

1973

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Recommended Citation

Longo, Joseph A. (1973) "Cleopatra and Octavia: Archetypal Imagery in 'Antony and Cleopatra'," *University of Dayton Review*: Vol. 10: No. 3, Article 5.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol10/iss3/5>

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Cleopatra and Octavia: Archetypal Imagery in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Joseph A. Longo

It is axiomatic to cite elements in *Antony and Cleopatra* to which Shakespeare's genius can justly lay claim: the imaginative and bold use of language and symbols, that mastery of style described by Coleridge as "*Feliciter audax*."¹ This achievement is particularly evident in Shakespeare's ability to employ moving and profound archetypal images which capture the élan of myth in the advancement of his ideas, specifically in the treatment of the antagonism between the naked realities of political power and erotic-emotional love. One of the methods which Shakespeare utilizes in the development of this uncompromising dichotomy is the use of symbols to explore myth: on one side is Cleopatra, the Dionysian energy; on the opposite side is Octavia, the Apollonian force.² Throughout *Antony and Cleopatra*, in numerous rhetorical forms, Shakespeare contrasts these two primal forces and invariably asserts the dominance of the Dionysian, although on occasion this partiality is tempered by warnings and misgivings.

I do not wish to imply, in the spirit of Dryden's methodical, symmetrical reduction of the play to the issues of love and honor, that the complexity and richness of *Antony and Cleopatra* can be condensed to these opposing forces. I merely suggest that the symbolism traditionally associated with these conflicting Dionysian and Apollonian states, these analogues of the human spirit, is a major ingredient of the play. It would be foolish to assert that Shakespeare is conscious of the mythic pattern which he employs; rather, Shakespeare unconsciously tapped the resources of archetypal symbolism.

In his *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872),³ Nietzsche gives us the apparatus to understand various states of human experience: the ecstatic, savage, sensual, demonic principle whose rapture is allied to a physical intoxication he called Dionysiac; the Apollonian signified restraint, clarity, order, and rationality. The *modus operandi* of the Apollonian is sober thinking and propriety; its logical equivalents may be symbolized in the imagery of Head and World. The apotheosis of these traits is, for Nietzsche, the disciplined aesthetics of the "art of sculpture" (951). Apollo is selected by Nietzsche because this Olympian deity is the "shining one," the god "of light" (953), the "glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*" (954). Essential to this schema is Nietzsche's apprehension of Apollo "as ethical deity, [who] exacts measure of his disciples, and, that to this end, he requires self-knowledge. And so, side by side with the esthetic necessity for beauty, there occur the demands 'know thyself' and 'nothing overmuch'" (966).

The logical teleology of such criteria is individual and social objectivity, truth, and restraint; to these ends the traits of pity, self-sacrifice, and tranquility are pre-requisite virtues. Ultimately, Apollo is linked with the world of phenomena, with nature (1035ff.).

The Dionysian, as with many pre-Olympian gods, is akin to the spirit of Bacchic frenzy and irrationality; the Dionysiac rapture rises "either under the influence of the narcotic draught, which we hear of in the songs of all primitive peoples, or with the potent coming of spring penetrating all nature with joy" (995). Its traits are a "... blissful ecstasy which rises from the innermost depths of man, aye, of nature, at this very collapse of the *principium individuationis* . . . which is brought home to us most intimately perhaps by the analogy *drunkenness*" (955). The instinctive and savage, the sensuous and cruel, the power, awe, and terror endemic to Dionysos (959) coalesce, perhaps, in the images of Heart and Flesh. The Dionysian instinct has its logical parallel for Nietzsche in the orgiastic, "non-plastic . . . art of music" (951). Unlike Apollo and the *principium individuationis*, "by the mystical triumphant cry of Dionysos the spell of individuation is broken, and the way lies open to the Mothers of Being" (1033). This mystical feeling of Oneness, of "the dissolution of the individual and his unification with primordial existence" (990, 957, 971) partakes of the ritual sacrifice of dismemberment: "the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire" (1001). Such mythic dissolution into unity with primordial life has as its efficient cause an exquisite perception of subjectivity (969), and to this mystic unity the Bacchic wantonness is essential. Nietzsche, therefore, equates Dionysos with the world of numina, with music: "Dionysian art, too, wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them We are really for a brief moment Primordial Being itself" (1039) for "through Dionysian music the individual phenomenon is enriched and expanded into a picture of the world" (1043). This chthonic, dynamic energy is tempered, appropriately, by Apollo with his "measured restraint, that freedom from the wilder emotions," that philosophical calm of the sculptor-god (954).

