

“A very Antony”: Patterns of Antonomasia in Shakespeare¹

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When Dr Johnson complained that Shakespeare’s punning was “the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it,” he at once expressed his own century’s reaction against paronomasia and demonstrated the futility—and perhaps the half-heartedness—of this reaction, as seen in the fact that he could not resist expressing himself expansively and wittily, even while inveighing against wit. It would seem that the joys of paronomasia are all but irresistible.

Without going into Johnson’s quibble on “fatal” here,² I would like to call attention to a more elementary kind of word play in his remark, one that I believe Shakespeare explored throughout his career and that he treated most definitively, perhaps, in *Antony and Cleopatra*. This is the figure of antonomasia, which the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines as follows: “1. The substitution of a title or epithet for a proper name, as in calling a king ‘His Majesty.’ 2. The substitution of a personal name for a common noun to designate a member of a group or class, as in calling a libertine ‘a Don Juan.’”³ It is the disjunction between name and epithet, proper noun and common noun, that is the crucial element in this definition. For example, in the eighth book of his *Institutes*,⁴ Quintilian observes that some writers refuse to consider an epithet a trope at all, since it involves no change; but he states that although an epithet may not always be a trope, “if it is separated from the word to which it belongs, it has a significance of its own and forms an *antonomasia*” (VIII.vi.40-43). He recognizes a crucial turning in the use of epithet, at the point of its separation from the person or thing being characterized. I would suggest that this antonomastic gap, so to speak, is fundamental to the more obviously interesting examples of Shakespearean onomastics. At its most elementary and obvious, dramatic

irony may note a disjunction between a king and his "majesty," or perhaps in Antony's funeral oration between Brutus' actions and his characterization as "an honorable man." Furthermore, we see Brutus driven to live up to his republican ancestor's name, to be another Junius Brutus, and fearing that Julius Caesar may *become* a Caesar if he is not killed first. Here we also find antonomasia affected by ironies of temporal perspective: a protagonist is swayed by an awareness of earlier stories, while the spectator is similarly affected by knowing that this drama, too, is now one of those earlier stories, and that the *omen* in the *nomen* has by now long since been realized. Cressida is always *a* Cressida, Pandarus a pander; to see them pledging to be otherwise is to be made aware of the web of language in which they are caught—so to speak a "fatal antonomasia."

Still, it must be admitted that epithets are not in themselves particularly exciting rhetorical figures. Quintilian rather condescendingly remarks that "Poets employ [the epithet] with special frequency and freedom, since for them it is sufficient that the epithet should suit the word to which it is applied . . . we shall not blame them if they speak of 'white teeth' or 'liquid wine,'" but rhetoricians, Quintilian's own audience, need to make sure that an epithet "adds something to the meaning," and moreover that it is used sparingly. "The nature of this form of embellishment," he remarks, "is such that while style is bare and inelegant without any epithets at all, it is overloaded when a large number is employed. For then it becomes long-winded and cumbrous."

Quintilian here takes for granted that names are prior to their epithets, as are nouns to those adjectives that are deigned to suit them, dress them, decorate them. This makes sense in the context of the *Institutio Oratoria*, which is concerned with pleading specific causes on behalf of specified clients; but in everyday life the identity of a person or issue is not invariably a given. Typically, an infant's first word (in perfect Latin) bridges the gap between a perceived functional property and a proper noun; it is both antonomasia and synecdoche: *mamma*. Similarly, the spectator at a Shakespearean play derives a sense of verisimilitude from the very fact that here too there is no "without-book Prologue"; that we must work toward a partial and tentative sense of who is talking about what.

As an example of antonomastic uncertainty at its most prolonged and stimulating, we might best look at a comedy—where there is no protagonist named in the play's title as a sign of someone to watch for—and at a comedy which flaunts its inconclusiveness, *Love's Labour's Lost*. Not typically, the first scene opens with a crowned figure:

Navarre shall be the wonder of the world;
 Our court shall be a little academe,
 Still and contemplative in living art.

