Narrating the Play

A Closer Look

Intriguing Chorus

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Narrating the Play

A Closer Look at One of Shakespeare’s Most Intriguing Chorus Characters

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Abstract

With this thesis, I wish to grant critical space to a character often overlooked in Shakespeare studies. *Antony and Cleopatra* has long been considered one of Shakespeare’s most difficult “problem tragedies”. In a play where the notion of moral superiority is as elusive as its protagonists, the character that best engages the reader and informs his/her perception of the play is not a queen or an emperor, but a simple “soldier only”.

Enobarbus is a character who straddles not only the Alexandrian and Roman worlds, but also the realm between play and audience, text and reader. An understanding of him is essential to a thorough critical consideration of *Antony and Cleopatra*. This thesis aims to map his significance by delving deeply into the text of the play, attempting to determine Enobarbus’ effect on the reader’s experience of the characters, the themes, the tragedy, as well as how the reader’s perception of him can and will alter these experiences. I will also compare and contrast Enobarbus’ role with that of similar characters in Shakespeare’s body of writing. Additionally, I seek to discover how varying filmic portrayals of his character can alter the reader’s/viewer’s perception of the play as a whole.
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**Bibliography**
Introduction

If someone says Iago, most people with a working interest in classical literature will recognise the name, regardless of whether or not they have actually read or seen *Othello*. Slightly less well known, yet just as popular in Shakespeare criticism, is *Henry IV*’s Falstaff.

If you say the name Enobarbus, most people, even those who are fairly well-versed in Shakespeare’s works, will wrinkle their brows in suddenly pensive expressions as they attempt to remember where they might have heard the name before, if their recollection even takes them that far. Many of literature’s supporting characters fare the same way; they play important roles in their respective works, yet are quickly forgotten after they have performed their allotted parts. To be fair, Enobarbus is not forgotten by literary critics, however, he is often given just the barest mention, usually in connection with the famous “Barge Speech”. Other scholars stipulate that he is a so-called “chorus character” and make brief mention of what this entails before moving on to other things.

To many, this may seem completely natural. After all, the play is called *Antony and Cleopatra*, not *The Interesting Case of Enobarbus*. It is natural that more critical space is given to the main characters than to a personage whose role is traditionally described as “supporting”. I, however, want to explore Enobarbus, and with this thesis, grant him the space he has, earlier, been denied.

The natural question to pose at this juncture is, why? Why is it important, or even relevant, to spend so much time on this one, supporting character?

“Because he is interesting” is not a good enough answer, although it was my first thought. After all, he caught my attention precisely because he elicited an emotional response from me that would be best described as “fascination”. This probably has a lot to do with the fact that Enobarbus is the character with which the reader/viewer acquires the closest connection. He is the character through which so many of the reader’s perceptions of the play and its characters are filtered. This is why the way he, in turn, is perceived is not merely a point of vague interest, it is an essential detail that a critical reading of *Antony and Cleopatra* cannot afford to forget. Our understanding of Enobarbus is pivotal in the shaping of our perceptions of the other characters. In other words, a closer look at Enobarbus can provide the reader with a better understanding of the play, and a change in how the reader sees Enobarbus, or a change in how the reader understands what he says, can dramatically alter how he/she perceives both the other characters and the play as a whole. This is why it is not
only interesting, but necessary, to take a closer look at him, and to afford him a separate chapter in the plentiful study on Shakespeare’s famous problem tragedy.

The reason this kind of character study is particularly important when looking at *Antony and Cleopatra* is that it is such a difficult play to properly understand. None of Shakespeare’s works are straightforward and simple, and much of his continued appeal lies, I believe, not only in his masterful use of language and excellent dramatic development, but in the conspicuous lack of a definitive moral message you find in most of his plays; the question of who is right and who is wrong is, at least in the tragedies and history plays, so often left pointedly unanswered. I believe this is a large part of the reason Shakespeare is so easily adapted to a modern audience, in spite of ancient settings and outdated language.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is not only the question of who is right and wrong that is left hanging in the air; the reader’s sympathies are also deliberately and consistently divided and confused. In *Hamlet*, although one might often feel that the protagonist’s choices are ill-advised or lack conviction, the reader’s sympathies are still engaged on behalf of the ill-fated Danish prince. A reader/viewer may or may not be enchanted with the romantic story in *Romeo and Juliet*, yet support for the two long lovers is seldom held back. In *Timon of Athens*, although Timon goes from being naively generous to wildly misanthropic in the space of a heartbeat, the reader still feels that he is to be pitied, and readily empathises with him, easily condemning those that refused him their assistance and friendship when his fortunes fell.

Both Antony and Cleopatra are problematic in this sense, not only because, true to Shakespearean tradition, neither of them, nor any of the other characters, has a clear moral advantage, but also because they are so unavailable to the reader. This is in part due to the fact that they are consistently compared to deities and lifted on metaphorical pedestals to a place far above that of the common man, and partly due to the fact that both lead characters are significantly absent from a surprising number of scenes. Janet Adelman puts it this way: “We expect to see the universe only insofar as it reflects the experience of the protagonists; but we see the universe as prior to and independent of them” (44). We cannot expect access to the lead characters’ thoughts, like we can in, for example, *Hamlet*, so we either have to guess what they are thinking and why they do the things they do, or we need a third party, someone who can comment and clarify, someone who can speculate along with us.

This is the reason Enobarbus’ role is so pivotal. In a play where the reader/viewer has very limited access to the lead characters, Enobarbus serves as a conduit, allowing the audience/reader access to the events unfolding on stage/on the page. Without him, the reader
would be completely separated from the action; Enobarbus makes the play four-dimensional. One could say that Enobarbus is the reader’s “contact” within the play.

In this modern age, when so many literary theorists, and readers for that matter, choose to focus their attentions on their own interpretations instead of finding meaning based on for example historicity or author intent, a character link between reader and text becomes all the more important, because such a link helps to shape our interpretations. Stanley Fish says that it is the reader who creates meaning (393). In this sense, it is the activity of the reader (or viewer, if we are talking about a staged play) that determines his/her interpretation of the play. It is the reader who, himself or herself, puts meaning into the words he/she reads. I bring this forward here, not to suggest that Shakespeare, who died more than four hundred years before Fish was born, could have had been thinking of reader-response criticism when he wrote his plays. However, as a modern audience, we are, as mentioned, accustomed to a freedom of interpretation which, at least in literary circles, colours our understanding of what we read.

It is precisely for this reason that a modern academic reading of *Antony and Cleopatra* requires an extra measure of attention to those details that shape and alter our perceptions and interpretations. Enobarbus is a highly important piece without which it is impossible to complete the *Antony and Cleopatra* jigsaw puzzle. Similar to a novel’s narrator, Enobarbus is, throughout most of the play, the voice that guides the reader through the action. It is my belief, however, that Enobarbus is not only a helping hand along the way to understanding this problematic play, he is, or at least should be, a key factor in our interpretive process; by analysing his comments, reactions, and character, we can acquire a much clearer picture of the otherwise blurry main characters, and the play as a whole.

My intention with this thesis, is not to diminish the role of the lovers in the play, but simply to include and incorporate an element often forgotten, or perhaps simply set aside, when discussing the relationship between the lovers and how said relationship appears to the reader/viewer. Additionally, I wish to show that Enobarbus does not only have worth insofar as he sheds light on what is going on around him, but that he also has merit in and of himself.

**THESIS OUTLINE**

The aim of this thesis is both to shed light on a character I feel has been largely overlooked, or at least granted insufficient space, in the previous critical work on the play, and also to discover how a “magnifying glass” approach to Enobarbus can inform and alter a reader’s
view of the play as a whole. The thesis will be split into three chapters, each dealing with different aspects of Enobarbus’ dramatic significance, also taking into account characters with similar roles in other plays.

It is important to note that although Antony and Cleopatra is a play, and is primarily intended to be seen on stage, as this is a literary thesis, I will chiefly be approaching the play as text, as literature. However, the dramatic nature of the play will not be forgotten, and my third chapter will, among other things, take into consideration the differences in character perception brought about by actor interpretation.

Chapter one will, simply put, be a comprehensive character analysis of Enobarbus and his role in Antony and Cleopatra. I feel that this is a necessary and useful springboard with which to launch my thesis; it will hopefully shed light on the different aspects of Enobarbus’ character and functions, and will combine and contrast my own theories and interpretations with those of prominent Shakespeare scholars.

Chapter two will dive deeply into the text, examining Enobarbus’s lines, and the placement thereof, more closely. The goal with this kind of approach is to gain some insight into Enobarbus’ placement in the play, and why he, specifically, has been chosen to deliver certain lines, as well as the significance of his use of language in specific situations. This chapter will also contain an element of comparison, looking at Shakespeare’s use of Enobarbus in comparison with his use of other, similar characters; I will pay particular attention to the characters Flavius and Apemantus from Timon of Athens.

Chapter three will, as mentioned, take a look at how different actors have interpreted the role of Enobarbus, and how these differing interpretations change the way the character is perceived, and, in turn, how the play is received.

METHODOLOGY

Because this thesis aims both to examine the relationship between Enobarbus and reader, as well as to determine the affect of a single character on an entire play by delving deeply into the text of said play, it finds itself in between several schools of literary criticism, some of them, interestingly enough, at opposite ends of the scale. My first thought was to filter my thesis through Reader-response theory, particularly that as developed by literary theorists
such as Stanley Fish. I have found this area of criticism useful before, particularly when dealing with how works or certain elements of works are received. Since my thesis seeks, at least in part, to divine the effect of one character on a reader’s perception, or reception, of a given work, I conjectured that a methodology that focused precisely on the reader would be useful. However, I discovered fairly quickly that such an intense focus on the reader’s response would not leave enough room for the study of Enobarbus himself. I am, after all, not just interested in how Enobarbus affects the reader’s experience, but also how he affects the nature of the work itself. I next considered methods such as close-reading and New Criticism, but these, in turn, place too heavy a focus on the text, and do not make sufficient room for the reader’s interpretive process.

I have therefore found adhering to one specific school of literary criticism to be rather detrimental than helpful to this thesis. The thesis will instead be built mainly on the text itself, with plentiful reference to Shakespeare scholars who have studied and written about it before me. Their views will be compared and contrasted with my own.
Chapter 1: Wherefore art thou, Enobarbus?

Enobarbus, like Lear’s Fool, is Shakespeare’s translation of the chorus of Renaissance neo-classical drama into the dramatic character. Both the Fool and Enobarbus live in the elusive borderland between pure comedy and high tragedy. Both smile wryly at the absurdity of the proud passions that strut around them, baldly tell truth about things as they are, and speak for sanity in the midst of madness and infatuation. But both are mere mortals, living quite in earnest amid the follies they behold, and overwhelmed by the disasters bred by the ill-starred masters whom they serve. (Wilson 407-408)

ENOBARBUS: SHAKESPEARE’S OWN

Enobarbus is Shakespeare’s own creation. Just like the other characters in the play, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus is a historical person, recorded in Plutarch’s Lives, yet he is the only character (apart from the Clown) of whom very little is known. This naturally makes it easier for Shakespeare to make Enobarbus more completely his own, thus facilitating a more liberal use of the character. Where the other characters are, in a sense, bound by their historical backgrounds and the roles history has given them, Enobarbus, being something of an inconnu, is not. He can therefore be used to tie things together while still maintaining the illusion of historical accuracy in the play, because he has the name of a person who did, in fact exist.

Enobarbus’ limited historic backdrop is also important with regard to the reader’s perception of his character. The three primary characters in this play, Antony, Cleopatra, and Caesar, are all such well-known historical persons that there are few readers who can pick up the play without having any preconceived notions of how these characters are going to be. With Enobarbus, however, the reader experiences no such familiarity, and Enobarbus can therefore be permitted to define himself however and whenever he chooses. His character is shaped only by what he says and does. In turn, what he says and does helps shape the reader’s perception of the other characters, as well as the events that take place around him.

Additionally, because Enobarbus is “Shakespeare’s own”, not only can Shakespeare shape him in any way he wishes, but the reader will not know what to expect from him. Most
people who are even the tiniest bit versed in history, will, as mentioned, know the names Antony, Cleopatra, and Caesar, and have some small inkling as to their fortunes (who has not heard of Cleopatra’s infamous suicide?). However, although Enobarbus was a historical character, and although history does show that he perished, I think there are few readers not uncommonly interested in ancient history who will be familiar with the story of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus. Therefore, while the reader might know the inevitable course the story will take as far as the protagonists are concerned, Enobarbus’ fate is, for all intents and purposes, wide open.

In other words, Enobarbus is a metaphorical “blank page”, and Shakespeare makes full use of this fact. Consequently, Enobarbus plays a great variety of roles. One of his most obvious functions is as commentator. Because Enobarbus is not an integral instigator of the main plot, because he is not one of the primary acting parties, he is given more space to observe what is going on, and make remarks, both to other characters and to himself. This naturally also helps make the reader/viewer aware of subplots, motifs, and themes, and also serves to illuminate other characters and their functions. The areas in which Enobarbus serves as commentator are many. He makes remarks on what is said and done (2.2.115, 2.6.122-127, 3.2.2-6), offers opinions on the other characters (3.2.9, 4.2.3-4), gives advice (3.7.34-39, 42-48), sometimes he will amplify the sexual tension and gender confusion the play is so full of (2.2.71-72, 4.2.34-37), sometimes he will be intentionally witty to break the tension or imbue discussions with humorous sarcasm (1.2.130-132, 134-140). The insight Enobarbus gives the reader forces him to call his earlier judgements into question, and renews and changes his view of characters and situations (Muir 39).

For example, in Act 1, Scene 2, while Antony and Enobarbus speak of Cleopatra, Enobarbus makes this remark:

Under a compelling occasion, let women die. It were pity to cast them away for nothing, though between them and a great cause they should be esteemed nothing. Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment. I do think there is mettle in death, which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a celerity in dying. (1.2.134-140)

With this small speech, Enobarbus at once makes an observation on Cleopatra’s behaviour, makes the reader aware of her tendency to overdramatize, describes (and, to a certain extent, discredits) her outbursts before they even happen, makes several sexual puns, and makes rather an accurate foreshadowing of Cleopatra’s eventual demise. Additionally, one might add the slightly more shallow observation that this speech is funny. Enobarbus often makes
humorous remarks which lighten the mood of the play, even when events are decidedly dark and dreary. Here, for instance, Antony is calling his relationship with Cleopatra into question, he is questioning himself, he has just received news that his wife is dead, and he faces having to leave Egypt for Rome. In short, it is a time of considerable personal turmoil for Antony, turmoil that Enobarbus counters with witty sarcasm.

It is also interesting to note how, in this scene as in so many of the others, Enobarbus is permitted to carry on with his sarcastic remarks. In fact, going simply by his lines, Antony seems to pay little heed to Enobarbus’ witticisms. One must assume, therefore, that Enobarbus often responds in this manner, and that the dynamic between Antony and Enobarbus is often similar to that which we witness in the aforementioned scene. Still, it also seems safe to conjecture that Enobarbus’ role in Antony’s life, and in their friendship, cannot always be one of witty banter and insincerity. In order to gain such a close friendship with such an important man, it stands to reason that Enobarbus must also be an important confidant, and advisor.

ENOBARBUS AND COMEDY

Enobarbus is not a clown, although he sometimes fulfils elements of that role along with all the others he plays. One finds these comical characters in many of Shakespeare’s plays. They often pop up whenever the plot is becoming or has become especially dramatic, and they lighten the mood with their witticisms and general ridiculousness, while simultaneously contributing to the plot by way of highlighting themes or amplifying the tension. In Othello, the clown shows up at the beginning of Act 3, when Iago’s devious plan has been set into motion, and a sense of unavoidable tragedy has truly begun to permeate the play. He humorously bids the musicians stop playing, remarking on the “tail” that hangs from “many a wind instrument” (Othello, 3.1.4-29). The wind instrument easily becomes a man, and the translation for “tail” naturally follows. Since the play’s primary tragedy revolves around the erroneous assumption (assiduously urged forth by Iago) that Desdemona is sexually promiscuous, the clown’s sexual puns are both funny and disturbing. Additionally, the repeated reference to “wind” instruments naturally makes the reader think of “windy” arguments and speeches, i.e. the empty words and accusations of Iago. In Hamlet, the Gravediggers serve as clowns, and they appear in the final act. They do not joke about sex, but rather, about death, an important theme in that particular play.
**Antony and Cleopatra** also has a clown. He appears in the very last scene, directly before Cleopatra commits suicide. It is, in fact, he who gives her the snake that administers the fatal bite. This naturally contributes significantly to the tone of the event which is, if not precisely pathetic, then not exactly heroic either. The constant mention of the “worm” also naturally directs one’s thoughts to sexual situations, the conversation between the Clown and Cleopatra about whether the snake’s bite kills, drawing parallels to the “little death” – the orgasm. In other words, these clowns find humorous ways to highlight certain aspects of the dramatic situations. They are a part of the play, and yet not, and so they are permitted to comment and make jokes where integral characters must adhere to their roles and bring the plot forwards. Roberta Mullini puts it this way: “There they are, the fools – ubiquitous, able to speak both as characters and as voices outside the plays through their metadramatic glosses, spokesmen of the commonsense of the audience and, at the same time, of the utopian aspirations of the playwright” (102).

It seems to me that Enobarbus functions, at least part of the time, in a similar way. Like Enobarbus, the Clown in *Antony and Cleopatra* is Shakespeare’s own invention. He thus functions precisely as Shakespeare needs him to, just as Enobarbus does. The main difference is that Enobarbus, while often humorous, is not in any way ridiculous. Quite the contrary, he, like the protagonists (perhaps even more so), is tragic. The clowns usually come, deliver their witticisms, and go, whereas Enobarbus is a firm fixture in the play from the beginning and almost until the end. He is integral without truly being integral. By this I mean that he has an immense importance to the reader/viewer, while his role in the play itself is not one that brings the plot forwards in any large way.

Shakespeare endows his fools with extraordinary powers of speech. Following Elizabethan poetics, all his characters show specific rhetorical competence, but the fool’s acute sense of the semantics and rhetoric of language enables him to play with the subtleties of the common code in order to subvert – for a magic moment – the hierarchical order of the speakers.” (Mullini 102)

We see this very tendency in several of Antony and Enobarbus’ conversations, where it seems that it is, despite his inferiority rank-wise, Enobarbus who takes the lead and, in certain scenes, almost seems to undermine Antony’s role as leader. This, however, is not done with ill intent, but as an attempt at opening his leader’s eyes. Something similar happens with the Fool and Lear in *King Lear*. The Fool is also, as we have heard, considered one of Shakespeare’s great chorus characters, and he also subverts Lear’s increasingly maddened
ramblings with his own pithy and often quite bitter commentary, attempting to “make Lear see his folly clearly” (Dillon 111).

As we will see in Chapter 2, Enobarbus’ comic function often entails these kinds of subversions, where his comments and witticisms make the other characters, or their situations, seem ridiculous, usually in an attempt either at getting the other characters to listen and understand where they are headed, or at conveying certain elements of the scene or characters in question to the reader/viewer. However, it is relevant to note that the more Antony’s fortunes fall, the worse his troubles become, the more serious Enobarbus becomes. Where, in the first two acts, Enobarbus is witty and full of life, taking part in the merriment that surrounds him, looking on the folly around him with at least a trace of humour, he rapidly becomes sober in his reflections as Act 3 and 4 take their course.

ENOBARBUS & ANTONY, LOYALTY, AND REASON

I have already mentioned that Enobarbus holds a unique position in Antony’s life, given the former’s relatively low rank and level of importance. Yet, the natural boundaries between their separate stations seem at times, as mentioned, to become momentarily erased. This happens so subtly, and so often, that when Antony during the meeting with Caesar tells Enobarbus to “speak no more” (2.2.114-116), it almost feels as if Antony is somehow being unreasonable, as if his desire to keep the affairs of state a matter between those that have been chosen to lead it, is somehow wrong. Therefore, when Antony tells Enobarbus that he is “a soldier only”, he is not only reminding Enobarbus, but also the audience, of that fact. Interestingly, at the beginning of Act 2, Scene 2, Lepidus asks Enobarbus to “entreat” Antony to “soft and gentle speech”. This is very telling in that it is not only the audience/reader that is aware of Enobarbus’ influence over his leader; the other characters are familiar with this dynamic as well.

In the aforementioned scene (2.2), Enobarbus says a number of things that foreshadow future events, and makes statements that, if they are not precisely foreshadowing, make the reader consider and reconsider events to come. The comment Enobarbus makes that causes Antony to bid him be quiet, is a cynical (and correct) reflection on the agreement that Antony and Caesar make: “Or, if you borrow one another’s love for the instant, you may, when you hear no more words of Pompey, return it again. You shall have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do” (2.2.110-113). With this, Enobarbus, insinuates that the agreement is built on necessity rather than affection, and that it is bound to be a short-lived
one. This, as we know, turns out to be completely accurate. Similarly, at the end of his famous “Barge Speech”, Enobarbus declares that Antony will never leave Cleopatra, which also, unsurprisingly, turns out to be true.

The same scene (2.2.) also brings to light the ironic fact that Enobarbus, “a soldier only” proves himself more forward-thinking and discerning than any of his alleged peers. For, in a play where it is challenging to attempt to determine who is “right” and who is “wrong”, Enobarbus is, in many ways, the voice of reason. Even Enobarbus’ decision to commit an act of desertion is so thoroughly backed-up with his own, logical reasoning that it is impossible for the reader to find him a villain. Quite the contrary, the logical foundation for his desertion (3.13.199-205), as well as his profound sorrow and regret upon receiving his “treasure” from Antony (4.7.31-40), make Enobarbus, if not precisely “heroic”, then at least a character with whom it is not only possible, but necessary, to sympathise. “In Enobarbus we are shown in microcosm the dilemma of Antony’s followers, torn between personal loyalty and Roman rationality” (Hume, 282).

This divide between duty and honour on one side, and loyalty and passion on the other, is one of the central themes of the play. For Enobarbus, duty and honour is acting in such a way as befits a man, a Roman, and a soldier, and when this starts to jar with his loyalty to Antony, he begins to rethink said loyalty. For Antony, duty and honour involves being a strong, capable leader, and already at the very beginning of the play, we are told that this quality in him has been weakened considerably (1.1.1-10), due to his relationship with Cleopatra. The struggle between duty and passion is seen clearly in Antony, so why is Enobarbus important here? Because he represents all those that follow Antony, and because he represents the common man. The theme of duty versus loyalty is not only reserved for the elite, but also applies to the voiceless number of soldiers Antony has at his command. Enobarbus is, in a sense, their mouthpiece. Enobarbus represents all those “background characters” who are never actually included in the play, but who are nonetheless there, in the recounting of battles, following the military leaders, in short, between the lines.

Enobarbus is also important because his struggle is a direct result of Antony’s. His struggle becomes a reflection of Antony’s in that Antony becomes Enobarbus’ “Cleopatra”. There are several situations in which Antony realises that Cleopatra’s influence over him is destructive (1.2.112-113, 1.2.141-147, 3.11.50-53), and part of him no doubt keeps this realisation constantly, although he is too blinded by his infatuation to truly do anything about it. His decision to desert her in Act IV is countered by her own decision to feign her death, which in turn causes Antony to take his own life. Not identically, but one can say similarly,
Enobarbus’ decision to desert Antony results in his death when Antony shows his true nobility in sending Enobarbus his treasure. Additionally, Enobarbus realises fairly early on that Antony is no longer a true leader, yet he continues to follow him in spite of this. It is easy to compare Enobarbus’ decision to go against his own better judgment and remain with Antony to Antony’s decision to remain with Cleopatra despite the fact that it is painfully apparent that his connection with her will lead to his downfall. The dynamics in their respective relationships have many similarities.

Thus Enobarbus becomes a reflection of Antony. However, he also reflects Antony in other ways. Enobarbus’ respect for Antony, his decision to stay with him for so long despite the latter’s obvious decline as a leader, tells the reader not only that Enobarbus is loyal, but that Antony is a man to whom it is natural to be loyal. It tells the reader that Antony is a man who engenders not only respect, but also friendship from his followers. This sets him in sharp contrast to Caesar, whose harsh policies and unyielding character make him a leader more to be feared than loved. Indeed, Enobarbus’ powerful reaction to Caesar’s ruthless treatment of Antony’s deserted followers (4.6.8-20) provides a mirror for Caesar as well; where he is ruthless and unfeeling, Antony is kind and generous. Enobarbus, and Antony’s treatment of him, makes this comparison possible. It is a comparison which, just as Antony’s fate goes tumbling down the hill, puts Antony before the reader as a leader who is, if not as dutiful or honourable as he should be, then at least forgiving and beneficent. This doesn’t necessarily make the reader feel that Antony has done well in his neglect of his role as leader, nor does it cause us to forgive this neglect, but it engenders sympathy for him just as his life is about to be torn away. In short: this comparison between the two leaders intensifies the effect of the tragedy that is about to happen.

