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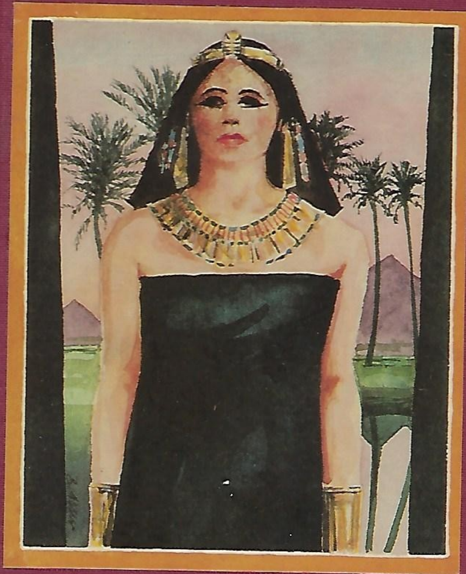

THE GUILD

Shakespeare

JULIUS CAESAR
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

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Sir John Gielgud and Tony Randall

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FOREWORD
to
JULIUS CAESAR
by Sir John Gielgud

One of the first serious problems one faces in planning a production of *Julius Caesar* is the question of the Roman mob. How many players can be afforded, and how much time allotted to manipulate them, not only in the Forum Scene, but also at the opening of the play, the murder scene, and the episode of the lynching of Cinna the Poet?

Brutus is evidently the protagonist of the play, but it is very difficult for even the most skillful actor to prevent the interest in him from being outshone by the players of Mark Antony and Cassius. Though he has many great scenes and speeches (some of them foreshadowing Hamlet and Macbeth) and, on paper, dominates the action, he is entirely without humour and may easily seem dull and priggish.

SIR JOHN GIELGUD'S first stage appearance was playing the role of the Herald in *Henry V*. He has since appeared in such diverse Shakespearean roles as Hamlet, Shylock, Antony, King Lear, Prospero, Julius Caesar, and Richard II, and directed productions of *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice,* and *Twelfth Night,* among many others.

Antony has brilliant youthfulness and vitality; Cassius, a feverish, spiteful urgency. The text gives wonderful opportunities for contrasting orchestration in the acting and speaking of these three superb characters.

Casca, with his one fine scene in prose after the Games, is certainly the best of the minor parts, and his opportunity for comedy is something of a relief after the sonorous stretches of verse in which most of the play is written.

Caesar himself is merely an imposing figurehead, with few opportunities for the actor (as I know myself from having attempted the part several times both on the stage and screen), except for his short scene with Calphurnia. His appearance as the ghost in the tent scene is strikingly effective, but his speeches in the Senate-house, just before the murder, are trite and pompous, as Shakespeare seems to have intended.

Portia is, of course, extremely sympathetic, but has only two short scenes to arouse our interest. I always feel that more could be made of the boy Lucius, who has evidently been a surrogate son to the childless couple. His presence in the tent scene when he falls asleep over his instrument as he is singing, and reminding us of Portia just when Brutus alludes so movingly to her death, should be one of the most touching episodes in the whole play.

In 1952 I played the part of Cassius in the Hollywood film of *Julius Caesar,* and Marlon Brando made a striking success of Mark Antony in his only appearance in a classical role. I still think that this production was one of the best renderings ever given of the play. The film, produced by John Houseman and directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, still holds up with considerable effect after

all these years, and succeeds when so many stage productions (including several in which I have acted myself) have failed.

It is a great pity, however, that in the battle scenes of the film, the last two acts were carelessly strung together on the cheap, for these scenes particularly should have benefited by the more ample expanses of the screen. But the later scenes are, in any case, apt to be something of an anticlimax once the tent scene is over, and the death scenes, first of Cassius, then of Brutus, fail in their writing to compare with the magnificent poetry so vividly achieved in the first three acts, while Antony must make do with a few conventional speeches to finish off the play.

