UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

This is a peer-reviewed, post-print (final draft post-refereeing) version of the following published document and is licensed under All Rights Reserved license:

Innes, Paul ORCID logoORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5375-5341 (2019) Resources for Teaching and Studying Antony and Cleopatra. In: Antony and Cleopatra a Critical Reader. Arden Early Modern Drama Guides . Bloomsbury, pp. 201-227. ISBN 9781350049901

Official URL: https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/antony-and-cleopatra-a-critical-reader-9781350049901/

EPrint URI: https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/7388

Disclaimer

The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.

Resources for Teaching and Studying *Antony and Cleopatra*

Why are so many theatre audiences, readers, students and critics attracted to *Antony and Cleopatra*? This is not a question about the status of Shakespeare as a figure; there is no point in trying to summarize a centuries-long debate. *Antony and Cleopatra* can be viewed, interpreted and analyzed in many ways, and no single book chapter can possibly do justice to them all. The task can seem daunting given the sheer amount of secondary material that is available about any Shakespeare play, but the effort is especially well worth making in the instance of this one. Almost by definition, therefore, the present essay involves partial choices. However, this is not a negative view of a seemingly intractable problem. *Antony and Cleopatra* lends itself to discussions of genre, ethnicity, culture, gender, empire, historical consciousness and performance, to name but a few. While many of these elements are present in other Shakespeare plays, this particular play affords many avenues of enquiry.

High-school teaching is often concerned with the usual Shakespearian suspects of a selected few comedies and tragedies. It is not difficult to see the reason for this; given constraints on time and resources, a play that needs extra information about Roman history and the Renaissance view of that history is unlikely to make it onto a national school curriculum. The play does appear more often on the university syllabus, although even here it often takes second or third place to more of the standard fare. It activates all sorts of anxieties about the pedagogical practice that lies behind curriculum design and the overall construction of the Shakespeare canon.[1] Perhaps even more importantly in pragmatic terms, these issues cannot be separated from the whole environment that students inhabit. Despite the academic profession's commitment to learning for its own sake, students are becoming increasingly focused on what they need to learn and do to achieve the highest grades. This is something of an empty observation, since it has always been the case. However, it is much more at the forefront of current practice because of the commodification of higher education in many countries. Students are likely to have up to four part-time jobs at any one time, because they are paying for their education and need to make a living. This is the case even when they are in receipt of loans, because of course those will need to be repaid. Everyone in higher education knows that this is the reality for most students, but there is often little willingness to adapt the curriculum to swiftly changing contemporary needs. The effects on student well-being and mental health have been devastating. They still do choose their course of study because they are committed to that specific subject, but the foregoing has to be recognized because it is the immediate context within which a volume like the present one will be used by students. The current chapter seeks to provide selected resources that will meet the needs of the stressed student as well as of those more generally interested in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In fact, this volume provides an example of one of the major and perhaps most useful types of secondary critical material: the edited collection.

One can narrow the focus even further. Given the state of contemporary higher education, how exactly is this play valuable? Definitions of value will obviously vary, and so there is no exact answer to this vexed question, although it does have two parts. The first is the nature of the individual assignment, and the second is how that assignment fits into the module, course or programme as a whole. An awareness of both elements is crucial in understanding why any text or play is worth studying. Again, then, why study *Antony and Cleopatra*?

For most, the answer is simple: it is on a reading list and a deadline is looming, either examination or coursework. The latter now predominates because examinations depend on a single day that requires vast amounts of advance preparation, something that is often simply not possible for most contemporary students, and those revising *Antony and Cleopatra* for an examination are very unlikely indeed to be studying only this play, at least in the UK. Coursework assignments take many forms, such as comparisons of at least two plays. Essays are perhaps the most common assessment format, and this is exactly the attraction of *Antony and Cleopatra*: the earlier list of elements that could be used in an answer makes it an excellent play to choose for essays. This play is worth watching, reading, studying and analysing precisely because it raises many important cultural questions. Ultimately, this chapter is aimed squarely at the student who needs to get things done. The following material is not organized in alphabetical order, but for the purposes of a discursive tour. It is therefore intended to be much more than a simple annotated bibliography.

Scholarly editions

The starting point is always the edition. In practice, the precise text tends to vary between students, who are much less concerned with the vagaries of editing than academics; this section describes major current editions that include supplementary material of use in essay writing.

Antony and Cleopatra, ed. David Bevington (updated edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

In common with most other scholarly editions, this one (belonging to the New Cambridge Shakespeare series) has a long and useful Introduction, divided into nine sub-sections, three of which reference performance. The Introduction includes illustrations and line drawings, and appended at the end of the book are a section of textual analysis and a reading list. A full apparatus of footnotes accompanies the text on every page.

Antony and Cleopatra, ed. Emrys Jones (London: Penguin, 2005).

This is the play's entry into the ubiquitous Penguin Classics series. First published in 1977, this particular edition carries a further Introduction by René Weis. He also adds a section on the play in performance and a reading list; these usefully update Jones's text. Rather than accompanying notes, the Penguin series adopts the convention of a section of critical commentary that comes after the full text itself.

