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'A WOMAN IS A DISH FOR THE GODS': SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF MYTH
TO CRITICIZE PATRIARCHY

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BY

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The Globe Theatre is crowded tonight. In the pit, a great number of common-folk, groundlings, stand in anticipation of the performance of *Troilus and Cressida*. The wealthier folk look on from cushions in the gallery. All watch as the man dressed as the heroic Troilus appears on stage professing his lovesick woes. The audience listens longingly as Troilus calls upon the god Apollo to transform his lover's self to the bellicose hero. The Elizabethans know the story of Apollo and of his love for Daphne, and wonder why Troilus needs help. Little do they know they are about to be exposed to a subliminal message, a hidden meaning.

William Shakespeare's canon is famous throughout the world, studied by scholars as well as read by laymen for leisure. These scholars and laymen value Shakespeare's works for their content and form, at the same time that they criticize them for their flaws. On the surface, it is clear that Shakespeare touches on many issues in his poems and plays, such as love and war, but hidden underneath are messages that are ambiguous.

CENSORSHIP

These hidden messages are a product of censorship. During the Renaissance, Sir Francis Walsingham established the State apparatus which helped to protect society against counter-Reformation activists. This apparatus hindered playwrights from expressing true feelings towards the government because the theatre entertained large audiences. Because of this, the government feared that the playwrights might include seditious material against England and the Queen ("Censorship" 1). Shakespeare noticed this law and took great care to hide meanings in his works. Through the use of mythology, Shakespeare brings cultural history and a sense of heritage to his plays. But most importantly, he uses mythology as a device to expose social issues that occurred in the contemporary patriarchal society of Elizabethan England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH I

In 1558, Elizabeth Tudor graced England with her reign. England was so in love with the Queen that the people bought bootleg paintings of her to hang in their houses. The great poet, Spenser, even went so far as to write poetry about the Queen and common folk sang songs about her. She was praised highly; but she was also greatly admonished for refusing to get married which was something that was expected of a Queen. Elizabeth's decision to not get married was emasculative because she could not continue the royal bloodlines. This also prevented her from transferring power to a man. Elizabeth was, in fact, a woman running a patriarchal society. How could she rule without a king by her side? Elizabeth made a highly political statement in response to the opponents of her single status: she "wore her Coronation ring to symbolize her marriage to the Kingdom in the same way that professed nuns wear gold rings upon their hands to show that they are brides of Christ" (Heisch 50). Elizabeth wanted to be the wife to her people, the mother to her people, the female figure in the lives of all the people of England. She did not care about the masculine figure that was expected to be by her side. She instead saw that her role as a leader transcended the limits gender and stated in an oration, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king..." (Heisch 51). Though Elizabeth's sister, Mary Tudor, or "Bloody Mary", reigned before Elizabeth, she had a husband to share the power with. Elizabeth's reign and her insistence on leading by herself finally introduced the idea of a single female leader to Parliament and to all of England.

But introducing the concept of a woman in a position of absolute authority and power was not the only accomplishment of Elizabeth. Elizabeth showed her scholarly prowess by attending Latin plays and making speeches at various venues (Heisch 53). She was highly educated and wanted to spread education amongst the people of England. Therefore, she

established schools and universities across the country. As education rose, so did the interest of the history and the myths emerging from Greece and Rome, which “led men to try and imitate their perfections” (Heath 3). This interest in Greece and Rome influenced the schools to teach mythological texts such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which, coincidentally, was one of Shakespeare’s favorite texts to adopt in his plays.

MYTHOLOGY

Shakespeare makes use of Ovid’s text in most, if not all, of his plays. The tales of Apollo and Daphne, Philomela and Procne, and Dido and Aeneas can be found in *Troilus and Cressida*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* respectively. All three of these works are Roman, which is relevant to Elizabethan England, since during Elizabeth’s reign there was conflict with Italy as well as an emphasis on classical Roman education. Shakespeare takes advantage and makes use of the rise of classical education and mythology to point to flaws in England’s patriarchal society that is reflected in the portrayal of the Roman patriarchal society. Evidence of this claim can be seen through extensive reviews of literature concerning the cultural elements of England and Rome as well as in close analyses of Shakespeare’s plays *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.

Because the culture of Rome was so important to the Elizabethans, the Roman mythology that Shakespeare uses in his plays is equally as important. In order to understand the intent behind the allusions to these myths, one must know the tales in order to relate them to the Shakespearean characters and plots.

The Greco-Roman tale of Apollo and Daphne is one of love and loss. Apollo has taken on many forms as a god throughout history. He has taken on so many forms, in fact, that it may

be confusing for one to understand what he represents. Walter R. Agard, however, walks his readers through the many transformations of Apollo. First, Apollo was the god of light. As the god of light, he brought man healing and pestilence. Apollo was always the god of war, but went from the god of light to the “lord of the golden bow.” Agard expounds, only to add more confusion, that Apollo was chiefly celebrated as the god of intelligence, and the patron of the arts (99-101).

But his representation also varied depending on where he was being worshipped. The Romans saw Apollo as a great god of music. The Greeks worshipped Apollo as the tough fighter. Despite all of his transformations, Apollo is still always identified with enlightenment and deviation of knowledge, skill, and ability. Agard argues that this is because the Romans were hitting a “sentimental streak” and that the Greek poet was honored as an “interpreter of civic aspirations and ideals that were predominately masculine in character” (101). Both Elizabethan and Jacobean England appropriated Apollo’s identity based on their own political and cultural needs and priorities. In this sense, both societies are no different than ancient Rome or Greece.

