Egypt and the Augustan Cultural Revolution : an interpretative archaeological overview

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1. INTRODUCTION

'When I administered my thirteenth consulate, the Senate and the Equites and the people of Rome all referred to me as Pater Patriae, and they voted that this same title be inscribed in the vestibule of my temples and at the Julian Senate house, and in the Augustan Forum under the chariot that had been placed there in my honour as decreed by the Senate. When I wrote this I was seventy-six years of age.'[6]

- Conclusion of the 'Res Gestae Divi Augusti', the account of the deeds and achievements of the Divine Augustus.

In 14 CE, these concluding words were soon to be marked by the death of their author. Two thousand years later, the relevance of Augustus' life is still tangible. The writing of this dissertation coincided with the second millennial anniversary of Augustus' death – and as such it demonstrates that Augustan scholarship still yields new insights today and continues to incite researchers to explore new and expanding perspectives. Two thousand years onwards, the complexity of the Augustan period remains a lynchpin for our understanding of Rome.

The city of Rome became a symbol of power, prosperity and stability throughout the reign of Augustus. Its visual transformation signalled the end of civil war as well as the beginning of a new era, as widely propagandized by Augustus' politics. As such, the period developed into a turning point for the Roman world and, as such, became the initiation of the Empire that was to come. The widespread influence and success of these Augustan transformations were not confined to the spheres of political and socio-demographical shifts only. Inseparably connected to these shifts, the distinct changes evident from the material culture and urban landscape of the city of Rome itself at this time could likewise be called revolutionary. There is an impressive body of scholarship that explores these influential and interconnected processes of Augustan power and self-representation in relation to the archaeological record of Rome. This research aims to present a new contribution to this continuous exploration of Augustan Rome, by focusing on what has remained a lacuna in studies on Augustan material culture so

[6] *Res Gestae Div. Aug.* 35. 'Tertium decimum consulatum cum gerebam, senatus et equester ordo populusque Romanus universus appellavit me patrem patriae, idque in vestibulo aedium mearum inscribendum et in curia Iulia et in foro Aug. sub quadrigis quae mihi ex s.c. positae sunt censuit. Cum scripsi haec annum agebam septuagensumum sextum.' (Edition: Sheid 2007. English translation by present author, 2013).

far: the study of Egypt as integral part of Augustan Rome. To this purpose, this dissertation provides for the first time a comprehensive overview of the remarkable diversity of manifestations of Egypt that were part of the material culture of the city of Rome during the time of Augustus, and based on these findings it investigates what new insights may be derived from these manifestations of Egypt in Rome as part of the wider Augustan cultural revolution.

This Introduction will first explore the relationship between Augustus and Egypt from a historical and political point of view, and thereby focus especially on how that relationship was closely interconnected with the development of Augustan material culture. The second paragraph explores the developments of scholarship on Augustan material culture so far, with particular focus on how the phenomenon of a 'cultural revolution' gained such an important status in Augustan studies. Following from this, in the third paragraph the specific topic of Egypt as part of Augustan material culture studies will be further explored, resulting finally in the outline of this dissertation's research questions.

1.1. Setting the scene: Augustus and Egypt

Rome's transition from Republic to Principate, as instigated and achieved by Augustus, can be placed in the period stretching from 30 BCE to 14 CE. One of the best known links between Augustan Rome and Egypt is, of course, the official annexation of Egypt as Roman province in 30 BCE, after Octavian's defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII at the battle of Actium. Egypt had already been a Roman protectorate since 198 BCE, at which time the Ptolemaic Dynasty sought an alliance with Rome –the rising power of the Mediterranean world– following the turbulent rule of Ptolemy V Epiphanes.[7] But only through its official status as Roman province did Egypt concretely come to exist 'for the benefit of Rome'[8], a change that would result in wide-stretching social, economic and cultural consequences.[9] During that time, however, decorative styles from the Ptolemaic Egyptian capital of Alexandria were already known to Roman material culture; soon after its founding in 331 BCE, the city of Alexandria had become a major consumer and producer of the so-called Hellenistic material culture repertoire that increasingly spread

[7] Shaw (I) 1995, 28-60; Shaw (II) 2003; 1-16, Lloyd 2003 (II), 388-413; Idem. 2011, 83-106; Vandorpe 2011, 292-308; Herklotz 2012, 11.
[8] Huzar 1988, 380.
[9] Versluys 2002, 3.

throughout the Mediterranean world.[10] Debates on the existence (or not) of a specific 'Alexandrian style', as part of this Hellenistic repertoire, have likewise influenced studies of its appearance in Roman material culture and continue to raise questions of meaning – in terms of identity, functionality and ethnicity.[11] Majorie Venit conclusively argues, in her study on cultural interplay in the funerary material culture of Alexandria, that no such categorisations can be made on an ethnic basis; it would be misleading to speak of either purely 'Greek' or strictly 'Egyptian' distinctions in Alexandrian material culture.[12] What we find instead is a mixture wherein categories were flexible, fluid even, and where a diversity of stylistic choices was available in order to accommodate a diversity of contexts.[13] Important herein is the awareness that Alexandria certainly played an important part in the development of a wider Hellenistic repertoire, on more levels than the often highlighted stylistic elements – but that does not imply that all so-called 'Alexandrian' elements within that Hellenistic repertoire must automatically be categorised and thus isolated as Alexandrian, or indeed should be considered to have been produced in Alexandria.[14] This has nonetheless long been the predominant approach, leading to misinterpretations of entirely Roman-made objects as Alexandrian imports, as will also be demonstrated in the overview of case studies presented in this dissertation.

