

ABSTRACT

Scott, Amy Nicole. Sovereign Amity and Mimetic Rivalry: Shakespeare's Roman Masculinities. (Under the direction of Barbara Baines.)

In recent years gender criticism in Renaissance studies has begun to focus on issues of masculinity. The “woman question” has given way to the “man question”: that is, an examination of masculine gender construction in the repressive regime of Renaissance gender ideology. In early modern English culture it is surely a disadvantage to be a woman. According to the ideology, women are leaky vessels: they bleed uncontrollably, have an excess of fluids, and also cannot hold their tongues. Multiple early modern discourses insist that women cannot control their sexual appetites: they *will* make a cuckold of a man. Anatomically, women are deformed, incomplete men: female genitalia are conceived of as inverted male genitalia, lacking enough “heat” to descend. And women are commodities in an economy of exchange between fathers (and brothers) and husbands.

However, in some ways it is just as horrifying to be a male subject in this gender regime. Literature of the period betrays an obsessive concern with controlling female chastity. This is not surprising, of course, in a patriarchal /patrilineal society in which property and title follow blood-lines and fatherhood never carries the same physiological certainty as motherhood. As Mark Breitenberg argues in *Anxious Masculinity*, masculinity becomes synonymous with anxiety.

This thesis examines the attempt, in drama of the early modern period, to retrieve masculinity from that anxiety via the celebration of the male/male bond in the form of sovereign amity. Sovereign amity, referring to the rhetoric of Renaissance friendship in which the friend is figured as the other-self and in which the friends achieve a kind of

“sovereignty” vis-à-vis their bond, requires a radical likeness between subjects.

Ironically, it is the very same likeness that engenders mimetic rivalry. Mimetic rivalry seeks to annihilate the same radical likeness which sovereign amity celebrates.

This thesis focuses first on Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the play most appropriate for examining the correlation between sovereign amity and masculinity. The discussion then explores *Antony and Cleopatra*, the political sequel to *Julius Caesar*, to see what happens to sovereign amity in the face of heterosexual desire and mimetic rivalry. I am interested in these particular plays because of the way in which they foreground notions of sovereign amity and its inverse, mimetic rivalry, in relation to masculinity. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare offers a fleeting glimpse of the achievement of ideal of sovereign amity. This portrayal collapses, however, under the very real pressures of social and political hierarchies in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as sovereign amity gives way to mimetic rivalry. Ultimately sovereign amity proves to be a dream impossible to sustain in an intensely hierarchical culture.

**SOVEREIGN AMITY AND MIMETIC RIVALRY:
SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN MASCULINITIES**

by

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Thank you for infinite varieties of support.

BIOGRAPHY

Amy Nicole Scott was born on August 4, 1972, in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Growing up, Amy (and her family) lived in twelve houses in ten cities and six states before she graduated from Bakersfield High School in 1990. She left Bakersfield, CA to attend her father's alma mater, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. After changing colleges five times and majors three times, Amy earned a BA in English from the University of California Santa Barbara, graduating with highest honors and distinction within the major.

Amy left beautiful Santa Barbara for Raleigh, NC to be closer to her mother and to live with her best friend. After a brief, miserable "career" in non-profit, Amy decided to pursue graduate studies in English at North Carolina State University, where she had been awarded a teaching assistantship. During her time at NCSU, Amy was inducted in Phi Kappa Phi honor society, served as Treasurer and founding member of AEGIS, received one of twenty University Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards, and was accepted to the PhD program in English at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, where she plans to continue studies in Renaissance literature.

This thesis marks the completion of the Master's Program, culminating in the awarding of the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature.

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CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	page 1
II.	“Romans, countrymen and lovers”: Performing Politics, Sovereign Amity and Masculinity in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	7
III.	“[A] pair of chaps—no more”: Mimetic Rivalry and the Dissolution of Amity in <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	27
IV.	Conclusion	47
	Notes	55
	Bibliography	61

I Introduction

In recent years gender criticism in Renaissance studies has begun to focus on issues of masculinity. The “woman question” has given way to the “man question”: that is, an examination of masculine gender construction in the repressive regime of Renaissance gender ideology.¹ In early modern English culture it is surely a disadvantage to be a woman. According to the ideology, women are leaky vessels: they bleed uncontrollably, have an excess of fluids, and also cannot hold their tongues. Multiple early modern discourses insist that women cannot control their sexual appetites: they *will* make a cuckold of a man. Anatomically, women are deformed, incomplete men: female genitalia are conceived of as inverted male genitalia, lacking enough “heat” to descend.² And women are commodities in an economy of exchange between fathers (and brothers) and husbands.

Ian Maclean’s survey *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* examines early modern woman in theological, medical, ethical, and legal discourses of the period. Theologically, woman is, of course, cursed by the Fall, to which she, as woman, is particularly susceptible:

St. Antoninus Forciglioni’s alphabet of female vices... encompasses almost the whole domain of sin, and suggests that not only are the vices listed found in woman, but also that they hold greater sway over her than over man. This alphabet is well known in the Renaissance, and appears in Spanish, French, English and Dutch versions, usually without reference to its scholastic source.³

Medical discourses, though evolving, rely heavily on the principles of Aristotle and Galen, which imply congruence between male and female genitalia. Although most anatomists seem to abandon the notion of parallelism with regards to understanding sex difference by the end of the sixteenth century, early modern culture has inherited an anatomical tradition grounded in an Aristotelian classification based on polarities and opposites.⁴ The supposed biological sex differences have, for early modern culture, “psychological implications.” According to the *Historia animalium*:

In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental characteristics of the sexes... the female is softer in character, is the sooner tamed, admits more readily to caressing... softer in disposition, more mischievous, less simple, more impulsive...the male, on the other hand, is more spirited than the female, more savage, more simple and less cunning... the nature of man is most rounded off and complete, and consequently in man the qualities or capacities above referred to are found in their perfection. Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency... more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive...⁵

Given the ideology of woman in the period, it is not surprising, then, that the bonds men forge with other men occupy a privileged position in literary discourse.

However, in some ways it is arguably just as horrifying to be a male subject in this gender regime. Literature of the period betrays an obsessive concern with controlling

female chastity. This is not surprising, of course, in a patriarchal /patrilineal society in which property and title follow blood-lines and fatherhood never carries the same physiological certainty as motherhood. As Mark Breitenberg argues:

Masculine subjectivity constructed and sustained by a patriarchal culture—infused with patriarchal assumptions about power, privilege, sexual desire, the body—inevitably engenders varying degrees of anxiety in its male members. [...] Anxiety and masculinity: the terms must be wed if only for the obvious reason that any social system whose premise is the unequal distribution of power and authority always and only sustains itself in defense of some of its members and by the constraint of others.⁶

“Anxious masculinity” is, then, according to Breitenberg, a tautology. Breitenberg also argues that anxiety enables masculinity, applying Freud’s discussion of the child’s “fort/da” game as an analogy for masculine subjectivity. The child, enacting the painful separation from the mother, throws the toy away not only to allow for the experience of pleasure in regaining what is “lost,” but also to exhibit his control over the game.

Analogously,

we can view the discourse of anxiety as staging masculine loss and vulnerability for the purpose of maintaining control of the performance of one’s gendered identity. Or, more specifically, and indeed ironically, in the repetition or staging of anxiety men compensate for an anticipated danger that derives from the very patriarchal system in which they are engendered as subjects in the first place.⁷

What I find most interesting is the way that Renaissance discourses try to retrieve

masculinity from that anxiety. The most intriguing maneuver, to my mind, is the celebration of the male/male bond, in the form of sovereign amity, which if carried to its logical extreme ironically impedes—and even threatens—the systems required for maintaining the patriarchal structure. As Mary Beth Rose so cogently remarks, “Sexuality therefore presents itself as a paradox: the human need for sexual relationships could lead to the mindless disruption of society, but without fulfillment of this need, there would be no ordered society at all.”⁸ Given the necessity of procreation for the preservation of primogeniture, it is fascinating that the homosocial bond should be so highly elevated above the heterosexual marriage bond.⁹ An examination of the celebration of sovereign amity allows then for an understanding of the complexities of masculine gender construction in the Renaissance and for the radical shifts in normative gender behavior that separate the early modern period from our own.¹⁰

“Sovereign amity,” from Laurie Shannon’s book of the same title, refers to Renaissance friendship tropes in which the friend is figured as the other-self and in which the friends achieve a kind of “sovereignty” vis-à-vis their bond.¹¹ Sovereign amity requires a “likeness in both sex and status,” which, as Shannon argues, allows for the only possibility of “political equality in period terms.”¹² Examining a wide range of Renaissance friendship tropes, Shannon describes the way in which Renaissance writers figure the friend as “another self” and as “one soul in two bodies,” deriving these representations from popular humanist discourses, specifically Cicero and Aristotle.¹³ Friendship becomes sovereign not only in that it is the superlative form of interpersonal interaction in this homosocial culture, but also because it seemingly allows for a space in which the rigid hierarchy of Renaissance society temporarily collapses: within the bond

of sovereign amity there are, as such, *two* sovereigns. Thus, as Shannon argues, “The radical likeness of sex and station that friendship doctrines require singly enable a vision of parity, a virtually civic parity not modeled anywhere else in contemporary social structures.”¹⁴

This paper does not attempt to be an exhaustive study of the connections between masculine anxiety and sovereign amity. Nor does it aim to be a *definitive* study of the way these themes overlap in Shakespeare’s tragedies. Instead, this discussion focuses largely on the play most appropriate for examining the correlation between sovereign amity and masculinity, *Julius Caesar*. The discussion also explores the political sequel to the play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, to see what happens to sovereign amity in the face of heterosexual desire and mimetic rivalry. Mimetic rivalry, explored in depth by René Girard in his discussion of several of Shakespeare’s plays,¹⁵ results from the mimetic nature of desire. What mimetic rivalry seeks to annihilate is the same radical likeness which sovereign amity celebrates. I am interested in these particular Roman plays because of their examination of sovereign amity and its inverse, mimetic rivalry, and the way in which, as a pair, these plays foreground “the uncanny proximity, even identity, of mimetic friendship and mimetic hatred.”¹⁶

Masculinity in the Roman plays is constituted by *virtus*, manifested through mimetic rivalry. The male-male bond thus becomes of paramount importance. In her groundbreaking survey of all of Shakespeare’s Roman works, Coppélia Kahn examines the way in which “Romanness is virtually identical with an ideology of masculinity.”¹⁷ Drawing together a body of diverse examinations of Rome in early modern literature, Kahn explains both the prevalence of Roman *virtus* in humanist education and the way in

which “The public theatre, both as an art form and as a social milieu, allowed Shakespeare wide latitude in refashioning Romanness.”¹⁸ Roman *virtus* becomes, for the English Renaissance, almost synonymous with masculinity. Kahn also argues that:

Shakespeare’s Roman heroes strive to prove themselves...against a rival whom they emulate. ... Emulation figures and enacts the differences *within* the masculine; thus it fractures a seemingly unified *virtus*.¹⁹

Both sovereign amity and mimetic rivalry are rooted in emulation—in the context of social parity, the emulous pair strives for equality, whereas in hierarchy emulation engenders rivalry and violence. As such, sovereign amity invariably gives way to mimetic rivalry. Early modern English culture and court are defined both by emulation and love of exemplars, and by a resurgence of classical and humanist education. Shakespeare’s explorations of Roman masculinities in terms of sovereign amity and mimetic rivalry are, then, as much about the contradictions inherent in early modern English masculinities as in Roman masculinities. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare offers a portrayal of the ideal of sovereign amity realized. This portrayal cannot be sustained, however, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, as sovereign amity cannot withstand the very real pressure of hierarchy and gives way to mimetic rivalry. Sovereign amity proves to be, like the Republic upon which it depends, a dream “devoutly to be wished” but impossible to achieve in the intensely hierarchical worlds of imperial Rome and early modern England.

