A Comparison of the Two Principal Characters of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra with Their Prototypes in Plutarch's Life of Marcus Antonius

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A COMPARISON OF THE TWO PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS
OF SHAKESPEARE'S ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA WITH THEIR PROTOTYPES
IN PLUTARCH'S LIFE OF MARCUS ANTONIUS

BY
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The recent successful run of Katherine Cornell's production of Antony and Cleopatra in New York (at the Martin Beck Theatre, in the 1947-1948 season), besides giving the lie to those who claim that Shakespeare is entirely unproducible, and that most of all Antony and Cleopatra is unproducible, had another happy effect in arousing interest in a play that has been sadly neglected in modern times. One unusual manifestation of this interest is a scholarly article that appeared in the drama section of the New York Herald Tribune, and it is a quotation from this article that will introduce the subject to be treated in this thesis. The author is journalistic enough, despite his scholarship, to entitle the piece "Cleopatra was Plutarch's Girl, But Shakespeare Made Her His." He begins:

This tribute (i.e., to be given below) to the Queen of Egypt by the character Enobarbus describes Shakespeare himself. For in writing Antony and Cleopatra and other plays adapted from Plutarch's Lives or Holinshed's Chronicles Shakespeare often followed his sources so closely that they are constructed more like narratives than stage plays, and so are structurally defective. Moreover, he apparently worked so rapidly on these plays that he merely completed what amounts to first drafts. And yet even so,
he "Did make defect perfection, and, breathless, power breathe forth."1

The writer of the article might well be criticized for overemphasizing the structural defectiveness and hastiness in Shakespeare's workmanship—at least the point is a debatable one, but the attention he calls to these two facts, namely, Shakespeare's close adherence to his source material in the play, and the success he had, nevertheless, in making "defect perfection" is entirely justified, and it is on these two points that this thesis will be built.

By a comparison, therefore, of Plutarch's Life of Marcus Antonius with Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra we will attempt to establish the fact that, while treating the same subject matter, and in a startling number of instances the same precise details, Shakespeare was able to convert Plutarch's plain, unpretentious narrative into a dramatic work almost unmatched in the history of English Literature.

It is the method used by Shakespeare that will be of special interest; of the fact of his superiority there is little doubt. Even those who find fault with the play as

1 New York Herald Tribune, Drama Section, March 7, 1943. The quotation given is from Antony and Cleopatra, II, 2, line 239.
a piece of drama, esteem it higher than Plutarch's version of the same tale. Those who consider the play to be dramatically correct are even more emphatic in their preference of Shakespeare over Plutarch, and they call attention to the fact that it was not by wholesale butchery of the facts of history that he achieved his success, but by faithful adherence to them. In the introduction to his edition of Antony and Cleopatra, H.N. Hudson says:

In this instance [i.e., Antony and Cleopatra] the poet seems to have picked and sifted out from Plutarch with the most scrupulous particularity, every fact, every embellishment and every line and hint of character, that could be wrought coherently into the structure and process of the work. Notwithstanding, his genius is as free as ever from seeming at all encumbered with help, or anywise cramped or shackled by the restraints of history...  

Coleridge lends the weight of his authority in a passage in the Lectures on Shakespeare:

Of all Shakespeare's historical plays, Antony and Cleopatra is by far the most wonderful. There is not one in which he has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much--

---

perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly.3

About the fact, then, most are agreed. This thesis, therefore, will not be directly concerned with establishing what is generally conceded, but rather with showing in one instance how Shakespeare made the transformation. The instance to be considered is characterization. This aspect of the play has been chosen, not as the only possible standard of comparison, but as a more important and interesting one. The other major standards that might have been adopted are those of plot and diction. Plot has been passed over here for two reasons: 1) because in the treatment of character, plot will of necessity be obliquely treated. (See the remark of Professor Gervinus: "While Aristotle regarded action as the most important thing,... Shakespeare on the other hand considered the main point to be character and action united, or character alone."4); and, 2) because such a comparison is one that would carry us too far afield through the need of treating the Aristotelian concepts of dramatic structure, not to mention the numerous theories opposed to Aristotle's.

A comparison of Plutarch's diction with Shakespeare's would make an interesting study, but it would involve treating the *Antony and Cleopatra* as a poem rather than a play, and if any statement about Shakespeare is true, it is this, that he wrote his plays to be acted, and that his poetry was subservient to his drama.

A more troubling difficulty in the present study is the possible objection that it is entirely unjust to make a comparison of a dramatist and poet with an unassuming historian. This objection must and will be met, but because the answer is to be found partially in the reasons for choosing *Antony and Cleopatra* in preference to other plays of Shakespeare, we will first give these reasons, and then proceed to a direct reply to the objection.

For an instructive and profitable comparison of Shakespeare's historical plays with the sources he used, any one of his English chronicles, or *Macbeth*, or any of the Roman plays might have been selected. To say that *Antony and Cleopatra* has been selected because this thesis aims to show how Shakespeare transformed history and made it live in that particular play would obviously be begging the question, and it would be to mis-state the approach used in this thesis. The purpose of this study is to compare Shakespeare with a source that will suffer least by comparison, and that is best able to compete
with the dramatist on grounds of literary quality; and with this in mind the *Antony and Cleopatra* was chosen. It can be seen that in order to satisfy this need for a fair treatment, Plutarch should be the historian of the comparison rather than Holinshed (or Saxo Grammaticus, from whose *Historia Danica* Hamlet is derived, to suggest another possibility), since he is undoubtedly superior to those other authors, good though they be. This, it will be noted, is a partial reply to the objection mentioned above, that it is unfair to compare a poet with an historian.

It still remains to explain why *Antony and Cleopatra* was chosen instead of one of the other plays based on Plutarch. The prime reason for this is the close adherence to the original of Plutarch that is found in the play. The more faithful the poet is to his source, the more striking are his deviations, and the more certain it is that the deviations were dictated by some powerful dramatic reason. Apart from this reason, of the three plays, *Julius Caesar*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Coriolanus*, all but *Julius Caesar* might well be rejected on the grounds that their sources are not found directly in Plutarch, but only indirectly through other Elizabethan plays. Hardin Craig remarks

Shakespeare found the story of Timon in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. He may also have amplified it by reference to the
dialogue Timon the Misanthrope by the Greek satirist Lucan, since a number of places recall Lucan's words. There is also an old play on Timon which Shakespeare may have known.5

And of Julius Caesar, he says

Julius Caesar was a popular theme on the stage of the sixteenth century in Holland, Italy, France, and England... Caesar had been made the hero of various Senecan tragedies, traceable to the Latin Julius Caesar and its French adaptation, Cesar...Alexander's Julius Caesar, and the anonymous Caesar and Pompey, or the Tragedy of Caesar's Revenge.6

All this is not meant to imply that the story of Antony and Cleopatra was unknown on the Elizabethan stage before Shakespeare. However, in this instance the influence of other works is not nearly as profound or as marked as it is in Caesar or Timon. Plutarch here is clearly the prime source.

The reasons for the choice so far given are of course merely negative, and offer more justification for rejection of the plays rejected than for selecting that selected. Therefore the intrinsic excellence of the Antony and Cleopatra itself must be added as a final and far from light reason for its choice. For although the high praise of Coleridge ("The
highest praise...which I can offer in my own mind is the doubt...whether the Antony and Cleopatra is not...a formidable rival of Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, and Othello.7) is not the unanimous opinion of the critics, still there is an impressive enough array of similar encomia to justify placing the play among those of highest rank in Shakespeare. This alone is sufficient to make it worthy of study, but when we further consider its own peculiar merits: that it is Shakespeare's counterfoil to Romeo and Juliet, the one being a tragedy of youthful, innocent love, the other, of mature passion; that it is more than a love story—it is the tale of the fall of an empire—when all these are considered, there appear abundant positive reasons for studying the play.

The principal reason, we repeat, is the fact that the Antony and Cleopatra is more faithful to Plutarch's version than any other play based on the Lives. This makes the comparison more just, and it is another of the indirect answers to the charge that such a comparison is unfair. It is now time to treat this charge directly.

For the sake of clarity, let us phrase this objection in a declarative sentence. It might be put this way: It is not fair to compare an historical work with a poetical work,
for the latter is intentionally and essentially artistic, while the former need not be so and is not so of its essence.

Even Coleridge might be used in confirmation:

Shakespeare can be complimented only by comparison with himself: all other eulogies are either heterogeneous, as when they are in reference to Spenser or Milton; or they are flat truisms, as when he is gravely preferred to Corneille, Racine...8

The answer to this is that both Plutarch and Shakespeare fall under the general Aristotelian dictum that says

Now there is an art...in which the medium of imitation is language alone...whether the language be metrical or non-metrical....The primary objects of artistic imitation are human beings in action.9

In other words, since the Lives are literature, there is at least a generic basis on which they must stand comparison with other literature, not excluding Shakespeare's. The Life of Marcus Antonius, and Antony and Cleopatra both imitate the same actions, and a similarity always invites some kind of comparison.

Furthermore, if the nature of the comparison is fully understood, it will be clear that we are not attempting to

8 Coleridge, 145.
9 Aristotle, Poetics, tr. by Lane Cooper, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, New York, 1913, 3.
belabor the obvious. As we have said before, it is not so much whether Shakespeare outdoes Plutarch that interests us, but how he does it. We are not trying to establish that Shakespeare was a better historian than Plutarch, or that Plutarch was a worse poet than Shakespeare—of course Coleridge is right in saying that the comparison is heterogeneous—but we wish to illustrate at least this, that there is an absolute order in which the two works may be compared, that of its nature the poetic plane is the higher, and that Shakespeare took his matter from the historical plane and raised it to the poetic, without doing violence to the former. Some of his methods will be studied in this thesis.

As is indicated by the title, this study will be concerned chiefly with the characterization of Antony and Cleopatra. The procedure to be followed is simple, and the intention is to be logical and orderly in order to achieve a maximum of clarity. The hero and heroine of the play will be considered in Shakespeare's and in Plutarch's portrayal. Where Shakespeare has adhered to Plutarch's conception, and where he has abandoned it, will be noted, and an attempt will be made to discover the dramatic necessity that caused the changes. Sometimes, of course, it may be that character changes were made not on account of any intrinsic necessity, but because of a dramatic tradition of Shakespeare's time, although, as we
have remarked, the traditions behind Antony and Cleopatra are nearly so strong as those behind Julius Caesar or Timon of Athens. At any rate, such instances will not be used in proof of this thesis.

