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Shakespeare and the Mediterranean • 3

Antony and Cleopatra

Edited by Cristiano Ragni

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Shakespeare and the Mediterranean

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Part 2
Shakespeare and His Contemporaries

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"All the unlawful issue that their lust / Since then hath made between them": Children and Absent Motherhood in Early Modern English Cleopatra plays

Jason lawrence

Abstract

Recent criticism on *Antony and Cleopatra* has started to argue for a closer correspondence between Shakespeare's play and the English closet dramas (*The Tragedie of Antonie* by Mary Sidney Herbert, and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* by Samuel Daniel), which preceded it by a decade or more. This essay explores the relationship between these three plays, and their common historical source in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius", through the specific comparative lens of their dramatic treatment of motherhood and children. It demonstrates that the conspicuous absence of emphasis on Cleopatra's role as a mother in Shakespeare is actually closer to the characterization of the Egyptian queen in Plutarch than are the earlier English plays, both of which highlight the maternal aspect more strongly, particularly in the relationship between Cleopatra and her oldest son Caesarion in Daniel's play, in both its original and revised forms. The essay also examines the puzzling absence of any sustained reference to Octavia's status as a historically significant mother in the three English plays, particularly in *Antony and Cleopatra*, despite the centrality of this role in Plutarch's account of her character.

Keywords: motherhood; Shakespeare; Plutarch; Daniel; Sidney Herbert

This essay examines the relationship between three Early Modern English plays that focus on the figure of Cleopatra through the specific comparative lens of their treatment of motherhood and children. In addition to the undisputed prose 'source' for all of these plays, Sir Thomas North's translation (via Jacques Amyot's 1559 French translation) of Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius" from *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes Compared*, first printed in 1579, Geoffrey Bullough also includes complete texts of two recent English closet dramas, Mary Sidney Herbert's *The Tragedie*

of Antonie (1592; 1595), a verse translation from French of Robert Garnier's *Marc-Antoine* (1578; 1585), and Samuel Daniel's companion play *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594; 1599), in the fifth volume of *The Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1964). Bullough designates the earlier play as merely an "analogue", and the later one as a "probable source" for Shakespeare's *Tragedie of Anthonie, and Cleopatra* (c.1606; 1623) [hereafter *Antony and Cleopatra*]. In the past decade or so, however, critics have started to argue for a closer correspondence, suggesting that "Shakespeare's play appears in dialogue with the coterie dramas", exhibiting "a significant degree of continuity with the works of the closet dramatists" (Cadman 2015, 2 and 5). Yasmin Arshad agrees that "Shakespeare's play is also more like the closet dramas that preceded it than has been previously considered" in order to argue that his "Cleopatra was influenced by Mary Sidney's and Daniel's Cleopatras" (Arshad 2019, 179).

One key aspect of this perceived influence is expressed primarily by means of contrast rather than continuity: the vexed issue of Cleopatra's status as a mother in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In *Imagining Cleopatra: Performing Gender and Power in Early Modern England* (2019), Arshad traces the development of the handling of Cleopatra's motherhood in the earlier plays by the Countess of Pembroke and Daniel:

> The conflict between the role of a mother and a queen touched on in *Antonius* [the title of Sidney Herbert's play when first printed in 1592] with the Egyptian queen's wrenching goodbye to her children before her suicide -is made central in *Cleopatra*. In Daniel, the focus shifts more specifically to her son, Caesario, allowing for a more sympathetic and detailed treatment, with Cleopatra actively trying to save him. (2019, 75)

In another recent comparative analysis of *Cleopatra in Italian and English Renaissance Drama* (2019) Anna Maria Montanari similarly identifies "motherly love" as "a trait of Cleopatra's characterization that Daniel enhances", suggesting that the queen's "role as loving mother, in conflict with her instincts as a ruler, is part of the complex characterization of the principal" (2019, 191 and 193) in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*. In contrast to this earlier dramatic treatment, Arshad argues that "the most significant departure from Daniel

in *Antony and Cleopatra* is in the idea of the Egyptian queen's motherhood. Shakespeare mentions Cleopatra's children only in passing, whereas Daniel's tragedy centres on her motherhood", as, in the later play, "Shakespeare's Cleopatra, unlike Daniel's and Mary Sidney's Cleopatras, shows no emotion towards her children" (2019, 198-9). Given the emphasis placed on the Egyptian queen's fraught maternal role by both Sidney Herbert and Daniel, it is perhaps surprising that, in this regard, Shakespeare is in fact much closer to the characterization and account of Cleopatra in North's Plutarch than are the earlier English dramatic representations: "The Life of Marcus Antonius" is full of references to mothers and their children, including three historically and dynastically important figures who are included or at least mentioned in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but the maternal role is only really emphasized in one case, and this is conspicuously *not* the queen of Egypt. Strikingly, in Shakespeare's play, in addition to the apparent lack of emotion that Cleopatra herself might display to her offspring, neither of these other historical women is identified as a mother. This essay therefore sets out to explore the significance of and attitudes towards children exhibited in Plutarch and all three of the Early Modern English Cleopatra plays, addressing in particular the phenomenon of what might be referred to, developing the terminology and work of Coppelia Kahn (1986) and Mary Beth Rose (1991), as absent motherhood in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The first historically significant mother to be identified in Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius" is Fulvia, Antony's wife at the start of Shakespeare's play, specifically in relation to Claudia, her daughter by her first husband Clodius. It soon becomes clear that, for Plutarch, wives and children play an important role in the formation of (often temporary) strategic and dynastic alliances in "The Life": shortly after the founding of the second Triumvirate and even before the battle of Philippi, in an attempt to alleviate tensions between Antony and Octavius despite their uneasy truce, it is proposed by Roman soldiers that "Caesar should mary Claudia, the daughter of Fulvia, and Antonius wife" in order to "have this friendship and league betwixt them confirmed by mariage" (Bullough 1964, 269). Historically this marriage did happen but soon ended in divorce, and it is not referred to again in "The Life", with no indication that

