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DOMINANCE AND RADICAL SUBMISSION IN SEVENTEENTH-
CENTURY DRAMA: CHASTITY, FAIRNESS, AND SILENCE IN
PORTRAYALS OF MAR(R)IAM(NE), SOPHONISBA, AND
CLEOPATRA

BY

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BA, SUNY Binghamton University, 2021

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
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Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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Abstract

This thesis conducts an extensive reading of early modern English playwrights' interpretation of ancient royalty. I survey a series of seventeenth-century plays concerning Mariamne I, the Carthaginian noblewoman Sophonisba, and Cleopatra VII. I argue that the English stage produced two models of ancient royalty. Mar(r)iam(ne) and Sophonisba personify one model, functioning as white, seemingly obedient figureheads. I document playwrights portraying their men as reducing them to their chastity and fairness, or lack thereof. Despite the inactivity of these objectified women, the qualities that these men obsess over catalyze masculine irrationality. The other model, which Cleopatra embodies, encompasses blackness and defiance. Though contemporary scholarship on these plays discusses the role of sexuality in these texts, scholars do not acknowledge the extent to which these ancient queens were sites of racial imagination, nor the extent to which these two models of ancient royalty were in conversation with another.

Key words: early modern drama, ancient royalty, gender, sexuality, critical race studies

Dedication

Mariamne I, c. 60–29 BCE

Sophonisba, c. 225–203 BCE

Cleopatra VII, c. 69 BCE—30 BCE

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Introduction

Seventeenth-century English playwrights frequently portrayed ancient royalty on the early modern stage. They were particularly committed to crafting plays about Hasmonean princess Mariamne I, who lived just before the first century began, Carthaginian noblewoman Sophonisba, who lived during the Second Punic War, and Cleopatra VII, queen of the Ptolemaic dynasty, just before the first century. Playwrights writing about Mariamne I principally took inspiration from *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus, which are first-century historical accounts of Judea (*The Tragedy of Mariam, the...*). Playwrights invested in exploring Sophonisba looked to material by “Polybius (14.4ff.); Livy (30.12.11–15.11), Diodorus (27.7), Appian (Punica, 27–8), and Dio (Zonaras, 9.11)” (*Women at War in the Classical World*, p.483). Lastly, playwrights crafting plays about Cleopatra VII, most notably Shakespeare, primarily drew inspiration from Plutarch’s *Life of Antony* (*The Tragedy of...* p.126).

I argue that the English stage produced two models of ancient royalty in these portrayals. Mar(r)iam(ne)¹ and Sophonisba personify one model, functioning as white, seemingly obedient figureheads. Although scholars have conducted a feminist re-evaluation of passivity, they have yet to explore the larger dynamic of playwrights portraying men as reducing ancient royalty to their chastity and fairness, or lack thereof. I

¹ For the rest of this thesis, my statements collectively regarding Mariamne I throughout all four plays will refer to her with the historical spelling of her name, Mariamne. My inclusion of Mar(r)iam(ne) here, as well as in my title and abstract, reflects the instability of the spelling of her name across each play. When discussing individual plays about Mariamne, the spelling of her name will reflect that of the playwright.

argue that, despite the inactivity of these objectified women, the qualities that these men obsess over catalyze masculine irrationality. The other model, which Cleopatra embodies, encompasses blackness and defiance. Scholars acknowledge the chastity and fairness of the former two women, as well as the licentiousness, and blackness of the latter. However, scholars have not fully unpacked the racialization of either model of feminine royalty, nor put them in conversation with one another.

Early modern plays about Mariamne and Sophonisba depict both of these women as fair, chaste, and often silent. In plays about Mariamne, these traits collectively work as a radical submission. As scholars have noted, though Mariamne appears obedient and submissive, her submission actually functions as dominance. The manifestations of this radical submission include how she catalyzes Herod's extreme guilt over losing her fair, chaste body (*The Tragedy of Mariam; Herod and Mariamne; Herod and Antipater*), her ability to make Tyridates and Antipater sacrifice themselves for her (*Herod and Mariamne; Herod and Antipater; Herod, the Great*), and her more blatant defiance of Herod by masculinely saving Antipater, acting fearless of death (*Herod, the Great*).

In Sophonisba plays, Sophonisba also operates in a radically submissive manner, which translates to dominance over others through her rare magnetism. In *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba*, John Marston portrays her chaste body as fair, contrasting it with gruesome bed tricks, and (necrophiliac) rape threats. In *Hannibal and Scipio*, Thomas Nabbes frames Sophonisba's sought-after, chaste body with ubiquitous discussions of how sex and promiscuity render soldiers incapable, which elevates Sophonisba's purity, due to her abstinence. As a result of Sophonisba's radical submission,

Syphax and King Massinissa fall deeply in love with her. Lastly, in *The Tragedy of Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow*, Nathaniel Lee also foregrounds Sophonisba's fairness, as well as the mutual exclusivity of love and political success, emphasizing Sophonisba's chastity. Lee showcases the implications of Sophonisba's radical submission through King Massinissa's piercing, molecular language in his willingness to die for Sophonisba, as well as other characters' awareness of Sophonisba's influence over him, revealing the public nature of her erotic power. I argue that plays about Mariamne and Sophonisba link race to particular forms of sexual power: these playwrights connect portrayals of fairness to chastity, showcasing how Mariamne and Sophonisba wield power over the men that surround them by abstaining from sex in their white bodies.

These portrayals of Mariamne and Sophonisba differ from early modern portrayals of Cleopatra, whose fairness playwrights cannot agree on. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, she is mostly dark, in *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, she is mixed; and in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and *The tragedie of Antonie*, she is fair. Despite these differences in racialization, playwrights unanimously depict Cleopatra as a dominant, erotic force, not possessing chastity or utilizing strategic silence like Mariamne and Sophonisba. I argue that continuities and differences within the manifestations of Cleopatra's racialized dominance arise in this body of plays. For example, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra's erotic power seduces the men around her, as she basks in a sexual, Egyptian lifestyle. This behavior directly opposes the chastity, fairness, and surface-level compliance of Mariamne and Sophonisba. In *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, the implications of Cleopatra's racialized dominance include her influence over Antony, her masculine suicide for Anthony first and

fearlessness of death, as well as her triumphal anxiety, revealing a level of pride that the fair and chaste Mariamne and Sophonisba do not have. Similarly, in *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, Charles Sedley reveals Cleopatra's racialized, erotic power by framing it with the mutual exclusivity between love and war, making feminine sexuality appear evil; he also emphasizes and Cleopatra's prideful nature through her triumphal anxiety. Lastly, in *The tragedie of Antonie*, Robert Garnier and Mary Sidney portray Cleopatra as a similarly influential, but a slightly less prideful character. I contend that these playwrights associate Cleopatra's murky racialization or blackness (depending on the play) with her promiscuity, demonstrating her dominant, exoticized power.

Racialized Chastity and Erotic Power: Mariam, Sophonisba, and Cleopatra Scholarship

Scholars have long understood that these ancient royalty plays offered audiences ideas about sexuality, but most scholarship focuses on single works. A set of scholars, for example, imply that Mariam's chastity, fairness, and silence make Mariam appear submissive². Another set of scholars acknowledge Sophonisba's status as a chaste and fair character who sneakily exercises her own will³. Similarly, though scholars note Cleopatra's

² See Raber, Karen L. "Gender and the Political Subject in The Tragedy of Mariam." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1995, pp. 321-43, Shannon, Laurie. *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts*. University of Chicago Press, 2005. Pp.56, Berry, Boyd M. "Feminine Construction of Patriarchy; Or What's Comic in 'The Tragedy of Mariam.'" *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 7, 1995, pp. 257-74, and Oh, Elisa. "Refusing to speak: silent, chaste, and disobedient female subjects in King Lear and The Tragedy of Mariam." *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, vol. 34, no. 2, winter 2008, pp. 185+.

³ See Rist, Thomas. *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, edited by Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins, Routledge, London, 2016, pp. 111-126, Çelik, Merve Aydoğdu. "Perpetuating the Misogynist Thought Through Representation of the Witch in John Marston's *The Tragedy of Sophonisba*." *Diyalektolog*

black, erotic power, they tend to treat her in isolation⁴. In this essay, I argue that, through reading a breadth of Mariamne, Sophonisba, and Cleopatra plays, two models of ancient royalty arise across them: one that is white, chaste, and seemingly obedient, as well as one that is black, promiscuous, and defiant.

21. 2019, and Mendoza, Kirsten. "Thou maiest inforce my body but not mee": Racializing Consent in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women*." *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2021.

⁴ See MacDonald, Joyce Green. "Sex, Race, and Empire in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*." *Literature & History*, vol. 5, no. 1, Mar. 1996, pp. 60–77, and Payne, Michael. "Erotic Irony and Polarity in *Antony and Cleopatra*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1973, pp. 265–79.

Chapter 1: Radical Submission as Dominance: A Cross-Section of Mariamne Plays

Throughout *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Herod and Mariamne*, *Herod and Antipater*, and *Herod, the Great*, playwrights have other characters define Mariamne by two, linked features: her chaste, submissive identity and her fairness. I argue that Mariamne's chastity, fairness, and strategic silence allow Mariamne's surface-level radical submission to actually function as dominance. Continuities among manifestations of this radical submission include Herod's varying levels of regret for executing Mariamne in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Herod and Mariamne*, and *Herod and Antipater*. Another continuity lies in how men deeply fall in love with Mariamne, like Herod in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Herod and Mariamne*, *Herod and Antipater*, and *Herod, the Great*. Secondary characters fall in love with Mariamne because of these traits as well, including Tyridates in *Herod and Mariamne* and Antipater in *Herod and Antipater*.

