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Plutarch's *Life of Antonius*

Translation and Commentary,

C.A. Mock

## Life of Antonius

### Introduction

#### Plutarch, Historiography, and the *Lives*

From the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, L. Mestrius Plutarch attracted more readers than any other Greek author, and was the most influential author among those readers outside the circle of classical scholarship. The original French translation of his works by Amyot, later retranslated by North and Holland, was essential to the dissemination of his works; only this translation made it possible for Shakespeare to become familiar with the material necessary for his historical tragedies. Frederick the Great, Montaigne, Goethe, Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, and Emerson all read Plutarch – not only for his *Lives* but also for his instruction in moral philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Yet the fame which Plutarch enjoyed after the Renaissance could not survive the nineteenth century's revolution in historiography, when Plutarch became a 'secondary authority' to be used when the 'primary sources' failed; he was no longer the famous 'mirror of antiquity and of human nature' that he had been, and was relegated to the dusty shelves of the 'true researcher'.<sup>2</sup> It should have been obvious, however, that the product of such a complex array of ancient historiographic traditions could not be studied properly without consideration of the plans and purposes of its author – plans and purposes which, until thirty years ago, scholars had neglected.

Plutarch's *Lives* are the products of two traditions of ancient biography. The first classified data according to topic and disregarded chronology, in a tradition which ultimately led to the thematic ordering of Suetonius. The second, preferred for political figures and other men of 'action', was characterized by narration in chronological order

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<sup>1</sup> Russell 2001: 161; Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1995: 47-8.

<sup>2</sup> Russell 1995: 75.



and led to the sequentially organized biographies of Cornelius Nepos.<sup>3</sup> Plutarch's work uniquely falls in between the two categories, since he discusses the difference between history and biography, and because he knows and uses historical writings.<sup>4</sup> In manner of inquiry, however, Plutarch perhaps did not see a difference between history and biography, but only between the finished products – the story of the life of one person, juxtaposed against the tale of a war or the history of a people.<sup>5</sup> Thus the *Lives* were written with the philosophy that the character of exceptional individuals determines the course of history – that the fourth century Greek conquest of Persia was an expression of Alexander's character, that the liberation of Greece in the second century at Scotussa could be attributed to one Roman personality: Titus Flamininus.

Of the extant pairs of *Lives*, all but four are concluded by formal *synkriseis*, which weigh the two subjects against each other. Most scholars do not find the *synkriseis* to be worthy of their time.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, these *synkriseis* generally supply points of contrast which the modern reader may find obvious after having read the preceding two *Lives*.<sup>7</sup> Yet our own age is different from most generations, in that earlier generations may not have found such moralizing as strange and embarrassing as we do.<sup>8</sup> In any case, the pairs that have *synkriseis*, along with their formal prologues, knit together the two strands of the Plutarchan books. Generally, the *synkrisis* draws out the differences between the two, while the prologue highlights their similarities; yet the subject of both the prologue and the *synkrisis* is the same: the analysis and evaluation of the character of the two subjects,

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<sup>3</sup> Scardigli 1995: 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch declared at *Alexander* 1.2 that he aspired to compose biographies, not histories.

<sup>5</sup> Wardman 1974: 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Russell 2001: 110.

<sup>7</sup> Duff 1999: 249-57.

<sup>8</sup> Pelling 1988: 19.

and the deeds by which their character is revealed. In other words, the *synkriseis* do not focus on the circumstances of the subjects' lives, but on their *ethos* – Plutarch's true interest.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, then, Plutarchan books must be read as a whole – prologue, pair, *synkrisis* – in order to understand Plutarch's purpose: reinforcing adult moral education.<sup>10</sup>

The extant *Lives* are but a fraction of Plutarch's prolific writings; only about half of his work survives, and that work still fills 27 Loeb volumes. What modern scholarship knows about Plutarch comes almost exclusively from what he himself tells us: he was born in about 45 CE to a well-off family in the Boeotian town of Chaeronea.<sup>11</sup> He traveled widely, to Asia, Rome, and Alexandria, and also received a fine philosophical education from his Egyptian teacher, Ammonius.<sup>12</sup> His family seems to have been close, as his anecdotes about his grandfather, father, brothers, and wife Timoxena are engaging, warm, and affectionate.<sup>13</sup> Undoubtedly, the rosy lenses of Plutarch's family life colored his writing, as some of the most moving passages in the *Lives* concern the impact of a hero's successes and failures on those closest to him.<sup>14</sup>

### Plutarch and the *Life of Antonius*

The *Life of Antonius* fits well into Plutarch's didactic character study. Compared to the *Life of Caesar*, in which Plutarch shows a surprising interest in political analysis,

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<sup>9</sup> In some cases, however, there is a marked divergence between the themes, issues, and substance explored in a pair of *Lives* and those discussed in the *synkriseis*. This need not be seen as a fault – in the *synkriseis*, the past is simply constructed in a manner which is markedly different from that in that narrative (Duff 1999: 257; see also note on 77.19).

<sup>10</sup> Pelling 1995b: 205-20 *passim*; Stadter 2000: 493.

<sup>11</sup> Jones 1971: 8-9, 13; Pelling 1988: 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Jones 1971: 9, 13-18, 21-5.

<sup>13</sup> Jones 1971: 9-10. His affection for his wife and children is clear in his *Consolation to his Wife* (608a-612a), which was written on the occasion of the death of their daughter. He and his wife had at least five children, at least three of whom died very young (Pelling 1988: 2). For all of this see Jones 1971: 1-66 *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Pelling 1988: 2.

there is little interest in such history in *Ant.* – he chooses instead to devote pages to his set up of Antonius for his seduction by Cleopatra.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, *Ant.* is different, in that it is considerably longer than the other *Lives*, and it ends not with the death of Antonius, but with the death of Cleopatra nine chapters later. This is unique among the *Lives*. Perhaps by the end of *Ant.*, Plutarch felt that the fates of Antonius and Cleopatra had become so interwoven, it was impossible to end the *Life* without also narrating Cleopatra's death. Perhaps her suicide was simply too dramatic to exclude.

Plutarch paired Antonius with Demetrius Poliorcetes (336-283), the son of the Antigonus to whom Alexander bequeathed part of his empire. Demetrius fought alongside his father in an attempt to win control of the whole of Alexander's empire, but they were defeated at the Battle of Ipsus in 301, and there Antigonus was killed. Demetrius remained resilient for sixteen further years, and reestablished an empire in Greece and Macedonia, but he was finally defeated by Seleucus in 285. Two years later, he drank himself to death. Plutarch explains their similarities in the first book of the *Life of Demetrius*:

Both had similar qualities: they liked love and drink, they were soldierly, generous, extravagant, and hybristic. Their fortunes possessed corresponding similarities. All through their lives both experienced great successes and great failures, conquered and lost great tracts, unexpectedly failed and recovered beyond their hopes, and then one died in his enemy's hands, the other very close to this.<sup>16</sup>

As usual, Plutarch concludes the pair with a *synkrisis* contrasting *Dtr.* and *Ant.* The whole of the epilogue need not be reproduced here, but Plutarch does set out some noteworthy contrasts between their upbringing, their generosity, their excesses, and

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<sup>15</sup> For example, in *Ant.* 15-21, Plutarch manages to describe the events from April 44 until Philippi without mention of Brutus and Cassius.

<sup>16</sup> *Dtr.* 1.8; trans., Pelling 1988: 19.

between the consequences of their excesses: “Demetrius’ harmed others, Antonius’ himself.”<sup>17</sup> The comparisons, however, are not confined to the prologue and epilogue, and subtle similarities emerge from the narrative itself. One image that occurs throughout *Dtr.* and *Ant.* is that of a nautical tableau.<sup>18</sup> For example, *Dtr.* ends with the slow procession of his extravagant funeral barge, and in *Ant.*, Cleopatra’s magnificent barge echoes Demetrius’ and perhaps foreshadows the imminent disaster she will bring to Antonius.<sup>19</sup> In general, *Dtr.* establishes an index of success and failure, while *Ant.* exploits and expounds upon that index.<sup>20</sup> Plutarch perhaps hoped that the reader, after having ‘witnessed’ the progress of weakness in Demetrius and Antonius and having been quizzed by the *synkrisis*, would work to control a perceived minor fault in its early stages before it could grow to such disastrous proportions.<sup>21</sup>

Plutarch seems to have used the following sources for *Ant.*: the autobiography of Augustus, Cicero’s *Philippics*, the history of C. Asinius Pollio, the work of Q. Dellius, oral sources (such as the story told to him by his grandfather in 68.19), and local history (such as the account of Cleopatra’s death supposedly published by her doctor Olympus).<sup>22</sup> It appears as if Plutarch did his basic source work for *Ant.* at the same time as for five other Late Republican *Lives*, in the usual manner for ancient historians – compiling evidence, writing a draft, then adding stylistic color, form, and rhythm.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Duff 1999: 279-81.

<sup>18</sup> Pelling 1988: 21.

<sup>19</sup> Mossman 1995: 226.

<sup>20</sup> Pelling 2002: 356.

<sup>21</sup> Stadter 2000: 505.

<sup>22</sup> Pelling 1988: 26-29; Stadter 1999: 363.

<sup>23</sup> For the usual method of writing history, see Lucianus *Hist. Conscr.* 47-8: ‘and when he has gathered everything or almost everything, he should first weave together a draft, a version which so far has no beauty or articulation: then he should impose order, give the

### Notes on this translation and commentary

Some may feel that Plutarch's specific stylistic techniques and moral insights warrant more discussion here. While that sort of thematic emphasis is certainly a constructive endeavor, I make no apologies for concentrating more on the question of truth. Of course, by truth I mean not the veracity of the 'facts' in the text, because Plutarch's idea of truth simply is not the same as mine, or yours. Plutarch's 'truth' is rather like portrait sculpture: when possible, he renders his subject accurately; when necessary, he fudges what doesn't fit or what he doesn't know into something which still captures the essence of his subject personality. In an endeavor to more fully understand Plutarch's truth, this treatment of *Ant.* employs history in the service of elucidating critical questions which may be more literary in substance.

Due to constraints of time and ability, I have only translated or written detailed commentary on a quarter of *Ant.*; those portions with which I chose to work were chosen for their significance to character development, for historical significance, or for remarkable stylistic elements. Sometimes these passages are easy to pick out; Plutarch often highlights crucial scenes with quotations from Greek literature. More often than not, however, I have been forced to choose. Not to say that the portions which have been skipped are not worthy of note – my only excuse is one only of necessity.

Passages 1-2 and 4 were chosen for their importance to Plutarch in setting up Antonius' character.<sup>24</sup> I chose 11-14 for both their historical significance and as examples of Plutarch's source-work. Passages 21, 25, 27, 35-36, and 53-55 are important

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work its beauty, add color to the diction, and give form and rhythm' (in Pelling 1988: 32-33). See also Stadter 1999: xxiv, 363.

<sup>24</sup> See note on 2.11.

to Plutarch's development of Antonius', Cleopatra's, and Octavian's characters. Passages 62-63 and 67-68 bracket the narrative's climax at Actium, and in those passages Antonius' spiral toward ruin gains momentum after having begun in way back in 35. Plutarch's style and inventiveness are highlighted in 76-77, and passage 86 dramatically concludes the narrative.

I also have been selective in my bibliography. Apart from Syme, Scullard, Pelling, and Stadter, I have only infrequently cited secondary sources. Most modern scholarship on Plutarch is concerned with his *Moralia* and his role in the development of the historical tradition, a topic more suited to this introduction and one which, if discussed fully, would fill volumes. Again, I am forced to sacrifice to keep the material necessary for me to absorb in this endeavor reasonable. I have used Pelling's research as an introduction to this material and as a skeleton for my commentary.

Throughout this introduction, the translation, and the commentary, I have, as a rule, used non-Anglicized Latin spellings of proper names (following the example of Syme), but I prefer to break my own rule sooner than write anything outright barbarous (e.g. Plutarch, Rome). Plutarch refers to C. Octavius with the name by which he was known from 44 to 27, 'Caesar', and that is the name I use in the translation. Confusion with C. Julius Caesar is not a problem in the translation, but to differentiate between the two in the commentary, I refer to C. Julius Caesar as 'Caesar' and to C. Octavius as 'Octavianus', again after Syme. In the first two chapters of the translation, some jumbling of the names of the male Antonii is possible, but the commentary should clarify any confusion. As for abbreviations – references to ancient authors should be self-explanatory and are after LSJ III. All dates listed are BCE unless otherwise noted. In the

commentary, lemmatized points from the text have been highlighted with bold lettering, and numbers associated with those points correspond to line numbers in the Greek text. The Greek text used is that used by Pelling for his 1988 commentary.

