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# THE EMASCULATION OF ANTONY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN PLUTARCH'S *LIFE OF ANTONY*

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In recent years, much attention has been given to questions of gender in the construction of women in ancient literature.[1] These studies have focused for the most part—and with good reason—on women, and so men like Mark Antony have been neglected.[2] Yet it is important to remember that many male Roman aristocrats of the late Republic—e.g., Caesar, Pompey, Catiline, Curio, and Augustus—were criticized for sexual transgressions.[3] It is Antony's image, however, that emerges from the ancient sources more distorted by the manipulation of gender stereotypes than that of any other male figure from Roman Republican history. As this article will show, Plutarch's *Life of Antony* provides a very clear illustration of this distortion.

The emasculated Antony does not, of course, originate with Plutarch,[4] but it is he who brings together the tangle of truth and innuendo and molds it into a coherent biography. Born in c. 50 C.E., 75 years after the death of Antony and Cleopatra, Plutarch composed his *Life of Antony* in a world in which Antony's archenemy had become not just emperor but god. Augustan propaganda had shaped the discourse concerning Antony and Actium to the point where Plutarch probably could not have produced an accurate account of Augustus' enemy even had he wished to. But unbiased truth was not his primary concern, since the

1. Two subjects of such reappraisals are Cleopatra and Fulvia, who have in common three characteristics: a legacy of vilification in the ancient sources, a resuscitated reputation in revisionist versions of history, and a husband. For Cleopatra, Hamer, Hughes-Hallett, Wyke 1992; for Fulvia, Delia.

2. A notable exception is Gleason.

3. Caesar was accused of prostituting himself as a passive homosexual with King Nicomedes of Bithynia (Suetonius, *Iul.* 49), as well as having numerous adulterous affairs with women (*Iul.* 50-52). Pompey was charged with uxoriousness and neglecting public affairs to spend more time with his young wife Julia. Cicero accused Catiline of adultery (*Cat.* 1.26) and Sallust charged him with wantonness, adultery, and excess in all his appetites (*Cat.* 14.2) and even of the heinous charge of defiling a Vestal Virgin (*Cat.* 15.1). Curio was accused of a homosexual relationship with Antony (Cicero, *Phil.* 2.44-45). Augustus was said to have engaged often in adultery (Suetonius, *Aug.* 60) and also to have been a passive homosexual, but Suetonius affirms that his later sexual conduct refutes this charge (*Aug.* 71).

4. The propaganda war began almost immediately after Caesar's murder in 44 B.C.E. Cicero's *Philippics*, especially the Second, cast numerous aspersions on Antony's manhood, not all of which Plutarch believes or even repeats (e.g., accusation of a sexual relationship between the young Antony and C. Scribonius Curio, with Antony in the passive role: *Phil.* 2.44-45). For lewd verses about Antony and Fulvia attributed to Augustus himself, see Martial, *Epigr.* 20. For modern discussions of the first-century B.C.E. propaganda, see Charlesworth, Scott 1929 and 1933, and Hallett.

purpose of his *Lives* was didactic rather than journalistic.[5] The *Life of Antony*, like its Greek counterpart *Demetrius*, was intended to serve as a negative moral example,[6] and yet Plutarch does not engage in wholesale mudslinging without regard for the truth. Significantly, he omits some of the most vitriolic material from Cicero's *Philippics*, which he did consult.[7] Still, it is through the eyes of Antony's enemies that Plutarch sees his subject, and thus the Antony that emerges in this *Life* is part reality and part representation.[8]

The argument being made here is not that Plutarch set out deliberately to emasculate Antony and to create a false, feminized representation of the triumvir in order to present an unequivocally negative moral example. On the contrary, a number of passages in this *Life* show Antony exhibiting great valor and conducting himself in a manner worthy of a Roman *imperator*.[9] The passages extolling Antony's virtues are, however, almost lost amid the catalogue of his vices. Plutarch's Antony is a man of many vices—excess in his appetites, lack of self-control, immaturity, passivity, uxoriousness—and each plays a part in the construction of an antihero who has failed to live up to his society's norms of masculinity. Plutarch emasculates Antony, whether intentionally or not, in ways that are at times heavy-handed and obvious—e.g., the phrase Cleopatra "melted and feminized" (*ἐξέτηξαν καὶ ἀπεθήλυναν*, 53.11) him—but at other times more sophisticated, such as when he uses metaphor (e.g., the recurring leitmotif of education) to suggest subtly that Antony was not the man he should have been. Finally, Antony's degeneration is accompanied by an increasing estrangement from the Roman world and identification with the Greco-Egyptian East.

One way Plutarch emasculates Antony is his depiction of Antony as dominated by his wives. Antony's uxorious, uncontrollable passion for the Egyptian queen results in his ultimate destruction,[10] but his inability or unwillingness to control the women in his life begins much earlier. Antony's marriages figure prominently in the *Life*, and Plutarch implies that Antony played the woman's role in those marriages. He makes it clear that when Antony married Fulvia, he chose

5. On the moral purpose of the *Lives*, see Jones 104-05. In the opening chapter of his *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch himself affirms: "It is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives . . . so must I be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests" (1.2-3; Loeb translation).

6. "So, I think, we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad. This book will therefore contain the Lives of Demetrius the City-Besieger and Antony the Imperator, men who bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato's saying that great natures exhibit great vices also, as well as great virtues" (Plutarch, *Demetr.* 1.6-7; Loeb translation).

7. E.g., the accusation in *Phil.* 2.44-45, discussed in note 4 above. In addition, Plutarch rejects as "manifestly false" (6.1) Cicero's accusation (*Phil.* 2.55) that just as Helen was the cause of the Trojan War, so Antony was the cause of the civil war.

8. On the dangers of taking representations of individuals depicted in texts at face value, see Skinner, Wyke 1989, Joshel, and Richlin 1992b.

9. Most notably under the dictator Caesar at Rome (7.1), at Philippi (22.1-4), and in Parthia (42-49, esp. 43.3 on his virtues and the unsurpassed love of his soldiers for him), and on the eve of his destruction at Alexandria (75.1).

