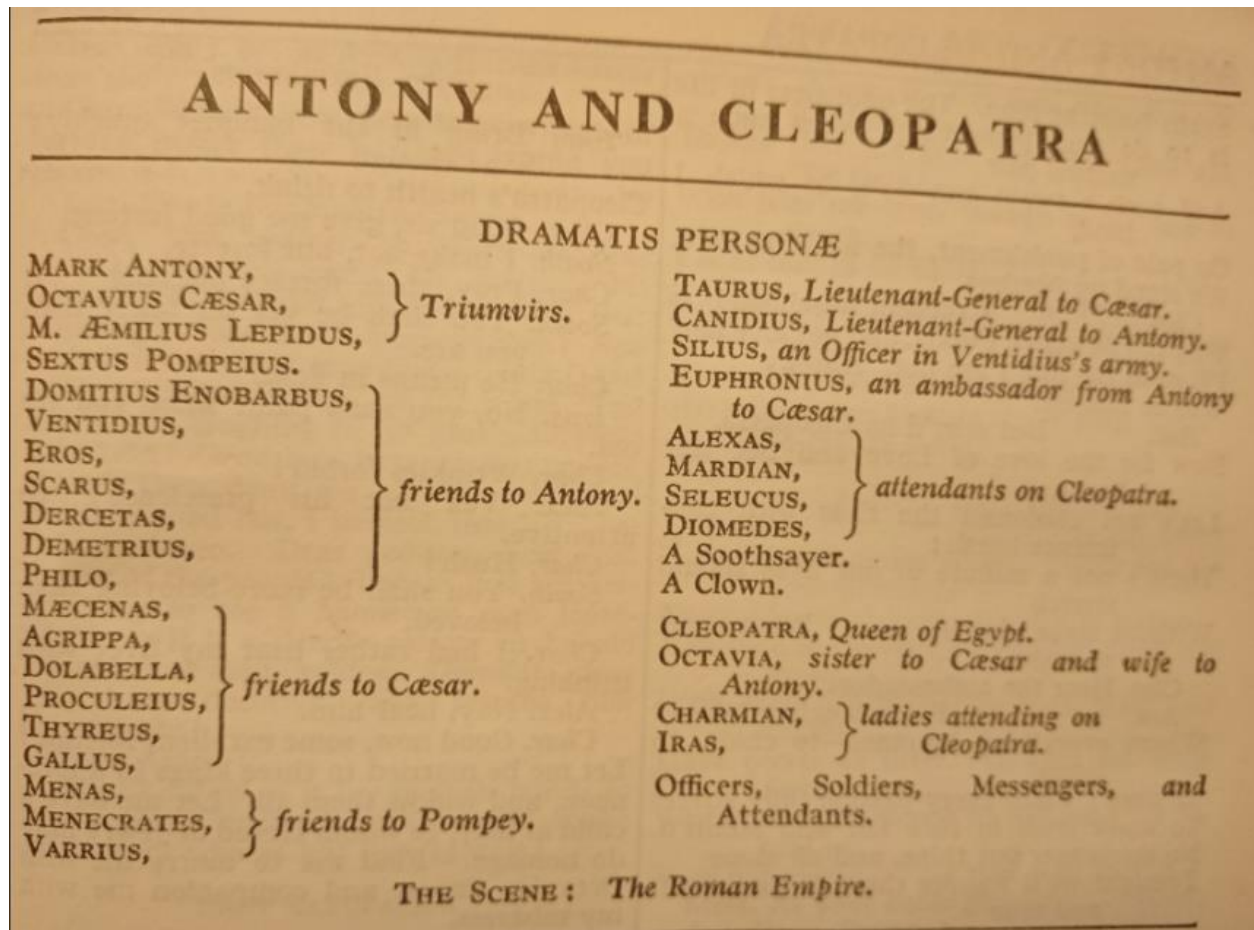


Antony and Cleopatra 1606



Source:

THE TUDOR EDITION OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
THE COMPLETE WORKS
COLLINS
LONDON AND GLASGOW
APRIL 1959

A new edition, edited with an
Introduction and glossary by
PETER ALEXANDER
*Regius Professor of English Language
and Literature, University of Glasgow 1959*

David Akenhead, CEO Akenhead crosswords currently enjoying 507,275 visits at his Visits page on his website at crosswordsakenhead.com where there is a link to his crossword challenges: A joint copyrighted 27 x 27 digital Times Jumbo has to be a First in On-line crossword competitions thanks to AI, two individuals and Microsoft.

Sources: Howard Staunton April 1860 (1810-1874)

Anthony and Cleopater 1606 (*Folio of that date*) (Bracketed items hence, comments by D.A.)_

“Shakespeare’s story and incidents sre evidently borrowed directly from the Life of Antonius in North’s *Plutarch*, which he has followed, even to the minutest circumstances, with scrupulous fidelity. The action comprehends the events of ten years; beginning with the death of Fulvia, B.C. 40, and terminating with the overthrow of the Ptolomean dynasty, B.C. 30”

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) translator of Shakespeare (1797-1810) and the foremost German authority to this day.