THE TRAGEDY OF ENOBARBUS

However, Enobarbus does not only build up under the tragedy that strikes the two lead characters; he is also deeply tragic in and of himself. His demise is tragic not only because it is placed in a tragic setting, in a world where it is perfectly obvious that no one can truly “win”, but because the reader sympathises with him, perhaps even more so than he/she sympathises with Antony or Cleopatra. Why?

The fact that Enobarbus is more or less a common man makes him more easily accessible to the audience, because the task of identifying with him becomes a great deal simpler. Whereas the title characters, both with regard to their stations as triumvir and queen,
and with regard to their somewhat grandiose lovemaking, are in many ways difficult to comprehend, Enobarbus is a less ambiguous character, and, by virtue of his ordinary station and ordinary sense, relatable. His struggles are also a great deal more relatable. Antony struggles to make a choice between the love for an Egyptian queen and his position as Triumvir (both causes made more lofty by the constant comparison of the protagonists with deities). This is a problem few people can say they have ever had. Enobarbus, on the other hand, struggles with his own loyalties, the choice between friendship and his own convictions. Essentially, Enobarbus’ problem is simple, although it is magnified to a grand scale. Most people will have experienced a situation where they are forced to make a choice between amicability and persuasion.

Additionally, Enobarbus is the character in the play with whom the reader feels the greatest desire to become acquainted. His personality and situation engender not only sympathy, but also curiosity as to his background. How, for instance, is it that he has such a close friendship with Antony, a friendship which permits him to speak his mind on important official, as well as personal, matters on more than one occasion? He is a soldier, yes, and a good soldier, as far as we are made to believe, but even excellent soldiers did not normally enjoy the kind of relationship with their leaders that Enobarbus has with Antony. The question of how Enobarbus and Antony became close is not one I intend to answer, simply because any answer would be made up entirely of guesswork. However, the fact of Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship, however it came to be, is one of the many elements that make Enobarbus such a fascinating character.

Enobarbus is not only the character in the play with whom the reader feels the strongest desire to become acquainted; he is also the character with whom the reader actually forms the closest acquaintance. We are allowed regular access to his emotions and thoughts, he is funny, down-to-earth, honest, and inherently likeable. His multiple witticisms and puns make him a character that does not always have to be taken seriously, yet he also contributes a sense of gravity whenever it is required. In other words, he feels and behaves like a normal human being.

Everyone seems to like Enobarbus; in spite of his sarcastic comments, he is greeted with friendship by almost everyone he meets. Even those who might oppose his leader speak to him jovially. I believe this is done to enforce the sense of his being, for lack of a better term, a “regular guy”. Leaders may become enemies, but, clearly, their respective supporters do not necessarily feel the need to dislike one another. Particularly in the scene between Enobarbus and Menas, we can see a kind of comradeship between soldiers, as if, even though
they may need to fight on opposite sides if it comes down to that, there is a bond between these men, these followers, that enables them to speak to each other like brothers. This is significant because the more down-to-Earth, the more common, Enobarbus appears, the more he can connect with the reader.

Enobarbus’ likeability is the key to what makes him such a tragic character. Why, after all, does a reader find a particular character tragic? Well, in order to do so, one must sympathise with the character in some way, and sympathising with goes hand in hand with knowing. That is not to say that we automatically sympathise with all the characters we become acquainted with. A brilliant example of this is the title character in Coriolanus. The reader certainly follows him closely enough to know his mind and person, but he is such a hard, unyielding personage that it is difficult to feel sorry for him, even in the midst of his tragedy. He digs his own grave so well that when it comes time for him to lie in it, one accepts his death with little more than a vague sense of pity. There are, naturally, many other tragic characters who bury themselves similarly, with whom one more readily sympathises. Hamlet, for instance, is destroyed by his inaction, yet the conscience that can be said to be the cause of this inaction, makes his plight easily pitiable. Similarly, Timon, from Timon of Athens is the instrument of his own undoing when he places too much faith in the friendship of others, yet this naïveté, this faith, also secures the reader’s sympathy for him.

Antony and Cleopatra can also easily be blamed for their own deaths insofar as their obsessions with their own, selfish passions, and their inability, or unwillingness, to see beyond their own spheres lead to their undoing. The question of whether or not they are sympathetic is a tricky one, because while the idea of an undying, unchanging love is admirable, or perhaps enviable, their separate characters do not, for large parts of the play, necessarily engender a lot of compassion. They are so caught up in each other that they not only become inaccessible to the world of the play, they become inaccessible to the reader/viewer as well. Their love can at times become so grandiose that the reader even has trouble believing in its authenticity. Furthermore, neither Antony nor Cleopatra seem to put up much of a fight against their inevitable doom. Antony, it is true, debates and struggles with himself, but in the end, does nothing significant to attempt to change his fortunes, rather hastening his undoing. He and Cleopatra are, for all intents and purposes, walking in a straight line towards their downfalls.

Enobarbus cannot be said to influence his own death in the same way. He is not subject to the chief tragedy of the play, i.e. the hopeless love, yet his fate is still tied to Antony’s. However, seeing Antony’s decline, Enobarbus attempts to change this. Naturally,
seeing as *Antony and Cleopatra* is a tragedy, Enobarbus’ efforts are doomed to fail, yet he makes an honest and genuine attempt to alter his fortunes, all the while taking the reader/audience with him.

FATAL DUALITY

According to Lawrence E. Bowling, it is Enobarbus’ inability to fully choose one side over the other that leads to his downfall (255). His inherent duality, his insecurity, kills him. Ironically, this self-same duality is one of the elements that make him so interesting, both with regard to his own person, and when it comes to his ability to “reflect” other characters. Robert Hume says, “Perhaps our best perspective on Antony and Cleopatra is through Enobarbus. He alone of the other characters straddles the Roman and Egyptian worlds. He is equally at home among Roman soldiers and in the seamy luxury of Cleopatra’s court” (285-286). Enobarbus is only able to grant us a perspective on both worlds because he is able to exist within both of them, and at the same time be apart from both of them. He can give us the “inside scoop” on both sides without our feeling that he is too much biased towards the one or the other. He can be critical towards both sides without passing final judgment on any of them, and he allows the reader to do the same, thus maintaining, and intensifying, the moral ambiguity of the play.

Bowling also claims that Enobarbus is entirely free of duality in the beginning of the play, and that it is “Antony’s unpredictable and sudden changing from one nature to another which sets up the internal division in Enobarbus” (254). I believe this is a simplification of Enobarbus’ character, which I find so interesting precisely because he is *not* free from internal division, not even in the beginning of the play. Enobarbus’ duality consists of the same elements that Antony’s does, although their dualities take on different expressions: theirs is an inner conflict between the Egyptian and the Roman worlds. Like Antony, Enobarbus, as we meet him in the beginning of the play, lives much like an Egyptian, while still thinking like a Roman. He can make witty comments and in a sense place himself in a spectator role if he so chooses, but, through Antony, Enobarbus has also become a part of the Alexandrian world. Enobarbus’ duality is not created when Antony begins to behave contrary to his duties as leader – after all, the reader is informed, before he/she even meets Antony, that he has already lost himself to his love for Cleopatra to such an extent that he no longer acts “like himself” – but, rather, Enobarbus’ duality is brought into sharper focus the more Antony’s Roman character declines. Enobarbus does not have a Cleopatra to distract him.
from his duties as a Roman, but he does have an Antony, and this is true from the very beginning. Part of the distinction here is whether Enobarbus’ struggle merely reflects back on Antony, or whether it should also be considered to have merit on its own, as a part of Enobarbus’ separate story.

Regardless, in the end, Enobarbus’ lack of bias, if we can call it that, or, better yet, his lack of internal unity, leads him to desert his friend and leader, and consequently die from a “broken heart” caused by a guilty conscience. As Janet Adelman puts it:

But in this world of violent extremes, the only safety is in the purity which both Octavius and Cleopatra possess; to be mixed in composition is disastrous. Enobarbus, like Antony, is mixed. He chooses to obey his reasonable sense of expediency, to behave like a man of measure. But once he has left Antony, his own spiritual niggardliness is mocked by Antony’s overwhelming generosity; and the contrast kills him.” (Adelman 130)

DYING FROM A BROKEN HEART

Through Enobarbus’ death, the reader/viewer is given a glimpse into the heart of what is perhaps one of the play’s central problems: the struggle between logic and passion. If we are to believe Bowling, this struggle could be avoided by a strict adherence to either one or the other ideal; yet, as we are frequently made to condemn Caesar, the character in the play with decidedly the most undivided conscience, for his harshness and unfeeling nature, the idea of being one-sided does not seem so commendable either. Additionally, Cleopatra, who can also boast a single-minded adherence to her space, Egypt, also perishes in the end. Enobarbus dies because his conflicted feelings cannot allow him to live with his own betrayal. This is, naturally, quite interesting, because Enobarbus is supposed to be one of the sensible characters in the play. In fact, it is easy to argue that he is the most sensible character in the play. Yet, in the end, this logical, down-to-earth, Roman soldier dies of a broken heart. The irony of it is hardly lost on the reader.

I am alone the villain of the earth,
And I feel I am so most. O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought; but thought will do’t, I feel.
I fight against thee? No, I will go seek
Some ditch wherein to die. The fouls’ best fits
My latter part of life. (4.6.31-40)

Enobarbus’ language has, up to this point, been fraught with irony and sarcasm, and it seems befitting that his death should turn that irony back on himself. Then, in his death, Enobarbus is free to be completely and unequivocally sincere. His last ironic statement is his own death, and the lines he delivers before passing are thus free of his former sarcastic tone. There is not a moment of doubt in the reader’s mind as to whether or not the feelings Enobarbus expresses are genuine.

“[…] it is fitting that in his [Enobarbus’] death scene the constant commentator has become the central actor upon whom others comment” (Adelman 33). His last act, his death, turns him from commentator into a statement in and of himself; his death is the final warning bell for the protagonists (though they do not hear it), and it is also a comment on the futility of scepticism.

But in this play, not even skepticism is a secure position: Enobarbus shows us that. He persistently questions the sincerity of the passions, but when he follows his reason, he dies of a broken heart. At his death, we who have agreed with his rational skepticism are at a loss; skepticism itself is no more reliable than passion. (Adelman 24)

Enobarbus’ death is like a prequel to the deaths of the two main characters. When he dies, we as readers know it cannot be long before the protagonists follow him to the grave. Enobarbus’ death marks the end of all hope for a pleasant ending, a hope which, admittedly, has not been strong to begin with. However, Enobarbus’ death is the sign of the play’s definitive and unambiguous tragic decline, the point of no return, if you will. For, although the protagonists have always been free to bring about their own undoing, and have clearly been doing so since the beginning, it is when they, albeit inadvertently, bring about someone else’s undoing that the true tragedy of the play becomes a reality.

Enobarbus’ death also cements the final failure of Antony. In sending Enobarbus’ treasure to him (4.5.12-17), Antony means to be kind, and he is; his kindness towards Enobarbus is, as mentioned, one of the factors that engenders added sympathy for him towards the end. Yet, it is also the action that ultimately kills Enobarbus. Enobarbus is already conflicted with regard to his desertion, just as he has spent the play being conflicted about his loyalty to Antony, yet it is the show of generosity from Antony that sends
Enobarbus spiralling over the edge. So, in other words, Antony’s attempt at showing kindness and nobility ends up having fatal consequences; his leadership has, with this, truly failed.

His soldier and friend dies of a broken heart. And Enobarbus dies alone, with no pomp, circumstance, or any other kind of attention. Where Antony and Cleopatra’s deaths are drawn-out and full of ceremony and drama, Enobarbus’ death is simple, and passes unremarked save by a couple of sentries who just happen to be there when it takes place. His death is not planned, and is not manufactured in any way. He simply laments his treason, asks forgiveness of the absent Antony, and dies (4.9.12-23). It is, naturally, possible to draw an interesting parallel here, between the death of Enobarbus and the deaths of the protagonists. Enobarbus, after all, succeeds where Antony fails. For when Antony seeks to die, he neither has the courage to commit suicide as befits a noble Roman, nor does he do a proper job when he finally attempts it. This also intensifies the reader’s awareness of Antony’s failure. Enobarbus does not fear death, does not shy away from it, he simply meets it. Both Antony and Cleopatra desire death as the play draws to a conclusion, yet both of them seek roundabout ways of finding eternal sleep. Antony wants another to perform the necessary task, which leads to Eros’ turning the blade on himself in the ultimate dramatic gesture Antony could not do for himself (4.14.94-95). Antony, in turn, falls on his own blade, making his ensuing death a very passive affair. Similarly, Cleopatra seeks a method of dying that will cause her as little pain as possible. Where Antony and Cleopatra’s deaths seem artificial and overdone, Enobarbus’ is simple and honest.

It is strange, really, that a supporting character, a commentator, should be given such a significant death scene. It is not a common occurrence in Shakespeare’s tragedies. Peter Bilton puts it this way: “Enobarbus is not a shallow commentator, but a character in his own right, tragically mistaken. Impersonal commentators do not face tragic dilemmas” (Commentary and Control 156). Bilton is right. Enobarbus is, precisely, not just a “shallow commentator”, and if we as readers or viewers have labored under any such misapprehension, Enobarbus’ tragic and touching death scene will soon put an end to that; ironically, it is by dying that Enobarbus truly highlights his own importance to the reader.

When Enobarbus dies, he takes the reader/viewer with him. We have followed him from the beginning, and his passing not only marks the passing of all hope for Antony and Cleopatra, but also for the reader. Enobarbus involves us in the play; with his demise, we become spectators once more. In Shakespeare’s tragedies, it is common for the reader/viewer
to be granted a certain degree of access into the minds of the leading characters. This is not the case in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

To the extent that we are engaged with the protagonist, his judgment will be our judgment; and to that extent it will be dramatic fact. Throughout most of *Antony and Cleopatra*, we are not permitted to become wholly engaged with the protagonists. In fact, most of the structural devices of the play prevent our engagement […]. (Adelman 158)

If the protagonists’ judgment cannot be our judgment, then whose judgment do we put our faith in? This is where Enobarbus plays his most pivotal role.

Reading *Antony and Cleopatra*, it has often struck me that Enobarbus in several places can be said, in a sense, to “adopt” the role of protagonist. The play’s title characters are so thoroughly caught up in their own problems, are often so self-obsessed, absorbed in their own worlds, and, most importantly, are so often absent, that the reader/audience has trouble feeling a connection to them. Enobarbus on the other hand, is, as I have mentioned, relatable, and he is, above all, accessible. I do not mean to make the assertion that Enobarbus can be considered the play’s lead character, however, the connection that arises between him and the reader is similar to that which one might traditionally find between reader and protagonist. This is why, when Enobarbus dies, we as readers/viewers become emotionally involved in his death in the same way we would a protagonist’s.

**NARRATING THE PLAY**

Although a play does not traditionally have a narrator, it is safe to say that in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Enobarbus often functions as one. According to Arthur Colby Sprague, “A chorus character is one of the *dramatis personae* – often not a principal – who sums up a number of episodes in the play or whose remarks have obvious appropriateness as an interpretation of the play as a whole” (209). Shakespeare uses many such chorus characters in his plays, and even in *Antony and Cleopatra*, there is more than one. For instance, in the very first scene, before we are introduced to Enobarbus, it is the character Philo who presents the situation we as readers/viewers are about to enter into. “Nay, but this dotage of our general’s / O’erflows the measure” (1.1.1-2). This opening line does not, however, only present a situation, but also judges it, thus making the discontent of Antony’s followers known immediately.

Consequently, no part of the play is without this ominously festering discontent. Before the reader even meets the “heroes” of the play, his/her mind is already slightly
prejudiced against them. Enobarbus’ job is not to change the reader’s mind in this respect, but to complicate his/her analysis. If we simply saw the lovers through the eyes of judgmental outsiders the entire play, I don’t think the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra would be granted any major importance in our eyes. However, Enobarbus, who, despite being a Roman, takes part in the revels and can be said to live in the Egyptian world, comes from the inside and complicates our sometimes negative notions about the lovers by his friendship with Antony and his admiration for Cleopatra. His comments, his views, open the lovers up for deeper consideration in the reader’s eyes. We are forced to reconsider our opinions, and, though this does not result in an unequivocally favourable opinion of the lovers in the end, it allows us to feel the weight of their inevitable tragedy, and it also results in a final judgment that is ambiguous, a final opinion that leaves us thinking and wondering.

One might ask why a play requires a “narrator”. “In one sense, the experience of Antony and Cleopatra is curiously indirect: the play consists of a few actions and almost endless discussion of them” (Adelman 30). This is why a character like Enobarbus, who comments on and judges the events he perceives, is so important. In many ways, he strings the entire play together. Without him, the play might easily be perceived as a series of separate, disjointed scenes, connected only by vague thematic overtones.

VOICE OF THE AUDIENCE

Enobarbus is not only the voice of the common soldier, he is in many ways the voice of the audience or reader. Oftentimes, Enobarbus says exactly what the reader is no doubt already thinking. Arthur Colby Sprague puts it this way:

So, at any rate, I explain the presence in some plays of characters who seem designed to say, at moments of stress, what the audience need to have said, or would like to say themselves. A character of this sort, who stands in approximately the same relationship to the spectators as the chorus character to the author, may be designated, for want of a better term, the “spokesman for the audience. (244-245)

Characters drive the story, and everything that happens does so because of, and through, them. The main character is, most often, the main “driver” of the story. He or she is the chief reason the story is there to begin with. We often see things more or less from this character’s perspective, and his or her decisions usually shape the outcome of the story. However, a character does not need to be the main “driver” to be important. Other characters exist to do everything from supporting and guiding the main character, to placing obstacles in
his/her path. Many of these supporting characters also drive the plot forwards by force of the actions they perform with regard to the protagonist. In *Othello*, Iago’s determination to bring down Othello drives the story to such a degree that even though the play is called *Othello*, the main “driver” is, without a doubt, Iago. Without Iago, *Othello* would be a story about a man who is successful in wars, marries a beautiful, virtuous girl, and, for all we know, lives happily ever after. Similarly, *Henry IV*’s Falstaff, another of Shakespeare’s highly popular supporting characters, though he cannot be said to drive the action insofar as the rebellion and wars go, he influences and drives the young prince, and is one of the obstacles Henry must overcome in order to become king.

Enobarbus does not drive the story, or at least he drives it exceptionally sparingly. He provides commentary, but more often than not, the only ones truly listening are the audience/readers. Despite the fact that Enobarbus shares an important friendship with Antony he does not, ultimately, influence him in any large way. The only thing Enobarbus truly “drives”, is himself, and his own fate. So, ironically, Enobarbus becomes a main “driver” within the play, but only of his own, personal story. Enobarbus decides his own fate. Yes, he is in some ways “driven” by the unfortunate fate of Antony, but, ultimately, Enobarbus creates his own ending. In many senses, Enobarbus, far from being a simple supporting character, serves as a protagonist in his own story within the story. This is, as mentioned, made clear in his separate, tragic end.

So, what does Enobarbus drive, apart from himself? Enobarbus drives us, he drives the reader, because his opinions and his perceptions, as I have mentioned, not only shape our own, but often create them. He is able to do this so well because he achieves a connection with us. He becomes the voice of the reader/viewer, and can therefore project his thoughts onto us while simultaneously appearing to project our thoughts onto the play.

**VOICE OF REASON**

Like many of Shakespeare’s plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a text where it is difficult to define who is in the “right” and who is in the “wrong”. I mentioned earlier that in this setting, Enobarbus can easily be seen to be the voice of reason. This does not mean that he is infallible, it simply means that he appears rational and logical where the other characters seem irrational and illogical, or perhaps just very difficult to understand, both in terms of their actions and their affections. I have already mentioned Act 2, Scene 2, where Enobarbus is the only character to point out the inadvisability of the agreement Antony enters into with Caesar. Along with Agrippa, he also points out and mocks the comically exaggerated praise
Lepidus gives to both Caesar and Antony (3.2.7-21); he tries to dissuade Cleopatra from being a part of the battle (3.7.1-14); he vainly attempts to talk Antony out of fighting at sea (3.7.34-48), and there are several other situations where he performs a similar role.

Enobarbus frequently directs the reader’s attention towards the illogical and ill-fated actions of the characters around him. However, this does not make him a perfect observer. For instance, one might ask why Enobarbus takes so long to begin commenting in earnest on Antony’s lack of leadership. For, in the beginning of the play, as we have seen, it is not Enobarbus, but Antony’s other followers who make their leader’s failings known to the reader. Enobarbus has misgivings about the actions of the characters around him from the beginning of the play, and often views the situations in front of him with ironic detachment and scepticism, but he does not begin to truly question his leader’s capabilities before the second half of the play. The answer, I believe, to why his most pronounced doubts are reserved for Act 3 and onwards, is that Enobarbus, taking part in Egyptian life alongside his master and friend, cannot necessarily see Antony, or the life he leads, objectively. There is much reference to Enobarbus as an impartial observer, but, as I have stated previously, I think this simplifies him. He is, precisely, not an impartial observer. He is the most impartial observer we are presented with in the play, but that does not make him unfeeling. His connection to Antony not only makes it difficult for him to see his leader, it also makes it impossible for Enobarbus to see himself clearly, until it is too late. However, there is a certain point at which Antony steps over a line, a point at which Enobarbus can no longer follow him, and this is what grants Enobarbus the ability to look at Antony from an outside perspective. The more Antony becomes entrenched in the Egyptian world, the more he allows himself to be ensnared by Cleopatra, the further apart he comes from Enobarbus. Consequently, Enobarbus is, in a sense, “removed” from Egypt. The further Antony falls, the more Enobarbus becomes a spectator, because his loyalty to Rome will not allow him to follow where Antony presently leads. It is significant, I believe, that, after Antony’s visit to Rome, there are no more scenes in which Antony and Enobarbus confer alone, such as they do in 1.2.

The conference between Antony and Enobarbus weakens, and, along with it, the connection between Antony and the reader/viewer lessens. While Antony confides in Enobarbus, he confides in the reader, when he stops, he becomes even farther removed from the audience. This, however, is entirely necessary. If Antony were still available to us, if we were still privy to the how’s and why’s of what he did, his decisions would lose that mystery which, in turn, makes the play a mystery. Enobarbus’ reason, and through his, our reason,
cannot fully penetrate the mystery that is Antony (or Cleopatra, for that matter), for if it did, it would take from the play much of that which makes it interesting.

Enobarbus’ role as “voice of reason” also ties into his role as sceptic. “Throughout, Shakespeare disarms criticism by allowing the skeptics their full say: the whole play is in effect a test of the lovers’ visions of themselves” (Adelman 109-110). His scepticism both fuels and mirrors the reader’s, and also promotes the question of whether his, and our, scepticism is, in fact, reasonable at all. Is it reason to oppose or to accept the lovers’ version of themselves, and of the play? Or is reason perhaps completely useless in this context? Do reason and scepticism amount to the same thing here?

The answer to these questions largely depends upon one’s view of the play, particularly on one’s perception of the main characters and their relationship. Enobarbus, by way of his role as sceptic and “voice of reason” brings these questions to light, and provides insight into the main characters, without which the play would suffer materially.

This has been, as I stated in the introduction, an overview of Enobarbus’ multiple functions in the play. The next two chapters will dive much more deeply into the text and examine more closely how and why Enobarbus performs these functions.
Chapter 2: A Closer Look

Enobarbus’s rank with Antony, his desertion, Antony’s generosity toward him that seemingly evoked his repentance, and his death soon thereafter are no more than suggestive facts in North. But Shakespeare found in them the embryo of one of his most distinctive characters, vital to the structure of the play. (Wilson 391-392)

Indeed, Enobarbus is one of Shakespeare’s most distinctive characters. In Shakespeare’s great body of work, there is no one quite like him. This chapter will delve deeply into the text and study Enobarbus’ lines and their placement, in the hopes of shedding more light on this vital character’s influence. In the next chapter, I will discuss how delivery can alter and inform these lines, but in this chapter, I wish merely to look at the words themselves, and at their placement in the text. Why is this necessary? Why is such a meticulous approach required? Because I don’t feel that an overview of Enobarbus and his functions truly does credit to how much he actually affects the reader’s perception of the play. I believe a “magnifying glass” approach to Enobarbus as a character, his lines, the placement thereof, and, not least, the question of why certain lines are given to him, must inform and broaden our perception of this arguably important but often overlooked character. Additionally, space will be granted towards the end for comparison and contrast with other, similar characters in Shakespeare’s other plays, paying particular attention to Flavius and Apemantus from Timon of Athens.

INTRODUCING ENOBARBUS

We are introduced to Enobarbus in 1.2, as he calls out a command for drink. The text thus places Enobarbus in the middle of the Alexandrian world right from the outset. This is relevant for two main reasons. First, it cements him, early on, as part of Antony’s Egyptian life; he is not simply an impartial bystander, but someone who takes part in that which is going on around him. This, in turn, makes his future conflict much more interesting, because not only will his loyalties become divided between his leader and his better judgment, but his own part in the Alexandrian way of life will naturally divide his mind between Rome and Egypt. Like Antony, he no longer truly belongs to either the Roman or the Egyptian worlds, but has become a citizen of the in-between, the middle ground.
Second, it places Enobarbus in the middle, not just of the Alexandrian world, but of the play itself. He is not introduced as a commentator, but simply as another participant in the action, which will underscore his double role as “narrator” and character. This double role gives his future commentary an extra measure of consequence, as his involvement in the play will make it more natural for the reader to consider him an authority on that which he speaks of.

