

Varieties of Power in *Antony and Cleopatra*

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“It is, I think, a rather sad reflection on the present state of political science that our terminology does not distinguish among such key words as ‘power’, ‘strength’, ‘force’, ‘authority’, and, finally, ‘violence’.”¹ Hannah Arendt made this complaint in 1970, but she would not have found the situation much improved if she had lived to scrutinize the concept of “power” as it was applied in literary studies in the following decades. In particular, a series of books in the late 1980s debated the relation of the early modern stage to state or royal power. This debate remains a bracing exercise in historical imagination and conceptual sophistication. Its main productions have attained classic status in their branch of literary scholarship. On the one side, Steven Mullaney argued that the theatre stood in a subversive relation to civic and religious power in early modern London. On the other side, Stephen Greenblatt and Leonard Tennenhouse argued that the theatre was complicit in a wider political and cultural activity of social control.² But despite their differences in the way they assess the exercise of power, all conceived of power in what now appears an excessively unitary or hypostasized form.

The terms of this critical debate were largely shaped by the work of Michel Foucault, who influentially elided the concepts of power, right, and truth, discerning in the tight triangle thus created a mutual reinforcement of almost irresistible potency. In the early 1970s, Foucault had formulated his fundamental question and its answer in the following terms: “what type of power is susceptible of producing discourses of truth that ... are endowed with such potent effects? ... We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth ... we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands”.³ For Foucault, “power” produces the “subjects” of knowledge, the academic disciplines that may claim to interrogate power but actually reproduce it, as well as “subjects” in the sense of individual human beings

who may seem to exercise an autonomous subjectivity but are actually subjected to an all-pervasive, determining, though largely invisible network of coercions.⁴ These two kinds of subject are linked through the way in which our very conception of the human “subject” is formed by the intellectual disciplines or “subjects”, such as medicine, in whose terms we conceptualize it. Foucault expounds his position with a paucity of concrete evidence and critical differentiations, but in a totalizing rhetoric that strikingly reproduces for the reader who is subjected to it the totalizing power that Foucault analyses:

In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. ... It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of undergoing and exercising this power. ... [“Subjects” are constituted through] a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc.⁵

Foucault’s intellectual influence over early modern literary studies diminished somewhat through the 1990s, as scholars began to separate out the different varieties of power at work in, on, around, and through the Renaissance theatre, to pick apart the different threads in the web of power that Foucault makes so seamless and all-embracing. A signal contribution to this process was made by Jean Howard.⁶ The present essay attempts to contribute to the process by introducing some of the necessary distinctions that Arendt desiderates. It defines and distinguishes some of her terms, and related terms, drawing on the work of political theorists other than Foucault, whose dominance over many literary scholars (to make the point again) eerily mirrors the claustrophobic exercise of power that Foucault himself investigates. This discussion will create a framework, in some ways specific, in some ways general, in which to examine the varieties of power dramatized in Shakespeare’s political tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra*.

One of the most profound analysts of the concept of power, Max Weber, formulated one of the simplest definitions: “the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons”.⁷ This proposition makes an initial clarification, by distinguishing the exercise of power between human beings, in social situations, from the broader scope of human power over nature, in an ecosystem, and from the narrower scope of the individual human’s power over the self (that is, usually, over one’s actions), in the realm of moral psychology. The notion of “imposing one’s will” involves some measure of intention or purpose. In this way, the existence or exercise of power may be distinguished from the social conditions or norms or controls that regulate conduct in a broader and less purposive way. These rules of social conduct are generally internalized by social training. They include such things as wearing clothes, eating or not eating certain foods, speaking the same language, resolving conflicts by agreed means. It may be argued that these social norms serve the power interests of a section, or various sections, of a society, but this argument is not on the face of it true for all aspects of social conduct. It therefore needs to be proved, not merely asserted or assumed, as is sometimes done by social and cultural theorists. It must also be recognized that deviations from the norms of social control are demonstrably possible: not everyone acts in equal accordance with them. Again, some theorists have “minimized the degree to which resistance to the demands and expectations of others also pervades human social life.”⁸

Various modes of power may be distinguished. Power may exist in potential: that is, one may possess power without actually exercising it. That is the reason for defining power as the *possibility* of imposing one’s will: it may be enough for others to know that one has the means to impose one’s will, through force or otherwise. Power may have varying scopes. It is most visible when it operates on the actions of others, and it is therefore most often thought of as operating with this scope. But it may also operate on the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of others. In these last examples it operates rarely through force, more often through persuasion or manipulation or the promise of benefits. Persuasion is not always thought of as an instrument of power, but it is in fact a highly effective and perhaps necessary means. The ability to win acceptance of one’s point of view tends to produce a more enduring imposition of one’s will than many other means, including force.

