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# Classical Masculinity in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra

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**CLASSICAL MASCULINITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S**

***ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA***

By

Timothy Grams

THESIS

Submitted to  
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CLASSICAL MASCULINITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

This thesis by Timothy Grams is recommended for approval by the student's Thesis Committee and Department Head in the Department of English and by the Assistant Provost of Graduate Education and Research.

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## ABSTRACT

### CLASSICAL MASCULINITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

By

TIMOTHY GRAMS

This thesis uses the formula of classical masculinity to examine Marc Antony's value as a Roman man in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Examining Antony's history as a Roman hero, I distinguish how his reputation is destroyed through his romantic involvement with Cleopatra. Furthermore, I consider the divine representations of Cleopatra and Octavian Caesar as they oppose each other, and how Antony's role within their conflict defines his value as a classical Roman man. I then deliberate his sexual fetishism for the matriarch pharaoh, and how their relationship functions as sadomasochistic, defining Antony as the masochist and Cleopatra as the sadist. In conclusion, I focus on Antony's suicide, and determine the masculine value of his final moments within the play.

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## **Part 1: Introduction**

This project examines early modern forms of masculinity in *Antony and Cleopatra* by measuring Roman concepts of virility and power. The classic Roman army, composed exclusively of Roman men, conquered the majority of Western Europe, a portion of Northern Africa, part of Western Asia, and a sizable portion of the British Isles. The adult Roman male's citizenship, and value, was not always linked exclusively to war, but war arguably shaped the Roman economy. Conquering other nations allowed Rome access to slaves, minerals, trade routes, and other essentials that allowed the Republic/Empire to flourish. Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul made him an exceptionally wealthy man, and vastly increased the wealth of Rome, thus making the man favored among the people. Such popularity led to his deification due to the model he came to represent as both a man of war and a model citizen. Carole Pateman, feminist and political theorist, has observed that "The masculinity of citizenship and the masculinity of war have been conceptually connected in Western thought—and connected through some of the most central ideals of the (masculine) philosophical tradition" (64). Where Caesar came to be a model of Roman virtues, Mark Antony did not. His problematic love affair with Cleopatra, the Egyptian Queen, branded him as not only less masculine, but less Roman as well.

Scholars tend to judge Cleopatra as the cause of Antony's fall from Roman grace, but tend to ignore many factors. Though Cleopatra has classic masculine characteristics, —i.e. as commander of soldiers, an established ruler, and one who maintains both choleric and sanguine aspects— I argue that Cleopatra's role in Antony's degrading by the Romans

is not as a puppet master controlling the man, but rather as a temptation for Antony's masochistic fetishism. Employing Freudian terminology, I explore Antony's masochistic and Cleopatra's sadistic traits throughout the play, and his infatuation with the matron Pharaoh that leads to his death. Antony's temptation by the Pharaoh causes him to be "othered," to no longer represent the ideal classical masculine form. As the representative of paramount Roman status, Augustus/Octavian Caesar comes to feminize Antony due to his link to Egypt, and what the Romans perceived as the tainting allure of Cleopatra. I argue that, for Shakespeare, Antony's obsession with Cleopatra leads to his masculine undoing, and consequently his fall from Roman grace. Furthermore, his suicide implies Antony's attempt to reclaim his masculine prowess as a Roman.

Though Shakespeare writes about the Romans, one has to consider that he has other influences outside of possible research material: that he was writing for an audience with its own sixteenth century English sexual, religious, and cultural anxieties. Therefore, he likely wrote to challenge and/or appeal to those anxieties. Throughout this analysis, I will be attempting to demonstrate how he uses his dramatic interpretations to unveil issues within his own culture, and how Renaissance society, as depicted by Shakespeare, reflects classic Roman ideals.



## Part 2: Ancient Roman Masculinity

Rome was a patriarchal society. Roman men fought the Roman wars, arranged Roman politics, and conducted Roman family affairs. As masculinity was such a pinnacle part of Roman life, defining what the Romans thought of as masculinity as distinctly as possible is vital to this analysis. Thus the best way to consider classic Roman masculinity is by using terminology that the Romans would have used. The word *virile*, a word often used to describe the manliest of men, has its root in the Latin word *vir*, meaning man.

Erik Gunderson states that the word *vir*

also signifies a man who is a husband or a soldier. Thus, in ‘pregnant’ uses, a man in Latin is a real man, a manly man. The term also dictates a position of authority and responsibility: the adult is enfranchised, while the child (or slave) is not; the man rules his wife in the household; the soldier is the defender of the safety of the state. In short, the term evokes more than mere gender. Maria Wyke has discussed the imbrication of the physical enactment of gender and the Roman field, and she concludes of this relationship, ‘in the practices of the Roman world, the surface of the male body is thus fully in definitions of power and civic responsibility.’ (7)

The word *virile* (manliness) is often associated with potency, strength, and other manly qualities, and adding the English suffix *ity* to the word *virile* (*ity*, which stems from the Latin *-itatem* [nominative *-itas*], denoting state or condition) generates a term that literally means the state of manliness: virility. By evaluating Antony as so many characters do in *Antony and Cleopatra*—characters like Octavian, Lepidus, Cleopatra, and Antony himself—one can tally up a score pertaining to Antony’s manliness as defined by

Roman values. Roman society, being so centered on manly exploits, had very distinct guidelines with which, I argue, Shakespeare would have surely been familiar.

In writing *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Coriolanus*, his Roman plays, Shakespeare reveals a powerful knowledge of ancient Roman people and their society. Establishing Shakespeare's knowledge in regards to Roman people and their culture has value because of the many issues within *Antony and Cleopatra* that are distinctly Roman in relation to Mark Antony –and therefore distinctly masculine. Masculinity in Rome would have been a powerfully constructed model for a society. Jonathan Boardman notes that “the dominating personalities in the city's history have been almost exclusively male, be the consuls, emperors, or popes” (23), and these masculine figureheads are accredited with conquering the ancient western world.

Shakespeare's comprehension of influential Roman men and their exploits likely stems from Sir Thomas North's 1579 publication entitled *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, which was a translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, a biographical work focusing on the highlights of influential Greek and Roman people's lives. Geoffrey Bollough states in his work *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Volume V: The Roman Plays*:

Shakespeare's main source for *Antony and Cleopatra* North's Plutarch (*Parallel Lives*), and it has been declared that he looked no farther for any of his material.

Certainly he could have developed all his plot and characterization from

Plutarch's *Life of Antony* and the *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony*. (218)

Indisputably Shakespeare's research was heavily influenced by Sir North's translations, but Shakespeare also employed an education within Elizabethan England that focused on

Roman stories and scholarship. Therefore Shakespeare would have likely drawn on other sources with which the Elizabethan public would have been familiar as well. Paulina Kewes addresses the importance of Roman influence in Elizabethan education:

History was not a separate subject in either grammar schools or universities. But the study of Latin grammar and rhetoric involved reading, translation, and commentary on classical writings—above all, poetry, oratory, history, and moral philosophy. Students would have been familiar with the works of Cicero, Caesar, Seneca, Livy, Sallust, Suetonius, Tacitus, and many others. Academic disputations in a variety of disciplines, too, fostered the knowledge and critical appreciation of ancient history, political thought, and literature. (517)

Since so much of Roman history was part of the education in Shakespeare's time, he would have been writing for an audience that was to some extent familiar with Roman society.

Shakespeare's education is somewhat of a battlefield to many literary and historical scholars. On one end of the spectrum is the belief that Shakespeare lacked the intellectual background to write the things that he did, due to the lack of record in regard to Shakespeare's formal education. There also happens to be very little circumstantial evidence that he attended grammar school, which raises many questions in regards to the validity Shakespeare's works. Christopher Dams suggests that many of "these facts, taken with the absence of any direct evidence, would surely lead a reasonable person to at least a tentative conclusion that he was not an educated man" (1). The other argument points to Shakespeare being extremely educated through personal study. Again, there is little evidence to support this claim outside of analyzing his works. In considering that

evidence within his many works, as Robin Fox states, “he was clearly a man of considerable learning, especially in the Latin classics. He must have been able to read many of the original sources in French, Italian and even Spanish and Greek, translations not being available at the time” (197). Regardless of his educational method, I believe that the plays reflect that Shakespeare had intimate knowledge of Ancient Romans. Therefore, I maintain Shakespeare was indeed an educated man who put effort not only into the development of the characters within this play, but also utilized his knowledge of the Ancient Roman culture and history to portray these characters.

