AN ANCIENT CHARACTER IN A MODERN WORLD: RE-REPRESENTATIONS OF CLEOPATRA IN MODERN VISUAL MEDIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Erika Hermanowicz)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores three distinct characterizations of Cleopatra: Plutarch's *Life of Antony, Cleopatra* (1963), and *Assassin's Creed: Origins.* The first being an ancient source, Plutarch's *Life of Antony* emphasizes Cleopatra's negative characterization using grammatical techniques, which highlights the character as an active, feminine presence that negatively influences both the men in her life and the Egyptian people that she rules. This portrayal of Cleopatra as a negative influence changes little within the next two sources, both within the epic film and the role-playing video game. Plutarch's grammatical manipulation translates to visual media, as both *Cleopatra* and *Assassin's Creed* use camera angle to provide similar characterizations to Plutarch. Through an analysis of verbal usage, body placement and camera angle, all three sources similarly depict Cleopatra's characterization despite the thousands of years spanning between ancient and modern representation.

INDEX WORDS: Classics, Cleopatra, *Assassin's Creed: Origins, Cleopatra (1963),* voice, characterization, video game, women, ancient, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Joseph Mankiewicz, Plutarch, grammar, film

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DEDICATION

To Cleopatra. Sorry ‘bout it.

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INTRODUCTION

The last Macedonian queen to rule Egypt, Cleopatra VII, has been depicted numerous times throughout history as the embodiment of hedonistic pleasures and their consequences. These representations span almost two thousand years, and the character changes little. When dissecting historical figures, it is impossible to accurately grasp their personality, and the reasoning behind these people's judgements can often be skewed depending on the sources. Cleopatra VII's true nature is lost, and contemporary evidence pertaining to her likeness is often overshadowed by Roman propaganda meant to slight her character in favor of Roman victors.

Cleopatra's legacy has been largely formed by ancient sources such as Plutarch, Propertius, Cicero, and Horace, who paint Cleopatra as a feminine presence misplaced in the world of masculine politics and warfare. Her influence within the Mediterranean is depicted negatively by those who documented and reported her exploits. The civil war between Mark Antony and Octavian was destructive, and Cleopatra was used as a scapegoat for lives lost in the struggle between the two Roman generals. Romans were able to find common ground against her, which was more comfortable than choosing sides between Octavian and Mark Antony. To disparage her name, Roman authors pair Cleopatra's political alliances with slanderous sexual declarations that further degrade her as an anomaly, and they focus on her foreignness and ambitions as means to villainize her. Most literary evidence we have on Cleopatra, then, does not exist without hostile Roman opinion.

As time passed, the Roman writings contemporary with Cleopatra became the main sources for other authors to use. Plutarch, for example, has no impartial eye-witnesses (at least

that we know of) to comment on Cleopatra's personality or exploits. He uses the sources available to him, which were previously written with the Roman victors in mind. The surviving sources have been mined continuously since her reign and suicide, and the most intriguing details of her life as found in these texts, such as her sexual relationships, foreign influence, and suicide, have kept her relevant in the public eye. Some of today's scholarship, such as Stacy Schiff's *Cleopatra,* attempts to analyze ancient sources to understand Cleopatra as a person rather than an article of propaganda. Popular media, however, are not created to emulate Schiff's approach. While Schiff's work is intended to interest and inform, modern interpretations of Cleopatra are for entertainment purposes. These latter versions of Cleopatra are consonant with popular tradition and thus focus on details of Cleopatra's life that were used for invective.

Within this thesis, I shall explore three specific characterizations of Cleopatra: (1) Plutarch's *Life of Antony,* (2) Joseph Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* from 1963, and (3) the 2017 video game *Assassin's Creed: Origins.* Through the examination of each interpretation, I show that ancient and modern media continue negative characterization of Cleopatra using similar techniques. I examine one ancient source and two modern representations that are divided across three different types of media: literature, film, and RPG (role playing games).

In Chapter 1, I explore Cleopatra's character in Plutarch's *Life of Antony.* I mainly focus on how Plutarch's grammar encapsulates Cleopatra's destructive presence. Through grammar, specifically the use of active and passive verbs, Plutarch portrays Cleopatra as the dominant presence within Antony's life while simultaneously using passive verbs to denote Antony's emasculation. With the use of active and passive amongst the entirety of the *Life of Antony,* Plutarch heightens the impact of his slander against Cleopatra. Plutarch's use of grammar to adversely characterize Cleopatra is similar to how *Cleopatra* the film and *Assassin's Creed*

frame their own similar portrayals, as both visual media use camera angle to indicate active, passive, positive and negative characterizations.

The reason that I chose Plutarch for this thesis is the specific way that he portrays Cleopatra in *Life of Antony.* Plutarch's sources for his biographies come from those who lived contemporary to Cleopatra. These sources are pro-Roman in nature, and therefore Plutarch's own version of Antony's *Life* is filled with information that is inherently biased against Cleopatra and Mark Antony's Egyptizing behavior later on in his life. Plutarch's analysis of Cleopatra, however, is not altogether negative, and therefore aligns more closely with *Cleopatra* and *Assassin's Creed*. Plutarch, for example, highlights Cleopatra's intelligence, polylingualism, and irresistible charm as positive assets to her characterization. His critical view of Mark Antony is also highlighted in *Cleopatra,* as Plutarch places blame in Mark Antony for Rome's civil war as much as he does in Cleopatra. Plutarch does not differ from previous sources by negating Cleopatra's corruptive nature, but he emphasizes Mark Antony's susceptibility and gullibility as detrimental to his leadership and success against Octavian.

In Chapter 2, I focus on Cleopatra's representation in *Cleopatra,* the 1963 film directed by Joseph Mankiewicz. Within the chapter, I closely analyze a number of scenes that use camera angle as a means of characterization. Similar to Plutarch's manipulation of active and passive voice, Mankiewicz uses angle as a device to create his own interpretation of the queen. Mankiewicz's version is mostly similar to Plutarch in that Cleopatra is a catalyst to Julius Caesar and Mark Antony's destruction. She is sexualized and proactive, and her ambition to conquer leads to her defeat. Mankiewicz, however, is more obvious in creating a more positive depiction of Cleopatra, as Mankiewicz emphasizes her strength and intelligence throughout her diplomatic interactions with Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and other Roman emissaries. Cleopatra's more

ambiguous characterization in Mankiewicz is complemented by Mark Antony's inherent weakness, insecurity, and cowardice, which mirrors Plutarch's own derogatory treatment of the general.

Choosing Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* as opposed to other film adaptations of the character comes from its relevance in film history. Starring Elizabeth Taylor as the titular character, *Cleopatra* transformed into one of the most controversial films of the 20th century. With an adjusted cost of $300 million, the movie proved to be "a trainwreck…an extraordinarily botched production that…took two directors, two separate casts, two Fox regimes, and two and a half years stop-start filmmaking…"[1] The complexity surrounding the film's production also exists within Mankiewicz's version of Cleopatra herself, and this makes *Cleopatra* an important contribution in the comparison of literature, film, and video games and their similar methods of portrayal. The similarities between Mankiewicz's version and Plutarch's version of the same character and how they are represented requires further investigation and analysis.

In Chapter 3, I turn to the most recent depiction—*Assassin's Creed: Origins.* Placed within the backdrop of Ptolemaic Egypt, *Origins* uses Cleopatra and the main events of her life—her exile, acquisition of the throne, and downfall after the death of Caesar—as motivation for the actions of the main characters, Bayek and Aya. I approach this source much like the movie *Cleopatra,* and focus on cutscenes that offer scripted, choreographed material that the player does not influence. Through cutscenes, the game presents itself much in the same way as a movie, and therefore is the best approach to analyze Cleopatra's characterization in modern presentation. Like both Plutarch's use of active/passive and Mankiewicz's manipulation of camera angle, *Origins* uses the camera to push forward the same characterization these previous

[1] David Kamp, "When Liz Met Dick," Vanity Fair, April 1998, 368, https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/1998/4/when-liz-met-dick).

sources have already presented to their audiences. Sexualized from the onset of her introduction to both the main characters and the player, Cleopatra's influence within the game is inherently negative and devastating. Like in Plutarch's *Life* and *Cleopatra,* her ambition proves destructive to both herself and those around her.

Other video games have used Cleopatra as a character—the popular game *Civilization* features Cleopatra as ruler of Egypt, and *Dante's Inferno* incorporates Cleopatra and Mark Antony's love affair in the second circle of hell. Neither characterization explores Cleopatra as a character like *Assassin's Creed,* which has over 25 minutes of cutscenes dedicated exclusively to Cleopatra and her influence in *Origins'* events. Mark Antony is not present in this game, but Cleopatra's relationship with Julius Caesar enables a direct comparison between the 1963 film and *Assassin's Creed.* The traits found in the other two representations, such as her intelligence and ambition, coincide with Cleopatra's portrayal in the game. Unlike *Cleopatra,* though, *Assassin's Creed* focuses more on Cleopatra's destructive personality rather than her potential for the successful rule of her kingdom.

The examination of Plutarch's *Life of Antony, Cleopatra,* and *Assassin's Creed* all create characterization using similar techniques. In his prose, Plutarch uses nuances in grammar to express the same characterization that Mankiewicz and *Origins* does with camera angle. These devices emphasize the narratological stagnation in Cleopatra's development as a fully-fleshed character. The medium in which her story has been told has shifted from literary to visual, but the character remains the same. In all three interpretations, Cleopatra is sexual, ambitious, destructive, and a negative influence to the men in her life.

CHAPTER 1

AN EXAMINATION OF PHILOLOGY: PLUTARCH'S *LIFE OF ANTONY*

In Plutarch's *Life of Antony,* Cleopatra's character is portrayed as largely negative through a manipulation of grammar and syntax. Plutarch uses language to highlight features in Cleopatra's characterization such as her resemblance to Mark Antony's wife, Fulvia, her foreign identity, her opulence, and finally, her authoritative nature. The most important grammatical structure Plutarch uses is his manipulation of active and passive verbs, which sets apart Cleopatra as the aggressive, active leader against Mark Antony's passive presence. These characterizations, however, contain pieces of positive influence that complicate both Cleopatra's identity and her relationship with Mark Antony.

Antony is the centerpiece of Plutarch's *Life,* and Cleopatra appears as a corruptive influence that accentuates his weaknesses and leads to his death. At first, however, it is not Cleopatra whom Plutarch describes, but Antony's wife Fulvia. Both Fulvia and Cleopatra are introduced in the same chapter:

> ἀπαλλαγεὶς γὰρ ἐκείνου τοῦ βίου γάμῳ προσέσχε, Φουλβίαν ἀγαγόμενος τὴν Κλωδίῳ τῷ δημαγωγῷ συνοικήσασαν, οὐ ταλασίαν οὐδὲ οἰκουρίαν φρονοῦν γύναιον, οὐδὲ ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου κρατεῖν ἀξιοῦν, ἀλλ᾽ ἄρχοντος ἄρχειν καὶ στρατηγοῦντος στρατηγεῖν βουλόμενον, ὥστε Κλεοπάτραν διδασκάλια Φουλβίᾳ τῆς Ἀντωνίου γυναικοκρατίας ὀφείλειν, πάνυ χειροήθη καὶ πεπαιδαγωγημένον ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς ἀκροᾶσθαι γυναικῶν παραλαβοῦσαν αὐτόν.[2]
>
> For having been set free from that life, he turned his attention to marriage, and lived with Fulvia in wedlock, the wife to the demagogue Clodius. The woman bore no mind to either wool spinning or keeping the house, nor would she think to rule a private man, but desired to rule the ruler and command the commander. Therefore, Cleopatra was bound to Fulvia for teaching Antony about the domination of women, since she received him as quite manageable, and taught him to listen to the rule of women.

[2] Plutarch*, Life of Antony,* 10.3.

Since both women are introduced so closely together, Plutarch is able to blur the line between his description of Fulvia's character and Cleopatra's introduction in Antony's biography. The similarities between the women are unmistakable. As ruler of Egypt, Cleopatra is truly an *ἄρχοντος,* and her alignment with Antony throughout the biography indicates the possibility that Cleopatra has the same desire (*βουλόμενον)* as Fulvia. Additionally, Cleopatra's involvement in the civil wars against Octavian mirrors Fulvia's own failed leadership of the military, and therefore, Cleopatra is also a *στρατηγοῦντος.* Her power and wealth in the Mediterranean also indicate that Cleopatra's responsibilities extend past the realm of *ταλασίαν οὐδὲ οἰκουρίαν.* Both women exhibited leadership roles, and both intruded the public sphere of war and politics despite their gender.

While these traits—*ἄρχοντος ἄρχειν καὶ στρατηγοῦντος στρατηγεῖν βουλόμενον*—may be considered noble and even necessary for a Roman general such as Antony, the use and placement of noun/adjective pairing *φρονοῦν γύναιον* sets the stage for Plutarch's negative opinion of the women who held such power in the masculine realm of politics and war. This one word, *γύναιον,* thus sets the tone for both characters.

To understand the intent of the word *γύναιον*, one must understand the range of definitions possible for this variation of *γυνή.* There are three common definitions for *γύναιον*. The first means simply "woman," and this interpretation does not inherently carry either a positive or negative intent. Another definition holds a more favorable interpretation of *γύναιον,* translating to "little woman" which the Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon suggests to be "a term of endearment for a wife."[3] This definition at first may seem appropriate for the given passage,

[3] H.G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 171.

since Plutarch precedes Fulvia's characterization with her marriage to Antony. It is not unreasonable for Plutarch to suggest that Antony was pleased with his *γύναιον*, especially given her aristocratic status and noble blood.