In treating characterization in Antony and Cleopatra it will not be possible to prescind entirely from all other considerations, nor would such a thing be desirable, since the play is best understood as a unified whole, and the parts are only to be taken out and examined in reference to the whole. In this connection then, there will be occasional need to comment upon the plot of the play, since plot and character are so intimately linked in Shakespeare. Prof. Gervinus may be quoted as one of the many critics who have noted this fact:

Character and action, as in nature, penetrate each other so completely in Shakespeare's art, which is so true to nature, that between the values and importance of both there is in all his plays the closest connection. If the characters are rough, as in the Taming of the Shrew, or superficial, as in the Midsummer Night's Dream, so will the actions be harsh in one instance and marrowless in the other.

For this reason it will be necessary to treat at least

11 Gervinus, 847.
briefly the question raised by some critics about the dramatic excellence of the play. Gervinus himself, for instance, is among their number. He comments

...this play is not arranged with the same attention to dramatic clearness and unity as that Julius Caesar is; other faults also seem to disturb somewhat the pure enjoyment...\(^\text{12}\)

Accordingly, the structural defects he finds in the play should have their effect on the characterization. Therefore these supposed defects must be touched upon in our treatment of the characters.

We will begin with the character of Cleopatra, and to her the second chapter will be devoted. The third chapter will discuss the character of Mark Antony. A fourth chapter will summarize the arguments and conclude the thesis.

\(^{\text{12}}\text{Ibid.}, 723.\)
CHAPTER II

CLEOPATRA: COURTESAN OR QUEEN?

Since what Cleopatra is is the key to what Antony becomes, it is fitting to consider her character first. If, in the drama, she is what Professor L.L. Schucking says she is, "an intelligent, passionate, astute, heartless, essentially vulgar and profoundly immoral creature,"¹ then the tragedy of Mark Antony's career might rather be deemed a farce; but if on the other hand she conforms to M.W. MacCallum's idea, "Perhaps even Shakespeare has no more marvelous creation than she, or one in which the nature that inspires and the genius that reveals, are so fused in the ideal truth,"²


The difference between MacCallum's excellent study and the approach we are taking here might well be emphasized at this point. On the title page of MacCallum's book the phrase "and Their Background" is printed in smaller type than the preceding words of his title, and this device is symbolic of the emphasis given to the source materials of the plays, in proportion to that given to interpretations of the plays themselves. Thus, in his chapters on Antony and Cleopatra MacCallum gives fairly comprehensive treatment to the principal characters of the play, but his reference to Plutarch is only sporadic, and he does not use the historian for the purpose of a comparison, as we intend here, so much as for an additional authority in confirmation of his arguments. This is of course a valid approach, and we will have frequent occasion to refer to this work. At times, however, MacCallum seems to confound Plutarchian characterization with Shakespearean, making it seem as though a statement about a character will stand as proved if it is confirmed in either one
then we will be inclined to agree with Dryden, that what Antony sacrificed was a "World Well Lost."

Our task here is to show how all the changes effected by Shakespeare in the characterization of Cleopatra have succeeded in making her a more artistic figure than she was in Plutarch. This can best be shown by a brief consideration of the nature of the project Shakespeare took upon himself.

The object of his writing was to produce a drama, a tragedy, a love story, based on the historical love affair of Antony and Cleopatra. As in every tragedy, it was necessary that there be a certain nobility in the principal characters, since ignoble characters cannot arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear in the spectators. In general, then, the playwright's task was to elevate Cleopatra to a higher nobility of character than she enjoyed in Plutarch's version. For it will be shown that Plutarch's Cleopatra has very little nobility. His problem can be made still more specific, however, by looking at the peculiar problems facing him in the portrayal of the Queen of Egypt. Since the tragedy is directly traceable to his infatuation for Cleopatra, it was necessary not only to ennoble Cleopatra in order that she might be

of the texts. This of course, assumes that Shakespeare changed nothing in Plutarch, an assumption that we are explicitly denying in this thesis.
a fit tragic heroine, but also to lay special emphasis on the reality of her love for Antony, in order that his passion might seem to have an object worthy of a tragic hero. For if Antony's love were not reciprocated, if he were devoted to a fickle coquette, then he too would diminish in stature. Shakespeare's end therefore is twofold: the general aim of enhancing the Queen's nobility, and the specific aim of making her love for Antony a sincere passion. To one or the other of these aims we shall discover that all the changes in Cleopatra's characterization can be reduced.

This fact alone, that the play stands or falls with the proper interpretation of Cleopatra's character, should be enough to convince us that in Shakespeare's mind she has, despite all her faults, an essential nobility that makes her worthy to be the heroine in a world-tragedy. She is noble in Plutarch too, yet in Plutarch and in Shakespeare her nobility has different qualities (as well as degrees), and this is one of the important changes introduced by Shakespeare. In the first meeting of Antony and Cleopatra, for example, the external events and circumstances are almost identical in the two authors, so much so that this is one of the favorite texts for illustrating Shakespeare's dependence on Plutarch. Yet the motives behind Cleopatra's behavior are far different in Shakespeare from those in Plutarch. The poet describes the Queen's coming in the following passage, that labors hard to
surpass Plutarch's version:

Enobarbus When she first met Mark Antony
She pursed up his heart upon the river of
Cydnus...
The barge she sat in like a burnished 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 amourous of their strokes. For her
own person,
It beggared all description...

And more of the same until

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.3

All this scene, and all its context convey only an im-
pression of luxury—-at most an impression of a woman's amor-
ous conquest. There is no hint of a political expediency as
the motive, not even from the cynical Enobarbus who narrates
the event, and would be the first to detect a hidden intent.
His tone here is one of admiration, and the speech climaxes
a series of boasts about the luxurious life of the east.
"We did sleep the day out of countenance, and made the night

3 The Complete Works of Shakespeare, "Antony and Cleopatra,"
light with drinking,' he has been bragging, and he goes on to add, "We had much more monstrous matter of feast, which worthily deserved noting." Yet in Plutarch this whole scene was a cunning, almost defiant act on the part of the Queen, a reckless bid for leniency from a conquering general, and a powerful indication of the trust she placed in her womanly charms. North's version of the Lives gives it:

Antonius, going to make war with the Parthians, sent to command Cleopatra to appear personally before him, when he came into Cilicia, to answer unto such accusations as were laid against her, being this: that she had aided Cassius and Brutus in their war against him. The messenger...when he had thoroughly considered her beauty, the excellent grace and sweet ness of her tongue, ...assured himself that in a few days she should be in great favor with him [Antony]. Therefore he did her great honor, and persuaded her...not to be afraid at all of Antonius...Cleopatra, on the other side, believing Dellius' (the messenger's) words, and guessing by the former access and credit she had had with Julius Caesar and Calenus (sic) Pompey (the son of Pompey the Great) only for her beauty: she began to have good hope that she might more easily win Antonius....Therefore when she was sent unto by divers letters, both from Antonius himself, and also from his friends, she made so light of it and mocked Antonius so much, that she disdained to set for ward otherwise, but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus, the poop whereof was gold, the sails of purple...5

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4 Ibid., II, ii, 134 sq.
and then follows the passage so closely resembling Shakespeare's description. But see the difference in the Queen's motive! Shakespeare does not precisely deny the political aim, but his silence obliterates it. In both authors she is queenly, but whereas in Plutarch she is queenly as monarch, in Shakespeare she is the queenly lover. By suppressing the motives of Plutarch's version, he begins to achieve what we have called his specific artistic aim—that of affirming the sincerity of the Queen's love. So too, in the account of the Queen's disastrous presence at the battle of Actium, Plutarch tells a different story than Shakespeare:

But Cleopatra, fearing lest Antonius should again be made friends with Octavius Caesar, by the means of his wife Octavia, she so plied Canidius with money, and filled his purse, that he became her spokesman unto Antonius, and he told him there was no reason to send her from this war, who defrayed so great a charge...

Expediency and politics pure and simple, according to the historian, but the poet turns the motive entirely:

Cleo I will be even with thee, doubt it not.
Enobarbus But why, why, why?
Cleo Thou hast foreshowed my being in these wars,
And say'st it is not fit.
Eno Well, is it, is it?

6 Ibid., 89.
Cleo Is't not denounced 'gainst us?
Why should not we
Be there in Person? 7

Cleopatra here confesses only to the desire of fighting her own battles, and even if we wished to question her sincerity in this regard, the only other motive the preceding scenes will allow us to attribute to her is the wish to be with Antony. If it were rather the motive of Plutarch's version, we could expect Enobarbus to challenge her with it. For him, a soldier, furthermore, the Plutarchian motive would have met his approval, as leading to a warlike resolution of the crisis, and her presence would have been quite unobjectionable to him. It is because he feels that her presence makes not for war but for peace—or at least for inefficiency in battle—that he resents it: "Your presence needs must puzzle Antony; take from his heart, take from his brain, from's time, what should not thence be spared." 8

In other words, what Shakespeare has done in these instances, and in others of the same kind, is to remove all references to Cleopatra as a self-seeking Queen, who sees her fortunes as lying apart from those of Mark Antony. That she may be self-seeking we do not deny, but in Shakespeare's ver-

8 Ibid., III, vii, 10 - 12.
sion she does not look upon herself as a queen mighty in her own right; it is in identifying her interests with those of Antony that her success is to be attained. This is not all that Shakespeare has done by this change. He does not only deny the motive of politics in the passage referred to, but he affirms the motive of real love. This is not at all verified in Plutarch.