One thing that stands out, however, in every aspect of this ongoing Alexandrian debate, is the flexibility of the process. A similar process seems to hold true for the incorporation of 'foreign' elements in Roman material culture. Tonio Hölscher was the first to explore the appearance of such elements as a typical Roman semantic system wherein themes and styles from different cultures could be used to evoke specific associations in certain Roman contexts, from late Republican times onwards; he regarded these styles and themes as taken from a repertoire of stylistic and thematic possibilities available to the

[10] Brown 1957, 84-88; Fraser 1972; Tybout 1985, 175; Iacopi 1997, 29; Venit 2002, 1-3, 10-11, 186; Zanker 2007, 38; Versluys 2010, 9-12.

[11] Especially in Roman wall painting similarities have been noted with paintings from Alexandrian funerary contexts and festival pavilions. See: Brown 1957, 93; Bastet & De Vos 1979, 18; Hanfmann 1984, 242-255; Ling 1991, 59; Venit 2002, 94, 118, 165, 186. Most recently, Rickert et. al 2014 has provided further insight into the long-standing Egyptian background of these Alexandrian funerary painting styles and decorative friezes (2014, vol.2), see in this volume especially: Dils 2014, 877-964.

[12] Venit 2002, 10.

[13] Versluys 2010, 11.

[14] For this argument, see already: Tybout 1985, 177-178. On the wider scale of Alexandrian contributions to the Hellenistic repertoire, see recently: Queyrel 2012, 237: 'Au premier abord, la notion d'alexandrinisme peut passer pour synonyme d'art á Alexandrie á l'époche hellénistique, mais il convenient de donner á ce substantive une extension plus large: l'alexandrinisme ne se limte pas aux arts figures; il s'entend aussi de la littérature et définit en fair une civilisation.'

Romans, by which they could express their own (Roman) concepts.[15] Egyptian styles and elements were part of this repertoire well before the annexation of Egypt as a Roman province.[16]

In contrast, the process whereby Augustus used Egyptian material culture, along with Greek, to physically change the urban landscape of Rome in accordance with the political and social changes that he continued to instigate following his victory at Actium, was a politically motivated process. Visual culture was a crucial component of Augustus' self-representation – his political programme was not merely expressed through material culture but actively shaped by and because of it: 'ein solches Programm erforderte eine neue Bildersprache'.[17] The flexibility of cultural interplay, such as explored in regard to Alexandria by Venit, is an important characteristic of the Augustan visual programme, too – different choices made to suit different contexts. This appears to be one of the core strengths of Augustus' 'visual language': its inherent capacity to accommodate a far-reaching diversity of contexts by means of an equally diverse repertoire of available forms, styles and concepts, while always working towards one purpose: the strengthening and constant confirmation of Augustus' *auctoritas*. This is also why Egypt could become an integral component of, and contributor to, the Augustan cultural revolution. As the overview in this dissertation will explore, this diversity and flexibility of both material forms and contexts was nowhere more evident than within the city of Rome itself. As pointed out by Galinsky, 'the Augustan age produced a culture that was remarkable for its creativity' and its manifestations were far from uniform, which is all the more reason to closely study them and the 'creative tensions that gave rise to them' as integral part of Augustan Rome.[18] Comparisons with the cultural golden age of Athens during the fifth century BCE are well-known in modern scholarship; both cities flourished in times of peace, and their resulting political and social stability were certainly conductive to this rise in creative manifestations.[19] In fact, Augustus' own deliberate references to the Athenian golden age, presented as parallel to the golden age that he was creating in Rome, is one of the main reasons why scholarship has focused predominantly on the incorporation of classical Greek art and architecture in the material

[15] Hölscher 2004, 125–26. (2004 English translation of: Hölscher 1987, *Römische Bildsprache als semantische System.*) The foreign elements that Hölscher focused on were exclusively Greek-Hellenistic; no different (non-Greek) cultures were explored or considered.

[16] Egyptian stylistic influences had already spread throughout the Hellenistic world, and as such they became known to the material culture repertoire of the Roman world as well; for example, in wall painting (see paragraphs 3.1.1.-3.1.4. and 3.51.-3.5.2. in this dissertation) and as part of the decoration of gems and jewellery (see paragraphs 3.7. and 3.10.).

[17] Zanker 1987, 13.

[18] Galinsky 1996, 4; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 406, 435.

[19] Zanker 1986, 171-177; Galinsky 1996, 332; Idem. 2012, 144.

culture of Augustan Rome: the rise of so-called 'Augustan classicism'.[20] One of Augustus' most fruitful tactics was his reference to the old in order to justify the new: he claimed to have reinstated the *res republica* and appealed to the ancient values of the Republic in order to validate –and perhaps even cloak– his new political system, which in truth was far removed from the essence of the Republic.[21] Especially Augustus' emphasis on his mythical Julian heritage and divine ancestry called for a visual expression in 'classical' style.[22]

But Augustus' appropriation of classical Greek culture was not only meant to give shape to an ancient past. His education as Roman aristocrat had revolved around the cosmopolitan character of Rome –a Rome that had been adapting, emulating, and revitalising culture from the Hellenistic world for over two centuries by then– and this synthesis would become a crucial basis for the cultural flourish under his Principate to come.[23] This repertoire of Hellenistic culture, which by then spanned the entire Mediterranean, was fully available to Augustus' changing Rome.[24] This accessibility also enabled Augustus to accommodate ancient myths and 'modern' cosmopolitan urban needs in equal measure – most famously by linking his own family's prominence directly to the myth of the Trojan Aeneas, who became the founding ancestor of Rome.[25]