Yet the subsequent characterization of Fulvia—and from this, Cleopatra—indicates that the third definition is likely the most suitable for *γύναιον*. This third definition, while also meaning "woman" may be translated in "a contemptuous sense," demeaning the *γύναιον* in question. This translation throws both women in a critical light, and such a translation compliments Fulvia's unusual traits described in the next clause.

Unlike a proper Roman matron, Fulvia neglects her presupposed responsibilities, *ταλασίαν* and *οἰκουρίαν*, which were the usual duties of upper-class women in ancient Rome. Instead, Plutarch describes Fulvia as someone with immense ambition who surpasses the proper conduct for a noble woman. She replaces domestic with public matters, desiring *ἄρχοντος ἄρχειν καὶ στρατηγοῦντος στρατηγεῖν*. Using *στρατηγεῖν* also foreshadows Fulvia's involvement in commanding a military attack against Octavian. The character traits following *γύναιον,* therefore, prove that the third definition is more appropriate to the neutral and approving definitions of *γύναιον*.[4]

The traits attributed to both women and the precedence of *γύναιον* set the tone for Cleopatra and Fulvia's characterization throughout the narrative. By including this negative interpretation of *γύναιον,* Plutarch sends a clear message to the reader—these women have overstepped their boundaries improperly into the world of men. As being the two most influential women in Antony's biography, Plutarch's characterization of Fulvia and Cleopatra as

[4] Plutarch, 10.3.

γύναιον indicates disapproving sentiment about Anthony's female companionship, and foreshadows their misplaced vying for power throughout the biography.

Plutarch solidifies the connection between Fulvia and Cleopatra by claiming that Cleopatra was indebted to Fulvia. He writes that "Cleopatra owed Fulvia for teaching Antony submissiveness by women" (*ὥστε Κλεοπάτραν διδασκάλια Φουλβίᾳ τῆς Ἀντωνίου γυναικοκρατίας ὀφείλειν*).[5] Here is the final clue of the correct translation of *γύναιον,* a word that applies to both Fulvia and Cleopatra in their influence over Antony. The unusual interests of politics and war and disdain for the domestic realm make Fulvia and Cleopatra neither endearing nor neutral. By ruling the rulers and commanding the commanders, both women exert power to outside forces and also to Antony himself. Since *ἄρχοντος* and *στρατηγοῦντος* are both singular, it is possible for both nouns to refer to one man in particular rather than standing as a generalization: Marc Antony. Their conditioning of him results in Plutarch's interpretation of Antony's depleted masculinity. This interpretation of the text complicates Marc Antony's presence within Plutarch's biography and is a theme that will define Marc Antony's relationship with Cleopatra. Since Fulvia—and by extension, Cleopatra—is the subject of both *ἄρχειν* and *στρατηγεῖν,* then she would be the one in control of Antony, thus the *ἄρχοντος* and *στρατηγοῦντος.* Although Antony could be linked with masculine traits such as governance and strategy, he does so under the influence of Fulvia and Cleopatra since they are the ones acting upon the objects *ἄρχοντος* and *στρατηγοῦντος.*

With Cleopatra's unusual traits established through Fulvia, Plutarch draws upon her opulence and foreign exoticism as a means of further characterization. Plutarch comments on lavish accommodations such as a barge with a gilded hull (*πορθμείῳ χρυσοπρύμνῳ*), purple sails

[5] Plutarch, 10.3.

(*ἁλουργῶν*) and oars decorated with silver handles (*εἰρεσίας ἀργυραῖς κώπαις*).[6] The only thing more extraordinary than her method of transportation was the queen herself, whom Plutarch likens to a painting of Aphrodite (*γραφικῶς Ἀφροδίτη*), depicted as reclining beneath a golden canopy (*σκιάδι χρυσοπάστῳ*).

Envisioning Cleopatra as Aphrodite seems positive, and the specific word *γραφικῶς* complicates Cleopatra's negative characterization thus far. The comparison of characters and settings to art, called ekphrasis, is a common literary tool in ancient works. This device is often used as complementary to the figure being compared. Likened to a painting of Aphrodite, Cleopatra's presence and extravagance become beautiful and artistically complex. Her entire entourage accompanying her is part of this otherworldly painting, too. Boys like paintings of cupids (*παῖδες δὲ τοῖς γραφικοῖς Ἔρωσιν*) and handmaidens beautifully fitted like Nereids and Graces (*θεραπαινίδες αἱ καλλιστεύουσαι Νηρηΐδων ἔχουσαι καὶ Χαρίτων στολάς*) create a mythical scene to provide a fitting context for Cleopatra's identity as a goddess reincarnate.[7] The two mentions of *γραφικῶς* mirror this transcendent experience that centers around Cleopatra. Embellished and grand upon her royal barge, Cleopatra is in her element—perched upon her throne and with the provisions worthy for the most wealthy and powerful woman in the Mediterranean. The simile between Cleopatra and the goddess Aphrodite also alludes to Cleopatra's status as the living reincarnation of Isis. As pharaoh of Egypt, Cleopatra was part of a long tradition of pharaohs who were thought to be living gods on earth—serving as intermediaries between celestial gods and their people.

Plutarch's comparison between Cleopatra and a painting, then, creates a mythical and beautiful presentation of the queen that mirrors her status, and so the ekphrasis places Cleopatra

[6] Plutarch, 26.1.
[7] Plutarch, 26.1.

in a positive light. Interpreting Cleopatra's likeness and entourage as a painting makes Plutarch's version of Cleopatra more dimensional than previous, pro-Roman depictions. Since Plutarch is Greek and far removed from the events of Cleopatra's life, Plutarch does not have to use his writings for a pro-Roman agenda. This enables Plutarch's interpretation of Cleopatra to be more nuanced than the Roman propaganda at the end of the first century BCE, which sought to make Augustus as a hero against the Egyptian queen.

There is, however, another interpretation of *γραφικῶς* that characterizes Cleopatra negatively. If Plutarch pushes the pro-Roman sentiments of his sources, Cleopatra's likeness to a painting might create a more damaging interpretation of Cleopatra as Aphrodite. With such a specification, Cleopatra's similarities to a goddess are diminished, and instead, Cleopatra only bears resemblance to a likeness of the divine, rather than the divine goddess herself. It is possible that Plutarch's inclusion of *γραφικῶς,* therefore, changes the entire image that he so meticulously describes. The details, the abundant wealth displayed, and the grandeur of Cleopatra herself are no longer likened to anything real. Instead, Cleopatra becomes a lesser simulacrum of a goddess—an image that only resembles the divinity Cleopatra had claimed to be.

Within this context, the importance of *γραφικῶς* in Plutarch's description of Cleopatra holds a deeper intent than a simple expression of Cleopatra's wealth. Looking upon Chapter 26, Plutarch could suggest to the reader that Cleopatra's entire image is a charade. Her likeness to a painting of Aphrodite might not mean, therefore, that Plutarch is comparing Cleopatra to a goddess. Rather, Cleopatra is mimicking a mere image of divinity—copying something that she is not. This grand show of gold, silver oars, and the entourage of **attendants** mirrors greatness that, by the inclusion of *γραφικῶς,* Plutarch may suggest doesn't exist at all. Cleopatra, therefore,

is not a divinity. Instead, she is a woman who presents herself wrongly from the truth of her own mortality.

Plutarch's comparison between Cleopatra and Aphrodite might also draw upon another negative facet of Cleopatra: her "otherness" to the Romans. The description of Cleopatra's arrival includes Greek deities, such as Aphrodite, Eros, Nereids and the Graces. This Hellenization differentiates Cleopatra from her Roman companions. Descended from Ptolemy, Alexander the Great's general, Cleopatra was not Egyptian at all, but Macedonian Greek. Therefore, the reference to Aphrodite coincides with Cleopatra's homeland of Greece. This foreignness, however, is attributed to both Cleopatra and Antony when Plutarch describes *ἡ Ἀφροδίτη κωμάζοι παρὰ τὸν Διόνυσον ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ τῆς Ἀσίας.*[8] Plutarch's inclusion of Mark Antony's resemblance to the Greek god Dionysus confuses Mark Antony's identity, since, as a Roman, Mark Antony might more likely be compared with Bacchus.

Plutarch's use of Greek divinities rather than Roman might be because of two reasons: the first is Plutarch's own identity as a Greek. If the use of Greek names is because of Plutarch's own place of origin, then Plutarch does not include *Ἀφροδίτη* and *Διόνυσον* as a negative attribute to the characters. Another interpretation does, however, contextualize Plutarch's word choice as negative, but the critical portrayal is aimed at Mark Antony just as much as Cleopatra. As Antony's biography continues, Plutarch condemns him for indulging in the pleasure of Egypt while his wife wages war against Rome. Especially in Plutarch's characterization of Antony, the Roman general is easily influenced and weak when around stronger personalities. Antony's Hellenization, then, may allude to Mark Antony's eventual separation from Rome, and the

[8] Plutarch, 26.3. Translation: "…Aphrodite makes merry with Dionysus for the good of Asia."

Roman gods that used to represent him. Therefore, the emphasize on Greek gods during this encounter makes Antony a foreign entity like Cleopatra.

Plutarch might not intend to make Cleopatra's Greek identity a flaw, but Cleopatra's foreignness defines her power and presence in the biography. Plutarch includes *Κλεοπάτρα* in all of its cases 65 times in Antony's biography. Occasionally, however, Plutarch refers to Cleopatra as simply "the Egyptian," forgoing her name and title, and simplifying her identity to her eastern kingdom. Plutarch further highlights Cleopatra's "Egyptian" identity through alleged magic and potions practiced by Cleopatra and others within her court. In examining potential reasons for Mark Antony's infatuation with Cleopatra, for example, Plutarch suggests that Cleopatra might have cast a spell (*κατακεκηλῆσθαι*) over her lover.[9] Cleopatra's alleged magical abilities appear elsewhere in the text, such as in chapter 25. In this particular section, Plutarch emphasizes the alien love charms (*φίλτροις*) as a source of Cleopatra's power by using both her proper name in section 1, and the substantive *τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν* in section 2. Throughout the rest of the chapter, Plutarch does not refer to Cleopatra by name again. The lasting impression, therefore, stems from the *τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν* rather than the *Κλεοπάτρας* in section 1.

This claim about Cleopatra's magical abilities in Chapters 25 and 31 coincides with the ancient belief that "sorcerers in the Graeco-Roman literary tradition are…characterized as deriving from the lands of the ancient civilizations of the Near East and Egypt…to 'invent the barbarian…'"[10] The substantive *τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν,* therefore, emphasizes Cleopatra's foreignness as well as her potential magical properties. This invention of "the barbarian," as David Ogden notes, creates a negative persona of Cleopatra. If people believed that Cleopatra had such arcane

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[9] Plutarch, 31.1.
[10] Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Source Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33.

abilities, they were nothing to be lauded. Instead, Plutarch creates a vivid picture of the Egyptian queen that draws attention to her distinct foreign characteristics—her un-Romaness—that would permanently place Cleopatra at odds with the Republican state.

The voice of verbs, however, is Plutarch's most widely used instrument to emphasize Cleopatra's most devastating accomplishment: her influence, and ultimate corruption, of Mark Antony. Throughout the biography, Plutarch expresses Antony's actions with an active verb when Cleopatra is not in the scene. In Chapter 14, for example, Plutarch shows Antony in his prime: the death of Julius Caesar paves the way for Antony's hopes of becoming *πρῶτον* if Caesar's assassins are put to death. Within the chapter, Antony takes command over the situation in the active voice. He visibly shook (*ἐξέσεισεν*) in front of the crowds of mourners at Caesar's burial, recounting (*διεξιών*) the customary eulogy for Caesar in the forum. Antony, reading the emotions of the angry mob in front of him, mixed (*ἐνέμιξε*) the customary eulogy for Caesar with outrage over his wrongful death.[11] The verbs *ἐξέσεισεν, ἐνέμιξε,* and the participle *διεξιών* are all active, which Plutarch incorporates in his prose to show Mark Antony's expertise in politics. Taking initiative in the chaos following Caesar's death, Antony displays intelligence, an ability to adapt to the situation and rhetorical excellence. The active voice is a grammatical representation of Antony's decisiveness and potential greatness. Through his character Octavian, Plutarch touches upon these qualities when he recounts that *οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' ἐπανελθὼν ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐκ τῆς Ἰβηρίας τὰ μὲν ἐγκλήματα παρεῖδεν αὐτοῦ, πρὸς δὲ τὸν πόλεμον ὡς ἐνεργῷ καὶ ἀνδρείῳ καὶ ἡγεμονικῷ χρώμενος οὐδαμῆ διήμαρτεν*.[12] With these words coming from the mind of Octavian,

[11] Plutarch, 14.3.
[12] Plutarch, 7.1. Translation: "But when Caesar returned from Spain, he did not notice the accusations against Antony, since in the war he regarded him as effective, courageous, and authoritative, in no way did he fail."

Antony's ultimate enemy, Plutarch acknowledges Antony's prestige during the republic's final years.

Yet this potential for rule becomes corrupted by Cleopatra's presence. Although the narrative is supposed to be an account of Antony's life, he no longer has power to be an active participant within his own story. The strong, intelligent commander who rallied the people against the assassins of Julius Caesar disappears and is replaced by the strong presence of Cleopatra. The active and passive verbs used by both Antony and Cleopatra shift between the two throughout the biography, and the exchange between action and passivity mirrors their fight for dominance. In this contest between the two lovers, Antony tries to retain some power, ordering (*κελεύων*) Cleopatra in an active participle to come to him, but Cleopatra ignores his wishes and subverts Antony's authority.[13] As a result, Antony no longer has supremacy. Instead, Cleopatra becomes the subject inflicting the action upon the more passive Antony.

