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The Impact of Marriages and Extramarital Affairs on Political Careers: A Selection of Roman Politicians and American Presidents

Shelby Cuomo

Union College - Schenectady, NY

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The Impact of Marriages and Extramarital Affairs on Political Careers:
A Selection of Roman Politicians and American Presidents

By

Shelby J. Cuomo

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Departments of Classics and Political Science

UNION COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

CUOMO, SHELBY The Impact of Marriages and Extramarital Affairs
on Political Careers: A Selection of Roman Politicians and American Presidents
Departments of Classics and Political Science June 2013.

ADVISORS: Professor Hans-Friedrich Mueller and Professor Zoe Oxley

This thesis explores four historical figures who engaged in extramarital affairs while holding political office. These figures include Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Bill Clinton. I assess the varied public responses to these men's affairs by researching their relationships with women – that is, their wives and mistresses. In Ancient Rome, one politician was exiled from society and eventually killed in battle for his extramarital romance, whereas the other was – and still is – praised as one of the most successful politicians while he was sleeping with the wives of his allies and friends. Both presidents, on the other hand, are remembered as two of the most successful in American history, yet during their presidencies, one's long-standing affair was overlooked and hidden by the media, while the infidelity of the other was splashed across tabloids and offered grounds for his impeachment.

I found a number of factors in each case that contributed to the public perception of extramarital affairs. This includes the political and media environments of the time. In addition, the treatment of women in each case is shockingly similar. The faithful wives of these adulterous men were praised in all instances, whereas the reputations of the mistresses were in some ways badly affected. By examining these men and the factors surrounding their infidelities, theories about the affect these affairs had on their careers and overall legacies can be determined.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- DGRBM:* *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ed. Smith, William, vol. I-vol. III (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1873), Print.
- MRR:* Broughton, T. Robert S., *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*. Ed. Phillip H. De Lacy. vol. II. (New York: American Philological Association, 1952), Print.
- OCD:* *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Ed. Hammond, N.G.L., and H.H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970), Print.
- The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Ed. Hornblower, Simon and Antony Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Print.
- s.v: *sub verbo* (entry for the word)
- Plut. Ant.: Plutarch, “Antony,” in *Lives*, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. IX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), Print.
- Plut. Caes.: Plutarch, “Caesar,” in *Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. VII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), Print.
- Suet. Div. Iul.: Suetonius, Tranquilli Gaius, *Divus Julius*, Ed. H. E. Butler and M. Cary. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), Print.

PREFACE

I have always been intrigued by politics, but it was not until I came to Union College that I had the opportunity to really explore this interest in depth. It was also upon my arrival to Union that I had the opportunity to develop a new interest in classics. After taking a variety of classes, I was able to not only expand on these academic pursuits, but also to notice connections between the two disciplines.

With this cross-disciplinary agenda in mind, I would like to first thank my two thesis advisors for helping me to successfully develop these two different academic areas of study into one combined thesis topic. It was Professor Zoe Oxley's *Public Opinion* course that opened my eyes to the lack of political engagement in American society. I find this fascinating, particularly given the media focus on the personal lives of politicians today, which seems to draw more public attention than their political decisions. After approaching Professor Hans-Friedrich Mueller with this topic, he guided me in furthering my research, opening my eyes to the classical period, which also has its fair share of scandalous extramarital affairs. With his generous offer of a research post, I was able to extend this topic to the ancient Roman period.

In addition to my advisors, I would like to thank, as promised, my friends and housemates at 1063 University Place, especially Meredith, Meridith, Madison and Julia, all of us sharing the same pains and achievements that come with writing a thesis. Also, thank you Jaclyn, for listening to the five of us complain.

I know this topic is a very unusual choice. I hope what I have uncovered in the pages to come, however, will make clear why this was an interesting and exciting task for me to pursue.

INTRODUCTION

The federal government of twenty-first century America can be justifiably characterized as one filled with more publicized scandalous sex stories than this country has seen before. First was Senator Gary Hart's extramarital relationship with model Donna Rice that pushed him to step out of the presidential race in the late eighties. Not long after was President Bill Clinton's relationship with intern Monica Lewinsky that was splashed across national newspapers in the late nineties and used as grounds for his impeachment. These two examples illustrate that we have entered the new millennium with an almost prioritized focus on the sex lives of American politicians.

Some of the most notable sex scandals of this century include New York Governor Eliot Spitzer's involvement in a prostitution ring, Anthony Weiner's X-rated social media advances, and, most recently, General David Petraeus's less-than classified relationship with a female journalist, archived in his C.I.A. emails. In these three cases, all of the careers of these men came to an abrupt end. Some wonder, however, why this is the case? Journalist Thomas Powers shares this sentiment, stating, "The recent end of Petraeus's public career ... came so abruptly last fall, for reasons so entirely irrelevant to any issue of substance, that one is almost embarrassed to cite the details."¹

Why is it, then, that today, what the public finds most interesting about our politicians is arguably not the policy decisions they make or even their day-to-day lives? Rather, it is the stories of the deceivers, liars, and cheaters who make the headlines, and in turn those stories are what grab the attention of the public. In these most recent

¹ Powers, Thomas, "Warrior Petraeus," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. LX, number 4, 7 March 2013, 40.

examples, such revelations served to derail the unfaithful politician's career. But how are some, such as Clinton, able to not only salvage his career, but in some respects benefit from his extramarital relationship? His popularity was certainly helped somehow as a result, for, as Emily Sohn indicates, "Clinton's popularity soared after the scandal was exposed."² Furthermore, is this public focus on the personal infidelities of politicians a worldwide phenomenon, or is it something reserved for the tech-savvy and prudish generations in America today?

Although this short introduction points to the variety of affairs that could be explored to find answers to these questions, I have limited my study to four cases. These cases assess and analyze four politicians at the peak of their careers from two different time periods: two from the ancient Roman Republic, and two from mid to late twentieth century America. I explored these two time periods for two reasons: I am most familiar with the governments of these two societies, and both offered many examples of scandalous political sex stories for me to choose from. The Roman politicians are Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, both of whom were linked to extramarital affairs during the time they held the consulship, the most powerful position in Roman politics at the time. The American politicians are Franklin D. Roosevelt and Bill Clinton, both men who were also linked to extramarital affairs during the time they held the American presidency. These men were chosen in particular for the publicized nature of their extramarital relationships, the different consequences each faced as a result of these relationships, and the few parallels that we may trace throughout the four cases all together.

² Sohn, Emily, "Presidents and Their Mistresses: Who Cares?," U.S. History: Discovery News, 8 February 2012. Web.
<<http://news.discovery.com/history/us-history/presidential-mistresses-history-politics-120208.htm>>

RELATIONSHIPS FOR POWER: A CASE STUDY OF JULIUS CAESAR

Introduction:

The society of the late Roman Republic provides an excellent laboratory for examining the adulterous affairs of politicians. In ancient Rome, many politicians were widely and publicly known to have had affairs, yet these affairs were accepted by their colleagues and citizenry. This is because the public retained respect for the political prowess of these politicians, and the culture at the time accepted these types of relationships. One of the best examples of a politician who illustrates this combination of public adultery and political success is Gaius Iulius Caesar, more commonly known today as Julius Caesar.³

It is hard to find anyone who has not known of this man's great political and military conquests. Similarly, it is hard to find any ancient historian who has not commented on his numerous extramarital affairs. Even though Caesar was bound by marriage – three times, nonetheless – he engaged in a long list of sexual transgressions. Furthermore, his infidelities were not scandalous enough to hurt his reputation or derail his political career. This may be surprising to many readers today, who have seen the careers of modern politicians ruined by allegations of similar affairs. For Caesar, however, the consequences for pursuing extramarital relationships were much different.

Caesar is depicted in ancient sources as a man who established relationships in order to further his own political goals. This is especially evident through his marriages, but the argument can be made that many of these extramarital affairs played a similar role for him. Thus, instead of ruining his political career, these relationships could have

³ In some texts referenced, "Iulius" is used rather than "Julius," for "J" is not a letter of the Latin alphabet.

actually *helped* it. In the end, however, as most people know today, Caesar's fellow politicians did turn on him in a famously tragic conspiracy. Is it possible that, if some affairs helped him, others could have provoked his enemies to conspire against him? By exploring the women in his life, as well as the networks of relationships they helped him develop, these possibilities can be examined.

Family Hindrances:

One key feature that distinguishes the late Roman Republic from today is the use of marriages to create bonds of loyalty to families. Although this was a common practice for many Roman politicians, it was exceptionally important for Caesar, who relied heavily on these marriages to establish and further his career.

The reason Caesar needed to establish relationships to promote his career is because his own lineage was not sufficient on its own for achieving his political ambitions. Although the Julian family was an ancient patrician family, Caesar's father, also Gaius Iulius Caesar, did not have an especially prominent political career. He held just one political office: the praetorship. This was a respected and powerful office, but not comparable to the peak office of a political career at Rome: the consulship. Unlike the consulship, which is defined as "the supreme civil and military [magistracy] of Rome under the Republic," the praetorship was held by eight men who acted as judges while in Rome, and governors of foreign provinces while abroad.⁴ Furthermore, if he were interested or successful in holding political office, it is likely that Caesar's father would have pursued more than this single position. As we will see with Caesar, it was common

⁴ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (OCD)*, ed. Hammond, N.G.L. and H.H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1970), s.v. "Consul," 286, and "Praetor," 873.

for politicians to hold multiple governmental positions over time, enabling them to work their way up to the most prominent political posts. A final consideration to note is that Caesar's father died when Julius Caesar himself was only sixteen years old. This suddenly ended his father's ability early during Caesar's life to influence and guide him to political success, forcing Caesar to independently find other means of establishing a presence in government.⁵

Karl Hölkeskamp explains the hindrances Caesar faced due to not just his father's insufficient career, but also the general lackluster political record of the Julian family overall. To start, he analyzes two sets of Roman *gentes*, or family clans:

It also seems appropriate to distinguish between an inner core of especially prominent *gentes* that were able to maintain a high degree of success at elections over relatively long periods of time, and a wider circle of families that were unable consistently to win elections (at least to the highest office) and were therefore always struggling to maintain their membership in the aristocracy.⁶

It is the later category that the Julian family falls under. Hölkeskamp strengthens this claim by referring to the Julian lineage specifically:

The *gens* Iulia produced several consuls and tribunes with consular power as early as the fifth and early fourth centuries – but only until 379 B.C. ... The next Iulius to reach the consulship was ... more than a century, or at least three generations, later and the only prominent member of the *gens* for the rest of the third century. During the following century, once again only Sex[tus] Iulius Caesar gained the *maximus honos* in 157 – all other Iulii, if at all, only reached the praetorship. In the early first century, the *gens* had already produced three consuls, in the years 91, 90, and 64, when the most famous scion of this old house entered the consulship of 59 – the rest is history.⁷

⁵ *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology (DGRBM)*, ed. Smith, William, vol. I (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1873), bio. 15: "C. Julius Caesar," 539.

⁶ Hölkeskamp, Karl-J., "Between Aristocracy and Democracy: Beyond a Dated Dichotomy," in *Reconstructing the Roman Republic: An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research*, Trans. Henry Heitmann-Gordon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

As this explanation shows, Caesar came from a family that inconsistently held prominent political positions when compared to other, more stable political families whose members held positions more stably over time. To counteract this trend, therefore, Caesar evidently utilized relationships, especially with women, to create ties to other political families with a more relevant presence in government that his own family lacked at the time.

Even early in his life, Caesar used a female family member to make a political connection that his family name, along with his father's legacy and early death, had failed to do for him. This was through the exploitation of his Aunt Julia's marriage, which established ties to her late husband, Gaius Marius, a man who held the office of consul an unprecedented seven times.⁸ W. Jeffrey Tatum agrees with this assertion: "Caesar exploited his relationship, through Julia, to Marius in order to appropriate his uncle's *gloria*, which far excelled anything in his own Julian heritage."⁹ It is important to note this example from Caesar's adolescence when discussing his affairs later in his life, for it signifies that he did not rely solely on his wives to further his political goals. It was Caesar's marriages, however, that developed the most dependable links to political families, enabling him to climb the governmental ranks in Rome.

As the example of Caesar's family shows, it is difficult to compare ancient Roman politics to American politics today due to the difference in reliance on family connections. In the case of Caesar, since he lacked important familial foundations in government established by his predecessors, his options at gaining office were limited. In comparison, American President Bill Clinton belonged to a family with no political experience, but was able to be elected to multiple political offices, including the

⁸ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 1: C Marius, 952.

⁹ Tatum, W. Jeffrey, "My True and Honourable Wife: Cornelia and Pompeia, Calpurnia and Cleopatra," in *Always I Am Caesar* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 102.

presidency. This is not to say, however, that American politicians refrained from utilizing kindred political connections. As we will see, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's marriage to Eleanor Roosevelt created a stronger relationship to Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt, who was Eleanor's uncle and stand-in father, was also President of the United States at the time of Eleanor's and Franklin's wedding. It is evident, however, through the example Clinton's career provides, that American society allows more freedom for political engagement for aspiring politicians with families of little political experience. This is something that is drastically different from the handicaps such lack of connections placed on hopeful Roman politicians.

Caesar's situation is unique even when compared to other Roman politicians. Although other men, such as Marcus Tullius Cicero, were also famously in this same, politically unconnected position, their careers were built over a much longer time span than that of Caesar. For instance, Cicero relied more on schooling and his long-standing career as a lawyer before he was elected to political office. Still, he was impressively the minimum age one could be when he was elected to many of these offices.¹⁰ Caesar, however, was interested in pursuing politics from a very young age, evident by the fact that he held his first office during his mid-teenage years. Therefore, Caesar had to rely on whatever he could that family connections and experience could not offer him. Combined with the time period, the vacancy of certain offices, and the requirements of a particular office within reach, it becomes clear how Caesar's first wife, Cornelia, helped him to achieve this aspiration.

¹⁰ Toher, Mark, "Cicero's Background," Lecture in *Latin 345: Cicero*. 06 September 12.

Honorable and Faithful Wives: Caesar's Marriages:

Many historical authors documented Caesar's marriages in great detail. These serve to exemplify how Caesar utilized relationships with women to create a network of connections to other politically powerful men. One author who describes these connections marriage offered to Caesar is Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus. In the opening chapter of his biography on Caesar, Suetonius describes Caesar's marriage to his first wife, Cornelia, in the following simple phrase: *Divus Iulius... Corneliam Cinnae quater consulis filiam duxit uxorem.*¹¹ This translates simply as "Divine Julius ... married Cornelia, daughter of Cinna, who was four times the consul."¹² Although this statement does not give any explicit information clarifying how powerful Cinna was as a politician, his value becomes clear by realizing the power of the office he held. The consulship, as noted earlier in a comparison to the praetorship, was the most powerful political position in Rome during this time period. It was thus impressive for a man to hold this position once, let alone four times. Therefore, in these few words, Suetonius lays out the importance this marriage played for Caesar's early career, as it acted as a stepping-stone for his entrance into politics by connecting him to one of the most powerful politicians at the time. This trend will continue to be discovered in many of the ancient sources that discuss Caesar's relationships, emphasizing the political gains he received through marital bonds.

Since Caesar was still very young, he had to rely on his camaraderie with other political figures in order to gain a foothold in politics. His first marriage led to his first political nomination: the office of the *flamen Dialis*, or the highest priest of Jupiter, a

¹¹ Suetonius, Gaius Tranquillus, *Divus Iulius*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, M.A. and M. Cary, M.A., D. Litt. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 1.

¹² Unless otherwise noted, translations of Latin authors are my own.

religious office among fourteen others dedicated to the worship of a specific god.¹³ By examining the year 87 B.C., which was the year Caesar was nominated for this position, it becomes clear why this was likely his best path to take in order to enter politics.

Thomas Broughton's chronology explains the convenience of this year: "L. Cornelius Merula ... *Flamen Dialis*, who was elected colleague of Octavius ... abdicated his office when the Marians won, and when placed on trial abdicated his priesthood and committed suicide."¹⁴ This likely unexpected opening lent Caesar the rare opportunity to enter politics quickly, which is fortified by Tatum in the following statement: "Cinna [consul] needed a *flamen Dialis*, Caesar's relations needed a place to install their charge."¹⁵

Here, Caesar's obligation to be married was fueled by more than just a desire to create political bonds. In the case of the *flamen Dialis*, marriage was a prerequisite: "marriage [through the ancient rites] was a prerequisite for the holy office of *flamen Dialis*, whose wife became the *flamenica Dialis*, herself subject to religious obligations and responsibilities."¹⁶ After looking at the events of 87 B.C., we recognize that this year also coincides with the year Cinna first held the position of consul.¹⁷ Though both ancient and modern sources name 83 B.C. as the year Caesar and Cornelia were married, the fact that Caesar was nominated for this position before that time suggests the marriage took place sooner. Therefore, handicapped by his young age, family's poor qualifications, and his own political inexperience, marrying Cinna's daughter when Cinna himself was about

¹³ *OCD*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Flamines," 441.

¹⁴ Broughton, T. Robert S., *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic (MRR)*, vol. II (New York: The American Philological Association, 1952), 47.

¹⁵ Tatum, *Always I Am Caesar*, 102.

¹⁶ Tatum, *Always I Am Caesar*, 102.

¹⁷ *MRR*, 45, 52.

to take on the most important position in government was arguably Caesar's best option to gain political influence, especially given a sudden opening for an appointed position. Looking to Tatum again, this idea is summarized to point to the political significance of this marriage: "Caesar's loyalty to her [Cornelia] cannot be equated automatically to devotion – or even with love. Their union, it will be remembered, had its origin in political convenience."¹⁸

Although Caesar successfully entered a marriage in which his political ties would be strengthened to Cornelia's family, this should not be mistaken as an unproblematic route. Analyzing the relationship between two of the most powerful figures in this time period illustrates how Caesar was not just making himself more politically powerful, but that he was also aligning himself with one of two dueling political factions. This is similar to when political hopefuls in America today decide to align themselves with a political party, isolating them to some degree from the opposing party. Exploring Caesar's decision also explains the political climate at this time early in his career.

Through this marriage, we see Caesar again making his political connection to his uncle Marius stronger. This is explained by looking at the history between Marius and the other powerful figure in opposition to Cinna at the time of Caesar's marriage: Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix, known in many texts as Sulla. As noted in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary (OCD)*, Marius and Sulla began their political careers as allies: Marius appointed Sulla as his quaestor, or financial prosecutor, in 107 B.C., and Sulla served under Marius against the Germans in 104 and 103 B.C.¹⁹⁻²⁰ This connection, however,

¹⁸ Tatum, *Always I Am Caesar*, 102.

¹⁹ "OCD, 2nd ed., s.v. "Quaestor," 906.

²⁰ *OCD*, ed. Hornblower, Simon and Antony Spaforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. "Marius," 400.

was soon tested by the interference of other governmental officials: “In 91 the senate, promot[ed] him [Sulla] against Marius.”²¹

Not long after this senatorial intervention, we see the disconnect between Marius and Sulla grow when another politician blocks Sulla’s political ambitions in favor of Marius: “Given the command against Mithradates Eupator by the senate, he was deprived of it by the tribune P. Sulpicius Rufus, who transferred it to Marius in order to gain Marius’ aid for his political plans.”²² In other words, the command over the war against Mithridates, a leader in central Asia Minor and a subsequent threat to Rome, Sulla had been promised was transferred to Marius during an election because of the influence of other distinguished politicians, successfully furthering the divide between these two men.²³⁻²⁴ An alliance collapsing and fostering hostile feelings is not out of the ordinary in Roman politics, as we shall see when examining Caesar’s alliance with Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, also known as Pompey the Great. It is important, nonetheless, to note how this split created a lasting divide in Roman politics, which in turn affected Caesar when he first decided to pursue politics.

Though Cinna is not mentioned in Marius’s biography in the *OCD*, Cinna’s own biography from the same source does explain how he was an opponent of Sulla: “against the opposition of Sulla, [he] became consul 87 B.C. ... [He faced] the threatening behavior of Sulla.”²⁵ His biography even points to the outbreak of violence during Sulla’s era between the opposing factions by noting that Cinna was killed when he had left for a

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Scullard, H.H., “Mithridates, King of Pontus,” in *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68* (London: Methuen & Co., LTD., 1959), 74.

²⁴ *OCD*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Commendatio,” 273.

²⁵ *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Cinna,” 393.

campaign, defined as a campaign whose purpose was “probably to train an army for a possible conflict with Sulla’s veterans.”²⁶ The clear hostility between these two strong political figures affected Caesar, who chose to marry Cornelia and align himself with Cinna – a clear opponent to Sulla and therefore a likely Marian supporter. Plutarch illustrates the immediate consequences Caesar faced in this decision during the beginning of Caesar’s biography: “When Sulla became master of affairs [i.e. consul], he could not, either by promises or threats, induce Caesar to put her [Cornelia] away, and therefore confiscated her dowry.”²⁷ Plutarch makes it clear that this hostility was mutual, as Caesar held contempt towards Sulla as a result of Sulla’s opposition to Marius.²⁸ This conflict indicates how Caesar may have successfully aligned himself with a politically prominent family, but he did so by forfeiting a connection to another very powerful figure of the time.

This partisan-like hostility is also a characteristic of contemporary American politics. It is a feature especially evident in today’s federal government, with partisanship playing a major role in creating deadlock situations over multiple issues in Congress. It is likewise a feature that has an important role in developing an analysis of President Bill Clinton’s administration. As we will see, the consequences of the split between Republicans and Democrats – the two dominant political parties of the country – became especially evident upon the discovery of Clinton’s extramarital relationship with a White House intern and the impeachment procedures that followed. Moreover, this political divide played a prominent role in fostering the public’s perception and reaction to the

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Plutarch, “Caesar,” in *Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, ed. G.P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), I.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

affair. Although Caesar is different from Clinton in that the political divide cited above did not particularly affect Caesar's reputation, we will see how the political environment later in his career helped preserve his image from criticism.

As noted previously, Caesar was married three times in his life. As Tatum also explains, however, divorce was not an option for Caesar and Cornelia: "For the *flamen Dialis*, however, only the death of his wife could put asunder what Jupiter and the religion of the republic had joined together: divorce was impossible."²⁹ Therefore, if it can be described as luck, this marital bond was broken by Cornelia's death in 69 B.C., whereupon Caesar was able to develop his political relations further by marrying Pompeia. Pompeia's political relations connected Caesar to her father, Quintus Pompeius Rufus.³⁰ His highest political success was his consulship during 88 B.C., the year preceding Caesar's own ascent into his first governmental office.³¹ Although solely from this information it seems that no real political connection was made, since her father held the consulship nearly two decades before Caesar's and Pompeia's marriage, looking at Rufus's wife shows a meaningful connection that creates a bond to Sulla that Caesar yielded in his first marriage.

Rufus's wife, Conelia, was the daughter of the dictator Sulla. Yet, by marrying Pompeia in 67 B.C., Caesar would not have fixed his relationship with Sulla personally, who had died more than 10 years prior.³² This could have acted in Caesar's favor, however, by spreading his alliances to Sullan supporters in the government at this time, whom still had a strong foothold in the Roman government: "his [Sulla's] funeral (79

²⁹ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 100.

³⁰ *DGRBM*, vol. III, bio. 2: Pompeia, 473.

³¹ *MRR*, 39, 52.

³² *DGRBM*, vol. III, bio. 5: L. Cornelius Sulla Felix, 933.

B.C.) was impressively staged to display the power of his veterans ... his administrative reforms survived to the end of the republic and beyond.”³³ This marriage shows that, although Caesar was forced to choose a side in his first marriage, he was able to spread his connections by aligning himself to another political alliance later on. This decision implies that these marriages enabled him to spread his connections to however many important political families he could, in turn developing and strengthening his own role in politics.

Caesar’s marriage with Pompeia ended in 61 B.C. as the result of a scandal that explains the importance Caesar placed on alliances with fellow politicians, as well as the dynamic between men and women in society during this time period. This is the scandal of the *Bona Dea* festival, which is discussed by many prominent historical biographers of Caesar, including Plutarch and Suetonius. Plutarch describes the importance of this festival, while emphasizing the necessity of keeping such an event free of every male presence:

Now, the Romans have a goddess whom they call *Bona*, corresponding to the Greek *Gynaecia* ... It is not lawful for a man to attend the sacred ceremonies, nor even to be in the house when they are celebrated ... Accordingly, when the time for the festival is at hand, the consul or praetor at whose house it is to be held goes away, and every male with him, while his wife takes possession of the premises and puts them in due array.³⁴

As this quote explains, it was forbidden for a man to even be in the vicinity of the *Bona Dea* rites, let alone to enter the festival itself. Thus, when Caesar’s wife hosted the sacred celebration, an infamous incident of immorality occurred when Publius Clodius

³³ *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Sulla,” 107.

³⁴ Plut. *Caes.* IX.

Pulcher, at the time a man of military experience who was just beginning his political career, entered Caesar's home.³⁵ Plutarch details the scandal:

He [Clodius] found the door open and was brought inside quite safely by the maid on duty who was in the secret. The maid then ran off to tell Pompeia ... [when Clodius] was accosted by one of Aurelia's [Caesar's mother] servants ... she dragged him forward and asked him who he was and where he came from. Clodius said that he was waiting for Pompeia's girl [maid] ... but his voice gave him away. Aurelia's servant shrieked and ran off to where the lights and the crowd were, crying out that she had caught a man. The women were in a panic. Aurelia put a stop to the sacred rites of the goddess and covered up the holy things ... They then went away immediately while it was still night and told their husbands what had happened.³⁶

This scandal, as Plutarch notes, was an "unfortunate affair" in Caesar's life that forced him to decide his true priorities: marriage or politics.³⁷ These priorities are better explained by analyzing the aftermath of Clodius's actions and Caesar's reaction.

Plutarch elaborates on this scandal by detailing the severe consequences Clodius faced. He describes a split between the nobility of Rome, who wanted to see Clodius charged and punished for this and numerous other crimes, and the common people, who maintained their support for him.

Accordingly, one of the tribunes of the people indicted Clodius for sacrilege, and the most influential senators leagued themselves together and bore witness against him that, among other shocking abominations, he had committed adultery with his sister, who was the wife of Lucullus. But against the eager efforts of these men the people arrayed themselves in defence of Clodius, and were of great assistance to him with the jurors in the case, who were terror-stricken and afraid of the multitude.³⁸

Plutarch finishes his account by discussing Caesar's decision to divorce Pompeia. He also noted, interestingly, that Caesar denied knowing anything of the sacrilegious charges

³⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 40: P. Clodius Pulcher, 771.

