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**“What Man Is That?” – The Personalities of Julius Caesar  
and Mark Antony in Shakespeare**

Thesis

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**“Co je to za člověka?” – Osobnost Julia Césara  
a Marka Antonia v Shakespearovi**

Diplomová práce

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### **Abstract:**

The primary concern of this thesis rests upon the assumption that despite all his disinterestedness, so vehemently advocated by Harold Bloom, Shakespeare was the child of the Elizabethan and Jacobean times and reacted to the current issues around him in his plays. Therefore, the question posed as the title “What man is that?” is not directed only to the Roman characters, but much more to Shakespeare himself. The question of his disinterestedness and involvement was hoped to be answered through contradictory practices of two schools of criticism: that is, New Criticism and New Historicism. The answer was looked for in the light of the forms of power and influence Shakespeare can be believed to have been subject to, which were listed as Literary Power, Experienced Power and Depicted Power. These forms were analysed in the personalities of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Cleopatra, their mutual love. All these three personages served as archetypes of the particular form of power, showing the extent of how much Shakespeare was apt to be influenced and what way, and how he himself succeeded in influencing others, his future readers including. Thus, the question paraphrased as “What man is Shakespeare” seems to be of great interest, since it aims at the very centre of the western canon and sees William Shakespeare both as a great artist and still as a man.

### **Abstrakt:**

Hlavním záměrem této práce bylo postavit Shakespearovu nestrannost a objektivitu, vlastnosti tolik ceněné Haroldem Bloomem, proti Shakespearově nevyhnutelné pozici dítěte své doby. Z tohoto důvodu se otázka daná v názvu práce „Co je to za člověka?“ nezaměřuje pouze na postavy římských her, ale také na Shakespeara samotného. Při hledání odpovědi byl použit přístup dvou rozdílných škol: Nové Kritiky a Nového Historicismu. Toto hledání se uskutečňovalo ve světle tří podob moci, u kterých se mělo za to, že na ně Shakespeare reagoval ve svém díle. Jednalo se konkrétně o podobu literární, zakoušené a zobrazené moci, z nichž každá byla rozebírána na pozadí jedné osobnosti z římských her; to znamená Julia Césara, Marka Antonia a jejich společné lásky, Kleopatry. Tyto postavy sloužily jako archetypy dané podoby moci, aby vykreslily míru toho, nakolik byl Shakespeare ovlivnitelný a nakolik sám ovlivňoval. Tak se otázce „Co je Shakespeare za člověka?“ přidává na zajímavosti, jelikož tato otázka míří do středu kánonu a vnímá Shakespeara jednak jako velkého umělce a jednak jako nezidealizovaného člověka.

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## Introduction

The world of literature has been quite in agreement throughout the decades, not only on the exclusiveness of William Shakespeare, but also on the almost prophetic function of his plays. The quotes coming from Shakespeare have appeared in various books, plays and movies. For instance, in the recent film *Pianist* depicting the horrors of Holocaust, the audiences could overhear one Jewish lad recite Shakespeare while German soldiers kept them shut before leaving for a concentration camp. In addition, he was reciting it side by side with a Jewish rabbi reading Torah. Whether deliberate or not, the combination of Shakespeare and Torah in one scene could lead to far-reaching implications; to mention at least one, they were both read to strengthen and comfort when nobody there knew what future held for him.

So influential was Shakespeare that he is still considered one of the most important playwrights of the English renaissance. Though a son of a middle-class glove-maker, he made his way to London and splendid carrier; the way a bit similar to the one of Caesar's whose genealogy contained mainly names of plebeians and still, despite this fact, he became the most powerful man of then world. The years that followed Shakespeare's coming to London marked the beginning of his advance to an incredible worldwide acknowledgement and praise; as Zdeněk Stříbrný remarks, "The fame of the actors, calling themselves The Lord Chamberlain's Men, was so extraordinary that the doors were opened for them even at the royal court." (Shakespeare's Predecessors, 10, my translation)<sup>1</sup> In about eight years, he presented two plays: Julius Caesar and As You Like It. The plays sparked off the amazing history of the favourite theatre in the Tudor age called The Globe. Thus, the play describing the fall of Caesar marked the rise of Shakespeare.

As the approach here to Shakespeare's plays Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra has been made mostly in Bloomian way, it seems appropriate to start with a quote from The Western Canon in which Bloom challenges his readers to start their reading experience with Shakespeare:

Immerse yourself, say for several days together, in reading Shakespeare and then turn to another author-before, after, or contemporary with him. For experiment, try only the highest in each grouping: Homer or Dante, Cervantes or Ben Jonson,

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<sup>1</sup> Sláva těchto divadelníků, kteří se nazývali „služebníky lorda komořího“, byla tak celonárodně pronikavá, že jim otevřela dveře i k častým pohostinským návštěvám na královském dvoře. (Stříbrný, Shakespeare's Predecessors, 16, original in Czech)

Tolstoy or Proust. The difference in the reading experience will be one of kind as well as of degree.

(The Western Canon, 488)

Given the above, Bloom expresses Shakespeare's universalism repeatedly, seeing the actor-playwright as a centre of the literary canon and as a person that is free of any ideology or metaphysics. However, despite continuous references to Shakespeare's disinterestedness and greatness, he himself acknowledges several influences Shakespeare could hardly avoid. These influences are either directly stated or implied in Bloom's three books that have been made use of in this paper: The Invention of the Human, The Western Canon and The Anxiety of Influence. All these influences will further be divided under three headings, of which each will deal with a different form of power Shakespeare might have been supposed to be subject to. Starting with literary influences, the search will focus on the predecessor that was alluded to by Shakespeare several times and might, hence, be expected to be at the back of Shakespeare's mind when he sat down to write Antony and Cleopatra. The most direct allusions to this predecessor are supposed to be found in Hamlet, Macbeth and The Tempest. With the help of Bloom's idea of the poetic influence, the relation will be drawn between Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, and the mutual misprisions will be discussed and interpreted. This is given a term "Literary Power". From this form of power, the closer look will be taken at Shakespeare's environment and the way he might have mirrored that in his plays; this is called "Experienced Power". Lastly, as a form of "Depicted Power", the play Antony and Cleopatra will be scrutinised to discover a form of power that might have been depicted by Shakespeare himself. All these forms of power are aimed to suggest the boundary between Shakespeare's interestedness and disinterestedness.

This paper, then, studies the shift from the literal power, across experienced, to the depicted one; following the logic sequence from the general to the concrete, from more plays to just one, from more images of power to the only one. This approach was inspired by two contradictory schools of criticism: New Criticism and New Historicism, which, when coming to the clash, might offer a broader view of Shakespeare that would be missed out if the study would have clung only to one of them. By the broader view it is meant the blend of Shakespeare's disinterestedness and his actual being in the sea of social energies. It is this relationship between the disinterestedness and involvement that has been studied throughout this paper with the hope of seeing Shakespeare fully objective as Bloom did and



still involved in his time as Greenblatt did. The way Shakespeare balanced between these two notions might symbolise the form of power Bloom sums up in the following quote, “If you cease to know when you impersonate itself, then you are likely to seem more opaque than you are.” (The Invention of the Human, 560)

The question posed as the title of the paper “What Man is That?” is not directed to Caesar primarily but much more to Shakespeare himself. It deals with the extent of his disinterestedness and involvement, or, in other words, with his quest for aesthetic and his reaction to the social energies around. The actual question appears in Caesar’s enquiry about the passing soothsayer who urged him to beware the ides of March:

Soothsayer: Beware the ides of March

Caesar: What man is that?

Brutus: A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

Caesar: Set him before me; let me see his face.

Cassius: Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

Caesar: What say’st thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer: Beware the ides of March.

Caesar: He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass

(Caesar, I.ii. 17-24)

Though it would be intriguing to enjoy the notion that Shakespeare himself played the role of Soothsayer, there is hardly any support for it and Bloom, on the contrary, prefers the idea of seeing Shakespeare, the specialist in kings, older men and ghosts, perform Caesar’s part. However, what can be applied to Shakespeare’s life is the essence of the question and the talk over it. Caesar poses the question as a reaction to the strange warning and leaves it unnoticed as if it were a silly talk a dreamer can only come up with. A dreamer or a prophet or anybody else? What man is Shakespeare whose plays have the capacity to read us better than we do them? As Bloom keeps reminding:

We are lived by drives we cannot command, and we are read by works we cannot resist. We need to exert ourselves and read Shakespeare as strenuously as we can, while knowing that his plays will read us more energetically still. They read us definitively.

(The Invention of the Human, xx)

The study presented here is expected to find more about Shakespeare’s power and influence over his audiences and readers and pose several suggestions pointing at the forms of power Shakespeare himself in all his disinterestedness was subject to. This will all be realised on the basis of the analysis of three Shakespeare’s characters: Antony, Julius

Caesar and Cleopatra whose personalities will serve as archetypes of particular forms of power.

## 1. Literary power

### 1.1. Intra-poetic relations

For [T.S.] Eliot each poem exists within tradition from which it takes shape and which it, in turn, redefines. Thus, tradition is both something to which the poet must be “faithful” and something that he or she actively makes: novelty emerges out of being steeped in tradition.

(The Norton Anthology of Criticism, 1090)

This section studies a potential literary relation between Virgil and Shakespeare, moreover, with a closer look at allusions Shakespeare might have made towards Virgil's masterpiece The Aeneid. Provided such a relation proves likely, another assumption will be suggested pointing to the relation between The Aeneid and Antony and Cleopatra in particular. This way is not so arbitrary as it may seem but rests on several literary uses of The Aeneid in Shakespeare's plays, namely, Hamlet, The Tempest and Macbeth; this step hopes to discover the outward evidence for the supposition Shakespeare had Virgil in mind when writing Antony and Cleopatra. This evidence will stem from the belief that if Shakespeare made use of Virgil's Aeneid in some of his plays, he might have done so in Antony and Cleopatra.

Harold Bloom, in his Anxiety of Influence, offers the story of intra-poetic relationships. Here this practice will be followed, necessarily with frequent looks into both Bloom's characterisation of “the poet in a poet” and the actual use of this concept in his two books The Invention of the Human and The Western Canon. In addition, and more to the overall aim of this paper, the term “power” will be reduced to its rather literary sense; that is, the sense of the poetic influence.

First of all, the basic question might be raised why would Shakespeare have to turn to Virgil at all for the source of inspiration when his genius sufficed to create works on his own? Moreover, what would the benefit of this be? Besides other causes, one might be of an interest: a common practise of Renaissance authors to turn to Classics. As Zdeněk Stříbrný states:

The Renaissance poets did not intend to come up with new themes and forms but understood it their sworn duty and ambition to improve the themes approved through the ages; especially, when these were of the ancient origin.

(William Shakespeare, 2, my translation)<sup>2</sup>

This act of refashioning the ancient classics and the exposition to their influence is revealed in the fact that just as Homer's Iliad was absorbed into The Aeneid so was Virgil's Aeneid imprinted on Shakespeare. This might also be apparent in the works of Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries; Dante's choice of Virgil as his guide in The Divine Comedy is one of the most classic examples. To the influence of Classics C. S. Lewis points in his Inaugural Lecture De Descriptione Temporum when mentioning the gap enlarging throughout the ages in which the ancient learning faces its second death:

As for the area and the tempo of the two deaths, if one were looking for a man who could not read Virgil though his father could, he might be more easily found in the twentieth century than in the fifth.

(20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Criticism, 445)

One might also trace a similar feature when comparing the Elizabethan times to ours. Nevertheless, it still refers to the important influence Virgil's Aeneid has left on works of various authors, namely Shakespeare. As the very source of Virgil's inspiration Homer's Iliad shows, the mighty influence was passed to Virgil and he passed it on; no wonder the following quote appears in Philip Hardie's introduction to The Aeneid:

That *The Aeneid* is both an *Iliad* and an *Odyssey* has been a critical truism since antiquity . . . The first six books of the epic present Aeneas as an Odyssean wanderer, while in the last six he must prove himself in the war in Italy as an Iliadic fighter.

(The Aeneid, xii).

As Philip Hardie further remarks there is one analogue and one distinction between Homer's Odyssey and Virgil's Aeneas:

Odysseus and Aeneas both start their journey from Troy, the one as victor going home, the other as vanquished setting out into exile. Yet through the Fate motif it turns out that the strange land of Italy is as inevitably the proper destination for Aeneas as his homeland of Ithaca is for Odysseus.

(The Aeneid, xiii )

The inversion present here might offer a crucial hint to other wanderings around Aeneas, Dido, Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra. Thus, it all looks Shakespeare did the similar thing as Virgil did; that is, inverting characters and their stories, or rather refashioning them. The Odysseus's wandering to his homeland Ithaca was transformed into Aeneas's

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<sup>2</sup> Renesanční básník si nekladl za cíl vymýšlet nové obsahy a formy, nýbrž považoval za svou povinnost, ano svou tížádost, aby ještě lépe zpracoval umělecké látky posvěcené staletími. (William Shakespeare 24, original in Czech)

saga to the strange land Italy and this saga was later turned into Antony's staying in Egypt. There are all here: Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare passing the muse from one to another and dressing her with new clothes. By doing so, they unconsciously answer to the description of the revisionism as presented in contemporary literary theory and introduced by Harold Bloom, along with the anxiety of influence:

In Harold Bloom's writings *revisionism* is used in a non-pejorative sense to indicate a general theory or a set of theories concerning the manner in which the poet (Bloom uses this word in a wide sense) revises the work of his (Bloom's use of female gender is very sparing) precursors. Thus, for Bloom, poetic influence is 'part of the larger phenomenon of intellectual revisionism'.

(Contemporary Literary Theory, 176)

Thus, there are things they all share or revise and things that make them distinct, giving them, at the same time, a chance to use own genius and react to the influences each of them had to go through in their own setting and time.

The anxiety of influence spurred by the aesthetic of both Homer and Virgil helps Shakespeare create something similar and different at the same time. The inversion appearing in The Aeneid is further inverted in Antony and Cleopatra. This genius and audacious act becomes the hallmark ". . . Of the transformative absorption of Homeric patterns ." (The Aeneid, xiii) when it comes to The Aeneid, and of the transformative absorption of Virgilian patterns when it comes to Antony and Cleopatra.

What might be of interest when comparing these two works is the commission Virgil was granted by the emperor Augustus. It seems that Virgil being burden with this commission makes Aeneas proceed in accordance with the commission as well; as if repaying it to Augustus who is presented by this Trojan hero. Octavius became, after Antony's fall, the mightiest man in the Roman Empire. He did not, in fact, colonize, but rather annex and unite countries around Mediterranean Sea; Shakespeare acknowledges Augustus' coming greatness and, being familiar with the ancient history, puts a longed-for vision into the emperor's mouth:

The time of universal peace is near  
Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nooked world  
Shall bear the olive freely

(Antony and Cleopatra, IV.vi.5-6)

Historically, his words were fulfilled and Octavius restored the Roman world to its prosperity gaining for himself a new title Augustus; that is, consecrated or holy.

Virgil could hardly ignore this commission and loosen the tie with the Roman emperor. It is not difficult to imagine the severe consequences he would have to face if he made his main protagonist Aeneas, the founder of Rome, look like somebody Augustus could not identify with and neglected the glory that was to be attributed to the emperor. If the writer creates a story about a mighty ruler, he has to suppose the contemporary ruler might expect some kind of connection between himself and the literary figure, let alone the audience watching the play or readers pondering over his book. This usually happens in the countries where a ruler or a governing party feels a bit uncertain about their undertakings on the political scene and is, hence, afraid of criticism and revolt. Therefore, Augustus must have been very delighted to see Aeneas, he either identified with or derived his origin from, as a man in whom god and human nature dwelt in unity and who was resolute enough to pursue his goals no matter how much it would cost him because the mission he followed was worth sacrifices.