The transitions of active and passive voice between Antony and Cleopatra continues, mirroring Antony's struggle to surpass (*ὑπερβαλέσθαι*) Cleopatra's brilliancy (*λαμπρότητα*) and grace (*ἐμμέλειαν*).[14] Plutarch balances this active verb with not just one passive participle, but two: not only was Antony left behind (*λειπόμενος*), but he was vanquished (*κρατούμενος*) in the presence of the Egyptian queen. This complete demonstration of Antony's failings becomes even more apparent with the next sentence, which begins with *πολὺν δὲ ἡ Κλεοπάτρα*. Plutarch's decision to transition from Antony's passives to Cleopatra in the nominative is indicative of their relationship.

[13] Plutarch, 25.1.
[14] Plutarch, 27.1.

At this point, Cleopatra surpasses Antony as she takes the dominating role in their struggle for splendor and popularity among their companions. Plutarch continues to manipulate the voice of verbs to declare the victor between the two, and the complimentary feminine active participle *ἐνορῶσα* and middle verb *ἐχρῆτο* contrasts against the passives *λειπόμενος* and *κρατούμενος* attributed to Antony. Upon noticing (*ἐνορῶσα*) Antony's character as being both of a soldier (*στρατιώτην*) and a vulgar commoner (*βάναυσον*), it is *she* who, in middle voice, furnishes *herself* (*ἐχρῆτο*) with this character (*τούτῳ*), confidently (*κατατεθαρρηκότως)* and with ease (*ἀνειμένως*).[15] Plutarch uses the active and reflective middle voices in this chapter to illustrate Cleopatra's intelligence and insight in this dangerous political situation. Without drawing a sword, Cleopatra overcomes Antony, a man who has been stripped of the autonomy he still believes he has.

Antony's actions in Chapter 15 were described with active verbs, but now Cleopatra is the subject and she is in the active voice. With the Egyptian queen now dominant, Antony becomes a secondary character. Perhaps the most poignant example of this appears at Antony's lowest point in the war against Octavian. In Chapter 62, Plutarch begins with *οὕτω δὲ ἄρα προσθήκη τῆς γυναικὸς*, and continues to emasculate Antony by using active and passive voice. Being an appendage of Cleopatra's power, Mark Antony subsequently relinquishes his own autonomy. Coupled with the defeat at Actium, the qualities touched upon previously—*ἐνεργός, ἀνδρεῖος,* and *ἡγεμονικός*—vanish and are replaced with an altogether different Antony. At this point within the biography, Cleopatra becomes a leader after Antony surrenders at Actium. She is the one to recognize Antony in the retreat (*γνωρίσασα*) and lifts him (*ἀνέσχε*) onto her ship, both verbs being in the active voice. Antony, who loses his *imperium* at the hands of Octavian,

[15] Plutarch, 27.1.

loses his active role in the narrative and becomes the object of Cleopatra's actions. Antony was carried (*προσενεχθείς*) by Cleopatra onto her ship, and neither saw nor was seen by his lover (*οὔτε εἶδεν οὔτε ὤφθη*).[16] The transition of Antony's active to passive existence is explicitly stated and Cleopatra, who is still queen, becomes the one in control of Antony. The Roman general, on the other hand, is reduced to wait for the queen, and his interactions with her only occur if Cleopatra wishes.

Through his meticulous prose, Plutarch creates a character in Cleopatra that we have seen before. Contemporary to and ultimately outlasting Fulvia, Cleopatra's masculine position and dominant presence situate her with other women who have stepped out of their domestic sphere in favor of more ambitious positions. Plutarch, however, observes more than one reason for Cleopatra's ascension in Rome. Plutarch's first reason is Cleopatra's exertion of power, intelligence, mysticism, and endurance in the face of both her enemies and allies. Yet the other, crucial piece to the republic's fall lies within the hands of Antony himself. The historian characterizes Antony through his control of voice in verbs. The carefully positioned active and passive forms and indicates the emergence of a more dominant figure as each historical event unfolds. While verb usage is Plutarch's most consistent tool in his characterizations, he also creates differences in character through the use of pronouns.

By the time the reader arrives at 24.4 in the *Life of Antony,* Plutarch has already established Antony as having a noble quality of form (*μορφῆς ἐλευθέριον ἀξίωμα*) comparable to Heracles.[17] Popular amongst his soldiers and giving to his friends, Antony cares for those close to him, and such attention to his allies lifted his power to more than a great height (*μεγάλου*

[16] Plutarch, 67.1.
[17] Plutarch, 4.1.

γενομένου τὴν δύναμιν ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐπῆρεν).[18] A soldier, orator, and leader of the Republic, Antony's presence within the biography is commanding and omnipresent. In Chapter 8, Caesar appoints Antony as Master of the Horse, a position that places him as second in command. Upon the death of Caesar in Chapter 14, Antony takes charge of the senate and emerges from the Ides of March as the most famous (*λαμπρότατος*) of men, having finally eclipsed the dictator. By Chapter 20, Antony had risen to become a third in the triumvirate, shared with Octavian and Lepidus.

In the midst of Antony's success, Plutarch highlights characteristics in Antony that will contribute to his corruption and death in 30 BC. The most thorough examination of Antony's faults appears in Chapter 24, which directly precedes the first interaction between Antony and Cleopatra. With Antony's revealed personality situated so closely to Cleopatra's entrance in Antony's *Life,* Plutarch insinuates that Cleopatra's negative effect on Antony only exists in the presence of his own faults:

> ἐτρέψατο τούτῳ δεινῶς τὸν Ἀντώνιον: ἠγνόει γὰρ τὰ πολλὰ τῶν γιγνομένων, οὐχ οὕτω ῥᾴθυμος ὤν, ὡς δὶ ἁπλότητα πιστεύων τοῖς περὶ αὐτόν. ἐνῆν γὰρ ἁπλότης τῷ ἤθει καὶ βραδεῖα μὲν αἴσθησις, αἰσθανομένῳ δὲ τῶν ἁμαρτανομένων ἰσχυρὰ μετάνοια καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐξομολόγησις τοὺς ἀγνωμονηθέντας, μέγεθος δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀμοιβὰς καὶ περὶ τὰς τιμωρίας. μᾶλλόν γε μὴν ἐδόκει χαριζόμενος ἢ κολάζων ὑπερβάλλειν τὸ μέτριον.[19]
>
> This cleverly turned Antony toward this (speech): For he did not recognize much that was happening, not so much because he was slow, but rather, he trusted those around him sincerely. For there was a sincerity and slow nature [within him], and perceiving those errors there was a strong repentance and a confession towards those who were mistreated, and also there was a greatness in his compensation and punishment of those mistreated. Yet it seemed that he overstepped his limits through indulging others rather than inflicting punishment…

[18] Plutarch, 4.3.
[19] Plutarch, 24.6.

The positioning of this demeaning description of Antony's character is no mistake. Cleopatra's effects upon Antony have been examined closely within the ancient world, notably, among Roman authors who sought to make an enemy in the foreign queen. Plutarch presents this same characterization of Cleopatra in his biography. In this passage, however, Plutarch attacks Antony for innate character traits in addition to his subservience to Cleopatra. His sincerity and slow nature (*ἁπλότης τῷ ἤθει καὶ βραδεῖα μὲν αἴσθησις*) make Antony inherently susceptible to Cleopatra's favor. Cleopatra, then, would not have been such a powerful influence if Antony's character was not so trusting. For Cleopatra to attach herself to Mark Antony so soon after Plutarch's emphasis on Antony's nature provides a negative characterization for Cleopatra, too. Antony's nature is inherent and cannot be helped, but Cleopatra's exploitation of Antony's simple judgements is damaging to her own actions.

Plutarch's use of grammar to characterize both Cleopatra and Antony helped solidify Cleopatra's lasting characteristics into modernity. Using active and passive verbs to differentiate Cleopatra's strength and Antony's weaknesses, Plutarch established a method to portray Cleopatra that brings more depth to her characterization than other, more pro-Roman sources preceding the *Life of Antony*. As much a contemplation of Antony's susceptibility to outside influences, Plutarch's biography saves Cleopatra from a completely derogatory characterization. Her negative characteristics, however, surpass her positive attributes in Plutarch's version of the queen. The grammatical devices that characterize Cleopatra's reputation in the structure of the prose is continuously used in modern sources, and camera angle becomes the new grammatical tool to illuminate (and criticize) Cleopatra's character.

CHAPTER 2

A DEVELOPMENT IN EPIC: JOSEPH MANKIEWICZ'S *CLEOPATRA*

Through film, camera creates character in the same way as Plutarch's manipulation of grammar, and Joseph Mankiewicz's film, *Cleopatra,* shows that the years separating Plutarch and Mankiewicz have an effect on the method of portrayal. The literary devices that Plutarch uses to create Cleopatra's identity appears in *Cleopatra* through Mankiewicz's camera work. Through the lens and the positioning of different characters throughout the film, Mankiewicz emphasizes ancient depictions of Cleopatra, and continues the Roman narratives that originally villainized her. In *Cleopatra,* Mankiewicz does draw upon more sources than Plutarch as inspiration for his titular character, and provides some positive variations from Cleopatra's almost entirely negative portrayal in ancient sources. Ultimately, though, Mankiewicz emulates Plutarch's method of characterization, and camera angle highlights the same, flawed character that was created in antiquity.

Although the title of Joseph Mankiewicz' film bears Cleopatra's name rather than Caesar's or Mark Antony's, the viewer does not see Cleopatra until 21 minutes into the film. Mankiewicz introduces the struggles of Caesar's civil war against Pompey in the first scene before fast forwarding to his arrival at Alexandria in the second. The camera follows Caesar as he muses over dead Romans on both sides of the battlefield, wanders through the marketplaces of Alexandria as he buys local wines, and surveys the throngs of Alexandrian commonfolk on the docks of the harbor. We see Cleopatra's younger brother, Ptolemy XIII, present the head of Pompey to a horrified Caesar. They speak of Cleopatra, but only in the context of Egypt's

political turmoil—a civil war that mirrors Caesar's within the first scene. Caesar's immense presence for so much of the beginning of *Cleopatra* places him as the central character and makes the queen's character secondary. Mankiewicz isolates Caesar by orienting the camera at chest level, emphasizing Caesar's face as he delivers his monologue on the battlefield (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Caesar on the Battlefield. Caesar stands against the backdrop of the blue sky as he muses over Rome's civil war. The camera angle and color contrast highlights Caesar's isolation and importance.

Backdropped against the sky, Caesar's face rises above the moving bodies in the background. Mankiewicz, therefore, uses monologue and camera orientation in this first scene to create the central character in Caesar—who, incidentally, makes no mention of Cleopatra. The first 20 minutes, therefore, are dominated by the men of the Republic.

An inkling of Cleopatra's importance comes from Caesar himself in the first lines of dialogue as he ruminates over the current situation in Egypt, where his foe, Pompey, has fled after his defeat at Pharsalus. Her name remains unmentioned, but Caesar remarks that "young king Ptolemy and his sister have a civil war of their own, intent on destroying each other, and in

the process, a great deal of wheat for Rome."[20] This mention of "[Ptolemy's] sister," however, exists within the context of Caesar's own interests for Rome and his own civil war with Pompey. Cleopatra is not, at this point, a main character. She is not even a named character. Out of the two civil wars that exist within this first scene alone, Caesar's is center stage.

Cleopatra does not appear visually in the first scene, and her name is finally spoken by the narrator in the second scene, which is approximately 9 minutes into the film. The wording of the screenplay, however, makes Cleopatra the secondary character within her own story. The narrator emphasizes the parallel civil war in Egypt to Caesar's further north, as "young King Ptolemy would no longer share the throne with his sister Cleopatra, but drove her from the city of Alexandria and sought to destroy her."[21] Cleopatra is finally introduced, but the honors of the active role are given to her younger brother. Ptolemy XIII, who, although younger than Cleopatra, is the one not sharing, and "driv[ing]" Cleopatra away. Her existence in the story only occurs as a reaction to Ptolemy's attack.

Once Caesar arrives in Alexandria during scene two, he is the first one to mention Cleopatra as a slight to Ptolemy XIII's authority. Caesar uses Cleopatra's name to undermine Ptolemy in their power struggle. The composition of the scene compliments the combative dialogue as Caesar stands over Ptolemy's seated figure, and this visual metaphor continues to heighten the power dynamic between Ptolemy and Caesar. First, the camera encompasses both Ptolemy's court and Caesar, bringing them together in one image of Rome vs. Egypt (Figure 2). Dressed in whites, blues, and pinks, Ptolemy's entourage is overwhelming compared to Caesar's red garb to the right of the shot, yet Caesar immediately downplays their grandeur by

[20] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:7:49.
[21] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:09:09.

Figure 2. Caesar Meets Ptolemy XIII and his Court. With Caesar on the far right and dressed in red, he contrasts against Ptolemy's group. The brightness of the red overpowers the blues, purples and whites of Ptolemy's court, signifying Caesar's own superior authority.

remarking, "you all look so impressive, *any one of you* could be king."[22] This comment underscores the body placement of Ptolemy, his advisors, and his guard. Whenever Ptolemy's advisors or generals speak, they exist as a whole rather than on their own. Those who talk to Caesar are at eye level or below their supporting entourage, causing them to blend in with their compatriots. One leader does not stand out amongst the many against Caesar. Caesar is always taller than his own generals, who, standing at a distance separate from Caesar, fade into the background with the Egyptian crowds.