In America, in 1937 the Mercury Theatre's production of the play by Orson Welles is still remembered and spoken of as having been sensationally successful, but Welles's ingenious innovation of dressing the characters as Mussolini Black Shirts, which seemed brilliantly appropriate at that particular time, has encouraged fatal mistakes in more recent stage productions. It is most important, of course, that the characters should appear in civilian costumes during the first three acts of the play, and the plotting and carrying out of the murder can only make its proper impact if one is made to feel the lurking secrecy of a swarming city, rife with dangerous intrigue in high places, and threatened by a lawless mob.

Actors are traditionally wary of wearing togas, but, if worn with ease and confidence, they should seem becoming and graceful and indeed easier to wear than the constricting armour, kilted tunics, and helmets which the actors must appear in for the battle scenes. It has been suggested that the tragedy be staged in Elizabethan costume, and there is a possible excuse for this idea in

some of the anachronisms in the text. But ruffs and trunk hose would hardly, I believe, be very successful, and these costumes are equally difficult for actors to wear.

I have written elsewhere of my seeing the play for the first time when I was only 12 years old. My recollection of the event has always reminded me of one of my boyhood's most cherished memories.

The play was performed in 1916 at the Drury Lane Theatre for a single performance only—to celebrate the Shakespearian Tercentenary—and was acted by a large and distinguished cast consisting of all the leading players then in London. The part of Cassius was superbly acted by H. B. Irving, the eldest son of the late Sir Henry. His eminent father had always dismissed the possibility of staging the play, because he thought it impossible to decide which of the three principal parts he should, as actor-manager, choose for himself.

Once, I believe in America, the Booth brothers appeared in it together. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who succeeded to leadership of the profession after Irving's death, staged an elaborate spectacle, with a large crowd and handsome pictorial scenery by Alma-Tadema, a greatly admired Royal Academician of the period. This production had three fine actors in the three great parts, though Tree himself was not greatly praised for his Mark Antony, and his casting of Lady Tree as the boy Lucius cannot have been a very wise or happy choice. Tree's scenery, which must have been stored in the intervening years, was used again at the Drury Lane matinee, and of course I thought it very grand and effective. But, apart from the acting of Cassius, I also admired greatly an electrifying performance of Mark Antony by the

young Henry Ainley. His subsequent rendering of the same part in a production of his own at the St. James' Theatre, some four years later, seemed to me far less striking.

Above all I remember the tremendous effect of the crowd scenes. In the souvenir programme, which I still possess, I find that these scenes were directed by Harley Granville-Barker, whom I came to admire so greatly when I became an actor. The few rehearsals I had the privilege of experiencing under his direction, and a number of letters he wrote me at various times, are among my most precious reminders of his genius.

But, alas, the intervention of the 1914 War, and his second marriage to a lady who beguiled him away from the theatre, robbed a whole generation of a superb master of the stage. His preface on *Julius Caesar* is typically sensitive and I have always found it an inspiration when studying the play.

FOREWORD to *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

by Tony Randall

David Garrick, the eighteenth-century British actor, once said, "The drama's laws the drama's patrons make," and so it seems. If there are rules about playwriting, they are broken so often that there seem to be no rules. How often a play that everyone admits is a poor one becomes a hit simply because it pleases anyway, or offers an actor a good, showy part. It used to be common to say of the Lunts, "Loved them, hated the play." One would suppose the only rule that cannot be broken or ignored is that a play must have a conflict. An exception is *The Tempest,* which has no conflict; everything happens as Prospero wills it, supernaturally.

There is one rule, however, unwritten perhaps, but taken as Gospel by everyone in commercial entertainment, that even Shakespeare could not break, which is that a play must give you

