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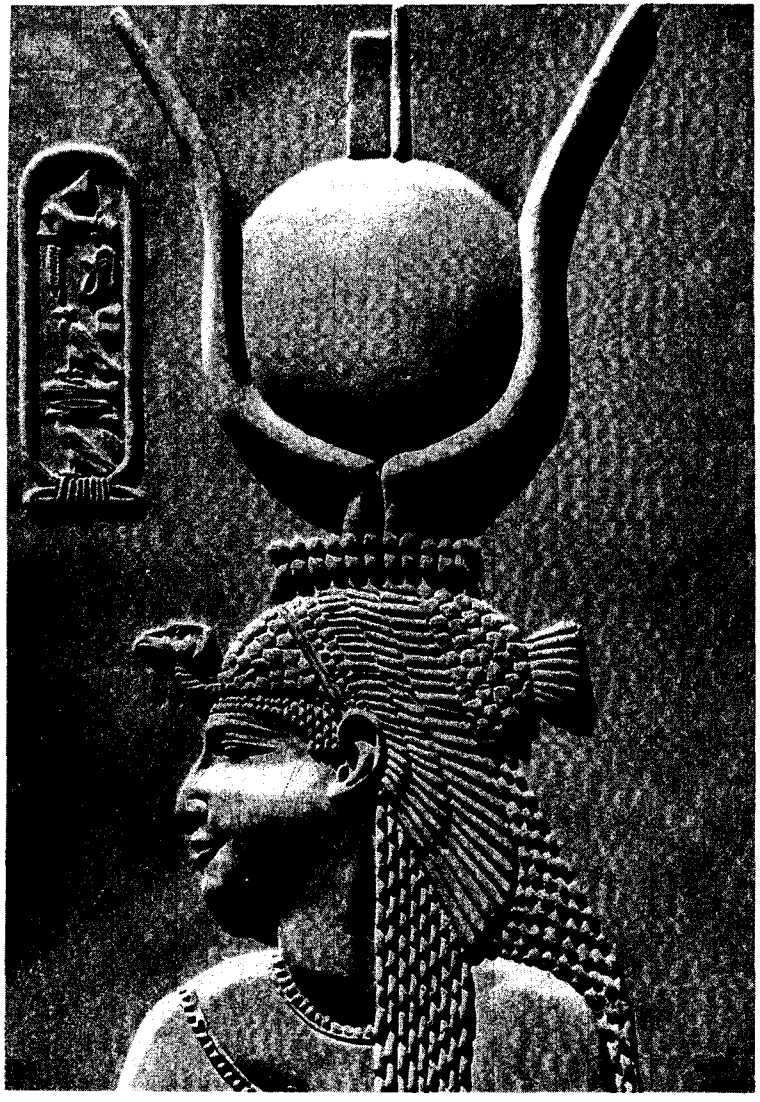

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CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF EGYPT

69 B.C.	Born
51 B.C.	Succeeded to Egyptian throne
48–45 B.C.	Caesar in Egypt
42–40 B.C.	Antony in Egypt
31 B.C.	Battle of Actium
30 B.C.	Died

Future ages would depict Cleopatra at the dark and exotic Egyptian queen who used her personal powers as much as her position to sway the two greatest Romans of her day, Caesar and Antony, to her cause. In fact, she was not an Egyptian at all but a blonde Macedonian, the descendant of Alexander's general Ptolemy, who had seized Egypt on Alexander's death and established his own dynasty there. Cleopatra had come to the throne on the death of her father in 51 B.C. and ruled successively with her two brothers, Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV, and her son Ptolemy XV.

By her lifetime Rome had become the dominant force in the Hellenistic east, having begun the diplomatic and military penetration of that region in the Second Punic War. Cleopatra realized that accommodation to Rome had to be made if she and her kingdom were to prosper. Caesar arrived in Egypt in 48 B.C. in pursuit of Pompey after his victory at Pharsalus. But Pompey had been murdered and Cleopatra was on the throne. She immediately set out to conquer Caesar, who was equally attracted to the Egyptian queen. He needed her money and resources; she needed Caesar's power to reestablish her dynasty and recover its lost provinces. Caesar dallied in Egypt with Cleopatra for some four years, giving her a son, whom she called Caesarion. Cleopatra returned to Rome with Caesar and was installed by him in regal state. With his assassination in 44 B.C.

she returned to Egypt to await the outcome of the next round of Rome's civil wars.

When Caesar's assassins were defeated at the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., the victors were the consul Marcus Antonius (Antony) and Caesar's adopted son Octavian. These two divided the Roman Empire between them, with Antony taking the east. His intention was to pursue a war against the Parthians. Cleopatra saw the opportunity to continue with Antony the liaison she had begun with Caesar—and for the same purposes. She met him at Tarsus in Asia Minor, laden with gifts and promises. Antony was as captivated by her as Caesar had been and, abandoning his Parthian campaign, returned with her to Egypt. In 40 B.C. they were married. This step alienated Antony not only from Octavian but from the majority of Romans. This alienation continued and culminated in the battle of Actium, 31 B.C., in which the forces of Antony and Cleopatra were routed by those of Octavian. Returning to Egypt, Antony took his own life. Shortly thereafter Cleopatra committed suicide, perhaps by snakebite. She was 39 and had been queen for 22 years.

The Roman sources of her lifetime are filled with references to Cleopatra, but a full narrative account of her life and policies had to wait for the second century, in particular the works of the Greek historian Dio Cassius and the Greek essayist and biographer Plutarch, from whose lives of Caesar and Antony the following excerpt is taken.

Lives

PLUTARCH

Plutarch was a learned and aristocratic Greek who lived among the highest circles in Rome and was a great admirer of all things Roman. He is famous for a biographical series, *The Parallel Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans,* which included substantial sketches of both Caesar and Antony. We turn to these works for Plutarch's account of Cleopatra. He begins with Antony.

Such being his temper, the last and crowning mischief that could befall him came in the love of Cleopatra, to awaken and kindle to fury passions that as yet lay still and dormant in his nature, and to stifle and finely corrupt any elements that yet made resistance in him of goodness and a sound judgment. He fell into the snare thus. When making preparation for the Parthian war, he sent to command her to make her personal appearance in Cilicia, to answer an accusation, that she had given great assistance, in the late wars, to Cassius. Dellius, who was sent on this message, had no sooner seen her face, and remarked her adroitness and subtlety in speech, but he felt convinced that Antony would not so much as think of giving any molestation to a woman like this; on the contrary, she would be the first in favour with him. So he set himself at once to pay his court to the Egyptian, and gave her his advice, "to go," in the Homeric style, to Cilicia, "in her best attire," and bade her fear nothing from Antony, the gentlest and kindest of soldiers. She had some faith in the words of Dellius, but more in her own attractions; which, having formerly recommended her to Caesar and the young Caenus Pompey, she did not doubt might prove yet more successful with Antony. Their acquaintance was with her when a girl, young and ignorant of the world, but she was to meet Antony in the time of life when women's beauty is most splendid, and their intellects are in full maturity. She made great preparation for her journey, of money, gifts, and ornaments of value, such as so wealthy a kingdom might afford, but she brought with her her surest hopes in her own magic arts and charms.

She received several letters, both from Antony and from his friends, to summon her, but she took no account of these orders; and

at last, as if in mockery of them, she came sailing up the river Cydnus, in a barge with gilded stern and outspread sails of purple, while oars of silver beat time to the music of flutes and fifes and harps. She herself lay all along under a canopy of cloth of gold, dressed as Venus in a picture, and beautiful young boys, like painted Cupids, stood on each side to fan her. Her maids were dressed like sea nymphs and graces, some steering at the rudder, some working at the ropes. The perfumes diffused themselves from the vessel to the shore, which was covered with multitudes, part following the galley up the river on either bank, part running out of the city to see the sight. The marketplace was quite emptied, and Antony at last was left alone sitting upon the tribunal; while the word went through all the multitude, that Venus was come to feast with Bacchus, for the common good of Asia. On her arrival, Antony sent to invite her to supper. She thought it fitter he should come to her; so, willing to show his good-humour and courtesy, he complied, and went. He found the preparations to receive him magnificent beyond expression, but nothing so admirable as the great number of lights; for on a sudden there was let down altogether so great a number of branches with lights in them so ingeniously disposed, some in squares, and some in circles, that the whole thing was a spectacle that has seldom been equalled for beauty.