Although alone and isolated visually, Caesar's piercing gaze and nonchalant yet imposing demeanor make Ptolemy appear weak and petty. At Caesar's interruption during the recitation of Ptolemy's many titles, Mankiewicz turns the camera back to Caesar, where he stands against a backdrop of Egyptians. Even alone, the camera shift makes clear that Caesar has taken the upper

[22] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:13:02.

hand in his deliberate interruption. Caesar makes sure not to hail Ptolemy XIII without looking around and adding "...and his sister, and co-ruler, Queen Cleopatra..."[23] Caesar's invocation of the queen suggests that Ptolemy is not entirely right in his claim to solitary rule. Caesar continues to insist that he has come to ensure the preservation of Ptolemy and Cleopatra's co-regency, speaking to Ptolemy's lord chamberlain Pothinus and his general Achillas without so much as a glance in the boy king's direction. The repetitive mentioning of Cleopatra does not mean to give her any power, but rather, Caesar employs her name to gauge Ptolemy's worthiness. Ptolemy's outbursts, pouting, and exasperated interruptions at the subject of Cleopatra do little to make him kingly.

What the on-screen characters say about Cleopatra is altogether negative. Ptolemy is first to speak, bursting out to Caesar that "*they* won't tell you so, but Cleopatra's dead. She tried to kill me, and then we chased her off into the desert...and there she died."[24] This claim, however, causes Pothinus to correct his king, as he says that Cleopatra, although she did try to kill her brother, is not dead. Caesar's response to these befuddled stories of her fate is: "the search for truth can go on and on...I shall try to decide justly..."[25] This line underscores the conflicting tales relating to Cleopatra that existed in both antiquity and modernity. Cleopatra the passive is pitted against Cleopatra the active. Caesar's intended investigation of Cleopatra further undermines the queen. In this masculine narrative, Cleopatra herself does not have the opportunity to reveal the true nature of character. Mankiewicz leaves this to Caesar, the masculine entity, as the character decides that it is his responsibility to define the truth of Cleopatra for himself.

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[23] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:13:25.
[24] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:13:30.
[25] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:13:51.

It would seem, then, that Mankiewicz' establishment of Caesar's assertive presence in the first two scenes would weaken the impact of Cleopatra's entrance when she finally does appear 21 minutes into the film. Initially, the first impression of Cleopatra is not altogether a promising one, as her emissary brings her into Caesar's room completely immersed in a rolled-up rug. The emissary claims that Cleopatra has bestowed this gift "for the eyes of Caesar, alone."[26] With a mischievous glint in his eye, Caesar clearly knows that this is not just an expensive rug, yet he encourages the ruse and begins to toy with the rug and its occupant inside.

The most threatening aspect of the introduction between Caesar and Cleopatra comes from Caesar, despite his easy-going, almost playful attitude when discussing the best way to unfurl the rug with Cleopatra's slave. With the simple, "Lend me your sword, Rufio, this might require some cutting," Caesar immediately establishes himself as dominant.[27] Weaponized, standing, and free to move around Cleopatra, Caesar uses his masculinity and power within her own palace to intimidate a queen before she even formally reveals herself.

The masculine show of force and flirtation continues. Caesar deliberately holds his sword against his body, with the hilt resting clearly upon his midsection. He points the sword downward, and the clear sexual implications are intended to both humiliate and flirt with the young Cleopatra.[28] The camera angle accentuates this position. As Caesar walks towards her with his sword pointed out, Mankiewicz uses a slightly wider shot than the previous one. Capturing Caesar from the knees upward, Caesar's midsection and sexually positioned sword appear at the center of the image (Figure 3).

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[26] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963). 00:20:06.
[27] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:20:12.
[28] This particular image of a sword posed menacingly at a man's midriff appears often in scenes of rape on ancient figure paintings.

Figure 3. Caesar Speaks to Apollodorus. His sword, which points toward the rug, is a clearly phallic symbol gestured towards Cleopatra. During the scene, Caesar is both flirtateous and threatening, and Cleopatra is subsequently made to be a sexual objective of Caesar's.

Towering over her body with a phallic weapon tipped towards her, Cleopatra is both submissive, passive, and entirely at the mercy at the masculine forces within the room. Keeping up with the Cleopatra's trick, Caesar heightens the sexual disparity between them by commenting to Apollodorus about the rug, asking whether it would be "easier" to "sling [the rug] over [his] shoulder," as if Cleopatra was simply a rug that can be "turned over" at Caesar's whim and fancy.[29] Even at Apollodorus's protest, Caesar insists that "I want [the rug] the wrong side up...I find that one can tell more about the quality of merchandise by examining the *backside first.*" [30] With the word "merchandise", Caesar speaks of both the rug and Cleopatra. In Caesar's perspective, Cleopatra is a tool that ensures Egypt's survival and its continued alliance with Rome.

[29] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:20:28.
[30] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:20:47.

Mankiewicz sets up Cleopatra's introduction through Caesar's perspective, but she has as much to gain from their meeting as Caesar. The general is domineering and flattering, and even during a conversation that likens Cleopatra to an expensive rug, his tone exudes charm and civility. Caesar's choice in demeanor is deliberate because he understands that he is not the only person with immense power in the room. He cannot see her, but Caesar knows that Cleopatra is judging the success of this meeting. Both sides rely on each other, and at the onset of this meeting, Caesar is just as delicate and coy in his banter as he is threatening.

Once Cleopatra shows herself, she immediately places herself in front of Caesar not as his inferior, but as the queen of Egypt on a diplomatic mission to reclaim her throne. Caesar, though, does not reciprocate Cleopatra's show of authority with respect. Cleopatra takes control of the room immediately as her right as queen, but Caesar responds with more banter and flirting and refuses to engage with Cleopatra as a worthy diplomat. He puts on an air of civility, but by doing so, Caesar also refuses to give up the power he has previously exhibited towards Apollodorus and his generals. The struggle for dominance mirrors that of Caesar's interaction with Ptolemy, except Cleopatra is not supported by the same entourage. Their repartee begins in a show of authority towards Cleopatra's slave. As Caesar orders Apollodorus to make ready her rooms, Cleopatra immediately sets herself as in charge with a cold, "Have I dismissed you?"[31] Mankiewicz incorporates both Caesar, Cleopatra, and Apollodorus in the same shot, yet Cleopatra is placed in the center between Caesar and Apollodorus (Figure 4). Central to the composition, Cleopatra holds her own authority with an accustomed air, at ease with power. Apollodorus's choice to follow Cleopatra shows that, despite Caesar's show of authority, Apollodorus sees Cleopatra's power as surpassing Caesar's. She knows the palace that Caesar

[31] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:21:43.

Figure 4. Cleopatra Stands between Apollodorus and Caesar. Her placement in this scene emphasizes her authority. Caaesar, although closer to the viewer, stands opposite Apollodorus as Cleopatra speaks to both men. Dressed starkly in red, Cleopatra holds the same, superior authority as Caesar in his meeting with Ptolemy XIII.

commands in ways that he does not, and even claims that Caesar is a guest of hers, not the other way around. Cleopatra is active, dominant, and equal among the Roman masculine presence. Dressed in the same red as Caesar in his scene with Ptolemy, Cleopatra exhibits the same power as Caesar did earlier in the film.

Ancient sources such as Plutarch emphasize Cleopatra's seductive prowess, but Mankiewicz's Cleopatra does little to seduce Caesar in terms of sexual physicality. In the dialogue between Caesar and Cleopatra, Cleopatra sets out to ensure her own preservation and her place in power. She uses her physicality to match Caesar's commanding presence, and only to support her diplomatic skill and verbal tactics. She maintains eye contact, at eye level, standing when he stands, sitting when he sits, and altogether remaining, literally, within the same plane of existence as Caesar. She maintains the equality between herself and Caesar throughout this entire interaction, and altogether remains just as active as Caesar.

Cleopatra's self-assurance throughout the scene is matched by Caesar as he tries to gain the upper hand by drawing attention to inadequacies of her age and sex. While Cleopatra treats Caesar as a leader, equal in diplomacy and eager to engage in talks over the futures of Rome and her own rule, Caesar continually dismisses her, and she questions his impudence, asking "is it because you're so much older?"[32] At the time of their meeting, Cleopatra was eighteen years old, while Caesar had already surpassed 52. The age difference shows on screen, as Caesar's receding, gray hairline starkly contrasts Cleopatra's full, dark bob. Caesar does not acknowledge her royal status in addressing her, calling her "young lady" at two points during their discussion: Not "my queen", or "your majesty". Caesar offers only derogatory titles, clearly indicating that he is the one with authority in the room. He regards himself as master, and through his flippant demeanor, Cleopatra is just the "young lady" who has overstayed her welcome.

The camera, for most of the scene, follows suit. The camera focuses on Caesar alone when he speaks, and Cleopatra alone when she responds, rarely bringing them together within the same shot as they stare each other down. Early on in the interaction, Caesar sits wearily while Cleopatra stands for some dialogue. The same composition occurs towards the end of their conversation, yet this time, it is Cleopatra who remains seated as Caesar stands. They have equal time before the lens, and Mankiewicz often uses opposing camera angles to focus on these initial exchanges. Their contentious dialogue, therefore, is complemented by their time and manner in front of the camera.

Cleopatra's careful dialogue with Caesar in the first scenes shifts in the next, as she wavers between verbal diplomacy and physical allure—that of the seductress intent to "command the commander."[33] Despite her physical vulnerability and unequal stature, Cleopatra

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[32] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:23:22.
[33] Plutarch, *Life of Antony,* 10.1.

very deliberately choreographs the atmosphere for her second meeting with Caesar. Reclining on her couch amidst a haze of music, dance, and attendants during one of her baths, Cleopatra encourages a *mythos* of the sexual exoticism that entices Caesar as he enters her bathing room. She changes into a gauzy slip that accentuates her figure and arranges her handmaidens around her in a worshipful manner that frames her in the center of Caesar's vision once he appears (Figure 5). This seemingly compromised position and apparent disruption of her bath are all

Figure 5. Cleopatra Among her Handmaidens. Here, Cleopatra breaks the fourth wall by alluding to her legacy in ancient sources such as Plutarch. The character in the film manipulates the rumors found in Roman texts to her own advantage, using foreign opulence and mystique to entice Caesar.

her orchestration. "The Romans tell fabulous tales of my baths and handmaidens...and morals..." she says before moving to change the layout of the room.[34] The writings of Plutarch are just one narrative of many that existed both during and after her lifetime, yet Mankiewicz, in this scene, permits his character "to respond" to such negative rumors by embracing them rather than

[34] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:33:17.

rejecting them. Cleopatra essentially breaks the fourth wall and directly addresses her own historical legacy in the literature of authors such as Plutarch. By doing this, Mankiewicz places power in his character's hands, giving the historical Cleopatra agency to her own character when using the malicious rumors others have concocted to her own advantage. Taking the narrative in her own hands, she appears before Caesar both as he expects, yet also as she desires. Her naked appearance before Caesar is therefore playfully self-aware and powerful.

Showing off her near naked figure, Cleopatra continues to speak about taking over Egypt and Caesar's danger in leaving her brother in power. Caesar, despite all of his power and strength, only has eyes for Cleopatra's body. With her demands of power from Caesar, he quotes Catullus's "give me a thousand and a thousand kisses" as he gazes intently upon her exposed body, but then kisses one of her handmaidens before leaving.[35] In this sexually charged scene, there is still a power dynamic between Cleopatra and Caesar that has yet to be resolved. The positioning of the two figures further highlights the shifting seat of control. Caesar stands in front of her while Cleopatra lies down in an exposed and vulnerable position. This contrasts their presentation on equal planes in the first scene they share together. There is a clear discrepancy of power through their differences in height within the room.

An important compositional detail concerning this scene is much like Caesar's first scene with Ptolemy, as Caesar exists alone in the face of Cleopatra and her court. Unlike Ptolemy, however, Cleopatra is not overwhelmed by those around her. Even lying down, Cleopatra remains active, dominant, and sexually powerful among both her group and to Caesar. Yet he responds in kind, meeting her sexual displays with one of his own. While there is talk of politics throughout the scene, Caesar ends the conversation with a kiss before leaving. Their exchange of

[35] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 00:37:02.

flirtations coincides with an interchange of dominance, and with Caesar's exit, he successfully challenges Cleopatra's initial control of the meeting.

By the time the second act begins, Caesar is dead and his will has failed to recognize Caesarion as his biological heir. This is a blow to Cleopatra and her desire to unite Rome and Egypt under one power. The opening scene does not focus on any of Cleopatra's struggles in coping with Caesar's murder and fallout with Rome, but begins with a body—specifically the body of one of Caesar's assassins, whom Antony has pursued and killed at the Battle of Philippi. Mark Antony sits on a throne, very much like Caesar did in the first half of the movie, taking on the mantle of Caesar (Figure 6).