II

“Romans, countrymen, and lovers”: Performing Politics, Sovereign Amity and Masculinity in *Julius Caesar*

Much of the recent criticism on *Julius Caesar* has focused on the language of the play, with essentially two main focal points. The first concerns the function of reflexivity in Renaissance drama: one such argument being that it “control(s) the audience’s degree of involvement in the stage illusion.”²⁰ This contention, of course, harkens back to the works of both Samuel Johnson and Coleridge and their comments on the audience’s awareness of the play as “staged” by “players.” Another significant reading of language in *Julius Caesar*, derived from J.L. Austin, focuses on rhetoric and the manner in which language itself is specifically, perhaps intentionally, performative in the Roman world of the play. Cicero offers us a thesis for the play in his only speaking scene: “Indeed it is a strange-disposed time. / But men may construe things after their fashion / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (1.3.33-35).²¹ Men not only may but also do “construe things after their fashion” and, indeed, nothing is but speaking makes it so. In fact, it seems as though the figure of Cicero is ushered into this scene for the express purpose of speaking these lines. Gayle Greene offers further commentary on the importance of rhetoric and how it operates in the play as a “theme as well as a style: accorded prominence by structure and imagery, it is integral to characterization, culture, and to the central political and epistemological concerns.”²² The notion of the performative has not remained static. Indeed, it has been appropriated by other critics in ways that are perhaps more significant to an understanding of this play. Specifically, Judith Butler argues that gender is performative;²³ and, like Austin’s performative, depends on recognizable cultural conventions. As Jonathan Culler explains, although gender is recognizable only

in its performance, this does not imply that one chooses gender as an ungendered subject. In the “regime of gender,”²⁴ to be a subject is to be gendered. *Julius Caesar* is a play of, by and for men, inasmuch as Shakespeare’s Roman world belongs to men. The performance of masculinity—and by extension the play’s understanding of masculinity—is situated squarely within the recognizable cultural contexts of politics and sovereign amity. The Republic serves as the civic incarnation of the sovereign amity by which these men define their masculinity. Each of these inextricably tied themes—masculinity, politics, sovereign amity—requires performance; additionally, they are figured forth in the text in overwhelmingly metadramatic terms, pointing not only to the performance required by each, but also to the inherent fiction of each.

Before teasing out these themes in the text, I need to elucidate briefly what I mean by each. “Masculinity” for this discussion is the construction of a masculine gender identity as tied to not only the politics of Rome (as presented by Shakespeare), but also more significantly to the notion of “sovereign amity” in *Julius Caesar*. “Politics” is self-evident in the political upheaval in the play and, more importantly, the conflict between republicanism and imperialism. Rather than merely recapitulating a shop-worn analysis of the performance of politics, my aim is to examine the way in which the civic parity of Roman politics mirrors the required parity of sovereign amity. “Sovereign amity,” adapted by Shannon from Shakespeare’s sonnet 29,²⁵ refers to Renaissance friendship and its “repeated privileging of (erotic and non-erotic) same-sex bonds over (presumptively erotic) heterosexual relations.”²⁶ The world of *Julius Caesar* is specifically homosocial, and the most important relationships within the play are intense male/male friendships. Shannon refers to the parity required by friendship as a “civic

parity.” My contention is that the same “likeness” required to form this sovereign amity is also the project of the Republic in Shakespeare’s Rome. As Caesar is elevated to a monarchical role, he disrupts the radical likeness of sovereign amity: “The precondition of the king’s function as an emblem of public sovereignty is his emphatic and comprehensive preclusion from exercising the very gestures and capacities friendship celebrates.”²⁷ Thus, in the empire or monarchy the intense male/male friendship based on a certain sameness is always already compromised by the very fact that there is no true equality among those who operate within a hierarchical framework. There can only be one sovereign; therefore Caesar’s transgression is against sovereign amity, and his ambition thus threatens not only the Republic but, more importantly, the masculinity defined by Republican equality.

The correlation between masculinity and Republican politics is apparent before we even meet Caesar. As the play opens, Flavius and Murellus, Tribunes of the people of Rome, chastise the plebeians for abandoning their trades to “see Caesar, and to rejoice in his triumph” (1.1.31) and send them home to “Pray to the gods to intermit the plague / That needs must light on this ingratitude” (1.1.54-55). The conflation of celebrating Caesar and the Lupercal holiday results in a kind of elevation, if not deification, of Caesar. By abandoning their shops and their trades to exalt Caesar, the plebeians enable the representation of Caesar as both hero and leader. This elevation of Caesar to a monarchical position signals a turning away from the Republic, wherein lies the true ingratitude. As Flavius and Murellus part to “disrobe” the images of Caesar, they are enacting a performance ritual of their own, an inverted ceremony, in the disrobing of the images, so that this one man is not elevated above the level of the Republic. Flavius

closes the scene with significant remarks on the threat Caesar poses: “These growing feathers plucked from Caesar’s wing / Will make him fly an ordinary pitch, / Who else would soar above the view of men / And keep us all in servile fearfulness” (1.1.72-75). Figured specifically as “above the view of *men*,” Caesar’s developing imperial position invokes deep anxiety: not only regarding the destabilization of politics and the Republic, but more significantly about the destabilization of what it means to be a man in the Republic.

The reason for concern becomes more apparent when we first meet Brutus, Cassius, Caesar, and Antony. As scene two opens, the word of Caesar is portrayed as the Logos. Antony says, “When Caesar says ‘Do this,’ it is performed” (1.2.10). This line and its sentiment specifically demarcate the difference in the sovereign amity shared by and essential to the conspirators and the idolatry Antony shows to Caesar. Antony’s obedience to Caesar is like that of the Christian to his God or the Englishman to his monarch. The elevated quality of Caesar’s speech-act evidences the violation of the parity of sovereign amity. In the private conversation between Cassius and Brutus that follows, the complaint becomes more obvious in terms of masculinity. Cassius bemoans the position of Caesar: “he doth bestride the narrow world / Like a huge Colossus, and we petty men / Walk under his huge legs, and peep about / To find ourselves dishonorable graves” (1.2.135-138). Caesar’s elevation to a god-like or monarchical figure, towering above as the emblematic head of a newly founded hierarchy, is again not simply a threat to the current political structure, but to their identity and honor as men. What makes matters more unbearable for Cassius is the lie of it. “Ye gods, it doth amaze me,” he rails, “A man of such feeble temper should / So get the start of the majestic world, / And

bear the palm alone!” (1.2.128-131). Caesar is deaf in one ear, arguably impotent, and suffers from epilepsy. He is no better a man than his Republican peers. As Stephen Greenblatt points out: “one of the highest achievements of power is to impose its fictions upon the world and one of its supreme pleasures is to enforce the acceptance of fictions that are known to be fictions.”²⁸ This, it would seem, is precisely Caesar’s achievement and the root of Cassius’ complaint.

Within this first conversation, we also see immediate expression of the sovereign amity shared between these men. As Cassius first approaches Brutus, he complains that the quality of their friendship has been strained of late, and he does so in homoerotic terms: “I have not from your eyes that gentleness / And show of love as I was wont to have. / You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand / Over your friend that loves you” (1.2.32-36). Cassius is clearly testing Brutus’s disposition towards Caesar’s rise, and he is not disappointed by Brutus’s response. Brutus, like Cassius, professes the intensity of the male/male bond, numbering Cassius among his “good friends,” and apologizing that he has neglected “the shows of love to other men” (1.2.43, 47). Cassius, when holding himself up as a mirror to Brutus, speaks again of his love for Brutus. Although this declaration may be called into question by his objective—namely to incite Brutus to conspiracy—the abundance of protestations of both love and sincerity throughout the play belie this possibility. Brutus himself responds, “That you do love me I am nothing jealous” (1.2.161). These assertions of love are later strengthened by the “lover’s-quarrel” in Act 4, Scene 2 and by their renewed declarations of love and friendship when they reconcile, prepare to go into battle against the revengers of their enemy (whose spirit they cannot, finally, vanquish) and as they die. Sovereign amity requires, it seems, not

only parity, but also expression in both action and language, suiting one to the other. It must be performed to the “other self” in order to be named.

As Brutus and Cassius initially broach the subject of conspiracy, a commotion can be heard off stage. Caesar and his train enter briefly, and the description Caesar uses to distinguish his beloved and trusted Antony from those he fears, such as Cassius, is startling. Caesar says, “Yet if my name were liable to fear, / I do not know the man I should avoid / So soon as that spare Cassius ... He loves no plays, / As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music” (1.2.199-201, 203-204). The similarity between Caesar’s Antony and Gaveston, the king’s “minion” in Marlowe’s *Edward II* (1592) is unmistakable. As the performance-loving Gaveston is about to be reunited with his Edward, he comments, “I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits, / Musicians, that with touching of a string / May draw the pliant king which way I please” (1.1.50-52).²⁹ Shakespeare’s invocation of Marlowe’s Gaveston is significant in that allows him to assimilate within the character of Antony the anxieties produced by the relationship between Gaveston and Edward II. This anxiety is again grounded in Renaissance friendship tropes. The role of monarch specifically precludes participation in the privileges celebrated by friendship discourse simply because of his required public function. The dramatic tension occurs in *Edward II* when Edward elevates his beloved Gaveston, a mere gentleman, above the status of the kingdom’s peerage. As Shannon explains, although Edward may be ascribing to norms of friendship doctrine when he offers the use of the treasury to his Gaveston, he is clearly abusing the absolutism of his rule: “‘Sovereign amity’ and ethical monarchy, as perfectly incompatible systems of propriety, demand precisely the opposite actions.”³⁰ Although Shakespeare does not explore this concern in *Julius Caesar* as directly and thoroughly as

does Marlowe in *Edward II*, rank and status still come into play. Although the conspirators strive so vehemently to protect the equality of Republicanism, that “equality” is arguably, in some senses, a fiction. The political reality of the Roman Republic involves *levels* of parity. The plebeians, for instance, may have a voice in Republican politics, but they do not have the same voice as the patrician Roman. Antony, though Caesar’s favorite, does not quite inhabit the same social strata as the conspirators. Brutus’s language—if not the man himself—acknowledges this when, dismissing Cassius’s assertion that Antony’s death should also be written into their script: “And for Mark Antony, think not of him, / For he can do no more than Caesar’s arm / When Caesar’s head is off” (2.1.181-183). He thus draws on the emblematic figure of the monarch as the body’s head. If Brutus sees himself as Caesar’s equal—as he must, since he bases his decision to participate in the conspiracy on the conditional “may”³¹—then he too is figured as a head, whereas Antony remains an arm. Ultimately it is Cassius, petitioning for the death of Antony, who names the sovereign amity, the “engrafted love” (2.1.184)³² shared between Antony and Caesar. The concern regarding Antony’s status hinted at by Shakespeare’s allusion to Gaveston is amplified when Antony, joined with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus against the Republicans, conspires with Octavius to eliminate Lepidus from the triumvirate. Although it is politically expedient for Antony to join the triumvirate, he—once Caesar’s favorite—does not consider Lepidus qualified for parity.