(1.1.12-14)⁵

We learn from this blank-verse sonnet that this is "Navarre"—both the person and the place. The setting of this scene will have made clear as well that this is the "court" of Navarre only in the sense that these men are Navarre's courtiers, assembled in the temporarily clement outdoors: "The roof of this court is too high to be yours," the Princess will tell Navarre at the beginning of Act 2 when he welcomes her to his "court." And the artificiality of his three-year project is further suggested by characterizing the academy as "still and contemplative in living art"—suggested all the more clearly if we understand this line as a cryptic, rhetorically strained way of saying that they will be constantly ("still") contemplating the art of living. The academy, like the court, hovers in status between human activity and institutional stasis; and we suspect that if the changing seasons do not drive the court back indoors, to *the* court, boredom will. "Mere necessity" does in fact intervene—both reasons of state and the human affections.

What is clear from the opening lines of this and other plays is that Shakespeare would have us see that he is making a virtue of the need to identify and locate his characters, by questioning the literal truth or referentiality of verbal structures. When, as here, his plays are most playful, most balletic, masquelike, the pressures of fact are most elusive. The "Navarre" of *Love's Labour's Lost*, as place, surely recalls or evokes the geographical Navarre in southern France; and the informed reader or spectator may recognize allusions to a specific project attributed to Henri de Navarre, later King Henri IV, just as Berowne, Dumaine, and Longaville may be recognized as names of real people variously associated with the historical Henri. But the play wears its allusions

lightly, teasingly, elusively. Navarre is never given a Christian name in the play's dialogue, but his identification as "Ferdinand" in the printed scene directions suggests a further authorial attempt to avoid any unambiguous, unequivocal identification with Henri. The masquing and casual circulation of "favours" and love poems enact tentative and noncommittal courtships which are finally seen as more or less self-conscious pastimes to mask the long day's dying of the French king. Only at the very end of the play, with Marcade's news of the king's death, is there any sense of urgency to the courtship, and a United Kingdom of Navarre and Aquitaine—perhaps even of France and Navarre—is no longer an academic question.

What aborts the courtship ritual in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and sets the play apart from the other romantic comedies, is the abrupt awareness of breached decorum that follows on Marcade's arrival. It has been clear from the earliest scenes, from Boyet's talk with the Princess about embassies and dowries, that the question of marriage is in the air, and apparently on the French king's mind, from the outset. But this is suppressed at the end, for the term of a year's grieving and abstinence—a project that takes the place of Navarre's academe, now not in defiance of *tempus edax*, perhaps, so much as in recognition of it.

However shapely the play is on its own terms, with this return to a proposal for penitential preparation and study—and however effective it has proved in modern productions, where its joking seems reason enough for the comedy—it has also proved notoriously attractive to critics who have found it filled with cryptic allusions to the Elizabethan court. In terms of the antonomastic crises I am discussing, I would briefly join those critics, by suggesting that the version of *Love's Labour's Lost* that has come down to us, "Newly corrected and augmented" and presented before the aging queen at Christmas of 1597 or 1598, may have had a particular piquancy in view of Elizabeth's own resistance to her courtiers' marriages. Games of courtship that could be no more than "merriment," "bombast and . . . lining to the time," as the Princess puts it, were the order of the day; while the marriages that would give substance and continuity to the noble houses of England had to be deferred to some future, post-Elizabethan day. Navarre's name, and the Bourbon dynasty he will found, are here subject to deferral; this is not

yet the "Burbon" whom Arthur will rescue in Spenser's 1596 *Faerie Queene*, while chiding him for abandoning the shield of his reformed faith. And yet, his readiness here to yield to "mere necessity" suggests that he can plausibly become that Henri, and so casts another foreboding cloud on this sunniest of comedies.

