

THE CLEOPATRAS AND THE JEWS

By Sarah Pearce

READ 23 SEPTEMBER 2016

ABSTRACT. This paper explores a variety of evidence for relations between Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt, and her Jewish subjects. In the first part of the paper, the focus is on the profoundly negative portrait of the queen in the works of Josephus, with particular attention to Cleopatra's alleged antipathy to Alexandrian Jews in Josephus's *Against Apion*. Analysis of Josephus's evidence confirms, I argue, that his case against the queen does not stand up. The second part of the paper offers a detailed consideration of other evidence, epigraphic and literary, which, I suggest, confirms a picture of the queen as continuing the policy of her predecessors with regard to the Jews of the Ptolemaic kingdom, by participating in the long-established practice of extending royal support and protection to Jewish *proseuchai* (places of prayer). While the evidence does not permit definitive conclusions, it suggests that Cleopatra looked to particular Jewish groups – as to others – within Egypt for support and in this, followed a path taken by Cleopatra II and Cleopatra III. Finally, a few details in Plutarch's *Life of Antony* may also suggest the queen's political and personal alliances with individual Jews, in Egypt and Judea.

Little has come down to us from antiquity by way of detailed reports of the life of Cleopatra VII. This is not surprising in view of the tendency of ancient authors to neglect the lives of women,¹ and, in particular, a life that was subjected to the relentlessly negative propaganda of the Augustan house.² Our most substantial literary source is the biographer and philosopher Plutarch (c. 45–c. 125 CE), whose moralising accounts of famous Greek and Roman men, as presented in the *Parallel Lives*, deal with Cleopatra's role in the lives of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Our most complete narrative of the period context of Cleopatra's reign comes from Cassius Dio's *Roman History*; writing long after the Roman victory over Cleopatra, Dio (c. 164 CE – after 229) is nevertheless our most substantial source for the preservation of Augustan propaganda against the queen. Otherwise, our most important literary account of Cleopatra is provided by the Jewish historian Josephus, writing towards the end of the first century CE, in the aftermath of the Jewish War against Rome

¹ Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Heroines and Hysterics* (Bristol, 1981), vii: 'No great ancient writer devoted himself or herself to the task of writing a woman's biography.'

² Maria Wyke, *The Roman Mistress: Ancient and Modern Representations* ('Meretrix regina: Augustan Cleopatras') (Oxford, 2002), 195–243.

and the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70. Josephus represents Cleopatra as a significant figure in two distinct contexts: first, in her relations with her close neighbour, Herod, the king of Judaea; and, secondly, as an enemy of the Jews of her capital, Alexandria. In both contexts, the queen is painted as a monster.³

The testimony of Josephus has long served to define the rule of Cleopatra as profoundly negative for Jews, and it forms the basis for later judgements that Jews responded by betraying Cleopatra and rejoiced at her downfall.⁴ In the case of the Jews of Egypt, there is no evidence for either contention. If Cleopatra's rule was indeed a negative experience for the Jews of her kingdom, this would mark her out as following a very different path from that taken by her predecessors with regard to the large and important Jewish community that prospered in Ptolemaic Egypt from the times of Ptolemy II Philadelphus onwards. A golden age of Jewish literature flourished in Ptolemaic Egypt, from the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek to tales of Jewish triumphs and happy relationships with Ptolemaic monarchs who valued their Jewish subjects and honoured the Jewish God. Inscriptions from Jewish prayer-houses record the loyalty of Jewish communities in Egypt to their Ptolemaic rulers, while the corpus of Jewish papyri from Egypt illuminates the lives of Jewish settlers, serving in the Ptolemaic army and administration.⁵ Against this background, Josephus's testimony presents Cleopatra as an aberration. In so doing, he applied to the Jews the more general tendency of the Augustan literature to present the queen as a 'singular stain' on her

³ The subject of Josephus's treatment of Cleopatra is rarely studied in detail: notable exceptions include Ilse Becher, *Das Bild der Kleopatra in der griechischen und lateinischen Literatur* (Berlin, 1966), 63–8; Jan Willem van Henten, 'Cleopatra in Josephus: From Herod's Rival to the Wise Ruler's Opposite', in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*, ed. Anthony Hillhorst and George H. van Kooten (Leiden, 2006), 115–34; Aryeh Kasher, *King Herod: A Persecuted Persecutor: A Case Study in Psychohistory and Psychobiography* (Berlin, 2007), 126–54.

⁴ See, for example, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), s.v. 'Cleopatra'; Louis H. Feldman, 'Pro-Jewish Intimations in Anti-Jewish Remarks', in Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (Leiden, 1996), 177–236 (214–16); Werner Huß, *Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit 332–30 v. Chr.* (Munich, 2001), 754–5; and the more detailed attempt to show Cleopatra's antipathy towards Jews in Livia Capponi, *Il Tempio di Leontopoli in Egitto: Identità Politica e Religiosa dei Giudei di Onia (c. 150 a.C.–73 d.C.)* (Pisa, 2007), 115–19. Against the construction of Cleopatra as anti-Jewish, see, for example, brief remarks in Victor A. Tcherikover, 'Prolegomena', in *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 1, ed. Victor A. Tcherikover in collaboration with Alexander Fuks (Cambridge, MA, 1957), 55; Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski, 'La dernière chance des Juifs d'Égypte', *L'Histoire*, 238 (Dec. 1999), 48–9 (49); Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction* (Leiden, 2009), 55 n. 121; Duane W. Roller, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (Oxford, 2010), 103–4.

⁵ For an authoritative overview, see Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Ramesses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton, 1995).

Macedonian heritage;⁶ the last, and worst, of Ptolemaic rulers. In what follows, I attempt to open up Josephus's evidence for closer scrutiny to see what lies beneath, together with an examination of other evidence that may offer alternative perspectives.

I begin with Josephus on Cleopatra and the Alexandrian Jews. Josephus's treatment of this subject forms part of an extended attack on Cleopatra in his work known as the *Against Apion*. Among ancient sources, this attack may be considered, as Duane Roller observes in his recent biography of the queen, 'perhaps the most complete and concise polemic' directed against Cleopatra's reputation.⁷ As Josephus constructs her in the *Against Apion*, Cleopatra committed every possible crime: against her family, her husbands and her 'benefactors', the Roman people and their leaders; she murdered her siblings; desecrated the temples and tombs of her ancestors; her 'husband' Antony she made a traitor to Rome, and then betrayed him herself. In this great catalogue of monstrous crimes, the final place is given to Cleopatra's alleged hostility to the Jews of Alexandria.⁸

As with all our literary sources for the representation of Cleopatra, the context is complicated. Indeed, in the case of Josephus's *Against Apion*, we are dealing with the polemical use of the figure of Cleopatra in different contexts over more than a century, and a brief look at that background is essential for understanding what Josephus is about. First, the *Against Apion* is a work of the late first/early second centuries CE (c. 94–c. 105 CE), in which Josephus sets out to defend the reputation of the Jewish people against their detractors and to promote a vision of Judaism as compatible with Roman values and loyalty to the Roman Empire.⁹ A member of the ruling class of Judaea before the war, Josephus played a leading role on the rebel side before his imprisonment by the Romans in 67 CE; in the freedom awarded by the victors, Vespasian and Titus, Josephus dedicated his life to writing in defence of the Jewish people. Older studies often portrayed Josephus as traitor to the Jewish cause; the Roman lackey, living a life of ease in the household of the emperors who made their name with the destruction of Jerusalem. A very different and more complex portrait of Josephus emerges in modern scholarship: a courageous and loyal Jew, working in a context deeply hostile towards Jews. As a matter of imperial policy, all Jews of the Roman Empire were punished for the revolt in Judaea (66–73/4 CE) through the imposition of

⁶ Propertius, *Elegies* Book 3.11, 40: 'una Phillipeo sanguine adusta nota'.

⁷ Roller, *Cleopatra*, 131.

⁸ Josephus, *Apion* 2.56–61.

⁹ The *Against Apion* must post-date the publication of Josephus's *Antiquities*, referred to at *Apion* 1.1; 2.287, and known to have been completed in 93/94 CE (Josephus, *Antiquities* (*Ant.*) 20.267): for detailed discussion, see John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* (*Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, x, ed. Steve Mason; Leiden, 2007), xxvi–viii.

the *fiscus iudaicus*; the propaganda of the emperors promoted their own role as saviours of the Roman people by emphasising the magnitude of the Jewish threat that they had crushed. In the decades after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Roman world was not a comfortable place for Jews – not at all – and Josephus's work is a powerful witness to that fact.¹⁰

The *Against Apion* is a deeply apologetic work, explicitly formulated as a response to specific accusations against the Jews and Jewish customs, and filled with features that look designed to appeal to Roman readers – with an emphasis on the venerable antiquity of the Jews and the harmonious relationship between the authentic Jewish way of life and loyalty to Rome and traditional Roman values.¹¹ At the heart of this work is a long, sustained refutation of hostile statements made by Greek-writing authors against Jews and Judaism.¹² Among these, the final example is represented by the figure of Apion of Alexandria, the eponymous villain of the book's best-known title.¹³ It is Apion, according to Josephus, who was apparently the source for the allegation that Cleopatra VII treated the Jews of Alexandria badly.¹⁴ Josephus aims to turn this charge around to benefit the reputation of the Jews, assuming his readers' familiarity with the deeply negative reputation of Cleopatra in Rome: if the Roman people and its government were Cleopatra's deadly enemies, then 'we' Jews should be glorified, not maligned, for finding 'ourselves' also abused by this monstrous queen.¹⁵ In fact, the strength of Josephus's argument is unimpressive on this point: the list of murders, sacrilege and betrayals attributed to the queen climaxes in her omission of the Jews from a distribution of grain in time of famine.¹⁶

The charge that Cleopatra was hostile to the Jews of Alexandria has often been accepted at face value. The great Thackeray, editor of the 1926 Loeb edition of the *Against Apion*, still a great standard in scholarship,

¹⁰ Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and his Society* (2nd edn; Oxford, 2002), 226–9. On the Roman context of Flavian propaganda: Fergus Millar, 'Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome', in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason and James Rives (Oxford, 2008), 101–28; Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War, A.D. 66–74* (New York, 2016), 3–43; and, in relation to the *Against Apion*, Barclay, *Against Apion*, xxxvi–xliv.

¹¹ On the alignment of the *Against Apion* with Roman values, political and cultural: Martin Goodman, 'Josephus' Treatise *Against Apion*', in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, Simon Price and Christopher Rowland (Oxford, 1999), 45–58; Barclay, *Against Apion*, 167–9, 362–9. On the apologetic character of the work: Barclay, *Against Apion*, xxx–vi.

¹² Josephus, *Apion* 1.219–2.286; as 'refutation', cf. 2.1, ἀντίρρησις, 'counter-statement'; on his purpose in writing, cf. especially 1.1–5; 2.1–7, 287–96.

¹³ *Ibid.* 2.2–144, cf. 148, 295.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 2.56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 2.56: 'Is (Apion) autem etiam ultimae Cleopatrae Alexandrinorum reginae meminit, ueluti nobis impropers quoniam circa nos fuit ingrata' (my emphasis).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 2.60.

entitles this section ‘Persecution by the infamous Cleopatra’.¹⁷ However, there are good reasons to be cautious about the reliability of this allegation against the queen. First of all, it relies on the testimony of Apion, as mediated through Josephus. A contemporary of neither Cleopatra nor Josephus, Apion was an Alexandrian scholar of the first half of the first century CE, famous for his commentaries on the classics of Greek literature but also with a mixed reputation, based on his publishing some manifestly outlandish lies.¹⁸ Apion’s many works are all lost, preserved only in fragments in the works of authors like Josephus, who uses them to his own end.¹⁹ As his source for Apion’s statements on the Jews, Josephus drew on Apion’s five-volume work on Egyptian topics, the *Aigyptiaka*.²⁰ This was no systematic treatise against the Jews, but, in the extracts preserved by Josephus, Apion had created a hostile and unflattering portrait of the Jews and their ancestors. A major part of this material dealt with Apion’s contempt for the idea that Jews could be called ‘Alexandrians’, even though Jews did not worship the gods of the city.²¹ It is in this broader context that Josephus locates Apion’s remarks about Cleopatra and the Jews. We also know from Josephus that Apion played a leading role in the politics surrounding the crisis of 38 CE, when a faction of the Greek elite in Alexandria led an attack on Jewish civic rights in that city, culminating in an outbreak of extreme violence against the Jews. Apion led an embassy to the emperor Gaius Caligula to put the case for the Greeks; Philo, the outstanding Jewish scholar of the time, headed up the delegation to speak for the Jews of Alexandria.²² The precise nature and cause of the dispute is impossible to determine from the evidence available.²³ Philo, our chief source for events, emphasises the wholly unprecedented character of the

¹⁷ Henry St.J. Thackeray, *Josephus, I: The Life. Against Apion* (London and Cambridge, MA, 1926), 315.

¹⁸ A notorious example involves the claim that Apion’s expositions of Homer owed their authority to a tutorial with the spirit of Homer in the underworld (Pliny, *H.N.* 30.18). On the figure of Apion: Barclay, *Against Apion*, 170–1, with detailed bibliography.

¹⁹ The remains of Apion’s works are collected in *FGrHist.* 616.

²⁰ Josephus, *Apion* 2.10, cites a passage about Moses from the third book of Apion’s *Aigyptiaka*. Following Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights* 5.14.4), Apion’s *Aigyptiaka* comprised 5 volumes; Tatian (*Discourse to the Greeks* 38) refers to volume IV of the same work.

²¹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.32–78.

²² Josephus, *Ant.* 18.257–60. Philo wrote an extended account of his embassy to Gaius, but does not name Apion among the members of the opposing Alexandrian embassy: Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, esp. 178–206, 349–73.

