CHAPTER ONE

EGYPTIAN RELIGION AND THE PROBLEM OF GREEKNESS

ISIS IN GREECE: FRAMING THE QUESTION

When Greeks and Romans thought of Egypt, what images came to mind? In a floor mosaic from a house in Thysdrus in Africa Proconsularis, six provincial personifications are grouped around the central figure of Roma, producing an allegory of Rome's Mediterranean-wide power (Plate 1).[1] The province of Egypt wears a yellow short-sleeved chiton with a blue mantle tied diagonally across the chest, a variation on Isis' signature knotted mantle costume (Plate 2). Like Isis, she has her hair arranged in tight corkscrew curls or locks, and an Isiac *sistrum*, a rattle used to make music during Egyptian rites, leans against her left shoulder. What is remarkable here is the collapse between religious and ethnic iconography: Egypt is Isis, and her defining feature is her cult.

The eclectic combination of geographic personification, ethnic identity, and religious iconography in the mosaic is consistent with personifications of Egypt from elsewhere in the empire. In a frieze depicting Roman provinces on the Temple of the Deified Hadrian in Rome's Campus Martius,[2] Sapelli identifies one personification, which wears a crown with rosettes and a long, fringed mantle, as Egypt (Figure 1). Similarly, a relief depicting the *Ethnous Aigyption* ("the Egyptian people") from the Julio-Claudian Sebasteion at Aphrodisias also uses cult-specific dress and iconography to epitomize Egypt.[3]

These three personifications of Egypt rely on the assumption that religion could serve as an effective and legible symbol of Egypt writ large (Figure 2).[4]

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1. Relief from the Hadrianeum in Rome depicting the province of Egypt, later Antonine period. Rome: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme inv. 428497. By concession of the Ministerio per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo – Museo Nazionale Romano.

Greek and Roman peoples would have encountered Egyptian migrants and diaspora communities, and in practice the boundaries between ethnicities are never as clear-cut as they are in theory. But the presence of Egyptians in Greece does not mean that exoticizing and imaginative Greco-Roman stereotypes about Egypt disappeared.[5] Cultural anxieties informed how people saw the world constructed in the edges and shadows of the Hellenistic and Roman Empires. Violence and tension often result from migration. Ethnic and cultural boundaries persist, even if only as human constructs. Proximity does not always breed tolerance or cultural competency, and in many cases the opposite is true.

Noticing these connections opens up a challenging question for the study of Greece, a region where nearly every city had a sanctuary to the Egyptian gods: What does it mean for a Greek under the Roman Empire to become a devotee of an Egyptian religion? Many scholars who have worked on Roman Greece, particularly those who have focused on the Second Sophistic,[6] have highlighted the resurging importance of Classical Greek culture in this period. In these works, which form the core of previous studies on Greekness in the

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2. Statue of Isis in diagonally draped *diplax* costume, thought to be from Rome, Hadrianic period. London: British Museum inv. 1805,0703.11. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Roman Empire, Greek ethnicity was founded on a collapsed temporality that brought an idealized and supposed pure version of the golden age of Athens into the Roman present.[7] Given the ethnic connotations attached to the Egyptian gods, why was the cult so popular and successful? More importantly, how did Egyptian religion impact the Greek devotees' understanding of their position in the Mediterranean world?

This book explores the worship of Egyptian deities in Roman-ruled Greece and the impacts of those cults on ideas of Greek ethnicity. Through their participation in these cults, I argue, Isis devotees constructed a variant form of Greekness, one that broke open Greece's purportedly closed cultural system and located Isis and Sarapis in Greek mythologies, places, and cultures.[8] I consider this new idea of Greekness dissonant but not discrete. That is, devotees probably considered themselves Greeks, even if their translations of Isis and Sarapis produced a variant form of Greek ethnicity embedded in the cults' ideas about Greece, Egypt, and cultural primacy in the Roman Empire.[9]

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This form of Greekness was divided by other intersecting factors, including gender, origins, and economic status. Though dissonant, the group was probably large: nearly a quarter of known Athenian funerary reliefs from the Roman period depict at least one person in Isiac cult costume.[10] There is no way to know if this sample is representative, but it does suggest the existence of a large, vibrant community of Isis devotees.

Despite the cults' popularity, no study of Imperial-period Greece has incorporated Isiac difference or other forms of discrepant experience or intersectionality into their analyses.[11] This book offers a new perspective on the formation and expression of minority forms of ethnicity in the Roman Empire. In contrast with these earlier, inward-looking approaches to Greek ethnicity, I suggest that some Greeks also looked out to the rest of the Mediterranean world to define themselves. Through a careful interdisciplinary study of Isiac cult, I challenge the notion of a singular Greekness in Roman Achaia and Macedonia by highlighting an understudied group that inflected its version of Greek ethnicity with foreign practices and ideas. The wealth of epigraphic, literary, artistic, and archaeological evidence associated with the cults in Greece allows for a fine-grained investigation of how local and regional communities adapted and remade globalizing phenomena.

My approach is grounded in the idea that identities are not monolithic or static but rather form over time and rely on continual processes of self-fashioning and self-location to produce ethnic forms of self-understanding. I organize my discussion around key concepts derived from Brubaker's critiques of ethnicity and identity. In his *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004), Brubaker advocates an approach founded on processes of identification that he calls group-making, self-understanding, self-fashioning, and self-location. These concepts are defined more fully at the end of this chapter and in Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6, where they are applied to the analysis of case studies, but they are inherently interrelated and contribute jointly to the production of identity and, I argue, to the impact on the textual and material products that result from these communities.

Within the discipline of Isiac studies, excellent studies of Egyptianizing material culture from Italy have appeared, but comparable studies of Greece and other provinces have been largely overlooked.[12] Recent work by Versluys, Swetnam-Burland, Barrett, and Mol has brought more holistic and theoretical approaches to the study of Egyptianizing material culture in Italy, raising questions about the cults' relationships to globalization, power, viewership, and geography.[13] This innovative research has advanced the discipline by integrating the subject of Isiac cults into more prominent dialogues concerning imperialism and cultural change in the disciplines of Roman archaeology and history. But this focus on Italy leaves open the question of how the Egyptian cults interacted with provincial identities and experiences. By looking at Greek material produced under the Roman Empire, my work directs attention to a new geographic area: the provinces.[14]

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Though my focus is material culture from religious contexts, particularly sculpture and architecture, this is not a work of religious history. Rather, this book is a work of materially oriented ethnic history: it examines the ways in which cultural and religious changes impacted traditional narratives of Greekness, and how material and textual objects intervened in these shifts. I work from the assumption that objects play an active and constitutive role in culture's formation and change – that objects have the power to affect human ideas and behavior.[15] My interpretations of material culture, however, require a careful study of the epigraphic and literary evidence. For this reason, the first half of the book focuses on texts related to Isaic cults, as they are critical for establishing the circular and dynamic ways in which, I argue, devotees would have understood and used the objects under discussion in the later chapters.

In terms of geography, I focus on the provinces of Achaia and Macedonia, but I also engage with evidence from the Aegean and Mediterranean islands, particularly with the sanctuaries, inscriptions, and sculptures of Kos, Crete, and Rhodes (Figure 3). My decision to omit Asia Minor reflects my opinion

3. Map of Greece. Ancient World Mapping Center © 2022 (awmc.unc.edu). Used by permission.

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that the region's long and close political connections with Egypt, dating back well into the Bronze Age, may have resulted in a different kind of familiarity with and understanding of Egyptian religion and culture. I expect that the history of Asia Minor's understanding of Greekness in the Roman Empire, as complicated by Isiac cult and local identities fashioned at the city and provincial levels, merits its own study.