10. After the battle of Actium, Plutarch calls Cleopatra "the woman who had already ruined him and who would completely destroy him" (*τὴν ἀπολωλεκυῖαν ἤδη καὶ προσαπολοῦσαν αὐτόν*, 66.8).



for a wife "not the kind of woman who intended to do housework or to rule over a private citizen, but one who wanted to govern a governor and command a commander" (*οὐ ταλασίαν οὐδ' οἰκουρίαν φρονοῦν γύναιον οὐδ' ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου κρατεῖν ἀζιοῦν, ἀλλ' ἄρχοντος ἄρξειν καὶ στρατηγοῦντος στρατηγεῖν βουλόμενον*, 10.5). By allowing himself to be ruled by a woman, Antony took the passive, feminine role in the relationship, while his masculine wife, who scorned the proper womanly duty of managing the household, wanted not only "to rule" (*κρατεῖν*) a husband who was a private citizen (which would have been bad enough) but also to govern and command a husband who himself had authority to command others, and thus to extend her power beyond the scope of the household into the public, masculine realm of war and politics.[11] Plutarch goes on to say:

> *ὥστε Κλεοπάτραν διδασκάλια Φουλβίᾳ τῆς Ἀντωνίου γυναικοκρασίας ὀφείλειν, πάνυ χειρωθῆ καὶ πεπαιδαγωγημένον ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἀκροᾶσθαι γυναικῶν παραλαβοῦσαν αὐτόν.*
>
> In fact, Cleopatra owed teacher's fees to Fulvia for schooling Antony to a wife's temper, for when she [Cleopatra] received him, he was completely submissive and had been taught to obey the rule of women. (10.6)

This mocking, contemptuous passage—with its metaphor of a schoolboy being "taught to obey" (*πεπαιδαγωγημένον . . . ἀκροᾶσθαι*) by one wife so that he became "completely submissive" (*πάνυ χειρωθῆ*) to another—clearly implies Antony's feminization by these two dominating women. In his *Advice on Marriage*, Plutarch makes it clear that a wife should be taught by her husband: "The bedroom will be for her a school of orderly behavior or of licentiousness" (*τὸν θάλαμον αὐτῇ διδασκαλεῖον εὐταξίας ἢ ἀκολασίας γενησόμενον*, *Moralia* 145a). Further, he affirms that it is an honor for a man to hear his wife say, "Husband, you are to me guide, philosopher, and teacher of all things most beautiful and divine" (*ἄνερ, ἀτὰρ σύ μοί ἐσσι καθηγητὴς καὶ φιλόσοφος καὶ διδάσκαλος τῶν καλλίστων καὶ θειοτάτων*, 145c).[12] Xenophon also held that the husband's duty in a marriage was to educate his wife. In the *Oeconomicus*, Critias asks Socrates whether happy husbands blessed with good wives have educated them themselves (*αὐτοὶ ταύτας ἐπαίδευσαν*, 3.14), and Socrates, responding in the affirmative, repeats the words of Ischomachus regarding the education of the latter's wife: "When after a time she had become accustomed to my hand and had been tamed so as to engage in a discussion" (*ἐπεὶ ἤδη μοι χειροήθης ἦν καὶ ἐτετιθάσευτο ὥστε διαλέγεσθαι*, 7.10), he then commenced with her education in philosophy.

Plutarch's use of the education metaphor thus has the effect of reversing the appropriate gender roles in Antony's marriage with Fulvia. In addition, the reference to *διδασκάλια* puts Fulvia in the position of *παιδαγωγός* ("a boy's tutor") to her husband. Thus he is not only feminized (taught as a wife should

11. During Antony's first sojourn with Cleopatra in Alexandria, Fulvia became involved along with her brother-in-law L. Antonius, in the Perusine war against Octavian (30.1). See Martial, *Epigr.* 20, Hallett 1977, and Delia concerning the invective against Fulvia for her unfeminine conduct.

12. Adapted from Andromache's words to Hector in *Iliad* 6.429.

be by her husband) but also infantilized (taught as a child by his tutor). The metaphor is continued when Cleopatra "amused" (διεπαιδαγώγει, 29.1) Antony day and night in Alexandria: in addition to its more general meaning "to amuse," the verb has the specific meaning "to attend children."

When Plutarch depicts Antony as a child rather than a mature man, he feminizes him in yet another way, for women in Rome and Athens—as well as many other Greek cities—were perpetual minors, whose legal business had to be overseen by a *tutor* or κύριος.[13] Aristotle (*Pol.* 1.1260a9-14) discusses the different ways in which the minds of women, children, and slaves are inferior to the minds of free adult males. In three separate passages (10.7, 28.1, and 30.1), Plutarch uses variations of the word μειράκιον ("boy") to describe Antony.[14] According to Pelling, Plutarch tends to use this word to denote boys about twenty years of age,[15] and yet Plutarch uses it repeatedly of Antony, a man in his forties who has been consul and has been proclaimed *imperator* by his soldiers. He shows Antony playing practical jokes and "playing the boy" (μειρακιευόμενος, 10.7) with his wife Fulvia, then wasting time in "the leisure of a boy" (μειρακίου σχολήν, 28.1) with Cleopatra, and again "playing the boy" (μειρακιευόμενον, 30.1) with Cleopatra, this time while his wife Fulvia and his brother Lucius were making war with Octavian. Here again the gender roles are reversed, and Antony indulges in private amusement like a child while his wife fights his battles like the man he is not.[16]

The most unequivocal example of Plutarch's feminization of Antony is in the passage quoted briefly above (53.11) in which Cleopatra "melted and feminized" (ἐξέτηξαν καὶ ἀπεθήλυναν) him. Cleopatra's successful efforts to emasculate Antony in this passage stem from her desire to keep him away from his legitimate wife Octavia, for fear that the latter "would conquer the man absolutely" (κρατήσῃ παντάπασι, 53.5). The language of military conquest heightens the irony of the situation: two women are competing to see who of them might conquer (κρατήσῃ) the man, especially since that man is himself a general who *should* be off conquering Rome's enemies himself, rather than being the object of female conquest. Also striking is the implication that if Cleopatra could dominate Antony, so too could Octavia, provided that she had the inclination and the opportunity. Antony is merely a pawn in this game of sexual politics, in which his royal mistress is the consummate master.