## Part 2: Roman Values vs. Mark Antony

Throughout *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare utilizes the classical masculine formula as a framework to judge Antony. Historically, Antony was an admired Roman hero. As a warrior, Antony had a dominant reputation as a commander of men, and a governor of state. The Roman people admired Antony, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* describes Antony's dealings with his opponent, Archelaüs, and how he was "thought by the Romans on the expedition to be a most illustrious man" (145). Shakespeare masterfully utilizes Antony's former reputation as a model of masculinity by degrading his masculine persona throughout the play. Namely, Octavian (or Octavius) Caesar, as the chief representative of Rome, has the most to say about how traitorous and non-Roman Antony has become. Shakespeare's Octavian Caesar effeminizes Antony despite all of his traditional masculine qualities:

CAESAR     You may see, Lepidus, and henceforth know,  
          It is not Caesar's natural vice to hate  
          Our great competitor: from Alexandria  
          This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes  
          The lamps of night in revel; is not more man-like  
          Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolemy  
          More womanly than he; hardly gave audience, or  
          Vouchsafed to think he had partners: you shall find there  
          A man who is the abstract of all faults  
          That all men follow.     (1.4.1-10)

The emasculating quality in Octavian's speech lies within his faulting of Antony and his elevation of Cleopatra. Octavian claims that Antony is "not more man-like than Cleopatra" (1.4.5-6), which masculinizes Cleopatra and concurrently effeminizes Antony. Octavian insults not only Antony's masculine prowess by likening him to Cleopatra, but he also insinuates Antony's wasting "The lamps of night in revel" (1.4.4-5), which indicates his indulgent lifestyle with Cleopatra. In a stereotypical sense, indulgence is not foreign to classical Roman culture. The Romans saw the opulence of Egypt as suspicious. Sally Riad states that Rome's "moralizing tales have traditionally framed such extravagance as deplorable, and Antony became implicated by association" (7), thus painting him as "a man who is the abstract of all faults that all men follow" (1.4.9-10), suggesting, as Eleanor Huzar does, that Antony "showed a fondness for lavish display, he drank to excess, and he relished the taking on of dramatic roles" (147). Furthermore, Sally Riad states, "To observers, this contrasted notions of decadence with the discipline engrained in warrior leadership. Indeed, the warrior model as it figures in heroic Roman characters – has been a very influential perspective in leadership" (7). Antony's wavering prowess as a leader of Rome linked to the sumptuousness of Egypt has come to destroy his reputation as an admired Roman hero. Octavian's implication linking the lack of Antony's masculine Roman status with the taint of Egypt paints the hero as lacking in the Roman will to remain, and symbolize, Roman values. Expanding his insult, Octavian says:

CAESAR      Let's grant it is not  
                  Amiss to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy,  
                  To give a kingdom for a mirth, to sit

And keep the turn of tipping with a slave,  
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet  
With knaves that smells of sweat. Say this becomes him—  
As his composure must be rare indeed  
Whom these things cannot blemish—yet must Antony  
No way excuse his foils when we do bear  
So great weight in his lightness. If he filled  
His vacancy with his voluptuousness,  
Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones  
Call on him for't. (1.4.16-28)

The senate in 42 BC deified Octavian, who took the name Augustus, and added the phrase 'Son of God' to his name. Therefore Octavian has a divine representation in opposition to anything that is not Roman. One part of Caesar's speech, i.e. that Antony "tumble in the bed of Ptolemy" (1.4.17), suggests he sleeps with Cleopatra. The obvious implication that Antony is in bed with Egypt testifies to the tainting power of Egypt and/or Cleopatra, and yet also emphasizes adultery against Rome/Octavian. The core of Octavian's judgments revolves around Antony's indulgent lifestyle. Thus Octavian suggests the idea that Antony sacrificed his great respect from the Romans for a joke: "a Kingdom for a mirth" (1.4.18). As chief representative of Egypt, Cleopatra signifies the lavish displays and indulgences in opposition to Octavian's Roman model. Antony has Roman position and love but his willingness to sacrifice that power for a foreign queen degrades his Roman character. Furthermore, "Full surfeits, and the dryness of his bones, Call on him for't" (1.4.27-28), references the Egyptian heat, painting Antony into a

likeness of a drought in which his Roman blood is dried up. The footnotes of the *Norton Shakespeare, Second Edition*, discuss this reference to Antony's bones as "Ill health caused by dryness of bones and venereal disease" (1.4.27, n.4). Such an account derides Antony's presumed indulgent lifestyle.

As the embodiment of Egypt, Cleopatra represents everything in opposition to Octavian both physically and symbolically. Physically, she is a female ruler that holds different and opposing values to Octavian and Rome. Symbolically, she identifies as a goddess of Egypt, pitting her against Octavian and Roman beliefs in religious opposition. Shakespeare utilizes the religious symbolism of Cleopatra within her dialogue. In writing such lines as "Thou shouldst know there were a heart in Egypt" (1.3.40-41), and "Bid adieu to me, and say the tears belong to Egypt" (1.3.76-77), the word Egypt becomes interchangeable with the name Cleopatra. The divinity of Cleopatra as Egypt functions as one half of the metaphorical battleground for Antony's Roman soul.

Given Antony's distinct status as a Roman hero, there naturally would be opposition to Octavian's view of the man. Marcus Lepidus, the triumvirate in control of Africa, seems to feel sympathy for Mark Antony throughout various points in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare was perhaps building off of the idea that historically Lepidus and Antony were respected soldiers, and possibly this virile connection bonded the two characters as comrades. Both Lepidus and Antony lived in and ruled from the continent of Africa, too, which is not Rome and therefore has an othering factor from the Roman homeland. After Octavian expresses his disapproval of Antony's flaws, Lepidus sympathetically responds, "I must not think there are evils enough to darken all his goodness. More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary rather than purchased; what he



cannot change than what he chooses” (1.4.10-15). One meaning we can take from Lepidus’ words is that Antony conceivably inherited these flaws. As the son of Marcus Antonius Creticus, a man known for his incompetence and corruption, Antony is perhaps the best he can be given whom he comes from. In referring to Antony’s “goodness” which Erik Gunderson declares “often indicates men of substance or social standing: a prominent citizen, a leading citizen” (7), Lepidus specifies Roman prestigious status. Lepidus does not outright argue with Octavian in an effort to defend Antony’s character, but he, in essence, defends Antony’s Roman qualities as a soldier that once fought for the glory of Rome, a prominent citizen. Referring to Antony as “Noble Antony” (2.2.15) indicates an acknowledgement of the man’s value. Lepidus effort to point out the “good” qualities of Antony, and referring to him as noble, testifies to his faith in the once great Roman hero.

Historically, Lepidus and Antony are at the same level of virility and “goodness.” They are both decorated war heroes and notable politicians; both of them are more experienced and distinguished than Octavian on almost all fronts related to Roman virility. In Shakespeare’s portrayal of these two characters, Lepidus’ heroic past remains un-mentioned; he simply stands as another wealthy Roman. However, Shakespeare demonstrates comradery between Antony and Lepidus, they drink together, jest at each other’s expense, and respect each other. When Antony and Octavian meet in Rome, they do not get along. Lepidus acts as a moderator between them. When Octavian makes accusations against Antony’s honor Lepidus makes an effort to maintain some semblance of peace between his fellow triumvirates, saying, “Soft Caesar” (2.2.88). When Antony responds to Octavian’s accusation of oath breaking, he states:

ANTONY     Neglected, Rather,

And then when poisoned hours bound me up  
From mine own knowledge. As nearly as I may  
I'll play the penitent to you, but mine honesty  
Shall make poor my greatness, not my power  
Work without it. Truth is that Fulvia,  
To have me out of Egypt, made wars here,  
For which myself, the ignorant motive, do  
So far ask pardon as befits mine honour  
To stoop in such a case. (2.2.94-103)

Antony apologizes for his “poisoned hours” (his indulgences) and asks pardon. This speech strongly supports Lepidus’ argument about Antony’s “good” qualities, in that it demonstrates penitence for his gluttonous actions. Lepidus’ response to Antony’s penitent speech is “Tis noble spoken” (2.2.104). The “good” qualities of Antony (rank, position, and wealth) renew with his apology, and with Antony’s penitence, war between Rome and Egypt can be avoided. After Antony and Octavian join hands in reconciliation, Lepidus remarks, “Happily, Amen,” (2.2.160). Lepidus responds joyously to the union, signifying a united Rome.

