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Kendra Bumpus

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Early Life of Mark Antony

By Kendra Bumpus

Honors Thesis

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Early Life of Mark Antony

Most people have heard of Mark Antony. Public opinion of him is that he was merely Kleopatra's doomed lover and the man who failed to rule Rome after Julius Caesar died. These are all true statements, but these statements do not reflect how Mark Antony came to be in these positions. They do not reflect his growth from a drunkard teenager to the second in command of Julius Caesar, undeniably the most powerful man in the world in his time. Mark Antony was a man loved and respected by his soldiers and, though his succession was quick, due to his personal friendships and contacts, it was not undeserved. Mark Antony came from obscurity and moved into greatness.

There were several people that influenced Mark Antony and his political career. His family brought about the possibility of his political life, and politics meant everything in first century B.C. Rome. His grandfather was the first Antonius to have any contact with the Caesars, something they probably did not even realize would be a turning point for Antony. Both the houses of Mark Antony's family, the Antonii and the Julii, acquired such political power and reputation that Antony was born into a powerful, and burdensome, role full of great expectations. His political life "was a foregone conclusion,"¹ the same can be said for his military career, though it did start off later in his life than other prominent figures. Antony would know political greatness and political suicide through his family's dealings. He would learn all the lessons of Roman politics before he ever stepped his foot in the Senate, or on any other political ground. He would hear and see the tales of his family, would find the common themes, and would learn from the mistakes others before him made.

¹ Huzar, Eleanor Goltz. *Mark Antony: A Biography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1978; p12

One problem, which was a common theme for the Antonii, would be the involvement of Cicero in his life. Another influential figure, which also had a common thread, would be Julius Caesar. Another major role to include would be pirates, who would be a thorn in the side for one member and the downfall of another of Antony's family. Antony would not make the same mistakes his ancestors did, however; and he would not forget these people, as he honored them publicly and in religious rites.² These ancestors established his political value, his value as an ally, and the price to pay with him as an enemy. They gave him allies in "both conservative and popular camps."³ They gave him his start in both life and politics.

Marcus Antonius- the grandfather of Mark Antony

Mark Antony came from a fairly influential family, though the men that were to act as his role models were not very good politically or morally. Antony's real saving grace was the memory of his grandfather from his father's side, Marcus Antonius, whose traditions and commitments would leave their mark upon Antony throughout his life and career.⁴ Marcus Antonius was born in 143 B.C., and led a rather good life, politically speaking.⁵ Antonius was an orator and could easily talk himself out of many situations, which he often did. He was highly respected and had a rather bright future. He even taught Cicero, whom Antony would later kill, in part, due to Cicero's hand in the death of his step-father among other reasons (see below, p11). It appears Cicero cared only for the eldest Antonius, though. In his *Philippics*, Cicero called the

² Huzar, p 12

³ Huzar, p 22

⁴ Huzar, p 13

⁵ Huzar, p 13

day of his death, *acerbissimum eius supremum diem*⁶, all the while criticizing his grandson.⁷

Antonius also had ties with Julius Caesar; it is this familial tie, one of many, with Caesar that probably originally helped the young Antony rise in the ranks. Antonius was a censor, as well⁸.

In 113 and 112 B.C. Marcus Antonius was in Cilicia,⁹ fighting the pirate problem, which his son would later do. The pirates were a great threat to the Romans. The Romans, at this time, were using the sea as a major trade route, particularly to Egypt. This was due to Egypt producing massive amounts of grain, which the Romans would need to feed their people. The pirates compromised this trade and could have stolen much Roman revenue if they were not dealt with properly. The Senate gave this task to Antonius; this shows how highly the senate regarded Marcus Antonius.

In 102 B.C., Antonius was praetor, giving him similar authority to a consul¹⁰, governing the Cilician coast, and was allotted a special commission for fighting against the pirates.¹¹ This seems odd, as Antonius first attacked the pirates was ten years before, as mentioned above. Surely the fact that he had been fighting pirates for the last ten years would have indicated his inability to beat them. Perhaps this was the reason Antonius received "Rome's first special command which included authority over other provincial governors: a power which later grew to the *imperium maius* held by generals such as his grandson over all other commanders".¹² *Imperium maius* is the "greater authority," or, in Antonius' case, more along the lines of authority to deal with a community and the dealings of individuals in that community.¹³ This would be a groundbreaking event, as others would go on to have a power similar to this, such as

