

# Suspension in *Antony and Cleopatra*

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## Introduction

There are various disruptive elements in Shakespeare's Roman tragedies in the Jacobean Era, which seem to reject our linear interpretations. These include, for example, Antony's being lifted up in Act 4 Scene 15 as well as Seleucus' intervention in Act 5 Scene 2, both in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and, in *Coriolanus*, an unusual stage direction "silent" in Act 5 Scene 3 and subsequent reticence of Volumnia.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, why in the first place is Antony lifted up in Act 4 Scene 15? Here, the audience may wonder why Cleopatra does not simply open the gate of the monument where she locks herself in, which obviously should have made it a lot easier for both lovers to have their final dialogue. If Shakespeare's intention here was genuinely to engage the audience with the last glow of a transcendent love, he might have avoided Antony's bungle<sup>2</sup> that is uncharacteristic in tragedies.<sup>3</sup> And, why did the playwright introduce Seleucus in the middle of Cleopatra's crucial conversation with Octavius at Act 5 Scene 2? The audience may wonder here what is the role or function of the devious courtier here, who is *prima facie* unfaithful to the queen. If the playwright simply expected the audience to be overwhelmed by the dramatic tension as to Cleopatra's choice of her ultimate action, he might not have allowed Seleucus's disturbing intervention here. In both cases, it seems that Shakespeare took special care to suspend the audience's critical attention in these scenes, in a way removing them from the dramatic flow of the play, which the audience may usually anticipate.

This paper intends to provide possible interpretations regarding these interfering factors, or aesthetic "suspension",<sup>4</sup> focusing especially on Antony's lifting up in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

## 1. Suspension

It seems that these interfering factors invite a recipient of the play, whether it be a spectator, a stage director, an actor or a reader of the script,<sup>5</sup> to halt before deciding upon a certain aspect of the character or the drama as a whole, allowing them to vacillate among various interpretative options, yet keeping them seeking for a satisfactory end. Namely, it makes the recipient sit back and reflect on the meaning of what really happens on the stage. In this sense, I would like to suggest calling these intervening elements in general a “suspension”.<sup>6</sup>

In a way, this “suspension” is similar to a Brechtian theatrical technique, alienation (*Verfremdung*), which “enables the spectators to perceive things in a new way so that the social rules governing our actions can be revealed and so that [the spectators] can see how events could have turned out differently” (Brecht 5). Although these notions are analogous in that both are counterweights to the demand for engagement in a drama, “suspension” is not necessarily “alienation” because the former is not limited to revealing the implicit “social rules governing our actions” but also addresses the complexity of psychological states of characters of a play.

In a similar vein, this “suspension” may be close to Maynard Mack’s “detachment” (Mack, “Engagement” 275), who uses this terminology to mainly illustrate the density of emotional communication between a spectator and a character on a stage. For example, he classifies tragic heroes, such as Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Coriolanus, as exemplars of “the men engaged” while the clowns, such as Sly, Touchstone, Feste and Fool, are called “the detached men” (286-87). However, “suspension” not only relates to individual dramatic characters but also to various situations which appear on the stage along with the overall flow of a play.

The effect of “suspension” I have in mind may be comparable to “disengagement” which Charles Taylor uses in his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. He employs this term as a kind of liberation through objectification. He argues: “We have to disengage ourselves from ... [an] immediately confused and obscure way of grasping things” (146); “The disengagement is carried further in being turned towards the subject himself”

(161); and therefore “involves taking a stance to ourselves which takes us out of our normal way of experiencing the world and ourselves” (162).<sup>7</sup> Thus both “suspension” and “disengagement” are concerned with the radical scrutiny of a self, a situation and the world by standing back. However, one speech, such as King Richard’s final soliloquy of 5.3.176-204 in *Richard III*, which is uttered the night before the Battle of Bosworth, might provide a typical example of a character’s disengagement from himself to explore and to try to objectify himself, but this may not be a case of “suspension” because it is about a dramatic character, not about a recipient. On the other hand, I would call a situation, such as the aforementioned case of Coriolanus’s silence and muteness of Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, a case of “suspension”, though it may not be a case of “disengagement” because undoubtedly the audience is immersed in the scene here.

