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THE IMPACT OF WOMEN ON THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MARK ANTONY

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by

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Abstract

Throughout the life of Mark Antony, the women he became involved with had a large impact on his political career, life, and legacy. These women, such as Fulvia and Cleopatra, used Antony as a means to achieve their own political, economic, and personal goals and were able to gain power in a very anti-feminist society through their relationships with and manipulations of him, affecting the career of Antony in many ways including his politics and his actions as a military commander, as showcased by the examination of primary sources from the late Roman Republic and early Roman empire periods. This key role of women in Antony's life was used against him by his political enemies and anti-Antony propagandists like Cicero and Augustus, which negatively impacted Antony's reputation in Rome, contributing to his eventual downfall in 30 BCE and leaving a permanent impact on his legacy. This lasting female presence on his legacy is present not only within Roman sources such as the speeches of Cicero, Augustan propaganda, and records of Antony's life, but also within historical texts that were written long after his death, which will be examined through the literature of Vergil and Shakespeare.

Key Words: Mark Antony, Rome, Sexuality, Gender, History, Classics, Classical Studies, English, Cleopatra, Fulvia, Octavia.

Dedication/Appreciation

I would like to thank my advisors Dr. Gorman and Dr. Palmer for guiding me throughout this process and allowing me to explore a subject I find so fascinating. I have loved working with both you and am so insanely grateful for your support. I would also like to thank my parents for all of their support over the years, as well as my best friend Allison Lund for listening to my incoherent ramblings as I worked on this project. Finally, I have to thank the late Mark Antony for being such an interesting figure throughout his life, which allowed me not only to write this paper, but to have a fun time doing it.

The Impact of Women on the Life and Legacy of Mark Antony

Marcus Antonius lived from 83 BCE until 30 BCE, in an era when most women had very little power and received equally little recognition in Rome's patriarchal society. During this time, women were not necessarily viewed as individual people, but as political and economic tools to be married off at as young as fourteen years old with no say about their husbands. As soon as one husband died, they were often immediately married off to someone else.¹ Women were an essential part of the household, resigned to weaving and other traditionally feminine tasks, and most women had little to no power outside of these pursuits. There were exceptions to these standards, however. The vestal virgins, for example, were allowed to remain unmarried and hold an honorable position among the Roman social hierarchy.² Similarly, Livia, wife of Augustus, was able to assert political power through her husband during his reign as emperor.³ Generally, though, women were considered to be at their best when they were seen and not heard, thus receiving little opportunity to pursue an education or a life as something other than a wife or mother.⁴

Despite the lack of agency for Roman women in general, the women in Antony's life were largely an exception to this paradigm. In fact, Antony's legacy and reputation were controlled by women, and his political and personal lives were intertwined with the women with whom he involved himself. Those individual women seized the rare opportunity to further their own agendas

1 Clark 1981, 200-203.

2 Huzar 1978, 207; Richlin 2014, 31.

3 Barret 2002, 115; Richlin 2014, 84.

4 Clark 1981, 206-208.

and gain autonomy in a society that allowed them very little. Fulvia, Octavia, and Cleopatra all used their marriages to Antony in order to further their own political agendas, and he relied on them for political power, funding, military support, and more. Antony was manipulated and controlled by the women in his life, and his reputation became intertwined with femininity, a fact that was used and emphasized by his political enemies in order to turn the people of Rome against him and contribute to his downfall.

The first thing to note before the explorations of Antony's relationship with gender and femininity is the bias of sources and lack of material from the discussed time periods. The main sources of contemporaneous information used to discuss Antony come from Marcus Tullius Cicero. Cicero was a known enemy of Antony's and spent much of his time mocking and disparaging Antony's character and reputation. The *Philippics* themselves were speeches specifically intended solely to defame Antony.⁵ Other works such as Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, Appian's *Civil Wars*, Cassius Dio's *History of Rome*, and Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* were all written years after Antony's death and are not first-hand accounts of what was happening during Antony's lifetime. The large amount of time between the writing of those sources and Antony's life means that they were most likely influenced, at least partially, by Augustan propaganda. During the civil war especially, Octavian had the incentive to tear down Antony at every turn in order to win the support of the Roman people during their political and military disputes. While the information from these sources, as well as the works of Cicero, may very well be accurate accounts of Antony's life, there is very much a bias present in them that is important to take into consideration.

⁵ Goldenhard 2018, 6.

Although femininity is intertwined with Antony's life and legacy, the masculine qualities of Antony were certainly there as well, and there were ways in which Antony encapsulated the standard of Roman male ideals. One of the key ways that Antony did this was in his military career. As a general, Antony led very successfully, a trait associated with masculinity. According to Guy De la Bédoyère in his book on Roman warfare, this victory and violence was all in accordance to Roman standards of what masculinity looked like since "it was all part of Roman virtue, which meant honourable courage, manliness and heroism all dressed up in a semi-religious veneration of violence."⁶ In 54 BCE, Antony secured a position under Caesar as a member of his military staff during his conquest of Gaul, where he displayed impressive military leadership, causing Caesar to promote him.⁷ Antony continued to serve at Caesar's side throughout the civil war between Caesar and Pompey that began in 49 BCE.⁸ According to Plutarch:

The struggles which followed were many and continuous, and in all of them Antony distinguished himself. [...] Accordingly, next to Caesar, he was the man most talked about in the camp. And Caesar showed plainly what opinion he had of him. For when he was about to fight the last and all-decisive battle at Pharsalus, he himself took the right wing, but he gave the command of the left to Antony, as the most capable officer under him.⁹

Antony was an impressive military commander and was extremely well-respected by Caesar himself, giving him the respect of the Roman soldiers as well. This military prowess continued

6 De la Bédoyère 2020, 208.

7 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 5.

8 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 8.

9 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 8.

throughout his life, and, notably, at the Battle of Philippi. In this battle, Antony demonstrated feats of bravery and skill, with Appian stating that:

He courageously broke this advance guard and dashed against the fortification that ran between the marsh and the camp, demolished the palisade, filled up the ditch, undermined the works, and killed the men at the gates, disregarding the missiles hurled from the wall, until he had forced an entrance through the gates, and others had made breaches in the fortification, and still others had climbed up on the débris.¹⁰

According to Appian, Antony continued to courageously lead the battle, rallied his men, and was one of the largest contributing factors to the defeat of Brutus and Cassius.¹¹ This demonstration of Roman masculinity as a military commander was especially impressive and notable in comparison to Octavian since “no great achievements were performed by Caesar, but it was Antony who was everywhere victorious and successful” because Octavian was sick and unable to participate in the battle.¹² These demonstrations of being an accomplished, respected, and competent general were all ways in which Antony excelled at exhibiting traditionally masculine traits.

Another aspect of his life that he acted very masculinely in was his physical form. Although many of his actions were seen as effeminate, his gender presentation was far from feminine or androgynous. According to Plutarch “He had also a noble dignity of form; and a shapely beard, a broad forehead, and an aquiline nose were thought to show the virile qualities peculiar to

¹⁰ Appian. *The Civil Wars*. 4.111.