Agrippa plays a major role in the effort to claim Antony from Egypt. Much like Lepidus, Agrippa seeks to salvage the Roman hero’s reputation. He suggests to Caesar that Antony marries Octavia, Caesar’s sister:

AGRIPPA     To hold you in perpetual amity,  
To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts

With an unslipping knot, take Antony  
Octavia to his wife; whose beauty claims  
No worse a husband than the best of men;  
Whose virtue and whose general graces speak  
That which none else can utter. By this marriage,  
All little jealousies, which now seem great,  
And all great fears, which now import their dangers,  
Would then be nothing: truths would be tales,  
Where now half tales be truths: her love to both  
Would, each to other and all loves to both,  
Draw after her. Pardon what I have spoke;  
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,  
By duty ruminated. (2.2.131-145)

With this speech, Agrippa compliments Antony's virility as a Roman man. Agrippa calls Antony "the best of men; whose virtues and whose general graces speak that which none else can utter" (2.2.133-137), which may be an acknowledgement of Antony's warring exploits and reputation as a leader of Rome. Additionally, Agrippa suggests that "By this marriage / All little jealousies, which now seem great, / And all great fears, which now import their dangers, / Would then be nothing: truths would be tales, / Where now half tales be truths: her love to both / Would, each to other and all loves to both" (2.2.137-142), implying the strength of a united family of Romans. Exercising Octavia as the figurative adhesive cementing Antony and Octavian together, they can now form the proper strong foundation on which to support Rome. Agrippa's proposal solely depends

on honorary Roman duty. The “duty ruminated” (2.2.145) with which Agrippa concludes his speech testifies to trust. Agrippa plays off of the idea that Antony’s *pietas* (or duty), and devotion to the Roman concept of honor, will force Antony to maintain his loyalty to Rome. Joyce Green Macdonald states the importance behind the meaning *pietas* as “the good name of one’s family and to the welfare of Rome, and submission to the will of the gods” (10). Hence, Agrippa seeks to keep Antony in check and force the two men into cooperation.

Historically, according to Plutarch, the wedding between Antony and Octavia was purely political: “Everybody tried to bring about this marriage. For they hoped that Octavia, who, besides her great beauty, had intelligence and dignity, when united to Antony and beloved by him, as such a woman naturally must be, would restore harmony and be their complete salvation” (207). As a “good” Roman man, Antony would have to set an example to the people and protect his power by remaining true to his civic Roman duty and remaining with Octavia. Antony’s marriage is symbolic of a political alliance with Octavian; therefore violating the symbolism of this alliance would be a desecration of his civic duty, his Roman virility, and his “goodness.”

Antony does violate his civic duty and leaves Octavia to go back to Cleopatra. Antony thus abandons his Roman virility by acting against the idea of *pietas*. By sacrificing the Roman masculine qualities that define the Roman man, the qualities of *vir*, Antony adopts a new identity as a different kind of man; he is a man of no virtue, or “goodness,” once again. Shakespeare utilizes the drama of Antony abandoning his Roman wife, perhaps in reflection of the event from historical perspective. Jasper Griffen expresses the Roman’s portrayal of Antony’s abandonment of Octavia, saying, “he

abused and rejected Octavia, that model of Roman matrons” (23). When Octavia tells Octavian about Antony’s return to Africa, Octavian quickly judges Antony’s actions:

CAESAR    No, my most wrongèd sister. Cleopatra  
              Hath nodded him to her. He hath given his empire  
              Up to a whore; who now are levying  
              The kings o’ th’ earth for war. He hath assembled  
              Bocchus, the King of Libya; Archelaus,  
              Of Cappadocia; Philadelphos, King  
              Of Paphlagonia; the Thracian king, Adallas;  
              King Manchus of Arabia; King of Pont;  
              Herod of Jewry; Mithridates, King  
              Of Comagen; Polemon and Amyntas,  
              The Kings of Mede and Lycaonia,  
              With a more larger list of scepters. (3.6.65-76)

Octavian’s words imply bewitching. Octavian’s statement that Cleopatra hath nodded him to her represents the supposed tainting allure of Egypt calling to Antony’s indulgent spirit, but the nod also signifies a shot at Antony’s Roman virility. Cleopatra’s summons to Antony and Antony’s response to the summons goes against the role of the Roman male entirely. Grounded in a patriarchal society, Roman men govern literally all aspects of life within the Empire/Republic. For the ideal Roman man to submit to a foreign woman’s summons literally represents the abandonment of Antony’s Roman station, especially since that woman represents everything anti-Roman. Further, the name Octavia is the feminized version of Octavian and arguably represents the feminine spirit of Rome.

Leaving the literal spirit of Rome, Octavia, for the physical embodiment of Egypt, Cleopatra, Antony has committed sacrilege. Octavian calls Cleopatra a whore; his exact words are as follows, “He hath given his empire up to a whore” (3.6.66-67). Arguably, Antony has paid Cleopatra with his honored Roman position; he has sold his virility, his Roman soul. In short, the characters revert to where they were at the beginning of the play: Antony is again with Cleopatra and is again an enemy of Rome.

The sacrilege against Rome, at its core, is directly linked to Egypt. Octavian’s, hatred for Egypt correlates to Cleopatra as the divine representation of everything that is anti-Roman. Joyce Green Macdonald suggests that the Romans themselves were “distinctly hostile toward Cleopatra and distinctly conscious of her and her country’s divergence from a Roman cultural norm” (35). The hatred for Cleopatra/Egypt, by association, links to Mark Antony and his rejection of his family. As Octavia’s husband, Antony is bound by Roman law has to protect and look after his family. Historically, Antony and Octavia had children together, but in Shakespeare’s interpretation of the events they did not have offspring. Shakespeare’s rejection of Octavia and Cleopatra’s children with Antony implies a level playing field between the two women. If he incorporated children with one matron over the other, Antony’s *pietas* may restore, justifying a decision to stay with the mother. Since Cleopatra and Octavia, within the play, are children-less, Antony can only choose between them based on character. The abandonment of that Roman family is perhaps one of the most scarring factors on Antony’s reputation. The major destruction to Antony is in relation not only to his family duty but also his Roman duty. Macdonald advocates that Antony’s “impious love would be one in which violates the standards of Roman *pietas*” (40). *Pietas* is inevitably tied to

both virility and “goodness,” and in lacking in these key Roman aspects, Antony has chosen to be an outcast again.

In abandoning Caesar’s sister and family, the family that signifies a divine representation of Rome, makes Antony’s desertion a blasphemy against Rome, the Roman way of life, and the Roman Gods. The evidence of the anti-Egyptian mindset of the Romans presents itself throughout the dialogue of the play. Octavian Caesar refers to her as a “whore” when she steals Antony from the Empire. The comparison to be made enforces the idea that Cleopatra stands on seemingly equal ground with Rome. She, in essence, contests Rome. Her whorish qualities are often a very powerful factor in nearly all of her descriptions, i.e. as Philo suggests “The triple pillar of the world transformed into a strumpet’s fool” (1.1.11-12). The triple pillar represents the three legs of the triumvirate of Rome. Thus Rome becomes unstable when Antony falls, leaving Octavian and Lepidus, the other two pillars, to balance the remainder of the Empire. Cleopatra has thrown a nation off balance by again taking away Rome’s great hero.

The allure of Cleopatra has tainted more than Antony, however; she has seduced Julius Caesar, as well. Caesar, like Antony, was a prime model of good and virile qualities. He conquered Gaul and shared his massive wealth with the people of Rome. He had high position, a warrior’s reputation, and a name that demanded immense respect. Mary Beard describes Cleopatra as “best known for her alliance, political and romantic, with Mark Antony.... [though before him, her] interests lay with Caesar, with whom she had an open affair” (163). Therefore, Egypt has seduced Rome twice, which heightens Roman’s perceived danger of the Pharaoh. Unlike Antony, Julius Caesar stood on a pedestal that granted him divinity, and made him more of a classic model of a man than

Antony. Cassius describes Caesar as:

CASSIUS     Why, man, 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.