²³ On the crisis of 38 CE and its wider context, important recent studies include John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh, 1996), 48–71; Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2002), 54–83; Pieter van der Horst, *Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 2003); Gottfried Schimanowski, *Juden und Nichtjuden in Alexandria: Koexistenz und Konflikte bis zum Pogrom unter Trajan (117 n.Chr.)* (Berlin, 2006); Gambetti, *Alexandrian Riots*.

attempt to destroy the civic privileges of the Jewish community, above all the right of Jews to observe their ancestral customs without compromising the fundamental Jewish prohibition of worshipping other gods.²⁴ The matters brought before Gaius, so Philo states, had not been brought up for 400 years;²⁵ in other words, at no time since the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great and his foundation of the city of Alexandria. Under all the Ptolemaic monarchs, Philo declares, Jews were permitted to show their loyalty to the crown by making offerings to God on behalf of the monarchs, a way of honouring their rulers without taking part in the city's cults of the deified Ptolemies.²⁶ Philo leaves us in no doubt that this was also the situation under Cleopatra VII and that the policy continued under the rule of Roman emperors until the accession of the lunatic Gaius Caligula, who declared himself a god. It was only then that a certain faction in Alexandria, among whom we should include Apion (not named by Philo), stirred up accusations against the Jews that their refusal to worship the emperor was, in effect, treason. Against this background, it seems that part of Apion's argument was that Cleopatra's treatment of the Jews confirmed that they lacked civic privileges and that this state of affairs was also reflected in later Roman policy towards the Jews.²⁷

But what did Apion really say? We only have access to his words on these matters through Josephus; and we have access to Josephus's Greek original only through a sixth-century Latin translation (of variable reliability).²⁸ In this context, the introduction to Apion's statement about Cleopatra reads as follows: '(Apion) also mentioned Cleopatra, the last queen of the Alexandrians, as if it were a matter of reproach against us that she was ungracious (or ungrateful) towards us (*nos fuit ingrata*), instead of using his energy to indict her.'²⁹ Since Apion failed to condemn the queen, as (Josephus implies) he should have done, Josephus lists her alleged crimes at length – against her family and her ancestors, her husbands (Ptolemies XIII, XIV and Mark Antony), the gods and the Roman state – thus setting the scene for her alleged *ingrati*a towards the Jews.³⁰ The task of interpreting Josephus is not helped by the Latin, in which textual

²⁴ On which, see, for example, Philo, *On the Decalogue* 58–81.

²⁵ Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 350.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 138–40.

²⁷ Cf. Barclay, *Against Apion*, 188–9, 202 n. 214.

²⁸ On the Latin translation of Josephus's *Apion* (and *Antiquities*), commissioned by Cassiodorus, see the summary overview, with key bibliography, in Barclay, *Against Apion*, lxii. Critical edition: Karl Boysen, *Flavii Iosephi Opera ex Versione Latina Antiqua*, VI: *De Iudaeorum Vetustate sive Contra Apionem* (Vienna, 1898).

²⁹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.56 (tr. Barclay, adapted).

³⁰ *Ibid.* 2.57–9.

corruption seems to have greatly augmented the queen's alleged offence against the Jews:

Finally, when Alexandria had been captured by Caesar (Octavian), she was reduced to such straits that she could hope for salvation if, by her own hand, she could kill the Jews, after the cruelty and treachery which she had practised towards all. Would you not think it something to be proud of if, as Apion says, she did not distribute grain rations to Jews in a time of famine?³¹

The suspect text belongs to Josephus's own formulation of the queen's crimes: that, after Octavian's conquest of Alexandria, Cleopatra was 'reduced to such straits' 'ut salutem hinc sperare se iudicaret, si posset ipsa manu sua Iudaeos perimere'. Almost all critics take the Latin as hopelessly corrupt. Thus, for example, Thackeray: 'The Latin is manifestly absurd'; the Greek original probably read something like 'if she could kill herself (Greek: αὐτὴν) by her own hand'; αὐτὴν was corrupted to αὐτοὺς, 'them', and thence to Ἰουδαίους, 'Jews'.³² Cleopatra's hope for *salus* is surely for her deliverance from the fate of being paraded in Octavian's Roman triumph, an escape she secures 'by her own hand', through suicide.³³ This interpretation matches Josephus's emphasis in this same context on Cleopatra's death as a fitting punishment for her crimes against others.³⁴ It is hard to see how even the most hostile enemy of the queen could plausibly argue that Cleopatra sought escape from Octavian by killing Jews.³⁵ That proposition, in my view, can be safely set aside.³⁶ This leaves

³¹ *Ibid.* 2.60 (tr. Barclay, adapted).

³² Thackeray, *Josephus*, 1, 316 n. 2.

³³ Thus, the Blum/Reinach rendering of *Apion* 2.60: 'elle ne vit plus d'espoir pour elle que dans le suicide': *Flavius Josephus, Contre Apion*, Texte Établi et Annoté par Théodore Reinach et Traduit par Léon Blum (Paris, 1930), 69; cf. Siegert's rendering of the same lines: 'Zuletzt aber . . . ist sie so weit gegangen, ihr Heil davon zu erwarten, dass sie sich mit eigener Hand selbst . . . umbrächte': *Flavius Josephus, Über die Ursprünglichkeit des Judentums: Contra Apionem*, 1, ed. Folker Siegert (Göttingen, 2008), 169. With regard to the Latin, Siegert justly notes (*ibid.*) that 'Das wäre für die königliche Hand viel Arbeit gewesen'!

³⁴ Josephus, *Apion* 2.61.

³⁵ Contra the attempt by Volkman to read Josephus's paraphrase of Apion as the words of Cleopatra herself, interpreted psychologically: "'I would have conquered, if I had been able to destroy all the Jews'". These despairing words of Cleopatra's show that she felt she was surrounded by difficulties and treachery'; cf. Hans Volkman, *Cleopatra: A Study in Politics and Propaganda* (1958), 199.

³⁶ Barclay (*Against Apion*, 202, n. 213; cf. lxiv, the reading *Iudaeos* is 'just possible') offers an interpretation of the text as it stands, suggesting the possibility that some (but certainly not *all*) Jews may have been killed in the purge (reported in Cassius Dio 51.5.4–5) directed against some leading citizens in Alexandria, after the Battle of Actium and news of the defection of Herod and other client kings to Octavian. Plutarch, on the other hand, observes that the news of defections did not much disturb Antony (*Antony* 71.1–2). If there was a purge in Alexandria at this time, following Dio, there is no evidence that it specifically targeted Jews, let alone 'the Jews' as a collective. No mention is made of such an event in Herod's post-Actium speech before Octavian (30 BCE), in which, as king of Judaea, he claims to have proved himself a loyal ally to Antony in advising him to kill Cleopatra (Josephus,

us with the allegation, based on Apion's words, that 'in a time of famine, Cleopatra did not distribute grain rations to Jews (*triticum non est mensa*)'.³⁷ Josephus does not give the context, but instead focuses on Apion's allegedly astounding ignorance of written Roman testimony to the loyalty of the Jewish people towards Rome and, before the time of Roman rule, 'under Alexander and under all the Ptolemies'.³⁸ Clearly, however, the real heart of the problem addressed by Josephus is the situation in the Roman administration of Egypt, since he follows the denunciation of Cleopatra with special pleading about the similar treatment of Jews by Germanicus, nephew of the emperor Tiberius, on his visit to Alexandria in the year 19 CE: 'If (says Josephus) Germanicus was unable to distribute grain to all the inhabitants of Alexandria, that is an indication of the failure of the crops and the shortage of grain, not grounds for an indictment of the Jews'.³⁹ Josephus thus tries to dispose of what, presumably, were further claims made by Apion about the status of Jews in Alexandria under Roman rule. In response, Josephus seeks to show that Roman rule did not single out Jews for discriminatory purposes, while implying, on the other hand, that – if Cleopatra did indeed leave Jews out of a grain distribution – her policy was manifestly part of her appalling portfolio of evil acts committed against all those who deserved much better. What, we might ask, was Apion's purpose in mentioning Cleopatra's distribution of grain? In the context of a dispute over Jewish civic rights, the topic might well serve to underline the inferior status of those rights in relation to those of

War 1.389–90; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.191–2). Given the various claims attributed to Herod about Cleopatra's hostility to himself and to Judaea, one would expect that his account of her atrocities would include reference to a massacre of Alexandrian Jews, but it does not.

³⁷ Josephus, *Apion* 2.60.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 2.62: 'omnibus Ptolomaeis'; cf. *Apion* 2.48, on the exceptional kindness of almost all the Macedonian kings towards the Jews, as a fact ignored by Apion.

³⁹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.63–4 (tr. Barclay, adapted). Josephus's brief treatment of this episode gives no sense of how problematic it in fact was in the context of imperial politics. According to Tacitus (*Annals* 2.59), Germanicus visited Egypt without the permission of the emperor Tiberius, and, while there, lowered the price of corn by opening the state granaries; his entry into Egypt transgressed the strict Augustan prohibition of entry into Egypt, without the emperor's permission, by senators and equestrians of the higher rank, and earned Germanicus a severe rebuke from Tiberius. See further Francis R. D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus Books 1–6*, II: *Annals 1.55–81 and Annals 2* (Cambridge, 1981), 372–80. Suetonius (*Tiberius* 52.2) gives a severe famine as the motive for Germanicus's visit, an explanation that probably derives from the supporters of Germanicus in defence of his reputation, and against Tiberius. In the papyrus record of Germanicus's speech in Alexandria on the reasons for his visit, no reference is made to a famine (*P. Oxy.* 2435), perhaps because the measures he took in the grain distribution may have benefited only the citizen body, a small part of the population to be addressed. On the other hand, a distribution given only to a small minority is not likely to have lowered the price of grain, and might suggest that a much larger part of the population benefited; cf. Dieter Georg Weingärtner, *Die Ägyptenreise des Germanicus* (Bonn, 1969), 94. In that case, the exclusion of the Jews would indeed appear as a deliberately hostile act in the time of Germanicus.

the Alexandrian citizen body. Nevertheless, the evidence is very unclear in this case, with no sense of why this distribution was made, and no clear identification of the recipients of the grain from the queen. Apion's argument seems to have presented this case as a one-off event rather than a regular occurrence. If, as seems likely, Cleopatra was engaged in the distribution of a grain dole, and that privilege was, as in other Greek cities,⁴⁰ reserved for the citizen class, it should be noted that the Alexandria's citizen body is likely to have included some Jews as well as others of non-Greek background, though certainly not the Jews of Alexandria as a whole.⁴¹ As to a date for this episode, we know that serious famine struck Egypt following the failure of the Nile flood at the time of Cleopatra's co-rule with her young brother Ptolemy XIII (51/50 BCE) and again in the years 43–41 BCE, when she ruled with her infant son Ptolemy XV Caesar.⁴² From October 50 BCE, a royal decree prohibits the transport of grain supplies to anywhere other than Alexandria.⁴³ Its significance is best understood, as Dorothy Thompson suggests, as exemplifying 'the Queen at work in Egypt', concerned, in a time of crisis, to ensure political stability in the capital by ensuring sufficient food for its population; or perhaps specifically to benefit the wealthy landowners and elite of Alexandria, as a pitch for their support.⁴⁴ The queen's concern for the welfare of the landowning class of Alexandria is explicit in another decree of 41 BCE, guaranteeing their fiscal privileges.⁴⁵ Both in 51, her first year as ruler, and in 41, following the defeat of the assassins of Julius Caesar at Philippi, Cleopatra faced turbulent times in which it was essential to do all she could to preserve stability and win support, particularly among the elite of Alexandria. If she restricted the distribution of grain to Alexandria's citizen class in time of famine, this

⁴⁰In the Hellenistic context, cf. the grain law of Samos (*Syll.*³ 976 = Bagnall and Derow no. 75; c. 250 BCE).

⁴¹Ulrich Wilcken, 'Zum Germanicus Papyrus', *Hermes*, 63 (1928), 48–65 (52–3); cf. Reinach, *Contre Apion*, 69 n. 3; Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Tübingen, 1985), 341; Barclay, *Against Apion*, 202 n. 214; Gambetti, *Alexandrian Riots*, 55. An alternative view speculates that Cleopatra's grain distribution took place on the Sabbath, thereby excluding observant Jews: Schimanowski, *Juden*, 155; cf. Philo's praise for Augustus who ensured that Jews entitled to the monthly corn doles at Rome might receive them on a day other than the Sabbath (*Embassy to Gaius* 153). We do not know, however, whether a similar right existed at Alexandria: cf. Miriam Pucci ben Zeev, *Jewish Rights in the Roman World* (Tübingen, 1998), 439.

⁴²Seneca, *Natural Questions* 4.2.16; Appian, *Civil Wars* 4.61; *OGIS* 194.14–20 (39 BCE, Thebes).

⁴³*C. Ord. Ptol.* 73 = *BGU* 1730 (27 Oct. 50 BCE).

⁴⁴Dorothy J. Thompson, 'Cleopatra VII: The Queen in Egypt', in *Cleopatra Reassessed*, ed. Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton (2003), 31–4 (32).

⁴⁵*C. Ord. Ptol.* 75–6 (12 Apr. 41 BCE), cf. Jean Bingen, 'Les ordonnances royales C. Ord. Ptol. 75–76 (Héracléopolis, 41 avant J.-C.)', *Chronique d'Égypte*, 70 (1995), 206–18; Thompson, 'Cleopatra VII', 32–3.

was hardly a policy of discriminating against the Jews or anyone else, but a tried and tested means of keeping the powerful among the Alexandrian population on side.

Thus far, several factors emerge as shaping the image of Cleopatra in the *Against Apion*: the Augustan perspective on Cleopatra, adapted by Josephus for apologetic purposes after the Jewish War, to stress the alignment of loyal Jews with Roman values;⁴⁶ and the perspective of Apion, who seems to have appealed to Cleopatra as a precedent for his own times, under Gaius Caligula, in upholding status distinctions that put the Jews of Alexandria in their place, outside the Alexandrian citizen body.

Another element in the mix, I suggest, is the influence of Cleopatra's contemporary, Herod, king of Judaea (c. 73–4 BCE), and his role in constructing the queen's negative reputation. In the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*, Josephus provides detailed reports of Herod's reign, including accounts of Herod's thoughts on Cleopatra.⁴⁷ Josephus gained access to those thoughts primarily through the work of Nicolaus of Damascus. Sometime tutor to the children of Antony and Cleopatra, Nicolaus later became Herod's courtier and historian: his account of Herod's reign, part of a massive work of world history, draws on the king's *Memoirs* as well as Nicolaus's knowledge of events in which he himself played a leading part, notably as Herod's ambassador to Augustus.⁴⁸ By the time that Nicolaus joined Herod's retinue (no later than 14 BCE), Cleopatra was certainly a figure of the past; in Nicolaus's construction, however, she plays a vital role as one of several female figures portrayed as threatening Herod's kingship.⁴⁹

Of non-royal stock, Herod was a king made in Rome. Pompey's Roman settlement of Syria in 63 BCE ended the rule of the Hasmonean monarchy in Judea (revived temporarily 40–37 BCE, see below), while retaining the Hasmonean Hyrcanus II as high priest and ethnarch – but not king – of a country now under the control of the Roman governor of the newly created province of Syria. In this role, Hyrcanus was assisted by the powerful figure of Antipater of Ascalon, the father of the future Herod the Great, and Hyrcanus's long-time supporter in the inner-dynastic

⁴⁶Barclay, *Against Apion*, 200 n. 194.