The next day, Antony invited her to supper, and was very desirous to outdo her as well in magnificence as contrivance; but he found he was altogether beaten in both, and was so well convinced of it that he was himself the first to jest and mock at his poverty of wit and his rustic awkwardness. She, perceiving that his raillery was broad and gross, and savoured more of the soldier than the courtier, rejoined in the same taste, and fell into it at once, without any sort of reluctance or reserve. For her actual beauty, it is said, was not in itself so remarkable that none could be compared with her, or that no one could see her without being struck by it, but the contact of her presence, if you lived with her, was irresistible; the attraction of her person, joining with the charm of her conversation, and the character that attended all she said or did, was something bewitching. It was a pleasure merely to hear the sound of her voice, with which, like an instrument of many strings, she could pass from one language to another; so that there were few of the barbarian nations that she answered by an interpreter; to most of them she spoke herself, as to the Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes, Parthians, and many others, whose language she had learnt; which was all the more surprising because most of the kings, her predecessors, scarcely gave themselves the trouble to acquire the Egyptian tongue, and several of them quite abandoned the Macedonian.

Antony was so captivated by her that, while Fulvia his wife maintained his quarrels in Rome against Caesar by actual force of arms, and the Parthian troops, commanded by Labienus (the king's generals having made him commander-in-chief), were assembled in Mesopotamia, and ready to enter Syria, he could yet suffer himself to be carried away by her to Alexandria, there to keep holiday, like a boy, in play and diversion, squandering and fooling away in enjoyments that most costly, as Antiphon says, of all valuables, time. They had a sort of company, to which they gave a particular name, calling it that of the Inimitable Livers. The members entertained one another daily in turn, with an extravagance of expenditure beyond measure or belief. Philotas, a physician of Amphissa, who was at that time a student of medicine in Alexandria, used to tell my grandfather Lamprias that, having some acquaintance with one of the royal cooks, he was invited by him, being a young man, to come and see the sumptuous preparations for supper. So he was taken into the kitchen, where he admired the prodigious variety of all things; but particularly, seeing eight wild boars roasting whole, says he, "Surely you have a great number of guests." The cook laughed at his simplicity, and told him there were not above twelve to sup, but that every dish was to be served up just roasted to a turn, and if anything was but one minute ill-timed, it was spoiled. "And," said he, "maybe Antony will sup just now, maybe not this hour, maybe he will call for wine, or begin to talk, and will put it off. So that," he continued, "it is not one, but many suppers must be had in readiness, as it is impossible to guess at his hour." This was Philotas's story. . . .

To return to Cleopatra; Plato admits four sorts of flattery, but she had a thousand. Were Antony serious or disposed to mirth, she had at any moment some new delight or charm to meet his wishes; at every turn she was upon him, and let him escape her neither by day nor by night. She played at dice with him, drank with him, hunted with him; and when he exercised in arms, she was there to see. At night she would go rambling with him to disturb and torment people at their doors and windows, dressed like a servant-woman, for Antony also went in servant's disguise, and from these expeditions he often came home very scurvily answered, and sometimes even beaten severely, though most people guessed who it was. However, the Alexandrians in general liked it all well enough, and joined good-humouredly and kindly in his frolic and play, saying they were much obliged to Antony for acting his tragic parts at Rome, and keeping his comedy for them. It would be trifling without end to be particular in his follies, but his fishing must not be forgotten. He went out one day to angle with Cleopatra, and, being so unfortunate as to catch nothing in the presence of his mistress, he gave secret orders to the fishermen to dive under water, and put fishes that had been already taken upon his

hooks; and these he drew so fast that the Egyptian perceived it. But, feigning great admiration, she told everybody how dexterous Antony was, and invited them next day to come and see him again. So, when a number of them had come on board the fishing-boats, as soon as he had let down his hook, one of her servants was beforehand with his divers, and fixed upon his hook a salted fish from Pontus. Antony, feeling his line give, drew up the prey, and when, as may be imagined, great laughter ensued, "Leave," said Cleopatra, "the fishing-rod, general, to us poor sovereigns of Pharos and Canopus; your game is cities, provinces, and kingdoms."

Whilst he was thus diverting himself and engaged in this boy's play, two despatches arrived; one from Rome, that his brother Lucius and his wife Fulvia, after many quarrels among themselves, had joined in war against Caesar, and having lost all, had fled out of Italy; the other bringing little better news, that Labienus, at the head of the Parthians, was overrunning Asia, from Euphrates and Syria as far as Lydia and Ionia. So, scarcely at last rousing himself from sleep, and shaking off the fumes of wine, he set out to attack the Parthians, and went as far as Phoenicia; but, upon the receipt of lamentable letters from Fulvia, turned his course with two hundred ships to Italy. And, in his way, receiving such of his friends as fled from Italy, he was given to understand that Fulvia was the sole cause of the war, a woman of a restless spirit and very bold, and withal her hopes were that commotions in Italy would force Antony from Cleopatra. But it happened that Fulvia, as she was coming to meet her husband, fell sick by the way, and died at Sicyon, so that an accommodation was the more easily made. For when he reached Italy, and Caesar showed no intention of laying anything to his charge, and he on his part shifted the blame of everything on Fulvia, those that were friends to them would not suffer that the time should be spent in looking narrowly into the plea, but made a reconciliation first, and then a partition of the empire between them, taking as their boundary the Ionian Sea, the eastern provinces falling to Antony, to Caesar the western, and Africa being left to Lepidus. And an agreement was made that every one in their turn, as they thought fit, should make their friends consuls, when they did not choose to take the offices themselves. . . .

But the mischief that thus long had lain still, the passion for Cleopatra, which better thoughts had seemed to have lulled and charmed into oblivion, upon his approach to Syria gathered strength again, and broke out into a flame. And, in fine, like Plato's restive and rebellious horse of the human soul, flinging off all good and wholesome counsel, and breaking fairly loose, he sends Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra into Syria. To whom at her arrival he made no small or trifling present, Phoenicia, Coele-Syria, Cyprus, great part of Cilicia, that side of Judaea which produces balm, that part of Arabia where the Nabathaeans extend to the outer sea; profuse gifts which much displeased the Romans. For although he had invested several private persons in great governments and kingdoms, and bereaved many kings of theirs, as Antigonus of Judaea, whose head he caused to be struck off (the first example of that punishment being inflicted on a king), yet nothing stung the Romans like the shame of these honours paid to Cleopatra. Their dissatisfaction was augmented also by his acknowledging as his own the twin children he had by her, giving them the names of Alexander and Cleopatra, and adding, as their surnames, the titles of Sun and Moon. But he, who knew how to put a good colour on the most dishonest action, would say that the greatness of the Roman empire consisted more in giving than in taking kingdoms, and that the way to carry noble blood through the world was by begetting in every place a new line and series of kings; his own ancestor had thus been born of Hercules; Hercules had not limited his hopes of progeny to a single womb, nor feared any law like Solon's or any audit of procreation, but had freely let nature take her will in the foundation and first commencement of many families.

For assembling the people in the exercise ground, and causing two golden thrones to be placed on a platform of silver, the one for him and the other for Cleopatra, and at their feet lower thrones for their children, he proclaimed Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele-Syria, and with her conjointly Caesarion, the reputed son of the former Caesar, who left Cleopatra with child. His own sons by Cleopatra were to have the style of kings of kings; to Alexander he gave Armenia and Media, with Parthia, so soon as it should be overcome; to Ptolemy, Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. Alexander was brought out before the people in Median costume, the tiara and upright peak, and Ptolemy, in boots and mantle and Macedonian cap done about with the diadem; for this was the habit of the successors of Alexander, as the other was of the Medes and Armenians. And as soon as they had saluted their parents, the one was received by a guard of Macedonians, the other by one of Armenians. Cleopatra was then, as at other times when she appeared in public, dressed in the habit of the goddess Isis, and gave audience to the people under the name of the New Isis.

Caesar, relating these things in the senate, and often complaining to the people, excited men's minds against Antony, and Antony also sent messages of accusation against Caesar. The principal of his charges were these: first, that he had not made any division with him of Sicily, which was lately taken from Pompey; secondly, that he had retained the ships he had lent him for the war; thirdly, that, after deposing Lepidus, their colleague, he had taken for himself the army, governments, and revenues formerly appropriated to him; and lastly,

that he had parcelled out almost all Italy amongst his own soldiers, and left nothing for his. Caesar's answer was as follows: that he had put Lepidus out of government because of his own misconduct; that what he had got in war he would divide with Antony, so soon as Antony gave him a share of Armenia; that Antony's soldiers had no claims in Italy, being a possession of Media and Parthia, the acquisitions which their brave actions under their general had added to the Roman empire.