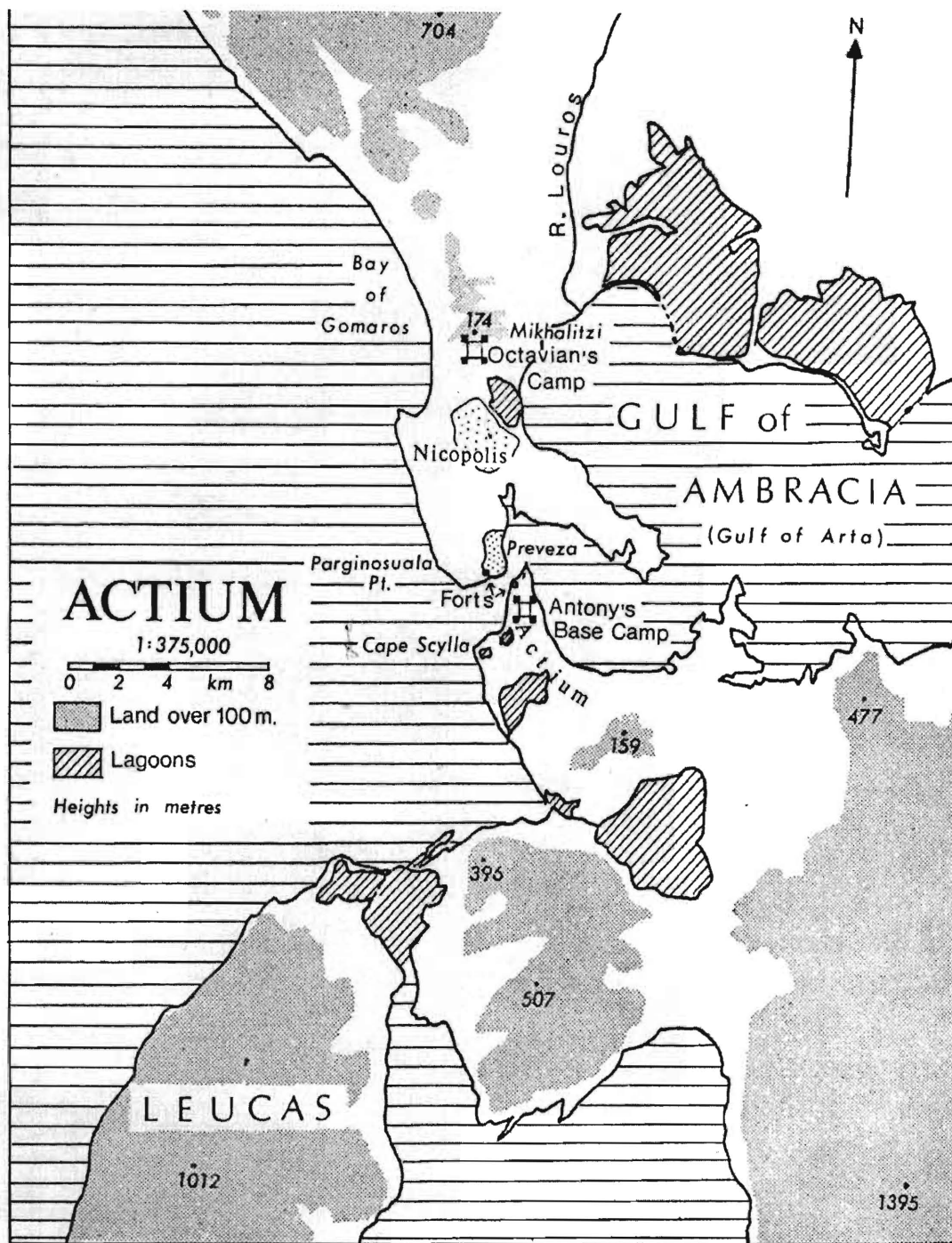
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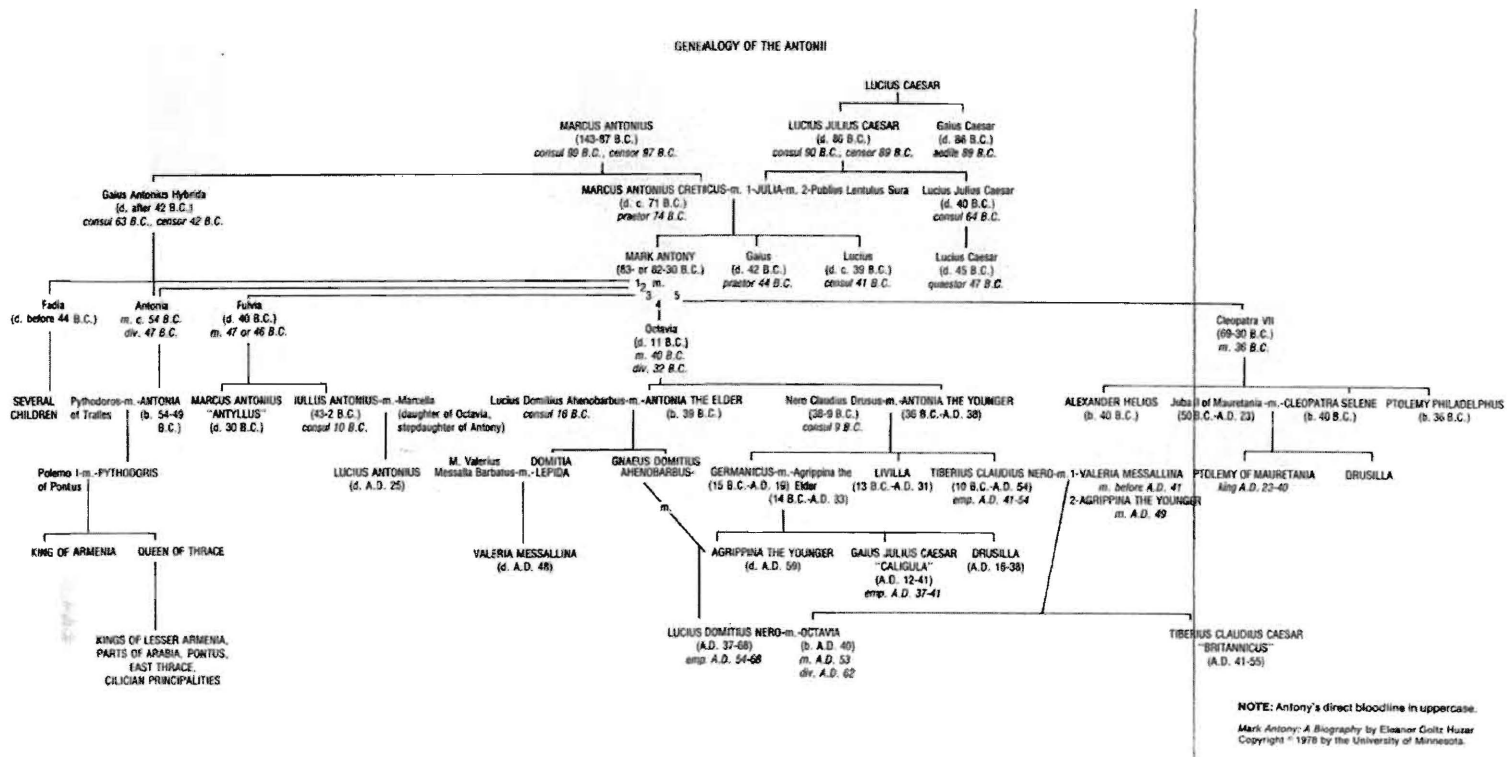
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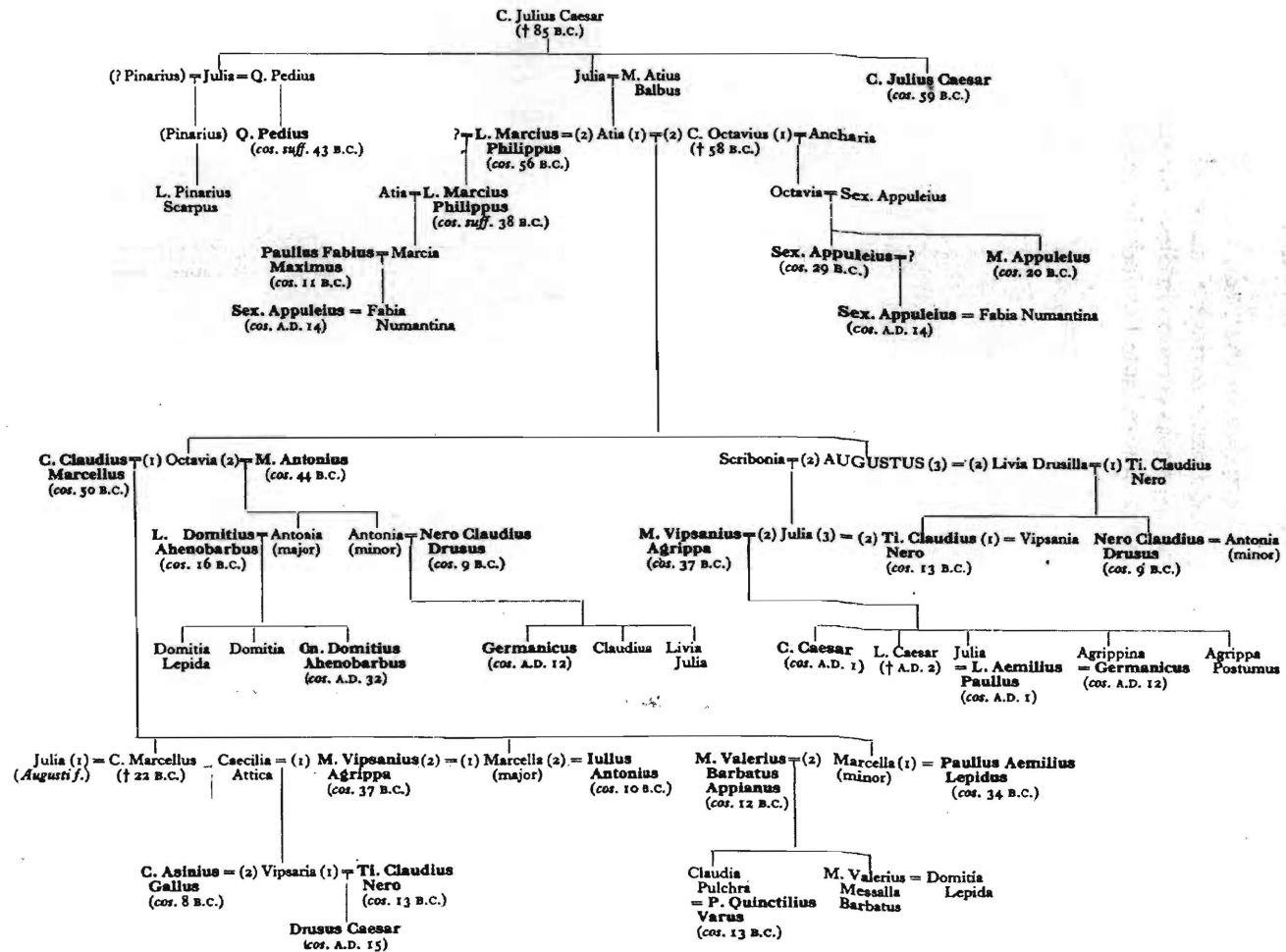
Actium

From Carter 1970: 207

# The Antonii



### III. THE FAMILY OF AUGUSTUS



The Family of Augustus  
From Syme 1939

Illustrations

### **Life of Antonius**

1. Antonius' grandfather was the orator Antonius, whom Marius executed because he had belonged to Sulla's faction. Antonius' father was Antonius Creticus, not a particularly famous or illustrious man politically, but he was otherwise charitable and upstanding, and in particular generous in regard to his contributions, as one might discover from one of his deeds. He was not a rich man, and for this reason, his wife forbade him to engage in philanthropy. When a friend came to him asking for money, though he had no money himself, Antonius ordered a slave to put water in a silver bowl and bring it to him. When the slave had brought the bowl, he wet his cheeks as if he were about to shave. After the slave left the room to do some other chore, Antonius gave the bowl to his friend, encouraging him to take it. Later, when the slaves in the house were being searched for the bowl, Antonius confessed and asked for forgiveness when he saw that his wife was angry and intended to examine each slave one by one.

2. Antonius' wife was Julia, from the house of the Caesars and a match for the best and most temperate women of the time. Their son, Antonius, was raised by her after the death of his father. She was married to Cornelius Lentulus, whom Cicero put to death for being one of Catiline's conspirators. She seems to have been the cause and origin of the extreme resentment Antonius held for Cicero. At any rate, Antonius claimed that Cicero did not return Lentulus' body to them until his mother had begged Cicero's wife. This story is agreed to be false, however, for no one put to death by Cicero at that time was denied burial.

The say that, once Antonius had become well-known, his friendship and association with Curio, a boorish hedonist, befell him, as if he had contracted some disease. Curio introduced Antonius to drinking, women, and lavish, immoderate expenditures, from which Antonius incurred a heavy debt for his age: 250 talents. Though Curio pledged to cover all of this debt, Antonius' father expelled him from the house when he learned of it. Then, for a short time, Antonius involved himself with the faction of Clodius, the most arrogant and vile of the demagogues at the time – a faction which had thrown Roman political affairs into chaos. But Antonius soon became full of Clodius' insanity, and fearing those rallying against his group, he left Italy for Greece, where he spent his time conditioning his body for military contests and studying oratory. Antonius employed what is called the vigorous Asiatic style of oratory, which was particularly fashionable at that time, and which bore much resemblance to Antonius' own life, full of braggadocio, whinnying and prancing, and capricious ambition.

4. In addition, Antonius' appearance was dignified and distinguished, and his noble beard, broad forehead, and aquiline nose seemed to possess a manliness similar to that in the face of Hercules in paintings and sculptures. There is an old story that the Antonii were descended from Hercules, and that their line originated from Anton, a son of Hercules. Antonius thought that his stature, mentioned before, and his clothing confirmed this story. Whenever he was likely to be seen by many people, Antonius always girded his tunic up to his thigh, wore a large sword at his side, and wrapped himself in one of those coarse cloaks. However, those traits of his which seemed coarse to others – his boasting, teasing, and public carousals, as well as how he sat next to

someone who was eating, and how he stood at the dinner table while on campaign – created in his men an amazing amount of favor for Antonius and longing in his absence. Somehow he was charming in regard to romantic affairs, and he won over many with this trait because he helped others with their love-lives was not annoyed whenever he was teased about his own love-life. His generosity and the favors he gave, to his friends and to his men, sparing no expense, provided a bright beginning to his influence and augmented his power to a higher level when he had become a great man, though this influence was ruined by his many other flaws.

I will describe one such example of his generosity. Antonius once ordered that one of his friends be given 250,000 drachmas – this the Romans call a *decies* – and Antonius' steward, amazed at the amount, laid out the silver out in the open in order to show him the sum. When he passed by, Antonius asked about the display. When the steward said that this was the money to be given away, Antonius perceived the man's mean-spiritedness and said, "I thought that a *decies* was more. This is not enough. Double it."

11. The leading men of Rome went on a journey to meet Caesar (who had just returned from Spain), and there he conspicuously honored Antonius. When Caesar was being carried into Italy by chariot, he had Antonius riding together with him, and behind was Brutus Albinus and Caesar's nephew, Octavianus, who afterward took the name Caesar and ruled Rome for many years. When Caesar was designated consul for the fifth time, he immediately chose Antonius as his colleague, but considered refusing the position in order to hand it to Dolabella, and he presented this consideration to the Senate. But when Antonius strongly objected and impugned Dolabella, an embarrassed Caesar ended the



commotion. Later, Caesar came forward to declare Dolabella as consul, but when Antonius proclaimed the omens unfavorable, Caesar gave way and refused the position to an annoyed Dolabella. It seemed that Caesar loathed him no less than Antonius did, since it was said that when someone spoke slanderously against both of them to Caesar, he said that he did not fear those fat, long-haired men but those pale, lean ones – meaning Brutus and Cassius, who were plotting against Caesar, intending to assassinate him.

12. Antonius involuntarily provided the most appropriate pretext for Brutus and Cassius to act. It was the festival of the Lymcaea at Rome, which the Romans call Lupercalia, and Caesar was dressed in his triumphal raiment, sitting on a platform in the forum and watching the runners. At the Lupercalia, many youths of patricians and magistrates anoint themselves richly with oil and run around, playfully whipping those whom they happen to encounter with pieces of shaggy goatskin. Antonius, running among them, ignored custom and ran to the tribunal platform, carrying a laurel woven around a diadem. Once his fellow runners had lifted him up, he put the diadem upon Caesar's head in order to pronounce him king. Caesar, putting on a show of refusal, turned away, and the people applauded, delighted by his rejection of the diadem. Antonius presented it to him a second time, and again Caesar brushed it away. For a while, they contended in this way: a few of Antonius' friends would force the crown on Caesar, and all the people would applaud and shout at Caesar's refusal. And what was amazing was that they already submitted to a state of monarchy in their actions, but they only shunned the word 'king' as a symbol of the destruction of their freedom. So, an angered Caesar stood upon the platform, pulling his toga away from his neck, and shouted that he was baring his

throat for anyone wishing to strike him down. Some tribunes pulled off a garland placed on one of the statues of Caesar, and the mob formed a train behind them, shouting their approval of what the tribunes had done; Caesar had the tribunes removed from office.

13. This incident strengthened the resolve of Brutus' and Cassius' followers. When they were recruiting those friends whom they considered trustworthy into their scheme, they considered Antonius. Though the others were eager to admit him, Trebonius spoke out and said that at the time when he set out to meet Caesar on his return from Spain, he had been Antonius' tent-mate and traveling companion. Trebonius said that he had asked Antonius' opinion of the matter carefully and with caution, and though Antonius understood, he did not approve of the enterprise. But he did not make the conversation known to Caesar, and faithfully kept the conversation secret. Because of this, they considered whether they should kill Antonius after they had killed Caesar. Brutus put a stop to this talk, deeming that a deed undertaken for the sake of the law and justice must be pure and clear of injustice. But they feared Antonius' power and his position of leadership, and so they appointed some of the conspirators to keep Antonius outside and delay him with conversation once Caesar had gone into the Senate house and the deed was about to be done.

14. The deed was done as planned. After Caesar fell in the Senate, Antonius quickly changed into slave's clothing and hid himself. Once he had perceived that the conspirators were attacking no one else and had gathered on the Capitoline, he persuaded them to come down from the hill and take his son as a hostage. Antonius hosted Cassius

at dinner, while Lepidus hosted Brutus. Antonius, convening the Senate, called for an amnesty and for the distribution of provinces to Cassius and Brutus. The summoned Senate confirmed these acts, and they voted to change nothing of the measures passed under Caesar. Antonius left the Senate as the most brilliant man alive, giving the impression that he had avoided civil war and dealt with events which were difficult and disturbing to an unusual degree in a most sensible and statesmanlike manner.

Popular opinion, however, quickly shook him loose from these rational considerations, and led him to believe that he could be the undisputed leader if Brutus were destroyed. And so it happened that when Caesar's body was brought out, and Antonius was to deliver the customary funeral oration in the forum, he saw that the common folk were exceptionally moved and spellbound by his words, and so he added to his commendations of Caesar words of sorrow and indignation over the calamity. At the end of the speech, he waved about the dead man's toga, bloodstained and slashed up by swords, and he called the perpetrators of the deed murderers polluted by bloodguilt.

In this way he so roused the crowd's anger that they piled up benches and tables and burned Caesar's body ceremonially there in the forum. Then they snatched firebrands from the flames, and ran to attack the houses of the assassins.

**21.** The Romans hated the triumvirate for the most part, and Antonius was mainly to blame, since he was older than Caesar and more powerful than Lepidus. And once again he gave himself to a life of licentious luxury, after he had reared up and bucked off his troubles. In addition to his generally bad reputation, he incurred no small amount of hatred on account of the house in which he lived, formerly the home of Pompeius

Magnus, a man admired not less for his temperance, discipline, and manner of open living than for his three triumphs. Many people were vexed to see that the house often was closed to leaders, generals, and elders – who were rudely pushed away from the door – while the house was full of actors, carnies, and drunken flatterers – on whom Antonius spent most of the money he had acquired through especially violent and cruel means. For not only did the triumvirs sell the property of those whom they murdered after bringing trumped-up charges against their wives and family, and not only did they impose every kind of tax imaginable, but after discovering that the Vestal Virgins occasionally served as bankers for both foreigners and citizens, they came and seized those holdings as well. Since no amount of money was ever enough for Antonius, Caesar required that Antonius share the money with him. They also divided up the army, as both were campaigning against Brutus and Cassius in Macedonia, and they entrusted Lepidus with Rome in their absence.

**25.** For such a man as Antonius, the emergence of his love for Cleopatra was the ultimate evil. It roused and stirred up many of the feelings formerly hidden and lying quietly within him. If any good or redeeming qualities remained in him, she corrupted and destroyed them.