Across plays about Mariamne, playwrights obsessively portray her as chaste. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Elizabeth Cary hinges the plot on Herod's baseless claim that Mariam was not chaste, and has never been (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.4). In *Herod and Mariamne*, Samuel Pordage maintains this thread of continuity, making Herod and Tyridates fixated on Mariamne's chastity (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.4; 3.6). In *Herod and Antipater*, Gervase Markham and William Sampson also write Herod as obsessed with Mariam's chastity, and often racializes it with accompanying descriptions of Mariam's fairness (*Herod and Antipater*, 2.1). Lastly, in *Herod the Great*, Roger Boyle Orrery

discusses Mariamne's chastity and fairness more briefly than any of the other texts concerning Mariamne, perhaps because Mariamne acts the most rebellious. Across the body of Mariamne plays in this analysis, an interesting inverse relationship exists between rebelliousness and perceived level of fairness and chastity. In *Herod the Great*, Orrery does not directly reference Mariamne's chastity, and rarely references her fairness. Rather, he suggests these qualities through writing minor characters like Haziel, Pheroras, and Asdrubal, who both question and affirm Mariamne's chastity via implication (*Herod the Great*, 1.1; 3.1). This consistent characterization of Mariamne across four contemporaneous plays reveals how solidified this identity category is for white women like Mariamne; Mariamne submits to this reductive description without opposition or contradiction.

Mariam's chaste status undergoes two major shifts in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, catalyzing the main plot of the play. Throughout the play, Mariam's chastity changes: at the start, Cary describes her as chaste, until Salome frames Mariam for attempting to murder Herod. This scene makes Herod question Mariam's purity⁵. A final shift in Mariam's chastity ensues post-execution, when Herod realizes that Mariam was always chaste. This realization makes Herod desire proprietorship over Mariam's body, and makes him feel immense guilt when discovering he falsely executed her (*The Tragedy of Mariam*). Before this realization, Herod was positive that Mariam was never chaste, going as far as doubting his court structure, for fear of Mariam swaying the court's decision in her favor

⁵ As a result, minor characters like Salome and Sohemus publicly deliberate over Mariam's status as a chaste queen, revealing its presence in public life within Herod's kingdom (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.3; 3.3). This public discussion of chastity is mirrored by the Chorus (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 3.3). Mariam defends herself against Salome's accusation of her impurity, which operates as a clear demonstration of her submission to the identity category of chastity (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.3).

with her enchantment: “It may be so: nay, tis so: shee's vnchaste, / Her mouth will ope to eu'ry strangers eare: / Then let the executioner make haste, / Lest she inchant him, if her words he heare” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.7). Herod’s seemingly harsh perspective regarding Mariam’s loyalty and chastity ends up being easily altered: after Nuntio informs Herod of Mariam’s death, Herod states that Mariam died too young. He also claims to have thought that she was too beautiful to be chaste: “To see chast Mariam die in age vnfit... Her heau'nly beautie twas that made me thinke / That it with chastitie could neuer dwell: / But now I see that heau'n in her did linke, / A spirit and a person to excell... He both repents her death and knowes her chast” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). The play’s preoccupation with the state of Mariam’s chastity illustrates its centrality to her characterization and the plot. Although Herod accuses Mariam of being unchaste, Mariam never breaks this chastity, but rather submits to this identity category completely. In spite of Mariam’s lack of action challenging this reductive characterization of her, she continues to drive the plot forward by catalyzing the primary action in this play: Herod and Salome’s obsessive interrogation of Mariam’s chastity.

Before mapping out universal portrayals of Mariamne’s fairness, one must fully understand the contemporary connotations of the term “fair,” as it is a central, unwavering tenet of her identity. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, when Cary was writing, in addition to denoting whiteness, “fair” had multiple definitions: “Beautiful to the eye,” and “Applied to a woman or to women collectively, as expressing a quality considered as characteristic of the female sex” (OED). Additionally, at times, it was frequently used “Of an inanimate thing” (OED). Fairness thereby indexes a certain level of feminine beauty⁶,

⁶ For more on fairness in Shakespeare’s sonnets, see Hall, Kim. ““These Bastard Signs of Fair’: Literary Whiteness in Shakespeare’s Sonnets.” *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp. 64–83.

which also can be read as inherently objectifying, since this term was frequently used regarding objects. The linkage between feminine beauty and whiteness reflects a larger history of whiteness being privileged as beautiful and regal. This opposed playwrights' depictions of blackness as inferior, during the historical moment in which modern conceptualizations of race arise.

Playwrights often discuss Mariamne's fairness in conjunction with her chastity. In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Herod contests Mariam's fairness, unlike her chastity, only once; other characters constantly call Mariam fair, and she never challenges being reduced to her race. Like her chastity, Mariam herself as well as minor characters like Pheroras and Salome comment on Mariam's fairness (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.8; 4.2; 4.7). However, unlike her purity, Mariam's fairness is never questioned. Contrastingly, in *Herod and Mariamne*, Tyridates often interjects about Mariamne's fairness via referring to Mariamne as his "Fair Queen" (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.4; 5.1). Pordage prioritizes discussions of Mariamne's chastity over her fairness. In *Herod and Antipater*, Markham and Sampson highlight the whiteness implicit in Mariam's chastity. In this play, characters like Herod, Pheroras, and Nir incessantly discuss these characteristics together (*Herod and Antipater*, 2.1; 4.1; 5.1). Lastly, in *Herod the Great*, like Mariamne's chastity, Orrery rarely discusses her fairness, and only has Asdrubal refer to Mariamne as "fair Mariamne" after she passes away (*Herod the Great*, 5.1). This fits into the larger pattern of Mariamne's post-mortem glorification. More broadly, and perhaps more obviously, I would be remiss to not note the titular prioritization of fairness in the following full-length play titles: *The Tragedie of Mariam, the Faire Queen of Jewry* (Cary), and *The True Tragedie of Herod and Antipater*:

with the death of Faire Marriam (Markham and Sampson). This higher value placed on Mar(r)iam's fairness functions as a titular embodiment of one of the primary characteristics of Mar(r)iam. As aforementioned, across plays, Mariamne incessantly submits to this identity category; she never speaks out against the reduction of her character to her race and beauty. Through my overview of Mariamne's fairness among seventeenth-century plays, one can see its consistent employment by playwrights as a central facet of her identity.

Cary highlights the emptiness of the notion of fairness through her portrayal of Herod and Salome, who accuse Mariam's fairness of being a facade in *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Herod and Salome compare Mariam's fairness to darkness; Mariam submits to the identity category of fairness by self-identifying with it. For example, after Mariam learns about her alleged attempt at poisoning Herod, he claims that Mariam's fairness functions as a facade, containing darkness: "So I for false my Mariam did not know. / Foule pith contain'd in the fairest rinde, / That euer grac'd a Caedar. Oh thine eye / Is pure as heauen, but impure thy minde, / And for impuritie shall Mariam die" (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.4). Although he accuses this fairness of being fake, it cannot seem to leave Herod's mind, even when he deliberates about whether or not to execute Mariam, calling her precious, and "the fairest lam / Of all the flocke" (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.4). After Mariam dies, Herod compares her complexion to the whiteness of snow, calling it sweet, which contradicts his previous accusation of Mariam's fairness being a facade (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). This reveals his preoccupation with Mariam's fairness, which he alleges acts as a shell encasing darkness. Although Salome does not question Mariam's fairness, she utilizes the image of it to suggest that Mariam has no shame in her alleged

indecencies: “Tis very faire, but yet will neuer blush, / Though foule dishonors do her forehead blot” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.7). A bit later, Mariam later utilizes her skin’s literal fairness to verify her chastity, stating: “If faire she be, she is as chaste as faire” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.8). Thus, even when characters try to insult Mariam, they never deny the presence of her fairness; rather, these characters reduce Mariam to this identity category, which she submits to.

Cary contrasts Mariam’s fairness with racist images of Cleopatra’s alleged blackness, which Cary portrays as steeped in promiscuity. For example, Alexandra states that Antony took Herod’s life, and, when describing how she believes that Antony would have loved Mariam over Cleopatra, Alexandra describes Cleopatra as “the brown Egyptian” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.2). Mariam responds to this vision of an alternate reality by rejecting Cleopatra’s lifestyle: “Not to be Emprise of aspiring *Rome*, / Would *Mariam* like to *Cleopatra* liue: / With purest body will I presse my Toome, / And wish no fauours *Anthony* could giue” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.2). Here, Mariam states that she would not want to be Cleopatra, even if it meant being able to be the empress of Rome, revealing her repulsion for Cleopatra. Additionally, Mariam highlights her own purity while rejecting this alternate version of reality, condemning unchaste women (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.2). Moreover, when Mariam later soliloquizes about her future death, she says: “The wanton Queene that neuer lou’d for loue, / False *Cleopatra*, wholly set on gaine: / With all her slights did proue: yet vainly proue, / For her the loue of Herod to obtaine. / Yet her allurements, all her courtly guile, / Her smiles, her fauours, and her smooth deceit: / Could not my face from Herods minde exile” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 4.8). Here, Mariam accuses Cleopatra of desiring Herod; Mariam implies that her chastity

distinguishes herself from Cleopatra. Although Mariam admits that Cleopatra has an alluring presence, Mariam claims that Cleopatra could not supersede her in Herod's mind. These examples reflect Cary's knowledge of Cleopatra, demonstrating her larger awareness of ancient royalty.

