A HISTORICAL STUDY ON THE CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARE'S *Antony and Cleopatra*

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Forewords

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was not recognized as one of his greatest tragedies in former days. S. L. Bethell says that it has been treated the least kindly of Shakespeare's tragedies.(1) Indeed nearly all the critics before the age of Romantic Revival could not appreciate it as a great work. Even

though in that age such great critics as Coleridge and Hazlitt could recognize its greatness, they only acknowledged it as a masterpiece of historical play and not of tragedy.(2) Formerly it was not generally considered as a great play and its stage presentation was infrequent. From its first performance in 1608 to the last one in the 19th century, it had only ten runs of performance, and almost all of them were failures.(3) This shows that the greatness of this tragedy was not understood by the public, though this may be due partly to the fact that the tragedy has too many scenes and its staging was exceedingly difficult owing to the change of theatre form from the Elizabethan and moreover Dryden's *All for Love* was more popular than it. But from the latter half of the 19th century, the greatness of the tragedy came to be gradually understood, and recently it has been regarded even as the greatest of all Shakespeare's great tragedies.(4) Nowadays it has often been reproduced every year.(5) Now I shall trace the critical changes of this play until it has come to be recognized as one of the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare.

Earlier Criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra*

The story of Antony and Cleopatra was made considerably known to the Elizabethans. North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1579), Countess of Pembroke's *Antonius* (1952), and Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* were, perhaps, read or seen by them. Presumably in 1607 Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, but this tragedy was not published till 1623. These facts may show that the tragedy was, perhaps, not so popular with the Elizabethan public.

In the age of Restoration **Dryden** (1631–1700) made much of the unities of time, place, and action, which had been erroneously laid down from Aristotle's *Poetics*. Shakespeare had rejected them in the tragedy. So Dryden seems to have considered this to be the defect of the tragedy, though he recognized its greatness and had great respect for Shakespeare's genius. Then imitating its style and observing the unities, Dryden wrote his *All for Love* (1677).(6) This drama of Dryden's became more popular and more frequently represented than that tragedy of Shakespeare's in the 17th and 18th centuries, though the former is far inferior to the latter. Dryden's *All for Love* accorded with the rule of three unities and was more suitable for the production in the theatres of those ages, and it appealed to the public more than Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In the age of Pseudo-Classicism forms and rules were much respected. **Nicholas Rowe** (1674–1718) also made much of the unities. *Antony and Cleopatra* comprehends a great length of time and different places of the Roman Empire. In this point Rowe considered Shakespeare to have been careless, and the tragedy seemed to him to have many faults. But he esteemed its poetry and also paid attention to the characters in it. He thought that the characters were as exact as in history and they acted and spoke properly and fitly, so that they could compensate for the faults. He could not but admire the play and insist that, as Shakespeare lived under a kind of mere Light of Nature and had never been acquainted with regularity of those rules established by Aristotle, it would be hard to judge him by a law he knew nothing of; Rowe

admired the play, because in it Shakespeare imitated exactly the historian (Plutarch) and had verisimilitude which was valued by the critics in the Restoration Age—Shakespeare observed justly the manners proper to the characters represented, and described them exactly; for instance, he described the irregular greatness of mind in Antony and his description was true to the Roman History. His design in the play seemed to Rowe to describe great men in the several fortunes and accidents of their lives rather than take any single great action and form his work simply out of it, so that this design could make up for the fault that Shakespeare did not conform to the unity of action. (7)

Although Rowe thought that Shakespeare had not known the unities and so he had not observed the rule, **Samuel Johnson** (1709–84) maintained that it was impossible to decide and useless to inquire whether Shakespeare had known the unities and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance. Though being a critic of the Pseudo-Classicism, Johnson himself rejected the unities to some extent and insisted that the unities of time and place had arisen from false assumptions and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, they lessened its variety. The merits of *Antony and Cleopatra* were, in his opinion, the continual hurry of the action, the variety of incidents, and the quick succession of one person to another;—these call the mind forward without intermission from the first act to the last; this play keeps curiosity always busy and the passion always interested. The power of delighting, as he thought, is derived principally from the frequent changes of scene. So he did not think it much to be regretted that the unities of time and place had been neither known nor observed by Shakespeare. While Johnson recognized the greatness of the play to some extent without being a slave to the rule of unities, he could not feel interest in the characters of the play. He was of opinion that no character was very strongly discriminated and even Antony's speeches were not distinguishable from those of others, and the feminine arts which distinguished Cleopatra were too low. He, moreover, thought that tragedy must have unity of action, but the play had not so near approach to unity of action; so he regarded it as a historical play rather than a tragedy in its quality, for in a historical play the events, of which the principal are described according to history, can be produced without any art of connection or care of disposition as in this play. (8) It is true that Johnson acknowledged the greatness of the play in its 'variety', but he could not be interested in its characters and their dictions. For him the greatest graces of a play were to copy nature and instruct life, and the immoral subject of the play—the unlawful and sensual love theme—seems to have prevented him from appreciating the real merits of the play. Though he was a great critic, he could not understand the characteristics of Antony's and Cleopatra's dictions which contain such vast imagery as of the earth, the heaven, and the universe. He detected the defect of the play in its loose construction and regarded the play as a historical play and not as a tragedy, but originally its text had not had the division of scene. The editors, afterwards, thinking in terms of localized scenes, produced an incredible number

of scenes. He could not realize the tight and balanced construction of this tragedy concealed in its superficial looseness.

Such comments as the above may be called the 'theatrical criticism', because the above-mentioned critics discussed *Antony and Cleopatra* as a play produced on the stage or as a play to be presented in the theatre. But the poets of the age of Romantic Revival (1799–1852) began the 'closet criticism'. They read Shakespeare's dramas in their studies and criticized them as if they had been poetry not written to be acted on the stage. They did not or least consider Shakespeare's plays in relation to Shakespeare's stage. Though the depths of his dramas were explored by their excellent insight and imagination, it was ignored by them that he was a very practical playwright and wrote all his plays to be acted on the stage. Here we can find the defect of their criticism.

S. T. Coleridge (1772–1834) regarded *Antony and Cleopatra* as a historical play, but not as a tragedy. "Of all Shakespeare's historical plays," he wrote, "*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. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, and to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction". In his view *feliciter audax* is the motto for its style compared with that of Shakespeare's other works; this happy valiancy of style is but the representative and result of all the material excellencies so expressed. The following is also his assertion. The play should be read thoroughly as the love and instinct. But the art displayed in the character of Cleopatra is profound; the sense of criminality in her passion is lessened by our insight into its depth and energy, at the very moment that we cannot but perceive that the passion itself springs out of the habital cravings of a licentious nature and is supported and reinforced by voluntary stimulus and sought-for associations. He praised the play to be almost a formidable rival of Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, and Lear in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity.(9)

Coleridge considered the play wrongly to be a historical play, but he was the first critic who understood and appreciated its greatness, especially in its style and Cleopatra's character.

W. Hazlitt (1778–1830) also recognized the merits of the drama, and called it a very noble play. He evaluated it to stand next to the first class of Shakespeare's productions. He also regarded it as a historical play—the finest of Shakespeare's historical plays, in which Shakespeare made poetry the organ of history and assumed a certain tone of character and sentiment in conformity to the historical known fact, instead of trusting only to his observations of general nature or to the unlimited indulgence of his own fancy. Hazlitt considered the play to present a fine picture of Roman pride and Eastern magnificence. The characters of the play attracted his interest. They seemed to him not to be the groups of stage-puppets or poetical machines making set speeches on human life and acting from a calculation of ostensible

motives, but to breathe, move, and live as real human beings. He appraised the character of Cleopatra as a masterpiece unlike Dr. Johnson. In his opinion, Cleopatra's character is the triumph of the voluptuous, of the love of pleasure and the power of giving it, over every other consideration. He warned the readers against paying the jealous attention to the unities of time and place, as it had taken away the principle of perspective in the drama, all the interests which objects derive from distance, contrast, privation, change of fortune and long-cherished passion, and the view of life of a strange and romantic dream long, obscure, and infinite. He said, "Shakespeare's genius has spread over the whole play a richness like the overflowing of the Nile". (10)

Hazlitt was an exemplary romantic critic and appraised mainly the romantic elements of the drama highly.

T. Campbell (1777–1844) also regarded the play as a historical play, in which Shakespeare combined an almost literal fidelity to history with an equally faithful adherence to the truth of nature and superinduced the merit of skilful dramatic management. (11)

T. De Quincey (1785–1859) regarded Shakespeare as the absolute creator of female character and considered Cleopatra as a fine and pure creation of his art. About Antony he said that the character had a mind of chaotic composition — light conflicting with darkness, proportions of colossal grandeur disfigured by unsymmetrical arrangement, the angelic in close neighbourhood with the brutal. (12)

De Quincey was learned in the philosophy of human heart and read the character in its true meaning.

The critics of the age of Romantic Revival were, on the whole, favourable to *Antony and Cleopatra*, because the drama suited with the their romantic mood and appealed to them. But it could not make a favourable impression on the writers of the Victorian Age (1833–1900), because the story of the love affairs of the drama seemed to be too indelicate and immoral for them to receive it favourably. But they could not but admire Shakespeare's dramaturgy and poetry of the play. Then they tried to justify themselves in depreciating the characters of Antony and Cleopatra and their love affair. But towards the end of the 19th century the play was gradually recognized its merits and even produced on the stage.

Scottowe's criticism on this play (1824) was as follows: The discretion and actions of Shakespeare's Antony are diametrically opposed to each other. Antony lost his judgement by the licentiousness of Cleopatra which is the link to bind her to Antony's heart; her depravity is congenial to his nature, he himself being dissolute and voluptuous. Shakespeare wrote the inmost thoughts of Antony whose intellectual ability became a victim to his corporeal frailty and his appetite. (13)

For **H. Hallam** (in 1839) the play did not furnish so many striking beauties as *Julius Caesar*, but was at least equally redolent of the genius of Shakespeare; and Cleopatra was the incarnation of passions, more lawless and insensible to reason and honour than Antony: the character was not one that could please, but the type found in the courtesan of common life, though it had

only a poetical originality.(14)

According to **Charles Bathurst** (in 1857), *Antony and Cleopatra* is a carelessly written play, with no attempt at dignity, but with a great deal of nature, spirit, and knowledge of charaeter, and with several most beautiful passages of poetry and imagination. He explains that the subject of the play is historical, but is chiefly the anecdote of history. He presumes that Shakespeare meant to elevate the character of Antony as much as possible and he is represented as a man of the most noble and high spirit, capable at times of thoroughly soldier-like and full of kind and generous feelings, notwithstanding his great weakness in all that concerns Cleopatra.(15)

Hartley Coleridge (in 1851) thought that the general subject of the play and the preference long given to Dryden's *All for Love* proved the danger of the negligence of the three unities in order to introduce a greater variety of incidents. It was not easy for H. Coleridge to conjecture Shakespeare's reason for introducing so many short scenes, for they detain the action. He acknowledged the superiority of poetry and character as well as the deep and grand pathos, but for him both Antony and Cleopatra were too heroic to be pitied for weakness and too viciously foolish to be admired for their heroism. He said, "Seldom has unlawful love be rendered so interesting; but the interest, though not dangerous, is not perfectly agreeable."(16)

According to **W. W. Lloyd** (in 1856), the passion of Antony for Cleopatra is too obviously spurious to command our sympathy, but it is in its way sympathetic and unselfish; and the course of the action makes us feel the value of this quality, however debased. Notwithstanding the folly of Antony and falsehood of Cleopatra, the play throughout envinces the master hand of Shakespeare. It reads with unchecked freshness, and every live is charged with the maturest of his ripened mind. Thus Lloyd recognized this play as the most correct in the technical sense.(17)

J. A. Heraud asserted (in 1865) that Shakespeare's intellectual energies, which had already blended with and modified his imaginative, passionate and creative power and impulses, manifested themselves in the highest form in his sublime and wonderful tragedy of *Antony and Cleopntra.* The hero and heroine of this tragedy at their height of fortune conceived themselves to be in the position of Divine Powers and free from all laws except that of their own wills. In his opinion Shakespeare did not paint them as mere human persons indulging in voluptuous and licentious habits, but as the beings living in an ideal region far above the reach of a moral code—they acted on the warranty of their own nature and were free from becoming immoral; no notion of guilt attached to their conduct either in Shakespeare's opinion or their own. He considered that, though Shakespeare showed by the catastrophe of the tragedy that their position had been false, they suffered no vulgar criticism to come near them and sat on thrones outside the world, and they reposed on the couches which floated in air-like clouds and never touched the surface of the earth.(18)

J. A. Heraud tried to demonstrate the merits of the tragedy by explaining that the immorality of the subject of the tragedy, which was blamed

by most critics of the Victorian Age, has nothing to do with its true value.

Edward Dowden (1843–1913) discussed the tragedy as follows: the characters of Antony and Cleopatra insinuate themselves through the senses, trouble the blood, ensnare the imagination, and invade our whole being like colour or like music. The figures dilate to proportion greater than human and are seen through a golden haze of sensuous splendour. This play is a divinization of pleasure, followed by the remorseless Nemesis of eternal law. The spirit of it, therefore, is essentially severe, though superficially it appears voluptuous. Antony is swayed hither and thither by appetites, interests, and imagination, careless of his own moral being, incapable of self-control, and soiled with the stains of passion and decay. Cleopatra is the ideal of sensual attractiveness. She weaves her snares with endless variety in order that Antony may not escape. Their love is the deeper intoxication of middle age, when death has become a reality. Antony is daily dropping away farther from all that is sound, strong, and enduring. He is the ruin of Cleopatra's magic. She is neither faithful nor faithless to him; she has a complex nature composed of layers of sincerity and insincerity and is 'a brilliant antithesis, a compound of contradictions, of all that we most hate, with what we most admire' as Mrs. Jameson said. What Shakespeare would seem to say to us in this play as an artist is that this sensuous infinite is but a dream, a deceit, and a snare. The ethical truth lives and breathes in every part of this play no less than the truth to things sensible and presentable to the imagination. (19)

As the above shows, Dowden's criticism was affected by the faults of the Victorian trend of view, and he could not understand the true value of the tragedy, though he was a sound and keen critic.

F. J. Furnivall, as well as **R. Cartwright**, maintained (in 1859) that in Cleopatra the 'dark lady' in Shakespeare's Sonnets was, to some extent, embodied. He praised the poem picturing Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony upon the river of Cydnus. In his view, Cleopatra, who is fickle, serpentlike, lustful, false, and yet attractive, plays a prominent part in this play; and Antony, who has not only renown and power, but also that fatal inability to say 'No' to woman which shows us his weakness and the cause of his final fall, prefers selfishly his own whims to honour's call and his country's good. (20)

A. C. Swinburne (in 1880) admired and praised highly the tragedy, especially feeling the charm, the terror, and the mystery of Cleopatra's absolute and royal soul. He said that in Cleopatra, only once for all, Shakespeare had given us the perfect and the everlasting woman. (21) In this respect, Swinburne differs from other critics of the Victorian Age and is so excellent that a modern eminent critic, G. Willson Knight, follows his criticism on Cleopatra.

According to **H. N. Hudson**, this play contains a superabundance of external animation as well as a surpassing fineness of workmanship. The great variety and the rapidity, with which events pass before us, distract and divert the thoughts from those subtleties of characterization and delicacies of poetry which everywhere accompany them, and so he says that the play needs oft-repeated and most careful perusal to appreciate its real merit. (22)

H. Corson explained (in 1889) the dramatic situation as follows: a man of

extraordinary possibilities and altogether of colossal but unsymmetrical proportions is brought under the sway of a sensuously fascinating woman, and the greatest possible demands are made upon his asserting his nobler self to induce a vigorous resistance to her sway and to save him from becoming a helpless victim of her magic. But Antony has 'some vicious mole of nature' in him, and he cannot meet those demands. This is the very theme of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The moral problem involved in the dramatic treatment of such a theme is to consist in shutting off sympathy with moral obliquity but in inviting sympathy with moral freedom on the part of the principal actor. We are nowhere brought into a sympathtic relationship with the moral obliquity of either Antony or Cleopatra. We are protected by Shakespeare's moral spirit from any perversion of moral judgment; Cleopatra's fascination is described and spoken of rather than brought dramatically to our feelings through what she actually says and does before our eyes on the stage—the narrated elements serve moral proportion. The moral judgment is stimulated to its best activity throughout the play. Though Cleopatra's fascination is almost wholly a sexual one exerted upon those who are in her bodily presence, the drama brings her charms and fascination to our aesthetic appreciation by the narration described in excellent poetry rather than simply acquainting us with the fact. Corson thought this a feature of the play.(23)

W. Winter's assertion (in 1892) is the following. The play affords a great and splendid relief and refreshment to strong natures that sicken under the weight of convention and are weary with looking upon the bitterness of human nature in its ordinary forms. Shakespeare's vast imagination was here loosed upon colossal images and imperial splendours. The theme is the ruin of a demigod. The play does not signify that the stern truth of mortal evanescence is suggested all the way and simply disclosed at last in a tragical wreck of honour, love, and life. While the splendid pageant endures, it endures in a diamond light, and when it fades and crumbles, the change is instantaneous to darkness and death. Antony and Cleopatra are in middle life and their ideal is that which invests them with the developed powers and fearless and exultant passions of men and women to whom the world and life are a fact and not a dream. For them there is but one hour, which is the present, and one life, which they will entirely and absolutely fulfil. They have passed out of the mere instinctive life of the senses into that more intense and thrilling life in which the senses are fed and governed by the imagination. Nemesis will certainly come to them, for nothing is more inevitably doomed than mortal delight in mortal love. Shakespeare taught his lesson of truth with the most inexorable purpose in this play, though it is the vitality and not the moral implication of the subject that the actors must be concerned to show. Antony and Cleopatra are lovers only; each of them speaks great thoughts in great language, displays noble imagination, and becomes majestic in the hour of danger and pathetically heroic in the hour of death. The splendid stature and infinity in them must be recognized and understood by the observers of this tragedy.(24)

George Wyndham (in 1895) discussed the relation between North's *Plutarch*

and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* He maintained that during the first three acts of his play Shakespeare merely painted the man and the woman who were to suffer and die in the last two acts, and for these portraits he had scraped together all his colour from the many passages such as were scattered through the earlier and longer portion of North's *Antonius*; but in the Fourth Act he changed his method, because he had no more need to gather and arrange; and the concentrated passion, born of, and contained in, North's serried narrative, expanded in his verse into the flashes of immortal speech. (25)

F. S. Boas (in 1896) is of the opinion that the tragedy is unsurpassed in consummate delineation of character and in the superb rhythmical swell of many passages, but it has a grave defect; it has no dramatic unity and perspective. He says that the multiplicity of details is bewildering, and no single event stands out boldly as the pivot on which the catastrophe turns. But this artistic defect is in part the outcome of a significant peculiarity in Shakespeare's treatment of love as a dramatic theme. In his view, sexual passion is the immediate subject of this play, but the emotional interest is interwoven with the element of political nature—the struggle for the lordship of the Roman world; Shakespeare does not isolate this elaborate study of amorous passion from the wider, more material, issues of surrounding life. This is a method which avoids the disastrous pitfall of treating love as the exclusive factor in existence—the belief that sexual relationship is the solitary, imperious concern of all mankind—according to Boas' theory; so that, though Shakespeare opens to our views the heart aflame with sensuous desire, the picture does not tend to produce an unwholesome prurience, because the kaleidoscopic changes of Cleopatra's moods are counterpoised with Roman legions tramping in solid array, the battles, council chambers, and the like, on which the destinies of kingdoms depend. (26)

In **T. R. Lounsbury's** views (in 1901), *Antony and Cleopatra* exhibits Shakespeare's almost divine insight and intuition; no one can give so clear and vivid a conception of the characters of the actors who took part in the struggle for the supremacy of the world. He says that Antony appears the soldier and voluptuary; he was, alternately by love, by regret, and by ambition, at one moment the great ruler of the divided world, and at the next moment was recklessly flinging his future away at the dictation of a passionate caprice; while Cleopatra, true to no interest, fascinating, treacherous, and charming with her grace even those whom she revolts by her conduct, was luring the man whom she half loved to a ruin which involved herself in his fate. Lounsbury further says that other characters appear painted in clear and sharp outline on the crowded canvas of Shakespeare, while Enobarbus stands like the chorus of a Greek tragedy. (27)

Richard Garnett says (in 1903) that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a work about the 'world great business'; and hardly anywhere else is there such bustle, such variety, or such zest for political and military affairs. He explains that Shakespeare's treatment of Cleopatra is purely objective and there is no trace

of personal resentment, and she is perhaps the most wonderful of all Shakespeare's studies of female character. He says about Antony that he is marvellously depicted as 'the average sensual man' capable of deep human feeling; and the depth of feeling is entirely devoted to Cleopatra, so intensely, so sincerely, and so single-mindedly that we overlook that Antony is in decay, no longer able to sway the Roman multitude or control Octavius; his wisdom and policy are gone forever and even martial honour is dimmed; but the love for Cleopatra amends for all. Garnett also says about Cleopatra that the keynote of her personality is her 'infinite variety'; there is in her every phase of female character. In his opinion the play itself has the same amplitude as her character, with its great sweep in time and place, its continual changes of scene, its crowd of personages, and its multitudes of speeches and profusion of poetical imagery. Garnett's critcism on this tragedy is that the ease with which Shakespeare handles the theme in it and also the plasticity of the entire subject in his hands manifest the perfection of his art by dint of practice, but impair the effectiveness of the tragedy on the stage, because there are few sustained outbursts of passion or eloquence, although the play is resplendent with poetical phrases. (28)

W. J. Courthope's view (1903) is that Antony's character in its extraordinary versatility furnishes one of those contradictory problems of human nature which Shakespeare was accustomed to study with the most sympathetic insight. He assumes that the meretricious fascination of Cleopatra, joined to a certain greatness of soul and fidelity to passion, must have struck shakespeare's imagination by its likeness as well as in contrast to the 'dark lady' whose character he painted in his *Sonnets*. He takes notice of the use of the word 'will' in the play, and explains thus: Antony went to ruin because he 'would make his will Lord of his reason'—this passage shows that his conduct was what Iago calls 'merely a lust of the blood and permission of the will', and the meaning of the word 'will' is the very helplessness of passion spoken of in *Sonnet* CL. Thus Courthope recognizes the projection of the 'dark lady' of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* on the Cleopatra of the tragedy. (29)

H. W. Mabie (in 1900) considers the play as a tragedy almost incredibly rich in variety and range of character and in splendour of setting. In his opinion this drama brings before the imagination with equal firmness of touch the power of Rome, personified in the disciplined and far-seeing Octavius, the voluptuous temperament of the East in Cleopatra, and the tragic collision of two great opposing conceptions of life in Antony—a man born with the Roman capacity for action and the Eastern passion for pleasure. The following is the epitome of his explanation. This tragedy is the drama of the East and West in mortal collision of ideals and motives, and the East succumbs to the superior fibre and more highly organized character of the West. The story of Antonius in Plutarch's hands has a noble breadth and beauty, and is full of insight into the ethical relations of the chief actors in this world-drama. Shakespeare only brought out dramatically the significance of Plutarch's words: "The love of Cleopatra lighted on Antonius, who did waken and stir up many vices yet hidden in him, and were never seen to any; and if

any spark of good or hope of rising were left him, Cleopatra quenched it straight and made it worse than before". Upon this great theme Shakespeare showed how tragic disaster issues out of unregulated passion and infects the coolest nature with madness. Mabie analyzes as follows:—"Cleopatra is the greatest of enchantresses. She has wit, grace, and humour ; and the intoxication of sex breathes from her. She unites the passion of a great temperament with the fathomless coquetry of a courtesan of genius. She is passionately alive, avid of sensation, consumed with love of pleasure, imperious in her demands for that absolute homage which slays honour and saps manhood at the very springs of its power. This superb embodiment of feminity, untouched by pity and untroubled by conscience, has a compelling charm, born in the mystery of passion and taking on the radiance of a thousand moods which melt into one another in endless succession, as if there were no limit to the resources of temperament and the sorceries of her beauty. Of her alone has the greatest of poets dared to declare that 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety'. It is this magnificence which invests Cleopatra's criminality with a kind of sublimity, so vast is the scale of her being and so tremendous the force of her passions." Mabie indicates that the style of the play marks the transition to Shakespeare's latest manner: rhyme almost disappears, and 'weak endings' or the use of weak monosyllables at the end of the lines become very numerous—he had secured such conscious mastery of his art that he trusted entirely to his instinct and taste. Mabie concludes his criticism with the remarks that the depth of Shakespeare's poetic art and the power of his imagination are displayed in their full compass in *Antony and Cleopatra*; the play is vitalized as by fire, so radiant is it in energy and beauty of expression; not only are the chief figures realized with historical fidelity, but they breathe the very atmosphere of the East; and the play is steeped in the languor and luxury of the East, and has the glow and radiancy of painting. (30)

Mabie's criticism is considerably valid and reliable.

