Analysis of scenes 1-2 Act 1, Antony and Cleopatra

“Antony and Cleopatra” is a Shakespeare’s tragedy, therefore, differently from the other plays, the beginning scene has to announce a coming disaster that in this play is represented by the death of the two lovers. But in all categories of his plays, Shakespeare wants to create an interesting setting which involves the spectator’s attention. He quickly introduces a sort of conflict. The first scene of the act 1 is set in in Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria of Egypt, it opens with Philo that is discussing with Demetrius. The spectator understands that Philo disapproves the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, he tells that, before Antony’s love for her, his general had had the same boldness of Mars (the Roman god of the war and masculinity) and after he became submitted to Cleopatra and Philo demonstrates his disdain using the word “gypsy”. When Antony and Cleopatra arrived the conflict is evident: Cleopatra is discussing about the marriage between Fulvia and Antony, so the intelligent reader understands that Cleopatra is very jealous. Then Antony tries to keep her quiet telling that he loves only her and not Rome, she is warried because he fears that he follows Caesar too much and if he doesn’t execute the orders he will be killed. After the discussion they think again to their plans and go out for a walk. Demetrius and Philo, who heard all about the discussion, tell that Antony doesn’t respect Caesar a lot.

In the second scene the hand maid of Cleopatra enter and speaks with Alexas and a soothsayer. Carmiana asks the soothsayer to “read” his future using the “hand’s reading”. She wants to become beautiful and powerful like her owner Cleopatra but the soothsayer tells that fortune is not coming.

Antony arrives and he is speaking with a messenger who gives him a terrible new: the Parths occupy Syria, Lydia and Ionia. After arrives another messenger with a worst new: the death of Fulvia, Antony’s wife. He desired her death but he isn’t really happy indeed he says that everyone who dies is regretted and Antony thinks that his indolence could be dangerous for himself. He calls Enobarbus and specifies that he wants to leave Egypt immediately. Enobarbus advises him to remain because leaving could be an imprudent action. He tells him that particularly Cleopatra could be deluded, but Antony explains him that he has to leave because Fulvia is died and Enobarbus advises him to offer a sacrifice to the gods. Antony says that other events graves on his decision: letters by friends invite him to return in Rome and Sextus Pompeus is threating the political attitude of Rome, he is a valid general and soldier that challenged Caesar to rule the Roman territory.

So the second scene announces another complication in the tragedy: if in the first scene is presented the complex relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, in the second scene are presented the political complications that pervaded Egypt and Rome, that then will fall in a real war.