I have started with a quite basic, primitive instance of Shakespeare's use of floating indicators of identity. The pleasures of allusion in *Love's Labour's Lost* seem to me quite indistinguishable from the play's refusal to identify fully its characters or, indeed, its subject. We cannot say that the play is or is not "about" the Elizabethan succession or the earlier marriage question (although Alençon's name is mentioned in passing, at 2.1.61), or about Henri IV—or about Chapman or Raleigh for that matter. In its choreographing of a whole catalogue of Elizabethan dreams—of learning, power, patronage, royal marriages and royal deaths—it provides both fantasy and guilty awakening. The gap between the generalized titles of such transgressive figures as Pedant or Princely Wooer, and their proper names, is the space in which such fantasy can take place, with the reader's uncertain recognition left forever undenied and unconfirmed.

Shakespeare's other plays work to close that gap. To give two or three examples of plays in which the names of characters give conflicting omens which are variously fulfilled at various stages in the action, we might start with the example of Orlando in *As You Like It*, who recalls the distraught and enamoured Orlando of Boiardo's and Ariosto's poems, most notably perhaps when he is most fully in the throes of papering and carving trees with testimonials to his love: "Run, run Orlando, carve on every tree / The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she" (3.2.9-10)—and who puts on the guise of an Orlando *furioso* when he needlessly storms Duke Senior's picnic with drawn sword. Furthermore, the fact that his father, Sir Rowland de Boys, gave his youngest rather than his eldest son a name that was an anagram of his own may suggest a sentimental favoritism that flies in the face of that "courtesy of nations" which recognizes primogeniture, and so may partly account for the eldest brother's envy. When Orlando, driven by "the spirit of my father, which I think is within me," eventually flees into the wood accompanied by Adam, we may sense that he is taking part in a fortunate catastrophe

that will both regenerate his fortunes and affirm his name, as another Roland of the Wood. And if as *readers* of the play we know that his elder brother—never named in the dialogue—is an Oliver, the name of the original Roland's best friend, we may expect that in the Edenic forest of Arden, where Duke Senior and his companions "live like the old Robin Hood of England . . . and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world," this sibling rivalry too will be resolved, and the visitors to Arden will eventually become "all Olivers and Rolands"—to cite a phrase used by Alençon in *The First Part of Henry VI* (1.2.30) to describe England in its finest hours under Edward III. Indeed, the reader might ask why a Sir Rowland should name his first son Oliver and his youngest son Orlando, if not in an effort to bequeath, antonomastically, comradely identities that counterpoise the predictable Oedipal and sibling hostilities. Read with some of this awareness of intertextual allusions and of a cumulative generalizing force associated with names, the play shows the beneficent will of a dead father to be pervasively operative throughout. The sermons in stones that Duke Senior derives from his banished state are finally, then, a re-membering of a father's will, a patriarchal order, first rehearsed in the opening words of the play.

We might note, too, that "Arden," like "Navarre" earlier, is an amalgam of possible identities, recalling both the French Ardenne and the Arden of Warwickshire. A reader of Ariosto might also think of the "Ardenna woods" in canto 42 of the *Orlando furioso*, where Rinaldo is rescued from a monstrous figure of Jealousy and drinks from a fountain that purges him of his own jealous passion for Angelica. In the play's final scene, therefore, the setting is an Arden in Ariosto's sense as well.⁶

In his wholesale reworking of the characters and plot of Lodge's *Rosalynde*, Shakespeare makes a number of choices to which we may reasonably try to attribute some such intended meanings as I have suggested. It is harder to speak of significant naming and typing of characters in a play like *King Lear* where he did not diverge so obviously from his sources. Yet I think it is also possible to say something of the antonomastic aspects of Lear's three daughters. The junction of "woman" and "rule" in the names of Goneril and Regan summons up an image of the monstrous regiment which their passionate and destructive behavior abundantly exemplifies. A contrast with Cordelia in this regard

is both necessary and much more problematic. The "heart"—*cor, cordis*—that is conspicuously present in her name may allude to her appeal as baby of the household, something that is as apparent in Lear's case as in Sir Rowland's (though in the latter instance, more explicit in Lodge than in Shakespeare).⁷ That Shakespeare has chosen a form of her name that first appears in Spenser may doubtless be explained by its easier adaptability to the rhythms of blank verse (where "Goneril" always carries a stress on her "ill"). I would also suggest that "Cordelia" recalls "Cordelion," Richard the Lion-Hearted, whose epithet (similarly spelled albeit pronounced with differing stress) is repeatedly used antonomastically in the opening scenes of *King John*, with reference to the bastard son of Richard, whom the play treats sympathetically as the worthiest—dramatically the most plausible—of Richard's survivors.