Recent Criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra*

Recent criticism of the tragedy is, on the whole, superior to its earlier criticism, but almost all the germs of recent criticism are contained somewhere in the earlier criticism. In some recent criticism one germ of them has been given prominence and developed, and in other recent criticism a few or several germs of them have been done likewise, according to the standpoint of each recent critic. From the standpoint and method of approach, the recent criticsm can be classified broadly into four or five kinds of criticism: —the character or psychological, the historical, the aesthetical, the multi-conscious, and the like. (31)

(1) **Character-Criticism**

This sort of criticism can be called psychological or natural criticism, because the play is studied by the psychological method of approach to the charaters of the play as if they were real living men and women in the world, and mainly from the results of that study the literary work is evaluated. Then the study of a play becomes to study chiefly its characters. As

I have mentioned before, Rowe, Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and many critics in the latter part of the 19th Century paid much attention to the characters of the tragedy and discussed them, but **A. C. Bradley**'s (1851–1935) achievements in this sort of criticism was great and admirable.

Coleridge wrote that Shakespeare impressed the notion of anglic strength in *Antony and Cleopatra* more than in almost any of other plays. Bradley takes these words to show that Shakespeare had an ability to compose an extraordinarily effective play out of intractable materials as easily and freely as if he had an angelic strength, and not that the play itself impressed the notion of angelic strength on the audience, and so to regard the play as a rival of Shakespeare's famous four tragedies, whether on the stage or in the study, as Coleridge did, is considered to be surely an error by Bradley. Besides, Bradley thinks that the play may be wonderful as Coleridge called it, but it has not an equal value to those of Shakespeare's famous four tragedies, and so in the attempt to rank it with them there is involved something more important than an error in valuation, for there is a failure to discriminate the peculiar marks of this tragedy which make it decidedly different from the other tragedies.

In Bradley's opinion, the tragedy has a grave defect in the construction —it has so many scenes as forty-two—and moreover the matter presented in the first three acts lacks dramatic elements. Bradley insists that the story of most of Shakespeare's tragedies is not merely exciting and impressive from the movement of conflicting forces towards a terrible issue, but often there come situations and events which appeal most powerfully to the dramatic feelings—scenes of action or passion which agitate the audience with alarm, horror, painful expectation or absorbing sympathies and antipathies, but the first three acts of the tragedy lack these elements dramatic both in special and general senses of the word, and thus it has never attained popularity either on the stage or off it. He supposes that Shakespeare might have easily made those acts of the tragedy extremely exciting in a heightened tone and tension by portraying both severity of an inward struggle and fatal step of Antony's return from Rome which might have made this story of Antony and Cleopatra the source of tragic emotions, if he had chosen; but he does no such thing till the catastrophe is near. In Bradley's view, tragic impressions of any great volume or depth were reserved by the very scheme of the work for the last stage of the conflict, while the main interest, down to the battle of Actium, was directed to the matters exceedingly interesting: on the one hand, to the political aspect of the story; on the other, to the personal causes which helped to make the issue inevitable.

The political situation and its development are simple and to show the reduction of three of the triumvirate to one. The one is Octavius. Bradley discusses this character in detail. The epitome of his dicussion on the character is as follows: Octavius fixed his eyes on his purpose to rule the world alone, sacrificed everything for it, and used everything as a means to it. Shakespeare took little interest in this character. Octavius is one of those men who have plenty of 'judgment' and not much 'blood'. Victory in the world almost always

goes to such men. He is very formidable. We dislike him and when Cleopatra by her death cheats this conqueror of his prize, we feel unmixed delight. Though this character is neither attractive nor wholly clear, this figure is invested with a certain tragic dignity, because he is felt to be the Man of Destiny, the agent of forces against which the intentions of an individual would do nothing. From the character of this man, Bradley explains the political aspect of the tragedy and says that, in spite of an external magnificient spectacle, the tragedy fails to uplift or dilate the imagination; this makes the play appear inwardly small. The 'world-sharers' contend for the lordship of the world, but their aims are as personal as if they were captains of banditti, and they are followed merely from self-interest or private attachment. In short the political aspect of the tragedy is of a world so splendid, but so false and petty; a painful sense of hollowness of the aspect oppresses us. From this Bradley explains the important characteristics of the tragedy thus: the presentation of the outward conflict for the world's lordship has two results; first it blunts our feeling of the greatness of Antony's fall from prosperity, secondly the greatness of Antony and Cleopatra in their fall is so much heightened by the contrast with the world they lose and the conqueror who wins it, that the positive element in the final tragic impression, the element of reconciliation, is strongly emphasized. The peculiar and characteristic effect of this tragedy, therefore, depends not only on the absence of decidedly tragic scenes and events in its first half, but quite as much on this emphasis.

Bradley discusses Antony's character. He says that in the opening scene of the tragedy its two aspects——the dotage of the great general and his capacity of finding in something the infinite and pursuing it into the jaws of death (the tragic greatness with the tragic excess)——are presented together. We sympathize warmly with Antony, and we are greatly drawn to him and inclined to regard him as a noble nature half spoiled by his time. His nature is a large, open, generous, expansive nature, quite free from envy, capable of great magnanimity and even of entire devotion. He is unreserved, naturally straightforward and courteous. He can admit faults, accept advice and even reproof, and take a jest against him with good humour. Though he can be exceedingly dignified, he seems to prefer a blunt though sympathetic plainness, which is one cause of the attachment of his soldiers. His nature tends to splendid action and lusty enjoyment, but he is neither a mere soldier nor a mere sensualist. He has imagination, the temper of an artist who revels in abundant and rejoicing appetites, feasts his senses and richness of life, flings himself into its mirth and revelry, yet feels the poetry in all this, and at the same time he is able to put it by and be more than content with the hardship of adventure. He enjoys being a great man, but he has not the love of rule for rule's sake. Power for him is chiefly a means to pleasure. The pleasure he wants is so huge that he needs a huge power. By women he is not only attracted but governed. The joy of life had always culminated for him in the love of women: he could say 'No' to none of them. When he meets Cleopatra, he finds his Absolute. She satisfies, nay, glorifies, his whole being. He is

more than love's pilgrim; he is love's martyr. The above is the epitome of Bradley's explanation of Antony's character.

Bradley explains Cleopatra's character as follows:—Cleopatra is both a courtesan of genius and a great queen. The whole of the fifth Act is devoted to the heroine, in which she becomes unquestionably a tragic character, but not till then. She stands in a group with Hamlet and Falstaff. They are inexhaustible and their variety could never be staled by custom; Shakespere has bestowed on each of them, though they differ so much, his own orginality, his genius. What raises Cleopatra at last into pure tragedy is, in part, her love for Antony. The exercise of sexual attraction is the element of her life. She has developed the nature in a consummate art. She lives for feeling, and some of her feelings are violent. She ruins a great man, but shows no sense of the tragedy of his ruin. She is willing to survive her lover. The thing that drives her to die is certainty that she will be carried to Rome to grace the triumph of Octavius. Doubtless she wrought magic on the senses, but had not such extraordinary beauty as seems divine. What makes her wonderful and sovereign is in her final speech, 'I am fire and air: my other elements I give to baser life'. Only the spirit of fire and air within her refuses to be trammelled or extinguished, burns its way through the obstacles of fortune and even through the resistance of her love and grief, and would lead undaunted to fresh life and the conquest of new worlds. In the final scenes of her life, it flames into such brilliance that we watch her entranced as she struggles for freedom, and thrilled with triumph as, even if conquered, she puts her conqueror to scorn and goes to the other world to meet her lover in the splendour that crowned and robed her long ago, when she first met him in this world to take him captive for ever.

Though my epitomes of Bradley's explanation of the characters are flat and static, his character-analyses are, in truth, solid and dynamic by dint of his observation of their action in the tragedy. Through his excellent character-analyses Bradley draws the conclusion of his criticism of this play as follows: although we close the book in a triumph which is more than reconciliation, this is mingled with a sadness so peculiar, almost the sadness of disenchantment: it is because when the glow has faded, Cleopatra's ecstasy comes to appear only an effort strained and prodigious as well as glorious, and is not the final expression of character, thoughts and emotions which have dominated a whole life; and it is also because there is something paradoxical——we are saddened by the very fact that the catastophe saddens us so little; in other words it pains us that we should feel so much triumph and pleasure. Tragic emotions are stirred in the fullest possible measure only when such beauty or nobility of character is displayed as commands unreserved admiration or love, or when, in default of this, the forces which move the agents, and the conflict which results from these forces, attain a terrifying and overwhelming power. Shakespeare's four most famous tragedies satisfy one or both of these conditions, but this tragedy satisfies neither of them completely. Though a great tragedy, it attempts something different and succeeds triumphantly, and leaves us in astonishment at the powers which created it. (32)Such was Bradley's criticism

upon *Antony and Cleopatra.* His criticism is now generally called to be out-of-date, but had a great influence upon his contemporary and later critics.

Arthur Symons (1865-1945) says that the tragedy is the most wonderful of all Shakespeare's plays, and it is so mainly because the figure of Cleopatra is the most wonderful not only of Shakespeare's women, but also of all women. He suggests that Shakespeare must have put to use his experience brought so sorrowfully from the 'dark lady' sung in the *Sonnets* to write Cleopatra who is synonymous with all the subtlety of feminine beauty. He analyzes her character. If I describe only the peculiar points of his criticism on it, they are as follows:—Cleopatra loves not alone her conquest of Antony by her spells, but him really; her love is a real passion of a woman with her Greek blood heated by the suns of Egypt who knows how much greater is the intoxication of loving than of being loved; her passion is an intense, exacting, oppressive, and overwhelming passion, wholly of the senses and selfish, and the love requires possession to absorb the loved one—hence comes her infinite variety. It is true that she is a woman who must have a lover, but she is satisfied with one—with one at a time, and she finds her ideal lover in Antony. In this respect she is very different from such women as Manon Lescaut who is an exquisite but faithless creature and changes a lover for a calculated advantage. It wrongs her to suspect that she really betrayed Antony to Caesar. Her love of Antony is the one thing that had ever been real and steadfast in the deadly quicksand of her mind. In her last days Cleopatra touches a certain elevation: the thought of death intoxicates her reason; it gives her a triumphant sense of her mastery over Caesar and over Destiny, and the reunion with her lover. She is fire and air, and so she dies, undisfigured in death, and the signs of death are barely perceptible.[33] Arthur Symons gives many important suggestions in his criticism for us to understand rightly the character of Cleopatra in the tragedy.

J. Dover Wilson is not merely a critic who criticizes the characters of this tragedy, but he has a wider view and uses also a historical method of approach to the study of the work, though he attaches much importance to the characters of the play. He presumes that Shakespeare now freed himself from the emotion caused by the 'dark lady' in the *Sonnets* somewhere about 1594 and could tranquilly delineate Cleopatra objectively; clearly he went to work upon her characterization with keen zest quite uninfluenced by any but aesthetic feeling, and the result was a portrait whch seems nearer to the historical truth as revealed by recent historians than Plutarch. He insists that, where Plutarch could see a bad woman in Cleopatra, Shakespeare discovered and brought to life—the eternal life of art—one of the geniuses of all time, at times hitting upon a particular attribute or quality of the real woman by some happy stroke. This tragedy has the double catastrophes at the end, which shape makes a tragedy of a unique quality, and Wilson maintains that this quality has puzzled all the critics to define, though they agree in pronouncing the effect transcendent. Wilson refutes Bradley who regards the play rather as tragic history and has moral considerations in mind when criticizing this tragedy. Wilson suggests that nothing is more remarkable about this play,

in which an imperial courtesan is the central figure, than the sobriety and coolness of its atmosphere; indeed there is plenty of frank speaking, some ribaldry, and a little sexual imagery, but of sensuality there is not a note, and moreover it has no strain of sex-nausea which seems to run through the four famous tragedies; and so in this tragedy sensuality is not the main theme at all, but merely the medium through which Shakespeare conveys the obvious source of that sense of 'triumph which is more than reconciliation' which Bradley speaks of. Wilson explains that Antony's infatuation for Cleopatra is condemned by other characters as 'dotage', a grave error of judgment, extreme folly, or even dishonour and abomination in a general or ruler, but never as 'sin' in the man; and the self-slaughter, though the Everlasting had fixed his canon against it, is glorified as the noblest act of both hero and heroine, and death translates the lovers to the timeless Elysian fields; in these respects the religious and ethical tone of the tragedy is in fact pagan; and there is contempt for this 'little O, the earth' which is a kind of stoicism and constitutes one of the leitmotifs of the play. Wilson also refutes Lord David Cecil who tries to fit the play into the traditional category of historical drama with the interest 'largely political' as a sequel to *Julius Caesar*. Wilson analyses Antony's character: Antony possesses qualities finer than any of the military ones which brought him victory in the days of his greatest glory; magnanimity, the loftiness of his world station, the splendour and graciousness of his person, his voice like the music of the sphere for beauty and range, his divine amiability, and, when needs be, no less divine wrath, his untiring and inexhaustible liberality, his immense capacity for enjoyment and for rising at any moment superior to it, finally his ascendancy over mankind, together with his contempt for the fruits of power——all these combined do not make up the sum of his virtues; he has, moreover, majesty, affability, benevolence, placability, amity, justice, fortitude, patience in sustaining wrong——all these and more are Antony's virtues; but he lacks such virtues as continence, sobriety, and political sapience; in short Antony is the portrait of true greatness of a man able to conquer the world with his sword but winning all hearts at the same time by geniality and self-oblivious magnanimity, who is conceived on colossal scale in everything—in stature, force of character, generosity, affections, passions; and who perishes because, being after all human, he suffers from the overgrowth of passions; in his last hours after receiving Cleopatra's death Antony is at his greatest: the death of Cleopatra calls forth his highest qualities together with other traits exhibiting in extreme form the weakness that brings the catastrophe upon him. Wilson explains that this tragedy is also Cleopatra's tragedy in which she must also find her true greatness and must be touched to the finest issues: this is the theme of Shakespeare's fifth Act. In Wilson's opinion, Shakespeare was thus driven to compose a *coda* to the tragedy of Antony which many consider the most wonderful movement in any of his great symphonies; the last act is not merely a second catastrophe with Cleopatra as protagonist: her death fills us with exultation and delight, so far from arousing pity; her words of farewell means, not death, but an undying triumph in the eternal city of imagination

of mankind, and a triumph over Caesar and every other political 'ass unpolicied' who finds in life no purpose but an extension of his own tethered range upon this 'dungy earth'. Wilson omits his explanation of the character of Cleopatra as he thinks that it has been too often and too well discussed. He says only two things about her: first, Cleopatra is in the Seleucus scene only pretending to desire to live lest Caesar should thwart her resolution for death, which she is only forced to postpone by her unexpected capture and the interview with Caesar; next, if Antony's supreme virtue is magnanimity, hers is vitality, and because she, 'all fire and air', is also the genius of the play, vitality is its true theme; vitality as glorified in them both, and in the form which Shakespeare most admired: 'the nobleness of life', the strength and majesty of human nature, its instincts of generosity, graciousness and large-heartedness; its gaiety of spirit, warmth of blood, 'infinite variety' of mood. Wilson concludes that this play is, in short, Shakespeare's Hymn to Man; a symphony in five acts, elaborating Hamlet's canticle:

> What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form, and movlng; how express and admirable in action; how like an angel in apprehension; how like a god!—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.(34)

H. B. Charlton says that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a great achievement in drama and poetry, but though Shakespeare has lost none of his artistry, his inward eye is dimming in this play; his imagination ranges widely over space and time but it dwells more on the surfaces and no longer thrusts to the utter depths, that is to say, the genius of the dramatist is displayed not so remarkably by a profound upheaval in his imaginative experience, but its ultra-romantic structure suggests his exuberant revelry in his theatrical skill. Charlton insists that, though the play is a form of Shakespearian tragedy as only Shakespeare could write it, it is a tragedy fallen away from the peak of Shakesparian tragedy and fits better into the theme of his Roman political plays.(35)

Charlton's criticism of this tragedy shows that his critical eye is dimming, and his imagination dwells on the surfaces and cannot thrust to the utter depths.

T. M. Parrott considers the main theme of *Antony and Cleopatra* as the clash of opposing forces for the domination of the world, resulting in the overthrow of the sensuous East (incarnate in Cleopatra) by the hard efficiency of Rome (incarnate in Octavius). But he says that Antony and Cleopatra stand out in this conflict as two of the most famous lovers in history; Antony falls a victim to seductive Cleopatra and loses the world for her, but there is little or nothing of the inner struggle, the combat in the hero's soul with the power of evil, which marks the earlier and greater tragedies. Parrott, therefore, regards the play as the least tragic of Shakespeare's tragedies, though he acknowledges it to be one of the most magnificent of his plays. Parrott explains Shakespeare's characterization of the hero and heroine and others of the play as follows. Antony is no poetizing sentimentalist: he is a tried soldier, a leader of men, and the triple pillar of the world as well as a man who abandons all his better self to passion; Shakespeare's Antony is brave, generous and self-forgetful,

independent of Plutarch's Antony who was coarse, cruel, and base; hence with all his faults and follies there is something magnificent about this Antony. As for Cleopatra she is Shakespeare's supreme portrayal of the eternal feminine; no other woman in all his female portraits is so fully realized or approaches her infinite variety. To Plutarch she was simply the evil genius of Antony, but to Shakespeare she is that and more; she is the courtesan of genius and the Queen of Egypt. She is herself, throughout, complete and consistent from beginning to end; the strain that gives unity and consistency to her character is her passion for Antony, who is her man, being so strong, so male, and so pleasure-loving like herself. She had lovers before, but she has never had such a splendid Roman as Antony and she will have none after him. But she has been the mistress and the ruin of Antony. Resolved on death in the high Roman fashion, she yet hesitates and falters; she even tries in vain to win also Octavius as she had won before. It is only when she learns her failure that she rises to the height of resolution. (In this repect Parrot differs from Wilson.) Now she claims Antony as her husband by the title of her courage. Her desire for reunion with him exalts and glorifies her last moments, with the result that, despite of Roman triumph in the outer world, the victory of the great lovers over external circumstances is perfectly accomplished. As for the other characters in the play, the majority of them are mere names with no substance behind them, though Shakespeare now and then puts life into them with a dash of his pen. Among them Scarus, Lepidus, Pompey, and Cleopatra's maids are alive, and especially one figure stands out. It is Enobarbus whose character Shakespeare created out of a name and an incident in Plutarch. He is a plain, blunt soldier, a mocker, a cynical realist, and a very human figure. He plays at times the part of the chorus in commenting on the action. Shakespeare uses his desertion and his remorseful death to portray at once the hopeless ruin of Antony's cause, his noble generosity, and the devotion he inspired even in such a cynical realist as Enobarbus. Parrot concludes that the art with which Shakespeare reveals the characters is the art of fully accomplished master and the peculiar glory of this play is its poetry in which each speaker preserves his own identity of utterance.(36)

(2) **Historical Criticism**

Psychological critics treat characters of a play as if they were real persons in the actual world, but they are created persons by its writer in the fictional world of drama. The characterization and plot are influenced not only by the real persons with whom the writer contacts in his life, but also by the literary tradition and convention in which he lives. Therefore, such a supremely gifted genius as Shakespeare is also a master of his medium and an immediate heir to the artistic tradition; and even though ignorant or regardless of aesthetic rules or psychological principles, he throws himself into his work prodigally and exuberantly, guided and guarded only by the healthy instincts and customs of his race, his temperament, and his day. It goes without saying that the characters, their actions, and plots of his plays often have the factors which cannot be understood only by literalism or a psychological method of approach. Shakespeare has many such factors; he is a great artist who makes up un-

reasonable characterization and plots into verisimilitudes of fiction in his plays. To understand and criticize his dramas rightly it is necessary to study them also from historical directions.

