The Ancient World had lured the Elizabethan mind through the Renaissance. Roman patriotism was strengthened by stoic fatalism and self-sufficiency. Suicide had an exalted status in Roman public life. The misdeeds of a lifetime were thought to be redeemed by an honourable and fearless facing of death. Death is presented as a near ritual in 'Julius Caesar' and as dispatch in 'Coriolanus'. The plays on the Ancient World are significant landmarks on the way to his major Tragedies.

'Timon of Athens'

'Timon of Athens' dramatizes flight from self and from society to death. Timon reveals the tragic paradox of a consciousness which derives joy from the death of consciousness. Only in death and the deeper silence of the night, does Timon discover his true home. The void of death - the more nothing, is to Timon, everything. With a final flourish of rejection of the world Timon wills his own death. Timon dies on the cold breast of nature apart from mankind. The end of Timon gives to the action of the play a tragic framework of eternity.

'Coriolanus'

'Coriolanus' deals with the narrow world of political conflict. In his pride he has defied exile as he is to defy death. Coriolanus of the last Act hearkens to the fundamental bond of family and country, and he goes to certain death to honour his pledge as a soldier. He is isolated by his pride but responds to nature and dies a martyr to his love for mother, wife and child. The death of Coriolanus, results though mechanical, is noble because it results from his adherence to his pledge of honour.
Julius Caesar's arrogance causes his fall and death. But his power is projected beyond his death. The play ends with the triumph of the spirit of Caesar. On the eve of his murder, nature is in disorder. The aftermath to Caesar's murder shows that with his 'Et tu Brute' Caesar cuts deeper in the conscience of Brutus than Brutus does with his dagger. Brutus who killed Caesar has to kill himself. Portia commits suicide. It is an anticipation of the suicide of Brutus. It passes through internal conflict prior to his suicide. The conspirators seek to kill the spirit of Caesar in murdering him but the spirit of Caesar proves invincible. Brutus' death combines Roman dignity with stoic firmness. Lucius asleep in the tent of Brutus is a reminder of Portia dead and an anticipation of Brutus' death next day. Thus Lucius is dramatically used as a death symbol. The end of Cassius, like the end of Brutus shows a resigned attitude to retribution. Thus, like the portia, both Brutus and Cassius seem to have almost willed their deaths with stoic indifference. Unlike Macbeth, dragged into many murders, one murder is more than enough for Brutus. In 'Julius Caesar', Shakespeare reaffirms an ethical judgment.

'Antony and Cleopatra'

In 'Antony and Cleopatra', death is an ecstatic nuptial. The suicides in this play have wide ranging motives. Antony recognizes in Cleopatra his Absolute. She is his Heaven and death is reunion with her. When she forsakes him, he is bewildered by the loss of his identity. Antony's death is a cosmic crack. He reviews his chequered life and philosophizes in the hour of death. In Cleopatra's vision death transcends time, shackles accidents, bolts up change and liberates from Fortune's Wheel. The glamorous Cleopatra turns death into
an act of love. In her final act she runs through all her roles as Queen, wife, mistress, cunning victor over Cæsar and nursing mother. It is as natural for her maids Charmian and Iras to die for her as it is natural for Enobarbus and Eros to die for Antony. The death of Antony distils sublime poetry from the grief of Cleopatra. The shame of military defeat is the purgatory of Antony, her survival after the death of Antony is the purgatory of Cleopatra. Iras seems to die by mere denial of life — hers is the death of the mystic East. The end of the play suggests the final superiority of their suicide over circumstances. Death has come not as punishment but as a sublimation of love.
ancient Rome loomed vast in the Elizabethan imagination. Shakespeare on the threshold of British Empire is fascinated by the imperialism of ancient Rome. The Elizabethans had problems and sought answers in the history of ancient Rome. The Roman world of Shakespeare is aggressively political. Shakespeare, like the humanist moralists, associates courage with the master virtue of magnanimity, as is indicated by Volumnia's speech to Coriolanus, when she urges him to go to the market place and address the people of Rome.

The spirit of patriotism is evident in the Roman Tragedies. Coriolanus expresses his patriotic sentiment. Like Brutus, he holds his country dearer than himself. Brutus justifies his stabbing of Caesar with the statement, "... Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." (III, ii, 23). Thus Brutus clearly exemplifies the exalted patriotism of the Roman.

Shakespeare's attitude to citizens in 'Julius Caesar' and 'Coriolanus' appears anti-democratic, but this is to forget that the Roman situation was pro-democratic.
In the Roman plays, suicide is presented as an honourable act. His Roman plays like *Julius Caesar* are as much influenced by the intense patriotic sentiments of the Romans as they are influenced by stoic fatalism. Shakespeare has shown that

"by an honourable and fearless facing of death men could redeem in large measure, the misdeeds of a lifetime."

The Romans are true to their own values and the great Roman gesture — suicide — is the measure of this truth. The suicide of the dying hero is a manifestation of the Ciceronian maxim that "it is unworthy of a high-minded man to be subject to any man." This high-minded approach to life which preferred death to dishonour is dramatically communicated in Shakespeare's Roman plays.

The most remarkable suicide is of Portia, the daughter of Cato who also had stoically embraced death. Bratus had considered suicide as cowardly, but faced with the alternative of defeat and servitude, he commits suicide. The other conspirator Cassius completes the circle of his life history by committing suicide on his birthday. There is justice in such end. It was Antony who contributed to the defeat and suicide of Bratus and Cassius. By a strange irony
of history, Antony too dies at his own hand. Like Brutus, he requests his follower Eros to kill him but Eros prefers to kill himself. Like Brutus, Antony realizes in retrospect the meaning of life which has been changeable like a cloud and intangible like water in water. If Antony's is imperial suicide, Cleopatra enacts the most magnificent suicide in all the plays of Shakespeare.

Elyot in his 'Defence of Good Women' points out that Roman women committed suicide in order to join their husbands in death.

Brutus' Fortin thus proves her constancy. Cleopatra is no Roman but her suicide sums up all strands of her intricate character. Shakespeare has thus provided an ethical and aesthetic context to these suicides.

From Greece of philosophers Shakespeare has selected Timon to dramatize the profoundest philosophy of death.

Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens gives significance to the death theme. It also gives significance to the hate theme. "I am misanthrope, and hate mankind" (IV, iii, 53). The play shows love for death. He accepts death willingly because he hates mankind. He accepts the nothingness of death.
"I am sick of this false world, and will
love nought
But even the mere necessities upon 't.
Then, Timon, presently prepare thy grave."

(IV, iii, 373-380)

He cuts off contact with the finite world and claves to the
darkness of infinity. He tells the Senators:

"So I leave you
To the protection of the prosperous Gods,
as thieves to keepers"

(V, i, 137-139)

From the depths of his heart, he pronounces judgment on the
pettiness of man and condemns one and all. He tells the
thieves:

"... You are thieves professed, that you work
not
In holier shapes; for there is boundless theft
In limited professions".

(IV, iii, 432-434)

His sweeping condemnation includes not only man but even
the Sun and the Moon.

"The Sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
Robbs the vast sea; the Moon's an arrant thief
And her pale fire she snatches from the Sun;"
The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
The sun into salt tears; the earth's a thief,
That feeds and breeds by a composture stolen
From general excrement, each thing's a thief."

(IV, iii, 442-448)

Timon shared a universal dream of a paradise of
love on earth and of Fortune in life. This dream was shattered.
Therefore Timon lost faith in life and wished for universal death for all mankind.

"... tell my friends,
Tell them, in the sequence of degree,
From high to low throughout, that whose
To stop affliction, let him take his hate,
Come hither, ove my tree hath felt the axe;
And haul himself."

(V, i, 312-217)

According to him, death alone eases aches and losses and grieves and so he commends death to all

"and tell them, that, to ease them of their griefs,
Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses,
Their pangs of love, with other incident throes
That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain
In life's uncertain voyage, I will some kindness do them:
I'll teach them to prevent wild Alcibiades' wrath." — and that is to end life.

(V, i, 203-208)
Timon has withdrawn from Athens to the woods.
But nature does not redeem him. Even nature is cruel. Timon
is alone in his severance from society. He compares himself
to an oak, stripped of its leaves. It is a characteristic
image.

"The oak is ... a symbol of tragic endurance
or destruction. ... Nor man nor nature holds
peace for him. Nor may the infinite lights
of Sun and Moon assuage his pain."

Annihilating rage against self and mankind,
there is only one way to peace — death and the oblivion
of death. He digs his own grave by the sea-shore,
arranges his own funeral ceremonies in the midst of pomp
of desolation and builds his mausoleum of the elements. He
makes the wind his funeral dirge and the succumbing ocean
his mourner.

Timon's love of earth seeks fulfilment in the wide
spaces of infinity. Failing to find love and peace in man-
kind he longs for death. He has long lived by the sea and
yearns to end his life there.

"Then Timon, presently prepare thy grave,
Lies where the light foam of the sea may beat
Thy grave-stone daily."

(IV, iii, 330-332)
The infinity of his soul's passion finds rest in the infinity of death. He seeks the peaceful rhythm of death in the death by the sea. He steps from that ridge into the waters of death.

Way to Athens

Tiron hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beaches verge of the salt flood;
Who once a day with his embossed figieth
The turbulent surge shall cover."

(V, i, 219-223)

He is entombed upon the very edge of the sea. The sea is a weltering 'nothing' yet it brings him 'all things', it brings him infinity. Its undying requiem is sweet.

"It is as a solemn monotone of death, unending, sobbing above the 'everlasting mansion' of eternity."

Life and Death have interchanged their meaning for him. There is a swift unwrapping of fold on fold of life's significance, till we reach the core of pure significance in the nothingness of death. As Tiron utters:
"by I was writing of my epitaph;
It will be seen to-morrow. My long sickness
Of health and living now begins to mend,
And nothing brings me all things."  
(V, i, 190-193)

"The nothingness of death becomes 'all things' to Timon, who passionately desires that
'nothing'. ...... consciousness that thus derives joy from the death of consciousness
is already ..... outside the dying and the
death." 6

Timon sees in the solemnities of nature oblivion
of the transitory splendour of life. Timon is the totality
of all the elements. All lift their lonely voices in his
in his universal curse.