Professor J. F. Danby has noted the central process of *Antony and Cleopatra* to be "the logic of a peculiarly Shakespearian dialectic. Opposites are juxtaposed, mingled, married; then from the very union which seems to promise strength dissolution flows."⁴ He adds, "In *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare needs the opposites that merge, unite, and fall apart. They enable him to handle the reality he is writing about—the vast containing opposites of Rome and Egypt, the World and the Flesh" (140). In his analysis of the unique "Shakespearian dialectic" in *Antony and Cleopatra* Danby is most perceptive in his recognition of Octavia as "one of Shakespeare's minor triumphs in the play, beautifully placed in relation to the main figures and the tenor of their meaning Octavia is the opposite of Cleopatra as Antony is the opposite of Caesar" (142). Regretably, however, Professor Danby devotes a brief page to this provocative issue; my intention is to expand these suggestions.⁵

Although one must take the prejudiced Agrippa's estimate of Octavia during the Reconciliation Scene (II.ii) *con granum salis*, the truth of his comments are, nevertheless, substantiated throughout the play. Agrippa finds Octavia to be one

whose beauty claims
No worse a husband than the best of men;
Whose virtue, and whose general graces, speak
That which none else can utter.⁶ (128-31)

The "beauty, wisdom, modesty" which Maecenas finds in Octavia (II.ii.241) is complemented by the Messenger's appraisal given to Cleopatra (III.iii); shorter in stature than Cleopatra, "low-voic'd" (13), who "shows a body, rather than a life,/ A statue, than a breather" (20-21), round of face (30), with brown hair and low forehead (31-33), a widow who is thirty—in contrast to Cleopatra's thirty-eight—(26-28), Octavia appears to be a figure derived from classical mythology. Octavia is perhaps the most ethereal persona of *Antony and Cleopatra*; as Danby observes, "it is the interfluent life of this reality rather than the personality of its vehicle which fills the scene" (142) in which Octavia appears. Sharply delineated by Shakespeare, Octavia is the image of Apollonian civility. Antony himself admits that Octavia is "a gem of a woman" (III.xiii.108), and Cleopatra finds her to be one with "modest eyes/ And still conclusion" (IV.xv.27-28). Octavia is the incarnation of temperance, serenity, of selfless love untainted by worldly or political ambition, malice, and concupiscence. Honorable, decorous, and apparently chaste since her widowhood, Octavia is characterized by Enobarbus—one whose judgment is without challenge—as having a "holy, cold, and still conversation" (II.vi.119-120).

Always restrained and rational, Octavia is the exemplum, to Antony, of Rome: the old life, public commitment, sobriety, honor, stoic asceticism. As Maurice Charney notes, "coldness represents the opposite [to Egypt and hotness] Roman quality of temperance. Its exemplar is Octavia."⁷ Antony's marriage to Octavia is, of course, one of political expediency, a loveless union to heal the political wounds between himself and Octavius; as Enobarbus acutely perceives, the mystic tyranny of Cleopatra is ever-present: "Antony will use his affection where it is. He married but his occasion here" (II.vi.127-129). In one of the few scenes which Shakespeare devotes to establish the relationship between Antony and Octavia (II.iii.), we discover a cold, dispassionate marriage best described as "duty" rather than "love." Octavia accepts the possibility of separation from Antony with typical Roman stoicism and resignation; also, the conversation between the two is punctuated with the most formal terms of address, with "sir" and "dear lady." Later, when Antony, with Octavia, departs from Rome to Athens, Enobarbus comments, "Octavia weeps / To part from Rome" (III.ii.3-4) and, we soon discover, from Octavius (39-45).

Placed in this delicate balance between brother and husband (Shakespeare omits Plutarch's account of Octavia's success in reconciling the two), Octavia succinctly enunciates the power struggle in a stunning, violent image: "Wars 'twixt you twain would be / As if the world should cleave, and that slain men / Should solder up the

rift" (III.iv.30-32). Octavia logically selects duty to husband with, however, unpalliated apprehension. Although Octavia genuinely loves Antony, the quality of this affection might be equated with love as Agape, and, as Thomas McFarland writes, "confronted by the politic piety of Octavia's kingdom-joining 'love,' Antony counters falseness with falseness."⁸ Objectively viewed, Octavia is an exemplary person; sensible, practical, stable, her value stems from a capacity for faithful, unswerving duty to those she loves—Anthony and Octavius. As Danby observes, "Octavia never escapes from her position midway between the contraries that maintain and split the world" (143). Octavia wishes to divide her allegiance between brother and husband; unfortunately, she will learn there is "no midway / 'Twi'xt these extremes at all" (III.iv.19-20).

