THE PRODUCTION OF SPECTACLE: VERBAL AND VISUAL ELEMENTS IN SHAKESPEARE'S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

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ABSTRACT

THE PRODUCTION OF SPECTACLE: VERBAL AND VISUAL ELEMENTS IN SHAKESPEARE'S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

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As Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was first staged, much of Renaissance Europe was engaging in a debate around artistic production. Painting and poetry were set against each other to determine which could produce the best representation of nature or surpass it altogether. What we see with theater, however, is that it occupies a unique position in the world of artistic production because it is capable of presenting the two, seemingly opposite forms of representation: the verbal and the visual. Examining the discourse around art production in early modern England reveals how the construction of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s famous scenes reflects debates around representational mediums. Shakespeare's interchange between verbal and visual representation produces shifting characterization of the play's iconic figures. Since the two mediums work simultaneously to produce different images, the characters are often paradoxical and unpredictable. From here, it is possible to trace how *Antony and Cleopatra*'s distinctive characterization has become a cornerstone of its legacy. By looking at the production history of the play, it is apparent that its critical reception relies on a production's awareness of shifting artistic mediums, complex representational choices, and paradoxical figures.

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INTRODUCTION

> It is impossible to predict how Josette Simon's Cleopatra in the RSC's Antony and Cleopatra will react to anything. She lives up to Enobarbus's report of her "infinite variety" ... The fascinating sense Simon gives is of underlying insecurity, as though Cleopatra were shuffling selves. She is a queen and a jester, a fake swooner whose final tragic trick will kill Antony.
>
> (Review of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2017)

Kate Kellaway's review of the RSC's 2017 production of *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals how impactful the staging of Cleopatra's characterization is towards the success of a production. Kellaway associates Simon's effective portrayal of Cleopatra with unpredictability and shifting identity.[1] In other words, there is an expectation for Cleopatra to embody many roles and moods within the action of the stage. What is fascinating about Kellaway's positive reaction to Cleopatra is that she cites the text itself as a source for her expectations of Cleopatra's paradoxical characterization. What does it tell us when Enobarbus's description of her "infinite variety" becomes a prescription for all future representations of Cleopatra on the stage? It is clear that the play-text has a lasting influence on the expectation we take to the spectating process. In the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the expectation of contradiction is tied to the play's complex and shifting presentation of character and place.

[1] Many of the production's positive reviews comment on Simon's ability to incorporate Cleopatra's shifting characterization. For instance, Howard Loxton's review states, "Josette Simon's Cleopatra is indeed a woman of "infinite variety" as Antony's aide Enobarbus describes her: you never know what mood she will be in as she changes so quickly, one moment charming the next full of anger. Sometimes it seems a genuine reverse of feeling; more often it is conscious play-acting and she knows exactly what she is up to, she loves seeing the effect on other people" (*British Theater Guide).*

How the play achieves this is through an exploration of theater's unique place in the world of artistic representation. It is possible to trace how verbal and visual technologies are deployed at various moments throughout the play. The interchange between these technologies reveals Shakespeare's interest in the various limitations or affordances of artistic forms, and how an awareness of their limits produces new, generative possibilities. Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's "infinite varieties" exists along the verbal axis, but Cleopatra's own performance, creation of spectacle, and presence on the stage engages with the visual. Ultimately, the ways in which these representational differences interact is what produces paradox on the stage, and that paradox creates a more complete representation of depth and human emotions in the character's performance. By first establishing the complexity of England's visual culture in the Renaissance, we can understand how *Antony and Cleopatra* was crafted in response to the changing artistic culture. This subsequently allows us to understand how the play's shifting interest in verbal and visual representation challenges dichotomies, especially those of gender, sexuality, and power. Lastly, building on a reading of the play's verbal and visual elements, it is possible to see how expectations for paradox and complex characterization are brought to the spectating process of any future productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The success of a production is tied to its ability to reflect the play–text's interest in artistic mediums and shifting modes of representation. By first understanding the discourse around art and representation in the early modern period, we can get a better sense of why contemporary productions are expected to present the play's famous scenes and characters in such precise ways. While it may be somewhat obscured, the play-text's interest in representational mediums is very central to its central meaning and the themes it explores.

PRESENTATION OF CLEOPATRA ON THE RIVER CYDNUS

In order to understand *Antony and Cleopatra*‘s complex relationship with representational mediums, it is necessary to look at Enobarbus’s famous speech recounting Antony and Cleopatra’s first meeting on the River Cydnus. It is possible to approach this scene’s insight into representation through three lenses. The first mode of interpretation is to consider the scene’s unique verbal elements. It must be noted that Enobarbus’s speech is an entirely verbal description of Cleopatra, and, while there is a lot of focus on her spectacle, the lack of actual stage representation is very important. In this sense, it is useful to uncover how audiences would have interpreted Shakespeare’s rhetorical choices. The second analytical focus would be to consider the scene’s visual elements. By uncovering the influences of early modern visual culture on Shakespeare’s construction of this dialogue, we may get a better sense of how visual language was a necessary analytical tool for audiences, even when a physical spectacle is not present. Finally, perhaps the most important for uncovering Shakespeare’s views regarding representational mediums, is how the scene presents a blending of verbal and visual elements. Instead of uncovering the interpretive process of Shakespeare’s audiences, the scenes blending of verbal and visual mediums shows how it operates in the context of stage performance. Theater is inherently tied to the combination of the verbal and visual since it combines stage action with dialogue and poetry. Enobarbus's speech reflects an awareness of theater's unique position in the world of artistic creation, and its manipulation of the two seemingly opposite mediums shows Shakespeare's interest in a larger discourse around representation that was occurring at the time of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s staging and publication.

"I will tell you:" Verbal Elements of the Cydnus Scene

Enobarbus's speech recounting the meeting of Antony and Cleopatra is one of the play's clearest examples of how verbal technology has a dynamic place in theatrical production. Despite opportunities to present Cleopatra's "infinite variety," something the play will do in later scenes, the intensity of her spectacle is resigned to a strictly rhetorical medium. Therefore, Shakespeare is showing the specific affordances of dialogue to present a scene of "visual" excess and beauty. Before uncovering how Enobarbus's speech engages in visual representation, or more importantly the blending of verbal and visual mediums, it is important to understand how it operates as a dialogue. First, I will uncover how the speech reflects the play's larger interest in storytelling, rumors, and erotic dialogic exchange to show Enobarbus is responding to the expectation of his Roman counterparts. Second, I will look at how presenting this scene through dialogue, offering no visually present image for audiences to respond to, suggests that Shakespeare is using it as an opportunity to explore poetry's position in the debate of representation and artistic mediums. While this discussion becomes more complicated when we see how verbal and visual mediums are combined, it is still important to understand the ways this scene may suggest a favoring of a verbal medium. Finally, I will look at how audiences would have interpreted the dialogue and get a sense of *how* verbal "spectacles" would have operated on the stage.