In order to construct a narrative that is as textured as possible, I include material from the Hellenistic period through the 3rd century CE. Most examples date to the 1st century through the late 2nd century CE, when the cults were at their height. Wherever possible, I have privileged material with archaeological context over better-known objects. In describing the sanctuaries, I retain the original scholarly nomenclature of the sites, which depends on the language used in early 20th-century academic publications. Consequently, French-excavated Delos has a Sarapieion while German- and Greek-studied Thessaloniki has a Sarapeum.

I focus primarily on material excavated in sanctuaries in order to ensure a heightened focus on the intersection of religion and culture. The funerary portraits that are the subject of Chapter 5 are the exception, but they, I argue, depict the subject in cultic dress connected to specific rituals and consequently emphasize a religious identity. Determining whether an object is religious or not is a difficult task,[16] and I work from the assumption that most monumental architecture and sculpture from a sanctuary site are at least partly religious in nature. This is not to draw a sharp line between the world of cult and the rest of human experience. Recent work by Swetnam-Burland, Mol, and Pearson highlights the fact that not all Egyptianizing material culture is connected with the cult,[17] but my view of the ancient world relies, in part, on the assumption that cult and other aspects of daily life are inseparable.[18] Objects used for ritual could have more prosaic uses in other spatial or even temporal contexts. Ritual activities have an impact on devotees' view of the world around them while also informing their use of Egyptianizing iconography and symbols.

Instead of treating cultural entities like Greekness, Romanness, and Egyptianness as bounded groups whose meanings persist over the long term, I argue that Greek devotees of Isis, through their participation in Egyptian cult, constructed a transcultural form of Greekness that met the challenges of an increasingly connected Roman Empire.[19] I will use the term "Greek" to refer to a commonly held cultural ideal to which a person living in the provinces of Achaia and Macedonia under the Roman Empire could reasonably ascribe. This term is not meant to obscure the existence of migrants and others who might identify with different ethnicities, but to describe those who have chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to participate in the practices of Greekness.[20] I use this term not absolutely, for I do not believe there existed a single, stable, reified group of Greeks. Rather, I keep the term for ease of expression, and ask the reader to grant me this shorthand.

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SETTING THE SCENE: GREECE UNDER ROMAN RULE

The period under discussion is one in which Roman Imperial power impacted day-to-day life in unpredictable and sporadic ways.[21] Roman power first appeared in the region in the 3rd century BCE, and the intensification of Roman control in the 1st century BCE reshaped Greek identity profoundly. Throughout the Hellenistic/Republican period, Greece was a battleground on which Roman troops fought their wars. As their control increased, Roman administrators plundered Greece's artistic and cultural wealth and left cities like Corinth and Athens in disrepair. During the reign of Augustus, tensions flared into small, sporadic rebellions. At the same time, Roman administrators began to use the language of continuity and memory, often expressed through material culture, to build a new narrative of Roman rule as the logical outcome of the Greek past. But Greek communities had agency in the construction of these memories as well. Local communities could come up with their own framing narratives about Roman institutions, power, and people and their relationships with Greek culture and history. As I argue throughout this book, those narratives most often centered Greek culture, ranking it above other provinces in cultural value.

As a corrective to the often halcyon discussions of Roman control in Achaia and Macedonia, in this work I highlight aspects of violence, power, and domination in Greece's colonial experience. Other histories might minimize this violence,[22] but it is important to my argument to place Isiac cults in this context of conquest and foreign rule. While Greece probably had an easier transition to Roman rule than many other provinces, the violence inherent in Roman colonization should not be overlooked.

As early as the 3rd century BCE, the Mithridatic, Syrian, Macedonian, and Achaean Wars placed Roman soldiers in Greece intermittently and resulted in Rome's conquest of Greece. The brutality of these conflicts, sporadic though they were, had major consequences for particular communities. For example, during the Fourth Macedonian War, Corinth sided with Philip VI, the pretender to the Macedonian throne.[23] Strabo disparagingly describes Corinthian conduct in the war, claiming that the city's inhabitants threw mud at passing Roman envoys. Perhaps as a consequence of such behavior, the Roman general Lucius Mummius razed the city of Corinth in 146 BCE and subsequently bestowed the land upon the Sikyonians.[24] Corinth's famous paintings were destroyed, its monumental inscriptions were smashed, and its men were killed.[25] Cicero visited the city sometime between 79 and 77 BCE and described the Corinthians as living among the ruins of their once great city.[26] James demonstrates that after many public buildings in the city, including the North Stoa and the theater, were damaged, along with several public inscriptions, a small, loosely organized community of around 500–1,000

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people remained in Corinth during the period between the sack and 44 BCE, when Julius Caesar refounded the city as a Roman colony.[27]

Similarly, Athens suffered a devastating sack at the hands of Sulla, and throughout the 1st century BCE suffered repeated ravages at the hands of Roman administrators. Verres removed gold from the Parthenon, L. Calpurnius Piso stole more treasures, and the damage from this constant pillaging by Republican officials was not adequately remedied until the end of the reign of Augustus.[28] Elsewhere during the Republican period, Rome intervened in interstate and even some minor intrastate affairs, including the matter of Athenian control over private sanctuaries on Delos, which suggests that Roman rule could extend to day-to-day operations within the Aegean.[29] This control was scattered and disorganized, however, and Greek cities continued to support Rome's dissidents and rivals, including Brutus and Marc Antony, during the civil wars at the end of the Republic.[30] During these wars, many battles were fought on Greek soil, including the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BCE, the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE, and the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. These conflicts would have brought soldiers and bloodshed into the Greek countryside and damaged nearby cities and farms.

During the Imperial period, the Roman army maintained a small but mobile presence in Greece. The Legio IV Macedonia was based in the province of Macedonia during Augustus' reign, though it often traveled to the west to aid with Imperial campaigns. Many *coloniae* filled with veterans or Italian migrants were established in important cities like Corinth, Patras, and Dion, and these new arrivals often supplanted Greek elite families in political hierarchies.[31] Troops were stationed in Macedonia intermittently throughout the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods, but the epigraphic evidence confirms that the Cohors I Flavia Bessorum was stationed in Macedonia sometime in ca. 100–120 CE. More troops were stationed there during Marcus Aurelius' war with the Costoboci, which must have signaled to later emperors that it was necessary to station at least two auxiliary cohorts in the province to protect the Via Egnatia.[32]

Even without a permanent base in Attica, the Roman army was still a visible part of life. Many soldiers appear in Roman-period Athenian inscriptions, which attests to frequent troop movements through the port.[33] Roman military and administrative control coincides with other cultural interventions in the region that shifted the balance of local power. Agrippa and Augustus organized a Panhellenic assembly and granted the majority of votes to Nikopolis, a city Augustus founded to commemorate his victory over Marc Antony and Cleopatra. This new institution shifted the intraregional power balance away from Thessaly, its historical and symbolic center, placing it instead in the hands of a new city filled with migrants.[34]

Throughout the late Julio-Claudian and the Flavian periods, emperors and wealthy elites continued to visit Greece and dedicate buildings and sculptures.

