

Sons of Heracles: Antony and Alexander in the Late Republic
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Abstract: This chapter argues that Marc Antony both consciously and unconsciously attempted to play the role of a successor to Alexander while in the east. Many of the links between the two men were the result of personal traits and familial ancestral claims. However, it is clear that in the competition for power in the Late Republic the image of Alexander and of Heracles could be used not only as positive representation of Antony's ambitions and successes but also as part of a portrayal of an oriental despot.

Keywords:

Marc Antony; Alexander; Ptolemy; Heracles; Dionysus; Cleopatra; Dionysus; Alexandria;

Him the father made equal in honor event to the blessed immortals, and a golden throne is built for him in the house of Zeus; beside him, kindly disposed, sits Alexander, the god of the dancing diadem, who brought destruction to the Persians. Facing them is established the seat of centaur-slaying Heracles... there he joins in feasting with the heavenly ones and rejoices exceedingly in the grandsons of his grandsons, for the son of Kronos has removed old age from their limbs, and his very own descendants are called immortal. Both have as ancestor the mighty son of Heracles, and both trace their family back in the end to Heracles. Therefore, whenever, now having drunk his fill of fragrant nectar, he leaves the feast for the home of his loving wife, to one he gives his bow and the quiver that hangs beneath the arm, and to the other his iron club, its surface pitted with knots; to the ambrosial chamber of white-ankled Hebe they lead both the weapons and the bearded son of Zeus himself.

Theocritus *Idyll* 17, 16-33 (translation (Hunter 2003))

These lines from the poet Theocritus eulogise Ptolemy I and Alexander during the reign of Ptolemy II in Alexandria, but for the outcome of a battle another poet could likely have paired another descendant of Heracles with Alexander, Marcus Antonius (more commonly Marc Antony).¹ Had Antony and Cleopatra (Ptolemy's descendant) defeated Octavian at

¹ For Antony as an imitator of Heracles from whom he claimed descent see: Plutarch *Life of Antony*, 4: 'He had also a noble dignity of form; and shapely beard, a broad forehead, and an aquiline nose were thought to show the virile qualities peculiar to the portraits and statues of Heracles. Moreover, there was an ancient tradition that the Antonii were Heracleidae, being descendants of Anton, a son of Heracles. And this tradition Antony thought that he confirmed, both by the shape of his body, as has been said, and by his attire....' For the most explicit comparison of this scene see: Plutarch, *Demetrius and Antony*, 3 (translation Perrin). It is also important to note that while modern commentators often associate Antony's Herculean associations with a man subdued by a

Actium it may have been possible that Antony would have succeeded in controlling the entirety of the Roman empire, which encompassed large swaths of Alexander's former dominion. With this battle, roughly three centuries after the death of the Argead king, a Roman general had finally completed the replacement of the descendants of Alexander's companions as the inheritors of his empire. However, before this defeat a series of Roman generals vied for control of Alexander's conquests, each of these men, not the least Pompey the Great, engaged with the image and reputation of Alexander. For a Roman audience of the late Republic and the early Imperial period, it was not only the conqueror who could be imitated but Alexander's personal flaws allowed such imitations to be used against political opponents. Furthermore, Alexander's failure to do what Rome had so successfully done and maintain and transfer his empire beyond his own personal glory could be used to belittle his accomplishments. His success, so tied to his conquests, could serve as a double edged sword in the competition for power that finally ended at Actium. The seeds of this Roman attitude were sown in their dealings with Alexander's degenerate successors.

So, like Achilles,² he was lost in the brilliance of his youth and did not live to see his accomplishments weathered down by the mundane problems of ruling his new empire. Instead that task fell to the group of nobles whom he had brought with him across the continent. After more than twenty years of struggles to carve a portion of Alexander's empire into their own domain, it is unclear the extent to which the dream of reuniting the kingdom played in the ideologies of the successor kingdoms. In Asia and North Africa, two men, Seleucus and Ptolemy, were able to claim the majority of Alexander's conquests. The friendship between the two men is often credited with their unwillingness to attack each other's territory, even when both laid claim to the same region of Coele Syria.³ The relative inactivity of Ptolemy in expanding his empire beyond its base in Egypt has led some scholars to suggest that he had no desire to recreate Alexander's empire and instead sought to consolidate his gains.⁴ Meeus and Strootman have both separately argued that the rhetoric employed at the Ptolemaic court gave no hint of abandoning the dream of re-uniting the empire even if it proved beyond the realm of practicality and thus never abandoned the Alexander prototype for a Hellenistic king, including the last of the Ptolemaic queens.⁵

Given this legacy of claims over the entirety of the eastern Mediterranean, the emergence of Rome as a great power inevitably invited comparisons between individual commanders and Alexander as well as the Roman state and Alexander.⁶ For the Roman authors of the Augustan age, Rome would have emerged triumphant over Alexander, just as it had done

women rather than the world conquering hero as a result of Octavian's propaganda the negative characterisation is not the only available interpretation. See Hekster 2004. For the ancestry of Alexander see Fredricksmeyer 1966.

