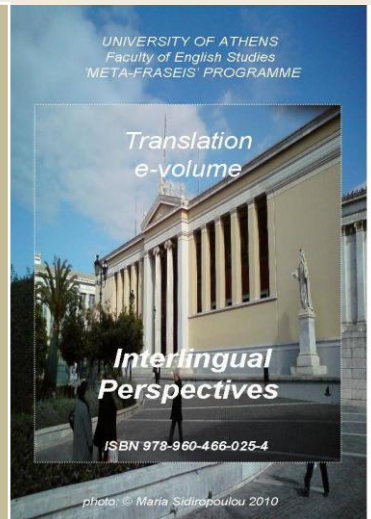


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Antony and Cleopatra:
sexuality
and submission



ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: SEXUALITY AND SUBMISSION

Maria Rigli

Abstract

In recent years, translation studies have focused on gender and sexual identity construction. The study aims at exploring discursive construction of identity in two Greek versions (1955, 1997) of Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606). It explores the way in which public narratives have influenced construction of these identities. It examines shifts which reveal a different approach to interpreting male gaze at female charm, as well as other gendered identities with reference to social hierarchies. Language choice seems to be influenced and motivated by socio-political conditions at the time of publication, among various other parameters. Male submission to female sexuality is rendered through manipulating aspects at a deeper level of culture, beyond the bounds of consciousness.

Key words

Sexuality, submission, power, sociopolitical changes, theatre, culture, social hierarchies.

1. The work and its characters

The Shakespearean tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra* was probably written around 1606. Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives: Antony* served as an inspiration source for the poet. The plot draws on historical events covering the period from 41 BC to 31 BC, when the Battle of Actium marked the end of the Roman Republic. It focuses on the relationship of queen Cleopatra of Egypt with the Roman politician and general Marcus Antonius, popularly known as Mark Antony. The story is set in Rome and in

Egypt. Shakespeare dramatized historical events of the period from the Sicilian revolt against the political alliance formed by Mark Antony, Octavian and Caesar to Cleopatra's suicide during the Civil War between Mark Antony and Octavian. The tragedy is written in a highly poetical language employing metaphors, symbolic expressions, hyperboles and allusions. One of the main topics of the tragedy is the struggle between love/sexuality and reason/ political power. In fact,

[t]he love between Antony and Cleopatra is based on power. The lovers could have stayed together in disgrace, or run off, but the real basis of their love for each other is the power each of them holds. Without that power, and the honor implied by it, their relationship means nothing (SHMOOP online).

Throughout the play, Antony "vacillates" (ibid) between his duty to the empire and his passion for Cleopatra. His frequent changes of behaviour (tenderness transforms into anger and vice versa) demonstrate the internal battle he experiences and his dilemmas between love and political duty. For example, in the first act of the play, he declares "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the rang'd empire fall" (I.i.35–36), which underlines his willingness to sacrifice his military duties and yield to pleasures often connected with the power of female sexuality embodied by Cleopatra. He thus seems to have temporally become politically "eunuchised" by sacrificing his political strength in order to enjoy life. Krontiri (2000) claims that this political eunuchism is evident as early as the first scene of the play in which Philo, a Roman soldier, compares Antony to a "fan... cool[ing] a gipsy's lust".

Cleopatra symbolizes female sexuality. Without describing her physical features, Shakespeare presents the portrait of a sensual woman of unrivalled beauty and grace:

[Cleopatra] is particularly notable for her strong sexuality, and sexual relations with the world's most powerful men. She is one of Shakespeare's few female characters for whom sex is not a submission, but a testament to her own

glory. As such, Cleopatra is symbolic of her country. As an earthy and sensual woman, Cleopatra represents the earthy and sensual Egyptian culture (SHMOOP online).

Cleopatra is, certainly, one of Shakespeare's most accomplished creations; she can stir strong feelings, such as anger – as shown by the scene in which Antony gets angry when Caesar's messenger, Thidias, kisses Cleopatra.

Throughout the play, the male characters rail against the power of female sexuality. Caesar and his men condemn Antony for the weakness that makes him bow to the Egyptian queen, but they clearly lay the blame for his downfall on Cleopatra. On the rare occasion that the Romans do not refer to her as a whore, they describe her as an enchantress whose beauty casts a dangerous spell over men. As Enobarbus notes, Cleopatra possesses the power to warp the minds and judgment of all men, even "holy priests" who "[b]less her" when she acts like a whore (II.ii. 244–245) (SparkNotes online).