³⁶ Plut. *Caes.* X.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

against Clodius: “when he was summoned to testify at the trial, he said he knew nothing about the matters with which Clodius was charged.”³⁹

Other sources besides Plutarch also make Caesar’s reaction to this scandal clear. For instance, Pompeia’s biography underscores her possible innocence, while emphasizing Clodius’s fault, stating, “[Pompeia] was divorced by him [Caesar] ... because she was suspected of intriguing with Clodius, who stealthily introduced himself into her husband’s house while she was celebrating the mysteries of the *Bona Dea*.”⁴⁰ Caesar therefore divorced Pompeia because he could not allow his reputation to be tarnished by the possibility of an unfaithful wife, but he still stood by Clodius for his political promise.

To better understand Caesar’s decision, it is important to recognize Clodius’s importance in Roman politics and society. Plutarch describes Clodius’s prominence, despite his political inexperience, in the following description: “Publius Clodius was a man of patrician birth, and conspicuous for wealth and eloquence.”⁴¹ Tatum, in his book *The Patrician Tribune*, a biographic study devoted solely to Clodius, goes into further detail of this importance. He explains, “[One] reason for Caesar’s benevolent attitude toward Clodius, one that has received considerable attention from recent scholars, can be found in the sources: Caesar respected Clodius’s clout.”⁴² Tatum elaborates on this point, stating that Clodius enjoyed “enormous popularity,” seen after his success as quaestor, which “had brought him and the luster of his family’s name warmly before the public.”⁴³

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *DGRBM*, vol. 3, bio. 2: Pompeia, 473.

⁴¹ Plut. *Caes.*, IX.

⁴² Tatum, Jeffrey W. “The Bona Dea Scandal,” in *The Patrician Tribune: Publius Clodius Pulcher* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

This also explains why the public supported Clodius during this scandal, as cited earlier in Plutarch's account.

Although to readers today Caesar's politically motivated decision may have been morally wrong and unfair to Pompeia, it did benefit Caesar in the long run. Plutarch makes clear one of the direct benefits Caesar enjoyed later in his career by supporting Clodius: Cicero, whom was an active opponent of Caesar's rise to power, was driven out of Italy by Clodius.⁴⁴ In addition, Caesar was able to further his own connections by marrying one final time, which allowed him to retain his political prominence. Unfortunately for Pompeia, she was deemed unfit for marriage and is remembered solely as the unfaithful wife of Caesar, illustrating the sexist and hypocritical nature of Roman relationships. As we will see, the treatment of women, especially those whose marital faith has been questioned, like Pompeia, is one quality that has not changed much from Roman to American society.

Caesar's third and final marriage to Calpurnia illustrates yet another opportunity for him to exploit his wife's relations in order to ally himself with prominent political figures of the time. Calpurnia's father, L. Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, held the consulship in 58 B.C., the year Caesar was also a promagistrate in Gaul.⁴⁵ In holding the promagistry, which placed him in a governing position in Gaul for an extended period of time, it is possible that Caesar wished to develop a close relationship with an important political figure in order to maintain his domestic influence while he was away. This was also a role played by Calpurnia, as she was able to look over Caesar's political interests while he was abroad. Their relationship is described by Tatum in the following quote:

⁴⁴ Plut. *Caes.* XIV.

⁴⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 2: Calpurnia, 582; Broughton, *MRR*, 193, 197.

“For most of their married life, of course, they were separated, he in Gaul, she in Rome, where she will have played her part in looking after his interests, political and otherwise.”⁴⁶

Tatum also acknowledges that this relationship would have been beneficial to not just Caesar, but also Calpurnia’s father: “By then [59 B.C.], of course, he [Caesar] was a man to be courted as a valuable son-in-law.”⁴⁷ This growth in Caesar’s political prominence is supported in Plutarch’s account, who states that during his campaign in Gaul, candidates would come visit him to give him their support: “He fixed his quarters and carried on his political schemes. Many came to see him, and he gave each one what he wanted, and sent all away in actual possession of some of his favours and hoping for more.”⁴⁸ Further into his account, Plutarch reiterates this practice, stating “not only did the candidates for office ... enjoy his assistance, and win their elections by corrupting the people with money from him, and do everything which was likely to enhance his power, but also most of the men of highest rank and greatest influence came to see him.”⁴⁹

Thus, as Plutarch illustrates, at this point in his career, Caesar no longer relied as heavily on marriage to further his own prominence like he did early in his political career. Rather, as illustrated by the fact that other figures now went to him for support, Caesar had finally maintained a political stability after developing his reputation for years. The current position Caesar held, however, required him to be away from Rome, which could easily weaken his position if other hopefuls who were in Rome wished to take his place in politics. It is for this reason that Caesar’s wife and relatives played a vital role in

⁴⁶ Tatum, *Always I Am Caesar*, 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Plut. *Caes.* XIX.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XXI.

protecting his interests. The security provided by Caesar's third marriage, therefore, serves to fortify the fact that Caesar utilized his marriages to strengthen his position in Roman politics. Cornelia's father also exemplifies that other political figures used marriages for similar political reasons, allying himself with Caesar, a now powerful Roman politician, in order to secure his own position in government.

Before finally exploring Caesar's extramarital affairs, we should recognize Tatum's acknowledgment that Caesar was willing to forfeit his marriage to Calpurnia – whom Tatum calls Caesar's "true and honorable wife" – in order to reinforce his alliance to Pompey.⁵⁰ While Caesar was in Gaul, the time at which his highly successful military campaigns secured his prominence in Roman politics, unfortunate news disturbed him: "In Gaul he found letters ... They were from his friends in Rome, and advised him of his daughter's death."⁵¹ At this point, Caesar was a close ally to Pompey, which will be discussed later when looking at his alleged affairs. This alliance was secured by Pompey's marriage to Julia, Caesar's only daughter, which, as already discussed extensively, was a typical practice to unite oneself to another prominent family. This death, however, greatly disrupted this alliance, as indicated by Plutarch: "Great was the grief of Pompey, and great was the grief of Caesar, and their friends were greatly troubled too; they felt that the relationship which alone kept the distempered state in harmony and concord was now dissolved."⁵²

What Plutarch leaves out of his account, however, is the following attempt Caesar made to salvage his connection to Pompey: "after Julia's death in 54 B.C., it was Caesar who proposed to Pompey that he [Caesar] marry the great man's [Pompey] daughter in

⁵⁰ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 109.

⁵¹ Plut. *Caes.* XXIII.

⁵² *Ibid.*

his attempt to preserve their friendship, a relationship on which he obviously set higher value than his marriage to Calpurnia.”⁵³ The fact that Pompey did not agree to this alliance was destructive to his and Caesar’s connection, as it was the start of their division that led to civil war upon Caesar’s return from Gaul. What is important here, though, is that Caesar’s willingness to leave Calpurnia to preserve his Pompeian ties supports the conclusion that marriage for politicians in Rome was a very strong and valuable political tool.

The Adulterer: Caesar’s Extramarital Affairs:

In addition to analyzing how Caesar’s marriages helped strengthen his political career, it is interesting to see how his extramarital affairs also affected his career. Surprisingly, a number of affairs he is speculated to have engaged in seem to have strengthened his ties with political figures. Suetonius devotes an entire chapter in his biography on Caesar to listing Caesar’s supposed extramarital affairs and the men his mistresses were connected to:

Pronum et sumptuosum in libidines fuisse constans opinio est, plurimasque et illustres feminas corrupisse, in quibus Postumiam Servi Sulpici, Lolliam Auli Gabini, Tertullam Marci Crassi, etiam Cn. Pompei Muciam. Nam certe Pompeio et a Curionibus patre et filio et a multis exprobratum est, quod cuius causa post tres liberos exegisset uxorem ... Sed ante alias dilexit Marci Bruti matrem Serviliam, cui et proximo suo consulatu sexagens sestertium margaritam mercatus est et bello civili super alias donationes amplissima praedia ex auctionibus hastae minimo addixit; cum quidem plerisque vilitatem mirantibus facetissime Cicero: ‘quo melius,’ inquit, ‘emptum sciatis, tertia deducta;’ existimabatur enim Servilia etiam filiam suam Tertiam Caesari conciliare.⁵⁴

⁵³ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 109-110.

⁵⁴ Suet. Div. Iul. 50.

The common opinion is that he was eager for and free-spending in his longings, and he corrupted many women and women of the highest quality, among whom were Posthumia (wife of) Servius Sulpicius; Lollia (wife of) Aulus Gabinius; Tertulla, (wife of) Marcus Crassus; and Mucia, (wife of) Caius Pompeius. Certainly Pompey was blamed by both the Curio's father and son, and many others, that for the sake of Caesar he left his wife after she bore him three children ... But it was said that he held Servilia, mother of Marcus Brutus, before the others, for whom after his next consulship he bought a pearl worth six million *sesterces* and in the Civil War, above other prizes he brought along the best spoils from the auctions at a very low price; and indeed many people wondered about the cheapness of the price, to which Cicero most wittily remarked: 'to which woman,' he said, 'so that you know, between us, thirty (*tertia*) was deducted;' for it was supposed that Servilia even prostituted her own daughter Tertia to Caesar.

Though Suetonius does not give exact dates as to when these affairs might have occurred, which would be most helpful in determining the political context of the time period in which the relationships ensued, he provides enough information to infer possible connections Caesar was able to develop through such relationships.

The first woman Suetonius lists is Posthumia, whose affair with Caesar is mentioned in her biography: "The wife of Ser. Sulpicius, was a busy intriguing woman, and did not bear a good character. She is said to have been one of the mistresses of Julius Caesar."⁵⁵ Upon further research into Posthumia's husband, his place in society is uncovered: "Sulpicius ... was a contemporary and a friend of Cicero ... [whose] father ... was of the equestrian order."⁵⁶ Further into his biography, Sulpicius's various political positions are listed, ranging from quaestor of Ostia, *aedilis curulis*, praetor, *interrex*, and consul.⁵⁷ One close connection Caesar has to Sulpicius is that the year Sulpicius held the consulship was 51 B.C., at which time Caesar was in Gaul.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. III, bio. 2: Posthumia, 510.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, bio. 1: Serv. Sulpicius Lemonia Rufus, 946.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ *MRR*, 240, 243.

The most obvious possible connection here, given that this year comes right before the outbreak of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, is that Caesar was trying to strengthen ties with other strong political leaders that could challenge Pompey's power. Furthermore, Caesar could have been interested in gaining Sulpicius's trust because of Sulpicius's friendship to Cicero, a political enemy of Caesar whom Caesar tried unsuccessfully to ease tensions with after the trial against Clodius, where each man advocated opposite sides.⁵⁹ Though Sulpicius's biography does not confirm this assumption, it does offer some support: "There is no mention of any decided part that Servius took in the war between Caesar and Pompeius, but he appears to have been a partisan of Caesar, who, after the battle of Pharsalia, made him proconsul of Achaea, B.C. 46 or 45."⁶⁰ This position is confirmed by Broughton to have been delegated in 46 B.C., where he retained the title and, consequently, remained in Achaea, "until the summer of 45."⁶¹

The second alleged mistress Suetonius lists is Lollia. Again, in this woman's own biography, not only is her affair with Caesar mentioned, but her character is also commented on: "The wife of A. Gabinius, debauched by Caesar ... She may be the same as the Lollia whom Cicero speaks of as a woman of bad character."⁶² When examining the biography of her husband, A. Gabinius Sisenna, Lollia's similarity to Posthumia is challenged, for her husband does not seem to have a political connection to Caesar. In fact, Gabinius's political career and overall historical legacy seemed to be lackluster, with his biography not much longer than his wife's entry. Furthermore, his political career is

⁵⁹ Plutarch, "Cicero," *Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. VII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 29.

⁶⁰ *DGRBM*, vol. III, bio. 1: Serv. Sulpicius Lemonia Rufus, 946.

⁶¹ *MRR*, 299.

⁶² *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 1: Lollia, 796.

mentioned in conjunction with his father's career: "[he] accompanied his father to Syria, and remained in that province, with a few troops, while his father was engaged in restoring Ptolemy Auletes to the throne of Egypt."⁶³ Upon examining Gabinius's father, however, a political connection to Caesar is uncovered.

Gabinius the elder's political interaction with Caesar becomes evident when we look at the positions each held in simultaneous years. For instance, in 61 B.C., when Gabinius was named praetor, Caesar was a promagistrate in Spain, a position he held until 59 B.C., when he became consul.⁶⁴ In Gabinius's biography, we note that his own consulship was decided the previous year, the year in which Caesar held the consulship: "in 59 B.C., he [Caesar] and L. Piso were chosen consuls for the ensuing year."⁶⁵ Therefore, it is possible that Caesar was involved in this decision, illustrating how closely connected the two were politically.

Given that the time this decision was made was when Caesar had returned from Gaul, at which point he was one of the most powerful politicians in Rome, it can be inferred that Caesar held the upper hand in this political relationship. Plutarch, as noted previously, discusses in his biography on Caesar that during the time he was winning major conquests in Gaul, he was at a position in his career where politicians now came to him for support. The following quote, partially cited earlier to signify Caesar's political prominence during his marriage to Calpurnia, puts into context this time period, which overlaps with when Gabinius was consul: "Caesar left his forces among the Sequani to spend the winter [of 58/7 B.C.] ... Here he fixed his quarters and carried on his political

⁶³ *Ibid*, bio. 6: A. Gabinius Sisenna, 195.

⁶⁴ *MRR*, 179-180; 184; 187.

⁶⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 5: A. Gabinius, 193.

schemes.”⁶⁶ One of his various political schemes could have likely included helping Gabinius gain political strength and eventually win the consulship. This is an interesting dynamic when considering Caesar, the same man alleged to have had an affair with Gabinius’s son’s wife, was at the same time helping Gabinius to gain political prominence.

Before moving on to the other affairs Caesar allegedly had, it is interesting to analyze how Posthumia and Lollia are recorded in Smith’s biographies. Both are remembered almost exclusively for having an extramarital relationship with Caesar, and both are described as women of immoral character by authors of antiquity. This can be explained by looking at the marriage laws of Roman society at this time, as parsed by Tatum:

Marriage ... was mostly a private matter: there was no license, no document. Roman law set limits on what constituted a legal marriage. A citizen could not, for example, marry a non-citizen – not, that is, if he wanted that marriage to enjoy the benefits afforded by Roman law and custom (there was no legal obstacle to the pair’s cohabiting)... Roman law forbade a man’s having sexual intercourse with a fellow citizen, if said citizen was a man, with a fellow citizen’s unmarried daughter or with a fellow citizen’s wife. This last offense was adultery. The first two constituted what Roman law denominated as *stuprum*. You will perhaps have noticed that nothing prevents a man from having intercourse with foreigners, with prostitutes, and with slaves, of whatever gender ... women did not enjoy similar latitude. For a married woman, the scope of her sex life extended only to her husband. Punishments for adultery were determined privately, within the family.”⁶⁷

What is most intriguing and pertinent to the case study of these two affairs is the difference in law between husband and wife. Tatum notes that legally, the husband is given more freedom to engage in infidelities, whereas the wife has no such exceptions from the bounds of marriage. Also, even though Tatum notes that husbands were not

⁶⁶ Plut. *Caes.* XIX.

⁶⁷ Tatum, *Always I Am Caesar*, 108.

legally allowed to engage in extramarital affairs with citizens, especially the wives of fellow citizens, he ends his description by identifying that, if breaches in this conduct were detected, they were dealt with privately.

In other words, at this time in Roman history, marital infidelities were not punishable by Roman law. This explains how Caesar was able to engage in these affairs with no legal backlash, as is evident thus far. What is also interesting is that, up to this point, there seems to be no political backlash as well: despite the fact that Caesar was having affairs with these women, hopeful politicians, some the husbands and relatives of these mistresses, still sought for and in some cases were awarded his support. Finally, the standard men were held to compares drastically to that women were held to. This helps explain why the mistresses and unfaithful wives catalogued here are remembered as having a tarnished reputation, illustrating again the unequal cultural values that characterized Roman marriages during this era.

The third and fourth women Suetonius lists as mistresses of Caesar further demonstrate how extramarital affairs affected political careers during this time. This is because the men these women were connected to were among Caesar's closest allies. Since the following three men were connected in an alliance that would be known as the First Triumvirate, we can look at these affairs simultaneously.

The first woman was Tertulla, wife of Marcus Licinius Crassus, who was one of the richest men in Rome during Caesar's time. Crassus's wealth enabled him to also become one of the most powerful men in Rome: "Crassus further increased his fortune and, relying on his connections, financial power, and astuteness, gained considerable

influence.”⁶⁸ The second woman is, in my opinion, the most interesting affair, due to the timeline of events that coincides with the affair. This was Mucia, who was tied to a number of important political figures: her father, Q. Mucius Scaevola, held the consulship in 95 B.C., and her two cousins, Q. Metellus Celer and Q. Metellus Nepos, also held the consulship, in 60 B.C. and 57 B.C., respectively.⁶⁹ The most important political figure Mucia was connected to, however, was her husband, none other than Pompey the Great. Pompey had also grown into one of the strongest political figures of Caesar’s time, especially after his military campaigns under Sulla.⁷⁰

Although Suetonius does not give a time period for when Caesar’s affairs occurred, other sources indicate that at least Caesar’s affair with Mucia occurred before the First Triumvirate was established. Thus, this affair did not harm Caesar’s relationship with either Crassus or Pompey, both of whom made up this alliance with Caesar. Furthermore, if the affair did have any influence at all, it, oddly enough, worked in Caesar’s favor. Caesar was instrumental in putting together the First Triumvirate, for he was the link between Crassus and Pompey, whom beforehand had a tense relationship. Both Crassus’s and Pompey’s biographies in the *OCD* illustrate this tension, stemming from the following scenario: “After his [Crassus’s] praetorship he defeated Spartacus, but Pompey, after crucifying many fugitives, claimed credit for the victory, deeply offending Crassus.”⁷¹ In Pompey’s biography, Caesar’s role in allying these two men is evident: “in 60 [B.C.] Caesar succeeded in reconciling him [Pompey] with Crassus.”⁷² This is

⁶⁸ *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Crassus,” 857.

⁶⁹ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 2: Mucia 1117.

⁷⁰ *OCD*, 3rd ed. s.v. “Pompey,” 1215.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, s.v. “Crassus,” 857.

⁷² *Ibid*, s.v. “Pompey,” 1215.

interesting if indeed Caesar had the affairs with either one or both of these men's wives before his political interactions with them occurred.

Just as Caesar was known for utilizing marriages to further his connections with other powerful political figures, Pompey furthered his own political relationships through his five marriages. For instance, his wife Aemilia, who died in 80 B.C., was Sulla's stepdaughter, who was the political figure under which Pompey's military campaigns allowed him to gain prominence.⁷³ After her death, Pompey married Mucia, his third wife, which connected him to the Metelli family, one of the wealthiest and most important families during this era.⁷⁴ Yet, he divorced Mucia for her alleged infidelity, with a number of sources indicating that the affair was with Caesar, and that he [Pompey] knew about it: "He had divorced Mucia for adultery, allegedly with Caesar."⁷⁵ It is after this divorce that Pompey married Julia, Caesar's only daughter, which symbolizes the beginning of the First Triumvirate alliance. Tatum recognizes the important political meaning behind this marriage, defining again the arrangement this made in the following quote:

Marriages were arranged. They united not simply two individuals, but two families. We have seen one example of this in Caesar's marriage to Cornelia. We have also seen an instance of this in Julia's marriage to Pompey the Great, a tie that confirmed and publicized the friendship between the two men. In fact, the Romans could not imagine a bond of friendship closer than that between father-in-law and son-in-law.⁷⁶

Therefore, Mucia's alleged infidelity forced Pompey to salvage his reputation through divorce – a quality not uncommon of political Roman marriages, as we have seen in the case of Pompeia. This successfully made Pompey, one of the strongest men in Rome at

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 106.

this time, available for a new political connection. Caesar, a politician rising in power at the time, secured this opportunity through the exploitation of his own daughter. Thus, Caesar was able to finally reach a point of utmost prominence in Roman politics through this alliance, which was in large part a result from his infidelities with the wives of other political figures that were to become his strongest allies.

Personal Motives: Affairs Involving the Conspirators:

As we can see, at this point in Suetonius's list, Caesar's extramarital affairs with women connected to prominent political figures did not harm his political career. In most cases, the connections Caesar had to these women's husbands were political alliances and support systems. This theory changes when examining the last two women Suetonius lists whom allegedly had affairs with Caesar: Servilia and Tertia. Both of these women were connected to two of the most famous conspirators against Caesar who played instrumental roles in his assassination.

The first woman, Servilia, is likely the most infamous domestic sexual relationship Caesar is linked to. She is the only woman Caesar had an affair with, as listed by Suetonius, who has a biography in the *OCD*, indicating her prominence in Roman society. Her affair with Caesar is cited in this biography: "Caesar was her lover for many years and remained on good terms with her after." There were even rumors that Marcus Junius Brutus, Servilia's son and one of the most famous traitors of history due to his role in Caesar's assassination, was actually Caesar's son, offering an explanation as to why Caesar treated him with such favor.⁷⁷ Her biography also indicates her hidden role in politics, a role that is unusual, but not entirely uncommon, for a woman to hold in

⁷⁷ *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Servilia," 1394.

ancient Roman society: “she may have been discretely involved in high politics before the civil war, and after Caesar’s death Cicero’s letters show her playing a leading part in the tyrannicides’ deliberations, always protecting her son’s interests.”⁷⁸

Servilia was also the stepsister of Marcus Porcius Cato, whose biography makes clear his thoughts on Caesar: “In 59 [B.C.] he opposed Caesar obstinately and was temporarily imprisoned.”⁷⁹ This hostility towards Caesar continued throughout the Civil War, indicated in the extreme means through which he avoided surrendering to Caesar: “In the war he tried to avoid citizen bloodshed but resolutely followed Pompey ... he committed suicide rather than accept pardon from Caesar.”⁸⁰ Servilia’s familial connection to two of Caesar’s political enemies illustrates that in this case, his extramarital affair may have influenced the negative reaction of these figures. It is highly likely that the political figures of Caesar’s time were aware of the affair, for neither Caesar nor Servilia were secretive about it. As Tatum explains, “Servilia was an extraordinary woman. She was bold enough to insist that her love letters be delivered to Caesar even when he was in the midst of senatorial debate.”⁸¹ Although these men were some of Caesar’s political opponents, such as Cato, other men, especially Brutus, were some of his closest comrades. Therefore, it is likely that Caesar took up affairs with this woman unbeknownst to him that her male connections would become his enemies. Thus, this publicized affair is an example that illustrates the negative consequences Caesar may have experienced from his infidelities, as men he hoped (and thought) were some of his closest allies turned on him in the infamous Ides of March conspiracy.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Marcus Porcius Cato,” 1225.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 110.

Similar to Caesar's affair with Servilia, his affair with Tertulla may have also worked against him, as she was connected to another one of his conspirators. Tertulla was the wife of Gaius Cassius Longinus, described in his biography as "the tyrannicide (killer of Caesar)."⁸² Cassius was similar to Brutus in that he also had a close political connection to Caesar. His biography notes that in 48 B.C., Caesar pardoned him (for he was a Pompey supporter during the Civil War) and even gave him the post of *legatus*.⁸³ Despite this, Cassius still played a leading role in the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. As in the case of Servilia, this indicates that Caesar's affair with Tertulla, if it affected his political career in any way, would have worked against him, creating political enemies and leading to his ultimate downfall. Again, as is the case with Servilia and the men connected to her, evidence points to the likelihood that Caesar did not realize these political companions would become his enemies.

Although these two affairs connect Caesar to two of his most prominent conspirators, there is little evidence to suggest that the relationships played any role in fueling the conspiracy against him. On the contrary, many historians strongly feel that these relationships did not contribute to the conspiracy. As noted in Brutus's biography, he was likely more driven by political concerns rather than a personal vengeance: "When Caesar became dictator *perpetuo*, Brutus, reminded of his heritage, joined, and *ex officio* took the lead in the widespread conspiracy that led to Caesar's assassination before his departure for his Parthian War."⁸⁴ Scullard's history further explains why Brutus's heritage would prompt him to join the conspiracy: "Brutus ... claimed descent from that Brutus who had killed ... the last king of Rome in 510 B.C. ... He was deeply attached to

⁸² *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Cassius Longinus," 390.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *OCD*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Brutus," 788.

the Republican tradition.”⁸⁵ Thus, the threat Caesar’s dictatorship presented to the Roman government gives the most widely accepted reason as to why Brutus would betray Caesar, relating back to Brutus’s ancestors who protected Rome from the threat of dictatorships.⁸⁶ It is interesting, however, to recognize the possible role Caesar’s affair played in Brutus’s and Cassius’s decision to conspire against him. Furthermore, Caesar’s relationships with Servilia and Tertia also illustrate how, since Brutus and Cassius were his allies, Caesar was possibly using these women to become closer to their male counterparts, likely unaware of the hostility brewing against him.

Conclusion:

If Suetonius’s list is true, the women he cites who had affairs with Caesar can all be traced to prominent political figures in the Roman government at the time Caesar himself was involved in politics. As is illustrated by his marriages, as well as other political marriages of the time, women were utilized mainly for the possible connection they could provide between two political families. The affairs Caesar had outside of his marriages, for the most part, seem to also offer this connection. Whether it be to the benefit of the husband of the woman whom he had an affair with, or to his own benefit in creating alliances, Caesar’s relationships seem to have almost always strengthened his political connections.

In certain instances, these relationships – both marital and extramarital – allowed him to maintain his presence in Rome while abroad for military and governmental positions. In others, especially his affairs with the wives of Crassus and Pompey, he was

⁸⁵ Scullard, “Caesar’s Autocracy,” *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 157.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

able to mold a mutually beneficial alliance that enabled all the actors to rise to the top of politics. In the case of Brutus and Cassius, two of his conspirators, the possibility remains that his affairs with the women connected to them fueled their ambition to rise against him. What is most intriguing about all of these relationships is that there are clear political results that could be directly related to them.

What we will see in the next chapter is an extramarital affair that was not beneficial to Marcus Antonius, another prominent Roman politician. Rather, this affair resulted in his vilification by other Roman politicians and, eventually, his ultimate demise. This will support two theories. First, there are no consequences that result from engaging in extramarital affairs that can be applied to all Roman politicians – a point that will also apply to American presidents. Second, there are factors outside of the politician's own actions and choices that contribute to the public reception of extramarital affairs. We will see how these factors, especially political and cultural, contributed to the unique and different perceptions of Caesar's and Antony's extramarital affairs with one of history's most famous women.

A ROMANTICIZED POLITICAL AFFAIR: A CASE STUDY OF MARCUS ANTONIUS III

Introduction:

The extramarital pursuits of Julius Caesar exemplify and emphasize how affairs during ancient Rome could be very beneficial. Yet, this was not always the case in Roman politics. Another prominent politician of the same era serves to illustrate the downfalls of pursuing certain relationships: Marcus Antonius III, commonly referred to today as Mark Antony.