⁴⁷The reign of Herod: Josephus, *War* 1.203–673; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.158–17.208.

⁴⁸Tutor to the children of Antony and Cleopatra: *FGrHist.* 90, T2. Herod's Memoirs: Josephus, *Ant.* 15.174; *FGrHist.* 90 Fr. 135. On the life and works of Nicolaus of Damascus: Emil Schürer (revised by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black), *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 1 (Edinburgh, 1973), 28–32; cf. 50–2 on Josephus's use of Nicolaus in the *War* and the *Antiquities*.

⁴⁹Tal Ilan, "'Things Unbecoming a Woman'" (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.431): Josephus and Nicolaus on Women', in Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Tübingen, 1999), 85–125 (111, 113).

Hasmonean conflict that had led to Pompey's intervention in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ Following the demise of Pompey (killed in Egypt on the authority of Ptolemy XIII, 48 BCE), Julius Caesar confirmed Hyrcanus as high priest, in recognition of the assistance received by Caesar from Antipater and Hyrcanus in the course of the Alexandrian War in which Ptolemy XIII was eliminated (47 BCE); in the same year, Antipater's rewards included the prize of Roman citizenship and the position of procurator (*epitropos*) of Judea.⁵¹ Early in the Second Triumvirate, following the assassinations of Caesar (44 BCE) and Antipater (43 BCE), Antony's settlement of the East (41 BCE) promoted Antipater's sons, including Herod, as local governors (*tetrarchs*) within the Jewish territory.⁵² In the following year, the Parthians invaded Roman Syria, taking Jerusalem and installing as its high priest and king Antigonus, who, as nephew of Hyrcanus II, was to be the last of the Hasmonean monarchs (40–37 BCE).⁵³ Herod fled – via Cleopatra's Alexandria – to Antony in Rome, where, with the support of the triumvirs, he received from the Senate the kingship of Judea (40 BCE);⁵⁴ and, in time, the might of Roman military backing to exterminate the pro-Parthian Antigonus, executed on the order of Antony, and to install Herod as king in Judea (37 BCE).⁵⁵

Any evaluation of Herod must take into account the fundamental insecurity that dominated much of his reign. Internally, surviving Hasmoneans remained a powerful threat, not at all diminished by Herod's marriage to Mariamme, Hasmonean granddaughter of Hyrcanus II.⁵⁶ Josephus records Cleopatra's support for Alexandra and Aristobulus,

⁵⁰Hyrcanus II: Schürer, *History* 1, 267–80.

⁵¹Josephus, *War* 1.187–94; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.127–55.

⁵²Josephus, *War* 1.242–7; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.324–6. Josephus places the appointment, it should be noted, in the context of the beginning of Antony's relationship with Cleopatra: at Daphne by Antioch, with Antony 'already enslaved to love for Cleopatra' (Josephus, *War* 1.243); or at Tarsus, when Antony 'was taken prisoner through love' (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.324). On the assassination of Antipater by Malichus, a supporter of Hyrcanus: Josephus, *War* 1.226–37; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.277–93.

⁵³Antigonus: Schürer, *History*, 1, 281–6. A prisoner of the Parthians, Hyrcanus II's position as high priest was terminated following his deliberate mutilation, performed by Antigonus in order to disqualify Hyrcanus from resuming the high priesthood (Josephus, *War* 1.270; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.366).

⁵⁴Josephus, *War* 1.277–85; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.370–89; Tacitus, *History* 5.9 (Herod receives his throne from Antony); cf. the accounts of Herod's appointment as king in Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.46; Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.75. Cleopatra received Herod in Alexandria as he sought refuge from the Parthian invaders: Josephus, *War* 1.278–9; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.374–6. Her positive reception of Herod reflects loyalty to Antony, but also contrasts with the rebuff given to Herod by Malchus, the Nabatean king, who refused Herod assistance (allegedly for financial motives) at this time: Josephus, *War* 1.274–7; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.370–3.

⁵⁵Josephus, *War* 1.328–57; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.394–491.

⁵⁶Marriage to Mariamme proved a source of terrible division in Herod's household (so Josephus, *War* 1.432–3), and fatal for its Hasmonean members: in addition to the assassination of Aristobulus, Herod ordered the execution of Hyrcanus II (30 BCE),

Mariamme's mother and brother, promoting to Antony their claim to the right of Aristobulus to the high priesthood, and, on behalf of the old monarchy, challenging the legitimacy of Herod as commoner turned king.⁵⁷ Confined to house arrest by Herod, Alexandra appealed to Cleopatra for help.⁵⁸ The queen offered sanctuary to Alexandra and Aristobulus in Egypt, but their plan to escape was betrayed to Herod; Aristobulus, the last Hasmonean high priest, was dead within the year, drowned in Herod's swimming pool at Jericho (35 BCE).⁵⁹ Alexandra again appealed to Cleopatra, hoping that the queen's influence with Antony would lead to Herod's punishment for the killing; while Josephus portrays Cleopatra's promotion of Alexandra's cause as the pursuit of her supposed long-term policy to make Antony the enemy of Herod, the power of the queen's hold over Antony was not proved on this occasion as Antony, bribed by Herod, dismissed the challenge to his client king.⁶⁰ In another episode, of uncertain date, Josephus reports the attempt by Costobarus, the Idumean husband of Herod's sister Salome and governor of Idumea, to persuade Cleopatra to collaborate with him against Herod. In this case, Costobarus allegedly appealed explicitly to Cleopatra's ancestral claims on Idumea as the basis on which she should ask Antony for the return of the land. The motive of Costobarus, we are told, involved another kind of ancestral claim: to free Idumea of subjection to Jewish laws and to promote his own rule of the country.⁶¹ With Antony's refusal of Cleopatra's request, the plan came to nothing, but the story is striking for its explicit articulation of Cleopatra's ambition for the restoration of the empire of her ancestors.

Externally, Herod saw Cleopatra as his greatest threat, driven by her ambition for his territory. Josephus tells us that Herod fortified Masada as a refuge from his enemies, specifically pro-Hasmonean Jews, aiming to

Mariamme (29 BCE), Alexandra (28 BCE?), and his own sons by Mariamme (7 BCE). On Herod's suspicions, encouraged by his mother and sister, of Cleopatra's involvement in the breakdown of his relations with Mariamme: Josephus, *War* 1.439–40. Given that Herod had recently ordered the killing of Mariamme's brother, she already had good grounds for 'hatred' of Herod. Contrary to Herod's supposed thoughts, Cleopatra is hardly likely to have encouraged Antony's involvement with the beautiful Mariamme.

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.23–32. Alexandra's challenge to the legitimacy of Herod and promotion of the Hasmonean cause through Mariamme, after the killing of Aristobulus: Josephus, *Ant.* 15.63, 73.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.45–8.

⁵⁹ Josephus, *War* 1.437; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.23–79.

⁶⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.62–5, 75–7, 79.

⁶¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.254–8; cf. Jan Willem van Henten, *Judean Antiquities*, xv: *Translation and Commentary (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary)*, viib, ed. Steve Mason; Leiden, 2014), 177–80. The continuation of the narrative, in which Salome denounces Costobarus to Herod for a further act of treason, makes clear Costobarus's alliance with pro-Hasmonean sympathisers: Josephus, *Ant.* 15.259–66.

restore the old dynasty to power, and the even greater danger of Cleopatra, who allegedly sought the throne of Judea for herself.⁶² A client king of Rome, Herod owed loyalty to Antony as commander in the East; after Antony's defeat at Actium (at which Herod was not present),⁶³ Herod presented himself to Octavian as always a loyal servant to Rome but an enemy of Cleopatra from the beginning.⁶⁴ Herod benefited greatly from Cleopatra's fall, and played a major role in promoting Octavian's victory as the salvation of the Roman state.⁶⁵

In Josephus's portrait of Cleopatra in the *Against Apion*, the influence of Herod's perspective may be seen in two respects, beginning with the condemnation of Cleopatra as 'ingrata (circa nos fuit ingrata)'.⁶⁶ What does this mean here? The question goes back to Müller's commentary of 1877, in which he states that Josephus knew no reason why Cleopatra should be grateful to the Jews; rather, *ingrata* should be read as 'ungracious', a symptom of the queen's malevolence.⁶⁷ Müller's interpretation is widely adopted. But I would like to speak up for the 'ungrateful' reading of Cleopatra.⁶⁸ This, I suggest, reflects the view that

⁶²Josephus, *War* 7.300–3.

⁶³Herod blamed his absence from the battle on Cleopatra, who was allegedly behind Antony's commissioning of Herod with a campaign against Malchus, king of the Nabateans: Josephus, *War* 1.364–5, 440; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.108–60, esp. 110. Antony's motive for the campaign was the disloyalty of Malchus, as reported to him by both Herod and Cleopatra: Josephus, *Ant.* 15.110. In the case of Herod, Malchus owed him huge sums in arrears for the tribute owed to Cleopatra for the lease of their lands: Josephus, *Ant.* 15.106–8 (on Herod's earlier plans to attack Malchus on this account), 132–3. Herod also seems to have considered Cleopatra responsible for the demise of Malchus (Josephus, *War* 1.440), though the latter's fate after 30 BCE is unknown. The role of Malchus in a plan to give refuge from Herod to the aged Hyrcanus II led to the latter's execution after the Battle of Actium (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.167–78; spring 30 BCE).

⁶⁴Josephus, *War* 1.388–91; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.187–201.

⁶⁵On Herod's acquisitions, resulting from Cleopatra's fall (territory and men, comprising 400 Gauls who had served as Cleopatra's bodyguards); Josephus, *War* 1.396–7; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.217; cf. Tacitus's brief note confirming that, post-Actium, Augustus extended Herod's territory (*History* 5.9.2). At the site of Nicopolis, founded by Octavian near Actium to celebrate his victory over Antony and Cleopatra, Herod funded the construction of most of the public buildings (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.147). On the site of Strato's Tower, added to Herod's kingdom by Octavian (Josephus, *War* 1.396; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.217), Herod founded the city of Caesarea Maritima in honour of his patron (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.136–41). The flattering note on Roman approval of Herod's generosity in this venture no doubt reflects Herod's own propaganda and the reality that the extension of his territory resulted, at least in part, from the loss of Cleopatra's: 'And they say that Caesar himself and Agrippa often remarked that the extent of Herod's realm was not equal to his magnanimity, for he deserved to be king of all Syria and Egypt' (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.141).

⁶⁶Josephus, *Apion* 2.56.

⁶⁷J. G. Müller, *Des Flavius Josephus Schrift gegen den Apion: Text und Erklärung* (Basel, 1877), 251; cf. Thackeray, *Josephus* 1, 315; Barclay, *Against Apion*, 200 and n. 193.

⁶⁸*Oxford Latin Dictionary* (2nd edn, Oxford, 2012), 1, 997–8, s.v. 'ingratus'; cf. *Flavius Josephus*, ed. Siegert, 169 ('class sie undankbar zu uns war').

Cleopatra should have counted the Jews, especially the family of Herod, among her benefactors. As Josephus reports it, Herod's father Antipater played a crucial military role in Roman efforts to restore Cleopatra's father to power in Alexandria (55 BCE), while Antipater's support for Julius Caesar in Egypt (48/47 BCE) brought Jewish troops to assist the restoration of Cleopatra.⁶⁹ Herod's actions in 40 BCE, after the Parthian takeover in Judea, assume the strength of this connection, heading for Alexandria as his first source of refuge, and received 'magnificently (λαμπρῶς)' by Cleopatra as an ally.⁷⁰ Cleopatra did indeed have reason to be grateful.⁷¹

Secondly, the list of crimes attributed to Cleopatra in the *Against Apion* matches very closely the account of her atrocities as given in Josephus's details of Herod's reign in Book 15 of the *Jewish Antiquities*.⁷² In that context, Cleopatra's insatiable greed is repeatedly given as the root cause of all her other evil acts, with particular focus on her greed (πλεονεξία) for Herod's kingdom.⁷³ This idea is at the heart of Herod's construction of Cleopatra and exploits a powerful theme of the Augustan propaganda which justified going to war on the grounds that Antony was giving Cleopatra lands that belonged to the Roman people.⁷⁴ To this familiar theme, the Herodian perspective adds the further, specific charge – that Cleopatra sought to obtain his lands, either by seduction or by plotting to kill him.⁷⁵

Certainly, Herod's fear of Cleopatra centred on the threat to his newly acquired kingdom posed by Antony's policy of expanding the queen's lands outside Egypt in the period from 37 to 34 BCE. Antony's organisation

⁶⁹Restoration of Ptolemy XII/assistance to Gabinius and Mark Antony: Josephus, *War* 1.175; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.99. Restoration of Cleopatra VII/assistance to Mithridates of Pergamum, ally of Julius Caesar: Josephus, *War* 1.187–90; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.127–39, cf. 14.139, citing Strabo.

⁷⁰Josephus, *War* 1.279; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.375–6.

⁷¹In Josephus's account of the reception of Herod in Rome in 40 BCE, he reports that Octavian, even more than Antony, was in favour of Herod's promotion to kingship because of the loyalty shown by Herod's father to Julius Caesar, the 'father' of Octavian, in the course of the Egyptian campaign (Josephus, *War* 1.283; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.383). Antony, too, is said to have supported Herod because (among other things) of the memory of Antipater's hospitality (*xenia*) in Judaea in the course of the Judaeian campaign led by Gabinius (Josephus, *War* 1.244, 282; Josephus, *Ant.* 14.381, cf. 14.84–6, 326).

⁷²Josephus, *Ant.* 15.88–103, expanding Josephus, *War* 1.359–61; cf. van Henten, 'Cleopatra in Josephus', 126–30; *idem*, *Judean Antiquities*, XV, 59–103.

⁷³Josephus, *Ant.* 15.89–95.

⁷⁴Cassius Dio 50.25.4–5; 50.26.2.

