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## The Death Drive in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra

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If you count "Pyramus and Thisby" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra* is Shakespeare's third telling of *Romeo and Juliet*, the story of star-crossed lovers from feuding worlds who ultimately commit suicide. Love is a "poison," one that will literally kill Cleopatra in the phallic love bite of the asp. In *Twelfth Night*, imagination and love must surfeit so that they will die (1.1.1-3). In tragedy, Antony and Cleopatra themselves must die so that imagination and love will be without limit.

This tragedy, for me, has always most embodied the idea of Freud's *todestrieb* or death drive. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud shockingly asserts that "the aim of all life is death" [emphasis his] and that:

Our views have from the very first been dualistic, and today they are even more definitely dualistic than before, now that we describe the opposition as being, not between ego-instincts and sexual instincts but between life instincts and death instincts. (Freud 18.53)

Appropriately, the great Freudian paradox of the death drive underscores the Shakespeare tragedy perhaps most characterized itself by contradiction and opposition.<sup>1</sup> In *Antony and Cleopatra*, love is conceptualized in no terms other than death, as if the opposing drive has already been vanquished. Life itself becomes an agony, more of an enemy to the lovers than Caesar and Rome.

In loving homage to death, Cleopatra conceives herself as a *femme fatale*:

...Now I feed myself  
With most delicious poison. Think on me  
That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black  
And wrinkled deep in time? Broad-fronted Caesar,  
When thou wast here above the ground, I was  
A morsel for a monarch; and great Pompey  
Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;  
There would he anchor his aspect, and die  
With looking on his life. (1.5.27-35)

Cleopatra fantasizes by imagining Antony feeding on her in his thoughts. She sees herself first as the lover of the sun god, whose "amorous pinches" have darkened her and damaged her skin with wrinkles. The love of a god is not without cost. Julius Caesar, the Roman emperor and therefore both divine and human, has dined on Cleopatra. But she has implicitly been a poisoned dish, for Caesar no longer walks above "ground" or eats with the living. Pompey, by 'making babies' with Cleopatra through exchanging lovers' gazes, also dies. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, the Renaissance authority, reminds us there is no more fatal portal for love than the eyes (3:64-87). And by embracing Cleopatra, Antony too makes love to his own mortality by joining himself irrevocably to the woman who couples repeatedly with death. He makes Adam's choice, according to John Milton: "...if Death / Consort with thee, Death is to me as Life" (PL 9.953-54).

To entice Antony, this *femme fatale* wants it reported that she is the opposite of whatever state he is in: "If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick..." (1.3.4-6). Cleopatra's contrarian strategy will itself be repeated in deadly earnest in act four. Both lovers act childishly petulant when separated from the love object. Perhaps *Antony and Cleopatra* is in itself a magnificent game of hide and seek? The only real tension in the first couple of acts is whether or not Antony will return. He may hide in Rome, but not for long; after all Cleopatra is 'home.' Freud's footnote in *Beyond*, detailing Ernst's reprisal on his absent mother, is apropos here: "...during this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making himself disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror which did not quite reach to the ground, so that by crouching down he could make his mirror-image gone" (18:15). Cleopatra gets something like little Ernst's revenge when she disastrously flees the Battle of Actium in the third act (3.10.1-4; 14-15), only to be followed doggedly by Antony. He will brook no separation that he does not initiate.

His fate is irrevocably entwined with hers, for as Scarus reports, "His fretted fortunes give him hope and fear / Of what he has and has not" (4.12.8-9). He conquers one day returning triumphant to Cleopatra and rewarding Scarus by allowing him to kiss the hand of his queen (4.8.12-14). The following day, his navy surrenders to Caesar's, and Cleopatra appears to have betrayed him (4.12.9-15). Antony's catastrophic choice of a sea battle against Caesar is a kind of death wish. He claims to fight at sea because Caesar "dares" him (3.7.29); however, clearly he hopes to impress the Queen. Antony willingly abandons his superiority on land for Cleopatra—"chance and hazard / From firm security" (3.7.47-48). Critics have taken Cleopatra to task for her alleged

emasculatation of Antony, preferring to adopt the limited view of Caesar and Roman condemnation: "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the Queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he..." (1.4.5-7).<sup>2</sup> Yet, Antony only claims to be emasculated in his despair and shame following the Battle of Actium. Antony, the consummate general, appears absolute for death before Actium, despite his assertion that he expects "victorious life / Than death and honour" (4.2.43-44). Indeed, the *liebestod* in Antony asserts, "I'll make death love me..." (3.13.194).

