A Song of Arms and of the Woman: Confronting Cleopatra in the Augustan Era through the Carmen de Bello Actiaco

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A Song of Arms and of the Woman: 
Confronting Cleopatra in the Augustan Era through the Carmen de Bello Actiaco

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for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies from
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by

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Introduction

Papyrus Herculanensis 817, the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco* or *Carmen de Bello Aegyptiaco,*¹ came to light during the mid-18th century excavations of Herculaneum’s Villa of the Papyri. The pyroclastic phase of the 79 CE eruption of Vesuvius had carbonized and buried this text along with nearly 1800 other papyri, mainly Greek philosophy texts. Extremely high temperatures left the scrolls resembling lumps of charcoal. In fact, early excavators threw away many of these texts before realizing what they were. 817 is one of the only Latin texts unearthed so far,² and only eight columns and several *fragmenta minora* survive (totaling about 60 lines). Scholars surmise that the epic would have recounted events from the battle of Actium in 31 BCE through the double suicide of Antony and Cleopatra in the following year.³ The papyrus was unrolled in 1805 to reveal handwriting in the Latin rustic capital style, complete with punctuation and metrical signs.⁴ Little is known about the author of the work, its date, or its relationship to other literature of the era.

¹ Hornblower 2012, 281.
² For the debate on the nature and layout of the Villa dei Papiri library, see Gigante 1995.
⁴ Sider 2005, 66.
Copy of line drawing of text of P.Herc.817 made shortly after its discovery. Garuti 1958.
The villa in which it was found may at one time have belonged to Lucius Calpernius Piso Caesoninus, a consul and father-in-law of Caesar. Piso was likely a patron of Philodemus, who was widely known in the Roman world at the time. This would explain the heavy focus on Greek-language Epicurean philosophy, which makes Latin epic unique within the library collection. While some of the texts from the villa have offered indications of authorship and dating, the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco* remains a mystery. The *termini post-* and *anti-* *quem* are the death of Cleopatra ca. 30 BCE and the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE. The exact dating within this span of more than a century remains widely contested.

The *Carmen*’s authorship is even less certain than its dating. Rabirius is a popular candidate, but there is not enough evidence to attribute the *Carmen* to him with any degree of certainty. Zecchini prefers to date the epic to the Flavian era, though there is little to substantiate this later dating, and he points to no individual author during this period. At present, the state of the papyrus and the length of the text preclude definitive answers to the questions of dating and authorship. It is, however, possible address the ambiguity of this context through the epic, which

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5 For more on the background of the villa and its contents, see Sider 2005.
6 Hornblower 2012, 270; Sider 2005, 5-6. Piso lived in the early-mid first century BCE, so he would not have owned the villa in its final phase.
7 Hornblower 2012, 1132.
8 For a discussion of the prevailing theories about the date of the *Carmen*, see Zecchini 1987, 12-13.
9 Gaius Rabirius was a Roman poet and contemporary of Virgil. His authorship, if it could be confirmed, would ground the *Carmen* firmly in the Augustan era.
11 Zecchini describes the “tone [of the *Carmen*] hostile to Augustus” (*il tono ostile ad Augusto*) as supporting a date further along in the imperial period, *Ibid.*, 80. However, an Augustan date does not necessarily mean that the work was an Augustan commission, as with the *Aeneid*. 
lends itself to an Augustan reading in its subject matter, portrayal of Antony, and treatment of Cleopatra and Egypt.

Though the Carmen is subject to a great deal of interest in the field of papyrology, it has largely been ignored by literary scholarship, especially philology. The goal of this project is to address the importance of the Carmen by contextualizing it within the cultural and historical context of the late first century BCE and the aftermath of the Roman conquest of Egypt.

**Setting the Scene: Rome and Egypt**

The surviving fragments of the Carmen focus on one of the most critical years in Rome’s relationship with Egypt, from the battle of Actium in 31 BCE through the double suicide of Antony and Cleopatra ca. 30 BCE. This section will provide context for these events as well as a brief discussion of the complex relationship between the two regions involved.

Alexandria, dedicated ca. 331 BCE by the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great on the site of the Egyptian city Rhakotis, served as the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt. The city’s cultural history and enduring importance in the Mediterranean make it an ideal context for an examination of the cultural influences in Egypt leading up to Octavian’s involvement in the region. Funerary monuments from the city reveal a combination of Greek cultural practices fused with elements of local Egyptian religion. On the periphery of both the Greek and Egyptian worlds, Alexandria was at

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12 Even Sider gives only brief mention of this text in his book on the Villa dei Papiri, and he does not hold the Latin in high regard (2005, 66-7).
the center of the fusion between these two cultures. Alexander set it up as a true Hellenic city, with all the trappings of Greek governmental structure (demos, ecclesia, boule, etc.) and city plan (a Hippodamian grid with an agora, palaestras, theaters, etc.). However, the city’s proximity to the interior invited cultural mixing, which only increased over time until the city came to be considered part of Egypt and, eventual, its capital. The Ptolemies, who ruled Egypt from Alexandria, were of Hellenic origins, but they relied on traditional Egyptian precedents as legitimization strategies. The democratic system set up by Alexander came to cooperate with the Egyptian pharaonic system, and Egyptian gods like Isis and Osiris were worshipped alongside the Greek pantheon. These interactions produced a metropolitan city steeped in diverse cultural traditions.

This fusion made Egypt what cultural critic Mary Louise Pratt might call a “contact zone” a transcultural space where Hellenism met an established Egyptian presence. The resulting interaction impacted all manner of cultural products from the region, including material culture and literature. Tombs from this liminal space

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14 Venit, 2002. 1-2. Venit describes Alexandria as “a city with one foot in the Mediterranean and the other planted firmly on Egyptian soil.”
15 Ibid., 7-9.
16 Alexandria was originally a Hellenistic center and a largely international city, physically removed and politically independent from the actual territory of Egypt. As the Ptolemaic capital, it slowly became integrated with the rest of the kingdom. For more on the foundation of Ptolemaic Egypt, see CAH 101-174.
17 Stephens describes the blending of Hellenic models with local elements in Hellenistic monarchies as producing “new experiments and kingship” (2003, 32).
18 For more on the mixing of Egyptian and Greek tradition in the Hellenistic period, see Riggs 2012, 419-473 and Stephens 2003.
19 Pratt describes these zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 1992, 4)
demonstrate a complexity unmatched by either purely Hellenistic burials or customary Egyptian ones. Funerary hypogea from in and around Alexandria dating between the late third century BCE and the Roman conquest in the late first century BCE tend to feature the typical Greek kline chamber and loculi combined with spaces and decorative elements designed to accommodate Egyptian burial and commemoration practices. Motifs such as broken lintels, typical of Egyptian tomb architecture, became increasingly popular in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, both in Alexandria and in neighboring areas. Such decorations did not appear only on the graves of people of Egyptian descent, just as Greek elements were not exclusive to the burials of Greek people. The proliferation of tombs and the strong correlation between tomb architecture and the cultures of the living (religion, belief in the afterlife, artistic styles, etc.) make burials a valuable map of the cultures coming into contact with each other in Egypt, especially during the Hellenistic and Ptolemaic periods. A similar phenomenon impacted the literature of Hellenistic Egypt, resulting in texts from authors such as Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius marked by syncretism, new models of kingship, and a ‘double vision’ of the Egyptian world.

Rome entered this “contact zone” as a third major cultural entity as early as the fourth century BCE, when it began to have diplomatic relations with Alexandria and later the Ptolemies. By the second century, as Roman alliance with Alexandria grew more solid, the influence of the Ptolemaic kingdom abroad began to decline.

21 Ibid., 15, 94-95
22 Stephens 2003, 8-73.
24 Ibid., 15-19.
When Cleopatra VII inherited the Egyptian throne ca. 51 BCE, she was a queen of Macedonian descent in a Hellenistic capital seeking to balance the interests of her Egyptian people with pressure from Rome. She also faced internal strife in the form of economic instability and competition from her brother and co-ruler, Ptolemy XIII.\footnote{Ibid., 23-24; Riggs 2012, 12. For ancient sources on Cleopatra’s ascendance to the throne, see Caes. \textit{B Civ.} III.108, \textit{B Alex} XXXIII.1; Cass. Dio XLII.35.4.}

In 48 BCE, as Pompey fled Julius Caesar after the battle of Pharsalus, Cleopatra and Ptolemy faced off at Alexandria. Pompey was killed in Egypt\footnote{For a detailed account of the Roman version of the flight and death of Pompey, see Caes. \textit{B Civ.} III.102-104, or the beginning of the \textit{B Alex}.} by Ptolemaic forces, and Caesar supported Cleopatra’s bid for the throne.\footnote{Walker and Higgs 2001, 23-24} This moment, pivotal for both sides, represents the first major point of entanglement of Roman and Egyptian history. Increased contact with Rome in no way diminished Hellenic influences in Egyptian culture, and if anything may have increased the general cultural diversity and mixing.\footnote{“For it is in the period of Roman political domination of Egypt that Alexandria’s monumental tombs show the strongest interaction of Hellenic and Egyptian culture, signaling a new religious syncretism and producing a new aesthetic” (Venit 2002, 95).} Egypt also continued to play a role in Roman politics after Julius Caesar’s death, when the second triumvirate used it as a pawn in their power struggle. It became a point of contention between Octavian and Marc Antony, especially when Antony aligned himself with Cleopatra (personally and politically) and invited her on his Eastern campaigns in Octavia’s stead.\footnote{Eck 2007, 9-33. For imagery and the rivalry between Antony and Octavian, see Zanker 1990, 33-77.} This, along with alleged evidence\footnote{For the controversy surrounding Antony’s will, see Johnson 1978. For the story in the ancient sources, see Suet.\textit{Aug.} XVII.2 and Plut.\textit{Ant.} LVIII.} from Antony’s will that granted lands and titles to Cleopatra...
and her children, gave Octavian the excuse he needed to vilify him publicly. Soon
tensions escalated to the point of war, and Octavian strategized and delayed until he
could meet Antony and Cleopatra in a naval battle near the Gulf of Actium in
September of 31 BCE. Here Octavian and Agrippa’s forces prevailed, and Cleopatra
retreated with her Egyptian forces to Alexandria, which Octavian would take within a
year, confirming his victory and officially annexing Aegyptus as a Roman province.

The Carmen de Bello Actiaco (or Aegyptiaco), as its name suggests, deals with
events surrounding the decisive battle at Actium and its aftermath.

Thus, the Carmen, despite the ambiguities surrounding its dating and
authorship, is situated in the rich Roman discourse on Egypt that began with its
conquest as a province and remained vibrant through the first century CE. Though
the period in question predates ‘modern Orientalism’ by nearly two millennia, many
aspects of the Rome-Egypt relationship fit within the framework of Said’s definition
of Orientalism, and it is useful to consider this definition in reading the Carmen:

“Orientalism is...a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic,
scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an
elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of
two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a wholes series of
“interests” which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological
reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological
description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is rather than expresses a
certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate,
even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel)

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31 Eck 2007, 42-44.
32 Said considers this type of Orientalism to be primarily a product of the post-
enlightenment (i.e. late 18th-early 19th century) phenomenon. Said 1979, 3-4.
33 In this paper, I employ Orientalism as a loose theory of large-scale cultural
interactions. In truth, the spread of knowledge, people, goods, and customs between
the two places was much more complicated and had identifiable influences on
individual texts, monuments, and events, which I do not have space to include here.
The Romans, too, used geography to explain and delineate cultural differences between Egypt and Italy, both real and imagined. Though I will replace the (problematic) labels ‘Western’ and ‘Oriental’ with ‘Rome’ and ‘Egypt’ (or, rather ‘Rome’s imagination of Egypt’), there is much in Said’s discussion of the question of Orientalism that is useful in framing Rome’s involvement with Egypt from the time of Octavian onward, and which proves especially profitable for thinking about the historical issues framed in the Carmen. In many ways, this relationship is comparable to colonialism in the modern era, in that Rome’s interests in Egypt came from a place of hegemony, creating an unbalanced equation of power. Thus, while the influence of each culture upon the other was significant, Egypt did not have interests in and power over Rome in the same way that Rome did in and over Egypt.

By the first century BCE, Rome was already accustomed to taking advantage of Egypt’s resources of grain, oil, and papyrus. This economic exploitation only became easier once Octavian made Aegyptus an official Roman territory and began to import its art and select aspects of its culture, decontextualized and repackaged to be more palatable to the Roman public. This is how obelisks,34 pyramids, and certain Egyptian religious cults became Roman imports. Egypt swiftly became the fashionable, exotic ‘other’ of the Augustan period, and Rome was able to select the aspects of Egyptian art and culture she wished to exploit while discarding the rest. This carefully curated imagination of Egypt became more actual than any true knowledge of the place and its culture.