⁷⁵Josephus, *War* 1.360; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.97–103. The *Antiquities* account of Cleopatra's supposed attempt at seducing Herod, in the context of Cleopatra's visit to Judaea, follows the model of Octavian's vilification of Cleopatra as arch-seductress; in any case, her dependence on Antony, by whom she was then pregnant with a third son, makes such a scenario implausible: cf. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 121.

of the East involved the gradual redistribution of territories among rulers friendly to Rome. Herod benefited. But Cleopatra benefited most, her proven loyalty to Julius Caesar and Antony rewarded with Antony's enlargement of Cleopatra's territories and the extension of the Ptolemaic Empire in the East almost to its glory days at the beginning of the third century BCE. In 37/36 BCE, Antony's dispositions granted Cleopatra a vast extension to her territory: Chalcis (in Lebanon), parts of Judea and the Nabatean kingdom, together with the city of Cyrene and estates on Crete.⁷⁶ For Cleopatra, 37/36 BCE marked the official beginning of a new era of her rule, 'Year 16 which is also Year 1'.⁷⁷ In the East, coins of the new territories, with portraits of Antony (reverse), and Cleopatra (obverse), mark the new era and a new titulature for the queen: 'Thea Neotera (the New Goddess)' or 'Queen Cleopatra Thea Neotera'.⁷⁸ The title promotes Cleopatra VII as successor to Cleopatra Thea (c. 164–c. 121 BCE), daughter of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II; as queen of three Seleucid kings in turn, Cleopatra Thea had represented the Ptolemies' ancestral claims over large parts of the Seleucid empire.⁷⁹

The expansion of Ptolemaic-controlled lands had already begun, in fact, under the Egyptian settlement of Julius Caesar, who in 48 BCE restored Roman Cyprus to Ptolemaic rule (first acquired under Ptolemy I Soter); and, apparently with no objection raised by Octavian, Roman Cilicia (under Ptolemaic rule in the third century BCE) was placed by Antony under Ptolemaic control c. 40 BCE.⁸⁰ As tensions increased between Octavian and Antony, however, the further extension of Cleopatra's territories from 37 BCE became a focus of Octavian's negative propaganda against his rival. These gifts, as Plutarch puts it, 'particularly annoyed the Romans', even though – as Plutarch justly notes – Antony had also distributed lands to others, including commoners who received the lands of former monarchs, the Hasmonean Antigonus

⁷⁶ Josephus, *War* 1.361; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.94–6 (with wrong chronology); Plutarch, *Antony* 36.3–4; Cassius Dio 49.32.4–5; Porphyry in *FGrHist.* 260, Fr. 2.17; Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London and New York, 2001), 241–4; Roller, *Cleopatra*, 90–101.

⁷⁷ Porphyry in *FGrHist.* 260 Fr. 2.17; *BGU* 14.2376 (35 BCE; Year 2).

⁷⁸ *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*, ed. Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (2001), 233–4, nos. 214–17 (Chalcis), 221–2 (?), 232–4 (Cyrene?).

⁷⁹ Thompson, 'Cleopatra VII', 31. Cleopatra Thea: John Whitehorne, *Cleopatras* (London and New York, 1994), 149–63.

⁸⁰ Hölbl, *History*, 241; Jean Pouilloux, 'Deux amis: le stratège Diogénès fils de Nouménios et le gymnasiarque Stasicratès fils de Stasicratès', in *Praktika tou Protou Diethnous Kyprologikou Synedriou*, 1 (Leukosia, 1972), 141–50; Edmond Van't Dack, 'Notices Cypriotes', in *Studio Paulo Naster Oblata II: Orientalia Antiqua*, ed. Jan Quaegebeur (Louvain, 1982), 321–6 (323); Thomas Schrapel, *Das Reich der Kleopatra: Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu den 'Landschenkungen' Mark Antons* (Trierer Historische Forschungen; Trier, 1996), 259.

among them.⁸¹ The propaganda of Octavian, matched by Herod, makes Antony's land distributions to Cleopatra the product of his passion for the Egyptian queen. That view does not stand up to historical scrutiny. As Günther Hölbl observes in his *History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, 'It is no longer the opinion of modern scholarship that these so-called gifts to Cleopatra were the acts of an unrestrained lover. Instead, they are now seen as a "balanced and clear-sighted reorganisation of the administration of the east which won over to Antony's cause capable figures and powerful dominions"'.⁸²

From Herod's perspective, outrage was particularly directed at Cleopatra's acquisition – as part of Antony's reorganisation of the East – of parts of Judaea, including Jericho, rich in balsam and date groves, and sections of the coastal area.⁸³ From then on, Herod leased from Cleopatra the lands 'detached from his kingdom' at 200 talents a year (at least a fifth of his annual income).⁸⁴ For Cleopatra, the deal could be seen as the restoration of ancestral territory, first won under Ptolemy I Soter in 301 BCE; Palestine later came under the rule of Seleucid Syria with the conquests of Antiochus the Great in 201, but the marriage of his daughter Cleopatra I to Ptolemy V served to fuel Ptolemaic ambitions to reclaim sovereignty in this region. According to pro-Ptolemaic sources, including the Jewish 'Tales of the Tobiads', Cleopatra I, 'the Syrian', the first Cleopatra to rule Egypt, brought Palestine to the Ptolemies as part of her dowry, employing loyal Jews to collect the tax revenues.⁸⁵ In a sense, her descendant Cleopatra VII was continuing the practice of her ancestors.

From the testimony of Josephus and the world of Herod, I now turn to explore other sources of evidence bearing on the relationship between

⁸¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 36.3–4; cf. Cassius Dio 49.32.4–5; Christopher B. R. Pelling, *Plutarch, Life of Antony* (Cambridge, 1988), 217–18; Meyer Reinhold, *From Republic to Principate: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 49–52 (36–29 B.C.)* (Atlanta, GA, 1988), 63–5.

⁸² Hölbl, *History*, 242, citing Karl Christ, *Krise und Untergang der römischen Republik* (2nd edn; Darmstadt, 1984), 448; cf. Pelling, *Life of Antony*, 217.

⁸³ Josephus, *War* 1.360–3; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.93–6; Plutarch, *Antony* 36.3. On Cleopatra's alleged ambition for the whole of Herod's kingdom or for Malchus's kingdom of Nabatea, by fomenting conflict between the two: Josephus, *War* 1.365, 367; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.115–16.

⁸⁴ Josephus, *War* 1.362–3; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.106, 132. Herod's annual income is estimated at 1,050–2,000 talents: Samuel Rocca, *Herod's Judaea: A Mediterranean State in the Classical World* (Tübingen, 2008), 208.

⁸⁵ Cleopatra's dowry: Josephus, *Ant.* 12.154; cf. Polybius 28.20.9; Appian, *Syrian Wars* 5; see further Daniel R. Schwartz, 'Josephus' Tobiads: Back to the Second Century?', in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford, 1998), 47–61. The Tobiads as tax-collectors for the Ptolemaic monarchy: Josephus, *Ant.* 12.160–223.

Cleopatra and Jews, based on documentary evidence from the Ptolemaic era and the testimony of Plutarch's biography of Mark Antony.⁸⁶

I An asylum decree for a Jewish place of prayer

Rare material evidence bearing on our subject appears in the form of a bilingual (Greek and Latin) marble plaque, on which is inscribed the grant of asylum by a Ptolemaic monarch to a Jewish place of prayer (Greek, *proseuche*) and the renewal of the grant ordered by 'the queen and king', who are almost certainly to be identified with Cleopatra VII and a co-ruler, probably her son Ptolemy XV Caesarion.⁸⁷ The royal grant of asylum to temples in Egypt represents a distinctive part of Ptolemaic domestic policy from the beginning of the first century BCE until the fall of Cleopatra.⁸⁸ As Kent Rigsby shows in his comprehensive treatment of *asylia* documents from the Hellenistic world, Ptolemaic asylum decrees served to honour certain temples with the privilege of 'religious immunity from the civil law',⁸⁹ and at least in some cases to show royal favour towards powerful institutions that could promote crucial support for the monarchy. Judging by the number of decrees extant, the grant of *asylia* to religious institutions in Ptolemaic Egypt was a rather rare privilege.⁹⁰ Most of the extant evidence concerns temples of Egyptian gods, including institutions of 'first rank', such as the temple of Horus at Athribis in the southern Delta, distinguished by its fame and antiquity,⁹¹ as well as the more modest temples of the Fayum.⁹² From the reign of Cleopatra VII, we have the latest known example of the grant of asylum made

⁸⁶Some scholars identify evidence for Jewish representation of Cleopatra VII, including Jewish support for the queen against Rome, in the *Third Sibylline Oracle*. On this question, I follow Erich Gruen's analysis of the evidence which finds no reference to Cleopatra here: 'Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Third Sibylline Oracle', in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Goodman, 15–36 (25–7). Relevant to the history of Jewish reception of Cleopatra, but not considered here, are references to the queen in rabbinic literature; see further Joseph Geiger, 'Cleopatra the Physician', in *Zutot: Perspectives on Jewish Culture*, ed. Shlomo Berger, Michael Brocke and Irene Zwiep (Dodrecht, Boston and London, 2001), 28–32; Rivka Ulmer, 'Cleopatra, Isis, and Serapis', in Rivka Ulmer, *Egyptian Cultural Icons in Midrash* (Berlin, 2009), 215–43.

⁸⁷*CIL* III Suppl. no. 6583 = *OGIS* no. 129 = *JIGRE* no. 125 = Kent J. Rigsby, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996) no. 228.

⁸⁸Rigsby *Asylia*, 540–73.

⁸⁹*Ibid.* 540.

⁹⁰*Ibid.* nos. 219–28, a corpus of eleven grants of *asylia* from Ptolemaic Egypt; additional evidence for such grants is supplied by references to other temples already in possession of the grant of *asylia* (e.g. Rigsby, *Asylia* no. 219).

⁹¹Rigsby, *Asylia* no. 19, Temple of Horus (Ptolemy X, 96 BCE).

⁹²E.g. Rigsby, *Asylia* no. 221, Temple of Isis Sachypsis (Theadelphia; Ptolemy X, 93 BCE). In addition to temples of Egyptian gods (Horus, Isis, Ammon and various manifestations of the crocodile god Sobek), grants of *asylia* are also known for Magdola's temple of Heron, a Thracian god whose cult was probably founded in Egypt by military settlers under the early

to the temple of an Egyptian deity, the temple of Isis south of the city of Ptolemais in Upper Egypt.⁹³ Dated to year 6 of Cleopatra's rule (46 BCE), following Julius Caesar's departure from Egypt and the birth of Cleopatra's son by Caesar, Caesarion (47 BCE), the grant was issued at a very significant moment in the queen's political life: her first year in charge after the elimination of her brother Ptolemy XIII in the Alexandrian War, and a crucial period for building alliances for the future. As part of that strategy, the royal decree gives protection to a new Isis temple, built for the monarchy by Cleopatra's powerful ally Callimachos, close to Ptolemais, the Greek city founded by Ptolemy I to support the monarchy's interests in Upper Egypt.⁹⁴ By promoting the worship of the traditional gods of Egypt, Cleopatra continued the policies of her father, following a strategy of embracing Egyptian religion that goes back to the beginning of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Much more unusual, based on what we know of Ptolemaic policy, is the grant of asylum for a Jewish *proseuche*, a 'place of prayer', preserved in a bilingual inscription of uncertain date and provenance, but which may, with good reason, be placed in the reign of Cleopatra VII. The royal command is given as follows:

(Greek). On the orders of the queen and king.

In place of the previous plaque concerning the dedication of the *proseuche*

(προσευχή) let the following be inscribed. King Ptolemy Euergetes

(proclaimed) the *proseuche* inviolate (ἄσυλον).

(Latin). The queen and king gave the order.⁹⁵

That the decree concerns a Jewish institution is not in doubt. The term *proseuche* means 'prayer', and by extension 'place of prayer', and in the latter sense, in ancient literary and documentary evidence, normally designates a Jewish place of worship.⁹⁶ The use of *proseuche* in this sense

Ptolemies (Rigsby, *Asyilia* no. 220), and for Theadelphia's temple of the Greek god Heracles Callinicus (no. 222).

⁹³C. Ord. Ptol. 67 = Rigsby, *Asyilia* no. 226.

⁹⁴Thompson, 'Cleopatra VII', 33.

⁹⁵Βασιλίσσης καὶ βασιλέως προσταξάντων ἀντὶ τῆς προανακειμένης περὶ τῆς ἀναθέσεως τῆς προσευχῆς πλακὸς ἢ ὑπογεγραμμένη ἐπιγραφῆτω· [vacat] βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Εὐεργέτης τῆν προσευχὴν ἄσυλον. *Regina et rex iusser(un)t* (text follows *JIGRE* no. 125, based on *CIJ* 2, no. 126).

⁹⁶On the Jewish significance of *proseuche*: William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With an Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica* (Cambridge, 1992), 14; David Noy, 'A Jewish Place of Prayer in Roman Egypt', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 43 (1992), 118–22; Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting, v: Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Carlisle, 1996), 213–25, correcting LSJ s.v. προσευχή.

gives way only gradually in later centuries to the use of Greek *synagoge*, 'place of assembly', in Jewish communal contexts.⁹⁷ In the context of our evidence for Ptolemaic grants of *asylia*, this is the only known example of such a grant to a Jewish institution.

The decree is unique in another respect, as the only known witness to the renewal of an asylum decree in Ptolemaic Egypt. The royal order commands the renewal of an asylum grant made originally for a *proseuche* at the time of its dedication under 'King Ptolemy Euergetes'. Two different monarchs may be in view here: Ptolemy III Euergetes (r. 246–221 BCE) or Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (r. 170–163, 145–116 BCE). Since the dated evidence for the use of asylum decrees as an instrument of royal policy belongs to the later period of Ptolemaic rule, however, we are almost certainly dealing with Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and therefore a latest possible date of 116 BCE for the initial grant of asylum.⁹⁸ On this basis, the renewal may be seen as supplying rare and precious evidence for the continuity of a particular Jewish community in Egypt over a significant

⁹⁷ *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (3rd edn (BDAG); Chicago and London, 2000), 963, s.v. συναγωγή; cf. Steven Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period* (Eugene, OR, 1997), 25–33; Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (Stockholm, 2001), 436–59.