That Cordelia's name may suggest a feminine Cordelion seems congruent with versions of her story which make her a wise and worthy successor to Lear on the British throne. In both Holinshed and Spenser,⁸ Lear goes to France and appeals to Cordelia and her husband, the French king Aganippus, who levies an army that Lear and Cordelia bring to England, where they triumph and Lear is restored to the throne, ruling for two years before dying and leaving the kingdom to Cordelia, who then rules for another five years before the sons of Goneril and Regan rebel and put her in prison where she kills herself (by hanging, in Spenser). Shakespeare's version of the story is both abridged and—I would suggest—censored. Though Lear must die since it is his tragedy, Shakespeare's killing-off of Cordelia has puzzled and troubled generations of readers. Edmund's order that she be hanged and made to seem a suicide, however effective it may be as a means of giving the tragedy a sense of sweeping and bleakly inclusive mortality, also has the effect of recalling the original story and at the same time rendering moot any question of the legitimacy or effectiveness of a British queen who is married to a king of France. The Cordelia of Spenser and Holinshed is dangerously close to figuring an Elizabeth who has gone ahead with the French marriage; and at the end, when their Cordelia survives her husband and is apparently childless, she is not so far from figuring a nightmare version of an Elizabeth without a James to unite her divided kingdom.

Shakespeare's Cordelia similarly returns to England with a French army, but not one that is led by Lear. The very lines in 4.3 (in the Quarto), which seem tactfully to be making the point that the King of France has been called home suddenly—so that this may seem less threateningly like a foreign invasion—go on at once to establish that the Marshall of France has been left in charge of the troops. Since the other side is led by the virtuous Albany, Shakespeare's audience must have felt that this was dubious battle indeed, in its political implications: for the movement toward Dover that promises resolution of the tragedy offers no hope of a viable candidate for the throne, as is clear from the confused concluding dialogue among Kent, Edgar, and Albany. Considered solely as an English history play (which is admittedly a secondary aspect of this tragedy at best), *Lear* stands in quite precise contrast to the action of *King John*, where the dubious and troublesome reign of John is succeeded by the accession of his lineal heir, Henry III, loyally supported by the Bastard whose upbeat and patriotic final lines are echoed dispiritedly at the end of Lear's tragedy. The Bastard proposes a decorous but swift transition to the new regime:

O, let us pay the time but needful woe,
 . . . This England never did, nor never shall,
 Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
 (5.7.110-13)

The spirit of post-Armada confidence is far from the exhausted sense of Time's victory that concludes *Lear*, when Edgar (Albany, in the Quarto text) says, "The weight of this sad time we must obey, . . . we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long." To recognize the degree to which Cordelia is, and yet is not finally able to be, a Cordelion—for all her outspokenness and unshakeable loyalties—is to see more clearly, I think, that the play makes Lear's story into the tragedy of a king who has no sons, in a world where bastards are treated as bastards and behave like bastards, and where—equally reactively—women are either vicious or frail, self-destructive or simply destroyed. Any hint of the miraculous exception that was Elizabeth is missing from this King James version of the story.