"He is the soul .... voyaging on a lonely quest
most truly at home with Sun and Moon and Earth
and all elements of nature, and listening from
time to time to the sob and surge of the great
seas." 7

Timon flies from society as much as from self. He
does not worship God either. "I am no idle votarist"
(IV, iii, 27) he says. He finds nothing praiseworthy in
any human activity. He condemns all men as flatterers. To him:
"... all is oblique;
There's not ing level in our cursed natures
But direct villany. Therefore, be abhorr'd
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!"

(IV, iii, 13-21)

Various people visit him in his seclusion but none is able
to change his despair into hope and ultimately as an act
of rejection of life, he wills his own death. He digs his
own grave, addressing mother earth:

"That nature, being sick of Man's
unkindness,
should yet be hungry! Common mother, thou,
Whose womb unmeasurable, and infinite breast
Teems, and feeds all, whose self same mettle
Thereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is
puff'd".

(IV, iii, 177-181)

His final choice of a resting place is a tomb
on the sea shore.

"Not only will the salt sea-water give Timon,
twice a day, that brine he sought in vain
in the eyes of those who heard of his mis-
fortune; its sterile bitterness will keep
anything green and growing away from his tomb,
so that his savage rejection of life will be
perpetuated."
The dark sea which is infinite formlessness, infinite depth, the surge and swell within the soul of man, the deeps beyond intellect or sight or sound. It is this surge that has throbbed within... this tide of emotion that breaks and soaks in Timon's passion when... he speaks the language of a soul beyond the world of manifestation — .... the wide sea of eternal darkness beating on the rocks of creation. 9

Timon ranges the planetary spaces and finds no home. He is at peace in the spaceless silence of the deeper night and in death. For Timon, there is only death; death alone in its nothingness is desirable. "The void of death, — darkness — the Shakespearean 'nothing' .... brings Timon 'all things'." 10

The action of Timon ends in the framework of eternity. The action of Timon, which springs from hate ends with his aspiration for eternity. Timon is on the brink of mystery that sends his life with "all things". He attains to true 'being' from which soul self is not distinct.

"The hate-theme is born of the aspiring spirit of man, un-home in its frail sepulchre of flesh, reaching out to infinity, crying for death, because the world is unworthy." 11
The compelling death-mysticism of Timon leaves a memory, not of pain but of profundity. "In Timon of Athens we scale the altitudes of eternity."  

This play marks an advance in the mystic understanding of death. Death is the end of pain in tragedies like King Lear, but here it becomes a positive good. Death, which is a nothing, is the harbinger of "all things". At the moment of self-sought death, his soul aspires to the vision of the infinite - which climaxes in the "nothing" of death.

"The negation is pressed far until 'nothing' becomes Nirvana as in Buddhism. .... If 'Nirvana' be better than life, then 'Nirvana' is itself a better life."  

The play is thus a summation of all Shakespearean sombre tragedies. It alone gives us a philosophic reading of death.

**Coriolanus**

Coriolanus is the least metaphysical of tragedies. There is neither communion with the supernatural nor prayer to Heaven for sympathy nor protective love of God. The play
Coriolanus has an ancient theme. The hero hates the Plebeians and is hated by them. They exile him. He joins hands with the Volscians. He breaks the moral law. Rome without Coriolanus is defenceless and doomed. The Romans send a deputation of women led by his mother to persuade Coriolanus to spare the city. Coriolanus retreats with the Volscians. In saving Rome, he has to commit another treason. He has broken his contract with the Volscians. Thus he again breaks the moral law. This is a double betrayal — both of Rome and of Volscians. He is murdered by the Volscians as a perjuror. In his encounter with his mother, he has to choose between his life and that of Rome. He chooses death. Rome has been saved. Thus fate corners and breaks Coriolanus. History has proved stronger than Coriolanus. It has made a double traitor of him. All that is left to him is self-destruction. He is a man of death. His essential quality is the quality of destruction. Coriolanus yields to his mother. He knows that it means his death.

"O my mother! mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But, for your son, believe it, O! believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortal to him."

(V, iii, 135-139)

In yielding to his mother, he knows, he falls.

But in that fall is his rise. That moment of illumination saves Rome.

"The glory of his giving in is that it is
a supreme act of courage as well as of renunciation." [14]

The real tragic victim in this tragedy is

Volumnia. She alone can save Rome but only if she persuades her son to break his promise to the Volscians. So either way, the end has to be disaster. If she fails in persuading him, Rome will be sacked. If she succeeds, her son will be destroyed, but as G.B. Harrison puts:

"Volumnia is Roman enough to realize the bitter choice and she destroys her own son for the sake of his country. .... Had she been softer, she would never have moulded this Coriolanus." [15]

Ultimately Rome is spared the mishap of war at the expense of its bravest life.

Like 'Hamlet, Coriolanus' is a play of death and ends with a dead march. Coriolanus' final cry ends in a note of triumph, showing his royal integrity. He was trained to
be a hero and he dies with an awareness of being a hero. Before his death, Coriolanus resents his heroic achievement. Says he:

"If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there
That, like an eagle in a dovecote, IFlutter'd your Volscians in Coriolis;
alone I did it".

(V, v, 113-116)

Coriolanus is really destroyed when he is persuaded to be false to his own nature. This mother-motivated patriot is bent upon destroying his own country, though he began as its saviour. He thereby loses both his world and his integrity. He glories in the splendour of his isolation. He is isolated by his self-sufficiency. He suddenly passes from towering passion to helpless death. He dies a gruesome death but as a martyr of love.

"In the case of Coriolanus the voice of nature prevails, and the hero is won back, at dreadful cost to himself."

Even the Volscian Lords protest against the brutal killing of Coriolanus by Aufidius: "Thou hast done a deed wherein valour will weep." (V, v, 134) The valour of Coriolanus wins a tribute from the funeral instruction given by the Volscian Lord.
"Bear from hence his body
and mourn you for him! Set him be regarded
as the most noble corpse that ever herald
Did follow to his urn."

(V, v, 143-146)

The dead Coriolanus compels a change of heart in
his inveterate enemy Tullus: "My rage is gone, and I am
struck with sorrow." (V, v, 143-149)

The play concludes with the last utterance of his
enemy who pays tribute to the nobility of the dead
Coriolanus. "Yet he shall have a noble memory." (V, v, 155).
Coriolanus dies honouring his pledge which wins praises
even from his enemies.

Coriolanus' death is both tragic and ironic. It is
tragic in the world of his own. It is tragic according to his
absolute system of values. It is ironic in the real world
as the man who kills him, praises his bravery and nobility.
Shakespeare heightens the tragedy of a general who leads
his nation in battle, but whose honours are not national. But
the outward conflict in Coriolanus is eclipsed by inward
struggle. The truly tragic issue is the struggle between
the mother and the son in which the son accepts defeat in
silence.
History either confirms values or destroys them. If it destroys, it is tragic. History has destroyed the personal value system of Coriolanus and therein lies his tragedy. In him pride is overcome by his mother’s pleading. But the moment of her triumph is the moment of her personal tragedy. When he grants her request, she is so relieved that she does not catch his presentiment. She obeys the voice of Rome, he obeys the voice of his mother. His obedience to his mother brings him to his death - and that he could foresee in the very act of obedience.

Coriolanus has never forgiven the corruption of Rome and hates Rome for it. But he does not die a traitor to Rome. He rather dies so that Rome may be saved. He dies for Rome because, having accepted the true value of Rome enshrined in the Roman women, he thus redeems himself and meets death with a constant temper. Antony too dies in the foreign land, but unlike Antony, this Roman is alone on foreign soil and is butchered by hired assassins.

His character rises to heroic stature as he lives up to his ideals. He tries to remain true to himself at any cost. Exile holds no terror for him. He does not realize what leaving Rome will mean - that he learns only in the isolation of exile. In accepting exile, he severs the bond with his family.
"His temporary denial of familial ties puts him on the brink of the ultimate destruction of order, for the family bond is the most basic of all the bonds." 17

Proudly defiant, he did not realize what it would mean. He hated Rome in abstraction, but when it was embodied in those he loved, he responded to it despite of himself. Coriolanus' own fate is of no moment, now that he has acknowledged the fundamental relationship of life.

The crisis of the action of 'Coriolanus' is, as in the other passion tragedies, a collision of personal and social loyalties. There is a parallel between the victim of the passion-tragedy and the rebel of the order-tragedy.

"Coriolanus dies because there is no place in the world for him - no place either at Rome or at Antium. The past is too bitter to be blotted out, the future is too ambiguous. In death only can he wholly rehabilitate himself; only in death's other kingdom can he find the peace that this sullied earth has denied him. More sinned against than sinning, maddened than mad, dead Coriolanus is assured of a noble memory in the glowing pages of Shakespeare." 18

As in the other Roman plays, Rome here, too, emerges invulnerable, as if it were an eternal city, undefiant and deathless.
Como, in a sense, stands out as the symbol of life.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar belongs to the group of Tragedy of Order. The Elizabethan Historical Tragedy is based on the assumption that society is a structure of personal authority with ruler at its head. It is the vigilance of the ruler which is responsible for maintaining social peace. Caesar is the figure of order, Cassius is the figure of disorder. Brutus is the rebel figure and Antony is the Hamannic figure of restoring order.

Caesar displays godlike arrogance:

.... "he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves."

(I, ii, 134-137)

No act of Caesar justifies his murder but his attitude of superiority enrages men like Cassius who incites Brutus:

"Men at some time are masters of their fate
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

(I, ii, 133-140)
Brutus is drawn into the conspiracy by his love of liberty, but he recognizes the goodness of Caesar and the need of upright methods. He joins the conspiracies in the name of liberty of Rome— for the honour of Rome:

"If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honour in one eye and death in the other;  
And I will look on both indifferently".

(I, ii, 35-37)

He offers his assent in the conspiracy of the murder of the tyrant, but only that far and no farther. He does not believe in shedding blood unnecessarily.

Fearing Antony, Cassius suggests:

"I think it is not meet,  
Mark Antony, so well belov'd of Caesar,  
Should outlive Caesar."

(II, ii, 155-157)

In Cassius' opinion: "Let Antony and Caesar fall together."

(II, i, 161). But Brutus' reply is:

"Our course will seem too bloody, Caius  
Cassius  
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,  
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards.  
For Antony is but a limb of Caesar."