Despite the obvious potential, this chapter does not extend its discussion of Antony and Alexander beyond the end of Antiquity and attempts to focus on the life of the historical Antony as best as can be reconstructed through the sources, rather than the more famous modern Antony from Shakespeare to Richard Burton. The modern connections between the two have been well covered in McJannet 1993.

² See Heckel 2015 for the links between Alexander and Achilles as a creation of later writers; it is apparent that the major hero on which Alexander modelled himself was Heracles rather than Achilles or any other god. Compare, however, Mossman 1988 for the parallelism between Achilles and Alexander used by Plutarch in his life.

³ For the claims of both Kings see: Diod. 20.113.4.

⁴ E.g. Hölbl 2001, 28.

⁵ Meeus 2014; Strootman 2014.

⁶ Spencer 2002, 1–38.

over his degenerate successors.⁷ It was only in the final moments before the death of the last of the successor kingdoms did anyone seek to combine the two forces – Alexander’s legacy and Roman power into a vision of a single new kingdom. The failure of Antony and Cleopatra was not in the re-imagining of Alexander’s empire, but the combination of Octavian’s ability to exploit the negative perceptions of Alexander and the east at Rome, alongside the final military defeat at Actium.

Well before the final engagement between a ‘Hellenistic’ power (albeit led by a Roman commander) and Rome, Alexander had become the criteria against the Roman state measured her own success. Alexander served as the point against all of Rome’s greatest generals and her greatest enemies would be measured. The pursuit of Alexander like glory increased substantially after Rome’s initial forays into the Greek world and by the time that Pompey Magnus dissolved the greatest of Alexander’s successor kingdoms,⁸ Alexander imitation had become an art amongst the Roman elite. However, as we can see from the passage of Livy, Alexander was far from regarded as a uniformly good role-model for aspiring Roman elites:

Alexander would, if beaten in a single battle, have been beaten in the war; but what battle could have overthrown the Romans, whom Caudium could not overthrow, nor Cannae? Nay, many a time —however prosperous the outset of his enterprise might have been —would he have wished for Indians and Persians and unwarlike Asiatics, and would have owned that he had before made war upon women, as Alexander, King of Epirus, is reported to have said, when mortally wounded, contrasting the type of war waged by this very youth in Asia, with that which had fallen to his own share.
Livy 9.19 (Foster 1926)

With Roman defeat of more and more of the successor kingdoms, Roman generals could claim to have at least equalled, if not having out done, the Macedonian king. To claim even greater Roman success, the complications provided by Alexander’s turbulent life and his untimely death allowed Roman authors and politicians to exploit the negative aspects of Alexander’s character against their opponents.

Thus as Roman generals moved from defeating Alexander wannabes, such as Hannibal,⁹ to encroaching into Alexander territory (i.e. ‘the East’) the comparisons between Alexander’s ambitions and Roman successes became inevitable. The most potent of these claims on Alexander’s legacy came from Pompey who took the cognomen *Magnus* in imitation of the Macedonian conqueror.¹⁰ However, Pompey’s successes in the east were far from complete from the perspective of a second Alexander. The Parthians who had claimed from the Seleucids the majority of the eastern half of Alexander’s empire and could be looked to as the successors to the Persians remained unconquered. As Pompey’s rivals emerged from his shadow, they too sought their own comparisons with Alexander. For Caesar, Suetonius’ *Life of Julius Caesar* gives us the story of his encounter with the statue of Alexander in Spain and his own insubstantial career at the same age¹¹ and also there are his reported plans for an

⁷ For the supposed attitude of Augustus to the Ptolemies in comparison to Alexander see Cassius Dio 51.16.5.

⁸ For the context of the Pompeian settlement of the east, see e.g. Morstein-Marx 1995, 324–333.

⁹ Spencer 2002, 168–9. See also Cicero *Academica* 2.2 and Livy 35.14.11.

¹⁰ It seems likely the application of the title of Megas to Alexander is a creation of Antiochus III’s propaganda when he first begins to use this title after his own campaigns in the eastern half of his ancestral empire. See Rubincam 2005.

¹¹ Suetonius *Julius Caesar* 7

invasion of Parthia. The other triumvir Crassus lost his head in his own Parthian campaign when he refused to take advice and met the Parthians on the open plains at Carrhae.¹² These dreams of Parthian conquest did not die with Crassus and Caesar but rather Crassus' death added further impetus to Roman eastern expansion. Following the division of the empire between Octavian,¹³ Lepidus, and Antony only Antony was in a position to expand Roman interests at the expense of Parthia.