The motifs which Shakespeare employs to delineate Octavia are unmistakable in their Apollonian overtones. The traits of sobriety and coldness remind one of the rational aesthetics of the "art of sculpture" which Nietzsche associates with Apollo. Octavia's self-sacrificing nature and her objectivity which finds its expression in the themes of honor and Rome are certainly testaments to the Apollonian principles of control and self-knowledge. These moral imperatives are those recognized by Nietzsche's Apollo as "ethical deity." Appropriately, the Roman world of Octavia is symbolized by Mars, cold, and land;⁹ although Rome represents security and power, it is a dead world. What lies beyond Rome, in the opiate world of Egypt, is the resurrected god Dionysos *qua* Cleopatra. Ultimately, we must concur with Cleopatra's appraisal: "dull Octavia" (V.ii.55). Significantly, the single most important contribution which Octavia can make to Antony is to give him an objective identity, to unite him with the Roman attributes which Shakespeare meticulously stresses; such an offering is the salient feature of the Apollonian state. Paradoxically, however, as Antony recognizes, Apollo alone is incomplete, is insufficient—the Dionysian spirit must be recognized and admitted.

Shakespeare's Cleopatra is, among other things, surely one of the classic portrayals of the Dionysian principle to appear in the pages of western literature. Antony's attraction for Cleopatra is, on another level, the movement of the aroused soul-image—Jung's dark, or tragic, anima. *Antony and Cleopatra* represents, we can say, one of those great archetypal situations revealed in the mythic costume of Egypt/Cleopatra *qua* Dionysos; in Antony the unconscious, sub-strata of the human mind is hypnotically attracted and, often simultaneously, consciously repelled by the dark god Dionysos, the chthonic world. Endemic to Antony's attachment is the surfacing of pre-rational impulses by the siren-goddess Cleopatra, and Antony recognizes this "enchanting queen" (I.ii.125) who, like Dionysos, is emblematic of the elemental and erotic. We may go further and say that Cleopatra is the embodiment of the dark god and not merely a symbol of him. She has a mythical uniqueness, ambiguity, and timelessness described by Enobarbus as "a wonderful piece of work" who is "Wrinkled deep in time" (I.ii.151-2).¹⁰ The *locus classicus* for many of these ideas are the eloquent, oft quoted, lines of Enobarbus, "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety (II.ii.235-6); Cleopatra's "infinite variety"

is also singled out by an angry Antony: "You have been a boggler ever" (III.xiii.110). In addition, Cleopatra's affinity with the natural world, with the unfathomable fructifying powers, is most significantly revealed in the luxurious, voluptuous imagery which depicts Egypt; the sensual, tactile image of heat (or its cognate, the sun); the sexual symbols of the serpent and water; and the love-fertility goddesses Venus and Isis with whom she is often linked.¹¹ Allied with this identification of Dionysos as the god of fertility is the familiar motif of Cleopatra as Eros, for Dionysos is also the erotic god.¹² To Antony, Cleopatra is the forgotten truth, the force who must be served—a trait observed by Jung dominant in medieval love, and, I might add, suggestive of the medieval theme of the inseparableness of concupiscent love and death, of Eros and Thanatos. Cleopatra vividly embodies a repressed component of human personality: those unconscious, primitive impulses rejected by culture.

