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Sequel and aftermath: tragic structure and dramatic continuity in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*

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Abstract
In this paper I shall discuss some possible relations between two of Shakespeare's tragic dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1). These plays were probably written and perhaps staged at a distance of seven years from each other (*Julius Caesar* almost certainly written by, and staged in, 1599, and *Antony and Cleopatra* perhaps written by the end of 1606); but they deal with periods of ancient Roman history effectively continuous with one another. I shall consider, first, the notion of 'sequel', as it might be relevant to possible interconnections between Shakespearean dramatic units, and the related but distinct notion of 'aftermath'. Here I shall refer to a text by the contemporary English novelist and essayist Rachel Cusk, *Aftermath* (2012). Secondly, I shall consider applications of these notions within the fields of Shakespearean comedies, English Histories, and tragedies. In my third and final section I shall argue, both that, in relation to *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* may be considered a sequel, and that the lines along which, in the later play, the roles of Anthony and of Cleopatra are presented and developed can fruitfully be understood in terms of 'aftermath'.

Key words: Shakespeare, aftermath, *Julius Caesar, Anthony and Cleopatra,* tragedy

Introduction

In this paper I shall discuss some possible relations between two of Shakespeare's tragic dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*[1]. These plays were probably written and perhaps staged at a distance of seven years from each other (*Julius Caesar* almost certainly written by, and staged in, 1599, and *Antony and Cleopatra* perhaps written by the end of 1606); but they deal with periods of ancient Roman history effectively continuous with one another. I shall consider, first, the notion of 'sequel', as it might be relevant to possible interconnections between Shakespearean dramatic units, and the related but distinct notion of 'aftermath'. Here I shall refer to a text by

[1] All references to Shakespearean plays are taken from The Norton Shakespeare.

the contemporary English novelist and essayist Rachel Cusk, *Aftermath* (2012). Secondly, I shall consider applications of these notions within the fields of Shakespearean comedies, English Histories, and tragedies. In my third and final section I shall argue, both that, in relation to *Julius Caesar*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* may be considered a sequel, and that the lines along which, in the later play, the roles of Anthony and of Cleopatra are presented and developed can fruitfully be understood in terms of 'aftermath'.

Sequel and aftermath

Within Shakespeare's oeuvre it has been customary to consider certain plays as 'sequels'; I have in mind the almost universal editorial practice of referring to two early History plays as *'2 Henry VI'* and '*3 Henry VI*', and to a later History play as *'2 Henry IV'.* In considering what such a view might involve, It is helpful to cite a rather provocative claim, by Giorgio Melchiori in his edition of *2 Henry IV,* about the notion of a sequel:

> The *Second Part* is merely a 'sequel'...In fact it bears all the marks of the time-honoured technique, still practised nowadays especially by the film industry, for concocting a sequel: the introduction of a host of new characters to support the central figure responsible for the success of the original play, the parallelism in structure with the 'parent' production, and even the explicit promise at the end of further instalments... [such features] give the play a metadramatic quality...making it a reconsideration of the nature of the dramatic event (Melchiori 1989, 1).

While Melchiori's general view, here, of the nature of a 'sequel' is suggestive, his specific interpretation of *2 Henry IV* in such terms was, and remains, far from universally accepted; much critical opinion has seen the two *Henry IV* plays as planned, either from the start of composition or at least from some identifiable point within the writing of the first play, as a 'double play' exhibiting a careful interrelation of its two parts. It is not clear that the two plays run parallel to each other in structural terms; at a basic level the first play ends with the victory over internal rebellion of King Henry IV while the second ends with the peaceful succession of that King by his son Henry V. Both plays, certainly, stage rebellions, but their character is markedly different, and the defeat of the second rebellion occurs more by Machiavellian diplomacy than, like the first, through open battle. The promise of a 'further instalment' occurs, despite Melchiori's implication, at the end not of the first but of the second play; and it refers, there, to the reappearance of a 'central character', Falstaff, who actually, in the 'sequel' to *2 Henry IV* – that is, in *Henry V* – significantly fails to reappear. Moreover, it seems misleading to imply that the 'success' of *1 Henry IV* was or is attributable simply to the character of Falstaff's role,

but rather to the relations between it and the roles of Prince Henry and of Hotspur (Bulman 2016, 3-16).

As for the three *Henry VI* plays, issues of compositional intention, and of chronology, are also problematic. A common recent view sees *2 Henry VI* as the earliest of the plays to be composed and staged, followed by *3 Henry VI,* with *1 Henry VI* as perhaps the last play in order of composition. Relevant factors in such a view include the likelihood that each play was composed by more than one author, and the possibility that *I Henry VI* was created as a 'prequel'; the idea here might indeed resemble Melchiori's notion of 'sequel' as far as concerns such elements as 'parallelism of structure', a 'central figure' surrounded by 'new characters', the 'promise of further instalments' (which in this case would already exist), and above all the hope for theatrical 'success' (Warren 2003, 67-74).

However, the main justification for any understanding of (two or more) plays in terms of (one or more) sequels, including that of Melchiori concerning the *Henry IV* plays, surely lies in the co-existence of a few of Melchiori's named features with another, which he does not name; continuity of staged action. In the penultimate scene of *I Henry IV* Hotspur is killed by Prince Henry, with Falstaff inappropriately claiming his share of the credit; in the opening scenes of *2 Henry IV* a variety of rumours circulate concerning Hotspur and his death (or possible victory) and Falstaff is seen claiming general acceptability and entitlement on the basis of his supposed role in Hotspur's defeat. The dovetailing of staged events, between the end of *2 Henry VI* and the start of *3 Henry VI,* and between the end of *1 Henry VI* and (its perhaps already composed 'sequel') *2 Henry VI,* is even more tight and precise.