This was the manner in which he was seduced by her. When he was engaged in his Parthian campaign, he wrote to her and bade her meet him in Cilicia in order to give an explanation for the many gifts and contributions which she was accused of having given to Cassius during the war. As soon as Dellius, the messenger, noticed her appearance and learned of her cleverness and cunning with words, he immediately sensed that Antonius

would not likely do anything to harm such a woman, and that she would become very important to him. He then turned to her service and to persuading the Egyptian, in the words of Homer, “to come to Cilicia decked in all her finery,” and to not fear Antonius, since he was the most amicable and friendly of the Roman statesmen. She was persuaded by Dellius, and judging by her affairs during her youth with Gnaeus Pompeius and Caesar, she hoped to vanquish Antonius easily. The others had known her when she was only a girl, inexperienced in the matters of love, and she was about to take Antonius into her bed at the age when women have their most dazzling beauty and are at their prime intellectually. On which account she prepared herself with many gifts, much money, and personal ornaments, the sort which it was likely that someone as prosperous as she, from a great position and kingdom, would take. And most of all, she went taking her confidence in herself and in her magical arts and charms.

27. On the next day, Antonius in turn entertained Cleopatra. Antonius strove earnestly to exceed the brilliance and attention of her preparations, but in respect to both she surpassed and defeated him – he being the first to mock the squalid, common fare he had to offer. Cleopatra noted in his joking a wide streak of the vulgar soldier in his personality, and she employed the same manner toward him, boldly and without restraint. It was said that in itself her beauty certainly was not without parallel, nor of the sort to strike those who saw her with desire, but her presence exuded an inescapable grip, and her beauty combined with her persuasiveness in conversation and with the character which surrounded her whole manner in company, had a certain sting. The sound of her voice also was charming, and she turned her tongue just as easily as a many-stringed

instrument, to whatever language she wished, so that rarely when meeting with foreigners did she have need for an interpreter – in most cases she answered questions herself, whether they were asked by Ethiopians, Trogodytae, Hebrews, Arabs, Syrians, Medes, or Parthians. It was said that she learned many other tongues as well, whereas other Ptolemies before her had not cared even to learn Egyptian, and some even had abandoned Macedonian.

35. Because Antonius was again irritated with Caesar for certain slanders, he sailed for Italy with 300 ships. When the people of Brundisium would not receive his fleet, he sailed on to Tarentum and anchored there. Once at Tarentum, he sent out Octavia (for she had sailed from Greece with him) at her behest to her brother. Octavia was pregnant, and already had borne Antonius a second baby daughter. She met Caesar on the road and took his friends Agrippa and Maecenas with her to help persuade Caesar. She conversed with Caesar, weeping and imploring him at length not to send her into misery from her happy state. She told him that currently, men admired her universally, as the wife of one of Rome's leaders and the sister of the other. "But if the worst were to happen," she said, "and war were to break out, it is not clear which of you is fated to win and which is to lose, but in either case my situation becomes wretched." Caesar was moved to pity by her words and went to Tarentum with peaceful intentions.

Those present at Tarentum beheld a spectacular sight – a great army at rest upon the land and many ships lying idle offshore – while Antonius and Caesar and their associates met in friendliness. Antonius gave the first dinner, for the sake of Caesar's sister. When they agreed that Caesar would give Antonius two legions for his Parthian war, and

Antonius would give Caesar one hundred bronze-rammed warships, Octavia requested separately that her husband agree to give twenty light ships to her brother and that her brother give Antonius one thousand soldiers in turn. After parting ways, Caesar immediately began his campaign against Sextus Pompeius, and Antonius left Octavia and his children – both those by her and those by Fulvia – with Caesar, and sailed for Asia.

36. But the terrible misfortune of his love for Cleopatra, long dormant and seemingly quieted and lulled to sleep by better reasoning, flared up again and regained strength as he drew nearer to Syria. In the end, just like Plato's disobedient and intemperate horse, Antonius kicked away everything good and all his means of deliverance when he sent Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra to Syria. When she arrived, he welcomed her and presented her with no small or insignificant gift: Phoenicia, Coele Syria, Cyprus, much of Cilicia, that part of the land of the Jews that produces balsam, and that part of Arabia belonging to the Nabataeans which slopes down to the outer sea.

These gifts especially infuriated the Romans, though Antonius had presented private citizens with tetrarchies and kingships over important lands before, and he had taken many kingdoms away from their regents – as he did with Antigonus of Judea, whom he had beheaded publicly, though no previous king had ever been punished in such a manner. But the honors given to Cleopatra were most grievous for the Romans because of the shame. Antonius also strengthened the Romans' anger by acknowledging as legitimate the twins Cleopatra had borne him, whom he named Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene.

Still, he was good at putting a glorious façade on dishonorable deeds, and he used to say that the greatness of Roman hegemony was not founded on what the Romans took, but what they gave. He also said that children of royal parentage increase a family's noble blood. At any rate, his own ancestor was said to have been fathered by Hercules, not one who fathered his offspring by only one womb. Nor would Hercules be fearful of Solon's laws regulating conception, but he allowed his nature to leave behind many beginnings and foundations of races.

**53.** In Rome, Octavia wished to sail to Antonius, and Caesar allowed it, though most say this was not a kindly gesture; it would rather provide a suitable excuse for war if she were treated rudely or otherwise ignored by Antonius. When she arrived in Athens, Octavia received letters from Antonius, requesting that she stay there and explaining the matters of his expedition inland. Octavia, although she was angry and wary of his excuses, wrote him inquiring where to send the things she was bringing for him. She was bringing a great deal of clothing for his soldiers, many yoke-animals, money, and gifts for his officers and men. And apart from these things, she brought two thousand picked troops – praetorian cohorts equipped with splendid armor. Niger, a certain friend of Antonius, was dispatched by her with this message, and he added to it appropriate and fitting words of praise.

Cleopatra perceived that Octavia would give way to her if they were in the same place, but she was fearful lest by her own noble manner, by the intimidation of Caesar, by the pleasure of her company, and by paying attention to Antonius that she would win control of him and become invincible, with complete control of her husband. So



Cleopatra feigned love of Antonius and made her body waste away with a meager diet. She had the look of being ecstatic whenever he was near, and when he went away she was just visible pining for him dejectedly. She contrived things so that he often saw her weeping, but quickly she would try to wipe away and conceal her tears as if she wished to hide them from him.

She acted this way while he was planning to make an expedition into Syria to join the Medes. Flatterers eagerly took action on her behalf, reproaching Antonius and telling him that he was hard-hearted, apathetic, and was pointlessly destroying the woman who was utterly devoted to him, and to him alone. They said that though she had been married to Antonius because of her brother, Octavia was honored with the name of his wife, while Cleopatra, though she was a queen with many subjects, had not rejected the title of Antonius' mistress or disclaimed it as unworthy, as long as she could see him and live with him. But if he drove her away, they said, she would not survive. Finally, they melted him and made him so weak that he began to fear for Cleopatra's life, and he returned to Alexandria, telling the Mede to wait until summer – although it was said that there was much dissension in Parthia at the time. When Antonius journeyed up-country again, he reclaimed his friendship with the king, arranging the marriage of one of Cleopatra's sons with one of the Mede's daughters – though she was only a child. Then he returned to Alexandria, with his mind turned toward the civil war.

**54.** Caesar felt that Octavia has been treated with disrespect, so when she returned from Athens, he bade her live in her own house. But she said that she would not leave her husband's home, and she told her brother, if he had not decided to go to war with

Antonius on other grounds, that it would be an unspeakable thing if the two greatest Roman statesmen plunged Rome into civil war – one because he loved a woman, and the other because of a brother's jealous anger.

Octavia's actions upheld the nobility of her words, as she continued to live in Antonius' house just as if he was there, and she not only cared for their own children, but also his children by Fulvia, in an exemplary and commendable way. She also welcomed any of Antonius' friends sent on official business matters and helped them get what they wanted from Caesar.

But in so doing she was unintentionally hurting Antonius – he became hated for doing injustice to such a noble woman. He also was hated for what he gave to his children in Alexandria. In an overly theatrical, arrogant, and anti-Roman way, he filled the gymnasium there with a mob, and put upon a silver platform two golden thrones – one for himself and the other for Cleopatra – and other, relatively more humble thrones for his children. First, he proclaimed Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Cyrene, and Coele Syria, with Caesarion, her son allegedly by Julius Caesar (who had left Cleopatra pregnant), as her co-regent. Then, he proclaimed his sons by Cleopatra 'kings of kings' and assigned Armenia, Media, and Parthia (whenever he brought that land under his control) to Alexander, while he gave Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia to Ptolemy. He brought his sons forward; Alexander wore a Median tiara and an upright kitaris, while Ptolemy wore military boots, a cloak, and a woolen hat with a diadem. Ptolemy thus wore the implements of the kings after Alexander the Great, while Alexander Helios was dressed in the manner of the Medes and Armenians. After the children embraced their parents, Alexander was presented with a guard of Armenians, and Ptolemy with a guard

of Macedonians. Cleopatra at that time and at other times when she appeared before a crowd wore a robe sacred to Isis, and she took the name 'New Isis.'

**55.** Caesar made these things known before the Senate and repeatedly denounced Antonius before the public, trying to provoke the masses against him. Antonius in turn sent a response against Caesar. The most important of the things which Antonius charged were, first of all, that when Caesar took Sicily from Sextus Pompeius he did not apportion a share of the island for him; second, that the ships Antonius had lent Caesar for that campaign had never been returned; third, that after Caesar deposed and dishonored their fellow triumvir Lepidus, Caesar kept for himself Lepidus' army, territories, and income; and finally, that Caesar had colonized almost all of Italy with his own men, leaving nothing for Antonius' men. Caesar answered these accusations, saying that he had put an end to Lepidus' foolish abuse of power, and that the things which he held were spoils of war, spoils which he would share with Antonius whenever Antonius shared Armenia with him. Also, Caesar said that there was no share of Italy for Antonius' men, for they had Media and Parthia for themselves, which they had annexed for Rome, fighting gloriously for their leader.

**62.** Antonius was such an appendage of Cleopatra that, although he held an advantage in a land battle, he wanted victory with the fleet for Cleopatra's sake, despite seeing the trierarchs supplement inadequate crews with travelers, muleteers, reapers, and young men from 'long-suffering' Greece, and even then the ships were not fully complemented, but were undermanned and incompetently handled. Caesar equipped his fleet with ships not

built for showiness in respect to height or mass; they were maneuverable, fast, and fully manned. Once Caesar had made ready with his fleet at Tarentum and Brundisium, he dispatched a message to Antonius, bidding him to stop delaying, and to come to Italy with his forces. Caesar promised to provide unhindered access to anchorages and harbors, and that he would withdraw from the coast the distance of a day's ride, until Antonius had safely debarked and established a camp. Antonius replied to these words by calling on Caesar to fight him man-to-man, even though he was older than Caesar, and if Caesar should refuse this challenge, to come with his host to Pharsalus, where C. Julius Caesar and Pompeius Magnus had battled years before. Caesar acted first, while Antonius was anchored at Actium, the place where Nicopolis now stands, and crossed the Ionian Sea, landing at a place called Toryne, or 'the ladle.' When Antonius and his men began making a loud fuss about Caesar's arrival (because his own infantry was late), Cleopatra jokingly said, "what's so terrible about Caesar sitting on the ladle?"

**63.** At dawn, when the enemy sailed against him, Antonius feared lest they capture his ships while they still lacked marines, so he armed the oarsmen and deployed them on the decks of the ships, in plain sight, and ordered that the ships' oars be raised like wings on both sides. He deployed the ships with their prows pointing out to the mouth of the bay of Actium, as if they were fully manned and ready to fight. Caesar, thus defeated by Antonius' superior tactics, withdrew. It seems that Antonius also ingeniously had the water supply surrounded with a fence, thus depriving the enemy of water, since the villages within the enclosure had what little poor-quality water that there was. Antonius also was reasonable in extending a hand to Domitius, against Cleopatra's wishes.

Domitius, having come down with a fever, got into a small boat and defected to Caesar. Antonius bore the loss with difficulty, but nevertheless he sent Domitius all his baggage, friends, and attendants. And Domitius, perhaps to repent his treason, died soon after. Also, there were the defections of Amyntas and Deiotarus to Caesar.

Because his fleet was always unlucky and always arrived too late to help, Antonius was forced to turn his attention to the infantry. Canidius, commander of the infantry, changed his mind in light of the current dangers, and he advised Antonius to send Cleopatra away and to withdraw into Thrace or Macedonia and to let a land battle determine the outcome. Canidius said that Dicomus, the king of the Getae, promised to help with considerable reinforcements, and it would not be shameful if he yielded control of the sea to Caesar, who now was practiced in naval warfare from his experience in the Sicilian War, but it would be terrible if Antonius, being more experienced in commanding land battles, did not make use of the strength and preparedness of his legionnaires, dividing and wasting his strength among ships. Cleopatra's point of view, that the battle should be decided with the fleet, prevailed, but already she was thinking of fleeing and she deployed her forces not where they would be helpful in winning the battle, but where they could most easily escape in the event of defeat.

There were long walls running down to the docks from the camp, along which Antonius was accustomed to walk, and where he expected no danger. When a servant revealed to Caesar that it might be possible to capture him while he walked along the wall, Caesar sent men to ambush him. These men came near to capturing him, but they prematurely came out of hiding to capture the man walking in front of Antonius. Antonius narrowly escaped by running away.

67. When Cleopatra recognized Antonius, she gave a signal from her ship, and his ship was pulled alongside hers and he was taken aboard. But Antonius did not see her nor was he seen by her, and instead he went to the prow of the ship and sat by himself in silence, holding his head in his hands. But at that moment, Liburnians from Caesar's fleet were spotted pursuing them. Antonius ordered that the ship be turned with its prow toward the pursuers. This turned back all of the pursuers, except for Eurycles of Laconia, who taunted Antonius arrogantly from the deck of his ship, brandishing a spear as if he were going to let it fly at Antonius. Standing at the prow of his ship, Antonius said, "Who is that who pursues Antonius?"

"It is I," he replied, "Eurycles the son of Lachares, and by Caesar's fortune I will avenge the death of my father!" (Lachares had fallen in with pirates, and had been put to death by Antonius).

Eurycles rammed not Antonius' ship, but the other of the flagships (there were two), and spun it around like a top, knocking it with its bronze ram. So Eurycles captured this ship, which fell foul of his, broadside on, and another ship too, in which there were extravagant household goods.

Once they had been relieved of this threat, Antonius sat in the same spot, keeping quiet. And for three days he stayed at the prow, either from his anger or his shame, until they landed at Taenarum. There Cleopatra's maids convinced them to speak to one another and persuaded them to share a meal and go to bed together.

Soon, more than a few transports and some friends had come to Antonius and Cleopatra from the rout, bringing news that the fleet was lost, but the land forces still stood together, as far as they knew. Antonius sent messengers to Canidius with orders that he

was to withdraw through Macedonia to Asia with the army as soon as possible. Antonius intended to cross from Taenarum to Libya. He selected one transport ship, stocked with great worth in gold, silver, and royal accoutrements, and gave it to his friends as a group, begging them to share it and keep it safe. They refused the gift, all of them weeping, while he comforted them with great kindness and warmth, sent them away, and told them to accept the gift. They took with them a letter he had written to Theophilus, his procurator in Corinth, asking him to ensure that they be provided for and hidden until they were able to negotiate a reconciliation with Caesar. This Theophilus was the father of Hipparchus, who was influential with Antonius, and was among the first of his freedmen to fall in with Caesar and who later settled in Corinth.

**68.** This is how things were for Antonius. At Actium, the fleet held out against Caesar for a long time, and only after taking on much damage head-on from high, rough seas did they surrender, nine hours into the battle. There were no more than five thousand dead, but three hundred ships were captured, as Caesar himself recorded. Many were not aware of Antonius' flight, and those who learned of it were incredulous of the story – how he could leave behind nineteen legions of undefeated soldiers, and twelve thousand cavalry, as if he had not often experienced both good fortune and bad, nor had learned from experience in countless battles and wars. His soldiers missed him and some expected that suddenly he would appear from some place or another, and they displayed such loyalty and trust that, even after his flight became apparent, they stayed together for seven days, paying no heed to Caesar's ambassadors. Finally, when Canidius, the commander, ran

off during the night and abandoned the camp, and they were leaderless, they finally surrendered to the victor.

After this, Caesar sailed to Athens, and talked it through with the Greeks, distributing grain that had been provided for the war to the cities, which were in bad shape, because their money, slaves, and yoke-animals had been stolen. At any rate, my great-grandfather Nicarchus would say that all the citizens were forced to carry measured amounts of wheat on their shoulders in an orderly fashion down to the sea at Anticyra, while being sped along by whips. They had carried one such load, and already the second load had been measured out, and they were ready to take it down when news came of Antonius' defeat, and this saved the city, for immediately Antonius' procurators and soldiers fled, and the citizens distributed the grain among themselves.

**76.** At daybreak, Antonius put his land forces upon the city's headland and watched as his ships put to sea and approached the enemy fleet; since he expected to see a great victory, he kept the troops at rest. When Antonius' fleet drew near to the enemy, his ships raised their oars in salutation to Caesar's men, and Caesar's men greeted them in turn. Then Antonius' ships turned to join Caesar's, and they became one fleet, together sailing head-on for the city. After watching this happen, Antonius was immediately abandoned by his cavalymen as well, who had also defected. Once his infantry had been defeated, Antonius retreated to the city, crying out that Cleopatra had handed him over to those whom he fought for her sake.