¹¹ Appian. *The Civil Wars*. 4.119-134.

¹² Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 22.1; Galinsky 2012, 32.

the portraits and statues of Heracles.”¹³ Cicero similarly comments on Antony’s body, stating “You with that gullet of yours, with those lungs, with that gladiatorial strength of your whole body.”¹⁴ It is clear from these descriptions that Antony was muscular and presented himself in a traditionally masculine manner. Another way that Antony used his presentation in order to conform to masculine ideals was his comparisons to Heracles, who was a masculine figure as a Greek hero.¹⁵ The Antonius family claimed their lineage from Heracles due to the name of Hercules's son, Anton.¹⁶ Antony very much tried to emulate this in the way he dressed, wearing his tunic high to show off his muscular thighs, wearing a large sword by his side, and adorning himself with a heavy cloak.¹⁷ All of these physical attributes were attributed to Heracles and therefore were things that Antony emphasized in his dress.¹⁸ This emulation of Heracles was not only in his dress; statues and coins of Antony were also made in the image of Heracles.¹⁹ Paul Zanker explains that “he used the identification with Heracles to best effect as the macho soldier fraternizing with his men. An engraved stone from a ring, found at Pompeii, shows that there were statues of him of this type and that his followers gladly carried such an image of their hero on a ring and used it as a seal.”²⁰ It is apparent from his dress and the way he was represented in art

13 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 4.

14 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.63.

15 Freyburger 2009, 24.

16 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 4; Freyburger 2009, 24; Zanker 1988, 45.

17 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 4; Freyburger 2009, 24.

18 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 4; Freyburger 2009, 24.

19 Zanker 1988, 45-46.

20 Zanker 1988, 45-46.

that Antony embraced this masculine look, and, while his actions may have been perceived femininely, his dress and presentation were anything but.

Antony certainly held the aforementioned masculine traits, however, the feminine traits displayed by Antony can be traced all the way back to his childhood. Antony's youth was a time when many of his attitudes toward women can be traced, since he lacked strong male role models and was instead raised by a woman. Antony's father, Marcus Antonius Creticus, died in Crete in 72 BCE, after being given military command against the Mediterranean pirates and, as Cicero stated, he failed miserably due to his corruption and incompetence.²¹ Antony was left in the care of his mother, Julia, who later married Publius Cornelius Lentulus Sura, another man considered an enemy of the Roman people.²² Lentulus was constantly in debt and was eventually arrested and executed for his involvement in the second Catiline conspiracy in 63 BCE.²³ Lentulus and Creticus, the only two father figures in Antony's life, were both regarded as weak, incompetent men who died for their mistakes and would not have been good role models for a young Antony growing up in Rome. Instead, the only stable parental figure that Antony had was his mother, Julia, something that would have made him respect women more than the average Roman citizen, since he was exposed to the incompetence of men and authority of women from an early age.²⁴ Antony's upbringing may be a reason Antony was so willing to let his wives control his career

21 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 2.1; Huzar 1985, 14.

22 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.14, 2.18; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 2.1-2.

23 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.14, 2.18; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 2.1-2.

24 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 2.1. Welch 1995, 189.

rather than attempting to do something on his own; he had seen the failure of men in his family first-hand through the death of his father and the execution of his step-father.

The first instance of Antony using the power of his wife, rather than relying on his own influence or resources, occurred in his marriage to his first wife. According to Cicero, Antony was married to a woman named Fadia in his youth, although the exact time period is unspecified. Fadia was a lowborn woman, the daughter of a rich freedman whom Antony married for her wealth, since “Antony therefore had to overcome the failings of the previous generation of Antonii, but he could rely on the distinction of his grandfather and some family resources, which “included the large Antonian clientela and access to wealth, arising both from the family’s business interests in the East and from a possibly lucrative first marriage to Fadia, the daughter of a freedman.”²⁵ During his youth, Antony had become obsessed with drinking, gambling, and indulging in unsavory activities, which caused him to accumulate a large amount of debt.²⁶ Antony was unable to pay the debt off himself, so, according to Cicero, Antony had to marry this freedwoman, from one of the lowest rungs of the Roman social hierarchy, in order to pay what he owed.²⁷ Although little is known about Fadia, the trend of Antony needing his wife’s resources began with her and certainly continued after their marriage, since Antony needed Fadia for his own gain, despite her lower social status.

²⁵ Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.3; 3.15, 13.10. Goldenhard. 2018, 13; Myers 2003, 5.

²⁶ Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.3; Huzar 1985, 97.

²⁷ Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.3; 3.15, 13.10. Goldenhard. 2018, 13; Huzar 1985, 97; Myers 2003, 5.

After an unknown amount of time, Antony married again, this time to Antonia, a cousin of his, and again he used her wealth for his own benefit after accumulating large debts.²⁸ Antony's marriage to Antonia contributed to his politics in 47 BCE, when Caesar was in Egypt, due to her relationship with Dolabella.²⁹ Publius Cornelius Dolabella, a tribune in 47 and former supporter of Pompey, Caesar's rival, seduced Antonia, which caused Antony to attack him.³⁰ Antony's attack was wildly mismanaged, since Antony lost many of his own men and lost a lot of public favor.³¹ The political chaos with Dolabella was so bad that Caesar was forced to return home and clean up Antony's mess.³² Additionally, the idea of a man being cuckolded by another man did nothing to boost his reputation as a masculine figure. Antony, once again, allowed his political actions to be controlled by his wife and the rumors surrounding her, rather than thinking about actions that would put him in a more favorable position with the Roman people and with Caesar himself.

While Antony's early marriages show the beginnings of his political career lining up with the women he involved himself with, it fully came to a head in 47 BCE, when, soon after the divorce of Antonia, Antony married Fulvia, one of the most powerful women in Rome.³³ Unlike Fadia and Antonia, Fulvia had a reputation as a powerful politician through her previous marriages. Plutarch describes Fulvia as a woman not fit for running a household or sewing like most

28 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 9.1-2; Huzar 1985, 98.

29 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.99; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 9.1-2; Huzar 1985, 99.

30 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.99; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 9.1-2; Huzar 1985, 99.

31 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 9.1-2; Huzar 1985, 99.

32 Appian, *The Civil Wars*. 2.122, 129; Huzar 1985, 99.

33 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.3; Huzar 1985, 99.

women did, and, according to the Romans, should do. Rather she was a better fit to being a ruler, which can be demonstrated even before her marriage to Antony, and Plutarch states that “she was a woman who took no thought for spinning or housekeeping, nor would she deign to bear sway over a man of private station, but she wished to rule a ruler and command a commander.”³⁴ Before her marriage to Antony, Fulvia was married to both Clodius and Curio, and was politically involved with each of them.³⁵ When Clodius died in 82 BCE in a gang war with Milo, another politician, Fulvia used his death as a way to position herself politically and went dragging his body into the streets of Rome in order to make herself an avenging symbol for him.³⁶ She strove to become a reminder of Clodius and his death, and “from 52, she had a unique asset to offer any future husband which did not depend on inheritance or background: she was the widow of the people's hero, the mother of his children, the visible symbol and reminder of his presence. Until Clodius' son was able to take over the patronage of the Clodian clientela for himself, a chosen husband could use his marriage to Fulvia to extend his own interests.”³⁷ This strategic political maneuvering paid off, since she regained her control over her late husband's gangs. They remained loyal to her due to her strong involvement with her husband and status as an avenger in his death. Fulvia used these connections to Clodius in order to help her next husband, Curio, and put him in a very advantageous position. She encouraged him to promote Clodian policies and to preserve his legacy, and in 50 BCE, Curio became Tribune due to the support of Clodius's fol-

34 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.3.