E. E. Stoll approaches Shakespeare by the historical and comparative method. He says that Shakespeare's passion for Mary Fitton may have found its extreme expression in *Antony and Cleopatra*. He remarks the neglect of analysis and motivation in it and explains them historically and comparatively. Cleopatra's character has apparently contradicting elements—of a heartless coquettish courtesan and of a devoted lover and noble queen, but he regards as the essential unifying element in the character the speech, the identity of tone, rather than the deeper psychological attitude. The psychology or logic may be faulty, the motivation may be summary or inadequate, and character and conduct may often be difficult to reconcile; but Shakespeare lends the persons on the stage each a particular and individual voice at his best. Stoll insists that Cleopatra speaks her own words which are the true accents of her human voice, a quick and passionate speech for all the conventions involved in it, and the 'real things'; and she does not speak the words of a type or a species of woman, or the rhetoric or eloquence of passion; her unique speeches express her vivacious manner when excited, while from beginning to end she keeps her languorous, voluptuous manner through all her fits and starts. In spite of her decision to die, as Stoll says, she does not forget her cunning but endeavours to cheat Octavius out of her jewels and treasures, and in the midst of her sufferings she gives her wit and irony while the clown intrudes into the presence of her sufferings and imparts to her repeated counsels as he hands over the basket. Stoll appraises the scene as the most pregnant inspired stage device that produces the effect to bring the tragic emotion from the highest pitch down to this earthly level and shows the clown speaking more wisely than he knows. Stoll says that even on her deathbed she is still the amorous, intriquing, wrangling queen, jealous of Iras who may meet Antony first and receive his kisses which are her Heaven, but is tickled at the thought of outwitting by her death great Caesar, "ass unpolicied". Stoll also says that her playful fancies with the clown and the baby (an asp) at the breast bring tears to our eyes and smiles to our lips at once and together; it is because she has lived and loved so, and her romantic passion finds play in wit and humour. According to Stoll, Antony lives and dies, like finer characters of the ancients, mindful of fame and glory, and at his end is disengaged from himself and is noble like the ancient poets. The Supernatural melody in the tragedy is very fine and heightens the unsubstantial effect. Shakespeare, in Stoll's opinion, made few discoveries or disclosures in this tragedy; there is little in his characters that is surprising and at the same time indisputably true; what is suprising is generally not true, or else like Cleopatra's cheating (taken from the source) left unexplained. (37)

Walter Raleigh appreciates Shakespeare's plays in their true merits and says that *Antony and Cleopatra* approaches, in some of its scenes, to the earlier chronicle manner, and also that some places of it are inferior to their original places of Plutarch's *Lives*; for instance, the scene of the supernatural

melody in the Fourth Act falls short of its source of Plutarch's passage which is tremulous with suspense and dim forebodings, and the last scene of Cleopatra's death has not that combination of the intensity and minuteness of realism with the dignity and reserve of the best classic art which Plutarch's description of Cleopatra's death has. But Raleigh continues to say that Shakespeare reveals some astonishing piece of insight which defeats all expectation, is surprising, and yet has a convincing quality, as if he were God's spy seeing into the mystery of things; then the words become inevitable and characters come to life as in real life, ceasing to be the characters of fiction controlled by the plot, as seen in such scenes as that immediately after Cleopatra's meeting with Octavius in the monument and that of Cleopatra's deliberate frowardness of mood which Shakespeare, in direct opposition to Plutarch's account, invents for her, to gain and keep Antony's love. Raleigh also remarks the independent characters introduced in this play to play the part of a chorus to interpret to the audience the meaning of what is going forward on the stage. He explains the tragedy in this way: also in this tragedy Shakespeare comes face to face with the mystery and cruelty of human life, and translates a gentle undertone of melancholy, the insecurity of mortal things, into the story, in which the hero is presented with a choice which is impossible and he stands poised between love and empire—that is the essence of this tragedy. (38)

E. K. Chambers studied solidly and elaborately the Elizabethan theatres, Shakespeare's life and works, and their various historical backgrounds. He infers that *Antony and Cleopatra* was written after *Macbeth* or *Lear* from its metrical characteristics and says that it may have been produced early in 1607 on the evidences of Barne's *Devil's Charter* (1607) and Samuel Daniel's revised edition of *Cleopatra*. He says that Shakespeare tends to end very often a speech and begin a new one in the middle of a line, which is a noticeable characteristic of his later poetry, and he rose to his height of poetic expression in this tragedy. (39)

G. B. Harrison explains *Antony and Cleopatra* mainly from the point of view of presentation. He considers the play as the most magnificient of all Shakespeare's plays, but he does not regard it as a deep tragedy from the standpoint got from his historical study of tragedy. He appraises highly the verse, the characterization, and the construction of the play. According to his opinion, Shakespeare is at his freest, writing with delight, understanding, and gusto, and with a new command of words, rhythms, and imagery, in the play; the verse is gorgeous with loveliest word-music and with an elaborate and pregnant kind of imagery used instinctively. All the characters of the play, in spite of frailty and errors they commit, are shown at their best in failure. The characterization is subtle and the play is genial. It has rapid alternations, containing no less than forty-two episodes which are, in the usual text, marked as spearate scenes. In it they are not 'scenes' in the sense of places, but rather glimpses of persons in rapid action. It can be adequately acted only on the Elizabethan stage or a modern stage so designed that changes of scene can be instantaneous. Its construction is elaborate. Harrison says

that the play never reaches down to the depths of emotion clearly because its story, telling a man who throws his wealth into the lap of a harlot and kills himself, is not tragic; though Shakespeare reveals his powers at their best in this play which is not failure, but a triumph, a thing of beauty incomparable. (40)

Harrison seems to have mistaken the entity of Cleopatra and the Roman fashion of suicide of Antony by a Christian prejudice, and so he evaluates this tragedy a little wrongly.

H. Granville-Barker studies *Antony and Cleopatra* chiefly from the historical viewpoints of production, acting, and stagecraft. He says that it is the most spacious of Shakespeare's plays and his eyes swept no wider horizon; it has a magnificence and a magic all its own, and it is a large field of action though not of spiritual insight; the hero is not the self-torturing soul concerned with world within himself, but is concerned with the world of great affairs. Indeed his passion for Cleopatra ruins him, but the wider issue dictates the form, method, and the bulk of its content. It is not merely a love-tragedy (which is not made the main question till no other question is left; till the ruin wreaked by the Triumvir and Queen is accomplished), but a tragedy of the hero's downfall and ruin as general and stateman, and the final ascension of Octavius in the struggle for the world's rulership; and the action of play is schemed throughout for the picturing of this wider ruin. So Granville-Barker says that we might call it a tragedy of disillusion. He explains in detail the characteristics of the verse of this play and says that the verse is malleable to every diversity of character and mood and is at its supplest, so that we are hardly conscious of the convention and the shifting of verse to prose and back again. He also explains the characters in detail and says that they never fail to come to life. He remarks that the action moves forthright and unchecked, and yet little or nothing in it shows superfluous. He makes clear the construction of the play. In this play the main lives of the story are laid so firmly and simply that we may see where we are going from the start, and the complexities from borrowed plots and the side-issues promising distraction are cut short and reduced to simplicity. The Roman and Egyptian are set against each other and this opposition braces the whole body of the play, even when conflict between character and character will sustain each scene, in a broard picturisque contrast. The pattern of the play Shakespeare weaves, setting colour against colour, coarse thread by fine, with such seeming ease and natural subtlety that we hardly note the artistry involved. Granville-Barker says that in this play Shakespeare has told his story, woven his pattern, kept conflict alive and balance true, character prompting action, and action elucidating character, neither made to halt for the other—this really is the be-all and end-all of his stagecraft. He insists that the play has a larger theme, to the catastrophe of which Shakespeare gives half his play's length, than the love story; this respect has been ignored by editors, critics and producers. The First Folio gives none of act and scene divisions to this drama. They were given by Rowe afterwards. To the Elizabethans, the visual law of drama was very different from the visual side of the modern 'realistic' drama and was a very arbitrary and inconstant thing. By the visual

law was not necessarily understood the background against which the actors and their acting showed themselves in the Elizabethan dramas. The Elizabethans imagined the background themselves; for the actors were plainly on the stage, but characters might, half the time, be nowhere in particular as in the case of the modern novels in which the novelist may, if he chooses, detach characters, through page after page, from fixed surroundings. Shakespeare never gives more attention to his play's background than he feels it will be dramatically profitable. Granville-Barker finds in this play Shakespeare in the maturity of his craftsmanship, enjoying and exploiting it to the full; and he says that in this play we find, except for the one episode of the sentries on guard listening to the mysterious music, no verbal scene-painting of any sort, direct or subtle; nor more than the very minimum of reference to the locality of the scenes; plainly because it is a play of action and of multiplied incidents, and the story is simple, but the tributary threads of it are manifold, and the interweaving of purpose is complex enough. The play is economised by suppressing picturesque inessentials, and it is the most business-like of plays. Its dramatic strength lies in the unity of the whole complex events, and its value is isolated and made clear by the welding of the mixed mass of incident and character into a consistent whole, freed from all irrelevant circumstances. The scenic locality is obliterated, and once we are enthralled, there is nothing left to stand between us and the essential drama; we are at one with its realities. Graville-Barker says that Shakespeare has, utterly sure of himself, reached in the writing as in the shaping of this play limits of freedom and daring that he will not overpass; and indeed the play is not a high spiritual tragedy, but there is something most fundamental in the pity and terror of it; especially Cleopatra is defiant and noble in her kind, and is shaming convenient righteousness; she is a miracle of nature that will not be reconciled to any gospel but its own—she is herself to the very end: here is the tragedy.(41)

Theodore Spencer, E. M. W. Tillyard, G. I. Duthie, J. F. Danby, and M. C. Bradbrook study the historical—intellectual, social, and emotional—background of Shakespeare, as well as the craft, the artistic medium which he employed; and analyze and judge his works in relation to what they believe to be true of human experience as a whole. They may be called men of revised historical criticism.

Theodore Spencer studies particularly Shakespeare's intellectual background and explains *Antony and Cleopatra* mainly by it. As the intellectual background of the 16th century there was a remarkable unanimity about man's nature and his place in the world. The combined elements of Aristotelianism, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, and Christianity were almost indistinguishably woven into a pattern which was universally agreed and which, in its main outlines, was the same as that of the Middle Ages. Spencer calls the pattern the Optimistic Theory. Unfortunately space forbids the explanation of this theory. Spencer says that in this tragedy human passion puts an end to a career of an empire and moves us much, but it does not produce spiritual disaster because the situation is exposed, but not probed. In his opinion Shakespeare gave to this play the breadth and size which his vision of the

subject demanded by a fresh use of the three inter-related hierarchies of Nature, the world, and the state. The love of Antony and Cleopatra has a dimension as large as any political world, and the size of their world of love is deliberately set against the size of the political world which their love may reject. Antony himself is a figure of more than human proportions. Cleopatra, in speaking of Antony, uses most majestically the concept of the microcosm and the macrocosm; to her he is not merely the 'Lord of lords', not merely the crown of the earth and the garland of the war, but he is the macrocosm itself; she thinks of Antony, the individual man, in taking in the whole Ptolemic universe, the world of Nature, and the world of the state. Thus Shakespeare's magnificent poetry is developed from the images which the optimistic theory of his own age gave him. The familiar concepts of this theory occur in his work in three ways; each is characteristic of a different stage in his development as a poet and playwright. First the traditional beliefs appear as part of the background (in the plays of the 'nineties), secondly they are part of the consciousness of the protagonists, and the splitting of a soul is the splitting of a world (in the four great tragedies and *Troilus and Cressida*), and thirdly they are used not merely as background, not merely as elements in a psychological chaos, but as part of the texture of the poetry as a way of enlarging the magical aura that surrounds the characters. In *Antony and Cleopatra* they are used in the third way. They do not intensify situation, but they expand it and make themselves a part of the picture itself; they are expanded to give a picture of glory though it may be defeated glory. The situation, therefore, is not unnatural or monstrous and the play has no terror mixed with its grandeur. In this respect Shakespeare's portrayal of human nature of this play is very different from those of his four great tragedies. This play shows 'a world-catastrophe'. From the beginning of the play to the end Antony and Caesar are described in the terms of the macrocosm they rule. The impression of largeness by the imagery of macrocosm (the world) is reinforced by the way the action shifts from Egypt to Rome and back again and by the place-names. This world is indeed immensely imposing, rich, spacious, and magnificent, but it is a world of senses; it is physical and not metaphysical as in Lear's world, and it is smaller for all its grandeur and, when Antony loses it, there is no reason why he should go mad like Lear, though he may be passionately moved. What happens to him is, after all, in the nature of things and is to be expected. Therefore, there is not any awareness of unnatural happenings on the part of characters and nothing is hideous or monstrous in the tragedy. Though the vast world of the Roman Empire falls into the dry manipulating hands of Caesar, the passion of Antony and Cleopatra destroys them; that, we feel, is how things should happen, and it is not unjust but how things are. In this point, Shakespeare's final vision of man, though still under a tragic guise, is already in sight. Though the stretch of empire is both the background and an essential part of the action and conditions the expansive form of the dramatic structure of this play, it is obviously only half the picture. Shakespeare devotes as much care to the description of the characters and passion of Antony and Cleopatra themselves

as to the description of the huge environment in which their passion flames. In describing this world of passion he also uses the familiar language of his time; Antony loses everything because he loses his reason and fails to be a rational being. As Antony gives up everything for Cleopatra, we see him gradually being stripped of the huge and glamorous world which surrounds him. The process is a long one described with admirable skill. Until the middle of the third Act Antony has the best of both the world of passion and the world of empire. From then on he loses one thing after another—the stars, his own judgment, his soldiers, Enobarbus, the god from whom his family are descended, and even Cleopatra herself—until there is nothing left but Antony himself and the private world of passion for which he had thrown the public world away. But the tragedy does not end here, and Antony's death is not a defeat but a kind of triumph. Antony imagines that he and Cleopatra will meet and live together in the next world; in a sense the new heaven and earth have been found at the end as he said at the beginning of the play. They are never disillusioned, for they have had no illusion to start with. Their deaths are part of the order of things. Yet in his presentation of Cleopatra at the end, Shakespeare gives a further range to her action by referring to the fact that under all the trappings of royalty there are only human beings. After Antony's death Cleopatra is 'a lass unparallel'd'. She is on a level with the clown who brings the basket of figs with the asps. He is at the bottom of the human scale. But the moment he leaves, she is at the top of the human scale and a royal queen; she leaps suddenly from the humblest peasant's scale to the highest grandeur. The paradoxical reversal is the essence of her charm. When she applies the asp to her breast, with that reversal, she both spurns and spans the same range—from the heavens to the most simple human act—that has been spanned by the whole play; from an eastern star which reminds us of the wide skies that have echoed the rich Egyptian glory to the nurse who holds her baby at her breast. (42)

The above is the summary of Spencer's interpretation and criticism of this tragedy, which makes exceedingly clear the meaning of this play.

G. I. Duthie says that indeed we have a contrast between Egypt and Rome in *Antony and Cleopatra,* but we must be cautious in the use of the methods of critics of imaginative interpretation or multi-consiousness. They comment that Egypt and Rome are opposed throughout the play: this opposition is the 'atmosphere' of the play, and the atmospher is of vital importance and gives the play its most fundamental significance. They object to the character-criticism, reject also as invalid the study of sources, the author's intentions, and plot, as aids to interpretation, and insist the 'inner meaings' of the play. But Duthie says that their views are apt to be artificial abstraction, while the character-criticism is not sufficient in itself. In his view we have the scene shifting over a very wide area and also have warlike action in this play, but Shakespeare's primary interest is in the conflicting impulses and emotions in the hearts of the principal characters; this is highly dramatic material and external action has no vital importance in itself. He comments that Shakespeare is dealing primarily with the dramatic material and not narrative-

descriptive poetry that is non-dramatic; for instance, the spectacle of Cleopatra in her barge cannot be successfully presented on the stage and such a piece of pure description is put in Enobarbus's mouth within the stage-dialogue.(43)

According to M. C. **Bradbrook** the Elizabethans regarded magnanimity as a courtly virtue, the first and greatest virtue of a gentleman; the magnanimous man respected honour, ignored wrongs done to him, and sought always to confer benefits rather than receive them. Whenever he received any benefit, it must be at once repaid with interest. Such free spirit as this, as she explains, impelled Antony to forgive Cleopatra's treachery with a kiss and to send treasure after the renegade, Enobarbus, and did not distinguish between liberality and prodigality. In her view Cleopatra shares mysteriousness with Hamlet and Falstaff, and the core of her being is a mystery. The magnificence of the picture of Cleopatra's barge upon the river Cydnus is considered by Bradbrook to depend partly at least upon the symbolic costume of her attendants, the mermaids and cupids who represent all the power of witchery and desire that royal Egypt commands. Bradbrook says that Cleopatra adorns herself again with her robe and crown at the end, as Mary, Queen of Scots, in real life adorned herself to die in a manner fitting for a Princess; no scene in the theatre of the time approaches the latter, for Mary put off her mourning gown of black velvet and, clad all in scarlet, faced the headman on the scaffold at Fotheringay to meet what she held to be a martyr's death. There is no doubt a moral configuration, Bradbrook presumes, at the basis of the play, and it is Shakespeare's most human and universal vision.(44)

John F. Danby sees *Antony and Cleopatra* as an abrupt transition from the Christian world of the plays of Shakespeare's 'great period' to the world of North's Plutarch and thinks that it indicates his new period. The play is the deliberate construction of a world without his symbol for a reality (such a character as Cordelia) that is the third term and transcends the political and the personal. Antony is a heathen man who lacks patience of Christian moral. The absence of 'Nature' of the Christian world-view in Shakespeare's time from the tragedy suggests Shakespeare's satisfaction that the theme is exhausted for him. Freedom from the compulsive theme of the Nature enabled him to handle something new and intrinsically simpler. Part of the energy absorbed in grappling with the theme now bestows itself on technique and the play gives the impression of being a technical *tour de force* which he enjoyed for its own sake. The technique is always under deliberate, almost cool control and inwardly related to the meaning which he has to express. In the play are the swiftness and the variety, the interpenetration of the parts of time and space, and the added burden which his 'giant power' of compelling presentation imposes. The effects are at once those of rapid impressionism and a careful lapidary enrichment. The play has ambiguity which invests everything in Egypt equally with all things in Rome. It is central to his experience in the play. Another feature of his technique which makes for the impression of uniqueness of the play is in the methods of character-portrayal which he seems to be innovating. Throughout the play we are forced by Shakespeare himself not to take comment at the face value of character.

Character issues from mutable and ambiguous flux of things. There is something deliquescent in the reality behind the play. To the full display of the deliquescence, not only each judgment and each aspect pointed to but each character is necessary, always on the condition that no single one of these is taken as final. Antony and Cleopatra are presented in three ways; the reported speech about them, their own speech about themselves, and their action. Each of these is in tension against the others, and makes its continuous and insistent claim on the spectator, but they oppose to each other, so that they have to mix in the spectator's eye. But under the bewildering oscillations of scene, the interpenetration of different times and places, the co-presence of opposed judgments, and the innumerable opportunities for radical choice to intervene, there is a deliberate logic which gives the play its compact unity of effect and makes its movement a sign of angelic strength. It is the logic of a peculiarly Shakespearean 'dialectic'. The meaning of 'dialectic', of course, is not post-Hegelian. Opposites are juxtaposed, mingled, and married; then from the very union which seems to pomise strength, dissolution flows. To approach to Shakespeare's meaning of the play, the process of this dialectic, that is to say, the central process of the play, must be traced. Ambivalence runs through everything in the play, and at its heart is the deliquescent reality. This incarnates itself most completely in the persons of the hero and heroine. The first scene sufficiently illustrates all the main features of the play—swinging ambivalence, the alternatives and ambiguities proposed to choice, the speed and oscillation, the interpenetration of Rome and Egypt, and present and past, and above all the dialectic marriage of contraries and their dissolution through union. To have any judgment at all, therefore, is to choose apparently one of the contraries, for instance, either the judgment of the soldiers at the beginning of the scene or the lover's own self-assessment that immediately follows. Either judgment is not right; and the deliquescent truth is neither in them nor between them, but contains both. This play can be regarded as Shakespeare's critique of judgment. Antony is throughout the most complex meeting-ground for the opposites; he can understand and respond to the appeal of Rome as mush as that of Egypt. Rome is the world and Egypt is the Flesh. Rome is the world of politics and policy. Shakespeare uses contraries to give some sort of rational account of the irrationals involved in this world. Though the commons are always in motion, do irrationals, and are despised by the great men, the great men themselves behave exactly as the commons do. That is the general law: judgment is a kind of accommodation to the irrational. The self-destruction of things that rot with motion which their own nature and situation dictate is pervasive throughout the play. Octavia is one of Shakespeare's minor triumphs in the play, but not as a 'character-study'. She is the opposite of Cleopatra. The effect of her presence is that she gives a symmetrical form to the main relation of the play. She is a focal point of the contraries and transparent to the reality behind the play. Octavius Caesar is the supreme term of the world of Rome, and, seen only as a 'character', half his significance is lost. In him we have aids external to the play which help towards a clear focus

on what Shakespeare intends by him. He falls recognizably into Shakespeare's studies of the 'politician'. He is a notably developed figure of a pure and simple Machiavellian, part of the structure of things, and 'Rome' itself. He is a kind of impersonal embodiment and more like a cold and universal force than warm-blooded man. In the last act Rome and Egypt confront each other singly. The tension is maintained throughout the last act by the doubt as to whether Cleopatra will accept submission or take her own life. The point of the play, however, is not the decision taken but the dubieties and ambivalences from which choice springs—the barren choice that only hastens its own negation. Rome, from nature of things, can never admit a compromise, and Egypt, equally, can never submit to its contrary; so Cleopatra kills herself. As Caesar impersonates the world, so she incarnates the Flesh. Shakespeare dexterously constructs an account of the human universe consisting of only these two terms. The dichotomy is not resolvable unless we are willing to take the delusions of either party as a resolution——the 'universal peace' of Caesar or the Egypt-beyond-the-grave of Antony and Cleopatra. The Flesh is also the female, and Cleopatra is Eve and Woman, and also Circe. Though Shakespeare gives her everything of which he is capable, he does not give his final and absolute approval to her. The tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra* is, above all, the tragedy of Antony. His human stature is too great to express himself both in Rome and Egypt, and it is imposible for him to bestride both the worlds like a Colossus and keep his balance. The opposites play through and with him, and finally destroy him. His tragedy is neither the downfall of the soldier in the middle-aged infatuate as stressed by the earlier criticism nor the epiphany of the soldier in the lover and reassurance that the death is not the end as asserted in the recent criticism. The meaning of the tragedy is Shakespearean 'dialectic'—in the deliquescent reality that expresses itself through contraries. Once we lose sight of the controlling structure of the opposites which hold the play, we are at the mercy of any random selection of its abundant occasions. Both the Roman condemnation of the lovers and the sentimental reactions in their favour are equally mistaken. To claim a 'redemption' motif in their love is an even violent error. There is no so-called 'love-romanticism' in the play, and Antony and Cleopatra's love is not asserted as a 'final value'. The whole tenor of the play, in fact, moves in an opposite direction. The fourth and fifth Acts of the play are not epiphanies; they are ends moved to that process whereby things rot themselves with motion—unhappy and bedizened and sordid, streaked with the mean, the ignoble, the contemptible. The tone of the play has the sense of ripe-rottenness, and hopelessness, the vision of self-destruction, the feeling of strenuous frustration and fevered futility. This owes to the excision of the theme of Nature from the tragedy. Also on this account the real scope of the play is felt small in spite of its outward vastness. The theme of Rome and Egypt is also simpler than the theme of Nature, and the trick of using the contraries is relatively an easy way of organizing the universe. This play is apparently isolated from Shakespeare's plays that have gone before. He shows his surprising capacity for self-renewal in the play. There is something in it that is

new and exciting and profound. In it he is making his own adjustments to the new Jacobean tastes. The play is his study of Mars and Venus—the presiding deities of Baroque society, painted for us again and again on the canvasses of his time. It shows us Virtue, the root of the heroic in man, turned merely into *virtu*. It is the tragedy of the destruction of man, the creative spirit, in perverse war and insensate love—the two complementary and opposed halves of a discreating society. This discreating society leads to the society which Beaumont depicted.(45)

The above is the epitome of Danby's criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra*. His criticism is excellent but it seems to be a little too severe on Cleopatra and treats the love-theme too lightly.