Professor Schucking's severe charge against Cleopatra which has been quoted earlier in this chapter is probably to be explained by his confounding of the two Cleopatras, that of Plutarch with that of Shakespeare. We will attempt to show that his charges are in the main false; and by showing here and now that in Shakespeare's story Cleopatra's love was sincere, that indeed Shakespeare took great pains to show that it was sincere, a beginning on this refutation will have been made. First, however, let us see Cleopatra as Plutarch saw her. A few random passages will show his mind. Her effect on Antony:

Antonius being thus inclined, the last and extremest mischief of all other (to wit, the love of Cleopatra) lighted in him, who did waken and stir up many vices yet hidden in him, and were never seen to any: and if any spark of goodness or hope of rising were left him, Cleopatra quenched

it straight, and made it worse than before.\textsuperscript{10}

Then began this pestilent plague and mischief of Cleopatra's love...again to kindle.\textsuperscript{11}

Her methods of swaying him:

But now again to Cleopatra. Plato writeth that there are four kinds of flattery: but Cleopatra divided it into many kinds. For she, were it in sport or matter of earnest, still devised sundry new delights to have Antonius at commandment, never leaving him day or night, nor once letting him go out of her sight.\textsuperscript{12}

Her deceit:

Cleopatra knowing that Octavia would have Antonius from her, and fearing that... she would be too strong for her, and in the end win him away; she subtly seemed to languish for the love of Antonius, pining her body for lack of meat....And still found the means that Antonius should often find her weeping....All these tricks she used.\textsuperscript{13}

Even her beauty is somewhat disparaged:

The Romans did pity her (Octavia), but much more Antonius, and those specially who had seen Cleopatra, who neither excelled Octavia in beauty, nor yet in young years.\textsuperscript{14}

In Plutarch this whole history is viewed from the point of view of the Roman, the aristocrat, the imperialist. For

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Shakespeare's Plutarch, 36.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 55.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 43.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 83.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 91.
\end{itemize}
although Plutarch was a Greek, in his time one was either Roman or barbarian, and his sympathies lay with the city on the Tiber. To a man of this stamp all that is Roman is noble, and the East with all its works and pomps was an abomination. The sympathies of men of this age and disposition are well epitomized in Horace's exultant ode on the downfall of Cleopatra, "Nunc Est Bibendum":

...while still a frenzied queen was plotting ruin against the Capitol, with her polluted band of gallants foul with lust, --a woman mad enough to nurse the wildest hopes and drunk with fortune's favors. But the escape of scarce a single galley from the flames sobered her fury, and Caesar changed the wild delusions bred by Maerotic wine to the stern reality of terror, chasing her with his triremes, as she sped away from Italy, even as the hawk pursues the gentle dove, or the swift hunter follows the hare...with purpose fixed to put in chains the accursed creature.\textsuperscript{15}

Like all translations of the \textit{Odes} except those few done in verse by poets, this one loses everything but the literal sense, but at least the sense is clearly unflattering to the Queen. Notice too that in this ode Antony is not mentioned at all. He is a Roman, and his disgrace is best passed over in silence. For disgrace it certainly is, in the eyes of such as Plutarch, for not only did Antony cast away a kingdom, but he did it in

the thralldom of a non-Roman, which is well-nigh the unforgivable sin.

The selections from Plutarch quoted above are chosen at random, and they are typical of his remarks about Cleopatra. Nowhere until the death of Antony can we be sure, in Plutarch's version, that Cleopatra's love for Antony is anything more than mere policy. Indeed, when we see her in Plutarch's account of the death scene, how "she rent her garments upon him, clapping her breast and scratching her face and stomach... forgettin her own misery and calamity, for the pity she took of him,"16 we are tempted to accuse Plutarch of misrepresenting her in the earlier parts of the story. Professor Schucking has accused Shakespeare of pure contradiction in her character: "The contradiction between this picture of Cleopatra and the character Shakespeare gives her in the last two acts, ...is astonishing."17 We have already hinted that this is an erroneous conclusion caused by confounding the Cleopatra of Plutarch with that of Shakespeare. It seems closer to the truth to say that Shakespeare has recognized this contradiction latent in Plutarch's story, and has chosen the most artistic means of remedying it: stressing the nobility of Cleopatra, and making her love for Antony stand out as unquestion-

16 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 123.
17 Schucking, 127.
ably sincere, despite all her coquetry and the raillery she directed at her lover.

Furthermore, besides his desire to remedy this contradiction in Plutarch, Shakespeare probably had another motive in emphasizing Cleopatra's love at the expense of her statesmanship. He was writing the story of Antony and Cleopatra, which is a love story, and has been so in English at least since the time of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. He was not writing a chronicle here, and not doubt he saw, now in his maturity, that chronicles such as the Bolingbroke series were not fitted to either tragedy or romance. To fit the story to this artistic form, he clearly saw the necessity of making the Queen's love real. Thus the following interpretation by Schucking seems forced:

Further on in the same act (I,ii) she is described by Enobarbus, who, throughout the play acts the part of chorus...as consisting "of nothing but the finest part of pure love." That here we have to understand the word love in a purely erotic sense, is confirmed by a remark of the same observer, who ironically declares that he can explain her constant threats to kill herself only by the belief that in death she will find a new erotic enjoyment."18

The proof offered for interpreting the statement of Enobarbus "in a purely erotic sense", is at best quite tenuous. Schuck-

18 Schucking, 122.
ing misunderstands the character of Enobarbus for one thing, in saying that he "acts the part of chorus." A chorus stands apart from the action, is often only vaguely characterized, while Enobarbus is a partisan—of Cleopatra at that—and is an individual; and above all his desertion prevents us from assigning him any such role as chorus. More specifically, it is likely that Schucking is coloring the text with his own notions, as we see when we examine the line in context. A lengthy quotation from the play will be necessary:

Ant. I must with haste from hence.
Eno. Why then, we kill all our women: we see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death's the word.
Ant. I must be gone.
Eno. Under a compelling occasion, let women die: it were a pity to cast them away for nothing... Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment: I do think there is mettle in death, which commits some love act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying.
Ant. She is cunning past man's thought.
Eno. Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest parts of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms than almanacs can report: this cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove.
Ant. Would I had never seen her!
Eno. O sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work; which not to have been blessed withal would have discredited your travel.19

Enobarbus here makes a gradual transition from his usual irony to earnestness. His first answer is a negligent one, because he does not know the reason for Antony's desire to depart, and expects it to develop into no more than another idle wish. Antony repeats his decision, and Enobarbus calls what he thinks is his general's bluff by warning him, in an exaggerated fashion, of Cleopatra's likely reaction to the departure. But when Antony agrees with Enobarbus' disparagement of the Queen, "she is cunning past man's thought," the lieutenant realizes that he is serious, and is quick to show the good in Cleopatra. His answer, then, seems rather to be in disagreement with Antony, and meant to be complimentary, not derogatory, as Schucking would have it. Enobarbus' last line quoted above is unquestionably sincere, and it is not unflattering to the Queen.

Our main concern, however, is not a refutation of Schuckling's theories concerning Cleopatra. Our business is to show how Shakespeare transformed the Plutarchian concept and built up his own concept, which is far more artistic and more true to life. It is because Schucking is the most vociferous of our adversaries that he has received so much space here.

We have been maintaining then, that Plutarch's Queen is not drawn as loving Antony so much as beloved by him; that, in fact, Plutarch's description of her anguish at the death of
Antony comes very unexpectedly because of the impression given earlier in the *Life* that Cleopatra used Antony merely as a tool. Now we must illustrate from the text of the play how Shakespeare conscientiously corrected this false impression, by placing emphasis on the love element in the drama, and playing down the political dealings of the Queen. Such illustrations, it must be declared, are not to be found in the mere remarks of the other actors in the drama, without any interpretation of their motives for speaking or of their available knowledge. Thus Octavius Caesar's remarks about the Queen may be discounted on both standards: he is not an impartial judge, and it is impossible to judge the truth of a person's love from a distance of a thousand miles. Nor are Cleopatra's statements of her love to be taken merely at their face value, for it is certain that at times, at least, she speaks out of flattery or guile, for we can never deny that there is much of the coquette in her. A few passages in which the true intent can be established, will nevertheless prove our point. They will be chosen from the parts of the play prior to Antony's death, since even Schucking acknowledges that the Queen's passion is true in the later portions.

The third scene of Act I is a notable example of the sort of dialogue which is common in the interchanges between the two lovers, where it is difficult to distinguish between what is said in a chiding tone, and what is literal truth.
Throughout the scene, from the time Antony and Cleopatra are together, the Queen has fifteen separate lines, and all but the last one, or at the most two—are said in a spirit of play acting. But the last two, certainly the last, are sincere, and prove Cleopatra's love. Antony comes to tell Cleopatra of Fulvia's death, and his return to Rome. Cleopatra shuts off all his protests with lamentations over her "betrayal" before he can even tell her of the death of his wife: "What says the married woman? You may go: Would she had never given you leave to come! Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here; I have no power upon you," and "O, never was there Queen so mightily betrayed!" After Antony finally tells her of Fulvia's death, she is stunned for a moment, but incredulous: "Can Fulvia die?" Convinced, she immediately uses this very fact to renew her abuse of her lover, "Now I see, I see, in Fulvia's death, how mine shall be received."\(^{20}\) She continues, displaying a wit vastly superior to the plodding mind of Antony, and finally his rising anger shows her she has gone far enough. She drops her wiles and speaks to him affectionately:

Courteous Lord, one word.  
Sir, you and I must part—but that's not it:  
Sir, you and I have loved—but that's not it;

\(^{20}\) Ibid., I, iii, passim.
That you know well: something it is
  I would--
  O, my oblivion is a very Antony,
  And I am all forgotten.²¹

It might be argued that this line can hardly be expres-
sive of Cleopatra's true feelings, since Antony takes it as
worthy of censure, saying, "But that your royalty holds
idleness your subject, I should take you for idleness it-
self."²² There is something in this contention, but on the
face of it, it is hard to see what other meaning the words
of Cleopatra could have except their literal one. Antony's
reproach might well apply to all the "idleness" of the Queen's
prededing speeches rather than to the present one. MacCal-
lum at least takes this side, prefacing a quotation of this
text with the statement, "But at the word of his leaving she
is at once all wistful tenderness."²³ Be this as it may, of
the real sincerity of the Queen's next line there can be no
doubt. MacCallum's remark here: "But thence again she passes
on to grave and quiet dignity,"²⁴ expresses only part of the
truth, for the line has love in it too, and true respect:

'Tis sweating labor
  To bear such idleness so near the heart
As Cleopatra this. But sir, forgive me;

²¹ Ibid., I, iii, 86 - 91.
²² Ibid., I, iii, 91 - 93.
²³ MacCallum, 419.
²⁴ Ibid., 419.
Since my becomings kill me, when they do not
Eye well to you. Your honor calls you hence;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword
Sit laurelled victory! and smooth success
Be strewed before your feet!²⁵

When the Queen has done with her "becomings" she has yet another mood, which is her true and lasting mood. It is noteworthy that MacCallum uses this entire section in illustration of the fact that "her versatility of intellect, her variety of mood, are inexhaustible; and she can pass from gravity to gaiety, from fondness to banter with a suddenness that baffles conjecture."²⁶ It is a failure to recognize the infinite variety that Enobarbus credits her with²⁷ and Shakespeare endows her with that causes some critics to discover contradictions in her character. This variety has been Shakespeare's contribution to the character. Flutarch gave the cue:

...so sweet was her company and conversation that a man could not possibly but be taken. And besides her beauty, the good grace she had to talk and discourse, her courteous nature that tempered her words and deeds, was a spur that pricked to the quick. Furthermore, besides all these, her voice and words were marvelous pleasant...²⁸

²⁶ MacCallum, 418.
²⁷ Shakespeare, A & C, II, ii, 244.
but he had not the art to exemplify it. So great was Shakespeare's art that this one scene alone gives a plausible presentation of the Queen in all the moods of pathos, anger, indignation, mockery, tenderness, love. It is an instance of the superiority we mentioned in the first chapter, of the poetic medium over the historical. Plutarch acknowledges the infinite variety of Cleopatra's character, but limited as he is by historical facts, not to mention the prejudices of a Graeco-Roman imperialist, he is unable to illustrate this trait in Cleopatra in such a way that it will appear as alluring to us as, he grants, it did to Antony. The poet, restricted by a far different kind of truth, is able to realize this ideal. His truth is what Aristotle calls "poetic truth," and the Poetics describe it in this way:

The office of the poet consists in displaying not what actually has happened, but what in a given situation might well happen, a sequence of events that is possible, in the sense of being either credible or inevitable.29

The scene is, finally, an instance of the poet's achieving both the general and particular aim that we mentioned earlier. The Queen is made to appear both more noble than she does in Plutarch, and more true in her love.