⁹⁸ See, however, Rigsby's doubts about the authenticity of the claim that asylum was originally granted to the *proseuche* at the time of its dedication, because (1) this is the only example known from Ptolemaic Egypt in which royal permission is given for the renewal of a grant of asylum (though Rigsby notes the not wholly dissimilar example from Nysa in modern Turkey of the restoration of a temple's documents to the record office (Rigsby, *Asylia* no. 186); and (2) based on the fact that a date of 116 BCE or earlier would make this the first known example of an asylum decree in Ptolemaic Egypt (but not necessarily by more than twenty years), with the suggestion that it is unlikely that the first known grant should be for a Jewish institution rather than an Egyptian temple; and (3) on the supposed improbability of a scenario in which any religious institution might be granted asylum from the time of its original dedication: Rigsby, *Asylia*, 572; *idem*, 'A Jewish Asylum in Greco-Roman Egypt', in *Das Antike Asyl: kultische Grundlagen, rechtliche Ausgestaltung und politische Funktion*, ed. Martin Dreher (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003), 127–41 (135–8). These points do not, in my view, prove the inauthenticity of the grant of asylum under Ptolemy Euergetes. On the early date, it is clear from the Amnesty Decree issued by Ptolemy VIII, Cleopatra II and Cleopatra III that certain temples in Egypt already enjoyed the privilege of asylum, which the Decree aims to protect (*C. Ord. Ptol.* 53=P. *Tebt.* 1 5, ll. 84–5; 118 BCE). The grant of asylum to a new temple is exemplified in the case of the temple of Isis near Ptolemais (Rigsby, *Asylia* no. 226, see above), which received from Cleopatra VII the grant of asylum at a time close to its foundation. Rejecting the claim that the *proseuche* received a grant of asylum under Ptolemy VIII, Rigsby argues that 'the claim of Euergetes's grant of asylum to the synagogue will be a fabrication of the first century B.C., in imitation of the report about the Temple in 1 Maccabees' (Rigsby, *Asylia*, 572, referring to 1 Maccabees 10:31). This seems an unnecessarily complicated hypothesis.

period of time.⁹⁹ Frustratingly, the identity or location of this community is not stated, a point to which we will return.

As for the date of the renewal of the grant of asylum, the decree is issued by order (*προτάσσω/iusserunt*) of ‘the queen and king’, βασιλίσσα καὶ βασιλεὺς, *regina et rex*. No names are given, but the unusual order of the royal titles, giving precedence to the queen, is matched in some of the official documents of powerful Ptolemaic queens as co-rulers with their children or siblings: in particular, Cleopatra III, widow of Ptolemy VIII, who ruled jointly with both her sons (Ptolemy IX and Ptolemy X) at different times until her assassination in 101 BCE;¹⁰⁰ and Cleopatra VII, as co-ruler and official wife successively to her younger brothers Ptolemy XIII and XIV and from 44 to 30 BCE as co-ruler with her son Ptolemy XV Caesarion.¹⁰¹ Our inscription supplies no dates, but the use of Latin clearly points to the reign of Cleopatra VII, and the substantial presence in her kingdom from 47 BCE onwards of a Latin-speaking, Roman military force to protect the queen and the interests of Rome as represented by Julius Caesar and, from 41 BCE, by Mark Antony.¹⁰²

Of course, our decree relates to just one, unnamed *proseuche*, rather than to Jews in general. Theoretically, the decree could belong to any one of the multiple Jewish places of prayer known to have existed throughout

⁹⁹Gideon Bohak, ‘Ethnic Continuity in the Jewish Diaspora in Antiquity’, in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*, ed. John R. Bartlett (London and New York, 2002), 175–92 (186).

¹⁰⁰Cleopatra III: e.g. *I. Alex. Ptol.* no. 30 (112 BCE). For the brief period of co-rule of Cleopatra II, Cleopatra III and Ptolemy IX, with both queens given precedence in the naming sequence: Hölbl, *History*, 205, with reference to *P. Rylands dem.* III.20 (116 BCE). Cleopatra I: for evidence of her preeminence, as regent with her son Ptolemy VI, in official documents: Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 86–7.

¹⁰¹E.g. *P. Bon.* 10 (46/45 BCE); *P. Oxy.* 14.1629 (45/44 BCE); *P. Ryl.* IV.582 (42 BCE); *C. Ord. Ptol.* 75–6 (41 BCE); *OGIS* 194 (39 BCE); *P. Cair. Dem.* 31232 (37/36 BCE?); *BGU* XIV.2376 (35 BCE). See further Jean Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture. Edited with an Introduction by Roger S. Bagnall* (Berkeley, 2007), 63–79, esp. 67–71; originally published as ‘La politique dynastique de Cléopâtre VII’, *Comptes Rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1999), 49–66; Linda M. Ricketts, ‘A Chronological Problem in the Reign of Cleopatra VII’, *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 16.3 (1979), 213–17; Linda M. Ricketts, ‘The Administration of Ptolemaic Egypt under Cleopatra VII’ (Ph.D., Minnesota, 1980), 11–44.

¹⁰²Identification with Cleopatra VII: Hermann Dessau in *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, 3.2 (1916), clxxi; Jean Bingen, ‘L’asylie pour une synagogue CIL III *Suppl.* 6583–CIJ 1449’, in *Stadio Paulo Naster Oblata II*, ed. Quaegebeur, 11–16 (with a decisive refutation of Mommsen’s influential argument (1881), predating the publication of most of the relevant documentary evidence for Ptolemaic Egypt, in which he identified the queen and king with Zenobia and Vallabath of Palmyra during their brief period of control in Egypt (270–2 CE)); Laura Boffo, *Iscrizione Greche e Latine per lo Studio della Bibbia* (Brescia, 1994), 113–20; Rigsby, ‘A Jewish Asylum’, 131–3. Cf. the attempted revival of Mommsen’s theory by Glen Bowersock (‘The Miracle of Memnon’, *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 21 (1984), 21–32), dismissed in Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt*, 71 (originally published as ‘Cléopâtre VII Philopatris’, *Chronique d’Égypte*, 74 (1999), 118–23).

Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside.¹⁰³ The exceptional character of the decree in its application to a Jewish *proseuche*, however, suggests the likelihood that this was no ordinary institution.¹⁰⁴ Might this then be identified with the ‘great *proseuche*’ of Alexandria, so large and prominent in Philo’s time that the Alexandrian mob failed to destroy it?¹⁰⁵ A different place of origin is, however, indicated by the fact that the plaque turned up for sale in Cairo, not Alexandria, and that it was reportedly found in Lower Egypt.¹⁰⁶ In that context, Kent Rigsby makes a strong case for identifying the unnamed *proseuche* of the asylum decree with the Jewish temple of Onias at Leontopolis near Heliopolis in the Nile Delta, founded under the patronage of Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II, the older siblings of Ptolemy VIII, the likely author of the original grant of asylum to the *proseuche*.¹⁰⁷ When dealing with a world that must be reconstructed from the survival of fragments and chance finds, great caution must of course be exercised in any attempt to draw conclusions based on linking one rare piece of evidence to another. But the hypothesis that Cleopatra VII singled out the temple of Onias for exceptional privileges has much to commend it. In scale, judging by Josephus’s account(s), the Jewish foundation at Leontopolis might well have been considered a great temple, not only in size and importance,¹⁰⁸ but also in the prestige of its founder, Onias IV,

¹⁰³ The documentary evidence is listed in Zsuzsanna Szántó, ‘The Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt in the Light of the Papyri’ (Ph.D., Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2016), 180, which adds *PSI Congr.* XVII 22 (Fayum, 114 or 78 BCE) to Tcherikover’s earlier summary of the documentary evidence for Egyptian *proseuchai* (‘Prolegomena’, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 1, 8). *CPJ* 1, no. 138, a fragmentary papyrus record of unknown provenance, deals with a resolution agreed at ‘a meeting in the *proseuche* (συναγωγῆς ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ)’, dated on palaeographical grounds to the reign of Cleopatra VII (cf. Noy, ‘A Jewish Place’, 119 n. 9). On the literary evidence, including rabbinic literature: Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven and London, 2005), 82–96.

¹⁰⁴ Rigsby, *Asyilia*, 572.

¹⁰⁵ Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 134–5, on the violations perpetrated by Alexandrian enemies of the Jews within the ‘largest and most distinguished (ἐν τῇ μεγίστῃ καὶ περισημοτάτῃ) of the Alexandrian prayer-houses (38 CE); on the colossal size of the ‘great synagogue’ of Alexandria, cf. the later rabbinic traditions recorded in *t. Sukkah* 4.6; *y. Sukkah* 5.1, 55a–b; *b. Sukkah* 51b.

¹⁰⁶ On the discovery of the inscription: Rigsby, ‘A Jewish Asylum’, 127.

¹⁰⁷ Rigsby, *Asyilia*, 571–3; *idem*, ‘A Jewish Asylum’.

¹⁰⁸ Josephus gives conflicting accounts of the appearance of the temple: (1) as modelled on the Jerusalem temple (Josephus, *War* 1.33; 7.428, 431–2 (intended as a rival to the Jerusalem temple); cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.388; 13.63, 67; 20.236); (2) as ‘not like that in Jerusalem’ (Josephus, *War* 7.427). Other signs of the magnitude of the temple include reference to its similarity to a tower built of massive stones, sixty cubits high (Josephus, *War* 7.427); its extensive lands, donated by Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II (Josephus, *War* 7.430); the foundation of a fortress or small town (πολίχνη) associated with the temple (Josephus, *War* 1.33). Josephus varies the terminology for the temple, using, apparently without significant distinction in meaning: (1) ναός (e.g. Josephus, *War* 7.427; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.63; 20.236); (2) ἱερόν, ‘holy place’ (e.g. Josephus, *War* 7.431; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.388; 13.70–3). Josephus

descendant of the old Jerusalem high priesthood and a powerful supporter of the Ptolemaic monarchy.¹⁰⁹ From its beginnings, the Jewish settlement at Leontopolis repeatedly demonstrated its loyalty to the crown.¹¹⁰ The founder Onias was probably one of the two Jewish commanders (Onias and Dositheos) to whom Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II entrusted their army, as Josephus proudly reports in the *Against Apion*.¹¹¹ After the death of Ptolemy VI, the same Onias fought on the side of Cleopatra II in her military struggle against Ptolemy VIII to retain power.¹¹² In the next generation, Cleopatra III, daughter of Cleopatra II, relied on the military leadership of the sons of Onias IV in her war against her elder son, Ptolemy IX. Josephus quotes Strabo (a source with privileged access to information in Egypt in the first decade after the fall of Cleopatra) as confirming that ‘only the Jews of the district named for Onias remained faithful to her’ because of the queen’s favour to her Jewish generals, ‘Chelkias and Ananias, sons of the Onias who had built the temple in the nome of Heliopolis’.¹¹³ In the lifetime of Cleopatra VII, according to Josephus, the support of ‘the Jews from the so-called land of Onias’

locates the temple at Leontopolis in the nome of Heliopolis, *c.* 20 miles from Memphis (Josephus, *War* 7.426; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.65, 70), known as ‘the temple (ναός) of the Jews in the so-called district of Onias’ (Josephus, *War* 7.421); but the exact site of the temple, following its destruction by Roman forces in the aftermath of the Jewish Revolt (Josephus, *War* 7.420–1, 433–6; 73/74 CE), has not been found. That territory within the Heliopolite nome was identified as ‘the land of Onias’ is known not only from Josephus’s sources, including Strabo (Josephus, *War* 1.190; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.287, citing Strabo), but also from the epitaph of Arsinoe, associated with the cemeteries at Tell el-Yehoudieh (*c.* 20 miles north-east of Cairo), who names ‘the land of Onias’ as her birth-place (*JIGRE* no. 38). The archaeological site of Tell el-Yehoudieh has yielded a large corpus of Greek epitaphs, of which more than 50 per cent may be judged to include distinctively Jewish names; this site of Jewish settlement corresponds to at least part of Onias’s foundation; cf. Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, xvi–xix; Capponi, *Il Tempio di Leontopoli*, 207–11.

¹⁰⁹ On Onias IV as founder of the temple of Leontopolis under Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II: Josephus, *Ant.* 12.387; 13.62–73 (contra Josephus, *War* 7.423, which attributes the foundation to Onias III, father of Onias IV); cf. Gideon Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* (Atlanta, GA, 1996), 19–27; Erich S. Gruen, ‘The Origins and Objectives of Onias’ Temple’, *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 16 (1997), 47–70 (55); Capponi, *Il Tempio di Leontopoli*, 39–59. Against the current majority view, Meron M. Piotrkowski argues for Onias III as the founder of Leontopolis, against the background of political crisis in Judaea and the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Antiochus IV, who had deposed Onias III as Jerusalem High Priest (175 BCE; cf. Josephus, *War* 1.33; 7.423): ‘Priests in Exile: The History of the Temple of Onias and Its Community in the Hellenistic Period’ (Ph.D., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2014).

¹¹⁰ See Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 101–3 (Onias IV), 106–7 (on Josephus, *Apion* 2.53–6); 139–46 (Chelkias and Ananias).

¹¹¹ Josephus, *Apion* 2.49.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 2.50–2.

¹¹³ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.285–7; cf. 13.351–5; Edmond Van’t Dack, ‘Les armées en cause’, in *The Judean–Syrian–Egyptian Conflict of 103–101 B.C. A Multilingual Dossier concerning a ‘War of Sceptres’*, ed. Edmond Van’t Dack, Willy Clarysse *et al.* (Brussels, 1989), 127–36 (129–31).

(persuaded by Antipater, father of the future Herod the Great, and the authority of the Jerusalem high priest Hyrcanus) played an important role in the victory of Julius Caesar over the forces of Cleopatra's rival, Ptolemy XIII, in the course of the Alexandrian War (spring 47 BCE).¹¹⁴ Though Josephus does not say so, it follows that Jews from 'the land of Onias' played an important part in events that led to the restoration of Cleopatra VII as queen of Egypt.¹¹⁵ The asylum decree may well reflect that context of a special relationship between the crown and the Jews of Leontopolis, and perhaps of Cleopatra's hopes of continued reliance on this powerful base of support outside Alexandria, as in the case of her patronage of the Isis temple near Ptolemais in the south.¹¹⁶

Whether this decree originates with the Jews of Leontopolis or belongs to another Jewish place of worship in Egypt, other evidence points to the conclusion that the rule of Cleopatra VII did not deviate from the long-established practice of the Ptolemaic monarchs with regard to their official, publicly stated support for Jewish *proseuchai*. From the third century BCE on, the Jews of Egypt dedicated their *proseuchai* 'on behalf of (ὐπέρ)' the royal family.¹¹⁷ This custom, attested in diverse inscriptions and literary sources, adapted the practice known from non-Jewish temples in Egypt in using such dedications as a means of honouring the monarchs, promoting their image as pious rulers by associating them in the worship of the deity/ies, while refraining from any explicit ascription of divinity

¹¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.127–39. According to Josephus, *Ant.* 14.127, Antipater acted under orders from the Jerusalem high priest Hyrcanus. Somewhat different is the account in Josephus's *War* (1.187–94), in which Antipater receives the credit for persuading the Egyptian Jews to cooperate in assisting Julius Caesar and his allies. Neither Jewish leader is mentioned in the Caesarian account of the Alexandrian War, though reference is made there to the post-victory rewards made by Caesar to his allies; cf. *Alexandrian War* 26–8, 65, 78; Schürer, *History*, 1, 270–1.