Cleopatra feared his anger and desperation, so she fled into her tomb and closed the portcullises, which were strengthened with bars and bolts. She sent messengers to



Antonius to tell him that she was dead. Believing what they told him, Antonius cried to himself, "Why do you still wait, Antonius? Fortune has robbed you of the only remaining reason for clinging to your life!" So he went into his bedroom, loosened and removed his breastplate, and said, "Oh, Cleopatra, I am not grieved at losing you, for soon enough I will be with you, but I am grieved that such a great commander has been revealed to have naught but the courage of a woman."

Antonius had a trustworthy slave by the name of Eros. Antonius encouraged Eros to kill him, as he had once promised to do if anything such as this had befallen him. So Eros took up a sword, and held it up as if to strike Antonius, but then he turned his head away and killed himself. When Eros fell at his feet, Antonius said, "Well done, Eros. Although you were not able to do it, you have shown me what it is necessary to do myself." Antonius then stabbed himself in the stomach and fell back onto the couch.

The wound was not immediately fatal, because the couch slowed the flow of blood. Antonius lifted himself up and cried for someone to strike him a second time, for the fatal blow. Those present fled from the room, while Antonius was wailing and convulsing. Finally, the scribe Diomedes came from Cleopatra, who instructed that Antonius be brought to her tomb.

77. Learning that Cleopatra still lived, Antonius eagerly ordered his servants to lift up his body, and in their arms he was carried to the door of the tomb. Cleopatra would not open the door, but she appeared from the windows and let down ropes and lines, and the attendants fastened Antonius to these. Then Cleopatra and two maids, the only other people whom she allowed into the tomb, took him up. Those who were present say that

this was a most pitiful sight. Antonius was lifted up, red with blood and in the throes of death, reaching out to Cleopatra with his arms, even though he was suspended in the air beside the tomb. The work was not easy for Cleopatra, but she barely managed the rope and her face was distorted by the strain. Those below shouted up to her and shared in her struggle. Thus she took him into the tomb and laid him down. She stood over him, tearing her clothes, pounding on her breast, and scratching herself with her hands. She smeared his blood on her face and called him her master, her husband, her general, and for a short while, she was almost able to forget her own troubles in her pity for him. But Antonius calmed her laments and asked for a drink of wine – either he was thirsty or simply hoping for a faster release. After he drank, he told her to find her own honorable deliverance, and to trust Proculius most of all of Caesar’s companions. He told her not to mourn his recent misfortunes, but to consider lucky all the good things that had happened, since he had been most powerful and renowned among men, and now not without honor was he, a Roman, defeated by a fellow Roman.

**86.** It is said that the asp was smuggled in with the figs and fig leaves themselves, hidden underneath them (for Cleopatra had ordered it this way), and the critter struck at her body without her knowledge. Then, after she removed the figs, she saw it, and said, “Here it was all along!” and she presented her arm for it to bite. Others say that the asp was kept shut up in a water jar, and when she was trying to goad it out by prodding it with her golden staff, it lunged at her and fastened onto her arm. But no one knows the true story. It was also said that she used to carry poison around in a hollow hairpin, which was hidden in her hair. But there were neither marks on her body nor signs that

she had taken poison. No one actually saw the snake, but some noticed its trail on the beach which the windows of the tomb overlooked. Others observed two small, barely visible puncture marks on her arm. This is the story that Caesar seems to have believed, for there was a picture of Cleopatra carried in his triumphal procession with the snake clinging to her. These are the accounts of what is said to have happened.

Caesar, although annoyed that the woman was dead, was impressed with her nobility and gave orders that her body was to be buried alongside Antonius', and that she should be given a splendid and regal burial ceremony. He also arranged for her attendants to receive an honorable burial.

When she died, Cleopatra was thirty-nine years old, had been queen for twenty-two of those years, and had Antonius as her co-ruler for fourteen of them. Some say that when he died, Antonius was fifty-six; others say that he was fifty-three. Antonius' statues were pulled down, but Cleopatra's remained standing, because a man named Archibius, a friend of hers, paid Caesar one thousand talents so that they would not suffer the same fate as Antonius'.

## Life of Antonius

### Commentary

#### 1.1-2.11 The Antonii

**1.1 M. Antonius** was consul in 99, censor in 97, killed in 87. Renowned for his oratorical skill, this Antonius had been sent out to Cilicia and Pamphylia as a praetor with proconsular *imperium* in 102 in order to establish bases there to combat piracy in the eastern Mediterranean. He was not successful, despite a law passed in December of 101 mobilizing more forces for his use. He held power until 100, celebrating a triumph upon his return to Rome.<sup>1</sup> Just before the outbreak of the Social War, he escaped conviction on bogus charges brought against him for associating with the younger Drusus by virtue of his oratorical skills.<sup>2</sup> Plutarch describes his death in *Mar.*: he hid in the house of a poor plebian friend, and that man's slave accidentally betrayed him to Marius' men, who then murdered him.<sup>3</sup>

**1.3 M. Antonius Creticus** was given special proconsular *imperium infinitum* in 74 to manage the recurring piracy problem in the east and to keep pirates out of Cyrene. Instead of campaigning in Cyrene, however, he led a sloppy expedition against pirates in Crete and was soundly defeated in 72 or 71.<sup>4</sup> He died soon afterwards, and was honored with an honorary cognomen – probably in order to gloss over his failure.<sup>5</sup> Antonius'

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<sup>1</sup> Scullard 1982: 55, 58, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Scullard 1982: 62-4, 404.

<sup>3</sup> Pelling 1988: 117; *Mar.* 44.

<sup>4</sup> It seems that he, along with Lucullus, was vested with such special powers by the Optimates in order that he serve as a counterbalance against the rising power of Pompeius (who was in Spain at the time). Ironically, both campaigns failed and opened the door for Pompeius' two eastern commands. Scullard 1982: 91, 97, 418.

<sup>5</sup> Syme 1939: 103; Pelling 1988: 117.

once illustrious plebian family had nearly become impoverished in course of these previous two generations.<sup>6</sup>

**2.1 Julia** was the daughter of L. Julius Caesar (consul in 90) and Fulvia, the sister of L. Julius Caesar (consul in 64).

**2.3 P. Cornelius Lentulus Sura**, consul in 71, was expelled from the Senate in 70.<sup>7</sup> He was among the group with whom Catiline planned his uprising in Rome on 28 October of 63. Plutarch details some of his ‘licentious’ deeds in *Cic.* 17-22.

**2.7** Plutarch’s source for **Antonius’ resentment for Cicero** was *Cic. Phil.* 2, which he probably had reread in his preparations for *Ant.*<sup>8</sup> Yet Cicero does not mention Julia’s pleading, nor does he guarantee that those he punished were granted burial. Pelling attributes the discrepancy to Plutarch perhaps misremembering, during his rereading of the *Philippics*, a reference source he had used for *Cic.*<sup>9</sup>

**2.10** Such source criticism also appears in *Ant.* 6.1, 59.1, 86.9, and also in *Cras.* 13.3-4 and *Caes.* 8.3-4.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.11-29 Antonius’ youth

In contrast to his normal practice (for he is unique among ancient biographers in his lengthy narrative treatments of his subjects’ boyhoods, such as in *Dtr.* 2-4), Plutarch is brief in describing Antonius’ youth. Normally, he is very interested in their education and early signs of character flaws (e.g. *Cor.* 1, *Mar.* 2). He explains why in the introductory chapter of *Dtr.*, quoting Plato’s *Republic*: ‘if even the most gifted minds are

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<sup>6</sup> Syme 1939: 103.

<sup>7</sup> Scullard 1982: 108.

<sup>8</sup> Pelling 1988: 118.

<sup>9</sup> Pelling 1988: 118.

<sup>10</sup> Swain 1995: 243; Pelling 1985: 316-17.

subjected to a bad education, they become exceptionally bad.’<sup>11</sup> Thus Plutarch’s examination of how the great potential of Antonius and Demetrius was wasted by poor training would necessitate a lengthy treatment of their youth. Despite Antonius’ apparent early flaws, however, *Ant.* does not fit this pattern. Most likely Plutarch lacked a satisfactory source; likewise does mystery blanket modern historians’ knowledge of Antonius’ obscure first twenty-five years.

**2.11 C. Scribonius Curio**, a bankrupt son of a former consul, was tribune in 50 and was bribed into service of the Caesarian party.<sup>12</sup> In his war with Pompeius, Caesar entrusted Curio with the task of seizing Sicily and Africa from that territory’s Pompeian governor, P. Attius Varus. Curio had supported Caesar with great political skill when he was in Rome, but he was an inexperienced general abroad. After taking control of Sicily, Curio campaigned against King Juba of Numidia, eventually leading his army into a trap in the Bagradas valley, west of Carthage. He was killed in battle, as were most of his men.<sup>13</sup> Plutarch’s source for the relationship between Antonius and Curio was Cic. *Phil.* 2.44-8, where Cicero stressed the physical relationship between the two; he likened Antonius to a male prostitute, and that though he had recently come of age, he had turned his man’s gown into that of a ‘harlot.’<sup>14</sup> Plutarch omits this.

**2.17 Antonius’ debt** of two hundred and fifty talents is correctly reproduced from Cic. *Phil.* 2.45; according to Cicero, Antonius owed six million sesterces.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Pl. *R.* 491e.

<sup>12</sup> Syme 1939: 63.

<sup>13</sup> Scullard 1982: 136.

<sup>14</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.44

<sup>15</sup> 1 talent = 6000 denarii/drachmas = 24,000 sesterces. 24,000 x 250 = 6 million. Pelling 1988: 119.

**2.19 P. Clodius Pulcher**, demagogue, son of Ap. Claudius Pulcher, and tribune in 58, associated with Antonius during his tribunate and was on the payroll of M. Licinius Crassus.<sup>16</sup> The triumvirs used Clodius to expel Cicero and Cato from Rome, after he had passed a law which distributed free grain to the people and his popularity with the mob had skyrocketed.<sup>17</sup> Clodius had earned Cicero's dislike in 61 by means of his part in a notorious scandal, when he dressed as a woman and infiltrated the festival of the Bona Dea – sacrilege for men to witness. Clodius was brought to trial, and after an episode of ridiculous bribery, he was acquitted. The consequent political intrigue wrecked Cicero's hopes for a continuance of the peace he had forged between the Senate, knights, and Pompey.<sup>18</sup> Because Cicero probably would have made more of Antonius' association with his bitter enemy otherwise, the association was probably brief.<sup>19</sup> Clodius was later murdered by order of T. Annius Milo on January 18<sup>th</sup> of 52.<sup>20</sup>

**2.25 The Asiatic style** was not an established school of oratory in Rome, but instead was a lightly derogatory term applied to florid speaking. Plutarch probably had no source of Antonius' speeches, but he often describes his subjects' rhetorical style in order to reflect character.<sup>21</sup>

#### **4 Antonius' appearance and personality**

Plutarch stressed Antonius' excesses in 2, his military genius in 3. These two thematic threads are woven together in 4, suggesting that Antonius' popularity was the result of his excesses and brilliance. Characterizing passages like 4 often introduce a

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<sup>16</sup> Syme 1939: 459.

<sup>17</sup> Scullard 1982: 116, 427.

<sup>18</sup> Scullard 1982: 112.

<sup>19</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.48; Pelling 1988: 119; Huzar 1978: 25-6.

<sup>20</sup> Scullard 1982: 120.

<sup>21</sup> Pelling 1988: 120.

critical stage of a *Life*: e.g. *Alc.* 16 and 23, *Mar.* 7 and 28, *Caes.* 15-17, *Pomp.* 45, *Dem.* 13-14, *Dtr.* 19-20, and thus at *Ant.* 24.9-12.<sup>22</sup> Here, the passage marks the transition between his youth and his entry into politics.

**4.1-9** Plutarch usually mirrors personality with physical appearance.<sup>23</sup> Here he stresses how Antonius' appearance affects his popularity, just as Pompeius' appearance helped him garner political support (see *Pomp.* 2). Whom Antonius and Cleopatra mimic is a recurring theme: Antonius first imitates Hercules, then Dionysus, while Cleopatra emulates Isis and Aphrodite.<sup>24</sup> Plutarch's description, probably based on heroically stylized portrait sculpture, is supported by numismatic portraiture.<sup>25</sup>

**4.5 The Herculean lineage of the Antonii** was taken seriously; Antonian coins were issued at one point portraying Hercules, just as Caesar and Octavianus shared coins with Venus and Aeneas.<sup>26</sup> Because Antonius' self-portrayal as a hero of myth is so closely parallel to similar passages in *Alex.*, it seems as if Alexander, not Demetrius, would have been the obvious *Life* with which to pair *Ant.*<sup>27</sup> Plutarch, however, saved Alexander for pairing with *Caes.*

Plutarch's description of Antonius' Herculean dress – the sword, cloak, tunic girt to the thigh – is puzzling. Though Romans most likely would have found it offensive (Plutarch, as a Greek, perhaps may have been ignorant of Roman sentiment on the matter), neither Cicero nor other writers hostile to Antonius mention it.<sup>28</sup> Pelling suggests that Plutarch, in an attempt to emphasize Antonius' braggadocio, invented the

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<sup>22</sup> Pelling 1990: 232.

<sup>23</sup> See *Sull.* 2, *Mar.* 2, *Arat.* 2.

<sup>24</sup> See *Ant.* 24.4-5, 26.2, 26.5, 36.7, 54.9, and 60.3-5; Brenk 1992: 160.

<sup>25</sup> Toynbee 1978: 41-6; Pelling 1988: 124.

<sup>26</sup> Pelling 1988: 124.

<sup>27</sup> *Alex.* 15, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Pelling 1988: 124.



story. Trajan also connected himself with Hercules in Plutarch's own day, but in the differing sense of Hercules' labors and generosity to humanity.<sup>29</sup> But Plutarch was not making any contemporary reference; any such allusion would have been in very poor taste.<sup>30</sup>

**4.9** Plutarch's description of **Antonius' camaraderie** is standard. Though Plutarch does not see Antonius' magnanimity as contrived, the general who shares his men's everyday hardships or one who becomes personally familiar with his men is an ancient historiographic stereotype.<sup>31</sup>

**4.12 '...longing in his absence':** *ποθος* is the powerful word Plutarch uses here. *ποθος* indicates a yearning for something absent, often of sexual longing; Plutarch uses it elsewhere to connote affection for an absent or dead hero.<sup>32</sup> Here it connotes the army's affection for their leader who will eventually abandon them at Actium.

**4.16** The story that Plutarch relates here is one of three examples in *Ant.* where he forces an anecdote into the narrative.<sup>33</sup> This story does not so much highlight Antonius' generosity as it does his dislike for his steward.

## 11 Antonius and Caesar

**11.1** Cicero mentions **Caesar's return from Spain**, but gives no details of the voyage.<sup>34</sup> Presumably, Plutarch possessed some historical source for these details; Pelling thinks

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<sup>29</sup> Jones 1978: 116-19.

<sup>30</sup> Pelling 1988: 124.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ant.* 6.5-6, 17.5, 43.6, and *Mar.* 7.3-6. In other authors, see Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.25, Suet. *Iul.* 67, Tac. *Hist.* 1.23, 1.52.

<sup>32</sup> Pl. *Crat.* 420a; for Plutarch's uses see *Pomp.* 53.2, 57.7; *Per.* 39.3, and again in *Ant.* at 68.11.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. 11.16, 62.22.

<sup>34</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.78.

they sound authentic.<sup>35</sup> This journey took place in the summer of 45, after Antonius met Caesar in Narbo.<sup>36</sup>

**11.4** Here Plutarch is distinguishing between **Decimus Brutus** and M. Junius Brutus, Caesar's assassin.<sup>37</sup> Decimus Brutus commanded a fleet which had helped C. Julius Caesar quell a revolt by the Gallic Veneti in Quiberon Bay in 56 and battled Pompeians in Spain in 49. Later he was one of the Caesarian members of the conspiracy to kill Caesar. After Caesar was murdered, Decimus Brutus was one of two conspirators (the other was C. Trebonius; both originally were Caesarians) who were allowed to return to their provinces, in this Brutus' case – the province of Cisalpine Gaul.<sup>38</sup>

**11.5 Caesar's nephew, Octavianus** was in fact his great-nephew, the son of his niece Atia. Plutarch most likely made a simple mistake here, for he has it right at *Brut.* 22.1. 'Octavianus' was born 'C. Octavius', then became 'C. Iulius Caesar Octavianus' when Caesar adopted him in his will. From 44 to 27, his contemporaries called him 'Caesar', which is the moniker Plutarch uses for him in all of the *Lives*.<sup>39</sup>

**11.7** Caesar became **consul for the fifth time** for 44, and retained the power of dictator. M. Aemilius Lepidus remained *magister equitum*.

**11.9** Caesar apparently intended for **Dolabella** to replace him as consul while he took an expeditionary force into Parthia (he was planning the expedition when he was murdered). Plutarch adds some particulars to the details which Cicero gives in *Phil.* 2.79-84 regarding this episode between Antonius and Dolabella, which took place at the *comitia* for Dolabella's election in early 44. According to Plutarch, the position is Caesar's to

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<sup>35</sup> Pelling 1988: 142.