⁶ Cicero, *Philippics*, 1.34

⁷ Cicero, *Philippics*, 1.34

⁸ Southern, Pat. *Mark Antony*. Stroud: Tempus Publishing Limited, 1998; p 12

⁹ Southern, p 12

¹⁰ *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p 1240

¹¹ Huzar, p 13

¹² Huzar, p 13

¹³ *OCD*, p 751 and 752

Tiberius (given by the emperor Augustus) and Germanicus (which he held in the east and was given by Tiberius). Antonius seems to have had the same trouble Antony's other relatives, as he later attempted to clear the Mediterranean of pirates by attacking Spain and Sicily and failed.¹⁴ The pirates were not eliminated, but were contained for the moment.

As a result of this, in December of 100 B.C., he was awarded a triumph,¹⁵ a procession which would have given Antonius not only money but public fame,¹⁶ which included an allotment so a statue of him could be erected; and he was allowed to decorate the Rostra in Rome.¹⁷ This is a tradition that started in 338 B.C.¹⁸ This not only allowed Antonius the public fame mentioned above, it would have made him a household name. It also would have made him a very influential person. The masses would have witnessed this parade, and they would have adored Antonius for a time. During this time is when Antonius could have been made even more influential by the masses and would have been more useful to other politicians with this connection. In Rome, whoever controlled the love of the masses controlled Rome.

Marcus Antonius is most noteworthy because he was the first Antonius to reach the consulship in 99 B.C.¹⁹ The consulship in Rome was the highest office one could attain. It was a position which required two people, and those two people could rule as a king.²⁰ However, Rome did not have kings any more, and Romans were fearful of the term, *rex*, almost as if it was a curse on their society. Antonius had reached the highest point in Roman politics; his family would surely profit from this.

¹⁴ Huzar, p 16

¹⁵ Plutarch, *Pompey*, Ch 24.6

¹⁶ *OCD*, p 1554

¹⁷ Huzar, p 14

¹⁸ *OCD*, p 1336

¹⁹ Huzar, p 14

²⁰ *OCD*, p 383-384

After his consulship, he became one of the censors in 97. Typically a censor was in charge of not only the census, or counting how many Roman citizens were in the province, but also they were responsible for the morals of the people in this province. Also, they could place a *censure*, or a mark, upon a person, in effect, making this person unable to vote, but still be held responsible for taxes and a *nota*, or a mark excluding one from the Senate.²¹ This was most prestigious, as not many senators achieved such a high status.²² Censors were elected every five years.

In 90 B.C. Antonius was accused of treason on an invalid charge, but, as censor, he did follow Marius' policies which allocated generous grants of citizenship to Italians. This left a legacy of gratitude for Antonius and his family throughout Italy, which Antony would be able to use to his advantage. "During these years of prominence, Antonius also received the religious office of augur for life"²³. This appointment apparently did not mean too much. Antonius was later killed during the struggle between Marius and Sulla.²⁴ Plutarch says that Antonius joined Sulla and was put to death by Marius.²⁵ Marcus Antonius, the most prominent member of the Antonius family up to this point,²⁶ was killed by L. Cinna²⁷. His head was exposed for the public's viewing pleasure on the Rostra, the same one he had decorated years earlier and from which he delivered his orations.²⁸ This seems a common theme, however, as it will not be the last time those with whom Antony had contact would find themselves in such a situation.

Antonius' sons inherited a good family name with a good record of public service; family ties with the Caesares, which would later prove the best thing any Antonius did; sympathy for

²¹ *OCD*, p 307-308

²² Southern, p 12

²³ Huzar, p 14

²⁴ Southern p 12

²⁵ Plutarch, *Antony* Ch 1

²⁶ Huzar, p 15

²⁷ Cicero, *Philippics*, 1.34

²⁸ Huzar, p 14

provincials; loyalty among the Italians and peoples abroad, which would be of great use to Antony later; and a willingness to support reform legislation, despite the costs to their person. His sons were also indebted to him because Antonius' supremacy ensured their election to high offices. But Antonius' "real ability in oratory, his capacity for military and political leadership, his political dexterity in adjusting to new leaders and demands of the time were to leap a generation," reappearing in his famous grandson, Antony.²⁹