Antony and Cleopatra, ed. Ania Loomba (New York: Norton, 2011).

Though more expensive than others, the Norton Critical Editions are especially useful for students because each includes a large selection of secondary material. Accordingly, rather than a long Introduction, there is a short preface to the play; the text has footnotes on every page, mostly devoted to specific Renaissance word usage. This edition includes a chapter on sources, analogues and contexts, encompassing classical material such as Herodotus on Egypt and Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, as well as contemporary Renaissance references to the couple and extracts from the period's writings about women. There is a substantial selection of critical material, in addition to sections from adaptations in various genres. The volume concludes with a selected bibliography.

Antony and Cleopatra, ed. John Wilders (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

This is the play's entry in the well-known scholarly Third Arden Shakespeare series. The long introduction has nine sub- sections. Six deal with major critical issues regarding the play, while the final three adopt the standard Arden approach to source material, date of composition and textual issues. The play is accompanied by full footnotes throughout.

Antony and Cleopatra in monographs about Shakespeare and Rome

Book-length treatments of topics and plays that include *Antony and Cleopatra* inevitably come in different flavours, and quite a few have appeared since the 1970s. However, unlike the other types of material discussed in this chapter, these texts will be characterized in terms not only of what they say about the play but also how they treat Shakespeare's overall interest in ancient Rome. Some discuss his Roman reimaginings as a single epic; others focus more precisely upon the play as a dyad with Julius Caesar; and still others treat the various Roman plays, however defined, as modulations of an ongoing theme. The first few, by Robert S. Miola, Paul A. Cantor and Warren Chernaik, provide reasonably recent studies of issues that could be considered conventional. Some of the other material looks in different directions.

Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Miola's introduction is entitled 'The Roads to Rome', signalling a central concern with the place of Rome in Shakespeare's imagination. This is, however, contextualized in relation to contemporary English Renaissance uses of Rome: 'it seems clear that some consideration of Elizabethan classicism should preface consideration of Shakespeare's Rome' (3). The attitude to classical antecedents is characterized as having a rather haphazard approach to historicity:

> 'English classicism came to be ahistorical and eclectic in character, little concerned with understanding the past on its own terms. Shakespeare's anachronisms are to the point here, evidencing the age's disregard for historical accuracy, at least as we understand the concept' (9–10).

These two short quotations raise important issues not only of how Shakespeare's versions of Rome relate to others in the writings of his contemporaries but also how they might differ from ours. The term 'anachronism' is crucial here, alerting the reader to historical difference.

The chapter on *Antony and Cleopatra* is divided into an introductory passage, followed by seven sections. It locates the play as 'in many ways a sequel to Julius Caesar' (116), a common perspective – also touched upon in the Introduction to the present volume – that bases the relationship on the death of the republic and the birth of the empire: 'In addition to the popularity of subject matter, the two plays share a focus on the same critical juncture in Roman history: the decades encompassing the dissolution of Republic, and the birth of Empire' (116). The difference is that 'Rome in this play is not simply a city…, but an Empire, a world unto itself' (117).

The first section separates the worlds of Rome and Egypt via the figure of Cleopatra: 'Infinitely variable, she is the antithesis of Roman constancy and, therefore, perfectly fitted for her role as critic of Roman values' (119). Without explicitly stating the case, the book feminizes Egypt in relation to the Roman world by personifying Egypt as Cleopatra. This is a familiar position: 'Antony's leave-taking of Cleopatra, carefully prepared for by the conversation with Enobarbus, allows Cleopatra to display her power, pettiness, temper, and theatrical talents' (122). Cleopatra is passionate and irrational, a consummate actress, and Rome is by definition her binary opposite. Section two of the discussion concentrates on the Romans by way of contrast. As a major Roman political figure and general Antony is seen to have much in common with Octavius, while 'Unlike the contrast between Caesar and Antony, the contrast between Caesar and Cleopatra is clear-cut and unqualified' (129), reinforced by geographical and gendered difference. The third section spends time on Roman political infighting and 'bargaining' (134) by reference to Gnaeus Pompey, providing commentary on that old favourite of Shakespeare critics, the internally flawed protagonist: 'Before the outbreak of war and the Battle of Actium, Shakespeare shows Antony and Octavius to be flawed and ambivalent characters' (136). Section four concentrates on the importance of Cleopatra's gendered difference, suggesting that her 'attempt to play the man fails and results in death and disorder' (137). It is tempting to note that couching the result in terms of her failure effectively to be a man replicates an ages-old gendered hierarchy that privileges men, but of course the nascent Roman empire is resolutely patriarchal. Cleopatra is doomed to failure because the world in which she has to act is already coded politically and militarily as masculine.