There is a tendency to embrace a naïve Machiavellianism that regards force as supreme. During the Vietnam War, when there was much talk of the United States winning the “hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese people, a widely quoted dictum of uncertain authorship claimed that “If you get them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.” The outcome of the Vietnam War, the collapse of the Russian military hegemony over eastern Europe, and (at the time of writing) the progress of the US-led invasion of Iraq all argue that this dictum is false. Force rarely prevails for long without the admixture of other forms of power, such as persuasion. The use or threat of force is paradoxically one of the weaker, or at least weakening, means by which power may be exercised. This is because it requires a large and continuing expenditure of resources, in terms of human effort (*personnel*) and instruments (*matériel*). Moreover it can be overthrown more easily, or perhaps one should say more decisively, than other forms of power: a single major defeat has the capacity to overthrow power based solely on force, because it has no other kinds of support on which to fall back.⁹

Whatever the modes in which power is exercised, there is by definition an asymmetry in power relations: “the power holder exercises greater control over the behaviour of the power subject than the reverse”.¹⁰ But this asymmetry is not fixed and absolute. Power travels in both directions, as Foucault pointed out: “individuals ... are always in the position of undergoing and exercising ... power”. Parents control the spending of family income; children control the selection of television entertainment. Governments exercise power over citizens by imposing taxes and enforcing laws; citizens exercise power over governments by holding mass demonstrations and voting in elections. The rather rare circumstances in which all power flows in one direction has been called “integral power”; the circumstances in which it flows in both directions, is negotiated through contestation and bargaining, has been called “intercursive power”.

As well as on force or on persuasion, power may be based on authority.¹¹ Authority may be distinguished from persuasion as a less explicit, less fully tested, less critical reason for subjecting oneself to the power of another. Authority may derive from social status (as in a hereditary aristocracy),

material resources (which allow the offer of inducements), or personal attributes (such as military prowess). The soundest authority is that deriving from competence, like that of a doctor, airline pilot, or firefighter, to all of whom other people cede power in their areas of competence. Authority can also reside in illusory competence, like that of a cult leader or a confidence trickster, both of whom can assume great power over their victims. Between force and authority lies coercion, which achieves power through the limited use of force, or the implied threat of (further) force. Most forms of force and coercion will seek to attain authority or legitimation, for the reasons given above in discussing the limitations of force as the sole basis of power.¹²

The action of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* turns on the exercise of "integral" power, and on a contest for "integral" power, cast primarily in military terms. The play's supreme soldier is Antony. The first speech endows him with the attributes of Mars; Cleopatra declares him "the greatest soldier in the world"; his adversary Caesar pays a marvelling tribute to Antony's superhuman soldiership.¹³ These attributes do not by themselves make a very strong base for power, because power based on individual force must sustain itself by the continued exercise of force, and cannot afford to falter. The further problem for Antony is that he *has been* a supreme soldier: the handsome tributes just quoted are all modified by the recognition of the fact that he is in decline. Mars now turns his energies to cooling a gypsy's lust (1.1.1-12);¹⁴ Cleopatra adds that her "greatest soldier in the world / Is turned the greatest liar" (1.3.38-39); Caesar sharply contrasts the memory of Antony's feats with his descent into a life of "lascivious wassails" (1.4.56-57). When Antony vaunts his valour and his short-lived success in the field against Caesar, he himself does so in the face of his earlier defeat and the ineluctable fact of ageing:

We have beat them to their beds. What, girl, though grey
Do something mingle with our younger brown, yet ha' we
A brain that nourishes our nerves and can
Get goal for goal with youth. (4.8.19-22)

Antony subsists on a soldierly reputation that is fading, a fact that he himself recognizes but tries pathetically to dismiss when he complains that Caesar

“makes me angry with him ... harping on what I am, / Not what he knew I was” (3.13.145-47).