Enobarbus's famous description of Antony and Cleopatra's first meeting begins with the line "I will tell you" (2.2.226). It is immediately clear that the dominant mode of presenting this scene will be through dialogue and poetic language. Later, I will discuss how this choice reflects a larger discourse around artistic mediums, but it is important to first uncover how this choice is situated in the context of the scene's preceding lines. Prior to Enobarbus's description, Maecenas

and Agrippa ask if the many stories of Egypt and Cleopatra's splendor are true. Maecenas states, "if reports be square to her" (2.2.220-1). Agrippa follows with the strikingly similar line, "my reporter devised well for her" (2.2.224-5). On one hand, the purpose of this exchange is to establish the contrast between life in Egypt and life in Rome. Maecenas and Agrippa represent the Roman citizens who have heard many stories of Egypt's decadent treatment of Antony and his attendants. Furthermore, the repetition of "reports" suggests the importance of rumors in the building of Cleopatra's legacy. It is also possible to see the repetition of this phrase as representative of their skepticism. They do not seem to believe the many stories they have heard of Egypt, but trust in Enobarbus's firsthand experience. Their questions are continually followed by Enobarbus's confirmation that the reality of the splendor is much more than reports state. This exchange, one of rumored lavishness, cultural difference, and skepticism all inform why Enobarbus's famous description takes the shape it does, specifically that of exaggerated narration.[2] In terms of a representational choice between verbal and visual mediums, Enobarbus's description adopts the form most familiar to his Roman counterparts. He presents Cleopatra as a mythologized seductress and political power through a story which matches Maecenas and Agrippa's familiar "reports." Despite *Antony and Cleopatra*'s interest in spectacle, it is clear that there are contexts where verbal representation is the appropriate mode of communicating the play's themes. The "image" of Cleopatra is constructed through dialogue because her legacy is being continually formed through the storytelling of Roman citizens.

[2] John Yargo's article "Messengers Were Harmed in the Making of This History: Narrating the Past in *Antony and Cleopatra*, he is also interested in the significance of storytelling, though he focuses on how messengers continually produce a sort of "history" around the characters and events of the play. Noting that, "*Antony and Cleopatra* reckons with questions about the provenance and reliability of 'past facts' by repeatedly staging imaginative acts of historical knowledge-making within extensive networks of trust" (62). I am concerned specifically in the function of "imaginative acts" and how they reflect the play's use of representational mediums.

Enobarbus's description engages with the practice of rumors which were necessary to build the legacy of Cleopatra, however it is important to consider how this informs the play's larger interest in representational mediums. There is the possibility of associating Enobarbus's speech with an overall favoring of dialogue to present exaggerated spectacle. In a larger discourse surrounding a debate between representational mediums, this would imply that Shakespeare prefers speech and descriptive language in his theatrical productions. Shakespeare's decision to present Antony and Cleopatra's first meeting through a description rather than showing it on the stage is established to be more effective at communicating the intensity of her beauty and visual spectacle in their first meeting. Enobarbus suggests this when he states, "where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (2.2.237-8). The use of "fancy" insinuates that her image belongs in the imagination rather than physical representation. Though it has many meanings, in the context of Enobarbus's speech, it is likely referring to both a "mental image" and "the process, and the faculty, of forming mental representations of things not present to the senses" (OED "fancy" 4. a. & b.). His use of the term "nature" then suggests a physical staging of this scene is limited to what is possible by nature. Shakespeare is clearly entering in on a discourse around artistic representation and agreeing with position that art and artists may surpass what already exists within nature. Furthermore, these lines suggest that an artist should not be limited to recreating images from life. Instead, they have the liberty to "outwork nature" and produce spectacles that aim to surpass existing beauty (2.2.238). Given that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a theatrical production, it is inherently tied to both the verbal and visual modes of representation. What we find in the previously mentioned lines, however, is a recognition that any attempts to *visually* produce the spectacle of Cleopatra on the barge would consign the scene to natural limitations. Therefore, we may interpret the choice to present it through Enobarbus's description

as a momentary preference for the verbal medium since it allows for deeper imaginative possibilities.

The additional benefit to having audiences use their imagination to produce a spectacle is that it allows them to create a scene which may satisfy their own expectation. This participatory expectation is mirrored in the actual structure of the dialogue between Enobarbus, Maecenas, and Agrippa. Although Shakespeare's play borrows from the description provided by Plutarch, his exchange contains substantially more emphasis on dialogue. Maecenas, Agrippa, and the theater spectators are invited into the imaginative process. Enobarbus's description is cut with interjections: "O, rare for Antony" (2.2.243), "Rare Egyptian" (2.2.257), "Royal wench" (2.2.266). Shakespeare builds on Plutarch's description by revealing the erotic exchange in the Roman's dialogic encounter. Maecenas and Agrippa represent the listener's expectations and desires which become a part of the story's development. Therefore, the actual discourse at work competes with the hypothetical spectacle of Cleopatra arriving on the barge. The element of dialogue and recognition of spectatorship is especially relevant to theater since it calls attention to the role of audiences in the creation of art, and it is fair to say that this scene represents a "creation" of sorts as Enobarbus asks us to utilize our imagination to create the image.

In terms of understanding how Enobarbus's description invites audiences to "create" the image of Cleopatra, it is important to get a sense of how his words operated in Renaissance visual culture. Therefore, we can attempt to reconstruct how audiences would have viewed Enobarbus's rhetorical rendering by understanding the unique uses of art terminology in the period. As Lucy Gent uncovers in her book *Picture and Poetry 1560-1620*, 16th century art terms that were in frequent use in continental Europe, notably perspective and design, were signally lacking in England (17). To better understand how the English viewed art, it is necessary to

disentangle the context of their terminology. So, when Enobarbus says "o'picturing," I am interested in uncovering the term "picture." In 16th century England, the term "picture" "was an extraordinarily wide and vague word… it could mean, in short, anything to do with a visual image, though not necessarily a visible image; a poet's description could be a picture too" (Gent 6). This reveals that the visual culture of Renaissance England did not rely on physical visual material. English audiences were very comfortable with translating poetic and discursive material into pictures.

Uncovering the meaning of art terminology in England's unique artistic culture undermines the possibility of reading Enobarbus's speech as an example of Shakespeare's preference for verbal representation. Instead, it is more appropriate to read this scene as his invitation for audiences to respond to the visual language in the description and translate it into a spectacle in their mind. Therefore, it is not fair to say that the scene lacks visual representation, despite its lack of physical staging. The staging of the scene would only limit Cleopatra's "infinite variety" because it would present a fixed image. The specific affordance allowed by a favoring of verbal representation is that it allows for paradoxical characterization and erotic exchange. The play will continue to build on paradoxical characterization as characters undermine fixed social expectations and switch between their romantic and political roles. As far erotic exchange, it is clear that Shakespeare is inviting audiences to respond to Enobarbus's speech, much like Maecenas and Agrippa do with their interjections, but through a uniquely imaginative lens. Therefore, it is now important to understand the cultural material that is embedded in Enobarbus's speech. The various references to early modern visual culture allow us to understand what audiences were expected to "see" when Enobarbus described Cleopatra on the barge.