Willard Farnham has a profound knowledge of medieval and Elizabethan literature and uses a historical method of approach to Shakespeare. He calssifies Shakespeare's tragedies into three tragic worlds—the early, the middle, and the last. Of course, *Antony and Cleopatra* is placed in the last tragic world. The characteristics of that world explained by him are that the heroes and heroines are self-centred and much bent upon involving themselves in tragedy through the flaws in their characters, but they have nobility so inseparable from their flaws that an admirer of that nobility may wonder whether he is not admiring the flaws themselves even while he sees that they are flaws——in short the heroes and heroines of Shakespeare's last tragic world show paradoxical nobility. In Farnham's opinion Antony, therefore, shows the paradoxical nobility and by his side stands Cleopatra as a companion study in deeply flawed yet somehow admirable humanity, and their taints and honours 'wage equal' so that they may be counted rare spirits despite of their faults and folly. Both Antony and Cleopatra are evaluated by Farnham as finished studies in paradoxical nobility. He induces this view of paradoxical nobility also from the background of Elizabethan literature and the sources of *Antony and Cleopatra*. He quotes as its illustrations Chapman's works, Plutarch's *Lives*, the Countess of Pembroke's *Antonius*, and Samuel Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra*, and compares Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with them and makes clear the paradoxical nobility of the hero and heroine of the tragedy. According to his explanation Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra have regal greatness of spirit—Antony is born to lead men and to make crown and crownets wear his livery; while Cleopatra is born to assume queenly position and to make the world accept her as royally magnificient—and mainly on this account of their regal nature, which Shakespeare takes care to express, this play is not a drama in which the world is well lost for love (the world is as nothing to the losers when compared to their love), but a drama in which the world finally lost to Octavius is implied by Shakespeare to weigh very much in the balance against their love. In other words this tragedy is organized by Shakespeare not as a drama of the love of Antony and Cleopatra, but as a drama of the rise and fall of Antony in the struggle for world rulership after his meeting Cleopatra, and in the organization of this tragedy as Antony's struggle for world rulership (of a pyramidal form showing a rise and fall in his fortunes) a psychological drama of love (of a rising form to

the end in action) is developed by Shakespeare. Farnham insists that the drama of love also shows paradoxical nobility, because their love, like themselves, never ceases to be deeply flawed. He says that Antony and Cleopatra are voluptuaries, which fact is, in large part, their paradox, because to understand them thus is to understand much that is admirable in them as well as much that is not admirable; from beginning to end Cleopatra has the instincts of a strumpet and Antony is capable of being a fool in her hands because of his desire for her; but, as the drama unfolds, it shows them to be much more than the typical soldier broken down by debauchery and the typical wanton in whose arms such men perish, and it also shows them as apparently incapable of being their greater selves except through being their lesser selves. Farnham analyses their characters and illustrates their faults as paradoxes. He also makes clear that in closing scenes of this tragedy Shakespeare pays his compliments with marked even-handness to the two traditions—the one that Cleopatra was really moved to end her life by concern for herself and her honour, and the other that she was really moved to suicide by love for Antony; and by using effectively almost everything to be found in either tradition Shakespeare seems to have done his poetic best both to make us feel that, though the full achievement of Cleopatra is a dark matter, she attains to a noble aspiration in love while she does not attain to a noble constancy in love, and to make us sense in the 'immortal longings' of Cleopatra a paradox to cap together other paradoxes in her character. Farnham's inference is that for Cleopatra Elysium is to be an eternity of faithfulness in love and yet also to be an eternity of delightful competition for kisses. (46)

As mentioned above, Farnham substitutes paradoxical nobility in this tragedy for evil and villainy by which ruin is brought about to the heroes and heroines in Shakespeare's early and middle tragic worlds and explains the essential characteristics of the tragedy almost solely by it, but his interpretation seems to be a little strained.

Robert Speaight says that this tragedy has not a very clear line of dramatic development; the scenes are short, the point of vision is constantly shifting, and the impression is one of movement round and round, backwards and forwords, and not of progress ordered to a climax. He insists that the Nemesis of Antony's surrender to lust is not the point of the play, for if we think in terms of Antony's tragedy alone and try to make his tragedy conform to a classical definition, we find it awkward to face the fifth Act in which only his heroic and fallen shadow is left to keep Cleopatra company. Speaight makes much of the love theme in the play. He notices that in this play time and place do not matter and its dimensions are not temporal but eternal, not local but spatial—on a lower plane we see the conflict of East and West, and we are present at the suicide of the human spirit in a Pyrrhic triupmh of imperialism on a higher plane, to which Shakespeare is leading us all the time with a magnetic imagery of fire and air; and we are lifted to an empyrean of pure glory, a world beyond good and evil, where souls couch on flowers. But Shakespeare does not neglect the realities of human life, which a sovereign poetry and a paradoxcial purity of motive are eventually to trans-

form. Speaight says that planes are important in the play and not places; and this is a problem to the modern playhouse, for the play most requires to recover the freedom of the Elizabethan platform-stage. In Speaight's view, this play is not only achievement in itself without parallel in the poetry of the world, but it marks also a capital point of development in Shakespeare's mind and art. It would be inaccurate to call it a play of transition; for it is not tentative, indecisive, and incomplete, as a play of transition may suggest, but is affirmative as only a supreme masterpiece can be. Of all Shakespeare's plays it is most incomprehensible apart from an understanding of its imagery, the range of which spans heaven and earth, the dimension of infinity. The drama is inherent in poetry, which is not a decoration of the drama. The situation of the play is spatial and our imagination is stretched to the limits of classical geography. The technique of Shakespeare's presentation is clearly seen in the dexterity of showing us the hero and heroine, not only through their own words and actions, but through the eyes of others; these viewpoints are so cunningly juxtaposed that they seem to be not successive but simultaneous, and the final impression, for all its kaleidoscopic contradictions, is single and not diffused. The hero and heroine become one, so that in the end we think Antony and Cleopatra, as we think of *The Phoenix and The Turtle*, that most mysterious and profound of Shakespare's poems, 'fled in a natural flame from hence'. Shakespeare is here concerned with something much deeper than character-drawing. His task is to construct a hypostasis which at one moment shall seem to be compounded of mere dross and at another of purest gold; a hypostasis where the dross shall be miraculously transformed. Speaight, moreover, remarks that this tragedy contains comic elements so many that the play is kept suspended somewhere between the tragic and the comic muse, for instance, by the contrast between the gipsy and the Egyptian queen of Cleopatra; that Antony's defeat at Actium is, for him, the death of honour and the prelude of his entrance into the paradise of Love; and that Enobarbus represents a type of fidelity as seen in Shakespeare, and the parting of the ways to foolish allegiance or to wise renegation is perhaps the only purely tragic thing in the play, and his death is Shakespeare's most striking admission that the noblest part of our inherited nature is flawed and that reason is not enough——it is a reluctant judgment on the natural man. According to Speaight, in the final act is made clear the meaning of the play which goes far beyond morality. In other plays Shakespeare had taken politics seriously; he had believed in the sacredness of order, and in the rights and duties of royalty. But in this play he believes in love; in love beyond good and evil; in love that purifies its own degradations; in love that is necessarily at odds with actuality and can only be perfected in death; in love that transforms its objects by the force of its own intensity; in love that, unlike politics and war, is beyond the hostility of fortune. Before death all is equal; the beggar and Caesar are equal. In the new daylight of this equality the elaborate constructions of hierarchy, with their attendant politics, will quietly dissolve. The contest between Caesar and Cleopatra is the last duel between the secular and the transcendental view of life. Speaight notices

that the poetry of this play takes hold upon the humblest images (beggars or babes), though it has scaled the splendours of the universe, and even in the apotheosis of the final scene realism will have its place. It is a poor fellaheen (at the humblest scale of human being) who brings the instruments of liberty; and when all has been royally accomplished, Cleopatra's crown is 'awry'. Speaight also notices that Caesar's intention to lead her in triumph through the Roman streets is the most unchivalrous notion, and imperialism becomes vulgar; in Caesar's world there is no motive beyond avarice and acquisition, and no triumph without pride. This forms a striking contrast to Cleopatra's dream of Antony. According to Speaight's explanation the asp carries more than its mortal sting; it bears the salt and savour of all that natural life whose passionate child Cleopatra had been. The asp is very much more than a theatrical convenience; it is the symbol of nature reclaiming one part of its own to the stillness of impulse and the arrest of the menacing years. But the part that is already' fire and air' is untouchable. In this part, Speaight says, is the end of contradiction and division; and the crucifying dialectic of human nature is resolved, not in terms of psychology or philosophy, but by the sheer, superabundant power of the poetic image; not in terms of religious dogma, but in the triumph, beyond all reason or analysis, of a transcendent humanism. It is, Speaight concludes, the most dazzling, even if it is not the most profound, of Shakespeare's visions, and it would never quite come to him again; through it he asserts, without either moral censure or romantic compromise, his belief in the resurrection of the flesh.(47)

Speaight's criticism of this tragedy is not only historical, but also aesthetical and philosophical. It is excellent and not prejudiced and shows the merits of this tragedy rightly.

Brents Stirling vindicated *Antony and Cleopatra* from G.B. Shaw's charge that the tragedy must needs be as intolerable to the true Puritan as it is vaguely distressing to the ordinary healthy citizen, because Shakespeare makes sexual infatuation a tragic theme and strains all his huge command of rhetoric and stage pathos to give a theatrical sublimity to the wretched end of the business of the sybarite and the typical wanton and to persuade foolish spectators that the world was well lost by them. In order to prove that Shakespeare does not express moral nihilism on a sentimental plane in the tragedy, Willard Farnham shows historically that the paradox of tragic greatness and intensified flaw becomes increasingly prominent in Shakespeare's last tragedies, and J.F. Danby points to a dialectic within the play in which no single attitude, such as "autotoxic exaltation", becomes dominant. But in order to meet the issue which Shaw's criticism raised, Stirling insists that the play is a satirical tragedy. He analyzes the basic device of exposition of the play and shows that Shakespeare did not "see life truly and think about it romantically" as Shaw said and that there is no meretricious sublimity cast even over the ending of the play: it is engagingly satirical throughout, but satire is combined effectively with other qualities and it is a great tragedy. At the beginning of the play Antony claims tragic status for love amidst the ruins of empire. But the satire is directed at his claim. In the course of the

play Antony exhibits self-knowledge, but his revelation of it is depicted so spuriously, self-consciously, or even comically as to redeem him from solemnity. He sometimes shows dignity such as shown at the news of his wife's death, but the reason for this lies not so much in his code of honesty as in his manner, his style, which governs his really impressive moments throughout the play. His stature does not depend on his triumviral status, his peerless grand passion, or his repetitive and almost priggish self-examination, but upon such manners as the above-mentioned which evoke respect for his tact and worldly intelligence and suggest his self-understanding. So the "woe or wonder" becomes quite subordinate to the effects of this kind in evoking tragic response. *Savoir-faire* in the hero functions as a major element of the tragedy. When it sets him above satire, he gains stature. But after allowing him his recovery, Shakespeare quickly revives the satirical tone and considers the urbane opportunism of Antony or Enobarbus to lack ultimate wisdom. Antony gains his stature through contrast with Octavius in the session and can quietly rise both to the occasion and to a plane of dignity, but quickly the other Antony offsets him. Both the admirers and the detracters of the celebrated lines on Cleopatra's barge seems to be equally wrong, for the sublimity of the passage is modified by deliberate anticlimax. By the end of Act II the satirical and affirmative elements of the play are present in excellent proportion and the fortunes of Antony also rest in balance. But Act III abruptly brings his fall in keeping with the satirical and realistic tone previously set. The play begins with a slow alternation between grandeur and ignominy, and as it advances this tempo increases until the end of Act IV, and it slows and stops there. The sentiment of Cleopatra's remarks at Antony's death is neither selfish nor genuine. There is a new Cleopatra, but the old one must still be heard. She has become the chorus of conventional tragedy even to the extent of rendering inversely the doctrine of "admiration". After invoking Antony as the "noblest of men" she bestows the nobility upon her coterie. Act V, Scene i presents a galaxy of stock comments upon tragic stature and tragic flaw, and also the *de casibus* theory with the mirror for magistrates. The retinue of Octavius has been converted into a chorus and has presented the subject of tragedy in every standard detail, and then Cleopatra promptly continues the theme in Scene ii with a vision of Antony's stature and flaw. Dolabella, however, reduces her illusion in a single, well-turned line, "Gentle madam, no". It is one of the shortest dramatic commentaries and its choric nature is warranted. Dolabella denies the scale of grandeur she finds in Antony. Realism is allowed to have its demonstration at a key point of the tragedy. We should not interpret the last act as a simplified denial of tragic dignity and say that Cleopatra's fall is unmoving, but it is unperceptive to see it as the august event she desires. In this tragedy when the protagonists self-consciously assume a flawed stature, the role is ironically denied them; when they are simply themselves they achieve a subduced dignity. The dignity, however, is qualified by a satire which constantly keeps the tragedy within bounds of moral realism. Satire and seriousness are in continual suspension. The satire is directed constantly at the claims of

tragic stature which the protagonists assert for themselves. The suspension of opposites is consistently carried through to the end; in the Seleucus scene Cleopatra's claim of the *de casibus* role for herself is comic, while in Caesar's lines her posthumous assumption of the role is not comic at all. Neither of the concluding notes is controlling. Each supplies context for the other and the balanced result agrees with a tone set throughout: anything other than blend of satire and tragedy would have destroyed a quality present from the beginning. The above is the summary of Stirling's analysis and interpretation of the tragedy. Stirling says that the tragedy may contain its own answer to the condemnation of moralists in the Shaw tradition. According to his opinion Antony's obsession is entirely of this world, clearly understandable, and convincing because it is a human weakness. Antony never changes, for he knows himself from the beginning as he drifts to his 'wretched end'. Shakespeare certainly understood the role in tragedy of the flawed hero and accepted a relationship between social rank and tragic stature, but when the highly placed hero becomes the military sensualist to lose battles in a ludicrous manner and when his self-perceived imperfection becomes a doting satyriasis, the quality of transcended flaw becomes uncertain; it becomes doubly uncertain after Cleopatra likens Antony's sensuality to the dolphin rising above its element. The spectacle of Antony may be both colourful and pitiful. Mere suspension of moral judgment does not induce or account for the tragic response, for it in no way implies necessarily that the hero has asserted value or dignity in his fall. In this tragedy Shakespeare offers the protagonists who combine impressive qualities with an artless and self-conscious claim to the "nobleness of life", which is satirized almost to the end. Moreover, he uses some of the traditional concepts of tragedy ironically as themes for choric dialogue. Shakespeare sees tragic insight as a quality of the play, and only secondarily, although often, as a quality of the protagonist. This means that Shakespeare's tragic perception is the function of the tragedy and not of its hero. The dignity of perception underlying a Shakespearian tragedy and communicated with art to an audience either Elizabethan or modern is its essential quality. This tragedy, therefore, is in no sense anomalous, for its quality is a satirical tragedy. It is soberly honest and sympathetic, and it contains great art. It has the stature, whether or not the hero attains greatness, and it, not Antony or Cleopatra, embodies the ultimate insight intended for an audience. It asserts human dignity and value with a superb expression of ironical truth. The audience must perceive events not in the manner of Antony or Cleopatra but of Shakespeare. (48)

The above is the outline of Stirling's criticism of the tragedy. His criticism is excellent as an abstract theory. But he is worried so much with Shaw's deprecation of this tragedy and tries to refute it so eagerly that he seems to have overlooked some impressive points of the drama, for instance, the charm of Cleopatra's character.

M. D. H. Parker says that Shakespeare tries, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, to see what happens to the majority of mankind whose suffering is not unbearable and whose sin is not great; the play is neither cool, nor disturbing in the

main action, and the hero and the heroine are saved, both in the way and to the degree that many people are, through a surrender to love as they know it, frankly sexual, but not entirely selfish. Parker considers that it is not here a question of whether Antony was right or wrong to prefer love to honour or love to expediency; it is rather that in a choice not wholly evil the good that he chose became better, both in Cleopatra and in himself. The 'facts' of *Antony and Cleopatra* were the attested prologue to the Augustan peace, which, the tradition had taught Shakespeare, was the stage for the drama of Christ. In Parker's view, Antony's end is merciful as well as just, for Antony is prodigal to the last of the stuff of his huge spirit, and he is a mine, not merely of the material bounty by which he crowns Enobarbus's turpitude with gold, but also of a natural generosity, not far from the charity of the kingdom of God. Antony does not rail at men's bad faith, but writes 'gentle adieus and greetings'; and regrets that his 'fortunes have corrupted honest men'. Although he is often enraged only against love's treachery, he changes little, but he survives, more fully himself, whole and human in the face of death. As for Cleopatra Parker says that she is explicitly improved in the play and changes her character, and she suffers like Antony, but her suffering is pathetic rather than tragic. Parker also says that Enobarbus is a tragic character entirely of Shakespeare's invention; who betrays the virtues of loyalty and gratitude, high in the hierarchy of his values; and runs away that he may be a 'wise man' with the result of becoming a fool again; and achieves a repentance which would grace a saint. (49)

Walter Oakeshott compares Antony in Shakespeare's play with Antonius of Plutarch's *Lives*, and from the difference between Plutarch's interpretation of the character and that given by Shakespeare he gets a close view of Shakespeare's conception of tragedy, especially of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Plutarch does not symathize with Antonius, though he cannot but approve of Antonius' great courage, bounty and liberality, and the loyalty he won from his subordinates. Plutarch dislikes Antonius' 'abominal life', and his distaste for Antonius' riotous life is the *leitmotif* that repeats itself in his account of Antonius. For him Antonius' passion for Cleopatra is the climax of Antonius' follies. Plutarch's distaste for Antonius' way of life is not overcome by his sympathy until his account reaches the *dénouement*. On the contrary Shakespeare sympathizes with Antony. His passion for Cleopatra may in one sense be madness, but it is something also of incomparable splendour for the poet. It is peerless and transcendent, looking beyond the world and even death. Antony proclaims that his love is immortal, and Cleopatra says that her 'longings are immortal' as she dies. So their relationship in Shakespeare's play is extraordinarily different from that described in Plutarch's *Lives*. Antony is said to be the descendant of Hercules by both the writers. But Shakespeare weaves this myth of the descent into the texture of the play, while Plutarch makes it a simple paragraph in his story. Shakepeare makes Antony a great captain, while Plutarch treats him as a reckless libertine. Shakespeare endows him with noble qualities as shown in Enobarbus' words. Oakeshott supposes from the above facts that first it is necessary for

the play that we should admire Antony, and secondly Shakespeare divined the prejudices of the Stoic Plutarch and saw through them to a truer Antony. The second thing of the supposition is a matter of intuition. But the first thing brings us to the essence of Shakespearean tragedy—Shakespearean tragedy ends with the triumph of the tragic hero. Plutarch describes Antonius' death cowardly and miserably done, while Shakespeare makes both Antony and Cleopatra accept death and triumph over it. This element of acceptance can be found in some degree in all the great tragedies of Shakespeare. But this sense of final triumph—the tragic acceptance—is much recognized in this tragedy. Oakeshott asserts that this makes this tragedy in some ways the greatest of all the tragedies of Shakespeare.(50)

Franklin M. Dickey studies the Elizabethan views of love in detail, and says that the Elizabethan playgoers come to theatre expecting to see love as a source of crosses and complications in comedy and of violent death in tragedy. He argues they wept over the tragic deaths of those who loved not wisely but too well, but unlike Hegelians they did not consider such an end as "the crown of life". In order to see what Shakespeare's audience might have expected when they attended the first performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Dickey begins his survey with the familiar accounts of the lovers in classical antiquity from Cicero to Sidonius. According to the classical view of them, they are shameless voluptuaries, although generally Antony appears nobler than his mistress. Dickey draws the conclusion that from the classical tradition the Elizabethan audience might have learned how to judge Antony and Cleopatra: whatever virtues they had, they were notorious for their lust and extravagance. Next Dickey pursues the story through its medieval modifications. The medieval world embroidered the legend of Antony and Cleopatra freely. But nearly all the major accounts of Cleopatra before Chaucer made Cleopatra a typical instance of a woman who lived for pleasure and died unhappily—she was made a moral *exemplum* to warn others. For instance, in Boccaccio Cleopatra is a cruel and designing woman, and Antony under her influence becomes voluptuous and idle; and ever ready for carousing, he lets himself by unbridled lust be dragged into so great infamy. After he has killed himself, she tries in vain to seduce Caesar, and applies the asps to her breasts and dies. But Chaucer alone makes Cleopatra a martyr of love and adds a vigorous medieval version of the Battle of Actium and describes her self-immolation for love. The medieval tradition which the Elizabethans inherited generally follows the classical tradition but adds its own Christian moralization; for most of the medieval Cleopatras, save for Chaucer's, are very wicked and carnal, and these carnal sinners are punished by God's justice for their crime. Thus the Elizabethan readers received the opinion condemning the lovers for their foul and abominable lust from classical and medieval times. The Elizabethans cited the story of the lovers regularly as examples of how not behave. For instance Spenser writes that the lovers exemplify the sins of lust and pride. For the Elizabethans Antony appeared variously as a man feminized by lust, as a drunkard, and as a man dominated by women, while Cleopatra was worse—she served as an example of the sins

of incest, lust, and prodigality, and taught men to beware of wicked women. The Elizabethans generally pointed to their love as destructive, not only of their own happiness but that of their followers and subjects as well, instead of seeing Antony and Cleopatra as patterns of nobility and a deathless love. The above is the epitome of Dickey's historical survey of the story of Antony and Cleopatra. He also explains the characteristics of both medieval tragedy and mature Renaissance tragedy. Medieval tragedy generally follows the pattern of Boccaccio's *De Casibus* in picturing the fall of men and women of high estate, shows the vicissitude of fortune and the instability of earthly prosperity, and teaches contempt of the world. Mature Renaissance tragedy attempts to deal with the problem of evil by linking men's fortunes to their passions. Tragedy was seen as an imitation of an action which might both teach and delight: the delight comes from the liveliness of the imitation, while the teaching is to be seen in the plot which shows by example what happens to those whose passions carry them off. In these respects Antony and Cleopatra, Dickey argues, were the ideal dramatic material for tragedy.