29 Aristotle, 31.
Let us now refer briefly to one other scene which will clinch our argument that Shakespeare's Cleopatra is motivated by a deep and sincere love. This scene will also serve as a transition to another important point of departure between Shakespeare and his source. We are referring to the fourth scene of Act IV, when, on the morn of the final battle at Alexandria, Cleopatra acts as Antony's squire and helps him into his armor. There is no interchange of vows or embraces, no deep passion displayed, but the humble, eager service of the Queen, her quaint vanity at her success ("Is not this buckled well?"30), and her cheerfulness in the face of what she knows to be certain defeat, are surer proofs than any protestations could be of the sincerity of Cleopatra's love. She keeps a smile—in her actions we see this—until Antony leaves, and then even in her despair there is nothing but loyalty: "Lead me. He goes forth gallantly. That he and Caesar might determine this great war in single fight! Then Antony, --but now--well, on."31

This scene is Shakespeare's own, and has no prototype of any kind in Plutarch. Such a thing is rare in Antony and Cleopatra, and when we find such a scene, we may justly con-
clude that Shakespeare had a definite and conscious purpose in view. Since the effect of this scene, indisputably, is to impress us forcibly with the tender love of the two leading characters of the play, it is not rash to argue that this effect was intended by Shakespeare, and that he desired it strongly enough to seek it by abandoning his source book at that point in the play where otherwise he was following the source most closely. The reason for this deviation, of course, lies in the need to portray his characters in such a way that they will arouse the pity of the spectators.

It is strange that this "arming" scene has not received more attention from the critics. There is scarcely another scene in the play where the characters appear more human, or more worthy of our sympathy. In its few lines—there are but thirty-eight altogether—we get a picture of both the lovers, but of Cleopatra especially, that reminds us of what Shakespeare gave us in *Romeo and Juliet*. The action ought to be visualized, as Shakespeare would have done in writing it; for it must always be remembered that he never meant his plays to be read, but to be seen on the stage. We can see the Queen on her knees, buckling the strap of Antony's greave, or fastening his breastplate, and hear the low tones of their affectionate banter:

  Cleo. Nay, I'll help too.  
  What's this for?
Ant. Ah, let it be: thou art
the armourer of my heart: false, false;
this, this.
Cleo. Sooth, la, I'll help: thus it must be.
Ant. Well, well;
We shall thrive now. --See'st thou, my
good fellow?
Go put on thy defenses.
Eros Briefly, sir.
Cleo. Is not this buckled well?
Ant. Rarely, rarely:
He that unbuckles this, till we do
please
To daff't For our repose, shall hear
a storm. --
Thou fumblest, Eros; and my Queen's a
squire
More tight at this than thou.32

This scene is a real gem of Shakespeare's art, and can be
one of the most touching in a stage presentation of the play.

We have remarked that this scene would serve as a transi-
tion to the next point of our comparison. This point is the
minimizing by Shakespeare of all references to carnal or
sexual love in the play. The scene we have been discussing
is a good illustration of the positive side of this same
observation, for it is typical in its emphasis on a love of
companionship and camaraderie. Of course we do not mean that
Shakespeare had any intention of denying that Cleopatra was
the mistress of Antony, nor that Antony had a wife at Rome,
nor that in Roman times as well as Elizabethan times the name

32 Ibid., IV, iv, 5 - 15.
for this intimacy was adultery; but still, we do mean to show that wherever it was possible Shakespeare avoided the fact, and portrayed a love of a different sort. Again, this is just another method of making the characters more noble and thus more appealing to the sympathies of the audience. Let us consider Plutarch's treatment of the same subject, and compare it side by side with Shakespeare's. We will see that his is another occasion where Shakespeare is loyal to his source, in the sense that he denies nothing that Plutarch affirms, but where by emphasis and omission he gives what is in fact a very different coloring.

Consider, for instance, the number of times Plutarch refers to Cleopatra's children by Antony:

Cleopatra having brought him two (sic) twins, a son and a daughter, he named his son Alexander, and his daughter Cleopatra.33

For he [i.e., the King of the Medes] married his daughter, which was very young, unto one of the sons that Cleopatra had by him [Antony].34

...upon a high tribunal silvered he set two chairs of gold, one for himself, and the other for Cleopatra, and lower chairs for his children...he called the sons he had by her kings of kings...35

33 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 56.
34 Ibid., 85.
35 Ibid., 86.
So after his sons had done their humble duties, and kissed their father and mother...36.

For all these texts and many similar ones in Plutarch, only one can be found to match in the play. In the sixth scene of Act III Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Octavius an account of Antony's giving the name of kings to the children of himself and Cleopatra. There is no other mention of these children, and even this allusion loses force because it is not staged, only related by one from whom abuse of Antony is to be expected.

Now let us look at some of Plutarch's texts that are adopted by Shakespeare, and we will see how he handles them for his artistic purposes. The ambassador whom Antony and Cleopatra send to Octavius after Actium is expressly described by Plutarch as "Euphronius, the schoolmaster of their children." But in the play, when Caesar, notified of the messenger's coming, asks who he is, the reply is "Sir, 'tis his schoolmaster." Whether this means "the former teacher of Antony," or "the teacher hired by Antony," is indifferent; the thing worth noting is that attention is diverted from the children sprung from the two lovers. It is worthwhile repeating here that the danger of confounding impressions de-

36 Ibid., 87.
rived from Plutarch's version with the interpretation intended by Shakespeare should be scrupulously avoided. From Plutarch's version we are well aware that Antony and Cleopatra had children, but in Shakespeare's play the fact is almost always by-passed, and there can hardly be any other explanation of this than to say that Shakespeare wished to portray a different kind of love than merely sensual and selfish love. A second comparison will make this clearer. Plutarch tells of Caesar's threat to Cleopatra, after Antony's death, in these words:

But Caesar mistrusted that Cleopatra would kill herself... and therefore did put her in fear, and threatened her to put her children to shameful death. With these threats Cleopatra for fear yielded straight, as she would have yielded unto strokes.37

Compare Shakespeare's version of this scene:

Caes. ...but if you seek
To lay on me a cruelty, by taking
Antony's course, you shall bereave yourself
Of my good purposes, and put your children
To that destruction which I'll guard them from
If thereon you'll rely. I'll take my leave.
Cleo. And may through all the world:
'Tis yours; and we,
Your scutcheons and your signs of conquest shall

37 Ibid., 129.
Hang in what place you please.38

The Queen's answer is ironical, though the irony is veiled enough to deceive Caesar. Her determination to follow Antony is unshaken even by the conqueror's threat, so that this passage is a definite departure from Plutarch. In her first words upon the exit of Caesar, both her exasperation with him and her determination are evident: "He words me girls, he words me, that I should not be noble to myself; but hark thee, Charmian..."39 And she whispers to her attendant the order to provide the asp.

These examples show Shakespeare's conscious avoidance of references to children sprung of Antony and Cleopatra. Another proof of his wish to ennoble them by portraying the more spiritual side of their love can be seen in the occasional suggestions which, in the eyes of the protagonists at least, might justify their regarding their relationship as a common-law marriage. MacCallum, for instance, devotes an appendix of his book to a treatment of the possibility that Cleopatra desired to legalize their union after the death of Fulvia.40

This is his suggestion for the meaning of her line:

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39 Ibid., V, ii, 190 - 191.
40 MacCallum, Appendix E.
Courteous Lord, one word.
Sir, you and I must part, --but that's not it:
Sir, you and I have loved, --but that's not it;
That you know well: something it is I
would, --
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten. [Italics ours] 41

He suggests explaining this as the beginnings of a proposal of marriage, abandoned for the reason that usually causes women to shy away from proposing. This is not implausible, and her reply to Antony's charge of idleness then fits well with this explanation: "'Tis sweating labor to bear such idleness so near the heart as Cleopatra this." 42

Another instance of her wish for a more legitimate union is found in her speech just before her suicide: "Husband, I come: Now to that name my courage prove my title." 43

Plutarch's only reference to the title of husband is found in his description of Cleopatra's grief over Antony's body when the word is among her expressions of lamentation: "Then she dryed up his blood that had berayed (sic) his face, and called him her Lord, her husband, and Emperor, forgetting her own misery and calamity, for the pity and compassion she took of him." 44 For the rest Plutarch lays continued stress

42 Ibid., I, iii, 93 - 95.
43 Ibid., V, ii, 289 - 290.
44 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 123.
on the irregularity of their bond.

