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Authorship

Unlike so many surviving Renaissance plays that remain anonymous and undated, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* is unusual in the fact that we possess such a wealth of information on the life of the author. We even know the dates of the play's original and later publications. It is likely that we have such a comprehensive knowledge of the playwright because of the literary circles he was moving in and the aristocratic audience he wrote for, which meant that he was laudable enough to be chronicled in Renaissance records. Throughout his life (1562/63-1619),[1] Samuel Daniel wrote a great many works on a variety of highly differing subjects, from love sonnets to tragicomedies to history books. Daniel mixed with the most prestigious literary minds of his age. His patron for the beginning of his career was the Countess of Pembroke, Mary Sidney, and it is to her that *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* is dedicated.

Dating

The Tragedy of Cleopatra first appeared in the Stationers' Register in 1593 (but is referred to as the 1594 version,)[2] appendaged to an edition of *Delia and Rosamond. The Tragedy of Cleopatra* was prefaced by a dedicatory poem to the Countess of Pembroke. This play was re-published extensively throughout Daniel's life, three times with minor revisions.[3] The last revised copy, published in 1607, had such extensive changes that it led critics to debate whether or not Daniel had read or witnessed a performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (which was finished around 1606-7.)[4] It was suggested that Daniel had made these substantial modifications to make his play more stage friendly, as prior to the 1607 edition, due to the long nature of the speeches and the lack of action or stage direction, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* was very much a 'closet drama,' (a play that was never intended for the stage.)
In 1594, an unknown crisis tore Daniel away from the Wilton Circle and the patronage of Mary Sidney, and Daniel went on to acquire new patrons. It is interesting that in the last edition of his play, Daniel's revised 'Cleopatra' differs so greatly from the 1594 version he wrote while at Pembroke.[5] Daniel could have chosen to modify his play for several reasons. It is possible that Daniel wanted to break away from the enforced structure 'imposed' upon him by the Countess. Another motive could have been that Daniel wanted to update his play in keeping with his contemporaries, such as Shakespeare, by making it performable. This 1607 version of the play was published again with minor alterations in 1611 in *Certaine Small Workes Heretofore Divulged by Samuel Daniell ... and now againe by him corrected and augmented.* In the 1605 and 1607 versions of 'Cleopatra,' the dedicatory Ode had been omitted entirely, perhaps revealing the extent of the disagreement that had arisen between

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[1] Rees (1964) 1-2.

[2] Rees (1964) 62.

[3] Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra,* 71.

[4] Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra,* 1.

[5] Rees (1964) 107.

Mary Sidney and Daniel. By the 1611 publication, however, Daniel had had his patronage by the Countess restored and the dedication became once again included at the forefront of his play, having been revised accordingly.

Introductory dedication: Mary Sidney and family

In the Ode, the name 'Sidney'[6] reoccurs. In continuation of the praise of his patron, Daniel extended his dedication to include the immediate members of Mary Sidney's family. Mary's brother, Sir Philip Sidney, was another prolific poet who was highly celebrated by his contemporaries and is regarded today as one of the Elizabethan age's most important literary figures. When Philip died in battle (1586,)[7] it seems that the Countess had a special desire for Daniel to write 'Cleopatra.' Philip had despaired of the drama of his age. In his *Apology for Poetry* (written in 1580-81[8] and published in 1595 posthumously,)[9] he implored for the literature that was written and enjoyed by the Ancients to be restored. The only English work that Philip Sidney exempted from his scathing criticism was *Gorboduc* (published in 1561-2, 1570-1,)[10] which Philip praised for the Senecan style of its writing and morality.[11] *Gorboduc* therefore, is a firm starting point for those who want to know more about the style of literature Philip Sidney admired. It seems that Mary Sidney took it upon herself to commission a play in the model of her deceased brother's literary ideal, and this is perhaps why there is a distinct Classical and Senecan style to 'Cleopatra.'

