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Leaders' Non-standard Sexual Behaviour as a Source of Power: An Ancient and Modern Comparison

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Abstract

Political leaders' sexual behaviour has been a source of interest and intrigue in both ancient and modern societies. When this sexual behaviour publicly deviates from societal norms, it can have a damaging effect on a leader's standing. This paper does not seek to argue against this idea, but does suggest that in some contexts a leader's non-standard sexual behaviour, here defined as sexual behaviour that is not traditionally acceptable, can act as an alternative source of power. Sex scandals surrounding the presidential terms of Bill Clinton and Donald Trump will be read alongside the sex lives of Mark Antony and Nero to further our understanding of how non-standard sexual behaviour impacts a leader's image.

Introduction

Political leaders' sexual behaviour has been a source of interest and intrigue in both ancient and modern societies.¹ When this sexual behaviour publicly deviates from societal norms, it can have a damaging effect on a leader's standing. Recent examples in the United States include Cal Cunningham's failed senatorial election after his extramarital messages became public, and the resignation of Representative Tom Redd after accusations of sexual misconduct.² In the UK, former MP Chris Pincher resigned after the Commons Select Committee on Standards recommended his suspension for groping two men, and former MP Neil Parish resigned following his admission that he had been watching porn in the Commons.³

However, the re-election of Donald Trump in 2024, despite allegations of more than twenty incidents of sexual misconduct and extramarital affairs, demonstrates that some leaders can survive and even thrive after committing non-standard sexual behaviour.⁴ Harriet Fertik analyses this idea in an ancient leadership context. Using Cicero's *Philippics* 1 and 2, Fertik argues that for those unable to participate in traditional political life, engaging with Mark Antony's sex life represented an opportunity to form bonds with each other and with their leader.⁵ His outrageous behaviour, rather than joining people together in disdain, had the potential to join them together in at least curiosity, if not affection, creating a 'bond between leader and people that is rooted in their common experience of bodily desire'.⁶ Additionally, Antony's sex life was a way to reject the authority of traditional Roman standards and Ciceronian ideals of leadership, with citizens asserting their membership to the group 'not by showing his adherence to established norms but by demonstrating his disregard for rules that are not set by Antony'.⁷ Because of this, Fertik suggests that Antony was able to access an alternative leadership model to the traditional one offered in Roman society.⁸

¹ Vout 2007: 4-5.

² Hall 2020. Schnell 2022.

³ Giddings 2023. BBC News South West 2022.

⁴ Guardian staff 2024. Bubalo and King 2024.

⁵ Fertik 2017: 76.

⁶ Fertik 2017: 77-78, 84.

⁷ Fertik 2017: 78, 80.

⁸ Fertik 2017: 67.

My analysis aims to further Fertik's work by considering the circumstances which allow some to access this leadership model while others cannot. To do this, I will first examine modern examples of leaders successfully accessing this model. I will begin by looking at the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, in which then President Bill Clinton was found to be having an affair with White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. Then I will turn to the Pussycat scandal, in which a tape of President Donald Trump was released, where he stated that when he met beautiful women, he would kiss them and 'Grab 'em by the pussy'.⁹ Access to alternative, non-elite sources for these two events will facilitate the consideration of a wider variety of responses to a leader's non-standard sex. This in turn will illuminate the examination of ancient leadership in the second half of this paper, exemplified by Mark Antony, a Roman politician and triumvir in the Late Republic, and Nero, a Roman Emperor in the 1st Century CE. This is not to suggest that ancient and modern leadership operates in the same way; rather, the examination of modern examples can help to tease out a more complex reading of ancient leadership than the primary sources may initially suggest.

These leaders have been chosen because their non-standard sexual behaviour is particularly key to their image. It would be difficult to think about Bill Clinton without the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal coming to mind, just as it would be hard to discuss Mark Antony without thinking about his relationship to Cleopatra. Other leaders have also faced charges of non-standard sexual behaviour, such as Augustus, who was accused of earning his adoption by Julius Caesar through sex.¹⁰ However, he is more prominently known for his intention to restore the morality of Roman society with, for example, the introduction of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, which criminalised adultery.¹¹ This paper specifically focuses on instances where non-standard sexual behaviour has had a significant and lasting impact on a leader's image.

⁹ Makela 2016. I will provide a more detailed summary in the following sections.

¹⁰ Suetonius *Aug* 68.1, trans. Rolfe 1914. Augustus founded the Roman Empire and was its first emperor from 27 BCE – 14 CE.

¹¹ Although what was considered adultery in ancient Rome differed from the modern sense, it was specifically thought of as sex between "married female citizen and a man not her spouse", Skinner 2021: 189.

Note on terminology

I use the term non-standard sexual behaviour to group together acts that are not traditionally acceptable, but I do not intend to suggest they are morally comparable. For example, extramarital affairs and sexual assault may both cause harm or help to a leader's standing, but have different legal, moral and social implications and repercussions. This term is also intentionally broad to facilitate comparison between the actions of ancient and modern leaders, as different sexual behaviours have had different associations. For example, when Cicero accused Mark Antony of being Curio's wife, he was specifically noting his position as the penetrated partner, with Craig Williams arguing that adult men who displayed 'a desire to be penetrated [were] effeminate anomalies, liable to ridicule or worse'.¹² Although improvements to LGBTQ+ equality have meant that modern Western leaders have more freedom to be openly gay without negative repercussions, when their sexual behaviours have had an impact on their leadership, their status as penetrating/penetrated partner did not play into the controversy. For example, when US Representative Edward Schrock announced his early retirement in 2002 following accusations that he was gay, his involvement with other men was enough to cause scandal.¹³ Therefore, while non-standard sexual behaviour in this paper will be used to discuss a wide variety of acts, it is done so to ease the comparison of these behaviours, rather than to make judgements about the acts in and of themselves.

Bill Clinton (1993–2001)

Bill Clinton's political career has been plagued by accusations of adultery and sexual harassment.¹⁴ Alongside the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, which will be the focus of this section, Clinton has also been accused of seven other instances of non-standard sexual behaviour, including extramarital affairs and sexual harassment.¹⁵ However, these initial accusations did not allow the former president to access an alternative

¹² Cicero *Philippic* 2.44, trans. Ker 1926; Williams 2010: 8.

¹³ NBC News 2004.