(II, i, 162-165)
Like Othello, Brutus adopts a ritualistic attitude:

"Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius. We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar; And in the spirit of men there is no blood; But then that we could come by Caesar's spirit, And not dismember Caesar. But, alas! Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends, Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully; Let's carve him as a dish fit for the Gods, Not saw him ane carcass fit for hounds."

(II, i, 160-174)

Cassius ultimately succeeds in winning over Brutus in the name of the liberty of Rome. It is Cassius who has planned Caesar's murder and Caesar himself senses some unknown danger in the vicinity of Cassius:

"Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look; He thinks too much: such men are dangerous"

(I, ii, 193-194)

Caesar has observed that Cassius "loves no plays", (I, ii, 202) 'hears no music' (I, ii, 203), 'seldom he smiles' (I, ii, 204).

"Such men as he be never at heart's ease While they behold a greater than themselves, And therefore, are they very dangerous."

(I, ii, 207-209)
In a sense it is a premonition as the conspiracy planned by Cassius will cause Caesar's destruction.

True lovers of liberty hate force; so does Brutus, but his idealism stifles his hatred of murder. The noble cause of liberty blinds Brutus to the use of ignoble means of assassination — and that is the pity of it. On the eve of the conspiracy, Brutus is "with himself at war." (I, ii, 46). He had a disturbed night, after joining hands with the conspirators. He walked about, musing and sighing in "the vile contagion of the night." (II, i, 265). Even Portia perceives vaguely: "You have some sick offence within your mind." (II, i, 268).

The shadow of the impending murder falls across the scene in the form of omens, and prophecies. A soothsayer's voice "a tongue, shriller than all the music", (I, ii, 16) interrupts the music prophesying disaster and disorder. The soothsayer twice warned Caesar: "Beware the Ides of March" (I, ii, 13) — but Caesar takes no serious notice; he waves it aside as a fantasy of a dreamer. That is his fate. He is doomed, and though forewarned, does not apply his mind to take any cautionary measures. His fate is destined. But he is no ordinary man. The death of the great man is preceded by disorder in nature. The previous night had been
weird and unruly. As Caesar himself observes: "Nor Heaven
nor earth have been at peace to-night" (II, i, 1). Even the
conspirator Caesar notices something alarming: "But never
till to-night, never till now, did I go through a tempest
dropping fire" (I, iii, 9-10).

The murder of Caesar is heralded by unnatural phe-
nomena. All order is inverted. It shadows the terrors and
dangers of an act against the symbol of order and authority.
Such unnatural events foreshadow the unnaturalness of murder,
the disorderliness of destruction. It is found that

"Either there is a civil strife in heaven
Or else the world, too saucy with the Gods,
Incenses them to send destruction"

(I, iii, 11-13)
The unnatural scenes of disorder are the core of the play.
Caesar's murder is heralded by chaos and tempest. The
tempest is accompanied by fierce beasts.

"A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
And graves have yawn'd and yielded up their
dead;
Pierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
Which drizled blood upon the Capitol;
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the
streets"

(II, ii, 17-24)
This is an illustration of the Elizabethan belief in correspondence between the realm of human society and the realm of nature.

The murder of Caesar is preceded by dreams and premonitions. Even then the poet has seen strange sights on that fearful night. He dreamt that he feasted with Caesar and was then mobbed and slain. Caesar’s wife Calpurnia had thrice cried out in her sleep, “Help, ho! They murder Caesar!” (II, ii, 3). Calpurnia had a dream of Caesar’s statue spouting blood and many lusty Romans bathing their hands in it. In Caesar’s words:

"She dreamt to-night she saw my statue,
Which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts,
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it."

(II, ii, 76-79)

Calpurnia expresses her fears and urges him not to go out that day. But Caesar takes a rational stand:

"What can be avoided
Whose end is purpos’d by the might God?
Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Caesar."

(II, ii, 26-29)

He says that advance warnings are for everybody, not for
Caesar alone. But Calpurnia's rejoinder is that gods give omens only for the death of the mighty:

"Then beggars die there are no coments seen;  
The Heavens themselves blaze forth: the death of princes"  

(II, ii, 30-31)

Calpurnia reiterates her warning as she had a strange premonition of the imminent death of her husband. Her fears are understandable in the light of the context of the milieu. She is repeating the common Renaissance belief that disasters in the human realm are reflected by great disturbances in the natural realm. But Caesar defies all omens in which he partially believes. He himself had sought the priest's opinions of success after presenting sacrifice but he does not yield to her fears. Death, being a necessary end, Caesar thinks it foolish to fear it.

"Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come."

(II, ii, 34-37)

This dialogue between Caesar and Calpurnia assumes
the form of a debate on cowardly and stoical approaches to death. It ends with a note of stoic resignation — death will come when it is destined to come. He, as it were, approaches his death with the courage of stoic:

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once"

(II, ii, 32-33)

when he is advised to have a guard for safety, he does not consent to it, saying:

"... danger knows full well
That Caesar is more dangerous than he".

(II, ii, 44-45)

Calphurnia regrets that his "wisdom is consum'd in confidence." (II, ii, 49). To Caesar, it is better to die once than always to be afraid of death. Asked what death is best, he utters prophetically "Death unlook'd for." He proceeds to meet his doom. Here we pity the victim who co-operates willingly in his own assassination.

All conspirators stab, Brutus stabbing last.
When Brutus stabs, Caesar is stunned: "Et tu Brute" (III, i, 77).
This exclamation is followed by his dying words "Then fall Caesar" (III, i, 77). It is a tragic exclamation. It voices great pain at the betrayal by a dear friend. Caesar's dying words must have left a deeper wound in Brutus' heart than did Brutus' dagger into Caesar's flesh. "It was Caesar who stabbed Brutus".20

With the fall of Caesar, Cinna exclaims "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead"! (III, i, 73). Cassius cried out: "Liberty! Freedom, and enfranchisement!" (III, i, 31). Brutus justifies the cruel act of Caesar's murder: 'ambition's debt is paid'. (III, i, 33). Brutus, the idealist proclaims:

"Then walk we forth, even to the market-place;
And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
Let's all cry, 'Pence, freedom, and liberty!"

(III, i, 108-110)

"That peace and liberty could be bought with 'red weapons was the illusion; the reality is mob violence, proscription and civil war."21

Any murder is in the act savage and inhuman, but the merciless reading of a man is an obscene performance.
The conspirators bathe their hands in the victim's blood. Thus Calphurnia's anticipatory dream is realized. Brutus insists on the ritualistic action of smearing themselves with Caesar's blood:

"Stoop, Romans,
And stop, let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows, and besmeer our swords."

(Ill, 1, 105-107)

"that Brutus should suggest the blood-bath comes as a shock.
And that is exactly Shakespeare's intention." 22

Brutus views the murder as a ceremonial slaying of a sacrificial beast on the altar of the commonweal; Antony views it as a hunting of a royal stag, for the spoil. The conspirators picture the killing as an act of sacrifice to purge the land of evil. But "to transmute political killing into ritual is to cloak it with appearances" 23 The act of shedding blood has an ancient ceremonial meaning of purifying the land. The blood of Caesar spreads over Rome.

"The dreadful blood which we see covering the hands of the conspirators, then touching Antony's hand, then staining the exhibited mantle, then turning the witless plebeians
into destroyers — this is the symbol
and mark of the blood and destruction,
which is to flow through the rest of the
play, overwhelming the conspirators' plans, accomplishing Antony's promise to
Caesar's butchered corpse."

Repeated references to blood, spouting of blood,
scaring their hands in blood have a sacrificial import.
It has powerful implications of death, which overshadows
the rest of the play.

"Each conspirator had struck individually
at Caesar and had symbolically involved
himself with the others; for the second
time Antony reminds us of this ritual bond by
recounting each stroke, and his recreation
of the rite becomes a mockery of it.
Brutus' transformation of blood into the
heady wine of sacrifice is reversed both
in substance and in ceremony."

Caesar's murder is not only presented on the stage
but "it is described both in prospect and in retrospect." —
The premonition of the death of the victim to him and to
the persons associated with him; as also the effect of
Caesar's murder on the life of Rome in general and on the
murderers in particular.

After Caesar's murder, chaos and destruction
engulf all Rome; and discord and death overwhelm the murderers themselves. When Caesar is slain, Rome stands aghast; there is mounting bewilderment outside the Capital; men, women and children run about and cry out, as it were doomsday.

As Brutus approaches to plunge dagger into Caesar's body

"it is as though history itself quivers, totters, is gashed open, exposing ruinous self conflict above the streets of Rome." 27

At the thought of assassination, there was a tempest in Brutus' heart. He suffered like a town besieged; he has not slept since Cassius first put the idea of murder; and after the murder, his sleep is shattered by Caesar's ghost. After Caesar's murder there is a scene of hysteria and indirection among the murderers. Caesar's ghost destroys their peace and creates a nightmare of fear. This tempest is not to be stilled till Brutus' death.

Antony makes a moving speech showing the contrast between the greatness of Caesar's achievement and its annihilation by death.
"O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils
Shrunk to this little measure?"

(III, i, 148-150)

Funeral orations by Brutus and Antony turn the tide of events. Both speak in character. Brutus asserts

"Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?"

(III, ii, 22-25)

The irony of it is that the reply to his question is "Let him be Caesar." (III, ii, 56). Citizens raise flattering slogans. "Bring him with triumph home unto his house" (III, ii, 54). The crowds which adored Caesar, now transfer the same adulation to Brutus "Give him a statue with his ancestors" (III, ii, 55). The conspirators were against concentration of power in Caesar's hands. Once Caesar is dead, the crowds worship Brutus as the hero: "Live, Brutus! live! live!" (III, ii, 53).

Antony makes a dramatic appearance before the conspirators and offers himself as a victim:
"Now, whilst your purpled hands droop and smoke,
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,
I shall not find myself so apt to die:
No place will please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off."

(III, 1, 153-162)

Thus

"in one speech he evokes both the holy scene
which the conspirators so desired and the
savagery which underlay it. The murder
scene is thus hallowed by Antony in a
manner which quite reverses its sanctifi-
cation by the conspirators."

Brutus attempts to mollify Antony with his che-
rished theme of purgation.

"Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
And pity to the general wrong of Rome
As fire drives out fire; so pity pity
Hath done this deed on Caesar."