We also see a reference to 'Wilton.'[12] Mary Sidney established the Wilton Circle, a group of literary elites who gathered at one of her family estates. This group included individuals who we can recognise today as some of the greatest poets of the Elizabethan period, such as Edmund Spenser and Michael Drayton. Even from this brief overview we can see that Daniel was mixing with the upper echelons of society. This group of collective minds aimed to challenge the Classics through their literary achievements and to ennoble the English language as a result.

Closely tied into the Sidney family was the 2nd Earl of Essex, who married the widow of Philip Sidney, Frances Walsingham. Robert Devereux, (the 2nd Earl of Essex) was the cousin of Elizabeth I and was promoted to the position of the Queen's favourite, replacing Robert Dudley (his step father.)[13] This title, as with any position associated with the court of

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[6] Daniel, *Front matter,* 81, 88.

[7] Alexander (2006) xxi.

[8] Rees (1964) 44.

[9] Kinney (2002) 488.

[10] Rees (1964) 45.

[11] Rees (1964) 45.

[12] Daniel, *Front matter,* 18.

[13] Hopkins (1990) 83.

Elizabeth might sound 'glittering and splendid, but it held dangers too,'[14] as Devereux was to find out. Devereux led several failed military campaigns, the most significant being in Ireland where Devereux agreed to sign a peace agreement with Hugh O'Neil, the leader of the rebels.[15] This decision angered Elizabeth, who saw the truce as a submission that made England and its government seem weak. Soon after this failed mission, Devereux was placed under house arrest, following which in 1601,[16] Devereux led a *coup d'état* against Elizabeth in an attempt to capture the Tower of London. The 'Essex rebellion' was swiftly overthrown and Devereux was executed for high treason on 8th February 1601.[17] It is interesting, therefore, that not long after, in 1605,[18] a performance of one of Daniel's plays, *Philotas,* resulted in an investigation by the Privy Council for the accusation of political propaganda. It was thought that the hero of *Philotas* bore a close (and sympathetic) resemblance to Robert Devereux and his political situation. Daniel pleaded innocent to this charge and the accusations were eventually dropped. Like *Philotas*, 'Cleopatra' is a political play and we are left to wonder how potentially dangerous 'Cleopatra' was, especially as we see some suggested references to Elizabeth and James I throughout this play.

Historical context

After the assassination of Julius Caesar, the first Dictator of Rome, Octavius, Antony and Lepidus were the co-rulers or second Triumvirate that made up the uneasy alliance of the Roman Empire. Lepidus did not have as much military power as Octavius or Antony. This meant the Empire was essentially ruled between Octavius in the West and Antony in the East. Antony became enthralled by Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, and he deserted his responsibilities in Rome to be with her in Alexandria. During this time Octavius, (aware that he could become the leading power in Rome if he could free himself from the military threat of Antony,) gained favour in Rome by launching a brutal propaganda campaign against both Antony and Cleopatra. He presented Cleopatra as a corrupt, Eastern 'other' who had lured Antony away from his civic duty. In turn Octavius presented Antony as a cuckold, who had turned his back on Rome, for a decadent Eastern existence. You can see these themes presented in the literature of that time, especially in the Augustan poets.
The power of Rome was threatened. This forced Antony to return to Rome where he recommenced his military duty alongside Octavius. After the threat had subsided, Antony married Octavius' sister, Octavia, in a bid to strengthen the alliance. Antony discovered that Octavius had embarked on new campaigns without his knowledge. This discovery provoked him to desert Octavia and to return to Egypt where Antony declared himself and Cleopatra sole rulers of the East. This blatant antagonism gave Octavius the perfect excuse to declare war on Egypt (and Antony.) A naval battle was launched against Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31BC and Octavius defeated them. Cleopatra fled the battle and returned to Alexandria, where she feigned her own death, afraid that Antony would accuse her of

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[14] Hopkins (1990) 82.

[15] Hopkins (1990) 103.

[16] Connolly & Hopkins (2007) 155.

