Framing Egypt : Roman literary perceptions of Egypt from Cicero to Juvenal

Leemreize, M.E.C.

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Author: Leemreize, M.E.C.
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Introduction

regia pyramidum, Caesar, miracula ride;
iam tacet Eoum barbara Memphis opus:
pars quota Parrhasiae labor est Mareoticus aulae!
clarius in toto nil videt orbe dies.

Laugh, Caesar, at the royal wonders of the pyramids;
now barbarous Memphis no longer talks of eastern work.
How small a part of the Parrhasian palace is equaled by Mareotic toil!
The day sees nothing more magnificent in all the world.[1]
Mart. 8.36.1-4

This is a study of Roman concepts of Egypt as found in the Roman literary discourse from the last half of the first century BCE to the beginning of the second century CE. It is, therefore, not about 'real' Egyptian history but about how Roman perceptions of Egypt are used and function in Roman literature and society to tell a Roman story. In the lines of Martial quoted above at the beginning of an epigram that celebrates Domitian's newly built palace, two perceptions, or concepts, of Egypt can be discerned. Mentioning the Egyptian pyramids, which were the prime examples of large-scale buildings and hence 'wonders' (*miracula*) in antiquity, recalls on the one hand the Roman respect for ancient Egypt.[2] But on the other hand, Egypt, represented in Martial's text by Memphis, the ancient royal citadel of Egypt, as *pars pro toto*, is barbaric (*barbara*).[3] The pyramids are 'eastern work' (*Eoum opus*), i.e. they are clearly un-Roman. Hence, Egypt is simultaneously approached positively and negatively. Both concepts of Egypt together serve to get Martial's message across. The proverbial immense size of Domitian's palace and the effort it took to build this structure is stressed when the total volume of the pyramids,

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[1] Tr. Shackleton Bailey 1993, with some modifications.
[2] The pyramids were famous for their height: Prop. 3.2.19; Tac. *Ann*. 2.61.1; *Anth. Lat*. (ed. Shackleton Bailey) 415 and 416 = Breitenbach 2010, nos. 20 and 20a.
[3] Regarding the negative connotation of *barbarus*, see Schöffel 2002, 330.

referred to as 'Egyptian toil' (*Mareoticus labor*), covers only a small fragment of it.[4] Domitian's palace surpassed the pyramids in size and in labor, and consequently also emulated them in fame. Moreover, Martial's lines formulate a new premise: from now on (*iam*), other parts of the world, such as Egypt, should not praise their own miracles but should instead admire Roman wonders such as Domitian's palace.[5] Rome is the new standard by which everything else needs to be judged. Martial's text is exemplary for the way Egypt is used in the Roman literary discourse, that is, as a fertile and polyvalent concept. However, the role of Egypt in Roman literature has been interpreted rather differently until now.

This introduction will first explore the presence of 'Egypt' in Rome – i.e. literary references, persons, material objects, etc. – from a historical point of view, followed by an interpretative point of view concerning cultural transformation. The second section examines current scholarly explanations of literary references to Egypt with particular attention paid to their deficiencies, resulting in an enumeration of this study's research questions. The third section explains how these research questions are tackled by presenting the outline of this study. The fourth section explains the theoretical methods, techniques, debates and concepts that have played a role in this study. Finally, the fifth section will present the scope of this study.

1. Setting the scene, Egypt in Rome

1.1. *A short history*

Diplomatic contacts between Rome and Egypt had existed since 273 BCE, but profound political entanglement between Egypt and Rome arose only in late

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[4] Although the exaggeration in these lines is obvious, there is no need to argue for hidden irony in Martial, see Cordes 2014. *Labor* probably implies the 'hardship' it took to build the pyramids, see Reitz 2012, who argues that 'hard work' is one of the positive aspects of construction processes that literary descriptions (and also visual images on monuments) of architectural works tend to emphasize.

[5] In Mart. *Spect*. 1, the same technique is used when the Flavian amphitheater surpasses other wonders of the world; note the beginning of this epigram with its similar phrase (*barbara pyramidum sileat miracula Memphis*). For a commentary and translation of this epigram see Coleman 2006, 1-13, also for a Greek antecedent of this poem.

Republican times.[6] Egypt had gradually lost its influence in the East and become more and more dependent on Rome. Roman annexation of Egyptian territory, Cyprus, in 59 BCE eventually led to an Egyptian rebellion and the exile of the Egyptian king at that time, Ptolemy Auletes XII, who was held responsible for the loss of Cyprus. Ptolemy fled to Rome where he stayed in one of Pompey's houses from 58 to 55 BCE. After offering huge bribes, he was restored to the throne by Pompey's protégé Aulus Gabinius.[7] In 49 BCE Pompey, having lost the Battle of Pharsalus to Julius Caesar in the Civil War (49-45 BCE), fled to Egypt expecting auxiliaries and support from Ptolemy XII's son and successor, Ptolemy XIII. In Egypt, Pompey was murdered by officers of Ptolemy who favored Caesar's side.[8] Caesar, chasing Pompey and his army, got involved in the Alexandrian civil war between Ptolemy XIII and his sister and original co-ruler Cleopatra VII, whom Ptolemy had driven from the throne. Caesar defeated Ptolemy's army and restored Cleopatra to the throne together with another of her brothers, Ptolemy XIV in 47 BCE. In the same year Cleopatra gave birth to Ptolemy Caesarion XV, Caesar's son.[9]

In the second half of the first century BCE, Egypt got involved in the Civil War between Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus after 27 BCE). In the power vacuum after the death of Julius Caesar, a second triumvirate was formed by Octavian, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Mark Antony. After Caesar's murderers Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus were slain at Philippi in 42 BCE, the *triumviri* decided to divide the Roman empire into three parts: the West was assigned to Octavian, the East to Antony and the province Africa to Lepidus. After Lepidus was sent into exile – he was accused by Octavian of abuse of power and inciting rebellion – the already tense relationship between Octavian and Antony worsened. Although he had married Octavian's sister Octavia in 40 BCE, Antony lived openly together with Cleopatra VII in Alexandria and fathered three children with her, the twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, and Ptolemy Philadelphus. In

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[6] Smelik and Hemelrijk, 1986, 1920; Malaise, 1972a, 315.

[7] For the events leading eventually to the restoration of Ptolemy XII to the Egyptian throne, see Siani-Davies 2001, 1-91, and Klodt 1992, 23-59, see also pp. 120-121.

[8] Pompey's flight to Egypt and his murder are dramatically described in book 8 of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, see pp. 135-139, see also Plut. *Pomp*. 76-80; D.C. 42.1-7; App. *BC* 2.84-86.

[9] The Alexandrian war is the subject of late Republican writing *B. Alex*. by, probably, several anonymous authors, see p. 123.

32 BCE Octavian officially declared war on Egypt. The actual Civil War between Octavian and Mark Antony, who allied with Cleopatra, ended with the suicide of Mark Antony after he lost the Battle of Actium (31 BCE). Octavian subsequently annexed Egypt and turned it into a Roman province in 30 BCE.[10] Governed by a prefect instead of a governor, probably because of its importance as Rome's granary, Egypt was under Octavian's close supervision. The latter replaced the first prefect of Egypt, Gaius Cornelius Gallus, when the latter's strong habitual fondness of self-display had probably crossed the line: after putting down a revolt in Memphis, Gallus celebrated that victory by erecting a trilingual inscription – in Latin, Greek and Hieroglyphs – in Philae.[11] Octavian legislation that prohibited senators from setting foot on Egypt's soil without his permission caused friction between Tiberius and Germanicus when the latter visited Egypt unannounced in 18 CE.[12] In 69 CE, Vespasian was declared emperor in Egypt by the Judean and Alexandrian troops he commanded.[13]

Several Roman emperors seem to have shown more than the usual interest in the Egyptian culture. After the annexation of Egypt, Augustus transported two obelisks from Heliopolis to serve as landmarks in Rome.[14] In the wake of the annexation, many Egyptian objects found their way to Rome, a process which is sometimes called Egyptomania.[15] Nero, too, seems to have had a special interest in Egypt as shown by his expedition to the source of the Nile. His tutor was the Egyptian scholar Chaeremon.[16] Vespasian's crowning in Egypt may have stimulated him to legitimize his reign through Egyptian references. For example, Sarapis and the Egyptian goddess Isis were adapted

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[10] An historical overview of the second triumvirate is Pelling 1996, see also p. 134, n. 313.

[11] For the trilingual inscription, see Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010; Hoffmann, Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2009.

[12] Tac. *Ann*. 2.59.2, see also pp. 167-168.

[13] Cf. Levick 1999, 43-64.

[14] For these obelisks as an integral part of Rome, see Van Aerde 2015, see also pp. 69-70 and pp. 75-76.

[15] Wallace-Hadrill 2010, 357, for instance, notes: 'the impact of Octavian/Augustus' conquest of Egypt and the "Egyptomania" that followed it.' For critique of this term, see p. 5-6.