(III, 169-172)

Antony's response is of counterceremony. The
assassins had agreed as a token of solidarity that each
of them should stab Caesar. Antony refers to this:
"Let each man render me his bloody hand" (III, i, 184).
It is then that Antony addresses the body of Caesar:

"Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood"

(III, i, 200–201)
He then delivers his first profanation of the ritual sacrifice:

"Pardon me, Julius! Here wast thou bay'd,
brave hart;
Here didst thou fall; and here thy hunters stand,
Sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy loth."

(III, i, 204–206)
Here we are made to feel that a vital force, a stream of life outflows at his death.

When the conspirators leave him alone with the dead Caesar, he expresses his grief in violent blood imagery. 'O! pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth.'

(III, i, 254). Caesar's death is mourned by Antony:

"Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,
Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips,
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue"

(III, i, 255–261)
The wounds of Caesar are compared with 'dumb mouths' and 'ruby lips' - even the maimed and bleeding body is visualized in rich details.

So strong is his love for Caesar that he idealizes mantles, wounds, blood. Even Caesar's mantle is endued with a kind of personality:

"Through this the well-beloved Britus stabb'd
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it."

(III, ii, 181-183)

Through his eloquence he has put a tongue in every wound of Caesar.

"Kind souls, what! weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors."

(III, ii, 200-202)

Antony prophesies:

"Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall sumber all the parts of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war;
All pity chok'd with custom of fell deeds;  
And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With atre by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry 'Havoc', and let slip the dogs of war."

(III, i, 263-273)

He thus prophesies that civil war will burst out in Rome. Mothers have to smile to see "Their infants quarter'd with the hands of war." (III, i, 268). The image of child desecration is a usual Shakespearean image of essential life destruction.

Antony amplifies the theme of betrayal by a dear friend.

"For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:  
Judge, O you Gods! how dearly Caesar lov'd him!  
This was the most unkindest cut of all;  
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart."

(III, ii, 186-191)

Antony sheds tears during his oration and has to stop his speech. He had the pulse of the crowd and it throbbed with every word of his.
"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now" (III, ii, 174).

Then the citizens weep too:

"O! now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity; these are precious drops."

(III, ii, 193-199)

Antony has made every citizen feel that with Caesar's assassination, something sacred, something worthy is desecrated.

By the force of his great oratory he created a havoc. His appeal is sometimes personal; at the same time he shows Caesar's murder as a treason which plunges Rome in disaster. He emphasizes the personal as well as the political aspect of Caesar. Caesar, the guide, philosopher and friend of Romans is also shown as the principle of order. Antony thereby brings home to the Romans that by stabbing Caesar, they conspirators have plunged Rome in disaster:

Then, I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourished over us."

(III, ii, 195-197)

The crowd's response to Antony’s demonstration of the art of inflammatory rhetoric is civil commotion. They all cry 'O pitious spectacle', (III, ii, 203) 'O Noble Caesar' (III, ii, 204), 'O woeful day' (III, ii, 205),
"O traitors! villains" (III, ii, 206), "O most bloody sight!" (III, ii, 207). They all raise hue and cry "Revenge! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! — slay! Let not a traitor live." (III, ii, 209-210). Even an unoffending poet Cinna became the victim of a brutal mob: 'Tear him to pieces; he's a conspirator' (III, iii, 30). Even when he says "I am Cinna, the poet" (III, iii, 33) the furious mob shouts "Tear him for his bad verses" (III, iii, 34). Shakespeare has here dramatized the undeserved death resulting from the blind fury of the mobs. Caesar's murder is thus preceded by strange disturbances in nature; it is followed by disorderly commotion in civic life. It is all chaos; violence holds sway.

Antony shows Caesar's body to create passion-stirring effect of death. It directly appeals to the emotions of the people, and as they weep, he uncovers the body "marred with traitors", the effect is electrical. It leads to civil war. One murder, leads to mass murders.

Before the battle of Philippi Brutus taunts Antony: you "very wisely threat before you sting." (V, i, 38) to which Antony retorts:

"Villains! you did not so when your vile daggers
Hack'd one another in the sides of Caesar."

(V, i, 39-40)
Before the battle of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius appear like doomed men. Defeat and death come to each in different ways, they are prepared for their end - they are expecting death as their retribution.

Shakespeare is interested in showing the effect of the murder - in the reaction of Cassius upon Brutus and Brutus upon Cassius and their moral degeneration after murder, as reflected in the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius.

Portia is Brutus' other half. Being the mirror of his soul, she reflects his spiritual death in accepting the code of violence. And that is exactly what her death does.

"On entering the conspiracy, Brutus metaphorically swallowed fire. Portia swallows it literally, as an allegory of his act." 29

Portia's death conveys the degeneration of Brutus and her consequent agony at the spiritual atrophy of the man she loved. The meaning of the drama is concentrated in this symbol. The fire swallowing by Portia symbolizes the tragedy of Brutus. Overcome by the spiritual ruin of Brutus, Portia brings the end of her life. The woman in her cannot bear the strain. Distraught with anxiety, she
kills herself. Brutus attributes her suicide to his absence and to the success of Antony. Suicide was a tradition in Cato family but to commit suicide by swallowing hot coal was excessive even for a Cato. She had been perfectly identified with her husband. Had she been less her husband's equal, less identified with his aims and endeavours, she might not have sought end of her life but to commit suicide by swallowing hot coal is incredible.

Brutus speaks of her death with the self control of a stoic. When he hears the news of Portia's death, he retains stoic attitude:

"... . We must die, Messala: with meditating that she must die once, I have the patience to endure it now."

(IV, iii, 139-191)

His utterance "Portia is dead" (IV, iii, 146) tries to conceal the bitter grief within. This stoic response is interpreted by Edward Dowden:

"Brutus is sustained by the spirit of Portia. To live in her spirit of stoicism becomes now the highest act of religion to her memory."

After Caesar's murder Portia disappears from the
play and the last we hear about her is the fact of her suicide. The reappearance of the ghost of Caesar and the news of the death of Portia arrive simultaneously at the penultimate stage in the play. The horror of Caesar's murder comes home to Brutus with the horror of her death. One is dead through the anxiety about the man she loved, and the other revisits the earth to seek vengeance on the same man.

Brutus is now out of tune. He is victim of an auditory hallucination and mistakes the cry of his own soul for the nightmare. The ghost appears to Brutus showing that the Gods are offended with the murder of Caesar. The appearance of Caesar's ghost suggests that Brutus' death is a direct consequence of his guilt.

"Too late Brutus discovers that when his dagger entered Caesar's body it released a power as towering and uncontrollable as the genie freed by the fisherman in the Arabian tale. Julius Caesar is dead. But his spirit has volatilized into something as invulnerable as the air."

Though Brutus may refer to his high motive, Caesar's ghost introduces himself as "Thy evil spirit" (IV, iii, 231). Caesar's ghost with its threatening prophecy "Thou shalt see me at Philippi" (IV, iii, 283) warns him that the spirit which the conspirators had hoped to
annihilate is still active and is dogging the conspirators to destruction. As G. Wilson Knight comments:

"In opposing the Caesarian essence - it is that the 'spirit' not merely the body of Caesar at which they aim. The conspirators merely slay themselves while that spirit moves on indestructible." 32

as he looks on his dead kinsman Brutus utters a significant cry, which is the keynote: "O Julius Caesar! thou art mighty yet!" (V, iii, 94).

The episode of Lucius shows that Brutus who had slain his friend "for the good of Rome" (III, ii, 50) has not the heart to wake a sleeping boy. He atones for his cruelty to Caesar by his tenderness towards his servants. Lucius asleep is a reminder of Fortia dead and the premonition of the death of Brutus next day. The sleeping Lucius is a dramatic anticipation of the death of his master. His disappearance thereafter is also a death symbol. When Brutus with his shriek wakes up the sleeping boy, his startled words "My late is out of tune" turn out to be the last farewell. Lucius is a vanishing character like the Fool in King Lear. The vanishing characters in Shakespeare suggest also a dimension of death.

On the battlefield, Cassius orders Pindarus to hold his sword against his bosom and Cassius falls on it.
In his dying breath, Cassius says,

"Caesar, thou art reveng'd,
Even with the sword that kill'd thee"

(V, iii, 45-46)

Cassius dies on his birthday:

"This day I breathed first; time is come round,
And where I did begin, there shall I end;
My life is run his compass."

(V, iii, 23-25)

Cassius, at his end, as Brutus all along,
accepts the retribution for his act. He seems relieved
that, in death, he is punished for his deed. He runs
on the very sword by which he stabbed Caesar. For him
death is a thing of ecstasy and liberation. He remembered
in his last moments that his day of death is his day of
birth.

"This birth-remembrance lights this death
With a sudden expectancy — a birth a
death — and birth."33

(Cassius dies and Shakespeare makes nature sympathize with
his fall

"But Cassius is no more. O, setting Sun!
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night,
In the end, Brutus is shown at moments when life really matters, when the aspirations of a politician fade into nothingness. In the vicinity of death we see his true nobility. Even when he is "sick of many griefs" he does not wake up a sleeping boy. In sad solemnity he bids farewell to Cassius:

"For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius!
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile;
If not, why then, this parting was well made"

(V, i, 117-119)

In profound grief, he pays final tribute to dead Cassius:

"The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!
It is impossible that ever Rome should brood thy fellow. Friends, I owe more tears
To this dead man than you shall see me pay
I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time.

(V, iii, 99-103)

These slowly reiterated words fall heavily like a passing bell on the ear and linger on.
Brutus accepts his fall not as an accident of defeat but as
"the working out of the destiny to which he committed himself long before." \(^{34}\)

Caesar's ghost appears before him. It is a reminder of his guilt. It takes the toll of his life. He who killed Caesar, has to kill himself. He knows that he should die. He puts himself to all risks in the battle but cannot be slain. His men are killed. He knows, he will have to surrender, but he prefers death to dishonour. Brutus has found suicide cowardly and vile — he has blamed Cato for it —

"For fear of what might fall, so to prevent The time of life; arming myself with patience, To stay the providence of some high powers That govern us below."