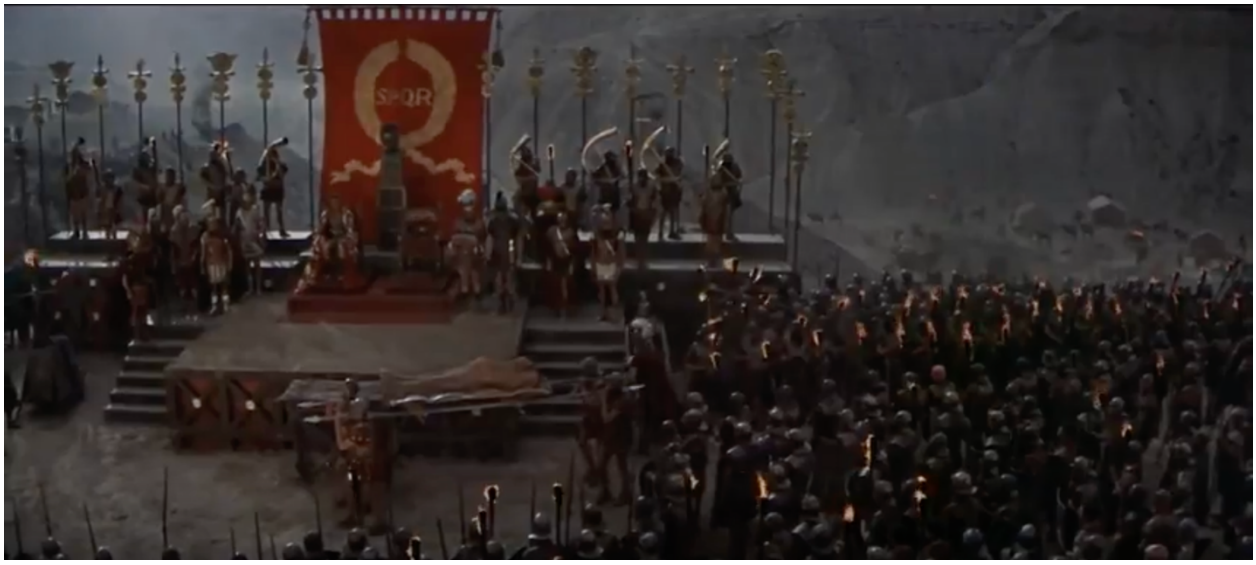

Figure 6. Mark Antony at the Battle of Philippi. Antony sits on a throne in the upper left of the screen and revels in his victory. In the sea of red and the soldiers flanking his right and left, Antony is almost indistinguishable in the crowd. Contrasting against Caesar's first appearance, Mark Antony is unremarkable despite the overwhelming spectacle around him.

In image and practice he is the new Caesar, and tracking down those who killed Julius cements Antony's claim. The similarities between the two characters are obvious—both generals are

surrounded by their men who claim they've won a great victory while the problem of Egypt's cooperation lingers in both of their minds. While Caesar remarked on the fruitlessness of war, seeming to take no joy in the defeat of another Roman, Mark Antony has no qualms about the deaths of Cassius and Brutus, and he wears a crown of laurel briefly before throwing it into the crowd of soldiers.

The composition of both scenes reveals key differences between the two generals. While Caesar had the backdrop of blue against his red cloak, Mark Antony is merely one red figure among other red figures. Antony's other generals and soldiers surround his throne, making Mark Antony's presence less pronounced than Caesar's. Mankiewicz's wide shot includes dozens of figures surrounding Mark Antony, and the camera is so distant from the central character that identifying him becomes a difficult task. The might of Rome behind Mark Antony shows his army's loyalty towards him, but his undistinguished nature within the shot lessens the impact of his own scene.

This introduction of Mark Antony's victory continues to place Roman men at the forefront of Cleopatra's narrative, and thus mirrors the first act with Caesar's musings at Pharsalus. As before, Cleopatra is absent in the first scenes of the second act as she was in the first. The characters speak of her importance in Roman diplomacy and Mark Antony even expresses anger at the prospect of meeting the Egyptian queen again, yet she remains present only in dialogue until the third scene. Cleopatra's entrance in the second act, however, is more regal than the first. She is not rolled out from a carpet, but dressed in royal attire, performing the rites before the deified Caesar while wearing a necklace bearing coins of Caesar's image. Even if Cleopatra looks the part of a queen in her magnificent attire, the presence of Caesar all around her shows that the masculine still exists within her introductory scene, almost as if she shares the

same third scene with Caesar as she did in the first act. The deified Caesar stares down at her as she speaks of Caesarion's inheritance and Mark Antony's need of her, almost as if judging her in the same way as he did during their first encounter (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Cleopatra Gives Offerings to the Deified Caesar. The sitting statue shrouded in black is Caesar, who remains an everlasting presence in Cleopatra and Mark Antony's lives in the second half of the film. The scene's composition draws attention to Caesar's overshadowing presence in Cleopatra's affairs, including her romantic relationship with Mark Antony.

In the scene before Cleopatra and Antony meet again, she presents herself much differently than she did to Caesar in the first act. She has complete control over every aspect of her meeting with Antony as she sails to Tarsus in her bejeweled royal vessel and draws crowds of commoners from the hilltops with red plumes of smoke. People jump into the sea and crowd the vessel, trying to touch the same ship that Cleopatra sails upon. Mankiewicz creates an atmosphere of the utmost luxury and grandeur as the curtains pull back and Cleopatra, decked in blue and gold, spreads her arms. At this moment, she is, at least in image, the opposite of when she first appeared to us in the third scene of the third act. She has fully assumed her right to rule, survived the assassination of Caesar in Rome, and has fully grown into her position as queen of

Egypt. She has designated the place and time of their meeting, and controls her presentation to Mark Antony.

When Mark Antony boards Cleopatra's ship, he is less authoritative and distinctive than Caesar. Mark Antony rides in a litter carried by slaves as he waves to the crowd. Once Mark Antony's figure is fully visible, Antony's costume is not red or gold, but blue, a color similar to the attire of Ptolemy's court earlier in the film. In this foreign land, Mark Antony barely seems Roman at all, mimicking the customs and dress of those around him. Mark Antony blends in, just like Ptolemy amongst his own officials. With these minute details, Mankiewicz sets Caesar and Antony apart.

Once Cleopatra and Antony are together, their interaction does not compare to what she and Caesar experienced all those years before. There is strife between them, but the tension is much more sexual than political. Cleopatra continually steers the conversation towards her relationship with Caesar, noting that "her nights have too many" hours without Caesar.[36] Antony, amidst the constant drinking, displays insecurity when he sees Cleopatra's necklace of Caesar, and suggests that he return to the boat to spend the night with Cleopatra once their guests have left.[37] Cleopatra responds, just as she had to Caesar, with politics. Expressing concern about Octavian's power in Rome, she warns Antony to stop playing god in Tarsus while Octavian becomes a god in Rome. While Cleopatra is right, Mark Antony shunts aside any political suggestions Cleopatra makes, and demeans her position to that of a sexual conquest that he cannot seem to fulfill.

The treatment of Mark Antony seems partly orchestrated by the queen. As a final token of entertainment for her guests, Cleopatra signals her dancers to reveal *another* Cleopatra—an

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[36] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:17:22.
[37] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:18:07.

actress dressed exactly like her, holding a cup of wine towards Mark Antony as the other performers laugh at his confusion. This scene reiterates Cleopatra's control over Mark Antony. Cleopatra knows his wants and desires, and has the performers mock him for his obvious longing. Orchestrating this scene of sexual desire is not unlike her bath earlier in the movie. The differences between Caesar's conduct and Antony's further creates a disconnection between the two generals. At the attempted seduction of Cleopatra, Caesar responds with his own ingenuity, citing Catullus and playfully kissing a handmaiden before he leaves the room. Mark Antony, however, is drunk with wine and unable to control himself. Launching himself at Cleopatra's decoy, he passionately kisses her not to show his own power, but to fulfill his own unfulfilled desire of Cleopatra. She does not revel in his confusion, which turns into anger. Instead, she moves away from the scene with a slight smile and goes to bed as he passionately kisses her doppelgänger. Through this topsy-turvy encounter, Cleopatra regains the upper hand in a situation where the masculine forces of her life—the threats in Rome and Mark Antony's advances—continue to affect her politically and sexually.

Even though Antony plays a fool in front of the courts of Alexandria and Rome on Cleopatra's ship, he continues to pursue her, and for all of her treatment of Antony, Cleopatra ends up staying with him for the night. Just like with Caesar, her sexuality merges with politics. As they muse over who loved whom first, the relationship seems more passionately charged than politically motivated. She does not continuously push her political agenda on Mark Antony during their heated argument, like she did with Caesar. Perhaps the political situation in Egypt is far less dire than when she met Caesar, or the love she feels for Mark Antony overcomes her political aspirations for Rome. But as she gives her love to Mark Antony, one cannot help but

remember Mark Antony's former insecurities. Trapped by anxiety, Mark Antony cannot overpower Cleopatra any more than he can adequately become Caesar's heir.

The second half of this movie, therefore, does not seem to place the failings of the Ptolemaic empire and Alexandria on Cleopatra as much as it does on Mark Antony. It is Antony who at first refuses to return to Rome, and it is Cleopatra who forces him to go and face Octavian and continue the triumvirate. Rufio and the other Roman officers, however, look at Cleopatra with disdain as Rufio says, "He wrote that he was no longer interested in the matters I described to him, that he would not return to Rome, that he understood quite clearly what was at stake and what he would lose, and he would not leave you."[38] Antony, then, is willing to give up his legions and his part in the triumvirate for his new life with Cleopatra. For all of her professions of love, however, Cleopatra sends Antony back to Rome to fix the issues that have arisen in his absence along with instructions to maintain his hold over the East. For politics, her role as queen and protector of Egypt ultimately wins out over her feelings for Antony.

Cleopatra's reaction to Antony's decision to stay in Rome comes as a surprise. Up until this point, Cleopatra has always been in control of her emotions and decisions. Being queen came before her position as a lover as Caesar and Antony pursued an alliance between Egypt and Rome abroad. With both Caesar and Antony, she controls their sexual needs by creating scenes of sexual tension within the narratives while maintaining her place within the political realm. She prioritizes, and reiterates to Caesar her "dream" of a unified Rome and Egypt which she will rule with Caesar. Even in her vulnerability after Caesar's death, Cleopatra never forgets her role as queen of Egypt, and acts accordingly. After sending Mark Antony to Rome, she learns that he

[38] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:30:06.

has followed her advice and has sealed a pact with Octavian that has heightened his power and augmented his legions. A unified Rome and Egypt is now a reality.

As Cleopatra hears of Mark Antony's success in Rome, the camera is further away from the queen, so that the viewer sees a sitting Cleopatra and a handmaiden positioned over her left shoulder. As she hears of Antony's marriage, however, Mankiewicz places Cleopatra centrally within the shot, zooming in on her fading smile. The handmaiden, while still at Cleopatra's side, is no longer within the frame. Mankiewicz isolates Cleopatra, and with a simple, "Leave me...completely alone," her handmaidens leave her.[39] Mankiewicz then zooms out as Cleopatra walks towards her bedroom. Angled from the ceiling, the camera points down at Cleopatra in the middle of her large palace, with no one from her entourage or court ladies to comfort her. The extent of the set dwarfs Cleopatra, making her appear small and vulnerable (Figure 8). The politics do not matter at this point. The dream that has been realized is inconsequential, and her stake in Rome is now forgotten with Antony pledged to another woman.

Cleopatra enters a state of frenzy, taking Mark Antony's sword and stabbing his clothes and the bed curtains, before plunging his *gladius* into the bed that they shared together (Figure 9).[40] Bringing violence into the most intimate part of their relationship, Cleopatra destroys their bond, stabbing in the same way that the senators stabbed Caesar in the senate house. She is completing an assassination of her own—the assassination of her love for Antony. After this fit of rage, she can do nothing but weep. This is the first moment that we see Cleopatra not as a queen, but as a woman devastated by love. Mankiewicz makes clear that Cleopatra exists in both

[39] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:38:10.
[40] This particular image is similar to Dido's expressions of grief in the *Aeneid.* Like the audience sympathizes with Dido after Aeneus leaves Carthage, viewers of *Cleopatra* might also sympathize with Cleopatra because of Antony's betrayal.

Figure 8. Cleopatra Stands in her Palace Alone. In such a spacious room and with the camera so far from Cleopatra's figure, her isolation during her contemplation of Mark Antony's betrayal is dramatically emphasized.

Figure 9. Cleopatra Stabs the Bed. The camera focuses on Cleopatra's anguish and grief as she attacks the "marriage bed" that she no longer shares with Antony. Reminiscent of Caesar's own assassination, Cleopatra's actions against Antony are sexual and violent.

roles—a side that has not been seen before now. The camera zooms in on her face as she cries, fully focused on her grief and despair. Alone in a room once shared with Antony, her isolation is pronounced. In a fit of weeping, Cleopatra sheds years of planning, patience, and dedication to two men who have disappointed her in death and marriage.

Jealousy and pain permeate through the next scene that Cleopatra and Mark Antony share. This is not a meeting on a floating vessel of pomp and celebration. There is no wild drinking or partying, and no diplomatic celebration between two leaders of Egypt and Rome. Instead, Cleopatra sits on a throne of gold, bearing the symbols of a pharaoh—the crook and flail crossed upon her chest and a red crown. A necklace of gold draped around her neck along with the gold jewelry symbolize her wealth and status. Compared with Mark Antony's gold, white, and red military dress, Cleopatra is on a pedestal all of her own, literally raised three levels above Mark Antony during their heated discussion (Figure 10).

