REVIEW ESSAY

Interpreting the Uninterpretable: Cleopatra and Biography

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Diana E. E. Kleiner. *Cleopatra and Rome*. Cambridge, MA, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. pp. ix + 340.

Duane W. Roller. *Cleopatra: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. xi + 252.

By way of introduction, one must note that Diane Kleiner's volume appeared five years earlier than that of Duane Roller, who acknowledges her, (xi) and that both rely on the very same detail of the painting by Alexandre Cabanel for their respective cover illustration. Both scholars generally pass in review the same body of evidence which can be divided into three broad categories, namely, the literary testimonia, or, ancient written sources, the visual arts of Greece and Rome, and the cultural record of ancient Egypt.

Christopher Pelling, reflecting on the literary testimonia, observes that Cleopatra VII "was a virtuoso of spectacle"[1]—from her bed-rolled introduction to Julius Caesar to her death from the venom

[1] Christopher Pelling, "Anything the truth can do, we can do better: Cleopatra the legend," in *Cleopatra of Egypt from History to Myth.* ed. Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 292.

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of a serpent's bite. In general, Roller is sceptical when reviewing these seemingly extravagantly staged events, and questions their veracity, but Kleiner is credulous, and accepts them at face value. There is, however, one curious reversal of their respective interpretations of that corpus. Roller accepts the contentious view that Cleopatra's mother was Egyptian, and devotes a special section to his views on the subject, (165-6) whereas Kleiner accepts her suggested Macedonian, Greek ancestry. The antipodes of these evaluations demonstrate just how equivocal that testimonia really is. *Tot homines, quot opiniones*, and there this matter stands.

In their treatment of the visual arts of Greece and Rome, into which I place architecture as well, Roller is less speculative and more conservative in his approach than is Kleiner. He attempts to tackle the architectural programs of the queen both in Alexandria and in the rural countryside of Egypt, but does not take into account recent underwater archaeological activities.[2] His discussion of the tomb of Cleopatra VII and Anthony passes over in silence the much-touted public relations effort to suggest it was located at Taposirs Magna,[3] a claim which has little to do with reality. A more serious suggestion, that the tomb may have been located on Alexandria's Cape Silsileh (that is, Akra Lochias), has been advanced by several scholars, particularly since that mausoleum appears to have been designed in a pharaonic Egyptian, rather than Hellenistic Greek, architectural idiom.[4]

[2] Franck Goddio and Manfred Clauss, *Egypt's Sunken Treasures* (Munich/Berlin/London/New York: Prestel, 2006).

[3] This effort was led by Zahi Hawaas and Franck Goddio, *Cleopatra. The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2010), in a bid to highlight the personalities of Hawaas himself and Kathleen Martinez and to draw attention to their archaeological work at Taposiris. This 2010 publication appears to be a popular distillation of chapters in Franck Goddio and Manfred Clauss, *Egypt's Sunken Treasures*.)

[4] Harry Tzalas, "The Underwater Archaeological Survey of the Greek Mission in the Coastal Area of Ramleh, Alexandria, Egypt (1998-2009), in *First Hellenistic Studies Workshop. Alexandria, 12-18 July, 2009. Proceedings,* ed. Kyriakos Savvopoulos (Alexandria, 2010), 56-63.

Both Roller and Kleiner concern themselves with images of Cleopatra. Roller's discussion takes the form, more or less, of a catalogue, in which those representations of the queen are presented in a succinct and prosaic fashion. The exclusive focus is on images on coins.(173-183) He treats both pharaonic and Hellenistic representations, and follows Kleiner's embrace of Sally-Ann Ashton's suggestion that the triple *uraeus* is an insignia specifically created for images of that queen.[5] (The noun *uraeus*, the etymology of which is debated,[6] is generally a synonym for a cobra.) The significance of two or more *uraei* as royal insignia remains enigmatic, because there is no consensus on the meaning of the double *uraeus*, which has a long history in the iconography of ancient Egyptian royal and divine representations,[7] and even less consensus about the significance of the triple *uraeus*. Nevertheless, Kleiner attempts to extend Ashton's suggestion by interpreting the triple *uraeus* as a reference to Cleopatra's three sons, Caesarion, Alexander Helios, and Ptolemy Philadelphus, the latter probably born in 36 BC. Accepting Kleiner's interpretation mandates dating all such pharaonic representations of Cleopatra VII with a triple *uraeus* to the period between 36-30 BC, or afterward. The corollary mandates that there were no such insignia-specific images of the queen created earlier in the years between 51-36 BC, a position which is difficult to accept inasmuch as at least one relief

[5] Sally-Ann Ashton, "Identifying the Egyptian-style Ptolemaic queens," in *Cleopatra of Egypt from History to Myth,* ed. Susan Walker and Peter Higgs (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 160-171.