While it is known that Marcus Antonius was a great man, it appears that he was the only strong male figure that appeared for Antony as he surely could not have counted on his father or step-father. He had a political record which allowed Antony certain liberties which others may not have had. To put it into today's terms, his grandfather had been a moderate-neither too conservative nor too liberal. This left Antony with the option of choosing his political side. His grandfather's mistakes would not be repeated, and helped Antony learn the ability to come to power through military means, rather than political.³⁰

Marcus Antonius- Mark Antony's father

Mark Antony's father was a politician who, apparently, could not wisely use the power he was given. He fought the same pirates his father did, and apparently learned nothing from his father's dealings with them. In fact, he was beaten by these pirates, a shame Antony would later have to live down. Also, though he was in charge of finances, he could not balance the books. He had little money for his family, yet spent what he did have unwisely, it would seem, for he had

²⁹ Huzar, p 15

³⁰ Southern, p 15

left “considerable debts” which caused his son to “start life as a bankrupt.”³¹ While Antony’s grandfather showed him what to do, his father seems to have shown him what **not** to do, though it is apparent Antony did not learn his lesson well. These pirates became such a burden that Caesar himself was captured by them, sometime between 78 B.C. and 69 B.C.³² To Caesar’s “*summa indignatione*” he was held *quadraginta dies* and had to pay “50 talents, or 12,000 gold pieces” to be let go.³³ This time period would have been during the time Antonius was controlling these pirates, and this shows the extent of which he failed to do so, proving he could not use his power effectively.

Antony’s father left a rather bad name for his son. One positive trait about Marcus seems to be his generosity, which he would also leave to his son. There are stories which tell of Marcus’ unparalleled generosity, though some modern historians, such as Pat Southern, do not fully believe them. According to Southern, these stories were readily accepted by Romans because they demonstrate the proverb ‘like father, like son’.³⁴ According to Plutarch, however, the father had a small amount of money and was prevented by Julia, his wife, who will be discussed later, from giving too much away. One day, a friend of his came to him and asked for money. Not having a lot of money, he didn’t really have the money to spare. Instead, Antonius ordered a slave to put water into a silver bowl and bring it to him. After this was done, he moistened his chin, letting others think he was about to shave. The slave was then sent away, so as to have no knowledge of the events taking place, and Antonius gave the bowl to his friend and told him to pawn it for the money he needed.³⁵ This tells us that the ancient sources seemed to think that Antonius was a giving man, though the modern sources believe that the ancients had

³¹ Southern, p 15

³² Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, Chapter 4

³³ Suetonius, *Divus Julius*, Ch 4- “greatest indignation” ... “40 days”

³⁴ Southern, p 14

³⁵ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 1

this impression due to Antony's generosity. As discussed below, Antonius' public money dealings show his greed more so than his generosity.

Politically speaking, however, Marcus Antonius was by no means an outstanding man. He even received the name Creticus, normally signifying a victorious campaign, denoting his defeat by the Mediterranean pirates.³⁶ Pompey would later defeat the pirates which had plagued the Antonii for two generations in c. 63 B.C.³⁷ Marcus' political dealings show what Mark Antony had to overcome. Marcus proved "an amiable incompetent," as he was generous with friends, but avaricious of money, public money in particular, to sustain the lifestyle which he accustomed himself, which happened to also be a lifestyle he could not afford. He was unimpressive in the leadership, both politically and militarily, which was thrust upon him due to prestige and friends of his family. "That he received power at all bespeaks the bankruptcy of senatorial leadership" during this time, but it could also be the case, as Cicero said, "he was given power because he was too inept to use or abuse it."³⁸ Cicero, though taught by Mark Antony's grandfather, had little love for the Antonii, it would appear. This bashing is not uncommon of him, as he later did similar things to Antony's step-father and to Antony himself. In the *Philippics* Cicero would go on to degrade Antony in any way he could, even stooping to accuse him of improper and intimate relations, *familiares*, with Curio (See p 17),³⁹ something highly looked down upon at this time.

In 74 B.C., Marcus Antonius, acting as a praetor, received the special command of *imperium infinitum*, or territory without limit (meaning that Antonius could go beyond his own boundaries to do what was deemed needed, something that could have sparked a civil war before

³⁶ Southern, p 14

³⁷ Dio Cassius, Book 36, Ch 37

³⁸ Huzar, p 15

³⁹ Cicero, *Philippics*, 2.4

this command was brought about). This case was also the first use of this power.⁴⁰ This command, which was most probably granted by the Senate, was necessary for him because Antonius needed to travel around the coast of the Mediterranean and did not have the time to stop and ask permission to do something in each province. As the man deemed to wipe the pirates out, Antonius needed to make swift, decisive actions without fear of consequence. With defeating the pirates as his goal, he needed the freedom of movement that these renegades possessed.