Throughout his political career, Augustus presented himself as the heir of Caesar.[26] However, he took great care not to replicate Caesar's dictatorship in his victories. The political and military defeat of his enemies, above all of Mark Antony, enabled Octavian's success and allowed him to become 'Augustus' – but the core of the longevity and strength of that success lay in Augustus' acute understanding that the transformation of Rome could not be just a political or military one, but that its survival would depend

[20] Zanker 1986, 242; Galinsky 2012,148.
[21] Wallace-Hadrill 1993, 11-14; Idem. 2008, 239; Galinsky 1996, 6; Eder 2005, 13-32.
[22] Augustus referred back to the ancient mythical lineage of Aeneas' son Julus, claiming the deities Venus and Mars as his ancestors and placing himself in direct line with Romulus, the founder of Rome. See: Zanker 1986, 196-205; Galinsky 1996, 312-321.
[23] Galinsky 2012, 10.
[24] In regard to terminology, this dissertation will refer to 'Hellenistic' for any example of this wider Mediterranean repertoire of Hellenistic (material) culture, and will only use the term 'Greek' when referring to recognizable examples of classical Greek (material) culture, in most cases from the Athenian Classical Period, when these appear in Augustan material culture.
[25] This mythical link famously resulted in Augustus' commissioning of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Galinksy (1997; 124, 222, 247) furthermore interprets Augustus' self-reference to the trials and efforts of the Trojan hero Aeneas as a deliberate expression of his own *auctoritas* gained through trail and effort.
[26] Augustus was born Gaius Octavius of the Velitrae Octavii; his mother Atia was the daughter of Gaius Julius Caesar's sister. The revelation of Caesar's will, which officially appointed Octavius as Caesar's adopted son and heir, appears to have been unknown to Octavius until after Caesars's assassination on the Ides of March. This thesis will not dwell further on the debate regarding Augustus' personal biography and inheritance. For the ongoing discussion as well as new interpretations of the few known facts, see most comprehensively: Galinsky 1996, 43-49; Idem. 2012, 14.

on an entire cultural revolution as integral part of the change. Galinsky suggests that *auctoritas* was the crucial component in all this: the constant confirmation of Augustus' authority as an on-going and gradually increasing process, as opposed to the notion of *potestas*, whereby official power is claimed and maintained through a singular instant of conquest or inauguration.[27] While reality tends to be more complex than such a distinct dichotomy of *potestas* and *auctoritas* might suggest, it is clear that Augustus chose to represent himself as fellow citizen among the people of Rome, as *civilis princeps*, and that he did so for important political reasons.[28] In December of 44BCE, shortly after accepting his official appointment as Caesar's heir, Octavian took command of two legions at Alba Fucens. Appian tells of how the soldiers offered to take him to Rome to 'carry on the war and act as their leader' and how Octavian 'thanked them for the honour, but passed the matter on to the Senate instead'.[29] This was a crucial decision; Octavian seemed aware that without the *auctoritas* of the Senate he would be yet another usurper with an illegal private army.[30] It was by deliberately honouring the Senate's *auctoritas*, by ostentatiously reinstating the *res publica* after decades of civil war, that Octavian was able to develop his own *auctoritas*, which would soon come to surpass any other. This kind of authority was something that needed to be earned, constantly, in order to be maintained; Augustus' social reforms and the transformation of the city of Rome were all crucial parts of this on-going process. 'I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble'[31]: these famous words attributed to Augustus are not just a metaphor for the scattered fractions of the Republic ('bricks') that were to be transformed into the 'solid marble' of the *Pax Augusta*. The literal, physical transformation of the city was necessary in order to both express and earn *auctoritas*, in a continuous process of visual confirmation.

It is in this process that Egypt took up an important role. Octavian's military victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE and the following incorporation of Egypt as Roman province officially marked the end of the civil war. In 29 BCE Octavian returned to Rome for a triple triumph, celebrating his victories at Actium, Alexandria and Illyricum, and in the next year coins were minted that pictured

[27] Galinsky has written extensively on the important of *auctoritas* in regard to the Augustan Principate, aptly identifying it as 'a principal concept' (Galinsky 1996, 10) and as 'the substance on which real influence is based' (Idem. 1996, 15), linking it also with the traditional Roman notions of *fides* (trust and protection), *gravitas* (seriousness stemming from integrity) and *libertas* (a sense of 'political freedom' interdependent with the Senate's authority to act) – whereas the notion of *potestas* was the kind of power usually associated with a king (*rex*) or military *dux* or dictator, both of which were hateful concepts to Roman perception. Galinsky 1996, 10-20. See also: Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 239, 453.
[28] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 453.
[29] Appian 3.194.
[30] Galinsky 1996, 44.
[31] Cassius Dio 56.30.3; Suetonius *Div. Aug*. 28.

Octavian (by the name of Caesar) along with a crocodile and the inscription 'AEGVPTO CAPTA'(fig. 1).[32] As such, Egypt took central stage at the very beginning of the Augustan Principate.

Fig. 1. Silver denarius, 28 BCE. Obverse: head of Augustus. Reverse: Crocodile and inscription 'AEGVPTO CAPTA'. Minted in Italy (findspot Rome). Cat. Nr. AN633015001. Image copyright: the Trustees of the British Museum.

The Latin verb *capere* (*capta*), however, does not exclusively mean 'to capture' or 'to seize' in military sense; it also reads as 'to assume' and 'appropriate' or quite literally as 'to incorporate'.[33] Although we cannot tell with any certainty whether or not this may have been a deliberately implied message, it nonetheless reflects exactly what happened after Actium: Egypt had been conquered, but it did not become part of the Augustan cultural revolution as merely a conquered foreign entity or military trophy. In the same manner in which Egypt had geographically and politically been incorporated into the Roman Mediterranean domain, Egyptian forms, styles and concepts were incorporated into the repertoire of Augustus' visual language. Some of these forms, styles and concepts were already known and available to Rome as part of the wider Hellenistic repertoire – but it was from 31 BCE onwards that these elements became more frequent and evident, even deliberately singled out, as part of this cultural revolution that Augustus had set in motion.