This continuity of staged action is not necessarily – and in the case of the two *Henry IV* plays it is in fact not – a matter of historical continuity between the events underlying the dramatic staging. Both plays simplify and compress actual historical process, in the interests of a sharp focus on their principal roles and the causal agency of these roles. What matters, if one play is to be seen as another's sequel, is that a staged action be intelligible as continuous, across the two plays and the juncture between them, in terms of the actions and reactions of principal characters appearing in the plays. Given this, many of Melchiori's claims do fall into place. A sequel will stage familiar characters from its antecedent drama, along with major new roles; it will display, not parallelism indeed, but significant differentiation, in structure; and, not least, by its own existence and in other ways it will open a prospect of further sequels, whether or not extant.

What, then, is an aftermath, and how might it be recognised? It is useful to distinguish the idea from that of a mere sequel; yet the word clearly carries within itself a sense of sequence. Initially one may say that the notion of 'sequel' operates at the level of artistic form, while that of 'aftermath' involves claims about human experience, real or fictive. The idea of 'aftermath', by derivation, also implies some

sort of productive fruitfulness. Rachel Cusk, in giving the title *Aftermath* to her memoir of a marriage that ends painfully but whose ending is yet in some important ways fruitful, writes that "The etymology of the word 'aftermath' is 'second mowing', a second crop of grass that is sown and reaped after the harvest is in" (5). An important implication here is that an 'aftermath', even if only in the long run, is something positive for the one who experiences it. Cusk later remarks that "To reach aftermath, first there has to be the event itself" (55). Of her emotional experience, in the painful situation which she delineates, she says that "[T]his darkness and disorganization were not mere negation, mere absence. They were both aftermath and prelude" (5). Later in her memoir she develops an application of her notion of 'aftermath' to a dramatic text – that is, by implication, to more than one such text;

> The world Creon has inherited... is aftermath, and Creon has the job of governing it...Creon's authority is recreating the very perversity from which it was born... but afterwards he is more honest with himself. This, after all, is aftermath, the second harvest: life with knowledge of what has gone before. He admits that he is frightened. He admits that what frightens him most is the idea that he will have to sacrifice himself in the name of authority, that true responsibility is an act of self-destruction (103-105).

Cusk has in view here, of course, Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone,* and its relations to two other extant tragic dramas by Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus.* Cusk is no doubt aware that these three plays are susceptible of being considered as containing two 'sequels' (*Antigone*, on such a view, occupying the third and final position). Equally she will probably have known that the order of composition and staging of these plays does not correspond to the order of their represented dramatic action – *Antigone* was staged around 441 BC, twenty or more years before *Oedipus Rex* and thirty-five years before the later play, *Oedipus at Colonus,* with which the opening of the earlier *Antigone* is more or less dovetailed. Clearly Cusk's understanding of 'aftermath' – a very rich and suggestive understanding, upon which I shall draw in detail in later sections of this paper – is distinct from a 'mere' continuity of action; yet also, I think, in her application of it to these two or there plays by Sophocles, it presupposes some such continuity.

Cusk also seems to presuppose the relevance, to the notion of 'aftermath' and to the continuity of action across which she traces its operation, of the genre and the experiential mode of 'tragedy'. An aftermath, though eventually understood and experienced in positive terms, may also be painful and problematic; moreover, it typically follows something, also painful, which has seemingly amounted to closure and finality. Hence there emerge questions; how may such a closure, and (differently) how may its aftermath, be survived, in such ways as to do justice, emotionally and morally, to what precedes them? if an aftermath involves both pain

and growth, by what process may it be "sown and reaped"? how might one distinguish, from an initial (perhaps, ex hypothesi, negative) harvest, its aftermath? and by what causal processes might a seemingly complete harvest generate something "aftermathic", transcending the limits of a supposed previous closure? Might there be no end of aftermath(s)?

I would paraphrase my sequence of quotations from Cusk's *Aftermath* in the following terms. Some framework, whether considered primarily in political or social or interpersonal terms, has broken itself down. This breakdown, which could be interpreted as a closure, is, in an 'aftermathic' framework, to be understood as a (possibly tragic) 'event'. From it, and by the same token from behind and before it, there emerges something new - some factor, within the apparent causal chain preceding the event, which had been dormant or neglected; some option which the seeming closure of the event within itself left available for a new exposure and a new opening. Yet, all this can be ignored or refused. New harvests may be blighted in advance, by the insistence of such traditional "landlords" and administrators as Sophocles' Creon upon the maintenance of inherited traditions of social criteria, governmental discipline, and of personal 'dignity' which have been already, by the "event", proved demonstrably counter-productive. If an 'aftermath' is something positive, it is achieved at a cost, and by a personal recognition of the necessity of a cost, already paid, which may amount to a sacrifice. It is also the case that a refusal of such recognition exacts its own cost.