¹⁴ Thompson 2000: 149, 151.

¹⁵ Shalby 2016.

leadership model until January 1998, when the news broke that Clinton had been having an affair with former White House intern, Monica Lewinsky.

Before the scandal became public, Clinton was seen as 'weak' and 'feminine' in comparison to his 'masculine' and 'dominating' wife Hillary Clinton.¹⁶ This is exemplified in *The Big Clinton Joke Book*, with one gag featuring a cross-dressed Hillary and Bill, parodying Grant Wood's *American Gothic*. Hillary, with her face looking directly at the viewer while wearing men's clothing, contrasts Bill's slight turn from the observer and his female outfit, illustrating her more powerful position of the two. The book even includes the joke 'Q: What does Hillary do after she shaves her pussy in the morning? A: She puts a suit on him and sends him to work.'¹⁷

This emasculated image of Clinton was also utilised when comparing him to his Republican rivals. Jules Feiffer's cartoon, *S&M with Newt 'n Bill*, depicts a masochistic/sadistic relationship between Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich, then Speaker of the House of Representatives. Gingrich, attired in studded leather accessories, a spiked belt, a mask, and boots with spurs, along with a cat-o'-nine-tails in his hand, taunts Clinton, who is chained to a dungeon wall. Gingrich tells Clinton, 'I'm going to assault you, degrade you, humiliate you, make you whine, whimper, and follow my command', with Clinton responding, 'And then will you like me?'¹⁸

This image of the president was changed by the scandal, when Clinton was accused of carrying out an 18-month long affair from 1995–1997 with Lewinsky. He originally denied the accusations in January 1998, but once firm evidence was produced, Clinton admitted the affair in a televised address in August of the same year. Clinton was then impeached in December but was acquitted in February 1999.¹⁹ Not only was Clinton's non-standard sex given a public spotlight, but he was also charged with perjury, as his denial of the affair was a part of a court case brought against him by Paula Jones, who accused him of sexual harassment.²⁰ While opponents attempted to use the event to

¹⁶ Ducat 2004: 150-153.

¹⁷ Ducat 2004: 153.

¹⁸ The Library of Congress n.d: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96523611/>.

¹⁹ Thompson 2000: 154-155.

²⁰ Thompson 2000: 151.

damage public perception of the President, the scandal had a positive impact on Clinton's image.²¹

A Time/CNN poll taken in March 1998 revealed that while 52% of the American public believed that Clinton engaged in a pattern of sexual misconduct during his presidency, 67% still approved of the way he was handling his job.²² Furthermore, 40% admitted that 'while lying is seldom acceptable, lying about sex is something that most of us do'.²³ In December 1998, another CNN poll showed that the President's approval rating rose 10 points to 73%, which was an all-time high for Clinton.²⁴ The American public were not only expressing sympathy to the President's affair, but they were also favouring him more because of it.

The public were also able to create a bond with Clinton through shared 'bodily desire' because of the sheer amount of news coverage.²⁵ The Associated Press hired twenty-five full-time journalists dedicated to the scandal, who produced 1931 minutes of content for broadcast on the evening news.²⁶ There was also a significant focus on intimate details, such as a story on a dress containing Clinton's semen.²⁷ Even when the news was not directly about the scandal, it was used to contextualise other stories.²⁸ Unlike former accusations of Clinton's non-standard sexual behaviour, the sheer coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal gave the public ample opportunity to resonate and connect to their President.

This bond created by Clinton's non-standard sex also had a gendered dynamic. Shann Nix, writing for the *San Francisco Examiner* at the time, discussed the rise in Clinton's popularity, saying:

We don't rate Clinton so high in spite of his sexual adventures, but because of them. Secretly...we like the idea of having a sexually potent ruler. We have president envy. We marvel that with all the stress of his job, he could still have

²¹ Connolly 1998.

²² Nix 1998.

²³ Nix 1998.

²⁴ CNN 1998. In comparison, in December 1997 a year prior, it was at 56%. Gallup n.d: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116584/presidential-approval-ratings-bill-clinton.aspx>.

²⁵ Fertik 2017: 84.

²⁶ Gillion 2008: 226.

²⁷ Gillion 2008: 227.

²⁸ Kenski 2003: 262.

the time or interest for a quickie in the Oval Office. Someone with that much unrestrained libido must be powerful. And morals or no, we worship power.²⁹

Nix encapsulates the argument of Fertik's article, as it demonstrates a rejection of a traditional relationship between leader and the people. Rather than maintaining a separation between President and electorate, the public were allowed insider knowledge into Clinton's non-standard sex life and therefore developed a more intimate relationship with him. What is also important to highlight is the focus on the masculine nature of Clinton's sexuality. Will Courtenay highlights a 'ceaseless interest in sex' as a behaviour of hegemonic masculinity, while Douglas Holt and Craig Thompson note 'untamed potency' as an element of the American ideology of heroic masculinity.³⁰ Female leaders struggle to access alternative leadership roles, with a strong sexual identity and attractiveness causing female leaders to be seen as 'frivolous' or as 'sex objects'.³¹ Clinton, on the other hand, was a male leader in control of his sexuality, no longer sexually controlled by others, as in *S&M with Newt 'n Bill*. Furthermore, Nix describes only the sexual desires of Clinton, not of Lewinsky; the President was the one who had an 'unrestrained libido', who decided when time should be made in his office for a 'quickie'. As the man, he was perceived to be the one with power and authority in the relationship.

Interestingly, this interpretation of Clinton's masculinity was initiated by the people rather than the leader himself, especially given his denial of the affair and his famous declaration that he 'did not have sexual relations with that woman'.³² However, Clinton demonstrated his power via his ability to ignore and remain resilient to criticism, and consequently did not resign from office.

Clinton's new image of a sexually strong, masculine leader was used in mass marketing following the scandal, demonstrating this new view of the President. A Tommy Hilfiger advert that pictured a young model sitting on an Oval Office desk alluded to the President's new 'potent' image. *The Slick Times* used an edited image of Clinton surrounded by celebrating women, wearing party hats and holding

²⁹ Nix 1998.

³⁰ Courtenay 2000: 1389; Holt and Thompson 2004: 427.

³¹ Sinclair 1995: 29.

³² The Washington Post 2018.

champagne, in a marketing poster.³³ The celebration of the President's new sexual status speaks to the way in which the scandal elevated his leadership position.