[6] The noun *uraeus* is thought to derive from the ancient Greek adjective, *ουραιος, -α, -ον*, referring to the coils of the serpent's body. Louis Keimer, *Histoires des serpents dans L'Egypte ancienne et moderne* (Cairo: L'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1947), 15, saw the word's origin in the ancient Egyptian noun *iart* which he translated as "cobra," following the comments in the fifteenth century manuscript attributed to Horapollo *Book I,* 1, for which see George Boas [trans], *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 43.

[7] Peter Pamminger, "Features of the Past. A Royal Statuary and its Secret," *Revue d'Egyptologie* 51 (2000): 153-173.

representation in the Temple of Dendera shows a male royal so adorned.[8]

Kleiner's discussion of images and iconography extends to hairstyles. She argues that the nodus coiffure was introduced for the first time for representations of Octavia, (245) although others would attribute its introduction to Livia.[9] It is unlikely that the nodus coiffure was a conscious artistic response to the *uraeus*, (246) either single or triple, of Cleopatra, because there are neither representations of that queen with secure Italian provenance, nor literary references to such representations in Italy, that depict that queen in pharaonic, Egyptian style so accessorised. Kleiner's contention (155) that a uraeus originally appeared on the forehead of the marble portrait of the queen in the Vatican collections [inv.nr. 38511], long since removed from the draped body to which the portrait head was affixed, is forced, both because it is unlikely that an element in the form of an erected hooded head of a *uraeus* could have been vertically designed to tower into space without an additional support, and because there is no trace whatsoever of the alleged serpent's body on the wide diadem. One might consider, alternatively, the introduction of the nodus coiffure within the broader context of late Republican coiffures in general. It has been suggested that the signature coiffure of Augustus himself is indebted to Hellenistic images of the Ptolemies,[10] which may themselves have been influenced by the images of Alexander the Great exhibiting the anastole.[11] It is within this same context that images of Livia have been observed to exhibit a marked Ptolemaic, that is, Hellenistic Ptolemaic, manner.[12]

[8] Ashton, "Identifying the Egyptian-style Ptolemaic queens," 154-5.

[9] Laura Buccino, "Morbidi capelli e acconciature sempre diverse," in *Ritratti. Le tante facce del potere,* ed. Eugenio La Rocca and Claudio Parisi Presicce (Rome: MondoMostre, 2011), 360-388, esp. 367-8.

[10] Susan Walker, "From Empire to Empire," in *Cleopatra Reassessed,* ed. Susan Walker and Sally-Ann Ashton (London: British Museum Occasional Paper 103, 2003), 85.

[11] Robert Steven Bianchi, "The Nahman Alexander," *The Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 43 (2007), 42.

[12] Walker, "From Empire to Empire," in *Cleopatra Reassessed,* 85.

With regard to other images adduced as possible representations of Cleopatra VII by Kleiner (154-5), one can dismiss both heads in the collections of le Musée Archéologique in Cherchel, Algeria [inv.nos. S65 and S66][13] as well as the head found on Delos [inv.nr. A 4196], the archaeological context of the latter indicating that it was created well before Cleopatra VII came into power.[14] One should at least have mentioned in passing that other images of royals presented as portraits are not inscribed, therefore no academic consensus exists regarding them. This is the case for a black granite head [inv.nr. SCA 88] accepted as Augustus, in which others see Caesarion.[15] The Berlin Green Caesar (130-1) [inv.nr. Sk 342] is now understood to have been a posthumous, Roman creation, and was not, therefore, originally erected in Alexandria.[16]