Our understanding of Antony's motives and actions in the east is dependent on reading through layers of Augustan propaganda aimed at discrediting his former colleague and brother-in-law. It is only through this Augustan lens that we are able to discern how Antony fit into the model of a Roman general and a successor to Alexander. Antony's dalliances with Cleopatra, the last of heirs of Alexander's companions, provided Octavian with easy fodder for discrediting him. Regardless of whether or not it actually occurred, one of the most important arrows in Octavian's bow became the so-called 'Donations of Alexandria'. Discerning Antony's use of associations with Alexander in the broad category of *imitatio* is extremely difficult. This is not only because of Octavian's propaganda, but also because of the gods with which Antony associated himself in the east, Heracles and Dionysus. Both gods were significant for Alexander's own image, and even more so for how the Diadochoi constructed an image of Alexander. But it is nearly impossible to differentiate whether or not Antony is drawing on associations with Dionysus and Heracles because he is imitating Alexander or if these associations are independent of Alexander and in fact fit better into a pattern of Hellenistic or Roman aristocratic competition. The entirety of the question of Antony's Alexandrian image is tied up with his activities in the east and his failed attempts at an eastern anabasis. In relation to this the chapter will now focus on four areas in which Antony and Alexander overlap: the first is their role as descendants of Heracles and competitors within his image; the second is their association with Dionysus; the third is domination or control of both men by women from the east; and finally we will examine Antony's so-called 'Donations of Alexandria' as an episode of Alexander *imitatio*. In the first two cases, Alexander provides a model through which a positive relationship with the god could be achieved, and where Octavian's propaganda creates a view of Antony as a degenerate version. In the final case, both Antony and Alexander fail to properly plan for the succession of empire. Thus despite his attempts, Octavian's victory creates an Antony that can only ever be a failed Alexander, who shared many of his flaws but lacked his brilliance.

Alexander, Antony and Heracles

Following Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire there were two gods, both associated with Alexander, who came to symbolise eastern conquests, Heracles and Dionysus. In the surviving iconography from the reign of Alexander Heracles serves as an important point of reference. For as Plutarch records Alexander telling Diogenes: 'I imitate Heracles and Perseus, also following in the footsteps of Dionysus'.¹⁴ Now the interchange between the king and philosopher is likely fictional, but it was clear that at least by the 2nd C AD Alexander was associated with those three heroes who were each strongly associated with the east. The direct evidence for much of this imitation within Alexander's lifetime is difficult to

¹² Plutarch *Crassus* 23-27; Cassius Dio 40.21-4.

¹³ See Engels 2010 for the argument that to counter Antony's Ptolemaic connections, Octavian drew connections with the Seleucids. Both men also drew connections to Alexander.

¹⁴ Plutarch *Mor.* 332a.

find. However, there is evidence for strong links with Heracles in his iconography and a large number of literary connections to Dionysus. In terms of Heracles iconography, Alexander's coinage provides the clearest link between Alexander and the hero/god as the majority of his silver coinage depicts a beardless Heracles on the obverse.¹⁵ More direct links between the king and the hero can be found on the so-called 'Alexander sarcophagus' found at Sidon where Alexander wears the lion-skin cap of Heracles.¹⁶ These images may recall Alexander's actual dress, for if we believe the report of Ehippus then Alexander often liked to dress up as a variety of gods, including Heracles.¹⁷ On the other hand, it is clear that Alexander's successors, such as Ptolemy, promoted a link between the deceased king and the conqueror of the Nemean lion as we have already seen in Theocritus' *Idyll* at the opening of the paper.

As Palagia has shown, the Ptolemaic followed Alexander's example and linked themselves both to Alexander and Heracles.¹⁸ This included the production of coinage showing the kings with the features and symbols of Heracles as well as poetry, as we already seen. This legacy may have been picked up by Antony, but it seems likely that it already existed before his arrival in Egypt.¹⁹ The Roman moneyer Livineius Regulus produced in 42 BC a series of aurei which featured pairings between the triumvirs and their mythical ancestors, Octavian and Aeneas carrying Anchises; Lepidus and the Vestal Aemilia; and Antony and Heracles²⁰. Other associations with Antony and Heracles are much harder to find, given the large range of possible connotations of lion imagery it is not necessary to see the lions that appear on Antony's coinage as a reference to Heracles.²¹ However, if the now lost aureus showing a lion walking to left, holding a sword, with a star in the field was really the same the types issued by Alexander at Babylon²² then there may be a combination of Alexander and Heracles imitation at work.

