The Trial of Cleopatra and the Women of Italy

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要約

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シェイクスピアの『アントニーとクレオパトラ』は、『ハムレット』や『リア王』などに表れる懐疑的な期間をはさんで、ヘロイックでロマンティックな愛への見事な復帰である、としばしば理解されてきた。近年このような従来の解釈に対する反論が多いが、本稿はこの反論の当否を問題にするものである。

『アントニーとクレオパトラ』はその先行作品である『ロミオとジュリエット』同様にイタリアを舞台とするが、時代はルネサンスのイタリアではなく、古代ローマとエジプトである。この作品のローマは活力を外部に依存しなければならないローマとなっている（それは丁度エリザベス朝の英国がイタリアに依存したようにである。）クレオパトラの人間像を造形するのに、シェイクスピアは、イタリアとその女性を探求に、露感を与えるベテルルカ的というよりは、むしろ媚婦的あるいはマキアヴェリ的な女としてとらえる当時の演劇界を予想し、この問題に対する彼の見解を示そうとしたのかもしれない。

クレオパトラの弱点として非難するのは、このような女性像からシェイクスピアがクレオパトラを救っているのか、ウェプスターの『白魔』のヴィトーリア裁判やエノバーブスの有名なクレオパトラ「呪呪」などと比較しつつ検討したい。ヴィトーリアや同類の女性たちはパラドックスから逃れることはできないが、『アントニーとクレオパトラ』においては、パラドックスの手法はクレオパトラに対する疑念を解消するだけでなく、彼女を謎に官能の限界をも超越することに成功している。
I will tell you.
The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggared all description: she did lie
In her pavilion—cloth of gold, of tissue—
O'er picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature.

(2.2.200-211)

These words are among the most memorable of Antony and Cleopatra, even though they are not spoken by either of its two main characters. They belong of course to Enobarbus, who addresses them to some fellow Romans who are at once both admiring and sceptical. These Romans constitute a kind of court which is judging Cleopatra (and Antony) in her absence. By extension we the audience form a part of that court and our experience of the play includes our deliberation over the question whether and in what sense Cleopatra (the enchantress? possibly the witch?) is innocent or guilty. The pleas for and against her come variously throughout the action.

I will refer to Enobarbus's speech as I go through this paper, and I will ask what judgment we can finally read into it. I also want to examine the speech in connection with some of its sources, for more than just Plutarch is involved. I want to consider Cleopatra in the company of other famous dramatic heroines of the early seventeenth century: notably Beatrice-Joanna of The Changeling, Vittoria Corombona of The White Devil, and the Duchess of Malfi. All of these represent a growth of interest on the part of playwrights in creating powerful, challenging, and even dangerous women; and Cleopatra seems to be Shakespeare’s way of responding to that new process.

They are women of Italy and Cleopatra is a woman of Egypt. Can she be properly compared? The English preoccupation with Italy has been long-standing, dating from at least a century before Shakespeare and continuing up to the present (think only of the novels of E. M. Forster and specifically the movies made recently from them). The usual practice for the Elizabethans was to set the play entirely in Italy, with more or less all Italian characters (with the odd Spaniard thrown in), and then invite the audience to form their superior English judgment of the goings-on. In Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare teases this covert practice out into the open by dividing the play into two markedly contrasting and opposing camps with a strong compulsion on the audience to go into one or the other. Do we identify with Rome or Alexandria? In terms of updating to Elizabethan times, which contemporary cultures are represented by either?
This strong opposition leads me to a third and final point, which is that I want to consider the trial of Cleopatra in part through the stylistic device of paradox. Cleopatra is a paradox in herself and she can be compared on that basis with these other women of Italy. The device or figure of paradox operates variously, but there are two distinctive, and again opposing, features to it: one is closed paradox, the other open. The first says because light, therefore dark, with a downward, pessimistic effect; the other, because dark, therefore also light, with a contrary, upward and optimistic motion. The title of John Webster’s play, *The White Devil*, is a good example of such a paradoxical model.