The fact that Enobarbus’ first line is a command for drink, also gives the reader some early information about his character: Enobarbus is not averse to feasting and drinking. He is a character at ease in the situation in which he has been placed, and he is, at least for the moment, relatively carefree. His second line, “Mine, and most of our fortunes tonight, shall be – drunk to bed” (1.2.42-43), continues this portrait, and adds to it a sense of Enobarbus’ penchant for witty remarks. Additionally, this line portrays a situation beyond his own. He informs the reader that there will be drinking likely to send more than one person “drunk to bed”. It creates a clearer image of the Alexandrian world in which Enobarbus currently resides.

Enobarbus is a spectator to most of the early parts of this scene, where Charmian and Iras have their fortunes told. Following this, he has a very brief exchange with Cleopatra (1.2.73-80) which does not signify much other than that he and Cleopatra are familiar with each other. Enobarbus’ first interaction with Antony is far more interesting to study, and will be considered in some detail here.

Enobarbus happens upon Antony directly after the latter receives news of Fulvia’s death. Antony is regretting is idleness and in his frustration speaks to himself of “breaking off” from Cleopatra. Early in the play, then, the reader is made privy to Antony’s inner conflict. The atmosphere of the play thus takes a serious turn from the earlier merrymaking. Enobarbus, among other things, here uses his wit to lighten the mood. It becomes difficult for the reader to take Antony’s concerns seriously when Enobarbus does not. Antony’s “I must with haste from hence” (1.2.129) is countered by Enobarbus’ “Why then we kill all our women. We see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death’s the word” (1.2.130-132). Enobarbus here dismisses Antony’s serious statement with witty sarcasm, all the while commenting on the playacting nature of women. He simultaneously draws attention away from Antony and his conflict and fixes it on the woman in question, the woman very much behind the scenes and between the lines in this conversation, Cleopatra. Enobarbus here makes it possible for Antony and Cleopatra to share a scene without actually
sharing it, intensifying the notion that the two of them will be together, regardless of where the play takes them.

His next speech (1.2.134-140) has many interesting elements to it that I want to take a look at. “Under a compelling occasion, let women die. It were a pity to cast them away for nothing, though between them and a great cause they should be esteemed nothing” (1.2.134-136). Enobarbus is, naturally, not talking of actually murdering women, but, rather, that they have a tendency to “die”, in the very metaphorical sense, from the grievances placed upon them. He might not be referring so much to women in general as to Cleopatra in particular here. Regardless, although this line is laced with humour and sarcasm, Enobarbus’ “between them and a great cause they should be esteemed nothing” naturally turns the mind towards one of the chief issues of the play, namely that of Antony’s having to choose between his love and his duty. For, in the end, Antony will not choose the “great cause” over his love, but, rather, his love over it. Already Enobarbus is, in true narrator-like fashion, foreshadowing events and themes to come. The rest of this speech, detailing Cleopatra’s “celerity in dying” not only humorously draws the reader’s mind towards the sexual connotation of “the little death”\(^1\), but also foreshadows Cleopatra’s real, physical death which might also be said to “commit some loving act upon her” in that she, in real death, “looks like sleep, / As she would catch another Antony / In her strong toil of grace” (5.2.340-342). Most people, despite never having read this play or studied Shakespeare before, will be familiar, in broad strokes, with the historical Cleopatra, so it seems safe to assume Enobarbus’ reference to her “celerity in dying” will not fail to make the reader/viewer consider Cleopatra’s eventual demise here.

Antony’s “She is cunning past man’s thought” (1.2.141) is countered by Enobarbus’ “Alack, sir, no, her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love” (1.2.142-143). As Bevington points out in his footnote, Enobarbus here denies that Cleopatra is cunning, while simultaneously acknowledging her skill in in artifice (AC, ed. Bevington, at 1.2.141). She is capable of turning her “ sighs and tears” into “greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report”, yet it seems like Enobarbus is saying that there is genuine feeling behind the dramatics. “This cannot be cunning in her” (1.2.145). Perhaps Enobarbus is saying that this is simply how Cleopatra expresses herself. Her “winds and waters” might seem extravagant, but to her, they are as real as anything. She is not “cunning” in the sense that she is deliberately deceitful, but might (whether intentionally or unintentionally) exaggerate in her emotional outbursts. This idea will be complicated in the following scene with

\(^1\) Bevington’s footnote has some further insights on this (AC, ed. Bevington, at 1.2.137&138).
Cleopatra’s “If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick” (1.3.3-5). For there is little doubt that Cleopatra is more than capable of bending Antony to her will using some form of dramatics. The real question is not, then, whether or not she is capable of artifice, but how much of her character is artifice.

Enobarbus’ opinions on women in this scene seem fairly misogynistic in their objectification. Cleopatra is a “wonderful piece of work” (1.2.148-149), Antony’s deceased wife is likened to and “old smock” that “brings forth a new petticoat” (1.2.162), and so on. His comments are delivered with a good dose of sarcasm, so that it is hard to tell, in between all the humour, where his true feeling on the subject lies. Still, I think the object of having Enobarbus speak in this way is not to intimate that he despises women, or even that he finds them false and undesirable, but rather to show that Enobarbus is not easily entranced by the opposite sex. He is wont to treat women with humour rather than praise them or woo them. This will make his future descriptions of Cleopatra seem all the more genuine; if Enobarbus does not normally praise to this extent, one must understand there is something very grand indeed in Cleopatra that makes him do so.

Much of what Enobarbus says in this particular exchange is also deliberately ambiguous, thus frustrating the reader’s attempts at trying to pin down his opinions about Cleopatra; Enobarbus’ opinions, by way of his constant commentary, easily become our opinions, so this ambiguity is very important in order to keep the mystery of Cleopatra alive. Enobarbus’ comments on Cleopatra also reveal sides of her character to the reader before we have really become properly acquainted with her. So this exchange allows us to form, or at least attempt to form, an opinion of her very early on.

Additionally, this scene tells the reader a lot about Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship. Antony’s choosing to confide in Enobarbus about his feelings, and doubts, about Cleopatra (1.2.141, 147) is an important mark of their friendship. That Enobarbus can get away with answering in a humorous, and sometimes quite bawdy, way, is another factor that tells of their bond as one exceeding, imaginably, that of the average leader and his soldier. This scene is, as such, extremely important in establishing Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship. Enobarbus is more lewd and insincere here than he is in the entire remainder of the play, and I believe the reason for that, beyond sketching his own character, and that character’s propensity for “light answers”, is, precisely, to show the reader/viewer how much Antony and Enobarbus share with one another, how they speak to one another, how informal they are with one another. There is room for a lot of interpretation here, as far as how this scene is acted. Does Enobarbus deliver these lines with laughter or with some measure of
severity? How does Antony react to Enobarbus’ witticisms? Antony has little to say in between Enobarbus’ speeches, and his expression and other non-verbal responses can also say much about his character, and about his and Enobarbus’ friendship. In my next chapter, I will take a look at how differing on-screen versions of this scene can actually do much towards changing how the viewer sees Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship.

One could probably write an entire chapter on the end of 1.2 alone. There is so much that happens in that one, relatively brief verbal exchange between Antony and Enobarbus. The last thing I will mention before moving on is something that might seem a given, but I feel it is worth mentioning anyway: This scene goes a long way towards establishing Enobarbus’ character. The previous “meeting” with him is only brief. This scene with Antony is where the reader gets to meet Enobarbus properly. He is presented as a witty, sarcastic character who can take a humorous, somewhat insincere approach to serious subjects. This is going to be an important element of his character throughout the play. Janet Adelman puts it this way: “[…] in Antony and Cleopatra we see through the eyes of the commentators more often than through the eyes of the protagonists; and the commentators seldom take the protagonists as seriously as they might wish” (50). As to Enobarbus’ character, Wilson says, “By the end of Act I Enobarbus is before us as Antony’s privileged friend and chief officer, a robust Roman at ease in the Alexandrian court, but not subdued to it. Through an acute eye for the comic aspect of things as they are, he beholds his master’s infatuation with understanding, yet remarks upon it with detachment and justice” (393).

A SOLDIER ONLY

To answer like himself

We next meet Enobarbus in Rome. Scene 2.2. opens with Lepidus’ “Good Enobarbus, ‘tis a worthy deed, / And shall become you well, to entreat your captain / To soft and gentle speech” (2.2.1-3). Enobarbus’ response is important for several reasons. First, it might seem odd that Lepidus should find it necessary to make a request like this of “a soldier only”. Lepidus, however, clearly knows of Enobarbus’ relationship with Antony and his consequent influence with him. It is also obvious, from this, that Lepidus is aware of Enobarbus’ penchant for speaking his mind. Lepidus is, simultaneously, drawing our attention towards Enobarbus, drawing the reader’s/viewer’s attention towards the fact that Enobarbus is an important character, even an influential character. The commentator is already at this point being, in a sense, “commented” on, his “double importance” (i.e. as both supporting character
and commentator, and as lead character in his own story) by this brought forth and underlined. It is also highly interesting that Enobarbus feels comfortable answering Lepidus the way he does. Not only does this attest to his position and reputation with these powerful men, but it also tells us something about Enobarbus as a character, namely that he will speak his mind no matter if he is faced with the highest or the lowest degrees of people.

Second, Enobarbus’ response shows his loyalty to and faith in Antony. He will not be coerced into attempting to make Antony speak like anyone other than himself. This shows trust in Antony’s judgment and character. Enobarbus’ response also shows pride in his leader: “If Caesar move him, / Let Antony look over Caesar’s head / And speak as loud as Mars. By Jupiter, / were I the wearer of Antonio’s beard, / I would not shave’t today” (2.2.4-8). Enobarbus clearly does not feel that Antony should bow and grovel to Caesar, but should show his strength. The reference to Mars also recalls Antony’s former, more warlike (and arguably prouder) nature.

Yet, the speech is also laced with another, secondary meaning. Saying he means to entreat Antony to answer “like himself” also bears the weight of Antony’s change. It reminds the reader that Antony is, lately, not always “like himself”. His infatuation with, or love for, Cleopatra, has changed him, and in many ways not for the better, at least as far as Roman thinking is concerned. His abilities as Triumvirate and leader have been neglected, and he has, already, dismissed messengers with important information for the sake of his own pleasure. This is not “like himself”. So, in addition to showing Enobarbus’ loyalty to his leader, this simple line also reminds the reader of one of the important themes of the play: identity, being “like oneself”.

The line is not only a testimony of Enobarbus’ loyalty to, and faith in, his leader, it is also a declaration of the fact that Enobarbus cannot change Antony, any more than he can change the ending of this play. He is a commentator, and he seems sometimes to have some influence (though often more in reputation than in practice), but he cannot change how Antony’s mind works, and, in the end, he cannot change the fact that Antony will fall (and with Antony, Enobarbus himself). At the same time, this (partial) unwillingness to make a serious effort to change Antony’s actions, also plays its part in bringing about the main characters’ downfall. Enobarbus can make snarky remarks and comments that accurately foreshadow events to come, but for all the attention the other actors pay him, he might as well simply be talking to the audience, which, one can argue, is what he’s really doing. However Enobarbus does have Antony’s ear, that much has already been asserted; perhaps he might have “entreated” him, if not to “soft and gentle speech”, then to an alteration of course, but
the times he actively attempts anything like this, he fails (i.e. trying to get Cleopatra to stay out of the wars (3.7.1-20) and trying to get Antony to relinquish the idea of fighting at sea (3.7.30-48)). Why? Because his powerlessness in the face of this tragedy is part of his own tragedy. In the end, he can comment, but he cannot act. And when he finally decides to act (by leaving Antony), this decision, paradoxically, kills him.

I will write much more on Enobarbus’ death later in this chapter, but, for now, one other interesting thing stands out in Enobarbus’ brief conversation with Lepidus: Enobarbus’ “Every time serves for the matter that is then born in’t” (2.2.10), Lepidus’ “But small to greater matters must give way” (2.2.11), and Enobarbus’ reply, “Not if the small come first.” (2.2.12). This seems at first glance like relatively meaningless pseudo-philosophical humour. Enobarbus appears almost to be teasing Lepidus. Still, the notion of “small to greater matters” “giving way” easily raises the question of which matters should be considered small, and which great; this, in turn, ties neatly into the question of Antony’s love for Cleopatra versus his obligations as Triumvir. Which of these is more important? In the Roman world, the soldierly, manly, and honourable must, naturally, come first, and thus the matter of Antony’s love for Cleopatra must be considered “small”. And, indeed, in comparison with lofty state matters, a love affair will seem a matter of little importance, something that necessarily must be sacrificed for the greater good. However, Enobarbus’ line here arguing that “small matters” coming first may eclipse the “great matters”, though it might be seen simply as an attempt at being querulous with Lepidus, can also be taken as a hint that Antony’s “small” matter of love might just eclipse the “great” matter of his state, as, in truth, it will in the end.

Speaking out of turn

The following talk between Antony and Caesar lays before the reader something of the grounds for their conflict, and sees them attempt to make peace. In the midst of this important, diplomatic discussion, Enobarbus interjects his opinions and commentary. These interruptions serve several purposes. First, as regards Enobarbus’ character, they show just how privileged a position he is accustomed to having with Antony. When “a soldier only” feels comfortable enough in the presence of these three world leaders to interrupt their important conversation, he must be used to little or no distinctions between himself and his leader. The remarks Enobarbus makes also say something about his plain-spokenness. Not even in the face of the Triumvirs will he keep his opinions to himself. His first remark, “Would we had all such wives, that the men might go to wars with the women!” (2.2.71-72)
does not even contain any constructive criticism or advice, but is simply a humorous attempt at lightening the mood, presumably mostly for the audience (AC, ed. Bevington, at 2.2.72). How this line is delivered by Enobarbus, and how it is received by Antony can greatly affect the mood of the scene. More on this in Chapter 3.

There are two main reasons for Enobarbus’ interruption of the Triumvirs during their discussion (other than to sketch Enobarbus’ character and position). Firstly, his interruptions serve as comic relief. The scene is a very tense one, and Enobarbus manages both to lighten the mood and intensify the tension all at once. His humour makes the scene funny for a small moment, and then reminds the reader of the severity of the situation by its obvious inappropriateness. His interruptions also serve to highlight the eventual outcome of the temporary peace between Antony and Caesar: “Or, if you borrow on another’s love for the instant, you may, when you hear no more words of Pompey, return it again. You’ll have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do” (2.2.110-113). Enobarbus here accurately points out that, no matter how many diplomatic arrangements they make, or how many fine words they speak to one another, this friendship is one of necessity, not one of feeling. I am certain neither Antony nor Caesar seriously believes that their differences are suddenly forgotten, nor that they suddenly love one another, but it seems that they are capable of believing they can put their differences aside and be proper partners again. Enobarbus has no such faith, and voices it clearly. Interestingly enough, Enobarbus’ remark, which Caesar listens to, ends up being, in a sense, Caesar’s motive for asking for some additional proof of his and Antony’s friendship, whereupon the marriage between Antony and Octavia is decided. This will, later, be the deciding factor of their enmity. Enobarbus, naturally, has no faith in this arrangement either, because he knows how Antony’s heart and soul are tied to Cleopatra, but he is silenced, and thus, powerless.

Antony’s “Thou art a soldier only. Speak no more” (2.2.114) rings a little strangely in the reader’s ears after Antony’s previous indulgent attitude towards Enobarbus’ witty commentary. This is not only a reminder that Enobarbus is, in fact, a soldier, not a political leader, and, as such, does not really have any business speaking in an assembly such as this. Antony gives him more space than that normally, but his frustration with Enobarbus’ interruption leaves him, perhaps, with the feeling that it is momentarily necessary to put Enobarbus in his place. Perhaps Antony’s remark that Enobarbus is “a soldier only” is not meant to be taken to mean that Antony really considers Enobarbus below him, but is simply a symptom of his irritation and/or embarrassment at the untimely interruption. However, Antony’s silencing Enobarbus here also sets a precedent for silencing him in the future. Here,
Antony’s bidding Enobarbus’ be quiet is not unreasonable, and it is based on the inappropriateness of his interruptions. In the future, Antony will not silence him in so many words, but his refusal to listen, and his refusal to act “like himself” will, effectively silence Enobarbus until the only one left to listen to his commentary is the reader.

ON EGYPT AND CLEOPATRA

Most of the rest of this scene is devoted to the infamous Barge Speech. Since this particular speech has been devoted plenty of attention in the critical consideration of Enobarbus, I will not spend pages and pages on it here. Yet one cannot claim to have written a serious paper on Enobarbus and leave this speech out. Before getting to it, though, there is Enobarbus’ meeting with Maecenas and Agrippa to briefly consider. There is not much of great import to report here, but two things stand out: Maecenas, Agrippa, and Enobarbus greet each other on very friendly terms, despite their allegiance to different masters. Enobarbus seems, as I mentioned in my previous chapter, generally well liked. The other element to take away from this meeting is Enobarbus’ descriptions, and confirmation of descriptions, of life in Egypt: “Eight wild boars roasted whole at a breakfast, and but twelve persons there” (2.2.189-190). Enobarbus exaggerates in his descriptions, making them amusing, yet he still manages to convey a sense of the grandiose nature of life in the Alexandrian world (AC, ed. Bevington, at 191-192). It is important for the reader to get a sense of this extravagant life in order to properly understand not only the lure of Egypt, but also of Cleopatra herself.

This meeting transitions nicely into Enobarbus’ lofty description of Cleopatra on the river Cydnus. What I find interesting here, and what I will spend, if not pages and pages, then at least a little time discussing, is why precisely Enobarbus is given this speech. He is, after all, not exactly portrayed as a romantic, yet his speech here is one of the most romanticised and hyperbolic in the play. Janet Adelman has some interesting insight:

The paradoxes surrounding Cleopatra are in a sense verified early in the play by Enobarbus’s portrait of her at Cydnus. Enobarbus’s speech is placed between Antony’s resolution to marry Octavia and his decision to leave her; placed here, it serves to tell us why Antony will return to Cleopatra. In this sense, it functions as a substitute for a soliloquy in which Antony could announce his intentions to us. But a soliloquy would tell us about Cleopatra only as Antony perceives her: this description comes from Enobarbus, the most consistently skeptical voice in the play. That
Enobarbus is the spokesman for Cleopatra’s paradoxes establishes the portrait of her as one of the facts in the play. (116)

Enobarbus is given this speech, as Adelman says, precisely because he is sceptical. If Enobarbus can praise Cleopatra to such an extent, with such lofty words and high poetry, she must indeed be a character worthy of praise. This is, in a sense, a verification, and a continuation, of the praise Enobarbus has offered earlier (in 1.2). For, as I have mentioned, although his comments are laced with irony and humour, it is clear that there lives in him an admiration for Cleopatra.

As Adelman also points out, this speech and its language are a means of conferring on Cleopatra almost a “superhuman” status. This kind of language permeates the play, particularly in the descriptions of the lovers, elevating them to godlike rank, and, in a sense, justifying their actions by exempting them from the bounds of normal, human reason (77). In a similar way, the Barge Speech can be seen as a “justification” of Antony’s infatuation with Cleopatra. For who could look on such divine majesty as is here described and not become enthralled by it? As Wilson pointed out, Enobarbus does, after all, appear to understand Antony’s love for Cleopatra, although he cannot always condone its effects.

This understanding is expressed in Enobarbus’ remark, “Never. He will not” (2.2.244), following Maecenas’ assertion that Antony must now leave Cleopatra “utterly”. Enobarbus knows, and understands, that Antony never will leave Cleopatra, not because he does not occasionally want to, but because he cannot. Enobarbus makes the reader understand that “Age cannot wither her” because there is more to Cleopatra than an outward appearance. It is not this outward appearance that makes her what she is, but, rather, her spirit, her character. “Cleopatra’s incredible parade of shifting moods and stratagems, together with Shakespeare’s notorious reticence about her motives, has led even her admirers to conclude that her one salient quality is, paradoxically, her lack of one – the magnificent inconstancy that Enobarbus calls “infinite variety”’’ (Rackin 203). This is precisely why “she makes hungry / where most she satisfies” (2.2.247-248). The Barge Speech makes the reader, in many ways, understand Cleopatra’s appeal, which will inform the reader’s opinion of her (and with it, his/her opinion of the romance) throughout the play.

ENOBARBUS AND MENAS

2 See quote and reference, p. 5.
It is very interesting to note the parallels between Enobarbus and Menas, two characters who both serve and love leaders who cannot or will not act according to what each of them considers logical and right. First, the Triumvirs’ meeting with Pompey includes some lines by Enobarbus that I wish to remark upon. Pompey, to put it crudely, rather “steps in it” with Antony, making remarks about Egypt and Cleopatra that incense him. Enobarbus here breaks the tension, not just dramatically, for the sake of the reader/audience, but in the action of the play as well, diffusing a situation that could otherwise have become quite uncomfortable, not only because of Antony’s connection to Egypt and its queen, but also because of Caesar’s father’s connection to the same (AC, ed. Bevington, at 2.6.67). Enobarbus interrupts Pompey mid-sentence with “No more of that. He did so” (2.6.71). He confirms what Pompey has heard of Cleopatra’s being carried in to the late Caesar in a mattress, and at the same time, transfers Pompey’s attention to himself.

The two of them have a very brief, good-humoured conversation, which makes the reader aware of several things. First, one may note that, once again, Enobarbus has taken the liberty of interrupting important men in the middle of their diplomatic talks, thus intensifying the reader’s notion that Enobarbus is not one to hold his tongue. Additionally, his manner of speaking to Pompey does not denote servility or reticence; Enobarbus will continue to say as he finds, regardless of whom he is speaking with. This quality serves him well now in his role as, simultaneously, commentator and actor, but it will also serve as a contrast to his more frequent “internal” speeches later, as he begins to turn inward, or towards the reader, instead of towards the other characters, to voice his opinions. Second, Pompey’s “I have seen thee fight / when I have envied thy behaviour” (2.6.76-77) tells the reader something of Enobarbus’ soldiership, of which we have heard but little up to now. Apparently, he has done well, if he has caught the attention of Pompey. Third, Pompey’s indulgent “Enjoy thy plainness” (2.6.80) reminds the reader of Enobarbus’ plain-spokenness, thus underlining its significance. Enobarbus is the one character the reader can always trust to speak his mind, the one character who will lend his observances to the reader and direct his/her attention and interpretation.

When the leaders take their leave, Menas and Enobarbus are left. As Bevington points out, their greeting and the beginning of their conversation seems to echo and mock the earlier formal proceedings between Caesar and Antony (AC, ed. Bevington, at 2.6.85). The greeting is funny in its would-be formality and in the roundabout way the two praise and then insult each other. The beginning of their conversation seems to be mostly relatively meaningless banter, and it is not particularly interesting to look into the lines here one by one. What is
interesting is the similarity between the two characters their conversation makes apparent. Both characters are plain-spoken, their words often laced with humour and/or sarcasm. In fact, Menas seems to be introduced for no other reason than to draw a parallel between him and Enobarbus.

The first we hear Menas speak in this scene, before his verbal exchange with Enobarbus, “Thy father, Pompey, would ne’er have made this treaty” (2.6.84-85), is a comment on what has just transpired between Pompey and the Triumvirate. With this comment, Menas at once draws parallels between the present Pompey and the image of a presumably greater, braver father figure (much like parallels are constantly drawn between the present Antony and his former, grander self), and expresses his dislike of the treaty. Much like Enobarbus will soon become disenchanted with Antony, Menas here begins to doubt his faith in his leader. In a sense, Menas is Pompey’s “Enobarbus” in the short time we see them. If the play were about Pompey, as opposed to Antony and Cleopatra, one could presume that Menas might have had a role in the play similar to the one Enobarbus now has.

This is also why it is appropriate that the two of them “comment” together; Menas declares his feelings against Pompey’s readiness to accept the terms he has entered into with the Triumvirate, and Enobarbus confesses his misgivings about the marriage Antony has entered into with Octavia. Neither of these two soldiers talk about these concerns in front of their leaders’ other followers (that is to say, we are not privy to most of Menas’ actions, but Enobarbus, in any case, does not do this), for both of them are loyal to their leaders, and the words they speak here could easily breed dissension. Even Enobarbus, although he will not hesitate to speak his mind, does not do so behind Antony’s back, and at his expense. Instead of talking idly amongst their leaders’ other followers, then, they converse with each other, because they are of similar mind, and have similar troubles and concerns. They can both permit themselves to do this precisely because they are on opposite sides, because they serve different masters.