TONY RANDALL made his Broadway debut performing the role of Scarus in *Antony and Cleopatra.* A prolific actor whose credits include E. K. Hornbeck in the play *Inherit the Wind,* the multi-role lead in the film *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao,* and the title role in the series *Love, Sidney,* he is perhaps best-known for his television portrayal of Felix Ungar in *The Odd Couple.*

someone to root for. There, I think, lies the problem with *Antony and Cleopatra* and the reason for its tepid popularity in the canon. It is a magnificent creation, superbly constructed. Its historically accurate and humanly real conflict is dramatized with a virtuoso's ease and seeming inevitability. Every scene is interesting and the variety is dazzling. It ranges in scene much more widely and daringly than any other Shakespeare play; indeed it covers the world of its time. It is most innovative in its use of short, cinematic, "flash" scenes. It is peopled by an enormous cast from every walk of life, all real, powerful, funny, quaint, "actual" (though Shaw thought Enobarbus "bogus") and recognizable today. Lepidus says, deep in his cups, "Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun: so is your crocodile. . . . What manner of thing is your crocodile?" Its poetry at its best—"I am dying, Egypt, dying"—is the best ever written. It offers its leading actors the juiciest of plums. Yet with all this, it is not a play audiences warm up to and love.

The reason, I think, is that Cleopatra and Antony are such loathsome people, monsters of self-gratification, greed, lust—heedlessly and without remorse sending thousands to a terrible death just to satisfy themselves. When Cleopatra dies with her handmaidens, her chief worry is that one of them will bed Antony in Paradise before she gets there. She also schemes to keep half her jewelry from Caesar. (Katharine Cornell cut this scene from the 1947 Broadway production of the play.) Antony calls her a whore, and it does not break our hearts as when Othello calls Desdemona a whore.

What was Shakespeare's view of these characters? What was his purpose in writing their lives? Was he glorifying them, their

"great love," their willingness to lose the world for it? Or was he dramatizing the evils of lust and drunkenness and gluttony and greed? It is almost impossible to answer, but there are clues. When Shakespeare gives beautiful poetry to a character it seems to indicate sympathy for that character. Iago has no poetry; the entire part, the longest in Shakespeare, is in prose. Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* seems a bad man to us today, but he has the most beautiful poetry in the play, "in such a night as this . . . ." (Act V, Scene i), a speech that captures for everyone everywhere the first rapture of love. And in the same scene he makes Shakespeare's glorious tribute to music.

Shakespeare gives us Enobarbus' end and Eros' sacrifice to show us how Antony was loved by his soldiers, and Caesar's apostrophe to show that even his greatest enemy revered him. But I think Shakespeare fails to convince us. We will forgive anyone anything if his cause is noble, but Antony's cause is contemptible and we rarely see him behaving nobly. Mostly we see him behaving foolishly. We feel about him as we feel about anyone who, blest with great gifts, throws them all away.

If Shakespeare meant for us to admire, love, and weep for Antony and Cleopatra, and if his audience did, then it is we who have changed. Perhaps in Elizabeth's England no one questioned the right of "great ones" to do as they pleased. The French Revolution was yet a century and three-quarters away.

In 1947 I made my Broadway debut in Katharine Cornell's revival of *Antony and Cleopatra.* It was a noble production. Godfrey Tearle was Antony, and Kent Smith a perfect Enobarbus. In the cast were Lenore Ulric, Maureen Stapleton, Charlton Heston,

and Eli Wallach. Joseph Wiseman was an unforgettable Eunuch. The part is usually cast as a very fat man, but the director, Guthrie McClintic, knew what he was doing. Joe was as thin as a snake and he spoke in a hiss. He was made of pain and hate. When Cleopatra asked him if he indeed had sexual feelings, a lifetime of deprivation came out when he said, "No, Madam, not in deed."

I played Scarus, a messenger part. He comes on cold and describes the Battle of Actium which has just occurred. Imagine a fledgling actor saying this:

SCARUS Gods and Goddesses,
All th' whole Synod of them!
ENOBARBUS What's thy Passion?
SCARUS The greater Cantle of the World is lost
With very Ignorance; we have kiss'd away
Kingdoms and Provinces.
ENOBARBUS How appears the Fight?
SCARUS On our side, like the token'd Pestilence,
Where Death is sure. Yon ribaudr'd Nag of
Egypt
(Whom Leprosy o'ertake!) i' th' midst o' th'
Fight,
When Vantage like a pair of Twins appear'd,
Both as the same, or rather ours the Elder,
The Breeze upon her, like a Cow in June,
Hoists Sails and Flies.
ENOBARBUS That I beheld:
Mine Eyes did sicken at the sight, 'nd could not
Endure a further view.