Nonetheless, Antonius, even with this new power, could not defeat the pirates, which, by this time, were probably costing Rome quite a bit of money, as it did Caesar (See p 7). Yet again, Marcus could not handle the power he received, and this time, when able to be compared with his father, the expedition was a momentous failure, bringing Antonius even more infamy as a bungler. He attempted negotiating with the pirates, embarrassing Rome. It was almost emasculating to Rome for him to have done this. Rome did not deal with vagabonds and ruffians, they conquered them; and the Senate then rejected the negotiated terms.⁴¹ This confirmed his incompetence. Antonius was then “mercifully” murdered while still holding office.⁴²

Antony, about the age of 11 at this time (71 B.C.), was now something quite dreadful in Roman society: he was poor, due to his father; fatherless, as his father had been murdered; and had a bad family name, since his father had been defeated by pirates. Antonius did only a few good things to help his son: he led a political life, as his father had done, which left a legacy for his descendents in politics; he made loyalties based on this life, loyalties which would help his son in his political career; and was a ‘notable’ ally with his legate from 73 B.C., Julius Caesar.⁴³

⁴⁰ Huzar, p 15

⁴¹ Huzar, p 15 & 16

⁴² Southern, p 14 & Huzar, p 16

⁴³ Huzar, p 16

There does not appear to be a personal relationship between Caesar and Antonius, merely a business relationship. The personal relationship that would come into play would be that of Antony and Caesar. These two would be good friends in years to come.

Lentulus Sura- Antony's stepfather

Antony's stepfather, Publius Cornelius Lentulus Sura, was a great influence upon Antony. At the time when Antony was growing into the man he would be, Antony and his brothers lived under Lentulus' care. There seems to have been a great fondness, if not love, for his stepfather on Antony's part. Again, though, Antony would learn the way of politics in Roman society; and, again, he would lose a father figure. Lentulus' greatest lesson to Antony was that the correct faction could mean your life.

Lentulus Sura fared little better than Antony's father. He held office, indeed he held some of the highest offices: a quaestor in 81 B.C., a praetor in 75 B.C., a propraetor in 74 B.C., and finally elected a consul in 71 B.C.⁴⁴ This is called *cursus honorum*, or the course of honors, which would be the equivalent today of climbing the corporate ladder. This career path had rules, and the "quaestor-praetor-consul" path was the basic progression after 197 B.C.⁴⁵ Lentulus Sura held all of these offices before marrying Antony's mother.

Despite his career path, Lentulus was "morally corrupt."⁴⁶ He soon joined Cataline.⁴⁷ Plutarch makes Sura seem like a mere follower, but the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* says that

⁴⁴ Huzar, p 17

⁴⁵ *OCD*, p 415

⁴⁶ Huzar, p 17

⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

Sura was “the head of the conspiracy in the city” of Rome.⁴⁸ Cataline was a man who wished to overthrow the Roman government of this time and take control for himself.⁴⁹ When Cataline decided to make his move, Lentulus attempted to aid him, sending native Gauls, who were in Rome petitioning the Senate on their own accord, to the rescue. It was his wish that the Gauls would back Cataline, so he probably attempted to lure them in with promises that their petition would go through once Cataline won the war versus the government. The petition most likely was dealing with the rights of Gauls. However, this did not go as planned. These Gauls then turned on Lentulus and informed the Senate, probably in an attempt to aid their own agenda. Having helped the old regime maintain their power, the Gauls would have been owed a favor and, therefore, their petitions would have been passed.

Catiline managed to flee, but those helping him, Lentulus included, were brought before the Senate. Lentulus was then executed, along with the other conspirators, on the order of Cicero, who tried them without due process in 63 B.C.⁵⁰ If the conspirators were left alive, they could possibly have arisen again to cause trouble. But this was doubtful. Cicero would later come to regret his hasty actions, as they would be the official reason he was exiled from Rome in 58 B.C.

