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Revolution, Equaliberty, and the Citizen-Subject in Shakespeare's Roman Plays

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Abstract

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By Alexander Amin

In this thesis, I read “revolution,” “equaliberty,” and “citizenship” in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus*. I am informed by the works of Étienne Balibar, drawing upon “Citizen-Subject,” “The Idea of Revolution” and *Equaliberty* to develop an understanding of the agency of various characters within the texts and their relationship to the State. Shakespeare and Balibar remind us of the violence we can enact on once another, individually and systemically. However, the two share an optimism for what humanity can be when we are at our best. My reading leads me to reflect upon my position within society, and the responsibilities I have to my own community.

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## Reading “Citizenship” in Shakespeare’s Roman Plays

I owe a great deal of my personal development to William Shakespeare. His plays have had a significant impact upon my conceptions of community and human character. It is the complexity of his plots and the richness of his characters that first attracted me. Here was a way to study elements of the human experience I felt far removed from. Shakespeare provoked a unique reaction in me that many other writers had failed to produce. Transcending the boundaries of time and space, his characters came alive before me. I learned of human suffering, the sometimes-ridiculous compulsions of love, the deep pride I felt when witnessing an act of compassion and the incredible frustration I felt in the presence of cruelty. In reading Shakespeare, my previous understanding of the human experience slowly unraveled, and I changed. *Hamlet* opened my eyes to the depth of consciousness. *Macbeth* expanded the boundaries of human ambition. *King Lear* showed me the fragility of authority, and the potential for injustice inherent to systems of oppression. *Richard III* showcased our ability to manipulate and be manipulated,

while also presenting me with new modes of understanding disability. *The Taming of the Shrew* made me question how to read from a more feminist perspective, and comedically revealed the social elements of romantic relationships. *Othello* taught me of human jealousy and the avoidable tragedy it can lead us to, should we succumb to it. Reading these plays began to change the way I interacted with people, and profoundly shaped my sense of self. Shakespeare humanized the world for me.

During my time at Emory, my professors taught me to get so much more out of my readings. A single scene, or even a brief line, could hold seemingly endless interpretations. My

mind was opened to the complexity of Shakespeare. The nuances of his characters allowed for a more real representation of life. People could be more than just heroes or villains. Good people sometimes did bad things. The imperfections of his characters, and their beautiful representation of the human condition, helped me to accept my own shortcomings. It was this thought that initially sparked my interest in writing a thesis. I wanted to study new ways of thinking about Shakespeare. I wanted to continue that process of self-growth. During the Trump presidency I became more exposed to politics, and my interest in law as a source of both justice and oppression was sparked. What did it mean to be a citizen of America? What kind of people were we?

Born and raised in the United States, I had developed the conventional appreciation for my country growing up. We were, of course, the “greatest” country on Earth. That much was not to be disputed – especially not by my immigrant parents. Raised as a first generation American, I was taught how fortunate I was to have been born in this country. There was always a reassurance that being an American entitled me to a security my parents had not been permitted to enjoy in their childhoods. The American government and legal systems protected this security. These were my “rights” as an American citizen. I went through my entire youth perceiving these “rights” to be guaranteed, but never pausing to question how. It was not until I arrived at Emory that I began interrogating the nature of government. The operational aspects were interesting, and certainly very relevant in the conversations I had daily. The Trump presidency had become a constant source of news, and provoked questions about the capacity of our government to uphold its founding values. But I was more interested in the theory of government. I was looking to expand my understanding of human relationships – of community. As in the past, I intended to do this through Shakespeare. What revelations could I glean from his plays that might inform my

understanding of community, and what being a “citizen” of that community meant? To do this, I needed a new way of reading Shakespeare. For that, I turned to Étienne Balibar.

A French philosopher who has published extensively on morality and political theory, Étienne Balibar is Professor Emeritus of Humanities at the University of California. He is also Professor Emeritus of moral and political philosophy at Paris Nanterre University and holds a part-time Anniversary Chair in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University, London. He is a professor of French and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where he teaches in the Fall. His impressive resume of scholarly works includes *The Philosophy of Marx* (1995), *Equaliberty* (2014), and *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology* (2017). I found his exploration of concepts like revolution and citizenship to be fascinating. They, like Shakespeare, had begun to expand my understanding of what being a member of my community signified. The goal was to enrich my knowledge of these concepts and use this understanding to inform a new reading of Shakespeare. Could I read Balibar’s theory of equaliberty in Shakespeare’s plays, and somehow come to a better understanding of both?

The ultimate objective, of course, was to once again expand my own horizons. I wanted to test my ability to grapple with linguistic and political theory and apply those concepts to the Shakespearean texts responsible for so much of my previous growth. This thesis is my attempt to accomplish those objectives. I look to read Balibar’s concepts of citizenship, equaliberty, and revolution in the characters and events described in Shakespeare’s Roman plays, and thereby reach a greater understanding of my relationship to my own community. As I read through the plays of *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus*, I found it quite possible to relate the experiences and events surrounding Shakespeare’s characters to the agency and



transformative properties of revolution described by Balibar. The Renaissance plays and modern scholarly works share an optimism for a more perfect system of human interaction and remind us of our individual responsibilities in bringing about that future.

In this introductory section, I explain the concepts of equaliberty, citizenship, and revolution as I understand them. Each of these terms relates to one another in formulating a broader theory of human community. In 2014, Balibar published a collection of essays, *Equaliberty: Political Essays*, which deal with better understanding citizenship. He proposes the term equaliberty – a unity between equality and liberty – as both contradictory and subject to various tensions. While the terms (equality and liberty) are bound together to reflect an ideal, the two operate on distinctive plains. Freedom relates to our judicial processes, institutionalized systems of regulation that restrict human behavior (simultaneously creating and destroying various freedoms). Equality is social – and is reflected in the economic activity of a society that thereby assigns various agencies to its constitutive members. The two operate together in thinking on human rights (Balibar argues that the natural, original state of being human is both free and equal). However, Balibar finds fault with how we, as communities and societies, look to realize and maintain those rights. Equality is mediated through the intervention of a State, whereas liberty is restricted by this same intervention. Balibar notes that there is a constant negotiation between these two concepts, equality and liberty. The paradoxically juxtaposed connection between liberty and equality, existing in constant tension and negotiation in order to restore the natural rights of the individual-citizen, is what Balibar terms “equaliberty.” This term is directly related to an understanding of citizenship, which likewise operates with the intention of negotiating between humanity’s natural liberty and equality.

In the essay “Citizen Subject: Response to Jean-Luc Nancy’s Question ‘Who Comes After the Subject?’” Balibar examines the philosophical history behind our modern understanding of citizenship. His analysis posits the citizen as an ideal, something inherently identified with visions of utopia. Balibar presents liberty as an intrinsic and universal state, “...to will freely, in the sense of necessary freedom, enlightened by true knowledge, is to coincide with the act by which God conserves me in a relative perfection” (21). Yet, in thinking back to equaliberty, freedom paradoxically creates a mechanism for subjection. Freedom thus exists as “the freedom of the *subject*, of the subjected being, that is, as a contradiction in terms” (22). If we understand the origin of humanity to be humanity itself, not subjectivity nor subjecthood, we can recognize that subjecthood is a perversion of this original state. Subjecthood signifies a death of the original (human being). Balibar, in rethinking subjecthood in relation to the natural state of humanity, answers Jean-Luc Nancy’s question “*After the subject comes the citizen*. The citizen (defined by his rights and duties) is that “nonsubject” who comes after the subject, and whose constitution and recognition put an end (in principle) to the subjection of the subject” (24). The difference between citizens and subjects, according to Balibar, is that while both exist within a system (of socialized solidarity), citizens recognize their natural status as one of liberty and equality, and demand this be recognized by other members of their community

The citizen as defined by equality, absolutely active and absolutely passive... suspended between individuality and collectivity, between public and private: Is he the constitutive element of a *State*? Without a doubt, the answer is yes, but precisely insofar as the State is not, or not yet, a society. He is... a *utopic* figure, which is not to say an unreal or millenarist figure projected into the future, but the elementary term of an “abstract State” (“Citizen Subject” 38).

Subjects, alternatively, fail to achieve this same recognition. This distinction between citizens and subjects is of particular interest to me. Balibar recognizes the inherent social contracts which bind us together. Existing in this collaborative space, the country of my birth, the United States of America, I rely upon our laws to maintain my status as a citizen; I rely upon the people of the United States to respect and adhere to those laws. This defines a substantial component of my political agency. Balibar's citizens are utopic because they, like me, subject themselves to the law in order to maintain their liberty and equality. To be a citizen is to be subject still (to law). Balibar looks to Rousseau in order to reflect upon the law's role as a system for maintaining citizenship. Law allows for the manifestation of a collective will that promotes a more democratic, free, and equal system of political socialization (equaliberty). In this sense, Balibar posits the citizen as an ideal – identified with visions of utopia – and recognizes its inherent instability. The citizen exists with the law. As Balibar notes, citizenship is neither above nor below the law, but equal to it. This raises some important questions pertaining to a theory of citizenship. I was curious to see how Balibar's understanding of the citizen and the subject held up in the absence of law. The State could either be displaced or somehow fail in its ability to negotiate equaliberty. My mind immediately went to revolution.

Balibar has explored the idea of revolution before. He recognizes that revolutions tend to invert upon themselves and reinstitute systems of oppression ("The Idea of Revolution"). While many of them do in fact start with a movement rooted in the desire for greater liberty and equality, all revolutions inevitably stray from their founding principles towards the reestablishment of the State. Some revolutions in the past have transitioned societies from monarchies towards far more democratic governments. Yet others have resulted in dictatorships and oppressive regimes that denied the freedom and equality of many people residing within

their boundaries (denied citizenship). At best, society moves towards equaliberty – at worst, towards tyranny or anarchy. I find revolutionary spaces intriguing, particularly in Shakespeare, because their transitional environment demonstrates a negotiation between equality and liberty. This asks us to reexamine our understanding of citizenship.

Historical examples of revolution show that they eventually result in the formation of a new State. Some members of the community are then marked as citizens and others as subjects. The State was a necessary model of social unification in our collective history. It allowed us to come together and achieve otherwise unimaginable advances. But the State is not perfect. In fact, it is at the root of many of the paradoxes noted by Balibar. While creating citizens, the State simultaneously creates subjects. Attempts by the State to negotiate greater equality often infringe upon freedom. We can trace our understanding of the citizen back to a desire to institutionally realize and protect the natural state of humanity as free and equal. Allowing people to participate in their political system and have equal say in the trajectory of the community represents a better negotiation between equality and liberty. Throughout human history, societies continually transition. Sometimes, certain communities develop of more democratic and equal form of government, and better negotiate equaliberty. Sometimes, civilizations regress to a more totalitarian, unequal, and oppressive forms of government. Balibar's understanding of equaliberty, citizenship, and revolution points to a continuous cycle of negotiation, revolution and constitution. The process of negotiating between liberty and equality is imperfect. The constant tension between the two natural states of humanity directly relates to my analysis of revolution and citizenship in Shakespeare.

I look to Shakespeare's Roman plays to better understand this process of negotiation, and the relationship between citizens, subjects and the State during moments of revolution. In doing

so, I hope to better appreciate my position within my own community, and my responsibilities to that community. In this thesis, I analyze Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Each play relates to a moment of revolution within Ancient Rome.

*Julius Caesar* explores the rise and fall of its titular character and provides a vital starting point for developing ideas on the citizen-subject dichotomy. Balibar notes that the citizen is bound to the idea of the State, as the law is essential in maintaining natural equality and liberty. The distinction between citizens and the subjects is determined by the social regulations that recognize the citizen's natural humanity but deny the subject's. *Julius Caesar* reveals the potential of revolution to complicate notions of citizen and subject, as the State can no longer regulate their difference under the law. Characters like Calphurnia display agency that extends beyond the boundaries of their social stations, and thereby demonstrate the manifestation of a more comprehensive societal will during revolution. This in turn points to a continued negotiation between equality and liberty. The sense of fear expressed by the social elite opposing Caesar reflects an observable recognition that the dichotomy distinguishing citizens from subjects risks collapse during revolution. The commoners experience such an expansion of agency that they become capable of voicing their own will. This directly parallels Balibar's understanding of citizens as individuals within a State who demand others recognize their natural status as free and equal. In *Julius Caesar*, as in the other Roman plays examined within this thesis, the characters are not directly submissive to a formal law as we would understand today. Rather, they follow recognizable social codes which might be read as law. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* asks us to consider the role of revolution in the negotiation of Balibar's equaliberty. It must be recognized that historical examples of revolution and the attempted systemization of revolutionary theories (concepts of social regulation imagined as an alternative to the previous

State) have proven unsustainable and eventually result in an inversion. The initial displacement of class fades to reveal a new form of social hierarchy. There is always a return to the State, as the conceived alternative is anarchy.

*Antony and Cleopatra* represents a collapse of the State and the emergence of a revolutionary moment. The play, like *Julius Caesar*, demonstrates that revolutions contain a potential for a different negotiation between equality and liberty, even in the absence of law. As the Second Triumvirate consolidates power over the Roman Republic, its members begin to turn their attention towards one another. This results in the State fragmenting, thereby confirming the revolutionary moment. Characters like Cleopatra display a greater agency formerly denied them by the State. This supports a reading of revolutions as continuing the negotiation of equaliberty within the community, even in the absence of the State. However, this negotiation eventually proves unsustainable. Balibar's point that revolutions end in their own inversion ("The Idea of Revolution") is confirmed in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The Egyptian queen displays an obvious expansion in her personal agency, eventually coming to hold such a profound influence over Antony that he cannot conceive of life without her. Nevertheless, the two lovers are eventually defeated by Rome. The conclusion of the play, in which Octavius Caesar emerges victorious and consolidates the Roman Empire under his control, signals a return to the State. This shows that both revolutions and the State negotiate between equality and liberty. This prompts further consideration on how to best sustain equaliberty.

*Titus Andronicus* relies on bodily metaphor and productive violence to reflect a failure of the State to achieve equaliberty that inevitably leads to revolution. The productive violence hinted at in the text reminds us of our individual responsibility in the negotiation between equality and liberty. However, productive violence, while briefly glimpsed, fails to sustain

momentum throughout the play. As in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the revolutionary moment is proven unsustainable. The revenge arc of the play reminds us that some revolutions contain glimpses of a more equal and universal citizenship. The absence of the State may on occasion have its advantages in the negotiation between liberty and equality, but our current development as a globalizing species forces us to reply upon systems of law and a concept of the citizen in order to best achieve equaliberty. The alternative, as shown in *Titus Andronicus*, is an endless cycle of violence. This does not dissuade us from appreciating the potential of revolutions to aid in the negotiation between equality and liberty. Rather, it reminds us that Balibar's equaliberty is a continuous process. The play ultimately asks us to consider our own involvement in achieving a more equitable society.