While both men appear to have developed an association with Heracles, the ways in which this connection was used by their contemporaries and successors were very different. Alexander's association with Heracles became a model for future rulers, both his immediate successors as we have seen above and for a large number of Romans particularly in the imperial period.²³ Antony's connections with Heracles were exploited in a far more negative light. Rather than the all-conquering hero, Antony could be associated with a Heracles tamed by Omphale, as we see in Plutarch:

Antony, on the contrary, like Heracles in paintings where Omphale is seen taking away his club and stripping off his lion's skin, was often disarmed by Cleopatra, subdued by her spells and persuaded to drop from his hands great undertakings and necessary campaigns, only to roam about and play with her on the sea-shores by

¹⁵ See Mørkholm 1991, 42–43 for the date of the introduction of the head of Heracles onto Alexander's silver coinage as part of his monetary reform.

¹⁶ Istanbul, Archaeological Museum 68. See Heckel 2006 for an alternative identification of the original occupant of the sarcophagus. Cf. Palagia 2000, 186–189; Stewart 1993, 298. Palagia 1986, 141 raises the contentious issue of whether or not we should see something of Alexander in the image of the beardless Heracles before Alexander's death, if it is possible to see the link from the Alexandrian mint after his death.

¹⁷ Athen. XII.537e.

¹⁸ Palagia 1986, 143–144.

¹⁹ See Huttner 1995 for an overview of Antony's relationship with Heracles.

²⁰ Crawford, *RRC*, no. 494.2a. See Hekster 2004; Ijalab Perez 2009.

²¹ See Hekster 2004, 172 for the rejection of these as Herculean; see Palagia 1986, 144.

²² Palagia 1986, 144; Abry 1993.

²³ See Palagia 1986 for a survey.

Canopus and Taphosiris. And at last, like Paris, he ran away from battle and sank upon her bosom; although, more truly state, Paris ran away to Helen's chamber after he had been defeated; but Antony ran away in chase of Cleopatra and thereby threw away the victory.

Plut. *Demetrius and Antony*, 3 (translation Perrin).

Here Antony's association with Cleopatra overshadows any of his previous 'heroic' deeds and he is branded a coward. Whether or not this element of Plutarch's attack on Antony derives from Octavian's propaganda,²⁴ it is clear that his liaisons Cleopatra overshadowed the rest of his career. Even when examining his connections to Heracles, the impact of Octavian's attempt to disgrace Antony on account of oriental luxury dominate the narrative.

Alexander, Antony and Dionysus

The other of the Eastern conqueror, Dionysus, could have served as a model for both Alexander and Antony. Plutarch links the degeneration of Alexander to his movement east while at the same time Dionysus replaces the Homeric heroes as the models for Alexander's conquests in the narrative.

For the Ptolemaic kings who followed Alexander in Egypt, the image of victory became increasingly associated with Dionysiac pomp.²⁵ Although its origins remain open to some debate, the diadem which many associate with Dionysus became the key symbol of victorious Hellenistic kingship.²⁶ For his Roman successors, the diadem became a symbol of kingship and deeply problematic for Caesar and was thus avoided by Antony.²⁷ However, during Antony's time in the east, Dionysiac associations were too important for his image in the east to be ignored, whatever problems they might have caused in the West. Antony had long toyed with Dionysiac associations,²⁸ but these became much more apparent when at Athens²⁹ and at Ephesus.³⁰ Furthermore, he produced coinage with his bust wearing wreaths of Dionysiac ivy.³¹

Despite Octavian's attempts to use Antony's actions to discredit him, particularly his association with Dionysian revelry, laziness and drunkenness, which is most evident in Plutarch's moral criticism,³² Antony's presentation as Dionysus fit particularly well within the context of previous Hellenistic kings, if not with Alexander's own image. The most obvious parallel of a successor king is Demetrius Poliorcetes who likewise associated himself

²⁴ See Hekster 2004 for a convincing rebuttal to the view that the Hercules – Omphale negative image of Antony is a creation of Octavian's propaganda.

²⁵ For the famous Dionysiac pomp see: Rice 1983. For Dionysus and Ptolemy II see: Goyette 2010.

²⁶ Bell 2004, 119; Collins 2012; Fredricksmeyer 1997; Hammond 1989.

²⁷ Cicero *Phil.* 2.85; Carson 1957; Rawson 1975; Welwei 1967.

²⁸ See Scott 1929 for sources and see Litwa 2013, 30–37.

²⁹ Plut. *Antony*, 24.

³⁰ Plut. *Antony*, 60.

³¹ *RPC* 2201; see Mannsperger 1973 for the Apolline response of Octavian.