Menas, ironically, suggests to Pompey that he do something less than honourable. Pompey declines his offer, citing his honour as the reason. Pompey is bound by this honour, and cannot, then, act in such a way as will benefit himself. This breaks Menas’ confidence in him. Enobarbus finds Antony lacking in honour, then lacking in his true self, and this leads him to desert Antony. Thus a parallel is drawn between Pompey and Antony. Pompey’s failure here is a foreshadowing of Antony’s failure to come. Menas and Enobarbus make this comparison possible. Peter Bilton puts it this way:
There is a parallel to the Antony-Enobarbus relationship when Menas urges Pompey to take his chances on the barge, and Pompey, to Menas’ disgust, refuses. When, despite Octavia, the conflict between Caesar and Antony comes to a head, Enobarbus finds Antony similarly incapable of taking sound realistic advice – and for less adequate reasons than Pompey’s. (Commentary and Control 154-155)

Pompey and Menas’ relationship, and their falling out, is not only a parallel to Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship, but also a foreshadowing of the inevitable dissolution of that relationship. Enobarbus seeks to change Antony’s fortunes by offering him advice. Menas goes a step further, but his goal is the same: he seeks to alter his leader’s fortunes. Both of them fail, and, because of this, both of them end up without a leader to follow. Menas’ deciding to leave Pompey is an interesting parallel to Enobarbus’ later desertion of Antony not only in its similarities, but also in its one, main difference. For where Enobarbus struggles for a long time with his decision to leave Antony, Menas’ conviction comes to him easily: “For this, I’ll never follow thy palled fortunes more. / Who seeks and will not take when once ‘tis offered / Shall never find it more” (2.7.77-79). Menas knows where his loyalties lie, but he also knows what he considers a good leader to be, and when Pompey cannot do what it takes to be ruler, Menas will not sacrifice himself to aid him. Menas is, in this, more like Caesar, firmly Roman, and he sticks to Roman ideals with much greater conviction than Enobarbus can. Enobarbus is torn between his emotions, his loyalties, and his logical faculties, and this destroys him.

In his conversation with Menas, Enobarbus, as mentioned, speaks of his concerns regarding at what price Antony and Caesar’s new peace has been bought. He quite accurately sums up the consequences that will fall on them once Antony (as Enobarbus is certain he will) spurns Octavia to return to Cleopatra: “Then shall the sighs of Octavia blow the fire up in Caesar, and, as I said before, that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance” (2.6.123-126). This builds up tension, and reminds the reader of Antony’s already formed resolution, “I will to Egypt; / And though I make this marriage for my peace, / I’th’East my pleasure lies” (2.3.38-40). The reader is not permitted a respite, is not permitted to forget the inevitable course Antony’s fate must take.

The most relevant part of the ensuing feast, at least as regards Enobarbus (i.e. Menas’ offer to make Pompey “lord of all the world), I have already covered. Enobarbus’ role in the festivities is mostly, it seems, to take part in them. However, when Pompey says “This is not yet an Alexandrian feast” (2.7.89), this reminds the reader (and presumably Antony) of Egypt. Enobarbus takes this up and keeps Egypt strong in everyone’s mind by inviting them
all to dance the “Egyptian Bacchanals”. He then places everyone hand in hand and they sing and dance together. The irony in Enobarbus’ placing all of these great men hand in hand to take part in revels of Egyptian style is very potent. Presumably, everyone, even those that condemned Antony’s participation in such just a few hours ago, take part in this. It is a sequence in the play more amusing than it is thematically relevant, but, if nothing else, it directs the reader’s focus towards Egypt, and Cleopatra, keeping her fresh in mind. In a play where the lead characters are so often absent, such reminders can be very useful for directing focus towards them.

3.2, 3.5

Scene 3.2. is a scene of parting, in many ways simply an “in-between” scene; Antony heads for Athens with Octavia and his followers. Enobarbus’ function here is largely one of observation. This scene takes place not long after 2.7., and Enobarbus tells the reader what has happened since then (3.2.2-6). He and Agrippa enjoy a brief exchange where they mock Lepidus’ extravagant praises of Antony and Caesar (3.2.7-19); this has a chiefly comedic function, though it also tells something of Lepidus and the presumably empty nature of his praises for his fellow Triumvirs. It echoes Pompey’s words from the beginning of the last act: “Lepidus flatters both, / Of both is flattered; but he neither loves, / Nor either cares for him” (2.1.14-16). Lepidus’ overthrow by Caesar will not come as a big surprise after this.

Enobarbus continues to make mainly observational remarks as the scene unfolds; he becomes chiefly narrator here. His comment “Will Caesar weep?” (3.2.51) is interesting because it seems to remark on the unlikelihood of such an emotional outburst from Caesar. Caesar, as we have seen, and as we will continue to see, is not prone to much feeling, making him something less than a sympathetic character. The notion of Caesar weeping is compared with Antony’s weeping both when Julius Caesar was killed, and when Brutus was slain. Bevington comments,

Enobarbus wryly points out the contradiction in Antony’s weeping for one he has killed; his tears are ‘crocodile tears’ […]. Enobarbus has good reason to be wary of emotion in Antony, which is both life-giving and life-destroying whether it is accepted or rejected, but in so far as Antony defeats the kind of logic Enobarbus applies here, the implied criticism cannot be seen as definitive. (AC, ed. Bevington, at 3.2.59)
Antony will later mourn many things he “destroys”, or thinks he destroys, in this manner; he, more and more frequently as the play goes on, laments the loss of “himself”; when Enobarbus leaves him, he is deeply saddened by his friend’s desertion; though he was furious with her moments before, and, at least in words, ready to kill her himself them, he becomes instantly inconsolable the moment he learns of Cleopatra’s would-be suicide. Earlier in the play, he is similarly saddened by the death of his wife, Fulvia, although he seemed to have but little love for her while she lived. However, Antony’s tears probably are not “crocodile tears”; it seems obvious that his regrets and his sorrow are genuine. He might have helped to destroy what he later regrets having destroyed, yet his sadness does not have to be contrived. Enobarbus’ comment, though seemingly simply humorous, opens the reader’s mind to these questions and broadens his/her perception of Antony’s character.

Things turn sour rather quickly in Act 3, and in 3.5, Eros, through conversation with Enobarbus, presents the reader/viewer with Caesar’s overthrow of Lepidus. Enobarbus’ response, “Then, world, thou hast a pair of chaps, no more; / And throw between them all the food thou hast, / They’ll grind the one the other” (3.5.11-13), is a dire and concise prediction of the conflict that must follow now that Lepidus no longer stands as mediator between Antony and Caesar. Additionally, this overthrow, which was probably, historically, more defensible, is presented in this scene as “the ruthless elimination of an innocent bumbler”, making Antony’s resentment against Caesar more justified (AC, ed. Bevington, at 3.5.6). This will also play into the image of Caesar as somewhat cruel and unfeeling.

This scene also marks the first time Enobarbus openly expresses discontent with Antony. His dismissive “”Twill be naught, / But let it be” (3.5.20-21) is a symptom of his burgeoning doubt in his leader’s capabilities. He expects Antony to act unwisely, even foolishly. Act 3 will continue in this vein, with Enobarbus becoming steadily less and less convinced of the sagacity of his staying with Antony. This small beginning prepares the reader for Enobarbus’ eventual defection, and also sows further seeds of doubt in the reader as to Antony’s leadership capabilities.

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

There are several reasons scene 3.7. is both extremely frustrating and very interesting. The scene is seen largely from the perspective of Enobarbus (as well as Canidius), who must watch as Antony destroys his fortunes by his foolish and headstrong decision to fight at sea,
despite all the sound advice he receives that urges him to do otherwise. Many themes are prominent here, not the least of which is reason versus passion.

The first thing the reader sees is Cleopatra confront Enobarbus over the matter of his suggesting she stay out of the wars. According to Bevington, the historical Enobarbus was successful in convincing Antony to bid Cleopatra return to Egypt. However, Cleopatra bribed Canidius to speak with Antony for her (AC, ed. Bevington, at 3.7.3). It is unclear whether Shakespeare’s Enobarbus has been able to convince Antony to do anything with regards to Cleopatra, but it is nevertheless obvious that he has tried, and that Cleopatra has heard of his attempts, and is unhappy with him. The brief exchange between them raises a number of interesting questions, the first of them being, is Enobarbus or Cleopatra in the right here? Her arguments, and his responses, invite the reader to consider both sides of their argument, making judgment, once more, impossible.

Enobarbus condemns Cleopatra’s being in the wars based on the assertion that her “presence needs must puzzle Antony” (3.7.10). At first, one is inclined to agree with this. Antony has not been “himself” since he met Cleopatra, and one must assume that her presence on the battlefield will be a distraction to him, since he cannot be the heroic warrior of the past and the romantic lover of the present at one and the same time. Enobarbus knows Antony’s struggle with himself will not permit him to act according to his fullest potential if Cleopatra is there. Still, Cleopatra’s response to this, “A charge we bear i’th’war, / And as the president of my kingdom will / Appear there for a man” (3.7.16-18) begs the reader to consider her view as well. Although Cleopatra’s motives behind this statement are unclear (as her motives are throughout the play), the argument that she should not be kept out merely for being a woman is, at least as seen from a feminist point of view, a valid point. This exchange between Enobarbus and Cleopatra also invites the question: if Antony does become distracted because of Cleopatra’s presence, should that really be considered Cleopatra’s fault? Should Antony not be master of his own actions? What Enobarbus feels on this subject is unclear, although his response when, after the disastrous battle, Cleopatra asks him if she or Antony is at fault, clearly tells that he does not hesitate to place the blame with Antony (3.13). If he truly believed that the ill that befell them were due to Cleopatra’s presence in the battle, he would be plain-spoken enough to say that outright. Consequently, Enobarbus’ initial attempt to keep Cleopatra out of the battle probably has more to do with his doubts about Antony’s actions than his fear of anything Cleopatra can do. Enobarbus does not blame her for her hold on Antony, but he wants to keep said “hold” away from the fighting, so that Antony can be more “himself”.

This scene is important because it is all-too simple to blame Cleopatra for the fall of Antony. Cleopatra, with her wily ways and often ambiguous intentions, in her urging Antony to do things that are not advisable (such as fighting at sea), cannot be found entirely blameless with regard to his corruption, yet Antony’s fall will, in the end, be brought about only by Antony himself. Still, despite the fact that one cannot unequivocally blame Cleopatra for what happens next, despite the fact that one cannot help but agree with her that keeping her out of the wars when she, as she says, has a “charge” in them, seems unjust, Enobarbus’ prediction that her presence “needs must puzzle Antony” also carries quite a lot of weight. Additionally, it turns out to be entirely accurate. Antony takes his entire fleet and flies after her when she leaves, something any good leader should be mortified to do. The conversation between Cleopatra and Enobarbus is frustrating precisely because we know that both of them are, in some measure, in the right, yet we also understand that if Cleopatra takes part in the battle, Antony will lose both it and himself.

The following conversation with Antony is far more frustrating, and far less ambiguous in terms of whom the reader sympathises with. Antony’s decision to fight at sea, “For that [Caesar] dares us to’t” (3.7.29) is laced with so much reckless abandon on Antony’s part, that the reader, like Enobarbus, truly begins to lose confidence in him. We have seen him act rashly before, but not to his extent. This scene proves just how far Antony has fallen. There is not a moment when the reader doubts the sagacity of Enobarbus’ and Canidius’ advice, there is not a moment’s doubt that Antony’s choosing to fight at sea can only lead to his destruction. This scene builds up the tension that will be released in full at the crisis point in scene 3.10, when Antony’s fate will be more or less sealed.

The reader here readily agrees and sympathises with Enobarbus and Canidius, who lay the details of Antony’s inferior ships and mariners before him with ardour and honesty, while Antony seems hardly to listen to them. They also easily dismantle the argument that Antony should fight Caesar by sea because Caesar has dared him to it, pointing out that Antony has given Caesar dares, which Caesar has neglected to accept, seeing that they would grant him no profit. Caesar’s restraint is, here, more sympathetic than Antony’s daring, largely because Antony’s present daring seems to be built up chiefly of thoughtlessness.

MY REASON SITS IN THE WIND AGAINST ME

As the previously discussed scene predicts, the sea battle is disastrous. The reader sees the fight only insofar as it is described by Enobarbus, here:
Naught, naught, all naught! I can behold no longer.
Th’Antoniad, the Egyptian admiral,
With all their sixty, fly and turn the rudder.
To see’t mine eyes are blasted. (3.10.1-4)

It is important that these lines are spoken by Enobarbus, for as someone who is both follower and friend to Antony, Enobarbus can imbue his speech with more than just a follower’s disappointment:

The following scene, x, holds the crisis of the play, is superb in its dramatic handling of off-stage action, first reported by Enobarbus. His three speeches that tell of Antony’s shameful flight after Cleopatra show that he is no aloof observer, He is Antony’s loyal friend and captain, overcome with grief and shame, who feels his commander’s disaster as his own. (Wilson 398-399)

Enobarbus’ presence opens up for further description, and Scarus enters the stage to inform the reader/audience of that which has taken place. He tells of Cleopatra’s flight with no small measure of venom, and Enobarbus’ “Mine eyes did sicken at the sight, and could not / Endure a further view” is a testimony to his considerable grief at the loss they have suffered. Indeed, Enobarbus’ responses in this scene seem more emotional than judgmental. However, Enobarbus’ presence permits other characters to pronounce the judgment he cannot, or will not, express. When Scarus speaks of how Cleopatra turned tail and fled from the battle and Antony fled after her, he speaks of the act with extreme severity. Scarus can call Cleopatra a “ribaudred nag”, Antony a “doting mallard”, and he can declare that he “never saw and action of such shame. / Experience, manhood, honour, ne’er before / Did violate so itself.” (3.10.21-23). These somewhat harsh sentiments, spoken by Scarus, tell the reader of desperately disappointed and angry followers; Scarus becomes their mouthpiece, through Enobarbus. Scarus’ “We have kissed away / Kingdoms and provinces” (3.10.7-8) also echoes Menas’ “Pompey doth this day laugh away his fortune” (2.6.103-104), reminding the reader of another leader and his similarly unfortunate fate.

The fact that Enobarbus himself does not speak against Antony (or Cleopatra) as harshly as Scarus does, even though it is evident that he is also deeply ashamed by what has happened, says a great deal of the loyalty and friendship Enobarbus has for Antony. This is further pronounced in his “Ay, are you thereabouts? Why then good night indeed” (3.10.29). How this line is spoken by an actor will have some bearing on how judgmental it sounds, but the words themselves seem to suggest Enobarbus’ disapproval at the other characters’ talk of desertion.
His final line, “I’ll yet follow / The wounded chance of Antony, though my reason / Sits in the wind against me” (3.10.34-36) is a testament to his inner struggle. In the annotation to the Cambridge edition, David Bevington writes: “To ‘sit in the wind’ is to be on the downwind side, having the scent coming towards you. Thus Enobarbus’s reason is scenting and tracking him down as a victim” (AC, ed. Bevington, at 36). The image of Enobarbus as an unwilling victim to his own reason intensifies the reader’s sympathy for him. His reason is here presented as something he cannot escape. However much he may desire to stay loyal to Antony, this reason will catch up with him and “scent him out”.

Enobarbus’ tragedy is that no matter what he chooses, he cannot live with his decision. If he were to have continued following Antony indefinitely, his reason would subject him to such gruelling shame that he should never be satisfied in anything he did, and, when he listens to said reason, his heart will not permit him to live with his betrayal. Stuck, infinitely, between two extremes, Enobarbus, who cannot choose a middle path, is forced to choose no path.

I WILL SEEK SOME WAY TO LEAVE HIM

Enobarbus is both commentator (narrator) and actor in 3.13, and it is important to draw attention to both sides of his character in order to allow this scene its full significance. In his role as commentator, Enobarbus starkly contrasts Antony’s new-found bravado with his cynical, calculating comments (AC, ed. Bevington, at 3.13.1). For much of the scene, he takes no active part, but stands aside, remarking upon the action and debating with himself. This separation is important with regard to Enobarbus’ character and internal struggle; as long as he felt his loyalty to Antony was reasonable, he could take part in his Egyptian life, could be a part of that which was going on around him, but the more Enobarbus becomes disenchanted with his leader, the more of an “outsider” he becomes. The fact that he is, for most of this scene, separated from the action is a symptom of his psychological separation from Antony, a separation that, following Enobarbus’ decision at the end of this scene, will also become physical. So Enobarbus’ estrangement from the rest of the characters in this scene is not included merely to draw attention to his role as narrator, but also to intensify the idea of him as psychologically separate from them. So, his role as “actor” and “narrator” here blend together to serve two different purposes at once.

The exchange between Enobarbus and Cleopatra at the beginning of the scene is very important because, although the previous scenes have shown the reader Antony’s failure and his follower’s disappointment, it is still necessary to cement Enobarbus’ discontent here. His
commentary and his inner debate need a forum, and the reader needs to understand just how much Enobarbus condemns Antony for his actions in order for his eventual desertion to be fully understood.

Cleopatra’s opening “What shall we do, Enobarbus?” (3.13.1) is another indicator of Enobarbus’ position in Antony’s life, as even the Queen of Egypt turns to him for advice. The fact that she afterwards asks him who should take the blame for the disastrous battle, is also a mark of her trust in him. Enobarbus is, as I have mentioned, known for answering bluntly and honestly, and Cleopatra must, in order to ask him these things, place some faith in his judgment. I point this out because Enobarbus is, time after time, placed in front of us as an important character also in the lives of the other personages in the play, and this has bearing on how he should be perceived, both as a character in his own right, and as an element of the play.

Enobarbus’ “Think, and die” is not comprised of many words, but still manages to say plenty. This small phrase could have multiple meanings. Bevington suggests, simply, “Think despondently and die of it, or commit suicide” (AC, ed. Bevington, at 3.13.1). This, I suppose, could be taken to mean that if they should choose to think, or be incapable of avoiding thought, they must be unhappy in it, or else choose to die. It could also be a statement about the futility of Enobarbus’ position. He can only “think, and die”; any other action is at this point lost to him. I think this statement’s most potent role is its foreshadowing of Enobarbus’ death. For Enobarbus does “think” and die. Because he cannot stop himself from “thinking”, because he cannot stop his logical faculties from overshadowing his emotional connection to his leader, his “thinking” must kill him. And in the end, ironically, thought is all it takes for him to end his life.

Enobarbus’ following condemnation of Antony’s fleeing from the battle is worded in such a manner as to make Enobarbus’ feelings on the subject very plain. Cleopatra is not to blame, but “Antony only, that would make his will / Lord of his reason” (3.13.3-4). This speech is a clear statement extolling the Roman virtues of sense and reason over Alexandrian passion. “The itch of his affection should not then / Have nicked his captainship […]” (3.13.7-8). Enobarbus argues that Antony should have followed his head and not his heart. Ironically, Enobarbus himself is torn between his head and his heart, allowing himself to continue to follow Antony in spite of his own reason, his own better judgment. He wants to follow Antony, because Antony is his friend, and because he has sworn loyalty to him. However, as Enobarbus has recently stated, his reason “sits in the wind” against him. Enobarbus is doing the same thing for which he is condemning Antony. However, having
Enobarbus make these statements at the beginning of the scene, prepares the reader for the decision he will make at the end of it. Thus the speech he makes here is, perhaps, spoken as much for Enobarbus’ own benefit as it is for Antony’s, or Cleopatra’s.

For the rest of this scene, Enobarbus becomes, largely, spectator. As Antony storms about, railing at Caesar, at Thidias, at Cleopatra, his fury fuelling an upsurge of power in him, Enobarbus’ wry commentary provides insight, and his sarcastic point of view makes the scene almost comical. “The long scene in which Antony rages in Hercules’ vein and Enobarbus consistently undercuts him (act 3, scene 13) is fundamentally comic in structure […]. His rage here does not fully engage our sympathy […]. The hyperbole here dissuades us from belief and becomes mere rant” (Adelman 119-120). As Adelman points out, because of Enobarbus, we are not permitted to fully sympathise with Antony. We want to think it bravery in him that makes him rally his spirits and challenge Caesar, but as we see through the eyes of Enobarbus, we see the scene with his misgivings, with his growing conviction that following Antony has become “mere folly”.

His first aside comment during the course of this scene pertains to Antony’s challenging Caesar to a single fight. Enobarbus’ private response to this shows how foolish he finds the notion, and states quite clearly, before Caesar does so himself, that Caesar will never agree to such a proposition. His “I see men’s judgments are / A parcel of their fortunes, and things outward / Do draw the inward quality after them / To suffer all alike” (3.13.31-34) indicates that Antony’s fortunes and his mind decline alike. The notion that Antony’s speeches during this scene are mere ravings is intensified through this, and also helps to justify Enobarbus’ following reasoning as to his own loyalties.

“Mine honesty and I begin to square. / The loyalty well held to fools does make / Our faith mere folly; yet he that can endure / To follow with allegiance a fall’n lord / Does conquer him that did is master conquer / And earns a place i’th’story” (3.13.41-46).

Lawrence Bowling states, “During the time of Enobarbus’ tragic struggle, he is attempting to find the correct answer to two questions: Is Antony a fallen lord or a fool? Should he (Enobarbus) obey his feeling of loyalty (which tells him to remain with Antony), or should he follow his practical good sense (which tells him to seek his safety elsewhere)?” (254-255) Enobarbus is not only struggling to attempt whether Antony is worthy of being followed or not, he is also attempting to discover how strong his own sense of loyalty is, regardless of what Antony does. How Enobarbus responds and reasons with regard to Antony are very important to understand not only Antony’s fall and ensuing tragic end, but also how Antony’s nameless followers (whose mouthpiece Enobarbus must be) react to his deterioration as a
leader. However, in order to grant Enobarbus the import his character deserves, he must also be considered the subject of his own struggle, so that his duality matters not only insofar as it reflects on Antony, but also by how it shapes Enobarbus himself, and his destiny.

“… and earns a place i’th’story” (3.13.45). This last line is highly significant, because Enobarbus here tells us directly why his place in the story is so important, and why he deserves not only this place, but also our consideration, our attention towards the role that he plays. For he has “earned” a place in the story, not only by his loyalty to and friendship for Antony, nor only by his commentary, but, ironically, will forever be cemented as an invaluable part of the story by the role he is about to play, namely that of deserter, and then repentant deserter. His tragedy earns him a bigger place in the story, at least as far as the reader is concerned, than his loyalty ever could.

When Antony leaves to send his message to Caesar and Thidias arrives for Cleopatra, Enobarbus’ role as narrator is pushed aside for a moment, as his commentary in this scene is directed mostly at Antony. He responds to Thidias’ hesitation to speak in front of Antony’s “friends” with, “He needs as many, sir, as Caesar has, / or needs not us” (3.13.49-50). Though this is not spoken aside, as commentary, but directly to Thidias, it can still be seen as another point in Enobarbus’ argument with himself. If Antony’s situation is utterly hopeless, can it then be reasonable to stay with him? If hope is gone anyway, would not logic dictate finding a new master? We know that many of Antony’s followers have already left him, so the idea that Antony, at this point, has as many friends as Caesar is unlikely. The decision is therefore already present in Enobarbus’ comment: Antony’s case is hopeless, therefore staying with him is foolish.

His following, “thou art so leaky / that we must leave thee to thy sinking, for / Thy dearest quit thee” (1.13.64-66) does, as Bevington points out, not only refer to Cleopatra as “dearest”; Enobarbus himself is also incorporated in his statement (AC, ed. Bevington, at 64-66). Both Cleopatra and Enobarbus are dear to Antony, and although Cleopatra’s motives in this scene are unclear, Enobarbus’ doubt and plans are not.

The reader does not hear much from Enobarbus for the remainder of the scene. He has only one line other than “You will be whipped” (3.13.90) before the very end of act 3: “‘Tis better playing with a lion’s whelp / Than with an old one dying” (3.13.96-97). This is spoken as Antony unleashes his fury on Thidias, and partly deflates the reader’s impression of Antony’s anger. It also tells the reader that Enobarbus’ inner debate is very close to a conclusion. He does not spend many words arguing with himself here. However, he manages
to convey both that he does not have much love for Caesar, and that, despite this, Enobarbus will join him, as Caesar has now become the lesser of two evils.

Great skill is in the projection of the psychological sequence that gradually culminates in Enobarbus’s desertion of Antony. Four times the audience sees that desertion is before Enobarbus as the logical course. Each time it appeals more strongly to his highly rational self – “reason” and “judgment” are recurring words in his speeches – as the only intelligent move; for each time he beholds additional evidence of Antony’s folly. A suggestion of desertion grows gradually into the definite resolve with which Enobarbus ends the act. (Wilson 402)

Enobarbus’ final decision to leave Antony is the very last thing that happens in Act 3. This is significant for many reasons, the foremost of which is that it heightens the dramatic tension. Since Enobarbus has in many ways been the play’s “wild card” insofar as, as I have mentioned, his historical role will be relatively unknown to most readers, his decision to leave Antony gives the play’s tragic turn a finality few other things could accomplish. Enobarbus’ decision to leave Antony after his meticulous self-scrutiny, cements Antony’s fall so thoroughly that the reader knows there is nothing left for the hapless leader now but the decline. Additionally, Enobarbus’ desertion of Antony in many ways constitutes the reader’s own desertion of Antony. As I have mentioned, we follow Enobarbus through the play, he guides us, and he guides our perceptions. When Enobarbus shows that his opinion of Antony has sunk so low that he can see no other way but to leave him, the reader’s opinion must follow. This opinion is then complicated by Antony’s reaction when he learns of Enobarbus’ desertion; the reader who has agreed with Enobarbus’ logic will see that same logic confounded when Enobarbus’ heart is broken by Antony’s nobility. This will be discussed in more detail further on.

