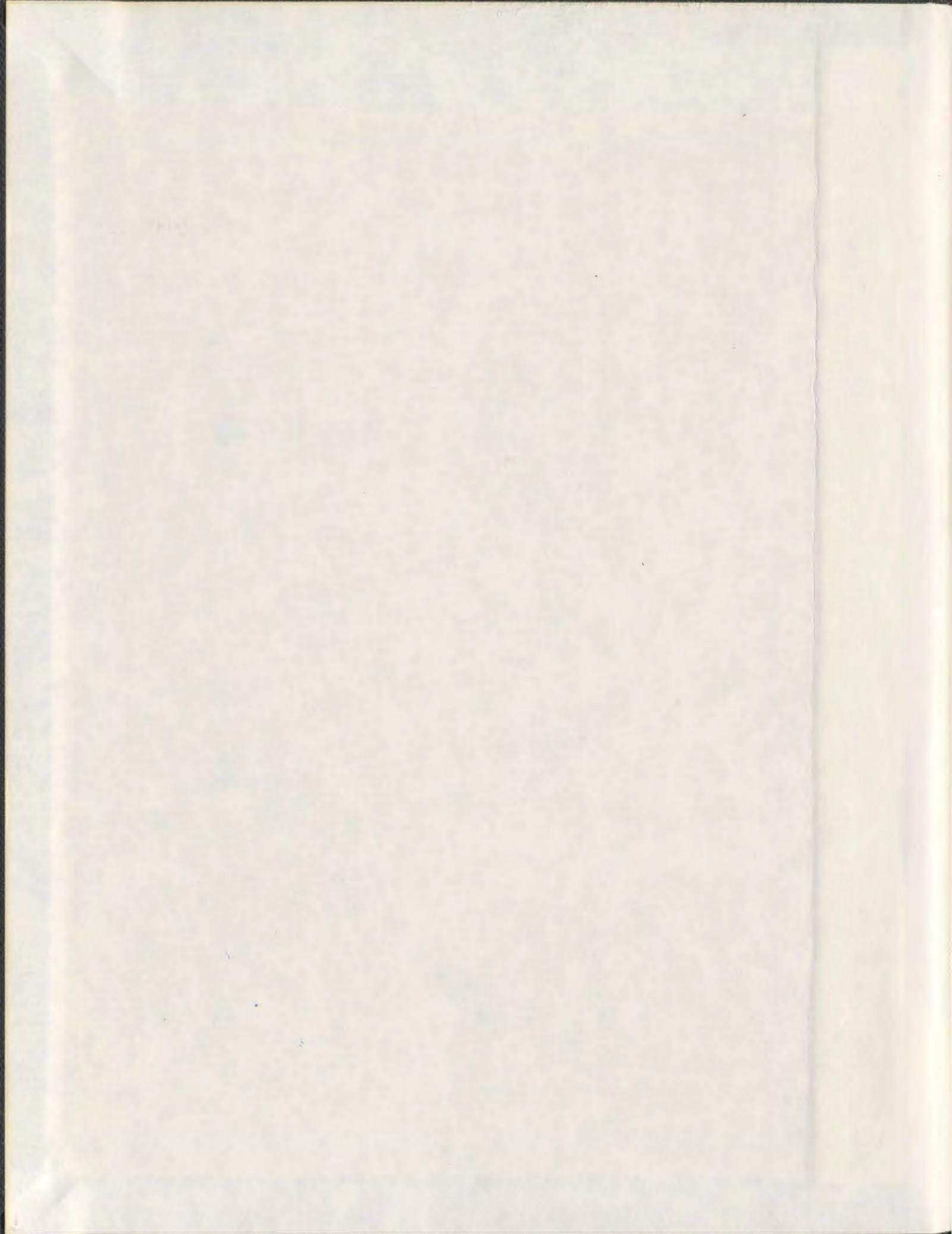


"ROYAL WENCH"

INVESTIGATING GENDER AND POWER IN THE
ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA PLAYS OF THE
ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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**“Royal Wench:” Investigating Gender and Power in the Antony and Cleopatra Plays
of the English Renaissance**

by

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Abstract

In 1592, Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, published her dramatic version of the Antony and Cleopatra story, *Antonius*. In fairly quick succession, Samuel Daniel and Samuel Brandon published their own versions, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) and *The Tragicomeodi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598), of the ancient and tragic tale of love and politics. This study is an investigation into how these particular plays, using the same source story, illustrate the complex issues of gender and power in early modern England. In particular, I focus on how each writer's construction of the figures of Cleopatra and Antony illuminates how Renaissance cultural constructions of gender and power were made even more complex with the presence of Elizabeth I on the throne. Pembroke's *Antonius* seeks to subvert the cultural definitions of gender and power. Daniel uses his play to undermine the subversion of gender roles that Pembroke presents by returning to the figures of Antony and Cleopatra the traits with which they were invested in early modern culture. Brandon also resists the alternate reading of gender and power found in *Antonius* by presenting a positive vision of female power, Octavia, who reasserts the cultural definitions of gender and power. Brandon also explores more intensely the issues of power itself; that is, he moves from issues of gender and power to the issue of a ruler as a private and public person regardless of gender. My study also examines how changes in the power structure affect the use of the Antony and Cleopatra story. William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-1608) and Thomas May's

The Tragedy of Cleopatra: Queen of Aegypt (1626), and John Dryden's *All For Love* (1678), all written after the death of Elizabeth I, reveal that the ancient source story continued to be a relevant text for political investigation regardless of the gender of the monarch. By examining the ways in which these plays interact with the cultural constructions of gender and power and how they interact with each other, this study illustrates the complex relationship of literature and culture as well as literature with literature.

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Introduction

“Royal Wench:” Investigating Gender and Power in the Antony and Cleopatra Dramas of the English Renaissance.

Elizabeth: (To Shakespeare) Am I your Cleopatra? (Pause.) Is your Antony, then, my
Essex?

(Excerpt from Timothy Findley’s *Elizabeth Rex* 1.2)

In discussing the creation of his 2000 drama *Elizabeth Rex*, Timothy Findley claims that the “play was born in answer” to his own questions about what type of male actor could play mature female roles such as Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, and Mad Margaret (ix). For, as Findley asks, “[w]ithout such men, would Shakespeare have written such women?” (ix). What then follows is a modern investigation into the socially constructed nature of gender and gender roles in a Renaissance setting. And although Findley is perhaps more concerned with illuminating our own culture’s negotiations with gender, his dramatic questioning is founded on his awareness, as an actor and a playwright, of the fascinating figure of Elizabeth I and how her presence on the throne of England affected early modern gender perceptions:

[p]ondering the whole question of a contradiction in genders, I remembered that Elizabeth I often referred to herself as “a Prince of Europe” and even declared that in order to maintain her grasp on the British monarchy and to rule her England, she was called upon to be more than woman. Suddenly a phrase drifted into my mind. *Elizabeth Rex*, “King Elizabeth.” (ix-x)

Findley's connection and use of the conflict between Elizabeth's gender and her performance of power in the highly patriarchal world of early modern politics for his play shows an astute awareness of the gender politics of the twenty-first century and an awareness that such gender[ed] politics have existed since at least the sixteenth-century. His own choice of the phrase "Elizabeth Rex" reflects a similar yoking of opposing terms that William Shakespeare gives one of his own queens, Cleopatra, that "royal wench" (*Anthony and Cleopatra* 2.2).¹ Indeed, that both Findley and Shakespeare create such similar oxymoronic phrases to characterize their respective queens illustrates the continuing conflicts surrounding the issues of gender and power in Western society. This is an issue clearly articulated in those dramas written during the reign of Elizabeth I that take for their dramatic source the story of Marc Antony, the Roman general, and Cleopatra, the last queen of Egypt, including Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius* (1592), Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594), and Samuel Brandon's *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598). Specifically, my study examines the complex perspectives on the issues of gender and power in Renaissance England that are displayed in these plays in their use of the classical figures of Antony and Cleopatra, in their interaction with larger cultural constructions of gender and power, and in their interaction with one another.

In his discussion of a "poetics of culture," Stephen Greenblatt argues that to understand the value of art one must also understand "that the work of art is not itself a pure flame" (*Learning to Curse* 158) that stands apart from the society in which it is produced. As such, Greenblatt, in his analysis of earlier Marxist attempts to answer the

question of “what is the historical relation between art and society or between one institutionally demarcated discursive practice and another” (*Learning to Curse* 151), claims that:

capitalism has characteristically generated neither regimes in which all discourses seem coordinated, nor regimes in which they seem radically isolated or discontinuous, but regimes in which the drive towards differentiation and the drive towards monological organization operate simultaneously, or at least oscillate so rapidly as to create the impression of simultaneity. (*Learning to Curse* 151)

In other words, Greenblatt argues that the discourses of art and society, while often intended or structured for different political outcomes, are, to a large degree inseparable in their creation; the discourses of art are a product of society and the discourses of society are implicated in and by art. These discourses are separate but so mutually dependent that neither can fully operate without the other. Hence for Greenblatt, “[t]he work of art is the product of a negotiation between the creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society” (*Learning to Curse* 158). In simple terms, a work of art is “the product” of an artist’s engagement with not only society and its institutions, but with culture.

In discussing the rise in the nineteen-sixties and seventies of histories that sought to discover and recover the experience and, hence, knowledge of women, Olwen Hufton acknowledges the importance of the theory of “cultural history” expounded by

anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz as well as philosophers such as Michel Foucault (5), a theoretical discourse that had a strong influence on the theoretical practices of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism as well. While Hufton claims that “[n]one of these scholars saw sexual distinction as a primary concern,” their work was important for studies of gender because they did “define and seek to understand ‘culture’” (5) as an integral part of human intellectual understanding and production. In these theories, culture is:

broadly explained as a set of shared meanings, reflecting ingrained beliefs and determining ritual and practices and the expression of attitudes within a particular group. This group, which could be no larger than a guild or could comprehend an entire empire, was distinguished and demarcated from other groups by these shared meanings or beliefs. (5)

Further, Hufton notes that while “the new cultural historians” (5) did not necessarily focus on women they “were quick to insist that the beliefs and attitudes implicit in both high and low culture would necessarily embody assumptions about the essence of manhood and womanhood, the male and the female”(5). Joan Wallach Scott also argues that gender is a product of cultural production:

[t]he term “gender” suggests that relations between the sexes are a primary aspect of social organization (rather than following from, say, economic or demographic pressure); that the terms of male and female identities are in large part culturally determined (not produced by individuals or collectivities entirely on their own);

and that the differences between the sexes constitute and are constituted by hierarchical social structures. (25)

Like gender, power is a cultural construct. The concept of power, using Greenblatt's terms, is embedded in the "complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions" (*Learning to Curse* 158) of Western culture. While, of course, power, especially political power, is a clearly institutionalized part of society, it is also a concept that is part of the "oscillating" discourses that are essential to cultural poetics. Like gender, what power is and how it is perceived is filtered through our cultural definitions. In the early modern period, gender and power were linked together in the overall project of constructing social order. Merry E. Wiesner argues that:

[o]nce we begin to investigate all relationships of power ("political" in the broadest sense) we find that gender was a central category in the thinking of early modern Europeans. Not only did the maintenance of proper power relationships between men and women serve as a basis for and a symbol of the larger political system, but also for the functioning of society as a whole. Relations between the sexes often provided a model for all dichotomized relations that involved authority and subordination, such as those between ruler and subject. Women or men who stepped outside their prescribed roles in other than extraordinary circumstances, and particularly those who made a point of emphasizing that they were doing this, were seen as threatening not only to relations between the sexes, but the operation of the entire social order. (306)

One important instance of an “extraordinary” circumstance that threatened the relationship between gender and power was the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England in 1558.

The presence of a single, female monarch in Renaissance England defied the connection between gender and power that was inherent in early modern culture. As Carole Levin notes “[d]uring her lifetime Elizabeth had been greatly loved, but in her reign as an unmarried woman who wielded power, refused to be the modest woman who listened to her advisors and preachers, and would not marry or name a successor, she had provoked deep anxieties and fears” (171). One of the ways the “anxieties and fears” of which Levin speaks are articulated, I would argue, are in the Antony and Cleopatra dramas that were produced during Elizabeth’s reign. As Mary Hamer claims “[t]he name and image of Cleopatra are still appropriated for political and cultural debate” (xix) in modern society. For Hamer, “Cleopatra and her story have the weight of originary myth in Western culture: and, used in metaphor, they are specially disposed to illuminate the place of women in the social order” (xvii). Lucy Hughes-Hallett agrees with Hamer in seeing the figure of Cleopatra as a continuing social and political metaphor; for her, “the vicissitudes of Cleopatra’s legend, to which so many different morals have been attached, may act as a reminder that even the simplest piece of information can be made to serve a polemical purpose” (2). In a larger social context “[e]ach image of Cleopatra . . . provides clues to the nature of the culture which produced it, its neuroses and its fantasies” (Hughes-Hallett 2). The image and story of Cleopatra and her paramour, Marc Antony, was not introduced into the English dramatic tradition until fairly late in Elizabeth I’s

reign. Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*, the first of the Antony and Cleopatra plays, was written in 1590, but not published until 1592. A plausible reason for the lateness of the appearance of Cleopatra as an allegorical representation of female rule, and, therefore, Elizabeth I, is that after 1584, with the death of Francis, Duke of Alençon (Neale 256; Somerset 421), it seemed highly unlikely that the Queen would ever marry and produce a male heir.² So while there had been concern from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign due to her gender, once it became clear that there would be no marriage and no male heir of the Queen's body to succeed to the throne, this cultural anxiety increased. Levin remarks that "[o]ne reason for the intense insecurity and upset of the 1590s . . . were the fears over the succession as Elizabeth became older and her death a more immediate possibility" (156). The fear over what would happen to England should Elizabeth die without an heir and the fact that after 1584 Elizabeth would remain a single, female monarch seems to account for the production of the Antony and Cleopatra plays to be studied. As will be argued, the fear of a potential civil war after the death of Elizabeth and the rising frustration of young male courtiers who attempted to fulfill their own political agendas by seeking favours from the aging queen, led to a similar scrutinizing of power, especially gender and power, in the later years of Elizabeth I's reign. As such, these texts reveal in their construction and deployment of the figure of Cleopatra and in consideration of her relationship with Antony, not only the early modern cultural concern with gender and power, but also how each writer perceived gender and power and how they perceived themselves and others in relation to it.

The three texts written during Elizabeth I's reign—Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius* (1592), Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594), and Samuel Brandon's *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598)—all deal with relatively the same subject matter and each play creates its own interaction with Renaissance concepts of gender and power. Yet, each writer's perspective on the story is shaped by her/his relative position to Elizabeth I and her court; that is, how each writer viewed the issue of gender and power is shaped by her/his personal relation to power. *Antonius* (1592), the first English dramatic text to use the story of Marc Antony and Cleopatra, is written from the perspective of a woman and a member of the aristocracy, Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. Pembroke's familial descent as a daughter of the influential Dudley-Sidney alliance and her marriage to Henry Herbert, the powerful Earl of Pembroke, gave her an insight into gender and power not readily available to dramatists who were common and male. As the niece of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and the Queen's longtime favorite, and the daughter of Mary Dudley Sidney, a woman who lost her looks attending on Elizabeth during an attack of smallpox, Pembroke was invited to be a lady-in-waiting for Elizabeth (*Philip's Phoenix* 31-32).³ Unlike all the other writers who engaged with this material, Pembroke had a personal relationship with Elizabeth.⁴ She had first-hand experience, as one of the Queen's attendants, of Elizabeth's performance of power. Also, as a member of the aristocracy, Pembroke was raised to understand the political machinations of early-modern court life. Pembroke's experience of Elizabethan politics could only have been enhanced by her own gender. As a woman, she had a unique perspective on the negotiations that Elizabeth had to perform as a

female ruler and, indeed, after her marriage to Henry Herbert, Pembroke had to perform similar negotiations herself. Despite her own belief and support of her family's political Protestant agenda, her *Antonius*, through her construction of an extremely sympathetic Cleopatra, is a play that seeks to illuminate the difficulties with which Elizabeth had to contend as a female monarch. Her play, rather than focussing on a negative assessment of female rule (as was often the case with male-authored texts on woman and monarchy, such as John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*), focuses on the inability of a masculine society to accept female rule as the cause of such negative political (and personal) consequences. The difficulty of overcoming a patriarchal culture's ideologies of gender and power is then illustrated in the dramatic sequel to Pembroke's play, Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*.

If Pembroke, as a noblewoman, had a unique perspective on how Elizabeth I negotiated gender and power, Samuel Daniel's perspective, as a commoner and a male, represents a nearly polar opposite position. As a writer under the direct patronage of Pembroke and a subject of Elizabeth I, Daniel experienced the anxiety of submitting himself to female power. While there is no direct contact between Daniel and Elizabeth I, his patronage relationship with Pembroke is a reflection of the larger cultural issue of females holding power over males. It was not only under Pembroke's patronage, but also, apparently, under her direction that Daniel penned his own version of the Antony and Cleopatra story, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, in 1594. In his dedication to Pembroke, Daniel specifically writes that his version of the tale was written at Pembroke's request (Hannay "Patroness" 143; Rees 12; Seronsy 22). Yet, Daniel's *Cleopatra* does not

articulate the same discourse concerning gender and power that Pembroke's text does. Instead of agreeing with Pembroke's assessment of the danger inherent in a masculine anxiety concerning female rule, Daniel's play seeks to subvert this political stance by re-establishing the cultural biases against female rule. In his text, Daniel reinstates through his construction of the figure of Cleopatra many of the negative qualities typically represented by the Egyptian queen. Daniel's play is thus more than a sequel to *Antonius*; it acts to counter the political message constructed in Pembroke's play. In doing so, Daniel demonstrates the anxiety of his personal subordination to a powerful woman, Pembroke, and a more general early-modern masculine anxiety about submitting to female rule that was engendered by the reign of Elizabeth I. Like Daniel, Samuel Brandon, in his *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598), engages with the issue of female rule, but rather than presenting a negative vision of feminine power, he presents one that is exaggeratedly positive.

Of the three writers that used the story of Antony and Cleopatra to investigate the issues of gender and power, Samuel Brandon created his play *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598) at the farthest remove from power. Yet it is also clear from reading his play that Brandon had read both Pembroke's *Antonius* and Daniel's *Cleopatra*. One aspect of his play that would suggest this is the fact that he takes Octavia, Marc Antony's neglected Roman wife, as his central character. By using Octavia, Brandon completes the ancient love triangle of the classical story. A more substantive argument for Brandon's familiarity with the plays of his more famous predecessors is the manner in which *The Vertuous Octavia* interacts and reinterprets themes and issues found

in the texts that preceded it. Like Daniel, Brandon writes his play to reconfigure the positive portrayal of Cleopatra in Pembroke's play. Unlike Daniel, Brandon, does not display the dangers associated with female rule through the character of Cleopatra, but creates an ideal figure of female rule in Octavia. Also, by choosing to have Octavia as a positive female figure of power, Brandon fully reinstates the positive and the negative dichotomy that the figures of Cleopatra and Octavia traditionally represented. Unlike the sensuous force disruptive of masculine power so often linked to Cleopatra, Brandon presents the powerful, yet submissive, Octavia who restores masculine power. By positing an alternative to Cleopatra, Brandon suggests an alternative perspective of female rule—a rule that, while held by a female, is submissive to patriarchal authority. Other than restoring Cleopatra to her status as an example of negative female rule by offering the positive example of Octavia, Brandon's play is the one that most clearly emphasizes the necessity of rulers, whether male or female, to separate private desire from public duty. While both Pembroke and Daniel also deal with the issue of the private and the public sides of rule, in Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* this issue is made central to the text.

While critics have acknowledged that Daniel and Brandon use Pembroke's play as a source for their own dramatic texts, very few have fully explored how these plays are interconnected not only by subject but by theme and political content. My study seeks to fully outline how these plays illustrate the complex perspectives on gender and power in early modern England. More than using the same classical story, these plays use this story for similar, yet, alternating discourses on gender and power; that is, each play

comprises its own reading from the early modern ideologies of gender and power and, through this reading of culture, constructs its own perspective on gender and power. In addition to appropriating the cultural discourse on gender and power, both Daniel and Brandon appropriate and attempt to subvert the alternate perspective on gender and power found in Pembroke's *Antonius*. What these plays, when studied together, represent, in a sense, is a debate about the construction of gender and power, and a debate that underlies the idea that gender and power were products of cultural construction. My study investigates this debate by examining, in the first chapter, the construction of gender and gender roles in early modern culture by reading the non-dramatic texts that were written in direct relation to the issues of gender and power in early modern England including John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* as well as the pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes*. This investigation then links how the figuration of Cleopatra in early modern culture made her such an appropriate symbol not only for Elizabeth I but also as a representation of female rule. In chapter two, I connect the cultural construction of gender roles with how they were used by Pembroke in *Antonius*. In chapter three, I explore how both Samuel Daniel and Samuel Brandon constructed their own discourses on gender and power by attempting to subvert Pembroke's discourse and by reattaching to Cleopatra the traditionally negative traits she was assigned by early modern culture. I also, throughout these chapters, illustrate how the discourses initiated by Pembroke, Daniel, and Brandon shift from being an examination of gender and power to an engagement with the broader discourse of power, especially monarchical power. This shift is further explicated in chapter four that examines three of

the Antony and Cleopatra plays that appeared after the death of Elizabeth I including William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-1608), Thomas May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* (1626), and John Dryden's *All For Love* (1678). Each of the latter plays, written during the reign of different, male, monarchs shows the manner in which the use of the story of Antony and Cleopatra was adapted to construct a political reading of power when gender was not an issue; that is, these plays show how the political discourse constructed by Pembroke, Daniel, and Brandon to examine the issues of gender and power became an appropriate (and appropriated) discourse for examining the nature of power regardless of the gender of the monarch. By studying the ways in which the same source material, the story of Antony and Cleopatra, is used differently by each writer, one is presented with a dramatic image of the inherent complexities that the idea of gender and power encompassed for the Renaissance and how that image expanded to become a discourse about power itself.

¹ I have chosen to use the spelling of “Anthony” instead of “Antony” in the title of Shakespeare’s play throughout my study. A full explanation for this can be found in note 1, chapter four.

² Anne Somerset notes that even if the match between Elizabeth and Alençon had been successful, there were fears that the Queen was too old to conceive a child (she was forty-six at the beginning of the courtship in 1579) or that giving birth might kill her (395ff).

³ Margaret Hannay claims that “[o]n Mary Sidney’s first birthday [1562], the future of England—and particularly of English Protestants—looked grim as Queen Elizabeth lay near death from smallpox” (*Philip’s Phoenix* 17). While Elizabeth did not die, Mary Dudley Sidney who had “nursed the queen through that near-fatal illness” contracted the disease and “that service cost her beauty and almost her life” (*Philip’s Phoenix* 17). Millicent Hay, the biographer of Pembroke’s younger brother, Sir Robert Sidney, also notes the importance of Lady Sidney’s pedigree and service to Elizabeth for the family’s position in court (18).

⁴ By using the term “personal relationship,” I am not arguing that Pembroke and Elizabeth were friends or confidantes. However, as a lady-in-waiting, Pembroke would have spent a great deal of time with Elizabeth and often in more personal circumstances such as the Queen’s bedchamber.

Chapter One

“More than a man, and, in truth, something less than a woman:” Cleopatra, Elizabeth, and Gender and Power in Early Modern England.

In his *Life of Sidney*, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, makes an interesting, if fleeting, reference to his own dramatic version of the Antony and Cleopatra story. In discussing his literary endeavours, which he claims were inspired by Sir Philip Sidney, Greville claims that originally his tragedies “were in their first creacion three; whereof Anthony and Cleopatra, according to their irregular passions, in foresakeing Empire, to follow sensuality, were sacrificed in the fire. The Excucioner, the Authour himself” (Greville 97).¹ Greville claims that the deliberate decision to destroy his own play was not because “he conceived it to be a contemptible yonger brother to the rest, but least while he seemed to looke overmuch upward, he might stumble into the Astronomers pitt ” (98). Unlike his friend and model Sidney, Greville was apparently keenly aware of the political consequences of writing for any courtier. His fear that he would “stumble into the Astronomers pitt,” Greville’s poetic reference to the Star Chamber, due to his retelling of the Antony and Cleopatra story is clarified by Greville’s subsequent claim that he was worried that his play about the ancient lovers would have been read as a negative or critical commentary on contemporary events and that “[m]any members in that creature [the Government/Court] (by the opinion of those fewe eyes, that saw it) having some childish wantonnesse in them, apt enough to be construed, or strained/ to a personateing of vices in the present governours, and government” (98). Specifically,

Greville was worried that the story would recall the fairly recent, and traumatic, fall of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, under the blade of the State Executioner:

[a]nd againe in the practise of the world, seeing the like instance not poetically, but really fashioned in the Earle of Essex then falling; and ever till then worthily beloved, both of Queen and people: this sudden discent of such a greatnes, together with the quality of the actors in every Sceane, stird up the authours second thoughtes, to be carefull (in his own case) of leaving fair weather behind him. (98).

While Greville gives his reader no date for his lost Antony and Cleopatra play, the earliest date given for his *Life of Sidney*, 1610, comes seven years after the death of Elizabeth I and his excessive caution seems somewhat exaggerated.² However, Greville's fear that his dramatic and poetic writing might cause him political difficulties is hardly unfounded. Several writers were called before the Privy Counsel for their literary output, and there were also writers who faced clear and obvious punishment when their works were judged to be politically inflammatory.³ Yet, despite the danger of writing plays that many would read as being "really fashioned" on the powerful personages of the day, several writers during Elizabeth's reign did produce dramatic versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story including Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, Samuel Daniel, and Samuel Brandon, and they did so without any or minimal—as we will see in the case of Daniel—apparent political misfortune. However, the fact that none of these writers suffered negative

political consequences cannot be read as a confirmation that their texts were apolitical.

Written during the reign of a strong, single, female monarch, the Antony and Cleopatra plays produced during Elizabeth I's lifetime were bound to be seen as political. Indeed, it seems very unlikely that those who read these plays would not have read them as political. While in the modern mind the ancient story of Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII is, above all else, a love story, the decidedly idealized vision of love associated with the Roman general and the Egyptian queen was neither so clear-cut nor so overtly romanticized in the early modern period. Rather than extolling the power of love, most early modern versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story expounded on the conflicting pressures of love and political power. Instead of being concerned with the private feelings of the great pair, these writers were concerned with how the very personal natures of Antony and Cleopatra affected their public and political actions. It was a story that investigated how conflict within the dual nature of any ruler, the private human being and the political entity, could have serious consequences for the people they ruled. Furthermore, this concern for the dual nature of a ruler was even more complicated when the ruler in question was a woman. For Pembroke, Daniel, and Brandon, who penned their versions of the ancient saga of the doomed lovers during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, the story became a platform from which they launched their own investigations into the idea of gender and power.

The Renaissance was a period of great social and ideological flux due to the discovery of new literatures, philosophies, continents, sciences, etc. Yet, despite the

numerous social, political, cultural, and religious changes that occurred during the early modern period, there was also a seemingly strong desire to maintain traditional hierarchical structures. In fact, the almost overwhelming atmosphere of change led to a parallel need to implement definitions and order in the name of social and cultural stability. As Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride argue:

these changes . . . caused tremendous anxiety amid cultures that were constantly having the rug of truth and familiarity pulled out from underneath them. The disruptions and anxieties of the period had significant effects on the representations of certain social groups, as fear of the unknown was often displaced onto the body of marginalized peoples, including Conversos, those Jews who had converted to Christianity, and women. Their bodies came to signify the disturbing disparity between what was thought to be hidden inside and what merely appeared to be true on the outside. The sinful soul in a woman's beguiling body became an emblem of all the deceiving confusion of the period: she was often perceived, therefore, as a threat that must be controlled, contained, silenced, or destroyed. (6)

The "anxiety" aroused due to the changes in almost every area of Renaissance society (economic, scientific, philosophic, religious) led to a desire to incorporate old structures of order with new ways of thinking, especially with regards to groups, such as women and religious minorities, who had been traditionally marginalized within early modern society:

[o]rder and hierarchy were important concepts in the Renaissance, and most theorists and moralists of the period worked out their philosophy in a schema of rank and subordination. Early modern peoples shared a literary, philosophical, and religious heritage that mostly argued for women's inferiority to men as well as peasants' inferiority to the nobility and aristocrats' inferiority to the sovereign. In addition, people of one religious confession usually held that people of other religions were misguided and mistaken. However, the Renaissance was a period of new thinking regarding religion, politics, and social roles and structures; all of the received wisdom of the ancient world as well as time-honored interpretations of the Bible were being challenged during this period. So, while most early modern people continued to hold rather traditional notions of hierarchy, there were challenges to almost every idea they had inherited. (Brown and McBride 22)

The need of some early modern thinkers and writers to maintain traditional hierarchical order in the face of being challenged by new knowledge is clearly illustrated by Renaissance writings that focus on gender and power. One clear example was John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558). This noteworthy, and, to some, notorious text is frequently cited by those scholars interested in exploring the complex relationship between the patriarchal philosophy of Renaissance thinkers and the real circumstances of female monarchs.⁴ Knox's political treatise, published in the same year as Elizabeth I's ascension to the throne of England, but written during the reign

of her sister, Mary Tudor, is a vociferous declamation against the very notion of women being in positions of social and political power. While Knox wrote the text to denounce specific female monarchs, Mary Tudor of England, Mary Guise, the widow of James V and the Queen Regent of Scotland, and, after her, her daughter Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scotland, the rhetoric of *The First Blast* is very similar to other texts that discuss the nature of women.⁵ For this reason, despite Knox's religious and political radicalism, his text is a crucial touchstone in any discussion of women and power.⁶ According to Knox, "[t]o promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and, finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice" (42).⁷ The tenor of the piece, based mainly on scriptural exegesis of Christian fathers like St. Paul and Christian thinkers like St. Augustine and John Chrysostom, is established by Knox's strong rhetoric that allows little room for equivocation. For Knox, the idea of "a woman in power" was an anomaly at best, and in this idea he was not alone. As Theodora Jankowski observes:

Renaissance works of political theory nearly always focussed on how a male ruler could secure, enjoy, or extend his power within a society that was most definitely patriarchal and, therefore, *used* to being ruled by a man. Even if heredity decreed that a woman should rule, society provided her with no patterns of behavior to follow. Male monarchs, in contrast, were products of a society whose major components—civil, ecclesiastical, familial—consisted of

a ruling father who groomed chosen “sons” to take over his role. (“As I Am Egypt’s Queen” 91-92)

While Knox’s political and religious concerns in *The First Blast* are, to some extent, specific to his own text, the language and the authority he uses point to larger cultural concerns about women and power. Of particular interest is Knox’s reliance on two aspects of the patriarchal discourse about women to substantiate his own claims: the basic natural inferiority of women and the evidence given by examples of women rulers, ancient and modern, who were unable to rule rightly.

In his discussion of the natural inferiority of women to men, Knox’s rhetoric relies heavily upon cultural definitions of traits assigned to both males and females; that is, he points to cultural artifacts including biblical authority and ancient philosophy to indicate the socio-culturally accepted ideology of what traits define men and what traits define women. Because of this, Knox’s rhetoric is constructed through posing a series of oppositional signifiers. If men are reasonable, women are unreasonable. If men are strong, women are weak. Using established gender paradigms, Knox claims that women are naturally inferior to men. To strengthen his argument, Knox further claims that while men can be misled on an ideological basis, especially in the case of religious belief, their views on women and women in power is correct and righteous:

[m]an, I say, in many other cases blind, doth in this behalf see very clearly, for the causes be so manifest, that they can not be hid. For who can deny but it is repugneth [repugnant] to nature, that the blind shall be appointed to lead and

conduct such as do see, that the weak, the sick and impotent persons, shall nourish and keep the whole and strong, and, finally, that the foolish, mad and frenetic shall govern the discrete and give counsel to such as be sober of mind? *And such be all women, compared unto man in bearing of authority.* For their sight in civil regiment is but blindness, their counsel, foolishness, and judgement frenzy, if it be rightly considered. (42-43, my emphasis)

In making his case for the natural debility of women as rulers, Knox uses his culture's definition of woman as naturally inferior to man on a physical, emotional, and intellectual level. As Knox makes clear, women are too "blind" to have any valid political vision, are too "weak" to implement political and social policy, are too "foolish" to counsel their betters (that is, men), and, of course, are too "frenzied" or emotionally unstable to pronounce judgement. For Knox, a woman in power is akin to the "feet leading the head" (52). Knox reiterates this point while at the same time adding the weight of general cultural consensus:

[n]ature, I say, doth paint them [women] forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish, and experience hath declared them to be unconstant, variable, cruel, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment. And these notable faults have *men in all ages* espied in that kind, for the which not only they have removed women from rule and authority, but also some have thought that men subject to the counsel or empire of their wives were unworthy of public office. (43, my emphasis)

Knox's connection of the culturally accepted feminine traits that make women naturally inferior to men with an ideology of power illuminates two points for understanding how the discourse of power is constructed as an exclusively masculine discourse in the early modern period. First, the statement makes it clear that not only are women excluded from power, but so too are those men who listen to the advice of women; that is, men who allow their decisions to be swayed by women are not "manly" enough to be trusted with political and social power. Second, Knox reminds his readers that the idea of a woman's unsuitability as a ruler is not an original idea. It has the support of "men in all ages." In this passage Knox argues that not only are women unfit naturally to rule, but also that any man weak enough to allow himself to be "ruled" or advised by an inferior woman is not a man, and, it seems, is even less than a woman. Knox employs this logic to berate the men of his time who have given support to women rulers, especially the Catholic and female rulers that Knox's tract is directed against. Using biblical sources, such as the writings of Paul, and biblical authorities, such as Augustine and Ambrose, as his guides, Knox does claim that women may have some virtues—constancy, stability, prudence, discretion, and reason—but even in the rare cases where women possess such virtues they, according to Chrysostom, "cannot have [these virtues] in equality with men" (53).⁸ Despite this minor concession, Knox continues to deliver the main point of his argument. In reference to Chrysostom's contemplation of the Apostle Paul's injunction against women teachers, Knox claims Chrysostom argues that even "men who were so far degenerate to the weakness of women" (53) are not to be taught or ruled by women,

even if the woman in question is more virtuous. Knox clearly agrees with Chrysostom's assessment that even the rare "good" woman is not good enough to have authority over even the least of men. Again the text emphasizes that it is the responsibility of men to ensure that women do not overstep their "natural" bounds. Knox effectively cites Chrysostom to prove his point: "[t]hese things do not I speak to extol them (that is, women) *but to the confusion and shame of ourselves [men], and to admonish us to take again the dominion that is meet and convenient for us, not only that power which is according to providence, and according to help and virtue*" (54, my emphasis). In fact, Knox sees the acceptance of a female monarch by both the nobility and the common people, especially the men, as a refutation of God's Divine plan of order:

[f]or we are debtors to more then to princes, to wit, to the multitude of our brethren, of whom, no doubt, a great number have heretofore offended by error and ignorance, giving their suffrages, consent, and help to establish women in their kingdoms and empires, not understanding how abominable, odious, and detestable is all such usurped authority in the presence of God.

(40)

Here Knox is delving into the concept of monarchy itself. In the Renaissance, the power of the monarch is directly connected to the power of God; for the subjects ruled by a monarch, the need to obey their King was inevitably linked to the belief that the King is divinely appointed as God's representative on Earth. By reminding the reader of this intertwining of religious belief and secular power, Knox's

derogatory rhetoric connects masculine submission to female rule to Adam's divine treachery in submitting his will to Eve. Using scriptural precedent, Knox argues that it was Adam's action of listening to Eve, of being ruled by his wife, that led to the expulsion of mankind from Eden. His reasoning is based on a combination of natural conditions and divine order. Knox reminds his readers that by God's will Eve was made from Adam in order to serve Adam, "[a]s St. Paul doth reason in these words; 'Man is not of woman but the woman of the man. And man was not created for the cause of woman, but the woman for the cause of man, therefore ought the woman to have power upon her head'" (45).⁹ In Knox's argument, Adam's sin consists not only of eating the forbidden fruit, but also of listening to Eve in the first place; Adam ignores the natural order of God's will by submitting himself to the will of Eve. In being ruled by Eve's will, Adam has flouted Divine Will. In order to correct this breakdown in the natural order, Knox claims that Eve, and all women after her, are to be submissive to the will and rule of men:

[f]or they shall be dejected from the glory of the sons of God to the slavery of the devil and to the torment that is prepared for all such as do exalt themselves against God. Against God nothing be more manifest than that a woman shall be exalted to reign above man. For the contrary sentence hath he pronounced in these words: "Thy will shall be subject to thy husband, and he shall bear dominion over thee" [Genesis 3:16]. As God should say: "Forasmuch as thou hast abused thy former condition, and because thy free will hath brought thyselfe and mankind in to the bondage of Satan, I therefore will bring thee in

bondage to man. For where before thy obedience should have been voluntary, now it shall be by constraint and by necessity: and that because thou hast deceived thy man, thou shalt therefore be no longer mistress over thine own appetites, over thine own will nor desires. For in thee there is neither reason nor discretion which be able to moderate thy affections, and therefore they shall be subject to the desire of thy man. He shall be Lord and governor, not only over thy body, but even over thy appetites and will.” [Ibid] This sentence, I say, did God pronounce against Eve and her daughters, as the rest of the Scriptures doth evidently witness. So that no woman can ever presume to reign above man, but the same she must needs do in despite of God and in contempt of his punishment and malediction. (46)

The importance of the divine and natural hierarchy of male over female is so vital to the order of the world that Knox claims that God uses his own power of command to emphasize the necessity of women to be ruled by men because of Eve’s complicity in Original Sin. And while this statement is clearly a reiteration of the basic theme of Knox’s text—the monstrosity of a woman who rules—it also brings into focus the spiritual consequences that God’s sentence on Eve and her daughters have for men; they must be the rulers, not the ruled. By Knox’s logic, a man’s submission to the rule of a woman is to be “in contempt” of God’s will and command as much as a woman who tries to rule. By allowing women to rule, Knox argues men of the period were flouting the Divine Law of God, as it is established in the Scriptures, and imperiling their own immortal souls. According to Knox, it is only by refusing women the right

to any real socio-political power that men can be assured of both secular social order and divine salvation. For Knox acceptance of “the monstrous regiment of women” threatens to bring chaos to the mundane world and to incur a divine wrath that will close the door to the spiritual realm of Heaven.

Knox fortifies his position against female rule by combining the scriptural injunctions against the concept of the governance of women to a cultural, historical, and patriarchal evaluation of the general characteristics of women and the disastrous consequences of past female rulers. Knox refers to the laws and beliefs of ancient Greece and Rome to give cultural and natural authority to his own scriptural argument. He claims that the classical writers and philosophers who were “illuminated only by the light of nature” (43), rather than God, would be shocked by the power given to women in Knox’s time. To emphasize this notion, Knox states “that such a sight should so astonish them that they should judge the whole world to be transformed into Amazons” (43). In doing this, Knox’s theological rhetoric is supported by classical and “natural” learning. He cites ancient authority in the person of Aristotle to claim that the revered Greek philosopher also believed “that wheresoever women bear dominion there must needs the people be disordered, living and abounding in all intemperance, given to pride, excess, and vanity. And finally, in the end that they must needs come to confusion and ruin” (44). Again Knox emphasizes the dire consequences for the social order that could, and would, result from the “unnatural” rule of women. In order to prove the validity of the “natural” wisdom of the classical thinkers, Knox paints with a very broad brush some pictures

of past/ancient women who were given socio-political power, a power they could not, due to their weaker natures, understand or control:

[w]ould to God the examples were not so manifest. To the further declaration of the imperfections of women, of their natural weakness and inordinate appetites. I might adduce histories proving some women to have died for sudden joy, some for unpatience to have murdered themselves; some to have burned with such inordinate lust that, for the quenching of the same, they have betrayed to strangers their country and city: and some to have been so desirous of dominion that, for the obtaining of the same, they have murdered the children of their own sons. (44-45)

Despite Knox's self-deprecating claim that "this part of nature [classical history] is not my most sure foundation" (45), his allusion to classical *femmes fatales* is an important part of his otherwise Christian and scriptural argument. First, his reference to the classical examples proves that even in non-Christian societies, the wisdom that women should not rule has been received. Knox further argues that the ancients recognized that unnatural events (such as mothers killing their children or their grandchildren) arose because of the unnaturalness of giving women power. Women may want power, since their appetites are insatiable, but if they get power their negative traits become even more pronounced and uncontrollable. They are unable to withstand their own natural tendencies to exploit power for their own personal satisfaction. As well as supporting his Christian argument, Knox's open and very general references to Greco-Roman examples of women who have either usurped the

power of legitimate male rulers and/or women of power who have betrayed the trusts of their people by their own selfish desires, connects his scriptural argument to a larger cultural discourse. Knox is able through this short passage to remind his readers, in particular, his male readers, of well-known female figures of the classical world and, in so doing, he integrates his very specific religious argument with the feminine figures of the larger, and secular, masculine discourse. The non-specific nature of Knox's classical allusions is excused since they are part of a specific knowledge of ancient history that is not his "most sure foundation" (45). However, the fact that Knox makes such references, despite his recognition of his apparent insecurity about his use of classical mythology/history, speaks to the importance of these feminine figures as part of the rhetorical discourse about women in power in the early modern period. While the women of Knox's classical examples are not named, their identities would not have been unknown to his readers. In other words, Knox speaks with and speaks to a base of socio-cultural knowledge about women shared by masculine thinkers and writers as well as the general populace. His seemingly abstract examples call to mind the numerous concrete feminine figures used in literature throughout the period and, perhaps more importantly, the very abstract nature of his examples connects his argument to the on-going cultural debate concerning the nature of women found in several early modern texts, especially in the tracts of the *querelle des femmes*.

One of the focal points for any discussion of the construction of gender roles in the early modern period is, of course, the series of pamphlets that comprises what

Renaissance scholars have termed the *querelle des femmes*. In England, the nominal period for this debate over the nature of woman and her place in society runs from the mid-fifteen hundreds to the mid-sixteen hundreds. In general the writers of the texts in this debate argued about the “nature” of women as well as the appropriate behavior for both genders, especially in defining which gender is “public” and which is “private.” Jean Elshtain states that “[i]mages of public and private are necessarily, if implicitly, tied to views of moral agency: evaluations of human capacities and activities, virtues, and excellence” (4). Yet Elshtain also claims that “[a]lthough public and private are terms of ordinary discourse, one finds widespread disagreement over their respective meaning and range of application within and between societies” (5). However, on a general level, the terms:

public and private [act] as twin force fields [that] help to create a moral environment for individuals, singly and in groups; to dictate norms of appropriate or worthy action; to establish barriers to action, particularly in areas such as the taking of human life, regulation of sexual relations, promulgation of familial duties and obligations, and the arena of political responsibility. Public and private are imbedded within a dense web of associational meanings and intimations and linked to other basic notions: nature and culture, male and female. (Elshtain 5)

These generalized, dualistic notions signify opposing, yet complementary, aspects of human existence. The feminist movement of the early twentieth-century, in its search to understand how and why women were placed in secondary roles in society, clearly

saw these paired terms as registering a dominant-subservient pattern in Western culture and, more specifically, identified women's inferior status as being related to their association with the private world, in particular, the family. As the members of the human race who actually give birth, women were identified with the private life of home and family. The link between a woman's biological reality and her position in society is of great importance when understanding the construction of gender roles and the social behavior appropriate to those roles.¹⁰ In discussing distinctions between private and public with regards to women and feminism, Sherry Ortner claims that the historical devaluing of women is defined by identifying the polemic of nature versus culture. For her, the ideology of culturally sanctioned female inferiority springs from the aspect of human existence to which women are connected:

[w]hat could there be in the generalized structure and conditions of existence, common to every culture, that would lead every culture to place a lower value upon women? Specifically my thesis is that woman is being identified with—or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of—something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself. Now it seems that there is only one thing that would fit that description, and that is “nature” in the most general sense. Every culture, or, generically, “culture”, is engaged in the process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artifacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the givens of a natural existence, bends them to its purposes, controls them in its interest. We may thus broadly equate culture

with the notion of human consciousness, or with the products of human consciousness (i.e. systems of thought and technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature. (25-26) ¹¹

While Ortner's argument is directed towards a modern (and Western) investigation of the place women hold in relation to the concepts of private and public, she makes points that are of great value when considering the texts of the *querelle des femmes*. One such point that is relevant for the early modern period is the distinction made between culture and nature. Ortner's assertion that patriarchal Western culture uses ideology to impose order on "unruly" nature (and, hence, women) and control it is a common theme in modern feminist argument (27). However, in early modern thinking, a medieval heritage combined with Platonic and Christian ideology, saw nature as Divinely Ordered. This order is clearly linked to cultural notions of hierarchy. Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named The Governor* (1531) includes a description of this Divinely Ordained order:

[b]ehold also the order that God hath put generally in all His creatures, beginning at the most inferior or base, and ascending upward. He made not only herbs to garnish the earth, but also trees of a more eminent stature than herbs, and yet in the one and the other be degrees of qualities: some pleasant to behold, some delicate or good in taste, other wholesome and medicinable, some commodious and necessary. Semblably in birds, beasts, and fishes, some be good for the sustenance of man, some bear things profitable of sundry uses, other be apt to occupation and labour; in diverse strength and fierceness only;

in many is both strength and commodity; some other serve for pleasure; none of them hath all these qualities; few have more part or many, specially beauty, strength, and profit. But where any is found that hath many of the said properties, he is more set by than all the other, and by that estimation the order of his place and degree evidently appeareth; so that every kind of trees, herbs, birds, beasts, and fishes, beside their diversity of forms, has (as who saith) *a peculiar disposition appropereed unto them by God their creator: so that in everything is order, and without order may be nothing stable or permanent;* and it may not be called order, except it do contain in it degrees, high and base, according to the merit or estimation of the thing that is ordered. (3-4, my emphasis)

Elyot's argument that everything, and everyone, has "a particular disposition appropereed unto them by God" serves as a foundation for the construction of his own political philosophy about the best and most "appropereed" power structure. In his description of God's natural order, men are, of course, higher than any other creature since it is mankind "for whose use all the said creatures were ordained of God, and also excelleth them all by prerogative of knowledge and wisdom" (4). So while nature is ordered in Elyot's argument, it is also hierarchical. Just as trees are "higher" in this order than "herbs," men are superior to all things, including women.¹² It is this view of nature that John Knox uses, and, indeed, most of the literary works that debated gender, especially the feminine gender, relied heavily on defining the "natural" deficiencies of women. This debate over the "natural" shortcomings of humankind in

turn illustrates how early modern culture established systems of thought in an attempt to control what it perceived as natural inferiority.

The debate over the place/position of women in the early modern period is featured prominently in the literature, both prose and drama. In her study of the “pamphlet wars” (or, as she terms it, the formal controversy) of 1540-1620, Linda Woodbridge lists several conditions that she feels are common to the prose literary works in this genre. For Woodbridge “all works of the formal controversy address the nature of Woman in general,” they “deal exclusively with the nature of Woman,” they all “use *exempla* historical and/or literary examples, usually biblical and classical in origin, of good women or bad,” and they all “argue their case theoretically, relying heavily on abstractions rather than bringing their charges against women or vindications of women to life as object lessons” (14).¹³ In fact, the use of either the positive or the negative female “*exempla*” or figures found in the texts in the *querelle des femmes* can be seen as an attempt to define and redefine, to some extent, the cultural constructions of gender, especially the concept of a woman’s “natural” inferiority and her inability to overcome this deficiency. In her modern feminist study, Ortner claims that culture uses ritual and custom as a means by which to devalue nature and, hence, women. For her:

the universality of ritual betokens an assertion in all human cultures of the specifically human ability to act upon and regulate, rather than passively move with and be moved by, the givens of natural existence. In ritual, the purposive manipulation of given forms toward regulating and sustaining order, every

culture asserts that proper relations between human existence and natural forces depend upon culture's employing its special powers to regulate the overall processes of the world and life. (26)

In the Renaissance period, one can identify that one such aspect of "ritual" that society used to transcend the limitations of nature was literature itself.

One of the potent "rituals" that shapes culture is language. Indeed, one of the key factors in the numerous changes that occurred within the Renaissance was Johannes Gutenberg's invention of a printing press with movable type in 1440. Before this invention, the production and the availability of books, due to the expenditure and expense of creating manuscripts, was very limited. The increasing ability of early modern peoples in the dissemination of the written word changed the social and cultural landscape dramatically by allowing ideologies and information to be learned and absorbed by a much greater audience. In his discussion of Renaissance "self-fashioning," Stephen Greenblatt points to the vital role that the written word played in the construction, dissemination, and challenging of social and cultural forms. In arguing for the need of the literary critic to see his/her own work within the continuation of cultural production, Greenblatt claims that criticism must be self-reflective and any critic must understand that all "literature . . . is part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture" (*Self-Fashioning* 4). Greenblatt's inclusion of all writing, including criticism itself, is largely based on Clifford Geertz's theory of cultural anthropology. According to Geertz, cultural anthropologists, rather than attempting to find "universals" in vastly different human societies, need to look for a

“synthetic” approach to human behavior; “that is, one in which biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural factors can be treated as variables within unitary systems of analysis. . . It is a matter of integrating different types of theories and concepts in such a way that one can formulate meaningful propositions embodying findings now sequestered in separate fields of study” (44). Geertz’s argument for a “synthetic” view of human behavior leads him to postulate that, first:

culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns—customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters—as has, by and large been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call “programs”)—for the governing of behavior. The second idea is that man is precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such cultural programs, for ordering his behavior. (44)

Subsuming Geertz’s theory within his own, Greenblatt argues that:

[s]elf-fashioning is in effect the Renaissance version of these control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing their passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment. Literature functions within this system in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes. (*Self-Fashioning* 3-4)

Greenblatt's connection of "self-fashioning" to the shaping of culture and cultural ideologies is instrumental in understanding the construction of Renaissance views of women. This becomes particularly apparent when investigating the pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes*. Within these texts, especially the "attack" texts, the construction of the characteristics of being female, on both a negative and positive level, is very clear. These texts illustrate how literature contributes to the construction of "cultural meanings" as well as how each text illustrates the author's "concrete behavior" and "the codes by which [that] behavior is shaped."

Acknowledged as the first of the English *querelle des femmes* pamphlets, Edward Gosynhyll's *The Schoolhouse of Women* [1541?]¹⁴ is one of the "attack" texts of the controversy; that is, it lists the negative traits associated with women. Before beginning his enumeration of the women's many flaws, the author claims his knowledge comes from:

Each other man in general,
 And namely those that married be,
 Give evident testimonial,
 Affirming the same (if I would lie),
 And thus report that femini[ne]
 Been evil to please and worse to trust.

(Henderson and McManus 138)

Other than making the assertion that the "feminine" is "evil to please" and "worse to trust," the author argues that this is commonly held information in his culture.

Gosynhyll claims social authority for his statements about women, as men “in general,” especially “those that married be,” argue and believe the same things of women. He substantiates his negative assessment of women by foregrounding the cultural acceptance of such an assessment. After providing the “evidence” of cultural support for his argument about the “evil” of women, Gosynhyll spends the rest of *The Schoohouse* listing the numerous deficiencies and flaws of women. In general, the author claims that women:

Have tongue at large, voice loud and shrill,
Of words wondrous, passing store,
Stomach stout, with froward will,
And namely when ye touch the sore
With one bare word or little more,
They flush and flame, as hot as fire,
And swell as a toad for fervent ire.

(Henderson and McManus 138)

Like Knox’s tract, the author of this text points to the largest deficiencies, by cultural consensus, of women: their lack of reason and their excessive passions. Women’s tongues are “loud and shrill,” and they cannot control their own emotions. They are “froward” and if men try to correct them “[w]ith one bare word or little more,” women fly into uncontrollable rages. Indeed, the overall description given to women in *The Schoolhouse* is very similar in language to that offered by Knox in his own text. In both, the negative traits of women are used to construct a commonplace and

negative figure of the female. This process of figuring or shaping the negative woman is also clearly illustrated in another “attack” pamphlet, *The praise and Dispraise of Women, very fruitfull to the well disposed minde, and delectable to the readers thereof. And a fruitfull shorte Dialogue vppon the sentence, know before thou knitte* (1563-1579?), examined by Carrol Camden, that includes a precise, and useful, picture of the negative figuration of the feminine described in *The Schoolhouse* and *The First Blast of the Trumpet*. Camden notes that while the author of *The praise and Dispraise of Women* claims he “does not intend to speak against good women” (248), he does intend to point out the dangers of the “monster woman” who “is changeable, insincere, proud, servile, cruel, too talkative, and so on” (248). As in *The Schoolhouse* and *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, the author of *The praise and Dispraise of Women* engages with the construction of women as unreasonable and uncontrollable. This figuration of women supports both Greenblatt’s and Ortner’s arguments directly by listing those qualities of “nature” most associated with women that culture tries to control; that is, the writers of the “attack” pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes* emphasize the similarities between untamed “nature” and untamed “women.” Like nature, women must be defined and controlled by those individuals associated with culture and logic, men.

To further strengthen their argument for the inferiority of women, the writers of these “attack” texts used specific examples of women—historical, biblical, and literary—to give evidence that the general negative traits associated with women are valid. Like Knox, many of these writers point, of course, to the figure of Eve and her

role in the ousting of humankind from the Garden of Eden. However, unlike Knox, the writers of these texts also allude to many specific examples of the negative women from both biblical and classical histories. Referring to Gosynhyll's *The Schoolhouse*, Woodbridge notes that he draws "historical examples from biblical sources (Eve, Jezebel, Herodias, Lot's wife, Delilah, Athalia, Job's wife, Pharaoh's wife) and classical sources (Messalina, Cicero's wife). He of course considers the biblical to be 'historical.' His literary examples are classical (Pyrrha, Myrrha, Byblis, Pasiphaë, Helen of Troy) and modern (women in Boccaccio)" (30). There are two noteworthy aspects to all of these examples. Firstly, all of these women used their sexuality to negatively affect males or used their sexuality unnaturally. Eve used her seductive powers to ensnare Adam. Salome used Herod's desire for her to have John the Baptist slain. In the classical examples, Pasiphaë has sex with a bull and produces the unnatural minotaur. Messalina used her position as the wife of the emperor Claudius to satisfy her lusts, and Helen leaves her rightful husband, Menelaus, to run away with Paris and so starts the Trojan War. Secondly, the majority of these women are married to or connected with men of power and, therefore, they affect power by affecting those who wield it. Like Knox, the writers of the "attack" pamphlets seem less concerned with how women could overcome their "natural" deficiencies and more with how men could resist women and keep them from negatively affecting social order. The examples they use illustrate this concern by emphasizing the culpability of men in allowing women to use their feminine wiles, their insatiable and uncontrollable sexuality, to influence the reason of men, especially men in power.

This early modern cultural anxiety over how women and their sexuality could disrupt socio-political order is not only found in the “attack” pamphlets, but also in the “defenses” of women.

If the detractors of women emphasized the danger of female unreasonableness and sexuality, the defenders of women rallied to prove the opposite. However, the defenders of women in the *querelle des femmes* did not attempt to argue for women’s equality with men. In their discussion of these pamphlets, Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus claim that the examples of the negative figuration of the feminine shown in the “attack” texts of the controversy rely heavily on constructing three important female stereotypes: the seductress, the shrew, and the vain woman (47-48).¹⁵ It was the stereotype of the seductress, “the image of woman as enticing, sexually insatiable, and deceitful in the service of her lust” (47), that was emphasized as the most dangerous to socio-political order, and it was this predominant image of the seductress that many of the pamphlets that sought to defend or praise women countered. To do so they offered examples of positive feminine figures. As those who defamed the female character relied on the biblical story of Eve to show feminine “evil,” those who defended women use the figure of the Virgin Mary to illustrate the very important part a woman played in the redemption of humankind. In her reference to *The prayse of all women, called Mulierū Paeon* (1542?), by Edward Gosynhyll, the same author of the aforementioned “attack” text *The Schoolhouse*, Woodbridge notes that the author uses the figure of Mary as a base to illustrate the goodness of women:

[t]he refutation of the misogynist's argument from Eve is lengthy. Gosynhyll objects to sweeping generalities about women, implying that Eve is no more than one example. . . . He questions the logic of blaming Eve more than Adam: both partook of the apple. He maintains that the Virgin Mary atoned for Eve's sin. In the cult of the Virgin Mary elaborated during the Middle Ages, Mary had become almost the female equivalent of Christ: as Christ redeemed mankind from the sins of Adam, Mary redeemed womankind from the sins of Eve. Although the formulation is essentially medieval, formal defenders [of women] use this argument all through the Renaissance. (35)

As with the Virgin Mary, many of the writers who praise or defend women do so by giving their readers positive examples that negate or check the negative feminine examples given in the texts that defame women and women's characters. Along with the Virgin Mary, other biblical women, shown to be virtuous and wise, are given as examples of female worth such as Deborah, Sarah (wife of Abraham), and Rebecca (wife of Isaac) (Henderson and McManus 165-166). Gosynhyll's defense also records several "classical examples of virtue: Lucretia, Veturia (the mother of Coriolanus), Portia (wife of Brutus), and Penelope" (Henderson and McManus 168). Like the negative examples of *The Schoolhouse*, Gosynhyll's positive examples are similar in two important ways. First, all of the women he uses as examples are, like their negative counterparts, associated with men of socio-political or religious leadership; that is, they are all linked by marriage or blood to powerful men. Secondly, the majority of these positive female figures are also noteworthy due to their sexuality.

However, unlike the negative examples of women, these women are praised for controlling their sexuality; they are praised for their chastity. The Virgin Mary, the ultimate example of feminine worth, was so pure that God chose her to bear his son. Sarah, to fulfill her duties as a wife, gives her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham so that he may have a son. Lucretia, raped by Sextus Tarquinius, commits suicide after the loss of her chastity. Penelope, wife of Odysseus, remains faithful to her husband by constantly weaving and unraveling her father-in-law's funeral shroud, thereby keeping her numerous suitors at bay until the return of her husband.

By offering various examples of chaste women to counter the negative images of women as sexually insatiable, the defense texts of the *querelle des femmes* refuted many of the examples of negative feminine traits by constructing female figures that were obviously positive. In the defense pamphlet *Jane Anger her Protection For Women. To defend them against the Scandalous Reportes of a late Surfeiting Lover, and all other Venerians that complaine so to be overcloyed with womens kindness* (1589), the author refutes the attack on women by listing the traits that make women worthy:

[o]ur bodies are fruitful, whereby the world increaseth, and our care wonderful, but which man is preserved. From woman sprang man's salvation. A woman was the first that believed, and a woman likewise the first that repented of sin. In women is only true Fidelity; except in her [no] constancy, and without her no Housewifery. In the time of their [men's] sickness we cannot be wanted, and when they are in health we for them are most

necessary. They are comforted by our means; they [are] nourished by the meats we dress; their bodies [are] freed from diseases by our cleanliness, which otherwise would surfeit unreasonably through their own noisomeness. . . . Our virginity makes us virtuous; our conditions, courteous; and our chastity maketh our trueness of love manifest. (Henderson and McManus 181)

Here Anger argues for the “goodness” of women by arguing not only about their virtues, but also for the female activities that help men. Women are not only moral; they are useful. She argues for the importance of women as the helpmates of men. Furthermore, Anger tries to deflate the arguments of the misogynists by claiming that the only reason men “confess we [women] are necessary” while also claiming women are “likewise evil” (Henderson and McManus 181) is because of their own corrupted natures, “[o]ur tongues are light because earnest in reprov[ing] men’s vices, and our good counsel is termed nipping inquiry in that it accords not with their foolish fancies: . . . our dispositions naughty, for not agreeing with their vile minds; and our fury dangerous, because it will not bear with their knavish behaviors” (Henderson and McManus 179). Here Anger argues that the predominant negative character traits assigned to the feminine gender—talking too much, being scolds, being unreasonable and possessing contrary, raging tempers—are only perceived to be negative by male detractors because these men lack virtue themselves. Men complain about women because they do not want to listen to women who are “earnest in reprov[ing] men’s vices.” Anger argues that the “evil” men see in women arises because of their awareness of their own “evil,” and their unwillingness to be good. However, while

Anger's *Her Protection*, and other defense pamphlets, refute the negative characteristics assigned to women, they do not refute the idea that it is men who should wield authority.

In *Her Protection*, Jane Anger makes an intriguing statement concerning women and authority. When discussing the creation of Eve, she states that unlike Adam, made "of dross and dirty clay" (Henderson and McManus 180), God made "woman of man's flesh that she might be purer than he" which "evidently show[s] how far we women are more excellent than men" (Henderson and McManus 181). The detractors, to emphasize woman's subordinate place in the divine and natural hierarchy, often used the creation of Eve from Adam's rib as proof of man's supremacy. Although Anger makes no direct reference to this idea, it does seem that she agrees with the detractors in believing that women are subordinate to men when it comes to authority. While arguing that women are morally superior and more reasonable than men, she also admits concern that her readers, especially her male readers, "will adorn my head with a feather [indicating she is a fool], affirming that I roam beyond reason" as she seems to be arguing against the precept that "it is most manifest that the man is the head of the woman and that therefore we ought to be guided by them" (Henderson and McManus 177). But Anger, while maintaining the moral superiority of women, also agrees that men should be the ones who hold authority: "[t]he Gods, knowing that the minds of mankind would be aspiring and having thoroughly viewed the wonderful virtues wherewith women are enriched, lest they should provoke us [women] to pride and so confound us with Lucifer, they

bestowed supremacy over us to men” (Henderson and McManus 177). Anger’s claim that men were given “supremacy over us” in order keep women from falling prey to “pride” and “Lucifer” is an intriguing rhetorical strategy. She maintains her argument that women are better while also maintaining the socially accepted gender hierarchy of the early modern period. Woodbridge notes that the defense texts “accomplish little more for women’s cause than to create a stereotype of the ‘good’ woman to counter the misogynist’s stereotype of the ‘bad.’ The portrait of Woman as by nature a tender-hearted, homekeeping, obedient, motherly, uncomplaining washer of befouled diapers does little to advance the argument of the equality of women” (18). Despite the accuracy of Woodbridge’s argument, it does seem more suggestive of a modern, Western feminist bias. To call the defense texts of the *querelle des femmes*, even those written by women, feminist would be anachronistic. Like men, women in the early modern period were the products of their own culture. As Henderson and McManus note:

[t]he religious basis for female subordination caused the greatest difficulty in evolving a truly feminist perspective in the Renaissance, however. In an age when the Bible was interpreted strictly, the defenders could not discount that passage in Genesis [“Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” 3:16]. Therefore, although they argued that woman was as good as, if not better than man, they accepted men’s rule over women as part of the God-given order of the world. Since a hierarchy among people was generally

regarded as right and natural in the Renaissance, the obedience of one adult to another did not carry the stigma that it has acquired today. (27)

Despite the fact that none of the defense pamphlets argue against the “natural” order of men over women, they did argue for the importance of the roles women played in their culture, and they argued for a recognition of female worth. On the level of cultural production, “[t]he defenses of the English Renaissance . . . did contribute something new to the controversy, the voices of women raised in public protest” (Henderson and McManus 25). Other than marking the voices of women “in public protest,” the defense texts of the controversy also show that cultural assumptions about gender, although clearly present, were not unassailable; that is, the defense pamphlets added to the cultural consciousness by illustrating, what Greenblatt would term, a “reflection” upon the cultural codes that initially informed the debate.

The texts of the *querelle des femmes*, both the attacks and the defenses, illustrate how the cultural assumptions about gender and gender roles were not only constructed in the Renaissance, but how the cultural constructions of gender and gender roles were questioned by early modern thinkers and writers. They are important texts because they allow the modern reader to see more clearly and effectively the same concern about gender and gender roles that surface in other modes of cultural and literary production including drama.¹⁶ While Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus call the female figures used in the *querelle des femmes* “stereotypes” (47), the older term, “types,” is perhaps more applicable to the manner in which these figures are used in Renaissance writing.¹⁷ Like the notions of

women inherited from the medieval period, the literature of the Renaissance also appropriated some of the rhetorical conventions of medieval literature. Specifically, the female figures created in the literature of the Renaissance are reminiscent of the type characters found in the Morality plays of earlier drama. In these plays the authors create allegorical figures that represented moral values or failures rather than any “real” person. Unlike the other most popular form of drama of the period, the Mystery plays, which recreated biblical stories for spiritual edification and education, the Morality plays “represented the conscience, the learning, and the moralizing inclinations of the Middle Ages” (Gassner 204). The use of types in these plays highlights, in particular, “the conscience” and “moralizing inclinations” of the abstract individual faced with being good or evil, moral or immoral. *Everyman* has its main character, Everyman, followed in his journey to death by Fellowship, Strength, Discretion, Five-Wits, Good Deeds, etc. While these characters are played as “persons,” it is obvious that they represent the character traits and qualities associated with the moral man; they are not representative of themselves as such, but of the character of Everyman and, hence, the character of each audience member. They are a reflection of the moral dilemma of being human, partly good and partly bad, and illustrate how our choices affect our mortal soul. Like *Everyman*, the play *Mankind* focuses on the condition of man and how difficult it is for humans to stay moral in an immoral world. Unlike *Everyman*, *Mankind* emphasizes the traps and snares that lie on the path to morality illustrated by the use of characters such as Mischief, New Guise, Nought, and Now-a-Days. Each of these characters, representative of moral

flaws, attempts to plunge Mankind into sin. Again these characters, while played as persons, are allegorical figures that posit a reflection of man's immoral traits. Like the types used by *Everyman* and *Mankind*, the feminine figures found in early modern literature can be read as illustrating traits, negative and positive, of women. However, unlike the types found in the Morality plays, the feminine figures found in early modern literature are far more complex.

As was discussed earlier, the *querelle des femmes* pamphlets, both attack and defense, rely heavily on the use of *exempla*—biblical, historical, literary—of women to define female gender roles. This practice led to two competing feminine figures: the bad woman and the good woman. While the earlier Morality plays constructed types/figures that represent a single vice or virtue, the feminine types/figures used as examples to represent women are much more multifaceted. One clear example of how the figures used by early modern writers addressing the “woman question” is far more complicated than the more simple vice/virtue dichotomy of the Morality play is the figure of Eve. While Eve is the first and foremost example of a woman's weak reason, emotional frailty, and sexual danger, writers, as we observed with Anger, also argued that she is more pure and more perfect than Adam since God made her from Adam's flesh. Eve is also the mother of humankind and, therefore, the maternal ancestor of the Virgin Mary who gives birth to Jesus and redeems us all. Indeed, many of the biblical and historical examples of women used to investigate the nature of women could be read as either negative or positive or a combination of both. In Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* (*Concerning Famous Women*) (1355-

1359), the “most important single source of classical *exempla* used in the formal controversy between 1540 and 1620” (Woodbridge 15-16), there are several examples of women which are “employed with equal dexterity by attackers and defenders” (15). In his biography of Semiramis, Queen of the Assyrians, Boccaccio praises her as “a glorious” queen who “was so spirited that she, though a woman, dared to undertake to rule with skill and intelligence those nations which her valiant husband had subjugated with arms and governed by force” (4). He also notes that Semiramis was able to add to her husband’s empire and “restored the city of Babylon” (Boccaccio 5). However, while Boccaccio praises this woman for her political and military prowess, he also claims that “with one wicked sin this woman stained all these accomplishments worthy of perpetual memory” (6). The “wicked sin” to which he refers is Semiramis’s insatiable sexuality: “this unhappy woman, constantly burning with carnal desire, gave herself to many men” (Boccaccio 6). Another example of Boccaccio’s mixture of both praise and complaint is his biography of Mariamne (Mariam), the wife of Herod. He praises Mariamne for her “unheard-of beauty,” he claims that “she was far more distinguished for her strength of character” (Boccaccio 189). While Boccaccio admires Mariamne for her faithfulness to her husband (despite his harsh treatment) and her steadfast morality, he also seems to condemn her womanly pride. He claims that she, after discovering Herod’s plan to have her killed if he did not survive battle, “scorned him [her husband] and with proud demeanor strove to trample upon his power” (Boccaccio 190). Boccaccio praises Mariamne for her morality while at the same time he paints her as somewhat

of a shrew. Woodbridge argues that Boccaccio as well as other writers of texts concerning the “woman question” were more interested in developing and illustrating their rhetorical skills than in arguing seriously about the reality of women in the Renaissance.¹⁸ She states that “the operation of literary conventions and the principles underlying the artificial construction of literary *personae* are widely understood . . . but some genres, more than others, tempt us to forget them” (Woodbridge 5). Indeed, it is the very “artificial” construction of these feminine figures in a masculine rhetoric that makes them so similar to the types of medieval drama. They are not “real” women; they are a rhetorical conglomeration of traits assigned to the feminine gender. It is because of this that the figures of the “bad” and the “good” woman, while types, are far more complicated than those found in medieval drama. They can be made to represent multiple, and sometimes opposing traits, rather than a single vice or virtue. However, while these figures do not represent the lived reality of being a woman in the early modern period, they do illustrate a cultural concern over the position of women in early modern society. They are a reflection of “real life, real emotion, [and] real attitude” (Woodbridge 6). For, as Woodbridge herself states, “a view of literature as bearing no relationship whatsoever to the lives and beliefs of real human beings is no more appealing than its opposite extreme, the too-pat biographical and social conclusions of the utterly literal minded” (6). For the writers of the Renaissance, Cleopatra VII, the last Queen of Egypt, was one of these complex rhetorical feminine figures. Through her figure they investigated their culture’s, and their own, perspectives on both gender and power.

Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemy line to rule in Egypt, is included as one of the examples of extraordinary women in Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*. However, Boccaccio's biography of the famous queen is less than flattering. According to Boccaccio, she "came to rule through crime" and "gained glory for almost nothing else than her beauty, while on the other hand she became known throughout the world for her greed, cruelty and lustfulness" (192). In contrast to Boccaccio's description of Cleopatra as a "wicked woman" (194), Geoffrey Chaucer includes the Egyptian queen in his *Legend of Good Women* as a true and faithful wife who died for love.¹⁹ The discrepancy between Boccaccio and Chaucer is inherent in the culturally constructed figure of the Egyptian queen; that is, what Cleopatra means to any cultural ethos depends on what values that culture has invested into her figure. In her own time and since, Cleopatra essentially has remained a rhetorical cipher that is invested with meanings that illuminate her not as a woman, nor as an Egyptian, nor as a queen, but rather illuminate the values of the culture which produces those meanings. Initiating her study of Cleopatra's place as an important and multiple signifier of meanings in the Western patriarchal mythos, Lucy Hughes-Hallett lists the many identities attributed to the infamous Egyptian queen:

[s]he is 'the wickedest woman in history' [sic]; she is the pattern of female virtue. She is a sexual glutton; she is a true and tender lover who died for her man. She is a royal princess whose courage is proof of her nobility; she is an untrustworthy foreigner whose lasciviousness and cunning are typical of her race. She is a public benefactor, builder of aqueducts and lighthouses; she is a

selfish tyrant who tortures slaves for her entertainment. She is as playful as a child; she is as old as sin. (1)

The culturally constructed figure of Cleopatra is not a “person.” She is a figure who is, when all her qualities are combined, everything and nothing—she is indefinable. She is surrounded by identities which are both constructed for and by her. She is one of the best known women in history, yet she is, to a large extent, unknowable. One of the difficulties in “knowing” or attempting to find the “truth” of Cleopatra is that much of the information about her life and reign was not only written years after her death but also by writers who were not of her culture.²⁰ The stories and legends about her life and reign served to establish the Egyptian queen as an oppositional figure in a dialectic about power and gender that obfuscates the real or historical Cleopatra. Cleopatra’s own recognition and use of spectacle and propaganda further complicates this issue. It is the shifting and nebulous figure of Cleopatra that is used by writers for cultural, social or political purposes. This is also how the character of Cleopatra, with its numerous metaphorical associations, resembles the set type or allegorical characters of medieval Morality plays discussed earlier. Because Cleopatra is a multivalent figure, what she represents is determined by whichever aspects of her character are used by a writer. Because she can be made to represent so many ideas, both moral and immoral, Cleopatra emerges from history not so much as a person but as a set of reflections or refractions of a writer’s perspective on both gender and power. In the Renaissance, how the authors use or eliminate certain aspects of Cleopatra’s character indicates their own view of the unsettled idea of gender and

power in the period, especially in understanding their perception of their own participation in the politics that sustained and shaped culture. But in order to understand how the aspects of Cleopatra's character are used to elucidate the issue of gender and power, it is necessary to understand the two major representations of the Egyptian queen: Cleopatra as she is presented by others as a foreigner and, hence, foreign threat, and Cleopatra's presentation of herself.