Bill Clinton's non-standard sex increased his popularity with the American people, not only because his relationship with Lewinsky established an intimate relationship with them and fulfilled their erotic desires, but also because he was seen as firmly in control of his sexuality. The perception of Clinton's increased masculinity in turn translated into a public perception of him as a more powerful leader. While Clinton did not craft this image of himself intentionally, within two decades, there would come a president who sought to deliberately model this alternative leadership style.

Donald Trump (2017–2021, 2025–Present)

Even before entering the White House in 2017, Donald Trump's election campaign signalled his desire to be a president who would deviate from standard political norms. By marking himself out as an outsider who sought to disrupt the traditional establishment, Trump created a strong relationship with his supporters, with his non-standard sexual behaviour in the infamous Pussycat scandal bolstering this image.

On 7 October 2016, just over a month before the presidential elections, a tape of Trump from 2005 talking with *Access Hollywood* host Billy Bush was released.³⁴ The event was dubbed Pussycat due to the comments made by Trump:

Trump: ...You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything.

Bush: Whatever you want.

Trump: Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything.³⁵

The leaked comments sparked outrage from the public. Some Twitter users took to the platform to use the #NotOkay hashtag to share their responses to the event. Megan Mass et al. found that the three main themes of 652 tweets were 1)

³³ Los Angeles Times 1998; Ducat 2004: 164.

³⁴ Havens 2017.

³⁵ Makela 2016.

condemnation of rape culture, 2) Donald Trump and the national state of sexual assault, and 3) trying to engage men to end violence against women, showing that many were challenging Trump's comments and were calling for societal change.³⁶ Some members of the Republican Party denounced Trump's comments and pulled their support for his candidacy, including Senator Mike Crapo, Senator John McCain, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.³⁷ Many athletes also criticised Trump after he defended his comments as 'locker room' talk, including American baseball player Sean Doolittle, and American footballer Jacob Tamme.³⁸

Trump's ability to use his non-standard sexual behaviour to form an intimate bond with his followers was more complex than Clinton's, due to the non-consensual nature of his remarks. Clinton's relationship was established with the wider American public because, while his actions did not conform to expected leadership behavioural norms, they were still reflective of the real actions of the population: James Beggan notes that over the course of a seven-year marriage, there is a 51% chance of infidelity.³⁹ However, the implication that Trump had committed, or at the very least approved of, illegal sexual behaviour outraged many Americans, with studies suggesting support for a tough stance on sex crimes.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, while Trump could not use an alternative leadership model with such an immediate wide-ranging effect as Clinton, Pussygate still resulted in securing a stronger relationship with Trump's already established supporters. While advocates in the Republican Party denied the implications of sexual assault in Trump's comments, such as Senator Jeff Sessions arguing that it was a 'stretch' to call it as such, some of his proponents outside the Party praised Trump's comments and envied his sexual power.⁴¹ One person replied when questioned about his support of Trump:

You know what, so what if he wants to grab pussy? I want to grab pussy. I wish I could grab as much pussy as he has.⁴²

³⁶ Maas et al., 2018: 1739-1750.

³⁷ Scott 2016.

³⁸ Puglise 2016.

³⁹ Beggan and Allison 2018: 7-8; Beggan 2018: 168.

⁴⁰ Mears et al. 2008: 545-547; Chrysanthi 2011: 1-2.

⁴¹ Troyan 2016.

⁴² Landsbaum 2016.

Another supporter, former professional boxer Floyd Mayweather, said:

People don't like the truth... He speak [sic] like a real man spoke. Real men speak like, 'Man, she had a fat ass. You see her ass? I had to squeeze her ass. I had to grab that fat ass.' Right? So he talking [sic] locker room talk. Locker room talk. 'I'm the man, you know what I'm saying? You know who I am. Yeah, I grabbed her by the p---y. And?'⁴³

On 4chan, a website known for its white supremacist, far-right nationalist and fascist rhetoric, users praised Trump's comments as a pushback against 'gynocentrism', believing that they needed to grab 'civilization by the pussy' to restore 'MANkind'.⁴⁴

Similarly to Clinton, Trump was framed by his supporters as a successfully masculine leader for disrupting norms and exhibiting sexual power. They admired his ability to perform behaviours that they would like to perform themselves, creating a bond between supporters and leader. It is also important to stress the necessity of Trump's masculine image resting on his perceived domination of women, especially in the more extreme circles of his supporters.⁴⁵ By validating these misogynistic non-standard sexual behaviours, Trump leveraged his mostly white male supporter's anxieties about women's social progress in society. He asserted himself as a powerful leader, able to exert control over women's bodies personally, and by extension nationally.⁴⁶

The day after the recording was released, Trump made a tweet to secure the bond with his supporters:

The media and establishment want me out of the race so badly - I WILL NEVER DROP OUT OF THE RACE, WILL NEVER LET MY SUPPORTERS DOWN!
#MAGA⁴⁷

By not dropping out of the presidential race, Trump took control of the scandal and strengthened the image of him as someone who could overcome the political establishment. The reassurance of his continued commitment to his supporters also reinforced the bond between Trump and themselves. This represents a divergence from Clinton's response to accusations regarding his involvement with Lewinsky, as

⁴³ Wells 2017.

⁴⁴ Thorleifsson 2022: 287; Gaufman and Ganesh 2024: 77-78.

⁴⁵ Lindsey 2018: 584.

⁴⁶ Lindsey 2018: 586; Hershkoff and Schneider 2019: 55.

⁴⁷ Peters and Woolley n.d.: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-october-8-2016>.

Trump intentionally and publicly took control of the narrative and, as we will see below, continues to use a rejection of established norms to further his relationship with his supporters.