The paradoxes of naming and characterizing that have been discussed thus far lie almost wholly in the judgment of the reader or spectator. We see a stage property like a crown, hear a name or place associated with its bearer, perceive language or gestures that may recall earlier texts, and gradually form an increasingly rich and complex understanding of what we find. The arguing amongst ourselves over the plausibility and importance of such observations is a large part of our daily business as interpreters of literature. But we are not alone in trying to interpret character and action in Shakespearean drama; many of the figures on stage are up to much the same thing. This is especially true in the Roman plays, where Shakespeare could find the making and bridging of what I call antonomastic gaps, throughout his sources. Roman names, for instance, are richly suggestive and frequently burdened with historical overlay. Caius Martius, surnamed Coriolanus, "the Coriolan," for the city he has conquered. Julius Caesar—is he a Caesar yet? Most intriguingly, perhaps, Junius Brutus, whose "brutishness" was a calculated response to his "juniority" in the savage family of Tarquins, and whose strategy for survival is re-enacted by a Hamlet or a Prince Hal and fatally misunderstood by a Marcus Brutus. Writers like Valerius Maximus, Livy, and above all Plutarch, who try to arrange the stories of exemplary Romans into coherent narratives, further afforded the playwright far more in the way of interpretation than was usually available in his other sources. Finally, and most importantly, the almost wholly public world of Shakespeare's Rome, the world of political self-presentation, pleading of causes, and what would today be called spin control, constituted a setting where (as on the Shakespearean stage itself) all reality was verbal and gestural at heart and subject to revision.

I suggested earlier that the figure of antonomasia is seen at its most pervasive and complex in *Antony and Cleopatra*; and indeed the opening scene of the play introduces the protagonists in terms of contradictory epithets which suggest how paradoxical and futile it must be to comprehend such fluid and self-characterizing individuals. The play's title has already given us the names of the people we are looking for (as the titles of comedies do not), and in a sense the audience already knows Antony—an Antony—from *Julius Caesar*; furthermore, there are two choric figures on stage, Philo and Demetrius, who perform the

conventional presentational rôle of a Prologue. What they are presenting, however, is an Antony who is not himself:

Nay, but this dotage of our general's
 O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
 That o'er the files and musters of the war
 Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
 The office and devotion of their view
 Upon a tawny front; his captain's heart,
 Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
 The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
 And is become the bellows and the fan
 To cool a gypsy's lust. (1.1.1-10)

Philo's complaint is framed by appeals to the Graeco-Roman virtue of moderation in all things: Antony's folly o'erflows the measure, his heart reneges all temper, refuses to be constrained. Yet, the Roman and Antonine values that Philo seems to treasure are hardly themselves moderate. Antony—the authentic and good Antony—has always been excessive and larger than life. In battle his goodly eyes have glowed like plated Mars and his captain's heart is praised for reneging all temper, for bursting buckles in the just cause of a "great fight." It is the unworthiness of Antony's object now that makes Philo believe that this Antony is a figure of culpable excess; in fact, he has always overflowed the measure in everything he did. When Cleopatra says that her "oblivion is a very Antony" (1.3.90), she may be characterizing him as the epitome of forgetfulness and indifference, as the scene's recollection of Aeneas leaving Dido would imply; but we can also take it as identifying Antony as a figure of excess and epitome itself, Antony as *antonomasia*.

To say that Antony's heart "is become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gypsy's lust" makes sense most simply if we understand that lust can be cooled only by stoking its flames to the point that it is consumed orgasmically. Antony's oversized, buckle-bursting lungs are employed in the service of an indefatigable gypsy. That Philo says the heart has become the bellows *and* the fan may be no more than a hendiadys, a rhetorical embellishment on a "fanning bellows" (remember the "still and contemplative" in Navarre's opening speech), but it may also suggest a fundamental uncertainty, from a Roman viewpoint, whether it is

Antony's virility or his effeminacy that they are witnessing. When Philo is interrupted by the entry of "Antony, Cleopatra, her Ladies, the Train, with eunuchs fanning her," it is an open question, I think, whether Antony is seen as the "bellows" or the "fan" in this first view of him in Egypt: as cock of the walk and sole possessor of this queen, or as part of her feminized entourage. Philo is quite certain that it is the latter:

Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see.