This contradiction serves as a considerable starting point for examining how translators have treated the theme of power and sexuality in the target texts. Shakespeare is among the writers whose works have been most translated and dramatized. Moreover, as a writer, he contributed to the formation of identities and ideologies.

Shakespeare's works reflect and voice a masculine anxiety about the uses of patriarchal power over women, specifically about men's control over women's sexuality, which arises from this disparity between men's social dominance and their peculiar emotional vulnerability to women (Kahn 1981: 12).

This paper studies two Greek translations of the play – one by the poet Vassilis Rotas in 1954-55 and another one by the filmmaker Michael Cacoyannis in 1997. The aim is to explore the viewpoint from which translators approached the theme of the tragedy, namely male submission to female sexuality. The texts used for the study appear below.

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- ST Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra, SPARKNOTES online/and bilingual edition of *Shakespeare, William*. 1997. *Antony and Cleopatra*. transl. Michael Cacoyannis. Athens: Kastaniotis.
- TT1 Σαίξπηρ, Ουίλλιαμ. 1954-1955 [reprinted in 2009]. *Αντώνιος και Κλεοπάτρα*. μετάφρ. Βασιλῆς Ρώτας. Αθήνα: Επικαιρότητα.
- TT2 Σαίξπηρ, Ουίλλιαμ. 1997. *Παράλληλα Κείμενα. Αντώνιος και Κλεοπάτρα*. μετάφρ. Μιχάλης Κακογιάννης. Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης.

The cultural significance of Shakespearean translations can be assessed in quantitative and qualitative terms. It is worthwhile noting that many translation theorists use Shakespeare's work to test the relevance and the validity of their theoretical interpretations. This study examines interpretations of male submission to female sexuality by exploring two subthemes in the target versions, namely, male gaze at female charm, and the construction of further gendered identities as manifested through construction of power and hierarchical relations.

2. Sex and gender representation through the lens of language

In recent years, translation studies have focused on gender and sexual identity construction. The goal is to explore the way in which public narratives have influenced representation of these identities. Butler (in Felluga 2002 online), the American post-structuralist philosopher, claims that gender is not connected with material bodily facts; instead, it is a social construction. Stereotypes assume stable identities and gender differences, while language subjects construct their identity drawing on non-/established social norms (Felluga 2002). The status of men and women seems to be determined by language – it is socially encoded: for instance, girls being discouraged from developing muscles and boys are encouraged to do so (Hinnells 2005). Hinnells thus agrees with Butler on the mutability of sex throughout time due to social or cultural developments reflected through language (Felluga 2002). The connection of language with social

norms is also shared by Nikolopoulou (online): she agrees with Foucault that sexuality is not “a biological category, but a form of experience that arose in modern societies after the 18th century through types of language (pedagogical, moral, etc.)”¹.

If language is so crucial in encoding and constructing identities, this study attempts to examine the linguistic devices translators have used in the two versions to shape intended identities.

2.1 Male gaze at female charm

As mentioned, one of the main themes of the tragedy is female sexuality and seductiveness. The study begins with examining male gaze at female charm. The following examples reflect different approaches to the representation of this theme, in the two versions. In TT1, female charm is represented in a neutral way and is often associated with food and hunger. However, the more recent translation reveals a more overt, voluptuary and, often, offensive attitude towards women, irrespective of the social class to which the latter belong. Moreover, in TT2 the power of female charm is often described in political terms (see, for instance, example 5, *με κυβερνούσες*). Philo, one of the members of Antony’s company, refers to the power Cleopatra exerts over Antony. In the more recent translation, the translator uses the TT2 item *κορμί* (*body*) in rendering ST item *front*, which creates more sensual connotations than TT1 item *μέτωπο* (*forehead*).

Example 1

ST	those his goodly eyes [...] now bend, now turn the office and devotion of their view upon a tawny <i>front</i> (p. 12)
TT1	τα τολμηρά του μάτια [...] τώρα λύγισαν, πιώστρεψαν τα βλέμματα ερωτιάρικα σε <i>μέτωπο</i> άλλο, μελαπό (p. 17) <i>his daring eyes [...] have now bent, turned their eyes amorously upon another front, a swarthy one</i>
TT2	τα ξύπνια μάτια του [...] τώρα όλο σκόβουν, προσκυνούν το <i>μελαπό κορμί</i> που΄γινε στόχος και σκοπός της αφοσίωσής τους

¹ Writer’s translation.