Antony's decline is most evident when he indulges in a wild or badly directed violence, which tends to suggest impotence rather than strength. When Antony sees Caesar's servant Thidias kissing Cleopatra's hand, he orders him whipped, “Till like a boy you see him cringe his face / And whine aloud for mercy” (3.13.102-3). It is all too clear that by this act, Antony is merely venting his humiliation at defeat and his rage at betrayal. He gains nothing politically, and indeed he diminishes his authority by breaking the rules of diplomacy – which Caesar observes punctiliously in his dealings with Cleopatra, seeking to gain leverage by his respectful treatment. As his power slips away, Antony hopes to retrieve it by the most elementary exercise of force, challenging Caesar to single combat, “sword against sword, / Ourselves alone” (3.13.27-28). Everyone except Antony recognizes the futility of this challenge, because, while the newly defeated Antony has nothing to lose, the newly victorious Caesar has everything. Enobarbus sees that there is no possibility “the full Caesar will / Answer his emptiness” (3.13.35-36); Caesar himself cruelly but accurately dismisses the challenge as the posturing of an “old ruffian” and “Laugh[s] at his challenge” (4.1.4, 6); Cleopatra allows herself a wistful moment's meditation on the impossible idea of a single combat before she acknowledges the reality: “Then Antony – but now –” (4.4.38). Cleopatra herself descends more than once into wild and impotent violence, when she physically attacks a messenger bringing news of Antony's marriage and when she threatens to attack her treasurer Seleucus after he admits to Caesar that she has understated her wealth by half (2.5.62-85, 5.2.153-57). More clear-sighted than Antony, Cleopatra is readier to acknowledge her folly at such moments, which thus become part of her “infinite variety” of mood. In particular, Cleopatra recognizes the futility of her earlier rages as she approaches tragic exhaustion and acceptance: “impatience does / Become a dog that's mad” (4.15.84-85).

Antony's challenge to single combat shows an inability or unwillingness to distinguish between individual heroism and the large-scale military organization – the generalship, the networks of counselors and subordinates

– that is one element in projecting “integral” power. Antony’s generalship proves increasingly irresponsible. The military and political problems facing Rome at the play’s opening require Antony to lead an expedition to Parthia (1.2.95-99, 2.2.16), but soon afterward, despite his reconciliation with Caesar and his marriage with Octavia, Antony resolves abruptly to send Ventidius instead, so that Antony himself can return to Egypt:

He shall to Parthia. ...
I will to Egypt;
And though I make this marriage for my peace,
I’th’east my pleasure lies. (2.3.32, 38-40)¹⁵

After he throws in his lot decisively with Cleopatra, and against Caesar and Octavia, Antony is swayed by Cleopatra’s strategic preference for fighting Caesar by sea, a decision that results in the ruinous retreat of Cleopatra and then of Antony himself. Antony’s refusal to take the counsel of his experienced officers receives heavy dramatic emphasis in this sequence (3.7.27-53, 60-70; 3.10; 4.5.2-6).¹⁶ It is after this display of capricious generalship that the closest followers of the defeated and suicidal Antony desert him, to be followed later by his allied kings.

The play’s ultimate political victor, Caesar, is by contrast a masterful military organizer, who builds his power partly on the cooperation of trusted subordinates. His first entry shows him in mid-conference with Maecenas and Agrippa (2.2.18). These counsellors accompany Caesar in almost all his scenes of negotiation and warfare, while he also makes skilful use of his emissary Thidias (3.12.26-35). In addition, Caesar gathers information methodically (1.4.34-36); his military movements are marked by a celerity that takes his opponents by surprise (1.4.74-78, 3.7.20, 54, 74); he takes pains over small but telling matters, such as misleading spies about his intentions (3.7.75-77) or demoralizing Antony’s forces by deploying deserters from his army in the front line against it (4.1.11, 4.6.8). The use of force is never, or cannot for long be, a matter of simple physical activity. Physical force requires mental, organizational, or psychological support.