Antony was in Armenia when this answer came to him, and immediately sent Canidius with sixteen legions towards the sea; but he, in the company of Cleopatra, went to Ephesus, whither ships were coming in from all quarters to form the navy, consisting, vessels of burden included, of eight hundred vessels, of which Cleopatra furnished two hundred, together with twenty thousand talents, and provision for the whole army during the war. Antony, on the advice of Domitius and some others, bade Cleopatra return into Egypt, there to expect the event of the war; but she, dreading some new reconciliation by Octavia's means, prevailed with Canidius, by a large sum of money, to speak in her favour with Antony, pointing out to him that it was not just that one that bore so great a part in the charge of the war should be robbed of her share of glory in the carrying it on; nor would it be politic to disoblige the Egyptians, who were so considerable a part of his naval forces; nor did he see how she was inferior in prudence to any one of the kings that were serving with him; she had long governed a great kingdom by herself alone, and long lived with him, and gained experience in public affairs. These arguments (so the fate that destined all to Caesar would have it) prevailed; and when all their forces had met, they sailed together to Samos, and held high festivities. For, as it was ordered that all kings, princes, and governors, all nations and cities within the limits of Syria, the Maeotid Lake, Armenia, and Illyria, should bring or cause to be brought all munitions necessary for war, so was it also proclaimed that all stage-players should make their appearance at Samos; so that, while pretty nearly the whole world was filled with groans and lamentations, this one island for some days resounded with piping and harping, theatres filling, and choruses playing. Every city sent an ox as its contribution to the sacrifice, and the kings that accompanied Antony competed who should make the most magnificent feasts and the greatest presents; and men began to ask themselves, what would be done to celebrate the victory, when they went to such an expense of festivity at the opening of the war. . . .

The speed and extent of Antony's preparations alarmed Caesar, who feared he might be forced to fight the decisive battle that summer. For he wanted many necessaries, and the people grudged very much to pay the taxes; freemen being called upon to pay a fourth part of their incomes, and freed slaves an eighth of their property, so that there were loud outcries against him, and disturbances throughout all Italy. And this is looked upon as one of the greatest of Antony's oversights, that he did not then press the war. For he allowed time at once for Caesar to make his preparations and for the commotions to pass over. For while people were having their money called for, they were mutinous and violent; but, having paid it, they held their peace. Titius and Plancus, men of consular dignity and friends to Antony, having been ill-used by Cleopatra, whom they had most resisted in her design of being present in the war, came over to Caesar and gave information of the contents of Antony's will, with which they were acquainted. It was deposited in the hands of the vestal virgins, who refused to deliver it up, and sent Caesar word, if he pleased, he should come and seize it himself, which he did. And, reading it over to himself, he noted those places that were most for his purpose, and, having summoned the senate, read them publicly. Many were scandalised at the proceeding, thinking it out of reason and equity to call a man to account for what was not to be until after his death. Caesar specially pressed what Antony said in his will about his burial; for he had ordered that even if he died in the city of Rome, his body, after being carried in state through the forum, should be sent to Cleopatra at Alexandria. Calvisius, a dependant of Caesar's, urged other charges in connection with Cleopatra against Antony; that he had given her the library of Pergamus, containing two hundred thousand distinct volumes; that at a great banquet, in the presence of many guests, he had risen up and rubbed her feet, to fulfil some wager or promise; that he had suffered the Ephesians to salute her as their queen; that he had frequently at the public audience of kings and princes received amorous messages written in tablets made of onyx and crystal, and read them openly on the tribunal; that when Furnius, a man of great authority and eloquence among the Romans, was pleading, Cleopatra happening to pass by in her chair, Antony started up and left them in the middle of their cause, to follow at her side and attend her home. . . .

When the armaments gathered for the war, Antony had no less than five hundred ships of war, including numerous galleys of eight and ten banks of oars, as richly ornamented as if they were meant for a triumph. He had a hundred thousand foot and twelve thousand horse. He had vassal kings attending, Bocchus of Libya, Tarcondemus of the Upper Cilicia, Archelaus of Cappadocia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, and Sadalas of Thrace; all these were with him in person. Out of Pontus Polemon sent him considerable forces, as did also Malchus from Arabia, Herod the Jew,

and Amyntus, King of Lycaonia and Galatia; also the Median king sent some troops to join him. Caesar had two hundred and fifty galleys of war, eight thousand foot, and horse about equal to the enemy. Antony's empire extended from Euphrates and Armenia to the Ionian sea and the Illyrians; Caesar's, from Illyria to the westward ocean, and from the ocean all along the Tuscan and Sicilian sea. Of Africa, Caesar had all the coast opposite to Italy, Gaul, and Spain, as far as the Pillars of Hercules, and Antony the provinces from Cyrene to Ethiopia.

But so wholly was he now the mere appendage to the person of Cleopatra that, although he was much superior to the enemy in land-forces, yet, out of complaisance to his mistress, he wished the victory to be gained by sea, and that, too, when he could not but see how, for want of sailors, his captains, all through unhappy Greece, were pressing every description of men, common travellers and ass-drivers, harvest labourers and boys, and for all this the vessels had not their complements, but remained, most of them, ill-manned and badly rowed. Caesar, on the other side, had ships that were built not for size or show, but for service, not pompous galleys, but light, swift, and perfectly manned; and from his headquarters at Tarentum and Brundusium he sent messages to Antony not to protract the war, but come out with his forces; he would give him secure roadsteads and ports for his fleet, and, for his land army to disembark and pitch their camp, he would leave him as much ground in Italy, inland from the sea, as a horse could traverse in a single course. Antony, on the other side, with the like bold language, challenged him to a single combat, though he were much the older; and, that being refused, proposed to meet him in the Pharsalian fields, where Caesar and Pompey had fought before. But whilst Antony lay with his fleet near Actium, where now stands Nicopolis, Caesar seized his opportunity and crossed the Ionian sea, securing himself at a place in Epirus called the Ladle. And when those about Antony were much disturbed, their land forces being a good way off, "Indeed," said Cleopatra, in mockery, "we may well be frightened if Caesar has got hold of the Ladle!"

On the morrow, Antony, seeing the enemy sailing up, and fearing lest his ships might be taken for want of the soldiers to go on board of them, armed all the rowers, and made a show upon the decks of being in readiness to fight; the oars were mounted as if waiting to be put in motion, and the vessels themselves drawn up to face the enemy on either side of the channel of Actium, as though they were properly manned and ready for an engagement. And Caesar, deceived by this stratagem, retired. He was also thought to have shown considerable skill in cutting off the water from the enemy by some lines of trenches and forts, water not being plentiful anywhere else, nor very good. . . .

When it was resolved to stand to a fight at sea, they set fire to all the Egyptian ships except sixty; and of these the best and largest, from ten banks down to three, he manned with twenty thousand full-armed men and two thousand archers. Here it is related that a foot captain, one that had fought often under Antony, and had his body all mangled with wounds, exclaimed, "O my general, what have our wounds and swords done to displease you, that you should give your confidence to rotten timbers? . . .'

When they engaged, there was no charging or striking of one ship by another, because Antony's, by reason of their great bulk, were incapable of the rapidity required to make the stroke effectual, and on the other side, Caesar's durst not charge head to head on Antony's, which were all armed with solid masses and spikes of brass; nor did they like even to run in on their sides, which were so strongly built with great squared pieces of timber, fastened together with iron bolts, that their vessels' beaks would easily have been shattered upon them. So that the engagement resembled a land fight, or, to speak yet more properly, the attack and defence of a fortified place; for there were always three or four vessels of Caesar's about one of Antony's, pressing them with spears, javelins, poles, and several inventions of fire, which they flung among them, Antony's men using catapults also, to pour down missiles from wooden towers. Agrippa drawing out the squadron under his command to outflank the enemy, Publicola was obliged to observe his motions, and gradually to break off from the middle squadron, where some confusion and alarm ensued, while Arruntius engaged them. But the fortune of the day was still undecided, and the battle equal, when on a sudden Cleopatra's sixty ships were seen hoisting sail and making out to sea in full flight, right through the ships that were engaged. For they were placed behind the great ships, which, in breaking through, they put into disorder. The enemy was astonished to see them sailing off with a fair wind towards Peloponnesus. Here it was that Antony showed to all the world that he was no longer actuated by the thoughts and motives of a commander or a man, or indeed by his own judgment at all, and what was once said as a jest, that the soul of a lover lives in some one else's body, he proved to be a serious truth. For, as if he had been born part of her, and must move with her wheresoever she went, as soon as he saw her ship sailing away, he abandoned all that were fighting and spending their lives for him, and put himself aboard a galley of five banks of oars, taking with him only Alexander of Syria and Scellias, to follow her that had so well begun his ruin and would hereafter accomplish it.