Dickey, moreover, makes a historical survey of tragedies to which the story of Antony and Cleopatra is material. French Senecans handled the story for didacticism and struggled to show the lovers as both very wicked and pitiful in their dramas. Êtienne Jodelle's *Cleopatre Captive* (1552) shows the themes of individual responsibility for passionate action and of the harsh fate which is inexorably bound up with it. Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (1578) tries to harmonize the themes of guilt and blind fate. The Countess of Pembroke's translation of it is *Antonius* (1592) and had much influence upon English Senecans. Daniel's *Cleopatra* and *A Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius* (a poem, 1598), Samuel Brandon's *The Virtuous Octavia* (1598), and *Caesar's Revenge* (*c.* 1606) are all Senecan. They follow classical and medieval authorities and Elizabethan moral philosophers in regarding Antony as a picture of extravagance, gluttony, and intemperance, and Cleopatra as a wanton and sorceress who employed all conscious arts of love to keep Antony ensnared. But the English Senecans alter the basic morality of Plutarch to fit Renaissance concepts of ethics and politics. They emphasize the moral turpitude which has brought the lovers low and preach the necessity of controlling passion, and at the same time they relate the story successfully to a larger plan of morality and politics. They make us feel pity for the lovers by penitent and pathetic accounts of their miseries before they die. Cleopatra is made more pure in death by them than by Shakespeare. Shakespeare's queen, therefore, has never reached the moral stature of either Garnier's or Daniel's penitent queen, although Shakespeare's queen, of course, is more magnificient and eloquent. In short Dickey's explanation is as foollows: all the Senecans as playwrights deal in some degree with the theme of fortune and write at length on the unstable position of the great ones of this earth, but at the same time they all censure the love of Antony and Cleopatra; though the medieval theme of the fall of princes still dominates Jodelle's play, Garnier and Daniel make fortune clearly dependent upon moral choice and conform their plays more closely to Renaissance literary theory. Shake-

speare has moved still further from the medieval concept by minimizing the part of fortune in the tragedy and by dealing much more with the dire consequences of indecorum on the part of the prince and the terrible end of excessive passion.

Dickey thus makes clear the historical background of this tragedy and refutes the criticism which emphasizes the transcendent passion of the imperial lovers and sees the play as an almost mystical exaltation of passion and Antony and Cleopatra as canonized martyrs of love. He says that it is clear from both the tradition and the play itself that passion causes the downfall of the royal lovers—it is clear, from the actions and statements supported by the traditional characterization of the lovers with which both Shakespeare and his audience were familiar, that Antony and Cleopatra are examples of rulers who throw away a kingdom for lust, and this is how they appear in the play, in spite of the pity and terror which Shakespeare makes us feel; and he says that the play is not beyond good and evil and their world is not well lost. Dickey explains the love story as it appears in Act I and II. At the beginning of the play Cleopatra enters the stage followed by eunuchs. They are, if not symbols, singularly appropriate to the scene and the action which follows, for one of the themes which recurs in the play is that Cleopatra unmans Antony. Dickey interprets the beginning of the play as Shakespeare's both implicit and explicit introduction of the traditional themes associated with the lovers: Antony's disregard of empire for pleasure, Cleopatra's dominance over his spirit, her conscious artistry as amorist, the effeminacy and luxuriousness of the Egyptian court, and Antony's decline from the decorum of man and ruler. He says that action, imagery, and setting in these openning scenes all serve to emphasize the traditional Elizabethan view of the story in which Antony is the example of a man made weak by his affection. Shakespeare shows in them Cleopatra's "fetters" and Antony's "dotage", and not "the crown of life" or the splendours of a 'transcendent passion'. Dickey feels little tenderness at the lovers' parting but ironically sees Cleopatra's attempt to keep Antony captive. He assumes that Octavius was regarded as the ideal prince by the Elizabethans. At the beginning of Act II Pompey recalls Cleopatra's medieval reputation as sorceress. From the lines of "moody food/of us that trade in love" Dickey interprets her as a professional lover. He presumes that Shakespeare's point is to describe her both magnificient and destructive. The images of food and feasting are repeated constantly in the play and they are associated with lust and gluttony in the Elizabethan audience. Along with her lust and allurement Shakespeare shows her faults, and as the action progresses the flaws in the love become evident and Antony's defection from himself grows more and more ominous until at the end both lovers are victims of the passion they have lived by. Shakespeare makes Cleopatra almost a symbol of willful lust in middle age and at the same time he shows her as a cruel, tyrannical, and prideful character. The whole incident of her rage at the messenger is Shakespeare's invention and reveals a part of the perturbation which the Elizabethans found to be the inevitable consequence of excessive passion. Dickey interprets her unquiet

mind as part of her payment for the guilty love. Dickey also explains pity and terror at the end of their action. He says that Shakespeare indeed makes us feel a very real pity and terror at their downfall, but a well-established tradition that has censured them as an example of God's judgments is still inherent in the play. Antony's real downfall begins with his dismissal of Octavia whom the Renaissance, as Dickey asserts, saw as a symbol of faithful love. For the Elizabethan audience Octavius Caesar is a minister of divine justice and the fortunes of Antony and Cleopatra are linked to their deserts. The Renaisance God had many ways to punish sin. An unquiet mind was one of them and the automatic effect of vice which no transgressor might flee. In Shakespeare's morality wrongdoers suffer in mind or in fortune, usually in both, as shown in all his plays. We can see the automatic consequences of lust, intemperance, and love—the punishment of unquiet mind and declined fortunes. After the defeat of the battle of Actium Shakespeare for the first time introduces the theme of despair, which increases as Antony's life draws to its end, and also his failure to observe the decorum of prince and of soldier becomes the theme of his self-reproach, but Shakespeare gives the self-recrimination to Antony alone and not to Cleopatra who never measures herself against any moral standard. According to Dickey she teeters even on the edge of surrendering Antony to Octavius. When the ambassador tells her that Octavius knows that she follows Antony not through love but fear, she jumps at the chance. They both lose not only their kingdoms and their lives, but both suffer from the fact that their love turned to ashes before the play is over. His passion becomes hatred after his final defeat and she is haunted by his furious hope that Octavia will mock her in the Roman triumph. Dickey warns us against the assumption that Antony's momentary vision of Elysium is identical with Shakespeare's view of love. Cleopatra's love, at last schooled by Antony's death, becomes more than a mere combination of lust and cunning, and she at last discovered the meaning of faithfulness. Her resolution to die is thrilling in its rhetorical magnificence, and inspires us with pity and terror as well as with admiration. But her motives for death remain mixed and are not merely pure love; her memories of Antony alternate with visions of her humiliation in Rome. In spite of her resolution to die she clings to life and rages at Seleucus who tells Octavius that she has declared only half her wealth. The above-mentioned are chiefly the characteristic points of Dickey's interpretation of this tragedy.

From his interpretation Dickey offers his criticism that *Antony and Cleopatra* remains one of the most astonishing acts of creation in Shakespearean drama. For Shakespeare is always shifting his viewpoint so that each magnificient wayward gesture is countered either by a glimpse of its futility or by a sober estimate of its cost both to the lovers and to the universe—so we are left feeling that the most magnificient love affair the world has ever known blazed like a fire in the night and like a great fire left sad ashes in the morning. Dickey says that the sensuality and luxury of the play, its scale and size, shock us by a paradox, and the *contemptus mundi* which other playwrights preach in vain follows upon our awe at the sight of the most

glittering world conceivable lying in ruins.(51)

Dickey's method and criticism are unique and excellent but they contain many problems.

Harold S. Wilson traces Shakespeare's development as a writer of tragedy by a comparative and historical method and assumes that Shakespeare produced the tragedies which invokes Christian ideas on the one hand and the tragedies based on pagan naturalistic conception on the other hand. But in his view, Shakespeare continually strove towards a comprehensive and unified tragic interpretation of human life, and this synthesis is reached by *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra.* According to Wilson's explanation, in *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare makes some effort of imagination in setting himself historically back into the milieu of thought and belief to which the characters and events belong and at the same time in avoiding the absurdity of attributing Christian ideas or sentiments to the characters, and he composes the most comprehensive drama. It is the story of empire crossed with story of love: the high political destiny of empires and the love of a great commander and a great queen; the whole world as the setting of this love; the luxury and mystery of the East pitted against the disciplined power of the West. The love of man and woman extends the reaches of this world; it expands to fill the universe itself and transcends the limitations of the flesh to inhabit the universe of the spirit. Wilson says that it is a vision of love which glorifies man and woman, so that with all their faults of ambition and deceit, and sensuality and careless pride, the lovers yet rise to a tragic dignity, a 'tragic reconciliation' and serenity. And, symbolically, it is the ageless contrast and conflict of East and West: the East, with its mystery, its sensuous delights and rapturous abandonments, against the matter-of-fact, efficient, materially powerful West. Antony tries to mediate between the two and fails. But he gains his love; that is what finally counts in the play. Wilson considers the conflict of world empire and human love as the theme of the play, and Antony and Cleopatra together symbolize the conflict and its issue. The portrayal of Antony is enlarged to include all sides of the politician, the soldier, the world commander, and the lover. Wilson argues that it is needless to raise the question whether Cleopatra has indeed betrayed Antony to Octavius. He assumes that she has not, though constancy is not her strong point, by the reason that in the outcome Cleopatra is magnificently true to Antony. What is seen in Antony's last moments is that in his death he triumphs over his suspicion against her through his love and rises superior to Octavius and to the world that he has lost. His love has ultimately come to have the generosity of self-forgetfulness; and only his courage, magnanimity, and devotion are perceived in his end. Also in Cleopatra's tragic end there are development and refinement in her love. Wilson insists that *Antony and Cleopatra* and *King Lear* are the two most comprehensive of Shakespeare's tragic designs; and *Antony and Cleopatra,* dealing with the themes of a man's love for a woman and the ambition of empire, mediates between the themes of *Julius Caesar* and *Troilus and Cressida,* comprehending and reconciling in some sense their moods, the conflicts, and the value. Wilson says that the

value that emerges ultimately in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the value of human love as in *King Lear*, and the ultimate sense of Shakespeare's tragic vision is that human love is the greatest good of human life and that without it life is barren, trivial or evil. Shakespeare does not anywhere say so much, but he makes us understand and feel it so powerfully, tenderly, and grandly, that all other values, even justice, seem to be transcended or merged in this governing conception and feeling. And the love is represented as a developing action, and the action involves a conflict and resolution; and the conflict is between human love and world empire and occurs in two planes: in the opposition of Antony and Cleopatra to Octavius and also in the love of Antony for Cleopatra. The resolution of this latter conflict, as of the former, is that Antony sacrifices the world; and in this sacrifice Cleopatra joins him in a union which transcends material values, scorns the world in all its power and magnificence, and exists enduringly in the Elysium of true lovers. This enduring union is not attained without effort. But the lovers are two very fallible mortals. In them we can recognize something of ourselves. They triumph in their love, and in so far as we may be capable of sharing in their experience we triumph with them. In this play no Christian analogy is made explicit. Shakespeare avoids any issue involving specificially Christian doctrine, although the play contains issues the ethical solution of which reflects a Christian mode of feeling and belief. Shakespeare achieves the synthesis of Christian ideas and pagan naturalistic conception in the play. The final synthesis of Shakespearean tragedy is a reconciliation of other human values in that single value of human love which reflects a Christian attitude without any direct reference to Christian faith. The Shakespearean value of love is not the same as the Christian's love of God. It is not the heavenly love. Shakespeare's tragic matter is humanity, its passions, its blindness, its mistakes, and its pathos; yet out of these very elements, he fashions a design that issues in a vision of humanity ennobled, that reconciles us to our human kind with all its failings, and that shows us an unmistakable human dignity emerging triumphant out of the tragic catastrophe itself. But the final synthesis of the play, though not overtly Christian in its ethical scheme, is nevertheless ultimatley and distinctively Christian in the ethical attitude reflected. The play pays careful attention to its setting in pagan times and attributes to the actors only such beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments as are vouched for in the historical accounts of Plutarch. But the prevailing value of the play, that is to say, the triumphant vindication of the love of a man and a woman could be treated as thematically central in so dignified a medium as tragedy, though the ancients did not customarily consider human love——and especially love between sexes——as particularly beautiful or exalted. The exaltation of human love as a value is a Christian conception, deriving ultimately from the greater and inclusive conception of God's love and the Christian's love of God. The value of human love in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the normative value of natural ethics in a Christian view, and in this play it is to be seen emerging as the supreme value of Shakespearean tragedy. But the love that is thematically central in the play does not raise any

religious issue, because it is not the love of God but earthly love of man and woman. Wilson explains the emerging implication of the natural order seen in the light of Christian ethics, with reference to A. S. P. Woodhouse's lucid exposition of the orders of "nature" and "grace". According to the seventeenth-century testimony, man's relation to God might be considered in the three following ways. (1) In the state of nature man is governed by divinely instituted natural law, which operates not simply in man's nature but in all natures and is discoverable by the light of God-given natural reason. *This natural order* is as readily intelligible to reasonable pagans as to reasonable Christians, and thus it happens that Christian humanists of the Renaissance often couple the moral authority of the ancients with the ethical teachings of the Bible without any sense of incongruity or invidious contrast. (2) The natural order is subject to God's providential care and overflowing love, vouchsafed independently of man's merits or his awareness of that love: the power which ordains and orders all things to ultimate good. *This providential order* will be more apparent to the instructed Christian through loving faith rather than through reason. (3) Transcending the natural order (but also ratifying and completing it) is *the order of grace* to which man belongs as a supernatural being, the order which provides a remedy for man's fallen state when God's grace irresistibly turns the human will into the way of eternal salvation: a miraculous intervention without which the utmost human merit would be of no avail. Divine grace is indeed but a particular application of God's over-ruling providence——the application of that providence to man's fallen state ——but it is of cardinal importance for man and distinguished in his apprehension as an immediate spiritual intuition affecting the will, whereas the other operations of divine providence are quite independent of man's will or of his knowledge. Of these three orders——really a single order that is the divine love acting as an ordering principle in all things——Shakespeare deals only with the first two in his tragedies. With the third order the tragedies have nothing to do, for the order of grace concerns the specially religious experience of the Christian. Shakespeare projects a providential order of human experience seen in the light of Christian faith in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*——an order which is likewise the order of nature and in which the protagonists are but little aware of this ordering principle. The unawareness or the blindness and ignorance of the protagonists might be called the Christian irony of these plays, for Shakespeare's audience instructed in Christian doctrine was aware of the contrast between the ordering of events in the light of divine love and justice on one hand and the blind striving and frustrations of the human agents on the other. But if we consider the natural order, not with direct reference to a supernatural ordering power which we can apprehend only dimly, but indirectly with reference to the effect of that ordering power upon the natural order and upon natural ethics, we retain the human scope of the action while enlarging the limits of merely human virtue by means of a supernatural sanction. This is what happens in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *King Lear*. These plays achieve a harmony or synthesis, a transformation and refinement, of natural human

ethics through the triumphant emergence of a supremely Christian value, the value of the new law of human love which takes precedence of the old law of justice. The above is the synopsis of Wilson's explanation of the implication of the synthesis in *Antony and Cleopatra.* In the synthesis Wilson says that the love of man and woman is vindicated, ennobled and rendered beautiful in this tragedy. That is what is meant by "tragic reconciliation" in the play: the loss is inherent in the story and inevitable, but we are left with the sense that human life has been ennobled in and through the tragic experience. The tragedy as well as *King Lear* pays the highest tribute to the human spirit and represents Shakespeare's greatest achievement in tragedy. Technically the tragedy comprehends the full range of the means Shakespeare used to achieve a tragic effect. It interprets a sequence of historical event with close fidelity to its Plutarchan source and presents his imaginative conception of what the historical persons of the action were actually like. The principal persons become not merely dramatic projections of actual persons but also grand poetic symbols of earthly love. The play gives a remarkable impression that the people and events are, indeed, remote from us in time but actual and essentially contemporaneous, and, but for the heroic roles of the participants in some of the greatest events of human history, the lovers are man and woman found in every time and place, loving and fighting and suffering. The above is Wilson's criticism of this tragedy. He also asserts that Antony's love for Cleopatra is an essential part of his whole being——to love her is the man's very nature and something he cannot help doing——and it is not what we ordinarily mean by an act of choice, even if it brought his downfall. In Wilson's view the play represents a picture of the tragic limits of human life and human love; and it is tragic because men and women are mortal and incapable of supporting their most heroic aims. He, therefore, insists that in *Antony and Cleopatra* any talk about "errors" or "flaws" in the sense of the tragic *hamartia* of Aristotle's *Poetics* will give a misleading impression of the central conception of the play and of its effect; and the play is Shakespeare's faithful dramatic interpretation of history. (52)

(3) **Aesthetical Criticism**

Aesthetical critics places the greatest importance on the poetry of Shakespeare's plays, for they assume that poetry cannot be separated from drama in Shakespeare and so we cannot appreciate properly his play unless we perceive the poetical value and beauty of his plays by imaginative interpretation. They, therefore, pay attention more to his composition of poems than to anything else in his plays.

Caroline F. E. Spurgeon suggests that a poet, to some extent, reveals himself chiefly through images used in his poems: in the case of Shakespeare, he lays bare his own innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thoughts, attitudes of mind and beliefs, in and through the images. In her view, the most striking function of the imagery as background and undertone in Shakespeare's art is the part played by *recurrent* images in raising and sustaining emotion, in providing atmosphere, or in emphasizing a

theme. By recurrent imagery she means the repetition of an idea or picture in the images used in any one play, for instance, in *Hamlet* the conception of disease, and this secondary or symbolic imagery within imagery is a marked characteristic of Shakespeare's art——his most individual way of expressing his imaginative vision. This symbolism of the imagery in *Antony and Cleopatra* is subtle, and the atmosphere of the play is entirely different from those of his other plays; in it his imagination is a pure flame driving throughout, fanned by emotion, whose heat purifies, fuses and transmutes into gold all kinds of material, and this atmospheric heat creates the pictures, dominating and directing them. But the group of chief images peculiar to this play consists of images of the world, the firmament, and the ocean——vastness. The dominating note in the play is magnificence and grandeur, expressed and pictured by continually stimulating our imaginations to see the colossal figure of Antony. Antony himself touched this note in his royal love-making. Spurgeon exemplifies this by Cleopatra's lyrical elegies, adjectives to express the magnificence and scale of his bounty, and other examples from the play. This vastness is kept constantly before us especially by the use of the word 'world'. It is 42 times used in the play and is continually employed in a way which increases the sense of grandeur, power, and space, and which fills the imagination with the conception of beings so great that physical size is annihilated and the whole habitable globe shrinks in comparison with them. Antony's imagination moves on this same vast plane, and the pictures that he draws stimulate our vision and keep us ever conscious of the puny size of even the greatest of worldly princes, powers, and spaces, compared to his stupendous force. Especially is this so when power is slipping from him, and the tragedy is thus increased by contrast. The above is Spurgeon's criticism of this tragedy, for this recurring image definitely, potently, and profoundly influences Spurgeon in calling into being the emotional background of the play. She believes that the study of Shakespeare's imagery helps us to realize one of the many ways by which Shakespeare so magically stirs our emotions and excites our imagination, and sometimes even throws a fresh ray of light on the significance of the play concerned and on the way Shakespeare himself saw it. (53)

But she is primarily interested in the *content* of Shakespeare's images, and classifies and catalogues them systematically by a statistical method. She, therefore, commits an error in regarding all the images in a set to be equal among themselves. Her criticism may serve for our understanding the poetry of the play, but not for the appreciation of the drama itself.