“ Although the mutual passion of herself and Antony is without moral dignity, it still excites our sympathy as an insurmountable fascination: - they seem formed for each other, and Cleopatra is as remarkable for her seductive charms, as Antony for the splendour of his deeds. As they die for each other, we forgive them for having lived for each other. The open and lavish character of Antony is admirably contrasted with the heartless littleness of Octavius, whom Shakespeare seems to have completely seen through, without allowing himself to be led astray by the (subsequent) fortune and fame of Augustus.” (!)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) (extracts)

“This play should be perused in mental contrast with ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ – as the love of passion and appetite opposed to the affection of love and instinct.

Of all Shakespeare’s historical plays, ‘Antony and Cleopatra’ is by far the most wonderful. There is not one in which he has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, and to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction. As a wonderful specimen of the way in which Shakespeare lived up to the very end of this play, read the last part of the concluding scene; and if you feel the judgment as well as the

genius of Shakespeare in your heart's core, compare this astonishing drama with Dryden's 'All for Love.'"

Story (extracts and further comments) courtesy of John Goodwin RSC's Short Guide to Shakespeare's Plays 1990

Antony and Cleopatra, is perhaps the richest play about love in the English language, an epic flood of sensuality and despair. Herbert Farjeon says: 'It reels with passion – not the sweet young – boy-and-girl passion of *Romeo and Juliet*, but violent, overstrained, suspicious, recriminative, adult passion just past its prime, (splendidly portrayed by Richard

Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in the 1963 movie for Fox)...It begins magnificently. It goes on magnificently. It ends most magnificently of all.' Coleridge writes that 'of all Shakespeare's plays the most wonderful is *Antony and Cleopatra*.'

On stage, it can be an unforgettable experience. Yet it is rarely seen. One of the reasons theatre directors are wary of it may be the part of Cleopatra, arguably the most demanding female role of all – quoting Farjeon again 'She is priggish. She is vain. She is vulgar. She is cruel. She is cowardly. She is a born commander. She is a born slave. She is innately faithful. She is deceitful.'

Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' calls for, as well, an actress who can bring together a sense of majesty, great vocal control and range, and ripe sexual attraction. A.C. Bradley stresses her wantonness: 'She cannot see an ambassador, scarcely even a messenger, without desiring to bewitch him . . . Even when death is close at hand, she imagines his touch as a lover's.'

The play itself reflects the power of its two main characters by spanning the entire Mediterranean world. The text is full of images of this vastness: of orbs, spheres, planets, sun, moon. The drama shows domestic passion against a panoramic public setting. Antony has allowed his passion for Cleopatra to overwhelm his great gifts as a soldier and leader. His taste for riot and excess has taken over and he has become a libertine.

Even in disaster, however, he still manages to keep the devotion of those in the army who are closest to him. Enobarbus – to whom Shakespeare gives lines that create for the audience Antony's nobility and Cleopatra's fascination almost as much as the protagonists themselves do by their own words and actions – deserts Antony in disgust. But it breaks Enobarbus' heart, and he dies.

The actual plot of the play is simplicity itself. Antony holding power in Egypt for Rome, and wishing to patch up his relationship with Octavius Caesar, separates from Cleopatra and marries Octavius's sister. He then deserts her to return to Cleopatra. As a result, war breaks out, Octavius defeats the two lovers, and they kill themselves. Though Antony and Cleopatra are figures of immense political power, they are also self-

=destructive, undeviating sensualists, feeling the world well lost for love. In the end, Antony and Cleopatra win our pity because they both, separately, accept death with courage and nobility. Their passion for one another is transcendent, looking beyond death.”

David Akenhead (1946 -) Theatre manager, Producer, critic.

Isn't that so like where we are today? My father taught me wisely. We call the shots when it comes to new words. We lexicographers, like Dr Samuel Johnson and Geoffrey Chaucer before us literally invent new words before they even become official, and not just words, but phrases too, which as words on their own are meaningless! Furthermore, I see my Jumbos today as a playing ground, whereby we can create a stage instruction visible in the solutions afforded by our 27x27 grids. The picture is worth a thousand words, David, he reminded me, and our modern audience should be our prime consideration amid our ramblings. William Shakespeare knew that very well, too.

Antony and Cleopatra 1606

Above part of my legacy to Shakespeare, courtesy of my former wife, Celia Ruth Staunton and her celebrated ancestor Howard Staunton (1810-1874), supreme Shakespearean authority from his Globe Illustrated Shakespeare, and a former English Chess Grand Master to boot! Enjoy my digital Jumbo crossword evolved from two chess supremos: Howard Staunton and Edmund Akenhead former Times crossword editor 1965-1983 via his mother, Myrtle Akenhead nee Nicholson Grant MacGregor, former Ladies Chess Champion of Somerset who I had the audacity to beat aged 10 with hitherto unconventional moves using the Queen's pawn!

David Akenhead, February 2026