Since Pussygate, Trump has seen varying levels of political success over the last decade – winning the 2016 election but losing in 2020 – yet his most recent success in 2024 represents Trump’s enduring ability to access an alternative leadership model. Not only did he achieve electoral success, but Trump also achieved the majority of the popular vote, receiving 49.81% compared to Kamala Harris’ 48.34%.⁴⁸ The perception of Trump and the bond with his supporters that arose during the 2016 election and the Pussygate scandal has greatly impacted his current success. Anthony Salvanto, CBS News’ executive director of elections and surveys, argues that one of the three main reasons for Trump’s win was a steady MAGA (Make America Great Again) base.⁴⁹ In a discussion of the reasons behind the 2024 result, David Bell highlights this bond with the electorate and Trump’s ability to go against norms:

To liberal intellectuals, Trump’s rants seem unbearably disgusting, stupid, offensive, and dangerous. Trump swears, insults his opponents in crudely sexist and racist terms, and often sounds like a third grader. But over the years, he has inured a large portion of the electorate to this behavior. To them, his behavior is proof that he is willing to break the rules of what he has helped them to view as an entirely corrupt system.⁵⁰

Pussygate demonstrated to his supporters that Trump not only intended to break down the barriers of the traditional establishment politically, but that he had already broken-down traditional notions of sex with his body. The anti-establishment bond this created with his supporters underpinned Trump’s success in securing another four years in the White House.

Through looking at both Bill Clinton and Donald Trump’s non-standard sex lives from the perspective of Fertik’s article, we can see how their scandals afforded them the opportunity to utilise an alternative leadership model and formulate intimate bonds between themselves and the public. Our access to approval ratings, electoral figures, and a wider variety of perspectives on leaders has shown that even in the face of

⁴⁸ Peters and Woolley n.d.: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-october-8-2016>.

⁴⁹ Farmer 2024.

⁵⁰ Bell 2025: 110.

negative coverage, Clinton and Trump both gained access to an alternative leadership model. Additionally, the modern examples highlight the fact that this alternative model connects to a strong sexuality, necessitated by a perceived control. For Clinton, this can be seen in the reassertion of his masculinity, and for Trump, in the assertion of his power over the traditional establishment. This paper will now turn back to reflect and further Fertik's examination of Mark Antony's, and then Nero's, non-standard sexual behaviour.

Mark Antony (BCE 43–30)⁵¹

Fertik's argument rests on Cicero's *Philippics*. This section will first consider her argument with a focus on *Philippics* 2, before turning to other sources to assess whether Antony was able to maintain his access to an alternative leadership model in his relationship with Cleopatra. Alongside this, a comparison with the modern examples will facilitate an analysis of the ancient material that does not always preserve for us the connection formed between leader and supporters.

Cicero's *Philippics* used Antony's engagement in non-standard sex as part of the orator's invective. Jonathan Powell categorises invective as 'a direct attack...a declaration of open enmity' which goes beyond 'subtle, disguised or mitigated attacks.'⁵² Cicero first accused Antony of being a prostitute, then of being made into Curio's wife and slave:

Sumpsisti virilem, quam statim muliebre togam reddidisti. Primo vulgare scortum, certa flagitii merces, nec ea parva; sed cito Curio intervenit, qui te a meretricio quaestu abduxit et, tamquam stolam dedisset, in matrimonio stabili et certo collocavit

You assumed a man's gown, and at once turned it into a harlot's. At first you were a common prostitute, the fee for your infamies was fixed, and that not small; but Curio quickly turned up, who withdrew you from your meretricious

⁵¹ Ruling dates given from the start of the triumvirate between Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus until Antony's death.

⁵² Powell 2007: 2.

traffic, and, as if he had given you a matron's robe, established you in an enduring and stable wedlock.⁵³

Cicero used invective to attack Antony's image and paint him as an unfit leader for the community in multiple ways.⁵⁴ First, he portrayed Antony as a woman, who, when a prostitute, rather than simply cross-dressing, was transforming his *toga virilis* into a *toga muliebris*.⁵⁵ Then, once saved by Curio as his wife, it was implied that he was the penetrated partner in their sexual relationship.⁵⁶ As the penetrated partner, he would have been seen as having *muliebria pati*, 'having a woman's experience', again returning to this idea of a feminised Antony.⁵⁷ Cicero sought to undermine Antony's ability to lead as there was a disconnect in Roman thought between being a leader and being a woman. While some women were able to hold unofficial leadership positions in Roman society, when they were described by writers, they were generally attributed with masculine qualities.⁵⁸ It was also thought that elite Roman men should be able to 'defend the boundaries of their body from invasive assaults of all kinds', and if Antony could not protect his body from invasion during sex, then it could be expected that as a leader, he would not be able to protect Rome.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, as Fertik notes, while Antony was the passive partner in his and Curio's sexual relationship, he demonstrated control over Curio emotionally.⁶⁰ Cicero recounts that Curio came to him to protect Antony from his father's wrath and that:

Ipse autem amore ardens confirmabat, quod desiderium tui discidii ferre non posset, se in exilium iturum

in the ardour of his passion he assured me he would go into exile, as he could not endure the regret of being parted from you.⁶¹

⁵³ Cicero *Philippic* 2.44, trans. Ker 1926. As well as a close friend of Antony's as a young man, Gaius Scribonius Curio was a Roman politician and fought on the side of Caesar in the civil war against Pompey, consequently dying in Africa in 49 BCE.

⁵⁴ Corbeill 2002: 199.

⁵⁵ Gildenhard 2018: 138.

⁵⁶ Fertik 2017: 74.

⁵⁷ Walters 1997: 30.

⁵⁸ Williams 2010: 133.

⁵⁹ Walters 1997: 30.

⁶⁰ Fertik 2017: 74-75.

⁶¹ Cicero *Philippic* 2.45, trans. Ker 1926.

Cicero did not intend to grant Antony control of this episode, instead aiming to depict Curio as femininely controlled by his passion.⁶² However, if we read this invective in a favourable light, then this passage illustrates upward mobility and financial gain for Antony through the control he exerted over his lover.⁶³ Fertik notes this but does not incorporate it into her overall argument.⁶⁴ Yet, as we have seen from the analysis of Clinton and Trump, power and control are necessary elements in accessing an alternative leadership model. The people resonate and connect to their leader's non-standard sexuality, but this then must inspire further awe, for Clinton's reasserted masculinity, Trump's overturn of traditional establishment, and Antony's ability to influence and control others.