"What his eyes only eat:" Visual Elements in the Cydnus Scene

It is worth restating that one of the most notable elements of Enobarbus's speech is that he describes a scene that never actually occurs on stage; we are left to wonder at the purpose of leaving absent a visually powerful spectacle. Despite the lack of actual stage representation, it is still possible to read the scene according to what it is potentially communicating with its visual language. It has been established that this is possible because audiences would have been comfortable thinking of Enobarbus's description as a picture of sorts. The implied visual language of that "picture" is important for establishing Cleopatra's iconic characterization and image throughout the play. So, the question becomes, what exactly is Enobarbus communicating about Cleopatra at this moment, and what visual markers are used to solidify her characterization?

Arguably, the description of Cleopatra on the barge mirrors the visual marker associated with *power* that is employed throughout this play. Cleopatra, Antony, and Caesar are often accompanied on the stage with a court, attendants, messengers, and soldiers. The sheer number of characters in this play is one of its unique characteristics, and it becomes apparent that the purpose is to give the key players a sense of power and influence through their large stage presence. Therefore, their processions become a visual technology on the stage. This is clearly articulated in the scene where Octavia returns to Caesar:

> Why have you stol'n upon us thus? You come not
> Like Casear's sister. The wife of Antony
> Should have an army for an usher…
> . . . . . .
> But you are come

A market-maid to Rome… (3.6.48-57)

Through Caesar's angry declaration, it is clear that attendants are a marker of power; Octavia's lack of procession in this moment marks her as cast out and disrespected. Caesar regards her return alone as a contradiction to her social position, and he associates the visual effect of Octavia's return with a "market-maid."[3]

The importance of a procession for visually communicating power can be applied to Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra on the River Cydnus. First, it is important to look at how her attendants are described by Enobarbus. Rather than the court we see accompanying her throughout the rest of the play, Enobarbus substitutes them with a mythical counterpart to create an image of Cleopatra as Venus.

On each side her

Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,

. . . . . .

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,

So many mermaids, tended her i' th' eyes,

(2.2.238-245).

Cleopatra's procession communicates the extent of her power. When she first meets Antony, she does not do so as a "market-maid," but as the head of Egypt; however, Cleopatra is not presenting her authority through military strength or warships. Instead, she uses the setting of the sea to perform "a tableau vivant of Venus" (Bronfen 118). Her authority is filtered through

[3] It is also interesting to see how Octavia's social position is marked by her connection to Octavius and Antony. Her political power is dependent on her relationship with these men, either as sister or wife. This contrasts Cleopatra's characterization since her independence is what marks her as a threat to political power and fixed gender systems.

sexual potential, and, as the Venus, she proposes a union with Antony, the "plated Mars" (1.1.4).

When looking closer at what is communicated through the visual language of Enobarbus's description, it is important to keep in mind the most popular forms of images at the time. While Enobarbus makes a direct reference to a Venus painting, the reality is that many English playgoers would not have had many, if any, opportunities to look at paintings that we now consider "fine art." Besides artists such as Hilliard, the majority of English painters were associated with common trade practices. So, the pictorial material that was widely popular at the time was generally emblematic.[4] The popularity of emblem books began to gain traction by 1580 although they "had long been known in England, in the shape, for example, of heraldic devices" (29). The history of emblematic expectations in England meant that "a picture was regarded first and last as a *vehicle of meaning* (29, emphasis mine). It is necessary to understand the visual culture of early modern England because it allows us to familiarize ourselves with the interpretive context audiences brought to the play. Their understanding of Enobarbus's description is built upon a culture which associates images with allegorical meaning. Furthermore, the many references Shakespeare makes to mythical figures is deeply embedded in the popularity of emblems at this time. In order to analyze the visual meaning of the play, we must understand its many emblematic references.

In Christopher Wortham's exploration of the emblematic associations of Antony and Cleopatra, he notes how, in Otto van Veen's *Amorum Emblemata* (1608), "a chubby little Cupid

[4] I owe much of my understanding of early modern visual culture from Lucy Gent's book, *Picture and Poetry, 1560-1620: Relations between Literature and the Visual Arts in the English Renaissance*, Emanuel Stelzer's *Portraits in Early Modern English Drama: Visual Culture, Play-Texts, and Performances*, and Orgel's chapter "Idols of the Gallery: Becoming a Connoisseur in Renaissance England" from the important book, *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*.

is seen overpowering Mars in an unlikely tussle;" Wortham observes that "van Veen is close to classical forms of the myth of Mars and Venus, wherein the union of the two brings forth Harmonia" (7). Cleopatra's association with Venus in Enobarbus's description coincides with Antony's associations with Mars, and therefore, part of her authority in the play comes from her ability to subdue and alter the war-like Mars. The subduing of Antony creates a series of reactions by the Roman actors who fear how changeability threatens fixed masculine identities. No doubt, Cleopatra is associated with changeability, both in the play-text and by literary critics, but it is clear that that association is built into the visual language of the play itself. Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra as the Venus already speaks to the Venus emblem's legacy of meaning.

The substitution of Cleopatra's attendants with mythical Cupids and mermaids echoes the visual elements of the Venus emblem. Echoes are also found between the emblem's epigram and the play-text itself:

> Cupid the sword of Mars out of his hand can wring,
> And soone aswage his wrath how furious so he bee,
> Love can do more than stryf, by this effect wee see,
> The sturdie and the stout love doth to mildness bring. (van Veet qtd. in Wortham 7)

The disarming of Mars is reflected when Cleopatra says, "I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan" (2.5.25-27). In both instances, the war-like Mars is sedated by the union with his lover. However, unlike Venus who employs Cupid to take the sword, Cleopatra disarms Antony herself and becomes the "Venus armed in victory over Mars" (Singh 100). Therefore, we see how Shakespeare builds upon the mythographic associations of Venus with sexuality but complicates it by having Cleopatra's sexuality be a driving force behind her authority within the play.

Despite the fact that the image of Cleopatra on the River Cydnus is never seen by audiences, the imagined spectacle still contains visual language that references the visual culture of the period, namely through her Venus association.[5] Enobarbus establishes the importance of Cleopatra's power, sexuality, and threat to the Roman gender system through his description. It is necessary to read Enobarbus's speech as both a rhetorical choice by Shakespeare, who recognizes the limitations of actually staging the grand scene, and as a distinctly visual moment. Since audiences would have comfortably translated Enobarbus's description into a "picture" of Cleopatra as the Venus, it is important to keep in mind how pictures functioned in the period. Ultimately, English audiences saw images through an allegorical lens, and we see how the visual language employed in Enobarbus's description is rich with symbolic meaning.