[17] Connolly & Hopkins (2007) 155.

[18] Michel (1970) 36, fn. 1.

desertion and betrayal. Cleopatra's plan backfired, however, as Antony believed the news of her death and consequently killed himself out of devotion and defeat.

This is where the *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* begins. It is interesting that Daniel did not acknowledge the historical background of Antony and Cleopatra in his play and he instead favoured the psychological and moral aspects of the story. As *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* was intended as a 'closet drama' this is perhaps why there is a lack of action (bar the 'Monument Scene') and Daniel concentrated more on analysing the emotions of his characters. Throughout the play we see a softer side to this Egyptian Queen as she laments so emphatically over the fate of her lover and her son. This compassionate presentation is a far cry from the historical accounts we have of Cleopatra, who was created into a monstrous figure by Octavius and the Roman writers.

Daniel's 'Cleopatra' and other influences

As Rees eloquently put it, it is remarkable given the many variants of this story that anything of any originality got written at all.[19] The French writer Robert Garnier published *Marc-Antonie* in 1585[20] which was translated by Mary Sidney in 1592.[21] It is thought that Garnier in turn was influenced by the prominent French playwright, Etienne Jodelle and his play *Cleopatre Captive* (1552.)[22] It is no surprise, therefore, that as Daniel heavily alluded to Mary Sidney's *Antonie* we can see the influences of Sidney, Garnier and Jodelle at certain points throughout Daniel's play.

It is thought that Daniel was also influenced by Shakespeare and his *Antony and Cleopatra* but this fact is difficult to prove. Despite the many similarities that would lead a reader to assume that Daniel had read/seen a performance of *Antony and Cleopatra,* the matter is complicated by the fact that both authors would have been aware of *The life of Marcus Antony* by Plutarch. Plutarch is the main historical source we have for Antony and Cleopatra and both Shakespeare and Daniel followed the chronological order of events found in this text. It is almost impossible to distinguish, whether Daniel was alluding to Shakespeare or whether he was just using the account of Plutarch (like Shakespeare) as a historical model. The historical accuracy of Plutarch itself is debatable; Plutarch wrote in the first half of the 2nd Century AD,[23] more than a century after the death of Antony and Cleopatra and as a Roman writer, he was invariably biased against them.

All of these works, some of which we know were read by Daniel, some of which we are unsure; undoubtedly serve to give a reader familiar with the literary history, a new perspective on the many textual layers to this play. Due to the extensive influence of secondary texts I will only include a few examples from each play to illustrate the similarities in theme and content.

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[19] Rees (1964) 50.

[20] Rees (1964) 46.

[21] Rees (1964) 46.

[22] Sider (2007) 153.

[23] Plutarch (1999) viiii.

Language and stylistic techniques

Despite the arguments to suggest that *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* was later modified to become more stage-worthy, we still encounter several stylistic techniques that Daniel had been experimenting with to demonstrate his literary skills to the Elizabethan audience. Daniel used a variety of stylistic methods that can be found throughout the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Stichomythia – In Act I, Scene i, we are first introduced to a linguistic technique that was frequently used in Ancient tragedies. Stichomythia is the use of short, sharp sentences by alternating speakers to aid a sense of importance and earnest. Daniel used this technique predominantly in the first half of the play and returned to use it frequently in the final, most dramatic act, to create a feeling of menace and urgency. (To see an example of stichomythia in a Classical text, see *Antigone* by Sophocles.)

Rhetoric – The art of articulate and persuasive speech was a skill highly valued in the Ancient world. The heroes of Ancient literature all possessed excellent oratory skills. In Classical times, the great thinkers and politicians performed publically in the crowded *Agora* and sophistry was deemed an art form. Daniel orchestrated the use of rhetorical questions into his play to create a sense of drama and to add a persuasive effect. Daniel implements this technique during Cleopatra's emotive speeches, (the most notable being in Act IV, Scene ii, at the grave of Antony.) Daniel has Cleopatra use this style of language extensively and the added application of rhetoric serves to emphasise the height of his protagonist's distress and grief. (To see an example of rhetorical questions in a Classical text, see *Medea* by Euripides.)