35 Babcock 1965, 1.

36 Babcock 1965, 21.

37 Babcock 1965, 21; Welch 1995, 186-187.

lowers who had remained loyal to Fulvia.³⁸ The political involvement of Fulvia before her marriage to Antony was only a precursor to how politically involved she would become when they were together, since she used her political reach in order to further her own Clodian political agenda and aid her husbands' causes.

Fulvia had a hold over Antony not only politically, but personally. In 48 BCE, after Caesar had won in Spain, Antony rode out to Rome to see Fulvia.³⁹ At this time, rumors that they had lost and Caesar had been killed were spreading around the city.⁴⁰ Despite the rumors, Antony dressed like a servant and delivered a letter to Fulvia, stating that he, Antony, had died.⁴¹ After she began to weep, Antony embraced her and revealed himself to her.⁴² This lack of judgment demonstrates the lengths that Antony would go to just to test Fulvia's devotion, even going as far as to strike fear into the hearts of the people of Rome by pretending that they had lost in Spain. Fulvia also may have been the one to convince Antony to divorce his previous wife, Antonia. Although her adultery was well known, Antony only publicly noticed it when it was suitable for him to marry Fulvia, and their marriage occurred very shortly after his divorce of Antonia, sooner than the appropriate mourning time.⁴³ Antony also was willing to give up his previous affairs and life of debauchery for Fulvia, including giving up Cytheris, an actress he had been involved with, just to ensure that Fulvia was content and happy in their marriage, even though it was not

38 Babcock 1965, 21; Welch 1995, 189.

39 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.77; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.4-5.

40 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.77; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.4-5.

41 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.77; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.4-5.

42 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.77; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.4-5; Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015, 255.

43 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.2; Huzar 1985, 99; Myers 2003, 5.

considered particularly egregious for Roman men to commit adultery.⁴⁴ These lengths that Antony was willing to go to in order to make Fulvia happy are prevalent throughout his personal life, and highlight the hold that she had over him.

Although Fulvia certainly had an element of control over Antony's personal life, her influence on his politics was significant as well, particularly after Caesar's death in 44 BCE. With the formation of the Second Triumvirate in 42 BCE, Fulvia was able to take hold of more political power than she had been before, and, due to Antony's newfound power, was more able to manipulate things in her favor.⁴⁵ During the formation of the Second Triumvirate, Fulvia used her marriage to Antony in order to influence the negotiations, and she arranged to have her daughter, Claudia, married to Octavian.⁴⁶ Although the girl was only Antony's stepdaughter and marriage between Octavian and a blood relative of Antony would have made more sense for Antony, Fulvia managed to put her own daughter in an extremely valuable position, further cementing her position of power and attempting to control Octavian during the time when she was his mother-in-law. Fulvia also had a role to play in the proscriptions and was able to achieve a personal vengeance against Cicero, who had publicly insulted both her and her husband.⁴⁷ Cicero was killed in these proscriptions, and Fulvia ordered that his head be brought to her and Antony. Fulvia stuck pins in his tongue in order to get back at Cicero for the words he had spoken, and the two reportedly laughed over his corpse.⁴⁸ Cassius Dio states that "And Fulvia took the head into

44 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.69.

45 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 20.1.

46 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 20.1.

47 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 20.2.

48 Cassius Dio. 47.8; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 20.2. Galinsky 2012, 37.

her hands before it was removed, and after abusing it spitefully and spitting upon it, set it on her knees, opened the mouth, and pulled out the tongue, which she pierced with the pins that she used for her hair, at the same time uttering many brutal jests.”⁴⁹ During the period after Caesar's assassination, Fulvia was able to insert herself into the political machinations of the Second Triumvirate through various means in order to give herself more power politically and in order to serve her own personal interests.

One of the key ways that Fulvia influenced events during the Age of Augustus was during the Perusine War in 41 BCE. This conflict was started by Fulvia with Lucius Antonius, the brother of Mark Antony, in order to raise opposition to Octavian through veterans and landowners, since they did not want him to receive all of the credit. During the Perusine War “Fulvia maintain[ed] her leadership position among the Antonian faction and work[ed] to provide support for Lucius, who [was] clearly at the helm of the military operation,” demonstrating her influence at this time, since she had the ability to support Lucius and the influence to maintain a leadership position even while her husband was away in Egypt.⁵⁰ Cassius Dio even states that in 41 BCE “Publius Servilius and Lucius Antonius nominally became consuls, but in reality it was Antonius and Fulvia” due to the vast amount of action that Fulvia was able to take during the Perusine War.⁵¹ Fulvia also managed to turn some of the government and army against Octavian and remind them that Antony was the one who had won in Philippi and not Octavian, with the aid of Lucius. She even attempted to bribe Octavian's troops so that they would start a mutiny in favor

49 Cassius Dio. 47.8.

50 Cassius Dio. 48.4.1; Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015, 248; Schultz. 2021, 96.

51 Cassius Dio. 48.4.1; Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015, 247.

of Antony.⁵² All of her actions at the time of the Perusine War caused so much disruption that a civil war broke out between the factions of Antony and Octavian's men. Fulvia and Lucius Antonius raised eight legions that briefly occupied Rome.⁵³ Lucius raised his own troops in Praeneste but was eventually besieged by Octavian after retreating to Perusia.⁵⁴ Fulvia and Lucius expected Antony to raise his armies in aid of them. However, still in Egypt, Antony was unaware of the war being waged by his wife and brother.⁵⁵ The siege lasted for two months before Lucius surrendered in February 40 BCE.⁵⁶ Fulvia fled to Greece with his children, before meeting with Antony in Athens. He rebuked her actions and disapproved of the war.⁵⁷ Fulvia died in exile in Sicyon of an unknown illness.⁵⁸ Although she ended up losing the war, it is impressive in its own right that Fulvia was able to rally troops and organize such a feat as a woman.

The Perusine War had a major influence on the political relationship between Antony and Octavian. Although the two had been at odds with one another previously, the war with Fulvia gave Octavian the ammunition to blame Antony and eventually broker a deal that worked heavily in his favor.⁵⁹ In order to smooth over the conflict caused by Fulvia and Lucius, Antony went to

52 Schultz. 2021, 96.

53 Appian. *The Civil Wars*. 5.4.32.

54 Appian. *The Civil Wars*. 4.15.1.

55 Appian. *The Civil Wars*. 5.4.33.

56 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 30.3.

57 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 30.3.