<sup>36</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.34.

<sup>37</sup> Scullard 1982: 130.

<sup>38</sup> Scullard 1982: 136, 155, 437.

<sup>39</sup> Pelling 1988: 143.

appoint – this is an understandable oversimplification. An endorsement by Caesar would have practically guaranteed office to Dolabella, and the actual election would have been a formality. Despite what Plutarch says, the election seems to have gone through, but its validity was questioned; Caesar was scheduled to speak to the senate about this issue on the day he was murdered. After the Ides of March, both Antonius and the conspirators confirmed Dolabella's succession.<sup>40</sup>

**11.16** Plutarch forces Caesar's '**fat, long-haired men**' remark in here, marking the third time he has told this story.<sup>41</sup> Caesar's words show that he did not feel threatened by Dolabella, not that he 'loathed' him. The word *παχείς* does not only suggest stoutness, but also slow wits, and long hair was common among wealthy youths who took care in their appearance.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, *ωχρούς και λεπτούς* suggests austerity and the physical weakness considered typical of intellectuals.<sup>43</sup>

## 12 Lupercalia

These events of the Lupercalia on 15 February 44 followed an incident on 26 January, when the people proclaimed Caesar king upon his return to Rome from a festival on the Alban Mount. He responded to the people by saying that he was a Caesar, not a Rex. Not long after, his statue in the Forum Romanum was decorated with a laurel and diadem. Plutarch found source material for this episode at Cic. *Phil.* 2.84-7 and probably in Pollio (since Dio and Appian also tell the story).<sup>44</sup> Nicolaus of Damascus gives a

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<sup>40</sup> Pelling 1988: 143.

<sup>41</sup> See *Caes.* 62.10 and *Brut.* 8.2.

<sup>42</sup> s.v. *παχείς*, LSJ III; Pelling 1988: 143.

<sup>43</sup> Pelling 1988: 143.

<sup>44</sup> Pelling 1988: 144; App. *BC* 2.109; Dio 44.11

different account, but his story seems to attempt to impugn Caesar's enemies.<sup>45</sup> Even Plutarch himself tells a somewhat different story at *Caes.* 61. But the story Plutarch tells at *Caes.* 61 dwells on the *popular* reaction to the incident, an emphasis not present in *Ant.*, Appian, or Suetonius, though all draw on the same source – Pollio. The narrative at *Caes.* 61 likely serves as an example of Plutarch reinterpreting for his use what stood in his source.<sup>46</sup>

The interpretation of this incident has been in dispute since antiquity. Dio and Nicolaus make several guesses, and the debate still continues among modern historians.<sup>47</sup>

Scholars have made several guesses:

- (1) either Antonius acted of his own accord, whether sincerely wishing for Caesar to become *rex*, hoping to gratify Caesar with a grand gesture, or intending to embarrass him,
- (2) or Antonius acted with Caesar's encouragement, meaning either that Caesar truly was aiming for kingship and intended to accept the crown if the crowd reaction was positive, that Caesar wished to put on a public show of his refusal of the crown, or that Caesar was testing public opinion of the idea, himself being unsure if they would accept him as king.

Plutarch makes his view more clear in *Caes.* 61, that Caesar wanted to be king, and he planned the Lupercalia incident as an experiment – an experiment which ultimately failed.<sup>48</sup> In *Caes.*, the true significance of the incident lies in his dismissal of the tribunes (a separate incident which Plutarch wrongly associates with the Lupercalia; see note on

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<sup>45</sup> Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 71-5.

<sup>46</sup> Pelling 1986: 320-1.

<sup>47</sup> Dio 44.11.3 and 46.17-19; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 73-4; for modern bibliography see Weinstock 1971: 331-40.

<sup>48</sup> *Caes.* 60.1, 61.5-7.

12.24).<sup>49</sup> There, Caesar is himself to blame for his assassination; but in *Ant.*, the incident was no experiment, only Antonius' independent action, which in turn antagonizes the conspirators.<sup>50</sup> Here, Caesar's dismissal of the tribunes only receives a token reference.<sup>51</sup>

**12.3 The Lupercalia** took place on 15 February. A new college of *luperci*, the *luperci Iulii*, had recently been added in Caesar's honor to the two ancient colleges, the *luperci Fabiani* and *luperci Quinctiales*. Antonius captained Caesar's new college. Plutarch was fairly well-informed about this festival.<sup>52</sup> It bore some association with Romulus, but its origins are otherwise unclear.<sup>53</sup> Aside from presiding over the festivities of the Lupercalia, Caesar had been associating himself with Romulus in other ways: he erected a portrait sculpture of himself in the Temple of Quirinus, for example.<sup>54</sup>

**12.4 Caesar's triumphal raiment** may have been more 'regal' than 'triumphal' – apparently, he was given the right to wear either. Dio's description suggests that he was wearing the regal dress; the triumphal toga was a purple toga, bordered with gold, called the *toga picta*, but Caesar wore a different toga, the *toga purpurea*. This toga was purple, unembroidered, generally simpler, and of the type associated with the early kings of Rome. Caesar also wore a gold crown, the *corona aurea* of the triumphator rather than a symbol of kingship.<sup>55</sup> In *Caes.* and later again in *Ant.*, Plutarch writes that he sat on a golden throne, an honor which he had been voted earlier in 44.<sup>56</sup> The throne was not a

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<sup>49</sup> *Caes.* 61.1.

<sup>50</sup> *Caes.* 62.1; *Ant.* 12.1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ant.* 12.20; Pelling 1988: 144-5.

<sup>52</sup> *Rom.* 21; *Caes.* 61; *Mor.* 280b-c

<sup>53</sup> Pelling 1988: 145.

<sup>54</sup> Dio 46.19.6; Pelling 1988: 145.

<sup>55</sup> Pelling 1988: 145-6.

<sup>56</sup> 16.15; *Caes.* 61.5.

standard honor for the triumphator, and may have been a symbol of divinity or royalty.<sup>57</sup> This crown and throne are possibly like those visible in his coin portraits.<sup>58</sup> Suetonius writes that the throne was one of several honors Caesar was voted but should have refused, so it seems to have been rather offensive.<sup>59</sup>

While it is possible that the Roman people may not have understood the regal symbolism of the toga or throne (if any existed), it seems that the diadem which Antonius offered him would have signified a *regnum* he clearly did not yet possess.<sup>60</sup>

**12.5** Plutarch elaborates further on the significance of the **strips of shaggy goatskin at Caes. 61**: if a woman who was struck by the runners was pregnant, she would have an easy birth; if a barren woman was smitten, she would be barren no longer.

**12.8 The ‘diadem’** was a simple headband, usually white. It had been a symbol of royalty among Hellenistic kings, and was familiar in Rome.<sup>61</sup> Some suggest that Antonius’ presentation of the diadem emulated eastern coronation rituals.<sup>62</sup> Plutarch and Nicolaus of Damascus agree that Caesar already wore a golden crown, and that a laurel crown decorated the diadem; thus we may expect for Caesar to be offered a diadem alone.<sup>63</sup> Either both confuse the diadem with the laurel wreath and diadem placed on Caesar’s statue weeks earlier, or the laurel was used to conceal the diadem before the presentation. Other obvious alternatives include the possibility that Caesar simply would

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<sup>57</sup> Weinstock 1971: 272-3, 281-4; Suet. *Iul.* 76.1.

<sup>58</sup> Crawford 1974: nos. 488, 491.

<sup>59</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 76.1.

<sup>60</sup> Pelling 1988: 146.

<sup>61</sup> First century coins represent early kings of Rome with such diadems, while Ti. Gracchus and Pompey both were accused of ‘aiming’ for the honor of such diadems (Crawford 1974: nos. 425, 446; Pelling 1988: 146).

<sup>62</sup> Weinstock 1971: 333-40.

<sup>63</sup> *Caes.* 61.5; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 71; Pelling 1988: 146.

be expected to wear two crowns, or that he would be expected replace one with the other.<sup>64</sup>

**12.12** By describing Caesar's refusal as **disingenuous**, Plutarch hints that Caesar really wanted the diadem, despite his reluctance.

**12.12-21** Caesar also ordered that an entry be made in the *fasti* under the Lupercalia: 'To C. Caesar, perpetual dictator, M. Antonius, the consul, by the people's order, offered kingship; Caesar was unwilling'.<sup>65</sup>

**12.21** In *Caes.*, Plutarch places Caesar's **baring of his throat** earlier, when he sensed that the other magistrates and senators were offended that he did not rise as they approached to offer him honors.<sup>66</sup> Its displacement here seems deliberate, suggesting that Caesar's aggravated reaction was a result of the crowd's applause at his refusal, not at Antonius' offer of the diadem.

**12.24** The story of the **laurel wreath** being torn from a statue is wrongly placed here; Plutarch shares this error with Nicolaus of Damascus.<sup>67</sup> Other accounts have Caesar ordering the crown be taken to the temple of Jupiter upon the Capitoline, 'Rome's only king'.<sup>68</sup> Either Plutarch or his source combined the Lupercalia episode with an event weeks earlier, when the tribunes C. Epidius Marullus and L. Caesetius Flavus threw in prison the man who had crowned Caesar's statue with a diadem. Caesar removed the tribunes from office and they fled from Rome.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Pelling 1988: 146.

<sup>65</sup> "At etiam adscribi iussit in fastis ad Lupercalia C. Caesari dictatori perpetuo M. Antonium consulem populi iussu regnum detulisse; Caesarem uti noluisse," Cic. *Phil.* 2.87.

<sup>66</sup> *Caes.* 60.6.

<sup>67</sup> Pelling 1988: 147; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 71.

<sup>68</sup> *Caes.* 61.8; Dio 44.11.3.

<sup>69</sup> Weinstock 1971: 319-20.

### 13 The conspiracy

Suetonius writes that there were at least sixty conspirators; Nicolaus of Damascus claims there were more than eighty.<sup>70</sup> Both numbers seem implausible. About twenty conspirators are known by name, including both enemies and friends of Caesar.<sup>71</sup>

**13.4 C. Trebonius**, a *novus homo*, was tribune in 55 and consul in 45. He was the son of a knight, and came to prominence as one of Caesar's legates after meritorious military service in Gaul. After Caesar's assassination, he was still allowed to take up his proconsular appointment in Asia (a province with no legions) as Caesar had intended.<sup>72</sup> In February or March 43, P. Cornelius Dolabella captured, tortured, and executed him.<sup>73</sup> Trebonius' line produced no consular descendants thereafter.<sup>74</sup>

**13.3-9 Trebonius' story** highlights Plutarch's method. Plutarch draws upon Cicero for this story, to which he adds his own imaginary detail.<sup>75</sup> Here Antonius shares a tent with Trebonius, though officers did not normally share tents, an erroneous addition Pelling attributes to Plutarch's misunderstanding of the Latin word *contubernalis*, though that word does not seem to exist in any of Plutarch's extant Latin source.<sup>76</sup> Though Plutarch implies that Antonius and Trebonius went together to meet Caesar at Narbo in the summer of 45, Trebonius had gone to Spain to fight, and Antonius probably met him upon his return. The story seems to be a misinterpretation/elaboration of Cic. *Fam.* 15.21 and *Phil.* 2.34. Here, Trebonius broaches the subject 'delicately and cautiously', and

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<sup>70</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 80.4; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 59 (possibly corrupt, Pelling 1988: 148; Syme 1939: 95).

<sup>71</sup> Syme 1939: 95. Also see note 11.4 on **Decimus Brutus**.

<sup>72</sup> Syme 1939: 94-5.

<sup>73</sup> Syme 1939: 172.

<sup>74</sup> Syme 1939: 498.

<sup>75</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.34.

<sup>76</sup> Pelling 1988: 148.



Plutarch stresses that Antonius neither joined the plot nor revealed it to Caesar. The story of his ‘faithful silence’ does not fit well into the narrative after the story of Antonius’ lapdog-like behavior at the Lupercalia.<sup>77</sup>

**13.10** That the conspirators considered whether to kill Antonius is illogical as well; why would Antonius’ ‘faithful silence’ warrant that he be killed? The awkwardness here is probably due to Plutarch’s use of both Cicero and Pollio, whose accounts may have differed slightly. Neither Cicero nor any other extant source tells of the conspirators considering Antonius in their plot after the Lupercalia, or that Trebonius told his fellow assassins of his conversation at Narbo. Cicero only mentions Narbo – Plutarch most likely blended details from the two differing accounts.<sup>78</sup> Plutarch also omits that Antonius was on good terms with Brutus and does not allow for the possibility that Antonius might be sympathetic to the cause of political Republicanism, which he hints at elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Instead, Plutarch sets up the Antonius who will precipitate the principate, in a manner congruent with his theme.

**13.13** Plutarch is curiously vague here. He knew from Cic. *Phil.* 2.34 and from Pollio (see App. *BC* 2.117 and Dio 44.19.1) that it was Trebonius who delayed Antonius outside the senate. Since Trebonius is already so prominent in the passage, it follows that he would mention him by name in this context, as he does at *Brut.* 17.2. But at *Caes.* 66.4, it is D. Iunius Brutus Albinus who delays Antonius – most likely a simple error. Perhaps Plutarch was conscious of his inconsistency, and is deliberately imprecise here.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Pelling 1980: 131-2.

<sup>78</sup> Pelling 1988: 148; see App. *BC* 2.113-114; *Brut.* 10-12, 18.3-5.

<sup>79</sup> *Brut.* 18.4-5, 29.10; *Cic.* 43.1.

<sup>80</sup> Pelling 1988: 149.

### 14 The Ides of March

Caesar was killed at about 11 a.m. on 15 March, 44; the events which followed remain controversial. The following is the most likely sequence: that night, after Antonius and Lepidus began negotiations in the senate, Antonius secured Caesar's will from his wife Calpurnia while Lepidus' troops secured the forum. The next day, there were further negotiations, with Lepidus and Balbus urging violent action be taken against Caesar's assassins, while Antonius and Hirtius called for an amnesty. The next morning, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the senate met again, with Cicero and Munatius Plancus supporting Antonius' amnesty. Finally, a compromise was struck: Caesar's laws would not be repealed, he would be given a public funeral, his will would be read publicly, and the assassins would be spared. After the senate agreed on the deal, the conspirators, who had been entrenched upon the Capitoline since the murder, came down to the forum and took Antonius' and Lepidus' sons as hostages.<sup>81</sup>

The account Plutarch gives here is a simplified version of that which he likely found in Pollio (his account is paralleled at App. *BC* 2.112-118), and that which he gives at *Cic.* 43, *Caes.* 67-8, and *Brut.* 18-20. There are several noteworthy points of disparity here:

- (1) the offer of hostages comes before the senate meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup>, creating a more effective climax at Antonius' glorious departure from the senate;
- (2) elsewhere he makes more of the role of Lepidus and Cicero after Caesar's murder, choosing instead to concentrate more on Antonius (see *Caes.* 67.2, *Cic.* 42.3, *Brut.* 19.1);

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<sup>81</sup> Horsfall 1974: 191-9; Pelling 1988: 150. The hostages were probably a handful – Antonius' son was no older than two at the time.

- (3) Plutarch either combines with the meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> an additional meeting of the senate, from 18 March, at which provincial assignments were made (mentioned at *Brut.* 19.3-5), or he fabricated the second meeting in *Brut.* (a more probable explanation);
- (4) he omits, unlike at *Brut.* 20.1-2, that it was Antonius who insisted that Caesar be buried publicly, giving the impression that Antonus' funeral oration was spontaneous, rather than emphasizing Brutus' unworldliness and Antonius' calculating, as was the case in *Brut.*<sup>82</sup>

**14.3 Cicero attests to Antonius' flight home** at *Phil.* 2.88. Appian, Dio, and Plutarch all emphasize Antonius' fear.<sup>83</sup>

**14.6 At dinner with Cassius**, Antonius asked him (according to Dio at 44.34.7) if he still carried his dagger. Cassius replied, 'Yes – it's a big one – in case you wish to play tyrant yourself.'

**14.8 The provincial assignments of Brutus and Cassius** were certainly a compromise; they were praetors for 44 and thus would not have normally been issued provincial assignments until 43. At *Brut.* 19.4-5, Plutarch conflates the two groups of provincial beneficiaries. While the praetorian provinces had not yet been assigned for 44, Caesar had already assigned provinces to the conspirators who had been the previous year's magistrates (C. Trebonius, L. Tullius Cimber, and D. Iunius Brutus Albinus), and when the senate ratified his *acta*, they left within weeks. Plutarch's error ultimately may derive from an error in Pollio (cf. App. *BC* 3.2 and Dio 47.20.2, 47.21.1).<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Pelling 1995: 273.

<sup>83</sup> App. *BC* 2.112; Dio 44.22.2.

<sup>84</sup> Pelling 1980: 138.