³² 'But perhaps the most decisive reason was that tragic patterning could not fit in to Plutarch's conception of Caesar's downfall: for Plutarch, external factors destroyed Caesar, whereas internal forces worked on Alexander, as they did on Demetrius and Antony.' Mossman 1988, 92. Cf. Bosman 2011. For an example, Antony's continued commitment to revelry even after his final defeat: Plut. *Antony*, 71.

with Dionysus when in Athens and took up residence in the Parthenon.³³ Alexander's Dionysian revels in Carmania (that appear only in the vulgate tradition)³⁴ are probably a later connection between Alexander and his victory in the east building on Ptolemaic ideology.³⁵ Although Bosworth demonstrates that the connection between military victory in the east and Dionysus is a later creation that still impacts modern scholarship,³⁶ the link had already been made by the time that Diodorus was writing his history and thus would have been a model on which Antony and other Roman commanders drew. The possibility of connections between Roman triumphs and Dionysian revels, alongside the increasing importance of Dionysus as a model for late Hellenistic kings would have provided Antony with ample opportunity to combine his quest for glory in the east, along Alexandrian models, with the pomp and ritual of a Roman triumph in the guise of Dionysus.

Alexander, Antony and the Romance of the East

By Antony's rise to power there has been a long tradition of associating conquests in Greece and the east with both Hellenism and a competition with Alexander for the role of supreme conqueror. This is evident in the spoils taken in the various conflicts through which Rome conquered the east, for example Metellus' acquisition of the famous Lysippean statue group of the companions who fell at Granicus³⁷ even if his pursuit of this statue was for its artistic rather than Alexandrian characteristics.³⁸ The increasing interaction with the successors to Alexander's conquests accelerated Roman comparisons as one after another the Hellenistic kings bent their wills to Roman conquerors. The most significant of these, Pompey, lies for the most part outside the scope of this paper although there are some precedents that need to be considered in light of Antony's own eastern adventures. Pompey is the first Roman to take the title *Magnus* which appears to be in imitation of the title used for Alexander after the reign of Antiochus III.³⁹ The ambiguity of this title which recalls both Persian court titles, defeated enemies, and Alexander's own potential for eastern despotism represents one of the fundamental problems in understanding how the later Republican audience after Pompey understood Alexander imitation.

In returning to Antony and Alexander, location appears to have a significant impact on the comparisons that can be drawn between the two men. Octavian's attempt to define Antony as un-Roman found a far more receptive audience when Antony was not physically present in the city and while he spent his time travelling between monarchic courts in the East. In this regard Antony's own actions, in particular with Cleopatra, did nothing to aid himself in refuting Octavian's attacks.

As Spencer states:

Curtius' emphasis on the Macedonian inability to shake off Alexander's increasing orientalism is comparable to popular distaste for Antony's supposed enslavement by

³³ Plut. *Demetrius*, 23-24; See Plut. *Demetrius*, 12-14 for the Athenian's first reception of Demetrius. See also: Bell 2004, 100-107; Holton 2014.

³⁴ Plut. *Alexander*, 67.1-6; Diod. Sic. 17.106; Curt. 9.10.24-28; Arrian, 7.28.2.

³⁵ Bosworth 1988, 67-77.

³⁶ Bosworth 1988, 67-71.

³⁷ Vell. Pat. 1.11.3-4.

³⁸ (Gruen 1992, 116, 143).

³⁹ *supra* n. 10.

the ‘barbarian Queen’, Cleopatra. A connection between the above slogan and the motif of *dominatio* (essentially an expression of tyranny: government by Lord and Master) in propaganda against Antony is evident in the particular hostility shown by Augustus to the term.⁴⁰

Before turning to Antony’s so-called “Donations of Alexandria” as another example of how Octavian was able to turn Antony’s Alexandrian settlement of the east into a political liability because of his relationship with Cleopatra, it is useful to look at both Antony and Alexander’s relationships with women. Despite having three wives and at least one mistress, the stories of Alexander’s relationships with women are not a major feature of either the historical or the ahistorical literary accounts. Even in the *Alexander Romance* tradition, women paired with Alexander are missing: as Stoneman states: ‘A perhaps surprising feature of the *Alexander Romance* is the absence of sex.’⁴¹ This is of course very different from the image that we get of Antony, and the reluctance to identify potential liaisons for Alexander may be the result of the Diadochoi’s desire to monopolise links with their deceased king.

For Antony his interactions with women, particularly but not only Cleopatra, moved from a heroic playboy to one of a failure and a coward. As we have seen in Plutarch’s comparison to Heracles and Omphale, Cleopatra could be viewed as the cause of Antony’s failure.⁴² One of the ways in which Antony’s actions were effectively exploited by Octavian were his relationships with women, even when similar liaisons had not hindered the political careers of other Roman generals. Octavian was able to portray his sister, married to Antony, as the wronged party as Antony took another wife in Cleopatra.