(V, i, 105-107)

But at the same time he cannot think of going bound to Rome. So death is the only liberation — self-sought death is the only way out; and so with undisturbed self composure, he takes everlasting farewell of Cassius. Like Hamlet, he ponders over the pros and cons of suicide. He considers it cowardly but ultimately, as the last resort, he turns to it to avoid the shame of dishonour.
Then setting his sword's point against his breast, Brutus falls upon it and dies pierced by his own sword. That began at Forum, ended at Philippi. Caesar's disembodied spirit pursues Brutus to his death. He invokes Caesar's spirit which is taking its toll of his murderers. He has seen the guilt of conspirators expiated. Retribution is foremost in Brutus' mind. He has expected it, awaited, it, almost subconsciously wished for it to expiate guilt. Before he dies, he addresses Caesar's ghost:

"Caesar: now be still;
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will."

(V, v, 90-51)

"Those ten words", to quote Goddard, "are the Last Judgment of Brutus on a conspiracy, the morality of which other men, strangely, have long debated."

Brutus, the idealist, blind to the facts of life, ends in disaster.

"His is the glorious blindness that springs from excess of light. He fails as a leader of men because his eye is for ever fixed on the radiant vision of man as he ought to be."

With his fall, the Republican cause is finally lost. It is not Brutus who dies, but democracy dies in Rome. The death
of Brutus is worthy of him.

“It has the dignity of the Roman Senator with the firmness of the stoic philosopher.”

Antony in his farewell tribute, gives Brutus the praise which he would have coveted most: “This was the noblest Roman of them all” (V, v, 63). His final tribute is the greatest that can be paid to a man of honour.

“His life was gentle, and the elements so mix’d in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’”

(V, v, 73-75)

Brutus the idealist wins our sympathy, though he is doomed in the end. Retribution is similar for the hard realist Cassius as for the idealist Brutus. Both have united in the same philosophy of life and prefer death to dishonour. Both have made a searching examination of their own guilt, and both are reconciled to their end - a wrong that has to be righted. Each is moving willingly toward his death, which each feels subconsciously, is deserved.

The play begins with Caesar in his God-like splendour-striding the globe like Colossus; it ends with his ghost, a death symbol which becomes the hero as Caesarian
triumphs in the end. He is murdered so that there may be no more Caesar. "Let him be Caesar" (III, ii, 55) is the demand of the mob. Caesar's true triumph is the victory of his ideology. "The name and spirit of Caesar ring as imperially through the play as they do through history." 38

Caesar was not a king like Duncan and yet Duncan's death is not of vital importance to the world. Caesar's death was the great fact of his time — that is the overwhelming greatness of Caesar.

"The murdered man is so great in his fall as in his life that this crisis becomes itself a catastrophe and the victim must give his name to the play." 39

But E.M. Forster slightly differs in his opinion:

"I should be certain that he has planned Caesar to be little in life and great in death." 40

When Caesar is dead, his mighty spirit haunts Brutus and wins. The gigantic shadow of the dead. Caesar broods over the play after his death. It is Caesar who triumphs in the end, not Brutus.

Both Caesar and Brutus meet their deaths through
their own actions as through the actions of other men. But above all, we feel the invisible power working behind the happenings on earth.

Though there are murders and suicides, there is no villain in this tragedy. The play shows an integrated picture of murder, of the mind of the murderer and the effect of murder as a single reality.

The necessity of Caesar's murder is best known to Brutus and Cassius, the horror of it is best known to Brutus and Antony. Cassius and Antony have self-confidence but the uncertainties of situation are known only to Brutus.

Both Brutus and Othello try to convert murder into a ritual, to get rid of their burden of guilt, but their ritualistic attitude cannot conceal their guilt and they have to suffer for it. The great lover Othello murders his wife for the sake of love and justice; and the idealist Brutus kills his benefactor with the best political motives, yet murder is murder and both of them suffer for their wrong action.

Brutus is deceived in his blind idealism. In him we find the noble hero with a tragic flaw. This tragedy shows that virtue is not enough. All murder is inhuman.
No murder can be justified as bad means for good end. In accepting the path of violence, he has accepted the path of hatred, and in accepting hate, Brutus denies love — "the greatest force in life and the only hope in death." 41

The irony is that Brutus opposed Caesar because he claimed perfection, but the conspirators are infected by his arrogance. Brutus' assertion of murder as a religious ritual is his claim to moral perfection. It is like claiming divinity. The revolutionary idealist Brutus resembles what he abhorred in Caesar, and that is his deeper nemesis. The deeper tragedy of Brutus is his isolation. He is isolated by his ideals; he lives, thinks and dies alone. By temperament a stoic, he is unfitted for the task he has to perform.

"In the treatment of his inner struggle and the dignity of his death, there is a close approach to the theme and style of Shakespeare's finest tragedies." 42

Julius Caesar is partly a play of misjudged appearance. Harold Goddard says: "The whole plot against Caesar had been such an error." 43 This view is supported by L. J. Knights in Further Explorations.

"The play also enforces the close connection between error and a supposed perception of 'things that are not'" 44
as Titinius says to the dead Cassius "Alas! thou hast misconstru'd everything". (V, iii, 84).

Though Caesar is murdered, it is the tragedy of Brutus. Disparity between what we wish to be and what the world makes of us reflects the tragedy of Brutus. Both Brutus and Cassius murder Caesar and both suffer retribution, yet Brutus is the tragic hero, because he suffers pangs of conscience, not Cassius. Cassius has no conscience and is indifferent to the storm.

With the murder of Caesar there is disorder in the soul of Brutus as there is wider disorder in the life of Rome.

"We see the spirit-world itself dissociated from any normal bodies of life. We see not only the body of Rome but the spirit of Rome too severed from its body by the disorder of insurrection."

The two modes, personal and political are unified in Caesar; he is both an individual and a symbol of order, hence the shedding of his blood is accompanied by disorder in the state, as also disorder in the soul of Brutus. That order is restored with the death of Brutus.
As in Macbeth, so in Julius Caesar peace is restored after the death of the hero. In Macbeth, Macduff by killing Macbeth restores order; in Julius Caesar, Antony avenges Caesar's death and order is restored.

Julius Caesar and Macbeth have the same dramatic roots. They are plays of division, disharmony, destruction within and without. Macbeth is a butcher of many murders. For Brutus, even one murder is too much; one death is already one too many. Brutus is ultimately able to separate the evil deed from its consequence. The theological verdict is the same for both Macbeth and Brutus; cold blooded murder, whatever the temptation or whatever the ideal, is an unmitigated crime and its wages are death. Macbeth and Brutus are "parallel studies in crime and punishment." 46

Both Macbeth and Brutus murder their kinmen and achieve their goals. Brutus becomes the hero of the Romans, Macbeth becomes the king of Scotland; and yet their hour of victory is their hour of defeat because it spells their spiritual fall. So in the true sense, they fail in their schemes
"not so much because of outward events and forces but through the working of that part of their natures which originally forbade murder.\textsuperscript{47}

In Macbeth's regime, Scotland is a barren wasteland so in Julius Caesar, Caesar's death sheds the life blood of communal life of Rome. As in Macbeth, though Banquo is murdered, ultimately Banquo's spirit triumphs, his progeny will rule over Scotland; so in Julius Caesar, though Caesar is murdered his spirit wins after his death. So in the true sense, it is the defeat of Brutus. In him we see the sudden fall of a man of overwhelming greatness and the retribution falling upon him. In Brutus we find the noble hero with a tragic flaw. His very goodness has made him wrong-headed in action. He fails in life and dies sadly. By that discovery this tragedy attained a greatness hitherto attained only by Greek Tragedy. Here

"the high-minded hero tries dutifully to do right, even by means of assassination, which for him is a form of judicial execution, and comes to ruin because of fatal mistakes in judgment growing out of faulty wisdom."\textsuperscript{43}
The fall of the great man was an old idea in tragedy as we find in Marlowe's tragedies, but the fall of the great man who is good and through his goodness, is the new idea in tragedy. The idea that a good man can do incalculable harm from the best possible motives is Shakespeare's interpretation of this historical play — not found in its source in Plutarch.

Shakespeare's version of this historical material is his unique contribution. It is no longer a play of murders and suicides, it is not a play of crime and punishment. It is his own dramatic and imaginative interpretation of the mind of the murderer and the effect of murder on different persons in particular and on nation in general. Even swords and daggers are important throughout dramatically and imaginatively. Daggers and swords are scattered throughout. Spirited action uses them for its purpose. There are the daggers that murder Caesar. Brutus uses the same dagger for himself when his country needs his death:

"... as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself when it shall please my country to need my death."

(III, ii, 50-52)
Swords and daggers are used to symbolize death. Says Strato of Brutus' death: "I held the sword, and he did run on it." (v, v, 65).

As there are frequent references to daggers and swords, there are frequent references to blood. Brutus advises the assassins to bathe their arms and smear their swords in Caesar's blood. Then Antony in his orations emphasizes blood.

"The pages of this play are drenched in it and yet the blood imagery does not hold a quarter of the terror and the misery of the blood speeches in Macbeth." 49

In this play, blood-imagery does not horrify

"It is a brilliant stream of rich life, sacrificially poured out in a drama of vivid life, erotic perception, dynamic and spiritualized humanity." 50

Brutus points out a body-spirit contrast "and in the spirit of men there is no blood" (II, 1, 163) but in the blood of men there is a spirit. The contrast between body and spirit bridged by 'blood' is fundamental; hence the power of Caesar's blood throughout the play.
Blood is vitality, the nearest physical thing to the spiritual and therefore shedding of Caesar's blood is of vital significance.

Calphurnia has a dream in which she sees Caesar's statue:

"which, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it."

(II, ii, 77-79)

Decius interprets it as "a vision fair and fortunate" (II, ii, 34) as the statue spouting blood and Romans bathing in it.

"Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck Reviving blood, and that great men shall press For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance."

(II, ii, 37-89)

So the shedding of blood is, as it were, the spilling out of life. Life and blood are almost equated. Caesar falls at the base of Pompey's statue "which all the while ran blood," (III, ii, 194) and then Brutus fulfils Calphurnia's blood dream: "and let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood." (III, i, 106). It is thus recognized alike by Antony and
the conspirators who smear their hands in it, as in a stream of life — All the speeches and actions impress one thing: the costliness of Caesar's blood, which is a life stream of infinite value. As the blood, so the image of fire has been referred to several times — the fire of emotion, the fire of spirited action. Such imaginative interpretation and dramatic delineation of a great historical fact of Caesar's murder lend a true Shakespearean touch.
Antony and Cleopatra

Antony and Cleopatra, a grand scale drama of love and death, has wide ranging motives for suicide. In Antony and Cleopatra, as in Othello the theme is an interaction between different civilizations. In Antony and Cleopatra, the characters and history are ranged side by side, like the tragic and the political themes running together.