Now, although it contributes to the trial of Cleopatra, the speech of Enobarbus unlike many others in the play is not directly accusatory. It is famous for its evocative beauty, which is what audiences love about it. As we all know, it follows North’s translation of Plutarch very closely, and Plutarch seems to dwell objectively on the marvellousness of the occasion, in so far as any description involving character can be objective. A slightly different emphasis reveals itself in Shakespeare’s version. The picture Enobarbus paints of Cleopatra is undeniably that of a temptress, that most dangerous of women even, an enchantress. Not only Antony but nature itself is challenged by her power of attraction:

Antony,

Enthroned i’ th’ market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to th’air, which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in nature.

(2. 2. 224–28)

The effect on Antony, as the Roman’s opening spokesman Philo and others after him maintain, is to unman him. Like Plutarch, Enobarbus cites Cleopatra’s likeness or rivalry to Venus and points to the multiple cupids making up her retinue. It was the sorry fate of Mars to doff his armour and be caught napping in Venus’s bower in full view of all the gods when he should have been engaged in contests of arms, and this aspect of their relationship the humorous Enobarbus develops beyond the Plutarchan original. The audience of the gods finds its counterpart in Enobarbus’s listeners as well as in the soldiery positioned to witness Antony’s dishonourable debauches near at hand. Throughout the renaissance the love of Mars and Venus, with its comic emphasis on Venus’s cuckolding of her lame husband Vulcan (lame presumably in more than one sense), stands for the misspending of virility on a woman rather than its demonstration in the field of combat.

A classic example is Spenser’s description of ensnared virility in the Bowre of Blisse, in the second book of *The Faerie Queene*, and I suggest that Shakespeare is implicating Antony in the Spenserian picture:

Upon a bed of roses she was layd
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
And was arrayd, or rather disarrayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtle web Arachne cannot spin,
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th’ aire more lightly flee...
The young man sleeping by her, seemd to bee
Some goodly swain of honorable place...

His warlike armes, the idle instruments
Of sleeping praise, were hong upon a tree,

(II. 12. 77–80, ll. 685–720)

The Spenserian context reminds us of the strongly Circean character of the enchantress; and this in turn along with the captivating and ravishing song that is heard in the bower helps register the siren–like quality of the music played on Cleopatra’s barge, which appears to denature the elements (“and made/The water which they beat to follow faster,/As amorous of their strokes”). The nets this Arachne spins have the effect and quality of the ropes and rigging of Cleopatra’s barge; so that what the barge ultimately brings to mind is that other boat on which Ulysses and his crew sailed, which fell under enchantment and which became the source or topos of all siren–singing. Another example would be the pirate ship which Bacchus turned into a floating vineyard and the crew into dolphins. Being a dolphin is doubtless better than being a swine but the principle of enchantment is the same, and the Bacchanalian excesses to which Antony is given further enforce the parallel.

In The Faerie Queene Sir Guyon and the Palmer wake the young knight from his enchanted slumber, a detail which occurs similarly in North’s Plutarch at the point at which Antony learns of political trouble brewing: “Then began Antonius with much a doe a little to rouse him selfe as if he had bene wakened out of a deepe sleep.”(Sleep, as in the medieval example of the long sleep of Merlin, King Arthur’s magician, is a significant dimension of enchantment literature.) Shakespeare’s development of his Plutarchan source along the lines of Spenser brings out the Acrasia or Circe, the enchantress in Cleopatra. This is how the Romans see her, but they are too prosaic to put it in the language Enobarbus uses. He being half–Alexandrianized like Antony is also half in love with the danger he describes. His Roman companions respond in such a lack–lustre way to him that his speech is itself, to apply the Circe metaphor, an example of casting pearls before swine.