I wish to continue this review by examining how both scholars treat the Egyptian evidence, upon which Roller asserts he has drawn, (x) and which Kleiner observes has often been overlooked.(10) One wonders how conversant either are with that evidence. Despite Roller's assertion to the contrary, his use of that data is both sparing and circumspect; he purposefully avoids the pitfalls into which Kleiner repeatedly falls. In keeping with her admittedly readable text, often couched in the vernacular—"Cleopatra's post-sack affair," (6) "stepped up to the plate," (201) "Julius Caesar had already broken the ice" (230)—Kleiner has frequent recourse to worrisome neologisms. A number of these, italicized here, deviate from normal usage, to wit, "by pharaohs since the *Early* Kingdom," (122) and "there are no surviving examples with inscribed *rear* pillars."(138) Other

[13] Mahfoud Ferroukhi, "Les deux portraits de Cherchell, dits de Cléopâtre VII," in *Cleopatra Reassessed*, 101-108.

[14] François Queyrel, "La Pseudo-Cléopâtre de la Maison du Diadumène à Délos," in *Aegyptiaca serta in Soheir Bakhoum memoriam, Collezioni Numismatiche* 7, ed. Dominique Gerin, Angelo Geissen, and Michel Amandry (Milan: Bibliothèque nationale de France Edizioni Ennerre, 2008), 199-210.

[15] Goddio and Clauss, 55-56, no. 463.

[16] Francesca Licordari, "2.5 Busto di Cesari verde,"La Rocca/Presicce (2011), 141.

statements suggest an unfamiliarity with the landscape of Egypt: "The Tomb of Cestius…is far smaller than the *pyramidal tombs* in Egypt's Valley of the Kings."(170)

Several assertions made by both scholars require comment inasmuch as those passages appear to be riddled with seemingly minor errors, the cumulative effect of which seriously erodes the reliability of the conclusions based on the Egyptian evidence reviewed. Roller maintains that Alexander the Great was installed as pharaoh of Egypt in a ceremony of investiture, while Kleiner concedes that he "acquiesced to being crowned pharaoh."(18) Stanley Burnstein convincingly argues that the hero was not officially crowned pharaoh.[17] Indeed, as Charles Maystre shows,[18] the office of High Priest of Memphis, the cleric solely responsible for the investiture of the pharaoh, was unoccupied during the time of Alexander's visit, rendering the performance of any requisite ceremony impossible. It now appears that Alexander the Great founded his Egyptian Alexandria on a site already occupied at the time of his arrival,[19] a site at which the cult of the god Sarapis appears to have been already established as well.[20]

[17] Stanley M. Burnstein, "Alexander the Great as Pharaoh: A Scholarly Myth," American Research Center in Egypt, *Annual Meeting. Boston, 1991. April 26-28, 1991. Programs and Abstracts* (New York, 1991), 31-32.

[18] Charles Maystre, *Les grands prêtres de Ptah de Memphis*. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 113 (Freiburg, CH and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1992), 179.

[19] Michel Chauveau, "Alexandrie vue par les Égyptiens," in *Alexandrie: Une mégapole cosmopolite*. *Actes du 9ème colloque de la Villa Kérylos à Beaulieu-sur-mer les 2&3 octobre 1998*, ed. J. Leclant, (Paris : Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1999), 1-10. The ancient Egyptian designation for Alexandria, rendered as Rhacotis, appears to derive from the ancient Egyptian phrase, figuratively "that which is continuously under construction."

[20] Stefan Schmidt, "Kunst am Hof der Ptolemäer—Dokumente und Denkmäler," in *Fremdheit—Eigenheit. Ägypten, Griechenland und Rom. Austausch und Verständnis,* ed. P.C.Bol, G. Kaminski, and C. Maderna, *Städel-Jahrbuch* NF 19 (Munich, 2004), 291-304. This was already suggested by Sharon Kelly Heyob in *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World. Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*, 51 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 2-3.

Both Kleiner and Roller are concerned with the issue of consanguineous marriage, and, in keeping with the traditional, classical interpretation for that practice's precedent, both endorse the pharaonic, Egyptian mythical union of Osiris and Isis as its source. H. Heinen categorically refutes the position and, correctly to my mind, defends its Greek precedent in the form of the sibling marriage between Zeus and Hera.[21] Demographic data gleaned from papyri suggest that "it is far from certain that it [consanguineous marriage] can be regarded as an Egyptian socio-cultural manifestation,"[22] seriously calling into question K. Butaselis's zealous defence of its Egyptian precedent, [23] based as it is almost exclusively on the literary testimonia, influenced by a prevailing Roman prejudice against Cleopatra VII. Within this context, it is difficult to understand Kleiner's laconic pronouncement that "the pair [Antony and Cleopatra] were married in an Egyptian ceremony in Antioch," (108) a statement that suggests there was an established pharaonic praxis sanctioning such a union, for which there is virtually no evidence.[24] Such unions were regarded as private, personal arrangements between consenting parties, and were regulated neither by legal documents nor officially performed ceremonies. Partners were united without legal and religious sanction. The informality of the practice also obviated the need for a written document.[25]