Apollo, apparently, was also slightly arrogant. He taunted Eros, who was another archer, that he could not be as great of an archer as Apollo. Eros became enraged and coated one arrow in gold, which would cause lust, and another in lead, which caused hatred. Eros shot Apollo with the gold one and shot Daphne with the other. Apollo chased Daphne down until she was entirely too tired to run anymore. Her father, Peneus, helped Daphne by changing her into a laurel tree. Still, Apollo felt love for this tree and admired it greatly (Lee 1).

Apollo and Daphne are reflected in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*. In the play, the protagonist, Troilus, does not want to go to war with the Greeks because he is obsessing over a beautiful girl named Cressida. Cressida rejects Troilus at first, but then, over time, they fall in

love. The Greeks, however, want Cressida as a gift and peace-offering because Helen of Troy refuses to leave Paris. Cressida reluctantly goes and Troilus secretly follows after her. He finds her flirting with Demetrius and gives up on her. This is much like Apollo and Daphne because Troilus, like lustful Apollo, longs for Daphne and chases her. Though Cressida submits to Troilus, she still ends up running away like Daphne.

The myth of Philomela and Procne is a tale of lust and revenge. Though their story is not as frequently told as the story of Apollo and Daphne, Philomela and Procne are important figures in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

Philomela and Procne were the daughters of King Pandion of Athens. Procne's husband was King Teresius of Thrace, and they had a son named Itys. Though Procne and Teresius were wedded, Teresius was overtaken by an insatiable lust for Philomela and raped her. He then proceeded to cut out her tongue thinking this would stop Philomela from telling anyone of Teresius' wrong-doing. However, Philomela was much cleverer than that. She instead wove the truth in a tapestry and gave it to Procne. Enraged by the news, Procne killed her son, Itys, and served him to Teresius for dinner. Teresius learned of this and tried to kill the sisters. Instead, the Olympian Gods stopped the bloody ending by turning the three into birds (Hunter, "Philomela" 1).

Shakespeare echoes this tale in *Titus Andronicus*. Angered Tamora wants revenge on Titus Andronicus for killing her son. She and her sons are prisoners of the Roman army, led by Titus. The Roman tradition demands that the oldest son among the prisoners of war be sacrificed to the gods as a gift from the victors. Tamora seeks revenge because she begs Titus to spare her son, but he does not oblige. He cannot break the will of the law or of the gods. She calls upon her other sons, Chiron and Demetrius, to mutilate Titus' daughter, Lavinia. They find Lavinia by

herself, rape her, then cut off her arms and cut out her tongue just like Teresius rapes Philomela and cuts out her tongue. When Lavinia reveals her attackers to her father, he immediately plans to take revenge on Tamora. He finds Chiron and Demetrius, kills them and bakes them into a pie and invited Tamora over for dinner. She eats the pie, and Titus tells her what she has done. This story is very much in keeping with the tale of Philomela and Procne .

Now we move to *Antony and Cleopatra* in which the myth of Dido and Aeneas is present. Aeneas was a Trojan War hero and the son of Venus. During the war, Aeneas was rescued by divine intervention and was finally forced to flee the war. While he was leaving and carrying his father and the household gods on his back, he was parted from his wife, Creusa, and never saw her again.

After he fled, Aeneas landed on the shores of Carthage, where Dido was the queen. Aeneas and Dido ended up falling in love with each other, but Aeneas was summoned back to war in Rome. Mercury came to get Aeneas and bring him back to Rome, and Aeneas reluctantly left. Because of this, Dido became extremely heart-broken and committed suicide. Later, Aeneas went to the Underworld and saw her, but she refused to speak to him because she was still upset that he left her (Hunter, "Aeneas" 1).

Shakespeare's use of this myth in *Antony and Cleopatra* is obvious. Antony leaves Rome to live in Egypt with the alluring queen Cleopatra. They fall in love, but when Antony receives word that his wife, Fulvia, has died, he is summoned back to Rome and reluctantly leaves Cleopatra. While he is back in Rome, he agrees to marry Octavius Caesar's sister, Octavia. Cleopatra hears of this marriage and becomes angry. She eventually gets over it when she finds out that she is more beautiful than Octavia.

Antony is allied with Caesar against Pompey, but when he hears that Caesar is speaking badly about him in public, Antony goes back to Egypt and teams up with Cleopatra to wage war on Caesar. Cleopatra agrees to order a fleet to sea, but her fleet flees the scene and Antony's fleet follows. When they try this again, Cleopatra's fleet flees again and Antony feels betrayed. He believes that Cleopatra has betrayed him on purpose and wants to kill her. Cleopatra hears about this and tells her messenger to tell Antony that she has killed herself. Antony immediately feels regret and wants to meet his lover in the afterlife, so he stabs himself but does not die right away, but it takes him a few scenes to finally take his last breath. He is carried to the monument where Cleopatra is hiding and they are reunited before Antony dies and Cleopatra kills herself as well at the very end of the play.

The story of Antony and Cleopatra, as represented by Shakespeare, echoes the classical myth of Aeneas and Dido. Antony represents the character of Aeneas, the great war hero who falls in love with the queen Dido, who is represented by Cleopatra. Antony loses his wife, Fulvia, much like Aeneas loses his wife. Antony is also called back to Rome like Aeneas is called back to fight. They both have to leave their queen-lovers, which causes resentment. Unlike Aeneas and Dido, though, Cleopatra does not kill herself right away, but instead waits for Antony. However, the suicide is reflected in the end when Antony kills himself and Cleopatra follows suit.

While Shakespeare uses characters to reflect these mythological tales, he also uses these tales to reflect the Elizabethan social issues and perspectives on war, sexuality and on gender roles.