As Caesar’s entourage departs, Casca remains and describes Antony’s thrice offering of the crown, and Caesar’s thrice refusal of it, to the delight of their plebian audience. The performance of politics is explicit in this scene staged by Caesar and

Antony. This performance is, of course, necessary to woo the plebeians to the radical political shift they would enact. The metadrama here becomes explicit in the remarks of Casca: “If the tagrag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theater, I am no true man” (1.2.258-261). Certainly, we must choose whether or not to trust Casca’s declaration of himself as a “true man,” but, aside from the play’s overall mistrust of “construing” and “fashioning,” we have no cue to doubt him. As a matter of dramatic convention his direct, frank descriptions and prose style of speaking signals that his statements, though tinged with some disgust, act as an accurate report. The dangerous power to sway (and perhaps fool) is figured in specifically metadramatic terms. Antony and Caesar have become the actors who portray themselves, and the plebeians are to be found in the audience of the Globe as well as on stage. We see here, as we do when Antony steps down into the throng while eulogizing Caesar, a temporary dislocation in what Wilson calls “the imaginary plane between stage and audience.”³³ This moment is further informed by Drakakis’ assertion that “[t]his representation of the workings of political power, irrespective of intention discloses an unstable institution proceeding gingerly into a terrain fraught with considerable political danger.”³⁴ This moment of political performance not only reminds us of Renaissance concerns about the power of representation, but also evidences the connection these men make between their political status and their masculinity. In response to Casca’s description of Caesar’s performance, Brutus attributes his “on-stage” collapse to the “falling sickness,” prompting Cassius’s declaration: “No, Caesar hath it not; but you and I, / and honest Casca, we have the falling sickness” (1.2.255-6). Cassius frames their positions in this newly developing

hierarchy in the same terms he has used while bemoaning the emasculating effect of Caesar's undeserved elevation.

The depth of friendship among these Republicans is reiterated when the conspirators meet with Brutus for the first time. As Cassius and the other conspirators arrive, Cassius describes their sentiment toward Brutus: "and no man here / But honors you; and everyone doth wish / You had but that opinion of yourself / Which every noble Roman bears of you" (2.1.90-93). Brutus welcomes them individually, offering recognition to each and refers to them as "gentle friends" (2.1.171). It seems that it is specifically their sovereign amity that enables the existence of their Republic. It is also clear in Brutus's speech against oath swearing that he and the others find both their pride and their identity as men in their position as Romans. "What other bond / Than secret Romans, that have spoke the word / And will not palter?" (2.1.124-126). Oaths, it seems, are the property only of "priests and cowards and men cautelous" (2.1.129)—men whose masculine identities are necessarily called into question. The performance of an oath ritual is not necessary for these Romans, these men; speaking the word is enough to make it so. As the conspirators part Cassius directs the others: "friends, disperse yourselves; but all remember what you have said, and show yourselves true Romans" (2.1.222-223), making explicit once again the connection between their civic and personal parity.

Although the figure of Portia may connect only obliquely and certainly complicatedly to the notion of sovereign amity, it seems remiss to discuss gender in *Julius Caesar* without addressing her role, particularly in terms of masculine gender appropriation. After the conspirators depart, Portia enters and complains to Brutus of his unwillingness to acquaint her, his wife, with his cause of grief. In Portia's efforts to gain

the confidence of her husband we see not only the supremacy of the male/male bond (as Portia must appropriate behavior gendered masculine in order to forge a bond similar to that which Brutus shares with Cassius and the conspirators), but also the threat of the heterosexual bond to the homosocial order. Initially, Portia tries to debase the homosocial bond and privilege their heterosexual bond by conflating the marriage bed with health and aligning Brutus's "illness" with the meeting that has just taken place. Portia asks, "What, is Brutus sick? / And will he steal out of his wholesome bed / To dare the vile contagion of the night" (2.1.263-265). Kneeling, she recalls "that great vow / Which did incorporate and make us one" (2.1.272-273) and asks "[t]hat you unfold to me, your self, your half, / Why you are heavy, and what men tonight/ Have had resort to you... / ... who did hide their faces / Even from darkness" (2.1.274-278). The sinister image of men who hide their faces even from darkness is clearly meant to coincide with the image of the "vile contagion of the night" as well as to descriptions of the danger that Brutus will "suck up the humors / Of the dank morning" (2.1.262-263) and "tempt the rheumy and unpurgèd air / To add unto his sickness" (2.1.266-267). Drawing on registers of early modern humoral medical theory, Portia's correlation of "rheumy" (humoral imbalance and excess of phlegm) with the meeting of the conspirators figures Brutus's privileging of the same-sex bond over the marriage bond as diseased.

Ultimately, Portia will have to resort to some masculine gender appropriation to sway Brutus. This is apparent early in this scene when, referring to "your self, your half," she uses the language of sovereign amity, of the friend as "another self," to characterize the marital bond. Portia next exploits the "virgin-whore" dichotomy of feminine gender construction by proclaiming, in response to Brutus's withholding from

his wife, “Portia is Brutus’s harlot, not his wife” (2.1.287). Given that masculinity in the Renaissance is often arguably constructed against anxieties about women’s chastity and the control of women’s sexuality, the defamation of Portia’s chastity necessarily equals the compromise of Brutus’s masculinity. Portia next re-scripts herself as not merely a woman, but most significantly as “[a] woman that Lord Brutus took to wife” (2.1.293) and “[a] woman well reputed, Cato’s daughter” (2.1.295). She asks Brutus, “Think you I am no stronger than my sex / Being so fathered and so husbanded?” (2.1.296-297). By aligning herself with the honor of her father and her husband, Portia not only points to the economy of exchange in which she is a commodity, but she also attempts to usurp some of their masculine honor for herself. Finally, Portia argues that she has “made strong proof of [her] constancy” (2.1.299), and she employs her most powerful strategic maneuver, displaying the “voluntary wound / Here, in the thigh” (2.1.300-301). Although this wound and its position draw attention to the “wound” of femininity, the fact that she has controlled the phallic weapon to reinscribe her “cut” simultaneously masculinizes Portia. Madelon Sprengnether makes a compelling argument regarding Portia’s wound:

In a play obsessed with wounds—with the spectacle of Caesar’s hacked and bleeding body and the ritually self-inflicted wounds of the conspirators Cassius and Brutus—Portia’s gesture is far from gratuitous. In her zeal to prove her masculine trustworthiness, she reveals the underlying paradox of the play, which equates manliness with injury, so that the sign of masculinity becomes the wound.³⁵

However, unlike the “woman’s wound” which bleeds uncontrollably, this wound is

firmly under Portia's control. Of course, in the play this wound does not, in fact, bleed at all. It cannot be insignificant that in a play filled with so many self-inflicted wounds and so much blood, that this bleeding wound is only presented in narrative. Even Portia's self-inflicted death, her swallowing of fire (4.3.156), occurs off-stage, is presented as a report of past events, and is treated so ambiguously as to distance it from the play's other stoic suicides (by men). As much as Portia herself seems to interrogate the assumptions of femininity and the supremacy of homosociality over heterosexuality, the play does not, finally, endorse her position. Although Portia does sway Brutus, she must refigure herself in terms familiar to masculinity and sovereign amity in order to do so. And although Brutus does allow her to "partake / The secrets of [his] heart" (2.1.305-306), she ultimately fears she will prove to be, in accordance with Renaissance gender ideology, a leaky vessel, unable to refrain from divulging his secret. The play seems to ultimately warn against befriending one's wife.

In Act 2, Scene 2, we find not only a fine example of Cicero's notion of the way men "construe," but also the most explicit acknowledgement that Caesar has violated the notion of sovereign amity. After Caesar is convinced to go to Senate (teased into it by the image of the crown) he says to the band of conspirators/friends, "Good friends, go in and taste some wine with me, / And we, like friends, will straightway go together" (2.2.126-127). Caesar opens with "good friends," addressing the group of men to whom he is speaking and who are indeed good friends. By referring to the "other" as "good friends" he is inevitably pointing to his own exclusion from the group: he does not say "my good friends," inserting himself into the group. He is acknowledging the sovereign amity among these men, which he no longer shares. In the following line, he says they

will go “like friends”— not as friends, but *as if* they were friends. Brutus emphasizes the collapse of sovereign amity between them in his aside response, “That every like is not the same, O Caesar, /The heart of Brutus earns to think upon” (2.2.128-129). Indeed they are “acting” *like* friends, but things are not as they appear. Caesar’s ambition has secured his exclusion from the bond of sovereign amity. Brutus recognizes that the performance of amity between him and Caesar— whom he still loves—is now merely performance.³⁶ It is this realization that breaks the heart of Brutus.

As the assassination scene draws near, it is Caesar’s own words that indict him, making apparent his violation of the parity of Republicanism and sovereign amity. Caesar, like the monarch, refers to himself in both the third person and in the first person plural. When denying the appeals on behalf of Publius Cimber, Caesar says, “I am constant as the northern star, / Of whose true-fix’d and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament” (3.1.60-62). Caesar declares himself peerless; as he figures himself Sovereign, he severs himself from the bond of sovereign amity. Brutus’s words as he kneels at Caesar’s feet also draw on registers of Renaissance friendship: “I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar” (3.1.52). In Philemon Holland’s 1603 translation of Plutarch’s “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend,” the distinction between true and false friends is defined specifically in terms of speech. As Shannon argues, “We do not need, in Holland’s words, ‘a false friend to flatter us in our follies, ...but rather of one that would frankly finde fault with our doings and reprove us.’ ... Sharp corrective speech arises here as the evidentiary test by which true and false friends and flattery and good counsel may be distinguished.”³⁷ By petitioning for Publius Cimber, Brutus gestures at providing Caesar the opportunity to accept his good counsel. Brutus will later prove

again his true friendship to Cassius with “sharp corrective speech.” The anxiety surrounding monarchy, friendship and flattery is reiterated by Antony just after he shakes the bloody hand of each conspirator: “My credit now stands on such slippery ground / That on of two bad ways you must conceit me, / Either a coward or a flatterer” (3.1.191-193). Like the conspirators, Antony here correlates his masculinity to the expression of sovereign amity. Standing idly by the slain body of Caesar “That I did love” (3.1.194) figures him (at least momentarily) emasculated: either dishonorable Roman or false friend.