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Many of their artistic and architectural activities reveal a desire to rewrite historical and material narratives to introduce Roman rule at earlier periods of Greek history. Caligula was said to have taken the Phidian statue of Zeus from Olympia for reuse in a new cult dedicated to himself at Rome,[35] and Nero famously inscribed his name on the Parthenon and caused all of the Panhellenic festivals to be held in the same year.[36]

These interventions were part of a broader pattern of reinventing the Greek past to suit contemporary needs.[37] Many monuments were reconstructed to strengthen Roman claims to membership in local Greek communities. Shear has identified a series of sixteen Classical and Hellenistic bronze portrait statues from the Athenian Akropolis that were refashioned to depict Roman consuls and elites, and Platt has identified two more from Oropos that were rededicated as Appius Claudius Pulcher and Marcus Agrippa.[38] These monuments are early examples of a revisionist cultural strategy used by Roman elites and emperors in the city throughout the Imperial period. Among the Athenian statue bases, seven had the name of the Classical-era subject erased, and nine contain a dedication to a Roman carved underneath or alongside the original Classical inscription, constructing an analogy between the two subjects.[39] The monuments were selected for their artists' signatures, including those of famous Classical sculptors like Praxiteles and Kritios and Nesiotes, which placed the monuments at an early date and established epigraphic connections to prominent 5th- and 4th-century BCE Athenians like Hegelochos, a veteran of the Persian Wars.[40] These statues, then, offered their Roman subjects an opportunity to insert themselves into earlier historical narratives and to claim equivalence with the Greek heroes whose portraits remained on the statue bases.

This retrospective approach became especially useful during the early Imperial period, when much of the city needed repairs after Sulla's sack and the neglect of the Late Republican era. Toward the end of his reign, Augustus, with Marcus Agrippa, rebuilt Athens in historically significant areas. In the Agora, they dedicated several new temples atop old sanctuaries, often bringing in Classical architectural elements from sites in the Attic countryside, enriching Athens while leaving the rest of Attica depleted.[41] Though earlier scholars saw these monuments as an infilling effort aimed at curtailing Athenian democracy, more recent work has documented the continuity between these new Roman monuments and the temples that preceded them.[42] These monuments, then, glossed over the history of Roman conquest and violence; instead, they support the argument that Romans played a constructive role in the creation of these touchstones of the Athenian landscape.

Some revisionist monuments, however, broke with the past entirely. Among the most intrusive was a monument to Augustus and Roma erected on the Akropolis. This small monopteral temple was probably dedicated by an elite Greek man from Marathon. It stood just a few meters to the east of and

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directly in line with the Parthenon's main entrance.[43] The dedication of this temple, one of the first dedicated to Augustus, might have been unpopular because of Augustus' punitive actions against the city early in his reign.[44] Scholars have compared the somewhat unusual monopteral design with representations of an unexecuted temple at Rome that would have commemorated Augustus' victory over the Parthians.[45] The effect of these monuments is thus twofold. It set Augustus and Rome among the city's most venerated Classical cults in the city and served as a constant reminder of Rome's conquest and control over the city.

Though the evidence suggests that local elites adapted quickly to Roman rule, these material interventions were remarkable enough to provoke occasional small acts of resistance.[46] In an evocative passage from the 2nd–3rd century CE historian Cassius Dio (54.7.2–4), a statue of Athena on the Akropolis responds to Augustus' decision to free Aegina from Athenian control in 22/21 BCE by turning to the west and spitting blood.[47] The passage clearly refers to Athena's displeasure at Roman colonial control, and by extension that of Athens – but the act of spitting blood suggests a grave and perhaps even a mortal injury. Hoff interprets Dio's account literally and suggests that the Athenians, who were angry at the loss of territory and tax revenue, moved the image and defaced it in protest.[48] Given the long history of active statues in Greek literature and thought, I argue that the passage is metaphorical and alludes to a conquered and weakened Athens.[49] As the residents of a city that was the site of repeated warfare throughout the 1st century BCE and the victims of restrictive Augustan regulation, many Athenians may have seen themselves as battered and broken, just like Athena's statue.

As Roman power over Greece solidified, such material narratives of historical continuity and the Romanness of the Greek past intensified. Elites and intellectuals in the Antonine period cultivated the definition of the boundaries of Greekness at both the institutional and individual levels. During his reign, the emperor Hadrian devoted special attention to Athens and invested in building and political projects that integrated the city's Classical past with the ideologies of the Roman present, including an arch that represented him as a founder of Athens by comparing him to the mythological hero Theseus (Figure 4).[50] Hadrian's Arch follows contemporary styles of monumental architecture in Greece and Asia Minor and features a theatral façade, which must have held at least three portrait statues above a single-bay arch. A mirrored pair of inscriptions, one on either side, divided Athens in two. On the western face of his arch, Hadrian inscribed: "This is the city of Hadrian, and not of Theseus." On the eastern side: "This is Athens, the ancient city of Theseus."[51] The pairing of Hadrian and Theseus creates an equivalence between the two. More importantly, it suggests that Hadrian belongs among

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4. The Arch of Hadrian at Athens, dedicated 131–132 CE. Photo: Carole Raddato (via Creative Commons license). © Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund.

the mythological founders and heroes that lived long ago – either that he is one of them or that he has brought their legacy into the 2nd century CE.

Hadrian's Arch was built to accompany one of the emperor's most impressive building projects in the eastern Mediterranean: the completion of the colossal Temple of Olympian Zeus, located to the west of the city's Classical core. In 131/132, Hadrian selected this sanctuary, which contained bronze statues of *apoikia* (colonies), as the seat of a new political and cultural

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5. Temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens, dedicated 131–132 CE. Photo: Carole Raddato (via Creative Commons license). © Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund.

organization, the Panhellenion (Figure 5). Setting Athens as the center of the Panhellenion (in lieu of larger and more prominent cities like Alexandria or Ephesus) highlighted Achaia's new position as the home of Greekness and Greek culture.[52] Though its precise purpose is not clear, the Panhellenion was a group of cities that could claim membership in the Greek world and in Greek ethnicity.[53] Membership conferred significant symbolic, political, and cultural benefits from the Roman rulers, which led many cities in the east to develop new myths and histories in arguing for their inclusion.[54]

As an institution, then, the Panhellenion tasked itself with the process of determining who "counted" as a Greek. Most cities outside of mainland Greece argued for inclusion based on their relationship with a Greek *metropolis*, the majority of which were in Achaia, Crete-and-Kyrene, and Asia, by claiming mytho-historical bonds from the distant past.[55] But there were other ways into the Panhellenion. Greek ethnicity could be claimed, so long as these arguments relied on familiar people, places, and characters. For example, Aizanoi in Phrygia claimed Azan, son of Arcas, as its founder, and through Arcas, a relationship with the Arcadians, who claimed that Elatus, another son of Arcas, was the representative of the Lapiths in Thessaly.[56] Through this torturous mythology Aizanoi could claim a relationship with the Thessalians, one of the oldest and most significant groups in early constructions of Greekness.[57] These arguments of shared blood based on colonial foundations of the distant past rely on the assumption that the Greekness of these cities had

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persisted into the Roman present, a key aspect of Greekness in the High Empire.