When Octavian was ready to declare war, he did so against Cleopatra, rather than against Antony, or even against Cleopatra and Antony together, and passed a decree depriving Antony of the authority that he had given up to a woman (ἀφελέσθαι δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς Ἀντώνιον ἧς ἐξέστη γυναικί, 60.1). The declaration of war against Cleopatra alone was not Plutarch's invention, but rather Octavian's attempt to disguise the civil war against Antony as a legitimate foreign

13. See Sealey 103-07, 154-55.

14. Appian also uses it of Antony: "A[ntony]'s reason was shattered by the sight [of Cleopatra at Tarsus]; he was captivated μειρακιωδῶς, for all his forty years . . ." (*BC* 5.8, cited in Pelling 194).

15. Pelling 194.

16. See note 11 above. In addition, "it was seen as a particularly feminine characteristic to value private concerns over the good of the state": Edwards 80.



war against a hostile monarch and, probably, an attempt by Octavian to depict his brother-in-law as the emasculated tool of a foreign queen;[17] if so, he was successful. In describing this incident, Plutarch makes a point of emphasizing Antony's inappropriate relinquishing of authority *to a woman* (γυναικί).

Plutarch also repeats Octavian's accusation that it was not even Cleopatra[18] herself in command of Antony's military affairs, but a eunuch (Μαρδίων ὁ εὐνοῦχος) and a hairdresser (Εἴρας ἡ Κλεοπάτρας κουρεύται, 60.1). Though Plutarch indicates that this was Octavian's opinion (προσεπεῖπε Καῖσαρ), he repeats it without any contradicting commentary of his own. By permitting his readers to infer the influence of a hairdresser, Plutarch chose not only a woman, not only a slave, but a female slave whose duties lay exclusively in the private realm of personal body service to a woman. The significance of a eunuch in this context scarcely needs mention.[19]

Plutarch roundly condemns Antony's decision to fight at Actium Octavian at sea rather than on land, and attributes this decision to the fact that Antony had become by this time "an appendage of the woman [Cleopatra]" (προσθήκη τῆς γυναικός, 62.1) and so had fought at sea merely to please her. As Edwards notes, "Erotic distraction, dependence on a woman (even one's wife) were felt to divert a man from his public responsibilities. In neglecting the public good for the pursuit of his private desires he became like a woman, in Roman eyes."[20] The account of Antony's erotic distraction continues as Plutarch relates Cleopatra's flight from the battlefield: "Then it was apparent that Antony acted neither like a commander nor like a man" (ἔνθα δὴ φανερὸν αὐτὸν Ἀντώνιος ἐπίησεν οὔτ' ἄρχοντος οὔτ' ἀνδρός, 66.7). Instead of staying to fight like a *man* (ἀνδρός), Antony "was dragged along by the woman, as if he had become a part of her and was being borne off together with her" (ἑλκόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς γυναικὸς ὥσπερ συμπεθυκὼς καὶ συμμεταφερόμενος, 66.7). When he should have been leading his men in battle, he was being dragged away by a woman *as if he had become a part of her* (ὥσπερ συμπεθυκώς). In the ultimate emasculation, Cleopatra has deprived him not only of his will, but here, metaphorically, of his body as well. The verb συμφύω ("to make grow together," "to unite into one") makes Antony not only subordinate to her, but *part* of

17. Dio 50.4.3-5, 6.1. Pelling calls the declaration against Cleopatra "a device which aided O[ctavian]'s representation of the conflict as one of West against East: when A[ntony] refused to leave Cl[eopatra], he could now be seen as a traitor to Rome" (264). According to Syme, the war "was designed and contrived by the party of Octavianus . . . [as] not a war for domination against Antonius—Antonius must not be mentioned. To secure Roman sanction and emotional support for the enterprise it was necessary to invent a foreign danger that menaced everything that was Roman, as Antonius himself surely did not" (275).

18. Whom Plutarch elsewhere calls "a queen superior in power and glory to all, except Arsaces, who were kings in her time" (*Demtr.-Ant.*, 1.5).

19. Cf. Horace, *Epod.* 9.13-14, in which Antony serves as a soldier for withered eunuchs (*miles et spadonibus / servire rugosis potest*).

20. Edwards 85. Her comment here refers specifically to Pompey, whom Plutarch criticizes for excessive devotion to his young wife Julia at the expense of his public duties (*Pomp.* 48). Later in the *Life*, however, Plutarch notes that Julia was equally devoted to her aging husband, and that people could not really blame him for the love he felt for her (53).

her, an image that calls to mind Ovid's account of Hermaphroditus: "For the bodies of the two are joined, and a single form spreads over them" (*nam mixta duorum / corpora iunguntur, faciesque inducitur illis / una, Met.* 4. 373-75). The resulting amalgamation was a half-man (*semivir*, 4.386), a being who had descended into the waters of the pool of Salmacis a man (*vir descenderat*, 4.380), but was emasculated (*semimarem fecisse*, 4.381). This is not to say, of course, that Plutarch consciously sought to call to mind Hermaphroditus, but rather that the resonance between the two passages demonstrates the underlying attitude of the biographer to his subject's masculinity, which he perceived as threatened by the aggressive, dominating Cleopatra.

A final feminization of Antony occurs in the *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony*, where Plutarch likens Antony to Heracles in his relationship with Omphale: "Just as in paintings we see Omphale removing Heracles's club and stripping him of his lion's skin, so Cleopatra many times enchanted and disarmed" Antony (ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς ὁρῶμεν τοῦ Ἡρακλέους τὴν Ὀμφάλην ὑπαιροῦσαν τὸ ῥόπαλον καὶ τὴν λεοντῆν ἀποδύουσαν, οὕτω πολλάκις Κλεοάτρα παροπλίσασα καὶ καταθέλξασα, *Demetr.-Ant.*, 3.4).[21]

This catalogue of feminized behavior is foreshadowed in the very first chapter of the *Life*, in an incident involving Antony's father. After the elder Antonius gave away an expensive silver bowl, his wife Julia noticed that it was missing and began interrogating the slaves. The shamefaced husband then "confessed, begging to have her forgiveness" (ὡμολόγησε συγγνώμην ἔχειν δεηθείς, 1.3). Significantly, this is the only anecdote Plutarch relates about the elder Antonius, who died when Antony was young, leaving the son to be raised "under her" (τῆς ταύτης, 2.1, referring to the imperious Julia). Plutarch remarks that he tells the story in order to demonstrate Antonius' "benevolence, honesty, and especially his generosity" (Antonius gave the bowl to a friend who was suffering dire poverty). On the surface this passage casts a favorable light on the Antonii, father and son, as generous and benevolent, but the subtext is less flattering. While Plutarch draws no overt parallel between the relationship of easy-going Antonius to hard-headed Julia and that of their son to his wives, it is not difficult to imagine the effect of such incidents on young Antony. A husband who "begs for forgiveness" from his wife is clearly not the master of his own household. With such a poor example of a *paterfamilias* before him, it is not surprising that Antony would himself become a husband incapable of controlling his wife—and therefore capable of being controlled by her.