Section five concentrates on the meanings generated by geographical difference: 'As in Julius Caesar, spatial and topographical metaphors express the transfer of power, this time from Antony to Octavius' (142). Nestling here, though, is an underlying insistence that what truly matters is the internal process constituting the tragic protagonist: 'Antony's rise from the nadir of misfortune and dishonor is a long spiritual process that begins with getting off the ground and ends with ascent to the tomb' (143), a vocabulary that is recalled in the following section when attention shifts to Cleopatra: 'Like Antony's falling on the sword, this falling begins a process of spiritual rising, an ascent that will result in transcendent reunion' (151). Political disaster allows the ineffable to be unmasked. The chapter ends with a return to the nature of Octavius' new Roman empire. However, it qualifies any binary opposition between the play's versions of Rome and Egypt: 'the dichotomy between these places and these values does not remain absolute and unqualified' (158).

Paul A. Cantor, *Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2017).

This is the second edition of a book first published in 1976, together with a new preface. The first half reads Coriolanus as defining Shakespeare's understanding of republican politics, forming the basis for a comparison with the empire in *Antony and Cleopatra* in Part 2. Sometimes the pairing is modulated via *Julius Caesar*, a tendency that is enacted in full in Cantor's latest book on Rome, discussed below. The new preface sets the tone:

> In this book I work out the details of how the republican and imperial regimes operate, and I also do more of the kind of character analysis typical of most studies of the Roman plays, for example, discussing the pride of Coriolanus and the love of *Antony and Cleopatra* in ways that I do not in Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy. (4)

Many of his concerns are therefore similar to those of Miola, although there are important differences, especially when Cantor delineates the relationship between the public and private spheres.

Cantor is quite explicit about this from the outset of his material on *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> *Antony and Cleopatra* are not typical of lovers in general but claim a special status for their passion. In fact their insistence that they 'stand up peerless' (I.i.40) in the eyes of the whole word suggests that they have found an imperial form of love to correspond with the imperial form of politics that prevails in their

era. (127)

He glosses the specific nature of their love on the next page: ‘the early Roman Empire supplies the hothouse conditions necessary for such exotic flowers as the imperial love of *Antony and Cleopatra* to flourish’ (128), and, ‘In the Empire, the rewards of public life begin to look hollow, whereas private life seems to offer new sources of satisfaction’ (128). Politics, love and the relationship between them structure the second part of the book. The love between this pair is for Cantor already imbricated in an imperial world, and the connection between love and the nature of the empire’s power is his main interest – he assumes that the Roman empire has already come into existence. In point of historical fact, of course, it is the demise of Antony and the supremacy of Octavius that ushers in the imperial era. Antony’s death is required for the empire to emerge; this book defines Antony’s character (and Cleopatra’s) in relation to an emperor’s dictates, so losing the political battle before the fact of military defeat.

The book accordingly insists throughout on the importance of ‘desires’ (134) and ‘spiritual emptiness’ (135), thereby personalizing the political in a way that is echoed to some extent by Miola. There is a similar treatment of topography: ‘Merely locating the city of Rome in *Antony and Cleopatra* has become difficult, for it seems to have been swallowed up in the vast territory it conquered’ (136). The effect of these imperial dislocations is shown by a case study of the character of Enobarbus (146–8), followed in the second chapter by further reference to the figure of Antony, who ‘has no such blind attachment to the Roman cause, and sees more clearly than most of his contemporaries the questionable aspects of public life in the Empire’ (155). The inevitable destruction of Antony’s cause is rooted in his character psychology as a manifestation of new modes of being in a post-republican world, producing something akin to a death drive (164ff). In the final chapter, tragedy arises because ‘Antony and Cleopatra want to excel in love just as the Republican Romans want to excel in war’ (186), and ‘as the play progresses it becomes clear that Antony has staked his whole sense of his worth as a man on the fact that Cleopatra loves him’ (188). These two short passages could serve as working definitions of the book’s critical position on the play.

Paul A. Cantor, *Shakespeare’s Roman Trilogy: The Twilight of the Ancient World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Cantor’s second book on Shakespeare and Rome extends and refines nascent elements from the first. His Nietzschean philosophical underpinnings are made more explicit, introducing Julius Caesar more fully as it mediates between the ancient republic and the newly emerging empire; he pays relatively little attention to *Antony and Cleopatra*, which occupies the final chapter. Refiguring the focus of his first book, the introduction to this one sees the emergence of the empire as a radical departure from the republican view of the city as sufficient in and of itself; the drive to empire produces a set of logical consequences.

The chapter on *Antony and Cleopatra* shows this process at work, returning to the play by relocating some of the concerns of its predecessor. It argues for the centrality of the Mediterranean world to Shakespeare’s imagination, the corollary being the critical importance of Rome in his conception. The chapter just prior to this one discusses Rome’s role in shaping English Renaissance notions of the imperial state as a precursor to the emerging British Empire (195–6), with the material on the play itself tellingly subtitled ‘Empire, Globalization and the Clash of Civilizations’. It is a short piece (210–24), comparing conceptions of empire in the Renaissance via Rome to modern global politics: globalization ‘constantly awakens new desires in the process of satisfying old ones; it dissolves old orders even as it brings new ones into being’ (224). The book therefore replays the methodology of its predecessor: politics and desire are intertwined.

Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Chernaik provides a variation on a by now familiar theme, the relationship between love and politics:

> ‘Throughout *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra keeps up a running commentary on conventional Roman notions of heroism and masculinity, and the virtues of the cold, efficient Octavius Caesar are less attractive and dramatically interesting than the vices of his rival Antony’ (3).

Here again the focus is on Antony’s politically self-destructive behaviour, as noted by Cleopatra. However, there is a slippage as Chernaik shifts from Cleopatra’s viewpoint to a generalized statement about dramatic power. It is inevitable that Octavius’s Egyptian rival has a negative view of his version of Rome, but her role takes over critical discourse as well.

The chapter on the play is entitled‘O’erflowing the Measure: *Antony and Cleopatra*’, recalling the conventional critical assumptions already noted; they achieve boundless love even as they are destroyed. It begins with Scarus’ choral speech about Antony’s conduct at the battle of Actium, showing that Antony lacks political and military judgement (135). The first section is entitled ‘Tragic Cleopatras’, following on logically

enough from the implications of Antony's desertion of his navy. This part of the chapter refers to other English Renaissance texts concerning Cleopatra in addition to Shakespeare's version, contextualizing the issues. The third section is concerned with Roman values, concentrating on the power relationships between the play's important Roman figures.

The final section is entitled 'Immortal Longings', emphasizing the importance of the grandstanding love of the protagonists. The structure of Chernaik's argument is most instructive: it begins with one character's denigration of the effects of the couple's love on Antony's capacity for action; it then moves through a historical contextualization of the story as it was understood in the English Renaissance, especially upon the stage; and it ends by means of their love's transcendence of mere politics and an emerging imperial state. In this reading, the doomed love of the protagonists becomes profound. A common theme is emerging in these four books, couched in ways that seem reassuringly modern: the personal love between Cleopatra and Antony is tragically elevated above the mundane world.

Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

Belonging to a series of feminist analyses of Shakespeare, Kahn's book departs radically from the seemingly standard critical line even though it predates Chernaik's by over a decade. Her Introduction investigates the kind of 'anachronism' mentioned by Miola, but with a difference: 'Through a kind of cross- pollination that isn't simply anachronism, Englishness appears in Roman settings, and Romanness is anglicized' (4). Kahn reformulates what later cultures like our own might see as anachronistic, registering a sense of the productive possibilities afforded by the dynamic relationship between ancient Rome and the English Renaissance. She comments on both Roman and Renaissance politics in Shakespeare's approach to Rome: 'Skillfully deploying details culled from Livy or Plutarch, he evokes the workings of a republic or an empire, making them intelligible to the subjects of a monarchy' (14). Her insistence on the primacy of the political in Shakespeare's conception of Rome differentiates her book from the others just discussed; even more marked is her investigation of gender relations within this context.

She investigates them, however, in a perhaps unexpected manner. One might naively assume that a feminist analysis would concentrate on Cleopatra, especially given the conventional critical tendency to oppose her femininity to the rational masculine world of Rome. However, Kahn focuses upon Antony, with her chapter on the play entitled 'Antony's Wound'. She delineates a more 'deconstructionist' approach, refusing to characterize Rome and Egypt as simple binary opposites:

> 'Such a stance ignores the historical specificity of the narrative Shakespeare dramatizes, and the political circumstances determining the creation of that narrative. Furthermore, it fails to take full account of Antony's ambivalence and the more radical instabilities of his subjectivity' (111).

Kahn analyses Antony's 'subjectivity' as deeply unstable, influenced by both Rome and Egypt, comprising an ambivalence that structures the interplay between the time periods in Shakespeare's drama. This is a feminist understanding of masculinity as historically and culturally produced. The vocabulary retains traces of a less 'materialist' approach by utilizing subjectivity rather than the terminology of the subject, but even so Kahn is clearly trying to show how Antony is constructed (or over-determined) by conflicting cultural imperatives.

This chapter carefully locates issues that an older critical tradition would call Antony's 'character' by relating its effects to Shakespeare's uses of Plutarch:

> As Linda Fitz demonstrates, Shakespeare's departures from Plutarch's account 'mitigate Cleopatra's culpability' for Antony's defeat (1977: 310). More than that, his play dramatizes the Roman construction of her agency as such – as an ideological reading of events that differs from what can be know about them but effectively becomes what is known about them.[2] (117)

Such an emphasis on the importance of Antony destabilizes any easy assumption of a binary opposition between Rome and Egypt because he oscillates between them. It also implicitly reinforces the importance of Antony as part of the play's eponymous pairing, restoring him to something like parity in the face of a critical tradition that often gets carried away by the figure of Cleopatra, whose position is also shown to be ideologically constructed.

As with many other critics who have written on this play, Kahn ends her chapter with death, in this case that of Antony. But she does so in a way that denies a simple identification of Antony with Egypt in the form of Cleopatra:

> 'But even in her arms, with death upon him, he portrays himself as "a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished" (4.15.59–60), countering the undertow of her attraction for him by evoking a reciprocity with Caesar that, even though fatal, insures Romanness' (137).