A man of many marriages and families, he is known today for his famous scandal with one of the most notorious queens of all time: Cleopatra of ancient Egypt. By pursuing a marriage – unacknowledged by Roman laws, and frowned upon by Roman society – with this powerful foreign woman, Antony likely foresaw the opportunity to enrich his own political ambitions further than what Rome alone could offer him. Instead, a successful political and military campaign against their union was started, led by other powerful Roman politicians of the time, particularly his competitor C. Octavius, known by his contemporaries as Augustus.

This war against Antony's and Cleopatra's romance led to both of their dramatic deaths, immortalized by famed works of literature, including William Shakespeare, for what seemed to be their tragically forbidden love story. Yet, by further analyzing the biographies of the political figures involved in this tale, as well as other modern sources, Antony's affair with this powerful woman and the backlash it created become less romanticized. Antony's selfish motives are uncovered when juxtaposed to his various marriages to Roman women. These women, like Cleopatra, are portrayed as political moves used to further his ambitions, a quality that relates him closely to Caesar. Yet,

unlike Caesar, Antony's affair with Cleopatra led to his demise. Where he and Cleopatra went wrong in their relationship will be uncovered, as political contexts, actors and ambitions become clear.

In Good Company: Antony's Family Ties:

Unlike Caesar, Antony was fortunate enough to have close relationships to powerful politicians his entire life. His father, M. Antonius Creticus, was a successful politician, holding the office of praetor in 75 B.C., as well as taking upon the command of the fleet in the Mediterranean Sea the following year.⁸⁷ Antony's political connections, however, were not without controversy. For instance, his father's biography notes the scandal surrounding his command: "Antonius was avaricious and greedy, and misused his power to plunder the provinces ... He did not succeed either in the object of which he had been appointed."⁸⁸ These accusations may have affected Antony's father's legacy, but they pale in comparison to Antony's stepfather, whose name will forever be associated with one of the biggest conspiracies to occur in the late Roman Republic.

After his father died, Antony's mother remarried to Cornelius Lentulus, to whom the care of Antony was entrusted, since he was still quite young.⁸⁹ Lentulus's biography notes his active role as a Roman politician. He is notoriously remembered, however, for his role in the Catilinarian conspiracy. This was a plan to overthrow Cicero, who held the consulship at this time, in order to instill governmental reforms, such as the cancellation of debts and the reintroduction of proscriptions, or ordered killings of other Roman

⁸⁷ "DGRBM, vol. I, bio. 9: M Antonius M.F.C.N. Creticus, 214.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, bio. 12: M. Antonius III, 214.

men.⁹⁰ Lentulus's status and power, which allowed him to play a large role in the conspiracy, are noted in his biography: "from his distinguished birth and high rank, he calculated on becoming chief of the conspiracy."⁹¹ Once the conspiracy was exposed, however, Cicero executed Lentulus for his involvement, an act that created a rift between Cicero and Antony until Caesar himself mediated between them years later.⁹² The following account by Plutarch emphasizes the enmity between Cicero and Antony: "this would seem to have been the origin and ground of the violent hatred which Antony felt towards Cicero ... Antony says that not even the dead body of Lentulus was given up to them until his mother had begged it from the wife of Cicero."⁹³ Though animosity existed between Antony and Cicero, one of the most powerful politicians of his age, the political connections offered to Antony through his family ties and his father's and stepfather's political and military careers allowed him to age among and interact with Rome's elite, thereby allowing him to establish important connections that would help him later in his own career.

Although the patriarchal figures in Antony's life were politically involved men, Antony's relationship with Caesar is what helped his career the most. This relationship was cemented from the time he was born: Antony's mother was Julia, a relative of the Julian family and thus a distant relative of the famed Caesar himself.⁹⁴ His relationship with Caesar, however, did not blossom until later in life, once Caesar realized Antony's potential as a politician and an ally. Before then, Antony was known for leading an

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. I, bio. 1: Catilina L. Sergius, 630.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. II, bio. 18: P. Cornelius P.F.P.N Lentulus, 730.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Plutarch, "Antony," in *Lives*, ed. G.P. Goold, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. IX (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), II.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

immoral way of life, due to his comradeship with Curio. Plutarch ironically notes that this debauchery included sexual encounters with women, yet most other biographies do not mention this in their catalogue of sinful behavior, rather focusing on Antony's drinking and financial indulgences. Due to his excessive drinking and debts, Antony was pushed out of Rome in 58 B.C., which sparked his transformation into a valuable military and political asset for many Roman leaders, eventually including Caesar himself.⁹⁵

After fleeing Rome, Antony was appointed as commander of the cavalry by proconsul A. Gabinius, a man whose son's wife was one of the women named in Suetonius's account of Caesar's mistresses.⁹⁶ It was in this role that Antony developed his reputation as an esteemed military leader. His biography notes, "He soon became distinguished as a brave and enterprising officer."⁹⁷ Caesar would soon take notice to his usefulness. Though Antony's biography claims that he went to Caesar in Gaul during 54 B.C., where he acquired his favor and influence, Plutarch focuses on the influence of Antony's friend, Quintus Scribonius Curio in persuading Antony to support Caesar:

When matters at Rome came to a crisis, the aristocratic party attaching itself to Pompey ... and the popular party summoning Caesar from Gaul ... Curio, the friend of Antony, who had changed sides and was now favouring the cause of Caesar, brought Antony over to it. Curio had great influence with the multitude from his eloquence, and made lavish use of money supplied by Caesar, and so got Antony elected tribune of the people, and afterwards one of the priests, called augurs, who observe the flight of birds. As soon as Antony entered upon his office he was of great assistance to those who were managing affairs in the interests of Caesar.⁹⁸

With Plutarch's biography of Antony as an example, the mutual benefits both Caesar and Antony received by becoming comrades are illustrated. By supporting Caesar, Antony

⁹⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: Marcus Antonius III, 214.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Plut. *Ant.*, V.

was able to get his first real footing in politics as the *tribuni plebis*, or officer of the plebeians, a position that oversaw the affairs of the common people.⁹⁹ On the other hand, by relying on Antony, who stood out to Caesar due to his “energy and intrepidity,” Caesar was able to maintain his interests in Rome while he was in Gaul.¹⁰⁰ This first step in securing a political relationship fostered an important connection for both of these men that would continue to mutually help them throughout their careers.

When compared to Caesar, Antony was very lucky to be born into the political connections his family offered him. Unlike Caesar, Antony’s father and stepfather were both well-known politicians, despite some of the controversy associated with their positions. Though during his adolescent years he was preoccupied with non-political matters, his debts indirectly helped him with his career. By leaving Rome due to pressure from his creditors, Antony was able to develop a strong military leadership that eventually led him to join the ranks of Caesar’s closest and most important military assets. This transformed into a political career soon, as Caesar, in his typical fashion, utilized Antony to further secure his own career. These features show that Antony’s destiny, it seems, was to become a powerful political actor in ancient Rome. Yet, we will see how an extramarital affair could easily ruin this, even at the height of his career.

Man of Many Families: Antony’s Marriages:

Charles P. Johnson expresses the popular opinion concerning Antony’s relationships with his wives in the following statement: “the flood lights of history and drama which have illuminated the romance of Mark Antony and Cleopatra for the past

⁹⁹ *OCD*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Tribuni Plebis,” 1092.

¹⁰⁰ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: Marcus Antonius III, 214.

2,000 years have left very much in obscurity the other marriages of this blustering and amorous hero.”¹⁰¹ In reality, Antony acted as the husband and father in five different families. Though Caesar relied heavily on his three marriages for his own political career, this was not necessary for Antony because of what his family connections alone had to offer. Yet, by examining these marriages, the possibility becomes clear that his intent was to maintain his status by tying himself not just to other prominent families, but to wives who had the ability to strengthen whatever goals he hoped to achieve during that time.

Not much is written about Antony’s first wife, Fulvia, whom he married at a young age. Yet, what is written points to an intriguing reason as to what she could offer him. Fulvia’s family was not political, for her father, Q. Fadius, was a *libertinus*: a freedman who was a former slave, but was granted freedom by his master.¹⁰² Cicero, a *homo novis* himself – a man with no history of political connections who was able to build up his career alone – looked down on Fadius, illustrated in the following comment he made to Antony: “But I think you have mentioned this for this reason – to commend yourself to the lowest order of citizens, since they would all remember that you had been the son-in-law of a freedman, and children of yours had been grandsons of Quintus Fadius, a freedman.”¹⁰³ Cicero illustrates an opinion many Roman elite might have had towards freedmen, questioning Antony’s motives in pursuing such a marriage.

Though Fulvia offered Antony no political connections, she was able to compensate with something likely much more meaningful to a young Antony: wealth. In her father’s short biography, his wealth is noted: “[he] seems to have possessed

¹⁰¹ Johnston, Charles P., “Mark Antony: Man of Five Families,” *Journal of the Society of Ancient Numismatics (SAN)* IV (1972-1973) 21.

¹⁰² *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 1: Q. Fadius, 133.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Mark Antony: Man of Five Families*, 21.

considerable wealth, for his daughter, who was married to M. Antonius, is called a rich woman.”¹⁰⁴ Combined with the fact that this marriage occurred when Antony was still in his adolescent years, we are reminded of his early life pursuits of, as Plutarch states, “immoderate and extravagant expenditures.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, as Caesar pursued marriages to further his political careers, it is possible that Antony pursued this marriage in order to further his prodigal expenses.

Antony’s next marriage is quite unusual compared to those of Caesar, for it was to his own cousin, Antonia. She was the daughter of Antony’s uncle, Caius Antonius. Moreover, the marriage was pursued at the urging of Antony’s mother, Julia.¹⁰⁶ Ancient and modern sources do not discuss why Julia pushed for this marriage, which is deemed as surprising to us today. They do, however, point to the scandal that ended this marriage, providing another example to demonstrate the interesting dynamic between men and women involved in affairs during this era.

Antony’s second marriage provides an example similar to Caesar’s marriage to Pompeia in terms of adultery. In Antonia’s biography, their divorce is referenced, based “on the grounds of an alleged intrigue between her and Dolabella.”¹⁰⁷ The biography of P. Cornelius Dolabella also notes this affair, as well as the implications it had on his and Antony’s relationship: “Antony ... bore no hostility towards Dolabella ... until he was informed of an amour existing between his wife Antonia and Dolabella.”¹⁰⁸ Though many sources note this affair, Plutarch gives a most detailed account by adding the political backlash Dolabella faced as a result:

¹⁰⁴ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 1: Q. Fadius, 133.

¹⁰⁵ Plut. *Ant.* II.

¹⁰⁶ Johnson, *Mark Antony: Man of Five Families*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 4. Antonia, 209.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, bio. 8: Dolabella, 1059.

Dolabella ... introduced a law for the abolition of debts, and tried to persuade Antony, who was his friend and always sought to please the multitude, to take common action with him in the measure. But ... as chance would have it, a dire suspicion fell upon him that he was wronged as a husband by Dolabella. Antony took the matter much to heart, drove his wife from his house ... and waged war upon Dolabella. For Dolabella had occupied the forum in order to force the passage of his law; so Antony, after the senate had voted that arms must be employed against Dolabella, came up against him, joined battle, slew some of his men, and lost some of his own.¹⁰⁹

As Plutarch shows, Antony's reaction to Dolabella was quite different from Caesar's understated reaction towards Clodius after hearing about the *Bona Dea* scandal. Caesar's reaction to the affair between Dolabella and Antonia parallels his own reaction to Pompeia's affair with Clodius. As Plutarch notes, Caesar, though publicly unsupportive of Dolabella's decisions, continued to offer him support even after news of the affair broke.¹¹⁰

There is, however, an important similarity between Antonia's supposed affair with Dolabella and that between Clodius and Pompeia: both Antonia and Pompeia were immediately divorced. Furthermore, these women were not divorced upon the discovery of the affair, but when both Caesar and Antony received word that a relationship *might* have existed. Thus, these women were deemed unworthy of marriage not because of concrete proof of their infidelities, but solely because of the accusations against them. This characterizes the society both Caesar and Antony lived in as one with a very unequal outlook towards women and men. Even if both women had committed adultery, the consequences are vastly different for the wives than they are for their husbands, men who also committed this same act on more than one occasion.

¹⁰⁹ Plut. *Ant.* IX.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

After his divorce from Antonia, Antony married Fulvia, a woman who had been married twice before to two very successful politicians. Johnson names these two men: “her first husband was Publius Clodius, killed in 52 B.C. by Milo. Her second was C. Scribonius Curio, killed in Africa in 49 B.C.”¹¹¹ We have already discussed Clodius and his relationship with Caesar, for he is the adulterer who caused the divorce between Caesar and Pompeia. Aside from this infamous scandal, Clodius was influential in politics throughout his life. The role he played is described in his extensive biography, including his successful candidacy for the aedileship and his support of Pompey and Crassus for the consulship.¹¹² Curio also held an important role in Roman politics, with his biography citing him as one of the “main instruments in kindling the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.”¹¹³ Aside from his relationship with Caesar and Pompey, Curio also held important political positions himself, such as the quaestorship in Asia and the tribuneship soon after.¹¹⁴

The length of her biography alone indicates Fulvia’s importance in Roman society, especially when compared to Antony’s two previous wives, whose entries consist of a few sentences. This is likely due to not only her connection with three of Rome’s powerful politicians of the age, but also her indirect role in politics as well, particularly in the support she gave to Antony. Plutarch discusses Fulvia’s character in Antony’s biography, noting her strong leadership qualities:

Antony put away his reprehensible way of living, and turned his thoughts to marriage, taking to wife Fulvia, the widow of Clodius the demagogue. She was a woman who took no thought for spinning or housekeeping, nor

¹¹¹ Johnson, *Mark Antony: Man of Five Families*, 21.

¹¹² *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 40: Clodius Pulcher, 773-774.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, bio. 4: C. Scribonius Curio, 902.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.

would she deign to bear sway over a man of private station, but she wished to rule a ruler and command a commander.¹¹⁵

This mention of Fulvia suggests her aspirations for Antony, explaining her strong-willed character. There are other indicators in these same texts, however, that paint her character in a much different light.

Although much is not mentioned about her in Clodius's biography, Curio's biography begins by briefly relating her character to that of her and Curio's daughter: "He was married to Fulvia, who afterwards became the wife of Antony, and by whom Curio had a daughter who was as dissolute as her mother."¹¹⁶ The term "dissolute" clearly points to her character as immoral in some way, but specific behavior cannot be determined by this alone. Her biography, though it uses the same term, alludes to possible licentious behavior when taken in full context: "Up to the time of her marrying Antony, she had been a woman of most dissolute conduct, but henceforth she clung to Antony with the most passionate attachment, and her only ambition was to see her husband occupy the first place in the republic."¹¹⁷ This statement equates Fulvia's change of immoral behavior to her devotion to Antony, suggesting that perhaps before this marriage she was unfaithful. Compared to Pompeia and Antonia, this fact seems impossible, for these previous examples support the theory that unfaithful wives are divorced at once in order to save the husband's reputation and fully condemned by society.

Therefore, if this assumption is true, Fulvia breaks the stereotype that all political wives were held to this inferior standard in ancient Rome. Rather, considering the adultery charges against her as true, perhaps the retaliation unfaithful wives faced

¹¹⁵ Plut. *Ant.* X.

¹¹⁶ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 4: C. Scribonius Curio, 902.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. II, bio. 2: Fulvia, 188.

differed based on their importance and indispensability. As noted previously, Fulvia had a politically active mind-set, thus suggesting that she played an important role in her husband's political decisions. The same is not said for Pompeia and Antonia, who were immediately discarded upon news of their possible promiscuity. Therefore, the value Fulvia provided as a wife outweighed the negative effects to a husband's reputation her "dissolute" behavior would cause, something that was not the same case for Pompeia and Antonia. This theory helps to explain why her sinful behavior was forgiven and why she was thus re-married again. Nevertheless, all three women's possible infidelities are recorded in historical sources, showing that no matter their importance, their reputation would suffer to some extent, with these allegations memorialized by ancient and modern authors.

Fulvia's political aspirations have already been pointed out, but her biography illustrates how they would eventually lead to her downfall. Cleopatra is (unsurprisingly) pointed to as part of the root of the problem that led Fulvia to measures that would lessen Antony's favor for her:

In B.C. 40, while Antony was reveling with Cleopatra in all the luxuries of the East, and Octavianus was rewarding his soldiers with lands in Italy, Fulvia, stimulated partly by jealousy and the desire of drawing Antony back to Italy, and partly by her hostility towards Octavianus, resolved upon raising a commotion in Italy. She induced L. Antonius, her husband's brother, to come forward as the protector of those who were oppressed and reduced to poverty by the colonies of Octavianus ... She afterwards followed L. Antonius to Perusia, and endeavoured to rouse the inhabitants of the north of Italy to assist him, while he was besieged at Perusia by Octavianus.¹¹⁸

This segment of her biography clearly points to Fulvia's power in politics. What Plutarch's account emphasizes is that this war Fulvia was instrumental in starting was

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

against Augustus, the man who would eventually ruin Antony and Cleopatra: “Lucius ... and Fulvia ... had first quarreled with one another, and then had waged war with Octavius Caesar [Augustus], but had lost their cause and were in flight from Italy.”¹¹⁹ This likely placed tension on the comradeship between Augustus and Antony, which would soon spiral into full-scale warfare between the two men. Before this happened, however, there was a marriage put in place to try to avoid another civil war. Yet, as we will see, this marriage had the opposite effect, eventually heightening Augustus’s animosity towards Antony.

Before turning to Antony’s fourth marriage, it is important to note how Fulvia’s behavior led to her demise. It is unlikely that she was the sole reason for this war in Perugia, but she obviously played a large role in provoking it, providing us with a concrete example of her activist role in politics. In this case, however, she would be rewarded with unforeseen consequences, as Antony was very upset for the disturbance she had caused. His reaction is cited as a major factor to her death: “It is said that, from grief at his rough treatment, she was taken ill, and in this state he left her at Sicyon ... Her feelings were so deeply wounded by her husband’s conduct, that she took no care of herself, and soon after died.”¹²⁰ Fulvia’s actions would not be lost, however, and she would eventually have her revenge on Antony. For it was her actions that contributed to the hostile feelings between Antony and Augustus that would spiral out of control once his relationship with Cleopatra became very serious.

Antony’s fourth and final Roman wife, who played a major role in his life during his affair with Cleopatra, was Octavia. This marriage took place immediately upon

¹¹⁹ Plut. *Ant.* XXX.

¹²⁰ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 2: Fulvia, 188.

Fulvia's death, and thus immediately after the conflict at Perusia. Plutarch sets the scene in the following:

Caesar [Augustus]¹²¹ was exceedingly fond of his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman. Her husband, Caius Marcellus, had died a short time before, and she was a widow. Antony, too, now that Fulvia was gone, was held to be a widower, although he did not deny his relations with Cleopatra; he would not admit, however that she was his wife, and in this matter his reason was still battling with his love for the Egyptian. Everybody tried to bring about this marriage. For they hoped that Octavia, who, besides her great beauty, had intelligence and dignity, when united to Antony and beloved by him, as such a woman naturally must be, would restore harmony and be their complete salvation.¹²²

Plutarch's description points to three important factors pertaining to Octavia. First, he emphasizes her role as a political wife that paralleled and perhaps surpassed that of Fulvia. He also describes Octavia in a most flattering way that will later compare to his critical description of Cleopatra, illustrating the Roman sentiments towards the famous foreign queen and the faithful Roman wife. Finally, Plutarch alludes to his theory that Antony was a reasonable and smart politician, but Cleopatra's influence eventually corrupted his senses to the point of his destruction. These points, especially the latter two, will be elaborated when discussing Antony's relationship with Cleopatra, for they are very significant in understanding not just Antony's and Cleopatra's fates, but the popular public perception of their affair amongst Romans of that era.

Octavia's biography makes the realization clear that she was destined for marriage for the sake of political alliances. She was married twice, first to C. Marcellus, consul B.C. 50, before her marriage to Antony after Marcellus's death. Even during this first marriage, her use in important political alliances is noted, as Caesar wanted to utilize

¹²¹ Many ancient authors refer to Augustus by his familial names: either Caesar or Octavian. However, to prevent confusion between him and the famous Julius Caesar, this paper will refer to him exclusively as Augustus, and will make a note to clarify when quoting ancient sources.

¹²² Plut. Ant. XXXI.

her for the First Triumvirate after it was weakened by an unexpected death: “Caesar, who was her [Octavia] great uncle, was anxious to divorce her from Marcellus that she might marry Pompey, who had then just lost his wife, Julia, the only daughter of Caesar.”¹²³ It was Pompey’s refusal that allowed her to remain married to Marcellus, even though he was an opponent of Caesar’s.¹²⁴ Although Octavia’s role in the First Triumvirate was never achieved, the Second Triumvirate provided another opportunity for her political destiny to be realized.

Octavia’s role in the Second Triumvirate, a pact between Augustus, Antony, and Lepidus, is explained further into her biography: “She lost her husband towards the latter end of B.C. 41; and as Fulvia, the wife of Antony, died about the same time, Octavianus [Augustus] and Antony, who had lately been at variance, cemented their reconciliation by the marriage of Octavia to Antony.”¹²⁵ This reiterates Plutarch’s account, but the biography furthers the peculiarity of this situation that distinguishes it from the marital pact of Julia to Pompey. This is explained by the legal measures taken to ensure this marriage: “Octavia was at the time pregnant by her former husband, but the senate passed a decree by which she was permitted to marry at once.”¹²⁶ This indicates that there was a legal barrier that would have normally prevented Octavia from marrying one man while pregnant by another. Thus, the importance of this pact, illustrated by its passage by the senate, a body made up of men who were likely enemies to both of these men individually, indicates that the union between Antony and Octavian was necessary at this time. This near desperation for the unity of these two powerful politicians will be

¹²³ *DGRBM*, vol.III, bio. 2: Octavia, 3.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

explained when looking at Antony's pursuits at the time, one being, of course, Cleopatra herself. This, combined with the already tense feelings due to Fulvia's actions that predated Augustus's and Antony's marital pact, emphasize what this particular goal of Antony threatened to do to the Roman state and Augustus's standing in Rome.

Antony's marriages are all very diverse in objectives. What they all have in common, however, is that they each allowed Antony to reach a certain goal. These goals changed as Antony himself changed. At first, he was the adolescent, frivolous spender, who likely used his first wife's fortune to finance his luxuries. At his mother's intervention, he married his own cousin, a marriage where the particular gains are unclear – perhaps it was an attempt to push Antony away from his immoral lifestyle in order to focus on his career. Yet, from this marriage, Antony experienced the pains of unfaithfulness, affecting his personal and political life. Next, Fulvia provided perhaps the greatest political rise for him, until her own ambitions and jealousy pushed his patience too far. Upon her death, to secure a pact with the most important politicians of the time at the height of his own career, and pushed for by an already delicate relationship between himself and Augustus, Antony married Octavia, a woman also commended for her character. We will see, however, how specifically Antony's last two marriages were deeply affected by his relationship with Cleopatra, who would eventually become his fifth and final wife. By unearthing these details, it becomes clear that perhaps his marriage to Octavia was not so much pursued, but rather pushed onto him as a means to rein him in from Cleopatra. Nevertheless, the well-known story to follow of this fatal relationship illustrates the important role relationships with women played in ancient Roman politics.

Antony's Folly: The Romance with Cleopatra:

Many authors, from antiquity to today, have analyzed the relationship between Cleopatra and Antony, as well as their individual characteristics and motives. Some, like Shakespeare, rely little on historical accounts in order to emphasize the tragedy behind their unpopular union, sacrificing an accurate portrayal in favor of an entertaining and ideal love story. Others, especially most ancient Roman historiographers, cite this relationship as one of Antony's biggest mistakes, while labeling Cleopatra as the seductress who was one of the biggest threats to Rome at the time. A. Etman discusses this latter perspective:

Thus it is obvious that the classical portrait of Cleopatra has two essential sides. The first, which is more well known and popular, is that which presents Cleopatra as a hedonist, over-sexed woman or a notorious prostitute ... The second essential side of the classical portrait of Cleopatra presents her as a very ambitious queen. She had the hope not only to keep the Egyptian throne safe against the Roman dangers but also to widen its territories. She even planned to have an Empire of her own or rather to restore the Ptolemaic Empire of the golden age.¹²⁷

Although these claims may hold some truth about the character of Cleopatra, they cannot be analyzed when isolated from other key factors. When examining the political context of the time, as well as Antony's and Augustus's positions in Rome, a more complex characterization of Cleopatra can be assessed. In addition, by challenging the stereotypes promoted by ancient authors of the Roman Republic, the true political motives behind Cleopatra's and Antony's union can be uncovered.

Upon Caesar's death in 44 B.C., Antony had climbed to prominence in domestic Roman politics. His actions immediately after the assassination, as well as the description

¹²⁷ Etman, A., "Cleopatra and Antony: A Study in the Art of Plutarch, Shakespeare, and Ahmed Shawky" *Athe'na; syngramma periodikon te's en Athe'nais Episte'monike's Hetaireias* 78 (1981) 98-99.

detailing the hysteric reactions of others, prelude to his rise as one of the most powerful politicians in the city:

The murder of Caesar had paralyzed his friends and the people, and for a time placed the power of the state in the hands of the conspirators. Antony therefore thought it more prudent to come to terms with the senate, but meantime he obtained from Calpurnia the papers and private property of Caesar, and by his speech over the body of Caesar and the reading of his will, he so roused the feelings of the people against the murderers, that the latter were obliged to withdraw from the popular wrath.¹²⁸

This description illustrates Antony's role in preventing total chaos from breaking out in Rome, testifying to his power in commanding an audience. In addition, it testifies to his loyalty to Caesar, as he did not allow the conspirators to gain power. This is balanced with his continued connection to, and influence over, other Roman politicians.

Antony's leadership role after Caesar's murder is described further into his biography, which indicates that, even though he was able to persuade the masses, he was still not a strong enough leader among his peers without senatorial support. Thus, Antony "effected a reconciliation with them [the senators], and induced them to accept a number of laws ... Antony was now the most powerful man in the state."¹²⁹ Although these descriptions seem to simplify Antony's ability to preserve his influence during a frenzied moment, it is important to note the precariousness of the situation. Many of the senate members were involved with the conspirators in Caesar's assassination, and Antony had no idea how the people would react to Caesar's death. Thus, Antony's combination of reason and risk-taking allowed him to gain prominence in Rome at a time that precedes his famed love affair with Cleopatra.