58 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 30.3; Metts 2004, 93; Welch 1995. 193-195/

59 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 31. Metts 2004, 95-96.

meet up with Octavian in 37 BCE.⁶⁰ The two men decided to blame everything that happened on Fulvia, and to split up the territory they had acquired—one of the things that Fulvia had been fighting about—with Antony taking the East, Octavian the West, and Lepidus Africa.⁶¹ This meeting, however, was not enough of a reconciliation, since the damage that Fulvia had done was severe, and more was needed in order to solidify the relationship between Antony and Octavian. They decided that Antony would marry Octavian's beloved sister, Octavia as a way to cement their alliance in 39 BCE.⁶² The marriage, however, was a clever political maneuver by Octavian, since many of the Roman people had lost faith in Antony due to the actions of Fulvia, who was hated. By marrying Antony to his sister, who was considered an honorable woman and beloved by the Romans, Octavian was once again putting Antony's fate into the hands of a woman. If Antony did anything in order to dishonor Octavia, there would be outrage from the Roman people and from Octavian himself since "Caesar was exceedingly fond of his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman."⁶³ Fulvia's involvement in the war was a major reason why the relationship between Octavian and Antony fell apart and why they needed a new agreement, and is a prime example of how Antony's wives were put in positions of power while he held little authority over them.

The way that Fulvia was portrayed in the primary sources is a striking example of Roman sexism that led to the distrust they had in Antony due to his relationships. In her dealings with

60 Babcock 1965, 24; Galinsky 2012, 44; Singer 1847, 174.

61 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 30.1; Singer 1947, 174-176.

62 Huzar. 1985, 104-105; Metts 2004, 95.

63 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 31.

Cicero and the proscriptions, Fulvia is described as being incredibly cruel, because she “ordered that the head be displayed not in the Forum, along with the heads of the triumvirs’ political victims, but at the building itself” and “she is said to have toyed with his disembodied head.”⁶⁴ The portrayal of her cruelly playing Cicero’s decapitated head showcases the biases and sexism present within Rome. When similar violence, like the desecration of Brutus’s body by Octavian after the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE, was done by a man, it did not garner nearly as much scrutiny as Fulvia with Cicero.⁶⁵ Another negative and sexist portrayal of Fulvia by her contemporaries is the poem reportedly written about her by Octavian during the Perusine War. The poem states: “Because Antonius fucked Glaphyra, Fulvia decided that this should be my punishment, that I should fuck her. That I should fuck her? What if Manius begged me to fuck him up the ass? Would I do it? I don’t think so, if I were wise.”⁶⁶ The poem and language used display a rather sexist view of Fulvia, both in that Octavian does not take her seriously as an adversary, and in his accusation that the war is about her jealousy and getting Antony’s attention.⁶⁷ Plutarch’s description of her relationship with Antony is another example of the Roman biases against women. According to *Roman Lives*, Fulvia was “a meddlesome and headstrong woman,” who was solely to be blamed for the war, and for causing trouble for Antony.⁶⁸ Fulvia was also blamed for Antony’s later transgressions with Cleopatra, who was also villainized by the Roman people, with Plutarch

⁶⁴ Schulz. 2021, 96.

⁶⁵ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 22; Galinsky 2012, 35.

⁶⁶ Martial. 11.20; Schulz. 2021, 100.

⁶⁷ Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015, 250.

⁶⁸ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 30. Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015, 250.

claiming that Cleopatra was “indebted to Fulvia for teaching Antony to endure a woman's sway, since she took him over quite tamed, and schooled at the outset to obey women.”⁶⁹

Additionally, Fulvia’s impact on Augustan Rome is demonstrated in how future women portrayed themselves, especially in the case of Livia, wife of Augustus. Livia managed to strike a balance between the image of a dutiful and dignified wife, while also asserting herself into a powerful political position.⁷⁰ Livia sometimes guided Augustus in his political decisions, such as in the case of the conspiracy of Gnaeus Cornelius Cinna Magnus against Augustus; it was her words that convinced Augustus to let Cornelius live.⁷¹ It was also her son, Tiberius, who eventually became their heir to Augustus and emperor of Rome, rather than any of Augustus’s blood relatives.⁷² Although Livia and Fulvia had similar roles and both held positions of power, Livia did it very much behind the scenes, unlike Fulvia who was the face of all of her political machinations.⁷³ Fulvia is described as “brash, rude, domineering, ambitious not just for her husbands but for herself, and petty—a caricature of a powerful, independent woman.”⁷⁴ It is plausible that Livia knew of Fulvia’s negative reputation and portrayal as a powerful woman and purposely attempted to stay out of the public’s eye in order to discourage comparisons between the two. All of the anti-Fulvia sentiment demonstrates the rampant sexism present within Roman society, as well as the idea that strong wives meant weak husbands, and Fulvia left an overwhelming nega-

⁶⁹ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10.

⁷⁰ Barret 2002, 115; Richlin 2014, 84.

⁷¹ Cassius Dio. 55.16-22.

⁷² Cassius Dio. 57.

⁷³ Clark 1981, 207.

⁷⁴ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 10; Schultz. 2021. 2.

tive impact on Antony's reputation in Rome, as they saw him as weak-willed and emasculated due to his lack of control over her.

Octavia, Antony's fourth wife, was the exact opposite of Fulvia: quiet and obedient, she "had intelligence and dignity." Octavian hoped that she, "when united to Antony and beloved by him, as such a woman naturally must be, would restore harmony and be their complete salvation."⁷⁵ Throughout their marriage, Octavia was an essential resource to Antony and was often a mediator between her husband and brother, unlike Fulvia, who was often a detriment to Antony. In 37 BCE, Octavia was an essential mediator at Tarentum, while Antony and Octavian were each dealing with their own military campaigns: Antony in Parthia and Octavian in Sicily.⁷⁶ Antony was desperate for soldiers since his campaign in Parthia was failing, so Octavia's negotiations with her brother was a dire situation for him.⁷⁷ Octavian refused to go to Tarentum until Octavia's interference, since she went to him, first convincing Agrippa and Maecenas, two of Octavian's closest friends, before meeting with her brother directly.⁷⁸ It was only after Octavia begged him not to go to war with Antony and that the two needed to come to each other's aid, since she would be a "loser" in either outcome, that Octavian finally agreed to meet with Antony and work out yet another agreement.⁷⁹ This mediation was not the only time that Octavia saved Antony from his disastrous campaign in Parthia as, after more losses there in 35 BCE, Octavia

⁷⁵ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 31.

⁷⁶ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 35.1-5; Singer 1947, 174-176.

⁷⁷ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 35.1-5; Singer 1947, 174-176.

⁷⁸ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 35.1-5; Singer 1947, 174-176.

⁷⁹ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 35.1-5; Singer 1947, 174-176..

brought troops and provisions to Athens for Antony; Antony refused to meet with her.⁸⁰

Throughout their short marriage, Octavia provided extremely valuable services for Antony, acting as a mediator and supplier of funds after his defeats in Parthia, and it was only in his rejection of her that her political career began failing once again, since he rejected Octavia in favor of Cleopatra, another striking-willed woman.