She, perceiving him to follow, gave the signal to come aboard. So, as soon as he came up with them, he was taken into the ship. But

without seeing her or letting himself be seen by her, he went forward by himself, and sat alone, without a word, in the ship's prow, covering his face with his two hands. In the meanwhile, some of Caesar's light Liburnian ships, that were in pursuit, came in sight. But on Antony's commanding to face about, they all gave back except Eurycles the Laconian, who pressed on, shaking a lance from the deck, as if he meant to hurl it at him. Antony, standing at the prow, demanded of him, "Who is this that pursues Antony?" "I am," said he, "Eurycles, the son of Lachares, armed with Caesar's fortune to revenge my father's death." Lachares had been condemned for a robbery, and beheaded by Antony's orders. However, Eurycles did not attack Antony, but ran with his full force upon the other admiral-galley (for there were two of them), and with the blow turned her round, and took both her and another ship, in which was a quantity of rich plate and furniture. So soon as Eurycles was gone, Antony returned to his posture and sat silent, and thus he remained for three days, either in anger with Cleopatra, or wishing not to upbraid her, at the end of which they touched at Taenarus. Here the women of their company succeeded first in bringing them to speak, and afterwards to eat and sleep together. And, by this time, several of the ships of burden and some of his friends began to come in to him from the rout, bringing news of his fleet's being quite destroyed, but that the land forces, they thought, still stood firm. So that he sent messengers to Canidius to march the army with all speed through Macedonia into Asia. And, designing himself to go from Taenarus into Africa, he gave one of the merchant ships, laden with a large sum of money, and vessels of silver and gold of great value, belonging to the royal collections, to his friends, desiring them to share it amongst them, and provide for their own safety. . . .

But at Actium, his fleet, after a long resistance to Caesar, and suffering the most damage from a heavy sea that set in right ahead, scarcely at four in the afternoon, gave up the contest, with the loss of not more than five thousand men killed, but of three hundred ships taken, as Caesar himself has recorded. Only a few had known of Antony's flight; and those who were told of it could not at first give any belief to so incredible a thing as that a general who had nineteen entire legions and twelve thousand horse upon the seashore, could abandon all and fly away; and he, above all, who had so often experienced both good and evil fortune, and had in a thousand wars and battles been inured to changes. His soldiers, however, would not give up their desires and expectations, still fancying he would appear from some part or other, and showed such a generous fidelity to his service that, when they were thoroughly assured that he was fled in earnest, they kept themselves in a body seven days, making no account of the messages that Caesar sent to them. . . .

When Antony came into Africa, he sent on Cleopatra from Paraetonium into Egypt, and stayed himself in the most entire solitude that he could desire, roaming and wandering about with only two friends, one a Greek, Aristocrates, a rhetorician, and the other a Roman, Lucilius, of whom we have elsewhere spoken, how, at Philippi, to give Brutus time to escape, he suffered himself to be taken by the pursuers, pretending he was Brutus. Antony gave him his life, and on this account he remained true and faithful to him to the last.

But when also the officer who commanded for him in Africa, to whose care he had committed all his forces there, took them over to Caesar, he resolved to kill himself, but was hindered by his friends. And coming to Alexandria, he found Cleopatra busied in a most bold and wonderful enterprise. Over the small space of land which divides the Red Sea from the sea near Egypt, which may be considered also the boundary between Asia and Africa, and in the narrowest place is not much above three hundred furlongs across, over this neck of land Cleopatra had formed a project of dragging her fleet and setting it afloat in the Arabian Gulf, thus with her soldiers and her treasure to secure herself a home on the other side, where she might live in peace far away from war and slavery. But the first galleys which were carried over being burnt by the Arabians of Petra, and Antony not knowing but that the army before Actium still held together, she desisted from her enterprise, and gave orders for the fortifying of all the approaches to Egypt. But Antony, leaving the city and the conversation of his friends, built him a dwelling-place in the water, near Pharos, upon a little mole which he cast up in the sea, and there, secluding himself from the company of mankind, said he desired nothing but to live the life of Timon; as indeed, his case was the same, and the ingratitude and injuries which he suffered from those he had esteemed his friends made him hate and distrust all mankind. . . . Canidius now came, bringing word in person of the loss of the army before Actium. Then he received news that Herod of Judaea was gone over to Caesar with some legions and cohorts, and that the other kings and princes were in like manner deserting him, and that, out of Egypt, nothing stood by him. All this, however, seemed not to disturb him, but, as if he were glad to put away all hope, that with it he might be rid of all care, and leaving his habitation by the sea, which he called the Timoneum, he was received by Cleopatra in the palace, and set the whole city into a course of feasting, drinking, and presents. The son of Caesar and Cleopatra was registered among the youths, and Antyllus, his own son by Fulvia, received the gown without the purple

border given to those that are come of age; in honour of which the citizens of Alexandria did nothing but feast and revel for many days. They themselves broke up the Order of the Inimitable Livers, and constituted another in its place, not inferior in splendour, luxury, and sumptuosity, calling it that of the Diers Together. For all those that said they would die with Antony and Cleopatra gave in their names, for the present passing their time in all manner of pleasures and a regular succession of banquets. But Cleopatra was busied in making a collection of all varieties of poisonous drugs, and, in order to see which of them were the least painful in the operation, she had them tried upon prisoners condemned to die. But, finding that the quick poisons always worked with sharp pains, and that the less painful were slow, she next tried venomous animals, and watching with her own eyes whilst they were applied, one creature to the body of another. This was her daily practice, and she pretty well satisfied herself that nothing was comparable to the bite of the asp, which, without convulsion or groaning, brought on a heavy drowsiness and lethargy, with a gentle sweat on the face, the senses being stupefied by degrees; the patient, in appearance, being sensible of no pain, but rather troubled to be disturbed or awakened like those that are in a profound natural sleep. . . .

Caesar would not listen to any proposals for Antony, but he made answer to Cleopatra, that there was no reasonable favour which she might not expect, if she put Antony to death, or expelled him from Egypt. He sent back with the ambassadors his own freedman, Thyrsus, a man of understanding, and not at all ill-qualified for conveying the messages of a youthful general to a woman so proud of her charms and possessed with the opinion of the power of her beauty. But by the long audiences he received from her, and the special honours which she paid him, Antony's jealousy began to be awakened; he had him seized, whipped, and sent back; writing Caesar word that the man's busy, impertinent ways had provoked him; in his circumstances he could not be expected to be very patient: "But if it offend you," he added, "you have got my freedman, Hipparchus, with you; hang him up and scourge him to make us even." But Cleopatra, after this, to clear herself, and to allay his jealousies, paid him all the attentions imaginable. When her own birthday came, she kept it as was suitable to their fallen fortunes; but his was observed with the utmost prodigality of splendour and magnificence, so that many of the guests sat down in want, and went home wealthy men. Meantime, continual letters came to Caesar from Agrippa, telling him his presence was extremely required at Rome. . . .

After this, Antony sent a new challenge to Caesar to fight him hand-to-hand; who made him answer that he might find several

other ways to end his life; and he, considering with himself that he could not die more honourably than in battle, resolved to make an effort both by land and sea. At supper, it is said, he bade his servants help him freely, and pour him out wine plentifully, since to-morrow, perhaps, they should not do the same, but be servants to a new master, whilst he should lie on the ground, a dead corpse, and nothing. His friends that were about him wept to hear him talk so; which he perceiving, told them he would not lead them to a battle in which he expected rather an honourable death than either safety or victory. That night, it is related, about the middle of it, when the whole city was in a deep silence and general sadness, expecting the event of the next day, on a sudden was heard the sound of all sorts of instruments, and voices singing in tune, and the cry of a crowd of people shouting and dancing, like a troop of bacchanals on its way. This tumultuous procession seemed to take its course right through the middle of the city to the gate nearest the enemy; here it became the loudest, and suddenly passed out. People who reflected considered this to signify that Bacchus, the god whom Antony had always made it his study to copy and imitate, had now forsaken him.

As soon as it was light, he marched his infantry out of the city, and posted them upon a rising ground, from whence he saw his fleet make up to the enemy. There he stood in expectation of the event; but as soon as the fleets came near to one another, his men saluted Caesar's with their oars; and on their responding, the whole body of the ships, forming into a single fleet, rowed up direct to the city. Antony had no sooner seen this, but the horse deserted him, and went over to Caesar; and his foot being defeated, he retired into the city, crying out that Cleopatra had betrayed him to the enemies he had made for her sake. She, being afraid lest in his fury and despair he might do her a mischief, fled to her monument, and letting down the falling doors, which were strong with bars and bolts, she sent messengers who should tell Antony she was dead. He, believing it, cried out, "Now, Antony, why delay longer? Fate has snatched away the only pretext for which you could say you desired yet to live." Going into his chamber, and there loosening and opening his coat of armour, "I am not," said he, "troubled, Cleopatra, to be at present bereaved of you, for I shall soon be with you; but it distresses me that so great a general should be found of a tardier courage than a woman." He had a faithful servant, whose name was Eros; he had engaged him formerly to kill him when he should think it necessary, and now he put him to his promise. Eros drew his sword, as designing to kill him, but, suddenly turning round, he slew himself. And as he fell dead at his feet, "It is well done, Eros," said Antony; "you show your master how to do what you had not the heart to do yourself; and

so he ran himself into the belly, and laid himself upon the couch. The wound, however, was not immediately mortal; and the flow of blood ceasing when he lay down, presently he came to himself, and entreated those that were about him to put him out of his pain; but they all fled out of the chamber, and left him crying out and struggling, until Diomede, Cleopatra's secretary, came to him, having orders from her to bring him into the monument.