Cary also makes broader contrasts between Mariam and Egyptians; because Cleopatra symbolizes Egypt, these examples index the presence of Cleopatra. For example, after Herod has Mariam executed, he regretfully discusses this decision with Nuntio, who says: "I tell you once againe my Mariams dead. / You could but shine, if some Egiptian blows, / Or AETHiopian doudy lose her life..." (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). Nuntio indicates that, if black figures like an Egyptian or Ethiopian would die, not only would Mariam live, but she would thrive. Furthermore, the association of a black body with a "doudy" reveals how seventeenth-century playwrights like Cary link blackness with promiscuity and alleged primitiveness⁷. More broadly, this willingness to sacrifice a black body to preserve a white one mirrors contemporary notions of race. It can also be read as representative of how contemporary, white society hierarchized the two models of ancient royalty I observe. Similarly, Herod claims that if Mariam were "like an Egiptian blacke, / And not so faire" she would have lived longer; he claims her beautiful body made him think that there was no way it was chaste (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). This quotation is akin to the previous one from Herod; here, Mariam's fairness can take the blame for her death. The quotation hence operates as another example of her fairness opposed by Egyptian darkness. One can observe within these examples the extent to which Cary

⁷ The contemporary definition of "doudy" is "A woman or girl shabbily or unattractively dressed, without smartness or brightness" (OED).

highlights Mariam's fairness, as well as Cary's awareness of contemporary ideas surrounding Cleopatra being a black, promiscuous figure.

Similarly, in *Herod and Mariamne*, Markham and Sampson also describe Marriam's whiteness as saintly, and contrasts it with blackness. For example, Pheroras describes Marriam's body as dying "like a Saint" three times, with "snow-white hands to Heauen" (*Herod and Antipater*, 2.1). Furthermore, Pheroras describes her as "assend[ing]" to heaven "with a constancie, that would outface / The brazen front of terror" (*Herod and Antipater*, 2.1). This commentary on the alleged volatility of women functions ironically, as Markham and Sampson contrast it with Herod's irrationality. Here, Markham and Sampson elevate Marriam to a saintly (chaste) status centered around her whiteness and purity. In opposition to this whiteness, Herod says that, if he could revive Marriam, he would do just about anything, including rectifying a black body: "And dedicate those Numbers to her Shrine; / A Breath more loathsome then the Stench of *Nile*, / Ile rectifie, and, for her sake, make pleasant; / A Face more black then any *Aethiope*, / Ile scoure as white as Siluer; to attaine / But one touch of her finger, I'de beget / Things beyond wonder; stab, poyson, kill" (*Herod and Antipater*, 3.1). This desire to rectify and beautify a black body functions as another example of the aforementioned pattern of seventeenth-century playwrights like Cary, Markham, and Sampson offering black sacrifice as the solution for preserving whiteness. Thus, like Cary, Markham and Sampson demonstrate an awareness of contemporary, racist ideas concerning Egyptians, and utilizes this information to elevate Marriam's fairness.

A key continuity regarding the implications of Mariamne's radical submission is the deep remorse that Herod feels for executing her, which Mariamne causes through her

chaste, fair, and silent subjecthood. This leads to Herod glorifying her existence. For example, in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, after Mariam dies, Herod claims that Mariam cannot be over-praised: “Thou dost vsurpe my right, my tongue was fram'd / To be the instrument of Mariams praise: / Yet speake: she cannot be too often fam'd: / All tongues suffice not her sweet name to raise” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). This elevates Mariam, asserting that no praise will ever properly encapsulate her goodness; Herod’s hindsight bias operates as a result of Mariam’s submission to being a chaste, fair subject. Cary also shows this when Herod describes memorializing Mariam via claiming to “hold her [Mariam] chast eu'n in [his] inmost soule” (*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 5.1). Similarly, in *Herod and Mariamne*, although Herod justifies sentencing Mariamne to death by claiming he did it out of love, he immediately regrets the decision: “Stay *Mariamne!* dead, dost fly from me too? / No Jealousy nor Rage can reach you now” (*Herod and Mariamne*, 4.2; 5.4). Herod almost expresses shock over her death; he acknowledges that he felt envious and angry, and that these emotions can no longer reach Mariamne. He later expresses regret for outliving her (*Herod and Mariamne*, 5.7). Herod’s remorse for executing Mariam(ne) thus exists across *The Tragedy of Mariam* and *Herod and Mariamne*; this continuity exists in a more extreme reverberation in *Herod and Antipater*.

Herod’s regret for executing Marriam is so intense in *Herod and Antipater* that it makes him physically ill. Despite Herod’s choice to kill Marriam, he describes its effects on him as though he is sick: “My Marriam; O, the very name of her / Is like a passing-Knell, to a sicke man / The thought of Marriam, like a Feuer burnes, / Diffects me eury Nerue; I feele within / My cognations beating, things long past / Are now presented, now I suffer for them” (*Herod and Antipater*, 5.1). He then describes himself as a “monster”

who will die with her name on his lips (*Herod and Antipater*, 5.1). This self-reflection by Herod illustrates his deep guilt, as even her name makes death seem more appealing. His regret is so unrecognizable in comparison to his tyrannical actions that he does not even conceptualize himself as human anymore. Moreover, Herod proceeds to call himself possessed with a “mortall sicknesse,” and says, as he feels dizzy, that he needs to kill himself to forever be with Marriam (*Herod and Antipater*, 5.1). Herod’s guilt for killing a chaste and fair woman thus makes him physically sick.

Another continuity regarding the effects of Mariamne’s radical submission across plays includes how it causes men to fall in love with her. As a result of Mariamne’s alluring chastity and fairness, playwrights demonstrate Mariamne’s control over these men through their obsession with her seemingly submissive being. In *Herod and Mariamne*, Mariamne’s chaste character makes Tyridates willing to jeopardize his social status and commit suicide for her. Throughout the play, Tyridates acts not only willing, but eager to physically fight Herod to protect Mariamne (*Herod and Mariamne*, 1.4). Moreover, although Tyridates tells Polites that he “live[s] to tell” him about his love for Mariamne (*Herod and Mariamne*, 1.1), he quickly offers to give up his life for her: “But though I Love, 'tis with so pure a flame, / As well not Innocence, nor Vertue shame! / To say, I Love her more than Life, is poor, / But I love Mine, and Her bright Honour more” (*Herod and Mariamne*, 1.1). Here, soon after Tyridates admits his love for Mariamne, he asserts that he is willing to die for her, while continuing to utilize purity rhetoric. This operates as the first of many instances throughout the play in which Tyridates offers to give up his life for Mariamne without hesitation. He later states that he came from Parthia to almost lose his life for Mariamne, and would find it an honor to sacrifice himself for her, which he

eventually does (*Herod and Mariamne*, 1.4; 1.6). This functions as the ultimate act of dedication to Mariamne's chastity and fairness. Tyridates is thus so in love with Mariamne that he is willing to sacrifice himself for her.

Likewise, Antipater in *Herod and Antipater* also exemplifies this phenomenon. Antipater's willingness to betray Herod, as well as kill himself and his father, reveal Mariamne's control over him. Despite Herod being married to Mariamne first, Antipater falsely asserts that Mariamne is rightfully his: "My Father's Wife! Witness ye Powers above, / She was first mine, by Sacred Vows, and Love" (*Herod, the Great*, 1.1). Antipater thus claims that Herod actually stole her from him; Antipater claims he solidified his love for her with "sacred vows," falsely implying marriage (*Herod, the Great*, 1.1). Later in the play, Antipater expresses willingness to kill himself, and even suggests a double suicide: "Then, Madam, let's resolve to live no more: / If th' other Life be what is taught us here, / Such Loves as ours must needs be happy there" (*Herod, the Great*, 4.1). This demonstrates Antipater's selfish need to possess Mariamne, even if that means they both must die. He assumes that he will possess her in the afterlife, despite Mariamne's legitimate marriage to Herod. Lastly, after hearing that Herod was planning to kill Mariamne that night, Antipater even risks his life to try and save her (*Herod, the Great*, 5.1). Through Antipater ultimately killing his father, he demonstrates a rebellious commitment to Mariamne (*Herod, the Great*, 5.4). Antipater's dedication to Mariamne at his own ruin shows his obsession with her as a chaste possession.

