

New Clarendon Shakespeare

# Antony and Cleopatra



THE NEW CLARENDON SHAKESPEARE

# ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Edited by

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## THE NEW CLARENDON SHAKESPEARE

Under the general editorship of R. E. C. HOUGHTON, M.A.

Edited by

*Antony and Cleopatra*  
*As You Like It*  
*Coriolanus*  
*Hamlet*  
*Henry IV, Part I*  
*Henry IV, Part II*  
*Henry V*  
*Julius Caesar*  
*King Lear*  
*Macbeth*  
*Measure for Measure*  
*Merchant of Venice*  
*Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*Much Ado about Nothing*  
*Othello*  
  
*Richard II*  
*Richard III*  
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*The Tempest*  
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## PREFACE

THE aims and methods of the *New Clarendon Shakespeare* are, after twenty years, sufficiently appreciated to obviate the need for reprinting the General Preface here. The General Editor would like, however, to take this opportunity to point out that the plays more recently published in this series—*Coriolanus*, *Winter's Tale*, *King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*—since they are not suitable for study below the sixth form, have been edited with a view to A Level and Scholarship work, and for those undergraduates who cannot possess the larger and more costly editions. The language of these plays is often difficult, and the amount of explanation provided in the footnotes remains usually fuller than that of any other edition; but at the same time more advanced topics are opened up in the commentary, and some references are now made to other editions. (The growing practice of omitting courtesy titles is applied here to the living as well as to the dead, it is hoped without offence.)

The basis of the present edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* is the original Arden edition of R. H. Case, supplemented by such material as the editor collected in lecturing on this play between the wars. In recent years the New Cambridge and the revised Arden editions have appeared, and the editor has taken account of both, as far as space would permit. He has been glad to adopt a number of the suggestions made in the latter (see, especially, v. ii. 34–35), but there has not usually been room to record reasons for not adopting all the new suggestions made by Dover Wilson and Ridley. There still remained a number of lines and phrases which no editor appeared to have tackled, but the exact meaning of which did not seem obvious; and here the present editor has preferred to hazard a paraphrase rather than remain silent. In the commentary more attention has been paid to the style than in earlier volumes,

since it is this which gives *Antony and Cleopatra* the unique place it holds in the affection of mature Shakespeareans.

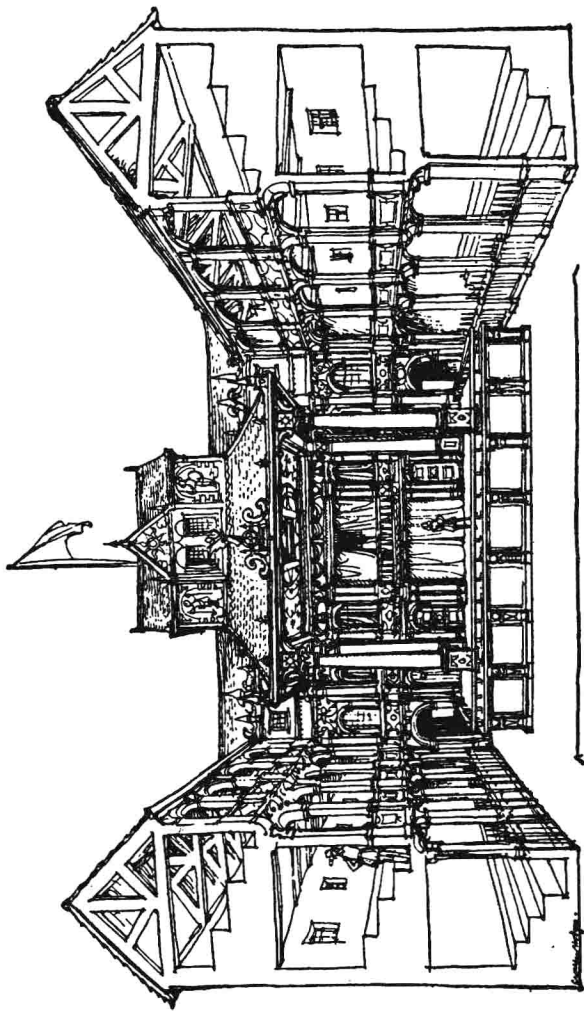
The editor would like to express his special obligations to the following books: the *New Variorum* edition of H. H. Furness (1907); the *New Cambridge* edition of J. Dover Wilson (1950); the (revised) *Arden* edition of M. R. Ridley (1954); MacCallum: *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background* (1910); H. Granville-Barker: *Prefaces to Shakespeare, Second Series* (1930).