34 For a discussion of obelisks, see chapter 2 of this paper, pages 35-7.
The Romans did not seek to understand Egyptian culture, but rather to categorize and describe it in accordance with their own methods of thought. One example of this almost scientific curiosity is the Roman fascination with the source of the Nile. Authors from Herodotus to Lucan wrote about this Egyptian river, which acquired a nearly mythical allure in Roman eyes. The Greek and Roman ‘geographies’ of Egypt combined cartography, navigation, history, and often philosophy in their examination of the region’s layout.

The *Carmen de Bello Actiaco*, written from the Roman perspective, reinforces and manipulates this power dynamic to Rome’s (and specifically Octavian’s) own benefit. Written in Latin and favoring Italic forces over Cleopatra and Egypt, the *Carmen* was not intended for an Egyptian or even an international audience. Much like Virgil’s *Aeneid*, it plays into the narrative of *Romanitas* and strength Augustus sought to make himself a part of. It is a song of triumph for Rome and for Octavian. The readers of such a text, who would certainly have been among Rome’s educated elite, would have had some familiarity with the works of authors and political figures such as Herodotus, Julius Caesar and perhaps even Vitruvius (depending on the dating of the *Carmen*), all of whom treated Egypt with a similar, culturally detached point of view. The author of the *Carmen* could therefore draw on this tradition of an Egypt portrayed as foreign, exotic, and generally non-Roman entity.

This pseudo-Orientalizing portrayal of Egypt fit nicely into Octavian’s political strategy. A policy of expansionism during the late Republic and leading into the principate and the accompanying incorporation of new and increasingly foreign lands

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35 See Merrills 2017 for a detailed analysis of Roman writing on the Nile.
meant a necessary shift in the conception of what it meant to be Roman. Octavian faced the challenge of incorporating Egypt into the Roman sphere of influence while simultaneously maintaining a certain level of disparity between Egyptians and full Roman citizens. He used the narrative of Egypt as 'Other' to dissociate Marc Antony from Rome, distinguishing his *bellum externum* against Egypt from his predecessor's *bellum civile*. The distinction between Italic and non-Roman features prominently in the *Carmen* and promotes a narrative of war fought on foreign soil against a foreign enemy. For example, the author specifically mentions foreign lands (*terrasque remotas*, 10.7) in conjunction with East Asian and Indain peoples (*Sere*[s] *et Indi*, 10.8), while being equally careful to identify the Roman army as such (*Laurentibus armis*, 6.8; *Italus…hostis*, I.8). Octavian, too, is not just the commander but *Latin Caesar* (*Latius…Caesar*, II.5). The conquering of Alexandria is not merely victory but Roman victory personified (*victrix…Romana*, II.9-10). Even a cursory reading of the fragments of the *Carmen* reveals a proliferation of such place-specific adjectives, which emphasize the dichotomy of this Roman-versus-foreign narrative.

I will explore this Roman treatment of Egypt by focusing on Cleopatra as a character within the *Carmen* and on the Augustan response to and use of the conquest of Egypt. In chapter 1, I address the literary precedents for a persistently exoticising Greco-Roman view of Egypt and establish the conflation of Cleopatra’s character with Egypt. I then explore the details of Cleopatra’s portrayal within the *Carmen* that align with and go beyond the established discourse, ending with a discussion of her role in the Roman celebration of conquest. In chapter 2, I use the literature and monuments of the Augustan era, as well as the characterization of
Octavian, to connect the *Carmen* to a narrative of war producing peace and prosperity for Rome.
Chapter One: Causa Maxima Belli: The Carmen’s Cleopatra and Spoils of War

If there is an antagonist to be found in the extant fragments of the *Carmen*, it is Cleopatra VII. Born in 69 BCE, Cleopatra came into a complicated world as a member of the ruling family of Alexandria and Egypt. As a Ptolemy, she was of Macedonian descent, but made more of an effort than her predecessors to connect with her kingdom’s traditional culture.\(^{36}\) In keeping with Egyptian and Ptolemaic religious practice,\(^{37}\) she even took the title of νέα Ίσις\(^{38}\) in 34 BCE, only a few years before the war with Rome.\(^{39}\) Her role as the last leader of Ptolemaic Egypt, her relationships with several of the foremost Roman men of the late Republic, and her involvement in a conflict that reshaped the power dynamics of the Mediterranean world have made her a popular subject for history and fiction, from the time of her death onward. Greek and Roman authors wrote many Cleopatras, some based in fact but most heavily embellished.

Rather than just equating Egypt with other foreign gentes, a conflation typical of Roman imperial vocabulary,\(^{40}\) the author of the *Carmen* reduces the entire kingdom to this single individual. Cleopatra is at the heart of the Roman narrative of Egyptian otherness,\(^{41}\) and she is no less synthetic in this Augustan epic than in

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\(^{36}\) In his *Life of Antony*, Plutarch describes Cleopatra as gifted with languages and the only Ptolemy to have learned Egyptian (Plut. *Ant*. LVII.3-4).

\(^{37}\) Walker 2001, 129.

\(^{38}\) Plutarch attests to this title in *Ant.* 54.6.

\(^{39}\) Walker 2001, 139.

\(^{40}\) Parker 2001, 9.

\(^{41}\) As noted in the previous chapter, this ‘Egyptian’ otherness extends to encompass the entirety of what Romans would have considered the ‘East’ (Parthians, Indians, etc.) Such an Orientalizing treatment of Cleopatra has resonance with the Augustan literary canon and contemporary Roman propaganda, which imagined her “not only
sensationalized modern portrayals. The goal of this chapter is to explore the power of Cleopatra as an image and how the author of the *Carmen* manipulates this image in order to intensify the Rome-Egypt antagonism. I begin by contextualizing the *Carmen*’s treatment of Egypt and Cleopatra within a long-standing Greco-Roman literary tradition about the alterity of Egypt, specifically drawing on Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. Then, I analyze Cleopatra as a character in the *Carmen*, emphasizing her roles as queen/Pharoah, as female, and as hostile to Rome. I then turn to the columns of the *Carmen* that address Cleopatra’s preparations for her suicide, following this with an evaluation of Horace’s ode on Cleopatra. I conclude with a discussion the importance of Roman triumphal imagery in relation to both this poem and the *Carmen*, including an exploration of Cleopatra’s divine aspect.

I. The Outsiders’ View: Herodotus, Diodorus, and Egypt in the Roman Context

The *Carmen* takes part in a preexisting Greco-Roman literary discourse on Egypt in general and Cleopatra specifically. In books II and III of his *Histories*, Herodotus presents the many idiosyncrasies of the Egyptian landscape, people, and culture. He follows his discussion of the land’s topography with an examination of its culture:

Αἰγύπτιοι ἄμα τῷ οὐρανῷ τῷ κατὰ σφέας ἐόντι ἑτεροίῳ καὶ τῷ ποταμῷ φύσιν ἅλλοιήν παρεχομένῳ ὥς οἱ ἅλλοι ποταμοὶ, τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ἐμπαλιν τοῖς ἅλλοις ἀνθρώποις ἐστήσαντο ἥθεα τε καὶ νόμους...

as queen of Egypt, but also as a symbol of the whole Orient consolidated against Rome,” Cleopatra è vista non solo come regina d’Egitto, ma ben di più come simbolo di tutto l’Oriente coalizzato contro Roma (Zecchini 1987, 22-3).

42 Though Egypt’s annexation as a Roman province by Octavian spiked interest in its culture, resources, and art, the Roman fascination with Egypt predated Actium and is attested over the course of centuries (Swetnam-Burland 2015, 5).
“the Egyptians, just as they have a climate to themselves, and their river having a different character from other rivers, so too do they have established customs and laws for the most part altogether contrary to [those of] all other men…” (Hdt. Histories. II.35.2).

By establishing the atypical as the premise for his investigation of Egypt, Herodotus creates an expectation of alterity, which he confirms with the next book and a half of examples of Egyptian strangeness. He draws a connection between geographic and cultural ‘oddities’ that ties this otherness to the concept of Egyptian identity as a whole. The Greek or Roman reader working within the context of Herodotus’ writings would consider Egypt in light of its perceived differences.

In what essentially becomes a catalogue of Egyptian peculiarities, Herodotus returns frequently to examples of gender roles that are inverted from (Greek) norms. For example, he relates that women go to market and conduct business, while men stay at home and weave (αἱ μὲν γυναῖκες ἀγοράζουσι καὶ καπηλεύουσι, οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες κατ’ οἶκους ἐόντες ὑφαίνουσι, Hdt. I.35.2), contrary to Roman convention. Likewise, women stand to urinate, while men sit (οὐρέοθσι αἱ μὲν γυναῖκες ὁρθαί, οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες κατήμενοι, II.35.3), altogether contrary to what is ‘right’ and ‘normal’ in the Greco-Roman world. These (and many other) such statements serve no historical purpose, but rather impress upon readers the degree of difference between themselves and the Egyptians.

Similar ideas remained current well into the Roman period in the first century BCE. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote his Βιβλιοθήκη Ἰστορικὴ in the last years of the

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43 For more on Herodotus and Egypt, see Moyer 2011, 42-83.
44 For Roman contact with and interest in Egypt predating Actium, see Swetnam-Burland 2015, 1-2. For the rich discourse in the Greek/Hellenistic period, see Moyer 2011, 11-32.
Roman Republic, devoted the greater part of his first book to an examination of Egyptian civilization, its customs and people. He wrote this work while in Rome after having lived for a time in Egypt, and through it represents a point of view on Egypt that, although heavily influenced by Greek models and his own Sicilian identity, accords well with contemporary Roman ideas.

Despite similarities between his own work on Egypt and that of his predecessors, notably Herodotus, Diodorus seeks to distance himself from other historians and establish his own credibility:

"But as for Herodotus and certain ones of those who, in books regarding Egyptian matters, invented stories, willingly choosing to recount marvels over the truth and to fabricate stories for the sake of amusement, we shall pass over them, and we shall lay out those things written down by the priests of Egypt in their records, having examined them zealously," (Diod. Sic. I.69.7).

Contrary to these protestations, the subsequent pages devolve quickly from anthropological observations into sensationalized anecdotes. When sharing a particularly ‘strange’ story, Diodorus never misses an opportunity to point out to his audience how difficult they must find it to believe such bizarre ‘facts’. For example,

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45 Diodorus includes the Assyrians, Medes, Indians, Scythians, and Amazons along with Egyptians in his examination of “barbarian” (τὰς βαρβαρικὰς, I.4.6) Eastern cultures, which takes up books I-III. This aggregation of such diverse cultures reinforces the idea of Roman Orientalism prevalent in this era, as discussed in the previous chapter.

46 Sacks 1990, 165.

47 For more on the Bibliothèque, Diodorus’ influences from other authors, and his treatment of ‘barbarian’ peoples, see Muntz 2017 and Sacks 1990.
when explaining that the Egyptians had, in the past, resorted to cannibalism rather than consume a sacred animal (84.1), he introduces this titillating detail thus: “with the words seeming to many unbelievable and similar to tales, that which is about to be told will seem even more incredible,” (ἀπίστων δὲ φαινομένων πολλοίς τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ μύθοις παραπλησίων πολλῷ παραδοξότερα φανήσεται τὰ μετὰ τὰ ταύτα ῥηθησόμενα, I.84.1). Other Egyptian practices that elicit Diodorus’ incredulity are the deification of crocodiles (I.89.1), embalming and treatment of the dead in general (I.91), and certain legal peculiarities (I.94), to name only a few.

Thus, while attributing a veneer of authenticity to his work, Diodorus in fact writes about the Egyptians in a way that enhances their alterity from the Roman perspective. The continuity of treatment from Herodotus to Diodorus and into literature that postdates Actium demonstrates the persistence of the Roman conception of Egypt as ‘foreign’ and ‘other’. Such historical-ethnographic works, in particular, served to legitimize the fictitious Egypt imagined by Rome at the expense of Egypt as it really was. Though the Carmen is of a different genre of writing, its author approaches Egypt and in the same way, especially in regards to Cleopatra.

II. Cleopatra in the Carmen

The Carmen carefully constructs a portrayal of Cleopatra as queen of Egypt, consort of Antony, enemy of Octavian and the Roman state, and embodiment of the goddess Isis. He uses these various roles to conflate her with her kingdom in association with his Actian campaign. Using Octavian’s Roman-ness as a foil, the Carmen stresses Cleopatra’s identity as Egyptian and foreign. In a narrative framed in hostility and opposition, the constructed identity of each side (Rome/Octavian vs.
Egypt/Cleopatra) shapes that of the other through an understood inversion of characteristics (i.e. the more Egyptian and foreign Cleopatra appears, the more Roman Octavian becomes by contrast).