Pordage includes this phenomenon in *Herod and Mariamne* through highlighting Herod's love for Mariamne's chastity and fairness. This is perhaps the most blatant iteration of this trend, as this is the only play in which Herod openly expresses being under

Mariamne's influence. For example, after Herod imprisons Mariamne, he enters her bed-chamber and alleges that he is subject to her will; the political backdrop of the play highlights the absurdity of this claim, because Herod just won the battle against Caesar (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.3). After Mariamne boldly declares that she is his prisoner, Herod goes as far as to claim the opposite: "O no *Mariamne*; here you still bear sway: / Oh do not at this small restraint repine. / Thou art no Pris'ner; but 'tis I am thine. / I now have nothing else I can subdue: / Fortune bows down to me; yet I, to you.— / And in the greatest glory of my Pride / Can Love—and see my self of Love denyed" (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.3). This inversion of the uneven power dynamic between them, which exists across all plays concerning Mariamne in this analysis, illustrates Herod's madness. In the next scene, Polites describes Herod as being "enamour'd now anew / He gazes on her with Affection still: / You'd think 'gainst her he never dream't an ill" (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.4), demonstrating how more minor characters bear witness to Herod's submission to Mariamne. Although Herod reduces Mariamne to her chastity and fairness, her radically submissive subjecthood alone causes her to dominate over Herod via catalyzing his irrationality. Her white, pure personhood alone allows her to control Herod.

Although Mariamne's radical submission remains intact in *Herod, the Great*, Orrery depicts her as the most outwardly dominant. In this text, Orrery portrays Mariamne as the most traditionally masculine, with regard to her defiant actions, and fearlessness toward death. For example, early in the play, Pollio describes Mariamne as unafraid of her dead brother and Hircanus' ghost (*Herod, the Great*, 1.1). During the period when Orrery was writing, because he wrote Mariamne's character as a woman, Mariamne's gender

alone created the expectation that she would be sensitive to death and scared of ghosts⁸. Thereafter, Orrery exhibits Mariamne's masculinity when she stops Antipater from killing himself, and prevents Herod from stabbing him; she even tries to save Antipater in her last breath (*Herod, the Great*, 4.1; 5.1). Through Mariamne's defiant actions, she proves to be the most dominant in *Herod, the Great*.

Orrery also displays Mariamne's masculinity through her fearlessness toward death. For example, Mariamne asserts that she will "lead the way" in her suicide pact with Antipater, demonstrating her willingness to die (*Herod, the Great*, 4.1). Furthermore, Orrery shows Mariamne's bravery in telling Herod that what he calls "love," is not so, because he imprisoned her; she claims to rather die than be his wife, again displaying a dauntlessness toward death (*Herod, the Great*, 2.1). In the same scene, when Herod threatens Mariamne with death, Mariamne boldly replies: "You should not threaten me with Death but Life" and "The greatness of your Love will more be seen / In making me your Martyr than your Queen" (*Herod, the Great*, 2.1). These quotations encourage Herod to kill her, as she deems death more optimal than being under Herod's control. Even moments before Mariamne dies, she states that she will only welcome him in her presence if he kills her (*Herod, the Great*, 5.1). Orrery therefore presents Mariamne's radical submission in the most dominant way in this text, namely through Mariamne's more blatant defiance, and fearlessness toward death.

In the body of plays above, playwrights foreground Mariamne's fairness and chastity, revealing their linkage of her white race to her sexual power, which stems from

⁸ Mariamne proves to be aware of these gender expectations by utilizing them to her advantage: later in the play, Mariamne reveals her dominance by trying to manipulate Herod with insincere tears: "Since my Command so useless now appears, / I'll try if I can move you by my Tears" (*Herod, the Great*, 4.1).

her purity. These playwrights present Mariamne's consensual reduction to these categories as appearing submissive, but these characteristics have dominant effects on the men around her. This, paired with the strategic silence unpacked by Raber, Berry, and Oh, craft Mariamne's identity as radically submissive. Continuities among how playwrights demonstrate this include Herod's varying expressions of deep remorse in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Herod and Mariamne*, and *Herod and Antipater*. Another continuity lies in the way men fall in love with her, including Herod in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, *Herod and Mariamne*, *Herod and Antipater*, and *Herod, the Great*. Other men that fall in love with Mariamne because of these qualities include Tyridates in *Herod and Mariamne* and Antipater in *Herod and Antipater*. Thus, Mariamne's abstinence in her white body, paired with her strategic silence, allow her to secretly exert influence over the men around her.

Chapter 2: Radical Submission as Dominance: A Cross-Section of Sophonisba Plays

Throughout *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba, Hannibal and Scipio*, and *The Tragedy of Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow*, Marston, Nabbes, and Lee center chastity in Sophonisba's identity. These playwrights portray men like King Mas(s)inissa, Syphax, and Scipio as entranced by Sophonisba. In *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba*, Sophonisba's power over men stems from her ability to remain a virgin despite being married. Marston racializes this chastity with fairness, and contrasts it with gruesome bed tricks as well as (necrophiliac) rape threats. Here, Sophonisba acts particularly powerful in her moments of silence. In *Hannibal and Scipio*, Nabbes contrasts Sophonisba's chastity with ubiquitous discussions of how sex and promiscuity render soldiers incapable. This elevates Sophonisba's chastity in comparison, causing Syphax and King Massinissa to fall deeply in love with her pure personhood. Lastly, in *The Tragedy of Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow*, like in Nabbes' text, Lee foregrounds Sophonisba's fairness, and the mutual exclusivity of love and political life. Lee demonstrates the implications of Sophonisba's radical submission via King Massinissa's passionate, granular language in his willingness to die for Sophonisba, as well as her public control of him, as observed by other characters.

Across plays about Sophonisba, chastity remains central to her identity, making her alluring to Syphax and King Mas(s)inissa. In *The Wonder of Women*, Marston highlights Sophonisba's virginity through other characters constantly describing her as chaste. For example, King Masinissa glorifies Sophonisba's pure body by removing a white ribbon from the bed and her waist, revealing her fair skin like opening a present: "Lo, I unloose thy waist; / She that is just in love is godlike chaste. / Io to Hymen! (*The Wonder of Women*,

1.2.40-42). Here, Marston states that Sophonisba, as a woman purely in love, possesses a chastity like God. King Masinissa later goes on to say that she is better than God (*The Wonder of Women*, 3.2 50-61). Because of this fair chastity, Syphax deems her “the royalest excellence / That ever was called woman to our palace” (*The Wonder of Women*, 4.1 81-82). Similarly, in *Hannibal and Scipio*, a little-known play, Nabbes describes Sophonisba as chaste. Here, external characters, like the Messenger, comment on it throughout the play: in Act 2 Scene 4, when Sophonisba returns, the Messenger says, “A stately ship from her rich laden wombe, / Hath on our shore deliver'd such a traine / Of glorious Virgins that attend on one, / Who lead's the rest (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 2.4). In the next scene, she dances in a circle of virgins (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 2.5). These angelic images highlight Sophonisba’s purity; this emphasis on chastity carries over into *Hannibal's Overthrow*.

Marston portrays sex in *The Wonder of Women* as a much less erotic force than in *Mariamne* and *Cleopatra* plays. In this play, Marston writes sex (or an attempt at sex) as a marking of one’s dominance or ownership of another. This elevates Sophonisba’s status as a married virgin, making her all the more desirable because male characters wish to be the one to have sex with her first. Marston first foregrounds Sophonisba’s chastity in the initial almost-consummation scene, where she states that she goes against the “long expectation” of consummation, deeming it ceremonious (“*The Wonder of Women*,” I.II.8-10). Furthermore, attempted rape operates as a vehicle used exert power over another. Since both rapes do not pan out, a failure of multiple, attempted claims of ownership over Sophonisba occur. For example, Syphax drags Sophonisba into his chamber by her hair, and threatens to rape her, but ultimately respects her request for an hour to mourn King

Masinissa (“*The Wonder of Women*,” III.I.20-25). The threat of rape equates to a threat to overtake her body, using it as he pleases. This reflects Marston’s overall portrayal of sex as a power move of sorts. In the second instance referring to rape, Syphax again threatens Sophonisba: “This forest’s deaf, / As is my lust. / Night and the god of silence / Swells my full pleasures. No more shalt thou delude / My easy credence. Virgin of fair brow, / Well-featured creature, and our utmost wonder, / Queen of our youthful bed, be proud. I’ll use thee” (“*The Wonder of Women*,” IV.i.46-51). Here, Syphax acknowledges the extremity of his lust, wanting to utilize Sophonisba’s body without caring about her emotions. Syphax later even threatens necrophiliac rape (“*The Wonder of Women*,” IV.i.57-58). Thereafter, Erictho echoes this necrophilia in a scene where she sticks her tongue down the throats of dead people (“*The Wonder of Women*,” IV.i.111-122). This depiction of sex serves as a disturbing reiteration of the representation of sex as dominance, while also highlighting the alleged impurity of extramarital sex. These instances contribute to the description of sex as lacking eroticism and functioning as claims of ownership throughout this play.

Marston also includes multiple bed tricks, which further reveal the use of sex as a statement of power. This first appears in Act 3 Scene 1, when Sophonisba and Zanthia put Vangue in Syphax’s bed; Syphax expects Sophonisba to be in his bed, and, upon seeing Vangue, refers to him as a “devil” (“*The Wonder of Women*,” III.i.182-183). The other bed trick occurs in Act 5 Scene 1, when Erictho pretends to be Sophonisba and has sex with Syphax. Syphax states the following, before discovering Erictho’s real identity: “Fury of blood’s impatient. Erichtho, / ’Bove thunder sit; to thee, egregious soul, / Let all flesh bend. Sophonisba, thy flame / But equal mine, and we’ll joy such delight / That gods shall not admire, but even spite” (“*The Wonder of Women*,” V.i.212-216). Syphax therefore believes

that gods will be jealous of his affair with Sophonisba. This polytheistic sentiment opposes much of the monotheistic purity language in this piece. Thus, these bed tricks are devices used as a means of trickery against Syphax to punish him for his evil nature. This strange depiction of sex adds to the lack of eroticism in this play: Marston discusses sex almost solely through awful, unflattering means such as rape, bed tricks, and necrophilia. Marston therefore makes sex seem less sensual and appealing, and more so a means of exerting dominance.