In the following sections, I would like to turn to an analysis of the various kinds of suspension which appear in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

## 2. Suspension in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Both Antony’s bungle and Seleucus’ entrance in *Antony and Cleopatra* are exactly what Plutarch describes in his *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans: The Life of Marcus Antonius*. However, although tracking this account closely, Shakespeare who adopted his source-text according to his own judgements in other places should have had an option not to follow it faithfully here. Hence, we may be able to say that these interfering elements such as Antony’s lifting-up must be regarded as Shakespeare’s clear intention, regardless of the difficulties for the stage management.<sup>8</sup> In other words, Shakespeare may have designed these scenes by adopting these disjunctive factors so that the audience may be suspended from an anticipated stream of the drama, and compelled to sit back and think.

Act 4 Scene 15 deals with the death of Antony, one of the two leading roles in this play. Toward his demise, Antony dramatizes his own end: “Not Caesar’s valour hath o’verthrown Antony, / But Antony’s hath triumphed on itself” (4.15.15-16); and “a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished” (4.15.59-60), but the process toward his death, which begins at Scene 14, is not necessarily as graceful and as exquisite as might have been expected. At Scene

14, Antony, being informed by Mardian, the messenger from Cleopatra, of the false report of Cleopatra's death, decides to attempt suicide, and asks Eros to assist him, who responds by committing suicide himself, thereby leaving Antony alive. Antony then makes another try by falling down on his sword, in vain, and asks his guards to give him a *coup de grâce*, which is again rejected, and furthermore he is deprived of his weapon. Subsequently, Antony, being informed by Diomedes that Cleopatra is still alive, is carried by the guards to the monument where she has locked herself up. The aforementioned Scene 15 follows these actions.

As has been noted, Scene 15 contains various suspensive elements. For example, Cleopatra does not open the gate of the monument to bring in Antony easily. Instead, she orders the guards, giving only a very strange reason in the context of their supposed great passion: "I dare not / Lest I be taken" (4.15.23-24), to lift him up, which obviously requires lots of toil and clumsiness for Antony's guards as well as for Cleopatra's maids. Also, even after Antony's being hoisted up and reaching Cleopatra's place, she is not willing to let him speak his last words but keeps interrupting with what she wants to say, thus making the lovers' final dialogue at cross-purposes. In addition, while Antony dies in this scene, the death of Cleopatra is pushed back till the end of the next Act, resulting in what Ann Barton calls a "divided catastrophe" (Barton 114). In other words, this scene has such suspensive factors that we might not feel the level of pathos which the audience may expect at the scene of a leading protagonist's death in a tragedy. All in all, this Scene 15 seems to show Antony's wretched situation and Cleopatra's psychological distance toward him. Hence, it might be difficult for the audience to perceive here a sense of unity or harmony which may be observed in more conventional tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead, these disjunctions seem to give the audience the cue to suspend themselves from their assimilation in the drama, and to make them think about what might be really going on.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding Antony's bungle, Scene 15 also seems to demonstrate his magnanimity as well. His last speech to Cleopatra is full of his generosity in a sense that he does not blame her selfish lie or her refusal to open the gate of the monument to bring him in, and this distinctive trait of his, which previously drove Enobarbus to his death in Act 4 Scene 9, should have touched Cleopatra's heartstrings. Nevertheless, a suspension is again revealed when Antony's dying

message, “Gentle, hear me / None about Caesar trust but Proculeius” (4.15.49-50), turns out to be untrue and meaningless in Act 5. This is also an episode in Plutarch, but Shakespeare’s decision to adopt it may again foreground the poet’s design to avoid unity and stress the disjunctions throughout Scene 14 and 15. Namely, Antony disarms himself, fails in his suicide, is deprived of his sword, is lifted up, does not have any kind of sensible conversation with Cleopatra, and dies uttering a final message, which is soon found to be false. In short, it seems that Shakespeare did not intend to unify and sublimate the love between Antony and Cleopatra, and the final event of Antony’s death here.