The clearly opposing views of Cleopatra found in Boccaccio and Chaucer are embedded within the ancient source stories, most of them written years after Antony and Cleopatra's death. In Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, the story of Cleopatra is told within the *Life of Marcus Antonius*.²¹ While Plutarch calls Cleopatra "the last and extremest [sic] mischief of all other" (25:698) for Antony, he also notes that she possessed a "noble mind and courage" (86:755). Indeed, throughout the *Life of Marcus Antonius*, Plutarch, while emphasizing Cleopatra's political ambition and machinations, also continues to include positive comments about the queen including her intelligence, her good governance, her linguistic ability, and more. Next to Plutarch, Cassius Dio's *The Roman History: Reign of Augustus* is the most often used classical source concerning Cleopatra. In his version of the battle of Octavius and Antony, Dio paints Cleopatra in a much more negative light than does Plutarch and includes details such as Cleopatra's betrayal of Pelusium to Octavius (51:70) and her attempt to seduce Octavius after the defeat at Actium (51:73).²² In summing up her character, Dio argues that:

Cleopatra was a woman of insatiable sexuality and insatiable avarice. She often displayed an estimable ambition, but equally often an overweening arrogance. It was by means of the power of love that she acquired the sovereignty of the Egyptians [through her affair with Julius Caesar], and when she aspired to obtain dominion over the Romans in the same fashion, she failed in the attempt and lost her kingdom besides. Through her own unaided genius she captivated the two greatest Romans of her time, and because of the third, she destroyed herself. (51:76)

The attributes that Dio ascribes to Cleopatra are intriguing as they combine her gender and her power. She is an “insatiable” woman who uses her sexuality in an attempt “to obtain dominion.” In Dio’s text can be found the “monstrous” female ruler so feared by John Knox. This construction of Cleopatra in the classical source stories is understandable given the perspective from which these writers engaged with the tale. As Lucy Hughes-Hallett argues, the histories and accounts of Cleopatra after her death were greatly influenced by the propaganda of Octavius, the man who defeated her. In the source stories it is Octavius’s:

version of the story of Cleopatra [that] became the dominant one. The tale was frequently told in the two centuries which followed the events on which it was based. By no means all the interpreters were Octavius’s lackeys; nor indeed were they all Roman—though they did, to varying degrees, owe some allegiance to Rome. All of them, though, with the exception of the Jewish historian Josephus, wrote mainly from the Roman point of view. All of them

are to be suspected of mingling invention with reportage . . . All of them brought to the story preoccupations of their own. But in these frequently untrustworthy histories and poems Octavius's story is repeated, with many variations but always retaining its tripartite moral: that Cleopatra was dangerous, Antony was unfit to rule, and Octavius, by contrast, was just, competent and fortunate—just the kind of man, in short, by whom a Roman might wish to be governed. (Hughes-Hallett 40)

The image of Cleopatra as “the prostitute queen” (Hughes-Hallett 72) is largely due to the fact that it was the victor, Octavius, who “wrote” the history of the battle. In other words, Cleopatra's image as the sexually depraved, immoral, selfish, vain, conniver was constructed to glorify Octavius's victory over her. This also accounts, to some degree, for the positive qualities assigned to Cleopatra within the source material. By making “Cleopatra the epitome of everything the Roman male resolved to forgo in the interests of good government (of self and others), of male supremacy and of military fitness” (Hughes-Hallett 68), Octavius made her a worthy adversary and, as such, shaped himself not only as the victor, but as the victor against a powerful foe. However, by doing so, Octavius also created “an idealized object of erotic fantasy” that led to “a regret for her fabled but prohibited beauty and all it represented” (Hughes-Hallett 68). Therefore, while Octavius was able to shape his own image and authority by constructing Cleopatra as the dangerous foreign female ruler, he could not control how her image was received by others, even by those who

shared his Roman perspective. Of course, the inability to eradicate a positive construction of Cleopatra is also due to Cleopatra's construction of herself.

As a woman born to and understanding the connection between pageantry and royal power, Cleopatra was adept at manipulating and creating constructions of her own identity as a woman, an intellectual, and a ruler. As Hughes-Hallett remarks, "[a]ccording to the Alexandrian tradition, Cleopatra was notable, not for her sex life and party giving, but for her scholarship and her public benefactions" (72). She further claims that while "[w]e cannot be sure that this idea of her is any more factually accurate than the Roman notion," it is nevertheless "a salutary reminder that every story has, at the very least, two sides" (Hughes-Hallett 72). In the tradition of politicians of the ancient past as well as those of modern times, Cleopatra used her intelligence and her works of "good will" as a tool to build and secure her power by representing herself as a shrewd and generous monarch. Historically, Cleopatra "appears to have been a tactful and efficient ruler, a tough negotiator and a thrifty manager" (Hughes-Hallett 23). She was also the first monarch of the Ptolemy dynasty to speak Egyptian.²³ Like Octavius, Cleopatra was a savvy politician and was adept in the use of propaganda to impress her people with the rightness of her rule. To secure her power over the Egyptians, she:

deliberately imposed on them an imaginary meaning designed to enhance her perceived image, to justify her policies and to further her cause. Unlike him [Octavius] she did not use words, which were inaccessible to the illiterate majority, but the language of drama and spectacle. Between the line of the

ancient accounts of her career one can watch a fantastic pageant being performed, a pageant which is simultaneously a sequence of real events and the symbolic and immensely exaggerated representation of them. (Hughes-Hallett 75)

Perhaps the most famous of Cleopatra's representative pageants was her trip down the Cydnus to meet Marc Antony. On going to meet Antony as Rome's representative, Cleopatra used spectacle to construct and emphasize her own political understanding and her own authority. The pomp and lavishness of her barge, her servants, and her person all served to direct attention away from Antony's authority as the patriarchal guardian of Rome's power in Egypt to center on Cleopatra's power as queen. On this, her most notorious and well-remembered spectacle, Cleopatra presents herself not as a subject queen to Rome's might, but as a royal partner with power and glory of her own. Cleopatra, in essence, supplants the power of Rome by constructing her own version of royal spectacle and power. It was Plutarch's description of this trip that was the most popular among earlier modern writers:

[t]herefore when she was sent unto by divers letters, both from Antonius himself, and also from his friends, she made so light of it, and mocked Antonius so much, that she disdained to set forward otherwise, but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus, the poop whereof was of gold, the sails of purple, and the oars of silver, which kept stroke in rowing after the sound of the music of flutes, hautboys, citherns, viols, and such other instruments as they played upon the barge. And now for the person of her self: she was laid

under a pavilion of cloth of gold tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddess Venus, commonly drawn in picture: and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretty fair boys, apparelled as painters do set forth god Cupid, with little fans in their hands, with which they fanned wind upon her. Her ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the nymphs Nereides (which are the mermaids of the waters) and like the Graces, some steering the helm, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of the which there came a wonderful passing sweet savour of perfumes, that perfumed the wharf's side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people. Some of them followed the barge all along the river's side: others also ran out of the city to see her coming in. So that in the end, there ran such multitudes of people one after another to see her, that Antonius was left post alone in the marketplace, in his imperial seat to give audience. (Plutarch 699: 26)

Plutarch's vivid account of the Cydnus meeting illustrates not only Cleopatra's perception of political self-presentation but also how even those who wrote from a Roman perspective could be entranced by the performances of the queen; that is, the description of this specific pageant is one of the places where Cleopatra as the "idealized object of erotic fantasy" (Hughes-Hallett 68) is clearly apparent. Indeed, in her first official meeting with Rome's representative, Antony, Cleopatra plays the roles of Queen, seductress and stage-manager *extraordinaire*. She not only determines the time and place of the meeting but also forces Antony to abandon his own staging of Roman authority to meet her on her own terms, and, in so doing, she

thwarts “what must have been Antony’s intention, that she should make her first appearance in a properly subordinate role, paying homage to him in the marketplace” (Hughes-Hallett 78). From this example alone it is clear that Cleopatra wished to construct an identity which was flexible enough to make her seem a queen worthy of the love and loyalty of her Egyptian people as well as a ruler strong enough to be perceived as an equal to Roman power. In other words, she constructed an identity for both the “common masses” as well as for those who understood the machinations of political power. The very fact that Cleopatra’s figure was still invested with some positive characteristics by the Roman historians, in spite of her defeat at the hands of Octavius Caesar, stands as tribute to the efficacy of her constructions of self. However, it is her ability to captivate by her performance of herself that led to such negative constructions of the ancient queen.

Cleopatra’s ability to attract powerful men and keep them loyal to her was one of the most dangerous traits assigned to the queen by her Roman detractors. She captivated Julius Caesar and she destroyed Marc Antony. In Dio Cassius’s account of the fall of Antony, he outlines the reasons why Octavius Caesar decided to declare war on Cleopatra:

[s]he [Cleopatra] had, it was believed, *enslaved him so completely* that she had persuaded him to act as a gymnasiarch for the Alexandrians; she was saluted by him as ‘queen’ and as ‘mistress’, and she had Roman soldiers in her bodyguard, all of whom had their name inscribed upon their shields. She visited the marketplace with Antony, presided with him over festivals and at

the hearing of lawsuits, rode with him on horseback even in the cities, or else was carried in a litter, while Antony followed on foot together *with her eunuchs*. . . . Painters and sculptors depicted him with Cleopatra, he being represented as Osiris or Dionysis, and she as Selene or Isis, and it was this practice more than anything else which gave the impression that *she had laid him under some spell and deprived him of his wits*. Indeed she so enchanted and enthralled not only Antony but all the others who counted for anything with him that she came to entertain the hope that she would rule the Romans as well. (50:5, my emphasis)

In this passage, Cleopatra is described as being completely in control of Antony, the representative of Rome's power in the East. She makes him act as a servant and entertainer for her "Alexandrians," her court, and she publicly displays herself as his equal, if not his better. She, a foreign monarch, even presides with him over a Roman court. In this scenario, Cleopatra is depicted as the perfect example of Knox's monstrous woman. This is emphasized with the image of Antony walking "with her eunuchs." Cleopatra's power over Antony is so great that she has emasculated him. She has stolen both his "Roman-ness" and his manhood. Of particular interest in this passage is the idea that Cleopatra has "enslaved" or "enchanted" Antony in order to take his power. This charge not only heightens the view of Cleopatra as "unnatural," it also absolves Antony of being blamed for his actions. He is not the Antony of Rome; he is Cleopatra's puppet. As Hughes-Hallett argues:

[t]his is the transgression of which Cleopatra stands accused by Octavian propaganda. Attended by the wretched and repulsive victims of her improper dominance, she has trapped Antony, once a paragon of masculine, militaristic virtue, and—according to the story—she has feminized him. She plays the man, ruling alone and organizing her own sexual and political affairs without deferring to any male protector. And the mate of a man is a woman, a subordinate person of trivial interests and weak will. This is the degrading role into which Antony is forced by Cleopatra's unladylike independence. (52)

In Roman eyes, Cleopatra has used her mystical sexuality to ensnare Antony and keep him subservient to her will. The fear this act engenders is that Cleopatra, if left unchecked, will be able to do the same thing to Rome itself. If Antony, the well loved military hero and paragon of masculine virtues is so easily undone by the Egyptian queen, what will happen to Rome if Cleopatra succeeds? Yet, not all of the source material is so forgiving of Antony. In Plutarch's version, Antony is not presented as quite so virtuous and noble. Indeed, at the beginning of the *Life of Marcus Antonius*, Plutarch recounts the stories of Antony's early relationships that show Antony's more negative tendencies. One such relationship was with a man named Curio. According to Plutarch, Antony "fell acquainted with Curio, whose friendship and acquaintance (as it is reported) was a plague unto him. For he was a dissolute man, given over to all lust and insolence, who to have Antonius the better at his commandment, trained him on into great follies, and vain expenses on women, in rioting and banqueting" (2:678). Plutarch also lists another of Antony's infamous friends, Clodius, "one of the

desperatest and most wicked tribunes at that time in Rome” (2.678). Unlike Dio Cassius, Plutarch claims that Antony’s personality, long before he met Cleopatra, “was full of ostentation, foolish bravery, and vain ambition” (2.678). Yet, Plutarch does not fully exculpate Cleopatra from Antony’s defeat. Plutarch describes her as “the last and extremest mischief of all other . . . who did waken and stir up many vices yet hidden in him [Antony], and were never seen to any: and if any spark of goodness or hope of rising were left him, Cleopatra quenched it straight, and made it worse than before” (25.698). In Plutarch, the traits that cause Antony’s downfall are in Antony before he meets Cleopatra, but it is Cleopatra who exploits them best. It is the complex construction of Cleopatra’s figure, by others and by herself, that made her character vital to those English Renaissance writers who engaged in the investigation of gender and power, especially during the reign of Elizabeth I.

At first glance, the similarities between Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolomaic queen of Egypt, and Elizabeth I, the last Tudor monarch of England, appear limited to the idea that they are both women and monarchs. Yet, rather than sharing just a simple relationship of being women rulers, the links that were made between the two historical queens, whose reigns are separated by over a millenium and a half (Cleopatra died in 30 BC and Elizabeth started her reign in 1558 AD), are far more complex. In his study of Shakespeare’s version of the story, Keith Rinehart makes an interesting comparison between the two women: “[b]oth treated courtiers and maids of honour roughly; both affected illness or other shams to give false impressions; both were marvelously facile in foreign languages; both governed their kingdoms with

skill; both desired amusement and revelry; both wore gorgeous apparel; both were witty” (81). However, one similarity shared by these two rulers not mentioned by Reinhart is how their gender affected the perception of their authority. Cleopatra’s gender, especially her sexuality, was an important key in her construction as a villain by the Romans and, subsequently, in early modern ideology. She is “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 two overlapping chauvinisms of race and sex, for in a man’s world every woman is a foreigner” (Hughes-Hallett 4-5). Although Elizabeth I was not a foreigner by nationality, she was a “foreigner” as a woman; that is, in spite of the previous reign of a woman, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth’s gender was still a cause of concern. In discussing the myths surrounding the “Virgin Queen,” Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman argue that “Elizabeth’s gender was itself a crucial factor in shaping her myth. Female rule was unattractive to early moderns as it represented a reversal of the natural (i.e. patriarchal) social and political order” (9). Doran and Freeman also note that “if Elizabeth’s gender did not disqualify her from reigning, it was nevertheless a serious liability in carrying out some of the functions of monarchy” (9).

Like Cleopatra, Elizabeth had to forge a construction of herself that would secure her political power, and she “employed a number of strategies to try to compensate for the weakness her gender created for her” (Doran and Freeman 9). One important strategy employed by Elizabeth, and her supporters, was the emphasis she placed on the division of her *body politic* and her *body natural*.²⁴ Marie Axton states

that the concept of the two bodies of the king, a legal concept rapidly moved forward by “Henry VIII’s break with Rome” (12), was created by lawyers of the time who were attempting to formulate “an idea of the state as a perpetual corporation” (12). However, these men ran into difficulties as “they were unable or unwilling to separate state and monarch” (12). This created a “paradox” since the state was eternal and the monarch was mortal. The concept of the monarch’s two bodies was created to elide this paradox. While the king may die, the power invested in him, and through him to his heirs, is eternal. The concept of the two bodies of the monarch became especially important when the monarch in question was a woman. According to Axton:

for the purposes of law it was found necessary by 1561 to endow the Queen with two bodies: a *body natural* and a *body politic*. . . . The body politic was supposed to be *contained within the natural body of the Queen*. When lawyers spoke of this body politic they referred to a specific quality: the essence of *corporate perpetuity*. The Queen’s natural body was subject to infancy, infirmity, error and old age; her body politic, created out of a combination of faith, ingenuity and practical expediency, was held to be unerring and immortal. (12)

While the concept of the monarch’s two bodies was gender neutral, so to speak, it was an idea that held a great deal of importance for a female monarch. As humans, all monarchs are liable to illness, infirmity, old age, etc., whether they are male or female. However, in a culture that saw a female body as weaker by nature, the concept of the two bodies of the monarch became a central focus for Elizabeth’s

construction of herself as queen. To negate, to some extent, the fears surrounding her gender, Elizabeth constructed for herself a royal bi-sexuality²⁵; her body natural was that of an inferior woman, but her body politic was that of a powerful (and masculine) monarch. Of course, the most famous image of this royal bi-sexuality was her reported appearance in armour on the field of Tilbury in 1588 where she is said to have claimed to “have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king” (Somerset 591). Elizabeth’s construction of herself as both male and female is also clearly apparent in her use of language. In discussing Elizabeth’s use of the theory of the monarch’s two bodies, Leah Marcus notes that Elizabeth:

took great care with the vocabulary used to describe her position on the throne. She had no objection to the term *queen* and used it herself throughout her reign. But more habitually she referred to herself as *prince*. The word’s most basic sixteenth-century meaning was ruler, especially male ruler; it was also applied to the eldest son of a reigning monarch. The equivalent female term was *princess*. But although Queen Elizabeth was frequently called “princess” in the early years of her reign and used the word herself, with the passing of time that feminine epithet tended to disappear in favor of the more masculine *prince*. (56)

Hence, Elizabeth “constructed a vocabulary of rule which was predominantly male-identified” and, over time, “her subjects yielded to the symbolic truths she sought to convey through her precision with vocabulary and modeled their language upon her

own" (57). Her careful construction of herself as both male and female illustrated Elizabeth's awareness of how her position violated the cultural ideologies about gender that, despite their status as rhetorical exercises, are found in the pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes*. Anne Somerset also argues that Elizabeth was clearly aware of the anxiety aroused by her gender and that "Elizabeth herself was no feminist, and in many of her utterances she implied that she shared the prejudices of her male subjects with regards to women" (75). It was only through stressing the masculine nature of her body politic that Elizabeth could avert to some degree the liability of her gender while agreeing with the cultural construction of women as inferior in general. By stressing her masculine body politic, given to her by God, Elizabeth constructed herself as the exception to the gender rules (and roles).²⁶ However, Elizabeth's adroit construction of herself as a "prince" did not completely alleviate the concerns her gender caused. As a single female who was not under the control of any man, Elizabeth was more than an exception; she was an anomaly. This becomes particularly apparent when one studies the manner in which the Queen constructed her sexuality.

One of the most dangerous character traits assigned to Cleopatra by her Roman detractors was her almost undeniable sensuality. She was the foreign queen who seduced the great Julius Caesar and who entranced the warrior Marc Antony. She used her sexuality to enslave powerful men in a campaign to increase her own political might. Cleopatra's conquering sexuality is an important trait with regards to the issues of gender and power. As was argued before, it was the image of the woman

as the seductress that caused the most anxiety for those writers and thinkers who considered the woman question. In her discussion of the popularity of writings concerning Semiramis (the same figure discussed earlier in reference to Boccaccio) as a figure of negative female rule, Judith Richards argues that it was largely the ancient queen's supposed rampant sexuality that made her a figure of anxiety and fear (110-114). Richards claims that:

[i]t is impossible to imagine that *any* male monarch could ever have had the spectacular triumphs and achievements of his rule discredited by such sexual adventuring. Chastity was then the preeminent and perhaps distinguishing female virtue and its loss by any woman her fatal flaw. . . . As many of the tellings and retellings of the Semiramis story reiterated, to keep woman womanly (and good order required they must be), they had above all to be chaste. (114)

While Elizabeth clearly stressed her "masculine" body politic, she could not ignore her feminine body natural. As Richards notes with regards to Semiramis, in the early modern period "women" needed to retain the qualities, especially chastity, that made them "womanly." The need to be seen as "a womanly woman" by her people was undermined, to some extent, by Elizabeth's emphasis on her masculine body politic. Yet, despite her emphasis on the ideology of the monarch's two bodies, Elizabeth could not erase "the conflict between her rule and her femininity. If a queen were confidently to demonstrate the attributes of power, she would not be acting in a womanly manner; yet womanly behavior would ill-fit a queen for the rigors of rule"

(Levin 3). Of course, by also stressing her feminine body, Elizabeth ran the risk of arousing the cultural anxiety concerning unrestrained female sexuality. Therefore, in order to contain fears about her sexuality, Elizabeth played upon two similar but separate feminine constructions: Elizabeth as the Petrarchan mistress and Elizabeth as the "Virgin Queen." Both of these images of Elizabeth distanced her from any cultural anxiety about her gender and her sexuality by allowing her the ability to emphasize her feminine body as womanly but "non-sexual."

One of the facets of Elizabeth I's court that has held fascination for people, even to the present, is the perception of the Queen as the most important "beloved" of a court that reinvigorated the ideals of courtly love. Here the beautiful and unattainable "Fairie Queen" encouraged, by her mere presence, the heroic and idealistic actions of the male courtiers who sought to gain their monarch's love and approval. This image of Elizabeth as the unattainable mistress is strikingly similar in presentation to the literary figure of the Petrarchan mistress. As Philippa Berry argues the figure of the beloved was not actually valued for herself but as an instrument whereby the male could attain his own perfection. As such:

the emphasis of the love discourses was usually on the meaning of this [female] figure for an individual masculine subject. In this context, she mediated between the male lover's fallen self, unable to master his own destiny or his environment, and his desire to become an heroic or angelic being, with the power to control his own life, to shape himself according to his own desires and consequently to impose his will upon nature. In other words,

the beloved conferred upon him the equivalent to a religious state of grace.

(83)

With specific reference to Elizabeth, the figure of the relationship between the male lover and the female beloved “was accredited with a collective rather than an individual experience of earthly paradise, in the form of benefits conferred by the absolutist state upon its members” (83). In her capacity as beloved, “Elizabeth emblemized the state which she also ruled” (84). Hence, during Elizabeth’s reign, the language of courtly love became the language of court politics. Leonard Tennenhouse argues that “it is reasonable to think of the language of courtship and love as a highly specialized political language which served a very different purpose in the Elizabethan court world” where “[i]t did not indicate the subject’s erotic attraction to the queen nor even his affection in any personalized sense of the term. Rather it represented relations in a manner that acknowledged the queen’s supreme power to determine those who should receive economic and political benefits” (32). Emphasizing that the “language of courtship and love” was political rather than personal is the argument that it was Elizabeth’s male courtiers who initially constructed their female monarch as the unattainable beloved in order to impose masculine rhetoric, and, therefore, control, on her power. Berry claims that:

when her [Elizabeth’s] unmarried state began to be accepted and even idealized in courtly literature, some fifteen years after her accession, it was as the unattainable *object* of masculine desire that Elizabeth was represented, in an assimilation of Petrarchan and Neoplatonic attitudes by English absolutism.

. . . Early representations of Elizabeth in these terms effectively deny that independent self-determination which had presumably motivated her to remain unmarried; they also deny her any active political role: both she and the twin realm she now embodies (as ruler of church and state) have become the passive vehicles of masculine fantasy. This formulation of her queenly role was certainly not fashioned by Elizabeth herself; instead, it was fabricated by a group of male courtiers who attempted to use it to further their own political and personal ambitions. (62)

Yet, Berry also notes that while the figure of Elizabeth as the objectified beloved was not the Queen's creation, she further states that "in the discrepancy between the version of this 'cult' and its formation in the last decade of the reign may be discerned, if not the influence of Elizabeth herself, still an increasing capacity to elude or unmask such masculinist manipulations" (62). One could argue that not only was Elizabeth aware of the masculine construction of herself as unattainable beloved, but also that she subverted it in order to secure her own power. In her discussion of Elizabeth's "courtships," both within the court and with the numerous foreign princes who vied for her hand in marriage, Anne Somerset claims that despite the Queen's refusal to seriously consider marriage, Elizabeth "derived immense pleasure from her courtships and flirtations" (126-127). Further, the enjoyment Elizabeth gained from these relationships was as much about control as it was about being personally glorified as a woman:

[s]he experienced an unmistakable frisson of excitement at the start of each new courtship, and took an unfeigned delight in the comedy that unfolded, exulting in the compliments and flattery that accompanied the proposals, and reveling in the confusion of foreign ambassadors, who were baffled by her equivocations and teases. When suitors wooed her in person, she found it still more delicious, but however much she welcomed male attention, she derived much of her enjoyment from the knowledge that she was in control. (127)

Other evidence also suggests that Elizabeth manipulated her image as unattainable beloved to control her relationships with others, domestic and foreign, as “one of the most frequent complaints from her most successful suitors was that Elizabeth distributed her favors to members of different court factions” (Tennenhouse 32). In other words, while Elizabeth rewarded those “lovers”/courtiers who played the game of courtly love the best, she was able to secure and maintain her authority by giving her “love” to different factions within her court at different times; she used the conventions of Petrarchan and Neoplatonic love to play her powerful male courtiers against each other which allowed her to maintain overall control. Elizabeth’s “romantic fictions” served to do “more than *represent* power: they may actually [have helped] to *generate* the power that they represent. Thus . . . the Queen’s dalliances did not weaken her power but strengthened it; did not hinder her business but furthered it” (Montrose “Shaping Fantasies” 84).

Aside from controlling the masculine element of her own court, Elizabeth’s use of her status as the unattainable beloved allowed her a strategy with which to deal

with foreign powers. As a female monarch faced with a multiplicity of foreign countries ruled by men, Elizabeth needed to work ingeniously to secure her throne against foreign interference. One of the strategies that she employed to do so was through her protracted marriage negotiations with several foreign nobles. Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride argue that “the opportunity for political capital via marriage was central to the life of Elizabeth” (136). They further claim that:

Elizabeth exploited her potential for marriage without ever actually submitting to a husband. Indeed, she parlayed her eligibility for marriage into a powerful tool to avoid submission—to forge alliances, force concessions from other nations, and ward off hostilities both at home and abroad. She gave audience to dozens of suitors during her 45-year reign, strategically using their courtship to mollify, coerce, or otherwise influence the myriad factions that she needed to navigate among in order to sustain the peace and prosperity of her nation. These factions included the English Protestants and Catholics, the French, the Dutch, the Spanish, and the papacy. By putting her marital potential on the market but never conceding it, she was able to maintain her independence, augment her power, and wield a potent diplomatic weapon. (135)

Jankowski agrees that Elizabeth’s use of courtship was political and claims that “[a]s a desirable marriage prize she could use the bargaining chip of her virginity . . . to control both civic threats to her sole authority as ruler—Leicester, Essex—as well as foreign ones—Philip II, Aleçon. While she remained unmarried, she had the potential

to be married” (*Women in Power* 70). Further, Elizabeth’s “ability to name a consort gave her immense power, which she exploited to aid her country and secure her realm” (70). But if Elizabeth did marry, she risked losing the power she had already gained. Anne Somerset makes a salient point regarding how Elizabeth’s identity as a woman and a monarch would be impaired by any marriage: “[a]cute observers realized that Elizabeth would not relish forfeiting any of her powers to the man she married,” and she was aware that “if she did marry, it would prove virtually impossible to preserve her independence” (119). Another factor in Elizabeth’s seeming lack of desire to be married was the inherent difficulty in finding a possible husband who would be acceptable to her people as a whole. If she married a foreign prince, she ran the risk of allowing foreign interference in English affairs and of alienating her people (Neale 76-84; Somerset 115-117; Starkey *Elizabeth* 314).²⁷ If she married an Englishman, she ran the risk of creating hostilities between different court factions (Neale 84-90; Somerset 7-118; Starkey *Elizabeth* 313-316). Other than the political ramifications that any marriage would produce, Elizabeth also seemed wary of the state of matrimony for personal reasons. As Somerset notes, while cultural wisdom assumed Elizabeth, a weak woman, would want “to place herself in the hands of a trustworthy man with whom she could share” (114) her monarchical responsibilities and cares, Elizabeth herself repeatedly made public statements about her own preference to remain single. When in February 1559 the Commons presented Elizabeth a petition “asking her to marry as soon as possible” (114), the Queen’s response made her own position clear. She “told them [Parliament] that while she did

not rule out matrimony altogether, she had so far never felt any inclination for it. She cautioned them that it was quite possible that it would ‘please God Almighty to continue me in the mind to live out of the state of marriage’, and she said that if so, it would cause her little regret” (114-115). Elizabeth’s apparent refusal to marry once again highlighted the debility caused by her gender by arousing cultural anxiety, especially by her sexuality and her status as an uncontrolled female. As Carole Levin argues, “[f]rom the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth’s Council and Parliaments beseeched her to marry, and found the idea of an unmarried woman ruling unnatural” (44). Elizabeth attempted to counter this anxiety by constructing herself as the “Virgin Queen.”

As was argued with reference to the image of Elizabeth as the unattainable beloved, the image of Elizabeth as the “Virgin Queen” was constructed to alleviate the fear aroused in early modern patriarchal culture by the accession of a single female to the throne. Of course, the factor that both of these images shared was the emphasis on Elizabeth’s chastity creating the image of a non-threatening female sexuality. Since chastity was the most valued and important virtue assigned to the figure of the “good” woman, Elizabeth needed to project her own female “goodness” to her people in order to avert domestic strife. Jankowski refers to the Queen’s representation of herself as the “Virgin Queen” as “the most powerful of Elizabeth’s fictions” (*Women in Power* 68). By adopting the image:

of the perpetual virgin, a strategy for successful rule presented itself. By becoming “officially” virgin, Elizabeth effectively removed herself from

being seen as a “normal” woman—a powerless creature in the early modern political scheme. By redefining herself as virgin—a woman who is “different” in very fundamental ways from other women, namely in her non-dependence on men to define her existence—Elizabeth defined herself as a powerful being in early modern terms and assumed a power usually reserved for men.

(Women in Power 69)

Yet, it was this very “difference” from other women that the image of Virgin Queen afforded Elizabeth that at times increased the very cultural anxiety she was trying to negate. Doran and Freeman claim that “[t]he creation of the image of a Virgin Queen had, as a corollary, the creation of the image of Elizabeth as aloof, cold, and somewhat unnatural. This dovetailed with the perception of her (because of her success in ‘male’ vocations) as unnaturally ‘masculine’ and insufficiently ‘feminine’” (13). The anxiety produced by this image of Elizabeth is clearly illustrated in the number of rumours that sprang up about her sexuality. Levin argues that rumours about Elizabeth’s sexuality, whether its overabundance or its non-existence, were directly related to her gender as female:

[w]hile questions, comments, and gossip about Elizabeth’s sexual behavior had begun long before she was queen, attention to her behavior intensified once she ascended the throne, and continued throughout her reign, even when she was in her sixties. Nor did it end with her death. This solicitude over Elizabeth’s sexual capacity was a means for the people to express their concern over a female monarch, and also a way of expressing the hope that

she would fulfill her womanly function, and have a child—a son who would reverse the dangerous precedent of a woman ruler. Especially in the last two decades of her reign, when Elizabeth was too old to marry and have a child, the rumors served as a focus for discontent and fear for the succession.

Elizabeth was deeply loved by her subjects but her refusal to follow the feminine gender expectations of passivity and acquiescence, her refusal to consider the need of a named heir, caused great fear. (66-67)

Some of the rumours that circulated about Elizabeth include several stories concerning illegitimate children with Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, the Queen's childhood friend and longtime favorite, charges of infanticide, a sexual relationship between the Queen and another courtier, Sir Christopher Hatton, that Elizabeth was barren, and that she was physically incapable of having sex (Levin 72-89; Neale 85-89; Somerset 128-129, 576).²⁸ What is interesting to note is the nature of such rumours: they all revolve around Elizabeth's sexuality. Whether she is being labeled as a "whore" or implicated as a woman unnaturally "frigid," it is her body natural that was targeted. This illustrates that although Elizabeth was a very successful ruler, the fact that she was a *female* monarch was never fully accepted: "[t]he belief in Elizabeth's lovers, in her illegitimate children, and the sexual interest in her suggest how significant and complex gender constructions and sexual issues were in the minds of Elizabeth's subjects and the important part they played in shaping the way English men and women regarded their queen" (Levin 89). Despite her elaborate and largely successful "fashionings" of her princely authority, Elizabeth

was never fully successful in winning over “[t]his nation of men [who] at times found it both frustrating and degrading to serve a female, especially one not under the control of any man” (89). Hence, while Elizabeth went to great efforts to maintain her femininity, a femininity that was carefully cleansed of a dangerous female sexuality, like Cleopatra, her authority was still inextricably linked to her gender.

Of the many traits that Cleopatra VII and Elizabeth I share perhaps the most prominent is their enduring presence in the Western imagination. It is difficult indeed to find many other historical monarchs, king or queen, who have had their stories told and retold throughout the ages. The longevity of the fascination with the figures of Cleopatra and Elizabeth I is, in no small part, due to their own constructions and presentations of self. In consolidating their power through pageant, rhetoric, and figurations, each queen made of herself an icon that inspired dramatization. For the writers of the early modern period, Cleopatra represented numerous traits and values that were particularly pertinent for those who lived during the reign of Elizabeth I. The fear and anxiety engendered by female rule generally, and an independent single female ruler specifically, made the figure of Cleopatra an appropriate template by which early modern writers engaged with the issues of gender and power that Elizabeth’s accession evoked. What is intriguing is the manner in which these writers were selective in their use of Cleopatra’s multivalent figure. In *Antonius*, Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, presents Cleopatra as the loyal, loving woman who is mistrusted and misunderstood by those around her. Samuel Daniel’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* shows a queen who uses her love as a political tool only

understanding, after she has lost that love, its importance. Samuel Brandon, in *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia*, uses the figure of Octavia, Cleopatra's polar opposite, to posit his own construction of acceptable female rule. Through their manipulation of these feminine rhetorical figures, these plays produce a multi-layered perspective on how Elizabeth was perceived as a monarch, especially as a female monarch. What results is not only multiple perspectives on the issues of gender and power for early modern England, but also how each writer saw herself/himself in relation to the Queen, her court and each other.

¹ The two tragedies to which Greville refers with regards to his lost Antony and Cleopatra work are *Alaham* and *Mustapha*, first published in 1633.

² In his discussion of the date of William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Geoffrey Bullough suggests that the publication date of the play, 1608, may not truly indicate the date when the play was written. His reasons for claiming an earlier date (1606) include both literary continuity and political awareness. He claims that "[i]t is hard to believe that by the time Shakespeare finished *Julius Caesar* he was not already thinking of writing another play describing the break-up of the triumvirate . . . the fall of Antony and the triumph of Octavius" (215) and that he "let several years go by before carrying on with a subject so rich in dramatic intensity" (216). Secondly, Bullough, citing Greville's own reasons for not publishing a dramatic version of the Antony and Cleopatra story, claims that it is "not surprising that Shakespeare, whose Company had only just escaped grave censure [for their performance of *Richard II* the night before the Essex insurrection], forbore to write a play from which invidious conclusions would almost certainly be drawn, until the circumstances changed" (217.).

³ Two of the period's major writers, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, experienced first-hand how writing could lead to both political and legal trouble. Jonson faced the Privy Council in 1597 for his involvement as an actor and a co-writer of *The Isle of Dogs* and was sent to jail for more than two months. In 1603, Jonson ran afoul of the court again with his *Sejanus*, but he was not imprisoned. However, in 1604 Jonson was jailed once again, along with George Chapman, for their penning of *Eastward Ho!* John Marston, the third collaborator, would also have been jailed but had fled London. Shakespeare seems to have been far more adept at avoiding trouble caused by the political content of his plays, but even he found himself in a precarious position in 1601. During the trial of the Earl of Essex, Shakespeare and his company were called before the court to explain and testify about their non-redacted performance of *Richard II* before a group of Essex supporters the night before the rebellion. Both Jonson and Shakespeare were fortunate that their writing, while attracting negative attention from the court, did not lead to further trouble. This was not the case for another writer John Stubbs. Stubbs, an ardent Puritan, wrote a tract called "The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf wherein England in like to be swallowed by another French marriage if the Lord forbid not the banns by letting her Majesty see the sin and punishment thereof" (1579) against Elizabeth's proposed marriage to Alençon. The Queen was enraged and Stubbs as well as "his printer and distributor were sentenced to lose their right hand under an act passed in Mary's day against promoters of sedition" (Somerset 399).

⁴ Judith M. Richards argues that "generations of historians, from blithely patriarchal to strenuously feminist, have conferred upon" Knox's text "a particular status as representative of the 'real views' of the age. Almost all other writers of the time would vehemently have denied it that status; they may have been uneasy about female rule, but they knew that inheritance and other laws made it a complex matter" (116). Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman also note that the views of Knox represent "extreme views" that were "rejected by most theorists and, more importantly, rejected by the English nation, who readily accepted the accession of two consecutive female monarchs in the sixteenth century" (9). While I agree with their assessment of Knox's argument being "extreme," the anxiety about a female monarchy can also be found in defenses of a woman's right to rule. In his *An Harborowe For Faithfull and Trewe Subiectes* (1559), John Aylmer, Bishop of London, defends Elizabeth's right to rule by refuting the "unnaturalness" of women rulers by Divine Ordinance and inheritance laws. He claims that since God "sendth a vvomā by birth, vve may not refuse hir by violence. He stablisseth hie by lavve, vve may not remoue hir by vvronge. He maketh hir a head, wve may not make hir a hande or foote" (C1). The strength of Aylmer's argument for female rule, however, is somewhat negated by other political anxieties, namely civil war. In his text, Aylmer clearly illustrates his fear that Knox, and other detractors of women rulers, may "impayre thobedience of good

Subiectes, to kindle the harts of the frovvard, and to *destroy honst, godly, and comly order*" (B1, my italics). That Aylmer's text seems to be more concerned with keeping "comly order" than truly defending women rulers is shown by other comments made in the text that emphasize, that in general, Aylmer agrees with Knox's basic position: "Only we can pul from them [women] that they be not strong of body, or commonly so couragious in minde, graunte that it is so: must they therefore be vterly vnmete to rule: nay if you [Knox] saide vnmete, then men: we woulde not muche wrastle with you" (C6). Aylmer, it seems, defends Elizabeth's position because there is not an appropriate male heir. Constance Jordan claims that Aylmer's reliance on "history as providential as an excuse for tolerating a woman ruler illustrates . . . , in sixteenth-century political thought, gynecocracy is more easily justified by appeals to providence and divine right than by arguments claiming an equality of worth" (439). For a fuller discussion see Constance Jordan, "Women's Rule in Sixteenth-Century Political Thought" *Renaissance Quarterly* 40.3 (Autumn 1987) 421-451; Judith Richards, "'To Promote a Woman to Beare Rule': Talking of Queens in Mid-Tudor England," *SCJ* 28.1 (1997) 101-121; and Paula Scalingi, "The Scepter or the Distaff: The Question of Female Sovereignty, 1516-1607," *The Historian* 41 (1978) 59-75.

⁵ In *Women In Power in the Early Modern Drama*, Theodora A. Jankowski argues that the patriarchal structure of Renaissance society meant "that the works of political theory written in the sixteenth century focussed primarily on the male ruler" (56). Jankowski does note, however, that several predominant political theorists mention women and power in their tracts of political theory including Niccolò Machiavelli (*The Prince* and *The Discourses*), Sir Thomas More (*Utopia*), and Desiderius Erasmus (*The Education of a Christian Prince*). While Jankowski claims that in these works the "[a]ttitudes . . . toward women in any sort of position of rule vary" (56), they share a philosophical premise that rule is based in reason. In particular, Jankowski argues that the political works in question establish two related dichotomies: reason/emotion—man/beast (*Women in Power* 57-60). For Jankowski,

[t]he reason/emotion dichotomy is interesting to examine on another level. It is often used, in both the medieval and early modern periods, as a gloss upon the relative importance of the genders within humanity. Man, the thinker and the doer, was often imaged as the representative of reason. Woman, the daughter of Eve, whose emotions led her astray, was often imaged as emotion or passion. In most works, women were the representatives of such irrational emotions as anger, jealousy, or fear. But in some, women were pictured as so completely the victims of their passions as to be viewed as bestial. Thus, the reason/emotion man/beast dichotomy does have a definite subtext of reason/emotion man/woman. (*Women In Power* 59)

Outside of Jankowski's survey of works of political theory, there were texts that discussed the "nature" of women in general. One such work was Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus (Concerning Famous Women)* (1355-1359). Other texts on the nature of women that share similar attitudes as Knox's political tract include the "attack" texts of the *querelle des femmes*, which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

⁶ Of course, as adherent and follower of Calvin, Knox's tract displays an almost equal amount of derision for these women due to their religion. All three female monarchs were Roman Catholic and, especially in the case of Mary Tudor, espoused Catholic causes and were aligned with the Catholic powers on the Continent. In other words, Knox's condemnation of the right of these women to rule has as much to do with their religious affiliations and the political affiliations which these affiliations created, as it does with their gender.

⁷ All citations for *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* are taken from *The Political Writings of John Knox*, Marvin A. Breslow, Editor, Washington: Folger Books, 1985.

⁸ Specifically, Knox refers to the *Homilies on Ephesians* of Greek thinker John Chrysostom, c.349-407, an early Christian authority.

⁹ Marvin A. Breslow notes that Knox's citation of Paul comes from I Corinthians 11:8-10.

¹⁰ Feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett recognize the direct connection between the lack of equality for women and their biological function. Yet both see the relation of the ability to give birth as the evidence of women's inferiority for being more "animalistic" as a socio-cultural construction as opposed to a natural function. In speaking of human thought before social organization de Beauvoir claims that the:

woman who gave birth, therefore, did not know the pride of creation; she felt herself the plaything of obscure forces, and the painful ordeal of childbirth seemed a useless or even troublesome accident. But in any case giving birth and suckling are not *activities*, they are natural functions; no project is involved; and that is why woman found in them no reason for a lofty ambition of her existence – she submitted passively to her biological fate. The domestic labors that fell to her lot because they were reconcilable with the cares of maternity imprisoned her in repetition and immanence; they were repeated from day to day in an identical form, which was perpetuated almost without change from century to century; they produced nothing new. (71, her italics)

Millett emphasizes more clearly that the Western social view of women as inferior stems more from culture than biology:

[u]nfortunately, as the psycho-social distinctions made between the two sex groups which are said to justify their present political relationship are not the clear, specific, measurable and neutral ones of the physical sciences, but are instead of an entirely different character—vague, amorphous, often even quasi-religious in phrasing—it must be admitted that many of the generally understood distinctions between the sexes in the more significant areas of role and temperament, not to mention status, have in fact, essentially cultural, rather than biological, bases. (28)

¹¹ While Ortner's argument is relevant to the discussion of gender and culturally defined gender roles in early modern England, her argument does reveal her own Western, cultivated bias that does not take into account pre-patriarchal cultures or even extant cultures, such as certain aboriginal cultures, that revere women as mothers and who consider the ability of a woman to give birth as not only of the utmost importance but as evidence of a woman's wisdom and ability to play a part in larger decision making capacities. However, Ortner, as a Western feminist, is not the only feminist theorist whose focus is on the historical and subordinate place of women due to their biological nature in Western culture. Various feminists have attempted to incorporate the idea of matriarchy within their own theorizing on patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir, in her examination of the Mother-Goddess, claims that "the great patriarchal epochs preserved in their mythology, their monuments, and their traditions the memory of the times when woman occupied a very lofty situation" (79). After discussing the power accorded to female figures such as Isis, Ishtar, Astarte, etc. in patriarchal history, de Beauvoir qualifies the representation of these powerful matriarchs by arguing "in truth that Golden Age of Woman is only a myth. To say that woman was the *Other* is to say that there did not exist between the sexes a reciprocal relation: Earth, Mother, Goddess—she was no fellow creature in man's eyes; it was *beyond* the human realm that her power was affirmed, and she was therefore *outside* of that realm" (79, her emphasis). As well Kate Millett, in her discussion of the attempt of theorists to uncover the pre-patriarchal history of Western philosophy, claims that these theorists raised "a curious quarrel that has absorbed anthropology for some hundred years" (108). If patriarchy is socially and culturally constructed, what came before? Millett argues that rather than trying to prove a pre-patriarchal matriarchy:

[p]robably one ought to be content with questioning the primordial character of patriarchal origins, relying upon the argument that since what we are dealing with is an institution, patriarchy must, like other human institutions, have had an origin and arisen out of circumstances which can be inferred or reconstructed, and since, if this is so, some other social condition must have obtained previous to patriarchy. Members of the matriarchal school, however, were not content with this. Working at a disadvantage because trying to counteract an established theory and strong social prejudices, they found it necessary to posit prepatriarchal conditions in the positive sense of "matriarchy." . . . nearly every member [proponents of matriarchal theory] has argued that patriarchal rule was preceded by some form of matriarchal rule, where mother-right, the "female principle," or fertility dominated social and religious life. (109)

For Millett, like de Beauvoir, establishing the "truth" of a prepatriarchal matriarchy in Western ideology is problematized by the evidence (myth and story) used to construct such arguments and as such the issue is, "[d]espite the possible fascination of the dispute" (109), impossible to resolve "since the information from prehistory which might settle it is inaccessible" (110). While both de Beauvoir and Millett attempt to confront the question of patriarchy versus matriarchy, their arguments, like Ortner's, are based on the prehistory and history of Western culture.

¹² Even those thinkers and writers who challenged medieval ideologies, including the view of women as "naturally" lesser in reason than men, did not see women as equal to men. One example of this was the Humanist development of an educational program for women. The programs designed by such leading humanists as Juan Luis Vives and Sir Thomas More were not intended for the edification of women or to increase their knowledge in masculine arts such as politics, but rather were meant to help women to be more pious and helpful to their naturally superior husbands. As Betty S. Travitsky notes that "while an interest in addressing the religious needs of secular women [by educating them] was an advance of sorts for women, especially as it recognized their intellectual capacities and as it attempted to raise the level of family life and child rearing, it was not an effort to enlarge the rights of women, who continued to be confined to domestic roles" (21). The relegation of women to "domestic roles" because of their biological roles in producing children is the connection modern feminists see between a woman's nature and her devaluation in Western society.

¹³ It shall be seen, however, that the abstract concepts of good or bad qualities the female figures in the literature of this controversy were given were used to indicate or implicate the behavior considered appropriate or inappropriate in women, and, in some cases, the use of a famous historical woman, such as Cleopatra, had far more important implications for the very limited number of women who actually wielded socio-political power.

¹⁴ There is still some debate over whether or not Gosynhyll wrote this text as his *Mulierum Pean* is written in praise of women. However, rather than excluding Gosynhyll from authorship, this seems to argue for it since many of the male authors of the texts of the *querelle des femmes* wrote both attacks and defenses to illustrate their rhetorical ability.

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that Cleopatra, depending on the writer representing the Egyptian queen, is rhetorically constructed as being an example of all three of these major types.

¹⁶ Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus also point to the importance that the feminine figures constructed in the *querelle des femmes* pamphlets had for early modern writers arguing that it was "the drama . . . which most clearly reveals the abiding interest in these images among every segment of the English population" (127).

¹⁷ In its modern connotation, the term "stereotypes" is generally associated with a negative, and prejudicial, construction of race, religion, gender, etc. While certainly figures used in the *querelle des*

femmes, especially those of the “attack” texts, can be read as overtly exaggerated negative constructions, the term “type” is more appropriate since the figures of these pamphlets are an amalgam of various qualities rather than specific women. As will be argued, they are consciously created figures representing cultural beliefs like the “types” of medieval drama that do not necessarily convey a sense of personal prejudice.

¹⁸ Woodbridge claims that “[w]riters like Gosynhyll and Pyrrre wrote formal essays on both sides of the women question, damning and praising women with equal conviction” and connects it to “the technique of arguing both sides of the same question as practice in rhetoric goes back to the first of the Greek Sophists, Protagoras of Abdera” (5).

¹⁹ In *The Legend of Cleopatra*, Chaucer even uses the strength of Cleopatra’s love as an example of loyalty for all men:

For loue of Antonye that was hir so dere;
 And this is storicall soth it is no fable.
 Now er I finde a man thus trew and stable
 And wol for loue his deth so frelye take
 I prey God lete oure heddes neuer ake. (Chaucer 207: 701-705)

²⁰ Michael Grant states that there are only a few extant and contemporary references to Cleopatra including Julius Caesar (*Civil War*), an officer of Caesar’s (*Alexandrian War*), and Nicolaus of Damascus, a Greek tutor for Cleopatra’s children (239). Grant notes the most used and famous account of the lives of Antony and Cleopatra is that of Plutarch who was born circa 50 AD, eighty years after the death of the pair in 35 AD. Cassius Dio’s dates are later than Plutarch’s, c. 155/163-235 AD (241).

²¹ Plutarch’s text is particularly important for investigating Cleopatra in early modern England as it was translated by Thomas North in 1579 and became a source text for many writers.

²² Plutarch does mention the betrayal of Pelusium but in his text the involvement of Cleopatra is recorded as a “rumour” (74:746). In Dio’s text, Cleopatra’s involvement in the taking of Pelusium is written as fact: “she at once surrendered Pelusium to Octavian” (51:70).

²³ This fact is noted by Lucy Hughes-Hallett (23), and by Michael Grant who argues that it was her father, Auletes Ptolemy, “who arranged for his daughter Cleopatra to learn more than one African tongue, in addition to the language of the Egyptians themselves” (20).

²⁴ Aylmer, along with his reference to providence, makes some clear allusions to the concept of the monarch’s two bodies in *An Harborowe For Faithfull and Trewe Subiectes*.

²⁵ I use the term bi-sexuality not in its modern day sense, but in a biological sense referring to Elizabeth’s strategy of creating herself as both a woman and a man.

²⁶ Somerset argues that Elizabeth saw her body politic as divinely ordained and, therefore, she: did not try to directly challenge the assumptions that were current about women, but instead she held that, as a sovereign appointed by God, the conventions that governed the relations between the sexes were not applicable to her. She genuinely believed that ‘Princes . . . transact business in a certain way, with a princely intelligence, such as private persons cannot imitate’, and in her view, the advantages she derived from her sovereign status meant that her gender was not a handicap, but an irrelevance. (75)

²⁷ In particular, Somerset, Neale, and Starkey claim that Elizabeth's caution about marrying a foreign prince was strengthened by her awareness of the difficulties such an alliance had for her sister, Mary Tudor, who married Philip of Spain (Somerset 119, Neale 77, and Starkey *Elizabeth* 314).

²⁸ Anne Somerset also mentions the rumours that surrounded Elizabeth and notes that "[a]s perhaps was unavoidable for a single woman in her position, there were soon innuendoes that she was rampantly promiscuous, and it was sometimes whispered that she remained unmarried because this made it easier to take a variety of lovers to satisfy her lust" (127). See also Neale 85-89.

Chapter Two

“In her allurements caught.” The Gender Politics of Mary Sidney Herbert’s *Antonius*

The first dramatic version of the Antony and Cleopatra story produced in early modern England was written and published by a woman, Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. In 1594, Pembroke¹ published *Antonius*, her translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antonie*. As a woman writer in early modern England, Pembroke’s success in devising a strategy by which she created a literary identity while maintaining her identity as appropriately feminine has been well documented in the last twenty years of scholarship devoted to uncovering those women who did write in the Renaissance. However, very little of this scholarship has been devoted to the political aspects of Pembroke’s only dramatic text. Yet *Antonius*, a play based upon the doomed love and failed aspirations of Antony and Cleopatra, was inherently political. As a story inevitably linked to the founding of the Roman Empire under Augustus Caesar, the play was clearly recognized in early modern thought as depicting the workings of power. It was also a story that reflected an increasing concern with the issue of power as it related to gender. This was perhaps especially the case during the time of the play’s publication, during the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth I. Indeed, Pembroke, as the daughter of the powerful Dudley-Sidney alliance and the wife of one of Elizabeth I’s more powerful courtiers, Henry Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, would have been intimately aware of the machinations of both gender and power in the Elizabethan court. Therefore, Pembroke, who was both a

noblewoman subject to a powerful female monarch and a powerful patron of her own literary “court” at Wilton, would have had a special and singular perspective on the political workings in her society. In particular, through her own efforts in constructing elaborate “self-fashionings” as a woman seen as the ideal of the socially constructed figuration of a female as well as a public writer, Pembroke would have been aware of the specific difficulties women faced while trying to assert themselves in this society.² In addition to her own personal insights into the early modern machinations of power and how gender affected these machinations, Pembroke, as a former attendant of Elizabeth I, would have seen first hand how the queen handled the same issues.³ Her *Antonius* gives the reader a unique perspective on this awareness.

Even though Mary Sidney Herbert was born to one of the most influential families in the late Tudor court and was married to one of the most powerful and richest Earls of the time, her writing was circumscribed by the fact that she was a woman. While her social position as a member of the nobility meant that she had the tools she needed to become a writer (education in classical and continental literatures and languages), that same position meant that her private reputation, to some extent, was far more open to public scrutiny than a writer who was socially unconnected. As a member of the nobility, she was courted for her patronage yet, as many critics have pointed out, most of the dedications to her carefully erase or codify her role as an author by stressing her position as the grieving sister fulfilling the duties of her dead brother and, as such, a patroness.⁴ The image of Pembroke as primarily a patroness rather than as an author is largely due to her own negotiations within the gender role

restrictions of the Renaissance. Pembroke deployed many strategies to save her private reputation despite her public voice. A key method by which Pembroke eluded the negative repercussions of being a “public female” was her conscious choice of the limited genres and themes considered relatively appropriate for women. In particular, Pembroke was fond of using translation as a method of avoiding the negative consequences that could arise from being a woman and a writer. Indeed, early critics of women’s writing in the Renaissance often dismissed Pembroke as a valid author for feminist study due to their opinion that she succumbed to social pressures and carefully wrote within the limited boundaries for women’s literary activity. In other words, Pembroke’s construction of herself as an acceptably feminine writer with regards to Renaissance cultural restrictions worked so well that the political aspect of her writing has often been ignored or dismissed by modern critics interested in the voice of women in print.⁵ Unlike her niece, Mary Wroth, who followed in her aunt’s (and uncle’s) literary footsteps but not her private reputation, Pembroke was able to maintain her private virtue while writing in public:

[a]mong her contemporaries, Pembroke was acclaimed both for her poetic achievement and for her virtue. She, or at least her public image, apparently fulfilled the Elizabethan ideal, but it was an ideal enlarged to include her writing. By confining her works to the approved genres of translation and encomium – of the queen, of her martyred brother, of her God – she produced a substantial body of poetry without openly challenging cultural restrictions on women. Although she was far from silent, contemporary dedications and

references construct her as the embodiment of all feminine virtue and accomplishment. (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 15-16)

The lack of early critical explorations of Pembroke as an innovative and political writer has been, to some degree, rectified by more recent studies of her works. Yet even the more recent critics continue to see Pembroke's translation of Garnier's *Marc Antonie* as a piece of writing that primarily exhibits her continuation of the Protestant cause that her family was deeply invested in and for which her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, died. While it is valid to interpret *Antonius* as a political-religious defense of the Protestant cause in early modern England, and of Elizabeth I in particular, it is also a play that clearly engages with the issues of gender and power in the Renaissance, specifically with the social anxiety aroused by a powerful female monarch. The lack of recognition for the multivalent nature of Pembroke's accomplishments with *Antonius* lies partially with the Countess herself. Indeed her skill in fashioning herself as an acceptable woman who happened to write and her ability to negotiate a public space while retaining her private virtue is, perhaps, largely responsible for modern critical opinions that marginalize her accomplishments. Nevertheless, it is in this fashioning and negotiation that one can find another interpretation of Pembroke's choice of the Antony and Cleopatra story as a dramatic subject. It is through an investigation of Pembroke's own understanding and perception of the interaction of the power and gender roles of her time, especially when reproduced by those writers who presented stories and figures that emphasize and delineate these relations, that one can see her dramatic translation as a criticism

of the period's carefully constructed idea of appropriate femininity. While many writers presented the story and characters of Antony and Cleopatra as the negative exemplum of what happens when traditional hierarchies of power (man over woman) and gender roles (masculine versus feminine) are disrupted, Pembroke employs her translation to question not only the function of these socially constructed roles but also to question the viability of the roles themselves and, hence, the socially accepted assumptions regarding both gender and power.

Although writing in general was perceived as a public expression that invariably was in conflict with the cultural construction of an ideal female in the early modern period, there were specific genres or forms of writing that allowed women to write without violating socio-cultural constructions of gender. One of the first genres of literature open to women that had been legitimized socially were texts dealing with personal religious devotions as well as the translation into English of religious tracts.⁶ Like the women writers who came before her, Pembroke used the socially approved forms of both translation and religious texts. The literary achievement for which she is best known is her completion of the translation of David's *Psalms*, a project that she began with her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. Partially, the reason for the social sanction of translation as an appropriate genre for women writers was that such texts, especially those of a religious nature, were originally written by men. John Florio's apologetic remark in a preface to one of his own translations clearly illustrates the connection between women and translation since he claims that "all translations are

reputed femalls.”⁷ The normative cultural prohibition against a woman writing is waived with translations:

Translation, especially translation of works by males, was allowed to women because it did not threaten the male establishment as the expression of personal viewpoints might. Perhaps more importantly, however, translation did not threaten the male ego. By engaging in this supposedly defective form of literary activity, women did not threaten perceptions of male superiority; any competence they [women writers] displayed could be dismissed by denigrating the task of translation itself. (Hannay *Silent* 116)

Yet despite the attempt to minimize the public voice of women by “denigrating” the use of this form of writing, “women occasionally subverted the text, even in translation, in order to insert personal and political statements” (Lamb 4).⁸ In her extant work, it is clear that Pembroke combined the acts of translation and devotion to gain legitimacy by seeming to stay within the cultural boundaries established for women. Yet her choice of texts could be seen as evidence of her acts of subversion as well. Other than the *Psalms*, Pembroke often chose texts which, if not political themselves, were connected through their writers to political causes. Philip de Mornay was clearly identified as a Protestant activist and is part of the reason for his close relationship with Sir Philip Sidney. So while de Mornay’s text which Pembroke translated, *A Discourse on Life and Death*, is not of itself political, one can see the political nature of its original author. This is even more apparent in Pembroke’s choice of Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*. Robert Garnier was clearly recognized as a

political thinker and writer in sixteenth-century France and translating, directly or indirectly, any play in his Roman trilogy must be read at some level as a political act rather than just another act of imitation. Even Pembroke's translation of the *Psalms* can be seen as a politicized act. Although Pembroke claimed that she was only finishing the work left by her brother, she still appropriates for herself the highly sacred texts of the *Psalms* and makes them her own, an activity hitherto restricted not only from women but from those (i.e. men) who were not ordained priests. Again the success of Pembroke's authorial strategy can be seen as being partially responsible for the relative lack of critical consideration of her works to date. By ignoring her political act of choice, many early critics (as well as more recent critics) have failed to recognize how even Pembroke's translations include original "personal and political statements" (Hannay *Silent* 4). For many critics, what has been less clear is whether or not Pembroke's fashioning of herself as a writer by working within genres and forms appropriate for her gender meant that Pembroke stayed within early modern cultural guidelines of appropriate femininity. The concern of critics regarding a woman writer's place within the cultural boundaries of her time reflects, one could suggest, our own bias regarding gender issues.⁹ Until recently, most critics have concentrated their work on those women writers who "rebelled" against cultural constructions of femininity or masculinity, such as Amelia Lanyer and Mary Wroth. Those women writers who maintained their social integrity have been often perceived as being culpable in maintaining the gender barriers. Indeed, on a superficial level, it certainly appears that Pembroke was seen as the woman who most clearly illustrated

the best qualities attributed to females in the period, as the numerous dedications to her suggest. However, since Pembroke was not only well versed but also well practiced in the art of self-presentation, any presentation of herself that she promoted must be investigated a little more deeply to understand the full implications of its representation.

To read Pembroke's *Antonius* as a specifically political play, one first needs to evaluate how the play engages with the cultural-political atmosphere of the early modern period. Doing so not only opens up a new perspective of the conscious recognition of the "construction" of gender in the early to late 1500s, but also illustrates the importance that such a construction of gender can have for those involved in the courtly power structure during the reign of Elizabeth I. As was argued in the first chapter's discussion of the *querrelle des femmes* pamphlet war (1540-1640), there seemed to be a general cultural concern to create and to stabilize the ideology of gender, including what were the ideal attributes of being "masculine" or "feminine," in the early modern period. Women were involved in this debate and often seemed to be bowing to the social pressures of what constitutes an appropriate vision of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, Pembroke's own vast project of self-fashioning underscores the importance she placed on manipulating the perceptions of her private feminine gender so as to enter the public masculine world of writing and, to some degree, politics. However, one of the most concrete pieces of literary evidence that connects Pembroke personally with the issues surrounding cultural constructions of gender roles is found in one of the works of her late brother, *The*

Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia. Like most of his works, Sidney's *Arcadia* was left to his literary heirs for editing and publication.¹⁰ That Sidney wrote the romance with his sister in mind is evidenced by the full title of the text, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and in Sidney's dedication. The *Arcadia* was dedicated to Pembroke, who Sidney claims, was the inspiration behind its composition: "you desired me to do it, and your desire to my heart is an absolute commandment" and that the work was "done only for you, only to you" (Evans 57). Indeed, Sidney alludes to the fact that the *Arcadia*, "this child which I am loth to father" (Evans 57),¹¹ was written in a type of editorial collaboration with Pembroke, and he claims that she "can best witness the manner [in which the text was written], being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence; the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done" (Evans 57). Sidney's dedication to the *Arcadia* illustrates not only the closeness of his and Pembroke's familial relationship but also their literary relationship; a relationship of collaborative effort which would also produce the translation of the *Psalmes*.¹² One scene in the *Arcadia* contains a debate focused on the construction and validity of socially accepted gender attributes that is striking considering Pembroke's own manipulation of such stereotypes in her representation of herself and in her translation of Garnier's text.

Being a romance, and, moreover, a romance that was dedicated to a woman, the *Arcadia* is a work of literature that is itself gendered. In particular, romances were generally considered texts written for the amusement of female readers.¹³ Sidney's text, while clearly part of the romance tradition of the early modern period,

complicates the genre's generally assumed social perspective on gender roles; that is the text complicates the black and white view of what is masculine and what is feminine. Sidney also questions the issue of how gender roles were classified as superior or inferior. In particular, the *Arcadia* upsets the normative polemic of positive masculine "Reason" versus negative feminine "Passion." Mary Ellen Lamb claims that in "the *New Arcadia*, Parthenia, Zelmane, and the princesses all become the heroines, rather than the victims, of their passion; for largely through their willingness to die, passion itself has assumed a new value as a motive for heroic constancy" (73). Moreover, Lamb states that:

both versions of the *Arcadia* are remarkable for the way they render problematic the relationship between male and female, like that between Reason and Passion. As in the argument between Reason and Passion, both sides are voiced: on the one hand, the dominance of male over female and on the other, the innate equality of the sexes. Like most issues in the *Arcadias*, this one is never resolved. (82)

Of course, by not resolving whether the relative cultural values ascribed to masculine and feminine roles are valid or not valid, the *Arcadia* lets its reader question the perception of gender and gender roles in the early modern period. By denying closure to the questions the text poses for gender, the *Arcadia* requires the reader to determine his/her own understanding of what is masculine and/or feminine. It requires an act of critical reading that was a positive, distinguishing feature of humanist rhetoric and literary creativity. Indeed, the extent to which gender roles are

highlighted in this work, a text Sidney specifically wrote for his sister, connects the Countess personally to the larger cultural concerns that surround the issue of gender. As Pembroke was the inspiration and the dedicatee of the *Arcadia*, one could suggest that the work's focus on gender is indicative of her own concern with the construction of male and female roles in the period. One episode in particular can be seen as a microcosmic example of the macrocosmic constructions of gender roles in the text and that is the episode in book one where Musidorus first meets Pyrocles dressed as the Amazon Zelmane.

Before the fateful meeting of the two young friends, the text explains that Pyrocles's decision to disguise himself as a woman is motivated by his love of Philoclea to whom he cannot "get access" because her father, Basillius, is "determined not to marry his daughters" (Skretkowitz 1.7-13, 80). Musidorus's reaction to and Pyrocles's defense of this gender bending deception, when it is discovered, clearly illustrates the crux of the arguments concerning gender and gender roles in the early modern period. When Musidorus realizes that Zelmane, the woman he has been admiring, is none other than Pyrocles, the lost friend for whom he was searching, he attacks his friend for his willingness to dress as a woman to win his love. Specifically, Musidorus fears that Pyrocles has lost his masculine reason due to his overwhelming love or passion for Philoclea, and it is this unreasonable love that has emasculated him:

[r]emember, for I know you know it, that if we will be men, the reasonable part of our soul is to have absolute commandment, against which if any

sensual weakness arise, we are to yield all our sound forces to the overthrowing of so unnatural a rebellion; wherein, how can we want courage, since we are to deal against so weak an adversary that in itself is nothing but weakness? Nay, we are to resolve that if reason direct it, we must do it; and if we must do it, we will do it—for to say “I cannot” is childish; and “I will not,” womanish. (Skretkowitz 70)

Musidorus’s speech is clearly gendered – reason is masculine and strong and all “sensual weakness[es],” such as love, are feminine and weak. For Pyrocles to don the clothes and identity of a woman in order to woo a woman is an “unnatural . . . rebellion” against himself as a man and society as a prince. To Musidorus, failing to uphold one’s masculine reason means one fails to be a man and becomes either “childish” or “womanish.” Indeed, Musidorus’s opinion of Pyrocles’s temporary masquerade as Zelmane negates all of Pyrocles’s masculine deeds and attributes:

[a]nd is it possible that this is Pyrocles, the only young prince in the world formed by nature and framed by education to the true exercise of virtue? Or is it indeed some Amazon that hath counterfeited the face of my friend, in this sort to vex me—for likelier sure I would have thought it that any outward face might have been disguised, than that the face of so excellent a mind could have been thus blemished. O sweet Pyrocles, separate yourself a little, if it be possible, from yourself, and let your own mind look upon your own proceedings. So shall my words be needless, and you best instructed. See with yourself how fit it will be for you, in this your tender youth, born so great a

prince and of so rare not only expectation but proof, desired of your old father and wanted of your native country, now so near your home, to divert your thoughts from the way of goodness; to lose, nay, to abuse your time; lastly, to overthrow all the excellent things you have done which have filled the world with your fame – as if you should drown with your ship in the long-desired haven, or like an ill player, should mar the last act of his tragedy. (Skretkowitz 70)

Musidorus's speech forcefully warns Pyrocles of what he sees, and through him what society sees, as the dangers of his romantic ruse. While it is dishonourable enough that Pyrocles, who is educated "to the true exercise of virtue," should disguise himself to win the hand of the woman he loves, it is almost unforgivable that the disguise he should adopt would be that of a woman. One danger that Musidorus foresees is that Pyrocles will be infected on an intellectual and philosophical level by what he has done. In other words, his friend fears that by wearing the "face" of a woman, Pyrocles has made it possible that "so excellent a mind could have been thus blemished." Here Musidorus fears, it seems, that Pyrocles, once he has dressed as a woman, will no longer be able to think as a man since his mind will be "blemished" by his feminine disguise. More specifically, Musidorus fears that Pyrocles has become infected or diseased by female weakness, especially irrationality, an attribute that Musidorus, as well as the society to which he belongs, obviously considers feminine. Musidorus also makes plain what he feels are the consequences of Pyrocles's decision to dress like a woman. Namely he claims that by following a course set by his irrational love

and by dressing like a woman, Pyrocles debases not only his own honour but also the honour of his “old father” and “native country” and these actions, being unmanly, are an “abuse” of Pyrocles’s time that could have been better spent in masculine pursuits such as learning, war, and statecraft. The last consequence of Pyrocles’s actions, according to Musidorus, is that by allowing his passion to overrule his reason, which he exemplifies by his *choice* to dress like a woman, Pyrocles has “overthrow[n] all the excellent things you have done which have filled the world with your fame.” By allowing himself to become feminized, literally, by his emotions, Musidorus fears that Pyrocles has negated all the actions that gained him renown as a man. While Musidorus’s speech directly relates to the consequences that have arisen from Pyrocles’s love for Philoclea, his words indirectly reinforce the negativity often associated with the feminine gender as it was constructed in the early modern period. Pyrocles’s supposed dishonour is based on his actions of disguising himself to get closer to the woman he loves. The fact that he dresses as a woman makes it more palpable and acute that his masculine grandeur has been weakened and effeminized. Despite the fact that it is the weakness of passion that Musidorus targets in his speech to Pyrocles, women and the love of women in particular are also blamed for his friend’s “fall”:

[a]nd truly, I think hereupon it first gat the name of love, for indeed, the true love hath that excellent nature in it that it doth transform the very essence of the lover into the thing loved, uniting and as it were incorporating it with a secret and inward working. And herein do these kinds of loves imitate the

excellent, for as the love of heaven makes one heavenly, the love of virtue virtuous, so doth the love of the world make one become worldly—and this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man that, if you yield up to it, it will not only make you an Amazon, but a launder, a distaff-spinner, or whatsoever vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform. (Skretkowitz 71-72)

As before, the main purpose of Musidorus's speech is to categorize love and emotion into acceptable and non-acceptable positions. However, his delineation of love denotes a discernible valuation. To love manly things – heaven, virtue, the world – is to become those manly things and, hence, more masculine. To love a woman, especially with a love that is as passionate as Pyrocles's love appears to be, is to become a woman. Even more telling, Musidorus rhetorically connects this transformation to the more negative aspects or characterizations of the feminine gender. It is Musidorus's contention that such a love will not only transform his friend into a weaker man, but an actual woman. While the use of "their" could be considered to some degree ambiguous, the negative qualities ascribed in Musidorus's tirade are the qualities most often used by misogynists of the period who argued for the complete inferiority of women based on their natural deficiencies including their lack of reason and intellect, their overactive imaginations, and their lack of fidelity and courage. The negative perspective of females and the female gender to be found in Musidorus's speech is also clarified by his description of occupations so obviously connected to women—including the traditionally feminine activities of the making

and the upkeep of clothes – as “vile.” Overall, Musidorus’s speech is constructed so as to be explicitly condemning of Pyrocles’s status as a man due to his excessive love or passion for Philoclea. Yet it is also constructed to be implicitly critical of women in general. In fact, the negative qualities of the feminine highlighted by Musidorus in his speech would have been familiar to anyone of the period and were more fully defined in the pamphlets of the *querelle des femmes*. However, Sidney does not allow Musidorus’s opinion of love and women to stand unopposed. It is in Pyrocles’s reply to his friend that the text of the *Arcadia* complicates any single view of what attributes belong to what gender and whether those attributes can be defined decisively as superior or inferior.

Once Musidorus has finished his speech, the text relates the changing response of Pyrocles to his friend’s warnings, “[b]ut in Pyrocles this speech wrought no more but that he, who before he was espied was afraid, after being perceived was ashamed, now being hardly rubbed upon left both fear and shame, and was moved to anger” (Skretkowitz 72). The fear and shame that Pyrocles initially feels are directly related to his sense of himself as a man. He is afraid, at least partially, of having anyone discover his disguise because it is unmanly in a literal sense and in a figurative sense because it illustrates the lengths to which love has driven him. As well it demonstrates his inability to overcome the barrier of Bassilius’s injunction by masculine means. However, these first emotional reactions are subsumed by anger, and the reason for this anger only becomes apparent when Pyrocles gives his response to Musidorus’s argument:

Cousin, whatsoever good disposition nature hath bestowed upon me, or howsoever that disposition nature hath been by bringing up confirmed, this must I confess: that I am not yet come to that degree of wisdom to think light of the sex of whom I have my life; since if I be anything (which your friendship rather finds, than I acknowledge), I was to come to it born of a woman, and nursed of a woman. And certainly (for this point of your speech doth nearest touch me) it is strange to see the unmanlike cruelty of mankind, who not content with their tyrannous ambition to have brought the others' virtuous patience under them, like childish masters think their masterhood nothing without doing injury to them, who (if we will argue by reason) are framed of nature with the same parts of the mind for the exercise of virtue as we are. And for example, even this estate of Amazons, which I now for my greatest honour do seek to counterfeit, doth well witness that, if generally the sweetness of their disposition did not make them see the vainness of these things which we account glorious, they neither want valour of mind, nor yet doth their fairness take away their force. And truly, we men and praisers of men should remember, that if we have such excellencies, it is reason to think them excellent creatures of whom we are, since a kite never brought forth a good flying hawk. But to tell you true, as I think it superfluous to use any words of such a subject which is so praised in itself as it needs no praises, so withal I fear lest my conceit, not able to reach unto them, bring forth words which for their unworthiness may be a disgrace to them I so inwardly honour.

Let this suffice: that they are capable of virtue, and virtue, you yourselves say, is to be loved. (Skretkowitz 72-73).