Antony's passivity is not limited to his conjugal life, but extends into his relationships with men, where he is portrayed as easily influenced by friends. In his commentary, Pelling dwells on Antony's passivity but makes no connection between passivity and emasculation.[22] In general, passivity can be seen as an essentially feminine characteristic. As discussed above, the man should take the active role in the education of his wife, who should be the passive recipient

21. See Zanker 58-59 for Augustan manipulation of the Heracles-Omphale motif in visual representations.

22. Pelling 181, 201, 263.



of his greater experience. Likewise, a man was expected to take an active part in the political life of the state rather than sit passively at home enjoying the pleasures of private life,[23] while taking the passive role in a homosexual act was to be feminized.[24] In each of these senses, passivity is equated with femininity, and it can be inferred that passivity in the sense of being easily led by others is a trait that bears the mark of feminization.

Antony's susceptibility to the influence of others began in his youth, with his relationship with Curio, whom Plutarch blames for corrupting Antony (2.4). Years later, it was Curio who persuaded Antony to ally himself with Caesar (5.5). Then, during the Civil War, after Antony had abused his authority as Caesar's *magister equitum* during the dictator's absence, Caesar returned and "seemed to hinder him from much of his fatuousness and prodigality" (ἔοικε μέντοι πολὺ τῆς ἀβελτερίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀσωτίας ἀφελεῖν ὁ Καῖσαρ, 10.4). Thus, whether it is Curio's baneful sway, or the steadying hand of Caesar, Antony is easily led by his friends and—more disastrously, as far as Plutarch is concerned—by his wives.

The increasing influence of others on Antony culminates with Cleopatra. Plutarch dwells on Cleopatra's skill at flattery (29.1, 53.5-9) and Antony's susceptibility to it, and concludes that, such being Antony's nature, his love for Cleopatra was "the ultimate evil" (τελευταῖον κακόν, 25.1) that befell him. Plutarch sets the tone for the entire relationship when he describes the prelude to their famous meeting at Tarsus, where Cleopatra arrived with all the theatrical splendor of a truly divine monarch. She drew the awestruck crowds down to the river Cydnus to gaze in wonder at the magnificent splendor of her appearance in the guise of Aphrodite, until "at last Antony sat alone on the tribunal" (τέλος αὐτὸς ὁ Ἀντώνιος ἐπὶ βήματος καθεζόμενος ἀπελείφθη μόνος, 26.4). He, a Roman *imperator*, had initially summoned her to Tarsus, but she neatly turned the tables on him, forcing him at last to come to her barge. The tribunal (τὸ βῆμα), one of the trappings of his *imperium*, becomes an instrument in his degradation, as he sits upon it alone and ignored, waiting in vain for her to obey his summons.

Throughout the *Life*, others act while Antony reacts—or fails to, as when he cavorts in Alexandria while Fulvia wages war (30.1). Before Actium, he told Cleopatra to go back to Egypt, but only because he had been persuaded to do so by Domitius Ahenobarbus (πεισθεὶς ὑπὸ Δομιτίου, 56.3). Naturally, she did not obey. Instead, she set her flatterers to work, and their arguments prevailed (ἐνίκα, 56.6). Her flatterers drove away many of Antony's friends (59.6) while Antony apparently did nothing but watch helplessly. By this time, it will be recalled, he had become "an appendage of the woman" (προσθήκη τῆς γυναικός, 62.1). It was Cleopatra who made the crucial—and fatal—decision to fight at sea when Antony's strength was on land (63.8). He fled the battle when she

23. Edwards 174: "Virtue is to be found in public places, pursuing the public good, winning public renown. Pleasure, on the other hand, is wet, soft (*mollis, enervis*) and characteristic of slaves."

24. Richlin 1983, *passim*; cf. Edwards 75: "To be penetrated was to be aligned with the female, the 'other'."

did, "dragged along by the woman" (ἑλκόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς γυναικός, 66.7). After the defeat and the defection of one of his officers, he tried to kill himself "but was prevented by his friends and was brought to Alexandria" (καὶ διακωλυθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν φίλων καὶ κομισθεὶς εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, 69.3); there he sulked alone on the island of Pharos (69.6). Later, when he believed Cleopatra to be dead, he determined to end his life, but upon discovering that she was still alive, had himself carried to her tomb, where Cleopatra herself and her two women pulled him up. As she struggled mightily to lift him, he lay there weak and helpless, stretching out his hands to her and lamenting, so that onlookers reported that there was never a more pitiable (οἰκτρότερον, 77.3) sight. "The task was not easy for a woman" (οὐ γὰρ ἦν γυναικὶ ῥᾴδιον τὸ ἔργον, 77.4) but she accomplished it. Again, the subtle message: Cleopatra is more than a woman, which makes Antony less than a man. When she had gotten him into the tomb, Cleopatra, lamenting and lacerating her breast, "called him lord and husband and *imperator*" (δεσπότην ἐκάλει καὶ ἄνδρα καὶ αὐτοκράτορα, 77.5). Ironically, Plutarch has her proclaim Antony to be in death those very things which she had prevented him from being in life.

Plutarch's *Lives* usually end with the death of the subject, with only a brief epilogue on his descendants and historical significance rounding out the portrait. In the case of *Antony*, the narrative continues for a full 10 chapters after his demise, nine of them chronicling Cleopatra's last days (78-86) and the tenth providing the customary summation of Antony's posterity (87).[25] Not only has Antony lost control of his own life, but he has also lost control of his *Life*.

