

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.