Nabbes also portrays sex in a negative light in *Hannibal and Scipio*. Nabbes contrasts Sophonisba's chastity with depictions of sex as promiscuous, and bad for political life. Although there are no rape attempts or bed tricks in this play, Nabbes contextualizes Sophonisba's purity within a political backdrop purporting that sex equates corruption. For example, Himulco and Maharball discuss the corruption of soldiers by promiscuity, after Himulco claims that a soldier forgets how to fight with his weapon because of a pretty mistress (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 1.2). Himulco goes on to state: "Why here we cannot quarrell / Amongst ourselves for wenches. There's a Lady, / As meane a beauty heretofore hath beene / The ground of a sad warre, or in a Campe" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 1.2). Himulco cautions soldiers from fighting among each other for the sake of women. This argues that women are not worth losing a battle for, nor destroying the homosocial camaraderie built between soldiers. In the following scene, Hannibal describes his soldiers as turning into women because of their promiscuity: "That can Hanniball; / Who through the twarthy vizard age and cares / Have tann'd his face with, blusheth at the change / Of Souldiers into women" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 1.3). This describes soldiers morphing into women because of their distractedness from looking at stylish mistresses; this emasculates

the soldiers, which should otherwise function as emblems of traditional masculinity. Nabbes therefore elevates Sophonisba's purity with portrayals of alluring women ruining soldiers.

Like in *Hannibal and Scipio*, in *The Tragedy of Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow*, Lee illustrates love as a major catalyst of war. For example, in the opening scene, Maherbal states that, because Rosalinda is a prisoner, "Love obliges [Hannibal] to war" and "Beauty like hers, Swords, Hands, and Hearts commands" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.1). This places feminine beauty in the same realm as weaponry, blaming love for Hannibal's need to battle. Hannibal then acknowledges that his mistress forces him into battle: "Melting at *Capua* I'm pleasures lay, / And for a Mistriss gave the World away" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.1). This blames the start of an entire war on a woman. He even admits that he "gave the world away" for her, putting forth the idea that women are not worth sacrificing one's political status for (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.1). Moreover, Scipio equates the powers of "war [and] love," when discussing his fearlessness of Carthage with Rosalinda: "My yet unshaken Soul with vertue bound, / No force of War, or Love cou'd ever wound" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 3.1). This equalizes the power of love with that of battle, highlighting their comparably dangerous nature. Rezambe takes this argument further, later saying that "Love laughs at Brandish'd swords and glitt'ring Arms" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 3.2). Unlike the previous quotation, this heightens the power of love above that of war. Thus, Lee portrays love as being just as, if not more, violent than war.

Marston discusses Sophonisba's fairness at length, linking Sophonisba's whiteness with a chaste form of sexual power. For example, King Masinissa makes note of

Sophonisba's race while speaking to Jugurth about wanting to fight Syphax for Sophonisba: "Fair, noble, modest, and 'bove all, my, / My Sophonisba. O Jugurth, my strength doubles; / I know not how to turn a coward; drop / In feeble baseness I cannot..." (*The Wonder of Women*, 2.2 11-14). This reference to Sophonisba reduces her to her fairness and chastity. He states that, because of these qualities, Sophonisba buttresses his political power. Moreover, Zanthia, a Moor who fundamentally believes that marriage is advantageous to women, incessantly conflates Sophonisba's chastity with her racial identity. For example, she says: "'Las, fair princess... / We things called women, only made for show / And pleasure, created to bear children / And play at shuttlecock, we imperfect mixtures" (*The Wonder of Women*, 1.2.18; 20-22). This misogynistic thought encompasses the idea that women are only made for reproductive purposes, which men exploit by marrying them. Zanthia thereby questions Sophonisba's decision to not consummate her marriage. Despite interrogating Sophonisba's sexual decisions, Zanthia still acknowledges Sophonisba's fairness, revealing its centrality to her identity. Marston thus racializes Sophonisba's chastity as white, revealing the radically submissive mode of power that Sophonisba's white body creates via her abstinence.

Lee, like in Cary, Markham, and Sampson's descriptions of Mariamne, contrasts Sophonisba's fairness with monstrous descriptions of black women. In the opening scene, after King Massinissa expresses longing for Sophonisba, Massina immediately contrasts her fairness with racist depictions of black women: "Women, Sir, I oft have seen, / Dancing with Timbrels on the flowry Green, / Or like small Clouds upon the Mountains brow; / But never thought they thunder bore till now. / I know they are all black, have rowling eyes, / Thick lips, flat noses, breasts of mighty size" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.2). This portrayal

of black women sexualizes them through describing their sensual dancing in a disturbing way. After this sexualizing portrayal of black women, King Massinissa then describes fair women in Africa who hide from the sun, to which Massina inquires if it is a sin to associate with them (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.2). King Massinissa says to avoid them, as their fairness can be concealing a dangerous, black core: “Lye down sweet youth, a fair white Woman was / Of what thou seest me now, the cruel cause; / Though clear her form appear'd, without one stain, / Bright as those Bodies which o're darkness reign, / Her Soul is blacker then the skin of *Moores*; / For fraud with Beauty do's his Lodging take” (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.2). Similar to Herod’s accusation of Mariam in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, this quotation reflects anxiety about inaccurate physiognomy. Hence, Lee highlights Sophonisba’s fairness through racist depictions of black women, which proves to be a facet of a broader trend in seventeenth-century plays about ancient royalty.

Although Sophonisba chooses to be silent at times, unlike Mariamne, Sophonisba publicly questions contemporary stigmas surrounding sexuality⁹. Firstly, as referenced earlier, Sophonisba questions the ceremonious nature of consummation, deeming the “long expectations” of consummation “forced by ceremony” (*The Wonder of Women*, 1.2.6-12). In the same scene, Sophonisba defends the normalcy of sexual desire for women, arguing that it does not conflict with chastity:

“A modest silence, though’t be thought / A virgin’s beauty and her highest honour;
/ Though bashful feignings nicely wrought / Grace her that virtue takes not in, but
on her; / What I dare think I boldly speak— / After my word my well-bold action

⁹ These moments function as an exception to Sophonisba’s radical submission, but are crucial nonetheless in discussing the role of sex in the play.

rusheth. / In open flame, then, passion break! / Where virtue prompts, thought,
word, act never blusheth” (*The Wonder of Women*, 1.2.43-57).

Here, Sophonisba’s language boldly defies contemporary conceptualizations of sex. Marston thus crafts Sophonisba as questioning extant understandings of sex, calling for the destandardization of consummation and bolstering feminine desire.

In spite of her few instances of vocality above, like Mariamne, a facet of Sophonisba’s radical submission lies in her silence. For example, when Sophonisba argues that sexual desire for women is healthy, she acknowledges her “modest silence,” claiming that her “bold” speech always must follow “bold action” (*The Wonder of Women*, 1.2.43-48). Through Sophonisba’s use of the word “modest,” her awareness of her own chastity permeates her lack of speech. In Sophonisba’s recognition of the gravity of her speech, and the actions that accompany it, she reveals that her strategic silence is on her own volition. Moreover, when Sophonisba discusses how her choice to be with King Masinissa enraged Syphax, she notes that her status as a woman prevents her from taking any military-related action, or speaking further: “My tongue / Swears I am woman still; I talk too long” (*The Wonder of Women*, 1.2.184-185). This logically means that, if she were a man, she would be able to continue discussing the political implications of her relationship with King Masinissa. Finally, Sophonisba again implicitly communicates how her silence fits into patriarchal understandings of women after the Carthaginian Senate deliberates: “But since affected wisdom in us women / Is our sex’ highest folly, I am silent. / I cannot speak less well unless I were / More void of goodness” (*The Wonder of Women*, 2.1.136-139). Within this quotation, Sophonisba proves to have internalized a great deal of misogyny: here, she asserts that emotions cloud women’s intelligence, which makes her unwilling to speak. She

then claims she sees herself as too morally good to speak further. Thus, Marston portrays Sophonisba's radically submissive power as partially derived from her self-aware silence.

Nabbes displays Sophonisba's radical submission as causing King Massinissa to be so deeply in love with her that he wishes to kill himself alongside her. Similar to Hannibal's relationship to the Salapian woman in this play, Nabbes exhibits King Massinissa to possess an unruly fervor for Sophonisba. When Scipio encourages King Massinissa to find a Roman woman, King Massinissa states that "Rome hath not / Another Sophonisba," to which Scipio accuses him of "los[ing] command o're passions" with "blinded reason" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 4.4). This dialogue simultaneously reflects King Massinissa's idolization and obsession with Sophonisba, as well as its implications in political life. Scipio cannot take King Massinissa seriously as a political threat, because his love for Sophonisba makes him irrational. Furthermore, King Massinissa admits to being Sophonisba's captive (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 3.3), which mirrors Herod's similar proclamation to Mariamne in *Herod and Mariamne* (*Herod and Mariamne*, 2.3). Additionally, King Massinissa's creation of a double suicide pact resembles those made by Antipater and Mariamne in *Herod, the Great*. Furthermore, just after Sophonisba kills herself, King Massinissa deifies her immediately: "Shee's not dead: / Only she hath translated her divinity / To it's owne blest abodes, and call's on me / To pay a mortals duty" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 3.4). King Massinissa goes on to worship her, offering his blood as a sacrifice (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 3.4). This aligns with the strange polytheism in *The Wonder of Women*. King Massinissa thereby obsesses over Sophonisba's allure.