While the mightiest person in Virgil's time was Augustus, in Shakespeare's times it might have been the queen Elizabeth I. No matter how many other famous rulers governed in Europe at that time, the only name would spring to audience's mind when the question of power, rule and monarchy happened to surface. As one visitor to England confessed, "It is more to have seen Elizabeth than to have seen England." (All the Queen's Men, 13) Add to that, the historian Neville Williams states:

She dazzled like a Sun Queen, making her court the most resplendent in Christendom. Many of her subjects sought 'to have the twinkling of one beam of the splendiferous planet', others, drawn irresistibly to her service, felt in the shadows when they were away from her side. The court, appropriately in a personal monarchy, was the setting in which the sovereign lived out her public and private lives so that attendance on her became the social obligation of the aristocracy and the goal of the lesser mortals."

(All the Queen's Men, 13)

However, it would be too daring to believe Shakespeare began to write Antony and Cleopatra because he was commissioned to do so by those in power. One greatest excellence in Shakespeare is his capacity to please all and stay faithful to himself; the idea that will come up again in the next sections of this paper. Thus, it seems hard and even impossible to figure out what Shakespeare's relationship to the monarch was like and which type of government he primarily favoured. The only commission he followed was his own and it was nothing else but the literary one; after all, he was a prolific playwright

and not a cunning politician, or anarchist with the commission to change the world by means of literature. There is an apt point to this by Harold Bloom:

Except for that desire [to work hard to go back to Stratford as a gentleman] we know next to nothing about Shakespeare's social outlook, except what can be cleaned from the plays, where all of the information is ambiguous.

(The Western Canon, 43)

## **1.2. Virgilian patterns in Shakespeare's plays**

Though more allusions to Virgil's Aeneid than those mentioned here could be found in Shakespeare's plays, the closer look will now be taken at three of them at least: Hamlet, Macbeth and The Tempest. The reason for mentioning Hamlet as the first one lies in the very sentence Hamlet addresses the players with when one of them asked him about the part he should start reciting, "One speech in it I chiefly loved: 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido . . ." (Hamlet, II.ii. 54) This he added after praising the epic The Aeneid and went on citing this ancient work to relay it to the players again. The extent of how much Hamlet was touched by the epic points to the affection Shakespeare might have felt when reading Virgil. Shakespeare seems to have acknowledged Virgil as the source of inspiration, which is what Virgil did when he recognized Homer as his great predecessor. This acknowledgement was put into Hamlet's mouth to express the admiration and homage to the ancient epic.

In addition to Hamlet, there is the figure of Macbeth sharing with Aeneas the necessity to undertake a similar business to go down the hell to see apparitions and ghosts forecast the future of the kingdom. Eight future kings pass in front of Macbeth in witches' cavern and, also in the cavern, future Roman rulers appear in front of Aeneas in the underworld where he comes to meet his father. The experience of seeing those succeeding them is common to both Macbeth and Aeneas; however, Macbeth feels much more threatened by this future vision than Aeneas since Macbeth's successor is inevitably his destroyer, whereas Aeneas's successor is the fulfilment of his mission.

Save these, there are other allusions to The Aeneid in The Tempest that, in spite of being enlisted as the last one, encompasses more links to Virgil's epic than the previous ones; though the most prominence is still held by Hamlet. When looking into these allusions, one has to neglect Harold Bloom's comment with which he attacked those who

add interpretations to The Tempest all based on the colonising phenomena in Shakespeare's times. He states:

Of all Shakespeare's plays, the two visionary comedies – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* – these days share the sad distinction of being the worst misinterpreted and performed. Erotomania possesses the critics and directors of the *Dream*, while ideology drives the bespoilers of *The Tempest*. Caliban, a poignant but cowardly (and murderous) half-human creature (his father a sea devil, whether fish or amphibian), has become an African-Caribbean heroic Freedom Fighter. This is not even a weak misreading; anyone who arrives at that view is simply not interested in reading the play at all. Marxists, multiculturalists, feminists, nouveau historicists – the usual suspects – know their cause but not Shakespeare's plays.

(The Invention of the Human, 662)

After ignoring this quote, one can trace the aspect of colonisation in both The Aeneid and The Tempest, including some attempts to discover similar interpretations in Antony and Cleopatra. In such a case, no search would be complete without applying some of New Historicism methods and practices: placing the work in its historical context, relating interpretive problems to cultural-historical problems and, above all, seeing images and narratives as a kind of cultural work. Therefore, despite Bloom's comments, a slight digression from his practice will be made but only for the purpose of tracing allusions to The Aeneid in The Tempest; that is, not for the purpose of interpreting The Tempest in the light of The Aeneid and the colonising world.

With this in mind, the following quote by David Scott Wilson-Okamura comes in handy because it neatly sums up the point made about the colonisation:

For thirty years or so, the received wisdom about William Shakespeare's *Tempest* has been that this is the play about the colonization of the New World, a visionary document in which, as Leslie Fiedler puts it, "the whole history of imperialist America has been prophetically revealed to us".

(Wilson-Okamura, David S. "Virgilian models of colonization in Shakespeare's *Tempest*." Literature Online. Baltimore: Fall 2003. Vol. 70, Iss. 3; pg. 709)

This is further supported by the assumption that putting The Aeneid and The Tempest side by side is nothing new. A couple of books have been devoted to this subject written by those who have seen The Aeneid as an "... archetypical colonizing text of all time ... " (Wilson-Okamura. Baltimore: Fall 2003. Vol. 70, Iss. 3; pg. 710).

Using this archetype, the following allusions might come to mind, though, at the same time, one could come up with the contra-opinions. In the first place, there is a similar situation of landing on the exotic shore: North-African coast and some island in Bohemia. Though neither the party of men in The Tempest nor Aeneas's crew in The Aeneid landed



for the purpose of colonizing, they all share the reality of appearing on the exotic and unknown coastline. Furthermore, the men walking on Prospero's island soon turn to talking about the queen Dido and, though the whole talk seem rather careless, it might suggest a bit more. Considering the fact that The Tempest “. . . Heads off the First Folio, printed as the first of comedies . . . “ (The Invention of the Human, 662), one could think of Shakespeare mentioning his favourite Virgil again, just as he did more explicitly in Hamlet, as if reminding the readers or audiences of his chosen precursor. In addition, Shakespeare's characters refer to Dido shortly after the storm; and it is this storm that “. . . Gives rise, in turn, to a love affair. Others [parallels between these two works] turn on verbal references.” (David Scott Wilson-Okamura. Baltimore: Fall 2003. Vol. 70, Iss. 3; pg. 715) These references are as follows:

Thus when Ferdinand addresses Miranda for the first time, the words he chooses- "Most sure, the goddess" (1.2.422)-recall those of Aeneas to his mother Venus in Aeneid 1: "O dea certe" (A, 328). Likewise in Prospero's masque, when Ceres hails Iris as thou "[w]ho with thy saffron wings upon my flow'rs Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers" (4.1.78-79), it is Virgil's Iris that Shakespeare has in mind, "Iris with the saffron wings" [Iris croceis . . . Pennis] (A, 4.700). Sometimes, Shakespeare's imitation of Virgil extends to a whole scene, as with the banquet of the harpies in act 3, scene 3.25.

Together with the reference to Dido at the beginning of The Tempest, David Scott Wilson-Okamura offers reasonable parallels between this play and Virgil's epic and, by doing so, challenges another search for likewise parallels in other Shakespeare's plays.

Virgil became such a prominent personage that hardly any person, no matter if his rank was low or high, might have neglected him. This is further supported by so called 'Sortes Vergilianae', that is, foretelling the future with Virgil's help, which was practiced by all classes of people. Even Charles I did so on the verge of his defeat at battle of Naseby<sup>3</sup> three years after the out-break of civil war when putting a finger blindly on a random opened page of Virgil. Sadly enough, since the superstition did not help, he sustained the defeat anyway. Besides this superstitious use of Virgil, George E. Duckworth adds more to the importance of Virgil in literature:

The Aeneid was highly appreciated in its own day. During the Middle Ages, philosophical meanings were read into it, and Vergil was thought to be a seer and

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<sup>3</sup> One of the decisive battle during the Civil War in which royal forces were severely shattered and Cromwell's New Model Army told its tale again. It took place near Naseby on June 14, 1645. The actual account of the king's superstitious use of Virgil appears in Penguin Encyclopedia, 409.

magician. Dante took Vergil as his guide through the first part of the Divine Comedy, and the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer told part of the story of the Aeneid in his House of Fame. In the 16th century the English poet Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* was indebted to Vergil for his conception of the epic as a national poem. Vergil's style and technique of versification influenced the English poets John Milton, in the 17th century, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in the 19th.

(Duckworth, E. George. "Vergil" Microsoft (R) Encarta)

Nevertheless, no matter what else can be attributed to this famous ancient poet, he might still be called poets' poet and this status can barely be ignored when tackling Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Thus, the question could be raised about how much of Virgil is in Shakespeare himself and how this famous ancient poet's work happened to be reflected in Antony and Cleopatra. Simply, how does the concept 'the poet in a poet' as presented by Harold Bloom in The Anxiety of Influence come to its function.

### **1.3. Aeneas in Antony**

The following section's main purpose is to present differences between The Aeneid and Antony and Cleopatra and stress how much these differences share and, on the other hand, how much they say about Shakespeare misreading; that is, Shakespeare's realisation of the first of six 'revisionary ratios' as outlined in Bloom's Anxiety of Influence under the heading *Clinamen* dealing with a poetic misreading or misprision proper. This misreading might be apparent in comparing the similarities in both works of art and in pointing out the facts that still distinct them.

"Comparison and analysis, Eliot said, are the chief tools of the critic enabling a precise perception of literary effects, relationships, and values." (The Norton Anthology of Criticism, 1090) Viewed strictly as stories of the struggle between passion and mission, The Aeneid and Antony and Cleopatra seem to have more in common than expected. As the comparison and analysis are expected to show, there is Aeneas in Antony, though Antony is no Aeneas. Shakespeare does not seem to indulge himself in making new Roman Aeneas and transform Aeneas's success into Antony's failure; though, on the other hand, he appears to have walked with Virgil half way and, then, abandoned him to come down his own path. In Bloom's revisionary ratios, the second one *Tessera* might apply to this:

*Tessera*, which is completion and antithesis . . . A poet antithetically "completes" his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough.

(“A Meditation upon Priority, and a Synopsis”, 1803)

Shakespeare creates a new personage that shares with his historical precursor the essence of his fate. The half of their fate appears same; their answer to it, however, differs. First, there is Rome versus Egypt with personages that symbolize what they are both after. Caesar represents the Roman Empire, while Cleopatra stands for Egypt. These two characters suggest the essence of the power in both worlds: the former appears masculine, whereas the latter absolutely feminine, both with all potential attributes pertaining to each of them. David Bevington has much to say when he states: “Caesar is a superb general and political genius, but he is also a military automaton, a logistic reckoner, a Machiavellian pragmatist.” (Antony and Cleopatra, xxii) Stating this, he points to a large set of things that correspond with the mode and way Rome fights for its place in the world. The similar qualities, the first and third in particular, pertain to Antony, at least to his Roman side. Caesar does not hesitate to recall them when regretting Antony’s absence in Rome and his growing disregard for the matters of the Empire:

Though daintily brought up, with patience more  
Than savages could suffer. Thou didst drink  
The stale of horses and the gilded puddle  
Which beasts would cough at. Thy palate then did deign  
The roughest berry on the rudest hedge .  
. . . On the Alps  
it is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,  
which some did die to look on.

(Antony and Cleopatra, I.iv. 62-69)

After praising Antony’s valour and incredible resolution to pursuit his goals, Caesar himself jumps to the conclusion that sets clearly one of the clashes between Rome and Egypt, “And all this / It wounds thine honor that I speak it now”. (Antony and Cleopatra, I.iv. 70) To underline the folly of Antony’s change Caesar uses the time reference ‘now’ to stress the fact that while this is the time Antony is so necessarily called for to protect the Empire against Pompey “ . . . He [Antony] filled / his vacancy with his voluptuousness”. (Antony and Cleopatra, I.iv. 26) Caesar’s speech implies an interesting characteristic of both worlds: the Roman world that is filled with wars, pragmatism and self-denial and the Egyptian one filled with lust, luxury and unrestrained desires. In the religious terms of the pagan world, Rome might seem to Antony as what is expected here on earth; that is duty, work and responsibility. Egypt, on the other hand, would offer him a handful of delights he might sum up in one word; that is to say, paradise. In this sense, the tension between the

earthly and paradisiacal experiences represents one of the clashes in the worlds of Antony and Cleopatra. Martin Hilský in the manual issued on the occasion of the premiere Antony and Cleopatra in the National Theatre in Prague on February 11, 1999 makes an apt point about this clash:

The symbol of Shakespeare's Rome is a negotiating table around which commanders and politicians divide the world. In contrast, Shakespeare's Egypt might be likened to a table heavy with food and drink.

(“Antonius a Kleopatra: text a context”, 18, my translation)<sup>4</sup>

With a look into The Aeneid, there is a similar struggle between two worlds that seem to tear the main protagonist apart. Just as Antony is balancing between Rome and Egypt, Aeneas faces the pressure from two sides; one represented by his love for queen Dido, the other related to his mission commissioned by Zeus. To apply this concept of clash to particular ‘nomen locale’, it seems convenient to call it the clash between Italy and Carthage; the usage which easily recalls the actual battles between Rome and Carthage in three series of Punic wars. Symbolically, Aeneas and Dido's split serves as a token of future hostility that later aroused between those two mightiest countries of the Mediterranean world. Moreover, Virgil describes Zeus assigning a mission to a messenger Mercury to remind Aeneas he was not rescued from Greeks to waste his life in Carthage beside Dido but to rule Italy and bring the world under one power and law. The god Zeus perceives very well that what distracts Aeneas from his further enterprise is the queen herself. Therefore, when Mercury is delivering the message, he addresses Aeneas with the following words:

Is it for you  
To lay the stones for Carthage's high walls,  
Tame husband that you are, and build their city?  
Oblivious of your own world, your own kingdom!

(The Aeneid, book IV 361-364)

Mercury does not hesitate to call Aeneas tame husband and, in later verses, he also reminds him of future history's glories. Octavius Caesar in Antony and Cleopatra observes the similar thing happening to Antony but, in contrast to Mercury, does not predict Antony's potential glory provided he gets away from Cleopatra but recalls the past deeds

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<sup>4</sup> Symbolem a divadelním znakem Shakespearova Říma je jednací stůl, u něhož vojevůdci a politikové rozdělují svět. V Shakespearově Egyptě je to stůl hodovní, přetížený jídlem a pitím. (Hilský, M. Antonius a Kleopatra, 18, original in Czech)

and experience Antony went through. None the less, what Mercury perceived in Aeneas Caesar did in Antony; that is, the fact of being tamed and tied to paradise-like comfort.

The large web of influences and various forms of power spread in The Aeneid and Antony and Cleopatra. While Aeneas sneaks out of Dido's influence, Antony gets stuck in Cleopatra's manoeuvring. Both heroes become the centres of two worlds and clashes. The former finds himself between Rome and Carthage being motivated to reach the first place by a mighty god Zeus and hampered to leave the other one by the queen Dido, the latter called to return to Rome by Caesar Octavius and constantly drawn back to Egypt by Cleopatra. Though Antony takes a different course of action than Aeneas, he remains, together with Aeneas, a Herculean hero that can act foolishly and follow the way the readers and audiences do not have to approve of, and still remain majestic. The essence of both Aeneas's and Antony's characteristic will be further scrutinised in the following section that deals with the form of power Shakespeare seems to have experienced. Despite the power being discussed up to now, this form of power finds its place in the social events Shakespeare is supposed to have lived through.