Antony's plaintive cries for his own lost self "make his followers weep" (4.2.24-33); he invites them to join in his lamentation. He cries, "Haply you shall not see me more, or if, / A mangled shadow..." (4.2.26-27). Later, he likens himself to a constantly shifting cloud: "here I am Antony, / Yet cannot hold this visible shape..." (4.14.13-14). Linda Charnes observes, "In Cleopatra's theatrical habitus, 'infinite variety' constitutes identity as a source of flexible strength; while in Antony's narrative habitus, such variety can only represent the infirmity of being unable to hold one's visible 'shape'" (128). He seeks dissolution. Tired of Cleopatra and what "he has and has not," Antony anticipates death as Stoic consolation: "O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more, / Fortune and Antony part here, even here" (4.12.18-19).

Clearly, after Cleopatra's desertion it is not the loss of fortune nor even empire that most dismays Antony:

...Betrayed I am.  
O this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm  
Whose eye becked forth my wars and called them home,  
Whose bosom was my crownnet, my chief end,  
Like a right gypsy hath at fast and loose  
Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (4.12.24-28)

Antony loses everything, he fears, because he has lost Cleopatra, "the very heart of loss." His Egyptian once again proves deadly, a "grave charm." Antony next calls out for Eros (4.12.30), but it is Cleopatra who comes instead: she is, after all, love as well as death. Unable to console Antony or absolve herself, she retreats to her monument to once again play hide and seek. She even instructs Mardian to report she has committed suicide and that her last word was Antony spoken "piteously" (4.13.9) for effect. Only too late does she realize how compelling her performance might be (4.14.122-29). Antony grieves over the reported loss of Cleopatra, this time to death rather than Caesar. All mourning is, in part, auto-mourning: a narcissistic wound prefiguring the eventual, and inevitable, annihilation of self. Once again he desires dissolution, not by

losing his visible shape but by being freed of the confines of the body altogether: "O, cleave, my sides! / Heart, once be stronger than thy continent; / Crack thy frail case!" (4.14.40-42). Katherine MacMullan also notes that in the final two acts "Shakespeare employs all the languid, luxurious connotations of sleep to portray the dying queen in all her regal seductiveness" (404). Antony tells his servant, "Unarm, Eros, the long day's task is done, / And we must sleep..." (4.14.35-36). Echoing Othello, Antony cries that "since the torch is out, / Lie down and stray no farther..." (4.14.47-48). Since Cleopatra, he thinks, has hidden in death, he is compelled yet again to find her.

Antony, who in Plutarch models his appearance and behavior after Hercules (Ridley 241), in Shakespeare instead fashions his death after his famous ancestor:

The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me  
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage;  
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o'th' moon,  
And with those hands that grasped the heaviest club  
Subdue my worthiest self.... (4.12.43-47)

Like Deianira, who unwittingly destroys Hercules in attempting to win him back, Cleopatra proves equally fatal for Antony. Antony's faithful servant, allegorically named Eros, will not slay his master as commanded but instead shows him the way by committing suicide instead (4.14.95-100). 'Love' again turns out to be self-destructive. Antony will "lie down" in a grave that is also a marriage bed: "But I will be / A bridegroom in my death and run into't / As to a lover's bed..." (4.14.100-102). Antony earlier complained that Cleopatra robbed him of his "sword" (4.14.23): now, he eagerly runs onto this same sword, emblematic of the death drive she has been all along. His *liebestod* is at last realized. "What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die in its own fashion" (Freud 18:39.) Antony orchestrates for himself a Roman death with Egyptian aplomb.

Ultimately, Cleopatra's reported death allows him to die like his Hercules, a hero. Barbara Bono reminds us:

Mardian's formally beautiful neo-Senecan report of Cleopatra's "death" transforms Antony's own motives for dying from Stoic despair to Epicurean joy. From shapeless being, robbed of his sword, left only "Ourselves to end ourselves" (4.14.22), Antony becomes transcendent erotic warrior..." (186)

Leslie Thomson, in attempting a solution to the continuing theatrical problem of how the dying Antony is physically raised into the monument, makes a larger point about this stage business. She argues that Antony is "not only literally, visually, but also

metaphorically" raised (78). Cleopatra elevates the mutilated body of Antony and then in her encomium restores his reputation by deifying him.