Nabbes also highlights the effects of Sophonisba's radical submission through her control of Syphax. For example, Hannibal describes Syphax as becoming irrational for

loving Sophonisba (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 2.4). This functions as another demonstration of a ruler's political reputation being tarnished by his love for a woman. Soon after, Syphax admits that his love for Sophonisba is his "weaknesse" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 2.4). Here, Syphax's description of his love for Sophonisba states that this love is a frailty, which mirrors the aforementioned pattern regarding love corrupting military and political life. Sophonisba's allure thus ruins Syphax's political brain, robbing him of his logic. In the next scene, Syphax admits that Sophonisba has "overcome" him: "I will be great; every dayes action... / You with me Lady: no; you shall lead me / The tribute I will pay for every kisse / Shall be a victory o're your enemies" (*Hannibal and Scipio*, 2.5). This reveals an alleged, extreme loyalty by Syphax to Sophonisba, demonstrating the pull that Sophonisba's radical submission has over him.

Lee crafts Sophonisba's radical submission as having effects just as extreme as in *The Wonder of Women, Or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* and *Hannibal and Scipio*. For example, Scipio recognizes Sophonisba's influence over King Massinissa in several moments in the play, like when he states "That you [King Massinissa] the Chaines of *Sophonisba* wear" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 2.1). This creates an image of King Massinissa comparable to a war prisoner. This image reveals Sophonisba's political power, and personal control over King Massinissa, despite being a woman. A bit later in the scene, Scipio states that King Massinissa will pass away "for lust" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 2.1). This criticizes King Massinissa's dedication to Sophonisba and his disregard for himself¹⁰. Like in *Hannibal and Scipio*, King Massinissa expresses being willing to die for

¹⁰ This sentiment is later echoed by Trebellius, when he states: "Urg'd with despair, and by his charming Wife, / Whose beauty has been fatal to his [King Massinissa's] life" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 3.1). Scipio, also echoes this by later claiming that King Massinissa "shalt perish for thy Mistriss's sake" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 4.1).

Sophonisba, offering to sacrifice himself if Scipio frees her (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 4.1). Moreover, in their suicide pact, King Massinissa also offers to die with Sophonisba to prevent her from being in a triumph alone (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 5.1). This divulges King Massinissa's commitment to being with Sophonisba, even in death. Lastly, after Sophonisba dies, King Massinissa's grief affects him on a micro level: "Cut me to Atoms, tear my soul out, yet, / In every smallest particle of me, / You shall the form of *Sophonisba* see" (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 5.1). This displays his suffering down to the molecular level. Lee thus portrays the primary manifestation of Sophonisba's radical submission via her seduction of King Massinissa.

Across Sophonisba plays, Marston, Nabbes, and Lee focus on her chastity and fairness, which catalyze King Mas(s)inissa, Syphax, and Scipio's obsession with her. In *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba*, Sophonisba's erotic power stems from her ability to remain a virgin despite being married. Marston elevates her chaste, white body, contrasting it with gruesome bed tricks, and (necrophiliac) rape threats. Nabbes similarly elevates Sophonisba's chaste, fair body in *Hannibal and Scipio*, through framing her sexuality with ubiquitous accounts of soldiers rendered incapable of battle by sex. Lee also foregrounds Sophonisba's fairness, and the mutual exclusivity between love and war. However, he also reveals the implications of Sophonisba's radical submission on King Massinissa through his passionate, anatomical language when expressing his eagerness to die for Sophonisba, as well as other characters' awareness of Sophonisba's influence over him.

Chapter 3: Racialized, Erotic Dominance: A Cross-Section of Cleopatra Plays

Early modern playwrights do not come to a consensus regarding Cleopatra's race like they do with Mariamne and Sophonisba. Shakespeare illustrates this in his portrayal of Cleopatra as (mostly) racialized in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as does Sedley in his uncertainty of Cleopatra's race in *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*. Samuel Daniel, Robert Garnier, and Mary Sidney contrast these representations of Cleopatra by highlighting her fairness in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and *The tragedie of Antonie*, respectively. Unlike Mariamne and Sophonisba, playwrights do not discuss Cleopatra as chaste, nor depict her as silent. Instead, within these plays, I argue that Cleopatra, as a racialized, erotic woman, blatantly exercises her sexual dominance. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare reveals the implications of (mixed) Cleopatra's magnetism via Caesar and Antony. Similarly, in *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, (fair) Cleopatra's magnetism influences Antony as well. Daniel illustrates these effects through Cleopatra's masculine suicide for Anthony first, her fearlessness toward death, and triumphal anxiety. The latter works to reveal a level of pride that Mariamne and Sophonisba, who are fair and chaste, do not have. Moreover, in *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, Sedley emphasizes (mixed) Cleopatra's erotic power by highlighting the mutual exclusivity of love and war, which frames Cleopatra's sexuality with ideology arguing that feminine sexuality is inherently bad. Sedley also showcases the implications of Cleopatra's racialized dominance through the prideful nature catalyzing triumphal anxiety. Lastly, in *The tragedie of Antonie*, Garnier and Sidney illustrate (fair) Cleopatra as a similarly influential, but more desperate character.

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* reflects a larger history within early modern drama characterizing Cleopatra as simultaneously fair and not. Although little is actually known about historical Cleopatra, as noted in *Cleopatra: a Life* by Stacy Schiff, it is known that Cleopatra was actually a "honey-skinned," Greek woman, and not "dark-skinned" (*Cleopatra: a Life*, p.6; 39). In spite of the lack of ambiguity regarding her race, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare primarily focuses on Cleopatra as a black character, and relates her to a different group of non-white people. Nevertheless, Shakespeare chooses to refer to Cleopatra as "tawny," while having both Philo and Antony refer to her as a "gypsy" ("The Tragedy of..." I.i.8-9; IV.xii.26-29). The one exception to this in the play lies in Act 3 Scene 13, where Antony acknowledges Cleopatra's "white hand" ("The Tragedy of..." III.xiii.143). This works to mirror the inconsistency in early modern representations of Cleopatra's race.

Philo and Antony calling Cleopatra a "gypsy" ("The Tragedy of..." I.i.8-9; IV.xii.26-29) functions as one of the many vague, incorrect racializations of Cleopatra in early modern plays. However, despite the lack of biological relation, contemporary writers stereotype Cleopatra and gypsies similarly. The historical stereotyping of gypsies has existed as early as 1620, in "Astrologaster, or, The figure-caster Rather the arraignment of artlesse astrologers, and fortune-tellers, that cheat many ignorant people..." by John Melton. This text states that the word "gypsy" is, "deriued from the *Aegyptians*, but by corruption of the tongue are called *gypsies*" ("Astrologaster..." p.48). Melton depicts gypsies as fake soothsayers, who utilize earthy ingredients in mystical ways and give fake fortunes to people that are desperate to hear them ("Astrologaster..." p.48). Furthermore,

Melton incessantly refers to gypsies as cunning, describing them to be: "...a tawny visaged man, with a blacke curled head of haire (especially, if he be scholler, or professe himselfe to be one) but they will thinke he is a Cunning man and a Coniurer" ("Astrologaster..." p.48). Shakespeare utilizes the same adjective, "tawny," as aforementioned, to describe Cleopatra in the play. In *His Art of Poetry* (1640), Q. Horatius Flaccus (Horace) portrays gypsies as thieves, chanting in their own tongue about stealing (*His Art of Poetry* p.52). This makes gypsies seem like strange figures speaking in rhyming language, as the character named 'Gypsie' spoke in an unnatural, sing-songy fashion. One could argue that Cleopatra as a black icon who Shakespeare ties to gypsies (despite being Greek) acts as a sort of reclamation of Cleopatra's social identity as a non-white person. As discussed by Francesca Royster in *Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon*, Shakespeare tying Cleopatra to a black identity has high stakes: in the twentieth and twenty-first century, Cleopatra has been adopted by black culture in films, musicals, infomercials, and hip-hop. This runs the risk of black community adopting not only Cleopatra, but her negative stereotypes, such as her personality-defining promiscuity and gluttonous lifestyle.

Sedley also mirrors early modern playwrights' uncertainty about Cleopatra's race in *Antony and Cleopatra, a tragedy*. For example, when retelling the story of the Battle of Actium, Canidius refers to Cleopatra by calling her a "base Egyptian train" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.2). Contrastingly, in the next Act, Mecoenas refers to Cleopatra as a "fair Aegyptian Queen" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 2.2). Moreover, in Act 4 Scene 1, this disparity is met in the middle: Caesar simply refers to her impersonally as "th' *Aegyptian*" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 4.1). This can be read either as highlighting

Cleopatra's blackness, or nationality. However, soon Sedley reminds the audience of Cleopatra's alleged fairness by having Cleopatra seduce Caesar with it. After being confident that he possesses Cleopatra, Caesar refers to her as "The fairest Fruit of all my Victory" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 5.1). As discussed above, although fairness had a multitude of contemporary uses, one could read this as a subtle reference to Cleopatra's whiteness. Sedley thus weaves contradictory ideas about Cleopatra's race into this play.