(p. 13)

TT2: his smart eyes [...] now bend, kowtow to the swarthy body, the target and objective of their devotion

In addition, TT2 item *πόρνη* (*whore*) is more offensive than *μαυλίστρα* (*seductress*), whose offensive value is minimal, because the word belongs to an older register.

Example 2

ST strumpet's fool (p. 12)

TT1 το μπαϊγνιο μιας *μαυλίστρας* (p. 18)
a seductress's game

TT2 μιας *πόρνης* παιχνιδάκι (p. 13)
a whore's game

In the following extract, Antony expresses his anger at Cleopatra, after learning about the bonds which linked the queen of Egypt with Caesar's family. TT2 assumes a more sensual image of Cleopatra: see TT2 items *μεζές* (*delicacy*), *τρώγησε η αχόρταγη λαγνεία σου* (*your insatiable lust enjoyed*) in contrast to TT1 in which sexual connotations are more indirectly expressed mainly through allusion to food: *αποκόμματα* (*leftover*) and *τσιμπησες λιχουδιές* (*picked out delicacies*), which allows the implication of secret activity. Moreover, the translator of TT1 chooses a common, namely less sophisticated, language to describe Cleopatra's actions.

Example 3

ST I found you as a morsel, cold upon dead Caesar's trencher:
nay, you were a fragment, of Gnaeus Pompey's, besides what
hotter hours, unregistered in vulgar fame, you have luxuri-
ously pick'd out (p. 290)

TT1 Σ'ήβρα αποφάγι κρύο στου πεθαμένου Καίσαρα το πιάτο' μά-
λιστα, ήσουνα *αποκόμματα* του Γνάιου Πομπήιου' αφήνω πόσες
ώρες πιο ζεστές, που δεν τις έχει καταγράψει η αγοραία η
φήμη, *τσιμπησες λιχουδιές* (p. 112)
I found you as cold leftovers upon dead Caesar's dish; yes, you were

- a fragment of Gnaeus Pompey; not to mention for how many hotter hours, unregistered in vulgar fame, you picked out delicacies*
- TT2 Σε περιμάζεψα σαν αποφάγι κρύο στου νεκρού του Καίσαρα το πιάτο. Ναι, ένας μεζές, αυτό ήσουνα, του Γνάιου Πομπήιου, αφήνω πόσες παθιασμένες ώρες, που αγνοεί η κουτσομπόλα φήμη, τρύγησε η αχόρταγη λαγνεία σου (p. 291)
I picked you up like cold leftovers upon dead Caesar's dish. Yes, a delicacy, this is what you were, for Gnaeus Pompey, not to mention how many passionate hours, unknown by gossiping fame, your insatiable lust enjoyed

In the following example, Antony's sense of duty seems to win over his love for Cleopatra. It is a matter of political honour. TT2 item *μάγια της Κλεοπάτρας* (*the spell of Cleopatra*) reveals that Antony's power of reason is fully blinded. Cleopatra is an enchantress having cast her spell on Antony who is fully incapable of reacting against her wishes.

Example 4

- ST I must from this enchanting queen break off (p. 38)
- TT1 Πρέπει να κόψω μακριά από τη γητεύτρα αυτή βασίλισσα (p. 26)
I must wean myself off this enchanting queen
- TT2 Πρέπει να λυτρωθώ από τα μάγια της Κλεοπάτρας (p. 39)
I must free myself from the spell of Cleopatra

In the following example, TT2 item *με κυβερνούσες* (*you ruled me*) has strong manipulative connotations. The translator associates female charm with political power, whereas the translator of TT1 refers to the emotional, static condition arising from Antony's submission.

Example 5

- ST You did know how much you were my conqueror (p. 266)
- TT1 Τό'ξερες πως μ'είχες κυριέψει (p. 104)
You knew that you had conquered me

TT2 Το 'ξερες εσύ πόσο γερά με κυβερνούσες (p. 267)
You did know how firmly you ruled me

In the following example, Cleopatra refers to the fate awaiting Iras if she yields to Octavian's desires. It is an instance where the translators determine how the female identity is going to be received by the public in Rome. TT2 uses the depreciatory item *ανδρείκελο* (*puppet*) in contrast to TT1 item *κούκλα* (*doll*) which has a female orientation and carries positive connotations.