In order to maintain this view of the Rome-Egypt conflict as culturally and geographically divisive, the author reduces Antony’s role in the narrative. Though he played an important part in Rome’s pre-Augustan political scene and was perhaps the more dangerous and direct threat to Octavian, Antony receives only a few brief mentions in the surviving portions of the Carmen, and even these come through the voice of Cleopatra.\(^{48}\) The author of the Carmen shifts the focus from him to her, making Cleopatra the primary target of Roman enmity and aggression. This degree of removal from the narrative emphasizes the representation of Antony not as a Roman man but as the consort of an Egyptian queen (Est mihi coniunx, / Parthos qui posset Phariis subiungere regnis, / qui sprevit…, Carmen IV.4-6). Cleopatra’s lack of faith in her quondam consort puts distance between the two, partly absolving Antony while at the same time highlighting his weakness and military failings.\(^{49}\) The use of the term coniunx for Antony is particularly interesting here. It is a reversal of Vergil’s phrasing\(^{50}\) and implies that Cleopatra is the dominant partner in the relationship and the primary antagonist of the narrative, relegating Antony to a minor role of guilt by

\(^{48}\) Columns V and VII, which mention Antony, both seem to come from the voice of Cleopatra (Benario 1983, 1660).

\(^{49}\) This section also implies that his Parthian campaign was undertaken at the behest of Cleopatra and Egypt, rather than Rome. He has been on the wrong side from the beginning.

\(^{50}\) See citation from Aen. VIII below.
association. The emphasis of the female over the male partner is consistent with a Roman point of view (led by Octavian) that seeks to feminize Antony and masculinize Cleopatra.

This de-Romanization of Antony accompanies an equally forceful hyper-Egyptianization of Cleopatra. The Carmen ties Cleopatra to Egypt as a physical place, using this conflation of individual and kingdom to make broad statements about the nature of both. Zecchini argues that the author’s use of the phrase Italus…hostis (Carmen I.8) portrays Octavian as instigator of this civil war, making him culpable. While the Italus makes sense as a geographic descriptor solidifying Octavian’s roots at the physical and historical center of the Roman world, I would argue that the use of hostis, rather than highlighting Octavian’s responsibility for the conflict, emphasizes the Rome-Egypt dichotomy. If Octavian is the ‘Italian enemy’ of Cleopatra and her kingdom, she is the ‘Egyptian enemy’ of Octavian’s Rome. This interpretation plays on the double meaning of hostis as both ‘enemy’ and ‘foreign’. Octavian is the hostis (enemy) of Cleopatra, while she is hostis (stranger and enemy) to Rome.

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51 It is, of course, possible that the missing sections of the Carmen might have focused more on Antony’s character and role in the conflict, but the lack of evident cohesion between the individual fragments and the sets of columns suggests that the surviving portions come from many different parts of the epic, (Zecchini 1987, 13-20) leaving little room for any in-depth discussion of Antony. Cleopatra, on the other hand, appears in many of the larger portions and is likely the interlocutor to whom some of the other conversations in the epic are directed. (Benario 1983, 1659).
52 Jones 2012, 173.
53 See previous section for the importance of cultural and geographic identifiers.
54 Zecchini 1987, 32. The portrayals of Antony and Cleopatra address this issue and absolve Octavian.
55 OLD s.v. ‘hostis’ 1, 2, 2b.
The Carmen’s emphasis on a Cleopatra who is intrinsically tied to and representative of Egypt echoes Virgil’s description of Aeneas’ shield in the book VIII of the Aeneid. The center of the shield features a scene of the battle of Actium. Octavian, consistent with the representation of his agenda in the Carmen, is portrayed as the Caesar leading the Italii into battle (VIII.678). The opposing (i.e. Egyptian) forces merit a much more colorful description:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis,} \\
\text{victor ab Aurorae populis et litore rubro,} \\
\text{Aegyptum virisque Orientis et ultima secum} \\
\text{Bactra vehit, sequiturque (nefas) Aegyptia coniunx.}
\end{align*}
\]

“Here Antony, with foreign wealth and strange armaments, victor over Eastern peoples and the Red-sea shore, brings Egypt and Oriental strength, and the most distant Bactra with him, and his Egyptian consort follows (abominable).” (Aen. VIII.685-688).

Although this passage subordinates Cleopatra’s role in regards to Antony much more than the Carmen does, much of the vocabulary is similarly antithetic to Octavian’s Romanitas. A similar scene may appear in fragmentum 6 of the Carmen, which appears to include the isolated words Vari…Bactra…Laurentibus armis (6.4-8). Garuti restores this as reading Alexandriam ab Italici armis defendat, and concludes that the mention of Bactra (as in Aen. VIII.688) and the reference to various Orientis gentes allude to Cleopatra’s people and allies. Though the last line of this Virgil passage clearly refers to Cleopatra, she (unlike Antony and Octavian, labeled by Virgil as Augustus…Caesar, VIII.678) is not explicitly named. She is

56 Actium’s presence at the forefront of this scene reinforces its (literally) central importance in Roman history and Augustan propaganda.

57 Garuti 1958, 55-56.
defined only by her nationality and her relationship to Antony. The parenthetical *nefas* blatantly condemns the entire affair (Antony, Cleopatra, their union, and their opposition to Octavian/Rome).\(^58\) Thus Cleopatra’s defamation is more important, more explicit than even her name.

The name Cleopatra may appear once in the surviving fragments of the *Carmen* (*Cl[eopatram]*, 2.8), though this reading is contested.\(^59\) All other mentions of her are oblique, though unambiguous. She appears as *femina* (III.6), *regina*\(^60\) (*Carmen* 1b.6, VIII.3), potentially *Phar[ioah]* (13.2), *illa* (2.3), *[H]as* (VI.9), *deam* (III.4), *diva* (II.9) *a[man]t[e][m]* of Antony (VII.1, self-referential), and “she whom her fates were now awaiting,” (*quam iam sua fata manerent*, VII.5). The majority of these appellations focus on two aspects of Cleopatra: her power as queen and her identity as a woman.\(^61\) While either of these by itself was enough to contradict traditional, patriarchal Roman values, their combination was nothing less than an affront and a threat.\(^62\) Her association with the generalized Roman ‘Orient’, which already carried

\(^{58}\) For further discussion of the negative Roman perception of Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship and behavior, see Ager 2013, 139-40.

\(^{59}\) Zecchini restores the full name *Cl[eopatram]* (Zecchini 1987, 95), whereas Garuti places the –*cl–* with the preceding *ad–* (*adcl…*), perhaps as a compound verb (Garuti 1958, 52). The remainder of the line is completely lost, both in the text and in the line drawing, but in the latter it appears consistent with Garuti’s *adcl…*, since no word break or space is indicated (7).

\(^{60}\) In fact, the OLD lists primary definition of *regina* (‘queen’) as specifically applied to Cleopatra (OLD s.v ‘regina’ 1.)

\(^{61}\) In 34 BCE, Cleopatra took the title “Queen of Kings,” explicitly uniting her female and royal nature in a way that inverts (Ager 2013, 140).

\(^{62}\) Jones 2012, 165.
associations of weakness and effeminacy, only emphasized her female identity,\textsuperscript{63} strange and unnatural in the eyes of the Romans.\textsuperscript{64}

By emphasizing this combination of royal, female, and foreign, the \textit{Carmen} further distances Cleopatra from the Roman world. During a period of political flux and uncertainty, monarchy was an unwelcome concept to a Roman audience that had only recently moved away from a Republican form of government and escaped the dictatorial regime of Julius Caesar. Cleopatra, as Pharoah, queen, and goddess of Egypt epitomized the concentration of power in a single individual.\textsuperscript{65} Even worse, she was a female leader in military as well as civic matters. Roman epic of the early imperial period emphasizes this ‘unnatural’ behavior by a female, especially in regards to Cleopatra’s overt role in the events surrounding Actium.\textsuperscript{66} What Pyy calls the \textit{dux femina} portrayal\textsuperscript{67} confers a certain amount of military power to Cleopatra, but the \textit{Carmen} reassigns this pseudo-\textit{imperium} to Roman forces. While speaking of Actium, an unknown interlocutor says of Cleopatra, “…although you were the greatest reason for the war, and part too of the command” (…\textit{cum [c]ausa fores tu ma[xi]ma [be]llii}, \textit{/ pars etiam im[per]ii}, \textit{Carmen} III.5-6). While this ostensibly assigns \textit{imperium} (“military power / command”) to Cleopatra in the Egyptian wars, it also

\textsuperscript{63} Although the \textit{Carmen} and early imperial literature in general emphasize Cleopatra’s identity as (unnaturally) female, they downplay her role as a mother. See Jones 2012.

\textsuperscript{64} Pyy 2011, 78-79.

\textsuperscript{65} Even within the context of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Cleopatra was an anomaly. It was typical for females to share rule with a male partner, a convention Cleopatra rejected when she did away with her brother (Jones 2012, 169).

\textsuperscript{66} Pyy 2011, 90-93. See Virgil, \textit{Aeneid} VIII.678-88 and Lucan, \textit{Pharsalia} X.75-81.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. The comparisons between Cleopatra and Virgil’s Dido are self-evident: see Ibid., 89.
foreshadows her subordination to Roman \textit{imperium} ("authority" or "dominion").\textsuperscript{68} Octavian, as a patrician man adopted into a prominent \textit{gens}, descended from the gods and the very founders of Rome, wields an \textit{imperium} that implies a sort of manifest destiny. Cleopatra, as a female and foreigner, represents the perversion of all the traditional Roman values that are meant to confer such power and right. This imbalance justifies and explains Octavian’s victory over and annexation of Egypt. The \textit{Carmen}, looking back on the conquest of Egypt after Actium and its aftermath, uses its unfavorable portrayal of Cleopatra as a means of justifying the campaign.

\textbf{III. Cleopatra’s arena of death}

Cleopatra’s negative characterization in the \textit{Carmen} comes to a head in columns V-VII, in which she becomes an active participant in a transgressive display of brutality. Despite the absence of some intervening fragments, these columns comprise a single narrative vignette, which I will undertake to examine as it unfolds in the order of the narrative. The gist of the scene seems to be that Cleopatra brings together a crowd of slaves or criminals (V.1-2) and tests out different methods of death for them in preparation for her imminent suicide. Column V employs military imagery, but perverts the simile to Cleopatra’s detriment:

\begin{quote}
\text{[Dele]ctumqu[e loc]um quo noxia turba\textsuperscript{69} co[i]ret \\
praebetque suae spectacula tri[s]tia mortis.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{68} For the many possible meanings of \textit{imperium}, see \textit{OLD} s.v. "imperium." It can also refer expressly to "the power exercised by the Roman emperors" or "an empire." Although the concept of a Roman empire may not have existed at the time of the Egyptian wars, Augustus’ rule demonstrated a shift toward a government in which one person would have absolute \textit{imperium} to the point that it would define Rome as a political entity. The defeat of Cleopatra and annexation of Egypt were instrumental in bringing this about.

\textsuperscript{69} Compare Hor. \textit{Od.} I.XXXVII.9-10, \textit{contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo vibrorum}
Qualis ad instantis acies cum tela parantur, 
signa tubae classesque simul terrestribus armis, 
est facie sea visa loci, cum saeva coirent 
instrumenta necis, v[a]rio congesta paratu: 
undi[s]que sic illo, campo deforme co[a][t]um 
omne vagabatur leti genus, omne timoris.

“And a chosen place where the guilty crowd might assemble and 
display sad spectacles of its own death. Just as when spears are 
prepared for impending battles, standards, trumpets, and fleets 
together with land weapons, so seemed the aspect of the place, where 
the fierce tools of death came together, stored up with various 
preparations: thus from all about gathered there on the field, was 
walking every awful type of death, every type of fear” (Carmen V.1-8).

In a grotesque echo of the battles described in previous scenes,\textsuperscript{70} this portion of the 
epic details Cleopatra’s behavior upon her defeat. In a parody of imperium, she uses 
the last moments in her position of power to organize a battle arena of death. With 
the repetitive parantur and paratu the author stresses the intent and agency behind 
the horrible scene being laid out; this has all been planned and chosen (delectum) 
by Cleopatra. The reference to naval\textsuperscript{71} and terrestrial warfare (classesque simul 
terrestribus armis) is a reminder of the real battles that have led up to this moment. 
Death and fear embodied permeate the Egyptian side, with Cleopatra at the helm.