Julius Caesar did not wish for the conspirators to die, suggesting a penalty of imprisonment, each person in a different Italian town under supervision, and for their estates to be confiscated; “*solus municipatim diuidendos custodiendosque publicatis bonis censuit*”.⁵¹ In point of fact, according to Suetonius, Caesar “brow beat those Senators who took a sterner line” so much that senators actually started to change their mind about the death penalty and “*nisi*

⁴⁸ *OCD*, p 396

⁴⁹ Gaius Sallustius Crispus, *Conspiracy of Cataline*, Ch 16

⁵⁰ Dio Cassius, Book 37, Ch 42 and Huzar, p 18-19

⁵¹ Suetonius, *Divine Julius*, Ch 14

labantem ordinem confirmasset M. Catonis oratio,” they would have followed Caesar.⁵² Since Caesar alone changes their reactions, this shows that he must have been a great orator. In his attempts to plead for their lives, Caesar was not winning friends in the Senate, but was gaining public appeal. Caesar, still unsatisfied with this penalty, “*inmoderatus perseueranti necem comminata est, etiam strictos gladios usque eo intentans, ut sedentem una proximi deseruerint*”⁵³ Caesar’s penalty was then regarded as a mild punishment, and Cicero got his way. At this time, Cicero’s faction was in power, and Caesar, though he would later have much power, did not have enough at this time to save the conspirators.

After Lentulus’ death, Antony claimed that Lentulus’ body was not given back to his family properly, and that it took Cicero’s wife to convince Cicero to allow for proper burial.⁵⁴ Southern put it quite eloquently in explaining the situation where Antony would now have found himself: Even though Plutarch did not think this story to be true,⁵⁵ especially since all the so-called criminals were allowed ‘decent funerals,’ the ancient authors miss the point. “Antony believed Cicero would go so far as to deny his stepfather a Roman funeral.”

The truth of the matter is not important; Antony’s perceived ‘truth’ is what matters. “Logic would not enter into [Antony’s] calculations”⁵⁶ when it came to this point. At any age, the death of a father figure is traumatic. If there is a person that one can blame, then that person **will** be blamed. The truthfulness of this blame doesn’t matter to the wronged party. Antony would not have cared that there were several people involved with the death of his step-father. The way he would have seen it would have been that Caesar tried to stop it and Cicero pushed it

⁵² Suetonius, *Divine Julius*, Ch 14; “had Marcus Cato not kept the irresolute Senate in line”

⁵³ Suetonius, *Divine Julius*, Ch 14; “continued to block proceedings until a body of Roman knights that stood on guard about the place threatened to kill him.”

⁵⁴ Southern, p 17

⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁵⁶ Southern, p 17

through. Cicero was the main proponent for this sentence, and, in Antony's view, would be the one to blame. Although it is not specifically known, it is quite possible that this, too, aided the friendship of Caesar and Antony. Not only would Antony be known through the political connection of his real father, he now had a tie with Caesar through his step-father. Lentulus Sura's death probably did Antony more good in getting to know both Caesar and Cicero than any other event until this time.

Lentulus probably made quite an impact on Antony, so it is important for one to know of this background, as the effects of this incident led Antony to be who he was. Antony, as well as his two younger brothers, liked their step-father and came to maturity under his care. "It could have been the beginning of a significant career for Antony, if only Lentulus had been in the right faction."⁵⁷ Factions were so important in this age because the right one meant political affluence, and the wrong one meant political, and possibly literal, death. Antony, about the age of 20 in 63 B.C., would have seen all of this taking place and learned his political do's and don'ts from this incident most of all. When his real father died, he was about 11, an age where a child may not fully understand what is happening and why, but at 20, Antony would have had full knowledge of the events taking place, if he himself had not seen and conversed with many of the men that would die that fateful day at the order of Cicero. It is no wonder that Antony hated Cicero in the manner in which he did. Cicero killed the man whom Antony saw as his political mentor.

However, the two men who would affect Antony's career and life had now entered the picture. An enemy, Cicero, and an ally, Julius Caesar, though it is doubtful and unrecorded whether Caesar and Antony met at this time. Caesar risked both his reputation and his life in seeking the penalty he sought against the conspirators, but he did so anyway. None can be sure exactly his motives, but it could be that Caesar was promoting *clementia* and disliked having to

⁵⁷ Southern, p 14

see Romans die needlessly, which he proved later in his career by letting Lucius Domitius go free: *qui per tumultum successor ei nominatus Corfinium praesidio tenebat, in dicionem redacto atque dimisso secundum Superum mare Brundisium tetendit.*⁵⁸ Also, Caesar, at the battle of Pharsalus, insisted that Romans be spared: "*Acie Pharsalica promclamavit, ut civibus parceretur, deincepseque nemini non suorum quem vellet unum partis adversae servare concessit.*"⁵⁹ Antony would probably have remembered the name of the man who virtually pleaded for the life of his step-father, whether or not they had met.⁶⁰

These two father figures for Antony showed him what not to do rather than what to do. With his father and step-father, he learned not to take the wrong side and the importance of doing one's job well. Had his father not been such a bad leader, he might have lived; the same goes for his step-father, whose life would not have been forfeit had he taken the right side in a political war. With his grandfather, Antony learned the value of oratory and the importance of a great political record.