[32] For further analysis of this type of coin, in terms of iconography and inscription, see paragraph 3.2.
[33] See for these multiple readings: 'capio' lemma in the Oxford Latin Dictionary (2007 ed.) 269-271. Apart from these inherent multiple readings of the verb, no direct (political) textual parallels seem currently known or have been noted in scholarship. The only comparison is the commemorative denarius and sestertius coins issued by Vespasian in 71 CE in celebration of his son Titus' conequest of Judea, with the inscription 'IVDAEA CAPTA'. See: Mattingly 1976, 185; Carradice 2007, 71.

It is interesting to note that Galinsky chose the term 'evolution' to describe this process instead.[34] While Augustus' visual language and the cultural change it caused might indeed be seen as a purposefully planned and therefore revolutionary process, there certainly seems to be some truth in the notion of an 'evolution' in what followed –or in fact 'evolved'– from these changes. Material culture that could be associated with Augustus, usually by resembling certain aspects of his visual programme throughout the city, quickly became popular among the Roman elite, and this phenomenon continued to evolve dynamically. Zanker has conclusively shown that these manifestations of private material culture were not mandated 'propaganda' (a laden term in Augustan scholarship), nor manufactured and produced as such, but should for the most part be seen as autonomous reactions to demands of the markets and tastes of that time and context.[35]

So, we could say, what began as propaganda on an official level, soon developed into other levels and as such gained other meanings as well. These kind of objects –varying from glass tableware to wall paintings to funerary altars– can often be interpreted in multiple ways: as marks of political loyalty to Augustus, or as something evoking a mainly aesthetic interest, or even as something rather more private, like a personal message or keep-sake.[36] References to Augustus' visual language became a kind of 'language of luxury' that 'spread to a broad segment of the urban population, flagging not so much elite status but the respectability of the *plebs media*'.[37] It were the middle-classes that perhaps flourished most under the *Pax Augusta;* the peace and stability of the Principate enabled exchange and trade throughout the Mediterranean on an unrivalled scale – and Roman Egypt was one of the most important contributors and suppliers.[38]

The following paragraphs will explore how scholarship up until now has dealt with the diverse nature of this connection between Egypt and Augustus – and whether or not the appearance of manifestations of Egypt have been approached as part of Augustuan material culture so far, especially in light of the fields' main focus on 'Augustan classicism' and the phenomenon of cultural revolution.

[34] Galinsky 1996, 3-9.
[35] Zanker 1986, 264-283, 290-293.
[36] Galinsky 2012, 149.
[37] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 454. See also: Veyne 2002.
[38] An interesting example is provided by Pliny the Elder, recounting how an antiquarian called Fenestella reports that the trade in pearls came into 'promiscuous and frequent use' after 'Augustus' triumph over Alexandria'. Plin. *Nat. Hist*. 9.123.

1.2. Unravelling a cultural revolution

The idea of a Roman revolution was first, and famously, penned by Ronald Syme. Set out to narrate the 'central epoch of the history of Rome', his book *The Roman Revolution* caused quite a stir in 1939 with his unconventional treatment of this crucial period. Based almost exclusively on Roman literary sources, such as the histories of Sallust, Tacitus and Pollio, Syme aimed to reconstruct the rise and establishment of Augustus' rule. He regarded the Augustan Principate as 'the consolidation of the revolutionary process' that marked the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Empire.[39] But at the same time Syme underlines the paradoxical nature of the term 'Roman Revolution', arguing that it was not a revolution of class struggles, as the term generally suggests, nor a challenge from the working classes to those holding power.[40] The Roman Republic was created because Roman kingship was overthrown; to a certain degree, one might say the Augustan revolution reinstated this kingship.[41] But as Syme already pointed out, when he chose to use the term, this Augustan revolution was by no means a strictly political one – it revolved around the traditional ruling families, the elite from the Roman cities and Rome in particular.[42] Rostovtzeff emphasised the importance of increased wealth and urbanisation in 2nd Century BCE Italy, resulting in a kind of bourgeoisie ruling elite.[43] He compared this new Roman bourgeoisie to the Russian elite of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.[44] Syme's approach may be linked to the political situation in Europe of the 1930s; the rise of facist dictatorships in Germany and Italy at the time may well appear as unspoken parallel to the rise of Augustus' Roman monarchy.[45] But despite this contemporary bias, as Greg Woolf has pointed out, Syme made one crucial step in realising that the gradual integration of the Roman periphery had a high impact on the development of Roman imperial power.[46] However, Syme's narrative on the transformations of state and society that marked Augustan

[39] Syme 1939, vii.
[40] Syme 1939, 452; Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 441.
[41] As argued by Bailyn 1967, who paralleled the Roman revolution to his study of the ideological origins of the eighteenth century American Revolution.
[42] Syme 1939, 7-8.
[43] Rostovtzeff 1957, 21.
[44] Rostovtzeff 1926; 1957. See also: Shaw 1992, 219-220.
[45] Syme emphasises that Augustus' reign, even though it 'brought manifold blessings to Rome', was the result of much bloodshed, fraud and intrigue 'based upon the seizure of power and distribution of property by a revolutionary leader'. (Syme 1939, 2). See also: Woolf 1990, 45; Wallace-Hardill 2008, 442.
[46] Woolf 1990, 44-58