Even at the moment of Antony's death, then, and in a refreshing departure from the critical tradition, Kahn insists on the tension between Rome and Egypt that constructs Antony's 'subjectivity'.

Lisa S. Starks-Estes, *Violence, Trauma and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

This is a major publication in the fast developing field of literary trauma studies. In accordance with a post-Freudian psychosexual understanding of trauma, literature and plays are read for signs of post-traumatic stress. This absolutely requires characters to be treated like real people so that they can be analysed as surface manifestations of deeply buried elements of the human psyche. Starks-Estes is clear about this procedure in Shakespeare, by focusing on his uses of Ovid:

> 'In his Roman poems and plays, in which matters of violence and its effects are heightened, Shakespeare creatively transforms Ovidian subjects to grapple with them, foregrounding the trauma inherent in subjectivity and shifting conceptions of the self' (3).

The self itself is the ultimate subject of study, the fundamental centre of cultural endeavour, and her book reads how Shakespeare grapples with selfhood and identity. Accordingly, Starks-Estes defines the Ovidian project as registering 'the traumatic effects of violence, the shattering of the self' (13). The literary self that Ovid invents is constituted in opposition to the powerful tradition of the epic (11–13), the tension between the two going on to inform later writers like Shakespeare.

This book is well aware of possible challenges to its central position, defined as 'employing psychoanalysis and contemporary trauma theory, combined with materialist approaches' (16). There is a tendency for psychoanalytical readings to dispense with historical or cultural specificity because they are merely surface variations of deeper truths. Although Starks-Estes invokes 'materialist approaches', a reader would have to dig through the book very deeply indeed to try to find any materialist examples. Her book is therefore similar to many other monographs that provide a literary analysis, with performance considered to be of secondary importance.

The Introduction sets up the central emphasis on the sense of self. The individual chapters modulate this critical position via various texts, including *Antony and Cleopatra*. Starks-Estes revealingly gives this chapter the title of 'Dido and Aeneas "Metamorphis'd": Ovid, Marlowe, and the Masochistic Scenario in *Antony and Cleopatra*'. The emphasis is resolutely on the personal desires of the main characters and the relationship between them, extending to lesser figures too: 'Moreover, Enobarbus' setting is strikingly similar to that of desire itself, particularly as conceived of early modern discourses of love sickness and later psychoanalytical theory' (101), which, of course, suggests that cultural elements separated by well over 300 years are uncannily similar. Starks- Estes uses the work of Gilles Deleuze to characterize the masochistic drive of desire as she moves on from Enobarbus to the two central lovers (102). Overall, she replays in more avowedly psychoanalytical terms the tragic dichotomy already noted in the conventional critical tradition: 'Triumphant figures of Ovidian transformation, *Antony and Cleopatra*'s deaths may be seen as a happy ending – at least for the anti- Augustan tradition' (108). Here again a modern re-reading of the play sees the personal as much more important than the political; such an observation would no doubt delight a psychoanalytic critic.

Paul Innes, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

This volume takes stock of developments in critical theory to interrogate many of the assumptions that lie behind the critical tradition, at least as they manifest in writing about Shakespeare and Rome. The Introduction is very short because the emphasis is on the individual plays, each treated separately from the others. There is no overarching narrative of Shakespeare's engagement with the classical past; since Shakespeare has been dead for 400 years, using the plays to reconstruct his thoughts would seem to be rather pointless. Part of the reason for this is that these are plays; the medium itself renders any retrospective very problematic indeed. Trying to locate meaning in the figure of the author would at best produce a partial reconstruction that says more about the critic's assumptions than it ever could about Shakespeare. The book is accordingly very suspicious of totalizing narratives.

The chapter on *Antony and Cleopatra* has three main concerns, and each considers some of the elements familiar from previous criticism. The first is the play's representations of Cleopatra, which are interrogated

in terms of the Virgilian epic tradition that has been so powerful in the production of discourses of empire. The chapter investigates this tradition's denoting of Cleopatra as an Orientalized and feminized other, analysing her instead in relation to Roman politics via Antony. Although Cleopatra did make politically astute use of the trappings of the pharaohs, she was nevertheless the heiress of a fundamentally Greek elite culture. A progeny of the Ptolemies, she descends from one of Alexander the Great's foremost generals, a member of the dynasty that sought to establish pre-eminent control over Greek learning and culture via the institution of the Great Library. Unlike Starks-Estes' book, this book sees the figuration of Cleopatra very much as a Virgilian construction, following the crucial trajectory established in the *Aeneid.* The distinction necessarily and inevitably undercuts any assumption of a binary opposition between Egypt and Rome. Much like Antony, then, Cleopatra is perceived to be a site for the contestation of classical values.