Chorus - The use of a Chorus also attributes this play with the style employed by the Greek and Roman tragedists. The Ancient playwrights used the Chorus as a form of light relief, to break up the heavy-going action with a song and a dance. It is the job of the Chorus, who in this case are a group of Egyptian citizens, to summarise the action and to predict what will happen in the future. They act as a voice of morality and tend to expand upon the ethical themes introduced. (To see an example of the Chorus in a Classical text, see *Oedipus* by Sophocles.)
There are no stage directions in *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* to indicate when the Chorus both enter and exit the stage, unlike the other characters. In Greek tragedies the Chorus were situated in the *Orchestra,* an alcove at the front of the stage, where they entered after the *parados* (their introductory episode) and stayed until the *exodus* (the final scene of dialogue.) As in the Ancient tragedies, the Chorus are generally a constant presence throughout the whole play; this is perhaps why Daniel did not include any stage directions for the appearance and exit of the Chorus in the original.

Dramatis Personae

The original Dramatis Personae contains thirteen names; I have fourteen as I have added *Titius* who speaks in Act V. I have changed the spelling of several characters to correspond with those that are found in Shakespeare to avoid uncertainty: *Caesario* to *Caesarion, Eras* to *Iras, Rhodon* to *Rodon* and *Charmion* to *Charmian*. I have also added a brief description of each character to aid the reader.

Editorial procedure

Names - In the original, the opening speaker of each scene is not noted, so I have added the name of the appropriate speaker. I have changed the spelling of 'Anthony' to 'Antony' to dispel confusion but have left the occasions where Antony is referred to as 'Antonius' so it does not interfere with the metre.

Punctuation and grammar – I have added speech prefixes to indicate both direct and indirect speech. I have used the modernised version of punctuation and spelling. I have edited out all the unnecessary 'e's' from the ends of words and I have added a stressed 'E' (è) to lines where it befits the metre. Daniel had a tendency to combine the word 'the' to the next word in the line, such as, *th'Ascendent* and to place ''d' instead of 'ed' on the ends of words, such as *rul'd*. I have changed these instances throughout the play to 'the' and 'ed' except in the places where it would interfere with the Iambic Pentameter of the line.

Miscellaneous – I have fixed all the paragraphs together into one continuous prose, as I believe not all the paragraphs in the original aided the understanding of the text. There were two Act IIIs in the unedited script so I have altered the second Act III to an Act IV. I have included the stage directions that I believe befit the action implied in the text. As the location alters from Alexandria to Rome, I have added the setting where I believe the action is being held at the beginning of each scene. I have added line references to the play at every line of 5, instead of the original 25.

Themes, allusions and similes
Storms, tempests and ships

Repeatedly throughout Act 1, Scene i, Rome and Octavius are compared to a storm that is relentlessly battering the foundations of Egypt. Egypt in turn is portrayed as the sinking ship that is slowly buckling under the might of the storm. Most of the known world had been engulfed by the expanding Roman Empire, save only a few; it is therefore, a fitting comparison to liken Octavius and Rome to a brutal, unstoppable force of nature that seems to be encompassing the globe.

Storms and tempests are an important part of Classical literature. They feature in the epic poems of the *Iliad,* the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid.* In fact, we are first introduced to the hero of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas during a storm. Later, when Neptune quells the angry sea, the epic simile of a statesman who is calming a volatile crowd is used by Virgil, to describe this intervention by the sea god.[24] The word 'state'[25] is repeated several times in the first act of *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*, which along with the mention of a storm could draw comparison to the *Aeneid*. There can be no escaping the link of water to the historical story of Antony and Cleopatra as it is an element inexorably intertwined with the story. Alexandria was situated right on the Egyptian Coastline where Cleopatra's lighthouse used to overlook the shore. Egypt was a massive trading country that the Egyptian citizens used the river Nile to transport goods

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[24] Virgil, 148-154.