Men at some time are masters of their fates:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,

But in ourselves, that we are underlings. (1.2.136-142)

Cleopatra conquered the mighty colossus, Julius Caesar. A man that was later made into a Roman deity seduced by a perceived enemy of Rome would rightly instill fear in Octavian, Agrippa, and Octavia. If Cleopatra could topple a deified colossus, how easy would it be to topple Antony? In a sense, Antony is a colossus as well, due to his warring exploits and favor amongst the Roman people. Antony did after all, play a major part in Caesar's conquering of Gaul. The late Republic was a time of many reputable Romans such as Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, and Marcus Tullius Cicero. Antony in this respect, stands as the last of the great men, and survives as the last colossus. With her seductions, Cleopatra managed to diminish two iconic Roman heroes. Representing the Roman opinion, Agrippa says, "Royal wench! She made great [Julius] Caesar lay his sword to bed" (2.2.233-234), which again implies the seductive power of Cleopatra because she made Caesar put his sword to bed. The implication that Cleopatra forced Caesar to have sex with her suggests sexual conquest. Being forced into sex implies a lack of strength/will, a lack of *pietas* that Agrippa suggests Cleopatra acts on. In being sexually dominant, as Agrippa suggests, Cleopatra inherits the classic masculine role of



penetrator. Shakespeare would have been exceptionally familiar idea of sexual dominance as a masculine characteristic. Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent emphasize the standard for male sexual dominance in the early modern period: “male sexuality, and specifically normative heterosexuality, as a source for legitimizing male authority has been a productive field of investigation for historians and has indeed produced some of the first and most important studies on male power hierarchies” (17). The classic historical view coincides with Shakespeare’s portrayal of Roman sexual roles, Kelly Olson describes Roman male sexual prowess as defined by

his active sexual role also configured himself as dominant and masculine. It mattered little whom he was penetrating, or which orifice, as long as he took the active role. The penetrated partner was characterized as womanish, servile, and emasculated--a role well suited to slaves, prostitutes, and women but problematic if filled by another adult citizen male. (184)

Given that both the Renaissance and classic Roman views on male sexual dominance take a hierarchical form, Shakespeare likely exploited the male sexual anxieties of his audience to strengthen the drama of the sexual subjugation of Caesar. Given the evidence of Cleopatra’s power of these Roman idols, she has symbolic power over Rome by toppling and figuratively raping the mighty colossus, Caesar. Cleopatra’s seductive power over Rome crosses political and religious boundaries. She becomes a symbolic rapist of Roman masculine values.

Octavian’s words obviously hold great weight throughout the play. As the ruler of Rome and as the inheritor of the great name of Caesar, Octavian has an authority that, despite his lack of virile qualities, grants him a status as a labeler of Roman virile values.

As Rome, he is allowed to state who the enemies are and why. Octavian carries the deified voice of Julius Caesar, making him the adopted son of a god, thus adding a deified value to his word. Cleopatra's labeled whorish qualities are threatening to Rome and therefore threatening to Octavian. The belittling qualities directed at Antony cannot be ignored due to him endangering his Roman reputation, his country, and his gods. His demolished name symbolizes his violation of all that his name represents as a "good" and virile Roman man. The destruction of Antony's good name symbolically stands as the destruction of Roman values, thus the destruction of Rome. As a colossus abandoning Rome Antony betrays his country in a physical and a religious sense. Ultimately, Antony abandons his gods. He abandons the divinity of Rome for the divinity of Egypt, signifying adultery.

### **Part 3: Octavia vs. Cleopatra**

Cleopatra combats Rome over Mark Antony's masculinity. As the classic embodiment of Roman masculine qualities, Antony signifies wealth, an indomitable reputation as a warrior and leader of men, a status as a notable politician, and a hero. Furthermore, Antony stems from the era of the Roman colossi such as Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar. The religious implications of the battle for Antony pit Cleopatra, goddess and matriarch of Egypt, against Octavian, son of a god and patriarch of Rome. The prize of this conflict is not Mark Antony, but the masculine spirit that he represents. If Rome loses Antony, then Rome loses a hero that exemplifies the patriarchal values of Italy. Therefore Rome needs a weapon to oppose Cleopatra, and that weapon is Octavia. As the sister of Octavian Caesar, Octavia carries somewhat of a divine rank from the Roman's perspective. Consequently, when Antony abandons Octavia, he deserts not only his ideal classic masculinity, but also the gods of Rome by her divine association/kinship with Octavian.

Nicola Onyett indicates Octavia's symbolism as exemplifying "Rome itself. She embodies all of the characteristics of a proper Roman wife: beauty, grace, wisdom, and above all obedience to her husband ... [she is] a character foil for Cleopatra, highlighting Cleopatra's foreign nature and her sexuality, which the Romans find unattractive and unacceptable" (2). As the quintessence of femininity that appeals to Roman males, Octavia stands as the example of everything Antony has rebuked in pursuit of Cleopatra. Common sense would dictate that a Roman man of note would find her as a desirable match. Various characters, such as Maecenas depend on Octavia's ideal feminine

qualities, indicating the Roman assumption that Antony will abide by Roman sexual archetypes. He says, “If beauty, wisdom, modesty, can settle the heart of Antony, Octavia is a blessed lottery to him” (2.2.274-284). Maecenas’ description of Octavia includes the word modesty, which alludes to passive behavior; that is a trait Cleopatra lacks. Agrippa describes her as “admired Octavia” (2.2.125), alluding to her favored passive feminine qualities. Antony refers to her as “gentle Octavia” (3.4.21), emphasizing her gentle passive nature in contrast to Cleopatra.

No character within *Antony and Cleopatra* describes the Egyptian Queen with passive characteristics. Octavian refers to her as some variation of “whore” (3.6.67) multiple times, indicating his view of her nefarious lifestyle and her sexual affiliation with Roman icons. Agrippa refers to her as “Royal Wench!” (2.2.233), and in his rage, Antony refers to Cleopatra as a “foul Egyptian” (4.12.10). The popular Roman opinion of Cleopatra’s foul whorish properties put her in direct opposition to Octavia’s favorable qualities. Onyett specifies Cleopatra as a cultural opponent in opposition not only to Rome, but also to the West, itself:

Cleopatra was Rome's enemy, and we in the West are Rome's heirs. The notion of Cleopatra that we have inherited identifies her primarily as being the adversary, the Other. Her otherness is twofold. She is an Oriental, and she is a woman. Even in her lifetime her legend was already shaped by the two overlapping chauvinisms of race and sex. (1)

Cleopatra’s elevated masculine position as leader of her country, a status that classic Romans associated only as a male’s station, makes her a target for the harsh criticisms of her Roman rivals. Not only does the matriarch Pharaoh sleep with Roman icons, but she

is Othered. She represents physical opposition and metaphorical opposition to Rome, simply by being an indulgent female Egyptian ruler.

By pitting the indulgent Egyptian queen in opposition to the passive sister of a deified ruler, and thus stressing cultural implications of such othering. Shakespeare masterfully exploits these iconic historical characters. Shakespeare knowingly uses Cleopatra and Octavia as a figurative scale to weigh Antony's Roman worth. In contrasting Cleopatra's sensuality with Octavia's passiveness, Shakespeare explores modes of femininity in relation to male desire. Designating Cleopatra's assertiveness and power makes her the model figure of what a misogynist society would find as threatening. Hence, if Antony chooses Octavia, he truly is Roman, therefore a misogynist. Since Antony chooses Cleopatra, he falls under the heel of what Shakespeare's Romans perceive as matriarchy, making him less masculine by classic Roman standards. Such utilization of Cleopatra and Octavia displays Shakespeare's comprehension of the cultural and sexual dynamics of East vs. West.



In exploiting these two contrasting personalities, Shakespeare further reinforces this contrast, employing humoral theory, based upon Hippocrates' (460-370 BC) four humours. The Four Humours were thought to idealize four distinct personality types that are linked to body parts, or functions. These

humours are as follows: *sanguine*, elementally linked to air and representative of a sexual, adventurous, courageous and hopeful personalities, *choleric*, linked to fire, rage, anger and equivocates to the personality of a leader, *melancholic*, associated with earth and a despondent and serious personality, and *phlegmatic*, related to water and a passive mindset. Integrated in humoral tradition, two of the Four Humours are attributed to masculinity while the other two are attributed to the feminine. The masculine humours are *sanguine* and *choleric*, the personalities linked to air and fire. The idea of men embodying the elements of air and fire are because *sanguine* and *choleric* represent the ideal personalities of the ancient male figure. The other two humours, *melancholic* and *phlegmatic* are the ideal characteristics of ancient women.

As a vassal of Rome, Cleopatra had experience in a masculine station commanding men through battle and managing politics. Duane Roller, describes Cleopatra as “an accomplished diplomat, naval commander, administrator, linguist, and author, who skillfully managed her kingdom in the face of a deteriorating political situation and increasing Roman involvement” (1). As a woman of power, Cleopatra goes against the principal of Roman virility in the sense that she has all of the characteristics of a “good” Roman man, but lacks Roman citizenship and the gender for her elevated station. Cleopatra’s attitude toward Antony demonstrates her masculine aspects in a way that figuratively expresses her power over Rome. As a vassal to Rome, Cleopatra’s power should be limited in comparison to Antony, a triumvirate and embodiment of Rome. She verbally wounds Antony insulting his warrior prowess, a favored aspect of a Roman hero. Taking offence to Cleopatra’s words, Antony’s responds feebly, “How now, lady!” (1.3.39), and Cleopatra fires back with, “I would I had thy inches. Thou shouldst know

there were a heart in Egypt,” (1.3.40-41), the footnote for this line indicates “There were courage (to respond to such insults) in the country (Queen) of Egypt” (1.3.40-41.n.6), indicating sanguineous sexuality. Cleopatra responds by boosting Antony up again by implying that he has a big penis to talk to the Queen of Egypt in such a way.