Another instance in which Cicero attempts to use Antony's non-standard sexual behaviour to demonstrate his inability to lead is when Antony travels with his mistress Volumnia:

Vehebatur in essedo tribunus; lictores laureati antecedeabant, inter quos aperta lectica mima portabatur, quam ex oppidis municipales homines honesti ob viam necessario prodeuntes non noto illo et mimico nomine, sed Volumniam consalutabant. Sequebatur raeda cum lenonibus, comites nequissimi; relecta mater amicam impuri filii tamquam nurum sequebatur

As tribune of the plebs, he used to ride about in a two-wheeled carriage; lictors decked with laurel led the way, and in their midst a mime actress was carried in an open litter. Respectable folk from the country towns, who were obliged to come out and meet the cortege, greeted her not by her well-known stage name but as "Volumnia." Then followed a carriage full of pimps, Antonius' utterly worthless entourage. His mother, relegated to the rear, followed her worthless son's mistress as if a daughter-in-law.⁶⁵

Mime actresses were viewed negatively in elite society and were in the same legal category as prostitutes.⁶⁶ Antony placing Volumnia, a mistress whose occupation was looked down upon along with 'worthless' 'pimps', over his mother, was meant to place Antony outside of the elite and exclude him from acceptable society.⁶⁷ However, mime actresses were popular with their Roman audience and also with some members of

⁶² Williams 201: 148, 132.

⁶³ Cicero *Philippic* 2.44, trans. Ker 1926. Curio was in debt for six million sesterces which Cicero assumes was for Antony.

⁶⁴ Fertik 2017: 75.

⁶⁵ Cicero *Philippic* 2.58, trans. Ker 1926.

⁶⁶ Duncan 2020: 21-49.

⁶⁷ Cicero *Philippic* 2.58, trans. Ker 1926; Corbeill 2002: 198; Edwards 1993: 12.

the elite, evidenced through repeated legislation to ban marriages with actresses by Augustus, Domitian, and Marcus Aurelius.⁶⁸ Fertik suggests that the locals who were made to meet Volumnia could have instead willingly gone to meet this celebrity.⁶⁹ If this suggestion is accepted, then this connection to the people would have been an especially important element for Cicero to reframe, given that Antony's politics played into the broader trend of populist politics in the late Republic. Cicero believed that such politics were detrimental to the *res publica*, and sought to protect it.⁷⁰ By rejecting traditional Roman norms, and thus harming the *res publica* (at least from a Ciceronian perspective), Antony asked others to do the same and to accept his own authority in its place, consequently creating a 'privileged' relationship between himself and the people.⁷¹ This would have been strengthened by the fact that Volumnia would have had to have made a lengthy journey to meet Antony on campaign, further signalling his powerful sexuality to his supporters.⁷² Not only could this episode have benefitted Antony's position in terms of his sexuality, but it may also have created a 'buzz' surrounding the entourage's journey, placing Antony more firmly in the public eye.

Additionally, to flaunt societal norms in the presence of the lictors, which were a marker of legitimate authority, demonstrates Antony's ability to practice alternative modes of behaviour and draw on Republican frameworks of power.⁷³ Both Clinton and Trump were and are respectively able to utilise the authority of their office alongside the power they drew from their non-standard sexual acts. Although Antony was creating an alternative leadership model, he was still striving for a dominant position in Rome. Although Trump has espoused anti-establishment views to accumulate support, he similarly still sought power through the presidency.⁷⁴ Leaders can use sex to form alternative relationships with their followers without losing the power they draw on from traditional models and fully alienating themselves from the political structures of their societies.

⁶⁸ Webb 2002: 293-295.

⁶⁹ Fertik 2017: 80.

⁷⁰ Moatti and Müller 2022: 213-216; 207-208. *res publica* is often translated as 'the public thing' or 'the public affair'. For more on the *res publica*, see Schofield 1995.

⁷¹ Fertik 2017: 80.

⁷² Fertik 2017: 82. Like Antony benefitting from Curio financially, this fact is not made important to Fertik's overall argument.

⁷³ Brennan 2022: 15.

⁷⁴ Hershkoff and Schneider 2019: 47.

Given that these two episodes are a part of Cicero's invective against Antony, we should be cautious in understanding them in the same way as the more accurate sources we have for Clinton and Trump. Yet, invective against a leader can lead to strengthened bond between the subject of the attack and their supporters. For example, Julius Caesar's rumoured sexual relationship with King Nicomedes IV of Bithynia was used on numerous occasions to attack the former, with his conservative consular colleague, Bibulus giving him the nickname 'the queen of Bithynia' (*Bithynicam reginam*).⁷⁵ Suetonius tells us that during his triumph, Caesar's men teased their leader, calling out:

*Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem:
Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit Gallias,
Nicomedes non triumphat qui subegit Caesarem.*

The Gallic lands did Caesar master; Nicomedes mastered Caesar.
Look! now Caesar rides in triumph, the one who mastered Gallic lands.
Nicomedes does not triumph, the one who mastered Caesar.⁷⁶

Fertik uses this incident to show that attacks and taunts were not just an illustration of moral outrage, but that making fun of a leader could in fact allow followers to express a commonality between them.⁷⁷ Judith Hack notes that in *Philippics* 2, Cicero purposefully uses a comical tone to paint Antony as 'ridiculous: a man in a top political position who cannot be taken seriously'.⁷⁸ If we see laughter as a way to allow the people to bond themselves to their leaders, then the *Philippics*, even as a piece of invective, can still be used to understand how Antony may have accessed an alternative leadership model.

Looking beyond the *Philippics*, Antony's famous relationship with Cleopatra could also have allowed him to access an alternative leadership model. At first glance, the

⁷⁵ Suetonius *Jul* 49.2, trans. Rolfe 1914. For more detail on this topic, see Osgood 2008.

⁷⁶ Suetonius *Jul* 49.4, trans. Rolfe 1914.

⁷⁷ Fertik 2017: 78. As part of the analysis, Fertik draws on Mbembe's idea of "conviviality", in which "Those who laugh...are not necessarily bringing about the collapse of power or even resisting it...they are simply bearing witness...that the grotesque is no more foreign to officialdom than the common man is impervious to the charms of majesty." Mbembe 2001:11. For more on this concept see Mbembe 2001.