When he understood she was alive, he eagerly gave order to the servants to take him up, and in their arms was carried to the door of the building. Cleopatra would not open the door, but, looking from a sort of window, she let down ropes and cords, to which Antony was fastened; and she and her two women, the only persons she had allowed to enter the monument, drew him up. Those that were present say that nothing was ever more sad than this spectacle, to see Antony, covered all over with blood and just expiring, thus drawn up, still holding up his hands to her, and lifting up his body with the little force he had left. As, indeed, it was no easy task for the women; and Cleopatra, with all her force, clinging to the rope, and straining with her head to the ground, with difficulty pulled him up, while those below encouraged her with their cries, and joined in all her efforts and anxiety. When she had got him up, she laid him on the bed, tearing all her clothes, which she spread upon him; and, beating her breast with her hands, lacerating herself, and disfiguring her own face with the blood from his wounds, she called him her lord, her husband, her emperor, and seemed to have pretty nearly forgotten all her own evils, she was so intent upon his misfortunes. Antony, stopping her lamentations as well as he could, called for wine to drink, either that he was thirsty, or that he imagined that it might put him the sooner out of pain. When he had drunk, he advised her to bring her own affairs, so far as might be honourably done, to a safe conclusion, and that, among all the friends of Caesar, she should rely on Proculeius; that she should not pity him in this last turn of fate, but rather rejoice for him in remembrance of his past happiness, who had been of all men the most illustrious and powerful, and in the end had fallen not ignobly, a Roman by a Roman overcome.

Just as he breathed his last, Proculeius arrived from Caesar; for when Antony gave himself his wound, and was carried into Cleopatra, one of his guards, Dercetaeus, took up Antony's sword and hid it; and, when he saw his opportunity, stole away to Caesar, and brought him the first news of Antony's death, and withal showed him the bloody sword. Caesar, upon this, retired into the inner part of his tent, and giving some tears to the death of one that had been nearly allied to him in marriage, his colleague in empire, and companion in so many wars and dangers, he came out to his friends, and, bringing

with him many letters, he read to them with how much reason and moderation he had always addressed himself to Antony, and in return what overbearing and arrogant answers he received. Then he sent Proculeius to use his utmost endeavours to get Cleopatra alive into his power; for he was afraid of losing a great treasure, and, besides, she would be no small addition to the glory of his triumph. She, however, was careful not to put herself in Proculeius's power; but from within her monument, he standing on the outside of a door, on the level of the ground, which was strongly barred, but so that they might well enough hear one another's voice, she held a conference with him; she demanding that her kingdom might be given to her children, and he binding her to be of good courage, and trust Caesar in everything. . . .

In the meanwhile, Caesar made his entry into Alexandria, with Areius the philosopher at his side, holding him by the hand and talking with him; desiring that all his fellow-citizens should see what honour was paid to him, and should look up to him accordingly from the very first moment. Then, entering the exercise ground, he mounted a platform erected for the purpose, and from thence commanded the citizens (who, in great fear and consternation, fell prostrate at his feet) to stand up, and told them that he freely acquitted the people of all blame, first, for the sake of Alexander, who built their city, then for the city's sake itself, which was so large and beautiful; and, thirdly, to gratify his friend Areius. . . .

Of Antony's children, Antyllus, his son by Fulvia, being betrayed by his tutor, Theodorus, was put to death; and while the soldiers were cutting off his head, his tutor contrived to steal a precious jewel which he wore about his neck, and put it in his pocket, and afterwards denied the fact, but was convicted and crucified. Cleopatra's children, with their attendants, had a guard set on them, and were treated very honourably. Caesarion, who was reputed to be the son of Caesar the Dictator, was sent by his mother, with a great sum of money, through Ethiopia, to pass into India; but his tutor, a man named Rhodon, about as honest as Theodorus, persuaded him to turn back, for that Caesar designed to make him king. Caesar consulting what was best to be done with him, Areius we are told, said,

"Too many *Caesars* are not well."

So, afterwards, when Cleopatra was dead he was killed.

Many kings and great commanders made petition to Caesar for the body of Antony, to give him his funeral rites; but he would not take away his corpse from Cleopatra by whose hands he was buried with royal splendour and magnificence, it being granted to her to employ what she pleased on his funeral. In this extremity of grief and sorrow,

and having inflamed and ulcerated her breasts with beating them, she fell into a high fever, and was very glad of the occasion, hoping, under this pretext, to abstain from food, and so to die in quiet without interference. She had her own physician, Olympus, to whom she told the truth, and asked his advice and help to put an end to herself, as Olympus himself has told us, in a narrative which he wrote of these events. But Caesar, suspecting her purpose, took to menacing language about her children, and excited her fears for them, before which engines her purpose shook and gave way, so that she suffered those about her to give her what meat or medicine they pleased.

Some few days after, Caesar himself came to make her a visit and comfort her. She lay then upon her pallet-bed in undress, and, on his entering, sprang up from off her bed, having nothing on but the one garment next her body, and flung herself at his feet, her hair and face looking wild and disfigured, her voice quivering, and her eyes sunk in her head. The marks of the blows she had given herself were visible about her bosom, and altogether her whole person seemed no less afflicted than her soul. But, for all this, her old charm, and the boldness of her youthful beauty, had not wholly left her, and, in spite of her present condition, still sparkled from within, and let itself appear in all the movements of her countenance. Caesar, desiring her to repose herself, sat down by her; and, on this opportunity, she said something to justify her actions, attributing what she had done to the necessity she was under, and to her fear of Antony; and when Caesar, on each point, made his objections, and she found herself confuted, she broke off at once into language of entreaty and deprecation, as if she desired nothing more than to prolong her life. And at last, having by her a list of her treasure, she gave it into his hands; and when Seleucus, one of her stewards, who was by, pointed out that various articles were omitted, and charged her with secreting them, she flew up and caught him by the hair, and struck him several blows on the face. Caesar smiling and withholding her, "Is it not very hard, Caesar," said she, "when you do me the honour to visit me in this condition I am in, that I should be accused by one of my own servants of laying by some women's toys, not meant to adorn, be sure, my unhappy self, but that I might have some little present by me to make your Octavia and your Livia, that by their intercession I might hope to find you in some measure disposed to mercy?" Caesar was pleased to hear her talk thus, being now assured that she was desirous to live. And, therefore, letting her know that the things she had laid by she might dispose of as she pleased, and his usage of her should be honourable above her expectation, he went away, well satisfied that he had overreached her, but, in fact, was himself deceived. . . .

Having made these lamentations, crowning the tomb with garlands

and kissing it, she gave orders to prepare her a bath, and, coming out of the bath, she lay down and made a sumptuous meal. And a country fellow brought her a little basket, which the guards intercepting and asking what it was, the fellow put the leaves which lay uppermost aside, and showed them it was full of figs; and on their admiring the largeness and beauty of the figs, he laughed, and invited them to take some, which they refused, and, suspecting nothing, bade him carry them in. After her repast, Cleopatra sent to Caesar a letter which she had written and sealed; and, putting everybody out of the monument but her two women, she shut the doors. Caesar, opening her letter, and finding pathetic prayers and entreaties that she might be buried in the same tomb with Antony, soon guessed what was doing. At first he was going himself in all haste, but, changing his mind, he sent others to see. The thing had been quickly done. The messengers came at full speed, and found the guards apprehensive of nothing; but on opening the doors they saw her stone-dead, lying upon a bed of gold, set out in all her royal ornaments. Iras, one of her women, lay dying at her feet, and Charmion, just ready to fall, scarce able to hold up her head, was adjusting her mistress's diadem. And when one that came in said angrily, "Was this well done of your lady, Charmion?" "Extremely well," she answered, "and as became the descendant of so many kings;" and as she said this, she fell down dead by the bedside.