## 2. Experienced Power

### 2.1. Patronage

While the first section deals with the power passed to Shakespeare, this section studies the form of power being around Shakespeare. The preposition *around* was chosen deliberately and prior to *in* that could imply too much of Shakespeare's share in the social events in the Elizabethan and Jacobean times; the implication whose interpretation strongly differs in two critical schools: New Criticism and New Historicism. By these schools it is meant a practice rather than some grouping of critics. Hence, New Criticism is held as a way to treat the text as something complete in itself without any touch with the author's life, intent and social context, whereas New Historicism is viewed here as a practice to relate interpretative problems to cultural-historical issues. On this point, the key figure of the former school Harold Bloom talks of Shakespeare's disinterestedness, whereas Stephen Greenblatt doubts the distinction between artistic and social production. Thus, though the approach to the issue of this paper is rather Bloomian, several uses of New Historicists' practices will be made of as well. To find a good boundary between Shakespeare's disinterestedness and interestedness, or, in other words, between his artistic production and response to the social background, it seems necessary to reconcile the two contradictory Criticisms' practices and use them one alongside another. Therefore, the power studied here is related to changes both *around* and *in* Shakespeare; though *around* is accepted more willingly.

The movement from *around-power* to *in-power* will start with Julius Caesar, the closest play to Antony and Cleopatra, then, it will go on to the plays that might mark Shakespeare's reaction to issues around him and, finally, will end with the life-threatening performance of Richard II. These steps hope to demonstrate the form of power Shakespeare himself might have experienced and offer a precedent for tackling Antony and Cleopatra in the individual section.

Coming to Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra first, it seems that the majestic presentation of some Herculean figure was very convenient in the career of the playwright. Shakespeare cautiously chose the most prominent figures in the Roman history to relate the plots of the plays to the aristocracy of his own time and dazzle them with once glorious fates. The pillars of the ancient world served as an inspiring source for noblemen and could

attract them to the Globe, which was more than necessary for an actor-playwright such as Shakespeare; as Bloom states:

Actors in Elizabethan England were, by statute, akin to beggars and similar lowlife, which doubtless pained Shakespeare, who worked hard to be able to go back to Stratford as a gentleman . . . As an actor-playwright, Shakespeare necessarily depended upon aristocrats for patronage and protection, and his politics – if pragmatically he had any – were appropriate for the pinnacle of the long Aristocratic age (in the Viconian sense) . . . .

(The Western Canon, pp. 43)

Winning the aristocrats over became an important feature of artists' lives in the Renaissance; hence Shakespeare's dedication of Lucrece and Venus and Adonis to Earl of Southampton: "Even if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honour'd you with some graver labour." (Venus and Adonis) "The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end." (Lucrece) Why, however, did Shakespeare not sign the dedication in other works as well? He would have won either new ties with patrons or strengthen the old ones. Presumably, he did not need to do so and signed the dedications only in those works he himself published; which means those he started his carrier with. As Richard Dutton explains:

Shakespeare clearly was responsible for the publication of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, both of which carried signed dedication to the Earl of Southampton, and were printed by his fellow Stratfordian, Richard Field.

(Licensing, Censorship and Authorship, 90)

There might be several suggestions why he signed only these and not the others and all of these suggestions would point to the concept of the power Shakespeare experienced in his lifetime. Firstly, there is the necessity to gain in popularity and meet people that would enhance the author's reputation. For this purpose, sound ties seem very convenient. Martin Hilsky, when commenting on both dedications in Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, states:

Similar dedications were also signed by Spenser, Sidney and Donne who, along with lots of other poets, were trying to find favour in aristocratic eyes. Quite often, the authors tried to print several various dedications to the same book and win more patrons over through exactly same words.

(Hilský, M. Sonety, 25, my translation)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Podobné dedikace psali Spenser, Sidney i Donne a spolu s nimi řada menších básníků, kteří se ucházeli o přízeň aristokratického mecenáše. Mnohdy docházelo dokonce k tomu, že autoři nechali vytisknout několik různých dedikací ke stejné knize a stejnými slovy se chtěli vlichotit do přízně různých mecenášů. (Sonety, 25, original in Czech)

Of course, these ties were not short of certain tensions, confusions and disappointments. Moreover, if the only reason for keeping them was mostly money, then, the way to the independency was closely related to finances. Thus, if the price for independency was in relation to the profit, the author was obliged to write works that would attract either readers or theatregoers. This, however, presupposes the question about the extent of author's intentions as reflected in his works since he himself might modify them according to public expectations. In this sense, the necessity to balance between writing to entertain and writing to express comes to surface and it is for each author to choose which side he will be mostly with. Nevertheless, those who kept a proper balance between entertaining audiences and expressing themselves acquired the skill very close to one of the forms of power: do as you please and please all people you need for what you please.

Secondly, the reason for Shakespeare's neglect of dedications in other works following Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece seems to lie in Shakespeare's preference for stage. He appears to be more concerned with staging his plays than with actual printing them. As Richard Dutton further observes:

Shakespeare was not shy of print, it seems, only of printing his plays (and perhaps sonnets). Why this should be so is still a subject for conjecture. For some scholars, only staging mattered to Shakespeare; Leeds Barroll, for instance, argues that Shakespeare wrote plays only when he could anticipate immediate performance: 'Denied the visual and auditory realization of his plays on stage, Shakespeare's creative drive seems to have faltered'.

(Licensing, Censorship and Authorship, 90)

Thus, though it remains a subject for conjecture, the stage enabled Shakespeare to become more independent on patrons since he could check immediately whether or not the number of theatregoers would suffice to help him get by and how much he would have to turn for help to aristocrats.

Thirdly and more to the legal point, the play was used as a property of the company and not of the author. Therefore, Shakespeare, both an actor and a playwright, could hardly sell his scripts with possible dedications and make some money from them if he did not agree with the company before. Thus, with all three points in mind, it seems that the only way for Shakespeare to win aristocrats and patrons started to lead primarily through the actual performances on stage and no more through the flattering dedications.

## **2.2. Caesar's director-like influence**



Therefore, the rigid and powerful bearing of Caesar combined with a Herculean personality of Antony seems to have challenged almost every young aristocrat coming to the theatre and set before his eyes examples of human capacities and greatness. However, is there not an instant disillusionment seeing the counterparts that shatter those mighty characters? Caesar is done away with by Brutus and Antony's commanding abilities are tamed by Cleopatra. The way Shakespeare disillusioned his audience by showing the negative and foolish behaviour of his main protagonists links Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra together. The mirrors he upheld to the audience, consisting of both common and aristocratic parts, appeal to all marks: those worthy of following and those rather repelling.

Both Caesar and Antony prepares a way to continue the story line from Julius Caesar and opens prospects for another drama set against the same historical setting. The connection is made through Antony outwardly and through Caesar secretly. While Antony is present in both plays from the very beginning to the end, Caesar is somewhat lingering in the distance. After being assassinated, he appears to Brutus at midnight, and after Antony's desperate falling in love with Cleopatra, he is still there as her first lover that cannot be so easily deleted from the memory. After all, he helped Cleopatra back to the throne and proclaimed her a queen after she had been disposed of the power in favour of her brother-husband Ptolemy XIII. In addition, she spent about two years in Rome as Caesar's mistress and gave birth to their son Caesarion, later Ptolemy XIV; the facts so visible in public that they could not be ignored or forgotten easily. Hence, Caesar's lingering influence is in Antony and Cleopatra just as it is in Julius Caesar, since he gave power to both Antony and Cleopatra: to the former through politics, to the latter through love.

Caesar remains mighty whether alive or dead. When being asked to pardon Mettulus's brother, he patronizingly reminds the senators of the steadfastness of his decisions and adds words that are lifting him up to the mythic abode of Greek gods. The similar mythic aspect also appears years later when Caesar, in a ghost-like figure, visits Brutus's tent to prophesy his murderer's end. This particular scene presents an intriguing analogue between Caesar's and Brutus's death. The prophecy preceding Caesar's death is now in Caesar's own mouth; however, the message is different: it is not a word of warning but a word of definiteness.

It all seems very exceptional in Shakespeare; what might have looked as a historical tragedy gives way to a more profound play about a constant influence of one character that

surpasses the others by stepping into the play again, regardless of space or time. Moreover, the apparition of Caesar makes it obvious that Caesar is somehow still present in the play and knows all about current happenings. This notion can also be perceived in one of the last Shakespeare's plays The Tempest. The idea of having the plot in somebody's hands, especially, when these are the hands of those participating in the plot, is shared by both Julius Caesar and The Tempest. It is Prospero who governs The Tempest and it is Caesar's spirit that pervades Julius Caesar. Both also hear and see the fulfilment of their words: Prospero hears all he planned was done and Caesar meets Brutus at Philippi as predicted; nothing unexpected in their sight. Therefore, Ariel's assuring question whether all was done well at the end of The Tempest is valid for both of them and they both might reply 'Yes, it was done well'. Harold Bloom perceives the similar implication and broadens it to the dialogue between an actor and a director: ". . . His [Ariel's] last words to Prospero are 'Was't well done?' an actor speaking to a director." (The Invention of the Human, 671)

Shakespeare is believed to make characters of his plays according to real actors around him. As Antony Burgess adds:

To Shakespeare, Hamlet was a part for Dick Burbage and Touchstone a part for Armin. What was Hamlet doing before the opening of the play? Probably drinking beer, brushing his hair, dusting his doublet . . . Why does the Queen say that Hamlet is fat and scant of breath and not fencing very well? Because Burbage, who played the part, probably was fat and scant of breath and not fencing very well.

(English Literature, 75)

Thus, in the play Julius Caesar he can be supposed to have taken the role of the dictator himself as a person remaining aloof and still interfering; no other role would be more suitable for the director of the whole play. This is also stated in Harold Bloom's The Invention of the Human where he confesses, "Sometimes I entertain the notion that Shakespeare himself-a specialist in kings, older men, and ghosts-played Julius Caesar" (The Invention of the Human, 110) Though the play could be just well called The Tragedy of Marcus Brutus because Caesar appears only in three scenes and is assassinated at the centre of the play, he still ". . . Pervades all of it . . ." (The Invention of the Human, 104) Even Brutus bears witness to this when saying:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.

(Caesar, V.iii. 152)

Bloom adds it was the crucial standing of Caesar in history that made Shakespeare call this play after him, because of "... its highest-ranking personage." (The Invention of the Human, 104) On the other hand, it is Bloom again who adds another quality that lends Caesar a prominent place in the play when he says, "Julius\_Caesar, and not Brutus or Cassius, is the free artist of himself in this play, in living and dying." (The Invention of the Human, 110) This notion might be supported by the assumption Shakespeare had a certain purpose in mind and was not under any historical obligation as suggested in the first Bloom's mention. He might have wanted to stress that the play was still about Caesar and his constant influence on other personages, no matter if he is dead or alive; and thus the play is worth its name. Furthermore, this could be well true about the director's influence on actors, no matter whether he is on the stage or not.

### **2.3. Caesar's prominence in the history**

Just as the English owe London to Rome<sup>6</sup>, so Rome owes Britain to Caesar. This debt is well deserved since it was an outstanding moment to see Roman legions land in the remote and fabulous island that enhanced the wildest imaginations in the minds of the Roman citizens. Despite some difficulties: severe gales shattering his fleet, unexpected high tides threatening anchored ships and British counter-attacks, Caesar's determination met its triumph. Even Shakespeare does not forget to mention this aspect of Caesar's qualities. Not knowing the mob of senators surrounding him will soon stab him to death, he boasts on his determination and elucidates he is the only one to change his mind; no circumstances, conditions or people can do so. Thus, when turning down senators' requests to pardon Mettulus's brother, his words unravel the consistency of his decisions:

I could be moved, if I were as you.  
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me.  
But I am constant as the northern star.

(Caesar, III.i., 80)

These verses are, however, only the preamble of the declaration that bears out Caesar's claims to act as he likes, "Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" (Caesar, III.i., 80) This comparison between him and the abode of the Greek gods demonstrates what Harold Bloom aptly calls "consciousness of being Caesar":

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<sup>6</sup> This notion appears in the first chapter of Churchill's *History of English Speaking Peoples* where he appreciates both the road system and the skilfully planned city that achieved a leading place in the life of the Roman province of Britain (The Birth of Britain, 11)

Though sometimes silly, even fatuous, Shakespeare's Caesar is an immensely sympathetic character, benign yet dangerous. He is, of course, self-centred, and always conscious of being Caesar, perhaps even sensing his deification in advance."  
(The Invention of the Human, 106)

This consciousness or even the feeling of predestination to become a significant icon in the world's history lent him an enormous endeavour that resulted not only in invading Britain but also in becoming one of the best-known persons of the ancient Rome and thus, the inspiration for all kinds of record.

Throughout the centuries, Caesar's life has attracted a crowd of people of various professions: politicians, warriors, historians and artists. Hence, most of his achievements have been written about already, let alone his love-affairs and the actual death, and he has been immortalized through a large variety of sculptures, busts, paintings, poems, dramas, books and films. To mention at least some of the artists who got inspired by him, it seems necessary to name, besides Shakespeare, such as the Roman poet Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, shortly Lucan, and his epic *the Pharsalia* (the only exact work of his<sup>7</sup>), the north Italian renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna and his fresco series on *the Triumphs of Caesar* (1489, Hampton Court Palace, England), a century later, English dramatist and translator of the classical literature George Chapman with his *Caesar and Pompey* (1631), then, Chapman's contemporary the Scottish poet sir William Alexander, earl of Stirling, writing his tragedies, among them Julius Caesar (1607), the Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, then American authors such as the novelist Thornton Niven Wilder with *The Ides of March* (1948) and the historian Will Durant and *Caesar and Christ* (1944). Who stands a bit out of this crowd is a Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's ex-president, who translated Shakespeare's Julius Caesar into Swahili in 1966 and, as such, he made it the most widely read book in East Africa. Touching this, it all shows Caesar's story has gained in popularity not only among people of various professions but also of different nationalities.

#### **2.4. The legitimacy of regicide**

As suggested, Julius Caesar, one of the best examples of power, remains mighty no matter how close he stands; whether he is alive or dead. How is it that he is the only one to

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<sup>7</sup> This epos also appeared in English, but only the first book of it being translated by Christopher Marlowe who also worked on the translation of another ancient work - Ovid's Amores.

keep on influencing others but not to be influenced by them? Perhaps, this might be the most essential capacity in Caesar and also might evoke the feeling that Shakespeare himself was also trying to stand aloof and keep interfering at the same time. Furthermore, this concept of continuous lingering influence also corresponds to the well-established Elizabethan doctrine of two king's bodies. According to Martin Hilsky's article issued in Hamlet v Národním divadle, the monarch was supposed to own two bodies: the natural one and the body of politic, the other of which was believed to exist even after the sovereign's death. This idea is more than welcoming in the talk of power because it presupposes the fact that while one can criticise the natural human faults perceived in the monarch, he must still keep in mind that over this natural body there is a state body being superior to the first one and more essential. Therefore, no wonder that the constant issue of obedience and revolt against the sovereign was such a frequent topic not only in a number of philosophical works but also in Shakespeare's tragedies and histories. In Julius Caesar, in particular, the question of regicide and its legitimacy comes to the surface since, though Brutus is persuaded to commit it through reasonable talk, he cannot escape his conscience anyway; this is demonstrated in the very words the apparition addresses him with in the night before the final battle:

Brutus: Art thou any thing?  
Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,  
That makest my blood cold and my hair to stare?  
Speak to me what thou art.  
Ghost: Thy evil spirit, Brutus

(Julius Caesar, IV.iii. 275-279)

The legitimacy of the decision to kill a ruler seems to matter in several Shakespeare's plays. This constant issue inspired politicians, philosophers and artists. George Buchanan, a Scottish reformer in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, tried his best to achieve well-founded arguments for deposing the monarch laying as the most essential one the difference between regicide and killing the tyrant. The similar struggle appears in Julius Caesar where, if it were to be read as a historical manual, the preference is given to the life under the dictator because it is better than the life in chaos and anarchy. In Hamlet, by contrast, the audiences are given the picture of the tyrant that, as it appears, must be killed at all events. The main character does not have to ponder over the legitimacy of the act; he simply acts. In Julius Caesar, however, Brutus is constantly haunted by dubious thoughts

whether or not he should act as he decided; he acts very hesitantly. The apt description of his hesitation can be found in Portia's words in Brutus's orchard:

. . . You've ungently, Brutus,  
Stole from my bed; and yesternight, at supper,  
You suddenly arose, and walk'd about,  
Musing and sighing, with your arms across,  
And when I ask'd you what the matter was,  
You stared upon me with ungentle looks;  
I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,  
And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot;  
Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,  
But, with an angry wafture of your hand,  
Gave sign for me to leave you.