[21] Heinz Heinen, "Aspects et problèmes de la monarchie ptolémaïque." *Ktema* 3 (1978): 177-199.

[22] Alan K. Bowman, "Roman Oxyrhynchus: City and People," in *Oxyrhynchus. A City and Its Texts,* ed. A.K. Bowman, et al. (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007), 179.

[23] Kostas Buraselis, "The Problem of the Ptolemaic sibling marriage: A case of dynastic acculturation?," in *Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his World,* ed. Paul McKechnie and Philippe Guillaume (Leiden, Boston: E. J. Brill, 2008), 291-302.

[24] William F. Edgerton, *Notes on Egyptian Marriage chiefly in the Ptolemaic Period* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931); and Gay Robins, "Ancient Egyptian Sexuality," *Discussions in Egyptology* 11 (1988), 66-67.

[25] Bernard Mathieu, *La poésie amoureuse de l'Égypte ancienne* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie orientale, 1996), 153 and note 513.

Roller accepts the tradition, endorsed by some historians, that the gold sarcophagus in which the mummified remains of Alexander the Great were housed was melted down in an effort to alleviate the dynasty's financial crisis, but a combined study by five collaborating scholars has demonstrated that this was not in fact the case.[26] Roller repeatedly suggests that Egypt's economy was systemically distressed, while Kleiner emphasizes the land's robust financial health, a stance that is in accord with the findings of L.M. Rickets, who can detect no economic crisis during the reign of Cleopatra VII.[27] It is interesting that neither Kleiner nor Roller observes that interest rates in Rome plummeted to unprecedented depths, from an estimated twelve percent to four percent, as a result of the infusion of Egyptian resources into its economy after Actium.[28]

Roller apparently conflates the cobra (*Naja haje haje*) and the asp, or horned viper, (*Cerastes cerastes*) in his review of the manner of Cleopatra's death, (148) the asp being considerably smaller and more deadly.[29] And whereas the agent of the queen's death is not known, both scholars gloss over the importance of the presence of Iras/Eiras and Charmion. In keeping with ancient Egyptian pharaonic tenets, which insured against the use of the pharaoh's own body in order to avoid conjuring, care was exercised in the disposal of hair,

[26] E. van't Dack, W. Clarysse, G. Cohen, J. Quaegebeur, J.K. Winnicki, *The Judean-Syrian-Egyptian Conflict of 103-101 BC. A Multilingual Dossier concerning a "War of Sceptres*" (Brussels: Publikatie van het Comité Klassieke Studies, Subcomité Hellenisme Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1989), 143.

[27] Linda Maurine Ricketts, "The administration of Late Ptolemaic Egypt," in *Life in a Multi-cultural Society. Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond,* ed. Janet H. Johnson (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1992), 275-281.

[28] Pelling, 197.

[29] See Jack A. Josephson, "A Variant Type of the *Uraeus* in the Late Period," *The Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992), 123-130; and Serge Sauneron, *Un traité égyptien d'ophilologie. Papyrus du Brooklyn Museum Nos. 47.218.48 et 85* (Cairo: Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1989), 154-8, for the types of snakes known to the ancient Egyptians.

clippings of finger and toe nails, and cuticles. The attendance of both a hair dresser[30] and manicurist[31] suggests the queen was well informed about the role and function of such courtiers. The attendance of such functionaries on royalty is attested to in inscriptions dated as early as the Egyptian Old Kingdom.