HEROISM

In his article “A Formative Shakespearean Legacy : Elizabethan Views of God, Fortune, and War”, Paul A. Jorgensen explains Shakespeare’s incorporation of popular culture into his plays. Jorgensen explains the Elizabethan view of God, fortune and war: “In the Renaissance, this legacy emphasized the question of how much latitude could be given to human prowess, as opposed to supernatural ordinance, in determining victory or defeat in battle.” “This legacy,” Jorgensen continues, “was especially crucial for the history plays because in them military victory or defeat is of ultimate importance.” The average Elizabethan Englander believed that man should himself be the hero in war, and that with God’s interference, man becomes “insignificant” (Jorgensen 222). This is especially important when analyzing Shakespeare’s plays because in *Troilus and Cressida* as well as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Gods are called upon for help but do not provide aid. This is Shakespeare’s way of reiterating the Elizabethan belief that man should not rely on God. This is also a way to undermine the religious patriarchal society that England was under by claiming that autonomy is more important than the reign of God, or even the reign of an autocratic figure.

The concept of heroism is seen in *Troilus and Cressida* as well as in *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare reflects the Elizabethan view of the soldier in both plays. As Hollander Emmauel van Meteren quotes, “the people are bold, courageous, ardent, and cruel in war, fiery in attack, and having little fear of death; they are not vindictive, but very inconstant, rash, vain-glorious” (qtd. in Jorgensen 222). John Barclay, another critic and historian, observes of the English: “They contemne all dangers, and death it selfe, with more courage than judgement,” (qtd. in Jorgensen 223). Jorgensen suggests, however, that this praise was not well-received by any of the elite members of Elizabethan England. The patriarchal society of England thrived on logic and

education and not on emotion, so these claims of the English war efforts were insulting to the Elizabethan Englishmen.

Thus, William R. Bowden sensibly states “the behavior of Troilus, Hector, and the Trojans collectively must appear faulty (whether evil or merely ridiculous) because they are ruled by emotion, by a ‘false idealism’, by instinct, by anything else but reason” (167). It is interesting, also, that these characters call upon the gods frequently, which Jorgensen argues make them less heroic and dependent on the supernatural for victory. This may have been Shakespeare’s way of criticizing England’s Roman enemies by laughing at their war tactics, but it may have also been another criticism of the patriarchal government.

Shakespeare’s characters in *Antony and Cleopatra* believe and reflect the Roman ideal that suicide is honorable and heroic. In “‘The High Roman Fashion’: Sacrifice, Suicide and the Shakespearean Stage,” Lorraine Helms states that “Cleopatra’s suicide, like the wife’s in Greek tragedy, constellates death and marriage in ancient symbols of female heroism” (555). But while the Romans and Greeks admired those who committed suicide in a heroic fashion, Elizabethan Englishmen had a different view on the subject. According to Ralph McLean, “under the Tudor monarchy the church and state took a strict view on suicide as a mortal sin which was linked to deep despair and demonic pride” (1). The early modern audiences would have had mixed feelings about the suicides in Shakespeare’s plays. They would have recognized the differences in cultural perspectives between Rome and England, but they would have seen their own view as superior. So when Cleopatra commits suicide alongside Antony, the Elizabethans saw this as negative. The suicide of Antony, which was a sign of his authoritative power over himself, feminizes him and his role as a man in the eyes of the Elizabethans.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER ROLES

While the concept of heroism is important in Shakespeare's canon, the concepts of sexuality and gender roles are more prevalent. Shakespeare, as said before, lived in a patriarchal society, which ironically was run by a woman for quite some time. It is likely that Elizabeth's reign awakened Shakespeare to the problems with patriarchy, and perhaps that is why he chose to address so many issues concerning sexuality and gender roles in his plays.

An extremely taboo topic in Elizabethan England was the idea of homosexuality and sodomy. Alan Bray goes into depth about this issue in his article "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England." Bray states that there was a noticed difference between male homosexuality and having a male friend. First and foremost, homosexuality was seen as a crime, but having a male friendship was seen as honorable (2-4). Shakespeare epitomizes male friendship and homosexuality in his plays. For example, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, has a strong affinity for Troilus. If looked at closely, though, it may seem as if the two men are more than just friends. This would be alarming to some Elizabethans because it would suggest that these two characters were doing something that was not "natural."

Similar to many communities today, homosexuals in the Renaissance, as Bray states, were seen as sodomites. These people were condemned by humanity and their actions were seen as acts "against nature." Bray suggests that the act of sodomy was especially feared by Elizabethans because the public logic was that "it was not part of the individual's nature: it was part of all human nature and could surface when the mind was dulled or sleeping, much as someone might commit murder in a drunken fit or in a dream" (2). Therefore, many Elizabethans

saw all acts of sexual deviance as sodomy, for fear that, they too, may someday become sinners against nature.

The Elizabethans viewed the masculine friend much differently. It was normal for a “manly-man” to have a very close friend of the same sex. Elizabethans saw this as an honorable way of life. Bray also states that it was not unusual for two people of the same sex to be “bedfellows.” Men who shared beds were not seen as homosexuals, and when “two men kissed or embraced the gesture had the same meaning” (Bray 5). Sometimes, though, there was a very fine line between being a sodomite and being a masculine friend, “as in some respects they occupied a similar terrain” (Bray 4). For example, as seen in *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus and Pandarus are great friends, but Pandarus’ constant valorization of Troilus hints that there may be underlying feelings that stretch beyond friendship.

This idea is also well exemplified in *Troilus and Cressida* with the characters Achilles and Patroclus. These two characters are always together in the Greek camp and are always referenced at the same time. The reader assumes that they are great friends, but the slave, Thersites, makes comments that the two men are lovers. Because the two warriors are together all of the time, it seems as if the line between male friendship and homosexuality has been crossed. This is especially evident once Patroclus is killed by Hector and Achilles goes to great lengths to avenge his “friend’s” death.

