

# Introduction

## *Roman Egypt and Rome's "Egypt"*

The Temple of Dendur stands grandly in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 1). Reflecting pools and cool tan-marble floors stylishly evoke the Nile and its surroundings; an enormous semi-translucent ceiling remains a relic of 1970s modernism; a vast wall of glass looks out to Central Park and E. Eighty-Fourth Street. All frame the Egyptian temple's relocation to the former Sackler Wing as a feat so grand that the original temple and its construction look pedestrian. Nominally, the room complements the temple, suggesting an original Egyptian setting. But the soaring space, large reflecting pools, and majestic windows become the object of admiration. We are asked to stand in awe of the imperial project of relocation that allowed an ancient temple to look so small against its modern exhibition. Lyndon Johnson's letter to the museum announcing that it would house the temple, which had been gifted to the United States after its help in the Aswan High Dam Project, proudly concludes that the temple's move to New York "will protect it and make it available to millions of Americans in a setting appropriate to its character."<sup>1</sup>

A setting appropriate to its character, indeed. To most visitors, the Temple of Dendur tidily evokes a transhistorical model of an Egyptian temple. The temporal disjoin between it and the statues of Amenhotep III sitting before it—over 1300 years!—certainly adds to this sense of nebulous timelessness. But the temple is decidedly of Roman-Egyptian origin. It was built in 10 BCE by the emperor Augustus and erected just south of Egypt's southern border. This space, long the frontier of Egypt and Nubia, became a place where Roman power and its cooption of Egyptian iconography of empire were formalized. On its walls (fig. 2), the emperor

1. Johnson's letter to the Metropolitan's then-director, Thomas Hoving, is reproduced and discussed in Patch (2018).



FIGURE 1. The Temple of Dendur, reign of Augustus, with two statues of Amenhotep III (22.5.1, 22.5.2) in the foreground. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

himself, in traditional pharaonic regalia, burns incense for a local Nubian chieftain's deified sons and the pantheon of Egyptian gods—Isis, Osiris, Thoth, Horus, and Hathor—to whom the temple is dedicated.

In the Temple of Dendur, Augustus perpetuates the visual language of Egyptian religion to associate Roman power with the Egyptian forms of imperial self-styling that long preceded it. But precious little of this context has made the trip to the Metropolitan Museum, where the temple's original semantics are now condensed into a bare sign of Egyptian religion that has been improbably and magnificently hauled off to New York. At the Met, the Temple of Dendur inevitably loses much of the spatial and temporal liminality that makes it such an atypical typical Egyptian temple.

That museumgoers in New York can look on Augustus worshipping Isis, Tefnut, Horus, and other animal-headed gods is at first strange. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil had framed Augustus's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium as a victory of the traditional Roman religious order over its vile, monstrous, Egyptian counterpart:

In the middle the queen Cleopatra calls to her army with native rattle,  
she does not yet look back behind her to the twin snakes.



FIGURE 2. The emperor Augustus offering to the Egyptian gods Horus and Hathor. From the southern wall of the Temple of Dendur, reign of Augustus. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Monstrous forms of every sort of god and the barker Anubis  
hold weapons against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva.<sup>2</sup>

Augustus's apparent distaste for Egyptian religion, one of many tools through which civil war against Antony was recast as a war between a Roman self and a barbarous, effete, Egyptian Other, took firm root. Cassius Dio tells us that Augustus patently refused to visit the Apis bull: "And for this same reason he also didn't want to meet with the Apis bull, claiming that he was wont to worship gods, not cattle."<sup>3</sup> The *Aeneid*, not quite finished when disseminated after Virgil's death in 19 BCE, and the temple, completed in 10 BCE, alternatively depict Augustus defeating and worshipping the same set of Egyptian gods.

2. *Aen.* 8.696–700: *regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro, / necdum etiam geminos a tergo respicit anguis. / omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis / contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam / tela tenent.* Text is that of Mynors (1969). Where unnoted, translations are my own.

3. Dio Cass. 51.16.5: *καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ταύτης αἰτίας οὐδὲ τῷ Ἀπιδι ἐντευχεῖν ἠθέλησε, λέγων θεοὺς ἀλλ' οὐχὶ βούς προσκυνεῖν εἰθίσθαι.* Text is that of Boissvain (1895–1901).

This is an odd disjunction: Egyptian religion is simultaneously vilified in Rome and, in Egypt, used to advertise Roman power. It is all too easy to write off this disconnect as situational. What happens in Egypt, stays in Egypt (until it is carted off to New York or Paris or London or Madrid). Augustus's activity in Egypt is incommensurate with the "Egypt" denigrated by Virgil and Cassius Dio.<sup>4</sup> In the Temple of Dendur, Egyptian priestly elite expediently underline a continuity of rule central to the ideology of Egyptian kingship. By barbarizing Egyptian religion, Roman authors create a schematic Rome-Egypt binary to stress the continuity of a *Romanitas* that had been undergoing constant rearticulation in the socio-political upheaval of the first centuries BCE and CE.<sup>5</sup>

In emphasizing the herculean task of relocating the temple, the Metropolitan Museum unwittingly perpetuates an imperial sleight of hand that had begun with Augustus himself. The Temple of Dendur is one entry in a millennia-long history of robbing Egypt of its big, heavy stuff. Augustus, who took Egypt's obelisks to decorate Rome, looms large in this history of looted antiquities. Pliny the Elder, the famous encyclopedist, brags about the ships that Augustus had built to bring obelisks from Egypt to Rome: "More than anything, there was the problem of carrying obelisks to Rome by sea. The ships were quite the spectacle. Augustus the divine had memorialized the boat that carried the first obelisk in permanent docks in Pozzuoli because of this miraculous deed."<sup>6</sup> The act of transport outshines the original creation of the obelisks, a shift of emphasis that redefines the value of objects that had long coordinated royal power with solar religion. As for Rome's obelisks, so too for Dendur.

Pliny's celebration of the transport of Egypt's obelisks exemplifies the ways that Rome's control of Egypt incentivized and gave shape to the movement of people and goods across the Mediterranean.<sup>7</sup> Exchange between Egypt and Rome puts paid to the "what happens in Egypt, stays in Egypt" narrative used to cleave off the Temple of Dendur from the antipathy to Egypt promoted by Virgil and Cassius Dio. Exoticism, barbarization, and Orientalism have for some time been invoked to justify this separation between Egypt in Rome and Roman Egypt.<sup>8</sup> The obelisk may travel from Egypt to Rome, but the cultural attachments that make an obelisk a significant object to Egyptians do not travel along with it. So long as Romans

4. For Augustus's (and other emperors') building activity in Egypt, see Klotz (2012, 227–45).

5. This barbarizing line of argumentation has been made by Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984), Son-nabend (1986), Pfeiffer (2015, 50), and Gasparini (2017, 399).

6. Plin. *HN* 36.70: *super omnia accessit difficultas mari Romam devehendi, spectatis admodum navibus. divus Augustus eam, quae priorem advexerat, miraculi gratia Puteolis perpetuis navalibus dicaverat.* Text of Pliny is that of von Jan and Mayhoff (1967).

7. For these imports, see Rouillet (1972), Malaise (1972a, 1972b), and Vittozzi (2006).

8. Pearson (2021, 193–94) pushes back against a dichotomy of full incorporation or complete exoticism when approaching Egyptian culture's presence in Rome. In chapter 1, I address the limits of Orientalism (see Said 1978) as a theoretical frame used to justify the schism between Roman Egypt and Egypt in Rome.

project their own significance onto Egyptian objects, landscapes, languages, priests, and animals, the Egypt on display in Roman literature and material culture can be held apart from the historical realities of Roman Egypt.<sup>9</sup> But this separability, built on the relative independence of Rome's Egypt from Egypt itself, fails to capture a vibrant process of cultural translation that surrounded the movement of goods and people from Egypt to Rome.<sup>10</sup>

This book sets out to recapture one of these processes of cultural translation: a literary tradition in which culturally mixed Egyptian authors wrote about Egypt for a Greek and Roman audience. This literary tradition's popularity in Rome has been masked by a perceived gulf between Rome's Egypt and Egypt's Egypt that is far from ubiquitous or inevitable. Orientalism has often been retrojected back into the ancient world to justify this chasm, but it is better suited to modernity and the academy.<sup>11</sup> It calls attention to the different disciplinary trajectories of Classics and Egyptology. A divide has emerged between those who study Roman views of Egyptian animal worship, or the hieroglyphic script, or priestly wisdom, from those who read Egyptian-language texts on those very traditions. Arguments for the isolation of Rome's own projected "Egypt" and the historical Egypt stand firmly at odds with a reality of travel, of people and ideas, from Egypt to Rome. Egyptian traditions hitched a ride with the culturally mixed Egyptian authors who made the trip from Egypt to Rome on paths carved by Rome's newly formed Principate. In this book, I want to document their whole trip, starting from Egypt and Egyptology and ending in Rome and the cultural history of the imperial period.