Through Enobarbus’ final decision to leave Antony, the end of Act 3 also acquires an element of tragic irony, as Enobarbus loses faith just as Antony regains (momentarily) a sense of Roman purpose. After Enobarbus leaves him, Antony will, in fact, fight a successful battle, which intensifies this irony.

Scene 4.2. seems specifically engineered to make not only Antony’s followers, but also the reader, “weep”. Antony addresses Enobarbus here and speaks to him more like he was wont to earlier, intensifying the feeling of sorrow at Enobarbus’ imminent departure. Enobarbus’ “I’ll strike, and cry ‘Take all’” (4.2.9) is deliberately ambiguous, thus managing to sound like something Antony would want to hear (AC, ed. Bevington, at 4.2.9), whilst at the same time signifying nothing.
As Antony speaks with his followers he attempts to cheer them up, but even at this he presently fails, succeeding only in making them unhappy. Enobarbus himself, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his decision to leave Antony, is moved to tears by Antony’s speech, and berates him for his thoughtlessness: “For shame, / Transform us not to women” (4.2.36-37). Enobarbus’ tearful reaction to Antony’s speech also prepares the reader for what is about to come: “Antony’s moving generosity by his followers and his prescience of their having another master soon make even strong Enobarbus “onion-ey’d.” Such a touch, by showing us the man of feeling beneath the ironist, prepares us to accept his quick repentance and fatal sorrow after his desertion” (Wilson 403).

REGRET AND DEATH

Enobarbus’ decline, when it happens, is swift. His decision to leave Antony was long in being made, but his regret is almost instant. However, before the reader sees Enobarbus in Caesar’s camp, scene 4.5. shows him/her Antony’s reaction to Enobarbus’ departure. Antony’s obvious sorrow, as well as his generosity and benevolence towards Enobarbus in spite of the latter’s betrayal, already establish a regretful tone before 4.6. begins.

Enobarbus’s long devotion is reflected in the soldier’s “One ever near thee”; Antony’s affection and magnanimity, in his sending all of the deserter’s treasure after him, in his confession that his fortunes have corrupted honest men, and in his concluding cry, “Enobarbus!” Antony’s “honest” is well chosen, for Enobarbus is an honest deserter in having left all his goods behind him. (Wilson 403-404)

Enobarbus’ remorse is established early in this scene. Caesar’s cold and cruel handling of the soldiers and captains who have defected to him from Antony invites comparison between the two leaders, a comparison that does not work in Caesar’s favour, as his cruelty is contrasted sharply with Antony’s kindness. Enobarbus makes this comparison possible both by his presence, and by his relating of the various fates of those that have left Antony’s cause for Caesar’s. And here, at the beginning, the reader has an advantage over Enobarbus; the reader already knows of Antony’s magnanimous response to Enobarbus’ betrayal, and we can imagine the effect this kindness will have on Enobarbus when he learns of it. The reader’s expectation here imbues the scene with an extra measure of suspense.

When Enobarbus is told of Antony’s generosity, his first reaction is disbelief, as shown by his “I give it you” and the Soldier’s response, “Mock not, Enobarbus, / I tell you true” (4.6.25-27). When he understands the truth of the Soldier’s words, he is instantly
heartbroken, and his judgment of his own actions is the fiercest he has delivered during the
course of the entire play. We see then that Enobarbus, the character who has commented on
and judged the actions of those around him, does not hesitate to judge himself just as harshly,
or even more so, when it becomes his turn to be placed under scrutiny. His role as narrator is
turned upon himself as he foreshadows his own death: “This blows my heart. / If swift
thought break it not, a swifter mean / Shall outstrike thought; but thought will do’t, I feel”
(4.6.35-37).

Because Enobarbus cannot return, and cannot live with the decision he has made, he
has but one choice left to him. “Enobarbus’s last lament is that of a man to whom self-
respecting thought is life, and dishonored thought, literally, death” (Wilson 405). His
language as he laments his betrayal to the moon is much more hyperbolic than any he has
used before, except in his description of Cleopatra at Cydnus. He thus, in a sense, elevates his
own death to a realm beyond that which he has acted in up to this point, and also underscores
his own importance. His death confirms that Enobarbus is, in fact, a tragic character in his
own right, as Peter Bilton pointed out (Commentary and Control 156).

Enobarbus’ friendship with Antony grants Antony a measure of relatability, as we
have seen. When Enobarbus dies of a broken heart due to his betrayal of Antony, it also lends
the play’s tragedy an added relatability. Because the reader so readily sympathises with
Enobarbus, his death touches him/her in a different way than Antony and Cleopatra’s tragic
ends do. Still, with Enobarbus “leading the way” in death, the reader is better prepared for
what is to come. In many ways, Enobarbus’ death thus foreshadows the main characters’
ends, and also creates parallels to them.

Plutarch’s Enobarbus died merely of the ague, but Shakespeare’s has his soul shaken,
and now sees in the master whom he deserted a “mine of bounty”. And so Enobarbus
dies, killed by Antony’s kindness, killed by his recognition of Antony’s grace. Antony
acts, Enobarbus recognizes his own true self (he has put life above love), and acts in a
way utterly unanticipated by Antony. He is released from error only by a blow too
great to sustain, even as Antony finds his true self only when mortally wounded by
the news of Cleopatra’ death. (Barnet 334)
The placement of Enobarbus’ death scene is highly relevant. It comes directly after Antony’s
victory in battle, contrasting the brief happy moment with utter dejection and tragedy. In a
sense, Enobarbus’ death almost mocks the previous scene’s jubilation. It reminds the reader
where the play is going; the death of the reader’s main link to the play can only signify its
imminent, tragic end. Because we see Antony’s leadership deteriorate through Enobarbus, we
sympathise so thoroughly with the latter’s desertion that when Antony’s generosity breaks Enobarbus’ heart, it also breaks ours. We regret with Enobarbus, and a part of us dies with him. This may sound melodramatic, but Enobarbus’ regret and death open the reader’s eyes to the fact that not even our scepticism constitutes a safe approach to the story. As Adelman puts it, “His death not only deprives us of our most skeptical spokesman; it also teaches us precisely the cost of skepticism” (131). So, our scepticism, or at least our faith in it, dies with Enobarbus, preparing us, if not to entirely accept the lovers as they see themselves, then at least to accept their tragedy and recognise its effect.

ENOBARBUS AND THE OTHERS

Shakespeare has several characters that perform roles similar to that of Enobarbus. After having looked in great detail at Enobarbus’ placement and function in *Antony and Cleopatra*, it can be useful to look at how Shakespeare portrays and utilises other characters like him, both to understand this type of character better, and in order to acquire a better appreciation of how and why Enobarbus is unique in his category.

Enobarbus is perhaps best known for his role as narrator, or rather, “chorus character”, including therein his function of pointing at the play’s themes. Shakespeare often uses many smaller characters to do this, and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, there are other characters beside Enobarbus (such as Philo, Ventidius, and Scarus, to mention a few) who help in this respect. However, some plays have characters who take on a larger role in their respective plays while still remaining, essentially, commentators. Flavius and Apemantus from *Timon of Athens* are two such, *King Lear*’s Fool another.

*Timon of Athens* is a tragedy that, much like *Antony and Cleopatra*, has not been read and studied to the extent that, for instance, *Hamlet, Othello*, and *King Lear* (to mention a few) have. Its characters are thus less iconic and well-known. The story, in broad strokes, amounts to this: Kind, benevolent Timon squanders his fortune by giving it all away to false friends. When he discovers their inconstancy, he becomes extremely misanthropic, goes out to live in the woods, curses every human being between Heaven and Hell (including himself), and dies. Where *Antony and Cleopatra* has one chief choric character, *Timon* has two: Flavius and Apemantus. Flavius is Timon’s well-meaning, good-hearted steward, Apemantus is the cynical philosopher whose often spiteful words cause him to be rather hated than loved by those around him.
As soon as Apemantus makes his entry into the play, he speaks his mind, clearly, and with some venom. He is much more rude than Enobarbus is, yet a propensity for blunt and unapologetic speech is something they have in common. Another thing they have in common is the unlikely closeness of their relationships with those of higher standing. Despite his coarseness of speech, despite his refusal to flatter Timon, Apemantus and he are clearly, to some extent, friendly. They share a bond that cannot compare to that of Antony and Enobarbus, but that yet permits Apemantus to speak his mind without needing to worry much about the consequences of his speech. Like Enobarbus, Apemantus also offers commentary on what is unfolding in the play (for instance, at 1.1.130-144), but Apemantus is much more acerbic in his wit than Enobarbus is. Apemantus, for the most part, instantly condemns the actions he witnesses where Enobarbus is more impartial.

Apemantus also predicts, with great self-assurance, the false nature of Timon’s flatterers, and the inevitability of their turning their backs on him when his fortunes fall (Timon 1.1.253-257, 1.2.38-52, among others). One might draw a parallel to Enobarbus’ assertions that Antony’s marriage to Octavia will fail, or that the bond between Antony and Caesar is one of necessity, and will be sacrificed when the “greater need” is no more. Here, then, are examples of these chorus characters not only predicting future events, but commenting on the other characters and what the reader can expect from them.

“So, / Thou wilt not hear me now, thou shalt not then. / I’ll lock thy heaven from thee. / O, that men’s ears should be / To counsel deaf, but not to flattery” (Timon 1.2.253-257). This line is very reminiscent of Enobarbus’ “That truth should be silent I had almost forgot” (AC 2.2.115). In both instances these characters deliver blatant truths that the other characters are either unwilling or unable to perceive, and in both cases, the other characters are worse off for it. Timon is destroyed, first financially and then psychologically, by his refusal to acknowledge the false nature of his “friends”, and Antony could have saved himself a world of trouble if he had heeded Enobarbus’ warnings.

Flavius also starts commenting on the situation at hand as soon as he is introduced into the play (Timon 1.2.160-165). However, where Apemantus is harsh and generally misanthropic, Flavius, as becomes instantly clear, truly cares for his master. Also, where Apemantus addresses himself chiefly to the other characters, Flavius speaks to himself, or, rather, speaks to the reader/audience. Like Enobarbus, Flavius informs the reader of what is going on, often by taking a step outside of the main action and speaking more or less directly to the reader. Flavius and Enobarbus also share a connection with their respective leaders that goes beyond loyalty but that will still, ultimately, fail. Flavius cares for Timon, this is
evident, but he cannot save him. Enobarbus fails to save Antony, and also fails to save himself.

Like Enobarbus and Apemantus, Lear’s Fool has the freedom to speak his mind at will. However, the factors that make these three different characters capable of speaking their minds when they wish, are also, often, the reasons they are not heard. Lear’s Fool is, as his name would suggest, a fool. A fool would often have the possibility of taking liberties with his speech, but because his job was to be humorous, his opinions were also often taken rather lightly. In Lear, the Fool can speak the same warnings and offer the same advice that Kent does, for which the latter is banished. The Fool can speak as he finds because he is a fool, and because his advice will be taken as the humorous rants of a fool. His power makes him powerless. Similarly, Apemantus gains his freedom to speak what he finds by way of his misanthropy, by way of his simply not caring what anyone thinks of him. Everyone expects Apemantus to speak negatively of everything and everyone, and therefore his opinions can be delivered precisely because everyone has given up listening to him. He is free to speak, but no one listens. Enobarbus, in his role as friend to Antony, should fare more fortunately with his advice than do these other two, but he, too, is hampered by the circumstances of his “free speech”. He speaks as he finds, but his frank nature and his penchant for “light answers” makes the other characters take his answers lightly. The only ones who truly take his comments to heart are the readers/viewers, and they can only, like him, watch as everything falls apart while they struggle to decide whom to support.

However, while these characters might not be able to influence their plays in any major ways, they do influence the readers/viewers. In the beginning of 2.2 (Timon), Flavius makes Timon’s financial carelessness known to the reader. He does not shy away from judging his master for his reckless spending, proving that he has a discerning and relatively impartial eye in the matter, yet he does not insult Timon. Flavius’ dejection at his master’s bad fortune, and his immense desire to see Timon understand the situation, also proves that Flavius has affection for Timon. Much like Enobarbus’ relationship with Antony informs the reader’s opinion of Antony, often shifting it in a positive direction, Flavius’ genuine concern for his master shows us that Timon is not only cared for by those he showers with gifts, but also by those that work for him; Timon is shown, by this, to have merit also outside of his wealth and treasure.

Something these characters have in common is precisely the effect they have on the reader’s perception of the main characters. All three plays have protagonists with whom it is, at least some of the time, very difficult to sympathise. Enobarbus’ affection towards and
loyalty to Antony make Antony more sympathetic because a leader that can engender such friendship from one of his followers, must have good qualities. King Lear, as he descends into madness, is followed faithfully by his Fool, as well as the disguised Kent. Both of these characters lend Lear the support of the reader through their affection for him.

Another important function these characters have is to underline the themes of their respective plays. In Timon of Athens, the difference between flattery and friendship is an important theme, tied to the question of whether wealth can buy you friendship and/or happiness, as is the ability to find a middle way between absolute complacency and naiveté and absolute misanthropy. Apemantus can be said to personify absolute misanthropy. He goes through life loving no one and having no one love him. Timon, as he is at the beginning of the play, is Apemantus’ opposite; he represents absolute generosity both in spirit and when it comes to material goods. Timon, when he discovers the disloyalty of his so-called friends, switches his benevolence off like a light and takes up something much like Apemantus’ cynicism. Apemantus points out Timon’s problem (Timon 4.3.300-304): Timon has only known extreme wealth, contentedness, and popularity, and now extreme poverty, hatred, and isolation. Timon’s chief tragedy is not that he has false friends, but that he blinds himself to compromise. First, he refuses to consider the notion that his so-called friends are only there for his gifts, and then he refuses to acknowledge any show of friendship from anyone. To Timon, all men are either good or bad, and his refusal to see that the world is, essentially, constructed from both sides of that scale, is a significant part of his tragedy. Flavius is there, among other reasons, to prove that good men do exist, to prove Timon’s notion of the world wrong. Even Timon has to acknowledge Flavius unselfish in his interests when the latter seeks out Timon and offers his small means to help him in any way he can (Timon 4.3.482-531). We have already seen how Enobarbus affects and informs the thematic structure of Antony and Cleopatra, so I won’t reiterate that here.

If we take Apemantus and Flavius and boil their characters down to one-word adjectives, we might say that Apemantus is cause, while Flavius is feeling. Apemantus does not care for the world, but he cares what happens in it. Flavius cares for Timon, and takes an emotional interest in his fortunes. Enobarbus incorporates both of these adjectives. Ironically, he incorporates them both to such an extent that, as we have seen, they end up killing him.

Flavius and Apemantus also move towards each other as the play progresses, in a sense becoming closer to one another in character. Flavius begins to sound more like Apemantus when Timon’s affairs begin to deteriorate, when he truly sees how despicable Timon’s flatterers have turned out to be. However, where Apemantus’ resentment is built on
his own cynicism, Flavius takes Timon’s disenchantment as his own because he cares about him; he shares his master’s pain and indignation. Just as Antony’s failure and shame become Enobarbus’ own, Timon’s misfortunes become Flavius’ misfortunes. Both these characters choose to continue to affiliate themselves with fallen lords, although, as we know, Enobarbus finally fails in his loyalty.

The main difference between these other supporting characters and Enobarbus is, naturally, his separate tragedy. Flavius and Apemantus are useful chorus characters, but they do not invoke the emotional response that Enobarbus does. That is to say, both Flavius and the Fool, with their decisions to remain loyal to their hapless masters, gain our sympathy, but they are still very much supporting characters, while Enobarbus, as we have seen, becomes something akin to protagonist in his own tale. Apemantus’ and Flavius’, as well as the Fool’s, speeches are spoken to elucidate themes, other characters, and so on. We are made privy to their thoughts only insofar as those thoughts enlighten us about the play in general. When Enobarbus speaks, the reader is not only interested in how what he says affects those around him, but also on how it affects him. Enobarbus, despite being a supporting character, engages the reader as would a protagonist.

All these characters shape their stories not because they are the main instigators of them, but because they shape our perceptions of the plays they belong to. They exist in a world midway between the play and the audience, taking part in their own, dramatic lives while simultaneously commenting on those lives and thus keeping the reader/viewer not only informed but also engaged.
Chapter 3: Film and Fiction

I have attempted, in my previous chapters, to elucidate how one character can change how a reader views a play. I have already gone into great detail with regard to Enobarbus' several roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as well as the placement and significance of his lines, and will now seek to discover how differing stage portrayals of Enobarbus may contribute towards altering the viewer’s perception of the play.

FILM AND TEXT

For this part of the thesis, I have chosen to watch three different adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*. These three productions were elected chiefly because they were readily available; many of the filmic adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra* are very hard to come by. As it turns out, though, they are also three very different productions, which makes comparing and contrasting them far more interesting, and which is why I have chosen to include all of them.

The first version I have chosen is Jon Scoffield’s adaptation from 1974, the second Lawrence Carra’s version from 1983, and the last, Charlton Heston’s 1972 film. Ideally, I would have liked to see this play performed on stage, but as stage productions are not always easily procurable, I have settled for filmic versions. In any case, both Scoffield’s and Carra’s filmic adaptations have much in common with stage productions. Carra’s, particularly, seems, for all intents and purposes, like a stage production that has been put on screen.

My theory has been that how Enobarbus is portrayed by an actor can significantly alter how the play is perceived, both in terms of theme, mood, character analysis (of the other characters as well as of Enobarbus himself), and more. I have found this to be true. Naturally, it is not only the portrayal of Enobarbus that brings about changes in how the audience perceives the play; one cannot ignore the actor portrayals of the other characters in the play, and how they are rendered must also have an immense impact on how they, and their stories, are understood. Still, the treatment of a supporting character can be very revealing of a director’s/producer’s intentions with regards to the play.

In the film world, supporting characters are often overlooked, frequently pushed aside to make room for everything from action to romance to special effects. This is probably due to the fact that in order to sell films, one needs to keep the audience entertained. Since the average reader/film viewer is, perhaps, less prone to scour books for details than a student of literature will be, and less equipped to interpret and analyse those details he/she does find
significant, it is not unsurprising that many filmic adaptations fail at capturing the essence of the texts they seek to portray.

Sometimes, it can be very challenging to figure out exactly how and why a filmic adaptation has failed or succeeded. I used to think a good adaptation was one that was as faithful as possible to every minute detail of the original text. Consequently, I was rarely happy with anything I saw on screen that I had previously read. However, I grew to realise that what I really appreciated in terms of cinematic experiences was not something that never deviated from the literary text whence it came; what I wanted was something that succeeded in capturing the *essence* of the original text. *Essence* is, naturally, not very concrete as far as literary analyses go, and what one considers to be the *essence* of a text can be subjective. However, it has been my experience that much of a text’s *essence* lies in its theme and in its characters. As Peter Bilton puts it, “It is indeed the life of the characters that gives life to the whole dramatic undertaking. Here dramatic illusion is at its strongest. We respond to characters on stage as we do to people in real life, whether the characters are ‘completely realized’ (whatever that means) or not” (*Choric Character* 256). How and by whom these characters are portrayed on screen can, therefore, make or break a filmic adaptation.

For example, despite exquisite cinematography, amazing settings and scenery, and a beautiful soundtrack, the 2005 adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* fails miserably, chiefly due to abysmal characterisation. It substitutes Austen’s incredible, subtle irony with modernised dialogue and lots of giggling. The characters are pale, vapid versions of their literary counterparts, all focus directed at the love story and none at Austen’s ironic and witty approach to that love story, much of which is, in the original text, built up and portrayed through a varied cast of characters and their interactions with each other and the society in which they live.

I use this as an example because, like *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Pride and Prejudice* is, in very broad strokes, a love story. However, these texts both encompass much more than that, and the love stories are informed and complicated not only by outside forces, but by the characters’ own feelings and dilemmas. Additionally, both texts, though they feature love stories, are really, thematically, about other things, and the love stories are, at least in part, tools used to emphasise those themes. *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play about identity and inner duality: Roman and Egyptian, warrior and lover, logic and passion, past and present, male and female. How the actors and directors choose to portray the characters in this play determine whether these themes will see the light of day, or whether it will just end up being another tragic love story.
This is not meant to be a comparison of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pride and Prejudice*, so I will shortly let Austen’s classic lie. However, it seems necessary to clarify why I felt the comparison was necessary. Whether or not one finds a filmic adaptation “good” or “bad” is, to a large extent, subjective. However, whether or not a filmic adaptation can be considered faithful to its original material is less subjective, and the original material is more than just the basic outlines of its story. So, when I look at these three adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is not only with the intention of informing myself about the text by seeing how it is interpreted by others, it is also with a mind towards establishing how much of the original material has been incorporated and understood by the films’ creators. There were many people who loved the 2005 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, and it received no less than four Academy Award nominations. Clearly, then, people have appreciated the film, just as people often do appreciate films that run circles around the original material instead of staying faithful to it. The question to ask is therefore, why is it necessary to harp on about fidelity to the book/play/other written text? In the case of *Pride and Prejudice* (as with many other literary works adapted for the screen) the answer is simple: because the book is so much better. We are living in a society where people read less and less (particularly literary classics), and filmic adaptations often end up being the only version of the story people know. It is not at all strange that people equate *Pride and Prejudice* with a vapid love story when that is the extent of what they get on screen, but it is sad, because it means that a stunning piece of classical literature, encompassing both extraordinary amounts of wit and biting social critique, is reduced to something people look upon as just another “chick flick”. It is easy for *Antony and Cleopatra*, I think, to fare similarly, and at least one of the adaptations I have watched falls into the trap of putting the love story on a pedestal and ignoring a good part of what goes on around said love story.

There are several decisions both in terms of casting, acting, and thematic emphasis that I find less than pleasing in the adaptations I am about to discuss, and these decisions often affect the play as a whole in major ways. Even though my chief focus is on Enobarbus, I would be remiss if I did not also include the other characters in my evaluation and interpretation.

**PLAYING ENOBARBUS**

There are many things to consider when portraying Enobarbus: how to achieve a balance between his sarcastic wit and the more serious matter of his inner struggle, how to properly
portray his relationship with Antony, in which direction to address his commentary and how it should be spoken, to what extent one must incorporate him into or separate him from the main action of the play, to mention a few. All of these things, in addition to how his character is, more generally, portrayed, can have a significant impact on the play, in several different ways.

The three adaptations I have seen are very different. One is, as mentioned, basically a stage play put on camera; another, though still in many ways close to a stage play, is slightly more varied in setting, but the sets are extremely simple, often just a room with a few chairs or a divan and some curtains; the last is a fully-fledged cinematographic film adaptation, and, although it is over forty years old, and the effects and suchlike are less than what they would be were this a more modern film, it is still very much a fully adapted film, and the only one of the three to be released in cinemas. So, already with regard to cinematographic format, the three directors chose very differently, and this will also, naturally, create larger differences between them. However, I am chiefly interested in character portrayal, so I will, for the most part, attempt to ignore the differences in set staging and focus on how the directors and actors have chosen to portray the characters.

The first adaptation I watched was the 1974 version directed by Jon Scoffield. This was made by a British production company with a Royal Shakespeare Company cast, and it is clear right from the outset that this is a group of people who know how to do Shakespeare. They don’t overact, but often do exactly the opposite, allowing the words to speak for themselves. The adaptation was still far from perfect in my eyes, but it managed to retain a sense of the play’s themes much better than the other two adaptations did. Not surprisingly, this version’s Enobarbus was also the most fortunately cast.

The second adaptation I watched was the 1983 production, directed by Lawrence Carra. This is, as mentioned, the closest to a stage production I have seen. It is made in the USA, with a very varied group of actors, some of whom have clearly done Shakespeare before, and some of whom clearly have not (and probably should not ever again). This production sticks to the original play very faithfully, and though there are some decent performances, it is sadly hampered by those of its actors that simply were not qualified to perform Shakespeare. Enobarbus is portrayed fairly well, but there is something lacking in him, some sense of purpose, that makes his character a little blander than it should be.

The third adaptation I looked at was Charlton Heston’s film of 1972. This is, without a doubt, the production that takes the most liberties with Shakespeare’s original text. This is hardly surprising, given that it is, as mentioned, fully adapted into a film and must therefore
alter some aspects of the play to accommodate the filmic medium. This film’s Enobarbus is underplayed and mostly just pushed aside.

**First appearance**

Patrick Stewart plays Enobarbus in the 1974 version, and his performance is much more successful in bringing out his character than those of the other two actors. This is chiefly due to the fact that he succeeds in incorporating both Enobarbus’ cheerful, witty side and his sensible, Roman side. Additionally, this filmic adaptation is the only one that has put a proper emphasis on Enobarbus’ friendship with Antony.