Shakespeare's plays reveal the tensions inherent to citizenship and equaliberty. In the absence of a formalized law and State, such as during revolution, we can still observe a process of negotiating between equality and liberty. The eventual inversions of the revolutionary moments in *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus* are consistent with an understanding of a continuous cycle of revolution and reconstitution taking place across human societies. Humanity, existing in a state of perpetual competition, does not find equaliberty in anarchy. Shakespeare and Balibar call for us to imagine a greater community that adequately upholds the natural equality and liberty innate to all humans. In applying Balibar's analysis of revolution, citizenship, and equaliberty to Shakespeare, I found the texts to share an optimism for a more utopic form of human interaction. There are moments in *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus* where we can glimpse a version of the play that is not realized – a potential for something better. Balibar calls for us to apply this same imaginative element to

our understanding of how humans should socially arrange themselves. As I had hoped, reading Shakespeare improved my understanding of what it means to be a citizen of my own community.



ANTONY.                   He hath left them you,  
And to your heirs forever: common pleasures  
To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.  
Here was Caesar! When comes such another?

– *Julius Caesar* 3.2.247-250

**Citizenship, n.**

1. The position or status of being a citizen.
2. Engagement in the duties and responsibilities of a member of society. Frequently with modifying word.  
(“citizenship”, *The Oxford English Dictionary*)

**Citizen, n.**

1. An inhabitant of a city or town; *esp.* one possessing civic rights and privileges, a burgess or freeman of a city.
2. A legally recognized **subject** or national of a state, commonwealth, or other polity, either native or naturalized, having certain rights, privileges, or duties. (“citizen”, *The Oxford English Dictionary*)

*Julius Caesar*

This chapter looks to apply Balibar's understanding of equaliberty, citizenship, and revolution to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. In analyzing the shifting political landscape that accompanies a transformation of the State during revolution, I contrast the expanded agency of characters like Julius Caesar, Calphurnia, and the commoners with the diminished political capacity of the Roman elite. I begin with a brief analysis of the Roman history Shakespeare draws upon as the setting for his play, before clarifying my reading of *Julius Caesar* as an English play set within the final days of the Roman Republic. In looking at certain key scenes in the play, I track the changing agencies of various characters to inform a reading of citizenship and equaliberty as they operate within the revolutionary space. The plot of *Julius Caesar* reflects a failure to negotiate between equality and liberty and supports Balibar's understanding of the two existing in a juxtaposed connection.

The play focuses on the events surrounding the Ides of March, the 74<sup>th</sup> day in the Roman calendar that served as a traditional period for settling debts. Julius Caesar was famously assassinated on this day. Shakespeare's play, through the language of its various characters, examines the motivation behind Caesar's assassination and the subsequent power vacuum created upon his death. At the opening of *Julius Caesar*, the Roman Republic has reached an unprecedented level of power due to its strong military ideals. In the textual introduction to the play in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt notes "By 44 B.C.E., an astonishing sequence of conquests had made Rome, once an unremarkable Italian town, the center of a vast empire that stretched from North Africa to Britain, from Babylon to Spain" (1685). Central to the identity of Rome, even during this great period of expansion, was its history as a republic. As Greenblatt goes on to mention, "For hundreds of years, Rome had been governed not by a king or a dictator, but by elected officers, and its republican traditions had been a source of fierce

civic pride” (1685). The Rome of Julius Caesar was the legacy of this tradition. To be a citizen of Rome, and certainly to be a member of the elite faction of society within Rome, was to have a sense of agency derived from this pro-republican culture. Catherine Steel comments on this history in *Roman Citizenship between Law and Practice*, which examines the development of various Roman communities and their participation in the greater republic tradition

Inclusivity as an aspect of community membership was embedded in the foundational stories of Rome as a political entity even before the establishment of the Republic, with the very existence of the city depending upon the incomers whom Romulus, the first king of Rome, welcomed in his asylum. This society was sustained because of the willingness of the first generation of Roman men to marry foreigners, as recorded in the story of the rape of the Sabine women (8).

Yet as Rome’s military, fueled by a series of successful expansionist conquests, grew increasingly powerful, so too did its generals. Most notable, as Stephen Greenblatt explains, was “the charismatic and enterprising Julius Caesar, who had subdued much of northwest Europe even while consolidating his popularity among the poorer classes at home, seemed particularly dangerous” (1685). It is here that the play begins. Caesar expanded the Empire into Gaul, a region of modern France once inhabited by Celtic tribes. By sending riches back to Rome and bolstering the reputation of the Republic, he secured the love of the common people. Now he is at the height of his political power within Rome. Despite the historical backdrop over which the play is set, it is crucial that we not confuse *Julius Caesar* with a play derived from the literary and performative traditions of Ancient Rome.

Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is an English play set within Ancient Rome, and while it is beyond the scope of this thesis to read outside of the text (that is, to read into the author’s possible intentions and motivations), an English play written from within a monarchical system that chooses an ancient republic as its subject offers some perspective as to the nature and

function of citizenship within the text. Indeed, parallels may be drawn between the consolidation of power (the transition from republic to empire) within the play and the strengthening of absolute monarchies throughout Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. To Shakespeare (who would have been familiar with both a general Roman history and the greater political tensions within Europe), the distinction between subject and citizen, and the scope of agency both terms may encompass, would have been pressingly relevant. I look to several scenes within the play in order to apply Balibar's understanding of this dichotomy to my own reading, thereby analyzing equaliberty and revolution within *Julius Caesar*.

The play opens with the tribunes Flavius and Murellus confronting a group of celebrating commoners in the streets of Rome. Tribunes were a class of Roman elite that may be equated with a modern military officer. Political and military power were often interconnected in Ancient Roman society. The term "tribune" is somewhat vague, just as "officer" would be a vague way to address someone of military rank today. The title could refer to several positions, such as *tribuni plebis*, *tribuni aerarii*, *tribuni militum*, etc. These ranks vary in terms of responsibility (the role might pertain to administration, economy, military, etc.) and eligibility. However, the title of "tribune" distinctly marks Flavius and Murellus as members of the Roman elite. The dialogue of the first scene further confirms this reading. Flavius is the first to address the commoners

Hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home!  
 Is this holiday? What, know you not,  
 Being mechanical, you ought not walk  
 Upon a laboring day without the sign  
 Of your profession? – Speak, what trade art thou? (1.1.1-5).

The tribune demands an explanation for why the commoners (the stage notes specify at least one carpenter and one cobbler) are celebrating in the streets and not seeing to their professional

trades. The language Flavius employs strongly relates to Balibar's analysis of the distinction between subject and citizen. Flavius refers to the commoners as "idle", as being "mechanical" and not "knowing" their role. Balibar notes that "the very being of the subject is obedience... the subject is he who has no need of *knowing*, much less *understanding*, why what is prescribed to him is in the interest of his own happiness" ("Citizen Subject" 26). The discourse within the first scene mirrors Balibar's understanding of subjecthood. The reference to the commoners "being mechanical" is of particular interest. Within the context of the text, *mechanical* may be understood to signify "belonging to or characteristic of people engaged in manual work, esp. regarded as a class, artisanal; vulgar, coarse" ("mechanical", def. 3, *The Oxford English Dictionary*). Yet mechanical may also refer to machines – to being machine-like in nature ("mechanical", def. 5, *The Oxford English Dictionary*). More particularly, mechanical describes something without autonomy. To be *mechanical* is to lack individual agency; it is to be obedient to one's design and function. To Flavius, the commoners are not citizens. Recall that Balibar distinguishes between citizens and subjects within a State on the grounds that citizens demand recognition of their natural freedom and equality. It will soon be apparent that Flavius's characterization of the commoners is not as adequate as he imagines.

The commoners display an agency that parallels Balibar's model of citizenship. Flavius confronts the men of Rome, questioning their motives for being out celebrating instead of tending to their professions. The implication here is self-evident; neglecting the status-quo of a "laboring day" is a rejection of the social and political norm. The cobbler replies "But indeed sir, we make holiday to see Caesar / and to rejoice in his triumph" (1.1.29-30). This reply deeply disturbs the tribunes, who are quick to reproach:

MURELLUS.            You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!  
 O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,  
 Knew you not Pompey?...

...

FLAVIUS.            Go, go, good countrymen, and for this fault  
 Assemble all the poor men of your sort,  
 Draw them to Tiber banks, and weep your tears  
 Into the channel, till the lowest stream  
 Do kiss the most exalted shores of all (1.1.34-59)

The men of Rome, in rejoicing over Caesar, have insulted the legacy of Pompey the Great, one of the members of the First Triumvirate who was defeated by Caesar in a civil war. The outrage of the tribunes echoes a greater sense of political unease among the elite members of Roman society that shapes the early scenes of the play; Caesar, now unchallenged and having secured the love of the common people, is a threat to the republican tradition of Rome. The tribunes assert that in celebrating Caesar, the commoners have insulted the legacy of Pompey. However, the language they employ suggests their concerns are far more personal in nature. The commoners are “blocks;” they are “stones;” they are “worse than senseless things.” Once again, the language Flavius employs is meant to signify a lack of agency. Yet the commoners do not conform to this status. They parade in the streets, rejecting the social norms that demand they labor in the trades of their professions. Their celebration of Caesar is a refusal to accept Flavius’s characterization of their “being mechanical,” and “poor men.” Indeed, it is a rejection of the sociopolitical constraints that subject them. Balibar notes “*After the subject comes the citizen.* The citizen (defined by his rights and duties) is that “nonsubject” who comes after the subject, and whose constitution and recognition put an end (in principle) to the subjection of the subject” (“Citizen Subject” 24). While it would be improper to argue that the commoners have reached the status of citizens within this scene, we can immediately recognize a failure by the State to adequately negotiate between equality and liberty. The tribunes can sense the erosion of this

dichotomy, and it is this realization that sparks their outrage at the celebrating men of Rome. The tribunes are not alone in their recognition of an emerging revolutionary moment. The commoners, by celebrating in the streets of Rome, demonstrate that they are also aware of social norms (which we can equate to a less formalized version of law) beginning to break down. The fear of a sociopolitical revolution Caesar threatens to bring about is echoed by other members of the Roman elite.

Key figures within the faction of the political elite standing in opposition to Caesar's increasingly centralized control of the Roman political systems, such as Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius, are quick to recognize the danger posed to their social rank and agency. The two speak at length of Caesar's growing influence over the people of Rome, and the corrupting power it lends him. Brutus is the first to voice this anxiety, admitting "I do fear the people / choose Caesar for their king" (1.2.78-79). Of the many characters within the play, the two tribunes are arguably among those most closely resembling Balibar's citizen. As members of the ruling body of government within the Republic, Brutus and Cassius's political agency has been certain since birth and is guaranteed so long as the system endures, as Cassius notes in the passage below

I was born free as Caesar, so were you;  
 ...  
 I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,  
 Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder  
 The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber  
 Did I the tired Caesar; and this man  
 Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
 A wretched creature and must bend his body  
 If Caesar carelessly but nod on him  
 ...  
 The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
 But in ourselves, that we are underlings (1.2.97-141).

Cassius and Brutus are citizens of Rome. Just as Caesar, they were “born free,” signifying that they are heirs to a lineage of political agency and wealth. We can draw a parallel here between Brutus and Cassius’s recognition of their natural status and Balibar’s understanding of the individual as being endowed with a natural equality and freedom. The two noblemen consider themselves members of the same elite caste as Caesar and attempt to humanize him in their conversation. Cassius recounts to Brutus a story of his youth, in which Caesar challenged him to a swimming contest in the Tiber (a river in Rome). Cassius was forced to come to Caesar’s rescue, which Cassius interprets as evidence against the justifiability of Caesar’s rise to power. Brutus and Cassius are conservatives; deeply invested in the long history of Rome as a republic, they derive a sense of civic duty and personal agency from their position within the government and view themselves as the guardians of the ancient Roman ideals now under threat. Caesar, in breaking away from republican tradition, now jeopardizes the citizenship of his peers. Balibar notes that “the citizen is a man in enjoyment of all his “natural” rights, completely realizing his individual humanity, a free man simply because he is equal to every other man” (“Citizen Subject” 30). Cassius’s language serves to highlight two points: (1) Cassius, both in birth and action, should be Caesar’s equal as a citizen of Rome, and (2) Caesar has now “become a god,” leaving Cassius a “wretched creature” who must “bend his body.” As Cassius and Brutus are no longer equal (to Caesar) and free, their status as citizens has come under attack. This in turn points to a failure by the State to adequately negotiate between the freedom and equality of its members and signals a call for revolution in the process of establishing equaliberty.

It must be noted that while Cassius and Brutus recognize the danger posed to their citizenship, it would be incorrect to read them as subjects within *Julius Caesar*. The Roman elite, despite the encroaching presence of Caesar, still retain a considerable level of autonomy and



influence. As Cassius notes, “the fault... is not in our stars, but in ourselves” (1.2. 141). Cassius and Brutus recognize that the erosion of the citizen-subject dichotomy cannot be blamed solely on Caesar. To admit as much would be to validate Caesar’s separation from them, thereby recognizing the failure of their State to establish equaliberty. If their desire is to ultimately return to the old ways of the Roman Republic, they cannot readily admit its fragility. Cassius goes to great lengths to humanize Caesar in his conversation with Brutus precisely to undermine the thought of Caesar as being a “god” in anything other than name. It is the people’s love for Caesar that propels him to such heights, not anything inherently great about the man as an individual. To conceive of Caesar as different or better would be to undermine the equality of Rome’s citizens. Therefore, Brutus and Cassius intentionally humanize Caesar in their conversation in order to undermine the notion that he possesses some divine right to rule. Shakespeare would have been familiar with the concept of divine right, a political (and religious) doctrine which legitimized absolute monarchies in Europe. The fear of an absolute ruler appointed on the basis of some perceived rightfulness is of particular interest, as it both complicates the citizen-subject dichotomy and connects the competing political ideologies of *Julius Caesar* to the recent past of Shakespeare’s own period (I am referencing Henry VIII here). While Brutus and Cassius are hesitant to legitimize Caesar in their critique of his increasingly consolidated power, they nevertheless recognize him to be the catalyst for the snowballing instability of the citizen-subject dichotomy. The two are informed by Casca that “Murellus and Flavius, for pulling scarves off Caesar’s images, are put to silence” (1.2.278-279). As used herein, “put to silence” signifies that Murellus and Flavius have been stripped of their rank. It is readily apparent that the citizen-subject dichotomy, by which the agency of individuals within the play is determined, has moved away from hereditary republican norms. Caesar, in consolidating power, threatens to bring about

even greater change. As Brutus notes, if Rome and its republican traditions are to endure, “It must be by [Caesar’s] death” (2.1.10). Two distinct factions within Rome are now readily observable to the reader. There are those who celebrate Caesar, and those who oppose his rise to power. Both sides recognize a failure by the State to negotiate between the equality and freedom of its members. The commoners, in rejecting the social boundaries of their station, demonstrate a failure of the political system to maintain their natural liberty. The elite of Rome, on the other hand, perceive Caesar’s ascension as evidence that their natural equality as citizens has come under attack. This transforming agency, created by a continued effort to better negotiate equaliberty, is readable in the character of Calphurnia.