SCARUS She once being loof'd,
The Noble Ruin of her Magic, Antony,
Claps on his Sea-wing, and (like a doting
Mallard),
Leaving the Fight in heighth, flies after her.
I never saw an Action of such Shame:
Experience, Manhood, Honor, ne'er before
Did violate so itself.

Before coming on each night I worked myself up through long preparation into shaking hysteria. One night Miss Cornell suggested to me that I try not preparing.

Editor's Introduction to

JULIUS CAESAR and *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

Shakespeare probably wrote *Julius Caesar* in 1599, shortly after he completed *Henry V,* the ninth installment in an extended cycle of "history plays" on the struggle for social and political stability in late-medieval England, and shortly before he produced *Hamlet,* the first of what modern commentators generally refer to as the playwright's four "great tragedies." He probably wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* in late 1606 or early 1607, shortly after he completed *Othello, King Lear,* and *Macbeth,* the other members of the "big four," and shortly before he began devoting most of his attention to the tragicomic romances, among them *The Tempest,* with which he would draw his work to a close between 1608 and 1613.

Approached in terms of their place in Shakespeare's career, the two plays in this volume bracket the artistic period for which the playwright is most widely celebrated today. *Julius Caesar* is frequently described as the drama that defines his ascent to that creative summit, and *Antony and Cleopatra* is sometimes discussed as the work that signals his transition from a preoccupation with

unalleviated tragedy to a new preoccupation with what might be called "divine comedy," a transfiguring dramatic form that permitted the playwright to explore those values that enable human beings to surmount their trials and achieve fulfillment in a spiritual realm that lies beyond the sway of earthly Fortune. *Julius Caesar* can be viewed in many respects as an outgrowth of the English history plays, then, transposing to a more distant classical setting the same issues that Shakespeare had been pondering in plays like *Richard II,* but focusing on a brooding protagonist who seems in retrospect to have been an anticipation of Hamlet. Meanwhile, *Antony and Cleopatra* can be viewed in certain ways as a foreshadowing of the emphasis on reunion, reconciliation, and miraculous renewal that we have now come to admire in "late plays" like *Pericles, Cymbeline,* and *The Winter's Tale.*

Stylistically, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* seem worlds apart. The earlier work strikes us as clear, focused, and straightforward; it is one of the shortest of Shakespeare's plays, and the elegance of its dignified rhetoric has established it as one of the most frequently quoted works in all literature. The later play, by contrast, is ambiguous, panoramic, and convoluted; it is one of the longest of Shakespeare's dramas, and its figurative language is at times so extravagant and multifaceted that different interpreters can emerge with quite different readings of its more involved passages. The earlier play now impresses us as the work of a confident dramatist who is just beginning to realize his full powers as a thinker and as a writer of tragedy; the later play impresses us as the work of a more mature dramatist who has scaled the heights in tragedy several times over and is now begin-

ning to experiment with new techniques in his ongoing quest for other worlds to conquer.

For all their differences, however, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* have a great deal in common. They both derive from the same narrative source, Sir Thomas North's 1579 English translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.* They both address philosophical and political questions that would have engaged the attention of Shakespeare's English contemporaries. And they both concern themselves with one of the major themes of Renaissance culture: the significance and continued pertinence of Europe's classical heritage.

Like many of his fellow artists and intellectuals, Shakespeare was keenly interested in the meaning of the classical past, and he seems to have conceived of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* as the centerpieces of a four-part dramatic meditation on "the matter of Rome." The playwright had begun his study of Roman antiquity in the early 1590s with *Titus Andronicus,* a tragedy about a mythical general in the fourth century A.D. whose agonies he depicted as a sign of the impending collapse of Roman civilization. Yet to come in Shakespeare's career, probably in 1607 or 1608, was *Coriolanus,* a tragedy about another legendary general whose fall in the fifth century B.C. was to be interpreted as a precondition to the rise of a nascent Republic. In between lay *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra:* the first, a tragedy about the dissolution of the Republic through the rise and fall of Rome's most famous general; the second, a tragedy about the consolidation of the Empire through the decline and fall of Mark Antony and the ascendancy of Julius Caesar's adopted son, Octavius, later known as Caesar Augustus.