All such siren–singing is a world away from the Romans’ experience, But none of it is beyond the scope of the typical Elizabethan traveller seeking pleasure and enlightenment abroad; not if we are to believe a characteristic polemic against travelling by Roger Ascham. The place of temptation, I should like us to note, is not the Middle East or the further shores of Greece and her islands but Italy:

But I am afraid that over–many of our travellers into Italy
do not eschew the way to Circes’ court, but go, and ride,
and run, and fly thither: they make great haste to come to her; they
make great suit to serve her; yea, I could point out some with my finger, that never had gone out of England, but only to serve Circes in Italy. Vanity and vice, and any license to ill living in England, was counted stale and rude unto them. And so, being mules and horses before they went, returned very swine and asses home again: yet every where very foxes with subtle and bushy heads; and where they may, very wolves, with cruel malicious hearts. A marvellous monster, which for filthiness of living, for dulness to learning himself, for williness in dealing with others, for malice in hurting without cause, should carry at once in one body, the belly of a swine, the head of an ass, the brain of a fox, the womb of a wolf."

As this extract shows, Ascham introduces a further element in his portrait of the foolish innocent abroad in Italy, and that is the Machiavellian: the image of the swine into which those who think they are dallying with a local Italian Venus (who is really Circe) are transformed acquires here an aspect of cunning, foxiness, such as we associate with a typical villain of the Elizabethan stage. Circe does not merely reduce her victims to an abject animal state; she makes of them a composite creature, both ineffectual (as far as his own salvation goes) and yet malevolent and dangerous concerning the good of others. Typical of his period, Ascham collapses the oppositions carefully maintained by the real Machiavelli, who in chapter eighteen of The Prince speaks of the necessity of combining the character of a fox and a lion: ‘As the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves, you have to be a fox in order to be wary of traps, and a lion to overawe the wolves.’ Either Ascham misremembers Machiavelli or he realigns the animals which provide the examples. The newly formed Italianate Englishman combines the cunning of a fox with the viciousness of a wolf, the one being simply an extension on the other, and in no sense a corrective to it, as it is in Machiavelli's conception. The neo-Machiavellian portrait lacks entirely the example of the lion's courage and authority. What, then, has become of Mars?

Enobarbus's speech describing Cleopatra's barge seems to point us in the direction of Circe. It is true that while Antony is none the wiser for his encounters with Cleopatra, yet neither does he exchange his lionine courage and authority for wolfish viciousness, according to the lesson of The Schoolmaster. So, pace Ascham. She, on the other hand, continues to be wily, and many would say—and do say—dangerous. Should we then see her as an example of that new kind of Circe, emerging on the late-Elizabethan stage, the Machiavellian woman? We have seen earlier examples, in this theatre, among the men, notably Richard III and the Jew of Malta, as well as lesser examples like Mendoza in The Spanish Tragedy; but latterly it becomes the women's turn: Isabella in Marston's Insatiate Countess, followed by Vittoria Corombona in The White Devil, followed by Beatrice-Joanna in The Changeling; or, to cite a powerful comic example, Franceschina in Marston's The Dutch Courtesan. How does Cleopatra belong to this pattern? Let me look
at another possible source for the barge speech in *Antony*. Malevole, the disguised and disaffected duke in Marston’s principal comedy, *The Malcontent*, delivers a soliloquy on Italian women which conveys a foretaste of Enobarbus on Cleopatra:

When in an Italian lascivious palace,
A lady guardianless,
Left to the push of all allurement,
The strongest incitements to immodesty,
To have her bound, incensed with wanton sweets,
Her veins filled high with heating delicates,
Soft rest, sweet music, amorous masquerers,
Lascivious banquets, sin itself gilt o’er,
Strong fantasy tricking up strange delights,
Presenting it dressed pleasingly to sense,
Sense leading it unto the soul...

The words, ‘Strong fantasy tricking up strange delights,/Presenting it dressed pleasingly to sense’ have something of an echo and feeling of ‘a strange invisible perfume hits the sense’, so that embedded in Enobarbus’s description are details traceable to Malevole’s remarks.