The Temple of Dendur is so exciting because it makes clear that the Egypt with which Rome came into contact was—far from an empty signifier of exoticism—a complex mixture of cultural traditions. Whenever I can dragoon family, friends, in-laws (anyone, really) to visit the temple with me, I cannot help but dwell on everything that makes it idiosyncratic. This starts with the cartouches in which Augustus's power is literally spelled out. The titlature is simultaneously Greek, Egyptian, and Roman while being none of these things exclusively. Sometimes, Augustus is simply called "Pharaoh" (*pr-ʿ*), a label for the institution of kingship rarely used as a stand-alone title in pharaonic titlature. In other cartouches

9. This separation extends across the two key groups discussing Romans' views of Egypt—those who work on material culture and on literature. For the latter, see Sonnabend (1986), Manolaraki (2013), Leemreize (2016), and Merrills (2017). For the former, see most recently Swetnam-Burland (2015), Barrett (2019), Pearson (2021), and Mazurek (2022, 59–87), who emphasizes the deterritorialization of Egyptian religion and its reinvention as a Greco-Roman fantasy.

10. Guldin (2018, 18–21) underlines the reciprocal influence of physical movement across space and metaphors of translation.

11. Parker's comparison of the Lateran obelisk and Diocletian's stele cautions that appropriation as a theoretical frame risks "reifying cultural boundaries" (2018, 138), a caution that could extend to Orientalizing approaches to Roman interest in Egypt. See Swetnam-Burland (2015, 187n2) for a similar note of caution.

(fig. 2), Augustus is “the Autocrator, Caesar, alive forever”  (*ʿwtrtr qysrs nḥ dt*). Both on the lexical level and in the cultural semantics of power, the title is a creative amalgam. It translates into Greek (Καῖσαρ) and then Egyptian (*qysrs*) Augustus’s self-advertised position as Caesar’s heir and adopted son; Augustus is an Autocrator, a Greek term for sole rule transliterated into Egyptian. As an Autocrator, Augustus adopts a label for kingship typical of Ptolemaic Egypt and its mixture of Greek and Egyptian idioms of power. The traditional royal tag “alive forever” (*nḥ dt*), here abbreviated in later hieroglyphic spelling, continues an Egyptian ideology of royal immortality that was part and parcel of pharaonic conceptions of kingship, but was just finding its footing in Rome with Julius Caesar’s postmortem divinization. In one title, a multimodal expression of power looks back to Egyptian traditions of the pharaonic past, remakes them in conversation with a mixed Greco-Egyptian argot of Ptolemaic power, and then leverages both Egyptian pasts (the one pharaonic, the other Ptolemaic) to incorporate Rome into Egyptian religious culture.

This mixture of traditions is what I find exciting and want to call attention to in this book. What is true of cartouches can be extended to the interconnected set of Egyptian religious themes on Dendur’s walls. The hieroglyphic script, animal-shaped gods, scribal priests—they too are idiosyncratic and speak to the liminal moment of the early-imperial period. How did Egyptians of this period present these “Egyptian things,” and how did Romans receive those explanations? What strategies did Egyptians use to explain the hieroglyphic script to Romans who were keen to see in it either the secrets of the universe or (as in the Augustus example) a potent means of expressing power? When faced with a barbarizing rhetoric demonizing cow-gods, how did Egyptians go about underlining the systems of significance surrounding a beetle-headed divinity? By spending time with these questions, I hope to put center stage Egyptian culture of the imperial period and the ways that Egyptians presented it to a Roman audience. In the process, I will be arguing both that Rome’s imagined Egypt was meaningfully shaped by what Egyptians had to say, and that what imperial-era Egyptians had to say about Egypt is a meaningful continuation of the pharaonic-era traditions on display in the Egyptian-language texts and monuments studied by Egyptologists.

#### DEFINING “EGYPTIAN THINGS”

To Rome went both objects associated with Egypt and Egyptians who strategically translated those objects’ original semantics to a Greek and Roman audience. Shining a light on these Egyptians and their interpretations of Egyptian objects and traditions reveals intercultural exchange, agency, and dialogue where exoticization, barbarization, and cultural projection have been assumed.<sup>12</sup> In part, this shift

12. Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984) and Sonnabend (1986) (on Egypt in Roman literature) and Versluys (2002) and Swetnam-Burland (2015) (on Egypt in Roman material culture) have emphasized Rome’s barbarizing or exoticizing portrait of Egypt.

in focus is meant to balance the story of Egyptian material culture's presence in Rome with Egyptians' creative explanations of that material culture. Many more people have written about the cult of Isis and Rome's Egyptianizing objects than about Egyptian authors who both wrote about Egypt and traveled from Egypt to Rome.<sup>13</sup> The fate of the term *Aegyptiaca* is exemplary. Miguel John Versluys, like others before him, chose "Egyptian things" (*Aegyptiaca*) to describe Egyptian and Egyptian-looking things in Italy. In 2007 Molly Swetnam-Burland continued the trend, explicitly defending the value of *Aegyptiaca* as a category for Egyptian-looking—and not just Egypt-originating—material culture in Italy. She, and Versluys before her, gravitated toward *Aegyptiaca* because it blurs the line separating Egyptian objects imported to Italy from Egyptian-looking objects made in Italy.<sup>14</sup>

Versluys and Swetnam-Burland used the term for material culture, but in antiquity *Aegyptiaca* was applied to texts. Like its sister-terms *Babyloniaca* and *Romaica*, *Aegyptiaca* was an open-ended term for Greek-language texts about the history and culture of a non-Greek community.<sup>15</sup> These different terms speak to the efflorescence of autoethnographic writing in the Hellenistic world. Babylonians, Egyptians, and Romans wrote about their own traditions for a wide Greek-speaking audience.<sup>16</sup> The Egyptian Manetho, Babylonian Berossus, and Roman Quintus Fabius Pictor leveraged their positions as priests or senatorial elite to present an authoritative version of their own people's history. The specific contours of that cultural self-presentation were flexible. The term *Aegyptiaca*, like its other ethnic counterparts, was deliberately blurry. As a blank neuter plural adjective, "Egyptian things" offered plenty of wiggle room.<sup>17</sup>

Long before Augustus or the Temple of Dendur, the Hellenistic period gave rise to an Egyptian presentation of Egypt that was read by a Greek-speaking audience. After Alexander, Egyptians began writing about Egypt in Greek. As yet, this has been commonly understood as a brief blip restricted to Manetho, its first

13. The cult of Isis has been a central object of scholarly attention, not least because of regular international conferences, published in Bricault (2004), Bricault, Versluys, and Meyboom (2007), Bricault and Versluys (2010, 2014), and more recently Gasparini and Veymiers (2018). Italy's Isis temples as archaeological sites are studied by Tran-tam-Tinh (1964), Dunand (1973), Lembke (1994), and Versluys, Clausen, and Vittozzi (2018). Isiac epigraphy was investigated by Vidman (1969). The Isis cult's presence in Book 11 of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* is discussed by Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2000) and Assmann (2002).

14. Swetnam-Burland (2007, 119), anticipated in Versluys (2002), picked up in Swetnam-Burland (2015), and used widely in Barrett (2019, 10–17) and Mazurek (2022, 4–6). For the history of the label "Egyptianizing," see Pearson (2021, 8–14). See too Malaise (2005, 201–20), who sets out to disambiguate *Aegyptiaca*, *Pharaonica*, and *Nilotica*.

15. Dillery (2002) positions Quintus Fabius Pictor, Manetho, and Berossus as kindred third century BCE auto-ethnographers. Josephus's *Contra Apionem* and *Antiquitates Iudaicae* are texts working in a similar vein, but in the early imperial period.