Fulvia's later uprising again Octavius, alluded to in the opening act of *Antony and Cleopatra*, is in any way connected to her brief period as Caesar's mother-in-law; Plutarch instead suggests that Antony's wife "who being of a peevish, crooked and troublesome nature, had purposely raised this uprore in Italie, in hope thereby to withdraw him from Cleopatra" (277). After Fulvia's death and Antony's hastily arranged marriage to the recently widowed Octavia, the sister of Octavius Caesar, the upbringing of "his other children which he had by Fulvia" (283), two young sons Antyllus and Iullus Antonius, is passed on to his new wife. Both sons are referred to by name in Plutarch, and the older boy is also mentioned in Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra*, where his unfortunate fate at the hands of Octavius is paralleled with that of Caesarion, Cleopatra's son by Julius Caesar, but neither he nor Fulvia's other children by Antony or her previous husbands are ever acknowledged in *Antony and Cleopatra*: this is the first instance of a persistent absence of a focus on motherhood in Shakespeare's play.

The next example is even more conspicuous, given the repeated prominence that Plutarch gives to Octavia's nurturing role as both mother and stepmother in "The Life of Marcus Antonius". In *Antony and Cleopatra* Octavia is reduced initially solely to the role of mediator between her new husband and her brother, and then to the role of hapless abandoned wife: across the four scenes in which she appears in Shakespeare's play, Octavia speaks only 35 lines in total (Montanari 2019, 233), whilst she is merely referred to by name in both Sidney Herbert's and Daniel's plays, with considerably less attention paid to her in all three English Cleopatra plays than in Plutarch's account (Arshad 2019, 199). Octavia does undertake the sensitive role of go-between in Plutarch, meeting her husband at Tarentum to persuade Antony that she can intercede on his behalf with her brother, as dramatized in 3.4 in Shakespeare's play, but the historian emphasizes the significant detail that "Octavia at that time was great with child, and moreover had a second daughter by him" (Bullough 1964, 282), having already given birth to a girl before moving to Athens with her husband. Octavia's intervention with her brother is successful (temporarily), leading to "Antonius also leaving his wife Octavia and litle children begotten of her, with Caesar, and his other children which he had by Fulvia" (283)

as he heads off for a military campaign in Syria, where he fatefully rekindles his romance with the Egyptian queen. The betrayal and mistreatment of his wife causes a further, terminal rift between husband and brother, dramatized in the second half of 3.6 of *Antony and Cleopatra*, where Octavia arrives in Rome believing Antony to be still in Athens, only to discover from Octavius that he is already back in Egypt. Even here her response focuses more on her conflicted situation, being stuck between brother and husband, than on her marital abandonment: "Ay me most wretched, / That have my heart parted betwixt two friends, / That does afflict each other!" (3.6.76-8).[1] The mistreatment of his sister seems to upset Octavius more than it does her in both Plutarch and Shakespeare, but again important elements of the characterization of Octavia in "The Life", 'the love of Octavia to Antonius her husband, and her wise and womanly behavior' as a mother, are completely ignored in the English dramatization:

> Caesar commanded her to goe out of Antonius house, and to dwell by her selfe, because he had abused her. Octavia aunswered him againe, that she would not forsake her husbands house, and that if he had no other occasion to make warre with him, she prayed him then to take no thought for her: for sayd she, it were too shamefull a thinge, that two so famous Captaines should bringe in civill warres among the Romanes, the one for the love of a woman, and the other for the jelousy betwixt one an other. Now as she spake the worde, so did she also performe the deede. For she kept still in Antonius house, as if he had bene there, and very honestly and honorably kept his children, not those onely she had by him, but the other which her husband had by Fulvia. (Bullough 1964, 289-90)

This emphasis on Octavia's role as an honorable and generous mother and stepmother (to Iullus Antonius, whilst the older son Antyllus is with his father by this point) is repeated throughout Plutarch's "Life", including at the very end, when she also assumes the care of Cleopatra's children with Antony, as will be discussed at the end of this essay, so it is important to consider not only why Shakespeare

1 All references to *Antony and Cleopatra* are from Shakespeare 2011 and will appear parenthetically in the text.

might have decided to ignore this central aspect of her historical character in his play, but also why the playwright seems to have made all of his dramatic characters oblivious to her motherhood too. In *Antony and Cleopatra* neither Octavius nor his sister ever mention these two daughters in relation to Antony's neglect of her, and, in one of the strangest moments in the play, Antony himself seems to forget the historical existence of his legitimate Roman children. In the final scene of act 3, when the Roman general enters to witness Cleopatra's overly warm reception of Thidias, Octavius's messenger to Egypt, Antony is driven into a terrible rage, reprimanding the queen for her lack of "temperance" (3.13.125), taunting her about previous Roman relationships with both Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great (3.13.120-4), and, most tellingly, blaming her for his own conduct towards his virtuous wife:

> You were half blasted ere I knew you. Ha?
> Have I my pillow left unpressed in Rome,
> Forborne the getting of a lawful race,
> And by a gem of women, to be abused
> By one that looks on feeders?
> (3.13.108-12)

If the verbal abuse of the Egyptian queen's overt sensuality here is characteristic of the Roman values Antony seems to invoke and endorse only when he is angry with her (as he does again even more bitterly in 4.12), specifically contrasting her with his chaste Roman wife who is figured as "a gem of women", it still seems odd that Shakespeare should choose to permit him no recollection of the legitimate children ("lawful race") that, historically, he had already conceived with Octavia (and abandoned) by this point in the play. Significantly, it will be by means of one of these daughters ("Antonia, so fayer and virtuous a young Ladie") that eventually "Of Antonius issue came Emperors", as is noted in the margin of North's Plutarch (Bullough 1964, 317). The historical information outlined in the brief genealogy at the end of "The Life", that the emperors Claudius and then Caligula would be direct descendants of Antony and Octavia's younger daughter's marriage to Drusus, the son of Octavius's wife Livia, is used in Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1599) as the basis for a prophecy, and curse, on the childless Octavius, delivered in

the reported words of Caesario, Cleopatra's son by Julius Caesar, shortly before his assassination:

> And thou *Augustus* that with bloudie hand,
> Cut'st off succession from anothers race,
> Maist find the heavens thy vowes so to withstand,
> That others may deprive thine in like case.
> When thou mayst see thy prowde contentious bed
> Yeelding thee none of thine that may inherite:
> Subvert thy bloud, place others in their sted,
> To pay this thy injustice her due merite.
> If it be true (as who can that denie
> Which sacred Priests of *Memphis* doe fore-say)
> Some of the of-spring yet of *Antony.*
> Shall all the rule of this whole Empire sway;
> And then *Augustus,* what is it thou gainest
> By poore *Antillus* bloud, or this of mine?
> Nothing but this thy victory thou stainest,
> And pull'st the wrath of heaven on thee and thine.
> (4.1018-33; qtd in Bullough 1964, 432)

In the extensive final revision of *Cleopatra* for his *Certaine Small Workes* volume in 1607, Daniel chooses to introduce on stage for the first time the character of Caesario, alongside his mother at the beginning of the play. Her oldest son then reappears alone on the way to his execution in act 4, after the fatal betrayal by his tutor Rodon, where he delivers a slightly amended version of this prophecy directly, rather than as reported speech: perhaps surprisingly, though, its impact in the revised 1607 version is diminished at this point by the playwright's decision to switch the initial direct address to Octavius at the start of the first verse paragraph, where Caesario tellingly uses the later imperial title, into the third person: "And he that thus doth seeke with bloudy hand, / T'extinguish th' ofspring of anothers race" (4.3.44-5).[2]

The centrality of the maternal relationship between the Egyptian queen and her oldest son in the original and revised versions of Daniel's *Cleopatra* highlights by contrast the marginalization of

2 All references to *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* are from Daniel 1607 and will appear parenthetically in the text.

Caesarion and his half-siblings in Shakespeare's later play. It is, however, striking that her son by Julius Caesar is the only child to whom Shakespeare's Cleopatra ever refers directly (5.2.19) and by name: in response to Antony's vicious verbal attack on her in 3.13, where he accuses her of being "cold-hearted" (3.13.164) towards him, Cleopatra is moved to defend her fidelity in the strongest terms she can summon:

> From my cold heart let heaven engender hail,
> And poison it in the source, and the first stone
> Drop in my neck: as it determines, so
> Dissolve my life! The next Caesarion smite,
> Till by degrees the memory of my womb,
> Together with my brave Egyptians all,
> By the discandying of this pelleted storm
> Lie graveless till the flies and gnats of Nile
> Have buried them for prey!
> (3.13.165-73)

The invocation of her son Caesarion in relation to the fading "memory of [her] womb" is the only time that Cleopatra acknowledges her maternal role explicitly in the play, but, even here, in an extraordinary image of the summoning of a poisonous hail storm which will liquefy and leave unburied the entire Egyptian race, she can only envisage the boy's death and dissolution until eventually he is consumed by "the flies and gnats of Nile". This is presumably one of the moments referred to when Arshad suggests that, in contrast to Daniel's queen, Shakespeare's Cleopatra shows "no emotion towards her children" (2019, 199) in the play, but I would argue that this powerful image, where she is desperately imagining the death of her eldest son alongside her own should she ever be unfaithful to Antony, demonstrates instead a strong emotional attachment to both Caesarion and her Roman lover. Antony's trite three-word response to the queen's emotionally affecting speech ('I am satisfied') feels almost deliberately bathetic.