**14.12** Like Cicero at *Phil.* 1.2, 1.31, and 2.90, Plutarch stresses that this moment marked the climax of Antonius' statesmanship and, like Cicero, he stresses the contrast with Antonius' later dishonors.<sup>85</sup>

**14.15 *Popular acclaim*** is always an interest for Plutarch (cf. *Ant.* 9.1, note on 12), while he ignores other factors that may have influenced his decision, particularly military and paramilitary forces, including: D. Iunius Brutus Albinus' gladiators, who protected the assassins as they fled to the Capitol; Lepidus' legions, who occupied the forum the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>; and Caesar's veterans, who were so worried about their land-allotments following the assassination that they demanded a separate senatorial decree guaranteeing their land.<sup>86</sup>

**14.17-24 The funeral oration.** Caesar's will was read on 19 March, and he was probably buried the next day. Cicero remarks that Antonius' speech was an emotional performance, and that Antonius was to blame for the ensuing violence.<sup>87</sup> Appian gives a detailed account at 2.144-7: Antonius began by slowly reciting Caesar's honors, sprinkling passionate comments throughout; then he led the crowd in a frenzied hymn; and finally he brought the mob to a climax of rage by waving about his tattered and bloodstained toga; then a wax image of Caesar was raised, and the crowd grabbed their fire-brands and rushed to action. Plutarch's account here and at *Brut.* 20.4 seems like an abbreviation of Appian's same source material – probably Pollio. Dio gives an evidently fabricated account at 44.36-49. Suetonius' account at *Iul.* 84.2 is substantially different from Appian and Plutarch: Antonius adds only a few words after a herald recites an honorific decree and the oath which all had sworn for Caesar's safety. Syme argues for

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<sup>85</sup> Pelling 1988: 152.

<sup>86</sup> Pelling 1986: 346.

<sup>87</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2.91.

Suetonius' account, on the grounds that neither Antonius nor the Caesarians were securely in power, and Antonius would not have benefited from a violent demonstration.<sup>88</sup> But if Appian and Plutarch draw their narratives from Pollio's account, their version still deserves consideration, though Pollio was not in Rome at the time to witness the events. Suetonius' sources may have been colored against Antonius, since even a conciliatory Antonius would gain from a demonstration of ochlocratic fury, since only he seemed able to control it.<sup>89</sup>

**14.25** The crowd **burned Caesar's body** in the forum instead of on the pyre prepared in the Campus Martius. The mob had carried his body, following Antonius' speech, to the Capitoline, but were turned back by priests. The 'benches and tables' came from tribunals, courts, and workshops surrounding the forum. Flute-players and actors threw in their costumes, legionaries threw in their garlands and decorations, and mothers threw in their children's tunics.<sup>90</sup> The mob then became violent and murdered the tribune 'Cinna the poet'. This account is restrained, in contrast to those in *Brut.* and *Caes.* Shakespeare based the famous passages at *Julius Caesar* III.iii on those descriptions.

## 21 Rome under the triumvirs

This passage reveals the inventiveness Plutarch can show in adapting his source material to fit his character development. This review of Antonius' rotten qualities is conveniently placed before Cleopatra's grand entrance, as his hedonism is what makes him particularly vulnerable to her. Cleopatra seduces him, enticing him with 'fresh pleasures and delights' (29.1), and together they will 'squander their lives in luxury and revelry' (28.8).

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<sup>88</sup> Syme 1939: 98.

<sup>89</sup> Pelling 1988: 154.

<sup>90</sup> Pelling 1988: 155.

**21.1** Antonius conventionally shouldered the blame. Historians of the early empire followed Octavianus' autobiography, which obviously was not kind to Antonius. Indignation at Cicero's execution strengthened the tradition, while other horror stories likely attached themselves to Antonius rather than the deified Octavianus or the unmemorable Lepidus. Suetonius gives a more complex account and was less willing to exonerate Octavianus.<sup>91</sup> Plutarch prefers to be simple, firmly describing Antonius' atrocities.<sup>92</sup>

**21.6** The outrages perpetrated at **Pompeius Magnus' house** represent another example of Plutarch's adaptation of his source material. This story is probably not fiction. Plutarch draws the story from Cic. *Phil.* 2.66-9, but has displaced it temporally; this scandalous behavior took place years earlier.<sup>93</sup> Plutarch's praise of Pompeius Magnus here is probably inspired by Cic. *Phil.* 2.69. Plutarch begins *Pomp.* by stressing his popularity, including among the causes his temperance, as he does here. For his three triumphs, each from a different continent, see *Pomp.* 14, 22, and 45.<sup>94</sup>

**21.16** Plutarch's sense of **proscriptions** seems to include a man's family as well as the man who was himself proscribed. In fact, 'proscription' was the declaration that a man was a public enemy who could legally be killed and whose property was forfeit to the state. A proscribed man's family already would lose the right of inheritance, and thus there was no need to bring charges against them.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 27.1.

<sup>92</sup> Pelling 1995: 297-9.

<sup>93</sup> Plutarch vaguely refers to Antonius and his behavior in Pompeius' house at 9.15, 9.28, and 10.5.

<sup>94</sup> Pelling 1988: 169-70.

<sup>95</sup> Syme 1939: 187-201.

**21.18** The triumvirs' **taxation of the Vestal Virgins** is not mentioned elsewhere. Pelling finds it credible, however.<sup>96</sup>

**21.21 Octavianus' demand for money** here is unlikely. Plutarch perhaps is either recalling Octavianus' demands in 44, or has deduced that funds were divided since the army was divided as well (see next note).

**21.21 The army.** The triumvirs controlled forty-three legions: seventeen led by Antonius and Lepidus, seventeen commanded by Octavianus, and nine elsewhere. At Bononia, the triumvirs struck a deal that Antonius and Octavianus would take twenty legions each, leaving three with Lepidus in Italy. Only twenty-one or twenty-two legions took part in the campaign, and only nineteen fought at Philippi.<sup>97</sup>

**21.23** Plutarch had failed to mention **Brutus and Cassius** and their success in the east since 15.1. He was by no means ignorant of those events, since he supplies a full account at *Brut.* 24-37.

## **25 & 27 Cleopatra**

**25.2 Cleopatra** had been queen of Egypt since 51, when she was eighteen. Ptolemaic custom dictated that she could not reign alone; she probably shared her father's throne during his final months, and after his death, she was forced to share the throne with her ten-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIII, whom eventually she would be obligated to marry.<sup>98</sup> Not long after Pompeius' eldest son Gnaeus visited Egypt in 49 raising money and men for his father, Cleopatra and Ptolemy were fighting a civil war. By 48, she had been deposed and expelled from the country.

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<sup>96</sup> Pelling 1988: 170.

<sup>97</sup> Brunt 1971: 484-5.

<sup>98</sup> Grant 2000: 29; Pelling 1988: 183.

Cleopatra was preparing to invade when Pompeius himself arrived and was promptly beheaded. Caesar arrived shortly after, and legend told how Cleopatra infiltrated Alexandria by night and was conveyed to Caesar, hidden in a carpet. She immediately captivated Caesar, and he scandalously went to war on her behalf against her brother. Ptolemy drowned in the Nile, and Cleopatra bore Caesar a son.

In 47, Caesar returned to Rome. Cleopatra married a new, younger brother-husband, Ptolemy XIV, but her unpopularity among her own nobility forced her to move to Rome for eighteen months, beginning in the summer of 46.<sup>99</sup> After Caesar's murder, she hurried back to Alexandria by April of 44, and not long afterward, Ptolemy XIV was dead. Cleopatra made her three-year-old son, Caesarion, her co-regent. While Brutus and Cassius threatened to start a new civil war, she aligned herself with Dolabella in Syria. But her commanders were not as ardently Caesarian as she; the commander of the legions which she sent to Dolabella, A. Allienus, and the admiral of her fleet in Cyprus, Serapion, both defected to Cassius. She continued to support Caesar's avengers, however, and Cassius prepared to march on Alexandria, but the approach of Octavianus and Antonius forced him to abandon the attack.

As the triumvirs and the Republicans prepared to meet at Philippi, Cleopatra would later claim that she put to sea with her fleet to aid Antonius and Octavianus. She never arrived at Philippi, however; she claimed that her fleet ran into a storm and that she fell ill. Antonius probably had suspicions about her excuses, and reasonably so. But she had a reasonable explanation: she had done everything in her power to avoid helping Brutus

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<sup>99</sup> Dio 51.5.4.



and Cassius. As Pelling writes, Antonius “did not have to be in love to find her defence persuasive.”<sup>100</sup>

**25.6** The winter after Philippi, Antonius had stopped in **Cilicia** on his tour of the eastern provinces. He reorganized their administration (the administration which Pompeius had originally installed) punishing those cities which had aided Cassius in the war. He installed new kings, exacted nine years tribute (to be paid in two years).<sup>101</sup>

**25.9 Q. Dellius** wrote a history with which Plutarch was familiar, and may be the source Plutarch consults here. Neither Appian nor Dio have detail of the first meeting between Antonius and Cleopatra. Dellius was an experienced survivor – he had served Dolabella, defected to Cassius, then again to Antonius. Dellius finally deserted Antonius in 31, and was later highly favored by Augustus. He had been one of Antonius’ generals during his Parthian campaign, and it seems that his later historical writings were not kind to Antonius.<sup>102</sup>

**25.13** Plutarch’s allusion to **Homer** marks a pivotal moment in the story. At *Il.* 14.166, Hera similarly dresses herself in finery in order to distract Zeus. During Zeus’ post-coital slumber, the pro-Hellenic gods aid the Greeks – against Zeus’ earlier orders. The consequences for the Trojans were disastrous, as will be the consequences for Antonius through his association with Cleopatra.

**25.16** Only Plutarch supposes that Cleopatra was intimate with **Gnaeus Pompeius**, not a likely love-affair.

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<sup>100</sup> Pelling 1988: 184.

<sup>101</sup> Syme 1939: 214.

<sup>102</sup> Syme 1939: 214, 265, 267; Scullard 1982: 438

**25.21 Cleopatra** is twenty-eight. Plutarch puts the height of a woman's beauty 'encouragingly late' and her intellectual peak 'depressingly early'.<sup>103</sup>

**27.1** Other ancient historians who give an account of **Cleopatra's banquets**, such as Socrates of Rhodes or Lucan, concentrate on the lavish settings for the banquets.<sup>104</sup>

**27.7-17 The description of Cleopatra.** Plutarch's description here is among the most critical and objective descriptions of Cleopatra's physical qualities in ancient literature.<sup>105</sup>

Other historians, such as Dio at 42.24.3-5 contribute to the stereotypical legend of Cleopatra's great beauty.<sup>106</sup> Numismatic evidence, though lacking in fine detail, supports Plutarch's description.<sup>107</sup> In the coin portraits she seems to have a high brow, downturned nose, and a protruding chin. Several surviving busts may represent Cleopatra, but the association is in every case disputed.<sup>108</sup>

Cleopatra's linguistic legerdemain here seems to be stock.<sup>109</sup> Mithridates was likewise said to speak 22 separate languages, so that he had no need of an interpreter in addressing his subjects.<sup>110</sup> It is not implausible, however, that Cleopatra learnt Egyptian, which in itself was a departure from the Ptolemaic norm: an earlier Ptolemy had addressed his troops through an interpreter.<sup>111</sup>

### **35-36 Antonius, Cleopatra, and Octavia (37 BC)**

**35.2** Appian records at *BC* 5.93-5 that **Antonius' 300 ships** sailed for Italy to help Octavianus. Appian does not mention that Antonius' fleet was turned away from

<sup>103</sup> Pelling 1988: 186.

<sup>104</sup> Jacoby 1923: 192 fr. 1; Cleopatra gives a similar banquet for Caesar at *Luc.* 10.107-71.

<sup>105</sup> Pelling 1988: 190-1.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. also *Luc.* 10.60-2.

<sup>107</sup> Crawford 1974: 543.

<sup>108</sup> Toynbee 1978: 86-8.

<sup>109</sup> Pelling 1988: 191.

<sup>110</sup> *V. Max.* 8.7.16.

<sup>111</sup> *Plb.* 5.83.7.

Brundisium, as if the meeting between Octavianus and Antonius was always planned for Tarentum. Both are in agreement in that there was a general feeling of uneasiness at the meeting.

Octavianus had recently suffered a series of defeats at sea over the course of the previous two years at the hands of Sextus Pompeius' fleet. Antonius probably was not upset to hear of Octavianus and Sextus destroying each other, but the prospect of either one emerging victorious as the undisputed leader of the west was probably frightening.<sup>112</sup>

Plutarch has nothing to say about Sextus before 32.1, though he had been an important figure for years. The younger son of Pompeius Magnus, Sextus had been proscribed and made an outlaw by Octavianus in 43. From that point, his cause became a rallying-point for the downtrodden and destitute, plebian and patrician alike. During the next five years, Sextus amassed a fleet of perhaps 250 vessels, occupied Sicily, blockaded Italy, and participated in other sorts of marauding in the Tyrrhenian. Both Antonius and Octavianus attempted to bring Sextus to their cause, and Octavianus married Scribonia, the sister of Sextus' father-in-law. Sextus preferred Antonius, however, and offered him an alliance, while seizing control of Sardinia and raiding the Italian coast in an attempt to support Antonius' cause. Sextus wisely resisted the urge to engage in extensive conflict on the mainland, and as a result Rome had been beset by famine by November 40.<sup>113</sup>

History remembers Sextus as a colorful, audacious braggart, but because of his defeat at the hands of Octavianus on 3 September 36, he never lived up to his boasts. Plutarch mentions him as Octavianus' ally at 32.1, then at 35.24 he makes reference to

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<sup>112</sup> Pelling 1988: 213; Syme 1939: 224.

<sup>113</sup> Syme 1939: 213, 215, 221; Scullard 1982: 163-4.

Octavianus' campaign against him. Plutarch only alludes to what had transpired since the pact at Misenum.

Nor does Plutarch tell what became of Sextus. In 36, Octavianus organized a three-way assault on Sextus' stronghold in Sicily. After Octavianus' forces had been reinforced with Lepidus' legions, Agrippa led the assault. First Agrippa won a victory, then Sextus. After his decisive defeat at Naulochus, Sextus fled to the East, hoping to ally himself with Antonius, whose Parthian campaign had recently ended in defeat. He instead chose to intrigue against Antonius, raising a private army of three legions and harassing Antonius' generals. Finally, the Antonian general Titius hunted him down and killed him – even though Sextus had once saved Titius' own life.<sup>114</sup>

**35.4 Octavia** is traditionally given credit for pushing the treaty through, but Plutarch gives her a bit more credit than others (cf. App. *BC* 5.93-5 and Dio 48.54.3).

**35.6 Octavia's pregnancy** is puzzling; Antonia *minor* was born in 36, so she must have been pregnant with her second child, not a third (unless a second child died in infancy).<sup>115</sup>

**35.15** Octavianus and Antonius met at the river Taras, west of the city of **Tarentem**. Appian tells how the men met mid-stream, after a race to get to the opposite side first (in a display of trust).<sup>116</sup>

**35.16** Plutarch freezes the action here and paints a vivid picture of the army and the fleet, similar to that with Sextus at 32.2. There is also a contrast here between the women: one brings the men to peace, the other will lead them to war.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Syme 1939: 231-2; Scullard 1982: 164; Dio 48.30.5.

<sup>115</sup> Pelling 1988: 214.

<sup>116</sup> App. *BC* 5.93-4.

<sup>117</sup> Pelling 1988: 215.

**35.20** Plutarch and Appian do not agree on the numbers of the troops or ships exchanged.<sup>118</sup> Pelling feels that Appian is more likely to be correct, as his account includes more circumstantial detail.<sup>119</sup> Also, Appian has that Antonius gave Octavianus 120 ships – a more plausible number, since a squadron normally consisted of 60 ships.

This exchange would have seemed to benefit Antonius (Appian makes clear that he was keener on the deal). Antonius needed more experienced troops for his Parthian campaign, and the ships were expensive to man. The only drawback – Octavianus only *promised* the troops to be exchanged for the ships which Antonius left with him at Tarentum. Antonius never received the troops.<sup>120</sup>

Plutarch does not elaborate on this meeting, but the deal was notable for other reasons: the triumvirate was renewed for a further five years, Sextus was deprived of his priesthood and consulship promised at Misenum, and the triumvirs planned dynastic marriages.<sup>121</sup>

**35.30** Dio writes that Antonius sent her back to Octavianus from Corcyra, while en route to Syria, because he did not want her in danger because of his Parthian campaign.<sup>122</sup> As it was late summer/early autumn by this time, and Antonia minor was born on 31 January of the next year, she was very much pregnant by this time. Antonius may either have been sincere in his concern for her safety, or he may have simply been irritated by anything that reminded him of her brother.<sup>123</sup> In either case, his fate and another woman awaited him in the East.

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<sup>118</sup> App. *BC* 5.95.

<sup>119</sup> Pelling 1988: 215.

<sup>120</sup> Syme 1939: 225; Pelling 1988: 216.

<sup>121</sup> Dio 48.54.4; Syme 1939: 225.

<sup>122</sup> Dio 48.54.5.

<sup>123</sup> Syme 1939: 226.

