Cleopatra to the Bard, Concerning *Julius Caesar*

William, I was there, in Rome,
on the Ides. I clung to our son.
I heard Antony stir the pot,

sway the mob, and thought
of Caesar’s dark orbs lighting
on my body the first time.

You have deprived me
of an excellent monologue
debating the bloody stars,

his wounds, the serpent
of memory twined around
our thousand-watt sheets--

Caesar could be tender,
for a dictator. Who remembers
Portia? It’s your loss,

scratching Egypt
from the dramatis personae.
Were you afraid I’d steal

the show, dim the luster
of stoic Romans
falling on their swords?

One scene, two, with *me*
would have relieved
your dreary play, unmanned

the critics. It’s enough
to make a great queen cry.
Yes, I know the later tragedy

with Antony makes up,
somewhat, for the slight,
but imagine this moment:

Caesar, to twist a line
Cavafian, bidding farewell
to the Cleopatra he is losing.