In discussing the relation between military force and the more comprehensive exercise of power, it is instructive to compare the major persons

of *Antony and Cleopatra* with the next tier of military persons. Ventidius, who eventually conquers Parthia on behalf of Rome, shows a military prowess that now surpasses Antony's own, but this fact does not guarantee Ventidius power away from the battlefield. With no strong political support, his military success actually puts him in a position of risk, because it might threaten those who do possess political power, as Ventidius explains to his officer Silius in 3.1. Even the successful general must acknowledge, albeit sarcastically, Antony's still potent political authority: "I'll humbly signify what in his name, / That magical word of war, we have effected" (3.1.32-33). The commentator Enobarbus speaks with the authority of experience and wit, but that authority does not carry enough weight in the councils of the major political figures to give him the power of persuasion. He predicts that the marriage between Antony and Octavia will prove a political disaster: "that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance" (2.6.124-26). He speaks out fearlessly against Cleopatra's persuasion of Antony to fight a battle at sea, and later, equally fearlessly, he condemns Antony for pursuing her into retreat (3.7.1-15, 3.13.1-12). The best hope of Enobarbus is that his loyalty to Antony, even in defeat, will win him further authority, "a place i'th'story" (3.13.46). He does of course win such a place in Shakespeare's play, though finally not for his loyalty but (introducing a very different register into the play's dramatic discourse) for his desertion and the tragic solitude and grief into which it leads him.

What of the mass of the people in relation to the exercise of power? Though they have an important and active role in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, where rhetorical persuasion is foregrounded as a basis of power, in *Antony and Cleopatra* the people remain mostly offstage. One brief exception occurs when servants prepare the banquet on board Pompey's galley. In this snatch of dialogue, common people resemble figures like Ventidius and Enobarbus by showing an authority based on their political perceptiveness, but having no scope for the exercise of power. By a neat parallelism, these servants analyze the inadequacy of Lepidus, who similarly has an authority, in his case derived merely from his social standing, but no ability to convert it into real power. Lepidus has merely "a name in great men's fellowship", not the reality of power; he suffers the shame of being "called into a huge sphere and not to be seen; to move in't", like a planet or star unable to fulfil

its cosmological function (2.7.10, 13-14). As far as the play's two antagonists are concerned, the people are merely reactive, though their unpredictability is politically disturbing and potentially threatening. Both Antony and Caesar describe in very similar terms how "Our slippery people", or "This common body", have switched their allegiance to Pompey, thus helping produce his threat to the triumvirate (1.2.178-85, 1.4.41-47).¹⁷ Here, therefore, the play exhibits in a small way the operation of interscursive power between rulers and ruled. The Roman people are able to influence the political situation; the asymmetry of power is not absolute. There are other minor instances of interscursive power, involving people higher in social rank who possess information that gives them momentary over the standing or action of their rulers: Cleopatra's treasurer Seleucus discredits her claims before Caesar (5.2.140-74); Dolabella lets Cleopatra know how Caesar plans to treat her in captivity (5.2.105-9, 196-205).

Discussion so far has centred on the power that derives from military force, or from the authority that may for a time attach even to fading military success. Some of the persons who attain power in Shakespeare's Rome derive it from other sources of authority, such as the prestige of family or *gens*, or by appealing to Roman custom or prejudice; conversely, Antony loses authority and eventually power because he offends against the ethical norms traditionally honoured by Roman society. This process is signalled by Philo and Demetrius at the beginning and end of the opening scene (1.1.1-10, 59-64), and reiterated by Enobarbus' warning that Antony is "Traduced for levity" (3.7.12). In some moods, Antony himself regrets that he has neglected military affairs and forsaken his lawful marriage (1.2.95-112, 3.13.108). At the same time, Antony's very recklessness and self-indulgence win him a different kind of authority among the fraternity of soldiers, as shown by their admiring accounts of his superhuman indulgences. This authority incidentally demonstrates how no single set of social norms prevails absolutely, how an "official", socially sanctioned allegiance to self-control may coexist with an unofficial admiration for excess. The two norms are of course in conflict, and in this case the official norm prevails; the unofficial indulgence of Antony lasts only so long as he is successful in battle.