(Julius Caesar, II.i. 237-247)

“Between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first motion . . . The genius and the mortal instruments are then in council” (Julius Caesar, II.i. 63-67), says Brutus shortly before he is paid a visit by conspirators to discuss the details of Caesar's assassination. By saying this, he describes the tension he experiences in the war with himself in the middle of the night; as if still hesitant whether or not he should join others and go on fighting not only with intentions that will influence fatally not only Caesar but also the whole empire. One conversation with Cassius was enough to shatter Brutus's mind and disturb his sleep, as he admits, “since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar / I have not slept” (Julius Caesar, II.i. 61-62). While in the real civil war Brutus joins Cassius to oppose Antony and Octavius, here he is left to wage another civil war alone and with himself; the experience in which the opposing thoughts are struggling with each other.

Various aspects of this struggle with the innermost self can be traced in several allusions Brutus makes when talking to himself. When Harold Bloom reaches the moment of this struggle he draws a distinction between Brutus's and another famous soliloquy made by Macbeth and says:

The difference is that Brutus's “state of man” is more unaided and lonesome than Macbeth's. Macbeth is the agent of supernatural forces that transcend Hecate and the witches. Brutus, the Stoic intellectual, is affected not by preternatural forces, but by his ambivalence which he has managed to evade.

(The Invention of the Human, 109)

On one side, he admits the necessity of Caesar's death, “it must be by his death” and, on the other, when conspirators come and “. . . their hats are pluck'd about their ears

and half their faces buried in their cloaks<sup>8</sup> . . . ” he calls the whole business a crime, “. . . O conspiracy, Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night, when evils are most free?” (Julius Caesar, II.i. 48)<sup>9</sup>. Brutus, apparently, marvels at the fact that conspirators are so careful to hide their faces when there is hardly anyone to stand up to them, as it is also revealed when no measure against them is taken immediately after Caesar’s death. Moreover, if Antony did not give his famous speech over Caesar’s corpse that kindled people’s wrath against murderers, hardly anyone would oppose them at all. Nevertheless, despite this bewilderment, Brutus welcomes the conspirators and repeats several times, “you are welcome . . . You are all welcome”, which is translated into Czech in more affectionate manner as “I am happy to see you all”<sup>10</sup>. His inner struggles, however, continue as it is shown in the remark he adds after that cordial welcome, “what watchful cares do interpose themselves / betwixt your eyes and night” (Caesar, II.i. 98-99).

After these words, there is a crucial moment when Cassius takes Brutus aside to whisper something Shakespeare did not find necessary to mention, and so readers are left to infer what Cassius told him from Brutus’s reactions coming afterwards. This secret whisper appears to move Brutus to make up his mind once for all and from this time on there is no more ambivalence in Brutus. He sticks to the resolution to kill Caesar and rid Rome of the danger of potential tyrant. However, it is this potential danger sowed into his heart by Cassius that Bloom aptly calls a fiction, “masking his own ambivalence toward Caesar, Brutus chooses to believe in a fiction, a rather unlikely one in which a crowned Caesar becomes another Tarquin.” (The Invention of the Human, 109)

Though it is easy to judge history from the present perspective and think about consequences when people of the past had to face circumstances, it is still alarming that the influence of one man can lead another one to the decision he would not make otherwise. Constant allusions to the past and to the possible run of events in the future were torturing Brutus and pushed him to make a one-sided decision. The example of Tarquin’s rule and

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<sup>8</sup> Hats and cloaks might evoke the image of the clothes from the Elizabethan period more than the image of the ancient Rome. Nevertheless, the reason for this lies in the fact that the actors were not used to dressing up as people living at the time of the play. Jiří Josek draws a comparison between the modern theatre, where dressing up is taken into account, and the Elizabethan theatre where it was not. (Josek, 170) Thurber even regards this description as another example of Shakespeare’s disregard of the costumes worn in Rome at that time. (Thurber, 209) Obviously, Shakespeare did not care so much about clothes as he did about words.

<sup>9</sup> Thurber puts this interpretation in his notes, attributing those free evils to the cases in which crimes are most free from the law, that is, Most unrestrained. (Thurber, 210)

<sup>10</sup> In Czech it is literally: Všechny vás rád vidím. (Josek, 51)

his father's heroic act of deposing this last king of Rome, along with potential awesome prospects of Rome under Caesar's tyranny so vividly depicted by Caesar's enemies, were so tiring Brutus's heart and conscience that he finally gave up and believed in the tragedy Rome could head for were Caesar crowned. Before this happened, Cassius himself had anticipated Brutus's surrender and counted on the general human propensity to give way to constant and repeated pressure; he declares, "Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see, Thy honourable metal may be wrought from that it is disposed . . . . For who so firm that cannot be seduced?" (Caesar, I.ii. 32) In these words he admits a trick played on Brutus to win him to the conspiracy; the trick that is played on Brutus's honesty.

Cassius stands out of the party of conspirators for one more thing than for having the main influence on Brutus's decision to stab Caesar to death. Besides being the only one to admit it is all about seducing<sup>11</sup> Brutus, he also presents a way to oppose this trickery. He seems convinced the only way not to be seduced and misled is to stick to those of honest characters. He reveals this when he states:

. . . Therefore it is meet  
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;  
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?  
Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus.  
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,  
He should not humour me.

(Caesar, I.ii. 32)

What Bloom calls "Cassius resentment of Caesar" and Josek "a personal grudge against Caesar" is in sharp contrast to "Brutus's love of Caesar" and "honourable principles and ideas" Brutus nurses. With this in mind, Brutus's love and honesty appears too blind not to see how he is used up. Then, it is love and honesty that needs to go hand in hand with prudence because if they happen to be misused the consequences might turn out much worse<sup>12</sup>; as Bloom states, "His [Brutus's] love of Caesar has in it a negative element darker than Cassius's resentment of Caesar" (The Invention of the Human, 109).

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<sup>11</sup> The etymology of this word might be of an interest since its exact meaning is 'lead away' or 'entice into wrongful behaviour'. As it contains only negative connotations, it is almost impossible to seduce somebody for a good thing. The good thing requires good ways. The Latin form is *seducere*: *se* – apart and *ducere* – lead. Then, this word should always design the practise of misleading and tricking people into wrong things.

<sup>12</sup> History might reveal a plenty of cases in which the honest men were fanaticized and kept pursuing the goals with clear motives, despite the fact what they were doing was totally wrong. Being persuaded of the honesty of the goals, they were unable to stand aloof and from objective perspective judge righteously what is right or wrong. This is the tragedy of being persuaded so much that it is not possible to be persuaded any more.



## 2.5. Between two worlds

When looking at the role of influence and power in Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra, it also seems necessary to tackle the question about the influences over Shakespeare himself. Did he also have to face the clash between the private and public? Did he also find himself standing between two worlds; just like Brutus in Julius Caesar or like Antony in Antony and Cleopatra?

There is about seven-year-long span between Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra and the assumption these two plays unfold the story set in similar time and historically successive might lead to the discoveries of some similarities and successiveness in Shakespeare's time as well. Those two plays represent two important epochs in Roman history: the assassination of Caesar and the inauguration of Octavius as the first ruler of the Roman Empire. The description of the gap between these two events would be very simple; the word that seems to fit best is chaos. The years following Caesar's fall were marked with the terror and chaos of civil war. It was as late as 27 BC Augustus restored order to Rome and put the seventeen chaotic years to end. The new period Pax Romana lasting around 200 years was inaugurated by Augustus and chaos of the preceding years was finally over. Shakespeare familiar enough with Roman history lets Octavius foretell this future of Rome in act IV.vi.: "The time of universal peace is near."

At the time of writing Julius Caesar, Shakespeare was one of the queen Elizabeth's subjects and, though some adherents of New Criticism might argue, also the subject of the Elizabethan times. Then, the question that might be raised would concern the actual impact the environment and culture made on Shakespeare in such a way he could not avoid it. However, to start this search and suggest some influences it seems fair to present two opposing notions of treating Shakespeare: one put forward by Harold Bloom, an advocate of New Criticism and the other offered by New Historicists and inspired by Stephen Greenblatt. As the former firmly states:

Part of the secret of Shakespeare's canonical centrality is his disinterestedness; despite all the flailings of New Historicists and other Resenters, Shakespeare is almost as free of ideology as are his heroic wits: Hamlet, Rosalind, Falstaff. He has no theology, no metaphysics, no ethics, and rather less political theory than is brought to him by his current critics . . . Refreshingly, he is not Nietzsche or King Lear, and he declined to go mad, though he had the imagination of madness, as of everything else.

(The Western Canon, 53)

Harold Bloom goes on praising and lifting Shakespeare's power of imagination and his aesthetic supremacy. However, he himself admits in his comments to Merry Wives of Windsor that Shakespeare was not always so free and unbound. He uses what looks as New Historicist's point:

The tradition is that Shakespeare wrote the *Merry Wives*, perhaps between the two parts of *Henry IV*, in response to Queen Elizabeth's request to show Sir John in love . . . . There are hints throughout that Shakespeare is uncomfortable with what he is doing and wishes to get it over with as rapidly as possible.

(The Invention of the Human, 315)

To see Shakespeare uncomfortable with what he is writing could well imply that this time the audience should not take it so seriously. The point being, reading too much into the play where there is not so much is supposed to result in absurd ends. Therefore, how to find the firm assumption that this is not true about other Shakespeare's plays, namely Antony and Cleopatra? Add to that, where is the base for assuming Shakespeare was comfortable enough when he was writing Antony and Cleopatra that it is feasible to assume he had some message in mind for his audience?

Tackling Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra as a unit could present one of the potential answers. Once again, Shakespeare picks up Plutarch's biographies and depicts the story that immediately follows the plot of Julius Caesar and even contains some of its characters. It seems rather questionable he would have done so without attributing to Caesar some kind of importance and assuming the end of the play is a good starting-point for another. His rereading Plutarch shows that Shakespeare knew well enough this is a good source; the fact he learnt from his experience with Julius Caesar. Nevertheless, the question remains whether Shakespeare turned to Plutarch again because the intention he had in mind was somehow close to the one in Julius Caesar or because he needed to find a theme beautiful enough to be worth writing about. In terms of criticism, the former might be deduced through practices of New Historicism, whereas the other one would be likely to evoke the support from New Criticism. The stress on “. . . the historicity of texts and the textuality of history . . .” as the key figure of the New Historicism Stephen J. Greenblatt describes the term applied to this groupings of critics in his collection of essays Learning to Curse would spark off considerations of how much “. . . the casual influences are mediated through discursive practices.” (Contemporary Literary Theory, 140). Hence, these casual influences will be scrutinized through both the historical and literary situation,

in the hope it will provide a firm ground for understanding Antony and Cleopatra and the role of power and influence within it.

What might first matter is the group of plays that had been performed shortly before Antony and Cleopatra was put onto stage. The particular look will be taken at things similar in all of them because they could suggest some overall idea at the back of Shakespeare's mind. The reason for this search is prompted by a certain link connecting three plays Othello, Macbeth and King Lear together and inspired by George Wilson Knight's method of interpreting Shakespeare's plays. G. W. Knight, along with Caroline Spurgeon, is considered a pioneer in the method that can be described as "the method of interpreting Shakespeare's plays by tracing the patterns of repeated metaphors, symbols, and other motifs that are peculiar to each". (20th Century Literary Criticism, 158) All three plays mentioned above were performed in two successive years and seem to tell stories of naivety versus cool calculation. Zdeněk Stříbrný remarks:

Almost in all Shakespeare's plays, namely in his greatest tragedies, appears a conflict of two worlds: the world of old times, backward ideas, the chivalry and foolishness, full of superstitions and blood; and the opposing world of new individual businessmen free from prejudices but deaf to their conscience, energetic, reason-oriented but also coldly calculating and indifferent to others.

(William Shakespeare 44, my translation)<sup>13</sup>

These words easily recall Shakespeare's famous sonnet 66 in which, through rhetorical device anaphora, the conjunction 'and' is repeated ten times to emphasize how dreadful time the poet turned out to live at that the only thing distracting him from suicide is love to the lady of his heart:

Tired will all these, for restful death I cry:  
As to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,  
And strength by limping sway disabled,  
And art made tongue-tied by authority,  
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,  
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,

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<sup>13</sup> Téměř ve všech Shakespearových hrách, a nejdramatičtěji v jeho vrcholných tragédiích, vystávají proti sobě dva světy. Svět staré pospolitosti, ale i zaostalosti, rytířských ctností, ale i pošetilostí, bludů a smrtelných krveprolití – a proti němu se bouřící svět nových individualistických podnikavců, zbavených všech předsudků, ale i svědomí, racionalistických, energických, ale i kariéristicky vypočítavých a bezohledných. (William Shakespeare 44, original in Czech)

And captive good attending captain ill.  
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,  
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

(Sonnet 66)

With a particular focus on the verse 11 “And simple truth miscalled simplicity”, another verse might fit here to depict the struggle between simplicity and cunning reasoning. Among those three plays preceding Antony and Cleopatra there is one that, more than the others, demonstrates the clash of old values and new devices. In Othello Iago first admits the splendid qualities found in Othello:

The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,  
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,  
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona  
A most dear husband.

(Othello, II.i. 230-233)

However, Iago despises the righteous character of Othello and does exactly what is expressed in the verse 11, sonnet 66; that is, the cautious shift from simple truth to simplicity, in other words, the shift from artless and honest belief to ignorance and stupidity. This is more evident in his closing words in Act II.i., which start with a seeming compliment to Othello’s qualities, but end up with resolution to spoil love through honest madness:

Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me  
For making him egregiously an ass  
And practicing upon his peace and quiet  
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused:  
Knavery's plain face is never seen till used.

(Othello, II.i. 250-254)

Besides Othello and Iago’s part in it, the clash between old and new is also manifested in King Lear. In contrast to Antony and Cleopatra where the two opposing worlds seem to be equal in terms of power and neither considers the other weak, in King Lear it might be easier to point to potential weaklings who do nothing to protect their rights. Finally, it must be the French king, Cordelia’s husband, who stands up for the claims of the oppressed ones and, shockingly, loses both the battle and Cordelia. Othello, despite his being “. . . Of a constant, loving, noble nature . . .” is driven to madness and his love does not look constant at all, provided it is liable to such a ghastly change. Cordelia, on the other hand, remains herself till the end and her affection for her father does not suffer any variation. Cordelia finds herself amidst the flurry of family war where the

opposing sides might evoke the idea of the past and the age to come. Lear's continuous claims over his royal privileges, though he is not a king anymore, and cunning merciless plots against him from his daughters do not only picture cruelties the young are able to inflict on the old, but also the dark side of human personality that comes out when given a chance. In Antony and Cleopatra and Julius Caesar both Antony and Brutus decides to stick to one world and oppose the other no matter which they belonged to before. Cordelia, however, appears to get stuck between the worlds and because she did not belong to neither of them, before or after, she dies. Zdeněk Stříbrný sees her as "the most splendid sign of future" and attributes to her ". . . Fragile features of dreamlike and fabulous utopian world." (William Shakespeare, 55, my translation)<sup>14</sup> Shakespeare later plays seem to prove it right, because the characters of similar "fragile features" do not die anymore, but, on the contrary, wins over the world and give their final forgiveness and reconciliation: e.g. Miranda in The Tempest, Imogena in Cymbeline and Hermiona, Paulina with Perdita in The Winter's Tale. Nevertheless, Antony and Cleopatra, along with Julius Caesar, are still somewhere on the way to these utopian visions. In these plays, heroes struggling for the utopian dreams always end up dead as if it were the only consequence and way out of the clash they find themselves in. Moreover, their struggles might be Shakespeare's own as well and it is the matter of further query what these struggles are all about.