¹²⁸ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: M. Antonius, 215.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, Augustus was rising to power relatively quickly, as he did not enter the sphere of Roman politics until after Caesar's death. Plutarch's account of what seems to be Augustus's and Antony's first encounter describes the contentious nature between the two men that will reoccur throughout their interactions. This was at the time when Augustus was still quite young, and, as noted above, when Antony was one of the most esteemed politicians in Rome. Plutarch recounts, "the young Caesar [Augustus] came to Rome, a son of the dead Caesar's niece ... who had been left heir to his property ... Antony, at first despising him as a mere stripling, told him he was out of his senses ... Antony kept saying and doing many things to insult him."¹³⁰ This quote points to one possible explanation for the constant tension between these two men: their relationship to Caesar.

Although Antony had been Caesar's esteemed colleague for many years, Augustus was his nephew, a blood association that surely helped him quickly rise to political power. Thus, Antony's behavior can be explained in part by jealousy, with Augustus's future behavior explained in part by a remembrance of the treatment he first received by Antony. It is important to consider, however, Plutarch's aim in this chapter of his biographies, which is to present Antony and Cleopatra as the enemies and Augustus as the hero – a goal that will become evident later in the chapter. Nonetheless, their relationship at this time, with Antony entering the height of his political power, and Augustus just beginning his pursuit of politics, commenced a common rift between the two involving a struggle of power that will reoccur many times and, as we will see, play a major role in the backlash Antony's relationship with Cleopatra received.

¹³⁰ Plut. Ant. XVI.

Plutarch strengthens the theory of a battle for power between Antony and Augustus by relaying Cicero's role in establishing power for Augustus: "Cicero, who was the most influential man in the city, and was trying to incite everybody against Antony, persuaded the senate to vote him a public enemy, to send Caesar [Augustus] the fasces and other insignia of a praetor, and ... to drive Antony out of Italy."¹³¹ Thus, with Cicero's influence, Augustus was immediately able to enter politics in the role of praetor, an office that was not as powerful as consul, but one that nonetheless enjoyed many responsibilities and leadership roles, making it especially impressive that a man with no political experience was able to gain it.¹³² Simultaneously, Antony's comfortable position in Roman politics was challenged, forcing him to flee Rome and try to preserve his political prominence. This example strengthens the fact that Antony was threatened by the young Augustus. This feeling will soon become mutual, for not long after their reconciliation, Augustus began to be challenged by others in Rome, and began to see the power Antony was able to gain abroad, thus prompting him to take action to preserve his own position.

Now it is clear that from the beginning, Antony and Augustus were continually in competition with one another for power. This fact remains evident after the creation of the Second Triumvirate. This pact, created after Augustus distanced himself from Cicero, fabricated a political alliance between Augustus, Antony, and M. Aemilius M. Lepidus, a successful military commander at the time.¹³³ Plutarch discusses the marital details that concluded the pact, which parallel the marriage between Pompey and Julia in the First Triumvirate: "To complete this reconciliation, then, the soldiers surrounded them

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹³² *OCD*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Praetor," 873.

¹³³ *DGRBM*, vol. II, bio. 17: M. Aemilius M. Q. Lepidus, 767.

[Augustus, Antony, and Lepidus] and demanded that Caesar [Augustus] should also cement the friendship by a marriage, and should take to wife Clodia, a daughter of Antony's wife Fulvia."¹³⁴ Yet, even the bonds of marriage that fortified this pact could not derail Antony's independent ambitions for power, which, when combined with those of Cleopatra, became a deadly combination Augustus quickly recognized and addressed.

At this point, Cleopatra was the young, but undisputed, leader of Egypt, which was recognized as one of the richest states of this era. Her ambitions for power certainly parallel those of Antony and Augustus, described by both ancient and modern sources. These sources emphasize the drastic actions that Cleopatra was willing to take in order to achieve sole power, as exemplified in Appian's account of the civil war, where he states Cleopatra first made use of her influence by procuring the death of her younger sister, Arsinoe, who had once set up a claim to the kingdom.¹³⁵ Diana Preston also strengthens this theory, by backing another cold-hearted claim made by an ancient historian: "The historian Josephus, writing in the first century A.D., believed Cleopatra had poisoned Ptolemy [her brother and husband] and he was probably correct. Cleopatra was as accomplished as any Roman at seizing the moment and perhaps even more cold-bloodedly ruthless."¹³⁶ These examples may have been dramatized by Roman historians to promote a negative image of Cleopatra, which was a common tactic employed by Augustus. Yet, Cleopatra's history of climbing through the political ranks of Egypt, as well as her future gains resulting from her union with Antony, strengthen the claim that it was Cleopatra's desire to maintain power at whatever costs. It was through her utilization

¹³⁴ Plut. *Ant.* XX.

¹³⁵ Appian, *The Civil Wars*, trans. John Carter (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 5.8 – 5.9.

¹³⁶ Preston, Diana, "Flight of the Queen," in *Cleopatra and Antony: Power, Love, and Politics in the Ancient World* (New York: Walker and Company, 2009), 127.

of Antony's position in the Roman government, also a very powerful state during this time period, that enabled this relationship to happen.

Although Antony had met a very young Cleopatra during his military career under Gabinius, his more intimate encounter with her did not occur until 41 B.C. Cleopatra's biography describes the incident by emphasizing her wits and charm that were used to manipulate a seemingly senseless Antony:

[Antony] summoned Cleopatra to [meet him], on the charge of having failed to co-operate with the triumvirate against Caesar's murderers ... She was now in her twenty-eighth year, and in the perfection of matured beauty, which in conjunction with her talents and eloquence, and perhaps the early impression which we have mentioned [i.e. their first encounter], completely won the heart of Antony, who henceforth appears as her devoted lover and slave.¹³⁷

This description is an example that highlights the points made earlier by Etman:

Cleopatra was a motivated woman who used her talents to further her own position, in this case, protecting herself from Antony's punishments for not aiding in the fight against Caesar's conspirators. Yet, as many other sources indicate, this account completely emasculates Antony. Brigitte Ford Russell acknowledges with this interpretation of Antony, stating that, when compared to other male Roman aristocrats of the late Roman Republic, "It is Antony's image ... 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."¹³⁸

With this distortion recognized as a means to vilify the strong Cleopatra, it appears possible that Antony did not begin a relationship with Cleopatra that would not help him gain power in some way. Rather, this relationship ensued after his victory at the

¹³⁷ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 10: Cleopatra 801.

¹³⁸ Russell, Brigitte Ford, "The Emasculation of Antony: The Construction of Gender in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*" *Helios: Journal of the Classical Association of the Southwest* 25 (1998) 121-137.

Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. against the conspirators Brutus and Cassius. This was a great success for Antony, as his biography states, “The war against Brutus and Cassius ... was decided by the Battle of Philippi, which was mainly gained by the valour and military talents of Antony.”¹³⁹ Although this was a victory for the Second Triumvirate in general, it was ironically perceived as a threat to Augustus, who was not seen as a decisive force in the battle: “Philippi was Antony’s victory. Again he had proved his military skill and leadership while Octavian [Augustus], still in frail health, had played only a minor role, as Antony very well knew.”¹⁴⁰ Preston even quotes Antony years later as describing Augustus as “a puny creature in body [who] has never by his own efforts won a victory in any important battle ... Indeed at Philippi, in the same battle in which he and I fought as allies, it was I who conquered and he who was defeated.”¹⁴¹ It becomes clear, therefore, that although this was a decisive win for the Second Triumvirate, it was still characterized by an intensifying rivalry between Augustus and Antony.

Antony’s biography notes that after the Battle of Philippi, Antony and Augustus, though still allies, geographically went their separate ways: “Caesar [Augustus] returned to Italy; and Antony, after remaining some time in Greece, crossed over into Asia to collect the money which he had promised to the soldiers.”¹⁴² While abroad, Antony’s financial gains, as for any Roman politician of the time, helped him maintain his leadership. Although the finances he collected in Asia were for his soldiers and not exclusively for himself, they would indirectly help him by ensuring the continued loyalty of his forces to him. Even ancient authors, such as Appian, made note of the benefits

¹³⁹ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: M. Antonius, 214-216.

¹⁴⁰ Preston, “Ruler of the East,” *Cleopatra and Antony*, 152.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: M. Antonius, 214-216.

Antony gained from foreign money.¹⁴³ These sources confirm that it was Antony's motivation to maintain and possibly make gains in his power through the intake of foreign money. This goal would magnify itself once he received Cleopatra, ruler of the richest independent state at the time.¹⁴⁴

Preston discusses the political confusion in Egypt during the time Antony was abroad, yet she strengthens the claim that, despite the governmental weakness, "Egypt was still the world's richest country."¹⁴⁵ Antony summoned Cleopatra to meet him in order to discuss her conduct pertaining to the conspirators during the civil war, a moment Cleopatra seized to, as many sources state, manipulate Antony in order to strengthen her previously strong ties to Rome in an attempt to secure her political prominence.¹⁴⁶

Plutarch describes the encounter and intention in the following quote:

Now as a crowning evil his love for Cleopatra supervened, roused and drove to frenzy many of the passions that were still hidden and quiescent in him, and dissipated and destroyed whatever good and saving qualities still offered resistance ... She was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power. Therefore she provided herself with many gifts, much money, and such ornaments as her high position and prosperous kingdom made it natural for her to take.¹⁴⁷

Plutarch utilizes many features of Cleopatra in this description to tarnish her reputation. In the opening, he refers back to Antony's teenage passions, including drinking and flamboyance, which were most characteristic of him during his first marriage. Since then, however, it is clear that Antony has been able to control this type of behavior, although sources do note how now and again when he would push the limits of appropriate Roman

¹⁴³ Appian, *Civil War*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Boatwright, Mary T., Daniel J. Gargola and Richard J.A. Talbert, *A Brief History of the Romans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 177-200.

¹⁴⁵ Preston, "Like a Virgin," *Cleopatra and Antony*, 73.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, "Mighty Aphrodite," 157.

¹⁴⁷ Plut. *Ant.* XXV.

behavior. Thus, Plutarch is emphasizing that Cleopatra's influence brought out the worst in Antony. In addition, Plutarch highlights her manipulative nature, such as her lavish gifts and alluring beauty, in order to gain Antony's favor. What Plutarch fails to recognize, however, is that the lavishness of Cleopatra's visit is what Antony was looking for: he remained abroad in order to collect money to preserve his prominent position by paying his soldiers and, perhaps, as many Roman politicians have done, helping other politicians financially to assure their continued loyalty. Therefore, Plutarch's account here exemplifies the Roman accounts' distorted natures of Cleopatra's influence and the exclusions of Antony's own motivations. This second factor is also critical, as it describes Cleopatra's and Antony's connection as one developed out of a desire for mutual political gains.

Cleopatra's helpfulness to Antony further into their relationship strengthens the fact that she was financially useful to him. After his marriage to Octavia, and at a time when Cleopatra and Antony had spent a number of years apart, Cleopatra reminded Antony of her usefulness: "Her connexion with Antony was interrupted for a short time by his marriage with Octavia, but was renewed on his return from Italy, and again on his return from his Parthian expedition, when she went to meet him in Syria with money and provisions for his army."¹⁴⁸ Although this account clearly states the material advantages Antony gained from Cleopatra's visit, Plutarch completely omits that Cleopatra brought anything for Antony, focusing instead on Antony giving in to his lustful desire to see her again:

But the dire evil which had been slumbering for a long time, namely, his passion for Cleopatra ... blazed up again with renewed power as he drew near to Syria. And finally, like the stubborn and unmanageable beast of the

¹⁴⁸ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 10: Cleopatra, 800-802.

soul ... he spurned away all saving and noble counsels and sent Fonteius Capito to bring Cleopatra to Syria.¹⁴⁹

This is yet another example of the negative image of Cleopatra, which was very relevant in Rome at the time. Yet, it is necessary to acknowledge that the relationship was not just Cleopatra's manipulation to gain political security. Antony too used the relationship for financial and material gains that likely maintained his positive reputation held among his soldiers, the men whom he was constantly interacting with and thus had to make sure to satisfy first and foremost.

Aside from just the material benefits Antony was able to secure through his union to Cleopatra, this financial procurement alone does not seem like enough of a reason for him to risk his reputation in Rome. By remembering the struggle for power between Antony and Augustus, however, the political climate of the time points to another reason why Antony would have benefitted from a close relationship to the queen. Preston notes the following circumstances Augustus was handling domestically in Rome when Antony was abroad: "Rome's citizens were hungry and angrily demanding bread ... Reports of Octavian's [Augustus's] lavish parties and feasts so angered people that they surrounded and began to stone him in the Forum."¹⁵⁰ While Augustus was faced with unhappy Romans in the city, Antony was in Greece with Octavia, where he was furthering his military pursuits: "Athens was also Antony's military headquarters. His plan was for his generals to drive the Parthians from the territories they had occupied in Asia Minor, Syria and Judaea while he reserved the glorious conquest of Parthia for himself."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Plut. *Ant.* XXXVI.

¹⁵⁰ Preston, "The Awful Calamity," *Cleopatra and Antony*, 193.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

This political context precedes Cleopatra's re-entrance into Antony's life, when she brought military supplies and financial support with her, which would help strengthen Antony's pursuits against the Parthians. Thus, Antony was a strong leader with one of the most successful military records at the time who was also removed from the domestic instabilities of Rome. Therefore, it is very probable that Augustus sensed this teetering balance of power leaning more favorably towards the successful Antony, despite the pact they renewed through the betrothal of Octavia. As two men with constant tension characterizing their political relationship, it seems obvious that by vilifying Cleopatra, Augustus would be able to regain popular support in Rome, eventually tilting the scales of power back in his favor.

The question to ask now is, how was Augustus able to turn this union between Cleopatra and Antony into something negative enough to launch a war against them both? The answer lies in two of Antony's follies with the relationship. These are two critical mistakes that are not explained by simply claiming that he fell in love with a manipulative woman. Rather, these two features Antony either disregarded or overlooked are based upon Roman values. Specifically, Antony did not recognize the line between what Romans disapproved of and condemned, something associated with his bond to Cleopatra that would eventually ruin his career. These are the mistreatment of his wife, Octavia, and the closeness and openness of his relationship to Cleopatra, defined strictly as a foreign woman. The combination of these two factors fueled the hatred the Roman people, which was openly displayed towards their relationship, and ultimately enabled Augustus's attack for absolute power.

Plutarch's short characterization of Octavia illustrates her worth as one of the most esteemed political wives of Roman history: "Caesar [Augustus] was exceedingly fond of his sister, who was, as the saying is, a wonder of a woman."¹⁵² Preston further emphasizes her legacy in the following description: "Writers, both in her lifetime and later, lauded her as the model of a virtuous Roman wife, with none of the unwomanly stridency and personal ambition of Fulvia or oriental wives of Cleopatra."¹⁵³ Although Plutarch is not as up-front in his characterization, he mentions Octavia later in Antony's biography by recounting her trip to Alexandria, when Antony's relationship with Cleopatra was at its height. In this description he emphasizes Octavia's material worth, stating, "She was bringing a great quantity of clothing for his soldiers, many beasts of burden, and money and gifts for the officers and friends about him; and besides this, two thousand picked soldiers equipped as praetorian cohorts with splendid armour."¹⁵⁴

Therefore, Octavia was an ideal Roman wife based on her behavior, an important political connection for Antony, and a helpful asset for him during his military pursuits abroad. Thus, when Antony allegedly snubbed her visit and finally divorced her, it greatly tarnished his career, especially after she had remained in Rome taking care of his children and business while he stayed abroad with Cleopatra: "She [Octavia] dwelt in her husband's house, just as if he were at home, and she cared for his children ... she also received such friends of Antony as were sent to Rome in quest of office or on business."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Plut. *Ant.* XXXI.

¹⁵³ Preston, "Single Mother," *Cleopatra and Antony*, 184.

¹⁵⁴ Plut. *Ant.* LIII.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, LIV.

The true reasons behind the divorce, however, may not have been due to Cleopatra's manipulation, which is the theory Plutarch writes of. Rather, Antony was likely aware of Augustus's activities in Rome, namely his damaging remarks about Antony in order to try and gain support against him. Even Plutarch discusses Augustus's motives upon Octavia's initial visit to Alexandria: "Caesar [Augustus] gave her permission to do so [sail to Antony], as the majority say, not as a favour to her, but in order that, in case she were neglected and treated with scorn, he might have plausible grounds for war."¹⁵⁶ Further into the biography, Plutarch makes clear the growing rift between these two powerful men that would eventually be too large to mend: "By reporting ... things to the senate and by frequent denunciations before the people, Caesar [Augustus] tried to inflame the multitude against Antony. Antony, too, kept sending counter-accusations against Caesar [Augustus]."¹⁵⁷ Thus, Antony's divorce from Octavia, which would thereby end his alliance with Augustus, becomes an obvious step, for this was a man who was quickly becoming one of his strongest political opponents. Yet, even though Antony had a secure position abroad, due to his military strength and relationship with the powerful Cleopatra, he underestimated the damage his treatment of Octavia would do to his reputation, specifically because it attacked the Roman ideal of a faithful wife.

This leads to Antony's second folly: his openness and closeness to Cleopatra, categorized here simply as a foreigner. Julius Caesar himself wrote about foreigners in a way that portrayed the common feeling amongst Romans, especially in book I of his narrative *de Bello Gallico*, which characterized the foreign clans he encountered as

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

uncivilized barbarians.¹⁵⁸ This common sentiment amongst Romans, who held their race as superior to any other, likely fueled the Roman public opinion about Antony's union with Cleopatra. Though she was a very powerful queen, she was still not a Roman woman, thus making her inferior. In saying this, it becomes clear that Antony's marriage to Cleopatra and the acknowledgment of fathering two of her children would tarnish his reputation.¹⁵⁹ He angered the Romans furthermore by awarding himself with triumphs in Alexandria rather than Rome, as well as pleasing the Egyptians by the distribution of some eastern lands to Cleopatra and her children.¹⁶⁰ Thus, although these two features likely were meant to strengthen his bond to Egypt in order to maintain his own strength, Augustus utilized them, along with the mistreatment of his ideal Roman wife, to initiate a war. Augustus even preserved the idea of Roman unity in doing this by declaring war on Cleopatra, not Antony, showing that it was Antony who was turning his back on Rome by maintaining his support for the Egyptian queen.¹⁶¹

Cleopatra's and Antony's demise illustrates the realist perspective behind their affair, thus dissembling the romantic interpretation of their marriage. Cleopatra's biography states that, as Augustus was gaining an edge during the war, she turned on Antony in an attempt to save herself:

Seeing Antony's fortunes desperate, [she] betrayed Pelusium to Augustus, prevented the Alexandrians from going out against him, and frustrated Antony's plan of escaping to Rome by persuading the fleet to desert him. She then fled to a mausoleum she had built, where she had collected her most valuable treasures, and proclaimed her intention of

¹⁵⁸ Caesar, *de Bello Gallico*, trans. H.J. Edwards (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1917), I.

¹⁵⁹ Boatwright, Gargola and Talbert, *A Brief History of Rome*, 177-120.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

putting an end to her life, with a view to entice Antony thither, and thus ensure his capture.¹⁶²

Yet, after Antony's death, Cleopatra realized that her charms, which worked throughout her life to persuade powerful Roman politicians to support her, did not sway Augustus: "the charms of Cleopatra, however, ailed in softening the colder heart of Augustus."¹⁶³ With her usually reliable plan unsuccessful, Cleopatra resolved to commit suicide, interpreted by some as a real-life Romeo and Juliet love story: two forbidden lovers dramatically torn apart and driven to death because they were not allowed to be together. Realistically, however, Cleopatra's resort to suicide is much more common than many might think, with many politicians adopting it, one being Cato in his resistance against Julius Caesar.¹⁶⁴ Her actions here point to the fact that perhaps Cleopatra was willing to do whatever was necessary to retain her prominence and independence. In another scenario, perhaps she thought by derailing Antony's military tactics, which would likely fuel a deadly war in her country, she would help to resolve the conflict between the two men. After all, she was aware of Caesar's emotional reaction to his enemy's murder, Pompey the Great, on her own shores not many years earlier.

Yes, it is undeniable that Antony's affair and eventual marriage with Cleopatra led to his death. The main stories recorded by ancient and modern authors, however, are more than likely distorted to a large degree. Although many interpretations characterize him as a man spell-bound by the seductive queen of Egypt, Antony's relationship with Cleopatra actually came at a perfect time in which their union would greatly enhance his foreign military and financial pursuits. Yet, Antony did not weigh the consequences of

¹⁶² *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 12: Cleopatra 800-802.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Mueller, Hans Frederick-Otto, "From Pompey's Return to the Ides of March," lecture in *CLS-126: Rise of the Roman Republic*, 22 February 2011.

such a lengthy and open relationship with this woman, especially when considering Augustus's insecurities and role in promoting propaganda against him. For it was not the relationship itself, but Augustus's promotion of his wrongdoings to the Roman ideal of superiority and his most faithful wife that enabled his affair to ruin him.

Caesar's Affair with Cleopatra: Where did Antony Go Wrong?

It is clear that Antony's relationship with Cleopatra led to his downfall. Yet, when looking at Cleopatra's list of amours, a shocking contrast is discovered to Antony. This is a man who not only walked away without a tarnished reputation, but also was received by Rome and lifted to the height of his career. This is none other than Julius Caesar, a man who we have seen was familiar with many different women with connections to power. Although the affair between Caesar and Cleopatra does not seem to have been less intimate than that between Cleopatra and Antony, the way in which Caesar portrayed it to the Roman public explains the difference in consequences they each experienced.

Caesar's first encounter with Cleopatra did not occur until later in his career, during the end of the civil war. After following Pompey to Egypt and discovering he was killed, Caesar, as Cleopatra's biography discusses, "took [it] upon himself to arrange matters between Cleopatra and her brother."¹⁶⁵ The "matters" refer to the civil war occurring in Egypt the same time the civil war between Pompey and Caesar was coming to a close. Ptolemy, Cleopatra's younger brother, was married to the Cleopatra herself – a marriage unusual by our standards today, but arranged in her father's will as a means of preserving Egyptian power for his family. After his death, their father appointed Cleopatra and Ptolemy joint rulers, but Ptolemy and his advisors drove her from the

¹⁶⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 10: Cleopatra, 800.

throne the year before Caesar's arrival. During this time, she was able to gather forces in Syria to force her brother to reinstate her.¹⁶⁶ Preston asserts that Caesar's involvement was not out of the goodness of his heart, but rather a combination of his retaliation against Pompey's murderers as well as a reaction to an oncoming offense.¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Caesar's involvement with this internal conflict in Egypt, along with the means to which Cleopatra secured his role, illustrate the beginning of their affair that helped both of their political careers tremendously.

Cleopatra's biography indicates that she utilized both Caesar's presence in Egypt and his reputation in general to help her regain her position in the Egyptian government:

Being informed of Caesar's amatory disposition, she resolved to avail herself of it, and, either at his request, according to Plutarch, or of her own accord, clandestinely effected an entrance into the palace where he was residing, and by the charms of her person and voice and the fascination of her manner, obtained such an ascendancy over him, that ... from being the judge between her and her brother, he became her advocate.¹⁶⁸

Preston admits that Cleopatra was very persuasive in convincing Caesar to support her cause, but, as noted previously, he was likely aware that the other side – murderers of his political enemy, which ancient sources recount as an emotional moment for him – were untrustworthy. Preston is sure to discuss Caesar's attraction to Cleopatra's character: "Cleopatra's bold and imaginative act also appealed to Caesar on another level. He knew all about taking calculated all-or-nothing risks and admired courage in others."¹⁶⁹ She further compares Cleopatra's risky strategy of entering Caesar's apartment in a carpetbag to Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, a risk that immediately put him in civil war with Rome, a home he had been absent from for some time.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Preston, "Like a Virgin," in *Cleopatra and Antony*, 67.

¹⁶⁸ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 10: Cleopatra, 800.

¹⁶⁹ Preston, "Like a Virgin," in *Cleopatra and Antony*, 77.

The attraction between Caesar and Cleopatra, according to ancient sources, such as Suetonius, parallels to that between Antony and Cleopatra, as it was a very intimate relationship that Caesar made public. Suetonius describes his famous foreign amour in the following:

*Dilexit et reginas ... sed maxime Cleopatram, cum qua et convivia in primam lucem saepe protraxit et eadem nave thalamego paene Aethiopia tenus Aegyptum penetravit, nisi exercitus sequi recusasset, quam denique accitam in urbem non nisi maximis honoribus praemiisque auctam remisit filiumque natum appellare nomine suo passus est.*¹⁷⁰

He had love affairs with queens too, but above all with Cleopatra, with whom he often feasted until daybreak, and he would have gone through Egypt with her in her state-barge almost to Aethiopia, had not his soldiers refused to follow him. Finally he called her to Rome and did not let her leave until he had ladened her with high honours and rich gifts, and he allowed her to give his name to the child which she bore.¹⁷¹

The difference between Caesar and Antony, however, involves looking at Rome at the time of the affair. With this in mind, Caesar was able to utilize his relationship to Cleopatra in order to gain what he desired from their union, while maintaining enough distance to satisfy the Roman people.

One major difference between Antony and Caesar involves the senate during Caesar's time. Preston describes the senate as being very welcoming towards Cleopatra: "The senate had soon dutifully and obediently ratified a treaty endorsing Cleopatra and her half brother as friends and allies of the Roman people."¹⁷² It was likely that this acceptance came as a result of Caesar's four triumphs through the city, one being over Alexandria, upon his return to Rome in 46 B.C.¹⁷³ Thus, unlike Antony, Caesar conferred honors upon Rome after his union with Cleopatra, thereby retaining his loyalty to the

¹⁷⁰ Suet. *Div. Iul.* LII.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, trans. J.C. Rolfe.

¹⁷² Preston, "Slave of the Times," *Cleopatra and Antony*, 101.

¹⁷³ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 18: Caesar, 552

city. This in turn strengthened his prominence, as he was able to reinstitute his title as dictator.

Although politically Egypt's relationship with Rome was accepted, Caesar would have easily experienced backlash if his personal relationship with the foreign queen got too personal. Preston already notes the unhappiness many Romans felt towards Cleopatra's and Caesar's intimate relationship, defining the source as to why this union was looked down upon: "Caesar was condemned, not admired, for succumbing to Cleopatra's sexual magnetism ... She epitomized an unwholesome, alien, royal and despotic influence on republican Rome."¹⁷⁴ It becomes clear, therefore, that the negative reaction Caesar received pertaining to his relationship with Cleopatra was based on the theory of Roman prominence, as those opposed to such a relationship were concerned about Rome's isolation from the queen's influence, along with their opposition to close relationships with foreigners in general.

Caesar's maintenance of the relationship, therefore, as a political one that was important for Rome's prosperity and reputation helped preserve his career. An example of how he was able to do this evolves from Caesarion, Cleopatra's son allegedly fathered by Caesar. In his biography, it is undisputed that Caesar is the father.¹⁷⁵ In other sources, however, such as Tatum's *Always I am Caesar*, his paternity is questioned, as it is noted that Caesar never acknowledged fathering Caesarion.¹⁷⁶ By doing this, no matter if Caesar was truly the father, he was able to preserve a distance necessary by Roman standards from Cleopatra. This, when compared to the lack of such distance in Antony's relationship with the same woman, helped save Caesar's career from being tarnished.