The particulars of this arena of death come to life in Column VI, which details 
the many means of demise Cleopatra has engineered. Swords, poison, hanging, 
drowning, and (of course) venomous snakes all have a place. The full column 
depicts the death throes of the poor souls subjected to these treatments in

\textsuperscript{70} Columns I and II of the Carmen describe military engagements, and given the 
nature of the epic, much of the missing text would surely have continued in this vein. 
\textsuperscript{71} In addition to referencing the naval battle at Actium, this combines with the 
theatrical imagery of the scene (see below) to evoke the naumachiae popularized in 
Rome by Octavian (Coleman 1990, 70).
gruesome detail, until the queen herself appears quite literally in the middle of this horrific scene (*Has inter strages solio descendit et inter*, “She came down from her thrown among the ruins and among…,” VI.8). This scene becomes a *spectaculum* of sorts, with Cleopatra both organizing and participating in the carnage. The “guilty crowd” (*noxia turba*, VI.1) perishes in a perverted interpretation of death in the arena, a feature of the Roman penal system that also provided entertainment. Cleopatra here fulfills the role of magistrate or emperor, sitting on a throne and observing the show she has arranged. However, she removes herself from this position of detached spectating to engage in the show. Her willingness to walk out into the midst of this ‘arena’ further distances Cleopatra from the ideals of Roman femininity and magistracy: Roman women and watched combat spectacles from the safe distance of the furthest removed seats, if at all, and officials viewed them from a similarly removed vantage pint. As Cleopatra violates this boundary between observation and exhibition, we the readers become the audience of her *spectaculum* as she becomes part of the dying crowd and therefore *noxia* by

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72 For a comparable example of amphitheatricality in poetry, see Hinds 2002, 139-140. Horace’s ode XXXVII, with its portrayal of Octavian as *venator* to Cleopatra’s wild beast, also recalls theatrical beast-hunt imagery.

73 Coleman 1990, 44.

74 Magistrates and emperors played an important role as benefactors and sponsors of public displays in the arena, and such *spectacula* provided an opportunity for the emperor to appear in the audience before the masses. It was Augustus himself that imposed strict hierarchical seating arrangements according to social rank (Coleman 1990, 51, 72).

75 As spectators at Cleopatra’s exhibition, we the readers imply our approval of her punishment and ultimate fate, just as viewers of capital punishment in the arena signified approbation by their presence (Ibid., 49-50, 58).

76 The ideal Roman woman exhibited *pudicitia*; it would be unseemly for her to become a spectacle.
association. This Roman perspective condemns Cleopatra to death for her crimes against the state, erasing the narrative of ‘honorable suicide’ by associating her death with culpability.

This spectaculum stretches out into Column VII, in which Cleopatra completes her transition from spectator to participant. Atropos, joining the reader as part of her audience, waits on the sidelines, ready to cut the thread of the queen’s life (procul hanc occulta videbat / Atropos inrid[e]ms [in]ter diversa vagantem / consilia interitus, quam iam sua fata manerent, “…far off Atropos, hidden, was watching her, mocking her as she wandered among the different plans for death,” VII.3-5), reminding the reader that Cleopatra’s death is at hand and building anticipation for the suicide scene with the use of iam and the imperfect manerent. At the moment when such a terrible fate seems most imminent, the scene shifts abruptly to Octavian’s siege of Alexandria (cum parte se[n]atus / et patriae comitante suae cum milite Caesar / gentis Alexan[d]ri c[u][r]rens ad m[o]en[i]a venit, “…with part of the senate and of his fatherland accompanying him, Caesar came running with his soldiers to the walls of

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77 While any criminal condemned of a serious crime could be sentenced to death by combat, Cicero associates it specifically with foreign prisoners of war (Coleman 1990, 54; Cicero Tusculanes II. 41). While Cleopatra, a Ptolemy and Pharoah of Egypt, would probably not have received such treatment if captured by the Romans, her situation in this scene underlines her defeat. She will not live long enough to be a prisoner of war, but she fulfills the role of one.

78 The inter… vagantem of line 4 reiterates Cleopatra’s direct involvement in the staging of the scene, and the participle describing her action appears physically between the varia…consilia interitus in the text, reinforcing the image of her on the floor of the arena encircled by dying criminals.

79 Though the scene of Cleopatra’s suicide is not extant, it almost certainly appeared in the epic as the final chapter in her sad story.
the people of Alexander…,” VII.6-8). Even as Cleopatra prepares to choose a death for herself, Octavian arrives and robs her of her agency in this matter. He and his army become the new source of dread (terror, VII.9) to Cleopatra and to Egypt. By foreshadowing Cleopatra’s suicide, the arena scene responds to a contemporary fascination with the female Pharaoh’s demise.

Depictions of Cleopatra VII and her demise in other post-Actian texts correspond with the Carmen’s characterization but fail to paint as nuanced and active a picture of the queen, instead portraying her as a passive recipient of her fate. Horace\textsuperscript{80} dedicates an entire ode to Cleopatra’s defeat and death. He begins the poem on a celebratory note, casting Cleopatra as the “deranged queen” (\textit{regina dementis}, I.37.7) plotting Rome’s downfall. Horace never names Cleopatra in his ode, though he spares no vividness in his description of her. She brings with her a diseased, guilt-stained crowd of deplorable men (\textit{contaminato cum grege turpium / morbo virorum}, 9-10), much like the Carmen’s \textit{noxia turba}, and she flees upon losing hope after the rout at Actium, playing the prey to Octavian’s \textit{venator} (10-19). Such a deadly monster (\textit{fatale monstrum}, 21) becomes as a gentle dove or rabbit (\textit{velut mollis columbas aut leporem}, 17-18) when entrapped by the power of Rome’s leader. This contradictory vocabulary is the result of a Roman imagination of Cleopatra that must reconcile the delicacy, weakness, and effeminacy that make her

\textsuperscript{80} Horace’s ninth Epode treats Actium more immediately and may have been written by the poet shortly after the battle. It focuses more on Octavian in his moment of victory and is also an interesting point of comparison to the Carmen (See Gurval 1995, 137-166).
'other’ and ‘unnatural’ with the violence, guilt, and power that make her a worthy adversary.

The end of the ode, which revolves around Cleopatra’s suicide, intensifies this conflicting characterization: she is defeated but courageous, female but not effeminate. Though “not a lowly woman” (non humilis mulier, I.37.32) may seem like a positive descriptor, it emphasizes the pride (unseemly in an ideal Roman woman) that drives Cleopatra to take her own life rather than “be led in a proud triumph” (deduci superbo…triumpho, 31-32). She does not exhibit any of the womanish fear of war (nec muliebriter expavit ensem, 22-3) that, to a Roman audience, would be natural in her situation. Horace’s Cleopatra is an oddly over-gendered creature, at times unbecomingly masculine and at times feebly feminine. And though she ultimately evades the physical chains of captivity, she and her kingdom are still subject to the metaphorical chains of defeat. Thus, the final image presented in the ode, similar to that of the Carmen, celebrates Octavian’s defeat of a formidable adversary: the hunter (19-20) is successful, the prey caught.

Horace’s Cleopatra and the Cleopatra of the Carmen share this dual characterization based heavily on conceptions of gender. However, the Egyptian queen of the Carmen is a more complex character; she is active, emotive, and most importantly vocal. Column IV seems to come entirely from the voice of Cleopatra,

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81 Ostensibly, superbus modifies the triumph directly, indicative of appropriate pride in an important military accomplishment. However, the context of the suicide allows the adjective to fulfill a secondary role via hypallage as a descriptor for Cleopatra. In this sense it connotes a hubristic, self-serving lack of humility on the part of a defeated enemy. See OLD s.v. ‘superbus’ 1c, 1d, 3 (positive connotations) and 1, 2a (negative).
and Column VII begins with a line of speech from her perspective. Though this would appear to grant the character more agency, she speaks at both times from a secondary position, referring to herself in terms of Antony (\textit{est mihi coniunx}, IV.4 and \textit{...miseram me linquit a[man]te[m], VII.1). Thus the author makes Cleopatra reinforce her own inferiority, maintaining her characterization as subordinate to Roman men.

\textbf{IV. Nunc Est Bibendum: Celebrating Cleopatra Capta}

Cleopatra’s defeat at Actium and Alexandria constituted not only an important victory for Rome, but also an opportunity for Octavian to publicly confirm his now largely uncontested rule. He celebrated a triple triumph in 29 BCE to commemorate his victories in Illyria, at Actium, and at Alexandria where he completed his conquest of Egypt.\textsuperscript{82} The triumph, full of tradition and symbolism, was an important rite in the Roman war narrative, both for victor and for victim. Though humiliation of enemies factored into the triumphal procession, this was also the ritual through which a defeated enemy would assume its new role as part of the Roman imperial order.\textsuperscript{83} Captives appeared in chains in front of the chariot of the triumphant general, and royal prisoners were especially popular. The legendary queen of Egypt would have made quite an impact being led through the streets of Rome in front of Octavian.\textsuperscript{84} Since Cleopatra’s decision to take her fate into her own hands deprived the Romans of an opportunity to physically manifest her subordination and submission to

\textsuperscript{82} Gurval 1995, 19-20. The Egyptian triumph was the longest lasting and most elaborate, indicating the importance to Octavian and Rome of the successful siege at Alexandria and the conclusion of the Egyptian campaign (Gurval 1995, 5, 29).

\textsuperscript{83} Beard 2009, 140.

\textsuperscript{84} Gurval 1995, 22.
Octavian,\textsuperscript{85} they had to make do with other symbols of her and of Egypt, now the province \textit{Aegyptus}.

In some cases, Octavian would use statues of Cleopatra\textsuperscript{86} to evoke the Egyptian war and its favorable outcome. He could use visual imagery to portray her as a captive, as in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, where he had the image of her son Cesarion removed from her statue to emphasize her new role as spoils of war rather than queen or mother.\textsuperscript{87} He also employed several hyper-Egyptian symbols to evoke and celebrate his victory. One notable example is a ca. 28 BCE silver denarius with Octavian’s portrait and title as Caesar and Consul on one side and a crocodile on the reverse with the inscription “AEGYPTO CAPTA.”\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Example of a silver denarius with Octavian’s portrait and the inscription “AEGYPTO CAPTA.”}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{85} This recalls Horace’s description of Cleopatra as “deprived, not a common woman to be led in proud triumph,” (\textit{privata deduci superbo, non humilis mulier, triumpho}, I.XXXVII.31-2).

\textsuperscript{86} Statues of Isis could also have been referential to Cleopatra, given the close ties between the two figures and the considerable overlap in their iconography (see Jones 2012, 165-6 and Stanwick 2002, 80 for Cleopatra’s adoption of Isiac vocabulary and attributes).

\textsuperscript{87} Jones 2012, 175.

\textsuperscript{88} For the significance of \textit{capio} in the Augustan vocabulary of conquest, see page 37.
A crocodile, much like Cleopatra or the Nile, is a single, easily recognizable image that represents the whole land and people of Egypt. It is also foreign to the Roman world, which allows it to convey otherness and a certain danger, with the *capta* used in the same way it might apply to a wild animal\(^89\) as much as a seized territory.\(^90\)

Thus, there was tension in the presentation of Cleopatra and Egypt in Augustan literature and art: On the one hand, there was a desire to present Cleopatra and her territory as subdued, but, on the other, the Romans could enhance the importance of their victory by establishing the strength and capability of the enemy. The same tension is evident in the *Carmen*’s portrayal. As in Horace, the author often presents her as powerful (though wielding her power cruelly and unjustly). Ultimately, however, the author strips her of her authority through her suicide and the conquest of her kingdom at the hands of Octavian.

In Column II of the *Carmen*, Octavian gives a rousing speech to his men at the walls of Alexandria, exhorting them to temper their aggression now that they have won the day:

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\(^{89}\) Octavian’s celebration of his triumph over Egypt also featured African animals, such as the rhinoceros (Gurval 1995, 29).

\(^{90}\) OLD s.v. ‘capio’ 4b and 6, respectively.

\(^{91}\) I have accepted Garuti’s (1958, 74) reading of line 9 as corroborated by Benario (1983, 1659) over Zecchini’s (1987, 99), as this reading appears more certain.
“What, do you take the spoils of war that lie already captured? You tear down my walls with [your] weapons. Once this people, too, with its divine [queen], was an enemy to me, but no longer: finally the Roman conqueress with a sword claims this whole race as handmaid,” (Carmen II.7-10).

This passage captures the exact moment of Roman victory at the siege of Alexandria.\(^{92}\) In the space of a sentence, the walls go from Cleopatra’s possession to Octavian’s. The diva, clearly Cleopatra, is no longer hostis to the Romans because she has been defeated and poses no further threat. The divine appellation, juxtaposed with the present servile role, is used ironically by the Roman author as a vehicle of derision rather than an accolade.\(^{93}\) The cum diva plebes of line 9 is redundant, and the gentem in the final line encompasses Cleopatra in its scope. She, goddess and people embodied in a single individual, becomes no more than a servant to Rome. This final line expresses Cleopatra’s significance in the conflict: by conquering her, Octavian has conquered Egypt. He has bent their gods to his will and now has them working in the service of Rome. Though Octavian could not have Cleopatra in chains before his chariot in Rome, this scene of the Carmen effects the same imagery.

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\(^92\) The section of the text that has Cleopatra returning from Actium to Alexandria is missing, but this scene follows her preparations for suicide and corresponds logically to the siege of Alexandria.