As a woman, Calphurnia is limited in her capacity to play an active role in the Roman government. Unlike a man of her same sociopolitical station, she cannot actively vote on policy, nor have her voice heard in the Senate. However, her expanded agency within *Julius Caesar* points to a continued negotiation between equality and liberty, even as the State fails to uphold the law. In the second act of the play, Calphurnia dreams of omens predicting Caesar’s doom if he ventures to the Senate House. She confronts her husband, demanding that he heed her warnings and remain at home

What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?  
 You shall not stir out of your house today.  
 ...  
 Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,  
 Yet now they fright me.  
 ...  
 We’ll send Mark Antony to the Senate House,  
 And he shall say you are not well today.  
 Let me upon my knees prevail in this (2.2.8-55).

There is a lot to unpack here. Historically, it is obvious that the concept of citizenship has often been interpreted in a gendered sense. The same could be said of Roman citizenship. Men held a

unique capacity to participate in the political structure of Rome. In reading law in Shakespeare's Roman plays, I look to both the political structures that organize and determine legal agency, and to the social interactions which define a system of appropriate conduct. Calphurnia is limited in her political participation as defined by the legal systems of Rome but retains a degree of influence that stems from an alternative structure of power: the household, existing within the larger State. Calphurnia is unique in *Julius Caesar* in her ability to change the course of her husband's actions. No other character, regardless of their political agency, is as successful at influencing Caesar. Although she comes to Caesar "upon [her] knees," Calphurnia ultimately bends her husband to her own will. He accepts her pleas that Caesar remain home and that he send Mark Antony to the Senate instead. Caesar concedes

Mark Antony shall say I am not well,  
And for thy humor I will stay home (2.2.55-56).

The relationship between Calphurnia and Caesar asks us to recall Balibar's equaliberty and apply its negotiation of liberty and equality to Shakespeare's examination of the household. Caesar's marriage is particularly suited to this task, as Caesar can be equated with the political structures of the State. The nearly absolute power which distinguishes him from other members of the Roman elite points to a shifting agency that is still consistent with equaliberty. Calphurnia is able to sway the mind of her husband because of the power she derives from the household, as opposed to the Roman political system. To Caesar, these powers are synonymous. Calphurnia finds greater equality and freedom in her marriage than via the institutions of the State. In referencing Calphurnia's marriage, it is the social aspect of her relationship to Caesar that should be emphasized. It is not the institution of marriage sanctioned by the State that she draws upon to dissuade her husband. Rather, it is their social relationship, which exists apart from them systems

of marriage artificially created by the State. Therefore, the State is still culpable for denying Calphurnia agency at the political level. Other characters, such as the commoners and the Roman elite, find themselves also criticizing the State's ability to negotiate equaliberty. The fragility of the concept of citizenship, inherently connected to the negotiation of liberty and equality, is shown in this failure. Characters now operate outside the boundaries of their social station, or rely upon alternative institutions of agency, such as marriage, to better achieve equaliberty. However, this is ultimately unsustainable and signals revolution. Revolution is an integral component of equaliberty. When the State fails to adequately negotiate between the equality and liberty, members of the community begin to operate outside of sociopolitical boundaries to reclaim their citizenship. We can observe this process in the alternative systems relied upon by various characters within *Julius Caesar*.

As has been established above, Caesar continues to procure a singular authority over the Roman government throughout the first half of the play. This nearly absolute power allows him to operate outside of and unrestrained by the whims of other characters within the text. When the Senators of Rome attempt to convince Caesar to release Publius Cimber from his banishment, Caesar denies them, stating that his mind cannot be changed, for he is "constant as the Northern Star" (3.1.61). Of all the characters in the text who attempt to reason with Caesar and sway him to their view, none of the men succeed. It is precisely this stubbornness and unwillingness to conform, which the Senators come to regard as evidence of tyranny, that ultimately leads to Caesar's assassination. Calphurnia stands alone in her ability to sway the mind of her husband. This complicates an understanding of women as subjects within the text. In "Citizen Subject," Balibar equates the subject ("*subjectus*") with obedience

It would be impossible to enclose the “*subjectus*” in a single definition, for it is a matter of a juridical figure whose evolution is spread out over seventeen countries, from Roman jurisprudence to absolute monarchy. It has often been demonstrated how, in the political history of Western Europe, the time of *subjects* coincides with that of *absolutism*.

Absolutism in effect seems to give a complete and coherent form to a power that is founded only upon itself, and that is founded as being without limits (thus uncontrollable and irresistible by definition). Such a power truly makes men into subjects, and nothing but subjects, for the very being of the subject is obedience (26).

If the subject *is* obedience, Calphurnia is something else. Her ability to influence Caesar is proof of a personal agency that rejects the brand of subject. Like the commoners and Roman elite, Calphurnia is actively involved in the negotiation between liberty and equality. While Caesar initially respects the desires of his wife, he ultimately dismisses her omens and pursues his own course of action. As Caesar is equated with the State, this signals a failure of the political (and household) structures in Rome to adequately negotiate equaliberty. Equaliberty is a continuous process of revolution and reformation. Citizens, demanding their natural status as free and equal be recognized by the State, come to interpret a deficiency in the State’s ability to negotiate between equality and liberty, and seek to establish an alternative system.

Much of first half of the play centers on Brutus, and his growing recognition that Caesar has become a tyrant. To justify the assassination of his adopted-father, Brutus must first convince himself that his cause is righteous. The Roman aristocracy comes to recognize that their freedom and equality has come under attack with the ascension of Caesar. To Brutus, Cassius, and the other members of the Roman elite, Caesar’s rise to power is perceived to be an affront on the political agency of the aristocracy. It should be noted that this is not a titled aristocracy, as one might observe in medieval or early modern Europe. Rather, the Roman aristocracy is composed of an elite group of men within the greater body of citizens of the Republic. The members of this group rely on the delicate balance of powers within Rome to maintain their citizenship, which resembles Balibar’s understanding of citizenship and is distinct from a broader Roman

citizenship. The Roman aristocrats are closely aligned to Balibar's understanding of citizenship because their status is one of liberty and equality within the State. Previously, these aristocrats had an ability to actively participate in their government. As Caesar consolidates power, this agency is transformed into a formality, as evinced in the senators' failed attempts to convince Caesar to release Publius Cimber from his banishment. Caesar, now a dictator of Rome, undermines equaliberty. So great is this threat that Caesar's childhood friends, peers, and even his adopted son Brutus swiftly attempt to remove him from power.

On the Ides of March, this rebellious group of the Roman elite stage a coup and assassinate Caesar on the floors of the Senate House. Seeing that even Brutus has come to betray him, Caesar dies uttering the words "*Et tu, Brutè?* – Then fall, Caesar" (3.1.78). The senators and patricians believe that they have done a service to the republican traditions of Rome, and, in slaying Caesar, have prevented the probable collapse of the social order. As Caesar falls, Casca cries out "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" (3.1.79). One of the central conundrums of the play is how to read the title character of Caesar. Is he, as the Roman elite claim, a tyrant who threatens to undermine the republican traditions of his country, degrading all beneath him to the status of subject? Or is he perhaps something else? Lauren Leigh Rollins clarifies this question in "Republicans' Behaving Badly: Anachronism, Monarchy, and the English Imperial Model in 'Julius Caesar' and 'Antony and Cleopatra,'" a scholarly article that supports a reading of *Julius Caesar* as a distinctly English play set within the Roman Republic

To this end, the most central question for audiences and readers of *Julius Caesar* is the justifiability of Caesar's assassination. And central to such a determination are detailed evaluations of the characters of his accusers and of Caesar himself. Particularly with the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to read Caesar without viewing his death as a tragedy, and certainly Shakespeare's choice to title the play as such suggests a certain value judgment with regard to the fate of his titular character (167).

In applying Balibar's explanation of equaliberty, citizenship, and revolution to Caesar's character within the text, I argue that Caesar exposes (rather than creates) a broader failure to negotiate between equality and liberty. While the Roman elite are quick to blame the shortcomings of the political system and social matrix on Caesar, his death fails to bring about the restoration Brutus and Cassius had hoped for. Rather, if we understand revolution to be an integral component in the greater process of equaliberty, we can read Caesar's death as signaling the transition from constitution to rebellion. Following his death, the city of Rome is plunged into chaos, with rival factions of nobility vying for control of Caesar's shattering country. The social revolution begun by Caesar climaxes with the plebians demanding "We will be satisfied! Let us be satisfied!" (3.2.1). In voicing their will and forcing their interests upon the political elite, the plebians reject a designation as subject" under the ruling bodies of the Roman government. Citizens, according to Balibar, actively demand that their natural status as free and equal be recognized and maintained by the State. Subjects, alternatively, are equated with obedience

Obedience is the principle, identical to itself along the whole length of the hierarchical chain, and attached in the last instance to its transcendental origin, which makes those who obey into the members of a single body. Obedience institutes the command of higher over lower but it fundamentally comes from below: as *subditi*, the subjects *will* their own obedience. And if they will it, it is because it is inscribed in an economy of creation (their creation) and salvation (their salvation, that of each taken individually and of all take collectively) ("Citizen Subject" 27).

Balibar reminds us that subjecthood is, in part, a mental framework (and, more obviously, a human construct). In demanding that their "will be satisfied," the commoners parallel Balibar's understanding of citizenship. In the revolutionary moment created in the wake of Caesar's death, the commoners attempt to establish their own citizenship by demanding their natural status as free and equal be realized.

The Roman elite are forced to recognize this newfound agency, directly contrasting the earlier interactions between the commoners and the tribunes Flavius and Murellus. Mark Antony, Caesar's trusted general and personal friend, is swift to recognizing that the true power in Rome rests with the will of the plebians. Antony relies upon his rhetorical ability to quickly sway the masses to his side

To every Roman citizen he gives,  
 To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.  
 ...  
 Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,  
 His private arbors, and new planted orchards,  
 On this side Tiber. He hath left them you,  
 And to your heirs forever: common pleasures  
 To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.  
 Here was Caesar! When comes such another? (3.2.239-250).

In declaring Caesar's legacy as interwoven with the good of the common people, Antony martyrizs Caesar as a ruler who stood apart from his peers within the political elite. Antony's speech enrages the plebians, who riot in the streets of Rome. Whereas the commoners once bowed to the tribunes Flavius and Murellus, here they force their will upon the Roman elite. This distinction points to the collapse of the subject-citizen dichotomy within *Julius Caesar*. Given a proper catalyst, the structures of citizen and subject, already shown to be inherently unstable, are broken even further. This is the process of equaliberty, in which the State is constantly remade to better negotiate between the equality and liberty of its various members.

Rivaling factions of the nobility must address the populace directly; their noble titles and military honors are practically worthless in the face of revolutionary anarchy. In the end, it is the will of the people that shapes the history of Rome as much as any individual character. In the aftermath of Caesar's assassination, a secund triumvirate of Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus is



formed. With the people of Rome supporting their ascension, they continue the reformative movement Caesar had begun

MESSALA.           That by proscription and bills of outlawry  
Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus  
Have put to death an hundred senators (4.3.172-174).

The authority of the State is used by the Second Triumvirate to dispose of the remnants of the previous government. Senators are among the most powerful political agents within Rome and are far closer to Balibar's conception of citizens than that of subjects. Their ability to play an active role in Rome's government stems from the long history of its republican traditions. The senators' deaths by the hand of an emerging new body of leadership is further evidence that Caesar (both in life and in death) is a catalyst for the collapse of the preceding social order. Brutus, as his enemies draw near and his allies begin to die off, recognizes that the reform begun by Caesar cannot be undone, despite the best efforts of the Roman elite

Are yet two Romans living such as these?  
The last of all the Romans, fare thee well! (5.3.98-99).  
...  
The ghost of Caesar hath appeared to me  
Two several times by night – at Sardis once,  
And this last night here in Philippi fields.  
I know my hour is come (5.5.17-20).

In the above passage, Brutus laments the deaths of Cassius and Titinius, Romans who had supported the revolt against Caesar. Brutus states that the "last of all the Romans" are now deceased, and senses his own demise quickly approaching. He interprets Caesar's ghost as a sign of his impending death. The language employed herein supports the earlier assertion that Caesar is a catalyst for social reform. His haunting "ghost" serves as a metaphor for the lasting impact the deceased ruler continues to impart.

The final lines of the play, in which Octavius and Antony finally secure peace within Rome, symbolizes the transition from republic to empire, and points to the constant process of a community working to better negotiate between equality and liberty. Brutus dies by his own hand. Octavius and Antony, while celebrating their victory, pay respect to the fallen aristocrat

OCTAVIUS.            Within my tent his bones tonight shall lie,  
Most like a soldier, ordered honorably.  
So call the field to rest, and let's away  
To part the glories of this happy day (5.5.78-81).

The revolution following Caesar's death, marked by the expanded agency of the commoners and necessitated by an observable failure in the negotiation between equality and liberty of the republic, supports Balibar's understanding of "equaliberty" as a continuous process. The various characters within *Julius Caesar* are unified in their involvement with this process. Balibar recognizes the unstable and seemingly paradoxical nature of citizenship in "Citizen Subject," and notes that the citizen is both an element of the State and an actor of revolution. In doing so, he places citizenship within the context of a broader community

...the citizen can be simultaneously considered as the constitutive element of the State and as the actor of a revolution. Not only the actor of a founding revolution, a *tabula rasa* whence a State emerges, but the actor of a *permanent* revolution: precisely the revolution in which the principle of equality, once it has been made the basis or pretext of the institution of an inequality or a political "excess of power," contradicts every difference. Excess against excess, then. The actor of such a revolution is no less "utopic" than the member of the abstract State, the State of the rule of law (38).