In this last paragraph, while staying, I believe, reasonably close to Cusk's lines of thought, I have also had in mind – perhaps a little transparently – the applicability of her thought, as I see it, to the Shakespearean plays *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra.* Before moving on to a consideration of these plays, it will be useful to consider the operation, in Shakespearean dramatic genres more generally, of 'sequels' and of 'aftermaths', and their relation to decisive 'events', within these dramas – events which sometimes take, or appear to take, the form and the weight of 'closure'.

Sequel and aftermath in Shakespearean comedy, English History, and tragedy

It is a familiar observation that several of Shakespeare's comedies start from a certain form of closure, namely a death – the deaths of a heroine's father, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and *All's Well That Ends Well* (a wonderfully aftermathic title), or brother, as (for Olivia) in *Twelfth Night*. As the action of this play begins, Viola, too, supposes her brother to have died; and supposed deaths, of a wife, a son and a brother, generate the action of *The Comedy of Errors*. In *Cymbeline* Posthumus' uncertain status is a function, to some extent, of his father's premature death. In *The Tempest* Prospero's death is assumed by most of the play's characters. *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* jointly written by Shakespeare with John Fletcher, begins with a marriage celebration

interrupted at once by the appeals, for redress and justice, of three recently widowed women – widowed, in fact, by the wars which have led to the rule, in a Thebes at once Shakespearean and Sophoclean, of the Creon to whom Cusk's remarks on 'aftermath' referred.

Death, perhaps, counts as an extreme event, and it is important to see that Shakespearean comedies regularly centre upon the experiences and choices of characters who survive and outlive the deaths of those who have been close to them. Thus notions of 'aftermath' should be relevant to such plays. Yet it's not always clear how painful the emotions are, or have been, which these deaths have aroused in the protagonists who survive them. Olivia's grief for her dead brother may, in face of Viola's sharp scrutiny, and by comparison with Viola's grief at her own supposed loss, appear affected. Portia, by her father's death, is bequeathed, rather than grief, the problems of a newly rich and much-besieged heiress. Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well,* makes no bones about it; 'I think not on my father... What was he like?/I have forgot him'. (Act 1, scene 1, lines 75, 77-78). Nonetheless she is grief-struck, for a different reason – the departure of her beloved, Bertram, seemingly unaware of her love, and bound for the social world of a court from which she is, by her 'low birth' excluded.

One might consider other kinds of putative closure here. Exclusions, or renunciations, are found prominently at the start of other Comedies. An ambitious attempt to renounce courtly obligations initiates the male projects of *Love's Labour's Lost*; disgrace and banishment underlie the uneasy embraces, by the characters of *As You Like It*, of the pastoral world of Arden. Behind the social wit, and the incipiently violent male chauvinism, of *Much Ado About Nothing* stands a military action with its own casualties. The female and the male protagonists of all these comedies have something, some 'event', some experience, or some decision seemingly involving 'closure', which they find themselves, within their plays, outliving.

Does this give one reason to see, in the field of Shakespearean comedy, the operation, on any widespread level, of what I am calling (following Rachel Cusk) 'aftermath'? It is not easy to embrace such an idea. The energies of Shakespeare's comic protagonists, as we observe and participate in them within the scenarios of the plays, are drawn more from qualities seemingly innate to them than from their processing of whatever negative experiences may have determined their initial situations. Nonetheless there are plays in which those energies, often deployed towards and within romantic relationships, are frustrated by obstacles which seem to impose some sort of closure; a father's will, a lover's refusal, a suspicion of betrayal. There are also comedies in which romantic projects are conceived with levels of single-minded intensity which may indicate a reaction, to past grief or loss, and which may in turn give place, in due course within the drama, to something more moderate and mitigated. In such cases one might see a kind of double aftermath, with

the single-mindedness which Cusk attributes to 'Creon' followed (but without the negative stimulus of bereavement, operative in Creon's case) by an acceptance of something like (Cusk's terms again) responsibility, or fear, or a necessary cost.

One may think in this connection of Benedick, and of his oscillations between a military pose of determined bachelorhood, a profession of equally determined courtship, and a reluctant abandonment of homosocial male bonds (which, in the end, he seems happy enough to renew). Again, one may think of Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well*, whose intense pursuit of Bertram, yielding to an intense abjection, is followed in turn by endlessly complex and contrived manoeuvres directed as much towards her own dignity as towards their marital future; or of Posthumus, whose staunch belief in the chastity of the wife from whom he is exiled collapses, under peer pressure, into credulity about her infidelity, a credulity followed in due course not (at first) by renewed trust but by a rather remarkable acceptance of autonomous female desire; or, above all, of Prospero, driven by his wrongs into a path of revenge which, with few words, he seems suddenly to abandon, in favour of a perhaps unconvincing policy of general forgiveness.

Another issue, here, should be mentioned. Whereas few comedies or Romances stage the death of a named and represented character (the exceptions are all late – *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen),* there are some plays in which the event of a marriage, or a betrothal, seems to precipitate, or in temporal terms to accompany, 'events' as drastic in their implication as might be expected of a death. Bassanio no sooner wins Portia's hand and heart than he learns of his friend Antonio's mortal danger, and comes to experience his own inability to make good to Antonio the obligations of friendship. Benedick's devotion to Beatrice is tested, to near-destruction, by the false accusations against her cousin Hero, which have led to her actual collapse and simulated death. In other comedies violent consequences ensue from marriages actually performed (as between Petruchio and Katharina), marriages arranged (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, between Demetrius and Helena), and marriages enforced (as in *All's Well that Ends Well* between Bertram and Helena).