\(^93\) Garuti 1958, 76.
Chapter 2: 
Praemia Belli: Peace through War and the Rise of the Principate

The characterization of Cleopatra VII in the Carmen is at once unique in its vividness and typical of the general post-Actium Roman attitude toward Egypt. It paints a portrait of her as responsible for the conflict and as a woman whose power threatens Roman peace and security, but it does so through unusually personal, specific episodes. To understand how the Carmen's character dynamics fit within the general drama of the period, I turn in this chapter to the world beyond the text to explore the Augustan response to and exploitation of the Egyptian conquest. Octavian himself makes limited appearances in the Carmen, but these references to him are situated within a widespread imperial campaign of propaganda that produces an image of him, dependent upon his military achievements, as a civic leader of Rome. The visual culture of the Augustan era presents an image of war, particularly the hostilities with Cleopatra, as a source of regeneration and prosperity, while Octavian stands at the helm to guide Rome through this transition.

With the Egyptian campaign successful and duly celebrated, Octavian was free to use his carefully constructed image of Roman dominance over Egypt as a foundation for his new role as princeps, a title he adopted in 23 BCE. He demonstrated his strength as a military commander to the Roman people by achieving victory against a foreign threat, and now faced the challenge of proving himself an equally effective civic leader. He achieved this by constructing an image of peace through war: he had defended Rome from her enemies and brought her into a new era of stability and security. The military aspect of Augustus' image
features prominently in the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco*, as well as with a monumental program that transformed Rome’s urban fabric. The goal of this chapter is to trace the development of this image from war to peace through literature and art. I will begin with a discussion of the portrayal of the Egyptian conquest in the Augustan era as represented in material culture (focusing on obelisks), literature (the *Carmen* and Horace), and monuments (the *Res Gestae*). These various media and the ways they treat the changing Rome-Egypt relationship contextualize the *Carmen* and confirm its concordance with Augustan ideology.

I. Importing Egypt: Spoils and Aegyptiaca in the Augustan Cityscape

It is difficult to overstate the importance of Actium and the conquest of Egypt to the Rome of the first century BCE. Octavian’s annexation of *Aegyptus* as a Roman province not only brought an influx of natural resources (especially grain) to Italy but also asserted Roman supremacy and control, both military and civic, in the Mediterranean. Octavian demonstrated that under his leadership, Rome was entering a new era of expansion, stability, and unity. Augustus represented this pivotal period in his reign in a variety of ways throughout the literature and monuments of his ideological program, and even brought physical representations of Egypt into Rome as symbols of conquest.

The appearance of Egyptian imagery and culture in Rome predated Octavian, but after his annexation of *Aegyptus* their importation and appropriation grew

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94 This is not to say that the annexation of *Aegyptus* was a smooth or instantaneous transition; border disputes and upsets would continue to plague Roman Egypt into the Imperial era. See also pages 6-10.

95 For an in-depth discussion of Augustus’ use of imagery in his propaganda, see Zanker 1990.
exponentially. In 10/9 BCE, Augustus brought two obelisks from Egypt to adorn the Circus Maximus and Campus Martius. The transport and display of these granite monoliths was a massive undertaking, indicative of their more than decorative role in Augustus’ *restoratio urbis*. The Romans viewed these obelisks as Egyptian symbols of power, brought into the Roman context as reminders not only of Augustus’ victories but also of Rome’s continued control over northern Africa and Egypt’s new place as part of the Roman world. The Romans likely recognized the Egyptian context of these monuments, which was primarily religious and associated with the sun god. They were also representative of Egyptian royal power and authority, given the considerable expenditure, effort, and labor that went into their production. Augustus and his Roman contemporaries appropriated this symbolism along with the obelisks themselves, and the *princeps'* inscription of his name and titles on their bases confirmed his role through his position of power in Rome as the next component in the Egyptian succession of kings that predated the Ptolemies.

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97 See image of Montecitorio/Campus Martius obelisk below.
98 The so-called Montecitorio obelisk, for example, which was placed in the Campus Martius, weighs approximately 214 metric tons and is nearly 22 meters high (Parker 2007, 216).
99 Swetnam-Burland 2015, 15, 66-68.
100 Ibid., 68-69.
The inscription on the base of the Montecitorio obelisk reads, “the imperator Caesar Augustus, son of a divinity, pontifex maximus, imperator twelve times, consul eleven times, granted tribunal power fourteen times, with Egypt brought into the
domain of the Roman people, gave [this] as a gift to the sun,” (IMP CAESAR DIVI F / AUGUSTUS / PONTIFEX MAXIMUS / IMP XII COS XI TRIB POT XIV / AEGYPTO IN POTESTATEM / POPULI ROMANI REDACTA / SOLI DONUM DEDIT).¹⁰¹ The phrase aegypto…redacta here is particularly powerful and notably different from the much earlier aegypto capta coins struck in the years immediately following Actium.¹⁰² While capio¹⁰³ implies merely a military conquest, redigo¹⁰⁴ connotes a subsuming of Egyptian cultural identity to the Roman state; it is a figurative echo of the obelisk’s physical presence in Rome. In a way, the addition of the inscription bases and the strategic relocation of the obelisks themselves constitutes the creation of an egyptianizing object out of something originally Egyptian. Despite the appropriation and re-identification of the obelisk, the inscription references the original 6th century BCE religious context of this monument with its final phrase: soli donum dedit. References to the sun and often, by association, to Apollo abound in the Augustan context, so it is no surprise that such imagery appears in the Carmen as well as in other literature of the era. The sun appears only once in the surviving fragments, but at a moment crucial to Rome’s success.

The Roman military command attains almost mystical status when, while planning the final stage of the siege, they “called back again the sun in its solemn path; the night suited to the planning of generals, the light more suited to arms,” (sollemnis iterum revocaverat orbes / consiliis nox apta ducum, lux aptior armis…,

¹⁰¹ CIL VI.701  
¹⁰² See previous chapter, pages 30-31.  
¹⁰³ OLD s.v. “capio,” 6, 11, 15c.  
¹⁰⁴ OLD s.v. “redigo,” 3, 3b, 7, 9, 10a, 10b.
VIII.5-6). This association of the sun with Roman military action and, ultimately, victory makes Augustus’ choice of obelisks as his most prominent import of Egyptian material culture particularly poignant. He, the son of a divus, receives divine favor from above as represented by the rays of the sun, which are physically embodied in the obelisks. It is almost as though he turns the Egyptian sun-god worship to which these monuments were originally dedicated to his own favor, appropriating the symbolism as surely as the obelisks themselves.

This sun imagery again finds resonance in Horace’s epode IX on Actium, in which “among the military standards, the sun gazes down shamefully upon [Cleopatra’s] tent,” (interque signa turpe militaria / sol adspicit conopium, Hor. Epod. IX.15-16). Cleopatra’s relationship with the sun is much more passive: she does not control the heavens, and the sun declines to aid her or even to shine down upon her with benevolence. The connection to the sun at Actium is particularly interesting given Augustus’ choice to align himself with the god Apollo throughout his reign. Apollo had sanctuaries both on the Ambracian Gulf (the Temple of Apollo Actius) and at Nikopolis, the nearby ‘city’ Octavian established to celebrate his victory. The references to solar imagery in literature tie together the obelisks at Rome and the focus on Apollo in the material culture both of Rome and of the provinces. The choices Augustus makes in his monuments contribute to a pervasive message of strength and divine favor.

105 Though not quite claiming divine status for himself, Augustus was sure to include the title divi filius on the bases of his newly imported obelisks (Swetnam-Burland 2015, 65).
106 Miller 2009, 56.
107 I return to Nikopolis and its features later in this chapter.
II. Reframing the Egyptian Conquest in Augustan Literature

Augustus' portrayals of his Egyptian victory range from the commemorative shrine at Nikopolis to crocodile-adorned coins to obelisks. The resonance among text, image, and monument demonstrates the intentionality behind these choices. Augustus used this variety of media to construct a Rome (both the city and the nascent empire) united under a single, cohesive vision. Though texts like the Carmen and Horace’s Epode reflect the ideals he promoted, Augustus’ own agency culminates in a text he composed, the Res Gestae Divi Augusti.\(^{108}\) The Res Gestae is exemplary of the Augustan ideological program, and its language resonates with other texts and monuments of the period. In this monumental inscription, Augustus mentions both the battle of Actium specifically and Egypt in general. In focusing on Actium, he reports that “All Italy swore allegiance to me voluntarily and declared me commander in the war in which I was victorious at Actium,” (\textit{Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua et me belli, quo vici ad Actium, ducem depoposcit}, Aug. RG. 25).

Reflecting on a war long since won, Augustus shifts the focus away from the enemy and the conquest and instead uses the conflict as a promotion of Roman unity and support. He returns to Egypt after a list of his conquests and expansions, stating simply, “I added Egypt to the domain of the Roman people,” (\textit{Aegyptum imperio populi Romani adieci},\(^{109,110}\) 27). After a life spent celebrating his Egyptian victories

\(^{108}\) The Res Gestae function as both a document and a monument. This section focuses on the text, but it is important to keep the physical display in mind. I will return to a discussion of audience and physicality later in this chapter.

\(^{109}\) OLD s.v. “adiicio,” 3, 5, 6, 12b.

\(^{110}\) Adicio joins capio and redigo as a means of describing Egypt's annexation to Rome. It is perhaps the most positive and inward-focused portrayal, focusing on the augmentation of the Roman empire rather than the subsumption of Egypt. The
and reminding Rome of their importance, he could include them as just one in his long list of accomplishments without understating their significance.

Though these are the only explicit mentions of his conquest of Egypt in Augustus’ Res Gestae, the princeps alludes to them quite openly at the start of his chronicle. He sets up the text with an introduction that celebrates his expansionism, and begins his story thus:

*Annae unde viginti natus exercitus privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi...Bella terra et mari civilia externaque tuto in orbe terrarum suscepvi victorque omnibus veniam petentibus civibus peperci. Externas gentes, quibus tuto ignosci potuit, conservare quam exidere maluia...*

“At nineteen years of age I raised an army on my own authority and at my own expense, by which I set free the Republic oppressed by the despotism of faction...I waged wars, civil and foreign, on land and at sea, throughout the whole world, and when I was victorious I granted pardon to all citizens who sought it. The foreign nations I was able to pardon safely I preferred to preserve rather than to destroy...” (Aug. RG. 1-3)

By clearly referencing his campaign against Antony and his victories against Egypt both naval (Actium) and on land (Pelusium, Alexandria, etc.), Augustus establishes these as the exploits against which the rest of his life should be measured. His message of clemency toward conquered peoples reminds his Roman audience that, though he has been successful in war, his reign has been one focused on peace, a chronology of the verbs used (*capio* first with the coin, then *redigo* on the obelisk base, and lastly *adjicio* in the *Res Gestae*) constitutes a transition from an Egypt-focused celebration of conquest to an example of continuing Roman expansion.

111 The mention of ‘civil wars’ here seems to refer as much to Octavian’s pursuit of Julius Caesar’s assassins, culminating in Octavian’s ultimate success at Philippi, as to the campaign against Antony, which Augustus later refers to as having “abolished civil wars,” (*bella..civilia exstinxeram*, RG 34).
concept to which I will return later in this chapter. Thus, Augustus’ Egypt in the *Res Gestae* is part of a campaign for Roman expansion, supported by the Roman people and the senate.

This focus on Roman approbation of the war recalls the section of the *Carmen* in which Octavian besieges Alexandria with his army “with part of the senate and of his fatherland accompanying him,” (*cum parte se[n]atus / et patriae comitante suae cum milite Caesar…*, VII.6-7).\(^\text{112}\) The figurative presence of Rome with Octavian as he begins the attack reflects the overall concept of *iustitia*\(^\text{113}\) he wishes to apply to the war. Because Augustus has agency over the portrayal of this war in the Roman context, he is able to frame it in the most favorable possible light.

In addition to reframing the war as a whole, the *Carmen* exhibits a rewriting of specific events and battles to include Octavian and focus on his portrayal as a general. He first appears in Column II in the thick of the action “conquering…the walls of Pelusium,” (*superans…Pelusia [m]oenia*, II.5) and commanding his army on the brink of victory. When he appears again in Column VII with the full force of the Roman senate and *patria* behind him, he stands yet again before the *moenia*, this time of Alexandria. With this focus on physical structure, the *Carmen* presents Octavian's conquest of Egypt in an immediate, palpable way. In all likelihood, Octavian was directly involved in the front lines of neither these Egyptian sieges nor

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\(^{112}\) See the discussion of this section in the previous chapter, pages 26-7.

\(^{113}\) For further emphasis on *bellum iustum*, see also *Res Gestae* 26: “The Alps, from that region which is nearest the Adriatic Sea, to the Tuscan (sea) I brought to a state of peace, with war waged against no people through injustice,” *Alpes a regione ea, quae proxima est Hadriano mari, ad Tuscum pacari feci nulli genti bello per inlato.*
the naval battle at Actium.\textsuperscript{114} The glory belonged to him, but it was almost certainly Marcus Agrippa, the young ruler’s advisor and chief general, who orchestrated the fighting.