In several recent articles, Sandra Joshel has discussed the question of agency and voice in connection with the construction of women in Livy and Tacitus. She finds it significant that in Livy's story of Verginia—the girl killed by her own father to prevent her rape—"Verginia never speaks or acts" (1992: 126). If Joshel is correct in interpreting lack of speech and passivity as a tool elite male writers used to silence women and deprive them of agency, then one might conclude that Plutarch, no doubt subconsciously, does likewise in the case of Antony. Thirty-four instances of direct speech occur in the *Life of Antony*, but Antony himself speaks directly only seven times.[26] By comparison, 34 instances of direct speech occur in Plutarch's *Life of Cicero*, but Cicero himself accounts for 28 of them, which is a rate four times greater than that for Antony. Another late Republican Roman *Life*, the *Caesar*, contains 36 direct speeches, with Caesar himself making 22 of them (= 61.1 percent). Proportionally, Caesar speaks

25. Pelling 16: "P[lutarch] often continues a *Life*'s narrative beyond its subject's death, but never so elaborately as this: he could have dismissed [Cleopatra's] death much more quickly. But by now this is not really a biography at all. We have two heroes whose fates have become one." Swain 76-82 makes the case that the form of this *Life* was to some extent shaped by the conventions of the Greek novel and pantomime. Thus by the time Antony dies, the *Life* has become the drama of Antony and Cleopatra rather than simply the biography of Antony, and Plutarch must bring it to a satisfying denouement, even though his title character has permanently left the stage. Plutarch himself uses the theatrical metaphor in the conclusion of the *Life of Demetrius*: "And now that the Macedonian play has been performed, let us introduce the Roman" (53.10; Loeb translation).

26. 4.9, 23.3, 45.12, 67.3, 73.4, 76.5-7, and 76.9.



less frequently in his own life than does Cicero, but he still speaks almost three times as often as Antony.[27]

Not only does Antony speaks less in his own biography than his contemporaries Cicero and Caesar do in theirs, but he also speaks less than Cleopatra. Although Antony speaks directly seven times and Cleopatra only six,[28] her six speeches contain a total of 24 lines while his seven comprise only 12. Antony's longest speech (76.5-7) consists of four lines, while the lament Cleopatra makes over Antony's body (84.4-7) is, at 14 lines, by far the longest speech in the *Life*. If denial of speech is an indication of disempowerment (such as what happened in the case of women in classical literature), then the silencing of Antony relative to Cleopatra becomes one more means of emasculating him.

Antony is also emasculated by Plutarch's seemingly paradoxical characterization of him as excessively masculine. Plutarch refers to Antony's voracious sexual appetite for women (4.5, 6.6, 9.5); his masculine appearance (τὸ ἀρρενωπόν, 4.1); his likeness to the rugged Heracles, from whom Antony claimed descent (4.2); and finally his prowess as soldier and as a commander who had the affection and loyalty of his troops (6.5-6, 43.3-6).

The likeness to Heracles is turned easily from an indication of masculinity to one of emasculation in light of the Heracles and Omphale passage discussed above.[29] Antony's masculine appearance, like Heracles', is made ironic by the image of him in a position of subordination to a woman. The topos of the conquering hero conquered by love[30] was common enough that Plutarch's readers would not have acquitted Antony of unmanly behavior in his relationships with women merely because of his bravery on the battlefield. As for Antony's soldiers' deep and genuine love for their commander, Pelling (123) argues that this was due in some measure to the fact that he shared their excesses with them.

Antony's immoderate attraction to women likewise serves to emasculate him. Whereas in some modern cultures a man's sexual prowess with women is a mark of masculine distinction, this was not so in ancient Rome. Edwards explains that "men were often accused of being effeminate while having an excessive interest in penetrating women" because

> in the eyes of Roman moralists, the effeminate were like women in playing a 'passive' sexual role but at the same time they were like women in having an excessive interest in sex. The appetites of the effeminate were uncontrollable. They were adulterers as well as catamites. (81)

27. The proportion of direct speech by Demetrius in his *Life* is 20 percent, about the same as Antony's. This may be because the *Life of Demetrius* was the companion to the *Life of Antony* and, like the latter, describes the vices and degeneracies of a man who did not live up to the moral ideals of his society.

28. 29.7, 59.5, 62.6, 83.6, 84.4-7, and 86.2.

29. *Demetr.-Ant.* 3.4. On the opposition between the virile and the feminine in representations of Heracles, see Loraux 21-52.

30. E.g., Achilles' excessive mourning of Penthesilea (*Aethiopis*); Propertius, asking what wonder that a woman holds him under her sway, when so many others (Medea, Omphale, Penthesilea, Semiramis and Cleopatra) have done the same to other men (3.11); Mars himself (Ovid, *Am.* 1.9).

Antony's appetite for women was immoderate and out of control,[31] and Joshel, like Edwards, points to the Roman preoccupation with male control of the body and the intersections between the discourses concerning political domination and physical denial, and the metaphorical connection between control of the physical self and social control of others. According to Joshel,

> the denial of the body to the self speaks the denial of social power to others; a Roman's rule of his own body provides an image of Roman domination and a model of sovereignty—of Roman over non-Roman, of upper class over lower, of master over slave, of man over woman, and of Princeps over everyone else. (1992: 120)

Although this quote refers to the *Roman* discourse on self-control, it can be argued that the same applies to the Greek discourse.[32] This view of men as rational and women as emotional and less able to control their physical desires is a topos, of course, found throughout ancient and even medieval Mediterranean and European literary texts.[33] Given this view, Plutarch's portrait of Antony as unable, like a woman, to rein in his bodily desires is yet another means of feminizing him.

Plutarch makes explicit the struggle between mind and body, reason and passion: "But in this matter he was still struggling with his reason against his love for the Egyptian" (ἀλλ' ἔτι τῷ λόγῳ περί γε τούτου πρὸς τὸν ἔρωτα τῆς Αἰγυπτίας μαχόμενος, 31.3). To illustrate how Antony's reason was overwhelmed by passion, Plutarch refers to Plato's well-known metaphor (*Phaedr.* 254a) of the human soul as a chariot team, in which one horse is obedient and in control, the other driven by its lusts; thus, Antony, giving free rein to the dark horse of passion, succumbed utterly to his desire for Cleopatra (36.2). He delayed his Parthian expedition because he could not bear to be parted from her, and his lack of judgment was such that he seemed "not to be [acting] according to his own judgments, but [as if he were] under some drug or spell" (οὐκ ὄντα τῶν ἑαυτοῦ λογισμῶν, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ φαρμάκων τινῶν ἢ γοητείας, 37.6). After making the decision to fight at sea at Actium for emotional rather than rational reasons (see above), Antony and Cleopatra sailed to Samos before the battle to indulge themselves "in luxuries" (ἐν εὐπαθείαις, 56.6). During the battle itself Antony revealed that he was not guided "by his own judgment" (ἰδίοις λογισμοῖς), and so proved true the joke, "a lover's soul lives in the body of another" (τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ ἐρῶντος ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ σώματι, 66.7). In the middle of a battle, love, not reason, ruled him, and indeed his soul now lives in Cleopatra's breast. After the battle, it was not shame over the humiliating defeat which ultimately drove him to suicide (a reasonable action for a man of virtue), but emotional despair at the thought of life without Cleopatra (76.5).