The building that housed the Panhellenion, however, might also represent resistance to Roman hegemony. Whitmarsh argues that we can interpret Pausanias' (1.18.6) description of the temple's art and architecture as instances of localism, which he categorizes as a type of opposition to Roman imperialism. Pausanias is careful to note that the statues of the *apoikia*, or colonies, are dedicated by the Greek cities themselves, not by Hadrian or the Roman Imperial administration. Pausanias' use of the word "colonies" may have been intentionally vague, in an allusion to a secondary local meaning, perhaps to earlier forms of Athenian colonization as well as Rome's rule over Greece in the 2nd century CE.[58] Whitmarsh thus reinforces Elsner in reading Pausanias' text as a deliberate framing of Greece. Rather than seeing Pausanias as a mere chronicler, Elsner argues that Pausanias transforms "landscape into discourse."[59] Viewed in this light, the Temple of Olympian Zeus is a house built by and for Greek people and purposes that simultaneously housed a Roman institution centered on the concept of idealized Greekness.

VIEWERSHIP, OBJECTS, AND THE SEARCH FOR ETHNICITY

How, then, can we untangle the threads that composed the Greekness of Isis devotees in the Roman Empire? Greeks in the Roman period certainly thought of themselves as an ethnic group, and few would have thought of Greekness otherwise.[60] While some have suggested that we remove ethnicity from the discussion of Egyptian religion altogether,[61] this perspective flattens our understanding of the influence of cults on other aspects of life. Ethnicity in antiquity is fundamentally a question about how origins are intertwined with a sense of self and belonging. When we ask questions about ethnicity, we are trying to understand how selves were formed and perceived in the ancient world. These questions allow us to interrogate who is represented by a work of art, and to consider how and when certain types of communal belongings are communicated.[62] Isiac devotees belonged to a community identified with a set of deities grounded in Egypt as a place and culture, and devotees expended tremendous effort to negotiate these geographic and cultural conflicts.

In this section and the next, I trace out the twin methodological approaches I have employed throughout the book. The first deals with ethnicity and its relationships with texts and objects. In this book, I define ethnicity as a social group that creates and enforces a boundary based on criteria agreed upon by those who identify with the group (usually cultural praxis, material culture, descent, and/or shared geography, in varying combinations) and often, but not always, recognized by those outside the group. Ethnicities are most evident in

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places and times of contact, exchange, and conflict. In most cases, there is an actual or putative shared homeland, and the idea and memory of that homeland binds members together even when they are elsewhere. Most importantly, ethnicity can compel actions, whether through social pressure, unifying ideas or beliefs, or shared understandings of history or mythology.

My definition is grounded in earlier work on Greek ethnicity, particularly the work of Hall. Hall defined ethnicity as: (1) a social grouping; (2) constructed through the manipulation of genetic, linguistic, religious, or cultural features to form ascriptive boundaries; and (3) associated with a specific territory and a shared myth of descent, which may be putative and must be defined through consensus.[63] This definition is useful but speaks more clearly to the concerns of ethnicity in the Classical period. Vlassopoulos rightly argues that ethnicity is better ascribed to minority groups than to hegemonic ones and thus criticizes the use of the term for the study of normative Greekness in Greece.[64] Morgan prefers a more generalized definition of ethnicity that focuses on "the way in which social groups consciously choose to assert their identity and to define and constitute themselves in relation to others in any given set of circumstances."[65] While Morgan's definition describes some general features of ethnicity, it could also describe any kind of identity that motivates collective action.[66]

Among scholars of ancient ethnicities, there has been considerable debate about the role of objects in creating, delineating, and expressing ethnicity. Even more controversial is the issue of whether we can reconstruct ethnic identity from archaeological evidence.[67] Archaeologists are able to group finds into formal types, to recognize styles, and to establish relative chronologies, but the significance of these categories is not always clear.[68] How, then, can we find ethnicity in objects? Some scholars have rejected the premise entirely, claiming that material culture cannot provide insights into the internalized ideas and feelings that produce ethnic groups.[69] But this critique ignores the agency of material culture. Instead of treating objects as passive reflectors of ideologies, more recent work in Roman archaeology and art history has recognized the constitutive role that objects play in the creation of identity and culture.[70] Objects motivate human responses, communicate inference and interpretation, and direct our eyes and motion. Material culture constructs distinctions between communities and provides a means for humans to express their understanding of themselves and their world to others, particularly in contexts where multiple ethnic groups are present.[71] My view of material agency, however, focuses on the dynamic interplay between human and object.[72] Both humans and objects have agency in the construction of ethnicity and culture, and this book focuses on the ways in which devotees exploit, understand, employ, and react to material culture. By treating material culture as an active part of the process of creating, defining, and expressing group

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belonging and meaning, we can gain access to some of the interior and exterior processes and experiences of Greek ethnicity.

Traditionally, many archaeologists and art historians have preferred to call such distinctions "cultural identities" or "local identities."[73] Yet Brubaker has argued that there are so many different types of identity (cultural, social, political, ethnic, sexual, local, etc.), that the term itself has almost no intrinsic meaning.[74] Further, the terms cultural/local lower the stakes in understanding these meaningful forms of difference. Upon closer examination, much in what has been called "cultural identity" should be called ethnicity. In her studies of Archaic and early Classical Morgantina, Antonaccio demonstrates that indigenous Siculan-Geometric pottery types flourished alongside traditionally Greek material like Greek-inscribed coins, Doric and Ionian stone architecture, and, in later periods, red-figure pottery.[75] That is, these distinctive material cultures existed alongside each other, emphasizing the difference between the two and, in turn, creating what Antonaccio has called a new, hybrid material culture.[76] The objects expressed differences in foodways and storage in a context when indigenous Italic and colonizing Greek, creating what S. Jones might call an "objectification of cultural difference" that is the basis of her archaeology of ethnicity.[77] In Roman archaeology and art history, identity writ large has been a dominant heuristic for the study of Rome and its provinces, but Pitts argues that most scholarship uses identity as a stand-in for the problematic concept of Romanization,[78] and thus is subject to its main flaws: an emphasis on how *Romanitas* was exported to the provinces and how provincial communities received it.[79] More recent work has defined identity in ways that grant more agency to provincial peoples and focus on other forms of identity in the ancient world, including Greekness. For example, in her book on local identity in the Roman Empire, Revell embeds her definition of identity within a discussion of Romanization while describing identity as multiple, fluid, and situational, and focusing on how individuals responded to prevailing social structures.[80] The question she asks, then, means that nearly everything could be construed as Roman or not-Roman, creating a static binary between two poles that would exclude communities like the one under study.

If Egyptian cults stand at the intersection of Greekness and Egyptianness, how can we model ethnicity as something other than a static essentialist category? As a partial answer to this question, I argue that a more precise terminology could help us better assess how the inhabitants of the Roman provinces of Achaia and Macedonia defined their ethnic groups and subgroups. Instead of assessing identity as an independent concept, Brubaker proposes a more process-based vocabulary that highlights the choices that individuals and communities make in order to ascribe to certain categories and ethnicities. Several scholars of the ancient world, notably Geary, Rebillard, Andrade, and

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Mattingly, have begun to adapt Brubaker's critiques of identity by treating identity formation as a dynamic and relational process, and recent work by Barrett applies Brubaker's work to the study of Egyptianizing wall painting at Pompeii.[81] By analyzing identity as a series of decisions manifested in texts and objects, these recent works have advanced the study of identity and ethnicity. Not all aspects of identity, especially those that stem from others' judgments, are choices, but individuals and groups have the power to decide how to respond to, express, and value identity.[82] More precise characterizations of the decision process might provide even clearer insights into the religious, cultural, and historical contingencies that informed the construction of Greekness under the Roman Empire.

