strong case suggesting that Cleopatra could not have had a black skin. However, as has already been stressed, the question ‘Was Cleopatra black?’ does not equate, for scholars such as Haley, to ‘Did Cleopatra have a black skin?’ Using a somewhat clinical approach, even if her grandmother had been a black Ethiopian or Nubian, Cleopatra herself would only have, according to the laws of genetics, a quarter of her grandmother’s genes within her own genotype. Whether the gene for dark skin was expressed in Cleopatra’s skin or not is impossible to assess: coins and portraits certainly reveal facial features but not the melanin in one’s skin. However, this is not the argument I believe Haley is trying to make in her claim for Cleopatra’s ‘blackness.’ I don’t believe Haley is as concerned about the racial identity of Cleopatra as she is about using the possibility of Cleopatra’s black ancestry to highlight the racial paradigms still governing, consciously or sub-consciously, classical scholarship. Thus, Haley (1993:29) testifies that ‘It seemed to me that the Cleopatra I studied [‘in the Anglo-Germanic tradition of the discipline’]²⁷ as the “true Cleopatra” was a construction of classical scholars and the Greek and Roman authors they consulted.’ Indeed, the imperial Roman poets’ work is marred by a malicious racism which Haley believes is partly responsible, along with the work of other classicists and historians, for misreading Cleopatra as a ‘way of furthering ideas of racial purity and hegemony.’²⁸ In her quest to reveal just how Romans and Greeks misread Cleopatra, Haley returned to the ancient sources’ references to foreign women and their image in ancient history and literature, and found that even in the translation of these sources, modern scholars, including black scholars, have applied contemporary physical stereotypes which at times reveal current racist stigmas in

²⁵ Haley (1993:23) states ‘As a classicist, I realize that I must validate the existence of ancient African women in accordance with the rigid criteria of documentary evidence upon which my discipline insists.’

²⁶ Haley (1993:24-25) describes how she started Latin in highschool and at university level, studied both Greek and Latin.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 30.

western society.²⁹ Not only is Cleopatra now subject to the ‘male gaze,’ such as in certain seduction scenes in Mankiewicz’s *Cleopatra*, but in classical scholarship the historical queen has been subjected to a racist gaze. Haley (1993:36) explains this ‘racist gaze,’ arguing that our understanding of Cleopatra and of ancient Egyptian society, as derived from ancient Roman and Greek texts, is foregrounded against *Greek* and *Roman* constructions of gender and society. Thus our understanding of gender and society in ancient Egypt is defined not according to Egyptian parameters but according to those parameters, foreign to Egypt, with which the Greek and Roman writers were familiar.

Haley argues that in order to understand Cleopatra, queen of an Egyptian, not Roman, world, modern scholars need to re-read ancient evidence, and re-address areas of classical study.³⁰ She (1993:36) calls for classicists ‘to move away from the notion of discipline. We speak of the discipline of classics; it evokes an image of narrow boundaries and rigid inflexibility and exclusion. The discipline of classics purports to study the ancient world, yet, in fact, only studies Greece and Rome. But Greece and Rome were not the only cultures in the ancient world. We need to think of classics in terms of ethnic studies and leave ourselves open to all possibilities.’

Haley concludes with a challenge that is most relevant to those engaged in the study of Cleopatra: ‘We need to hear the tension between the ancient African cultures and the culture of the Greek and Roman men who serve as evidence of their existence. We need to redefine our field so that it includes African languages, African history, African archaeology. We need to hear and acknowledge the silence of African women when we write books about ancient Africa from a Eurocentric standpoint.’ Haley is by no means advocating a new definition of history governed not by evidence but by cultural motives; ‘a portrait of the past painted with broad strokes and bright colors of our own choosing.’³¹ Instead, she calls for scholars – women, and people of ethnic groups outside of the Greeks and Romans – to question, intelligently but critically, intrinsically Greek and Roman patriarchal constructions of social identity and history in order to identify bias in our understanding of historiography.

²⁹ For example, Frank Snowden’s translation of the physical description of Scybale, an African woman who appears in the *Moretum* (Haley 1993:30-31).

³⁰ A claim asserted by Lefkowitz herself: ‘We recognize that no historian can write without some amount of bias; that is why history must always be rewritten’ (<http://www.historyplace.com/pointsofview/not-out.htm>).

³¹ Lefkowitz (1996:49).