The theme of Pyrocles's initial response to Musidorus's condemnation of his disguise is not one of self-defense. Indeed his anger at Musidorus is not because his friend has insulted him, but rather that he has insulted women. In Pyrocles's speech, the reader is given a defense of women to balance Musidorus's attack. The first aspect of his defense of women is that all men, virtuous or not, come from women. Furthermore, Pyrocles argues that not only are all men "born of women," but also, due to the social structure of the family, it is the mother who is the primary caregiver to the children, so that all men are initially "nursed of a woman." As the word "nursed" denotes both the literal feeding of a child as well as the early education of the child in both social and moral behavior, the impact of Pyrocles's statement is that it illustrates that all men receive their basic education from women. This idea of the influence of women upon the children they produce is given an even stronger emphasis by Pyrocles's connection of his argument with the masculine activity of animal breeding, specifically, with the breeding of hunting birds. He claims that "since a kite never brought forth a good flying hawk," men like Musidorus should be careful in attributing their own personal virtues or strengths to their masculinity alone since, he argues, the "excellencies" possessed by men can be traced back to those "excellent creatures of whom we are." In other words, Pyrocles uses Musidorus's argument on the natural inferiority of women against him by reasoning that the sum of the virtues that men claim must come from women, since all men must credit women for their

biological origin. Pyrocles takes this natural logic further by claiming women “are framed of nature with the same parts of the mind for the exercise of virtue as we are.” Like Musidorus’s misogynistic arguments against women, which hearken back to the attacks against women common since the Middle Ages, Pyrocles’s speech uses many of the arguments commonly used by the defenders of women in the Renaissance. Pyrocles’s argument also embodies an historical and/or iconographical reference to powerful women to establish his defense – the well-known feminine figure of the Amazon.

Considering that Pyrocles is dressed as an Amazon,¹⁴ it seems perfectly logical that this is the only reason he needs to justify the use of these mythical women as an example in his defense. Yet the way in which Pyrocles chooses to disguise himself has a larger significance than his stated claim of wanting to thwart the orders of Philoclea’s father. According to Louis Montrose, “[d]escriptions of the Amazons are ubiquitous in Elizabethan texts” (“Shaping” 66). The figure of the Amazon was one of great resonance in the Renaissance and, moreover, it was one that was as malleable as the figurations of gender roles themselves. The Amazon, at the most basic level, was that of the female warrior or soldier. Yet, how this figure appears in the rhetoric of the time is dependent on the use to which any given author puts her, and there are both positive and negative examples of these warrior women. In the writings of the Greek writers, such as Homer, the Amazon is overall a negative example of femininity. For the Greeks these women existed on the “outskirts of their known world” and were “barbarians—those rude and unfortunate strangers who

lacked the brilliant order of the Greek state, and it is to this realm of disorderliness and unnaturalness that the Greek tradition of the Amazons belonged” (Fraser 20). A large part of the “disorderliness” of the Amazon was that they displayed an active resistance to a society ordered by patriarchal power. They could not be categorized by masculine definitions of gender that valued the traditional quality of feminine passivity. Antonia Fraser argues that the predominant European view of the Amazon society was similar to the Greeks’ in that these women are presented as “an example of how badly things would turn out if the world was turned upside down and women ruled” (22). Yet Fraser also notes that the figure of the Amazon had a more positive use in the rhetoric of the early modern period especially by women who were also rulers. For such women “any situation in which a female ruler had performed to involve herself in war, an allusion to the Amazons was an appeal to history for the verification of her role” (Fraser 22).

Of course the figure of the Amazon becomes particularly pertinent in the Elizabethan period because England’s monarch was creating a country in which the socially accepted genderization of power as masculine was being challenged. This political reality is also a major contribution to the debate about gender roles and the attributes assigned to both male and female at the time. More than just depicting the inversion of society in the early modern period:

Amazonian mythology seems symbolically to embody and to control a collective anxiety about the power of the female not only to dominate or reject the male but to create and destroy him. It is an ironic acknowledgement by an

androcentric culture of the degree to which men are dependent upon women: upon mothers and nurses, for their birth and nurture; upon mistresses and wives, for the validation of their manhood. (Montrose "Shaping" 66)

Considering the "collective anxiety" that the figure of the Amazon embodies, it seems somewhat strange that Sidney creates an Amazonian alter-ego for his hero Pyrocles. The most basic explanation for the creation of the Zelmane disguise is that it would be easier on a physical and personal level for the warrior prince Pyrocles to imitate a woman who was, at least, a warrior and, hence, to a degree, masculine. Yet Pyrocles's speech defending women also alludes to a more significant reason for this particular charade. Rather than referring to the traditional or culturally accepted notion of the Amazon as the female figure of disorder who fights for the destruction of man, Pyrocles claims that "generally the sweetness of their disposition did not make them see the vainness of these things which we account glorious, they neither want valour of mind, nor yet doth their fairness take away their force." As was the case in Musidorus's speech, the use of the third person plural pronouns is left somewhat ambiguous. While Pyrocles seems to be referring directly to the Amazons, the description he gives to the "them" in his speech could also refer to women in general, specifically to the more ideal version of femininity espoused in the early modern period. Amazons and/or women have a sweet "disposition" that allows them to see the "vainness" of masculine pursuits such as war and politics. Pyrocles argues that since the natural character of women is to be reticent and non-aggressive, if women, like the Amazons, take up masculine activities it is not due to their quest for personal

recognition and power; they do not fight for the “vainness of these things we [men] account glorious.” Instead they fight for virtue and the order of things just as the best of men do and, in so doing, show themselves possessing both “valour of mind” and “force” despite their “fairness.” Pyrocles’s reference to the Amazons as women not seeking glory but possessing valour and force conflicts with the negative cultural images of the unnatural and disorderly woman usually figured by the image of the war-like Amazon females. Pyrocles also seems to understand that he is going against the cultural construction of the figure of the Amazon since he prefaces his statement by saying that “even this estate of the Amazons, which I now for my greatest honour do seek to counterfeit, doth well” emphasize the positive points he makes about women. The qualifying word of “even” illustrates that even those feminine figures most clearly connected in the cultural construction of gender roles with the inversion and upheaval of order and rule can be interpreted as being virtuous and worthy of “honour.”

In addition to defending women by illustrating their natural honour and virtue, Pyrocles uses his speech to attack men who would vilify women as a whole. He claims that the aspect of Musidorus’s speech that “doth nearest touch me” (Skretkowitz 72) is his spiteful language in describing women. One such example of Musidorus’s vindictive rhetoric is his blanket claim that all women have “idle heads” and “weak hands.” The tone of Musidorus’s attack on women leads Pyrocles to defend them not only by presenting the natural goodness of women but also by pointing out the negative qualities of men. For Pyrocles, Musidorus’s speech

illustrates “the unmanlike cruelty of mankind, who not content with their tyrannous ambition to have brought the others’ [i.e. women] virtuous patience under them, like childish masters think their masterhood nothing without doing injury to them.” Musidorus’s speech is one such example of “doing injury” to those who have not done any wrong to him. Pyrocles argues that by denigrating women in his speech Musidorus, like most men of the time, shows that he is the one who is petty and vain. He stresses the negative aspects of the masculine gender by referring to the “unmanlike cruelty of mankind” and “their tyrannous ambition.” He also calls men, those with the lion’s share of the power in the early modern period, “childish masters” who do harm or oppress women for their self-aggrandizement. Here Pyrocles’s speech targets the masculine prerogative of claiming to be more virtuous and reasonable than women by reminding such “men and praisers of men” of their own faults. If they abuse the power they have by willfully injuring those they rule for the sake of it, they cannot claim to be virtuous. If they claim to be naturally more reasonable than women, then they cannot ignore that women are essentially equal to men being “framed of nature with the same parts of the mind for the exercise of virtue as” men are. Musidorus’s attack of and Pyrocles’s defense of women speak to the cultural concern surrounding the social construction of definite roles for men and women. Together, both speeches complicate the strict dichotomy between masculine and feminine that was a cultural touchstone in the early modern period. Yet, Pyrocles’s speech, and the *Arcadia* as a whole, does not seek to abolish or resolve the problems it creates in viewing gender roles. Instead what it does is establish a

different way of perceiving the nominal values assigned to being male or female. It, in fact, establishes that being perceptive, and, to a large extent, being self-perceptive allows one to understand that gender roles are not black and white any more than virtue or reason can be labeled masculine or feminine. If a man who is weak is called “womanish,” it is because society sees weakness as feminine, not necessarily because all women are weak. It is in this sense that the text challenges the presumed stability of gender roles and the assumptions arising about men and women from them that culture and society enshrine as ‘truths.’ The encounter between Musidorus and Pyrocles/Zelma highlights the idea that gender roles and the attributes assigned as masculine and feminine are not solid and immutable. The negative aspects assigned to one gender can easily be seen in the other and, in the same sense, the positive qualities are equally transferable. Within the text of the *Arcadia*, the interchangeability of the characteristics of gender and the rhetorical ability to play with the cultural assumption of the immutability of masculine and feminine roles emphasize not only the awareness of social constructions, but also the awareness that one can subvert such constructions for one’s own purpose. The parry and thrust argument between Musidorus and Pyrocles/Zelma clearly illuminates the idea that while cultural constructions, such as those of gender, are static, human existence and experience are not. The episode also illustrates that the rhetorical figures based on static cultural constructions, such as the Amazon, can be used to undermine or question the underpinnings of social views of order.

The destabilization of gender, so to speak, presented in Sidney's *Arcadia*, illustrates the idea that Pembroke was keenly aware of the cultural constructions of gender to which she appeared to conform. Yet, it also shows her awareness of the act of construction that these roles revealed. Like her brother's romance, Pembroke's *Antonius* questions the validity of what traits were deemed masculine and feminine in her time. Furthermore, Pembroke's choice to translate Garnier's *Marc Antoine* evidences her awareness of the effect that the ideology of gender could have on politics, especially in a nation ruled by a woman. On a superficial level, Pembroke's use of translation appears to remain within the socio-cultural boundaries permitted to women with regards to writing for publication. On a deeper level, the translations written by women work to counteract the perception of translation as merely an act of literary copying or unimaginative replication. This is the case with Pembroke. Instead of being a woman writer who was submissive to the social injunctions concerning women's speech, Pembroke works through and with the authority of the male writer she has chosen in order to voice her own views and opinions. The choice of Robert Garnier [c1544-1590], a writer very much concerned with the political and moral implications of drama, is one small example of Pembroke's subversiveness. Although Garnier's play supports the political and religious causes of her own family, such as Sir Philip Sidney's impassioned defense of the Protestant cause, Pembroke also had a more personal political agenda in her use of Garnier as a source, namely, his characterization of gender roles. As Christine Hill and Mary Morrison note in their introduction to Garnier's *Marc Antonie* "[w]ith Cléopâtre's character and feelings

Garnier has certainly taken liberties. Instead of Plutarch's calculating, ambitious queen, Garnier presents her as an essentially noble woman, who has come to grief only through her intense and excessive passion for Antoine" (18).¹⁵ Pembroke in her translation of Garnier, as will be seen, emphasizes and alters how one reads Garnier's presentation of masculine and feminine, and particularly Antony and Cleopatra, with her one substantial addition to the French text, the penning of an original "Argument" for the play. This "Argument" redirects the reader's perception of Garnier's play, and by changing how one reads the characters of the play, Pembroke goes beyond the cultural boundaries of translation and uses her translation to question the socially sanctioned view of gender.

Continental playwright, Robert Garnier, was particularly well suited to write drama with clear connections to the social and cultural upheavals of sixteenth-century France. By occupation, Garnier was a lawyer as well as a playwright. His legal profession led to his being named "apparently through the direct intervention of the king, *lieutenant criminel*, that is, deputy president of the *assemblée de la ville*, under the *lieutenant général*, and also chief justice for the whole of the *comté de Maine*," a position he held until 1586 when he became a member of the King's Council (Hill and Morrison 1). Garnier's connection to the power structure in France gave him valuable insight into the political troubles of his country and how those political troubles affected not only those who ruled but also those who were ruled. Garnier's *Marc Antonie* (1578) was one part of a Roman trilogy that was intended to comment upon the religious civil wars in France.¹⁶ Gillian Jondorf believes that Garnier is a

political writer, in both the content and context of his tragedies, and she states that this is how he was acknowledged by his contemporaries (26). Jondorf also points to the obvious political allusions in “Garnier’s own prefaces” (27). Furthermore, she claims that Garnier’s choice of source material can be seen as evidence of his political consciousness, since:

[t]here must be more than coincidence in the fact that of Garnier’s seven tragedies, three deal with various episodes of the Roman civil wars, one with the war of the Seven against Thebes (which was also a civil war, since a Theban prince was attacking Thebes), and two others (*La Troade* and *Les Juifves*) with the aftermath of war or rebellion. (28)

All in all, as Jondorf notes, “[f]rom Garnier’s remarks it seems legitimate to assume a connection between his choice of subjects and contemporary events” (28).¹⁷ Such is the case with Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*. The play was published in 1578 when the throne of France:

had been occupied for nearly four years by the much-maligned Henri III, a man of many qualities, by far the most intelligent of the Valois kings, courageous, imaginative, a born orator; but also neurotic, vain, probably a sexual pervert, and so vilified by his enemies that even now he tends to be seen in the distorting glass of their slander campaign as effeminate, cruel, vindictive and hypocritical. (34)

Celebrated for his military prowess as the Duc d’Anjou, when he became king his enemies claimed his later “extravagant and voluptuous way of life . . . lost him the

sympathy of his subjects” (35). Jondorf remarks that the “parallel between Marc-Antoine and Henri III was likely to occur to his readers, even if Garnier did not intend it; but he probably did, for he would have had to be very unobservant not to notice the obvious analogy” (35). The striking parallel between the characters of Antony and Henri III, especially their shared weakness of private excess, can also be seen as being comparable on a political level. Like Antony, Henri III, due to his own personal indulgences, could be accused of fostering an erosion in the loyalty of his people that could eventually lead to his political downfall and his society’s disorder. Specifically, *Marc Antoine* can be seen as “Garnier’s censure of the ruler who is weakened by *volupté*” and “as a piece of well-meant criticism and implied advice” (35).

Furthermore the play condemns: “[m]isgovernment, loss of the sceptre to a ‘main étrangère’ [foreign hands] . . . , leaving the people to the mercy of ‘flateurs qui leur sucent les os,’ [flatterers who suck on their dead bones] injustice, disorder, and finally rebellion” (35). The critical perspective of Garnier as a political dramatist not only comes from the opinion of others and the relations that can be made between historical and political events of his own time, but also Garnier’s own words regarding the social discontent of sixteenth-century France. In particular, Garnier’s prefatory material directly links *Marc Antoine* to the civil turmoil caused by political and religious dissent in France. In his dedication to Monseigneur de Pibrac,¹⁸ Garnier explains his motivation for writing the play as well as his reason for his dedication:

[a] qui doy-je plus justement presenter de mes poëmes qu’à vous,

Monseigneur, qui les avez le premier de tous favorisez, leur donnant hardiness

de sortir en public? Et qui vous mesmes, nous traçant le chemin de Pierie, y allez souvent chanter des vers, dont la nombreuse perfection et sainte majesté ravit nos esprits estonnez d'ouir de si doctes merveilles. Mais sur tout, à qui mieux qu'à vous se doivent adresser les representations Tragiques de guerres civiles de Rome? qui avez en telle horreur nos dissensions domestiques, et les malheureux troubles de ce Royaume, aujourd'huy despouillé de son ancienne splendeur, et de la reverable majesté de nos Rois, prophane par tumultueuses rebellions.

[To whom more justly should I present my poems than to you, Monsieur, who before anyone else favoured them, giving them the boldness to be published? And who yourself, showing us the Road to Piera, often go there to sing poetry, which the great perfection and holy majesty delights our spirits surprised to hear such learned wonders. But above all, to whom better than you should the representations of the Tragedies of the Roman civil wars be addressed? You, who with the same horror view our domestic dissensions, and the unfortunate troubles of this realm, today stripped (despoiled) of its ancient splendor, and of the honourable majesty of our Kings, profaned by tumultuous rebellions.]¹⁹

(Hill and Morrison 105)

Other than the usual complimentary phrases that address the generosity of de Pibrac for helping the poet in previous literary endeavors, Garnier claims to dedicate the play to de Pibrac because his political involvement gives him the understanding necessary to see the connection between the civil plight represented by this particular aspect of

Roman history and the French troubles. Also Garnier claims that de Pibrac, like himself, is troubled by the “dissentions domestique, et les malheureux troubles de ce Royaume.” Jondorf emphasizes the political nature of Garnier’s choice of de Pibrac as clear evidence that the playwright wished to have the connections between his Roman play and the contemporary social climate understood. Other than the parallels between the characterizations of Antony and Henri III, “the whole setting of the play (another moment in the Roman civil wars) is of course still relevant” (Jondorf 35). For Jondorf the dedication and the play text itself indicate “that Garnier intends the reader to be aware of parallels between republican Rome and sixteenth-century France” (36).

The “dissentions domestiques et malheureux troubles” of which Garnier speaks in his dedication refer to the civil disorder and violence caused by the religious dissent in sixteenth-century France. The growing conflict between Catholics and Protestants in France, nominally a Catholic country, led to years of conflict within the country and eventually to the bloody massacre of the Protestant Huguenots on St. Bartholomew’s Day, on August 24th, 1572, triggered by, as Anne Sommerset suggests, the attempted murder of the Huguenot leader, Gaspard de Coligny (346).²⁰ Coligny, in his position as one of the advisors of Charles IX, promoted the idea that France should intervene in the continuing struggle to oust the Spanish from the Low Countries. According to Jondorf, this planned campaign is another way in which the themes in Garnier’s tragedies, especially *Marc Antoine*, are connected to the French political situation of the time.²¹ The play’s:

theme that foreign war is preferable to civil war might have been relevant throughout the period, but particularly in 1571-2, when Admiral Coligny was planning an expedition to liberate the Low Countries, supporting his scheme with various arguments, one of which (and probably his main motive) was that foreign war united a country and put an end to civil dispute—a Machiavellian principle; and it was relevant again from 1576 onwards, when François, duc d'Anjou, adopted Coligny's views for his own ends. Coligny sought to end civil war in France; as a convinced Protestant, he would no doubt also have been happy to free the Dutch Protestants from the heavy rule of Catholic Spain. The Duc d'Anjou was, in theory at least, a Catholic; his main interest in a campaign in the Low Countries was that he hoped to find a throne for himself there; such a campaign might also improve his chances with the Protestant Elizabeth of England, François having succeeded Henri III as a candidate for her hand.²² After [a] brief appearance in *Porcie*, the theme of foreign war as a means of preventing civil war now reappears in slightly expanded form in a soldiers' chorus in *Marc-Antoine*, coinciding with Anjou's use of the argument to support his own inglorious campaign in the Low Countries. Moreover, Garnier refers to Anjou's expedition in the dedication of the first (1579) edition of *La Troade*. It was probably less from any attachment to Anjou's cause, than from weariness with civil war, and willingness to lend support to any plan which offered a possibility of bringing it to an end. (Jondorf 36-37)

Garnier's play also dealt with some themes relevant to the larger scope of political ideology of the period, such as the concepts of public and private and the relationship between a monarch and his people. In other words, while it seems obvious that Garnier's *Marc Antoine* (as well as the other two plays in his Roman trilogy, *Porcie* and *Cornélie*) have a specific relationship to the social problems of France, it also investigates the larger question of ruling.

Garnier's *Marc Antoine* explores the discrepancy between being a private person in a public position; that is, the base story itself, the tragic love affair of Antony and Cleopatra, is perhaps the most potent source story from ancient history which illustrates what happens to individuals and countries when the personal emotions of the rulers outweigh their loyalty and duty to their people and the country which they ostensibly rule. While this is obviously a core theme in the original source, Garnier's characterization of Antoine and Cléopâtre²³ deviates from his source materials making this conflict of the self more apparent. Living with the consequences of civil upheaval in a country headed by "a pleasure-loving ruler" (Jondorf 36), both Antoine and Cléopâtre represent the consequences of private emotion overwhelming the importance of public duty in rulers (Hill and Morrison 17-18). Hill and Morrison claim that in Garnier's text Cléopâtre is constructed so that "her fate is an exemplum of the disastrous effects of excessive passion, not only to herself, but also . . . to the whole Egyptian people" (18). While the effects of Cléopâtre's emotive actions bring her country to ruin, "Antoine is even more of an exemplum of the effects of passion," since he "is miserably conscious that his love

has brought him shame and dishonour; it has ‘unmanned’ him” (18). For these critics it “seems, in short, that Garnier’s moral aim in *Marc Antoine* is to discredit passion totally” yet, at the same time, Hill and Morrison note that the play also shows “an involuntary sympathy with the lovers and a tendency to ennoble and dignify their love” (19). The disparity between the need to “discredit passion” and still having an “involuntary sympathy” with the pair of lovers stems from Garnier’s bifurcation of Antony and Cleopatra into public and private beings. As Barbara Bono notes:

Garnier selectively uses the past in a way he hopes will shape the present; he reads history philosophically, seeking to uncover universal moral categories for political conduct. Plutarch’s biographies, in which ethical concerns dominate the record of events, readily suit Garnier’s purpose, and he effectively adapts Plutarch’s moralistic portrait of a tragically tinged Antony, caught between private and public needs, between the inclination of his own excessive nature and the rule of reason, between love and duty. (117)

However, Bono also claims that the polarities of Garnier’s text are complicated by his creation of “something more than another example of the archetypal tragedy of suffering. Garnier is on the verge of vivifying what in previous plays had been a rhetorical debate between love and duty as a tragic action” by engaging with “a movement of consciousness in Antony, and of culture in the play as a whole” (121). What these critics recognize as an ambivalence within the text is the difficulty encountered when trying to separate private and public into clearly defined categories; that is, while the text condemns Antony and Cleopatra on a political level

for the terrible cost of their love in the public arena, it also recognizes the strength of their love for one another as a private virtue. The ambiguity or blurring of the line between the rhetorically polarized dichotomy of duty and love and public and private that arises in Garnier's text is not fully due to the sources he uses. Both Plutarch and Dio Cassius regard Antony and Cleopatra as the principal agents of the war with Octavius since the lovers valued their private passion and desire over their public duty (Antony's duty to uphold the values of the Roman Empire and Cleopatra's to preserve and shield Egypt as a country for her children and her people). In both sources, even in Plutarch's more sympathetic version, the lovers are castigated for their unwillingness to do their duty because of their emotional entanglements. Of course, in Cleopatra's case, this blame is even more strident since both sources show that political strategy, not love for Antony, may have been the inspiration for the queen's dramatic suicide. Both also include Cleopatra's attempt to manipulate Octavius in order to save the Ptolemy crown (either for herself or her children) after the death of Antony. Each source story thereby indicates the possible duplicity of Cleopatra in relation to her love of Antony. This is one of the significant changes that Garnier makes in his version of the story. He, to some degree, reforms the character of Cleopatra by making her more sympathetic and by omitting some of the more negative aspects found in his sources. Raymond Lebègue, in comparing Garnier's text to its French predecessor, Étienne Jodelle's *Cleopâtre captive* (performed in 1552-1553; published in 1574), notes that in Garnier the issue of public duty versus private desire is shown in the text when "[c]haque fois que le héros [Antony] paraît sur la

scène, il déplore l'amour insensé qui le dévore et qui a ruiné sa puissance et sa gloire" [each time that the hero arrives on the scene, one deplores the mad love which devours him and which has ruined his power and his distinction] (208). Lebègue enumerates the number of characters who speak on the theme of overwhelming emotion, including "Cléopâtre elle-même" [Cleopatra herself] (208), to illustrate the idea that "[d]ans le pièce de Jodelle, ce thème était beaucoup moins développé" [in Jodelle's play this theme is much less developed] and because of this lack of development of the theme of the personal recognition of responsibility in Jodelle's text, "Cléopâtre manifestait moins de remord que chez Garnier" [Cleopatra expresses less remorse than in Garnier's work] (Lebègue 208). The conflict between public duty and private love in Garnier's text is also evidenced by abrupt character changes in the text. Because of what Bono calls "Garnier's faithful rendition of Plutarch's complex and self-conscious Antony and the play's scrupulous regard for the political realities of civil war and imperial ambition" (120), she is unconvinced that Garnier's alteration of Cléopâtre's character is enough to modify the historical opinion of the queen. Bono's opinion is reinforced by what she sees as a dramatic flaw in Garnier's handling of the central characters at the time of their death:

[b]ut suddenly at the end of the play Garnier simplifies Antoine and Cléopâtre, as a messenger reports that Antoine has revised his harsh judgement of her. He commits suicide not only because his worldly fame is gone but also because he longs to be reunited with her. Garnier has done nothing to explain Antoine's change of heart, and the sentimental

conventional death scene is inevitably less convincing than the earlier condemning direct discourse. Cléopâtre, too, is abruptly ennobled. (120)

Furthermore, for Bono, Cléopâtre's death is an "impressive moment [that] rings hollow in a play that has carefully stressed political responsibility and has done little to substantiate Cléopâtre's value. The play's romantic conclusion seems a conventional rhetorical flourish unrelated to the political and psychological subtlety of the text" (120). While other critics recognize the abruptness of the change of Antony's opinion of his love near the end of the play, they do not see this dramatic reversal as being completely detrimental to Garnier's "humanization" of the Egyptian queen. Hill and Morrison claim that while Garnier "does not try to reproduce the diversity of Plutarch's characters, or the complexity of their relationship," he does use "Plutarch to give a sympathetic analysis of Antoine's state of mind, and ascribes to him varied and conflicting emotions" (17-18). For these critics, Garnier gives his audience "a plausible reconstruction of [Antony's] feelings in defeat" (18).

In presenting Cléopâtre, Garnier sympathetically portrays her not only as a queen but also as a woman. He does this by giving his audience/readers justifiable reasons, other than political motivation, for her seemingly contradictory actions at Actium and in the wake of her and Antony's defeat. Her withdrawal from Actium is done not to allow her the option of negotiating with Octavius, but because of her fear. She goads Antony because of her jealousy of Octavia. She sends the false message of her death to Antony not to induce his own suicide, but to discover whether or not he still truly loves her. In *Marc Antoine*, Garnier changes the character of Cléopâtre by

making her more human for his audience so that they understand that she, like all monarchs, suffers from human faults. In the text, “Garnier . . . falsifies history to make of his Cléopâtre an almost guiltless victim” (Hill and Morrison 18). Yet this “falsification” is part of what Hill and Morrison recognize as a structural element in Garnier which “is typical of methods of sixteenth-century dramatists” (15). Instead of a play that contains “what we regard as well-knit dramatic action” (15), Garnier’s text “could best be described as a series of loosely connected scenes, showing characters in situations representing different facets of the consequences of the battle of Actium” (Hill and Morrison 15). For them, the point of Garnier’s play is that:

[the] audience sees the lovers suffering the consequences of previous actions; they are represented in a passive, not an active state. They are moreover presented at a time when they are helpless victims. No action is possible, except to die. The emphasis on helpless suffering is reinforced by the odes sung by the chorus of Egyptians. These loosely connected scenes . . . give a poetic but largely static representation of the feelings of Antony and Cleopatra as they face calamity. (Hill and Morrison 15)

Yet the claim that the changes in characterization in Garnier’s text are due only to structural properties of the drama at the time is misleading. One could also read the alterations that Garnier makes, and the problems that arise from those changes, as stemming from the thematic content itself. If Jondorf is correct, Garnier was using *Marc Antoine* to criticize his own monarch for the escalating civil strife in France. Garnier’s changes to the characters of Antony and Cleopatra could be read as his own

attempt to understand the connection between monarchy and humanity, between the belief in the monarch as the elevated and divine representative of order and hierarchy and the clearly human person who assumes this representation. By making the main characters, especially Cleopatra, more human, Garnier directs his audience to understand the tension that can develop between the public persona of the monarch and his/her private existence as a feeling individual. It is this tension which Pembroke utilizes in her translation of Garnier's text. It is the difference between the characterization of the lovers as presented in history and the characterization of the lovers of Garnier's text that makes the French playwright's text the most suitable for Pembroke's own purposes.

In his use of his sources, Garnier deletes the more negative implications of Cleopatra's behavior, especially from Dio Cassius. One example is the removal from his text of the various encounters between Cleopatra and Octavius after the death of Antony. In describing the differences between the works of Jodelle and Garnier, Lebègue notes that unlike the queen in Jodelle's play:

le Cléopâtre de Garnier ne reconte pas Octave. On peut regretter l'absence d'une scène qui eût produit un effet dramatique. Mais Garnier n'a pas voulu conserver la querelle entre Cléopâtre et Séleucus; alors que Jodelle l'avait mise en scène en renchérissant sur Plutarch, . . . en la rejetant, il a montré son souci des bienséances tragiques. En outre les discussions entre Cléopâtre et Octave risquaient de ternir l'image pathétique de l'amante et de la mère.

[Garnier's Cleopatra does not meet Octavius. One may regret the absence of a scene that could produce such a dramatic effect. But Garnier did not want to keep the quarrel between Cleopatra and Seleucus; whereas Jodelle has added to Plutarch's version in his production, . . . in rejecting it, he [Garnier] has shown his concern for tragic seemliness. Moreover the discussions between Cleopatra and Octavius risk tarnishing the moving picture of the lover and of the mother.] (211)

As Lebègue makes clear, Garnier's deliberate decision to omit the passages from Plutarch that could be seen to strengthen the view of Cléopâtre as something of a political adventurer is part of his rehabilitation of the queen's character. Another aspect of Garnier's Cléopâtre that emphasizes his more moderate view of the historic queen is the dramatic scene in which Cléopâtre says farewell to her children before her death. Again, Garnier's Cléopâtre differs from that of Jodelle since he "insiste beaucoup plus que ne l'avait fait Jodelle sur son amour maternal" [emphasizes more than Jodelle does on her motherly love] and "[l]es longs adieux qu'elle adresse à ses enfants, sont un des passages les plus émouvants de la pièce" [the long goodbyes with which she addresses her children, are some of the most moving passages in the piece] (Lebègue 215). Unlike his predecessor, Garnier emphasizes Cléopâtre's role as a mother, again making her more human, as well as more sympathetic, for the audience. The question remains, then, as to how these arguments for Garnier's *Marc Antoine* are connected to Pembroke's decision to translate his play.

In choosing Garnier's text for translation, Pembroke focussed her talent on a play that illuminates the conflicts between the monarch as ruler and the monarch as human. Furthermore, in *Antonius* Pembroke produces a text that complicates the issues of gender as they were traditionally represented by the figurations of Antony and Cleopatra. Pembroke's understanding of the early modern constructions surrounding gender and power are clearly evidenced in her decision to write *Antonius*. Specifically, her decision to use Garnier's *Marc Antoine* as a text for translation displays not only her interest in the larger issue of how private and public complicated the idea of monarchy and power, but also her investigation of how such a contrast is made even more complicated when the ruler in question is a woman. Garnier's far more positive characterization of Cléopâtre certainly would have captured the interest of any writer seeking to explore the cultural constructions of gender and power in the age of Elizabeth. Furthermore, his non-traditional presentation of Cléopâtre would have been even more intriguing to a woman like Pembroke who was connected by birth and marriage to the court of Elizabeth I. Indeed, the fate of her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, would have made the issue of gender and power even more poignant. This may have been one of the reasons for Pembroke's choice of *Marc Antoine* as a text for translation. While it seems almost a given that a woman like Pembroke would have been intrigued by Garnier's Cléopâtre, she may also have been captured by the characterization of Antony in the French text. While he nominally remains the "hero" of Garnier's play and redresses his faults as a ruler through taking his life, his speeches about who is responsible for this tragic fall,

when compared to Cleopatra's own speeches, create an Antony who not only exemplifies the worst traits of leadership, but also of gender. In particular, Pembroke may have considered the characterization of Antony's defeat to be a mirror of Sir Philip Sidney's own downfall. Like Antony, Sidney let his passions, his faith and his belief in the duties of the courtier, overrule his reason and his ability to understand the political negotiations and/or strategies of his monarch. This becomes apparent by reading the slight changes Pembroke makes to Garnier's text that construct Antony's love for and loyalty to Cleopatra as questionable and by writing an original "Argument" for the text to underscore the play's inversion of what attributes are masculine and feminine.

It is only recently that the political connection of Garnier's *Marc Antoine* and Pembroke's *Antonius* has evinced critical consideration and discussion. There are multiple reasons for this, including critical biases that locate the purposes of Pembroke's translation work as solely due to her "parroting" the causes, both literary and political, of her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. Yet, when one returns to the political context of Garnier's plays, especially those of his Roman trilogy (*Marc Antoine*, *Porcie*, and *Cornélie*), it seems very coincidental that the purpose for writing given by Garnier himself are those same religious wars for which Sidney gave his life. Pembroke's own allegiance to the same political/religious cause as her brother (as well as the rest of her family, including her own husband), can be read in her decision to translate the works of Philippe de Mornay, a French Huguenot, and Garnier. Indeed the friendship shared between de Mornay and Sidney was founded on their mutual

desire to see the end of Protestant persecution on the Continent. Interestingly one can note the direct connection that Garnier's play had with the politics in Elizabeth I's England. As was previously discussed, Garnier's text is directly linked not only to the religious strife in France, but also to the religious wars in the Low Countries through the relation of the text to Gaspard de Coligny's proposed campaign to help Dutch Protestants against Spanish rule (Jondorf 36-37). Alençon, Elizabeth's "little frog," revived Coligny's²⁴ military strategies in 1576, despite his Catholic status. For Alençon, a victory in the Low Countries would have helped his marriage negotiations with Elizabeth in two ways: first, it would have shown that despite his own religious beliefs, the Protestants in England, especially those of power who were most opposed to the match, could believe that he would not interfere in the religious affairs of the country, and, secondly, he could have possibly won his own crown making him a more equal match for England's queen.²⁵ However, while in all probability Garnier's political interest in fighting in the Low Countries had less to do with religious belief than a desire to see peace in France, his advocating the idea of participating in the religious conflict in the Netherlands can be related to Sir Philip Sidney.

Along with the more powerful members of his family, such as his uncle, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Sidney used his position to voice his support of the Continental Protestants. Elizabeth I, while aware of the need to placate her own nobles and secure her country and her reign from more militaristic foreign powers, including Spain and France, was not, herself, such an unequivocal advocate of the Protestant cause. Anne Somerset claims that the limited intercessions that her own

nobles won from her to fight for the Protestant cause in Europe had less to do with her own personal religious beliefs than her keen political sense. One example of the differing views between the queen and her staunchly Protestant nobles can be seen in the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. This horrific event outraged both Elizabeth I and her court, but the reasons for the outrage were somewhat different. The Queen's more militant Protestant nobles and advisors, such as Walsingham, argued that the event presaged a monumental threat to the physical and, especially, the spiritual security of England. Somerset notes that for Walsingham, the massacre was a sign "that Armageddon was on its way, and [he] assumed that the atrocities in France were merely the first phase of a holocaust that would sweep the whole of Europe" (348). However, the reasons for Elizabeth's outrage were slightly different from those of her Protestant courtiers. While they saw the tragedy in terms of the disaster it inflicted on the establishment of their faith in Europe, Elizabeth saw the political consequences that might follow for her rule and her country. She, therefore, supported the Protestant cause on the Continent to protect herself politically:

[t]he Queen had tried to safeguard her country through a partnership with France, but though neither party had officially repudiated the other [in the wake of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre], it would clearly be madness to regard the French as the most stalwart of allies. Since the friendship of France no longer provided her with a protective shield, Elizabeth now had to fall back on more makeshift forms of shelter, and because she could not rely on the

goodwill of either of the two major continental powers, her aim was to ensure that they were in no position to do her harm. The standard way of achieving this was to see to it that the Kings of France and Spain were too distracted by unrest within their own dominions to think of becoming involved in action against her, and in these circumstances the Queen acknowledged that it was sometimes in her interest to give discreet assistance to the Protestant resistance movements that had sprung up in their realms. (Somerset 350-51)

Elizabeth's position did not please her more outspoken Protestant advisors, such as Walsingham and Leicester (Somerset 351-54), who wished for her full support to the Protestant cause. Sir Philip Sidney, the future son-in-law of Walsingham and the nephew of Leicester, most likely would have had the same perspective towards Elizabeth's moderate religious policies. Despite his position as the first-born son of the Sidney-Dudley alliance, Sidney's outspoken defense and passion in promotion of the Protestant cause at home and abroad led to his less than glorious career as a courtier. In particular, one incident seemed to seal the fate of Sidney's political/courtly ambitions, and that was the letter he wrote to Elizabeth I regarding her marriage negotiations with Francis, Duke of Alençon (later Duke of Anjou). According to Margaret Hannay, Sidney was the candidate chosen to write the letter "dissuading Elizabeth" (*Phoenix* 46) from marrying the French and, perhaps more importantly, Catholic prince. The letter and its contents were not well received by the queen and there were far-reaching consequences due to the strong stand that Sir

Philip Sidney, as the representative of the Protestant cause in England, had taken with regards to the Alençon marriage:

[while] Elizabeth did not marry her “little frog,” Alençon, . . . she never favored the members of the Dudley/Sidney alliance as she once had. Perhaps it was for personal reasons: she was violently jealous because Leicester had married her cousin Lettice. Perhaps it was for political reasons: Burghley counseled moderation, urging her to stay out of Continental religious wars.

(Hannay *Phoenix* 46)

As Hannay notes, Sidney’s letter gave Elizabeth an unwanted “reminder that she was irrevocably tied to the Protestant cause” (*Phoenix* 46). It was Sidney’s vocal and unwavering support of his faith that was largely responsible for his own failure to become an influential power in the court of Elizabeth I. The letter that brought him into disfavour with Elizabeth is the symbol that represents the reason why Sidney never reached the potential expected of him by his family and those at court. For the Queen:

Philip’s part in presenting the radical Protestants’ arguments against the Alençon marriage, which he put before the queen in his celebrated letter of August, 1579, seems by its boldness to have suggested a certain hot-headed naiveté that identified him in Burghley’s and the queen’s minds with the forces of intemperate extremism. Following this frustration . . . Philip retired into voluntary rustication at Wilton. (Hay 38)

The importance of the letter is its demonstration of Sidney's own view of himself. Although he did not have the close personal relationship with Elizabeth that other courtiers had (as did his uncle) or a strong, viable position in the court, he felt that he was influential enough to author a letter that bluntly told his queen what her responsibilities were.²⁶ Perhaps it was this seeming arrogance that further caused Elizabeth to dislike and distrust Sidney.

Considering his intemperate behavior with regards to Elizabeth, one might wonder how Sir Philip Sidney came to be seen as the "ideal" of the courtier in Renaissance England. Sidney's fame as "rare a iewell of vertue and courtesie" (Hannay *Phoenix* 58) can be largely attributed to the value of the literary works he left behind as well as to his death fighting for the cause about which he was so passionate.²⁷ However, during his life, Sidney's excessive belief in his own political and personal value led to him remaining on the margins, so to speak, of Elizabeth I's court. When modern critics do look to *Antoni*us for a contemporary political theme, the usual connection drawn between Garnier and Pembroke is based on the idea that both were invested in making a commentary on the religious strife between the Catholics and Protestants on the Continent and the implications such conflict had for England. Yet, it is very difficult, given the positive portrayal of Cleopatra, to see *Antoni*us as a reprimand to Elizabeth I and her policies of religious moderation. Perhaps the text that best suggests Pembroke's own loyalty to the political and religious ideologies of her family it is the 1599 presentation copy of *Psalms* intended for the Queen's 1599 visit to Wilton (Hannay *Phoenix* 84; Lamb 115). Margaret

Hannay clearly views Pembroke's decision to give the queen a copy of the *Psalms*, a combined work of Sir Philip Sidney and herself, as a political and religious statement.²⁸ The only point on which Hannay's argument may falter is whether or not Elizabeth actually received Pembroke's presentation copy. In an endnote concerning the dating of the presentation copy of the *Psalms* for the 1599 visit of the queen, Hannay remarks that "[a]lthough the visit was cancelled, Elizabeth did visit Penshurst" but since "[the Earl of] Pembroke was dying, . . . the countess was with him rather than with her brother Robert and the queen" (*Phoenix Note* 3 240). This raises the speculation that the copy was never presented to the queen and, hence, the political message it constructs was never delivered. Yet, even if Pembroke did not give the copy to the queen, the fact that she created it argues for her involvement in and awareness of the politics of the period. Indeed, the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that Elizabeth ever received Pembroke's "message" suggests an even keener awareness of the politics of her age. Considering that Pembroke was a first-hand witness of the disastrous consequences that befell a courtier (namely, her brother, Philip) who used his rhetorical talent to criticize Elizabeth I (specifically, the Alençon letter), it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that she withheld the presentation copy due to concerns about how her monarch would react to such statements. Considering the timing of the 1599 visit, one could suggest that Pembroke withdrew her gift of the *Psalms* to Elizabeth because of the possible negative consequences that such a gift might have had. With the death of her powerful husband, Henry Herbert, Pembroke would be left on her own to manage the estate of

the Earl for her son who was still in his minority. Perhaps she felt that antagonizing Elizabeth, even in the least, at a time when she might need the Queen's favour would be detrimental not only to herself but to her son and the power of the Herbert name. Unlike her brother, Philip, Pembroke may have understood that sometimes one must sacrifice one's emotional reactions to maintain one's social/political power.

That Pembroke understood the web of relationships whose lines intersected in Elizabethan politics is also clear in her letters. Of the sixteen letters known to have been written by or for Pembroke contained in *The Collected Works*, seven are described as being sealed with the "Sidney pheon" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 285-98). In fact, all of the letters carrying this seal were written to those with power in the court of Elizabeth I to whom Pembroke was not immediately related by blood or marriage.²⁹ Letter IX (1601) is addressed to Queen Elizabeth I, and in it Pembroke thanks the queen for inviting her son, William, to her court. The majority of the letter contains statements of seemingly required effusive praise and gratitude towards the queen, but also there is some wording that illuminates Pembroke's own knowledge and use of the "fashioning" of the self. In thanking the queen, Pembroke also asks Elizabeth "to fasshen fitt" William "to live in yowr sight, to add and supply whatsoever want or defect may be in him" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 291). Furthermore, from her own memory of her time at Elizabeth's court, Pembroke recalls the lessons on self-presentation and courtly behavior that "my selfe was grased by the same heavenly grace, the same sunn which evermore hath powre to perfit the greatest imperfection by the rarest example of all perfection" (Hannay, Kinnamon and

Brennan 291). Although Pembroke's letter to the queen seems overly sycophantic, her allusions to the idea of both herself and her son being *fashioned* by the court is indicative of her awareness of the constructions of self employed by the powerful of the period, and it also shows her understanding of what type of address may have gained Elizabeth's favour. Letters VII (August 1597) and X (August 1602) are both addressed to Sir Robert Cecil and both deal with maintaining the family power with which Pembroke was entrusted after the death of her husband. In the first letter Pembroke thanks Cecil for his "great kindnes to" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 289) her son, William, who was then at court. The second letter touches upon a slightly more serious matter. In this letter, Pembroke requests the assistance of Cecil in helping her with "her administrative problems in Cardiff, as the town attempted to throw off the seigneurial hold of the Earls of Pembroke" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 349). Pembroke asks for Cecil's continuing support of her administration and proprietorship of the land she inherited from her husband. The land being discussed in particular is "the castle and borough of Cardiff in satisfaction of her dower, held in trust for her son William and his male heir" (Hannay *Phoenix* 178) with which she is having problems since, as a woman, she "was vulnerable to revolt against her authority" (*Phoenix* 178). Like the letter to Elizabeth I, Pembroke uses specific phrasing to indicate her gratitude and thanks for Cecil's intercession. She opens her letter with statements indicating her inability to express fully her gratitude for Cecil or her ability to:

make any retorne unto yow worthey of yow; but that this blanke may wittnes what I woold had I powre to expres more then words can. A mynd more then thankefull, and a thankefullness answerable to that mynd which thus in paper forme (since otherwise it can not present the willing desire to pay the debtt it owes) doth onely apeere before yow. (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 292)

However, while Pembroke, in her letter to Elizabeth, rhetorically places herself appropriately in the typical subservient position of a loyal subject addressing a monarch who has granted him/her a favour that he/she claims is beyond deserving, in her letter to Cecil she employs a different strategy and emphasizes her own feminine weakness. She fashions herself as the frail woman who appreciates the “frendly favore; the honor, . . . queit [sic], and strengthe you have given me” (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 292). She also alludes to her apparently weak feminine qualities by claiming that it “might seeme strange to me to have to contest with such [those who are rebelling], in such a kind [in open and public dispute] before yow” (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 292) in which she tries to claim Cecil’s sympathy by alluding to her awkward position of being a woman who has to fight a public battle on behalf of her family; a role categorized as masculine. This posture of Pembroke’s (and there is evidence that she is posturing), as a woman placed by circumstances in a public and political situation that women were supposed to avoid, is emphasized by her statement that she is “nevertheless so exceedingly grased [by Cecil’s support] as that the want of thos frends of myne long since lost hath bin with full effectuall care and most praise worthey merrit in yor selfe to the uttermost

supplied” (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 292). Here Pembroke thanks Cecil for his “masculine” support:

[s]ince [by] 1586 she had lost most of the male relatives who had served as her ‘friends’ at court: her brothers Philip and Thomas; her uncles Leicester, Warwick, and Huntingdon; her brother-in-law Sir Edward Herbert; and, just eighteen months earlier, her husband. By 1602 her only close male relatives living were her brother Robert, in Flushing, and her young sons, none of whom were in a position to be of help at court. (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 349)

In her letter to Cecil, Pembroke rhetorically places herself in the position of a woman, who through no fault of her own, has lost all the males in her life who would have been responsible for taking care of the public business of the family, especially business that required legal procedures and power in the courts. Noticeably, along with her presentation of herself as the weaker woman, she positions Cecil as the powerful male who both understands her predicament (a private woman faced with public disputes over her authority as a noble and a landowner) and who replaces the masculine support on which, otherwise, she would have depended. The allusion to her missing “friends” also acts as a reminder to Cecil of her own powerful family heritage and name. This works as a double strategy by equating Cecil (as surrogate male relative) with some of the most revered and powerful men of Elizabeth’s court while at the same time implying that by helping her, he may be helping his own career. In this letter, Pembroke clearly alludes to her own family name and connections and her

use of the seal bearing the Sidney pheon has the same effect. By reminding her correspondents of her family heritage, by using a seal with a part of the Sidney arms, Pembroke amalgamates the power of the family into which she was born with the power of the family into which she married. Her use of the double seal on the letters to Elizabeth and Cecil could suggest the importance of the letters and her own willingness to remind the still powerful in court of those families. This is evidenced once again by the last letter contained in *The Collected Works*. Letter XVI (July 1607) to Robert Cecil is “[s]ealed twice with the countess’s own device, two intersecting pheons crossed with an H to form the initials MH” (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 297). In this letter to Cecil, Pembroke is repeating an earlier request that she be given the wardship of John Jennings (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 352).³⁰ The fact that Pembroke created her own seal after she lost her title as Countess of Pembroke (although, of course, she could and did refer to herself as the Dowager Countess of Pembroke) indicates her own carefully considered and planned construction of both her public and private identities. Indeed, Pembroke’s cultivation of an identity of her own relies on her ability to emphasize how she, as an individual, represents herself as the first branch of the grafting of the Dudley-Sidney and Herbert family trees. Like the creation of her seal, Pembroke used her family connections as a means of fashioning herself as a writer. Her deliberate deployment of the “Sidney pheon” in connection with the public voice of her letters provides the same balancing of public and private that she constructs in her presentation of herself as a virtuous woman writer in an age where such a being was basically considered a moral

anathema. It also illustrates that Pembroke was aware of, on a personal level, the careful power negotiations that early modern women had to employ to secure themselves. Her own use of such strategies perhaps gave her a better understanding of her monarch, Elizabeth Tudor, than that of her male relatives.

Court politics, perhaps at any time, could be treacherous and difficult to comprehend. The various negotiations of courtiers to attain place and power were often convoluted and illustrated a balance between confidence and subservience. One had to be sure enough of oneself to impress the monarch, but also clearly willing to allow oneself to be ruled by another. Such negotiations were even more difficult when dealing with an unmarried queen since all definitions of positive power in the Renaissance were masculine. Elizabeth's fostering of a culture of the courtly lover wooing the queen mistress made such a balancing act more precarious as illustrating passion was a necessary ingredient for any successful courtier's career; a condition that could lead to political disaster. Antony represents the man of power who loses everything because of his inability to control his passions, and Pembroke had a personal and a pertinent example of a courtier who lost favour in the Queen's eyes by allowing his emotions to run rampant, her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. The failure of Sidney to fully realize the power and position of an influential courtier in the court of Elizabeth I was largely predicated on his inability to control his emotions and, perhaps more importantly, his tongue. The letter written against the Alençon match was only one of the political missteps in Sidney's career as a courtier. Other incidents that may show Elizabeth's suspicions of Sidney's loyalty to her included Sidney's

attempt to join Francis Drake on his voyage against the Spanish in September 1585,³¹ and his very public quarrel on a tennis court with Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The argument between these courtiers almost led to a duel which “was avoided only by the Queen’s order” (Osborn 504). This incident illustrates Sidney’s seeming inability to recognize the limitations of his own political stature. Elizabeth responded to Sidney’s seeming indifference to the protocols of rank by reminding him that despite his birth, education, and alliances, he was not equal to de Vere, a titled member of the aristocracy. In his account of this reprimand, James Osborn claims that although the Earl of Oxford was “spoiled and conceited,” Elizabeth’s speech to Sidney stressed “that he and De Vere were of different rank and that inferiors owe respect to their superiors” (504). The Queen’s decision to remind Sidney about his “inferior” position at court may illustrate why Elizabeth held a more negative opinion of him than would seem appropriate. In the incident with Oxford, Sidney’s behavior shows a disrespectful arrogance towards the degrees of aristocracy that were part and parcel of political life in the early modern period. His emotional response to de Vere’s order could have been seen as the response of a man who thought his own personal worth was high enough to allow him to rebel against the strictures of protocol.³² Alan Stewart claims Sidney’s response to Elizabeth’s reminder was evidence of a man who “was unrepentant” (*Philip Sidney* 217-8). Yet, one could say that the “self-exile” from the court which Sidney imposed upon himself during the majority of 1580 may have allowed him to consider, at least superficially, the advice that was given to him by Elizabeth. Considering his family connections and his

personal knowledge of how the court of Elizabeth worked, it seems slightly odd that Sir Philip Sidney did not seem fully aware of the convoluted maneuvers which both his father, Henry Sidney, and his uncle, Robert Dudley, performed when dealing with the queen. Just as she was known for her intelligence, beauty, and ready wit, Elizabeth was also known for her short temper and her quick, often volatile, response to those who questioned her ability as a monarch. This is not to say that the Queen was incapable of accepting the opinions and advice of her chosen counsellors; her relationship with and reliance on Burghley certainly gives evidence of Elizabeth's willingness to listen to those who served her. James Osborne argues it was, in fact, the sterling qualities of the courtier for which Philip Sidney was celebrated which made his life in the "sycophantic court of Elizabeth" (500) so difficult:

[h]e was too direct and uncompromising in written argument (and doubtless also in speech) to avoid causing occasional resentment. Philip was the glass of fashion and the mould of form at court, but he lacked the agility, adaptability, and capacity to accept what was possible in place of what was desirable, qualities necessary for continuing success in court politics. Duplicity, the standard practice at court, was not one of Sidney's skills. As an administrator his ambitions exceeded his means to attain them. His extensive travels, linguistic skills, and friendships with learned foreign diplomats did not gain him a foothold in the councils of state. Here he had several other handicaps: he was too young for a major appointment, he had overestimated the

possibilities of a Protestant League, and Elizabeth had somehow acquired the opinion that he was too ambitious. (500)

While Osborne gives no reason for how or why the queen had “acquired the opinion that” Sidney “was too ambitious,” one could surmise that his family connections, especially his status as Robert Dudley’s nephew, had coloured Elizabeth’s perception of any member of the Sidney-Dudley alliance. After all, even with the active support of Essex, who was at the height of his ascendancy within the court, the Queen refused to grant Sir Philip Sidney’s younger brother, Robert, the post of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports (Somerset 649; Neale 344).

Pembroke was a woman who was fully aware of the dangers of flouting social conventions, especially the social ideology of appropriate gender behavior, and she was also a woman who was acutely aware of the machinations of power. Pembroke’s position as a noble woman who had to negotiate her own use of power, may have made her more conscious of the political strategies of Elizabeth I. The difficulty of courtiers like Sidney springs largely from the anomalous power hierarchy that was created by a female monarch who remained a single woman. Not only was the acceptance of such a power structure difficult due to the cultural constructions of gender that disallowed women power, but also due to the fact that there were no traditional or ideological methods to reconcile the idea of a woman holding power over men. Pembroke’s awareness of this cultural dilemma may have led to her choice of a text that itself creates complex gender negotiations that highlight concerns about the threat to national and political stability created by male courtiers unable to fully

submit to a woman's rule. The cultural anxiety that created such a divided response to female rule was grounded in the general characteristics attributed to women by cultural constructions; they were weak, illogical, unreasonable, emotional, and prone to excess. The favorable traits of the feminine gender (such as chastity, silence, self-sacrifice, piety) were largely connected to the private sphere and, in particular, to their duties as wives and mothers. As Karen Raber argues, treatises about power during the time of Elizabeth:

qualify the reign of a female monarch in terms that later political thinkers would adapt to argue explicitly for constraints on absolutism. This situation is the direct product of Elizabeth's sex. Because she is a woman, arguments justifying her authority and right to claim her subjects' obedience can be based on many things, but not on her bodily identity. The sex of her physical person might aid Elizabeth in controlling the desires of her ambitious courtiers or in channeling the devotion of her people, but these uses only affirmed the interdependence of monarch and subject, the mutual reliance and love required for England to prosper under this female prince. (96-97)

Actually, historical and cultural examples of what occurred when a woman ruled over men were usually overtly negative (including the figure of Cleopatra). Given the fact that female leadership was generally considered an anathema during the Renaissance, male courtiers had no adequate models of behavior to follow when attempting to understand Elizabeth. While they understood the power fictions that the Queen herself created, they were unable to fully divest themselves of the masculine idea of

monarchy that called for the complete submission of the subject to the ruler. This certainly seems to have been the case with Sir Philip Sidney. This inability of male courtiers to fully endorse and submit themselves to a female ruler as they would to a male monarch perhaps suggests another reason for Pembroke's choice of Garnier's text. Raber claims that *Antonius* constructs two versions of rule, masculine and feminine, based along marital lines. In this reading, Octavius represents masculine rule that "promises to internalize all, including that which should be other" (Raber 93). In Raber's view, the characterization of Octavius promotes "an unequal partnership, in which the new absolute monarch's tyrannical potential is expressed through the unequal human bond, either sexual or marital" (91). Antony is also, to some extent, complicit in the devouring nature of masculine rule. Antony's overwhelming sensual desires equal Octavius's overwhelming need to place everyone and everything under his control. In *Antonius*, the "[t]raditional images of king as husband or father to a feminized, subordinate nation backfire . . . to produce instead the instability of uncontested masculine will" (Raber 91). Furthermore, Raber suggests that Pembroke's play condemns the idea of absolute monarchy through presenting such a power scheme as ravenous and debilitating because if

tyrannical rule in Caesar's style leads to the dismantling of gender difference, making effeminacy internal to the monarchy, good rule, the play hints, may paradoxically require a more "womanly" relationship between monarch and state, a relationship based on the structures of self-abnegation and even

selflessness that are traditionally associated with a woman's place in marriage.

(92-93)

While Raber's argument concentrates on Pembroke's play as a commentary between absolute and limited monarchy, it also illustrates Pembroke's recognition of the problematic nature of feminine power for the men of the early modern period. Certainly the scarcity of positive female models of rule is the basis for several of Elizabeth's constructions of her princely authority. She is the wife/mother of England who would sacrifice herself for her people. In translating Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, Pembroke chose a text that not only creates a more positive paradigm of a female ruler, but also a text that creates a negative paradigm of the masculine response to such a ruler. This is most apparent when one compares the characterizations of Antony and Cleopatra.

While Garnier's reformation of Cleopatra's character would have been an important motive for Pembroke's choice of his play as a text for translation, it could also be argued that her choice was equally affected by the characterization of Antony. Antony is shown in the play to be an indecisive character ruled by his passions and unable to take any true personal responsibility for what has happened. This is especially apparent when one contrasts the appearances and speeches of Antony with those of Cleopatra. Antony's introductory speech in the play clearly shows his own perception of who is to blame for his downfall: first he blames the "cruell Heav'ns" then all of the gods of men, and, finally, and most importantly, Cleopatra the "Idoll of my hart" for whom he has "forgone/ my Country, Caesar unto warre provok'd/ (For

just revenge of Sisters wrong my wife)" (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan lines 9-10).³³ More than this he considers his love for Cleopatra in the same light as other patriarchal Romans, as a curse and a bewitchment, "For love of her, in her allurements caught/ Abandon'd life, I honor have despise,/ Disdain'd my freends, and of stately Rome/ Despoilde the Empire of her best attire" (12-25). Here it is interesting to recall the scene from Sidney's *Arcadia* between Musidorus and Pyrocles as Zelmane. Antony's speech about his downfall recalls the same type of argument that Musidorus levels at Pyrocles when he discovers his friend disguised as the Amazon Zelmane, namely, that a man ruled by his love for a woman forsakes or loses all those traits which make him a man including honour, respect, power, and statesmanship. Like Musidorus's claim that Pyrocles's feminine disguise will undo all the good he has accomplished in the masculine world of public perception, Antony lists Cleopatra and his love for her as the prime reasons for his loss of social position, honour, friends, and Rome itself. Like Musidorus's accusation, Antony claims that his love for Cleopatra will and has caused him to lose all that he had gained when he was fully "masculine," a claim he cannot now make since he is "in her allurements caught."³⁴ As was argued in chapter one, the destructiveness of Cleopatra's sexuality on masculine power is an essential part of the constructions of gender roles and national identities found in the source story. Cleopatra is the "Other" because she is Egyptian, but also, perhaps more importantly, because she is a woman. In many ways identifying Cleopatra as a seductress who uses her femininity to ensnare men is more important than her identity as a foreigner. It is her ability to rob men of their reason,

an ability centered in her female sexuality, that is the most threatening aspect of her personality. For Danielle Clarke, *Antonius* presents the disruptiveness of sexuality to order and rule and, in particular, she claims that “[s]exual passion is throughout [the play] closely allied to the feminine, conforming to some of the most deeply held convictions of Early Modern society regarding the incompatibility of rule and passion, regiment and femininity” (157). Like the Romans who war against him, including Octavius, Antony points to Cleopatra’s overpowering sensuality as the cause for his downfall as he claims that:

Since that day

Thy old good hap did far from thee retire,

Thy virtue dead, thy glory made alive

So oft by martial deeds is now gone in smoke.

Since then the bays, so well thy forehead knew,

To Venus’ myrtles yielded have their place;

(63-68)

Cleopatra has drowned Antony’s ability to make rational decisions by arousing in him passions that cannot be satiated. Cleopatra’s identity as a woman of power who uses her femininity to win even more power is the basis of Antony’s claim that he is not responsible for his own actions. Again this is emphasized with the damaging condemnation of Cleopatra, “O cruell, traitres, woman most unkinde,/ Thou dost, foresworne, my love and life betraie:/ And givs’t me up to ragefull enemye,/ Which soone (ô foole!) will plague thy perjurye” (18-21). The terms that Antony uses in this

speech recall or construct Cleopatra in her traditional role as a negative example of feminine behavior. She is a “cruell traitres” and a “woman most unkinde” who is apparently incapable of the masculine virtue of loyalty and so, a woman who will “my love and life betraie” and “giv’st me up to ragefull enemy” for her own benefit. Antony’s belief that Cleopatra will betray him to Octavius for her own personal gain must be read in the context of how he perceives his lover. He blames the enormity of her love for his downfall. In this he parallels his Roman counterpart, Octavius, who declared war not against Antony, but against Cleopatra who has enchanted her lover. Hence, rather than pity the honourable man who had been beset by misfortune, the reader can contextualize Antony’s complaints and accusations in reference to his continuing belief in the same power structure as Octavius; that is, Antony’s speeches about his enchantment/subjugation to Cleopatra illustrate his own belief in the masculine rule of Rome that opposes the feminine rule that the Egyptian queen represents. This reading is underscored by Antony’s own reference to his wife Octavia. Once he returns empty-handed from the Parthian campaign, Antony gives a brief description of his position:

Returned loe, dishonoured, despise,
 In wanton love a woman thee misleades,
 Sunke in foule sinke: meane while respecting nought
 Thy wife Octavia and her tender babes,
 Of whom the long contempt against thee whets,

The sword of Caesar now thy Lord become.

(120-25)

Antony's reference to Octavia emphasizes the opposing political systems of Rome and Egypt. Octavia, in the classical sources as well as in the gender figurations of the early modern period, represents the ideal or positive example of femininity. She is the woman who is subservient to and supportive of masculine rule. Antony's belated recognition of Octavia's worth is tied to his downfall due to his enthrallment to Cleopatra, and, since Cleopatra represents the negative example of a dominating female, such a comparison reveals Antony's support of masculine rule. Indeed, in all the appearances of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*, he never retracts his harsh judgement of Cleopatra. His eventual claim of true and loyal love for the Egyptian queen is pronounced not by Antony but by Dircetus in act four who relates Antony's suicide to Octavius. It is only by the second-hand report of the messenger that the reader hears Antony's love for Cleopatra framed in positive terms, "My Queene, my heart, the grief that now I feele,/Is not that I your eies, my Sunne do loose,/ For soone againe one Tombe shal us conjoyne" (1610-13). This true declaration of love, brief as it is, leaves the reader with the sense that Antony's loyalty to Cleopatra is somewhat questionable. Rather than the great man who has willingly and happily sacrificed everything for love, in *Antony and Cleopatra* one sees an Antony who constantly bemoans his fate and regrets his relationship with Cleopatra because of what it has cost him as a ruler and a man: his honour, his position, his military prowess, and his identity as a respectable Roman.

Antony's lack of loyalty to his lover is also evidenced by the numerous times that he states his plan to kill himself prior to his learning of Cleopatra's suicide. Indeed, in the last appearance in the play Antony once again reiterates his decision to die, not for love, but in order to escape this love and reclaim some small part of what he has lost:

Die, die I must: I must a noble death,
 A glorious death unto my succor call:
 I must deface the shame of time abus'd,
 I must adorne the wanton loves I us'de
 With some couragious act: that my last daie
 By mine owne hand my spotts may wash away.

(1249-54)

It is interesting to note that in his final speech, Antony never once refers to Cleopatra in a positive manner, but only in terms that are negative. His plan of suicide is based on his wish to "deface the shame" of the time he wasted in his "wanton loves;" that is, he plans to kill himself not so he can be with Cleopatra, but to eradicate what he now seems to consider his mistaken love and loyalty to her. The negative connotation that Antony places on his love for Cleopatra in his last speech is largely constructed through his obvious desire to return to Roman rule and rules. In his last speech, Antony degrades his love for Cleopatra as the "spotts" he must wash away to regain his Roman, and masculine, honour. Until his last words are reported by Dircertes, Antony blames his bewitchment and enchantment at the hands of Cleopatra for his

downfall; that is, he blames his subjugation to Cleopatra, the representative of female rule, for his loss of masculine honour. The responsibility he does accept is limited since he only seems to take responsibility in so far as he is unable to break Cleopatra's power. Antony's condemnation of Cleopatra is his condemnation of feminine rule. His constant complaint that his life would have been better had he stayed true to Roman, masculine rule emphasizes this. Clarke notes that the play's "representation of Antony posits female power as threatening and transgressive, and female power as shattering the proper exercise of politics" (158). From Pembroke's perspective, such a characterization of Antony may have been intriguing because it illustrates what happens when a man is unable to understand or remain loyal to a powerful female on both a private and a public level. Antony's railing against Cleopatra could be equated to the complaints that many of the male courtiers had against Elizabeth I, especially those male courtiers, like Sir Philip Sidney, who wished their monarch to take a more active role in the Protestant causes of the Continent. It seems plausible to suggest that, like Antony, they felt betrayed by the woman who ruled them. Also, like Antony, their failure to establish a strong Protestant faith on the Continent only strengthened their desire to return to what they saw to be a more normative and understandable form of power—masculine rule. This idea is enhanced when one compares Cleopatra's appearances and speeches to those of Antony.

Antony's speeches concentrate on his loss of status, power, and masculine achievement. In comparison, Cleopatra's speeches concentrate on her unwavering

love for and loyalty to Antony. Rather than the partial responsibility that Antony accepts, Cleopatra's first speech illustrates her complete acceptance of responsibility for what has happened. When Eras questions Cleopatra's culpability in Antony's fall, the queen responds that "I am sole cause: I did it, only I" (455). She furthermore notes, but never blames Antony for, the losses she has sustained. For Cleopatra, her love for Antony is "More deare than Scepter, children, freedome, light" (417). Indeed the only complaint that Cleopatra seems to have in her first appearance in the play is that Antony would think her capable of betraying him:

That I have thee betraid, deare, Antonie,
 My life, my soule, my Sunne? I had such thought?
 That I have thee betraid my Lord, my King?
 That I would breake vowed faith to thee?
 Leave thee? deceive thee? yeelde thee to the rage
 Of mightie foe? I ever had that hart?
 (394-99)

With this first speech, Cleopatra not only answers Antony's questions about her loyalty, but she also illustrates that she is aware of Antony's own lack of understanding. The numerous rhetorical questions show Cleopatra's realization that Antony does not understand her or the depth of her love for him. He does not see or feel the absolute loyalty that Cleopatra has for him. Despite this, she takes full responsibility for their combined defeat, and, specifically, she relates to the audience that her fear that Antony would return to Octavia was the reason for her insistence

that she join him for the Battle of Actium. Cleopatra claims in retrospect that had she not “taken Seas with him” but had remained behind a “fearfull woman farre/ From common hazard of the doubtfull war” (461-63), Antony’s defeat at the hands of Octavius might not have occurred. In calling herself a “fearfull woman,” Cleopatra refers not only to the possible hardships of military engagement, but also to the fear that by being absent, Antony might have been persuaded through the efforts of Octavia (as he was before) to rejoin Octavius. Because of her love for Antony, Cleopatra claims that she was unable to risk losing him:

But I car’d not; so was my soule possest,
 (To my great harme) with burning jealousie:
 Fearing least in my absence Antony
 Should leaving me retake Octavia.
 (470-74)

Rather than regret her actual love for Antony, she regrets that her insecurity has cost Antony his victory. This speech is also intriguing for the implications that it holds for a comparison between masculine and feminine rule. While Cleopatra is remorseful of the jealousy and fear that causes Antony’s defeat at Actium, her actions in making sure she accompanied him are based on her realization that Antony’s loyalty and love for her could be swayed back to Octavia. If one reads Cleopatra as representative of feminine rule and Octavia as representative of the properly submissive female of masculine rule, then Cleopatra’s fear that Antony may betray her is not only personal but also political. She fears he will deny her feminine power to regain his masculine

power. Cleopatra's fear of Antony's betrayal of her for another woman is perhaps the clearest point in the play where one could see Cleopatra as a representation of Elizabeth and a somewhat negative representation at that.

Many critics point to Elizabeth's own fear of being betrayed by her courtiers, especially her male courtiers, as part of the reason for her obsessive concern with their personal lives. Elizabeth's active, sometimes extremely intrusive, role in the marriage plans of her nobility and peers could be seen as simply womanly pique. However, one could also view the Queen's interest as strongly political since marriages among the peers of her court were usually political strategies; marriages were made for political alliances and to consolidate power. When her nobles and courtiers married without her permission, the Queen displayed a certain amount of mistrust as to why she was not informed of the potential marriages. Pembroke had two familial examples of male courtiers who angered Elizabeth by marrying without her knowledge or her approval: her uncle, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and, her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. The consequences of marrying without the Queen's approval were far more severe for Sidney than his uncle, likely as Sidney had far less influence and power than Dudley did. When marriage negotiations were commenced between Sir Philip Sidney and Frances Walsingham, the daughter of one of Elizabeth's most trusted advisors, the Queen reacted rather negatively. John Osborne claims that the marriage negotiations were impeded when the Queen "raised the petty objection that she had not been consulted before the marriage plans were announced," and that Elizabeth was pacified only when the "long-suffering" Walsingham wrote "a

letter of humble apology” claiming that he did not consider his daughter and Sidney to be “high enough in rank to be worthy of asking the Queen’s permission” (309-10). Elizabeth relented but “she did so rather rudely, exhibiting the captious attitude she had developed towards the Sidneys” (Osborn 310). Yet, Elizabeth’s seemingly obsessive interest in the marriage negotiations of her nobles and peers points to a political rather than exclusively private motivation. She rightly viewed the danger that could arise when two powerful and noble families were aligned in a political purpose that stood outside what Elizabeth considered the best interests of her country and, perhaps more importantly, her power to rule. Elizabeth’s anger at the proposed match of Philip and Frances stemmed from her recognition that the marriage would further cement the alliance of Walsingham and Leicester, and the Queen’s:

displeasure is hinted at in a letter to Mary, Queen of Scots, prompted by the French ambassador in London, Castelnau. The writer hinted that he hoped to persuade Philip Sidney to become a good servant of the Scottish queen, because Walsingham and Leicester had incurred great ‘*jalousie a ceste Reyne*’ because of their marriage negotiations for Philip. Even now, it seems, Elizabeth worried about power pacts among her chief counsellors, and Walsingham and Leicester were two of the greatest of all. What Philip’s marriage to Frances brought about, at least in the eyes of outsiders, was a tightening of links between Walsingham and Leicester: despite the Protestant credentials of these two, they might be provoked into seeking a new sovereign if Elizabeth remained obstructive. (Stewart *Philip Sidney* 250-51)

Once it was celebrated, this marriage forged a link between the majority of powerful men who were strong advocates of the establishment of the Protestant faith in Europe and perhaps suggests that the Queen saw the alliance as a political risk to her power and her policies of religious non-intervention.

Elizabeth's anger and interference with reference to the Sidney-Walsingham match seems fairly inappropriate given the social rank of the couple involved. But given Elizabeth's unique position as a woman who was also a monarch, such fear seems almost reasonable. The Queen's desire to be kept informed about which courtiers were to be married and to whom may have been motivated as much by politics as it was by personal emotion. Indeed, Elizabeth's political intelligence was acute enough to recognize the difficulties that the men of her court would have in bridging the gap between her gender and her authority. Her elaborate constructions of herself as both female and male attest to this recognition. However, like Cleopatra, Elizabeth never felt secure with relation to her crown. Like her male courtiers, Elizabeth would have been keenly aware of the lack of models for subservience to a female monarch and the anxiety this would cause for subjects who conceived of monarchy as masculine not feminine. In this sense, Cleopatra's fear that Antony would betray her for a woman who was symbolic of both a cultural feminine ideal and a masculine power hierarchy can be linked to Elizabeth's own fear that those men in her court upon whom she depended would eventually betray her and replace her with someone who was more representative of traditional and masculine authority. Therefore, while one could take Cleopatra's admittance of sole responsibility for

Antony's defeat as a censure of Elizabeth's own failure to fully and clearly support the Protestant cause in the Lowlands, one must also take into consideration the reasons for Cleopatra's supposed betrayal of her lover. Cleopatra's fear that Antony would leave her to return to Roman ways could be equated with Elizabeth's own fear that one of her male courtiers would leave her to support another candidate for the English throne, a candidate who would almost certainly have been male. The fact that Cleopatra is clearly aware of the precarious nature of Antony's loyalty to her enhances such a reading. Like Cleopatra, Elizabeth was fully aware that although her powerful male courtiers were ostensibly loyal to her, she also knew that her gender made absolute loyalty untenable or, at the least, uncomfortable, for many of her male subjects. So although one could certainly read Pembroke's *Antonius* as a criticism of Elizabeth's failure to support the Protestant cause as a case of womanly fear, one could also read Cleopatra's acceptance of responsibility and her justification for her actions as being legitimate reasons for Elizabeth's own behavior. Since Cleopatra claims that her involvement at the disastrous Battle of Actium is due to her insecurity with regards to Antony's loyalty to her, Cleopatra's "betrayal" of her lover is equally his fault; if she had not felt he would return to Octavia, Cleopatra would not have insisted upon being there. In this sense, reading Cleopatra as a representation of Elizabeth, the Queen's seemingly suspicious and controlling nature could be viewed as stemming from her recognition that she could not please all of the factions of her court no matter what her decision and that her full support of the Protestant cause could have called down the wrath of other European monarchs, such as Spain's

Charles I, to the detriment of England. This positive reading of Elizabeth as Cleopatra is further emphasized by how Pembroke highlights the relationship of the lovers through the idea of marriage.