Then too, it has been noted that throughout the play there is not a single line that calls for any gesture of affection, that it is possible, (though hardly advisable) to act out the play without the principals embracing at all. Neither is there a scene in which they appear alone, always there is some other person, at least a servant, present, and present in such a way that he cannot be dispensed with without dropping some lines. We are not suggesting that Shakespeare meant to provide the lovers with chaperons—it would be a brave duenna who would assume authority over the lovemaking of this pair—but we do suggest that Shakespeare felt that the best interpretation of the lovers' characters could be had without physical intimacy of any kind. Not so Plutarch. After the reconciliation following the debacle at Actium, he says explicitly: "Cleopatra's women first brought Antonius and Cleopatra to speak together, and afterwards to sup and lie together."\(^{45}\) Shakespeare's version provides for the speaking and supping very consistently, but that is all.\(^{46}\)

We have already remarked that Plutarch judges Cleopatra in Roman-wise, and according to Roman ideas of greatness.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 107.
\(^{46}\) Shakespeare, \textit{A \\& C}, III, ix.
Earlier in this chapter we have shown how Shakespeare's judgment is different, in that he is more willing to condone Antony's casting away of his empire in exchange for his "serpent of old Nile." Now we wish to apply this same truth to the highly controversial question of the motives for Cleopatra's suicide. Some critics are impatient with Cleopatra when she fails to die upon the body of Antony. The reason for this is probably that they fail to recognize the difference in temperament between the two characters. Despite all his profligacy, Antony shows that he has been reared in the traditional Roman manner—a manner that, along with gleanings from many kinds of popular philosophies, always included a certain amount of stoicism, a certain amount of Spartan asceticism. Because we implicitly expect this in Roman knights, we are not surprised at their propensity for suicide after failure. Now Cleopatra, on the other hand, has no such background. The historical Queen possibly had such a Spartan rearing, but it is with Shakespeare's Cleopatra that we are concerned. She has first of all, all the fears that are natural to her sex. She has been long used to service at the hands of others and to great luxury. Shakespeare never shows her enduring any hardship that she can possibly avoid. Thus when it comes time for her to consider suicide, a greater effort of the will is needed than in Antony's case. Even her remote preparation (Caesar remarks "Her physician tells me
she hath pursu'd conclusions infinite of easy ways to die."47) shows far more fear of death than readiness for it.

If we recognize that suicide was a higher triumph for Cleopatra than for Antony, and that for one so unaccustomed to this "high Roman fashion" a constant strengthening of motives is necessary, we are saved much perplexity in our attempt to explain Cleopatra's suicide. Dread of being led in triumph by Caesar is strong in her, and it seems more preferable that

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a ditch in Egypt
Be gentle grave unto me! rather on Nilus' mud
Lay me stark nak'd, and let the waterflies
Blow me into abhorring! rather make
My county's high pyramids [sic] my gibbet,
And hang me up in chains!48
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She therefore is strongly impelled toward the high Roman fashion by this motive, and if it were true that she could have but one motive, then perhaps it might be validly argued that it was this one, and not her love for Antony. But what reason is there for allowing her only one motive? Shakespeare knew more about human nature than that. The following passage clearly shows that her love is also urging her toward suicide: "Me-thinks I hear Antony call; I see him rouse himself to praise

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47 Ibid., V, ii, 355 - 357.
48 Ibid., V, ii, 57 - 62.
my noble act; I hear him mock the luck of Caesar."49 a little earlier, she says: "I am again for Cydnus, to meet Mark Antony."50 And then there is her consternation when Iras precedes her in death: "If she first meet the curled Antony, he'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss which is my heaven to have,"51 and upon these words she applies the asp to her breast.

The debate about Cleopatra's true motives in her death is even more remarkable since here Shakespeare and Plutarch are in almost complete accord. Shakespeare found that in this case the historian's facts showed the Queen's nobility, and thus fitted the purposes of the play, without the need for alteration. Plutarch allows for both motives: dread of Caesar's triumph, and love of Antony. In the Life, immediately upon learning from Dolabella that Caesar definitely plans to lead her to Rome, she goes to Antony's tomb, and in the course of a long and touching apostrophe to her lover, she says: "For though my griefs and miseries be infinite, yet none hath grieved me more, nor that I could bear less withal, than this small time which I have been driven to live alone without thee."52

50 Ibid., V, ii, 227 - 228.
51 Ibid., V, ii, 303 - 305.
52 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 132.
We will now treat of one final difference in the play and its source. In referring to the pastimes of Antony and Cleopatra, Plutarch uses much the same examples as Shakespeare, but always he recounts them as instances of the profligacy of the pair. Thus, he prefaxes his account of the fishing party with these words: "But to reckon up all the foolish sports they made, revelling in this sort, it were too fond a part of me, and therefore I will only tell you one among the rest."53 His censure is even stronger here:

And sometime also, when he would go up and down the city disguised like a slave in the night, and would peer into poor men's windows and their shops, and scold and brawl with them within the house; Cleopatra would be also in a chambermaid's array, and amble up and down the streets with him...54

Shakespeare recognized these instances of comic mischief as likely to degrade the characters in his audience's eyes, and therefore he is far less censorious in his version. Charmian relates the story of the fishing party in a way that makes it sound like a gay little joke:

'Twas merry when
You wagered on your angling; when your diver
Did hang a salt fish on his hook, which he
With fervency drew up.55

53 Ibid., 44.
54 Ibid., 44.
Antony's proposal for the "slumming" expedition has not the coarse boisterousness of Plutarch's version:

    and all alone
    Tonight we'll wander through the streets,
    and note
    The qualities of people. Come, my Queen;
    Last night you did desire it.56

Note how these apparently insignificant changes all contribute to elevate the characters to the tragic stature that Shakespeare's art demanded.

We can add to these examples one of Shakespeare's original touches, spoken by Enobarbus: "I saw her once hop forty paces through the public street; and having lost her breath, she spoke and panted."57 All in all, though Shakespeare is not trying to make an ingenue of the Queen--some of the remarks of Enobarbus or of Caesar would refute this notion--still he finds much more fun in her than Plutarch was able to detect. If, for instance, we were curious to discover where George Bernard Shaw got his idea for the girlish Cleopatra he portrays in his Caesar and Cleopatra, we would find that Shakespeare's Queen is far closer to Shaw's than Plutarch's is. It is hard to select out of an entire play a single quotation that will epitomize a character, but perhaps the following will give

56 Ibid., I, i, 52 - 55.
57 Ibid., II, iii, 236-238.
some idea of Shaw's portrayal of Cleopatra. Its reference to Mark Antony (who does not appear in the play) makes it especially interesting:

_Cleopatra_ Has he come with you?  
(Caesar shakes his head: she is cruelly disappointed.) Oh, I wish he had.  
If only I were a little older; so that  
he might not think me a mere kitten,  
as you do! But perhaps that is because  
you are old. He is many, many years  
younger than you, is he not?58

It is not hard to imagine this girl growing up into Shakespeare's Queen, but she can scarcely be identified with the Queen Plutarch portrays.

Consider, now, how the changes outlined in the foregoing chapter have fulfilled the aims—the specific aim and the general aim—of Shakespeare: he suppresses all political motives for Cleopatra's love, and painstakingly affirms the sincerity and depth of her passion. This is directly in line with the specific aim. He admits, with Plutarch, her versatility of wit, but outdoes Plutarch by making it live, and by doing so in such a way that it seems a virtue, not a fault. This fulfills the general aim of ennobling the Queen's character. He minimizes the physical element in the love of Antony and Cleopatra, and places emphasis on the spiritual

58 G.B. Shaw, _Caesar and Cleopatra_, Brantano's, New York, 1900, II, 44.
element. This both ennobles the Queen and confirms the sincerity of her love, and thus fulfills both aims. He preserves her weakness, by showing her tardiness to end her life, but he preserves also her dignity by showing her final resolution—motivated by love for Antony and by her own Queenly pride. Herein he ennobles her, and yet abides by the most fundamental artistic canon: that verisimilitude—poetic truth -- (cf. Page 31) be preserved.

In the light of these reflections, it seems true to say that Shakespeare's handling of Cleopatra's character and the changes he made in Plutarch's treatment, are highly artistic, that Shakespeare's alterations are not haphazard, but sharply focussed on a goal that is essentially dramatic.

We have seen how Shakespeare has used Plutarch's material in developing his characterization of Cleopatra; now in closing this chapter, it may be permissible to reaffirm the thesis, in the light of what has been learned from this study. Shakespeare has adhered remarkably close to Plutarch's account in the Life of Marcus Antonius, but he has breathed a new, three-dimensional life into the play; and this is especially true of his characterization of Cleopatra. His choice of detail has always been dictated by a single plan, that of presenting a character more human, more consistent, more fit for a tragic theme, and more worthy of Antony's sacrifice of a kingdom.
With this aim before him, he has been faithful to his source where possible, has contradicted it in a few rare cases where it was necessary, and has frequently changed its import by judicious omissions or interpretations. The Cleopatra that emerges is faithful, in outline, to what she was in Plutarch, but when we penetrate her character, she becomes very different. In our minds she seems worthy, as Plutarch's Queen does not, of the eulogy pronounced over her by Charmian:

So, fare thee well. --
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! 59

CHAPTER III

MARK ANTONY

"Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost."
--Mark Antony

In setting himself to portray the character of Mark Antony, Shakespeare faced a problem at once easier and more difficult than he had met in the characterization of Cleopatra. It was easier, because he would be able to adhere more closely to Plutarch's idea of the character than he could do in Cleopatra's case. It was more difficult because the problem of winning sympathy for Antony would be more delicate, in proportion as he revealed the general's weaknesses. Seventy years later John Dryden was to take the easy way out of the difficulty by playing fast and loose with historical facts. His All For Love is concerned almost exclusively with showing Antony at the third corner of a "triangle" the other two corners of which are occupied by Cleopatra and Octavia, the latter of whom appears very fortuitously in Alexandria to defend her rights. There is nothing very wrong with this, and Dryden made a good play of it, but "triangles" are hardly in Shakespeare's line, and besides, he did not choose to rewrite history in this play.

Considered from the viewpoint of Cleopatra's character, the principle object of Shakespeare's drama is the love story
of the hero and heroine. This is not quite true from the viewpoint of Antony's character, however, for while it is his infatuation that provides the dramatic motivation that is the source of the story's development, still his position as a triumvir is what gives the story much of its power. The higher the stakes, the more fascinating the game, and it is hard to imagine higher stakes than those gambled by Antony. He is literally the "Triple pillar of the world." In Dryden's version, despite the continued reproaches of Antony's friends, we cannot help getting the impression that in his eyes the whole world is a mere bauble, not to be reckoned at all in comparison with the love of the Queen of Egypt. This is no doubt a noble Christian sentiment—at least that part about the world's being a bauble—but the real Antony, Plutarch's and Shakespeare's, was no Christian.