16. For the concept of auto-ethnography, see above all Hayano (1979).

17. Dench (2013, 259–60) notes the importance of auto-ethnography, though she repeats the common assumption (see too the Manetho/Berossus pairing in Kuhrt 1987; Verbrugge and Wickersham 1996; and Dillery 2015) that Manetho and Berossus were its only real practitioners and that the third century BCE was its *floruit*.

practitioner. His list of Egyptian kings arranged into dynasties gave birth to an Egyptian presentation of Egyptian history indebted to, but positioned against, Herodotus.<sup>18</sup> Manetho translated Egyptian historiographic sensibilities in unequal dialogue with a new Ptolemaic regime keen to naturalize its control of Egypt. In the process, he wrested for himself the precarious agency to define and defend Egyptian conceptions of kingship to the Ptolemies, who elevated Greek as an unequally valued language, cultural tradition, ethnic affiliation, and tax and legal category. Manetho has finally received scholarly attention that places him at the intersection of Greek and Egyptian intellectual traditions.<sup>19</sup> The finesse of this cultural negotiation—the way that Manetho brings Egyptian historiographic traditions of the kings list and *Königsnovelle* into a form legible to a Greek audience—had long been lost in a data-oriented approach that utilized the dynastic history of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* without appreciating the cultural conditions of its production. John Dillery and Ian Moyer, in particular, have reemphasized through Manetho's text the continued vibrancy—rather than senescent posteriority—of Egyptian intellectual culture of the Ptolemaic period.<sup>20</sup>

Manetho has yet to be seen as a point of origin for a tradition that stretches into and is critical to Rome and the imperial world. There is a much longer list of Egyptians who continued in the literary form of *Aegyptiaca* begun, but not circumscribed, by Manetho.<sup>21</sup> With *Aegyptiaca* as a dynamic, diachronic tradition, the domains in which Manetho and his successors insinuated themselves expand well beyond the dynastic history of Egypt for which Manetho is most famous. Manetho will, then, be the hulking presence whose shadow adumbrates those latter-day authors of *Aegyptiaca* who are the subjects of this book. To give these authors their due, one must approach Manetho's formation of *Aegyptiaca* from a new perspective. In part, this is to see strands of Manetho's intellectual production that have been drowned out by the reputation, in antiquity and modernity, of his dynastic history of Egypt's kings. Manetho's philosophical presentation of Egyptian religion, texts on pharmacology and astrobotany, and etymologies of Egyptian gods'

18. For Herodotus's influence on Hellenistic auto-ethnography, see Murray (1972, 208–10). Dillery (2016) emphasizes Manetho's participation in a wider habit of syncing Greek and non-Greek events; Moyer (2011, 84–141) underlines Manetho's conversance with Egyptian historiographic conventions and his Egyptian sensibility around the past's connections to the present.

19. Gruen (2017, 307–10) approaches Manetho's (and Berossus's) intercultural negotiation from the perspective of Hellenistic court patronage of ethnographic writing. Aufrère (2014) locates Manetho's authorial production in the cultural history of Ptolemaic Alexandria.

20. Above all, Moyer (2011, 84–141) and Dillery (1999, 2015); cf. Redford (1986, 201–332) for an Egyptological perspective. I do not mean to diminish the work of Egyptologists who take a more data-oriented approach to Manetho's kings list, such as Helck 1956.

21. Burstein (1996) comes closest to a review of *Aegyptiaca* as a tradition, though see too Escolano-Poveda (2020, 92–115), who coordinates Manetho's and Chaeremon's representation of Egyptian priests; and Dickie (2001, 205–8), who discusses Apion and Pancrates.

names open a much larger terrain of the Egyptian *topoi* and generic traditions that constitute Aegyptiaca.

The autoethnographic tradition of Aegyptiaca is the subject of this book, about which I make two interconnected arguments: first, that this is a literary tradition that extends beyond Manetho, its first and best-known practitioner; second, that the popularity of literary Aegyptiaca outside Egypt exemplifies a process of translation of Egyptian traditions from Egypt, through a blended Greco-Egyptian medium, to Greeks and Romans. This story of translation is one worth telling, precisely because it challenges prevailing narratives that focus either on the exoticism of Egyptian-looking goods in Rome or the barbarism and archaism that Egypt connotes in Roman literature. These translations of Egyptian culture were certainly precarious and metamorphic. Aegyptiaca bent to the mundane social realities of Rome's political control of Egypt and its continuation of Ptolemaic governance. But as I will show, that does not diminish the impact and agency of Egyptians who helped shape Romans' views of Egypt.

Aegyptiaca as a tradition has been sidelined for reasons both benign and malign. Part of the problem is pragmatic. Until recently, these authors' fragments resided in the monumental, but user-unfriendly (and German-language) *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*.<sup>22</sup> Jacoby's text has now been digitized and republished as *Brill's New Jacoby*, but the prohibitive expense of accessing the new database continues to marginalize these authors. The disciplinary terrain surrounding Roman Egypt is also at issue. I am positioning these authors of Aegyptiaca as bridges between Egypt and Rome. These authors took cultural traditions discussed in the Egyptian language, wrote about them in Greek, and had as their audience Romans who wrote in Latin. By using a framework of cultural translation, I connect authors of Aegyptiaca both with Greek and Latin imperial literature and with Demotic texts, the dominant language of Roman Egypt. The realities of disciplinary boundaries and language training have made it difficult to trace the movement of ideas across these three languages.

Another part of the problem is methodological. The authors I discuss in this book are preserved only indirectly, when they and their texts are mentioned by authors whose texts do survive. There is a set methodology for fragmentary authors that has made post-Manetho authors of Aegyptiaca unappealing subjects when discussed individually. But my main focus is on the tradition itself, rather than the specific authors who comprise that tradition. The distinction matters. Manetho has been given more attention than his string of successors partially because he leaves a more substantial number of fragments. A reconstructive approach to fragmentary texts, the one traditionally taken to write about the authors I discuss in this book, demands that one take the available fragments and piece together

22. Jacoby (1923–1958).

from them an (admittedly fuzzy) picture of the original work.<sup>23</sup> If that is the goal, most post-Manetho authors of *Aegyptiaca* are not worth one's time. That helps explain why there has yet to be any synthetic account of such Egyptians and their contributions to the Roman view of Egypt.<sup>24</sup> But by abandoning reconstruction and instead stitching together kindred topological points across authors, I offer a pointillistic portrait of *Aegyptiaca*. Even as the exact contours of specific authors' works remain murky, *Aegyptiaca*'s vibrancy, popularity, and impact on the imperial world can take center stage.

Imperial authors of *Aegyptiaca* reside at a crossroads. To recover them, one must wade into fragmentary literature, source criticism, and prosopography, long the foundations of Classics' methodological rigor. But these authors have been hidden for so long precisely because, as culturally mixed figures bridging Egyptian and Greek identities and spanning the Roman and Roman-Egyptian worlds, they have been of only marginal interest to those scholars best trained in that methodological skill set. They are both uniquely suited to, but long shortchanged by, the normative (but certainly hotly contested) definition of Classics as an academic discipline. By using the traditional skills of philology to center authors of *Aegyptiaca*, I would like to make a methodological argument alongside a substantive one: that the old-fashioned philological and historiographic tools that have traditionally bolstered a narrow vision of Greek and Roman literature can instead promote an expansive Mediterranean world characterized by cultural pluralism.

*Aegyptiaca* is a literary tradition in which Egyptians wrote about Egypt for an external audience. Each of those three elements is productively elastic: the variety of subjects that fall under the "about Egypt" umbrella; just who counts as an Egyptian in a culturally mixed Roman-Greek-Egyptian world; and an imperial-era audience that straddles the divide between imperial Greek and Roman social milieux. I do not want to resolve totally any of these three tensions. The audience for *Aegyptiaca* is Roman, broadly defined.<sup>25</sup> In a culturally mixed environment, the term Egyptian should be capacious. The heterogeneous traditions that cohere

23. For a methodological overview of studying fragments, see Ginelli and Lupi (2021a, 1–12). Gumbrecht (1997) etiologizes this reconstructive approach to fragmentary texts. The two main conference volumes that thematize fragments (Most 1997; Ginelli and Lupi 2021b) confirm the typically author-centered, rather than topological, approach to fragmentary texts (though cf. Berardi 2021, who prioritizes genre over author).

24. The most important recent work on such authors is van der Horst (1981, 1982, 1984, 2002), Burstein (1996), Dillery (2003), Damon (2008, 2011), Keyser (2015), and Escolano-Poveda (2020, 92–115, *passim*).