Some relate that an asp was brought in amongst those figs and covered with the leaves, and that Cleopatra had arranged that it might settle on her before she knew, but, when she took away some of the figs and saw it, she said, "So here it is," and held out her bare arm to be bitten. Others say that it was kept in a vase, and that she vexed and pricked it with a golden spindle till it seized her arm. But what really took place is known to no one, since it was also said that she carried poison in a hollow bodkin, about which she wound her hair; yet there was not so much as a spot found, or any symptom of poison upon her body, nor was the asp seen within the monument; only something like the trail of it was said to have been noticed on the sand by the sea, on the part towards which the building faced and where the windows were. Some relate that two faint puncture-marks were found on Cleopatra's arm, and to this account Caesar seems to have given credit; for in his triumph there was carried a figure of Cleopatra, with an asp clinging to her. Such are the various accounts. But Caesar, though much disappointed by her death, yet could not but admire the greatness of her spirit, and gave order that her body should be buried by Antony with royal splendour and magnificence. Her women, also, received honourable burial by his directions. Cleopatra had lived nine-and-thirty years, during twenty-two of which she had reigned as queen, and for fourteen had been Antony's partner in

his empire. Antony, according to some authorities, was fifty-three, according to others, fifty-six years old. His statues were all thrown down, but those of Cleopatra were left untouched; for Archibius, one of her friends, gave Caesar two thousand talents to save them from the fate of Antony's.

The Roman Reaction

HANS VOLKMANN

Two different modern assessments of the position of Cleopatra in world history are now examined. The first is taken from her most definitive modern biography, *Cleopatra, A Study in Politics and Propaganda,* by Hans Volkmann. Volkmann views the conflict between Octavian on the one side and Antony and Cleopatra on the other in the context of Roman history, where he sees this conflict as pivotal. He stresses the reaction of the great contemporary Roman literary figures, the masters of Augustan propaganda.

A resolution of the Senate declared the day on which Octavian had captured Alexandria a public holiday, 'as on this day the Imperator Caesar Augustus freed the State from the direst peril'. The month, on the first day of which Octavian had thus set the seal on his victory, had till now been known as Sextilis: from the beginning of the Principate it bore the new name of Augustus. When it had once been desired to honour Caesar in this way, it was to the month of his birth (till then Quinctilis) that the name Julius was given. In the case of the distinction conferred on Augustus, the choice did not fall on the month of his birth (September) but on the month of his greatest success. And so even now the month of August serves to remind us not only of the Emperor himself but also of his victory over Cleopatra.

Horace, too, who on the evening after the Battle of Actium had still been alarmed about the eventual outcome, found his apprehensions resolved by the events of August 30. The jubilant song of triumph which the news of victory drew from him turns about the one great theme of Cleopatra. This poem, which redounds no less to the poet's honour than to that of the defeated queen, presents us with two striking pictures. Cleopatra is in the first instance the 'fatale monstrum,' the demon of mischief. She is the queen who wanted to lay the Capitol in ruins and to destroy the Roman Empire. She is represented as maniacal and distracted, measureless in her ambitions, intoxicated with good fortune, like a drunken maenad, out of her senses. Her company are a sickly crew of men shamefully unmanned. This sketch, in which Horace devotes not one syllable to Antony, or to the participation of Romans on Cleopatra's side, takes over the leading motifs with which Octavian's propaganda prepared for the conflict. It is all the more astounding that Horace describes the fall of Rome's grim enemy with manifest respect. Heavy blows delivered by Octavian put a sudden end to her ecstasy and throw her into an agony of fear: she flees, but in her ruin she rises to true greatness. She disdains to sail away with her fleet and abandon her homeland. She sees her royal palace levelled with the ground; she refuses to suffer the dishonour of the triumph, and chooses for herself the exceptionally horrible end of death by snake-bite. Horace has no word to say about the hostile rumours of her treachery, her secret negotiations, or of the seductive arts with which it was supposed she tried to win over Octavian at the eleventh hour. For Horace she is the woman of mighty spirit ('non humilis mulier') to whom he cannot refuse his respect.

How unique was this noble attitude of Horace we can infer from Propertius' libellous effusion, an elegy written eight years later. In this he flatly insults Cleopatra as 'incesti meretrix regina Canopi', the royal whore, not of Egypt, but of Canopus, a suburb of Alexandria notorious for its immorality. The reproach of licentiousness conveyed by these words is not merely lacking in taste, it offends truth. No historian of antiquity brings definite charges of sexual excesses against Cleopatra, such as history reports of many other royal women. She gave herself to Caesar and Antony to gain political ends. Propertius himself brands her alliance with Antony with the words: 'Did she not, as the price of her shameful marriage, demand that the walls of Rome should be hers, and the Fathers made bondsmen of her kingdom?' In impressive pictures he demonstrates the significance of her defeat. Cleopatra would have made the river-god Tiber a slave to the Nile, would have replaced the Roman Jupiter with the yelping dog-headed Anubis; she, a woman, wanted to issue laws to the Romans, who had once smashed the axes of their own kings! The collapse of morality, the overthrow of the country's gods, shameful serfdom, in short a national and religious calamity—that was what Cleopatra had stood for. The battle-cry devised by Octavian's propaganda for the war echoes once again after the victory in the mouth of the poet, whom it enables to reveal the full measure of Augustus' achievements and to extol them appropriately.

'With so mighty a citizen to protect you, Rome, you had no need to fear me and my tongue drowned in perpetual wine', Cleopatra is

forced to admit by Propertius. His flattery of the victory goes still further. 'These walls the gods built, these they also preserve. If Caesar is safe, Rome need hardly fear even Jupiter.' Apollo, beneath whose gaze the Battle of Actium was fought, will himself celebrate in epic song this victory surpassing all the previous achievements of Roman generals.

This poem of Propertius', which carries the attack on Cleopatra to absurd lengths, illustrates the increasing importance of the place won by her in Augustan poetry. It exalts the figure of Octavian, justifies his deeds and is closely linked to the foundation of the Principate. As time passed, Roman apprehension of the great event deepened, until it was finally lifted to the mythological plane. The central point of the legend is occupied by the Battle of Actium. The national gods of Rome themselves seize weapons. Apollo, Octavian's patron deity, aids him to achieve the victory; his presence and help transform Octavian into the agent of the divine will, the struggle with Cleopatra into a holy war.

An example of this attitude is furnished by Vergil. In the eighth book of his national Roman epic, the *Aeneid,* composed in the same period as Propertius' poem, he draws a striking contrast between West and East. At the head of the Italians stands Augustus, by his side the Senate, the people and the gods of his country. He is transfigured by supernatural phenomena. Flames stream from his temples, the star of his deified father Caesar blazes in the heaven behind his head and promises its aid. Near him marches Agrippa, adorned with the gleaming crown presented to him after his naval victory over Pompeius. From these two loyal Romans Vergil's gaze turns to Antony and his Egyptian wife who follows him. The single word 'nefas' ('O abomination!'), echoes Vergil's horror at the dishonouring alliance. Antony is no longer a Roman: he commands only the barbaric hordes of the East in all their pomp and variety. In the battle Vergil assigns him no part; in contradiction to the accounts of the historians, he places Cleopatra, the real enemy, in the midst of the mêlée: with the sistrum, the rattle of Isis, she issues orders to her multitudes. All kinds of monstrous Egyptian gods, such as the dog-headed Anubis, wrestle with the Roman deities Neptune, Venus and Minerva. Mars and his sister Bellona, the deities of war, and Discordia, the goddess of dissension, exult in the fury of the strife. Then Apollo of Actium intervenes with his bow drawn. The apparition is at an end: all the foreign peoples, Egyptians, Indians, Arabs and Sabaians flee in wild panic. Cleopatra herself pales with the presentiment of death and sets her sails for flight.

Vergil's picture of the Battle of Actium stamped itself deeply into the consciousness of his contemporaries. After him poets make repeated mention, whether briefly or fully, of the myth of Apollo's help. Propertius himself in a later poem once again practised his poetical

art on the exalted theme; but to our taste his treatment of it is artistically no better than before. Instead of painting a splendid picture, full of movement, of the battle and the god's intervention, as Vergil did, he makes Apollo appear to Octavian, 'the saviour of the world', before the battle, and reassure him in a long speech. 'It is the cause for which he fights that increases or breaks down the soldier's strength: if that is not just, shame strikes the weapon from his hand.' Consciousness of the justice of his cause was precisely what Octavian had emphasized in his declaration of war; and in the poet's song Apollo himself asserts it. As for the fight, it is self-evident that its outcome is decided as soon as the god discharges his arrows. The poet only needs to state the result in the brief epigrammatic words:

'Phoebus keeps faith: Rome wins, the woman pays the price!'

Cleopatra flees to the Nile. In one thing only does she succeed: she may choose the day on which she is to die. The gods thought it unbefitting the dignity of the triumph that a single woman should tread in the footsteps of the great Jugurtha. This outcome, then, though it cheated Octavian's hopes, derived from a well-weighted decision of the gods, and was therefore easier for the victor to bear.