"The fancy outwork nature:" The Combination of Verbal and Visual Mediums

The unique composition of Enobarbus's dialogue has allowed for viewing the scene through two seemingly opposite artistic mediums: that of verbal construction, discourse and rhetoric, and that of visuality and spectacle. However, since both of these mediums work together in this moment, it is not entirely appropriate to think of them as opposite modes of expression. Instead, the verbal and visual are inherently tied through the performative process, an idea Shakespeare seems keenly aware of in this moment. For that reason, it is possible to see *Antony and Cleopatra* as a play where Shakespeare expresses his interest in the debate surrounding artistic mediums and representation during the early modern period. That debate heavily centered around the concept of the *paragone*. This concept was primarily interested in

[5] Marguerite Tassi refers to this process as "a phenomenology of theater in which spectators are called to imagine and experience the actor in a state of artistic metamorphosis" (295).

which medium could produce the best verisimilitude to life, and it was common to see the visual arts, such as painting and sculpting, positioned against the verbal arts, such as poetics and rhetoric. The direct translation of "*paragone*" refers to "comparison; competition or emulation," though it likely originated from the ancient Greek understanding: "to sharpen or whet one thing against another" (OED "*paragone*," 1.b.†3.).[6] Concerning art, the term "*paragone"* embodied a popular debate between painting and sculpting in the Renaissance, and it often centered around the specific representational affordances of different artistic mediums.[7]

The debate surrounding the concept of the *paragone* has a long history before entering into the discourse of the early modern English art scene. We see its influence entering the public eye as works of Italian artists were being translated for English audiences. One such example can be seen with Richard Haydocke's 1598 translation of Giovanni Lomazzo's *Tratto dell'arte della pittura, scultura, ed architettura*. The text reveals the prevalence of the *paragone* as a debate in artistic discourse. The importance and popularity of Haydocke's translation also reveals how those involved in England's art culture would have been familiar with the specifics of the discussion. In the treatise, Lomazzo speaks to the far-reaching influence of the debate between painting and sculpture, but, through his tone, it is clear that he is obligated to address the question. This obligation then implies that the *paragone,* as a concept, was prevalent enough to be a required subject to those adding to existing artistic discourse.

[6] Tassi provides a similar definition of "paragone" in her article "O'erpicturing Apelles: Shakespeare's *Paragone* with Painting in *Antony and Cleopatra*."

[7] Important developments in the debate around the *paragone* span from Aristotle's discussion of mimetics to Leonardo da Vinci, and, finally, of interest to the literary scope of this project, Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*. It is clear that the concept takes up many artistic interests due to its broad scrutiny of forms and intrigue regarding the purpose of representation.

In terms of literary intervention, poetry was brought into the debate since poetry "could show the working of the mind" rather than simply the visual similarity that painting and sculpting was bound to (Blunt 260). A comparison between visual arts and literature broadens the question of strict verisimilitude and begins to question what produces a more natural representation (Tassi 293). That is to say, a representation that is capable of communicating the lived experiences of humans rather than simply visual similarity. Literature's complex relationship with the debate is furthered in Sidney's *A defence of poesie*.[8] Sidney asserts that astronomers, philosophers, and physicians are all bound to the study and understanding of nature. Poets, however,

> diſdaining to be tied to any ſuch ſubjection, lifted vp with the vigor of his own inuention, doth grow in effect into an other nature: in making things either better than nature bringeth foorth, or quite a new, formes ſuch as neuer were in nature. (Sidney *C.*).

In Sidney's comment about the poet's ability to improve on nature or create "forms," he is presenting a challenge to the purpose of artistic representation; thus, he offers an argument for literatures unique position as a mode of expression. While the visual arts are interested in representing things as they appear, Sidney suggests that poets are capable of inventions and "images" that go beyond reality.

Artistic representation meets an interesting crossroads when Renaissance thinkers began to consider the material limitations of both visual and verbal methods. This inherently leads to a question of how theater enters into the debate, since it is a space where the visual and verbal are

[8] Phyllis Rackin's important article "Shakespeare's Boy Cleopatra, the Decorum of Nature and the Gold World of Poetry" provides a more in-depth exploration of Sidney's ideals around poetry, his response to Plato, and, ultimately, the resulting insight into Enobarbus's famous description of Cleopatra on the River Cydnus.

combined. So, we might look to theatrical representation as a space where "liveliness" creates a better expression of the human experience. Arguably, this is produced because theater is able to set these "opposite" modes of expression against each other to produce paradoxical representations. When looking at *Antony and Cleopatra* with the *paragone* in mind, there is the expectation that a clear stance between verbal or visual representation will be taken. What we see, however, is no such fixed position. Instead, the play suggests that Shakespeare sees both affordances and limitations in each representational mode. The shifting emphasis allows for paradoxical representation, which then creates rich meaning and depth of character. Ultimately, theater is able to bring together these seemingly oppositional forms through the one representational process.

Enobarbus's speech is a clear example of the importance of considering both verbal representation and visual representation as equally important and cohesive mediums in theatrical productions. Therefore, it is necessary to look at examples of these combined representational modes in the artistic culture of early modern England. When Enobarbus asks spectators to create an image of the Cleopatra "o'erpicturing that Venus," it brings to mind ekphrasis. Ekphrasis is the use of descriptive and poetic language to create images in the mind of an auditor or reader. Although it has wider definitions, ekphrasis in literary criticism is often interpreted as a rhetorical device that describes a pictorial image, such as a painting.

In Barkan's important article "Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship," he points to the complexity of the relationship between poetry and visual representation as he wrestles with the limitation of Sidney's metaphorical terminology "speaking picture." Barkan points to the limitation of the metaphor since it implies:

> To move from poetry to mimesis to speaking picture is to promise something like a totalizing experience, one that embraces both eyes and ears, one that combines the discursive force of language with the sensuous power of real experience (figured as visual)... the 'speaking picture' stands as the emblem of a kind of utopian poetics, a dream that poetry can do just about *anything.* (Barkan 327)

Barkan's criticism of Sidney's totalizing inclination parallels some of the interesting implications of Enobarbus's description, especially in the context of the Renaissance debate around artistic mediums. Enobarbus's speech has been interpreted as an example of ekphrasis within *Antony and Cleopatra*, particularly when compared to how Shakespeare modified the description from Plutarch.[9] While Plutarch makes a reference to the Venus "commonly drawen in picture," he does not attempt to fully develop an "image" of the scene as we see within the play (Plutarch 981). Enobarbus's description is unique because he provides a rich visual narrative of the scene. To compare how the Cydnus scene manifests in *Antony and Cleopatra*, we must first look at Plutarch's original wording. He says:

> her barge in the riuer of Cydnus, the poope whereof was of gold, the sailes of purple, and the owers of siluer, which kept stroke in rowing after the sounde of the musicke of flutes, how boyes, citherns, violls, and such other instruments as they played vpon in the barge. (Plutarch 981)

[9] In Richard Wilson's article "Your Crown's Awry: The Visual Turn in *Antony and Cleopatra*," his discussion of Enobarbus's speech is followed by a reference to Sidney's definition of "poetry as a 'speaking picture'" which establishes it as an example of ekphrasis (333).

Plutarch's description is full of many details, but it lacks the poetic language we see in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Instead, the play matches the details and gives them a personified sensuality. Thus, Shakespeare enhances the lovers' first encounter through rhetorical affordances.