25. That is to say, the audience for *Aegyptiaca* were those who lived either in the city of Rome or in one of Rome's provinces. In this way, I take a capacious definition both of *Aegyptiaca*'s authors and of its audience. A Roman subject like Plutarch can meaningfully be called "Roman," for the purposes of discussing *Aegyptiaca*'s audience outside of Egypt but within the network of the Roman empire. On Plutarch's (and other imperial Greeks') navigation of Greek identity and Roman subject position, see Kemezis (2019), Monaco Caterine (2019).

through the label “Egyptian things” should not be lost under the well-founded but often misleading category “history writing.”<sup>26</sup>

Aegyptiaca as a genre was open-ended. The neuter plural adjective (“Egyptian things”) encapsulated a wide range of subjects that Egyptians wrote about, not just dynastic history. Some traditions loom particularly large. Aegyptiaca was shaped, for example, by the intellectual antagonism between Jews and Egyptians surrounding the history of the Exodus. The Exodus narrative had real stakes in the world of Alexandria in the first century CE. When Aegyptiaca occurs as a generic label concatenating a succession of Egyptian authors, it is in this vein. The late-antique Alexandrian Cosmas Indicopleustes proves as much: “Those writing Aegyptiaca, namely Manetho and Chaeremon and Apollonius Molon and Lysimachus and Apion the Grammarian, mentioned Moses and the exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt.”<sup>27</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustes certainly suggests that the Exodus is a central theme binding these authors together, but already in antiquity no one subject had exclusive ownership of the term Aegyptiaca. There is no set hierarchy that makes a given subject a more or less central “Egyptian thing.” As I proceed through Aegyptiaca’s disparate subjects, I prioritize those narrative threads that pose the most forceful challenge to a disciplinary model of cultural representation that makes assumptions about what Romans and Greeks thought about Egypt without taking into account what Egyptians themselves had to say on the subject. In this rubric, Aegyptiaca’s treatment of animal-shaped gods (chapter 4), the hieroglyphic script (chapter 5), and the interconnection of religious and philosophical inquiry (chapter 6) gain in size, so they occupy a central position in the chapters that follow.

The same push-and-pull between heterogeneity and coherence applies to just who counts as an Egyptian author. Manetho is such a felicitous anchor for Aegyptiaca because his Egyptian identity is so secure. He wrote in the early days of the Ptolemaic period, with the imprimatur of his Heliopolitan priesthood vouching for his authority regarding pharaonic history.<sup>28</sup> But as time went on, things got messier. Several hundred years of cultural mixture made tidy distinctions between the identity categories Greek and Egyptian blurrier. Even in the more cut-and-dried domain of citizenship status, deme affiliation, taxation, and law courts, the slipperiness between statuses combines with name changing and lacunose

26. By which I mean, the general category of ancient historiography and its cognate genres, like ethnography, geography, and paradoxography.

27. *Christ. Top.* 12.4 = *BNJ* 618 T 5b: οἱ δὲ τὰ Αἰγυπτιακὰ συγγραψάμενοι, τουτέστι Μανεθῶν καὶ Χαϊρήμων καὶ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ Μόλων καὶ Λυσίμαχος καὶ Ἀπίων ὁ Γραμματικός, μένηται Μωυσέως καὶ τῆς ἐξόδου τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ τῆς Αἰγύπτου. For these authors, see *BNJ* 609 and Waddell (1940) (Manetho); *BNJ* 618 and van der Horst (1984) (Chaeremon); *BNJ* 728 (Apollonius); *BNJ* 621 (Lysimachus); and *BNJ* 616 (Apion).

28. Manetho’s connections to Sebennytyos and position as Heliopolitan priest are widely accepted (e.g. Moyer 2011, 86), even if the latter is only mentioned in a far from ironclad source, a pseudonymous letter quoted by Syncellus (*BNJ* 609 F 25).

evidence to make any clear boundaries around the category Egyptian difficult to maintain.<sup>29</sup>

This is particularly acute in the case of *Aegyptiaca* and auto-ethnography, where identity and cultural expertise are often invoked to circularly reinforce each other. Manetho's Egyptianness explains, and is itself vouchsafed by, his dynastic history of Egyptian kings. But for culturally mixed Greco-Egyptian authors whose self-identification mixed together Greek and Egyptian signaling, that same circularity works to opposite effect. Scholars invoke these authors' culturally mixed presentation of Egyptian traditions—blending together Homeric tidbits with explanations of the scarab's cultural significance—to make clear that latter-day authors of *Aegyptiaca* were not “really” Egyptian.<sup>30</sup> In the coming chapters, I coordinate post-Manetho authors of *Aegyptiaca* with Egyptian-language texts—like the Demotic Book of Thoth or the Edfu temple inscriptions—that also reflect cultural mixture occurring in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. In doing so, I will show how imperial Egyptian culture—whether accessed via Demotic literature, hieroglyphic inscriptions, or *Aegyptiaca*—continued to be Egyptian culture even as it incorporated Greek intellectual traditions practiced in Alexandria and Egypt's other city-states.

#### ALEXANDRIA AND THE EGYPT-(GREECE)- ROME BINARY

Turning the spotlight to Manetho's successors is not just an exercise in advancing the timeline of Ptolemaic cultural mixture. It is also to see how things in Egypt look from a Roman perspective. Cultural translation, through which I will be framing Egyptians' presentation of Egyptian traditions to an external audience, ends up in the Roman imperial world.<sup>31</sup> With that end destination in place, the history of contact between Egypt's Greek and Egyptian residents joins up with very different dynamics of Rome's self-positioning against Egypt. That interplay provides much of the conceptual difficulty surrounding later authors of *Aegyptiaca*, who begin in Egypt and end up in Rome. To contextualize these authors, I have to keep my eyes trained on two very different binaries. First, Roman poets like Virgil and Propertius leaned heavily on a Rome-Egypt binary in the years after Augustus's victory

29. For name-changing and demography, see Clarysse and Thompson (2006) and Coussement (2016); for taxation, Wallace (1938); for law, Katzoff (1980) and Wolff (2002).

30. For example, Fowden (1986) presents Chaeremon's philosophical portrait of Egyptian priests as evidence of the “long-drawn out senescence” (65) of Egyptian learning.

31. My own phrase “cultural translation” borrows from two distinct theoretical traditions. First is a postcolonial understanding of “cultural translation” first developed in Bhabha (1994, 212–35), and summarized by Trivedi (2007). Second, see Reiß and Vermeer (1984) for a *skopos* theory of translation, which prioritizes texts' social function in originating and target cultures. In both cases, I add “cultural” to indicate the way that translation events are bicultural rather than bilingual, to paraphrase Reiß and Vermeer (1984, 26).

over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Second, a Greek-Egyptian binary dictated how those within Egypt navigated language, status, and taxation.<sup>32</sup>

For the domain of Aegyptiaca, it is important to see how the latter binary, and the mutual influence of Greek and Egyptian culture in Ptolemaic Egypt, changes when Rome enters the picture. Intellectual opportunities in Rome incentivized authors of Aegyptiaca to have their cake and eat it too; they sought to be jacks of all trades who represented to a Roman audience both an authoritative source for traditional Egyptian *topoi* and a typically well-educated Alexandrian, who could teach Romans the hallmarks of Greek literary, grammatical, and philosophical culture. Romans and mainland Greeks viewed the intra-Egyptian legal divisions separating ethnic Greeks and Egyptians only dimly and imperfectly, a fact that culturally mixed authors of Aegyptiaca capitalized on for their own social advancement.

Alexandria is the point where these two binaries intersected. The history of Alexandria and of Aegyptiaca are intertwined. By prioritizing post-Manetho authors of Aegyptiaca, I also aim to place the intellectual, cultural, and social history of first-century CE Alexandria on its own footing, outside the shadow of early-Ptolemaic Alexandrian intellectual culture.<sup>33</sup> Alexandrian history of the early-imperial period puts Aegyptiaca and the social conditions of its creation into context. This is true both for the topics discussed in Aegyptiaca and for the social and economic advantages that authors of Aegyptiaca hoped to gain through their work. The latter is a key thread through which I tie together Aegyptiaca into a coherent tradition. Apion, one important author of Aegyptiaca, was an ethnic Egyptian who was able to gain Alexandrian citizenship.<sup>34</sup> That mattered, both because it bestowed tax advantages and because it was a key stepping-stone to Greece and Rome.<sup>35</sup> Authors of Aegyptiaca, like their material counterparts, took a road to Rome that traveled via Alexandria.