Cleopatra, who wears the "habiliments of the goddess Isis" (3.6.17), presides as priestess at her lover's memorial.<sup>3</sup> Isis, the consort of her brother, Osiris, reassembles his body parts after he is torn apart by their brother Seth. She must also fashion a new, highly symbolic phallus to replace the only lost body part. Isis thereby enables Osiris to gain immortality and rule in the underworld. Similarly, Cleopatra's veneration provides a regenerative myth for Antony. Cleopatra remembers Antony's face "as the heavens" (5.2.78), his voice as "all the tuned spheres" (5.2.83). She rewrites him as the god of vegetation whose sacrificial death ensures plenty: "For his bounty, / There was no winter in't; an autumn it was / That grew the more by reaping..." (5.2.85-87). Seasonal limitations are shattered; death, symbolized by winter, is eclipsed, allowing only eternal harvest.

The apotheosis of Antony depends upon Cleopatra's ability to eulogize him. Duncan Harris asserts that during the sixteenth century in England the "cult of memory begins to replace the promise of salvation" (15). Cleopatra recognizes that her version of Antony is "past the size of dreaming" (5.2.96). His death allows for the release not just of physical limitation but imaginative restriction as well: "...nature wants stuff / To vie strange forms with fancy; yet t' imagine / An Antony were nature's piece, 'gainst fancy, / Condemning shadows quite" (5.2.96-99).

In this dense conceit, Nature proves superior through its power of creation, which Cleopatra conceives of as the ability to "imagine an Antony" in the first place. Antony successfully vies with both Nature and fancy; so does Cleopatra. Cleopatra's threnody of Antony parallels Enobarbus's voluptuous description of her at Cydnus: she o'er pictures "that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (2.2.210-11).

Cleopatra's eulogy over her fallen Antony transforms him from a legendary hero into a demi-god. Her language prevails as transcendent in its elegiac power:

Noblest of men, woo't die?  
Hast thou no care of me? Shall I abide  
In this dull world, which in thy absence is  
No better than a sty? O see, my women,  
The crown o'th' earth doth melt. My lord!  
O withered is the garland of the war,  
The soldier's pole is fallen; young boys and girls  
Are level now with men; the odds is gone  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon. (4.15.61-70)

The world is "dull" and diminished without Antony, one who Cleopatra envisions as having "bestrid the ocean; his reared arm / [c]rested the world" (5.2.81-82). Once peopled with super humans, mere animals now possess the "sty." She embeds the soldier Antony within Egyptian love language: the nonpareil "crown of the earth" melts, echoing Antony's own preferred metaphor of dissolution. She later implies that the "injurious gods" have been jealous of the pair: "this world did equal theirs, / Till they had stolen our jewel..." (4.15.81-82). The world chooses only to see distinction between Rome and Egypt, earth and water, and male and female. Without Antony, no further distinctions are possible, and in that simple assertion, Cleopatra claims victory for the pair. They begin to triumph over distinction and its ensuing division. "The odds are gone;" so are limits.

Cleopatra expresses a profound nihilism in her grief: "All's but naught" (4.15.82). The world is not just lessened but rendered meaningless. This nihilism leads her to contemplate suicide: "then is it sin / To rush into the secret house of death" (4.15.84-85), she wonders. Naysayers argue that Cleopatra kills herself as the only logical alternative to capture by Caesar, to prevent a "squeaking Cleopatra boy" from ruining her greatness in "th' posture of a whore" (5.2.220). The thought of such disgrace surely cements her decision, but it does not drive it. I can't think of a single critic who accuses Antony of suicide to prevent similar humiliation, although he decries similar treatment at the hands of a triumphant Caesar (see 4.14.72-78), another important parity between the lovers the play provides. Rather, a "pure culture of the death instinct" (Freud 19:53) is implicit in the final two acts, the parallel tragedies of Antony (Act Four) and Cleopatra (Act Five).