¹¹⁵ Caesar's restoration of Cleopatra with her second brother, Ptolemy XIV, in Alexandria: *Alexandrian War*, 33.

¹¹⁶ Thompson, 'Cleopatra VII', 33.

¹¹⁷ The earliest dated examples are from the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (r. 246–221 BCE) and his wife Berenike II: e.g. 'On behalf of king Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy, and queen Berenike his wife and sister and their children, the Jews in Crocodilopolis (dedicated) the proseuche' (*JIGRE* no. 117; cf. no. 22). A century later, the same formula is used in dedications made 'on behalf of' Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and his co-rulers, Cleopatra II ('the sister') and Cleopatra III ('the wife') (co-rule, 124–116 BCE) (*JIGRE* nos. 24, 25). In other cases, dedications made 'on behalf of king Ptolemy and queen Cleopatra' leave unclear the exact identification of the rulers (*JIGRE* nos. 27, 28; and cf. the fragmentary remains of *JIGRE* nos. 9, 14). The honorific dedication is a distinctive phenomenon of Egyptian Jewry under Ptolemaic rule, reflected, for example, in the petition presented to Ptolemy VI and Cleopatra II for the building of a Jewish temple at Leontopolis (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.67). On the unusual character, in the context of the practice of the Jews of antiquity, of making dedications on behalf of the ruler: Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 84.

to the Ptolemies themselves.¹¹⁸ Within the temples of Greek (non-Jewish) communities, the honorific dedication served, as Peter Fraser explains, as ‘a formula of loyalty, expressing the fact that the Greeks had a personal relationship with, and were therefore under the protection of the sovereign’.¹¹⁹ Among Jews, the honorific dedication of a *proseuche* permitted public expression of loyalty towards the monarchy,¹²⁰ while at the same time not compromising their exclusive, ancestral commitment to the God of Israel, which permitted the worship of no other god.

The reign of Cleopatra VII is very likely the setting for the last known *proseuche* inscription of this kind.¹²¹ Found among rubbish in modern Gabbari, a suburb in the south-west of Alexandria, a badly damaged plaque preserves the following words:

[On behalf] of the queen and king, for the great God who listens to prayer,
 Alyp[os (made) the] *prose[uchē]* in the 15th year, Me[cheir . . .]
 [ὕπερ] βασι[λίσσης]ς καὶ βασι[λέως] θεῶι [με]γάλωι ἐ[πηκό]ωι (?) Ἀλυπ[ος τήν]
 προσε[υχὴν] ἐπόει [vacat] (ἔτους) εἴς Με[χείρ . . .]¹²²

A date of 37 BCE, the fifteenth year of Cleopatra’s rule, is suggested by the sequence of royal titles, giving precedence to the queen (over Caesarion).¹²³ If this identification is correct, it offers a striking example

¹¹⁸ On the use of the dedicatory formula in dedications to Greek and Egyptian deities: Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (3 vols., Oxford, 1972), I, 226–7. The practice implies recognition that, though the cult of the Ptolemies was introduced under Ptolemy II Philadelphus alongside that of Alexander, the ‘divine’ rulers were not ‘fully gods’: Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (2nd edn; Princeton and Oxford, 2012), 125–6.

¹¹⁹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I, 116. In the case of non-Jewish Greek dedications, Fraser notes that the dedicatory formula, known from other Hellenistic kingdoms, was especially prominent in Ptolemaic Egypt, particularly in Alexandria. In the time of Cleopatra, see *I. Fay.* 3, 205 = Rowlandson no. 12 (Arsinoite nome, 51 BCE): ‘On behalf of (ὕπερ) Queen Cleopatra the goddess Philopator, the place of the association of (Isis) Snonaitiake, of whom the president is the chief priest Onnophris. Year 1, Epeiph’ (the Greek inscription accompanies traditional, Egyptian religious iconography).

¹²⁰ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I, 282–3.

¹²¹ The absence of a dedication to the Ptolemaic ruler is seen (among other data) as confirming a Roman date for the dedication by Papous of a *proseuche* ‘on behalf of (ὕπερ) himself and his wife and children’ (*JIGRE* no. 126).

¹²² *Ibid.* 13, based on the reconstruction by David M. Lewis (*CPJ* 3, no. 1432), here adapted, with my underline in the English translation of letters too damaged to read in the Greek equivalent (with damaged letters in square brackets). The final letters, designating the Egyptian month, here identified as Mecheir, allow for the alternative reading of the month Mesore (Adam Lajtar, Review of Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, in *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, 24 (1994), 57–70).

¹²³ An impressively strong consensus dates *JIGRE* no. 13 to 37 BCE: M. L. Strack, ‘Inschriften aus ptolemäischer Zeit’, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, 2 (1903), 559 n. 41; Evaristo Breccia, *Iscrizioni Greche e Latine* (Cairo, 1911), no. 41; *CIF* 2, no. 1432; *CPJ* 3, no. 1432; Méléze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt*, 91; Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 19 (a ‘tentative date’ of 37 BCE); *I. Alex. Ptol.* no. 35. Alternatively, 36 BCE: Giuseppe Botti, ‘Bulletin Épigraphique’, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique d’Alexandrie*, 4 (1902), 85–107 (86); Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*,

of the declaration of loyalty to the monarchs by at least one group of Jews within the royal capital, in a momentous year for the politics of the Ptolemaic kingdom. At the same time, the dedication suggests the confidence of the Jews of this Alexandrian *proseuche* in the patronage and support of the queen and her co-ruler.¹²⁴ This was no doubt one of the many *proseuchai* which Philo describes as scattered throughout the city in the 30s CE.¹²⁵ Many, if not all, of those buildings will have been part of the landscape of Cleopatra's Alexandria. In his powerful denunciation of those who violated the *proseuchai* of Alexandria in 38 CE, Philo emphasises that no such violation ever took place in the Ptolemaic era. In the context of Roman-ruled Egypt, more than sixty years after the death of Cleopatra VII, Philo reflects on the stark contrast between the respectful treatment of the *proseuchai* under all the Ptolemaic monarchs and the disastrous situation in his own Alexandria. According to Philo, the *proseuchai* of Alexandria's Jews became the target for accusations of Jewish disloyalty and impiety towards the emperor Gaius; in 38 CE, as Philo reports, most of the *proseuchai* were destroyed with great violence or transformed, with images of Gaius 'the god', into shrines for the worship of the emperor. Philo condemns these actions as an illegal innovation, designed only to inflict suffering on the Jews by their enemies in Alexandria. In this perspective, the rule of Cleopatra and her predecessors provides the model of appropriate monarchic piety with regard to the *proseuchai*. Philo's testimony serves to confirm the continuation of Ptolemaic policy under Cleopatra VII in permitting Jews to dedicate their places of prayer 'on

1, 282, II, 2, 441, n. 766. An identification with the fifteenth year of Cleopatra III (as proposed by Ulrich Willamowitz-Möller, 'Alexandrinische Inschriften', *Sitzungsberichte der kgl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Berlin*, 49 (1902), 1093–9 (1094)) puts the dedication just prior to the year of the queen's assassination (101 BCE). The inscription, however, lacks the double date expected for the era of Cleopatra III and Ptolemy X Alexander, i.e. 'the thirteenth year' of Ptolemy X, as noted by Strack, 'Inschriften aus ptolemäischer Zeit'.

¹²⁴ In terms of the identification of the group behind the *proseuche*, the extant letters of the inscription suggest the name Alypos as the benefactor responsible for the building of the *proseuche*. The name is not otherwise known to have been used by Jews in Egypt, though the Greek epithet *alypos*, 'without pain', 'one who causes no pain', is associated with Jews buried in the necropolis at Leontopolis (Tell el-Yehoudieh) (*JIGRE* nos. 74 (Marion) and 98 (Sabbataios), both probably of the Augustan period). Variants of the name (Alypis, Alypius) are known to have been used by Palestinian Jews of a later period (Beth She'arim 196; *CIJ* 2, no. 502). Alypius has been proposed as a possible alternative reading for the name in *JIGRE* no. 13; see, for example, Greg H. R. Horsley, 'Towards a New Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum? A propos W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*', *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 2.1 (1995), 77–101 (89); against, Étienne Bernand, *Inscriptions Grecques d'Alexandrie Ptolémaïque* (Cairo, 2001), 101, commentary on l. 5. The inscription represents the only example from Ptolemaic Egypt of the patronage of a *proseuche* by an individual benefactor: Carsten Clausen, *Versammlung, Gemeinde, Synagoge: das hellenistisch-jüdische Umfeld der frühchristlichen Gemeinden* (Göttingen, 2002), 91.

¹²⁵ Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 132.

behalf of the monarchs, without imposing on the Jews the worship of the Ptolemaic rulers themselves as gods.¹²⁶

II Plutarch, Cleopatra and the Jews

The final group of evidence to be considered comes from Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. A younger contemporary of Josephus, Plutarch is of first importance as a source for many details of the life of Cleopatra VII, including some intriguing passages bearing on the question of the queen's relations with individual Jews. The task of interpreting this version of Cleopatra is by no means straightforward. In his account of Mark Antony, Plutarch's portrait of Cleopatra as enslaving and bewitching Antony is clearly shaped by the hostile perspective of Octavian's propaganda. Plutarch's *Antony* is the story of a great man who went wrong through lack of self-discipline and submission to the control of others, including his wife Fulvia, whose unwomanly desire 'to rule a ruler' helped Cleopatra by establishing 'the female domination (γυναικοκρατία)' of Antony.¹²⁷ According to Plutarch, Antony's passion for Cleopatra represents the 'final evil (τέλευταῖον κακόν)' in the story of the Roman's downfall.¹²⁸ Plutarch's account is nevertheless valuable not only for confirming the enduring power of the negative propaganda against Antony and Cleopatra, but also for what it offers by way of alternative viewpoints, including reports by those who apparently witnessed first-hand the activities and appearance of the queen.¹²⁹ To the last category belongs the following well-known anecdote about Cleopatra's multi-lingual skills, which, among other things, are said to have included her ability to speak to 'Hebrews' without an interpreter:¹³⁰

There was pleasure even in the sound of her voice, and her tongue, like an instrument of many strings, she could easily turn to whatever kind of language she wished, so that with barbarians she very rarely conversed through an interpreter, but gave her answers to most of them herself and in her own person, whether Ethiopians, Trôgodytes, Hebrews (*Hebraioi*), Arabians, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. It is said that she knew the languages of many other peoples too, though the monarchs before her did not

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 138. In the confrontation between Gaius and Philo's embassy over Gaius's plans to put a statue of himself as a god in the Jerusalem temple, Gaius (so Philo) rejected the value of the Jews' offerings to God (in the Jerusalem temple) 'on behalf' of the emperor, 'For you have not sacrificed to me (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε)!' (*Embassy to Gaius* 356–7).

¹²⁷ Plutarch, *Antony* 10.6.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 25.1.

¹²⁹ Pelling, *Life of Antony*, 16–18, 26–31; Frederick E. Brenk, 'Plutarch's Life "Markos Antonios": A Literary and Cultural Study', in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Part II: *Principal*, vol. XXXIII: *Sprache und Literatur*, VI (Berlin and New York, 1992), 4348–4469, indices 4895–915.

¹³⁰ Roller suggests that the source for this anecdote 'was presumably someone in regular contact with the queen and her court, perhaps Nikolaos of Damascus or Sokrates of Rhodes': *Cleopatra*, 169.

even trouble themselves to learn the Egyptian language, and some of them had even abandoned speaking Macedonian.¹³¹

This statement finds its place within Plutarch's spectacular description of Antony's first meeting with Cleopatra at Tarsus (41 BCE), to which the triumvir had summoned the queen to test her loyalties in the context of the struggle for power in Rome after the assassination of Julius Caesar.¹³² Here, however, Plutarch's interest is less in the politics than the impact of Cleopatra on Antony's mental state. Thus, according to Plutarch, this meeting serves to explain how Antony was 'taken prisoner (ἀλίσκεται)';¹³³ how Cleopatra 'overpowered (ἤρπασεν)' him, hurrying him away from Tarsus and his duties in Rome to join her in Alexandria.¹³⁴

How then to explain this captivating power over Antony? In our passage, Plutarch's rationale appeals to the testimony of those who saw and heard Cleopatra. In terms of the queen's appearance, Plutarch cites others as confirming ('as they say') that Cleopatra's beauty was not wholly 'incomparable (οὐ πᾶνυ δυσπαραβλήτων)';¹³⁵ on the other hand, he reports ('it is said') that her overpowering attractiveness lay rather in her remarkable interaction with all those she encountered.¹³⁶ While Plutarch's primary purpose in this context is to explain Cleopatra's power over Antony, the description of the queen, from unnamed sources, may offer a rare insight into the 'real' Cleopatra, at work in her personal diplomacy with Egypt's neighbouring peoples; it also offers significant evidence about Cleopatra's identification with Egypt, with the strong suggestion that she was fluent in Egyptian, the language of the vast majority of her subjects.¹³⁷

In Plutarch's report, the list of 'barbarians' (non-Greek-speaking peoples) with whom the queen is said to have spoken corresponds to regions in which the Ptolemaic monarchy had long-standing interests; these peoples represent the importance of diplomacy for the queen,

¹³¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 27.4–5.

¹³² *Ibid.* 25.2.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 25.2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 28.1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 27.3. The adjective appears only here in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae corpus, perhaps a sign of the influence of an oral tradition? Other sources contradict Plutarch's testimony in emphasising Cleopatra's beauty as part of her fatal attractiveness: cf. Cassius Dio 42.34.5. On Plutarch's use of λέγεται ('it is said'), and similar impersonal expressions: Brad L. Cook, 'Plutarch's Use of λέγεται: Narrative Design and Source in *Alexander*', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 42 (2001), 329–60.