Within the two main sources for the Antony and Cleopatra story, it is made clear that Antony renounces his legitimate wife, Octavia, to solidify his relationship to Cleopatra. While Antony's behavior in the source material is governed by his obviously sensual nature, his actual love for Cleopatra on an emotional level is also clear. *Antonius* destabilizes the depth of Antony's love by his constant reiteration that Cleopatra and her love are to blame for his downfall. It is also notable that the only wife to whom Antony refers is Octavia. In contrast, Cleopatra clearly identifies herself as Antony's wife. Clarke's explanation for Pembroke's emphasis upon Cleopatra's identity as a wife is founded upon the idea that:

[f]emale monarchy in *Antoine* is acceptable only when it is freed from sexual taint, that is, at the point when it becomes masculine, virtuous, and immune from passion, or when it entails submission to a ruling male. This presumably accounts for the play's legitimization of Cleopatra's bond with Antony ('you deare husband,' 1808, V.16) by describing her love as 'wively' (590 II.354), and her tendency to describe her regiment in gender-neutral terms. (159)

Given Elizabeth's use of the marriage trope to construct her identity as a female monarch, one could suggest that another plausible alternative for Pembroke's stress on "Cleopatra's bond with Antony" was to highlight the idea that the Queen's power, as a female and as a monarch, was legitimate. While Clarke also notes that

Pembroke's identification of Cleopatra as Antony's wife indicates Elizabeth's own construction of herself as monarch, her connection to this concept is somewhat negative since, due to her wifely loyalty, the queen sacrifices "her children and kingdom to her love for Antony" committing "a selfish act of dynastic self-destruction" (159). Yet, Clarke makes no mention of the fact that Antony never refers to Cleopatra as his wife. If one reads Cleopatra as Elizabeth and Antony as one of her male courtiers (such as Sir Philip Sidney), the Roman general's refusal to acknowledge the legitimate relationship between himself and the Egyptian queen reveals the fissures of loyalty that occurred in Elizabethan England. Like the male courtiers of Elizabeth's court, Antony expects the complete loyalty and devotion of his queen, Cleopatra, but his own speeches do not suggest that he owes any loyalty or devotion to her. Rather than pointing to the failure of female monarchy, such a reading of *Antonius* points to the failure of the male subjects to recognize their own duty to the crown. Furthermore, Clarke asserts that "*Antoine* is a narrative of rule rather than of love, and of the need for a 'masculine' temperance whatever the sex of the sovereign" (156-57). However, despite saying that "the sex of the sovereign" does not matter, Clarke's argument claims "*Antoine's* insistence upon the danger of female influence is unequivocal" (157). Such an argument relies on seeing Elizabeth and her gender as not only intertwined and indivisible, but as the sole cause of political disruption. What Clarke does not seem to consider is that Pembroke deliberately highlights "the danger of female influence" to complicate the cultural [mis]perception that positive power is gendered as masculine. In so doing, the play also questions the

validity of cultural constructions of gender, whether positive or negative. This redefinition of gender and power as well as gendered power is emphasized by the piece of Garnier's text that Pembroke did rewrite significantly, the "Argument."

While all the critics who have written about Pembroke's translation of Garnier's text have mentioned the fact that her "Argument" is original, there is practically no discussion as to why she chooses to write an original "Argument" and how such a choice may affect how the play and its thematic issues may be read. Eve Sanders suggests that Pembroke penned the original piece due to "her interest in historical and psychological precision" (108), especially with regards to the character of Antony. Pembroke's revision of Garnier's prefatory material also "restores Plutarch's chronology and focuses attention on the precise dramatic situation in which Antony finds himself" (108). Tina Krontiris claims that the evocation of Octavia in Pembroke's text is "presented as an example of female gentleness and fidelity" and is included "as a safeguard against any obvious rejection of institutionalized marriage. It also enables a woman like Mary Herbert to publish the play without running the risk of appearing to endorse the abandonment of wives in favor of romantic lovers" (Krontiris 160). Margaret Hannay, Noel Kinnamon, and Michael Brennan assert more practical reasons for Pembroke's original text. For them her choices are directed towards an English audience who were "less familiar" with the story and its sources than its French readers, and was meant to shorten and simplify the "Argument" Garnier provided so as "to avoid confusion" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 148).

While all of these opinions are basically valid, they also raise further questions as to the full purpose of Pembroke's original "Argument," questions that are never answered. Specifically, it is in the differences between the Arguments of Garnier and Pembroke that one can see the way in which Pembroke directs her reader to engage with the main characters and the gender roles they represent. The position of Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan, that Pembroke wrote her piece for the purpose of helping English readers "avoid confusion" due to the supposed lack of reference to the source material, fails to mention that English readers did have access to a version of Plutarch's *Lives* in the form of Thomas North's translation which appeared in 1579; a translation which was subsequently used by many playwrights, including Shakespeare, for dramatic inspiration and plots. Sanders's view that Pembroke's "Argument" was written in order to capture precisely, from Plutarch, "Antony's mental state as he travelled eastward" (108) is more fundamentally correct. Yet Sanders fails to interrogate why Pembroke is so concerned that her text recapture this "historical and psychological precision" (108). One might suggest that besides adding Plutarch to illustrate "the precise dramatic situation in which Antony finds himself" (108), Pembroke's decision to reinvest her "Argument" with allusions to the larger story of Antony, the full biography as found in *Lives*, has a more specific purpose, that being to remind her readers of Antony's past, and often salacious, behavior. Instead of merely presenting him at the moment when he finally redeems himself and restores his honour through his act of self-immolation, Pembroke ties his final act to

the life he has lived according to Plutarch; a life which shows, both before and after the appearance of Cleopatra, a tendency towards extreme and unreasonable passions.

Pembroke wished to remind her readers of Antony's past and his history of often violent and self-negating emotion and behavior, and this idea is emphasized by the change in the "Argument" mentioned by Krontiris, namely, the subtle emphasis placed on the name of Octavia. As Krontiris notes, Octavia was the figure of the ideal woman for both the culture from which she came (Roman) as well as for the culture for which she became a symbol (Renaissance) (160). Yet while Krontiris's claim that Pembroke retains and highlights the name of Octavia in order to "safeguard" herself "against any obvious rejection of institutionalized marriage" (160) has merit, it further raises an important question. Why would Pembroke, who introduced new words in the text to ensure that her readers saw and felt the legitimacy of the union of Antony and Cleopatra (often relayed through marital terms), then undermine her efforts by reminding her readers of Octavia, the example of the virtuous, yet wronged, wife? One possible answer lies in understanding that both Octavia and Cleopatra, like many other historical and biblical women, were instrumental in shaping the larger cultural project of the constructions of gender roles. It is important to note that Pembroke, who obviously was well-acquainted with and knowledgeable of Plutarch's text, only mentions the woman from Antony's past who represents an ideal feminine figure—she does not mention Antony's first wife, Fulvia, although she is mentioned in Garnier's "Argument." Again, why is this detail meaningful? One interpretation for Pembroke's decision to write her own "Argument" for *Antonius* is that in doing so

she realigns the way in which her readers receive the play text itself. This is done to challenge the traditional dichotomy of the female figures of Octavia and Cleopatra and to further question the validity of masculine rhetorical structures concerning gender roles by shifting the qualities and characteristics of the female figures it uses to espouse the concepts of feminine ideals and infamy. Also, by redefining the female figures, the "Argument" prepares the audience for the problematic gender identifications, with regards to Antony and Cleopatra, within the body of the play. It can be argued that Pembroke's piece brings into the context of the play the similarities between Octavia and Cleopatra to challenge a masculine rhetoric, as exemplified in Plutarch's *Lives*, that figured these characters as polar opposites (positive and negative) and, in so doing, establish her own feminine rhetoric.

One of the greatest differences between Garnier's and Pembroke's "Arguments" lies not in the texts themselves but in how they each produce a particular perception of the classical source story and its main characters. While the political angles of both plays are similar, Pembroke, by the changes she introduces in the prefatory material, changes the evaluation of gender and power with which the story is so closely associated. Garnier's "Argument" is longer and includes many details not present in Pembroke's preface. His text also evinces the stereotypical presentation of the major figures of the classical story found in the source material, especially Plutarch and Dio Cassius. In particular, Garnier's "Argument" calls into play the usual opposition between the figures of Octavia and Cleopatra. Much like the rhetorical female figures of the *Querelle des Femmes* pamphlets, the figures of

Octavia and Cleopatra had iconographic meaning for readers of the various classical and Continental versions of the story. The status of these women as rhetorical figures for patriarchal discourse, portraying either a positive or negative feminine example, were equally applicable in England. Even Garnier's *Marc Antoine* adds details to the prefatory material which further positions these two female figures as moral examples in masculine rhetoric, so that in Garnier's text, as in most of the sources, Octavia is the "good" or moral woman and Cleopatra is the "wicked" or immoral woman, despite his sympathetic characterization of Cleopatra within the play. An important aspect of Pembroke's rhetorical strategy is how she presents and recontextualizes the figures of Octavia and Cleopatra.

In her "Argument," Pembroke deletes many of the details present in both the classical sources and Garnier. Pembroke redefines the presentation of Octavia and Cleopatra as rhetorical figures that constitute a moral dichotomy. The first example of this is Pembroke's decision to simplify Garnier's reference to Octavia as the "belle et vertueuse Dame à merveilles" [an exceptionally beautiful and virtuous Lady] (Hill and Morrison 106) to simply Antony's "vertuous wife Octavia" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 152). This simplified characterization eliminates from Pembroke's text Garnier's suggestion of Octavia's unique loyalty and virtue. Another choice that Pembroke makes in her text is her deletion of Garnier's reference to Antony's first wife, Fulvia. This revision fits Pembroke's rhetorical strategy in two ways. First, the deletion of Fulvia's name accentuates that Antony is balanced between two women, Octavia and Cleopatra. It is Antony's choice between these two females that

demonstrates his conscious decisions regarding his own life. Furthermore, it focuses the audiences' attention on the two competing, yet similar, figures in Antony's life. The second important fact about Fulvia is that in all the source material she is represented as that worst of female figures, the *virago*. Fulvia, as a female figure, represents, even more so than Cleopatra, the dangers to a patriarchal system posed by a woman who appropriates masculine authority. She is disobedient to both her husband and Rome, deciding upon her own to start a military insurrection against Antony's wishes but in his name. Like Cleopatra, she is a woman who represents the unnaturalness of a female who has male ambition, but unlike Cleopatra, she does not seem to have any truly feminine qualities such as maternal love. Nor does Fulvia have any of the positive qualities usually associated to the masculine, such as loyalty and courage that Cleopatra possesses within the text of the play. The absence of references to Fulvia, concentrates the focus of Pembroke's attention (and that of her readers) on the two women in Antony's life. Another possible suggestion for Pembroke's deletion of Fulvia's name from her "Argument" is that it would undermine her own construction of Cleopatra as similar to Octavia, a parallel that is central to the text. In most of the source stories, Plutarch in particular, Fulvia is seen as a precursor to Cleopatra; that is, Fulvia is used as an example of how Antony's weak character was made subordinate to the will of a strong woman. Fulvia, while not as strong or compelling as Cleopatra, foreshadows Antony's inability to do anything but succumb to the wiles of the Egyptian queen. By not making reference to Fulvia,

Pembroke emphasizes that the choices that Antony makes are his own—that he possesses free will when it comes to choosing between private desire and public duty.

Pembroke's final choice in relation to her construction of Octavia and Cleopatra is perhaps the most significant. She removes any suggestion that Cleopatra has planned a betrayal of Antony in order to save herself. Garnier in his "Argument" relates that Antony, after the disastrous Battle of Actium, has "quelque imagination sur Cleopatra qu'elle s'entendist avec luy pour le ruiner, et par sa ruine moyenner son accord" [had an idea that Cleopatra could get together with him (Caesar) to ruin him, and by his ruin secure her consent] (Hill and Morrison 107). In place of a statement about Antony's belief in Cleopatra's intended betrayal, Pembroke provides a more ambiguous statement: "where *Antony* finding all that he trusted to faile him, beginneth to growe jealous and to suspect *Cleopatra*" (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 153). Again, Pembroke's change has two implications for her construction of a revisionist feminine rhetoric. First, it erases the negative implications of the suggestion, most notably found in Dio Cassius, that Cleopatra has, in fact, planned her actions so that she can betray Antony to Octavius, if need be, to save her life and her crown. This deletion follows more closely the characterization of Cleopatra in the text of the play, and it eliminates any contextual suggestion that she is anything but loyal and steadfast to Antony. In Pembroke's "Argument," the onus of believing in Cleopatra's betrayal lies with Antony. By referring to Antony's general feeling of being betrayed by everyone, instead of specifying that Antony, in particular, might suspect Cleopatra, Pembroke's text suggests that the supposed betrayal of Cleopatra

is, and always has been, a figment of Antony's own imagination, now exacerbated by his defeat. Here the "Argument" relates to reading *Antonius* as a political statement meant for Elizabeth's courtiers as opposed to a statement meant for Elizabeth herself. Just as Antony misunderstands and suspects Cleopatra's choices, Pembroke suggests that Elizabeth's courtiers misunderstand and suspect the decisions of their monarch. That such fears are unwarranted can be read in noting that just as Antony's feelings of betrayal in the preface are groundless, so too are his claims that Cleopatra has betrayed him in the body of the play. Pembroke's numerous revisions (here in the "Argument" and, later, in the text of the play) highlight two aspects of the version of the Antony and Cleopatra story to be presented in the play: first, is the idea that both Octavia and Cleopatra, as women, are loyal in their duty and love of Antony, and, second, that it is Antony who finally makes the decision to choose between them. This last point is significant in that it emphasizes Antony's own culpability in his downfall.

Garnier, like his male predecessors, had attempted to explain why Antony leaves his model wife for Cleopatra, "ce neantmoins l'amour de ceste Royne avoit tant gangé et fait de si profondes breches en son coeur, qu'il ne s'en peut retirer" [nonetheless the love for this Queen had won him and made such inroads into his heart that he was not able to pull away from her] (Hill and Morrison 106). Pembroke deletes the idea or suggestion that Cleopatra has so infected Antony's heart that he is not able to do anything but go to her. This deletion in Pembroke's account acts in much the same way as her deletions of the more biased references to the women: her "Argument" changes the preconceived reception of the rhetorical figures in the story.

Rather than the familiar construction of the conniving Cleopatra who infects the otherwise strong heart of noble Antony, Pembroke reveals a suspicious Antony, weakened and self-deceiving, who consciously chooses Cleopatra and love over Rome and duty. Hence, the deletion of Antony's "bewitchment" by Cleopatra emphasizes that the choice was his; that is, he willingly and of his own accord goes back to Cleopatra. Pembroke adds to her "Argument" specific wording and information that reiterates the fact that it is Antony's choice as much as Cleopatra's fatality that brings about the general's downfall:

Antonius undertooke a journey against the Parthians, with intent to regaine on them the honor wonne by them from the Romains, at the discomfiture and slaughter of Crassus. But comming in his journey into Siria, the places renewed in his remembrance the long intermitted love of Cleopatra Queene of Aegipt: who before time had both in Cilicia and at Alexandria, entertained him with all the exquisite delights and sumptuous pleasures, which a great Prince and voluptuous Lover could to the uttermost desire. Whereupon omitting his enterprice, he made his returne to Alexandria, againe falling to his former loves, without any regarde of his vertuous wife Octavia, by whom nevertheless he had excellent Children. (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 152)

There is a slight, but telling, difference in Garnier's text. In his "Argument" it is stated that Antony "arrive en Cicilia en royale magnificence, que sans avoir souci des affaires des Rome, et de la guerre des Parthes, qu'il avoit sur les bras, *il se laissa par*

elle conduire en sa ville d'Alexandrie, où il passale temps en toutes especes de delices and amoureux esbatements" [having arrived in Sicily in royal splendor, that without having to worry about Roman business, and the war with the Parthians, which he had under control, he let himself be led by her to her city of Alexandria, where he spent the time in all kinds of delights and revels of love] (Hill and Morrison 106, my italics). In Garnier's text, Antony is seemingly not in control of his own actions since "il se laissa par elle" [lets himself be led by her]. In this way, Garnier intimates the Roman idea that Antony has been "bewitched" by the strong sexuality of Cleopatra. To negate this vision of Cleopatra as the sexual enchantress who steals men's wills, Pembroke's text claims that Antony has "omitted" his duty to repay the Parthians for lost Roman honour because of his own memories of the time he has spent with Cleopatra, not because she has "led" him in a literal sense. Including this material in the "Argument" also highlights Antony's own belief in his bewitchment at the hands of Cleopatra. This revision emphasizes the concept that social construction of Cleopatra's sexuality (and through her, all female sexuality) as a negative influence on order and hierarchy is false; a concept further illustrated by the play's presentation of Antony's character. It is also evident that it is Antony's memories of his enjoyment of "the exquisite delightes and sumptuous pleasures" of Cleopatra's court that influence his decision to neglect his duty and legal wife, Octavia, to return to Cleopatra. In fact, Pembroke's phrasing, "again falling to his former loves," echoes closely Plutarch's own phrase concerning Antony's behavior in luxurious Asia where "he easily fell again to his old licentious life" (Hannay, Kinnamon, and

Brennan 696). The Plutarchean echo in Pembroke's text can be seen as a reminder to the audience that Antony, while a powerful man and general, was also a man renowned for his own tendency towards immoral and excessively passionate behavior. Pembroke's additional phrasing works to remind her readers of Antony's previous illicit history and is then complemented by further details in her "Argument" which seek to exonerate Cleopatra from charges of feminine sorcery and an apparent lack of compassion and love towards Antony. That Antony's perception of Cleopatra as a false lover is mostly due to his own unwillingness to accept responsibility for his failures is also emphasized by how Pembroke alters the final segment of her "Argument" – the description of the lifting of Antony's dying body into Cleopatra's monument.

Although Garnier certainly presents the monument scene, Pembroke adds a very important detail—a plausible explanation as to why Cleopatra, when the fatally wounded Antony is brought to her, will not open the doors of her monument to the man she supposedly loves. In Garnier's "Argument" the pathos of this scene is described in detail:

Parquoy elle, redoutant sa fureur et desespoir, se retira avec deux ses femmes dedans le monument qu'Ille avoit fait superbement bastir. Puis envoya luy dire qu'elle estoit morte. Ce qu'ill creut tellement, qu'apres quelque regrets il commanda à un sien serviteur de le teur: lequel ayant prins l'espee, et s'en estant donné le corps, tomba mort aux pieds de son maistre, qui la relevant, se le planta dedans le ventre, dont toutesfois il ne mourut sur l'heure: ains

s'estant jetté sur un lict, et luy ayant esté annoncé que Cleopatre vivoit, se fist porter vers elle jusque à la porte du sepulchre, qui ne luy fut ouverte: seulement elle jetta quelques chaisnes et cordages par les fenestres, où l'on l'empaqueta demymort. Et ainsi fut tiré tout sanglant par Cleopatre et ses duec femmes, puis couché honorablement sur un lict, et ensepulturé.

[on account of this, she, fearful of his rage and despair, withdrew with two of her women into the monument which she had built magnificently. Then she sent to him to say she was dead. He believed this to such a point that after some hesitation, he gave orders to his manservant to kill him: this servant seizing the sword, plunged it into his own body and fell dead at the feet of his master, who picking up the sword, thrust it into his own belly; however, he did not die from this right away: But after he threw himself onto a bed and it was announced to him that Cleopatra was still living. He had himself carried to her as far as the door of the monument which was not opened for him: she only threw down some fetters/chains and ropes through the windows, in which he was wrapped up half-dead. And so in this way he was pulled all covered in blood by Cleopatra and her two women, then honourably laid upon and bed and interred.] (Hill and Morrison 106)

The sympathy of the audience for Garnier's "Argument" lies with Antony, the lover who has been lied to and then, without any seeming reason or compassion, hoisted up a wall half-dead. Our sympathy is increased by the inclusion of details of the suicide of his manservant who is willing to die for Antony, but who is not willing to kill him.

This reference to Antony's faithful soldier makes Cleopatra's actions of "only" throwing down chains and ropes seem not only unworthy of Antony's love and sacrifice, but also insensible to any human emotions. Pembroke, in her preface, attempts to soften the image of Cleopatra during this particular scene by adding a significant detail encompassing a possible explanation as to why Cleopatra does not open the door of the monument:

where Antony finding all that he trusted to faile him, beginneth to growe
jealouse and to suspect Cleopatra. She thereupon enclosed her selfe with two
of her women in a monument she had before caused to be built, thence sends
him woord she was dead: which he believing for truth, gave himself with his
Sword a deadly wound: but died not untill a messenger came from Cleopatra
to have him brought to her to the tombe. Which she not daring to open least
she should be made a prisoner to the Romaines, and carried in Caesars
triumph, cast downe a corde from a high window, by the which (her women
helping her) she trussed up Antonius halfe dead, and so got him into the
monument. (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 152-53)

Pembroke again follows more closely Plutarch's account. The changes she makes illustrates on one level Cleopatra's true love for the dying Antony in describing the physical labour she expends to reunite herself and her lover. The addition of a plausible reason as to why Cleopatra does not open the monument door illustrates not a heartless woman, but the political intelligence of a foreign monarch who is besieged. Like Antony, Cleopatra attempts to keep Octavius from making a spectacle

of her defeat in his Triumph in Rome and, thereby, preserve her dignity and royal honour. But this is not the only change that the Countess makes to this section of her "Argument." She also deletes from her account the actions of Antony's servant who commits suicide because of the grief he feels for Antony's fate. This change, while simplifying the text, also eliminates the inevitable comparison between the loyalty of Antony's servant and the seeming coldness of Antony's queen. This construction lessens the chance that the readers will be less sympathetic towards Cleopatra when she appears in the play. The last change between Garnier's and Pembroke's account of Antony's death and interment is small but, again, revealing. While in Garnier's text it is Antony who struggles to join Cleopatra, in Pembroke it is Cleopatra who struggles to get Antony both to and into the tomb. This small change emphasizes Cleopatra as the loyal lover by illustrating that it is through her own agency that she and Antony are reunited eternally.

Overall the choices Pembroke makes in her prefatory essay illustrate her efforts to construct a feminine rhetoric through her reconfiguration of the infamous couple and their story. Her "Argument" opposes Octavia and Cleopatra, while at the same time undermining such simple oppositions. While Pembroke's text alludes to the typical use and meaning assigned in literature to the rhetorical figures of Octavia and Cleopatra, she also emphasizes the undeniable similarities between the two women: both are women of socio-political power, both are wives, and both are mothers. In essence, Pembroke changes the moral perception of the audience towards these women. She transforms the characters from the morally opposed static and flat

figures familiar from traditional masculine rhetoric into figures who represent, in at least a small way, human women. Instead of representing good and bad, virtue and vice, the perception of Octavia and Cleopatra in Pembroke's "Argument" illustrates the idea that both suffer due to the love and loyalty they give to Antony. By reminding the readers of Antony's betrayal of Octavia at the outset of the play, the Countess establishes a two-point revision of the version of the Antony and Cleopatra story taken from patriarchal discourse. First she equates the figures of Octavia and Cleopatra as women undone or wronged by a man, and, second, she accentuates that it is this man, Antony, who, in fact, possesses the socially sanctioned "feminine" traits of being fickle and easily swayed by his emotions, as his abandonment of Octavia and doubting of Cleopatra illustrate. The revision introduced in the "Argument" intersects with the characterization of the lovers in the text of the play. While Antony rants and rails against his fate and blames Cleopatra, Cleopatra remains loyal and constant in her love for Antony. As in the "Argument," Antony is the character in the text representative of the worst traits associated to the feminine gender. His inability to control his desires and passions, his emotional vindictiveness against Cleopatra, and his unwillingness fully to understand or comprehend his own responsibility make Antony, not Cleopatra, the more feminine character. In contrast, Cleopatra's loyalty, virtue, intelligence, and sense of personal responsibility invest her character with the best traits associated to the masculine gender of the period.

Pembroke's *Antonius* questions the genderization of power in her time. By pointing out the rhetorical nature of what was considered masculine and feminine and

then attaching masculine qualities to Cleopatra, one of the ultimate symbols of feminine sexuality, and feminine qualities to Antony, the figure of Roman masculine power, Pembroke invites her readers to question the cultural belief that true authority is male. That writers of her own time read Pembroke's text as a complicated statement about the social construction of gender and the traits assigned to male and female and how these socially sanctioned figurations affected the legitimization of power is evident in texts that make allusions to both Pembroke and Cleopatra. Of women writers contemporary with Pembroke, both Elizabeth Cary, in *The Tragedy of Miriam* (1602-1612), and Amelia Lanyer, in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), use the figure of Cleopatra, albeit negatively, to construct their own versions of feminine power. Both women also attached to their texts a dedication to Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, and praise her as a writer. More directly, Pembroke's production of *Antonius* was directly followed by plays from Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594), and Samuel Brandon, *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598). Aside from adopting Pembroke's form, the closet drama, Daniel and Brandon adopted Pembroke's interest in the story of Antony and Cleopatra as their respective titles make clear. However, rather than agreeing with Pembroke's assessment of gender and power in *Antonius*, these playwrights work to dismantle and rearrange such social constructions.

¹ I have deliberately chosen to identify Mary Sidney Herbert most often as “Pembroke” for a specific reason. In her biography of Pembroke’s life, Margaret P. Hannay notes that “[w]hen Mary Talbert Herbert [the wife of Pembroke’s son William] appropriated for her signature, ‘M. Pembroke,’ Mary Sidney Herbert assertively changed her own signature to the title ‘Pembroke,’ adding an identifying design around the name” (*Phoenix* xi). I feel that this biographical detail is important for understanding how Pembroke constructed herself as a woman as well as an author—not as a Sidney or as a Herbert, but as both, thereby creating an individual identity for herself separate, yet derived, from her familial connections.

² Pembroke had a familial example of the dangers of being a woman writer during the early modern period. Her niece, Mary Sidney Wroth, was involved in a very damaging and public ‘feud’ with Sir Edward Denny over Wroth’s publication of *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* (1621). Denny took offence at portions of the text that “supposedly satirized various court intrigues, including those of Honora Denny, wife of James Hay, Earl of Carlisle” and “Wroth was forced to apologize and withdraw the booke from print” (Hannay *Phoenix* 209). A fuller discussion of the Wroth/Denny controversy can be found in Josephine A. Roberts’ *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. (Louisiana: Louisiana State Press, 1983): pages 31-37.

³ Shortly after Pembroke’s sister, Ambrosia, died, Elizabeth Tudor wrote a letter of condolence to Henry Sidney offering his surviving daughter, Mary, his “daughter of very good hope” (cited in Hannay *Phoenix* 31), a place at her court. Elizabeth writes to Sidney to “send her vnto vs before Easter, or when you shall think good, assure yourself that we will haue a speciall care of her” (Hannay *Phoenix* 31). Sidney accepted this special royal honour and Pembroke went to join Elizabeth I’s court in the spring of 1575 (Hannay *Phoenix* 32).

⁴ In particular, Mary Ellen Lamb’s analyses the anxiety about Pembroke as an author and a woman revealed in the myriad dedications written to the Countess in Chapter One of *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, pages 28-71.

⁵ In *Writing Women’s Literary History*, Margaret Ezell connects the dearth of serious feminist study of women writers pre-1800 to a “desire for continuity, for a maternal link, [that informs] the expectation that the past should be similar to the present and that the value of studying the past is to find someone or something with which to identify” (27). In particular, Ezell notes that feminists look for “the female writer in earlier periods” who was “an individual at odds with her society and with herself because her creative drive require her to resist ‘accepted’ feminine roles” (26). An example of this modern critical tendency to overlook those early modern women writers who stayed within cultural restrictions surrounding the female voice can be found in Betty Travitsky’s *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance*. In discussing her editorial procedures for the book, Travitsky states that “[t]ranslations by these women have been excluded on the ground that they are essentially derivative” (13). Although she also includes biographical and title information in the bibliography for those “readers who wish to follow further lines of investigation” (13) with regards to women translators, her claim that the work itself is “essentially derivative” evidences the way in which modern feminism may have excluded certain early modern women writers based on modern day perceptions of what constitutes both good and feminine writing.

⁶ Hannay argues that “silence was considered one of the primary feminine virtues . . . in the Tudor period” (*Silent* 4). Religious statements, to a certain extent, were exempt from this prohibition since the Protestant faith required all its members to study and articulate their religious beliefs. Due to this “one

exception to the silence required by women . . . the majority of extant works and translations by English women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance are on religious subjects" (Hannay *Silent* 5).

⁷ John Florio made this comment in the dedication to his 1603 translation of Montaigne's *Essays*.

⁸ The denigration of which Lamb speaks also appears in modern criticism. One such example is the recent article by Richard Hillman that argues that not only is Pembroke's *Antonius* non-political (62-67) but also that her translation 'shortchanges' politically and poetically Garnier's "original, explicitly, or implicitly" (69). "De-centring the Countess's Circle: Mary Sidney Herbert and Cleopatra." *Renaissance and Reformation* 28.1 (2004) 61-79.

⁹ In discussing the production of anthologies dedicated to women writers, specifically *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, Margaret Ezell notes that the contribution of women writers (such as Julian of Norwich, Margery Kemp, and Mary Sidney Herbert) of "coterie literature" in the early modern period is neutralized "by depicting them as amateurs, merely aristocrats amusing themselves with scribbling" (50). She further claims that in

such presentations, social rank is equated with economic dependence, and, even through it provided the necessary leisure from hard labor required, aristocratic rank is depicted as pulling whatever fangs these ladies might have dared to show. The implication is that even though such women wrote, what they wrote was co-opted by a patriarchal society, leaving us with an interesting vision of the Countess of Pembroke as a sort of a 'running dog lackey' of patriarchal cultural imperialism. Perhaps even more damaging, however, than the effects on the individual reputations of the women chosen to represent what the editors refer to as 'the so-called Dark Ages' of the female imagination is the general impression of female authorship" (51).

¹⁰ Pembroke was the main literary executor of Philip Sidney's work and this is the main reason why so many critical opinions about Pembroke's own work are based in seeing her texts as a reflection and continuation of Sidney's literary and political agenda. In fact, Sidney would have been the one forgotten as a writer since Pembroke "as editor, . . . published the works that have established Sidney's literary reputation: the 1593 edition of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*; the 1598 edition, which added 'Certaine Sonnets written by Sir Philip Sidney: Neuer before printed'; *A Defense of Poetry*; *Astrophil and Stella*; and 'Her Most Excellent Maieste walking in Wansteed Garden,' known as 'The Lady of May'" (Hannay *Phoenix* 69).

¹¹ The preface of the 1593 *Arcadia* makes reference to the father-child metaphor that Sidney himself used in the dedication to Pembroke. In his apology for the "unlikeness" the text bears to the father-writer Sidney, the editor, H.S., notes that imperfection cannot be helped "considering the father's untimely death prevented the timely birth of the child, it may happily seem a thank-worthy labour that the defects being so few, so small and in no principal part" (Evans 60). Although critics identify the writer of the letter as Hugh Sanford, it is also interesting that the initials also belong to Pembroke – Herbert and Sidney. Another interesting facet of this particular reflective image is that Sidney's image as a father has particularly feminine overtones in that it alludes to the child being defective due to premature birth – it is born too soon. While the letter may not have been written by Pembroke herself, the obvious parallel imagery and rhetoric indicates that this edition of the *Arcadia* was achieved "most by her doing, all by her directing" (Evans 59).

¹² Sanders argues that Pembroke's 1593 edition of the *Arcadia* is an example that illustrates the Countess's odd subject position as reader and writer. In her opinion the "1593 preface unpacks the double entendre of the possessive case used in the book's title, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Foregrounding Mary Sidney's 'honourable labor' in repairing the 'ruinous house' of Philip's unfinished manuscript, the preface concludes that the work 'is now by more than one interest *The*

Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia: done, as it was, for her: as it is, by her.” (91). For Sanders, by supervising and editing the work dedicated to her by her brother, Pembroke is not only an active reader but also an active producer of the text and a producer, moreover, who publishes a text that stands to correct the earlier version produced by a male writer, Fulke Greville.

¹³ The association of prose romance to women was not always positive as is clear from Denny's castigation of Mary Wroth's wasting time in writing *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Another indication of the negative social view of such works can be seen in Margaret Tyler's defense for translating a romance instead of a religious tract.

¹⁴ Of course, the figure of the Amazon in the early modern period was one of the central rhetorical figures used to illustrate the confusion and imbalance that occurs when gender roles are not followed. As a woman who dresses and battles like a man, the figure of the Amazon represents the woman who interferes in the public world of the masculine. Yet the figure of the female warrior is, to some extent, rather ambiguous since there are obviously positive connotations of the figure associated with Elizabeth I including Spenser's female warrior Brittomart in *The Fairie Queen*. It seems that Sidney is purposely playing upon the ambiguity of the figure to underscore the complications that arise when trying to define gender roles.

¹⁵ Of course, as a woman, Pembroke may have been intrigued by Garnier's non-traditional, sympathetic portrayal of the Egyptian queen as such a characterization went against the typical cultural figuration of Cleopatra as an example of femininity.

¹⁶ The two plays preceding *Marc Antoine, Porcie* (1566) and *Cornélie* (1574), are generally grouped together because of the commonality of subject matter (the death of Julius Caesar and the civil unrest and war that continued until the victory of Octavius over Antony) and the similarity of thematic content between the history of ancient Rome and the on-going conflicts in Garnier's France.

¹⁷ Jondorf qualifies her argument about the link between Garnier's use of contemporary political upheavals, in particular, with specific historic events, with the addendum that “the idea of such a connection must be handled cautiously as it can easily lead to unlikely conclusions” (28). Jondorf makes such a qualification to underscore the impossibility of making a “[d]etailed correlation between external events and parts of Garnier's plays” due to “the difficulty of dating the composition of the plays” (28).

¹⁸ Garnier is addressing his dedication to “Guy du Faur de Pibrac, 1529-84, [a] Toulouse lawyer, author of *Quatrains* (1574), [the] friend and protector of Garnier in Toulouse and Paris” (Hill and Morrison 171). Furthermore, like Garnier, Pibrac held a position within the governing system as the “*président du Parlement*” (Jondorf 36).

¹⁹ In Greek mythology, Pieria, Macedonia, is the birthplace of the Muses. Also, all translations from French are my own.

²⁰ According to Irene Mahoney (*Madame Catherine* New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan; 1975), “[a] prime source of friction between Catholics and Protestants [from 1563-1572] was Coligny's complicity in the murder of the Duc de Guise” (119) who was “mortally wounded by a paid assassin immediately identified as a Huguenot” (98).

²¹ This theme is obviously a pertinent one in many of the historical dramas of the time including Shakespeare's own *Henriad*.

²² The desire to free the Low Countries from Catholic oppression also had many consequences in England at the time and the relevance of this political issue for the Sidney family will be discussed in greater detail later.

²³ I have retained the spelling of Cléopâtre when specifically discussing Garnier's character in *Marc Antoine*.

²⁴ Coligny, himself a staunch Protestant, was killed in the St. Bartholmews Day Massacre along with many of the more prominent Protestant leaders in France (Somerset 347).

²⁵ Jondorf notes that Marguerite de Valois, Alençon's sister, "had travelled in the Low Countries on Anjou's behalf, to investigate what chances he had of acquiring sovereign power there" (37).

²⁶ According to Osborn "there is no record of any response, negative or otherwise" (503) from Elizabeth but, nevertheless, it is known that after presenting the letter, Sidney absented himself from the court indicating that Sidney felt some distance from the monarch at this point was necessary. If nothing else, the 1579 letter damaged Sidney's potential since in it he "appeared as the author of a direct, overtly frank statement of principle, a bold dose of medicine offered when sugared remedies had failed" (Osborn 503).

²⁷ Even the Queen, despite her apparent dislike for Sidney, was affected by his death:

Sidney had never been a personal favorite of the Queen; not only had he annoyed her by writing an outspoken letter advising against marriage with the Duke of Alençon, but he had also incurred her displeasure by identifying himself too closely with the Protestant cause in the Netherlands in the years when she had hoped it would be possible to remain out of the war there. As recently as July, Walsingham, whose daughter Frances was married to Sidney, had noted that the Queen was 'very apt upon every light occasion to find fault with him'. Nevertheless, although she had never felt great affection for him, she had valued Sir Philip as an asset to the Court, and had been pleased when he used his poetic talents to pen a graceful entertainment in her honour, or outshone all challengers in the tiltyard, arrayed in armour of blue and gold. At first it was thought that there was good hope that Sidney would recover, and in relief the Queen had at once written him a comforting letter in her own hand, but subsequently the wound putrefied, and death was unavoidable. Elizabeth was greatly distressed, as she never failed to be when her courtiers were killed on active service. . . . [As such], the Queen's disenchantment with the war was only increased by his death. (Somerset 539)

²⁸ The crucial components of Hannay's arguments concerning the presentation copy of the *Psalms* are the dedicatory and elegiac poems that were appended to the text. For Hannay, Pembroke's addition of two original poems concerning the loss of Philip Sidney to the presentation copy of the *Psalms* is "a powerful political statement," since it laments the loss of a leader of the Protestant cause who "died in Elizabeth's service, in a war that the Sidneys believed doomed by her withholding of money and supplies" (*Phoenix* 90). As such, Hannay argues that this copy of the *Psalms* served to remind "the queen that she had not favored 'the wonder of men, sole borne perfection's kinde' as she ought, and, by implication, that she was not fulfilling her godly duties by defending the faith as Sidney had done" (*Phoenix* 90). Hannay further suggests that the presentation copy of the *Psalms* illustrated for Elizabeth where she had failed with regards to her policy about England's involvement in the religious wars on the Continent. While the dedication contains the flattering images one would expect to find, it also implicitly reminds Elizabeth of the need to become a true leader for the Protestant faith since "[l]ike her family and like the Genevan Protestants, Mary Sidney believed that Elizabeth herself was the key

to the establishment of the Protestant faith, in Continental Europe as well as England” (Hannay *Phoenix* 90). It is by reading Pembroke’s addition of two poems that “are primarily personal laments” in conjunction with “the dedication to Queen Elizabeth” that one sees how the Countess takes a nominally non-subversive text, the *Psalms*, and refocuses the perspective of the text by reminding her royal reader that “[n]ot only will Sidney’s memory be sustained by the countess’s completion and publication of his work, but his efforts to establish a Protestant League will be carried on” (Hannay *Phoenix* 91). For Hannay, the presentation copy of the *Psalms* clearly indicates that “[i]f the countess is barred by her sex from political councils and from the battlefield, she will use her pen” (*Phoenix* 91).

²⁹ There are three such letters to Sir Robert Cecil, two to Sir Julius Caesar, one to Gilbert Talbot and Mary Cavendish, the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, and, of course, one to Elizabeth herself. Intriguingly, each letter could be described as a letter that courts power or favour from those to whom the letter is addressed. In the case of Sir Julius Caesar, Pembroke was requesting advice and aid concerning legal matters. Letter XV (September 1604), to Gilbert Talbot and Mary Cavendish, relates to the upcoming “marriage of her son William to their daughter Mary” (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 351). This marriage, like most aristocratic marriages including Pembroke’s own, was a marriage that would be advantageous to both the families on a public level insofar as it would increase the riches and fame of the families involved. The letters numbered VII (August 1597), IX (1601), and X (August 1602), are all sealed “twice with the Sidney pheon” (Hannay, Kinnamon and Brennan 291).

³⁰ Like the previous letters that were sealed twice, in this letter Pembroke is asking for a political boon or favour from Cecil. Also it was a matter of public debate, so to speak, as she had a contender in the person of Richard Ouseley who “also asked for the wardship, but apparently neither he nor the Countess obtained it” (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 352).

³¹ This caused the queen displeasure since Sidney did not have her permission to join the expedition and he returned “[o]nly after two angry messages had been sent” (Hay 44).

³² Since this conflict with de Vere occurred at nearly the same time as Sidney’s letter against the Alençon marriage, Alan Stewart proposes the possibility that the queen’s admonition of Sidney could have had a more personal context:

the fact that the *Letter* bore Philip’s name is intriguing. If the tennis-court débâcle happened before the letter was drafted, then perhaps it was felt that Philip had nothing to lose by having the letter carry his name. If the letter preceded the Oxford incident, then we might see Elizabeth’s reaction to that event as partially a displaced response to the letter. (*Philip Sidney* 220)

If the letter did precede the quarrel, then Elizabeth’s speech about rank and degree to Sidney could apply to the queen herself; that is, the queen’s reprimand could have been intended to remind Sidney of the loyalty and respect that he owed to his monarch.

³³ All citations for Pembroke’s *Antonius* are taken from *The Collected Works Of Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke: Poems, Translations, and Correspondence*. Volumes 1 and 2. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, eds. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

³⁴ Sir Philip Sidney also illustrated an anxiety with regards to being a man who is subservient to a powerful woman. On his return to the court, Philip Sidney attempted “to court the queen, employing the signs available to him. On New Year’s Day 1581, after his long retirement at Wilton, Sir Philip signaled his submission [to Elizabeth] by a gift of a jeweled whip” (Hannay *Phoenix* 56). The obvious implication of the gift was that Sidney had finally learned who held the true power in England. However, as Stewart notes, Sidney’s “delicious piece of arch wit” (*Philip Sidney* 234) in presenting a jeweled whip to the queen was not an admittance of defeat. While “[t]his appeared to be a symbol of

submission (Philip hands the whip over),” it could also serve as “a reminder that he *had* a whip in the first place” (Stewart *Philip Sidney* 234). By reading the double signification of Sidney’s gift, one could also read the gift as a statement of personal value. Sidney may be willing to bow under Elizabeth’s whip, but she must remember that it was he who gave it to her. Sidney was reminding his monarch once again that her rule depended on her subjects, especially subjects who, like Sidney, were eager to prove their loyalty to her by performing well in political posts. As such, Sidney’s ambitions were thwarted by his inability to control or moderate his passions, and, as such, the “early 1580s [were] . . . a period of increasing frustration for Philip Sidney, as Queen Elizabeth continued to deny him any political advancement” (Hannay *Phoenix* 56).

Chapter Three

“Th’unlucky party of my love:” Samuel Daniel’s and Samuel Brandon’s Dramatic Responses to *Antonius*

No drama exists in a cultural vacuum, even those dramas that are never intended for the stage. As was argued in chapter two, Mary Sidney Herbert’s *Antonius* has a valid political dimension, especially in how the play deals with the view of both gender and power as they were culturally constructed in the early modern period. But how did her contemporaries read Pembroke’s play? Did they only recognize the play as a new higher dramatic form in relation to ‘vulgar’ popular drama? Or did they read and understand how Pembroke’s *Antonius* questions and challenges early modern constructions of gender? Perhaps the best evidence that suggests that her contemporaries read *Antonius* for the political statement that it was is to be found by investigating the plays that seem to rewrite its views of gender and power using the same source material.¹ As Stephen Greenblatt has observed “[l]anguage, like other sign systems, is a collective construction” and, as such, studies of Renaissance writing must “grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text” (*Self-Fashioning* 5). Pembroke’s *Antonius* was certainly attached to central cultural issues within early modern society. Indeed, the various political readings of the play largely depend on seeing how Pembroke inverts and, in so doing, subverts the cultural categorization of power as a masculine

attribute in the Renaissance. The two texts that most clearly respond to Pembroke's questioning of gender and its affects on the perception of power are Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) and Samuel Brandon's *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598). Unlike the other closet dramas that followed the publication of *Antonius*, these two texts incorporate not only the general structural and thematic elements of Senecan inspired drama, but they also incorporate the same subject material as Pembroke's text. Furthermore, investigating how Daniel and Brandon rewrite the story of Antony and Cleopatra reveals how their respective texts are specific responses to the issues of gender and power that Pembroke constructs within her own play.

Of these two plays, the one that most fully explores the issues of gender and power in *Antonius* is Daniel's text, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594). This is, of course, as it should be. As a member of the Sidney family and the wife of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Pembroke not only used her social position to forward her own literary efforts, but she also used her status and wealth to become a patron for other writers. Samuel Daniel is perhaps the best known of the writers who received Pembroke's patronage. Joan Rees and Cecil Seronsy claim Daniel's association with the Pembroke family, and with Mary Sidney Herbert specifically, started around 1591-1592, under the auspices of either or both of his friends John Florio or Hugh Sanford (Rees 9-12; Seronsy 20-22). What is clear, according to these biographers, is that Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* was a direct result of his association with Pembroke (Rees 12; Seronsy 22) and her own literary endeavours. While all critics

agree as to Pembroke's part in Daniel's production of his first dramatic text, there is little to no discussion as to how interrelated these texts are in their investigation of gender and power in the Renaissance. Daniel's *Cleopatra* is not a simple sequel or continuation of Pembroke's *Antonius*. Instead, Daniel's play about the infamous Egyptian queen is a text that attempts to revert to their normative positions the ideologies of gender and power that *Antonius* subverts.

As was argued in the previous chapter, Pembroke uses her original "Argument" to direct the political reading she constructed in *Antonius*. Daniel's play illustrates clearly that Pembroke's strategy was effective. Indeed, the changes that Daniel makes to his version of the Antony and Cleopatra story show how he not only read his patroness's political message, but also how he responded to it. Most noticeably, Daniel changes the way in which the reader of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* perceives the characters of the Roman general and the Egyptian queen. His awareness of Pembroke's attempt to alter the culturally constructed figures of Antony and Cleopatra so as to question issues of gender and power is apparent in his own attempt to reinvest these characters with their typical or iconographic representations. In particular, Daniel manipulates both Pembroke's text and the original classical sources to create a figuration of Cleopatra, which in many ways, is even more negative than the figuration of the *femme fatale* that she normally represented in early modern culture. Daniel's reading of Pembroke's political arguments is also evident in his inclusion of material that seems to allude directly to Elizabeth Tudor and her moderate religious policies. Reading *Antonius* as a statement of support for Elizabeth

as a monarch instead of reading the play as a text that criticizes Elizabeth's lack of public support for Protestant reform is confirmed by Daniel's specific statements regarding religious issues in *Cleopatra*. By presenting a text that both challenges the gendered and political issues in Pembroke's play, Daniel shows his own personal anxiety with feminine power and his own attempt to secure his literary career.

As a middle-class male writer under the patronage of a powerful aristocratic woman, Samuel Daniel was personally aware of how power could change the dominant gender ideologies of his culture. Daniel's social class and profession, combined with his need for patrons, consistently placed him in the submissive position to members of the nobility and, interestingly enough, many of his works are dedicated to women. Therefore, like the male courtiers of Elizabeth I's court, Daniel had to shape a position for himself that allowed him to submit himself to a woman without becoming emasculated by doing so. In Daniel's case the anxiety caused by assuming such a position is perhaps most clear in his patronage relationship with Pembroke. Courting Mary Sidney Herbert for her patronage was certainly a task many male writers were willing to perform. The large number of literary efforts dedicated to her evidences this.² Considering Pembroke's literary legacy and her position as Henry Herbert's wife, such dedications make complete sense on both a literary and political level. Indeed, for certain writers, the connection of Pembroke to her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, made their plea for her patronage generic rather than gender specific; that is, these male writers could submit themselves to Pembroke because of the close identification she held with her brother. As "Philip's Phoenix,"

Pembroke, at some level, is constructed as bi-gendered. She is a woman, but in literary eyes she is the manifestation of a man's literary agenda. This fashioning of Pembroke as a conduit for her brother, a fashioning she certainly endorsed, made submitting to her akin to submitting to Philip. Yet, like the asexual or bi-sexual identity that Elizabeth I created for herself to allay masculine fears about her power, the construction of Pembroke as Philip's heir was often undercut by the anxiety of male authors submitting themselves to female judgement. This anxiety on the part of the male writer with a female patron is clear in the relationship between Pembroke and Daniel and is illustrated through the dedication to Pembroke that Daniel appends to the 1594 edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*.

As was fitting, Samuel Daniel dedicated the 1594 edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* to his patroness, Pembroke.³ The appropriateness of the dedication lies not only in the fact that Pembroke used her social status to sponsor Daniel in his literary efforts but also because, by Daniel's own admission, it was she who dictated the subject matter:

Loe heere the worke the which she did impose,
 Who onely doth predominate my Muse:
 The starre of wonder, which my labours chose
 To guide their way in all the course I vse.
 Shee, whose cleere brightnes doth alone infuse
 Strength to my thoughts, and makes mee what I am,
 Call'd vp my spirits from out their low repose,

To sing of state, and tragick notes to frame.

(1-8)

Indeed, at first glance, the opening stanza of Daniel's dedication seems conventional in the generally laudatory nature of most Renaissance dedications. Since writers used the dedication to the noble patron as a way of securing that person's future favour and patronage, dedications usually contained hyperbolic praise. Hence, for Daniel, Pembroke is the "starre of wonder . . . whose cleere brightness doth alone infuse/ Strength to my thoughts, and makes mee what I am." Daniel's praise for Pembroke, however, is undercut as soon as it is written. While he is claiming that Pembroke is his "starre of wonder" that gives "Strength to my thoughts," there is also a sense that her patronage limits his own creative imagination. The first line of the dedication gives the reader, on some level, a disclaimer about the subject of the piece to follow. Rather than arising from his own creative processes, Daniel alerts the audience that the text is actually "the worke the which she did impose," a statement that marks the author's lack of creative autonomy. Daniel's apparent lack of independence in this work is emphasized by his use of other phrases in relation to Pembroke, including calling her the person "who onely predominate [sic] my muse" and the one "which my labours chose." Daniel's use of the word "predominate" emphasizes the anxiety he felt in his relationship with Pembroke. On one level the term is used to refer to celestial positions; that is it refers to heavenly bodies that are in the ascendant position. This meaning of the word parallels Daniel's rhetorical flourish that describes

Pembroke as his “farrre of wonder.” However, the word also had other connotations in the Renaissance. In particular, his use of the verbal form of “predominate,” which means to dominate over, or control, may suggest the lack of control Daniel felt over his own work. Instead of being able to control his own writing, he claims Pembroke, and Pembroke alone, “doth predominate my Muse.” In essence it seems that Daniel is claiming that Pembroke has interrupted or usurped the communion between the writer and his inspiration. Rather than claiming the Countess is the inspiration, or muse, of his work, Daniel constructs her as someone outside of the writer-muse relationship controlling or dominating Daniel’s creative output. She is the taskmaster of Daniel’s pen. Beginning his dedication with an implication of self-loss leads the reader to re-examine Daniel’s own position with regards to gender and power, especially within the patronage system. For writers in the early modern period, the patronage of a member of the nobility meant possible financial backing for their literary projects either from direct gifts or payments by the patron, or through the patron’s assistance in finding suitable positions for young male writers in the court or within their own households as a secretary or a tutor. As such, even a male-to-male patronage relationship meant that the writer must submit himself as an inferior to another person. Of course, in the early modern period, such hierarchical relationships were accepted as being necessary and divinely decreed for the maintenance of order.⁴ For Werner Gundersheimer “[t]he political and social orderings in European societies in the Renaissance are mirrored in their structures of patronage” (Lytle and Orgel 23). So while those male writers did submit themselves to men higher on the social and

political ladder, they did so understanding that submitting one's self to a person of such stature was natural and expected. In the case of Daniel, and other male writers who sought the patronage of Pembroke, this master-servant relationship is far more complex due in part to Pembroke's gender.

Daniel's rhetoric in the opening of the dedication reveals the personal/private conflict between social power and gender that was publicly echoed in the culture at large with regards to Elizabeth I. The parallel between Daniel's personal anxiety and the general anxiety over powerful women hinges on recognizing that it is a woman who holds the position of authority. Like Elizabeth I, Mary Sidney Herbert, as was previously shown, was conscious of her own social status as a member of the influential Dudley-Sidney alliance and as the wife of Henry Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke. Also like Elizabeth, Pembroke was well educated and politically astute. As such Daniel's submission to Pembroke was akin to the submissive pose that the courtiers of Elizabeth I had to assume with her. Mary Ellen Lamb claims that "[a]s a patron, the Countess of Pembroke represented an especially powerful form of reader" and that her "reading was not only independent of patriarchal control; it was even invested with the power to demonstrate disagreement with an author's work by withholding financial favors" (*Gender* 28). Furthermore, Karen Raber states that Daniel's dedication belies the anxiety that female power divested of "patriarchal control" had for all men in the early modern period. For her, if Daniel's dedication had been offered to a male patron, . . . [it] would represent nothing more than a flattering compliment or a bid for support, which is typical of such writing.

Since, however, Daniel addresses the countess of Pembroke, who is at this time a powerful woman and a poet in her own right, and since he ascribes to her inspiration a significant change in his career, these lines speak about a challenging and multifaceted relationship, one in which gender and power are dominant issues. (99-100)

Daniel's anxiety about Pembroke's patronage is not only due to the inversion of the natural gender ideology; that is, the rhetorical construction of the 1594 dedication which both praises and criticizes (however, subtly) Pembroke's position is not only due to the fact that she is a woman. Over his career Daniel had many aristocratic female patrons including Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and her daughter, Lady Anne Clifford, as well as Lady Bedford. Indeed, later in his life Daniel was a Groom of Queen Anne's Privy Chamber (Rees 147; Seronsy 117). Yet, there is no indication, at least in Daniel's dedications, that any of these other female patron-male writer relationships provoked in Daniel the type of concern that the 1594 dedication to Pembroke reveals. One possible reason for this discrepancy with regards to Pembroke lies in her own status as a writer. In her discussion of how Pembroke used other male writers to mask or legitimize her own literary activities, Tina Krontiris points to the Countess's patronage as one such form of masking, and she claims that for Pembroke,

there was an unusual interdependence between herself and the authors she commissioned. The system of patronage, of course, by its very nature fostered such an interdependence. In seeking financial support and protection, an

author often had to make compromises in what he wrote. But the countess seems to have had an especially binding relationship with the authors she patronized. This is evident above all by the fact that she usually assigned works to her protégés. (157)

This situation seems particularly relevant to Daniel's *Cleopatra*, since he claims that the work has been "imposed" upon him by Pembroke. The 1594 dedication also directly connects Daniel's choice of subject matter of his play with the dramatic text of his patron. In the preface, Daniel claims that he would have been:

. . . (contented with a humble song,
 Made musique to my selfe that pleas'd mee best
 . . . had not thy well grac'd *Anthony*,
 (Who all alone hauing remained long,
 Requir'd his *Cleopatras* company.
 (9-16)

Again one can read both praise and censure in Daniel's dedication to his female patron. He claims that she is the one who caused him to forego writing "musique to my selfe that pleas'd mee best," in order to write a companion piece to Pembroke's "well grac'd *Anthony*." While he compliments Pembroke on her dramatic efforts, he also seems to complain that he is now writing for her as opposed to writing for himself. Once again, Daniel calls attention to his own lack of power over his writing. In her review of several dedications written by male authors to Mary Sidney Herbert, Lamb claims that these men tried to alleviate the uneasiness caused by Pembroke's

combination of gender and power by trying to contain her in a feminine role that could include public activities and “[t]heir inscriptions represent attempts to hide or to bridge the contradictions posed by the strikingly public figure Mary Sidney cut as a reader and a writer to the prevailing gender ideology designed to contain women’s language—reading, speech, and writing—safely within the private sphere” (28). Interestingly, Lamb does not reference Daniel or the multiple dedications that he made to Pembroke.⁵ For Raber, the 1594 dedication reflects “Daniel’s anxiety and resentment” of Pembroke as a patron, an anxiety and resentment that:

operate within a larger context of early modern discourse about women who are anomalous in their wielding of great power. The strategies Daniel uses to negotiate Sidney’s influential role in his poetic career are those of a skillful courtier who must maintain his patron’s affection and interest, while expressing thoughts or advice that will not necessarily please his sponsor. He negotiates toward a balance of power, between freedom and dependency, self-will and external authority, employing larger cultural categories and images of gender to achieve this end. (102-103)

In order to achieve this balance, Daniel tried to “contain” Pembroke within the acceptable paradigms for feminine literary activity. In the 1594 dedication, Daniel specifically mentions Pembroke as a writer, but the writing he emphasizes is that which would be acceptable for any learned, aristocratic woman.

In the eighth and ninth stanza of his 1594 dedication, Daniel gives unambiguous praise to one literary work penned by Pembroke: the translation of

Psalms. Daniel's praise of Pembroke as regards these religious poems illustrates his own anxiety about her as a writer and a patroness in several interesting ways. As has been noted by many modern critics of early modern women's writing, religious writing was an appropriate venue for women writers of the period because "women were permitted to break the rule of silence only to demonstrate their religious devotion by using their wealth to encourage religious education and publication by men, by translating religious works of other (usually male) writers, and, more rarely, by writing their own devotional meditations" (Hannay *Silent* 4). Daniel could give unequivocal approval to Pembroke's translation of the *Psalms* because they represent literary activity that was considered appropriate for women. This is plain in the laudatory verse he writes in the 1594 dedication:

Those *Hymnes* that thou dost consecrate to heauen,
 Which *Israels* Singer to his God did frame:
 Vnto thy voyce eternitie hath giuen,
 And makes thee deere to him from whence they came.
 In them must rest thy euer reuerent name,
 So long as *Syons* G O D remaineth honoured,
 And till confusion hath all zeale be-reauen,
 And murdered Fayth, and Temples ruined.
 (57-63)

Daniel's rhetoric figures Pembroke as a defender of faith and religion, a valid conceit considering the staunch support she and her family gave to Protestant causes in

England and on the Continent.⁶ Another reason Daniel can praise this work is that the poems contained within are translations. Rather than writing original material, with the *Psalms* Pembroke translates songs “Which *Israels* Singer to his God did frame.”⁷ Therefore, her writing had a male origin, David himself.⁸ Added to this is the fact that the *Psalms*, while finished by Pembroke, began as a joint project between her and her brother, Sir Philip Sidney. By praising the *Psalms*, Daniel is not only praising his female patron but also her brother, a man, who by this time, had already been constructed as the perfect courtier and a Protestant martyr.⁹ Another indication that Daniel’s praise of the *Psalms* is directly related to Pembroke’s gender comes from the fact that they were not published in the conventional sense. In her discussion of Pembroke’s use of her name to legitimize and publish the works of Sir Philip Sidney, Margaret Hannay notes that “her fame as a writer derived primarily not from her works circulated in print, but from a work she reserved for scribal publication, the Sidneian *Psalms*” (Justice and Tinker 17). However, despite the lack of publicly printed editions of the *Psalms*¹⁰, “they circulated in manuscript in the approved aristocratic manner” (Hannay *Phoenix* 84). So while the *Psalms* were available to readers within a certain social milieu, they were not available for public consumption. The seemingly private nature of this writing makes it even more appropriate for a woman writer, even one as powerful as Pembroke. What is intriguing about Daniel’s praise of the *Psalms* is the context of that praise. He praises the *Psalms* in a dedication to a play that he has already claimed was written as a companion piece to Pembroke’s translation of the secular *Antonius*. It seems curious that Daniel, while

admitting that *Antonius* is the starting point of his dramatic effort, minimizes his reference to Pembroke as a dramatic writer, moreover, a writer of a secular and published play.

In the 1594 dedication, Daniel's praise of the *Psalms* contrasts with his lack of praise or laudatory comments about Pembroke's play. *Antonius* brings into the social and cultural atmosphere of late Elizabethan England an ancient dramatic story grounded upon distinguishing the effects of private passion upon public power. In particular, it is a play that engages with the cultural figurations of gender in relation to power and questions the validity of such constructions. In writing and publishing *Antonius*, Pembroke writes in a genre not approved for female authors of the period, and she deals with issues that were generally classified as being the dominion of the masculine, political authority and power. Although *Antonius* is a translation, its subject matter in both Garnier's original and Pembroke's version, questions culturally constructed identity and socio-political issues. Rather than restricting her writing to religious categories that were culturally acceptable as feminine activities, Pembroke chose to work with a secular text that had obviously political, and public, overtones. Raber also notes that Daniel's evocation of the Sidneian *Psalms* emphasizes his own anxiety with regards to gender and power in his relationship with Pembroke. Focusing on Daniel's claim that the religious work of the *Psalms* is the literary work by which Pembroke "must be knowne," Raber states that for Daniel:

Mary Sidney's *Psalms* could be considered part of her "appropriate" sphere of influence, meditations on religious truth, and the source of all worldly power

in God. . . . Thus, when Daniel refers to them as her best work, the most suitable examples of her talent, he may also be enforcing a judgement about the relative merits of her place as Philip's sister. Indeed, Daniel spends three stanzas of the dedication to his *Cleopatra* musing on Philip Sidney's valiant life and incomparable art. Mary Sidney, Daniel's verse implies, might be most adept at finishing the work begun by men, not originating her own or telling other male poets how to go about theirs. (103)

Daniel's use of the 1594 dedication to warn Pembroke against "originating her own" writing and "telling . . . male poets how to go about theirs" can be most clearly seen in the prefatory text when he makes his only comments regarding *Antonius*. Rather than praising Pembroke as a dramatic writer in her own right and the play for its own particular merits, Daniel attempts to establish *Antonius* as an effort to change the course of English Renaissance drama. This is illustrated by Daniel's inference that *Antonius* is a play constructed to fulfill the literary vision of Sir Philip Sidney:

Now when so many pennes (like Speares) are charg'd
 To chace away this tyrant of the North :
Gross Barbarism, whose powre growne far inlarg'd,
 Was lately by thy valiant Brothers worth,
 First found, encountred, and prouoked forth
 (33-37)

For many of the earlier critics of Pembroke and, by association, Daniel, this passage is evidence for the belief that Pembroke, in writing *Antonius*, was demonstrating that

her brother's views about drama could be exemplified in the writing/translation of such a play for English readers as set forth in her brother's *Defense of Posie*.¹¹

Although recent critics have disputed the claim that Pembroke was attempting to use her writing and her patronage to reform the English drama,¹² one could suggest that Daniel did intend to imply the connection between Pembroke's and, by extension, his own text to the literary causes of Sir Philip Sidney. Claiming that he sees his own writing, specifically *Cleopatra*, as a way of fighting "Gross Barbarism," Daniel clearly establishes *Antonius* as the precedent for such an ideological battle:

But still the better part of me will liue,
 Deckt and adorned with thy sacred name,
 Although thy selfe dost farre more glory giue
 Vnto thy selfe, then I can by the same.
 Who doost with thine owne hand a Bulwarke frame
 Against these Monsters, (enemies of honour,)
 Which euer-more shall so defend thy Fame,
 That Time nor they, shall neuer pray vpon her.

(49-56)

Here Daniel seems finally to praise the merits of Pembroke's secular work. Although *Antonius* is not named, the fact that this reference to Pembroke's writing is mentioned in direct connection to his own efforts to live by the dramatic precepts set down by Sidney in the *Defense* illustrates Daniel's need to, once again, construct his powerful female patron as a literary figurehead through whom the literary aims of a male, Sir

Philip Sidney, are passed on to his successors—*male poets* like Samuel Daniel. By suggesting a connection between *Antonius* and the dramatic ideologies of Philip Sidney, Daniel once again contains Pembroke within the literary projects of her dead brother. Indeed this connection could be seen as Daniel's attempt to construct *Antonius* as one more act of sibling homage. In doing so, Daniel distances Pembroke from her own act as author. Rather than write about concepts with which she herself was concerned, Daniel constructs Pembroke as being the literary ventriloquist through which the ideals of Sir Philip Sidney are voiced as opposed to being a woman who gives voice to her own political and literary viewpoint.

This construction of Pembroke attempts to negate the issues of gender and power seen in *Antonius* in two ways. First, by connecting the play to Sir Philip Sidney's literary endeavors without making any comment upon Pembroke's own ideals or intentions, Daniel severely limits Pembroke's literary agency. Secondly, he attempts to negate the questioning of static, iconic, absolute masculine and feminine gender traits in *Antonius* by his own effacement of Pembroke's gender in his dedication; that is, he attempts to silence Pembroke as a woman writer by sublimating her feminine voice within the ideologies of the masculine voice of her brother. In this construction Pembroke is less a dramatic writer with her own agenda than a frontispiece for her brother's literary agenda. Of course, one could argue that the 1594 dedication is ambiguous in its phrasing and construction, and one such example is this reference. Indeed, since Daniel does not mention *Antonius* by name, it is possible to suggest that the "Bulwarke" of which he speaks is the writing of

Pembroke's *Psalms*. However, it is this very ambiguity that suggests the anxiety Daniel felt in his patronage relationship with Mary Sidney Herbert. The seemingly elaborate construction of multiple meanings in the 1594 dedication acts to draw attention to the issues of gender and power at work in the Pembroke-Daniel relationship. Pembroke, a titled woman with powerful family connections to the court, is not the kind of personage an artist like Daniel could reprimand or correct without fearing negative consequences to his own career. But Pembroke was also a woman. Moreover she was a woman who challenged, with her writing, the character traits assigned to men and women by early modern gender ideology, and her *Antonius* is the best example of this. Unlike the *Psalms*, Pembroke published *Antonius* for a larger and more public audience, and she did so without any of the apologies or prefatory materials usually attached to female publications in the period. Furthermore, as we have seen, Pembroke constructs her translation as a challenge to the perceptions of gender and power in the Renaissance by providing the public with a clearly positive image of the figure of Cleopatra and a negative portrait of Antony. In so doing, she questions the rhetorical constructions of gender held as almost inviolable truths in early modern culture. Therefore, the vacillating nature of Daniel's 1594 dedication, a piece that seems to alternately praise and censure Pembroke, can be seen as a result of his own inability to negotiate the gap caused by Pembroke's own gender and power. The anxiety underlying the construction of the 1594 dedication is further demonstrated by how Daniel reconfigures the character of Cleopatra in his own play, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*.

Along with giving recognition to his patroness and praising her, however limiting that praise may be, Daniel's 1594 dedication also indicates how his own play should be read, especially with regards to his recasting of Cleopatra's character in relation to her construction by Pembroke. Like Pembroke's original "Argument" for *Antonius*, Daniel uses his prefatory text to guide his readers, especially those who have read the Countess's play, towards the vision of rule to be found in his *Cleopatra*. Daniel uses the 1594 dedication to warn his readers that although his play is a companion piece to Pembroke's *Antonius*, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* differs substantially from its predecessor. In particular, Daniel focuses the reader's attention on the changes to be found in the character of Cleopatra:

Who if shee [Cleopatra] heere doe so appeare in act,
 That for his Queene & Loue he [Antony] scarce wil know her,
 Finding how much shee of her selfe hath lackt,
 And must that glory wherein I should shew her,
 In maiestie debas'd, in courage lower,
 Yet lightning thou by thy sweet fauouring eyes,
 My darke defects which from her sp[i]rit detract,
 Hee yet may gesse it's shee, which will suffice.

(17-24)

In this passage Daniel clearly admits that he has deliberately altered Pembroke's construction of Cleopatra's character. Since he has connected his *Cleopatra* to Pembroke's *Antonius*, his reference to an Antony who will "scarce" know his queen

appears directed to get the attention of one particular reader—his patroness, Mary Sidney Herbert. Eve Rachel Sanders argues that in this passage of the 1594 dedication, Daniel attempts to lessen any negative consequences that may arise due to his revision of his patroness's characterization. According to Sanders, this passage illustrates Daniel's concern over Pembroke's reaction to how he,

uses his play as a vehicle to reinscribe the discourse negated by Sidney in which Cleopatra stands as a potent negative symbol. Placed in that position, a protégé caught correcting his patron, Daniel refigures his disagreement with Mary Sidney by comparing it to Cleopatra's separation from Antony. His proposed solution to the conflict is that Sidney herself "lighten" what is "dark" in his depiction of Cleopatra by maintaining a pleasant demeanor. He weights his request for forgiveness emotionally by suggesting that Antony will remain "all alone," unable to recognize Cleopatra, unless Sidney is a good sport about Daniel's correction of her play and imbues the queen with some of that cheerfulness. Sidney must either accept the terms of his critique or be put in the ungenerous position of parting Antony from Cleopatra. (117-18)

This particular passage from the 1594 dedication also indicates that Daniel did, in fact, read Pembroke's *Antonius* as the challenge to early modern ideologies of gender and power that it was, and that Daniel consciously chose to rewrite Pembroke's Cleopatra, as is evidenced by his concern over her possible reaction. Furthermore, the revisions in *Cleopatra* attest to Daniel's own need to reaffirm the culturally sanctioned construction of what was appropriately feminine. While Sanders remarks

that Daniel was trying to convince Pembroke to be “a good sport” about the changes he made to her characterization of Cleopatra, one could also argue that Daniel was trying to correct not only Pembroke’s play but also Pembroke herself. Through his emphatic praise of her non-published religious work and his recasting of her secular work as a play authorized by the dramatic principles of her dead brother, Daniel subtly advises his patroness on her own position as a woman, who although powerful through her familial connections, is still expected to stay within the boundaries of accepted feminine behavior. Therefore, his plea that Pembroke “lighten” with her “sweet faouiring eyes, / My darke defects which from her sp[i]rit detract” is not only a plea that she forgive Daniel for changing Cleopatra’s character, but also a plea that she “lighten” any displeasure she may feel towards Daniel and, thereby, display the proper feminine quality of agreeableness.

The changes that Daniel makes to the titular character in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* clearly illustrate his recognition of the centrality of the issues of gender and power that the story of Cleopatra and Antony evoked for the early modern reader. In particular, the story resonates, in both classical and early modern times, with the social need to stabilize and demarcate all hierarchical relationships, especially gender, so as to establish and maintain order and power. As we have seen, the story of the two lovers is itself a cautionary tale about the social upheaval that can arise when such categorizations are trespassed or obscured. Indeed, Cleopatra is an example of the negative consequences that may befall a society when a woman with all the apparent weakness of the feminine gender holds power, and this, perhaps, explains why the

story held such potency for those in the early modern period. In *Antonius*, Mary Sidney Herbert had subverted the traditional iconic figuration of the Egyptian queen and, by so doing, questioned the validity of such constructions. By doing so, Pembroke, to some extent, destabilized Cleopatra's role as a negative figuration of female rule. It is this destabilization that Daniel attempts to reverse in his own play. As he has warned his readers, the Cleopatra of his text bears little resemblance to the Cleopatra of *Antonius*. While Pembroke's Cleopatra is constructed with the masculine qualities of strength and loyalty, she is still recognizably feminine. Her lament over the dead body of Antony shows the reader her womanly side. But this grief, while womanly, is not negative; that is, Pembroke was careful to construct her queen with those feminine qualities that were considered positive. It is this more positive portrayal that is most notably altered in Daniel's version of the ancient story.

Daniel's attempt to reestablish Cleopatra as a negative figure in early modern masculine rhetoric is apparent from the opening of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*. In her first appearance in Daniel's text, Cleopatra regains some of the more negatively charged traits with which her name was usually associated including vanity, greed, and selfishness. In recounting her sad fate and her wish to die in the play's opening lines, Cleopatra indicates that her desires are motivated as much by her loss of power and material wealth as they are by Antony's death:

Can *Cleopatra* liue, and with these eyes

Behold the deerest of her life bereft her?

Why should I linger longer griefes to try?

These eyes that sawe what honor could give mee,
 Doe now behold the worst of misery:
 The greatest wrack wherto Fortune could driue mee.
 Hee on whose shoulders all my rest relyde,
 On whom the burthen of my ambition lay:
 The *Atlas* and the Champion of my pride,
 That did the world of my whole fortune sway,
 Lyes falne, confounded, dead in shame and dolours,
 Following th'vn lucky party of my loue.
 Th' Ensigne of mine eyes, th'vn happy collours,
 That him to mischief, mee to ruine droue.

(1.5-20)

In Cleopatra's first words to the reader, Daniel establishes the motives for Cleopatra's actions. Unlike Pembroke's Cleopatra who is downcast because she thinks that Antony sees her as disloyal to their love, Daniel's queen seems more concerned with the drastic change in her social and political position. When Cleopatra does reference her relationship to Antony, she does not mention her love and loyalty for him but her own political purposes. Rather than referring to Antony as her lover, she refers to him as her tool or weapon in her power struggles with Rome. Cleopatra claims that Antony is the man on "whom the burthen of my ambition lay" and the "*Atlas* and the Champion of my pride." This speech suggests that instead of being upset that her love has died, Cleopatra is more concerned with the fact that she has lost Antony as a

political collaborator. She grieves the loss of Antony, the powerful Roman general, rather than Antony, the man. Instead of the heart-broken and remorseful Cleopatra of *Antonius*, in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* the reader sees a queen who seems far more worried about her material assets and her loss of political clout. Indeed, the reader sees a vain and ambitious woman who cares little for the cost of her drive to power. Rather than the queen who renounces crown, children and life, one sees a woman willing to use a man's love for her for political gain. In quick succession, Daniel has Cleopatra refer to her "ambition," "pride," and "fortune" (1.14; 15; 16). As such, Daniel's play immediately reminds the reader of the usual character traits—greed, indolence, vanity, fickleness—commonly associated with Cleopatra as a rhetorical example of negative feminine qualities.