But there is an inflated grandiloquence in calling Antony "the triple pillar of the world" when by this is meant that he is one of the Triumvirs. The intrinsic, effective power of a triumvir is problematic indeed, and as we soon see, one of these thirds of the world, Lepidus, is both impotent and rather silly. And the wrangling, teasing, jesting that Antony and Cleopatra indulge in as we take note of them is too complex a playing at folly for us to be able to say that either one of them *is* simply a fool or a strumpet as Philo intends those epithets.

Attempts to compose glosses to this play are fraught with peril, for the simple reason that frequently we cannot know just what people are saying to each other, only list sets of possibilities. For example, Cleopatra remarks: "I'll seem the fool I am not. Antony will be himself"; to which Antony responds: "But stir'd by Cleopatra" (1.1.42-43). The Arden editor would take *but* in the exceptive sense of *unless*: Cleopatra says she will go along with Antony's claim that his love for her is infinite, and Fulvia of no importance, since Antony is determined to play the lover; Antony replies that he will do so unless she goes on trying to anger him. Dr Johnson seems to have taken the exchange as even more of a plot summary: Antony is going to come to his senses—be himself in Philo's Roman sense—unless Cleopatra continues to distract him.⁹ I would suggest that *seeming* a fool is set against being unselfconsciously one's exaggerated self and so being a fool, literally an idiot in its Greek sense of apartness; to this Antony replies, then, that being himself means being stirred by Cleopatra, for she has made and continues making him what he is. But there is neither the need nor the possibility, probably, to gloss

dialogue of this speed and reactivity. What the audience perceives is predominantly a repartee of amorous challenges, in a public display where Philo, Demetrius, and we are trying in vain to take note of remarks whose private import lies tantalizingly beneath the intelligible and paraphrasable surface. With poignant irony, the scene concludes with Antony's proposal that

. . . all alone,
To-night we'll wander through the streets and note
The qualities of people. Come, my queen,
Last night you did desire it.

But they leave the stage, as the scene direction notes, "with the Train"; these lovers never have their privacy, or the luxury of being spectators, of "noting" the qualities of others and subjecting them to antonomastic characterization. At the outset, Cleopatra seems to realize more clearly than Antony that this is an inescapable condition of being a public figure.

Left on stage, the Romans draw their own conclusions about what they have seen:

Dem. Is Caesar with Antonius priz'd so slight?
Phi. Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony,
He comes too short of that great property
Which still should go with Antony.

Again, the claim that this is a deficient or diminished Antony who is not himself flies in the face of the evidence, for we have seen a magniloquent and arguably a magnificent Antony, albeit one who values someone and something other than Caesar. "Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike / Feeds beast as man . . ." The fact that our Antony is not so clearly the diminished Antony these Romans see contributes to our continuing curiosity as to whether there may be a wisdom in the folly or "dotage" attributed to him. We should also observe that when Demetrius concludes, "I am full sorry / That he approves the common liar, who / Thus speaks of him at Rome," there is an ironic circularity to the remark. What was falsely or ignorantly said in Rome is "approved"—made true or plausible—by Antony's subsequent behavior. In fact, by the same token Antony has just approved what Philo, the

presenter of this introductory play-within-the-play, had earlier affirmed about Antony's great-heartedness. The "common liar" expresses the official historical view of Antony that is already being written before the fact, and this first scene gives us a view of an Antony caught in the antonomastic trap mentioned earlier. As surely as Cressida was already *a* Cressida when her story was being enacted on a London stage, Antony is already the Antony of a history written by the Caesar whose victory over him will enable the *pax Augusta*. When we first see this Caesar in the fourth scene, he is predictably trying on a characterization of Antony as "A man who is th' abstract of all faults / That all men follow"—as the quintessence of antonomastic generalization, and as a perfect scapegoat.