Wolfgang H. Clemen notices the vast difference between the imagery in Shakespeare's earlier works and the imagery in his later tragedies. He regards this difference as an amazing and unique development of an element of poetic expression in Shakespeare, e. g. an evolution of imagery that cannot be found in any other poet. Clemen insists that Shakespeare wrote any of his passages for a certain situation and for a particular moment of his play, and before we can appreciate and appraise rightly any image or a sequence of images, we must first know what particular purpose the image serves when

it occurs. An image viewed outside of its context, therefore, is only half the image, and it gains full life and significance only from its context. In Shakespeare's later play it always has reference to the whole of a play and it appears as a cell in the organism of the play. Clemen says that in order to arrive at a truly organic method of understanding the images, it is important to investigate their relations and connections to the whole of the play. This power to associate the imagery with the very fabric of the play develops and extends, step by step, with Shakespeare's development as a dramatist. At first the images fulfil only a few simple functions, but they later often serve several aims at one and the same time and play a decisive part in the characterization of the figures in the play and in expressing the dramatic theme. Clemen investigates the form of the images and their relation to the context and examines them under the aspect of development. He says that 'descriptive or poetic imagery' in Shakespeare's earlier works becomes 'dramatic imagery' in his tragedies, especially in *Antony and Cleopatra.* In his view the imagery which is chosen to express abstract ideas seems itself to be derived from the atmosphere of this tragedy. He notices that the sea constitues an important element of 'scenery' of this tragedy and Shakespeare heightens the omnipresence of this peculiar sea-atmosphere even further by drawing metaphors to express abstract from the sea and the terminology of navigation. He also says that those images which strike the key-note of the play——the expanse of the world and the tremendous consciousness of power on the part of the characters——and which elevate the figures of these great rulers to the level of demigods generally fulfil a double function; they are a means of expressing Antony's greatness and at the same time they create atmosphere by summoning to our minds the image of the wide ocean and of the immeasurably vast world. Clemen explains Shakespeare's use of the Nile with its creatures, its snakes, and adders. It introduces into the drama the intimate interplay of person and scene, and this whole sequence of imagery gains powerful dramatic relevance through the fact that Cleopatra commits suicide at the end by means of such Nile serpents. Thus the imagery, which at first glance seems only to create the atmosphere of play, actually effects more than this; and it is symbolically related to the characters. This symbolical meaning of certain sequences of imagery is apparently expressed also in the case of the main theme of the play, the fall of the great lovers——the light-symbol of these sequences of imagery. Light extinguished had always been a symbol of death with Shakespeare. But in no other play is this darkness-symbol of death so closely associated with the whole characterization of the persons as in *Antony and Cleopatra.* Clemen says that these images reveal that Shakespeare viewed the life of his great characters as being in harmony with the cosmic powers. Cosmic events and human events run parallel in this tragedy, and what occurs in one sphere must have its counterpart in the other. Clemen also explains Fortune in the play. He also touches on the character of Cleopatra and says that she is neither solely queen, nor solely harlot, nor solely witch, but unites in her person all these contrasting natures. (54)

G. Wilson Knight appraises *Antony and Cleopatra* to be the subtlest and greatest play in Shakespeare, or, at least, paragoned only by *The Tempest*. He interprets this play imaginatively and advocates its transcendental humanism. He says that the action compasses the Mediterranean and its citied shores; the Roman empire is revivified at its climacteric of grandeur and magnificence, so that princes who sway its destiny appear comparable only to heroes of myth, or divine beings; and yet the persons of the play are human enough too, and the events are sharply realized; in short although the play presents, as a whole, a visionary and idealistic optimism, there are realistic and coarse essences and tragic pathos. He explains the effects which contribute to the prevailing optimism. In his view, the play discloses a vision rather 'universalistic', and our view is directed not to material alone, nor to the earth alone, but rather to the universal elements of earth, water, air, fire and music, and beyond these to the all-transcending visionary humanism which endows man with a supernatural glory. The vision is a life-vision and a love-vision. The love-theme ranges from purely sensuous delights to the rarefied heights of intense spiritual contemplation. But the sensuous is purified by the poet's medium and all is subduced to a single rare poetic quality of an especial kind. Knight makes some remarks on the play's style. He says that the poetry is both metaphysical and emotional, yet emotion is ever thrice-distilled; so finely wrought in delicate yet vividly dynamic phrase or word that a maximum of power is found in a minimum of sense-appeal, either visual or aural. The poetry has a pre-eminence of thin or feminine vowel-sounds, 'e' and 'i', a certain lightness and under-emphasis of passion which yet robs it of no intrinsic power, and a refusal of the resonant and reverberating stress, an absence of any direct or prolonged sensuous pleasure in phrase, word or syllable. The poetry catches the most evanescent tragic essence on the wing. The style of this play is like a thin, blazing, electric filament, steadily instinct with keenest fire. A world of meaning is compressed in the simplest phrase. The subject-matter is various: it ranges from the material and sensuous, through the grand and magnificent, to the more purely spiritual——there is an ascending scale. The style (or the poetic vision of the whole) endorses this movement; rising from matter to spirit. Knight stresses the optimistic and glorious effects by an analysis of this ascending scale and says that other effects are subsidiary. The ascending scale is a purely intellectual arrangement of imaginative essences of the play to enrich our imaginative vision of its complex whole. The imagery is evershifting, dazzling, and iridescent. The mass-effect is glinting variously in accordance with our viewpoints. But Knight says that a purposive attention to these varied, interrelated strands in the play's texture helps us to rise to the height of its theme and to understand its peculiarly transcendental realism.

Knight notes the theme of imperial magnificence, the imperial power and warrior-honour Antony sacrifies for love. This tragedy is impregnated with the atmosphere of wealth, power, military strength, and material magnificence. The sea-imagery heightens our sense of imperial magnificence and limitless power. This sea-imagery blends with a wider world-imagery. 'World' or

'earth' recurs continually in relation to the main persons. The principal persons are drawn to heroic proportions——almost superhuman power and nobility, and in the play mankind is almost deified. And naturalism is transcended and the earth itself (with its sea and land) is a little thing in comparison with such heroes. The setting is the Mediterranean empire idealized beyond all rational limits and the universe, and not our little world at all. The play views man as he is transfigured under the intense ray of love and the keenest poetic vision. The imagery and suggestion throughout is pointing to the transcendental qualities in man, or even in nature. Now this general elevation of humanity is related to two main streams of imagery: those of (I) War and (2) Love, which may be said to correspond to the above-mentioned two settings, the empire and the universe. These war and love are the two Shakespearian values. The first is twined with the empire-theme; and the second rises from out that theme and is both blended and contrasted with it. Antony sells a warrior's honour and an emperor's sway for Cleopatra's love. Each theme wins a victory; one material, the other spiritual. There are many 'horse' references in the play. They heighten and intensify our feeling for military magnificence. The horse in Shakespeare is elsewhere idealized as a beautiful animal and a war symbol. War (or Empire) and Love (the two main elements of the play's vision) are not always opposed imaginatively, but they contribute to the total splendour and unity. Finally the love-theme rises high in splendour on the structure of imperial and military magnificence. Antony's soldiership, that is to say, his peerless activity in the front of action shows his nobleness, and his love shows him divine. The imperial and war-like setting is apt for love's proud and flaming trajectory into the unknown and its aristocratic disregard of the baser elements and of the imperial splendour from which it rises colossal. These imperial suggestion and imagery increase our sense of the glorious love for which Antony barters this splendour. Knight says that love in this play translineates man to divine likeness——it is the only 'nobleness of life'.

Knight notes also the more physical and sensuous love theme and love-imagery in dialogue and suggestion. In his view the purely erotic suggestions are treated in an ascending scale. Antony's passion is depicted both as lust and spiritual love. We must note the lower element of physical passion and indulgence. Feasting is constantly referred to. Antony's life with Cleopatra is composed chiefly of love and feasting. Feasting is in Shakespeare not only a matter of sensuous pleasure, but a life-force. It has clearly relevance to sexual love. The sensuous element is presented in two-fold guise: as riotous waste and as something of princely and royal magnificence and of a marvellous and inexhaustible bounty, but its power as a 'life' symbol is not to be forgotten. The more spiritual reality grows and flames from this sensuous and living bounty: the two are rather twin aspects of a single beauty. So the transcendental humanism is everywhere but a development from a vital humanism. Physical alone, without faith or constancy, love is unclean, stupid, and a madness; but we see both aspects, physical and spiritual in the play——the blending of spiritual fire with material pleasures. We have a developing scale of sensuous

and erotic suggestion, layer on layer, leading from feasting and drinking and all riotous bodily excess, to the towering vision of transfigured man, godlike and immortal, in empire or in love. This is the play's final statement. Cleopatra's ladies are devotees to physical wishes. The love-realism of the play is far from tenuous. It is a human analogue to the continual suggestion of earth's fruitfulness——such as the sun breeding creatures and crops from the ooze of Nile. But the love vision is a chaste vision of unchastity: the poet's mind is alive in exquisite purity and profound insight. Physical love is purified by poetry. The imagery goes beyond the solid and sensuous to more elemental and ethereal suggestions: the imagery of water, air, and fire. Then appear the themes of music. These show the peculiarly transcendental humanism of the play. From the above statement, Knight says, we know why and in what sense this play is not merely a story of soldier's fall but rather a spelled land of romance achieved and victorious: a paradisial vision expressed in terms of humanity's quest of love.

Knight notes the natural and elemental symbolisms, in their varying ascent from the material to the ethereal, reflecting and blending with the love-theme of the play. The animal references are scattered throughout the play; but animal images are always implicit in the context and animal fierceness is not emphasized. There are other more significant images. They are serpents and snakes. This serpent-imagery suggests sinuous grace and fascination joined to danger: its aptitude in connexion with Cleopatra is evident——she is the 'Serpent of old Nile'. This phrase points us to another force, suggesting life in an element less material than earth——aquatic and aerial. Variously ascending from the material to the ethereal the life-images of the play are to be related to the erotic theme. They are physical and ethereal at once. In this play nature is ever at work, blending, mingling, and dissolving element in element, to produce new strangeness, new beauty. The natural imagery reflects the love-theme. There is imagery of trees, flowers, and fruits; the benison of earth's foison, harvest fruitfulness, picturesque cultivation, and flowery joy. Earth and sun are mated to produce rich harvest, and this harvest blends with the richer harvest of the protagonists' love; and finally there is the mating of life and death, where, in passion's ecstasy, the strength of 'death' is entangled with the 'force' of life. Water-imagery occurs continually——that is a certain liquidity showing the idea of 'melting' and 'dissolving'. It is a crucial theme in the play, for the blending or melting of elements is similar to that blending of the sexes which is the main story, and from that we pass even farther to a blending of life and death. Cleopatra's dying is a soft melting, a dissolving, of essence with essence, and Antony's death is "the crown o' the earth doth melt". The 'sun', 'moon', and 'star' imagery elevates the love-theme to universal stature; it lights the play with a glitter and a brilliance, merging with the gold-imagery and the watery sheen, so that the vision is seen as through a dropping shower of fire; the fire-imagery adds the fourth empyreal element to the ascending scale——earth, water, and air. Spirit is fire and love in Shakespeare is a spirit all compact of fire.

Knight notes also the more spiritual and transcendental elements in the love-theme. Now we approach the higher ether and more vivid incandescence of human art. Music sounds often in the play. Music is ever the food of love and its accompaniment. Even earth vibrates in this transcendent play, its myriad whirling atoms alive, burning, dancing, quiring in the immortal theme. The world glows with love's fire. Here the disparity between matter and spirit, the human and divine, are mingled, blended, and melted into unity; and so the little earth 'makes mingle' with its orchestra of elements and responds in magic harmony to that sphere music wherein a human death and life and love strike together one single chord in the melodic silences of the Divine. A divine humanism is in this play. Thus the persons are often compared to gods and heroes. The protagonists change a crown of gold for the more sparkling and ethereal diadem of love. Cleopatra refers to death and says that death never palates more the dung of the kingdoms of earth, of temporal existence, and she fertilizes the rich arable lands of the infinite and the harvest fruits of love. Thus the world is well lost for love. In this play earthly 'nature' is often subsidiary to man and a wider, more universal nature. Fortune is a recurrent word in the play, but it only indirectly points us to the central idea of the play. Antony and Cleopatra are both essentially sportive, and the spirit of the romantic comedies is blended with tragedy in the play.

Knight says that visionary imaginations are important for the right understanding of the play. The massed structure which is the whole play makes a single and profound statement and reveals a single and happy vision. To refuse this integrity of the poet's statement is to miss its important and profound meanings. Within this whole vision all elements of sordidness and dualisms are resolved, dissolved, and melted into a sublime unity. Knight asserts that not till we see the play as a whole do we recognize the significance of its parts. Attending simultaneously to its imaginative and narrative qualities, Knight says, we can see the whole structure. He quotes two passages which finely illustrate the welding of imaginative 'atmosphere' with the individual protagonists: Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra's meeting with Antony and Cleopatra's dream-vision of Antony. He explains them in detail. He says that the nature in this tragedy is bounteous, fruitful, and life-giving; and its ethereality and mystery are strongly emphasized to harmonize with the ethereal mystery of the final revelation of the play; and never were the pathos and failure of human tragedy so happily blended with the infinite purposes of human life; and the temporal is sanctioned by the eternal; and from the marriage of life and death a new reality is born——'a better life'; and in death man is triumphant, a conqueror.

The above is the synopsis of Knight's explanation of the transcendental humanism of *Antony and Cleopatra.*

Wilson Knight next observes the more specifically human qualities in *Antony and Cleopatra* in an essay entitled "The Diadem of Love". He says that the transcendental and ethereal humanism is primary in the play, and the elements of evil and hate, though present in it, are resolved constituents

to a wider harmony, a less partial view. No persons are bad in the play. In no play is moral outlook so irrelevant as a means to distinguish the persons. Knight says it has no meaning. All the chief persons reflect identical spiritual rhythms: from positive to negative, negative to positive. Indeed loyalty is the theme, but the persons often fall from faith or love to rise again, and they are all, at the last, true to their deepest loyalty. There is no feeling of victorious evil, and evil, (disloyalty) is ever melted in the prevailing delight.

Knight insists that the first effect noticeable in these persons is of a certain strangeness——a strange see-saw motion of the spirit, a 'varying'. They each contain the dual principles, positive and negative, locked in a single personality, and so there are changes, but no proper conflicts. Knight says that the root antagonists of the play are the two supreme Shakespearian values——War (or Empire) and Love: and there is no question of any ultimate denial or cynicism. All persons who die are at the height of love or loyalty at their death: death and love blend in each. All dualisms are less vital than the unities they build. Even at the feast held on Pompey's galley, there is no strong evil intent, nor any burning ambition; there is just a sudden absence of loyalty. At Antony's death Caesar's response is noble, generous, and profound. Both Pompey and Caesar have a streak of the *Macbeth*-evil, but the evil in this play exercises no continual power over the personalities, and at the end their nobler qualities are forced into prominence.

Enobarbus, too, wavers like others. There are the contrasts between 'women' and 'a great cause' or the 'business' of state and the 'business' of love, and the conflicting calls of these two are at the heart of this play. The values of War or Empire and Love are ever twin supreme values in Shakespeare and are the great spiritual heritages of West and East. Enobarbus wavers between them and reflects the wavering antagonism. He is the spokesman of enlightened common sense, both appreciative and critical. He at first remains loyal while he can feel the glamour of Antony's love. But when he see Cleopatra betray Antony he becomes disloyal and deserts Antony. So his desertion is more than a personal disloyalty and is a symbol of the protagonists' tottering romance. He finds too late the diademed principle of love. He has throughout been a common-sense commentary on the action, and at the same time he is the action's commentary on the worth of common sense and reason. This story of Enobarbus exactly reflects the primary stories of Antony and Cleopatra, and so it is most valuable to the general understanding. He waves between personal loyalty and reason, and at a crucial moment he takes the path dictated by his puny wisdom and is next wrenched back by events and by his own heart to a sudden and shattering realization that all expediency is dust and ashes beside the living flame of his love. He cannot fight against the universe. His only life is now in death. Death is synchronized with uttermost loyalty. This is the way our joyous universe makes music from the wilful unfaith and wayward purposes of man. An unseen power is at work forcing each person to realize a consummate beauty in life and in death, and pressing the richest liquid from the wines of his soul. Each thus dies for love or loyalty——Eros, Enobarbus, Iras, Charmian,

and the two protagonists. But in them death is not a fall, but a rising—— death is a crown of life. The theme is a wavering, a failing of trust in love's unreason, and swift and beauteous recovery in death.

This wavering is apparent in Antony. There is continually the wavering, ebb and flow, of the spirit; a shifting, varying psychology. At the death of Fulvia Antony regrets her. The same rhythm of a sudden regret at the impact of loss is apparent. Antony finds that the event has a quite different taste from its pre-imagined quality. The strongest thing in Antony is his love for Cleopatra, and he tries to break free from her. But his passion for her is burning in him. He is jovial, melancholy, reckless by turns. When he finds Cleopatra making private terms with Thyreus, he sees his love as filth, vice, and error. His abuse is hideous. But soon love floods again in his heart, and he willingly deceives himself that Cleopatra was not sincere in her betrayal. This swift oscillation of the spirit from positive to negative and back again is markedly emphasized toward the end of Antony's story. On the day before the last fight Cleopatra buckles on Antony's armour, and he returns in triumph; his warrior-strength and love-ardour are at their meridian glory, In this scene we meet the two great values, Love and War, perfectly blended in two personalities and one victorious event. Throughout we have also the contrast between spiritual romance and material realism. Antony's love-vision becomes bright or dimmed according as he prospers or fails in fight. Soon after the last battle he swears she shall die. But beneath all superficies and outward varying shows, the theme of this love-tragedy remains the failure of love to assert its royalty in the temporal scheme. When Love and War embrace harmonious, Feminine and Masculine, East and West, are blended in a universal concord. But in so far as love and world-success are antagonistic, love has failed, and meets condemnation. It is the destruction of the unity of love and world-victory that maddens Antony. Antony would end his experiences of changes from unreality to unreality by the last alternation from the flux of life to the flux of death. Death is visaged as the dissolution of life, rather a change of mode, a breath scattering and dissolving the wisp of smoke that for a short while claimed individual form and direction. Antony's vision at his end is a vision of eternity; and only in death is the finite thing complete; in death finite and infinite, good and ill, ugly and beautiful mate and blend in the one perfection. For him this death is not an ending. Its mystery casts a new glamour. It is eternity visioned as a brighter life, the prize of love, and a grand Elysium. Life in this tragedy is deserted for love, and that love is now equated with death; life and death are mated. By synchronizing death, the most absolute of all negations, with the positive aspect of life, love, Knight says, we are left with a sense of peace and happiness, an apprehension of pure immortality.

Knight considers Cleopatra as baffling in the remarkable combination of diversity and unity. She is by turns proud and humble, 'a raging tigress and a demure girl, deceitful and faithful, royal and skittish, gentle and cruel. Though she is woman's loveliness incarnate, beauty enthroned beyond the shores of time, set above the rugged map of imperial splendour, and down-

watching the fighting princes below, she has in her a streak of mysterious and obscene evil. Knight says that love is ever the pivot of her gyrating personality, and the light which illumes the phantasmagoria of her shifting moods. Though Antony serves two gods: 'love' and 'honour', she is not divided: love is the only root of her actions. She is also incarnate queen of music and romance. Her palace in Alexandria is a paradise of feast, fun, and love. Sportiveness is strong in the protagonists' love. Cleopatra is all womanly things, good and evil. There is danger in her. She has a serpent's grace, a serpent's attraction, dangerous as Eve, serpent-beguiled. She is 'the Serpent of Old Nile'. Sometimes her love appears violent and selfish and almost evil; at others, it is pure and innocent as the frosty light of a Christmas star. She does not control and unify her imperssions by any cool reason. She is swaying to every breath of her passionate desires. But those passions harp so fine a natural music as can be called an ever-harmonized music of passionate discords. Her passions, with varying and see-saw motions, return to pure femininity. But if Antony cannot leave the world of turbulence for the crowned peace of love, then she will share the action with him, though she is queen of love. Consequently the woman's heart ruins his manhood. Knight says that Death and Life are the sexes of the absolute: Death, the feminine, calls back the adventurer, Life, to her bosom; thus Cleopatra awaits Antony. After the battle of Actium, Caesar offers peace to her through Thyreus. Then she is the primal Eve; She reveals a serpentile evil, an utterly selfish streak of bottomless evil. Then 'policy' wins, and she shows unutterable baseness, and is love's ripening apple worm-eaten at the core. Cleopatra's variety surpasses that of any other Shakespearian person. In this respect she is all womankind, rather than a single woman. Knight says that she is universal in the sense that she, one person, becomes a symbol of universal meaning and content of womankind. Her two main qualities are essential femininity and her profuse variety of psychic modes. But these two are clearly one, since a profound and comprehensive delineation of essential woman is necessarily very varied and built of contradictions. She is a silk shot with dazzling, shifting, colours. She is the divinity of this play. Her transcendent divinity and beauty are stressed in Enobarbus' description of her in her barge. The streak of serpentine evil in her is part of her complex fascination and melts into her whole personality, enriching rather than limiting her more positive attractions. In Cleopatra a personification blent of 'good' and 'evil' is found. Thus, from a limited view, her treachery is nauseating, but from the view of eternity the 'evil' is seen otherwise, as a part of a wider pattern. Knight says that Cleopatra proceeds through the final scenes to assert the rights of her 'infinite variety' to that imperial diadem of love denied by the poet to other more limited and less perfect divinities. Cleopatra excels by virtue of her psychic infinity, which includes evil, and wins by her very capacity to fail, and steps more naturally to the infinities of death. Thus the final act of the play is as the crest not only of this play but of the whole Shakespearian progress. All this consummate artistry has been lavished in Cleopatra that she may assert the power of love to enclose not only life,

but death, in its vision. Knight then notes death's own essential sovereignty; first, it is like sleep; second, it tastes no longer that 'dungy earth' which is unworthy of its child; finally, it is nurse alike to Caesar in his glory and the beggar in his penury——a kindly presence, dear nurse to life, eternity calling back the child of time to its bosom. In this play death is continually welcomed as something of positive worth and sweet nourishing delight, like love. Cleopatra knows Antony is the universe and more, because in death he is transfigured by love and becomes all things accomplished. In the Seleucus scene she wavers again, and tries to ensnare Caesar and to set him as another fine emerald beside those other victories, Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Antony, and fails. Though she is compact of variety and waverings, she assumes a steadily icreasing grandeur of immobility; now her 'variety' is 'infinity', and infinity means death and love. At last she is raised beyond wavering and incertitude. Death is 'liberty' and enlarges the 'confine' of even her infinity. In her death is involved the justification of the starry hope beyond good or evil, the vision which is poetry in all its guiltless profusion, and the trust that unity (not duality) exists as the heart in the universal breast——the justification that all things blend into a single glory in the universal Cleopatra. At this point she becomes love absolute and incarnate. At the death-moments of the chief persons, there is an ascent, and humanity burns with a steady brilliance——there is no suggestion of tragic pain.

Knight insists that the play is to be understood as a whole only by various approaches assimilated in a single vision. He also pays attention to the technique of scene arrangement. He says that the most powerful emotional movements are ever compressed, both by the 'wavering' psychology which presents alternation rather than development and by the scene variation. The short scenes convey not only an impression of empire, but a still more powerful impression of space as opposed to time. They tend to crush time, to render it subordinate to simultaneity, which eternity envelopes, and which encloses the action like a moveless sphere englobing an oiled mechanism smoothly working within. Knight also insists that to understand the play aright we must be prepared to see Antony as a very human lover, and Cleopatra as love itself; hence the exquisite contrast of Antony's death, its quality of tragedy and failure, subtly differentiated from Cleopatra's dissolving immortality. Antony wavers between East and West, and is finally blended in love, but Cleopatra is Love's Queen, contrasted with Caesar, empire-symbol. There is no strong dualism in the play; the final effect is a blending, a melting, with a victory for finer love's ideal over the cruder empire's ideal. In this play humanity is most finely idealized. Even though the play presents ever two aspects of its love-theme, that is, the crude and the ideal, no play is more true and finally more beautiful. Knight concludes that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a dramatic microcosm of human, and other, life viewed from within the altitudes of conscious Divinity; that we have here our most perfect statement of the real; that, whereas the sombre plays of Shakespeare are aspects of 'appearance', in *Antony and Cleopatra* we touch the Absolute.