Shakespeare’s use of phallic humor in this uneasy situation demonstrates an icebreaker that Cleopatra uses to ease the tension. Implying Antony’s sexual endowment compliments his manliness, but Cleopatra also acknowledges his Roman virility by noting that he has stood up to her. Her recognition of his power has a *choleric* inflection; it is forceful and challenging. After Antony pleads his case for returning to Egypt, Cleopatra responds, “Though age and folly could not give me freedom, it does from childishness. Can Fulvia die?” (1.3.57-58), at this point she is unaware that Fulvia perished. Cleopatra’s wish that Fulvia die, so that she has the freedom to pursue and keep Antony, resembles melancholy. Conceivably, Cleopatra emulates melancholic characteristics, playfully mocking Antony and Roman preferences of femininity. Cleopatra’s mockery of melancholy continues when she finally gives Antony her blessing to leave for Rome:

CLEOPATRA            Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,  
   But bid farewell, and go: when you sued staying,  
   Then was the time for words: no going then.  
   Eternity was in our lips and eyes,  
   Bliss in our brow’s bent; none our parts so poor,  
   But was a race of heaven: they are so still,  
   Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,

Art turned the greatest liar. (1.3.33-38)

Cleopatra's reminiscence of the time her and Antony have spent together manifests in the eternity they would feel in each other's company and the bliss in each other's bent brows seems to be a mockery of phlegmatic and melancholic characteristics. These lines embody a choleric quality. Yanna McIntosh's performance as Cleopatra in Stratford's 2014 Shakespeare festival delivers this dialogue aggressively. Throughout the scene, she seeks quarrel with Antony out of jealousy of Fulvia. Since Yanna McIntosh's interpretation of this scene stems from melancholy associated with jealousy, she approaches Antony from a position of choleric strength. Aggression and melancholic pretense seem prominent throughout Cleopatra's dialogue to the point of mockery. Shakespeare often utilizes the mockery of melancholic dispositions throughout his plays. Often, Shakespeare utilized clichés of love that the Italian Petrarch, a famous love poet from Renaissance Italy, employed in mocking unrealistic ideas of love. An example of Petrarch's idealistic portrayal, "Era il Giorno ch'al Sol si Scoloraro," presents love as disempowering: "Love found me all disarmed and found the way was clear / To reach my heart down through the eyes / Which have become the halls and doors of tears" (Petrarch 6). Representing a loving moment in such an impractical fashion completely supports the idea that Cleopatra jests at Antony's expense, mocking the favored passive characteristics of Roman women.

As the model Roman woman, Octavia's nuptial with Antony symbolizes the ideal match in the classic Western world. Only a colossus such as Antony with a powerful reputation would be worthy of Octavia. Her characteristics of loyalty, dignity, and compassion make her a passive woman. Octavia's passiveness, linked to *phlegmatic* and



*melancholic* characteristics, is also connected to coldness. When Antony tells Octavia that his business may separate them from time to time, her cold reaction contrasts Cleopatra's heated response entirely: "All which time before the gods my knee shall bow my prayers to them for you" (2.3.3-5). The implication of servitude within this line has many connotations. Octavia's willingness to serve Antony from afar with her prayers to Roman gods implies service from great distances from a deified woman for a man that may no longer be favored by Roman Gods. The Roman Gods are not strong enough to keep Antony and Cleopatra apart. Yet Cleopatra's first lines to Antony are "If it be love indeed, tell me how much?" (1.1.16). The difference in tone between Octavia and Cleopatra differentiates due to the Egyptian Queen placing a price on Antony's love. Though this line could be argued as a sarcastic and playful remark it is far from a subservient thing to say. As the play continues, Octavia has a grand total of thirty-six lines, in comparison with Cleopatra's six hundred and seventy eight lines. Arguably, the line count comparison signifies another contributing factor to the idea that Cleopatra is, in fact, more powerful. She has more to say. The favored woman through the Roman prospective, Octavia is simply less important as a character, yet more symbolic to the political and ideal Roman prospects as the representation of what defines the Roman man's ideal woman.

Contrasting the final words between Antony and his lovers, yields the same conclusion. Cleopatra demonstrates choleric aggressiveness as Antony departs for Rome, in 1.3. The Pharaoh says in taunting humor:

CLEOPATRA            'Tis sweating labour

To bear such idleness so near the heart

As Cleopatra this. But, sir, forgive me;  
Since my becomings kill me, when they do not  
Eye well to you: your honour calls you hence;  
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly.  
And all the gods go with you! upon your sword  
Sit laurel victory! and smooth success  
Be strewed before your feet! (94-102)

Keeping with the theme of the scene, Cleopatra's dialogue could, in fact, be conceived as a mockery of the submissiveness of Roman women. Cleopatra mocks the Roman idea of needing the husband's approval: "Since my becomings kill me, when they do not / Eye well to you" (1.3.97-98). "And all the gods go with you! upon your sword / Sit laurel victory! And smooth success / Be strewed before your feet!" (3.1.100-102). Here she mocks Rome via both the symbolism of the sword, a symbol of the Roman warrior, and the laurel wreath, a stereotypical Roman headdress associated with Roman nobility. The sword and the laurel are quintessential parts of noble Roman manliness. Just as "Cleopatra Hath nodded him to her" (3.6.65-66), Antony's honour becomes juxtaposed with the figure of license Cleopatra represents. Just as Octavian cites Cleopatra as the "whore" who summons Antony, Cleopatra names Antony's honor as the lure. With the exception of Antony's suicide, his choice to leave Egypt is the one time in the play that Roman values actually trump Cleopatra. She strongly mocks the submissive need for approval in relation to Antony's honour, war, and nobility. Antony's need for classic Roman approval suggests his submissiveness, and in alluding to the Roman symbolism, Cleopatra mocks Roman power. Yanna McIntosh's performance of this dialogue,

however, does demonstrate the contrary. Her interpretation of this dialogue demonstrates genuine submission, her jealous mockery that she demonstrates so well throughout the scene ends abruptly before segueing into this speech. Her interpretation seems very passive, and Octavia-esque.

As the female symbol of Roman power, Octavia demonstrates melancholy and submissiveness during her last moments with Antony:

OCTAVIA            O my good lord,  
Believe not all; or, if you must believe,  
Stomach not all. A more unhappy lady,  
If this division chance, ne'er stood between,  
Praying for both parts:  
The good gods me presently,  
When I shall pray, 'O bless my lord and husband!',  
Undo that prayer, by crying out as loud,  
'O, bless my brother!' Husband win, win brother,  
Prays, and destroys the prayer; no midway  
'Twixt these extremes at all. (3.4.10-20)

Octavia stands on a thin line here, literally torn within this speech on her stance between her husband and her brother. On one side of the metaphorical coin is her love and loyalty to her husband, as a prime example of the Roman woman she is bound to the rule of her husband. The other side of that figurative coin is her representation of Roman honour that binds her to her brother. The cultural power represented in Octavia is, in a sense, a stronger representation of Rome than Octavian Caesar offers. Octavia herself represents

the line that Antony cannot cross, a distinctly Roman boundary in character and principle. Unlike Cleopatra's responses to almost anything, Octavia's affectionate response shows *melancholy* within her conflict due to her attachment to the opposing sides, Rome vs. Antony. Her sadness also expresses *phlegmatic* characteristics, being that she struggles with indecision. Her *melancholy*, again, catering to the stereotype of Roman women's expectations, but it also alludes to the Roman female position that Octavia symbolizes. As the wife of Antony, Roman law binds her to him, but as the sister of mighty Octavian Caesar, she is bound by the representation that comes with the name, Caesar. The clash lies in the symbolism of not only her gender, but also the cultural influence of her brother's name. Antony's response to Octavia makes plain his lack of Roman honour and he does not fret about it. He simply cuts Octavia loose when he says,

ANTONY                      Gentle Octavia,  
  
    Let your best love draw to that point, which seeks  
    Best to preserve it: if I lose mine honour,  
    I lose myself: better I were not yours  
    Than yours so branchless. But, as you requested,  
    Yourself shall go between 's: the mean time, lady,  
    I'll raise the preparation of a war  
    Shall stain your brother: make your soonest haste;  
    So your desires are yours. (3.4.21-29)

By sacrificing his high position, wealth, reputation, and ideal Roman wife, he chooses to become the anti-Roman. "If I lose mine honour, I lose myself" (3.4.23-24) testifies to Antony's willing sacrifice of his Roman prowess. In saying, "make your soonest haste; so

your desires are yours” (3.4.28-29), Antony releases Octavia from the subordination of the Roman wife. This dialogue testifies to Shakespeare’s knowledge of Roman people in the sense that Antony has cut Octavia loose, thus releasing her from the marriage, and the taint of Antony’s dishonored name. After receiving permission to make her desires her own, Octavia responds with another *melancholic* piece of dialogue:

OCTAVIA                      Thanks to my lord.  
  