Example 6

- ST Now, Iras, what think'st thou?
 Thou, an Egyptian *puppet* shall be shown
 In Rome as well as I: mechanic slaves
 With greasy aprons, rules, and hammers shall
 Uplift us to the view (p. 430)
- TT1 Και τώρα, Είρας, τι λες;
 Εσένα Αιγύπτια *κούκλα*, θα σε διαπομπέψουν στη Ρώμη, όπως
 κι εμένα. Δούλοι χερομάχοι, με ποδιές λιγδωμένες, με σφυριά
 και πήχες θα μας σηκώσουν θέαμα (p. 165)
Now, Iras, what do you think?
You, an Egyptian doll, will be ridiculed in Rome, just like me.
Manual slaves, with greasy aprons, hammers and boards, shall
uplift us to the view.
- TT2 Και τώρα, Ιρας, τι νομίζεις;
 Ένα *ανδρείκελο* είσαι της Αιγύπτου που προορίζεται, όπως κι
 εγώ, για επίδειξη στη Ρώμη. Τιποτένιοι δούλοι με λιγδερές
 ποδιές, με αξίνες και λοστούς, θα μας προσφέρουν σηκωτές
 στα μάτια (p. 431)
And now, Iras, what do you think?
You are a puppet of Egypt destined to be shown in Rome, just like
me. Petty servants, with greasy aprons, hoes and crowbars, will
uplift us to the view.

Male gaze is thus more promptly constructed through TT2 options than through TT1 ones. More shifts of this type involve ST *in flesh*

rendered as TT1 *κρεατωμένη* [meaty] vs. TT2 *σαρκική* [fleshy], ST *triple-turn'd whore* rendered as TT1 *τρεις φορές εταίρα* [triple-turned hetaira] vs. TT2 *τρεις φορές πόρνη εσὸ* [triple-turned whore], ST *strumpets* rendered as TT1 *κοινές* [prostitutes] vs. TT2 *ξεσίπωτες* [brash women], ST *looks on feeders* rendered as TT1 *ρίχνει το βλέμμα της στα τσανάκια* [*casts her eyes on parasites*] vs. TT2 *χαιδολογείται με λακέδες* [*flirts with la-keys*].

2.2 Other gendered identities and social hierarchies

Examples in this section show that TT2 tends to enforce submission to female identity. In the following example, Antony refers to emasculation, his inability to resist Cleopatra's charm. It is evident through TT2 item *με κατάντησες* (*suffer degeneration*), which constitutes a depreciatory comment on his own condition, whereas TT1 item *μ'έχεις φέρει* (*you led me*) is more neutral in this respect.

Example 7

ST O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? (p. 264)

TT1 Ποῦ μ'έχεις φέρει, ὦ Αἰγυπτία; (p. 103)
Egyptian, where have you led me?

TT2 Αχ, Αἴγυπτος, ποῦ με κατάντησες! (p. 265)
Egypt, what degeneration have you made me suffer?

Likewise, Mardian, a eunuch in the service of Cleopatra, is described by the queen in different ways in the two versions. TT2 item *ἀσπερμος* (*deprived of semen*) (p. 73) rendering ST item *unseminar'd* (p. 72) more eloquently constructs male weakness and activates sexual connotations, than TT1 item *ἀμέτοχος* (*genetically non-involved*) does, toning down offensiveness.

The following examples contain forms of addressing the queen by two socially inferior persons, namely by Charmian – one of Cleopatra's female servants – (example 8) and by eunuch Mardian (example 9). TT1 seems to bridge the social distance between the queen and her subordinates in contrast with TT2 which highlights this distance by focusing on Cleopatra's noble origin.

Example 8

- ST Good madam, keep yourself within yourself (p. 140)
 TT1 *Κυρούλα μου, έλα στον εαυτό σου (p. 62)*
My dear mistress, come to yourself!]
 TT2 *Καλή μου δέσποινα, κυβέρνα τον εαυτό σου (p. 141)*
My noble madam, master your actions

Example 9

- ST What's your highness' pleasure? (p. 72)
 TT1 *Τι αγαπάει η χάρη σου; (p. 38)*
What's the wish of your Grace?
 TT2 *Τι θέλει η υψηλότητά σου; (p. 73)*
What's the wish of your Highness?

Construction of social hierarchies in the universe of the play involves power relations which contribute to construction identities. Female power seems to be highlighted in TT2 more drastically.

3. Gender, sex and power distance

Acknowledging that gender, power and hierarchical structures are important variables of interpersonal communication, this section summarizes differences between TT1 and TT2 along the above themes in the following table. "+" shows the version which enhances the relevant feature.