The emphasis Marston places on woman as potential victim, on women’s weakness, contrasts with the portrait of Cleopatra which finds her to be in control, an enchantress casting spells to potentially if not actually damaging effect just as the enchanter Prospero is to cast them later to positive purpose. However, to take this argument a step further, to what extent can an enchantress ever be said to be truly in control if the motive of her conduct is irrational, as it is for all witches whose domain is the emotional, the superstitious, or fantastic—a point which Prospero, once more, will later make against the witch Sycorax? What difference, if any, can there be between a woman who practises guile and one who lends herself to guile as a ready and convenient medium? Especially if, as Malevole grimly concludes in *The Malcontent*, the object of the enchantment is not the woman who is seduced but the man whom her seduction betrays:

Enticed by that great bawd, Opportunity;
Thus being prepared, clap to her easy ear
Youth in good clothes, well-shaped, rich,
Fair-spoken, promising—noble, ardent, blood—full,
Witty, flattering—Ulysses absent,
O Ithaca, can chastest Penelope hold out?

(ll. 44–49)

All this notwithstanding, it is also the case that the tone of Malevole’s words are much darker, more sinister than any spoken by Enobarbus; so before drawing Cleopatra entirely and irrevocably into Marston’s satirical picture, let us recall that yet another prompt for the barge imagery of Cleopatra most likely comes from Marlowe’s play *Dido Queene of Carthage*, with its affecting portrayal of a woman suffering nobly for love. Since Shakespeare took so much imagery of an amorous kind from Marlowe, he may well, as
Thomas P. Harrison argues, have taken these words of Dido to Aeneas:

I'll give thee tackling made of rivell'd gold,
Wound on the barks of odoriferous trees;
Oars of massy ivory, full of holes,
Through which the water shall delight to play.

(Dido, 3. 1. 115–118)

Ten thousand Cupids hover in the air,
And fan it in Aeneas' lovely face!

(Dido, 4. 4. 48–49)

Dido's attempt to beguile Aeneas into staying with her in Carthage meets with temporary success but in the end results in the queen's mournful death. Yet it elevates the motif of dalliance from the sardonic, satirical plane on which I have been discussing it and gives it a fresher, more open setting. This is literally so, since both Dido's words, whether to Aeneas or about him, and Enobarbus's on Cleopatra describe the outdoors, where the two superior elements, air and fire, are more able to direct operations ('a burnished throne burned on the water'), just as they do in that later play about seafarers, with its ethically superior magician, The Tempest. Not only that but Cleopatra's desperate attempt to hold on to Antony may arguably derive a certain dignity from its model in Dido's more straightforward, ingenuous hope of detaining Aeneas. Antony, to his regret, fails to tear himself a way from Cleopatra. Aeneas, on the other hand, who succeeds in detaching himself from Dido is eventually more troubled by the memory of his desertion of her than he is by that of the destruction of Troy or the death of his own father—all of which only adds to Dido's stature. The invisible perfume that hits the sense of the adjacent wharfs (i.e. the open air) in Enobarbus's description and the odoriferous trees of Dido's imaginative marine pastoral, not being easily localised, can claim a more ideal status than the incense of Malevole's description, confined to the body in terms of emphatic, restrictive sensuality: 'to have her bound... wanton sweets... her veins filled... heating delicates... banquets', all focussed on the word 'sin' which hangs like a spider in the web of Marston's verse.

If a distinction can be allowed between the more open, freer evocations of Shakespeare and Marlowe and the enclosed, obsessive brooding of Marston, we must nonetheless acknowledge that Shakespeare too contributed to the tradition of disaffection in which Marston writes. Malevole speaks in some ways like a married Hamlet, the same Hamlet who muses misogynistically over the skull of Yorick in the gravedigger's scene:

Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint
an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that.