But the men were not the ones that were judged the most. C.L. Barber suggests that “the very central and problematical role of women in Shakespeare and in Elizabethan drama generally reflects the fact that Protestantism did away with the cult of the Virgin Mary” (qtd. in Montrose 63). The removal of the female figure of the Christian religion reflects the government of Elizabethan England. Removing Mary suggests that the Church, too, believed that all power

should be in the hands of a male figure. God, in Christianity, is referred to as a male figure, and by taking any sort of female figure away from the realm of God allows for all of the authority to shift to God and “He” only. This portrays that patriarchal society cut out the woman figure from religion, thus making the religious Elizabethan England entirely male-centered and male-powered.

Women, though, did have their place. Marriage was common in Elizabethan England as women were expected to be wives and mothers. Montrose states that “marital union implies a domestic hierarchy; marital harmony is predicated upon the wife's obedience to her husband” (61). But while an Elizabethan woman usually followed the conventions of a patriarchal household, and maintained the feminized role of complete obedience, silence and chastity, some wives had tendencies for sexual deviation as well. Women were supposed to be submissive and loyal to their husbands, but some women committed adultery, which caused shifts in power. Adultery was not only disapproved of within a household, but was also frowned upon in the public eye (“Disruption of the Household” 1). The infidelity committed by a woman upon her husband would have made the husband seem powerless which would have shaken his status as a patriarchal figure.

While women were adulteresses, Renaissance men committed sexual deviation through prostitution. But the double standard caused society to look at women the wrong way. Men were the ones with the power, so they could do what they wanted. Elizabethan men also used women for their sexual benefit, and sometimes even sold their wives as prostitutes for monetary gain (“Disruption of the Household” 2). This exploitation of the woman reiterates the man’s power, but as suggested previously, the disloyal woman could steal that power, causing a confusing shift in gender roles.

The concept of prostitution as a device for scrambling gender roles is evident in *Troilus and Cressida*. Ajax's slave, Thersites, explains that his reasoning for not fighting against Margarelon, Priam's bastard son, is because he is a bastard child, too. Thersites states "if the son of a whore fight for a whore, he tempts judgment..." (V.viii.12). Because Margarelon is trying to fight a slave rather than a warrior, it shows that he is not masculine enough to fight in war. Thersites backs this up by saying because he is the child of a whore, he is not fit to fight in battle. Because they are the products of prostitution, Thersites recognizes that neither of the two men should be fighting. They are not as masculine as they could have been if they were born of a chaste and loyal mother.

The idea of cuckoldry, too, made confusing power shifts occur. The disloyal woman, whether she was wife or lover, would find a man and have sex with him. Her husband would then become a cuckold. This would degrade a man, but he would feel even worse if he found his wife or lover with the other man. In his article "The Horn of Plenty: Cuckoldry and Capital in the Drama of the Age of Shakespeare", Douglas Bruster argues that being cuckolded "implies tardiness, even impotence," and the cuckold is "robbed and mocked by a picturesque opportunist" (199). The act of being cuckolded suggests that the man is "impotent" as Bruster states, which feminizes him in the eyes of the woman and her lover, as well as anyone who would find out about the situation.

Cuckoldry is also problematic because it would cause great anxiety among a patriarchal society. Since women are the way in which the family name and lineage is pushed into the future, being cuckolded would cause a great deal of stress. The cuckold would worry whether or not his wife would become pregnant by the man she is sleeping with. If she did, the cuckold

would feel emasculated because his wife is pregnant by another man, and therefore his bloodline would not carry on with the child in her womb.

Shakespeare wanted to bring forth his issue with patriarchy through his plays. The portrayals of war, sexuality, and gender roles all play an important part of this unmasking. However, the referenced sources all do not point specifically to passages in which Shakespeare uses his characters directly to uncover these hidden messages. Through close-readings of his plays, the connections among the characters, the myths, and the social issues that inform the subtext of their actions and words are made amply clear and provocative.

TITUS ANDRONICUS

The idea of sexual power and Elizabethan gender roles is present in *Titus Andronicus*. Douglas E. Greene suggests that the play's characters are influenced by the Queen. He states:

Just as Elizabeth's gender was submerged, in interludes and entertainments, 'in the complex iconography of her paradigmatic virtue,' always in accordance with patriarchal notions of her power as prince, so Shakespeare's notable and notorious female characters are here made to serve the construction of Titus—patriarch, tragic hero, and, from our vantage point, central consciousness. (319)

This idea of the patriarchal woman is reflected in Tamora, the Queen of the Goths. Tamora loses her power when she is held captive by Titus, but then regains it when she marries Saturninus. Because Tamora dominates the marriage instead of being submissive, she corrupts Roman masculinity and therefore becomes masculine herself.

But not all of the women in *Titus Andronicus* are powerful. Tamora's power-streak hits an all time high when she decides to attack Titus in the most humiliating way possible. By

ordering her sons to rape and mutilate Lavinia, Tamora acts as a patriarchal figure suppressing a woman in society. As Helms points out, “the rape, mutilation, and murder of Lavinia charts a daughter's failed passage from her father's house” (555). This “failed passage” represents a failure of Titus’ patriarchal society as well as the negative consequences of Tamora’s patriarchal society as well. Steven Gregg agrees in his article “Titus Andronicus and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption”. He says that “the rape and mutilation of Lavinia cannot simply be read as a crime against an innocent young woman; it is a profound statement to us on the situation of Early Modern women” (2). What Gregg is suggesting is that Shakespeare knew the problems with patriarchal society and used this violent act to bring forth the suppression of women in Elizabethan England in an extremely negative light.