[16] Cesaretti 1989, has collected literary, epigraphic, papyrological and archaeological evidence for Nero's interest in Egypt. A recent study specifically on Nero and Egypt is Bricault and Veymiers 2008. Cf. Manolaraki 2013, 40-42; Pfeiffer 2010a, 88-105 and Legras 2004, 34-35; and p. 138, n. 321.

as tutelary deities of the Roman emperor under the Flavians, as underlined by the rebuilding of the Iseum Campense under Domitian.[17] In Flavian times, Rome was studded with many Aegyptiaca (Egyptian and Egyptianizing) objects ranging from obelisks to golden rings decorated with images of Egyptian gods.[18]

Egypt and Egyptian topoi are evident in Roman literature as well. Observing and emphasizing this omnipresence, a contemporary scholar wrote, 'Put simply, references to Egypt and its culture occur in the works of almost every surviving classical author.'[19] Scattered over poetic, ethnographical, historical, and philosophical works, references can be found to Egyptians acting in Rome. Furthermore, we find references to Roman politics in Egypt, descriptions of historical events, thoughts on the Egyptian religion, anecdotes starring Cleopatra, touristic descriptions, and contemplation on the Nile and its characteristics.[20]

1.2. *Interpreting Egypt in Rome*

The Egyptian omnipresence in Rome has been labeled 'Egyptomania', i.e. an 'obsession with Egypt', and was given as a reason for the presence of so many Egyptian objects and concepts. It has already been objected that 'Egyptomania' is an insufficient term to understand the use of 'Egypt' in Rome: 'obsession' or 'fascination' are far too implicit qualifications to explain

[17] See, Capriotti 2014; Pfeiffer 2010b, *contra*. An archaeological study on the Iseum Campense is Lembke 1994. For the Iseum Campense (and Egyptian cults) in the epigrams of Martial, see Kardos 2011.

[18] Catalogs of Aegyptiaca include: Arslan 1997; Roullet 1972; Malaise 1972b (on the cults of Isis); for an interpretation of these catalogs, see Versluys 2002. A recent work that has collected manifestations of Egypt under Augustus and interpreted them within the framework of 'cultural revolution' is Van Aerde 2015. Cf. Müskens 2016, which is an interpretative study of Imperial Roman Egyptian and Egyptianizing material.

[19] Burstein 1996, 592, with reference to Jacoby, 1994: 3C, 608a-665, and Hopfner, 1922-1925.

[20] Studies that give an impression of the number of literary references to Egypt include: Meyer 1965, who presents a collection of all (not restricted to one topic or theme) references to Egypt in pre-Christian Latin diachronic categorized by author; Becher 1966, who gives a diachronic and thematic overview of sources on Cleopatra in Greek and Latin literature from Augustan to Byzantine Empire; Postl 1970, who presents a collection of particularly Roman sources on the Nile; Smelik and Hemelrijk 1986, who focus on the conceptualization of animal worship in Greek and Latin sources from 5th century Greece to the church-fathers.

why certain Egyptian objects and concepts appeared in certain contexts.[21] The presence of Egyptian objects and concepts in Rome is a manifestation of cultural transference and includes information about the Roman society. When analyzing processes of cultural change and identity-making, research in recent years has underlined that 'conscious choice' is pivotal: Romans chose to incorporate certain foreign objects and concepts for certain purposes.[22] Hence within the framework with which cultural innovation in the Roman world has been approached, Egyptomania does not explain anything.

Traditionally, the cultural transformation of the Roman world has been understood as being the result of a two-phase interaction between 'Roman' and 'native'. Firstly, a native culture, Greece, took over Rome (Hellenization) in such a way that it became 'Roman' or 'Greco-Roman'; and secondly, with the expansion of the Roman Empire, Roman culture conquered the provinces (Romanization).[23] Over the last decades, Romanization as a model to understand cultural interaction in the Roman world has lost its momentum. The main criticism is the top-down (or colonial) model, the superiority of Rome over the 'weaker' natives, which the term Romanization implies.[24] As a counter-reaction, post-colonial studies introduced the down-top model that emphasized the ability of the natives to maintain their own culture while adopting some Roman aspects.[25] A framework that clearly accounts for the general effects of global culture contact (hybridity/homogeneity), but also allows for regional deviations (heterogeneity) that underline choice and

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[21] See Curran 2007, 11.

[22] A good example of a study which accentuates conscious choice is Orlin 2010, who in the introduction of his study on the incorporation of foreign cults in Rome notes: 'The process of assimilation and incorporation was not automatic, however, on either the divine or the human level; not every foreign cult or practice became part of the Roman religious system, just as not every community was admitted to citizenship. The Romans made *conscious choices* about how to act in individual cases', 4. My italics. For the concept of invention of tradition and Roman 'choices', see Versluys 2015. Mol 2015, is a recent study that explores the deliberate uses of Egyptian artefacts in Roman domestic contexts of Pompeii.

[23] For this 'dual process' as 'our standard terminology', see Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 10.

[24] Severe criticism of the concept Romanization can be found in Millett 1990a; 1990b, and Mattingly 1997, 2004, 2006, 14-17. For a debate on whether Romanization has a future in (archaeological) research through a liaison with Globalization theory and Material Culture Studies or whether the term belongs to the field of historiographical study, see Versluys 2014 with a response by Hingley 2014.

[25] Edited volumes in which tools drawn from post-colonial theory are used to understand Roman imperialism are Webster and Cooper, 1996 and Mattingly 1997.

adaptation to their own purposes, is supplied by Globalization theory. Although Globalization theory was developed with modern global mass-communication in mind, it has been applied to more historical periods, too.[26] Fending off the main criticism associated with applying Globalization theory to antiquity, i.e. that the Roman world was never global, by arguing among other things that the Romans themselves perceived their Empire as *orbis terrarum* or *imperium sine fine*, a recent study has shown that it can be successfully implemented to explain cultural change in the Roman world.[27] Globalization theory supplies a useful framework to approach manifestations of Egypt in Rome, whether objects or concepts. In the first place, it places these manifestations into a larger network of circulating 'Hellenistic *Koine*' elements.[28] In this sense, the Roman understanding and use of Egypt were not based on profound Roman knowledge of the ancient Egyptian culture and Roman historical experiences with Egypt (at least not solely), but were filtered through more universal circulating ideas such as those about foreigners, kings and religion. For instance, the Roman use of Egyptian objects and concepts had in many cases more to do with Greek or 'Hellenistic' interpretations of them than with ancient/authentic Egyptian ones. In the second place, the framework of Globalization theory places emphasis on local peculiarities (heterogeneity) within the homogenizing world. It points out the importance of context and leads to questions of purpose. Applying the framework of Globalization to the Roman world leads to the hypothesis that Egyptian objects and concepts were appropriated and particularized for local Roman use.[29]

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[26] The edited volume of Hopkins 2002, is pioneering in this respect, although it suggests that Globalization theory is only applicable to the period from 1600 onwards.
[27] Pitts and Versluys 2015, see especially their introduction.
[28] It is argued that Romans had access to a 'repertoire' of material culture (referred to as Hellenistic *Koine*) on which they could draw. This repertoire contains a collection of 'original' Greek and Egyptian objects which are 'Hellenized', for a discussion, see Versluys forthcoming, who also draws parallels to literary studies with reference to Nauta and Harder 2005. For this present study, the literary tradition is important as many Roman sources on Egypt draw heavily on Greek predecessors. Note recent works on Greek perceptions of Egypt with (partial) titles such as 'Hellenizing Egypt', Vasunia 2001, and 'Egypt and the limits of Hellenization', Moyer 2011.
[29] The term 'glocalization' is sometimes used for the inextricable relation between globalization and localization. For the relation between global and local, see Pitts and Versluys 2015, 14-15.

The possibility that the presence of Egypt in Roman society may have stood for many different ideas and thoughts depending on their context hardly exists in previous scholarship on Aegyptiaca and Roman literary references to Egypt. In these studies Egypt has traditionally been approached in terms of fixated and normative concepts: Egypt was perceived to be the Other as opposed to the Self. Whereas modern studies label Greek culture as an integral part of Roman culture, Egypt is first and foremost understood as 'exotic' or 'Other'.[30] Egyptian culture seems to be omnipresent in Rome, but of marginal importance when Roman identity is at stake. The present study aims to redress that imbalance.

2. STATUS QUAESTIONIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1. *Negative stereotypes and the Augustan age*

Previous scholarship on Roman literary perceptions of Egypt has mostly emphasized the use of negative stereotypes.[31] In Roman texts we find many examples in which Egyptians are said to be untrustworthy, superstitious, effeminate and insane. Although most of them also point out several, more positive Roman views, the negative stance is held to be normative. For

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[30] In this respect, Versluys 2015 raised the question of why we speak about a Greco-Roman Empire, but not of an Egypto-Roman Empire.