Although the criticisms of this play, especially since John F. Danby and Janet Adelman, have focused on the multiplicity of the play’s interpretations, few of them seem to suspect the perceived harmony of the love between Antony and Cleopatra. But, as Linda Charnes argues, “Antony and Cleopatra talk about their love in ways that contradict what they actually *do* with it” (140, italics original), there could be a different point of view where the audience is implicitly expected to be suspended from this conventional interpretation and to make a closer scrutiny. In this context, the aforementioned disjunctions may lead us to the observation that Cleopatra’s love for Antony is not necessarily symmetrical with that of Cleopatra for Antony. Therefore, it may be said that the characterisation of both Antony and Cleopatra is in a way culminating in the suspension of Act 4 Scene 15, so it may worthwhile here to take a brief look at their respective title roles.

### 3. Antony

While Plutarch’s *Antony* covers the age of Julius Caesar, thus spanning the rise and fall of Antony’s life, Shakespeare’s *Antony* only relates his decline from the pinnacle of his military and political career, thus underscoring his psychological oscillation and his last spiritual radiance toward his final moment. His mind-set oscillates between the Roman value system and the Egyptian one. That is, between the Egyptian Antony, who exclaims: “Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall!” (1.1.34-35), and the Roman one, who murmurs: “These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage” (1.2.115-16); and “I must from this enchanting queen break off” (1.2.127). Cleopatra’s response to the former of

Antony's utterances, "Antony / Will be himself" (1.1.43-44), shows not only her sarcastic posture toward the Egyptian Antony but also her fears of losing him from her magnetic field. However, this play, after referring to the marriage of Antony and Octavia (3.2), moves on through their parting in Athens (3.4) and straight to Actium, without providing the possible scene of Antony's return to Egypt. In other words, neglecting the lapse of time in the source-text, neither touching upon Antony's moralistic entanglement to give up the Roman political value system, nor describing the reunion of the two lovers, Shakespeare brings Antony directly back to Cleopatra's orbit. These omissions may imply that he eventually belongs to Egypt. Octavius illustrates this process by simply saying, "Cleopatra hath / Nodded him [Antony] to her" (3.6.66-67), and this stark statement may show that Octavius has finally repudiated Antony politically; thence, Antony is doomed as the result of his own choice.

Furthermore, even after Antony's ultimate return to Cleopatra, the relationship between the two does not seem to be in harmony. Eventually Antony seems to lose his rational judgement as well as his initiative in the relationship with the queen.<sup>10</sup> After the sea-battle at Actium, Antony expresses his love for Cleopatra:

Egypt, thou knew'st too well  
My heart was to thy rudder tied by th'strings,  
And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit  
Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that  
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods  
Command me. (3.11.56-61)

This is "infatuation", as Jonathan Dollimore pointed out (217). We may say that Antony's lack of sensible strategy at Actium, against which his staff officers remonstrate, and his deserting the front line by pursuing Cleopatra's vessel, are simply the outcomes of this destructive passion. Scarus's remark on Antony's action here, "We have kissed away / Kingdoms and provinces" (3.10.7-8), foretells Antony's catastrophic destiny in the end.

All in all, the description of Antony in this play seems to be mostly centred on his oscillation between Rome and Egypt, the plunge in his career, and his seemingly unrewarded love toward Cleopatra. We may say that these are well

represented and symbolized in his bungle in Act 4 as we have observed. This account of Antony is very much in line with Plutarch's attitude toward him, in the "Comparison of Demetrius and Antony", which seems prevailed upon by Roman values and primarily laid blame on Antony's licentious disposition. This critical appraisal seems to be passed down to the Elizabethans, including such commentators as Francis Bacon, who claimed: "[Marcus Antonius] was indeed a voluptuous man, and inordinate" (358).

Nevertheless, it may also be noted that the more Antony's downfall is recounted, the more his magnanimity or generosity seems to be accentuated. Although Shakespeare does not explicitly employ these words in this play,<sup>11</sup> yet what Antony shows to Enobarbus and what he says to Cleopatra in his dying message can be clearly pinned down in such terms, and it seems that Shakespeare expected the audience to understand this distinctive disposition of Antony, which may more than cancel out his blemishes as well as his bungle, without directly using these words.