The sense that Cleopatra's actions are motivated more by political power than personal feeling is emphasized by the remarks she does make about love. After she describes what Antony means in political terms, she refers briefly to the personal relationship between the two. She states that Antony is destroyed because of his own personal feelings toward her. For Cleopatra, Antony loses life and honour by "[f]ollowing th'vn lucky party of my loue,/ Th'Ensigne of mine eyes, th'vn happy collours, / That him to mischief, mee to ruine droue." It is interesting to note that even while speaking of her love relationship with Antony, Cleopatra retains the language of war rather than love. Antony, the Roman general, is the one who is "following" Cleopatra due to his love for her and this is what drives "him to mischief" and her to "ruine." To further illustrate the lack of personal attachment to

Antony, Cleopatra states that “[m]y lusts haue fram’d a Tombe for mee to lie” (1.23). Here the use of the word “lusts,” instead of love, diminishes any true feelings Cleopatra may have had for Antony and emphasizes the lack of loyalty and honour possessed by the Egyptian queen which again stands in direct contrast to Pembroke’s construction of her character. In Daniel’s play, Cleopatra herself constructs the main relationship as physical rather than spiritual. After mentioning the seemingly one-sided love affair between Antony and herself, Cleopatra once again bewails her own loss in terms of power and possessions:

Ah, who would think that I were shee who late,
 Clad with the glory of the worlds chiefe ritches,
 Admir’d of all the earth, and wondred at,
 Glittering in pompe that hart and eye bewitches:
 Should thus distress’d, cast down from of that heighth [sic]
 Leuell’d with low disgrac’d calamite,
 Vnder the waight of such affliction sigh,
 Reduc’d vnto th’extreamest misery.
 Am I the woman, whose inuentive pride,
 (Adorn’d like *Isis*,) scornd mortalitie?
 (1.25-34)

Cleopatra’s words emphasize the material nature of her despair. She laments the loss of those “chiefe ritches” of the world and her royal power. While she at some level castigates herself for this loss, as is indicated by her referencing her “inuentive pride”

and her scorning of “mortalite,” the importance of her loss is measured in selfish and egotistical terms. She is the one who has lost her wealth. She is the one who has lost her power. She is the one who has lost her nation. Unlike Pembroke’s Cleopatra who is more concerned over what she has lost for Antony, her children, and Egypt itself, this Cleopatra is constructed as being more narrowly egotistical. Also it is noteworthy that Daniel’s Cleopatra seems far more concerned with the superficial aspects of her previous existence. The queen’s repeated references to her lost riches, her lost power, and her lost beauty illustrate how Daniel has reinvested Cleopatra with the more negative aspects that her name and gender represented iconographically. Sanders claims that:

Daniel controverts the complexity of Garnier’s/Sidney’s representation of Cleopatra and reinstalls instead the straightforward categories of female badness and virtue found in didactic treatises. Drawing upon the highly negative account of Cleopatra by Dio, the source named by Garnier in his argument and omitted by Sidney in hers, Daniel stages the universal condemnation of Cleopatra as an example of lust, vanity, and inconstancy.

(118)

In *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* one sees a cold woman who seems most concerned with worldly gain and loss on both a material and political level. The lamentations of Daniel’s Cleopatra bring his readers to recall the vain, boastful, luxurious, and greedy woman who was constructed as a powerful negative figuration of female power in early modern culture.

Other than Cleopatra's own speeches about what she has lost on a material level, Daniel also chooses to reintegrate into the dramatic movement an incident recounted in the classical sources, but eliminated in Pembroke's *Antonius*, that clearly illustrates Cleopatra's greed and vindictiveness. In the only scene in which Cleopatra and Octavius meet face to face (3.2), Daniel inserts into the battle of wills an incident that seems contradictory to the serious tone and nature of the meeting of the defeated queen and the conquering emperor. Taken from Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, Daniel portrays the quasi-comic incident where Cleopatra's servant Seleucus reveals to Octavius that the queen has lied to him about the amount of treasure she has in her possession. While treated with some levity in Plutarch, the same scene in Daniel's more serious and philosophical style suggests a bathetic movement as opposed to a mirthful interlude. This incident may seem like a trivial addition, yet when it is considered in relation to another important moment in the scene, the inclusion of the quibble between Cleopatra and Seleucus over her treasure is significant. Before Seleucus's betrayal of her, Cleopatra herself betrays Antony by suggesting to Octavius that as a woman confronted by a leading Roman general, she had no choice but to rebel against Rome. After Octavius judges that Cleopatra is the "cause of all" her miseries, Cleopatra retaliates by claiming that, because of Antony's power, she had no choice in her actions:

To mee? *Casar* [sic] what should a woman doe

Opprest with greatnes? What was it for mee

To contradict my Lord, beeing bent thereto

I was by loue, by feare, by weaknes, made
 An instrument to such disseignes as these.
 For whom the Lord of all the Orient bade.
 Who but obeyed? who was not glad to please?
 And how could I with draw my succouring hand,
 From him that had my hart, or what was mine?
 Th'intrest of my faith in straightest band,
 My loue to his most firmly did combine.

(3.2.25-36)

This speech blaming Antony, “the Lord of all the Orient,” for her actions against Rome, is yet another betrayal of her lover. It layers the negative qualities of Cleopatra’s character by reminding the reader that earlier in the play, she had seemed almost indifferent to Antony as a lover. Her plea to Octavius that she could not have done anything other than what she did because of both Antony’s political power and her own love for him seems disingenuous at best, machiavellian at worst. This passage is also noteworthy for the gendered nature of Cleopatra’s speech. She claims that as a woman she was forced to do the bidding of the powerful man because of “feare” and “weaknes.” Daniel’s Cleopatra is a queen who admits to her feminine ‘faults’ only when it is politically advantageous to do so. In her playing the weak and fearful woman, Cleopatra is trying to once again use her femininity this time to seduce Octavius or, at the very least, gain his compassion. Cleopatra’s use of womanly wiles is also clearly illustrated by her offering herself to Octavius but as a

lover rather than a prisoner, “For looke what I haue beene to Anthony, /Thinke thou the same I might haue been to thee” (3.2.73-74). It is after this proposition that the incident with Seleucus occurs, and so we see in combining the incidents, Daniel intensifies his negative construction of Cleopatra.

It is only in the last act of the play that Cleopatra is redeemed, to some extent, by her suicide. But even this act, an act that supposedly transforms Daniel’s Cleopatra from a negative figuration of feminine power to a more heroic and positive version of feminine stoicism is tainted by what Cleopatra says regarding her death in her first speech. Indeed, the negative portrayal of Cleopatra is accentuated by her stated reasons for wishing for death:

Consider *Cesar* that I am a Queene,
 And scorne the basenes of seruile thought: . . .
 No, I disdaine that head that wore a Crowne,
 Should stoope to take vp that which others giue:
 I must not be, vnlesse I be mine owne.
 (1.59-67)

Again Cleopatra’s speech revolves around the political aspects of her death as opposed to the personal; that is, her death becomes a tool to wield as a political strategy as opposed to a death that fulfils her emotional and personal relationship with Antony. Unlike Pembroke’s queen whose death scene is also a love scene, Daniel’s Cleopatra,

chooses to die to fulfill her sense of obligation to her dead beloved, not to cement a loving marital union. The two reasons Cleopatra gives for remaining alive in Daniel's play are both, finally, generated by her role as Egypt's queen. She wants to preserve her son's life and future by bargaining with Caesar, and she resists the diminution of her control over her body and self at her conqueror's hands. (Raber 106)

While Pembroke's death scene evokes the depth of Cleopatra's love for Antony, she certainly did not discount the political acumen of the Egyptian queen. This is illustrated by her inclusion in her "Argument" of Cleopatra's decision to raise the dying Antony by ropes instead of opening the doors for fear that she would be taken prisoner by Octavius. The difference between the two figures of Cleopatra under discussion here is that Pembroke's Cleopatra intermingles her personal and political feelings while Daniel's Cleopatra, throughout the majority of the play, shows the political nature of her character, oftentimes to the exclusion of the personal. By emphasizing Cleopatra's materialistic concerns and her use of her body and life as a weapon for political maneuvering in her negotiations with Octavius, Daniel changes the way in which the reader perceives the defeated queen. Rather than gaining sympathy or respect for her because of her loyalty to Antony in the face of her lover's doubt, as is the case in Pembroke's play, the reader is left with the impression that Cleopatra has little to no true feelings or even humanity. In Daniel's play she becomes the figure of a defeated monarch whose concern seems fully concentrated on her loss of power and position.

This dehumanization is made even more striking by the most drastic change that Daniel makes to Cleopatra's character in his text—her belated realization that she did, in fact, love Antony. As has been argued, the most surprising aspect of Cleopatra's first speech in Daniel's play is her lack of reference to the personal relationship between herself and Antony. Indeed, her first mention of Antony seems to suggest that she viewed his love of her as nothing more than a political tool. This impression is strengthened when near the end of her first speech Cleopatra admits that she did not really love Antony until he had died:

And next is my turne, now to sacrifice
 To Death, and thee, the life that doth reprove mee,
 Our like distresse I feele doth sympathize,
 And euen affliction makes me truly loue thee,
 Which *Anthony*, (I muft confesse my fault,)
 I neuer did sincerely vntill now
 (1.132-37)

Both Raber and Sanders point to this section of the opening soliloquy as clearly demarcating how Daniel has completely changed the characterization of Cleopatra as she was produced in Pembroke's play. For Sanders, this first speech "makes clear that Daniel has set out to recast Sidney's *Antonius* completely," since he has his Cleopatra claim that she "did not love Antony while he was alive. Her assertion that she has come to do so now that he is dead hardly lessens the enormity of the deceit that Daniel assigns to her" (119).¹³ By eliminating the deep personal love shown in

Pembroke's characterization of Cleopatra, Daniel once again returns his Cleopatra to the figuration of masculine rhetoric that represents the seductive and lustful *femme fatale*. This negative figuration of Cleopatra is strengthened by the way in which the speech is constructed. In the first part of her speech, Cleopatra's lament for her lost position, power, and wealth leads to her admission that she did not love Antony, and that, until Antony's death, she did not love anyone. After realizing that she did not return Antony's love while he was alive, Cleopatra states the reasons for her lack of feeling:

For whilst my glory in that greatnes stood,
 And that I saw my state, and knew my beauty,
 Saw how the world admir'd mee, how they woode,
 I then thought all men, must loue me of dutie,
 And I loue none: for my lasciuious Courte,
 (Fertile in euer-fresh and new-choyce pleasure,)
 Afforded me so bountiful disport,
 That I to thinke on loue had neuer leysure.

(1.140-47)

Here the queen directly relates her inability to love Antony when he was alive to her own faulty nature. She was too busy being a wanton with "bountiful disport." Her claim that, because of her beauty and power, all men "must loue me" indicates her own pride and vanity. She also illustrates her inconstancy by claiming that with all the pleasures she found in her "lasciuious Courte," she never had "leysure" to think

about love. Once again Cleopatra is characterized as a woman bound by the physical instead of the spiritual, by her political power and wealth rather than her private love and loyalty. She is herself claiming the character traits most closely associated with the negative figuration of the feminine gender in the early modern period. While Pembroke's text assigns most of the negatively charged feminine traits to Antony (traits such as fickleness, self-pity, inconstancy), Daniel reinvests Cleopatra's character with the faults culturally considered as belonging to women. By doing so, Daniel returns both lovers to the normative iconic status that they held in the gender rhetoric of the early modern period. This reversal also can be read as displaying Daniel's own anxiety in relation to female power. In re-establishing Cleopatra as an historical example of the inherent dangers of female power, Daniel attempts to negate Pembroke's challenge to the normative gender traits of the period. In so doing, he also attempts, to some extent, to reassert his own power as a male over his female patron. By returning to Cleopatra the negative qualities garnered from the classical sources, Daniel also reasserts the power of masculine rhetoric. Daniel then furthers this revision to masculine rhetorical figuration by restoring positive masculine traits to Antony's character.

In Pembroke's text, Antony becomes the figure who exudes feminine weakness and irrationality, while Cleopatra is the figure who radiates masculine strength and stoicism. In Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Antony becomes the seemingly innocent man of power who loses himself because he was unable to resist Cleopatra's feminine allure:

My vagabond desires no limits found,
 For lust is endlesse, pleasure hath no bound.
 Thou [Antony] coming from the strictnes of thy Citty,
 The wanton pompe of Courts yet neuer learnedst:
 Inur'd to warrs, in womans wiles vnwittie,
 Whilft others fayn'd, thou fell'st to loue in earnest
 Not knowing women like them best that houer,
 And make least reckning of a doting Louer.

(1.148-55)

Like Pembroke's Cleopatra, Daniel's queen indicates that she, and she alone, is to blame for the defeat and death of Antony. Yet unlike the heroine of *Antonius*, Daniel's Cleopatra blames Antony's defeat on her own immorality and her ability to manipulate Antony's naïvety about the ways of courtly/political love. He knows only war and not the "wonton pompe" of Egypt's court and, therefore, is unable to distinguish between playing at love and truly being in love. Indeed, in this part of her soliloquy, Cleopatra illustrates quite plainly the differences between the western culture of Rome and the eastern culture of Egypt that paved the way for Antony's demise. While Egypt is a place where "lust is endlesse" and "pleasure hath no bound," Rome is described by the "strictnes of thy Citty." As in the original sources for the story of Antony and Cleopatra, Daniel constructs Egypt as dissolute and chaotic compared to the rule and order of Rome. Even more intriguing is the gendered nature of this comparison. Cleopatra clearly is Egypt and represents in her

person all of the iniquities of the foreign east in her own lustful and lascivious nature. Antony, she claims, is not only corrupted by the abundance and moral freedom in Egypt, but also by her “womans wiles” that she used to seduce him from his loyalty to Rome. This section of Cleopatra’s speech, therefore, serves two purposes: it almost completely exonerates Antony of any wrong doing, since as an honourable Roman man he was unable to resist both the material and sensual pleasures of Egypt and Cleopatra, and it also fully reinstates the traditionally negative character traits that Cleopatra embodies as a ruler and a woman. One intriguing fact about this description of Antony’s fall from grace is the manner in which this version of Antony’s character strays from the characterization of the Roman general portrayed in the classical sources for the story. Plutarch, in particular, mentions that Antony (as well as his father before him) was morally weak even before he met Cleopatra. As is clear from Daniel’s inclusion of the Seleucus incident, he was obviously familiar with the source stories. His choice to make Antony seem like the victim of Cleopatra only serves to emphasize his negative portrayal of the queen. Daniel’s comparison between Egypt and Rome, despite its succinctness, emphatically overturns the manner in which Pembroke had refigured the characters of Antony and Cleopatra so as to challenge the traditional dichotomies of gender and power. In Daniel’s play, Cleopatra is shown to be clearly conscious of the political use to which she can employ her sexuality. This image of Cleopatra, of course, is not new. As was shown in Chapter One, Cleopatra as a figure of feminine duplicity, chaos, and emasculation is delineated in the two major classical sources for the story, Plutarch and Dio Cassius, and it is this figuration

of the Egyptian queen that was used most often in early modern rhetoric. Daniel's reinstatement of Cleopatra as a type of negative femininity seems constructed as an answer to the challenge to the ideologies of gender and power that the protégé read in his patroness's *Antonius*.

One of the problems in Daniel's reconfiguration of Cleopatra is the seemingly abrupt manner by which the queen is ennobled at the end of the play. To effect the change of Cleopatra's character from negative to positive, Daniel returns to the structure of Pembroke's play. As was previously discussed, Pembroke highlights Antony's negative qualities in conjunction with presenting Cleopatra's positive qualities. She also emphasizes the political nature of Antony's suicide by constructing his suicide as political rather than personal. Daniel purposely repeats this pattern in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*; however, he transposes the characteristics and actions Pembroke attributed to Antony to his depiction of Cleopatra. Like Antony's character in Pembroke's play, the Cleopatra of Daniel's text seems far more concerned about her political appearance. She clearly states that Antony was a political puppet for whom she had no true love until after his death. Like Pembroke's Antony, Cleopatra is motivated by her need to defeat Octavius on some level and her death is designed to do this. Also like Antony in *Antonius*, Cleopatra is suddenly ennobled at the end of the play. Until the end of act four, Cleopatra seems to have few to no redeeming qualities. For Sanders, Daniel's construction of Cleopatra as a figure of the "anti-ideal" feminine is transformed by his choice to turn his queen,

into an exemplary figure by showing that she has learned to embody, through her suicide, the examples of Virginia and Lucrece. Like those paradigms of female virtue, Cleopatra cleanses herself of sexual stigma through death. While shades of stoicism also color her decision to take her life, making it partly a triumph over authority, Daniel portrays the act primarily as a testament to her submission to dominant gender ideology. (118-19)

Certainly, it is only after she has truly made the decision to end her life that she speaks of Antony in a positive manner claiming that her suicide will allow her to “Fly to my loue, scape my foe, free my soule;/ So shall I act the last act of my glory,/ Dye like a Queene, and rest without controule” (4.2. 116-18). But even here, the political dimensions of her death are clear since she plans to “[d]ye like a Queene.” The personal side of Cleopatra’s suicide is more clearly illustrated in act five by Nuntius, the messenger who relates the queen’s final moments. He parallels Cleopatra’s initial presentation of herself to Antony at Cydnus with her final moments:

Euen as shee went as first to meete her Loue,
 So goes shee now at last againe to finde him.
 But that first, did her greatnes onely proue,
 This last her loue, that could not liue behind him.

(5.95-98)

Nuntius’s claim that at Cydnus Cleopatra wished to present her political power, her “greatnes,” is offset by his claim that at her death she wished to prove her “loue.” It is

this reversal of intent that belatedly redeems the negative portrayal of Cleopatra presented in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*.

These parallels in structure between *Antonius* and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* emphasize the parallels in characterization that Daniel constructs in his play, and these choices illustrate his awareness of Pembroke's challenge to her culture's dominant gender ideology. Nonetheless, instead of having his Cleopatra mirror Pembroke's queen, his Cleopatra mirrors Pembroke's Antony. By returning to Cleopatra the negative qualities that were associated with Antony in *Antonius*, and by emphasizing this association by using a parallel structure to Pembroke's play, Daniel illustrates his understanding of the ideology of Pembroke's play and attempts to negate completely the reorientation that he read in his patroness's text. By re-establishing the classical characters into the rhetorical figurations by which they were traditionally associated—Antony as the morally flawed man who redeems himself and Cleopatra as the inherently deceitful woman who only redeems herself through the love of a good man—Daniel uses his play to reassert the dominant ideologies concerning gender and power in the early modern period. Moreover, while Daniel's construction of Cleopatra evidences his personal anxiety about his relationship with Mary Sidney Herbert, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* could also be read as revealing the anxiety of all men in the age of Elizabeth Tudor.

When investigating how English Renaissance playwrights used historical stories to reflect the concerns of their own time and culture, one inevitably assumes that the presentation of any royal figure denotes a commentary on the state of the

monarchy and the history of England itself. This scholarly habit becomes even more pronounced when dealing with the Senecan closet dramas of the early modern period. By tradition, the Senecan model was best suited for philosophical discussion, especially in relation to issues of power as we have seen in both of the Antony plays by Garnier and Pembroke. Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* is no exception to this. For example, one of the interesting details that Daniel emphasizes in his depiction of the defeated queen is her age. Paying critical attention to this detail of the play may seem somewhat reductive. However, it does deserve attention since Daniel is the only author of the English versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story who presents his queen as old. When Cleopatra is reminiscing about Antony and the love he has shown her, she claims that she knew Antony's love was real since he,

Cam'st but in my beauties waine,
 When new-appearing wrinkles of declining,
 Wrought with the hand of yeeres, seem's to detain
 My graces light, as now but dimly shining.
 Euen in the confines of mine age, when I
 Fayling of what I was, and was but thus:
 (1.159-61)

Daniel constructs his queen with an intriguing facet that is not in any of the source material. While he does not specifically state that Cleopatra is older than Antony, Daniel's construction of the Roman general as the naïve victim of Cleopatra's seductive charms intimates that Antony was not old and wise in the ways of the world

when he faced the charismatic queen. Both Plutarch and Dio Cassius claim that not only was Antony less than morally pure when he met Cleopatra, but that he was also older.¹⁴ Another interesting fact from the source material that Daniel omits in this portion of the text is the fact that Antony had met Cleopatra when she was much younger and the mistress of Julius Caesar. While Daniel could have omitted the detail that Antony and Cleopatra met long ago in their youth simply for dramatic effect, the fact that he makes specific mention of Cleopatra's aging beauty raises an intriguing question. Why would Daniel include a detail missing from the source material and seemingly irrelevant to the action of the story?

As has been argued, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, with its sweeping revision of the antecedent *Antonius*, reveals Daniel's concern with the shaping of public feminine power, a power that had traditionally been considered masculine. The anxiety displayed in the dedication to the text can be connected directly to his patronage relationship with the powerful Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. However, Pembroke, while holding a great deal of influence, was not the most powerful woman in early modern England: this was the position of Elizabeth Tudor, the Virgin Queen. As such, one could read Daniel's inclusion of details about Cleopatra's fading beauty into the larger cultural concern about female rule as represented by Elizabeth I. The Queen was well known for her elevation of younger courtiers as favorites. In discussing Elizabeth's position as an unmarried, female ruler, Lisa Hopkins notes that the "image of the Virgin Queen" was politically advantageous, in that it:

capitalized on Elizabeth's unmarried state instead of allowing it to be perceived as a weakness, and it also provided a very useful framework within which Elizabeth could conduct her relations with the handsome young men she liked to have about her at court. Early in her reign, when she was still relatively inexperienced, she had created a scandal by her flirtation with Leicester; but a Virgin Queen could flirt as much as she liked—and Elizabeth did like, since it flattered her vanity and helped stave off her sense that she was getting old. She was able to use the image in much the same way as the code of courtly love had been used in earlier periods, as a safety-valve for emotions which it would otherwise have been difficult to express but painful to keep hidden. Handsome young courtiers could avow undying devotion to her, in hope of getting promotion at court, and she could gratefully accept their homage; everybody could thus be happy, and the whole thing could be safely governed by clearly defined rules. (42-43)

Not only did Elizabeth use her quasi-romantic relationships with her male courtiers as “a safety-valve for emotions,” she also valued the political advantages that favoritism could have at court. In discussing the rivalry that grew late in Elizabeth's reign between Robert and his father, Cecil, Lord Burghley, and Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex, J.E. Neale remarks that the contentious pairing between the “gouty old man and his puny hunchbacked son” and the “peerless and brilliant Adonis” (329-330) was a political ploy on the part of Elizabeth. For Neale, there is not a:

shaft [that] never went wider of the mark than the idea that Elizabeth was a victim to the physical charms of her Adonis [Essex]. There was too much policy, even in her friendliness. If a guess can be made at her intentions, she contemplated, in the new generation now attaining to power, a repetition of the old Leicester-Burghley combination, a blend of the noble favourite with the more dependable civil servant. (330)

Of course, the game of courtly love that Elizabeth played with her courtiers was no different, in many respects, than that of previous monarchs since “[a]ll monarchs had ‘favorites’” (Neale 213). The one clear difference between Elizabeth and previous monarchs¹⁵ was “the difference in sex” (Neale 213). Most notably this difference “was emphasized by the romantic note which the language of intimacy assumed. It betokened neither a lustful disposition, nor a callous heart; and though the amorous way in which men addressed her may seem highly suspicious, the staggering promiscuity of Elizabeth’s ‘love’ mocks at such a fond credulity” (Neale 213). If one grants that the courtly love game played by Elizabeth I and her courtiers was a superficial method by which political machinations for power were conducted at court, Daniel’s construction of Cleopatra’s character as a woman who uses her beauty and sexuality to secure her position belies his (and his male readers’) anxiety over the seeming fickleness of female royalty. Cleopatra is shown to have no real feelings for Antony before he died, and she clearly understands that it is Antony’s inability to comprehend the political side of love and passion that leads to his destruction at her hands. The connection to Elizabeth I’s Court is also emphasized by Cleopatra’s

speech concerning Antony's naiveté concerning the difference between Egypt and Rome as was previously discussed. The image of Antony, a celebrated and seasoned Roman general, as a man unable to resist or even survive the "laciuous Courte" (1.145) of female-ruled Egypt could be seen as a reflection of the fate of the courtier faced with the pomp and pageantry of the world of the "Fairie Queene." Daniel's portrayal of Cleopatra as the image of the female who uses her power and sexuality to secure her political ambitions is also highlighted by the actions of Octavius Caesar.

After Caesar and Cleopatra meet face to face, Caesar warns his subordinate, Dolabella, about falling victim to Cleopatra's charms. In so doing, Caesar reveals his own understanding of the sexual politics that Cleopatra employs:

What in a passion Dolabella? what? take heede:

Let others fresh examples be thy warning;

What mischiefes these, so idle humors breed,

Whilst error keepes vs from a true discerning.

Her sweetest graces in her saddest cheere:

Presuming on the face that knew the arte

To moue with what aspect so eu'r it were.

But all in vaine, shee takes her ayme amisse,

The ground and marke, her leuel much deceiues;

Time now hath altred all, for neither is

Shee as shee was, nor wee as shee conceiues.

And therefore now, twere best she left such badnes,

Folly in youth is sinne, in age, tis madnes.

(3.2.131-44)

This speech illustrates that Caesar understands how Cleopatra uses her sexuality to ensnare young and powerful men to do her bidding. Caesar's cautioning of Dolabella not to follow the path of Antony is indicated by his reference to "others fresh examples." The fact that Caesar warns Dolabella to beware also illustrates his understanding that Cleopatra still has power. In contrast to the supposed effects Cleopatra has on his subordinate, Caesar's reference to Cleopatra's attempts to use her femininity on him evidence his immunity to the seductive queen. Not only does he state that he is clearly unaffected by her charms, but also that her charms are not what they once were. In particular, like Cleopatra herself, Caesar comments on the queen's age. Cleopatra's attempts to use her "face that knew the arte" to secure her throne and Caesar's mercies are merely political maneuvers. Caesar emphasizes the almost pathetic attempt of the queen to use her physical attributes by his reference to her age. While Caesar claims that such a use of her body when she was young was "sinne," in her later years, he states that her mix of sexuality and politics "tis madnes." Once again Daniel characterizes his queen as a woman who uses her "womanly wiles" for political ends regardless of the disloyalty that such actions show for the dead Antony. Indeed, he makes his queen, because of her age, look ridiculous. Caesar's dismissal of Cleopatra's attempt at seduction is a dismissal of her power. Due to her aging beauty, she no longer has the power to command all men, and

Octavius believes that Cleopatra's apparent inability to understand this state of affairs negates her political acumen.

Throughout *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Daniel's characterization of the Egyptian queen is reinvested with the negative feminine traits usually attached to early modern women by cultural consensus such as inconstancy, lust, and vanity. He also makes the reader perfectly aware that Cleopatra consciously uses her sexual allure and beauty as a political tool, as is clear in her speech concerning her seduction of the hapless Antony. While Octavius feels secure about his own defense against the queen's feminine persuasions, he understands that not all men are so immune. Yet his dismissal of Cleopatra's ability to use her physical and personal attractiveness is what leads to his loss of Cleopatra as a prisoner. Like Octavius, Cleopatra is fully aware that it is her ability to seduce powerful men that allows her to gain her own political power. And like Octavius, she is also fully aware, due to Octavius's own rejection of her, that her ability to use her sexuality is coming to an end. After the meeting with Octavius and Dolabella, Cleopatra illustrates her own understanding of how she has used, and still uses, her physical charms for political gain. On realizing that Octavius does not intend to show her any mercy, Cleopatra claims she will put her beauty to one more use:

What, hath my face yet powre to win a Louer?

Can this torne remnant serue to grace me so,

That it can Casars secrete plots discouer

What he intends with mee and mine to do?

Why then poore Beautie thou hast doone thy last,
 And best good seruice thou could'st doe vnto mee.
 For now the time of death reueal'd thou hast,
 Which in my life didst serue but to vndoe mee.

(4.2.1-8)

Cleopatra's reference to the "Louer" she has gained power over is Dolabella who sends the queen a letter informing her that Octavius means to make Cleopatra and her children a part of his triumph in Rome to publicly show his defeat of Egypt. It is at this point in the play that the redemption of Cleopatra's character begins. She only truly makes her plans to die after she realizes that the political use of her beauty and sexuality has failed to win over Octavius. Her statement that her "poore Beautie" has done its "last/And best good seruice" refers to her ability to manipulate Dolabella into betraying Rome as symbolized by Octavius Caesar. This speech also reveals the beginning of Cleopatra's rehabilitation to a more positive example of femininity and power. At the same time that Cleopatra thanks her beauty for allowing her to discover Octavius's true plans for her, the queen also admits that it was her dependence on her beauty and feminine sexuality that has led her to this particular point. Making a specific reference to her sexual power, she claims that "the time of death reueal'd thou hast,/ Which in my life didst serue but to vndoe mee." Here Cleopatra admits that it was her reliance on her ability to enslave men of power that not only gave her power but also was what caused her to lose her power. After this admission, Cleopatra decides to die so as to escape Caesar's public humiliation of her and to join

Antony. By having his queen admit that her rule, based as it was on her sexuality and her femininity, was corrupt and corrupting, Daniel's play can be read as indicating the general anxiety surrounding female rule in the early modern period. In constructing the character of Cleopatra, Daniel combines the traditional figuration of the Egyptian queen as a negative portrayal of feminine faults (fickleness, abundant and depraved sensuality, idleness) with details that can be seen as being representative of the royal court of his time. In particular, he presents Cleopatra as an older woman who uses her sexuality politically to gain the love and loyalty of her male admirers to secure her own position. The fact that these courtiers are portrayed as naïve men who are overwhelmed by the sumptuousness of the queen's court only heightens the comparison. The similarities between Daniel's construction of Egypt's infamous queen and Elizabeth I highlight the problematic nature of female rule in the early modern period.

As a member of the household of the powerful Earl of Pembroke, Samuel Daniel certainly would have been aware of the importance attached to being one of the young male courtiers who gained Elizabeth's favour. The detrimental effects of Elizabeth's disfavour on the political careers of aspiring young men would have been made especially clear to him through his association with Mary Sidney Herbert and her family. In particular, the fate of her brother, Sir Philip Sidney and her uncle, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, would have been widely known as examples of what happened to those who attained the favour and the disfavour of the Virgin Queen. Although "there is no evidence that" Sir Philip Sidney and Samuel Daniel

“ever met” (Seronsy 21), Daniel does make reference to Sidney and his literary ideologies in the prefatory material of the play, suggesting that he was at least familiar with the legend of the fallen courtier. While there is no single courtier who can be suggested as being represented by the character of Antony in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, one could suggest that the characterization of Cleopatra as an older woman who uses the love of a seemingly younger and naïve man was connected to what both Hopkins and Neale identify as the courtly love manner of politics in Elizabeth I’s court. Yet, it is not only Elizabeth’s sexual politics to which Daniel alludes in his depiction of Cleopatra. More significantly, he also draws attention to Elizabeth’s struggles with her courtiers over the fraught matter of her support for Protestant reform (both at home and abroad) that demonstrates the political dimensions of Daniel’s play.

The political trouble surrounding religious reform was and remained problematic almost through the entirety of Elizabeth’s reign. The potential political threat of the Catholic Church and its attempt to bring all of Europe back to Mother Rome was, of course, the most notable religious issue with which Elizabeth had to negotiate. This, as many critics have noted, was no easy task.¹⁶ This task was made even more difficult given the fact that many of Elizabeth’s more prominent courtiers continually advised Elizabeth to take a stronger and a far more public stance in defense of the Protestant cause on the Continent. As was argued in the previous chapter, some scholars have looked to Mary Sidney Herbert’s *Antonius* as a political drama that seeks to guide Elizabeth I towards a more active and public position on the

part of the Protestant cause. The impetus to see *Antonius* as a political drama which intends to advise the queen on her duty to the Protestant church stems from the close association Pembroke had to the Protestant cause. Nonetheless, as previously argued, one can also read Pembroke's play as a criticism of Elizabeth's courtiers as opposed to a criticism of Elizabeth herself. Just as Daniel read Pembroke's text as a play questioning traditional gender traits, it seems he also read Pembroke's play as a subtle defense of Elizabeth and her moderate position on religious matters. Like his rewriting of the issues of gender in Pembroke's play, Daniel uses *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* to assert his own interpretation of Elizabeth's policies regarding the defense of the Protestant church in early modern Europe. Specifically, it is through Daniel's construction of similarities between Cleopatra and Elizabeth I and the connection of the faith of a ruler with the faith of his/her people that Daniel's second response to Pembroke's text can be found. Daniel uses his text as a rebuttal of Pembroke's views and to voice the concerns of the Protestant nobles with regards to Elizabeth's religious policies, a strategy by which he hoped to secure his own political future.

One of the seeming constants of the Senecan inspired drama imported from the Continent is the inclusion of speeches, either by the characters themselves or by one of the choruses, concerning fate. Specifically, these speeches tend to focus on how the conflicts found in the plays are a result of either a fickle fortune or uncaring deities. *Antonius* has passages that deal with the theme of the precarious nature of fortune.¹⁷ Therefore, one cannot be surprised to find such issues expounded upon in

The Tragedie of Cleopatra. Yet, when one examines the speeches in Daniel's text that deal with the will of the gods and religion, one notices that they are indeed different in that not all of these speeches are the generalized railing at fate and the gods often found in the genre. In particular, Daniel makes specific reference to the duty of a ruler to uphold religious faith so that his/her people will also learn to be faithful. In act three, scene one, the reader encounters a philosophical-political diatribe on the necessity of religious faith in ruling. The scene is comprised of a conversation between Philostratus and Arius, two of Cleopatra's councilors who have defected, so to speak, to Octavius in order to save their lives, in which they discuss the destruction of Egypt. Both Philostratus and Arius, as former councilors of the queen, represent the power structure of Egypt. Arius admits that the failure of Egypt began with the failure of those in power to recognize the signs of pending defeat at the hands of the Romans: "Yet what weake sight did not discern from far/This black-arysing tempest, all confounding?/Who did not see we should be what we are,/When pride and ryot grew to such abounding" (3.153-56). As a member of the power structure, Arius takes responsibility for not being a better steward and example for the people of Egypt. He further claims that it is luxuriant prosperity and the lack of faith it has engendered that has finally caused the fall of Egypt:

In wanton thoughts, with lust and ease made feeble,
 Then when vnwary peace with fat-fed pleasure,
 New-fresh inuented ryots still detected,
 Purchas'd with all the *Ptolomies* ritch treasure,

Our lawes, our Gods, our misteries neglected.

Who saw not how this confluence of vice,

This innondation of disorders, must

At length of force pay back the bloody price

Of sad destruction, (a reward for lust.)

(3.1.60-68)

The tenor of this speech, to a large extent, is in accordance with the customary Senecan-styled exhortations on the inevitability of Fortune. Yet unlike other speeches of its kind, it makes a very specific reference to religious observance. Arius claims that Egypt has defeated itself because its people have lost themselves in “wanton thoughts” and are “with lust and ease made feeble.” This has happened because of the neglect of “Our lawes, our Gods, [and] our misteries.” Egypt is defeated because it has lost its morality as represented by the lack of faith or, as Arius terms it, the “dissolute impiety” (3.1.57) of its people, including its queen. While there is no specific naming of the queen herself, there is a correlation between Egypt’s loss of faith and its destruction. Arius suggests that if it had not been for “all the *Ptolomies* ritch treasure,” then the inordinate amount of immoral behavior in Cleopatra’s court would not have occurred. The use of the name Ptolomy, the family name of Cleopatra, clearly connects her to the loss of faith experienced by Egypt. This suggestion is then clearly defined in the chorus of act four.

In the fourth chorus of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Daniel once again refers specifically to the role the lack of religious faith plays in the downfall of Egypt. The

chorus laments the loss of the Egypt of the past; an Egypt renowned for being “strict religions strange obseruer,/State-orderer Zeale, the best rule-keeper,/ fostering still in temprate feruor” (Chorus 4.2-4). Here there is an implicit connection drawn between the past glory of Egypt and its religion. The chorus questions why Egypt has moved from being a state of “Zeale” and “religions strange obseruer” to a place that has lost “so wholly/ all religion, Law and order” (Chorus 4.5-6). It is the loss of religion and the laws that come from religion that has caused Egypt’s destruction. Unlike Arius’s speech, however, the cause of this loss of religious and state order is not suggested but is explicitly stated. It is the fault of the ruler and those in power that have caused Egypt to lose faith:

Yet they that haue the stearne in guiding,
 tis their fault that should preuent it,
 For oft they seeing their Country slyding,
 take their ease, as though contented,
 Wee imitate the greater powres,
 The Princes manners fashion ours.

(Chorus 4. 23-27)

For the chorus, the fall of Egypt, due to its lack of religious faith and order, is a direct result of the failings of the “Princes” of the land, who are more concerned with their own personal pleasure, and who are to blame for the Roman conquest of Egypt. It is the state and its people who suffer when those who are “guiding” are blinded by “ease” and being “contented.” Not only do the rulers indulge themselves, they also

act as examples for the ordinary folk who imitate their behavior. In Daniel's text, the personal flaws of the monarch become national weaknesses:

Th'example of their light regarding,

vulgar looseness much incences:

Vice vncontrould, growes wide inlarging,

Kings small faults, be great offenses.

And this hath set the window open

vnto lycence, lust and ryot.

(Chorus 4.29-34)

The philosophical tenet here is that if the ruler is immoral, then the country he/she rules will also be immoral. The immorality of the ruler is then specifically linked to the lack of religious faith and fervor on the part of the ruled. It is at this point that the political reading of Daniel's play becomes more substantial.

When taken in combination, Daniel's reference to Cleopatra's age and his pointed remarks about the responsibility of rulers to ensure the religious faith and morality of the people they rule can be read as a reference to the ongoing religious debates that were prevalent in the early modern period. In particular, they seem to target Elizabeth I's policies regarding religion. However, rather than focussing the reader's attention on the divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants, it seems more likely that Daniel's play was referencing the political divide within early modern Protestantism itself. In his associations with members of the nobility, it is noteworthy that Daniel clearly aligned himself with those courtiers who were

identified closely with strong Protestant leanings. While there is no evidence that Daniel was personally an advocate of the Protestant cause, there is biographical evidence that he tried to link his professional and public career to those who were seen as staunchly religious. The first indication of Daniel's attempt to connect himself to those in power who were recognizably Protestant comes very early in his career. In 1586 Daniel, who was employed by Sir Edward Stafford, Ambassador to Paris, sent from France two letters to Sir Francis Walsingham. According to Rees the "letters to Walsingham are reports, not very accurate, on current affairs in Paris, offered in the hope of persuading Walsingham to employ him further" (7).¹⁸ For Rees the letters' "principal interest is their revelation of a young man who is eager to participate in the management of things—not by any means a scholarly recluse willing to retire from the pressures of active life" (7). While neither of Daniel's primary biographers, Joan Rees or Cecil Seronsy, mention Daniel's personal religious beliefs, they each connect Daniel to a list of courtiers notably connected to the Protestant cause including Henry Herbert and Mary Sidney Herbert (and, by association, the Sidney family), the Earl and Countess of Pembroke, Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, and William Blount, Lord Mountjoy. Considering that Daniel did associate with those at court noted for their support of a more radical Protestantism, the references to Cleopatra's age and the discussion of how faith is lost through the fault of rulers in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* becomes far more pertinent.

By the time that Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* was first published (1594), Elizabeth Tudor had finally been able to solidly establish the church she had

envisioned when early in her reign she had brought the Bill of Supremacy to Parliament in 1559.¹⁹ While Elizabeth used her power to promote an attitude of religious moderation, there were many nobles, both Catholic and Protestant, who did not approve of the Queen's attempt to include and, to some degree, pacify all parties. For some Protestants, the clause that demanded ministers retain the vestments that "had been in use in the second year of Edward VI's reign" (Somerset 102) was deeply disturbing. Elizabeth's insistence on maintaining the sumptuary codes of the old church offended the more staunch Protestant nobles who "maintained that they were relics of popery which acted as a snare for the ignorant by encouraging superstition" (Somerset 102). However, Elizabeth refused to listen to her councilors on this point and "would never concede that her religious settlement had been in any way inadequate" (Somerset 103). As J.E. Neale suggests, Elizabeth's refusal to follow the advice of her Protestant lords and to eliminate the sumptuary conditions of church service was motivated as much by political as by personal feelings:

[q]uite apart from her strong, personal dislike for Genevan views—a result of her Lutheran upbringing as well as temperament—if she had given way to the Puritan party she would have ruined her policy of comprehension, and perhaps goaded her Catholic subjects into revolt. Thus in the eyes of these godly men she sometimes seemed more favourable to Catholics than to themselves, and loud were their protests against the caps, copes, surplices, and ceremonies that she insisted upon, and the ritual she maintained in her own Chapel. (178-79)

Other than perhaps a personal liking towards the display of the older ceremonies, Elizabeth's religious policy also illustrated her awareness of the larger political implications of becoming an obvious political and potentially military target for the larger Continental powers who had clearly aligned themselves with the Roman Catholic Church, most notably Spain. As was discussed in the previous chapter, as a female monarch, Elizabeth had to be extremely careful when asserting her power on the larger world stage. She, unlike perhaps a male monarch such as Philip of Spain, could not construct herself as the warrior who could aggressively and publicly force her religious beliefs on others.²⁰ Nor according to biographers, was this something she could personally feel was appropriate. Elizabeth enforced her own moderate views as the best possible method of ensuring political stability both abroad and at home. Yet despite Elizabeth's success in mandating a foundation of moderation for the church in England early in her career, she was not able to truly secure her policies until the early 1590s.

During most of the 1580s, Elizabeth I's apparent tolerance of what were considered more "Romanish" practices within religious services and her increasing restrictions of the more stridently Puritan elements of the English court delayed the firm establishment of her control over the Protestant Church in England. The continuing political conflict between the Crown and the Puritans, to a large degree, headed towards an uneasy resolution in the years following the religious reformers' inability to enact major political change in the 1586-1587 Parliament. As Anne Somerset so aptly notes, "1588 was a bad year for the Protestant movement" (631).

Not only was the Protestant cause weakened by the loss of John Field and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester,²¹ but also the year saw the appearance of a series of anonymous tracts that caused a great deal of political agitation—the Martin Marprelate pamphlets. The tracts themselves were “a series of savagely satirical attacks on the bishops” (Somerset 631) of the Church of England. In the Marprelate tracts, the Puritan view of the unreformed Church was displayed and disseminated for the public and, due to the “witty, railing style” and “irreverent denunciations” of Government sanctioned clergy, the “works were vastly popular” (Somerset 631). While the tracts echoed the same sentiments as the Puritan militants as far as the problems with the church organization and ceremony were concerned, their publication was perhaps the final nail in the coffin for the Puritan movement during Elizabeth’s reign. Because of the public and slanderous nature of the Marprelate tracts, the authorities took decisive action to find the source of the publications (Neale 315; Sommerset 632). It was the search for Martin Marprelate and his infamous writings that finally enabled the Queen to find and silence those who were actively trying to reform the Church of England. J.E. Neale notes that in:

the course of the hunt for Martin Marprelate, the ecclesiastical authorities came across traces of the Puritans’ organization. A clever piece of detective work, in the vein of Walsingham’s political ferreting, put further details in their hands, and then Whitgift struck. In 1589-1590 the nascent presbyterian order, which had spread itself into about twenty counties, was destroyed and its leaders taken into custody. (315)

According to Somerset the Martin Marprelate tracts did “irreparable damage to the Puritan movement” and in “1591, nine of the ringleaders, including [Thomas] Cartwright (who had been back in England since 1585), were summoned before the High Commission” (632). Although Cartwright and those with whom he was arrested were found innocent of the charges of sedition (which was punishable by death), others were not so fortunate and “[a]t least fifty-nine individuals were arrested for holding these views, ten of whom died in jail. Two leaders of the movement named Barrow and Greenwood were tried in March 1593 and, having been convicted of producing seditious writings, they were hanged the following month” (Somerset 633). In essence, the Martin Marprelate tracts, as blatant attacks on the Anglican Church and, therefore, the queen, allowed Elizabeth and her clergy to eliminate the Puritan threat. It also allowed Elizabeth to further display her power as monarch. Her lengthy battle against the religious division within her own country was finally expunged and “the Church of 1559 was handed intact to her successor” (Somerset 633).²² However, not all of the members of her court agreed with her decisions regarding the Puritans, and it is this issue to which the speeches about religion in Daniel’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* make reference.

Like Daniel’s choice to refer specifically to Cleopatra’s age in his text, his references to the connection between the state and religion can be read as allusions to Elizabeth I and the country’s religious struggles. As was mentioned previously, there is no indication that Daniel himself was a militant or even strong Protestant. However, many of the courtiers to whom he attempted to attach himself were

certainly known as supporters of a more staunch Protestantism than Elizabeth I had established with her 1559 Church of England. The fact that the last of the more extremist Puritans were finally eliminated as political threats by 1593, fits with the time frame for Daniel's writing of his play. As Russell Leavenworth notes, when discussing Daniel's entry into the Pembroke household, that since "*Cleopatra* is entered in the *Stationers' Register* on the 19th of October of 1593, . . . there is no question of the date [of Daniel's association with Pembroke] being any later than 1592" (2: nt 4).²³ Daniel's composition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, therefore, would have fallen between 1591-1593, the very time when the leaders of the Puritan movement would have been on trial or in prison on the suspicion of sedition. This time-frame is suggestive of Daniel's choice to include such strong statements about religion and ruling, but the question remains as to what he may have been trying to do by implying such a connection. Rather than reading his inclusion of religious statements as a personal protest against Elizabeth's policies regarding the Protestant cause during the early modern period, the statements can be read as a political strategy on Daniel's part to connect himself more fully with the men of power with whom he wished to be associated.

Information about Daniel's life indicates that he was well aware of the need for a writer to acquire a powerful patron for both financial and literary success. As was mentioned previously, Daniel, while working for the English ambassador to Paris, wrote several letters to Sir Francis Walsingham in the hope that he could gain a position within the powerful courtier's service. Although this did not happen, there

are other incidents in Daniel's life that suggest that he was conscious of the political machinations needed to gain the favour of those in power. Early in his career, Daniel was in the service of Sir Edward Dymoke, and during his tenure with Dymoke a curious event occurred. In attempting to establish a timeline for Daniel's association with the Pembroke family, Joan Rees points to a piece of paper for evidence, specifically a letter written by Dymoke condemning his uncle, the Earl of Lincoln. The prolonged family disagreement finally led to a court date with Lincoln bringing a case against Dymoke in 1596. During the period of the family conflict, Dymoke claimed he tried to reconcile with his uncle but to no avail, and in his anger, wrote a presumably disparaging letter. Dymoke never sent the letter to Lincoln as:

his friends dissuaded him from sending it and he gave it to 'his servant Samuel Daniel' to be burnt. Daniel, however, instead of burning it, put in into a hole in the wall of Dymoke's house in Lincoln. Four years later Dymoke sold this house to his uncle and in the course of some alterations the wall was pulled down and the letter discovered among the stones. (Rees 8-9)

While Rees uses this event as a way of proving that Daniel was still employed by Dymoke in early 1592, she makes no comment upon how the event reflects upon Daniel's character. In his reference to the Dymoke letter, Seronsy claims Daniel's action of keeping the damning letter arose from Daniel's cautious tendencies and his "characteristic temperance" (19). However, considering that Seronsy also notes that the effect of Daniel's behavior led to a "legal action that did not end until 1610 with the imposition of a very heavy fine on Sir Edward Dymoke" (19), it is intriguing that

neither biographer suggests a more political intention to Daniel's actions.²⁴ But why would Daniel have kept such a letter? Certainly, he would have realized the possible consequences that would arise if Lincoln found or was given the document. Maybe, like his attempt to proffer himself as an agent in Walsingham's service, Daniel's safekeeping of the letter was part of his own strategy to attach himself to those in power in Elizabeth's court. If this is the case, the Dymoke letter might have been used by Daniel either to keep himself in Dymoke's employ, to keep himself safe from becoming a scapegoat in the powerful family's internal feud, or to ingratiate himself with the more powerful Earl of Lincoln. While such actions were never taken, the incident does raise some interesting speculations about how far Daniel was willing to go to advance his career. If he was willing to disobey the man to whom he owed allegiance as a means to greater preferment, his use of his own writings to criticize the Queen's religious policies in order to ingratiate himself to powerful patrons seems far more likely.

The conflict that arose between Elizabeth and the more militant Puritan movement in early modern England involved more than one powerful courtier who was not pleased with how the Queen responded to those who questioned her religious statutes. When Elizabeth empowered John Aylmer to deal with the Puritan "threat," several of her high-ranking councilors "such as Leicester, Mildmay and Walsingham, were naturally aghast at Aylmer's activities, and even Burghley, who was less indulgent to the Puritans, was highly critical of the Bishop" (Somerset 626). The same courtiers were also highly critical of John Whitgift who continued the work

Aylmer had begun. They saw Elizabeth's actions of empowering her bishops as a political maneuver that could cause her trouble with those in power in her Court. While this was a matter of religion, it was also in a very real sense an attack on Elizabeth's power as a monarch. The refusal of the Puritans to support Elizabeth's vision of the Church of England could be construed as a refusal to recognize fully Elizabeth's power as a monarch. The reaction of Elizabeth to those who opposed her, harsh as it seemed, was indeed a political maneuver, but one that illustrated to the men who surrounded her that she was the monarch with all the power that the position entailed. Elizabeth's hard line stance on the Church of England also emphasized her attempt to resolve the division between Catholic and Protestant beliefs within England. While England was a Protestant country in a political sense, the retention of parts of the ceremonies of the Catholic Mass that the Queen had incorporated into her church allowed those of her people who still were Catholic at heart to be included, on some level, into the new church. Indeed, for Elizabeth "the Puritans represented just as grave a threat to her as did the Catholics" (Somerset 633). The equation of these two groups in Elizabeth's eyes was not founded on religious belief but rather on her political perceptions. Like the radical Catholics who sought to assassinate or discredit Elizabeth, the radical Puritans also attempted politically and publicly to limit the monarch's power. Neither could be allowed to succeed and given the fact that the Puritans eventually rallied and eliminated the monarchy and executed Charles I, Elizabeth's fears seem well justified.

The references to Cleopatra's age and the destruction of Egypt through the ruler's lack of public and staunch religious conviction in Daniel's play can be seen as intending to echo the thoughts of those nobles to whom he is most often linked. In fact, it seems likely that Daniel, with his reference to Sir Philip Sidney's death in Zutphen in the dedication to the 1594 text, links Antony's death to both Cleopatra's actual betrayal and her implied lack of religious faith. Considering his earlier attempts to gain Walsingham's favour and his association with the Pembroke family, reading the character Cleopatra as a figure for Elizabeth is not a substantial leap of logic. As a public figure, Sir Philip Sidney was a courtier renowned for his martial as well as his literary ability, a posthumous legacy obviously enhanced, promoted, and constructed by his familial alliances, including Daniel's patron, Mary Sidney Herbert. The religious references one finds in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* may be read as Daniel's attempt to further align himself with those powerful nobles who were as passionate about the Protestant cause as Sidney was. The construction of Elizabeth as Cleopatra is suggested through the mention of Sidney and, thereby, of his literary and political ideologies since it was a cause that the Protestant courtiers of Elizabeth I's court could never convince their monarch fully and publicly to support. Like Cleopatra, she was not zealous in her religious stance, especially on the political and public stage. One could also claim that the frustrations and difficulties encountered by those men in power who attempted to gain the Queen's approval and financial support for the religious wars in Europe could be read, by some, as a betrayal of those very men of power, such as Leicester, who helped Elizabeth secure her throne. This reading of

the text is further enhanced if one reads Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* as a response to the issues of gender and power found in Pembroke's *Antonius*. As was argued in the previous chapter, it is somewhat difficult to read *Antonius* as a play that criticizes Elizabeth I's policy of religious moderation. Indeed Pembroke's play seems to do the opposite in criticizing those courtiers who were unable to understand or accept the singular politic position that Elizabeth faced as a single female ruler.

Daniel's reference to Sidney in the dedication and his characterization of Cleopatra as an aging and selfish monarch could have been constructed to gain the attention and interest of the Protestant nobles. In this sense, Daniel, like Pembroke, is directing the political polemic of his play towards the members of Elizabeth I's court instead of the Queen herself. However, instead of suggesting or advising those male courtiers on how they should act towards their monarch, Daniel's construction of Cleopatra allies him with those men who were perhaps unable to fully accept Elizabeth's royal power because of her gender. Perhaps, more importantly, by including in his play veiled allusions to the Protestant struggle in early modern England, Daniel was fashioning himself as a man who shared the sensibilities, and the possible frustrations, of those members of Elizabeth's court whose political agendas were blocked by the power of the female monarch who disagreed with them.

The success of Daniel's rhetorical ploys within the dedication and the play itself is suggested by the patrons with whom he became associated after the publication of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, including Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, and Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy. Both of Daniel's new patrons had connections to the

Protestant cause and Sir Philip Sidney. Greville was one of Sidney's closest friends, and it was Greville who eventually wrote about Sidney's life. Blount was a friend to another courtier clearly aligned with the Protestant cause, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, the stepson of Robert Dudley and the husband of Sidney's widow, Frances Walsingham. Essex's involvement in the religious strife on the Continent is illustrated by the fact that in "his will Philip [Sidney] had symbolically bequeathed to Devereux one of his two best swords, thereby handing on to him the dual role of Leicester's political heir and the future leadership of England's defense of international Protestantism" (Brennan 99). Of course, as members of the courtly circle of the Dudley-Sidney-Herbert alliance, it is quite likely Daniel would have come into contact with these men. Be that as it may, the fact that there is no evidence before 1593 that either of these men was supporting Daniel's writing is suggestive that perhaps they read Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* for the political statement that it was and became interested in offering Daniel patronage after its publication. This was especially fortunate for Daniel since it is also after the publication of the play that the writer lost the patronage of Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke.

By the time *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* was published in 1594, the patronage relationship between Samuel Daniel and Pembroke had apparently ceased to exist. According to Seronsy by 1593, around the time of the completion of the play, there "are strong indications that Daniel, whose allegiance and high regard for the countess continued throughout his career, was already drawing away from the rather exclusive association with her at Wilton" (60). Joan Rees deals with the disintegration of the

patron-writer relationship between Pembroke and Daniel far more fully, claiming that 1594 “was a monstrous, nearly disastrous year, for in the course of it some great change took place in Daniel’s fortunes which drove him away from Wilton and threatened to overwhelm him completely” (62). While Seronsy seems to think that Daniel retired from Wilton voluntarily, Rees surmises that the problem that “drove him away from Wilton” was not due to Pembroke but her husband, Henry Herbert. She suggests that the break from the Pembroke household might have been rooted in “some rift with the old Earl” (63). Furthermore, she notes that such a “rift” could have been sparked by Daniel’s own actions since he “may have expected some post in the Earl’s gift which never came his way and [had] grown tired of a dependency which perhaps bound him too strictly” (64). Eve Rachel Sanders claims that by 1593, “Daniel appears to have become embroiled in the quarrel between Fulke Greville and Sidney [Pembroke] over who would assume the role of her brother’s literary executor” (132).²⁵ However, the fact that Pembroke ceased to be Daniel’s patroness between the completion of the writing of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and its publication (1593-1594) suggests that the play itself could have been, at least partially, responsible for the rupture.

As has been argued, Daniel uses his play to rewrite the ideologies of gender and politics found in Pembroke’s *Antonius*. Within his text he re-establishes the traditional patriarchal values of gender that the characters of Cleopatra and Antony represented in the early modern period. By doing so, he negates Pembroke’s attempt to undercut the arbitrary nature of gender traits that were the foundations of the

masculine rhetorical figures that were culturally promulgated. Daniel also uses his text to invert Pembroke's political discourse. By his specific references to the loss of religion and, hence, order in Egypt through the inability of Cleopatra to restrain her passions and lasciviousness, Daniel enforces the idea of the negative consequences of female rule. In doing so, he writes against the political context of Pembroke's play which suggests that the inability of Protestant courtiers in the court of Elizabeth I to advance their political and religious agendas was based on their inability fully to endorse or recognize the power of the crown when it was worn by a woman. Pembroke uses her play to criticize the courtiers for their own lack of loyalty to Elizabeth, due to her gender, as monarch. Daniel uses his play to support those same courtiers by laying the blame of loss status and power on the fickleness and inconstancy of a woman. By completely reversing the issues of gender and power found in Pembroke's text, Daniel subverts Pembroke's own voice and power. He attempts, through his own dramatic effort, to strip Pembroke's writing of political validity. Since it is reasonable to assume that Pembroke, as Daniel's patroness, would have read *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* before it was published, the fact that her patronage of Daniel ended before 1594 can be read as her response to her protégé's using his writing to negate her own. The breakdown of the Pembroke-Daniel patronage relationship suggests that she not only read Daniel's play, but also understood (and did not appreciate) its implications.

The idea that Pembroke discontinued her patronage of Daniel due to his production of a text that opposed the views of gender and power found in *Antonius* is

further evidenced by the circumstances surrounding the renewal of the Pembroke's patronage. In 1595, things seemed to be going well for Daniel who "was under the protection of Greville who interceded on his behalf with the queen" (Sanders 132). However, Greville was not able to "procure Daniel a position at court, and he was left to take refuge instead in the household of Mountjoy" (Sanders 133). By 1605, Daniel had succeeded in attaining a court position but, ironically, it was a position that came very close to ending his career forever. Rees notes that by 1604 Daniel had finally achieved a court position as the "Children of the Chapel were reestablished as Children of the Queen's Revels by patent . . . and Daniel was appointed licenser" (96).²⁶ However, instead of being a position that helped his career either financially or personally, Daniel's appointment as the Queen's Licenser was filled with trouble. According to Rees, because of financial problems with the other men named in the patent, by 1609 "Daniel was again in acute financial trouble" (97). Other than the monetary entanglements the bond brought, the patent also caused a great deal of trouble for Daniel on a political level. During his tenure as licenser, Daniel appears to have made some disastrous choices in the kind of plays he allowed to be staged. In particular, Daniel allowed three politically charged plays to be staged, including: *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), by John Marston, *Eastward Ho!* (1605), a collaboration between George Chapman, John Marston, and Ben Jonson, and his own drama, *Philotas* (1605) (Rees 97; Seronsy 117-118). Rees notes that "the choice of plays presented during Daniel's term as licenser was singularly unfortunate" (97). Furthermore she states that,

[t]he Company [Children of the Queen's Revels] did not appear at Court during the winter of 1605-1606 and was thereafter known as the Children of the Revels, having forfeited Anne's patronage through its indiscretions.

Whether Daniel severed his connection with the company in the April of 1605 because of disagreement over policy, or whether as licenser he had by that time made too many mistakes or if there is some other explanation of this rather curious story, there are no means at present of knowing. It is certain, however, that the production of *Philotas* brought about the climax of what must have been a very anxious period for him. (Rees 97)

Daniel's *Philotas*, like *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, was a closet drama written in the Senecan style. Also like *Cleopatra*, *Philotas* used historical material to comment on political affairs. However, unlike *Cleopatra*, *Philotas* was a source of serious trouble for Daniel. The most public of these difficulties was the fact that the play "resulted in Daniel being called before the Privy Council charged with having, under the cover of an ancient story, commented seditiously on the trial and execution of Essex in 1601" (Rees 98; Seronsy 52-53).²⁷ Although it seems the Privy Council never punished Daniel,²⁸ the *Philotas* affair caused some severe difficulties for him on a financial level. Specifically, the scandal resulted in the loss of his connection to Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, "who for some years had been Daniel's patron and had himself been connected with the Essex plot, [and was a man who] apparently resented Daniel's reviving of the affair three years after the trial" (Seronsy 53). By 1607, Daniel had lost his major male patrons (Mountjoy, Hertford) partially as a result of

the political blunder he had made with his production of *Philotas*. The troubles with *Philotas* and the death of Mountjoy, in 1606, left Samuel Daniel's career in a precarious state. To perhaps alleviate his financial woes, Daniel published a revised edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* that Sanders claims "may have helped to accomplish . . . a rapprochement with Sidney" (133). The contention that Pembroke was once again taking an interest in Daniel at this point is strengthened by her support of him after the scandal. After being rejected by Mountjoy, Daniel wrote a "letter to Robert Cecil, chief minister of James I, in which he offers to withdraw publication of *Philotas* in exchange for enough money to leave court and 'bury' himself out of the way. Fortunately for Daniel, both Anne of Denmark and Mary Sidney stepped into the breach" (Sanders 133). The result was that, with the support of these influential women, Daniel "found financial security in the Queen's service as a groom of the Privy Chamber" (Sanders 133). Indeed, the 1607 version of *Cleopatra* would have been far more acceptable to Pembroke than Daniel's earlier version of the play due in large part to the many substantial changes Daniel made to the text and the dedication.

Between 1594 and 1607, Daniel published *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* seven times. Yet not all of these editions had significant changes. According to Russell Leavenworth, the most substantial changes to the text occurred between the original 1594 edition and the one that was published in 1607. Indeed, Leavenworth argues that "Daniel's last revision of *Cleopatra* [1607] was so thoroughly reorganized as to constitute an entirely new version of the poem" (16). Perhaps the most well known critical argument as to why Daniel made such a change to the play in 1607 is that he

was influenced by William Shakespeare's version of the story staged between 1607-1608. Joan Rees claims that:

the main question, as concerns Daniel, is whether, after his arm's length approach to the theatre in *Philotas*, he did not come more under the influence of the supreme popular dramatist, Shakespeare; or to put it in a different way, whether, remaining short of money, he did not try to recast his *Cleopatra* in the hope of profiting, financially, by another man's example. (107)

In opposition to this view, Leavenworth argues that the "guiding principle of most of Daniel's revisions were clarification" (19). Yet, it is reasonable to suggest that he had a more monetary and pressing reason for the revisions—to regain the patronage of Mary Herbert Sidney. Far more than simple "clarifications," it seems significant that for the 1607 edition of Daniel's play the majority of the revisions deal with cutting or rewriting those parts of the 1594 text that implied criticism of Pembroke's *Antonius*. For the 1607 *Cleopatra*, the scenes and speeches are altered, cut and rearranged, and the reader is shown a far more sympathetic figuration of Cleopatra. Furthermore, the 1594 dedication, which revealed tensions in the patronage relationship between Pembroke and Daniel, is almost completely revised for the 1607 version of the text that was reprinted in 1611. It is through these changes that one can view the last amended version of the play as a possible peace offering made to Mary Sidney Herbert.

It is very easy for a reader to note the differences between the 1594 and 1607 editions of Samuel Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, especially with regards to

how the main figure of the play is presented. Rather than the predominantly negative characterization of Cleopatra of the 1594 edition, the 1607 figuration of the queen is far more positive. The 1607 version, while still opening with the appearance of the defeated queen, offers a completely different sense of her character. In his reorganization of the text, Daniel opens the play with the touching scene of Cleopatra saying farewell to her son, Caesarion. While this scene occurs in the 1594 version of the play, it comes much later and correlates with the movement of Cleopatra's character from a more negative to a more positive representation. The scene in its original position (4.1) is emotive and is used to show the change in Cleopatra's character from selfish wanton to loving parent, while the scene in 1607 is positioned and reworked to fully capitalize on the figure of Cleopatra as the grieving mother. The repositioning and alteration of this scene significantly changes the first impression the reader has of the character of Cleopatra. Rather than finding a woman who laments that she has lost "the worlds chiefe ritches" (1594 1.1. 26), the reader finds a mother who defines worth on a more personal level. Rather than being worried about her material wealth, she is concerned on a maternal level with her son, Caesarion, whom she calls her "pretious iem, the chiefest I haue left" and "the iewell of my soule" (1607 1.1.2-3).²⁹ Rather than the grasping and greedy queen of 1594, the reader is shown the anxious mother willing to do anything to save her son. This change is emphasized by Daniel's decision to have Cleopatra appear and enact her feelings, rather than have her emotions and speeches reported by Rodon. This more

positive version of Cleopatra is then strengthened by further details that Daniel adds to the 1607 version, specifically the death of Antony.

The 1594 version of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, while certainly reminding the reader of Antony's demise, does not elaborate on the circumstances of his death. In the 1607 version the details of Antony's death are added to the text. In act one, scene two, Daniel uses Octavius's servant Directus to voice the circumstances surrounding Antony's death. In particular, Daniel relates two important details missing from the 1594 version: the idea that Antony committed suicide because he had been told that Cleopatra was dead, and the vision of Cleopatra and her serving women hauling the almost dead body of Antony into the monument. These changes allow Daniel to rehabilitate his Cleopatra from a selfish wanton to a grieving partner of the fallen Antony. The question remains as to why Daniel chose to make such a revision. Earlier studies of Daniel's revisions claim that the 1607 version of *Cleopatra* was directly affected by William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-1608).³⁰ However, it is only recently that critics have looked to Daniel's changes as being related to his renewed patronage with Mary Sidney Herbert. Sanders notes that:

Daniel's reworking of the character of Cleopatra to conform to Sidney's vision is most apparent in his narrated description of the final reunion with Antony. In his dedication to the 1594 version of the play, he had acknowledged having depicted Cleopatra "in courage lower." Daniel's revised version restores Cleopatra to her former stature by recounting, as does Sidney, the monument scene as a demonstration of the queen's valor. (135)

Furthermore, in outlining the comic elements of this same scene in Shakespeare's play, Sanders concludes that in altering his text "Daniel imitates Sidney rather than Shakespeare" (135). This argument is strengthened by the fact that in the 1607 version of his play *Daniel* includes the reasons surrounding Antony's suicide. Antony believes that Cleopatra has taken her own life, an idea fostered by Cleopatra who is afraid she has lost Antony's love due to his belief that she has betrayed him. While this suggests Cleopatra's lack of love for Antony, it echoes, to some degree, the way in which Pembroke uses her "Argument" to *Antonius* to clarify or explain the actions of Cleopatra that may be construed as hard-hearted or unfeeling, specifically her choice to drag Antony's body up the wall of the monument rather than open the doors. Pembroke claims that this seemingly cold action on the part of the queen is grounded in her fear of being caught by Octavius. By explaining, Pembroke alleviates some of the negative feelings that Cleopatra's actions may arouse in the reader. While *Daniel* uses Plutarch as his source to explain the circumstances surrounding Antony's death, the inclusion of Cleopatra's fears and her expressions of love for Antony act in the same way to excuse or explain actions that similarly may be seen as cold and calculating. Indeed, the admission that Cleopatra loved Antony before he died is new to the 1607 version of the text, since in the 1594 version *Daniel* has his queen claim that she did not love him at all until he was dead.

The idea that the changes to Cleopatra's character are meant to realign the play towards Pembroke's text is also indicated by another addition to the 1607 version of the play. In the 1594 edition of *Cleopatra*, there is an intriguing absence:

neither of Cleopatra's serving women, Eras and Charmion appear. The 1607 version contains both of these characters and the reason for their presence supports the idea that in making the revisions to the 1607 text, Daniel was indeed following Pembroke's *Antonius*. Not only does Daniel add a scene to his play that is a mirror to act two, scene two in *Antonius*, he also places his scene so as structurally to reflect Pembroke's play. Consequently, the insertion of Eras and Charmion into the 1607 *Cleopatra* allows Daniel to figure Cleopatra as a faithful lover. As in *Antonius*, these women act to convince Cleopatra to act politically, rather than personally. Specifically, they try to convince their queen to use her sexual allure and beauty to seduce Octavius and, thereby, save Egypt. Like Pembroke's text, in Daniel's play there is a debate in which Eras and Charmion try to convince Cleopatra to forgo her planned suicide and throw herself on the mercy of Octavius. Cleopatra refuses to capitulate to their arguments which shows the strength of her love and loyalty to Antony. Cleopatra assumes the entirety of the guilt over the failed campaign (especially with regards to Actium), and she refuses to let anything other than her love for Antony guide her actions. This figuration of the queen stands in direct contrast to Daniel's original characterization of Cleopatra that was far more politically centered. While there are political dimensions to Cleopatra's rejection of the ideas espoused by each woman, the main purpose of these minor characters is to show the strength of Cleopatra's character. In adding this scene with Eras and Charmion to the 1607 version of his play, Daniel largely abandons the negatively charged character of Cleopatra that appears in the 1594 version. Daniel's closer

reflection of Pembroke's play in the 1607 version of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* strongly indicates that the substantive changes from the 1594 text are due in large part to his reconciliation with Pembroke, and this argument is further emphasized by the new dedication that he added to the 1611 reprint of the play.³¹

The dedication of the 1611 version of *Cleopatra* is far less ambiguous and far less contentious than the dedication appended to the original 1594 version of the play. The 1594 dedication illustrates Daniel's own discomfort with his dependence upon a female patron and depicts his own personal difficulties in negotiating gender and power. In the later dedication, Daniel removes most of the references that could have been seen as insulting to Pembroke. For example, while in the 1594 dedication there is a sense that Pembroke interferes with, rather than nurtures, the writer-muse relationship, in 1611 Pembroke is cast in a very different light:

Behold the work which once thou didst impose
Great sister of the Muses glorious starre
Of femall worth, who didst at first disclose
Vnto our times what noble powers there are
In womens harts, and sent example farre
To call vp others to like studious thoughts.

(Dedication 1-11)

Rather than the overpowering and, perhaps, overbearing female who controls the writer's muse in the 1594 dedication, here Pembroke is figured herself as equal to a muse; she has become the "[g]reat sister of the Muses." The 1611 dedication also

praises, to some extent, Pembroke as a writer. Pembroke instead of being the “starre of wonder” (1594 Dedication 3) is now represented as the “glorious starre/ Of femall worth” (1611 Dedication 2-3) who not only inspires Daniel but also others by her actions. She leads the way for many by her “example farre” and acts “[t]o call vp others to like studious thoughts” (1611 Dedication 5-6). Sanders quite correctly observes that while Daniel

qualifies the compliment with a courtly flourish, locating her powers in her heart rather than her mind, [he] nevertheless acknowledges Sidney’s more capacious definitions of the female subject by suggesting that ‘femall’ worth might inhere not only in a woman’s restraint from misconduct but also in her active contribution to the literary culture of the day. (134)

It is also interesting to note that Daniel’s reference to Pembroke as a writer is far more general in this dedication. In Daniel’s early reference to Pembroke, the influence is much more personal; it is his writing that she influences as his repeated use of the pronoun “my” suggests. The 1611 dedication shows Pembroke as someone who not only influences Daniel to become more serious and great, but also as a woman who inspires and affects “others.” Yet, even though Daniel revises the picture of Pembroke as an overly controlling patron, some of the tension seen in the 1594 dedication is still present in the altered 1611 version.

The 1611 dedication explains, to some extent, Daniel’s literary inspiration for his figuration of Cleopatra. Daniel claims that it was during his time with Pembroke at Wilton that he learned, under her tutelage, “to apprehend how th’images/Of action

and of greatnesse figured were” (Dedication 1611). Here Daniel claims that it is Pembroke’s own literary skills that have influenced him; that is, he was inspired by Pembroke’s own figuration of a more humane Cleopatra. However, Daniel also uses the 1611 dedication to excuse his original negative figuration of Cleopatra in the 1594 text that, one could argue, lost him Pembroke’s patronage. Daniel asserts he was only attempting “t’attire her [Cleopatra] miserie/ In th’habit I conceiued became her care” (Dedication 1611) as he was taught at Wilton. Daniel further excuses his 1594 Cleopatra by noting that such a figuration of the queen’s emotions “to her it be not fitted right/ Yet in the sute of nature sure it is” (Dedication 1611). Daniel also references this issue in the original dedication to Pembroke with his comment that “it was I did the same addresse/ To thy cleere vnderstanding and therein/ Thy noble name, as in her proper right/ Continued euer since that time hath beene (1611 Dedication). The implication of these lines is that Daniel is claiming that he never tried to create a characterization of Cleopatra that stood opposed to the characterization of the queen in Pembroke’s *Antonius*; he was merely exercising the literary techniques that she inspired in him. While this section of the 1611 dedication seems intended as an apology to Pembroke, there is also a sense of the underlying tension that the 1594 dedication revealed. This non-apologetic apology intimates that Daniel may have seen the lack of connection between himself and Pembroke between 1594 and 1607 as stemming from his decision to “rewrite” *Antonius*. Daniel also suggests an awareness of how this has affected him both personally and professionally.