¹³⁶ Plutarch, *Antony* 27.4–5; cf. Plutarch, *Caesar* 49.2 on the supposed power of Cleopatra's presence over Julius Caesar in Alexandria.

¹³⁷ Wolfgang Schuller, *Kleopatra: Königin in drei Kulturen. Eine Biographie* (Hamburg, 2006), 40–1.

particularly on behalf of Antony and his campaigns in the East.¹³⁸ As Duane Roller observes, the details may also be indicative of Cleopatra's intellectual interests: the learned ruler represents an ideal of Hellenistic monarchy (male),¹³⁹ and one that Cleopatra seems to have embraced if we follow Roller's carefully constructed evaluation of the young queen as 'a remarkably educated person'.¹⁴⁰

That Cleopatra is said to have spoken with 'Hebraioi (Hebrews)' in their own language has been interpreted as a sign of her favour towards Jews.¹⁴¹ That judgement goes beyond the evidence of Plutarch's text, which confirms (if we believe the report) only that the queen had taken the trouble to learn enough of their language to speak directly with 'Hebrews' and a number of other barbarian peoples. It does not prove the queen's favour or particular friendship towards any particular group, though it at least suggests that she sought alliances with these peoples.

What Plutarch means here by *Hebraioi* is not clear-cut and deserves brief comment.¹⁴² Elsewhere in Plutarch's writings, he refers only once to the *Hebraioi*, their 'secret rituals' a topic of one of several questions about the practices and beliefs of the Jews, discussed at a symposium (narrated by Plutarch, who presents himself as participant) whose participants appear neither positive nor particularly well informed about the culture of the Jews.¹⁴³ Elements of their description of Jewish practices are clearly derived from a source, and that same source may be responsible for the

¹³⁸ See the useful discussion in Roller, *Cleopatra*, 46–50. Antony's alliance with the Median king, Artavasdes, included the betrothal of their children (Plutarch, *Antony* 53.12; Cassius Dio 49.40.2).

¹³⁹ Cleopatra's supposed linguistic skills are comparable (given the 'many other' languages she is credited with) to those attributed to Mithradates VI of Pontus (120–63 BCE), whose ability as king of twenty-two tribes to give judgements in as many languages, without an interpreter, earned him the admiration of Pliny for such remarkable powers of memory: Pliny, *Natural History* 7.88; 25.6; cf. variations on this tradition in Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* 8.7.16; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 17.17.1–2; cf. Anika Strobach, *Plutarch und die Sprachen: ein Beitrag zur Fremdsprachenproblematik in der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1997), 160 ('Solche Berichte über Sprachgenies gab es öfter in der antiken Literatur'). It is not impossible that Cleopatra and her supporters promoted her linguistic skills in deliberate emulation of Mithradates, cf. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 3, 49–50; for a more sceptical view, Pelling, *Life of Antony*, 191.

¹⁴⁰ Roller, *Cleopatra*, 43–51.

¹⁴¹ Cleopatra's ability to speak directly with 'Hebrews' is treated as positive evidence of her relationship with Jews in, for example, Heinz Heinen, 'Onomastisches zu Eiras, Kammerzofe Kleopatras VII', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 79 (1989), 243–7; republished in Heinen, *Kleopatra-Studien: Gesammelte Schriften zur ausgehenden Ptolemäerzeit* (Konstanz, 2009), 176–81 (181); note Stern's comment on Plutarch, *Antony* 27 that, despite the testimony of Apion in Josephus, 'there is no reason to assume that she was consistently anti-semitic': Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols., Jerusalem, 1974–84), I, 568.

¹⁴² Roller, *Cleopatra*, 47.

¹⁴³ Plutarch, *Convivial Questions* 671c.

use of the term *Hebraioi*.¹⁴⁴ In the same context, Plutarch's symposiasts also refer to the *Ioudaioi* and their customs,¹⁴⁵ and it is clear that both terms are used here interchangeably to refer to a people (*Hebraioi* or *Ioudaioi*) defined by religious practices and beliefs, though not by territory.¹⁴⁶

In the case of Cleopatra's 'Hebrews', the geographical shape of Plutarch's report (almost a half circle around Egypt) probably points to Jews from Herod's kingdom. A good number of the Jews of Judea, including Herod and his courtiers, would have spoken Greek. But since Plutarch specifies Cleopatra's prowess in speaking with 'barbarians', conversation with 'Hebrews' must mean Aramaic or Hebrew. As other evidence confirms, the language of the 'Hebrews' in the Graeco-Roman period could include Hebrew or Aramaic, and the context does not usually reveal which language is meant. Aramaic and Hebrew were both spoken in first-century Judea and the wider Palestinian region.¹⁴⁷ If Aramaic was the language in which Cleopatra addressed certain 'Hebrews', it was also the language in which she likely spoke with others including Syrians. And if Cleopatra really could speak to 'Hebrews' in their own language, she could do more than is usually presumed for most of the Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt in which few traces of the use of Hebrew or Aramaic survive. In any case, Plutarch's evidence for Cleopatra's conversations with *Hebraioi* adds to the broader picture of what we know of Cleopatra's personal interactions with Herod, as ally of Mark Antony,¹⁴⁸ and with Hasmonaean members of his family by marriage.

Eiras and Cleopatra

Plutarch also supplies important evidence that allows at least for the possibility that one of Cleopatra's most trusted companions was a Jew. The issue rests on the question of the identity of Eiras, one of the two

¹⁴⁴ On Plutarch's source for the description of the Jerusalem temple in this context: Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, 546.

¹⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Convivial Questions* 669d,e; 670d; 671c.

¹⁴⁶ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1, 559: 'Plutarch belongs to the generation of writers who started to use "Hebrews" instead of or together with "Jews"' (see references on 559). From the early Hellenistic period on, the term *Hebraios/oi* is used by Greek-speaking Jews to designate both themselves and their ancestors; cf. BDAG, s.v. Ἑβραῖος; Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden, 1996), 104–47. In some contexts, 'Hebrew/s' clearly refers to a particular territory (e.g. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.2; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 5.7.4); or to the speakers of a specific language (e.g. Philo, *Moses* 2.32; Josephus, *War* 6.97; Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 13).

¹⁴⁷ On whether Josephus spoke Hebrew as well as Aramaic: Rajak, *Josephus*, 230–2.

¹⁴⁸ Plutarch refers to 'Herod the Jew' as part of the alliance that sent forces to Antony at Actium: Plutarch, *Antony* 61.3.

women who, according to Plutarch's *Antony*, accompanied Cleopatra in her last days after the Battle of Actium and who died with the queen.¹⁴⁹ Plutarch first mentions Eiras in words attributed directly to Octavian:

Caesar (Octavian) said in addition that Antony had been drugged and was not even master of himself, and that the Romans were carrying on war with Mardion the eunuch, and Potheinos, and Eiras, Cleopatra's hairdresser, and Charmion, by (all of whom) the principal affairs of the government were managed.¹⁵⁰

Octavian's reported words stress the humiliation of Antony, no longer a man, no longer in control of himself, but the slave of a foreign government under the misrule of eunuchs and women. There is good reason to think that such images of Antony and his relationship to Cleopatra's court indeed originated with Octavian and his supporters, in the context of the campaign from the mid-30s BCE onwards to justify the elimination of Antony. A strong emphasis on Antony as the 'slave' of the 'Egyptian woman' and the unmanly, female character of Egypt's government, whose destruction is the duty of loyal Romans, pervades the sources for Octavian's war of words against Antony and Cleopatra. We see this powerfully exemplified in Dio's report of Octavian's arguments for war on the eve of the Battle of Actium,¹⁵¹ or in the celebration of Octavian's victory by the poet Horace who makes Antony 'a Roman (you future generations will refuse to believe it!) enslaved to a woman (*emancipatus feminae*)', a soldier who 'can bear to serve a lot of shrivelled eunuchs (*spadonibus servire rugosis potest*)'.¹⁵² Writing as a friend of the prefect of Roman Egypt in the 20s BCE, the geographer Strabo writes approvingly of the fact that, in contrast with the years of Antony's subservience to Cleopatra, Egypt is now ruled 'by prudent men (ὕπὸ σωφρόνων ἀνδρῶν)'.¹⁵³ Certainly, Plutarch reflects the influence of Octavian's propaganda when he places the description of Cleopatra's unmanly court in prime position within the arguments presented by Octavian in Rome for war against Cleopatra (32 BCE), with the goal of removing from Antony 'the authority which he had surrendered to a

¹⁴⁹ Eiras: Prosopographia Ptolemaica 14720. Other ancient sources that name Eiras with Charmion as among Cleopatra's companions: Pseudo-Plutarch, *Proverbs of the Alexandrians* Fr. 45, l. 1 (Eiras was tasked with the care of Cleopatra's hair while Charmion dealt with the queen's nails; the same in Zenobius, *Epitome of Didymus' and Lucillus Tarrhaeus' Collections of Proverbs* 5.24 who, however, gives the name Naera instead of Eiras); Zonaras, *Epitome of Histories* 2.432, l. 30 (closely follows Plutarch, *Antony* 85.7). Naera (Νᾶηρα) and Charmion: Zenobius, *Epitome* 5.24. Naeira (Νᾶειρα) and Charmion: Galen, 14.235–6.

¹⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 60.1 (tr. Bernadotte Perrin, adapted).

¹⁵¹ Cassius Dio 50.24.1–30.4; cf. also the articulation of the theme of Antony as 'slave' to 'the Egyptian woman' (48.24.2), and of Antony's own effeminacy (γυναικίζει, 50.27.6).

¹⁵² Horace, *Epode* 9, 11–16 (tr. Niall Rudd).

¹⁵³ Strabo 17.1.12.

woman'.¹⁵⁴ Whether Octavian is also Plutarch's source for identifying Eiras and the other names of Cleopatra's retinue we do not know; it is more likely that Plutarch drew such details from a different source with close knowledge of the Alexandrian court.¹⁵⁵

The description of Eiras as 'hairdresser (κουρεύτρια)' is suggestive of low status, marked by a job associated with slaves or freedwomen. For Ptolemaic queens, with their power hair and melon coiffures, the hairdresser was an essential and influential role.¹⁵⁶ But in this context, 'hairdresser' might be intended as a term of abuse, not a real job description,¹⁵⁷ – serving to underline the construction of the unmanly, servile character of Cleopatra's followers, a rabble that has turned the natural order of male-led government upside down.

Eiras is also named by Plutarch as one of the 'two women' who accompanied Cleopatra in her imprisonment in Alexandria, under Roman guard, and who joined the queen in a self-inflicted death in her tomb in August 30 BCE.¹⁵⁸ In Plutarch's account of those final days, Eiras and Charmion play a crucial role in helping Cleopatra to avoid humiliation in Octavian's triumph, and to die a noble death of her own making. The high status of these women is indicated by Plutarch's

¹⁵⁴ Plutarch, *Antony* 60.1.

¹⁵⁵ Pelling, *Life of Antony*, 264. Reference to Potheinos seems to be either an error or a deliberate confusion with the courtier of Ptolemy XIII. The eunuch Potheinos was a figure remembered as hostile to Rome; influential in promoting the cause of Ptolemy XIII against his sister Cleopatra, Potheinos was executed on the orders of Julius Caesar, 48 BCE (Plutarch, *Caesar* 49.2–3; Cassius Dio 42.36.1–3).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2005), 242–50. Evidence for female 'hairdressers' is relatively rare, cf. LSJ s.v. κουρεύτρια, which lists Plutarch, *Antony* 60, as the source for this feminine form. In the context of early Ptolemaic Egypt, a tax-register for the Fayum village of Lysimachis includes a woman named Kleopatra, listed as a (masculine) 'hairdresser (κουρέύς)' (*P. Count.* 26.320 (254–231 BCE)); cf. Willy Clarysse and Dorothy J. Thompson, *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt*, II: *Historical Studies* (Cambridge, 2006), 203. Plutarch nearly always refers to the (male) hairdresser as a prime example of the purveyor of gossip through their ability to mix with the powerful and the servant class: *Nicias* 30.2; *On Talkativeness* 508f–509b. In the same context, Plutarch mentions Julius Caesar's barber (κουρέύς), a slave (οικέτης), who served as Caesar's spy in Ptolemy XIII's Alexandria (*Caesar* 49.2). The tradition transmitted in Pseudo-Plutarch, *Proverbs of the Alexandrians* 45, also makes Charmion the queen's manicurist.

¹⁵⁷ Contra ancient and modern acceptance of this role for Eiras: Pseudo-Plutarch, *Proverbs of the Alexandrians* Fr. 45, l. 1; *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, 336, s.v. Εἰράς, 'Haarkräuslerin der Kleopatra'.

¹⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Antony* 85.7; cf. Cassius Dio 51.14.3, who does not name the two θεράπαινοι who die with Cleopatra. Plutarch's narrative of Cleopatra's death does not make clear until the end that the two women who alone accompanied the queen in her mausoleum were Charmion and Eiras (Plutarch, *Antony* 77.2; 79.2–3; 84.3). Furthermore, Eiras and Charmion are almost certainly to be identified with the unnamed female companions of Cleopatra who accompanied Cleopatra and served to reconcile the queen with Antony on the voyage home after the Battle of Actium (Plutarch, *Antony* 67.6); cf. Pelling, *Life of Antony*, 307.

note that their bodies received ‘honourable interment’ on the orders of Octavian.¹⁵⁹ If we follow Plutarch, Eiras and Charmion were Cleopatra’s most trusted and devoted people. Their loyalty is enshrined in the words of the dying Charmion, as she responds defiantly to the Roman soldiers of Octavian: that the queen’s death was ‘excellently done (κάλλιστα) and befitting the woman who was the descendant of so many kings’.¹⁶⁰

As for the possible association of Eiras with Jewish identity, the issue rests on the significance of her name.¹⁶¹ The volumes of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* published thus far do not include Εἰράς as a female name.¹⁶² Most of the (currently meagre) evidence for parallels comes from Egypt, to the extent that Εἰράς may be designated a ‘Graeco-Egyptian’ name,¹⁶³ attested by the following examples:

- (i) The genitive form Εἰράτος in a Herakleopolis papyrus of CE 224.¹⁶⁴
- (ii) A possible variant of the name in Εἶρα (or Εἰρά?) Εἰκαβαθίου, documented in the Fayum in the sixth–seventh centuries CE.¹⁶⁵
- (iii) Closer to the era of Cleopatra VII, the epitaph of Εἰράς θυγάτηρ, ‘Eiras the daughter’, from the necropolis at Tell el-Yehoudieh,

¹⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Antony* 86.7: ἐντίμου δὲ καὶ τὰ γύναια κηδείας ἔτυχεν αὐτοῦ προστάξαντος. Eiras and Charmion belong among the ‘Dames du Cour’ (otherwise mostly represented by courtesans of the Ptolemaic kings) in the *Prosopographia Ptolemaica*, ed. Willy Peremans, Edmond Van’t Dack, Willy Clarysse, Loe de Meulemeester-Swinnen and Hans Hauben (Leuven, 1950–81); cf. Daniel Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death: The Hellenistic Dynasties* (1999), 217, who notes that the trade of hairdresser is also abusively associated by Tlepolemos with the courtesans of Ptolemy IV Philopator (Polybius 15.25).