Arguably, thus, in these characters and situations and relationships of comedy and Romance, one may see, at a certain level and within single plays, the operation of 'aftermath'. On the other hand, it seems clear that no extant Shakespearean comedy or Romance has, or is, a sequel. We have reports of a play-title, 'Love's Labour's Won', which probably related to a comedy no longer extant – or possibly to a play we now know by another title; it seems to me vanishingly unlikely that such a play deployed characters familiar to us from a known drama.

One further point should be made. Few if any of these plays revolve around a single protagonist – few of them even centre upon one single 'romantic' couple'; whereas the notion of 'aftermath' seems to involve, either a single character, through

whom the operations of aftermath may be represented (perhaps by oscillations of project or of mood) or a single relationship, within whose problematic survival such oscillations might reach a more or less stable and fruitful resolution. If we turn now to Shakespeare's English History plays, it's again important to note how few of them revolve around a single protagonist – despite the often-misleading implications of their traditional regnal titles; Henry VI's role is far from being straightforwardly central to any of the three plays bearing his name, and the same is true of Henry IV.

These two royal roles appear, each of them, in three plays whose action is successive – plays, thus, which in my terms here can be perceived as sequels, whatever their order of composition, and whatever the moment, surely indeterminable, of their dramatic and aesthetic conception. In this sense, the two monarchs, as 'survivors' of various political crises – crises involving, for many of their political subjects, deaths – are certainly potential dramatic 'subjects' of 'aftermathic' experiences. Indeed Henry VI, rejection of reign, says to his Queen

> Come, wife, let's in, and learn to govern better;
> For yet may England curse my wretched reign. (*2 Henry VI*, 4.9. 47-48).

One might expect him to have said 'Yet may England hail my kindly reign', or something similar; he already seems despondent about his prospects, and correctly so. By the end of *2 Henry VI* his forces have been defeated in battle; *3 Henry VI* opens with a challenge to both his power and his legitimacy as King, and by its end he has been dethroned, re-enthroned, deposed once again and finally murdered. These are not, in Cusk's or in my terms, aftermaths; they are sequels, and the play is itself a sequel – followed by yet another sequel, with a different regnal name, *Richard III.*

Perhaps a greater readiness to reconceive past experiences in terms of 'aftermath' operates in the two *Henry IV* plays, and in their relations to *Richard II*, which precedes them, and *Henry V,* which follows them. Perhaps Bolingbroke, the seemingly reluctant rebel of *Richard II*, learns a costly shrewdness, in dealing with rebellions, as the aftermath of his experience of what he sees as Richard's naivety in that respect. More plausibly his son, the future Henry V, successfully learns a middle path, for his own kingship, between the heroic activism of Hotspur and the statecraft of his own father. A little more subtly one might suggest that the oscillations, in *Henry V,* between general up-front heroism and occasional rueful reflection, owe something, not only to an awareness of his father's guilt in acquiring the throne from King Richard, but also to a sense that his own rejection of Falstaff has opened up, within him, an emptiness which neither success nor repentance can quite fill – a knowledge of what has gone before (to apply Cusk's terms) which does not and cannot prompt, in him, any commensurate 'aftermathic' and sacrificial acceptance.

Yet it's hard to estimate the inner life of either Henry IV or his son, both before and within the period of their monarchic rule. Ultimately both men are committed to their own kingship; because – and this is the dominant feature of the English Histories – there is and must be an English King. Whatever process may generate the succession of one king by another, succession is what counts. Succession is not closure – neither seemingly nor actually so; it is what precludes the notion, and ideologically exorcises the fear, of closure – the fear of a 'tragic' event from which there can be, whatever its merely occasion-bound sequel, no fruitful aftermath of any kind. By the same token, I would argue, a commitment to 'succession', at the level of ideology, while guaranteeing the applicability, across the field of Shakespeare's English Histories, of the notion of 'sequel', effectively limits the operation of 'aftermath' within the represented experiences of the leading characters in these plays.

As for Shakespeare's tragedies, an interesting general picture is clear. Plays tend to begin in situations which involve potential crisis but in which such crisis is being kept, one way and another, at bay. Various characters, some of them villains, seek their own survival or (the villains especially) their own advantage and power, through these critical uncertainties. Differently, protagonists assume responsibility, by virtue not of their political position so much as their belief or will or ability or charisma, for keeping things together – for the survival or the amelioration, even if by drastic means, of the imperilled state or society which they, even if unwillingly, inhabit. The consequences include, sometimes, conflict – between protagonist and society, even (though this is in fact rather rare) between protagonist and villain; more generally the consequences involve reversal – the protagonist becomes all too closely identified with, and a major part of, those problems which he or she set out to resolve, to the point where the elimination of the protagonist may seem, to others, a desirable goal. The achievement of such an elimination – the death of the protagonist – will in turn be shown, though to differing degrees in different tragedies, to involve the general exhaustion of the fruitful energies of a whole staged polity and society.