Balibar notes that this process of revolution and constitution is a continuous one to which the citizen is fundamentally bound. As the State attempts to negotiate between the equality and liberty of its members, political systems occasionally privilege one (either equality or liberty) over the other, and sometimes fail to properly sustain either. Consequently, a community inevitably goes through cycles of restructuring to better facilitate this negotiation. This process is observable in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and is reflected in Balibar's understanding of

revolution, which is an equally paradoxical mechanism in the negotiation of equaliberty. We shall come back to this in the following chapters on *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Titus Andronicus*. The play examined herein, *Julius Caesar*, provides us with a valuable starting point for understanding the relationship between citizenship and equaliberty. Both exist as utopic conceptions containing inherent juxtapositions.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* draws attention to the instability inherent in our conceptions of citizenship and subjecthood. The play, as demonstrated herein, is fundamentally grounded in a question of identity. More specifically, the agency of numerous characters from a myriad of sociopolitical casts is revealed to be contrary to the social norms of the Roman Republic. The opening scene of the play, in which the tribunes Flavius and Murellus confront a group of celebrating commoners in the streets of Rome, comes to stand in direct contrast to the agency the populace later reveals following Caesar's death. The political elite opposing Caesar's increasingly centralized control of the Roman government recognize the danger posed to their social rank and agency. Characters like Calphurnia, believed to be limited in their capacity to play an active role in Roman politics, are revealed to hold a far greater level of autonomy and personal agency than originally imagined. If the subject *is* obedience, Calphurnia and the plebians, operating outside of the social norms of their station, cannot be confidently conceived of as being subjects. It is evident that the State has failed to adequately negotiate between the liberty and equality of its constitutive members. Both the Roman elite and the marginalized members of the broader community sense this failure. Caesar, at the very center of the play, is the catalyst for the revolutionary process essential in thinking equaliberty. When the law can no longer negotiate equality and liberty, a revolution inevitably results. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* asks us to reflect upon our own role in this negotiation and reminds us that a failure by our State

to adequately perform this function risks its own destruction. As we turn to *Antony and Cleopatra*, I look to expand upon this natural process of revolution and constitution and point out that while equaliberty is a continuous negotiation, it is not always linear in its establishment of democracy.

ANTONY.                   The present pleasure,  
By revolution low'ring, does become  
The opposite of itself.

– *Antony and Cleopatra* 1.2.123-125

**Revolution, n.**

1. Overthrow of an established government or social order by those previously subject to it; forcible substitution of a new form of government. In early use also: rebellion.
2. In Marxist theory: the violent overthrow of the ruling class and the seizure of power through control of the means of production by a class to whom such control was previously denied; the historically inevitable transition from one system of production to another and the political change which ensues, leading to the eventual triumph of Communism. Hence: an impending radical reformation of society, which will inevitably take place at some point in the future. Frequently with *the*. Also *continuing*, *continuous*, *uninterrupted revolution*, designating the concept of permanent revolution (“revolution”, *The Oxford English Dictionary*).

*Antony and Cleopatra*

This chapter, like the one before, seeks to relate Balibar's understanding of citizenship, revolution, and equaliberty to Shakespeare's Roman plays. In this section, I focus on *Antony and Cleopatra*, which I read as representative of the collapse of the State and the emergence of a revolutionary moment. The play demonstrates that revolutions contain a potential for a different negotiation between equality and liberty, even in the absence of law. However, the erosion of a State proves unsustainable and supports Balibar's understanding of a continuous cycle of revolution and reconstitution as an integral process of equaliberty. *Antony and Cleopatra* asks us to more closely examine revolution and the mechanisms which determine whether the resulting return to a State results in a more equitable and democratic society.

Changing alliances, opportunities arising from death, and rivals lusting for power create an exciting environment in which Shakespeare examines the lasting effects of Julius Caesar's assassination. The members of the Second Triumvirate, having secured control of Rome, quickly begin to direct their attention toward one another. As their suspicions rise and their relationships fragment, Balibar's perspective on revolution becomes increasingly relevant. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is an English play set in the early days of the Roman Empire. The agency of various characters within the text, particularly that of Cleopatra, supports a theory that the play takes place within a revolutionary space, in which the citizen-subject dichotomy begins to invert. However, the eventual implosion of the Second Triumvirate and unification of the Empire under Octavius points to an ending of revolution and a return to systems of oppression, paralleling Balibar's observation that revolutions inevitably regress "into another form of domination and subjection" ("The Idea of Revolution"). This chapter aims to explore these

systems of oppression, their relationship to the ending of the revolutionary space within the text, and the agency of certain characters across several scenes in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The first act begins with a discussion between Demetrius and Philo, in which the two Roman soldiers recognize a transition that has occurred within the psychology of Antony. The Roman general has transformed between the end of *Julius Caesar* and the beginning of *Antony and Cleopatra*; his evolution serves as a mechanism by which Shakespeare introduces the greater ideological and political conflicts at work within the text. Philo comments on Antony's transition, lamenting the general's loss of valor and charisma in the wake of his relationship with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra

PHILO.           ...Those his goodly eyes,  
That o'er the files and musters of the war  
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn  
The office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front.  
...  
Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transformed  
Into a strumpet's fool (1.1.2-13).

The above passage supports a reading of *Antony and Cleopatra* as a revolutionary space. The soldiers recognize the peculiarity of Antony's psychological evolution. The shifting of his eyes' focus from war to Cleopatra ("upon a tawny front") represents a loss of his previous passion and ambition. Once a powerful general, his rhetorical skills responsible for swaying the masses of the Roman republic (thinking back to the previous chapter's examination of *Julius Caesar*), Antony is now transformed from "the triple pillar of the world" into a "strumpet's fool." This inversion is significant for a myriad of reasons related to a reading of the text as a revolutionary space. Antony's status as a member of the Second Triumvirate marks him as one of the three most powerful individuals in the evolving Roman Republic. At this point, the de facto rulers

(Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus) have subjugated most of their political opponents. Their almost absolute control, except for a few lingering challengers, marks the three members of the Triumvirate as citizens when considering Balibar's citizen-subject dichotomy

The citizen (defined by his rights and duties) is that "nonsubject" who comes after the subject, and whose constitution and recognition put an end (in principle) to the subjection of the subject (Balibar, *Citizen Subject* 24).

Recalling that it is the role of the State to negotiate between the equality and liberty of its various members, it is possible to read the revolutionary space in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The characters respond to the inadequacy of this negotiation. There is an observable continuation of Balibar's process of revolution and constitution, which informs a broader understanding of equaliberty. Antony's internal struggle demonstrates a failure of the State, marked by his position as one of the heads of the Roman government. Once again, Shakespeare juxtaposes the agency derived from the political system with that of the household (although there are complications to this reading that I will address later). Antony's decline is inversely mirrored by Cleopatra's own rise to political power. The Egyptian queen experiences a myriad of obstacles that restrict her agency within the social matrix of Roman society. As Geraldo U. de Sousa notes in "Boundaries in a Globalized World: Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra," Shakespeare "associates the lure of the local with Egypt and grounds it in Egyptian cultural traditions and practice, which resist Rome's global influence and military hegemony" (69). Egypt contrasts Rome in Shakespeare's play. Cleopatra, although a member of the Roman elite, experiences barriers to entry related to active political participation. This is derived from Rome's failure to accept difference. Cleopatra, as a woman of considerable sociopolitical status within the text, could be equated with the character of Calphurnia in *Julius Caesar*. However, there are challenges presented to the Egyptian queen



that distinguish her and the extent to which her liberty and equality is denied. Cleopatra faces an additional obstacle: race.

Before expanding upon this point, it is necessary to offer a brief explanation of my reading of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play. My analysis focuses on the character, not the historical figure. While Cleopatra (the historical figure) was born in Egypt, she was a Hellenistic ruler of the Macedonian Greek Ptolemaic dynasty; her family can trace its origins back to Ptolemy I Soter, a companion of Alexander the Great. Ptolemy assumed control of Egypt following Alexander's death. Cleopatra, based on her family lineage, is widely believed to have been mainly of Greek ancestry. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the character of Cleopatra as she is imagined within the text from the historical Cleopatra VII Philopator. While the Egyptian Queen evidently shares a European lineage with her Roman peers, Shakespeare's text on numerous occasions imagines the character of Cleopatra as racially different, often equating her with Egypt itself. Camilo Peralta, in "A Woman 'Whom Every Thing Becomes' A Defense of Shakespeare's Cleopatra," helps to explain this distinction between the historical Cleopatra VII Philopator and the character of Cleopatra as Shakespeare depicts her in the play

The playwright issues a more subtle, but no less potent, critique of Cleopatra on the basis of her race. Hers is, in Philo's words, the "tawny front" that has led one of the most powerful men in Rome astray and provoked a race war between East and West... Because of her gender, race, and willingness to exert power, she represents a unique challenge to the white, established patriarchy of ancient Rome and Elizabethan England (43).

It must be admitted that Cleopatra's historical Greek ancestry complicates a reading of her race within the text. However, the specific rhetoric employed by Shakespeare throughout the play justifies a reading of Cleopatra as a member of a marginalized group; her character is often associated with Egypt, which in turn is juxtaposed against Rome. She is considered an outsider – a foreigner. As Camilo Peralta notes, her expanded agency throughout the text represents a challenge

to traditional systems of power. Cleopatra is not only a woman, and not only an outsider. Her agency – her ability to achieve citizenship status within the social matrix – is further denied by her race.

The political systems of Ancient Rome (and Elizabethan England) result in a failure of the State to recognize Cleopatra's status as free and equal. Thinking back to equaliberty, the inadequacy of the State inevitably calls for a continuation of the revolution-constitution cycle in the process of better negotiating the citizenship status of the State's members. I look to several scenes in *Antony and Cleopatra* to demonstrate the oppression Cleopatra experiences on the basis of her sex, gender and race. In the first act of the play, Antony converses with a messenger, who bring word from Rome. The general demands that the courier not censor his report

Speak to me home, mince not the general tongue.  
Name Cleopatra as she is called in Rome (1.2.104-105)

In the above passage, “home” can be equated to “plainly.” Antony's demand that the messenger speak “home” signifies his wish for the unfiltered truth. The general goes on to compare his behavior to an unplowed field – he must be tilled by true words of criticism, which prevent his decay. Antony's demand that the messenger speak of Cleopatra “as she is called in Rome” is of particular interest, as it reveals a discontinuity between the courts of Egypt and Rome. While Cleopatra's Egypt may fall within the Republic, the Queen is not considered to be Roman. In addition to being characterized as “tawny” (1.1.6), Cleopatra is equated with Egypt and the East on several occasions (1.3.78, 1.5.44, 5.2.304). Even Antony uses charged language that highlights Cleopatra's association with Egypt and the East: he refers to her as his “serpent of old Nile” (1.5.25). It is therefore readily apparent that Shakespeare's Cleopatra is considered an outsider to Rome – regardless of the mainly European heritage of the historical Cleopatra. Her association with Egypt marks her as a member of a marginalized group within the text. She is

perceived as an outsider, a woman, and “other.” Jennifer Park, in “Discandying Cleopatra: Preserving Cleopatra's Infinite Variety in Shakespeare's ‘Antony and Cleopatra,’” notes that modern postcolonial readings of the play recognize Cleopatra and Egypt as juxtaposed to Rome

Recent postcolonial readings of Antony and Cleopatra's depiction of Egypt have emphasized the "'Otherness' of Egypt." Readings of otherness have tended to view the play as a warning about the exotic as excess even while acknowledging the blurring of the proposed Rome/Egypt dichotomy (596).

Cleopatra is characterized as woman, outsider, and “other” (or “exotic”). She therefore directly contrasts traditional visions of power and citizenship within the Roman government and social matrix. Her agency and political power, already considerable due to her status as a queen of Egypt, continues to grow throughout the play, as evinced by her influence on Antony. Her ascent is of particular interest, as it contrasts the loss of Antony’s Roman identity and sociopolitical agency.

The concept of “change” is especially relevant, as it relates to both Cleopatra’s “otherness” and femininity, and to Antony’s loss of self. The Egyptian Queen fluidly transitions through emotions, wielding grief, anger, and mourning seamlessly, perhaps even theatrically. Her ability to change, and to facilitate change in others (Antony) contrasts the Roman identity grounded in a morality derived from individual responsibility, as Brent Dawson notes in “‘The World Transformed’: Multiple Worlds in Antony and Cleopatra.” Dawson argues

While the Romans, beholden to ideals of duty, portray Cleopatra’s feminine variability as a threat to their masculine order, Cleopatra herself characterizes variation as universal (182).

Egypt is an agent of change within the text, and Cleopatra a catalyst. When a messenger brings Antony news from Rome (1.1.18), Cleopatra mocks Antony’s loyalty to his wife Fulvia and to Octavius Caesar. Duty and passion are introduced as competing internal forces within Antony

and serve as a greater representation of the brewing conflict between East and West. The queen is quick to reprimand Antony for his loyalty to Rome

CLEOPATRA. Nay, hear them, Antony.  
 Fulvia perchance is angry. Or, who knows  
 If the scarce-bearded Caesar have not sent  
 His powerful mandate to you: "Do this, or this;  
 Take in that kingdom, and enfranchise that!  
 Perform't, or else we damn thee" (1.1.20-25)

Cleopatra's remarks displace Antony; his past identity and glory reside within Rome, where his duty compels him to serve his people and his government as a "triple pillar of the world" (1.1.12). Yet his passion keeps him in Egypt, bound to Cleopatra. Antony's soldiers comment on the general's previous valor and enviable military prowess. Yet they also recognize that Antony's love for Cleopatra transforms him from a "pillar of the world" into a "strumpet's fool" (1.1.10-13). The vernacular of "pillar of the world" is deliberately phallic. Rome is tied to a masculine identity and to an ideology which Cleopatra threatens to unsex. The queen is a model of fluid transition, her ever-changing mood and tactics flowing like the Nile. She initially mocks Antony for his loyalty to his wife and to Caesar (1.1.20), but later questions his devotion to her when she observes how quickly he declares "Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall!" (1.1.34). In dramatic fashion, she proclaims "Antony will be himself" (1.1.45). Yet how is Antony to *be* himself? His transformation is evident to all those around him. When news from home reaches Egypt, Antony comes to recognize the magnitude of his own transformation. His wife is dead, and with her goes a vital connection to his homeland. His speech reveals a form of self-death taking place alongside the loss of Fulvia

There's a great spirit gone. Thus did I desire it.  
 What our contempts doth often hurl from us,  
 We wish it ours again. The present pleasure,  
 By revolution low'ring, does become

The opposite of itself. She's good, being gone.  
 The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on.  
 I must from this enchanting queen break off.  
 Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,  
 My idleness doth hatch (1.2.121-128).