Rome focuses entirely on the players on the political stage spanning from 60 BCE to 14 CE.[47] While such an approach can provide valuable insight into individuals and political fractions, 'it does not explain their material needs: it simply presupposes them.'[48] The next step is provided by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, who likewise focuses on cultural change in relation with the Augustan revolutionary process and hence developed the concept of the 'Roman cultural revolution'.[49] He stresses that the transformation of Italian towns provided the opportunity for the authority shift from the privildged nobility from the Roman Republic to a new type of elite, such as arose under Augustus – but while Syme remains focused on the nobility, Wallace-Hadrill stresses that the changing elite only reveals one part of the complete story. He takes a wider approach in studying the demographic span of Rome during the Augustan era, which not only expanded but also significantly changed in nature, mainly by ways of foreigners gaining Roman citizenship and taking up public roles in the Augustan citizen body. Prior to the Augustan era, he argues, Rome lagged behind in the Hellenisation processes that spread across the Mediterranean at the time; literary discourse seems to suggest that the elite of the Roman Republic had remained exclusive and hesitant towards any alien factors, whereas the Augustan elite came to embrace foreign elements that, hence, likewise began to spread throughout Rome' wider demographic and urban landscape.[50] This, then, would be where the true revolution lies: the transition had already set in with the Republican civil wars from the early-mid first century BCE onwards. The citizen body was being redefined as well as accumulating; by the time of Augustus's rule the middle classes had already gained increased public participation along with an eagerness to actively seek it out, and Augustus' political changes continued to enable them herein – which, in turn, strengthened Augustus' own rule. The Augustan era was therefore not so much the instigator of the Roman revolution, as that it was the *result* of a long-running revolutionary process instigated almost an entire century earlier. As such, the subsequent 'Augustan cultural revolution' was firmly rooted in what Syme initially described as the 'Roman Revolution' – while at the same time the Augustan era marked the start of such a distinctly new chapter for the Roman

[47] Syme's chosen methodology is that of 'prosopography': the study of groups, families and individuals. Syme 1939, viii. Cf. Galinsky 1996, 4.
[48] Momigliano 1940, 77. (From his review of Syme's *The Roman Revolution*.)
[49] Wallace-Hadrill has been developing the concept of a Roman 'cultural revolution' since 1997 (W-H 1997, 'Mutatio morum: the idea of a cultural revolution', in T. Habinek & A. Schiesaro, *The Roman Cultural Revolution*, 3-22), eventually resulting into his 2008 publication *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, 2008). The first actual use of the term 'Rome's cultural revolution' was in W.-H.'s review of Paul Zanker's *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (1987) in: JRS 79, 1989, 157-164. Greg Woolf has subsequently adopted the term 'cultural revolution' in relation to Roman Gaul, see: G. Woolf, 2001. 'The Roman cultural revolution in Gaul', in: S. Keay & N. Terrenato (eds.), *Italy and the West. Comparative issues in Romanization*, 173-186.
[50] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 443-445.

world, that it indeed initiated an entire new 'revolution' that came to transform Rome. A cultural revolution par excellence, resulting from and even enabled by the past decades, that launched a change Rome and enabled the continuation of that change. Crucially, Wallace-Hadrill points out that the material culture from this transitional period does not merely provide a backdrop for these political and social shifts, but was an integral part of the change: 'the political transformation of the Roman world is integrally connected to its cultural transformation.' [51] This change of perspective has been a vital step in what Karl Galinsky describes as the evolution of Augustan scholarship.[52]

1.3. Studying Egypt in Augustan Rome

The city of Rome had never before become as cosmopolitan as during the age of Augustus. Few examples demonstate this as clearly as the diversity of manifestations of Egypt that appeared throughout the material culture of Rome at this time. And yet, these manifestations of Egypt have remained so far underexplored or even altogether neglected in studies of Augustan material culture. This was recently also noted by Robin Osborne and Caroline Vout, in relation especially to Wallace-Hadrill's *Rome's Cultural Revolution*; because of his attention to the wider changes in Roman society, they state, it is all the more regrettable 'that Egypt barely features in the book [W.-H. 2008], except as "Egyptomania" or fashion.' [53] Any mention of Egypt in this important book indeed remains restricted to remarks on the 'outbreak of Egyptianising motifs' nuanced only by the observation that the influence of Alexandrian art in Rome already pre-dated the Augustan era.[54] In their review, Osborne and Vout effectively outline why this lack of attention for the rôle of Egypt especially in regard to Augustan culture is an issue that should be addressed:

'As Greek art was displayed in her temples and Egyptian obelisks in her squares, [Rome] began to look radically different, alien even — both from what she once was, and perhaps too, given the obelisks, from other Roman cities. It needed a special language to claim that this Rome was stable. Rome's cultural revolution does not just depend on Greece but on the Hellenistic East, and above all Egypt, and Egypt's own Greek culture, demanding that

[51] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, xix. Cf. Osborne & Vout 2010, 233.
[52] Galinsky 1996, 9.
[53] Osborne & Vout 2010, 238.
[54] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 357-358. Cf. Osborne & Vout 2010, 240.

the 'Hellenistic' in 'Greek culture' accommodate the Alexandrian.'[55]

The necessity for such a reappraisal of Egypt in Augustan Rome has been present study's aim from the onset. Wallace-Hadrill's book provides a striking example of this lacuna, through his approach of Egypt in Augustan Rome as a 'purely aesthetic phenomenon with religious underpinnings'.[56] He refers to what Pliny called 'waves of fashion' in Rome, which would often be instigated by military triumphs.[57] Therefore he views the appearance of Egyptian elements in the material culture of Augustan Rome as related either to the Isis-cult or as luxurious fashion fetish temporarily popular among the new Augustan elite and rising middle classes, without ever truly mingling with the wider repertoire of Roman material culture. As a result, Egyptian elements in Augustan Rome are simply not studied beyond this preliminary impression – and Egypt in Augustan Rome thus remains underexplored.