**36.4 Plato's horse** is from *Phaedrus* 254a, where Plato compares the parts of the soul to a chariot team. At the sight of a lovely boy, the horse that represents the higher part of the soul reacts obediently and with self-control. The other horse struggles against his driver and his team member, and charges at the boy, thirsty for sexual fulfillment. As with his Homeric allusion at 25.13, this allusion marks an important moment: Antonius struggles with the effects of ἐρως on the higher and lower elements of his soul. The horse-imagery has also been a recurring theme (cf. 2.25, 21.4, 33.12).<sup>124</sup>

**36.7-11 Antonius' gifts** to Cleopatra probably were not as heinous as Plutarch or Dio make them seem.<sup>125</sup> In fact, the gifts of territory were a part of Antonius' planned reorganization of the East, whereby reliable puppet monarchs ruled large client kingdoms. The other kings included Archelaus in Cappadocia, Amyntas in Galatia, Polemo in Pontus, and Herod in Judea. Antonius chose his rulers wisely; the reorganization worked so well that Octavianus chose to continue the system with most of Antonius' men in place. Cleopatra was an especially able ruler, and particularly loyal to Antonius, so he naturally increased her realm. Also, the wealth of timber in Cilicia, Coele Syria, and Cyprus, as well as the great harbors of Phoenicia made Cleopatra more than able to replenish Antonius' fleet.<sup>126</sup>

Plutarch probably conflates multiple gifts: Cyprus and Cilicia seem to have been a part of her realm for several years. Plutarch's words here are very similar to Dio's at 49.22.6 and 49.32.3-5, and both are similar to a quotation of Strabo's history at Jos. *A.J.*

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<sup>124</sup> Pelling 1988: 217.

<sup>125</sup> Dio 49.32.

<sup>126</sup> Syme 1939: 260-1, 271-5; Bowersock 1965: 42-61.

15.8-10 and 15.94-5. Strabo may be Plutarch's and Dio's source, but all three are probably based on Q. Dellius.<sup>127</sup>

**36.17** There is symbolism behind **the children's names**: the sun and moon is a Hellenistic symbol which implies a new epoch. The names are also reminiscent of native Egyptian iconography.<sup>128</sup> The twins had been born in 40, and in 36, Cleopatra bore Antonius another son, Ptolemy Philadelphus.

### 53 The year 35

Plutarch represents the year 35 as the 'point of no return' for Antonius. In the next few chapters, Plutarch hurries through the political events of the years 35-33 – certainly natural as Antonius and Octavianus move inexorably toward war – while he supplements fact with fiction. Cleopatra probably was not even with Antonius when Octavia arrived in the East.<sup>129</sup> Turning Octavia back may not have been intended as a slight to her or an official break with Octavianus: Antonius still had plans to invade Parthia, and as late as 33, he still kept a large army stationed in Armenia, ready to invade. If he were planning war in the West, such a campaign would be impossible. Octavia certainly would not accompany him on any sort of eastern campaign, and Antonius would naturally send her back to Rome.<sup>130</sup>

Yet Plutarch is not completely off the mark here. Whatever was Antonius' intent, Octavianus took advantage of the situation, and began exploiting his sister's rebuff in his propaganda.<sup>131</sup> Octavianus' legions were engaged in Illyricum at the time, interestingly

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<sup>127</sup> Pelling 1988: 218-9.

<sup>128</sup> Brenk 1992: 163.

<sup>129</sup> Syme 1939: 265.

<sup>130</sup> Pelling 1988: 244.

<sup>131</sup> Syme 1939: 265.

close to Antonius' domain.<sup>132</sup> Octavianus also may have been negotiating with Antonius' enemy, Artavasdes of Armenia.<sup>133</sup> By the end of 33, Antonius and Octavianus were indeed on a collision course – but because of Octavianus' actions, not because of Antonius'.

**53.2 Octavianus' scheming** in this matter is obviously unfavorable to him. If Plutarch truly got this information from a written source, most likely it was either Dellius or Pollio. But this account may more likely be derived from an oral tradition.<sup>134</sup>

**53.11 The 2000 men** that Octavia brought with her presented Antonius with a difficult decision (he had been promised 20,000 men, cf. note on **35.20** and App. *BC* 5.95). Accepting the praetorian cohorts would condone Octavianus' breach of their agreement; rejecting the men would be an insult to Octavia, and, after processing by Octavianus' propaganda-factory, an insult to Roman sentiment.<sup>135</sup> Antonius accepted.

**53.12 Niger** is not otherwise known. Plutarch may not have invented him, however, and this may be a detail from Dellius (who was still a member of Antonius' party at this time, and thus may have known the messenger personally) which Dio and Appian chose to omit.

**53.14-21 Antonius' flatterers and Cleopatra's wiles.** Plutarch probably did not come across this story in his readings of the standard historical sources – Appian and Dio do not include it – and he seems to have known the story before he composed this *Life*.<sup>136</sup>

The story either derives from an oral tradition, or perhaps from a rare written source like

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<sup>132</sup> Syme 1939: 240.

<sup>133</sup> Dio 49.41.5.

<sup>134</sup> Pelling 1988: 244.

<sup>135</sup> Syme 1939: 265.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *Mor.* 61a-b 'How to Tell a Flatterer', an essay most likely composed earlier. Plutarch tells the same story as he discusses the ways in which flatterers encourage disastrous love-affairs. In *Ant.*, he distorts the story in order to fit it into his narrative.



that of Cleopatra's physician, Olympus, which he had read before as a part of his general research.

**53.25-36** Dio 49.33 confirms **Antonius' aborted campaign** against Artavasdes of Armenia in 35; according to Dio, Antonius turned back when he learned of Octavia's arrival, and Cleopatra plays no part in Antonius' decision to abandon the campaign. Presumably, both accounts share a factual basis, but in this case Plutarch has greatly expanded Cleopatra's role with the addition of the story of the flatterers' wives, which he already had known for some time (see note above) and for which he needed an appropriate context. This passage was an obvious choice, since in it Antonius makes his crucial decision to send Octavia home in favor of Cleopatra – Plutarch's (fabricated) decisive moment. Dio's account probably preserves their shared source material more accurately, since he probably would not have downplayed any perceived effects of Cleopatra's charms, for this seems to have been a favorite topic of his as well.<sup>137</sup>

**53.27-9 Octavia as wife, Cleopatra as mistress.** Plutarch, perhaps unintentionally, displays an uncommon readiness to see Cleopatra's viewpoint here and contrasts with the usual stereotypes of female psychology often found in ancient authors (and even in his own essays, cf. *Mor.* 61a-b). In love elegy, one woman's dual role – *amica* to one man, *uxor* to another – and a man's resulting displeasure or delight normally highlights the contrast between a delicately passionate and rewarding life with an *amica* and a cold and monotonous life with an *uxor*.<sup>138</sup> Plutarch's Antonius is instead confronted with damaging alternatives. To choose Octavia was to humiliate his *amica*; to send Octavia home, an affront to the brother of his *uxor*. Here, Cleopatra is also similar to Virgil's

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Dio 48.24.2, 48.27.2, and 49.34.1.

<sup>138</sup> Pelling 1988: 247; cf. Cat. 68.143-8, Ov. *Am.* 1.4, 3.4, Prop. 2.6.41-2 and 4.3.49-50.

Dido. After sacrificing her own majesty for an illicit affair, Dido claimed to be owed a debt.<sup>139</sup> But unlike Aeneas, Antonius ignores the demands of Rome and does not forsake his lover.

#### **54 Octavianus and Octavia, the ‘donations’ of Alexandria**

**54.1-14** Plutarch implies that Octavia remained in the East for some time, perhaps until the end of the summer of 35. Dio, however, says that Antonius ordered her to go home immediately.<sup>140</sup> Perhaps Dio is embellishing, but more likely Plutarch is exaggerating the conflict between Cleopatra and Octavia – for if Octavia returned home immediately, Cleopatra would have nothing to fear in **53.14** and Plutarch would have no basis to include his anecdote about her wiles.

Once again, Plutarch seems to be creating as much of a contrast as possible between Cleopatra and Octavia and to be emphasizing Octavianus’ scheming.<sup>141</sup> No other source mentions Octavianus’ pressure for a divorce and her refusal, but it is credible, since Octavianus may have sought to exploit Antonius’ treatment of his sister in his propaganda as early as 35. She apparently continued to live in Antonius’ house with his children until their official divorce in 32.<sup>142</sup>

**54.14-32** Like Dio at 49.41, Plutarch emphasizes the heinousness of the ‘**donations**’ of **Alexandria**. Antonius, once a noble philhellene, now is anti-Roman (μισορρωμιος – the only attestation of this word, perhaps Plutarch’s own invention). Plutarch now highlights the contrast between Octavia and Cleopatra by contrasting the once Roman

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<sup>139</sup> *Aen.* 4.333-61.

<sup>140</sup> Dio 49.33.4.

<sup>141</sup> Pelling 1980: 137.

<sup>142</sup> Syme 1939: 265, Pelling 1988: 248.

Antonius and the gaudy, eastern ‘Neos Dionysos,’ in turn creating a pointed juxtaposition between Rome and the East.

Plutarch’s and Dio’s report of Roman reaction seems exaggerated. Octavianus’ propaganda did feast on this affair, and as a result, the historical tradition on which Plutarch and Dio based their accounts were colored. In fact, in early 32, Antonius sought to have these *acta* ratified in Rome, but the Antonian consuls Sosius and Domitius still attempted a cover-up of this affair.<sup>143</sup> Any sort of hush-up would have been incredible, if the popular reaction had been of the sort which Dio and Plutarch describe.

That any sort of public ceremony happened, however, is not out of the question. Antonius perhaps wished to celebrate Rome’s conquests in the idiom of the East. In any event, the ‘donations’ made no substantial difference to the Roman administration of the East. Most of the territories already belonged to Cleopatra. Alexander Helios’ hopes of Media was not a threat of conquest – Alexander was to marry Iotape, the Median princess. But Antonius could only dream of Parthia. Syria, though it does seem to be a new addition to Cleopatra’s realm, continued to have a Roman proconsul, L. Calpurnius Bibulus, and Antonius did not expropriate its local monarchies.<sup>144</sup> Roman legions led by Roman generals continued to occupy Cyrene and Armenia.<sup>145</sup> Antonius likely intended for the children to simply continue as client kings one day, and these ‘donations’ were merely intended as gestures.

**54.23 The sons by Antonius** were Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus. Up to this point, Plutarch had not yet mentioned Ptolemy. ‘King of kings’ was a common

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<sup>143</sup> Dio 49.41.4.

<sup>144</sup> Broughton 1984: v.ii, 411; Bowersock 1965: 47.

<sup>145</sup> Brunt 1971: 504.

oriental title, but there is a discrepancy here. Dio 49.41.1 has that Cleopatra was to be ‘queen of kings’ and Caesarion ‘king of kings’, which seems to make more sense.<sup>146</sup>

**54.33** Egyptian queens had associated themselves with Isis for 250 years; Cleopatra did nothing new.<sup>147</sup> Her father, Ptolemy XII, called himself ‘Neos Dionysos’, as did Antonius.<sup>148</sup>

### 55 The propaganda war

Antonius and Octavianus had been exchanging propaganda since 44. The exchanges were particularly heated in 44-43, 40, and 33-32.<sup>149</sup> Octavianus spoke of ‘restoring the Republic’, something (according to him) with which Antonius was unwilling to help, and Antonius responded similarly.<sup>150</sup> Most of Octavianus’ propaganda centered on Antonius’ drunkenness and lechery, to which Antonius issued a blunt reply, quoted by Suetonius at *Aug.* 69.2:

What has come over you? Do you object to my sleeping with Cleopatra? But we are married; and it is not even as though this were something new – the affair started nine years ago. And what about you? Are you faithful to Livia Drusilla? My congratulations if, when this letter arrives, you have not been in bed with Tertullia, or Terentilla, or Rufilla, or Salvia Titisenia – or all of them. Does it really matter so much where, or with whom, you perform the sexual act?<sup>151</sup>

Like in *Caes.* and *Cato*, and unlike Suetonius, Plutarch excludes the more obscene accusations.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> A coin of about 32 has Cleopatra’s head on its reverse, with the legend CLEOPATRAE REGINAE REGUM FILIORUM REGUM (Crawford 1974: no. 543). Also, a Delian inscription that presumably refers to Caesarion has *rege]m regu[m ... Cleo]patrae ffilium* (*CIL* 3.7232).

<sup>147</sup> Fraser 1972: v.i, 240-6.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. 60.5. Grant 2000: 168-9; Brenk 1992: 160.

<sup>149</sup> Scott 1933: *passim*.

<sup>150</sup> App. *BC* 5.132; Suet. *Aug.* 28.1; Dio 49.41.6, 50.7.1;

<sup>151</sup> Trans., R. Graves 1959.

<sup>152</sup> Pelling 1980: 148.

This exchange took place in 33. Antonius makes similar complaints in Dio 50.1, and both likely derive from the same source. In Dio, however, Octavianus' charges focus on the 'donations' of Alexandria. Plutarch makes clear that these were an important element, but instead of rehashing material from the preceding passage, he has Octavianus make new complaints in the form of biting, sarcastic gibes – making Octavianus all the more unlikeable.

**55.1** Plutarch stresses 'the masses', in typical fashion.<sup>153</sup> Octavianus returned to Rome from Illyricum to assume his second consulship on 1 January of 33, and likely gave some sort of speech denouncing Antonius, but was not in Rome long enough to attack him repeatedly before the masses. Any sort of propaganda would not only be aimed at the masses, however, but also the senate, the legionaries, and the middle class.

**55.5** Octavianus had borrowed 100-120 ships, and only returned 70.<sup>154</sup>

**55.7** **Lepidus** had quarreled with Octavianus over the control of Sicily following their joint defeat of Sextus Pompeius in 36; his troops deserted to Octavianus, who promptly deprived him of triumviral powers and banished him to Circeii, a rocky peninsula in southern Latium, where he lived in obscurity and disgrace for a further twenty-four years.<sup>155</sup>

**55.8** At Dio 50.1.3, Antonius objects that he has not been able to recruit in Italy, and demands half of Octavianus' troops. Because of the nature of Octavianus' response, Plutarch naturally stresses settlement. Antonius certainly may have been concerned about a shortage of land for his veterans; a majority of his troops had been enlisted in 43-

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<sup>153</sup> Pelling 1986: *passim*.

<sup>154</sup> App. BC 5.139.

<sup>155</sup> Syme 1939: 232; Scullard 1982: 164.

40 and would be expecting settlement soon.<sup>156</sup> But Antonius could have made either or both complaints – he had been guaranteed Italian recruits in 40, but could not enforce this.<sup>157</sup>

### 62-3 Prelude to Actium

Antonius was perhaps not as foolish to go to the sea as Plutarch makes him out to be. For example, he naturally would want to harass Octavianus' crossing from Italy and would desire control of the sea. But if he were indeed determined to fight at sea, to do so would have created the paradox that Plutarch describes.

**62.3** Plutarch probably had an eyewitness oral source for these shanghaied gangs of Greek men.<sup>158</sup> About 150,000 men would have been needed to man Antonius' fleet; in reference to his need for crews, Antonius was said to have exclaimed, 'we shall not lack oarsmen as long as Greece has men' (Oros. 6.19.5).<sup>159</sup>

**62.4 'Long-suffering' Greece** is a quotation from Eur. *Her.* 1250, where Heracles has resolved to kill himself, and Theseus chides him. As usual in *Ant.*, the quotation marks an important theme, here the continuing agony of Greece.<sup>160</sup>

**62.7-21 The crossing of the Adriatic** would have been far more difficult for Antonius to execute, as S. Italy only has two harbors large enough for Antonius' fleet: Tarentum and Brundisium, where Octavianus already had concentrated his fleet. Western Greece, on the other hand, has many large harbors, and as a result, Antonius was forced to spread his fleet thin during the winter of 32-31 in a vain attempt to repel Octavianus' fleet. Plutarch omits Agrippa's important successes at Methone, Leucas, Patrae, and Corinth, all of

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<sup>156</sup> Keppie 1983: 35-8.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. 30.21.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. 68.19.

<sup>159</sup> Pelling 1988: 269.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. 24.3, 25.13, 28.1, 29.1, 36.4.

which were important in the crossing. In general, Plutarch shows little interest in the tactics of the campaign.

Octavianus apparently had no ship larger than a 'six', while Antonius' fleet was equipped with 'tens'. Octavianus' ships were by no means small; they were considerably larger than the Liburnians of Sextus that they had defeated in 36.<sup>161</sup> The contrast between the two fleets became commonplace in literature, perhaps as early as Hor. *Epodes* 1.1-2.