There are more serious issues at stake here, particularly in the authors' respective assessments of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera.That temple is more complex than either Kleiner or Roller suggests. Both Kleiner and Roller select as their illustration of that temple the east side of its rear wall, which is a mirror image of the west side of that same wall, but with a significant difference. Kleiner's insistence (85-86, 225), followed by Roller (113), that "Caesarion is portrayed as the principal ruler" because he stands "in front of" Cleopatra VII cannot be supported. Such a position disregards ancient Egyptian principles of orientation which afford primacy of place in two-dimensional representations to the figure occupying the (spectator's) leftmost space.[32] Consequently, the principal image in this entire exterior south wall is that of Cleopatra VII on the west, and not on the east side of the composition. This primacy is further reinforced because there Cleopatra VII worships Isis herself, and not Hathor.

Kleiner's insistence on the primacy of Caesarion completely ignores the fact that the temple of Hathor at Dendera is devoted to the female principle of creation. The true purpose of the temple is demonstrated in the preponderance of material related to Hathor: approximately fifty-five percent of its figural decoration and accompa-

[30] Nigel Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders* (London: Kegan Paul, 1985), 205; and, more particularly, Miroslav Verner, *Forgotten Pharaohs, Lost Pyramids. Abusir* (Prague: Academia Skodaexport, 1994), 173-192, "The Dazzling Career of the Royal Hairdresser."

[31] Hans Wolfgang Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptisches Alten Reiches* (Glückstadt, Hamburg, New York: J.J. Augustin, 1954), 65-66.

[32] Henry George Fischer, *L'écriture et l'art de l'Egypte ancienne. Quatre leçons sur la paléographie et l'épigraphie pharaonique* (Paris: Presses de universitaires de France, 1986).

nying inscriptions (estimated, if printed, to exceed 2,200 pages) are devoted to Hathor, but only twenty-five percent to Isis.[33] Accordingly, Hathor represents the female principle[34] as unbridled, unshackled, unrestrained, whereas Isis, her analogue, represents the uxorial and maternal natures of that same female principle. These familial characteristics are congruent with Cleopatra's political objectives of promoting the legitimacy of her son Caesarion as her rightful successor, just as Isis promoted the cause of her son as the heir of her murdered husband, a pointed mythological allusion to the assassination of Julius Caesar. The primacy of place occupied by Cleopatra VII worshipping Isis on the west side of that rear wall reveals just how congruent the theological and political message of the temple at Dendera is. Theologically, these characteristics of the female principle unite on an annual basis with the corresponding male principle, manifest in Horus and his temple at Edfu. The temples function in tandem to make manifest Egyptian theological principles of cosmic renewal and the maintenance of order,[35] into which Cleopatra VII seamlessly integrates both herself and her son.

Roller suggests that there was some interest in astronomy at the queen's court, (44, 126) and Kleiner seems to pass over this topic in silence. Nevertheless, one of the most remarkable features of the Temple of Hathor at Dendera is found in the Chapels of Osiris on the roof, the zodiac of which is now in Paris in the collections of Le Musée du Louvre [inv.no. E 13482],[36] the decoration of which inspired Herman Melville's description of Queequeg's tattoo in *Moby*

[33] Sylvie Cauville, *Le temple de Dendera. Guide archéologique* (Cairo: Institut français d'Archéologie orientale 1990), 10-11.

[34] Sylvie Cauville, "Dieux et prêtres à Dendera au Ier siècle avant Jésus-Christ," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie* orientale 91 (1991), 69-97.

[35] Hartwig Altenmüller, "Die Fahrt der Hathor nach Edfu und die 'heilige Hochzeit,'" in *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years.* Part II. *Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur,* ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peetersen Departement Oosterse Studies, 1988), 753-765.

[36] Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, *La crypte de l'Osiris* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1979), 15-17.

Dick.[37] The theme of these three chapels is the cosmic conjunction that only occurs every millennium and a half, when a full moon is at its zenith precisely on 26 Khoiak, a key day in the festival of Osiris,[38] whose theological resurrection is associated with the full moon. Other chapels within this temple are equally complex in their symbolism. All attempts, therefore, which suggest any equivalent relationship between this temple and the Ara Pacis are exceedingly difficult to support.