Table 1. Thematic orientations in the two versions

VARIABLES	TT1	TT2
Male gaze at female charm	-	+
Other gendered identities and social hierarchies	-	+

The study has sought to identify aspects of cultural knowledge which are prioritized in the two versions. These aspects of culture are connected with each other in a fluid way (Katan 2011), creating a single ensemble; they operate on three levels: technical (language),

formal and informal. The first level is connected with the use of language signs as means of expression of a referential function as well as with the universality of the values that these signs include. The translator is interested in the text itself and in the equivalences that can be found when cultural elements are transferred through language. The second level, the so-called formal, focuses on the notion of appropriateness. It has a functional character, as the main concern is the purpose of the translation. Finally, the third level - the informal one - goes beyond the bounds of consciousness and is subject to a metacognitive process.

The comparative study of the two target texts shows that both translators have been influenced by the third level of culture, each one for different reasons. Their choices reflect the sociological dimension of translation. More specifically, the use of mild, offenseless forms of expression for the representation of women in TT1 is, probably, due to the less liberated customs of the time. TT1 uses food-associated metaphorical analogies for the representation of sexuality. Krontiri (2005) claims that the use of domesticating translation strategies is probably due to his perception of Shakespearean dramas as means of supporting folk culture and enriching national culture. In fact, Rotas' intention was to use lively expressions which he had heard from the mouth of the Greek people, to "sail in the ocean of folk art, folk language, folk tradition, folk creation" (Damianakou 1994: 168). More precisely, the translator states his motivation as follows:

The elation my intellect felt from Shakespeare's work was like a new, unprecedented joy which had much in common with what I had experienced up until that day, but also like a revelation which revived in my mind the fairy tales and the songs which had enchanted me during my childhood, the dances and the festivities which I had seen, even Karagiozis² which I myself had played (Damianakou 1994: 166-167)³.

² A shadow puppet and fictional character of Greek folklore

³ Writer's translation.

TT1 can be justified by the sociopolitical context of the time. The cultural system described by the translator of TT1 was connected with a weak presence and participation of women in sociopolitical affairs, since there was a very short time interval between the date of the translation – 1955 – and the date of 1952, when political rights were granted to women. The construction of women's sexuality in terms of expressions referring to hunger seems to be alluding to the financial situation in Greece which was devastated by the Second World War (1939-1945) – and mainly during the occupation of the country by the the Axis power in 1941 – as well as by the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). It is a time marked by a reduction in livestock and mining production as well as in national income (Gregoriadis 1979).

A large part of the countryside was deserted. Many towns suffered severe war damage. Approximately seven hundred thousand villagers uprooted and exiled. Around 90,000 people together with children abandoned Greece at the end of the war. There were almost 90,000 unemployed in a total population of 7.5 million people. A third of the active population was driven out of production (Gregoriadis 1979: 98-99)⁴.

Svoronos (2007) also refers to the hard conditions prevailing in Greece which are claimed to have motivated the translator of TT1. More specifically, he attributes the poverty of that period to the uneven distribution of foreign financial aid that was given to Greece and resulted in the support of the country's military equipment program, to the detriment of productive investments. The Greek population was unable to live decently despite Greece's rural and industrial progress during the period 1952-1963. The situation in Greece deteriorated because of unequal distribution of national income and a taxation system based on indirect taxes hitting economically weaker sections of the Greek population (Svoronos 2007).

By contrast, TT2 encourages offensive language, favouring the production of a more lively, communicative and intervening translation, in compliance with conventional translation standards. In other

⁴ Writer's translation.

words, the translator of TT2 seems to take into account Bassnett's and Walton's claim about the semiotics of "translation" in theatrical environments, according to which the aesthetics of the target text is practically influenced by its dramatization potential (Hardwick 2011). Moreover, TT2 realizes the general twentieth-century tendency for greater freedom of expression due to an increasing tolerance of modern societies to questions such as sexuality and violence.

This paper leaves a gender-related question open. Our attitudes and knowledge intervene with the way information is read, processed and translated, and thus gender identity construction is expected to be constantly shifting as socio-cultural input is modified.

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About the author

Maria Rigli studied French Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Translation at schools such as meta|φραση School of Translation Studies, the Hellenic American Union, Institut Français d'Athènes and the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust. Her contribution to the *Interlingual Perspectives e-volume* is an edited version of the research initiated in

her “Translation Research Methodology” course of the Interdepartmental MA Programme in Translation Studies, taught by the editor. She has worked as a translator at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games Organising Committee. Since 2004, she has been working as a translator for translation agencies, individuals and publishing houses (Kastalia Publishers).