#### 4. Cleopatra

What we perceive from Cleopatra in this play is her realistic sense of politics. We do not know how familiar the original audience was with Plutarch's *Lives* but, considering that Sir Thomas North's translation was published in 1579,<sup>12</sup> it might not have been very unreasonable for Shakespeare to assume that some of the audience were fairly familiar with the original story. If so, they might have known that the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra was originally a political one, as Plutarch's *Lives* states, "[Cleopatra] began to have good hope that she might ... easily win Antony" (Bullough 273), and Shakespeare might have written this play relying on that supposition.

Though the political aspect of the link between Antony and Cleopatra is not highlighted in this play, yet the Cydnus scene for example is related by Enobarbus to Agrippa, "When she [Cleopatra] first met Mark Antony, she pursed up his heart upon the river of Cydnus" (2.2.198-99). This suggests a political pageant, and the intent of Cleopatra, who is at once a playwright, a director and a leading actress at the performance, is clear. Her political activities, of which the purpose is primarily to pursue her self-interest, have been consistent since her prior associations with "Broad-fronted Caesar"

(1.5.29) and “great Pompey” (1.5.31), and her relation with Antony seems to have been basically in the same line. Consequently, as Cleopatra is concerned with her possible transience vis-à-vis Antony’s affections, which is expressed in her words, “Now I see, I see, / In Fulvia’s death how mine received shall be” (1.3.64-65) or “Oh, my oblivion is a very Antony, / And I am all forgotten” (1.3.91-92), so does Antony worry in the same way. In this context, David Schalkwyk’s comment, “One of the sources of both Antony and Cleopatra’s anxieties about each other’s loyalty lies in their shared suspicion that they are merely the latest in a series of substitutes” (203), seems appropriate.

Of course, we do not doubt Cleopatra’s love for Antony, but her instinct for survival looks far stronger than his. Enobarbus’s comment on Cleopatra: “I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment. I do think there is mettle in death, which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying” (1.2.139-41), tells not only of its erotic implication but also her vital life force. Cleopatra asks Antony his definition of love at the outset of the play, but Cleopatra’s form of love seems a lot more complex and multi-layered, composed of “infinite variety” (2.2.248), than that of Antony.

Cleopatra tries to manipulate Antony mainly by acting. In this regard, her words, “If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick” (1.3.3-5), is a typical example. In the same vein, in spite of Charmian’s dissuasion: “Tempt him not so too far” (1.3.11), Cleopatra repeats the same at the critical moment of Act 4 by saying: “Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself” (4.13.7), and this false message only drives Antony to his suicide. It seems that her unvarying tendency to sway others may come not only from her political duty to preserve the state but also from her instinct for survival, which is also demonstrated in Act 3 when she receives Thidias, the messenger from Octavius. Thidias says to the queen, “He knows that you embrace not Antony / As you did love, but as you feared him” (3.13.56-57), to which Cleopatra responds in an ambiguous manner within a split line: “Oh”; then immediately continues: “He [Octavius] is a god and knows / What is most right. My honour was not yielded / But conquered merely” (3.13.60-62); and finally concludes: “I kiss his conqu’ring hand” (3.13.75). This noncommittal attitude seems to try rather to secure an option to go with Octavius than to hide Cleopatra’s other intentions, if there are any, and this may stem from her instinct for survival.

Then, how should the audience assess the authenticity of Cleopatra's love for Antony? We might be able to say that its quintessence is transference, as David Hillman suggests: "Transference brings out the deep ambivalence of the psyche — of no small relevance to Antony and Cleopatra, particularly to the character of Cleopatra" (305). As Hillman states, "Defined broadly, transference (Freud's *Übertragung*) is the transferal of emotional bonds from their original objects to new ones" (302). Cleopatra's instinct for survival inseparable from her self-love may constitute at least one layer of her love for Antony.