The assassination of Caesar is also highly metadramatic in that it plays like a murder staged. The conspirators, like the players portraying them, take their places and act on cue. Their appeals to Caesar on behalf of Publius Cimber are scripted. The metadramatic trope suggests again the necessary performance of the assassination as it is scripted by the conspirators in terms of both politics and friendship. The act is highly ritualized and culminates in the bathing of the hands in the blood of Caesar. As Anne Barton argues, “Blood is not blood, [Brutus] insists, but purely symbolic. It stands for the idea of freedom.”³⁸ The signifying of Caesar’s blood is a highly contentious issue in the play. In the context of the conspirators’ ritual performance, Caesar’s blood on the hands of his assassins operates as costume-as-prop. Brutus hopes to “fashion” the blood as exemplifier of their status as saviors of Rome. Ultimately, in the hands of Antony’s speech performance they will instead “appear as the bloody butchers of a ‘savage spectacle’ to the waiting audience of citizens.”³⁹

Gail Kern Paster’s exploration of blood as a gender trope further informs the notion that Caesar’s blood “stands for the idea of freedom” to Brutus. In Calpurnia’s

dream, Caesar has appeared as a “statue, / Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts, / Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans / Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it” (2.2.76-79). Paster argues that the “bleeding body signifies as a shameful token of uncontrol, as a failure of physical self-mastery particularly associated with woman.”⁴⁰ Women are, according to Renaissance ideology, leaky vessels, and menstruation is yet further proof of women’s weakness. Men may have blood too, but their bleeding is controllable. Caesar, envisioning himself as emperor, all too readily accepts Decius’s manipulative reinterpretation of Calpurnia’s vision as signifying “that from [Caesar] great Rome shall suck / Reviving blood” (2.2.87-88). Thus Caesar is able to reclaim his masculinity in the vision of his bleeding body by rescripting it as a figurative feeding of the nation. Following the assassination, Brutus once again rescripts the image of Caesar’s bleeding body to affirm both their Republican unity and their masculinity. “Stoop, Romans, stoop,” he urges the conspirators en masse, “And let us bathe our hands in Caesar’s blood / Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords” (3.1.105-107). By clearly invoking phallic imagery in opposition to Caesar’s blood, both Caesar’s blood and Caesar himself are feminized in this ritualization. In what is perhaps the most highly metadramatic moment in the play, Cassius, his hands dripping with Caesar’s blood proclaims, “How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over, / In states unborn and accents yet unknown!” (3.1.111-113). Brutus’s response, “How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport” (3.1.114) sexualizes and trivializes Caesar’s blood. Brutus has already proclaimed, “In the spirit of men there is no blood” and “Caesar must bleed” (2.1.168, 171). The refiguring of Caesar as feminized in contrast to the masculinity of the Republican conspirators seems necessary to justifying their own masculine gender

construction. It is Cassius who articulates their parity and masculinity in political terms:

“So often shall the knot of us be call’d / The men that gave their country liberty”

(3.1.117-118).

The speeches of Brutus and Antony in the funeral scene that follows are excellent examples of speech-acts, and both are clearly about speech as performance. Brutus’s speech clearly delineates concerns of politics and sovereign amity. Brutus delivers the “unkindest cut,” he explains to the assembled crowd, “not that [he] loved Caesar less, but that [he] loved Rome more” (3.2.21-2); and it is Brutus who finally constructs their masculinity: “Romans, countrymen, and lovers” (3.2.13). He is addressing his speech to the members of the Republic, who share a certain civic parity. In figuring them also as “lovers,” Brutus’s speech points to the way in which Republicanism and sovereign amity share, as a common necessity, parity. Additionally, this form of address marks their masculine gender identity. They are specifically, as men, “Romans, countrymen, and lovers.” Antony’s “eulogy” relies on familiar terms. As he holds up Caesar’s mantle, describing a scene at which he was not present, Antony declares, “Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed; ... Brutus, as you know, was Caesar’s angel. / Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him! / This was the most unkindest cut of all. ... Then burst his might heart” (3.2.176, 171-183, 186). Antony appropriates Brutus’s language of sovereign amity, portraying Brutus as the false friend, and imputing his death to this betrayal rather than to the multiple stab wounds. He re-scripts the assassination as murder and recuperates Caesar’s masculinity. Finally, Antony addresses the assembled Romans as “Good friends, sweet friends” (3.2.209) and figures himself in the role that Brutus would fill: “a plain blunt man / That love my friend” (3.2.218-219), once again

reiterating the connection between masculinity and sovereign amity.

As the battle between the two factions approaches, the sovereign amity between Brutus and Cassius is tested by a lovers' quarrel. Before Cassius and Brutus have their confrontation, however, Brutus says to Lucilius, "When love begins to sicken and decay / It useth an enforced ceremony. / There are no tricks in plain and simple faith; / But hollow men, like horses hot at hand, / Make gallant show and promise of their mettle" (4.2.20-24), echoing the language of Renaissance friendship discourses. When Brutus and Cassius do finally bicker, Cassius complains, "Brutus hath rived my heart" (4.3.85), "You love me not" (89), and "A friendly eye could never see such faults" (90). Brutus, echoing Plutarch, answers, "A flatterer's would not, though they do appear/ As huge as high Olympus" (91-92)—recalling also Caesar's "Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus" (3.1.74) just before Casca delivers the first blow. As a true friend ought, Brutus has used harsh, corrective speech, and he emphasizes the sovereign amity they share by embracing Cassius and offering his heart as well as the hand Cassius has requested. Cassius later proclaims, "I cannot drink too much of Brutus' love" (4.3.162).

This scene is immediately preceded by the meeting of the triumvirate as they list who shall not be allowed to live in their Rome. The juxtaposition of these scenes makes obvious the striking disparity between the sovereign amity shared by the Republicans and the utter want of sovereign amity among the members of the triumvirate. Antony makes apparent the absence of sovereign amity and its required parity between these men by declaring Lepidus undeserving of parity, referring to him as a "slight unmeritable man" (4.1.12). He asks Octavius if "The threefold world divided [Lepidus] should stand / One of the three to share it?" (4.1.14-15). Antony finally renders Lepidus as unworthy and

emasculated, proclaiming, “Do not talk of him / But as property” (4.1.39-40). The lack of sovereign amity is further evidenced by the tension between Antony and Octavius, apparent even in this early moment of their collusion. When Antony questions Lepidus’s worthiness, Octavius chides, “So you thought him, / And took his voice who should be prick’d to die / In our black sentence and proscription” (4.1.15-17). Antony responds with the equally, if not surpassingly, condescending, “Octavius, I have seen more days that you” (4.1.18). Octavius further argues, “You may do your will; / But he’s a tried and valiant soldier” (4.1.27-28) about the man he will so ruthlessly dispose of in *Antony and Cleopatra*. As the scene closes on Octavius’s remarks, “And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear, / Millions of mischiefs” (4.1.50-51), it is difficult to imagine any of the Republicans smiling on these two men. Indeed, it is this “pair of chaps” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 3.5.13) who smile on each other.⁴¹

The bond of sovereign amity in *Julius Caesar* finds its ultimate performance in the stoic suicides that conclude this play—those acts which also serve as the quintessential marks of masculinity, the pinnacle of their courage as warriors. As Brutus and Cassius make their farewells before embarking in battle, Brutus speaks both of his stoic resolve and the depth of his friendship: “Think not, thou noble Roman, / That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome; / ... If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; / If not, why then this parting was well made” (5.1.110-111, 117-118). Cassius, who has earlier referred to them as “Lovers in peace” (5.1.94), responds in virtually identical terms: “If we do meet again, we’ll smile indeed; / If not, ’tis true the parting was well made” (5.1.120-121). In the similarity of their words we see that these friends are very much “another self” to each other. Later, when Cassius mistakenly believes Titinius has fallen

in battle, he cries “O, coward that I am, to live so long, / To see my best friend ta’en before my face!” (5.3.34-35) and orders his slave to kill him. Upon his return, Titinius laments over the body of “brave Cassius” (5.3.80), “Alas, thou hast misconstrued everything” (5.3.84), lays a garland sent from Brutus, and kills himself, saying, “this is a Romans part. / Come Cassius’ sword, and find Titinius’ heart” (5.3.88-89). Upon finding them, Brutus declares, “Are yet two Romans living such as these? / The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!” (5.3.98-99). The image of the superlative Roman is finally that of the warrior who commits suicide in order to join his friend in death. Finally, as defeat draws near, Brutus takes his own life. These sovereign friends are able to preserve their amity only in death. It is Antony who performs the final fashioning of the play as he offers the encomium over Brutus’s body: “This was the noblest Roman of them all ... ‘This was a man!’” (5.5.68, 75). Antony’s speech makes explicit the indelible connection between Brutus’s masculinity and his commitment to the common good—that civic incarnation of their sovereign amity.

The Roman world of *Julius Caesar* is portrayed as specifically homosocial, with only two small female roles. The role of Calpurnia merely enables speculation on Caesar’s impotence and emphasizes—in the interpretation and re-interpretation of her dreams—Cicero’s thesis that “men may construe things after their fashion” (1.3.34). The figure of Portia is more complicated, given her self-inflicted wound and masculine gender appropriation. The most important relationships within the play are undeniably the relationships between men. These men operate in a Republican world of, by and for men. It is within this context that these men construct their masculine gender identity. Caesar’s unforgivable transgression is against not only the equality of Republican politics

but more importantly against the parity necessary to sovereign amity, and as such against the very basis of their masculinity. *This* is the insurmountable threat. Caesar must die so that they may be men. If this play is highly skeptical about Roman Republicanism, we are then left to decipher its stance on sovereign amity, which is inextricably tied to Roman Republicanism for these men. Perhaps Shakespeare is gesturing to the inherent compromise of the dream of sovereign amity in his own rigidly hierarchical culture. Republican Rome provides for a space, however temporary, in which this dream of sovereign amity seems possible. Considering themselves radically alike, Brutus and Cassius are able to overcome the momentary lapse into mimetic rivalry and maintain their sovereign amity. However, the play makes clear that the dream of sovereign amity in the context of hierarchy is just that: a dream. As we shall see in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the myth of sovereign amity evaporates under the pressures of hierarchy and mimetic rivalry.

III
**“[A] pair of chaps—no more”:
 Mimetic Rivalry and the Dissolution of Amity
 in *Antony and Cleopatra***

The tensions noted earlier between Antony and Octavius Caesar intensify to the breaking point in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the political and historical sequel, as it were, which opens shortly following the conclusion of action in *Julius Caesar*. If *Julius Caesar* envisions a masculinity grounded in the dream of sovereign amity and Republican civic parity, then *Antony and Cleopatra* evokes a world of emphatic hierarchy in which radical likeness leads inevitably to martial violence and mimetic rivalry. *Antony and Cleopatra* is remarkable in its absence of sovereign amity (with its required parity), the most celebrated of relationships between men during the Renaissance. The relationships between the men in this play, those that are not of a master/servant nature, are prominently marked by a sense of masculine rivalry. In the ever-warring world of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Republicanism is dead, as is parity. Masculinity is constantly threatened, but without the security of the intense male/male friendship bond to rescue it. Octavius Caesar marries Antony to his sister Octavia in an attempt to sever the specifically heterosexual bond between Antony and Cleopatra and to resecure, via triangulation with a woman he controls, the homosocial bond with Antony. Of his sister Octavia, Octavius says, “Let her live / To join our kingdoms and our hearts; and never / Fly off our loves again” (2.2.150-152). Enobarbus accurately predicts the inadequacy of this arrangement: “But you shall find the band that seems to tie their friendship together will be the very strangler of their amity” (2.6.120-122). Sovereign amity cannot operate by proxy nor within the pattern of mimetic rivalry; the dangers of

sexual love prove insurmountable, as Antony cannot resist the allure of Cleopatra (made perhaps all the more irresistible by her androgyny—a matter I will discuss at a later point). Octavius’s attempt to recreate the homosocial bond within a heterosexual paradigm proves fatal. The conflict implied in *Julius Caesar* between Antony and Octavius escalates in *Antony and Cleopatra* until Enobarbus declares, “Then, [world,] thou [hast] a pair of chaps—no more, / And throw between them all the food thou hast, / They’ll grind [th’ one] the other” (3.5.13-15).