Although Antony's actions in his marriages with Fulvia could be excused, his relationship with Cleopatra was, according to Roman sensibilities, the final nail in Antony's coffin in terms of his masculinity and the personification of Roman traits. By setting Octavia aside in favor of a woman who was not only a non-Roman, but also epitomized the opposite of Roman standards of femininity, Antony isolated and ostracized himself from the Roman people even further. According to Antony Rausbitschek, "Antony was called Dionysos in Athens, and that his divine surname was mentioned also on pedestals of statues set up to him. He was married to the Goddess Athena at a time when he was in Athens with his legal wife Octavia. Nobody, apparently, took offense at this bigamy, and when Antony later attached himself to Cleopatra, a witty Athenian suggested that Octavia and Athena should divorce him."⁸¹ This demonstrates how devoted the people of Rome were to Octavia, as well as how much they would have disliked Antony for setting aside such an ideal wife. Antony's transgressions with Fulvia could potentially be forgiven, since Antony himself had little involvement in the Perusine War. Although he did nothing in order to prevent it, the idea that Fulvia acted independently and Antony had just lost control over her is certainly an idea that Antony would have wanted to embrace. Unlike Fulvia, Antony did

80 Cassius Dio. 49.33.3-4; Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 53.1-2.

81 Rausbitschek 1946, 147.

not have plausible deniability behind Cleopatra's want of power, since she had been politically active for many years before her involvement with Antony, such as her ascension to the throne of Egypt in 51 BCE, the civil war between her and her brother, Ptolemy XIII, and her alliance with Julius Caesar.⁸²

Cleopatra's political career and involvement in Rome began long before her involvement with Antony. From her birth, Cleopatra was in line to be the Queen of Egypt. In 55 BCE, in particular, Cleopatra became a major player in Mediterranean politics, since she had to fight her siblings in a civil war between her and her brother Ptolemy XIII.⁸³ Although the war was an important part of Cleopatra's history and a demonstration of her political machinations, she did not become particularly relevant to Roman politics until 48 BCE, when Pompey and his children fled to Egypt, after getting support from Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII in the civil war against Julius Caesar in the previous year.⁸⁴ However, Pompey was killed upon his arrival in Egypt, something that upset Caesar at least officially. In response, Cleopatra met with him in Alexandria.⁸⁵ Caesar was charmed by her, similar to the way that Antony became infatuated with Cleopatra later, and Caesar then gave Cleopatra his full support in the war with her brother, resulting in Cleopatra's victory.⁸⁶ Apparently, "Caesar, upon seeing her and hearing her speak a few words was forthwith so completely captivated that he at once, before dawn, sent for Ptolemy and tried to reconcile them, thus acting as advocate for the very woman whose judge he had previously assumed to

⁸² Tyllesley 2008, 56, 69, 71.

⁸³ Tyllesley 2008, 131.

⁸⁴ Appain *The Civil Wars*. 71.

⁸⁵ Appain *The Civil Wars*. 2.84-86.

⁸⁶ Appain *The Civil Wars*. 2.90.

be.”⁸⁷ Caesar stayed in Egypt into 47 BCE in order to settle affairs there. In that time, Cleopatra and Caesar indulged in a romantic relationship and supposedly convinced a child, Caesarion.⁸⁸ Finally, in April of 47 BCE, Caesar returned to Rome, and, a few months later, Caesarion was born.⁸⁹ Although Caesar did not claim the child, Cleopatra claimed that Caesar was the father, and that, therefore, Caesarion was his heir.⁹⁰ This, possibly, was Cleopatra's first attempt at gaining power in Rome, an idea further supported by her visit to Rome in 46 BCE. Cleopatra stayed in Caesar's villa, where she was visited by him and many other guests.⁹¹ Here, Cleopatra was able to influence Caesar, and, according to Duane Roller's *Cleopatra: A Biography*, “Furthering her connection with Isis, the queen was presumably also responsible for encouraging Caesar to commission a Temple of Isis in Rome, probably in the central part of the Campus Martius near the Saepta Julia.”⁹² Cleopatra's influence on Caesar and the Egyptianization of some of his actions at time only would have encouraged the xenophobic, anti-Egyptian sentiments of the Roman people at this time.

After Caesar's death in 44 BCE, three years passed before Cleopatra was able to regain a Roman patron in the form of Antony. Their relationship began in 41 BC, when Cleopatra invited Antony to visit Egypt, where he was celebrated for his heroic actions that helped restore Ptolemy

⁸⁷ Cassius Dio. 42.34.

⁸⁸ Appian *The Civil Wars*. 2.90.

⁸⁹ Roller 2011, 70.

⁹⁰ Tyldesley 2008, 140.

⁹¹ Tyldesley 2008, 53.

⁹² Roller 2011, 115.

XII, her father, to power in 55 BCE.⁹³ Although Cleopatra's true motives are unclear, she intentionally went out of her way to invite and impress Antony during their first meeting, in a period of time where he was considered to be one of the most powerful people in Rome.⁹⁴ With his triumvir powers, Antony had the power to return lands to Egypt that had previously been a part of the Ptolemaic dynasty, but had been taken over by Rome.⁹⁵ Antony's political position certainly would have been an incentive for Cleopatra to manipulate and cajole Antony through a relationship with her, and such flattery paid off, and by 38 BCE, "Cleopatra was given control of Cyprus, Crete, Cyrenaica (Libya), large parts of Coele-Syria, Phoenecia, Cilicia and Nabataea."⁹⁶

After their first meetings and the beginning of their correspondence, the relationship between Cleopatra and Antony became strained when Antony married Octavia in October of 40 BCE.⁹⁷ During this time Antony led a campaign in Parthia, and relied on the resources of Octavian for supplies and men. Cleopatra reacted poorly to this, growing jealous of Octavia, so she essentially cut Antony out of her life and they remained apart during the early years of Antony's marriage to Octavia.⁹⁸ However, the two reconciled after Cleopatra went to Parthia in 36 BCE with their twins, Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, the first time that Antony had met their children.⁹⁹ Antony agreed to set Octavia aside and cohabit with Cleopatra, and the "marriage"

93 Appian *The Civil Wars*. 5.1; Tyllesley 2008, 53.

94 Appian *The Civil Wars*. 5.1; Tyllesley 2008, 179-181.

95 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 36; Tyllesley 2008, 193.

96 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 36; Tyllesley 2008, 193.

97 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 53; Tyllesley 2008, 192.

98 Metts 2004, 98.

99 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 36; Tyllesley 2008, 193.

between them contributed early on to the idea that Antony was anti-Roman. According to Cassius Dio, Antony, “learning on the way, however, that Octavia was coming from that, he went no farther, but returned, in spite of the fact that he had then and there ordered her to go home and had later accepted the gifts which she sent.”¹⁰⁰ To make matters worse for Antony, rather than divorcing Antony and going back to Octavian, as Octavian himself insisted, Octavia remained in Antony’s home and raised his children, demonstrating that she was the ideal Roman wife, showing that Antony chose a foreign queen rather than the ideal Roman wife and mother.¹⁰¹

After rebuffing Octavia, another transgression occurred in which Antony ignored Roman tradition in favor of Egypt. In 34 BCE, Antony occupied Armenia in order to take revenge for their betrayal in his attempt to take Parthia, and “in a kind of triumphal procession, he himself drove into [Alexandria] upon a chariot, and he not only presented to Cleopatra all the other spoils but brought her the Armenian and his family in golden bonds.”¹⁰² This action, referred to as the Donations of Alexandria, demonstrated that, rather than go to Rome and hold a triumph there, as a normal Roman would, Antony’s choice was to celebrate his victory in Egypt and thus honor Cleopatra. Throughout their relationship, the trend of Cleopatra using Antony’s power to better her own position while Antony abandoned Rome continued, most notably in the case of the Donations of Alexandria in 34 BCE.¹⁰³ According to Plutarch, it directed that “Antony's body, even if he should die in Rome, should be borne in state through the forum and then sent away to

100 Cassius Dio 49.33.

101 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 54.