This precision also requires a more careful consideration of the intersection of ethnicity with other aspects of human identity, including gender, geographic mobility, citizenship, socio-economic class, and religion. In this book, I have focused particularly on the intersections of ethnicity and religion, and elements of gender and class further inflect my account. Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to explore the ways in which an individual's multiple identities inflect each other.[83] Intersectional frameworks demand that we replace essentialist identity categories with the recognition that no aspect of human identity can be understood on its own but must be studied in a holistic context. Most importantly, Crenshaw and other critical race feminist scholars have emphasized the power that intersectional identities offer individuals and communities.[84] It is impossible to recover these kinds of details for the ancient world, but we can trace some aspects of how Isis devotees felt about their cults by looking at what they invested in joining, belonging, and expressing their membership in these kinds of ethno-religious communities.

It is also critical that we look at these shifts as the products of globalization. Defined broadly, globalization is a series of processes by which localities and people become increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Globalized approaches rely on analyses of connectedness, unevenness, and asymmetry in order to describe and explain local experiences within Imperial contexts.[85] In a general study of ancient globalization, Jennings identified a list of processes that constitute globalizations: time-space compression, standardization, simultaneous homogeneity and heterogeneity, deterritorialization (the appearance of objects with geographic attachments outside of their home regions), unevenness, and the deeper embedding of local culture.[86] Many of these appear in the Roman context, but some of the more frequently studied processes include increasing connectivity, unequal responses, the translation and reinterpretation of globally available forms for local use, and the lessening of place-specific and culturally specific connections. The processes of identification that I use in this book, as defined briefly in the section "The Problem of Greekness," intersect with and respond to these globalizing phenomena.

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Though my emphasis is on material culture, my approach is necessarily holistic. Ignoring texts in favor of solely archaeological or artistic evidence also produces flawed and incomplete readings. Texts offer directions on "where to look" in the material record to find evidence of ethnic ideology and practice.[87] Building on the work of scholars like Elsner, Platt, and Squire, I work from the assumption that reading texts, experiencing cultic rituals, and viewing art all informed how devotees understood Isiac cults.[88] None of these experiences, however, necessarily held primacy over the other, and over time a devotee or group of devotees might change their ideas and understandings of the cults as they read, saw, and experienced more. This approach recognizes that viewing art and other forms of material culture could intervene in devotees' understanding of rituals and cultic texts to produce layered, unstable readings of material culture.

As part of this approach, I bring together evidence from literature, inscriptions, sculpture, and architecture to address more holistically the intersections between cult, globalization, and ethnicity. From a textual perspective, Second Sophistic authors like Plutarch and Apuleius represent Isis and Sarapis as fulfilling functions previously held by canonical Greek divinities, contextualizing Egyptian religion within Greek philosophical and cultural paradigms that form the core of Greek antiquity. Similar themes also appear frequently in epigraphic hymns dedicated to Isis and Sarapis, which suggests that these texts developed through engagement with the cults' practices and ideas. In artistic media, Greek communities opted, in most cases, to depict Isis and Sarapis in Greek styles and Greek materials, constructing visual arguments for their enmeshment in the Greek pantheon. These representational decisions embedded Egyptian religion and its foreign associations firmly within Greek myth-history and ethnic ideals, producing a more transcultural and connected form of Greekness situated within the concerns of the Roman Mediterranean.

THE PROBLEM OF GREEKNESS

The second methodological issue concerns the definition of Greekness. Greekness has been defined repeatedly in previous scholarship, but there may have been more definitions available at a given time than has been assumed. Scholars have identified two main boundary criteria used in ancient periods: descent from Greeks, whether biological or mythological; and specific cultural actions like speaking Greek, participating in Greek religious activities or social institutions, or pursuing a Greek education. Traditionally, descent criteria have been associated with earlier historical periods, and cultural criteria have been associated with later periods. But a more careful study suggests that there was never a broad consensus about what made a Greek.[89] As early as the Classical period, there existed transregional forms of Greekness that prioritized

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cultural practices over descent.[90] It is true that cultural criteria were used more frequently in the Roman period, and the Roman Empire affected how people thought about Greekness.[91] But these concerns also grew out of longstanding discussions about Greek ethnicity. Isiac cult would have added another layer of complexity to these already heated debates. The problem with Greekness, then, is that multiple definitions existed in competition at the same time as many people and institutions were policing the boundaries of this ethnicity.

The Beginnings

Earlier Iron Age and Archaic communities in the Greek *oikoumenē* had episodic and partial cultural, religious, and political group identities.[92] Early writers like Homer, as well as Archaic and Classical historians like Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, use the terms *ethnos/ethnē*, but their meaning in these early periods is debated. While it is most often used to describe a form of political order that may be distinct from the *polis*, *ethnos/ethnē* might be used well into the Classical period to describe almost any kind of group, including women (Pind., *Ol.* 1.66), animals (bees in Hom., *Il.* 2.87), named groups of people like Lykians (*Il.* 12.330), or the dead (*Od.* 10.526). This textual evidence suggests that, rather than referring to a less organized political entity, the term originally did not have an inherently political or cultural meaning at all.[93]

Hall makes a compelling case for dating the origin of Greekness as a broad ethnic identity to the period of the Persian Wars (499–478 BCE).[94] The broad military alliance that united against the Persian invasion produced a useful polarity, the barbarian, against which Greekness could be defined.[95] Hall's definition corresponds to a version of Greekness as follows: a social grouping of people that ascribes to the same sets of myths of common descent and kinship, and association with a specific territory and history. More importantly, that group is defined in opposition to something else; in this case, against Persianism. Even in this period of heightened Greekness, however, individuals and institutions contested the meaning of Greekness and where its boundaries would be drawn. During the early 5th century BCE, Herodotus tells us, the Macedonian king, Alexander I, attempted to enter the Panhellenic games at Olympia, but some of his competitors objected that he was not a Hellene. Though the Macedonians spoke a dialect of Greek and had much in common with their southern neighbors, their Greekness was a matter of some debate.[96] A group of judges that Hall identifies as the *hellanodikai* judged Alexander to be Greek based on the argument that the Macedonian royal family, the Argeadai, were descended from the Argives and from Herakles.[97] The ability to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of Greek myth-history, rather than a realistic claim to biological descent, was

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probably enough to convince the judges to allow the king to compete and claim Macedonia's membership in the Greek community.