[31] Modern studies with a special focus on negative Roman stereotypes of Egypt include: Isaac 2004, 352-370, who discusses 'proto-racism in antiquity', i.e. the hostility and stereotypes; Maehler 2003, who explores Roman poets (in particular, Horace to Juvenal) for their understanding of Egypt's culture and discusses the impact of Augustan propaganda on their poetry; Versluys, 2002 387-443, who interprets Roman perceptions of Egypt in terms of the 'Other'; Berthelot 2000, who argues that Roman literary sources mainly repeated and sharpened Greek stereotypes of the Egyptians; Sonnabend 1986, who focuses on the Roman perceptions of Egypt (and Parthia) in the late Republican and early Imperial period and argues that these perceptions remained more or less the same despite increasing political contact; Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984, 1922-1950, who focus on animal worship; Reinhold 1980, who discusses the relationship between the political isolation of Egypt and stereotypes. Recent studies that place an emphasis on the positive evaluation of Egypt are: Gruen 2011a, who demonstrates the overlap and similarities between the Greco/Roman and Egyptian culture; Manolaraki 2013, who analyzes the Roman perception of the Nile diachronically.

instance, Meyer Reinhold in his attempt (somewhat misguided) to get to the core of 'real' Roman feelings about Egypt notes, 'It is true that numerous Romans traveled in Egypt as tourists, but they were repelled by the native population. True they were in general a submissive people, patiently supplying Rome with wheat, papyrus, and other products, and tribute. But Romans felt profound contempt for them because of their "deviant" behavior and failure to be "civilized".'[32] Even in an important recent study on the complex representation of the Nile in Roman literature that aims to go beyond stereotyping, *Noscendi Nilum cupido* by Eleni Manolaraki, Roman negative attitudes towards Egypt are taken as a point of departure. This book describes a chronological process in which first the 'Actian otherness of Egypt' needs to fade away before the Nile can be 'reimagined as an ambiguous space that is no longer foreign nor is it yet domestic.'[33] My study will question whether Roman stereotyping of Egypt ever was normative (even in Augustan times). If 'negative Egypt' turns out to be just one of many concepts, then a direct relation between positive remarks in later times and the negative earlier ones becomes hard to explain. One reason why negative stereotypes of Egypt seem to be prominent in Roman literature may be the choice of period and subject. Generally, the Augustan age has received relatively more scholarly attention as it covers almost five decades in which Rome changed dramatically from a Republic into an Empire and as it produced many still extant, remarkable archaeological objects and literary works.[34] In addition, it seems impossible

[32] Reinhold 1980, 100.
[33] Manolaraki 2013, 216. Cf. *ib*. 219: 'The Flavian editions, additions, and elaboration on the original "Augustan" Nile provide a model of discursive change that leads us to the next and final part. As Actium becomes ever more distant and the Flavians give way to the Antonines, the Nile is once again reinvented in the increasingly decentralized empire.' See also Laguna's comment (1992) on Stat. *Silv*. 3.2, 1992, 229, referred to and translated by Manolaraki 2013, 184: 'In his commentary, Gabriel Laguna observes that the mood of the hymn contrasts with the anti-Egyptian-ism of previous literature and therefore reflects a turning point in the Roman making of Egypt: "the religion and customs of Egypt had traditionally met with hostility and criticism in Roman mentality, but in Statius we observe for the first time a greater interest and a greater acceptance for Egypt".'
[34] Influential works are: Syme 1939, who argues that Augustus' power base was established by a military coup (instead of by processes of cultural transformation); Zanker 1988, who shows how Augustan material culture embodied and contributed to the transformation of Roman society; Galinsky 1996, focussing on material culture and literary sources describes processes of cultural transformation in Augustan times;

to write a historical/archaeological/literary study of Egypt in Rome without giving the Augustan age a prominent place: Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, annexed Egypt as a Roman province, turned Egypt into an important granary of Rome, and transported two obelisks from Heliopolis to Rome. It is argued that in this period certain fixated stereotypes (negative) were created that dominated Roman perceptions of Egypt for ages. Stephen Nimis summarizes these perceptions as follows: 'Literary sources from the Augustan period on tend to repeat a number of negative clichés and topoi: the treacherous murder of Pompey by Ptolemy XIII, the pernicious attack on the state by the dangerous and seductive Cleopatra, the bizarre worship of animals, Egyptians as cowardly Orientals and barbarians, etc.'[35] Another example is Versluys (2002) who, by focusing on Nilotic scenes and matching them to literary evidence, argues that the Roman concept of Egypt as the stereotypical Other became dominant after the Battle of Actium (31 BCE). Augustan stereotyping is held to be normative to the extent that deviating Augustan literature, i.e. sources presenting a positive attitude towards Egypt, are interpreted as being a reaction to Augustan official propaganda.[36]

Modern studies on Roman perceptions of Egypt tend to focus on specific Egyptian topoi or a specific author instead of presenting an overall study.[37] For instance, a study has recently appeared on the representation of Egypt in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.[38] Topoi that are considered in depth include, apart from negative stereotypes, the Nile, Cleopatra and animal worship.[39] Although

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cf. 2005; Wallace-Hadrill 1993 places Augustan politics and poetry in its archaeological and social context.

[35] Nimis 2004, 41.

[36] See chapter IV on Tibullus 1.7, especially pp. 182-184.

[37] Important Studies on Greek perceptions of Egypt are *overall* studies, see: Froidefond 1971, who investigates Greek 'imagining' of Egypt from Homer to Aeschylus. Cf. Vasunia 2001, who focuses on the period from Aeschylus to Alexander and explores the use of representations of Egypt for Greek identity formation. Meyer 1965 is an overall study of references to Egypt in Roman literature. But this study investigates the Roman knowledge of Egypt and does not focus on Roman concepts of this region.

[38] Tracy 2014. Studies on the representation of Egypt in the works of a specific Greco-Roman are Pearce 2007 and Cordier 2007 on the representation of Egypt in the works of Philo and Cassius Dio, respectively.

[39] Over the last decades a massive pile of works on Cleopatra have appeared, from historical / archaeological and literary points of view, for an overview I would like to

Manolaraki in her above-mentioned study on Roman perceptions of the Nile has shown that this river has many identities, her book also reveals the limitations of looking at just one subject. The fact that the Nile *is* a river directs Roman references to the Nile to specific Roman discourses on rivers and their relationship to geopolitical thinking. In other words, focusing on the Nile may not do justice to the wide range of Roman perceptions of Egypt. This can be illustrated by a parallel taken from the material culture. Though pyramids were, and are, one of the prime features of Egypt, they are nevertheless completely absent from all Nilotic scenery that can be found in the Roman world. When it comes to Nilotic scenes, the Nile apparently belonged to a different domain than the pyramids.[40]

2.2. *The 'traditional' concepts*

Based on previous scholarship, two major Roman concepts of Egypt arise. Firstly, Romans perceived Egypt negatively, they addressed many negative stereotypes to this region. Secondly, Romans understood Egypt to be particularly ancient and expressed that aspect positively. These two different perceptions are related to the dichotomy between contemporary Egypt and ancient Egypt, and it is held that both views are strictly unrelated: i.e. positive Roman thinking of ancient Egypt did not lead to a more respectful attitude towards contemporary Egypt.[41] Although the observed discrepancy in Roman evaluations of ancient and contemporary Egypt is generally accepted, it is not without its problems: not all positive images of Egypt concern ancient Egypt per se, and not all negativity was projected on contemporary Egypt. Examples include the 'timeless' marveling about the features of the Nile and the critique of the 'uselessness' of ancient pyramids. Hence, the two traditional concepts do not seem to cover the whole range of Roman perceptions of Egypt.

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refer to a recently published edited volume by Miles 2011 and Chapter II, especially pp. 85-86. The most recent study of the Nile in Roman literature is Manolaraki 2013, who presents a diachronic interpretation of the Nile in which its various identities are related to social and political contexts; cf. Schrijvers 2007, who compares literary Nile descriptions with those on Nilotic scenes; Postl 1970, see p. 5, n. 20. An important diachronic study on animal worship in Greek and Roman literature is Smelik and Hemelrijk 1986, see p. 5, n. 20.

[40] Pyramids are also absent from literary Nile descriptions such as that of Plin. *NH* 5.51-54, see Schrijvers 2007, 227.

[41] See, Sonnabend 1986, 101, quoted on p. 163.

Moreover, whereas Roman stereotyping of Egypt was related to identity-making, a positive Roman evaluation of Egypt was not. In the context of Actium, it is a well-trodden path to argue that Roman stereotyping of Egypt is an expression of Augustan propaganda to cover up the fact of civil war by creating a clear foreign enemy (the Other) who fought against a Roman force (the Self) that is defined positively by contrast. This process of 'Othering', in which the Other seems to be the antipode of the Self, has been called 'negative self-definition'.[42] In contrast to Roman stereotypes of Egypt, a good explanation has not been given for the use of positive Roman expressions of Egypt in terms of self-definition.