To put this general picture into terms relevant to the argument of this paper: Shakespeare's tragedies proceed from crises, through failed remedies, and through ostensible but only superficial recoveries of stability, into closure. Such closure, moreover, is, more often than not, ostentatiously theatrical; that is to say, it involves a representation, not of a purportedly logical resolution of events and situations, through necessary connections between a protagonist's virtues and failings, or between a protagonist and any single countervailing person or force – not this, but a violent, an abrupt, and frequently a wilful closure, enacted by a protagonist, of his or her project. Such violently theatrical closures not only deplete the social and political energies available within the world of a play; they embody a rejection, by its leading inhabitant – exemplary for better as for worse – of the terms of that play's

world, and a deliberate and negative verdict upon its remaining resources for fruitful growth, even for ultimate recognisable survival. The three greatest writers on Shakespearean tragedy (as I conceive them to be), Andrew Cecil Bradley, William Empson, and Stanley Cavell, conspire to concur in a sense that what is tragic about these tragedies is the enactment, and experience, of what they refer to as 'waste' (Bradley 1956, 37). This is the opposite of 'aftermath', and would seem to preclude it.

Yet I shall now argue that two of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (hereafter *JC* and *AC*), while falling recognisably, to some extent, within the terms of these general patterns, also exhibit differences, from such patterns, of some significance; that these features can be accommodated within the idea that the later play is in some ways a sequel to the former; and that *AC* is not only, in relation to *JC*, a sequel but also the vehicle of an experience of 'aftermath'. This aftermath amounts to something different from 'waste'; it is an experience located primarily, but not only, within the role of Antony.

Antony and Cleopatra as aftermathic sequel to *Julius Caesar*

First, then: in what sense and to what extent is *AC* a sequel to *JC*? (Hatchuel 2011) I shall mention a number of features which link the plays; some are more telling than others; one has, I think, never been given its due weight. Both plays draw heavily on the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch, available to Shakespeare in the translation of Thomas North. Over the last two generations they have often been staged in sequence with some continuity of set-design and performers (Jensen 2016)[2]. *JC* and *AC* have both generated their own prequels and sequels. Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* deals with the love-affair, with Julius Caesar, remembered by Shakespeare's Cleopatra with stagy nostalgia; Hebbel's *Herodes und Mariamne* pits against each other an Eastern queen, of suspected but true fidelity, and a powerful but jealous ruler, Herod the Great, who had also caused problems for Shakespeare's Cleopatra. A TV series screened between 2005 and 2007, *Rome*, presented a continuous narrative, from before the assassination of Julius Caesar, across 22 episodes, up to the (sadly unhistorical) survival, from the purges of the younger ("Augustus") Caesar, of Caesarion, Cleopatra's son by Augustus's adoptive father.

Roman triumvirs, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius Caesar, feature importantly or centrally in both plays. Both plays range in their settings from Rome across the Mediterranean, and both plays move, in the placing of their represented action, eastwards. Chains of revenge, in both plays – on behalf of Julius Caesar, and of Pompey his defeated rival, by Julius Caesar's adoptive and Pompey's actual son – are

[2] They have also frequently been staged as two of four plays – the others being *Titus Andronicus* and *Coriolanus* – presented as 'Shakespeare's Roman Plays', and a number of critical books and articles have considered these four plays in thematic terms as a distinct group.

thematically salient in both plays, affording as they do some degree of motivation for leading agents (though this factor is more relevant in the earlier play).

In both plays, a pair of politicians – Brutus and Cassius, Caesar and Antony – achieve, after quarrels, some degree of personal or diplomatic reconciliation. The name of "Caesar" runs remorselessly across the two dramas, as part of Julius Caesar's family name, and as assumed for ideological and even military purposes by his grand-nephew and adopted son (usually referred to in editions of *JC* as 'Octavius', more appropriately referred to in AC as 'Caesar'). The prospect or the fact of military and ceremonial 'triumphs' dominate the final scene of *AC* as they do the opening scene of *JC.*

Some scenes and some speeches, in *AC,* refer back to scenes and speeches and events in *JC.* Pompey, at *AC* 2.6, recalls the project of Brutus and the other conspirators, in the earlier play, against Julius Caesar as based on the desire to 'have one man but a man' (2.6. 19). Antony, at *AC* 3.11, recalls his own military success, at Philippi, against Cassius and Brutus, and contrasts it with the weakness shown at that time by Caesar and with the reversal of their fortunes in his recent defeat by Caesar at Actium. Antagonism between Antony and Caesar, which seems suddenly, in *AC*'s third Act, to become a dominant dramatic motivation, has emerged twice, at lower levels, in Act 4.1 and Act 5.1 of *JC.*

At a less measurable but very significant level, many audiences have felt the last two Acts of *JC*, after its central double crisis of action and rhetoric, rather a let-down; hesitating to find in the death of Brutus an adequate closure, they have, one way or another, wanted something more. One might also feel that the overall structure of *JC* – particularly if one were to emphasize its features shared with 'English History' dramas (and thereby, I think, to conceive Julius Caesar on the lines of an English monarch faced by violent rebellion) – resembles in some ways that of *1 Henry IV,* where rebels seek to overthrow a monarch (who seems to limit their own scope for dignity and self-expression) but come to grief, partly through their own unresolved differences, partly through the opposition of a monarch's heir. It may be suggested that, as far as concerns the (Octavius) Caesar depicted in *JC,* the closure of that play corresponds to the ending of a single 'Shakespearean (English) History', involving as it does the seeming establishment of Caesar as spokesperson for (his version of) Rome and interpreter of the significance of the battle immediately concluded. Antony's epitaph for Brutus, 'the noblest Roman of them all', might befit the death of a tragic protagonist; but nothing suggests that Caesar regards Brutus (or Cassius) in such a light. Caesar's refusal to respond, in fact, to Antony's remarks indicates the gap between potential readings of the whole play *JC;* and it is this gap which leaves scope for a reading of *AC* as, for Caesar, a sequel to, but, for Antony, an aftermath of, the earlier play (*JC* 5.5. 68 and ff.)