Nonetheless, while Daniel's figuration of Cleopatra is revised in some ways, the later version of the play still makes its political statements. While Daniel changes the characterization of Cleopatra in the 1607/1611 versions of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, he does not substantially change the political aspects of Cleopatra's actions. As was mentioned previously, one of the distinguishing features of Daniel's play is the pointed inclusion of various statements involving the view of the ruler as a religious, as well as political, leader. One way to understand Daniel's statements about religion and politics is, of course, to read them as referring to contemporary events. In particular, as argued, Daniel, while not an evident radical Protestant, was interested in allying himself with those male members of Elizabeth I's court and nobility who were known for their own Protestant leanings. Considering the fact that Elizabeth I had died in 1603 leaving the throne to James I of England, it seems odd that Daniel did not choose to alter the statements in his text concerning the inter-relatedness of religious piety and sound rule. The majority of the lines that can be read as referring to religion and power within the 1594 text remain in the 1607/1611 versions of the text and generally appear in the same place. Given that there was a new monarch, one must consider a possible reason as to why Daniel still thought the religious material was appropriate. One suggestion is that while the person of the monarch had changed, the crown's attitude towards religious reform had not. According to David Starkey, when the more zealous of Elizabeth's courtiers understood, even if it had not yet been declared, that James of Scotland would succeed to the English throne, there existed the possibility that he would be more

open to reforming the Church of England along more puritanical lines. Indeed, for them “the possibility of James’s accession aroused wildly contrasting hopes” (Starkey *Monarchy* 90). While James’s mother, Mary Stuart, was obviously a symbol of the threat of Roman Catholicism to English Protestantism, James himself was “brought up in the rigorous and austere Protestant Kirk” (Starkey *Monarchy* 90). The hope of the radical Protestants in England would be, of course, that when James became King of England he would reform the church along the more serious practices of Scottish Protestantism. However, the hopes of the English Protestants were not to be realized. On his accession to the throne of England, James held two conferences. The second of these meetings was held in January 1604 to “determine the nature of religious settlement” (Starkey *Monarchy* 96). The radical Protestant element hoped this second conference would lead to the reforms of the Church that they had sought under the reign of Elizabeth; however,

[i]nstead of making the Church of England more like the Scottish Kirk, therefore—as the Puritans had hoped—James used the Hampton Court conference to proclaim that he was satisfied with the Elizabethan religious settlement, and was resolved to keep it, as it stood. Beaten by Buchanan and hectorred by zealous Presbyterians, James associated Puritanism with disloyalty to monarchy. He would not, any more than Elizabeth, soften Whitgift’s hard line in enforcing ceremonies and vestments, which the Puritans thought scandalously Catholic. And, above all, he would allow not an inch of movement by bishops away from the English government of the

Church towards a role for assemblies of presbyteries or clergy as in Scotland.

(Starkey *Monarchy* 97)

As James I maintained the *status quo*, so to speak, of Elizabeth's Church of England, the religious sentiments contained originally in the 1594 version and kept in the 1607 version of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* still held value. The parallel these religious statements make between the public faith of the ruler and the public's religious faith were still pertinent. One of the reasons why Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius* has merited critical study is the fact that this drama, even as a drama not intended for the public stage, was one of the first plays to use historical/classical material to make contemporary political commentary.³² In doing so, ancient historical figures become characters who speak to or act upon contemporary issues. Pembroke herself uses *Antonius* to comment upon the relationships of Elizabeth and her courtiers. In this sense, Daniel's use of the word "figure" in the 1607 dedication fits with his decision to maintain the political-religious statements found in the 1594 version of *Cleopatra*, since Elizabeth's death did not end the desire of the radical English Protestants to reform the Church according to their own beliefs. Like his patron, Daniel uses his drama for a political purpose in that he continues to echo the sentiments of various nobles who still looked to the monarchy to address their religious concerns.

Daniel's 1607 revisions to the figuration of Cleopatra change the entire perspective of gender in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, as the association of misrule in the 1594 version is clearly linked to the concept of female rule as symbolized by the Egyptian queen. However, as was discussed above, Daniel chose not to alter

significantly the play's political-religious themes. In so doing, the political statements become almost degendered. While Cleopatra the monarch is still blamed for the destruction of Egypt at the hands of Rome, Cleopatra the woman is redeemed by the emphasis on her love for Antony. Hence the revisions that Daniel makes to the 1607 version of the play compliment rather than negate Pembroke's own figuration of gender without losing its political impact. As such, it is very likely that the changes Daniel made to the 1607 *Cleopatra* played a large part in the renewal of his patronage relationship with Pembroke. The deletion of a specifically gendered theme of power also illustrates the dominant use of the Antony and Cleopatra story in the early modern period; that is, the story's importance lies in its depiction of what happens when those in charge either neglect those who would advise them or are blinded by their personal position as monarch to the public opinion of power. While the focus the 1594 *Cleopatra* reflects a greater concern with gender and power, the 1607 *Cleopatra* focuses more closely on the idea of morality and power. This focus becomes more developed in the versions of the story that follow Pembroke and Daniel, especially in those written after 1603. This later development is made more apparent in the play that immediately followed Daniel's 1594 version of *Cleopatra*, Samuel Brandon's *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octavia* (1598). Another play written in the age of Elizabeth, Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* seems equally concerned with the issue of gender as it is with the issue of responsibility and ruling.

The critical attention that Samuel Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* has garnered deals largely with the connections of this text to its predecessors, especially

the wave of Senecan closet drama inspired by Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*. Indeed, it seems that it is only by writing this play that Brandon's name has been remembered at all.³³ Although there is no clear historical or biographical evidence to suggest that Pembroke was ever a patron to Brandon or that she was directly connected to him or his work,³⁴ the subject matter and thematic issues of his play indicate his awareness of both Pembroke and the writers, like Daniel, that she did sponsor. As was the case for Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Samuel Brandon's play attempts to negate the alternative figuration of gender and power displayed in Pembroke's *Antonius*. Published in 1598, Brandon's stance on gender in *The Vertuous Octavia* can be seen as the antithesis of *Antonius*. This is made apparent in Brandon's choice of titular character, Antony's wronged wife, Octavia. In early modern writing, Octavia, like Cleopatra, was an historical woman used in patriarchal rhetorical figurations. Cleopatra, as has been shown, exemplified an immoral/negative femininity, whereas Octavia represented most of the positive qualities of the feminine gender. By focussing on Octavia and her suffering, Brandon undercuts Pembroke's emphasis on the problematic nature of the culturally accepted constructions of feminine and masculine. He reasserts Octavia as the example of the good woman and Cleopatra as the example of the bad woman. Brandon also engages with the presentation of power in both plays by Pembroke and Daniel. In particular, he focuses on the issue of power and the separation of private desire and public duty. Indeed, the conflict between the private desire of the ruler with the public responsibility of that ruler to his/her subjects becomes a central issue in *The Vertuous Octavia*.

Brandon's decision to spotlight the character of Octavia is perhaps the clearest indication that his play is directly connected to *Antonius* and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*. Brandon's choice of Octavia as the central character of his dramatic effort completes the love triangle of the source story by adding her name to that of Antony and Cleopatra. His choice also illustrates that his play is a response to the issues of gender and power found in both of the antecedent texts. While Octavia is not literally involved in the conflict between Antony and Octavius (as she remains in Rome and does not go to war), it is Antony's betrayal of his ideal Roman wife that gives Octavius the reason he needs to justify his war against Antony. Partially, this response is due to Octavia's status as the wronged, yet clearly, virtuous woman. In terms of the typology of the classical story, Octavia represents the good and moral woman. She is obedient, patient, modest, loyal, loving, chaste, and orderly. As such, she is constructed so as to provide an example of feminine behavior that is diametrically opposed to the behavior of Cleopatra who is unruly, aggressive, faithless, vain, sensual, and disorderly. Brandon's invocation of Octavia's name and traditional figuration acts in much the same manner as her name and figuration act in the source story. She is the positive example of the feminine gender. By using Octavia this way, Brandon wages his own battle against the interrogation of gender and gender traits found in Pembroke's *Antonius*. As Sanders notes, Brandon's "celebration of Octavia as a female ideal is supposed to reestablish the equivalence between chastity and virtue that Sidney's unorthodox representation of Cleopatra helped to unsettle" (122). Brandon's play seeks to complete the rehabilitation process

of what was considered appropriately feminine and masculine behaviour first characterized in Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*.³⁵ Octavia refuses to let negatively charged emotions, such as anger and revenge, affect her decisions. She is, as Brandon's title states, the model of the virtuous female.

Like *Antonius* and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, *The Vertuous Octavia* is a Senecan-inspired closet-drama. Also like the two previous plays, Brandon's text features a five-act drama with each act ending with a Chorus. While taking the same subject matter as Pembroke and Daniel (the civil war between Marc Antony and Octavius Caesar), the action of Brandon's play begins shortly before the marriage of Antony and Octavia and continues until the death of Antony. All action takes place in Rome and is concerned with illuminating the Roman reaction, through Octavia, to the disagreements between Antony and Octavius. Throughout the play, Octavia is, and remains, steadfast in her virtue and her loyalty to Antony. Octavia's embodiment of the female ideal is illustrated through her own actions as well as the opinion of those around her. Speaking of her decision to remain loyal to Antony despite his proven inconstancy to her and their marriage, Caesar claims "[t]here are few women of Octaviaes minde" (3.1.168). Later in the same scene, Caesar makes the rarity of Octavia's character even more apparent, "Well sister, then I see that constancie/Is sometimes seated in a womans brest" (3.1.271-72). As Sanders notes, Brandon's characterization of Octavia as an ideal makes her figure the "exception rather than the representative" (122) of feminine worth. Of course, since Brandon does not include Cleopatra as a character in his play, Octavia's perfection is offset by the use of a

character named Sylvia. Identified as a “licentious woman” in the list of actors, Sylvia is a character who, echoing the negative figuration of the feminine, is clearly paralleled to Cleopatra. Brandon uses her character to establish the generally accepted idea of a negative example of feminine figuration and to remind the audience of the absent Egyptian queen. Sylvia only appears in act two, scene two where she vocalizes to Octavia’s women, Camilla and Julia, her own opinion about the idea of female virtue in the face of male dishonesty. Sylvia argues that if men are not punished for their licentious sexuality, neither should women be. Furthermore she claims that the need for feminine virtue and chastity is used to subjugate women to men:

Why constancie is that which marreth all,
 A weake conceipt which cannot wrongs resist,
 A chaine it is which bindes our selues in thrall,
 And gives men scope to vse vs as they list.
 For when they know that you will constant bide,
 Small is their care, how often they do slide.

(2.2.68-73)

As the example of the sexually aggressive female, Sylvia represents the absent Cleopatra. Sanders argues that the introduction of Sylvia’s character works “as a vehicle for making the point that sexual purity should be the be-all and end-all determinant of a woman’s social standing” (127). Further, she claims that in so doing, Brandon’s play attempts to negate the constant sensuality represented by Cleopatra in *Antoni*us, as his “manipulation of the female ideal and anti-ideal was to counter

Sidney's redefinition of Cleopatra as a virtuous woman" (Sanders 127). This is emphasized by Brandon's overly positive construction of Octavia's character which acts "to perform the exact function of a conduct manual, to expose women's defects and prod them to self-correction" (Sanders 122). Brandon's figuration of Sylvia, therefore, works in the same manner as Daniel's figuration of Cleopatra—as a method to reestablish the gender figuration inverted in Pembroke's *Antonius*.

While it seems clear that Sylvia is a *Doppelgänger* for Cleopatra and that she provides an antithesis to Octavia's beliefs, her character is also used to show the dangers inherent to national unity when gender roles are forsaken for the fulfillment of individual desire and/or ambition. Through Sylvia, Brandon brings into play the concept that an active female sexuality undermines the morality of the state itself. Her claim that she holds no loyalty to her lovers whom she uses to gain "presents and what not" (2.2.116) intimates that the only person for whom an aggressively sexual woman feels responsibility is herself. Power and sexuality become antithetical in *The Vertuous Octavia*, since those who hold power are shown to be accountable to those they rule. One of the interesting facets of the source story that Brandon maintains is the national identity or figuration usually associated with both Cleopatra and Octavia. More than merely representing the ideal feminine, Octavia is representative of Rome and Roman ideology. As an occidental monarch, Cleopatra's identity as a negative example of femininity and rule is often conflated with her race. She is the Other that threatens Rome's definition of itself. In this sense, each female figure, Octavia as well as Cleopatra, represents the values, morals, and ethics of her country. Octavia's

“goodness” is Roman goodness; Cleopatra’s “badness” is encoded as foreign badness. Like Egypt itself, Cleopatra is luxurious, sensual, and disorderly. Octavia, as Rome, represents the sacrifice of the self for duty to people and country. Brandon emphasizes the political side of these feminine figurations by illustrating what happens when Roman values are influenced by foreign viewpoints. Antony, of course, most clearly represents how Roman ideologies are corrupted by foreign influences. Indeed, Brandon makes it clear that Antony is even more to blame than Cleopatra, since he is a Roman and should know better than to allow his emotions and “affections” to sway his duty and responsibility to Rome. While Antony is the obvious choice for displaying how Roman values are corrupted by Cleopatra’s foreign ways, Sylvia also represents the dangers to Roman life and rule represented by the Egyptian queen. Other than appearing in *The Vertuous Octavia* to replace the missing Cleopatra, Sylvia’s character illustrates what may happen when powerful women, like Cleopatra, are allowed to be an example to others, even those outside of their direct sphere of influence. Sylvia, a Roman woman, not only represents Cleopatra in the text, she also emulates the behavior of the Egyptian queen; so that, like Cleopatra, Sylvia plainly and clearly admits that she sees nothing wrong in using her own feminine sexuality to gain power, especially over men. By creating Sylvia’s character, Brandon is able clearly to demarcate the traits associated with a moral feminine versus an immoral feminine, and he is able to illustrate that an immoral woman with power corrupts both her own soul as well as the soul of the state.

Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* responds more clearly and vigorously to the problematic questions concerning gender and power raised by Pembroke's play in comparison to Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*. Other than reestablishing the traits traditionally represented by the figures of Cleopatra and Octavia, Brandon defines power as it relates to women. One of the intriguing aspects of the source story, one that Pembroke herself exploited, is the curious similarity between Cleopatra and Octavia. Both are mothers, noblewomen, lovers of Antony, and, perhaps most importantly, both understand the workings of royal power. In Plutarch, it is clear that Octavia, like her foreign competition, is a woman who has power and uses it to her advantage. Brandon relays several of the incidents in the play that illustrate Octavia's own political power, including her mediation of a peace agreement between Octavius and Antony (1.2), as well as her ability to bring to Antony the money and supplies he needs for his troops (1.2). Obviously as the wife of one emperor and the sister of the other, Octavia is able to use her influence over those who hold power and that, in turn, gives her power. The important difference between the power of Cleopatra and Octavia is the purpose for which each woman uses this power. While Cleopatra seems intent on conquering and/or destroying Rome, Octavia uses her power in an attempt to preserve it.

The different uses of power are clearly connected to the personal morality of each woman. Brandon emphasizes that Octavia's power is defined by her status as a virtuous woman. Throughout the play, other characters discuss how Antony's immoral behavior highlights the moral behavior of Octavia. It is Octavia's active

virtue in remaining loyal to her disloyal husband that inspires those around her, including Octavius and his generals, to go to war against Antony. Indeed, Brandon emphasizes the fact that Octavia's power lies in how others perceive her virtues. This is apparent in act three, scene one when Brandon shows Octavia caught in the struggle between her power and her virtue. Once she realizes the truth of Antony's betrayal, Octavia debates with herself which course of action she should take. Her first instinct is to use her power to avenge herself upon her faithless husband:

Reuenge Octavia, or thou art too blame.

Dye neuer vnreueng'd of such a wrong

My power is such that I may well preuaile.

And rather then I will endure it long,

With fier and sword I will you both assaile.

(3.1.40-44).

Here Octavia's anger and hurt at Antony's betrayal lead her to consider using her influence to destroy her husband and his lover; that is, her first instinct is to act aggressively. Using her power as Octavius's sister and the power gained by her own reputation, Octavia knows that she will have no trouble convincing the Romans to start a military action against Cleopatra and Antony. Soon after this emotional outburst, Octavia considers the consequences of using this aggressive power:

How now *Octavia*, whither wilt thou flye?

Not what thou maist, but do thou what is iust:

Shall these same hands attempt Impietie?

I may, I can, I will, I ought, I must,
 Reuenge this high disgrace, this *Casar* [sic] will,
 Byrthe, nature, reason, all require the same.
 Yet vertue will not have me to do ill.
 Yeeld, all things yeeld, to vertues sacred name.
 How then? Euen thus, with patience make thee strong,
 The heauens are just, let them reuenge thy wrong.

(3.1.55-64)

Octavia's struggle between how she can best use her worldly power and her spiritual power are central to how Brandon constructs gender and power in the play. Unlike women like Sylvia and Cleopatra, Octavia refuses to use her public and political power to satisfy her own personal agenda. She refuses to renounce her feminine virtue for masculine aggression. The repetitive use of "I" within her speech illustrates that Octavia's struggle is one between her private emotional response and the public duty she owes. With reference to Octavia's struggle, Karen Raber argues that her "anger and passionate sorrow turn inward. She becomes a figure of control and containment, lauded precisely for not acting, not resisting, and for having no influence over either her husband's or her brother's decisions" (109). While Raber's claim that Brandon's play emphasizes Octavia's passivity in the face of betrayal is correct, her further claim that this scene is used to deny "Octavia even minimal control within domestic and familial domains" (109) is only one way of reading Brandon's presentation of women and power. When one reads the repetitive

statements concerning public power and private desire, and the responsibility of rulers to their people, one can also present Octavia's passivity in a more informative light.

Like his fellow male playwright, Samuel Daniel, Brandon reconstructs ideas from Pembroke's *Antonius* so as to negate her challenging of socially constructed gender roles. In particular, Brandon seizes upon Pembroke's construction of Antony as effeminized. As has been shown, Pembroke's play inverts the generally accepted traits assigned to masculine and feminine so as to construct Antony as female and Cleopatra as male in an effort to destabilize cultural perceptions concerning both the positive and negative traits arbitrarily assigned to gender. Brandon also effeminizes Antony, but he does so to highlight his own purpose—reinvesting gender figurations with their traditional sanctioned traits. The first chorus in the play comments upon how Octavia and Antony, through their behaviour, seemed to have switched gender roles:

Were nature falsely nam'd
 A stepdame to mankinde,
 That sexe, which we account
 Vnperfect, weake, and fraile,
 Could not in worthe preuaile:
 And men so farre surmount.
 We should *Octauia* finde,
 In some sorte to be blam'd
 She winnes immortall fame,

Whiles he who should excell:

Dishonour'd hath his name,

And by his weakness fell.

(Chorus 1. 29-40)

Here it seems that Brandon, like Pembroke, claims that the traditional traits associated to the genders are proven wrong. Clearly, Octavia, the woman who is supposed to be “Vnperfect, weake, and fraile,” is shown as the one possessing all the positive traits including virtue, reason, and strength. She does not fall prey to her emotions and thereby wins “immortall fame.” In contrast, Antony, the one who is defined as stronger by ‘nature’ since he is a man, is the one who is destroyed by “his weakness.” Given that *The Vertuous Octavia* is constructed to reestablish the generally accepted codification of feminine and masculine traits, Brandon’s acknowledgement that in this case Octavia is more “manly” than Antony seems somewhat incongruous. Yet, Brandon is able to use this idea, one central to Pembroke’s play, and still maintain the nominative gender roles accepted by early modern culture. Brandon manages this by clearly establishing Octavia as the exception of her sex as opposed to the rule. He also illustrates that Antony is the exception when it comes to men. In particular, he is unmanned by the women who surround him:

And Lorde *Antonius*, thou

Thrice women conquered man:

Shall not thy hart repine,

Their triumphs to adorne?

Octaviaes vertues scorne,
 That wanton life of thine:
 And *Cleopatra* can,
 Commaund thy ghost euen now.
 And faine would I refraine,
 From *Fuluiaes* stately name:
 Which dooth they manhood staine,
 And makes thee blush for shame.

(Chorus 1.43-54)

By illustrating that Antony's life is filled with women (whether moral or immoral) who are stronger than him, Brandon discounts Antony as an example of masculinity at all. Indeed, Brandon's argument in this verse of the Chorus is very reminiscent of the arguments of John Knox's *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*.³⁶ If men will not be men, then they deserve to be subjected to the capricious rule of women. For Brandon, it seems that it is only because of Antony's own weakness that these women appear strong, with the possible exception of Octavia. So while Brandon uses the idea that gender traits are, to some degree, mutable, he frames this idea within the suggestion that this only happens when men do not maintain the strength of character expected of them. Antony's powerlessness with regard to the women in his life emphasizes the unnaturalness of this situation, an unnaturalness that can only be corrected through the violence of war.

By establishing Octavia as the more masculine partner within their marriage, it might seem that Brandon is allowing Octavia the same power as a man. This, of course, is not the case. While Brandon does celebrate Octavia's strength of purpose, reason, and virtue, he clearly limits the effect her actions have on the world. Octavia's inner struggle displays her choice to remain passive in the conflict between her husband and her brother. Her main stated reason for this inaction is her choice to remain "vertuous;" that is, she refuses to allow herself to be corrupted by anger and selfish passions. But there is also a political aspect to her refusal to act against Antony. Throughout the text, Octavia is referred to as an "Empresse" or by a similar title. Such a reference clearly defines her as equal to royalty in that she is defined as a ruler.³⁷ It is as a ruler that Octavia hopes her own virtue and passive acceptance of the wrong that Antony has committed against her will stop Octavius from an even more disruptive situation—civil war. Unlike Cleopatra, who seems to ignore all the consequences of her passions and her actions for her people, Octavia's passivity is constructed as a political act. Her action is that she chooses not to act despite the feelings of anger and betrayal that Antony's rejection has caused. The intention behind this act of conscious passivity is emphasized by her political act of attempting to forestall a Roman civil war. In act four, scene one, Octavia tries to stop her brother and his generals from marching on Antony. Other than the regular horrors of war, Octavia reminds them that in an armed conflict with Antony "If you triumph, you conquer not your foes/ But neighbors, kinsefolkes and your dearest friendes:/ Whose wounds bleed shame, and deep hart-peircing woes" (4.1.25-27). Although neither

Caesar nor his generals listen to Octavia's pleas, she does indeed make them. The question then becomes why Brandon includes Octavia's acceptance of Antony's betrayal and her attempts to halt the conflict. The most obvious answer is that she is virtuous; she does not wish to be part of war between her husband and her brother, men to whom she owes her loyalty. Furthermore, her attempts to stop the inevitable aggression between Antony and Caesar illustrate that Octavia is not only personally virtuous, she is also, so to speak, politically virtuous. Unlike any of the other characters in the story, Octavia is the only one who seems to possess a higher morality. She argues against civil war because it is morally wrong. All the other major characters in Brandon's play have either lost their morality (Antony), have never had morality (Sylvia/Cleopatra), or are willing to compromise their morality (Caesar [who uses his sister's honour as the political tool to gain support for his own political agenda, becoming sole Emperor of the Roman Empire]). Octavia, however, is illustrated as having both virtue and a deep sense of morality, and this is her strength—a very feminine source of strength for the idealized female in early modern society.

Octavia's suing for peace is connected to one of the larger issues in the play, namely political responsibility. While all of the plays that deal with the Antony and Cleopatra story engage with the issue of private desire versus public duty to a certain extent, *The Vertuous Octavia* clearly emphasizes this theme. The idea of the responsibility of a ruler to his/her people, regardless of the ruler's personal feelings or desires, is continually identified in the play. Octavia is the embodiment of this idea.

From her first appearance Octavia states how it is necessary for rulers to remember their responsibilities and duties:

Tis greater care to keepe, then get, a crowne.
 Vertue dooth raise by small degrees we see:
 Wherein a moment Fortune casts vs downe.
 And surely those that liue in greatest place,
 Must take great care, to be such as they seeme:
 They are not princes, whom sole tytles grace,
 Our princelie vertues, we should most esteeme.

(1.1.150-56)

Here Octavia speaks to the idea that although one may be born with the title of prince, one will only truly fulfill the role of a prince when one acts with the virtues of a good ruler. The true power of a ruler, according to Octavia, is by necessity tied to his/her own morality. By connecting Octavia's decision to remain passive in the face of Antony's betrayal with her decision to act only in the best interests of the people of Rome, Octavia exemplifies not only the ideal of femininity, but she also exemplifies the ideal of female power. She is a virtuous woman and a virtuous ruler. Had Octavia chosen to use her power to initiate military actions against Antony, she would have become like Cleopatra. Cleopatra uses her power in the public, masculine world. In many ways, she is shown as acting as a man. Octavia, by refusing to do the same, retains her womanliness. Rather than act as a man, Octavia inspires the men around her, like Octavius, to become more masculine. She inspires them to protect and

avenge her. In contrast, as is clearly shown by Brandon's characterization of an effeminate Antony, Cleopatra, by possessing a politically and publicly active power, causes the men around her to become less than men; they, like Antony, become frail and weak like women. Of course, in the end, it is Octavia and Rome who triumph over Cleopatra and Egypt. This is the crux of Brandon's reconfiguration of gender and power. It is only when men and women, especially those who are in power, remain true to their roles that a nation can defend itself and prosper. The proof of this ideology lies in the victory of Rome.

Brandon's presentation of appropriate female power, a power based in a conscious passivity, and his illustration that Octavia only acts politically (in her attempt to forestall civil war) to save those who do not have power, can be read as a topical political statement. Like Octavia, many of Elizabeth I's nobles were anxious about the possibility of civil war because of the Queen's refusal to name a successor to the English throne. Brandon's play was published in 1598, only five years before Elizabeth I's death; yet she still had not named her royal heir. For many, Elizabeth's refusal to name her successor was one of the most troublesome aspects of her reign. As the Queen aged and no husband materialized, the courtiers became more obsessively concerned with the succession issue. While all knew that James VI of Scotland was the most likely candidate, there was no official or public affirmation of this from Elizabeth. According to Neale "[a]s the year 1602 progressed, courtiers and others entered into secret communication with their future king" (386). The anxiety provoked in the character of Octavia by the specter of civil war could be read as

relating to the concern of the English court about the lack of an heir. The fact that Octavia acts to prevent civil war could be read as Brandon's own comment on the succession in that Octavia, as a figuration of appropriate female power, acts to ensure the welfare of the Roman people; an act that could be seen as opposing Elizabeth I's own refusal to name a successor. Of course, Elizabeth's action, or inaction, regarding the succession sprang from her own political experience. Somerset notes that Elizabeth's refusal publicly to name an heir could have arisen from her recognition that such a statement could also lead to violence:

[t]here were at least ten possible claimants to the throne, and it was widely recognized that a public debate on the relative merits of each contender could only be highly divisive. It was also obvious that if a successor was named, those claimants who were thereby excluded might resort to arms in defense of their titles. To the Queen, these arguments had always seemed conclusive, and despite the universal dread that her death would be followed by the horrors of a contested succession, it was undeniable that there were compelling reasons for keeping the matter in suspense. (Somerset 713)

Whether or not one reads Octavia's fear of civil war as a criticism of Elizabeth I's own refusal to publicly declare the line of succession, it is clear that Brandon's use of the Antony and Cleopatra story and his focus on Octavia takes up the issues of gender and power in the early modern period which had begun with Pembroke's *Antonius*.

If not the best example of literary prowess, Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* has merit when investigating the manner in which dramatic texts engage with and

influence the culture which has produced them. While Brandon's presentation concerning the issues of gender and gender roles, especially as they relate to power, could be considered heavy-handed, at the least, his general ideology about power with regards to the story of Antony and Cleopatra seems almost prescient. The symbiotic relationship of the ruler and the ruled becomes central in later versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story. While *Antonius*, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, and *The Vertuous Octavia* all investigate the relation of gender and power that was peculiar to the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, they also investigate how power is dependent, to a significant degree, on the relationship between the ruler and those he/she rules. After the death of Elizabeth in 1603, other dramatists engaged more fully with the political aspects of the tale. William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-1608), Thomas May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra Queen of Aegypt* (1626), and John Dryden's *All For Love* (1677), not only take up the story of the ancient lovers first introduced to English readers by Pembroke, they do so while incorporating the political aspects of the story found in the texts that were published during the reign of Elizabeth I. Not surprisingly, the most conspicuous difference of these post-Elizabethan versions of the story is the absence of the anxiety produced by reconciling the contestation between gender and power caused by the presence of a single female monarch on the throne. Rather, their plays focus on the idea of the monarch's power including Shakespeare's interest in the pageantry of power, May's reading of the amorality surrounding those in power, and Dryden's defense of monarchical privilege.

¹ Pembroke's publication of *Antonius* inspired a number of literary productions that replicated the Senecan style including Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia*, Fulke Greville's *Alaham* and *Mustapha*, and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Miriam* (Witherspoon 84-85). However, while these plays certainly follow Pembroke's play in their "emphasis on philosophical contemplation over action, experimentation in a single work with different verse forms, and Senecan devices" (Sanders 106-7), they did not all necessarily contain the same themes and issues expounded upon in *Antonius*. Of all the plays inspired by Pembroke's foray into Senecan-inspired closet-drama, only Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and Brandon's *The Vertuous Octavia* are derivative in form and substance to *Antonius*.

² According to Franklin Williams, of non-royal women who were addressed in dedications, Mary Sidney Herbert was eclipsed by only one other titled woman, Lucy Russell, the Countess of Bedford, who received 38 dedications to Pembroke's 30 (366).

³ All line references for the 1594 edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* are taken from *The Short Title Catalogue*, entry number 12057, reel number 283 (Simon Waterson: *Delia and Rosamond Augmented. Cleopatra*. London, 1594).

⁴ As J.A. Sharpe notes, it is almost impossible to overstate the concern which commentators in late Tudor and early Stuart England felt over the need to preserve order. . . . By the Elizabethan period it was commonly held that the unquestioning maintenance of the existing social hierarchy was the only antidote to complete social breakdown. This assumption was connected to fashionable ideas about the nature of the cosmos, with their stress on correspondences and systems of hierarchy. It also owed a great deal to Reformation theology, with its stress on man's innate sinfulness and rebelliousness. Not only the monarch, but the whole of the social order existed by divine right, so rebellion was not only contrary to earthly authority, but also to the Almighty. (106-7)

⁵ In her investigation of how male authors tried to contain the public Mary Sidney Herbert within the private confines appropriate according to the gender ideology of the time, Lamb examines five particular texts from Abraham Fraunce, Nicholas Breton, Nathaniel Baxter, Thomas Moffett, and Edmund Spenser (28-71).

⁶ There is little reason to suggest that Mary Sidney Herbert was anything but a staunch supporter of the Protestant cause in early modern Europe. However, Daniel's figuration of Pembroke as a defender of religious ideals seems incongruous with the textual matter of *Antonius*. While the *Psalms*, as was discussed in the previous chapter, could certainly be seen as a religious-political statement, *Antonius* deals less with religious matters than with issues of power and gender.

⁷ Pembroke, as has been shown, was well aware of the cultural ideology surrounding translation as appropriate literary activity for women, especially with regards to religious texts. However, it also seems clear that Pembroke's choice of material in her translation work illustrates her consciousness that even translation could be used for political purposes, a fact to which Daniel does not allude.

⁸ Of course, *Antonius* is also a translation of a text original penned by a male writer, Robert Garnier. However, as was shown in the previous chapter, Pembroke's choices with regards to Garnier's text, and her publication of *Antonius* without apology, illustrate that the play comments upon contemporary political issues. Also, *Antonius* is a secular translation. The combination of these factors may have

made Pembroke's dramatic translation far less acceptable for feminine activity than the translation of the *Psalms*.

⁹ As was shown in the previous chapter, Mary Sidney Herbert played a major role in the construction of Sir Philip Sidney as the paradigm of courtier-poet.

¹⁰ Margaret Hannay notes that "the Sidneian Psalms were not published until a limited edition appeared in 1823" (*Phoenix* 84).

¹¹ Critics such as Alexander Witherspoon, *Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (1924), and Alice Luce, *The Countess of Pembroke's Antonie* (1897), both saw Pembroke's choice of the French Senecan model of Robert Garnier as the basis from which Pembroke hoped to counteract the popular drama of the time. Indeed, Witherspoon claims that when Philip Sidney died in 1586, Pembroke endeavored not only to secure his literary legacy by editing and publishing his works posthumously but also to put into practice the precepts Sidney outlined for drama in the *Defense*: "[s]he [Pembroke] would go farther, and by example [*Antonius*], as well as by precept [patronage], undertakes that reformation of the English tragedy which her brother had so desired" (67).

¹² As Margaret Hannay notes "the countess did not head a conspiracy against the popular stage" (*Patronesse* 143). Further, S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davis claim that "[i]nstead of reading *Antoine* as the unpopular work of a reclusive woman bound by tradition and obsessive loyalty to her dead brother, recent criticism suggests that we should interpret the play as an innovative and important contribution to a radical form of historical drama" (16).

¹³ Karen Raber also comments on this particular detail in Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* as being clear evidence that Daniel was attempting to rewrite Pembroke's figuration of Cleopatra. Raber, who views *Antonius* as a play attempting to invest the domestic with political power, claims Daniel tries to negate Pembroke's purpose by refocusing the attention of the reader/audience from Antony to Cleopatra: "[p]lucking up Cleopatra's story after Antony's death, removes the issue of marital relationships from Daniel's play; in its place, he writes about the political confrontation between Cleopatra and Octavius Caesar" (106). The omission or reduction of the personal relationship between Cleopatra and Antony, for Raber, negates the power of the domestic that she sees Pembroke's play as legitimizing.

¹⁴ In Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, Antony's tendency towards immoral, or at least, amoral, behavior was begun at an early age. Specifically, Plutarch first blames Antony's friend, Curio, who he describes as "a dissolute man, given over to all lust and insolence" (678). It was Curio that Plutarch claims "trained him [Antony] on into great follies, and vain expenses upon women, in rioting and banqueting" (678). Plutarch also writes of "Clodius, one of the desperate and most wicked tribunes at that time in Rome" as having some influence on Antony's development (678). Lucy Hughes-Hallett notes that Antony joined Gabinus in his attempt to restore the Egyptian throne to Ptolemy Auletes, Cleopatra's father (16). Auletes fled Egypt, due to civil unrest brought on by bad financial decisions, in approximately 57 BC (16). Cleopatra was twelve at the time of her father's flight to Rome and returned to Egypt two years later when "Gabinus, with the help of a young cavalry officer, Mark Antony, restored Ptolemy Auletes to power" (16). Antony's association with Gabinus is also noted by Plutarch (678-9).

¹⁵ Obviously, Neale seems to have forgotten that Mary Tudor did rule as a female monarch before.

¹⁶ Wallace MacCafferty notes that Elizabeth I's early reign was certainly affected by religious issues, both Catholic and Protestant:

[t]he years between 1559 and 1563 went far in defining the character and goals of the new regime. The anti-Roman position taken in the religious settlement of 1559 was underlined by English action abroad in support of foreign Protestants and at home by watchful observation of potential Catholic leaders and determined suppression of any slight move towards Catholic revival. In all these episodes—in regard to Scotland, to France, and within the English court circle—the drive for action and for change came from the servants of the Crown, alternately harassing and cajoling a reluctant Queen, herself timid of action and indifferent, even hostile, to the passions, secular and religious, which moved the men about her. (68-69)

In speaking of the political dynamics that eventually led to the Armada, Paul Johnson notes that there was another form of internal balance which Elizabeth had to maintain in conducting the war against Spain: the delicate equipoise of her religious settlement, now being assaulted by Catholicism from without, and by Protestant sectarianism from within. In some ways it was the most difficult problem which faced her throughout her reign, for it was continuous, and it affected large numbers of people, high and low, in an age when men and women were increasingly making up their own minds about religion, and were accordingly less responsive to royal authority. (340-1)

Of course, many other critics saw the centrality of religious issues to Elizabeth's reign including J.E. Neale, Anne Somerset, and David Starkey.

¹⁷ Examples include Antony's first monologue (1.1-7), Chorus 1 and Chorus 2.

¹⁸ Cecil Seronsy does not specifically mention Daniel's letters to Walsingham but he does note that "Daniel was entrusted with dispatches which he delivered on his return to England to Walsingham at Windsor Castle on September 7, 1586" (17).

¹⁹ According to Anne Somerset, the purpose of the queen's Bill was to highlight Elizabeth's religious moderation. As a law, the,

Act of Supremacy required all clergymen, magistrates and royal officials to take an oath avowing Elizabeth to be Supreme Governor of the Church, but the penalty for refusing to do so was only loss of office. More severe penalties were reserved for those who maliciously affirmed the authority of a foreign prince or prelate, but even so they forfeited no more than their goods and chattels on their first conviction, and it was only at the third offence that their action was construed as treasonous. In addition to the clauses dealing with the Royal Supremacy itself, the bill still contained its sections permitting communion in both kinds, and it also repealed the heresy laws which had formed the basis of the Marian persecution. These provisions were an insurance measure, designed to guard against the possibility that the Lords would reject the proposals for a full religious settlement that were [sic] yet to come before them. The Queen could now feel confident that, even if the Lords remained recalcitrant no one could be prosecuted for holding Protestant beliefs. (Somerset 100-1)

²⁰ The problematic nature of Elizabeth posing as a female monarch who is also a warrior prince is perhaps best displayed by her famous speech and appearance at Tilbury, August 8, 1588. Her famous line that she had "the body of a weak and feeble woman but . . . the heart and stomach of a king" illustrates the convoluted sexual negotiations that Elizabeth had to perform for her own people due to her gender. Her elaborate constructions of herself as either asexual (the Virgin Queen) or bi-sexual (the

body of a woman but the spirit of a man) evidence the necessity of the queen to allay fears about the combination of gender and power.

²¹ John Field was one the leaders of the Puritan militants who attempted to reform the Church of England through political means, albeit unsuccessfully. After failing to modify the Act of Uniformity in 1572, Field and a co-author, Thomas Wilcox, wrote and published the *Admonition to parliament*, “a virulent attack on episcopacy,” an action which saw them “jailed for a year” (Somerset 380). After the failure of the Puritans to enact religious reform in the 1586-1587 Parliament, Field tried to convince his fellow Puritans to rouse the people of England for their cause but again was unsuccessful since “very few of . . . [the Puritan movement] shared the revolutionary convictions of John Field” (Somerset 631).

²² While Elizabeth was successful in her suppression of militant Puritanism, her success did not mean the end of the Puritan movement in England which eventually led to the execution of Charles I and the establishment of a non-monarchical government structure by Oliver Cromwell.

²³ Although it is difficult to place an exact date on Daniel’s arrival in the Pembroke household, both Rees and Seronsy suggest that the patronage relationship between the Countess and Daniel started between late 1591 and early 1592 (Rees 9-11; Seronsy 20-22).

²⁴ Seronsy suggests that Dymoke “must have often had bitter reflections about Daniel’s caution” (19) without ruminating on any particular reason for Daniel’s actions.

²⁵ The quarrel to which Sanders refers was manifested specifically in the competing publications of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*. Greville published his own edition of the text, called the *New Arcadia*, which was entered into the Stationer’s Register in August, 1588, and he followed this by publishing in 1590 “Books I to III of the revised *Covntesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*” (Hannay *Phoenix* 71). According to Sanders “[i]t was this edition that Mary Sidney termed ‘disfigured’ when she published her own edition in 1593” (132).

²⁶ Rees states that Daniel’s appointment as licenser of the Queen’s Revels arose from the efforts on the poet’s behalf by a woman, Lady Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, “who had charge of the Queen’s masque for the first Christmas of the new reign, [and] recommended Daniel to the Queen” (90). Seronsy also attributes Daniel’s early success within the court of James I at least partially to Lady Russell and “her continued efforts in court on his behalf” (115).

²⁷ The fact that *Philotas* drew the very serious attention of the Privy Council due to its political content may seem to diminish or undercut the argument that *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, like its successor, was a play that used an historical story to comment upon contemporary political issues. There are several possible reasons to explain why *Philotas* was considered seditious and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* was not. Firstly, the political implications in *Philotas* are far more specific and obvious since many read the play as referring clearly to the Elizabeth-Essex relationship. The political statements in *Cleopatra* are not only more subtle, but they are also far more general; they comment upon the general behavior of the Queen with regard to her courtiers rather than specifying a particular courtier. The second suggestion as to why the two plays elicited such different reactions is that each was produced during the reign of a different monarch. *Cleopatra* was published during the later years of Elizabeth I’s reign while *Philotas* appeared very early in the reign of James I. The importance of this is that *Cleopatra* was published during a reign that had been fully and completely established, while *Philotas* appeared in the first years of rule by a monarch who was not as confident in his position as his predecessor. The third and, it seems to me, the most plausible reason for the different reactions to the two dramas is the

fact that Daniel actually staged *Philotas*. This meant that *Philotas* was, in a sense, far more public than *Cleopatra*, even though both were published. That this is the most likely reason for the trouble Daniel experienced with the later play is further evidenced by the fact that he published *Philotas* in both 1607 and 1611 (Rees 100) without any further problems with officials.

²⁸ According to Rees "*Philotas* reappeared in 1607 and 1611 along with other poems of Daniel's" suggesting "that his declarations of innocence [on the seditious intent of the play] must have been accepted" (100).

²⁹ All line references for the 1607 edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* as taken from *The Short Title Catalogue* entry number 17830, reel number 5989 (Simon Waterson: *Certaine Small Workes*. London, 1607).

³⁰ Both of Daniel's biographers feel that these changes were not made under the influence of Shakespeare (Rees 109-12; Seronsy 49-50). Both feel that the changes were made due to Daniel's own development as a writer and his desire to move away from closet drama to plays that were theatrically viable. Barbara J. Bono also refers to the change in the 1607 version as being seen to be "prompted in part by the appearance of" Shakespeare's version but also claims that "the substantive influence of Shakespeare's play upon Daniel's is nonetheless slight" (121). Russell Leavenworth claims that "Daniel undoubtedly had other reasons for these revisionary labors [sic], but none of them . . . had anything to do with Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*" (18).

³¹ The 1607 copy of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* does not include the dedication to Pembroke. The only critic who references this anomaly is David M. Bergeron who suggests that the 1611 dedication suggests that "the countess had resumed her patronage of Daniel" (Cersano and Wynne-Davis 78). It is interesting to note that the dedication does, however, appear in the 1611 reprint of the 1607 version. In his discussion of the numerous editions of the play that were published, Leavenworth claims that the "1611 text has no authority, being a poor reprint of 1607 and showing not the slightest editorial supervision" (16 ft.16). Leavenworth's editorial opinion aside, Eve Rachel Sanders does comment on the dedication of the 1611 version as evidence of Daniel's contrition towards his patron, Mary Sidney Herbert (133-4). One possible suggestion as to the lack of dedication in the 1607 printing would be a printer's error. The title page of the 1607 *Certain Small Workes* indicates that *Cleopatra* should have been the first piece in order, yet the book starts with *Philotas*. Indeed, the order of the contents is completely at odds with the content list. Perhaps this indicates that the dedication may have been included in the 1607 text originally but was not printed. Considering the situation of Daniel's finances at the time of the publication, it is possible to suggest that the error could have been the result of hasty printing arising from Daniel's need for money. The appearance of the piece in the 1611 edition, by the same publisher, could have been a correction of the previous error. It is also worth noting that the list of contents in the 1611 reprint more closely matches the order in which the works are found in the text that follows.

³² According to Margaret Hannay, Pembroke's work was "near the outset of the dramatic movement to comment on contemporary affairs by means of Roman historical allusions" (*Patronesse* 149). It should also be noted that *Antonius*, written in 1590 and published in 1592, coincides with the appearance of other plays concerned with using history for contemporary comment including all of Christopher Marlow's plays, and William Shakespeare's history plays, the earliest of which, *Henry VI, Part I*, was performed in March 1592 (*The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare* 140; 279-80). Given the propensity of early modern authors to circulate their works, finished and unfinished, among those of their circle and beyond, it is possible to suggest that Pembroke's production of *Antonius* was influenced by, and, in turn, influenced, the male writers of her own period.

³³ The only biographical information relating to Brandon is tied directly to his publication of *The Vertuous Octavia*. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that Brandon “is known only as the author” of this play and does not record any of Brandon’s personal information such as place of birth, dates, or connections (besides those to Lady Lucy Adelaide).

³⁴ While no solid evidence exists to link Mary Sidney Herbert and Samuel Brandon, critics do note that a tenuous connection can be made by inference. The first such inference lies in the fact that Brandon dedicated his *The Vertuous Octavia* to Lucy Adelaide whose mother, Mary Thinne, owned the estate that neighbored Wilton (Lamb 137; Raber 108; Sanders 123). A clearer connection lies in the subject matter Brandon chose and the manner in which his text attempts to rewrite the issues of gender found in *Antonius*. However, Brandon’s response to Pembroke’s text could be seen as an attempt to gain her patronage or, at least, her attention and those who surrounded her rather than a text composed due to a relationship between the two.

³⁵ This is in reference to the original 1594 version of Daniel’s text that reinvests, as has been argued, Cleopatra with her more negative character traits.

³⁶ As was discussed in chapter one, Knox makes reference to the “natural” inferiority of women referring specifically to classical writers.

³⁷ This could also be read as another implied reference to Cleopatra, Egypt’s Empress. Of course, Octavia stills represents a positive figuration of feminine power in direct opposition to Cleopatra as a negative figuration of feminine power.

Chapter Four:

“Such a spacious mirror:” Antony, Cleopatra, and Political Reflection

The story of the fall of Antony and Cleopatra provided rich interpretive ground for the dramatic works of Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, Samuel Daniel, and Samuel Brandon. All three dramatists produced their texts in a culture ruled by a single female monarch, Elizabeth Tudor. Yet each of these writers approached the source material from a distinct position in relation to the issues of gender and power. Pembroke, as a woman and an aristocrat, reveals her understanding, both personally and socially, of the problematic undertakings that a female monarch had to face to establish and retain her authority in a society dominated by male courtiers whose ideology of power was inherently patriarchal. Samuel Daniel, as one of Pembroke's protégés and a writer patronized by some powerful male Elizabethan courtiers, encounters the story as a common man working through his own anxieties about feminine power on both a personal level with Pembroke and a political level with Elizabeth I. Brandon, the least well known and the least politically connected of all three dramatists, writes as the male at the furthest remove from the center of Elizabethan political culture. *The Vertuous Octavia* illustrates how those beyond even the farthest circle of the court viewed gender and power and how the conflict of gender and power weakened authority generally. Yet, while all three of these writers approached the source material from classical writers such as Plutarch and Dio Cassius from an individual perspective, the plays they

produced, when studied together, give a larger picture of the way in which cultural production interacted and responded to both the cultural and political ideologies in the early modern period. *Antonius*, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, and *The Vertuous Octavia* all reinterpret the contemporary cultural meanings associated with the characters of the Roman tale, especially Cleopatra, while at the same time each successive playwright reinterprets the political stance of the play that came before.

As a whole, all three plays present a revealing picture of the political concerns of the Elizabethan age and how the drama of the period not only used stories from the past to illustrate these political concerns, but also how each dramatist was aware of her/his interaction with cultural construction through the act of writing drama itself. They borrowed from the past and they borrowed from each other, evidencing their awareness that the drama they wrote was the basis of their own participation in the questioning and espousing of the production of cultural ideologies. With *Antonius*, Pembroke took the archetypal character of Cleopatra from Garnier's play and invested her queen with all the anxieties and complexities of a nation whose reigning monarch was Elizabeth I. With a female monarch on the throne of England, the figure of Cleopatra became imbued with new meaning: she became both a dream vision and a nightmare. Cleopatra was the dream of female power, independence, and strength *and* the nightmare of female sexuality, decadence and willfulness. For everyone in England—male and female—having a woman on the throne necessarily changed how power was perceived. The plays of Pembroke, Daniel, and Brandon illustrate how these male and female writers envisioned different dreams and different nightmares

concerning female power, especially monarchial power, and, in so doing, they show how Elizabethan society had begun to reassess its perception of power itself. This distinct shift in purpose is clear from the plays that continued to dramatize the story of Antony and Cleopatra after the death of Elizabeth I in 1603.

As has been argued in the previous chapters, the story of the Roman general and the Egyptian queen was clearly recognized during the early modern period as a story about political power with particular emphasis on power from a gendered point of view during the reign of Elizabeth. However, the death of Elizabeth Tudor did not result in the story of Antony and Cleopatra becoming obsolete for political use. Indeed, even within the texts of the three writers studied thus far, there was an investigation of the idea of rule itself, despite the specific interest in female rule naturally aroused by the presence of a female monarch. Perhaps it was the scrutiny of female power that led these plays to investigate the dichotomy of rule itself, to investigate the bifurcation of the monarch as a ruler versus the monarch as a person. This attention to the division between the body politic and the body natural of the ruler becomes a central impetus for the continued creation of Antony and Cleopatra plays in post-Tudor England. The plays written after Elizabeth's death, *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606-1608)¹, *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra: Queene of Aegypt* (1626), and *All For Love* (1678), expand upon the socio-political discussion of the construction of power to be found in their dramatic predecessors; one sees a progression in these plays from the issue of gender as a central concern toward a stronger emphasis on the ideology of monarchy, and, therefore, the ideology of power itself.

In William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*,² when Agrippa and Mecnas discuss the death of Anthony (5.1), they emphasize the implications of Anthony's death for Octavius Caesar's rule. While both characters acknowledge that Anthony's "taints and honours/ Waged equal with him" (5.1.30-31)³, they both also admit to Anthony's greatness as a leader. He is hailed as a "rarer spirit" (5.1.32) whose life they continue to respect even upon hearing of his death. Anthony becomes "a spacious mirror," in Mecnas's words, for the new ruler, Octavius. In other words, the former emperor, Anthony, becomes a "mirror" by which Caesar's own fitness as a ruler will be judged. The image of the mirror holds particular significance for understanding the political implications of Mecnas's statement. Debora Shuger claims that unlike the modern perception of mirrors in which the subject finds him/herself, the use of the mirror in a cultural context in early modern England usually reflects a perspective of a political, moral, or social image. Specifically Shuger notes that "[t]he majority of Renaissance mirrors—or, rather, mirror metaphors—do reflect a face, but not the face of the person in front of the mirror. Typically, the person looking into the mirror sees an exemplary image, either positive or negative" (22). Mirroring in Renaissance culture is not an exercise of seeing the self, but seeing how one should or could be. In the case of Anthony, his personality and charisma as a leader will be the standard by which Octavius's rule will be judged, and it is important to note in the context of the play's use of pageantry that Anthony is not an ordinary mirror, but a "spacious" or grand mirror. Of course, the figuration of Anthony as "mirror" also has theatrical implications. Like Anthony, the stage is

also a “mirror” that gives its audience representations of rulers and the power they wield. Drama acts as a “spacious mirror” in which the culture that has produced the drama can see itself and its socio-political institutions reflected. Louis A. Montrose argues that the “Elizabethan playhouse, playwright, and player exemplify the contradictions of Elizabethan society and make those contradictions their subject. If the world is a theatre and the theatre is an image of the world, then by reflecting upon its own artifice, the drama is holding the mirror up to nature” (“Purposes” 57). While Montrose refers specifically to Elizabethan theatre, the same type of socio-political “dialog” can also be found in the Jacobean theatre. Indeed, the reflections seen in William Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Thomas May’s *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*, and John Dryden’s *All For Love* capture how the drama continued to reflect a socio-cultural interest in the meanings of and applications of power during the reigns of three post-Elizabethan monarchs. In Shakespeare’s play the reader sees the reflection of a culture attempting to adjust to the loss of the powerful presence of Elizabeth Tudor. May’s play, published the year after James I’s death, focuses on the growing public view of the throne and the court as a place of moral bankruptcy. Finally, in Dryden’s play, written after the Restoration, the reader views the cultural fallout produced by the toppling of the monarchy that is illustrated in the play’s recontextualization of the Antony and Cleopatra story to caution those who do question power by depicting the powerful as “extraordinary” and beyond human frailty, so as to stabilize the throne’s necessity and authority. As will be seen, while

all three plays use the story of Antony and Cleopatra for political purposes, those purposes are adapted to a specific political times and circumstances.

“She shows a body rather than a life:” Shakespeare and the Politics of Pageantry

When Cleopatra first learns of Anthony’s marriage to Octavia in Shakespeare’s play, her questioning of the messenger who brings the news seems stereotypically feminine as she seems far more concerned about Octavia’s physical appearance than the political implications of the marriage. When the queen asks the messenger whether there is “majesty . . . in her gait” (3.3.17), he replies that Octavia’s “motion and her station are as one./ She shows a body rather than a life, / A statue than a breather” (3.3. 19-21). Having been informed of Octavia’s lack of charisma, Cleopatra once again feels confident in her position in Anthony’s heart as well as in her position on the political stage. The reason for Cleopatra’s renewed confidence has little to do with Octavia’s morals or position. Indeed, these attributes do not even seem to concern the Egyptian queen. What does concern Cleopatra, with her focus on her own position and power, is whether or not Octavia has any presence; that is, she is concerned with Octavia’s potential ability to project and to magnify her position and power. Since the messenger reports that Cleopatra’s female rival “shows a body rather than a life,” the queen can disregard any threat Octavia may have posed to her own image and life. As a person, Octavia cannot outshine Cleopatra, and, therefore, as a monarch, Octavia cannot be the queen for Anthony that Cleopatra is.

Cleopatra's focus on Octavia's "presence" or charisma, or lack thereof, illustrates a particular construction of power in Shakespeare's play that finds its acme in the Egyptian queen: the politics of pageantry.

Like the plays that preceded it, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is a political play. However, unlike the three dramas studied thus far, Shakespeare's play was written after the death of Elizabeth Tudor. Nevertheless, the image and the memory of the "Virgin Queen" still persists within the characterization of Cleopatra. Indeed, the similarities between these monarchs make such a comparison nearly inevitable. But since the play was composed after the death of Elizabeth, what value would such a comparison hold for its audience? We have seen that with Pembroke's and Daniel's plays the association of Elizabeth with Cleopatra conveyed the challenges that arose in early modern English culture when the construction of political power collided with the construction of gender; that is, both plays illustrate the inevitable socio-cultural conflicts that arise when a society that perceived power as patriarchal is ruled by a woman. And even in Brandon's play, with its stronger emphasis on personal desire versus public duty, the issue of the difficulty of reconciling gender and power is still a core thematic element. One possible suggestion for understanding how Shakespeare's audience may have interpreted the play's political implications lies in recognizing the complexity of the text itself. As Michael Neill notes, the "style of the play has all the breathtaking variety that Enobarbus ascribes to Cleopatra herself," and that:

[n]ot even Shakespeare's history plays offer greater contrasts of mood and effect than the forty-three scenes of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, which switch from courtly trifling to the nuanced menace of diplomatic skirmishing and machiavellian intrigue, and from episodes of drunken debauch to the drama of great battles and moments of high pathos. (2)

In simple terms, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is a play that presents what seems to be a basic dichotomy—Rome versus Egypt. However, this dichotomy is then layered as the audience realizes that each ideological site is complicated by both positive and negative values. One cannot simply associate one place/culture with good and the other with evil. Coppélia Kahn also notes the play's resistance to one interpretation while recognizing the near impossibility of escaping the play's construction of dichotomies. For her, the play's superficial or geographical construction of opposites has led many critics:

to read the play in terms of a mutually confirming chain of binary oppositions labeled "Rome" and "Egypt." War and love, public and private, duty and pleasure, reason and sensuality, male and female . . . form the framework within which the play means. And its meaning is that of a love story laced with cultural conflict, a Roman warrior seduced by an Egyptian queen. This schematic binarism, however, only replicates a binarism undeniably at work in the play, while keeping us from gaining critical perspective on it. Even when readers resist taking sides, to argue that the play's treatment of contrasting

value systems is ambiguous or equivocal, the poles of ambiguity or equivocation remain those of Rome or Egypt. (Kahn 110-11)

My reading of such oppositions, while still labeled "Rome" or "Egypt," is invested in seeing both places as representative of England in the early modern period. The ambiguity, I suggest, arises from the cultural inability to see the monarchical change from Elizabeth Tudor to James Stuart as either fully positive or fully negative. This lack of cultural clarity in the direction, so to speak, of English society and culture, would have been especially acute considering the timing of the play's composition (1606-1608), as it was written very early in James I's reign. Rather than dealing with the cultural anxiety surrounding a female monarch as was the case with its dramatic predecessors, *Anthony and Cleopatra* can be read as a play which deals with the socio-cultural insecurities produced in early modern England, both on a literal and figurative level, by the change in the court politics that accompanied the change in monarch.

While many critics claim that by 1603 Elizabeth Tudor's popularity with her courtiers and her people had waned, her rule was long, and for the most part, prosperous for the English people.⁴ With the accession of James I, the English people not only had to adapt to a new monarch and a new style of politics, but also to a new representation of power. As Paul Yachnin suggests:

[i]n terms of the political culture of the early Stuart period, *Anthony and Cleopatra's* account of the shift from the magnificent but senescent Egyptian past to the pragmatic but successful Roman future can be seen as a critical

register of the symbolic constructions and political ramifications of the shift from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean style of rule. (1)

Specifically, the play, with its opposing cultures and rulers, denotes the uneasiness produced in early modern English culture by the difference between Elizabeth I and James I. One of the key differences between the two monarchs was the way in which they presented themselves, as rulers, to the people. Elizabeth Tudor, whose rule was constantly complicated by her gender, created herself as the wife and mother of her people; she used her gender to enhance and strengthen the personal relationship between herself and her people. She relied on their love and courted it incessantly. In reference to Elizabeth's accession to the English throne, David Scott Kastan argues that "she was almost compulsively concerned with 'presenting her person to the public view,' recognizing that her rule could be—and in her case perhaps could *only* be—celebrated and confirmed with theatricality" (466). Kastan in particular relates Elizabeth's strategies of "theatricality" with her style of rule and claims that "throughout her reign Elizabeth's use of pageant and progress enabled her to transform her country into a theatre, and, in the absence of a standing army, create an audience, troops of loyal admirers, to guarantee her rule" (466). James Stuart, on the other hand, as a male monarch, used existing models of kingly behavior and reinforced the more traditional associations of monarchy in the period:

[s]ince James could rely upon the existing metaphors and formulas of a patriarchal society, his fictions were not essential for establishing his power. Elizabeth had no such special tropes to draw upon. She was forced to become

a consummate fiction-maker creating an elaborate political icon partially out of whole cloth, partially out of a symbolic list of strong women who were not necessarily rulers. (Jankowski "As I Am Egypt's Queen" 93-94)

One intriguing aspect of the different styles of rule between Elizabeth and James was the relationship that they constructed with the people they ruled. Elizabeth was well known for her courtship of her people on all levels, from courtiers to commoners. James, however, basing his rule on previous kings and his own experiences in childhood,⁵ took a more distant emotional stance from the majority of those around him, particularly the commoners. This is especially clear in the manner in which each monarch made her/his entrance into London on her/his respective accessions. Jonathan Goldberg clearly illustrates the marked difference of each monarch's presentation of himself or herself as monarch. In her accession procession into London in 1558/9, "Elizabeth offered a show of love" and "the description of the day's events . . . paints a vivid picture of mutual love, of the people displaying their affection by their prayers and cries, and of the queen returning these, in word and gesture" (Goldberg 29). Elizabeth's public participation in her procession initiated her construction of herself as the partner or mate of England; it established a style of rule that was, to some degree, personal. As Goldberg notes "the queen's presence in the people's pageant means that in another set of terms queen and people are co-partners in this spectacle" (30). James's entrance into London in 1603 was very different since "[u]nlike Elizabeth, James said nothing throughout his entrance, displaying no response to the pageants. Rather, the pageants responded to him" (31). The

constructions of power created by Elizabeth and James are delineated in their response to and participation in pageantry:

[w]hereas Elizabeth kept hushing the crowd, attempting to make the progress a totally theatrical event involving the queen, her people, and their pageants, James stood aloof; for him to see was enough (not necessarily for him, but for his viewers). James displayed their subjection to his subjects, showed them their need for him and his aloofness from them. (Goldberg 31-32)

While Elizabeth courted her people, James expected his people to court him. This difference in personal interaction between Elizabeth and James defines the style of authority or rule that each constructed. Whereas Elizabeth constructed her authority as a compact between herself and her people—as fictitious, in terms of real power for the people, as that compact may have been—James constructed his authority as Divinely ordained and separate from any acquiescence, as such, of his people. According to Goldberg, the early appearances of both monarchs became the basis of the presentation and performance of authority that each constructed during her/his reigns. If one reads the drama/theatre of Renaissance England as a “spacious mirror” in which the culture, both political and social, of the period is seen, the involvement of Elizabeth as a player in her own pageants and the contrived indifference of James to his pageants make the figures of Anthony and Cleopatra and Octavius very telling with regards to Shakespeare’s view of contemporary politics. While in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Anthony is the character who is directly called a “spacious mirror,” this metaphor is also by association, and implication, assigned to Cleopatra. As partners,

both in the political and the personal sphere, Anthony and Cleopatra stand for one style of rule in opposition to the style of rule constructed through the characterization of Octavius. Therefore, both Anthony and Cleopatra can be seen as mirrors for Octavius and the political strategies he represents. And it is in this mirroring of the main characters that the political aspects of pageantry are to be found with Anthony and Cleopatra reflecting the performance of rule enacted by Elizabeth and Octavius reflecting the performance of rule enacted by James.

Within the text of the play both Anthony and Cleopatra conflate power and performance. For each, to perform power is to be powerful. Hence their gestures and actions are grand and majestic. One such example is Anthony's behavior towards Enobarbus. After Anthony learns of Enobarbus's defection to Caesar's camp, he illustrates his own performance of power:

Go, Eros, send his [Enobarbus's] treasure after—do it,
 Detain no jot, I charge thee. Write to him—
 I will subscribe—gentle adieus and greetings;
 Say that I wish he never find more cause
 To change a master. O, my fortunes have
 Corrupted honest men! Dispatch.—Enobarbus!
 (4.5.12-17)

Anthony, while being emotionally devastated by Enobarbus's betrayal, not only forgives his former soldier and friend, but also insists on sending him all the property he has accumulated under Anthony's leadership. Anthony's sincere and

magnanimous gesture to Enobarbus illustrates his own performance of majesty; he voluntarily returns Enobarbus's wealth to him despite Enobarbus's rejection of him. The power of this particular performance is evidenced by the reaction of Enobarbus to Anthony's actions. Before the arrival of his belongings, Enobarbus is already feeling the guilt over his betrayal of Anthony. Once he witnesses Anthony's generosity, Enobarbus calls himself "the villain of the earth" (4.6.29) and wonders that he could have left Anthony, a "mine of bounty" (4.6.31) whose treatment of those who have betrayed him indicates the truth of his power. Anthony's power lies not in his material wealth, but in his loyalty to those whom he loves. Enobarbus's recognition of Anthony's true value is Enobarbus's undoing since the guilt he feels over betraying Anthony's love and trust causes him to commit suicide (4.10.12-23). Yet, Anthony's performance of power, unlike Cleopatra's, is inconsistent. Anthony is caught between two worlds—Rome and Egypt. He is neither fully Roman nor fully Egyptian. His behavior wavers between his own participation in Cleopatra's pageantry—at which points *his* majesty appears diminished by relation to hers—and his rejection of Cleopatra, which is a rejection of everything she represents from a Roman perspective, in order to reclaim his own (Roman) power and majesty. In *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Anthony represents a figure of transition. He is no longer Roman but he is not Egyptian either. He shows characteristics of both.⁶ While by the end of the play, particularly during his death, Anthony does finally embrace performance as power, in Shakespeare's play it is Cleopatra who stands as the unquestioned embodiment of pageantry as majesty—a stance with which Anthony

must struggle to either accept or reject. Hence it is through Cleopatra's character that Shakespeare represents the model of all that is "Egyptian."

Cleopatra, like Elizabeth, is aware and fully immersed in her own theatricality, and Cleopatra, like Elizabeth, is a willing participant in her own displays of regal power. There is perhaps no clearer example of how Cleopatra constructs her political power as a performance than at her staging of her meeting with Anthony on the Cydnus:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
 Burned on the water; the poop was of beaten gold,
 Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
 The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
 The water which they beat to follow faster,
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
 It beggared all description : she did lie
 In her pavillion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—
 O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
 The fancy out-work nature; on each side her
 Stood pretty, dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
 With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
 To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
 And what they undid did. (2.2.198-212)

The scene constructed by Cleopatra on her barge is one of both power and sensuality. In the actual production, no cost has been spared, illustrated by the “beaten gold” of the deck and the silver oars that indicate the great wealth of Egypt and its queen. It was this wealth that made Egypt so attractive to the political players in Rome, including Mark Anthony. Cleopatra, as Egypt, had the financial resources to fund the political and military campaigns that were necessary to achieve and maintain power in Rome. The sails, dyed in “royal” purple, also are an obvious reference to political power. Combined with the imagery of political wealth and power is the sensuality of the queen herself who “beggared all description” and whose public display of herself is personal as well as political, as is implied by the idea that she appears as an image of “Venus,” the Roman goddess of love, but as a goddess that makes “fancy out-work nature.”⁷ On the *Cydnus*, Cleopatra presents herself as both a powerful monarch and a beguiling lover. In this scene, the Egyptian queen’s facile use of the symbols of power illustrates how she combines the political and the personal; she comes to Anthony appearing as a ruler and as a lover. The effective nature of Cleopatra’s display on Anthony is clearly acknowledged by Enobarbus who states that Anthony, “for his ordinary pays his heart/ For what his eyes eat only” (2.2.232-233). Anthony, as the representative of Rome meeting with a client monarch of the Roman republic, should be the one in control of the situation, but instead he acts as “lovesick” as the winds that follow Cleopatra’s barge. Cleopatra’s ability to invert the power relation between Rome and Egypt is further emphasized by the public reaction to her theatrical arrival. Enobarbus claims that, upon Cleopatra’s arrival, “[t]he city cast /

Her people out upon her [Cleopatra]; and Anthony,/ Enthroned i'th'market-place, did sit alone" (2.2.220-222). Through her political pageantry, Cleopatra shifts the power from Rome/Anthony to Egypt/herself. By making Anthony pay "his heart" to her, Cleopatra establishes a strategy to ensure her own power in the face of Roman might. And, as Agrippa claims, this is not the first time the Egyptian queen has combined her political and personal self to secure her power as all Romans know that "[s]he made Great Caesar lay his sword to bed" (2.2.235). While Cleopatra's performance of herself as ruler and lover is intended for those men, like Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony, who represent Roman might, her pageantry also influences the regular Romans represented by Enobarbus and Agrippa. Besides Enobarbus's poetic vision of her barge on the Cydnus, throughout the description, Agrippa, Octavius's man, constantly interjects Enobarbus's speech with his own admiring descriptions of Cleopatra including calling her "Rare Egyptian" (2.2.225) and "Royal wench" (2.2.233). Therefore, while Cleopatra's performance of power is specifically directed at Anthony, it also indirectly affects those around the central figures of power, like the Egyptian people and Agrippa. Through her use of pageantry, Cleopatra is able to construct and manipulate the powerful and those ruled by that power for her own political gain.

Enobarbus's recitation of the meeting of Cleopatra and Anthony on the Cydnus clearly shows that Cleopatra uses performance, both political and personal, to attain and retain her power. Indeed, throughout the play, Cleopatra constantly draws attention to her own identity as player. When Anthony has returned to Rome, the

queen remembers past incidents of “playing” between herself and her lover during which she “laughed him out of patience, and that night/ [she] laughed him into patience” (2.5.18-19). Like the meeting at the Cydnus, Cleopatra uses her sexual power over Anthony to ensure that she can control his political decisions. This is clearly apparent when Cleopatra makes reference to putting “my tires and mantles on him [Anthony], whilst/ I wore his sword Philippan” (2.5. 22-23). Rather than merely playing for fun, Cleopatra’s references to the performance of their relationship is as much about the political as the personal. She holds power over Anthony by playing with his mood—she laughs him in and out of patience—and then she literally holds the symbol of his Roman power embodied in his sword “Philippan.” Another example that illustrates the conscious manner in which Cleopatra plays to gain power occurs just before Anthony leaves her to deal with the political upheaval caused by Fulvia. Fearing that she will lose her power over Anthony if he goes to Rome, Cleopatra sends her servant to report her performances:

See where he is, who’s with him, what he does:

I did not send you. If you find him sad,

Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report

That I am sudden sick. (1.3. 3-6)

Even at a distance, Cleopatra is able to use the power of her playing on Anthony to attempt to keep him within her own theatre, Egypt, where she controls everything. Cleopatra’s fear that she will lose Anthony is based upon her fear that another,

namely Octavius, will outperform her and gain Anthony's love and loyalty and, hence, his political power.

However, the ultimate example of Cleopatra's awareness of the pageantry and performance of power arises when that power is soon to be taken away by Caesar's conquest. After her meeting with Caesar during which he promises to be merciful to her, Cleopatra plays the part of submissive captive (5.2) while recognizing that Caesar intends to use her for his own performance of power. Once Caesar and Dolabella leave, Cleopatra illustrates her awareness of Caesar's planned performance of his victory:

Nay, 'tis most certain, Iras. Saucy lictors
 Will catch at us like strumpets, and scald rhymers
 Ballad us out o'tune. The quick comedians
 Extemporally will stage us, and present
 Our Alexandrian revels—Anthony
 Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
 Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
 I'th' posture of a whore. (5.2. 214-221)

Here Cleopatra shows her knowledge of how performance and playing can be used against her. She knows that if she lets Caesar take her to Rome, he will negate the power she has created by her own strategic playing by rewriting the script that she and Anthony have already produced. He will assure his own power by inverting for the Roman public their "Alexandrian revels" and recasting the general and the queen

as a drunkard and a whore. Instead of the subject of her own performance of power, Cleopatra will become the object of another's construction of power. Her only escape is to retain her subject position by enacting a final performance of power—her death.

Perhaps the most evocative scene of Cleopatra's theatre of power in *Anthony and Cleopatra* is her dramatic death scene. After her realization that Caesar intends to use her as a stage by which he hopes to construct his own theatre of power in Rome, Cleopatra puts into motion her final pageant of the play:

Why that's the way

To fool their preparation and to conquer

Their most absurd intents. Now Charmian!

Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch

My best attires. I am again for Cydnus,

To meet Mark Anthony. Sirrah, Iras, go—

Now, noble Charmian, we'll dispatch indeed!—

To play till doomsday; bring out crown and all. (5.2. 224-232)

Once again, Cleopatra arranges her “pageant” to display both the political and the personal aspects of her character. She will “fool” Caesar's “preparation” of his own pageant of power by preempting it with her own display. By killing herself on the stage that she herself has prepared, Cleopatra appropriates Octavius's power; by dying “like a queen,” she removes herself from being debased in Rome's political theatre of Octavius's triumph and, therefore, immortalizing her own construction of self. By ordering her women to “show” her “like a queen,” Cleopatra ensures that is

what she will be remembered as. This pageant also invokes the personal aspects of Cleopatra's pageant as she frames her death as returning to "Cydnus/To meet Mark Anthony." Like the original pageant of her first meeting with Anthony, Cleopatra plans to reunite with her dead lover as a queen and a woman. In death, as in life, Cleopatra's personal love and her play for power become one and the same. The evidence that her final performance is successful is found in the reaction to the tableau of Cleopatra's death scene. When Caesar arrives, Dolabella claims that he has come only to "see *performed the dreaded act* which thou/So sought'st to hinder" (5.2.329-330, my emphasis). Dolabella gives voice to Cleopatra's victory by observing that her performance has robbed Caesar of his own show of power, a sentiment that Caesar himself acknowledges by claiming that Cleopatra has "levelled at our purposes, and being royal, /Took her own way" (5.2. 334-335). By constructing the performance of her own death, Cleopatra deprives Caesar of completing his own pageant of power by displaying her in Rome.

In presenting Cleopatra as the ultimate performer, *Anthony and Cleopatra* emphasizes the theatricality of power itself. In her performances, Cleopatra deliberately constructs power as performance; that is, she erases the line between the acting of power and the attainment of power. The melding of Cleopatra as a woman and as a queen emphasizes this as it erases the traditional distinction between the political and the personal. In fact, Cleopatra's performances become the necessary basis of her power. While those around her, specifically the Romans, criticize the Egyptian queen for her theatrics, they are also enthralled by her performances as the

remarks of Enobarbus, Agrippa, and Caesar attest. They are unable to turn themselves away from the spectacle of power that Cleopatra presents. They also recognize the danger that Cleopatra's performances present to their own power in that they recognize that Cleopatra's displays of power are proof of her actual power. They are the public statements of her confidence and authority as a ruler. They are not empty shows of bravado; they are shows of political power. Cleopatra is the actress, director, and writer of all her displays of power, and all who enter her theatre are under her control. Cleopatra's final performance, her death, illustrates the obvious lack of understanding that the Romans, especially Octavius, have of how Cleopatra has conflated playing and power. Having defeated her on one stage, the war for the Roman Empire, Octavius thinks he has ended Cleopatra's ability to perform. He believes he has taken the stage away from her. Cleopatra's careful management of her death is important in the sense that in her last "act," Cleopatra makes Octavius, and the Romans who witness the scene, aware that no one can take her ability to perform, and hence her power, away from her.