Unlike Octavia, Cleopatra cannot exist without Antony (IV.xv.59ff.). In her final Immolation Scene of act five the hitherto egocentricity of Cleopatra is purified into a remarkable spirit expanded to cosmic dimensions; we see the fulfillment of Cleopatra's extraordinary comment to Antony (I.iii.35), "Eternity was in our lips and eyes"—the divinizing and eternalizing of their love—and a self-purification through suicide which is, as Cleopatra asserts, for "A better life" (V.ii.2).¹³ As Geoffrey Bullough describes this sublime act of transfiguration, the glory of Cleopatra's suicide "consists in the triumph of spirit over flesh and the sublimation of selfishness in the act of self-immolation" (Sources, V, 252). But the Cleopatra of act five is not the Bacchic goddess-Dionysos of the preceding action. She has a calm majesty and serene equipoise which Gilbert Murray observes at the end of ritual tragedy, and which he traces to a recognition of "the slain and mutilated Daimon, followed by his Resurrection or Apotheosis."¹⁴ And as Jane Ellen Harrison notes, the devotees of Orpheus, chief priest to Dionysos, emphasize the role of purification: the Orphic "spirit of gentle decorum is but the manifestation, the outward shining of a lambent flame within, the expression of a new spiritual faith which brought to man, at the moment he most needed it, the longing for purity and peace in this life, the hope of final fruition in the next."¹⁵

Cleopatra remains Dionysos, but now she becomes the mutilated Dionysos. Thus, Cleopatra's purifying act of self-immolation, appropriately she exclaims "I am fire, and air; my other elements / I give to baser life" (V.ii.288-9), is a ritual metamorphosis reminiscent, as Nietzsche believes, of the "triumphant cry of Dionysos" which breaks "the spell of individuation" and opens the path to "Mothers of Being" and Oneness (1033, 990). Also, we need recall Nietzsche's statement that "the properly Dionysian suffering, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire" (1001), a mythic union with primordial life. The cycle of Cleopatra, her life, death-dismemberment, and re-birth, parallels the life cycle of Dionysos who she is; and her sensual, dynamic, savage traits are those Dionysian attributes which intoxicate Antony. The rapturous quality of her death and renascence is a dramatic illustration of Nietzsche's conviction that the Dionysian spirit is akin to "the potent coming of spring penetrating all nature with joy" (955), and "Under the charm of the Dionysian not only

is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but Nature which has become estranged, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her prodigal son, man" (955). In addition, congruent with the poetry of all the Egyptian scenes is the ever-present lyrical, assonant nature of Cleopatra's poetry which reminds us of Nietzsche's association between Dionysos and music (951).¹⁶ On this issue Shakespeare's source is relevant: Plutarch eloquently writes, Cleopatra's "voyce and words were marvelous pleasant: for her tongue was an instrument of musike to divers sports and pastimes" (*Sources*, V. 275).

It seems fairly obvious that the dichotomy between Octavia and Cleopatra heightens the emotional and philosophical tensions of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The virtuous, transparent, stolid Octavia is calmly and objectively responsive to her Roman world and its ethical values; she subordinates, in true Apollonian fashion, her elemental passions for a disciplined, reasoned allegiance to her husband Antony and a personal-social servitude to her brother-king Octavius. As Nietzsche declares, Apollo is "the apotheosis of the *principium individuationis*, . . . this apotheosis of individuation knows but one law—the individual, i.e. the delimiting of the boundaries of the individual, *measure [sophrosyne]* in the Hellenic sense. Apollo, as ethical deity, exacts measure [self-control] of his disciples, and, that to this end, he requires self-knowledge" (966). The enigmatic, capricious Cleopatra, on the other hand, is often inaccessible and impenetrable; her guides are feeling, subjectivity, freedom, and an eroticism which accepts the force of earth as sex. She is the dark, Dionysian side of man's soul: her eroticism is combined with the denial of Apollonian self-knowledge as she asks Antony to surrender his Roman identity and to join her so that he may become one with her in love and passion.

In this struggle between the Dionysian and Apollonian states, Shakespeare's Antony is the meeting ground for, to borrow a phrase from Hamlet, these "mighty opposites."¹⁷ In Antony this elemental battle is simply and ultimately resolved: he realizes there can be no reconciliation between these two worlds and, therefore, he selects Cleopatra. Agrippa is totally incorrect in his misguided belief that Octavia will be the salvific mediatrix between Antony and Octavius (II.ii.135-7). These colossal forces which vie for dominance are seen in the play as the traits of prudence and stability (Rome and Mars) and emotion and irrationality (Egypt and Venus).¹⁸ Antony's marriage to Octavia is a conscious action; it assists in reasserting his Roman thoughts and behavior. His irrational love for Cleopatra threatens to destroy the Roman empire; to Antony, this love is more a matter of fate than will. Caught between Octavia and Cleopatra, Antony is, in a sense, dispossessed. The "real" world of Rome has rejected him, and to Antony it is cold and dead; until his final exorcising by Cleopatra's influence, the "unreal" world of Egypt seems only a temporary escape. With Octavia's help, Antony temporarily approaches the Apollonian state; the implicit irony is Antony's recognition of Cleopatra's power, just as the inherent irony of the Apollonian principle is that self-knowledge leads to a recognition of the Dionysiac spirit which is hidden in all (Nietzsche writes, with "knowledge Apollo found it impossible to live without Dionysos"). Antony, conse-