For South African scholars, especially in the face of the Eurocentric/Afrocentric debate about school and university curricula, the scope for this type of investigation is broad and exciting, and Cleopatra remains a wonderful case-study for such research. What other character in history can be found at such a controversial and paradoxical junction of identity expression and interpretation? Possessing both historically female and male attributes; crossing gender boundaries in her behaviour; being both African and Hellenistic-Greek – the ambiguities of Cleopatra go on and on, and historical record has shown that there are as many faces of Cleopatra as there are interpreters of her. While the identity of Cleopatra will always remain open to the creative forces of interpretation, to be re-invented to legitimize or further the aims of the interpreter, she remains a powerful legacy for Greek, Roman *and* African historiography, and may well serve not only as the woman who historically pitted these worlds against one another, but also as the woman who reconciles the study of these civilizations two thousand years later.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Alexander, P. (ed.). 1985. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. London: Collins.
- Babbitt, F. C. (trans.). 1957. *Plutarch's **Moralia**: Volume V*. London: William Heinemann.
- Bullough, G. (ed.). 1964. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare: Volume V*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Cary, E. (trans.). 1916. *Dio's **Roman History**: IV*. London: William Heinemann.
- Cary, E. (trans.). 1955. *Dio's **Roman History**: V*. London: William Heinemann.
- Cary, E. (trans.). 1955. *Dio's **Roman History**: VI*. London: William Heinemann.
- Cary, E. (trans.). 1955. *Dio's **Roman History**: IX*. London: William Heinemann.
- Colson, F. H. (trans.). 1962. *Philo: Volume X: **The Embassy to Gaius**; Indices to Volumes I-X*. London: William Heinemann.
- Day-Lewis, W. (ed.). 1966. *The **Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid** of Virgil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- de Sélincourt, A. (trans.). 1954. *Herodotus: **The Histories***. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics.
- Dittenberger, W. (ed.). 1960. ***Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae***. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.
- Edwards, C. (trans.). 2000. *Suetonius: **Lives of the Caesars***. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Fairclough, H. R. (trans.). 1986. *Aeneid VII-XII; The Minor Poems*. London: William Heinemann.
- Fairclough, H. R. (trans.). 1999. *Virgil: Eclogues; Georgics; Aeneid I-VI*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Garrison, D. H. (trans.). 1991. *Horace: Epodes and Odes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Goldstone, R. (ed.). 1968. *Contexts of the Drama*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Goold, G. P. (trans.). 1990. *Propertius: Elegies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Gow, A. S. F. (trans.). 1973. *Theocritus: Volume I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graves, R. (trans.). 1969. *Suetonius: The Twelve Caesars*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics.
- Jones, H. L. (trans.). 1949. *The Geography of Strabo: Volume III*. London: William Heinemann.
- Lacey, W. K. (trans.). 1986. *Cicero: Second Philippic Oration*. London: Aris & Phillips.
- Lawson-Tancred, H. C. (trans.). 1991. *Aristotle: The Art of Rhetoric*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Lee, G. (trans.). 1980. *Virgil's Eclogues*. Liverpool: Francis Cairns.
- Lee, G. (trans.). 1996. *Propertius: The Poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MacLeod, M. D. (ed.). 1968. *Lucian: A Selection*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Mandelbaum, A. (trans.). 1971. *The Aeneid of Virgil*. New York: Bantam.
- Marcus, R. (trans.). 1963. *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books XV-XVII*. London: William

Heinemann.

Miller, W. (trans.). 1953. *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*. London: William Heinemann.

Murphy, E. (trans.). 1895. *Diodorus On Egypt*. London: McFarland & Company.

Ogilvie, R. M. (trans.). 1965. *A Commentary on Livy, Books 1-5*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oldfather, C. H. (trans.). 1953. *Diodorus of Sicily*. London: William Heinemann.

Pelling, C. B. R. (ed.). 1988. *Plutarch: Life of Antony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perrin, B. (trans.). 1919. *Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero; Alexander and Caesar*. London: William Heinemann.

Perrin, B. (trans.). 1950. *Plutarch's Lives: Demetrius and Antony; Pyrrhus and Caius Marius*. London: William Heinemann.

Peskett, A. G. (trans.). 1966. *Caesar: The Civil Wars*. London: William Heinemann.

Ramsay, G. G. (trans.). 1900. *Selections from Tibullus and Propertius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rolfe, J. C. (trans.). 1914. *Suetonius: I*. London: William Heinemann.

Rolfe, J. C. (trans.). 1950. *Suetonius: II*. London: William Heinemann.

Rowlandson, J. (ed.). 1988. *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Russell, D. (ed.). 1993. *Plutarch: Selected Essays and Dialogues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schlesinger, A. C. (trans.). 1959. *Livy: Volume XIV: Summaries, Fragments, and Obsequens*.

London: William Heinemann.

Scott-Kilvert, I. (trans.). 1965. *Plutarch: Makers of Rome*. London: Penguin Books.

Scott-Kilvert, I. (trans.). 1987. *Cassius Dio: The Roman History*. London: Penguin Books.

Shipley, F. W. (trans.). 1955. *Velleius Paterculus; Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. London: William Heinemann.