The 1974 film stays very true to Shakespeare’s original writing. Most of the scenes are in the correct order, although some of the dialogue is shortened, or moved slightly. Enobarbus’ first line (“Bring in the banquet quickly; wine enough / Cleopatra’s health to drink!” (1.2.10-11)) is spoken drunkenly, and the film thus immediately places Enobarbus in the middle of the Egyptian world, taking part in its pleasures. In this production, the line is actually spoken during the first scene, as opposed to the second one, placing Enobarbus in the middle of the revels when he delivers it. This further underscores Enobarbus’ involvement in Antony’s Egyptian life.

The 1983 adaptation places Enobarbus’ introduction where Shakespeare originally placed it. However when his first line is delivered, Enobarbus (played by Barrie Ingham) is actually off-screen. Onstage, but off-screen. So one is really not introduced to anything other than a seemingly bodiless voice. There is therefore very little to say about this particular introduction, as we really don’t see Enobarbus properly before later in the scene. This will be discussed shortly.

More interesting to examine is the introduction of Charlton Heston’s Enobarbus (played by Eric Porter). In Heston’s 1972 filmic version of the play, the first line is spoken not by Philo, or by an unnamed soldier, but, after some scenes showing the arrival in Egypt of Caesar’s messenger and one scene of Antony and Cleopatra lounging about, by Enobarbus himself. This makes Enobarbus’ feelings on the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra much less ambiguous, and, as we will see, it also makes his and Antony’s conversation in 1.2 very odd. Enobarbus, as has been mentioned, does function as a sort of narrator in the play, and thus lines of exposition are often given to him, but this opening speech is not only one that tells the reader/viewer what is going on, but also one that, as we have seen, places judgment on the actions it observes. Enobarbus is not a character to shy away from placing judgment, as we will see later, but having Enobarbus judge Antony so harshly so early is
detrimental to his function as a somewhat neutral narrator, and I think it is very clear that this is the reason this opening line was *not* given to Enobarbus by Shakespeare. Another reason is that it places Enobarbus much more firmly in the place of “spectator” to the action, as he then begins the whole play by commenting on what is going on as opposed to being a part of it. His being a part of the action itself is precisely what makes him such an interesting voice to listen to. He is, as mentioned, not simply someone standing on the outside and looking in, but rather someone who has lived not only in the Roman world, but also in the Egyptian one, and one who plays an important part within the play as well as outside of it.

Shakespeare chose to place Enobarbus in the middle of the action first precisely because he needs to be cemented, in the mind of the reader/viewer, first as a part of that which is going on, after which he may then become a kind of narrator. What we might call Enobarbus’ “internal external” comments, i.e. his reflections on his own loyalties and actions, as well as those of the characters around him, come more frequently as the play moves towards its tragic conclusion (and as Enobarbus’ own story moves towards its tragic conclusion), and this is done not only because it is supposed to include the reader/viewer and guide him/her through the play as everything unravels, but also because Enobarbus himself is being pushed “outside” by force of his own conflicting emotions.

1.2.128-190

The next significant exchange to mention is from 1.2.128-190. There are many lines here that can be read exceedingly differently simply depending on tone and emphasis. Enobarbus jokes and makes some pretty lewd comments, but whether or not they be taken as harmless japes or offensive remarks largely depends on how these words are delivered. Their significance also depends on how Antony responds to them. In the 1974 adaptation, both Antony and Enobarbus are lounging on what looks like an enormous pile of large pillows, and both have had a bit to drink, or so it seems. Their conversation has an air of laziness and camaraderie about it. This is not Antony, the Triumvir, the important man, a very Hercules, speaking with his follower, a soldier; the staging of and acting in this scene makes them simply seem like two long-standing friends (as they must also be) having a lazy chat and a drink. Their conversation does not take on a note of any true importance, but is spoken quietly (and somewhat drunkenly). One might think that downplaying this scene so dramatically would diminish its impact on the play, but, interestingly, it does exactly the opposite. By toning it down, they actually make the scene easier to follow. This is, after all, an important scene both with regard to Enobarbus’ and Antony’s relationship, and with
regard to Cleopatra’s character. So far, we have only barely been introduced to Cleopatra, and Enobarbus’ comments here not only tell us something of her and her whims, but also peaks our interest in her. The way Enobarbus’ words seem to simply flow out of him in Scoffield’s adaptation makes the scene more, rather than less, interesting. He does not speak any of his lines scornfully, only humorously; there seems to be admiration for Cleopatra laced into his flippant remarks. His response to Antony’s claim that Cleopatra is “cunning” (“Alack, sir, no”) is spoken as if there were an exclamation point at the end of it, almost as if the idea of her being “cunning” is preposterous. Yet, his comments are also spoken interspersed with outbreaks of laughter, and thus, although some of his slightly roundabout praise seems sincere, it is still very difficult to properly establish what Enobarbus’ feelings about the queen truly amount to. This, in turn, just adds to the mystery of Cleopatra.

One significant thing is changed in the 1974 scene (other than the abbreviation of certain lines), and that is Antony’s “I shall break/The cause of our expedience to the queen/And get her leave to part” (1.2.170-172). This line is placed at the very end of his exchange with Enobarbus, following which Stewart’s Enobarbus sports an expression that clearly says “better you than me”. After this, they both drink deeply, and significantly, from their goblets. So, here, Scoffield has chosen to underscore the fact of Cleopatra’s sudden moods, her changeful nature being brought up in more than just words before we even really get to see it.

It is already clear that Cleopatra is placed front and centre in this production. This shouldn’t be strange at all, since she is one of the main characters, and, arguably, one of the main reasons the play is so engaging. Still, neither of the other two productions I have seen bring her forwards so quickly and so obviously. More weight is placed on her relationship with Antony than her character in itself. Here, however, she is given her due import. In the exchange in 1.2, several of the lines are, as mentioned, cut, yet those of Enobarbus’ remarks that pertain directly to Cleopatra are preserved almost in their entirety. Thus Enobarbus is, in this scene, partly used as a tool to direct our attention at Cleopatra, despite the fact that the queen of Egypt isn’t physically present in the scene.

Antony’s perception of Cleopatra is coloured by his love for her. Although he can become angry with her, even slightly disenchanted with her at certain moments, yet his deep and abiding infatuation with her will never allow him to be an impartial observer, will never permit the reader/viewer to take his words and his judgments with regard to Cleopatra without a trace of scepticism. We have the same issue with Cleopatra’s followers. They love her, adore her, even, to some extent deify her, and therefore they cannot be impartial either.
This is precisely why the scenes where Enobarbus speaks of Cleopatra are so important, and why it is vital, first, that those lines be included in the adaptation, and second, that a sufficient amount of thought is put into how those lines are delivered. Enobarbus is our only real, impartial observer when it comes to Cleopatra. He has no professed love for her, but it is clear from many of his speeches that he has an admiration for her, though perhaps sometimes a reluctant one. This admiration needs to be evident when the actor speaks these lines, because it is vital to the reader’s understanding of Cleopatra’s worth. She might be a difficult character to figure out, but if she can be admired even by one whose loyalty to and friendship for Antony cannot allow him to ignore the many adverse effects Cleopatra’s influence has on him, if she can be admired by such a character, then there must be more to her than her beauty and regal standing. Enobarbus’ admiration of Cleopatra opens the reader’s/viewer’s eyes to the fact that she deserves admiration.

The scene is very differently staged in Lawrence Carra’s 1983 adaptation. Ingham’s Enobarbus seems slightly mischievous, almost impish. There is very little sincerity in his speech, only humour. This serves reasonably well, since Antony, in this version, is much more serious during the scene, not to mention more obviously troubled by what is happening. Enobarbus thus uses his wit to lighten the mood. However, the bond between him and Antony is less pronounced here, as they are so far apart in mood and behaviour. Enobarbus seems more like the traditional clown or fool, breaking the often unbreakable tension with levity. His remarks also, apart from being intended in a humorous light, seem to be laced with a measure of sarcasm, so that where Stewart’s Enobarbus made us believe there was sincerity blended into his joking words, Ingham’s Enobarbus simply makes us believe in his insincerity.

Ingham’s “Alack sir, no, her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love” (1.2.142-143), far from making us believe in Cleopatra’s honest affections, rather enforces our convictions that she is, just as Antony suggests, “cunning past man’s thought” (1.2.141). In a sense, Enobarbus seems, in a mocking tone, to be echoing what Cleopatra herself might argue here, as if he is taking her words and turning them into comedy. This makes the scene lighter in tone, but the impact it has on our understanding of Cleopatra is significant. If Enobarbus cannot take her seriously, it becomes more difficult for the viewer to be able to take her seriously. Additionally, Ingham’s delivery of the line, “O sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work, which not to have been blest withal would have discredited your travel” (1.2.148-150) makes it seem like he is talking about an object rather than a person, as if Cleopatra is some famous tourist attraction that one simply cannot miss if
one is to see Egypt. I have attempted to analyse why Ingham’s delivery raises these thoughts, and I believe it has something to do with the fact that he seems very removed from the situation. He is, somehow, not properly incorporated into the life being led in Egypt, but seems for all intents and purposes like a bystander commenting humorously (and often sarcastically) on events in which he takes no part. This, in my view, makes his character seem less ambiguous in his opinions, and his lack of true involvement will colour his personal story in such a way as to make it much less tragic.

I will not spend long on Heston’s take of this scene, mainly because Eric Porter’s Enobarbus, having already pronounced fairly severe judgment on Antony in the opening of the film, can speak with neither the relatively impartial view point, nor the friendly informality that is required for this scene. Porter speaks his lines very calmly; his Enobarbus is, generally, very calm. Even when he jokes, it is underplayed. Where Ingham’s Enobarbus is a little too facetious, Porter’s Enobarbus is much too serious. This scene between Antony and Enobarbus does not, in Heston’s film, seem like one played out between two friends, but rather, as one played out between a leader and his follower, as, of course, they also are; however, as I have mentioned, the interesting nature of their relationship lies in the bond they share beyond that. It seems that this bond is mostly overlooked in Heston’s film. This also, naturally, means that the potency of Enobarbus’ tragedy will be greatly lessened. Disloyalty to a leader is one matter, disloyalty to a friend is another.

2.2

One of Enobarbus’ functions, at least in the first half of the play, is to remind us of Antony’s former greatness by his loyalty to, and trust in, him. When the Triumvirs meet in Rome, and Lepidus bids Enobarbus “to entreat [his] captain / To so ft and gentle speech” (2.2.2-3), Enobarbus’ reply, “I shall entreat him / To answer like himself” (2.2.3-4) is a significant example of his faith in his leader’s wisdom and power. All three of the actors who portray Enobarbus in these adaptations, answer Lepidus’ request decisively. Ingham retains his playful tone, yet seems sincere in his statement. He is the only one who gets to keep the whole exchange with Lepidus, and where his initial reply is (“… answer like himself …”) is spoken firmly, the rest of the exchange is spoken almost as if he is teasing Lepidus. Still, he has a very knowing tone as he says “Not if the small come first” (2.2.12), as if he already knows that the “small” matter of Antony’s love for Cleopatra will always come first, no matter what he states to the contrary. Porter’s Enobarbus is quite forceful in his reply, more passionate than we have see him be so far. Again, given his former judgment of his captain, it
seems odd that he should be so forceful in his defence now. One can already see that having Enobarbus speak Philo’s opening lines is affecting the viewer’s perception of Enobarbus in such a way that his other words and actions become somewhat illogical. Patrick Stewart delivers this line almost aggressively, as if the notion that he should influence his leader in such a way makes him angry. The rest of his lines here are cut, but the force with which Stewart answers actually lends the line a sufficient amount of space all by itself. Cutting the other lines makes the scene less funny (with Ingham, you find yourself smiling as he delivers his lines), but it does make Enobarbus seem more serious in his refusal to acquiesce to Lepidus’ request. Which works better is difficult to say here. Both Ingham’s and Stewart’s performances in this scene work for the character; both show a strong-willed character refusing to bend that will to another man, despite his higher rank and importance. Porter’s Enobarbus also shows this decisiveness, and his response is emotional (irritated), a rare occurrence in Porter’s portrayal, at least in the first half of the film.

The fact that Lepidus, one of the leaders of the Roman world, comes to Enobarbus for help with “reigning in” Antony is a very significant mark of Enobarbus’ importance in Antony’s life. The fact that Enobarbus is a “soldier only” will be painstakingly remarked by Antony in the next few lines, but right here, his position seems greater than that. It is clear that he is accustomed to a certain level of freedom and importance with Antony, since he, unbidden, interrupts the three leaders of the Roman world when they are discussing important state affairs.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, Enobarbus’ reason for interrupting like he does is twofold: he does so both for the sake of humour and for the sake of commentary. How this is done in the different productions significantly changes the mood of the scenes. In Heston’s production, Enobarbus’ commentary is completely left out, so the 1972 adaptation will not be discussed here.

In the 1983 production, Antony and Caesar sit while their followers stand behind them. In the 1974 production, Antony and Caesar have their followers right next to them, which makes it seem less like a meeting of two people, and more like a meeting of two groups. In the 1983 production, Enobarbus delivers the first line (“Would we had all such wives, that the men might go to wars with the women!” (2.2.71-72)) standing quite far behind Antony, while Antony laughs with him. This makes the comment seem less obtrusive than it does in the 1974 production, where Stewart delivers the line from right next to Antony, while he elbows him jovially in the side and sets to laughing, all by himself. Antony looks at him with a mixture of exasperation and embarrassment, Caesar looks haughtily puzzled at the
interruption, and an extremely awkward silence follows, at which it is very difficult not to laugh out loud. In both cases the tension is broken, although differently. The written play does not stipulate how anyone reacts to Enobarbus’ comment; it seems for all intents and purposes to be simply ignored by the other characters; so how to make the other characters respond is entirely up to the director and the actors. The 1974 version perhaps better prepares the viewer for the lines that are to follow; it seems more reasonable that Antony should bid Enobarbus be silent when he has already reacted negatively to his previous comment. It also intensifies the awkwardness of Enobarbus’ other interruptions.

When Ingham’s Enobarbus interrupts next, it is with his customary, light tone, which, although Antony has laughed with him previously when he, himself had just spoken somewhat jestingly of his wife, Enobarbus’ sarcastic comments seem very out of place when the discussion between Antony and Caesar reaches its peak, which it does right before this. Ingham’s Enobarbus also physically inserts himself into their discussion, by coming forwards. This makes it seem like he physically breaks some sort of barrier, and his interruption seems all the more officious for it. So, despite the fact that Antony has been disposed to laugh with Enobarbus earlier, Enobarbus’ playful and irreverent tone makes Antony’s irritated bid for him to be silent seem rather just.

In the 1974 adaptation, the awkwardness already created by Enobarbus’ earlier interruption colours the new one. Stewart, interestingly, does not deliver the lines with a humorous tone, but rather a frustrated one. Where Ingham is funny, Stewart is, in this part of the scene, serious. This laces his words with a much stronger sense of urgency, and the scene becomes more tense for it. I cannot truly say that either version functions better than the other here, but the weight of Enobarbus’ words (and accurate predictions) is made much heavier with Stewart’s delivery. This is further intensified by the decision to zoom in on Enobarbus wearing a pensive expression after Antony and the others leave. This seems intended to underscore Enobarbus’ previously voiced concerns. After he has greeted Maecenas and Agrippa, Maecenas states, “We have cause to be glad that matters are so well digested.” (2.2187-188), whereupon Stewart’s Enobarbus rolls his eyes pointedly. Ingham’s Enobarbus merely scratches his nose, wearing an expression that seems to say it were better if he didn’t speak. In both cases, this clearly conveys the character’s lack of faith in the arrangement.

**The Barge Speech**

I have earlier said I didn’t wish to spend too much time on this speech, since it is the one element of Enobarbus’ performance that is given its fair share of attention, yet I wish to
dwell a little on the three very different renditions of this speech, as performed by Stewart, Ingham, and Porter. The three actors play Enobarbus very differently, and so it is natural that this speech, too, should be delivered diversely by them. The speech, though clearly theatrical, has quite a bit to say for the viewer’s perception of Cleopatra, and so its delivery is therefore no small matter.

All three actors portray Enobarbus an admiration for Cleopatra whilst giving this speech, which is fitting, for although Enobarbus is a sceptic, this speech shows the reader/viewer that, although he can look on and analyse Cleopatra with logical faculties, he is not untouched by her charms, nor is he insensible to her merits. When looking at these performances, it is also interesting to note the reactions of Agrippa and Maecenas, for how they take Enobarbus’ speech is also relevant with regard to how much the viewer takes heed of it.

Ingham’s rendition of this famous speech is very informal, and given to Maecenas and Agrippa almost as if he were imparting a sensational bit of gossip. The mood of the scene is very light, very easy. This is simply three friends chatting about an unbelievable woman. Ingham is deliberately theatrical for parts of his performance, making his descriptions take on almost a mystical note; “From the barge / A strange invisible perfume hits the sense / Of the adjacent wharfs” is spoken almost in a whisper. “For her own person / it beggared all description …” Enobarbus starts this line, looking as if he is about to make some grandiose, theatrical allusion, but then he pauses, and completes the line as if he, in spite of himself, has to admit that he can think of no description that will do her justice.

Agrippa and Maecenas react with expressions and exclamations of admiration as Ingham’s Enobarbus tells his tale. Agrippa is particularly delighted, and makes his small interjections with no small amount of fervour. Maecenas seems more spellbound, and for the most part simply gazes at Enobarbus in awe. The three of them clearly show admiration for Cleopatra, but what kind of admiration is a little more uncertain. It might be more of a superficial appreciation, judging by the manner of their speech. Agrippa’s “She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed; / He ploughed her, and she cropped” (2.2.237-238) is followed by laughter, and Enobarbus hushes them good-humouredly, looking behind him, as if knowing this kind of talk would not please Antony. In the midst of admiration there seems also, here, to be objectification.

Stewart is much slower, much calmer, in his delivery than Ingham is. The 1974 version has also moved them, so that Enobarbus, Agrippa, and Maecenas now sit alone, away from where the talks between Antony and Caesar took place. This gives the scene more
intimacy. Where Ingham’s Enobarbus and his fellows linger and sort of huddle conspiratorially after Antony and the rest have departed, the 1974 edition excludes this scene completely, so that it stands entirely on its own in the midst of everything that is happening. This is an interesting choice. Separating the Barge Speech from the rest of 2.2 grants it more space to properly convey its significance, and for the format this film has chosen, it works well. It continues this edition’s propensity for favouring Cleopatra.

Stewart, to a great extent, allows the words to speak for themselves, or, rather, he does not seem to put on airs, but simply speaks the words as he finds them; he makes them sound natural and spontaneous rather than premeditated, which seems to indicate that the character is speaking them from his heart, from sudden inspiration. Maecenas seems rather mesmerised for a good part of this speech, but Agrippa’s reaction to it is more interesting. In the 1974 version, Agrippa appears very sceptical to Enobarbus’ praise. Instead of being spoken with fervour, his interjections (“O rare for Antony!”, “Rare Egyptian!”, and “Royal wench […]”) are spoken with what would seem to be a touch of sarcasm, as if he distrusts the glorious picture Enobarbus is painting. It adds a note of doubt to the lofty descriptions, and I am not entirely certain the scene needs that doubt. Additionally when Agrippa says “Royal wench”, he places a deliberate pause between “royal” and “wench”, as if he begins to praise Cleopatra by calling her royal, but then adds “wench” to qualify that praise with the assertion that she is just a girl. I do not think Shakespeare intended any foul meaning with the word “wench”, but it does not always support positive connotations, particularly when it is emphasised separately the way Agrippa does in this scene. His following reference to her relationship with Caesar thus becomes more than bawdy chatter, incorporating the idea that Cleopatra just moves from one man to the next. The idea of Cleopatra’s having had several partners is not a new one, as Charmian herself, in her teasing Cleopatra with her praise of Caesar (1.5.70-76), puts the thought in the reader’s/viewer’s mind before this.

Porter’s Enobarbus delivers this speech after Antony has already talked and feasted with Pompey, wed Octavia, and has moved with her to Athens. In the film, Heston’s Antony overhears the speech directly after he has spoken with the soothsayer, who has told him that his fortunes will never rise higher than Caesar’s, so long as Antony stays by his side (this scene has also been moved). Antony’s overhearing Enobarbus’ praise of Cleopatra is, here, actually the final straw that pushes him back to Egypt, and back to her. Thus Enobarbus, unwittingly, relinquishes his role as observer and becomes instigator. In my last chapter, I quoted Janet Adelman, who stipulates how important it is that the Barge Speech be placed
where it is. It is not supposed to be a speech to goad Antony into action, it is supposed to be a speech that informs the reader of why Antony will and must leave Octavia.

As for Porter’s delivery of the speech, it is calm and unaffected, like most of his lines. He does seem genuine in his admiration of Cleopatra, though there is not much fervour in his words. He delivers his speech to an unnamed man, presumably a soldier of some sort, who seems entranced and impressed by the tale. This version is the only one that has made cuts to this speech. Though several of Enobarbus’ other lines have been cut in the other adaptations as well, the Barge Speech is kept in its entirety in both of them. Significantly, the lines cut in Heston’s film are the ones that pertain to Cleopatra’s action. The first part of the Barge Speech speaks mostly of the entrancing quality of Cleopatra, of her beauty, of the almost mysterious effect she has on everyone and everything around her. Much of this could be spoken of some wonderful object, and, indeed, the first part of the speech rather deals with her as an object of extreme desire than as a human being. However, in the play, Enobarbus goes on to tell Maecenas and Agrippa, and the reader, of how she refused Antony’s invitation and bid him be her guest instead, thus taking control of their relationship from the very start. This is more than a description of an object, this is a description of a personality. This second part has been cut in the 1972 film, just like many of Cleopatra’s lines, particularly the ones that show the many different sides of her character, have been cut. So, Heston’s filmic version fails at capturing the essence of the dramatic significance of the Barge Speech. Right after Enobarbus is finished telling this unnamed soldier that Antony will never leave Cleopatra, it cuts to Antony on a boat, and then meeting Cleopatra again in Egypt. So the speech becomes more of a final transition for Antony back to Cleopatra than a stand-alone tribute to Cleopatra’s mysterious and enthralling character.

And this tribute is important if we are to fully understand Enobarbus’ firm “never” when he is met with Meacenas’ assertion that Antony must now “leave her utterly”. She is so much more than some girl, or some woman. She is something different altogether, something that is almost godlike in its “infinite variety”. Patrick Stewart delivers his “never” loudly, with something akin to a smile, and when he notices Agrippa and Maecenas’ bewildered expressions, he instantly becomes serious, looking almost surprised that they could even think Antony would consider leaving Cleopatra. He is very quiet when he speaks the last: “Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety. Other women cloy / The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry / where most she satisfies.” (2.2.245-248)

Interestingly, even Ingham’s witty, playful Enobarbus becomes entirely serious when he states his “never”. Porter’s Enobarbus is, as mentioned, always quite serious, but he delivers
the line almost with a note of weariness, as if he knows exactly what will happen, and knows he can do nothing to stop it. Here, I feel all three portrayals of Enobarbus, though slightly different, get it right. It is very important that the idea that Antony will never utterly abandon Cleopatra is cemented into the viewer’s mind, for it adds to the dramatic tension. If there were some small hope before this that Antony might do right by Octavia, and that he and Caesar might remain in friendship, even before anything has happened to put their friendship in trouble’s way, this final word from Enobarbus effectively quenches hope that the situation will work itself out.

“He will to his Egyptian dish again”

The scene where Pompey and the Triumvirate meet is not particularly interesting to go into as far as performance goes, for it is not a scene where the matter of speech or expression play particularly important roles, at least not as far as Enobarbus’ lines go. Therefore, I will skip to Enobarbus’ conversation with Menas. This conversation is cut down both in Scoffield’s and in Heston’s adaptations.

Scoffield places the scene simultaneously with the feasting. The first part of the conversation with Menas (i.e. the one pertaining to what they have both “done by sea” and “by land”) is left out. Their conversation pertains entirely to Antony’s marriage to Octavia and the predicted outcome of that particular alliance. Stewart’s Enobarbus is once more, clearly drunk, and speaks of the matter rather loudly, predicting that Antony “will to his Egyptian dish again” with a bawdy grin. I believe there is a reason this scene was written to be played out between two characters, in confidence, and not as a show for an entire crowd. It seems odd that Enobarbus, loyal to Antony, would so loudly and publicly make his negative thoughts on the match known. Although this underscores the image of him as a part of the play, a part of the revels, such carelessness does not seem compatible with his character, nor does it seem defensible, given his friendship with Antony. Enobarbus will not hesitate to tell Antony what he is thinking, what he feels, about a situation, but he would not, and should not, proclaim his distrust to an entire room full of people the way he does in the filmic adaptation of this scene. As it is, this scene plays out as if Enobarbus is spreading a juicy piece of gossip, and, however free Enobarbus may be with his speech, he can hardly be accused of spreading gossip.