I shall now add what seems to me the most important feature which links these plays. It is, simply, the remarkable choice, by Shakespeare, of a starting point – in terms both of historical fact and of the structural arrangement of his own drama – for the later play, *AC.* All accounts of *AC* dwell upon its wide range in both space and time; it covers, in terms of original history, eleven years, from 41 to 30 BC. Many accounts of the play also develop comparisons between it and other early-modern tragic dramas focussed on the deaths of Antony and (especially) of Cleopatra – one of the greatest, and latest, of these dramas being Dryden's play *All for Love.* Such dramas, almost invariably (a rare exception is a play by Hans Sachs), begin at a point either immediately before or, more often, after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Some begin after Antony's death. None begins as far back, from these events of 31-30 BC, as Shakespeare's play (Neill 1994, 14-20). Equally, no playwright other than Shakespeare wrote plays both about the death of Julius Caesar and the relationship, and the deaths, of Antony and Cleopatra. Only to Shakespeare's treatments of these historical events, therefore, are the double modes – of sequel and aftermath – conceptually and emotionally pertinent.

By his chosen starting point, Shakespeare achieves important and vivid effects of continuity between the actions of the two plays. Of the victors at Philippi, Antony has remained in the East, supposedly (and, I would claim, genuinely) maintaining a Roman imperial presence there through his power over Cleopatra, while Caesar undergoes very mixed fortunes, back in Italy, in his attempts to quell enduring civil war – war which the 'victory' at Philippi has left unresolved. Caesar, moreover, receives, or endures, the uncertain assistance of the third triumvir, Lepidus, whose qualities and limitations were staged in just one telling scene of *JC,* Act 4.1. In these ways, and in the other aspects which I have mentioned, there is a strong case for seeing *AC* as a sequel to *JC.*

Yet such undeniable continuity, so carefully and remarkably staged by Shakespeare, has passed largely unremarked, in critical literature. There is one obvious reason for this; criticism has dwelt, understandably, on the striking opening of *AC* – on everything in it that is, by comparison with *JC,* glamorous and amusing and romantic and, above all, new; a new major female role, that of Cleopatra; a new 'female' presence, in the form of Cleopatra's attendants Charmian and Iras, whose part in subsequent events will be crucial; a new setting, Alexandria; above all, as it seems to his Roman followers, a new Antony;

> ... 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...

> Take but good note, and you shall see in him
> The triple pillar of the world transformed
> Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see. (*AC* 1.1. 6-10, 11-13)

Yet another factor has also militated against the acceptance of *AC* as a 'historical' sequel to *JC* – again a rather obvious factor; the categorisation of bot plays as tragedies. Tragedies (as I have discussed above) do not typically have sequels. It is worthwhile, therefore, to ask how far one may understand the end of the earlier play, *JC*, as an adequate closure, in terms of tragic form? What is going on in *JC*? The play's central crisis is, no doubt, the assassination of Julius Caesar and its immediate consequences. What precedes this? Typically, a set of unresolved situations in Roman public life; fickle public adulation of Julius Caesar; his own impenetrable self-confidence, bolstered by apparent deference from leading Senators; Cassius's keenly resentful desire for a revival of the traditions of Republican rivalrous and oligarchic governance; the envy and herd-instinct shared by other conspirators; and, in Brutus, grand dreams of public renewal by 'purge' and 'sacrifice', by the exaltation of public ideals over personal relationships.

How does the assassination resolve these motives and emotions? It is typical of Shakespearean tragedy that such a violent reversal of the terms of political life and public conduct should cause problems far greater than any it might claim to resolve; and, more specifically, that Brutus and Cassius, agents of one version of resolution, should become the targets of another. Rivalry is indeed renewed, more bloodily than ever, between killers and avengers of the dead general and leader; citizens turn their uncertain civic allegiances into armed opposition; and, for both Brutus and Julius Caesar's young heir Octavius "the Ides of March" becomes an ideology – a singularity, a catch-word for the thought that, now, because of and in the embodied continuity of that "event", nothing and everything are to remain the same, everything and nothing are to have changed. Either "Caesarian Rome" – under an Octavius, or under a Brutus hailed, against his will, as "Caesar" – or endless resentment and civil war. The conclusion of *JC,* on this reading, lacks something in terms of tragic form, not only because of Brutus's failure but also because of the terms in which Caesar presents his own success – terms which seem to leave unresolved many of the issues, and the energies, which the play has staged.