But this particular interpretation of Egypt in Rome does not stand alone. In contrast to Greek art and culture, which is widely regarded as deeply and irrevocably affecting Roman art and culture, Egypt has predominantly remained fixed, if not isolated, as 'the Other'.[58] As a result, any appearance of Egypt in Roman material culture is usually referred to under the nondescript collective of *aegyptiaca*. Two categories are generally considered: 'Egyptian' (original objects from pharaonic or Ptolemaic Egypt in the Nile valley and therefore considered authentic) and 'egyptianising' (objects created outside of the Nile valley to resemble Egyptian styles and therefore considered less authentic).[59] The term 'egyptomania', in similar vein, implies the interest of the Roman elite in 'exotica', under which especially these so-called 'egyptianising' objects are then categorised: imitations of or references to Egypt meant only to suit a

[55] Osborne & Vout 2010, 242. In relation to the arrival of obelisks in Rome they here refer to: C. Edwards, 2003. 'Incorporating the alien: the art of conquest', in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (eds), *Rome: the Cosmopolis*. And in relation to 'accommodating the Alexandrian' to the work of M. J. Versluys, including Versluys 2002, *Aegyptiaca Romana: Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt*, and H. Beck et al., 2005, *Ägypten, Griechenland, Rom: Abwehr und Berührung*.

[56] Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 357-358.

[57] Plin. Nat. Hist. 37.12.

[58] For recent scholarship that has identified this ongoing issue, see especially: Versluys 2002, 389-412; Vout 2003, 177-202; Idem. 2006, 177-202; Swetnam-Burland 2007, 113-136; Idem. 2012, 684-696; Davies 2011, 354; Versluys 2013.

[59] This approach keeps Egypt and Rome separated as two different entities, thus regarding any appearance of Egypt in Roman material culture in the vein of closed-off 'cultural containers': on display in Rome but never part of Rome. This distinct nation-state perspective underlying determinations such as 'egyptianising objects' and 'egyptomania' still dates from 19th century (colonial) archaeology and mainly reflects its own 19th century context by superimposing it upon the ancient Mediterranean. See also: Curran, 1996, 740; Versluys 2002, 399-401 & 439-441; Swetnam-Burland 2007, 113-136; Wight & Swetnam-Burland 2010, 843; Versluys 2013.

certain fashion trend in Rome.[60]

Over the past decade, especially the work of Miguel John Versluys has identified this lacuna and continues to argue for a change of perspective on Egypt in the Roman world, emphasising that although certain aspects of the influence of Egypt on Rome, such as the popularity of the Isis cult and the Alexandrian grain imports, have been extensively explored, 'no comprehensive overview exists'.[61] The appearance of Egyptian styles, symbols and motifs beyond Egypt itself, Versluys argues, is a well-known phenomenon throughout Antiquity from as early as the Minoan Bronze Age;[62] the appearance of Egypt in Rome, therefore, should be regarded as a continuation of an already diverse and Mediterranean-wide process that Rome shapes, emulates and re-contextualises to its own purpose, rather than an isolated phenomenon of 'exotica' or the strictly political conquest of an alien culture. Catherine Edwards and Greg Woolf name Egypt specifically as example to demonstrate how 'everywhere in the city [of Rome] elements of the conquered world had been appropriated and re-contextualised', how 'the city had absorbed the world'.[63] Nonetheless, the majority of scholarship has remained predominantly focused on isolated and often only briefly explored examples of Egypt in Rome,[64] whereby the actual archaeological record of Egypt as part of Roman material culture is generally approached as confirmation –or even just as illustration– of wider historical, political and cultural contexts. In response to this, Vout points out that the apparent criticism on Egypt as found in Roman literary sources contradicts the actual archaeological record, where Egyptian materials and motifs were clearly in demand and left a visual mark on the city, especially from Augustan times onwards: 'if we follow this line of argument to its logic

[60] For a recent overview and critique on 'Egyptomania', see Curran, 1996, 739-745. See also De Vos, who uses the term 'Egyptomania' but does not define its significance or implications: De Vos, 1980; 1983, 59-71. Cf. Versluys 2002, 439-441; Swetnam-Burland 2007, 113-136; Wight & Swetnam-Burland 2010, 843; Versluys 2013.

[61] Versluys 2002, 3. Since 2002 the exploration of the concept of Egypt in the Roman world has been extensively pursued by Versluys by means of international conferences and publications. This has often been in collaboration with Laurent Bricault from the University of Toulouse, whose focus on the material spread of the Isis cult in the Roman world often provided both a thorough background and an academic contrast, thus enhancing the debate on how to approach Egypt in Rome as a whole. See: Bricault & Versluys 2007. *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman world*. Leiden/Boston. And: Bricault & Versluys, 2010. *Isis on the Nile. Egyptian gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt.* Leiden/Boston; Versluys 2013, 'Egypt as part of the Roman *koine*: a study in mnemohistory', in: J.F. Quack, C. Witschel (eds.), *Religious flows in the Roman Empire* (Orientalische Religionen in der Antike). See also: Pitts & Versluys (eds.) 2014. *Globalisation and the Roman world: perspectives and opportunities*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

[62] Versluys 2010, 7-9, 12. Minoan and Phoenician cultures were probably the first to incorporate Egyptian elements into their material culture, see: Hölb 1989; Cline & Harris-Cline (eds.) 1998, 193-205, 198; Caubet et. al 2007, 204-215; Philips, 2008.

[63] Edwards & Woolf 2003, 2.