This, then, Plutarch and Shakespeare have in common, that their Antony is a true Roman, that he has a high regard for the possession of empires, and that casting empires away is not something done without a pang. Plutarch and Shakespeare differ, however, in this, that Plutarch is concerned only with presenting the facts, whereas Shakespeare is intent upon a consistent artistic representation of those facts. If Plutarch's narration is unflattering to Antony, why then he is sorry, but Antony must blame only himself. The historian is able to assume such an attitude, and it is a credit to his profession,
but Shakespeare's trade is more exacting. His Antony must be a tragic hero. To arouse and purge the emotions of pity and fear in the beholders, Antony must have that in him which will elicit pity and fear. But it is hard to pity that which we despise; and we are often close to despising the Antony that Plutarch shows to us. Shakespeare will meet the problem head on, by showing Antony's weaknesses with entire frankness, but by penetrating more deeply into the character, and showing that even these weaknesses are human. If any one power can be set apart as the distinguishing mark of Shakespeare it is this ability to humanize his characters. Professor Gervinus is especially enthusiastic about this gift:

And hence it is that Shakespeare's characters have always been his greatest glory....His mastery of character and motives not only at all times attracted the best actors, but soon also the dullest censors, and transformed pedants into enthusiasts.... Here is not stage language, or manners, no standing parts,...neither the poet nor the actor speaks in them, but creative nature alone, which seems to dwell in and animate these dead images.1

Before we set about showing in detail how Shakespeare worked over his Antony until he became a fit tragic hero, let us revert for a moment to the changes he made in Cleopatra's character. These changes might be called the first step in

1 Gervinus, 849.
the transformation of Antony, for by the very fact that Cleopatra is shown to be more noble and more loving and more lovable than Plutarch made her out to be, Antony's crime in loving her becomes more acceptable to us. This is what we meant when, at the beginning of the preceding chapter, we said that "what Cleopatra is is the key to what Antony becomes." If the Cleopatra that Shakespeare showed to us were nothing but a poor, disloyal courtesan, then Antony's choice would be a sorry thing, and would be indicative of a mean and ignoble character. Shakespeare's heroine is, however, shown to be worthy of comparison with the empire in exchange for which she is wooed, and thus we can accept the hero who made the exchange.

Shakespeare had another advantage already at hand also, in that Antony's character would appear nobler in his version by the fact that the very nature of the dramatic art would allow him to leave out many of the unsavory details of Antony's early life. Plutarch's version, being specifically the Life of Marcus Antonius, had to include these details. Let us consider a few, to get an idea of the prejudgment that a reader of Plutarch will have concerning Antony's character, before he ever arrives at the events handled in Shakespeare's play.

Here are a few samples from North:

...he purchased divers other men's evil wills, because that through negligence he would not do them justice that were injured, and dealt very churlishly with
them that had any suit unto him: and besides all this, he had an ill name to entice other men's wives.\textsuperscript{2}

...for they did abhor his banquets and drunken feast; he made at unseasonable times, and his \textit{extreme} wasteful expenses upon vain light huswifes (sic): and then in the daytime he would sleep or walk out his drunkenness...\textsuperscript{3}

and his cruelty is as great as his profligacy:

for he robbed noblemen and gentlemen of their goods, to give it to vile flatterers, who oftentimes begged men's goods living, as though they had been dead, and would enter their houses by force.\textsuperscript{4}

And Antonius also commanded them to whom he had given commission to kill Cicero, that they should strike off his head and right hand,...so that when the murtherers brought him Cicero's head and hand cut off, he beheld them a great time with great joy, and laughed heartily, and that oftentimes.\textsuperscript{5}

Opposed to this, in Shakespeare we come to the character with open minds. As far as the drama is concerned, we know nothing of Antony's past. Indeed, even if we were to say that Shakespeare's other play, \textit{Julius Caesar}, is the equivalent of the earlier parts of Plutarch's \textit{Life}, we would find that Antony's character is rather enhanced there, and that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2}Shakespeare's \textit{Plutarch}, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{4}\textit{Ibid.}, 35.
\item \textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, 29.
\end{itemize}
any prejudice we gained from the play would be in Antony's favor. The only stains on Antony's character in Julius Caesar are the slurs cast upon him by the conspirators, and his guilty share in the proscription. These are slight, and are far outbalanced by his great tour de force at Caesar's funeral, and by the battle of Philippi, the greatest of his many great military feats. Thus whether we admit the Julius Caesar as supplying part of Antony's character in the play under discussion or not, it is still true that the character gains simply by the omission of what Plutarch tells us of him before the meeting with Cleopatra.

For his interpretation of Antony's character, Shakespeare could find everything he needed in Plutarch—and in this respect he had an easier task than in characterizing Cleopatra; but it was his peculiar task to take what Plutarch stated, and to make it shine forth in the character. One striking example of how he faced and solved this problem is found in the way even Antony's enemies are made to criticize him without causing us to lose respect for him. The subtle device lies in the fact that the abuse is most regularly made by contrasting Antony's natural greatness with his ill behavior. In this way even his critics are made to praise him while they censure him. We can illustrate this device of the poet's by a few quotations. The very first lines of the play offer a good instance:
Philo Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: those his good-
ly eyes,
That o'er the files and muster of the war
Have glowed like plated Mars', now bend,
now turn,
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front. 6

Again, when Octavius has nought but blame for Antony, Lep-
idus is there to emphasize the good:

Caes. He fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel;...
hardly gave audience or
Vouschafed to think he had partners:
you shall find there
A man who is the abstract of all faults
That all men follow.
Lep. I must not think
there are
Evils enough to darken all his goodness:
His faults, in him, seem as the spots
of heaven,
More fiery for night's blackness; here-
ditary,
Rather than purchased...? 7

Although Caesar reproves Lepidus' tolerance, the case for
Antony has at least been stated. Shortly afterward, in the
same scene, Octavius apostrophizes the absent Antony with
one of the finest eulogies in the entire play, albeit the
motive of the passage is to contrast Antony's former great-
ness with his present state:

Antony,
Leave thy lascivious wassails! When thou once

7 Ibid., I, iv, 4 - 14.
Wast beaten from Modena, where thou
elew'st
Hirtius and Pansa, Consuls, at thy heel
Did famine follow; whom thou fought'st
against,
Though daintily brought up, with patience
more
Than savages could suffer: thou didst
drink
The stale of horses, and the gilded puddle
Which beasts would cough at; thy palate
then did deigh
The roughest berry on the rudest hedge;
Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture
sheets,
The barks of trees thou browsed'st;
on the Alps
It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
Which some did die to look on: and all this—
It wounds thine honour that I speak it now—
Was borne so like a soldier, that thy cheek
So much as lank'd not. 8

This is an intensification of Plutarch, but in Plutarch's
version there is no reproach coupled with the story:

These two consuls, together with Caesar... overthrew him in battle... Antonius,
lying upon this overthrow, fell into
great misery all at once; but the chiefest
want of all other, and that pinched him
the most, was famine.... It was a wonder-
ful example to the soldiers to see An-
tonius, that was brought up in all fine-
ess and superfluity, so easily to drink
puddle water, and to eat wild fruits and
roots: and moreover it is reported that,
even as they passed the Alps, they did
eat the barks of trees, and such beasts
as never man tasted of their flesh be-
fore. 9

8 Ibid., I, iv, 55 - 71.
9 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 26.
Cleopatra's testimony is equally valuable to show how Shakespeare blends credit with discredit in Antony. Thus, when she is infuriated with him for marrying Octavia, she says "Let him forever go: --let him not, Charmian; though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, the other way's a Mars."\(^{10}\) And in speaking of his indulgence, she recalls, "his delights were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above the element they lived in."\(^{11}\)

Lastly, Antony's own estimate of himself contains both knowledge of his wrongdoing and awareness of his greatness, as his demeanor before the other two triumvirs shows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{As nearly as I may,} \\
\text{I'll play the penitent to you, but mine} \\
\text{honesty} \\
\text{Shall not make poor my greatness, nor} \\
\text{my power} \\
\text{Work without it. Truth is, that Fulvia} \\
\text{To have me out of Egypt, made wars here;} \\
\text{For which myself, the ignorant motive, do} \\
\text{So far ask pardon as befits mine honour} \\
\text{To stoop in such a case.}^{12}
\end{align*}
\]

There can probably be found a few examples where this juxtaposition of praise and blame for Antony is not verified, but at least it is true to say that in the main Shakespeare never lets us forget that this man is ruler of half the

\(^{10}\) Ibid., II,v, 115 - 117.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., V, ii, 83 - 90.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., II, ii, 95 - 102.
world, and that it has been through his own valor and brilliance that he has gained his position. To show the subtle difference between this device of Shakespeare's and Plutarch's treatment is difficult because in the latter we find the same declaration of both sides of the hero's character, but not the juxtaposition. And it is much harder to show by quotations what is missing than what is present. We must be content then with a general analysis of Plutarch's method, and of its impression on the audience.

Plutarch handles only facts, and he is not very much concerned with winning sympathy for Mark Antony; indeed it is not hard to see that he himself has very little sympathy for the Roman. At the same time he is not unjust, and when it is time to speak of Antony's bounty, or of his military exploits,—the two principal elements of greatness in Plutarch's Antony—he does not fail to make it clear that both are extraordinary. Of his liberality he says "That which most procured his rising was his liberality, who gave all to the soldiers and kept nothing to himself." In speaking of his military prowess, Plutarch is always full of admiration, and even Octavius suffers beside Antony. At Philippi, Antony's figure overshadows all others:

13 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 6.
They began to make war... Antonius against Cassius and Caesar against Brutus; Caesar did no great matter, but Antonius always had the upper hand, and did all. 14

and:

Shortly thereafter... Brutus was overthrown, who afterwards slew himself. Thus Antonius had the chiepest glory of all in this victory, specially because Caesar was sick at that time. 15

Alternating with these passages of credit in Plutarch are those of severe blame, a number of which we have already quoted earlier in this chapter. Notice that we say "alternating." It is in this that the difference between Shakespeare and Plutarch lies. Where Shakespeare blends the praise and the blame, thereby keeping the totality of Antony's character ever before us, Plutarch swerves back and forth from one extreme to the other. In the long run the final impression of the character will most probably be the same in either case, but Shakespeare's method of blending the traits is the safer one, and it gives us a grasp of the character sooner than Plutarch's method does. Shakespeare's is the more artistic method too; for it reveals a deeper insight into the person portrayed. After all, the real Antony always had his liberality and his valor with him even when he was indulging himself, even

14 Ibid., 31.
15 Ibid., 32.
as he always had his luxurious nature with him in the midst of a battle, so that the verbal picture that presents the whole of the man, with all his extremes, is the more true to nature and therefore the more artistic.

There is another Shakespearian improvement in the character that is also a mark of higher art, of deeper penetration into the soul of the man. This improvement is the suggestion, met frequently in the play, that this conflict of extremes in the character of Antony is a source of continuous turmoil in his soul. In his noble moments, when he is doing the work of a soldier and a Roman, his mind is ever going back to Egypt. More noticeable still, in the times of his disipation there are ever recurring moments when "a Roman thought hath struck him," and he seems to wish he were not so deeply committed to Egypt and her Queen.