To accept John Dryden's retelling of Shakespeare in *All for Love*, that it is in fact a "world well lost" for romantic love, then the self-sacrifice of suicide, especially Cleopatra's, is an intrinsic part of the lover's final redemption. Because Cleopatra has been a *femme fatale* for Antony, her grief at his death assures his final apotheosis. By mourning him, Cleopatra transcends death and immortalizes the pair. Cleopatra's mourning exceeds any other Shakespeare character, except Hamlet's. The Ghost dooms Hamlet to grieve because he must remember; Cleopatra chooses to repeat rather than remember. Tellingly, the destructiveness of the "compulsion to repeat" facilitated Freud's theorization of a death drive that "disregards the pleasure principle in every way" (Freud 18:36). The last important "compulsion to repeat" in this tragedy will be for Cleopatra to commit Roman suicide. Repeating Antony, she too sees only darkness: "Our lamp is spent, it's out" (4.15.89) and decides upon suicide "after the high Roman fashion" (4.15.91). Cleopatra bids farewell to fortune, again imitating Antony:

My desolation does begin to make  
A better life. 'Tis paltry to be Caesar.  
Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave,  
A minister of her will. And it is great  
To do that thing that ends all other deeds. (5.2.1-5)

She's right. The mighty Caesar reels from "Fortune"; he concedes that he prospers and Antony fell simply because their "stars, / Unreconcilable" (5.1.46-47) divided them. Act Three opens with the dead body of Pacorus borne on stage, thereby staging death about midway through the tragedy. Pacorus's death symbolizes revenge as well as the carnage of war. Shakespeare borrows the detail from North's translation of Plutarch, who notes that the slaying of Pacorus "was a full revenge to the Romans" (Ridley 253). Cleopatra's death will also be a kind of revenge upon Caesar and Rome. By committing suicide, Cleopatra serves neither Caesar nor "Fortune."

Her language is irrevocably Cleopatra's, *liebestod* with sexual puns on "will," "thing," and "deeds." The Elizabethan bawdy pun on "dying" informs the inextricable link between love and death in Antony and Cleopatra. Cleopatra pictures death as a lover whose pinch hurts but is desired (5.2.294-95). At Antony's death, Cleopatra had tried, paradoxically, to revive him by making him "die" sexually: "Die when thou hast lived; / Quicken with kissing. Had my lips that power, / Thus would I wear them out" (4.15.39-41). Janet Adelman argues that the final two acts of the tragedy suggest not only *liebestod* but sexual intercourse: "The scenes become longer and more leisurely; the entire pace of the play slows. In some ways, the rhythm of the play suggests the rhythm of the sexual act itself..." (Adelman 159).

When Cleopatra is about to be taken by surprise by Gallus and company, she pulls out a phallic dagger and attempts to kill herself: "Where are thou, Death? / Come hither, come! Come, come and take a queen / Worth many babes and beggars!" (5.2.45-47). Death imaginatively remains her lover, and she again desires consummation. Whereas Antony's (masculine) climax was singular and quiescent—"O withered is the garland of the war, / The soldier's pole is fallen" (4.15.66-67) her (feminine) climax will be multiple, as the repetition of "come" suggests.<sup>4</sup>

Harriet Hawkins calls Cleopatra "the least conventionally genteel and feminine of all [Shakespeare's] dramatic heroines" (122). Certainly, she is the only female in the tragedies to disrupt sexual difference in a sustained and meaningful way. Cleopatra capitalizes on the rich love play of seduction and cross-dressing as well as the ability to dominate sexually (rather than to adopt the subservient position culturally ascribed to



women): "Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan..." (2.5.21-23). In the resolve of suicide, Cleopatra forgoes her identity as mutable Egyptian and as a woman to once more become her Roman Antony: "My resolution's placed, and I have nothing / Of woman in me. Now from head to foot / I am marble constant. Now the fleeting moon / No planet is of mine" (5.2.237-40). Through suicide, Cleopatra hopes to kill in the self the lost object, Antony, with whom she, as mourner, deeply identifies.

The play insists on a shared identity for the pair that will transcend ego boundaries, an appealing but deceptively dangerous place without limit for lovers. Their lack of well-developed ego boundaries exacerbates the *todestrieb*. She is as dependent upon Antony for identity as he is to her: "It is my birthday. / I had thought t'have held it poor, but since my lord / Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra" (3.13.190-92). Origin itself seems rooted in her lover. Obviously, their love is in large part narcissistic: they love the self they find reflected in the other. Fascinatingly, in addition to mourning and melancholia, Freud acknowledges only one other psychological state in which "the object has, so to speak, consumed the ego" (Freud 18:113): romantic love.