Just how Shakespeare viewed the critical period he dramatized in *Julius Caesar* (44–42 B.C.) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (40–30 B.C.) is a matter of interpretation, but we can be sure that he was aware of many different ways of looking at it. He would have known, for example, that to Roman writers such as Lucan and Cicero, who brought a republican perspective to the events of 44 B.C., Julius Caesar was a tyrant whose disregard of civil liberties had made his assassination imperative. He would also have known that a number of Renaissance thinkers, among them such eminent contemporaries of the playwright as Sir Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson, shared the republican point of view.

Meanwhile, Shakespeare would probably have been even more acutely aware that the writer on whom he drew as his principal source, Plutarch of Charonea (46–120 A.D.), a Greek historian who had lived in Rome during the most decadent years of the Empire, portrayed Caesar as a de facto monarch who had brought peace and stability to a society ravaged by more than a century of civil war. According to Plutarch, Caesar was a noble man who wielded power justly and responsibly and whose one flaw, a vanity that made him wish to be crowned king, was a small price to pay for the leadership he provided a body politic in desperate need of a head. Plutarch's view of the matter was the one favored by medieval writers such as Dante (who had placed Brutus and Cassius in the same circle with Judas in his *Inferno*) and Chaucer, and Shakespeare would have also found it reflected, implicitly if not explicitly, in many of the official proclamations of a Tudor establishment committed to the maintenance of social and political order in the England of his own day. As Elizabethans were repeatedly reminded through such exhorta-

tions as the "Homily against Willful Disobedience," the monarch was to be revered not only as God's deputy but as the people's sole bulwark against civil chaos. To rebel against the established hierarchy was to risk a return to the bloody strife that had torn the nation asunder during the fifteenth-century Wars of the Roses, a hall of horrors that Shakespeare himself had dramatized in three plays on the troubled reign of Henry VI and a fourth play on the tyranny of Richard III.

In addition to what he drew from sources that might have informed his thinking about the political issues involved in "the matter of Rome," Shakespeare would also have known about a wide range of other writings that addressed the subject philosophically or theologically. He would have been familiar with the critique of Roman Stoicism in Book XIV of St. Augustine's *City of God* (426 A.D.), where the members of Rome's most influential school of philosophy are said to be so puffed up with "ungodly pride" that they are virtually indistinguishable from the self-righteous Pharisees of the Gospels. And he would have been aware of similar observations in Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1509), where the typical Stoic is depicted as "a stony semblance of a man, void of all sense and common feeling of humanity, . . . a man dead to all sense of nature and common affections, and no more moved with love or pity than if he were a flint or rock; whose censure nothing escapes; that commits no errors himself, but has a lynx's eye upon others; measures everything by an exact line, and forgives nothing; pleases himself with himself only; the only rich, the only wise, the only free man."

Meanwhile, Shakespeare would also have known the traditional Christian view that the Pax Romana, the "Universal Peace"

that was ushered in with the ascendancy of Caesar Augustus (as we are reminded in IV.vi.4 of *Antony and Cleopatra),* was a time divinely ordained to provide a suitable setting for the advent of another "Prince of Peace." What this meant, in the language of the title page to a 1578 English edition of Appian's *Civil Wars,* was that the conflicts and bloodshed that constitute the subject matter of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* could be viewed in golden hindsight as a "prophane Tragedie, whereof flowed our diuine Comoedie." In other words, a sequence of events that meant one thing to a pre-Christian Roman such as Brutus, Antony, or even Octavius could have a radically different significance to a later era accustomed to interpreting all of human history in the light of a Providential plan in which even God's enemies were constrained to play a role in fulfilling His divine purposes.