Julia Caesar- Antony's mother

Antony's mother, too, was a source of strength for him, as she had more political ability, it would appear, than the men. "Julia, of the house of the Caesars,... could vie with the noblest and most discreet women in her time."⁶¹ She struggled constantly with the financial needs of

⁵⁸ Suetonius *Divine Julius*, Ch 34- "Lucius Domitius was a man of Pompey's army who was named as Caesar's successor. While fighting in the war of Pompey versus Caesar, he was holding a fort, Corfinium; when the fort was captured, Caesar let him go without punishment."

⁵⁹ Suetonius, *Divine Julius*, Ch 74- "At the battle of Pharsalus he cried out, "Spare your fellow citizens," and afterward allowed each of his men to save any one man he pleased of the opposite party."

⁶⁰ Southern, p 17

⁶¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

both of her husbands, plus with the needs of growing children, and tried to provide the most stable environment for her sons that were possible in “the chaotic world of civil wars, proscriptions, and moral decay”⁶². Julia was a third cousin of the famous Julius Caesar himself, whose family was said to be descended from Venus, *A Venere Iulii* during the founding of Rome.⁶³ Antony was mainly taken care of by his mother, as his father died and his stepfather was murdered, as well.⁶⁴

When her first husband died, she remarried the above mentioned Lentulus.⁶⁵ A woman of her stature could not have remained unmarried for long,⁶⁶ as women had no rights to hold property, money, or anything else of value in the ancient world without a man, but she did not choose the wisest person to marry. Antony, it seems, would have his mother’s luck in matters of the heart, as his women were not always the best choices, such as Fulvia and Kleopatra, both of whom Antony would later marry and be dominated by. Also, it appears she was quite active in politics.⁶⁷ When Lentulus was eventually executed she used the title of Antony’s mother to take on many tasks that were thought to be more of a male-oriented nature, such as politics and finances (as she had to keep her household running, being the head of the house). Julia would later act as a convoy between her son and Sextus Pompey.⁶⁸ “[Julia’s] effectiveness was due to the strength of her personality and intellect, her experience in dominating men of affairs”.⁶⁹ She even gained Cicero’s respect, something not easily done for anyone, let alone Julia, who had been married to men that Cicero loathed with a passion and who was bringing up a son that

⁶² Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁶³ Suetonius, *Divine Julius*, Ch 6

⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁶⁵ Huzar p 17

⁶⁶ Southern, p 14

⁶⁷ Huzar p 12

⁶⁸ Dio Cassius, Book 48, Ch 15 and 16

⁶⁹ Huzar p 21

Cicero would like no better than her husbands;⁷⁰ though it does appear that she was liked more so due to her brother than because of who she was.⁷¹

The importance of Julia cannot be underestimated. Her influence is immense because she gave Antony his upbringing. She was the one constant in his life. When his father figures continuously died, it would be his mother to whom he would turn, as many people today do. Huzar may have said it best in saying, "it may be fair to ascribe [Antony's] dependence on strong-minded women like Fulvia and Kleopatra to a home governed by Julia."⁷²

These family members are the people who gave Antony his greatest help and hindrance. His family name worked both for and against him, and these four individuals were responsible for this. In Roman society, much like today's society, it was all who you know, who your family knows, and, most importantly, who knows you and your family. Antony's grandfather was the man who really gave the Antonii their start in politics. His name was well known and he helped his son to gain the power he acquired. Marcus Antonius, the father, then put a bit of a black mark on the family name. He had power, but used it ineffectively, and gained a great enemy, namely Cicero. However, this did not prevent him from making good connections, such as Julius Caesar and Julia Caesar (his wife), which would later help his son. Julia helped to shape Antony into the man he became. She was his rock and his model, for better or for worse, with the women in his life. Through her second marriage to Lentulus Sura, Antony learned the importance of winning the conquest one starts, if only to avoid death. With this background, Antony had to be involved with politics. It was a toss up whether or not he would be a great man, however; and his early years would show little of what he would become.