¹⁷⁴ Preston, "The Ides of March," *Cleopatra and Antony*, 113.

¹⁷⁵ *DGRBM*, vol. I, bio. 18: Caesar, 552.

¹⁷⁶ Tatum, *Always I am Caesar*, 111.

Conclusion:

Antony's legacy seems to condemn him as a man ruined by the passion of an ambitious woman. When looking at his relationships with the women in his life, including the infamous Cleopatra, it becomes clear that Antony was not a passive actor. On the contrary, each of the women he either married or had intimate relationships with provided him with some sort of material or intellectual advantage. From his first wife's monetary endowments to his third wife's political knowledge, Antony was linked to women who were able to further his ambitions and careers.

Cleopatra is no exception to this, as she helped him retain his strong position in Roman politics while he was abroad. Yet, there is no contesting that it was his union with Cleopatra that led to his fatality. This, however, runs much deeper than blind love. Augustus, a forced ally, was constantly in competition with Antony, for they could not maintain a balance of power that would satisfy both men. Therefore, Augustus was able to focus on features of Antony's relationship to Cleopatra that were regarded as unacceptable to Romans of the age, including his children by her, his bestowing of honors onto Egypt rather than Rome itself, and his disregard for his most faithful wife, Augustus's sister Octavia. These oversights, combined with the ambitions of Augustus, Antony, and Cleopatra herself, directly led to Antony's and Cleopatra's downfalls.

In this way, the few seemingly minor differences between Antony's relationship with Cleopatra and that of Cleopatra and Caesar greatly altered Antony's ability to become the most powerful leader in Rome. In turn, this fatal affair turns into one of the best examples of how in ancient Rome, although relationships with women seem to have been carefully utilized to promote political security, sometimes these relationships could

be unintentionally harmful, even if both sides were guided by political and individual interests. We will see that in the case of American presidents, the awareness of acceptable actions and the political and cultural environments of the time played a large role in how Roosevelt's and Clinton's extramarital affairs were received by the public. Also, we will see how the comparison of Roosevelt and Clinton is to that between Caesar and Antony, based on the factors discussed that contribute to how extramarital affairs are treated.

FOSTERING A LEGACY: A CASE STUDY OF FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Introduction:

Ancient Roman politicians, such as Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, were not the only men whose extramarital affairs have been recorded in history. Many men, ranging from medieval kings to contemporary politicians, have engaged in these sorts of relationships. This wide array of unfaithful husbands includes some who have served in the highest political office of one of the most powerful nations of today: President of the United States of America. Like Caesar, most of these presidents are not remembered for their marital disloyalty, but rather for their great political achievements while in office. One such president is Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Biographer Ted Morgan equates Roosevelt to a handful of American presidents who are arguably the most idolized and beloved in history and today. This list includes founding fathers Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, as well as President Abraham Lincoln, credited for preserving the country during the Civil War.¹⁷⁷ Yet, many sources, including Morgan, reference Roosevelt's long-term affair with Mrs. Lucy Mercer Rutherford, a relationship that started during the early stages of his presidency, persisting through both of their marriages up until his death. Why is it, then, that Roosevelt's career was untarnished by this long-standing extramarital affair? Upon examining a number of factors, especially his relationship with his wife Eleanor Roosevelt, his interaction with the media of the age, and the political environment during his administration, it becomes clear that both Franklin Roosevelt's own handling of the affair combined with the

¹⁷⁷ Morgan, Ted, "Epilogue: The Transformation," in *FDR: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 771.

popular sentiments of the time enabled his legacy to flourish without being hampered down by his extramarital relationship.

Reconstructing the First Lady: The Roosevelt Marriage:

Eleanor Roosevelt was for women in the mid-twentieth century what Hillary Clinton is for today's generation. Voluntarily and prompted by the needs of her husband, she grew from a timid, self-conscious woman into a political asset for Franklin Roosevelt. She changed the preceding role of first ladies from a White House hostess to an engaged political advocate for her husband with a strong relationship to his administration and the media. Although reformative, Eleanor still embodied some of the most important features of a traditional first lady, especially loyalty to her husband. Even if preceding Franklin's presidency and throughout his time in the White House the genuineness of their relationship received more doubt than likely any other presidential marriage, her grand impression on the American people during Franklin's political career nonetheless helped bolster his popularity.

Franklin's and Eleanor's marriage had undeniable similarities to the Roman marriages we have seen in the previous chapters. Just as Julius Caesar married women to strengthen his relationships with other powerful political families, Franklin's marriage to Eleanor subsequently strengthened his relationship to another very powerful Roosevelt: Theodore Roosevelt, twenty-sixth President of the United States. Although Franklin was a distant relative of Teddy Roosevelt, Eleanor held a much closer familial and sentimental kinship to this powerful politician. Carl Sferrazza Anthony illustrates the closeness of their bond in the following description of Teddy Roosevelt's wife, Edith,

and her role in Eleanor's relationship with Teddy: "Edith had the burden of long visits from Theodore's brother's daughter, [Anna] Eleanor ... In many ways this niece was like another daughter to 'Uncle Ted,' arousing jealousy in his own daughter Alice."¹⁷⁸

Further into his account, Anthony discusses the actual marriage ceremony between Franklin and Eleanor, indicating the presence of Teddy Roosevelt, president at the time: "The president [Teddy Roosevelt] gave his late brother Elliott's daughter, Eleanor, away in marriage to Franklin, a fifth cousin. Uncle Ted wrote Eleanor, 'Married life has many ... trials,' and advised Franklin, '... No other success in life – not the presidency, or anything else – begins to compare.'"¹⁷⁹ Although the political importance of this connection could have been coincidental, Joseph Persico points to an interesting fact about Franklin Roosevelt's family that could have prevented him from seeking this tie: "Though Franklin's family were Democrats ... [he] was not about to have his family's Democrat affiliation stand in the way of his capitalizing on the TR [Teddy Roosevelt] connection and he worked for the McKinley-Roosevelt ticket."¹⁸⁰ This marriage, whether intentionally or not, undoubtedly strengthened Franklin's association with, and thus relationship to, President Teddy Roosevelt. In addition, as was true for Roman politicians, this relationship, whether through Eleanor's connection to Teddy or through her own character, helped strengthen Franklin's political career.

Franklin's marriage to Eleanor, however, was not met without criticism.

Franklin's own mother was one person opposed to the union: "When Franklin announced

² Anthony, Carl Sferrazza, "Home Again," in *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents' Wives and their Power (1789-1961)*, vol I (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 280.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, "The Cabinet Wife," 311.

¹⁸⁰ Persico, Joseph E., "A Harvard Man," in *Franklin and Lucy: President Roosevelt, Mrs. Rutherford, and the other Remarkable Women in his Life*, (New York: Random House, 2008), 37.

their engagement, his mother begged him to break it off and keep looking.”¹⁸¹ Franklin, however, did not listen to the criticism, not based on his infatuation with Eleanor’s beauty, but based on her personal qualities that would eventually become the most important in molding their relationship and his presidency: “Franklin felt a kinship to Eleanor. He said, ‘She possesse[d] what every member of the Roosevelt family seems always to have, a deep and abiding interest in everything and everybody.’”¹⁸² Indeed, it was their shared interest in preserving Franklin’s political career that would become the defining characteristic of their relationship.

During the beginning of Franklin Roosevelt’s engagement with politics, Eleanor was hesitant to be publicly involved at all, let alone enough to challenge the status quo of political wives. Although her initial involvement in politics revolved around Franklin’s engagement with statewide positions, Eleanor’s acceptable role as a wife paralleled what was seen as the acceptable role of a first lady, with the difference relying on the publicity the latter role received. Maurine Beasley describes this appropriate role in her opinion on the challenges first ladies have and always will face: “As autonomous individuals, they face amorphous boundaries, defined partly by their own personalities and partly by the shifts in public attitudes and perceptions of what women should be and should do.”¹⁸³ Thus, by a combination of her self-declared lack of interest in politics and the constricted role traditionally held by political wives of the time, Eleanor resisted from involving herself in Franklin’s political agenda:

¹⁸¹ Flynt, Larry and David Eisenbach, Ph.D., “The Ballad of Franklin and Eleanor,” in *One Nation Under Sex: How the Private Lives of Presidents, First Ladies and their Lovers Changed the Course of American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 102.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Beasley, Maurine H. “Eleanor Roosevelt and the ‘Newspaper Girls,’” in *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 3.

Eleanor Roosevelt thought that being photographed for and active in one's husband's campaign was improper, and resisted attempts by FDR's manager, Louis Howe, to involve her. As she wrote her 'Dearest Honey' Franklin, "I hate politics!" But Howe persisted, and Eleanor began to make appearances from the rear platform of the train with Franklin. Gradually, she became confident. When Franklin's speeches became a little too long-winded, she would 'yank at his coat-tails.' Louis told reporters to stand at the back of crowds and make funny faces at her, to prompt a broad Roosevelt smile. Howe began calling on Eleanor, to coax out her opinions and discuss FDR's speeches. She began to trust Louis, though she didn't see 'that I'm of the least use on this trip.'¹⁸⁴

Eleanor's hesitation, however, would be short-lived, as her involvement grew, promoted by husband's manager's coaxing as well as by her own accord:

Louis Howe encouraged Eleanor to keep Franklin in politics by herself taking a more active role in political and social reform activities. With the motivation of being a concerned wife, she joined organizations like the League of Women Voters, the Women's Trade Union League, the New York State Democratic party's Women's Division, and a diverse variety of consumer-protection and public-housing movements.¹⁸⁵

Her true commitment to maintaining this type of political involvement was soon tested once Franklin contracted polio. With this virus suddenly leaving Franklin paralyzed, Eleanor had to stand up against his mother to try and maintain Franklin's political career. Although "Sara [Franklin's mother] wanted him [Franklin] to retire to Hyde Park ... Eleanor nervously but boldly told her mother-in-law that she would never accept such a life for Franklin."¹⁸⁶ This was a decision that likely saved Franklin's career in politics. It was also a decision that set her up for a more prominent role in politics than any other American political wife and first lady had held before.

Immediately after Franklin's contraction of polio and Eleanor's dismissal of his mother's wishes, Eleanor had to physically attend events that were made impossible for

¹⁸⁴ Anthony, "Our Regent," *First Ladies*, 381-382.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, "The Duchess," 390.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Franklin to attend due to this disability. Her first act was to lead the Dutchess County delegation to the 1922 state Democratic Convention, where her relationship with the media was signified: “*The New York Times* dubbed her a ‘highly intelligent and capable politician.’”¹⁸⁷ Eleanor, however, though taking on an unprecedented role by this active presence, refrained from associating herself so closely to politics as to refer to herself as a politician: “Eleanor blanched at the thought of herself as such [a politician]. She was just filling in for Franklin.”¹⁸⁸ These two features of Eleanor’s involvement offer another comparison to the ancient Roman marriages, especially to Caesar’s wife Calpurnia and Antony’s wife Octavia. Both of these women were responsible for looking over their husband’s interests when they were physically removed from Rome. And, subsequently, both Calpurnia and Octavia enjoyed high praise from other Roman politicians and historians, the ancient realm of media. As is evident by Eleanor’s reaction after Franklin’s illness as well as the media’s and public’s receipt of her role, Eleanor offers a strong comparison to these ancient political wives.

Eleanor’s active role for Franklin continued during his presidency. Larry Flynt and David Eisenbach discuss her significant contribution to Franklin’s image and policies in their following analysis:

“In those days, a disability was considered a mark of shame ... Eleanor became such an asset for the administration that she was sent around the country in the 1930’s to make personal appearances at coal mines, factories and labor meetings and assure workers her husband was fighting for them.”¹⁸⁹

As these authors explain, Eleanor was vital in preserving Franklin’s image with the American people, a great obstacle considering his disability. Her obligation to help her

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 121.

husband to this capacity grew into a political activism that shattered the precedence established by first ladies before her. Lisa Barry lists Eleanor's accomplishments in this office:

She was the first president's wife to hold – and lose – a government job, the first to testify before a congressional committee, the first to hold press conferences, to speak before a national party convention, to write a syndicated column, to be a radio commentator, to earn money as a lecturer. She effectively changed the role of the first lady from a predominantly social hostess role to a social activist. Indeed, she shattered the ceremonial mold in which the role of the first lady had traditionally been fashioned, and reshaped it around her own skills and commitments to social reform.¹⁹⁰

This list of firsts was groundbreaking for women, especially future first ladies. Yet, it is clear that Eleanor retained a connection to her husband's administration, especially in the public eye. By offsetting her unconventional qualities through the preservation of this important traditional marital role, Eleanor was able to deflect and prevent criticism against her unprecedented character as first lady. In the long run, it was this care Eleanor took to preserve her image that ultimately helped to secure Franklin's image in the public eye as a beloved politician.

To reiterate, Eleanor undoubtedly played an important, active role in politics during Franklin's ascent into and tenure of the presidency. Yet, one very important factor of this role is that Eleanor's work was always relayed back to Franklin. Anthony discusses an example in which her travels for Franklin were very important to the policies he promoted:

Her 'eyes and ears' role proved itself successful early on, after the Caribbean trip. FDR used her reports as background material, and proudly wrote her, 'Everywhere, they spoke of your visit.' If experts came to him

¹⁹⁰ Berry, Lisa R., "Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom," in *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Molly Meijer Wertheimer (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 182.

with information that contradicted her more honest investigations – often left as reports on his night table – he contradicted their rosier versions by opening with, ‘Yes, but my missus tells me ...’¹⁹¹

Thus, although it was Eleanor’s experiences that were furthering Franklin’s understanding of certain issues, they were still only one consideration, though evidently a prominent one, involved in his policy-making. In this way, Eleanor and Franklin made sure her activism did not overstep any boundaries that may have threatened the traditional role of first ladies so much as to harm their public images.

Another important factor about Eleanor’s role in politics concerns the policies she discussed with the press. Although Barry states that Eleanor engaged in press conferences to “construct a public persona ... related to, but separate from, the president’s,”¹⁹² she contradicts herself by alluding to the fact that Eleanor was careful not to speak against her husband’s values and policies. For example, Eleanor was vocal but careful around the time during the development of Franklin’s biggest contribution to domestic American politics: “Although Mrs. Roosevelt spoke publicly about her opposition to existing social and political practices, she was careful not to publicly challenge her husband’s New Deal policies.”¹⁹³

Furthermore, Franklin’s advisors made sure to censor what news Eleanor would discuss with the press. As Beasley states, “On occasion, [Stephen] Early [Franklin’s press secretary] would make sure that the first lady had some ‘real news to present,’ illustrating how the press conferences fit into presidential political communication.”¹⁹⁴ This real

¹⁹¹ Anthony, “... In with the Radical,” in *First Ladies*, 462.

¹⁹² Barry, “Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom,” *Inventing a Voice*, 187.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 184-185.

¹⁹⁴ Beasley, “Eleanor Roosevelt and the ‘Newspaper Girls,’” *First Ladies and the Press*, 12.

news would use Eleanor's activism to directly bolster Franklin's image. The end of Prohibition provides a strong example:

When the White House decided to start serving beer to mark the end of Prohibition, President Roosevelt referred journalists to his wife ... The approach ... allowed the administration to handle a 'hot potato' subject carefully. Eleanor Roosevelt, known to be against drinking, prepared a carefully worded statement indicating that she hoped the change would lead to temperance. With Eleanor rather than Franklin Roosevelt making the announcement, the administration hoped to appease those who still supported Prohibition."¹⁹⁵

These precautions exercised by Franklin's administration and Eleanor herself indicate how Eleanor's innovative and thus potentially problematic role as first lady was balanced by some very important traditional qualities in order to preserve the Roosevelts' public image and acceptance. Although Barry contests that this behind-the-scenes role was a "disguise" to cover her individual political involvement, these features point to the fact that Eleanor's political involvement was quite the opposite from hidden. In fact, both traditionalists and reformists praised Eleanor's obvious involvement in politics, for she pushed the boundaries of appropriate political involvement while simultaneously retaining the proper role and activities of a traditional first lady by advocating the views of her husband.¹⁹⁶

It is this philosophy and perception of the Roosevelt marriage that prevented Eleanor's unconventional role from being criticized. Beasley notes the press's understanding of Franklin's and Eleanor's political relationship:

They [female reporters] defused political criticism of her [Eleanor's] activities to a degree by picturing her as a wife who reported back to her husband on what she had learned during her travels. Since the public knew that Franklin Roosevelt was impaired physically as a result of infantile paralysis ... journalists showed relatively little skepticism about her

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 12-13.

¹⁹⁶ Barry, "Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom," *Inventing a Voice*, 187.

frequent trips. Prior to the election of 1936, for example, Kathleen McLaughlin, a member of the press conference group, praised the first lady in the *New York Times* for acting as her husband's 'eyes and ears.'¹⁹⁷

In a way, Eleanor's uncommon role is explained through this lens by her role as dutiful wife taking on these tasks for the sole benefit of her husband. Combined with her other fulfillment of traditional cultural values, such as raising a family and caring for her husband while he was sick, Eleanor "possessed an identity consistent with societal norms and expectations for women. She fulfilled her roles as a mother and wife [first]."¹⁹⁸

Although it is clear that Eleanor played a delicate role in the office of first lady, this is not meant to take away from her uncontestable contributions to American policy. For example, though Eleanor often advocated Franklin's decisions, sometimes Franklin's policies resulted directly from her personal interests. The creation of the National Youth Administration provides one example of this instance:

After being approached by Harry Hopkins – head of the National Relief Administration – and Aubrey Williams, who were unable to get FDR's time to discuss their program to keep youths in school as well as work, the First Lady went to him. Along with some of her own suggestions, she detailed the entire proposal. 'If it is the right thing to do for the young people,' he agreed, 'it should be done.'¹⁹⁹

The National Relief Administration illustrates Eleanor's symbiotic relationship with Franklin. Recognizing Eleanor's help and input with Franklin's speeches furthers this theory. Sam Rosenman, Franklin's speechwriter, was directed by Franklin himself to seek Eleanor's advice. Through her speechwriting advice, Eleanor also gave suggestions: "She continually impressed ... that we [Franklin and his team] must not be satisfied with

¹⁹⁷ Beasley, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the 'Newspaper Girls,'" in *First Ladies and the Press*, 21-22.

¹⁹⁸ Barry, "Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom," *Inventing a Voice*, 189.

¹⁹⁹ Anthony, "Overwhelmed at the Mere Possibility ...," *First Ladies*, 450.

merely making campaign pledges, [with] the president being under moral obligation to see his domestic reforms through.”²⁰⁰

Eleanor Roosevelt is a name ingrained in history along with her husband’s for her contributions to American society. These include her revitalization of the role of first lady through her political and public engagement, as well as her unwavering support for her husband during his personal and presidential struggles. Although she presented dynamic challenges to the traditional office of the first lady, she balanced them with her marital role as Franklin’s physical and vocal supporter. Anthony states that Eleanor felt that, during the era of Franklin’s presidency, “‘the ideal type of modern wife’ was a partner” to her husband.²⁰¹ This is a position Eleanor embraced throughout her marriage to Franklin, which, as we will see, became more politicized upon the discovery of his infidelities.

A True Political Arrangement: The Ramifications of the Affair:

Although it is clear that Eleanor and Franklin had a strong political relationship, the same cannot be said for their personal relationship. Flynt and Eisenbach characterize their marriage as “the most complicated ... in the history of the presidency.”²⁰² Tainted by the discovery of his extramarital affair with one of Eleanor’s one-time employees, Eleanor’s and Franklin’s relationship became more of an arrangement than a marriage. This relationship was a “dynamic team that led America through the dark days of the

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, “Power and Influence,” *First Ladies*, 463.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, “Overwhelmed at the Mere Possibility...” 450.

²⁰² Flynt and Eisenbach, “The Ballad of Franklin and Eleanor,” *One Nation Under Sex*, 101.

Great Depression and World War II,” but it was not established without difficult personal decisions and agreements made by Franklin and Eleanor.²⁰³

Different factors are pointed to by a number of sources as reasons that prompted Franklin to seek an intimate relationship outside of his marriage. One theory, which nearly all sources agree upon, includes the physical differences between Franklin and Eleanor. Persico portrays the puzzlement experienced by many after Franklin’s and Eleanor’s marriage: “The unlikeliness of Franklin and Eleanor as a couple, noted even by their own children, continues to perplex. Photographs of Franklin in his young manhood reveal a Golden Boy, over six feet tall, now filled out to 161 pounds, and stunningly handsome . . . Eleanor, however, never rises above plain.”²⁰⁴ These questions about appearance differences did not go unnoticed by Eleanor. She is said to have worried whether Franklin would stay with her, even exhibiting jealousy “at the sight of women who ‘crowded around him and exclaimed over his good looks and charm.’”²⁰⁵ Thus, it is possible that, though Eleanor and Franklin shared an intellectual intimacy, there was not that same intimacy physically, at least not throughout their relationship.

Aside from physical appearances, the dynamic of Eleanor’s and Franklin’s relationship after a few years of marriage points to further reasons that prompted him to engage in extramarital affairs. This includes personality differences, made especially evident upon Franklin’s election to the New York State senate, his first political office with varying duties and responsibilities that created a hectic schedule for both Eleanor and himself. Flynt and Eisenbach describe Eleanor’s and Franklin’s different reactions to this change: “Franklin loved the DC social scene and the nonstop dinner parties with

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Persico, “Courtship,” *Franklin and Lucy*, 53.

²⁰⁵ Anthony, “Our Regent,” *First Ladies*, 382.

congress members and lobbyists, but his introverted wife was overwhelmed by the frantic schedule.”²⁰⁶ It was this personality difference that introduced Lucy Mercer into their lives, as Eleanor hired her to be her social secretary in order to better manage her now hectic schedule.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, there are indications that Eleanor herself did not want a physical relationship with Franklin after the birth of their sixth child. Maurine Beasley cites Franklin’s and Eleanor’s children, stating, “According to two of the Roosevelt children, Anna and Elliot, Eleanor refused to have sex with Franklin following the birth of John in March 1916, possibly inadvertently contributing to his affair with Lucy.”²⁰⁸ Although there is no way to discern if these factors did provoke Franklin to have an affair, they do make clear that Eleanor’s and Franklin’s marriage did have some problems concerning their two personalities and desires.

Lucy’s background is quite different from the women today who are in the news for having affairs with presidents. Persico describes her as “[Franklin’s] social superior and ... equal in wealth.”²⁰⁹ Lucy’s socialite family is notable for their American roots, with their ancestors signing the Constitution, naming a town in Maryland, and serving in the Second Continental Congress.²¹⁰ Although her parents’ frivolous spending ended up spoiling their marriage, their reputation allowed their name to remain as a powerful one in Washington, D.C., a claim Beasley reinforces: “Lucy Page Mercer, a beautiful and charming young woman with an impeccable background, even though her family had lost

²⁰⁶ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 103.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Beasley, Maurine H. “Finding a Place,” in *Eleanor Roosevelt: Transformative First Lady* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 23.

²⁰⁹ Persico, “From Riches to Rags,” *Franklin and Lucy*, 28.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

its money.”²¹¹ Rather than a prostitute or young White House intern, Roosevelt sought a relationship with a woman of important social and political connection. Though their clandestine relationship would prevent him from capitalizing on this notoriety, Lucy’s reputation likely served to protect his image; neither would have wanted their relationship to ruin their names in the elite circles of Washington, thus ensuring that both would remain quiet about the affair.

With America’s interest in extramarital affairs of the famous at an all-time high today, it is no wonder that Lucy’s and Franklin’s relationship has resurged. *Time* magazine summarizes their relationship in the following manner:

Hired as a secretary by Eleanor Roosevelt, Mercer ended up having an affair with Roosevelt’s husband. Eleanor discovered love letters between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mercer in 1918, when the presidency was just a distant ambition for her husband. Fearing for his political life, Franklin convinced Eleanor to stay married, promising he would avoid seeing Mercer again and that the two would sleep in separate beds.²¹²

It is this resurgence that condemns Lucy to the same fate as the mistresses in ancient Rome. Although at the time of her affair with Roosevelt her reputation was preserved through secrecy, today she is archived in sources such as the article cited above as one out of many presidential mistresses. She provides an example indicating that the treatment of presidential paramours has not changed from the treatment of unfaithful or promiscuous women of Caesar’s and Antony’s time.

Before Eleanor’s discovery of the love letters, she had fired Lucy, likely for her suspicions about Lucy’s relationship with her husband. Flynt and Eisenbach discuss this, as well as Franklin’s covert reaction to keep Lucy in his life: “Eleanor used America’s

²¹¹ Beasley, “Finding a Place,” *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 23.

²¹² “Top Ten Mistresses,” *Time*, accessed 3 March 2013, <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1908008_1908007_1907977,00.html>

entry into World War I to justify firing Lucy as a wartime sacrifice, and she continued to live in denial about the affair. FDR meanwhile conveniently gave his mistress a job in the Navy Department.”²¹³ It was, as the *Time* article noted, upon the discovery of the letters when Eleanor was forced to address the relationship: “Eleanor unpacked his luggage and found a hefty packet of perfumed letters, tied with a velvet ribbon and addressed to Franklin in a familiar hand. Reading letter after letter Eleanor could no longer deny the affair to herself.”²¹⁴ Eleanor’s ensuing debate and ultimate decision to stay married to Franklin would become a defining moment in their relationship and eventually their legacies.

Many sources note Eleanor’s debate over whether to stay with Franklin. Anthony describes the situation, as well as Franklin’s and his mother’s role in the decision to remain together:

Eleanor openly confronted him [Franklin] about rumors of the affair. She said she would leave him, and warned, ‘My threat was no idle one.’ When Franklin had gone overseas to inspect naval stations, he received letters from Lucy that Eleanor discovered while unpacking his luggage. She flatly offered him a divorce, and his freedom to marry Lucy. At this point, his mother, Sara, entered the fray as mediator, explaining that she would completely cut him off financially if he left Eleanor. Without Sara’s money, it was impossible for Franklin to support two families. Besides, his career would be ruined if he were divorced because of adultery. A deal was struck; Franklin must stop seeing Lucy, the couple would stay married, and Sara would continue providing monetary support.²¹⁵

As Flynt and Eisenbach state not so delicately, Franklin was “unwilling to trade money and power for love and happiness.”²¹⁶ Thus, although it seems her faith was restored in

²¹³ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 104.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

²¹⁵ Anthony, “The Shepherdess,” *First Ladies*, 364.

²¹⁶ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 105.

Franklin by his (empty) promise to not see Lucy again, Eleanor's decision to stay in the marriage dramatically altered the character of their marriage.