The words of the women are heard and silenced in *Titus Andronicus*. Tamora, the Queen of the Goths and Titus Andronicus’ hostage, is admired by the new emperor, Saturninus. Because of this, she becomes the empress of Rome. This new position gives her a sense of power that soon adds masculinity to her character. Already Tamora is portrayed as a barbarous and savage Goth, but her new-found power has only given her more control over the man that had once held her hostage. She is also the mother, but more-so a patriarchal figure to her sons, Chiron and Demetrius. Tamora’s patriarchal status is also highlighted by Lavinia’s words before she is mutilated. She says “thou bearest a woman’s face” (II.ii.136). Lavinia is silenced before she can finish her sentence, but it is implied that Tamora has a woman’s face, but calculates her thoughts and actions as a man, a patriarch.

The epitome of a patriarch is Tamora’s counterpart, Titus, who stands as the father of his depleting family when he comes home from war. He has lost 21 of his children, with only 4 left. Two of his sons are beheaded by Tamora, leaving Titus with only a son, Lucius, and a daughter,

Lavinia, as well as decreasing sense of masculinity. And, through Shakespeare's use of the myth of Philomela and Procne, Titus suffers even more emasculation when Lavinia is raped and mutilated. In Shakespeare's version of the myth, though, there is twice the punishment. Shakespeare makes Lavinia a tongue-less and armless casualty of Gothic rape, which leaves her unable to follow in the footsteps of Philomela. Her mutilation does not allow her to go forth into the world. Her mutilation serves as a "failed passage from her father's house" which reflects failure of a patriarchal society (Helms 555). Titus suffers from this because Lavinia will not be able to carry on his bloodline and also because he has lost his daughter as a trafficable substance.

The violence of the tale of Philomela and Procne is doubly intensified in *Titus Andronicus*. While the abhorrent mutilation of Lavinia signifies an oppressed woman in a patriarchal society, her downfall leads to her uprising against her oppressors. Shakespeare worsens Lavinia's mutilation in comparison to Philomela's, however, he still allows her to come up on top and out her attackers. Because Lavinia is able to write Chiron and Demetrius' names in the sand, she is overcoming adversity of being an oppressed woman. Shakespeare is hinting at the woman's power here, showing the faults of the patriarchal government.

However, he once again emphasizes the problems with patriarchy at the end of the play when Titus is at dinner with Tamora. Titus turns and stabs Lavinia because she is no longer capable of going out and fulfilling her duty as a woman. She has been raped, which signifies that she is no longer chaste and therefore not marriage material. But, perhaps Titus also kills Lavinia to rid her of her pain. This is reflective upon patriarchal society because it is suggesting that women are not worth anything except marriage. Killing Lavinia, though, suggests that Titus is becoming sensitive to the women under the patriarchal rule, thus emasculating him even more.

In this same scene, elements of Tamora and her relationship with her two sons come out as well. Titus, in keeping with the myth of Philomela and Procne, feeds Tamora Chiron and Demetrius in a pie. By doing this, he is taking out her followers and giving her less power. Tamora also becomes the victim of the same crime that she committed towards Titus. Tamora becomes weak and angry, which portrays the weakness of her patriarchy.

But one of the most interesting elements of this scene is the fact that the pie contains her two sons. These two beings came out of her womb at birth, but are not being recycled back into her. Gregg suggests that this action combines the “combines the taboo of incest with the taboo of cannibalism” (10). The idea of incest is reflected, again, in the fact that her two sons are now inside of her. This shows signs of a corrupted government, but also hints at homoeroticism since Tamora stands as a masculine figure.

Tamora’s infidelity can also be compared to the story of Philomela and Procne. As Teresius wasn’t true to his wife, Procne, Tamora wasn’t true to Saturninus. Her affair with Aaron the Moor mirrors the Elizabethan woman’s lust for other men. In “Disruption of the Household”, the reader is told that many Elizabethan women were prostitutes or committed adultery. This act of betrayal, however, shifts the power from the man in the relationship to the woman. The woman is expected to be submissive, yet she is taking control by doing what she wants behind the man’s back. Tamora becomes more powerful with her infidelity, however, Shakespeare gives the audience satisfaction by punishing her, showing that infidelity is immoral and that patriarchal society only enhances the woman’s desire to lie and cheat.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Representations of social issues regarding gender and sexuality also exist in *Troilus and Cressida*. James O'Rourke argues that the play shows the female as a "commodity" and that its central theme focuses on a "patriarchal culture" that denounces women's rights to make their own decisions. O'Rourke also argues that Shakespeare focuses on Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, and his plight of syphilis to show that "Shakespeare places the blame for the corruption of sexuality not on the woman but on the governing term of a patriarchal social order — the patriarch" (140). The plight of Pandarus is Shakespeare's way of showing that the patriarchal society is like a disease corrupting the people and putting pressure on innocent women.

The myth of Apollo and Daphne is fleshed out in *Troilus and Cressida*. Troilus, a lovesick warrior, is chasing Cressida, much like Apollo chased Daphne. However, the strong Apollo of the *Metamorphoses* is played out as the more feminine version through Troilus. When he is first introduced, Troilus is lovestruck. But instead of taking direct action, the young lover pines for love's remedy. He calls upon Apollo to ask about his love for Cressida. He asks "Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love/ What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?" (I. ii. 99-100). Here, Apollo stands for not a figure of war, but as a figure of love. By asking Apollo for advice, he is feminizing himself because he is reliant on a deity. Also, he is addressing the representation of Apollo that does not deal with war.

Apollo's sexuality is also seen through Troilus. Of course, the reader knows that Troilus has a heterosexual lust for Cressida, but the homoerotic elements of Apollo's character shine through as well. The character Pandarus gives great praise to Troilus. In fact, Act I, Scene ii, is spent with Pandarus constantly complimenting Troilus to Cressida. Pandarus expresses his admiration of Troilus:

Himself! no, he's not himself: would a' were
 himself! Well, the gods are above; time must friend
 or end: well, Troilus, well: I would my heart were
 in her body. No, Hector is not a better man than Troilus.