At the time of the discourse between Cleopatra and Thidias, quoted above, Cleopatra may be contemplating, consciously or not, the transference of her allegiance from Antony to Octavius. In fact, she may have thought of her own suicide more or less in Act 4 Scene 15 when Antony died, but it seems unlikely that she then felt that this was the only option available to her. When she realizes that Octavius does not intend to treat her as a leading actress but to bring her to Rome only as a foil for his own triumphant return, her death instinct may be triggered and override her instinct for survival, in the final decision about her suicide in Act 5. In addition, Cleopatra's will to outmanoeuvre Octavius' ambition of using her alive as a political symbol in order that she could ridicule and win over Octavius might be another motivation. Regarding this point, although Hillman argues: "[Cleopatra's] suicide precisely enacts a decision not to transfer her attachment, both erotic and political, from Antony to the next powerful Roman to set foot in Egypt" (311), yet her decision process looks somewhat to be the reverse. Namely, her recognition that her love cannot be transferred to anywhere anymore may precede the activation of her death instinct, which Freud called Thanatos. As Freud claims, "The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (63); her final decision seems to beautify her love with Antony in her memory, which may culminate in her transcendent vision of a world of poetry at Act 5.

## 5. Identity, acting and historiography

Shakespeare does not give soliloquies to either Antony or Cleopatra, thus does not allow the audience to have any means to approach directly to

their respective inner landscape. Hence, the audience's understanding of the characters becomes rather ambiguous, since what we come to know about them is informed only through their dialogue and interaction.

We learn, for example, from Antony's various lines that he has a continual conflict of identities a Roman martial self and an Egyptian sensualist throughout the play: "If I lose mine honour, / I lose myself." (3.4.22-23); "I am so lated in the world that I / Have lost my way forever." (3.11.3-4); "I am / Antony yet." (3.13.93-94); and "Here I am Antony, / Yet cannot hold this visible shape" (4.14.13-14). As these lines show, Antony alternates between irreconcilable versions of his identities toward his end. However, his last lines, "Not Caesar's valour hath o'erthrown Antony, / But Antony's hath triumphed on itself" (4.15.15-16) and "a Roman by a Roman / Valiantly vanquished." (4.15.59-60), seems to contain identity-related multiple implications. First, between irreconcilable alternatives, he has finally a revelation that he remains after all a Roman soldier for whom honour has utmost importance. After apparently being stripped of every remnant of Roman pride by his bungles that precede this scene, he still keeps this sense of identity and his magnanimity. Secondly, these self-conscious dramatic lines reveal that he has been unconsciously acting his role. Thirdly, he seems to be sensitive to his position in the longer historical record.<sup>13</sup> These observations contrast to some extent with Cleopatra who seems to have some degree of control over her continually fluctuating identity, and whose sense of acting seems more evident and self-conscious.

As to Cleopatra, her identity obviously lies in her position and pride as the queen of Egypt. Accordingly, it is highly correlated with the stability of her political position as the protégée of Rome, which in turn is a function of imperial politics. Thus, once the situation in Rome becomes destabilised and loses its equilibrium, her position becomes increasingly precarious. In the play, her performance is directly connected with her manipulation of Antony who is one of "The triple pillar of the world", and that is triggered by the outbreak of a crisis in her position vis-à-vis Antony, such as when she knows Antony's decision to leave for Rome (1.4) or discovers his anger due to his belief that Cleopatra conspires with Caesar (4.13). Consequently, when her hope to keep her political position and her identity is crushed by Octavius, the only thing remaining for her is to act out the immortal vision of her love with Antony

through her last minutes.

Thus, when we consider Antony's love for Cleopatra and Cleopatra's love separately, we observe that they seem to have a different register. An asymmetric nature of the two's love may well be represented in two contrasting scenes. That is, while in Act 4 Antony is disarmed and is deprived of his sword before his death, in Act 5 Cleopatra dresses herself up prior to her death. This asymmetry is further strengthened by the fact that Antony's death is largely triggered by his resignation and love, whereas that of Cleopatra seems to have an element of a political act.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Shakespeare seems to place emphasis not only on Antony's magnanimity in Act 4 but also on Cleopatra's transcendence in Act 5. From Antony's view point, Cleopatra's love toward him is highly elusive as he relates:

Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,  
A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,  
A towered citadel, a pendent rock,  
A forked mountain, or blue promontory  
With trees upon't that nod unto the world  
And mock our eyes with air. (4.14.2-7)

However, as a result of Antony's death, Cleopatra's love seems to crystalize within a poetic dimension in Act 5. Of course, this crystallization may stem not only from Antony's death, but also from the magnanimity demonstrated in his dying message that should have moved Cleopatra, as it has moved Enobarbus in Act 4 Scene 9. If love necessarily contains self-renunciation, then Cleopatra crystalizes her love for the first time at this point, and this spiritual elevation may provide a basis for her transcendence. In other words, Cleopatra's sublime poetry in Act 5 Scene 2 would not have been born without Antony's death. Namely, her transcendence requires her lover's death, thus making "divided catastrophe" (Barton 114) a natural and logical consequence.