In Carra’s production, the scene is played out just as it is written by Shakespeare; Menas and Enobarbus fall into conversation directly after the Triumvirate and Pompey discuss and complete their treaty. Menas’ first line “Thy father, Pompey, would ne’er have
made this treaty” (2.6.84-85), is spoken with obvious disapproval, foreshadowing his eventual disenchantment with his leader, just as Enobarbus’ commentary in Act 3 will be the precursor to and proof of his own dissatisfaction. They play out the scene where they meet and discuss their several successes very pompously, thus underlining the parodying nature of the scene. Despite Menas and Enobarbus being, in reality, on opposite sides, their talk here is jovial, played out as between comrades. This seems to indicate a bond between soldiers which, despite the fact that they might be forced to fight each other in future, goes beyond established lines of “that side” or “this side”.

In this scene, Ingham’s Enobarbus is actually surprisingly serious, given his previous penchant for delivering almost every line with a smile or a half-smile. Here, he is more solemn, and discusses his predictions for the outcome of Antony and Octavia’s relationship very calmly and soberly. This might have something to do with the fact that, as I have mentioned in Chapter 2, Menas and Enobarbus are similar characters. Enobarbus does not need to put on airs or mask his truths in sarcasm here, for these two understand each other; thus he speaks very plainly, and Ingham delivers the lines very plainly, placing in his words the character’s obvious misgivings about the future of Antony and Caesar’s relationship. Only when Menas answers Enobarbus’ claim that Octavia is of a “holy, cold, and still conversation” (2.6.120) with “Who would not have his wife so?” (2.6.121), do they both laugh, but Enobarbus is serious again, when he replies,

Not he that himself is not so, which is Mark Antony. He will to his Egyptian dish again. Then shall the sighs of Octavia blow the fire up in Caesar, and, as I said before, that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance. Antony will use his affection where it is. He married but his occasion here.

(2.6.122-126)

Enobarbus is not trying to be funny here, he is not attempting to be sarcastic, he is simply stating what he fears, and knows, is to come. Ingham’s serious portrayal is thus interestingly and significantly set up against his previous, playful comments, and his seriousness grants the situation all the more gravity for the distinction. Enobarbus would take no pleasure in making fun of this situation, because he understands how grave it is, and how much trouble Antony will cause when he, inevitably, returns to Cleopatra again. Enobarbus knows that this cannot end well. Here, then, Ingham’s delivery grants the scene much more weight and matter than does Stewart’s delivery, and, although Carra’s adaptation has many flaws, this scene retains

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3 See chapter 2
much more of its original purpose than it does in Scoffield’s 1974 film. Despite its initial humorous exchange, this scene, or at least its conclusion, is meant to instil within the reader a dark presentiment, it is meant to prepare the reader/viewer for what is about to happen. With Stewart’s presentation, the scene, although it conveys much of the same message, still becomes more funny than foreboding.

The 1972 film also places this conversation directly after the talks with Pompey, as in the original text. The conversation is greatly shortened, and is spoken very nonchalantly, as if its subject is of little matter. In fact, before re-watching the scene, I had entirely forgotten that Heston had even included it. It is given very little space, and thus its message, although Porter’s Enobarbus delivers it by predicting Antony’s return to Cleopatra, does not contribute greatly to the mood of the film. Enobarbus’ “He will to his Egyptian dish again” is spoken by Porter with a small smile, and Menas’ reply “And thus it may be” is spoken as if it is a matter of little import. As if Antony’s leaving Octavia to go back to Egypt would not constitute the tearing asunder of his and Caesar’s amity, and as if this would not lead to the devastation of Antony’s fortunes. In order to give this scene its proper weight, in order to make it seem like anything other than a casual conversation between two soldiers, Heston should have afforded it more space, and the actors should have spoken their lines with more gravity. Part of the play’s intrigue lies in the almost mystical inevitability of Antony’s (and Cleopatra’s) fall. From the very beginning, the reader/viewer is not permitted more than a few pages of hope at a time, for something is constantly reminding him/her that there is a sense of doom lying over both Antony and Cleopatra. This consistently foreboding feeling is partly lost in Heston’s filmic adaptation.

2.7

The next scene, where Pompey feasts the Triumvirs, is chiefly interesting to look at in terms of what is missing from it in the different adaptations. The 1983 edition will therefore not be subject to much scrutiny here, for it portrays the scene pretty much exactly as it is written in Shakespeare’s original text. Ingham’s Enobarbus is here included in the revels, and he performs his lines somewhat drunkenly and with plenty of mirth (as the text indicates). This is another example of Enobarbus, the common man, taking part in all that is going on around him. Enobarbus is incorporated into scenes like this, as I have previously argued, in order to remind the reader/viewer that he is part of the action, part of the play. The most significant part of this scene, in terms of Enobarbus, is the conversation between Menas and Pompey, which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Performance here does little
to change the content and tone of that conversation, but the fact that it is included here makes
the parallel between Enobarbus and Menas, and, through them, between Antony and Pompey,
visible. This parallel will give precedent to Enobarbus’ own desertion.

In Scoffield’s play, Pompey is only present insofar as his name is mentioned, and the
scene between him and Menas is therefore cut. I have already mentioned that the
conversation between Menas and Enobarbus here takes place during the revels, and instead of
conversing with Menas, Enobarbus speaks with Agrippa and Maecenas and another,
unnamed man (possibly Menas, but it is not specified) who is there for the occasion. Since
Pompey is not physically included in this production, it is Enobarbus who cries “A health to
Lepidus!” (2.7.28) and similar lines during the course of the scene. In this production as well
as the 1983 film, Enobarbus is jolly and drunk, familiar with both leaders and soldiers. This
is, as mentioned, an important element of his character. In both adaptations they have him
lead in the “Egyptian Bacchanals” (as he does in the written play) – so he is not only a
partaker here, but also a leader in the revels. Enobarbus can permit himself, despite his
Roman heritage, to get “lost” in these festivities. For Antony, whose heart will never leave
Egypt, this feast is reminiscent of what has become his home. Caesar is, in all three
adaptations, portrayed as staying rather aloof from the festivities, and is, thus, an interesting
contrast to those that have lived in the Alexandrian world.

Heston’s version continues to keep Enobarbus out of the main action. He does not
take place in the revels, as he does in the play, but rather stands apart from them, observing.
The adaptation does make a point, however, of frequently turning the camera on him, so that
the viewer is constantly reminded that he is watching. As this Enobarbus has already been
portrayed as someone who does not really belong in Antony’s Egyptian world, it is not
strange that this should be conveyed also by keeping him deliberately separated from the
main brunt of the festivities here. I have already stipulated how this change affects his
character, as well as his relationship with Antony, so I will not repeat my views on that here.

The conversation between Pompey and Menas is included here; however, although it
ends with Menas looking displeased, it does not include any of his commentary, so the
parallel between Menas and Enobarbus is thus not made obvious. The scene seems to be
included more for the sake of dramatic tension and excitement rather than for the sake of
creating a link between the fortunes of Pompey and those of Antony, or between those of
their two loyal followers. This continues the 1972 film’s focus on action rather than thematic
structure.
3.2-3.5

These scenes are completely left out in Heston’s film, so that particular adaptation will not be discussed here. Scene 3.2 is not one of those scenes where Enobarbus’ expression and tone make a very great difference in the perception of his lines, so I will not spend much time on it, yet there is significance to the fact that the scene is included in both Scoffield’s and Carra’s films. This scene of parting is commented on by Enobarbus, who, along with Agrippa, gives his customary, witty report. His comments, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, shed a little light on the other characters involved, and tells the viewer what is going on “behind the scenes”, as it were. The fact that these two productions include this scene does not, perhaps, make them thematically superior, but this attention to smaller details gives the productions more colour. One delivery worth noting, that both Stewart and Ingham share, is “Will Caesar weep?” (3.2.51). The line is, in both cases, spoken with a rather incredulous tone, as if the idea of Caesar weeping is preposterous. So far, Caesar has only shown himself to be cold and aloof, so the idea of his being truly emotional about anything seems a little odd. This comment, then, spoken in this manner, not only sheds light on Caesar’s weeping, but also, without saying it in words, declares it unusual. This, in turn, sheds further light on Caesar’s character. It both softens and hardens him at the same time; on the one hand, his love for his sister is moving, and proves him human, on the other hand, the fact that it has taken him this long to make a show of softness also speaks volumes about his unyielding person.

Only Carra’s production includes 3.5. This is, chiefly, a scene of exposition, where the success of Caesar and Lepidus’ wars against Pompey is presented and Antony’s anger is made known. Seeing as much of this is made known in the following scene in Rome with Caesar, it is understandable that this scene be cut, although one misses the subtle hint of Enobarbus’ misgivings. His line, “Then, world, thou hast a pair of chaps, no more; / And throw between them all the food thou hast, / They’ll grind the on the other” (3.5.11-13) increases the sense that this is the beginning of the end; Enobarbus knows that the situation would be hard-put to improve now. Ingham delivers this line almost angrily, his frustration with this development made very clear. His response to Antony’s request to see him, “‘Twill be naught, / But let it be” (3.5.20-21) is spoken dismissively, which intensifies the sense that Enobarbus is growing disenchanted with his leader. So, although this scene does not, perhaps, constitute the greatest importance to the play, yet it creates a smoother transition for the story and lends some aid in Enobarbus’ character development.
“Your presence needs must puzzle Antony”

This scene is a very relevant one for many different reasons. First, it is an example of Cleopatra’s strength of will, and it is important how her responses to Enobarbus are portrayed. Second, it marks an increase in Enobarbus’ frustration with his leader. Third, before now, we have only, personally, seen Antony “lost in dotage” to the extent that he has refused to receive a messenger (1.1), but here, we must remark on how Antony’s infatuation completely blinds him to all the advice Enobarbus and the others around him try to offer.

In Scoffield’s film, a few of the lines in this exchange are cut, but the scene retains its essential purpose. Patrick Stewart’s Enobarbus actually becomes furious during this scene, and does not hesitate to give his opinions to Cleopatra with some force. His “Nay, I have done” (3.7.19) is spoken not as if he gives in to Cleopatra’s reasoning, but with an extremely frustrated tone, as if he in that moment just gives up. The 1974 film’s Cleopatra is decidedly the most capably performed; Janet Suzman brings to the character that changeability which makes her, at times, almost frightening. In this scene, she manages to look and act so regal, she speaks with so much authority, that Enobarbus’ complaints against her taking part in the wars almost seem unreasonable. Truthfully, I think Enobarbus’ frustration lies more with Antony than it does with Cleopatra. In my previous chapter, I discussed whether Antony or Cleopatra should be the party that takes the blame for Antony’s lack of leadership, and it seems obvious from Enobarbus’ later assurances (3.13) that his concern lies with Antony’s actions, not Cleopatra’s. However, the only way he knows how to keep Antony “within himself” is to keep his fighting and his loving in two separate places. It does not need to be Cleopatra’s fault that Antony cannot be “himself” around her; as long as he cannot, then she cannot be there if he is to be master of himself.

The brilliance of this scene’s beginning lies in its play between Cleopatra and Enobarbus, and Scoffield’s adaptation captures this perfectly. When Antony enters the scene, his “dotage” immediately becomes apparent, in that he refuses to listen to the advice of his followers and doesn’t seem to take the situation seriously. Enobarbus becomes more and more heated as he tries to make Antony see how foolish a sea battle is, but Antony just grins at him stupidly, almost teasingly, and continues to declare that he will fight by sea. Even when Ventidius (Canidius in the play) brings news that Caesar has taken Toryne, Antony’s “impossible” is spoken not necessarily as if he doesn’t trust the news, but rather as if he finds the situation mildly amusing. The camera then switches to Enobarbus, who looks disappointed before he appears simply to give up.
The most frustrating exchange is the one that happens in Carra’s 1983 film. Lynn Redgrave, who plays this version’s Cleopatra, is much more angry and petulant, which makes her less sympathetic. Thus the viewer’s sympathy, which naturally divides itself at least for a part of the same scene in Scoffield’s version, is heartily engaged with Ingham’s Enobarbus, whose growing irritation as the scene progresses is readily understood. He begins by talking relatively calmly, as if hoping to be able to make Cleopatra understand his point of view, but Redgrave’s Cleopatra turns her head demonstratively away from him, and the more she refuses to listen, the more frustrated Enobarbus becomes.

When Antony arrives on the scene and declares he will fight by sea, Enobarbus’ advice (and that of Canidius) is not only ignored, but they are completely ignored. Antony is so engrossed in Cleopatra that finally, Enobarbus has to physically place himself between them in order to make Antony hear a single word of what he says. Before that, when Enobarbus is giving Antony his advice, Antony simply gazes into Cleopatra’s eyes, kissing her with a vacantly romantic smile on his face, as if he doesn’t have a care in the world. He suddenly starts up angrily when he hears that Caesar has taken Toryne, but is soon relatively calm again.

Both Carra’s and Scoffield’s productions succeed in impressing upon the viewer just how much Antony has allowed his heart to become judge of his reason. His insipidness, his ceaseless lovemaking, and his complete unwillingness to listen need to be there in order for the viewer to understand why such a man, when given such steady, logical advice, would choose, still, to fight by sea.

Heston’s film also incorporates this, to an extent. There is, consistently, more focus on Antony than on anything else going on in the film, and though this scene does show Heston’s Antony exchanging coy glances with Cleopatra while he receives warnings and advice from his followers, and it shows him generally distracted, there is still too much pride in Antony’s stubbornness here.

Cleopatra’s conversation with Enobarbus is also coloured by her less commanding character. Since several of her scenes have been cut in this production, and since most of the focus granted her has been shared with Antony, Hildegard Neil’s Cleopatra cannot command the viewer’s respect like Janet Suzman’s can. Additionally, Heston has her shooting tiny arrows at Enobarbus’ table as she speaks to him, as if she were a child attempting to annoy him. This, far from making her seem warlike or proud, makes her appear childish. Porter’s Enobarbus, when he speaks to her is, perhaps, as frustrated as we have seen him yet. He also seems to lecture her much more than his counterparts do.
Porter’s Enobarbus also delivers Canidius’ line, “So our leader’s led, / And we are women’s men.” (3.7.68-69). He looks extremely displeased when he does this, and snaps one of the arrows Cleopatra shot at him. Once more, this is something Enobarbus would not do, for two simple reasons: one, he rarely pronounces judgment on Antony unless it is spoken directly to Antony, or spoken aside, to himself/the audience; two, the anger Enobarbus displays here, the venom with which he speaks “women’s men” directs his anger too much at Cleopatra, who should not be given such unequivocal blame here. Enobarbus should, despite his misgivings about Antony’s ability to lead, be a relatively neutral party between Antony and Cleopatra. This is due to the fact that, as has been stipulated, Enobarbus is, in many ways, the voice of the audience. If Enobarbus pronounces final judgment, it is likely the audience’s judgment will follow. Enobarbus needs to remain ambiguous, particularly when it comes to his feelings for and opinions about Cleopatra, because his perception of her colours the reader’s/viewer’s.

“Naught, naught, all naught!”

Since Heston’s film shows the entire sea battle explicitly, Enobarbus’ descriptions of that scene are not required and are, understandably, mostly cut. His “naught, naught, all naught” is spoken very softly, his voice very low, as if the words come from deep inside him. He looks out upon the bay with severe disappointment. He finds Scarus in the water and helps him ashore. Scarus tells of how Cleopatra fled and Enobarbus’ response, “That I beheld. / Mine eyes did sicken at the sight” (3.10.15-16), is spoken with a lot of venom.

Stewart’s Enobarbus also speaks his “naught, naught, all naught” very softly, as if the words come against his own will. The tone with which he describes the scene seems to indicate that he can hardly believe his own eyes, or words. He turns his back on the scene and walks away, whereupon he is met by Scarus, who imparts his information with no small measure of anger and frustration. Enobarbus makes this scene possible, for the information is given to him, but in this particular adaptation, Scarus’ delivery is just as interesting as that of Enobarbus. This version of Scarus emphasises the end of his speech by changing his tone completely: “I never saw an action of such shame. / Experience, manhood, honour, ne’er before / Did violate so itself” (3.10.21-23). Where Scarus has previously spoken with fury, he here speaks with such utter dejection that the viewer cannot help but feel the pain emanating from him. The softer, more emotionally vulnerable portrayal here adds greatly to the emotional impact of the scene. Enobarbus’ responding “Alack, alack!” is also spoken softly, with pain instead of anger.
Ingham’s Enobarbus is more forceful than both of the others. His speech in this scene is delivered loudly and very theatrically. There is no trace of humour in him now, only intense frustration. He seems almost on the verge of pulling his hair out. Yet, in this loud and animated effusion of his disappointment, he becomes, almost, comical. To be fair, Ingham is hampered in this scene with two other actors who are not particularly convincing. Still, a great difference is created here by having Enobarbus react to Antony’s failure and dishonour with anger as opposed to sadness. With both these reactions, his disappointment and dejection is evident, yet a response involving true sadness seems to indicate a more intimate emotional involvement. Ingham’s Enobarbus reacts the way someone who has put faith in a leader might react when that faith proves ill-advised. Stewart’s Enobarbus reacts almost as if he were betrayed by a friend, which, in part, he has been. After all, Antony’s refusal to listen to Enobarbus’ advice, Antony’s failure to act “like himself” can also be seen as a betrayal, not only of himself and his own ideals, but also of those that have placed their trust in him. In my mind, the calmer, less angry reaction has a stronger emotional impact. The way the characters react emotionally to Antony’s failure not only impacts the scene insofar as it denotes these characters’ feelings about the situation; it also says something about how the other characters actually feel about Antony. Anyone can react with anger over a failed cause, but the characters’ responses focus more on Antony’s lost honour than on what they have actually, physically lost by the losing of this sea battle, which seems to indicate that their disappointment lies more with him than it does in the losing. A heartfelt, sad response will therefore be more powerful in this situation, as it better exemplifies Antony’s followers’ disappointment in him, as opposed to merely their frustration and anger at the situation.

Two final points important to note in this scene, are, how Canidius speaks of his desertion, and how Enobarbus responds to him. For the most part, this final exchange continues in the already existing mood the different productions have set for this scene. In Heston’s film, Canidius’ decision to desert is spoken angrily, forcefully, unapologetically. Enobarbus’ response is spoken quietly, and almost like a question. He does not seem in any way convinced of his own decision. He speaks the entire line to himself, after Canidius has already left, which increases its function as commentary. In Carra’s adaptation, Canidius is more defensive in his speech, and the first part of Enobarbus’ reply (“I’ll yet follow / The wounded chance of Antony”) is spoken directly to him. Ingham’s Enobarbus speaks the line forcefully; it is less of an external expression of his thought process and more of an accusatory rebuke to Canidius. It is clear in this adaptation that Enobarbus finds Canidius’ decision to leave Antony reprehensible. This is offset by his following line, “though my
reason sits in the wind against me”, which is spoken only to himself, and seems to express both frustration with the situation as well as with his own reason.

In Scoffield’s adaptation this entire scene, as I have mentioned, plays out very differently, because all the actors speak their lines so heartbrokenly. At the end, here, Canidius, who, in the other adaptations, has been angry and defensive, seems simply beaten down and deeply saddened. Canidius says he will join Caesar with an assurance that seems more put-on than genuine. His follow-up, “Six kings already / Show me the way of yielding” is spoken with a tone that begs understanding for this act. Enobarbus does not react angrily to Canidius’ declaration, but seems understanding of it. His ending remark is spoken, like that of Ingham’s Enobarbus, partly to Canidius and partly to himself. The first part is spoken to Canidius, and is spoken so hesitatingly that Enobarbus’ struggle is, through this, made painfully evident. “Though my reason / Sits in the wind against me” is spoken, after a small pause, directly into the camera. Stewart’s Enobarbus will continue to do this for his commentary in the scenes that follow, and I will discuss this decision in a little while. The important thing to take from this scene is that how it is portrayed, not only by Enobarbus, but also by the other two actors who take part in it, can significantly alter how Antony’s tragedy is perceived, as well as that of Enobarbus himself. In my opinion, an angry response places more focus on the action, on the events that have led to the crisis, whereas a saddened, defeated reaction will place more importance on the characters’ emotional responses, and how these are engaged on behalf of themselves, and on behalf of Antony.

3.13

This is a pivotal scene in the play’s tragic decline. As I detailed in my previous chapter, the scene, in many ways, marks Antony’s definitive failure as a leader. The reader is led through Enobarbus’ thought process, his debate with himself, as Antony, finding in his desperate situation some new energy, goes about the scene with renewed determination. What is most important to convey in this scene is the tragic combination of Antony’s new fervour and Enobarbus’ decision to leave him. It is impossible to look at this scene only insofar as Enobarbus’ performance differs; it is the play between Antony, Cleopatra, and Enobarbus that is interesting here, so I will say something of all three characters and their different actors.

Cleopatra’s query of whether this be her fault or Antony’s is answered decisively by Enobarbus. He does not hesitate, in any of the adaptations, when he tells her that this is Antony’s doing. All three versions of Enobarbus also portray great amounts of frustration at
Antony’s flight. Both Porter and Stewart deliver the response with more anger than Ingham, who seems more disappointed than angry. Ingham’s Enobarbus seems with his words to be searching for a reason why Antony would do such a thing. All three portrayals here capture the essence of Enobarbus’ reply (although in slightly different ways), which is to convey his anger and indignation at Antony’s failure to act “like himself”.

Enobarbus’ response makes a neat transition into the rest of the scene, which plays out very differently in the three adaptations, not only due to the placement and use of Enobarbus and his comments, but also due to the enormous differences in the portrayals of Antony and Cleopatra.

Both Ingham and Porter speak Enobarbus’ lines as if they were an outward expression of his thought process. Porter is, as he has been throughout most of the play, very composed in his portrayal. His Enobarbus seems sympathetic here, yet not overly emotionally involved. His final conclusion to leave Antony is spoken with hesitation and some sadness, but most of the rest of his commentary is delivered with more calculating observation than emotion. Several of his lines are cut, and less attention is devoted to his commentary than in the other adaptations. The chief problem with this scene, however, is the two main actors. Heston’s Antony is cruel and unsympathetic, as well as physically violent: he strikes and kicks Thidias, and actually slaps Cleopatra across the face. Despite the rapidly changing moods and generally erratic behaviour that signal Antony’s growing desperation, it is still important to make him likeable, or at least pitiable, here, otherwise the viewer will be unable to sympathise with him. Cleopatra, for her part, continues under Heston’s direction to lack personality. Many of her lines here are cut to make room for Heston’s Antony and instead of the ambiguous duality in her emotions that makes this scene interesting and tense, she is very clearly unfailingly devoted to Antony. Neil’s portrayal causes part of the problem with Heston’s as well; in the other adaptations, Antony is also fiercely angry when he finds Cleopatra with Thidias, but because Cleopatra in both the other cases answers in kind, showing her power equal to his, Antony’s anger does not end up seeming so cruel and unnatural. Neil’s Cleopatra acts more like a frightened little girl than a proud queen, and this makes Heston’s Antony seem all the crueller in his rage.

Stewart’s Enobarbus is the one who, based on how he and Antony have been portrayed, has been allowed the closest relationship with Antony. It is therefore his Enobarbus who enters this scene with the greatest possibility of making it emotionally powerful. However, I personally feel that Scoffield’s adaptation fails here. Stewart’s Enobarbus delivers most of his commentary directly into the camera. One reviewer on IMDB
found this to be effective. I found it to be the opposite. On the one hand, Stewart’s looking into the camera causes the viewer to become even more intimately involved in his thought process, almost as if he is reaching out to the audience to make us personally understand his dilemma, as well as his final conclusion. It also forces the viewer to listen to him on a different level; it pushes his commentary even further to the front of the action. This breaking of the fourth wall will, however, also intensify the viewer’s perception of the play as a play, will draw the viewer out of the dramatic action and force him/her to pay attention to the invisible “screen” that separates the viewer from the film. If the intent is to draw attention to the play in a metafictional or metadramatic sense, this tactic has some value, but I am not certain it serves the story’s best interests here. The reason for this is that it draws the viewer’s attention away from Enobarbus as a character, as a part of the play, and focuses that attention wholly on him as a narrator, a commentator. Since Enobarbus’ role in this scene is twofold, too much focus on one or the other side will be detrimental to his purpose. In Scofield’s adaptation, the intense focus on Enobarbus as narrator, takes away from his role as actor, which, in turn, removes him from his own attachment and feelings; his decision to leave Antony thus fails to have the desired emotional impact.

With Johnson’s Antony, the viewer gets to see the “diminution” in his brain that Enobarbus speaks of. His erratic mood seems at times almost that of a doddering old man, his confusion and sorrow at his situation so pitiable that one cannot help but sympathise with him. In the final part of the scene, when he talks with great bravado of how there’s still hope, and of having “one other gaudy night”, he involves Enobarbus, grabbing him by the soldiers and reminding the viewer of the bond they share, just before Enobarbus decides to break that bond forever. This is why it is especially frustrating that there is so little emotion in Enobarbus’ final conclusion. He is still, here, the commentator, not the friend.

Ingham’s Enobarbus is the one that is the most convincing in this scene. He portrays very clearly the inner struggle Enobarbus is going through. Ingham has had a tendency towards dramatics earlier, but here he is very natural, and his struggle appears genuine. He delivers most of his lines aside, by himself, and only the very last speech is delivered directly into the camera. Ingham’s Enobarbus is not, however, the neutral commentator when he

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4 “Patrick Stewart is really good as Enobarbus. The way he turns and talks straight to the camera is just magnificent.” (Petri Pelkonen. “Good performances, average movie adaptation”)  
5 See Chapter 2
delivers this speech, but rather the reluctant friend and supporter. His last line comes so reluctantly and with such obvious regret that the moment becomes very powerful.