The play focuses a dramatic conflict within Antony as much as the conflict between Antony & Rome, a conflict between honour and lust. The love of Antony Cleopatra is in conflict with the social order as well as political. It needs death for its consummation.

Antony had a Roman wife Fulvia who died fighting his political battles. The news of her death emphasises the dramatic contrast in relationship of Cleopatra the mistress and Fulvia the wife, with Antony. The death of Fulvia is reported. The reported death of Fulvia forecasts the false report of the death of Cleopatra.

The play is not a mere romance. It is history, depicting the conflict between two world conquerors, as also the conflict between Rome on the Tyber and Alexandria on the
Nile. This political conflict is symbolized in a marriage of convenience between Antony and Octavia, the sister of Octavius. But the truce is shortlived, as Antony is pulled back to Egypt by his passion for its queen.

The wrecking of his marriage with Octavia leads to a war of attrition, between Octavius and Antony. Antony's infatuation for Cleopatra blinds him to errors in his military decisions. Invincible on land, he decides to fight a naval battle at Antium. At a critical turn in the battle Cleopatra retreats and the great Antony to his everlasting shame turns his back and flies in pursuit of Cleopatra. Not all his greatness can conceal this shameful act and death is the only way to save himself from this shame.

"Since Cleopatra died, I have lived in such dishonour, that the Gods Detest my baseness."

(IV, xii, 55-57)

Antony resolves that he should undergo inevitable prosecution for his disgrace. He commands his faithful follower Eros to kill him but when Eros hesitates, Antony queries:
"Wouldst thou be window'd in great Rome, and see
Thy master thus with pleas'd arms, bending down
His corrugible neck, his face subdu'd
To penetrative shame."

(IV, xii, 72-75)

Bros had promised that when shame and disgrace were ahead, he would kill his master. But at the exigent moment, he implores:

"turn from me then that noble countenance,
Wherein the worship of the whole world lies."

(IV, xii, 35-36)

When Antony's face is turned, Bros stabs himself. Bros thus slays himself to escape "the sorrow of Antony's death". (IV, xii, 94).

His other faithful servant Enobarbus left his master Antony at the crucial time of his defeat, but Antony bears no ill-will towards him and sends all his treasures "with his bounty overplus" (IV, vi, 22). Enobarbus is so touched that he exclaims:

"I am alone the villain of the earth
And feel I am so most."

(IV, vi, 30-31)
Antony's generosity awakes the conscience of Enobarbus who had deserted him. In response to Antony's nobility, there is an upsurge in Enobarbus' heart:

".......... throw my heart
against the flint and hardness of my fault,
which, being dried with grief, will break to
powder,
and finish all foul thoughts. O Antony!
Nobler than my revolt is infamous
Forgive me in thine own particular;
But let the world rank me in register
A master-leaver and a fugitive."

(IV, ix, 15-22)

Enobarbus thus redeems himself by dying of grief and shame. He dies broken-hearted. Greater love has no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friend. He has realized that "all expediency is dust and ashes beside the living flame of his love." His loyalty to his fallen master is final and secure. Now his only life is in death.

Enobarbus' death, as also the death of Eros, is synchronized with uttermost loyalty. Each dies for loyalty. Their suicides vindicate the royalty of Antony which commands such loyalty. In their loyalty is reflected the essence of their true selves.
Antony ennobles the sacrifice of those loyal followers and is ennobled by their sacrifice.

Antony is thus left to kill himself. When the false tidings of Cleopatra's death reach him, his only desire is to join her "where souls do couch on flowers." (IV, xii, 51). He attempts suicide but bungles even in that. His entire being is centred in Cleopatra. When this support is withdrawn, he is bewildered by his loss of identity. There is no point or purpose in life any more, the only way out is the resolution:

"...... there is left us
Ourselves to end ourselves."

(IV, xii, 21-2)

A word of Cleopatra's death leads him to self recognition "towards essentials - ...... towards self-discovery, towards re-evaluations." At the moment of desolation he attempts a recognition of his essential self, a new sense of self. He realizes that without Cleopatra "there is no light to light his way." Cleopatra's death is to Antony as a light extinguished.
"All length is torture, since the torch is out, Lie down and stray no further."

(IV, xii, 46-47)

Betrayed in hopes, "he is left a Roman to end simply as a Roman." The world without Cleopatra has no meaning for him, the single minute has been to him as years. The world is unlighted after her death. It is a barren promontory without love. Hearing the news of her death, his lustful attachment is transformed into honourable fidelity. At the end, he feels that his isolation is redeemed as he envisions immortal love with her.

"In response to Cleopatra's supposed suicide, Antony looks upon death with joyful anticipation as a means of escaping the entanglements of temporal existence into a realm of idyllic freedom."

He tries to commit suicide but fails in taking his life at a stroke. When he is dying, he learns that Cleopatra is not waiting to meet him in the Elysian fields, he looks upon death as a means of holding the visible shape in her memory.

When Antony is informed that Cleopatra had sent false news of her death as she thought his rage would not
be purged otherwise, no word of reproach slips Antony's lips. His last wish is to be carried "where Cleopatra bides." (IV, xii, 131).

Both Antony and Cleopatra make their final choice only after their political defeat. Power for Antony is chiefly a means to pleasure. His last desire is to die by her side. In her, he finds his Absolute.

"She is his heart's desire made perfect. To love her is what he was born for. To die is to rejoin her. To deny that this is love, is the madness of morality." 56

If Antony chose to give himself to public affairs, he would have world empire in his grasp. But it was impossible for him to find his world elsewhere. "Let Rome in Tyber melt." (I, i, 33).

Nobility and gentleness shine through Antony's last moments. His suicide is a tribute to the love and affection she commands. There is completeness and sublimity in his dying love for Cleopatra. In his last moments, Antony awakes from illusion to reality. He reviews his career with wisdom gained on the brink of death. His last words "I am dying, Egypt, dying" (IV, xii, 41).
"remind us of words ....... 'No rest but the grave for the pilgrim of love.' Antony is more than love's pilgrim; he is love's martyr." 57

At the moment of death, Antony finds honour in truth to himself — as he reaches a greater tragic height than Cleopatra. His is a great sacrifice of political ambition as also of social reputation.

Antony's death is a triumph over the world, not a defeat by it. The dignity of his death suspends all usual debate. Death, for Antony, is certainly not exhaustion; it is a consummation. His death is an event too mighty even for gods.

"Antony's death is a cosmic disaster, against which the universe itself should veil its face." 58

The glorious aspect of suicide is represented in Antony's end. Antony, like all heroes, has the courage to defy death; but like true lovers, he woos death as a means to eternal union in love, almost a timeless nuptial. "but I will be a bridegroom in my death, and run into't as to a lover's bed." (IV, xii, 99-101).
Suicide as a weapon of victory over the adversary is illustrated in Antony's suicide. Antony's death deprives Caesar of victory.

"Not Caesar's valour hath o'erthrown Antony, But Antony's hath triumphed on itself."

(IV, xiii, 14-15)

Cleopatra's death is to Antony the extinction of light; so is Antony's death to Cleopatra:

"Ah, women, women, look! Our lamp is spent, it's out."

(IV, xiii, 84-85)

The world is deprived of its light, or if lit at all, then by a pale moon. So

"... the bright day is done
And we are for the dark."

(V, ii, 192-193)

Antony wins Cleopatra again.

After Antony's death, Cleopatra justifies his faith in her. Cleopatra faints when he dies. When she recovers, she has changed. The shock of his death strikes
her senseless, but her spirit is unquelled. There has been a change in her personality, in the last moments from the theatrical to the poetical.

"As she renounces the intoxicants of earth, a celestial intoxication comes over her. She feels herself being transmitted from earth into fire and air." 59

There are two meetings of Antony and Cleopatra at Cydnus, the earthly meeting as described by Enobarbus and the spiritual meeting as visualized by Cleopatra to which death is the entrance. The two meetings at Cydnus are a study in contrast: the first expresses the poetry of the senses, the other offers the poetry of imagination.

"Show me, my women, like a queen; go fetch My best attiros; I am again for Cydnus, To meet Mark Antony."

(V, ii, 226-228)

But J.C. Eary comments:

"Not again for Cydnus ..... For that old Cydnus, where the wonder pageant was, was but a symbol and prefiguration of this. That was an event in time, this is an event in eternity. Those royal robes were then only lovely garments of the body, now they are the integument of a soul. They must
show her like a queen now, because she is a queen, as she never was before.

It is at this moment .... while the queenly soul in travail of its own royalty awaits the flash of incandescence, that Shakespeare makes the extreme challenge to reality." 60

After Antony's death transformation takes place in her. She proclaims:

"My resolution's plac'd, and I have nothing of woman in me; now from head to foot I am marble constant".

(V, ii, 237-239)

When Antony who was Cleopatra's son, declines, she abjures her symbol, the moon:

"now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine".

(V, ii, 239)

A flicker of that cosmic suggestion brings new depth to her royalty. "Death is here dynamically conceived as an entrance into the cosmic harmony." 61 Her concept of death is the transcendence of this world into a world of fire and air, a world of pure spirit where they will meet again.
"I am fire, and air; my other elements
I give to baser life."

(V, ii, 291–292)

She sees the vision of a world made magnificent by Antony.

"His face was as the Heavens, and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted
The little o, the earth."

(V, ii, 73–74)

After his death, for Cleopatra:

"The crown of the earth doth melt. My lord!
0! wither'd is the garland of the war."

(IV, xiii, 63–64)

"gone is the measure and topmost garland of
all human enterprises." 62

after his death, to her, the earth is deplete of all glory, all magnificence.

"And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon."

(IV, xiii, 66–67)
In her lament, he is visualized as the world's symbol of excellence.

"His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm
Created the world; his voice was propertied as all the tuned spheres."

(V, ii, 32-34)

"For his bounty,
There was no winter in't, an autumn it was
That grew the more by reaping"

(V, ii, 86-88)

in his livery/...crows and crownets, realms and islands were/...plates dropped from his pocket." (V, ii, 90-91).