Vergil and Propertius, with their legend of Actium, have glorified the battle as the great turning-point of the fortunes of Rome. The conviction that this is so prevails throughout the Principate. Lucan, a contemporary of Nero, utters the cry of surprise:

'And in Leucadian waters, the issue doubtful stood
Whether the world should be ruled by a woman of alien blood!'

As an epigram preserved on a papyrus foretells, the Battle of Actium will never cease to be talked about. As late as the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Nonnus of Panopolis in Egypt celebrates the victory at Actium over Cleopatra, a foe 'practised in sea-fights', through which the Roman Empire consummated its great history and united the world under its rule of peace. This is beyond doubt a sound judgement. Even Oswald Spengler—who in his *Decline of the West* obstinately refuses to accept the verdict of history and maintains that 'Antony should have won at Actium'—concedes, despite his protest, the significance of the result. And E. Stauffer includes 31 B.C. in his six 'great dates of ancient history', as the year in which Rome won a total victory over the Egyptian world-monarchy and free Europe assumed the leading place in imperial history and world-politics.

The memory of this great event, which has moulded the course of European history, is for ever linked with Cleopatra's name. She not

only took part in what happened, but significantly influenced it. We, who look back along the lines of history and survey its entire course, can see how the age summoned Cleopatra to its service. In her the tendencies of a dying epoch could be discerned so clearly and intelligibly that they evoked and even aided the contrary forces under Octavian, and brought a new epoch into being. Cleopatra was an instrument used and then broken by the sovereign will of history. She failed tragically, and has long had to accept a picture of herself misdrawn by the propaganda of her adversary and displayed in a false light. Dante meets her in the second circle of Hell among the carnal sinners and mentions her, 'the licentious Cleopatra', along with Semiramis, Dido and Helen. Her sensuality has been heavily stressed in countless stage-pieces—plays, operas and ballets.

In fact she never sought sexual pleasure for its own sake. She was a royal woman, the last scion of a princely house, in whose exacting traditions she had consciously lived from youth up. Fate had given into her hands the vast forces that resided in the unique character of the land she ruled, in its wealth and its type of administration. It had also favoured her with the moment of opportunity—with the *kairos,* as the Greeks called the fertile hour that waits upon the great man who knows how to use it. Cleopatra perceived her opportunity with rare vigilance and readiness. Possessed by the will to power, she brought into play, among other weapons, those that are given to women alone. One thing only she was not aware of—the law that sets bounds to the actions of men, even of great men. The ancient Greek virtues of *sophrosynē* (wise prudence) and *mesotēs* (moderation)—not often to be found in politics—were alien to the Hellenistic princess who felt herself to be an Egyptian deity. She thought that if she were to prove a worthy heir to the mighty past, she must be able to shape history; and she resolutely took her place beside men of world-history, Caesar and Antony, and imparted to them impulses, whose demonic force we can in the last resort only guess at.

But the age required more of her than this. It was her fate that in Octavian she opposed a man who was not merely an heir and a successor, but also the creator of a new epoch. In history it does not matter, in the last analysis, whether an Empire is founded but how it is founded. Octavian, not Cleopatra, fulfilled the requirements of history in this respect. Knowing how to keep within the limits appointed for him, he appealed to the national consciousness of Rome and secured the general approval ('consensus universorum') for his political work. Thus he was enabled to throw the physical and moral resources of the West against the East's display of might, and to devise the individual form of constitution by which the eastern type of empire was for centuries superseded.

The contributions of human beings to history, and our final verdict on them, are certainly not dependent on the success of their efforts. Rather, their value is determined by the way in which they grasp and endure their fortune. Cleopatra's opponents were already passing judgment on her according to this standard. After her death Octavian himself acknowledged her noble bearing with admiration; and the poet Horace found the appropriate words for her greatness: 'non humilis mulier', 'a woman of mighty spirit'. As such, among the women who intervene in the masculine strife for political power, she will always occupy a special position, and ever and anon excite the imagination of mankind.

Antony and Cleopatra in World History

MICHAEL GRANT

In his biography of Cleopatra, the wide-ranging modern classical historian Michael Grant sees the positions respectively of Antony and Cleopatra on the one side and Octavian on the other in the context not only of Roman but of world history, with Octavian's victory producing the possibility of the Roman Empire that was to endure as a political entity for three more centuries and as an imperial ideal for a thousand years more.

Although Cleopatra, not Antony, had been Octavian's declared foe, all his statues at Alexandria were torn down, but hers were allowed to stand, because one of her friends, Archibius, gave the victor two thousand talents to save them from destruction. For a generation to come she was still spoken of as *the* queen, like Arsinoe II before her, and a 'Cleopatreion' mentioned in AD 4–5 at Rosetta (Rashid), like other similar buildings in different parts of the country, appears to have been a shrine erected in her honour. Sixty years after her death an Alexandrian grammarian named Apion, hated by Josephus, championed her memory. Her statue in the Temple of Venus Genetrix at Rome, set up by Julius Caesar, was still standing there in the third century AD, and the cult of Cleopatra Aphrodite remained alive more

than one hundred years later still. It was said that another powerful empress Zenobia (Bat Zabbi), ruling in the Syrian desert city of Palmyra (AD 269–73), claimed descent from Cleopatra and made a collection of her drinking cups, and although the story may be fictitious it illustrates the continuing power of the Egyptian queen's name. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus (*c.* AD 330–95) suggests that the Egyptians were still flattering her memory to a scandalous extent, and a Coptic bishop of the seventh century AD, John of Nikiu, declared that it was impossible to think of any monarch or woman who had ever surpassed her. Many of Alexandria's greatest monuments and architectural masterpieces, including the palace and Pharos lighthouse, were believed to have been her work. Alone of Alexander the Great's successors she became a legend, like Alexander himself.

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Most historians, ancient and modern alike, see a total inevitability in the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Octavian's hands. But their defeat was only inevitable because Agrippa was a better admiral than Antony or any of his lieutenants. To contrast the faults of their régime with the merits of that of Octavian, the later Augustus, and to conclude that the Augustan system was bound to win is an unjustifiable procedure. There were many faults and merits on both sides, and if Antony and Cleopatra had been victorious in the Actium campaigns, it would not have been their failings but Octavian's which posterity would have emphasized. The particular brand of Roman empire that he established turned out, in its own way, to be one of the great, durable success stories of history. But it has meant that all appreciation—apart from the sympathies attaching to personal melodrama—has been withheld from the losers, and that their aspirations have been lost sight of.

During the last hundred years and more there has been lively discussion about the qualities, first of the successful Julius Caesar, and then of the successful Augustus, and both their personalities have come under a sharper and colder process of inspection than before. But the cases of Caesar and Augustus are different. The trouble about withholding all sympathy from Caesar is that his 'Republican' opponents were for the most part so very unpleasant. There is a movement today, from praiseworthy motives, to get away from the cult of success, and this has even led to a certain veneration for failure, as exhibited, for example, in the downfall and death of Che Guevara. But to make similar anti-heroes out of Julius Caesar's adversaries is absurd. Caesar possessed extremely distasteful qualities, but to be ruled by him might well have appeared the lesser evil.

A comparison between Augustus and *his* opponents, Antony and Cleopatra, ought to yield a different result. As the historian Tacitus

explains in his sour preface to the *Annals,* Augustus was a cold-blooded and ruthless man. Without that ruthlessness he could never have carried through the unparalleled achievements and reorganizations of his forty-five-year reign that followed Actium. But his enemies were very different from the enemies of Julius Caesar. Between the nobility who hated Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra who fought against his heir, there is little in common. The record of the anti-Caesarian nobility is negative and brutal, especially in their later years. But Antony and Cleopatra had plans to provide a much more positive and constructive policy. Its existence has not, in general, been admitted, though W. W. Tarn in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1934) was not unsympathetic, while Ronald Syme, in his *Roman Revolution* (1939) pointed to the wisdom of many of Antony's administrative arrangements.

But why is it that so few other historians have appreciated that Antony and Cleopatra had a serious, valid point of view? If devotees of the cult of failure can even muster sympathy for Caesar's opponents, one might have expected them to find more promising scope here. There are two main reasons why this has not been so. In the first place, the story of the lovers offers such unexampled opportunities for romantic sentiment that attention has constantly been distracted from matters of policy. Secondly, their conflict with Octavian is seen as part of the historic feud between east and west—and we are westerners. The countries of western Europe, and the United States of America, are the direct heirs of the occidental victor of Actium, and of the tradition which he deliberately implanted. Indeed, this very assertion, that Actium was part of the clash between east and west, is itself a direct echo of his propaganda—propaganda which, because of Octavian's naval victory, prevailed.