Again it is difficult to cite texts from Plutarch showing this difference, because it is the lack of any inner turmoil that is conspicuous in Plutarch's Antony. We can touch upon a few instances of the turmoil as depicted in the play, however, and then refer to the corresponding portion of Plutarch, to see his handling of Antony's motives. In the first act, when Antony hears of Fulvia's war with Caesar, he urges the messenger to speak his mind:

Speak to me home, mince not the general tongue:
Name Cleopatra as she's call'd in Rome;
Rail thou in Fulvia's phrase; and taunt
my faults
With such full license as both truth and
malice
Have power to utter. O, then we bring
forth weeds
When our quick minds lie still; and our
ills told us
Is as our earing. 16

Then learning of Fulvia's death, he exclaims

I must from this enchanting Queen break
off:
Ten thousand harms, more than the ills
I know,
My idleness doth hatch. 17

Plutarch's passage corresponding to this comes nearer than
any of his others to implying Antony's sense of guilt, but
it is not at all as explicit as Shakespeare's:

Then began Antonius with much ado,
a little to rouse himself, as if he had
been wakened out of a dark sleep, and as
a drunk man may say, coming out of a
great drunkenness. 18

After the disgrace at Actium, Plutarch tells of Antony's
behavior in these general terms:

he went and sate down alone in the prow
of his ship, and said never a word, clap­
ping his head between both his hands... 19

and, after a skirmish,

17 Ibid., I, ii, 137 - 139.
18 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 45.
19 Ibid., 106.
he returned again to his place, and sate down, speaking never a word as he did before: and so lived three days alone, without speaking to any man. 20

Plutarch does not make it clear whether Antony blames the defeat on himself, Cleopatra, or the malignity of Fate. Shakespeare, however, lets us hear Antony's thoughts after the battle, and we clearly see that he is full of self-reproach:

Hark! the land bids me tread no more upon't; It is ashamed to bear me!... I've fled myself; and have instructed cowards To run and show their shoulders, Friends, be gone; ...

O, I followed that I blush to look upon! My very hairs do mutiny; for the white Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them For fear and doting... Leave me, I pray, a little; pray you now: Nay, do so; for indeed, I've lost command. 21

Antony's anger against Cleopatra later in the play, for her courtesy to Caesar's envoy, reveals a thought that must have come more than once before:

Have I my pillow left unpress'd in Rome, Forborne the getting of a lawful race, And by a gem of women, to be abused By one that looks on feeders? 22

It is a regret that must come to any man who has sunk deeply in sin, and can see no way back. Plutarch's version, how-

20 Ibid., 106.
22 Ibid., III, xi, 106 - 109.
ever, mentions only jealousy: "And the Queen herself also did him great honour: insomuch as he made Antonius jealous of him. Whereupon Antonius caused him to be taken and well favoredly whipped."23

Into this passage from Plutarch, and the other quoted above, we might conceivably read an interpretation that would make Antony a man torn by an interior struggle, but much of it would depend on our own subjective reactions. Shakespeare makes this struggle explicit; he regards it as part and parcel of an infatuation such as Antony's. His technique is always the "involution of the particular in the universal," and insofar as Antony's irregular passion is like the universal concept of "dotage," it would engender an ever recurring reaction of regret. This, we cannot fail to admit, is the normal state of mind of evildoers, whatever their degree, and to a great extent the quality of a creative writer's talent may be measured by his appreciation of the truth that all is not black and white in the moral order, that the two are in continual combat, producing varying degrees of grays. Shakespeare certainly never presents pure blacks and whites—this technique belongs to the "Tom Swift" school. Perhaps the nearest thing to black that he has created is Iago, and even

23 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 116.
there it is hard to argue for evil incarnate. Most Shakespearean characters fail to come near this blackness. Antony, as we have observed, has much to redeem his weaknesses, and Shakespeare took great pains to make his good side as prominent as his bad.

Another facet in the character of Antony which, according to MacCallum, has been introduced by Shakespeare is what he calls "the born orator's faculty for throwing himself into a situation, and feeling for the time what it is expedient to express."24 The thing that caused MacCallum to introduce this element into his analysis of the character is the condensation of events after Antony's marriage to Octavia. In Plutarch the return to Cleopatra occurs after several years and the birth of several children to Octavia, and the old infatuation, according to Plutarch, "had slept a long time, and seemed to have been entirely forgotten, and that Antonius had given place to better counsel."25 Shakespeare's version has Antony saying, between the betrothal and the wedding, "I will to Egypt; and though I make this marriage for my peace, i'the East my pleasure lies."26 Therefore we have in Plutarch a relapse into an old state, nothing more; but in Shakespeare we have a delib-

24 MacCallum, 400.
25 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 55.
erate and shamefaced deceit by Antony—at least it seems so. MacCallum then applies the above mentioned interpretation to explain Antony’s action, claiming that at the time of the betrothal Antony was sincere, but that the sincerity was only a passing feeling. "It is a fatal gift," says MacCallum, "which betrays him oftener than it helps."27 He distinguishes it from hypocrisy:

Hypocrisy it is not, but it comes almost to the same thing; for the easily aroused emotion soon subsides after it has done its work and yields to some contrary impulsion. But meanwhile the worst of it is that it carries away the eloquent speaker, and hurries him in directions and to distances that are not for his own good.28

It is not hard to see that this shallowness in Antony’s character was offered by MacCallum because it seems to be an easier alternative than deceitfulness. If it was not a passing sincerity in Antony that prompted his acceptance of Octavia’s hand, then Antony stands condemned of gross and malicious deceit. However, MacCallum has no other instances from the play to substantiate his assigning this trait of shallowness to Antony. He does go to Julius Caesar, and says that it is this trait that "prompts the moving utterances over the bodies of Caesar and Brutus,"29 but there is little reason

27 MacCallum, 400.
28 Ibid., 400.
29 Ibid., 400.
to deny that his sorrow in both these instances was more than passing. On the whole, therefore, MacCallum's explanation seems to have more expedience than truth in it. Sooner or later it becomes necessary to allow that even Shakespeare was sometimes guilty of inconsistency, and this seems to be one of those occasions. He found himself embarrassed by the compression of events which dramatic structure demanded, and so he had to show Antony honestly resolved on amendment at the time of the betrothal (as he was in Plutarch's version), and honestly determined to return to Cleopatra later. The fact that in the play dramatic reasons caused the second resolve to follow almost on the heels of the first, is the cause of the inconsistency, but it seems better to call it such, than to accept MacCallum's argument.

Another difficulty presents itself in interpreting the character of Antony. It is the suggestion, met with frequently after the battle of Actium, that Antony's reason was failing. This is not found in Plutarch, and it seems that even in Shakespeare's version it is hardly consonant with our picture of Antony as a valiant soldier and leader of men. The solution to this problem is not hard to find, if we examine the texts in which the madness is mentioned. We can at the same time compare them with Plutarch, to show that there is no suggestion of madness there. In the play, the first suggestion follows Antony's challenge to Caesar to meet in single combat:
Enobarbus (aside) Yes, like enough high
battled Caesar will
Unstate his happiness, and be staged
to th' show,
Against a sworder! I see men's judgments
are
A parcel of their fortunes; and things
outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike. That he should dream
Knowing all measures, the full Caesar will
Answer his emptiness! --Caesar, thou hast
subdued
His judgment too.

In the Life the challenge is not commented upon by anyone:
"Antonius sent again to challenge Caesar to fight with him
hand to hand. Caesar answered that he had many other ways to
die than so."

The next occasion where madness is mentioned in the play
is when Antony orders Caesar's messenger, Thyreus, to be whipped
for kissing the hand of Cleopatra. Enobarbus remarks in
an aside: "'Tis better playing with a lion's whelp than with
an old one dying." There is no parallel passage in the
Life for this line. Then at the end of the same scene, when
Antony proposes new revels despite the late disaster, Enobarbus grumbles

Now he'll outstare the lightning. To be
furious

31 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 118.
Is to be frightened out of fear; and in
that mood
The dove will peck the estridge. I see
still,
A diminution in our captain's brain
Restores his heart. When valour preys
on reason,
It eats the sword it fights with, I
will seek
Some way to leave him. 33

In the parallel passage there is again no reference to "a
diminution in our captain's brain."

Lastly, when before the final battle Antony takes fare-
well of the servants of the palace, and reduces them to tears,
Enobarbus answers Cleopatra's "what means this?" with the
remark, "'Tis one of those odd tricks which sorrow shoots
out of the mind." 34

Plutarch tells of this farewell with reverence, apparent-
ly regarding it as something normal, not as an "odd trick
which sorrow shoots out of the mind.":

So being at his supper (as it is reported),
he commanded his officers and house-
hold servants that waited on him at his
board, that they should fill his cups
full, and make as much of him as they could:
"For," said he, "you know not whether
you shall do so much for me tomorrow or
not..." This notwithstanding, perceiving
that his friends and men fell a-weeping
to hear him say so: to salve what he had

33 Ibid., III, xi, 194 - 200.
34 Ibid., IV, ii, 13 - 15.
spoken, he added this more unto it,
that he would not lead them to battle,
where he thought not rather safely to
return with victory...35

From the quotations we have given from the play a sharp
eye might already have detected what answer we have to
the assertion that Antony was really losing his reason after
Actium. For it is always Enobarbus who judges Antony in this
way; he manages to interpret Antony's various moods--his des-
pair, his anger, his gaiety--as springing from a common
source, a diseased mind. A sentence from one of the above
quotations from the play gives a clue to Enobarbus' think-
ing: "I will seek some way to leave him."36 Enobarbus has
two traits strong in him: cynicism and loyalty. His cynical
bent urges him to desert Antony for Caesar, while his loyalty
restrains him. He sees Antony's impotent fury at the posi-
tion he has been reduced to, and by interpreting this as mad-
ness he provides a sop for the loyal part of his makeup. There
is no call to abide by a madman; the rational are not to be
led by the irrational, and it is the part of a wise man to live
according to reason.

Admittedly, it is not uncommon in Shakespeare to find
profound disillusionment producing some kind of disorder in

35 Shakespeare's Plutarch, 119.
the judgment. Witness Lear, or Macbeth, or Hamlet (if we hold that his mind was really ailing). To this degree we can admit a weakness in Antony's judgment, but it may hardly be confused with real insanity—loss of mental control, and it seems that Enobarbus is bent on persuading himself to believe that his captain is really insane, that therefore he was seeking an excuse for his own impending desertion. The fact that no one else in the play comments upon any supposed "diminution in our captain's brain" adds further probability to this contention.