This momentary privileging of Caesarion to the exclusion of all her other children in *Antony and Cleopatra* is an aspect of Cleopatra's characterization which Shakespeare might have inherited directly from Daniel's play, where the relationship

between the queen and her oldest son, specifically in terms of the conflict between the roles of mother and monarch, "is made central" (Arshad 2019, 75). This struggle is apparent from Cleopatra's long opening soliloquy, where the queen muses on the reasons she might have to continue living after the suicide of Antony, with the concern for her children's futures exemplified in the rhyme of 'wombe' with "tombe":

> 'Tis sweete to die when we are forc'd to live,
> Nor had I staide behind my selfe this space,
> Nor paid such intr'est for this borrow'd breath,
> But that hereby I seeke to purchase grace
> For my distressed seede after my death.
> It's that which doth my deerest bloud controule,
> That's it alas detaines me from my tombe,
> Whiles Nature brings to contradict my soule
> The argument of mine unhappy wombe.
> You lucklesse issue of a wofull mother,
> The wretched pledges of a wanton bed,
> You Kings design'd, must subjects live to other;
> Or else, I feare, scarce live, when I am dead.
> It is for you I temporize with *Caesar*,
> And stay this while to mediate your safetie:
> For you I faine content and soothe his pleasure,
> Calamitie herein hath made me craftie.
> (1.74-90; qtd in Bullough 1964, 409-10)

Bullough chooses to include a full text of the lightly revised edition of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, printed in 1599 in Daniel's *Poeticall Essayes*, in the fifth volume of the *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, rather than the original version of the play first printed with *Delia and Rosamond Augmented* in 1594. There are some notable differences in this soliloquy in the earlier text, where the queen's decision to remain alive is more obviously and urgently borne from her trepidation about what Octavius will do to her children after her suicide ("But that I feare, *Caesar* would offer wrong / To my distressed seede after my death"; 1.73-4):

> O lucklesse issue of a wofull Mother,
> Th'ungodly pledges of a wanton bed,

> You Kings design'd, must now be slaves to other,
> Or else not bee, I feare, when I am dead.
> (Daniel 1594, 1.79-83)

The revised version also tones down some of the language from the original, where Cleopatra's children are now the "wretched" rather than "ungodly" products of their mother's "wanton" bed, and face the risk of becoming "subjects" rather than "slaves" to another ruler, should they live at all after she has gone ("scarce live" rather than "not bee"). Common to both versions, though, is the stark reminder that these children are "Kings design'd": this is significant, as it is the only moment in Daniel's play where the queen even acknowledges the existence of her other sons, in addition to Caesarion, whom she will later describe as "the jewell of my soule I value most" (4.866). Historically, the Egyptian queen bore two sons by Antony, Alexander (Helios) and Ptolemy (Philadelphus), both of whom are mentioned by name, alongside their half-brother Caesarion, in Plutarch and Shakespeare's accounts of the contentious Donations of Alexandria, but Daniel gives no further indication of their historical existence. In the final revision of the play for the 1607 *Certaine Small Workes*, where Cleopatra's soliloquy is moved to the beginning of act 2 after the staging of her moving parting from Caesario in act 1, which had originally only been reported by Rodon in act 4 of the 1594 and 1599 editions, even this brief acknowledgement of their existence is erased, as the lines about "Kings" in the plural are removed altogether. Even more conspicuous in its absence from all the versions of Daniel's play, and indeed *Antony and Cleopatra*, as will be discussed shortly, is any recognition of the fact that Cleopatra also had a surviving daughter with Antony, Cleopatra Selene, Alexander Helios's twin sister.

The only other occasion that Caesarion is mentioned by name in Shakespeare's play is at the start of 3.6, where Octavius disdainfully describes the Donations of Alexandria to Maecenas and Agrippa, making it abundantly clear that he does not believe that Cleopatra's oldest child is the son of his own adopted father Julius Caesar:

> Contemning Rome, he has done all this and more
> In Alexandria. Here's the manner of 't:
> I' th' marketplace, on a tribunal silvered,

> Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
> Were publicly enthroned. At the feet sat
> Caesarion, whom they call my father's son,
> And all the unlawful issue that their lust
> Since then hath made between them.
> (3.6.1-8)

He also pours scorn on the children that Cleopatra has subsequently borne with Antony, pointing out that they are merely the products of their parents' "lust", and implicitly contrasting their illegitimate status as "unlawful issue" with the "lawful race" (3.13.110) that Antony might have had with his Roman wife Octavia (and indeed already had historically by this point). Maecenas's shock that this distribution of kingdoms amongst the queen of Egypt and her male children was staged publicly derives directly from Plutarch's "Life", where the historian suggests that

> the greatest cause of their malice unto him, was the division of landes he made amongst his children in the citie of Alexandria. And to confesse a troth, it was too arrogant and insolent a part, and done (as a man would say) in derision and contempt of the Romanes' (Bullough 1964, 290).

Shakespeare follows Plutarch's account of the Donations quite closely at points in this scene, including, for the only time in the play, the naming of Cleopatra's two sons with Antony, specifically in relation to the kingdoms gifted to them by their father:

> I' th' common showplace where they exercise.
> His sons he there proclaimed the kings of kings.
> Great Media, Parthia, and Armenia
> He gave to Alexander; to Ptolemy he assigned
> Syria, Cilicia, and Phoenicia. She [Cleopatra]
> In th' habiliments of the goddess Isis
> That day appeared, and oft before gave audience,
> As 'tis reported, so.
> (3.6.12-19)

The phrase "the king of kings" in Octavius's speech comes directly from North's translation, and had already been used in *The Tragedie of*