Elliot, Franklin's and Eleanor's son, describes the marriage after the discovery of Franklin's affair in the following words: "Through the entire rest of their lives, they never did have a husband-and-wife relationship, but ... they struck up a partnership agreement ... it became a very close and very intimate partnership of great affection – never in a physical sense, but in a tremendously mental sense."²¹⁷ Barry reiterates this sentiment, declaring that Franklin's and Eleanor's relationship became "a formal one that took on the characteristics of a business partnership."²¹⁸ Yet, what their relationship lacked in romance and physical intimacy, it made up for in political benefits – apparently one of the major reasons that prompted them to stay married. As Barry elaborates, "FDR had a trusted confidante and Mrs. Roosevelt had the opportunity to pursue her own political and professional interests" as a result of their continued marriage.²¹⁹ One could not deny, however, that the positives that resulted from the affair did not fix the damages it inflicted on their personal relationship. Anthony quotes one of Franklin's political advisors, stating he "never saw the couple alone together in the same room ... the understanding they had reached years before about maintaining separate lives, interests, and friends, remained intact."²²⁰

Despite Franklin's promise to Eleanor to not see Lucy again, he eventually did continue to see Lucy. Some speculate that Franklin did end the relationship – for a moment, that is. Although it is unclear if Franklin saw her again before he occupied the

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

²¹⁸ Barry, "Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom," *First Ladies*, 184.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Anthony, "Power and Influence," *First Ladies*, 464-465.

White House, there is sufficient evidence that the affair resumed after his presidential election. Flynt and Eisenbach describe his efforts to hide the affair from Eleanor: “Lucy’s visits to the White House were closely timed to avoid Eleanor.”²²¹ Whether it resumed after a period of faithfulness to his wife or was ongoing from its discovery, the relationship definitely remained an integral part of Franklin’s life. It was Lucy, not Eleanor, who was with Franklin when he died, at the White House one afternoon with a handful of other people, including Franklin’s and Eleanor’s own daughter, Anna.²²² Upon her discovery of Lucy’s presence, Eleanor reacted in a manner that many respect and praise:

At first, [Eleanor was] surprised and perhaps hurt. But by that time had become so understanding of what loyalty meant that she didn’t hold it against [Lucy] ... Lucy’s presence as an entertaining cocktail companion, Eleanor realized, could never diminish the far deeper spiritual commitment that she and Franklin had fashioned for themselves.²²³

It becomes evident that Eleanor remained with Franklin because of this spiritual and intellectual connection they shared. By doing so, she enabled and helped the career of a man whom she deeply cared for. Simultaneously, she developed her interests by directly contributing to his political successes, which enabled her to have a continued presence in politics after his death, leaving behind a very important legacy for women that continues to be idolized today.

Political Distractions and an Overlooking Media:

Although Eleanor and Franklin came to a mutual agreement about how they would deal with Franklin’s affair with Lucy, this does not explain why there was no

²²¹ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 126.

²²² Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 511.

²²³ *Ibid*, 512.

public reaction to the extramarital relationship. Unlike today, there were a number of factors that prevented news of the affair from being plastered on newspapers and tabloids. Specifically, the media's role in portraying the private lives of presidents was much different than what it is today. In addition, the political environment of Franklin's administration helped to divert attention away from personal matters. These features of American society combined with Franklin's own caution with the affair, successfully protected him from a public scandal.

Franklin was adamant about keeping his relationship with Lucy a secret to most people, including his own wife. Despite his efforts, people in Washington were aware of the relationship. This included other prominent politicians as well as members of the media. Yet, indicated in some sources, neither of these groups of individuals reacted hostilely towards the affair. Perhaps this is because they were not surprised by the relationship, for presidents before Roosevelt's time also had relationships with women who were not their wives. Because of this acceptance, as Flynt and Eisenbach discuss, the press during the mid-twentieth century held an ethical boundary that prevented them from publishing the story:

The same press corps that shielded Franklin's disability from public view also ignored his extramarital relationship with Lucy Mercer ... Journalist Raymond Clapper wrote in his diary in 1933 that gossip about the Mercer affair 'buzzed around Washington,' yet Clapper and other reporters obeyed era's rules of journalistic ethics and never wrote about it.²²⁴

This quote points to a number of factors about the press during this age. The opening statement that indicates that the press hid Franklin's disability emphasizes the media's desire to portray their president in an idealized light. As noted earlier in this chapter, having a disability was not as socially acceptable as it is today. Thus, Franklin's public

²²⁴ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 111.

image overlooked this taboo with the help of the media's compliance. This combined with the ethics that journalists followed during this era, successfully shielding his reputation from slander about the affair.

This is not to say that the press during this era was not interested in the personal lives of the president. Eleanor noticed this interest during her press conferences, as discussed by Beasley: "Long before the celebrity-crazed culture of today, Roosevelt realized that the public had an almost insatiable appetite for tidbits about the lives of presidents and their families."²²⁵ Yet, unlike many famous people today, Eleanor was able to maintain a boundary between her personal life and the press, only discussing what she wished to discuss: "Although some topics were off-limits, such as her children's divorces ... Roosevelt capitalized on the eagerness of the news media to write human interest stories that reinforced the limitations of women's sphere in the early twentieth century."²²⁶ Eleanor's press conferences alone signify her commitment to addressing and tackling the limitations of women during this era, as male reporters were barred from entrance.²²⁷ Her discussion, however, retained focus on political issues, such as foreign affairs, defense, and the economy. Whether due to the difference between media of the Roosevelt administration versus the prodding media of today, or due to Eleanor's stable relationship with the press, her wishes, as well as Franklin's, to keep certain issues, especially the affair, out of the news were listened to and agreed with.

The press's desire to protect Franklin's image was likely also influenced by the political climate of the time. Flynt and Eisenbach share their views on the press's role, stating, "The press certainly was not going to expose a presidential sex scandal in the

²²⁵ Beasley, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the 'Newspaper Girls,'" *First Ladies and the Press*, 19.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

middle of World War II, when such an act would have bordered on treason. During the war, the commander-in-chief's whereabouts became a closely guarded national secret."²²⁸

This is a hard concept for readers today to understand, for we have no ongoing national situation that compares to America's involvement in World War II. Dexter Perkins illustrates how large of a role the war played in the lives of Americans: "American participation in World War I was a small affair compared with participation in World War II. The year 1920 had seen a real reaction away from involvement in world affairs. The years after 1945 saw new complications, new commitments, new interpretations of the American role."²²⁹ The constant attention on the war effort, as well as Franklin's role in determining America's place in the war, helped to divert attention away from his personal life while also pushing the media to promote an idealized portrayal of him. Beasley fortifies this theory, alleging that Franklin used wartime censorship to "avoid public notice of his train stopping in New Jersey en route to Hyde Park in 1944 so he could see Lucy Mercer Rutherford at her estate."²³⁰

World War II was not the only event preoccupying America's mind during the Roosevelt administration. Franklin also had domestic concerns to address after the stock market crash and Great Depression early on in his presidency. With the New Deal programs, Franklin took on the role of transforming America's economy on a scale encountered never-before. Perkins calls this "the most universally praised of the president's actions."²³¹ With the country at such a desperate and low point, Franklin's engagement with the people through the development of social aid programs and constant

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 127.

²²⁹ Perkins, Dexter, "Prologue," in *The New Age of Franklin Roosevelt: 1932-45* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 3.

²³⁰ Beasley, "Backing the War Effort," *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 207.

²³¹ Perkins, "The Two Phases of the Early new Deal," *The New Age of Franklin Roosevelt*, 13.

communication through his fireside chats helped to bolster his image with most Americans. Their reliance on him as the country's leader therefore helped retain his positive image, for the people were more concerned with his role as president rather than his role as husband.

Conclusion:

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt continue to hold a prominent position in American history due to their dynamic roles on the national stage. Their uniqueness is not limited to their professional lives, illustrated by how their marriage was drastically affected by Franklin's infidelities. It was this point in their relationship, however, that transformed them from a married couple into a strong political partnership that would help promote Franklin's bid and long-lasting success in the presidency. Eleanor, too, was able to benefit from the affair and the subsequent marital arrangement her and Franklin agreed upon. Barry notes that, after Franklin's death, Eleanor "continued to be the most effective woman in American politics," through her position on the United Nations council and her role in promoting global humanitarian efforts.²³²

The benefits Franklin and Eleanor enjoyed as a result of the affair were not due solely to their reactions. The media, cultural and political climate of the era promoted the president's privacy, successfully preventing news of the scandal from becoming public knowledge. This likely contributed to Franklin's popularity during his presidency, as well as his continued popularity today. As a man who is remembered for his successful presidency during a very difficult time for America and the world, his legacy is, for the

²³² Barry, "Eleanor Roosevelt: A Rhetorical Reconstruction of First Ladydom," *Inventing A Voice*, 198-199.

most part, entirely removed from any negative backlash concerning his extramarital affair. We will see in the upcoming chapter, however, that these outside factors changed at the turn of the century. Other politicians and media personnel were no longer quiet about extramarital relationships, and the political tranquility of the era allowed for a more critical assessment of the president. These few factors converged to create a tumultuous public reaction towards President Clinton's extramarital affair, compared to the privacy and acceptance President Roosevelt enjoyed.

ADULTERY AND CELEBRITY: A CASE STUDY OF BILL CLINTON

Introduction:

To conclude this study of extramarital affairs, the most publicized sex scandal in living memory to occur in the Oval Office must be discussed. This is, of course, President Bill Clinton's sexual relationship with one of the young White House interns, Monica Lewinsky. This is an affair that had an unwelcome impact on his presidency and continues to influence his legacy today.

But why is this the case? History shows that there is a substantial list of other presidents who have engaged in extramarital affairs, some much more scandalous than Monica's and Bill's relationship. We have seen one example in Franklin D. Roosevelt, a president who began a long-standing affair with his wife's social secretary early into his political career as a state senator that continued during his presidency until his death. In addition to Roosevelt, a simple Google search turns up pages upon pages of links leading to articles that question nearly every president's faithfulness to his wife. One such article, written by blogger Nolan Thomas, describes a number of well-known presidential scandals. This list includes Thomas Jefferson's secret family with one of his slaves, Warren Harding's mistress who blackmailed the Republican Party in order to be paid for her cooperative silence, Dwight D. Eisenhower's failed consummation with his long-standing mistress, John F. Kennedy's insatiable appetite for sex, and Lyndon B. Johnson's "harem of women."²³³ These men, some much more memorable than others, are rarely remembered or condemned for their sex scandals, and the scrutiny and

²³³ Thomas, Nolan "Sexual Affairs by U.S. Presidents," *Nolan Thomas HubPages* (16 September 2011). <<http://nolanthomas.hubpages.com/hub/Sexual-Affairs-by-US-Presidents>>

criticism they faced for such affairs is not even slightly comparable to that which Clinton faced.

The reality of the situation is that Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky is now ingrained in history for a number of reasons. The root of this conclusion begins with Bill's marriage to one of the most powerful women in American politics historically and today: Hillary Rodham Clinton. No matter Bill's faithfulness, many sources suggest that Bill and Hillary have a relationship that was inevitably bound to greatly challenge the status quo of previous presidential marriages. It is their unconventional marriage in terms of power equality that attracted, and still attracts, much media attention and public criticism. In addition, there were many factors outside of Clinton's control that contributed to the highly public nature of the affair. This includes the political dynamic of the era, especially the beginning of partisanship that greatly characterizes our government today, the media's bounding technological advances and need to satisfy the public's thirst for gossip, and, finally, the cultural changes the United States was experiencing and, in some cases, resisting. All of these features, combined with Clinton's own errors in both pursuing a relationship with Lewinsky and his response after news of the affair broke, converged to create one of the most memorable presidential sex scandals of American history.

Revitalizing the First Lady: Hillary Rodham Clinton:

It is common, even today, to hear speculation about the Clinton marriage. Many characterize it as an empty political arrangement, claiming that Bill and Hillary stay married for the sake of their public image. To counter these accusations, both Bill's and

Hillary's autobiographies emphasize the romantics of their relationship, recounting their nerves when they met at law school and how their relationship developed during those years into a strong attraction. Yet, even their autobiographies cannot hide the gains both were able to achieve as a result of their marriage. Although it is unfair to categorize the Clinton marriage with the political marriages that occurred in ancient Rome, there are certain parallels, especially when considering the political benefits each achieved through their union.

Many today recognize Hillary Clinton as an independent and strong woman, but most may not realize how unprecedented her role as first lady truly was. Maurine H. Beasley lists some of her achievements:

She was the first president's wife to hold an advanced degree and to have been a practicing attorney before moving into the White House ... She was the first president's wife to set up an office alongside her husband's advisors in the West Wing of the White House as well as to have her own office for social affairs in the East Wing, the traditional domain of the first lady's staff. She was the first president's wife to chair an important task force – one entrusted with reforming the nation's fragmented health care system; although the effort failed, it identified her as a key policymaker. She is the first president's wife to insist on the appointment of several women to top administration posts ... and she was the first president's wife to serve as a global advocate for women.²³⁴

What all of these points emphasize is Hillary's activism during Bill's presidency.

Although most of the first ladies generally advocated some causes during their husband's presidency, Hillary actually held several important leadership and policymaking roles within the federal government. Before her husband's last year as president, Hillary continued making history in this sense, when she became the first lady to hold an elected

²³⁴ Beasley, Maurine H., "Hillary Rodham Clinton as Media Polarizer," in *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 202.

public office herself: “no other predecessor has run for a seat in the U.S. Senate (or any other elected office for that matter), while occupying that role [first lady].”²³⁵

One first lady Hillary Clinton is often compared to is none-other than Eleanor Roosevelt. We have already seen how unprecedented Mrs. Roosevelt’s role was as first lady, specifically due to her political knowledge and her close relationship with the media. Beasley characterizes this common sentiment in the following characterization of Eleanor:

She expanded horizons for her successors, establishing the right for presidents’ wives to have a public presence as long as they did not openly disagree with their husbands’ views. She also claimed the privilege of pursuing an independent career as a way of establishing individual autonomy and self-worth, although most of her successors, apart from Hillary Rodham Clinton, have not followed in this direction.²³⁶

This description shows how Eleanor and Hillary are both set apart from other first ladies due to their political vigor. Yet, Eleanor was constrained by factors that either Hillary was not affected by or that Eleanor herself was too cautious to challenge.

The major difference between Hillary’s and Eleanor’s roles as first ladies revolves around the publicity of their political activities. Carl Sferrazza Anthony describes Eleanor’s more hidden position in politics in the following description of her behavior while her husband, Franklin Roosevelt, was governor of New York: “Upon Franklin’s gubernatorial inauguration, she had publicly removed herself, fearing conflict-of-interest charges, resigning from her political groups, halting her lobbying and speeches, assuring him that ‘you see, I’m being most discreet.’”²³⁷ When at one point during Franklin’s

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, “Eleanor Roosevelt and the ‘Newspaper Girls,’” 24.

²³⁷ Anthony, Carl Sferrazza, “... Overwhelmed at the Mere Possibility...,” in *First Ladies: The Saga of the Presidents’ Wives and their Power (1789-1961)*, vol. I (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 450.

presidency Eleanor did try to become more public about her political involvement, she faced immediate criticism. It was this backlash that provoked her to return back to her more behind-the-scenes role. Beasley relays the events that led to this retreat, mainly attributing Eleanor's reaction to the press's own reaction to her appointment:

When Eleanor Roosevelt received an official, although unpaid, appointment as assistant director of the Office of Civil Defense in September 1941, her press relations changed. She was forced to hold press briefings at civil defense headquarters, where male as well as female reporters quizzed her about alleged inefficiency in administration and favoritism in hiring. Martha Strayer, a reporter for the *Washington Daily News*, noted that these conferences, unlike her others, put the first lady 'on the defensive.' In February 1942, Roosevelt resigned as the result of the scathing disapproval she received from the press for promoting the employment of friends in civil defense jobs and proposing that dancing be taught in bomb shelters as a form of physical fitness.²³⁸

Eleanor's resignation ended up saving her image with the press, as she returned back to her post as Franklin's hidden political advisor. As Beasley notes, "After her resignation, the press softened its condemnation, picturing her as a woman of good intentions."²³⁹

Thus, although many compare Hillary to the unprecedented Eleanor Roosevelt, Eleanor did, in some very important ways, drastically differ from Hillary, a woman who, as we will see, held a very unapologetic and public role in politics during Bill's presidency.

Hillary's importance to Bill during his political pursuits directly relates to her unconventional role as first lady. Her character was clearly a factor that spurred Bill's interest in her upon their first interaction. The following description offered in Bill's autobiography illustrates this point, as he highlights her strong personality: "She [Hillary] had thick dark blond hair and wore eyeglasses and no makeup, but she conveyed a sense

²³⁸ Beasley, Maurine H., "Eleanor Roosevelt and the 'Newspaper Girls,'" in *First Ladies and the Press: The Unfinished Partnership of the Media Age* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 19.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

of strength and self-possession I had rarely seen in anyone, man or woman ... I intend[ed] on introducing myself ... I was determined to spend some time with her.”²⁴⁰ Further into his description of their developing relationship, Bill notes some important people he met during their courtship. These people would later become important political resources for Bill, a fact that he does not try to deny or hide. “By mid-May, I wanted to be with Hillary all the time. As a result, I met several of her friends, including Susan Graber ... whom I later appointed to a federal judgeship in Oregon ... and Neil Steinman, the brightest man I met at Yale, who raised the first funds for me in Pennsylvania in 1992.”²⁴¹ This quote exemplifies how Bill’s relationship with Hillary, a woman challenging the status quo of women’s traditional roles, directly connected him to people that furthered his political career.

Not only was Bill’s relationship with Hillary able to connect him to other important people by association, but Hillary herself proved to be a valuable resource for him, starting during his initial pursuit of political office. After holding the office of attorney general in Arkansas, but losing the race for re-election, Hillary realized some changes needed to be made in order to strengthen Bill’s chance at other political offices in the future. Beasley describes Hillary’s reaction to this loss in the following quote:

The couple was shocked when he [Bill] was defeated for a second term in 1980. When she learned that one of the reasons was perceived voter unhappiness with her bookish appearance and insistence on using her own name, Hillary Rodham quickly took his name and spruced up her wardrobe to present a more feminine image to the public.²⁴²

It becomes clear that Hillary was willing to make sacrifices in order to help her husband achieve his professional goals. This example of changing materialistic features, however,

²⁴⁰ Clinton, Bill, “Chapter Seventeen,” in *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 181-182.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁴² Beasley, “Hillary Rodham Clinton as Media Polarizer,” *First Ladies and the Press*, 211.

is something Hillary rarely agreed to do. Rather than pleasing the public, and later the press, with her image, both Bill and Hillary began to focus more on her importance as a political contributor to Bill's policy decisions.

Hillary's ability to help Bill politically is evident during most of the offices Bill held, statewide and federally. For example, when Bill was governor of Arkansas, Hillary played an active role in statewide education reform that helped strengthen Bill's image on the national stage:

As chair of the education committee, she traveled around the state, holding hearings and getting a sense of the breadth and depth of the issues ... She developed tough policies designed to improve the system, and though they were unpopular, they work[ed] ... Many observers have noted that it was the success of education reform that catapulted then governor Clinton to center stage at the 1988 Democratic National Convention ... His lengthy prime-time speech made headlines and earned him an invitation to Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show*, where he charmed the national audience with self-deprecating humor.²⁴³

It is clear that Hillary's efforts had a strong influence on Bill's political image. As described above, her work, combined with Bill's personality, helped set the stage for his candidacy for the President.

In this way, Hillary seems comparable to political wives of ancient Rome that we have examined, who were valued for the political benefits and gains their husbands received as a result of the marriage. For example, Antony's marriage to his third wife, Fulvia, exhibits the gains Bill achieved due to his relationship with Hillary. Fulvia was a prized political wife not because she simply watched after her husband's affairs when he was away, which was a duty for many political wives of that era, but because of her own

²⁴³ Mattina, Anna F., "Hillary Rodham Clinton: Using Her Vital Voice," in *Inventing a Voice: The Rhetoric of American First Ladies of the Twentieth Century* ed. Wertheimer, Molly Meijer (Lanham, Maryland; Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 422.

aspirations, as Plutarch states, “to rule a ruler and command a commander.”²⁴⁴ Perhaps due to the legal constraints preventing Fulvia herself from ever gaining a prominent political office, or maybe just due to her desire for power and influence, Fulvia helped her husband achieve great political successes so she too could reap the benefits.

Although Hillary and Fulvia have been proven to be important political assets for their husbands, there are two important distinctions between them. First, though critics of the Clintons feel that their relationship is solely a political arrangement, some of Hillary’s choices show that she had made decisions to support Bill that were not in some of her best interests. This contrasts to the marital arrangement between Fulvia and Antony, which Fulvia utilized to attach herself to one of the most important politicians of the era, thus reaping the benefits he would enjoy in that position. Anna Mattina points to an example relatively early on during Bill’s and Hillary’s relationship where Hillary made such a choice:

In 1974, she went to Washington, D.C., taking a position with the House Judiciary Committee investigating what was to become known as the Watergate scandal. She impressed supervisors and peers with her energy, objectivity, and knowledge of legal procedures. The position ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon, whereupon Rodham was ‘deluged with offers of high-paying jobs at prestigious law firms on the East Coast’ as well as an offer to return to her position at the Children’s Defense Fund. Instead, shocking friends and colleagues alike, Hillary traveled to Arkansas to help with Bill Clinton’s (unsuccessful) congressional campaign.²⁴⁵

Thus, instead of furthering her own career as a lawyer, Hillary was willing to help Bill with his political pursuits. The risk she took here could have ultimately hurt her own career, which is a risk Fulvia was unlikely to take concerning her status in society. This

²⁴⁴ Plutarch, “Antony,” 161 (X).

²⁴⁵ Mattina, “Hillary Rodham Clinton: Using Her Vital Voice,” *Inventing A Voice*, 421.

chance Hillary was willing to take alludes to the second distinction between Fulvia and Hillary: Hillary's publicized role as a politically active woman who helped her husband versus Fulvia's behind-the-scenes political engagement. Coincidentally, as seen in the comparison to Eleanor, Hillary's publicized role is also what set her apart from all previous first ladies. This active and public position as one of Bill's most important official and unofficial political advisors has become one of the defining features of her time as first lady.

Not only did Bill not try to hide Hillary's political helpfulness for Bill, but he also advertised it from the start of his presidential campaigning. After his success as governor in Arkansas, Bill used the campaign slogan "buy one get one free," referring to the fact that if he were elected, his wife would not idly occupy the position of first lady, but rather be just as politically active as him.²⁴⁶ Beasley notes that this type of campaigning was the first of its kind: "Never before had a presidential candidate been so open about the advisory role that he expected his wife to play."²⁴⁷ This was not an empty promise, for Bill immediately instilled Hillary with official political power: "Her husband appointed her to head the President's Health Care Task Force five days after his inauguration."²⁴⁸ The consequences of this type of advertising are illustrated in Beasley's comments below:

When he took office, President Clinton made no secret of the fact that she was one of his chief advisers and that he valued her contribution to his administration. In doing so, he gave public recognition to the wielding of power by a wife, which led to arguments over the appropriate dimensions of the first lady's role.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Beasley, "Hillary Rodham Clinton as Media Polarizer," *First Ladies and the Press*, 218.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

Due to the publicized nature of Hillary's role in the White House, she faced constant criticism. This criticism fits into the discussion about the political, cultural, and media environment during the Clinton administration that enabled the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal to be publicized to such a strong degree.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Hillary and Bill had a very unconventional marriage when considering Hillary's role. It was the unique nature of both the boundaries of tradition that were pushed and the publicity surrounding Hillary's position as first lady that focused much attention on them. It will become clear after examining other factors of Bill's presidency that this attention, and later the criticism they faced due to the non-traditional manner in which they occupied the positions of president and first lady, influenced the public's reaction to Bill's extramarital affair with Lewinsky. In addition, the dynamics of Bill's and Hillary's relationship will prove to be pertinent to the consequences Bill's and Hillary's images faced as a result of the affair's publication.

Welcoming Self-Destruction: Bill Clinton's Personal Mistakes:

Although there were a number of factors out of Bill Clinton's control that contributed to the mass attention his affair with Monica Lewinsky received, there were also a number of errors he himself made. When compared to the extramarital affairs of other presidents, such as Franklin Roosevelt, Clinton's errors in pursuing and dealing with his affair with Lewinsky are highlighted. In addition, his errors are emphasized further when compared to his affair with another woman, Gennifer Flowers, which became a public story that broke during the earliest stages of his presidential candidacy. The manner in which he addressed the news of this affair greatly differed from how he

addressed his affair with Lewinsky, especially to the public. By recognizing this, the immediate dramatic increase in public attention Clinton received once the truth of his and Lewinsky's relationship was discovered is more understandable.

The first and most obvious error in judgment Clinton made was pursuing a relationship with Monica Lewinsky in general. Lewinsky's character alone point to the risks Clinton was taking by allowing a sexual relationship to ensue over a long period of time. Alan M. Dershowitz discusses his opinions on Clinton's decision to engage in an affair with Lewinsky by stating, "It is difficult to imagine any action more reckless than Oval Office sex with a young blabbermouth whose goal was probably as much to brag about her conquest of the president as to engage in an intimate relationship."²⁵⁰ Although Lewinsky defends her relationship with the president in her biography, her descriptions of their encounters are warning flags to readers that the president should have acknowledged.

First, Lewinsky does not deny that she told many people about the affair, stating in an interview with Barbara Walters that she told over ten people about her relationship with the president, justifying it by saying that they were girlfriends that she trusted "implicitly."²⁵¹ This was a category of women that included Linda Tripp, Lewinsky's colleague who secretly recorded the conversations she and Lewinsky had about the affair then handed the tapes over to prosecutors, single-handedly enabling them to motion for the president's impeachment. As a young woman eager to gossip with her friends - friends whose loyalty is obviously questionable - she instantly becomes a liability for anyone hoping to keep a relationship with her secret. Secondly, her decision to go to

²⁵⁰ Dershowitz, Alan M., "How Did We Get Here?," in *Sexual McCarthyism: Clinton, Starr, and the Emerging Constitutional Crisis* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 7.

²⁵¹ Walters, Barbara, "Interview with Monica Lewinsky," on *ABC: 20/20*, 3 March 1999.

Washington, D.C. points to concerns about what her focus was: “Unlike other interns, Monica had no political ambitions – indeed, she wasn’t even interested in politics – and certainly hadn’t brought with her to Washington an agenda.”²⁵² Although in her biography she claims she had no agenda when arriving in Washington, in her interview with Walters, Lewinsky states that she did have one goal: escaping Andy Bleiler, a man she had engaged in an affair with beginning at the age of eighteen.²⁵³ With men and relationships on her mind, and no vocational or political opportunities interesting her, it is fair to assume that if a relationship did begin to develop in Washington with anyone, it could turn into something she would actively pursue or cling to.