Agrippa himself may make a cameo in the first column of the \textit{Carmen} (which describes the Roman conquest of Pelusium) as the young hero’s follower,\textsuperscript{115} “strong in his loyalty and skill and adept in the business at hand through practice, continually conducting matters of Mars,” (\textit{fide dextraque po[t]ens rerumque per us[um] / callidus, adsidu[us tra]ctando in mundere [Mart]i[s]}, I.6-7). His characterization as \textit{gran[da][e]vos} (4-5) may be a clue to the \textit{Carmen’s} dating. Agrippa was young at the time of the battle at Pelusium, but a poet writing several decades after the Egyptian campaign, perhaps even after Agrippa’s death in 12 BCE,\textsuperscript{116} could easily have imposed the general’s seniority upon his younger self. There is an established tradition of associating or conflating Agrippa with Octavian in the context of military success, as in Horace’s \textit{Ode} I.6, in which Horace addresses Agrippa directly and allows him to share in the praise, citing, (“the glories of distinguished Caesar and your own,” \textit{laudes egregii Caesaris et tuas}, Hor.\textit{Od}.I.6.11). Though Agrippa in fact always stepped back and allowed Octavian to take the \textit{laudes},\textsuperscript{117} this ode and the

\textsuperscript{114} The tradition developed later in the Augustan era had not only Octavian himself fighting at Actium, but the god Apollo doing battle alongside him and bringing victory to the Romans (Miller 2009, 55-57).

\textsuperscript{115} Garuti summarizes the controversy surrounding the identification and symbolism of the father-son pair portrayed in this first column. While Agrippa himself was only in his 30s at the time of the events, no suitable alternative has been proposed (see Garuti 1958, 70-71).

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{OCD} s.v. “Vipsanius Agippa, M.” (pg. 1554-6).

\textsuperscript{117} He even refused an opportunity for a triumph “because it would have shown up Octavian’s lack of success” (Mayer 2012, 94). It is worth noting that even in the ode Octavian is listed first with Agrippa’s \textit{et tuas} tacked on as an afterthought.
Carmen both place him at the princeps’ side, both literally and metaphorically. This potential explanation of the problematic characters that introduce the surviving sections of the Carmen aligns with an interpretation of the epic as a commemoration of victory. The overwhelmingly positive portrayal of the Roman military throughout the epic corresponds with other tributes to the Egyptian campaign.  

III. Victoris Pax: Augustus as Peace Bringer and Liberator in Text and Monument

Having dealt with the portrayal of the Egyptian war, I will now examine how the Augustan response to the conflict shifted the focus to peace, again employing both literature and monument. Horace’s portrayal of the scene, composed at Rome following the victory and perhaps as a product of the poet’s own visit to Actium, again focuses on the narrative of military conquest. It celebrates Octavian as the victorious commander whose name the soldiers shout (17-18) and whose feats as dux put the great generals of Roman history to shame (23-26). Whether or not Horace actually observed the battle, there is no question that he wrote the epode as a fairly immediate response to Actium. And, though overall favorable toward Octavian, by continuing to focus on the military aspect the epode does not entirely align with the later Augustan representation of the Egyptian war:

\[
\text{Romanus, eheu, – posteri negabitis –}
\text{emancipatus feminae}
\text{fert vallum et arma miles et spadonibus}
\text{servire rugosis potest,}
\]

\[118\] For example, see Horace’s Epode IX, discussed below.
\[119\] For dating and context, see Gurval 1995, 137-141.
\[120\] Ibid., 138.
“The Roman, alas – you will deny it, posterity – having given up his authority to a woman, brings to bear entrenchments and weapons and he, the soldier, is able to be in service to (her) withered eunuchs…” (Hor. Epod. IX. 11-14).

Though he does present Cleopatra indirectly as the *femina*, denying her the dignity of a name throughout the poem (as does the *Carmen*) and surrounding her with “withered eunuchs,” (*spadonibus…rugosis*, 13-14), he presents her as not just antithesis of acceptable femininity herself, but one who actively deprives others of their masculinity and strength. Horace deviates in his description of Antony as *Romanus* (11). By placing the *Caesar* of line 18 in a war against a fellow Roman, Horace fails to address the implication of civil war that underlies his portrayal. In a way, his *posteri negabitis* is prophetic – future generations would deny not that Antony was an enemy to Octavian and Rome, but rather that he deserved the appellation *Romanus*.

This prediction, though it opposes Augustus’ rhetoric, comes to fruition in the *Res Gestae*, in which Augustus claims to be responsible for eradicating civil discord (*bella ubi civilia exstinxeram*, Aug.RG.34), writing his foe’s Roman-ness out of the narrative and instead focusing on imperial expansion (as discussed at the start of this chapter). Though he came to power through war, he frames himself as the bringer of peace to Rome, a portrayal that merits an entire section of the *Res Gestae*:

Janum Quirinum, quem claussum esse maiores nostri voluerunt, cum per totum imperium populi Romani terra marique esset parta victoriiis pax, cum prius quam nascerer a condita urbe bis omnino clausum fuisse prodatur memoriae ter me principe senatus claudendum esse censuit.
“[The temple of] Janus Quirinus, which our ancestors willed should be closed, when through the whole domain of the Roman people, on both land and sea, peace was established through victory, [and] which before I was born is recorded in history to have been closed only twice since the foundation of the city, the senate decreed to be shut thrice during my time as princeps,” (Aug.RG.13).

Augustus turns to traditional imagery of peace rooted deep in Rome’s past to establish his role as bringer of peace to Rome. He is in venerable company, as the doors of the arch of Janus are said to have been closed first under Numa, the legendary king of early Rome.\textsuperscript{121} Although Augustus is careful to state that the Senate, not he, decrees the closing of the doors, a large part of the \textit{Res Gestae} consists of him taking credit for bringing peace to Rome. The phrasing \textit{parta victoriis pax} demonstrates the importance of war to the Roman conception of peace: \textit{pax} is not the absence of conflict, but the product of its successful resolution. The mention of peace across all of Rome’s dominion, land and sea, echoes the phrasing from \textit{Res Gestae 3: bella terra et mari civilia externaque toto in orbe terrarum suscepi}.\textsuperscript{122}

This \textit{terra marique}, in recalling this sentence, reminds readers that Augustus has already fulfilled the conditions of state-sanctioned peace by waging successful war across the (Roman) world. The defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, which took place both on land and at sea, creates a parallel by which an all-consuming war feeds into an equally ubiquitous peace.

The inclusive geography of the \textit{Res Gestae} corresponds with the physical aspect of this document, which was displayed not only in Rome but also in the provinces. The Roman monument consisted, per Augustus’ instructions, of the text

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Livy. \textit{Ab Urbe Cond.} I.19.
\item \textsuperscript{122} See page 41.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
inscribed on bronze tablets and displayed outside Augustus' Mausoleum after his death in 14 CE. However, what we know about the text derives not from this (since lost) original, but from copies of it found in the Roman province of Galatia in Anatolia. The placement of the original and Augustus’ decision to have this catalogue of achievements erected there upon his death reflect a desire for continuity. Even after Augustus’ death, his legacy lives on among the Roman people through the Res Gestae. As noted previously in the discussion of the text of this document, the conception of Rome in the Augustan era was increasingly expansive, including, to a certain extent, even the provinces at the edges of Roman-controlled territory. The presence of copies as far away as Galatia reinforces the theme of “continuity of empire” present throughout the inscription. The same monument, located in the heart of Rome and at the most culturally heterogeneous fringes of the Roman empire (and probably in numerous other locations where it may not have survived), created a link across the Mediterranean that symbolically held together the territories unified by Augustus.

Though no copies of the Res Gestae survive from Aegyptus, there are texts that reverse the flow of ideology, reflecting the Roman portrayal of the princeps as

124 Augustus chose to place this document not at the ara pacis, in his forum, or at one of the many temples and civic buildings erected during his reign, but in front of his monumental final resting place, “resulting in a fusion of public and private memory,” Ibid., 31-32.
125 Ibid., 30.
126 For physical display in Galatia and associations with the Roman imperial cult in the provinces, see Güven 1998.
127 The presence of corresponding ideas from Rome to provincial contexts as well as in such a text from the periphery directed back to centralized, Roman thought is demonstrative of the success of Augustus’ unifying imperial program.
unifier and bringer of peace through an outside tradition of him as Zeûs ἐλευθέριος in Egypt.\footnote{For more on this idea and how it fits in with the imagery of Apollo at Actium, as well as the Roman point of view, see Miller 2009, 61-64.} A Greek encomiastic poem found on a papyrus from Arsinoe presents a non-Roman perspective on Octavian’s conquest of Egypt:

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'Ἀκτιον ἀμ[φιέπων, ἄνα ν]αμμάχε, Καίσαρος ἔργων
μνήμα καὶ εὐ[τ]υχέων μαρτυρίῃ καμάτων,
Αἰώνος στ[ό]μασιν βεβοημένε...
...
...
...
...
...
...

"Actian guardian, sea-fighting king, memorial of the deeds of Caesar and witness of his successful labors, acclaimed by the mouths of posterity...cutting short the sufferings of fair-eyed peace there, he came, joyous, to the land of the Nile, heavily laden with cargo in good order and exceedingly bountiful provisions, like Zeus the liberator, and Nile received the lord with welcoming arms and his wife, washed by the river’s golden arms, (welcomed) the rain of Zeus Eleutherios, unwarlike and free of strife, and indeed the very name of war was snuffed out…” (SH 982\footnote{SH 982 is also listed as P.Brit.Mus. II inv. 256 \textit{recto}, b and P.Lit.Lond.62, and consists of only one section on a papyrus fragment that includes rhetorical exercises in different hands and likely of a different date than the epigram in question here. This poem appears to have no relation to the other writings found with it (Barbantani 1998, 256-9). I have used Barbantani’s version of the text.}.1-3, 5-12).
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Augustus therefore takes on the role of Zeus ‘the liberator’, a civilizing force bringing peace and prosperity to the (presumably heretofore bereft and bellicose) Egyptians, who welcome him with open arms.\footnote{Augustus’ character from the Alexandrian perspective exhibits a tension between his role as a sort of ‘heir’ to the Ptolemaic succession and his function as the one who brought an end to that same dynasty (see Ibid., 255).} This is a role in keeping with both Roman
propaganda of the Augustan era and Orientalist imperial vocabulary. The ἐσβέσθη δ’οὖνομα καὶ πολέμου of line 12 recalls Augustus’ own claim that he “eradicated civil wars,” (bella ubi civilia extinseram, Aug.RG.34). Both σβέννυμ and exstinguo evoke the putting out of a fire.\textsuperscript{131} This consistency in vocabulary across language and culture demonstrates the ubiquity of Augustan propaganda. As the Roman world expanded, so too did Augustus’ image of himself as the founder of peace and harmony.

The proposed dating of this poem to the last few decades of the first century BCE\textsuperscript{132} places it firmly within the Augustan era, although the author and exact date are unknown. The portrayal of the princeps as a divinity would be particularly suited to the context of the newly established Roman imperial cult in Egypt, and the epigram probably originated in Alexandria at the center of Egypt’s new cultural context and was written from the Greco-Egyptian perspective.\textsuperscript{133} Though it is not recorded elsewhere than on this papyrus fragment, the structure and style of the poem indicate that it may have been intended to be read aloud. It could have been recited by its author as part of a ceremony, perhaps a dedication of a statue of Augustus or of Actian Apollo at Alexandria. It may even have been intended for the ears or eyes of Augustus himself, though without exact dating and authorship it is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} OCD s.v. “exstinguō” 1, 1c. Liddell & Scott s.v. “σβέννυμι” 1, II (entry 1 gives the Latin extinguere as synonymous).
\item \textsuperscript{132} The orthography, content, and handwriting all indicate a late 1\textsuperscript{st} century date, probably contemporary with fragments of Gallus’ epigrams found at Qasr Ibrîm, which exhibit similar stylistics (Barbantani 1998, 259-60).
\item \textsuperscript{133} Barbantani proposes that the epigram made its way on to this papyrus as a copying exercise after the original purpose of the document had been fulfilled and the fragment was ‘recycled’ into this service (Ibid., 263-4).
\end{itemize}
impossible to determine when, if at all, the poem’s recitation may have coincided with the presence of Augustus or his representatives in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{134} Though this portrayal of Augustus is unique (indeed, it was more typical to draw on his associations with Actian Apollo, to whom this epigram is addressed, than with Zeus), the theme of peace and civilization fits neatly into the contemporary Roman visual program.