Antonie by Mary Sidney Herbert, who acknowledges in the Argument that, as a supplement to Garnier's play as the principal source for her translation, "*the history [is] to be read at large in* Plutarch *in the life of Antonius*" (Bullough 1964, 359). In act 4 of Sidney Herbert's play Octavius Caesar and Agrippa are equally outraged by the Donations of Alexandria, suggesting that "never *Rome* more injuries receiv'd" than when Antony gifted these kingdoms to his sons "The king of kings proclaiming them to be" (4.1441 and 4.143; qtd in Bullough 1964, 393). Sidney Herbert's line is a direct recollection of North's phrasing rather than Garnier's original ("Et comme par edict, Rois de tous autres Rois"; 1585, 99*v*), and it is possibly a direct influence on Shakespeare, who here utilises the same verb, which is not present in North. Unlike in Plutarch and Shakespeare, none of the "Children *of* Cleopatra" are named directly in Sidney Herbert's play, although they are included amongst the list of "*The Actors*" and do briefly appear on stage in the final act; the Countess of Pembroke's *Antonie*, however, is the only English Cleopatra play which seems to be aware, albeit only by metaphorical inference, that Cleopatra and Antony had a daughter together as well as two sons:

> What monstrous pride, nay what impietie
> Incenst him onward to the Gods disgrace?
> When his two children, *Cleopatras* bratts,
> To *Phoebe* and her brother he compar'd,
> *Latonas* race, causing them to be call'd
> The Sunne and Moone? Is not this follie right
> And is not this the Gods to make his foes?
> (4.1419-25; qtd in Bullough 1964, 392)

Octavius's contemptuous description of Cleopatra's two children as "bratts" might here imply their illegitimacy (though, if it does, this is watered down considerably from the French original, where Garnier's Cesar describes them explicitly as twins born from adultery, "iumeaux d'adultere"), but he appears more angry that Antonius has dared to challenge the Roman gods by associating these children with their twin gods Phoebe and Phoebus, the progeny of Latona's adulterous liaison with Jupiter: Antony and Cleopatra's first-born offspring, Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, are also female-male twins named after the moon and the

sun respectively. In retaining the image of "Diane" and "Phebus" from the French in Caesar's speech, the Countess of Pembroke is the only English dramatist implicitly to acknowledge the existence of Cleopatra Selene, and also to suggest her presence at the Donations of Alexandria, something which is not specified even in Plutarch's account, where only the male children are mentioned by name.

The first reference to children in Sidney Herbert's play, in Antonius's long opening soliloquy, is the sole occasion, in any of the English Cleopatra plays, that Octavia's role as a mother is recognised, however briefly. The defeated Roman general reprimands himself for the fact that his 'wanton love' for Cleopatra has caused him to neglect "Thy wife *Octavia* and her tender babes" (120-122), confirming the observation in the Argument that Antonius had "*made his returne to Alexandria, againe falling to his former love, without any regarde of his vertuous wife* Octavia*, by whom nevertheless he had excellent children*" (qtd in Bullough 1964, 358). It is noteworthy that Sidney Herbert retains Garnier's designation of these children as exclusively her offspring ("De ta femme Octavie, et de sa geniture"; 1585, 78*r*), with no acknowledgment from Antonius of his own paternity, but the English playwright does intensify the reference to her children at the start of the play by adding the adjective "tender" and choosing the word "babes" in place of the original "geniture", which she also later uses to translate the French "enfançons". The "tender babes" of Octavia (and Antony) are thus paralleled with the children of Cleopatra and Antony in the following act, when, on her first appearance in the play, the Egyptian queen laments to the absent Roman what she has sacrificed for his love:

> And did not I sufficient losse sustaine
> Loosing my Realme, loosing my libertie,
> My tender of-spring, and the joyfull light
> Of beamy Sunne, and yet, yet loosing more
> Thee *Antony* my care, if I loose not
> What yet remain'd? thy love alas! thy love,
> More deare then Scepter, children, freedome, light.
> (2.2.404-10; qtd in Bullough 1964, 369)

Cleopatra's earliest reference to her children in the play is translated directly from Garnier ("ma tendre geniture"; 1585, 82*v*),

with the repetition of 'tender' in the English play here highlighting both a comparison and contrast with the neglected children of Octavia: Cleopatra acknowledges the children as her own, but only to indicate at this point that her love for Antony is "more deare" to her than they are. Her initial response to Antonius's anger at her apparent betrayal is framed in strikingly similar terms to Shakespeare's Cleopatra in 3.13, with the Roman's false accusation of infidelity inspiring an impassioned defence, which invokes the Egyptian elements to punish her if she has been disloyal:

> Rather sharpe lightning lighten on my head:
> Rather may I to deepest mischiefe fall:
> Rather the opened earth devoure me:
> Rather fierce *Tigers* feed them on my flesh:
> Rather, ô rather let our *Nilus* send,
> To swallow me quicke, some weeping *Crocodile.*
> And didst thou then suppose my royall heart
> Had hatcht, thee to ensnare, a faithles love?
> (2.2.393-400)

The unusual combination of invoking a destructive storm with a desire for self-dissolution in the earth as a form of retribution in Pembroke's Cleopatra's speech suggests that this might have been a direct, if unacknowledged, influence on Shakespeare's image of the venomous hailstorm in the later play, where, as demonstrated earlier in this essay, the Egyptian queen envisages her own death alongside that of Caesarion and her subjects, should she ever betray Antony. The intense struggle between the queen's love for Antonius and love for her children is revisited later in the scene in the brief stichomythic exchange between Cleopatra and her maid Charmion (instead of both Charmion and Eras in Garnier), who urges the queen to focus on her maternal role for the sake of her male children with Antonius and their dynastic inheritance:

> CHARMION Live for your sonnes.
> CLEOPATRA Nay, for their father die.
> CHARMION Hardharted mother!
> CLEOPATRA Wife, kindhearted, I.
> CHARMION Then will you them deprive of royal right?