⁷⁸ Hack 2023: 31.

sources depict Antony as under the control of Cleopatra.⁷⁹ For example, Appian tells us that after the death of Brutus and Cassius:

ὁ δὲ Ἀντώνιος ἐς τὴν Ἀσίαν, ἔνθα αὐτῷ συμβάλλει Κλεοπάτρα βασίλισ Αἰγύπτου, καὶ εὐθύς ὀφθεῖσα ἐκράτει

Antony proceeded to Asia, where he met Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, and succumbed to her charms at first sight.⁸⁰

Similarly, when describing Antony's preparations for the battle of Actium, Plutarch writes that:

οὕτω δὲ ἄρα προσθήκη τῆς γυναικὸς ἦν ὥστε τῷ πεζῷ πολὺ διαφέρων ἐβούλετο τοῦ ναυτικοῦ τὸ κράτος εἶναι διὰ Κλεοπάτραν

But to such an extent, now, was Antony an appendage of the woman that although he was far superior on land, he wished the decision to rest with his navy, to please Cleopatra.⁸¹

Not only was Antony meant to have been under the power of Cleopatra but was so much so that he sacrificed his victory at Actium to please her. Williams argues that in Roman thought, 'non-Roman peoples were destined to submit to Rome's masculine *imperium*' and that control over oneself and others was a precondition for Roman masculinity.⁸² Adding to this feminised view of Antony is his devotion to Cleopatra, with an excessive interest in sex with or love for women seen as an emasculating behaviour.⁸³ We have seen these ideas play out in the figure of Curio, with his uncontrolled and excessive feelings for Antony.⁸⁴ If Antony was now in this feminised and powerless position, unable to retain his *imperium* in the face of a foreign queen, would he have been able to retain his bond with his supporters?

It is important to consider that this view of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship is a revisionist narrative created by Octavian to discredit his rival and was subsequently reproduced by successive Roman sources.⁸⁵ If we think of Antony as a figure with agency, a competent politician and military leader, then even the indulgent decision to

⁷⁹ Beneker 2014: 508; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 50.24-28, trans. Cary 1927; Horace *Odes and Epodes* 9.12-14, trans. Rudd 2004.

⁸⁰ Appian *Civil Wars* 5.1.1, trans. McGing 1899.

⁸¹ Plutarch *Lives* 62.1, trans. Perrin 1920.

⁸² Williams 201: 148, 132.

⁸³ Williams 2010: 157.

⁸⁴ Cicero *Philippic* 2.45, trans. Ker 1926.

⁸⁵ Schmaal 2024: 56.

abandon a 'dignified' Roman wife for a 'decadent', 'hedonistic' Queen, to leave 'humble' Rome to ride gilded couches in Egypt, and to leave behind his mortal life to embody Dionysus, would have inspired 'bodily desire' in his supporters and 'fulfilled their most exaggerated fantasies'.⁸⁶ By placing Cleopatra in control, Octavian's propaganda blocks us from seeing Antony's continued access to an alternative leadership model. But, by giving Antony back his agency, we can see how his non-standard behaviours could have continued to fulfil the desires of his supporters and demonstrate his power through his rejection of Roman sexual morals.

This sense of agency also raises the question of intentionality. Unlike Clinton, who exerted power by ignoring criticism and remaining in office despite the scandal, Antony's behaviour demonstrates an intentionality in crafting his relationship in specific ways. In the Volumnia episode, more so than the adolescent Curio episode, Antony's behaviour displays a deliberate desire to draw attention to his relationship with the mime actress, thereby flaunting established Roman morals. Likewise, Antony and Cleopatra's relationship was framed in an 'un-Roman' style, purposefully rejecting traditional Roman models of behaviour to embrace an Egyptian aesthetic. We know that Antony would have materially benefitted from his relationship with Cleopatra, her support allowing him to leverage the resources of Egypt and to continue to resist an autocracy of Octavian.⁸⁷ Yet even so, this repeated untraditional behaviour from Antony demonstrates that, like Trump, he deliberately framed himself as rejecting established norms through his non-standard sexual behaviour.

Furthermore, like with the *Philippics*, we may also query the accuracy of our sources for Antony and Cleopatra, and question why authors may seek to attack their relationship. Arguably, Octavian would have needed to craft propaganda to counter alternative views and positive bonds with Antony. Cassius Dio writes that:

εὐδαιμονίας παραχωρῆσαι; τίς μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ὀδύραιτο ὁρῶν στρατιώτας
Ῥωμαίους δορυφοροῦντας τὴν βασιλίδαν αὐτῶν; τίς δ' οὐκ ἂν στενάξειεν ἀκούων
ἱππέας καὶ βουλευτὰς Ῥωμαίων κολακεύοντας αὐτὴν ὥσπερ εὐνούχους;

⁸⁶ Plutarch *Lives* 31.2, trans. Perrin 1920; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 50.5.1-4, trans. Cary 1927; Schmaal, 2024: 59-60; Fertik 2017: 84-85.

⁸⁷ Schmaal 2024: 63.

Who would not lament at seeing Roman soldiers acting as bodyguards of their queen? Who would not groan at hearing that Roman knights and senators fawn upon her like eunuchs?⁸⁸

Although Cassius Dio, through the voice of Octavian, laments against these supporters of Antony and Cleopatra, he demonstrates that they existed, and that they were a threat that had to be discredited in the public consciousness. Even though Octavian's propaganda eventually succeeded in negatively affecting Antony's popularity in Rome, which allowed Octavian to carry out the civil war with public support, the latter still evidently had support that needed to be quashed.

Additionally, we also see support for Antony, or at least respect for his power, outside of Rome in the east, with cities minting portraits of Antony to express an 'explicit statement of allegiance'.⁸⁹ This may have reflected an element of the ruler cult, in which Roman benefactors were treated akin to Hellenistic monarchs by their cities.⁹⁰ Drawing on this non-Roman source of power would have fit into the larger framework that Antony was constructing outside of the traditional Roman sphere. His relationship with Cleopatra, as part of this construction, did not prevent Antony from accessing an alternative leadership model, nor from having supporters; in fact, he would have materially benefitted from his indulgent sexuality and may have strengthened his position.

This section has shown that not only is Fertik's argument applicable beyond her assessment of Cicero's *Philippics*, but also alongside that, there is a requirement of control to access an alternative leadership model. This is not only demonstrated in the cases of Clinton and Trump, but also in Antony's ability to leverage the support of Curio, the celebrity status of Volumnia, and the resources of Egypt. This paper will now turn to assess the non-standard sexual behaviour of Nero, and see that in some cases, leaders cannot always maintain access to the alternative leadership model.

⁸⁸ Cassius Dio *Roman History* 50.25, trans. Cary 1927.