Thirdly, Monica’s desires for Clinton are proven by her own admission to have been unyielding and irrepressible. Before even meeting the president, Monica was hit with desire for him: “It was the smell of eucalyptus wafting along the powder-blue-carpeted corridors that first seduced Monica. Then the sight of a slightly bored-looking Secret Service agent standing by a heavy-framed mahogany door made her heart skip a beat. For behind that door was the hallowed Oval Office.”²⁵⁴ Being attracted to a man in such a powerful position is not unusual for a woman, for, as Larry Flynt and David Eisenbach point out, “Clinton won the support of 70 percent of unmarried women during his 1996 reelection campaign,” which is quoted from a study that “compiled the nighttime fantasies that dozens of women had for their president.”²⁵⁵ Yet, Monica’s actual pursuit of the President of the United States is what sets her apart from most other

²⁵² Morton, Andrew, “Monica Goes to Washington,” in *Monica’s Story* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 63.

²⁵³ Walters, “Interview with Monica Lewinsky.”

²⁵⁴ Morton, “Monica Goes to Washington,” *Monica’s Story*, 63.

²⁵⁵ Flynt, Larry and David Eisenbach, Ph.D., “The Full Bill Clinton,” in *One Nation Under Sex: How the Private Lives of Presidents, First Ladies and their Lovers Changed the Course of American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 225.

women. As her biography cites, Monica definitely fell into the category of women who fanaticized about the president, stating herself, “It was just fun and I would be lying if part of the excitement was not that it was the president.”²⁵⁶ She also admits to being flirtatious with him before any intimate encounters occurred, giggling in her interview with Walters about when she once lifted her jacket in his office, revealing her underwear, when she knew he was watching.²⁵⁷

Monica’s active pursuit of President Clinton grew into an insistence on seeing him once their sexual encounters had begun. Up to the point news of the scandal broke, Monica continually tried contacting the president, even after she had been transferred from the White House to the Pentagon. She would call Bill Clinton’s secretary, Betty Currie, to try and talk to the president, for reasons ranging from a pep talk about her meeting with Ambassador Richardson to letting him know that she left sweets with his secretary for him.²⁵⁸ Although Lewinsky refers to those of the president’s staff who transferred her to the Pentagon as “the meanies,” it is highly unbelievable that the president would have realistically wanted her to remain in the White House for fear of growing suspicions about their relationship.²⁵⁹ This theory is strengthened by his decision to end the affair with Lewinsky, a day she refers to as “D-Day,” or “Dump Day.”²⁶⁰ Yet, even Lewinsky recognizes that she was too invested in the relationship at the time Clinton tried to end it, admitting that she was out of control and was at the point she should have sought professional help, either psychologically or in the form of anti-

²⁵⁶ Morton, “He Was Like Rays of Sunshine,” *Monica’s Story*, 80.

²⁵⁷ Walters, “Interview with Monica Lewinsky.”

²⁵⁸ Morton, “Everyone Gets a Job with a Little Help,” *Monica’s Story*, 161, 168.

²⁵⁹ Walters, “Interview with Monica Lewinsky.”

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

depressants.²⁶¹ It is clear that allowing a relationship over the course of two years to continue with this particular woman was hazardous to the president's reputation on its own. Combined with the other blunders Bill Clinton made in handling the affair publicly, as well factors outside of his control, this relationship quickly built up into a scandal that had the potential to poison his presidency and legacy.

A second mistake President Clinton made in dealing with his affair with Lewinsky is how he originally addressed it once it became public. Dershowitz notes that, for no obligatory reason, Clinton made a public statement on January 26th, 1998, denying ever having any sexual relations with "that woman, Miss Lewinsky."²⁶² This was a poor decision that, as Dershowitz argues, probably seemed like a quick fix to Clinton and his administration. In reality, however, Clinton would eventually be forced to admit that he did have some sort of sexual relationship with Lewinsky. In this moment, although he was not under oath, his opponents would use the statement to question his trustworthiness. As Craig Allen Smith suggests in his article surveying the rhetorical crisis Clinton was engaged with, this "uninvited statement" about his relationship with Lewinsky "seriously flawed" the defenses he would be able to make if questioned under oath, which, as we know, would eventually happen at his impeachment trial.²⁶³

Continuing with Clinton's evasiveness and denial of his relationship with Lewinsky, his third flaw in handling the affair spurs from the sexual harassment accusations he was being investigated for at the same time of the affair. This case, known as the Paula Jones case, and the legal proceedings of it which Clinton and Lewinsky were

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Dershowitz, "How Did We Get Here?," in *Sexual McCarthyism*, 21.

²⁶³ Smith, Craig Allen, "Bill Clinton in Rhetorical Crisis: The Six Stages of Scandal and Impeachment," in *Images, Scandal, and Communication Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, ed. Denton, Robert E. and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 175.

involved, is what Kenneth Starr, the prosecutor, used to ensnare Clinton. Starr claimed that Clinton had told employees, including Lewinsky, to lie about their relationship, and Clinton's own false testimony in the case allowed charges of perjury to be pursued against him. Clinton defends his innocence in his autobiography:

In October, she [Lewinsky] asked me to help her get a job in New York, and I did. She had received two offers and accepted one, and late in December, she came to the White House to say good-bye. By then, she had received her subpoena in the Jones case. She said she didn't want to be deposed, and I told her some women had avoided the questioning by filing affidavits saying that I had not sexually harassed them.²⁶⁴

Thus, after the truth of the affair was discovered, Lewinsky's affidavit was proven false. This could have gotten Lewinsky into serious legal troubles for lying under oath, but it became useful, specifically after Starr was able to probe the truth out of her. With this and with Clinton's own testimony, prosecutors were able to trap him in the ongoing Jones case with charges of perjury.

Clinton's decision to testify at the Jones case without telling his lawyers the truth of his relationship with Lewinsky would become the legal feature of the affair that almost gave the prosecutors in the impeachment trial enough strength to win the case. Eli Zaretsky explains the dangers this decision presented to Clinton:

He [Clinton] consistently lied to every friend ... to his lawyers, to his advisors, to his wife, and to his daughter [about his relationship with Lewinsky]. This meant that between the time that Monica Lewinsky's name appeared on the Paula Jones witness list on December 17, 1997, and Clinton's grand jury testimony on August 17, 1998, he received no advice, feedback, or consolation.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Clinton, Bill, *My Life*, 774.

²⁶⁵ Zaretsky, Eli, "The Culture Wars of the 1960s and the Assault on the Presidency: The Meaning of the Clinton Impeachment," in *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*, ed. Berlant, Lauren and Lisa Duggan (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 25.

Furthermore, Clinton's decision to litigate the case in general rather than trying to settle or default it enabled his affair with Lewinsky and his lies about it to be publicized, and also considerably threatened his presidency. Dershowitz discusses Clinton's legal options in dealing with the Jones case, stating that Clinton agreed to a lawsuit because it "helped him in the short run – by avoiding the negative headlines of a settlement or default."²⁶⁶ Yet, as with his initial public denial about his relationship with Lewinsky, this decision would come back later to harm his image. His testimony in the Jones case, in which the president stated, "I have never had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. I've never had an affair with her," would give the perjury charges against him credibility.

Evidently, in a number of legal, public, and personal decisions, Bill Clinton made errors that would contribute to the Lewinsky affair's popularity. Looking back on Franklin Roosevelt, some of Clinton's mistakes are emphasized in comparison to Roosevelt's careful handling of his affair with Lucy Mercer. Lucy was higher on the employee scale than Monica Lewinsky, as a social secretary, and Franklin's initial advances towards her occurred before he was president. It was her reputation in Washington, D.C., however, that suggests that she would likely keep her relationship with Roosevelt a secret. As a socialite who experienced how reputations could be harmed through the frivolous actions of her parents, it is very conceivable that she understood what rumors of an affair would do to her name – especially when the affair first started while she was unmarried. Additionally, Roosevelt's affair with Mercer was not completely hidden from everyone. Various people in Washington, including his own daughter, not only knew of the relationship, but helped him conceal it. These seemingly minor differences, along with a number of different external factors, point to some

²⁶⁶ Dershowitz, *Sexual McCarthyism*, 21.

smarter and more carefully thought out decisions President Roosevelt made concerning his affair that could have worked to preserve his career from the backlash infidelities could create.

It is clear by Franklin Roosevelt's example that Clinton's poor decisions about his affair with Lewinsky laid the framework for his critics. Yet, looking at another one of Clinton's past extramarital affairs provides the best example to strengthen the role these decisions played in developing the negative consequences that resulted from his relationship with Lewinsky. This is his affair with Gennifer Flowers, a television reporter Bill Clinton first met when he was attorney general.²⁶⁷ Clinton first cites her in his autobiography when Larry Nicholas, whom he calls a "disgruntled former employee of the Development Finance Authority," began accusing Clinton of using the agency's funds in order to "carry on affairs with five women." Ken Gormley uses a quote from Nicholas to illustrate Nicholas's intent on using Clinton's personal sex life to harm Clinton's image: "I knew sex sells ... I figured I'd pop in with a lawsuit."²⁶⁸

What Nicholas probably did not foresee, however, is that, even though we now know there was credence to his claim about there being a relationship between Clinton and at least one of the women, no one, including the media and Gennifer Flowers herself, was willing to help him confirm the story at the time. Clinton states that, when approached by a reporter of the Associated Press, he gave him the following advice: "I just suggested he call the women."²⁶⁹ This suggestion produced the following results: "He did, they all denied it, and the story basically died ... Only one conservative radio

²⁶⁷ Clinton, Bill, *My Life*, 387.

²⁶⁸ Gormley, Ken, "Seeds of Scandal," in *The Death of American Virtue* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 62.

²⁶⁹ Clinton, Bill, *My Life*, 360.

announcer ... talked about it, actually naming one of the women, Gennifer Flowers. She threatened to sue him if he didn't stop."²⁷⁰ This reaction by Flowers indicates that she, at this point, had no desire to publicize her relationship with Clinton. Her mood, however, would change upon Clinton's bid for the presidency.

During Clinton's campaign, Flowers went public about her affair with Clinton, which she alleged was a "twelve-year" long romance.²⁷¹ Clinton discusses the debate he and his campaign advisors had in determining whether to address these charges. He notes that at first, they decided to ignore the claims, instead focusing on their quest for the presidency. This soon changed, however, once Flowers claimed, "she had tapes of ten phone conversations with me [Clinton] that supposedly proved the truth of her allegations."²⁷² Flynt and Eisenbach indicate the important influence this feature of Flowers's claims had on Clinton's decision, stating: "The way politicians traditionally handled sex scandals was to deny the accusation and hope there was no evidence. That was not an option for Clinton, because Flowers had audiotapes of their intimate conversations."²⁷³ Clinton's recognition of the dangers presented by evidence in this case contrast to his oversight of such a possibility in the Lewinsky matter. Perhaps he did not foresee that such evidence would have existed, or that it would have been used against him in the Jones case (which, as some scholars agree, is a stretch many lawyers may not have decided to pursue). Yet, if he had questioned Lewinsky's ability and promises to keep the relationship quiet – especially after having phone conversations allegedly

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 384.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 228.

recorded by another woman he had an affair with – perhaps he would have decided against publically denying the affair.

Clinton, after noting his team had become aware of the Flowers tapes, relays what led him to the decision to do a public interview in order to address the allegations of an affair. He focuses on the existence of possible evidence, the impact the scandal alone was having on his candidacy, and the media's eager publication of the story:

We didn't know what was on whatever tapes Flowers might have, but I remembered the conversations clearly, and I didn't think there could be anything damaging on them ... The Flowers story hit with explosive force, and it proved irresistible to the media, though some of the stories cast doubt on her accusations ... I was dropping in the New Hampshire polls, and Hillary and I decided we should accept an invitation from the CBS program *60 Minutes* to answer questions about the charges and the state of our marriage.²⁷⁴

It was this interview that would both save Bill's candidacy and prevent the scandal from becoming more publicized. The interviewer, Steve Kroft, asked Clinton if Flowers's allegations were true. Clinton denied that they were, but, when asked if he had ever taken part in any affairs, he answered evasively, stating: "I said that I had already acknowledged causing pain in my marriage, that I had already said more about the subject than any other politician ever had and would say no more."²⁷⁵ Aside from this interview, the Clinton campaign decided to leave Flowers's allegations alone. Bernie Nussbaum, a lawyer from New York who had worked with Hillary Clinton on the Watergate Scandal, was helping advise Clinton in the final weeks of his candidacy (providing another example of how Hillary directly connected Bill to very useful people during his time in politics). When the Flowers scandal broke, Nussbaum advised the Clinton campaign not to attack or investigate the truth of her allegations, which allowed

²⁷⁴ Clinton, Bill, *My Life*, 385.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

“Clinton himself ... to dodge a bullet.”²⁷⁶ It was this response, combined with Bill’s careful answer concerning his fidelity, as well as Hillary’s unwavering support for her husband, that ended up not just saving his image with the American people, but also driving his name to the top of the list of Democratic candidates for president.

As Flynt and Eisenbach summarize, “The Gennifer Flowers scandal actually helped Clinton win the Democratic nomination by showing primary voters that he had the poise and resilience to take the hits [concerning his personal life].”²⁷⁷ Much of this resilience results from the manner in which Clinton approached and addressed the affair. He had not taken part in the affair when he was holding the most important position in American politics, but rather while he held his first state position in Arkansas. Flowers also was proven to be, at least during the beginning speculations of affair, more reliable than the young, star-struck Lewinsky, which was made evident when Flowers initially threatened to sue reporters for using her name in their stories about the affair. When Flowers had a change of heart and decided to come forward about the relationship during a time that could have ruined Clinton’s chances at the presidency, he handled the allegations with much care. In this instance, he sought help from his campaign team and trusted advisors. He was also evasive enough in his televised interview to admit to wrongdoings, while not fully admitting to an affair. These choices completely contradict his handling of the Lewinsky affair, where he insisted on immediate denial rather than carefully assessing the long-term consequences if evidence of the affair should (or, as we know, would) unfold.

²⁷⁶ Gromley, *The Death of America Virtue*, 68.

²⁷⁷ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 229.

Influence of a Dynamic Country:

Although few disagree that Clinton made mistakes when he engaged in an affair with Monica Lewinsky, many also note the role outside factors played in pulling together his impeachment. These revolve around three major qualities about the time period during which Clinton was president: the political, cultural, and media climates. Politically, a growing partisanship in the federal government and the politicization of the Office of the Independent Council helped aid conservative criticism against Clinton. This worked closely with the cultural changes the country was experiencing, which were non-traditional characteristics many critics felt Bill Clinton embodied. These two popular sentiments among critics merged with the media's new interest in the personal life of the president, something that became heightened when Clinton's affairs were first being speculated. It is these three features of the Clinton era that combined with his own personal mistakes to make the Lewinsky affair the most publicized affair of any prior American president.

Much of the speculation surrounding the political role played in Clinton's impeachment revolves around special prosecutor Kenneth Starr's role. Clinton introduces Starr in his autobiography by highlighting his conservative identity:

[Judge David] Sentelle's [of the Special Division responsible for naming independent counsels] panel fired Robert Fiske and replaced him with Kenneth Starr, who had been a court of appeals judge and solicitor general in the Bush administration. Unlike Fiske, Starr had no prosecutorial experience, but he had something far more important: he was much more conservative and partisan than Fiske.²⁷⁸

With this description, Clinton notes Starr's past political role under Republican President Bush. He then turns his discussion to Starr's role in the Paula Jones case, noting, "Starr

²⁷⁸ Clinton, Bill, *My Life*, 613.

had been an outspoken proponent of the Paula Jones lawsuit, appearing on TV and even offering to write a friend-of-the-court brief on her behalf.”²⁷⁹ Clinton finishes his introduction of Starr by discussing his dismay with the political-based appointment in one of the few politically independent government offices: “His [Starr’s] bias against me was the very reason he was chosen and why he took the job. We now had a bizarre definition of an ‘independent’ counsel: he had to be independent of me, but it was fine to be closely tied to my political enemies and legal adversaries.”²⁸⁰ Clinton’s remarks on Starr at this point in his biography sets up the theory that Clinton was facing a Republican conspiracy, a view he continues to claim throughout his autobiography.

It is clear that Clinton had a strong opinion against Starr’s political motives, but other authors independent from political identities agree with this assessment. Benjamin Wittes assesses Starr’s appointment and role in the Office of the Independent Council from an autonomous, non-political perspective. Yet, he still points to the fact that, upon entering the office, Starr attracted much skepticism. This was due mainly to the factors Clinton lists above, from “the sudden sacking of the well-regarded Robert Fiske Jr.” and “Starr’s ... public position against presidential immunity from civil actions.”²⁸¹ Wittes, however, supports Starr’s appointment, claiming, “his [Starr’s] views about executive power and his attitude toward the independent counsel law itself both indicated that [he] would be a cautious special prosecutor keen to avoid running amok.”²⁸² Despite this attempt, however, analysts of the Lewinsky scandal point to Starr’s use of perjury in

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ Wittes, Benjamin, “Taming the Statute,” in *Starr: A Reassessment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 29-30.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 30.

reference to the president's relationship with Lewinsky in the Jones case as a major stretch for a case many other lawyers would have been unwilling to make.

Starr's initial case as independent counsel was not the Jones case, but rather the Whitewater scandal. This starting point of Starr's involvement stretches Lewinsky's place in the legal proceedings even further. Flynt and Eisenbach summarize what they characterize as the boring details of the Whitewater affair in the following:

The Whitewater scandal began in the 1980's when an old friend of the Clintons, Jim McDougal, convinced the Arkansas governor and his wife to invest \$20,000 in a resort complex ... The Whitewater Project failed to attract buyers and the Clintons lost their investment, but two complicating factors raised eyebrows. Bill allegedly had an affair with McDougal's wife, Susan. And the McDougal's savings and loan, Madison Guaranty, retained Hillary as its lawyer even though her law firm also represented the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in recovering lost deposits from Madison when it failed in the late 1980's.²⁸³

What seems like a failed scheme in which the Clintons were one of the only ones harmed turned into a scandal that would be probed at the earliest stages of Bill Clinton's presidency. Flynt and Eisenbach note that an Arkansas businessman, David Hale, "accused Clinton of pressuring him to lend Susan McDougal \$200,000 in 1986" to help with the project.²⁸⁴ This claim, along with the details of possible sexual misconduct and cover-ups fueled the opposing party enough to call for an investigation by the independent counsel during Clinton's first year in office.²⁸⁵

The question then begs how Starr was able to redirect the focus of his investigation from these decade-old financial matters to sexual harassment allegations. Robert Busby describes the legal leeway inherent in the Office of the Independent Counsel that allowed Starr to investigate with seemingly no boundaries:

²⁸³ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 233.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The Independent Counsel has the power to investigate whether the President, or others in the Executive branch, ‘may have violated any federal laws’ ... The Counsel does not have to prosecute a case at hand, but can hunt for information to show that there may be grounds to prosecute. This has given the Independent Counsel substantial power to investigate wide areas in order to uncover incriminating information. This explains why Starr, initially granted his position to probe the Whitewater dealings involving the Clintons, eventually found his attention drawn to a largely unrelated affair and appeared, at first sight, to have initiated a totally new investigation.²⁸⁶

The nature of this office, as described above, resulted in Starr’s free reign to manipulate evidence to champion the Republican cause, no matter if he was involved in a Republican conspiracy or if he thought he was achieving justice for those claimed to have been wronged by Clinton. His personal agenda aside, Starr’s report itself has features that, according to Fedwa Malti-Douglas, emphasize his obsession with attacking the president: “[Starr’s] obsession manifests itself not only in the organization of [his] referral but also in both the narration and the technique of repetition so privileged in this convoluted text.”²⁸⁷ This assertion is furthered by Starr’s initiative to gain Lewinsky’s testimony against Clinton, the legality of which is questioned by Dershowitz. Dershowitz paints an ironic critique of Starr, a man prosecuting Clinton on charges of perjury and ordering women to lie, by terrifying a young woman himself into testifying against Clinton by threatening legal repercussions if she did not comply:

By threatening to prosecute Monica Lewinsky and her mother unless the former intern gives him the story he wants, Starr may well be encouraging Lewinsky to bend – or even break – the truth. Lewinsky knows that without transactional immunity, she could be prosecuted for past perjury, since her sworn affidavit is apparently different from what she said on the tapes ... Starr can offer her full immunity. But he will not do so unless her story is consistent with what he wants to prove. Otherwise, he will

²⁸⁶ Busby, Robert, “The Starr Investigation,” in *Defending the American Presidency: Clinton and the Lewinsky Scandal* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 119.

²⁸⁷ Malti-Douglas, Fedwa, “Organization as Obsession,” in *The Starr Report Disrobed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 20.

prosecute her – though his mandate does not extend to alleged perjury committed in the course of a civil case unrelated to Whitewater.²⁸⁸

Starr's exploitation of whatever evidence he could use to indict the president, though eventually proven to be unsuccessful, did, whether purposefully or not, further a divide between political parties that is still seen in politics today.

Simultaneous with Starr's overreaching investigative methods was a critical view upheld by conservatives concerning Clinton's promotion of non-traditional ideals. As Zaretsky argues, "Clinton, the out-of-control dope-and-sex fiend, was [the Republican] scapegoat," which was a party at this time dominated by "white, male, rural, suburban, and southern constituencies threatened by the social and cultural changes unleashed since the 1960's."²⁸⁹ Steven Gillon specifies this claim by focusing on incidents during Clinton's candidacy for president that challenged the culture accepted by the Republican elites at the time. After Jennifer Flowers spoke out about her relationship with Clinton, newspapers soon printed another story to slander Clinton's credibility. This concerned the Vietnam War draft, and Clinton's ability to avoid it. Although Clinton states it was by chance that he was never called for service, Gillon cites a letter he had written to Colonel Holmes, which thanked him "for 'saving me from the draft.'"²⁹⁰

In addition to scandals that characterized Bill's candidacy for presidency, it is argued by some that his poverty-stricken background affected the cultural criticism he faced. Micki McElya discusses this "white trash" mentality, stating, "among whites, 'white trash' signifies the location of this 'natural failure' ... To many of his critics,

²⁸⁸ Dershowitz, *Sexual McCarthyism*, 123.

²⁸⁹ Zaretsky, Eli, "The Culture Wars of the 1960's and the Assault on the Presidency," in *Our Monica, Ourselves*, 10.

²⁹⁰ Gillon, Steven M., "The Critical Year: 1992," in *The Pact: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and the Rivalry That Defined a Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94.

Clinton's affront has been bringing his so-called trashiness into that most sacred of places in American political culture – the White House.”²⁹¹ These characteristics that define Clinton as different from the typical United States President are said to have been seen by some conservatives as a threat to tradition, allegedly prompting them to take whatever action necessary to remove him from the nation's most powerful position.

With his background and scandalous entrance into national politics, Clinton immediately entered the presidency by presenting a change from the clean-cut, socially acceptable White House occupants of previous generations. Gillon claims, “Bill Clinton came to represent the cultural challenge of the 1960's ... Most Americans learned who Bill Clinton was from the cover of a supermarket tabloid ... they would know him as an accused adulterer and draft dodger [first].”²⁹² It was not just Bill Clinton, however, that furthered this theoretical war between cultures. As noted earlier in this chapter, Hillary's role as first lady also challenged these traditional roles. Hillary's activism represented a feminist movement for women that garnered much criticism from Clinton opponents. Beasley describes this criticism, stating, “In her [Hillary's] case, the creation of tradition seemed equated with generating more controversy than any predecessor.”²⁹³ Beasley even quotes Hillary herself admitting that she recognized the criticism her unconventional role alone created: “We were living in an era in which some people still felt deep ambivalence about women in positions of public leadership and power. In this era of changing gender roles, I was America's Exhibit A.”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ McElya, Micki, “Trashing the Presidency: Race, Class, and the Clinton/Lewinsky Affair,” in *Our Monica, Ourselves*, 157.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Beasley, Maurine H., “Hillary Rodham Clinton as Media Polarizer,” in *First Ladies and the Press*, 203.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

The last feature that ubiquitously defined Clinton's administration involves the changing nature of the media. Flynt and Eisenbach claim that the privacy presidents enjoyed changed during the post-Cold War era of George H.W. Bush's presidency. The probing of his personal life, however, did not occur, coincidentally, until after Clinton's relationship with Flowers was made public. It started from Hillary Clinton's off-the-record remarks to Gail Sheehy of *Vanity Fair* magazine, where she alleged, "Bush and his carrying on, all of which is apparently well known in Washington' ... 'the establishment' media chose to focus on Gennifer Flowers while ignoring 'the other Jennifer.'"²⁹⁵ Although the worst scrutiny Bush faced after these remarks was the inquiry of a handful of bold reporters, Hillary makes a case for the fact that Bill's affairs were being isolated and highlighted when affairs had occurred in the presidency in the past that were untouched by the media.

Further into their assessment, Flynt and Eisenbach note the difference between the American culture and many European nations, where the private lives of their politicians are left alone:

'We do not talk about politicians' private lives,' [Anne-Elisabeth] Moutet [the bureau chief for *European* magazine in London] sniffed. 'President Francois Mitterrand had lots of mistresses and two regular mistresses, and every journalist in town, myself included, knew all about them, and we had the telephone numbers and we knew about the kids and everything. And we never wrote it. It was perfectly understood that nobody will back you up. The public will hate you to kingdom come. Do not talk about politicians' private lives.'²⁹⁶

This assertion by someone who works in the European media industry highlights the unique media obsession in America of the personal lives of public officials. Dershowitz attempts to define this difference, claiming, "this difference is not a function of

²⁹⁵ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 230.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 247.

American-public prurience or media irresponsibility,” but rather that it is based on the manner in which our presidents are elected.²⁹⁷ Dershowitz furthers this claim by noting the emphasis during elections on personal qualities of presidential candidates, stating, “American presidential candidates rarely run on their records or platform alone. They run on their character, their charm, their charisma, their photogenic quality, their wives’ popularity, and their rapport with the media.”²⁹⁸ It makes sense, then, that a public that bases much of their decision on the personal qualities of their electoral candidates would be interested in the private features of their lives during their occupation of public office. Yet, this insistence of knowing some of the most intimate and scandalous details of an official’s life takes away media attention from very important political and policy decisions. As Mattina notes, although critics challenged Hillary Clinton’s role as first lady, the traditional positions taken by previous first ladies she did pursue were largely unreported by the media. Instead, Mattina states the American media was “all consumed by her [Hillary’s] hairstyle, her ‘failure’ at health care reform, and her husband’s infidelity.”²⁹⁹

Zaretsky summarizes all of these problems Clinton faced out of his control in the following description of the era of his presidency: “Clinton’s problem, then, was to ‘reinvent’ the presidency in a context of massive cultural change, Democratic party factionalization, an overwhelming media presence in American life, and a resentful and angry minority.”³⁰⁰ These features of American society during Clinton’s administration played an unwelcome, yet defining role in Clinton’s presidency. The convergence of the

²⁹⁷ Dershowitz, *Sexual McCarthyism*, 49.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Mattina, Anna F., “Hillary Rodham Clinton: Using Her Vital Voice,” in *Inventing a Voice*, 432.

