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In its towering central characters, vast geographical and historical sweep, and its variety of style and mood, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is perhaps the most ambitious of Shakespeare's designs. Yet the degree and nature of its success remain surprisingly contentious, and performances of the play have seldom matched the extravagant expectations of its admirers.

Michael Neill's wide-ranging introduction from a number of angles, including those of gender and race. He examines the sources and discusses the theatrical challenge presented by Shakespeare's technique, with its extraordinary tensions between rhetoric and action. A full stage history further illustrates its theatrical fortunes; both here and in the extensive commentary this edition illuminates the play's theatrical dimensions as well as the rich complexity of its poetic language.