⁸⁹ Meadows 2020: 20, 23.

⁹⁰ The ruler cult framed interactions between benefactors and their cities. For more on this topic see Chaniotis 2003.

Nero (CE 54–68)

Nero's reign is characterised by a devotion his to 'alternative and self-indulgent pursuits'.⁹¹ Sources claim that, among other excessively indulgent and violent acts, Nero raped a Vestal Virgin, married men, and committed incest with his mother.⁹² Suetonius particularly painted Nero's sexual extravagance as corresponding negatively with his cruel treatment of others, moral judgements, and running of the state.⁹³ One example of such behaviour was recounted by Suetonius:

Puerum Sporum exsectis testibus etiam in muliebrem naturam transfigurare conatus cum dote et flammeo per sollemnia nuptiarum celeberrimo officio deductum ad se pro uxore habuit... Hunc Sporum, Augustarum ornamentis excultum lecticaque vectum, et circa conventus mercatusque Graeciae ac mox Romae circa Sigillaria comitatus est identidem exosculans

He castrated the boy Sporus and actually tried to make a woman of him; and he married him with all the usual ceremonies, including a dowry and a bridal veil, took him to his house attended by a great throng, and treated him as his wife... This Sporus, decked out with the finery of the empresses and riding in a litter, he took with him to the assizes and marts of Greece, and later at Rome through the Street of the Images, fondly kissing him from time to time.⁹⁴

It would have been socially acceptable for Nero to have sex with Sporus; as a freedman, he would have still been expected to carry out duties for his former master, including sexual favours.⁹⁵ Yet, this story highlights the emperor's disregard for the natural order, framing Nero as going beyond expected norms, ignoring Sporus' natural state and shaping it based on his own desires. Additionally, marriage was seen as an institution that existed between men and women for the production of legitimate children, with Williams noting that even the term *matrimonium* derives from *mater*, illustrating that marriage was intended for the creation of motherhood.⁹⁶ To force male-male relationships into a Roman framework (for example, through marriage) would have invoked criticism, Caroline Vout argues, as it threatened the features of Roman society, or 'Romaness-itself'.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Shotter 2005: 27.

⁹² Tacitus *Annals* 14.2, trans. Jackson 1937; Suetonius *Nero* 6.28, trans. Rolfe 1914.

⁹³ Chong-Gossard 2010: 297.

⁹⁴ Suetonius *Nero* 6.28, trans. Rolfe 1914.

⁹⁵ Williams 2010: 107.

⁹⁶ Williams 2010: 280.

⁹⁷ Vout 2007: 157.

However, it is important to note that under the reign of emperors like Trajan and Hadrian, the excess of figures like Nero would have been exploited to contrast the formers' 'good' reign with the latter's 'bad' leadership, which depended upon an exaggerated depiction of Nero's extravagance.⁹⁸ Yet, this incident still reveals the emperor's power in several ways. First, Nero's lack of regard for nature could be seen as his ability to exert his authority; not satisfied with simply having a 'husband', he physically altered Sporus' body to transform him into a woman. Nero manipulated Sporus' body into the form that he wanted, ignoring the limits placed upon his desires not only within society, but also in nature. Furthermore, as Sporus was the castrated partner, we can assume that Nero was the penetrator in the relationship.⁹⁹ Jonathan Walters notes that the penetrator-penetrated relationship was one that naturally presumed 'a more powerful individual wielding power over a less powerful one' and that 'sexual penetration is used to mark a gender boundary'.¹⁰⁰ Nero's behaviour surpasses this framework, evidenced in the more 'usual' context in the Curio/Antony episode, going beyond normal societal taboos to be the stronger and more masculine position in the relationship.

Cassius Dio's account also tells us that Nero publicly married Sporus.¹⁰¹ As an open display of Nero's intimate sexual excess, this would have created a bond between the emperor and the masses. We are also told that Nero's Greek subjects not only celebrated his marriage as if it were a triumph or a religious festival, but also expressed hope that Sporus would bear legitimate offspring.¹⁰² We must consider that this anecdote comes to us from an elite Roman author, who may have been highlighting this flattery as an element of the Greek ruler cult to undermine the relationship between Sporus and Nero.¹⁰³ However, material evidence provides an insight into the type of relationship Nero was attempting to craft with his Greek subjects. Erika Manders and Daniëlle Slootjes argue that Nero's Greek coins reflect a focus on the emperor's persona rather than his imperial familial legitimacy.¹⁰⁴ This could demonstrate that

⁹⁸ Edwards 1993: 28.

⁹⁹ Meister 2014: 67.

¹⁰⁰ Walters 1997: 31.

¹⁰¹ Cassius Dio *Roman History* 62.28.3, trans. Cary 1927.

¹⁰² Cassius Dio *Roman History* 63.13.1, trans. Cary 1927. Vout 2007: 151.

¹⁰³ Especially in contrast to negative Roman reactions, such as Cassius Dio *Roman History* 62.28.3.

¹⁰⁴ Manders and Slootjes 2015:1004-1005.

Nero sought to shift away from traditional formulations of power, instead seeking to draw power from his own image independently from his lineage. Rather than seeing the reaction to Nero and Sporus' marriage as subjects attempting to flatter their deluded emperor, this episode could be interpreted as Nero intentionally drawing on a reliable source of support to invest power within his physical presence, as an embodied persona, instead of to the intangibility of imperial lineage. By displaying his marriage with Sporus to the people, Nero was allowing his subjects intimate insight into his body and that of his 'wife', their untraditional pairing clueing in the spectators as to details of their non-standard sexual behaviour.¹⁰⁵ Even after the death of Nero, Sporus' body remained important for representing imperial power, with both Galba's main rival, Nymphidius Sabinus, and Otho seeking him as their consort.¹⁰⁶ Nero's ability to alter the body and to make it a site of power would have allowed him to enhance his leadership position as emperor; not only could he break the sexual rules of nature, but also the established rules of imperial power.

Although Nero was able to access an alternative leadership model with Sporus, he was not able to maintain this access in all his relationships. Suetonius claims that Nero and Agrippina committed incest, reporting that 'whenever he rode in a litter with his mother, he had incestuous relations with her, which were betrayed by the stains on his clothing.'¹⁰⁷ Tacitus also reports on their relationship and adds that it was Agrippina who initiated the relationship, with Nero lacking control.¹⁰⁸ This was furthered by Agrippina's boasting of the relationship, causing their behaviour to become notorious and demonstrating her ability to craft the sexual narrative that was being received by society.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, she 'offended him by too strict surveillance and criticism of his words and acts', with Nero controlled by his mother even outside the bedroom.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Fertik 2017: 66.