Being on the brink of the enormous change in social order seems to push Shakespeare to react to it in his plays. It is the time of incredible sea voyages in which England is in its prime: first voyages around the world, new riches shipped over to Europe and growing competing market appear to form a base for the new world order. Surprisingly, what humanism commenced the commerce seemed to close; the idea humanist thinkers had to abhor. Literally, as the New Historicists see ". . . The literary work [is] as a vessel tossed in a social sea of competing interests, antagonistic values, and contradictions." (The Norton Anthology of Criticism, 2250) Add to that, the social sea around England at the turn of the sixteenth century was stormy enough to shatter even the stronger sort of man than Shakespeare. Douglas Bush sums up the background of this period in the following words:

While all ages are ages of transition, there are some in which disruptive and creative forces reach maturity and combine to speed up the normal process of change. In the

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<sup>14</sup> Tak nabývá Kornélie křehkých rysů jakéhosi snového, ale nekonečně spanilého utopického příslibu. (William Shakespeare, 55, original in Czech)

history of England, as in that of Europe at large, the seventeenth century is probably most conspicuous modern example, unless we except our own age, of such acceleration. In 1600 the educated Englishman's mind and world were more than half medieval; by 1660 they were more than half modern.

(The Early Seventeenth Century, 1)

It seems Julius Caesar, in particular, bridges two opposing periods in England, marking the change in politics and society.

The play [Julius Caesar] pertains to the first Shakespeare's plays in which the renaissance trust in the man and his capacities shifts to the baroque skepticism; the shift that was accompanied by the feeling of ambivalence and ghastly horror.

(Julius Caesar. Ed. Josek, J. 5, my translation)<sup>15</sup>

The play announces a new period and great change of time in both England and the continent. The first performance of the play took place in the theatre Globe at the turn of the century, in 1598. Despite hundreds of years, the new epoch in Rome sparked off by the Caesar's death can also resemble the coming age in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England. Is this what Shakespeare was scared of? Seeing the chaos and the civil war after the death of the mighty dictator, was he also afraid of what future held for England after the death of the mighty queen? When using this concept of history, he was not far from the truth. The conspirators huddled around the queen, just as in the Roman senate around Caesar, and similarly, while the queen had to keep an eye on her sister, Caesar should have been wary of his 'son' Brutus. The message of the play could be simple. If it were to speak directly to the queen, it could call to her 'please, be warned, pay attention to this, think about those close to you'. The price of Caesar's neglecting the soothsayer's warning words was too high to be paid again:

*Caesar.* What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

*Soothsayer.* Beware the ides of March.

*Caesar.* He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass.

(Caesar, I. ii, 16)

In this sense, Shakespeare puts himself into the role of another soothsayer, being afraid of possible consequences following the queen's death and realizing the hopelessness and terror of the people abandoned by its ruler. Thus, the run of things after Caesar's death might illustrate what is supposed to happen if the queen passes away without any heir. The quote from Harold Bloom supports this when he states, "Shakespeare's Caesar is at most a benign tyrant, certainly in comparison with the terror afterward practiced as policy by

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<sup>15</sup> Patří k prvním Shakespearovým hrám, ve kterých renesanční víru v člověka a jeho schopnosti vystřídala barokní skepse, provázená pocity rozpolcenosti a tajemné hrůzy. (Josek 5, original in Czech)

Antony and Octavius” (The Invention of the Human, 115). The prophetic side of the play tells its tale again since the history reveals the turn for worse when comparing the Elizabethan and Jacobean times; the new period emerging in England meant bitterer times.

## **2.6. The life-threatening performance of Richard II**

Shakespeare himself also experienced the touch of power, since it was his theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, that got paid for playing their old play Richard II just one day before the rising against the queen on August 4, 1601. According to Stephen Greenblatt, Elisabeth I is even reported to exclaim on this day: “I am Richard II. Know ye not that?” (“Introduction to the Power of Forms” The Norton Anthology of Criticism, 2251) Shortly before the attempted murder, Shakespeare’s company plays the story about the real murder. Moreover, the relation existing between Shakespeare and Essex, and, even closer relation, between Shakespeare and Southampton, both involved in the rising, shows Shakespeare might have been hardly indifferent to what was happening at that time. Above all, if the queen’s life seemed seriously threatened, every tie with the conspirators could be called to question and Shakespeare’s life, at least when remembering his explicit dedications to Southampton, would appear in jeopardy. Harold Bloom uses the same context as Greenblatt in his comments on Richard II but points out Shakespeare’s discontent with the political use of the play; that is, As a tool of power. As Bloom states:

The Earl of Southampton helped arrange that Shakespeare’s company give a performance of *Richard II* as prelude to the Essex rebellion against Elizabeth in 1601, six years after the first performance of the play. Shakespeare cannot have been happy with this, but evidently he could not refuse, and he was fortunate that this elicited only Queen Elizabeth’s ironic comment “I am Richard II, know ye not that?” Essex was no Bolingbroke, and Elizabeth not at all Richard, and being dragged into potential danger was anything but Shakespeare’s way, since he never forgot what the state had done to Marlowe and to Kyd.

(The Invention of the Human, 262-263)

As Harold Bloom shows Shakespeare might have been lucky to avoid appearing on the list of the rebels. It would be very difficult to persuade state investigators that Richard II was only a play without any touch to the reality and that the evidence of Southampton’s paying for the performance is a pure coincidence. This can be further supported by Annabel Patterson who, when listing the basic hermeneutical principles, refers to John Chamberlain’s letter written on 1 March 1599 and uses the exact words Chamberlain wrote

to Dudley Carleton as a result of questioning the appearance of Sir John Hayward's Life of Henry IV that led to Hayward's temporary imprisonment:

“Why such a storie shold come out at this time.” That is, the importance of an exact chronology in determining what any given text was likely to mean to its audience at the time of its appearance . . . Hayward's history had acquired its dangerous significance by appearing at a particular tense moment toward the end of Elizabeth's life, that the significance resided precisely in the connection between “this time” and “such a storie.” In other words, to retell the story of Richard's deposition by Henry Bolingbroke at a time when Elizabeth's authority was being challenged by the earl of Essex was inevitably to suggest an analogy – the same analogy that Elizabeth admitted to William Lambarde in 1601 when she saw herself in Shakespeare's play.

(Censorship and Interpretation, 55)

The fact Shakespeare was so close to face the queen's disgrace, just as the rebels had to, though he himself did not mean it at all, gives Shakespeare a very profound feeling of the power and influence. Mentioned above, Bloom's comment makes it quite obvious, “Shakespeare cannot have been happy with this, but evidently he could not refuse . . . .” Though the answer to why he could not refuse it Bloom does not mention, Greenblatt sees one of the causes in a very ordinary thing: “This power, notwithstanding royal protection, censorship, and the players' professions of unswerving loyalty, could be purchased for forty shillings.” (“Introduction to the Power of Forms”, 2252) This purchase occurred because some people evidently understood the theatre as one of the forms of “ . . . Power to subvert . . . .” (“Introduction to the Power of Forms”, 2252) Hence, there might be two things Shakespeare appeared to be discontented with: the necessity to accept Southampton's order and the use of the theatre as the power to subvert or, as Greenblatt more explicitly remarks, as the power “ . . . To wrest legitimation from the established ruler and confer it on another.” (“Introduction to the Power of Forms”, 2252).

Both Julius Caesar and Richard II give a hint to Shakespeare's view of sovereignty, though, as Harold Bloom adds, “Shakespeare is almost as free of ideology as are his heroic wits: Hamlet, Rosalinda, Falstaff.” (The Western Canon, 53) Why not believe Bloom that Shakespeare had a resistance to any form of ideology, let alone theology, metaphysics or political theory, and accept it as one of Shakespeare's supremacies. However, Shakespeare were to know that no matter what he means people will make their own interpretations on the basis of what they have seen and lived through; Annabel Patterson calls this “ . . . The writer's own sensitivity or insensitivity to his audience determining his ability to survive.”



(Censorship, 54) The simple fact that the world is a theatre and the theatre is an image of the world, the idea Shakespeare himself suggests, helps realise the importance of seeing the audience when constructing the play. Greenblatt recognizes this as a distinction between “literary foreground” and “political background”; or in other words as a distinction between “artistic production” and “social production”. Therefore, though free from any ideology, Shakespeare presented plays that somehow exposed the audiences to the thought that legitimate authority is still better than ruthless usurper, simply because the usurpation gives way to the civil war; the situation taking place in both plays after Caesar’s and Richard’s murder.

Another evidence pointing to the power of the theatre Shakespeare might be expected to anticipate is revealed in the history-making moment of the glorious wedding of king James’s daughter, the princess Elizabeth. She became a lawful wedded wife of the Czech protestant king Fridrich Falcky who embodied the hopes of Czech exiles that longed to retain the religious freedom and protestant supremacy in the central Europe. In such a case, the alliance with the English protestant king was a hoped-for step. Again, no matter what Shakespeare felt about it personally, his plays were used to commemorate this historic event. About eight plays are said to have been performed and even the final blessing of Miranda and Ferdinand in The Tempest is believed to have been addressed to the newly married couple; no wonder that Fridrich Falcky himself became a patron of the theatrical company. Similarly, the last Shakespeare’s play *Henry VIII* mirrors the anti-catholic preferences that England and Bohemia had in common. What it all suggests is the phenomenon the theatre and the art as a whole appears to carry; that is, The power to subvert and the power to support. The actual outcome often depends more on those (mis)using the art than on those doing the art.

Both examples, Richard II and The Tempest, suggest that despite own personal feelings about issues, Shakespeare was (mis)used to mirror the issues the society found itself passing through; the fact sometimes beneficial and sometimes perilous.

### 3. Depicted Power

#### 3.1. Docere et Delectare

If one traces the form of power and the way characters in some plays influence each other, the first thing he might be expected to do is to define the actual word. Without this, there would be just a vague feeling of what power stands for and this feeling would differ from one person to another. In the preceding sections, the power was viewed from two perspectives: the kind of literary power or, in other words, the anxiety of influence, and the power experienced in “. . . a social sea of competing interests.” (Norton Anthology of Criticism, 2250) The third form of the power will be scrutinized in Antony and Cleopatra through Shakespeare’s and Plutarch’s use of these two lovers.

The American Heritage Dictionary puts forward several definitions of *power*<sup>16</sup> all of which do not correspond with the idea of Jeremy Hawthorne, the author of the glossary of literary theory, who describes *power* as:

. . . That which either allows or prevents a subject from reaching its object. A power can be an individual character, or it can be an abstraction such as fate, age, nature, and so on. The issue of power has entered into recent discussion of literature mainly in connection with issues loosely related to ideology. Literature is often subject to control (Through censorship, restrictions on literacy, use of powers associated with ownership of libraries, publishing houses, reviewing media) precisely because it can challenge existing authorities – or because these at least believe that it can.

(A Glossary of Literary Theory, 156)

Given the above, definitions might also imply that the power does not have to be realised by all means but that the belief in its potential realisation can suffice. With this in mind, the power seems more effective in the terms of anticipating and expecting than in the terms of actual control and might. It is mainly caused by the fact that the anticipation, expectation or vague feeling at the back of mind make people act without any observable reasons. Hence, the authorities, in particular those practising rather questionable steps, censor literature far before they get attacked by it; simply just in case.

The similar concept of power is also present in Antony and Cleopatra, in particular, in Cleopatra’s attitude and influence over Antony. Finding himself in the tension caused by the clash of two opposing views of the world, Roman and Egyptian, Antony rushes to and

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<sup>16</sup> For example: The ability or capacity to act or perform effectively, a specific faculty, aptitude, a person, group or nation having great influence or control over others, forcefulness, effectiveness etc.

fro, from Rome to Egypt, from Egypt to Rome, and becomes the only personage in the play to change both the place and himself. The point being, his appearance in Rome is always Roman, in Egypt Egyptian. One might recall the old saying “When in Rome, do as Romans do” of which Antony does not have to be reminded, because he naturally turns back into a resolute and cool Roman soldier when arriving in Rome in order to do exactly the same when back in Egypt. By contrast, Octavius and Cleopatra appear to remain same, a kind of flat characters, and their identity does not cease to be tied to their country. Caesar remains Roman no matter whether he is in Rome, at sea or in Egypt, and, similarly, Cleopatra is always exotic, untouchable and Egyptian no matter what is going on; though as a good actress playing herself she lets her passion change so often that one never knows what the next manifestation of her passion will be like. Moreover, when Antony finally clings to Egypt and fights alongside Cleopatra, one might still get a dubious feeling that it is not the result of his free choice but the evidence of Cleopatra’s victory over Rome. If true, the victory would be realised without any weapons or external things but, quite the opposite, through an internal power Cleopatra exercises over Antony regardless of her presence near him or distance from him

However, it would be too easy to limit all these three characters, namely Cleopatra, to this short description. Shakespeare is not so quick to be settled; Harold Bloom himself admits: “. . . I am certain . . . That the plays read me better than I read them.” (The Invention of the Human, ) and adds:

Of Shakespearean representations of women, Cleopatra’s is the most subtle and formidable, by universal consent. Critics never can agree on very much about her: Shakespeare’s control of the various perspectives on her is so astute in this play, more perhaps than in any other, that the audience is given an enigmatic range of possible judgements and interpretations.

(The Invention of the Human, 546)

Shakespeare’s wisest woman may be Rosalind in *As You Like It*, but his most comprehensive is Cleopatra . . . . Cleopatra brilliantly bewilders us, and Antony, and herself. Mutability is incessant in her passional existence, and it excludes sincerity as being irrelevant to eros.

(The Invention of the Human, 715)

Considering the above, Cleopatra seems to be more suitable example of power than anybody else in the play, simply because, along with Julius Caesar and Prospero, she acts with a constant lingering influence proving that just as Julius Caesar remains mighty with his spirit walking abroad and turning “. . . Our [conspirators’] swords / in our own proper

entrails.” (Caesar, V.iii. 152), or just as director-like Prospero navigates the play, she herself is the mistress of the play. While Antony’s fate seems more than catastrophic and Octavius’s effort rather cool and Machiavellian, Cleopatra acts as she pleases and even her escape from the battle at Actium and her death are both in her hands.

Bloom states: “Critics never can agree on very much of her [Cleopatra].” (The Invention of the Human, 546) Her personage is so inexhaustible that there is still some space for new interpretations. No wonder, the very characters in the play ranging from Roman soldiers to Egyptian eunuchs would differ in their views of Cleopatra as well. Despite these differences, however, Shakespeare exposes his audiences to Roman view of Cleopatra and let them say for themselves whether or not this view is consistent with what Cleopatra does and says. David Bevington takes a notice of the same thing: “The Roman point of view opens the play, and never entirely loses its force. At first it may seem superior to that of Egypt.” (Antony and Cleopatra, xix) Bevington wisely adds that this may seem at first, as if suggesting that though the Roman view persists, it does not have to receive the audiences’ approval throughout the play. Thus, provided neither critics nor audiences seem in agreement, Shakespeare might have done it on purpose in order to please all kinds of personal attitudes to the theme of the play.

With this in mind, Shakespeare as a person largely depending on his audiences and patrons is likely to follow the common rule of Elizabethan artists “docere et delectare”<sup>17</sup>. It reminds again the form of power Shakespeare might be supposed to stick to after the unfortunate performance of Richard II, a day before the attempted assassination of the queen. This form of power encompasses the capacity and resolution to create works everybody is expected to be satisfied with and the author feels content with. From the very beginning of the play, the audiences are told this is one of the views of Cleopatra and now judge for yourself how much it is legitimate or not in the light of the rest of the play and be ready to find the sufficient support for both extreme: either it is all about love and all for love, or it is all about manipulation and all for politics. Logically, if the watchwords of Elizabethan playwrights were as those mentioned above, then, the more delight they offered the more profit they could get. Furthermore, provided the Elizabethan and Jacobean times saw the expansion of education and readership, the playwrights were more and more

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<sup>17</sup> Profit and delight

concerned about the demands of all levels of society. When studying the mode of life in England at that time, R. E. Pritchard remarks:

*Docere et delectare* were the watchwords. There was also a growing market for entertainment – satirical pamphlets, accounts of crime and scandal, poems and ballads, almanacs, playscripts, jestbooks, and fiction (though the realist novel did not appear until much later). By the turn of the century, perhaps two hundred books were published each year.

(Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times, 2)

This might serve as a link between the form of power as experienced in a social sea of competing interests and the form depicted in Cleopatra's character. Cleopatra is so inexhaustible that she can be hardly fully grasped and, thus, enables the audiences entertain and have a delight in a variety of interpretations; simply, as they like it or as Shakespeare made them like it. Harold Bloom does not forget to remind in constant allusions in The Invention of the Human that it is mainly Shakespeare who explains us and invents us:

The plays remain the outward limit of human achievement: aesthetically, cognitively, in certain ways morally, even spiritually. They abide beyond the end of the mind's reach; we cannot catch up to them. Shakespeare will go on explaining us, in part because he invented us, which is the central argument of this book. I have repeated that argument throughout, because it will seem strange to many.

(The Invention of the Human, xvii – xviii)

Shakespeare writes roles for particular actors in his theatrical company and the plays for his audiences, patrons and the queen or king; the last two were often represented by their Lord Chamberlain who “. . . Supervised Court activities, including entertainments (with a special eye on plays) . . . “ (Life in Elizabethan and Jacobean Times, 129). To please all, profit a lot and keep own face was obviously the form of power Shakespeare experienced and used when writing his plays. This experienced power is depicted in the largeness of Cleopatra's role and her role of herself as well. Bloom stresses that it is “. . . So wonderfully difficult for an actress, who must act the part of Cleopatra, and also portray Cleopatra acting the part of Cleopatra.” (The Invention of the Human, 548) This fact itself offers the audiences to focus on what they like according to their personal preferences: either on the part of Cleopatra and nothing more, or on the part of Cleopatra's Cleopatra with all the interpretations sparked off by that.

### **3.2. The precedent**

The example of how skilfully Shakespeare plays with the image of Cleopatra and Antony is evident in the ambivalent verse that can be interpreted in various ways and can offer different keys to the personalities of the two lovers. “I’ll seem the fool I am not. Antony / will be himself”, says Cleopatra in the very first scene as if predetermining roles they both will play; or, more precisely, she will play because Antony will always be himself. This equivocal place refers to Antony either as to a fool, to a Roman leader or to a deceiver. It is hard to tell the right implication from the others since they all seem legitimate. Provided Cleopatra called Antony a fool from the very beginning, she might have made known her policy to the audience and stressed she was going to take such a course of action that would serve Egyptian purposes; no matter how much effort she would have to make to fool Antony. This view of Cleopatra’s significant statement is also supported by Roman point of view. The whole play starts with presenting one of Antony’s officers Philo who, though beginning with references to his general’s splendid properties such as “. . . Goodly eyes / that o’er the files and the musters of the war / have glowed like plated Mars . . . His captain’s heart / Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst the buckles on his breast . . . “ ends with a sad observance, “The triple pillar of the world transform’d / into a strumpet’s fool.” (Antony and Cleopatra, I.i. 1-13) Both descriptions of Antony look rather hyperbolic. As every reader of Plutarch might know, Antony’s greatest battles were those his generals won for him; as Plutarch states, “Both Antony and Octavius were said to be luckier in the battles others took command of on their behalf than in those they themselves were in command of.” (Plutarch, 640) On the other hand, the closing cynicism calling Antony a strumpet’s fool is the opposite extreme and points to the fact that once a mighty commander was being made a fool of now. Philo’s introductory speech bridges this play to Julius Caesar where Antony was left standing over Brutus’s dead body as a winner together with Octavius. When being enchanted by Cleopatra, he shifts slowly from this winning position and begins to lose battles up to his final defeat.

While the notion of seeing Antony as a fool in Cleopatra’s eyes from the first scene points to the queen’s intelligence and smartness, the remaining two make her hopeless. If Antony remains a Roman leader at all cost, she will only become his mistress and the similar love affair as the one with Caesar might repeat itself. More tragically, had Antony been a deceiver just using her up, the idea Cleopatra cries out when overwhelmed with jealousy for Antony’s lawful wife Fulvia naming it “Excellent falsehood”, the whole

concept of the play would have to turn the other way about. Cleopatra, however, insists that she is not the fool and coming dialogues between her and Antony proves it right. Harold Bloom makes an apt point when saying: “Cleopatra never ceases to play Cleopatra, and her perception of her role necessarily demotes Antony to the equivocal status of her leading man. It is her play, and never quite his . . .” (The Invention of the Human, 546) Moreover, the illustration of a fan Antony is likened to, “. . . his captain’s heart . . . is become the bellows and the fan to cool a gypsy’s lust.” and the allusion it might evoke when the train of eunuchs fanning Cleopatra appears immediately after Philo’s words, gives credibility of understanding the play as primarily Cleopatra’s. The image of Antony as a eunuch, in the sense of losing his masculinity, fits well Harold Bloom’s remark, “he [Antony] is waning well before the curtain goes up, and she [Cleopatra] cannot allow herself to wane.” (Bloom, op. Cit. 546)

After presenting this sort of preamble, Philo invites his friend, and implicitly the audience as well, to behold and see. However, both Demetrius and audience are inclined to follow the course of events with the picture of a strumpet and a fool in mind; that is, with a Roman point of view in mind. If this picture is really legitimate or not might be questionable, but still a certain precedent resulting from the very first scene seems to spring to audience’s mind and it might warn audience of not taking Antony and Cleopatra as suffering lovers who face the misunderstanding and the cruel world standing in their way; the concept easily applied to Romeo and Juliet but awkward in terms of Antony and Cleopatra’s affair. If the audiences are given the Roman view of Cleopatra as a Machiavellian erotic gypsy at the very beginning then, in the course of the play, they have to either abandon it or find more support for it. The power depicted here talks about the pursuit Cleopatra follows but nobody else is sure about. Neither Antony nor anybody else, let alone Octavius, can grasp her.

The question raised about the true face of the main protagonists; that is, who is whose fool and who is under whose power and influence can also be answered through historical imperfections Shakespeare might have consciously made and through historical facts Shakespeare literally followed. As Shakespeare was inspired by Plutarch; though in a different way than in the case of Virgil, it seems convenient to compare where and how much he followed Plutarch’s Parallel Lives and to what extent he departed from the historical account. Therefore, the first comparison will deal with the accordance between

Plutarch and Shakespeare, and the second one will examine the differences that seem to spring up when pondering over Shakespeare's Antony with Plutarch's picture in mind.

### **3.3. Shakespeare's and Plutarch's Antony**

Both Antony and Cleopatra share that enormous appetite for love and life and, hence, they tend to neglect their governmental duties though Antony seems to do so more than Cleopatra. The first scene shows Cleopatra as the one fully aware of the consequences resulting from turning back on Rome. She urges Antony to hearken to the news from Rome as if understanding that it is not reasonable to ignore the state commissions; "Is Caesar with Antonius prized so light?" wonders Demetrius and Cleopatra appears to share the same feeling. However, even here one gets bewildered by her and realises how difficult it is to grasp her since, later on, she is able to reproach Antony for reacting to the news and being Rome-bound. Bloom's comment mentioned above finds its place again: "Mutability is incessant in her passional existence." (The Invention of the Human, 715)

Shakespeare offers several examples of Antony and Cleopatra's indulging in careless pleasures; as Antony himself confesses, "there's not a minute of our lives should stretch / without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?" (Antony and Cleopatra, I.i. 48-49) There are several supports to this in Plutarch and, with Shakespeare reading Plutarch in mind, it is clear that when Shakespeare mentions Antony's indulgences he is very close to his historical personality. Antony served to Shakespeare as a best presentation of the strange combination of heroism and indulgence. In Plutarch one would hardly find someone of the same combination; there are either villains like Sulla or heroes like Julius Caesar. However, when it comes to Antony, then, after reading Plutarch, one might get the feeling he was just a cad; the attribute being also given to Aeneas in Phillip Hardie's introduction to The Aeneid: ". . . Aeneas has been a perfect hero, a cad and a downright villain." (The Aeneid, *vii*.) In Plutarch's account, the picture of Antony as a cad is somehow surpassing the other attributes given to Aeneas. In Shakespeare's eyes, however, Antony is not only a cad but, add to that, a passionate hero and poet. For Bloom, Antony is ". . . Shakespeare's final triumph over Marlowe's shouting cartoon, Tamburlaine the Great." (The Invention of the Human, 558) Plutarch's record is full of Antony's actions, victories and failures; Shakespeare's Antony is vital, heroic and Herculean. Using the



mythic comparison, David Bevington sees Antony as Hercules being not entirely in his prime:

In another mythic comparison, Antony is like Hercules, not in his prime but with the shirt of Nessus on his back – a poisoned shirt given Hercules by his wife in a mistaken hope of thereby assuring his love for her (4.12.43).

(Antony and Cleopatra, xx)

Shakespeare uses the same imagery seeing Antony as an archetype of Hercules and so does Plutarch. First, Antony's soldiers come to the conclusion that "Tis the god Hercules, whom Antony loved / Now leaves him." (IV.iii. 21) and then Antony himself concludes that he was bewitched and played tricks on all the time he was in deep affection for Cleopatra:

The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me,  
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage . . . .  
The witch shall die.

(Antony and Cleopatra, IV.xii. 43.44.47)

However, it is not only Hercules being likened to Antony; Plutarch plays with another image coming from the life of the similar mythic hero:

Whereas Antony, like Hercules in the picture where Omphale is seen removing his club and stripping him of his lion's skin, was over and over again disarmed by Cleopatra, and beguiled away, while great actions and enterprises of the first necessity fell, as it were, from his hands, to go with her to the seashore of Canopus and Taphosiris, and play about.

(Plutarch, 677/3)

Shakespeare gives a hint to this imagery and, being likely to know the story about Heracles and Omphale from Plutarch and Ovid, makes Antony look like Heracles and Cleopatra like Omphale. He lets Cleopatra recall her act of effeminising Antony:

I laughed him out of patience ; and that night  
laughed him into patience. And next morn,  
ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed,  
then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst  
I wore his sword Philippan.

(Antony and Cleopatra, II.v. 19-22)

In all these allusions Shakespeare appears to be in accord with Plutarch's account of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship. The overall picture shows Antony powerfully influenced by Cleopatra and brings both main characters to the connection with two mythic couples where two heroes, Hercules and Heracles, are settled by their female counterparts. Using the first imagery from myths, Antony is Cleopatra's victim because she hoped to win

him back from Rome and from Octavia in particular, but, by doing so, she finally loses him; whereas, in the second case, Antony is Cleopatra's fool she can entertain herself with without spoiling anything else but his masculinity. Even his amazing victory over Brutus at Phillipi is nothing to Cleopatra because she experiences her own power over this famous Roman soldier who lies in front her drunk and dressed in women's clothes. However, this is all just a sport and game because she is far from looking at him with disdain. Despite all her humiliating words towards Antony said in rage, she confesses her respect and admiration for Antony several times, "Lord of lords / o infinite virtue . . ." or when seeing him in full armour with Herculean courage ready to earn their chronicle with a sword and return to kiss her with blood all over, she cannot help exclaiming, "That's my brave lord!" (Antony and Cleopatra, IV.viii. 16.17; III.xiii. 180). Antony always remains a hero, though a hero of the past. This is apparent in both Shakespeare and Plutarch: in the former through Caesar's words when he learns about Antony's death, in the latter through his closing comparison of Antony and Demetrius. As Caesar says:

Dercetus: I say, O Caesar, Antony is dead  
Caesar: The breaking of so great a thing should make  
A greater crack. The round world  
Should have shook lions into civil streets  
And citizens to their dens. The death of Antony  
Is not a single doom; in the name lay  
A moiety of the world.

(Antony and Cleopatra, V.i. 14-18)

Plutarch, on the other hand, uses Antony's unfortunate affair to prove that that was the real sign of his greatness:

Those very things that procured him ill-repute bear witness to his greatness . . .  
Antony was thought disgraced by his marriage with Cleopatra, a queen superior in power and glory to all, except Arsaces, who were kings in her time. Antony was great as to be thought by others worthy of higher things than his own desires.

(Plutarch, 676)

Perhaps, Plutarch's closing words over Antony might have become those that inspired Shakespeare to write a play about a hero who does not look like a hero at all and still remains an undisputable Herculean hero. After his death, nobody can compare him. He pertains to the age of Julius Caesar and Pompey, which is what Bloom calls "Herculean or heroic age" and adds, "Antony – in the play – is already archaic, reflective of a time when charismatic flamboyance still could overcome every obstacle." (The Invention of the Human, 558) Therefore, Shakespeare makes Caesar feel astonished and puzzled when

Antony challenges him to duel; fairly Herculean act, though, to pragmatic Caesar, looking a bit primitive. Nothing would make Caesar accept and he ascribes the challenge to Antony's powerless rage, replying:

Let the old ruffian know  
I have many other ways to die, meantime  
Laugh at his challenge.

(Antony and Cleopatra, IV.i. 4-6)

Antony marks the end of Herculean age and Harold Bloom points to his and Cleopatra's story as the mark of the end of something in Shakespeare's work as well. He states that "After Antony and Cleopatra, something vital abandons Shakespeare."

When it comes to the points Plutarch and Shakespeare part, Cleopatra seems to appear. On Antony they both, more or less, agree. Cleopatra, however, stands in the centre of their parting. Historically, Plutarch sticks to the Roman point of view, though he admits that Cleopatra was not driven only by political concerns but also by deep affection for Antony. Nevertheless, despite admitting her love for Antony, Plutarch calls their relationship Antony's last extremest mischief:

The last and extremest mischief – to wit, the love of Cleopatra – lighted on him, who did waken and stir up many vices yet hidden in him and were never seen to any; and if any spark of goodness or hope of rising were left him, Cleopatra quenched it straight and made it worse than before.

(Plutarch,633/25)

Seeing Cleopatra as the one that pursues to save her relationship with Antony at all cost, even at the cost of losing him, makes her look rather passionate than pragmatic; again, the comparison with the mythic story about Heracles's wife can spring up. However, she appears to be more guilty than Antony because she quenches whatever spark of hope of rising or redeeming quality that would otherwise help Antony resist temptation. This is Plutarch's record and it is worth uncovering how close or far Shakespeare stands to it.

There is no idealisation of Antony on Shakespeare's side. Several episodes are in accordance with Plutarch's account and Shakespeare uses both those praising Antony's valour and those making him look a bit awkward. As already mentioned, there are admiring Caesar's words recalling Antony's journey through the Alps, remembrances of his battles and other examples that would place him in the pantheon of Greek-Roman heroes. What, however, counterbalances this view is constant and lingering Cleopatra's power and influence combined with the art of using the theatrical gestures and words that always make

a profound impact on Antony and manipulate him according to Cleopatra's will. Plutarch seems very strict to Antony's crazes and makes it clear that it is Cleopatra that quenches the last independent qualities in Antony. Shakespeare, on the other hand, opens the view a bit wider and offers to his audiences an alternative in which Antony remains a hero till the end; a hero that is hard to look up to but is easy to be sympathetic with. Once again, Shakespeare brings enough space for everybody in the audience coming to be entertained and get the equivalent for what he had to pay.

The picture of Antony seems evoke in the audience the feeling of both admiration and irony. Another striking difference between Plutarch and Shakespeare is also suggested in the contrast conclusions they both end up their stories with. The former states in his Parallel Lives when comparing Antony and Demetrius:

For their final disasters they have both only to thank themselves; not, however, in an equal degree. Demetrius was deserted, the Macedonians revolted from him: Antony deserted others, and ran away while men were fighting for him at the risk of their lives. The fault to be found with the one is that he had entirely alienated the affections of his soldiers; the other's condemnation is that he abandoned so much love and faith as he still possessed. We cannot admire the death of either, but that of Demetrius excites our greater contempt. He let himself become a prisoner, and was thankful to gain three years' accession of life in captivity. He was tamed like a wild beast by his belly, and by wine, Antony took himself out of the world in a cowardly, pitiful and ignoble manner, but, still in time to prevent the enemy having his person in their power.