Shortly thereafter, Greekness could also be defined in the second sense, as a set of practices. This shift occurs as Panhellenism rises in importance, offering new pathways to Greekness. In 380 BCE, the Athenian orator Isocrates circulated a text that offered a version of Greek identity based more on education and culture (*paideia*). In particular, he notes that the name Hellene refers not to descent or family (*genos*, *physis*) but to an attitude (*dianoia*) held by people who share in Greek culture (*paideusis*).[98] Isocrates' admittedly Athenocentric view of Greekness is not necessarily meant to lessen the divide between Greek and barbarian. Rather, Isocrates restricts Greekness to those who have been educated in the Athenian manner, turning education into a sort of ethnic initiation available only to a handful. Still, this definition reframes Greekness as a series of actions and experiences that produce a shared worldview.[99] Elsewhere, Isocrates also highlights the territorial dimension of Greekness, describing Athens as the sole *polis* in the entire region of Hellas (*Antid*. 299). Hall argues that Isocrates is here visualizing Greece as a "continuous geographic entity radiating out from Athens" that unifies all the disparate groups of Greece and places them in a single territory.[100]

Isocrates' work also speaks to the broadening perception that Greek culture could benefit all who participated.[101] In the *Panathenaikos*, Isocrates suggests that the various subgroups of Greeks are all of the same origin (90), even while arguing that Athens has a right and duty to reign supreme over them all. But this same origin refers to kinship models of ethnicity (*Panath*. 164, 200; *Ad Philippum* 108, 126; *Paneg*. 43), which indicates that Isocrates has not entirely abandoned descent as a key component of Greek ethnicity.[102] Similarly, in the Peloponnese, the newly freed Messenians created an ethnicity through narratives of descent from mythological heroes, particularly Herakles, and the establishment of new cults for gods like Asklepios. These new deities built a connection with the city's Spartan past while also preserving the Spartans as a group against which Messenian identity could be defined.[103] Even in this early period, then, both cultural and descent definitions of Greekness are in use.

Hellenistic Greekness: The Case of Ptolemaic Egypt

As more and more of Asia and Africa came under Macedonian rule, cultural definitions of Greekness came to the forefront and shifted ethnic identity to become a form of moral character. This shift suggests that ruling elites wanted to open the boundaries of Greekness and find new ways to integrate their subjects into new imperial projects. Migration and settlement also played an important role. Soldiers from Alexander's army, which included Macedonians and mercenaries from around the Mediterranean, settled in these conquered

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lands and founded new colonies and kingdoms that used Greek language and cultural norms.[104]

This book is about Greece, not Egypt, but it is worth pausing to explore how Greekness and Egyptianness were constructed in Egypt, where papyri provide more detailed evidence about how ethnic categories were formed in the Hellenistic period. Though Greek communities had long thrived in Egypt, their power had been limited prior to Alexander's conquest in 332 BCE, which likely accelerated an ongoing integration process.[105] As part of these changes, Ptolemaic bureaucrats strove to reify existing ethnic distinctions between Greeks and Egyptians into legal categories.[106] Egypt was reorganized around four cities (Alexandria, Ptolemais, Naukratis, and Paraetonion) that were either new foundations or home to large communities of Greek merchants or immigrants. Citizens of these *poleis*, often referred to as *Hellenes*, had many legal benefits, such as exemption from the poll tax, and de facto social benefits, such as access to elite cultural institutions like the *gymnasium* and *ephēbeia*.[107] Citizenship was determined by descent from citizen parents and membership in a *dēme*, identifiers that were often used in documentary papyri.[108] There, the ethnic term *Hellēne* was used more and more frequently to describe a person's identity and language, and an emphasis on Greek kinship and unity appeared in diplomatic, religious, and historical writing.[109] But people of Egyptian descent could gain citizenship and other ethnically named statuses in special circumstances, usually through military service, marriage, or civic benefaction.[110] These Egyptian elites appear frequently in the historical record, like Manetho, an Egyptian priest who served the first Ptolemaic kings and wrote several works in Greek, including a now-lost history of Egypt.

Outside of these four cities, individuals of Greek descent lived alongside Egyptians in villages or small cities that lacked political independence and consequently did not have access to the same benefits of citizenship.[111] Residents of these rural communities married across ethnic lines and often used multiple names and languages.[112] Those of Greek descent had some access to elite institutions like the *gymnasium* and could use these institutions to advance themselves. Despite the fact that these people were descended from Greek immigrants and spoke Greek, the Ptolemaic legal system often referred to them as Egyptians. This produced a legal situation in which some of those who identified as Greeks would not be seen as such by the state.[113]

This situation continued into the Roman period, when these distinctions were further reified by the intensification of legal administration. The Roman population of Egypt consisted of a small number of Roman citizens who migrated to Egypt, and some local elites and veterans to whom Rome granted citizenship. This meant that some people categorized as Romans in legal documents had Egyptian ancestry.[114] Roman administrators referred to all others as Egyptians because they were subject to Egyptian laws. This shift

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had a major impact on the day-to-day lives of people living in Roman Egypt. Marriage between Roman citizens and Egyptians was forbidden, and apart from the citizens of Alexandria, all "Egyptians" were subject to the poll tax. But in the capital of each *nome*, called a *metropolis*, a small group of elites paid a reduced rate, and members of the metropolitan *gymnasium* had similar privileges, particularly after the 1st century CE, when they were allowed to take up local civic and regional offices.[115] In turn, access to the *gymnasium* became more closely regulated, though it remained a voluntary institution.[116] These changes meant that elite status was no longer firmly tied to ethnic identity, weakening the importance of these terms even further.

A handful of people, however, retained the identity of *Hellēnes* in legal documents. In a letter of 55 CE, the Emperor Nero referred to 6,475 Hellenes in the Arsinoite *nome* and granted them special privileges.[117] In his study of the names of these 6,475, Bagnall notes that while the majority are Greek, they are not the same kinds of names that appear in mainland Greece. Instead, the majority have some connection to Egypt, such as Anoubion, Horion, or Sarapion, or could possibly refer to gods worshiped by both Egyptians and Greeks, including Herakleides or Apollonios.[118] Rowlandson takes this as evidence that these may have been people who also considered themselves Egyptian and who saw no conflict between Greekness and Egyptianness.[119] During the reign of Hadrian, the citizens of his new city, Antinoopolis, were called the *Neoi Hellēnes*, or New Greeks, though they were drawn from the Greek citizens of Ptolemais and the Arsinoite *nome* and thus had preexisting claims on Greekness.[120]

The cases of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt illustrate the constantly shifting boundaries of Greekness in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. By the Roman period, Greekness operated as a nebulous title used sporadically to refer to elite groups or people for whom exceptions to the rule would be made. Noting these changes, Vandorpe emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between state-defined categories, self-ascription, and ethnic labeling.[121] Individuals may not have had much control over how the state labeled them, and those labels may not have reflected the actual ways in which individuals understood themselves or their place in society. By reorienting away from external categories and toward more ascriptive actions, as I propose in the section "Chapter Outlines," we can gain a better understanding of the problems and nuances of Greekness.

Defining and Contesting Greekness in Roman Greece

While the meaning of Greekness was shifting in Roman Egypt, individuals in Achaia and Macedonia also began to police Greekness on a case-by-case basis. These debates make it clear that the precise boundaries of Greece and Greek

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ethnicity were of great concern. For many, Greece was a place that lived in the past.[122] Many of the best known and best studied Greek texts from this period, particularly in the 2nd century CE, adopted a retrospective version of Greekness, one in which Greeks were not subjugated by foreign rulers but were rather the inheritors of a venerated Classical tradition. This perspective gave Greece, and Athens in particular, status within the empire. Aelius Aristides, whose *Panathenaic Oration* claims that Greece is at the center of the whole world,[123] was not alone in his view that Greece was the center of the Mediterranean, but its power was primarily cultural. Political power was still concentrated in Rome, and Greek ports were less important than those in Sicily, Gaul, and North Africa. Though the majority of texts describe Greekness as a set of practices and processes, kinship and descent would never fully disappear as criteria for Greek ethnicity.[124] This tension produced an environment deeply concerned about Greekness: what it was, where its boundaries were, who counted as a Greek, who did not count – and what Greekness meant.