¹⁰⁶ Plutarch *Lives* 9.3, trans. Perrin 1920; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 64.8.3, trans. Cary 1927; Williams 2010, 285.

¹⁰⁷ Suetonius Nero 6.28, trans. Rolfe 1914. "Olim etiam quotiens lectica cum matre veheretur, libidinum incestu ac maculis vestis proditum affirmant". Agrippina, or Agrippina the younger, was Roman empress from 49 CE – 54 CE. As well as Nero's mother, she had been the niece and wife of emperor Claudius.

¹⁰⁸ Tacitus *Annals* 14.2, trans. Jackson 1937.

¹⁰⁹ Tacitus *Annals* 14.2, trans. Jackson 1937.

¹¹⁰ Suetonius Nero 6.34, trans. Rolfe 1914. "Matrem facta dictaque sua exquirentem acerbius et corrigentem hactenus primo gravabatur".

But, like our ancient sources on Antony, we are dealing with biased perspectives. Jan Meister argues that reports, especially by Suetonius, have more to do with character assassination than a desire to report on the actual sex lives of the emperors.¹¹¹ However, Agrippina did hold power in the imperial court and she featured on coins alongside Nero – a first for an emperor’s living mother – with her position in one type more prominent even than her son’s image.¹¹² Furthermore, while Agrippina had featured on coins under Claudius, the number of cities that minted coins with her image almost doubled under Nero’s reign.¹¹³ In 56 BCE, family references in coins stop, with Olivier Hekster et al. suggesting that this could indicate Agrippina’s loss of influence.¹¹⁴ Our textual sources tell us that Nero decided to have his mother killed:

postremo, ubicumque haberetur, praegravem ratus interficere constituit, hactenus consultans, veneno an ferro vel qua alia vi

At last, convinced that she would be too formidable, wherever she might dwell, he resolved to destroy her, merely deliberating whether it was to be accomplished by poison, or by the sword, or by any other violent means.¹¹⁵

Yet, when Agrippina is finally murdered:

αὐτὸς δὲ ταῖς τε νυξὶν ἐξεταράττετο ὥστε καὶ ἐκ τῆς εὐνῆς ἐξαπιναίως ἀναπηδᾷ, καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέραν ὑπὸ σαλπίγγων δῆ τινων πολεμικόν τι καὶ θορυβῶδες ἐκ τοῦ χωρίου ἐν ᾧ τὰ τῆς Ἀγριππίνης ὀστᾶ ἔκειτο ἡχουσῶν ἐδειματοῦτο

his own conscience was so disturbed at night that he would leap suddenly from his bed, and by day, when he merely heard the blare of trumpets sounding forth some stirring martial strain from the region where lay Agrippina’s bones, he would be terror-stricken.¹¹⁶

Unlike Antony parading his relationship with Volumnia throughout Italy, Trump’s swift commitment to his followers after Pussygate, and Nero’s own public marriage of Sporus, the emperor’s decision to remove Agrippina demonstrates his inability to take control of his non-standard sex – or more simply, take back power from his supposed domineering mother. It may have been difficult for Nero, if a relationship between his mother and himself ever did occur, to have been able to exert control over his non-

¹¹¹ Meister 2014: 70.

¹¹² Hekster et al. 2014: 12.

¹¹³ Hekster et al. 2014: 16.

¹¹⁴ Hekster et al. 2014: 13.

¹¹⁵ Tac *Annals* 14.3, trans. Jackson 1937.

¹¹⁶ Cassius Dio *Roman History* 62.14, trans. Cary 1927.

standard sex, given the Roman view of incestuous relationships in comparison to other taboo relationships. Judith Grubbs notes that incestuous unions were particularly 'unholy' and needed religious atonement, and in legal cases describing other non-legal unions, such religiously laden language was not used.¹¹⁷ In this case, if Nero had taken control in the form of publicly declaring a relationship with his mother, the taboo of the relationship may have outweighed the benefit it could have provided.

Even if we read Nero's assassination of Agrippina as a form of taking back control, she was able to dominate his thoughts from the grave. His attempts to reassert power failed and he was unable to come out from under her shadow. Additionally, unlike with the other three leader's examples, there is no benefit to Nero in this instance of his non-standard behaviour: no increased masculine sexuality, no upward mobility, and no financial gain. His non-standard sex was unlikely to have inspired the kind of relationship between leader and supporters described by Fertik. He was not able to benefit or exert control over his relationship to Agrippina and therefore could not access an alternative leadership model.

Conclusion

By comparing these modern and ancient examples, we can see how important non-standard sexual behaviour can be to the standing of a leader. By looking at the modern sources, we can see how supporters might connect to a leader through sex in ways that are not preserved for us in the ancient material. They have also highlighted that to access an alternative leadership model one cannot only perform taboo sex, but must also exhibit power. Clinton's image shifted from one of weakness and domination by others to one where he was in control of his potent masculine sexuality. While this view of the president came from the American people, Clinton still demonstrated his power through ignoring criticism and not resigning as president. Pussygate demonstrated Trump's intentional ability to dominate others and commit acts that go against traditional norms, illustrating his powerful leadership and his ability to overcome the political establishment to his supporters. Mark Antony's indulgent, but also at times intentionally constructed, sexuality connected him to the people while

¹¹⁷ Grubbs 2015 :128.

also enabling his political success. Nero's relationship to Sporus demonstrated his power over nature and his ability to reframe his connection to imperial power, but his relationship with Agrippina prohibited him from exhibiting control and connecting to the people. What the modern examples have highlighted, and the ancient examples subsequently shown, is that non-standard sexual behaviour facilitates access to an alternative leadership model when their behaviour is connected to a strong sexuality and a sense of control. An ability to control the sexual narrative, acquire benefits through sex and/or a relationship, or ignore and avoid negative consequences of a sex scandal, grants further power to the leader. Consequently, it is not enough to perform non-standard sexual behaviour. Even if a leader creates an intimate bond with their supporters through living out their desires, this must then be coupled with power.

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