**62.7-14 The exchange of offers** is paralleled at Dio 50.9.5-6, and may well be historical.<sup>162</sup> Plutarch perhaps abbreviated material from their shared source, as Dio includes more circumstantial detail. Antonius' offer of single combat was a Roman tradition, especially for junior officers, but only mythical precedent exists for allowing such a duel to determine the outcome of a war.<sup>163</sup>

**62.18-20 Actium and Toryne.** Though the bulk of his force was anchored at Actium, Antonius himself probably wintered at Patrae.<sup>164</sup> Octavianus first landed on the mainland north of Corcyra, then seized Corcyra itself, then moved his fleet to the 'Fresh Harbor' near the mouth of the Acheron, while his army landed at Toryne. Toryne has not been positively identified, but may be the site of the modern Parga, which is situated on a ladle-shaped rock west of the mouth of the Acheron. That site seems to be an appropriate place for the army to camp if the fleet had moored at the mouth of the river and with Actium a two-day march away. Nicopolis was founded by Octavianus after his victory.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Casson 1971: 99, 141.

<sup>162</sup> Pelling 1988: 270-1.

<sup>163</sup> Oakley 1985: 399.

<sup>164</sup> Dio 50.12.1.

<sup>165</sup> Pelling 1988: 271.

**62.22 Cleopatra's joke** is obscene, though Plutarch may not have realized it. 'Ladle' seems to be slang for a penis.<sup>166</sup>

**63.1** Though he seems to have had a good source (shared with Dio at 50.12-15, as usual) and may have visited the site himself, Plutarch has little understanding of the strategy involved here. Because this pivotal battle is so crucial to Antonius' downfall, the oversimplification here cannot have been wholly intentional.

At first, Antonius made camp on the south coast of the bay, while Octavianus camped at Mikalitzí, a headland which commands the area. Octavianus attempted to force a battle, but failed; here is where Antonius' creative naval defense of 63.1-10 fits. But when the whole of his army arrived, Antonius established a new camp on the north side of the bay, at Priveza – and a short distance across the plain of Nicopolis from Octavianus' army. Both built earthworks in attempts to control the water supply and routes to the harbors, and there seems to have been some minor cavalry skirmishes on the northern plain. Antonius positioned catapults on both sides of the strait – the 'superior tactics' at 63.7. Then, Octavianus' commanders Titius and Statilius Taurus won the small battle which persuaded Deiotarus, king of Paphlagonia, to defect, while Agrippa's fleet had taken Leucas.

Agrippa's victories and Octavianus' position effectively blockaded Antonius. Antonius set out to overtake Dellius and Amyntas in central Greece, whom he had sent to recruit mercenaries, for fear that they were intending to defect to the enemy.<sup>167</sup> While he was away, his commander Sosius lost a naval skirmish to Agrippa, and Tarcondimotus, an obscure client king of inland Cilicia and a loyal Antonian, was killed. Antonius

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<sup>166</sup> Adams 1982: 23.

<sup>167</sup> Dio 50.13.4, 8.



returned shortly thereafter and was defeated in a cavalry battle, after which Amyntas defected.

Antonius may have been inspired to break out into the interior of Greece, as he himself witnessed Caesar do in 48 at Pharsalus. But Antonius' position was much worse; he had been forced to withdraw back to the southern shore of the bay. Morale was low. More defections followed that of Amyntas, including Dellius', malaria and dysentery were rampant, and there was a consistent shortage of water. Antonius was in a much tougher spot geographically than that in which Caesar had been: going inland with the army meant abandoning the fleet, and his men were in poor condition to fight. Only in desperation did Antonius choose to fight a naval battle.<sup>168</sup>

**63.10-16 Domitius' desertion** was due to some grievance about Cleopatra, according to Dio 50.13.6. He had previously encouraged Antonius to send Cleopatra back to Egypt; perhaps that is why she is so unforgiving here.<sup>169</sup> The motive is not particularly important to Plutarch. Since the story makes a point of Antonius' nobility, it fits well as a conclusion to a sequence of his successes.

**63.20-29 Canidius** had originally argued the opposite strategy.<sup>170</sup> Plutarch phrases his argument forcefully, and presumably wants its apparent conviction to contrast with Cleopatra's shameful reasoning.<sup>171</sup> His argument could have easily been placed somewhere in 62, but here it highlights Antonius' fatal resolve.

Problems with Plutarch's logic exist here. Plutarch reiterates Cleopatra's insistence on fighting a naval battle, clearly after she had lost hope of victory. Thus, he has to make

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<sup>168</sup> *Passim* Carter 1970: 200-14.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. 56.7.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. 56.7.

<sup>171</sup> Pelling 1988: 275.

her treachery seem premeditated, a less-plausible suggestion than Dio's (that Antonius and Cleopatra had simply lost their nerve before the battle).<sup>172</sup> If she truly were only concerned for herself (the root of her alleged treachery), why would she not follow the advice of Domitius and Canidius and leave? It seems that both Dio and Plutarch forewent the information in their source in order to add their own motivational analysis, or no discussion of motive existed in their source.

**63.13-19** The story of **Antonius' near-capture** does not exist anywhere else. The circumstantial detail suggests that Plutarch may owe the tale to an oral source. If historical, this event probably occurred some time before the actual battle, while Antonius was still camped on the north shore of the bay.

### **67-68 The flight from Actium**

**67.3 Antonius' solitude** is reminiscent of the anticlimax at *Pomp.* 72-3. Pompeius also sits silently (72.3); like Octavianus' men here, Caesar's men find Pompeius' trappings of luxury – all now poignantly ironic (72.5-6). Pompeius begs his comrades to save themselves (74.3, 75.3), as Antonius will. Interestingly, he also received word that his fleet is still intact, and laments that he engaged Caesar on land (76.2-3) – the complete converse of the events at Actium. Yet there is no need to assume that either passage is influenced by the other, or that both share a common original story.<sup>173</sup> It is unlikely that Plutarch derived such humane renderings of Pompeius and Antonius from his source material, and in both cases Plutarch probably supplies the detail of the sequence from his imagination. As always, Antonius is generous in defeat, loved by his men, and concerned

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<sup>172</sup> Dio 50.33.2.

<sup>173</sup> Pelling 1988: 285.

for their safety.<sup>174</sup> The conclusion of 67 reveals what is inevitable: ‘Hipparchus, who was...among the first of his freedmen to fall in with Caesar...’

**67.5 Liburnians** were fast two-banked vessels, favored by pirates and by Sextus Pompeius.<sup>175</sup>

**67.8 Eurycles of Sparta** was later rewarded with friendship by Octavianus, but eventually caused so much trouble in Achaea that he was banished between 7 and 2 BC.<sup>176</sup> His father, **Lachares** was honored by the Athenians with a statue – clearly an important man.<sup>177</sup> It is unlikely that such a Spartan had fallen in with pirates and roamed the sea. It is more likely that Antonius, in a move to consolidate his power, removed some magnates he deemed untrustworthy in the Peloponnese, where he had repeated administrative problems.<sup>178</sup> Eurycles’ descendant, C. Iulius Eurycles Herculaneus, was probably the dedicatee of Plutarch’s *On Self-praise* (*Mor.* 539a).<sup>179</sup> This account of the Liburnian may derive personally from him; in contrast, Dio 51.1.4 expressly says that Octavianus’ ships did not overtake Antonius.

**67.25** If this is true, **the transports** must have come from Actium itself, for they brought the news rather quickly. But it is odd that they could escape Octavianus’ Liburnians. It is possible that Antonius’ friends could have gone by land to Patrae, and then sailed to meet Antonius; this would mean that Agrippa’s capture of that port was not complete. It is also possible that Plutarch has compressed time. Dio makes no mention of these friends.

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<sup>174</sup> Pelling 1990: 236.

<sup>175</sup> Casson 1971: 141-2.

<sup>176</sup> Scullard 1982: 463.

<sup>177</sup> Dittenberger 1915: v.iii, 786.

<sup>178</sup> Owens 1976: 726.

<sup>179</sup> Pelling 1988: 286; Jones 1971: 41.

**67.35 Theophilus** must have once been a slave himself, or otherwise his son would have been born free. Hipparchus had been involved with the triumvirs for some time; he made a fortune during the proscriptions.<sup>180</sup> He is also twice attested as a *duumvir* in Corinth.<sup>181</sup>

**68.1-5** Other sources suggest that the fighting was not particularly fierce, and the number of dead is surprisingly low (as Plutarch implies).<sup>182</sup> Yet Octavianus still conspicuously spent the night aboard his ship.<sup>183</sup>

**68.7 ‘Twelve thousand cavalry’** is the same number Plutarch gives in 61; death and desertion would undoubtedly have reduced this number. Either Plutarch or his source must be reusing numbers from the beginning of the campaign. Though the nineteen legions were ‘undefeated’, they probably had been depleted as well by disease. Anyway, 20,000 select men were aboard ships as marines.<sup>184</sup>

**68.22 Nicarchus** was presumably Lamprias’ father. Plutarch probably didn’t hear the story from him firsthand, as he would have been at least 80 when Plutarch was born. Lamprias was most likely as fond of telling this tale as he was of the one about Philotas.<sup>185</sup>

### 76-77 The end in Alexandria

**76.1-7 The fleet deserts.** Dio is explicit at 51.10.4: Cleopatra caused the ships to desert. Though Plutarch knows this version, he does not commit to it (cf. 76.9). Antonius can only watch his ruin unfold from the ‘headland’ – a fictional geographical reconstruction

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<sup>180</sup> Pliny *N.H.* 35.200.

<sup>181</sup> Pelling 1988: 287.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Hor. *Epodes* 9.19-20; *pace* Dio 50.34-5.

<sup>183</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 17.2.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. 64.1.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. 28.3; Pelling 1988: 289.

on Plutarch's part (there are no such hills in Alexandria). Plutarch intends for Antonius to have a view of the fiasco like Xerxes at Salamis.<sup>186</sup>

**76.8 The infantry battle** is here only; Dio 51.10.2 puts a brief land skirmish before the naval catastrophe.

**76.10 Cleopatra's tomb.** Whereas Plutarch's Cleopatra flees to her tomb out of impulsive fright, Dio's Cleopatra is more calculating: she hopes that news of her death will drive Antonius to kill himself.<sup>187</sup>

**76.13-31 Antonius' fatal wound and death.** Plutarch stresses Antonius' soldierly courage in facing his own death rather than dwell on any final melancholy sentiments of love. Shakespeare does the opposite.<sup>188</sup> Here, the scene is made all the more poignant and pathetic when the slave named Eros attends him in his final moments. Dio simply names him as 'one of those present'.<sup>189</sup> In a manner similar to Antonius', Cassius prepared his slave Pindarus to strike him when the appropriate time came.<sup>190</sup>

**76.30 Diomedes** is not known in any other authors. How Cleopatra received news of Antonius' wound so quickly, or how she sent out messages from her tomb, Plutarch does not mention; Dio supplies a telephone-game solution to this problem, and the news is carried vocally to Cleopatra's tomb and back again to the palace.<sup>191</sup>

**77.4 The ropes and cords** were being used for hoisting cut stone blocks into position on the unfinished monument, Dio says at 51.10.9.

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<sup>186</sup> Hdt. 8.90.4.

<sup>187</sup> Dio 51.10.6.

<sup>188</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra* IV.xiv.51-2.

<sup>189</sup> Dio 51.10.7.

<sup>190</sup> See 22.11, *Brut.* 43.7.

<sup>191</sup> Dio 51.10.8-9.

**77.6 The present tense** and the vivid detail here suggest Plutarch draws on an eyewitness source, perhaps that of Olympus.<sup>192</sup>

**77.19 Antonius' last words** are almost certainly fictional. Plutarch, in the tastes of his own era, credits Antonius with positive and admirable dying sentiments.<sup>193</sup> This presentation of his death differs significantly from that in the *synkrisis* which concludes this pairing; there his death is presented in a negative light. In contrast to the statement at 77.7, that Antonius died 'not ignobly', Plutarch declares that 'Antonius made his exit in a cowardly, pitiful, and dishonorable way'.<sup>194</sup> The discrepancy is due to Plutarch's different uses of the moral register: in the narrative, Antonius and Cleopatra are protagonists rather than moral *exempla*, but Plutarch returns to explicit moralizing in the *synkrisis*, using Antonius as an example for moral instruction. Thus Plutarch provides us with two different ways of looking at the same event.<sup>195</sup>

**77.21 C. Proculeius**, a prominent *eques*, was actually quite close to Octavianus; had Antonius actually known Proculeius, he would have known this. This is a deliberate set-up for 78.18-79.15, where Proculeius is Octavianus' disingenuous stooge.

### 86 Cleopatra's death

The tradition of her death, probably on 10 August, already was in place by the time of Hor. *Odes* 1.37, published in 23. The details of the suicide were debated (as they are here), but the earliest accounts of her death unambiguously accept snakebite as the cause.<sup>196</sup> Had it been possible that Octavianus contrived her death, it seems as if Tacitus

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<sup>192</sup> Pelling 1988: 307-8.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. *Mar.* 46, *Brut.* 52.5, *Per.* 38.4, *Flam.* 20.10-11, *Alex.* 43.4; Suet. *Aug.* 99, *Nero* 49.1; Tac. *Ann.* 15.63.3, 16.35; Arr. *Diss. Epic.* 4.10.14-17.

<sup>194</sup> Comp. 6.4.

<sup>195</sup> Duff 1999: 281.

<sup>196</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 8.697; Hor. *Odes* 1.37.27; Flor. 2.21.11 (from Livy?); Prop. 3.11.53.

would have said so.<sup>197</sup> Modern scholars are more willing to suggest he played an active role in her death.<sup>198</sup>

Octavianus would certainly be taking a risk in allowing Cleopatra to live, even if only for display in his triumph. But if he wanted her dead immediately, why let her live for nine days after Alexandria fell and – if Plutarch’s account is true – foil two of her suicide attempts?<sup>199</sup> Had she died during the capture of the city, it would have been easier to propagandize her death in any way he saw fit: suicide by poison would have better suited his propaganda, since poison was associated with Oriental witchcraft; he certainly could have played up his regret for not being allowed the chance to show her mercy. Perhaps the story made her a worthier opponent, once she had been elevated to the status of heroine.<sup>200</sup> If he did keep her alive, the most plausible reason is that he truly wanted her for his triumph. But whether the story was fact or fiction, Octavianus immediately encouraged the version of the asp – straight away he sent for the *Psylli*, Libyans renowned for their snakebite cures.<sup>201</sup> His display at his triumph further encouraged the tale. If he spread the story of the asp, it may well have been true; However, some parts of the story are immediately suspect:

- (1) the Egyptian cobra is about two meters long, and would be difficult to conceal in a basket – especially if there were two of them (see note below);
- (2) the cobra’s bite takes about three to four hours to ‘recharge’ its venom after a full injection.

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<sup>197</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 1.10; Pelling 1988: 318.

<sup>198</sup> Syme 1939: 298-9; Grant 2000: 224-7.

<sup>199</sup> See 79.7-11, 82.10-13.

<sup>200</sup> Syme 1939: 299.

<sup>201</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 17.4; Dio 51.14.4-5.

Other details are more plausible. The cobra bite does look like a series (two or four) pin-pricks. Perhaps most important, the double cobra is a symbol of both Isis and the royal house of Egypt; if Cleopatra indeed turned these beasts on herself, it would have been majestically appropriate.<sup>202</sup>

**86.1 The asp.** Dio similarly mentions but one snake.<sup>203</sup> Yet one snake could have hardly killed Cleopatra, Iras, and Charmion (see note above).

**86.23 The summaries.** Cleopatra became queen in 51; her reign is first attested on a stele of 22 March of that year, twenty-one years before. The assertion that Antonius had been her co-ruler for fourteen years is flat-out wrong: Cleopatra met Antonius at Tarsus in 41, and he was never king of Egypt. His age is fuzzy as well – of the two possible birth-years Plutarch supplies (86 or 83), 83 is far more likely. His birth-date, whatever the year, was 14 January.<sup>204</sup>

Plutarch is fond of such summaries noting the age of his subjects.<sup>205</sup> But the summary shared by Antonius and Cleopatra is unique. Here, it reflects how the lovers' lives essentially became a shared life – this *Life* has become more than the *Life of Antonius*.

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<sup>202</sup> *Passim* Pelling 1988: 318-321.

<sup>203</sup> Dio 51.1-4.

<sup>204</sup> Pelling 1988: 322-3.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. *Artax.* 30.9, *Ages.* 40.3, *Rom.* 29.12, *Caes.* 69.1-2.



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## College Scholars Senior Project Proposal:

### Plutarch's *Life of Antony*

I will be translating roughly a third of Plutarch's *Life of Antony* (Books 1-4, 11-14, 21, 25, 28-29, 35-36, 53-55, 62-69, 75-77, and 87-88) into accurate and idiomatic English, and I will offer a historical commentary on the portions which I translate. Lacunae in the translation and commentary will be filled with synopses of the skipped-over portions. The Greek text I will be using is C.B.R. Pelling's edition. For the historical commentary, I will be drawing on my own translation of the text, as well as other primary texts such as Cicero's *Philippics*, the *Res Gestae*, and the histories of Appian and Cassius Dio, as well as the research of modern historians, primarily that of Pelling. A crafted 5-10 page introduction, which will include general information about Plutarch himself and his methods in addition to an introduction on my methodology (e.g. how I chose which portions to translate), and 3-5 pages of concluding remarks will accompany the roughly 40-50 pages of translation and commentary. I have included with this proposal a preliminary bibliography.