As with the power that arises from military origins, other kinds of authority must be combined with political acumen before they will convert

into power. As their names continually remind the audience, both the Caesar and the Pompey of *Antony and Cleopatra* inherit the reputation of exceptionally able and ambitious forebears.¹⁸ Each might expect to inherit as well a considerable political following. But where Caesar succeeds in exploiting the opportunities that their family histories give the two rivals, Pompey fails. The rival power of the “scarce-bearded Caesar” is announced comically by Cleopatra (1.1.20-34), but the action shows that his political skills are no less formidable than his military skills. In negotiations, Caesar is businesslike, wasting no words (3.12.1-10), but he is also ready to attempt a richer rhetoric of persuasion when it suits his purpose (3.12.26-33). As Antony’s loss of political power results from his excesses, his inability to exercise an ethical power over the self, so Caesar’s success results from his self-control, signaled by his unwillingness to join in the alcoholic excesses of his rivals (2.7.91-96, 113-20). When urged to be “a child o’th’time”, to play along with events, Caesar responds with a curt statement of his determination to control events, to grasp every opportunity: “Possess it, I’ll make answer” (2.7.94).

Sextus Pompeius seems in the opening scene to be shaping as the play’s most important antagonist, when his power is described as formidable and growing (1.4.36-56, 2.2.167-74). Pompey owes his prominence partly to his name and family, partly to his own abilities (1.2.180). But he is too undisciplined and tactless to be a successful politician, to turn the authority of his social position and competence into power. When he first appears on stage (2.1), Pompey is over-confident, airily certain that his enemies are divided, refusing to believe that even Caesar is in the field, convinced that Antony’s luxury will keep him in Egypt. Pompey accurately predicts that his enmity may draw together Antony and Caesar, yet he does not act effectively to keep them apart. In the conference of all the Roman political contestants (2.6), Pompey acts erratically. He claims to be avenging his father, as the triumvirs avenged Julius Caesar – a point that is more likely to remind Antony and Caesar of their unity than their differences. He ends the scene by tactlessly baiting Antony and Caesar with chatter about Cleopatra’s amorous history with Antony and with Julius Caesar – which might remind Antony and Caesar of their tensions, but is not well calculated to make either of them look kindly on Pompey himself. Almost as an afterthought to these and other preoccupations, Pompey abruptly and without explanation

agrees to the triumvirs' political terms. His ally Menas, recognizing that he has not consolidated what was a strong military and political position, sums up contemptuously: "Pompey doth this day laugh away his fortune" (2.6.103-4).

When Pompey entertains the triumvirs on his ship (2.7), Menas offers him the opportunity to take power by violence, ruthlessly assassinating all three rivals. Here Pompey shows a keener awareness about the possibilities and limits of power. He rejects Menas' offer because he cannot in honour approve of it – though he would have been willing to profit if he had been presented with a *fait accompli*. In explaining this, Pompey expounds a Machiavellian separation of ends and means, and anticipates the doctrine of "deniability" in contemporary politics. Pompey is aware that power cannot be dissociated from the authority associated in Roman society with honour, though he is also aware that the appearance of honour may suffice:

Thou must know,
'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;
Mine honour it. Repent that e'er thy tongue
Hath so betrayed thine act. Being done unknown,
I should have found it afterwards well done,
But must condemn it now. (2.7.71-76)

Menas is a pirate who has allied his sea power with Pompey's (1.4.49). The text here shows the gap between the ruthless and limited conception of power by which a pirate operates and the way in which a leader who claims authority is constrained to conform in some degree to Roman ethical and political norms.