In particular, Antony's path through the play invites interpretation; his role, negligible in the first two Acts, acquires great prominence once he encounters the assassins, in 3.1, and even more significance as he successfully arouses the Roman crowd against them in 3.2. One editor of *JC,* David Daniell, makes a very telling point here;

> By contrast with everyone else in the play…his language over long passages is apparently driven by feeling for someone else…in the Forum scene, whatever he is saying, his linguistic eye, if we may so express it, is on his dead friend and leader, in grief for him. (70)

'Whatever he is saying', here, is a phrase covering a rather large range of effects, for Antony is in fact arousing the Roman crowd to violence and murder; yet there is no reason to discount his own genuine feelings of grief and loss in response to Julius Caesar's death Hereafter his role is telling but limited; he participates with Octavius Caesar in the semi-legalised murders of leading Roman citizens, he shares with him in the leadership of Roman armies – against fellow-Romans – at Philippi, and he offers generous words towards (in 5.4) the defeated Lucilius and (in 5.5) the dead Brutus. On the whole he says rather little. He involves himself in both civil and military violence against Roman fellow-citizens. He refers to Cassius and Brutus – after they are safely dead – in terms appropriate to fellow-citizens. In what he says and in what he does not say – it can be suggested - he does not subscribe to Caesar's versions of political or dramatic closure.

In the later play, *AC*, he is seen, from the outset, to evade such closure. We may think he resents Caesar's pretensions; we may think he seeks, and in his own eyes finds, a kind of escape from the tensions of Roman civil war. In any case – this needs no emphasis – he finds other kinds of things to do and to say. He becomes, indisputably, with Cleopatra, one of the play's two protagonists – while Caesar still operates, in his own eyes, as if he were a nascent monarch in a historical drama destined for a conclusion in terms of 'filial' succession. For Antony there are other options; these are, I would suggest, 'aftermathic' and fruitful. By Caesar's standards he incurs, and comes to accept (also in his own eyes) vulnerability and 'disorganization', 'fear and darkness', and ultimately 'self-destruction' – all these being tokens of (Cusk's understanding of) aftermath. He exposes himself to critiques launched from the supposedly invulnerable standpoints of "honesty" and "justice" – critiques already operative in *JC,* as in Brutus's early and rash judgment;

> [...] he is given
> To sports, to wildness and much company. (*JC* 2.1. 188-89)

Those who have understood *Antony and Cleopatra* as a tragedy have generally found in it an Antony deficient in duty and responsibility to Caesar and to Rome. Differently (one would think) he has been seen as a failure insofar as he does not manage to defeat Caesar and take over one-man rule in Rome. Generally, allowing for concessions to him of personal "generosity", he is perceived as decadent and morally delinquent, falling short of Caesar in rational self-control and of Cleopatra in glamorous manipulation. Yet why assume the moral rectitude, or the political rationale, of one Caesar's inheritance of the aura and allegiances of another? Antony is surely the shrewder in virtue of his refusal, for himself and to anyone else, of the dangerous exposure involved in one-man rule; and triumviral rule, an aftermathic novelty and (in Cusk's phrase) a "structural refurbishing", arguably preserves just the

manageable degree of oligarchic rivalry needed to sustain – as in the time of Julius Caesar's predominance it had sustained and furthered – the expansive energies, valorised or otherwise, of Roman warfare and government.

But the case for Antony can be put in terms less political, more theatrical and emotional; after tragic assassination – and all the more, for Antony, after the guilt incurred by the murderous proscriptions, and the discomfort involved in military alliance with the ineffectual but pompous young Caesar - who would not welcome the comedies of triumviral diplomacy? Who would resist the farcical pleasures of Egyptian flirtation (itself relevant to such diplomacy)? If a "Roman" is to find a place for himself in "Egypt", better so as lover than as - the title bestowed later upon Caesar – "universal landlord". And in any case, as the Soothsayer spells out, Antony thrives best when well away from Caesar;

> Thy demon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is
> Noble, courageous, high, unmatcheable,
> Where Caesar's is not; but, near him, thy angel
> Becomes afeard, as being o'erpowered. (*AC* 2.3.18-21)

Yet erotic and diplomatic comedy turns rapidly, in the play's third Act, into zero-sum military tragedy and, it may seem, emotional betrayal. Caesar seems determined to punish, next after his adoptive father's assassins, his own fellow-triumvirs – above all Antony, the triumvir with his own hinterland. Hesitant to lose Roman lives in civil wars, Antony is defeated at sea – and perhaps abandoned by the fleet of a Cleopatra tacitly concerned with her own survival and options for power. Moralistic Roman revenge, upon an Antony who has abandoned the life of vengeance, would thus be empowered by Antony's infringement of his own previous 'diplomatic' marriage to his Roman wife Octavia, and given further scope by a Cleopatra whose necessary independence, in political as in amatory warfare, Antony has arguably failed fully to acknowledge.

In these respects, on an "aftermathic" reading, Antony retains all too much of the Caesarean "perversity" of male governance, alternately resisting the stigma of moral and military shame and, by his melodramatic celebration of occasional victory, proclaiming a virtue whose location, between bed and battlefield, remains uncertain. His attempts to claim temporary military victory over Caesar, in the play's fourth Act, may seem to evince the kind of 'perversity' ascribed by Cusk to Sophocles' Creon. As is often remarked, Antony contrives to make a clumsy failure even of his attempted suicide.

How far can this train of events, and the role of Anthony as a tragic protagonist, be at all accommodated within the conception of Shakespearean tragedy which I have tried to sketch? If *AC* is indeed a tragic drama, whose tragedy is it, and in what sense? Is it better to accept the pair of sequenced plays, *JC-AC,* as a dramatic unit

closer (as the plays' Caesar would have it) to the modes of Historical than of tragic theatre? Or, does an acceptance of Antony's development, from the earlier to the later play, in terms of 'aftermathic' experience, carry with it the notion that the later play, insofar as it is indeed a sequel, is something less than tragic – perhaps elegiac, even comic? 'The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce'? (Again these are perceptions voiced by many interpreters of *AC*).