[64] For example, De Vos' focus on wall paintings (De Vos 1980; 1983, 59-71; 1991), Vout's focus on the pyramid of Cestius (Vout 2003, 177-202), Swetnam-Burland's focus on glass vessels and obelisks/hieroglyphs (Swetnam-Burland 2010, 839-846; Idem. 2010, 135-153), and the selection of very brief and sporadic case studies by Söldner (Söldner 2000, 383-393) and Davis (Davies 2011, 354-370).

end, we realize that influences as *au courant* and exotic as those of Egypt must have pervaded all areas of Roman culture.'[65] In similar vein, Penelope Davies outlines how 'Egyptian and egyptianizing art' needs to be explored with more scrutiny, seeing that 'such objects harmonized fluently with contemporary Roman forms, fitted easily into Roman patterns of behaviour' and thus actively shaped Roman art.[66]

While such calls for changing perspectives on Egypt as part of Rome have become increasingly frequent, these approaches have not yet been executed concretely in regard to the changes that the Augustan period entailed – nor have they, comprehensively, made their way into the bulk of studies on Augustan classicism and visual language, which remain predominantly fixed on Greek-Hellenistic influences.[67] The importance of especially the Augustan period should be evident, as pointed out above: this is when all the political, demographical and cultural shifts instigated by the Roman civil wars have come together and have proven to be successful. This is when the result of the by now accumulated and altered Roman society has set off the crucially new era or imperialism; when the Augustan cultural revolution is enabled to take shape. This is *exactly* the time when Egyptian elements could have become integral parts of the expanding, accumulating and changing face of Roman society and the material culture that reflected this, interacted with it, and in many ways held its own agency within it. Moreover, the political significance of Egypt for Augustus would rather have worked as accelerator in this process, plainly put, through making Egypt especially visible in Rome even beyond the appearance of Egyptian elements as part of the wider Hellenisation that was already becoming an integral part of Rome since the civil wars. The result would have been a direct contrast, in fact, to the temporary 'wave of fashion' that Wallace-Hadrill and most scholars today have deemed Egypt in Augustan Rome to be.

1.4. Research questions

In response to the issues outlined above, this dissertation sets out to present an interpretative overview of manifestations of Egypt in Augustan Rome. The main question herein is whether or not this overview

[65] Vout 2003, 183. She here provides the famous example of Cicero publically criticizing Egypt as a country, but meanwhile stating his interest in Egyptian culture to his friend Atticus, even saying how much he wishes to visit Egypt. See: Cic. *Rab. Post.* 12.35 and *Nat. D.* 1.16.43, as opposed to *Att.* 2.5.1. See: Leemreize 2014, 56-82.
[66] Davies 2011, 354, 366-367.
[67] This lacuna is evident, as mentioned above, from Wallace-Hadrill's exclusive focus on Hellenistic influences in his treatment of Rome's cultural revolution (W.-H. 2008). The same focus has prevailed throughout the important studies on Augustan culture of Erika Simon (1986), Tonio Hölscher (1987) and Paul Zanker (1987), and beyond. Cf. Elsner 1996, 32-53; Galinsky 1997; Pensabene 1997, 149-192; Gazda 2002, 2-15; Perry 2002, 153-163; Idem. 2005; Marvin 2008.

will demonstrate that Egypt became an integral part of Augustan material culture, and not simply an isolated category of exotism such as it has been predominantly interpretated to be until now. This is approached through an archaeological reappraisal of already known Egyptian materials, themes and styles that can be found in the material culture from the city of Rome during the late first century BCE until the early first century CE, as well as through the interpretation of newly discovered artifacts and/or monuments that can be dated to Rome during this period. The objects explored range across a diversity of both public and private contexts. The archaeological record, which includes the presentation and interpretation of never before published finds, forms the research's core: the objects themselves are studied, within their physical contexts where available, and the results of these analyses then become sources of insight into the historical and cultural developments of Augustan Rome. This approach regards material culture as an active part of political and social change, and thus as a crucial record of it, rather than only a confirmation or illustration of cultural history.

The overview presented in this dissertation sets out to explore the diversity of manifestations of Egypt by way of many different objects and contexts throughout Augustan Rome. It will be looked at whether or not there is any evidence from the archaeological record to suggest that these objects would have functioned and/or evolved as part of Augustan material culture rather than as isolated exception, such as current scholarship still maintains.[68] Does the archaeological record show that 'Egypt', in all diversity of its manifestations, was an integral part of the material culture repertoire of Augustan Rome?

The Roman Mediterranean came to flourish under Augustus' Principate, even more so than it already did, as 'a multicultural world par excellence' wherein 'cultural contact blurred boundaries, promoted linguistic fluidity and jumbled ethnic categories'.[69] The superimposed isolation of any single culture that was part of this Mediterranean –especially one as influential and diverse as Egypt– contradicts any understanding we might gain of this complex, cosmopolitan world. As Osborne and Vout rightly point out: 'cultural contact [between Rome and] North Africa needs separating out, but separating out as one strand interwoven with the others.'[70] Such is the aim of this research: to focus on the diversity of Egyptian forms, styles and concepts that were manifest as part of Augustan Rome, but not by isolating them – by studying them as interwoven with the whole repertoire of Augustan material culture.

[68] Augustus' victory at Actium remains one of the most prominently highlighted and isolated examples, in this respect. See: Galinsky 1997, 177ff; Zanker 1987, 24; 79-80; Gurval 1998, 4-17.
[69] Gruen 2011, 1.
[70] Osborne & Vout 2010, 242.