The second major element of the chapter is a return to anachronism, in an attempt to theorize the historical consciousness that lies behind English Renaissance attempts to manage the history of Rome. Anachronism is reconfigured as a peculiarly modern invention, which does not exist in that form during the Renaissance. Instead, following some of the observations made by Kahn, this book seeks to uncover a dynamic interplay between classical and contemporary notions of Rome. The perception is that both are operating at the same time, in all sorts of dazzling, conflicted and confusing ways, as the play tries to make sense of Roman history to fit its own very current cultural concerns. This doubled perspective is labelled 'anamorphic', a term derived from art history.

The third issue dealt with in this chapter is the fact that these are plays. Performance theory is seen as a corrective to conventional criticism that reads the plays exclusively as literature. Many critics do of course mention performances, either in Shakespeare's time, our own, or both, but it is very often lip-service. The analysis here balances Cleopatra's cultural importance with Antony's stage presence, especially in the public theatres of Renaissance London. Any such reconstruction is entirely provisional, of course, but at least it attempts to move beyond a narrowly literary conception of the play. Lurking beneath these critical manoeuvres is an awareness that Shakespeare's plays were reconstituted as literature by subsequent cultures.[3]

Antony and Cleopatra in other monographs

It is not surprising that a play at the nexus of so many critical views about major cultural issues also appears in writing concerned with topics other than Shakespeare and Rome. What follows is a sample of such work, chosen for the way these contributions interact with major questions of critical theory, not just literary enquiry. Not all have individual chapters on this play, but they do provide important perspectives in addition to the more traditional ones.

Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (2nd edn, Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).[4]

First published in 1984, *Radical Tragedy* is an important corrective to criticism that views tragedy as somehow inherent to the protagonist, usually manifested in Shakespearian criticism as the well-known formulation of the tragic flaw. Dollimore eschews this emphasis on a historically recently constructed individualism, instead producing a Hegelian theorizing of tragedy as a social form. This provides a nuanced view of the forces that constitute Antony's position:

> heroic *virtus* may appear to be identical with the dominant material forces and relations of power. But this is never actually so: they were only ever coterminous and there is always the risk that a new historical conjuncture will throw them into misalignment. This is what happens in *Antony and Cleopatra*; Antony, originally identified in terms of both *virtus* and those dominant forces and relations, is destroyed by their emerging disjunction. (206)

Dollimore defines the interest of this conflict of forces for the English Renaissance slightly earlier in his discussion, noting that plays like this one were 'Staged in a period in which there occurred the unprecedented decline of the power, military and political, of the titular aristocracy' (204). Even though he is a Roman triumvir, Antony is nonetheless imbricated in this Renaissance play as a member of the aristocracy, because these are the circumstances within which he is constructed. By extension, then, it could be argued that Octavius Caesar wins because he is more successful at managing the contradictions produced both by the nascent Roman empire and its English Renaissance reconfiguration. Within this context, Dollimore's

reformulation of tragedy as fundamentally social refuses to grant Antony's death any transcendent power: 'As effective power slips from Antony he becomes obsessed with reasserting his sense of himself' (210). He further supplements this observation on the next page: '*Virtus*, divorced from the power structure, has left to it only the assertion of a negative, inverted autonomy' (211). Such a perspective radically questions the modern privileging of the supposedly autonomous subject, in a return to the social conditions that precede it.

Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Loomba's book does not contain a chapter specifically on *Antony and Cleopatra*, instead referencing the play as she moves across thematically topical chapters. This permits a more dispersed analysis, allowing her to relate the observations of her individual chapters to the general terrain outlined in the book's title. It is a necessary move because she wishes to discuss not just the three issues of gender, race and performance but how they intertwine. The most sustained encounter with *Antony and Cleopatra* comes in a chapter entitled 'Theatre and the Space of the Other', in a section subtitled 'Spatial Politics'. Loomba sets up the standard stereotypical opposition between masculine Rome and feminine Egypt, but, in a move similar to that of Dollimore, she notes how the figure of Antony fragments after Actium:

> Without power, without space, without Rome and without Cleopatra, Antony disintegrates. It is important that Cleopatra's transformation into the 'whore' and 'witch' occurs precisely at this point: the language of what Antony perceives as a betrayal reduces Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' to both patriarchal and racist stereotypes. (127)

Here is another important corrective to critical convention: Antony himself decries and derides Cleopatra in the language constructed for her by their Roman opponents. This demonstrates the ideological nature of that discourse precisely because it is so partial; it also deals a body blow to criticism that sees their love at the end as somehow transcendent. Loomba's characterization of Cleopatra similarly comprises contradictory elements; not only are these to be expected in a critical analysis of her as a figure, they are managed in this book by interrogating the discourse that previously constructed her personality. This section on the play finishes by describing the performed contradictory elements of the play's ending as 'false resolutions' (129).