> The barge she sat in like a burnished throne
> Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold,
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
> The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of the flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. (2.2.227-234)

Notably, the environment reacts to the presence of Cleopatra, and therefore the scene itself is imagined to be lively and sensual. Recalling Sydney's defense of poetry, he mentions that poets are capable of making forms not found in nature. Enobarbus expresses a similar sentiment not long after the preceding lines when he says, "the fancy outwork nature" (2.2.238). Therefore, one of the primary differences between Plutarch's description of Cleopatra and Enobarbus's, is that Enobarbus's reflects new ideas around poetry's ability to surpass nature. The sensual environment, which seemingly reacts to the presence of Cleopatra, sets Shakespeare apart from Plutarch because it imagines a spectacle that could not really exist.

In terms of Shakespeare's choices around artistic representation, it is possible to see this as a moment where the poetic medium has more affordances in its mimetic creation because it enriches the overall effect of the spectacle. However, this does not appear to be an entirely

appropriate reading of the scene.[10] Simply discussing Enobarbus's description as a model of ekphrasis implies that Shakespeare is foregrounding the discursive mode over a performance of the scene, which would offer audiences a direct visual encounter with Cleopatra on the barge. This foregrounding then implies that poetic description is more capable of producing rich images than the "commonly drawen" Venus, and that it is necessary for Cleopatra to outdo that pictorial tradition. Any attempts to read Enobarbus's ekphrastic description as a clear favoring of the poetic mode are undermined when he says, "For her own person, / It beggared all description" (2.2.234-235). Shakespeare is pointing to the limitations of rhetorical spectacles by conceding that some things, at this moment it is the spectacle of Cleopatra, are beyond the possibilities of description.

This disrupts any clear position alongside the debate around artistic methods, but it also highlights important features of Cleopatra's characterization. Matching Cleopatra's shifting and dramatic elements, the "speech is full of hyperbole and paradox, rhetorical manifestations of the impossibility of its subject to be contained within the categories of logic and measurement" (Rackin 204). In other words, applying the concept of the *paragone* to *Antony and Cleopatra* will not result in a determination of Shakespeare's position; arguably because he invokes the debate but with a simultaneous critique of taking sides. Instead, it is clear that Shakespeare favors a combination of the two mediums, but with a shifting emphasis on one or the other in

[10] I am hesitant to make any claims regarding Shakespeare's position because of the various moments where the play seems skeptical of the superiority of entirely rhetorical representation. For instance, within the same scene Enobarbus says how Antony "pays his heart / For what his eyes eat only" (2.2.265). In terms of favoring the verbal and visual, there is the suggestion here that the visual experience of beholding Cleopatra was sexually gratifying. This is further affirmed when Agrippa immediately responds, "Royal wench!" (2.2.266). One of the primary differences between Shakespeare and Plutarch's description is the use of dialogue. Through erotic interjections, the sexual nature of Enobarbus's description is heightened. However, Enobarbus undermines Maecenas and Agrippa's desire to experience the scene by reminding them that it is a visual experience when only Antony "fed" on.

order to enhance the play's paradoxical characterization. The character's famous self-contradictions are best achieved when they are *said* to be one way but *seen* to be another.

Theater's intersection of the verbal and visual creates opportunities for the play to oscillate between physical spectacle and poetics. Shakespeare is interested in playing with the practice of mental "pictures" by calling attention to the limitations of visual art, poetics, and the imaginative process. Cleopatra, especially in the Cydnus scene, evades all attempts at fixity and understanding. While the visual is subverted by offering the scene in a speech, the rhetorical is also subverted since she "beggared all description" (2.2.235). Finally, the spectator's own imaginative ability is subverted when Enobarbus reminds us of Cleopatra's "infinite variety" where "she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies" (2.2.278-279). Since paradox is an essential element of her characterization, we are left questioning our own capacity to imagine her in our minds.[11] What lies at the intersection of all of the aforementioned representational forms is a better understanding of Shakespeare's entrance into the discourse around verbal and visual mediums in the production of art.

[11] Rackin often refers to speeches where the absence of "physically present" spectacles are followed by the description which is marked by "paradox and hyperbole" (209). Thus, it is possible to see paradox as a common element of Cleopatra's characterization and of the play's overall construction.

ANAMORPHIC PERSPECTIVE AND CHARACTERIZATION

Anamorphic paintings are useful for understanding how *Antony and Cleopatra*'s shifting characterization reflects Shakespeare's interest in the changing art landscape of early modern England. Anamorphic paintings would show different images or effects depending on the position or perspective of the viewer. Lucy Gent notes the impact of anamorphic art when she refers to it as "the genre which more than any other brought home to power of illusionist art" which "played an important, if rather crude, part in widening the pictorial experience of the English" (23-4). Therefore, we might trace how England's new interest in perspective paintings offer a useful framework for understanding why *Antony and Cleopatra* focuses so heavily on shifting perspectives. It is also worth noting that the shifting perspectives are not consigned to a strictly visual format within the play. Instead, the play is deeply invested in the debate around artistic mediums, further reflecting Shakespeare's mingling of the two representational mediums, verbal and visual. Antony and Cleopatra are continually compared to an image that is built through verbal exchange; they have a legacy, history, and a set of rumored stories to live up to. Their actual behavior in the play, behavior that can be regarded as Shakespeare playing with the visual interpretation of his audience, often contradicts the "fixed" image of the two established through language. Therefore, we may trace the many instances where the play highlights the anamorphic image of Antony and Cleopatra as a moment where Shakespeare asks his audience to be skeptical of what they see and hear. As spectators, it is important to weigh the characters as a combination of their verbal legacy and their observable reality.

The play's interest in paradox and shifting characterization begins immediately with Philo's opening speech. Before the play's lofty, iconic characters enter the stage, Philo addresses Demetrius and, in turn, the audience of the theater. His statement acts as an introduction to the

action of the rest of the play, so it is important to understand the meaning behind his words. As an audience, we must assess whether his words stand for the expectation of what is to come, or if we should resist his statement, which seemingly represents that of the larger Roman state, and support the characters that resist the Roman hegemonic worldview.[12] Most notably, Philo critiques Antony's changed legacy. In doing so, he is preparing the audience for a play that is interested in the space between the human and the historical myth. He states:

> Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
> That o'er the files and musters of the war
> Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
> The office and devotion of their view
> Upon a tawny front.
> . . . . . .
> Look where they come.
> Take but good note, and you shall see in him
> The triple pillar of the world transformed
> Not a strumpet's fool. Behold and see. (1.1.1-14)

As Philo directs the gaze of the spectator in 1.1, he calls attention to the ways in which visual interpretations change depending on the perspective in which they are viewed, thus reflecting the

[12] In his article "The Weight of Antony: Staging "Character" in *Antony and Cleopatra*," W. B. Worthen discusses the anamorphic quality of Philo's opening lines, but he focuses on how the scene asks spectators to note the difference between character and actor (297-8).

interest in anamorphic art which was beginning to take shape in Elizabethan and Jacobean visual culture.[13]