Daniel, Garnier, and Sidney portray Cleopatra as fair. For example, regarding the former, after Caesar swears to Cleopatra that he takes good care of his subjects, Dolabella describes her as: "The wondring object to each wanton eye," and proceeds to describe her rare "beauty" as "faire" (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 3.2). Garnier and Sidney also depict Cleopatra as fair when describing Cleopatra's "heavenly" face as having an "Allablaster couering" on her "marble face," beneath her "faire haire" (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 2.1). Diomed says this, also asserting that "Nought liues so faire" and referring to her breasts as "faire" (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 2.1)¹¹. These images convey a celestial whiteness, which Garnier and Sidney code with language tied to Roman art (due to alabaster and marble being associated with the creation of Roman statues)¹². Daniel, Garnier, and Sidney thus render Cleopatra fair.

¹¹ Yasmin Arshad argues that Daniel, Garnier, and Sidney's whitening of Cleopatra works to emphasize her similarities to Queen Elizabeth, make her seem more aristocratic, and fit into contemporary beauty ideals (*Imagining Cleopatra*, p.220).

¹² The one potential contradiction of this pure, white vision of Cleopatra occurs by Canidius, who refers to Antonius' love for Cleopatra as an "An vnchast loue of this Aegiptian" (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 4.1). Although this does not blatantly relay that Cleopatra has dark skin, referring to her by her nationality as an Egyptian paired with the association of being impure, which early modern conceptions of race link with darkness (as opposed to chastity, which has a historical link to whiteness), may suggest that Cleopatra is dark-skinned.

Shakespeare portrays Cleopatra's dominance as exotic. In particular, Shakespeare incessantly displays Cleopatra as obsessed with an exotic, luxurious lifestyle. Shakespeare first establishes this idea in Act I Scene I, with the entrance of Cleopatra: "*Flourish. Enter ANTONY, CLEOPATRA, her Ladies, the Train, with Eunuchs fanning her*" ("The Tragedy of..." I.i.9). This immediately provides Cleopatra with the reputation of living a lavish, perhaps even excessive, lifestyle. Furthermore, in a scene where men lust over Cleopatra openly, Shakespeare describes Cleopatra as "Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy, / Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too, / And made a gap in nature" ("The Tragedy of..." II.ii.222-224). Here, Shakespeare crafts a strange, mystical depiction of Cleopatra as a figure that can alter the way gravity operates. Shakespeare's decision to include this description of Cleopatra contributes to the ideas both that Cleopatra is unworldly and that natural laws in Egypt (since Cleopatra is symbolic of it) function differently. Shakespeare even suggests that Cleopatra is, "O'erpicturing that Venus," or looks better than Venus ("The Tragedy of..." p.128). Shakespeare thus supports his racialization of Cleopatra's dominance with the exoticization of her being, which hinges on her portrayal as non-white.

Shakespeare builds upon this racialized, exoticized portrayal of Cleopatra by sexualizing her as well. This renders Cleopatra's erotic power as black and promiscuous. Cleopatra demonstrates possessing erotic power through her association with sex and magnetism, which men feel dominated by. For example, Agrippa replies to Enobarbus' fetishization of Cleopatra by replying with phrases like, "O, rare for Antony!" ("The Tragedy of..." II.i.212) and "Rare Egyptian!" ("The Tragedy of..." II.i.224); Agrippa first discusses Cleopatra in terms of Antony (by saying "for Antony"), and then reduces

Cleopatra to her identity as an Egyptian (“The Tragedy of...”). This simultaneously displays an objectification of Cleopatra, and an acknowledgement of her erotic power. Moreover, Caesar’s final speech, after Cleopatra has died, has a reference that, although may be read as alchemical, has sexual undertones: “Most probable / That so she died; for her physician tells me / She hath pursued conclusions infinite / Of easy ways to die” (“The Tragedy of...” V.ii.344-347). This alludes to Cleopatra’s alleged promiscuity¹³. Shakespeare adds to this sexualization of Cleopatra with via the clearest reference to Cleopatra and Antony’s sex life. This sole description of Cleopatra and Antony having sex involves crossdressing and an inversion of the stereotypical power dynamic between men and women: “That time,—O times!—/ I laugh'd him out of patience; and that night / I laugh'd him into patience; and next morn, / Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed; / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippian” (“The Tragedy of...” II.v.18-23). This crossdressing scene emphasizes Cleopatra as a commanding figure, and feminizes Antony. Shakespeare therefore portrays Cleopatra as a domineering, sexual figure, who emasculates Antony.

Daniel portrays the implications of Cleopatra’s racialized, sexualized dominance through her public power. For example, in Act 1 Scene 1, just before saying Cleopatra’s name, the Chorus cautions against Cleopatra’s lasciviousness: “And wanton loose respect, that dooth it selfe forget. / And *CLEOPATRA* now, / Well sees the dangerous way / Shee tooke, and car'd not bow, / Which led her to decay. And likewise makes vs pay / For her

¹³ Additionally, it is worth noting that Shakespeare also references Cleopatra’s former male partners and illegitimate son named Caesarion multiple times in the play, further highlighting that Cleopatra has had sexual partners other than Antony (“The Tragedy of...” III.vi.5-8; III.xiii.168-170).

disordred lust... And thus shee hath her state, her selfe and vs vndunne” (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 1.1). This makes early modern audience members recall the historical Cleopatra in a negative, lustful light. The Chorus later describes Egypt as “misterious,” a “wonder breeder,” a place without legal and religious code, and “wanton luxurie” (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 4.1). Since Cleopatra symbolizes Egypt, one can interpret this as a vision of Cleopatra as well. The Chorus’ descriptions of Cleopatra and Egypt reveal Cleopatra’s reputation as wielding a seductive, erotic power.

Thomas May also illustrates Cleopatra’s outward dominance as having public implications. Perhaps most obviously, when Caesar and Mecoenas discuss the Battle of Actium, Mecoenas predicts that Antony will desert his soldiers again for Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.1). In the same scene, Caesar describes Antony as “...more than drunk with Cleopatra's charms,” accusing him of losing loyalty to Romans (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.1)¹⁴. Cleopatra acknowledges that Antony left this battle because of her, and he admits that “Yet overcharg'd with love, [he] lost the day, / And in [his] Mistress presence ran away” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.2). Cleopatra’s vocalized awareness of her power over Antony reveals her certainty of her dominance over him; his confession of this uneven power dynamic displays the extent of her influence on him. Later in the play, Agrippa also acknowledges Cleopatra’s unusual power over Antony: “Employs my wonder: was it ever seen / A Woman rul'd an Emperor till now? / What Horse the Mare, what Bull obeys the Cow? / Nature that Monster Love does disavow: / In all her kinds only fantastick Man / Finds ways of folly which no other can” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*,

¹⁴ This notion of Cleopatra being charming reoccurs throughout the text, by both Iras and Canidius (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 2.1; 3.2).

2.1). Here, Agrippa argues that Cleopatra's ruling over Antony is unnatural. Additionally, Thyreus recognizes Cleopatra's power over Antony, claiming that she rules him (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 3.2). Cleopatra thus publicly dominates Antony, which other characters interpret as Antony being weak.

Sedley frames Cleopatra's eroticized, black dominance in *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy* with ideology that shames feminine sexuality. Sedley establishes this in Act 1 Scene 1, when Mecoenas states "As men till Impotent are seldom Chaste" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.1). This demonizes sex and associates power with chastity. Furthermore, when Mecoenas rapes Octavia to prevent her from suicide, like in *The Wonder of Women*, Sedley portrays sex as an exercise of power dynamics. After her rape, Octavia reveals an internalization of misogynistic ideas about women's sexuality: "Wives (like good Subjects, who to Tyrants bow) / To Husbands though unjust, long patience owe: / They were for Freedom made, Obedience We, / Courage their vertue, ours is Chastity" (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 3.1). One can interpret this as a combination of an adoption of sexist ideas about feminine sexuality as well as residual shame from her sexual assault. Here, Octavia states that men must be brave, and can make decisions, while women must be subservient, and chaste¹⁵. This reveals the prevalence and contagious nature of misogynistic interpretations of sex. Sedley thus surrounds Cleopatra's sexuality with negative portrayals of sex, which heighten the promiscuity of her black, erotic power.

Sedley, like Nabbes and Lee, also contextualizes Cleopatra's sexuality within a larger perception of love and war being mutually exclusive. For example, in Antony's

¹⁵ All relationship history of Octavia aside, her sexual assault guarantees that she is not chaste; this can be read as a demonstration of the shame that Mecoenas' assault on her causes.

discussion of the Battle of Actium, he tells Cleopatra “When to be near you I left Victory. / And chose to be companion of your flight, / Rather than conquer in a distant Fight” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.2). He therefore has to decide between love and war, because these two phenomena cannot mix. As a result of choosing love, his military colleagues shame him for his poor political strategy. Antony later asks Cleopatra for her help in fighting her battle: “But in your quarrel the whole World shall fight” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 2.1). This holds Cleopatra responsible for the entirety of the war, by referring to it as exclusively her’s. Even though he states that it is everyone’s duty to fight in her war, he continues to place the blame on her. This is similar to when Hannibal acknowledges that his mistress forces him into battle in *The Tragedy of Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow* (*Hannibal's Overthrow*, 1.1). Cleopatra proves to have internalized this by later saying: “And can you for My sake a War sustain?... Sure of this War I am the meer pretence, / How can our Love, to *Rome* give such offence?... But let in *Egypt*, Love and pleasure reign” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 3.2). Here, Cleopatra displays guilt for causing the war. Additionally, Sedley shows Cleopatra succumbing to contemporary stereotyping about Egypt being designed for pleasure, which highlights her alleveygedly inherent eroticism. Lastly, like in *Hannibal and Scipio*, Cleopatra further reinforces this idea of love and war being fundamentally separate through the common theme of women rendering soldiers rendered incapable of battle. Cleopatra conveys this idea by stating that love makes soldiers erratic (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 3.2). Hence, Sedley frames Cleopatra’s exoticized sexual power with ideologies purporting the idea that love and war

are mutually exclusive. These ideologies demonize Cleopatra's sexuality for corrupting Antony.