> Cleopatra Do I deprive them? No, it's dest'nies might.
> (2.2.555-8)

Arshad has suggested that in the earliest English Cleopatra play there is a "conflict between the role of a mother and the role of a queen" (2019, 75), but, for the majority of the play, the dramatic tension in fact derives primarily from the conflicting roles of mother and "wife", as Charmion herself perceives when she continues to rebuke the Egyptian queen, challenging her claim that she has shared a "wively love" ("amour coniugal") with Antonius:

> Charmion Our first affection to ourselfe is due.
> Cleopatra He is my selfe.
> Charmion Next it extends unto
> Our children, frends, and to our country soile.
> And you for some respect of wively love,
> (Albee scarce wively) loose your native land,
> Your children, frends, and (which is more) your life,
> With so strong charmes doth love bewitch our witts.
> (2.2.587-93; qtd in Bullough 1964, 372-3)

Pascale Aebischer has argued, with regard to Sidney Herbert's translation of Garnier,

> that the most significant cluster of revisions accrues precisely around Cleopatra's status as a wife, the holiness of her love and her illicit sexuality. Contrary to expectation, Pembroke's interventions amount to a pretty much systematic denial of Cleopatra's wifeliness and a toning down of allusions to her sexuality and the sanctity of her love (2012, 230).

One such example of this perceived refutation of "wifeliness" is apparent in the extract above: Garnier's Cleopatre refers to Marc-Antoine directly as her husband ("mon espoux est moymesme"; 1585, 85*v*), which is rendered in English merely, but more affectingly, as "He is my selfe". If this "less wifely" (Aebischer 2012, 233) Cleopatra is evident in Sidney Herbert's translation of the French for much of the play, there is a significant alteration by the time of the entreaty to the dead Antonius in her moving final speech; this follows on closely from "the Egyptian queen's wrenching

goodbye to her children" (Arshad 2019, 75) at the start of the final act, where the "Children *of* Cleopatra" appear in the company of their tutor Euphron, who is tasked with keeping them safe after their mother's death, despite vainly trying to persuade her that she should go on living for their sakes, as Charmion has done earlier in the play. None of the children are named in either Garnier's play or the English translation, so it is unclear whether Caesarion and Cleopatra Selene would have been included here alongside her sons by Antonius, Alexander and Ptolemy ("This great *Antony* your father was"; 5.1855), but, for the first time in the play, a strong sense of Cleopatra's maternal instinct and concern is vividly conveyed: this is exemplified in the queen's sudden switch from addressing them as her "children" ("enfans") to the more loving and intimate "babes" ("enfançons"), and in the comparison of her own maternal grief to that of the "weeping *Niobe*" (5.1887) immediately after they part from her with a despondent "Madame Adieu". It is only after this affecting farewell to their shared children, the "knot of our amitie" which binds their "holy mariage", that the Countess of Pembroke's Cleopatra can finally recognise and acknowledge the link between the roles of mother and wife in addressing her Roman husband for the last time before her intended suicide:

> *Antony* by our true loves I thee beseeche,
> And by our hearts sweete sparks have set on fire,
> Our holy mariage, and the tender ruthe
> Of our deare babes, knot of our amitie:
> My dolefull voice thy eare let entertaine,
> And take me with thee to the hellish plaine,
> Thy wife, thy frend: heare *Antony,* o heare
> My sobbing sighes, if here thou be, or there.
> (5.1945-52; qtd in Bullough 1964, 405)

In Daniel's companion play, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, which begins where Sidney Herbert's play ends, immediately after the suicide of Antony, the dramatic attention does switch to the central conflict between the roles of queen and mother, rather than that between wife and mother, as in the earlier English work. Aebischer describes Daniel's eponymous queen as "an intrinsically royal and majestic figure whose intense anxiety for her children is second only to her

deep . . . concern for the welfare of her country" (2012, 234). His Cleopatra does certainly demonstrate apprehension about the fates of her male children in her opening soliloquy, as discussed earlier in the essay, but this assertion requires some qualification, as, for the remainder of the play in both its original and especially its revised version, the queen's "intense anxiety" as a mother manifests itself solely with regard to the safety of her oldest son Caesario, who, although half-Roman, is conspicuously not the son of the recently deceased Antony, as her desperate appeal, via Proculeius, to Octavius, the adopted heir of Julius Caesar, indicates:

> No other crowne I seeke, no other good.
> Yet wish that *Caesar* would vouchsafe this grace,
> To favour the poore of-spring of my bloud.
> Confused issue, yet of Roman race.
> If blood and name be linckes of love in Princes,
> Not spurres of hate; my poore *Caesario* may
> Finde favour notwithstanding mine offences,
> And *Caesars* blood, may *Caesars* raging stay.
> (2.2.347-54; qtd in Bullough 1964, 416)

Despite this plea for mercy for her son, whom she still hopes will be permitted to accede to the throne of Egypt after her death, Cleopatra clearly does not trust Caesar, and so decides to send Caesario away to India in the company of his tutor Rodon, who soon betrays her by having the boy sent to Rhodes "Pretending that *Octavius* for him sent, / To make him King of Egipt presently" (4.1.972-3). The queen seems to anticipate the futility of this attempt to protect her "precious Gem", as, in Rodon's report of her parting words, she movingly demonstrates her vacillation in deliberating whether it is worth severing the maternal knot binding her to him by sending Caesario away from Egypt if he is already fated to die:

> O my divided soule, what shall I do?
> Whereon shall now my resolution rest?
> What were I best resolve to yeelde vnto
> When both are bad, how shall I know the best?
> Stay; I may hap so worke with *Caesar* now,
> That he may yeelde him to restore thy right.