Parity has little place in *Antony and Cleopatra* where so much is defined in terms of differences rather than similarities: Rome versus Egypt and masculine versus feminine are just two examples. The reliance on an oppositional reading is due, in part, to the lack of certainty as to where the play stands on a variety of issues. As Howard Felperin argues, “That *Antony and Cleopatra* creates an ambiguity of effect and responses unprecedented even within Shakespeare’s work is documented by a history of interpretation that wavers inconclusively between Egyptian and Roman viewpoints, and that usually feels compelled finally to side with one or the other position, however tentatively or tactfully.”⁴² My discussion here of masculinity also necessarily relies on its opposition to femininity, against which masculinity is so anxiously constructed in early modern literature. Ultimately the “endless likeness and endless difference”⁴³ of sovereign amity and mimetic rivalry are flip sides of the same coin. In Kahn’s assessment of Antony and Octavius, “‘equalness’ spawns a relentless striving for its opposite, the ultimate difference of total victory and total defeat: that is the paradox at the heart of emulation.”⁴⁴ My reading of the relationship between violence, masculinity, and sovereign amity in *Antony and Cleopatra* is heavily informed by Barbara Baines’s

application of René Girard's theories of mimetic rivalries and "doubles" to this play. Baines explains that the mimetic desire of the characters Antony and Cleopatra, mediated by mythic models, generates an *external* rivalry, within which "there is no risk of generating violence, for the models and rivals inhabit a remote space, a different world."⁴⁵ On the other hand violence (perhaps both inevitable and necessary) is generated to alleviate the *internal* mimetic rivalry between "doubles." Mimetic rivalry is not induced by Difference but instead by a crisis in degree engendered by the lack of difference between mimetically desiring subjects. Or, as Enobarbus tells us, "that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance" (2.6.128-130).

Arguably, the rhetoric of sovereign amity allows for a discursive space where radical sameness, "no difference," is rescripted as non-threatening. However, mimetic rivalry always threatens at the periphery once the subjects become desiring subjects. In *The Winter's Tale* the sovereign amity shared by the youthful Leontes and Polixenes—"We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun, / And bleat the one at th' other" (1.1.67-68)—cannot withstand the pressures of heterosexual desire, which seems always dangerous and threatening for Shakespeare's male characters. Perhaps it is in this way we can also account for the near absence of women in *Julius Caesar*. Of course, "desire" is not restricted to that of an erotic nature—Caesar's desire for power is a complicated and potentially complicating example—but it is striking that one of these so closely related plays features a dearth of heterosexual desire and an abundance of intense homosocial bonding while the inverse is true of the other.

Antony and Cleopatra features a multitude of permutations on the figure of the

“double”—that is, the play features seemingly endless sets of doubled pairs. However, the two pairings I am most interested in are Antony and Octavius and Antony and Cleopatra. With Antony and Octavius we witness the inadequacy of “sovereign amity” to temper mimetic rivalry in the context of an epistemological dilemma—when “seeming” and “being” are so incongruent. As Janet Adelman argues, “In this play, more than in any other, Shakespeare does not choose to suit the words to the action, the action to the words.”⁴⁶ Sovereign amity between these men is impeded by the very hierarchical nature and political expediency of their relationship; the “dream” of sovereign amity is merely a useful fiction. Cleopatra, rendered androgynous by the appropriation of masculine gender tropes, is cast in the role of Antony’s “other self,” and the play makes apparent the inherent instability of the masculinity of the man who attempts to forge the bond of sovereign amity with a woman.

In the opening speech of the play we learn that the male Romans serving Antony in Egypt have already taken note of the crisis in masculinity engendered by the close relationship between their general and the Egyptian queen. As Antony and Cleopatra accompanied by her attendants enter, debating the quality of his love, Philo instructs Demetrius, “Look where they come! / Take but good note, and you shall see in him / The triple pillar of the world transform’d / Into a strumpet’s fool” (1.1.10-13). This perception is reinforced when Cleopatra tests Antony, urging him to hear the messenger recently arrived from Rome and teases “As I am Egypt’s queen, / Thou blushest, Antony” (1.1.29-30), either at the shrill demands of his wife or the mandates of the “scarce-bearded Caesar” (1.1.21). At the close of the scene, Demetrius questions, “Is Caesar with Antonius priz’d so slight?” (1.1.56) and Philo answers “Sir, sometimes when he is not

Antony, / He comes too short of that great property / Which still should go with Antony” (1.1.57-59), making clear that the threat to Antony’s masculinity is his elevation of Cleopatra over Caesar. In this opening scene Demetrius and Philo establish the Roman perspective of Antony in Egypt: he is not “himself” and “his captain’s heart ... reneges all temper” (1.1.6, 8). From the very first speech we begin to learn the Roman definition of Roman masculinity. As Carol Cook argues, “The principle of Roman identity is founded on the premise of self-conquest, denial of the body, and a creation of the self in the abstract image of the state... Roman virility demands the reigning in of all excess and the complete subjugation of the body to the will.”⁴⁷

Within the context of sovereign amity, their cause for alarm is equally apparent. When Antony challenges the powers of nature to sever his embrace with Cleopatra, his own characterization of their bond, “such a mutual pair ... such a twain ... We stand up peerless” (1.1.37, 38, 40), figures their bond in the language of sovereign amity. He clearly sees them as each other’s other self, and as a bonded pair they are peerless, sovereign. Given the requisite radical likeness of sovereign amity, Antony and Cleopatra take on the role of doubles. This is amplified by Enobarbus when he mistakes Cleopatra for Antony: as the servants and the soothsayer are interrupted by the queen’s entrance Enobarbus says, “Hush, here comes Antony” and is corrected, “Not he, the Queen” by Charmian (1.2.79). Even Antony’s closest servant, a character created entirely by Shakespeare, confuses his master and his master’s mistress.

Antony oscillates throughout the play between disregard for anything or anyone outside his bond with Cleopatra and awareness that this bond threatens his masculinity and subjectivity. As news arrives of Fulvia’s death, Antony laments “I must from this

enchancing queen break off; / Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know, / My idleness doth hatch” (1.2.128-130) and calls Enobarbus to prepare for the journey home. Despite the predominantly bawdy tone Enobarbus adopts during this interlude, with puns on how Cleopatra will “die” and how Antony would be “cut” by Fulvia’s loss only if she were the only woman, Enobarbus also offers the first hint at an alternative Roman interpretation of Cleopatra—one that surely begins to account for Antony’s love for her in terms devoid of censure. When Antony calls her cunning, Enobarbus responds, “Alack, sir, no, her passions are made of nothing but the finest parts of pure love” (1.2.146-147). When Antony bemoans having ever seen her, Enobarbus responds, “O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work, which not to have been blest withal would have discredited your travel” (1.2.153-155). Certainly praise from Enobarbus, here mingled with bawdy puns, reads as tongue-in-cheek. However, he also seems to be answering Antony in Antony’s own terms, as though ventriloquizing Antony’s internal debate. And though we may be uncertain of his praise here, it is Enobarbus who will offer the most poetic tribute to Cleopatra (2.2.190-218, 234-239).

Finally, Antony must make his farewells to his mistress. He remains resolute in the wake of her pleading and manipulation, but reassures her “Our separation so abides and flies, / That thou residing here, goes yet with me; / And I hence fleeting, here remain with thee” (1.3.102-104). These lines significantly echo the sentiment of the opening quatrain of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116, one of those belonging to the group dedicated to the young man, which celebrates an intense male/male bond:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments; love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

In the economy of friendship, the desire to be together is natural, but an insistence to refuse parting is not. Shannon cites Leontes's insistence at the opening of *The Winter's Tale* that Polixenes not depart on state business as Leontes's first error and quotes Cicero:

Often ... important duties arise which require ... separation of friends; and he who would hinder the discharge of those duties because he cannot easily bear his grief at the absence of his friends, is not only weak and effeminate, but is far from reasonable in his friendship.⁴⁸

Sonnet 116, so insistent in its refusal to allow impediment, also gestures to the impediment that must generate the anxiety upon which this poem is based. Antony appeals to Cleopatra in terms borrowed from sovereign amity, once again inscribing her in the role of sovereign friend, and thus in terms that similarly predict the crisis to come.

As the setting shifts abruptly from Egypt to Rome and the play introduces the other two pillars of the triumvirate, Octavius also characterizes Antony and Cleopatra as doubles. He tells Lepidus that Antony "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (1.4.5-7). For Octavius, the real horror engendered by Antony's casting of Cleopatra as his other self is not the masculinization of Cleopatra but the effeminization of Antony. This is the Roman perspective that Antony in his Roman thoughts and oscillation shares. In Octavius's descriptions of Antony, we see Octavius's construction of Antony in Roman terms. Octavius's Antony is man enough to "drink / The stale of horses and the gilded puddle / Which beasts would cough at" (1.4.61-63), to "eat strange flesh, / Which some did die to look on" (1.4.67-68),

and, above all, to bear it “so like a soldier, that [his] cheek / So much as lank’d not” (1.4.70-71). Octavius defines Antony before his passion for Cleopatra as his “competitor” (1.4.3) —that is, his “partner,” his equal, his “double.” As such, his own masculinity is equally invested in this Roman image of Antony and clearly threatened by Antony’s sojourn in Egypt. As Cook explains, “Singularly dedicated to control, rigorously abstract and impersonal in its ethic of duty, founded on the suppression of the heterogeneous, the feminine, the bodily, the maternal, Roman manhood is always threatened by the eruption of desire.”⁴⁹ In this initial speech of Octavius’s we also find an early hint of the lack of sovereign amity between these men. Although Lepidus tries to defend Antony and excuse his faults, Octavius chides, “You are too indulgent” (1.4.16), speaks of Antony as a “boy” to berate, and emphasizes his “shames.” Octavius’s claim that Antony’s behavior reduces him to a “boy” is also an accusation of effeminacy. Octavius also strives here to ensure that Antony and Lepidus remain only precariously at peace.

The tenuousness of the triumvirate’s loyalties and the absence of sovereign amity are again made evident as the play shifts to the rebellious Pompey, preparing to embark on his own bid for power. Recalling the anxiety of false friends and flattery, Pompey says, “Lepidus flatters both, / Of both is flatter’d; but he neither loves, / Nor either cares for him” (2.1.14-16). Pompey makes clear that this play, unlike *Julius Caesar*, does not allow for a multiplicity of sovereign amity bonds shared among a group of men. With civic parity annihilated, the only possibility for sovereign amity to exist is within a single paired bond. Pompey’s interpretation predicts the ruthless disposing of Lepidus as the three pillars diminish to one. Pompey’s voice also serves to reiterate the anxiety of

sexual love. Hoping Antony will remain in Egypt's lap, he says,

Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both,
 Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
 Keep his brain fuming; epicurean cooks
 Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
 That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor,
 Even to a Lethe'd dullness— (2.1.22-27)

Clearly sexual love is a powerful and dangerous force which will lead a man to dishonor and possibly death. Pompey's fanciful rumination on the perilousness of Antony's desire for Cleopatra is interrupted by news that Antony's return to Rome is imminently anticipated. Pompey's description of Antony as a libertine changes dramatically to an assessment of his martial prowess in comparison to that of Lepidus and Octavius: "His soldiership / Is twice the other twain" (2.1.34-35). Pompey also argues that the news of Antony's return should bolster the egos of his supporters, "that our stirring / Can from the lap of Egypt's widow pluck / The [ne'er-] lust –wearied Antony" (2.1.36-38). Having recuperated his proper masculine role, Antony is instantly redeemed in Pompey's assessment. He tells Menas, "I know not... / How lesser enmities may give way to greater" (1.5.42-43), recognizing that Antony and Octavius will likely put aside their enmity to face Pompey. Ultimately, Antony and Octavius will "cement their divisions, and bind up / The petty difference" (1.5.48-49), at least temporarily, in the face of Pompey's rebellion. When Pompey and the triumvirate meet, Pompey frames his complaint in reference to the conspiracy of Cassius and Brutus against Julius Caesar. Calling the conspirators "courtiers of beauteous freedom" (2.6.17) who sought to "Have

one man but a man” (2.6.19), Pompey mythologizes both the dream of Republicanism and the illusion of sovereign amity. As the two factions reconcile, that reconciliation plays out in highly ironic terms. These heroic, masculine, self-denying Romans embark on a night of drunken revelry equal to any in Egypt.