At this point it is instructive to consider a comparable discussion, that on Greek attitudes towards Egypt. In recent scholarship on Greek literary perceptions of Egypt, the dichotomy between Greek/Self and Egyptian/Other has been questioned. Phiroze Vasunia, for instance, in his study about the Greek discourse on Egypt states, '[a] study that simply creates an opposition between self and other [..] fails to comment fully and meaningfully on the complex portrayal of Egypt in any period of Greek literature. For one thing terms such as 'self' and 'other' are often unstable, giving the idea of two monolithic and homogeneous categories. This book posits a Greek identity that is less fixed and more variable than such an idea implies.'[43] Greek literature shows that the Greeks not only diametrically opposed themselves to the Egyptian Other, they also saw themselves as successors to ancient Egyptian achievements. Egypt was conceptualized as the first inventor culture of many great institutions, and this aspect of Egypt became the object of appropriation for the Greeks. In this respect, Plato's *Timaeus* 21e-23e forms a good example as it uses Egypt's great antiquity to enhance the status of Athens, which turns out to be even older than Egypt.[44] In particular, François Hartog's studies of the use of ethnographies as tools to reflect upon and question Greek identity is pioneering in this respect. In his book *Le miroir d'Hérodote: essai sur la représentation de l'autre* (1980, tr. 1988), he argued that the Other not only functioned as a negative mirror for the Greek civilization, it could also be staged to reveal the Greek flaws. Moreover, in his

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[42] Stereotyping foreigners in Roman texts can be explained as a tool to define civilization: to underline the fact that Rome is civilized, a culturally accepted antipode, here Egypt, is staged. Cf. Versluys 2002, 392.
[43] Vasunia 2001, 2-3.
[44] For a full analysis of this passage in similar terms, see Hartog 2001, 56-59.

later work *Mémoire d'Ulysse* (1996, tr. 2001), Hartog distinguishes between 'real' traveling through Egypt ('voyage en Égypte') and 'imaginary' trips to this territory ('voyage d'Égypte') and explicitly shows how diverse Greek concepts of Egypt in the latter could be used to think and rethink Greek conventions. In modern scholarly literature dealing with Greek and Roman literary perceptions of foreigners, such as the book by Vasunia, Hartog's approach has become prominent.[45]

Taking my inspiration particularly from studies like Hartog and Vasunia, I have discerned a number of hypotheses/questions concerning the interpretation of Roman literary perceptions of Egypt that will be addressed in this thesis: 1) The Roman literary discourse on Egypt can probably not be fully covered by an explanation involving the two traditional concepts (negative perception of contemporary Egypt versus positive perception of ancient Egypt). Are other concepts present that can explain the Roman use of references to Egypt? 2) All concepts of Egypt (whether positive or negative perceptions) are likely to have a function in terms of self-definition. As context is decisive, what is the meaning of each single use of a particular concept in this respect? 3) The existence of other concepts than Egypt as the stereotypical Other can undermine the central place given to Actium in the Roman discourse on Egypt. How important is the role of Actium and Augustan poetry in Roman perceptions of Egypt?

3. Method and chapter outline

To tackle these questions, my research has taken two steps in the analysis of Roman literary references to Egypt. The foundation of these two steps was an investigation of all kinds of references to Egypt in (Greco-)Roman literary sources covering the late first century BCE to the first century CE – hence avoiding a focus on one author, subject or period. This investigation was aimed to explore 'the furniture' of Egypt (what *makes* Egypt according to Romans). The first step included a matching of the texts with references to Egypt to the two traditional concepts: could every reference to Egypt be understood as a reflection of either a positive evaluation of ancient Egypt or a negative conception of contemporary Egypt? The second step included the

[45] Vasunia 2001, 29-32. Cf. Murphy 2004, 77-128.

explanation of texts with references to Egypt in terms of self-definition. Questions asked in this phase were: does Egypt function as a negative mirror for Roman behavior only (standard explanation of Roman stereotypes of Egypt), or can it also function to demonstrate Roman faults, or otherwise? My study consists of four chapters that represent the two steps taken. The first two chapters focus on the first step and question the relationship between a reference to Egypt and the two traditional concepts. The last two chapters concern the second step and thus focus on the function of Egypt in terms of self-definition.[46]

Chapters I, II and IV each concentrate on a specific text, respectively Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, Propertius 3.11 and Tibullus 1.7. Chapter III revolves around a specific topos, negative Roman stereotypes, and discusses several texts related to that topic. I have chosen to focus on these texts primarily on the basis of narrative volume. Passing references to Egypt do not provide enough information in most cases to discern the use of Egypt in terms of self-definition. On the other hand, analyses of sources that devote much ink to one particular subject, such as contemplations of the Nile, would have unbalanced my aim to present an overall study. Comparable sources to my central texts are collected in the footnotes.

The first chapter deals with the representation of Egypt in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Firstly, this encyclopedic work is a good case-study to investigate and critically question the relation between references to Egypt and the two traditional concepts (see above on pp. 11-13) as it contains many references to all kinds of 'furniture' of Egypt. It includes information about the Nile, Cleopatra, pyramids, obelisks, Egyptian flora and fauna. Recent scholarship suggests that this work can be read as a monograph as it contains general messages.[47] Hypothetically, the Egyptian topoi function within these general messages more than within the traditional concepts. Secondly, the *Natural History* was composed in the Flavian period and seems to convey the Flavian 'Zeitgeist'. It is, hence, a good start for a study that aims to put the Augustan age and its role in the Roman conceptualization of Egypt into perspective. Thirdly, this work is related to historical/geographical genres and not poetry. Previous scholarship on Roman perceptions of Egypt

[46] A good impression of the scope of ancient sources with references to Egypt that form the foundation of this study can be found in 'the index of references to Egypt' on p. 201-204.
[47] See pp. 40-43.

suggested that genre influences Greek and Roman perceptions of this foreign culture. Historical and geographical works tend to approach these cultures and their features in less violent stereotypes than poetry.[48] As chapter I functions to set the scene, it looks beyond concept to function. It investigates how Pliny's conceptualization of Egypt functions within the larger context. Does it affect Pliny's representation of Rome? And if so, how is Egypt used to convey messages about Roman society?

The relationship between topos and the traditional conceptualization of Egypt is further elaborated in chapter II by looking at one important Egyptian subject: Cleopatra. After having examined the Flavian period in chapter I, we turn back to the Augustan age. One feature that seems to be inextricably linked to Actium and negative stereotyping is Cleopatra. In this chapter the text that seems to contain the most violent oppositions between Egypt and Rome in which Cleopatra operates, Propertius' *elegy* 3.11, is investigated for the relationship between the Egyptian queen and negative stereotyping. Although the portrayal of Cleopatra is generally interpreted as being negative, the poem itself is explained differently. Some believe that this poem was meant to praise Augustus, while others argue that it contains criticism. This chapter contributes to this discussion about the general interpretation of this poem by examining the conceptualization of Cleopatra in Propertius 3.11. Does Propertius 3.11 conceptualize Cleopatra in just one way (negative) or in more diverse ways? Like chapter I, this chapter also anticipates the third and fourth chapters by analyzing what effects the conceptualization of Cleopatra had on Roman self-representation.

Chapter III examines the function of a particular concept that has received much emphasis in earlier research: negative stereotypes. As the Augustan age seems to be pivotal in the creation of negative stereotypes, the texts analyzed in this chapter include those of Cicero, the Augustan poets, Lucan, Pliny the Younger and Juvenal, i.e. sources dated before and after Actium that allegedly contain stereotypes. Do negative stereotypes only function as a negative mirror for the self (Othering) or is there more at stake? By approaching these texts in a diachronic way, the role of Actium in the creation of stereotypes will be investigated.

Chapter IV focuses on the function of the other 'traditional' concept of Egypt: the positive evaluation of Egypt's antiquity. Are references to ancient

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[48] See p. 37, n. 109-110.

Egypt used to convey messages about the Roman identity? And if so, how do they contribute to self-representation? The second and especially the third chapter discusses the role of Augustan poetry in Roman conceptualization of Egypt. The fourth chapter broadens this discussion and questions whether negative stereotypes should be seen as normative in Augustan times by looking at Tibullus' *elegy* 1.7, a poem that is known for its positive presentation of Egypt, or lack of negative stereotypes. The question of how Tibullus could write such a 'deviant' Roman view on Egypt is highly debated in modern literature: is he offending Augustus? To answer this question, more historical debates about the Augustan policy towards Egypt and more particularly his politics concerning the worship of the original goddess Isis in Rome need to be included along with a philological interpretation of the text. However, the main question this chapter has to answer is: did Tibullus represent Egypt in an extraordinary way, deviant from what was normative, or did he use a concept of Egypt that was also alive in Roman society (in a similar way as that of negative stereotypes)?

4. Theoretical methods, techniques, debates and concepts

This study presents a rather different view on the Roman literary discourse on Egypt than most previous research. It tries to demonstrate how to study Roman literary representations of Egypt on the basis of some selected texts. In the analysis of the selected texts, several methods, techniques, debates and concepts have played a role: discourse analysis and framing (4.1); imagology and discursive patterns (4.2); stereotyping and its social meaning (4.3); post-colonialism (4.4); and cultural memory (4.5). The first three form the main framework from which the Roman literary discourse on Egypt has been approached in this study. As both discourse framing and the social meaning of stereotyping are concerned with meta-communication and cognitive processes meant to make sense of the world, these concepts give insights into the discursive patterns (or filters) that construct the Roman discourse on Egypt. Post-colonial theory and cultural memory need to be considered as broader frameworks underlying the Roman discourse on Egypt as post-colonialism concerns the construction of the Other and cultural memory that of the Self.