After his death, Cleopatra undertakes the task of perpetuating his image. It seems changed into a vision: "I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony" (V, ii, 76).

She wakes, as it were, out of her trance:

"Think you there was, or might be, such a man
As this I dream'd of?"

(V, ii, 92-93)

After his death, Cleopatra has dreams of a cosmic Antony; but this dream was real.
"It's past the size of dreaming; nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with fancy; yet to imagine
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst fancy
Condemning shadows quite."

(V, ii, 97-100)

To her, Antony was and remains here man of men. Dolabella registers this incommensurability of her loss and suffering

"Your loss is as yourself, great; and you bear it
As answering to the weight: would I might never
O'ertake pursu'd success, but I do feel,
By the rebound of yours,a grief that irritates
My very heart at root."

(V, ii, 101-105)

After Antony's death, she recognizes the futility of all passion; death alone has positive significance.

Out of her varying moods, only one fact emerges — her love of Antony — among all else fleeting — only her love abides; ultimately it alone is changeless. In his death, she sees Antony, transfigured by love, in his cosmic form.

She has a vision of Antony as a cosmic force:

"His face was as the Heavens and therein
Stuck
A Sun and Moon."

(V, ii, 79-80)
"Cleopatra .... Speaking of Antony uses most majestically and most magically the concept of the microcosm and the macrocosm." 63

To Cleopatra, dead Antony is not only the Sun and the Moon, not merely the crown of the earth and the garland of the war, but he is the macrocosm itself. Such a man is "past the size of dreaming" (V, ii, 97).

"At the end, through the poetic glory of Cleopatra's recreation of Antony we feel that in a sense the new Heaven and Earth have been found." 64

De rived of her earthly glory; she attains reaffirmation on a higher plane. Left alone, she sees him as one with the glorious universe and triumphantly follows him. Here we receive an immediate immortality intuition beyond the ordinary tragic acceptance. In her death, she will re-live Cydnus. Relief through grief is not for her. She has immortal longings for Antony which she will die to fulfil. For her death is a meeting and a consummation.

The closer to death Cleopatra draws the more actively her histrionic imagination works. She sees the vision of her Antony in all his magnificence. He lives in her vision as an Emperor. This is the miracle that dead Antony has performed on the mercurial Cleopatra. "His
devotion to her even if unto death is what does it." 65 — believes Goddard. Antony's devotion to Cleopatra transforms her; the enchantress disappears yielding place to new Cleopatra, devoted to her Antony. After his death, her memory of Antony transforms what little of life is left for her on earth. The change in Cleopatra is confirmed in her words:

"My desolation does begin to make
A better life."

(V, ii, 1-2)

She must live in the blaze of her own light or die; and she has decided to die like a queen enrobes. Their love needs sacrifice for its proper consummation. Only in her self-immolation for Antony is found their eternal marriage.

Cleopatra refers to her anticipated suicide as a noble deed. When she announces her intention to commit suicide, she asks unachronistically: "Then is it sin

To rush into the secret house of death,
Are death dare come to us?"

(IV, xiii, 90-92)

Her suicide reveals many motives — the romantic motive of following love in death the resentment at the
humiliation of surrender to Caesar, and the instinct to dramatise a final display of royal courage. Her death is not a regeneration but a sublimation of all her qualities.

The dying Cleopatra rehearses multiple roles of queen, wife, mistress nursing mother and cunning victor. Death to her means liberty, a chance to rejoin Antony in all the triumphant splendour.

"The quick change of mood in her final lines, from swooning rapture to alert impatience, shows her 'variety' undampened to the end. Even in death, she sustains the impression of a vitality not extinguished but merely dormant." 66

Cleopatra had unpardonable faults, but all are redeemed by the beauty of her death. She keeps up her queen-like dignity even in her defeat. She is true to herself to the end and in the end

"tragically true to a self loft sublimated by great loss" 67

She is confirmed in her loss.

With the death of Antony, the world is vacant for her and she swoons. Then her maids address her as Empress, she denies:
"No more, but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks
And does the meanest chares"

(IV, xiii, 73-75)

"what abides, what in the end has come to
dominate the rich chameleon quality of her
existence, her majesty of being, what has
come to be its meaning -- is Antony and her
passion for him, a passion which is not here
as Empress but as a woman".68

In the end, she dramatizes their pilgrimage to
its abiding meaning. It is death, in her vision, which
transcends time "which shackles accidents, and bolts
up change," (V, ii, 6). It liberates from fortunes wheel.
To understand this, we will have to grasp the meaning of
this particular death as also the complex nature of death
itself.

Cleopatra faces death and hereafter with the full-
est confidence. She accepts death with dignity and self-
assurance. Death no longer holds any dread for her. She
hurries towards it. Death is a state she looks forward to.
Her death is an assertion of the spirit. She takes
courage from the softness and ease of Iras' death. Cleopatra
approaching her self chosen end is a woman of the greatest
tragic dignity. At the moment of dying, Cleopatra becomes an illustration of the greatness and strength of an invincible spirit. In her death, Cleopatra becomes worthy of the isolation and death that Antony had willingly accepted for her.

When Cleopatra is nearing her self chosen death, she asks Charmian "To play till doomsday." (V, ii, 231). When Cleopatra imagines death, she imagines it as a consummation of love. By the alchemy of her images, death is transmuted into a sleep of love. It gathers definiteness in her cry:

"Where art thou, death?
Come hither, come, come, and take ausan
Worth many's babes and beggars!"

(V, ii, 46-47)

To Cleopatra, death is "The beggar's nurse and Caesar's"
(V, ii, 3)

"Death - Cleopatra - nurse - babe - sleep; these are the ever-changing elements of the 'sensation' which is Cleopatra"

For a moment, she is a woman, even a girl.
After his death, it is Cleopatra who reverberates his loyalty in her imperishable lament and final sacrifice. In Antony's death, Cleopatra becomes aware of his royalty, and loyalty surges up in her. Thus she knows her lover better in his death than when he lived.

"So fully does this new Cleopatra realize the splendour of Antony at death that her memory of him transforms what little of life is left for her on earth into Heaven." 70

Her remaining life is transformed into a Heaven on earth. Harold Goddard comments: "A new Cleopatra is using the old Cleopatra as her instrument." 71 The new Cleopatra orders; the old one obeys. With the robe on and a crown on her head, and immortal longings within her she play acts the very act of death. In Cleopatra's death, there is neither the feeling of horror, nor that of suspense. She dies gloriously and royally.

Cleopatra rises in her final act. Cleopatra in the end confirms her constancy in self-chosen death. As she says

"Hat's brave, what's noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
And make death proud to take us."

(IV, xiii, 36-88)
But Cleopatra's death is not after the high Roman fashion that she had predicted; it is a glorious Oriental celebration. It is a painless death—such a death that has in it

"Something dazzling and splendid, something sensuous, something theatrical, something magnificently coquettish and nothing stern." 72

In the vicinity of death, she rises to poetical planes. Her death gives a new meaning to her life. It fulfills their bond of love.

"... husband, I come:
Now to that name my courage prove my title!"

(V, ii, 289–290)

Death confirms this truth "the fullness of her death will embody the fullness of her life" 73 a lived fullness, a passionate overflow of imaginatively fecund life energies.

At death, a _passion_ is the sum total of what he has been in life. Cleopatra retains her sensuousness, her arrogance, her jealousy even in death. She says of
Iras, lying dead at her feet.

"If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have."

(V, ii, 303-305)

Like a romantic bride, she envisions Antony awaiting her in Heaven.

Cleopatra's end is tragic in an exalted sense. She consciously and ceremoniously fashions the style of her death. Till the very end, she is in full enjoyment of her faculties. She is charming even in death. She puts her conqueror to scorn and goes to meet her lover in all splendour. After Antony's death, Cleopatra has entered a dream-like world. Her final cry signifies her union with him. She who had scorned Fulvia as 'the married woman', now exults in her own marriage in death: "Husband I come". (V, ii, 289). To Antony, she offers what is most pure in her: "I am fire and air, my other elements I give to baser life." (V, ii, 291-292). Her vision of Paradise is as voluptuous as Antony's had been. Her only aspiration now is eternity of love together.

The way Cleopatra faces death shows her resilience as also her sensuousness. The terrible aspic is treated as
a lover whose pinch "hurts and is desired" (V, ii, 293).

It is also treated tenderly as a baby "That sucks the nurse asleep" (V, ii, 311). But she is also philosophic:

"this knot intrinsic of life atonce untie"

(V, ii, 306-307)

So the aspic, which is a source of death will solve the riddle of life. The asp is mortal in a double sense: it will open the door of immortal longings and it will untie the knot of life which is 'intrinsicate' – both intrinsic and intricate. The clown who brings the asp in the basket of figs, is a grotesque figure of death.

Cleopatra dies crowned and beauteous. Her death is an added glory to her life. As she takes the asp to untie the knot intrinsic of life, she imagines herself its mother.

"Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?"

(V, ii, 310-311)

For Cleopatra, dying is "as sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle" (V, ii, 313) and dying for her is but a final swoon of sense. In death, she has the calm of consummation.
As Middleton Murry observes:

"Shakespeare — Cleopatra .... is in love with easeful death. Death and her drowsy child are merged into one another and Cleopatra is the drowsy child." 74

When she prepares for suicide, she reaches tragic height. In her death, she mounts to a plane of tragic grandeur. Shakespeare's portrayal of fickle Cleopatra ends with a death befitting a Princess of a line of many royal Kings — Charmian applauds Cleopatra's brave act of suicide

"It is well done, and fitting for a princess Descended of so many royal Kings

(V, ii, 328-329)

Caesar's comment is a testimonial: "Bravest at the last". (V, ii, 336). She is the only Shakespearean woman to die heroically, even theatrically, as theatrically as she had lived. Yet at the same time, she is the only Shakespearean heroine to reach tragic stature. She turns death into life.

To Antony, to face death is to face the inescapable fact, whereas to Cleopatra, death is a vindication of her maddening life.

"The serpent of the Nile has been transformed into the Phoenix ... who has gone up in a tongue of mutual flame with the
Only in death can they achieve a union that is beyond the vicissitudes of uncertainty, jealousy, fear. They are transported to a world where they are beyond worldly judgment. They are liberated by death. They leap across mortality. Death comes to them not as a punishment but as the fulfilment "the apotheosis of their love." 