Knight, moreover, compares this play with *Macbeth* in detail, and makes

clear a certain elusive similiarity between the essences of these two plays, and also shows clearly how exactly they may be considered opposites. He concludes that these two plays present respectively a love-empire rhythm and empire-love rhythm.(55)

Knight's essays are very excellent and make clear the essence of *Antony and Cleopatra*, but he is imaginatively so subjective that we cannot but doubt whether his vision of the play corresponds with Shakespeare's or not.

J. Middleton Murry says that the impression, the quality and the music of Cleopatra's description of the dead Antony remain long in our minds. In this scene she roves between dream and reality, she wakes wistfully out of her marvellous dream and looks upon reality for what it is and what it will be, and then she thrusts it away. But it was actually happening——the reality she thrusts away thus is doubly real. This is the dramatic device of Shakespeare. Murry insists that it is a super-dramatic device, for Shakespeare's method here is quite intuitive one, and not a very deliberate and conscious technical cunning. He says that Shakespeare has created the imaginative reality of his Antony and his Cleopatra, and in the confidence, the ecstasy, and the intensity of his own creativeness he seizes the opportunity that has offered itself naturally of directly confronting the order of reality which he has created with the order of actuality which is. Murry enlarges upon this triumph of art in this play. He indicates the contrast between the ecstasy of Cleopatra's imaginative dream and the tenderness of Dolabella's human sympathy which springs from and is rooted in the world of actuality. Dolabella stands by the queen and is eager to comfort her, but she, in her ecstasy, is beyond his ken. Her grief is superhuman for him. It is 'royal'. Into this word 'royal' Shakespeare crams the sense of the superhuman, standing over against the human, that is to say, the incommensurability of Cleopatra's experience. Charmian says that Cleopatra is 'a lass unparallel' d'. In this phrase 'Royal Egypt' and 'the maid that milks' are blent in one. In these words Shakespeare bodies forth instinctively the Cleopatra who dreams, and is a girl: the Cleopatra who is superhuman and human. In Charmian's words "And golden Phoebus never be beheld/ Of eyes again so royal" at Cleopatra's death, Murry says, Cleopatra herself is suffused with a sunset glow, and her dignity in death is endued with the majesty of the heavens; and the order of these words is magical——Cleopatra's final royalty is totally suffused by the glory of 'golden Phoebus'. Murry assumes that the word 'royal' makes a mechanism of the natural alchemy of the supreme poetic imagination of this play.

Murry compares Enobarbus and Antony in an earlier scene (IV. ii) when Antony, before his last fight, commands one final feast, with Dolabella and Cleopatra in the scene of her description of the dead Antony. When the serving-men come in to set the banquet, Antony takes them by the hand, one by one. Murry sees this as the Last Supper of Antony. This reminds us that kings have done him the like office. In comparison with Antony, and in his own accustomed sight, servants and kings are one. If kings were his servants, so his servants are now made kings. But Cleopatra does not under-

stand it. Enobarbus half understands it. It seems to him 'one of those odd tricks which sorrow shoots out of the mind'. Servants serve Antony now, where kings served him before; and by the change it is not Antony that is declined, but they who are advanced; they have become kings. Antony, at this moment, when there are no more throned monarchs to serve him, invites his servants into royalty. By serving him now, they become kings of the spirit. The royalty strikes Enobarbus, but Cleopatra, at this moment, does not understand it. The scene is the spontaneous expression of the sacramental essence. In this scene Cleopatra plays the part towards Antony which bewildered Dolabella will play towards her afterwards, when she, remembering Antony, is 'inspired' as he is 'inspired' in this scene. She has yet, crowned queen though she is, to achieve her 'royalty'. The above is Murry's interpretation of royalty of the scene.

Murry looks more deeply into the secret of this 'royal' essence. He explains it by Enobarbus' desertion and repentance and Antony's magnanimity. That royalty in Antony which made his servants kings; that power which was in Antony to say to them simply, 'I am I'; and that manhood in him which disdained a compelled allegiance, and, when allegiance was withdrawn from him, sought instantly, by a natural motion, to find the cause within himself ——those have made Enobarbus repent and his loyalty final and secure at last. This is the point at which the superhuman becomes human. That royalty draws loyalty to it; it compels loyalty, not by an external, but by an internal compulsion, whereby the servant is at once the lover and the friend, and knows that he becomes his own true self only in serving his lord. That royalty is superhuman in the lord himself. It expects allegiance, as the earth expects rain. Then royalty and loyalty go hand in hand, and the man who is loyal becomes royal by his loyalty.

Murry insists that the above is the true theme of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Shakespeare's prodigious art consists first and foremost in convincing us of Antony's royalty. It is the *primum mobile*. He says also that the power of poetry used by Shakespeare in this play overrides drama and psychology. The ultimate and enduring structure of the play is in the poetry. Its life and its inward progression derive from the response of poetry to poetry. The creation of royalty by loyalty can be simply reduced to the response of poetry to poetry. We cannot judge such a play as this as a record of action merely, for if we do, its essence that is vital inward unity escapes our judgment. Murry assumes that Antony can be set before our imaginations as belonging to an order of beings who can declare "he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall save it", for the passion to which Antony yields seems to us overwhelming and elemental, a force of nature and a power of destiny, and especially we are convinced of his essential nobility.

In Murry's view the secret of Shakespeare's method in great plays is to build the character of royal nature. If the character does monstrous things, we can but ascribe it to his falling into the clutches of some superhuman power. So is it in this play. But Cleopatra, as she is presented to us in the earlier acts of the play, is not of power to make Antony 'the ruin of her

magic'. She is only a partial embodiment of the power which has overwhelmed him. The impression that the Cleopatra of the last action seems to be a far greater figure than the Cleopatra of the earlier acts is due to the fact that up to the death of Antony the life of the play has been derived from him. She is what she is to the imagination, rather in virtue of the effect we see in Antony than by virtue of herself. As he is magnificent, she must be so. But when he dies, her poetic function is to maintain and prolong that achieved royalty of Antony's. Murry explains that before he dies she is, as yet, neither royal nor loyal. But, with his death, straightway her nature and her utterance change. When he breathed out his soul, it found an abiding place in her body. There the soul must needs struggle, but it prevails. The supreme relation of royalty and loyalty is, then, established in her, and she becomes royal. She says, "I am again for Cydnus." Murry interprets that is not *again* for Cydnus, but for the first time; the old Cydnus was but a symbol and prefiguration for this new Cydnus, though there was the wonderful pageant then. That was an event in time: this is an event in eternity. Those royal robes were then only lovely garments of the body, but now they are the integument of a soul. Shakespeare shows the queenly soul in travail of its own royalty in the extreme challenge to reality. Murry summarized his theory as follows. From the beginning of the play we have been gradually raised to height far above that of ordinary dramatic illusion: we have been lifted from the human to the superhuman. Antony ennobles the sacrifice of his friends, is the more ennobled by that sacrifice, and dies royally. Then his royal spirit transfuses itself mysteriously into the mind and heart of his fickle queen. All this we watch, not merely with the bodily, but with the spiritual eye, and we hear it, not merely with the bodily, but with the spiritual ear. The prime instrument of this sustained and deepening enchantment is a peculiar quality of poetry. It is the reverberation of the noble deeds and more than the reverberation of them. This quality of poetry conditions the acts and gives them a quality of significance, and then the quality of 'inspiration', which our minds attribute to the poetry alone, envelops and suffuses the acts. The poetic utterance passes into the dramatic deed, as if utterance and act were but a single kind of expression.

Murry says that the inward life and creative process of such a drama as this are the gradual invasion and pervasion of the characters by the poetry of their own utterance. Their acts gradually move into harmony with their utterance, and, as the acts slowly change their nature, so the quality of the utterance becomes more rich and rare. To this process of attunement of deed to poetry, Murry says, there is only one inevitable end. Murry regards this as a spiritual law derived from the strange logic of imagination. He says that the total self-sacrifice of one human being for another in death is the only true symbol we can recognize for Love——the inextinguishable significance of the Crucifixion. In this symbol Time is suffused and made incandescent by Eternity. In this drama likewise the total self-surrender of chosen or self-inflicted death is the only symbol of the complete suffusion of the character by poetry. Shakespeare loads the act of death of the historical fact with all

the significance it can contain, and poetry is the means by which he does it. He entangles his characters in the compulsive magic of poetic utterance, and submits them to that alchemy of his supreme dramatic device. Thus they change, and they become royal.(56)

Harold C. Goddard acknowledges the merits of *Antony and Cleopatra* but he considers it to be unable to compete with the four famous tragedies of Shakespeare for the affections of readers, because they think that the hero and heroine, compared with Shakespeare's other heroes and heroines, are soiled and stained by long submersion in the world. But Goddard regards the play as the one play of the author's in which love drama and power drama are completely fused. In order to appreciate rightly Goddard stresses the role of Octavius Caesar sufficienty. Caesar is the indispensable background against which the protagonists must be seen and in contrast with which they take on their significance. The play may be said to be a study in the power of personality versus the impersonality of power. Caesar has almost no personality in any proper sense, and is identified with the worldly power. So the impression he produces on us is one of coldness, of nullity, and of death. Satire or derison on the power appears subtly almost throughout the play, but nowhere in the play, except at the very end, is the ridicule of it more concentrated and effective than in the scene on Pompey's galley that concludes the second Act; it is a perfect fusion of burlesque and political wisdom. Goddard says that the word "love" covers many shades of emotion from the highest spiritual and mystical feelings known to man down not only to sexual passion but to the basest perversions of it. It embraces both heaven and hell literally. He thinks that this play might have been written to confirm and amplify it. He also notes that Antony shows the Hamletian powers, e.g. introspection, strength and weakness, courage and irresolution, masterful manhood and feminine sensibility——the paradoxes of Hamlet. He is passionate, rash, and self-indulgent, but has compensating virtues. He is a military genius, a ruler, and a conqueror, and he can admit his faults without false modesty. He is, in short, a Herculean Roman, and when this man turns from the conquest of the world to the conquest of the most complex and the most astonishing woman Shakespeare ever created, Goddard says, we cannot accept it as a mere act of dereliction, nor even as a descent, ——we can see here the whole purpose and scheme of the play for the first time. Cleopatra is also Woman in her infinite variety——Woman is the Earth, as various in her different moods as the landscape under changing effects of light and shadow, sun and rain. Cleopatra's beauty may have been more Dionysian beauty of vitality than the Apollonian beauty of form. Goddard points out that the magnetism that emanates from her first meeting with Antony at Cydnus is mere witchcraft and magic of her Dionysian beauty compared with the authentic "fire" and "air" that descend on her before her second immortal meeting with him at the end. It is the magic and witchcraft of this enchanting queen that capitvate Antony in the first place. It is with the semi-mythological Cleopatra, the ancestral image of Woman she evokes within him, the gypsy, Egypt and the Serpent of old Nile, that he is in

love. The fascination is mutual, and she in turn endows him with superhuman attributes. He is to her the demi-Atlas of the Earth, Mars, and a descendant from Hercules, son of Zeus. This tradition abets the cosmic overvaluation of him for her as her assumption of the role of the goddess Isis does for him. Goddard says that Shakespeare correspondingly suggests Antony to be like sun. But not until near end does this analogy shine forth so clearly that we know the author's intention. In the Battle of Actium the protagonists are defeated shamefully. But to deepen the enigma, Shakespeare proceeds to show that it is precisely out of the dishonour and defeat that the spiritual triumph emerges which is always found at the heart of the highest tragedy. More and more as the play nears its end it seems to recede from history into myth, or to open out and mount above history into a cosmic sunset of imagination. Then sudden mysterious music is heard. It is a premonition of the transubstantiation that is to overtake Antony in defeat. In defeat he puts off the strength, the renown, and his spurious claim to divinity through descent from the gods; and he puts on, in exchange, the true divinity of his own guardian angel who is the enemy and the opposite of the demon of power. Antony's metaphor of the sunset is only a confirmation of this, adding, however, the element of fire to the element of air. When the sun goes down, it has an alchemic power to transmute the material world into its own substance. So does a great man when he dies. The world in which he had lived is lit up with his afterglow. Goddard says that this is the miracle which Antony, dead, performs on Cleopatra. His devotion to her is what does it, and it brings to the surface at last a Cleopatra that his love has long been shaping underneath. Cleopatra the enchantress disappears for ever, and the new Cleopatra takes the place of the old Cleopatra. This new Cleopatra realizes the splendour of Antony at death so fully that her memory of him transforms what little of life is left for her on earth into heaven. She enters heaven in advance. After this the new Cleopatra is using the old Cleopatra as her instrument; the new one issues the orders and the old one obeys them. Never from the moment when the dying Antony is lifted up into her monument does she waver in her undeviating resolution to join him in death. What looks like hesitation and toying with the thought of life is but deception utilized with the highest art to make certain that her determination to die is not thwarted. Goddard says that those who think Cleopatra is driven to suicide only when she is certain that if she does not kill herself she will be shown in Caesar's triumph are taken in by her as badly as is Caesar himself. In Goddard's view, the interlude with her treasurer Seleucus is a deception to conceal her intention. The reason she kept back some of her treasures is to throw the gullible Caesar off the track of her intention. She assumes once more the role of queen in her "best attires". She plays the very act of death. This is not the old Cleopatra reverting to the theatrical and meretricious queen, but the new Cleopatra aspires to rise into that region where art is lifted into life and life into art, e.g. the goal, alike, of art and life. After the loquacious clown brought the asps and left her, Cleopatra renounces the intoxicants of earth. Then a celestial intoxication comes over her and she feels herself being

transmuted from earth into fire and air. The atmosphere of sunset (turned into sunrise by Charmian's phrase, "O eastern star!), the universal character of every image and symbol, and above all the sublimity of the verse conspire with action itself to produce this alchemic effect. Here is the harmony that mitigates tragedy. Goddard considers the contrast between the two meetings of Antony and Cleopatra at Cydnus, and regards them as the two foci of an ellipse of this drama. The first meeting, as described by Enobarbus, is like an immense tapestry or historical picture, a word painting, just the overdecorated sort of thing that the world mistakes for supreme art; it is the poetry of senses, while the second meeting is spiritul meeting and the poetry of the imagination. The second is more than the greatest art; it is an apocalypse. Goddard interprets Caesar's words spoken at her death as the most miraculous touch in the whole play——a touch that, like a flash of lightning at night, illuminates everything. Gazing down as if entranced, Caesar, who had been cold to her and to her beauty while she lived, utters the most beautiful words ever spoken of her. Those words show that being dead she proves more powerful than the most powerful of men alive; she makes him realize that there is something mightier than might, something stronger than death; she kindles the poet within him; she catches him in the strong toil of grace; and she leads him in her triumph!

Goddard compares this play with *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*. He regards this play as one of Shakespeare's Roman trilogy and considers it to be his historical masterpiece.(57)

(4) **Multi-Conscious Criticism and Other Latest Criticism.**

Multi-conscious criticism asserts that there is a popular dramatic tradition, and that its dominant charcteristic is the audience's ability to respond spontaneously and unconsciously on more than one plane of attention at the same time. This is called the principle of multi-consciousness. Mult-conscious critics believe that this principle is operated in the plays of Shakespeare, and in the light of it they consider the problems of Shakespearean criticism. This method of approach demands dual awareness of conventionalism and naturalism, narrative and philosophy, play-world and real world, direct presentation and allegorical presentation of character, and so forth. In this method of approach are contained nearly all the methods of Bradely's naturalism, Stoll's conventionalism, and Knight's symbolism; and they are tried to be unified on the principle of multi-consciousness as a Christian tradition.

S. L. Bethell is a representative of this sort of criticism. He says that *Antony and Cleopatra* has been treated most unkindly by critics. Dr. Johnson and Schücking find its defects in construction, but Granville-Barker refutes them. Schücking, Stoll, and Graville-Barker all find its apparent inconsistencies in psychology. The problem of the play, therefore, is that psychologically one cannot reconcile the vicious, the vulgar, and the commonplace in Antony and Cleopatra, with the sublimity with which they are invested especially as they face defeat and death. Naturalistically studied, their transformation appears inconsistent, and it seems to be rather an unworthy dramatic trick to dodge the moral issue. To solve this problem Bethell makes clear the

hidden meaning of this play by his method of approach. It is quite clear that we are not to think Antony and Cleopatra merely as a lecher and a strumpet. So Bethell insists that we must radically alter our critical approach of naturalism and begin with the poetry itself, for, in his view, we are not so much concerned with psychology as with the concrete poetic expression of a complex interpretation of experience. Especially in the presentation of Cleopatra, character and symbol are inextricably interfused, and, moreover, there are passages of double meaning, where the two meanings are clearly separable. In the verse of the play Brobdingnagian imagery, that is to say, objects of tremendous size and power are constantly utilized to illustrate some quality of character or situation. Bethell says that this pervading suggestion of tremendous size and power conveys the imperial theme and the dignity of the persons involved. The same colossal imagery is also applied to the theme of empire and the theme of love. It is a deliberate equation. Thus we feel Cleopatra's love as quite commensurable with the honour of war and statecraft against which it must be weighed. This strengthens the dignity of the love of Antony and Cleopatra, and weakens the sensuality. Cleopatra's sensual qualities, besides, are translated into the medium of poetry, and are not shown by their actions. Such a poetic building-up process is continuous in the play. The two themes of love and empire are not merely paralleled in power and grandeur by poetry, but sharply contrasted as conflicting alternatives presented to Antony's choice. The contrast is also geographically expressed as between East and West, or Egypt and Rome. Cleopatra and Octavius Caesar stand respectively for the Egyptian and the Roman qualities. This contrast is insisted upon also in stagecraft. Egypt and its attractions are insisted on throughout the play. Egypt and Rome represent contradictory schemes of value, and contradictory attitudes to, and interpretations of, the universe. The whole play, therefore, should be read with opposition of Egyptian and Roman values in mind. Egypt and Rome stand respectively for love and duty, pleasure and duty, indulgence and restraint, intuition and reason, or the final authority of the spontaneous affections and the authority of worldly wisdom or practical common sense. Caesar enunciates the Stoic, Roman philosophy. He is cold and calculating; for reasons of state he gives up his apparently beloved sister; he has a low opinion of the people; he is not tempted into any reckless action. Faced with the dead Cleopatra he is, indeed, moved for a moment, or speaks out of character, but he soon becomes interested in the medical cause of the death. His last words are merely a ceremonious close to the play. He incarnates the practical reason, or worldly wisdom, with which are closely linked the notions of restrictive morality and political order. Antony has a foot in both worlds. His position is central, for he is to make the choice between Egypt and Rome. Cleopatra stands opposite Caesar, incarnating intuition, the life of the spontaneous affections, with which are linked the notions of expansive morality and aesthetic order. In the play justice is done to Rome, but the tendency is to depreciate the Roman values, for there are a machine-like inevitability in Caesar, accompanied by a certain calculating meanness, and imperial corruption subducing the note

of Roman virtue. Shakespeare usually treats the new Renaissance virtue of ambition as a vice. The Egyptian qualities, crystallized in Cleopatra, are correspondingly raised in our esteem by subtle poetic means. Instead of making her a mixture of hoyden and strumpet, Shakespeare, taking boldly for thesis that 'everything becomes' her, transmutes these qualities by poetic paradox. Her character worries the psychologist. Bethell interprets it as an extended metaphysical conceit rather than as a character. According to his complex interpretation, the conceit is brought out by the resemblance of form in words of opposite meaning: there are paradox, the fusion of opposites, and a benediction upon her sensuality. The love of Antony and Cleopatra is treated heavenly, and she is herself a goddess. Enobarbus' description of her in the barge at Cydnus has a ritual flavour, and she was then actually dressed as Venus. She habitually dressed as a deity. She has the mystery of divinity and the same sort of immortality as Keats' nightingale in virtue of her symbolic function. In her remarkable conceit the common attributes of age and ugliness are taken as the material of immortal beauty, and, symbolically interpreted, the phrase 'deep in time' gives her an infinite age—— immortality. 'Phoebus' amorous pinches' mean that she is an immortal lover of the sun-god, of Phoebus-Apollo, the god of poetry and song, the paragon of beauty. The choice which Antony has to make between Rome and Egypt is thus heavily weighted by Shakespeare on the Egyptian side. Antony is a lordly man and a natural Egyptian. In his Roman days he was prodigal of pains and in his Egyptian pleasures he was as magnificent. He has generosity and it killed Enobarbus, a natural Egyptian with a deceptively Roman exterior. Antony's love can measure up to Cleopatra, and the goddess immortalizes her mortal lover as he dies. Cleopatra is the focus and symbol of intuition and the life of the spontaneous affections with its moral and aesthetic corollaries. The psychologists can hardly understand the character of Cleopatra. Bethell says that Shakespeare presents in Cleopatra the mystery of woman, the mystery of sensuality, an exploration of the hidden energies of life, and a suggestion of its goal. Antony chooses Egypt. This means that intuition or spontaneous feeling is opposed to practical wisdom, generosity to prudence, love to duty, the private affections to public service, and the former in each instance is preferred. Though the Roman values are not entirely repudiated, the play shows that the good life may be built upon the Egyptian values, for the latter values are affirmative or positive, and not restrictive or negative as the former. Bethell says that the play means that the strong sinner may enter heaven before the prudential legislator. In this play the strong sinners meet their purgatory, which is forced upon them by the grace which visits them in the guise of defeat. Thus the changes of character inexplicable by psychological determinism, in Bethell's view, are readily explained if we perceive that Shakespeare is applying theological categories. Antony's purgatory lies in military failure and a bungled suicide prompted by the false report of Cleopatra's death, and Cleopatra's in surviving Antony and in the thought of a Roman triumph. But the better Roman qualities are needed to transmute the Egyptian qualities into eternal validity. It is wrong to condemn their

suicides from a Christian point of view. Their view of the hereafter is hardly Christian either, but their assurance is emphatically not pagan and theologically orthodox. Bethell argues that Shakespeare tries to find in this play what the positive bases of the good life are, and he finds them in the affections, and the affections as rooted deep in the sensual nature. Of these Cleopatra is the symbol, sensual even in death, for, paradoxically, the Egyptian values must survive death. Bethell concludes that in Antony and Cleopatra the element of self-giving inherent in the sensual nature, purged of selfish fear, is revealed in its eternal significance, while in Caesar his heart is entirely set on the passing world and has no such selfless hold upon eternity——this play is poetically stating the resurrection of the body. (58)