Shakespeare was, then concerned with providing a motive that would justify Enobarbus' desertion in his own mind. The motive had to be in harmony with the lieutenant's character. In Shakespeare's conception of Enobarbus, Antony shows a trust in him that seems to be warranted by all the man does and is. Still, Shakespeare makes him a cynic, one who has a firm grasp on reality, not excluding the seamy side of reality. Such a man will not have a loyalty overlaid with sentimentality, but one based on logic. He can reason himself into desertion of a master who, in his estimation, has lost control of his mind. Antony's behavior after the battle certainly does not seem very different from what it was before, except to the extent to be expected in a defeated general. Apart from the frequent remarks of Enobarbus, no
one else uses the word "madness" in reference to Antony. Mecaenas, indeed, speaks of "his distraction," but it is the behavior mentioned by Caesar in the preceding line that earns this title: "He calls me boy, and chides, as he had power to beat me out of Egypt; my messenger he hath whipped with rods; dares me to personal combat." So it is not distraction as synonymous with insanity that Mecaenas mentions, but the distracted behavior of a desperate soldier.

It is as a great lover that Shakespeare wishes us to remember Mark Antony. This he had in common with Romeo, and with Troilus. If this is kept in mind, then the most conspicuous and most easily recognized divergence from Plutarch that the author makes is readily understood: his constant emphasis of the mutual relationship of the two principals. We were at pains to prove that he meant such an emphasis in the character of Cleopatra, because sometimes Cleopatra's love is denied, or impugned as a mere outward show. In Antony's character there is no need for a formal proof, for no one doubts that his love for the Queen is real.

What makes Antony different from Troilus and from Romeo is that his love is illicit and debilitating. (The love of

37 Ibid., IV, i, 1 - 3.
Troilus and Cressida is not illicit according to the convention upon which the plot is based.) Such a love receives the name of "dotage", and that is a word that occurs frequently throughout the play. We have shown that Shakespeare never minimizes the weakness of Antony which flows from this dotage, but we have also shown that he is extremely careful that Antony's greatness is never overshadowed by his weaknesses. This is more properly an improvement upon matter found in Plutarch, rather than a true change, or introduction of entirely new matter. Such entirely new additions are not so common in the character of Antony as we have seen them to be in the character of Cleopatra; with Antony Shakespeare has only intensified what was already to be found in Plutarch, and presented it more convincingly and artistically. The other factors that we mentioned as affecting the characterization are obviously accidental rather than essential: the enhancing of Antony's character by increasing the worthiness of the object of his passion, Cleopatra; and the omission of the early events of Antony's life, resulting in a great load of guilt being absent in Shakespeare's version of the character.

It would be well to summarize here, as we did in the chapter on Cleopatra, those points in Antony's character that are peculiarly Shakespearian, and to show how they all contribute to a whole picture that is on a much higher artis-
tic level than the Plutarchian prototype. Again, this must be done by referring Shakespeare's treatment to what was his particular problem in the characterization. As with Cleopatra, Antony had to be given the nobility of character needed in a tragic hero—one who must arouse the audience to pity and fear—but Plutarch's Antony, as opposed to his Cleopatra, already enjoyed a certain degree of nobility, and thus we are not surprised to discover that the changes introduced by Shakespeare into the character are not so radical as they were in Cleopatra's case. Shakespeare rather devotes himself to intensifying what he finds in Plutarch, to increasing its verisimilitude or artistic truth. This then is his aim, and in each of the points treated in this chapter we can see how he has fulfilled it. Thus, the juxtaposition of praise and blame, of strength and weakness, in the character, which has received much attention in this chapter, is perhaps the principal difference between the play and the Life, and it is an instance of the superiority of art over history, since the presentation of a character with all his traits simultaneously manifest is a much more true-to-life method than a presentation that can show these traits only separately, at different occasions.

Then too, Shakespeare's idea of Antony as a tragic lover almost automatically raises the characterization of the hero to a higher artistic plane. Love, an internal force,
is the instrument of the tragic lover's downfall, rather than the merely external forces of hostile armies. It might be argued that it is love that ruins Plutarch's Antony too, but even if this be granted, still the love as portrayed by Plutarch is such a mean, ignoble affair, that there can be little tragic force in Antony's dying of it.

Finally, what we have called "accidental changes," the ennobling of Antony by the ennobling of Cleopatra, the object of his love, and the omission of the unflattering details of his early life, are nevertheless real changes, and they have their effect on our concept of the character. This effect, too, is to enhance his tragic grandeur.

It may be observed in conclusion that the total of these differences between the play and its source seems somehow to be greater than the sum of its parts. It is certain that the Shakespearian Mark Antony is a great tragic hero, and he wins our sympathy almost immediately. Plutarch's Antonius is a much less congenial person, and he does much that alienates us as we read. What it is in Shakespeare that, in addition to the changes already discussed, makes for the transformation in Antony's character (and Cleopatra's as well) is probably the poetry of their utterances. A treatment of the diction of the play is beyond the scope of the present study, but it is worthwhile taking note of the tremendous power carried
in the lines of the play, apart from their plot interest. For besides the emotion directly imparted by sense in a bit of poetry, there is another emotion caused in the reader, an emotion of pleasure felt, regardless of how merry or sad the matter be. Cecil Day Lewis, in his book The Poetic Image, says this concisely and clearly, and we will end this slight digression by quoting him. He offers a line from our play and comments upon it:

"Finish, good lady, the bright day is done,
And we are for the dark."
The context is tragic; the feeling of the speaker is all sadness...Hearing those lines, we too feel the sadness, but only as a faint reminiscent undertone; it is a dark streak tingeing a radiance. That radiance, of which the shadow is but a servant, is the overmastering emotion we receive from the image. We feel it as pleasure, exhilaration; we accept it as a kind of truth which could not have been given us in any other form or through any other medium. 

At any rate, Shakespeare's poetic gift, working in harmony with his genius for characterization, has produced an Antony who stands among the best of Shakespearian heroes. This we have attempted to show in this chapter, and once again we may assert our thesis, that Shakespeare worked the prose characters of Plutarch into living stuff, into breathing, sentient persons.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

It may seem that in our study of the development of the principal characters in the play, we have been so assiduous in discovering the differences between Shakespeare and his source in Plutarch's Life of Marcus Antonius, that we have altogether neglected to show the similarities. This is in part true, but the reason is easily shown. First, to show the similarities would have involved a process of textual comparison, and of lengthy quotation, that would have been extremely tedious and would have carried us far beyond our original purpose. Second, the testimony of the many authorities quoted in the introduction should, it is hoped, be sufficient proof of the fact that Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra adheres more closely to its source than any other play of the author. Here is an instance where argument from authority ought to carry sufficient weight of itself to convince, without need of introducing further proof, because it is simply a matter of almost pure statistics; there is no need for subjective interpretation in order to arrive at the truth, only a pencil, paper, and a good deal of patience. For us to have repeated the task of counting parallel texts here would have been a vain task, since so many others have done it so satisfactorily. There would hardly be any justification for reproducing at great length so many sections of the play and the Life, for anyone
who doubts our authorities can get the original texts and check for himself without any trouble.

We have presumed then, that in such a non-controversial matter the testimony of our authorities would be sufficient proof of the assertion that the play adheres very closely to the Life. We might mention briefly MacCallum's book, wherein he enumerates seventy-one different borrowings from the Life to be found in the play, of which several could be broken down still further—for instance such phrases as "many particulars about the battle of Actium," and "several particulars in the last interview, such as the commendation of Proculeius."1

In the chapters treating the characterization of the two protagonists, therefore, it has been the differences rather than the similarities that have received the most attention. Of course, the very nature of the comparison has caused us to quote parallel passages where similarities might be noted, but this was accidental to our purpose. It is where Shakespeare exercises his own originality that we most expect to find the particularly Shakespearian coloring of character. The fact of his normally close adherence to Plutarch in this

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1 MacCallum, 325.
play should be regarded chiefly as a justification of the supposition that any lapse in this close adherence does not occur without a good reason. These reasons have been the object of our search, and they are the keys to Shakespeare's notion of the characters of Antony and Cleopatra.

We have found that Shakespeare's changes have always been pointed in a single direction: the elevation of the characters to the level of tragic hero and heroine. In Shakespeare, as in every great tragedian, this elevation does not mean "whitewashing" the character, for although such a procedure might be pleasing to overly Puritanical minds, it is not the solution to the problem of winning sympathy. We admire unadulterated goodness, but it does not excite sympathy, for it does not need it. This elevation is accomplished rather by penetrating deep down into the character in question, by acknowledging his evil, but by seeing it with all its mitigating circumstances, by seeing the remorse felt by the evildoer, by identifying the character with all humanity, showing that "there, but for the grace of God," go we all. This is the art of a great tragedian; and this it is that Shakespeare does with Antony and Cleopatra. His changes are all made under one principle: humanizing and yet idealizing what Plutarch has given him.

In Cleopatra's case this penetration into the character
required a much more vigorous change of viewpoint than was
called for in Antony. Plutarch from the first is inimical
to the Egyptian Queen, and Shakespeare from the first is
sympathetic. Yet it is remarkable that he changes her so
much while changing Plutarch's facts so little. She still
does the same things Plutarch has her doing (although a
judicious omission here and there does much to shift emphasis)
but she does not seem the same person when she does them.

Antony is still less altered, apparently. Apparently
Shakespeare is as ruthless in showing Antony's faults as
Plutarch was; but the over-all effect is vastly different
in the play and in the Life. We have seen how Shakespeare
accomplished it. Again, his method is but another form of
penetrating character. He conceives Antony as a whole, never
mentions his crimes without somehow mentioning his great-
ness at the same time; never praises him without reproach-
ing him for his later degradation. This cardinal point, in
addition to those others we have called attention to in the
chapter on Antony, subtly transforms Plutarch's vain and
futile Antony into a man whose weaknesses are those of all
men, and with whom all men can feel a kinship.

This then concludes our study of the characterization of
Antony and Cleopatra. Other studies—of diction, plot, his-
torical sense—might be conducted and they would very likely
corroborate our thesis that, in adapting his story from Plutarch, Shakespeare "Did make defect perfection, and breathless, power breathe forth."
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The thesis submitted by Robert G. Lynch, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

March 17, 1950.  
Date

[Signature]  
Signature of Adviser