Both Kleiner and Roller appear to be imprecise with regard to their designations of the regions to the south of Egypt's traditional southern border at Aswan. Roller refers to this region as Trogodytika, (46) where Trogodytic was spoken.(105) Kleiner suggests that Antony and Cleopatra VII might have sailed "nearly to Ethiopia had his soldiers consented" (96) and that Caesarion "fled to Ethiopia."(159) Although the literary testimonia often refer to these regions as Ethiopia,[39] the use of that noun in this context is misleading, because its use completely masks the fact that that region was home to a thriving Black African cultural horizon, the Meroitic. Both scholars ignore the impact of Meroe on the policy of Augustus. This silence is all the more regrettable in light of Kleiner's attempt to sketch the life of Cleopatra VII, which she uses as a foil against which to compare and contrast the lives and political careers of her contemporary noble Roman women. The exclusion of any mention of a Meroitic queen, called *kdke*, a title mistaken for the personal name Candace in some of the literary testimonia, is regrettable. This queen, who is perhaps to be identified either as Amanirenas or more probably as Amani-

[37] John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics. The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 146, 161, 285-6, 321.

[38] Sylvie Cauville, *Le zodiaque d'Osiris* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), an abridged version of her fuller treatment in *Dendera. Les chapelles osiriennes,* volumes 1-5 (Cairo: Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1997).

[39] Robert Steven Bianchi, *Daily Life of the Nubians* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3-8, for some of the designations of these regions.

shakheto,[40] was at the heart of a Meroitic revolt[41] which stormed Egypt's southern frontier, sacking monuments in the process,[42] and carrying back to Nubia statues as trophy art. The bronze portrait of Augustus, now in London's British Museum, [inv.nr. 1911.9-1.1] was looted in the process, and ceremoniously buried beneath an entrance to a palace in Meroe so that upon entering and exiting the Roman would be symbolically trampled underfoot. In the end, a delegation from Meroe, the first attested diplomatic contact between a truly Black African state and Rome, travelled to Samos, where Augustus had been bivouacked, and there extracted from him favourable conditions. This Meroitic queen achieved what Cleopatra VII had not. As a consequence of this episode in his career, Augustus was compelled to embark on a number of architectural projects south of Aswan, including the Temple of Dendur,[43] now re-erected in the Sackler Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. [inv.nr. 68.154] Kleiner's discussion of this temple and its neighbours fails to place these monuments into the context of her narrative.(194-5) Moreover, she misidentifies the lioness-headed goddess in her caption as Sekhmet, (195 fig. 13.2) when in fact the accompanying hieroglyphs identify her as the lioness-headed goddess Tefnut.[44] Such carelessness mars her other discussions of pharaonic monuments, in which she dismisses representa-

[40] Fritz Hintze, "The Meroitic Period," *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan.* The Brooklyn Museum. *Proceedings of the Symposium Held in Conjunction with the Exhibition, Brooklyn, Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 1978. Meroitica 5* (1979), 98-99.

[41] L. Török, "Augustus and Meroe," *Orientalia Suecana* 38-39 (1989-1990), 171-190.

[42] Friedhelm Hoffmann, Martina Minas-Nerpel, and Stefan Pfeiffer, *Die dreisprachige Stele des C. Cornelius Gallus* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 18, passim.

[43] Aylward M. Blackman, *Les temples immergés de la Nubie. The Temple of Dendûr* (Cairo: Service des Antiquités de L'Egypte, 1911). Ier Reduction photographique 1981 (avec supplement) (Cairo: Dar el-Maaref, 1981).

[44] Blackman, 54, scene VIII with plate LXXXIII. In this image, the king makes an offering to the god Thoth, accompanied by the goddess Tefnut, who is specifically named in the caption in the field immediately in front of her image.

tions as depictions of "the same offerings to the same gods."(194) In light of these comments, the conclusions reached in this particular volume should be used with extreme caution.

As the above review attempts to demonstrate, biographies of Cleopatra VII based on images in ancient art are tentative at best, because the majority of those images are without archaeological provenance and are not inscribed. Furthermore, there is little scholarly consensus regarding the individual portrayed, and even less with regard to understanding the significance of certain attributes found on those images. Interpretations of the literary testimonia are likewise equivocal, often leading to contradictory conclusions about their meaning. The situation is often further compounded by an imprecise comprehension of the ancient Egyptian pharaonic evidence. Indeed the interpretations of the available data are fraught with academic perils in which there are few, if any, absolutes. Readers of both volumes should, therefore, realize that both Kleiner and Roller have presented two perspectives on the life and times of Cleopatra VII, but their respective takes are simply two attempts at interpreting seemingly uninterpretable data. A more balanced approach to a biography of the queen, in my view, is one which embraces competing hypotheses, without categorically accepting one and dismissing another.