4.1. *Discourse analysis and framing*

The concept of framing is of central importance for discourse analysis, which is primarily concerned with unraveling how human discourse functions, how people are able to understand each other when communicating 'complex meanings by means of coherent texts'.[49] Communication is a social activity as it involves interaction between the recipient and the communicator. As communication and interaction are complex processes, studied in many fields such as sociology, anthropology, Artificial Intelligence and linguistics, a uniform definition of framing/frame is lacking, but some overlaps can be found.[50] To understand each other, both the recipient and the communicator need to share a 'common ground', they need to possess a certain amount of the same knowledge or experience, and also be able to estimate what the interacting partner knows. The concept of framing concerns the 'common ground', both parties need to have some shared understanding of how the discourse is 'framed', i.e. what the aims and purposes are of the interaction in which they participate.[51]

Although framing concerns the 'common ground', diverse studies on framing either focus on the recipient or look at the communicator. For instance, within social sciences, frames are 'metamessages' that people rely on when making sense of an event. Based on earlier experience, people interpret interaction in a certain way, for instance, whether something is really

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[49] For the quote see Ensink and Sauer 2003, 1, who refer to Brown and Yule 1983, ix; Fairclough 1995, 4-10 and Wood and Kroger 2000, 3-16.

[50] Ensink and Sauer 2003, 2-4, show how the many fields of research apply different meanings to framing /frame; even within these fields, various other terms are circulating that are more or less synonymously used. Cf. Druckman 2002, 226-227, who lists several different definitions of framing/frame. Both single out overlapping features and use that as their description of framing/frame. See also Scheufele 1999, who argues for a comprehensive model of framing in political communication, instead of the 'vague conceptualizations' of framing. Since its introduction in the field of anthropology (Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', 1954, 177-193), the concept of framing has almost immediately been very influential in scholarly disciplines that study language in interaction such as in the field of social and cognitive sciences (important ones are Goffman 1974; 1981; Minsky 1975). From the 1990s onwards, the concept has truly been applied to linguistic studies (but Fillmore 1975 is pioneering). For instance, Tannen 1993 demonstrates that the presence of certain frames in communication can be revealed by linguistic study.

[51] Clark 1996, 92-121.

happening, or whether it is actually a joke or theater. In his influential book *Frame analysis* (1974) in which he studies framing in everyday communication, Irving Goffman notes that frame analysis comes down to constructing a framework that helps to understand the answer to the question 'what is it that is going on here?' that an individual faces when he comes across some kind of communicative move.[52] Goffman's frames (or schema of interpretation) are related to the *perception* of individuals, how they interpret a given situation or any act of communication. As an individual's perception is based on his experience, it may vary among individuals.[53] Other scholars use the term frame to refer to 'words, images, and presentation styles' that are used by the speaker or the writer in interaction with his public and not to the perception of the individual. These 'frames in communication' are related to what is said or written, to the actual *phrasing*, and may reveal what the communicator considers salient in the discourse.[54] Different phrasing or different emphasis in phrasing can direct the recipient's thoughts. This process in which phrasing molds the perception of individuals is called 'frame setting'.[55]

The present study is actually concerned with the 'frame setting' of Roman literary sources. Hence, I treat Roman literary texts as communication sources that construct a point of view – whether deliberately or not – that encourages

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[52] Goffman 1974, 8: 'I assume that when individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: 'What is it that's going on here?' Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion and doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand. Starting, then, with that question, this volume attempts to limn out a framework that could be appealed to for the answer.'

[53] Tannen 1993, 14-56, demonstrates how past experiences raise certain expectations by recipients when involved in interaction. Cf. Kuypers and Cooper 2005, who show how the experiences of journalists who travelled with military troops in the 2003 Iraq war led to different reporting than that of behind-the-lines journalists. The use of frames in understanding how the percipient makes sense of the world has been labeled 'frame in thought', see Druckman 2002, 227-228, with references to other scholars than Goffman.

[54] See Druckman 2003, 227 for the quote and further references.

[55] Scheufele 1999 developed 'a process model of framing research' in political (mass) communication that is more elaborate than the one applied here. He unraveled four processes in framing: frame building (how frames are formed by the media, i.e. the communicator), frame setting (the effect of a frame on the audience's frames), individual-level effects of framing (how and why individuals react to frames), and 'journalists as audiences' (how journalists pick up frames).

the reader to understand the themes (or concepts) in a text in a particular way. Hence, a 'theme' (for instance, Roman stereotypes of Egypt) is not the same as a 'frame'. To understand how the 'theme' functions, what it actually means, we need to understand it in its larger context, i.e. we need to know how the theme is 'framed'.[56] Martial's text at the beginning of the present introduction can serve as an illustrative example. In these lines the concept of Egypt's antiquity (recalled by mentioning pyramids), usually interpreted as conveying Roman respect for Egypt, is 'framed' as evidence for Rome's own successes.

4.2. *Imagology and discursive patterns*

The Roman discourse on foreigners harbors certain patterns that give an impression of the 'common ground', the knowledge and past experiences that both the Roman text and the Roman reader share when they communicate about foreigners. A recent research field that studies the literary representations of European 'nationalities', Imagology, has unraveled general discursive patterns that seem to be present in every literary representation independent of nationality. Three of these patterns seem to govern the ancient discourse on foreigners as well: 1) East versus West; 2) center versus periphery; and 3) positive versus negative characterization.[57] These patterns

[56] Cf. Kuypers 2009, who analyzed the methodology used in social scientific studies in the period after 9/11 using 'a rhetorical version of framing'. These studies argued that news media took over uncritically the exact words of the president, focusing on the binary themes good versus evil and security versus peril. Kuypers, 188, criticized these studies in the following way: 'From a rhetorical point of view, .. [they] .. found only *content*. They did not analyze or interpret *the context* in which these binaries were found. They mistook the presence of *themes* as evidence of a particular *frame*. What is left out of many studies suggesting a permissive press is information about how the discovered themes are *framed*. The news media may well relay what the president says, but it does not necessarily follow that the president's framing of those themes is accurately conveyed prior to the press commentary or criticism of others. Thus we often find the echo of a *theme*, but not of a *frame*.' Original italics.

[57] Within Imagology it is claimed that 'a systematically diversified and particularized assignation of characters to specific ethnic groups (as opposed to incidental instances of finger-pointing and name-calling) appears in European written culture only during the modern period', Leerssen 2000, 272. However, the patterns that govern the discourse on stereotypes from the early modern period onwards can be found in the Roman discourse on Egypt. Note that Beller and Leerssen 2007, in their 'critical survey' of Imagology, include papers on 'pre-modern ethnic and national images' of

are *discursive* as they are limited to literary discourse only; they do not concern 'real' knowledge of foreigners or 'real' experience with foreigners.

Firstly, according to Imagology, the discourse on foreigners in literature from the early modern period onwards is governed by the distinction between North and South in which the Northern people are more severe than the Southerners.[58] The same kind of division can be found in Greek and Roman ethnographical remarks, but then in antiquity mainly between South and East. The Hippocratic essay *Airs, Waters, Places*, dated between c. 430 and c. 400 BCE, relates the characterization of Europeans and Asians (including the Egyptians, but their description is lost) to climate, geography and ways of life. According to this essay the Asians lack spirit, are more gentle and less warlike than the Europeans.[59] In Aristotle a distinction between the Western Europeans and the Asians can be found as well. The former is full of spirit, but lacks intelligence, whereas the latter lacks spirit, but is intelligent. Aristotle adds that the Hellenic race, geographically positioned in the middle, has both good qualities.[60] Regarding the Roman West-East division, Balsdon notes in his study on Roman perceptions of foreigners ('aliens'), 'If westerners were crude and uncultured, they were tough and warlike; effeminacy, lack of enterprise and courage marked the unwarlike oriental.'[61] For instance, in Caesar *De Bello Gallico*, the Germans were presented as extremely warlike, living a very disciplined life without luxury.[62] From Rome's perspective the Egyptians were Eastern people, as we have already noticed in the example of

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which one concerns antiquity, Nippel 2007. Nippel presents a good introduction to the topic of ethnocentric thought in antiquity.

[58] Leerssen 2000, 272.

[59] For an useful analysis of *Airs, Waters, Places* concerning the division between Asia and Europe, see Thomas 2000, 86-98. About this division she notes: 'But the ethnography of *Airs* is not primarily and exclusively about Greek superiority over barbarians: on the contrary it is about continents and general physical rules (climate, continents) that should in theory apply to all mankind.' Cf. Backhaus 1976, *contra*. For the dating of this Hippocratic essay, see Thomas 2000, 24-26.

[60] Ar. *Pol. VII* 1327b23-31. See Thomas 2000, 93, for a comparison between Aristotle's division and that of *Airs, Waters, Places*.

[61] Balsdon 1979, 61. Roman discourse on the North-South division overlaps with that on the West-East division. Generally, the Northerners/Westerners were perceived to be physically strong, and the Southerners/Easterners were represented as intelligent, *ib*. 59-76.

[62] See, for instance, Caes. *B Gal*. 4.1-4. Roman stereotypes of the Germans were not static, see below on pp. 21-22 and Kremer 1994. A study into the utility of ethnographies, or 'myths', of Western barbarians for Roman purposes is Woolf 2011.