³⁰⁰ Zaretsky, Eli, “The Culture Wars of the 1960’s and the Assault on the Presidency,” in *Our Monica, Ourselves*, 18.

political, cultural, and media influences on his presidency combined with his own mistakes to make his affair with Monica Lewinsky one of the most discussed and debated extramarital affairs in presidential history.

Short Term and Long Term Consequences of the Lewinsky Affair:

It is a popular assumption that news of an extramarital affair would demolish a politician's reputation. At first, this appeared to be the case for Bill Clinton. Yet, the immediate aftermath of the affair and his long-term reputation disprove this allegation. Clinton experienced an outpouring of support once he admitted that the allegations about his relationship with Lewinsky were true, proven by his rising popularity. Hillary Clinton also received a boost in popularity, mainly focused on a common sympathy for her as a loyal wife.

Even today, both Bill and Hillary have fared extremely well. Bill's reputation as a womanizer does not demean his character, but is rather treated as a personality trait often joked about or, in some cases, praised. Hillary's standing with the public has never been better, with her political role reaching its height during Obama's administration, although she has yet to completely escape her anti-feminist critics. This affair, however, did not leave everyone unharmed. Starr and the Republican opponents experienced unforeseen backlash once the impeachment proceedings began. In addition, Lewinsky herself, as well as the other women who were linked to sexual relationships with Clinton, are forever ingrained in history as mistresses. These consequences, some unforeseen and unexpected, are an interesting feature of the Clinton/Lewinsky affair.

Gormley describes the immediate reaction regarding Bill Clinton's infidelities through the lens of Clinton's advisors and staff. These feelings result mainly from the belief that Clinton ruined his reputation and future due to his relationship with Lewinsky:

There was not much sympathy for him, even among his staffers. One member of the Clinton team who regularly traveled with the president expressed the view shared by many of his peers: Their boss had squandered his chance to become one of the greatest leaders in world history ... Clinton had everything going for him that a president could want: He enjoyed unprecedented economic prosperity at home ... He had made significant advances on the domestic policy front. He had won extraordinary popularity on the worldwide scene and had earned foreign affairs successes ... Now all of these triumphs, it seemed, had been flushed down the drain – all for a reckless fling with a chubby-cheeked female who was the age of Clinton's own daughter.³⁰¹

This quote shows that even Clinton's staff and likely Clinton himself thought that this affair would be the end of his career. This self-destruction, however, would soon be avoided, as Clinton's staff would see the tides turn once the impeachment proceedings began.

J. Michael Hogan highlights the media's focus on the Lewinsky scandal by noting the number of surveys the public experienced from the time the affair was made public to a little over a year later: "the Gallup poll asked the presidential approval question fifty-eight times, or about twice as frequently as normal."³⁰² These public approval polls clearly illustrated the immediate consequences of the Lewinsky scandal, mainly revolving around feelings about Clinton's impeachment. As McElya notes, "Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and the House managers increasingly fell out of favor in national

³⁰¹ Gormley, Ken, *The Death of American Virtue*, 559.

³⁰² Hogan, J. Michael, "The Rhetoric of Presidential Approval: Media Polling and the White House Intern Scandal," in *Images, Scandal, and Communication Strategies of the Clinton Presidency*, ed. Denton, Robert E., and Rachel L. Holloway (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger: 2003), 272.

polls while approval ratings for Clinton soared.”³⁰³ Flynt and Eisenbach further clarify Clinton’s rise in popularity:

A week after the Lewinsky story broke, a *Washington Post* poll found Clinton’s job approval rating at 67 percent, the highest of his presidency. The *Post* poll also found that even though a majority believed ‘something had happened’ with Lewinsky, a majority thought Clinton’s political enemies were conspiring to bring down the president ... Once the shock of the revelation passed, Clinton’s poll numbers went even higher. By March 1998 his popular-approval rating soared to over 70 percent, while only 11 percent had a favorable view of Ken Starr.³⁰⁴

These popularity ratings are extremely high for any president, let alone one whose reputation was rocked by scandal.

John Zaller explains Bill’s surge in popularity by defending the public’s understanding of what is truly important: a politician’s policy decisions. He claims that Bill’s ratings show “the importance of political substance ... Even when, as occurred in this case, public opinion is initially responsive to media reports of scandals, the public’s concern with actual political achievement reasserts itself.”³⁰⁵ Zaller attributes Clinton’s popularity to his political successes, including a country at peace and a stable and strong economy.³⁰⁶ He notes, however, that Clinton’s personal rankings did decline as a result of the affair, creating an inverse assessment: declining personality polls, and rising job approval polls.³⁰⁷ It would be interesting to see where his character ranks today when compared to the immediate aftermath of the affair. Based on my personal conversations

³⁰³ McElya, Micki, “Trashing the Presidency: Race, Class, and the Clinton/ Lewinsky Affair,” in *Our Monica, Ourselves*, 158.

³⁰⁴ Flynt and Eisenbach, *One Nation Under Sex*, 248.

³⁰⁵ Zaller, John, “Monica Lewinsky’s Contribution to Political Science,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 31, No. 2, June 1998, 182.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/420248>>

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 185.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 184.

and today's media portrayal of Clinton, I would assume his personality rankings would be higher, maybe even as high as his presidential approval ratings are today.

Zaller also directly relates Bill's increase in popularity to the content of media reports during the days following the publication of the scandal. "In the period in which Clinton's support fell about 7 percentage points, media coverage was sharply negative, but in the period in which he gained back those 7 points and added an additional 8 to 10 points of support, coverage was essentially balanced."³⁰⁸ Thus, in his study, Zaller highlights two of the three outside factors I have pointed to as important in promoting a particular perception of a politician's infidelities. Zaller claims that the stable political environment allowed Clinton's job approval ratings to cover the criticism his personal life faced, although I argue that this stable environment is what enabled Clinton's personal life to be closely scrutinized. He also notes the media's role in saving Clinton's image (after releasing the harmful stories in the first place). Perhaps it was true public understanding of political versus personal life that saved Bill's reputation. Maybe the public sympathized with Bill, recognizing the microscope permanently hovered over his personal life. Another possibility is that the public realized the boundaries Starr and other conservative opponents were pushing with the impeachment. Whatever the reason, Clinton's rankings seem to prove that his own mistakes in pursuing an affair were quickly forgiven, helping to save his career and ultimate reputation.

Bill was not the only Clinton who experienced a surge in popularity after news of the affair broke. His faithful wife also saw an increase in the polls: "By the end of 1998, the year of the Lewinsky scandal, Hillary Rodham Clinton was popular again. Her ratings stood as high as they had been following the 1993 inauguration, with 67 percent of the

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

public holding a favorable opinion of her.”³⁰⁹ Beasley attributes this surge to Clinton’s decision to stand by her husband, stating that the ratings “reflected approval of her conduct as an aggrieved wife once again standing by her flawed husband.”³¹⁰ This relates back to the challenges Hillary Clinton’s role as first lady presented to the traditionalist views of an acceptable first lady. Beasley relates public opinion researcher Barbara Burrell’s views on the support Hillary received after the scandal:

‘Her image as the wronged wife staying in her marriage, however, was quite contrary to the image of the independent, professional achiever role she had adopted as first lady.’ She won sympathy by surmounting her personal pain and reaffirming values held by many traditionally minded Americans ... ‘People either thought she should have left the President or admired her for staying with the President.’³¹¹

Thus, in choosing to stay with Bill Clinton, Hillary pleased the American public and critics of her unconventional character. Interestingly, Beasley notes that this approval was quickly subject to fluctuation, as she returned to her roots of challenging precedence: “her poll ratings began to decline as soon as it became evident she would shatter precedent and seek political office in her own right.”³¹²

Lastly, it is evident that the reputation of Monica Lewinsky herself received the most harmful backlash after her affair with the President was publicized. McElya points to yet another unforeseen public reaction to the case Starr attempted to make against Clinton:

Contrary to the persistent attempts of Starr and the House managers to cast Monica Lewinsky as a vulnerable, young victim of the inappropriate advances of her older boss, dominant narratives of the affair quickly

³⁰⁹ Beasley, Maurine H., “Hillary Rodham Clinton as Media Polarizer,” in *First Ladies and the Press*, 221-222.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*

revolved around Monica, with her ‘presidential kneepads’ and thong underwear, as a pursuer, instigator, or aggressor.³¹³

Considering this quote along with President Clinton’s soaring approval ratings, it becomes clear that Starr predicted the public’s reaction to the affair to be completely opposite to what actually happened. Yet, from the time the affair was going on itself, it is clear that Lewinsky was in a losing position. She states herself that she “lost her job because [she] was his girlfriend and that [her] affair with the President hampered, rather than helped, [her] job prospects.”³¹⁴ These losses were clearly heightened after news of the affair broke, as she became portrayed and thought of as a villainous seductress rather than a young woman who was taken advantage of. Even today, Lewinsky still clings to her resentment over the affair and its aftermath, with the *Washington Post* claiming that she, “at 39, never wed and mad as hell,” is seeking a tell-all book deal worth upwards of twelve million dollars.³¹⁵

Conclusion:

The Clinton/Lewinsky scandal set the stage for a heightened interest in the extramarital scandals of politicians, which dominate the news today. Unlike many politicians of this decade, however, who are usually pushed to resign and lead a life outside of politics, Clinton was able to retain his legacy as one of the most popular presidents of all time. Just as multiple factors merged to set the public stage for the affair, many of these factors also worked to preserve Clinton’s image.

³¹³ McElya, Micki, “Trashing the Presidency: Race, Class, and the Clinton/ Lewinsky Affair,” in *Our Monica, Ourselves*, 161.

³¹⁴ Morton, Andrew, *Monica’s Story*, 183.

³¹⁵ Groer, Annie, “Monica Lewinsky’s steamy account of Clinton affair could get \$12 million advance, report says” *Washington Post*, 20 September 2012.

Clinton, unlike Franklin Roosevelt, made a number of personal blunders that made him an easy target for political critics and a probing media. In addition, otherwise great features of a presidency – a stable political environment and a morphing, more accepting culture – worked against Clinton’s personal life. Yet, when the scandal did become publicized, these same features worked in his favor, as the public decided not only to maintain support for Clinton, but to actually increase support, evident through his approval ratings.

It is unclear at this point in history if his affair will be the only one of its kind: completely exposed to public scrutiny, yet somehow bolstering a politician’s image with the American people. Whatever the consequences for future politicians who engage in infidelities, it is clear that Clinton’s infamous affair with Lewinsky may seem to have been a silly fling to most, but it was undeniably one of the most complex and publicized extramarital relationships any American politician has been involved in.

CONCLUSION

The extramarital affairs of Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Franklin Roosevelt, and Bill Clinton provide only four out of countless examples of many politicians from different governments and time periods. Therefore, with this small sample, it is difficult to make overarching claims about the general impact extramarital affairs have on all political careers. The conclusion that is suggested from these cases, however, might be more important. This is that the relationships these men were involved in show us that extramarital affairs do not have a standard consequence for all politicians. In other words, it is not justifiable to say that these infidelities ruined these politicians' careers, for some of the cases studied here prove otherwise. This is a verdict that is dependent on the analysis of personal decisions and uncontrollable characteristics of the given society and time period.

To determine the effects that extramarital affairs had on the political careers of these four men, a number of factors were considered. This includes the politician's own judgments, and whether these judgments were beneficial or harmful to their image and career. In addition, external factors that were out of the control of the politicians, particularly the political situation at the time of the affair, the country's cultural and societal values, and the role the media played are included in the examination. The analysis of these features – features unique to each politician discussed – helps to explain the different receptions of their individual affairs.

Lastly, parallels between the time periods of each politician's affairs were noted and discussed. First is the treatment of women throughout each of the four cases. The treatment of women, both wives and mistresses, whether they lived in ancient Rome and

America in the mid and late twentieth century, was undeniably similar. From Caesar's political alliances to the powerhouse Clinton relationship, all of these politicians' marriages somehow benefitted their political careers. Also, the long-standing reputation and legacy of each politician were ultimately affected by their extramarital affairs. For all of these politicians, even if the immediate reaction towards their affairs was negative, the legacy of the adulterous politician remains uncorrupted. In some cases, their reputations actually seemed to be helped by the affair, either immediately after the relationship was made public or years later. Again, although no decisive theories are proven here due to the small sample of politicians examined, these parallels point to interesting possibilities about the overall effects of extramarital affairs.

The individual decisions each politician made regarding his extramarital affair seems to have had the most significant impact on the immediate public reaction towards the relationship. This is where we may emphasize differences between Caesar and Antony, as well as between Roosevelt and Clinton: Caesar and Roosevelt were treated as if no affair existed, whereas Antony and Clinton were crucified mainly for the affair itself.

Caesar recognized the bounds of extramarital affairs, determining which constraints he could forgo and which he had to abide by in order to preserve his image. Though his relationships with wives of Roman politicians were legally forbidden, he realized that in pursuing these relationships he would not have been punished. He was also careful about the public nature of his affairs. He did not refrain from hiding some, such as his affair with Servilia, who was a known political asset for men during this era. On the other hand, he refrained from developing a more public relationship with others.

This includes Cleopatra because of the repercussions that would have resulted from a close alliance with a foreign potentate. This example provides a strong contrast to Antony's conduct. Antony either failed to recognize or simply did not care about the consequences of his publicized intimate affair with Cleopatra. Intertwined with the external factors at the time, the decisions of Caesar and Antony guided their image in opposite categories: Caesar remained a publicly beloved figure, whereas Antony was condemned by Roman society.

We find a similar situation when we compare Franklin Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. Roosevelt engaged in a long-term affair with one woman: Lucy Mercer. Mercer's confidence could be trusted, based on her family's experience with scandals in the public eye and her awareness of how her reputation would be affected if news of the relationship became public. Clinton, on the other hand, engaged in a reckless relationship with a twenty-something year old intern, whose ability to keep the relationship a secret was highly questionable. In addition, Clinton engaged in this two-year sexual relationship while there was an ongoing sexual harassment investigation against him. Roosevelt, on the other hand, kept his relationship so hidden that some biographers still refrain from mentioning it. Again, as with Caesar and Antony, Roosevelt's personal decisions shielded him from most negative consequences that could have resulted from the relationship, whereas Clinton's judgments enabled his image to be jeopardized.

This is not to say, however, that the perception of each man's affairs was based solely on his personal decisions. The politics surrounding each of these figure's time in government also played a role in how his image was affected. Caesar, as we saw with his marriages, was conscious of the powerful political actors of the time, aligning himself

with powerful figures through various types of Roman alliances. Furthermore, Caesar's rise and eventual dominating leadership in Roman politics helped shield him from criticism of his personal decisions. His relationship with Cleopatra testifies to this: the relationship did garner some disdain from Roman elites, yet it occurred at a time when he had re-established Rome's global dominance by winning four victories for the city. Antony, on the other hand, pursued a relationship with this same woman at a time when politics in Rome were tense. Although he and Augustus had defeated the conspirators at Philippi, the angst between them was at an all-time high, with each threatened by the other's power. With other Roman politicians aware of this precarious situation, Augustus was able to use Antony's mistakes and other external factors to gain support against Antony, successfully harming Antony's public image.

Politics continued to play a relevant role in the perception of extramarital affairs in America. President Roosevelt held office during a trying time. World War II occupied his attention in foreign affairs while he tackled the Great Depression domestically. With the United State's eventual success in the war and the triumph of the New Deal, Roosevelt's image was very popular, a sentiment still felt by Americans today. President Clinton, however, had a paradoxical administration: he entered an office with no foreign threats, with the Cold War far removed, and domestic stability economically and politically after preceding years of social turmoil and change. Although he was lucky in this sense, these features of his presidency actually focused attention on his personal life, contributing to the never before seen focus on the intimate details of his personal relationships, especially his affair with Lewinsky. In addition, Clinton's administration was met with growing partisanship, which was evident in the politicized Office of the

Independent Council, which spearheaded the legal attack against him after the discovery of his affair. These political stabilities combined with growing internal tensions prevented Clinton enjoying the shield of public silence that kept Roosevelt's infidelities secret in a more tumultuous era.

These political factors are intertwined with the cultural factors of Roman and American societies during the historical era of each politician's career. In ancient Rome, extramarital affairs were known of and tolerated. Even religion, which in today's American culture constrains the acceptability of extramarital relations, promoted this sexual freedom:

[The goddess] Venus emerges from Rome's historical records as an increasingly powerful deity of sex, war, and politics, whose most prominent patrons were generals and statesmen ... Roman men ... could engage in extramarital sex ... without committing adultery, and prominent statesmen enjoyed full access to all Venus' gifts.³¹⁶

It is likely no mistake, then, that Caesar declared his divine relation to this goddess by declaring that he had descended from her legendary son Aeneas. He even went as far as to push the bounds of acceptability by pursuing affairs with prominent politicians' wives. Although many today might look at these actions and question Caesar's motives, it is even more surprising that some of these politicians were his closest allies, even after news of the affairs became public.

Another important cultural feature of ancient Rome is what I like to refer to as the Roman superiority complex. Romans (like many Americans today) thought of themselves as the best, most powerful, idealized people of the world, placing themselves far above foreign inferiors. Thus, although Caesar had alleged affairs with foreign women, particularly Cleopatra, he retained a distance from her and portrayed her in a subordinate

³¹⁶ Mueller, Hans-Friedrich, "Venus," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient History* 12 July 2010, 1.

role for the public. Antony, on the other hand, bestowed honors upon her and the Egyptian nation, seemingly forgetting his devotion to the Roman state. Romans could not fathom the idea that Antony would make a foreigner equal to them. This cultural feature also illustrates the delicate line of acceptability of extramarital affairs that dramatically changed the perception of Antony's affair from the toleration Caesar enjoyed.

The cultures of Roosevelt and Clinton, though close in time period, changed enough over the few decades to affect the public reception of their adulterous relationships differently. For Roosevelt, his extramarital relationship was not just overlooked, but it was expected. Men in power, especially previous presidents, had been involved in similar relationships, from President Hoover's office orgies to President Jefferson's family with one of his slaves. Thus, for Roosevelt to have one long-standing mistress was not out of the ordinary for men in his position. By the time of Clinton's presidency, however, there was a notable increase in the public interest of the personal lives of the powerful and famous people of America, including their most scandalous secrets. This change opened the White House doors to the media microscope relevant in today's society that broadcasted the most intimate details of President Clinton's extramarital affair. Thus, although it is unclear as to whether the media and political elites still expected these relationships to occur, what is clear is that there would now be more publication of these infidelities than before.

One final external factor that characterized the perception of the affairs of these politicians is the media. The public perception in ancient Rome is examined through the biographies of ancient historians, such as Suetonius and Plutarch. As is evident from Caesar's biographies, his affairs were recognized and sometimes recorded in history. Yet,

they were not largely criticized, with the most critical account likely being that of Suetonius, who does not condemn Caesar, but illustrates the judgments he sometimes received from fellow politicians. Antony, on the other hand, was met with criticism in nearly all of these historical sources, either promoted by the Augustan government that opposed Antony or genuinely illustrating the feelings of the Roman people. Sources from the historian Plutarch to the poet Lucan were especially critical of Cleopatra. Lucan introduces her in his epic *De Bello Civili* by calling her “the shame of Egypt, the fatal Fury of Latium, whose unchastity cost Rome dear.”³¹⁷ These ancient counterparts to modern media outlets provided portrayals of Caesar and Antony that were not just contributive to the public’s perception of them during that era, but also to the comparative analysis between the two and the different consequences they experienced as a result of these two distinct characterizations.

American media is closely related to the cultural values discussed previously. For Roosevelt, although his affair was well known, the media did not report it. This transfers to Roosevelt’s contemporary biographers: some discuss the relationship, but others fail to recognize it completely. Some books on Roosevelt refuse to describe Lucy Mercer as a mistress, rather labeling her “an old family friend,” being sure to cite her by her married name.³¹⁸ For Clinton, however, his personal life had been under intense media scrutiny even before the Lewinsky affair began. After allegations from another woman became public before Clinton entered the presidency became public, a *60 Minutes* interview illustrated the lack of personal boundaries between Clinton and the media, with the

³¹⁷ Lucan, *De Bello Civil*, trans. J.D. Duff (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1928), X.56-60.

³¹⁸ Author, “Roosevelt the Human Being,” in *Roosevelt in Retrospect: A Profile in History* (New York: Harper and Brother’s Publishers, 1950), 72.

interviewer interrogating Hillary and Bill about the dynamics of their relationship and his faithfulness. As news of the affair was broadcast, however, Clinton himself notes that some media outlets did come to his defense, likely salvaging his image with the public, who continued to support him politically. It was this same media, however, that promoted the story more so than any other presidential affair to occur before.

It was a convergence of these four factors that developed the public's reaction to each of these politician's extramarital affairs. These details illustrate the complexity in defining how extramarital affairs affect political careers, for we cannot apply one consequence to all cases. This is not to say that there are no parallels between the four cases. Rather, there are three characteristics that are strikingly similar across these affairs, all pertaining to consequences resulting from the politician's engagement with women.

The first parallel is the importance of each of these politician's marriages for their respective political careers. Caesar provides the most concrete example of direct political benefits he received from his marriages, as they all connected him to powerful political families. Antony, too, used marriages to help achieve his personal goals, ranging from the gain of a notable dowry to connecting himself to the man who would be his most powerful ally and eventually his most bitter enemy. In addition, although we perceive his marriage to Cleopatra as fatally harmful to his career, there are some motivations that he was able to achieve through such a union, including spreading his power abroad and gaining foreign wealth. Thus, although unforeseen consequences could have resulted from some of these marriages, there were clear benefits for both Caesar and Antony by pursuing each of them.

The marriages of Roosevelt and Clinton do not provide such predictable benefits, but the importance of Eleanor and Hillary to the political success of both of these men is undeniable. Franklin's marriage to Eleanor aligned him to one of the most powerful politicians of the era: Teddy Roosevelt was President of the United States at the time of the wedding. Furthermore, Eleanor had a strong intellectual and ideological connection to Franklin, which became increasingly important during his presidency. Combined with the limits his physical ailments placed on him, this connection with Eleanor became something he relied on to decide some of his policies. Hillary's role in Bill's political positions is similarly important. Although Hillary offered him no familial connections to politicians, she did introduce him to people who would become important assets to his administration. In addition, her strong character, something that attracted Bill to her, would also be helpful for his policymaking decisions, as she was a leader in her own right capable of making intelligent political judgments. Although her more publicized role made her role as first lady more criticized than Eleanor's more hidden political role, it is undisputed that both Franklin and Bill relied to some extent on their wives for political advice and guidance.

Relating to the benefits each of these politicians received through their marriages is the second parallel evident in these four cases. This is the overall treatment of women, which I find the most similar across each case, similar enough that they can all be considered together rather than case-by-case. In each account, all of the wives are categorized in one of two ways, and treated similarly based on this categorization. First, there are the faithful wives, who provide continual support for their husband and attend to their duties as expected. This includes Caesar's Calpurnia, Antony's Octavia, Roosevelt's

Eleanor, and Clinton's Hillary, whose devotion during Clinton's affair salvaged her unconventional image from unfavorable ratings. The other category includes the dishonorable wives, specifically Pompeia and Antonia, both condemned in history for their alleged extramarital affairs.

This leads us to the discussion of the mistresses, all of whom were treated similarly. Ancient sources mention the women Caesar engaged in affairs with by either solely mentioning their involvement with him or carrying heavy references of the relationship. Though lightened from the criticism these Roman women received, presidential mistresses also are haunted with this reputation. Lucy Mercer, though not critically depicted in many accounts, is nonetheless recorded in history as the other woman. Monica Lewinsky certainly provides an example of the life of a mistress after an affair, with her legacy forever bound to her fling with President Clinton. Thus, although the degree to which these women are criticized varies slightly, they are all condemned by society as the "other woman," indicating a double standard between men and women concerning extramarital affairs.

The final parallel evident between these four cases leads to my ultimate goal in taking on this study. This pertains to the reputation of the politician and how his extramarital affairs ultimately affected it. As has been discussed, the immediate reception of the affairs of these politicians varied, with Caesar and Roosevelt faring much better than Clinton, and all three making out dramatically better than Antony. Yet, in the long run, most of these men's reputations were not forever harmed by their extramarital relationships. Caesar's legacy remains untainted by his affairs, with Suetonius being one of the few ancient historians who recorded them, and with many contemporary politicians

focusing on his political contributions rather than his personal life. Antony, though his contemporaries vilified him, seems to have redeemed himself for the desirable qualities of his relationship with Cleopatra. As society realized the biased lens ancient historians reported through, some idealized the relationship in a more modern way. Shakespeare provides a strong example, as he analyzed the marriage as one characterized by love, a value much more appreciated by contemporary societies than that of Rome.

Roosevelt and Clinton have experienced similar fates. Roosevelt's reputation, as noted previously, was shielded from the consequences such a relationship could have caused by a number of factors. Clinton, on the other hand, was faced with the possible end of his political career. Yet, through the sympathy and faith of the American public, he was able to retain his position and, in the end, his reputation. Today, like Roosevelt, Clinton is remembered as one of the greatest presidents of American history, a legacy that would not have been foreseen during the outbreak of this sex scandal of the late twentieth century. It is possible that his legacy survived because of the people's respect for his contribution to politics, but it is also likely that people appreciate and respect his sexual appeal. Even from talking with my fellow students, I hardly hear a bad reaction towards Clinton, and nearly every boy refers to him as "the man." I sincerely doubt that this is based solely on his political successes.

What this study concludes is a number of important features about the extramarital affairs of powerful politicians. For one, it is not fair to claim that these types of relationships automatically ruin political careers, even though that is much of the reaction we are seeing in the news today. Rather, it is not possible to standardize the effect extramarital affairs have, for the consequences are dependent on a number of

factors relevant to each politician. Additionally, although there is no one conclusion that can be drawn based on these four cases, they do point to some interesting parallels across societies, particularly concerning the dynamic between men and women and the actors' overall reputation. What I have learned from this study is that these affairs do not simply serve to satisfy the public's intrusive curiosity. Rather, these relationships are uniquely complex, made up of multiple factors, decisions, and judgments that played interesting roles in characterizing the reputation and legacy of each of these powerful men.

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