⁷⁰ Huzar, p 21

⁷¹ Cicero, *Philippis* 2.14

⁷² Huzar, p 21

The Life of Antony- The early years

Antony's relative obscurity, as mentioned above (see page 1), may seem misleading. His family was prominent and had a legacy of political leadership with a plethora of political connections. However, when one looks at the role models left for Antony and his legacy, one can easily see the doubt which must have surrounded him. After all, in Rome, who one was and where one came from told everyone anything they needed to know. So, if Antony had a name clouded with mistrust, then the overwhelming consensus must have been that Antony, too, would not have a promising political career. He was not expected to do many great things, following the pattern set by his male predecessors and so he was allowed to run amok, as that is what people expected. The fact that his family was so affluent and known gave him larger leeway to act as the drunkard he was in his early days.⁷³ He, as happens frequently, got in with the wrong crowd. He joined with the likes of Curio and Clodius, both of whom were men of ill repute and would be a stain on Antony's misspent youth. These friendships were between the years of 62 B.C.⁷⁴ and 58 B.C.,⁷⁵ not including his time spent in Greece (See XXX).

C. Scribonius Curio was Antony's childhood friend. They would not have a lengthy relationship, probably no more than a few years, but it would be a meaningful one. He was a friend of both Antony and Clodius. He was also married to Fulvia. Later in his life he would grow out of his foolish ways and be more like the man his father wanted him to be: he got into politics, even becoming an opponent of Caesar. He would later attempt to stop the civil war between Pompey and Caesar; then he served under Caesar, having been released of his debts by

⁷³ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁷⁴ Suetonius, *Divine Julius* Ch 14

⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 3

Caesar as a bribe⁷⁶; and later went to Sicily and Africa. He then died in Africa, murdered by Juba.⁷⁷

Curio was a great friend to Antony in his early days, though he was often blamed for Antony's bad habits. It is said that, until Curio and Antony met, Antony had promise,⁷⁸ though the promise of what is never said. It is most likely that he would have been a successful senator, as he would have the love of the masses, inherited by his grandfather, and his political savvy, inherited by his father and stepfather. Curio is said to have fallen on him "like a pest," and "in order to make Antony more manageable, [Curio would] engage [Antony] in drinking bouts and with women, and in immoderate and extravagant expenditures."⁷⁹ Perhaps Curio gets the blame now because he wouldn't have gotten the blame then. Curio was "wealthier and better connected," and could walk away untouched more than Antony.⁸⁰ Anyone who remembers back to their own youth may remember that one friend that put an idea into their head, but they also know that just because the idea was put there, it didn't have to be acted upon. Antony did these things because it was in his nature. It was virtually expected of him to fall flat on his face, and, for while, he did just that.

He chose Curio as a friend, perhaps, because they were more like minded than Plutarch would like us to believe. With or without Curio's terrible influence, Antony did run up quite a debt, two hundred and fifty talents,⁸¹ which happened, most likely, due to Antony's love of matching or exceeding others.⁸² Antony was lucky to have a friend like Curio, though, as Curio

⁷⁶ Plutarch, *Pompey*, Ch 58

⁷⁷ *OCD*, p 1370

⁷⁸ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁸⁰ Southern, p 18

⁸¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁸² Southern, p 18

offered to pay off his debts. This offer should be proof of Antony's ability to gain loyalties⁸³, which will help him later down his military and political career, which we shall later see. This payment did not happen, however, thanks to Curio's father. Then, Curio's father heard of the matter and put a stop to the friendship. Antony was henceforth banished from Curio's house.⁸⁴ Antony never renounced Curio as his friend, though. He actually remained on "good terms" with Curio until Curio died in 49 B.C.⁸⁵

Though Curio was not a pivotal figure for Antony, Curio's friendship is a lesson to people who study the life of Antony. The two men became fast friends, though they were not close friends at the end. He and Curio's friendship shows a side of Antony that had not been seen before, but that would not be uncommon to him later in his life. Antony liked to eat, drink, and be merry, as the saying goes, and would obtain large debts in the process. To a young adult who has little, this is not difficult to do. Also, to appear poor was to be poor in Rome, so it makes sense for Antony to live the life of an affluent man, it was like playing a part for him. In this one friendship, we see the seed of loyalty sown into Antony's friend, and though we are unable to see the fruition of the effort, we will see more in his other friend at this time.

