

1. Marissa Nicosia, Salad Cleopatra

This paper takes up Cleopatra's quip about her "salad days" to consider the autobiographical potential of culinary metaphor. Although salads seem healthful at best and innocuous at worst to twenty-first century readers, in Renaissance England salads were a vexed site of bodily regulation. Cookbook authors exoticized salads by commenting on their continental origins. Dietary authors guided by humoral theory fretted about the humoral properties of cold vegetation and the disruption salad might inflict on the consuming body. Recipe recreation, I show, provides us with one avenue for considering these decadent, varied salads anew today.

2. Virginia Burnett, A Branch of the Blue Nile: Cultural Hybridity and Postcolonial Identity in Derek Walcott's Play

Derek Walcott's *A Branch of the Blue Nile* explores themes of cultural hybridity and postcolonial identity through the lens of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. This paper examines how Walcott's play, structured as a play within a play, reflects the complex negotiations between colonial and postcolonial theatrical traditions in the Caribbean. By engaging with Shakespeare, Walcott's characters confront questions of identity, performance, and artistic legitimacy, revealing the tensions between European dramatic conventions and indigenous Caribbean expressions. Drawing on theories of hybridity, mimicry, and resistance from scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Edward Baugh, this study highlights the ways in which *A Branch of the Blue Nile* critiques colonial legacies while advocating for a distinctly Caribbean theater. The paper also considers archival materials from the play's early productions, providing insights into its reception and impact. Ultimately, this analysis situates Walcott's work within broader conversations on cultural reclamation, theatrical innovation, and the evolving role of Shakespeare in postcolonial contexts.

3. Jonas Gardsby, Breaking the Spell of Performance in Antony and Cleopatra

The late 16th and early 17th centuries were a time when the performance politics of monarchs, members of parliament, and nobles began to look more like what happened on public theater stages. This reconfigured the public's conception of and relationship with political power, and led to increased efforts by those who held political power to maintain an image that encouraged the public's loyalty and obedience. In this paper, I examine Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in this light. I argue that the play is designed as a warning against the power of performance politics, not only in its depiction of such performance but also in its odd, disruptive, self-skeptical strategies that continually prevent its audience from being drawn into the performance.

4. Laura Deluca, Cleopatra's Conduct: Racial Ambiguity and Exemplarity in Early Modern Drama

This paper examines early modern drama about Cleopatra through the lens of early modern conduct literature, focusing on Kate Aughterson's identification of its primary tenets, namely the virtues of "chastity, obedience, humility and silence." Through analyzing how playwrights characterize Cleopatra's race and sexuality in conversation with contemporaneous conduct literature, I demonstrate how Cleopatra's racial ambiguity creates a vast and unusual

interpretive space, leaving room for playwrights to either portray Cleopatra as exemplary or deviant, depending on how they choose to racialize her. I map out the wildly varied racializations that Cleopatra embodies in each play, including *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606) by William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) by Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedie of Antonie* (1595) by Mary Sidney, and *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1626) by Thomas May. I ultimately argue that whether Cleopatra conforms to exemplary femininity or embodies its antithesis, correlates with her level of fairness and/or blackness.

5. Robert Stagg, "Asiatic Style" Revisited

This paper revisits the notion of 'Asiatic style' as it appears in Thomas North's Plutarch and the classical world more generally, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Rosalie Colie's commentary on the Shakespearean drama. In the process it reconsiders the putative division between Rome and Egypt in the play.

6. Claire Sommers, The Maligned Mistress and the Venerated Virgin: Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, and their Creation of Legacy

With an approximate premiere date of 1607 Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* may not have been the first early modern work to align the title character with Elizabeth I. However, it was the first to debut after the death of the British queen. Therefore, Cleopatra's repeated expressions of concern regarding her postmortem legacy would have taken on an even greater significance for the audience of Shakespeare's version. Focusing on the play's final act, this paper argues that, in the aftermath of the British monarch's death, Shakespeare juxtaposes Cleopatra's stymied efforts to assert agency over both her memorialization and her nation with the more assured representation of Elizabeth I and England. I show that, by centering Cleopatra's sexuality and otherness against the backdrop of her thwarted attempts at self-presentation, Shakespeare not only emphatically demonstrates that Cleopatra is not Elizabeth I, but also links the British queen's preservation of her virginity with the successful preservation of her legacy.

7. Kelley Glasgow, Erotic Histories in Antony and Cleopatra

Antony and Cleopatra demonstrates how desire shapes history and how, in turn, history shapes desire. Narrating a fraught moment in the history of the Roman and Ptolemaic Empires, Shakespeare's play tracks the crucial place of individual desires within that moment. There are several types of historical thinking running through *Antony and Cleopatra*. The characters make frequent reference to events and people that predate the play, and even use those references for their own sexual purposes. But the development of history and how it will be recorded in future texts is a constant concern in *Antony and Cleopatra*, within both its structure and the language of the characters who will be represented in these texts. Structurally, the play demonstrates over and over how important historical events not only fail to come to fruition, but how the climax of these events are replaced by individual expressions of desire. Instead of Pompey's invasion of Rome and a battle, we are witness to the drunken revels of the Romans and their unfettered desire for Cleopatra's Egypt. But these characters are also constantly aware of their place in the historical record and how those creating history will attempt to interpret their desires. Cleopatra, most of all, expresses her anxieties about her future historical persona and she will be portrayed

as an endlessly erotic figure. By tracking the way history and desire shape each other in Antony and Cleopatra, I hope to show its interest in developing early modern historical thinking that privileges the inner life of the individual. In a historical method that is based on the individual, Shakespeare argues, that individual's desire will inevitably direct history and will, in turn, be impacted by the creation of history.