The reconciliation between Antony and Octavius proves much less facile and equally short-lived. As they navigate the path toward appeasement, without much progress, it is Enobarbus who rightly suggests, “Or, if you borrow one another’s love for the instant, you may, when you have no more words of Pompey, return it again” (2.2.103-105). In a surprising turn Antony silences the man who seems his closest male companion: “Thou art a soldier only, speak no more” (2.2.107). Enobarbus’s response is both flippant and accurate: “That truth should be silent I had almost forgot” (2.2.108). Antony reiterates, “You wrong this presence, therefore speak no more” (2.2.111). Enobarbus, who does not appear in Plutarch’s *Lives*, to which Shakespeare is indebted, is a curious figure. I would suggest that one reason Shakespeare adds this wholly fictional figure and gives him such a prominent role is not just for bawdy comic relief, but so that he and Antony may speak these lines. First, Enobarbus rightly points to the fiction of friendship among men whose principal common desire is political expediency. The notion of sovereign amity has been a useful fiction for Antony, in both his relationship to Julius Caesar before his assassination and to Octavius Caesar in the formation of the triumvirate and the defeat of the republican conspirators. More importantly, this exchange emphasizes the difference of degree between these men. Antony’s relationship with Enobarbus, arguably the most idealized male/male bond in the play, is one that is emphatically hierarchical. And although there is a degree of familiarity, that familiarity

never progresses to the extent that it does in Marlowe's *Edward II*.⁵⁰ The most devoted male/male bond in *Antony and Cleopatra* is between men of different status who do not fully disregard their difference. Although Enobarbus will ultimately abandon Antony when the general's valor supercedes his wisdom, Enobarbus will also die from the shame of his betrayal.

The enmity between Antony and Octavius seems irresolvable. Octavius acknowledges the accuracy of Enobarbus's remarks, commenting, "for't cannot be / We shall remain in friendship, our conditions / So diff'ring in their acts" (2.2.112-114). He continues, "Yet if I knew / What hoop should hold us staunch from edge to edge / A' th' world, I would pursue it" (2.2.114-16) allowing for the rehearsed proposal from Agrippa that Antony marry Octavia, sister to Octavius, and her brother's double at least in name:

To hold you in perpetual amity,
 To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts
 With an unslipping knot, take Antony
 Octavia to his wife; (2.2.124-127)

Clearly, Agrippa is merely proposing the match, and the solution, that Octavius desires. Antony agrees to the match, indeed is forced by Octavius's silence to ask for it, but only because there is no other way for him to make peace and restore his Roman reputation. Again we witness Antony's oscillation, which in this instance is clearly a betrayal of the "mutual pair." Establishing the power dynamic in this interaction such that Antony must appeal to Octavius, Octavius has already begun to maneuver himself into a position of supremacy. Octavius is able to construct the situation so that he will either have Antony as a brother, an equal in amity, or if Antony betrays Octavia and thus the "marriage" to

Octavius, he will then have justification for violence. What is perhaps most noteworthy about the contracting of this union is the resemblance of their agreement to the marriage ceremony. Antony urges, “Let me have thy hand / Further this act of grace; and from this hour / The heart of brothers govern in our love” (2.2.145-147). As in the bond of sovereign amity, these brothers will share one heart. Octavius responds in kind: “There’s my hand” (2.2.148). As Octavius “bequeaths” Octavia (absent and unconsulted) to Antony in his stead, the two men stand facing each other, hands joined (as indicated by their deictic lines). It is in fact these two men who have become “hand-fastened” in marriage, with Octavia serving as an enabling substitute. This highly eroticized moment of homosocial bonding is the closest these men come to sovereign amity in the play. However, this moment is equally rife with political expediency and thus becomes a rather ironic version of sovereign amity.

The concord between these pillars is short-lived, and Antony, as Enobarbus predicts, returns to his Egypt, where his sword will be “made weak by [his] affection” (3.11.67). After the contracting of Octavia to Antony, Enobarbus, speaking to Octavius’s followers, offers something of an alternative to the Roman view of Cleopatra. In poignant and poetic language he describes Cleopatra on her barge and the first meeting between Antony and Cleopatra. Although his language still recalls the opposition between a masculine, self-controlled Rome and a feminine, self-luxuriating Egypt, Enobarbus speaks without censure here, and his lavishness raises suspicion that he too is a little in love with Cleopatra. His praise culminates in the declaration that “she did make defect perfection” (2.2.231) and the avowal that Antony, despite his marriage to Octavia, will return to Cleopatra.

As soon as Antony is married to Octavia, and the parity between him and Octavius is thereby reasserted, the tenuous amity between the two immediately gives way to rivalry. Antony asks the Soothsayer, “Whose fortunes shall rise higher?” (2.3.15), and the Soothsayer predicts that Octavius’s will. More importantly, he tells Antony, “If thou dost play with him at any game, / Thou art sure to lose” (2.3.26-27). Spoken by a soothsayer, this counsel “makes Antony’s rivalry seem fated rather than socially inscribed.”⁵¹ Kahn directs our attention to the language with which Antony substantiates the Soothsayer’s prediction. Antony ruminates:

Be it art or hap,
 He hath spoken true. The very dice obey him,
 And in our sports my better cunning faints
 Under his chance. If we draw lots, he speeds;
 His cocks do win the battle still of mine,
 When it is all to nought; and his quails ever
 Beat mine, inhoop’d, at odds. (2.3.34-39)

More than verifying that Octavius *will* win, as Kahn argues, “The speech hints at the casual dailiness of such competitions; recall the impromptu swimming contest between Cassius and Julius Caesar. Precisely because they are ordinary pastimes, though, they define a pervasive cultural pattern of homosociality: men playing with, and against each other.”⁵² Now made equals, brothers, via the triangulation with Octavia, Antony and Octavius once again define their relationship through mimetic rivalry. Antony’s only hope at differentiation and thereby the possibility of masculine supremacy in this hierarchy is to return to Cleopatra. Immediately following his speech on his continual

besting by Octavius, Antony declares, “I will to Egypt” (2.3.39). By placing distance and culture between Octavius and himself, Antony hopes to avoid internal rivalry by replacing it with harmless external rivalry.

Before Antony’s return to Egypt, Cleopatra offers an interlude that once again confirms their status as doubles, and the emasculating effect this “no difference” has on Antony:

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 Philippan. (2.5.18-23)

Given the early modern obsession with clothing as a marker of class and gender and the anti-theatrical bias based in part on anxieties regarding cross-dressing on the stage, the exchange of clothing between these lovers serves as further evidence of the gender confusion that results from their union.⁵³ Cleopatra, much to Enobarbus’s dismay, will “take up the sword” again and joins Antony in battle. Enobarbus pleads fervently against her doing so, arguing that as a woman she must needs be a distraction to Antony in battle. Once again, Enobarbus’s predictions prove accurate, and Antony, upon seeing Cleopatra’s ship flee from battle, “(like a doting mallard), / Leaving the fight in heighth, flies after her” (3.10.19-20). Scarus’s analysis of this flight serves as a thesis for the dangers of both sexual love and the certain outcome of venerating the heterosexual bond above the homosocial bond: “Experience, manhood, honor, ne’er before / Did violate so

itself" (3.10.22-23).

Antony's poor judgments in battle begin to trouble his heretofore faithful servant Enobarbus. Initially Enobarbus tries to ignore his doubts, convincing himself that "he that can endure / To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord / Does conquer him that did his master conquer, / And earns a place I' th' story" (3.13.43-46). Finally, Enobarbus does desert his master, but not out of rivalry. Kahn argues that Enobarbus "seems to stand aloof from emulation" and deserts Antony out of "disappointment in [his] lack of judgment and loss of honor."⁵⁴ It is telling, however, that Enobarbus does not desert Antony after his initial misjudgment or failure in honor, but as he prepares to return to battle with Octavius. Enobarbus argues that "When valor preys on reason, / It eats the sword it fights with" (3.13.198-199) and decides to "seek / Some way to leave him" (3.13.200). Enobarbus does not find that way until after Antony delivers a poignant speech meant as a rallying point for his troops. Enobarbus, who earlier attributed tears of Antony's to rheum rather than effeminate weeping, chastises Antony for his speech: "What mean you, sir, / To give them this discomfort? Look, they weep, / And I, an ass, am onion-ey'd. For shame, / Transform us not to women" (4.2.33-36). It seems clear that Enobarbus weeps, at least in part, because he plans to abandon his master. But surely his resolve to leave is strengthened after this moment in which he too feels emasculated.

Antony, at first incredulous that Enobarbus has deserted him, asks the soldier who reports his desertion to repeat his verification twice. Once he accepts the truth of Enobarbus's betrayal, Antony acts most magnanimously toward his friend: he sends Enobarbus's abandoned treasure after him and dictates "gentle adieus and greetings"

(4.5.14). Most significantly Antony takes upon himself the blame for Enobarbus's betrayal: "O, my fortunes have / Corrupted honest men! ... Enobarbus!" (4.5.16-17). As soon as we see Enobarbus in Caesar's camp, we hear his regret as he says, "I have done ill, / Of which I do accuse myself so sorely / That I will joy no more" (4.6.17-19). He, like Antony, blames only himself for their division. When he learns of Antony's generosity, his heartbreak is evident in his words:

I am alone the villain of the earth,
And feel I am so most. O Antony,
Thou mine of bounty, how wouldst thou have paid
My better service, when my turpitude
Thou dost so crown with gold! This blows my heart.
If swift thought break it not, a swifter mean
Shall outstrike thought, but thought will do't, I feel. (4.6.29-35)

Enobarbus does indeed die of a broken heart, and his final words are "O Antony! O Antony!" (4.9.23). Ultimately, what breaks Enobarbus's heart is the realization of what Antony offered him: true amity free from all political expediency. If sovereign amity becomes merely a useful fiction in an emphatically hierarchical culture, then what Shakespeare offers the audience in the bond between Antony and Enobarbus is a realistic alternative. The amity possible between them is not the dream of sovereign amity, but a friendship which accounts for the very real pressures of political and social hierarchies.