In Heather James's article "The Politics of Display and the Anamorphic Subjects of Antony and Cleopatra," she uses anamorphic art as a lens to understand how Cleopatra "disrupts powerful conventions through which early modern writers affirmed ideological norms of gender, desire, and masculine subjectivity" (212). These are all necessary themes to uncover within the play, but I argue that these themes are best uncovered by looking at the play's interest in the limitations and affordances of artistic representation. If it is true that the play reflects Shakespeare's interest in the idea of the *paragone*, then in it is necessary to understand the relevant artistic practices in Renaissance England's visual culture. Theater's co-opting of the anamorphic view "sets up a fundamental mode of spectatorship" (Tassi 297). Spectatorship is itself a contested term for the early modern theater goer since it implies a visual turn from "auditor" to viewer (Wilson 315).[14] By asking the audience to "Look where they come" and "Take but good note," Philo is making the distinction that the audience must participate in observational practices alongside the already familiar practice of listening. However, the play offers no comfortable and fixed images. While the audience must look closely at the play, they must recognize the limitations of optics. Discontinuity and perspective are made suspect with the rise of anamorphic art, which Shakespeare continually interposes in the presentation of Antony throughout the play.

[13] Artists such as Hans Holbein, Nicholas Hilliard, and Isaac Oliver are all important figures in the unique artistic culture of sixteenth-century England, but Holbein's *The Ambassadors* is, perhaps, the most important example of anamorphic perspective found in paintings of the period. This is highlighted in Stelzer's book, *Portraits in Early Modern English Drama: Visual Culture, Play-texts, and Performances.*

[14] Wilson provides further insight into how attending The Globe is, in itself, a reflected of the anamorphic process since theater spectators were bound to unique, sometimes shifting views of stage action.

Philo's speech establishes the importance of spectatorship and scrutiny, but it is interesting to note how his lines are echoed in, perhaps, the clearest example of an anamorphic reference in the play. Cleopatra states that Antony "be painted one way like a Gorgon / The other way 's a Mars" (2.5.144-145).[15] Again, Antony is compared to Mars, but, through Cleopatra's description of his "painted" image, we are given the sense that this is not a fixed position. Viewing Antony as the anamorphic, or Janus-faced, Mars asks us to uncover the sublimation of meaning that is at work with such a symbolic association. Therefore, it is necessary to ask how Mars was mythographed in early modern England.[16] As an emblematic figure, Fraunce describes Mars as having a "*hote and furious disposition, fit for wars . . . signifiyng fiercnes and cruelty: he is figured grim, fierce, and sterne, alarmed: his chariot is drawen by two horses. . . . Terror and Feare: His companions be, Feare, Fury, and Violence*" (qtd. in Wortham 7). Mars does not connote the same valorizing, positive association that we see in Philo's opening lines since war was not a profitable enterprise for the middle class emblem writers (10). Multitudinous meanings are already embedded in any association with Mars. In *Shakespeare's Visual Theater: Staging the Personified Characters*, Kiefer explains how Mars was praised and "considered the epitome of aggressive masculinity;" but, consequently, "to the extent that he represents impulses leading to cruelty and wanton destruction, he occasions deep apprehension" (187). In other words, the emblem of Mars was saturated with both positive and negative masculine associations.

[15] Tassi also identifies this moment as a clear example of anamorphic perspective in the play and suggests that the image Philo presents is subverted by Antony and Cleopatra's construction of their own image (297).

[16] I draw many of the historical examples from Wortham's article "Temperence and the End of Time: Emblematic 'Antony and Cleopatra.'" While his article is thorough in its research of emblematic references, he does not read comparisons for how they relate to the play's shifting perspectives and anamorphic interpretation of characters. While Wortham's work is indispensable, I hope to build on it through an application of the Renaissance *paragone*.

Antony's characterization within this play is heavily bound to these anamorphic associations, and it is fair to regard them as anamorphic because his moralistic rendering changes depending on the perspective. It is clear that Antony is happily associated with Mars by Philo's desire for the "files and musters of the war" (1.1.3). Cleopatra also suggests a positive association since Antony escapes any Gorgon "monstrosity" when painted one way "a Mars" (2.5.145). However, the negative connotations of Mars's emblematic associations are best understood through Antony's deteriorating relationship with his Roman associates, notably Enobarbus. Cleopatra is often blamed for Antony's military failure, in part due to her association with the seducing Venus, but his failure was already marked through his connection to the iconographic Mars. The impulsive, fierceness tied to this association is emphasized when Antony announces, "By sea and land I'll fight. Or I will live / Or bathe my dying honor in the blood / Shall make it live again" (4.2.7-9). Antony is set on reconciling his split identity through war. Therefore, his downfall is tied to his association with the impulsive Mars. Spectators engrossed in emblematic visual culture would have predicted the characterization of Antony. For every positive rendering they saw of his character, they would have predicted his anamorphic quality and expected Antony's shortcomings to follow.

Cleopatra has a similar mythological connection to Antony, who is either fallible man or mythologized Mars. While I have already covered her emblematic association with Venus in Enobarbus's speech, she later compares herself to Juno. The association between Cleopatra and Juno highlights her potential shortcomings, which is significant considering the many exaggerated, super-human descriptions she received throughout the play.

> Our strength is all gone to heaviness;
> That makes the weight. Had I great Juno's power,

The strong-winged Mercury should fetch thee up

And set thee by Jove's side. (4.15.39-42)

Cleopatra and her women's physical struggle to pull the dying Antony up the monument communicates the fallibility and the "humanness" of Cleopatra. There is a contrast between the commonplace human experience and Cleopatra's continual mythical comparisons. In other words, the historical and mythological epic that she is associated with is subverted through the limitations of her own body.[17] This contrast is something she seems to identify herself with when she wishes she had the "great Juno's power." Therefore, Cleopatra's anamorphic presentation is shown when her image fluctuates between the mundane and the legendary. The monument scene highlights how perspective produces radically different images of Cleopatra. It is worth noting that deities are not the only mythological references within the play because the main characters, Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavius, are all important mythological figures in *history*. Shakespeare continually exercises the verbal and visual interchange afforded by theater to undermine the characters' mythological figurations. By doing so, the play's major characters reflect the mimetic desires to create livelihood in artistic representation. Paradox and the use of anamorphic perspective permit complex characterization by allowing characters to shift between various emotions and the constraints of their memorialized legacy.

[17] David Bevington comments on the contrast between Cleopatra's physical limitations and her desire for extra-worldly power in his article "'Above the element they lived in:' The Visual Language of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 4 and 5" (107).

PARADOX AND PRODUCTIONS OF *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

Antony and Cleopatra makes continual references to the exchange between verbal and visual representational modes in the process of theater. The exchange between these seemingly oppositional mediums is used to highlight the affordances and limitations of each, which emphasizes the need for skepticism for how character, plot, and meaning is presented. Ultimately, the many examples of contradiction, paradox, and shifting characterization become cornerstones of the play's legacy and reflect a larger discourse that was occurring at the time around artistic production. What is interesting to see, however, is how the legacy of these elements produce an expectation for complex characterization in productions of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Therefore, with an understanding of *how* Shakespeare played with different representational mediums, it aids in our understanding of *why* particular productions succeed or not. In other words, the specific discourse surrounding the concept of the *paragone* that was occurring in early modern England still has echoes in the reception of productions today. Tracing how productions have historically embraced or rejected complex characterization further proves the importance of understanding Shakespeare's construction of shifting representation.