[25] Daniel, 1.1.10,40,79,124,129,131,135,138.

around the world. Due to the climate, the river Nile was also the main source of life in Egypt. The river irrigated the land and kept the country fertile.

It was also at the naval battle of Actium in 31BC that Octavius finally triumphed over Antony and Cleopatra. This is perhaps why Daniel chose the metaphor of a doomed ship to represent Egypt and Cleopatra, as it was as the result of her defeated ships that both Cleopatra and her country died.

Astrology, fate and fortune

Astrology is a theme that is found throughout the play; the emphasis Daniel put on the stars links with the idea of nautical navigation and the 'ship' imagery mentioned previously. The image of astrology also ties in with the theme of destiny and fate that is so apparent in this play, as the Ancient astrologers used the sky and the stars to foretell the events on earth. 'Augury,' the technique of determining the will of the gods through the behaviour of birds, was a common practice among the Ancients. The mention of birds, along with the theme I will discuss below, would also bring to mind the image of prophecies and the cosmos. The idea of the wheel of fortune and the cyclical rotation of providence were very much mulled upon by the Ancients. The Ancients were taught through literature to be wary of great fortune, as the general contention was that the Gods lifted up those that were intended to fall. Herodotus, in his *Histories*, stated how nothing is stable in mortal events and that the gods hold sway over all human affairs: 'human life is like a revolving wheel and never allows the same people to continue long in prosperity.'[26] Herodotus revealed how the gods could strike down great and powerful men on a whim, which is why you should never believe that good fortune will be constant. 'Look to the end... Often enough God gives a man a glimpse of happiness, and then utterly ruins him.'[27] The theme of how great Empires and all great Kings, given time, will eventually fall, is a theme we see reiterated by Daniel.

Divided sympathy (in the imagery of birds)

The idea of Rome and Octavius being a predatory and all-consuming force was a theme that was lamented and questioned by the Classical poets. Is human cost acceptable in the pursuit of the noble Roman cause? This difficulty is highlighted by Virgil in the celebrated Roman epic, the *Aeneid*. In this text it is the apparent sympathy shown for the African Queen Dido that led to the debate that Virgil was critical of the harsh military regime of Augustan Rome. Running throughout the work is the apparent conflict between Virgil's 'public voice' and his 'private voice.' His 'public voice' being Virgil's patriotic glorification of Rome's heritage and destiny, with his 'private voice' being Virgil's humanity, sensitivity and apparent sympathy for Dido.

Virgil in another text, the *Eclogues*, has the image of the victim of Rome as an innocent animal 'a dove' and Rome as the predatory hunter, 'an eagle.'[28] It was not just Virgil that used literature as a way to lament the sorrow of war. Horace, in his 'Cleopatra Ode', described Octavian's pursuit of Cleopatra as 'like a hawk after gentle doves or a swift hunter

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[26] Herodotus, 90.

[27] Herodotus, 16.

[28] Virgil, 9.13.

after a hare.' [29] It is Cleopatra who is portrayed as the vulnerable animal that does not stand a chance of survival against the predatory Octavius. This evokes a sense of sympathy in its impression of inevitability. Cleopatra could be being portrayed as the weaker, innocent animal to evoke sympathy and suggest Horace's ambivalence towards Octavius' brutal military campaigns. To continue the use of 'bird' imagery from Horace, it is interesting that Cleopatra is referred to as a 'fowl'[30] in the closing acts of this play. If Daniel had read the works of Virgil and Horace, it could be argued that Daniel implemented this theme of the victim and the hunter to describe his characters in a similar sympathetic vein.