(Plutarch, 678/6)

On the other hand, Shakespeare ends his play with Caesar's talk over dead bodies of Antony and Cleopatra and wins great sympathy from his audiences by letting them leave the theatre with the verse "No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / a pair so famous" (Antony and Cleopatra, V.ii. 359) in mind as the last echo of all they have seen. Thus, while Plutarch draws the reader's attention to Antony, that is, to the representative of Rome in the course of history, Shakespeare's Caesar calls them a famous pair, putting Antony and Cleopatra together and not seeing Cleopatra only as the one that stole Rome of their Roman. With Plutarch in mind, it would be easy to consider Cleopatra a witch and the originator of Antony's fall; the idea which opens way for further discussion about Cleopatra's power and influence over Antony. Shakespeare's way of dealing with both protagonists, however, makes them look more connected to each other; the link not so easy to be ignored. There is some touch of destiny in Antony's last words before his first leaving for Rome on hearing the news about Fulvia's death:

Our separation so abides and flies  
That thou, residing here, goes yet with me,  
And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee.  
Away!

(Antony and Cleopatra, I.iii. 103-105)

### **3.4. The Invention of the Human**

Given the above, they both seem to exercise power over each other and limit the other's behaviour either by their actual presence or lingering influence when they must separate. Some power always brings them back together even at the risk of their own lives. One might call this power pure love, another frantic passion and others simply lust and stupidity. Each characteristic, if preferred, would lack the quality of those remaining. Janet Adelman suggests that "Shakespeare deliberately makes aspects of both major characters opaque to us." (The Invention of the Human, 560) Harold Bloom argues that one of the causes of Antony and Cleopatra's tragic fall is their desire to be the world:

So varied and exuberant is Antony and Cleopatra that its protagonists never dominate; the world prevails, and the play, more than any other by Shakespeare, is itself a heterocosm. Cleopatra and Antony are parts of a world; they desire to be the world, and that alone is their tragedy. Octavius wins because he represents Rome, and Rome will ingest much of the world.

(The Invention of the Human, 561)

Bloom further suggests that the word *world* becomes a refrain throughout the whole play. What does he mean by it? In the context of his idea of Shakespeare's invention of the human, one of the aspects the world denotes is the uncertainty and hesitation over being and acting: when one knows he is himself and when he can tell that he acts himself? Bloom also adds that "if you cease to know when you impersonate yourself, you are likely to seem more opaque than you are." (The Invention of the Human, 560) Thus, the struggle between being and acting pervades throughout the play and makes protagonists look sometimes histrionic and sometimes real. The hardest task, then, would be to tell these times apart. They mingle together in the human in such a way that one becomes the other and vice versa: they act their being and live through acting. This concept of the world represents the power depicted in the play. It is no more a question "to be or not to be" but "to be or to act".

Shakespeare, with all what he experienced as power, balances between these two features of the world and is capable of both being and acting. In the very play, Shakespeare

hardly takes sides and leaves it to his audiences to choose whoever they prefer. However, following Bloom's comment on Shakespeare's impartiality, the world is finally denied its triumph over Cleopatra and she departs with a majestically tragic air; as Bloom states:

The world, let alone Octavius, wants its triumph over Cleopatra, but Shakespeare at last takes sides, and denies the world its sadism, by appropriating Cleopatra for his play's triumph alone.

(The Invention of the Human, 566)

Though it might seem questionable which of the main characters, whether Antony or Cleopatra, wins the sympathy of their playwright, Octavius is supposed to fall from favour of both audiences and the playwright. Antony dies, Cleopatra laments but Octavius vindicates his victory:

O Antony,  
I have followed thee to this; but we do launch  
Diseases in our bodies. I must perforce  
Have shown to thee such a declining day,  
Or look on thine; we could not stall together  
In the whole world.

(Antony and Cleopatra, V.i. 36-45)

These words do not necessarily have to make Octavius more abhorrent to audiences and he can remain, if not in favour, then, at least, in a neutral position. Up to this point, he has been a Roman fighting another Roman; the way quite understandable in the world of politics and pragmatism. He himself admits that one world could not do for them both and one of them would inevitably have had to succumb to the other. Therefore, when Antony is at death's door, he rejoices over the fact that he was not beaten by anybody else but a Roman:

. . . And do now not basely die  
Not cowardly put off my helmet too  
My contryman – a Roman by a Roman  
Valiantly vanquished . . .

(Antony and Cleopatra, IV.xv. 57-59)

However, Octavius is losing the favour on the point he is not such a good actor and cannot reveal or conceal his intentions in the way Antony or Cleopatra does: Antony acting the part of Herculean hero and Cleopatra acting the part of herself, that is to say, of Cleopatra. When touching the last scene with Antony urging Cleopatra to let him speak and Cleopatra stubbornly interrupting "No let me speak", Bloom states:

Since his advice is quite bad anyway, as it has been throughout the play, this makes little difference, except that Antony, just this once, almost stops acting the part of

Antony, Herculean hero, whereas Shakespeare wishes us to see that Cleopatra never stops acting the part of Cleopatra.

(The Invention of the Human, 548)

Being incapable of this, Octavius is quite transparent and all his being lacks the quality of acting. Therefore, it is no problem for him to both pity Antony and show the generosity to Cleopatra and, immediately, rejoice over the idea of performing Cleopatra in Rome as the evidence of his victory and triumph. Moreover, he acknowledges Cleopatra's last chance of defeating him by bungling his plan of showing her in the victorious procession in Rome. To prevent this he urges her not to be afraid but to lean on his generosity; but, unfortunately for him, he cannot act so well. Shakespeare offers a good hint for his audiences to figure out which side is worth being taken at last:

*Cae:* We purpose her no shame. Give her what comforts  
The quality of her passion shall require,  
Lest, in her greatness, by some mortal stroke  
She do defeat us; for her life in Rome  
Would be eternal in our triumph.

(Antony and Cleopatra, V.i. 62-66)

The power depicted in Antony and Cleopatra points to an amazing quality of being and acting. The border between life and theatre is, however, very thin and uncertain. One is safe only when he is fully aware of the moments he impersonates himself; on this point, Cleopatra seems to be in her prime. Moving around that border, she creates enough space for various feelings and interpretations offering audiences a brilliant adventure in telling her being and acting apart. When Cleopatra being herself, one is attracted to her, when playing herself, one might acquire the Roman view of her; that is, a witch, strumpet and cold politician. This form of power does not violate audiences' minds. It helps Shakespeare stay safe and sound since it says a lot and it also says nothing at all. The theatregoer and reader might feel free to take Cleopatra and the play as a whole as they like it, though the essence of their freedom is limited by Shakespeare.

To conclude with, for Harold Bloom, whose works have served as primary sources for this paper, Cleopatra falls into the same group as Hamlet; he sees her as one of Falstaff's peers that is, along with Hamlet, transcending us:

I once wrote that Falstaff would not accept being bored by us, if he was to deign to represent us. That applies also to Falstaff's peers, whether benign like Rosalind and Edgar, frighteningly malign like Iago and Edmund, or transcending us utterly, like Hamlet, Macbeth, and Cleopatra.

(The Invention of the Human, xx)

## Conclusion

It seems to be an intriguing quest to discover drives and forms of power Shakespeare was subject to and do this in the light of the New Criticism that appears to be inclined to reject whatever interpretations resulting from the historical context of Elizabethan time and would prefer to see Shakespeare as immune as possible; a form of bardolatry Bloom himself confesses to adhere to:

The more one reads and ponders the plays of Shakespeare, the more one realizes that the accurate stance toward them is one of awe . . . Bardolatry, the worship of Shakespeare, ought to be even more a secular religion than it already is.

(The Invention of the Human, xvii)

Given the above, the search for unavoidable forms of power was realized with awe and Shakespeare was viewed both as a child of his time and as a central person of the canon for whom there is no substitute. The extent of this audacity, which was inevitable if scrutinizing Shakespeare in his life's context, was always limited by the borders of the New Criticism that grasps the text as something complete in itself without any relations to the author's life. Thus, the tension between approaching Shakespeare's plays, Antony and Cleopatra in particular, as the complete wholes or autotelic artefacts and applying several New Historicism techniques, for instance setting interpretive problems against cultural-historical problems, helped create a broader picture and approach Shakespeare with both awe and audacity.

All three chapters, each dealing with a particular form of power, were supposed to follow a logic sequence from general to concrete and create a link from the first revisionary ratio *Clinamen* to the last one *Apophrades* as found in Bloom's concept of the poetic influence and intra-poetic relations. With the actual description of these two ratios in mind, the circle might be closed and Shakespeare would meet his precursor Virgil again, though, this time, with a different couple of lovers. As Bloom also observes when reaching the last of the ratios:

The later poet, in his own final phase, already burdened by an imaginative solitude that is almost a solipsism, holds his own poem so open again to the precursor's work that at first we might believe the wheel has come full circle . . . And the uncanny effect is that the new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as



though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work.

(“A Meditation upon Priority, and a Synopsis”, 1803-1804)

The search for own aesthetic, as seen in Literary Power, the necessity to survive in the sea of competing interests, as described in Experienced Power and, finally, the result of both of these, as suggested in Depicted Power give hints to the drives Shakespeare himself could not command and the goals he reached in spite. With this in mind, the personalities of Caesar and Antony were interpreted in the light of these forms of power with a constant look at Shakespeare himself. Therefore, the question “What man is that?” was repeated several times, each time providing ‘the man’ with the appropriate personality: Antony in the case of Literary power, Julius Caesar in Experienced Power and Cleopatra in Depicted Power. These three personalities were set one against another, compared and analyzed in order to offer the interpretation of drives Shakespeare could hardly command.

Touching the first form of power, as allusions in Hamlet, Macbeth and The Tempest suggest, there is an intra-poetic relation between Virgil and Shakespeare; or more precisely between Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare. The so-called ‘Epic Cycle’ as formed in the forty-eight books of the Iliad and the Odyssey is transformed into Roman Epic Cycle in The Aeneid, from which it is further transformed into Elizabethan Drama Cycle in Antony and Cleopatra. Why Cycle? According to Philip Hardie the work of art is a part of the Epic cycle when it helps create the sequence from the beginning of the world to the current generation. As he states:

The two Homeric epics [The Iliad and The Odyssey] in antiquity formed part of the ‘Epic Cycle’, a sequence of epics that together spanned the time from the beginning of the world down to the generation after Odysseus.

(The Aeneid, xiii)

To this form of Epic Cycle, Virgil adds another quality by pointing at the struggle between chaos and order. This quality also finds its place in Antony and Cleopatra where it might be renamed as the struggle between passion and mission. Hence, the second revisionary ratio *Tessera* was applied here because both Virgil and Shakespeare retained the terms of their precursor but used them in another sense. Philip Hardie recognizes this as the inversion of transformative absorptions of Homeric patterns; the idea that was applied to Shakespeare as well as the inversion of transformative absorption of Virgilian patterns. Since the cycle suggests the process being repeated many times in the same order, the comparison was drawn between main heroes of both stories: Aeneas and Antony. The

comparison and the analysis of these two works showed that while there is Aeneas in Antony, Antony is no Aeneas. Shakespeare seems to have walked with Virgil half way, having him as his Sweet Master, but abandoned him in the exotic place of Carthage-like Egypt. Thus, while Aeneas sneaks out of Dido's devoted hands, Antony gets stuck in ambivalent Cleopatra's love. However, no matter how much their reactions differ, they both share the quality of remaining Herculean and Heroic despite their lapses. As Harold Bloom sums up this point:

With Antony's death, the age of Julius Caesar and of Pompey is over, an age that began with the death of Alexander the Great. For Shakespeare, it is the Herculean or heroic age, and, as I have remarked, Antony – in the play – is already archaic, reflective of a time, when charismatic flamboyance still could overcome every obstacle.

(The Invention of the Human, 558)

The Literary power was one of the first forms of power Shakespeare himself chose to be subject to and made Virgil his precursor. The gradual transformation of Aeneas into Antony and reforming Aeneas's resolution to fulfil the mission into Antony's passionate decision to reject the duty form the example of intellectual revisionism in which Shakespeare, distant and influencing just as Caesar in Julius Caesar, first swerves away from his precursor into the state of solitude, separates himself from him and, then, continues to accomplish the work of art in such a way that he comes back to his precursor not only as his disciple but as the master of other disciples coming after him; and this is the power Shakespeare yielded to in order to exercise it.

While the personality of Antony was looked at in the light of Literary Power, Julius Caesar was dealt with in the section called Experienced Power. The question about the power around Shakespeare was raised in order to provide more details of what Shakespeare had to go through before sitting down to write Antony and Cleopatra, a model for Depicted Power. Shakespeare wrote Julius Caesar at the time of enormous changes in England and in the world. These changes were labelled as 'the renaissance trust in human capacities yielding up to the baroque scepticism'. As it was shown in Shakespeare's Sonnet 66, Julius Caesar, Othello and King Lear, the two worlds, the old one and the coming one, clashed in a combat and thrust their representatives into irreconcilable struggle: Brutus versus Cassius, Othello versus Iago, Lear versus Edmund, Goneril and Regan and, finally, Antony versus Octavius. This is the clash of old visions, superstitions, backward philosophies and

energetic cool calculations; in other words, feudalism is being replaced by the coming age of capitalism.

With the personality of Julius Caesar, three areas of interest were pointed out in the hope of seeing Shakespeare in his lifetime context. By means of several New Historicism techniques, these areas were listed as follows: Shakespeare's practical goal to earn his living, Caesar's continuous influence on other characters similar to the one exercised by a director on actors and, lastly, the political (mis)use of Shakespeare. In its broader sense, all three areas found support in Harold Bloom's writings, though Bloom might be expected not to go as far as a key figure of New Historicism Stephen Greenblatt did. Firstly, when it comes down to the necessity to earn his living, Shakespeare followed the common practice to dedicate his works to the influential persons of his time, namely to the Earl of Southampton. He abandoned this practice, which was also followed by Spenser, Sidney, Donne and others trying to gain some favour in aristocrats' eyes, and turned to staging that seemed to offer him both better profit and more space to use his talent; as the quote from Licensing, Censorship and Authorship shows, ". . . denied the visual and auditory realization of his plays on stage, Shakespeare's creative drive seems to have faltered." (Licensing, 90) Then, it was for the performances to attract audiences from all social classes and enable Shakespeare to check immediately what the audiences liked and what made them bored. The dramatic heroes and their stories were thus the convenient sources to create plots that would entertain most and hurt few. Secondly, however, to show he does not only follow people's likes and dislikes, Shakespeare might have been believed to write a role for himself and become a director-like actor on the stage through the personage of Julius Caesar in order to experience, at least for a while, a thrill of standing aloof and interfering. The concept of the plot being in the hands of somebody who takes part in this plot emerges in Julius Caesar and also in The Tempest, in which Prospero handles the plot with the director-like craft and ease. Hence, the idea of seeing Shakespeare write for himself the part of Julius Caesar was suggested pointing at the practice he also followed when creating other parts for people in his company.

Lastly, the theatre was not, on the other hand, only about entertaining and profiting. Apart from what Shakespeare really meant, his plays served as a means of messages to the surroundings. After all, his plays present so many royal fates with kings succeeding and kings deposed, that one does not have to exert much effort to draw a parallel to the political

issues of the Elizabethan and Jacobean times. The example of the theatre as the power to subvert was particularly stressed in the case of the performance of Richard II, which Shakespeare's company played one day before the rising against the queen. No matter how uncomfortable Shakespeare felt deep down, he could not refuse to perform it. His company got paid and so they played the story about deposing the lawful ruler. Though Shakespeare seems to have implied a different message, those who paid the Lord Chamberlain's Men forty shillings thought otherwise. As Greenblatt explains:

Modern historical scholarship has assured Elizabeth that she had nothing to worry about: Richard II is not at all subversive but rather hymn to Tudor order. The play, far from encouraging thoughts of rebellion, regards the deposition of the legitimate king as a "sacrilegious" act that drags the country down into "the abyss of chaos".  
(*"Introduction to the Power of Forms"*, 2252)

Despite the fact that the future vindicated Shakespeare's use of the play, the actual misuse of Richard II suggests that, after all, it is the interpretation and not the intention that matters.