Garnier and Sidney reveal manifestations of Cleopatra's dominance via her extreme influence on Antonius. In Act 1 Scene 1, Antonius describes himself as being haunted by Cleopatra's image (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 1.1). This first section of the play establishes Antonius as consumed by Cleopatra's unworldly looks. Furthermore, Eras later asks Cleopatra "Feare of a woman troubled so his [Antonius'] sprite?...And should he [Antonius] then to warre haue led a Queene?" (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 2.1). Here, Eras describes Antonius as being distressed by Cleopatra, so much so that he was willing to cause political turmoil over her. This coincides with my aforementioned analysis of love and war needing to remain separate. Thereafter, when grieving for Cleopatra, Antonius describes himself as disheveled:

"So pittifull a sight was neuer seene. / Little and little Antonius was pull'd, / Now breathing death: his beard was all vnkempt, / His face and brest al bathed in his blood. / So hideous yet, and dieng as he was, / His was all vnkempt, / His face and brest al bathed in his blood. / So hideous..." (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 4.1).

In this same speech, Antonius mourns Cleopatra, falling to the ground in sadness (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 4.1). This mind-consuming grief paralyzes Antonius completely, demonstrating his reliance on her emotionally. Garnier and Sidney thus portray Cleopatra's dominance as ruining Antony.

Daniel reveals manifestations of Cleopatra's dominance by inverting the dynamic present in Mariamne and Sophonisba plays in which males are the first to suggest suicide.

In *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Cleopatra wishes to commit suicide for Anthony first, and acts fearless of death. For example, after acknowledging her beauty and the world's general admiration of her, Cleopatra states that she will be smart enough to know when it is her time to die (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 1.1). Similarly, Proculei, who saves Cleopatra from suicide, relays Cleopatra's suicidal ideation to Caesar, saying "Shee saide, shee crau'd not life, but leaue to die" (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 2.1). This functions as Cleopatra's attempt to act on her beliefs regarding exercising control over the length of her lifespan¹⁶. The Chorus supports Cleopatra's desire for death, by stating that she will gain respect by dying, because without her kingdom or Anthony, she lives in a state of perpetual embarrassment (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 2.1). In Act 4 Scene 1, Cleopatra's suicidal ideation continues, where Cleopatra determines that her time to die approaches her, as foreshadowed above: "For *Cleopatra* now can loue no more.../ And last farewell of my dead *Anthony*: / Whose deerely honour'd Tom be must heere receaue / This sacrifice, the last before I dye" (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 4.1). She concludes this soliloquy by stating that she will bring herself to Anthony via death, which will free her soul, as she "dye[s] like a Queene, and rest[s] without controule" (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 4.1). The latter part of this sentence plays off of Cleopatra's aforementioned association with excess, as well as eternity. In pretending to no longer wish to die, she relays a similar sentiment, claiming that her affection for Anthony will follow him as he passes away (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 4.1). Daniel represents Cleopatra's dominance via her masculine willingness to die for Anthony.

¹⁶ Interestingly, Cleopatra says this in spite of her kids being alive; nevertheless, she hopes they will receive a fortune when she dies (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 2.1).

Although Cleopatra seems unbothered by dying, Daniel and Sedley portray Cleopatra as possessing a wealth of triumphal anxiety. This is interesting, because Sophonisba and Mariamne are fair, chaste, and without pride. Cleopatra, on the other hand, can be read as racially ambiguous, promiscuous, and prideful. In fact, this pride forces Cleopatra to fear triumph more than death. In *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, Cleopatra acts fearful of Caesar “violat[ing]” her dead body in triumph (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 2.1). This anxiety foreshadows Caesar’s blunt fantasy about parading Cleopatra in a Roman triumph (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 3.2). Furthermore, in Act 4, Cleopatra mentions her fear of being in Caesar’s triumph in her soliloquy, saying that she would blush with shame (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 4.1). The notion of blushing functions as bound within this larger idea of women’s shame, as one can interpret blush as traditionally linked with being fair and innocent. Moreover, Cleopatra’s fear becomes even more tangible when Daniel describes her despondency in the tomb, envisioning herself in a triumph (*The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, 5.1). In *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, Sedley writes Cleopatra as suffering from extreme triumphal anxiety, demonstrating her alleged prideful nature as an unchaste, (potentially) dark-skinned woman. For example, early in the play, Cleopatra expresses fear of being overtaken by Romans, stating that she would rather die (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 1.2). This foreshadows a wealth of future expressions of triumphal anxiety to come, such as when she predicts that Caesar taking over will cause her to be in triumph (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 3.2). Later, Cleopatra even warns Charmion that Caesar will include them in his triumph (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 5.1). However, as discussed, Cleopatra’s exercises her agency through her suicide; just before she dies, she

expresses comfort in being “from triumph and contempt secure” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 5.1). Photinus later demonstrates knowledge of her original anxiety, when describing it to Caesar: “The Queen your Roman Triumphs ever fear'd, / And therefore Poysons of all sorts prepar'd...” (*Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*, 5.1). Daniel and Sedley thus portray Cleopatra with triumphal anxiety, revealing an inverse relationship between fairness and pride, as compared to plays about Mariamne and Sophonisba.

Similarly, in *The tragedie of Antonie*, Cleopatra’s eroticized, black power causes her to have triumphal anxiety; however, here, this exists in a manner much less apparent. This is fascinating, as Garnier and Sidney more frequently depict Cleopatra as fair in this play, fitting into my theory regarding an inverse relationship between fairness and pride. For example, when a servant of Caesar approaches Cleopatra to take her for triumph, Cleopatra acts distressed: “The poore soule at these words euen rapt with ioy...We bare him to the Tombe, but entred not. / For she so feared captiue to be made, / And that she should to Rome in triumph goe” (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 4.1). However, because this is an immediate threat, this anxiety is rational. In the same scene, Caesar contrasts this deep despair with his excitement, wishing to keep Cleopatra safe in order to be able to parade her around in Rome (*The tragedie of Antonie*, 4.1). This again shows Cleopatra’s justified fear of triumph in this scene, as the threat is immediate, unlike her foreshadowing anxiety in early scenes of *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* and *Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy*. Fascinatingly, Cleopatra proves to be more anxious about triumphs, and her future portrayal in cultural memory, when playwrights like Sedley depict her as brown, as opposed to fair, like Garnier and Sidney do.

Thus, the aforementioned playwrights unanimously depict Cleopatra as a dominant, erotic force, not possessing chastity or employing strategic silence like Mariamne and Sophonisba. I argue that Shakespeare and Sedley demonstrate Cleopatra's racialized, erotic influence on the men around her. This racialization heightens Cleopatra's alleged promiscuity. Though I contend that Daniel, Garnier, and Sidney racialize Cleopatra's dominant, erotic power as white, contemporary audiences would have associated Cleopatra as a historical figure with her Egyptian nationality, perhaps making her racially ambiguous. Regardless, seventeenth-century playwrights all depict Cleopatra as a (mixed) racialized, sexualized being, who openly exerts her power over Antony. These representations both within my study of Cleopatra as well as my broader analysis of seventeenth-century ancient royalty more broadly display an anticorrelation between fairness and pride.

Conclusion

This essay argues that the unusual burst of plays about ancient royalty on the seventeenth-century stage was a way for playwrights to think about the relationship between race and sexuality. Through my investigation of early modern plays about ancient royalty, two models arise: Mariamne and Sophonisba personify one model, functioning as white, seemingly compliant figureheads. Early modern dramatists depict these women as fair, chaste, and often silent. Despite Mariamne and Sophonisba's respective inaction, these qualities alone catalyze irrationality in their male counterparts. These portrayals of Mariamne and Sophonisba greatly differ from that of Cleopatra, the other model of ancient royalty, who encompasses blackness and resistance. Playwrights represent Cleopatra as a blatantly dominant, often racialized, erotic force. The notion of playwrights utilizing ancient royalty as ways to think about exemplary sexuality in terms of white chastity and black promiscuity reveal the stakes of my argument: these ancient, royal figures serving as models for seventeenth-century, female audience members' sexuality conveys the harmful idea that women's race influences their sexual power. I demonstrate this phenomenon through my location of an inverse relationship across plays between fairness and pride. Thereafter, I contextualize this dynamic within a broader pattern of white bodies abstaining from sex wielding power over men; I argue that playwrights did not sexualize or deem these white women lascivious, like the black woman that playwrights portray as outwardly dominant, defiant, and promiscuous.

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