The general admits to, in part, having longed for the death of his wife. It is natural to question how much of Antony's grief is directed at his partner, and how much is reserved for his loss of self. His wife was a connection to Rome, and to his past. Intertwined with his legacy, Fulvia's death is a shocking reminder of the present. In his recognition of her loss, Antony feels further from Rome than ever before, as Joseph Aluis notes in "The Tragedy of Politics: Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*" Aluis argues

Antony's speech of regret at the passing of Fulvia reflects a dim consciousness of the passage of the most reliable element of Roman control that remained in his life (192).

Fulvia's passing has a sobering effect on Antony, who experiences an observable moment of recognition. His infatuation with the Egyptian Queen is a threat capable of producing tens of thousands of "harms," forcing him to "break off" or suffer the consequences. In neglecting Rome, Antony subjects himself to the ambition of his peers. Octavius becomes increasingly suspicious of Antony, and the delicate balance of peace between the East and West slowly begins to erode. Perhaps Antony considers these political implications in his moment of ego-death; yet there is something even greater at stake for the weathering Roman General – his identity. Cleopatra's influence over Antony distances his present character from the "triple pillar of the world" the soldiers remember in the opening scene of the play. This decline, marked by political matters moving outside of Antony's control, complicates a reading of the general as a citizen, particularly when considering the impact of Cleopatra (who is both "other" and woman) on his diminishing agency. Antony's loss of political security and waning control over his vices are

representative of failure by the State to negotiate between equality and liberty. The members of the Second Triumvirate, Antony included, are synonymous with the State and therefore may be equated with the systems of social regulation maintaining their control. Antony's decline reflects a breaking down and reshaping of citizenship and subjecthood within the text, and "the historically inevitable transition from one system of production to another" ("revolution", *The Oxford English Dictionary*). Cleopatra's own rise to power and political agency supports a reading of revolution within the play.

As has been established, a failure by the State to recognize and maintain the equality and liberty of its members results in revolution. Cleopatra relies upon her ability to capture Antony's heart in order to achieve a greater recognition of her natural status as free and equal. This symbolizes a rejection of the State and law. In the second act of the play, Antony's loyal supporter, Enobarbus, describes an early encounter between the two lovers. The scene begins in Rome, where the Second Triumvirate and their attendants briefly meet. Lepidus encourages Antony and Caesar to rebuild their relationship and once again strengthen the alliance, for the security of the Empire. The political rivals share a relatively polite conversation in which the two generals voice their concerns. Agrippa, a friend to Caesar, suggests that the partisan divide now threatening the security of Rome might be mended with a marriage between Caesar's sister, Octavia, and Mark Antony. The Triumvirate agrees that the marriage will reaffirm their loyalty to one another. The conversation then changes towards subjects more immediate in the danger they present. Pompey, is the son of one of Julius Caesar's former political partners who eventually became his rival. While his father is dead, the junior Pompey possesses enough military tact and popularity with the people of Rome to present a legitimate threat to the Second Triumvirate. Antony, now aware of the danger to his own power, urges his peers to make plans

to defeat the young Pompey. With their differences temporarily at bay, the three triumvirs exit the scene. Their officers, Enobarbus, Maecenas and Agrippa, remain behind and begin to converse. Enobarbus is loyal to Antony to a fault. Yet this devotion allows him to see Antony's shortcomings and comment rather freely, even when he is relatively critical in his analysis of the general. Enobarbus provides the reader with a voice of reason. Antony is often blinded by his passions, and Enobarbus recognizes the danger this presents to the new marriage. In a conversation with Agrippa and Maecenas, Enobarbus describes an early encounter between the two lovers, in which he recalls how the Egyptian queen swiftly won the heart of the Roman general

When she first met Mark Antony. She pursed up  
his heart upon the river of Cydnus.

...

I will tell you.

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne  
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold,  
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that  
The winds were lovesick with them. The oars were silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes.

...

The silken tackle  
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands  
That yarely frame the office.

...

Upon her landing, Antony sent to her,  
Invited her to supper. She replied,  
It should be better he became her guest,

...

And for his ordinary pays his heart  
For what his eyes eat only (2.2.196-238).

Enobarbus charges his speech with vivid signifiers that suggest an erotic form of domination.

Cleopatra's barge "burns" on the water, the deck is "beaten", the winds themselves are

“lovesick” in her presence. As Gillian Knoll notes in “Binding the Void: The Erotics of Place in Antony and Cleopatra,” the scene described by Enobarbus “removes us from the present... and brings us into a state of arrest, engaging but stymieing our desire, inciting but not quite appeasing hunger. This is true not only for the audience but also for Antony and for the crowd that gazes on Cleopatra within the narrative frame” (284). Shakespeare portrays Cleopatra’s presence as intoxicating, even addictive. From this description, it is not surprising to imagine how Antony could have so quickly become infatuated with the Egyptian queen. Antony invites Cleopatra to supper, but she refuses, inviting him to dine with her instead. Enobarbus is acutely aware of the underling power dynamic this scene reveals, comparing the dinner to a public meal one might receive at an inn (“his ordinary”, “for what his eyes eat only”). Antony pays for the bill with “his heart.” Cleopatra, in brining Antony into her own domain (“he became her guest”), signals her domination over him. What is significance here is Cleopatra’s reliance on alternative systems of power to achieve recognition of her natural equality and freedom. Unable to derive her agency from the State or law, which are associate with patriarchy and racism, she relies upon her femininity and variability. I had promised at an earlier point in tis chapter to expand upon my reading of the household in *Antony and Cleopatra*. As Antony is now engaged to Caesar’s sister Octavia, I cannot read Cleopatra’s agency as being derived from the traditional household, like Calphurnia’s is in *Julius Caesar*. Rather, Cleopatra rejects both political and household systems of agency. In fact, her attempt to establish citizenship on her own terms undermines both structures of sociopolitical governance.

Maecenas comments on Antony’s inevitable separation from Cleopatra now that he is engaged to Octavia. Yet Enobarbus, in a moment of foresight, recognizes that any attempt made by Antony to reject his lustful desires will ultimately prove futile



ENOBARBUS.        Never, he will not.  
 Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
 Her infinite variety (2.2.246-248).

Cleopatra's femininity, "infinite variety" and "otherness" threatens the power structures of Ancient Rome, and supports a reading of revolution in the play. Now betrothed to Octavia, any failure by Antony to retain his end of the agreement jeopardizes the security of the Triumvirate. Cleopatra's characterization as "infinite variety" reveals her to be a source of disruption within the text. Her ability to reject the citizen-subject dichotomy, bringing one of the triumvirs (equated with the State and the systems of oppression therein) into her domain and therefore under her influence, points to a destruction of the State. Thinking back to Balibar's "Citizen Subject," Cleopatra models a return to the "origin," indicating a reversal of the dichotomy and suggestive of revolution

Here is the answer: *After the subject comes the citizen...* We also know that this answer carries with it, historically, its own justification: If the citizen comes after the subject, it is in the quality of a rehabilitation, even a restoration (implied by the very idea of a revolution). The subject is *not* the original man, and, contrary to Bossuet's thesis, men are not "born" "subjects" but "free and equal in rights." The *factual* answer, which we already have at hand (and about which it is tempting to ask why it must be periodically suspended, in the game of a question that inverts it) also contains the entire difficulty of an interpretation that makes the "subject" a nonoriginary given, a beginning that is not (and cannot be) an origin. For the origin is not he subject, but man (24-25).

The "origin" is not subjecthood, but its opposite. Cleopatra, in asserting her femininity, "variety," and "otherness" within the text, restores her state to the original. She is not subject. She is human, endowed with the transformative and revolutionary capabilities (the potential to transform oneself and to enact change) inherent to an individual both "free and equal." Her status as citizen is self-evident. As a woman of foreign origin (herein understood to signify "otherness," as the text imagines her) she rejects the boundaries of her station within the systems of oppression inherent to her State. *Antony and Cleopatra* is therefore a revolutionary space in

which the means of production and the citizen-subject dichotomy are threatened by a potential for restructuring. As Antony spirals out of control, succumbing to his vices and thereby rejecting his duties to Rome (Roman morality was built, in part, upon a sense of individual duty), Cleopatra's own political agency climaxes. Egypt's influence now comes in direct conflict with Rome. The final test in weighing Cleopatra's control falls to Antony, who now must choose between duty and desire, East and West. He has an opportunity to help preserve the State (herein equated with the Second Triumvirate). However, as predicted by the rational voice of Enobarbus, his actions ultimately aid in the system's collapse.

Antony's return to Cleopatra and rejection of Octavia provides Caesar with a justifiable reason to pursue revenge. Much of Act III, in which Antony rejects Rome, focuses on war. The first scene, in which Antony's comrades Ventidius and Silius discuss the politics of warfare, connects the battlefield and the State. Ventidius describes his war against Parthia, in which he honored the late Marcus Crassus (a member of the First Triumvirate, along with Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great; Crassus was killed in an earlier conflict with the Parthians) by killing the King of Parthia's son, Pacorus. Silius encourages Ventidius to return to Antony and claim glory for his victories against the enemies of Rome. Yet he hesitates, fearful of overstepping his station and thereby threatening his superior

VENTIDIUS.           Who does i'th wars more than his captain can  
 Becomes his captain's captain, and ambition,  
 The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss  
 Than gain which darkens him.  
 I could do more to do Antonius good,  
 But 'twould offend him. And in his offense  
 Should my performance perish (3.2.21-27).

Ventidius bridges battlefield and politics. The social restrictions maintaining a system of hierarchy and oppression now shape the face of warfare. Ventidius cannot "do more to do

Antonius good” for fear of being perceived of as the “captain’s captain.” Silius agrees that it is wise to be cautious, supporting the idea that Ventidius write to Antony while remaining a safe distance from the general’s ambition. The above scene helps to explain my reading of law within Shakespeare’s Roman plays. A particular legal code is not readily observable – the characters do not rely on a court system in order to negotiate between liberty and equality. This further supports a reading of the play taking place within a revolutionary space, in which the State and law are somewhat suspended. However, the process of equaliberty continues even within these spaces. We can read the law in Shakespeare’s plays as the social codes which determine proper behavior and participation within a community. A legal system, such as the one currently operating within the United States, is a formalization of this same concept. Balibar notes that the negotiation between equality and liberty, like citizenship, is inherently social in nature. The citizen is recognized as naturally free and equal under the law, but this is conditional on the various members of a community adhering to those same codes. Operating like law, the social implications of Ventidius’s actions define his agency. Unable to perform to the best of his abilities for fear of the political repercussions, Ventidius’s commentary points to a failure of the State to negotiate between the equality and liberty of its members, and thereby signals revolution. However, I do not read Ventidius’s actions as supporting a revolution. Not only do the members of the Triumvirate go out of their way to stabilize the fractioning Empire and sustain the State, but the lesser officers do so as well. Ventidius’s letter, paralleling Antony’s engagement to Octavia, intentionally seeks to preserve (the systems of) the State. Yet these actions ultimately prove futile. The failure of the State in relation to equaliberty has already been demonstrated. Revolution is unavoidable and necessary.

Octavia accompanies Antony on his journey to Athens, only to be immediately sent back to Rome at the behest of her husband. Antony warns Octavia that he intends to prepare for war. Meanwhile, Caesar moves to consolidate power. After defeating Pompey, Caesar betrays Lepidus, locking him away to await execution. Hostilities mount between the two remaining triumvirates as each perceives the other's actions to be insulting affronts on the balance of power. The sixth scene of the third act opens in Rome. Caesar confers with his officers, Maecenas and Agrippa, regarding Antony's return to Egypt. Antony has granted Cleopatra sweeping power over his domain and has appointed his sons as heirs to numerous provinces in the East.

CAESAR. Contemning Rome, he has done all this and more  
 In Alexandria. Here's the manner of't:  
 I'th' marketplace on a tribunal silvered,  
 Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold  
 Were publicly enthroned. At the feet sat  
 Caesarion, whom they call my father's son,  
 And all the unlawful issue that their lust  
 Since then hath made between them. Unto her  
 He gave the stablishment of Egypt, made her  
 Of lower Syria, Cyprus, Lydia,  
 Absolute queen (3.6.1-11).

Cleopatra, in assuming power over Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, and Lydia, rejects subjecthood and the inadequacies of a misogynistic, racist Rome. At this point in the play, the various factions of the Roman political body, split between Antony and Caesar, prepare for war. It is here, within the tension of the two great armies, that a reading of revolution in *Antony and Cleopatra* is justified. Balibar points to several observable phenomena that signify a revolutionary moment. He derives this understanding from historical examples, which share discernable trends. However, I would argue that it is possible to apply those observations to the events and characters described by

Shakespeare within the play. Balibar makes note of three underlying indicators which, when taken together, imply revolution

A political scenario of revolutionary moments in history essentially combines three types of phenomena: a *change in the distribution of power* within society, which transfers it from those from above who “normally” monopolize it (the aristocracy or oligarchy defined by wealth, status, or both) to those from below who “normally” are excluded or marginalized (the mass, the poor, the ordinary citizens); a *transition from one state or social regime to another*, which concerns the *whole* of society (or its basic institutions), therefore separates “long” periods of time or what the philosophy of history calls *epochs* (*Zeitalter*); a *moment of exception* with respect to the legal and institutional “governmentality” (to borrow from Foucault’s terminology), where the rules of decision-making and the forms of representation are suspended, either in the direction of more democracy or dictatorial authority *or both*, in a typical (and highly problematic) unity of opposites (“The Idea of Revolution”).

If we look at the characters and events within *Antony and Cleopatra*, we can observe these same phenomena. The “*change in the distribution of power*” can be observed in the fracturing of the Second Triumvirate, coupled with the expanded agency of Cleopatra and Egypt. Cleopatra’s influence over Antony and her establishment as “absolute queen” signify the transfer of power Balibar notes in the passage above. The “*moment of exception*” can be observed in Antony’s rejection of Rome and his duties as a husband to Octavia. In choosing Egypt over Rome, Antony fragments the State and suspends its systems of political and social governance. The “*transition*” Balibar refers to is about to arrive.