Suicide

Suicide in the Roman world was viewed as noble if you were faced with no alternative method to preserve your name. If Cleopatra had lived, she would have been paraded through Rome as an imperial prize. This is why Antony describes Cleopatra as 'brave'[31] and applies the word 'glory'[32] to his death. The two words are reminiscent of the Augustan poet Horace and his 'Cleopatra Ode,' where Cleopatra's suicide is also described as being a 'nobler death'[33] and she ends his Ode as a 'humble woman in a proud triumph.'[34] Horace also described Cleopatra's method of suicide as 'brave'[35] which gives the impression that the poet admired the Queen's decision to shun public shame and retain her dignity. If Daniel was knowledgeable in the works of Horace, then it could be argued that Daniel employed the use of these admiring adjectives to his Cleopatra to attest to his knowledge of the Ancient poet.

Dido, stoicism and lamentation

In *Aeneid 1* Queen Dido of Carthage is introduced to the plot, and it would have been apparent to any contemporary Roman reader, with Actium still fresh in their minds, the obvious parallels Virgil draws between this African Queen and Cleopatra. There can be no denying that Dido, who seduces a Roman hero and later commits suicide, holds reverberations of the notorious Cleopatra.
In Act IV, Scene ii, Cleopatra is supplicating at the tomb of Antony with 'odours, incense and garlands'[36] and in her mind she has already resolved to die, 'So shall I act the last of life with glory, Die like a Queen, and rest without control.'[37] This scene, along with Act V, Scene i,

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[29] Horace, 37.17-18.

[30] Daniel, 4.2.105.

[31] Daniel, 1.2.29.

[32] Daniel, 1.2.39.

[33] Horace, 37.22.

[34] Horace, 37.32.

[35] Horace, 37.26.

[36] Daniel, 5,1,10.

[37] Daniel, 4,2,163-164.

(where Titius relates to Dolabella Cleopatra's reaction to his letter,) is similar to book IV of the *Aeneid* where Dido is at the tomb of her deceased husband Sychaeus. Dido is also supplicating sacrifices (along with incense) at the tomb of Sychaeus and at this point is also determined to die. 'She could bear no longer to look up to the bowl of heaven, and her resolve to leave the light was strengthened when she was laying offerings on the incense-breathing altars.'[38]

In addition to this parallel, Daniel touched on the idea of fire in the sacrifice scene, 'Thou hast without my tears, within my flame'[39], and this reference to flames to anyone familiar with the Classics would have automatically brought to mind Dido and her subsequent fate. The theme of fire is prevalent throughout books I-IV of the *Aeneid* as Virgil described the all-consuming love Dido holds for Aeneas to flames: 'Dido was on fire with love,'[40] 'the fire was eating the soft marrow of her bones,'[41] 'consumed with hidden fire.'[42] Similarly, Shakespeare's Cleopatra, in the first part of her final speech compares herself to the less tangible element such as 'fire and air.'[43] This could be seen as a prophetic reference to her later suicide by the parallel to Dido.

Cleopatra and Dido were both figures worthy of pity who had suffered tremendous losses during their lifetime. It is feasible that Daniel wanted to compare these two Queens, both of aristocratic lineage and education, to Mary Sidney. Mary Sidney had suffered the loss of her beloved brother and therefore, could relate to the principal theme of torment and anguish running throughout *The Tragedy of Cleopatra*.

The idea of stoicism is another theme found throughout the duration of the play. Stoicism was a school of philosophical thought founded in Ancient Greece. Stoics believed that one should follow 'reason' and not 'passion' in the face of adversity. Although in history Cleopatra she was seen by the Roman people as an uncivilized barbarian, Cleopatra chose to take her life in a stoically Roman manner and thus embodies the characteristics they so admired. If Daniel intended to parallel Cleopatra to Mary Sidney, then this virtuous character trait was also deliberately designed to be attributed to his patron.

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[38] Virgil, 4,453-454.

[39] Daniel, 4,2,44.

[40] Virgil, 4.69.

[41] Virgil, 4.67-68.

[42] Virgil, 4.2-3.

[43] Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra,* 5.2.289.