This requirement of monogamy did not apply to Argead or Hellenistic kings, but where Philip II’s marriage practices could have turned problematic in succession and could be used to question Alexander’s status as heir,⁴³ Alexander’s sexual mores were never seriously questioned. Despite the lack of sex in the Romance tradition, the historical Alexander had numerous conquests, both real and perhaps imagined: these included not only his three wives (Roxane, Stateira and Parysatis),⁴⁴ but also Barsine, the wife of Memnon,⁴⁵ Stateira, wife of Darius III,⁴⁶ Callixeina,⁴⁷ Campaspe;⁴⁸ Cleophis;⁴⁹ and Thalestris, queen of the Amazons;⁵⁰ not to mention a variety of concubines.⁵¹ Furthermore, Alexander has a series of (non-sexual) relationships with mother-like figures, including his own mother, Queen Ada of Caria, and in the Romance tradition, Candace. Perhaps, Alexander’s sexual conduct did not feature as

⁴⁰ Spencer 2002, 194.

⁴¹ Stoneman 2008, 128.

⁴² See for example, Livy *Periochae* 130; Propertius 2.15, 2. 16; Appian *BC* 5.9; Plut. *Antony* 28.

⁴³ See Tronson 1984 for the marriages of Philip.

⁴⁴ Roxane: Arrian 4.19.4-6, 4.20.4; Curtius 8.4.21-30; Plut. *Alex.* 47.4; Plut. *Moralia* 338D; Strabo *Geog.* 11.11. Stateira and Parysatis: Aelian *Varia Historia* 8.7; Arrian 7.4.4-8; Athenaeus 12.538b; Diodorus 17.107.6; Justin 12.10; Plut. *Alex.* 70.2; Plut. *Moralia* 329D-F

⁴⁵ Arrian 7.4.4-6; Curtius 10.6.10-14; Justin 11.10; Plut. *Alex.* 21.4; Plut. *Eumenes* 1

⁴⁶ For her death as a result of miscarriage see: Plut. *Alex.* 30.1; Just. 11.12; for Alexander’s restraint see: Curt. 3.12.21-23; Plut. *Alex.* 21.4; Athen. 13.603 b-d; Plut. *Moralia* 6.522A; Aulus Gellius 7.8.1-4.

⁴⁷ Athen. 10.434f-435a.

⁴⁸ Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12.34; Lucian. *Essays in Portraiture* 7-8; Pliny, *NH* 35.84-97.

⁴⁹ Curtius, 8.10.33-36; Justin, 12.7; Metz *Epitome*, 45.

⁵⁰ Arrian 4.15.1-5, 7.13.2-6; Curtius 6.5.24-32; Diodorus 17.77.1-3; Justin 12.3; Plut. *Alex.* 46.1-2; Strabo *Geog.* 11.5.3-4.

⁵¹ Athenaeus 13.607f-608a; Curtius 6.6.7-9; Diodorus 17.77.4-7; Justin 12.3

prominently in his legacy because of the potential difficulties that could have been caused for the Diadochoi had other women claimed to have borne rightful heirs. Nevertheless, despite their relatively limited attestation, there are two incidents that show Alexander could have faced similar problems to Antony. The first depends on how one chooses to view the destruction of Persepolis, if we choose not to believe that the fire was a deliberate act of policy, then the Macedonian king and his companions were roused to such a fury by an Athenian woman (Thais) that burned a significant portion of one of their newly won cities.⁵² Thais, normally closely associated with Cleopatra's ancestor, nearly led Alexander to destroy his attempts to build a consensus between the Macedonians and the Persians, and endangered his empire.

A second disarming of Alexander by a woman can be found in the Romance tradition. Here Alexander has his life placed in the hands of Queen Candace. The basic outline of the story is as follows. Alexander wished to visit the country of Semiramis which was now ruled by Candace. However, one of Candace's sons had been married to the daughter of Porus who in the Romance tradition Alexander had killed and sought revenge. On the other hand, Alexander, disguised as Antigonus had saved the wife of another of Candace's sons when she had been kidnapped by the king of the Bebyrces. Following the rescue, Alexander disguised as Antigonus went to the palace of Candace where he was shown a number of wonders and recognised by the Queen. Afterwards, the two brothers nearly came to blows over the desire to either kill or protect Alexander. Alexander manages to escape as he claims not to be Alexander but Antigonus. Candace keeps his secret and allows him to escape unscathed.⁵³ Here we can see that even Alexander was not immune to the power that women could hold over him. Nonetheless, it is the failure of Alexander to provide a suitable heir early enough before his death that marked his greatest failure. It was this error that Antony appears to have attempted to correct in his arrangements of the east.

Donations of Alexandria

We will now turn to one of Antony's greatest propaganda failures, but perhaps political successes, the so-called "Donations of Alexandria". There are ways to view Antony's actions: one, and this is the view that Octavian exploits, is that Antony was acting as an un-Roman tyrant; the second is that Antony was attempting to solve the issue of succession in the east by creating a stable powerbase tied to his new eastern family, in effect solving Alexander's greatest failure and keeping nearly the entirety of his kingdom intact.