The last point is a reminder of the earlier one that power may derive from persuasion and manipulation. More specifically, power may be legitimized through the ability to imagine and propagate a particular view of political realities and political figures. People's beliefs cause them to act in certain ways; both authority and power derive in part from making people believe certain things. Such beliefs may sometimes be the result of falsification – though one should not overrate the capacity of outright falsification to

prevail in the long term. More often, and inevitably, political beliefs have a problematic relation to reality, since they are coloured by political pre-suppositions, conscious and unconscious, on the part of both rulers and ruled. These operations of power, or of claimants to power, are conspicuous in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare's Renaissance view of the Romans strongly emphasizes the way in which political power is based in rhetoric, the ability through language to frame an understanding of events and to bestow fame or reputation. The play's persons make many assertions about the conduct of others that are not fully verified by the text. As a dramatically crucial example, does Cleopatra betray Antony in the last battle, as he charges (4.12.10-30)? Or is he attempting, like many a defeated general, to persuade others, and himself, that his defeat could only be the result of treachery? At the outbreak of war between Antony and Caesar, each puts his version of events on the historical record, accusing the other of provocations (3.4, 3.6). On occasion, persons show that they are conscious of creating a historical record and of writing themselves into it. As Enobarbus aims through his loyalty to win "a place i'th'story", so Antony aims to do the same thing through one final climactic victory: "I and my sword will earn our chronicle" (3.13.179), while towards the end of the play Caesar offers to display the carefully marshaled evidence for his claim that he was drawn into war against his will (5.2.73-77).

The most plentiful and the most conflicting political and ethical stories surround Antony and Cleopatra. The Mars-like Antony with whose memory the play begins is himself an imaginative construction. Antony attempts to sustain this version of himself through his own hyperbolic boasts. This works well enough when things are going successfully (4.10.1-4), but it tends to ring hollow when they are not (3.13.129-31, 4.12.43-47). It is necessary to give an imaginative projection to power, but in the absence of power such imagination readily lapses into delusion. Antony looks back nostalgically to the days when he triumphed on the battlefield and Caesar was a mere apprentice, or even avoided battle:

He at Philippi kept
His sword e'en like a dancer, while I struck
The lean and wrinkled Cassius, and 'twas I

There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. ...
Think you there was or might be such a man
As this I dreamt of?

DOLABELLA Gentle madam, no. (5.2.81-93)

The Romans' Cleopatra is rendered in the pejorative terms always associated with a female enemy: a gipsy, a strumpet, a whore, "Salt [or lustful] Cleopatra", "Egypt's widow", Antony's "Egyptian dish". In his rage at defeat and seeming betrayal, Antony is capable of adopting this language: "You were half blasted ere I knew you ... You have been a boggler ever ... I found you as a morsel cold upon / Dead Caesar's trencher" (3.13.107-20). There are of course a variety of alternative Cleopatras to this, from the magnificent seductress evoked by Enobarbus's Cydnus speech to the helpless victim devised by Caesar's orator Thidias as he tries to give Cleopatra the pretext to desert Antony (3.13.57-63). The most interesting are perhaps Cleopatra's own versions of herself. As she faces death, Cleopatra mythologizes herself magnificently as a noble Roman heroine, but more often her portrayals of herself (and others) are full of humour and irony. In Antony's absence, she demands that the messenger from Rome bring her the tidings she wishes, and insists that the messenger's appearance must match his news – very transparently trying to make the world take the shape she wishes (2.5.23-50). Likewise Cleopatra creates an amusingly temperate version of the intemperate Antony (1.5.56-64) and an amusingly unattractive Octavia, who could never challenge Cleopatra's hold on Antony (3.3). Cleopatra knowingly and mockingly plays with the stories by which power attempts to endow itself with imaginative authority.

Cleopatra's teasing wit is one of the things that contributes to her many-sided erotic appeal, and, at the risk of using the term "power" too capaciously, that eroticism is in turn a source of Cleopatra's power. As it happens, Enobarbus applies the term to her physical dynamism and magnetism, and to her ability to exercise it under the most unpropitious conditions:

I saw her once
Hop forty paces through the public street,

And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
That she did make defect perfection
And, breathless, power breathe forth. (2.2.238-42)

It goes without saying that, in her relationship with Antony, Cleopatra exhibits a mastery of the way erotic wives may project personal power. A delightful example (and here we are talking about the intersection of power and delight) is her reply to Charmian's advice that she should "In each thing give him way. Cross him in nothing": "Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose him" (1.3.9-10). But Cleopatra's playful power has implications for the political realm when it results in Antony's symbolic surrender of his masculinity and of his military weaponry:

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)

This small-scale surrender is translated into large-scale terms when Cleopatra flees the play's first sea-battle and Antony, "like a doting mallard, ... flies after her. ... Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before / Did violate so itself" (3.10.19-23). Or, as Antony helplessly confesses:

O'er my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
Command me. (3.11.57-60)

The stupendous manifestation of Cleopatra on the river Cydnus, narrated by Enobarbus (2.2.200-36), is another example of the exercise of a power that is simultaneously erotic, playful, and political. Erotic: Cleopatra is a Venusian figure, perfumed and glowing. Playful: as often in Cleopatra's self-presentations, there are signs that she does not take altogether seriously the impact that she strives to make. The "pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids" and the gentlewoman costumed like a mermaid, the poop of gold and the tackle of silk, all display a semi-parodic opulence and excess. Political: the opulence is at the same time the display of regal wealth, and the whole tableau has the result of drawing the crowd away from the visiting

Antony, and so instructing him in Cleopatra's ability to win the public admiration on which power always depends.

NOTES

- 1 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), p. 43.
- 2 Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (London: Methuen, 1986).
- 3 "Two Lectures" [1976], in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 93.
- 4 An early collection of essays edited by Greenblatt, *The Forms of Power in the English Renaissance* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982) is, as its title announces, an exercise in critical practice indebted to Foucault.
- 5 *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 94, 98, 97.
- 6 *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 7 Max Weber, *Law in Economy and Society*, quoted in *Power*, ed. Steven Lukes, *Readings in Social and Political Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 212.
- 8 Dennis H. Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses*, Key Concepts in the Social Sciences (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 3.
- 9 For reasons related to these facts, Arendt argues acutely and challengingly that power and violence are opposites: *On Violence*, pp. 47-56.
- 10 Wrong, *Power*, p. 10.
- 11 See the dense discussion of this concept in Talcott Parsons, "Power and the Social System", in *Power*, ed. Lukes, pp. 113-15.
- 12 The preceding discussion is indebted to Wrong, *Power*, Chapters 1-3, though

- aspects of Wrong's discussion are in turn indebted to Parsons, among others: see, e.g., *Power*, ed. Lukes, pp. 95, 105, 123-24. Parsons also devised many of the formulas about power that recur in the writings of Foucault and the new historicists, e.g., on the "interchange of power" between different agents (p. 125), and "power as a circulating medium, moving back and forth over the boundaries of the polity" (p. 117).
- 13 *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. David Bevington, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1.1.1-12, 1.3.38, 1.4.57-72. The superhuman stature of Antony in the opening speech recalls Hercules, whom Antony claimed as his ancestor.
 - 14 Cleopatra is later compared to Venus (2.2.210). Antony's liaison with Cleopatra is thus related to the liaison between Mars and Venus, which in Renaissance mythological lore was emblematic sometimes of a surrender to sensuality, sometimes of a due tempering of opposite qualities.
 - 15 This is an instance where an aspect of moral psychology, Antony's lack of power over himself, merges with political science, Antony's failure in political and military responsibility.
 - 16 Even before his irreversible defection, in the play's first scenes, Antony defers surprisingly to Cleopatra in military and political affairs: 1.2.170-72, 1.3.66-71.
 - 17 Though in these speeches, Antony and Caesar despise the wavering of the common people, this characteristic of the people does not much differ from the wavering of Pompey or of Antony himself. Among the constantly metamorphosing cast of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Caesar is exceptional for his smooth and unchanging course.
 - 18 Octavius Caesar, called simply "Caesar" by Shakespeare, was the adoptive heir of Julius Caesar; Sextus Pompeius, called "Pompey", was son of Pompeius Magnus or Pompey the Great, who was a contemporary and rival of Julius Caesar. Shakespeare's nomenclature makes it clear that these two rivals carry with them the authority of their elders.
 - 19 Antony means that Caesar kept his sword in its sheath, more like the ornamental sword worn when dancing than a soldier's sword, and that he relied on his lieutenants or subordinates to do his fighting. As David Bevington points out, Plutarch reports that this charge was in fact made against both Antony and Caesar (3.11.39, n.). In Shakespeare's own text, the same charge is made against both Antony and Caesar by Ventidius (3.1.16-17). Shakespeare therefore shows Antony attempting to manipulate the record, laying Caesar only under the charge.

Antony and Cleopatra

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