¹⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 85.8.

¹⁶¹ In some post-Plutarchian versions of Cleopatra’s death, the name Eiras is replaced by other names: Νάηρα, ‘Naera’ (Zenobius, *Epitome* 5.24), or Νάειρα, ‘Naeira’ (Galen 14.235). Pseudo-Plutarch (*Proverbs of the Alexandrians* 45) and Zonaras (*Epitome of Histories* 10.31), however, follow Plutarch in preserving the name Eiras. The name Charmion, by contrast, remains fairly stable in the tradition (cf. Καρμιόνη in Galen etc.). Nevertheless, Charmion is another rare female name; cf. *P. Mich.* 4.223 (Valeria Charmion; CE 172, Karanis).

¹⁶² The closest female parallel is Εἰραῖς from fourth/third century BCE Anthedon in Boeotia (IIIb, no. 24690; noted in Hannah M. Cotton *et al.*, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, 1: *Jerusalem. Part 1, 1–704* (henceforth, *CIIP*) (Berlin and New York, 2010)), 314. Two second-century BCE inscriptions from Pamphylia attest Εἰρας (in the genitive Εἰραυ) as a male name (*Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* Vb, s.v. Εἰρας).

¹⁶³ David Noy and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis*, III: *Syria and Cyprus* (henceforth *IJO*) (Tübingen, 2004), 115–16, commenting on *Syr*72ⁿ = *CIIP* 1, 1, no. 291.

¹⁶⁴ *Stud. Pal.* 20.26, an example of the name Eiras in a non-Jewish context, cf. Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 121. In other evidence, the name Eiras is no longer read in the revised edition of *Stud. Pal.* 22.101 (second century CE; Fayum); and from the graffito carved on the Memnonion at Abydos (332 BCE – CE 284?), ‘Eiras and Helene were here!’, Eiras is taken to be male (*I. Memnonion* 131.1).

¹⁶⁵ *P. Vindob. Sal.* 19; see Heinen (‘Onomastisches zu Eiras’, 179) on the possibility of reading Εἶρα as a variant of Εἰράς.

associated with the Jewish settlement of Onias at Leontopolis.¹⁶⁶

Though the inscription includes no date, it must belong to the period of settlement between Onias's foundation in the mid-second century BCE to the presumed end of the settlement as a consequence of the revolt under Trajan (CE 115–117).¹⁶⁷ Here, Eiras the daughter is commemorated in a modest epitaph, together with 'Tryphaina the mother', placed over two burial niches.

- (iv) Finally, from the Akeldama burial caves, south of Jerusalem, an ossuary of the first centuries BCE/CE contains the bones of a woman commemorated by two brief lines: ΕΙΡΑΤΟΣ | ΣΕΛΑΕΥΚ, 'EIRAS' | '(daughter of?) SELEUK[OS]', or 'from SELEUK[IA]'.¹⁶⁸ As indicated by the inscriptions, Akeldama's burial caves seem to have been used by interrelated families, with most names recorded in Greek, others in a Jewish script or in bilingual records.¹⁶⁹ In the case of Eiras, it is not certain whether the second, incomplete word refers to her *patris*, or (as is more likely, based on the use of patronymics in the associated ossuaries) to her father.¹⁷⁰ If Seleuk- does not refer to Seleucia in Syria (there are two candidates for this location), a Syrian origin for Eiras and other family members buried at Akeldama is suggested but not proved by a reference to Apamea as the home of one of the deceased,¹⁷¹ and by the predominant use of Greek in the inscriptions, characteristic of other Jewish inscriptions from Syria but not generally of Jerusalem ossuaries.¹⁷² Certainly, the Eiras buried at Akeldama is likely to have come originally from outside

¹⁶⁶ *JIGRE* no. 52. The epitaph was recorded in situ in 1887; cf. Edouard Naville, 'The Mound of the Jew and the City of Onias', *Egypt Exploration Fund*, 7th Memoir (1890), 14, pl. IV N.

¹⁶⁷ On the Jewish context of the burials at Tell el-Yehoudieh, cf. Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, xviii: more than 50 per cent of the names given in the epitaphs are 'distinctively Jewish'; others include many names (including Eirene) known to have been much used by Jews without being distinctively Jewish; the same family can include members with Jewish, Egyptian and Greek names; while 'the community may not have been exclusively Jewish... there are no reliable grounds for identifying any non-Jewish minority which may have been buried at the site'.

¹⁶⁸ *CIIP* 1, 1, no. 291 = *IJO*, 5972^b; cf. Tal Ilan, 'The Ossuary and Sarcophagus Inscriptions', in *The Akeldama Tombs: Three Burial Caves in the Kidron Valley, Jerusalem*, ed. Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut (Jerusalem, 1996), 57–72 (59, no. 3); Tamar Shadmi, 'The Ossuaries and the Sarcophagus', *ibid.*, 41–55 (43, Fig. 2.7; Ossuary 11; ed. pr.); P.-L. Gatier, in *Bulletin Épigraphique*, 654 (1997), 596–7, no. 654. My thanks to Meron Piotrkowski for advice on this topic.

¹⁶⁹ Cotton *et al.*, *CIIP* 1, 1, nos. 309–10; cf. their observation that the family buried with Eiras in Cave 2 'seems to have had a predilection for names based on Eros', and that Eiras is similar sounding.

¹⁷⁰ *IJO* 116; *CIIP* 1, 1, no. 314.

¹⁷¹ *CIIP* 1, 1, no. 304, 'Ariston from Apamea'.

¹⁷² On the basis of new readings, *CIIP* 1, 1, 310, revise the arguments for the inscriptions' Syrian origin as given in the *editio princeps*, cf. Ilan, 'The Ossuary'.

Judaea; whether she lived at some point in Jerusalem or simply had her bones transported to Judaea is unknown.¹⁷³

On the basis of this evidence, the case for identifying Εἰρᾶς as a name strongly suggestive of Jewish origins depends on several factors. First, while the name is rarely documented in the ancient world, Εἰρᾶς is attested in two contexts associated with Jews, in Egypt at Tell el-Yehoudieh, and in Judaea, apparently as part of a diaspora Jewish burial site in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Furthermore, a distinctively Jewish association with the name Εἰρᾶς is also indicated by the likelihood, as demonstrated in the authoritative analysis of Heinz Heinen, that Εἰρᾶς is a hypocoristic form (the short form of a name, typically used in intimate circles) of Eirene, a name generally widespread from the Hellenistic period on, and well documented among the Jews of Egypt and elsewhere.¹⁷⁴ As Heinen puts it, ‘The popularity of the name Eirene among the Jewish population of Ptolemaic Egypt is a fact.’¹⁷⁵ In the Jewish context, Eirene (Greek: εἰρήνη, ‘peace’) may have been used as the equivalent of the Hellenised Hebrew name Salome (Hebrew: *Shalom*, ‘Peace’), the most popular female name in Graeco-Roman Palestine.¹⁷⁶ The strongest case for identifying Cleopatra’s companion Eiras as a Jew

¹⁷³ Cotton *et al.*, *CIIP* 1, 310.

¹⁷⁴ Εἰρᾶς as hypocoristic form: suggested by David M. Lewis, in *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, III, ed. Victor Tcherikover, Alexander Fuks and Menahem Stern, with an Epigraphical Contribution by David M. Lewis (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 148; argued in detail by Heinen, ‘Onomastisches zu Eiras’, 176–81. Heinen (178–9) notes the use of hypocoristic name forms of other individuals within Cleopatra’s court or administration (e.g. the queen’s male servant Saras (Sarapion) mentioned in Cicero, *Atticus* 15.15.2), while rare hypocoristic forms of feminine names ending in -ᾶς appear, for example, in the names Κλεοπᾶς/Κλεοπᾶτος (Kleopas) (*I. Philae* 1.29; Philae, first century BCE) and Κλεοπᾶς (Kleupas) (*CPJ* 3, no. 1530b = *JIGRE* no. 99; Tell el-Yehoudieh; mid-second century BCE – early second century CE; 7 BCE?), both derived from the name Κλεοπάτρα (Kleopatra). In the same context, one should also note Heinen’s decisive refutation of earlier attempts to interpret the significance of the name Eiras, including his critique of the entry in the standard lexicon by W. Pape (G. E. Benseler), *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen* (3rd edn; Braunschweig, 1911), s.v. Εἰρᾶς = ‘Wollkopf’ (‘Woolhead’, based on τὸ εἶρος = ‘wool’).

¹⁷⁵ Heinen, ‘Onomastisches zu Eiras’, 181 (my tr.).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 179; Horbury and Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions*, 138 (noting, on the basis of the evidence available before 1992, that Salome is not attested in Greek transliteration in Egypt with the possible exception of treating the name Salamis as a variant form (*JIGRE* no. 48)). Gerard Mussies treats Eirene as an example of ‘foreign names used by Jews’, and specifically of names translated from the Hebrew: ‘Jewish Personal Names in Some Non-Literary Sources’, in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden, 1994), 242–76 (245). The fact that Eirene is a well-established Greek (non-Jewish) name does not render unlikely the adoption by Jews of the name as equivalent to Salome, despite the doubts expressed by Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity. Part III. The Western Diaspora 330 BCE–650 CE* (Tübingen, 2008), 416. On the extreme popularity of the name Salome, cf. Tal Ilan, ‘Notes on the Distribution of Jewish Women’s Names in Palestine in the Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods’, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 40 (1989), 186–200.

is based on the rarity of this name formation, probably a hypocoristic form of Eirene, and its appearance, despite that rarity, in distinctively Jewish contexts. New evidence may transform that picture. Following Heinen's cautious findings, the evidence does not prove that Cleopatra's Eiras was a Jew,¹⁷⁷ but her name is certainly suggestive of Jewish origins,¹⁷⁸ and this suggestion is further strengthened by the Akeldama inscription not yet available at the time of Heinen's study. Certainly, the context of Cleopatra's rule, her connections to the Hasmoneans of Judaea, and the evidence for her good relations with Jewish groups within Egypt, allows for the possibility that one of her most trusted companions might have been a Jew. Was Eiras perhaps a Jew from a high-ranking family in the Jewish colony of Leontopolis? The presence of Jews in the Ptolemaic court is not so unusual in the context of the practice of Cleopatra's predecessors, particularly from the time of the earlier Cleopatras, when the bond of loyalty was forged between the Jewish priest Onias IV and his followers with Ptolemy VI Philometor and Cleopatra II, and with their daughter, Cleopatra III, the great-grandmother of Cleopatra VII.¹⁷⁹

III Conclusion

Any attempt to get back to the realities of the last Cleopatra must contend with a subject profoundly obscured by the propaganda of her enemies and the instrumentalisation of Cleopatra as the Roman 'other'. In the case of Josephus's testimony, I suggest that – despite his noble purpose, the exoneration of the Jews under Roman rule – he has not served truth well in the case of Cleopatra. There is no good evidence for Cleopatra as persecutor of the Jews. Indeed, Josephus gives us glimpses of another Cleopatra, offering refuge to members of the Jewish aristocracy among the Hasmoneans, as they sought survival away from Herod. Cleopatra may have learned Hebrew or Aramaic; among her supporters, someone thought it worthy of record that the queen held conversations, in person,

¹⁷⁷ Heinen, 'Onomastisches zu Eiras', 181: 'Die Frage, ob Eiras, die Zofe Kleopatras, eine Jüdin gewesen ist, läßt sich anhand der uns zur Verfügung stehenden Quellen nicht entscheiden.'

¹⁷⁸ The suggestion of Eiras's Jewish origins is noted, for example, in the authoritative collection *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*, ed. Jane Rowlandson (Cambridge, 1998), 41, in which Eiras represents the only case-study of a (possibly) Jewish woman in the Ptolemaic era.

¹⁷⁹ The known names of Cleopatra's administrators reveal little of their identity and may well have included individual Jews: most of the administrators have Greek names though a number also have Egyptian theophoric names, cf. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 107–8; for a list of administrators from the reign of Cleopatra VII, see Ricketts, 'The Administration', 137–49. The name of the scribe (*grammateus*) who posted the royal *prostagma* protecting the shipping of wheat (*BGU* VIII.1730, 27 Oct. 50 BCE; see above p. 37), Onias (Ονίας) of the Herakleopolite nome, points to his Jewish identity; cf. Ilan, *Lexicon*, 671–2, s.v. 'Honi' no. 5, 'Jewishness is indicated by name' (672).

with 'Hebrews'. And perhaps among those very few who stayed loyal to Cleopatra at the end, the courtier Eiras may have been a Jew.

But what perhaps speaks most powerfully against the negative tradition about Cleopatra and the Jews is our evidence for her patronage and protection of the fundamental Jewish institution of the prayer-house. After Cleopatra, we have no more decrees of asylum, no dedications of prayer-houses to Roman emperors; this phenomenon simply disappears with the Roman conquest of Egypt. When Philo the Jew from Alexandria despaired at the destruction of his city's Jewish prayer-houses, he insisted that nothing like this had ever happened under Ptolemaic rule.¹⁸⁰ Philo does not hold back in a fight; but, despite the world of Augustan propaganda around him, he never condemns Cleopatra or her Ptolemaic predecessors. His is a voice from within ancient Alexandria, from a man born in the decade after Actium. Philo's voice has the ring of authenticity and it deserves our attention.

¹⁸⁰ Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 138.