By the 1st century BCE, the Greek-speaking literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus defined Greekness (*to hellēnikon*) as speaking the Greek language, having a Greek way of life, acknowledging the same gods, and having reasonable laws (1.89.4). But Greekness had also expanded beyond its original geographic and genetic confines. Several writers describe personal or cultural attributes that define Greekness, including political knowledge, care for the arts, and an understanding of how to live (Strabo 2.5.26), and a good education and refined behavior (Cass. Dio 36.24, 26, 43; Philostr., *V A* 1.16; Plut., *Quomodo adul.* 9–30).[125] Similarly, Dio Chrysostomus (*Or.* 44.10; *To Prusia*) encourages the Prusians to make their city Greek by educating their children well and turning their energies and abilities to greater and finer things, a command that connects Greekness with the higher orders of human thought and action. Turning from the cultural to the territorial, the itinerant Apollonius of Tyre argues that Greece is everywhere for the wise man (Philostr., *V A* 1.35). Apollonius' approach gestures toward a global form of Greekness not tied to Greece's geography but accessible to all worthy men in any place and time.

In many texts, Greekness is linked with *paideia*, or "education," and students and teachers were often called Greeks irrespective of their origins. In a passage from the *Lives of the Sophists*, one sophist agrees to come with his "Greeks" (*V S* 571), a term that Whitmarsh and others argue refers generally to students.[126] This process of teaching and learning asks the student to replicate the values and practices of the teacher and transforms young men into adults that participate in established social and cultural hierarchies.[127] Possessing *paideia* meant that someone had mastered the canon of Greek literature and had learned a certain mode of behavior, "certain cognitive, ritual, ethical, and/or

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professional standards" that might help him feel a new sense of kinship with Greekness.[128] In this way, *paideia* created a sense of difference between Greek and other cultures and juxtaposed Greekness to all other forms of ethnicity.[129] Most importantly, *paideia* came to belong to Greece alone. Romans could not obtain this education in masculinity, elitism, and Greekness in Italy, but needed to go to Athens and other Greek intellectual centers to obtain it.[130] *Paideia*, then, offered outsiders a way to become Greek, to access the status and antiquity that Greekness might confer.[131] This emphasis on actions and becoming produced a constantly shifting dialectic in which Greekness' limits were repeatedly redefined.

Even as Greekness expanded geographically, many tried to control the supposed purity of Greek ethnicity. In Plutarch's *On the Education of Children*, he warns that enslaved companions of children must be fluent Greek speakers in order to keep Greek children from "being colored by" their base barbarian-ness.[132] Whitmarsh makes much of the verb *sunanachrēnnumenoi* in this passage, which derives from the word for color (*chrēma*). This term can refer both to the idea of influence and skin color, which links concerns about language with anxieties about skin color and racial purity.[133]

The debates I have outlined so far in this chapter have focused on external identifications; that is, how an individual was identified by others. As I discuss in Chapters 2 and 5, insiders and outsiders evaluated group membership based on the perceived correctness of an individual's performance of ethnic identity as a way to maintain boundaries.[134] But equally important is the self-perception of the individual, and the evidence suggests that a wide variety of people ascribed to Greekness, perhaps to gain access to the cultural prestige bestowed by Greekness.[135]

Favorinus, a rhetorician from Arelate in Gaul Narbonensis who became one of the leading figures of the Second Sophistic, described himself as fluent in the thought, manners, and dress of Greek culture.[136] The lengths to which he must go to claim that Greekness, however, suggest that his status was not secure. In his *Corinthian Oration*, Favorinus complains that the city has taken down his portrait statue; he goes on to use an array of local mythological knowledge to demonstrate his superior claims to Greekness and to argue for the image's restoration. He begins with the story of Arion and the dolphin and a visit from Solon and the sage Periander as an introduction to his own return to the city and his knowledge of local mythology (2–7). He further connects his image with allusions to Jason and the Argonauts, and Daedalus' craftsmanship; and ultimately credits the Corinthians with the Greek victory at Salamis during the Persian Wars (8–19). His ultimate argument for its restitution is his own Greekness, stating that by adopting Greek manners he has exceeded the best of the Greeks, who are increasingly turning toward Roman ways (25). His statue must be returned to its proper place so that he might serve as an

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exemplar of Greekness for others, demonstrating that culture is no less worthy than birth as a way to access Greekness (26–27).[137]

We should not ignore what Favorinus lost. In his biography of Favorinus (*V S* 489), Philostratus never lets the reader forget that Favorinus was born a Gaul and lived as a Greek. The statue would have been part of Favorinus' claim on the Greekness that he fought so hard to protect. It is likely that the now-lost image depicted the orator in the Greek-style chiton and himation used to depict intellectuals in Roman Greece (Figure 6).[138] Depicting himself in this costume would have been key to Favorinus' claim of Greek ethnicity. Dio notes the importance of dress and hairstyle and argues that these are two of the factors that marked out a true Hellene.[139] As a permanent reminder set up in front of Corinth's library, the statue reified his status as a Greek intellectual deserving of high public honors, as a participant in the social economies of honor, civic participation, and belonging that took form in Greek honorific portraiture.[140] Its loss made his position within these networks more tenuous.

6. Portrait of a man in chiton and himation, Antonine period. Athens: Agora Museum inv. S 936. Photo: American School of Classical Studies at Athens: Agora Excavations.

As Favorinus' experience shows, there existed degrees of Greekness and several ways to claim it. A man might see himself as a Greek, but that did not mean that others had to agree. An individual could excel in Greekness and compete with others to highlight their connection and familiarity with Greek culture, but

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Greekness could also be lost through improper behavior or through speaking mixed or improper forms of Greek.[141]

Greekness was also historically contingent. The ways in which Romans and those from around the Mediterranean laid claim to it changed depending on institutional, political, cultural, and social norms. Yet what stayed the same were the methods that cities and individuals used to claim membership in this community: engagement with Greek culture through processes of culture and *paideia* and the renegotiation of deep history, including myth-history, to construct or support kinship relationships. The focus on retrospective and mythological arguments of Greek greatness intersected with the demands of Imperial institutions like the Panhellenion but also with more subtle pressures like the popularity of Classical Athenian literature and philosophy among Roman elites and emperors. But this view of Greekness is only one option, and I argue that other Greeknesses existed alongside the small cadre of elite intellectuals who comprised the Second Sophistic.[142] Scholarly emphasis has been placed on a peaceful and largely intellectual dialectic between conceptions of Greekness and Romanness, past and present. These ancient authors, upon whom modern scholarship has focused for the last twenty years, form a small and interconnected circle. Philostratus' biographies name only a handful of men across multiple generations.[143] What about everyone else?