Timothy Dalton’s Antony does not, as his counterpart in the 1974 adaptation does, engage “his” Enobarbus at any point during this scene; this Antony is far more erratic than the others, and his intense emotional outbursts seem to give him more than enough to do without paying much attention to anyone else. Where Johnson’s Antony seems very much like an unfortunate old man, Dalton’s Antony appears more like a child in his outbursts. There is little pride left in him, and it is very understandable, based on this scene, that Enobarbus, the logical, Roman soldier, would choose to leave him.

4.1, 4.5

And leave him he does, though not before he has “one last gaudy night”, as Antony puts it in the previous act. In Heston’s adaptation, however, Enobarbus does not join in the revels, nor are they shown on screen at all. The scene is played out, in a very shortened form, between Enobarbus and Antony as Enobarbus attempts to leave. The words Antony speaks to his followers (“Thou hast been rightly honest …”) are instead spoken only to Enobarbus as, unbeknownst to Antony, Enobarbus leaves him. Antony is friendly here, and clearly grateful to Enobarbus for his service and friendship. Performing the scene in this way successfully heightens the tragic nature of Enobarbus’ departure. Still, the connection Antony and Enobarbus should have had throughout the whole film cannot now be portrayed in one, simple, very short scene. The scene helps increase the dramatic tension, but it cannot convey the full extent of Antony and Enobarbus’ friendship as it is in the play.

Stewart’s Enobarbus is shown in the midst of the festivities, but in bad spirits. He traverses the crowd of festive soldiers and pushes them aside as they attempt to engage him. Antony is clearly intoxicated in the scene, and delivers his speech to his followers first with drunken joviality and then with sudden seriousness. Enobarbus’ reproach, “What mean you, sir, / To give them this discomfort?” (4.2.34-35) is spoken loudly and unhappily. Stewart’s Enobarbus is actually crying as he says this, which lends the scene an extra measure of dramatic tension given the viewer’s knowledge that Enobarbus has, at this point, decided to leave Antony.

In Carra’s adaptation, after Enobarbus has said, “I’ll strike, and cry ‘Take all.’” (4.2.9), Antony embraces him heartily. When he then says, “Give me thy hand, / Thou hast been rightly honest” (4.2.11-12), he takes Enobarbus’ hand first. Enobarbus looks slightly
uncomfortable, clearly feeling the pangs of his conscience. Ingham’s Enobarbus also appears to weep in earnest when he berates Antony for his depressing speech to his followers.

When Dalton’s Antony, a few scenes after this, learns of Enobarbus’ desertion, he is angry. His response is spoken more spitefully than I believe the text intends, which lends an air of vindictiveness to Antony’s “gentle greetings”. As I stated in the previous chapter, part of the function this scene has in the play is to show Antony’s magnanimity in the face of desertion and betrayal. The scene is supposed to increase sympathy for him, and will also make Enobarbus’ feelings in the next scene better understood. An angry, spiteful Antony cannot here have the same effect as a dejected, forgiving Antony. This scene should also be a mark of how much Antony’s “fortunes have corrupted honest men”, so the blame in this scene should be focused on Antony, not Enobarbus. Enobarbus’ blame receives its just due during the next scene.

In both Heston’s and Scoffield’s adaptations, Antony is much more obviously saddened by the news of Enobarbus’ departure. Heston’s Antony attempts to hide his grief and speaks of sending Enobarbus’ treasure to him with Antony’s greetings casually, as if it didn’t matter to him. But when he tries to mount his horse, he collapses against it instead, a pained look on his face. This is a powerful portrayal of Antony’s feelings for Enobarbus, yet, and I reiterate, this reaction would have had more impact on the film as a whole if Antony and Enobarbus’ friendship had been portrayed more successfully in the first part of it.

The response of Johnson’s Antony is the one that achieves the greatest impact in the context of his play, and this is due to the consistent portrayal of Antony and Enobarbus’ friendship during the course of the film. Johnson’s Antony reacts as one might react if one has been betrayed by a friend, but realises it is for good reason. Antony is surprised and pained when he hears the news, and his “my fortunes have / Corrupted honest men” (4.6.16-17) is spoken with the deepest regret. He speaks Enobarbus’ name, first in an intense whisper, and then in a pained cry, whereupon the scene fades out and fades in directly on Enobarbus’ face.

“I will go seek some ditch wherein to die.”

Enobarbus’ regret and death are two of the most powerful moments in the play, and, naturally, how they are acted is pivotal to the viewer’s reception of Enobarbus’ tragedy, as well as how that tragedy should affect the play as a whole. This moment is important not only insofar as it marks the end of an important character in the play, but also because it marks the beginning of the end for the main characters. Enobarbus’ death is placed right after Antony’s
victory in battle, subduing most effectively the note of celebration the previous scene contains.

In Heston’s film, Enobarbus’ receiving his treasure from Antony and his death happen in the same sequence. In this adaptation, Enobarbus comes to Caesar’s camp just as Caesar and his army are setting out to fight Antony. Here, Enobarbus speaks directly to Caesar (which he does not do in the play). For reply, Caesar merely looks at him scornfully and rides away. Enobarbus’ line “Alexas did revolt …” (4.6.12-20) is cut, and, directly after Caesar rides away, Enobarbus is told that Antony has sent him his treasure. He then resolves to die, and promptly goes away and throws himself off a cliff.

In my mind, there are many things wrong with this sequence, not the least of which being that, as I have mentioned, the film has failed to build up Antony and Enobarbus’ relationship, thus Enobarbus’ tragic climax is, from the outset, doomed to fail. Apart from this, the fact that so many of his lines are cut make it difficult for the character to explain his utter dejection. As it is, the viewer sees him leaving, sees him barely encounter Caesar, sees him receive his treasure from Antony, and then sees his resolution dissolved, whereupon he instantly kills himself. Porter’s Enobarbus has been so cold and calculating the entire time that it seems baffling that he should commit an act of such pure emotion. Additionally, in this adaptation, Caesar does not instruct that those that have defected from Antony should be placed in the vanguard, a command that Enobarbus, in the play, hears, and which inspires his speech wherein he condemns his decision to leave Antony. This, naturally, happens before he receives his treasure. The reason Enobarbus regrets his desertion has nothing, at the outset, to do with this gift, but, rather, seeing the kind of master Caesar is, seeing his lack of compassion, makes Enobarbus regret the master he has left behind. Antony’s sending Enobarbus his treasure then causes him to fall off the edge, metaphorically speaking. Heston’s version simplifies this, like it simplifies most of the play. The few lines Enobarbus gets to speak before he goes off and jumps to his death, are spoken in between a voice-over of Antony from their last meeting; once more, Heston chooses to draw the viewer’s attention back to Antony when the main focus should be on another character.

The fact that this particular rendition makes light of Enobarbus’ conflict and desertion makes the whole situation seem less dramatic. It becomes much more difficult to treat Antony’s dire situation with the severity it requires when Enobarbus’ earlier commentary has been delivered with something akin to neutrality, as if it hardly affects him. It is precisely in Enobarbus’ struggle with, and pain at, his leader’s decline that we fully see how tragic Antony’s fall is, not only for himself, but also for his followers and friends.
Having Enobarbus go off directly and kill himself grants that act less space. The fact that Porter’s Enobarbus actually then jumps off a cliff as opposed to dying of a broken heart is understandable. His emotional life and responses have not been built up sufficiently to make the play’s death remotely plausible. Additionally, Enobarbus’ original death requires more of his speech to be included, which I am sure this production did not wish to spend time on. The result is that Enobarbus’ death, rather than being deeply tragic and pitiable, ends up feeling a little bit ridiculous.

Ingham’s performance also has an element of the ridiculous to it in this last part of his performance. His condemnation of his own desertion (following Caesar’s command about the vanguard) is delivered relatively calmly, though with no small amount of self-reprobation. However, when the messenger comes to tell Enobarbus about his treasure, his reply “I give it you” (4.6.25) is shouted out with sudden, violent emotion. The same thing happens with “I am alone the villain of the earth” (4.6.31). The idea, here, I think, is that Enobarbus, who has been a relatively calm, collected, logical person, suddenly has an intense upsurge of desperate emotion upon hearing this proof of Antony’s generosity. The problem is that it only works so-so on screen. On stage, with the audience further away, this reaction might have been quite a powerful one, but on screen, it seems exaggerated and strange, and, as I mentioned, unfortunately takes on a slightly ridiculous aspect. Ingham’s performance tones itself down a little as the speech moves on, and his sadness and regret become very emotionally powerful.

Stewart’s Enobarbus, once more, delivers the most emotionally intense performance. His initial speech (4.6.12-20) is spoken directly into the camera, with a slightly desperate touch of humour. His “I give it thee” is spoken with a laugh, as if he thinks the messenger is playing a trick on him. His ensuing speech is delivered calmly and heartbrokenly. For the screen, downplaying this response works very well. There is no doubt in the viewer’s mind that Enobarbus’ regret is intense and genuine.

His following death scene is painful to watch. Stewart’s Enobarbus chokes out his words between sobs as he lies on the ground. The soldiers who, in the play, do not approach Enobarbus until after his death, here come to him while he lies there pouring out his laments to the night. Right before he dies, one of the soldiers bends over him to see how he does, and Enobarbus, thinking he sees Antony, reaches up for him, wrapping his arms around him as he cries, “O Antony! O Antony!” (4.9.23) and then dies. This adaptation chooses thus to intensify the tragedy of Enobarbus’ death.

Ingham’s performance is different, but also effective, though perhaps not equally. He does not weep, but is calm as he looks up at the moon and bewails his desertion. He speaks
his final words as if he has trouble getting them out, after which he simply keels over and
dies. The important element for an actor to convey in this scene is Enobarbus’ genuinely
broken heart. The irony in the fact that the logical, Roman soldier dies of sorrow needs to be
portrayed. The relative ease of his death is also important to portray, as it will be compared,
in the following scenes, to the deaths of the play’s main characters. Both Carra’s and
Scofield’s adaptations have clearly considered this scene, and Enobarbus’ fate, important
parts of the play, and have thus given the scene the space it requires to play out to its fullest
extent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENOBARBUS

In the end, what does the portrayal of Enobarbus signify for the play as a whole? Why have I
written this chapter detailing with meticulous care the sometimes minute differences in actor
interpretation of this one character?

Because Enobarbus, as I have stated, is pivotal to the viewer’s understanding of the
play. As I have gone through in some detail in my previous chapters, Enobarbus’ role is
manifold: he is narrator, commentator, soldier, friend, loyal supporter, voice of reason, and
the audience’s main connective point within the play, to mention a few. Some of these roles,
such as Enobarbus’ choric, narrator-like function, will be found less necessary in an on-
screen portrayal. Varied sets, special effects, etc., give a cinematic production a greater arena
for showing what the supporting characters often describe. However, despite the fact that
Enobarbus’ role as “narrator” might be less necessary, his role as commentator should not be
considered so. There is a duality in Enobarbus that mirrors the duality of the play. His
relatively cold, clear-headed observation is contrasted by his clearly passionate loyalty to and
friendship for Antony. Additionally, he is, like Antony, caught between the Alexandrian and
Roman worlds, both in loyalty and in spirit. Enobarbus’ role partly serves to underline this
theme of duality in the play, and without any attention to this side of Enobarbus’ character,
that theme will become less obvious.

Additionally, there is the argument that Enobarbus, having a story, and a tragic end, in
his own right, deserves the place he has been granted in Shakespeare’s play. Although his
path is linked to, and largely depends upon, the fate of Antony, his story is still separate in
that Enobarbus himself decides his final fate; he is not killed by the other characters, he is not
subject to some act of God, but, rather, dies of his own will. Removing this story, or
significant parts of it, makes the play less interesting simply because Enobarbus’ story,
adding to the lofty affairs of kings and queens the tragic story of a common man, makes the story more interesting. In addition to this, Enobarbus’ friendship with and betrayal of Antony, as I have mentioned in the previous chapters, adds a measure of humanity and relatability to the main tragedy of the play. Simplifying or ignoring Enobarbus’ tragedy can thus have an effect on more than just his own story.

Scoffield’s adaptation has chosen, in several scenes, to draw special attention to Antony and Enobarbus’ friendship, which grants this bond an importance it does not acquire in the other productions. Their tragic parting is, in turn, much more powerful than the other adaptations can hope to make it. Patrick Stewart’s Enobarbus is not perfect, and I have mentioned several scenes in which I feel some errors in judgment have been made with regards to his representation of the character, but, out of the three portrayals of Enobarbus I have seen, Stewart’s interpretation is the one that best incorporates the different sides of Enobarbus’ character. This attention to his character and role engenders interest in and sympathy for him, which, in turn, places an added focus on what he says and does. The more attention is paid to Enobarbus, the more attention will be paid to his words, the words that often elucidate the play’s themes and give an added dimension to the play’s other characters.

Whereas Carra’s version has been the most faithful to Shakespeare’s original text, it has not necessarily managed to relate the substance of that text as well as Scoffield’s production, though his version made larger cuts in the text, took greater liberties with the placement of certain scenes, and was freer with Shakespeare’s original stage directions. This just goes to show that staying completely true to the original, physical, text you are adapting, does not necessarily mean that you succeed in capturing the essence of that text. As I have attempted to show, it is not only the exclusion or inclusion of certain bits of text that is important, but also how what you include is presented.

Carra’s version has some powerful scenes and conveys a good part of the play’s thematic content, but it is, as I have mentioned, hampered with some truly awful actors, whose interpretation and delivery of lines tend to have a very negative effect with regard to how certain scenes are perceived. Enobarbus is portrayed fairly skilfully, but one good performance cannot save an entire adaptation when so many of the other characters are wooden and unengaging. Even the main characters, played by Timothy Dalton and Lynn Redgrave, lack believability and it is difficult to sympathise with them. In Redgrave’s case, this has to do with her lack of subtlety. What makes Cleopatra so interesting is not only her unpredictability, but also her pride. An actress portraying Cleopatra needs to incorporate some mystery in her performance; a good Cleopatra leaves you uncertain of whether you like
her or not, and Redgrave is too boisterous, too harsh in her different moods, to engender any true sympathy. Dalton’s Antony seems rather childish, and even, at times, slightly insane. It is difficult to imagine a connection between Antony and Enobarbus given the former’s character in Dalton’s portrayal, which, in turn, makes their tragic story difficult to swallow, in spite of Ingham’s efforts towards the end.

Heston’s 1972 adaptation is the most cinematographically pleasing version, and probably the one that works best as an actual film, but Heston chooses to display fight scenes instead of character development, and this means that much of the play’s message is lost. This film is also a very potent example of how Enobarbus’ character is overlooked and underplayed. None of the tragedy of his character and situation is properly conveyed here, and because this element is missing, a good part of the emotional link between the film and the audience is also missing. In the written play, as well as in stage performances and those filmic adaptations that remain close to stage performances, Enobarbus is, as has been stipulated, necessary also as a medium of conveying information about what is going on. In a fully filmic adaptation, much of his observational function becomes unnecessary because everything is shown explicitly, at least to a much higher degree. Perhaps this is why Enobarbus’ role is so overlooked in Heston’s adaptation. Indeed, I wonder if this is why Enobarbus is so readily forgotten also by Shakespeare critics and scholars. Many of those that mention him do so but briefly, and focus chiefly on his role as “narrator”, i.e., his observational and commentary role, and forget his role as friend, companion, soldier, and, not least, his own tragic story.

This simplification, if you will, of Enobarbus’ character belongs to a long-standing tradition of ignoring or diminishing supporting characters, not only in Shakespeare, but also in general, particularly when translating a written text to the stage or screen, perhaps particularly the latter. A supporting character is not necessarily only there to complete a formula, but often has merit on his/her own, and by way of this individual merit, creates a larger dimension in which the rest of the story exists.

If we look at Heston’s filmic adaptation, the chief problem with its one-sided focus on the character of Antony (and the action scenes in which Heston is able to shine) is that it ends up ignoring many of the play’s most significant themes. It completely ignores the fascinating mystery of one of its main characters; Cleopatra is turned into a bland, romantic version of herself, with only occasional moments to remind us of the character she is supposed to be. Where the other portrayals of Cleopatra tend to be deliberately ambiguous, even when they are discussing their feelings for Antony (thus to keep the audience in suspense as to her true
feelings), Hildegard Neil’s version simpers and sighs, and there is no ambiguity in her portrayal. She is much more Antony’s girlfriend than she is the Queen of Egypt, and this makes for a much blander, much less interesting love story.

Enobarbus’ diminished role and importance, although it is not the decisive element of Heston’s directorial failure, is a symptom of that which is wrong with his perception of the play, or at least his filmic interpretation of it. It is not unsurprising, I think, that a Charlton Heston film would feature Charlton Heston very heavily, and, indeed, Antony and his character and his problems are pulled to the front continuously, transferring the play’s main focus onto him. Even in the Barge Speech, the focus is steadily drawn back to Heston’s Antony, as he listens outside a window. This speech, the most famous and enthralling description of Cleopatra the play can boast, is “hijacked” by Antony and turned in such a way that it ceases to be about Cleopatra, and instead becomes another stepping stone to Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship, with particular focus on how that relationship affects Antony. Similarly, when Enobarbus receives his treasure from Antony, his spoken lament is interspersed with a voice-over of Antony, thus drawing attention away from the substance and significance of Enobarbus’ grief and transferring a good part of the viewer’s focus to Antony.

Why is this a problem? Why make a big deal out of it? Because the play is not called *The Tragic Fate of Antony*. Focusing so obviously and exclusively on him robs the film of much of its deeper meaning and substance. There is, in Heston’s adaptation, limited focus on the duality of the Roman versus the Alexandrian worlds, love versus duty, or friendship versus loyalty. You will perhaps perceive the theme of duality if you have already read and studied the play, but as this film was not made merely with Shakespeare scholars in mind, most people who see this film will not pay that theme much mind. Cleopatra’s character, as I have stated, is simplified dramatically here, making her less intriguing and more placid, adaptable. Why is this a problem? Because Cleopatra is one of Shakespeare’s most interesting female characters, and this has little to do with her relationship with Antony, and everything to do with her ambiguous, mysterious nature. Her relationship with Antony is just as much (if not more) in her control as it is in Antony’s, which makes her a rare breed for her time. Taking focus away from Cleopatra and placing it on Antony, placing all control of their love in his hands, effectively places restrictions on her femininity and sexuality and perpetuates the gender stereotype of the man as lord and master and the female as subjugated and delicate, a stereotype Cleopatra does not, and should not, adhere to.
Here, then, are three adaptations that differ greatly in their adherence to and portrayal of the original text. My object here was, as mentioned, to show how the differing interpretations of Enobarbus changed these productions, thus shedding some light on the importance of his character. What has been shown is that, not unsurprisingly, the interpretation of Enobarbus does change how the play is perceived. However, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the other characters naturally play important parts here as well, and this chapter was not written to write them off. However, the attention given to Enobarbus must in some respect be illustrative of the play’s adherence to detail, perhaps particularly thematic detail. As I have seen, the production that best incorporates the thematic essence of “Antony and Cleopatra” is not the one that sticks most faithfully to the original play’s lines, but, rather, the one that grants Enobarbus (and the other characters) the most space. By space I mean that these characters are given the possibility to act to the full extent of their allotted roles, and that, through them, the play’s thematic structure retains its original significance.
Conclusion

The inspiration for this thesis was born during the second year of my BA in English literature, as I scoured the library and the internet for information on a supporting character about whom I was attempting to write a qualifying essay. I had chosen this particular writing task because I found the character intensely fascinating. So I set to work, taking down book after book, rifling through pages and pages. After hours of research, I had discovered one, tiny book which contained a couple of sad little paragraphs on a character I had considered to be alpha and omega to the thematic reception of his play, and whom almost every single literary scholar I had looked up seemed simply to have forgotten. Frustrated, I thought, am I the only one who cares about Enobarbus?

Naturally, I was not. However, my then futile search fuelled my desire to explore Enobarbus further, to give him the extra scholarly space I felt he deserved. This is, above all, what I have sought to do with this thesis. I have attempted to show just how great an effect he has on the reading of Antony and Cleopatra, and how a reader’s understanding of him can inform and alter his/her perception of the play as a whole. Additionally, I have argued that Enobarbus, as he occupies space in the play traditionally only granted protagonists, should, although his role is supporting, also be considered in the context of his own story, and according to his own merits therein. Arthur Colby Sprague states, “Enobarbus is, of course, intensely interesting in himself – a fine example of the way Shakespeare can wipe out the distinction between major and minor characters” (217).

I stated in the introduction that if you mention characters like Iago and Falstaff, most people who have at least a rudimentary knowledge of Shakespeare will know who you are talking about, whereas if you say the name ‘Enobarbus’ most people will just give you a puzzled expression and intone a vague, “who?”’. There are, naturally, two very simple reasons for this, the first being that both Othello and King Henry IV (parts 1 and 2) have been afforded much more space, both dramatically and critically. Antony and Cleopatra was all but forgotten for years because of its lack of “classical structure” and what many considered to be its lack of a plot, at least in an Aristotelian sense (Barnet 331). Secondly, Iago and Falstaff have both been so thoroughly covered by Shakespeare criticism that attention will naturally be given them whenever their respective plays are read or viewed.

The trend of literary research in part determines which characters we choose to focus on, and that’s why I find it vital to bring Enobarbus into the spotlight. No one can perform a serious study of King Henry IV without mentioning Falstaff, and this is not only because he is
a character pivotal to the play; it is also because the critical precedent demands that Falstaff be included in our consideration. It is my opinion that Enobarbus plays just as important a role in *Antony and Cleopatra* as Falstaff does in his plays, and that is why I believe it is crucial that renewed attention be granted Enobarbus in the critical reception of *Antony and Cleopatra*, lest his role continue to be diminished and forgotten.

As part of my thesis, I have, as I have shown, looked at filmic adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the course of doing so, I spent some time looking for and reading reviews other people had written about the films, this in order to discover if the public was generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the various adaptations. On the IMDB page for Jon Scofield’s 1974 adaptation, I came across this:

> Perhaps the intervening years have affected my memory, dimming the details, but I cannot forget the awe I felt watching Patrick Stewart’s Enobarbus. When I had read the play in school, Enobarbus was a minor character and his speeches weren’t important. Stewart’s performance changed that. Now the role was central, and his descent from cheer to madness was a mirror of his world. (bongoz, “Defined Shakespeare”)

“Enobarbus was a minor character and *his speeches weren’t important.*”

Apart from being a glowing recommendation of Patrick Stewart’s portrayal of Enobarbus, this review proves how easy it is to sweep Enobarbus under the mat. Enobarbus’ speeches convey and elucidate many of the play’s main themes. If one is capable of considering Enobarbus’ speeches “unimportant” one must miss much of the play’s thematic significance. For Enobarbus *is* “a mirror of his world”. He is also a conduit, a “way in”, and without him, the play would end up being a portrayal of several lofty characters with whom one never has the chance to become properly acquainted. Enobarbus is their mouthpiece, as well as ours. This is why his character needs more space in the school of Shakespeare criticism, and this is why I decided to write this thesis.

I argued in Chapter 3 that ignoring or undervaluing characters like Enobarbus is often a symptom of how we treat the text as a whole. I am not trying to say that any Shakespeare critic who pushes Enobarbus into the background has misunderstood the play, I am merely saying that simplifying and diminishing characters like Enobarbus reflects poorly outward. I also argued in Chapter 3 that it isn’t because we, at all times, need to be able to remember and relay every single detail of a given text that fidelity to that text is important. Rather, fidelity to a text’s *essence* is important because how we treat a text actually changes how we, and other people, see it.
In this sense, Stanley Fish is right. We do create meaning as readers. So many complex stories are boiled down to their simplest forms because we see them that way. When we pick up a text, we come to it with certain expectations. If we expect to find a vapid love story, we might very well find one, even if there is a lot more between the lines. For instance, so many times, one hears of romantic couples being compared to Romeo and Juliet. Every time this happens, I want to say: you mean that story about a guy on the rebound who looks at a girl for about ten minutes and falls desperately in love with her and they get married in secret and everything goes to hell and they end up killing themselves? Oh, and did I mention that Juliet was thirteen? I do not mean, by this, to make stubborn assertions that it is impossible to enjoy and value the love story in this play. My point here is rather that Romeo and Juliet is a story just as much about societal and familial division and the consequences thereof as it is about the love story itself, and although this is not in any way ignored by Shakespeare scholars, it is easily forgotten by the rest of the world.

Similarly, Antony and Cleopatra, as we have seen, is easily simplified until it becomes nothing more than a love story. So, how we treat Enobarbus matters, because he incorporates so much of what makes Antony and Cleopatra interesting. He is our voice, our guide, through this difficult play, and the better we get to know him, the closer we come to an understanding of Shakespeare’s infamous problem tragedy.
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