   The Jove of power make me most weak, most weak,  
  
   Your reconciler! Wars 'twixt you twain would be  
  
   As if the world should cleave, and that slain men  
  
   Should solder up the rift. (3.4.30-34)

As the last thing Octavia says to Antony within the play, this speech passively-aggressively attacks masculinity, especially since Octavia remarks about the “Jove of power” (3.4.31). Jove, according to ancient Romans, has a deified meaning; the word is linked directly to the Roman god Jupiter as a second name or in defining things that are chiefly, or above the rest. In modern context Jove is used in exclamation, expressing surprise. Under the context of Octavia’s speech, “Jove of power” is translatable to “God of power,” or the divine Jupiter. Jupiter as the chief god of Rome is representative of the power of Rome and therefore he is the force that is making Octavia “most weak” (3.4.31). Octavia’s remark, “that slain men should solder up the rift” (3.4.33-34), indicates that the obvious casualties of war will be the cement that holds the Roman empire together, which again alludes to the idea that Roman men are defined by their warring exploits. Carmen Grant’s performance as Octavia, in the 2014 Stratford Shakespeare Festival, demonstrates a legitimate thankfulness in this passage. She remarks

that she literally feels gratitude to Antony for cutting her loose, because her honour as a Roman woman would force her to choose sides. Her choice as an actress indicates gratitude due to a release of responsibility.

If Antony had stayed with Octavia he would have had wealth and authority, and his good Roman name might have been rectified. He would be standing, again, as the prime model of a “good” and virile Roman man. The analysis to be applied to Antony and his decision to return to Cleopatra can be as simple as he loves her and wishes to return to her, but in keeping in mind the cultural connections when labeling Octavia as representing Rome and Cleopatra as representing Egypt, one must include the cultural impact represented in Shakespeare’s pitting of Rome against Egypt. The war presented within the world of *Antony and Cleopatra* and that conflict’s genesis in its explanation of Antony’s masculinity creates distinct interpretation that molds this entire play into a renown tragedy.

#### **Part 4: Antony vs. Cleopatra**

Love-suicides are a common theme throughout the theatre world. Shakespeare famously utilizes the dramatic flair of the love-suicide within *Romeo and Juliet*, which stands as one of the most famous love stories in Western culture. However, the love-suicide is not unique to the West. Chikamatsu Monzaemon, known as Japan's Shakespeare, famously utilizes the lovers' suicide in *The Love Suicides at Amijima*, written for the bunraku stage. The fascination with love's association with punishment stretches across cultures, and has inspired the research of notable psychiatrists and philosophical scholars, such as Sigmund Freud and Gilles Deleuze. Kim Elyse Farber utilizes Freud in exploring love's link to suicide and the human condition:

by the advent of the 'mysterious masochistic trends of the ego', which he believed stood in opposition to the instinctual tendency toward pleasure: 'There exists in the mind a strong tendency towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure. (90)

Freud's analysis conjugates with Antony's relationship with Cleopatra, and other stories linked to love-suicides. The mysterious masochistic trends of the ego function as an explanation for the hostility of the super ego towards the ego, the influence of culture versus the need to please oneself. Even as Romeo's culture will not abide his courting of Juliet, Rome's social norms did not allow Antony's romance with Cleopatra, inviting punishment.

Antony's longing for Cleopatra signifies an additional masochistic element outside of Rome's contentions. His relationship with the matriarch pharaoh not only invites abuse from Rome, but also entails mistreatment within their relationship. Cleopatra mocks Antony in a variety of ways; many times those insults are directed toward the Roman hero's virility to the point of what one may perceive as verbal abuse. Antony clearly states his "pleasure lies" (2.3.38) in Egypt, implying his love for Cleopatra. Therefore Antony feels adoration for Cleopatra, despite her abuses. This mindset implies masochism. Lisa S. Starks, cites Gilles Deleuze in her analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra*, stating:

The masochist does not desire to or destroy the woman [as does the sadist], but to idealize her, to submit to her and to be punished by her so that the father (in himself) may be symbolically punished and denied. The unconscious fantasy underlying this masochistic disavowal of the father is the wish for re-symbiosis with and fantastical rebirth with the powerful pre-Oedipal mother that will result in the 'new sexless man' who owes nothing to the father and phallic sexuality. (qtd. in Starks 62)

In the context of this play, the "father" in Antony symbolizes the masculine values of the classic Roman world, and therefore his relationship with Cleopatra denies him that masculine symbolism. Antony consequently unsexes himself, disavowing classic phallic symbolism by inheriting a submissive role.

Cleopatra satisfies Antony's masochistic longings through her sadism. Her active pursuit of conflict throughout her relationship with Antony, centering on his achievements as a hero and his representation as a man, thrive upon manipulation.



Cleopatra's reaction to Antony's delivery of news of his wife's death, and how her death interferes with his business in Rome, encourages conflict between them. Despite Antony's sad delivery of the news, Cleopatra adopts an argumentative manner. Antony says, "My precious queen, forbear, and give true evidence to this love, which stands an honourable trial" (1.3.75), implying that even though Antony leaves Egypt he will still love Cleopatra. Cleopatra responds to Antony's declaration of love with, "So Fulvia told me" (1.3.78), signifying doubt in his love for her since he does not weep for his deceased wife. Antony seems take no offense to Cleopatra's comment, as if his attachment to her has no emotional link. In the previous scene he made no remark in defense to Enobarbus' jests of Fulvia's death. Enobarbus states that Antony's dead wife means nothing since he has Cleopatra: "Why, then we kill all our women. We see how mortal and unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, deaths the word" (1.2.121-23). Enobarbus here sexualizes the two women, using "death" and "kill" and "sacrifice" as double entendre for the female orgasm (1.2.121-23 n.7). Antony ignores, or does not acknowledge, Enobarbus' various analogies. He responds: "The business she hath broachéd in the state cannot endure my absence" (1.2.155-56). Antony's lack of attachment to Fulvia provides Cleopatra the opening to pursue conflict.

She starts by encouraging Antony to feel saddened for her: "I prithee turn aside and weep for her, then bid adieu to me, and say the tears belong to Egypt. Good now, play one scene of excellent dissembling, and let it look like perfect honour" (1.3.76-80). Cleopatra encourages a playful deception in which Antony mimics perfect honour, implying he lacks classic masculine honour due to the absence of his love for his deceased Roman wife, Fulvia. The backhanded aspect of Cleopatra mocking Antony's

honour comes into play when one considers how she taunts the honourable trial of their love in comparison with the implied, and very similar, trial of Antony and Fulvia's relationship. The implication suggests that despite Antony's marriage to Fulvia he has still been sleeping with Cleopatra, therefore Antony may not be strong enough to withstand the honourable trial with Cleopatra. She implies Antony's integrity is lacking. Carlin A. Barton discusses honour's link to Roman life: "Roman honor was, at its best, a homeostatic system, but it was always a homeopathic system, and the body was the axis or the balancing systems that invested every aspect of Roman life" (7). Cleopatra's criticism of Antony's honour designates an imbalance in his virility, and therefore a lack in masculine honourable qualities. Despite Cleopatra's words, Antony harbors no ill will; he says, "And I hence fleeing, here remain with thee. Away" (1.3.105-06). Antony's loving words indicate that despite Cleopatra's negativism toward him he still loves her, and therefore the context of what some might perceive as an argument between two lovers may serve as playful flirtation.

Perceiving Antony and Cleopatra's bickering as playful flirtation may seem like a stretch, but considering other popular relationships within Shakespeare's works, argumentative flirtation commonly presents itself. *Much Ado About Nothing's* Beatrice and Benedick stands as a prime example of quarrelsome flirtatiousness. Much of the dialogue between Beatrice and Benedict could be considered hurtful, depending on how the actors portray the roles. Despite Beatrice and Benedick insulting each other, *Much Ado About Nothing* is largely considered an iconic love story. The introduction to the play in *The Norton Shakespeare: Second Edition*, by Stephen Greenblatt, describes the dialogue between Beatrice and Benedick, and the other characters, as violent:

The more one attends the language of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the more it seems saturated with violence. In the lighthearted opening scene alone, there are almost constant comic references to war, plague, betrayal, heresy, burning at the stake, blinding, hanging, spying, poisoning. (1410)

Such violent language between Beatrice and Benedick's first meeting projects the idea that the two characters obviously have a confrontational history. Despite the metaphorical daggers of their words, Beatrice and Benedick become lovers:

BENEDICK           What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?