102 Cassius Dio. 49.33.

103 Strootman 2010, 1.

Cleopatra in Egypt.”¹⁰⁴ Antony’s request to be buried at Alexandria only drives home the message even more that Antony was no longer Roman and was violating Roman values. The most damning aspect of the Donations of Alexandria was when he gave Roman land to his children by Cleopatra.¹⁰⁵ He declared “Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria, and she was to share her throne with Caesarion. In the second place, he proclaimed his own sons by Cleopatra Kings of Kings, and to Alexander he allotted Armenia, Media and Parthia, to Ptolemy Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia.”¹⁰⁶ The bestowal of lands on Cleopatra and her children was seen as treasonous, since not only was Antony giving Roman provinces to foreigners, but he was declaring Caesarion, an Egyptian, Caesar’s heir, thus undermining Octavian, a Roman. By splitting up that land between his Egyptian, non-Roman children, Antony was essentially declaring that he cared more about a foreign nation than Rome, since he was willing to give it up to outsiders.

Another factor that solidified the people’s view of Antony was how he was compared to Octavian himself. During the civil war, while creating much propaganda against Antony, Octavian was also influencing public opinion in his own favor. He increased the quality of public works and games. When Agrippa became Aedile in 33 BCE he “without taking anything from the public treasury repaired all the public buildings and all the streets, cleaned out the sewers, and sailed through them underground into the Tiber” and “distributed olive-oil and salt to all, and furnished the baths free of charge throughout the year” along with many other vast improve-

104 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 58.

105 Strootman 2010, 2-3.

106 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 54; Strootman 2010, 8.

ments for the Roman people on Octavian's behalf.¹⁰⁷ This beneficence helped the reputation of Octavian, since the people were directly benefiting from his contributions, while Antony partied and drank with Cleopatra in Egypt.¹⁰⁸ During this bout of partying and drunkenness, Antony began to associate himself with the god Dionysus, abandoning his previous emulation of Heracles while in Alexandria.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the masculine appearance of Heracles, Antony, while dressed like Dionysus, would appear "with full physique, sensuous eyes and lips, wearing long, transparent garment, and holding a kantharos."¹¹⁰ This was a far more effeminate presentation for Antony, something that Octavian took advantage of, since "the statues that showed Antony in the guise of Dionysus were to be seen only in the East, but the partisans of Octavian did all they could to play up their scandalous nature. This was not hard, since there were figures of Dionysus all over Rome, and one could conjure up the image of Antony's features on these effeminate bodies."¹¹¹ In comparison to this, Octavian began to liken himself to the god Apollo, "for he had made public property of the place on the Palatine which he had bought for the purpose of erecting a residence upon it, and had consecrated it to Apollo, after a thunderbolt had descended upon it."¹¹² By living next to a temple of Apollo, Octavian was directly comparing himself to the god, in contrast to Antony's comparisons to Dionysus, who was the god of parties and drunkenness, and a more

107 Cassius Dio 49.43.

108 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 24, 71.

109 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 60; Zanker 1988, 44, 46.

110 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 24; Zanker 1988, 47.

111 Cassius Dio. 50.5; Zanker 1988, 58.

112 Cassius Dio. 49.15; Freyburger 2009, 22.

effeminate figure.¹¹³ Lastly, Octavian emphasized his relation to Julius Caesar and began calling himself by the same name, erecting shrines to Venus and reminding the Roman people that he was a descendant not only of the great general, but of a goddess.¹¹⁴ The emphasis on his alleged heritage, as well as the eventual divinization of Caesar, made many Romans side with Octavian as a powerful and masculine figure acting in order to benefit Rome, rather than with Antony, who only seemed to care about Cleopatra.

All of Antony's submissive behavior and deference to Cleopatra reaped its consequences when war was declared in 32 BCE by Octavian as a result of the Donations of Alexandria.¹¹⁵ From the years prior to the disputes between Antony and Octavian, Rome had already been entrenched in civil war: in 88 BCE between Marius and Sulla, 83 BCE between Sulla and Cinna, the Catiline Conspiracy in 63 BCE, the civil war between Caesar and Pompey in 49 BCE, and the recent war beginning in 44 BCE between the second triumvirate and the anti-Caesarian conspirators were all examples of the many bloody civil wars that occurred within a short period of only about forty-five years.¹¹⁶ The idea of another civil war after all of this conflict was certainly not an idea that would have been popular among Roman soldiers or civilians. Octavian, therefore, avoided officially declaring war on Antony by attacking Cleopatra instead. Cleopatra was already an unpopular figure at this time due to Antony's actions in his marriage with Octavia, so the court of public opinion was already in his favor; all he needed was an excuse to declare war.

113 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 24, 60; Freyburger 2009, 24.

114 Cassius Dio. 51.22.

115 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 62.

116 Huzar 1978, 9, 11, 18.

Such an excuse came to Octavian in 34 BCE when the Donations of Alexandria were published, as it seemingly confirmed the Roman fear of their territories and poor being given to a foreign ruler.¹¹⁷ Roller confirms this in his biography of Cleopatra, stating “Yet the vast amount of prejudice that had developed against Cleopatra was hardly legal grounds for war, although it did create a convenient body of public opinion that provided support for such an action. As Octavian himself made clear, it was Cleopatra’s actions that were the cause for war; in other words, she had conducted herself in a manner improper for an allied monarch.”¹¹⁸ Although technically Rome declared war on Cleopatra, not Antony, it was clear that such a declaration was an attack on Antony as well, as he was married to Cleopatra and the couple had three children together. As Roller states, “despite the fact that she was the stated enemy, it was understood that the war was also against Antonius, who was deprived of his remaining authority.”¹¹⁹ Practically speaking, the war was against Antony, without it having to be officially declared against him.

While there were land skirmishes throughout the Mediterranean, the battle of Actium was the most important and final battle in the war with Octavian. This is also where Antony’s weakness towards his wives appears most obviously, which hurt him in an irrevocable way.¹²⁰ This battle, which took place on September 2nd, 31 BCE, was fought by boat in the Ionian Sea near Actium.¹²¹ Although Antony wanted Cleopatra to stay in Egypt, she insisted upon being there

117 Strootman 2010, 1.

118 Roller 2011, 136.

119 Roller 2011, 137.

120 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 60.