After the friendship with Curio, Antony appears to have moved farther down the ladder, and almost into the gutter. "Then Antony allied himself for a short time with Clodius, the most audacious and low-lived demagogue of his time..."⁸⁶ Originally named Publius Claudius Pulcher, he changed his name to Clodius, a more plebeian name.⁸⁷ The exact reason for this change is not revealed, but it was most likely done in an attempt to appeal to the masses. Clodius was a man infamous for his own scandals. He was the reason Caesar divorced Pompeia and was

⁸³ Southern, p 18

⁸⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁸⁵ Southern, p 18

⁸⁶ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁸⁷ Southern, 18

an enemy of Cicero. Clodius broke into a religious festival reserved only for women, allegedly to attempt the start of an affair with Pompeia. Cicero, therefore, prosecuted him for the offense.⁸⁸ Cicero also wrote a speech about him, which we only have fragments of today.⁸⁹ Perhaps it was the common hate for and of Cicero that first drew them together, or it could have been simply Antony's youthful taste for debauchery. Either way, it was a bad time for Antony to be making friends such as this, as Rome was in a perpetual state of violence.⁹⁰ According to Plutarch, Antony "soon became sated with [Clodius'] madness ... and left Italy for Greece, where he spent some time in military exercises and the study of oratory."⁹¹

The only good thing about Clodius, is that Clodius was the first to marry Fulvia, a woman Antony would later marry, and this friendship caused the meeting between Antony and Fulvia. Southern suggests that an affair may have begun during her marriage with Clodius, "mainly because [Antony] could not see a woman without thinking of the bedroom first..."⁹² The last time Antony and Clodius saw each other, which was years after the dissolution of their friendship, Antony would threaten Clodius with violence.⁹³

Study Abroad- Antony leaves Rome a boy

It appears that the ancient sources lost track of Antony for a while, as there were more pressing matters to write about, namely the First Triumvirate. Plutarch gives this time period,

⁸⁸ Southern, p 18

⁸⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Orations: Three orations on the Agrarian law, the four against Catiline, the orations for Rabirius, Murena, Sylla, Archias, Flaccus, Scaurus, etc.*

⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁹¹ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁹² Southern, p 19

⁹³ Southern, P 21

about 62 B.C. - 58 B.C., the time after his friendships with Clodius and Curio but before he became a general, only a sentence and a half. "[Antony] left Italy for Greece, where he spent some time in military exercises and the study of oratory. He adopted what was called the Asiatic style of oratory, which was at the height of its popularity in those days, and bore a strong resemblance to his own life, which was swashbuckling and boastful, full of empty exultation and distorted ambition."⁹⁴ Antony went to Athens and Rhodes, specifically, in his study.⁹⁵ His military studies came later in his life, compared to others; most Roman boys destined for the military started around eight years old. There are no specific accounts of his progress. However, there are also no specific tales of his exploits.⁹⁶ This is largely due to the fact that there were other things going on of greater concern than one man's schooling.

It was here, while studying in Greece and in his early twenties, that Antony was first requested to join the military. Aulus Gabinius, "a man of consular dignity," asked Antony to accompany him to Syria.⁹⁷ Antony, it appears, was not reluctant to go, but did not jump at the chance, either. It is not told for certain, but perhaps it was Antony's love of being care-free that stopped him. It also could have been that he felt it was beneath him, a man of such noble family, to go along as a mere soldier. It was not until he was offered the command of the horse that he accompanied Aulus Gabinius.⁹⁸ This position would give him rank and status. Also, it would have afforded him more money than being merely a student.

This is the area in Antony's life where most ancient sources have the most information.. Antony's early life is shrouded in uncertainty. No one knows exactly when he met Caesar; no one knows exactly why he and Cicero had such a strong distaste for each other; and no one

⁹⁴ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 2

⁹⁵ Southern, P 21

⁹⁶ Southern, p 22

⁹⁷ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch3

⁹⁸ Plutarch, *Antony*, Ch 3

knows exactly why he and his young friends split company. Little is known about Antony's early life, the adversity that he had to overcome, and the trials of his character, all of which brought him into the man that became the second most powerful man in the world during his time. This is an important lesson for not only classicists, but for people in general. It shows that Antony came from little and built himself up, which is the American Dream. He did what many strive to do, but few people achieve.

Early Life of Mark Antony

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