What, we may ask, are the "properties" that first identify Antony and Cleopatra to the spectator? The unusually detailed scene directions suggest that the play relied on spectacle in its own day, as in the eunuchs' fans. Modern productions have often shown an Antony whose dress or features recall a flamboyant contemporary general or politician; and the actual or apparent age of an Antony will affect the weight given the term "dotage" in the first line of the play, for this is in some measure a play about middle-aged lovers, and Antony is like Othello *a senex*. One may also take hints from Shakespeare's sources. Dover Wilson suggested that Antony be shown wearing a lion skin,¹⁰ on the basis of Plutarch's remark that

it had been a speche of old time, that the familie of the Antonii were descended from one Anton, the sonne of Hercules, whereof the familie tooke name. This opinion did Antonius seeke to confirme in all his doings: not onely resembling him in the likeness of his bodye . . . but also in the wearing of his garments.¹¹

Such an initial visual antonomasia, identifying Antony with his mythical ancestor, would enhance the effectiveness of later allusions to Hercules, for instance in 4.3.16-17 where the soldiers hear music under the stage which they take to be "the god Hercules, whom Antony lov'd, / now leav[ing] him," or Antony's remark in 4.12.43 that "The shirt of Nessus is upon me," as well as the more casual reference to him by Cleopatra in 1.3 as "this Herculean Roman." Furthermore, the audience will recall

the figure of Hercules and Omphale here, or later when they hear Cleopatra in 2.5 describe the time "I drunk him to his bed; / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan." By the same token, Philo's description of Antony's eyes glowing like plated Mars leads us, like Mardian, to "think / What Venus did with Mars." The popular Renaissance figures of the relation between making war and making love are seen everywhere in the play. That Antony's servant is named Eros affords opportunities for suggesting that Antony is armed or disarmed by Love, both figuratively and in allusion to the role of Cupid in illustrations or descriptions of the Mars-Venus union.

Yet another mythological model for Antony is seen in Plutarch's remark that although he claimed descent from Hercules, his life showed his principal devotion to be to Bacchus. In fact, in Plutarch it is the uncanny sound of a Bacchic celebration that the soldiers hear, and it is "thought that it was the god [Bacchus] unto whom Antonius bare singular devotion to counterfeate and resemble him, that did foresake them" (308). Although Shakespeare changes this to the departure of Hercules as regards this specific incident, I believe he does develop an awareness of Antony's double identity, as modelling himself on those two antique figures whom Spenser links in the opening lines of Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, as "inspired with heroicke heat" and bringing civilization to the East and West respectively. The dream of combining East and West is invested in the figure of Antony, who for all his contradictions—reveler and warrior, a Roman with an Asiatic style, with a dual allegiance to Amor and Roma—evokes the fantasy of an Emperor Antony that Cleopatra describes to Dolabella: "His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm / Crested the world . . ."

The more fully to present this duplex Antony, Shakespeare replaces the choric Philo and Demetrius with the more sympathetic and nuanced voice of Enobarbus. In this he takes a minor figure from Plutarch's account, notable only for his death by fever after leaving Antony, "as though . . . he repented" (298), and makes him Antony's chief friend and advisor. Somewhat similarly, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare found a figure in his sources with the common Venetian name of Marcuccio—little Mark, after the region's patron saint—and by changing a vowel turned him into Mercutio whose mercurial temperament and cynical

realism make him a comparable interpreter of and to Romeo during the first part of the play. Here the historical Domitius Ahenobarbus¹²—brazen or red bearded—becomes Shakespeare's Enobarbus, his name combining the attributes of Bacchus and Hercules, wine-bibbing (*oeno-*) and manly valor (*-barbus*). When we first meet this Wine-beard in Egypt he is calling for wine and predicting that "Mine, and most of our fortunes to-night, shall be—drunk to bed." When we first see him in Rome, in 2.2, he is telling Lepidus (the doubtless clean-shaven, "smooth" or "polished" Lepidus), "By Jupiter, / Were I the wearer of Antonio's beard, / I would not shave't today." When this keeper of Antony's two properties betrays his master, as he decides to do at the end of Act 3—"I will seek / Some way to leave him"—it marks the disintegration, "dislimning" of Antony himself. The man who had hoped to earn "a place i' the story" (3.13.46) finds that it is that of "a master-leaver and a fugitive" (4.9.22).