With this principle in mind, it is not strange to see Shakespeare create an inexhaustible and broad personality of Cleopatra. By making Cleopatra so hard to grasp, Shakespeare offered a wide range of various interpretations. The audiences, then, could entertain themselves and take delight in a variety of interpretations ranging from those taking Cleopatra as a gypsy witch, the Roman point of view, or as a lady in love doing all for love. The ambiguous words uttered by Cleopatra about who is whose fool support this because the answer to this question might change the whole mode of play. As David Bevington explains, "Antony will be himself, that is, (1) be the Roman Antony (2) be the fool he is (3) be the deceiver he always is." (Antony and Cleopatra, 7) In this case, there are at least three options to define Cleopatra: either she will become another mistress of the Roman ruler, or she will trick Antony to serve her purposes and politics, or she will become the object of Antony tricks. It largely depends on the audiences to stick to one of the views and support or abandon it in the following course of the play. Thus, Shakespeare could be hardly guilty of the misuse of the play since none of the potential interpretations would have to reflect his intentions. To conclude, the largeness of Cleopatra's role depicts the form of experienced power because it enabled Shakespeare to please all, profit a lot and still keep the face; simply, fulfilling the watchwords of the Elizabethan artists *docere et delectare*.

The personality of Antony also adopts new features that did not surface through the comparison with Aeneas in the section of Literary Power. Antony's relation with Cleopatra adds other features to his Herculean nature than those mentioned in his literary relation to Aeneas. Using the imagery from the mythology, Antony seems like Hercules past his prime that got stuck in a trap set for him by his wife in the hope of keeping him near and in love with her. Moreover, Antony also resembles Heracles by experiencing the same humiliation as Heracles did when Omphale took the lion skin off him and put some female mantle on him. In both these acts, Antony seems either deceived or changed into the object of Cleopatra's entertainment. However, despite Plutarch's account, Shakespeare is not so strict when it comes to Antony's failures. For him, Antony remains the hero till the very end; though the hero of the past that is hard to be admired but still easy to be sympathised with.

Antony and Cleopatra is the last tragic step towards the hope depicted in the following plays. Antony as a hero of the past cannot compete with the pragmatic world Octavius is bringing. Their worlds differ considerably. Bloom points at the word *world* as a refrain repeated throughout the play. In the terms of his concept of The Invention of the Human, the word appears to adopt surprising qualities. One of these qualities seems to be defined by the hesitation over being and acting. With the quote from Bloom, "If you cease to know when you impersonate yourself, you are likely to seem more opaque than you are" (The Invention of the Human, 560), the question might be posed about the moments people are themselves and the moments they impersonate themselves. This struggle between being and acting is pervading the whole play and makes the protagonists look sometimes histrionic and sometimes real. The most difficult task is, then, to tell these apart. Octavius's world is too pragmatic and straightforward to grasp this. Therefore, when Octavius assures Cleopatra of his mercy and favour, he cannot fool her and is, quite the opposite, fooled by her. With her final act, Cleopatra proves her transcending nature that posts her in the pantheon of Shakespeare's greatest characters such as Hamlet or Falstaff.

Three forms of power have been offered and all of them differ in the extent of their strength. While the first one, that is Literary Power or the anxiety of influence, appears the strongest one mainly thanks to the firm link created between Virgil and Shakespeare, the second and the third form seems more questionable. This might be caused by the fact that while the analysis and the comparison of the text as a whole can guarantee some borders,

placing the text into its historical context can spur lots of speculations depending on the inter-textual relations that can hardly be fully exhausted. Though this is the basic argument New Criticism and New Historicism can hardly agree on, the combination of both these schools can offer a broader interpretation of the work as it was hoped so in this paper. As Brutus confesses:

For the eye sees not itself  
But by reflection, by some other things.

(Julius Caesar, I.ii. 53-54)

## Resume

Tato práce si kladla za cíl objevit a porovnat vlivy a okolnosti, kterými Shakespeare mohl procházet a které se tak mohly odrazit do jeho tvorby, zvláště do tragédie Antonius a Kleopatra. Při těchto krocích byly používány i ostatní hry, a to především ty, které hře Antonius a Kleopatra bezprostředně předcházely. V době, kdy byla tato hra napsána, pravděpodobně v druhé polovině roku 1606, měl Shakespeare za sebou své vrcholné tragédie jako Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth a Král Lear. Byly to tedy právě tyto hry, které napomáhaly k jasnějšímu uchopení Antonia a Kleopatry, a to spolu s Bouří, která uváděla První Folio. V diskuzi nad textem bylo použito dvou protikladných literárně kritických přístupů: Nové Kritiky, v díle Harolda Blooma, a Nového Historicismu, zde hlavně v podání Stephen Greenblatta. Tato strategie byla nutná k získání širšího úhlu pohledu a vyrovnanějšího chápání Shakespearovy tvorby i jeho samého. Na jedné straně může totiž Shakespeare být vnímán jako ten, který stojí v centru kánonu a slouží jako měřítko pro všechny ostatní; v takovém případě se vyzdvihuje jeho velikost a schopnost zůstat neovlivněn. Na straně druhé se však počítá s historickým kontextem a jeho vlivem na Shakespeara, přičemž se tento kontext jeví natolik silným, že ani sebevětší umělec mu nemůže uniknout a zůstat ve své práci nestranným. Vlivy a okolnosti zmiňované v této práci pak načrtávají podoby moci, kterým se Shakespeare nemohl vyhnout. Při jejich hledání byl v první části použit přístup Nové Kritiky, v druhé Nového Historicismu a nakonec ve třetí pokus o kombinaci obou předcházejících.

Jelikož záchytnými body na cestě za oněmi podobami moci byly osobnosti hlavních postav z římských her Julius César a Antonius a Kleopatra, měla každá část jako svůj archetyp jednu z těchto osobností. V první části vystupuje do popředí Antonius a na jeho osobnosti se vykresluje poetický vztah mezi Shakesparem a Vergiliem, který se promítá v porovnávání podobností i odlišností Antonia a Aenea, včetně jejich rozdílné reakce v téměř totožných souvislostech. Po kapitole zabývající se tímto druhem literární podoby moci, jakožto té, která působí a napomáhá pozdějšímu básníkovi (označení básník má podle Blooma širší záběr) v jeho tvorbě, přichází forma materiálnější moci, jež ovlivňuje básníka úměrně k tomu co sám v životě zakouší, ať už v soukromí, či na pozadí společensko politických událostí. Zde bylo spolu s použitím osobnosti samotného Julia Césara věnováno

i několik odboček Brutovi, skrze kterého došlo ke spojení těchto dvou částí, to značí části zabývající se Antoniem a tou, která se zaměřuje na Césara, neboť, tak jako Antonius, i Brutus uvízl mezi dvěma světy, které jej ovlivňovaly až do chvíle jeho smrti v bitvě u Filip. Po částech hovořících o moci literární a zakoušené se další kapitola zaměřuje na samotnou Kleopatru. Na základě předchozích přístupů se na Kleopatře zobrazuje podoba moci, jak ji Shakespeare mohl chtít vyjádřit, či dokonce zrelativizovat. Tyto tři postavy, Antonius, César a Kleopatra, podávají nástin vlivů působících na Shakespeara v oblasti čistě poetické, životně zakoušené i jím vyobrazené.

Každá z kapitol také pracuje s určitým předpokladem, který slouží jako základ pro celkovou stavbu dané části. V první kapitole se jedná o předpoklad daný Novou Kritikou, a to především T. S. Eliotem a Haroldem Bloomem, který pojednává o nutnosti tradice a spojení nového díla s touto tradicí; odtud také vyplývá jistá tvůrčí poslušnost začínající inspirací, následováním a konče osamostatněním a oproštěním se od inspirujícího autora, které v konečném důsledku opět přispívá k rozšíření tradice. U druhé kapitoly se nabízí předpoklad z Nového Historicismu, jehož přívrženci se snaží vidět každé dílo jako nádobu plovoucí v moři soupeřících sociálních tlaků, čemuž se nevyhýbá ani dílo Shakespeara. Poslední kapitola čerpá pak svůj předpoklad ze spojení obou předchozích a snaží se popsat konkrétní odraz, jak toho co Shakespeare načerpal od svého předchůdce, tak i toho co se obtisklo z událostí a nutností jeho života.

Podrobněji se první část snaží poukázat na odkazy, jež mohou sloužit jako vodítko k nalezení Shakespearova literárního předchůdce. Vedle nejpřímočařejších narážek na Vergiliovu Aeneidu v Bouři si pozornost zaslouží i Hamletova pochvalná slova na adresu Vergilia při rozpravě s herci, spolu s následným zacitováním Aeneidy. Na další spojení bylo také poukázáno i ve hře Macbeth. Vedle těchto narážek poukazuje na oblíbenost Vergilia i používání jeho děl v lidové pověřivosti, nevyjímaje přitom ani anglického krále Karla I., a obecně rozšířená znalost Vergilia mezi lidmi, jak poukazuje profesor renesanční literatury C. S. Lewis. Po vytvoření základního předpokladu, že Vergilius mohl inspirovat Shakespeara při jeho tvorbě, se naskytla možnost pro srovnání Aeneidy a Antonia a Kleopatry, děl blízkých si svou tematikou, a srovnání jejich hlavních protagonistů Aenea a Antonia. Při rozboru Antoniovy osobnosti vychází na povrch stálá přítomnost hrdinství, tolik typická pro antické postavy, která nepřestává být přítomna i po očividných Antoniových poklescích. V tomto bodě jsou, navzdory velkému časovému odstupu,



pohledy Plutarcha a Blooma shodné, protože oba, první historicky a druhý literárně, rozpoznávají Antoniovu velikost, která přetrvává navzdory nesouhlasům Antoniových současníků nebo Shakespearova obecnstva. Na základě srovnání Aeneidy a Antonia a Kleopatry bylo také poukázáno na podobnost střetu dvou odlišných světů, které mohou v náboženské mluvě, bez ohledu na to jestli pohanské nebo křesťanské, představovat napětí mezi pozemským posláním a rajským ulehčením. V tomto napětí se reakce hlavních protagonistů začíná lišit a zůstává na čtenáři, aby posoudil, která reakce si zaslouží větší obdiv. Zda ta, jíž se dopouští Aeneas ve chvíli, kdy ruší slib daný královně Didoně a utíká od lásky k poslání, nebo ta, v níž se Antonius staví proti římskému světu a zůstává s Kleopatrou. Zatímco Plutarch neopouští kritický pohled na Antoniovo rozhodnutí zůstat s Kleopatrou, Shakespeare ve svém podání tento pohled nepodporuje a skrze Césara povyšuje Antonia a Kleopatru na nejslavnější pár na světě. V celém tomto postupu se pak demonstruje podoba literární moci, jež sice ovlivní na počátku, ale vede k samostatnosti na konci. Z pohledu Blooma se jedná o uzavření kruhu, ve kterém pozdější básník už nepotkává svého předchůdce jako svého učitele, ale stává se mu rovným, nebo jej dokonce převyšuje.

Po zabývání se podobou literární moci, nabízí druhá kapitola pohled na některé vlivy a okolnosti v Alžbětinské a Jakobínské době, a to zvláště v jejich vztahu na život a dílo Shakespeara. Nejprve bylo poukázáno na status divadelníků a běžnou praxi umělců spočívající v získávání patronů z řad aristokratů. Nabídka Julia Césara a Antonia a Kleopatry se zdála být vhodnou volbou pro přilákání obecnstva, jelikož bez psaných dedikací záleželo více než kdy jindy na vlastním ději a provedení, aby přinesly zisk nebo ztrátu. Z tohoto důvodu byla hra Julius César viděna spíše jako konkrétní provedení na jevišti, ve kterém vše záleží hlavně na hercích a jejich schopnosti získat uznání nebo pomluvu. Jelikož v této části se pozornost obracela především k samotné postavě Césara, byla to právě jeho osobnost a role ve hře, která se rozebírala. Při stálé Césarově přítomnosti, ať už faktické nebo tušené, nebylo daleko k představě vidět Shakespeara jako toho, který sám ztvárňuje roli Césara. Po srovnání s Prosperem v Bouři se nabízí představa herce-režiséra, který vše řídí a zasahuje do děje, ve kterém sám hraje. Politicky viděno, podsouvá Julius César otázku oprávněnosti královraždy. V době, která předcházela pokusu o atentát na Alžbětu I., se hra zdá jako varování, že to mohou být právě ti nejbližší, kteří ukládají o život královně; dohad, který se stal skutečností ve zmařeném povstání

nejbližšího favorita královny, kterým byl Lord Essex. Kromě této zmínky, která ještě souvisí s představením Richarda II., hraného jeden den před vypuknutím onoho povstání, vykresluje Julius César nejenom možnou nejistotu těch, co přispějí ke svrnutí a zabití vládce, ale také zmatek nadcházejících let. Časově i dějově hra stojí na předělu dvou věků, který odlišuje napůl středověkou Anglii od napůl moderní. Nejenom Julius César, ale i Othello, Macbeth a Král Lear poukazují na střet starého a přicházejícího světa. Tento střet navíc Shakespeare okusil při zmiňovaném představení Richarda II., kdy bylo divadlo použito, či zneužito, k politické propagandě, a to bez ohledu na skutečné poselství hry. Podoba zakoušené moci tedy obsahuje jak okolnosti, které se obtiskly do Shakespearových her; v tomto případě zvláště do Julia Césara, tak i vlivy, demonstrované představením Richarda II., jež mohly Shakespeareovi naznačit, že výklad předchází záměr.

Po představení, popisu a rozboru obou předcházejících podob moci, se třetí kapitola zabývá jejich důsledkem a nabízí pohled na formu moci, jak ji mohl Shakespeare, vědomě či nevědomě, zobrazit ve hře Antonius a Kleopatra. Opět zde dostává prostor osobnost Antonia, i když tentokrát ne ve světle Aenea, ale přímo Kleopatry. Oba protagonisté, Kleopatra i Antonius, vytváří dostatek prostoru pro rozporuplné interpretace, a tak se zdá, že porozumět jim není lehké pro kritiky ani pro obecenstvo. Sama hra začíná římským pohledem na věc, to znamená odsouzením a kritikou vztahu Antonia a Kleopatry, a jak se děj odvíjí, je tento pohled podporován i narušován. Nakonec zůstává na obecenstvu, aby si vybralo svůj pohled, za který je ovšem odpovědno samo a ne Shakespeare. Začátek i konec patří řeči Římana, v první scéně kritickému Antoniovu stoupenci Filo, v závěrečné pak obdivujícímu Octavianovi Césarovi. Nerozhodnost v pohledu na Kleopatru podporuje i ona sama a zanechává obecenstvo ve chvilkové jistotě i nejistotě nad ní samotnou. Hrou prostupuje otázka o tom, zda se Kleopatra stala jen milenkou Antonia, tak jak tomu bylo u Julia Césara, či se on stal nástrojem její politické strategie, nebo ji on Antonius sám využívá a klame; anebo vše dohromady a prostoupeno hlubokou vášní a oddaností. Není jednoduché toto posoudit, jelikož podoba moci zobrazená ve hře vypovídá o proměně hlavních aktérů, kteří se někdy chovají teatrálně a někdy reálně. Harold Bloom v této souvislosti poukazuje na jeden aspekt toho, co Shakespeare vynáší z člověka na povrch. Jde o porozumění lidské teatrálnosti a reálnosti a o to, kdy člověk je, čím je, kdy sám sebe hraje a nakolik rozpoznává, kdy se jaký z těchto dvou projevů odehrává.

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