Against Marx's formula, just cited, one might pit two fine Shakespearean phrases. One comes from a later play still, *The Tempest*;

> Spring come to you at the farthest,
> At the very end of harvest. (4.1. 114-15)

Another is voiced by Cleopatra, in the final Act of *AC,* and it proposes a direct and adequate evocation of Antony;

> For his bounty
> There was no winter in't. An Antony 'twas
> That grew the more by reaping. (5.2. 85-87)

I am a little surprised that Cusk's memoir lacks reference to this utterance. What can one take from it for an understanding of the play? That Antony was, I will say, generous; that – more tragically – he sought to bind to himself his lover, his friends, ultimately the whole state and empire of Rome; that, rather single-mindedly, he took his life with Cleopatra, and with himself as her lover, to embody a fullness which was at once universally admirable and effectively inimitable; as he had said,

> Here is my space.
> Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do it – in which I bind,
> On pain of punishment, the world to weet
> We stand up peerless. (*AC* 1.1. 35-41)

This is an Antony who has learnt, from Cleopatra and from their 'mutuality', a new understanding – of empire, of Rome, and of himself. His responsibility to Rome, thus, becomes a responsibility to this conception. It leaves little independent room for any Caesar. More importantly, it circumscribes the distinct hopes, and underestimates the manifest fears, of Cleopatra. Its breaking point is reached in the play's third Act – a regular enough feature of tragic structure – as Caesar seeks to enforce against Antony the consequences of his double sexual and emotional betrayal, of Cleopatra no less than of Antony's new wife, and Caesar's sister, Octavia. Cleopatra, meanwhile

(I would argue), is led, by the same 'doubleness' that lurks within Anthony's professed generosity, into her own plans for betrayal, and for political double dealing; why would she not keep alive, in Caesar, the idea of her power to betray Antony, when by so doing she might save her own kingdom and her status as its Queen?

Antony's death, which in its verbal form may seem to resolve him back into a 'Roman' mode – 'a Roman by a Roman/Valiantly vanquished'-, surpasses, in its rich flexibility and mobility, the death of *JC*'s protagonist Brutus; where Brutus resigns himself to defeat, Antony forgives (and in silence) the treachery of Cleopatra which has been the final trigger for his own suicide (*AC* 4.15. 59-60). Such a silent forgiveness – or, such a last-ditch preservation of dignity – allows to Antony the complex closure of a tragic protagonist. But this has been the drama, and potentially the tragedy, not of one protagonist alone but of two, and of their relationship – that relationship being, in my view, the play's true 'protagonist'. And, at the point of Antony's death, a whole Act remains – the fifth Act, which comes to be, through Cleopatra's brief but potent survival of him, a second "aftermath". After tragedy and farce, after the triumphalism of Caesarian politics and the tragedy of Antonian love, follows a new spring. What, for Cleopatra, is this second aftermath?

It is a dream of Antony, as she develops it rhapsodically to her entranced Roman hearer Dolabella. It is a crafty deception, for the sake of her own dying independence, of the appropriative will of Caesar the 'universal landlord' (*AC* 3.13. 72). It is the basis for endless new 'triumvirates' in which, as the "third person" with herself and Antony, shall be linked any and every gossiper, admirer, and audience whom (like Enobarbus and so many others within the play itself, Caesar not excluded) she has captivated and will captivate. And it is a staging by Cleopatra of herself as, beyond "queen", "wife" – "Husband, I come" - and mother – "dost thou not see the baby at my breast?"; as, thus, "playing" erotically and melodramatically up to and even beyond her own end - beyond it into the admiring imitation of her maid Charmian whom she urges to "play till doomsday" and who obediently dies in mid-flirtation with the reproving Roman soldier to whom she insists that, whatever the appearances, all this - this unending aftermath - has been indeed "Well done" (*AC* 5.2. 283, 305, 322). For such aftermaths, flirtatious and debatable, shameful and theatrical, "dislodging" and "refurbishing" their readers' and audiences' emotions, there may indeed be no end.

Still, one final post-'aftermath' needs to be indicated. *AC* can ultimately be interpreted less as tragedy, and not even as a mere comedy, but as something one might want to call a 'triumph' – the triumph, over both protagonistic tragedy and 'successional' political History, of a vision of ultimate Love, whether sexual or romantic or, even, marital. The play, certainly, has inspired such reflections – along with, and perhaps not so differently from, its power to evoke a sense of moral disgrace and deliquescence. Aftermaths, perhaps necessarily, evoke varied reactions from their commentators. But another aftermath lies beyond the play's represented

action – yet not beyond the hints and implications of that action and its concomitant utterances. The 'Herod of Jewry', whom Caesar names as an ally of Antony and Cleopatra, reigns (if one is to believe St Matthew's gospel) at the time when the 'eastern star' (Charmian's description of the dying Cleopatra) was, by a few 'wise men', seen – and, being seen and 'followed', was interpreted as the sign of a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Matthew 2.1-2; Revelation 21.1, see *AC* 1.1. 17). In terms of the nascent framework of Christian revelation – so, I suggest, Shakespeare may, in this play's tragic action, have sought to insinuate – tragedy, history and comedy are hard to distinguish; they become each other's sequels and aftermaths.

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