BEATRICE           Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet  
                          food to feed it as Signor Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain  
                          if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK           Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain I am loved of  
                          all ladies, only you excepted. And I would I could find in my heart that I  
                          had not a hard heart, for truly I love non. (1.1.95-101)

One may argue that these two characters are not in love at this point in the play and that their bickering stems from legitimate disdain for each other, keeping in mind the popular eavesdropping scenes in which Beatrice and Benedick are tricked into believing that their quarrelsome counterpart has feelings for them. Beatrice's speech after she overhears Hero and Ursula talking about Benedick's love for her displays a kinder side of her, unseen until this moment in the play. Her speech implies that she feels the same way about Benedick:

BEATRICE           What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?  
                          Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?

Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!  
No glory lives behind the back of such.  
And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,  
Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:  
If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee  
To bind our loves up in a holy band;  
For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
Believe it better than reportingly. (3.1.108-117)

Her words, “Contempt, farewell! And maiden pride, adieu!” (3.1.110), testifies to the abandonment of her contempt of marriage. Stating that she will tame her “wild heart” to his “Loving hand” (3.1.113) indicates consent to Benedick’s feelings. Despite Beatrice’s awareness of Benedick’s supposed affections, she still plays a manipulative and quarrelsome game with the man throughout the rest of the play, while he retorts in kind.

In contrast to Benedick, Antony assumes a completely passive role when in conflict with Cleopatra. Antony’s lack of potency when confronting the matriarch signifies his willingness to assume a submissive role. As the masochist, Antony’s submissiveness in their relationship allows Cleopatra to satisfy her sadism. She reflects on a sadistic moment with the Roman hero:

CLEOPATRA        That time-O times!-  
I laughed him out of patience, and that night  
I laughed him into patience, and next morn  
Ere the ninth hour, I drank him to his bed,  
Then put my tires and mantles on him whist

I wore his sword Phillippan

O, from Italy.

Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears,

That long time have been barren. (2.5.18-24)

Cleopatra's reminiscence of Antony fondly reflects on effeminizing him. Her partiality of putting her "tires and mantles on him whilst" while she "wore his sword Phillippan" (2.5.22-23) attests to her not only taking advantage of a drunk and foolish Roman idol, but signifies a role reversal in which Antony dons the clothes of an Egyptian queen while Cleopatra stands in the garb of a Roman colossus that carries the sword with which Brutus and Cassius were defeated at the battle of Philippi. This fondly remembered role reversal implies that Cleopatra enjoys her sexual dominance over Antony. Marsha A. Decker describes Cleopatra as a "vibrant, passionate woman who uses sex and cunning manipulation to control the political male environment" (10). The Egyptian queen's fondness in recalling this moment implies that this particular memory is a loving moment in which she enjoys her dominance and his submissiveness.

Cleopatra's aggressive fetishism still takes precedence in Antony's absence. She exorcises dramatic flourish in regards to Antony, even when the man is not present. Her melodramatic statement to the messenger delivering news of Antony entails control over the messenger, using guilt as she demonstrates with Antony:

CLEOPATRA           Antonio's dead! If thou say so, villain,

Thou kill'st thy mistress. But well and free,

If thou so yield him, there is gold, and here

My bluest veins to kiss—a hand that kings

Have lipped, and trembled kissing. (2.5.26-30)

Cleopatra tears the messenger down, calling him a villain, and builds him back up again by offering her hand as a reward, a hand that “kings have lipped and trembled kissing” (2.5.30). The messenger’s news of Antony’s death, and its link to Cleopatra’s fatality, implies that messenger’s bad news would lead to punishment for the herald in losing his mistress. He would hereby cause the metaphorical death of all Egypt. The other implication of Cleopatra’s threatening of the messenger with punishment centers on Cleopatra’s love for Antony. The thought of the Roman hero’s death seems so overwhelming to Cleopatra that she links the importance of her life to Antony’s.

Cleopatra’s love for Antony emerges in her jealousy. After the messenger delivers news about Antony’s marriage to Octavia, Cleopatra demands to know details about Antony’s wife:

CLEOPATRA            Is she as tall as me?

MESSENGER:           She is not, madam.

CLEOPATRA            Didst hear her speak? is she shrill-tongued or low?

MESSENGER            Madam, I heard her speak; she is low-voiced.

CLEOPATRA            That's not so good: he cannot like her long.

CHARMIAN             Like her! O Isis! 'tis impossible.

CLEOPATRA            I think so, Charmian: dull of tongue, and dwarfish!

                              What majesty is in her gait? Remember,

                              If e'er thou look'dst on majesty.

MESSENGER            She creeps:

                              Her motion and her station are as one;

She shows a body rather than a life,  
A statue than a breather.

CLEOPATRA        Is this certain?

MESSENGER       Or I have no  
observance.

CHARMIAN        Three in Egypt  
Cannot make better note.

CLEOPATRA       He's very knowing;  
I do perceive't: there's nothing in her yet:  
The fellow has good judgment.

CHARMIAN        Excellent.

CLEOPATRA       Guess at her years, I prithee.

MESSENGER       Madam,  
She was a widow,--

CLEOPATRA       Widow! Charmian, hark.

MESSENGER       And I do think she's thirty.

CLEOPATRA       Bear'st thou her face in mind? Is't long or round?

MESSENGER       Round even to faultiness.     (3.3.11-30)

David M. Buss states that Cleopatra's jealousy "communicates commitment to a partner who may be wavering, serving an important purpose in the maintenance of love" (6), which is apparent through her criticism of Octavia's features. Octavia is not as tall as Cleopatra, she speaks too low, she is dull, and she is round faced (a little heavy). Cleopatra feels confident in Antony's good judgment and the idea that he cannot like

Octavia long. To her, Octavia's attributes are nothing like the sexually dominant Cleopatra. Furthermore, Octavia's features are soft; her description lacks any powerful characteristics. That authoritative quality that Octavia lacks, Cleopatra has in excess. Plutarch describes Cleopatra, saying that her beauty "was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her... her presence, combined with the persuasiveness of her discourse... had something stimulating about it" (197), i.e. that it was her commanding discourse that gave her social power. Arguably Octavia's lack of life, or lack of her more masculine characteristics such as sanguinity and choleric, makes her dull in comparison. Cleopatra's ultimate weapon is that she is both a leader as a sexual individual. She knows Antony is wrapped around her finger, and she utilizes this knowledge, contributing to his and her fetishism.

Since so many of Cleopatra's characteristics are playfully confrontational and Antony's "pleasure lies" (2.3.38) in Egypt, common sense would dictate that he also misses the conflicting moments with Cleopatra. Antony's fondness for the punishment of his masculine Roman station signifies the diminishment of that station. Which Shakespeare links to Antony's submission. Thus allowing the kind of behavior in his and Cleopatra's relationship. As Starks suggests, "submission, and humiliation that characterize the narrative of male masochism pervade Greek and Roman mythology and literature"(59). Masochism does not necessarily have to be sexual, though at times sexuality is implied; it is a social kind of masochism. Antony, a man that has dominated the Roman world and has stood beside the Roman colossus Caesar, appears to require access to someone that has great authority. He has the same magnetic attraction to the matriarch Egyptian ruler that Caesar had.



The power of Cleopatra was well asserted over both Antony and Caesar. Her grip over these men is not necessarily a manipulation, not as demonstrated in Antony's case within *Antony and Cleopatra*, but it is, instead, a willing submission to Cleopatra's charm. A key part of masochism is the willing submission to the idol. Antony never opposes Cleopatra. His love for her unarguably leads to his undoing. He goes to war for Egypt and leads Cleopatra's navy against the most powerful nation in Western culture at the time. The idea of war with Rome seems suicidal and ultimately invites punishment. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that Antony's suicide is the final result of his own fetishism. One could argue that convincing Antony to commit suicide was the last sadistic action Cleopatra enacts. Antony willingly goes to his Pharaoh idol, saying, "But I will be bridegroom in my death, and run into't as a lover's bed" (4.15.99-101), implying death "as a form of erotic union or climax, with Antony as the bridegroom and death (and Cleopatra) the bride" (4.15.99-101 n.1). In essence, even Antony's death is an appeasement to Cleopatra, his sadist idol.

## The Death of a Colossus

Antony's willing submission of his *pietas*, family, and gods indicates his masochistic need for abuse, which leads to his downfall, as to his death. But every flaw I have identified in Antony centers upon how other characters see him. The question still remains: how does Antony see himself?