The few original contributions which he hopes to have made to the elucidation of the play (apart from new paraphrases) will be found at: II. vii. 17-20; III. iii. 13-15, iv. 31-32, and ix. 35, 39, and 53; IV. xii. 133-4 (foot-note); v. ii. 347 and 355.

Thanks are due to J. C. Maxwell for most kindly reading the proof-sheets, and to M. Mahood for advice on Select Criticism.

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## THE FORTUNE THEATRE

A reconstruction by Mr. C. Walter Hodges. The theatre was built in 1600, one year later than the Globe, at which most of Shakespeare's plays were performed, and burnt down in 1621

## INTRODUCTION

THE first play to be edited in the *New Clarendon Shakespeare* was *Julius Caesar*; the last, or almost the last, in a series which can only include the greater plays of Shakespeare, is *Antony and Cleopatra*. Both are Roman plays drawn from the same source and written within six or seven years of one another; yet between them lies a vast development in Shakespeare's art and in his imaginative experience, for in that interval he had written his greatest tragedies. It is no accident that *Julius Caesar* is often one of the first plays to be read by boys and girls; for the situations and emotions involved in it are, in the main, within their comprehension, while the style has an almost classical purity and clarity, free alike from the affectations and mannerisms of an early play like *Love's Labour's Lost* and of some parts of *Romeo and Juliet*, and also from the involutions of syntax and crowding metaphors of the last plays. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, on the other hand, neither situations nor style are clear or simple, so that it is a play not usually studied till the last years at school, or even later. For in this play the moral is ambiguous—our emotions perhaps taking side against our reason—while the consummate mastery of the language can only be felt by those who have undergone a considerable apprenticeship both to poetry in general and to this poet in particular.

Perhaps the two most interesting things about *Antony and Cleopatra* are its style and its nature as a tragedy. The double title links it to *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*, suggesting at once that love is to be the main subject, with equal emphasis on hero and heroine. If we have not here the youthful innocence and ardour of the first, neither have we the cynicism of the second. For all



their age and sophistication, Antony and Cleopatra are genuine lovers, and in their death they are not divided. This relationship becomes the most permanent thing in their world, and enables them partially to rise above the egoism of their own nature and the surrounding corruption. It might be said of them that, as they are shown by Shakespeare, nothing in their lives became them like the leaving of it; and this, indeed, is one reason why the play does not create the full tragic impression. Like Romeo, Antony dies under a misapprehension, but he chose his fate—to be with Cleopatra even in death. We feel pity, perhaps, but no terror. It is passion rather than any one tragic flaw that Antony shares with the other tragic heroes. He is not a character of the all-round nobility of an Othello or a Lear, and he has not the capacity for suffering that they and Hamlet, or even Macbeth, display. Nor has Shakespeare taken us by soliloquy into his mind as he has into theirs. Again the play is half a chronicle-history in its form and construction, and the extent of time covered would alone forbid the concentration of *Othello*. The dramatist follows Plutarch in his Roman plays more closely than his sources in other plays, and this fact alone makes them less intimate than those tragedies which are to a greater degree his own creation.

But it is hardly possible to put *Antony and Cleopatra* alongside *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* without feeling a difference as great as the resemblance. And this lies in the superb poetry flashing out again and again, and putting the protagonists on a plane where morality seems almost irrelevant. It is the poetry that almost convinces us that 'the nobleness of life is to do thus', that Cleopatra on Cydnus was a sight to take captive even air and water, a woman whose 'infinite variety' surpassed that of her sex before and since, whose hand could only be the playfellow of Antony and of no one else, 'a great fairy', 'a day of the

world', but yet in her mortality only 'a lass unparalleled'. And so with Antony. We know he has deserted his political duty for personal pleasure, but we also believe that 'his rear'd arm' had 'crested the world', that 'for his bounty there was no autumn in it', that 'realms and lands were as plates dropp'd from his pocket'; so that with their death our imagination feels that something of the glow of life has departed:

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

Finish, good lady; the bright day is done  
And we are for the dark.