121 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 66.

and so Antony had to focus not only on the battle, but protecting Cleopatra's ship as well.¹²² Additionally, this action only angered some of Antony's men, leading to their desertion and defection to Octavian's side. For example, "Titius and Plancus, friends of Antony and men of consular rank, being abused by Cleopatra (for they had been most opposed to her accompanying the expedition) ran away to Caesar."¹²³ After the battle began to go poorly for Antony, Cleopatra, fearing that they were going to lose, fled the battle.¹²⁴ Antony, ever subservient to the women around him, chased her, fleeing as well and abandoning the battle.¹²⁵ Although the conflict very well could have gone the same way without Cleopatra's involvement and Antony's pursuit of her at Actium, his decision to chase after her was a dire mistake and was the final nail in the coffin of the civil war. Plutarch describes this as a defining moment for Antony: "Here, indeed, Antony made it clear to all the world that he was swayed neither by the sentiments of a commander nor of a brave man, nor even by his own, but, as someone in pleasantry said that the soul of the lover dwells in another's body, he was dragged along by the woman as if he had become incorporate with her and must go where she did."¹²⁶ Once again, Antony's inability to control his wives in the way that Romans traditionally encouraged and his subservient attitude towards them caused Antony to suffer fatal consequences.

122 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 66. Tyllesley 2008, 209.

123 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 58.

124 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 66 - 68. Tyllesley 2008, 209-210.

125 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 66. Tyllesley 2008, 209.

126 Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 66.

Antony's final act was similarly performed due to his devotion to Cleopatra: he committed suicide by stabbing himself in the stomach.¹²⁷ After Actium, a rumor had been spread that Cleopatra had committed suicide, so Antony followed suit, not wanting to live without her.¹²⁸ After it was revealed to him that she was not dead, and had instead barricaded herself in a mausoleum, he managed to live until he was transported to Alexandria, where his final moments were spent in Cleopatra's arms.¹²⁹ Cleopatra followed suit with her own suicide after Antony's, although the exact circumstances are unknown, with the most popular telling being that she let an asp bite her breast.¹³⁰ This final act of Antony's was ironically encapsulating how many people saw him; a man controlled by the whims of a foreign queen, with little autonomy or logic behind his actions.

Although much of Antony's reputation for being effeminate comes from the assertion of masculine traits of his wives and Antony's own lack of agency in his relationship with them, much of it came from his own actions throughout his life. To understand this, the ideals of Roman gender must be explained. Roman attitudes toward gender were less about male and female, and more about sexual orientation, in which the world was divided into "penetrators" and "those penetrated."¹³¹ The person penetrated, regardless of gender, was "characterized as womanish, servile, and emasculated — a role well suited to slaves, prostitutes, and women but problematic

¹²⁷ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 76. Tyllesley 2008, 216.

¹²⁸ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 76. Tyllesley 2008, 216.

¹²⁹ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 77; Tyllesley 2008, 217.

¹³⁰ Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 86; Tyllesley 2008, 223.

¹³¹ Olson 2014, 184.

if filled by another adult male.”¹³² In 44 and 43 BCE, Marcus Tullius Cicero, one of Antony’s most vocal opposers, wrote and delivered a series of fourteen speeches that disparaged Antony on a personal and political level called the *Philippics*.¹³³ Within these speeches, specifically, Cicero used feminine language and allusions in order to mock Antony for being feminine, again, something that was overwhelmingly negative within Roman society. These rules about Roman sexuality certainly played a role in Antony’s effeminate reputation, since Cicero calls attention to an alleged sexual dalliance by Antony in which he played the role of the person being penetrated.¹³⁴ Cicero compared Antony to a woman in order to disparage him, especially in the context of his relationship with Gaius Scribonius Curio. Cicero claimed that Antony and Curio were in a sexual relationship in which Antony played the submissive role, or the “womanly” role, and that the two were like husband and wife, again with Antony in the woman’s role, the “bride” be married off to Curio, the “groom.”¹³⁵ Cicero also accused Antony of prostituting himself for money during his youth, another way that he connected Antony to womanhood and the idea that he was acting in an “unmanly” way.¹³⁶ There is no other indication of whether or not their sexual relationship really existed or if it existed in the way that Cicero describes. However, Cicero was able to use it against Antony as ammunition in order to hurt his reputation and compare him to women. Cicero is even able to twist Antony’s masculine actions into something feminine:

132 Olson 2014, 184.

133 Fertik 2017, 65; Gildenhard 2018, 5-7.

134 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.45; Fertik 2017, 74.

135 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.45; Fertik 2017, 74.

136 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.44; Fertik 2017, 74.

In two other references, Cicero emasculates Antony, turning his public political and military actions into feminine issues of baseness through two negative comparisons to women. From his mid-twenties to mid-thirties, Antony was a distinguished military commander, a quaestor, a tribune, and a consul and worked in many capacities for Caesar. Cicero accentuates how Antony has not only sold his affiliation to the highest bidder, but he has also caused the downfall of the republic. He focuses on Antony's early activity in the senate, which was tainted with the bankruptcy of his deceased father. He attacks Antony's fiscal and moral bankruptcy and early participation in the senate due to his social status.¹³⁷

During Antony's youth, his actions were nonpolitical and uninvolved with the agenda of many women in his life, however, sexist Roman customs and ideas on "manliness" were still used against him, since Cicero used comparisons of Antony to women in order to insult him, such as his comparison of Antony to Helen of Troy.¹³⁸ Although Cicero's defamation was certainly a reason why Antony would be viewed effeminately, it alone would not be enough to tarnish his reputation. For example, Caesar was rumored to have a relationship with the King of Bithynia, and was called "every man's woman" yet still remained an authority figure in Rome and was respected as a masculine figure by Roman historians.¹³⁹ The alleged relationship with Curio only added to the narrative that was already present in Rome; that Antony was a submissive figure.

137 Myers 2003, 6.

138 Cicero. *Philippics*. 2.54.

139 Suetonius ii., 45-53.

Although Antony is depicted as an effeminate figure by Roman writers, it is important to note that the sources of this information were biased and influenced by Augustan propaganda or by Antony's enemies. Notably, Cicero was one of Antony's most vocal enemies who publicly hated him, and is thus more inclined to report on and embellish Antony's negative traits. Similarly, authors such as Appian, Cassius Dio, and Plutarch wrote their histories after the fall of the republic and were not there to see Antony's failures firsthand. Instead, they were relying on vast amounts of anti-Antonian propaganda that was being spread by Octavian after the civil war. Additionally, although the women in his life certainly benefited from their marriages to Antony, he benefited from those relationships as well. From his first two marriages to Fadia and Antonia respectively, Antony gained money that he desperately needed in his youth. By marrying Fulvia, Antony gained money, support from the Clodian faction, and a politically savvy partner to help him run Rome. By marrying Octavia, Antony gained soldiers, resources, and an opportunity for peace with Octavian. Finally, by marrying Cleopatra, Antony gained money, resources, military and political backing, as well as the kingdom of Egypt. One could certainly argue that Antony manipulated his wives in the same way they manipulated him and that his apparent ineptitude and constant missteps were out of his control. However, regardless of whether or not Antony was truly a submissive figure to his wives or if he was attempting to use them, his reputation was that the former was true. His legacy is one that will always be intertwined with these ideas and attitudes about him, which is supported by the literature referencing him and featuring him after his death.