The final act will stage the spectacle of her suicide, which is indeed Roman but in extravagant Egyptian style. At the last, Cleopatra is "again for Cydnus / To meet Mark Antony" (5.2.227-28). She conquers her own fears, doubts, and, I hope, all but the most Roman of hearts. Acknowledging that her lips lacked the power to "quicken with kissing" (4.15.40) the dying Antony, she suspected that "Wishers were ever fools" (4.15.38). This wish that she expresses so eloquently is to transcend death, a wish endemic to much of humanity. To misquote Freud, the future of an illusion is at stake in her suicide. For Cleopatra's version of Antony to be true, she must transcend death and transform loss into restoration.

Lorraine Helms finds that "Cleopatra's suicide, like the wife's in Greek tragedy, constellates death and marriage in ancient symbols of female heroism" (555), but in Shakespeare alone does it "takes place without father, master, husband, hero, shareholder, or journeyman..." (560). Unwilling to allow anyone else to hoist her (5.2.54), as she fears the Romans will do after her capture, she must now raise herself, just as she has elevated Antony before her. Cleopatra asserts, "Rather make / My country's high pyramides my gibbet / And hang me up in chains" (5.2.59-61). Her tomb fittingly becomes the site of suicide. "Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have / Immortal longings in me..." (5.2.279-80), Cleopatra tells her women. She must be arrayed in glory to rejoin her Antony, who calls her (5.2.279-81). It is hard to come to this

moment of the play and not have, somewhere in mind, the remarkable Tutankhamen exhibit. Ancient Egyptian royalty prepared for as splendid and sumptuous a life after death as they enjoyed before it. Mummification was essential in ancient Egypt to secure eternal life for the wealthy and powerful. Charmian's touching gesture of straightening her dead queen's crown transforms Cleopatra into a flawless funereal effigy already housed in the elaborate monument of her pyramid. Cleopatra claims for herself one final title – that of beloved wife – a claim on Antony denied her in life. Her "courage" in committing suicide will "prove" that "title" (5.2.287). Ever Cleopatra, she amuses herself with the thought that one Nile asp should prove "great Caesar ass / Unpoliced!" (5.2.306-07). Antony had given up the world for one of her kisses (3.11.70-71); now, she too will renounce the world for one of his, beating Iras to "that kiss" which is a "heaven to have" (5.2.301,302). She dies nursing the snake as a baby at her breast (5.2.308), and death comes peacefully as she joins her Antony once more: "As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle. / O Antony!..." (5.2.310-11).<sup>5</sup> Cleopatra leaves behind both Egyptian water and Roman earth: "I am fire and air; my other elements / I give to baser life..." (5.2.288-89). In the locus of her dreaming, Cleopatra's immortal soul re-joins the already risen Antony.

Rome and the "common liar" (1.2.61) have decried the renunciation of (Roman) duty for (Egyptian) love. Then there are all those critical voices denouncing the pair.<sup>6</sup> David Bevington, however, contends that "greatness is a part of the whole and complex truth about the lovers, something that can be glimpsed and felt even at our moments of keenest skepticism" (27). Even Caesar, with his limited imagination, notes that, in death, she looks "As she would catch another Antony / In her strong toil of grace" (5.2.346-47). He acknowledges, "No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous..." (5.2.358-59), officially sanctioning the lovers' claim for transcendence. Caesar may be left to rule the world during the Pax Romana, but it is the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare commemorates. What mattered most late in life for Antony was Cleopatra, and she will be all that concerns him in death. And in death, Antony envisions another world for the lovers to conquer:

Eros!--I come, my queen.--Eros!--Stay for me.  
Where souls do couch on flowers we'll hand in hand  
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.  
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,  
And all the haunt be ours. (4.14.51-55)

In Elysium, the lovers will once again say, "We stand up peerless" (1.1.41). Shakespeare re-writes Virgil's *Aeneid*, allowing love to vanquish both death as well as the Roman Empire.