Caesar marches his armies upon Egypt. Initially, Antony and Cleopatra are predicted to fare well in the war. However, despite the advantage Egypt’s forces have on land against the invading armies of Rome, Antony decides to battle Caesar at sea. He allows Cleopatra to command a ship in his army. Enobarbus, ever the voice of reason, strongly protests this strategy. However, Antony fails to heed the advice of his friend and proceeds with plans to battle Caesar at sea. As Enobarbus predicts, this course of action proves unsuccessful, although not for the

reasons initially imagined. Speaking before the audience, Enobarbus recalls what he witnessed during the first naval battle. Antony's forces, initially successful, looked as though they might claim the victory for Egypt. However, for reasons unknown, Cleopatra's ship flees. This breaks Antony's morale, and he chases after her, leaving his troops exposed. Confused and without either of their leaders present, the Egyptian forces are defeated by Caesar. Antony's soldiers are disgusted by his lack of leadership and many defect to join Caesar's army. Antony is deeply ashamed of his actions on the battlefield and recognizes that his glory is now in the past. He has abandoned his former identity, no longer the same Antony who defeated Brutus and Cassius. When Cleopatra returns to his side, he asks her why she has led him astray. She begs for his forgiveness, and Antony relents. The rulers of Egypt request a pardon from Caesar. Antony asks to be left alone in Egypt or be allowed to "breathe between the heavens and earth / A private man in Athens" (3.12.14-15). Cleopatra requests "The [crown] of Ptolomies for her heirs, / Now hazarded to [Caesar's] grace" (3.12.18-19). Caesar rejects Antony's proposal, but informs Cleopatra that her requests to leave control of Egypt within her family will be heard if she betrays Antony. Cleopatra initially appears to agree to Caesar's proposal, bought to her by Thidias. Caesar explains that he is sympathetic to the Egyptian, knowing that "[Cleopatra] embrace not Antony / As [she] did love, but as [she] feared him... / The scars upon [her] honor, therefore, he / Does pity as constrained blemishes, / Not as deserved" (3.13.56-59). Cleopatra speaks treason, proclaiming that "[Caesar] is a god and knows / What is most right. Mine honor was not yielded, / But conquered merely... / Say to great Caesar this deputation: / I kiss his conqu'ring hand. Tell him I am prompt / To lay my crown at 's feet and there to kneel" (3.13.60-76). Antony enters and is disgusted with his queen's betrayal. However, Cleopatra is quickly able to calm Antony's rage. Enobarbus, observes Antony's infatuation with Cleopatra. He has

seen all he needs. His was suspicion of Antony, suspecting that the same general who once swayed the masses of Rome to his will has been replaced by a dull shadow. Enobarbus, after what he has seen, can no longer support his general. Caesar rejects the challenge to a duel proposed by Antony. The war resumes. Antony, surprisingly, proves victorious in the coming battle. Caesar had ordered his armies to fill the front lines with Antony's deserters, hoping Egypt's morale would be broken. Yet the Egyptians prevail. When Antony sends Enobarbus's belongings to Caesar's camp as a sign of respect and understanding, Enobarbus is so overcome with shame that he refuses to fight against Antony. Instead, he looks to take his own life. Antony is confident that his victory is now secured. However, in the ensuing battle by sea, Antony watches as his navy defects to Caesar's side. He blames Cleopatra for this treachery, believing that she has led him to despair. When she goes to him, he threatens to kill her for her betrayal. Cleopatra, desiring to curtail Antony's wrath, devises a plan to win her lover back. She instructs the eunuch Mardian to inform Antony that she has died. The Roman general is taken aback by the news and proclaims that he shall die with his lover. He instructs his soldier, Eros, to kill him. Eros refuses and, to escape the shame of killing his general, takes his own life instead. Antony, moved by Eros's bravery and loyalty, decides that he must fall upon his own sword. However, unlike his loyal friend, the wound he suffers does not immediately kill him. He is carried to Cleopatra, where he makes a final speech and declares his Roman identity restored

ANTONY.                   The miserable change now at my end  
Lament nor sorrow at, but please your thoughts  
In feeding them with those my former fortunes,  
Wherein I lived the greatest prince o'th' world,  
The noblest, and do now not basely die,  
Not cowardly put off my helmet to  
My countryman – a Roman by a Roman  
Valiantly vanquished. Now my spirit is going.  
I can no more (4.15.53-61).

With his dying breath, Antony reveals that he has returned to his Roman identity. Cleopatra feels the loss of her lover, declaring the world to be a dull and joyless place without Antony. She decides to bury Antony in the Roman tradition before pursuing her own death. One of Antony's soldiers brings his sword to Caesar and informs the Roman leader of his master's death. Caesar and his soldiers agree that Antony was a great Roman and deserves to be honored and mourned. The sole remaining Triumvirate plans to bring Cleopatra to Rome, and dispatches men to prevent the Egyptian from taking her own life. Rather than succumbing to the shame of being paraded through Rome, displayed in her defeat for the entertainment of Rome's people, Cleopatra allows herself to be bitten by poisonous snakes. The Egyptian queen dies, and Caesar vows to bury the two lovers together

CAESAR.                    Take up her bed,  
 And bear her women from the monument.  
 She shall be buried by her Antony.  
 No grave upon the earth shall clip in it  
 A pair so famous.  
 ...  
 Our army shall  
 In solemn show attend this funeral,  
 And then to Rome (5.2.353-360).

The "transition" from the previous government to the establishment of a new State is clearly shown in the destruction of the Second Triumvirate and the consolidation of power under Octavius Caesar. The phenomena noted by Balibar in "The Idea of Revolution" are each shown within the play, thereby supporting a reading of revolution.

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* asks us to consider the role of revolution in Balibar's equaliberty. Not all revolutions result in the formation of a more democratic government. The social and political changes charted across Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and



*Antony and Cleopatra* demonstrate a failure by the State to adequately negotiate the liberty and equality of its members, thereby exposing the fragility of citizenship. The shortcomings of the Roman government result in an observable cycle of revolution and constitution, supporting an understanding of equaliberty as a continuous process. The Roman Republic collapses and consolidates under Julius Caesar. Despite briefly stabilizing under a single ruler, Rome is once again thrown into chaos by Caesar's assassination. The Second Triumvirate, which gains power after Julius Caesar's death, like the previous regime, proves inefficient at negotiating between the equality and liberty of its members. The Mediterranean is plunged into revolution, as characters like Cleopatra fight for their natural status – as humans endowed with liberty and equality – to be recognized. However, the war between Egypt and Rome results in the consolidation of power under a single ruler once again. The “transition” from republic to empire is complete. Octavius Caesar emerges as the new head of the Roman State. This is a sharp reminder that not all revolutions result in greater equality and liberty. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* asks us to more closely examine revolution and the mechanisms which determine whether the resulting return to a State will ensure the emergence of a more equitable and democratic society. It is obvious that Octavius's rise to power in the text examined herein points to a centralized dictatorship, not to the formation of a democracy. As we shift our focus to *Titus Andronicus* in the next chapter, the motivations which drive the various agents of revolution are called into question and remind us of our role in bringing about meaningful change within our own communities.

AARON.                   And mount her pitch whom thou in triumph long  
Hast prisoner held, fettered in amorous chains  
And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes  
Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.  
Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!

– *Titus Andronicus* 2.1.14-18

**Violence, *n.***

1. The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.: physically violent behavior or treatment; the unlawful exercise of physical force, intimidation by the exhibition of such force.  
Formerly also: the abuse of power or authority to persecute or oppress.
2. Great strength or power of a natural force or physical action, esp. when destructive or damaging; violent motion or effect (“violence”, *The Oxford English Dictionary*).

*Titus Andronicus*

This chapter looks to apply Balibar's understanding of citizenship, revolution and equaliberty to the characters and plot of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. The play relies on bodily metaphor and productive violence to reflect a failure of the State to achieve equaliberty that inevitably leads to revolution. Violence is a major theme within the text and is shown to contain a potential for facilitating a greater negotiation between equality and liberty. However, while moments of productive violence are observable, they fail to sustain momentum throughout the play. As in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, a reading of revolution within *Titus Andronicus* is justified by observable phenomena that relate to Balibar's "The Idea of Revolution." The revenge arc of the play reminds us that while some revolutions briefly contain glimpses of a more equal and universal citizenship, they also hold the potential for a rejection of these principles and a denial of the natural status of humans as free and equal. Revolutions are inherently violent; they imply a violence on the State in the continuous process of transformation and constitution within a community. This does not dissuade us from appreciating the potential of revolutions to aid in the negotiation between equality and liberty. Rather, it reminds us of our own potential. We have a personal stake in the progression of our society. The play reminds that sake, and of our relationship to equaliberty as individuals.

*Titus Andronicus* opens on a crisis of succession. Titus, a general of Rome, returns from a decade-long bloody campaign against the Goths. The Emperor of Rome, Titus's brother, has passed away and his two sons, Saturninus and Bassianus, ask the people of Rome to determine which of them should rule. Saturninus argues that it is his natural right to claim the throne. He is the first-born son of the previous emperor. But his younger brother, Bassianus, asserts that he is more worthy. Bassianus claims that he possesses more merit and virtue. He urges the people of

Rome to “fight for freedom in your choice” (1.1.17). The princes are informed by their uncle, Marcus, that the people have failed to choose either of them. Instead, they have elected Titus as their new ruler. Titus is both an Andronici (member of the royal family) and an accomplished military general. He returns to Rome in a victory parade. With him are several hostages: Tamora (Queen of the Goths), her three sons, and Aaron the Moor (Tamora’s lover). Lucius, son to Titus, asks his father to hand over Alarbus, Tamora’s eldest son, so that he might be sacrificed in the Roman tradition. Tamora pleads with the weathered Titus, calling upon his mercy and humanity

TAMORA. Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
 Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed –  
 A mother’s tears in passion for her son –  
 And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,  
 Oh, think my son to be as dear to me!  
 Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome  
 To beautify thy triumphs and return  
 Captive to thee to thy Roman yoke?  
 But must my sons be slaughtered in the streets  
 For valiant doings I their country’s cause?  
 Oh, if to fight for king and commonweal  
 Were piety in thine, it is in these.  
 Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood.  
 Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?  
 Draw near them, then, in being merciful:  
 Sweet mercy is nobility’s true badge.  
 Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son (1.1.107-123).

Tamora calls upon a shared sense of humanity in order to convince Titus against sacrificing her eldest son; she refers to the Romans as her “brethren,” seeking to find common ground in universal parental love. However, Titus rejects these pleas, and sanctions Alarbus’s death. The sociopolitical agency of the Romans and Goths within this scene could not be more opposite. The Andronici, as the ruling family of Rome, are the embodiment of citizens. They are active in the decision-making processes of the State. The Goths, as prisoners of war, unable to retain control even of their own lives, are obvious subjects to the same systems of social governance.

They Goths are enemies of Rome. They are outsiders and represent a separate ethnicity. The State fails to negotiate their natural status. In this first scene, Shakespeare both defines the State and reveals the mechanism of its destruction. The Romans perceive the Goths as uncivilized outsiders, enemies of Rome who lack its cultural gravity. Shakespeare appreciates this, as Rome's gravity would come to greatly influence his own education. Rome is known for its technological and governmental advancement. It has a history as a colonizing force. However, it should be noted that the Rome of *Titus Andronicus* is very different from the Rome examined in the previous chapters of this thesis. Whereas *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* were based upon historical people and events, the play examined herein deals with a fictional Rome inspired by its greater civilization and the literary traditions of Shakespeare's own time. In Shakespeare's Rome, the stability of the State is shown to be initially weak and is ultimately compromised by the morality of the characters, as Stephen Greenblatt notes

A quarrel over the imperial throne precedes Titus's victory celebration, suggesting the institutional instability that will ultimately subvert Rome from within even as uncouth armies threaten to overwhelm it from without. Moreover, the climax of Titus's victory celebration is his insistence on sacrificing Alarbus despite Tamora's maternal pleas: a case in which the traditional forms of piety that underlie Roman civilization seem to require the barbaric practice of human sacrifice. If Rome's conviction of racial and cultural supremacy – of *deserving* to rule the world – was once a workable notion, it is no longer so (495).

Rome serves as both an embodiment of the State and a warning of the temporality of revolution. Tamora begs for her son's life, encouraging the Romans to prove their perceived superiority by demonstrating a greater capacity for compassion and morality. Yet Titus rejects her, citing tradition as justification for Alarbus's murder. The State, already shown to be weakened by the rivaling factions within the Andronici, loses whatever moral credibility it might have once had. Tamora is justified in her pursuit of revenge just as Titus is vilified in his moment of authority.

Shakespeare herein parallels revenge with revolution and the destruction of a racist, misogynistic hierarchy stemming from historical Roman traditions. Roman identity within *Titus Andronicus* is associated with a form of patriarchy based upon cultural traditions and recorded incidents from Roman history (Greenblatt 492). Shakespeare, in showing the moral fallibility of the Romans, challenges a trend of romanticizing the classical era. He juxtaposed the military advancement of the Romans with their paganistic sacrifices. The Romans suddenly do not appear so advanced after all. In murdering Tamora's son, Titus sets in motion a series of events that support a reading of revolution within the text.

Marcus offers Titus a "palliamment of white and spotless hue," a symbol of the people's acceptance of Titus as the new Emperor of Rome (1.1.185). Titus refuses, citing his old age. He appoints Saturninus in his stead, who then takes Titus's daughter Lavinia as Empress. This enrages Bassianus, who had previously been betrothed to Lavinia. Bassianus spirits Lavinia away with the aid of Titus's sons, thereby insulting the newly crowned emperor Saturninus. Titus attempts to prevent Bassianus's escape but is himself blocked by his son Mutius. Enraged by this betrayal, Titus strikes Mutius down. With Mutius's dead body lying on the ground, Titus declares his children to be traitors and refuses to lay his son to rest in the Andronici tomb. Yet Titus's actions prove too little too late. The damage has already been done. Publicly humiliated by the events which have just transpired, Saturninus proposes to Tamora in Lavinia's stead. The Queen of the Goths accepts, and immediately her position changes from oppressed subject to empress. Tamora's character resembles Calphurnia and Cleopatra. She is a woman of considerable status. Despite being an outsider, as wife to the emperor she enjoys a form of citizenship within Rome. However, Tamora is not motivated to operate within the systems of the State. She does not truly desire membership to the Roman community. She seeks revenge.