Arthur Sewell can be regarded as a multi-conscious critic, for he fuses natural criticism and aesthetcial criticism excellently. Bethell finds the fusion of multi-levels in the audience's multi-consciousness, while Sewell finds it in theatre as a microcosm of society. Sewell makes much of the study of 'character' in Shakespeare's plays. But he suggests that the primary concern in character-creation is moral, and not psychological. He sees theatre as a microcosm of society, of which the audience is an integral part, and 'character' is what it is partly because of the kind of society in which the persons of the play are imagined to have their being; in other words, because of the kind of order prevailed in the play in which they appear. This order is considered by Sewell as the moral vision of the play. Sewell says that in Shakespeare's comedies, they live in a secular society and are subjected to secular moral judgments; in the histories, their behaviour and emotions are public and political; in the great tragedies, Shakespeare's vision reaches out to a conception of a metaphysical society, a world beyond this world, but subtending this world, and in Roman plays and the Romances, Shakespeare returns to the secular society with a new emphasis not only on social order but also on the renewal of the generations. What is the relation between the moral vision and 'character' then? Sewell explains it as follows: in Shakespeare's plays, the essential process of character-creation is a prismatic breaking-up of the comprehensive vision of the play; and each element of the vision, so separated out, is in itself a unique illumination, finding its individual fulfilment in character; and thus even the minor characters have a way of coming to life and of becoming in themselves a unique, if partial, fulfilment of that vision. And at the same time even they enrich, diversify, and individually quicken the comprehensive vision. Characters are the products of the moral vision, but in that vision they are also agents. The minor characters are not merely deductions from theme of the play, related by a kind of dramatic geometry to the whole pattern, but also in them the vision tranforms, even to a small extent, and lights up, the whole matter. Thus in a manner possible only to his comprehensive soul, Shakespeare has transformed and subtly defined the total vision of the play. In this way we see, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, through Cleopatra a world in which sensuality is for us a 'mystery'. Of that same world, however, Charmian, Iras, and also Alexas are part, and in them sensuality is not a 'mystery' but something quite

different, and yet Cleopatra moves in their company as a royal figure. This same world, too, we see as Enobarbus sees it, when he says, "Mine, and most of our fortunes tonight, shall be——drunk to bed." Each contributes to our vision of a world in which sensuality might be a 'mystery' and might be no mystery at all, too; and this vision is only part of the total vision of the play, which comprehends the austerities of Rome as well as the ardours of Egypt. Sewell says that after the great tragedies, Shakespeare's major theme once again becomes the eyes of the present world, as if he were taking up again the secular vision in this play as in his comedies. Neither Antony nor Cleopatra is exempt at any time from the social judgement. Not to the universe but to society are we concerned to accommodate what these persons were. So when we discuss how lust and martial valour are treated in this play, it is a little extravagant to use such words as 'mystery' and 'value'. Vision is not discovered by our looking at the world through Antony's eyes. His world-view must be considered to be rather a matter which vision has to reckon with. In this play the imagery does not create for us a circumambient universe, although in the imagery a conventional universe, both physical and metaphysical, is taken for granted. Every image seems to come authorized and processed by social and literary usage. This is true of the supreme moments of the play ——true, for example, of Cleopatra's "Husband, I come". The imagery is what it is, shaped and substantiated by social and literary usage; and the characters never fashion for themselves their world or their universe; they speak and behave within a world and universe already fashioned. Sewell interprets the scene in which Cleopatra dies as follows: Cleopatra takes leave to make believe in death that their union was other than it was. There was something in the union, certainly, which gives her now a temporary title to call Antony her husband; but what this something was is no mystery. It was that kind of physical surrender and fulfilment which 'continuates' society, and to which society gives, at the very heart of disapproval, admiration. For, in Antony and Cleopatra, this surrender and fulfilment, though of its own kind absolute, did not 'continuate' society. Pity now licenses our admiration, and disapproval is so subdued that we can make the sublime pretence that this union was not as it was, but otherwise. Not even here is Cleopatra really self-transcendent. The same judgement must be made of Antony. We do not see the universe through Antony's and Cleopatra's eyes; they do not lead us beyond themselves. We see them in the universe, and within that universe we have to subdue them; and to that universe they must, though in death, be reconciled. But in that reconciliation they make no discovery and experience no transformation of vision. In this play we are never interested in what these characters do to themselves. We never wish them otherwise. To wish them otherwise is to wish the spiritual universe otherwise. The judgement involved is a secular and social judgement. We miss in the play the quality of humility. So we may view them with a kind of pity, but not with compassion. There is a kind of levity in them which dwindles the moral status of the protagonits. They often come very near to caricature. Shakespeare seems to be often half in league with

society to denigrate these magnificences of spirits which society must admire but does not easily contain. *Feliciter audax* (happy valiancy) of this play may be said of Shakespeare's range of sensibility and attitude, as well as of his imagery and his mastery of the stage.(59) The above is the synopsis of Sewell's critism of *Antony and Cleopatra.* His criticism seems to be too metaphysical to appreciate the beautiful chiaroscuro of this tragedy.

Apart from multi-conscious critics, **Arthur M. Z. Norman** says that Shakespeare was apparently influenced in his works by Daniel's poetry, and so there is a considerable possibility that he knew Daniel's popular *Tragedie of Cleopatra* which appeared during his lifetime in a number of editions. In his essay "*Daniel's tragedie of Cleopatra* and *Antony and Cleopatra*", Norman compares Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with Samuel Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* and points out many similarities between them. He also assumes that both Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Daniel's vary markedly from the unsympathetic picture of the queen given by Plutarch, to whom Cleopatra is Antony's evil genius. Daniel's Cleopatra is ennobled by the realization of the extent of her love for Antony and by sacrificing herself to that love. Shakespeare's Cleopatra, though she is the amoral, wilful person described by Plutarch, is equally close to Daniel's heroine as the embodiment of an enduring passion. Norman insists that by considering Daniel's play as a possible secondary influence upon Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* we can explain Shakespeare's daring use of two climaxes in his play which has provoked critical comment both good and bad, and at the same time can explain his conception of Cleopatra as the embodiment of a love transcending worldly obligations.(60)

Mary Olive Thomas writes an essay on the repetitions in Antony's death scene of *Antony and Cleopatra* where Antony is drawn up into the monument to die in Cleopatra's arms (IV. xv). Cleopatra requests help in lines 12–13 and in lines 29–31, and Antony says, "I am dying Egypt, dying", at line 18 and again at line 41. These repetitions have troubled editors of the play. Bernard Jenkin says that they were caused by the confusion of Shakespeare's original version and revised version in the First Folio. Dover Wilson attributes them to the work of a cutter's hand (Shakespeare's or prompter's) who sought to abbreviate performance time. M. R. Ridley thinks that they were due to the advantage of repetition in stage-effect, Shakespeare's forgetting to delete, or his neglect of indications of deletion. Thomas examines in detail the two sets of lines in relation to Plutarch's narrative. She thinks that the repetitions were written by Shakespeare, and, moreover, suggests that when the scene is analyzed from the theatrical standpoint, interpolation is a more likely explanation of the texual peculiarities than cutting seems. She also thinks that the repetitions may be regarded as Shakespeare's employment of rhetorical figures at a time when he wishes to heighten effect and evoke compassion. She concludes that if the repetition alone are considered, taste is perhaps the only arbiter; but when to the repetition are added the other factors, the case for interpolation seems stronger; or perhaps the present reading resulted from the printer's ignoring minor deletions, or perhaps Shakespeare was not bothered by minor unevennesses.

Benjamin T. Spencer considers "paradoxical metaphor" as a rhetorical mode which in its reiteration throughout the five acts is peculiar to *Antony and Cleopatra* and hence provides a clue to its implications. He says that this paradoxical metaphor involves the sense of bafflement and surprise, the inherent contradiction, and the unexpected reality beneath appearance, which are associated with paradox. Paradox was a familiar device to the rhetoric-conscious Elizabethans of the literate class, many of whom may have recognized in this tragedy its recurrent appearance in the form of synoeciosis, a yoking of seemingly incompatible terms. Spencer asserts that in this play the paradoxical element pervades and dominates behaviour and catastrophe——the play begins and ends on such a note. It becomes a staple in the utterance of the Roman characters about Egyptian affairs. The most concentrated expression of this paradoxical metaphor in the Egyptian scene is to be found in the description of Cleopatra on the barge. To Enobarbus the magic of Cleopatra seemed to lie not so much in sheer sensuous splendor as in her paradoxical charm in which the splendor is wreathed. Spencer says that Shakespeare did not, indeed, contradict Plutarch's characterization, but he added a paradoxical dimension to it which helped to transform Plutarch's didactic account into the more complex stuff of tragedy. Shakespeare not only makes the Queen the greatest paradox in the play, but also goes beyond Plutarch in developing Antony as a character who is not merely an aggregate of diverse and contrasting traits but a paradoxical one who seems to make "defect perfection" like Cleopatra. Spencer explains that in addition to these concentrations of paradoxical metaphors around Cleopatra and Antony, Shakespeare diffuses lighter touches of the same mode throughout the play by means of a pun, incongruous or unlikely associations in epithet and noun, complex ethical overtones, etc. Spencer presumes that Shakespeare's ultimate construction of this tragedy lay in the paradoxical metaphors; the sense of the paradoxical metaphors was surely the matrix from which much of the characterization and the action sprang, and in the more comprehensive sweep of the plot paradox inevitably passed into irony. Both paradox and irony involve contradition, surprise, and the variance of the apparent with the real. It is often hard to fix the separating line between the two, but paradox inclines towards the static, whereas irony looks more explicitly to antecedent expectation and action. Spencer says that in this tragedy paradox and irony serve as related media and manifest the mood of paradox which is the imaginative premise from which the major elements of the play are wrought. In ending the tragedy Shakespeare also held to paradox and irony. Spencer criticizes other criticisms of this tragedy from the point of view of the paradoxical metaphor. He thinks that what we have in the tragedy is the mirror held up to the disturbance of values when two large and incompatible cultures come into conflict, and the virtue whose feature the dramatic mirror shows here is an as yet undefined synthesis lying beyond both Rome and Egypt but partaking of the values of both. He says that for this undefined synthesis paradox was the inevitable mode of discourse, and the Elizabethan age which nurtured the art of John Donne would have found itself even more at home than we

with the cumulative paradox that lies at the very heart of *Antony and Cleopatra*. (62)

Michael Lloyd insists that Cleopatra's most striking qualities closely resemble those of the goddess Isis and may have been suggested by Isis, in an assay entitled "Cleopatra as Isis". He explains Cleopatra's relationship with Antony and the view of the queen, corroborating them on the evidences from the texts of *Antony and Cleopatra*. In his view, the opposition of 'business' (war or politics) and 'pleasure' (love) imposes a choice for Antony, and at first he wavers between them. 'Pleasure' has no priority over 'business' and the former is on a level with the latter, or rather 'business' predominates over 'pleasure'. Such is the Roman attitude to affections. Antony can lightly turn from Fulvia to Cleopatra, from Cleopatra to Octavia, from Octavia back to Cleopatra. When he left Cleopatra he forgot her, and she is in his thought only when others remind him of her. The sequence of events leading to his return to Egypt depends not on passion but on policy. The soothsayer scene shows that if it is to Antony's interest to work in a sphere apart from Caesar's, Egypt offers that sphere. The real impetus to return comes from Caesar's initiation of hostilities and not from 'pleasure'. Antony's exclusive concern with his own interest is incompatible with the love which we come to understand through Cleopatra. He lacks that fidelity which she shows us to be a necessary component. Only his belief that she has killed herself for him convinces him finally of her love and makes him faithful, for that he believed her to have betrayed him shows inversely that he was not faithful. Against such an Roman attitude the nature of love in Cleopatra must be seen. She has the martial element in her and will appear in battle "for a man". This element is wholly devoted to her fulfilment as a lover. Roman contrast between love and war is in Cleopatra a synthesis. She leads the leader. At Actium she destroys the Roman Antony for whom love and war stood in contrast, and remakes him after her own kind. Though the method is destructive, the purpose is creative. Thereafter he goes to war with the soldier and the lover in him no longer separate. Hitherto he had ever "won more in his officer than person". In the synthesis of lover and soldier he for the first time achieves his real reputation. Her love is deepened by her disaster into an experience which it is the function of the fifth Act to state. In this act her role as faithful wife and mother, the crown of the play, fully evolves. Her care for her children cannot be doubted, though they are never on Antony's lips. Her maternity is wide and intense. It includes not only her children but all her subjects. The concept of queen is merged in that of mother. The theme of mother, with that of wife, is strengthened in the fifth Act. Her request to Caesar is not for herself but for her heirs. It is true that, when Antony is dead and she is surprised in the monument, he is paramount in her mind and the children form no impediment to end herself, but, when prevented and forced to live, she schemes for them. The former juxtaposition of lover and children remains in her. She kneels to Caesar for the gift of "conquered Egypt for her son". She conceals her treasure for her children. When she learns from Dolabella's report that she cannot preserve

them, she need not preserve herself any longer. In her death the composite figure of wife and mother has fully evolved, and she goes to her 'husband' nursing a child. In Cleopatra out of a militant sexual love emerges wifely and maternal fidelity. Lloyd says that the above-mentioned concept of Cleopatra receives a succinct formulation in the evocation of Isis at the end of Apuleius's *Golden Asse*. According to whether the maternal or amorous quality of the procreative principle is stressed, the name of Ceres or Venus is given to Isis. The goddess is also invoked as queen of the dead. Her worshippers call her by different names of Juno, Bellona, and Hecate, etc. These names of Isis might be Cleopatra's. There is much in the fable of Isis that resembles the above-mentioned view of Cleopatra. Besides, Plutarch's account of Isis and Osiris was published in Philemon Holland's translation of *Moralia* in 1603. Lloyd presumes that Shakespeare had read it and was echoing it in parts of the plays. Lloyd cites the instances from the play and explains them. Cleopatra was the first to see herself as Isis. Shakespeare first took this hint from Plutarch's *Lives*. He also found in the same source a similar identification of Antony with Bacchus. Shakepseare made use of it in formulating certain elements in Antony's portrait. Bacchus and Hercules are both akin to Antony in *Lives*, and this kinship Shakespeare develops. Bacchus is also considered by Plutarch in his essay to be akin to Osiris. Shakespeare uses the associations of Cleopatra with Isis, of Antony with Bacchus and Hercules. But he deliberately denied to Antony that quality of devoted love which have been associated with Osiris. Lloyd concludes that Shakespeare was acquainted with the cult of Isis from Plutarch's essay and from Apuleius. They are echoed in his portrait and her values. So we can hardly see Antony's tragedy as the centre-piece of the play. The fifth Act falls into place as the necessary final stage in the evolution of the play's values, if we see as its subject the statement of the divine humanity which is common to Isis and Cleopatra. (63)

L. J. Mills recognizes as the three principal themes in this tragedy the East (Egypt) versus the West (Rome), the strife in the Triumvirate, and the love and tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra. He sees the last theme as dramatically dominant, and says that the play presents the tragedy of Antony and then the tragedy of Cleopatra. As one of the evidences supporting his view is cited the title of the play as it appears in the Folio, "*The Tragedie of Anthonie, and Cleopatra*", and to the comma after "Anothonie" is paid attention as significant. As another evidence he quotes a passage from one of judicially objective critics saying that Cleopatra has the stature as a tragic figure in her own right. He explains the tragedy of Cleopatra as follows. Her tragedy is of a distinctly different kind from Antony's. There is no admirable background for her to have a "tragic fall" as in the case of Antony. She is sensual and egoistic and must have as her lovers the world's greatest men one after another to satisfy her ego. She has no perception of the fact that she is responsible for Antony's defeat and death, for her self-pity and her concentration on self make it impossible for her to see the situation objectively. This is the basis for her ultimate tragedy. But there are many

unaccountable behaviours throughout the play. The secret of her charm lies rather in the fact that neither Antony nor we (including Shakespeare himself) can identify the secret of her charm. It should be noted that she commits suicide neither after the high Roman fashion, nor with singleness of motive that actuates Antony. Her tragedy is what Willard Farnham states: it is part of her tragedy that with her subtlety she wins control of Antony's force and by winning this control ruins him and herself. Her tragedy and his tragedy do not interact and intensify each other, though each tragedy gives significance to the other and increases its effect. When Antony dies, she, as can be recognized, changes somewhat, and attains some realization of what Antony was. Some appreciation of his worth, now that he is no more, comes to her; he is good, being gone (one of motifs of this play). That she did not realize it earlier, to a much greater degree, is her tragedy; 'too little and too late' is her tragedy, and the tragedy can be only partial and not complete. In short, Cleopatra's tragedy is inherent in her equivocality, utter self-interest, and complete ignorance of the existence of an unselfish love apart from the physical. She has had no comprehension of Roman virtues and has not understood Antony's true worth. She gloried in his worldly greatness for her own sake and not for his sake. She evinces little concern about her country; she is woman, not queen in her interests and behaviour. She is as innocent of morality as Falstaff of honour. But she does learn something, through frustration and suffering, of what virtue means. But the beginning to learn anything other than sensual self-interest comes when there is neither the opportunity nor the time for growth to ensue. In that irony——in the too little and the too late——lies her tragedy. The above is the summary of Mills' criticism. It has been much influenced by Willard Farnham's criticism of the tragedy; but it seems to be a little biased on account of his application of a moral standard to Cleopatra which is relevant to us but irrelevant to her. (64)

Concluding Remarks

I have interpreted criticism in a broad sense, and so I have dealt with not only the proper criticisms of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* but also the works of interpretative or other miscellaneous studies of it as its criticism in this historical study on the criticism, for such works involve also a considerable amount of criticism and make one of the bases for its proper criticism. I have surveyed those criticisms and described them as objectively as possible. Subjective writings very often pervert history and convey falsehood, so I must be satisfied with offering the historical facts about the criticism of the tragedy.

There is a general tendency towards the recognition of the greatness of this tragedy as the criticism advances form the earlier times to the latest. But the criticism is different according to the ages. And in the same age the criticism is different according to the methods of approach and the schools of the critics. Moreover, even among the critics of the same age, method,

and school, various criticisms of the play are seen. The criticism varies owing to the critics' tastes, the degrees of appreciative ability, scholarship, prejudices, etc. Their criticisms are different as if they were the blindmen's comments on an elephant in Aesop's *Fables*. Their differences, inversely, show whether the critics' views are partial or comprehensive, whether their learning is deep and wide or shallow and narrow, and whether their tastes and appreciative powers are free from various kinds of prejudices or not, rather than whether their criticisms are right or wrong. The fact that this play has presented many critical problems shows that it is so great a tragedy that its entity and merits are not easily understandable and appreciable even for critics and scholars. Hence each critic reveals his own level of poetic vision or appreciative ability in his criticism of the play. The critics who can appraise the play to be a great tragedy are to show the excellence of their critical powers.

To evaluate the above-mentioned criticisms by referring to the texts of the play is to write, in effect, my own criticism of the tragedy. This, therefore, will go beyond the limit of this historical study, but I hope to have the opportunity to write the criticism of the tragedy myself in future.

Notes and Books for Reference

(1) Bethell, S. L., *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, London, 1948, p. 116.

(2) Coleridge, S. T., *Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare*, Everyman's Library, p. 97. He says, "Of all Shakespeare's historical plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* is by far the most wonderful".

Hazlitt. W., *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, The world Classics, 1952, p. 78. He says, "This is a very noble play. Though not in the first class of Shakespeare's productions, it stands next to them, and is, we think, the finest of historical play……"

(3) Irving, H. and Marshall, F. A., *The Works of Shakespear*, vol. XI, pp. 165–171. In that period this tragedy was reproduced only ten times; in 1759, 1813, 1833, 1850, 1855, 1867, 1873, 1890, 1897, and 1900. In the 17th and 18th centuries it was almost never reproduced. The was perhaps owing to Dryden's *All for Love or the World Well Lost*.

(4) Knight, G. Wilson, *The Imperial Theme*, London, 1954, p. 198. He says, "It is probably the subtlest and greatest play in Shakespeare, or, at least, paragoned only by *The Tempest*".

(5) According to *Shakespeare Quarterly*, it was reproduced as follows: 1956–1957…… 3 times, 1957–1958……3 times, and 1958–1959……5 times.

(6) Furness, Harace Howard, *The Variorum Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra*, London, 1907, pp. 410–411, "Preface to *Antony and Cleopatra*"

(7) Smith, D. Nichol, *Shakespeare Criticism, A Selection*, (1623–1840), World Classics, 1949, pp. 32–33.

(8) Smith, D. Nichol, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–124, "Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare*"
Furness, H. H., *op. cit.*, p. 477.

(9) Coleridge, S. T., *op. cit.*, p. 97.

(10) Hazlitt, William, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–84.

(11) Furness, H.H., *op. cit.*, p.478.
(12) Smith D. Nichol, *op. cit.*, p.345
(13), (14), (15), and (16) Furness, H.H., *op. cit.*, pp.478-479.
(17) and (18), *ibid.*, pp. 479-481.
(19) Dowden, Edward, *Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, London, 1875. pp.306-317
(20), (21), (22), (23), (24), (25), (26), (27), (28), and (29) Furness, H.H., *op. cit.*, pp. 481-489.
(30) Mabie, Hamilton Wright, *Shakespeare: Poet, Dramatist and Man*, London, 1900, pp.335-338
(31) Ōyama, S., *A Bibliographical Approach to the Recent Shakespeare Studies*, Tokyo, 1955, pp.13-79
(32) Bradley, A.C., *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, London, 1955, pp.279-308
(33) Irving, H. and Marshall F.A., *op. cit.*, vol. 11, pp.171-176.
(34) Wilson, John Dover, *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cambridge University Press, 1954. Introd. pp. x-xxxvi.
(35) Charlton, H.B., *Shakespearian Tragedy*, Cambridge University Press, 1952, pp.15-16
(36) Parrott, T. Marc, *Shakespeare, Twenty-three Plays and the Sonnets*, EM 130, 1944. pp.859-862
(37) Stoll, E.E., *Shakespeare Studies*, New York, 1942.
(38) Raleigh, Walter, *Shakespeare*, London, 1950
(39) Chambers, E.K., *William Shakespeare*, Oxford, 1930, pp.476-478
(40) Harrison, G.B. *Shakespeare's Tragedy*, London, 1951, pp.203-226
(41) Granville-Barker, Harley, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Second Series, London, 1930, pp.111-233
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