Pauline Kiernan, *Shakespeare's Theory of Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Kiernan's book ends with a chapter entitled '*Antony and Cleopatra* as a Defence of Drama'. This balances her first main chapter, which takes a challenging look at dramatic works in an era that produced Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*. She emphasizes the importance, fleeting though it is, of the body in performance, the physicality of acting:

> For Shakespeare's audience, the historical Cleopatra can never appear 'indeed'. The meeting at Cydnus between the two famous lovers is an event in history that history itself has made irretrievable. What spectators at the Globe in the seventeenth century, and spectators at the new Globe in the twentieth century, can see is Shakespeare's Cleopatra: there, she appears 'indeed'. In Plutarch's narrative, Cleopatra's physicality is nowhere described; in Enobarbus' report, little other than her physicality is described. (158–9)

For Kiernan, the moment of performance puts in question the competing discourses, historical and contemporary, adhering to the performing body of the actor, and perhaps even obliterating them (although of course traces do survive). It is almost impossible for late modern audiences not to be aware both of the historical Cleopatra and also Shakespeare's version of her even as they watch another unfolding for their own cultural moment. Kiernan suggests that performance is layered almost like an archaeology of stage presences. It is this immediate context in her chapter that sets the scene for the discussion of Cleopatra, Antony and Octavius Caesar that follows, especially and most importantly the interrelationships between all of them. She resolutely insists on the crucial importance of physicality in all of this:

> a plain utterance is heightened and intensified by the simple, physical act of it being spoken as an exclamation. It is language at its most prosaic describing the most commonplace of human actions. But what it conveys, and conveys most powerfully, is the sense of a human body: the man's solid weight of flesh and bone is what we are aware of. (174)

It is no coincidence that this play provides the pinnacle for Kiernan's argument about the primary importance of performance. After all, the Renaissance dramatists' penchant for self-reflective statements is particularly acute in *Antony and Cleopatra*. What criticism like this does is remind us that these plays are also, crucially, about themselves in performance.[5]

Edited collections

These take two forms: books like this containing new essays, and collections of previously published chapters and essays. The first type is relatively rare when compared with the second, but both are invaluable resources because they bring together a large amount of material on the same topic. They tend to be produced in a major series such as the Longman Critical Readers or the Arden Early Modern Drama Guides (previously Continuum Renaissance Drama). Such series can be treasure troves of information on all sorts of subjects, Shakespeare aside.

John Drakakis (ed.), Antony and Cleopatra*: Contemporary Critical Essays* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

The original Macmillan Casebook series contains a great deal of older literary critical material; the New Casebooks provide much more recent criticism in one convenient place. They fall into the second category defined above, since they collect already published information, albeit with a new editorial introduction. Mostly, these take the form of essays that have been influenced in some way or another by elements of critical theory, and this one is no exception. It contains twelve pieces, reprinted in the form of essays, although some of them were originally published as book chapters. In the words of the Introduction:

> The first six essays in the present collection, ranging from John Danby's attempt to problematize the act of judgement in *Antony and Cleopatra*, through Janet Adelman's and Phyllis Rackin's focus on the rhetorical function of poetry, to Terence Hawkes's account of its social context, and then beyond to Neville Davies's and Margot Heinemann's varying accounts of the play's negotiations of 'history', all in their different ways mark a distinct departure from those traditional approaches which privilege transcendental themes, and which express an uncritical fascination with the seductive allure of Cleopatra. (17–18)

None of these essays, therefore, is taken from the monographs that are described in this particular chapter of the current volume, precisely because they are oppositional in tone to the received wisdom of conventional criticism. The rest of Drakakis's Introduction investigates why this should be so, forming a context for the other essays collected in his collection.

Naomi Conn Liebler (ed.), *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Liebler's collection contains one essay that relates Shakespeare's play to two other Renaissance dramas about Cleopatra, plus one that is fully concerned with Shakespeare's play. Liebler's primary interest in editing this collection is stated in her Introduction:

> What has been missing from feminist criticism of tragedy, especially, is a reading of women as such actors and agents, as tragic heroes, protagonists positioned in their plays in precisely (or nearly so) the same ways as Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Dr. Faustus, and Macbeth. This volume aims to supply that reading by exploring the dimensions of a feminist tragic heroic discourse. (2)

Regarding *Antony and Cleopatra*, such a project sidesteps many of the issues that have been raised in the current chapter, because Liebler's book is itself produced by a very specific kind of critical discourse: 'Tragedy always tells the tale of a culture in crisis; it depends no less on what happens in domestic arenas than it does on what happens on battlefields' (3).

The two investigations of the figure of Cleopatra in this collection fully accord with this editorial position. In her essay on three versions of Cleopatra, Mimi Still Dixon notes the resonances produced by the queen's theatricality:

> Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is a complex play in part because it foregrounds these issues of sexual

power and visual perspective, of subjects and objects and knowledge relations. By doing so, it avoids the simple resolutions of the moralizing or romanticizing representation. (75)

Such a critical gesture therefore refuses the usual closure enacted upon the play as privileging the fecund power of love over the dearth of politics. Dixon shows how the figure of Cleopatra ultimately undoes such simplistic assumptions:

> 'Cleopatra, of course, is the supremely self-conscious object. She exploits her power as visual object with her unrelenting theatrics. Her personal and political strategies depend on the power of theatrical spectacle' (76).

This formulation comes very close indeed to the kind of performative power ascribed to Cleopatra by Kiernan. Dixon is effectively proposing that a notable, and culturally variable, confluence of effects is produced by the extraordinary affective power of gender in performance.