I have suggested that the Roman thoughts of *Antony and Cleopatra* try to comprehend the world by naming, characterizing, describing it by means of epithets that I call antonomastic in that they replace a complex and mutable person or issue with a static and necessarily inadequate verbal formula. A full discussion of the play's antonomasia would be as long as a discussion of the play itself; so I shall conclude with two final examples of antonomasia in the Egyptian manner, epithets that deny, as it were, the making of epithets.

Determined to cheat Caesar of a Roman triumph in which she would have to watch "Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I' th' posture of a whore" (a scene, of course, that we are watching at this very moment and that echoes Philo's earlier judgment), Cleopatra applies the asp:

Come, thou mortal wretch,
 With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
 Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
 Be angry, and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak,
 That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
 Unpolicied! (5.2.302-07)

The richness of this carefully contrived scene, designed to show Cleopatra in all her regal splendor, is heightened by language in which paradox reverberates. The Gordian knot of life, both intrinsic and intricate, must now be severed by an act of violence. The worm is at once Cleopatra's final lover, discharging after a furious fit, and the fruitful product of that love, the baby at her breast "that sucks the nurse asleep." Great Caesar is not Caesar Augustus here, at this moment, but an "ass unpolicied"—saddled with an epithet in which the defeat of Caesar's policies is paronomastically underscored by the fact that the *name* of the asp now literally occludes Caesar's, with the privative prefix, *un-*, itself embedded within its name, *ass un-p-olicied*. This triumphant renaming of Caesar, heavily ironized by the fact that it is imagined by the dying Cleopatra as both unhearable and unspeakable, a phrase to be conveyed by means of the speaking picture of her dead body, is echoed by Charmian, as she closes her mistress' eyes and straightens her crown:

Now boast thee, Death, in thy possession lies
A lass unparallel'd.

Here too the asp and its power to undo are at the heart of the epithet, and the earlier phrase is now enhanced by an implicit play on "lass" and "alas." Sadly, the incomparable Cleopatra is possessed by death; but happily she is now finally no longer queen but a private "lass," free of the stately body that awaits Caesar's anticlimactic entry a few lines later. The time is past for the drawing of parallels or epithets, and we are left with that spectacle that I earlier suggested as the primal antonomastic moment at the opening of the play, when the audience is presented with a crowned figure on stage and waits for it to stand and unfold itself.

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NOTES

¹An earlier version of this essay was read at a conference on Paronomasia at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster, July 1992. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Inge Leimberg and the other organizers and participants in this conference for their helpful comments.

²See M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957; London: Methuen 1966) ch. 1, "The Fatal Cleopatra."

³New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

⁴Ed. and trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1920).

⁵All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

⁶That Arden was the family name of Shakespeare's mother may suggest a further psychological dimension to the initial contrast with the patriarchal tyrannies at court.

⁷Professor Leimberg has pointed out that Cordelia's name may also suggest the musical chord, actualized in the therapeutic "soft music" of 4.7, and perhaps the "cord" that hangs her and may be shown still around her neck in the final scene, and, moreover, the *ordeal* implied in the name Cordelia.

⁸See the Arden edition of *King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1985) Appendices 2 and 3 (220-24).

⁹For both readings, see the Arden edition of M. R. Ridley (London: Methuen, 1954) 7.

¹⁰The New Shakespeare *Antony and Cleopatra* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1950) xxv.

¹¹North's Plutarch (1579), in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: RKP, 1964) 5: 257.

¹²Although this Domitius is a minor figure in Plutarch's life of Antony, he is described at the end of the story as the ancestor of the Ahenobarbus whose name was changed to Nero Germanicus. Plutarch concludes: "This Nero was Emperour in our time, and slue his owne mother, and had almost destroyed the Empire of Rome, through his madness and wicked life, being the fift Emperour of Rome after Antonius" (318). As with his treatment of the Lear story, Shakespeare suppresses a historical dimension (obviously unsuited to the unities of drama, even in this play which stretches them to the limit) of which his audience may have been aware.