quently, becomes Bacchante and confronts Dionysos—he gives himself to Cleopatra who revitalizes and frees him; Antony's suicide duplicates Cleopatra's approaching death and re-birth. Apollo is sacrificed for Dionysos. Through Cleopatra's potency Antony sheds his traditional past self and finds a new, deeper rooted state of being; she forces his mind to go beyond the limitations of ordinary thought. Antony's declaration of love for her is an affirmation of the unconscious, with its irresistible and irrational components, as a directing influence in life. Analogous to the Jungian Delphic archetype, Cleopatra is one of those persons who evoke and transmit the unconscious. By embracing Cleopatra, his rejected opposite, Antony loses Rome and Octavia. But who would not forsake Octavia and the world for Cleopatra and immortality!

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NOTES

- ¹ See, for example, the studies by Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays: the Function of Imagery in the Drama* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), and G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (1931; rept. London: Methuen and Co., 1963).
- ² A recent essay by Harold Fisch, "Antony and Cleopatra: the Limits of Mythology," *ShS*, 23 (1970), 59-67 notes the centrality of the "myth-ritual pattern." The following studies also treat this theme: Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare, and Dryden* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962); Michael Lloyd, "Cleopatra as Isis," *ShS*, 12 (1959), 88-94; Raymond B. Waddington, "Antony and Cleopatra: 'What Venus did with Mars,'" *ShakS*, 2 (Cincinnati: Univ. Cincinnati Press, 1966), 210-27; Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957). It is of value to note Charney's observation of the symbolic use of "place" which permeates the action of the drama (94-5).
- ³ "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music," trans. Clifton P. Fadiman in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, Modern Library (New York: Random House, 1927)—all subsequent page references to this edition are incorporated into my text.
- ⁴ "Antony and Cleopatra: A Shakespearian Adjustment," *Poets on Fortune's Hill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 132. On this technique of juxtaposed opposites see the treatment of imagery by B. T. Spencer, "Antony and Cleopatra and the Paradoxical Metaphor," *SQ*, 9 (1958), 373-8 and the remarks of S. L. Bethell in his *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* (London: P. F. King and Staples, 1944). It is pertinent to quote Charney's salutary stricture: "the tragic conflict is not conceived as an alternation between love and honor. If we cannot in some way justify Antony's return to Egypt as well as condone it, there can be no tragedy, for tragedy is based on significant choices in situations which have some elements of moral dilemma" (115).
- ⁵ Danby finds Octavia to be a "focal point for the contraries" in the play (142). Schanzer also writes, "It is Caesar's sister, Octavia, who is her [Cleopatra's] opposite in every way" (14). Like Danby, however, Schanzer does not elaborate this issue. In his survey of sources for *Antony and Cleopatra*, Geoffrey Bulough finds "A Letter from Octavia to Marcus Antonius" which in Daniel's *Poeticall Essayes* (1599) preceded [his] *Cleopatra*. Daniel writes in the Argument that though Antony married Octavia, she 'met not with that integritie she brought'," and Daniel's "Letter" emphasizes Octavia as a "civill nurtred Matrone, whose entertainment bounded with modestie and the nature of her education, knew not to cloth her affections in

any other colours than the plain habit of truth"; quoted in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), V, 237. Most critics agree *Antony and Cleopatra* is, as Waddington phrases it, "an exposition of *concordia discors*" (222). See the recent book by Julian Markels, *The Pillar of the World: Antony and Cleopatra in Shakespeare's Development* (Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 8-15, 17-49. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Danby's remarks apropos *Antony and Cleopatra*.