As Antony oscillates between Rome and Egypt, and Enobarbus oscillates between Antony and Octavius, so does Cleopatra between life and death in Act 5. Antony is elevated in her imagination: "His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm / Crested the world ..." (5.2.81 ff). And Cleopatra, who seems to decide her

suicide at the timing of her line: “Hie thee again. / ... / Go put it to the haste” (5.2.193-95), confirms her determination in the dialogue with Iras (5.2.206-25), begins her preparation toward her suicide with Charmian’s entrance on stage: “Show me, my women, like a queen” (5.2.226), and recalls her earlier splendour at the pageant, “I am again for Cydnus / To meet Mark Antony” (5.2.227-28). Ironically, the Cydnus scene was previously presented to the audience only through Enobarbus’ memory. What follows after these lines, that is, 5.2.276 and thereafter, is the climax of Cleopatra’s transcendence, which Stanley Cavell calls: “a new ceremony (or new sacrament) of marriage” (18), “her [Cleopatra’s] reinvention of marriage” (28). Here we have Cleopatra’s erotic apostrophe to Antony: “Husband, I come” (5.2.283), and her oxymoronic description of love as: “a lover’s pinch / Which hurts and is desired” (5.2.291-92). These lines may be an echo of those used by Enobarbus in Act 2 Scene 2 for the description of the queen: “With divers coloured fans whose wind did seem / To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, / And what they undid did” (2.2.215-17); and “she makes hungry / Where most she satisfies” (2.2.249-50), thus strengthening the connection between the Cydnus scene and the transcendent display of passion here.

If we suspend or disengage ourselves from the preconceived love story or unity of Antony and Cleopatra, we may observe paradoxical, funny, doleful and undaunted human characters who try to resist the callous and inescapable flood of history, represented by Octavius. Maynard Mack suggests: “[Jacobean writers] were fascinated by the potencies of the human will: ... its residual dignity when, all else removed, man stood at his being’s limit” (Mack, “Jacobean” 41), and this view may be applicable both to Antony’s magnanimity and Cleopatra’s transcendence at the very last moment of the play. Cleopatra, who may recognize the inevitability of history: “I am his [Octavius’s] fortune vassal” (5.2.29) as well as the transiency of her doom, nevertheless tries to resist against her destiny.

Thus, it seems that in this play Shakespeare intended to show this illusion and its beauty as a representation of a human will struggling against time’s transiency, a process which we might call a fragile history that easily disappears in the course of time. In other words, by suspending the audience, Shakespeare may have tried to show an aesthetic and dramatic paradox which may “bestride” the gap between Plutarch’s hard facts of history, and the soft

possibilities of individual passions in his problem tragedies such as *Antony and Cleopatra*.

## Conclusion

A reading I present in this paper is the outcome of observing the disjunctive and suspensive elements in the scenes in Act 4 Scene 15, which seem to be strategically placed around the symbolic scene of Antony's lifting-up. The ostensive quality of such suspensive elements fits in with the play's expansive nature which is permeated by visual and cinematic scenes. This quality seems to be further reinforced by frequent use of metaphor and simile in the play.

Russ MacDonald points out: “[*Antony and Cleopatra*] asks us to see the meaning of history as indeterminate” (99). In fact, Shakespeare, in his process of adopting his source-text, especially in his making of Act 4 Scene 15 through Act 5 Scene 2, may create many suspensive factors, inviting multiple interpretations for his characters, above all those for Cleopatra. Thus, the dramatist seems to try to control the level of assimilation of the audience in the drama, suspending them from time to time from any preconceived harmony or unity, providing his sense of inconclusive human characters and their relations, along with the indeterminacy of the history making and its potential endlessness, which may be matched by the expansive nature of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

## Notes

1 All quotations and act and scene divisions of Shakespeare's plays are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd edition.