Martial, where pyramids were framed as Eastern work. Consequently, the Egyptians were labelled as more outgoing, sensual and untrustworthy.[63]

The second structural pattern ordering the discourse on foreigners is the distinction between center and periphery, in which the center is associated with "historical dynamism" and development, whereas the peripheries are stereotypically "timeless", "backward", or "traditional".[64] The same notion can be found in Greek and Roman texts with references to Egypt. In these texts Egypt is not only truly ancient, it is also 'frozen' in its past. For instance, Vasunia, with reference to Froidefond, notices with regard to the Greek literary discourse on Egypt that 'few writers apprehend the country as it exists at the time of their writing. There appears, instead, a homeostatic view of a country removed from the present, a view that often focuses on the antiquity of Egyptian civilization, the invention of writing, the scribal tradition of chronicling the past, the contributions of the Egyptian philosophical and religious systems to Greek counterparts.'[65] The effect of such a representation of Egypt is that Egypt appears to be bygone while Greece is associated with progression: the Greeks took over Egypt's inventions and developed them further. The distinction between past and present governs the lines of Martial quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This distinction is indicated by the word *iam*: from 'now on', ancient Egypt should not be marked as a point of reference, instead present Rome should be. The achievements of ancient Egypt are superceded by those of 'modern' Rome.[66]

The third discursive pattern is the variability of stereotypes and the existence of opposites. Depending on the literary and historical context, different and even contradictory characterizations may appear.[67] An example

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[63] In this respect, it is not remarkable that it is sometimes hard to distinguish whether Roman negative stereotypes are aimed at Egyptians proper or at Greek Alexandrians. From Roman point of view, the Greeks and the Egyptians were both Easterners, see also Balsdon 1979, 68. For the opposition between Greek/Alexandrians and Egyptians in general and in particular in Philo's *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*, see Pearce 2007, 45-80.

[64] Leerssen 2000, 277.

[65] Vasunia 2001, 7, with reference to Froidefond 1971.

[66] Cf. Farrell 2014, whose examples of Veii and Falerii show that the Roman *suburbium* could be perceived 'almost as an imaginary landscape dominated by ruins, cult sites and other institutions that helped make it a kind of time machine, a zone of virtual antiquity, a nearby area of chronological as well as other kinds of refuge from the modern city and its discontents.'

[67] Leerssen 2000, 278-280.

of how a contradictory characterization becomes attributed to one group of people can be found in the Roman discourse on the Germans. Whereas in Caesar the Germans were extremely warlike, Tacitus' *Germania* characterized them as warlike *and* lazy (see Tac. *Germ.* 15.1). When studying the Roman discourse on the Germans, coining it as 'Borealism' in dialogue with Said's 'Orientalism', Christopher Krebs argued that Tacitus reversed Caesar's more positive description of the Germans for political reasons. Representing the Germans in positive terms, Caesar created a distinct group of people, i.e. distinct from the Gauls, and supplied a reason why the Romans should not attempt to include this extremely warlike people in the Roman Empire. In Tacitus' time, Trajan had already approached the Rhine. According to Krebs, Tacitus altered Caesar's conceptualization of the Germans by adapting Seneca's *homo iracundus* (the 'irascible man'), Polybius and Livy's description of Celts, and Caesar's representation of the Gauls. By doing so, Tacitus showed that the Germans could be defeated by the Romans.[68] According to Imagology, a certain stereotype may be dominant in certain situations, but the contradictory stereotype does not simple vanish – texts written in certain circumstances may be readable for ages – and can be evoked when needed in other circumstances.[69] This may explain why Roman texts can refer to the same foreigners in positive as well as negative terms. Thus, in the literary discourse we find notions that Egypt can be perceived as uncivilized on the one hand (negative characterization), but as civilized on the other (positive characterization). An example of the coexistence of both kind of stereotypes can be found in the quoted lines of Martial where Egypt is conceptualized as barbarian and ancient.[70]

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[68] Krebs 2011. For the shifting Roman perception of the Gauls, see Williams 2001 and Kremer 1994. A study into the utility of ethnographies, or 'myths', of Western barbarians for Roman purposes is Woolf 2011.
[69] Leerssen 2000, 278-280.
[70] See also Woolf 2011, 114, who gives the following examples of Roman alternating perceptions of Westerners: 'Druids were *either* natural philosophers who taught the transmigration of souls, mediators in their own communities and respected beyond it for their great reserves of orally transmitted wisdom, *or else* they were terrifying barbarian priests who conducted savage human sacrifices. Gallic warriors were *either* symbols of strength that came from a simple life and diet *or* illustrations of the limits of that strength and passion without discipline and intelligence.' With references. Original italics.

4.3. *Stereotyping and prejudice*

In the research field of social psychology, an empirical division is made between stereotyping and prejudice. Stereotypes are *thoughts* about the characteristics of groups of people: '[s]tereotypes represent the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or of individual members of those groups, and particularly those that differentiate groups from each other. In short, they are the traits that come to mind quickly when thinking about groups.'[71] Stereotyping is the application of stereotypes when interacting with members of that group. Prejudice is a negative *attitude* towards these members. As such, stereotyping can be coined 'cognitive' and prejudice 'affective'. Although the two phenomena are two sides of the same coin, stereotyping groups of people does not immediately imply prejudice as the latter involves emotions such as dislike, disgust, hate. For instance, characterizing professors as absent-minded does not immediately imply negative feelings.[72] In the field of social psychology, however, stereotypes are primarily held to be negative. Positive stereotypes do exist, but they generally do not lead to positive reactions. Explicitly saying that a minority group has positive characteristics is in most cases understood as acknowledging implicitly that negative characteristics also exist.[73] Studies in social

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[71] Stangor 2009, 2. Cf. Dovidio *et al*. 2010, 8, whose definition includes the effects of stereotypes on individuals: '[S]tereotypes represent a set of qualities perceived to reflect the essence of a group. Stereotypes systematically affect how people perceive, process information about, and respond to, group members.' For stereotypes as cognitive representations, or *prototypes* and *schemata*, in the field of social psychology, see Dovidio *et al*. 1986.

[72] For definitions of stereotyping and prejudice, see the fine overview studies of Stangor 2009; 2000, 1, whose definitions I have adopted here. The absent-minded professor is an exemplary stereotype frequently used in Stangor's 2000 introduction. Cf. Dovidio *et al*. 2010, 5-8; Fiske 1998, often cited. For the fact that stereotypes and prejudice are two sides of the same coin, see Stangor 2009, 4: 'The relationship between stereotypes (cognition) and prejudice (affect) is not always strong, but is reliable. This is reasonable, because affect and cognition represent different components of the same underlying attitudes, and because stereotypes are in part rationalizations for our prejudices.' With references.

[73] Stangor 2009, 2, who gives the following example: 'Consider how we might react to people who have claimed that African Americans have the positive traits of being athletic and musical. The problem, in part, is that if we express positive stereotypes, it is assumed that we hold the negative ones, too.' Following Allport 1954 (generally acknowledged by social psychologists to be the most important study on stereotyping

psychology show that the accuracy of stereotypes is hard to pin down. They seem to have a 'kernel of truth' as it is difficult to imagine how they would be useful if they were completely untrue, although a few studies suggest that a relationship between perception and some kind of reality is not necessary.[74]

Stereotyping is functional. There are good reasons why people categorize individuals in groups and do not judge them as unique individuals. Firstly, stereotypes can be informative (when accurate). When a person is categorized as a shop employee (and not a customer), certain forms of social knowledge about this person are immediately processed. Secondly, stereotypes and prejudice are necessary to make sense of a complex world. They simplify and structure the complicated information flow. Sometimes there may simply not be enough time to get to know someone better or to gain a full understanding of the situation. Thirdly, stereotypes and prejudice are related to self-esteem. Thinking in negative terms about other groups makes people feel good about themselves. In general, people like to be part of relevant social groups, and they tend to think more positively about their own groups than about other ones.[75]

Apart from individual motivation, stereotyping also has a social or collective variant which is called 'intergroup stereotypes'. Research into this domain revolves around questions such as 'What kind of shared construction of social reality, mediated through social categorizations, leads to a social climate in which large masses of people feel that they are in long-term conflict with other masses?'[76] Intergroup stereotypes seem to function in three different situations: when explanation is needed for a complex event; when justification is needed for certain reactions against groups of others; when differentiation is needed in times of fading boundaries between groups of people.[77] The individual and collective functions of stereotyping seem to

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and prejudice) only negative stereotypes have been seen as pointing to prejudice. Studies on stereotype content (in contrast to stereotype processes) argue that stereotypes fall into two dimensions: competence and warmth. These studies show that positive stereotypes exist, but that they do suppose prejudice. See Fiske *et al.* 2002.

[74] Stangor 2009, 2 with reference to Swim 1994.

[75] Stangor 2000, 4, with multiple references.

[76] Tajfel 1979, 188, quoted by Tajfel and Forgas 1981.