Apion and other authors of Aegyptiaca were, quite literally, ambassadors of Alexandria for a Roman audience. Apion was chosen to represent Alexandrian

32. A raft of scholarship of the past several decades has sensitively navigated the contact and mixture of Greek and Egyptian culture in Ptolemaic Egypt, whether via documentary papyri (Clarysse and Thompson 2006), religious and scribal texts (Jasnow and Zauzich 2005; Dieleman 2005; Papaconstantinou 2010; Kidd 2011; Quack 2021 [to cite only one piece of his prolific scholarship]), city-specific analysis (Thompson 1988; Vleeming 1995), epigraphy (Daumas 1952), or Alexandrian literature (Stephens 2003; Ryholt 2012).

33. Of work on Alexandria (especially Fraser 1972, but also the collections of Ruffini and Harris 2004; Hirst and Silk 2004; Méla et al. 2014), more attention is paid to the Ptolemaic than to the Roman period (though cf. Lembke, Minas-Nerpel, and Pfeiffer 2010 and Vandorpe 2019, who focus on Roman Egypt specifically).

34. As Delia (1991, 29, 56, 164) makes clear, and as I discuss in chapter 1.

35. Delia (1988 and 1991) focuses on the dynamics of Alexandrian citizenship in the Roman period. Jördens (2012) offers a good introduction to Roman-Egyptian citizenship. Relevant too is the issue of Jews' status, which is a key context for the riots of 38 CE, as Bilde (2006) and Gambetti (2009, 57–76) demonstrate.

citizens to the emperor Caligula; Chaeremon and Tiberius Claudius Balbillus, two other authors of *Aegyptiaca*, joined a committee of Alexandrians asking for certain political rights from the new emperor Claudius.<sup>36</sup> In all three cases, these figures were both the faces of Egyptian intellectual traditions and advocates for the city of Alexandria, personages whose elite social position brought them to Rome and the emperor. This ambassadorial role anchors *Aegyptiaca*'s textual representation of Egypt in its authors' literal representation of Alexandria before the Roman emperor.

These authors of *Aegyptiaca* all represented Alexandria amid the fallout from Alexandrian Greeks' violent attacks against Alexandrian Jews in the early first century CE.<sup>37</sup> Romans' control of Egypt, and particularly Caligula's apparent aspirations to godhood, upset the delicate balance through which Jews living in Alexandria had secured the right to property and tax exemption.<sup>38</sup> There were very real stakes surrounding this unrest—Alexandrian Greeks risked losing their rights to political assembly because they instigated the communal violence; more seriously, Jews had been terrorized and had lost their right to own property altogether. The relationship between Egyptian and Greek identity categories in Alexandria was bound up in these riots. The riots of 38 CE vividly demonstrate the social stakes that gave shape to Alexandrian Egyptians' and Jews' mixture of Greek and non-Greek intellectual traditions. Both Philo and Apion, the Jewish and Alexandrian ambassadors to Caligula, came to embody a Greco-Jewish and Greco-Egyptian intellectual authority specific to the city of Alexandria.<sup>39</sup>

This history of social unrest spills over into the best-attested subject of *Aegyptiaca*. Almost every author of *Aegyptiaca*, beginning with Manetho, wrote an account of the Exodus story that exculpated Egyptians and denigrated Jews. Josephus's painstaking rejection of these arguments is the best through-line for *Aegyptiaca* as a durative tradition. Writing in the first century CE, Josephus arranged the Egyptian authors whom he rebuts into a discrete lineage on which Felix Jacoby drew in his still authoritative aggregation of these authors. The canon formation surrounding *Aegyptiaca*, in antiquity via Josephus and in modernity via Jacoby and *Brill's New Jacoby*, is a blessing and a curse. It makes clear at the outset that already in antiquity, *Aegyptiaca* was an identifiable tradition that extended beyond

36. For the former, see Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium* and Smallwood (1961); for the latter, see Claudius's letter to the Alexandrians (published in Smallwood 1967, no. 370), with Stuart Jones (1926, 18).

37. The best source is Philo's *In Flaccum*, on which see Alston (1997) and van der Horst (2003). An overview of the riots is widely available, in, e.g., Collins (2005, 86–90) and Gambetti (2009, 167–93).

38. For an overview of the history of Jews in Egypt, see Méléze-Modrzejewski (1991); for Jews in Alexandria, Gruen (2002, 54–83).

39. For Philo's intellectual position as philosopher and Jewish thinker, see Niehoff (2018) (especially part 3). For a broader treatment of Greco-Jewish intellectual cross-pollination in Alexandria, see Niehoff (2011).

Manetho. Later authors like Chaeremon and Apion—the target of Josephus’s *Against Apion*—were also essential contributors to *Aegyptiaca*. But this Jewish context, and its indirect impact on boundaries that Jacoby drew around “Egyptian things,” unduly limits *Aegyptiaca* to one social context and generic tradition that admittedly looms large over, but should not circumscribe, the way that Egyptians wrote about Egypt for a Greek and Roman audience.

In sum, I want to emphasize that the success of authors of *Aegyptiaca* as literal and metaphorical ambassadors of Alexandria and its intellectual culture was due to, not in spite of, the way they blurred Greek and Egyptian traditions into a mixed form. The Stoic philosopher-cum-scribal priest Chaeremon, the most famous exegete of the hieroglyphic script for a Roman audience, was the head of the Alexandrian Library before becoming Nero’s tutor. Pancrates gained membership in the Museum by composing an epyllion in honor of Hadrian’s lover Antinous, by putting on a typically Egyptian magic show for Hadrian himself, and finally by writing a biography of the Egyptian king Bakenrenef.<sup>40</sup> Even the rarefied institutions of Alexandrian society were sites of cultural mixture and polyvalent authority. That figures like Apion and Chaeremon and Pancrates were connected to such institutions, that they were Alexandrian citizens, does not disqualify them from the Manethonian legacy of *Aegyptiaca* or from the label “Egyptian.” Early-imperial authors of *Aegyptiaca* developed a culturally mixed authority that spanned both the Greek and Egyptian cultural traditions that were being practiced in Egypt. Their success in the former, their reputations as Homerists and Stoics and panegyrists, does not delegitimize their expertise in the latter. I find these authors of *Aegyptiaca* so valuable precisely because they challenge our assumptions about what an authentic Greek-language presentation of Egyptian culture looks like in the early-imperial world.

#### FRAMING AEGYPTIACA

The authors I discuss in this book have not been Egyptian enough for most Egyptologists or Greek enough for most Classicists. They make scattered appearances in work on Romans’ representation of Egypt and Egyptians.<sup>41</sup> They, like Alexandria of the early-imperial period, have resided on several different disciplinary

40. Van der Horst (1984) collects Chaeremon’s fragments and Frede (1989) offers a biography. For Pancrates, see Dickie (2001, 198, 205) and Burstein (2016), with Ogden (2004 and 2007, 231–70).

41. Most frequently, historicizing readings of Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* (Manolaraki 2013, 107, and Tracy 2014, 260) see in Caesar’s Egyptian interlocutor Acoreus the author of *Aegyptiaca* and tutor of Nero Chaeremon. Other key work on Egypt in Roman literature deals with *Aegyptiaca* only rarely, e.g. Iversen (1961) (hieroglyphic), Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984) (animal worship), Meyer (1961), Sonnabend (1986), and Leemreize (2016) (poly-thematic surveys of Republican and early-imperial literature), Merrills (2017) (the Nile across media), and Erler and Stadler (2017) (Egypt in Platonic philosophy).

margins. In the domain of Hellenism, they are too late for the Hellenistic period and too early for the Second Sophistic. Their Alexandrian status and Greek-language texts make them important, but peripheral, presences in Egyptological work on Demotic literature of the imperial period. They have featured as only supporting actors in the economic and social history of Roman Egypt, which prioritizes papyrological over indirectly transmitted evidence.<sup>42</sup>

That in-betweenness, however, is what makes these figures so important. Their Egyptian identities reflect a Mediterranean world defined by mixture and contact. Collective interest in recovering a broader Mediterranean typified by exchange and contact hits up against the methodological barriers that have kept *Aegyptiaca* as a rich cross-cultural intellectual tradition out of view. Scholars who have discussed the movement of ideas and traditions between Egypt and Greece have shown just how much can be gained by centering these authors and their work.<sup>43</sup> To pick just one example, authors of *Aegyptiaca* were the ones who broadcast Egyptian myths of Osiris and Seth to those like Plutarch and Apuleius who were keen to promote the common ground shared between Egyptian religion and Platonic philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

I have been emphasizing the role that authors of *Aegyptiaca* should play in Rome's reception of Egypt, but they also show how pharaonic traditions—like the Osiris myth—continue into the Roman period and a Greco-Egyptian milieu. Pharaonic traditions were changed, but not erased, by processes of cultural mixture occurring in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. Latter-day *Aegyptiaca*, as a bridge between Egypt and Rome and as an act of cultural translation, offers a valuable perspective from which to view both how Greeks and Romans made sense of Egypt *and* how Egyptian traditions continued to be Egyptian traditions, even as they were influenced by Greek and then Roman control of Egypt.