There are in fact Biblical echoes in both plays that hint at the kind of irony this Christian vantage on pagan Antiquity would seem to imply. And it may well be that that angle of vision accounts in part for the phenomenon Tony Randall remarks upon in his delightful and thought-provoking foreword to this volume. For if in some fundamental sense even "the Noblest Roman of them all" is limited by the mere fact that he *is* an antique Roman, there may be sound dramatic reasons for an audience's sense that plays like *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* provide us, in the final analysis, with no one "to root for."

In both tragedies we find ourselves in the presence of heroic figures whose behavior disappoints us. In *Julius Caesar,* for example, we focus much of our attention on Brutus, a man who seems to be universally admired and a man whose nobility derives from

an ancestor (the legendary Lucius Junius Brutus) who expelled kingship from Rome and established an early form of the Republic in 509 B.C. At a time when the survival of the kind of representative government ushered in by his forebear appears to be at issue, Marcus Junius Brutus is naturally the Roman to whom his concerned compatriots turn for another deliverance. We see him agonize over his decision to participate in an action that goes against his nature. We observe the scrupulous distinctions he insists upon in his effort to sanctify a deed that must inevitably appear brutal. We admire the integrity with which he endeavors to keep his cause pure: free of self-serving motives, free of unnecessary bloodshed, free of demagoguery, free of corruption. We respond to the kindness he shows his servant Lucius. And we note the devotion he inspires in his noble wife Portia. At the same time, however, we cannot help noticing that this Brutus is a man who often comes across as deficient in feeling, a man who must always have his own way even though he virtually always turns out to be wrong, and a man who seems incapable of imagining that he is capable of error. What we find, in short, is a character whose high-minded "constancy" seems remarkably similar to that of the would-be king whose vanity blinds him to the fact that, for all the power he wields, he is yet "but a Man."

Because we keep hearing about Brutus' nobility, our normal tendency is to assume that in some fundamental sense he really must be the ideal character that Mark Antony describes in his eulogy at the end of the play. If we find it difficult to square our perceptions of Brutus with what Antony says about him, however, before we conclude that the fault is in ourselves we should consider the possibility that Shakespeare *wants* us to feel puzzled,

uneasy, and disappointed—that a critical element of his strategy as a dramatist, indeed, is to make his audience uncomfortable with discrepancies between what a character like Brutus says or has said about him and what his thoughts and actions reveal him to be in reality.

The kind of disappointment we are likely to feel about Brutus, and in different ways about Antony and Cleopatra, is the disappointment that derives, quite literally, from disillusionment —from our discovery that a character we want to "root for," a person who seems to be endowed with almost superhuman potential, is fatally deficient in some quality that is essential to his or her full realization of that vast potential. In Shakespearean tragedy, the deficiency that vitiates a character's gifts is usually a lapse in self-knowledge (which results in defective judgment) or a lapse in self-control (which results in defective will-power) or both. Frequently a failure of reason precipitates or is accompanied by a breakdown of will; just as frequently a failure of will (such as a habitual surrender to the vices of the flesh) either results from or leads to a breakdown of reason. In either case, the key to a play's effect—to the fulfillment of its "purpose," as Hamlet would put it —lies in the audience's ability to respond intelligently and sensitively to all the clues the dramatist provides about his characters, and on that basis to perceive any illusions or flaws in even the most attractive of them.

The characters we encounter in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* occupy a setting and live in a time that has a great deal to do with who they are, how they think of themselves, and what they do. As they note on numerous occasions, the stage they march across is pregnant with consequence, and what is at stake

upon it is not just Rome, and not just the Roman Empire; it is nothing less than what one of Caesar's contemporaries would later refer to as "the whole world" (Matthew 16:26).

