



Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon

F. Royster

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Cleopatra. Sexy, sultry, political, and racially ambiguous. Moving fluidly from Shakespeare's England to contemporary LA, Francesca Royster looks at the performance of race and sexuality in a wide range of portrayals of that icon of dangerous female sexuality, Cleopatra. Royster begins with Shakespeare's original appropriation of Plutarch, and then moves on to analyze performances of the Cleopatra icon by Josephine Baker, Elizabeth Taylor, Pam Grier (Cleopatra Jones) and Queen Latifah (in *Set It Off*). Royster argues that Cleopatra highlights a larger cultural anxiety about women, sexuality, and race.

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