Cleopatra's ability to outperform Caesar is enhanced by Shakespeare's characterization of Caesar within *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Unlike either of the lovers, Caesar's character seems unemotional and merely political. Throughout the text, Caesar remains aloof and emotionally distant when compared to either Anthony or Cleopatra. In a structural echo of Enobarbus's descriptions of Cleopatra, Pompey is the one who gives voice to the most succinct description of Caesar's appearance and performance as a ruler. Before his meeting with the triumvirs, Pompey describes to

his friend, Menecrates, his chances of success by detailing how he perceives himself, Anthony, Caesar, and Lepidus:

I shall do well:

The people love me, and the sea is mine;

My powers are crescent, and my auguring hope

Says it will come to th' full. Mark Anthony

In Egypt sits at dinner, and will make

Not wars without doors. *Caesar gets money where*

He loses hearts. Lepidus flatters both. (2.1.8-14, my emphasis)

While Pompey's assessment of himself is somewhat overstated (he does lose everything), his assessment of the other three men is quite accurate. Anthony has ignored his Roman duties for Egypt, and Lepidus does prove to be the weakest member of the triumvirate. What is of interest here is Pompey's description of Caesar. Unlike himself or Anthony who, through their courage and personalities, have the "love" of the people, Caesar is described as a cold businessman. He is good at gaining money, but not conspicuously talented at winning the love of those around him. This picture of Caesar is of the greedy politician who is more concerned with the pragmatics of rule. As a ruler, Caesar is more concerned with being powerful as opposed to being "loved" by the people he rules. Indeed, in Pompey's speech, the personal side of Caesar, his characterization as a man, is never truly articulated. This seeming lack of humanity is an aspect of Caesar's character that is highlighted again and again. When Caesar first appears (1.4) a messenger relays to him news of

Pompey and claims that not only is Pompey “strong at sea” (1.4.36) but that “it appears that he is beloved of those/ That have only feared Caesar” (1.4.37-38). Caesar responds with a somewhat cynical comment regarding being “beloved” of the people:

I should have known no less:

It hath been taught to us from the primal state
 That he which is was wished until he were;
 And the ebb'd man, ne'er loved till ne'er worth love,
 Comes deared by being lacked. This common body,
 Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream,
 Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide
 To rot itself with motion. (1.4.40-47)

While it is clear Caesar realizes that he is not beloved of the “common body,” this lack of devotion does not bother him since he claims that the common people lack the proper morals, intelligence, and knowledge to judge who is the better man. He states that the people who go “to and back” with their affection do so without any realization of true worth. They love without thought or discretion and that the worthy man, who believes in duty and rule, while not loved, “comes deared by being lacked.” Unlike Pompey, and, of course, Anthony, who rely upon their personal charisma to buttress their political ambitions, Caesar clearly divides who he may be as a private person from who he is as a ruler. Indeed, even Caesar’s language in this passage illustrates a man who is more of an intellectual than a man who panders to the sentimental needs of those around him. The convoluted phrasing and wording of his

speech about the “common body,” while illustrating Caesar’s political acuity, also illustrates his inability or unwillingness to display himself as being as human as those he rules. Here, even his wording distances him from those who surround him. Unlike Cleopatra, Caesar’s political performance is constructed by setting himself above or apart from all those around him. He is not one with his people; he is their ruler. Caesar’s concerns are for power and Rome, not for popularity. Caesar’s emphasis on the political instead of the personal is further illustrated by his lack of emotional displays in the text of the play. When his beloved sister, Octavia, leaves him after her marriage to Anthony, Enobarbus and Agrippa make a commentary on Caesar’s lack of emotion:

Enobarbus: Will Caesar weep?

Agrippa: He has a cloud in’s face.

Enobarbus: He were the worse for that he were a horse—

So is he being a man. (3.2.50-54)

Enobarbus’s and Agrippa’s asides illustrate how Caesar is perceived by those around him as being, to some extent, inhuman. They acknowledge that Caesar’s political side will always hold sway over his personal emotions. While Caesar loves his sister, he realizes the political necessity of her marriage to Anthony. He subdues his personal feelings for his sister for the greater cause of Rome and, in doing so, illustrates he is a man of duty first. He clearly separates his identity as ruler from his identity as a private man. No where is Caesar’s sacrifice of personal emotion more clear than after learning of Anthony’s death:

O Anthony,

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 [sic] should divide
 Our equalness to this. Hear me good friends—

Enter an Egyptian

But I will tell you at some meeter season:
 The business of this man looks out of him;
 We'll hear him what he says. (5.1.35-51)

After starting his emotional eulogy to the dead Anthony, Caesar suddenly breaks off his speech to attend to business. This speech, perhaps the most emotive ascribed to Caesar throughout the text, shows the politic nature of Caesar. It is also interesting to note that Caesar's final line before the entrance of the Egyptian, "Hear me, good

friends,” is a verbal echo of Anthony’s own eulogy in *Julius Caesar* (3.2.73ff)⁸. Here Caesar illustrates his own performance of power. Once Anthony is dead, Caesar realizes that he has won Rome. When Anthony was alive, albeit defeated, Caesar knew he could not consolidate his power since Anthony represented a political threat because of the perception of Anthony as a great and honourable Roman. Despite the fact that Anthony had betrayed his “Romaness” by partnering with the Egyptian Cleopatra, he is still lamented and loved by the Roman people for what he had been. In other words, while Anthony was alive, what he represented, the charismatic personal ruler, was also alive. As Jonathan Dollimore states:

[t]he question of Caesar’s sincerity here is beside the point; this is, after all, an encomium, and to mistake it for a spontaneous expression of grief will lead us to miss seeing that even in the few moments he speaks Caesar has laid the foundation for an “official” history of Antony . . . the rationale of his encomium . . . [is] a strategic expression of “love” in the service of power. The bathos of these episodes makes for an insistent cancelling of the potentially sublime in favour of the political realities which the sublime struggles to eclipse or transcend. (203)

Significantly, at Anthony’s death, Caesar appropriates not only Anthony’s political power but also, his political performance. This is indicated by the somewhat hyperbolic language of Caesar’s speech as he calls Anthony his “brother,” “competitor,” and “mate.” Considering Caesar’s condemnation of Anthony throughout the majority of the play, his apparent change of opinion seems

uncharacteristic. Caesar's eulogy, with its personal tone, attempts to imitate Anthony's own use of personal charisma. While Caesar does not fully engage in the type of play and pageantry that Anthony and Cleopatra have mastered, he does perform for political necessity. Similarly, given the number of characters in the play who admire and love Anthony, even after he has been defeated, Caesar's eulogy seems designed to mollify those Romans who still love the dead general. The idea that Caesar is imitating Anthony's own performance is further evidenced by the idea that one could read Anthony's own eulogy of Julius Caesar (in the earlier play) in a similar manner since, on a political level, Anthony used his oration to gain Roman support for his future military and political actions against Brutus and Cassius. Like Anthony, it seems Caesar is using a more personal style to connect himself with both Anthony and Julius Caesar to strengthen his own ambitions. However, despite the emotive quality of Caesar's speech, the kind of rule that he represents still remains more political than personal. Near the end of the speech, Caesar is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger. Rather than continue his praise of Anthony, Caesar halts his eulogy; he stops his emotional send-off to Anthony to attend to "business." Here Caesar is once again presented as a ruler who, unlike Anthony or Cleopatra, is unable to master combining a personal charisma with a political agenda. For Caesar, the personal and the political are clearly separated despite his own recognition, as his attempt to show personal emotions upon hearing of Anthony's death illustrates, that performance and power are a potent tool. The question now becomes how

Shakespeare's construction of such opposing styles of rule can be read as emanating from the socio-political conditions of the play's production.

Despite its characterization of both Anthony and Cleopatra as larger-than-life figures with fatal charisma, *Anthony and Cleopatra* retains the moral disapprobation at the cost of the lovers' disregard of public duty for personal pleasure found in the source material as well as in the majority of the preceding dramatic versions of the story. And, while Caesar may be shown to be the better ruler, his character lacks the presence to inspire the love and admiration of his people. Caesar does not play the ruler the way that Cleopatra does and, due to this lack, appears bland. By contrasting the two opposing styles of leadership, the play seems to hold at its heart an ambivalence towards which style of rule it truly endorses (if any). From the perspective of pageantry and charisma, Cleopatra is obviously the more attractive ruler. She is, as seen at her death, a queen who understands the connection of power and presentation. She is a ruler who uses performance as power and, in so doing, wins the admiration and love of her people. From the perspective of duty and order, Caesar, while not overly charismatic, is able to unite and cement the Roman people, and he always holds true to Roman values. Caesar is also the victor in the worldly political arena. Hence, the compelling pageantry of Cleopatra seems to be defeated by the pragmatic politics of Caesar. Such an ending, while obviously historically accurate, may have also led to mixed reactions on the part of the audience. On a personal level, it is Cleopatra's presence who commands the admiration and attention of all around her, even those like Mecnas and Agrippa who are completely loyal to

her enemy, Caesar. And because she sets the stage for her death, her power, rooted in her blending of the personal and political, is never fully conquered by Caesar. In contrast to Cleopatra's pageantry, the play emphasizes Caesar's lack of presence, especially his lack of personal charisma. One ruler is majestic and one ruler is pragmatic. It is this contrast that creates much of the ambivalence in the play. While on a personal level Cleopatra is a far more attractive ruler, Caesar is far more stable on a political level. This contrast causes a conflict for the audience between an emotional response and an intellectual one. So while Caesar wins, it is Cleopatra who is immortalized since her pageantry and personality will always be remembered. It is in the construction of Anthony and Cleopatra as so personally attractive, despite their political flaws, in contrast to the seemingly bland but efficient Caesar, that Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* can be seen as politically topical, and it is also this facet that creates some of the play's ambiguity.

As was noted previously, the dates for the composition of *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606 to 1608) mean that the play was written in the early years of James's reign. Just as it would not have been difficult for an early modern audience to associate Cleopatra with the late Elizabeth Tudor, it would have been just as likely that such an audience would have equated Caesar with James I. Indeed, H. Neville Davies suggests that "it is inconceivable that a dramatist late in 1606 . . . could have failed to associate Caesar Augustus and the ruler whose propaganda was making just that connection" ("Jacobean" 124-25). From the start of his reign, James used Roman allusions to represent his own political philosophies and agenda. James's

representational use of Roman allusion was more than symbolic; it was integral to his own political philosophy. Unlike Elizabeth who courted her people, James conceived of the monarch's power as Divinely ordained and, therefore, believed that the monarch was the master who ruled whether or not his people loved him. This style of authority, coming so closely after the charismatic style of Elizabeth, heightened the difference between the two monarchs. James's apparent disregard for his new English subjects, especially as it related to their national identity, emphasized this difference. Several political decisions by James at the start of his reign caused a negative reaction towards the new monarch including his attempt to solidify the peace with Spain and his Unity proposal of 1604.⁹ However, it was each monarch's consciously chosen public persona that most dramatically reveals the differences between Elizabeth and James.

As was discussed earlier, the differences between the coronation ceremonies of Elizabeth and James were clearly designed to initiate the construction of each individual monarch's iconography of power. Elizabeth's construction of monarchy had to encompass her gender; she was a woman and could not be a man. One of the methods by which Elizabeth attempted to dampen some of the cultural anxiety that arose because of her "femaleness" was to embrace those feminine figurations that were positive—wife and mother. An inevitable part of such a strategy was that by constructing herself as wife and mother of England, she also had to construct her relationship with her people on a more personal level. By their nature, the roles of wife and mother implicate familial as well as familiar relationships. Elizabeth turned

this idea of personal rule into one of the great strengths of her reign. James's construction of monarchy, based as it was on more culturally accepted and traditionally masculine models, meant that constructing a personal relationship was not a priority. Unlike Elizabeth, James was unable and/or unwilling to be seen as accessible to his people, courtiers and commoners alike. More directly, before he ascended the English throne, James himself published his own vision of monarchy and monarchical duty, responsibility, and power in two works in 1598: *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* and the *Basilikon Doron*. John Cramsie argues that these two works, along with James's 1604 speech to the English parliament, work "as cultural performances of *imperium*" through which James "thrust himself into the negotiation and renegotiation of the imperial kingship initiated by his predecessors" (45). Cramsie further argues that in these texts "James confronted an imperative to turn back temporal and spiritual challenges to his *imperium*" and that each illustrates "that James's vision of imperial kingship—theoretical, practical, performative—constituted the strongest response yet to competing conceptions of royal power" (45). James's idea of the importance of "imperial kingship" and some of his earlier policies were partially responsible for both the growth of English discontent and Elizabethan nostalgia. Smuts claims that:

James might have alleviated anxieties caused by his foreign policy and the presence of suspected Catholics on his council if he had done a better job of displaying the qualities of a heroic king concerned about his people's welfare. Unfortunately he rarely participated in tournaments and showed little interest

in military affairs. Worse, he did not like to appear before cheering crowds and sometimes treated them with open contempt. James's Scottish experience had done little to prepare him for the sort of public role that Elizabeth had defined. There was no elaborate cult of royalty north of the Tweed, and there was no tradition of great progresses and royal entries. The instability of the northern kingdom had also given him a visceral dislike of unruly crowds and a deep mistrust of anything that savored of "popularity," which he tended to associate with seditious Presbyterians. The throngs of apprentices and laborers that surrounded his coach whenever it appeared in London's streets, shouting their greetings in his ears, struck him as highly indecorous and perhaps a bit frightening. (*Court Culture* 27)

Bryan Bevan also notes how James's dislike of large, even if adoring, crowds, left him open to unfavorable comparison with his predecessor. Bevan relates how "James was exasperated when the people tried to flock around him at his sports" and asked the nobles what they thought the people wanted, to which "they answered that they [the people] came out of love to see" their king (Bevan 80). Apparently James responded by shouting "'God's wounds (a favorite oath) [sic], I will pull down my breeches and they shall also see my arse'" (Bevan 80-81). James's inability to imitate Elizabeth's "personal" style of rule caused him, and his heirs, difficulty in establishing his own monarchial presence.¹⁰ Like Octavius Caesar in Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, James had to contend with a newly acquired populace who did not seem able to see their new ruler's positive side due to the strong impression

left by the charisma of their previous leader. James's inability and refusal to play the monarch on the grand public stage as Elizabeth had done distanced him from the people he now ruled.

The characterization of Cleopatra and of Caesar in *Anthony and Cleopatra* emphasizes the contrast between their styles of rule. Cleopatra is characterized as the charismatic woman who through her own conscious use of pageantry almost wins the Roman Empire. And even though she is defeated in the end, she is able to construct her last performance to ensure that by her death she is immortalized "like a queen." In contrast, Caesar is characterized as a ruler who understands the power of pageantry, yet who seems either unwilling or unable to use it. He is a canny and dangerous political force, but he does not have the "presence" that either Anthony or Cleopatra obviously embrace and represent. Through the contrast between the styles of Cleopatra and Caesar, the play embodies the growing ambivalence that confronted James I more than five years after he succeeded to the throne. While Caesar, in terms of duty and responsibility, is the more attractive ruler as far as pragmatism is concerned, Anthony and Cleopatra are more attractive with regards to presenting themselves as rulers; their performance of power seems more royal than Caesar's. As Smuts notes, although James "had a number of political talents[,] . . . the ability to project a majestic and dignified image and to inspire reverence for himself and his entourage was not among them" (*Court Culture* 28). He further argues that, while the traditional portrait of a slovenly, homosexual king presiding over a debauched court is grossly exaggerated and one-sided, it does contain a

significant core of truth. The lapses of decorum within the court, the presence there of unpopular Scottish and homosexual favorites, the mounting costs of the royal household, and James's own surliness in public all tarnished the monarchy's prestige, inhibiting spontaneous public support. (*Court Culture* 28)

While James garnered the type of reputation indicated by Smuts throughout his reign, the fact that he clearly began his rule of England by illustrating how he differed from Elizabeth I would have been especially pertinent during the time of *Anthony and Cleopatra*'s production when the English people were still unsure of what kind of monarch James would become. Despite the fact that James clearly demarcated his own view of monarchy in both his presentations of himself and his writing, the people had to assimilate a style of rule very different from the one to which they had become accustomed. Hence the ambivalence created in the play can be read as illustrating the socio-cultural uncertainty that marked the transition from the Tudor reign to the Stuart reign. Like the Romans and Egyptians in the play, the English people had to come to terms with a new ruler whose identity appeared at odds with their national identity. This identity was especially strong during the reign of Elizabeth I and was one she both fostered and encouraged. James never really succeeded in becoming the type of monarch who was beloved by his people. Like the Egyptians and Romans in the play, the British people had to accept a ruler who did not appear as majestic as the one they had lost.

Clearly, *Anthony and Cleopatra* is a play about transitions. In particular, the play can be read as emphasizing the disorientation, social and political, that transitions of power may bring. After realizing he has truly lost, Anthony recognizes how the shifting nature of power can alter not only one's perception of the world but also one's perception of self whereby one becomes as a cloud that "[t]he rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct/ As water in water" (4.15.10-11). Anthony's comparison of himself to the clouds that change and lose shape symbolizes both the larger working of Fate or Destiny in the play and the more personal sense of the loss of the self, the loss of identity. Written in the transitional phase between two very different monarchs, *Anthony and Cleopatra* emphasizes the insecurity that mutability can invoke. The apprehensions about how a new monarch would change the culturally constructed and accepted vision of English identity can be read in the ambivalent manner in which the play presents the two different styles of rule. The audience may be enthralled by Anthony and Cleopatra, but it is Caesar who holds the power. Added to this is the fact that the play never fully endorses one style of rule over the other; each style is shown to have a positive side and a negative side. The play's indeterminacy can be read as representative of the uncertainty of the future political climate of England, especially the English court. This theme of political mutability also appears in Thomas May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* (1626). However, unlike Shakespeare's play with its ambivalence concerning change, May's text clearly illustrates the negative cultural consequences of political change.

“This wicked age:” The Depreciation of Loyalty in Thomas May’s *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra: Queene of Aegypt*

William Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra* has, at its core, an ambivalence that is itself the key to understanding one of the play’s political readings. As has been argued, Shakespeare’s play, written very early on in the reign of James I, is greatly concerned with political change, both its inevitability and its ability to provoke uncertainty in the socio-cultural landscape. The seemingly simple dichotomies of the play are complicated by the fact that while two styles of rule are presented, neither is shown as fully positive nor fully negative. Anthony and Cleopatra are charismatic rulers, yet they lack the political pragmatism of Caesar. Caesar does not have the personal appeal of his opponents, but he does seem to grasp the realities of the larger political picture. The mixture of positive and negative traits in each style of rule is appropriate to the play’s historical context; the ambivalence as to which style of rule is better highlights the socio-cultural uncertainty that the change from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasty evoked in early modern England. While Shakespeare’s play deals with the uneasiness arising from the transition from one monarch to another, Thomas May’s *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra: Queene of Aegypt* was written at a time when the idea of monarchy itself was beginning to come under scrutiny.

First acted in 1626,¹¹ May’s *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* appeared at a time, like Shakespeare’s play, of monarchial transition. Due to this, it might be tempting to see the play’s use of the Roman history of Antony¹² and Cleopatra as another text that

signals the uncertainty of a society dealing with a new ruler. However, unlike Shakespeare's play, May's text does not seem to be concerned with the presentation of one style of rule juxtaposed against another. What is presented in this play is a world wearied by the competing ambitions of powerful rulers and the men who attach themselves to such power. This theme of political and worldly ambition, while most dramatically embodied in Cleopatra, runs throughout the play and is shown as a trait common to the majority of the play's characters, Roman and Egyptian. Indeed, there are only a few characters in the play whose loyalty and integrity remain clear and unquestionable. The lack of loyalty on the part of the majority of the characters is then compounded by the fact that those who switch loyalties face no consequences; soldiers who defect from Antony's camp are given equal footing in Caesar's as those who have proven their steadfastness. This amorality in the play can be read as relating to the worsening political atmosphere of the later years of James I's reign and the fear that such political inequity would continue under the rule of his heir, Charles I.

If Thomas May has gained any literary immortality (and to be fair, he has not), it is not as a playwright. While May was attached to some of the major writers of the later Renaissance era, most notably, Ben Jonson, he is more likely remembered by his contemporaries, and the writers who followed them, as a traitor to the Royalist cause. In 1640 when, as Allan Chester notes, "the open break between Charles and the Parliament could no longer be averted, May espoused the Parliamentary cause and set to work as a publicist to explain and justify the principles of his party to the world" (56). What shocked his contemporaries concerning May's decision to side

with the Parliamentarians was the writer's long association with Charles I. While Charles was not, as such, an official patron of May, the King did acknowledge May's writing and on at least one occasion gave him a monetary gift.¹³ In response to Charles's royal notice, May dedicated both of his historical poems, *The Reign of King Henry the Second* (1633) and *The Victorious Reign of King Edward the Third* (1635) to the King.¹⁴ Furthermore, in 1637, on the death of Ben Jonson, Charles recommended May for "the position of chronicler to the City of London" (54). May never gained this office, however, as the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen chose not to grant the King's request (54). Chester argues that the decision of the city fathers to reject May as city historian had less to do with May's abilities than "an inclination to annoy their sovereign" as by 1637 "the Puritan aldermen were in a frame of mind which led them to oppose the King on every point, however small" (54). The attention that May received from Charles and the numerous dedications he made to the King could have been considered more than ample evidence for May's colleagues and friends to view the writer's "defection" to the Parliamentarians as unjustified and traitorous. Yet, there was another reason ascribed to May for his decision to change his political coat: the loss of the post of Laureate to William Davenant.

Jonson's death in that year left not only the position of city historian vacant but also the post of Poet Laureate. Several of May's former friends and colleagues believed that it was the loss of this office that led May to his desertion of Charles I and the Royalist cause. As Christine Rees suggests, May had "the doubtful distinction

of being a recognized satiric target for the Royalists” and that May’s defection to the Parliamentarians “was represented (or probably misrepresented) as [being founded on] a base private motive, namely pique at not having been appointed Laureate after Jonson’s death” (31). Wayne Phelps also notes that May’s political turnabout was seen to be as a result of being overlooked for the Laureate post (413). The cruel reaction of his former colleagues to May’s political conversion is best summed up by the words of one of his closer former friends, Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon:

upon his majesty’s refusing to give him [May] a small pension, which he had designed and promised to another very ingenious person, whose qualities he thought inferior to his own, he fell from his duty, and all his former friends, and prostituted himself to the vile office of celebrating the infamous acts of those who were in rebellion against the King; which he did so meanly, that he seemed to all men to have lost his wits, when he left his honesty; and so shortly after died miserable and neglected, and deserves to be forgotten. (1.35)

Chester claims that it “seems likely that May hoped also to be appointed to the vacant laureateship” (as well as city historian), but that he probably also would have recognized that “there were men, the successful candidate Davenant among them, whose poetical reputations far exceeded . . . [his own], and against whom he could not seriously hope to compete” (54-55). Despite Chester’s argument that May might have been aware of his unlikely chances of being the new Laureate, he also claims that “although May was not an important candidate, he nevertheless resented, by his

own confession, the King's failure to provide for him, either with the laureateship or in some other way" (55).

But was it truly only this one incident that caused May to abandon the monarchy? Allan Chester argues quite clearly that the lost laureateship was only one factor, and a fairly small one at that, for May's decision to join the Parliamentarians. He maintains that May's decision to "betray" Charles I was predicated on several conditions that can be traced throughout the writer's life. One of these experiences was the loss of May's inheritance through the improvidence of his father, Sir Thomas May. May's family, although not of the gentry, was industrious and financially savvy. Chester illustrates how they, from the early 1400s on, continually increased the family fortunes with the purchasing of various manors and tenant farms (12-14). May's grandfather, George May, expanded his own inheritance by becoming involved in industry by buying into the iron forging trade (14). By the time of the birth of May's father his family while "beginning as yeoman farmers, had prospered greatly, and had acquired substantial properties and, evidently, a reasonably large fortune" (15). Yet despite their financial success, "the family had not yet acquired the social standing of a country family" (15). It was the writer's father, another Thomas, who took the family name into the ranks of the gentry, but who also bankrupted the family fortune in the process. Chester relates that Thomas May, the writer's father, "was knighted at Greenwich" (20) in 1603 by James I. He further claims that "the reasons for this distinction are not clear" (20) and that "[w]hatever his connection with the court may have been originally, it is clear that he served the king, probably in

some trifling and unimportant way, almost to the time of his death in 1617” (21).

There is no evidence of when and how Sir Thomas May lost the family fortune, but Chester does imply that some of the blame lies with the elder May’s attempt to gentry his family name. By 1600, Sir Thomas was selling off some of the properties he had inherited, and Chester implies that his sudden need for money indicates “that he was already living beyond his income, and that money was needed to maintain the Mayfield estate and perhaps to promote those ends which led to the knighthood in 1603” (28). This seems a likely scenario and one that was not altogether uncommon during the time. The result of Sir Thomas’s improvidence, whatever the cause, meant that his son and heir, Thomas May, who should have had the life of the “lord of the manor and country gentleman” (28), was now left with a good education but little else. As to be expected, May’s loss of position and fortune left the writer with “a certain natural resentment at the impoverishment which had cut him off from the possibility of a courtly career” (31). Although Chester claims that there is no real evidence as to how or why Sir Thomas lost the family fortune (15), his implication that the senior May’s life at court could be considered at least partially responsible for the family’s financial misfortunes has some significance. If Sir Thomas did lose the family fortune in his bid to include his family in the ranks of the gentry, May might have been resentful not only of his loss of fortune but also at the court that had been at least partially responsible for that loss. As Chester notes, May’s father was only one among many who “received the knighthoods which Elizabeth had bestowed sparingly but which James lavished so frequently that the honour became

meaningless” (21). Indeed, James’s “selling” of royal prerogatives became one of the most frequently cited examples of the growing corruption of the Stuart reign. As Kernan notes, the “[c]onstant need for money . . . forced James to a number of unpopular practices,” such as the selling of monopolies and the appointment of courtiers to public offices in lieu of salaries (126). James’s mad dash to get money for the crown led to growing public outrage and the belief “that everything was for sale” (126). With particular reference to the practice of selling knighthoods, Kernan notes that in “1603 James created a large number of ‘stay-at-home,’ or ‘carpet’ knights—46 before breakfast one day; 432 to honor his coronation—gathering in by this device . . . 30,237 [pounds] in fees in the first six weeks alone of his coming to England” (126). Given May’s family background, perhaps it is not surprising that he might have been resentful of a court that accumulated so much money at the expense of its citizens.

Another facet of May’s life that may have contributed to his later change of heart regarding the monarchy was the education he received as a young man. Chester notes that Sir Thomas, before becoming fully embroiled in his financial troubles, aspired to “give his son and heir an education of the sort at that time in vogue for young gentlemen who one day might expect to fall heir to the ownership and management of great estates” (22). Accordingly, Thomas May “was admitted fellow-commoner of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge” on September 7, 1609 (22). Chester claims that May’s enrollment in this particular college of Cambridge could have certainly led to the writer’s later decision to side with the Parliamentarians. He argues that Sidney Sussex was a college that from its founding “had been Puritan in

tone” (22) and that “as late as 1628, Archbishop Laud denounced Sidney Sussex College as a nursery of Puritanism and sedition” (23). Chester also notes that “by far the majority of Sidney Sussex men became supporters of the Puritan cause” (23).¹⁵ Aside from the atmosphere of the College itself, May’s studies could have influenced his later decision to side with the Parliamentarians. In particular, May applied himself quite diligently to his study of the classics. Indeed, it was May’s knowledge of and use of Roman and Greek writers that formed the basis of the bond between himself and Ben Jonson evidenced by Jonson’s appreciation and praise of May’s translation of Lucan and other ancient writers.¹⁶ Chester argues that it was not so much May’s studies of the classical writers that was particular but:

the fact that with Thomas May these same classics remained one of the absorbing interests of his life, and that he not only devoted much of his time to translating some of them, but also came under their influence in his English plays and non-dramatic poems to such an extent that he must be characterized as a “classical” writer. (24)

May’s love of the classical writers—specifically Lucan—was not only acknowledged by his contemporaries but also used as fodder against May when he made his decision to abandon Charles I. Chester argues that May’s “classical studies gave him a certain sympathy with republican ideals,” as attested to by John Aubrey who claimed May’s writings illustrated his love of the theories of republicanism, and that the writer’s work with Lucan “might [have led] a thoughtful young Englishman to regard with some distrust the absolutism of the Stuarts” (24-25). While May’s education appears

to be a tenuous link for his decision to join the Puritans against the King, there is another source that perhaps gives greater emphasis to Chester's claims: the writings of Thomas May, including *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*.

In many ways, Thomas May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra: Queene of Aegypt* follows its dramatic predecessors, taking place for the majority of its action in Egypt with the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the hands of Octavius Caesar. Yet, there are some interesting differences that arise in May's play when compared to previous versions of the ancient story. One very notable difference is the seeming similarity of the majority of the characters politically. Unlike the earlier Antony and Cleopatra plays all of which, at differing levels, highlight the differences between Egyptian and Roman values, May's play makes little or no reference to any major ideological opposition. Indeed, many of the characters, the main characters included, seem indistinguishable on a moral level. The characters recognize morality, but they do not allow moral considerations to impede their political desires. They know the difference between loyalty and disloyalty, but their overarching concern is for their own position within the power structure. It is not a matter of right or wrong but a matter of whether being loyal or disloyal will gain them a political advantage. Due to such ambivalent morality, whether a character supports one ruler over another seems unimportant. Such weak moral scruples, especially in terms of political loyalty, is then further emphasized by the fact that those who change loyalties are treated no differently than those who remain faithful. In fact, most of the minor characters act as foils to illustrate the moral or amoral position of the major characters of Antony, Cleopatra,

and Octavius. And it is this absence of a clearly defined moral dichotomy that makes May's play intriguing on a political level. In particular, May's play focuses on what happens to a society when the leaders of that society seem unable to distinguish between those who are loyal on an ideological and political basis and those who are loyal only to further their own personal and political agenda. *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* clearly shows the consequences that may arise when loyalty has no true meaning or value for a society's power structure and when personal ambition overrides any patriotic or national ideology.

The starting point of May's play, just before the Donations of Alexandria,¹⁷ is noteworthy. This event was, of course, a turning point in the political struggle between Marc Antony and Octavius Caesar.¹⁸ The first act of *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*, which closely follows the account from Plutarch, concerns itself with Antony's betrayal of both Octavia and Rome. In act one, scene one, two of Antony's soldiers, Titus and Plancus, are criticizing Antony's decision to cast off Octavia in favour of Cleopatra claiming his actions have brought "Shame and dishonour to the Roman name!" (1.1.1).¹⁹ However, while their complaints about Antony's loss of Roman morals are common in all dramatic versions of the play, the idea of moral superiority being the cause of the war is countered by Canidius who reprimands them in a very telling manner. When his compatriots continue to berate Antony about his relationship with Cleopatra, Canidius first counters by claiming that their condemnation of Antony is not due to any true regard for the General but only their own thwarted ambitions: "Tis envy not morality that make/ You taxe his love"

(1.1.89-90). When Titus attempts to deflect the blame away by referring to Antony's rejection of Octavia, Canidius makes an even more informative response:

Then like a Roman lett mee answer, Marcus.

Is it become a care worthy of us
 What woman Antony enjoyes? Have wee
 Time to dispute his matrimoniall faults
 That have already seene the breach of all
 Romes sacred lawes, by which the world was bound?
 Have wee endur'd oure Consuls state and power
 To bee subjected by the lawlesse armes
 Of private men, oure Senatours proscrib'd,
 And can wee now consider whither they
 That did all this, may keepe a wench or no?
 It was the crime of us and fate it selfe
 That Antony and Caesar could usurpe
 A power so great. (1.1.94-107)

Speaking as he does "like a Roman," Canidius mocks his fellow soldiers for complaining about Antony's abuse of Roman values since they themselves are complicit in the loss of the greatest Roman value—the identity of Rome as a republic. He reminds Titus and Plancus that they can hardly castigate Antony for betraying his wife, Octavia, when all of them, and he includes himself in this, have betrayed Rome itself by supporting Antony. He further includes all Romans in this betrayal by

referring to Caesar²⁰ in his speech as well. He also reminds them that they are fighting not for Rome or Roman values but for the individual ambitions of Antony and Caesar. When Plancus tries to reinstate the ideals of Roman republicanism into the debate, Canidius replies with a very candid response:

Pla. Have wee then,
 Whoo have beene greatest magistrates, quite lost
 All show of liberty, and now not dare
 To counsell him [Antony]?
 Ca. A show of liberty
 When we have lost the substance, is best kept
 By seeming not to understand those faults
 Which wee want power to mend. (1.1.110-16)

The faults to which Canidius refers are not just those belonging to Antony but those of all Romans who have allowed the ideals of the republic to be stolen by a handful of very powerful men, such as Antony and Caesar. For Canidius, the “show of liberty” that distributed power among a large group of men who worked together for the good of Rome now lacks any “substance” or reality. As such, by abandoning the republic, Romans like himself, Titus, and Plancus, have no real power or ability to restore Rome itself, let alone Antony. Canidius exposes the patriotic rhetoric of Titus and Plancus as a political tool by which they illustrate their own frustrated political ambitions. They do not like Cleopatra because, unlike them, she holds power over Antony that they could never hope to achieve. Their dislike of her is not based on her

representing an anti-Roman set of values. As Canidius points out, this is a case of “envy” rather than “morality.”

The theme of the death of republican ideals at the hands of personal ambition is an important one in May's *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*. Once again it is Canidius who points out the hypocrisy of Romans claiming that it is their loyalty to Rome that leads them to war. As the speaker of “truth,” Canidius claims he will remain loyal to Antony, not because he represents Roman ideals but because Antony possesses “a nature freer [sic], honester then Caesar's” (1.1.119). Canidius bases his claims for Antony's honesty on the very traits of the general, his hedonistic desires, that are used against Antony in Rome. He compares this to Caesar's claim of moral superiority which is suspect since Caesar uses the slighting of his sister, Octavia, as a platform for his own ambition. While Canidius never directly states that Caesar engineers Octavia's marriage to Antony for this result, he does claim that the war between Antony and Caesar was inevitable “as surely/ Ambition would ere long find out a cause/ Although Octavia had not beene neglected” (1.1.120-22). A further reason that Canidius gives for supporting Antony, despite his less than perfect morals, is that he feels that between Antony and Caesar, it is more likely that Antony would “bee brought more easily/ Then Caesar, to resigne the government” (1.1. 125-26), thereby restoring Rome as a republic. Canidius's optimism is, of course, somewhat unrealistic, as Plancus points out that he doubts “that either [Antony or Caesar] would doo so” (1.1.127). Plancus's remark is significant since it reiterates the idea of personal ambition being more powerful than loyalty to any political ideal. That

personal ambition, particularly when politically motivated, is more important than any moral ideology for this play is illustrated by the Roman reaction to the Donations of Alexandria at the end of act one.

The Donations of Alexandria, according to the majority of classical sources, factored heavily in Octavius Caesar's eventual triumph over Marc Antony. May is the only playwright in this study who stresses this event. May's use of the Donations in *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* is unique in comparison to all the previous dramatic versions of the play, and their enactment is directly related to the play's thematic focus on personal ambition versus national loyalty. The evidence for the importance of this event in the play is seen by the manner in which May alters the classical version of the story for his own dramatic purposes. The scene opens with the arrival of Antony and Cleopatra accompanied by the court. May constructs the scene to illustrate Cleopatra's power over Antony and also to emphasize the concerns of Antony's Roman followers voiced in the previous scene. When Antony and Cleopatra arrive to feast their followers and friends, Cleopatra plays upon Antony's feelings by referring to Julius Caesar. When Antony asks Cleopatra's priest, Achoreus, to sit with him as a sign of respect for the priest's "holy orders and great age" (1.2. 24), Cleopatra makes an odd response, "Great Julius Caesar,/ Did love my father [Achoreus] well" (1.2.25-26). According to J. Wilkes Berry, Cleopatra's reference to Julius Caesar, a name mentioned quite often in the play, illustrates "May's considerable knowledge of psychology," (67) and that this:

is nowhere more apparent than in the behavior of Antony at each reference to Julius Caesar. Cleopatra speaks of that 'great Worthy' frequently and reverently to the discomfort of Antony, who is not anxious to hear Julius praised since he is already acutely aware that Julius has preceded and bettered him in feats of war, politics, and love. (67-68)

While Berry's argument focuses on May's creation of a psychologically valid Antony, his perception of Cleopatra's references to Julius Caesar can also be clearly connected to the play's focus on the consequences of personal and political ambitions. It is immediately after Cleopatra's praise of her former lover that the Donations of Alexandria take place. Once Antony regains Cleopatra's attention from the past, he gives her the crowns of "wealthy Cyprus,/ Of Coelosyria, and Phoenicia" (1.2.83-84). Antony, with these gifts, is attempting to equal and, perhaps, surpass his dead rival. Not only does this scene illustrate Antony's insecurities about his place in Cleopatra's heart, it also clearly shows what type of power Cleopatra has over Antony. This scene connects with the discussion of power and personal ambition in the previous scene and makes Canidius's remarks about Titus's and Plancus's "envy" clear. Unlike Cleopatra, neither Titus nor Plancus is able to press Antony into giving them the assets, and the power those assets contain. They are unable to manipulate Antony because he believes in their loyalty to him. The fact the personal ambitions of Titus and Plancus have been impeded by Antony's belief in their loyalty is, ironically enough, the reason they finally betray Antony.

Within the scene of the Donations of Alexandria, the idea of personal ambition over national loyalty becomes quite clear. When Antony gives Cleopatra three Roman territories, his own men portray how their loyalty is based on their own advancement and political gain not on Roman ideals. Again, both Titus and Plancus attempt to justify their inevitable betrayal of Antony by hiding behind patriotic rhetoric. When Antony leaves with Cleopatra, without reading the dispatches that have arrived from Rome (1.1.150ff), both Titus and Plancus reveal their true feelings:

Ti. Can no affaires of what import so ere
 Breake one nights pleasure? Well Antonius,
 The tottering state thou holdest, must bee supported
 By nobler vertues, or it cannot stand.

Pla. Cyprus, Phonic, Coelosyria
 Three wealthy kingdoms gott with Roman blood,
 And our forefathers valour, giv'n away
 As the base hire of an adulterous bedd?
 Was Cyprus conquer'd by the sober vertue
 Of Marcus Cato to bee thus bestow'd?

Ti. This act will please young Caesar.

Pla. Twill diplease
 The Senate, Plancus, and Antonius frends.

Ti. Alas, hee knowes not what true friendship meanes,
 But makes his frends his slaves, and which is worse

Slaves to his lusts and vices. Could hee else
 Slight our advice so? Men, whome Rome has seene
 Wearing her highest honours, and of birth
 As great as his. (1.1.162-81)

In a manner very similar to the earlier scene, Titus and Plancus once again use patriotic language to justify their anger at Antony—an anger incurred by their own lack of political and material advancement. Both men claim their anger is because of their feelings of injured patriotism over Antony giving away territories that were “gott with Roman blood” to a foreign monarch. Yet they also indicate their personal feelings about the Donations. To Titus’s assessment that this political misstep by Antony will “please young Caesar,” Plancus meaningfully responds that it will displease “The Senate, Plancus, and Antonius friends.” Like Titus, Plancus recognizes how the Donations will affect Antony’s standing in Rome, but by including his own name he illustrates that his criticisms of Antony’s choices are as much about his own thwarted ambitions as they are about Antony’s political career. Rather than showing loyalty to Antony, Titus and Plancus reveal that they are more interested in their individual and personal political futures. This idea is further emphasized by the intimation that both men will, in the end, betray Antony.

The betrayal by Titus and Plancus is further foreshadowed by their discussion of the inevitable conflict that will soon erupt between Caesar and Antony. Specifically, they discuss how many of Antony’s actions will be counted against him politically in Rome including his Alexandrian triumph over the Armenian King,

Artavesdes (1.2.185-90) and his gift to Cleopatra of the library at Pergamus (1.2.193-97). After they recall these two incidents, Plancus talks about Antony's will "[w]hich now at Rome the Vestall virgins keepe,/ Of which wee two are privy to the sealing/ Should it be known, would stirre all Romans hate" (1.2. 200-03). According to Plutarch, it was Titus and Plancus who revealed the place of Antony's will and its contents to Caesar because of "the great injuries Cleopatra did them, because they hindered all they could, that she should not come to this war, they went and yielded themselves to Caesar" (Plutarch 58:731). In *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*, the defection of Titus and Plancus happens before Cleopatra manages to convince Antony to take her to war with him. This is a salient point. Although Titus and Plancus realize the political ramifications of Antony's decisions with regard to his love for Cleopatra, they only abandon Antony immediately following the Donations of Alexandria. It is after this event that both characters discuss the continuation of their loyalty to Antony. After concluding that Caesar is indeed "levying men and money" (1.2.207) in order to war against Antony, Plancus asks Titus what they "should doo" (1.2.212) when the war comes to which Titus responds "[f]ight for Antonius" (1.2.212).

Plancus, however, offers his friend another alternative:

True, friend, were hee [Antony] himselfe, or were there hope

Or possibility hee could bee so.

But shall *oure* valour toile in sweat and blood

Only to gain a Roman Monarchy

For Cleopatra and th'effeminate rout

Of base Canopus? Shall her timbrells fright
 Romes Capitoll, and her advanced pride
 Tread on the necks of captive Senatours?
 Or, which is more, shall th'earths Imperiall seat
 Remoove from Rome to Aegypts swarthy sands?
 For who can tell if *mad Antonius*
 Have promis'd her, as Caius Marcus once
 Promis'd the Samnites, to transferre the State?
 (1.2. 213-25, my emphasis).

Plancus's speech, like his previous speeches, uses patriotic rhetoric in service of personal, political ambition. From their discussions, it seems both Titus and Plancus believe that Octavius Caesar will win the conflict with Antony because of the support of Rome. The problem they face is how to defect to Caesar while still maintaining the *appearance* of loyalty to Antony. That the appearance of loyalty is important to both characters is articulated by Titus's claim that both he and Plancus should "fight for Antonius" even though he, like Plancus, recognizes that as long as Cleopatra maintains her power over Antony, neither he nor Plancus will achieve any personal advancement. Plancus's response illustrates the way in which they can maintain the appearance of being loyal while still attempting to further their own personal agendas. He argues that both he and Titus would remain loyal to Antony and fight for him if he "were himselfe." Since "mad Antonius" is so entranced by Cleopatra, the Roman general is no longer the Antony to whom Titus and Plancus have sworn loyalty.

Plancus claims that Antony himself has abrogated any loyalty due to him by his own men. Furthermore, Plancus argues that his and Titus's first loyalty should be to Rome, as he claims that if Antony does win, he may give the Roman Empire to Cleopatra and let her "[t]read on the necks of captive Senators." Of course, the idealistic and patriotic rhetoric Plancus uses is self-serving. This is especially apparent when one considers that the play presents the "senators" as being captive, albeit not to Cleopatra but rather to Caesar before Antony decides to go to war. When Sossius and Domitius enter in act two, they claim that Caesar has suspended the laws of Rome and they, as senators, have been "expell'd/ And suffer banishment" (2.1.23-24). Clearly, Cleopatra is not the only one who endangers Rome's laws and government. Furthermore, while Plancus speaks of saving Rome from falling into Cleopatra's hands, he also speaks of his and Titus's personal interests: "oure valour toile in sweat and blood." Plancus does not seem to have a problem with the idea of a "Roman Monarchy" as it is clear that he, unlike Canidius, believes that the Republic will no longer exist regardless of the winner of the upcoming conflict, an idea that is repeated throughout the play. Plancus's anger is more directed at who will run or rule this "Monarchy," Romans or Egyptians. His loyalty to Antony is not broken for the sake of Rome or the ideal of the Roman republic, but to assure that he may be able, if he defects to Caesar, to salvage some position of power for himself.

With the defection of Plancus and Titus to Caesar, the play's focus on how personal ambition compromises political ideology becomes central to our understanding of the text. Once Antony, with the support of the ousted consuls,

Sossius and Domitius, decides to fight Caesar for control of the Roman Empire, with the provision that Antony will reinstate the Roman republic by relinquishing his power to the Senate, Titus and Plancus finally choose to abandon Antony and go to Caesar. Titus claims that he is leaving Antony because he believes that Antony will not give up power as the “resignation of a power so great/ Will be a temperance too great for him” (2.1.102-03). Plancus agrees to this but adds other reasons for wanting to go to Caesar:

The frends and followers wee shall bring with us
 Will make us welcome guests to Caesar’s side.
 It seemes the City favours Caesar much
 That both the Consuls fledd from Rome for feare.
 Nor is oure action base. The scornes and wrongs
 Wee have endur’d at Cleopatraes hands
 Would tempt a moile to fury; and both sides
 Stand aequall yet. (2.1.110-17)

In this speech it is clear that Plancus believes that he and Titus will have a better chance at political and personal advancement if they switch sides. He claims that the men and money he and Titus will bring with them to Caesar’s camp will “make us welcome guests.” Also, like Titus, Plancus seems to realize that the odds of Antony’s success, while appearing “aequall yet,” are likely to turn in Caesar’s favour since “the City favours Caesar much.” At the end of the speech, Plancus makes a curious addendum—namely, that he reiterates his argument that his and Titus’s betrayal of

Antony stems from the “scornes and wrongs/ Wee have endur’d at Cleopatraes hands.” While this statement is comparable to Plancus’s earlier use of political rhetoric, his prefatory claim that “[n]or is oure action base” belies the fact that both men realize that they are betraying Antony for personal gain. If either Plancus or Titus were attempting to restore the ideals of the Roman republic, then neither would consider the “action base.” Since neither the sources²¹ nor the text itemize what Cleopatra has actually done to personally offend Titus or Plancus, the audience is left to read the “scornes and wrongs” that Plancus speaks of as being part of his envy for Cleopatra’s power over Antony. The importance of paying close attention to the speeches of Titus and Plancus, although minor characters in the source story, lies in understanding how May constructs these characters to not only mirror the main figures, especially Cleopatra, but also to illustrate the play’s focus on political ambition over national or patriotic loyalty. This becomes even more apparent when one considers how May changed his sources to accomplish this.

As mentioned previously, May was considered by his contemporaries (and even by Charles I) as a renowned classical scholar. If any form of literary activity was to give May fame, it was his work as a translator of Lucan. Given May’s love of the classical writers and his knowledge of them, it seems noteworthy that within *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, May decided to make some obvious changes from the classical story when he adapted the story of Antony and Cleopatra for dramatic purposes. May’s depiction of the Donations of Alexandria is one example of this. His use of this event at the beginning of his play highlights the materialistic side of

power; he uses it to construct his political theme of overarching personal ambition by illustrating that the majority of the characters are concerned only with their own power as opposed to any political or social conscience. This also connects to how May changes the actual presentation of the Donations in his text. May, as a classical scholar, was very clear in his use of his sources, noting which source or sources he used for each part of *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*. Yet, his presentation of the Donations has some intriguing editorial variations from his primary source, Plutarch. One of these odd omissions is the fact that the text indicates only the lands that were given to Cleopatra. Plutarch recounts that not only did Cleopatra receive lands and wealth but that her children, those she had by Antony as well as the son she had by Julius Caesar, are also present and given certain lands (Plutarch 54:727-28). While May might have made the change to shorten the presentation of the Donations, his version also emphasizes the power of Cleopatra over Antony. This is a significant change as Plutarch claims that “the greatest cause of their [Roman] malice unto him [Antony], was for the division of lands he made amongst *his children* in the city of Alexandria” (Plutarch 54.727, my emphasis). Plutarch’s specific mention of how the gifts to Antony’s children affected his standing in Rome is part of the political perspective in the source story, especially with regard to the transition of Rome from a republic to an empire. He gives these gifts without the consent of the Roman people and without any concern for the possible repercussions in Rome. He gives away Roman territories to non-Romans. In particular, this passage stresses that the children who are given Antony’s gifts of land and power are his own with Cleopatra and

Cleopatra's son with Julius Caesar. In Plutarch's biography, Antony not only spurns Octavia, but also the children of his Roman marriages. As such Antony gives his children and Caesarion more power and symbolically raises these children above those who are truly or fully Roman. This means he is giving the power of Rome to children who are the product, so to speak, of miscegenation. He favours the children who are the products of Rome and Egypt. Besides promoting his children who are not purely Roman over his children who are, Antony's actions at the Donations of Alexandria are politically volatile since he ennobles those children. He crowns them illustrating the idea of imperialism/monarchy that stands opposed, to a large degree, from the Roman ideal of republicanism.²² His actions are those of an emperor founding a dynasty, not of a Roman general fighting for the restoration of a Roman Republic. This seems especially apparent in Antony's inclusion of Caesarion in the Donations. He emphasizes the biological son of Julius Caesar as the inheritor of his father's power and imperial ambitions. May's lack of acknowledgement of the children in the play is significant as it underscores the play's concern with the conflict between personal ambition and national loyalty. If Antony were shown to be "founding" a dynasty through his children, the defection of his Roman friends and soldiers to Caesar's camp is understandable from a patriotic viewpoint. If Antony is founding a dynasty, his men would be seen to be abandoning a leader who has himself clearly abandoned all sense of what Rome is. Also, by omitting Antony's children from his enactment of the Donations, May constructs the gifts of land and power as a personal political triumph on the part of Cleopatra. It narrows the political

interpretation so that the Donations become more about the personal political ambitions of those who surround Antony rather than about Antony's own imperial desires. May's focus on Titus and Plancus serves the same purpose. While his sources indicate that these men left Antony after his decision to allow Cleopatra to join in the fighting, in May's version they leave before any actual military plans are made. In fact, their departure from Antony's camp (2.1) comes directly before the controversial decision to allow Cleopatra to go to war is discussed (2.2). May's changes to the source story serve to illustrate his own political reading of the Antony and Cleopatra story. By altering the depiction of the Donations of Alexandria and by having Titus and Plancus leave before the argument between Antony and his men begins, the play stresses the conflict that arises between individual ambition and loyalty to a larger political entity. And, as we see, for most of the characters, it is clear that they are more concerned with individual power than any loyalty to a national or larger political ideal, especially in the actions of Titus and Plancus.

The emphasis placed on the actions of minor characters in the first part of the play works as a basis for understanding the motivations of the major characters of the play, especially Cleopatra. Oddly enough, for a play bearing her name, Cleopatra only appears significantly during the latter half of the text. Earlier in the play, her actions and motivations are mirrored by the actions of the minor characters, especially Titus and Plancus. Like these characters, Cleopatra only acts to secure her own interests. As a result of this, May's Egyptian queen closely resembles the figure of Roman and Western rhetorical constructions of negative femininity that Cleopatra usually

represented in early modern culture. She is a manipulative *femme fatale* who uses Antony for her own personal gain. The first example of Cleopatra's manipulation of Antony is, as previously discussed, her reference to her past relationship to Julius Caesar that immediately precedes the Donations of Alexandria. Yet the best illustration of Cleopatra's ability to create the response she wishes from Antony is revealed by the tactics she uses to influence Antony's decision to take her to war. Knowing that the majority of Antony's followers are advising Antony to leave Cleopatra in Egypt when he goes to meet Caesar, Cleopatra devises a two-prong plan to make sure that she is present for the battle. First, she persuades Canidius of the importance of her being with Antony during the battle, and he willingly assures her that he will make her case with Antony, as well as his fellow Romans such as Sossius and Domitius, and promises her that she "shall not stay behinde" (2.3.8). Secondly, Cleopatra takes the argument to Antony himself. When Antony tries to take leave of her, Cleopatra uses Antony's love of her against him. First she claims that Antony thinks she is a bad "omen" for the war (2.3.35-37), and then she claims that her company is distasteful to Antony (2.3.47-48). The final and most effective of Cleopatra's taunts to Antony comes when he explains that he wishes her to stay in Egypt so that he has a place to which to run in case "Caesar's fortune conquer" (2.3.60-62). Cleopatra's response clearly plays upon Antony's own insecurities:

But I had thought the Roman Antony
 Had lov'd so great a Queene with noble love,
 Not as the pleasure of his wanton bed

Or mistris only of some looser houres,
 But as a partner in his highest cares,
 And one whose soule hee thought were fitt to share
 In all his dangers, all his deedes of honour.
 Without that love I should disdain the other.

(2.3.68-75)

Here, like the scene before the Donations of Alexandria (act one, scene two), Cleopatra manipulates Antony's emotions. She claims that instead of "noble love," Antony uses her for "the pleasure of his wanton bed." She is not his "partner" but his "mistris." She conflates personal affection with public honour by using examples of Antony's personal love for her as signs of his public honour. As such, she uses Antony's own sense of honour against him by insisting that his love for her is not honourable. It is clear that Cleopatra understands Antony far better than Antony understands Cleopatra. This is particularly apparent to the audience since earlier in the same scene Cleopatra has explained her real reasons for wishing to go to war against Caesar. When she has convinced Canidius to speak for her, Cleopatra explains why it is necessary to accompany Antony to war:

Hee [Canidius] must persuade Antonius to take
 Mee with him to the warre; for it [sic] I stay
 Behinde him here, I runne a desperate hazard;
 For should Octavia enterpose herselfe
 In this greate warre (as once before shee did)

And make her brother, and her husband friends

Wher's Cleopatra then?

(2.3.20-26)

Cleopatra sees her attendance at the war as “a thing on which/ My state, my hopes and fortunes all depend” (2.3.19). Her motivation is to keep Antony, and the power he can bestow, under her control and to maintain her present position by further solidifying her future political advancement. So when we subsequently see Cleopatra plead with Antony using references to their personal relationship, we recognize her deceit and manipulation of the Roman general. It is understood that her wish to go to war with Antony is neither for her loyalty or love to him, but for her own political ambition. Cleopatra's focus on her ambitions is further emphasized after the disastrous Battle of Actium.

Once it becomes clear that Caesar has won the day, the extent of Cleopatra's self-interest is shown. Immediately after the Battle of Actium, Cleopatra sends her servant, Euphronius, to surrender “all her fortunes” (3.2.25) to Caesar. Furthermore, she tempts the conqueror by offering him “a great masse of gold/ Unknowne t'Antonius” (3.2.57-58). When Caesar expresses that he wants both the gold and Cleopatra herself for his triumph (3.2.62-64), Agrippa argues that “[t]hat will be hard to bring to passe” (3.2.65) and warns Caesar not to underestimate the Egyptian queen “as in all her acts/ It has appear'd, is of a wondrous spirit,/ Of an *ambition greater than her fortune*” (3.2.69-71, my emphasis). Agrippa's recognition reiterates that Cleopatra's actions are a result of her ambition, not her love for Antony. This is

confirmed when she is more than willing to listen to Caesar's man Thryeus concerning Caesar's feelings for her. Thryeus recounts all of Caesar's qualities and how his master loves Cleopatra, and Cleopatra seems willing to accept his platitudes, "[w]hat more then this could all the fates contrive?/ What more then Caesar's love could I have wish'd/ On which all power, all state, and gloryes waite?" (4.1.173-175). Yet her optimism for Caesar's good will is tempered by some suspicion as she sends Thryeus away before Antony sees him and reveals that she has doubts about Caesar's sincerity. Despite her worries, Cleopatra does her best to mollify and seduce Caesar by surrendering Pelusium to him (4.1.1-3). When Thryeus claims that this action will "make Imperiall Caesar/ As much a debtor to youre curtesy/ As hee's already captive to your beauty" (4.1.4-6), Cleopatra's response is very informative:

Nor doo wee wrong Antonius at all
 In giving upp a towne which is oure owne.
 It may bee thought tis done to weaken him.
 Alas Antonius is already fall'n
 So low, that nothing can redeeme him now,
 Nor make him able to contest with Caesar.
 Hee has not only lost his armyes strength,
 But lost the strength of his own soule, and is not
 That Antony hee was when first I knew him.
 I can doo Caesar now no greater service,
 Though I shall never want the heart to doo it.

(4.1.7-17)

Cleopatra's phrasing and words echo those that Titus and Plancus used to rationalize their decision to betray Antony. Her claim that she is not wronging Antony by giving Caesar "a towne which is oure owne" is very similar to Plancus's claim that his and Titus's defection to Caesar's camp is not "base" (2.1.114). Cleopatra's excuse that Antony "is not/ That Antony hee was when first I knew him" parallels in diction and in idea Plancus's own excuse for not fighting for Antony, a position he would have to take if Antony "were hee himselfe, or were there hope/ Or possibility hee could bee so" (2.1.213-214). As was argued in the case of Titus and Plancus, Cleopatra uses her duty to her people as a rationale for betraying Antony, her lover and the man to whom she claims she has committed herself. She now clings to Caesar because it is Caesar alone who can fulfil her ambitions to retain what she has gained from her past lovers and, perhaps, give her even more power. Nevertheless, while May's text presents a more conventional version of Cleopatra, the "cunning, self-seeking woman" (J. Wilkes Berry 72), he does not do so to make any statements concerning gender and power. Indeed, the play does not seem to concern itself with gender at all. What is of concern is the repetitive presentation of characters (Cleopatra being the most significant) who willingly switch sides or betray their personal as well as patriotic loyalties in an effort to advance their individual agendas. The ominous political tone that this theme lends to the text is further modulated by the depreciation of loyalty within the play.

For the majority of *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*, the events and actions of the characters revolve around the question of personal gain versus loyalty, whether to a person or an ideal. As such, the treatment of those few characters who do exhibit loyalty is important to understanding the play's political issues. The most important character who displays loyalty is Antony's follower, Canidius. Not only does Canidius remain loyal to Antony throughout the course of the play, he also seems to be the only one who is concerned about restoring Rome as a republic. As was argued earlier, it is Canidius who points out the self-serving patriotic rhetoric of Titus and Plancus, and it is Canidius who seems to have legitimate patriotic reasons for supporting Antony whom he feels will be more likely than Caesar to return Rome to its republican ideals (1.1.117-26; 2.1-100). For Canidius, being loyal to Antony is being loyal to Rome itself. Canidius even remains loyal to Antony when Antony is no longer loyal to himself. This is apparent in the abbreviated telling of the Battle of Actium within the play. In act three, scene one, two of Caesar's generals, Pinnarius and Gallus discuss the events of Actium and its aftermath. While Pinnarius cajoles Antony's men into joining with Caesar, Gallus enters to proclaim Caesar the victor and describes Antony's dishonourable defection from Actium in which Antony's "Roman honour strove 'gainst wanton Love" but "[l]ove gott the conquest, and Antonius/ Fledd after her [Cleopatra], leaving his souldiers there/ To sell their lives in vaine" (3.1.65-68). Counterbalanced against Antony's fall from grace is Gallus's description of the honourable and brave behavior of Canidius. When Pinnarius

inquires “what became of . . . [Antony’s] strength at land,” Gallus’s response shows the true loyalty of Canidius:

After his flight

Hee nere return’d, though in the campe hee had
 Under the conduct of Canidius,
 And other Captaines nineteen legions
 Fresh and unfought; which might with reason hope
 Had hee beene there, to have recover’d all.
 They still remain’d encamped, and though oft
 Solicited by Caesar to revolt
 Were kept from yeilding by Canidius
 In hope of Antony’s returne; untill
 Canidius fearing his own souldiers mindes
 And Caesar’s anger, fledd away by night.

(3.1.77-88)

Unlike the rest of Antony’s men who have defected to Caesar’s side, Canidius remains loyal and in his loyalty attempts to keep the soldiers under his command loyal as well. He does this in spite of Antony’s refusal to act as a leader for his men. When Antony fails in his role as military leader, Canidius tries, for Antony’s sake, to rally his soldiers in Antony’s place only leaving the battle when he begins to fear “his own souldiers mindes/ And Caesar’s anger.” Canidius’s loyalty to Antony is so strong that he attempts to keep Antony’s military power intact despite the fact that Antony

has abandoned his own men for no apparent reason. Another scene that illustrates the loyalty of Canidius is the extended “Timon” episode. Once Antony realizes that he has basically lost the war to Caesar, he blames his defeat on the lack of loyalty given to him and this lack of loyalty drives Antony to adopt the philosophy and character of Timon of Athens. Those who are still loyal to Antony, Canidius among them, try to alleviate Antony’s depression by various means. Aristocrates, another of Antony’s loyal supporters, tries to bring Antony out of his “Timon” state and back to his normal state of mind by playing along with Antony. He calls him “Timon” (3.3.25), constantly supporting Antony’s misanthropy and giving him chance to wallow not only in the dire circumstances of his present condition but also in the positive actions that Antony has performed in the past (3.1.30-87). When Canidius enters, he is shocked to see Antony and wonders “[w]hat strange shape is that?” (3.1.88). Despite Canidius’s misgivings that he now must tell the already broken Antony what “will make him worse,/ And fright that little reason, that is left/ Quite from his breast” (92-94), Lucilius encourages Canidius to tell Antony the worst since it cannot hurt the general any further and “[p]erchance to heare th’ extremity of all/ Will cure his fitt” (3.1.95-96). When Canidius finally approaches Antony, he tells his general the truth (3.1.137-42) and notices that “[i]t makes a deepe impression in his [Antony’s] passion” (3.1.143). It is after Antony is told the truth that he regains Antony: “All you here yett? Then I have frends I see” (3.1.145). While Canidius disappears from the play²³ after Antony’s last attempt to salvage himself on a military level (4.4), his

character and the principle of loyalty that his character represents is transferred to the characters of Aristocrates and Lucilius.

Like Canidius, Lucilius and Aristocrates represent characters of personal and political integrity and loyalty. Like Canidius, they never leave Antony despite the general's own lack of military foresight and conventional moral standards. In lieu of Canidius, both Lucilius and Aristocrates represent the consequences of being loyal. After Antony loses the last military action and prepares to use his "Roman heart" and his "sword and heart to dy" (5.1.3-4), he releases both Lucilius and Aristocrates from their loyalty to him:

You truest servants,

Whose faith and manly constancy upbraides

This wicked age, and shall enstruct the next,

Take from a wretched hand this legacy.

For tune [sic] has made my will, and nought but this

Can I bequeath you. Carry it to Caesar.

If hee bee noble, it containes enough

To make you happier then Antonius can.

(5.1.4-11)

After being released from Antony's service, Lucilius tries to comfort Antony asking him to "take fairer hopes" (5.1.14) but to no avail. Such actions show the loyalty of Lucilius and Aristocrates. Even though all the rest of Antony's men have betrayed him either for personal gain or because they wished to join the victor's camp, these

men stay with Antony without any hope of personal gain, even when Antony has lost absolutely everything. They are truly men of “faith and manly constancy.” But what is the reward for such loyalty? This question is answered when Lucilius and Aristocrates appear before Caesar. In *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, May uses minor characters to question the value of loyalty. The theme of personal ambition over national or an ideological loyalty is clearly shown in the behavior of Titus and Plancus. After leaving Antony, the two characters reappear in the entourage of Caesar and illustrate that, as Plancus believed, they have been made “welcome guests” (2.1.111) in Caesar’s camp. Indeed, it seems that Titus and Plancus have been given the positions that they wished to gain under Antony’s leadership: they are both advisors to Caesar. When they have defeated Antony at Actium and are marching to Alexandria, Titus and Plancus re-enter with Caesar and are shown to be advising him (3.1). When told of Antony’s appropriation of the character of Timon, Plancus makes an astonishing remark: “[t]o what extreames unconstant men are carry’d!” (3.1.51). The irony of Plancus’s comment arises from the audience’s realization that because of the inconstancy of men like himself and Titus, as well as numerous others, Antony has ended up in his “strange/ Deepe melancholly” (3.1.36-37). It is the lack of loyalty that has, in the end, truly defeated Antony. Furthermore, unlike Shakespeare’s or Daniel’s characterizations of Antony and Cleopatra, those who betray Antony in May’s text do not face any negative consequences, either from their own guilt about the betrayal or from Caesar or his men.²⁴ This is paralleled in May’s text with what happens to those characters who do remain constant and faithful. Once Antony has

committed suicide, Lucilius and Aristocrates enter Caesar's camp to surrender and to carry out Antony's last order to them (5.1.62-74). Like Titus and Plancus, each man is accepted into Caesar's entourage. On the strength of Antony's letter, Caesar assures them that their "lives and fortunes both are safe, and since/ *Wee ever lov'd fidelity,* you shall/ If so you like bee welcome to oure service" (5.1.69-71, my emphasis). Like Plancus's statement about Antony's inconstancy, the irony of Caesar's comment is almost laughable. If Caesar truly appreciated "fidelity," he would not have been so ready to accept the services of men like Titus and Plancus. The loyalty of Lucilius and Aristocrates is given equal weight in Caesar's actions as the disloyalty of Titus and Plancus. Hence the consequences for being loyal or disloyal are shown to be equal. Lucilius and Aristocrates are not rewarded and Titus and Plancus are not punished. This ambivalent display of loyalty is the most striking political component of the play because if there is no reward for loyalty, what is the impetus for being loyal? This is the salient point with which *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* concerns itself. The play implicates the disastrous consequences for a national identity when such a depreciation of loyalty occurs. Egypt is no more and Rome will never regain its identity as a republic. The consequences of this depreciation for a ruler are most clearly illustrated in the characterization of Antony.

If there is one character in May's play who captures the audience's pity it is Marc Antony. While May does not fully rehabilitate Antony's character as it appeared in his source material (Antony is still ruled by his passions and unable to understand the political consequences of his actions), he makes the Roman general

the only character for whom the audience can be expected to feel sympathy. Antony is a man who still possesses admirable qualities despite, as Canidius notes, his “greatest looseness” (1.1.18). Indeed, through most of the play Antony, the great Roman general, seems naïve to the plots and ambitions of those who surround him. This is clearly shown in the trust he places in those he expects to be loyal to him, no matter what, including Titus, Plancus, and, of course, Cleopatra. He is also easily manipulated by his emotions. It is Antony’s need to be loved and respected as a man and a leader that allows those around him to fulfill their own political agendas at Antony’s cost. Hence, Antony never sees the signs that those he trusts may not be fully loyal to him. In *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, Antony is never truly presented as a bad man, but rather as a man who does not truly understand the political and personal machinations of people. In other words, despite presenting Antony as basically a good man, the play also presents Antony as a very naïve politician. This characterization of Antony is perhaps captured most effectively in May’s use of Antony’s mental breakdown when he imagines himself to be “Timon.”

After the spectacular loss at Actium, Antony goes into a severe depression and recasts himself as the misanthropic Timon. May’s articulation of the Timon episode is similar to his use of the Donations of Alexandria: he expands and focuses on the episode in order to heighten the text’s political themes. May once again follows one of his primary sources, Plutarch, although the mention of Antony as Timon in the historian’s text is brief and used to stress the effects on Antony from his loss to Caesar.²⁵ The reference to Timon in Plutarch is used to emphasize Antony’s

fundamental lack of strength as a leader, especially with regards to his overwrought emotional and seemingly childish nature. May's use of the episode is weighted differently. While May's Timon episode certainly reflects the emotional angst of Antony, he also includes a conversation between Antony/Timon and Aristocrates/Alcibiades to connect this scene to the political ideology of patriotic loyalty. After discussing various means by which Antony and Aristocrates can "kill the world" (3.3.54), Antony seems to come to himself to a small degree and recalls his own past glory including the battles he has won for Rome and his somewhat unscrupulous rise to power:

An: And when I was Triumvir first at Rome.

Ari: That was a time indeed; then I could heare

Of those good deedes which must bee still a comfort

To youre good consciences though they bee past.

When Rome was fill'd with slaughter, flow'd with blood.

But they perchance were knaves that were proscib'd,

And might have done more mischief had they liv'd.

An: No, they were honest men. I look'd to that.

Ari: Twas well and carefully.

An: Behold the list.

But one among the rest most comforts mee,

That talking fellow Cicero, that us'd

To taxe the vicious times, and was, forsooth,

This speech also reveals how Antony's personal insecurities have undermined his political effectiveness. When he notes that Julius Caesar accepted any type of disloyalty as long as it was beneficial to him, Aristocrates replies that "Caesar understood himself" (3.3.77-79) and hopes that Octavius "will prove as good/ A patriot as ere his father was" (3.3.80-81). Antony reassures Aristocrates that Octavius will be a good "patriot" by making sure his only loyalty is to gaining power and keeping it, rather than restoring the Republic since the new Caesar "is of nature/ Cruell enough" (3.3.82-83). Caesar only cares for Caesar, not for Rome. That Antony is not "cruell enough" is suggested in the play by the fact that despite his past behavior, Antony still cares for or supports the ideal of republicanism. Unlike Caesar, he actually claims that he is going to war to restore the Republic. When enjoined by Sossius and Domitius to go to war against Caesar, Antony makes a speech that is extremely republican in its rhetoric:

Tis not the place, nor the marble walls that make
 A Senate lawfull, or decrees of power,
 But convocation of the men themselves
 The sacred order by true magistrates.
 Fathers know the face
 Of youre assembly; know youre lawfull power.
 Consult, decree, and act what ere may bee
 Happy and prosperous for the commonwealth.
 (2.1.1-4; 12-15)

When Sossius and Domitius “consult” about what is best for the “commonwealth,” they ask Antony to go to war against Caesar so as to take over control of Rome’s government. Antony agrees and further promises that if he is “victorious, noble Romans,/ I make a vow, and lett it bee recorded,/ Within two months after the warre is ended/ I will lay downe the government I hold” (2.1.88-91) in order that the Roman republic be restored. Whether or not Antony’s pledge to restore the republic is sincere, he is the only character who states that republican ideals need to be restored. If one takes Antony’s “vow” as valid, then he fights not for his own power but to restore the power of the people of Rome against the personal ambitions of powerful men. And certainly some characters, Canidius foremost, believe that Antony would be the best hope for the restoration of the Republic. Given the fact that Antony claims to be fighting for Rome, his appropriation of Timon’s name and nature is fitting. The depression and anger that have led to Antony’s confusion of himself as Timon is predicated on the fact that those he thought he was fighting for and those to whom he pledged loyalty, the Romans, have deserted him and Rome to follow Caesar. Considering this, Antony’s belief that all men are corrupt and disloyal and deserve death is far more than a case of personal pique; it is a belief that is rooted in seeing that the ambitions of men will destroy anything that is larger than themselves. This realization, combined with Antony’s feelings of personal betrayal, is what drives him into his depression and his misanthropy.

Aside from his desire to appear to be noble and great, Antony’s actions are influenced by his emotional insecurities, and this is apparent in Cleopatra’s

manipulation of him. The manner in which Cleopatra persuades Antony to take her to war with him is a key example of this. In act two, scene three, there is an extended game of emotional give and take between Antony and Cleopatra. When Antony attempts to leave Cleopatra behind before he goes to war with Caesar, Cleopatra deftly uses Antony's insecurities against him. She does this by denigrating Antony's feelings for her thereby placing Antony in a defensive position. Every time Antony makes a logical, military argument against her involvement in the war, Cleopatra turns that logic into an argument that claims Antony does not love her. Antony tries to "plead excuse/ For leaving thee a while" (2.3.27-28) to which Cleopatra replies that she did not know Antony saw her as "[s]o badd an omen" (2.3.37). To allay this construction of his actions, Antony claims he will not take Cleopatra because he "would not venture thee" (2.3.41), and Cleopatra interprets this as a personal slight since it means her "company/ Distast my Lord" (2.3.47-48). He responds with the military argument that he, as a general, "would bee asham'd to rise/ From Cleopatra's armes, when warres rough noise/ Shakes all the world" (2.3.56-58) and, furthermore, he wants her to "stay behinde, and lett thy presence make/ Aegypt a place, to which I would desire" (2.3.60-61) if Caesar should win the war. It is this reason that evokes the most telling of Cleopatra's chidings that Antony does not really love her, but that he considers her "mistris only of some looser houres" (2.3.71). It is by constructing Antony's love as only lust that Cleopatra wins the argument, and Antony agrees, despite his military misgivings, to take Cleopatra to the war with Caesar if his other friends and supporters agree (3.2.83-84). J. Wilkes Berry argues that this scene shows

Antony's vulnerability to Cleopatra's emotional blackmail. He notes that "[s]o shrewdly does she pervert the meaning of his words that he [Antony] is ever defending and explaining his reasons for opposing her going—a futile defensive action which Antony the warrior would scorn" (72). Another example that underscores Antony's emotional dependence is his angry and violent reaction upon discovering Caesar's servant, Thyreus, with Cleopatra. When Cleopatra asks Antony to forgo sending Thyreus to prison, Antony suspects her of using Thyreus so that she may gain "a happier friend [sic]" (4.4.31). Once again Cleopatra reprimands Antony for his questioning of her loyalty by confronting him with his claims of love for her, noting that she, a "Queene so highly borne [,] . . . preferr'd/ Love before fame" (4.4.34-35) and all without the "names of honour" (4.4.36) given to Fulvia and Octavia, namely that of wife. Antony's response illustrates how the betrayals of his men have affected his perception of the world:

It is not Thyreus, but this heart of mine
 That suffers now, deepe wounded with the thought
 Of thy unconstancy. Did Fortune leave
 One only comfort to my wretched state
 And that a false one? For what conference
 Couldst thou so oft, and in such privacy
 With Caesar's servant hold, if true to mee?