31. The same is true for Antony's abuse of wine. Repeating another of Cicero's calumnies, Plutarch relates how on one occasion, Antony appeared in the forum after a night of drunken debauchery and vomited in public (9.6). Edwards 191 comments on the lack of self-control exhibited by Antony as he is depicted by ancient writers: "He has abandoned the bodily control required in one of his status."

32. The applicability of Greek cultural codes and constructs to Roman society (particularly regarding gender and sexuality) is critical to the views of such scholars as Foucault, Halperin, and Winkler. But see the arguments of Richlin 1991, esp. 166-72.

33. See, e.g., Dean-Jones and Oberhelman, esp. 66-68 with bibliography.



Away from the temptations of Rome (21.1-5), Asia (24.1-8), and especially Alexandria (29.1-4, 50.7, 54.5), Antony's finer qualities come to the fore; in the field at Philippi and against the Parthians he is at his best—brave, in control, and masculine (see also note 9 above). But when Cleopatra is on the scene, his duties to Rome come in a poor second, as when he put off a campaign against Parthia, fearing she would take her own life if he left her (53.11). The allusion to her threatened suicide vividly evokes Aeneas, who put duty to Rome before the tears of *his* African queen:

> at pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem
> solando cupit et dictis avertere curas,
> multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore
> iussa tamen divum exscquitur classemque revisit.
>
> But dutiful Aeneas, although he desired to lighten her sorrow
> by comforting her and to drive away her cares with assurances,
> lamenting much, shaken by his great love, nevertheless
> fulfilled the commands of the gods and returned to his fleet. (*Aen.* 4.393-96)

The propaganda is clear: Aeneas left the oriental splendor of Carthage and sacrificed his love for Dido so that Rome might live, while Antony let Roman interests suffer as he cavorted with Cleopatra in the fleshpots of Alexandria.

Plutarch portrays most strikingly the losing battle Antony fights between reason and passion in a passage describing the eve of the fateful encounter at Tarsus. After Plutarch's statement that Antony's love for Cleopatra was the "ultimate evil" of his life, an even more damning passage follows:

> τοιούτῳ δ' οὖν ὄντα τὴν φύσιν Ἀντωνίῳ τελευταῖον κακὸν ὁ Κλεοπάτρας ἔρως ἐπιγενόμενος καὶ πολλὰ τῶν ἔτι κρυπτομένων ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀτρεμούντων παθῶν ἐγείρας καὶ ἀναβακχεύσας, εἴ τι χρηστὸν ἢ σωτήριον ὅμως ἀντεῖχεν, ἠφάνισε καὶ προσδιέφθειρεν.
>
> Such being Antony's nature, the love for Cleopatra which now came into his life was the ultimate evil, and it awakened and roused to Bacchic frenzy many things which had been hidden in him and had lain dormant, and if there was anything still good or redeeming, it suppressed or destroyed it. (25.1)

The participle ἀναβακχεύσας, "roused to Bacchic frenzy," evokes associations on a number of levels. First, this striking metaphor, more than any other phrase, drives home the point about Antony's lack of self-control: Antony was not merely out of control, but driven to the point of utter madness by the divine frenzy of the Bacchantes.[34] The metaphor also reinforces the identification of Antony with Dionysus, a recurrent association in the *Life*[35] that began as an

34. The Bacchanalia had particular meaning to the Romans, whose persecution of the cult culminated in a senatorial decree in 186 B.C.E. (*ILLRP* 511, and note 37 below). "Bacchic frenzy" certainly would evoke deeper, more sinister feelings among a Roman audience than a Greek.

35. For example, Antony's entry into Ephesus was celebrated with a procession of Ephesians arrayed as Satyrs and Bacchantes who hailed him as Dionysius (24.4). He associated himself with Dionysus and was called the New Dionysus (Διόνυσος νέος, 60.5). Cleopatra was called the New Isis (νέα Ἶσις, 54.9; significant because according to Egyptian religion, Isis' consort was Osiris, the Egyptian Dionysus). And on the night before Octavian's invasion of Alexandria, the sounds of a Bacchic revelry exiting the city were interpreted as a sign that the god was abandoning Antony (75.4-5).

element of Antony's own propaganda but was then used against him by the victorious Augustus.[36] The association of Antony with this dangerous foreign deity, whose worship was once banned from Rome,[37] reinforces the image of the triumvir as passionate rather than rational, as feminine rather than masculine, and as marked with foreignness rather than Romanness.[38]

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, scholars have begun to examine how gender as a construct was used to shape the discourse on power relations between the Roman West (masculine and rational) and the Greek East (feminine and sensual). As Edwards observes, "The skirmishes between Roman moralists and alleged voluptuaries took place on the conceptual borders between masculine and feminine, public and private, Roman and alien" (5). The poetry of the Augustan age abounds with references to Asiatics as effeminate. Vergil has Iarbas, spurned by Dido, call Aeneas "that Paris with his half-man followers" (*ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu, Aen.* 4.215). Then he has the Rutulian Numanus Remulus taunt the Trojans:

> o vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta
> Dindyma, ubi adsuetis biforem dat tibia cantum.
> tympana vos buxusque vocat Berecyntia Matris
> Idaeae; sinite arma viris et cedite ferro.
>
> O Phrygian women, for indeed you are not even Phrygian men,
> Go through the heights of Mount Dindymus, where the flute
> gives a two-toned song to its devotees.
> The Berecyntian tambourine and flute of the Mother of Ida call you;
> Leave arms to men and give up your swords. (9.617-20)

Later, Turnus yearns to tear off the breastplate "of the half-man Phrygian" (*semiviri Phrygis*) and drag in the dust his hair, "curled with hot iron and dripping with myrrh" (*vibratos calido ferro murraque madentis*, 12.100). The threat of enemies other than Asiatics could, on occasion, be rendered less frightening by the tactic of feminization, as Livy does in reference to the Gauls: "Before the battle they are more than men, and after less than women" (*primaque eorum proelia plus quam virorum, postrema minus quam feminarum esse*, 10.28.4).