Not to sympathize with Antony would be to take sides against poetry.

If the preceding paragraph strikes a more emotional note than is usual in such a place as this the writer must excuse himself by the precedent of other critics (e.g. the chapters on this play in Murry's and van Doren's books on Shakespeare), and also by the insistence that the feeling is genuine and of long standing. It was the editor's good fortune as an undergraduate at Oxford just after the First World War to be present more than once at the O.U.D.S. presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and it was the hearing of Cleopatra's lines in the later part of the play from the lips of Kathleen Nesbitt which first disclosed to him a magic of poetry even beyond that in the great tragedies. This was one of the four plays most marked by Keats in his pocket Shakespeare; and it is interesting to find that Auden and Pearson in their five-volume anthology of English poetry chose to represent Shakespeare by this play complete. It is the quality of the verse which makes many critics today side with Coleridge rather than with Bradley in their final estimate of the play (cf. *Select Criticism*, p. 236). Shakespeare is a great dramatist, as the constant revivals

of his plays all over the world prove; but he is an even greater poet. In construction and concentration *Macbeth* is far above *Antony and Cleopatra*, but in poetry the latter play is at least equal to the former. And the mention of *Macbeth* enables us to point once more a contrast with the great four that underlay Bradley's verdict. In reading *Macbeth* we never forget that the hero is a cruel murderer, whatever noble qualities he may have. But in *Antony and Cleopatra* moral judgement is suspended, as Lamb claimed that it was for Restoration Comedy. By Christian ideals, or indeed by any high moral standards, the lovers stand totally condemned and Octavia deserves all our sympathy (which is, incidentally, why Shakespeare keeps her part so small). So judged, the play can only be called the Decline and Fall of Antony. But no one on whom the poet-dramatist has fully worked could accept this as a fair account of the experience that the play gave him. We care almost as little that Antony is neglecting his duty and has thrown away the world for a mistress as we do that Falstaff is a liar, a braggart, and a coward. That Shakespeare was *not* indifferent to moral consideration, and even to the highest Christian ideals, is apparent from *King Lear* before, and from the Romances after, our play.

It is not proposed in this short introduction to dwell on the individual *characters*, since this aspect is frequently touched on in the commentary and fully treated in the selections from earlier critics which follow it.

### THE DATE AND STYLE OF THE PLAY

The date of the writing and production of *Antony and Cleopatra* almost certainly lies between 1606 and 1608, the middle year being perhaps the most likely. It must have been before May 1608, when it was entered in the Stationers' Registers as if about to be published, though no Quarto was in fact brought out. If *Macbeth* is assigned to 1606,

the dramatist would hardly have been free till the later part of that year. On the other hand, he may well have been thinking of the subject of our play when he made Macbeth give as his excuse for mistrusting Banquo:

under him  
My genius is rebuked, as it is said  
Mark Antony's was by Caesar.

Those who think that Daniel's revised edition of *his* play *Cleopatra* in 1607 shows traces of the influence of Shakespeare's play date the latter in 1606 or early 1607; but it is possible that the influence is the other way.

More interesting than the exact month or year is the position of the play in its author's career. A glance at the table of approximate dates of Shakespeare's plays printed as Appendix I in most volumes of this series will show that in the now generally agreed order *Antony and Cleopatra* comes after *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, and just before *Coriolanus*, which is itself followed by the so-called Romances, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest* (ignoring *Timon* and the part-Shakespearian *Pericles*). A position between *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* not only suits metrical tests, but also the whole tone of the play. Like Macbeth, Antony has grave faults and deserves to lose his position, but like Coriolanus he is noblest at the end. Superficially this play is more closely linked with *Coriolanus* than with the four great tragedies. It follows its source more closely, is more loosely constructed and less gloomy. The great inward difference is that in *Antony* Shakespeare's genius took fire, whereas in *Coriolanus* it did not. This distinction, which seems to have attracted no notice from the eighteenth-century critics, was voiced by Coleridge when he spoke of the 'happy valiancy' of the style of *Antony and Cleopatra* (see *Select Criticism*, p. 249). In the freedom of its syntax and the piling up of metaphors our play heralds