(5. 1. 163–65)

The dominant trend in drama of the early 1600s is satirical and it to some degree affects Shakespeare's concept of tragedy. That most uncomfortable of comic plays Measure for Measure fits appropriately into such a trend. Shakespeare moves out of this phase but he does not do so easily, and David Bevington who proposes a date for Antony and Cleopatra late in 1606, very close to that of King Lear, argues that it shows 'no clear pattern of
development towards a lighter spirit and vision.\textsuperscript{50} Certainly, it has been difficult to produce the play in such a way as to make its lovers correspond in practice to the noble promise of its imagery. The last really convincing heroic Antony was Michael Redgrave in 1953, and he drew upon the formula of the collapsing strong man holding out barely against the odds.\textsuperscript{7} And the difficulties of representing Antony as truly heroic are not confined to our own day, as an account of stage productions shows.\textsuperscript{6} It seems to have been a problem at the time of writing, as the ambivalent response which Enobarbus's speech calls forth demonstrates. But overcoming obstacles to heroic expression was no new task for Shakespeare. We do not have to wait until the second decade of his career as a dramatist to see him undertake it, though admittedly there are differences between the early and late tragedies, the satirical character of the later period being a major one.

The solution concerning Cleopatra, that is to say, the verdict on her trial, is perhaps as follows. Although she is an enchantress, Cleopatra's main purpose is not to transform her victims, in the customary manner of Circe, but largely to transform herself. The transformations she imposes on others are not inflicted on them in the manner of Acrasia in the Bowre of Blisse, but urged as a form of rescue, even salvation. Her most significant transformation of Antony (following her earlier career of distracting him) results from her own self-beguiling. She falls into a sleep and dreams of an Antony at last nobly metamorphosed:

\begin{quote}
I dreamt that there was an emperor Antony.
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another man!
\end{quote}

(5. 2. 75-77)

Again, sleep is all-important. We remember that Prospero falls briefly into a sleep or reverie (others perceive it as a distraction) just before performing his most demanding magic. As examples from The Tempest show, sleep serves the paradoxical model: loss of consciousness can mean loss of control, as in the vulnerability of the sleeping Alonso and Gonzago early in the play, or it can be the means to regeneration and recovery, as in the rehabilitation of nearly all the guilty characters at the end. Cleopatra's words and her subsequent immortalising of the memory of Antony indicate that she has transformed herself from bad or dangerous enchantress into good.

At the end of his testimony on Cleopatra Enobarbus adopts the language of paradox to show how the queen is constantly able to secure her freedom:

\begin{quote}
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies. For vilest things
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
Bless her when she is riggish.
\end{quote}

(2. 245-50)

It is a freedom based on the power of self-transformation, and Enobarbus's words remind the audience both to expect the unpredictable in Cleopatra and through her to experience
such paradoxes as the ignoble resolving itself into the noble, and vice versa. Late in the play after the death of Antony, Cleopatra forestalls or delays the glorious alteration we expect by apparently trying, even at this hour, to strike an unsavoury deal with Caesar (in that part of the last scene involving Seleucus). But she would not be Cleopatra if the change did not come unexpectedly and against the tenour of her previous behaviour. When it does come, it comes miraculously and enchantingly.

What then of some of these other women who 'clay the appetites they feed'? The words seem to recall such speeches as Malevole's condemnation of 'heating delicates' and 'lascivious banquets', which is the perspective from which the Romans generally view Cleopatra. Typical representatives include those Machiavellian women whom I referred to earlier: figures such as Beatrice-Joanna and Vittoria Corombona, powerful and determined women whose circumstances, like Cleopatra's, put them on trial. Paradox also defines these heroines: they aim at one man only to fall prey to another: Beatrice-Joanna seeks Alsemero and is ready to kill for him but she kills through De Flores (whom she would use as a Machiavellian agent) only to find herself inseparably wedded to him in ethical terms. The difference between the paradox governing her and that which defines Cleopatra is that Deflores is an irreducible part of the equation and as a result exerts power over her. She can never find that individual freedom which Cleopatra has to define herself. Cleopatra avoids the power that Octavius would impose; her elusiveness is inseparable from that tendency to desert Antony at earlier moments in the play (a clear example of the paradoxical Cleopatra), but it leaves her free to redeem both herself and his memory.