(I.ii. 77-80)

Pandarus' expression of "I would my heart were in her body" suggests that he would love Troilus if he were Cressida. This hints at the social taboo of homoerotic feelings. If Pandarus were a woman, he would be able to show his love for Troilus, but the patriarchal society that Shakespeare constructs, much like that of Elizabethan England, frowns upon the same-sex union. It is also interesting to note that, despite being in a strong patriarchal society, Pandarus is willing to switch sexes in order for his homoerotic feelings to be socially acceptable.

But this secret male-bond is contrasted with the recognized relationship between Achilles and Patroclus. The difference between the two relationships is that the bond between Troilus and Pandarus may be seen as Bray's concept of a "masculine friend" with small suggestions of homoerotic tendency, while Shakespeare makes the sexual and erotic nature of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus blatantly obvious.

As Bray suggests, this line is not always so definitive. In fact, an overt representation of open sexual orientation was condemned. Even Therisites identifies and condemns it though he is like a whore himself. So one must consider the questions: Why is Troilus so worried about going through Pandarus to get to Cressida? Is it because Pandarus is her uncle, or because he is afraid about ruining the "masculine-friendship" between himself and Pandarus? And, this relationship between the two males is hinted at in Troilus' opening speech. Again, Troilus says "Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love/ What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?" (I. ii 99-100). Why

would Troilus include Pandarus in a speech about love? Perhaps this is Shakespeare's way of indicating a behind-the-scenes homoerotic union. Perhaps this is his way of showing the audience that it is possible that Troilus may have had feelings for Pandarus, and vice-versa, just like Apollo had feelings for Hyacinth, his boy-lover. Moreover, Shakespeare's insertion of homoeroticism questions the arbitrary structures of patriarchy that regulate and confine intimacy on the basis of what serves the institutions of power and authority.

Troilus and Cressida is a play built on warring lovers. The Trojan War starts over Menelaus' longing for his wife Helen. Troilus wants Cressida. Achilles does not want to fight because he loves Patroclus. Yet when Patroclus is killed, Achilles fights to avenge his love. In the Elizabethan view, love would not be something to fight for. The Roman masculine view of war, which is adopted by the Elizabethans, is not reflected in Shakespeare's work, but instead is criticized by being emasculated.

Troilus recognizes the fact that he is in love with Cressida and that this softens him. He is reluctant to go to war, which by Jorgensen's terms, would be seen as un-heroic, and by Elizabethan conventions would be considered un-manly. In Act I, Scene I, when Aeneas asks Troilus why he is not on the battlefield, Troilus says: "Because not there: this woman's answer sorts,/ For womanish it is to be from thence..." (I.i. 107-108). Troilus recognizes that his act of not fighting is considered womanly, and he celebrates it in these lines.

It is as if Shakespeare is criticizing patriarchal society by emasculating the men and giving the power to the women in the play. The three prominent women presented in the play are Cressida, Helen, and Cassandra. Cressida is, as mentioned before, holding power over Troilus as well as Troilus' and Pandarus' relationship. While Troilus considers himself "womanly", and Antony loses his power to Cleopatra, Cressida becomes the "man" in the relationship between

her and Troilus. She is the reason that Troilus will not go to war. She also says that “There is among the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus” (I. ii.242). Here, Cressida is not only discrediting Troilus as a man by saying there is a better man than he, but she is saying that homosexual Achilles is more of a man than Troilus, which is doubly emasculating him. She also holds power in relation to reconciliation with the Greeks. Helen holds power over the men because she is, in essence, the reason why the Greeks and Trojans are fighting. And, although Helen is the reason that the war started, she melts out of consequence because the men lose focus over what they are fighting for and it turns into them fighting each other to prove masculinity. Cassandra holds the power to prophesize; however, to the dismay of the Trojans, no one listens to her when she tells Hector not to fight that day and he loses his life. Shakespeare is holding a finger in the face of patriarchy. Listen to the women, he is saying, for their words do matter. This idea of infidelity is also found in *Troilus and Cressida*. Throughout the play, Cressida leads Troilus on. He wants her so badly until she finally submits to liking him. They have a short-lived romance in which they pledge their hearts to one another. When Cressida is taken to the Greek camp, she swears she will never forget him. But, like the Elizabethan woman had tendencies to sneak away from their husbands, Cressida did not think twice about talking and courting another man. Troilus knew this aspect of the woman so he spied on Cressida and found out that she was not loyal to him. But unlike Tamora, Cressida is not punished. Perhaps this is because Cressida did not want to be with Troilus in the first place, much like how Daphne never wanted to be with Apollo. Because Cressida was coaxed into being with Troilus, her actions to forget him do not seem as bad as Tamora’s actions to cheat Saturninus with Aaron and cheat on Aaron with Saturninus. This is because Tamora outright cheated, but when Cressida enters the Grecian camp, she has no choice to betray Troilus because she enters the Grecian camp as a sexual object

meant to be abused. This seems as if Shakespeare was trying to show that the woman should have a choice in who she wants to be with rather than being pressured into a marriage like England's society so often pressured men and women to get married.