As the play draws to a close, Antony begins to realize his emasculation, exclaiming to Eros and Mardian, "O, thy vile lady! / She has robb'd me of my sword" (4.14.22-23). In a compelling reading of *Antony and Cleopatra* as "a play that re-

members and re-collects the dismembered tragic body,”⁵⁵ Susanne Wofford, directing the reader to these lines, argues, “Antony and Cleopatra also experience passion as dismembering or dispersing their powers metaphorically. For Antony, this dismemberment is sexual, if metaphoric.”⁵⁶ This is certainly the case, yet what Wofford’s reading does not explore is the way in which Antony’s metaphoric sexual dismemberment shifts the gender balance between these two figures. If Cleopatra has robbed Antony, she has, metaphorically perhaps, taken possession of his sword, that is, his masculinity. What Antony fails to recognize is that his emasculation, redeemable only by his stoic suicide, results from his own attempt to forge a heterosexual bond equivalent in intensity and significance to the homosocial bond of sovereign amity. Kahn offers the most compelling reading of Antony’s suicide in relation to masculinity:

That Antony fails to perform his suicide effectively exposes it as a performance,... intended to effect an ideological transformation whereby he can regain the Roman virtue he lost in being defeated by Caesar... by rendering Antony physically powerless this scene also exposes the contingencies that attend these cultural fictions.⁵⁷

What is most significant about Antony’s bungled stoic suicide is that it is a reaction to the lie of her suicide Cleopatra tells through Mardian. If Antony’s masculinity is recuperated by his stoic Roman suicide, then it is specifically the *lie* which retrieves his masculinity. Masculinity is exposed, then, as a cultural fiction.

Ultimately, the two lovers are united in death, as Cleopatra too performs her own “stoic suicide.” The Clown who brings her the “pretty worm of Nilus” (5.2.243) delivers to her “liberty” (5.2.237). Like Portia, Cleopatra temporarily rescripts herself in

masculine terms in order to achieve this reunion, declaring, “My resolution’s plac’d, and I have nothing / Of woman in me; now from head to foot / I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon / No planet is of mine” (5.2.238-241). Cleopatra acknowledges dominant feminine gender ideology and repudiates the gender stereotype that woman is cowardly, so that she may join her “husband.” Although the act of suicide echoes that superlative performance of Roman masculinity, in her distinctly Egyptian method Cleopatra embraces her own feminine identity. Cleopatra scripts her suicide as quintessentially androgynous so that she may join Antony as his sovereign spouse. The “marriage” of Antony and Cleopatra in death echoes a vision of heterosexual love espoused by Shakespeare in “The Phoenix and Turtle”:

So they loved as love in twain
 Had the essence but in one,
 Two distincts, division none:
 Number there in love was slain. (25-28)

Antony and Cleopatra, this “mutual pair,” certainly figure themselves as “Co-supremes and stars of love” (51). However, although Shakespeare presents us with this ideal of heterosexual love, he is unable to embrace it wholesale, for the poem continues, “But in them it were a wonder” (32). That is, only in this allegorical pair, already dead, is this vision possible. Ultimately, “Truth and Beauty buried be” (64). Referring to the suicides of Antony and Cleopatra, Cook argues, “It is consistent with their intolerance of bounds that both Antony and Cleopatra look to death to consummate their love; death is the ‘elsewhere’ in which the play locates a possibility of pure fluidity, freedom from the confinement and obstacles of the ‘dunghill earth.’”⁵⁸ Only in death can the fantasy of

sovereign amity find possibility. As man and woman, Antony and Cleopatra can only be joined as equals in amity in death—and not just any death: the afterlife they join is peopled by mythic and heroic figures that have gone before them and serve as their mimetic models (i.e., Dido and Aeneas).

Like *Julius Caesar*, this play also allows the vanquisher to speak the final, framing encomium over the body of the vanquished. Performing the role perfected by Antony in *Julius Caesar*, Octavius laments the death of his “competitor” (which also carries the meaning “partner” in the Renaissance):

O Antony,
 ... But yet let me lament,
 With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts
 That thou, my brother, my competitor
 In top of all design, my mate in empire,
 Friend and companion in the front of war,
 The arm of mine own body, and the heart
 Where mine his thoughts did kindle—that our stars,
 Unreconcilable, should divide
 Our equalness to this. (5.1.35, 40-48)

In recounting the fates of Antony and Cleopatra, Octavius notably offers a revised historiography, now declaring “No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous” (5.2.359-360). Accounting for this revision Linda Charnes argues, “In the logic of his own terms, Octavius cannot elevate them enough, since whatever capital he produces by generating ‘pity’ for their story is commutable into the surplus value of his

own glory.”⁵⁹ In a note, Charnes references another reason for this “revisionist epistemology:” the recuperation of Antony’s masculinity.⁶⁰ As Antony’s masculinity is recuperated and Octavius once again refigures himself as his “double,” Octavius’s own masculine identity is reinforced. Although Octavius employs language that appeals to the registers of sovereign amity—brother, competitor, mate, friend, companion, equal—his words also serve to remind us that the dream of sovereign amity cannot withstand the pressures of hierarchy and that their lack of difference engendered a mimetic rivalry requiring, for the sake of his own masculine security, violent resolution.

IV Conclusion

Julius Caesar and *Antony and Cleopatra* provide the opportunity to explore Roman masculinity in terms of its two inherently contradictory ideologies: sovereign amity and mimetic rivalry. In his final Roman play, *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare returns to a pre-Republican Rome and offers a kind of coda to the consideration of these themes. In *Coriolanus*, we are presented with the final demise of the dream of sovereign amity. Coriolanus's martial prowess serves as the marker of his masculinity and positions him alone among men, the incarnation of patrician hierarchy. He is also the absolute enemy of the Republic. His demise is ordained by both his quest to achieve a status above all others and his subsequent attempts to forge a bond of sovereign amity with another man, forgetting that in this hierarchy, such amity is only a politically expedient fiction. Coriolanus, a man who finally envisions himself as a "dragon" with no kin, no kind, seeks to annihilate all relations. As Barton notes, he is "[e]normous, impressive, but somehow obsolete, the protagonist of this play is indeed a kind of fabulous beast."⁶¹ Certainly, Coriolanus is a fabulous beast: although Menenius recognizes that Coriolanus "is grown from man to dragon" (5.3.13), he also suggests that if not a dragon Coriolanus has become a god: "He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in" (5.3.23-24). Whatever the metamorphosis, whether beast or god, Coriolanus appears to have achieved his goal of renouncing his humanity: "I'll never / Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand / As if a man were author of himself, / And knew no other kin" (5.3.34-37). Unfortunately, this denial of humanity leaves Coriolanus with no comprehensible means of defining his masculinity. In this Roman world, his humanity is defined by his *virtus*, synonymous with his masculinity. By setting himself apart from all

other men, Coriolanus fails at both mimetic rivalry and sovereign amity.

In the opening conflict of the play, we quickly learn that Coriolanus initially conceives of Aufidius, leader of the enemy forces, as his equal. As war with the Volsces threatens, Martius (Coriolanus) confesses to the other patricians, “I sin in envying his nobility; / And were I anything but what I am, / I would wish me only he” (1.1.230-232). Of course this admiration is grounded in violent competition: “He is a lion / That I am proud to hunt” (1.1.235-236). During the battle that ensues, Coriolanus makes clear that his understanding of masculinity is also firmly rooted in violent contest and honor earned in warfare. As the Romans are beaten back, Coriolanus berates the plebeian troops: “You souls of geese, / That bear the shapes of men, how have you run / From slaves that apes would beat!” (1.4.34-36). Here is a man who clearly believes, as Wyatt wrote, “For goode is the liff, ending faithfully.”⁶² To Coriolanus steadfastness offers the reward of a good death, and cowardice is so emasculating as to render the soldier bestial.

The expression of camaraderie between soldiers of honor, like the celebration of sovereign amity and the homosocial bond, is scripted in highly erotic terms. As Coriolanus emerges from an impossible battle, so besmeared with enemy blood as to appear flayed, he greets his dearest comrade, Cominius, in homoerotic terms which echo the exchanges of amity between Brutus and Cassius throughout *Julius Caesar*:

O! let me clip ye

In arms as sound as when I woo’d, in heart

As merry as when our nuptial day was done,

And tapers burnt to bedward! (1.6.29-32)

Cominius addresses him with the endearing, if oxymoronic, “Flower of warriors”

(1.6.32). Sprengnether argues that “[b]ecause Coriolanus, in the beginning of the play, assumes mastery on the battlefield... such a rhetoric does not threaten his masculinity.”⁶³ And while this contention is not incorrect, I would argue that it falls short. In fact, this rhetoric authenticates his masculinity because, though eroticized, it celebrates and prioritizes the homosocial bond. On the battlefield, if nowhere else, Coriolanus experiences a homosocial bond with the valorous that approximates sovereign amity. Coriolanus, determined to return to battle, delivers a rousing speech to the assembled troops, in which he conceives of his brothers-in-arms, bonded by bloodshed, as more than colleagues, as friends. Moved by his speech the men hoist him up, and Coriolanus revels in this moment of hyper-masculinity in which he becomes the phallic symbol of his own martial prowess and camaraderie, crying “make you a sword of me?” (1.6.77).

When Coriolanus and Aufidius finally do meet in battle their sameness is expressed in a vocabulary that echoes the mimetic rivalry explored in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Aufidius immediately articulates their radical sameness in terms of an equality of the inverse of desire, aversion, with his first words to Coriolanus “We hate alike” (1.8.2). Their mirroring status is amplified after Aufidius, having been defeated by Coriolanus, tells a nameless soldier, “If e’er again I meet him beard to beard, / He’s mine, or I am his” (1.10.11-12). These warriors are doubles of sorts, mirrored figures, and ultimately one death will substitute just as well for the other. These lines also remind us that, given their sameness, mimetic rivalry *will* require violence. In this speech Aufidius also provides foreshadowing of his ultimate betrayal of Coriolanus: “I’ll potch at him some way, / Or wrath or craft may get him. / ... My valor’s poison’d / With only suff’ring stain by him” (1.10.15-18). Having now been defeated by Coriolanus five

times, Aufidius has in fact lost his mimetic rival. Since Aufidius cannot defeat him with the sword, he will do so with treachery. He must do so to rescue his own valor, his own masculinity, much in the same way that Octavius must finally vanquish Antony.

Coriolanus's naïveté provides Aufidius opportunity. Having been banished from Rome, Coriolanus seeks to join forces with the Volsces, hoping that the similitude shared by these men will engender a form of sovereign amity rather than the inevitable mimetic rivalry. However, Coriolanus himself also predicts the eventual outcome when he muses:

O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,
 Whose double bosoms seems to wear on heart,
 Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise
 Are still together, who twin, as 'twere in love
 Unseparable, shall within this hour,
 On dissension of a doit, break out
 To bitterest enmity; so, fellest foes,
 Whose passions and whose plots have broke their sleep
 To take the one the other, by some chance,
 Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends
 And interjoin their issues. (4.4.12-22)

Coriolanus clearly seems to understand the tenuousness of friendship in this culture of violence and hierarchy, yet he is somehow blind to the possibility that the new formed alliance will be at least equally susceptible to becoming “bitterest enmity”—exactly what Antony and Octavius with the marriage to Octavia become. His speech also acknowledges correlation between such enmity and the subjects who are twinned or

doubles. Coriolanus's rhetoric, while espousing the dream of sovereign amity, simultaneously betrays an underlying awareness of the inevitable conversion of sovereign amity to mimetic rivalry and violence in an emphatically hierarchical culture.