Given the focus on peace found both in the \textit{Res Gestae} and in such texts as \textit{SH 982}, it comes as no surprise that the same theme featured prominently in his monumental program, especially the \textit{Ara Pacis}.\textsuperscript{135} Commissioned by the Roman senate ca. 13 BCE in celebration of the \textit{princeps’} return to Rome and success in perpetuating the \textit{pax} he established, it was located at the edge of the Campus Martius, which for centuries had been the martaling ground for the Roman army. The placement of this new monument to peace in a space traditionally dedicated to war emphasized the idea that the former could not exist without the latter. Augustus’ commemorates its dedication and location in the \textit{Res Gestae}, effectively emphasizing the monument’s importance in the Roman context and expanding its influence to the provinces, where newly minted Roman subjects could read about it, though they could not see it:

\begin{quote}
\textit{…pars praetorum et tribunorum plebis cum consule Q. Lucretio et principibus viris obviam mihi missa est in Campaniam, qui honos ad hoc tempus nemini praeter me est decretus. Cum ex Hispania}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{134} For the potential performative, dedicatory, and/or commemorative associations of \textit{SH 982}, see Ibid., 275-7).

Galliaque, rebus in his provincis prospere gestis, Romam redi, Ti. Nerone P. Quintilio consulibus, aram Pacis Augustae senatus pro reeditu meo consacrari censuit ad campum Martium, in qua magistratus et sacerdotes et virgines Vestales anniversarium sacrificium facere iussit.

“…part of the praetors and of the tribunes of the plebs together with the consul Quintus Lucretius and the leading men were sent to meet me in Campania, which honor at that time had been decreed to no one apart from me. When, in the consulship of Publius Quintilius, I returned to Rome from Hispania and Gaul, with operations in these provinces carried out advantageously, in honor of my return the senate decreed that an altar to Augustan Peace be dedicated at the Campus Martius, at which [the senate] ordered the magistrates and priests and Vestal virgins to make annual sacrifices,” Aug.RG.12.

With this narrative surrounding the decision to build the Ara Pacis, Augustus associates the monument with provincial harmony (conveyed by prospere), political harmony as demonstrated by the Senate’s continued approbation of his actions and by the presence of important Roman political figures from several levels and branches of government coming to meet him, and traditional Roman religion as represented by the priests and Vestals. The physical togetherness of all these representatives of the Roman state with Augustus in the image surrounding the Ara Pacis mirrors the political and ideological unity represented by the monument.

Augustus emphasized this message in every aspect of the Ara Pacis: its story, its location, and the details of its décor, to which I will now turn.
The construction of an altar to peace at the Campus Martius, Rome’s traditional martalling ground, is physically representative of the idea of victoriis pax, “peace through war,” highlighted in the Res Gestae.\textsuperscript{136} The monument itself consists of a raised central altar within an enclosing wall, all done in marble and likely brightly painted.\textsuperscript{137} It is decorated throughout, but it was also a functioning altar, since, as noted above, priests and Vestals made regular sacrifices there. The inside of the wall features garlands and bucrania above a paneled fence-like pattern, which evokes a modest shrine made of wood slats rather than a grand marble altar.

\textsuperscript{136} See page 45.
\textsuperscript{137} The altar has undergone heavy reconstruction, and some friezes are more completely original than others. For a general history of the restoration, see the museum website at http://www.arapacis.it/en/il_museo/restauri
The floral motifs on the inside echo the swirling acanthus on the bottom panels outside, creating a general impression of abundance and plenty. Like these stone fruits and fronds, Augustus’ Rome flourishes eternally in its new era of peace.  

On the upper panels of the outer walls the sculpture becomes more narrative and, often, harder to interpret. On the Eastern side of the altar, flanking a door, are seated divinities (Roma on a pile of arms across from what may be Tellus or Pax with two accompanying figures). Next to the altar’s other doorway, on the left-hand panel, the war god Mars appears next to a scene of the wolf of Rome nursing Romulus and Remus. The right-hand panel, which has proven particularly difficult to interpret, shows two men preparing a sacrifice with two younger attendants and a temple in the background. Traditionally, it was thought to depict Aeneas preparing a sacrifice with his son, Ascanius Iulius, and two younger attendants, with a small temple elevated in the background. However, inconsistencies with Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the age and imagery of the ‘Aeneas’ figure and his companion have prompted Paul Rehak to propose a potential reinterpretation of this man as Numa Pompilius, Rome’s second king and Romulus’ successor. The processions of the southern and northern walls feature several children among the adults in traditional Roman garb, particularly evident since the height of the monument and the elevation of the

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138 For imagery of abundance on the Ara Pacis, see Castriota 1995.
139 This is one of the panels that has been restored (see above note), and the figure of Mars is not of certain identification.
140 Many of the figures are fragmentary and/or contested. These are some of the more widely accepted identifications, but for a more nuanced discussion see the suggested bibliography for the Ara Pacis in the previous note. I will address the implications of some of the panels below.
141 For details of the original interpretation, see Rehak 2001, 190-194.
142 Ibid., 196.
friezes render them more visible than the taller figures around them. Like the figure behind Rehak’s Numa, several of these children appear in foreign dress. Though figures S-30 and N-34 have traditionally been labelled Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Augustus’ adoptive sons, recent interpretations identify them as foreign pignora, ‘pledges of empire’ in the form of important foreign youths sent to live and study in Rome with the imperial household. These figures are useful in interpreting the assimilation of foreign territories into the Roman empire, and I will return to them below. The Ara Pacis combines such peaceful imagery of growth and traditional Roman pietas with martial imagery as a constant reminder that the two go hand-in-hand.

The probable presence of the war god and the bellatrix (perhaps Roma) on the Western and Eastern façades reinforce the importance of combat and conquest to the security of the Roman state. It is only through strife among the brothers that Romulus became the founder and first ruler of Rome. Likewise, Augustus has brought Rome through a period of conflict so that he might rebuild in times of peace. Numa’s presence on the Ara Pacis would be a reminder that he, too, closed the gates of the temple of Janus and brought peace to Rome. He also established

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143 Most notably, they are missing the toga and bulla, the standard for depictions of Roman children, instead sporting foreign tunics, footwear (or lack thereof), and ornaments (see Kleiner and Buxton 2008, 72).
144 For both the traditional and newly proposed interpretations of these children see Ibid., 59.
145 This figure in particular recalls the victrix…Romana (Carmen II.9-10) responsible for enslaving the Egyptian people.
146 On the opposite side of the altar, Roma personified sits enthroned on a pile of weaponry, an image equally consistent with this Roman conception of the codependent relationship between war and peace.
Rome’s Fetial law, which lays out the rules and requirements of "bellum iustum," a focus both of the Carmen and of Augustan ideology in general. Rehak suggests that this panel represents Numa making a sacrifice to ratify a peace treaty with "a foreign king." Though he does not propose a nationality or specific identity for this second figure aside from his regal and non-Roman attributes, this juxtaposition of Roman and non-Roman resonates with the presence of the non-Roman children in the processional scenes.

Much as the imperial cult or copies of the Res Gestae constituted a central Roman presence at the fringes of the state’s territory, the foreign children sent to the heart of Rome from its periphery reinforced the boundlessness and unity of Augustus’ expanding empire. Since they were incorporated as members of the imperial domus, they also represent Augustus’ position of mercy and benevolence toward conquered, ‘barbarian’ peoples. Rather than destroying his enemies, he made them his family and his subjects by thoroughly “Romanizing” them. They are not spoils of war, but promises of security for Rome’s future and the longevity of Augustus’ imperial vision.

147 Augustus himself was a member of the fetial priesthood (fetialis fui, Aug.RG.7) and conducted a fetial ceremony in 32 BCE to confirm the iustitia of his war against Antony and Cleopatra.
148 Ibid. For a Roman source on Numa as a bringer of peace and a lawmaker, see Livy, Ab Urbe Condita I.18-21. See also Rehak 2001, 198-9 for parallels between the lives of Numa and Augustus.
149 Ibid., 197.
150 The specific identities of the pignora are not crucial to the message – much like the Sere[s] et Indi of the Carmen (fr. 10.8), they represent generalized ‘Oriental’ people. It is enough that they are non-Roman.
151 For more on the role of these children in the imperial household and their importance to their home countries, see Kleiner and Buxton 2008, 67-8.
The presence of these foreign *pignora imperii* on the Ara Pacis in procession with Augustus, Agrippa, and the leading men and women of Rome necessarily recalls the imagery of a triumphal procession. Octavian’s Egyptian triumphs, emblematic of his attitude toward and celebration of conquest, also featured foreign children. Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios, Cleopatra’s children by Antony, appeared both in the triumphal procession and in Octavian’s celebratory monumentalization of Nicopolis near the site of the battle of Actium. Cassius Dio records their presence at the triumphal procession in Rome:

...τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ ἡ Κλεοπάτρα ἐπὶ κλίνες ἐν τῷ τοῦ θανάτου μιμήματί παρεκομίσθη, ὡστε τρόπον τινὰ καὶ ἐκείνην μετὰ τε τῶν ἄλλων αἰχμαλώτων καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ καὶ Ἡλίου, τῆς τε Κλεοπάτρας τῆς καὶ Σελήνης, τῶν τέκνων, ὡς πομπεῖον όφθηναι.

“And among other things Cleopatra was carried past on a couch as an effigy, she who was dead, so that in some way she too, along with the other captives and with Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, her children, was displayed as a trophy” (Cass.Dio, *Hist. rom.* LXI.21.8).

Though Cleopatra could only be conveyed in effigy, her children’s presence was real, and in this passage, they fulfill a role that encompasses the ideas both of *pignora* and of human *spolia*. Their mother becomes a πομπεῖον, an object carried in procession, in contrast but also in connection with the other captives. The children are not just some of these αἰχμαλώτοι, but instead constitute a separate category. It is the same half-foreignness, their descent from Cleopatra, that enables them to be both captives and guests in Octavian’s Rome.

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152 Ibid., 77
A visual depiction of this second day of triumph in 29 BCE may appear on the frieze of a *tropaeum*-sanctuary at Nikopolis.\(^{153}\) This monument, erected by Octavian between 29 and 27 BCE, features a monumental altar upon the spot where the *imperator* himself supposedly pitched his tent before the battle of Actium.\(^{154}\) Among its varied sculptural décor is a processional frieze not dissimilar to those of the Ara Pacis. This procession, however, seems to explicitly reference the triumphal procession of 29 BCE. It features a crowned victor with two children in a chariot, surrounded by togate figures and a few men in barbarian dress. Zachos identifies the victor as Octavian and proposes that the children represent Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene. Since Dio’s report has children marching with an effigy of their mother on the third day of the triumph, this frieze may depict the second day, which celebrated the victory at Actium. After this event, Cleopatra’s children would continue to live in Rome members of the extended imperial household.\(^{155}\) The probable immediacy of this monument to the events it depicts demonstrates that Octavian’s desire to give prominence to his foreign hostage-guests dates to the very start of his program of imperial conquest.

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The role of Cleopatra’s children in Augustan propaganda aligns with the general Roman view of Egypt present throughout the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco*. Cleopatra Selene and Alexandria Helios, like *Aegyptus*, are both Roman and

\(^{153}\) Kleiner and Buxton consider this frieze and Nikopolis’ general sculptural program “a precursor to the Ara Pacis,” (Kleiner and Buxton 2008, 78).

\(^{154}\) Zachos 2003, 76, 82-3.

\(^{155}\) Ibid., 90-92.
foreign, subordinate to the state of which they have become part. Through their iconography and decoration, the monuments of the Augustan era represent a transition from war to peace that brings with it regeneration and tranquility for the newly expanded Roman state. Texts like the Carmen mirror this imagery through their characterization of and vocabulary for ‘foreign’ people and places. The character of Cleopatra, much like the Montecitorio obelisk or the pignora on the Ara Pacis, is an Egyptian export rewritten to reflect the Roman perspective. Though fierce, Octavian’s conflict with allowed Rome to enter a period of unprecedented prosperity and growth. This resonance between literature and material culture confirms that the Carmen de Bello Actiaco exists as a product of Augustan-era ideologies, whether or not it was actually composed during the reign of Augustus. It therefore merits further study and a place within this complex tapestry of cultures and people which would become the Roman empire.
Conclusion

The Carmen de Bello Actiaco is a problematic text for a variety of reasons: its lack of a known author or date, its highly fragmentary nature, and its unusual style. However, it memorializes one of the most fascinating periods of Roman history. It presents a view of the events surrounding Octavian’s conquest of Egypt that is simultaneously in concordance with contemporary Roman thought and unique in its detailed treatment of Cleopatra VII. The author uses geographic identifiers to emphasize the physical and cultural gulf between Egypt and Rome in the first century BCE, establishing a discourse of alterity that conforms with a certain type of “Orientalist” thought. The characterization the actors involved on both sides justifies Octavian’s involvement in an explicitly non-civil war.

The character of Cleopatra VII is by far the most compelling feature of the text, which is why she has been one of the main focuses of my analysis. As an Egyptian ruler of Macedonian descent, she represents the already unique cultural dynamic present in Ptolemaic Egypt at the time. The language of the Carmen reduces this historical figure to a fictional villain by highlighting her perceived alterity, using Octavian’s Romanitas as the standard against which to measure her foreignness. The vocabulary used to refer to Cleopatra strips her of personal identity and reconstructs her as a double-gendered personification of all that is antithetical to Roman ideals of womanhood. Her words and her transgressive actions in the ‘arena of death’ scene confirm that she is cruel and dangerous.