The case of Vittoria Corombona is similar to that of Beatrice-Joanna. She too aims at a man she can never really have while the play pairs her not sexually but dramatically and memorably with her male alter ego the cunning Cardinal Monticelso. The brilliant, embellished stichomythia of the courtroom scene acts out the confrontation between a manipulative eroticism and a manipulative religiosity, the two being inverted mirrors of each other. In the mind of the audience Vittoria is inseparable from the figure she most loathes and fears, just as Beatrice-Joanna is compelled to acknowledge something in herself that binds her to the despised Deflores. In both plays the structure of paradox is powerfully operative but in such a way as to imprison the heroine and to deny her any opportunity of self-realisation.

The Duchess of Malfi, to dwell briefly on Webster's other major tragedy, avoids the fate of Vittoria or Beatrice-Joanna but only because the playwright deprives her of her freedom to act. After her challenging pursuit of Antonio, in which a real flesh and blood woman (to use her own words) stands impressively before us, the Duchess does virtually nothing of any interest. Webster seems nervous of allowing her to act in case she should fall prey to the same unsavouriness in which all the rest of the characters are steeped. Like her new husband Antonio, whom Webster also preserves from the ugliness of action, the Duchess dies a marginal and ineffectual character. Webster uses the whole of the fifth act attempting to create a kind of noble-martyr memory of her; but the result is like a slower-paced version of Donne's Anniversarie poems to the sacred memory of Elizabeth
Drury, and no more successful. After the opening scenes the play gives the actress who plays her little to work with, so it was not just spiteful but also imperceptive of the reviewer who reputedly quoted the line, 'I am Duchess of Malfi still', against the poor actress who lamely delivered it, with the smart rejoinder, 'But my dear girl, you never were!' The defect is in the dramatist not the actress. What gives the fifth act its subtle strength is the psychologial plausibility with which Bosola converts from common hitman to avenging agent.

Shakespeare is often acknowledged as bucking the trend in writing an heroic love tragedy against the prevailing satirical and pessimistic mood. The Alexandrian sections of Antony and Cleopatra render a sensuality which is transcendent, whereas in the drama of his contemporaries it is so often merely diseased. Enobarbus's speech is carefully constructed so as to contain enough of the Malevole-like sceptical to ensure that the vision it presents is not out of touch with the current temper while renewing, and thereby readmitting the Marlovian heroic. This enables Cleopatra to release the 'heating delicates' from her veins and say:

I am fire and air, my other elements
I give to baser life.

(5. 2. 288–84)

Shakespeare saw a different kind of Italy from his contemporary Elizabethans. There is little in his later work to suggest that he wanted to turn his back on the romance vision of the 1590s, or to repudiate that country that was passionate, mercurial, and spirited. He may well have chosen the occasion of Antony and Cleopatra to comment on the English tendency to regard Italy as the devil's own backyard. In this play of course the Romans are the English and the Egyptians are the Italians. Dolabella's courteously reserved, 'Gentle madam, no', is spoken like the words of an English member of a foreign delegation.

To conclude, let us look one last time at Cleopatra through the eyes of Enobarbus:

I saw her once
Hop forty paces through the public street,
And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
That she did make defect perfection
And, breathless, power breathe forth.

(2. 2. 238–42)

Through this paradox which reminds us how, following ancient aesthetic precept, Cleopatra derives her art from nature and not enchantment, Shakespeare is directing the audience, the jury, to deliver their verdict. In Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare may be saying to his fellow Englishmen, as he has done several times before, 'Look to yourselves, enjoy Italy, but also leave her alone'.


5) Thomas P. Harrison, 'Shakespeare and Malowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*'; *UTSE* 35 (1956), p. 59.


8) See Bevington, pp. 44–70.

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