[77] Tajfel and Forgas 1981 coin these three functions 'social causality', 'justification' and 'differentiation', respectively. An example of the first is blaming a certain group of people for the outburst of certain diseases such as the plague; an example of the

overlap in their simplification and structuring of the complex world. Intergroup stereotypes are, for instance, particularly created in 'times of crisis, such as wars, economic recessions and natural disasters. During these times, leaders use stereotypes of the enemy to reduce potential ambiguity, stifle dissent, and to provide a clear set of behavioral norms.'[78]

When applied to this study, research in the field of social psychology is first and foremost important because it shows that stereotyping is highly functional. This means that the relation between Rome and Egypt cannot be explained in simple terms of hatred or dislike – given as *the* reason for stereotypes in most studies on Roman perceptions of Egypt – based on the use of stereotypes in the literature. Seeing stereotyping as functional encourages us to look for the reasons (possible complex) why they are used. Secondly, the use of stereotypes is not only related to self-esteem, i.e. something that Othering implies. Stereotypes can also be informative or simplifying. Thirdly, the social function of stereotypes suggests questions of historical circumstances that urge the use of stereotypes.[79] In times of crisis, they can easily be explained as having a clear structuring function. The use of them outside times of crisis may need different explanations. In this respect, the Civil War between Octavian and Mark Antony is most obviously an example of crisis, but not all Roman literary stereotypes of Egypt appear in this period or refer to this event.

4.4. *Colonialism, post-colonialism, globalization*

The three previous sections explored theoretical angles that were all concerned with meta-communication and cognitive processes used to make sense of the world. In this section the debate on post-colonialism will be discussed as supplying a general background to the Roman discourse on Egypt as it deals with perceptions of the colonized Other. This section only serves to show the

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second is the European justification of their colonization of overseas territories in terms of bringing 'civilization' or 'human rights'. The third function seems to be the result of ethnocentrism, which is present in almost every culture.

[78] Stangor and Schaller 1996 also mention contrasts between individual and social functioning of stereotyping.

[79] Stangor 2000, 14-17. When stereotypes have achieved general acceptance, they receive permanence as they are hard to change or to erase. Their maintenance seems to be inherent in the use of stereotypes themselves. Stereotypes can be changed by intergroup contact, but only when the contacts between the two are positive.

observed overlaps and parallels, it is not meant to claim that the present study is a post-colonial one.

Post-colonialism is related to the dismantling of colonialism – in the sense of European overseas territories – in the twentieth century. It suggests (mistakenly) a linear progress, development from pre-colonialism to colonialism to post-colonialism. After former colonies received their independence in the decades after World War II, diverse strategies were undertaken to 'resist' the colonizers, such as emphasizing their own identity, ideology and even waging wars. However, the post-colonial period did not lead to independence: the ideological, political, economic and military influence of former colonizers, referred to as neo-colonization or imperialism, was still omnipresent. In this sense not all former colonies are 'post-colonial' at all.[80] Post-colonial theory is not 'anti-colonialism' as 'sympathy for the oppressed other, and pressure for decolonization, is as old as European decolonization itself', but part of 'an attempt to decolonize European thought and the forms of its history as well'.[81] Although this new way of approaching colonialism was not initiated by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) – he implemented French theory and transferred it to the English-speaking world – his work led to the academic field of colonial discourse analysis.[82] Concerned with the complicity between Western economic and political global power and

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[80] See McClintock 1992, 88, who argues strongly against the use of 'post-colonialism' (and of 'post-isms' in general): 'My misgivings, therefore, are not about the theoretical substance of 'post-colonial theory', much of which I greatly admire. Rather, I wish to question the orientation of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes, around a singular, monolithic term, organized around a binary axis of time and power, and which, in its premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power.' Cf. Williams and Chrisman 1994, 1-4.

[81] Young 1990, 119, does not mention post-colonialism in this context, but rather summarizes the general shift in thinking about colonialism in the years after World War II, in the years in which decolonization took place.

[82] See Young 1990, 119-126, for a discussion of important French thinking on decolonization, of which Fanon 1961 is the most important. Williams and Chrisman 1994, 5, in their introduction to the edited volume that collects important essays on colonial discourse and post-colonial theory, introduce Said's *Orientalism* in the following way: 'It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, single-handedly inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse, also referred to as colonial discourse theory or colonial discourse analysis.'

with Western representations of the Orient, Said analyzed 'Orientalism' which he defined as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'. Taking the French philosopher Michel Foucault's ideas about the relation between power and language (discourse analysis) as his point of departure, Said argued that Western power provided access to knowledge about other cultures, but that Western knowledge of these cultures resulted in certain representations of *the* Orient that in turn supported Western hegemony.[83]

By exploring the Western production of knowledge, post-colonial theory focuses on the colonized cultures themselves, their ideologies, histories and their 'resistance' against the colonizer. Although Roman colonialism is not the same as its modern European counterpart, the discourses that supported and enabled Roman power over the provinces are comparable to those in the time of European hegemony. Hence, post-colonial theory is also used to study Imperial processes in antiquity and especially to criticize the model of 'Romanization'. Romans not only ruled the provinces by imposing their will on their subordinates, they also collaborated with local élites, and the provincials did not slavishly follow Roman orders, but also engaged actively in building or protecting their own identity and social standing.[84] Colonial discourse analysis explores how the West created representations of the Orient, and what discursive strategies were used to support and sustain Western hegemony. In other words, it investigates how representations of the

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[83] Said 1978, 3, where he explains he explored Orientalism as a 'discourse' in the way Foucault has described it in *The archaeology of knowledge* (1973) and *Discipline and punish* (1975): 'My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism.' Said's concept of Orientalism is heavily debated within the scholarly field, see for instance: Young 1990 and Porter 1983 (critique on Said's methodology), cf. Sprinkler 1992; MacKenzie 1995; King 1999; Elmarsafy *et al.* 2013. For an impression of the debates raised by Said's academic work and his political statements, see Iskandar and Rustom 2010.

[84] See Millett, 1990a and 1990b. For a defense of the use of post-colonial theory to understand the Roman Empire, see Webster and Cooper 1996, 8-9.

Other were used to define the Self. Whereas *post-colonial theory* aims to deconstruct the binaries (Self versus Other, center versus periphery) that dominate the Western discourse on the Orient by placing the other/periphery in the center, *colonial discourse analysis* explains them in terms of identity building.[85] Said's *Orientalism* showed that the West did not think only in negative or denigrating terms about the Orient, it was also utterly fascinated by its un-Western exotic aspects. This observation led the social anthropologist Gerd Baumann to question the notion 'we are good, so they are bad': 'what is at stake in orientalism is not merely a binary opposition, but I argue, a binary opposition subject to reversal.'[86] In a process labeled as 'negative mirroring' or elsewhere 'negative self-definition', Western negative stereotypes of the Orient implicitly recall positive counterparts which contribute to Western self-definition. For instance, coining the Orient as irrational highlights Western rationality. However, this process of negative mirroring is dialectic as it also allows for self-reflection and self-criticism, since Western conceptions of the Orient as, for instance, 'spontaneous' lead to a characterization of the West as 'calculating', which does not always have a positive connotation (labeled 'positive reversal' by Baumann). Western self-criticism does not mean that feelings of superiority or ethnocentricity are not reflected in their 'Othering/Selfing' as the positive qualification of the Orient mostly implies something that the Orient still possesses and that the West does not have *anymore*.[87]

Modern scholarship on ancient literary texts has already shown that Greeks and Romans created the Other, or the 'barbarian', in order to define the Self in positive as well as negative terms. For instance, in *Inventing the barbarian* (1989), Edith Hall argued, by studying Greek tragedies, that fifth-century

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[85] Cf. McClintock 1992, 85, who notes while criticizing the term 'post-colonial': 'If "post-colonial" *theory* has sought to challenge the grand march of western historicism with its entourage of binaries (self-other, metropolis-colony, center-periphery, etc. the *term* "post-colonialism" nonetheless re-orients the globe once more around a single, binary opposition: colonial/post-colonial.'

[86] Baumann 2004, 19-20. In this work Baumann transforms Said's concept of Orientalism into one of the 'grammars of Us and Them.' The other two grammars that Baumann describes are 'segmentation' and 'compassment'. Cf. Versluys 2013, 244, for reference to Baumann's 'grammar of Orientalization' in his argumentation that Orientalism ('othering') and Orientalizing ('including' the Orient) cannot be seen as two opposing processes.

[87] Baumann 2004, 20.

Athens created an antipode, the barbarian, in order to cope with the geo-political Persian threat.[88] Particularly Greek and Roman ethnographical works show a very nuanced treatment of the 'barbarian'. I have already mentioned François Hartog's study of Herodotus' representation of the Scythians. His view that ethnographies can be read as reflecting on Greek identity in either a positive or a negative way has been taken up by other scholars such as by Gregory Murphy in his study on Pliny the Elder's ethnographies. The Roman ethnographical work *par excellence*, Tacitus' *Germania*, has also been interpreted in a similar way. Tacitus' portrayal of Germans not only functions to encourage contemporary Romans in a positive way, but also to put a finger on their low moral standards.[89] This present study overlaps with colonial discourse analysis by defining the Egyptian Other as a tool whose functions range from positively constructing Roman identity to criticizing that identity.

4.5. *Cultural memory*

Colonial discourse analysis looks specifically at discursive strategies, at *representations* of the Orient. In my discussion of the social function of stereotypes, it has already become clear that the Roman literary discourse on Egypt cannot be fully understood without examining the relation between the representation of Egypt and the reconstruction of the past, such as that of the Battle of Actium. Cultural (or 'collective' or 'social') memory studies investigate how groups of people *construct* their common past, deliberately or otherwise. Roman literature about an event such as Actium can be seen as a reflection, a representation and a (co-) construction of that particular historical event. Cultural memory studies generally hold that the construction of the past serves social reasons: remembering is a group process centered on a group identity. Having a shared past underpins the presence of a group to which people belong.[90]

Cultural memory studies cover a broad field of scholarly research, each with its own points of interest, that has developed substantially over the years.