- ⁶ All citations are to the Arden Shakespeare, ed. M. R. Ridley, 9th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956). Ridley points out the understandably pejorative connotations in the description of Octavia given by the Messenger, particularly in the symbolism of the round face and low forehead (v fns. 30, 31, 33, pp. 108-109).
- ⁷ *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*, p. 108. Plutarch, *Lives*, describes Octavia as a "noble Ladie" with an "excellent grace, wisdom, and honestie, joined unto so rare a beawtie"; quoted in Bullough, *Sources*, V, 278. Octavia's coldness, her Roman emotional discipline, has its parallel in Octavius' personality (e.g. his disdain to participate with Antony in the revels on Pompey's galley (II.vii.96-125)). Thomas McFarland, *Tragic Meanings in Shakespeare* (New York: Random House, 1966), defines Octavius as "the man who cannot love" (99); A. C. Bradley, "Antony and Cleopatra," *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1909), sees Octavius as one whose "cold determination half paralyses Antony" (288); and Charney, quoting the remarks of H. S. Wilson, also finds the world of Octavius to be secure and cold (91, 95). For Antony and Cleopatra "cold" is often equated with death, as in III.xiii.158-62).
- ⁸ *Tragic Meanings In Shakespeare*, p. 107.
- ⁹ See, for examples, Charney, Fisch, and Waddington on such symbols. It may be relevant to observe that we never hear anything from nor ever see Octavia after III.vi. when she learns from her brother that Antony has returned to Egypt.
- ¹⁰ Shakespeare's Cleopatra, we recall, is 38 years old; in contrast, Plutarch writes, "but now she [Cleopatra] went to Antonius at the age when a woman's beawtie is at the prime"; quoted from Bullough, *Sources*, V, 273. See also Charney, p. 230, n. 14; Fisch, p. 60; Lloyd, pp. 90, 91.
- ¹¹ Charney links Cleopatra's sensualism with food imagery (102-106); he also yokes her with the traits of energy and plenitude (104, 95-98); see also Fisch, pp. 61-62; Lloyd, p. 93; and Waddington, pp. 216-217. On Cleopatra's thematic relationships with Venus and Isis (I.ii.60-61; II.ii.197-202; III.vi.16-181; V.ii.222-228, 307) see Schanzer, pp. 137, 161; Fisch, pp. 58ff., and Waddington, pp. 210ff. Equally, Egypt is symbolized by hotness, the Nile, the senses, serpents, and fertility; Rome is equated with the State, order, cold, reputation, and temperance. This world theme of Egypt vs Rome is, as Charney believes, the issue which provides the "most general pattern of imagery in the play" (93).
- ¹² See Martin C. D'Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945) for an extensive study of love as eros and agape.
- ¹³ I do not agree with McFarland who finds this spirit of re-birth to begin as early as III.xiii. (*Tragic Meanings*, 117, 118). Valuable is Donald J. McGinn, "Cleopatra's Immolation Scene," *Essays in Literary History Presented to J. Milton French*, ed. Rudolf Kirk and C. F. Main (New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 57-80. I do not wish to suggest that *Antony and Cleopatra* is to be viewed merely as a kind of mystical Wagnerian experience, an approach held by G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*.
- ¹⁴ "Excursus on Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy," in Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1912), p. 343. Fisch, however, believes the "structure of the play does not mirror the 'myth of the eternal return.' In fact it is its opposite. The play lacks the rounded form, the satisfying, self-completed, cyclical rhythm of ancient tragedy" (65); he

continues, we “may look up the deaths of the two chief characters not as an event which climaxes a fertility ritual, but as an event which brings the whole orgiastic world of Paganism to an end” (67).

- 15 *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1922), p. 473.
- 16 The Roman scenes, in contrast, are marked by jagged, harsh metrical patterns. Charney observes “the full slow rhythms and word music of her [Cleopatra’s] final speeches” (110), a quality which I find, in varying degrees, in all of the Egyptian episodes.
- 17 Danby considers Octavia to be “the alternative plight to Cleopatra’s for womanhood in the play. The choice is merely between alternative methods of destruction—either at one’s hands, or through the agency of process” (143). For variations of this struggle see Fisch, p. 60; Lloyd, p. 93; and Waddington, pp. 210-211, 214-215, who find, in Plutarch, Antony’s association with Bacchus; Waddington’s essay also establishes the Antony-Hercules and Antony-Mars linkages; also to the point is Waith, pp. 113-121. Waith and Waddington argue for Antony’s destruction of his Roman personality and a re-creation of self.
- 18 The ironic fusion of these forces is aptly symbolized in Antony’s sword: on the one hand, the sword denotes Rome and its values; on the other, the sword often connotes an erotic-phallic symbol. In a sense, therefore, the sword may be conceived of as embodying Apollonian and Dionysian states. For a brief account of sword imagery see Charney, pp. 126-132.