Cressida's infidelity to Troilus shows a shift in power, too. Because Cressida decides that she wants to choose who she wants to be with, she throws off the man's power to choose who he wants to be with.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The idea of emasculation through the avoidance of war is also seen in *Antony and Cleopatra*. When Antony decides to fight against Caesar with Cleopatra, he realizes that his army is ill-equipped to fight against him on water. Cleopatra offers to organize a fleet to lead the fight. Not only does Antony empower Cleopatra by returning to her, he empowers her by fighting on her behalf. In reference to Cleopatra's newly gained power over Antony, Canidius says "Soldier, thou art: but his whole actions grows/ Not in the power on't: so our leader's led,/ And we are women's men" (III. vii. 86-88). Canidius' lines here show Shakespeare's intentional shift in power. Antony is now weak and so is his crew. They are now under the lead of Cleopatra. Because Antony leads an army for a woman instead of a man, and because the soldiers under him go from being of the Roman Empire to being women's men, Antony is emasculated and so is his army.

Antony's emasculation is also seen in a possible homoerotic relationship. In Act III, Scene ii, Domitius Enobarbus is speaking with Agrippa about Lepidus. He says :

But he loves Caesar best; yet he loves Antony:

Ho! hearts, tongues, figures, scribes, bards,

poets, cannot

Think, speak, cast, write, sing, number, ho!

His love to Antony. But as for Caesar,

Kneel down, kneel down, and wonder.

(III.ii. 17-22)

This hints at a contrasting relationship dynamic between Antony and Lepidus and Caesar on the one hand and Lepidus on the other. Enobarbus refers to Lepidus' love for Antony in reference to the feminized idea of hearts, tongues, and poets, while he refers to his love for Caesar in reference to kneeling down in respect. It seems as if Lepidus has strong homoerotic feelings for Antony but has the sort-of masculine friend bond with Caesar.

It is interesting to note that Shakespeare takes heroic qualities away from the males of the plays and gives them to the females. Cleopatra, for instance, stands true to Antony throughout the whole play. While Antony deserts her, she does not give up on him. Her true sense of heroism shines through in the very end when she commits suicide. Antony attempts to commit suicide, and, while it is just as important as Cleopatra's, is it not as heroic as hers. Antony asks Eros to kill him, which shows that he was not strong enough as a man to kill himself. Also, when he tries to stab himself, he does not succeed at first, which shows weakness.

It is important to look at the sexual connotations of these suicides. Antony asks Eros to kill him with a sword, which is a phallic representation. Eros, though, kills himself because he cannot bear to kill his love, Antony. Eros is less important than Antony, yet kills himself in one fell swoop. But Antony is so weak that he cannot penetrate himself with his own sword. This suggests that his phallus is limp, therefore emasculating him. Cleopatra not only kills herself by

her own hand, but goes out in style by attaching poisonous snakes to her breasts, which plays on her role as a powerful woman.

Cleopatra's power is also reiterated by Octavius Caesar. In Act I, Scene IV, Octavius speaks to Lepidus about Pompey. He criticizes Pompey of being womanly by contrastingly saying that Cleopatra is "man-like" (I.iv. 1-11). This foreshadows Pompey's downfall to Caesar, as well as Caesar's downfall to Cleopatra and Antony. However, referring back to Cleopatra's suicide, it is made known that she is the one with the most power, even though her combined forces with Antony do not defeat Caesar's army. Wars, and the aftermath of war through conquering a woman, allows men to show masculinity. Cleopatra may have used her suicide as a way to emasculate Caesar because she is the prize of war. To conquer Cleopatra shows masculinity, but she asserts feminine will by destroying her own life.

It is evident that the woman must suffer consequence, while the man escapes from situations unscathed. The instance of Antony's infidelity to Cleopatra brings up a double-standard. Shakespeare highlights this double-standard by allowing Antony to get away with what he did. Cleopatra is angry at first about the news that her lover got married. But once she finds out that Octavia is not as beautiful as she is, she becomes less and less mad. Cleopatra also decides to take Antony back once he returns to Egypt to see her. This is Shakespeare's nod to the ridiculous patriarchal society in England that punishes disloyal women but does nothing to men who cheat. In fact, instead of hiding his infidelity like most Elizabethan women probably tried to do, Antony made it known that he was in relationships with both women. In Act III, Scene VI, Mecaenas says :

Welcome, dear madam.

Each heart in Rome does love and pity you:

Only the adulterous Antony, most large
 In his abominations, turns you off;
 And gives his potent regiment to a trull,
 That noises it against us.

(III.vi. 106-111)

Though it is known that Cleopatra is the victim here, Antony still does not receive punishment, which is just showing that men really could get away with anything, which was unfortunate if the woman was loyal like Cleopatra was to Antony.

This theme of infidelity also plays off of the theme of cuckoldry that runs through many of Shakespeare's plays. Examples of cuckoldry are present in all three of these plays. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron the Moor becomes a cuckold when Tamora sleeps with Saturninus, but Saturninus becomes the cuckold when Aaron sleep with Tamora. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus becomes the cuckold when Cressida decides to go off with another man. And in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra becomes cuckolded when Antony marries Octavia. Each instance suggests something different, though.

When Aaron is cuckolded by Tamora, we recognize that Tamora has the power and Aaron becomes emasculated, and the same goes for Saturninus. Perhaps this act of cuckoldry leads Aaron to become the passionately furious man that he becomes, and perhaps it is also the reason why he "softens" for Tamora's child and becomes a maternal figure to the baby. But, if masculine gender is compromised by sexual indiscretion of women, racial othering and miscegenation of characters is a further recognition of the feminized body and being of characters such as Aaron and his infant son. Aaron's emasculation, which starts with cuckoldry, is complete with racial othering.

Also, while Saturninus is technically the ruler in Rome, Tamora seems to have more power. She is in the story a lot more than he is, and she also seems to command a lot more action. Because of Tamora's sexual deviation and the act of cuckoldry, she assumes the masculine role over both of these characters, much like Teresius assumed a masculine and forceful role over Philomela when he cuckolded Procne.