As Brutus reminds Cassius in one of many such images in these two plays, "There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men" (*Julius Caesar,* IV.iii.218), and the person who can crest it to victory will enjoy all the blessings of "Fortune." Brutus thinks it possible to master that "Tide," but events prove Cassius to be a better judge of its flow. Later, prompted by Cleopatra, Mark Antony trusts his fortunes to the tide in an even more literal sense; because of his dependence on his Siren-like Queen, however, he too founders. In the meantime, like Pompey the Great, who had been defeated by Julius Caesar, the younger Pompey falls victim to another wily Caesar. And as might have been predicted, the ineffectual Lepidus never regains his land legs after the poor drunken "Third Part o' the World" is carried ashore from Pompey's galley in II.vii of *Antony and Cleopatra.* What prevails, then, is "the Spir't of Caesar" (*Julius Caesar,* II.i.165), a presence that hovers over the last half of the play that bears his name, and one that then becomes embodied anew in the Octavius who methodically dispatches his rivals in *Antony and Cleopatra.*

As she contemplates the limited options that remain to her after the death of Antony, Cleopatra observes that " 'Tis paltry to be Caesar: / Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's Knave"(V.ii.2–3). In these words we recognize the self-consoling rationalizations of a loser—in this case a Circe-like temptress whose meretricious influence on a potential Aeneas has "unqualitied" him (III.xi.43) and made him defenseless against the "Fullest Man" (III.xiii.85). But what we should also recognize in Cleo-

patra's comment is something that would have been even more compelling to the original audience: the fact that the same tide that is now at the flood will eventually recede, taking with it both Caesar and the Empire that he and his fellow Romans have so pridefully assembled out of the "Clay" (I.i.35) of which human kingdoms are made.

The Caesar who arrives to consummate his victory at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra* is almost as puffed up with "Glory" as the Caesar who compared himself to "Olympus" at what he thought to be his moment of highest Fortune in *Julius Caesar.* There is no suggestion that Octavius Caesar's stay at the top will be as brief as that of his predecessor. But the exhortation he addresses to Dolabella at the end of the play provides an ironic reminder that even so august an Emperor as he has now become is neither omniscient nor omnipotent.

Whether Cleopatra's "Immortal Longings" (V.ii.281) have yielded her an eternity in the embrace of "The Crown o' th' Earth" (IV.xv.63) is anything but certain. And whether her suicide, any more than those of Brutus and Antony, would have impressed the original audience as a victory over Fortune and "the Spirit of Caesar" is equally problematic. But of one thing there can be no doubt: the "Greatness" of Cleopatra's grandiloquent exit has assured her a theatrical immortality that can only be described as transcendent. Like the poetry she both speaks and inspires throughout the play, it alone is sufficient to assure that audiences, if not Fortune, will ever award the palm to Egypt rather than to Rome.

Though *Julius Caesar* is less noted for verbal pyrotechnics than *Antony and Cleopatra,* it has enjoyed a life in performance that

is fully equal to that of the later play. Audiences continue to admire the stirring 1952 film in which John Gielgud played Cassius to James Mason's Brutus and Marlon Brando's Mark Antony. And as Sir John Gielgud notes in his gracious and informative foreword to this volume, *Julius Caesar* was once performed by the Booth brothers in a production that may have precipitated a turning point in American history. The occasion was a benefit to raise funds for the Shakespeare statue that had been commissioned for New York's Central Park on the three hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, and the performance took place in the Winter Garden Theatre on November 25, 1864. By this time Edwin Booth had already established himself as the foremost American actor of his generation, and he took the role of Brutus. His older brother, Junius Brutus Booth, played Cassius. And his younger brother, John Wilkes Booth, gave a memorable performance as Mark Antony. Though the youngest Booth was cast in what turned out to be the wrong role for him, he may well have realized even then, less than five months before he shouted "Sic Semper Tyrannis!" on a Good Friday in Ford's Theatre, that he was in the right play. And with what rapt attention he must have listened when he heard Cassius say (III.i.112–14):

> How many Ages hence
> Shall this our lofty Scene be acted over
> In States unborn and Accents yet unknown?

Both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* appeared in print for the first time in the 1623 First Folio. The text of *Julius Caesar* is unusually free of difficulties. The text of *Antony and Cleopatra* requires considerable rearrangement of its verse lines, but otherwise it too appears to be a generally reliable rendering of the

play. Over the years it has been emended quite freely in places, far more than seems necessary; in this edition many passages that have appeared only in "improved" versions for three centuries or more are restored to the readings of the First Folio.

JULIUS CAESAR