For a long time, fidelity to Egyptian cultural traditions and to Alexandrianism has been a zero-sum game. To identify authors of *Aegyptiaca* with Alexandrian intellectual culture is to mark out their distance from a pure Egyptian culture practiced elsewhere in Egypt. This book is animated by my desire to push back against a wrong-headed dichotomy of cultural mixture and cultural authenticity. To center the mixture of Greek and Egyptian traditions in *Aegyptiaca* is not to erase

42. Chaeremon's presentation of priestly life has been cited by Demotists like Jasnow (2011, 315–16), Escolano-Poveda (2020, 105–16, 214–17), and Quack (2021, 75), who all use Chaeremon as a *comparandum*—whether “borderline” (Quack 2021, 75) or “Greco-Egyptian” (Escolano-Poveda 2020, 115)—for Demotic texts about Roman-Egyptian priestly life. For the social history of Roman Egypt, interest has been paid to Apion's Alexandrian citizenship (Delia 1991) and the administrative careers of figures like Thrasylus and Tiberius Claudius Balbillus (Cichorius 1927; Krappe 1927; Schwartz 1949).

43. Griffiths (1969, 1970, 1975) and Burstein (1996). For Greek-Egyptian contact in general, see Rutherford (2016).

44. That is a topic I pick up in chapter 4, where I address Plutarch's and Apuleius's reliance on *Aegyptiaca* (e.g. Plutarch's debt to Manetho and Apion, per Griffiths 1970, 75–100; see too Porphyry's partial debt to Chaeremon, per von Lieven 2017, 287).

any possibility of a legitimate exposition of Egyptian culture for a non-Egyptian audience after Manetho. I set out to rebut that misconception by tracing a thread of cultural translation that begins in imperial-era, Egyptian-language intellectual traditions, continues through Aegyptiaca, and ends up in Greek and Roman literature.<sup>45</sup> The mixture of Greek and Egyptian intellectual traditions in Aegyptiaca was a creative strategy of translation that sought to make available to Greeks and Romans those aspects of Egyptian culture that were critical to the original social function of objects hauled off from Egypt to Rome. It is decidedly not a black mark against these authors' Egyptian *bona fides*.

Both Greek and Egyptian intellectual traditions practiced in Egypt by Egyptians are Egyptian. That is true across Egypt: it holds for those residing in Alexandria, in Egypt's regional capitals (the nome *metropoleis*), and in the countryside.<sup>46</sup> This is a seemingly straightforward, but unexpectedly thorny, clarification for cultural production rooted in Egypt but presented to Rome. One can acknowledge the prerogatives of Alexandrian citizenship—to say nothing of Egypt's other city-states (*poleis*), or the other interlocking status markers surrounding the *gymnasium*, tribal affiliation, and the *metropoleis*—without completely severing Alexandria from the conceptual map of Egypt and Egyptian traditions.<sup>47</sup> Wrestling with that surprisingly complex claim, that a cultural tradition can be both Alexandrian and Egyptian, will sustain the presentation of Aegyptiaca that follows in the next six chapters.

Ambiguity and multiplicity are all well and good, but at the end of the day I need to land on a label, be it Egyptian, Alexandrian, Greek, or Greco-Egyptian.<sup>48</sup> In an ideal world, I could denote these authors with a label like Alexandrian\*. That new version of Alexandrian\* could encompass both the very real systems of inequality delineating Alexandrian versus Egyptian citizenship and the broad and multicultural traditions practiced in Alexandria in the first century. To Romans

45. This complements work that offers source criticism of Romans' and Greeks' discussions of Egypt, most notably Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris* (Parmentier 1913; Griffiths 1970; and Hani 1976) and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (Griffiths 1975; Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000; and Finkelppearl 2012).

46. For the culturally mixed milieu of Greco-Egyptian metropolitan elite, see Tacoma (2006, 126–27). Bowman and Rathbone (1992) provide an essential overview of status and Roman administration; they note (113) the precipitous disappearance in Roman Egypt of the ethnic identification that had been widely used in Ptolemaic Egypt, on which see generally Méléze-Modrzejewski (1985), reprinted in Méléze-Modrzejewski (1990).

47. Van Minnen (2002 350–51), focusing on *metropolitēs* and the gymnasial order (cf. Ruffini 2006), also notes well the push-and-pull between ethnically oriented gatekeeping around gymnasial and metropolitan status and the reality of ethnic Egyptians' participation in institutions like the *ephebate* and *gymnasium*.

48. It is telling that many avoid these labels more or less entirely. Escolano-Poveda (2020, 105–13) slots Chaeremon into the “Greco-Egyptian” chapter alongside Manetho, but her biographical overview focuses mostly on Chaeremon's occupational (philosopher, sacred scribe) versus identity (Alexandrian, Egyptian, Greek) labels. Dillery (2003, 383–84) introduces Apion but avoids any identity label (though see 388 for discussion of *Ap. 2.28* and the phrase “Apion the Egyptian”).

like Pliny the Elder and Greeks like Plutarch, Alexandria's mixture of Greek and Egyptian intellectual traditions was just as important a hallmark of Alexandrianism as Alexandria's restricted citizenship and Alexandrians' privileged status. The limited evidence available suggests that most Romans were not very quick to distinguish the specifics of Alexandrian versus Egyptian citizenship. Pliny the Younger had no idea that his masseur Harpocras needed Alexandrian citizenship before he could become a Roman citizen.<sup>49</sup> But Romans very readily identified a culturally mixed Alexandrian religious and intellectual culture that was present, via Isis temples, wall paintings, and immigrants alike, in the city of Rome.<sup>50</sup> This tempered Alexandrianism would be complementary, rather than dichotomous, to the label "Egyptian." To be sure, "Egyptian" as a technical citizenship label referred to all those—ethnically Egyptian *or* Greek—who were neither Roman citizens nor citizens of Egypt's four *poleis*: Alexandria, Ptolemais, Naucratis, and later Antinoöpolis. Legally speaking, Egyptian and Alexandrian are mutually exclusive. But for the purposes of this book and for authors of Aegyptiaca, Alexandrian and Egyptian labels alike need to hew a middle ground between their technical meaning and the broader cultural connotations that were primary points of reference among Aegyptiaca's external Greek and Roman audience.

I cannot, however, use something as woefully clunky as Alexandrian\*. There is no perfect way to capture the intersecting valences that define the social position of latter-day authors of Aegyptiaca. That is what makes them interesting. They are slippery, demanding a new frame of reference for the identity labels Alexandrian, Greek, and Egyptian. So, to refer to the identities of these authors, I use the simple term "Egyptian." When Rome enters the picture, Egyptian as a cultural tag was readily applied to those who also could be called Alexandrian, or even Greek. To return to the domain of citizenship, Romans considered all those who were neither Romans nor polis-citizens "Egyptian," be they ethnically Greek or Egyptian or some combination of the two. Romans use the simple term "Egyptian" where scholars typically prefer the useful but anachronistic label Greco-Egyptian.<sup>51</sup> If "Egyptian" has yet to be used in this way, whether because of an overemphasis on a static image of pharaonic Egyptian culture or because of the dictates of Roman-Egyptian social history, this book tries to prove that it can.<sup>52</sup> The Egypt imagined

49. Per Plin. *Ep.* 10.6–7, where Pliny unknowingly makes a mistake by procuring Roman citizenship for his physical therapist without first getting him Alexandrian citizenship, a fact which Trajan (passive aggressively) rebukes in 10.7.

50. As Savvopoulos (2010) argues, Isis religion was inextricably connected to the city of Alexandria; this is clear already in Manetho (Plut. *DIO* 28, 361f–362a = *BNJ* 609 T 3), who is one of the purported "founders" of a Sarapis statue whose arrival in Alexandria forms an etiology of the Isis cult.

51. Per Rowlandson (2013, 221–24). I do not mean this in a derogatory way. I will use "Greco-Egyptian" as a shorthand for cultural mixture practiced in Egypt, even as I am arguing that, in the domain of identity labels, Aegyptiaca and its authors are still "Egyptian."