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[88] See, Vasunia 2003, 89 and n. 6 for references to earlier works of Hellenists addressing the dichotomy between Greeks and barbarians.

[89] See p. 20, n. 62. Rives 1999.

[90] Although most research in memory studies has focused on intentional remembering and the construction of identity, cultural remembering can also be unintentional and implicit, see Welzer 2010.

Having started with the studies of Maurice Halbwachs on *mémoire collective* (1925, 1941, 1950), the concept of cultural memory garnered great interest in the late 1980s from almost every academic field, including history and literature. The study of cultural memory has been highly debated ever since its introduction. It has been criticized for being too multifarious to be a distinctive field of research, or being superfluous as other concepts than cultural memory could just as easily describe the same kind of processes.[91] Because memory studies are the domain of so many (interdisciplinary) academic fields, a 'conceptual foundation' of it did not exist until recently.[92] It goes beyond the scope of this study to present a state of the art of memory studies, and I will discuss here just two accepted adjustments to the original notion of 'group process' and 'group identity' because they pre-eminently help us to understand the Roman literary discourse on Egypt: firstly, a homogenous group and a homogenous group identity do not exist; and secondly, contemporary (eyewitness) groups remember an event differently than later generations.

In the first place, it seems evident that a society or any collective does not remember anything. Only the individual has the mental capacity to remember.[93] However, it also seems obvious that shared memory exists, such as national memory or group (family, friends, colleagues) memory or even transnational memory (for instance, the remembrance of the Holocaust). To bridge the gap between collective and individual memory, cultural memory studies emphasise the multiplicity of groups, memories and identities. The existence of multiple memories includes the existence of conflicting memories. In a particular context, an event may be remembered differently

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[91] An example of a critical paper on cultural memory is Gedi and Elam 1996.

[92] The edited volume of Erll and Nünning 2010, containing papers of 41 scholars active in various research fields, is 'the first step on the road towards a conceptual foundation for the kind of memory studies which assumes a decidedly cultural and social perspective'. Other overview studies giving an impression of the large scope of memory studies and its theoretical and methodological approaches include Olick *et al*. 2011; Olick and Robbins 1989; Radstone 2000; Erll 2005. Studies on antiquity using the concept of cultural memory include Galinksky 2014, an edited volume focusing on Roman monuments as well as literature as evidence for Roman perceptions of the past; Koning 2010, who studies the conceptualization of Hesiod in the Greek literary discourse; Alcock 2002 on ancient Greek monuments and landscapes.

[93] Cf. Alcock 2002, 15, with further references.

than in another environment. Furthermore, as the past is remembered to serve the present situation, present memories of groups and individuals may be adapted, new memories may be invented, and old memories may disappear. Susan Alcock put it as follows, 'What we are talking about [..] is a plurality of concurrent, possibly conflicting, and potentially competing memories available to peoples at any given time.'[94] Relying on literary evidence in order to get a sense of what was held to be important in Roman society, this study takes plurality as its point of departure and focuses on how and why a particular memory (of Egypt) is used in order to define the Self.

Secondly, a useful angle from which the relation between contemporary versions and later reflections on history can be approached and studied is the distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory as formulated by Jan Assmann.[95] According to Assmann, with reference to what Maurice Halbwachs defined as 'collective memory', the concept of *communicative memory* concerns the collective memory of people as reflected in everyday oral communication. It includes the information exchange between individuals such as that taking place in 'train rides, waiting rooms, or [at] the common table'.[96] Although the specific context in which these conversations take place imposes limits on what is said, beyond these regulations 'reigns a high degree of formlessness, willfulness, and disorganization'.[97] Communicative memory is bounded by time: by the lifespan of eyewitnesses of an event (approximately 80 years). After this period of communicative memory, the period of 'cultural memory' begins. This is a period in which 'a 'common version' of history is negotiated, which goes down into the collective cultural knowledge of the group whose interests are at stake'.[98] The difference between *communicative* memory and *cultural*

[94] Alcock 2002, 15.
[95] Assmann 1988, 9-19 (tr. 1995) and 2000, 1-44.
[96] Assmann 2000, 127.
[97] Assmann 2000, 127.
[98] Sluiter and Visser 2004, 240, who discuss the literary construction of history at the hand of Aeschylus' Persians. They present an expedient summary of Assmann's distinction of collective memory into communicative and cultural memory in which they point to the need to develop Assmann's model in more detail. They suggest looking at the 'qualitative differences: subjective versions versus authoritative ones, autonomous versions versus negotiated ones'. They show that attempts to come to one common version of history are already being made in the period of communicative

memory lies in cultural formation ('texts, rites, monuments') of the past.[99] In this period 'poets, teachers, prophets, historians, their knowledge deriving from sources as different as divine inspiration and hardwork in the library, are the bearers *par excellence* of cultural memory'.[100] Assmann's chronological division of the processes of collective memory into a period of communicative memory and a period of cultural memory is important for this study as it points to possible different Roman evaluations of historical events involving Egypt through time. For instance, after the lifespan of eyewitnesses, Actium may have been remembered differently, and this new memory may have led to a different representation of Egypt.[101]

5. THE SCOPE (AND LIMITATIONS) OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is part of a larger project that focuses on the impact of Egypt on *Rome* and mainland Italy. Considering that concepts of Egypt and their function may have been different outside the city of Rome and mainland Italy, in other regions of the Empire, it does not focus specifically on sources that cannot be related, or at least not directly, to the social, cultural and political situation in the city of Rome. For instance, this thesis does not give prominence to Plutarch's representation of Egypt in his treatise *De Iside et Osiride* because this work probably is likely to be understood in relation to the position of Greece under Roman rule. Consequently, his treatise may not have been about Roman self-representation, but about Greek identity.[102] Generally, other Greco-Roman works (works written in the Greek language in Roman times) seem to present a different conceptualization of Egypt than Roman works do. In these works Egypt is openly characterized as *the* cultural foundation of Greece, as many references can be found to Greek adaptations and developments of Egyptian institutions.[103] It seems unlikely that Egyptian

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memories. In the period of cultural memory, a new communicative memory of recent events may alter the common interpretation.

[99] Assmann 2000, 127.

[100] Sluiter and Visser 2004, 240.

[101] See Gurval 2001, for Augustan monuments of Actium and contemporary reactions on this battle in poems.

[102] Manolaraki 2013, 252.

[103] See Vasunia 2003, Moyer 2011and Gruen 2010.

culture had such a direct influence on Rome.[104] As we shall see, Rome did appropriate Egyptian institutions, but mostly via Greek and Hellenistic traditions.[105] Hence, it is only due to the place of interest (the city of Rome) – i.e. not based on the difference in Greek and Latin language *sec* – that the selected texts in this study are mainly Latin texts.

Thus, the selection of my central texts is based on an investigation of all kinds of references to Egypt in (Greco-)Roman literary sources from Cicero till Juvenal, i.e. the periods shortly before and after Augustus. The index on pp. 201-204 gives a good impression of the scope of the texts I have studied. To summarize the selection criteria as already demonstrated above: 1) narrative volume, passing references do mostly not provide enough information in terms of self-definition; 2) my aim to present an overall study, a focus on similar kind of sources (genre, period, subject, author) would have unbalanced this aim (and my aim to put the role of Augustan poetry in perspective) – comparable sources to my central texts are collected in the footnotes; 3) *Roman* self-representation, sources that cannot directly be related to the city of Rome and Roman identity would have destabilized my aim to study the impact of Egypt on Rome and mainland Italy.

This study, therefore, is not a collection of all passages in (Greco-) Roman literature that mention Egypt. Rather it intends to rethink the prevailing explanations that all have their deficiencies, as has been argued in this introduction. This thesis does not intend to convey that every conclusion drawn from the analyses of the selected texts can be universally applied to every single Roman literary reference to Egypt. On the contrary, it will firmly demonstrate the complexities of the Roman conceptualization of Egypt. It does so, however, by approaching them from one angle: that of identity making. This, then, is the first study that investigates whether and how Roman representations of Egypt were used for Roman self-representation – without preference for one particular period, author or subject.

Focusing on the intercultural relationship between Rome and Egypt, this study hopes to be useful not only for classicists, but also for historians and archaeologists interested in the role of foreign elements in Roman society. The Roman literary discourse on Egypt cannot be understood without placing it in

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[104] The Romans thought of the Greek past as fundamental to Rome's own society. They shared the same cultural background, or *humanitas*, see Woolf 1994.

[105] See pp. 193-196; 91-95; 177-182. Cf. Assmann 2004-2005, 28, on what he characterizes as 'Gestaffelte Tiefenzeit.

its historical and archaeological context. Although my analysis of the ancient sources is primarily a philological investigation, sometimes resulting in the meticulous analysis of just one line of text, considerable attention is paid to the historical and archaeological contexts.