However, like so much of the best propaganda, it contains an element of truth. Many lies were told on both sides, but Actium *was* a clash between eastern and western ideologies. There is less truth, on the other hand, in the further statement, endlessly repeated, that Antony and Cleopatra stood for the queer, outlandish tribes and fetishes of the remote orient. What they really stood for was Hellenism—or rather, a partnership between Hellenism and *Romanità.* How they envisaged the shape of this partnership was suggested, in broad outline, by the territorial gifts of 37 BC, and the Donations of Alexandria in 34. Although a Roman was to remain in supreme charge, Antony and Cleopatra saw the Romans who occupied the western part of the empire, and the Greeks and Hellenized orientals who lived in the eastern provinces and client kingdoms, as more or less equal partners. This was how they interpreted the Concord between Peoples (Homonoia) which was one of the most vigorous ideals of the age, and the Sibylline Oracles and

other anonymous contemporary writings showed the enthusiasm evoked by such concepts among eastern peoples.

Augustus felt otherwise. It is true that the elaborate, rather superficial apparatus of phil-Hellenism which accompanied his religious and cultural policy provided a certain mild corrective to the anti-Hellenic sentiments of his compatriots. Nevertheless, he was ultimately the heir of Roman imperialism: the Italians were unmistakably intended to be top dogs. Certainly, there was to be a great reconciliation between east and west, and it is expressed with extraordinary brilliance and subtlety by Virgil. But the prophetic words the poet ascribes to Aeneas' father Anchises reflect Augustus' belief that it might be a reconciliation presided over by Rome, which would still reign supreme over the Greeks:

> There are others, assuredly I believe,
> Shall work in bronze more sensitively, moulding
> Breathing images, or carving from the marble
> More lifelike features: some shall plead more eloquently,
> Or gauging with instruments the sky's motion
> Forecast the rising of the constellations:
> But yours, my Roman, is the gift of government,
> That is your bent—to impose upon the nations
> The code of peace; to be clement to the conquered,
> But utterly to crush the intransigent.

That is unforgettably said, but in terms of politics it is very one-sided. The Greeks and Hellenized easterners, according to Virgil, were to be excluded from the heights of government—which is precisely what continued to happen. But it was the antithesis of the intentions of Antony and Cleopatra. Under their guidance, great areas of the east were to be under the administration and overlordship of Greek monarchies, led by a nexus of Ptolemaic kingdoms. The official coinages link Antony and Cleopatra together, not only as gods united in a divine union, but as human leaders of this partnership between Romans and Greeks.

The partnership never materialized, because Agrippa proved too good an admiral. But that does not mean it was impossible. W. W. Tarn's somewhat reluctant conclusion that the Hellenistic world had already fallen victim to itself before it fell victim to Rome is the product of hindsight. It is true that the age of wholly independent Hellenistic monarchies was at an end, because their continued existence was incompatible with Rome. But the idea of great Hellenistic kingdoms in intimate and honourable association with the Romans was a novel one and the relatively high status it conceded the Greeks was by no

means an unrealistic dream. That is conclusively proved by the condition of the Roman world three or four centuries later, in which the Greeks had risen to the political surface once again—with the result that the subsequent Byzantine empire was not Roman but Greek. If the events of 31 BC had gone the other way it is difficult to believe that this same sort of development would not have occurred, or at least begun to occur, three hundred years sooner.

In the foregoing discussion Antony and Cleopatra have been bracketed together, as a single political entity. This identification of their attitudes must not be carried too far, since there were certain political differences between them—for example, their disagreement about King Herod of Judaea. But the grand design belonged to them both, and both of them believed in it. Antony's methods of government, both inside and outside the Ptolemaic sphere, show a wide phil-hellenic sympathy for the concept of Greek ruling Greek. Nevertheless, it is only right to ascribe the main initiative to Cleopatra. For one thing she was Greek herself. And secondly, Antony, for all his very considerable gifts, was her inferior in drive, energy and ambition. Josephus sums up her character in a statement which seems to mean: 'if she lacked one single thing that she desired, she imagined that she lacked everything'. She was a woman of single-minded determination. Moreover, as Canidius and Crassus pointed out to Antony before Actium, she was a ruler of outstanding ability and experience.

The question of what might have happened if Actium had gone the other way raises one special, inflammable problem, which must have been constantly in Cleopatra's mind, even if Antony tried not to think of it too often. The problem is this. Once the campaign was won, what would have been her political position in the new order?

During the immediately preceding years, Antony's official Latin coinage, with unprecedented explicitness and emphasis, had declared her to be his honoured partner. If they had been victorious in 31 BC, she would have been his partner in the rulership of the entire Roman empire. The propaganda of the other side, which declared that she intended to dispense justice from the sacred Capitol itself, was surely right in supposing that she would have gone to Rome. For that is where Antony would have gone, and she would never have stayed behind permanently in Alexandria. Modern historians usually dismiss the idea of her going to Rome as an utter impossibility on the grounds that the Roman ruling class would never have tolerated such a thing. Yet her Roman supporters, though they had decreased in number, still remained fairly numerous—a fact of which little was heard, naturally enough, once she had been defeated and was dead. Moreover, after Antony had victoriously entered Rome, the opposi-

tion would have been cowed, just as the surviving Antonians were cowed after the issue went the other way. To discuss how long she might have lasted at Rome would be taking historical might-have-beens too far.

Another obscure but all-important question is the nature of the constitutional relationship which would then, following the victory, have existed between Cleopatra and Antony. Probably they would then, at last, have married, no longer merely in the theological sense of a union between gods, but as man and wife. Once Antony had become autocrat over the whole Roman world, he could have twisted Roman law to his needs—as the victorious Octavian, too, in his own way, was ready enough to give it a twist or two. In Italy, the Antonian régime would have encountered greater difficulties than the Augustan régime ever did. But Antony, on the other hand, would have received far greater and keener support from the rich and numerous populations of the east—which would thus have become a more potent political force than his opponent ever allowed them to be.

Actium set the scene for three centuries of western supremacy. If the losers had won, there would instead have been some sort of partnership between the two great populations of the empire, the Romans represented by Antony (who would have remained the supreme overlord), and the Greeks led by Cleopatra. She would never have tried to rule without Roman support, for she was faithful to her father's realistic recognition that Egypt could do no such thing. She preferred a theme of partnership. If we can forget the sentiments of occidentalism, whether conscious or unconscious, that her enemy Octavian has implanted in our hearts, Cleopatra's plan was not necessarily a less noble or even a less practicable plan than his. But she was born before her time, and her plan had to wait, as it turned out, for three hundred years.

Review and Study Questions

1. Why did Caesar and Antony go to Egypt in the first place?
2. Who played the dominant role in the alliance of Caesar and Cleopatra?
3. Who played the dominant role in the alliance of Antony and Cleopatra?
4. How would you assess the victory of Octavian at Actium in the context of the history of Rome?

Suggestions for Further Reading

There are many modern editions of Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans.* The one excerpted in this chapter is the Everyman's Library edition, 3 vols., ed. Arthur Hugh Clough (London and New York: Dent and Dutton, 1910 [1962]). The other major narrative source for Cleopatra is the Greek historian Dio Cassius, Dio's *Roman History,* tr. Earnest Cary, 5 vols. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, Ltd., 1917 [1967]).

Among the several biographies of Cleopatra the most definitive are Hans Volkmann, *Cleopatra, A Study in Politics and Propaganda,* tr. T. J. Cadoux (New York: Sagamore Press, Inc., 1958) and Arthur Weigall, *The Life and Times of Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, A Study in the Origins of the Roman Empire,* new rev. ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968). Two additional excellent modern biographies are Jack Lindsay, *Cleopatra* (New York: Coward McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1978) and Edwyn Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy, A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago: Argonaut Publishers, Inc., 1968).

The story of Cleopatra is part of the story of Hellenistic Greece. This story is set forth in Michael Grant, *From Alexander to Cleopatra, The Hellenistic World* (New York: Scribner's, 1982) and Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium, the Historic Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1990).

It is also part of the story of the rise of the Roman Empire. Among the larger and more comprehensive Roman histories are Edward T. Salmon, *A History of the Roman World from 30 B.C. to A.D. 138,* 3 vols. (London and New York: Methuen and Barnes and Noble, 1944), T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire,* 3 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1923), and Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Greatness and Decline of Rome,* 5 vols., tr. H. J. Chaytor (New York: Putnam, n.d.).

Under special topics in Roman history can be recommended H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero, A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68* (New York: Praeger, 1959), Frank Burr Marsh, *A History of the Roman World from 146 B.C. to 30 B.C.* (London: Methuen, 1967 [1935]), and Stewart Perowne, *Death of the Roman Republic: From 146 B.C. to the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York: Doubleday, 1968). See also Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (London: Oxford, 1960). Two excellent biographies can also be recommended, J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Julius Caesar and Rome* (London: English Universities Press, 1967) and John Buchan, *Augustus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937).