When Coriolanus kneels to Aufidius, offering either his services or his throat to his one-time enemy, Aufidius seems to turn all enmity to amity, declaring, "O Martius, Martius! / Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart / A root of ancient envy... / Let me twine / mine arms about that body" (4.4.101-103, 106-107), recalling the reconciliation between Brutus and Cassius near the close of *Julius Caesar*. The proper performance of friendship's offices acts as the good gardener, rooting out animosity. By meeting Aufidius unarmed and in a position of submission, Coriolanus temporarily forfeits the superiority he has achieved on the battlefield, thus allowing Aufidius to conceive, however fleetingly, of parity with Coriolanus. Aufidius correlates his own masculinity to that of Coriolanus, but he does so in a way which emphasizes not only their sameness, but also the competition (like that between Antony and Octavius) engendered by that sameness:

Here I cleep
 The anvil of my sword, and do contest
 As hotly and as nobly with thy love
 As ever in ambitious strength I did
 Contend against thy valor. (4.5.109-113)

Aufidius's words become more convincing as they echo those spoken earlier by Coriolanus to Cominius. Aufidius continues:

Know thou first,

I lov'd the maid I married; never man
 Sigh'd truer breath; but that I see thee hear,
 Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
 Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
 Bestride my threshold. (4.5.113-118)

Aufidius's long declaration becomes increasingly homoerotic until he tells Coriolanus of his dreams in which they "have been down together in my sleep / Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat" (4.5.124-125). Like Coriolanus, Aufidius espouses an erotics of violence. Unlike these nocturnal fantasies which have been so unsatisfying—as Aufidius "wak'd half dead with nothing" (4.5.126)—together they can now achieve gratification.

Despite the sincerity of these declarations, Aufidius does betray Coriolanus out of masculine rivalry. Though there is much to be made of Volumnia's role in Coriolanus's downfall, Coriolanus's capitulation to his mother's pleas serves only as a convenient cause to expedite plans Aufidius has in place well before Coriolanus's concession. As Coriolanus and the Volscies begin the sack of Rome, Aufidius's Lieutenant complains of the adoration the Volscan troops show to Coriolanus, arguing that Aufidius is "dark'ned in this action" (4.7.5). Aufidius assures his Lieutenant that "When he shall come to his account, he knows not / What I can urge against him" (4.7.18-19). Aufidius concludes this speech and this scene declaring, "When, Caius, Rome is thine, / Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine" (4.7.56-57), proving himself to be every bit as ruthless as Octavius in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Aufidius's betrayal culminates with his misrepresentation of Coriolanus's submission to Volumnia and his goading of Coriolanus

with the epithet “boy.” Clearly Coriolanus is infuriated with this taunt and the emasculation it implies; he speaks the word as a question repeatedly during the outburst that precedes his murder at the hands of Aufidius’s conspirators. His most poignant complaint, “Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart / Too great for what contains it” (5.6.102-103) suggests that he is equally enraged at the lie of the bond he believed he shared with Aufidius.

Once again, Shakespeare gives the final encomium for the dead to the vanquisher. However, though Aufidius claims to be “struck with sorrow” (5.6.147) and promises that Coriolanus shall be remembered with deserved honor, he does not pander to the audience by returning to the rhetoric of sovereign amity or by proclaiming to have lost his other self as Antony does over the body of Brutus at the end of *Julius Caesar* and as Octavius does, in turn, over the body of Antony at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Instead, he quite rightly admits, “My rage is dead” (5.6.146), referring not only to the emotion, but also to Coriolanus as his rage, his masculine mimetic rival, the source of the threat to his masculinity. In this moment Aufidius does, however, pander to his own masculine identity figuring himself as Coriolanus’s equal. Coriolanus, ever the victor over Aufidius until this final moment, fails to recognize that his own infatuation with hierarchy in martial prowess has precluded him from the bond of sovereign amity. Ironically, the dream of sovereign amity can only be conceived of through the same likeness which generates mimetic rivalry. As soon as Coriolanus has no rivals, he can no longer participate in a bond of amity based on equality.

If *Coriolanus* is, as Headlam Wells argues, not only “Shakespeare’s most political play, [but] also, despite its austere Roman authenticity, his most topical,”⁶⁴ perhaps this

play comes closest to offering a final perspective on sovereign amity in relationship to the mimetic rivalry that defines Roman masculinity (which is ultimately tied to early modern masculinity). In *Julius Caesar*, the dream of sovereign amity exists only fleetingly—within the equally elusive context of Republican parity. In *Antony and Cleopatra* we learn how readily amity gives way to enmity and mimetic rivalry in the developing hierarchy. In both cases, the dream of sovereign amity finally finds its culmination only in death. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare offers the relationship between Antony and Enobarbus, an amity not grounded in radical likeness and thus not threatened by mimetic rivalry, as the most realistic alternative to the dream of sovereign amity in a relentlessly hierarchical world. By the time Shakespeare concludes his Roman trilogy on mimetic rivalry with *Coriolanus*, the dream of sovereign amity is as remote—and as unsatisfying—as Republicanism.

Notes:

¹ Excellent recent critical works on the “man question” include: Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity In Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); Coppélia Kahn, *Man’s Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: Univ. CA Press, 1981); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

² Discussions of medical discourses and feminine gender ideology include: Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1990); Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion Of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Discipline of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993). More recently, Janet Adelman has offered compelling contradiction to what she calls the “hegemony of the Galenic model” in: Janet Adelman, “Making Defect Perfection: Shakespeare and the One-Sex Model,” *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana: Univ. of IL Press, 1999), 23-52.

³ Maclean, 16.

⁴ Maclean, 33.

⁵ Maclean, 41-42.

⁶ Breitenberg, 1, 3.

⁷ Breitenberg, 6.

⁸ Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1988), 37.

⁹ Whereas the homosocial bond is so often celebrated, the marriage bond is treated with more pronounced ambivalence. Examples include: Robert Cleaver, *A Goodlie Forme of Householde Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, according to the direction of God's Word* (London: Thomas Man, 1598); Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (London: Thomas Man, 1591); Torquato Tasso, *Of Marriage and Wiving*, trans. R[obert] T[ofte] (London: John Smythicke, 1599); Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); William Whately, *A Bride-Bush: Or, a Direction for Married Persons* (London: Thomas Man, 1619). Tracts that profess the mutuality of marriage nonetheless figure the wife as emphatically subordinated.

¹⁰ It is incumbent on me to offer a clarification regarding women and sovereign amity. What I do not mean to say is that women are excluded from the experience of sovereign amity per se. Rather, the radical sameness required by sovereign amity includes the sameness of sex. There can be sovereign amity between women—relationships in *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provide just two examples—although this amity is nearly always threatened and compromised by the heterosexual bond.

¹¹ Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹² Shannon, 3.

¹³ Shannon, 3.

¹⁴ Shannon, 2.

¹⁵ Rene Girard, *A Theater of Envy* (New York: Oxford, UP, 1991).

¹⁶ Rene Girard, "Love Delights In Praises: A Reading of the Two Gentleman of Verona," *Philosophy and Literature* 13 (1989): 244.

¹⁷ Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997), 2.

¹⁸ Kahn, 9.

¹⁹ Kahn, 15. Although Kahn does not directly credit Girard, her examination of emulation clearly echoes his earlier work on mimesis.

²⁰ Michael Shapiro, "Role-Playing, Reflexivity, and Metadrama in Recent Shakespeare Criticism," *Renaissance Drama* 12 (1981): 152.

²¹ All citations of Shakespeare refer to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., G. Blakemore Evans, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

²² Gayle Greene, "'The Power of Speech/ To Stir Men's Blood': The Language of Tragedy In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," *Renaissance Drama* 11 (1980): 69.

²³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

²⁴ Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 99.

²⁵ "For thy sweet love rememb' red such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings." (13-14). *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977).

²⁶ Shannon, 1.

²⁷ Shannon, 2.

²⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago:

Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 141.

²⁹ Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, ed. Martin Wiggins (London: A&C Black, 1997).

³⁰ Shannon, 163.

³¹ “So Caesar may. / Then lest he may, prevent” (2.1.27-28), from the “ladder/adder” speech.

³² In her chapter “Friendship’s Offices: True Speech and Artificial Bodies in *The Winter’s Tale*” from *Sovereign Amity*, Shannon makes note of the “horticultural vocabulary” (187) often associated with friendship discourses. The metaphor of grafting is employed at some length by Polixenes in *The Winter’s Tale*.

³³ Robert F. Wilson, Jr., “*Julius Caesar*: The Forum Scene as Historic Play-Within,” *The Shakespeare Yearbook* Spring 1 (1990): 22.

³⁴ John Drakakis, “‘Fashion it Thus’: *Julius Caesar* and the Politics of Theatrical Representation,” *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1992): 72.

³⁵ Madelon Sprengnether, “Annihilating Intimacy in *Coriolanus*,” *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986), 96.

³⁶ The distinction between “performance” and “mere performance” is best accounted for—given the context of my argument—by Shannon’s discussion, in relationship to true friends versus false friends, of flattery: “Directly disjoining truth and language, flattery presents an epistemological dilemma for friendship practice; mere simulation can look a lot like the similitude friendship celebrates” (47).

³⁷ Shannon, 47-49. Shannon cites: “Plutarch, *The philosophie commonlie called, the morals, written by the learned philosopher Plutarch of Charonea. Translated out of*

Greeke into English, and conferred with the latine translations and the French, by Philemon Holland (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1603), p.87.”

³⁸ Anne Barton, “*Julius Caesar and Coriolanus*: Shakespeare’s Roman World of Words,” *Shakespeare’s Craft: Eight Lectures*, Phillip H. Highfill, Jr., ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1982), 46.

³⁹ Wilson, 18.

⁴⁰ Gail Kern Paster, “‘In the spirit of men there is no blood’: Blood as Trope of Gender in *Julius Caesar*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40:3 (Autumn, 1989), 284-298.

⁴¹ “Chaps” here also means “chops,” as in jaws.

⁴² Howard Felperin, “Mimesis and Modernity,” *Modern Critical Interpretations: Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 87.

⁴³ Janet Adelman, *The Common Liar*, (New Haven, CT: Yale UP), 47.

⁴⁴ Kahn, 135.

⁴⁵ Barbara Baines, “Girard’s Doubles and *Antony and Cleopatra*,” *Theory in Practice: Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. Nigel Wood (Buckingham: Open UP, 1996), 26.

⁴⁶ Adelman, 11.

⁴⁷ Carol Cook, “The Fatal Cleopatra,” *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender*, ed. Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon Sprengnether (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), 241-267.

⁴⁸ Shannon, 202. Shannon cites: “Cicero, *De amicitia*, in *De senectute, De amicitia, De divinatione*, trans. W.A. Falconer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Pr., 1923): 184-5.”

⁴⁹ Cook, 249.

⁵⁰ see Shannon, 156-184.

⁵¹ Kahn, 113.

⁵² Kahn, 114.

⁵³ For a thorough examination see: Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Levine points to *Antony and Cleopatra* as "Shakespeare imagining the world the anti-theatricalists fear, a world in which men really can be transformed into women" (72).

⁵⁴ Kahn, 115.

⁵⁵ Susanne L. Wofford, "The Body Unseamed: Shakespeare's Late Tragedies," *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 13.

⁵⁶ Wofford, 15.

⁵⁷ Kahn, 132-133.

⁵⁸ Cook, 260.

⁵⁹ Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 146.

⁶⁰ Charnes, 204.

⁶¹ Barton, 31.

⁶² Sir Thomas Wyatt, "Sonnet 2: 'The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar,'" *English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New York: Norton, 1984): 130.

⁶³ Sprengnether, 101.

⁶⁴ Wells, 146.

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