52. Where work on the social history of Roman Egypt (e.g. Bowman and Rathbone 1992) focuses on citizenship status, membership in a gymnasium, or metropolitan residency and stresses that ethnic

by Romans was of precisely this mixed form, precisely because of the impact of authors of *Aegyptiaca*.

This messiness around identities is nothing new. Colonizations ancient and modern led to processes of mixture dependent on and productive of systems of inequality. Different colonial contexts developed different terms for mixture, each of which has its own history. The Caribbean's and Latin America's creole, North America's métis, New Spain's mestizo, and lusophone South America's mestiço are all particular, even as they reflect overlapping processes of colonial mixture from which emerged mixed groups on which national identities were founded.<sup>53</sup> In what follows, I prefer creole and creolization as frames for authors of *Aegyptiaca*. This owes less to the historical peculiarities of the places from which "creole" originated.<sup>54</sup> It is, instead, because I admire the Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant's enunciation of creolization's ecumenical reach and unending diachrony.<sup>55</sup> But no matter the term chosen, reembracing cultural mixedness must coexist with a healthy awareness of those who were violently excluded from these purportedly capacious groups.<sup>56</sup> That same balance must be struck for imperial authors of *Aegyptiaca*. It is important both to accept on its own terms *Aegyptiaca*'s unique mixture of Greek and Egyptian traditions and to appreciate that these authors' mixed Greco-Egyptian identity is particular to social positions—like scribal priests, grammarians, and philosophers—that were in large measure defined through exclusivity and elitism. That ambivalence is an important reason why postcolonial discussions of culturally mixed intellectual production can enrich, and themselves be enriched by, the history of *Aegyptiaca* and the social trajectories of its authors.

This all assumes that I can call Rome's control of Egypt colonial, or use the theoretical apparatus of cultural change of colonized peoples to make sense of

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affiliation falls out of use in the Roman period, I am trying to create space for "Egyptian" as a label that can felicitously characterize culturally mixed intellectual production practiced in Egypt (including Alexandria).

53. In the case of the term "creole," that history is well traced by Baker and Mühlhäusler (2007), and Stewart (2007) generally.

54. Laird (2010, 167–68) describes histories of the pre-Columbian past written by the creole historians of New Spain. That colonially framed impetus for claiming literary authority over a past only partially one's own is, as I continue to discuss in chapter 1, a productive frame for this book's subjects: culturally mixed authors of *Aegyptiaca* who benefited from their self-advertised knowledge of the pharaonic past.

55. Britton (1999), Wiedorn (2018), and Drabinski (2019) offer an overview of Glissant's work and thinking, which was (unsurprisingly, given his emphasis on the unpredictable and dynamic) heterogeneous. I am particularly indebted to the formulation of creolization offered in Glissant (1996 and 1997), whose utility for *Aegyptiaca* I defend in chapter 1.

56. Per Palmié (2007, 76): "Self-perceived, and self-declared, 'creoledom' we might conclude is a decidedly 'modern' project—in all senses of the word, including those pertaining to uniquely 'modern' forms of exclusion." For creolization, see also the pioneering but historically ungrounded defense offered by Hannerz (1987).

Aegyptiaca. This question of colonization in ancient Egypt is yet another way that Roman Egypt is overshadowed by Ptolemaic Egypt.<sup>57</sup> The arguments made against using colonization—arguments that are well made but that I will push back against—focus mainly on the Ptolemies’ internal rather than external control of Egypt and respond more or less directly to scholarship that sought to draw a straight line between Egyptian resentment of Ptolemaic rule and twentieth-century, anti-colonial wars of independence.<sup>58</sup> Moving from Ptolemaic to Roman Egypt and engaging with scholarship on indigenous elites in colonial societies change the picture.<sup>59</sup> Rome’s external control of Egypt sets it apart from the Ptolemaic situation; postcolonial scholarship has analyzed well the kind of nuanced negotiation of colonizer and colonized that Roger Bagnall thought was lacking in the work of Édouard Will and Barbara Anagnostou-Canas.<sup>60</sup>

More substantively, though, there is the threat of universalizing the contingent dynamics of European colonialisms by uncritically retrojecting postcolonial concepts back into the ancient world. In what follows, I frame the Hellenistic and imperial-era mixture of Greek and Egyptian culture through contemporary work on creolization and colonization. But Rome’s control of Egypt and its relationship to Egypt’s previous occupiers are idiosyncratic and cannot easily be collapsed into European colonization. To my mind, the converse is not without its risks: studiously sealing off ancient imperialisms to avoid any whiff of anachronism forecloses conversations with colleagues who work on the contemporary world, conversations that would benefit ancient and modern scholarship alike. I am not the first to try to navigate that balance. I am particularly indebted to Ian Moyer and Paul Kosmin, who have argued that Dinesh Chakrabarty’s “historical translation” can allow for a discussion of ancient systems of occupation that is in conversation with, without being circumscribed by, more modern instantiations of these dynamics.<sup>61</sup>

57. Work using colonization and imperialism as frames within Egypt generally focuses on Ptolemaic Egypt, e.g. Anagnostou-Canas (1989–1990, 1992) and Cohen (1983). Work on Roman imperialism that asks fundamentally postcolonial questions of identity under external occupation generally looks elsewhere in the empire, as Woolf (1994, 1998) (on Gaul) and van Dommelen (1998) (on Sardinia) make clear.

58. This case against colonization is made by Bagnall (1997). More recently, Moyer (2022, 162–63) has cautioned against the limited utility of modern frames of colonization for indigenous responses to and anger towards Ptolemaic rule.

59. Vasunia (2013, 223–24) notes the opportunities gained by Indians who managed to enter the colonial Indian Civil Service but emphasizes the barriers to entry they faced. Derchain (2000, 34–35) notes the spirit of collaboration with the Ptolemaic court on display in Egyptian scribal priests’ inscribed autobiographies.

60. In other words, Bagnall (1997) promotes a vision of “colonial” readings of Egypt that relies on a model of strict antagonism between colonizer and colonized, in the mold of Will (1979, 1985) and Anagnostou-Canas (1989–1990, 1992).

61. Moyer and Kosmin (2022, 10–11) cite Chakrabarty (2008) to set out a “parallax view” of ancient and contemporary forms of indigenous resistance. That is a comparative orientation I hope to continue, even as I will push more strongly for the felicity of modern theorizations of mixture for post-Manetho authors of Aegyptiaca.

Aegyptiaca, then, sits at the intersection of two equally vital frameworks. First, Aegyptiaca is a culturally mixed tradition; like all processes of colonially inflected mixture, Aegyptiaca was not a teleological march that began with the disparate inputs of Egyptian and Greek traditions and ended with a singular and static mixture of the two. My comparison of different authors' areas of expertise will show that Aegyptiaca, from its inception under Manetho to later practitioners writing under Hadrian (my chronological endpoint), developed a web of cultural traditions that was dynamic. Aegyptiaca, like the mixed identities of its authors, was heterogeneous and fluid.

But by the same token, authors of Aegyptiaca created a culturally mixed identity within finite social and economic boundaries. The creative mixture of traditions characteristic of Aegyptiaca did not happen in a vacuum. Authors of Aegyptiaca wrote what they wrote in the way that they wrote it because it helped them take advantage of the new roads that connected Rome and Roman Egypt.<sup>62</sup> To put it plainly, Aegyptiaca helped them get paid. The traffic in ideas, like the traffic in goods, traveled along paths that followed the dictates of imperial control and systems of inequality that arranged Roman citizenship, Alexandrian citizenship, and Egyptian citizenship hierarchically. I need to be honest about that social and economic hierarchization and its real effect on Aegyptiaca while still adopting a theoretical perspective that can highlight the creativity of post-Manetho authors of Aegyptiaca, rather than bemoan their mixed Greco-Egyptian texts as proof of the death of Egyptian culture. Threading that needle is easier said than done, but it is the only way to discuss the traffic in ideas between Egypt and Rome with the nuance that authors of Aegyptiaca deserve.

#### OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

I approach Aegyptiaca in three parts. The first surveys the tradition as a whole, underlines the heterogeneous cultural traditions it comprised, and discusses the social and economic position of its authors. The second uses the specific *topos* of Egypt's sacred animals to demonstrate that a singular focus on Romans' representation of Egyptian animal worship has masked processes of cultural translation in which authors of Aegyptiaca, Greeks, and Romans all participated. The third asks how we should position the translations of Egyptian traditions in Aegyptiaca against an Egyptian-language background with which Aegyptiaca has often been unfavorably compared. By recuperating Aegyptiaca's symbolic presentation of hieroglyphic and its philosophical portrait of the Egyptian priest, I push back against one of the most frequent scholarly responses to post-Manetho authors of

62. Robinson (2016) shows how imperial networks of control structure translational activity; in the process, he also charts a middle ground between a theory of "cultural translation" in postcolonial anthropology—where translation is a broad term for cultural mediation—and in translation studies, which generally uses translation in a stricter sense.

Aegyptiaca: that they were not “really” Egyptian and did not “really” know about Egyptian culture.

Part 1, “Introducing Aegyptiaca,” views Aegyptiaca synoptically. The first chapter focuses on Apion, a key author of post-Manetho Aegyptiaca. I start by asking whether Apion was an Egyptian or a Greek. This admittedly tendentious but heuristically valuable question brings to the fore the competing hierarchies of language, citizenship status, place of birth, and cultural expertise that have made the question so vexing. As a Greek-speaking ethnic Egyptian who was given Alexandrian citizenship and then traveled to Rome, Apion reveals the pitfalls of a long-standing tendency to divide Egypt into an interior where pharaonic traditions endured, and an exterior where Greek culture thrived in cities like Alexandria. Apion’s intellectual authority is that of a mixed insider-outsider: he was an expert on Homer who offered close grammatical readings long associated with Alexandria, but he also discussed the worship of the scarab beetle and plant medicine. I juxtapose two postcolonial lenses, Édouard Glissant’s creolizing “roots” and Anna Tsing’s colonially circumscribed “roads,” to appreciate rather than bemoan Apion’s mixed identity and then locate that identity against a backdrop of Roman imperial control of Egypt.

Chapter 2 expands Aegyptiaca beyond Apion through three successive case studies of Chaeremon, the Balbilli, and Pancrates. In doing so, I shine a light on the underlying social context that gives coherence to a genre that I am defining by its heterogeneity. Each author wrote cross-cultural texts rooted in both the Greek and Egyptian intellectual traditions practiced in Egypt. But their different areas of expertise speak to a truly wide-ranging set of Greek (philosophy, praise-poetry, epigram) and Egyptian (astronomy, magic, historiography) subgenres that constitute Aegyptiaca. By the same token, these authors all shared a direct connection to the Roman emperor. By attending to these authors’ connections to institutions like the Library of Alexandria and the Museum, I argue that expertise in Egyptian culture constituted a much more central part of imperial-era Alexandrianism than has been appreciated.

Part 2, “Egypt’s Animals: From Representation to Cultural Translation,” zeros in on one important strand within Aegyptiaca—sacred animals in Egyptian religion. Through a two-step reevaluation of Romans’ views of Egypt’s sacred animals, I recenter authors of Aegyptiaca and shift scholarly discussion away from Orientalism and toward cross-cultural translation. Chapter 3 shows that Romans’ interest in Egypt’s sacred animals was more variegated and less unilaterally negative than has been assumed. A frequently repeated narrative in which Julio-Claudian antipathy toward Egypt gave way to Flavian acceptance loses track of the different strategies of representation that shaped different authors’ engagement with the animal *topos*. In one case, Roman authors like Tibullus, Ovid, and Statius used metamorphosis and syncretism to make comprehensible the canine Anubis and bovine Apis. In another strategy, Romans conducted remarkably even-handed

debates about the risks and rewards of conceptualizing the divine in anthropomorphic (human) versus zoomorphic (animal) form.

Recentering these discussions of zoomorphism makes space for *Aegyptiaca*. As I show in chapter 4, authors of *Aegyptiaca* guided these philosophical discussions of Egypt's animals. The bulk of the chapter focuses on the Egyptian god Seth, his Greek counterpart Typhon, and the animals with which they were associated. As a hated god who opposed religious order, Seth's animal identification has been hidden by the artificially narrow term "animal worship." I trace Seth's path of translation from Egypt to Rome. I begin with the pharaonic myth of Horus and Seth, which regularly featured a set of wild animals—hippopotami, crocodiles, asses—into which Seth metamorphosed. Authors of *Aegyptiaca* strategically presented Seth's metamorphoses in the Greek traditions of enigma and symbol. As such, Seth's identification with wild animals encapsulated larger philosophical systems of order and chaos. When presented in these terms, Greek and Roman authors like Plutarch and Apuleius were quick to endorse these philosophical presentations of Egyptian culture.

Part 3, "What's Egyptian for 'Philosopher'?", takes up Egyptian authors' use of symbolism and the questions of authenticity that it introduces. Two specific hallmarks of Egyptian culture loop *Aegyptiaca* into conversations around the cultural projection of Greek concepts onto non-Greek traditions. In chapter 5 I focus on the hieroglyphic script, which was often discussed in symbolic terms. The prevalence of these symbolic explanations speaks to the liminal status of hieroglyphic, which was slowly falling out of use in the early-imperial period. Even as there were fewer new hieroglyphic inscriptions, the philosophical significance of written Egyptian was a mainstay across cultural contexts. Thus, the emperor Domitian emphasized his family's dynastic status by writing their names in cartouches on a Roman obelisk. Plutarch's philosophical presentation of Egyptian religion included an Egyptian-language etymology of the god Amun. Authors of *Aegyptiaca* touted their access to hieroglyphic inscriptions. These presentations of hieroglyphic lead to a much larger question of authority: did authors of *Aegyptiaca* actually *know* the hieroglyphic script? I return to the Egyptian Chaeremon, who wrote a treatise on hieroglyphs that emphasized their philosophical significance. To many, this has been a sign that Chaeremon had no idea what he was talking about. But I look at Egyptian-language discussions of hieroglyphic symbolism to provide context for Chaeremon's philosophizing presentation of hieroglyphic.

Chapter 6 continues with Chaeremon, whose other main work presented Egyptian priests as philosophers. This served Chaeremon well, since he advertised himself as both an Egyptian priest and a Stoic philosopher. As with his symbolic explanations of hieroglyphs, Chaeremon's "philosophification" of Egyptian priestly life has led many to emphasize his unreliable, outsider, and Greek approach to Egyptian cultural activity. But Glissant's theory of creolization offers a persuasive argument against this dichotomous view of authority. I evaluate this

creolization of the philosopher-priest from both Greco-Roman and Egyptian perspectives. First, Greek and Roman authors of the imperial period regularly claimed that Greek philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato, Eudoxus, and Solon trained with Egyptian priests. Second, Egyptian-language priest manuals from the Ptolemaic and imperial periods also present a mixed philosopher-priest. One, the Demotic-language *Book of Thoth*, draws a striking equivalence between the Greek term “wisdom-lover” (*philosophos*) and the Egyptian term “knowledge lover” (*mr-rh*). This translation forms a powerful response to any apparent inauthenticity of Chaeremon’s self-presentation as a philosopher. The specific constellation of the philosopher-priest thus speaks to a creolizing world that produced new modes of cultural authority that authors like Apion and Chaeremon could claim.

In a brief conclusion, I reapproach Aegyptiaca through two frames. First, I turn to Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*. Its final book contains a dialogue between Julius Caesar and an Egyptian philosopher-priest, Acoreus. Through a reading of their conversation, I show that authors of Aegyptiaca undergird Lucan’s representation of this Egyptian sage and his arbitration of Egyptian cultural wisdom. Acoreus, faced with an intellectually and imperially insatiable Roman audience of one, offers a precis of the core themes I have associated with Aegyptiaca.

Zooming out from this one-on-one conversation between Roman and Egyptian, I end by making a broader point about Egypt’s influence on the Greco-Roman world. I place Aegyptiaca against the backdrop of Martin Bernal’s pioneering, if controversial, *Black Athena*. Aegyptiaca and its intermingling presentation of Greek and Egyptian pasts can continue questions of cultural contact poorly served by an isolationist approach to Greek and Roman culture. A mix of benign and malign neglect that has marginalized the mixedness one sees in Apion, Chaeremon, and the other subjects of this book offers a more nuanced explanation of Egypt’s hidden influence on the Greco-Roman world. Post-Manetho Aegyptiaca thus makes clear that the classical has been, and continues to be, an object of constant reinvention. Rather than chase back an ever-receding moment of cultural influence of Egypt on Greece, we might better see how Egypt, its imperially framed relationship with Rome, and its mixed peoples and traditions were (and should continue to be!) a central site in the making and remaking of the classical.