CHAPTER OUTLINES

This book offers another perspective on Greekness – focused on devotees of the Egyptian cults, a minority group who lived, worked, and potentially even worshiped alongside these sophists and other Greeks. In the chapters to follow, I explore a series of historically and socially contingent choices made about the boundaries and sense of belonging used to define a concept of Greekness for a limited community. I reject the premise that Greeks in the Roman Empire participated only nominally in other cultures and ethnic concepts, as has been suggested for Romanness,[144] but argue instead that certain actions, like joining a cult, had ethnic implications that Greeks resolved through several identification mechanisms. The form of ethnicity I reconstruct applies to those who involved themselves in Egyptian religion but may offer a new way to consider other minority perspectives on ethnicity in the ancient world.

Before determining how Isiac communities reckoned with their ethnicity, we must first determine that Isiac communities existed and that they were meaningful to their members. Relying on epigraphic and literary evidence, I argue in Chapter 2 that several aspects of cult practice, including day-to-day administrative functions, internal private associations, and opportunities to differentiate from Greek society as a whole, aimed at constructing a sense of groupness for devotees. Processes of group-making reify social boundaries and

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call into being the idea of a unified community defined by common ideals, experiences, and actions. Over time, groups must continually create their meaning and reinforce their sense of belonging through continued activity.[145] The idea of group-making that frames Chapter 2 recognizes that Isiac communities relied on continual practice and repeated social action to stay meaningful. This identification also operated on multiple levels. At a local level, Isiac identity could intersect with other identifiers like family to strengthen devotees' ties to the cult. At a regional level, the cults' migration history provided ritual and social links that contributed to a sense that individual communities belonged to a larger group of Greek Isis devotees.

Self-understanding is a set of internal processes and decisions that structures a sense of belonging within a community. If, as Hall has argued, ethnicity is constructed by a group that ascribes to a shared myth of common belonging that provides a boundary, self-understanding describes the ideas that underwrite these myths. It describes the ways in which ideas and systems of belief informed how communities gave themselves shape and meaning, and how they defined themselves in opposition to other groups and among their members.[146] In turn, these definitions shaped the decisions people made and how outsiders perceived the group. I reconstruct Isiac self-understanding in Chapters 3 and 4 by exploring the dynamic interrelationships produced by devotees in reading and hearing cultic texts and experiencing cult images. Chapter 3 focuses on texts. Through a careful rereading of Isiac epigraphic hymns, I argue that Egyptian religion in Greece relied on a culturally ambivalent version of Isis embedded in the deep Greek past. The Greek Isis comes from an imagined Egypt founded in experimentation and wonder, crosses boundaries, overlaps mythologically and cosmologically with Greek goddesses like Demeter and Athena, and appears frequently in Greece. Her visits to Greece, however, are couched in broader narratives of the cult's history of travel and assimilation with Greek deities. Though the cults never create a shared sense of devotees' origins, these new myths about the descent of Isis and Sarapis and their familial bonds stand in for the biological groupness essential to Hall's definition of Greek ethnicity. I argue that these texts construct a pancultural Isis who is, paradoxically, Greek at her very core.

Chapter 4 turns to statues of Isis and Sarapis. I consider questions of style and materiality to examine how Isis and Sarapis were represented sculpturally in Greek cult centers. Focusing on the Sarapeum at Thessaloniki, I combine epigraphic and sculptural evidence to suggest that devotees preferred cult images that embedded Isis and Sarapis in Greek religious and artistic paradigms. When seen alongside the hymns, I argue, Greek-style statues of Isis both mediate her Egyptianness and promote cult-specific interpretations of other images. That is, Greek devotees might begin to see statues of cognate deities like Aphrodite, Demeter, or Athena as avatars of Isis. Materiality also

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contributes to this reading. Though many sanctuaries in Italy and throughout the empire held large numbers of imported cult objects and sculptures, current archaeological evidence suggests that most Greek sanctuaries might have contained few or none. The stark contrast gestures toward a different set of priorities. I demonstrate that Greek devotees had a marked preference instead for images of Isis and Sarapis carved in Greek styles and materials. Isis is here embodied as a Greek version of herself. These images, I hypothesize, used style as a method for visualizing an Egyptian goddess as part of Greece's heritage. I conclude with a discussion of the materiality of these statues and argue that the marble itself further participates in a Greek desire to ground Isis and Sarapis in Greece. Greek materials and styles, then, function as the prism through which Isiac universalism functioned.

In Chapter 5, I consider how Isis devotees fashioned themselves through sculpted portraits displayed in the cemeteries of Roman Athens. Self-fashioning describes the ways in which self-understandings produce material and conceptual signifiers of membership. The process is simultaneously inward and outward looking and is fundamentally tied to the experience and adornment of the body. By analyzing funerary depictions of Isiac men and women in cultic costumes, I demonstrate that these images allow devotees to incorporate aspects of alterity and foreignness into normative modes of Greek portraiture. As communities defined their boundaries, certain images and symbols became part of the ascribing process. The particular use of each symbol and its use in combination with other symbols would allow individuals to signal membership in particular communities. I suggest that the Athenian portraits use Isiac iconography to allude to a possible ritual experience shared by many devotees, but they also establish the subject as different from other Athenian women by following a pattern used in provincial portraiture across the Mediterranean. These images, I argue, have both a cult-specific and a provincial meaning that fashions two different but complementary forms of self. By examining the use of these images and symbols on the bodies of cult members, as evidenced in portraiture, self-fashioning considers how the accretion of iconographies allows individuals to navigate competing ethnic claims and construct novel and liminal forms of identity.

I conclude with the concept of self-location, which can refer to processes used to place the person or community within existing spatial, socio-political, or cultural hierarchies. These settings provide information about how communities organize their innate geographies, where they see themselves in relation to others, and how this information underpins actions and reactions. In Chapter 6, I examine how Isiac sanctuaries in Greece create imagined geographies of Egypt that local communities could possess and control. First, I consider the Sanctuary of the Egyptian Gods at Marathon, part of the family estate of the famed Roman sophist Herodes Atticus, where the sanctuary

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combines references to the Emperor Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, archaizing sculpture, and architecture meant to recall early pyramids and Egyptian temples. The Marathon sanctuary thus engages with its patron's interests in the project of the Roman Empire but adapts them in ways that emphasize Greek control over an imagined version of another province. Next, I examine how other cult communities used natural landscape and water features to construct a Nilotic world that locates an imagined form of Egypt in a Greek city. This type of self-location, in which Greek devotees find ways to recreate Nilotic visions of Egypt within the frame of Greek territory and landscape, offers these communities a way to assert control over the Egyptianness inherent in the cult, to domesticate and deterritorialize Isis, and to continue ongoing dialogues about the role of Egypt in Greece's past, present, and future.

My argument is that devotees of Isis in Roman Greece fashioned their ideas of themselves in ways that emphasized their own importance on a global scale as a counterpoint to their asymmetric experiences of power and cultural influence. These decisions navigated the complicated intersections of Greekness, a historically and regionally situated ethnic concept, and Egyptian cults, which many would have associated, to some extent, with Egyptian ethnicity and the multivalent and often exoticizing images found in Greco-Roman literature and art. The ways in which individuals and communities made these arguments, however, followed Greek norms of cultural value. In order to legitimate and raise the status of Egyptian religion, much of the text and iconography the cult produced tended to find ways to insert Isis into the deep Greek past, into Greek materials and places that recast and complicate her ethnic identity. For devotees, then, the cult and its version of Egypt and Egyptian deities offered a way to experiment with alterity while maintaining the primacy of Greekness in the world of the Roman Empire.

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