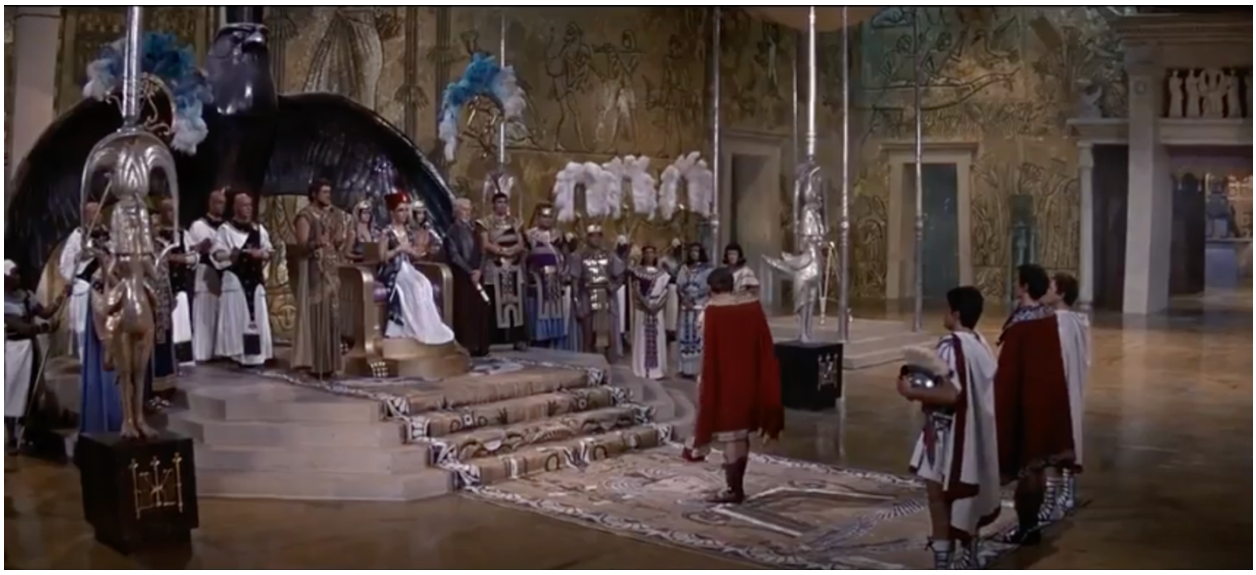

Figure 10. Cleopatra Negotiates with Antony. The composition of this scene clearly emphasizes misplaced power within the room. Cleopatra and her entourage are positioned above Mark Antony's, which therefore elevates the queen's rank and status. The camera simultaneously shows Cleopatra's strength along with Antony's weakness in negotiations.

Cleopatra is supported by those around her, but her wide throne creates space between herself and those who serve her. Even in the wide shots that Mankiewicz uses at the beginning of this contentious scene, Cleopatra is separate from the rest. The space on either side of her isolates her

presence on the screen, despite other attendants and generals being included within the same shot. Making no mention of their former affair, Cleopatra instead demeans and belittles Mark Antony:

> Cleopatra: You will kneel.
> Mark Antony: I will what?
> Cleopatra: On your knees.
> Mark Antony: You dare ask a proconsul of the Roman empire—
> Cleopatra: I asked it of Julius Caesar. I demand it of you![41]

Surrounded by her courtiers and ambassadors, Cleopatra uses information Mark Antony has shared with her in private against him. She knows his struggle with his legacy—understanding her previous relationship with Caesar while simultaneously trying to create his own legacy from Caesar's death.

Antony's insecurity is underscored through the camera angle, as Mark Antony is focused upon from slightly above. This perspective is from the eyes of the queen looking down upon her former lover, making Mark Antony's position even more inferior. To further spite Antony, Cleopatra twice invokes Caesar's name during their verbal battle, leaving him with the stinging reminder of Caesar's overbearing presence in his life. Sitting above him, Cleopatra has no mercy for Mark Antony so far below, ultimately telling him to take her demands to his "superior in Rome…Octavian. Caesar Octavian."[42]

The breakdown Cleopatra experiences at the knowledge of Mark Antony's marriage affects her during this political standoff, and, as Mark Antony points out, she mixes jealousy and politics. This is something that Cleopatra has not done before. Even though Caesar is married during the entirety of his relationship with her, Cleopatra never seemed to be jealous of Caesar's relationship with Calpurnia. With Mark Antony, however, politics mingle with love and affect

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[41] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:45:04.
[42] *Cleopatra,* directed by Joseph Mankiewicz (20th Century Fox, 1963), 2:46:12.

her deliberations about the treaty between Rome and Egypt. Her judgement is skewed, and her anger and rage clearly show through her jibes and domineering position against him. There is no love in her eyes, nor is there determined diplomacy as there was with Caesar. There is only jealousy, rage, and the hurt of Antony's betrayal as she demands from Antony a third of the Roman empire to honor their alliance.

The examination of Cleopatra within Mankiewicz's film reveals the same inherent characterizations revealed in Plutarch's *Life of Antony.* The director tries to create something new in this version of Cleopatra, highlighting her strength, intelligence, and diligence towards her kingdom, Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony. Mankiewicz's deviance towards a new Cleopatra, however, is stifled through the continuation of structure as a means of characterization. Camera angle mimics Plutarch's use of active and passive to underscore the same depictions of Cleopatra that existed in Plutarch—she is an overly ambitious, dominant leader that is out of place in the Roman sphere of masculine generals. Though the medium of *Cleopatra* differs from the literary presentation of Cleopatra, Mankiewicz fail to fully evolve past the ancient characterization his camera captures onscreen.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY FOR ENTERTAINMENT: *ASSASSIN'S CREED: ORIGINS*

After appearing in various visual media such as movies and television, Cleopatra made an appearance in the popular game series *Assassin's Creed.* Cleopatra is presented in a new medium, a video game, but the way that she is presented and characterized does not defer from the previous two media. The small steps that Mankiewicz takes to present a slightly more nuanced version of Cleopatra has disappeared in *Assassin's Creed.* The director uses camera angle as a means of characterizing Cleopatra, but this device is used to emphasize the villainy Plutarch has already stressed in his *Life.*

The first installment was released by Ubisoft in 2007 and is centered around the contemporary protagonist Desmond Miles, who participates in simulated historical events in a device called "the Animus" to procure powerful artifacts that, when in the hands of the evil Abstergo Industries, have the power to destroy humanity. As part of the secret organization called "The Assassins", Desmond travels to medieval Jerusalem, Renaissance Italy, the Revolutionary War, and then in *Black Flag,* sails the seas during Golden Age of Piracy. After Desmond dies, the player follows the discoveries of a new assassin, Layla, who appears in the latest three installments of *Assassin's Creed.* Cleopatra VII is featured in the tenth installment of the series, *Assassin's Creed: Origins,* which was released in 2017.

Although based on real events, the video game mingles fictional characters with historical ones, blending narratives found in ancient sources with the modern simulations that define the boundaries of the game's environment. The story centers around two figures, Bayek

and Aya, who interact with figures such as Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Ptolemy XIII and Apollodorus. Within the game, characters move through meticulously crafted reconstructions of Siwa and Alexandria during the late Ptolemaic Dynasty, immersing the player in the early years of Cleopatra's reign in Egypt.

The most identifiable aspect of *Assassin's Creed* is the attention to detailed settings and interactions with historical characters, which evoke "past societies…somehow allow[ing] a re-living experience of historical events."[43] The allure of the game, therefore, is to offer visual role-playing in previous civilizations, manifested through interactions, encounters, and explorations of highly detailed historical interpretation. Consisting of twelve full length games, seventeen spin-offs, and a major motion picture, *Assassin's Creed* has expanded beyond the gaming world and into education due to its detailed historical landscape, which "offers an engaging and immersive way to 'experience' concepts and notions that are presented in…history curriculum."[44] The history depicted in *Assassin's Creed*, then, is accurate enough to be analyzed within the context of a classroom and used as a tool to engage students in dynamic worlds of historical events and eras.

The historical interpretations within *Assassin's Creed* are ultimately meant for entertainment purposes, which cause certain events and characters within the game to be exaggerated or misconstrued. Cleopatra's characterization is one such interpretation, as the first cutscene featuring the queen diverts from previous film and literary interpretations. At this point in the game, Cleopatra is in hiding because her brother Ptolemy XIII is desperate to find and kill

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[43] Nelson Bondioli, Marcio Texeira-Bastos and Luciano C. Carneiro, "History, Design and Archaeology: The Reception of Julius Caesar and the Representation of Gender and Agency in *Assassin's Creed: Origins"* in *Die Skriflig* 53, no. 2 (2019): 1.

[44] Thierry Karsenti, and Simon Parent. "Teaching History with the Video Game *Assassin's Creed*: Effective Teaching Practices and Reported Learning." In *Review of Science, Mathematics and ICT Education* 14, no. 1 (June 1, 2020): 28.

her. Apollodorus, who is her advisor in *Assassin's Creed,* has offered Cleopatra his villa, and it is here where she hosts parties for her supporters while she plans her acquisition of the throne. Since the camera is positioned far away from the crowd, Cleopatra seems indistinguishable from the other people in the scene (Figure 11). Her clothes are similar in color with the rest of the group, and from such a distance, all that differentiates her figure from others is a glint of the gold crown resting upon her brow. With Cleopatra blending so well into her chosen company, the directors of *Assassin's Creed* visually emphasize her inconspicuousness. As the camera focuses on Apollodorus's villa, the viewer hears laughter, music, and a flirtatious "Catch me! Catch me!" from someone on the veranda. Here, Cleopatra is one within a party rather than distinct and separate as pharaoh.

Figure 11. Cleopatra Celebrates with the Elite. Cleopatra reclines on a couch to the far left of the frame. She blends with the guests on the veranda, fully integrated in the party as she remains in hiding from Ptolemy XIII. Her indistinguished presence makes her first appearance within the game almost unremarkable.

The camera zooms in on Cleopatra's face for the first time. Cleopatra is still not within her own shot, but the camera has closed in on Cleopatra and another figure kneeling before her in the

same screen. Focused at eye level, the viewer is immediately placed within this intimate setting among a voracious party. Reclining directly in front of the unnamed man, Cleopatra touches his face and speaks, ‘Where is my opium pipe?” before rising from the couch and addressing the group (Figure 12). This image mirrors the odalisque paintings by neoclassicist artists such as Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, who depicted women within the harems of the East, surrounded by opium pipes and rich textiles. Cleopatra incapsulates the same exotic, sexual allure. Surrounded by drugs, alcohol, and flirtation, Cleopatra does not seem at all concerned with the political turmoil of her kingdom. Her attitude mirrors that of the rest of her guests, and her promiscuous demeanor coincides with the exotic dancers that linger in the background of her scenes.

Figure 12. Cleopatra Flirts with a Guest. This intimate close-up of Cleopatra and an unnamed man draws emphasis to Cleopatra’s reputation as a wholly sexual being. Her inconspicuous introduction in the previous frame along with her flirtatious dialogue with this stranger makes her character seem frivolous and out of touch with her dire political situation.

The intimacy between Cleopatra and the unnamed man ends as Cleopatra walks towards the edge of the veranda. With the camera positioned at the balcony's edge from slightly above eye level, Cleopatra seems to be walking towards the camera itself before stepping upon the table and turning towards her audience. This camera perspective accentuates Cleopatra's importance, and hints at her regal status that separates her, for the first time, from her other guests. As she walks, however, dancers continue to sway behind her, and Apollodorus's blurred figure stands at attention in the background.

When this scene transitions to the next, the camera abruptly changes perspective. This time, the lens is situated slightly below Cleopatra, at the eye level of the other guests awaiting her speech. This point-of-view shot directly immerses the player in the events of the game, and so Cleopatra's words become more critical since they seem to apply to us, the players, too. "I will sleep with anyone… as long as they agree to be executed in the morning!" she announces, before playfully shoving another man in front of her. Cleopatra's proposition alludes to the story of Scheherazade and Shahryar in *One Thousand and One Nights.* Centering on the tyrant Shahryar who kills his wives the morning after their marriages, the Middle Eastern folk tale's presence within the scene directly orientalizes Cleopatra and her exotic seduction.

After she says "I will sleep with anyone," the camera shifts to a reaction shot from the crowd gathered around her (Figure 13). Once part of the crowd, the camera lens now emerges from behind Cleopatra, focusing on a smiling man below her as she finishes, "as long as they agree to be executed in the morning!" This quick change in camera angle exhibits both the perspective and reaction of the crowd she addresses, as well as her power and placement within the group. In the first position, the camera lens focuses on Cleopatra from among the crowd positioned below her. From this latest perspective, Cleopatra is placed, both physically and in

Figure 13. Cleopatra Makes a Bargain. She is situated higher than her guests, so her placement within the frame highlights her status for the first time in *Origins.* Her power becomes more prevalent as she barters her body in exchange for her guests' lives.

rank, above all, including the player watching the scene. When the camera cuts to Cleopatra from behind, her waist provides a frame for the left side of the camera, encapsulating one side of the shot. The focus is on the man directly in front of Cleopatra, and her body moves within frame as she pushes the man backwards. Since the camera is slightly above eye level, this perspective continuously places Cleopatra higher than those to whom she speaks.

With her sexual advances, Cleopatra shows that her inaccessible royal status is negotiable. Her price, however, is extreme. Cleopatra's delivery and the audience's laughing response are so playful and flirtatious that one almost forgets the veiled threat within her words. What begins as a sexual invitation immediately turns into a death sentence, and, paired with the camera angles, creates a more menacing depiction of Cleopatra that was not initially present. Cleopatra presents herself as an all-powerful sexual being, capable of being promiscuous and deadly. Though the other members of the party smile and laugh at her declaration, the threat is

very real, as another man remarks, "Like Xantides?" and Cleopatra responds, "He was well-satisfied with his bargain." In *Assassin's Creed,* Cleopatra's hedonistic lifestyle comes at a high price for those around her, and for all of the banter and verbal foreplay so to speak, one cannot forget the immense power Cleopatra wields.

Her power also comes in the form of her intelligence, which appears in her polylingual conversations during the party. After threatening death with any potential sexual partner, she notices the main character of *Origins,* Bayek, awaiting introduction. Perceiving that he is native Egyptian, Cleopatra switches from English[45] to Egyptian, asking Bayek, "Would you pay such a price?" in his native language. Cleopatra's keen intuition in this moment underscores her intelligence, yet she uses her intelligence to continue flirtation, raising her eyebrows coyly as Bayek responds by introducing his wife, Aya, to Cleopatra.