Shorey, P. (trans.). 1969. *Plato: The Republic; Volume I*. London: William Heinemann.

Shorey, P. (trans.). 1954. *Plato: The Republic; Volume II*. London: William Heinemann.

Thackeray, H. St. J. (trans.). 1956. *Josephus: The Jewish War, Books I - III*. London: William Heinemann.

Thomson, J. A. K. (trans.). 1976. *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

West, D. (trans.). 1997. *Horace: the Complete Odes and Epodes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

White, H. (trans.). 1913. *Appian's Roman History: III*. London: William Heinemann.

White, H. (trans.). 1955. *Appian's Roman History: IV*. London: William Heinemann.

Winstedt, E. O. (trans.). 1953. *Cicero: Letters to Atticus*. London: William Heinemann.

Woods, M. (trans.). 1982. *Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Secondary Sources

Ashton, S-A. 2001. 'Identifying the Egyptian-style Ptolemaic Queens,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 148-55.

Balsdon, J. P. V. D. 1979. *Romans and Aliens*. London: Duckworth.

Belsey, C. 1996. 'Cleopatra's Seduction,' in: Hawkes, T. (ed.). *Alternative Shakespeares: Volume Two*. London: Routledge. 38-62.

Bernal, M. 1991. *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. London: Free Association.

Bernal, M. 1992. 'Response to Edith Hall.' *Arethusa* 25(1):203-14.

Bernal, M. 1993. 'Response.' *Arethusa* 26(3):315-18.

Bradford, E. 1971. *Cleopatra*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Bradley, P. (ed.). 1990. *Ancient Rome: Using Evidence*. Melbourne: Hodder & Stoughton.

Brenk, F. E. 1992. 'Antony-Osiris, Cleopatra-Isis: The End of Plutarch's Antony,' in: Stadter, P. A. (ed.). *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition*. London: Routledge. 159-182.

Charnes, L. 1995. *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chauveau, M. 1997. (trans. Lorton, D.) *Egypt in the Age of Cleopatra*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Chisholm, K., and Ferguson, J. (eds.). 1981. *Rome: The Augustan Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Coleridge, S. T. 1907. *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare*. London: George Bell and Sons.
- Cook, C. 1996. 'The Fatal Cleopatra,' in: Garner, N., and Sprengnether, M. (eds.). *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 241-267.
- de Sousa, G. U. 2002. *Shakespeare's Cross-Cultural Encounters*. New York: Palgrave.
- Drakakis, J. (ed.). 1992. *Shakespearean Tragedy*. New York: Longman.
- Fantham, E., Peet Foley, H., Kampen, N., Pomeroy, S. B., and Shapiro, H. A. (eds.). 1994. *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garnsey, P. 1988. *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garrison, D. H. 1991. *Horace: Epodes and Odes*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Gill, C. 1996. *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Goldstone, R. 1968. *Contexts of the Drama*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Goodman, M. 1997. *The Roman World 44 BC - AD 180*. London: Routledge.
- Goudchaux, G. W. 2001. 'Cleopatra's Subtle Religious Strategy,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 128-141.
- Goudchaux, G. W. 2001. 'Was Cleopatra Beautiful? The Conflicting Answers of Numismatics,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 210-216.
- Gow, A. S. F. (trans.). 1973. *Theocritus: Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Grant, M. 1972. *Cleopatra*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Grant, M. 1978. *History of Rome*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Griffin, J. 1985. *Latin Poets and Roman Life*. London: Duckworth.
- Griffin, J. 1986. *Virgil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, J. 1993. 'Horace in the Thirties,' in: Rudd, N. (ed.). *Horace 2000: A Celebration*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 1-22.
- Gruen, E. 2003. 'Cleopatra in Rome: Facts and Fantasies,' in: Braund, D., and Gill, C. (eds). *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press. 257-274.
- Haley, S. P. 1993. 'Black Feminist Thought and Classics: Re-membering, Re-claiming, Re-empowering,' in: Rabinowitz, N. S., and Richlin, A. (eds.). *Feminist Theory and the Classics*. New York: Routledge. 23-43.
- Hall, E. 1992. 'When is a Myth not a Myth? Bernal's "Ancient Model."' *Arethusa* 25(1):181-98.
- Hardie, P. 1986. *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Harrison, J. A. 1988. *Horace in His Odes*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Hibbard, G. R. 1980. '*Feliciter audax: Antony and Cleopatra*, I, i, 1-24,' in: Edwards, P.; Ewbank, I-S.; and Hunter, G. K. (eds.). *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in honour of Kenneth Muir*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 95-110.
- Higgs, P. 2001. 'Searching for Cleopatra's Image: Classical Portraits in Stone,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 200-209.