> Go; *Caesar* never will content that thou
> So neere in bloud, shalt be so great in might.
> Then take him *Rodon,* go my sonne farewell.
> But stay; there's something else that I would say:
> Yet nothing now, but ô God speede thee well,
> Lest saying more, that more may make thee stay.
> Yet let me speake: It may be tis the last
> That ever I shall speake to thee my Sonne.
> Doe Mothers use to part in such post haste?
> What, must I end when I have scarce begunne?
> Ah no (deere hart,) tis no such slender twine
> Wherewith the knot is tide twixt thee and me:
> That bloud within thy vaines came out of mine,
> Parting from thee, I part from part of mee:
> And therefore I must speake. Yet what O sonne?
> (4.1.933-53; qtd in Bullough 1964, 430)

These lines remain virtually unchanged in the revised version of 1607, with a single line added to the end of the queen's speech ("Though I have made an ende, I have not done"), but their dramatic impact is intensified by being transferred from act 4 to the opening scene of the play, where they are delivered directly by Cleopatra to her son (1.1.101-122; Daniel 1607, 10*v*), with the character of Caesario introduced as part of the dramatis personae for the first time. Arshad suggests that, in moving this parting scene between mother and son to the first act, "Daniel was able to make Cleopatra's desperation to save Caesario and her struggle to part with him the immediate focus of the play" as "the Egyptian queen's motherhood and suffering are foregrounded more deeply in the 1607 *Cleopatra* than in any of the earlier editions"; she also observes that the playwright's "most important revisions and restructuring in *Cleopatra* are to elements of the story that do not appear in Shakespeare" (2019, 92-3). Whilst the initial assertion is incontrovertible, the final observation implies that Daniel might have undertaken these extensive and significantly more stage-worthy revisions to his closet play as a direct response to the appearance of *Antony and Cleopatra*. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Shakespeare might plausibly have influenced Daniel directly: even if the composition of *Antony and Cleopatra* can speculatively be ascribed to late 1606, there is no record of any contemporary performance of

the play in either the public theatre or at court, and the earliest direct allusion to it is Edward Blount's entry on the Stationer's Register in May 1608, after the appearance in print of the revised *Cleopatra* in the *Certaine Small Workes* of 1607.

Montanari acknowledges that "the role played by Shakespeare's tragedy on the modified text of 1607 remains controversial" (2019, 200), but the direct influence of Daniel's original version of *Cleopatra* on Shakespeare seems far less contentious. This is most apparent in the final scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*, at the start of which, following the earlier English play rather than North's Plutarch, where the queen "demaunded the kingdome of AEgypt for her sonnes" (Bullough 1964, 311), Cleopatra pleads to Octavius via Proculeius to allow the crown of Egypt to be passed on specifically to her son Caesarion, to whom she refers directly for only the second and final time in the play:

> If your master
> Would have a queen his beggar, you must tell him
> That majesty, to keep decorum, must
> No less beg than a kingdom. If he please
> To give me conquered Egypt for my son,
> He gives me so much of mine own as I
> Will kneel to him with thanks.
> (5.2.15-21)

Later in the scene, when Octavius and Cleopatra meet briefly on stage for the only time, the victorious Roman seems to offer to protect all of the queen's children, but his words make it clear that this is more a threat than an act of kindness:

> . . . but if you seek
> To lay on me a cruelty by taking
> Antony's course, you shall bereave yourself
> Of my good purposes, and put your children
> To that destruction which I'll guard them from.
> (5.2.124-8)

However, once the enamoured Roman Dolabella has revealed to Cleopatra that Octavius, despite his earlier offer, already intends to send her and her "children" in triumph to Rome "within three days" (5.2.197-8), a detail taken directly from North's Plutarch, she accepts

that she has no alternative but to take her own life, even if this will put the futures of her children in jeopardy.

The Egyptian queen's intensely moving suicide in Shakespeare's play is indebted directly to both Sidney Herbert, as Cleopatra alludes to her marriage to Antony for the only time ("Husband, I come!"; 5.2.279), and particularly to Daniel, where the Nuntius's account to the Chorus of the death of the queen and her faithful attendants emphasizes her pyrrhic victory over Caesar, by invoking the first encounter between Antony and Cleopatra in his direct address to the river Cydnos:

> Well, in I went, where brighter than the Sunne,
> Glittering in all her pompous rich aray,
> Great *Cleopatra* sate, as if sh' had wonne
> *Cæsar*, and all the world beside this day:
> Even as she was when on thy cristall streames,
> Cleere *Cydnos* she did shew what earth could shew,
> When *Asia* all amaz'd in wonder, deemes
> *Venus* from heaven was come on earth below.
> Even as she went at first to meete her Love,
> So goes she now at last againe to find him.
> But that first, did her greatnes onely prove,
> This last her love, that could not live behind him.
> (5.1456-67; qtd in Bullough 1964, 442-3)