This late Shakespeare tragedy ends like a comedy in marriage. The final movement of the play transforms loss into something rich and strange, and by doing so, *Antony and Cleopatra* provides Shakespeare transition into his final genre, romance. Shakespeare re-writes the tragic ending, satisfying wish-fulfillment by recreating the lost object and denying death.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Shapiro, for example, surmises, "The characteristic structural motion of the play is...action-reaction, assertion-reversal, alternation, oscillation" (19). For discussions of *Antony and Cleopatra* which center on paradox, the following list is illustrative but not exhaustive: Janet Adelman's *The Common Liar*; Walter Copplestone's "The Joy of the Worm: Dying in *Antony and Cleopatra*"; G. Wilson Knight's *The Imperial Theme*; Michael Payne's "Erotic Irony and Polarity in *Antony and Cleopatra*"; Stephen Shapiro's "The Varying Shores of the World: Ambivalence in *Antony and Cleopatra*"; Marion Smith's *Dualities in Shakespeare*; and Leslie Thomson's "*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 4 Scene 16: 'A Heavy Sight.'"

<sup>2</sup> I refer interested readers to L.T. Fitz's "Egyptian Queens and Male Reviewers: Sexist Attitudes in *Antony and Cleopatra* Criticism" for some of the seemingly endless denunciations of Cleopatra in largely patriarchal terms. See also Harriet Hawkins, who examines cultural reasons for this critical contempt in "Disrupting Tribal Difference."

<sup>3</sup> For accounts of Cleopatra and her association with the goddess Isis, see Barbara Bono (191-220) and Michael Lloyd, "Cleopatra as Isis." Bono also offers an erudite and full account of *Antony and Cleopatra* in relation to Virgil's *Aeneid* and the mythologies of Hercules, Venus and Mars, as well as Isis and Osiris. Adelman in *Suffocating Mothers* emphasizes this important connection as well:

If in [Plutarch's] "The Life" - and in one Roman version of Antony's story in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the woman figures the destruction of a great man, in [Plutarch's] "Of Isis and Osiris" she is the agent of salvation; by inserting elements of "Of Isis and Osiris" into the more monovocal "Life," Shakespeare opens up interpretative possibility, rewriting the female as the potential site of both generation and regeneration (183).

<sup>4</sup> Eric Partridge defines "to come" in early modern English slang as meaning "to experience a sexual emission" (81).

<sup>5</sup> The final image of the serpent nursing on Cleopatra's bosom is neither peaceful nor heroic for all. Knight, eschewing the insistent romanticism of the tragedy's final acts, insists that the asp is not "a baby: new life; it is simply death" (149). Helms cites Ania Loomia, who offers a feminist critique, claiming that Cleopatra is reduced to a mere wife, an image which "tames her own earlier identification with the serpent, replacing the deadly Eastern inscrutability with a comprehensible version of the Madonna" (359-60). If Madonna iconography is available for audiences and readers, such a powerful image of an ultimate mother who does not die but is instead assumed into heaven underscores my emphasis on the transcendent end of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Adelman, whose thorough readings of this tragedy I find so illuminating, also finds comfort in the final maternal image: "Through her [Cleopatra], the baby cast violently away from Lady Macbeth's breast is restored to nurturance in the end; and the witchcraft of *Macbeth* is recuperated in Cleopatra's enchantment, which makes defect perfection (2.2.231)" (*Suffocating* 191). Bono notes, "For the snake's Edenic

associations with the temptations and fall of Eve, she [Cleopatra] substitutes the transcendent symbols of Egyptian culture, the circled ouroboros and the serpent that sucks life from the bosom of the great nature goddess Isis" (190). For me, Cleopatra embodies the *todestrieb*, and she is both death (temptation and fall) as well as new life.

<sup>6</sup> I'll pick on Robert Ornstein because his analysis underscores the difficulty inherent in allowing the lovers their transcendence. Ornstein writes, "We are not ready to equate her [Cleopatra's] dream with Shakespeare's vision of love, which, in the sonnets at least, belongs very much to this world" (83). For Ornstein, Cleopatra's vision of eternal love is "embarrassingly physical" (83). Immortal longings, it would seem, make some critics downright squeamish. Ornstein sidesteps the issue by insisting that Shakespeare's artistry is what grants the lovers immortality (96); still, such a resolution is more a tautology, true for all the great characters in Shakespeare's canon. In part Adelman wrote *The Common Liar* in response to all these dissenting voices and beautifully defends the lovers' final ascension. John Alvis, too, argues that Antony and Cleopatra deify themselves by making a religion of erotic passion. David Scott Kastan agrees: "For them, love does overcome death" (504).

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