Cleopatra’s subalternation serves the double purpose of confirming the iustitia of Rome’s military involvement against a dangerous foreign enemy and of making
Egypt an attractive prospect for conquest. In the years following Actium, Octavian undertook a persuasive visual and literary campaign, making *Aegyptus* and Cleopatra a focus of his triple triumph and issuing commemorative coins to mark his success. An examination of Augustan literature (Horace, Vergil, the *Res Gestae*, etc.) and monuments (obelisks imported from Egypt, the Ara Pacis, the *Res Gestae*, etc.) demonstrates a continuity and gradual refinement of the message of successful conquest and lasting peace across the decades of the princeps’ rule. The *Carmen de Bello Actiaco* fits within this array of media all presenting minor variations on the same theme, and it should therefore be studied within the context of the Augustan era. In this setting, it comes to life as a poem about a specific kind of war – a just war waged for the benefit of Rome and resulting in a period of renewal and regrowth for the Roman state under Augustus.

After being sealed for centuries under hardened volcanic material in the Villa dei Papiri, the *Carmen de Bello Actiaco* has in many ways remained buried in classical scholarship. Despite its compelling narrative and resonance with other well-known texts, it has not received the attention it merits, largely due to the many unresolved questions about its origins and missing fragments. A close reading of this text against more canonical literature can, for example, allow us to reinterpret the gender dynamics on the shield of Aeneas or better understand the types of and justifications for war that lie behind texts like Lucan’s *Pharsalia*. The *Carmen* should, therefore, be read and studied more closely as a representative yet unique piece of Literature born from the turmoil, adjustment, and renewed prosperity that Rome underwent at the end of the first century.
Bibliography


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The *Carmen*: Latin Text

**Fragmenta:**

1a) . api . . . . . . rau . . . . . .
   . . . . . . ore. . . . . . . .
   . a. tu. . ac. . ai. . . . .
   . mige. . . . . ultau. . . . .
5 imut. tu. . . ufad. . . . .
   . mfa. eg. ara. . . . . . .
   . . . . . . dum gen[ibus]. . . .
   . . . . . . [su]mmu[m]. . . . . .
   . . . . . . sacra iu[bet]. . . .

1b) . . . . . . r. o . . . . . . . .
   . . . . . . regia m. . . . . . .
   . [tran]quilis. . . . . . . .
5 . . . . . . us soli. . . . .
   . . . . . . mei regin[a]. . . . .
   . nu. . em adh[aret]. . . . .
   . . . . . . os et ten[dit]. . .
   . . . . . . nt ritu. . . . . . .

2) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
   . . . . . . a . . . . . m ips. . p. . . . . . .
   [uir]geneos parat illa choros . . . . .
   [im] miscet[a]e mares inpuberis . . . . .
5 . . . . . . [ex]miros et carmina. . . . .
   . . . . . . [fall]aci [s]pes dicta sib[i]. .
   . . . . . . situm adcl. .
   . . . . . . uere totidemque ads[umit]. .
   [hos inter pro]gressa equos inte[rque
   ministros]. . .

3) . . . . . . iumaf . . . . .
   . . . . . . o . . . .
   . . . . . . em coh[ibe]ntes
   . . . . . . n plebem ego no[stram]
5 . . . . . . exempta solutae
   . . . . . . mediamquest. .
   . . . . . . moenia flectis
   . . . . . . u . iura deosque
   . . . . . . [san]cta uetusti
10 . . . . . . sira Nilo

3a) . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
   . . . . . . [m]. . . . . . .
   . [ha]. . . . . . . . .
   . . funest[a]. . .
   [ob]scena a . .
5 . . . . . . is ante. . . [p]uppis
   . . . . . . [be]lli

**Translation**

...while...knees...
...highest...
...sacred/rites...orders...
...royal/palace...
...calm...
...to the sun...
...of me...queen...
...clings...
...and stretches (out)...
...with the rite...
...she prepares the maiden chorus/dance...and
mixes in men...not yet mature...
...living...and each... present ...for whom is...
...excepted/extraordinary...and the
verses/songs...hope said for them(?)
deceptive(ly)...set...truly...and [she] took up just
as many/so many...here advancing among
horses and among attendants...
...confining/warding off...
...[one]our common people...
...removed...released...
...and is in the midst...
...walls...you turn (aside)...
...laws and the gods...
...made sacred...the ancient things
...the Nile...
...calamitous...
...inauspicious...
...before...the stern...
...of war...
4b) ... nos ... 
.... lu ....... 
.... captiu.a ... ... captive/prisoner...
.... [u]cit cor. ... ...the heart conquered...

5 . [ca]eli[que n]otique
.... queri. ... iau nu ... ... both of the heavens and of the known...
.... quem calo[r]. ... ...which...heat...
.... s ha. a. ...... 

5) .............
.... m. ... f. as. ... qu. ........
.... umque. .............
.... es manif[estum].. ...evident...

5 . oli. ... xi curu. ............
.... mor istis. ............
.... Alexand. ......... ...Alexand[ria]...
.... Anu[bis] ......... ...Anubis...
.... qu ...... ......

6) ............. [ob]scen. ............. ...ill-omened...
.... cordi. ............. ...
.... nqu. ... compte. ... usus ...
    Uari ingentia ri. Ae. ... diverse...large...
5 ... qua ... tuat te ... a profuit. ...
    [Ba]ctica. ... u humil[ti]s [cu] m r. ... ...Bactra...humble...
.... lit. ... bem. ....... 
.... s[a] Lau[ren]tibus arm[i]s ...Roman arms...
.... ille profatus ...he...having prophesied...
10 ................. urbes. ... ch ....... ...cities...

7) ............. ot ... u .......
.... [iuu]n[ti]bus a[ustris] ... ...with aiding southerly winds
.... ure[r]et unda ... ...the wave [it] was burning/would burn
    [uest]ligia posset ...he/she/it could...signs..
5 ... [ull]m indiscrimen h[aberet] ...it would have...any interval
.... [co]mage carinae ...with/by the joining of the keels...
.... maxima cum n[ox] ...when night [was]greatest...
.... [no]ua saepis ...new...frequent(ly)...
.... iuis 

8) Vt ra[pida]... ...swift[ly]...
    quam z[eephyri]. ...as/how the West winds...
    Indica q[uam tellus]. ...The indic (indigo?) earth...
    Parua cu[m].... small...
5 flectitur. ... ...is turned [aside]...
    sic imm[ota]. ...thus fixed...
    pondere. ... ...in balance/by a weight...
    solaqu[e]. ... and singly...
    quae su[per]... ...which...above..
10 nec fa[cile]... nor...easy/easily...
9) Nilus... atque al[ii]... N[o]x int[er]... o[rt]a grau[i]... effudere... includun[t]... quorum au[rora]... litora pellit... pars inclus[a]... The Nile... and other(s)... between... night... having risen/stirred... serious... pour forth... they close in... whose... (at) dawn... propelled (to) shore... part enclosed... 

10) [nouo]s adportat in u[s]us... ter[ra]que remo[tas]... [sucqu]r[ere] et Sere[s] et Indi... with these still... now... brings into fresh employment... and distant lands... bring aid... Oriental peoples... 

11a). on... o t... u... come... uba... a manu... minant... sic nocte... sica... ceran... a... after... Actian... wished/turned... and... youth... 

11b). [i]n med[iis]... ueni[t] sistrum... manu [ut] [ag]mina [cogat]... [s]uperan[t]... ra... nas... ra ului[t]... que iu[uentus]... came... sistrum... with hand... as... battle line... would gather... they surpass... shore... turned... and (with) the winds assisting... 

<12a illegible>

12b). e n... su... ad... o... a l... queisqu[e]... nilus... ecremus: thus anger of the gods... orders... to the defeated: we shall bear suffering... Look, fertile Pelusian earth lies wide open the way unfolds, and the rambling Nile, even in its entirety, before you... this... you would accomplish... 

[car]nae linis [pr]ecor h[a]ec ul... [Adnixus]que manus genibu[s]... null[ceb]at amanti... uertit dictis... t lin... turns with words...
<12c illegible>

13) . . . . . . pe. . . . . .
    . . . . . . Phar. . . . . . .
    . . . . . . am c. . . . . .
    . . . . . . uere q[u].
5 . . . . fuerat . . . . . .
    . . . . . . nii pau.
    . . . . . . a tenu . . .
. [pon]dere c . . .
. . . . . . . . . . . .

14) . . . . . . . . . . . . lla. . . . . .
    . . . . . . [in bel]lum pellere, cu[r]sus
    . . . . . . [c]arbasa nauta
5 . . . . . . . . . . . . uanor mare ge[n]tis
    . . . . . . . . . . . . ni a[e]quore uincit
    . . . . . . . . . . . . ista moueri
. . . . . . . . . . . . ta . am. . em
. . . . . . . . . . . . nube
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ferro

15a). . . n. u . .
    . . . . . . nmifr . .
    . . . . . . tosa .
[Pel]usia .
. . . . . . . . . . . .

15b). . . . . . . . . . . . unt. . . . . .
    . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
    . . . . . . nacta die[m]. . . .
    . . . . . . eres u . . .
5 . . . . . . . . . . . . ton. . . .
    . . . . . . uso. . .
    . . . . . . ora . . .

16a). . . . . .
    . . . . . . um n. . rum
    . . . . . . fiducia gentis
. . . . . . spe[s ]nuersa ruina
5 . . . . . . quo[n]dam . . [c]epit
. qu. . . iu praecipe nobis
. . . . . . i pondera uertunt
. . . . . . . . . . . .

<16b-c and 17-26 illegible>
Columnae:

I) proxim. Caesaris. .. ad Pharia.. s..... exc[it] [ho]r[ans ille] [petit] [nato cum [pro]elia por][tam],

5 quem iuuenem [g]ran[dae]uos erat per [c]uncta [sec]u[tus]
bella, fide dextraque po[to]rens rerumque per us[um]


II) [illo]s [se]qu[i]tur.... [fugiu]nt ipso que infecta cru[o]re [funera succ]edunt patr[i]is defor[mis]
[et foed]a ipsa m[ore] quam si cong[e]sta later[i]nt,

"Quid [ca]pitis iam [ca]pta iacent quae [praemia belli?]
subruitis ferro mea moenia.
Quondam er[at] hostis haec mihi cum [caus][a plebes quoque:
[de]ni[que u]indicat h[anc fa]mulam Romana tot e[nis]is [ge]ntem."

III) ............... [n]umin Al[ex]andro tha[l]mos in[tr]a[re dea][rum]:
di[co] etiam no[u]isse deam uidisse[e] t'um[tu]s

5 Actiacos, cum [ca]usa fores tu ma[x]ima [be]l[i]

ex[a]n[gi]isque moras utae libet? Est mihi coniunx,
Who was able to join the Parthians to the Pharian/Egyptian kingdoms [...] and to die in the name of our people."
With these [words], therefore, their mind was pulled in all directions, it is unclear what she wishes, in which lands or which seas...

And a chosen place at which the guilty crowd might assemble and exhibit sad spectacles of its own death. Just as when spears are prepared for impending battles, standards, trumpets, and fleets together with land weapons, so seemed the aspect of the place, where the fierce tools of death came together, stored up with various preparations: thus from all about, gathered there on the field, was wandering every awful type of death, every type of fear.

This one lies killed by a sword, that one swells with poison or, asp hanging from a hollow neck, slips into soft sleep and is pulled away by the desire for death: this one a short snake strikes down by its breath, without bites, or a small [amount] of poison, spread in a narrow wound, kills more swiftly. Some are compelled by tight nooses to let out from crushed passageways their blocked breath, and the throats of those submerged [in water] closed their jaws. She came down from her throne among the ruins and among...

And beginning other things he leaves me, his lover, wretched.
Thus they enjoy a sad discourse between them. The queen carries out these things: far off Atropos, hidden, was watching her, mocking her as she wandered among the different plans for death, she whom the fates were now awaiting. Thrice the day had been pushed back: when, with part of the senate and of his fatherland accompanying him, Caesar came running with his soldiers to the walls of the people of Alexander, and he set down the standards; thus terror...all...into a narrow...

[they could] destroy even the bars of the gates so that they enclose neither the city in a siege nor their army in the walls, and they placed camps in front of the walls, and infantry weapons.
ponunt. Hos inter coetus [t]alisque ad bella paratus
utraque sollemnis iterum reuocauerat orbes
consiliis nox apta ducum, lux aptior armis.

Between these arrivals and such great
preparation for war each had called back the
sun again in its solemn path, the night suited to
the planning of the generals, the light more
disposed to arms.

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i I have taken the Latin from the editions of Zecchini, Garuti, and Benario, giving
preference in cases of disagreement to the most complete rendering of the text
or the most agreed-upon restoration.

ii The translations are my own, and I have sought to provide the most probable
translation wherever the text is complete enough to make reading possible.