The case of Troilus and Cressida is entirely different. In this play, there are in fact two men who become cuckolded. Troilus is cuckolded when Cressida decides to court Diomedes. He is immediately shamed and goes off to war which he did not want to do before because he was so in love. Another character who becomes a cuckold is Menelaus. His wife, Helen, ran away to be with Paris. Menelaus becomes shamed because his wife chose another man over him and decided to stay with him. Menelaus even starts an all-out war over her, and she still decides to stay with Paris! This is Shakespeare's way of showing the woman's power over the man, but also showing the womanly qualities of Menelaus because he is having war over a woman to defend his honor, but is still losing his honor by being cuckolded.

Cleopatra seems to take a whole different perspective when she is cuckolded by Antony. As mentioned before, Cleopatra is only mad for a short period of time until she finds out that Octavia is less attractive than her. This shows that Cleopatra is powerful as a woman because she overcomes the hurt of being cheated on. Interestingly enough, Cleopatra is the only woman in all three plays that is a female cuckold. This may be Shakespeare's way of emphasizing the woman's power, even though Cleopatra is somewhat of a masculine figure.

Cleopatra, Tamora, and Cressida are female figures of masculine qualities. What, then, makes Cleopatra different? Tamora is presented as a barbarous goth, who is deviant but is not highly sexualized. Cressida is portrayed as a beautiful young girl who uses her power of beauty

to betray Troilus. Cleopatra is the only character that is extremely sexualized and powerful. The combination of the extreme sensuality and her physical power over her country gives her double the power and a hint of masculinity, but overall she is a woman and a proud woman.

Shakespeare does a great job with Cleopatra in the sense that she is no doubt an overall powerful woman with complete control over what she is doing. Out of the three main women characters from these plays, she is the only one brave enough to command power over her people and over herself. Tamora commands her sons, but is too weak to withstand that fact that she ate them in a pie. Cressida is powerful in the sense of her beauty, but is weak in the fact that she betrays easily and is reluctant about her choices (in men, atleast). Cleopatra holds true to her beliefs, stays true to Antony, and even has the courage to command a fleet and to commit suicide in order to keep her honor.

But what is humorous is that Cleopatra is worried how she will be portrayed in history. Shakespeare's Cleopatra may be different than the Cleopatra of other stories, but in his play she stands for something. She stands for the Elizabethan woman and her potential for power. Cleopatra, though, worries about being played by a boy on stage instead of by a powerful woman like she because patriarchy alters facts to appropriate figures in order to sustain its prevalence. Cleopatra is worried that she, as a powerful figure, will be made to look not, and Antony will also be emasculated.

In Shakespeare's time, all actors were male. Men were played by grown males and females were played by young boys (Shakespeare's Theatre 1). Cleopatra makes it known to the Elizabethan audience that she is aware her character, ironically, is being played by a male. In Act VI, Scene ii, Cleopatra says:

Nay, 'tis most certain, Iras: saucy lictors
 Will catch at us, like strumpets; and scald rhymers
 Ballad us out o' tune: the quick comedians
 Extemporally will stage us, and present
 Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
 Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
 Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
 I' the posture of a whore.

(VI. ii. 265-273).

Cleopatra knows that she is noble and powerful, but because of her loss of power to Caesar, she thinks that she is somewhat of a joke. A small boy is not a way to portray a strong, powerful, beautiful woman. Allowing small boys to play women is just another way of a patriarchal society discrediting the power and the ability of the woman, and Shakespeare is making that clear in these lines.

Another notable concept to address is the inner struggle of the patriarchy. Shakespeare portrays the problems with masculine figures having all of the power in all three plays. In *Titus Andronicus*, the powerful figures Titus, Tamora, Marcus and Saturninus all come together at the dinner scene. After Titus kills Lavinia, he then stabs Tamora. Saturninus then avenges his wife by stabbing Titus. Saturninus is then stabbed by Marcus. This cyclical fight portrays that the manly way of fighting only ends up with everyone dead in the end. This shows that patriarchal society just leads to men butting heads.

This can also be noticed in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Though Antony and Caesar are allies at first, their struggle for power gets the best of them. They both, as masculine figures, cannot

coexist in the same realm of power. So, then, Antony wages war with Octavius and causes a civil war. This also portrays that the structure of patriarchal government is messy and cannot deal with the division of power. The war between Menelaus and Paris can be included in this, too. Though their war is different than that of Antony and Caesar's, it still shows the weakness of patriarchal society by feminizing Menelaus for waging war over a woman.

It is clear that Shakespeare wanted to satirize and criticize the patriarchal government to the audience of his plays. Like Apollo chased Daphne, Troilus was emasculated by not going to war because of a woman. He was further feminized by being betrayed by the same woman. Like Philomela was raped and mutilated, so was Lavinia. But her mutilation was revenged, like Philomela's, when Tamora was fed her sons in a pie. Like Dido and Aeneas, Cleopatra was betrayed by Antony, but unlike Dido, she killed herself out of honor instead of out of heartbreak.

By analyzing each of these plays in reference to the mythology present and the social issues present, it is easy to understand that Shakespeare did not agree with a patriarchal structure. For, in the end, the woman came out victorious, despite the heavy burden of social conventions. At the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the clown emphasizes the power of the woman:

You must not think I am so simple but I know the
 devil himself will not eat a woman: I know that a
 woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not...

(VI.ii. 329-331)

The curtains close in the Globe Theatre and the audience starts to file out. Some don't feel anything, but many feel that something has changed. They have been hit by subliminal messages regarding perceptions of sexuality and heroism in their society as well as criticism of the patriarchal society they are ruled by. Shakespeare has won the battle with those that feel

different. How did he win this battle? His ammunition was his words and his use of the known characters, Apollo and Daphne, Philomela and Procne, Dido and Aeneas.

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