2 As to the stage management of Antony's bungle, see Leslie Thomson's "*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 4 Scene 16: 'A Heavy Sight'", and David Bevington's "'Above the element they lived in': The Visual Language in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 4 and 5".

3 Similar "bungle" in Shakespeare's tragedies may include, for example, Othello getting the handkerchief wrong, Hamlet switching foils in the duel, or the mistiming of the poison in *Romeo and Juliet*. However, in the case of Othello, it may signify effectively how the jealousy can narrow a hero's scope and make an idiot, and in the

case of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, those may be understood to be accidents but ingenious dramatic contrivances that are rather pertinent to the tragic flow of respective dramas. However in the case of Antony, the relevancy of his clumsiness, especially his lifting-up, to the dramatic flow is not necessarily clear.

4 By this term, one may recall Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief". In fact, Shakespeare explicitly asks the audience to suspend their disbelief through the Prologue in *Henry V* such as: "Pierce out our imperfections with your thoughts. / Into a thousand parts divide one man / And make imaginary puissance" (Prologue 23-25). This might validate that "suspension" is a versatile and useful contrivance in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical representation.

5 Relatively speaking, the degree of suspension may be higher for a repeat spectator, a director, an actor or a reader than for a new spectator who may busy himself watching the stage.

6 I borrow this terminology from Patricia Parker's *Inescapable Romance* (4).

7 Charles Taylor furthermore places this notion in a historical context by stating: "with the central idea of disengagement, [Descartes] was articulating one of the most important developments of the modern era" (159), and argues that it has played a significant role in establishing "the Modern Identity".

8 Regarding the interpretation of Antony's lifting-up, there seems to be two opposite opinions among critics. For example, Phyllis Rackin argues: "Antony's raising provide a visual 'metaphor of elevation' for his death" (208), and H. W. Fawcner states: "The final heaving of the expiring hero up to the top of Cleopatra's monument clearly corresponds to an idealist ascension, what we think of today as Hegelian *Aufhebung*" (113). On the other hand, Rosalie L. Colie contends: "However significant the 'elevation' of Antony into Cleopatra's tomb, it is an awkward business; the queen's failure to open the tomb lays stress, just at the worst moment, on the weakest side of her nature" (205), and Jonathan Dollimore asserts: "Antony, even as he is trying to transcend defeat by avowing a tragic dignity in death, suffers the indignity of being dragged up the monument" (211).

9 This complexity of Shakespeare's dramaturgy may be one of reasons for the remark by Dr. Johnson, who was not particularly fond of this play: "The events, of which the principal are described according to history, are produced without any art of connection or care of disposition" (Johnson 873).

10 In sonnet 147, Shakespeare sings, "My love is as a fever, longing still / For that which longer nurseth the disease, / Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill, / Th'uncertain sickly appetite to please", and Antony's inner landscape may be very much similar to the one of this sonnet's speaker.

11 According to Marvin Spevack's concordance, Shakespeare uses "magnanimity" once, "magnanimous" 7 times, "generosity" once, and "generous" 12 times in all his

works but not in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

12 Sir Thomas North's translation is a second-hand translation from the French of Jacques Amyot.

13 As we may observe in *Antony and Cleopatra*, there are so many scene changes, so many comings and goings of people, and so many changes in location that this play may remind us a history book narrated from a historian's bird-eye view. Moreover, consciousness of history permeates this play. For example, Enobarbus says: "When men revolted shall upon record / Bear hateful memory ..." (4.9.9-10); and "But let the world rank me in register / A master-leaver and a fugitive" (4.9.22-23), and Caesar says: "you shall see / ... / in all my writings" (5.1.73-76); and "The record of what injuries you did us, / ... we shall remember / As things but done by chance" (5.2.117-19).

14 Rosalie L. Colie's comment that: "The miracle of love (or whatever it is) we do not see acted out onstage. Indeed, we never see Antony and Cleopatra alone, as we do Romeo and Juliet, Desdemona and Othello" (187-88), may be relevant on this point.

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