There are two preserved accounts of Antony's supposed gifts to Cleopatra and her children in Dio Cassius (49.41.4) and in Plutarch (Life of Antony 54.4-9) and both show clear elements of Octavian's propaganda efforts. Both authors emphasise the spectacular nature of the ceremony which may be over exaggerated if we believe that the consuls Domitius and Sosius thought they could cover up the nature of the donations contained within Antony's *acta*.⁵⁴ However, as Strootman has shown the ceremony fits well within a Hellenistic context as a coronation ritual and with the 'legitimate' aims of Cleopatra given her heritage.⁵⁵ That the two pro-Antonian consuls were aware of the extent that this played into Octavian's

⁵² Plut. *Alex.* 38.1-4; Curtius 5.7.1-8; Diodorus, 17.72.1-6. Cf. Griffin 1977, 20; McAuley this book.

⁵³ AR 3.18-23.

⁵⁴ Cassius Dio 49.41.4; See Pelling 1988, 249.

⁵⁵ Strootman 2010.

characterisation of Antony as bewitched by Cleopatra and no longer Roman and therefore worked to actively suppress that impression is clearly evident within Cassius Dio's account.

Following Strootman's analysis we will place the donations within their Hellenistic context and as part of the re-organisation of the Near East by Caesar and Antony in an effort to replace the Pompeian settlement nearly a generation earlier. Within this reorganisation, Antony appears to have played the part of a successful Alexander who rather than leaving a legacy of warfare instead established clear lines of succession tied to himself and to the Roman state. While Antony and Cleopatra were ultimately defeated by Octavian Antony's solution to the problems of governing the eastern empire were continued.

First, let us look at the key territories assigned by Antony within the donations. To Cleopatra and Caesarion, Antony establishes them as King and Queen in traditional Ptolemaic fashion over Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Coele Syria. To their joint children he allotted Armenia, Media and Parthia to Alexander Helios and Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia to Ptolemy Philadelphus.⁵⁶ In total these territories combine the territories of the Ptolemaic empire with those of the former Seleukid empire and are familiar from a variety of Hellenistic documents. Choosing an example which reports to do the same thing, when Ptolemy III invaded Seleukid territory in c. 241 BC he claimed to have conquered the entirety of the Seleucid realm: 'the whole of the land on this side of the Euphrates, of Cilicia, Pamphylia... Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiana, the Persis, Media and the rest of the land as far as Bactria.'⁵⁷ Furthermore, he already had possession of 'Egypt, Libya, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Lycia, Caria, and the islands of the Cyclades.'⁵⁸ These types of lists were common for the Hellenistic kings and often appear to offer a form of imitation of Alexander.

The enumeration of territory which Antony could give away placed him in an elevated position compared to those whom he gives the territory.⁵⁹ Seneca uses an episode from Alexander's reign in his essay on benefits to demonstrate the position of power taken by the gift giver when Alexander gifts a city to one of his subordinates:

When the man to whom it was presented took measure of it and shrank from jealousy that so great a gift would provoke saying that it was inappropriate to his circumstances, Alexander said: "I am not concerned with what it is appropriate for you to receive, but in fact what is appropriate for me to give."

Seneca *Concerning Benefits* 2.16.1

The purpose of Seneca's passage is to criticise extravagant gift giving that places the recipient in an unrepayable debt and instead proposes a system in which the needs of the receiver are considered, a problem particularly important in the imperial context.⁶⁰ This passage does emphasise the relationship of giver and receiver. This is all the more important in Antony's case as he is not only the benefactor, but he is also either the husband or the father (in either case the *paterfamilias*) of those receiving the benefactions.

⁵⁶ Cassius Dio 49.41 and Plutarch *Life of Antony* 54.

⁵⁷ OGIS 54; Austin 221. Cf. Strootman 2010.

⁵⁸ OGIS 54; Austin 221.

⁵⁹ See above on the importance of kings and gift giving.

⁶⁰ Cf. Spencer 2002, 75.

Antony by supposedly giving away the territory reinforces his own position while simultaneously creating a network of client kingdoms beholden to Rome and to himself. By his marriage to Cleopatra, the adoption of Caesarion, as well as the production of his own children, Antony integrated himself into the long standing Hellenistic practice of dynastic intermarriage which had been a key mechanism of control for many of these same regions.⁶¹ For Huzar this integration was part of a fundamental understanding of a way in which to govern the expanded Roman world:

Yet behind it lay the broader vision of the Roman Empire which Julius Caesar had realized. The empire, to incorporate the whole Mediterranean, must equalize its peoples, must fuse the Hellenistic with the Latin and Gallic worlds. The intense Roman nationalism and sense of superiority over conquered lands must give way to a cultural integration. Antony seems not to have worked through all the implications of this conviction, but he was spontaneously living such a position.⁶²

This position was advertised by the coinage produced outside of Egypt after the donations (e.g. in Antioch) of Cleopatra with the legend Queen of Kings and Antony with the legend highlighting his triumph in Armenia. East and West were united under the new rulers. However, Antony had fundamentally miscalculated the perception of his actions in Rome and once again further opened himself to criticism by Octavian.