All of Cleopatra's interactions within this first scene are sexual, flirtatious, and threatening as she uses her position to both intimidate and entertain. As she leaves the veranda to discuss her ascent to the throne in Egypt, the camera switches to a wide shot. Encompassing the whole veranda, the viewer sees all of Cleopatra's guests continuing the festivities as Cleopatra opens her arms and encourages the celebrations to continue. This last gesture of Cleopatra as welcoming towards those within her close circle reflects the "end" of this character to whom we have been introduced. The camera underscores the balance Cleopatra maintains amongst her close-knit group, in that she blends in with the group but she also enforces her own status.

This power structure, however, also can be turned against Cleopatra. With the other guests always infiltrating Cleopatra's space, the crowd poses a threat to the queen just as she does to them. Given her precarious positioning and exile from Alexandria, Cleopatra has

[45] It is assumed that Cleopatra is speaking Greek, her native language, throughout most of the game. *Origins,* however, presents most characters as English-speaking rather than Greek, Egyptian, and Latin-speaking.

everything to lose if her guests find her unfit to rule or a traitor emerges within the group. She has power over their existence and status, but as the framing of the scenes continues to show, all of these friends remain present no matter how she moves. Even as she towers above everyone else, the camera takes the perspective of the guests—and the point of view of the players themselves—watching her.

Once she leaves the party, Cleopatra's sexual power becomes political. Initially, Cleopatra fades into the background as Apollodorus introduces the high priest, Pasherenptah, to Bayek and Aya. She began in the middle of the group, but as the camera takes a position on the left, Bayek and Aya's bodies block out Cleopatra's completely as they speak with Apollodorus and Pasherenptah. This is the first time that the player does not see Cleopatra within her own scene. As the camera zooms forward towards Pasherenptah and Apollodorus, Cleopatra's head disappears entirely behind Aya's, as if her advisors have replaced Cleopatra in importance (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Pasherenptah Speaks to Aya and Bayek. In this frame, Cleopatra is completely obscured by Aya's figure in the far left. She is momentarily left out of the discussion between her supporters, before the next frame reintroduces her as an ambitious leader intent on seizing the throne.

Cleopatra, however, refuses to be shunted to the side as other characters talk politics around her. Returning to a wide shot, the camera again places Cleopatra within the center of the frame, right before she reveals the reason for Bayek and Aya's presence: "Eudoros [who murdered Bayek and Aya's son] was a member of the Order of Ancients, they are responsible for my exile. They tore me from my throne." Here, the camera follows Cleopatra, remaining in front of her as she speaks to the rest of the group before she walks out of frame to the right. Obscured by Bayek and Aya, Cleopatra forcibly inserts herself into the story once again, and the camera follows suit as she explains the situation of her exile to them. In this reemergence in the player's visual field, the woman entranced by drugs, sex, and nightlife from the previous scene is replaced with a political one determined to reclaim her throne.

Cleopatra's brief reappearance reflects a change in personality, but she disappears again at the front of the group while the camera focuses on Bayek, Aya, and Apollodorus as the latter explains the danger the Order brings to Egypt. When Cleopatra reappears again, the camera focuses on the scene above the characters as she leads them to a makeshift war room—a map of the Upper and Lower kingdoms is sprawled before her on a large table on the lower level of the villa. Cleopatra is positioned to the upper left of the map, while Apollodorus stands across her and the other figures surround the right side of the table.

While Cleopatra is initially not central in the image, she inserts herself verbally into the dialogue as Apollodorus and Pasherenptah explain the deadly influence of the Order of Ancients throughout Egypt. Before Apollodorus can introduce the first member of the Order, The Scarab, Cleopatra initiates the briefing, "We have informants in each region. But they have been unable to touch the Order." Her tone, previously frivolous and defiant, has shifted to a melancholy note as she describes the crumbling of her kingdom. Throughout these descriptions of each member

of the Order, the viewer cannot see her face because the scenes constantly shift to different locations of Egypt—the Delta, Giza, Memphis, and Faiyum. Occasionally, the scene will revert back to the war room, as Cleopatra introduces the locations "most sacred Giza…and then there's Memphis…" The camera, however, only focuses on Cleopatra's hand as she moves to point out different locations on the map. Since the camera is now tilted upward from the table, the viewer does not have a clear view of Cleopatra's face, which is obscured by the shadows in the candlelit room. Cleopatra's voice betrays a sadness that, visually, we cannot see.

This tone continues into Cleopatra's most important moment in the game, as it is the first time that Cleopatra has an entire frame to herself. Bayek finally realizes that the man he murdered to avenge the death of his son was not the one who killed him, and Aya affirms this suspicion, spreading her hands out across the tactical map as she says, "You were right my love. *He* was not the only one…all of these are." As the camera moves from left to right, Pasherenptah is eventually cut from the frame until Aya and Bayek are the only two left within the shot. The camera sits at chest level, taking the perspective of the strategic pieces upon the map that Aya mulls over.

Aya and Bayek stand opposite Cleopatra in the war room, and so the frame showing them contrasts with the next, which cuts to Cleopatra. Looking at both of them, Cleopatra is almost central in the lens, with a torch emitting light on her right as she speaks, "When the Order wants something, as in Siwa, it does not hesitate to crush all in its path." Slightly below eye level, the camera angle makes Cleopatra appear taller and more imposing in this solitary image (Figure 15). Completely alone in the frame, Cleopatra fulfills the role of queen that was missing in her first scene. She does not share power with the others in the room, and her perspective and knowledge of her kingdom's circumstances are completely her own.

Figure 15. Cleopatra Explains the Influence of the Order. This is the first time that Cleopatra is alone within her own frame. This highlights her importance as leader, but also foreshadows her reckless and destructive ambition to reclaim the throne.

This scene at first champions Cleopatra's role within her kingdom. She seems to have a firm handle on the events in Egypt, and while she relies on advice from Apollodorus and Pasherenptah, she is capable of ruling by her own counsel. Her words seem caring and concerned as she describes the true evil of the Order, and its determination to "crush" those who interfere with its plans. Only through the completion of the game, however, does the viewer realize that Cleopatra ultimately becomes the oppressive master over her allies. The solo shot accentuates Cleopatra's ominous words, and foreshadows her later actions within *Origins,* which match those of Bayek and Aya's enemies: the Order.

As Bayek and Aya continue to hunt down members of the Order, Cleopatra runs out of allies within Egypt and looks to Rome to assist her against her brother. Once Bayek and Aya find Pompey's decapitated body, Cleopatra orders Bayek to wrap her within a rug to present to Caesar. After Cleopatra and Caesar both meet, Cleopatra takes Caesar into the tomb of

Alexander the Great. As Cleopatra and Caesar plan their alliance together, the camera shifts to Bayek and Aya looking on at the scene. The camera, at chest level, incorporates Cleopatra and Caesar in the background in between Aya and Bayek, who stand closer to the player in the foreground. This perspective shows two unions—Cleopatra and Caesar's political unity, which stand between Aya and Bayek's own marriage. Bayek speaks to Aya, "How long before the Queen stops impressing Caesar and starts impressing us?"

Bayek does not just mean himself and his wife, who have continuously pursued their son's killers for the game, but Bayek also speaks of the Egyptian people. From the first scene, Cleopatra has surrounded herself not only with the Macedonian-Greek royal class, but also has worked with Egyptians such as Bayek, Aya, and Pasherenptah. Bayek understands as he watches Cleopatra "impress" Caesar, however, that Egypt has become secondary to Cleopatra's own interests. Bayek's perception is not matched by Aya, who responds, "Our needs are hers as well. She will deliver." As she speaks the last phrase, the camera cuts to a wide angle from the left, encapsulating three distinct groups—Aya and Bayek, Cleopatra and Caesar, and Apollodorus, who stands alone examining Alexander the Great's tomb. The wide shot encompasses Romans, Macedonians, and Egyptians, but the clear separation between these groups indicates that these alliances are strained and beginning to fray (Figure 16).

This is the beginning of Cleopatra's downfall, when she becomes willing to "crush" all in her path in order to ascend to the throne. The ultimate betrayal of Bayek, Aya, and the Egyptians within the region occurs two scenes later, when Cleopatra prevails against her brother and announces her reign to her subjects in Alexandria. The camera takes the perspective of the commoners, who stand below her as Cleopatra speaks on the palace steps. From a perspective so far below, Cleopatra is central to the shot, but she is dwarfed by the massive figures of the guards

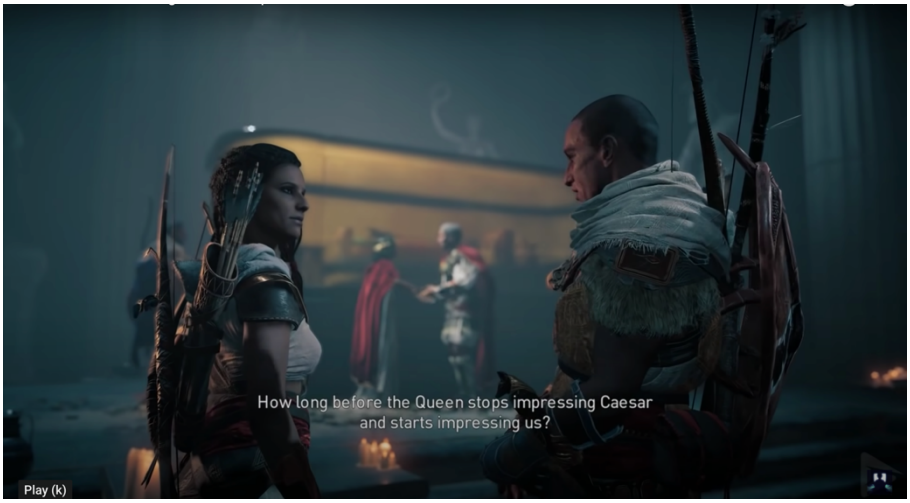

Figure 16. Bayek and Aya Question the Queen. Here, the camera illustrates a clear separation between Aya and Bayek as Cleopatra stands between them and Caesar. As the game progresses, this separation between the couple deepens as Cleopatra and Caesar align with the Order to secure her throne.

who stand closer to the camera. In this image, the Roman army has taken over Alexandria and stands guard against the Egyptian people, cheering for a queen who, in *Origins,* does not have their best interests in mind. As Cleopatra basks in her victory, Caesar stands by her side. The camera captures the characters in profile as they smile at their subjects, before Septimius, the high-ranking Order member who killed Pompey, appears to their left (Figure 17). Since Septimius, Caesar, and Cleopatra are all within the same frame, the camera angle shows that Cleopatra has aligned herself with the Romans. Although Apollodorus is also within frame, he is furthest from both the camera and Cleopatra. The composition of the scene, therefore, draws attention to the Order's influence, because Caesar and Septimius stand centrally within the shot while Cleopatra, the new queen of Egypt, stands to the right of the scene. As the camera zooms in to Septimius, Cleopatra's face moves out of frame almost entirely. Although she has just been crowned pharaoh, the camera direction signifies that the Order's infiltration of the Egyptian government is more important than Cleopatra's victory.

Figure 17. The Order Celebrates. Apollodorus looks at Septimius and Caesar with concern as Cleopatra is crowned pharaoh. This scene is a testament to Cleopatra's victory over her brother, but the lingering shot does not show Cleopatra. Caesar and Septimius, both affiliated with the Order, are the lingering tyrants who share in Cleopatra's victory—and rule.

After the celebration, Bayek and Aya are banished from Cleopatra's palace and cut off from their erstwhile ally. Apollodorus rushes to catch up to the pair, but Aya hurls him against a wall, saying "So you stand with Septimius now! And we are banned from the palace?" Aya's voice is tinged with anger, but with the camera behind her, we only see Apollodorus's face with his hands raised in surrender. The camera then pans from right to left, settling between the two figures as Apollodorus responds, "I do not begrudge the venom in your eyes…" With Aya and Apollodorus on both sides of the camera, the player sees an image of disunity among those who were once fighting for the same queen.

As the camera now faces both Bayek and Aya, Bayek yells "We gave her everything! We gave her the damned crown. And she stands next to [Septimius]?" Both Aya and Bayek are in the shot, but Bayek stands centrally within the frame, his body placement highlighting his own rage at Cleopatra and her advisor. Yet the next frame places Aya central within the shot, drawing

attention to the most important line in the scene as she asks, “And where is justice for us? Septimius was supposed to be judged by Rome! Is Caesar protecting the Order?” At the last sentence, the camera shifts to just behind Apollodorus’s shoulder, where we get a full view of Aya’s face as she asks the pivotal question. When Apollodorus answers with, “There are compromises to make a queen of Cleopatra!” the line reveals all.

Knowing her allies’ struggles and the death of their son, Cleopatra has condemned the Order in the past, mourned the death of her people at its hands, and promised Bayek and Aya revenge against those responsible for their loss. Yet Cleopatra has allied herself with Caesar, and by doing so, protects the Order that she initially sought to fight. With Ptolemy XIII dead at this point in the game, Caesar has now become the new leader of the Order, protecting Septimius and the others in a compromise to ascend Cleopatra to the throne. In this political struggle, Caesar is now part of the Order, and as such, Cleopatra is affiliated with the Order as well. As an unnamed character laments in the next scene: “Cleopatra has been poisoned by Rome, and we by her treachery. We will burn with Egypt.”