Shakespeare's Cleopatra similarly calls for her "best attires" so that she can transport herself "again for Cydnus, / To meet Mark Antony" (5.2.224-5) for one last time in death:

> Give me my robe. Put on my crown. I have
> Immortal longings in me. Now no more
> The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
> Yare, yare, good Iras, quick. Methinks I hear
> Antony call. I see him rouse himself
> To praise my noble act. I hear him mock
> The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men
> To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come!
> Now to that name my courage prove my title!
> (5.2.272-80)

As in the original version of Daniel's play, Plutarch's comparison of Cleopatra to the Roman goddess of love at her first meeting with Antony, so memorably described in Enobarbus's dramatization of North's translation as "o'erpicturing that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (2.2.207-8), is evoked again in Charmian's fond designation of her mistress as the "Eastern star" (5.2.300). At the very end of the play Shakespeare's Cleopatra comes to share a striking parallel with the playwright's earlier poetic representation of the goddess: at the conclusion of his narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* (1593), Venus's frustrated erotic desire for Adonis metamorphoses into a touching maternal affection for the flower that has emerged from the dead boy's blood, which she wants to protect and nurture as Adonis's son:

> Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast.
> Thou are the next of blood, and 'tis thy right.
> Lo, in this hollow cradle take thy rest:
> My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night.
> There shall not be one minute in the hour
> Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love's flower.
> (Shakespeare 2016, 1183-8)

Moments before her death, the equally sensual Cleopatra similarly demonstrates an uncharacteristic maternal feeling towards the "mortal wretch" (5.2.295) she places at her breast: "Peace, peace! / Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?" (5.2.300-2).

This image of the poisonous asp at Cleopatra's breast, rather than on her arm as in both North's Plutarch and Daniel's play, is too much for the dying Charmian, whose heart breaks as she adjusts the dead queen's crown just as Dolabella and the Roman guards enter, but, for the audience, it emphasizes by marked contrast how seldom we have witnessed any genuine maternal concern and consideration for her actual children in the play.

There is no indication of what will happen to Cleopatra's children in the immediate aftermath of her death at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Whilst this may not be as bleak a vision as the ending of Shakespeare's contemporaneous *Chronicle Historie of King Lear*, printed in 1608, which a-historically witnesses "the

extinction of the royal bloodline at the end of the play", where "the king is dead, as are all of his daughters, none of whom have left children" (Schwyzer 2006, 40), there is an immediate dramatic precedent for the focus on the demise of an entire historical dynasty in the Argument of Daniel's play. Following Plutarch's matter of fact reports that Caesar has both Antyllus, Antony's oldest son with Fulvia, and Caesarion put to death, Daniel highlights that the assassination of the latter signals the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty:

> *Caesario* her sonne, which she had by *Julius Caesar* (conveyed before unto India, out of the danger of the warres) was about the same time of her death, murthered at Rhodes: trained thither by the falshoode of his Tutor, corrupted by *Caesar*. And so, hereby came the race of the *Ptolomies* to be wholy extinct, and the flourishing rich kingdome of Egypt utterly overthrown and subdued. (Qtd in Bullough, 1964, 407)

This interpretation of history may suit the dramatic purpose of Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra*, where the queen herself and the two philosophers Arius and Philostratus seem fully cognizant of Egypt's impending dynastic doom, but it is not entirely true historically. Like Shakespeare after him, Daniel willfully chooses to ignore the end of Plutarch's "Life of Marcus Antonius", where the historian details what happens to Antony's children after the death of their father:

> Antonius left seven children by three wives, of the which, Caesar did put Antyllus, the eldest sonne he had by Fulvia, to death. Octavia his wife tooke all the rest, and brought them up with hers. (Bullough 1964, 317)

Plutarch also emphasizes that, with the exception of Caesarion, "for Cleopatra's children, they were very honorablie kept" and raised by Octavia. While he does not record what happened to her two sons by Antony, Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus, strikingly he does reveal that Octavia "maried Cleopatra, Antonius daughter, unto Juba, a marvelous courteous and goodly Prince". This is the only occasion that Cleopatra Selene is referred to and named in "The Life", and it is noteworthy historically because, through the intercession of her powerful Roman stepmother, Cleopatra's sole daughter is married to King Juba II, who is restored to the throne

of Numidia and then Mauretania by Augustus, and reigns with her husband as Queen Cleopatra Selene II until her death. Their son in turn succeeds his father, and rules for around twenty years as the last Roman client king of Mauretania: whilst the deaths of Cleopatra and Caesarion do signal the end of the reign of the Ptolemies in Egypt, as Daniel's play repeatedly emphasizes, the queen's grandson by her frequently forgotten daughter Cleopatra Selene keeps alive their dynastic name in a north African kingdom, where he rules as Ptolemy of Mauretania. For this, the dead Cleopatra has her former rival, Antony's long-neglected Roman wife, solely to thank, not that there is any sustained indication of Octavia's significant maternal role in any of the Early Modern English Cleopatra plays. The key absent mother in *Antony and Cleopatra* is, therefore, not Cleopatra herself, but rather "dull Octavia" (5.2.54), historically the mother of Mark Antony's two dynastically important daughters, and also the generous stepmother to his other surviving children, by both Fulvia and the more celebrated Egyptian queen.

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