Antony obviously depends on his exploits as a Roman hero to some extent. He plainly presents his wounded Roman pride after he loses the battle of Antioch, expressing for the first time in the play disdain for Egypt and Cleopatra:

ANTONY                    All is lost;

This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me:  
My fleet hath yielded to the foe; and yonder  
They cast their caps up and carouse together  
Like friends long lost. Triple-turned whore! 'Tis thou  
Hast sold me to this novice; and my heart  
Makes only wars on thee. Bid them all fly;  
For when I am revenged upon my charm,  
I have done all. Bid them all fly; begone.  
O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more:  
Fortune and Antony part here; even here  
Do we shake hands. All come to this? The hearts  
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave  
Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets

On blossoming Caesar; and this pine is bark'd,  
That overtopp'd them all. Betray'd I am:  
O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,--  
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars, and call'd them home;  
Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,--  
Like a right gipsy, hath, at fast and loose,  
Beguiled me to the very heart of loss.  
What, Eros, Eros! (4.13.9-30)

Cleopatra no longer epitomizes for Antony his idle to worship, as she is the excuse for his ruin as a Roman man. Her retreat from battle had cost Antony the war. Antony finally declares agreement with the popular consensus of his Roman enemies, and calls Cleopatra a whore. She is a “triple turned whore” (4.13.13), a “foul Egyptian” (4.13.10), and “a right gipsy, hath, at fast and loose, Beguiled me [Antony] to the very heart of loss” (4.13.28-30). His allegations directed toward Cleopatra stem from Antony’s wounded pride from loss. Arguably, Antony’s anger stems from the notion that he lost a battle to Octavian, a man far from the warrior prowess that Antony himself possesses. Furthermore, Antony expresses his feeling of diminished masculinity, saying, “blossoming Caesar” (4.13.23) has “bark’d” (4.13.24) his pine, which could be construed as Caesar stripping his wood, wood being an analogy for the male erection that Cleopatra praised at the beginning of the play. Antony seems to understand at this point in the play that his value as a man, in the classic sense, has been demolished entirely.

Antony’s destroyed Roman prowess leads him to commit the redemptive act of suicide, which was considered a strong representation of Roman freedom as Roman

citizens had the right to choose life or death, unlike slaves. A Roman suicide was, in a way, the ultimate virile action. According to the Romans only a true warrior could find the courage to kill themselves in the face of overwhelming odds instead of facing capture or dishonor. Catherine Edwards observes that one of the most famed honorable suicides in Roman antiquity was Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, stating his “death was rapidly taken as emblematic of Roman striving to place liberty above life – a death which marked the end of the republic yet also served as a testament to the value some Romans at least on its ideals” (3). The driving force for Antony killing himself is not the death of his lover, but the fear of being dishonorably displayed at Caesar’s triumph. Mary Beard perceives that

To be awarded a triumph was the most outstanding honor a Roman general could hope for. He would be drawn in a chariot—accompanied by the booty he had won, the prisoners he had taken captive, and his no doubt rowdy and raucous troops in their battle gear—through the streets of the city to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline hill, where he would offer a sacrifice to the god. (2)

Antony’s pride has already endured defeat at the hands of Octavian Caesar in battle, but to be his trophy at such a triumph would be the ultimate form of defeat. Antony would be displayed as an enemy of Rome to be ridiculed by the Roman crowd. He discusses the prospects of this fate with Eros:

ANTONY                      Eros,  
  
      Wouldst thou be window'd in great Rome and see  
      Thy master thus with pleach'd arms, bending down  
      His corrigible neck, his face subdued

To penetrative shame, whilst the wheel'd seat  
Of fortunate Caesar, drawn before him, branded  
His baseness that ensued? (4.15.72-77)

Antony asks Eros if he would be willing to witness Antony's shame. The symbolism of Eros as an observer of Antony's humiliation and destruction goes deeper than a simple soldier seeing his commander as a trophy. The name Eros is also the name of a Greek god of love, or lust, that blessed the union of Gaia and Uranus. As the figurative representation of love, Eros would be emblematically witnessing his handicraft of leading Antony and Cleopatra to their deaths at Octavian Caesar's Triumph. Shakespeare utilizes this symbolism throughout *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, demonstrating the destructiveness of love, or lust. Yet Antony manages to destroy the representation of love by convincing Eros to kill himself:

EROS            Farewell great chief. Shall I strike now?

ANTONY        Now, Eros.

[Eros stabs himself]

EROS            Why, there then, thus do I escape the sorrow of Antony's death.

(4.15.93-95)

Antony finds Eros' suicide inspiring. He compares the man's courage with his own.

Antony says:

ANTONY        Thrice-nobler than myself!

Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what

I should, and thou couldst not. My queen and Eros

Have by their brave instruction got upon me

A nobleness in record: but I will be  
A bridegroom in my death, and run into't  
As to a lover's bed. (4.15.95-100)

Since Antony has figuratively destroyed love, he now has the courage to take his own life. It is important to realize that within this play Antony kills himself to spare the shame of being a war trophy. He does not kill himself for his love of Cleopatra, though he alludes meeting her in death, but he kills himself for his restoration of honor. His love is the reason he has lost all of his masculine value as a Roman. Antony thus restores his honor, and now follows the example of Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis and stabs himself with his own sword. Antony's final words in the play are as follows:

ANTONY     The miserable change now at my end  
              Lament nor sorrow at; but please your thoughts  
              In feeding them with those my former fortunes  
              Wherein I lived, the greatest prince o' the world,  
              The noblest; and do now not basely die,  
              Not cowardly put off my helmet to  
              My countryman, – a Roman by a Roman  
              Valiantly vanquish'd. Now my spirit is going;  
              I can no more. (4.16.53-61)

In choosing to take his own life, Antony restores his virility. He wishes to be remembered by his former glories, saying, “please your thoughts in feeding them with those my former fortunes” (4.16.53-56) pleading to those around him to remember him for the days that he was a mighty “prince o’ the world” (4.16.57), a colossus that stood with other

colossi. It takes a true Roman man with true Roman courage to take his own life in the name of Roman liberty. Antony valiantly vanquishes himself, proudly stating “a Roman by a Roman Valiantly vanquished” (4.16.59-60).

Octavian’s opinion of Antony changes in the face of Antony’s death. When speaking to Cleopatra shortly before the play ends, Octavian glorifies Antony saying:

CAESAR      O Antony,  
  
I have followed thee to this, but we do lance  
Diseases in our bodies. I must perforce  
Have shown to thee such a declining day,  
Or look on thine. We could not stall together  
In the whole world. But yet let me lament  
With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts  
That thou, my brother, my competitor  
In top of all design, my mate in empire,  
Friend and companion in the front of war,  
The arm of mine own body, and the heart  
Where mine his thoughts did kindle—that our stars,  
Unreconcilable, should divide  
Our equalness to this. (5.1.35-48)

Octavian’s speech possesses a mournful quality, but it does not lack insult. Saying, “O Antony, / I have followed thee to this, but we do lance / Diseases in our bodies” (5.1.35-37) suggests bloodletting, figuring Antony as Rome’s disease to be lanced from the body politic. Conceivably, Antony was poisonous to Octavian, as the embodiment of Rome,

just by sharing triumvirate status with him. As Octavian continues his speech, he makes a strong emphasis on togetherness, on kinship. Octavian claims Antony as his brother competitor, and mate in empire, and therefore as representative of Rome. Octavian and Antony fought wars both against each other and side-by-side; at this moment, Octavian may be recalling those exploits positively. As Rome itself, Octavian says, "Friend and companion in the front of war, the arm of mine own body" (5.1.44-45) implying that Antony, as a hero of Rome, is part of Rome. One needs an arm to wield a sword and Antony represents that arm now that he has died the honorable Roman way.



## Conclusion

Antony's Roman virility, as a social construction, offers a roller coaster ride throughout *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Antony dies as an honorable Roman man, Shakespeare emphasizes Octavian's Roman kinship and the love he bears for the hero. Through the entire play, Lepidus views Antony as redeemable; they are warriors who have both bled together in battle. In a virile Roman sense, Lepidus is akin to Antony. But Cleopatra is the one who destroys Antony in a way that has echoed through the ages. Shakespeare's portrayal of Antony's masochistic obsession with Cleopatra was the ultimate hindering factor of Antony's manliness. Cleopatra did Antony a favor by inciting his suicide. It was only when Antony lost his idol worship of Cleopatra that he was able to redeem his great name for Octavian, and Rome. My argument ends with the firm belief that Cleopatra, willingly or unwillingly, is singlehandedly responsible for Antony's Roman virile destruction, and redemption. Shakespeare wrote Cleopatra's deception in such a way that, in the end, repaired Antony's damaged Roman pride, making Antony's suicide the death of a colossus.

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