Beyond providing fodder for Octavian's propaganda in Rome and enhancing both his own prestige and that of Cleopatra in the east, the donations changed very little of the day to day governing structures in the eastern Roman empire. In fact, the restoration and expansion of the Ptolemaic empire under Cleopatra with the support of first Julius Caesar and then Marc Antony had already occurred.⁶³ These early concessions of land to Cleopatra had included much of the territory supposedly granted to her in the 'Donations', for example Cyprus had returned to Ptolemaic rule with the arrival of Julius Caesar in Alexandria in 48 BC and yet was included in Plutarch's account.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Schrapel has shown that Octavian at least consented to some of these gifts of territory before the two triumvirs fell out,⁶⁵ for example western Cilicia was included in the treaty of Brundisium which divided the empire between them although Ptolemaic administrators do not appear in the historical record until 38 BC.⁶⁶ Not only did the other important triumvir appear to accept parts of this settlement, there had been no similar attacks on Antony's previous settlements at Tarsus (41 BC) and at Antioch (37/6 BC). So finally, as Pelling and others have rightly pointed out,⁶⁷ the donations did very little to change the actual governing structures of the East, Roman governors still continued to operate even in the areas granted to Antony's family.

However, this consensus seems to over under emphasise the significance of these gifts for example: 'These "gifts" were only gestures'⁶⁸ and included land that was not Antony's to

⁶¹ For a discussion of the political aspects of Hellenistic dynastic inter and intra marriage see Ogden 1999. See also McAuley 2016; Strootman 2016; Wenghofer and Houle 2016.

⁶² Huzar 1978, 186.

⁶³ Pelling 1988, 250; Hölbl 2001, 244; Strootman 2010.

⁶⁴ Cassius Dio 42.35.5

⁶⁵ Schrapel 1996, 267–8.

⁶⁶ Hölbl 2001, 249; Schrapel 1996, 279.

⁶⁷ Pelling 1988, 250; Hölbl 2001, 244; Strootman 2010.

⁶⁸ Pelling 1988, 249–50. See also: Hölbl 2001, 292; Southern 1999, 115.

give 'Parthia was not A.'s to give and represented only a hope for the future.'⁶⁹ Pelling also suggests that these were not meant as client kingdoms as the children were too young and the events too far in the future.⁷⁰ Rather it seems more sensible to view these donations as fundamental to Antony's attempt to reorganise the east as part of the Roman world, and as an important precedent that was followed even by his rival Augustus.⁷¹ The precedent of Alexander and of the other Hellenistic kings made the gifts meaningful in the now dying Hellenistic context. It was the act of giving, rather the precise nature of the gift that created the bonds that Antony could have later exploited. However, Antony miscalculated the ability of his rival Octavian to exploit his actions as Roman overlord of the Hellenistic world and portray him as another degenerate leader that fell to the lure of eastern luxuries.

Antony and Alexander both looked back to divine familial origins and throughout their lives linked themselves to both Heracles and Dionysus, but on their own it is impossible to tell whether Antony is imitating Alexander in these links or acting as any other Roman would. However, because of Pompey's deliberate *imitatio* of Alexander in his eastern conquests the god of the dancing diadem was never far from the minds of the late Republican generals who sought to conquer the east. For Antony, this manifested itself most clearly in his attempts at conquest against the Parthians, but like the other Romans of his generation these conquests fell short of Alexander's model. Antony's treatment of Brutus' body after his suicide at Philippi bears a resemblance to Alexander's treatment of Darius' body and puts Antony firmly in the model of Alexander.⁷² However, if Philippi marked a high point in his career, the failure in Parthia and then at Actium sealed his fate as another failed imitator of the great conqueror. Nevertheless, there are some indications that Antony was perhaps even more successful than Alexander in his attempts to reorganise the east into a familial possession. Despite, his failure this project appears to have been his most lasting legacy as the Augustan settlement of the east bore a strong resemblance to the logic of client kingship tied to family members that characterised the 'Donations of Alexandria'.

⁶⁹ Pelling 1988, 249.

⁷⁰ Pelling 1988, 250.

⁷¹ Kleiner and Buxton 2008; Roller 2010, 129; Strootman 2010.

⁷² Plut. *Brutus*, 53.4; Plut. *Alexander*, 43.5-7.

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