8. Amanda Ruud, Art, Objecthood, and Shakespeare's Cleopatra

At the moment of her death, Shakespeare's Cleopatra claims to become "marble-constant," crafting a final self-display that is coded as a sculpture. In doing so, Shakespeare's Cleopatra joins a line of literary-historical women who draw attention to the ways in which history and narrative collaborate to reify them, and yet her strategy for evading Caesar's instrumentalization is to become object-like. Reading the closing scene of *Antony and Cleopatra* through categories suggested by Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" and through writings about a sleeping sculpture of Cleopatra in Rome that was—in the Renaissance—one of the most well-known remnants of antiquity, this essay argues that Cleopatra's objectification constitutes a successful act of resistance.

9. Dustin Meyer, From Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt to *Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt*

By the time Shakespeare was writing *Antony and Cleopatra*, there was already a wealth of English plays depicting the shift from the Roman Republic towards the Principate. In fact, only a few years after the play appeared in print there were over twenty different English plays featuring Caesar, Pompey, Cato, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and Cleopatra—all of which straddled a range of traditions including commercial, academic, neo-Senecan, child and adult, as well as plays that come down to us in a variety of states: some whole, some fragmentary, and some not at all. This crowded dramatic tradition was preceded by a bustling classical tradition in which Greek and Roman authors alike jostled to tell and re-tell this story: in Latin we find Livy, Lucan, Suetonius and Florus; while from the Greeks we have Strabo, Appian, Dio Cassius and Plutarch. In this paper, I begin to think more about what is at stake in picking a version of this story to stage. The form of drama meant that playwrights—like Shakespeare, Fletcher and Massinger, and Thomas May—all had to make hard choices. Shakespeare, as we know, relied heavily on Plutarch, and, as I argue, in *Julius Caesar*, he also took from Plutarch an insistence on intertextuality which manifested in references to plays from the nearby Rose Theatre. In making this argument, I also have one eye towards Fletcher and Massinger's belated prequel, *The False One*, which is obliged to Plutarch through Shakespeare, but relies more heavily on Lucan's *Civil War*. Finally, I consider Thomas May's *Cleopatra, Queene of Egypt* which, I will argue, is an attempt to synthesize the many contradictory classical accounts of Antony and Cleopatra's final days together through the lens of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

10. Lauren Weindling, Narrative Desires and Failures of Closure

Scholarship has long noted the similarity between the *liebestod* of Romeo and Juliet and that of Anthony and Cleopatra, though most scholars seem to gloss over one particular wrinkle in the case of the more mature couple: the extensive time delay separating their deaths. So why does this near perfect love-death go unfulfilled in this case? Why does it fail to meet the ideal,

especially if one assumes that this play celebrates transcendent romantic love?

Answering this puzzle requires not only a consideration of romantic love but also its relationship to narrative. Although existing psychoanalytic readings accurately identify the ways in which Cleopatra embodies a fantasy of bottomless desire, they miss the relationship between desire and narrative. Borrowing the theoretical framework for romantic love conceived by Swiss cultural theorist Denis de Rougemont, Cleopatra's association with endless desire coincides with a denial of narrative closure, even in death. Shakespeare's tragedy thus highlights the Freudian pleasure of delay, the way in which narrative depends on sustaining desire via narrative obstacle. Moreover, in the end, both protagonists share a concern for legacy: how a story might continually deny closure by "living on."

11. Katie Shrieves, Transmutation into Myth in Antony and Cleopatra

This paper asks two questions about Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*: 1) Why is it significant to view Antony and Cleopatra alchemically? 2) And how can they be said to transmute when they die? The union of the eponymous couple has been compared with the "chemical wedding," and the characters themselves are associated with alchemical deities, elements, and processes. In this paper, I suggest that Antony and Cleopatra's transmutation is one to myth, in which they embody their own legend.

12. M.L. Stapleton, The Sorrows of Sir Thomas Hamner

My subject is the methodology of Sir Thomas Hamner in his text of Antony and Cleopatra in *The Works of Shakespear* he produced for the University of Oxford (1743-4), the first multivolume edition of the plays neither published in London nor under the aegis of the Tonson cartel. As he worked on this enormous project seemingly out of character with his career as aristocrat, MP (Commons), and landlord of his many estates, he found himself forced to negotiate public scandal and humiliation in his own home. Some of his contemporaries as well as critics from our own time have scorned Hamner as a dilettante or a slavish follower of Alexander Pope's second edition (1728). However, an analysis of his emendations in Antony reveals that his engagement with the Shakespeare text was not only competent and responsible but demonstrates his place in his community of editors and those following, his skills earning the praise of Edward Capell and others. His disastrous personal life might even have informed some of his editorial choices regarding Cleopatra.

13. Daniel Moss, *Old Age, Impotence, and Metatheater in Antony and Cleopatra*

For lame dick jokes, Act 3, scene 13 of Antony and Cleopatra stands alone. The entire scene is devoted to representing the once great "sworder" Antony's erectile impotence as the implicit sign of his advanced age, complementing the outward sign of his actor's (Burbage's?) "grizzled head," as well as the "wrinkled" Cleopatra's presentation of "late[ness] in the world/[Globe]" as a boy actor well past the moment of graduation to adult male roles. In 3.13, this relative dynamic of the actors' aged bodies—triangulated with the supreme potency of Caesar, whose actor "wears the rose of youth upon him"—decisively informs both the tragic portrayal of Antony as a "fall'n lord" and the company's metatheatrical scramble for center stage.