The Roman poet Vergil made the Roman attitude towards Antony and Cleopatra's relationship very clear in his epic poem the *Aeneid*, written between 29 and 19 BCE, and even refer-

ences them directly. In this poem, Aeneas, the protagonist, arrives at Carthage, where he meets Dido. Dido is the queen of Carthage and quickly takes a liking to Aeneas, and the two engage in a romantic relationship.¹⁴⁰ Although Dido asks Aeneas to stay, he ultimately decides that his duty to Rome is more important than his love for her, so he leaves, prompting Dido to commit suicide.¹⁴¹ Aeneas chose his duty to Rome over the foreign queen he loved, a clear parallel and reference to Antony's own love affair with Cleopatra. Aeneas does what Vergil thought Antony should have done; left Cleopatra and gone back to Rome. Additionally, Aeneas was created to be the perfect standard of Roman masculinity, since he was the founder of Rome and was an ancestor of Augustus. By having such a figure act in the opposite way of Antony, it further solidifies the idea that the Roman collective opinion was that Antony was an emasculated and un-Roman figure, controlled by a woman rather than his own whims. Vergil's direct references to Antony and Cleopatra certainly corroborate this interpretation of the text:

On the other side, with the wealth of the barbarian world and warriors in all kinds of different armour, came Antony in triumph from the shores of the Red Sea and the peoples of the Dawn. With him sailed Egypt and the power of the East from as far as distant Bactria, and there bringing up the rear was the greatest outrage of all, his Egyptian wife!¹⁴²

Vergil is stating that the biggest issue at Actium was not necessarily that Antony was raising arms against Octavian, rather that he was married to Cleopatra.

¹⁴⁰ Vergil. *The Aeneid*. IV.54-89, 129-172.

¹⁴¹ Vergil. *The Aeneid*. IV.331-361, 393-349, 630-705.

¹⁴² Vergil. *The Aeneid*. VIII.683-689.

Other, later literature featuring Antony after his death only reaffirms these attitudes towards him. One such example is the play *Antony and Cleopatra* by William Shakespeare written in 1607 CE. The play focuses on the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, the war with Octavian, and the downfall of Antony.¹⁴³ In the play, Antony is in Egypt with Cleopatra, drinking and reveling in Cleopatra's riches while ignoring his duties in Rome.¹⁴⁴ Throughout the play, Antony's political ineptitude is showcased, and he is portrayed as a lovestruck man ruled by emotion rather than logic, another traditionally feminine trait. Comparatively, Cleopatra is the powerful and level-headed one between the two. It is also important to note that of Shakespeare's many plays about historical figures, Antony is one of few that shares his play with someone else, and this play is the one of very few to feature the name of a woman in the title. Shakespeare named his play about Julius Caesar, *Julius Caesar*, his play about Henry IV, *Henry IV*, and so on and so forth. It is only Antony whose story is shared with a woman, which is incredibly revealing about his reputation in history after his death and how intertwined his legacy was with his wives.

Antony's portrayal in *Antony and Cleopatra* is similarly revealing about Antony's reputation throughout history, and especially how posterity views his masculinity. Many scholars have gone in-depth about this play in particular, and about what it says about both Antony and Cleopatra and the reversal of gender roles within their relationship. Hooks develops an in-depth argument about the submissive role that Antony plays in the play and the feminization of his character.¹⁴⁵ According to her, "the equation between Antony's erotic devotion and castration is graphic

¹⁴³ Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra*.

¹⁴⁴ Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra*.

¹⁴⁵ Hooks 1987, 37.

in the procession that ushers him onstage with a queen surrounded by eunuchs.”¹⁴⁶ The idea that Antony is “castrated” and emasculated is present throughout the play, the very first line being “Nay, but this dotage of our general’s O’erflows the measure. 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. His captain’s heart, Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper And is become the bellows and the fan To cool a gypsy’s lust.”¹⁴⁷ The very first line of the play encapsulates everything that the rest of the play perpetuates about Antony; he used to be a masculine and respectable figure, but he is now out of control and ruled by emotion and lust.

Additionally, the power dynamic between Antony and Cleopatra is clearly skewed, with Cleopatra holding all of the power in their ratio, while Antony gets only the illusion of power. Antony needs to return to Rome and do his duties, but Cleopatra has convinced him to stay in Egypt with her instead, fulfilling her own needs while neglecting his responsibilities.¹⁴⁸ These themes and ideas of Antony and his relationship with Cleopatra allow a rare opportunity to view what people believed about Antony in a time before access to all of the documents that scholars have now, and it is clear from this depiction of him that the Augustan propaganda of Antony as a weak, submissive figure who was bound to Cleopatra was prosperous even sixteen hundred years after Antony’s death.

146 Hooks 1987, 38.

147 Shakespeare. *Antony and Cleopatra*. I.I.

148 Hooks 1987, 39.

Another aspect of Antony's legacy that was controlled by women was his lineage. Ironically, it was the female line of Antony's children that survived and prospered after his death. Antony's son and heir, Antyllus, was executed in 30 BCE by Octavian after his father's death.¹⁴⁹ Iullus, his second son, although spared by Augustus initially, was forced to commit suicide in 2 CE after being involved in an adultery scandal with Augustus's daughter Julia.¹⁵⁰ His sons with Cleopatra, Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus, both disappeared from historical records and narratives after their parents' death, and it is assumed that they died young and unnoteworthy.¹⁵¹ Contrarily, several of his daughters went on to become powerful in their own right. Antony's daughter with his second wife, Antonia Hybrida Minor, married Pythodoros of Tralles, an incredibly wealthy Greek man, and their daughter, Pythodoria, eventually became the queen of Pontus and Cappadocia.¹⁵² Antony's other daughter, Antonia Minor, by his wife Octavia, became an important figure throughout Rome, since she was the mother of Emperor Claudius, grandmother to Emperor Caligula, and great-grandmother to Emperor Nero.¹⁵³ His only daughter with Cleopatra, Cleopatra Selene, married Juba II in 25 BCE, and became the queen of Numidia and Mauretania until her death in 5 BCE.¹⁵⁴ All of these examples of Antony's powerful female descendants compared to the failure of his male descendants are ironically reminiscent of

149 Suetonius ii. 17. Plutarch. *Life of Antony*. 81. Tyldesley 2008, 242.

150 Tyldesley 2008, 283.

151 Tyldesley 2008, 283.

152 Lightman 2008, 24.

153 Tyldesley 2008, 190.

154 Tyldesley 2008, 283.

Antony's own career and history of being a man dominated by women since his bloodline was one in which women thrived and men faltered.

Mark Antony is a figure from the Roman Republic who allowed his wives greater political freedom and power than his contemporaries, which was very distinctive from many of his contemporaries. However, due to this, Antony's reputation became and still is intrinsically intertwined with femininity. His relationships painted him as a submissive figure, the male wife of both Fulvia and Cleopatra, while his accomplishments and good deeds were overlooked and overshadowed.

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