Propertius, writing of Cleopatra herself, throws her foreignness into sharp relief:

36. Zanker 46-47, 57-61. Conversely, Octavian made the austere Apollo his patron deity. For discussion of the oppositional symbolism of the triumvirs' patron deities, see Zanker 44-53; cf. Gurval 87-98.

37. The *senatus consultum* of 186 B.C.E. prohibited future Bacchic worship and authorized the magistrates to hunt down and in some cases execute adherents of the cult; see Livy 39.8-22.

38. The association with Dionysus, combined with the excess of Antony's appetites, might seem initially to suggest an association with satyrs, the ithyphallic followers of the god whose exaggerated sexuality renders them bestial rather than masculine; Antony, however, is always associated with Dionysus himself rather than with the god's lecherous followers. For the radical difference between Dionysus and his male companions, see Lissarrague 59.



> scilicet incesti meretrix regina Canopi,
> una Philippeo sanguine adusta nota,
> ausa Iovi nostro latrantem opponere Anubim,
> et Tiberim Nili cogere ferre minas,
> Romanamque tubam crepitanti pellere sistro,
> baridos et contis rostra Liburna sequi,
> foedaque Tarpeio conopia tendere saxo,
> iura dare et statuas inter et arma Mari!
>
> Of course the whore-queen of defiled Canopus,
> the sole disgrace branded upon the blood of Philip,
> dared to set her barking Anubis against our Jupiter,
> and to force the Tiber to bear the threats of the Nile,
> to drive back the Roman trumpet with her rattling sistrum,
> and to pursue the beaks of our Liburnian galleys with the poles of her barge,
> to spread loathsome canopies over the Tarpeian rock,
> and to give judgement even among the statues and the arms
> of Marius! (3.11.39-46)

Here, Propertius juxtaposes Cleopatra's barbarian gods (*latrantem Anubim*) and disgraceful luxuries (*foedaque conopia*) against the wholesome deity (*Iovi nostro*) and masculine strength (*arma Mari*) of Rome. In addition, he sexualizes her (*meretrix*) and thus trivializes her as an opponent.

Horace—who, like Propertius, carefully avoids mentioning Antony by name[39]—depicts Cleopatra similarly in terms of foreign, feminine luxury (*turpe conopium*, *Epod.* 9.15-16), and as accompanied by the eunuchs associated with Oriental courts (*spadonibus rugosis*, *Epod.* 9.13-14) and by a crowd of shameful men polluted by vice (*contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo virorum*, *Carm.* 1.37.9-10).[40] Her Egyptian forces become "tender doves" (*molles*[41] *columbas*, *Carm.* 1.37.18) pursued by the Roman hawk.

In his *Aeneid*, Vergil also contributes to the poetic rhetoric concerning Rome's struggle against the feminine, foreign "Other" that Octavian had made of Antony and his client-queen ally. Like Propertius, Vergil emphasizes the foreignness of Cleopatra's gods—monsters of all kinds of gods and barking Anubis (*omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis*, 8.697). While Cleopatra rattles her ancestral sistrum (*patrio sistro*, 8. 696), Caesar (Octavian) makes a deathless vow to Italian gods (*dis Italis votum immortale sacrabat*, 8.726). Unlike Horace and Propertius, Vergil does mention Antony by name:

39. See the discussion above regarding the propaganda value of Octavian's having declared war only against Cleopatra and not against his Roman brother-in-law. The closest either poet comes to naming Antony is Horace's reference to "the Roman" who bears arms at a woman's behest and makes himself the minion of eunuchs: *Epod.* 9.11-14.

40. There is some ambivalence in this *Ode*, however. Although Horace brands her an accursed monster (*fatale monstrum*, 21), he acknowledges that she sought a noble death and scorned the thought of adorning a Roman triumph, and concludes by acknowledging that she was *non humilis mulier* (32). Plutarch displays a similar ambivalence to her, condemning her for destroying Antony, and yet permitting her a certain grace and nobility in her final hours.

41. On the significance of *mollis* and *mollitia* in the Roman discourse of sexual stereotypes and gendered invective, see the extended discussion in Edwards 63-97.

hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis,
victor ab Aurorae populis et litore rubro,
Aegyptum virisque Orientis et ultima secum
Bactra vehit, sequiturque (nefas) Aegyptia coniunx.

Here is Antony with barbarian might and various arms,
the victor from the East, the Red Sea shore,
bringing with him Egypt and the forces of the Orient,
even from farthest Bactria; and following him—an abomination!—
his Egyptian wife. (8.685-88)

This passage blatantly brands Antony as foreign: leading barbarian forces (*ope barbarica*) and bearing a motley panoply of (non-Roman) arms (*variisque armis*), this conqueror from the East (*ab Aurorae*) brings with him (*nefas*, "the shame of it!") his Egyptian wife (*Aegyptia coniunx*). The gods of Rome are arrayed on the side of Caesar, while Antony, his foreign wife, and foreign troops, bearing foreign arms, fight under the protection of monstrous foreign gods.