- Nisbet, R., and Hubbard, M. 1978. *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ogilvie, R. M. 1980. *Roman Literature and Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Oliensis, E. 1998. *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pearsall, J. (ed.). 1998. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pelling, C. B. R. (ed.). 1988. *Plutarch: Life of Antony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pelling, C. B. R. (ed.). 1990. *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pelling, C. 2001. 'Anything Truth Can Do, We Can Do Better,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 290-301.
- Pitt, A. 1981. *Shakespeare's Women*. London: David and Charles.
- Potter, D.S. 1999. *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian*. London: Routledge.
- Pym, J. (ed.). 1998. *Time Out Film Guide*. London: Time Out Magazine Ltd.
- Quennell, P., and Johnson, H. (eds.). 1973. *Who's Who in Shakespeare*. London: Routledge.
- Quinn, K. 1963. *Latin Explorations: Critical Studies in Roman Literature*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rawson, B. 1995. 'From "Daily life" to "Demography,"' in: Hawley, R., and Levick, B. (eds.). *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*. London: Routledge. 1-20.
- Ray, J. 2001. 'Alexandria,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History*

to Myth. London: The British Museum Press. 32-37.

Rayor, D. J. and Batstone, W. W. (eds.). 1995. *Latin Lyric and Elegiac Poetry: An Anthology of New Translations*. New York: Garland Publishing.

Raysor, T. M. (ed.). 1960. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Shakespearean Criticism: Volume One*. London: Dent.

Richmond, J. A. 1990. 'Symbolism in Virgil,' in: McAuslan, I., and Walcot, P. *Virgil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 24-38.

Robins, G. 1993. *Women in Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press.

Rowlandson, J. (ed.). 1998. *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Russell, D. (ed.). 1993. *Plutarch: Selected Essays and Dialogues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sandler, R. (ed.). 1986. *Northrop Frye: On Shakespeare*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Santirocco, M. S. 1986. *Unity and Design in Horace's Odes*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press.

Scott-Kilvert, I. (trans.). 1965. *Plutarch: Makers of Rome*. London: Penguin Books.

Seager, R. 1993. 'Horace and Augustus: Poetry and Policy,' in: Rudd, N. (ed.). *Horace 2000: A Celebration*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 23-40.

Shotter, D. 1991. *Augustus Caesar*. London: Routledge.

Skeat, T. C. 1953. 'The Last Days of Cleopatra: A Chronological Problem.' *JRS* 43:98-100.

Snowden, F. M. 1970. *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Snowden, F. M. 1983. *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Snowden, F. M. 1993. 'Response.' *Arethusa* 26(3):319-27.

Southern, P. 1999. *Cleopatra*. Gloucestershire: Tempus.

Stahl, H-P. 1985. *Propertius: "Love" and "War:" Individual and State under Augustus*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Storey, J. 2001. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Essex: Prentice Hall.

Sullivan, J. P. 1976. *Propertius: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Summers, J. A. 1984. *Dreams of Love and Power: On Shakespeare's Plays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Syme, R. 1939. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Volkman, H. (trans. Cadoux, T. J.) 1958. *Cleopatra: A Study in Politics and Propaganda*. London: Elek Books Ltd.

Walker, S. 2001. 'Cleopatra's Images: Reflections of Reality,' in: Higgs, P., and Walker, S. (eds). *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 142-147.

Wardman, A. 1974. *Plutarch's Lives*. London: Elek.

West, D. A. 1990. 'Cernere erat: The Shield of Aeneas,' in: Harrison, S. J. *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 295-304.

West, D. 1995. *Horace Odes 1: Carpe Diem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

White, P. 1993. *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Williams, J. H. C. 2001. 'Spoiling the Egyptians,' in Walker, S. & Higgs, P. (eds.) *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. London: The British Museum Press. 190-199.

Williams, R. D. W. 1973. *Aeneas and the Roman Hero*. London: Macmillan Books.

Williams, R. D. 1987. *The Aeneid*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Wyke, M. 1997. *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History*. New York: Routledge.

Wyke, M. 2002. *The Roman Mistress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yavetz, Z. 1984. 'The **Res Gestae** and Augustus' Public Image,' in Millar, F., and Segal, E. (eds). *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1-36.

Zanker, G. 1987. *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry: A Literature and its Audience*. London: Croom Helm.

Zanker, P. 1988. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Internet Sources

<http://www.historyplace.com/pointsofview/not-out.htm>

<http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/faculty.html?dept=Africana%20Studies>

<http://www.wellesley.edu/PublicAffairs/Profile/gl/mlefkowitz.html>

<http://www.imdb.com/Credits?0056937>

<http://video.barnesandnoble.com/search/product.asp?ean=24543014836>

http://cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?PID=1598591&frm=sh_google

Visual Sources

Mankiewicz, Joseph L. (Director). 1963. *Cleopatra*. United States: 20th-Century Fox Studio. Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and Rex Harrison. 243 minutes.