It is not always possible to confirm exact dates and staging locations for Shakespeare's plays. Still, an awareness of these factors is important when trying to imagine the relationship between the text's meaning, its staging environment, and its potential reception.[18] *Antony and Cleopatra* is believed to have been first performed around 1607. The only official recording of its performance is in 1669; it was recorded to have been "formerly acted at the Blackfriars,"

[18] I owe my understanding of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s stage history to Sara Munson Deats's encompassing and attentive work "Shakespeare's Anamorphic Drama: A Survey of *Antony and Cleopatra* in Criticism, on Stage and on Screen." While her study is more of a survey, I am taking the opportunity to build upon her research of performance history to see how it reflects a reading of the *paragone* in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

though it is unclear whether that was the location of its first staging (Deats 36). According to Bridget Escolme, it is more likely that *Antony and Cleopatra* would have been first performed at the Globe since the King's Men did not have a full season at the Blackfriars until 1610. After the play's initial performance, it was not embraced on the stage again for over 150 years (Deats 35). David Garrick's revival of the play in 1759 was not met with success. His highly truncated version is known for its lavish spectacle and underachieving cast (37). Ultimately, the failure of the production would make any future staging of the play wary of its monumental demands. However, it did eventually achieve success in 1849 when produced by Samuel Phelps and performed at Sadler's Wells (38).

Critical reception of *Antony and Cleopatra* at Sadler Wells has many parallels to Kellaway's positive review of the 2017 Iqbal Khan's production. The production was celebrated primarily for Isabella Glyn's depiction of Cleopatra. Critics described her as "the Egyptian Venus, Minerva, Juno—now pleased, now angry—now eloquent, now silent, capricious and resolved, according to the situation and sentiment to be rendered" (*The Illustrated London News*; qtd. John Russell Brown 51, qtd. in Deats 39). What is interesting about Glyn's critical reception is that her successful portrayal of Cleopatra heavily aligns with the play's anamorphic elements. Glyn was able to depict paradoxical characterization, and, in doing so, was even compared to the iconographic deities referenced in the play. The many unsuccessful productions, which I briefly referenced, favored the elements of the play which lent to large on-stage spectacles. It is clear that they saw *Antony and Cleopatra* as a vehicle for visual splendor, but, through this monolithic lens, they ignore the many ways that the play-text undermines the celebration of purely visual representation. Glyn's performance engages with the play-texts questioning of visual representation by embracing paradoxical characterization and shifting perspectives. This shows

that productions and actors must have an awareness of *Antony and Cleopatra*'s complex inconsistencies since they are fundamental to the themes developed throughout the play. Without a celebration of the play's paradoxical elements, it is rendered chaotic, illegible, and incomplete.

Perhaps the most profitable of the early productions was the Palmer Theater revival starring Cora Urquardt Potter. Potter's portrayal of Cleopatra catalyzed a shift in popular culture's expectations of the leading woman in *Antony and Cleopatra.* Notably, she was the first to portray Cleopatra as unlaced, which resulted in a critical tendency to comment on her sensuality on stage. The second significant change is that, in Potter's production, there was a staging of the river Cydnus scene which previously only existed through Enobarbus's description. Finally, her red hair and stained cheeks caused the following productions by Bernhardt and Langtry to adopt a similar physical appearance (460).

Undeniably, Potter's success in the role of Cleopatra, and perhaps the closest she achieved to an accurate textual characterization, was through a skillful staging of her own visual elements. Cleopatra is notable for her ability to control her own image through spectacle and performance, and it is clear that Potter possessed a similar skill. It was through this skill that she was able to create a successful visual appeal. The critical reception of Potter's portrayal shows the important connection between performing spectacle and the characterization of Cleopatra. In her article "The Unlacing of Cleopatra," Adler describes Potter's critical appraisal:

> This unlaced Cleopatra…a lovely young beauty in magnificent archaeologically correct raiment, played the roguish, seductive, clinging young temptress and drew her greatest acclaim for the beauty of her entrance on the barge, the scenes of love making, and the

> tempestuous fury with which she attacked the messenger who brought her news of Antony's marriage (458).

A few things stand out in potentially troubling ways about the reception of Potter's Cleopatra. The most glaring one being an acceptance of Cleopatra as a youthful beauty. No doubt, Cleopatra's ability to seduce is an important element of the original text, but it was often associated with anxiety of her potential power and her challenging of fixed Roman identities. Her position as born ruler and as the embodiment of alluring womanhood, as seen in her association with the Venus symbol, have always been the cornerstone of Cleopatra's characterization. In many ways, a celebration of youth, impressionability, and an element of naivety disrupt the legacy of Shakespeare's Cleopatra. That disruption was a concern for some critics who were wary of Potter's portrayal. For instance, in the *Sun,* she is described as the "lithe, clinging, alluring Egyptian woman, never an impressive or commanding queen" (Fryles, qtd. in Adler 459). According to the *Sun*, Potter's depiction is troubling because it does not embody the paradoxical elements of Cleopatra, lover and ruler, woman and historical myth. Cleopatra's shifting characterization may make interpreting the play's meaning an elusive task, but it is apparent that audiences bring to the viewing process a desire for "contradiction" in the portrayal of Cleopatra.

The choice to stage the Cydnus scene in Potter's production reflects a history of favoring spectacle over poetry in post-Restoration productions of the play.[19] Along with her simplified characterization of Cleopatra, the Cydnus staging is an instance of the production not embracing elements of paradox that are necessary for understanding the play's thematic structure. By

[19] Deats notes that the play may have gone so long without a restaging due to the favoring of "spectacle and scenery" in the "proscenium mode of the Restoration and eighteenth-century theaters" (35).

presenting a physical spectacle, all of the limitations of the visible experience are contained on the stage. Cleopatra does not "[beggar] all description" when the spectator can see her lying "in her pavilion" because a description is not necessary. Through Enobarbus's speech, Shakespeare favors narrative over a physical spectacle. Thus, he makes use of the restrictions and alternative affordances of the poetic medium. As Rackin describes, "the speech is full of hyperbole and paradox, rhetorical manifestations of the impossibility of its subject to be contained within the categories of logic and measurement" (204). To embody the complex and powerful inconsistencies of Cleopatra, her most profound "spectacle" of the play cannot be physically staged; to do so would fix the image into the static form of a visual display. While the use of spectacle is an important element of the text, whether or not it must be physically present is less defined. Ultimately, the choice to stage the Cydnus scene in Potter's production contributed to the making of a Cleopatra who was "never an impressive or commanding queen" because her spectacle and image was confined to the limitations of staging. In this sense, the production was not mindful of Shakespeare's original construction, where Enobarbus spectacularized her effect through poetic description. In order to present a successful, complex rendition of Cleopatra, a production must be aware of the play-texts interest in artistic mediums. The making of Cleopatra's character occurs whether she is or is not on the stage.