Kay Stanton provides the second essay in the collection that discusses *Antony and Cleopatra*. Unlike Dixon, she is interested in Cleopatra's mythic resonances. Her starting point reaffirms the editorial gloss already noted in Liebler's Introduction: 'male and female literary critics have resisted granting Shakespeare's Cleopatra full status as tragic hero' (93), and, again, 'The same Greco-Roman tradition that would propagandize against the historical Cleopatra as "prostitute queen" also defined and refined the genre of tragedy' (93). Stanton shows that the rules of the game are already fixed against personages such as Cleopatra, although she sees Shakespeare's play as in some sense reacting in performance against that tradition.

Journal articles

No book chapter can possibly cover the volume and range of articles on a play such as *Antony and Cleopatra*. However, this is where the internet starts to flavour critical material because of the availability of essays in digital formats. This is especially important because of the difficulty in easily accessing paper copies of journals, not all of which are carried even by university libraries, which are in many cases reallocating their budgets from print to electronic. The two main collections of peer-reviewed academic journals are Project Muse (https://muse.jhu.edu) and JSTOR (https://www. jstor.org). Much depends on precisely which of several journal collections that exist within both is available to a particular library; what this means in practice is that access to journals depends on which virtual collection has been purchased. Their online availability, however, makes them at least as important as edited collections, because they provide instant digital versions of many items at the same time, and these can be searched for specific phrases or texts. JSTOR has recently gone further in this regard, with a new search engine capable of enumerating all of the essays in the collection containing a set phrase. For example, one could take a speech from *Antony and Cleopatra* and look for any essay that quotes that passage. Many of these will be older critical essays, but the utility of such a process is obvious.

Historical information

Shakespeare's primary source is of course Plutarch. See Early English Books Online – Text Creation Partnership: http://quod. lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A09802.0001.001?view=toc. A useful modern edition is *Plutarch: Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, ed. Arthur Clough (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2010). The section on Antony is on 854–89. The Comparison of Demetrius and Antony that follows (890–1) paints Antony in an unflattering light.

The most thorough recent historical biography of the famous couple is Adrian Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010).

A recent overview of Shakespeare's engagement with the classics can be found in Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). His position is summarized as follows:

> Shakespeare knew quite a lot of classical literature. Given his education and the period in which he lived it would be surprising if he did not.
>
> Shakespeare did interesting things with that classical learning, and understanding what he did with his

> knowledge, rather than just trying scrupulously to assess its exact extent, is central to an understanding of his work.
>
> The ways Shakespeare used his classical learning changed throughout his career, in response to his contemporaries (including Ben Jonson), to new reading, and to the demands of different generic and theatrical settings. (2)

Burrow's book is organized thematically rather than by individual plays, with references to *Antony and Cleopatra* throughout. The most sustained comes in his chapter on Plutarch (207–11). The play provides him with a test case for the ways in which Shakespeare mined his Plutarch for dramatic ideas.

It should be apparent that this chapter is not an annotated bibliography; hence, it should be much more useful for students in particular to have a sense of the main arguments made in critical material and of how this material is informed by different currents of critical theory, and so this constitutes a guided, discursive tour. However, there is one important consideration that has been in the background throughout: critics always have an axe to grind, even if simply in response to another critical position. Theorized material can be especially difficult to read if one does not know where it is coming from, and that goes for this chapter as well.

Ultimately, the best thing to do when engaging in detail with a play like *Antony and Cleopatra* is just to watch it, or listen to an audio version, letting the words wash over you. Digital availability makes the plays so much more easily accessible, whether it be on DVD (as with recent performances recorded at the Globe in 2014 and at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2017) or an online resource such as Digital Theatre Plus (https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/education) or on YouTube. Recordings of performances are especially useful for students in non-English-speaking countries in that they have subtitles. All of this seems obvious, but as always, there is a catch: no performance is neutral, just as no critic is neutral. Choices are made at all levels. For example, in Trevor Nunn's 1974 television version, Cleopatra's sumptuous Egypt is denoted by multicoloured drapes and a suggestion of a hot, sandy environment, while Rome is cold and sterile, a pure white ambience fitting for men in togas. There is little sense of Cleopatra's Greek origins, and in this respect the production follows an age-old critical line. There is one good thing about all of this: if you can include performance details in an essay, you are likely to make a positive impression on your marker. Or, if you wish, you can just enjoy the play for its own sake.

Apart from hosting full video and radio performances (both amateur and professional) as well as clips of single scenes, YouTube is worth mentioning further in that it offers an incredible wide array of resources, ranging from recorded university lectures to interviews with actors and directors about the challenges the play poses in performance, to summaries of the plays for the laziest students who cannot even bring themselves to read (or watch) the entire play. As a free resource, accessible from anywhere in the world, YouTube has inevitably changed and will certainly continue to shape the landscape of teaching Shakespeare, especially for students living in non-English speaking countries, who can benefit from access to the plays in ways that would have been inconceivable, say, only twenty years ago.