In order to do so, first and foremost the available archaeological record that may be dated to the city of Rome between 30 BCE – 14 CE needs to be closely explored. These physical objects themselves, and the physical contexts wherein they were produced, exchanged and/or kept (wherever such data can be reconstructed), are the only strictly empirical remains of Augustan Rome that was. Why were certain manifestations of Egyptian chosen for specific contexts – and how did they become part of them? Can we only speak of deliberate and superimposed functionality, such as Hölscher proposed, or was there also a more fluid 'evolution' that spread throughout the city's material culture, as a result of Augustus' deliberately instigated propaganda, as proposed by Zanker and Galinsky? What does all this reveal about the different rôles that these Egyptian forms, styles and themes played (whether imported, imitated or emulated) within the material culture repertoire of Augustan Rome?

These questions need to be asked if we wish to approach a true understanding of Egypt's part in the Augustan cultural revolution, and investigate whether this was indeed as diverse and integral as individual case studies are increasingly suggesting. The isolation of all things Egyptian in Roman studies has kept this from happening. Contrary to isolation, we need overview. And in order to approach the wider scope of Egypt in Augustan Rome, we first need to turn to the close study of actual objects and their physical contexts.[71] This dissertation offers such an overview of manifestations of Egypt in Augustan material culture, presented and interpreted in the eleven paragraphs that form the third Chapter. Prior to this, the second Chapter reflects upon the theoretical framework underlying the approach this research takes in studying the variety of objects and contexts presented in the overview. Following from this theoretical exploration, the core methodology of this research is outlined in the second Chapter's concluding paragraph, as such forming the basis for the interpretative overview presented in the third chapter. Finally, the fourth Chapter provides the overall conclusion, wherein the research questions initially raised here will be revisited.

1.5. Research scope and limitations

By focusing on the archaeological record of Egypt in Augustan Rome, this study is by definition prone to certain limitations that should be addressed. The exclusion of a comparison between Egyptian and Greek

[71] The development of this approach will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2, wherein also is explained how other sources (e.g. literary discourse) were treated in relation to the objects and contexts under study.

elements in Augustan Rome has been a necessary choice to enable the compilation of the overview at the core of this dissertation –but of course this should not be an intellectual exclusion. This study, in terms of its scope, should therefore be regarded as a necessary first step that will enable and call for a comprehensive comparison of this kind, as a result. Likewise, it could be suggested that the choice for Egypt in Augustan Rome may restricit a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse appearance of Egypt in Roman material culture. However, the Augustan period, as already explored above, constituted a unique turning point for the interaction between Egypt and Rome and, as such, offers a rich and so far underexplored context that can greatly enhance the stepping stone for continuing research that this new overview aims to become.

When arguing against a prevailing interpretation, such as that of Egypt as 'exotic Other' in Rome, there is always a danger of going too far into the opposite direction. This is one of the main reasons why a focus on the archaeological record was chosen for this study, and not a predetermined theoretical perspective that would, prior to analysis, be likely to exclude interpretations of 'exoticism' instead. Rather than focusing on exclusion and/or compartmentalisation, this study aims to investigate what the possible functions and meanings of Egypt in Augustan material culture were –and excoticism may prove to be one of those meanings, perhaps alongside many others, and can therefore neither be excluded nor presupposed as category from the start. This change of perspective lies at the core of this new overview. It is not intended as a contrast to existing scholarship, but rather as a new addition and expansion of our understanding of the workings of Aug material culture and the role of Egypt within it.

The choice for a chronological approach is also related to this. One of the main limitations herein is the fact that dating is not always exact, or even possible, and it can be argued that the seemingly haphazard mixture of diverse types of material culture may be confusing rather than enlightening. But this approach was chosen because this presented the only way to avoid presupposed categorisations, such as public/private divisions, predetermined object genres or style categories, prior to analysis. Only after the compilation and subsqeunt review of this dissertation's overview might it be possible to derive new structures or disntinctions, to better demonstrate the characteristics, functions, and meanings of Egypt in Augustan Rome – as only then these characteristics, functions, and meanings will have become apparent. The concluding chapter of this dissertation will, therefore, return to this point.

Another inherent limitation is the fact that, by choosing not to adhere to the prevailing terminology of 'Egyptian' as opposed to 'egyptianising', the complexity of this issue is in danger of being downplayed

and appearing too simplified. Again, while aware of this limitation, this choice was necessary to avoid the ethnic/cultural implications that have become so entangled with these terms and categorisations, and to be able to really focus on the data from the archaeological record instead. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that the determination of 'egyptianising' or 'Egyptian' categories are by no means homogenous, either, but have so far led to perhaps even more discrepancy between scholarly interpretations of 'Egypt' than a lack a categorisation might have done; instead, these compartmentalisations rely heavily on what one might define as certain 'levels of perceived Egyptianess', such as those are observed in different ways by different scholars.[72] Because of this, these categorisations reflect certain features and iconographical 'types' that different scholars associate with 'Egyptianess' – and, as such, they are mainly representative of certain scholars' academic perspectives than of the archaeological record itself. Of course, every researcher is by definition subjected to their own academic contexts and perspectives; but the awareness of this issue is an important step. This study therefore attempts not to presuppose any such perspectives and/or categorisations prior to its overview and data analysis. For this reason the danger of downplaying the complexity of this terminological issue was a necessary limitation.

These choices were considered towards the aim to enable a better undertstanding and more comprehensive interpretation of the archaeological record of Egypt in Augustan Rome, and as such to provide a new stepping stone for a field that continues to grow and expand in terms of its complexity, scope, and perspective.

[72] This point is extensively explored and reappraised in the forthcoming study of Sander Müskens, also as part of the VIDI research project 'Cultural innovation in a globalising society: Egypt in the Roman world.' (Forthcoming, 2015).