Surprisingly, she encourages the emperor to accept Titus's apologies. She has something far more terrible in mind, and so the revenge arc begins. The first act of *Titus Andronicus* connects bodily mutilation (violence), revenge, and revolution

Generally speaking, *Titus Andronicus* is a tragedy of revenge, a very old form that originated in ancient Greece, flourished in ancient Rome, and was revived in the 1580s in England by Shakespeare's predecessor Thomas Kyd. English Renaissance revenge tragedies typically feature a man whose family members have been raped or murdered by a king, duke, or emperor. Because the administration of justice rests in the hands of the very person who has committed the outrage, no redress is obtainable through established institutions. As a result, the hero takes matters into his own hands. Ironically, as he struggles to impose a just order upon his world, he loses his own moral bearings and even his sanity: the commonsensical standards of "justice" upon which he has initially relied often come to seem either flawed or unreachable (Greenblatt 491).

Tamora's pursuit of revenge is justified by the slaughtering of her son, and further compromises the stability of the State. Rome is hinted at being a revolutionary space very early on in the play. We can readily observe a "*change in the distribution of power*" in the crises of succession. As the play continues, Balibar's "*moment of exception*" is quickly revealed. Shakespeare's own political system had laws pertaining to the transition from one monarch to another, and marriage laws which would have maintained Bassianus's engagement to Lavinia (although there is historical evidence of English kings ignoring such laws). The social regulations of *Titus Andronicus* are uncertain and reflect a chaotic space in which the State is somewhat absent. This fractioning of the Roman government and erosion of the citizen-subject dichotomy continues into the second act.

Act 2 resumes the cycle of revenge and violence that ultimately threatens to destroy Rome and the Andronici. It is also the first act in which Aaron speaks. Speech, and the absence thereof, is of critical importance to *Titus Andronicus*, and centers around the characters of Lavinia and Aaron. Tamora and Aaron are discovered in an intimate setting by Bassianus and

Lavinia. Tamora's two surviving sons enter the scene and kill Bassianus. Lavinia begs to be killed as well, rather than to be raped by the empress's sons. The power dynamic between the Goths and Andronici has shifted dramatically between the first and second acts. Yet the two families are united in the callous violence they inflict upon one another in their moments of agency. Titus has an opportunity at the beginning of the play to spare Alarbus

If Titus comes to adopt Tamora's perspective, even for the briefest of moments, he would see that what she values in her sons (valour) is what he values in his. Set with her against a shared background, he might regard the antagonism between Romans and Goths as to some extent artificial or imposed (Kuzner 109).

Instead, he refuses Tamora's pleas and murders her son. The empress now faces a similar opportunity and, like Titus, chooses violence. She denies Lavinia her request to be killed immediately rather than violated, and frames Titus's sons for the murder of Bassianus.

Demetrius and Chiron rape Lavinia, cut off her hands, and sever her tongue so that she may not speak of what has happened. In this moment, Titus's daughter is transformed into a voiceless subject. Lavinia is unable to speak the crimes committed against her. Her loss of speech directly contrasts Aaron's own voice

Aaron is connected to Lavinia through their reciprocal movements from speech to silence—from speaking signifier to silent signified—and back again. Lavinia's maimed white body and Aaron's rhetorically damned black one share a liminal quality that reveals the potentiality of violence (Tooker 32).

Violence grants Aaron speech, but robs Lavinia of her voice. Tamora's violence looks to invert (thinking back to Balibar) rather than sustain revolution. The importance of speech within *Titus Andronicus* links language to agency and to revolution. Balibar notes that revolution and speech are inherently unified, as the word "revolution" must come from language ("The Idea of Revolution"). The denial of speech, through bodily mutilation and death, is a mark of subjecthood. Thinking back to *Julius Caesar*, the commoners voice their will and thereby



demand recognition of their natural status as free and equal (*Julius Caesar*, 3.2.1). This parallels Balibar's understanding of citizens as individuals within a community who demand their inherent liberty and equality be recognized by the State. The stage notes for the fourth scene of Act 2 specify that Lavinia enter with "*her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and ravished*" (2.4). The word "ravished" is of particular interest here. How is Lavinia to embody someone "ravished?" She is a victim of the chaos that can accompany revolution. Her wounds are physical reminders that revolutions, even those which strive for equality and a suspension of class systems (oppressive systems), retain a certain capacity for violence. While some revolutions progress society towards greater equaliberty, others result in the formation of a more dictatorial State. Violence and revolution are linked within *Titus Andronicus* and reflect the process of revolution and constitution. The horrors inflicted upon Lavinia point to the excess of violence and revenge within the play, as Jessica Tooker notes in "Productive Violence in *Titus Andronicus*"

Lavinia's wounded mouth is literally an open signifier. Spectacle is substituted for speech, and Lavinia's gaping orifice is subjected to the gaze of both audience and characters, revealing the potential for a transformative representation of its owner (34).

Marcus later discovers the mutilated Lavinia. At first, he cannot comprehend the horrific violence that has been executed upon his niece's body. When the gravity of the situation finally registers, Marcus cries "Alas, a crimson river of warm blood, / Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind, / Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips, / Coming and going with thy honey breath" (2.4.21-25). As Lavinia is without speech, Marcus must voice the violence his niece has endured. Her uncle is witness to the violence –more specifically, to the physical manifestation of that violence – Lavinia has been forced to suffer. While Marcus cannot absorb the pain nor mend the mutilations to Lavinia's body, his speech does allow for a kind of healing to take place.

Marcus bears witness to Lavinia's pain and, in doing so, begins to facilitate the process by which Lavinia may return to speech in the later acts of the play. Shakespeare herein equates the violence on the physical body of Lavinia to the greater mutilation – the severing of connective tissues and essential bodily structures – of the country

The violence of silence... inflicted upon Lavinia through her rape and mutilation signals the impending breakdown of order in the Roman state (Tooker 35).

Violence is the mechanism by which bodily forms are severed, and this metaphor (that is, the connection between the physical and governing bodies) extends beyond Lavinia and is perpetuated by a continued cycle of oppression that parallels Balibar's understanding of historical revolutions eventually inverting on themselves. Act 2 of the play further establishes the connection between revenge, revolution, and violence. While we can read violence as an inherent part of any revolution (not necessarily a physical violence, but a violence performed upon the systemic structures of social regulation which maintain the citizen-subject dichotomy), there comes a point at which this violence is no longer productive (and is perhaps counterproductive).

The title character, Titus, also experiences physical violence and bodily mutilation as a result of the revenge arc of the play. This metaphor of fragmentation, resulting from the continuous cycle of brutal carnage, illuminates the greater divisions within Rome. Whereas the body is mutilated through the severing of tissue and bones, the State is severed along lines of culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic station, and gender. None are immune; all are inherently vulnerable to the horrific consequences of violence. The revolutionary space created within the play holds a potential for the disruption of class systems and for a more equal form of social regulation in which the formerly oppressed (Goths, women, Moors, etc.) find themselves with a greater sense of agency. However, this space is also marked by chaos. The emperor Saturninus is manipulated by Tamora into believing that Titus's sons Quintus and Martius are responsible for

his brother's death. Despite Titus's attempt to intervene, his sons are condemned. Aaron arrives with a message for Titus, demanding further mutilation

Titus Andronicus, my lord the Emperor  
Sends thee this word: That if thou love thy sons,  
Let Marcus, Lucius, or thyself, old Titus,  
Or any one of you, chop off your hand  
And send it to the King. He for the same  
Will send thee hither both thy sons alive,  
And that shall be the ransom for their fault (3.1.150-156).

Shakespeare plays with the potential of violence. Titus allows Aaron to sever his hand and present it to the emperor, thereby continuing the cycle of mutilation. Yet bloodshed in this scene contains a potentiality beyond that of the previous instances of disfigurement within the text. Titus's amputated hand has the capacity to be read as a *productive* violence. Had his bodily sacrifice proven sufficient to spare the lives of his sons, it would have marked a form of mutilation distinct from the revenge cycle (in that it would not perpetuate further violence). Productive violence, as referred to herein, is fundamentally oppositional to the revenge cycle in that it denies future violence, rather than produces it. If we look to apply an understanding of productive violence to political theory, we can relate it to Balibar's "*moment of exception*," in which a leveling form of equality is plausible. Revolutions often begin with a desire for greater equality. Those who consider themselves oppressed within the State fight for its replacement. In the "moment of exception" the systems of social regulation are suspended. The violence inflicted upon the State during revolution represents a potential for good. Whether that violence is productive, whether it ultimately proves beneficial for society or just continues the ongoing cycle, is determined later. Balibar notes that historical examples of revolution reveal an inherent instability; they inevitably fade as society returns to systems of a State. Violence is sometimes necessary. Not the human violence displayed within the play, but a political violence upon the

State that disrupts the status-quo and normal systems of social regulation. Shakespeare demonstrates that acts of violence may differ from one another greatly. Whereas violence on an existing State may mark a moment of revolution that suspends systems of hierarchy and oppression, other forms of violence undermine and corrupt the revolutionary moment, thereby expediting the inversion. As the cycle of violence continues, moments of uncertainty reveal a social leveling taking place.

Marcus and Lucius each offer their own hand to be taken, but Titus ultimately fulfills the bargain. After Titus severs his own limb, the deal is revealed to be fraudulent. A messenger returns with the heads and hands of Titus's sons, and it is in this moment that we see the Andronici at their weakest. Lavinia has been raped and mutilated; Titus has disfigured himself in a failed attempt to rescue his sons, and has murdered his own son, Mutius; Bassianus is dead; Saturninus is under the influence of Tamora, who has risen from prisoner to empress; Aaron has found speech while Lavinia has lost hers. Within the chaos we see glimpses of an underlying equality. Everyone is vulnerable. The traditions of class, race, and gender – pillars upon which the systems of oppression stand – are leveled by transforming agency, which in turn marks a “*moment of exception*” and a weakening of the citizen-subject dichotomy. Yet Shakespeare is critical of this revolution and details its divulgence into anarchic chaos. Violence in *Titus Andronicus* is rarely productive, even if the play reminds us of its potential to be.

Aaron complicates notions of race within *Titus Andronicus*, shifting from a catalyst for revenge to a more humanized figure of morality. While Aaron is a mechanism for furthering Tamora's revenge against Titus in the first half of the play, the protectiveness he displays for his child in Act 4 rejects a racist labeling of moral inferiority. Aaron's position is one of continuous complication. He is empowered through speech, violence, and lust. As both servant to and lover

of Tamora, Aaron's agency rises with that of the empress. He uses his return to speech<sup>1</sup> to further his own agency via the revenge arc of the play

AARON.                    Then, Aaron, arm thy heart and fit thy thoughts  
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress,  
And mount her pitch whom thou in triumph long  
Hast prisoner held, fettered in amorous chains  
And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes  
Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.  
Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts! (2.1.12-18).

...  
Come, come: our empress, with her sacred wit  
To villainy and vengeance consecrate,  
Will we acquaint withal what we intend,  
And she shall file our engines with advice,  
That will not suffer you to square yourselves,  
But to your wishes height advance you both.  
The Emperor's court is like the house of Fame,  
The palace full of tongues, of eyes, ears;  
The woods are ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull.  
There speak and strike, brave boys, and take your turns.  
There serve your lust, shadowed from heaven's eye,  
And revel in Lavinia's treasury (2.2.121-132).

Aaron recognizes that his own ascent mirrors Tamora's. As the empress gains personal agency and rejects the societal barriers which would deny her active participation in affairs of the State (subject), Aaron notes the benefits inherent to his own position. The language he employs rejects the constraints imposed upon him as a result of his race. Rather than being subservient to Tamora, Aaron reverses the servant-master relationship. He evokes highly sexualized language alluding to his physically intimate relationship with the Goth queen. Interracial sexuality is a rejection of the segregationist principles which would mark him as a subject within the text. To "mount" Tamora is a form of reversal that allows Aaron to hold Tamora as his prisoner (even

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term "return" here intentionally. Aaron is presumed to have spoken before the audience first hears him. Thus, his speech in Act 2 marks a "return" to speech (rather than a "first") that mirrors Lavinia's own in the later acts of the play. Aaron returns, in a sense, to the natural state of humanity (the "citizen") referenced in Balibar.

though he is technically hers) in “amorous chains.” He draws upon the legend of Prometheus – who was bound to Caucasus in punishment by Zeus for having gifted humanity fire – to emphasize his proximity to Tamora and his power over her. His sexual relationship with the empress allows him to do “away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts,” marking a clear rejection of the citizen-subject dichotomy and the institutionalized structures (such as racism) that oppress his personal agency. Lust, while elevating Aaron, serves as the mechanism for Lavinia’s horrific downfall. Chiron and Demetrius echo the earlier quarrel between Bassianus and Saturninus. The two brothers are pitted against one another in their shared desire for Titus’s daughter. Aaron uses this to further the revenge arc of the play. Whereas the Andronici divide from one another, Aaron prevents the Goths from making the same mistake. The language he employs while unifying Chiron and Demetrius is suggestive of the connection between agency and speech. He warns the two brothers that if they are to be successful, they must perform their atrocities in the woods, which are “ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull.” Speech has the power to elevate one’s personal agency. However, the absence of speech denies that same agency. Aaron’s return to language serves to further the collapse of the citizen-subject dichotomy demonstrating a “*moment of exception*,” and supporting a reading of revolution within the text. Shakespeare is somewhat critical of this form of revolution, and associates Aaron with “villainy and vengeance” in the first half of the play. Aaron is aware of this perception, as he is often the one to voice his own villainy. This reflection on his own wickedness further condemns him, as it denies any possible ignorance. However, while Aaron recognizes that his actions are perceived to be evil, he also rejects being defined as such, and points to the inherent atrocities of others and of the system in general. This partially absolves him, as he uses his agency in no worse a manner than any other character. Titus sentences his enemies to death and murders his own son. Tamora sanctions

the brutal rape of Lavinia. While the Moor promotes certain outcomes, he does not stoop to committing the same atrocities as his European peers. In fact, Aaron is one of the few characters to reject violence, even if doing so presents personal risk. In the fourth act of the play, a nurse enters with a “blackamoor child” (stage notes, 4.2), and laments that it has brought shame upon Tamora’s house. The nurse refers to the child as a “devil,” and compels Aaron to “christen it with thy dagger’s point” (4.2.70). The child of Aaron, a Moor, and Tamora, an empress of Rome, violates the systems of oppression (in this case, the human construct of “race”) inherent to the State

If whiteness and blackness are both associated with extremisms of barbarism and violence, the sexual blending of the two creates a new kind of violent agency based on a re-structured economy of racial forms. This economy destabilizes because of its latent potentiality and its lack of *literal* economy” (Tooker 39).