The production history of *Antony and Cleopatra* is important for understanding how critical responses to "successful" and "unsuccessful" performances reflect an unconscious expectation for paradox. We see this in the positive reception of Glyn's Cleopatra and in the criticism of Potter. Therefore, performances rely on a dramaturgical awareness of the play's entrance into the discourse around the *paragone* and Shakespeare's manipulation of theater's verbal and visual elements. His manipulation is, perhaps, most notable in the

anamorphic moments of the play. To best understand how that is represented on the stage, it is necessary to look closely at the monument scene. As the dying Antony arrives to Cleopatra and her women at the monument, she says:

> Help me, my women!—We must draw thee up.—
>
> Assist, good friends.
>
> [*They begin lifting him.*]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Here's sport indeed. How heavy weighs my lord!
>
> Our strength is all gone into heaviness;
>
> That makes the weight. Had I great Juno's power,
>
> The strong-winged Mercury should fetch thee up
>
> And set thee by Jove's side. Yet come a little.
>
> Wishers were ever fools. O, come, come, come!
>
> *They heave Antony aloft to Cleopatra*. (4.15.35-43)

The paradoxical element of this scene comes through in the contrast between mythical comparison and human limitations. Cleopatra and her women physically struggle to lift Antony; Cleopatra even wishes she had the "great Juno's power" (4.15.40). But the mythical element does not stop there since Cleopatra is already rendered a historical myth to the audience of Shakespeare's theater. Despite her great historical association, Shakespeare reminds us that she is still a human. He is able to communicate the human element by utilizing the unique features of the theater. In this case, the embodiment of movement and emotions by actors communicates a physical verisimilitude to nature that painting and poetry cannot achieve. Therefore, the idea of

the *paragone* is echoed in this scene since theater circumvents any verbal/visual limitations by allowing them to exist simultaneously.

In this moment, Cleopatra is aware of her continual mythical comparisons, or so she suggests when she wishes she had "great Juno's power," but, in reality, she is limited to the physical constraints of her body. Shakespeare plays on this contrast to highlight the tragedy of this scene. If Cleopatra truly were the goddess she is rumored to be, she would have the power to save Antony from his mortality. How productions have approached the monument scene reflects their awareness of the play's interest in verbal/visual manipulation. The 1945 Robert Atkins production of *Antony and Cleopatra* features no such monument scene. Without a staging of the monument scene, the production is "missing something about the play's daring shifts from tragedy to comedy, from mythic grandeur to material reality, from fiction to theatrical world" (Escolme 2). In other words, the monument scene embodies theater's unique ability to synthesize artistic representation while embracing paradox. Through its dynamic exchange between dialogue, performance, and spectacle, theater is able to communicate complex meaning and reflect "problems of identity and authenticity" (Sturgess 4).

The decision to remove the monument scene is uncommon in contemporary productions. Gregory Doran's 2006 production at the Swan Theater embraces the scene through a unique use of spectacle. While there is no traditional "monument" on the stage, Doran's production still makes use of the vertical metaphor. In it, Antony is hoisted up by a rope and pulley where Cleopatra and her women wait upon a floating platform. This staging of Antony's death leans closer to the comedic, rather than the tragic, as he is raised up to Cleopatra. Therefore, we are missing the important blend of paradoxical elements. Furthermore, it is Antony's attendants, not Cleopatra and her women, which lift the dying Antony. This substitution undermines the

dialogue of the scene where Cleopatra compares her powerlessness to Juno. Doran's Cleopatra is not plagued by the tragic physical restrictions. Cleopatra's mythical comparisons, her position as a powerful ruler, and her ability to control the staging, spectacles, and sensuality of each encounter are not set against the ironic contradiction necessary in this moment.

The staging history of *Antony and Cleopatra* reveals how the success of a production is intimately tied to its awareness of representational mediums. While critics and audience members are attuned to the play's iconic characterization, the underlying reality is that that characterization is informed by Renaissance art culture. Tracing the shifting use of verbal and visual representation allows us to understand how the paradoxical elements of the characters are produced via their anamorphic presentation. Philo's opening speech and Enobarbus's description invite audiences into the performance, but that invitation requires spectators to be skeptical of what the see and hear. Therefore, the play-text insists that audiences reject fixed ideas of characterization, legacy, and social roles. It is no wonder, then, why productions that seek to simplify *Antony and Cleopatra*'s complex staging and incongruities of character are met with resistance by critics and audiences alike.

CONCLUSION

In Cleopatra's final moments she says, "Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch / My best attires. I am again for Cydnus / To meet Mark Antony" (5.2.277-279). As an audience, we are reminded of Enobarbus's famous description, and, therefore, we are confronted again with Shakespeare's unique construction of spectacle. Cleopatra's final scene encompass how the combination of verbal and visual mediums produce spectacles which solidifies her paradoxical characterization. Similar to Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra on the barge, this scene makes use of dialogue, exchange, and poetic description. Cleopatra discusses her final moments and her hypothetical future as an "Egyptian puppet" with Iras, Charmian, and the Countryman that provides her with the asp (5.2.254). Unlike Enobarbus's description, Cleopatra offers her audience an image of herself available for visual interpretation. We watch as she adorns herself, "Give me my robe. Put on my crown," to appear as the epitomized beauty and power of Egypt (5.2.335). In this sense, it is the perfect synthesis of the verbal and visual mediums on the stage. The verbal and visual material we are offered, however, is unique. In this moment, we are not given the finalized spectacle, as we were with Cleopatra performing a tableau vivant of Venus. Instead, we watch as she prepares for her next performance: the image of her death and final political defeat before Caesar.

It is Cleopatra's ability to control her own spectacle that is important; through her suicide, she maintains authority over the production of her image. In this moment, she recalls the many anamorphic qualities which seemed to contradict each other throughout the play. She is the mortal woman who loves Antony. She is the powerful head of Egypt who challenges Caesar and the rigid Roman gender system. And finally, to satiate her "Immortal longings," she becomes the

mythologized, historical myth of Cleopatra (5.2.336). Cleopatra's control over her own image-making then mirrors the play's overall interest in the implications of producing meaning through representational practices. Notably, by staging the rivalry between the pictorial arts and poetry, *Antony and Cleopatra* challenges the rising debate around the concept of the *paragone*. Shakespeare's continual interest in the limitations and affordances of representational practices combined on the stage show how theater is best able to synthesize seemingly opposite modes of expression to produce paradoxical meaning. An awareness of the play's continual evocation of verbal/visual exchange aids in the understanding of how meaning is solidified in the play, namely that anamorphic representation relies on tension between what is seen and what is heard. Finally, a production's success requires an awareness of the play-text's use of artistic mediums, since it is clear that audiences expect complex, shifting representations of characters and themes throughout the staging of the play.

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