the style of the Romances. As an example of the latter we might take the dying speech of Enobarbus (IV. x. 11–23), of the former Caesar's words to his sister at III. vi. 50–52; and many other examples of Shakespeare's boldness with language are pointed out in the commentary. But what links our play with the greatest tragedies is an intensity and passion hardly to be found in the Romances. 'Developed for the utterance of tragic discord, it [this last style] becomes ever more close-packed, elliptical and strange or difficult, not to say inharmonious. And yet, in one play at least, *Antony and Cleopatra*, there is a certain exaltation of spirit which begets a rhythm ever more buoyant and magical and which derives directly from Shakespeare's transfiguring of the personages he found in Plutarch' (O. Elton).

When we speak of Shakespeare's latest *style* we are using a word of complex meaning, embracing, among other things, vocabulary, syntax, metre, rhythm, and imagery. In all these there are differences observable between Shakespeare's plays at different periods, and also, though less marked, between plays of neighbouring dates. For example, *Othello* is full of dramatic irony, whereas *Antony and Cleopatra* has little. *Antony and Cleopatra* is exceptional among the tragedies in having few ambiguities, so that even the slight paradox of 'valiantly vanquished' (IV. xiii. 58) has excited comment. The reason is, perhaps, that 'the chief characters are masters of their own fate and know the scope and consequences of their own actions as well as we do in the audience' (Mahood). On the other hand, there is hardly a play of Shakespeare in which the *imagery* is more striking or contributes more to the total effect.

### IMAGERY

All Shakespeare's work, poems as well as plays, is full of imagery, that is (using the word in its proper sense)

metaphors and similes, comparisons expressed or implied between one thing and another. When *Richard III* opens with the sentence

Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York,

the poet is making Gloucester express in metaphor what could have been expressed in simile by saying that the country's previous discontent was like winter and its present joy like summer, and the imagery here could be described as taken from the seasons or the weather. The source of the image here has no special significance with reference to the play as a whole; and in general the imagery of the earlier plays has poetic rather than dramatic value. But as Shakespeare developed he tended more and more to use a certain proportion of imagery in each play from sources which cast a certain colour over their context and over the whole play, often by way of enforcing something expressed definitely elsewhere. In *Hamlet*, after we have heard that 'There's something *rotten* in the state of Denmark' we are prepared to have the statement reinforced by any reference to disease, &c. So, particularly in the four great tragedies, there are clusters or patterns of imagery which give a particular flavour to the play. This imagery, of course, affected the minds of hearers or readers long before they were conscious of them; but it has been one of the main developments of criticism in this century to observe and bring together what may have been done unconsciously, even by the dramatist himself. When Shakespeare's imagination had clothed itself in Macbeth's mind, it became natural to him to see the colours black and red everywhere, and perhaps also to feel that he was dressed in borrowed robes.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* the most notable groups of images are those connected with the world or the universe

and those connected with Egypt. To take the less important first, by drawing on the references to Egypt in the Bible, as well as in his main source, and by using his own imagination, Shakespeare has managed to connect Egypt with heat, fertility, and luxury so that we see the voluptuous East in contrast to the austerity of Rome, comparatively a colder climate, and are thus led to appreciate the two forces contending for Antony, and the richness of that which he finally chooses. When Cleopatra recollects Antony calling her his 'serpent of old Nile' (I. v. 25) she starts a connexion which only ends with the asp from the 'caves of Nile' (this is admittedly a direct reference rather than an image, but critics have gradually widened the scope of imagery to include such things). A good illustration of the way in which dominant images are introduced even, as it were, irrelevantly, may be found in the casual conversation of Lepidus about the breeding of serpents (II. vii. 24-27).