Cleopatra is so irresistibly charming even in her death, that it is natural that her women die with her; it is also natural that Dolabella should betray Caesar, his master for her. Even tight-lipped Caesar cannot help paying her tribute after her death:

"She looks like sleep, 
As she would catch another Antony 
In her strong toil of grace."

(V, ii, 347-349)

Caesar's tribute prolongs her triumph beyond death. This shows that she conquered Caesar in death. In her death she outwitted a man like Caesar. Thus dead Cleopatra makes Caesar realize that there is something mightier than might. She kindles the poet within him.

We see Antony and Cleopatra in the vicinity of death
"transfigured in a transfigured universe
...... Cleopatra and Antony find not
dead but life. This is the high meta-
physic of love which melts life and
death into a final oneness." 77

Shakespeare bodies forth Cleopatra who is
superhuman and human. In Ira's words she is "Royal
Egypt! Empress!" (IV, xiii, 71), but Cleopatra reacts
"No more, but e'on a woman" (IV, xiii, 73). Cleopatra
is bodied forth anew in Charmian's words:

"Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
a lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close;
And golden Phoebus never be beheld
Of eyes again so royall"

(V, ii, 317-320)

"By the words 'golden Phoebus' Cleopatra
herself is suffused with a sunset glow
and her dignity in death is endued with
the majesty of the Heavens." 78

Dazzling all throughout her life Cleopatra retains
her dazzling splendour and regality in her death. Caesar
stands dazed by this Orient beauty in death. He looks on
her crowned and robed. Cleopatra who could not win Caesar
in life, wins him in her death. Caesar speaks the last
epitome of her and Antony's glory.
"She shall be buried by her Antony
No grave upon the earth shall slip in it
A pair so famous."

(V, ii, 359-361)

The description of her death is the most magnificent description in Shakespeare. The infinite variety of her moods is closed in a constancy that no mortal Caesar can defeat.

Cleopatra's maids die with her, Iras first.
Charmian survives to do her last duty and to pronounce the final word on her mistress

"Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies a lass unparallel'd."

(V, ii, 317-318)

Following her mistress, she also applies the deadly asp and embraces death in the same manner. Her last gesture is to show her mistress as the queen by trimming up the diadem on her dead mistress, loyal to the last breath. The royal mistress and her maids — they all die painless death — there is no drop of blood, no hideous effect of poisoning. Not only the great Cleopatra but even her maids have the courage to choose death. They die for loyalty to her as she dies for love for Antony.
The loyalty of Enobarbus and Eros for their master is matched by the loyalty of Charmian and Iris for their Eastern queen Cleopatra; Iris loves Cleopatra and while leave taking with a kiss from Cleopatra, she dies by a pure denial of life in the manner of the East. But

"Charmian is of fiercer breed. Quick, desperate agonized, sticking to her task to the end—when all is over, she is at it still, fighting her queen's battles. Still, mocking the enemy. She laughs in triumph as she too dies." 79

Our admiration for Cleopatra is heightened by the deaths of Charmian and Iris, by the heroic faith, Cleopatra has inspired in them.

Not only the deaths of the major characters but even those of minor characters are significant. To both, Antony and Cleopatra, a devoted confident—Eros and Iris, respectively, shows each the way to die.

Enobarbus, Eros, Charmian, Iris—each dies for love or loyalty—as also the two protagonists.

"But there is no fall to death. Death is a rising. To watch a crescendo of the soul to death, itself the aim; the canopy, climacteric and crown of life." 80
In the centre of the play are the great lovers raging, loving, despairing. The royal lovers are faced with Heaven and Earth.

"The Earth which cannot contain them, the Heaven which they cannot change. The world is hostile. Heaven and Earth have to fall so that love can triumph. But Heaven and Earth are stronger than Antony and Cleopatra. The royal lovers have to surrender or choose death."  

The royal lovers choose death to reunite thereafter in a better world. Horowitz bears it out. The love of Antony and Cleopatra

"aspires beyond all existent measures, requires new scales, a transvaluation of values to find its adequate frame."  

These romantic lovers have loved in the shadow of death. Only by dying, can they prove the loyalty and truth of their love. By dying Antony is her husband, so also her death makes her his wife.

"Something more than their world presence has engaged them with one another, and this bond has abided."  

What abides is their imperishable love. By dying for each other they gain each other.
"A main movement here is rebirth; they are born to each other and to themselves, even as they are dying to the world." 84

Historical events have parted the lovers and a dreadful fate awaits them. But the need of love is deeper in them than can be satisfied by life on earth. Love cannot be reconciled with the struggle for power. Antony and Cleopatra make their final choice. Only after their defeat.

The two sinners experience purgatory while alive. Antony's purgatory takes the form of military failure and bungled suicide. Survival after Antony and fear of a Roman triumph make purgatory for Cleopatra. They escape from purgatory through defeat and death. Defeat is their Grace. The lovers' vision of Hereafter is neither Christian nor pagan. They are cleansed by adversity and purged of selfish fear. Their deaths are a revelation of the self-giving element of love. In the face of death, they make imaginative readjustments. Cleopatra's art of dying consists of immortal longings and erotic fantasizing. Both the lovers welcome death for a reunion in a better world: — a world that accepts their vision of reality and its truth of the heart.
Death becomes a joyful experience for them. It releases them from the world which offers no place for them. Since the practical world prohibits total union of the two souls, that union can only occur beyond this world in that other world to which death is the vestibule. In the words of G. Wilson Knight "They die into love". They are lifted from the nadir of catastrophe to the height of a kind of success.

In this play, death is the supreme good. Antony and Cleopatra die for love. The final moment of love comes put with the time-destroying act of death. The immortality of love is indisputable in the end.

"In Antony and Cleopatra the love and death revelations are one; .... a representation of immortality in terms, not of time but of quality and value which is love."  

Antony and Cleopatra is a triumphant song of golden death – death harmonizes with love. The similes and metaphors bring death under the sovereignty of love. Love is the inward spiritual grace in Antony and Cleopatra. The deaths of Antony and Cleopatra are a victory of passionate illicit love over practical political and moral
concerns. It dramatizes the superiority of suicide over circumstances. Shakespeare infuses intense energy in the rendering of their love.

The theme of Antony and Cleopatra is love, all-consuming, all-preserving. Love completely destroys them, love also finally rehabilitates them. Here Shakespeare symbolizes love's triumph over death. It points the supreme victory of the erotic impulse, even though morality frowns upon it. In the words of C. Wilson Knight:

"The Love problems and Death Problems are resolved by being harmonized in the unity of death-in-love. ..... by synchronizing a fine moment of love consciousness with the time-vanquishing act of death, the timeless nature of that love consciousness is made apparent, or that the death and love union represents a union of immortality: in terms of quality rather than quantity, value rather than time." 87

Time holds a different meaning for every major character in this play. For Caesar, time means the future, for Antony, it is the past, for Cleopatra, time means the present. The linking of life and death is communicated through a wide range of images derived from
the cyclic process of ebb and tide, the round of growth
and decay and two kinds of death — mortal death reflected
in Cleopatra's celerity in dying and erotic death suggested
through the immortal worm "that kills and pains not"
(V, ii, 243).

Antony, nearing his death, speaks,

"...... the long day's task is
done,
And we must sleep"

(IV, xii, 34-35)

This is echoed by Iras to Cleopatra:

"Finish, good lady; the bright day is
done,
And we are for the dark."

(V, ii, 192-193)

it is both an echo and a contrast. To Antony, the long
day meant work and then rest. But for Cleopatra, she
must shine or disappear.

The romantic lovers know what time is, for they
live in the shadow of tomorrow. The dying Antony implores
death to tarry a while
"I bade importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips."

(IV, xiii, 19-21)

The great romantic lover that he was, he dies
as a lover, with the last wish of a lover. They die for
love and accept death willingly, as death alone will
offer what life has denied. For them death is not anni­
hilation, death is not destruction, it is not negation.
It is positive, it is the entrance into a new life and a
better life.

"Over and over in this play we are made
to see death as something else than
simple negation, and negation itself as
more than mere loss." 88

The idea of embracing death is a very old idea.
Cleopatra at her death, treats death in practically the
same way. For her, "The stroke of death is as a lover's
pinch." (V, ii, 297).

At Antony's death, Cleopatra cries: "The crown
of the earth doth melt." (IV, xiii, 63). Antony says:
"Here I am Antony; Yet cannot hold this visible shape."
(IV, xii, 13-14). For Cleopatra "dying is a soft melting
a dissolving, a blending of essence with essence." And to Antony

"Death is ..... a change of mode, a melting, a dissolving and perhaps a reforming in some newer fashion of this 'visible shape'. ..... Death is a soft changeful dissolution." 90

At the end death ends all deeds "shackles accidents, and bolts up change" (V, ii, 6)

"time is dissolved and eternity's star burns solitary-bright in the dark." 91

Her love, not warriorship has the monopoly of honour. In the end Death and love become identical. Death is Antony's bride:

" .......... I will be
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
As to a lover's bed."

(IV, xii, 99-101)

Here death is equated with beloved. Here death is no cadence.

"Death is rather the meridian of that embracing unknown which holds 'time' and 'eternity' as twin quadrants of its arching glory." 92
In their sacrifices love and death blend in a kind of life. Towards the end Death and Antony are lovers. Death is kind, it is a positive reality, death enlarges life's confine - "till death enlarge his confine." (III, v, 13).

There is finally no hint of tragic pair, so we joyfully

"... let determined things to destiny
Hold unbewail'd their way."

(III, vi, 84–85)

Destiny is kind, it allows the lovers to reach their heritage of love's immortality.

"In Antony and Cleopatra, death is the consummation of life, itself 'a better life', in truth, no death at all, but life. Here life conquers death." 93

In this play death is shown in its most aesthetic aspect. Exquisite poetry calls up such visions of rich beauty to present the two lovers, destroying themselves and each other, for a better life. Death is here sublimated as the supreme good. In Shakespeare we often find love and death interchangeable. In Antony and
Cleopatra as in Romeo and Juliet earlier, love and death go hand in hand. And it is this condition that lifts death to a great aesthetic plane. It becomes a thing of beauty. Here life no more divides whom death can join together.
Chapter 7

Shakespeare’s Ancient World

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