As the game nears its conclusion, startling events reveal Cleopatra’s disloyalty towards her own people. Septimius kills Apollodorus, and rather than lashing out against her advisor’s killers, Cleopatra continues to work with the Order to maintain her hold upon the throne. According to the resistance, Cleopatra “has abandoned [Egypt] for Rome,” and makes no effort to invest in the well-being of her subjects. Aya and Bayek’s marriage falls apart. Plagued by the tragedy of their lost son and their differing views on political interventions, they part ways. Aya’s story continues on without Bayek as she heads to Rome. Finally killing Septimius, Aya infiltrates the Theater of Pompey and assassinates Caesar in the curia. With Caesar gone, Aya’s next tyrannical person of interest is clear—Cleopatra.

This leads Aya to confront Cleopatra in her villa outside of Rome. The camera does not follow Aya into her villa, but rather focuses on Cleopatra and her son, Caesarion, interacting in the house. The camera does not capture Cleopatra's face as her back is turned while playing with her son. She sits on the lowest step in the center of the room, with all of the lavish décor and fine painting surrounding her. Situated so low after the death of her greatest ally, her position draws attention to her latest defeat—the death of Caesar. Although she still wears a golden crown, she does not seem like a queen. She is a mother, comforting her child in the wake of his father's death. The camera, glimpsing this moment from a distance does not reveal any emotion from Cleopatra. While she engages with her son, the player cannot see facial expressions or distinctive body language to make Cleopatra a sympathetic figure. This detached look is further emphasized by the camera drawing away from the two figures. As Aya walks into the frame on the right, Cleopatra turns away from her son to look at her, and therefore looks away from her own role as a mother. As she glares at Aya, Cleopatra transforms into a tyrant once more.

The camera then cuts to Aya, standing slightly to the left within the frame. She looks towards the right, where Cleopatra sits, and although her eyes are shadowed, her body is tense as she prepares herself to confront her former champion. She steps forward, and the light catches Aya's determined gaze as she stares down the queen. The perspective shifts again to Aya's right shoulder, and we see Cleopatra rise from her step and walk towards Aya. The composition of this scene has Aya on the left, Cleopatra on the right, and Caesarion in the middle, who continues to play as Aya and Cleopatra speak (Figure 18). Although Aya's face is turned away from the camera, her head is not following Cleopatra's movements. Her eyes are fixed on Caesarion.

The meaning behind Caesarion's presence within the composition of this scene complicates Aya's position and underscores Cleopatra's dynastic designs. Aya's fixation on

Figure 18. Aya's Confrontation. Aya and Cleopatra speak while Caesarion plays in the background. The camera captures the rift between Cleopatra and Aya by placing a barrier—Caesarion—between the two figures. Aya's gaze towards Caesarion emphasizes that her mind lingers on the death of her own son in addition to Cleopatra's affiliation with the Order.

Caesarion brings to mind her original mission in *Origins*, which was to kill those responsible for the death of her son. Seeing Caesarion is a reminder of both Aya's son and those who played a hand in his death. Since Caesarion plays between Aya and his mother, his body also physically blocks Cleopatra from assassination. In this way, Caesarion is Cleopatra's tool for protection and a shield against the dangers surrounding her in Egypt and abroad.

Whatever motherly instincts she bore towards her child earlier become obscured when she says to Aya, "Do you know what you've done? Caesarion would have sat on the throne of Rome." With this phrase, Cleopatra has fulfilled the prophecy she spoke of in the war room. To gain power, she formed an alliance with Caesar and bore his son, through whom she now intends to take over Rome. Cleopatra does not mention Egypt. To her, she has moved beyond her kingdom for the true spoil of war she has desired since her alliance with Caesar and the Order.

To do this, Cleopatra uses her own son as both a shield and weapon to unify Egypt and Rome as one kingdom under her control.

Though Caesarion is still between the two figures, Aya finally uses her words against Cleopatra, turning her gaze away from Caesarion to look at the queen. “Listen to the cries on the streets. They call you a dead tyrant’s whore.” At this, the camera, still positioned behind Aya, cuts to a closer shot of Cleopatra’s face as she listens to Aya. With this accusation, Cleopatra’s sexual characterization from her opening scene returns. During her first scene, Cleopatra promises to sleep with anyone who agrees to be executed, and Caesar unknowingly accepts this bargain when he allies himself with the queen. When he is ultimately assassinated by Aya, Cleopatra is faced with a reputation she has encouraged throughout the game.

Aya continues, calling her “a queen of liars and snakes.” For all of this disrespect, Cleopatra’s face shows no reaction, and the truth of who she has become does nothing to cause Cleopatra regret. Only when Aya shouts, “Apollodorus died for you, for Egypt!” does Cleopatra respond, “For Egypt? I *am* Egypt!” The line references another despot, Louis XIV, who famously declared his own power with the phrase “L’etat c’est moi!” which expressed complete political authority in France. By having Cleopatra repeat this similar line, the game emphasizes Cleopatra’s own domineering attitude towards her subjects.

The choreography of the scene highlights Cleopatra’s words. As she says “Egypt” the camera shifts again, showing Aya on the left and Cleopatra at the right. Cleopatra moves to strike Aya, but Aya’s hidden assassin tool blocks Cleopatra’s hand (Figure 19). Violence is something that Cleopatra never expects. Although Cleopatra and the Order regularly use force and manipulation to gain control, this is the first time she has done so unprotected by her allies. Just as Cleopatra has controlled all of Egypt, Aya, who is Egyptian, responds with violence

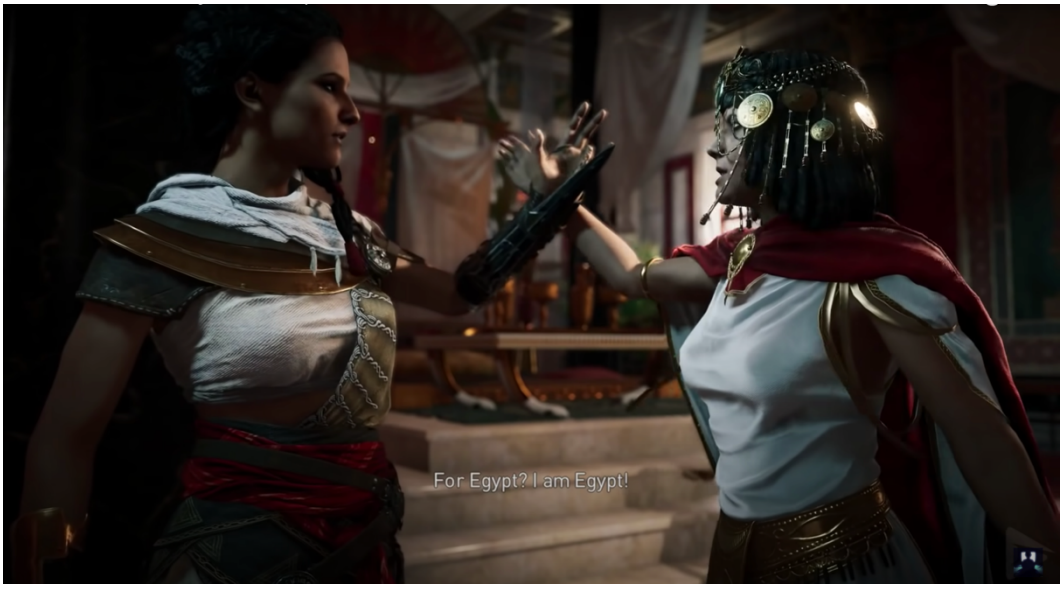

Figure 19. Cleopatra Attacks Aya. The camera draws attention to Aya and Cleopatra on opposite sides of the frame right before Caesarion's reemergence within the scene. Cleopatra's violent actions mirror her destructive behavior throughout the game, as her desire to rule ultimately overshadows the interests of her Egyptian and Greek citizens.

against her. Aya's actions draw attention to her participation in destroying rulers like Cleopatra, and also reveals that Cleopatra's plans are doomed to fail. Egyptians and Romans alike will ultimately turn against her no matter what she does or with whom she allies herself. She is not the goddess she claims that she is, and for all of her finery and self-proclaimed power, she is vulnerable against those who retaliate against her.

This violent outburst between Aya and Cleopatra fails to progress, however, as Caesarion moves between Aya and Cleopatra again. With this second intrusion, Aya decides to leave. Before she turns, however, Aya looks to Caesarion one more time and says "then be the ruler our people deserve, or nothing will save you from my blade across your throat." After Aya says "throat", the camera moves behind Aya's shoulder so that the player sees a final view of Cleopatra's face. Her eyes are wide and her eyebrows raised in surprise as Aya speaks one final time to her former ally: "You are the last of the pharaohs." Aya turns to leave the room, and

Cleopatra is left alone within a shot. As Cleopatra stands to the far right of the frame, Aya's absence creates an imbalance within the composition of the shot. This, therefore, accentuates Cleopatra's loneliness as her former ally abandons her in Rome. With her allies either dead or driven out by her own betrayals, Cleopatra has nothing left except her son. The camera cuts to a last image of Cleopatra moving towards Caesarion, and they embrace within the center of the shot. As the player witnesses Cleopatra's fear while she hugs her son, the camera zooms out, using a wide shot to emphasize Cleopatra and Caesarion's isolation within the large Roman villa (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Cleopatra Embraces Her Son. The camera's perspective highlights Cleopatra's isolation during her final moments in *Assassin's Creed.* She clutches her son, who is a source of protection and legacy for Cleopatra, but Aya's words make Cleopatra's once all-incompassing power seem insignificant.

The manipulation of grammar and angle seen in Plutarch's *Life* and Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* is still being used in this new medium. Through the camera, cutscenes within *Assassin's Creed* use the same techniques of previous representations to draw upon Cleopatra's most damaging characteristics. The camera frames Cleopatra's quest for power as detrimental to everyone who

assisted in her ambition, just as Plutarch's Cleopatra ultimately does in *Life of Antony.* Her characterization, although separated by almost 2,000 years, does not show the growth or complexity needed to understand Cleopatra as a historical figure. The same details that enticed readers in antiquity are still the most prevalent aspects of her character in *Assassin's Creed,* and the new medium to tell Cleopatra's story does not come with any new interpretation of her identity.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explores the characterization of one Cleopatra in three different sources and three different media. In each source, Cleopatra remains unchanging from the ancient to modern interpretations. The media analyzed vary among literature, cinema, and a role-playing game, but the same character of Cleopatra comes forth. She is a sexualized, odalisque figure who loses her kingdom in the selfish quest for power, but certain attributes such as intelligence, ambition, and capability are accentuated and underscored by distinct narrative framing.

Plutarch's *Life of Antony* sets the tone for the other two sources under discussion. Plutarch, like other ancient authors, centers Cleopatra's characterization around her faults, but he also incorporates positive aspects in Cleopatra's depiction that coincide with the other two sources used. Cleopatra negative traits are balanced by Mark Antony's destructive traits, and therefore Plutarch provides a characterization slightly more complex than more pro-Roman portrayals. His *Life of Mark Antony* is appropriate to compare to visual media, as his use of the active and passive Greek verb system is similar to the other visual sources' use of camera angle and body placement. Cleopatra's depiction moves beyond dialogue and narrative in all three representations, as verbal usage provides a comparative device for the characterizations within *Cleopatra* and *Assassin's Creed.* Plutarch also accentuates Cleopatra's exoticism and her sexual corruptive power that later sources emulate. The development between Plutarch's characterization and later portrayals, as this thesis discovers, is almost negligible when acknowledging the similarities.

Plutarch's use of grammar coincides with Mankiewicz's use of camera angle in the 1963 production of *Cleopatra,* but the film does show the most nuance of all three characterizations examined. Mankiewicz amplifies positive attributes found in Plutarch. She is strong if overreaching, and caring to both her kingdom and the political alliances in her life. Other characters, however, fail to see Cleopatra as a capable ruler, and often exploit her for her body and resources. Cleopatra does not necessarily reject these projections, and uses her image to her advantage as she attempts to hold sway over Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Still, Mankiewicz cannot override thousands of years of defamation against Cleopatra. She is still a sexual entity, and her relationships negatively impact her rule and the preservation of Egypt. Through Mankiewicz's manipulation of camera angle as a narratological device, Cleopatra remains a symbol for unbridled ambition and sexual corruption.

Assassin's Creed: Origins is the most recent depiction of the three sources analyzed, yet its characterization of Cleopatra is the most one-dimensional out of the three. The camera angles and body placement accentuate well-established personality traits already seen in Plutarch's *Life* and Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra,* and clearly determines Cleopatra to be an eventual antagonist against the characters of *Origins*. Within the game, Cleopatra bears no awareness to the rumors whispered about her, but engages wholeheartedly in physical pleasures from the very first scene when she is introduced. Cleopatra embraces her ruthlessness and manipulates those around her to gain control, yet Cleopatra's final moments are dependent on the actions of others. As the player follows the story of the assassins, Cleopatra is more of a passive presence who waits for others to make her queen. She orders Bayek and Aya to assassinate her enemies, and becomes entangled within the Order of Ancients through Caesar's influence. All of these attributes, seen in past examples of Cleopatra's representation, are emphasized through the same technical devices from

Life of Antony and *Cleopatra.* This video game provides a new medium for Cleopatra to shine, but the creators do not present the character in a new way, or with new characteristics.

It seems, then, that Cleopatra's personality traits in modern depictions stem from ancient sources such as Plutarch. Though an ancient source, the way that Plutarch frames Cleopatra through grammatic devices does not change as Mankiewicz and *Assassin's Creed* also use angle as a means to characterize. Plutarch establishes Cleopatra's negative behaviors with constructions such as active and passive verb choice, and through camera angle and body placement, modern visual media mirror ancient sentiments. As Cleopatra continues to be a relevant part of media to modern audiences, her characterization has, for the time being, remained stagnant. Cleopatra's curse, then, is the failure to evolve past the methods and personifications that both ancient and modern audiences have created for her.

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