Indeed, the mixed child of Aaron and Tamora is perhaps the greatest attack on the oppressive systems which stabilize the State. Class, race, subject, and citizen are unified with the birth of the “blackamoor child.” Aaron is incredibly protective of his offspring, despite the nurse’s claim that Tamora wishes the child dead. In defiance, Aaron declares “Is black so base a hue?... / It shall not die” (4.2.71, 80). His parental love directly contrasts the familial relationships of the Andronici and Goths. Tamora and her sons are quick to demand that Aaron dispose of the child, even though it is directly related to them by blood. This scene inevitably asks us to recall an earlier moment in the play in which Tamora appeals to Titus’s sense of parental love. Tamora fails to display the same affection she previously claimed to possess. Titus, as we already know, has murdered one of his own children. Thus, Aaron’s selfless display of love and loyalty towards his child elevates his morality, particularly when compared to those of the other characters within the text. In fact, Aaron’s expanded agency and the manner in which he rejects calls to inflict violence upon his child reflects a breaking down of racist systems of segregation and

points towards the potentiality inherent to revolutionary moments. While Shakespeare is largely critical of the revolution taking place within *Titus Andronicus* and portrays the accompanying chaos and violence as a justification for the reestablishment of the State (thinking back to Balibar and the inevitable inversion of revolutions), Aaron's moral elevation demonstrates that the oppressive forces of the State are not inherently defensible. However, while the State fails to adequately negotiate between the liberty and equality of its members, Shakespeare's depiction of the revenge arc within the play reminds us of the necessity of government – without it, chaotic anarchy erupts.

Lucius marches on Rome with an army of Goths, who are proud to serve with their former enemy. They discover Aaron hiding with his child and prepare to have both father and infant executed. Aaron bargains for the life of his child, ultimately revealing to Lucius the atrocities he and Tamora's family have inflicted upon the Andronici. Lucius is horrified by Aaron's confessions, and has him gagged so he cannot continue to speak his crimes. This marks Aaron's return to silence, and signals Balibar's inversion. Tamora and her sons appear before Titus, disguised as Revenge, Rape and Murder. The Gothic nobility believe Titus to be mad, and attempt to trick him into convincing Lucius to attend a banquet at the Andronici home. However, Titus is (arguably) merely feigning madness, and accepts Tamora's offer on the condition that she leave Rape and Murder behind to accompany him. The disguises Tamora and her sons take are of particular interest, as they emphasize the importance of violence within the play and associate Tamora with the revenge arc. While Tamora is Revenge, which has been shown herein to strongly relate with the revolutionary moment taking place within the text, her sons' disguises as Rape and Murder undermine the morality of the revolution



...because revolutions are typically linked to the *new foundation* of the State or the social regime, which is carried on through a “state of exception” which Benjamin called a moment of “divine violence”. But the exception needs to be *teleologically* oriented towards normality or stability, just as the moment of “crisis” is seen as an intermediary between successive “organic” states of society (Balibar, “The Idea of Revolution”).

Shakespeare demonstrates that the violence within *Titus Andronicus*, while often holding a certain corrective potentiality, is rarely productive. To quote another Shakespearean text, “These violent delights have violent ends” (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.5.9). Rather than, as Balibar notes, being “oriented towards normality or stability,” most of the violence within *Titus Andronicus* perpetuates further violence in a chaotic revolutionary moment that ultimately justifies a return to the State. Titus has Tamora’s sons bound and gagged upon their mother’s departure. He and Lavinia enter the scene, wielding a knife and basin, respectively. In their bound and gagged state, Tamora’s sons return to subjecthood, as they are unable to retain agency over their own lives and have lost their ability to speak the atrocities soon to be committed. Titus cuts their throats and declares “So, now bring them in, for I’ll play the cook, / And see them ready against their mother comes” (5.3.201-202). In the final scene of the play, the revenge arc climaxes in a moment of incredible violence. The Andronici and Goths meet at Titus’s palace. Dressed as a cook, Titus asks Saturninus “Was it well done of rash Virginius / To slay his daughter with his own right hand / Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered?” (5.3.36-38). Virginius is a character from Roman lore who in some versions killed his daughter to prevent her being raped, and in others killed her after the rape had occurred (as Titus references). When Saturninus confirms that Virginius was justified in his actions, Titus proceeds to kill Lavinia before the eyes of both the Andronici and Goths. Saturninus is outraged and demands to know why Titus has committed such atrocities before them all. Titus replies that Chiron and Demetrius have slain Lavinia through the horrific violence they inflicted upon her. He presents her murder as a form of mercy.

Once again, we glimpse a potential for productive violence within *Titus Andronicus*. While a father murdering his daughter would not be considered morally justifiable in contemporary times (or in Shakespeare's own time), it is evident that such actions within the text are derived from a Roman tradition of morality. Violence is inherently horrific; yet, as Shakespeare once again hints, horrific actions may contain a corrective potential. Nevertheless, this potential fails to be realized within *Titus Andronicus*, and proves the revolutionary moment to be unsustainable. Greater violence quickly ensues. Saturninus demands that Chiron and Demetrius be brought forth. Titus replies "Why, there they are, both baked in this pie, / Whereof their mother daintily hath fed, / Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred" before stabbing Tamora (5.3.59-61). Saturninus quickly stabs Titus in return, before himself being slain by Lucius. As play closes, Lucius stands at the head of a Goth army in Rome and is ultimately declared the new Emperor. We cannot help but breathe a sigh of relief as the revenge arc of the play concludes and the emergence of a new State is finalized.

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* parallels many of the themes Balibar discusses in relation to the citizen-subject dichotomy and revolution. Violence is always at the center of the play, as revenge is the primary call to action for many of the characters within the text. Through the atrocities the characters inflict upon one another, a revolutionary moment emerges in which the citizen-subject dichotomy is fractured, and various potentials are revealed. *Titus Andronicus* undermines the morality of the State, as the central characters within the play use their agency to oppress and inflict violence upon one another. Characters initially denied agency, such as Aaron, are revealed to possess a level of morality that distinguishes them from those in power and justifies a revolution. However, despite the initial necessity of a revolutionary moment, evinced by the execution of Tamora's son, Shakespeare recognizes the ensuing chaos as unsustainable

and problematic. While the text provides us with glimpses at a potentially productive violence that suspends systems of oppression and works towards a greater equality, the endless cycle of bodily mutilation and death necessitates a return to the State and to a subject-citizen dichotomy. Balibar recognizes this inversion as universal throughout historical examples of revolutionary moments. Shakespeare allows us to criticize the actions of the characters within *Titus Andronicus* and, in so doing, imagine an alternative mode of transformation. The play forces us to confront pressing questions pertaining to the inherent sustainability of such a movement. How can we ensure equality and peace in the absence of oppressive systems that, while unjust, mitigate the violence of anarchy? *Titus Andronicus* clearly links language and revolution. Throughout the text, various characters are denied speech. As Balibar notes, language is an integral part of any revolutionary moment, as the word “revolution” must come from somewhere – it must be voiced into existence. Shakespeare plays with this idea, particularly with the characters of Lavinia and Aaron. The two inversely mirror one another throughout the play; as one returns to speech, the other loses the same capacity for language and thereby experiences a reduction of personal and political agency. *Titus Andronicus*, taken in connection with Shakespeare’s other Roman plays, asks us to question our own positions within our communities and our role in enacting productive violence upon the State to ensure a better negotiation between liberty and equality, and a more equitable society at large.

Throughout Shakespeare’s Roman plays, the consequences of the State’s failure is made deeply personal. In *Titus Andronicus*, outcomes of revolution are uniquely polarizing. Saturninus comes to stand before two peoples, the Goths and the Romans. The reestablishment of the State not only marks an end to the cycle of violence but also signifies a unification. Saturninus brings an army of Goths with him to Rome. The play ends with the crowning of an Emperor who,

despite the constant and horrific violence that separated the Romans and Goths, seemingly manages to unite the two peoples. However, this victory comes at a terrible cost. In reflecting on the violence in Shakespeare's play, particularly the moments of "productive" violence that hint at a better use of human time and effort, it is difficult accept the deaths and mutilations suffered by both sides as necessary. Furthermore, the deeply personal nature of the consequence of a failed negotiation between equality and liberty by the State reminds the reader of the individual role we all play in equaliberty.

### Conclusion – The Individual and Revolution

The objective of this thesis was to test my ability to read Balibar's understanding of "citizenship," "revolution," and "equaliberty" in Shakespeare's Roman plays. In doing so, I hoped to not only obtain a better understanding of the texts but also come to new conclusions about my relationship to my community. I found that I could apply my understanding of the terms to *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus*. Even in moments of revolution, in which the State and law were suspended in the time before an eventual inversion and transition of power, Balibar's citizen could be found in characters like Calphurnia, Cleopatra, and Aaron – characters who, despite barriers created by sexism and racism, demanded their natural status as free and equal humans be recognized. Shakespeare, as he has done in so many other areas of my life, humanized the revolutionary process. In doing so, he beautifully captures many of the insightful lessons provided by Balibar. Shakespeare allows us to process societal changes on an individual level. He shows us what revolutions look like on the ground, to the people they impact. He captures the desires of the oppressed to obtain their deserved liberty and equality and forces us to confront the grotesque reality of what a failed State signifies. In doing so, Shakespeare reminds us of our responsibility to our own communities.

Each of us has a personal relationship to equaliberty. The negotiation between equality and liberty, as Shakespeare reminds us, does not truly take place at the State level. The State and law are but apparatuses for facilitating the greater social relationships that define our community. We personally participate in this negotiation every day. Each individual decision we make, like those of the characters within the texts examined herein, has resonating consequences which shape the trajectory of our society. Balibar and Shakespeare remind us that we cannot separate the State from the individual. To externalize the structures of social regulation which perpetuate

systems of inequality is to forget or deny our relationship to them. The inadequacies of the State force people, like the character of Calphurnia in *Julius Caesar*, to rely upon alternative sources of agency. Our current political system continues to isolate and antagonize specific communities. We can readily observe this in the industrial prison complex, the war on drugs, our attitude towards immigrants, the current status of women's reproductive rights, the pay gap, the failure to raise the minimum wage, and so many more examples of systemic inequality right here at home. Like the character of Ventidius in *Antony and Cleopatra*, we can conform to tradition and play it safe, even if we know doing so goes against the best interests of our community. Or, like Cleopatra, we can challenge conventionality and embrace transition. We can take a lesson from *Titus Andronicus* and see where violence is necessary and where it is not. We can remember the relationship between language and revolution and use our position in society to give voice to those who cannot yet speak – those who the State has failed in recognizing their natural equality and liberty. Balibar offers an incredible perspective on revolution and the negotiation between freedom and equality. Shakespeare helps to make that perspective personal.

During my time at Emory, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, I was privileged to have come in contact with remarkable people everywhere I went. In the dorms and classrooms, I met students from all over the world. Each had a different story to tell. Each had a different understanding of why we were here, what our purpose was, what education meant to them and what they would do with it. They opened my eyes to the many different paths I could have taken before I ultimately arrived here, at the very same university. Emory not only introduced me to my peers, but to incredible professors who shaped my understanding of life, individuality and happiness. Through them I was able to access even more people – creative thinkers who had come long before me and left a unique mark on the world. I studied

revolutionaries, scientists, explorers, presidents and soldiers; and I studied everyday people from countries I had never been to before and from eras in history we can only remember from the things they left behind. I found that as my education improved and my contact with the world expanded, I came to better understand myself. It was in Emory's English Department that my love of Shakespeare was first cultivated. In the fall of 2016, I took a course that focused on the portrayal of animals in his plays and sonnets. My interest in literature was ignited. I found that in written form, the chaos of the world was somehow made understandable. It was this realization which motivated me to pursue further education and attempt this thesis.

As I reflect on the insights Shakespeare and Balibar provide, I find that they share an optimism for a more equal community. Each, through their exploration of the human experience, visualizes a better negotiation between equality and liberty. In applying this optimism to the individual's relationship with equal liberty, I came away with a few personal objectives.

Embrace diversity. Many of the failures of the State within Shakespeare's plays stem from a rejection of diversity. A government that denies agency to certain groups of people on the basis of some perceived difference perpetuates systems of oppression. For the betterment of our own communities, it is vital that we each play our own part in supporting marginalized groups. The importance of this objective is made obvious by the news we see each day. Right now, a wave of anti-Asian racism and fear has resulted in brutal attacks on the Asian community. One of the most horrific examples took place a few miles from Emory University at several spas and massage parlors throughout Atlanta. We must take a lesson from Cleopatra and become change, rather than fear it. This transitions into my next objective.

Reject outdated tradition and embrace change. In each of the plays examined, there is an observable moment when character's cling to visions of the past. Whether it be the Roman elite

opposing Caesar, Mark Antony mourning his former glory, or Titus Andronicus performing ritual sacrifice, the characters in Shakespeare's plays show us the danger in conformity, even if doing so initially seems beneficial. Stubbornness against progressive change results in entrenchment and a greater political divide. Like Ventidius, we can play it safe. We can accept doing less even if we know we are capable of more. But Ventidius did not save Rome. We have learned enough from Shakespeare and Balibar to realize that forcing oppressive systems upon people is unsustainable. There is no denying humanities natural freedom and liberty. We must embrace it. We must remember our responsibility in maintaining it. This brings me to my final objective.

Remember our personal relationship to the State. Balibar examines the nature of citizenship and illustrates the connection between the individual and government. Shakespeare humanizes the process of revolution. In reflecting on the texts of both Shakespeare and Balibar, I came to recognize the significance of my relationship to the community. In my youth, I had often disassociated politics from my personal life. The events talked about on the news and voted on by politicians did not appear to significantly impact my day-to-day. That made it easy to externalize the State and all its shortcomings. I did not consider myself personally connected to the industrial prison complex, the war on drugs, our attitude towards immigrants, the current status of women's reproductive rights, the pay gap, the failure to raise the minimum wage. I, of course, recognized the terrible injustices of each and would advocate for reformation. But I did not hold myself personally accountable. I considered myself just one person. A single individual in the greater social-matrix and community. One out of hundreds of millions of people. Shakespeare and Balibar changed my perspective. They challenged me to confront my relationship with the State. As I prepare to begin law school next fall, I move forward with yet



another lesson from Emory. My understanding of citizenship has grown beyond what I ever thought it would. In looking to apply my reading of Balibar's "citizenship," "equaliberty," and "revolution" to my own life, I ask myself not what the citizen is, but what it should be. The citizen should not only demand that his or her natural status as free and equal be recognized by the community. The citizen should demand that the natural status of all humans as free and equal be recognized. There are obvious complications this train of logic is going to create: questions about how to form a society based upon human rights rather than citizenship. But there is potential. It is with this potential in mind, an optimism I believe I might share with Balibar and Shakespeare, that I excitedly turn towards the future.

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