All these passages illustrate the intersection of the Roman discourses concerning gender and national identity. The issues are more complicated in the case of Plutarch (a Greek from Boeotia), writing about Antony (a Roman branded as a traitor and tainted with foreignness by his fellow Romans) and Cleopatra (not an Egyptian as the Roman poets depict her, but a Greek-speaking queen of Macedonian lineage). Though stereotypes of effeminate Greeks abound in Roman literature, the Roman invective surrounding Antony dwelt upon his connection with Egypt and the Orient rather than with Greece. Plutarch incorporates much of this invective into his biography, and paints Cleopatra as an Egyptian rather than a Greek queen, and Alexandria as a Asiatic den of iniquity rather than as a Greek city. He refers to Cleopatra as "the Egyptian woman" (τῆς Αἰγυπτίας, 31.1). He has one of Antony's grizzled, battle-scarred veterans beseech him on the eve of Actium to let the Roman veterans fight on land and leave the "Egyptians and Phoenicians" (Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ Φαίνικες, 64.3) to fight at sea. In his dealings with Asian monarchs, Antony "compared his own wealth and generosity to those of the Persian kings" (περιουσίαν δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνην τοῖς Περσῶν βασιλεῦσι παραβαλών, 37.1). He has Antony and Cleopatra entertained by "a troupe of Asiatic performers" (Ἀσιανῶν ἀκροαμάτων θίασος, 24.2); the word θίασος, which also denoted a Bacchic procession, evokes Dionysus, a god commonly considered Asiatic. Plutarch foreshadows this Eastern theme very early in the *Life*, when he describes Antony's oratory as belonging to the "Asiatic style" (Ἀσιανῷ ζήλῳ, 2.8), which, although a second-century C.E. term of derogation for luxuriant rhetoric, also suggests a tendency to flamboyance, as opposed to control, in overall personal behavior.[42] The opposite of Asiatic oratory is Attic, the pure, austere style of

42. Gleason 160: "Because rhetorical skill was considered a definitive test of masculine excellence, issues of rhetorical style and self-presentation easily became gendered." Edwards 93 remarks that the characterization of literary styles as *masculine* and *feminine* "is often implicated in disagreements over the relative merits of 'Attic' and 'Asiatic' oratorical styles—a debate which cannot be simply mapped onto an opposition between Greek and Roman—but the parallels often drawn between the Greek and the feminine are nevertheless revealing."



Lysias, that is, of classical Greece. Such an opposition lends weight to Pelling's argument that Plutarch develops two distinctively different atmospheres, one for Alexandria and another for Greece itself, and that there is a difference between Antony's "fine, unpretentious philhellenism" and "the magnificence of Alexandria."[43] It is in Asia and Alexandria, not Athens, that Antony exhibits the emasculating voluptuousness that Plutarch so thoroughly condemns.

Although Antony serves as a negative moral example in the biography, Plutarch depicts his philhellenism in a positive light. The Romans themselves were ambiguous about philhellenism. As Edwards observes,

> Gendering Greek culture as "feminine" and philhellenes as "effeminate" can be seen both in general terms as a strategy to defuse the threat to Rome's cultural identity and, in terms of conflicts between individuals, as a strategy to limit the value of Greek sophistication to those Romans who possessed it to an unusual degree. . . . Elite Romans of the late republic and early principate had to perform a balancing act. To be as coarse and simple as the Romans of earlier days were believed to have been was to invite ridicule. A similar fate lay in store for those who were overcultivated. (95-96)

One example Plutarch gives of Antony's philhellenism may be "fine and unpretentious," as Pelling thinks, but it could also subtly imply an excessive willingness to abandon his responsibilities as a Roman magistrate. In Athens, Antony "left his insignia of *imperium* at home" (τὰ τῆς ἡγεμονίας παράστημα καταλιπών οἶκοι, 33.7) and instead appeared in public in the guise of a gymnasiarch. In Egypt, though, there is no ambiguity whatever about Antony's adoption of foreign customs: he celebrates a triumph[44] in Alexandria (50.6-7) and, the greatest insult of all, he doles out, while sitting on a golden throne beside Cleopatra, kingdoms to her and to his children by her,[45] an action that Plutarch calls "theatrical and arrogant and showing a hatred for Rome" (τραγικὴν καὶ ὑπερήφανον καὶ μισορρώμαιον[46], 54.5).

Throughout his self-indulgent and "Roman-hating" behavior, Antony's long-suffering fourth wife[47] Octavia remained faithful and loyal. A paragon of matronly Roman virtue, she was a devoted sister to Octavian, wife to Antony, and mother to all the children both she and Antony produced in their myriad marriages, even his to Cleopatra (87.1). She was, in short, everything Fulvia and Cleopatra were not, and in the struggle for Antony's soul between duty and passion, between Rome and Alexandria, Octavia and Cleopatra personify these polar opposites.

43. See Pelling 39, 208.

44. A religious as well as a military ceremony, and one which was to be celebrated only in Rome.

45. Lucullus, Pompey, and other Roman magistrates had carried out such settlements of Eastern territories, but their precedents are ignored by Plutarch, just as Octavian had in his denunciations of them. A crucial difference in the case of Antony's Eastern settlement, however, is his naming his own children as beneficiaries. Plutarch attributes to Antony the motives of a Hellenistic monarch in evoking his purported ancestor Heracles, who "left behind him the foundations of many families" (36.7). In this way he again highlights Antony's departure from Roman customs, here, monogamy (albeit, often serial monogamy).

46. The adjective μισορρώμαιον (literally, "Roman-hating") provides an interesting contrast with φιλέλλην ("Greek-loving") and φιλαθήναιος ("Athenian-loving," 23.2).

47. Or fifth, if one counts the marriage to Cleopatra, not valid under Roman law.

None of the women in Antony's life, not even Cleopatra, ever really transcends her status as a personification. On the surface it may seem, especially in light of the 10 chapters that follow Antony's death, that the *Life of Antony* might have been more aptly named the *Lives of Antony and Cleopatra*. But that is to forget the purpose of Plutarch's *Lives*, namely, the examination of character. Each subject has a defining characteristic—one that allows Plutarch to convey a moral lesson—and in this *Life* Cleopatra has none. At Cydnus she is the clever seductress who plays Aphrodite to Antony's Dionysus. Then when it suits Plutarch's dramatic purpose, she is transformed into the tormented lover who lacerates her breasts in desperate mourning over the body of the man she has led to ruin. Her motives are not consistent: she worries about her children above all else, and yet she takes her own life in the end. Her fate makes good theater, but not good moralizing. In the final analysis, Cleopatra's primary function is to serve as the instrument of Antony's destruction, just as Octavia's is to serve as the symbolic antithesis of Cleopatra. When Antony is torn between Cleopatra and Octavia, it is a choice not between two women, but between desire and duty. When he submits to his self-indulgent and emasculating passion for Cleopatra, he fails, as a man and as a Roman, in his duty to subordinate his unruly desires to the world of the patriotic and patriarchal values that Octavia represents. A slave to his appetites, dominated by his wives, seduced by foreign ways, Plutarch's Antony emerges as a character so utterly deformed by the manipulation of gender stereotypes that readers are left to wonder how such a man came to rule half the Roman world.

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