(4.4.41-47)

The betrayal of his councilors, the defection of his soldiers, and the loss of the war to Caesar seems to have undermined Antony's belief in any type of loyalty.

Unfortunately for Antony, this realization, never fully embraced with regards to Cleopatra, emphasizes Antony's inability to see the truth of the actions of those around him. Antony's seemingly noble intentions of restoring the Republic and his blind trust in Cleopatra's love and fidelity are used to construct Antony as a sympathetic character for the audience who is aware of Cleopatra's plan to betray Antony for personal gain. Other than evoking pity for the Roman general, a misguided but basically good man, May's characterization of Antony has some intriguing connotations for the political climate in which the play was written. Specifically, the naïve but well-meaning Antony can be seen as a political representation of May's perception of the Stuart court in the last years of James I's reign.

In *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, May's combination of a sympathetic Antony and an emphasis on the amoral political scheming of Antony's supporters leads to a unique political reading. At first glance, one might surmise, given the number of references to republicanism and May's own personal history, that his version of the Antony and Cleopatra story reflects the political views of Parliamentary Puritanism that led to the collapse of the monarchy and precipitated the English Civil War. However, such an assumption becomes problematic when one looks at the text closely. The first issue that complicates such a reading is the date of the play: 1626. Considering that May wrote his play around the time of James I's death and that after

this date the writer enjoyed the attention, however financially unrewarding that attention may have been, of Charles I, it seems unlikely that May, at this point in his life, was an avid advocate of Puritan politics. Another factor that complicates viewing the text as promoting the eradication of the monarchy is the manner in which May works to make Antony such a sympathetic character for the audience. While Antony does admit his own part in the destruction of the Roman Republic, he also seems to be attempting to make amends for his past ambitions. He claims he is fighting for the restoration of the republic and, therefore, the people. On one level, it is the political scheming of those in whom he has placed his love and trust that undermines Antony's ability to defeat Caesar. The fact that such disloyalty weakens Antony so much is due to the general's own need to be validated by those around him. The political reading of the play that emerges is one that questions not the leader of the state, but those who use the personal failings of that leader for their own political gain. The play's presentation of characters who are selfishly committed only to their own political agendas and a leader whose emotions led him to make ineffectual and foolhardy decisions is one that clearly illustrates the political infighting and turmoil that was a recognizable element of the last years of the reign of James I and the early years of Charles I. It is not the king who is being criticized per se, but the king's inability to recognize the duplicitous nature of the courtiers who surround him. It is the court and the courtiers who are being presented as culpable for national strife, not the monarchy itself. One of the consistent criticisms of the reign of both James I and Charles I was the manner in which each king allowed himself to be influenced by those courtiers

who were favourites. While Elizabeth played her favorites against each other in order to control the inevitable factionalism that characterized court life, James was unable to strike the same type of political balance. At the time of the composition of *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, one courtier favorite who created political controversy was George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Kevin Sharpe notes that “[w]ith the deaths of Cecil in 1612 and of Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton in 1614, court politics descended to the manoeuvrings of lesser figures on the stage vacated by the principal actors” (81-82). Sharpe adds that it was in the “confusion” created in court by the loss of these men that “Villiers emerged as the new favorite, not because he displayed ability or judgement, but because he was endowed with a grace and beauty that attracted James” (82). Other than the fact that Buckingham was not of great or noble birth, many in James’s court disliked his policy of blocking “the advance of any who did not enjoy his patronage and, after 1623, of all who disagreed with his policies” (Sharpe 82). With specific reference to May, Malcolm Smuts argues that the “1620s saw a revival of Roman history plays based on Tacitus and Suetonius, depicting evil imperial favorites” and that May’s play, *Agrippina*, whose “villains are freedmen who have supplanted the Senatorial aristocracy” by controlling Caesar, illustrates a “parallel to Buckingham’s relatively humble birth, hostile relations with ancient peers like Arundel, Bristol and Pembroke, and disregard for Parliament” (*Culture and Power* 77). May’s biographer, Chester, also notes that the writer saw Buckingham, and courtiers like him, as a “pernicious influence” (62) on Charles. In his *History of Parliament*, May argues that it was the evil advice given to Charles by “another sort

of men (especially Lords and Gentlemen) by whom the pressures of Government were not much felt" (1655: 4-5) that led to the circumstances underlying the Civil War. May also noted that it was the:

courtiers [who] would begin to dispute against Parliaments in their ordinary discourse, That they were too injurious to the Kings Prerogative: some of the greatest States-men and Privie Councillors would ordinarily laugh at the ancient language of *England*, when the word *Liberty of the Subject* was named. (1655: 5)

Chester argues that "May had seen enough and heard enough, during his years on the outer edge of the Court circle, to make any man of patriotic impulse feel disgusted with the Stuarts and their Court" (62). As was noted with regards to May's *Agrippina*, it is difficult not to see the parallel between May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* and the atmosphere of the courts of both James and Charles.

The connection of May's play to the conditions at court that eventually contributed to the dissolution of the monarchy illustrates how the deterioration of the political structures in early modern England began long before the Puritan rebellion against the crown. Sharpe's analysis of political ideology at the time implicates the imbalance between the law and the monarch's prerogative as one of the key problems that led to the fall of the king. He claims that:

[b]y the sixteenth century, parliament was undoubtedly regarded as the supreme legislator. But Members of Parliament did not regard the business of government other than legislation as their concern. They showed no desire to

participate in government, nor [sic] to tell the king how to govern. They only expected that the monarch should govern responsibly, with justice and for the good of his subject—in the manner, as Aristotle put it, that defined a monarchy as opposed to its corruption, tyranny. The king, of course, could not govern alone. Monarchical government, it was perceived, required good advisors who could inform the king and honest and efficient officers who would execute his decisions. It was the responsibility of councillors and royal officers to ensure that the king's will, always well-intentioned, was framed from the fullest knowledge and carried out honestly and impartially. (77-78)

In the Stuart court, in particular in the court of James, those who advised the king were not the same men as those who influenced him. Instead of being advised by, as May calls them, “the serious and just men of England” (*Breviary of the History of Parliament* 4-5), James's decisions were heavily swayed by those to whom he had emotional attachments such as Buckingham. Like Antony, who seems to be attempting to see to the needs of the Roman people, James was hindered by his inability to see past his feelings to the political agendas of those around him. He seemed to let his emotional attachments influence his political judgement. Of particular interest in the years during which May's play was written were the scandals surrounding Buckingham. Even more interesting for its connection to May's play, after the death of James, Buckingham became the favorite of Charles, a relationship the Duke had cultivated long before James's death. Of the problems Charles inherited from his father,²⁶ his decision to retain Buckingham in his previous position as “his

confidante and chief counsellor” was one that was to prove “highly damaging” for the new king since “within months, Buckingham was a liability, despised by the public, and vilified by the House of Commons” (Stewart *Cradle King* 348). This transfer of Buckingham’s loyalty from James to Charles seems strikingly similar to the transfer of loyalties presented in *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*. The only issue that seems open to discussion was whether Buckingham, as an example, could be seen as a Plancus or Cleopatra or whether he was a Canidius or Lucilius.

Of all of the plays that use the Antony and Cleopatra story for political purposes, May’s *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* is perhaps the least effective dramatically, but it is the most clearly political. It is a text that illustrates openly the connection between contemporary politics and cultural production. This, in part, was largely due to May’s own personal interests. In discussing May’s historical poems, Chester argues that May’s “patriotism is the historian’s very sincere love for his country’s past” (163) and that in his poems “there are passages to suggest that the author maintained an uneasy watchfulness over contemporary affairs” (163). While Chester is referring specifically to May’s English history poems, his comments about May’s patriotism and his political sensibilities seem equally fitting when applied to *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra*. This seems especially valid since Chester claims May wrote his poems in a form largely “inspired by a national pride” that “[b]y the middle years of the reign of James . . . had subsided” (162). The hint that May sensed a crisis of national pride is also to be found in his play. Since May himself wrote with great enthusiasm concerning previous English monarchs, it does not seem that his personal

politics were always in favour of abolishing the monarchy. Indeed, he seems sympathetic to those in power but realistic in understanding how those who attach themselves to power do so for myriad reasons, including personal advancement. May's play does not necessarily devalue the idea of empire/monarchy, but it does paint an ominous picture of what happens to an empire/monarchy when those who lead it are blind to the ambitions of others. More importantly, May's concerns seem to lie with the fate of those who are affected most by the ambitions of powerful men: the country and its people. In many ways, May's play is almost a prescient vision of the breakdown of the English monarchy and the suspension of the crown. But while the monarchy was suspended from the years of 1642 to 1660, it did once again rise with the restoration of Charles's son, Charles II. It was during Charles II's reign that the story of Antony and Cleopatra was once again revised for the stage in John Dryden's *All For Love*. However, while Dryden followed his dramatic predecessors in subject matter, there is one substantial difference between Dryden's play and those that preceded it and that is the play's determination to be apolitical.

"Nor would the times now bear it:" Political Perspective in John Dryden's *All For Love*

Like Pembroke, Daniel, and Brandon before them, Shakespeare and May recognized and utilized the story of the Roman general and the Egyptian queen to accommodate a reading of their own contemporaneous political climate. The constant element in all of the Antony and Cleopatra plays discussed so far is that they are

engaged, to varying degrees, in investigating and questioning power, especially monarchical power. However, the scrutiny of politics that exists in all of these plays is conspicuously absent in John Dryden's *All For Love* (1677). As his title makes clear, in Dryden's text the focus is not on power or politics but on love. Yet it is not Dryden's emphasis on the love story of Antony and Cleopatra that sets his text apart from the others, it is the deliberate erasure of the enquiry into the workings of power and the powerful that makes his play unique. Instead of a play about politics, *All For Love* is a play about the absence of politics. Of course, it is the very absence of a concentrated political reading that implicates the political nature of Dryden's text. In attempting to depoliticize the Antony and Cleopatra story, Dryden reveals both the anxiety that follows a time of political upheaval and the desire to revise the part that cultural production, especially dramatic literature, plays in the political landscape.

In the dedication to Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, Dryden clearly states the role he feels writing should play upon the socio-political stage. After some laudatory comments concerning Danby's own skill in poetic appreciation, Dryden makes a clear connection between politics and writing: "[t]here is somewhat of a tie in nature betwixt those who are born for worthy actions and those who can transmit them to posterity, and though ours be much the inferior part, it comes at least within the verge of alliance" (Dedicatory 16-19).²⁷ As part of this "alliance," Dryden claims that literature can "animate others to those virtues which we copy and describe from you [Danby]" (20-21). While Dryden's remarks are certainly consistent with the type of hyperbolic rhetoric found in most dedications to members of the court, his statements

concerning the relationship of the noble patron and the writer seem to be more than the traditional praise found in prefatory material when read in combination with other statements in the dedication. Specifically, Dryden connects the occupation of writing and publishing to the sphere of politics. In the dedication, Dryden argues that:

[‘t]is indeed in their interest who endeavour the subversion of governments to discourage poets and historians, for the best which can happen to them is to be forgotten: but such who, under kings, are the fathers of their country, and by a just and prudent ordering of affairs preserve it, have the same reason to cherish the chroniclers of their actions. (22-27)

By alluding to those who “preserve” the King’s “just and prudent ordering of affairs,” Dryden illustrates his positive view of writing as a political tool used to support authority. However, he also makes reference in the dedication to those writers whose texts may be read as direct or indirect criticism of the government, inherent in the questioning of power itself, that may subvert political authority. This negative use of writing is captured by his subsequent reference to the “malcontents amongst us” (135) who strike “at the root of power, which is obedience” (167) by more subtle use of discourse. Dryden acknowledges the power of writing as a political tool when he argues that “[e]very remonstrance of private men has the seed of treason in it, and discourses which are couched in ambiguous terms are therefore the most dangerous because they do all the mischief of open sedition, yet are safe from the punishment of the laws” (168-72). Within the dedication to Danby, Dryden establishes a very pertinent context for reading the play that follows. While the monarchy had been

restored in 1660, the troubles that caused the rebellion against Charles I had not been entirely eliminated, particularly the perception of a court that was extravagant and uncaring of the welfare of its people. Dryden himself alludes to the troubles Danby experienced as the Treasurer of England.²⁸ In this context, Dryden's comment about those who use literature to "do all the mischief of sedition" reveals the anxiety that followed the abolition and the restoration of the monarchy. The fall of the monarchy had illustrated that its power could be abrogated and the fear of such a recurrence makes Dryden's perspective understandable. This anxiety is also of interest with reference to the lack of political questioning to be found in *All For Love*. In Dryden's text, the seemingly inherent political issues embodied in the source story of Antony and Cleopatra are virtually non-existent. Indeed, Dryden takes a great deal of care to rid his play of any implication of questioning those in political power, and he does this by redirecting the focus of the play from the political to the personal—from power to love.

Like all the writers who preceded him, Dryden alters the source material of the Antony and Cleopatra story to suit his own dramatic purposes. However, unlike his dramatic predecessors, Dryden alters the source material to move the focus of the story away from the political decisions and motivations of Antony and Cleopatra to their personal story, the story of their love. While Dryden, by necessity it seems, must include some of the political machinations that occur within the classical story, he conspicuously avoids assigning blame or political motivations to either Antony or Cleopatra. The play presents the lovers as larger than life figures whose love and

motivations are far beyond the understanding of ordinary people, even those closest to them. Beginning his version of the story after the Battle of Actium, Dryden uses the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra as a venue to question the privileging of the political over the personal, especially with the character of Antony. While *All For Love* does portray a conflict between the personal and the political, it changes the context of that conflict so that only those who are truly great, Antony and Cleopatra, have the ability to understand how the personal can outweigh the political. It diffuses the questioning of those in power by questioning the understanding of those not in power.

In act one, scene one, Ventidius, Antony's general, returns to Antony's side in an effort to save Antony from himself and reclaim him for Rome. Returning to find Antony despondent, Ventidius makes a striking statement about Antony's character:

Just, just his nature.

Virtue's his path; [sic] but sometimes 'tis too narrow
For his vast soul, and then he starts out wide
 And bounds into vice that bears him far
 From his first course, and plunges him in ills:
 Quick to observe and full of sharp remorse,
 He censures eagerly his own misdeeds,
 Judging himself with malice to himself,
 And not forgetting what *as man he did*

Because his other parts are more than man.

He must not thus be lost. (1.1.123-34, my emphasis)

This speech illustrates the central “political” conflict that does appear in the play. Within Ventidius’s characterization of Antony there is an inherent conflict between social constructions of behavior and Antony’s inability to stay within the limits of such socially constructed behaviors because of his natural greatness. There is a discrepancy between Antony’s desires and Antony’s duty. While this battle between the personal and political is a trait assigned to most of the characterizations of Antony, Dryden qualifies this trait by adding a very important element—Antony’s “vast soul.” Ventidius’s recognition of Antony’s vices is placed in a very specific context. Antony, by “nature,” is virtuous but due to “his vast soul” he is unable to restrict himself to behavior that is acceptable on a conventional social level; the path of ordinary morality is “too narrow” for Antony. Ventidius notes that on an intellectual level Antony is aware that his actions will be perceived by society as “misdeeds” and that he even attempts to “censure” himself. However, the Roman general is not fully to blame because while he recognizes that “what he did as a man” is unacceptable to society, his “other parts,” like his soul, “are more than man,” and it is Antony’s status as “more than man” that makes his leadership so desirable to Ventidius and other Romans. As the representative of the ordinary Roman, Ventidius dislikes Antony’s actions that go against Roman ideals but at the same time he lauds Antony for being extraordinary. Indeed, throughout the play the conflict of personal

and political is shown to be one of perspective, not of reality. This is clear in the play's presentation of both Cleopatra and Antony.

In *All For Love*, Cleopatra's character is completely divested of any political motivation. All of her focus is reserved for Antony and her love for him. This characterization of Cleopatra is emphasized from her first entrance in the play in act two. Although she and Antony have lost the battle and Octavius is preparing to strike at Egypt, all of Cleopatra's thoughts are occupied by Antony. Her only concern seems to be that now that Ventidius has returned to remind Antony of his Roman duty, she will lose her lover. When Cleopatra's servant, Alexas, pointedly reminds her of her own political status, Cleopatra's response illustrates that she, like Antony, perceives the personal (love) as more important than the political (power):

Alexas: Does this weak passion

 Become a mighty queen?

Cleopatra: I am no queen:

 Is this to be a queen, to be besieged

 By yon insulting Roman, and to wait

 Each hour the victor's chain? These ills are small;

 For Antony is lost, and I can mourn

 For nothing else but him.

(2.1.6-12)

While Cleopatra clearly recognizes the political consequences of her and Antony's actions, the results of the war are not important to her. Despite being "besieged" by

Octavius and waiting for the “victor’s chain,” her only concern is for Antony. Cleopatra’s insistence that the loss of her power and her country are “small” ills compared to the loss of Antony underscores how deeply invested is her love for Antony. When Iras attempts to make her queen “[c]all reason” (2.1.16), Cleopatra reiterates that her love for Antony outweighs any political consideration:

My love’s a noble madness,
 Which shows the cause deserved it. Moderate sorrow
 Fits vulgar love, and for a vulgar man;
 But I have loved with such transcendent passion,
 I soared at first quite out of reason’s view,
 And now am lost above it.

(2.1.16-22)

Like Ventidius’s speech about Antony’s “vast soul,” Cleopatra illustrates that her love conquers any mundane or ordinary sense like reason. Her love is a “noble madness” that transcends the normal expectations of the ordinary. Charles Hinnant notes that this speech “echoes the soaring grandeur of Cleopatra’s passion” and “invests [her] love with a power that does not subordinate to reason but seeks to transcend it” (65). Cleopatra, like Antony, understands the value of this “transcendent passion” and how others would view her love as unreasonable, but only because those without the greatness of herself and Antony are incapable of such transcendence. Indeed, in the play, Cleopatra’s commitment to Antony is her only defining feature. Unlike the plays that preceded it, *All For Love* creates a one-dimensional version of

the Egyptian queen. In the text, there is no hint of the intelligent, ambitious, political thinker that the other plays, even those sympathetic to the queen, present. Instead she becomes a foil and a mate for Antony's own greatness of spirit.

Cleopatra's love for Antony to the exclusion of all political consideration acts to emphasize the context of Antony's own struggle between the personal and the political. Unlike Cleopatra, the audience does see the Roman general battling with the choice of his love or his duty. His love is as great as Cleopatra's, but unlike her, Antony struggles with the consequences of his decisions. Act three clearly delineates the difficulty Antony has choosing between the personal and political, a conflict that is embodied in the characters of Cleopatra and Octavia. At the start of scene one the audience sees a reconciled Antony and Cleopatra who have renewed their vows of love and loyalty. Here Antony's commitment to the personal is emphasized:

Let Caesar spread his subtle nets, like Vulcan:
 In thy embraces I would be beheld
 By Heaven and earth at once,
 And make their envy what they meant for sport.
 Let those who took us blush; I would love on
 With awful state, regardless of their frowns,
 As their superior god.

(3.1.17-23)

Like Cleopatra's speech concerning her "noble madness," Antony illustrates that normal morality does not apply to the love he shares with Cleopatra. While Caesar

and other Romans see their love as immoral, Antony sees their love as elevating them to the divine. He becomes a “superior god” because of his love for Cleopatra and, therefore, is above the criticism of ordinary mortals. While Antony’s speech shows that he perceives his love for Cleopatra in much the same way as Cleopatra does, he also shows that he is far more vulnerable to being swayed by the arguments of those who do not understand the transcendent nature of his love. This is apparent when Ventidius appears. When Alexas warns Antony that his general “joins not in your joys, nor minds your triumphs” but looks on Antony’s reunion with Cleopatra “with contracted brows” (3.1.30-31), Antony attempts to leave before Ventidius can talk to him. Antony asks Alexas to “[l]ead to the temple” because he wants to “avoid his [Ventidius’s] presence” (3.1.37). Antony even gives a reason for his desire to escape a meeting with Ventidius. He knows, like Alexas, that not only will his general be displeased, on a moral and political level, with Antony’s decision to renew his love for Cleopatra but also that, to some degree, Ventidius is correct in his displeasure. Antony admits to himself that “[e]ven this minute/ Methinks he has a right of chiding me” (3.1.35-36). Here Antony displays the fact that while his heart is devoted to love and to Cleopatra, he still realizes that on a political level his actions are questionable to those who follow him. He tries to avoid meeting with Ventidius because he knows that his general will remind him of his duty—his responsibility to follow accepted morality. Antony is afraid to meet with Ventidius since he fears his general will be able to make Antony forsake Cleopatra in the name of Rome. He is fully aware that this is Ventidius’s plan. Antony’s desire to avoid Ventidius shows that his

commitment to the personal can be overridden by the political. This becomes even clearer with the introduction of Octavia to the play.

In his bid to return Antony to what he considers proper Roman morals, Ventidius brings Octavia and her children (by Antony) to Egypt to make Antony feel guilty. Antony's alarmed reaction to Octavia's appearance makes Ventidius ask Antony if he feels Octavia is a "poison" to him (3.1.239). In the exchange that follows, Octavia's role as the proper Roman and wife is emphasized. When Antony accuses Ventidius, Dollabella, and Octavia of betraying him to Caesar, Octavia's response shows her true identity:

My hard fortune

Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes.

But the conditions I have brought are such

You need not blush to take. I love your honour

Because 'tis mine: it never shall be said

Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.

Sir, you are free, free even from her you loathe.

For though my brother bargains for your love,

Makes me the price and cement of your peace,

I have a soul like yours; I cannot take

Your love as alms, not beg what I deserve.

(3.1.289-99)

Octavia's speech is all about duty. She claims to "love" Antony's "honour/ Because 'tis mine." She loves only out of duty and upholds Antony's "honour" because in doing so she shows herself to be honourable. She claims to have a "soul like" Antony's in greatness, yet her obvious willingness to reconcile with Antony for honour seems to belie this idea. Octavia's interest in Antony is not motivated by the personal; it is motivated by the political. By convincing Antony to reunite with her, she is asking Antony to reunite with Rome. Referencing Octavia's position in the play, H. Nelville Davies notes "that although Octavia has made a powerful bid for our [the audience's/reader's] sympathy, and although Dollabella and Ventidius will immediately support her claim, it is a claim grounded not in affection but on pride. It is a grasping, predatory, legalistic claim" ("*All For Love*" 64). This becomes apparent when she claims that she is willing to be a wife in name only and tells Antony, once he is friends again with Caesar, that she "may be dropped at Athens—/ No matter where, I never will complain, / But only keep the barren name of wife" (3.1.302-04). While both Dollabella and Ventidius praise Octavia's sacrifice of the personal for the political, Antony, despite being touched emotionally by Octavia's speech, has a different reaction:

Octavia, I have heard you, and must praise
 The greatness of your soul,
 But cannot yield to what you have proposed;
 For I can ne'er be conquered but by love,

And you do all for duty.

(3.1.313-17)

Antony recognizes the choice being given to him: the choice between love and duty. He knows that any reconciliation with Octavia would be only for political purposes. There is no love between them. He must choose between the transcendent love of Cleopatra and the Roman duty of Octavia, and Antony finds this choice difficult:

O Dollabella, which way shall I turn?

I find a secret yielding in my soul;

But Cleopatra, who would die with me,

Must she be left? Pity pleads for Octavia,

But does it not plead more for Cleopatra?

(3.1.336-40)

Ventidius's answer to Antony's question makes it clear that he thinks that the choice is obvious: "Justice and pity both plead for Octavia;/ For Cleopatra neither" (3.1.341-42). Here Ventidius once again espouses the conventional and socially constructed morality of Rome. Octavia is Antony's legitimate, Roman wife, and Cleopatra, the foreigner, is only his mistress. However, for Antony the choice is not so obvious and his difficulties are related to the "vast soul" that Ventidius previously praised. While Antony knows what his fellow Romans expect of him, his own "nature" balks against following their "narrow" moral "path" (1.1.123-24). Even after Ventidius points out the truth to Antony, he claims "O my distracted soul" illustrating his struggle between the personal and the political. Antony's choice between Octavia and Cleopatra is

between the “morality” of the ordinary and the “immorality” of the extraordinary. This is because within *All For Love* Octavia is “the incarnation of honour” (Emerson, Davis, and Johnson 57), and her character is:

drawn as a “respectable woman” . . . [with] her pride, her regard for honour in the form of her reputation, . . . [and this] qualifies her “love” as something far more of a vice than the love of Antony and Cleopatra. Octavia is so undeniably self-righteous—and it is difficult to believe that she would not have seemed so to a Restoration audience—that Antony does what any man would do when he returns to Cleopatra. (Emerson, Davis, and Johnson 57)

The struggle for Antony’s soul seems to be won by Ventidius and Octavia when they confront Antony with his children by Octavia. It is the combined effort of Ventidius, Dollabella, Octavia, and the children that finally causes Antony to choose the political—a reunion with Octavia over his love for Cleopatra. The Romans, understanding the greatness of Antony’s heart, use emotional blackmail for their own political purposes. Although they know that Antony’s love for Cleopatra goes beyond anything they can understand, they convince him to abandon this love in order to quell the civil strife the war between Antony and Caesar has caused. It is only when Antony hears of Cleopatra’s “death” that he is able to find the strength to fulfill his vows of love.

Before he hears of Cleopatra’s death, Antony seems quite prepared to leave her and Egypt. This is largely due to the machinations of those around Antony.

Ventidius and Octavia work to convince Antony that Cleopatra is false; they convince Antony that Cleopatra has turned from him into the arms of Dollabella. Ventidius and Octavia are able to convince Antony of this because of the actions of Alexas, Cleopatra's servant, who tells his queen she should play up her relationship with Dollabella in order to make Antony jealous. Alexas, like Ventidius and Octavia, is only attempting to secure his own political future by trying to make Antony stay in Egypt with Cleopatra. However, Alexas's ploy results in Antony's rage against Cleopatra and, despite the love he still feels for her, his repudiation of the Egyptian queen. In order to salvage Antony's love, Alexas concocts the story of Cleopatra's suicide to see how news of her death will affect the Roman general. While Ventidius is pleased by the news, Antony reacts as Alexas wishes; he is overcome by grief. It is at this point that Antony's actions are controlled by the personal without any thought of the political. When Ventidius suggests that he and Antony die in one final battle against Caesar, Antony responds that he "will not fight: there's no more work for war" (5.1.261). Antony, on hearing of Cleopatra's death, loses not only his will to live, but also his will to commit any action that can be construed as political. He fully relinquishes the political for the personal:

What should I fight for now? My Queen is dead.

I was but great for her; my power, my empire

Were but the merchandise to buy her love,

And conquered kings, my factors. Now she's dead,

Let Caesar take the world—

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What should I fight for now? My Queen is dead.

I was but great for her; my power, my empire

Were but the merchandise to buy her love,

And conquered kings, my factors. Now she's dead,

Let Caesar take the world—

An empty circle, since the jewel's gone

Which made it worth my strife.

(5.1.269-75)

Here, Antony describes the power of his love for Cleopatra. It is only in the pursuit of his personal desires, Cleopatra's love, that he acted in the political field. His political actions of gaining "power" and an "empire" were not due to his ambition but to his desire "to buy her love." With Cleopatra dead, Antony has no more use for the world. For him the world is now "[a]n empty circle." Antony's own death is preceded by his admission that his political actions were due to his private desires. Now that those desires can no longer be fulfilled, he is happy to let "Caesar take the world." That Antony is happy with his choices is clear in one of his final speeches. When Cleopatra finds Antony alive after his somewhat botched suicide, he consoles her by his affirmation of their personal love:

But grieve not, while thou stay'st,

My last disastrous times:

Think we have had a clear and glorious day,

And Heaven did kindly to delay the storm

Just till our close of evening. Ten years' love,

And not a moment lost, but all improved

To th' utmost joys: what ages have we lived.

(5.1.387-93)

To Antony, the pain, the war, and the hardships of the world mean nothing. All that matters is that he and Cleopatra have taken full advantage of the time they have been given. Rather than being angry at his fate, Antony claims he is thankful of "Heaven" who "kindly" allowed them to find and enjoy each other. As Max Novak argues, "Dryden alone has a seemingly unpolitical Antony whose passion is a victory in itself" ("Criticism" 380). Antony's claim that the gods or Heaven aided his and Cleopatra's love echoes his earlier statement that this love made the lovers Divine. Such statements clearly illustrate that the love between Antony and Cleopatra is transcendent. It is not a normal, everyday love, but one that will live on through the "ages." It lives longer than any political conquest ever could. It is Antony's recognition of the metaphysical nature of great love that sets him apart from all the other characters in the play with the exception, of course, of Cleopatra. Both lovers have the greatness of "soul" to happily ignore all political considerations in the name of love because both know that love is far more important than power. Indeed, in *All For Love* the lovers are valorized for their commitment to the personal, and it is not their love that causes political strife, but the actions of the people around them who cannot understand their love. It is the "ordinary" people that surround the lovers who cause the political troubles because they are incapable of understanding the transformative power of love, and, therefore, their perspective is guided only by the political.

As was stated earlier, *All For Love* is unique in the Antony and Cleopatra plays studied thus far because of the conscious depoliticizing of the actions of Antony

and Cleopatra. The only ambition either lover really illustrates is the ambition to fulfill his/her vows of love. Neither Antony nor Cleopatra is shown to be clearly politically ambitious, and even when Antony is shown to be politically ambitious, it is an ambition that operates only to secure Cleopatra's love. Yet despite this focus on the personal, the play is not completely able to erase all political motivations from the source story. In order to accommodate the political issues inherent in the source story while also maintaining the political indifference of Antony and Cleopatra, the play transfers the political issues of power and empire to those who follow the lovers. While Antony and Cleopatra are not shown to have any obvious political ambitions, those who follow Antony and Cleopatra are clearly shown to think and act to ensure the success of their own political ideologies. In particular, Ventidius and Alexas become the political surrogates for Antony and Cleopatra, respectively. This act of surrogacy allows the text to offer a political reading of power without undermining the authority of that power as represented by Antony and Cleopatra. Instead of questioning the political decisions of those who hold power, the play questions the ability of anyone who is not in power to understand the position and the decisions of those who do hold power.

Ventidius represents the political ideology of Rome, and it is he who consistently attempts to "reclaim" Antony from the arms of Cleopatra. It is also Ventidius who voices the political and moral dichotomies represented by Rome and Egypt. One obvious representation of this is how Ventidius is shown to feel about Cleopatra. Although the audience does not see Cleopatra commit any action against

Ventidius personally, he clearly has both political and personal grudges against the Egyptian queen. When Ventidius arrives after Actium to bring Antony military support, his disapprobation of Cleopatra is evident:

He [Antony] know him not his executioner
 Oh, she [Cleopatra] has decked his ruin with her love,
 Led him in golden bands to gaudy slaughter,
 And made perdition pleasing: she has left him
 The blank of what he was.
 I tell thee, eunuch, she has quite unmanned him.
 Can any Roman see and know him now,
 Thus altered from the lord of half of mankind,
 Unbent, unsinewed, made a woman's toy
 Shrunk from the vast extent of all his honours,
 And cramped within a corner of the world?

(1.1.169-79)

Here Ventidius articulates the Roman perspective of Cleopatra's effect on Antony. She has "unmanned him" and has caused him to abandon "all his honours." According to Ventidius, Cleopatra has so transformed Antony that he is unrecognizable to his fellow Romans. Indeed, most of Ventidius's speeches concerning Cleopatra are constructed on the negative figuration of the Egyptian queen as the manipulative, canny, voluptuous woman who uses her own aggressive sexuality to gain political advantage and power. And even Ventidius admits that he is

not immune to the Egyptian queen's attractions claiming that "even I, who hate her/ With a malignant joy behold such beauty" (4.1.242-43). Cleopatra's ability to arouse Ventidius who readily admits his hatred for her seemingly validates the general's opinion that Cleopatra is the seductress who has enchanted Antony so that he no longer is concerned with his Roman morals and responsibilities. Ventidius even confronts Antony with what he believes is her culpability in the triumvir's downfall:

Behold, you Powers.

To whom you have intrusted [sic] humankind:

See Europe, Afric, Asia put in balance,

And all weighed down by one light, worthless woman!

I think the gods are Antonies, and give,

Like prodigals, this nether world away

To none but wasteful hands.

(1.1.369-74)

Ventidius's condemnation of Cleopatra illustrates that he only sees her in Roman terms. She is the foreign seductress who has separated Antony from his identity as a Roman. She has corrupted Antony's "natural" virtue and morality. Yet, Ventidius's hatred of Cleopatra is based on more than just his outraged morality; it is based on the political as opposed to the personal. Although Antony is the one who reminds Cleopatra of the negative political consequences of their love, Ventidius supports Antony and makes comments throughout clearly showing that Antony is parroting arguments that have been made to him by his general (2.1.259-390). Ventidius's

commitment to the political is emphasized further in the scene when Cleopatra successfully defends her past actions and convinces Antony of her love. When Ventidius sees that Cleopatra's arguments are starting to sway Antony, he forcefully reminds Antony that Cleopatra is still the cause of his political ruin: "O siren! Siren!/
Yet grant that all the love she boasts were true,/ Has she not ruined you? I still urge that,/ The fatal consequence" (2.1.359-61). Ventidius's concerns are for Antony's political power, regardless of the reality or the performance of Cleopatra's love. It does not matter on a political level whether or not Cleopatra is false. What matters to Ventidius, and the Roman ethos he represents, is that Cleopatra's love has caused Antony to forgo his involvement in the political. She has depoliticized Antony. Ventidius's rhetoric of Roman duty and morals not only illustrates his commitment to the political, it also illustrates his inability to understand the personal, especially at the level of either Antony or Cleopatra. This is evident in his last attempt to "save" Antony from himself by bringing Octavia to Egypt.

As was argued previously, it is Ventidius who brings Octavia to Egypt to confront Antony with the price that others, especially those to whom he has sworn oaths, have paid for his love for Cleopatra. He, as the representative of Roman ideology, thinks that Antony's guilt for betraying Octavia will bring Antony back to Rome. Ventidius hopes that Antony's encounter with Octavia will make Antony finally reject Cleopatra and return to his duty. He uses Octavia to remind Antony of the political cost of his personal choices. While Ventidius's ploy seems to work in the beginning, it is ultimately unsuccessful. This is largely due to the fact that Ventidius

is incapable of understanding, as Antony does, the value of the personal. He is unable to understand the transformative and transcendent power of love. The reason for Ventidius's lack of vision in this instance is that he is ordinary. Yet, it is Ventidius himself who continually points to Antony's extraordinary status. Although Ventidius thinks in strictly political terms, he cannot deny the charisma that Antony holds:

I'm waning in his favour, yet I love him;
 I love this man who runs to meet his ruin.
 And sure the gods, like me, are fond of him:
 His virtues lie so mingled with his crimes,
 As would confound their choice to punish one
 And not reward the other.

(3.1.46-51)

Ventidius comprehends that what makes Antony love Cleopatra is what makes Ventidius love Antony. He is "more than man" and although he "runs to meet his ruin," Ventidius cannot leave him. Ventidius shows that he knows that Antony's "virtues" and "crimes" come from the same source: Antony's larger than life personality and his "vast soul." Ventidius understands, like Cleopatra, that Antony is not and can never be the "vulgar" or common man. He is too great. However, Ventidius's understanding of Antony is not complete. Ventidius's incomplete knowledge of Antony is apparent when he brings Octavia to Egypt. Antony does not love Octavia, and Octavia admits that her motivations are due to "honour" rather than any personal feelings for Antony. Ventidius sees nothing wrong with the personal

outweighing the political, so he thinks that the reunion of Antony and Octavia, based on duty rather than love, will last. Even after he hears Antony claim that he “can ne’er be conquered but by love” (3.1.316), Ventidius believes that he has won Antony back for Rome with his ploy of emotional blackmail. He fails to understand the way Antony thinks even when Antony clearly announces that he privileges the personal over the political, love over duty. In reference to Ventidius’s speech about Antony’s “virtues” and “crimes,” John Vance notes that it is:

ironic that Ventidius voices so eloquently the mixing metaphor, for he errs egregiously in attempting to simplify Antony’s complicated nature.

Regardless of how one may sympathize with Ventidius’s position and admire his loyalty (in fact, regardless of how one might wish him to succeed in his struggle to win Antony back to Roman values), Ventidius is guilty of adding unnecessary anguish to Antony’s already troubled mind. . . . Ventidius cannot accept the fact that Antony is no longer, if he had ever truly been, stamped with heroic likeness, and consequently the general chides, implores, and weeps in an effort to redirect Antony’s course. (428)

Ultimately, Ventidius’s ignorance of the value of the personal to Antony is largely the reason that he fails in what he perceives to be his duty—restoring Antony to Rome. Ventidius is blind to the personal and, therefore, he can never fully manipulate Antony into doing what he wants the fallen emperor to do.²⁹ In contrast, Alexas, Cleopatra’s servant, is aware of the value that Antony places on the personal, and he uses it to his own political advantage.

In a marked difference to Ventidius, Alexas is fully aware of the value that both Antony and Cleopatra place on their love for one another. While Ventidius's manipulation of Antony is for political ideals (the restoration of Rome), Alexas's manipulation of both Antony and Cleopatra is based upon his own political agenda. Alexas knows that if Antony leaves Cleopatra, he will lose all the power he now possesses. As such, Alexas is far more canny and corrupt than Ventidius. Rather than working for any larger ideals, Alexas works for himself. Indeed, in *All For Love*, Alexas is shown, as Robert McHenry argues, to take "on all the treacherous 'oriental' qualities of Shakespeare's Cleopatra" (451). His tactics are far more effective in that he does know the value that Antony and Cleopatra place on their love even if he does not know that love on a personal level, and he uses this knowledge for his own purposes. When Antony appears to have abandoned Cleopatra for Octavia, it is Alexas who uses Antony's love to bring him back to Cleopatra and Egypt. As his first ploy, Alexas convinces a very reluctant Cleopatra to flirt with Dollabella to arouse Antony's jealousy (4.1.70-100). Yet, although Alexas understands the power of the love that Antony holds for Cleopatra, he fails to understand what the intimation of betrayal may do to that love. When confronted by Antony about Cleopatra's "seduction" of Dollabella, Alexas tries to test Antony's commitment by inferring that Cleopatra has the right to take another lover since she is "rejected . . . by him [Antony] she loved" (4.1.380). Alexas suggests this in order to provoke Antony's anger and jealousy, but he does not truly or fully understand the consequences of his act. Alexas, while understanding the value and importance of love to Antony, does

not understand the emotional context of that love. Like Ventidius, Alexas does not understand that this is not a “normal” kind of love. According to Hinnant, Alexas “tends to regard heroic love as an illusion and to see it as an obstacle to private self-interest. Antony is Cleopatra’s ‘slave.’ To him Cleopatra’s devotion represents the enslavement of her own natural reason to her baser passions” (63). In other words, Alexas only understands love as a mundane concept to, at best, be used for political ends as opposed to both Antony and Cleopatra who see their love as spiritual path to personal transcendence. This is why his plan to make Antony jealous fails. Because he cannot understand that Antony’s love for Cleopatra is part of Antony’s “soul,” he does not understand the rage that Antony feels when Alexas cheapens this love by suggesting it is easily transferable to the arms of another man. Even after Alexas sees Antony’s genuine rage over what the general perceives as Cleopatra’s betrayal of their sacred love, he fails to comprehend, as had Ventidius, that his plans cannot manipulate that love.

Alexas’s failure to truly understand the love of Antony and Cleopatra leads him, ironically, to his political ruin. When the Egyptian sailors betray Antony in his final battle with Caesar (5.1.81-94), Alexas advises Cleopatra to “haste you to your monument,/ While I make speed to Caesar” (5.1.106-07), Cleopatra finally realizes Alexas’s inability to understand the love she holds for Antony: “Base fawning wretch! Wouldst thou betray him too?/ Hence from my sight: I will not hear a traitor;/ ‘Twas thy design brought all this ruin on us” (5.1.110-12). Other than dismissing Alexas as a counselor, Cleopatra, on the advice of Serapion, orders Alexas to use his

powers of persuasion on Antony to see if he can save his life. Left to fend for himself, Alexas illustrates his true motivations:

Oh that I less could fear to lose this being,
 Which like a snowball in my coward hand,
 The more 'tis grasped, the faster melts away.
 Poor reason! What a wretched aid art thou!
 For still, in spite of thee,
 These two long lovers, soul and body, dread
 Their final separation. Let me think:
 What can I say to save myself from death?
 No matter what becomes of Cleopatra.

(5.1.131-38)

With Cleopatra's rejection of him, Alexas knows that his power, and quite likely his life, is at an end. What he has struggled to gain "melts away." Of particular interest is Alexas's admonition that reason is a "wretched aid" to him at this point. Here Alexas's condemnation of reason and its inability to help him echoes Cleopatra's own speech about reason (2.1.16-28). Otto Reinert also emphasizes the importance of this speech in understanding Alexas's role in the play. For him, this speech illustrates that:

just as the reason that had honor [sic], power, friendship, virtue, and life on its side [with reference to Ventidius] is incapable of keeping Antony and Cleopatra apart, so Alexas here admits to reason's impotence when it argues a

kind of stoical fearlessness in the face of death: for all his [Alexas's] philosophy, body and soul *will* dread their separation. (95)

Cleopatra denies reason because she knows that it never was and never will be part of her love for Antony. Reason implies logic and, as the Queen notes, her love is a “noble madness” (2.1.17) that has no reason, just emotion and loyalty. The love that she and Antony share is beyond reason’s grasp. It is only at his downfall that Alexas finally understands this breach of reason, albeit because of a different type of love—self-love. Unlike Cleopatra who would give everything to display her love for Antony, Alexas’s love is based on self-preservation. He is emotionally distraught because his plans have failed, and he faces not only a loss of his power, but also the possible loss of his life. His self-interest is evident when he proclaims he will do what he will to save his own life “[n]o matter what becomes of Cleopatra.” Alexas shows loyalty only to himself. In this he differs from Ventidius in that Ventidius’s actions are due to his loyalty to Rome. Alexas is the figure of individual political avarice and in this way represents the conventional figuration of Egypt in the source story, most often associated with Cleopatra, just as Ventidius represents Roman honour. But unlike Ventidius, whose ideals lead him to follow Antony despite the personal cost, Alexas goes to an extreme to save himself and, in doing so, precipitates the deaths of both Antony and Cleopatra.

Just as Dryden’s Antony and Cleopatra are cleansed of any political motivations, they are also cleansed of any of the immorality associated with their suicides, especially in the case of Cleopatra. Instead, the role of the fatal provocateur

is played by Alexas, and this is an important change. While all versions of the play have some intimation that the suicide of Antony is due to Cleopatra's own lies about her death, Dryden's Cleopatra remains completely unaware of the circumstances surrounding Antony's choice of death until her lover lies dying in her arms. It is Alexas who tells Antony that Cleopatra is "gone/ Where she shall never be molested more/ By love, or you" (5.1.199-201). When Antony erroneously assumes that Alexas means that Cleopatra has "gone" into the arms of Dollabella (5.1.201-13), Alexas falsely reports that Cleopatra, due to the loss of Antony's love and trust, has committed suicide (5.1.228-34). While Ventidius rejoices that Antony is free, Alexas rejoices that Antony is emotionally distraught:

He [Antony] loves her still:

His grief betrays it. Good! The joy to find

She's yet alive completes the reconcilment.

I've saved myself and her. But, oh! The Romans!

Fate comes too fast upon my wit,

Hunts me too hard, and meets me at each double.

(5.1.251-56)

In this speech, Alexas once again clearly illustrates his misunderstanding of the love that is shared by Antony and Cleopatra. Like his ploy to make Antony jealous, Alexas fails to recognize or apprehend the full consequences of telling Antony that Cleopatra is dead. Alexas, thinking logically and not emotionally, feels that his falsehood has assured the "reconcilment" of Antony and Cleopatra and, hence, he has assured his

own place in the power structure. This is emphasized by the final two lines of the speech in which Alexas moves from the problem of the breach between the lovers to the problem of the invading Octavius Caesar. Instead of being concerned with what Antony will do, Alexas is concerned with what he can do to stave off being conquered by Rome. With his lie of Cleopatra's death, Alexas thinks his political future, and his life, has been saved. While Alexas is correct in assuming that the news of Cleopatra's death will lead to a "reconciliation" of the lovers, he is incorrect in his assumption of the form of that reunion. As he misread the depth of Antony's jealousy and rage over Cleopatra's supposed betrayal with Dollabella, Alexas misreads the depth of Antony's grief. Like Ventidius who believes Antony's reunion with Octavia will last without love (even after hearing Antony's assertions to the contrary), Alexas believes that reason and wit have prevailed over love despite the fact that he has previously witnessed Antony's intense emotional response to Cleopatra's "infidelity" (4.1.335-85). As Reinert argues:

the consequences of the intrigue which Alexas directs on the Egyptian side and which Ventidius, though ignorant of Alexas' [sic] schemes, yet furthers on the Roman side are evidence of the inadequacy of reason. Alexas' [sic] and Ventidius' [sic] plans both miscarry because both depend on rationality: they presume to predict Antony's psychological reactions. They fail, not because they do not accurately predict what emotions will ensue, but because they underestimate their strength. (87)

Alexas's underestimation of the "strength" of Antony's love is clearly apparent in the movement of his thought from the lovers to how to deal with the Romans. Of course, Alexas's plans come to nothing due to his lack of understanding: Antony, unable to think of living without Cleopatra, kills himself, and Cleopatra, unwilling to live after Antony dies, joins him in death so that she can "knit our spousals with a tie too strong/ For Roman laws to break" (5.1.417-18). The powerful ending of *All For Love* shows the triumph of love over reason, the triumph of the personal over the political. The question that now arises is how such a triumph shapes the politics of Dryden's play.

In his discussion of *All For Love*, Aubrey Williams makes a significant and valid point regarding how certain statements in the Preface seem at odds with the actual content of the play. Specifically, Williams takes issue with Dryden's claim that he wrote the play to "try myself in this bow [dramatizing the Antony and Cleopatra story]" in order to "take my own measures in aiming at the mark" (Preface 10. 4-6). Further, Dryden claims that the material is fit for dramatic presentation due to "the excellency of the moral, for the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love, and their end accordingly was unfortunate" (Preface 10. 7-9). Williams contends that these statements from the Preface when juxtaposed against the content of the play prove "particularly contradictory" (6). Specifically, Williams argues that:

[t]he moral issues, as they are raised in the play itself, not to mention the questions of authorial intention and accomplishment, are simply much more

complex than would appear from Dryden's own *post factum* explanation of the "motive" behind his particular version of the Antony/Cleopatra story. The language and imagery of the play, as they generate its actual linguistic texture, operate to override and refute any simple explanation of its "moral", and also operate . . . to generate very mixed and complicated responses towards Dryden's lovers and their ends. (7)

The "contradictory" impulses of the preface and the play to which Williams refers are created in part, I would argue, by Dryden's attempt at depoliticization. Of all the Antony and Cleopatra plays studied thus far, Dryden's is unique in that neither Antony nor Cleopatra is assigned any real political ambition. The only political maneuvering in the play is that done by those who follow the lovers, Ventidius and Alexas being most significant. Dryden's choice to cleanse the lovers of any political blame is, itself, a political choice. As Max Novak suggests, "[w]hat *All For Love* lacks may be as significant as what is actually present in the play" ("Criticism" 379). Dryden's own admission that he knows the writers who have attempted "the bow" of the Antony and Cleopatra story before him illustrates his awareness of previous dramatic versions of the story as well as an awareness of the moral and political use to which this story was put. However, as Richard Kroll argues:

All For Love as a play . . . operates in a world clinically divorced from these values [political viability based on commercial stability]; compromise, political negotiation, concern for the national interest, the political power of commercial sea-borne processes, are all dramatically purged from the main

action of the play, but purged in such a way as to make us conscious of their absence. (137)

The seemingly political vacuum noted by Kroll is based on Dryden's attempt to recontextualize the political aspects of the source story and its earlier dramatic versions in order to recontextualize, to some degree, the relationship between dramatic production and political power. As he claims in the Dedication to Danby, Dryden sees himself in an "alliance" with those in power and works to bolster and secure that power. He does so by changing the political perspective of his play.

All For Love opens not with revelations designed to describe either Rome or Egypt but with the fatalistic revelations of the priest's, Serapion's, interpretations of the numerous "[p]ortents and prodigies" (1.1.1) that have been seen in Egypt after the Battle of Actium. Serapion describes in detail the various natural and spiritual phenomena that he has witnessed including the unexpected and violent flooding of the Nile (1.1.2-15) and his visions about the opening of the tombs of the Ptolomies (1.1.17-31). Serapion's visceral terror at what he has seen is dismissed by Alexas as a "foolish dream" (1.1.37), who enters unseen by the priest. However, even though Alexas mocks the visions of Serapion as a dream "[b]red from the fumes of indigested feasts/ and holy luxury" (1.1.38-39), he also knows the power that such visions hold. When Serapion assures Alexas that he knows his "duty" (1.1.39) not to present his visions to the populace, Alexas makes a statement that illustrates the political nature of the play:

'Tis not fit it should;

Nor would the time now bear it, were it true.

All southern, from yon hills, the Roman camp

Hangs o'er us black and threatening, like a storm

Just breaking on our heads. (1.1.40-44, my emphasis)

Presented as the most political character in the play, Alexas knows the effect a public revelation of such visions would have on the people of Egypt who have lost a key battle in their war against Rome that will likely lead to the loss of their country to "the Roman camp." Alexas knows that the visions of Serapion will lead the people to rebel against those who hold power in Egypt who have created this "storm" that is "[j]ust breaking on . . . [their] heads." Alexas knows, in other words, that any public representation of signs of the destruction of Egypt will cause that destruction to accelerate due to public panic. The political situation for Egypt at the beginning of the play is so tenuous that any hint of Divine disfavour would cause a catastrophe for those in power. In Egypt, "the time" will "not bear" any political misgivings on the part of the people. H. Nelville Davis argues that the opening scene of the play works to explode audience expectation of the kind of theatre popular in the early Restoration filled with "[e]xtravagant sentiments, tense conflicts between rival high-pitched claims of love and honour, exotic settings, and elevated versification" (*All For Love* 49). Further, he claims that the "grand manner [of Serapion] which originally captured the audience . . . is punctured instantly" (*All For Love* 52) by the appearance of Alexas who discredits Serapion's grand visions as dreams. While there

is certainly merit in Davis's argument, the opening scene also sets the political tone of the play. Within his dramatic texts, Novak argues that Dryden constructed an:

ideal world of superior beings, the consummate leaders who populate his heroic plays and operas, cast those who spoke of liberty and freedom as the enemy. What was important in this ideal world was a natural superiority that showed itself in a contempt for self-interest, commercial matters, and the lives of those who composed the mob. ("Rabble" 99)

Such a political philosophy would make a great deal of sense during the time of the play's production. Kroll notes "that the period between 1660 and 1677 represents a rapid decline in Charles's reputation" (135), largely due to both natural disasters, Charles's extravagant spending, and the King's unpopular relationship with the Roman Catholic French King, Louis XIV (135). In discussing the connection of Dryden's *All For Love* to Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Ann Huse claims that Dryden's choice to revamp Shakespeare's play:

was obviously relevant to the most controversial issues of the time. The story of Rome wooing Egypt, and of Antony's risking of his honor [sic] and his homeland for the sensuous embraces of a foreign queen, had long served as a crucible for concerns about masculinity, national identity, and the effects of luxury upon a military culture. (260)

Like the playwrights that preceded him, Dryden's play displays a concern with the socio-political anxiety of his time. Unlike the playwrights before, Dryden attempts to alleviate these concerns not by a criticism of the monarchy, but by criticizing the

faulty understanding of those who question the understanding and power of the monarchy. While closer to power than the normal citizen, both Ventidius and Alexas represent the ordinary person who criticizes their leader without ever understanding fully that the perception lies far outside of their grasp. As Tanya Caldwell argues:

[i]n presenting Antony [and I would add Cleopatra] both as an emblem of glorious kingly power and as a selfish individual who ultimately surrenders all for a foreign mistress, then, *All For Love* reflects a social order as complicated as England's own in which kingship of an idealized past still existed and was believed in, even as its demise was everywhere evident, particularly in Charles II's irresponsible behavior. In its emphasis on Antony as both king and suffering individual, the play also validates both the public and the private realm as the controlling sphere of the individual's life. (189)

Dryden's play, by displaying the power of love, suggests "that ultimate evaluations of events and personalities cannot be influenced solely by immutable laws of reason and morality" (Vance 422). In his reconstruction of the Antony and Cleopatra story, Dryden, the playwright, becomes an Alexas-like figure by reconfiguring a political tragedy into a personal victory; like Alexas, Dryden, with his text, states that "the time would not bear" a questioning of the privileges and power of the monarchy.

Within the dramatic versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story investigated within this study, Dryden's *All For Love* is, ironically, the text that most clearly illustrates the political nature of the story of the doomed lovers. In his attempt to depoliticize Antony and Cleopatra, Dryden's play also acknowledges how this story

was used as a text by which power was investigated, questioned, and presented in England. Dryden's choice to redirect the focus from the political to the personal acts to limit the use of the story as a tool for debating the merits of power on a private level (the individual playwright) and, more importantly, on a public level (the presentation of this political enquiry to a public audience). Its focus on love rather than duty implicates the socio-political effects that previous versions of the play may have had on English perceptions of monarchical authority. By eliminating the political ambitions of Antony and Cleopatra, Dryden alters the story from a text that arouses political anxiety into a text that attempts to remind its audience that political problems occur because those who should support and obey a power structure question it instead. Of course, written as it was after the Restoration of the English monarchy, *All For Love* betrays its own questioning of the stability of the power structure it is intended to support. If the monarchy was the best political system to ensure order and stability, then its necessity could not be questioned in the first place. Dryden's effort to change the context of political enquiry found in the source story and the dramatic versions of it illustrates that Dryden recognized how easily such questioning could disturb the power structure. Yet, despite the fact that Dryden's play displays, to some extent, his own political anxiety, it is his play that moved the Antony and Cleopatra story from the realm of politics to the realm of love. In our own culture, very few people would associate Antony and Cleopatra with politics; in our time, the names of the Roman general and his Egyptian Queen conjure up the story of ultimate love. In

changing the context of the story, Dryden was perhaps more successful than he ever could have imagined.

¹ In accordance with my practice of retaining the original spellings in character names and titles, I will be referring to Shakespeare's play as *Anthony and Cleopatra* and to Shakespeare's character as Anthony. As Michael Neill argues, the 1623 Folio version of the play is "the sole authoritative text of the play" (131) and this text is "consistent in spelling it [Anthony's name] with an *-h-* (except at 4.16.12-13 where abbreviation is required by the exigencies of typesetting)" and that "[i]n speech-prefixes the preferred form is '*Ant.*', but [the] appearance of '*Anth.*' and '*Antho.*' in a significant minority of cases lends weight to the supposition that the manuscript spelt the name with an *-h-*" (134).

² Geoffrey Bullough notes that the "play was entered in the Stationers' Register to Edward Blount on 20 May, 1608, along with *Pericles*, but whereas *Pericles* was printed in 1609 by William White for Henry Gosson, *Anthony and Cleopatra* was not printed before the First Folio of 1623" (215) and "[h]ow long before May, 1608 it had been written is uncertain, but there is evidence to suggest that it was written late in 1606 or early in 1607" (215).

³ All citations for William Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* will be taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: Anthony and Cleopatra*, Michael Neill, editor. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.

⁴ One such critic is R. Malcolm Smuts who argues that:

[b]y the late 1590s the queen's popularity had worn thin. The financial strains of war and Elizabeth's parsimony led to a drying up of royal rewards and a resulting outcry from disappointed courtiers, while her flirtations with her subjects lost their charm, now that she had aged into a shrewish spinster of nearly seventy. Rancorous battles for control of the court, culminating in Essex's rebellion and execution, further discredited her rule. Only her death in 1603 halted the erosion of support. (*Court Culture* 23)

A more specific discussion of the problems associated with the last years of Elizabeth I's reign are detailed in Anne Somerset (711-33) and J.E. Neale (376-90).

⁵ As Alan Stewart notes "[t]he first decade of James's life was one of the most bitter and bloody periods in Scottish history. Ancient dynastic rivalries were played out in the Council chamber and on battlefields" (*Cradle King* 33). Added to this was the very real life lesson of his mother, Mary Stuart who was constantly pulled in different directions by the various factions in Scotland and by powerful nobles. The constant threat of war and factionalism in Scotland led Sir John Oglander to note that James had a "fearful nature" (*Cradle King* x). The instability of James's early life led to "his fear of war, weapons, loud noises and unexplained strangers" (*Cradle King* x). Given his background, James's refusal to perform in public, a talent that Elizabeth excelled in, is clearly understandable.

⁶ Anthony's position in the text with relation to the opposing styles of rule is a much larger discussion than allowed for by the scope of this project. He is constantly pulled between two extremes. Furthermore, he understands the untenable nature of this position as his own speeches on mutability suggest (4.15.2-14). Anthony finally accepts one style of rule over the other as his suicide shows. While he dies a "Roman" death, he does so for the same reason Cleopatra suggests before her suicide, to enact his own death on his own terms so that he cannot be used as an actor in Octavius Caesar's own performance of power (4.15.55-77). By his death, Anthony fully embraces the power of pageantry.

⁷ Enobarbus's suggestion of Cleopatra as a woman who can "out-work" nature would have had several implications for an early modern audience. Other than describing the visual splendor of Cleopatra's power, the idea that her power is strong enough to promote her above nature could be read as relating to the ideology of the natural genderization of power as masculine in the early modern period. Hence, Cleopatra's power, while great, is, being feminine, unnatural.

⁸ Line references for *Julius Caesar* have been taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

⁹ One of the major concerns for James early in his rule was the continuing antipathy, despite the start of negotiated peace during the final years of Elizabeth I's reign, between Spain and England. As the King of Scotland, James did not have the same perspective towards Spain that many of his English subjects did. Indeed, Malcolm Smuts argues that James's:

experiences in Scotland, perhaps the most turbulent kingdom in Europe, had taught him to detest violence and had given him an almost mystical belief in the duty of kings to alleviate conflict. Upon reaching the English throne, he sought to implement this ideal on an international plane by attempting to mediate between Protestant and Catholic Europe, in hopes of bringing nearer the day when religious divides might be peacefully resolved. (*Court Culture* 24)

Furthermore, as Newton suggests, the relationship between England and Spain, especially during the later years of Elizabeth I's reign, was a complicated web comprised of politics, religion, and commerce. As such, when James came to the English throne "he found himself in the position of presiding over the formal conclusion of a war not of his making, the precise nature of which he did not fully understand" (49). Another of James's plans that upset his new subjects, who feared for their economic, personal, and national identity, was his unity effort. Alan Stewart claims that "James's priority in the 1604 Parliament . . . was to bring his two kingdoms of England and Scotland into a Union" (*Cradle King* 209). The union of the countries that James envisioned, however, was not to be. In 1607 the king's proposals concerning the union issue were defeated by Parliament (Stewart *Cradle King* 216; Newton 128-29).

¹⁰ Malcolm Smuts claims James's position as England's monarch was undermined by the "legend of a uniquely glorious reign [Elizabeth's]" and that:

[m]any of the political difficulties he and his son faced derived from their inability to surmount this problem. In the early seventeenth century the Crown could draw upon substantial reserves of loyalty, which not even the events of Charles's reign entirely exhausted. But devotion to the throne was conditioned by strong prejudices about how an English monarch ought to behave, largely defined by Elizabeth's golden legend. (*Court Culture* 16)

¹¹ *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* was first published in 1639 and "was reissued with a new title page in 1654" (Smith v). However, the editor of the only critical edition of May's play, Denzell S. Smith, notes that the "title pages of both manuscript and printed edition report that the play was acted in 1626" (v). May's biographer, Allan Chester, agrees that the play first appeared in 1626 and further argues that this date would fit with May's literary career as he claims that "all of May's tragedies were written between 1625 and 1631" (99).

¹² The use of "Antony" here in opposition to "Anthony" is reflective of the practice of the dramatists being discussed. As such, the decision to revert to "Antony" lies in the fact that this is the spelling used by Thomas May. In fact, of all the dramatists discussed, only Shakespeare uses the spelling of "Anthony."

¹³ Chester notes that May's publication of his *Continuation* (1630) of his translation of Lucan "won the favor of Charles, and to some degree the King became May's patron" (46). Chester also mentions that one of May's friends, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, claims that May received a "considerable donative" from Charles although the amount that the writer received is unknown (47).

¹⁴ The fact that May dedicated both of these works to Charles I was due not only to the King's notice of his previous works, but also to the fact that May "according to his own statement" wrote the historical poems "at the express command of the King" (Chester 47).

¹⁵ Chester argues that the funding that began Sidney Sussex College, given as it was by Lady Francis Sidney, "the wife of the powerful Earl of Sussex, and aunt to both Leicester and Sir Philip Sidney" (22) strongly influenced the Puritan inclinations of the school. Certainly, as was clear in Chapter Two, the involvement of the Sidney's in championing the Protestant cause was quite evident and public. Furthermore, Chester notes that Oliver Cromwell himself "was a Sidney Sussex man" (23) and:
 that he [Cromwell] remembered favorably [sic] the Puritan tradition of the place is clear from the fact that during the Civil Wars, when he seized and melted down the valuable plate of the other Cambridge colleges, he left the Sidney Sussex plate untouched and therefore is included in the official list of benefactors of the College. (23)

¹⁶ Chester notes that May was considered to be a member of "the tribe of Ben" and that the "friendship between May and Jonson endured until the latter's death" (35). May's biographer also states that Jonson admired May's translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* and wrote commendatory verses upon its publication (35).

¹⁷ The Donations of Alexandria are so called because they consisted of Antony, as Triumvir of the East, cutting his ties with Rome by first abandoning Octavia, his wife, and then giving Cleopatra and her children not only land but legitimacy. In Plutarch's account, this was the event that finally lost Antony any real support in Rome. Plutarch's account of the Donations is as follows:

the greatest cause of their malice [Romans] unto him [Antony], was for the division of lands he made amongst his children in the city of Alexandria. And to confess a truth, it was too arrogant and insolent a part, and done (as a man would say) in derision and contempt of the Romans. For he assembled all the people in the show place, where young men do exercise themselves, and there upon a high tribunal silvered, he set two chairs of gold, the one for himself, and the other for Cleopatra, and lower chairs for his children: then he openly published before the assembly, that first of all he did establish Cleopatra queen of Egypt, of Cyprus, of Lydia, and of the lower Syria, and at that time also, Caesarion king of the same realms. This Caesarion was supposed to be the son of Julius Caesar, who had left Cleopatra great with child. Secondly he called the sons he had by her, the kings of kings, and gave Alexander for his portion, Armenia, Media and Parthia, when he had conquered the country: and unto Ptolomy for his portion, Phenecia, Syria, and Cilicia. (Plutarch 54: 727-28).

¹⁸ In Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, a text that May had read in the original, the historian places the Donations immediately before each triumvir's preparation for war (Plutarch 54: 727-28). Plutarch's claims that it was Antony's blatant giving of Roman spoils and territories to Cleopatra and her children that gave Octavius Caesar the leverage he needed to stir "up all the Romans against" (55: 728) Antony.

¹⁹ All citations for May's *The Tragoedy of Cleopatra* are taken from the critical edition edited by Denzell S. Smith; Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1979.

²⁰ While it seems certain that Canidius is referring to Octavius Caesar here, the name could also stand for Julius Caesar. This ambiguity actually lends itself well to the theme of personal ambition over national, in this case republican ideals, as Julius Caesar's ambitions lay in overthrowing the republic to establish himself as dictator.

²¹ In his text, May himself attributes Plancus's speech to both Plutarch (58.730-31) and Cassius Dio (50:37). Dio's account follows Plutarch's in not giving any concrete reasons for the defection of Titus

and Plancus. Dio's account differs from Plutarch's in that he adds the idea that both men were "welcomed . . . most warmly" (50.37) by Caesar and helped Antony's enemy by telling him "all about Antony's affairs—his present actions, his future plans, the provisions of the will and the name of the man who held the document" (50.37).

²² Of course, the ancient Roman idea of the republic was far different than our own liberal concepts of republicanism that is defined as being a state of equals. Only those Romans, such as Julius Caesar and Marc Antony, who were members of the proper citizen families, social standing, and financial background, could hope to wield any real power within the Roman republic. Despite this, the Roman republic was not a monarchy in which the power of the state rested in the hands of one man and his heirs.

²³ The odd disappearance of Canidius from the text illustrates one example of May's lack of creative dramatic skills. Unlike other dramatists who used the story of Antony and Cleopatra, May was, despite the changes he did make, much more dependent on his sources. This explains Canidius's somewhat baffling exit from the text since Antony's loyal supporter disappears from Plutarch's account after he tells Antony about his loss of the land forces, the shock of which causes Antony to abandon his guise as Timon (Plutarch 71:743). Had May been more adept as a dramatist, he might have retained Canidius through to the end of the text to avoid dramatic incongruity.

²⁴ In Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Enobarbus best illustrates what happens on a psychological level to the man who has betrayed his personal and political loyalty as he ends up committing suicide over his defection to Caesar's side (4.10). The consequence of betraying the leader to whom one owes loyalty also appears in Daniel's *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*. In act four, scene four, Seleucus and Rodon, two of Cleopatra's servants who have betrayed her and her children to Caesar, lament that their disloyalty has been repaid by being betrayed by Caesar as they claim Caesar will kill them rather than reward them as he has done to another servant who betrayed Antony.

²⁵ Plutarch states that Antony's affectation of his Timon persona was "because he had the like wrong offered him, that was afore offered onto Timon: and that for the unthankfulness of those he had done good unto [sic], and whom he took to be his friends, he was angry with all men, and would trust no man" (Plutarch 69:742). Plutarch also includes a short description of Timon (70:742-43) that includes the mention of the fig tree on which Timon exhorted men to hang themselves; an idea used by May.

²⁶ Stewart notes that:

James left many legacies, not all of them good. Even as he lay dying, his most recent foreign policy decisions were proving themselves murderously disastrous on the ground. His finances were hopelessly compromised. A series of scandals—the Overbury murder, the fall of Bacon and Middlesex—had shaken public confidence in government. His series of fraught encounters with the English Commons had left the Crown constantly on the defensive. (*Cradle King* 348)

²⁷ All citations for John Dryden's *All For Love* are taken from the New Mermaids critical edition edited by N. J. Andrew. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1993 (First Published 1975).

²⁸ N. J. Andrew notes that in 1675, two years before the production of *All For Love* there was "an unsuccessful attempt to impeach" Danby "on charges of bribery" (3, nt.1). Furthermore, Andrews states that "in December 1678, . . . [Danby] was impeached, and, despite some protection from Charles II, he was imprisoned in the Tower until 1684" (3, nt.1).

²⁹ Ventidius's "blindness" is a choice. As Ventidius's admission about his attraction to Cleopatra makes clear (4.1.233-244), he is not totally immune to the personal. The difference is that Ventidius

makes the choice to suppress the personal (his attraction for Cleopatra) in favour of the political (what he feels is in the best interests of Rome). As Hinnant argues, this makes Ventidius's character much more sympathetic for the audience since,

[f]ar from being exempt from internal conflict by his stoicism, Ventidius shares in the predicament of the other heroic characters who, in their struggle to transcend their unheroic natures, illustrate the tragic duality of man, his division into spirit and flesh. If we regard Ventidius as a heroic figure, then his discovery of the discrepancy between the demands of the body and the demands of the soul is his central tragic dilemma. (68-69)

Ventidius's loyalty and love for Antony, the person, finally does outweigh his stoicism which is clear from his choice to die with his emperor rather than defect to Caesar, and it is these qualities that make Ventidius far more likeable than his Egyptian counterpart, Alexas.

Conclusion

As Mary Hamer notes, “[i]ssues of politics and desire are at stake in representing Cleopatra” (xv). This, as has been argued, was certainly the case for those writers who used the figure of the Egyptian queen for their dramatic works. These writers created different versions of Cleopatra, yet all of the Cleopatras they created carried a political perspective. For the dramatists who wrote of Antony and Cleopatra during the reign of Elizabeth I, the story was a particularly appropriate tale through which they investigated the issues of gender and power. The multivalent figure of Cleopatra allowed each writer to construct a version of the ancient queen that illuminates a distinctive political perspective. For Pembroke, Cleopatra is a figure of constancy undermined by the inability of her lover, Antony, to trust and to understand her and demonized by Octavius for his own political purposes. Antony is the fickle lover who is not only unable to understand the depth of Cleopatra’s commitment to him, but also who is unable to accept responsibility for his own actions. For Daniel, Cleopatra is a capricious seductress who uses Antony for her own political gain and who understands far too late the real consequences of her actions, and his Antony is a naïve, but noble, man too innocent to formulate or perceive the political machinations of others. For Brandon, both Antony and Cleopatra are the worst examples of rulers because they allow their private passions to overrule their public duty, as is shown by

his positive figuration of female power, Octavia. Yet despite all the variations, each play using the story of Cleopatra and Antony speaks to how each writer interacted with the very real historical female ruler, Elizabeth I. As Louis Montrose argues, one of the important criterion of New Historicism for Renaissance studies is that it:

emphasizes both the *relative* autonomy of specific discourses and their capacity to impact upon the social formation, to make things happen by shaping the consciousness of social beings. To speak, then, of the social production of “literature” or of any particular text is to signify not only that it is socially produced but also that it is socially productive—that it is the product of work and that it performs work in the process of being written, enacted, or read. (“Subject of History” 8-9)

Montrose’s statement is particularly relevant to the plays studied here. Each of the Antony and Cleopatra plays written before 1603 arose out of a need to reassess the construction of gender and power in early modern culture due to the presence of a single woman on the throne. As such, they are the “social” products of early modern culture. However, once Pembroke published *Antonius*, these plays also became “socially productive.” Daniel did not write his play simply because Elizabeth was monarch; he wrote also in response to Pembroke’s play. Brandon continued this cultural exchange with his play. These plays not only interact with the culture that produced them, they also

affect that culture by initiating a cultural dialectic that was developed by the writers who followed them.

After the death of Elizabeth I, the need to explore the anxiety and fears related to female rule would have been redundant. Yet the image of Cleopatra, and the use of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, remained politically viable. While this seems to detract from my position that the plays written during Elizabeth's reign were "socially" productive, it actually reinforces this idea. The Antony and Cleopatra plays before 1603 focussed on the cultural construction of a female as weak and unfit to rule. By exploring the weakness of (or the lack of weakness in) the female body of a ruler, the plays also explored the ideology of the monarchy itself; that is, by reacting to the historical fact of a "weak and frail" female body invested with the masculine power of authority, these plays also brought into focus the duality that every monarch possessed—every monarch, male or female, is both a private person and public being. In other words, the cultural contradictions inherent in the figure of a female ruler led to an exploration of power and the questions about gender and power became questions about power itself. Shakespeare uses the figure of Cleopatra to explore the actual constructed nature of rule. By presenting his audience with two very different styles of rule, his play heightens the awareness that the individuals who wield power construct power. May's play shows what happens to a nation when those who surround a ruler take advantage of that ruler's personal flaws for their own political and

material benefit. It is not the monarchy itself he criticizes *per se*, but the political machinations of others who exploit a ruler's personal weaknesses. Dryden's play, by its very depoliticization of the lovers, suggests the dangers that cultural production of texts, like drama, could have for the stability of the power structure.

In her study of *Cleopatra*, Lucy Hughes-Hallett notes that "a story is a protean thing, changing its shape when viewed from different angles," one in which a "single set of facts, arranged and rearranged, can point to a variety of contradictory conclusions" (2). This is certainly the case for the *Antony and Cleopatra* plays within this study. Each takes the story of the lovers and remolds "its shape." As has been shown, each play does indeed reach "a variety of different conclusions." Yet it is this very difference that makes studying these plays in relation to each other so informative. By tracking the way in which each author manipulates a single story, one can track the changing cultural and political ideologies of early modern society. As such these plays represent a cross-section, so to speak, of the manner in which literary texts are both the products of culture and producers of culture. By following the dramatization of one source story, we can see how each play, in its exploration of issues like gender and power, leads to a fuller understanding of the manner in which early modern texts are formed by and impact the formulation of the culture of which they are a part.

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