But the more important group of images and expressions concern the protagonists of the drama, and are mainly used by or about them. We are not to be allowed to think of them as any ordinary pair of lovers. If we are to be sufficiently moved by their love and their fate, they must soar above ordinary human scale. Hence we find constant mention of the world (forty-two times in this play against an average of about twenty), the heavens, and the gods, or at least the supernatural. At one moment Antony 'doth bestride the world like a colossus'; at another his partner is 'our terrene moon'; while her words about him leave us to supply the word 'sun' ourselves: 'He would *shine* on those That made their looks by his' (I. v. 55-56). Even imagery chosen to express abstract ideas may be drawn from and contribute to the atmosphere of the play. For example, the sea comes into the first part of the play in connexion with the danger from Pompey and

in the later part in connexion with the naval battle. It also belongs to the vast and elemental. It therefore forms a suitable source for a picture of the fickleness of popular favour ('lackeying the varying tide', 1. iv. 46). The student of the play will find it interesting to collect further examples of the different groups of images, to some of which attention is directed in the commentary.

### SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES AND HIS USE OF THEM

The subject of Antony and Cleopatra was not new to drama when Shakespeare took it up. A French play, *Cléopâtre Captive*, by Jodelle (1552), is said to be the first proper tragedy in that language (as, curiously enough, is a Casper's *Cleopatra* of 1661 in German). The next was also French by Garnier, having *Marc Antonie* as its hero, and this was translated by the Countess of Pembroke, sister of Sir Philip Sidney, published in 1592, and ran into five editions. It is probable that Shakespeare knew this *Antonius* (cf. Commentary on 1. ii. 129). Its popularity probably prompted the poet Samuel Daniel to produce his *Cleopatra* of 1594. Like its predecessors this play only dealt with the last moments of his heroine, and the work is more literary than dramatic (e.g. the whole of Act I is a soliloquy by Cleopatra). Nevertheless it seems to have had some influence on Shakespeare, since both, but not Plutarch, insist on Cleopatra's fear of being made part of Caesar's triumph and on her reluctance to pass before Octavia's eyes, and on her no longer being in the prime of her beauty (cf. also v. ii. 165 footnote, and the commentary on v. ii. 227-8). Daniel issued a revised edition of his play in 1607, which *may* have influenced Shakespeare at one or two points.

Other sources may be dismissed even more briefly before we come to that which is paramount. For Egypt Shakespeare may have used Philemon Holland's translation of



Pliny's *Natural History*, from which he had lately taken a good deal in *Othello*, and he certainly had in his head the biblical references to Egypt. Appian's *Bellum Civile*, which had been translated in 1578, probably made him realize the importance of the naval power of Sextus Pompeius and rate his threat to the triumvirs more highly than Plutarch warrants (cf. also commentary on II. i. 13-14). But the main source for this as for the other Roman plays is North's *Plutarch*, one of the great Elizabethan books. Plutarch wrote his *Parallel Lives* of Greek and Roman worthies in Greek in the first century of our era, and Sir Thomas North made his translation not directly from the Greek but from the French version of Amyot (1560), publishing his first edition in 1579 and the second, which Shakespeare used, in 1595. For our play the main source was the life of Antony, though the other lives he had used for *Julius Caesar* also contributed something. Shakespeare followed his source far more closely in the Roman than in his other plays, and the reason lies partly in Plutarch and partly in North. For Plutarch was writing biography, not chronicle-history like Holinshed, and North was a master of language. Plutarch is the only great writer who furnished the material for Shakespeare, and the only one still read for his own sake. North made him a national classic, and his style had such relish for Shakespeare that he retained many of North's expressions. When speaking of Shakespeare's sources in this play it will be convenient so far as possible to speak of Plutarch for the matter and North for the language. It is only possible to give here a few excerpts from North's life of Antony (see Appendix), but the student will find it worth while to read the whole life (e.g. in the beautifully produced 'Tudor Translations' series), or at least all those parts used by Shakespeare, which are printed in the (old and new) Arden editions of the play. (A summary of Plutarch's