Late Roman Alexandria:

A Multi-Cultural Community

by

Brittany White

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Abstract

Identification with a communal group, whether it is that of the patron-client, trade guilds, or a religious group, was for the people of the Roman Empire a fluid concept. Through the changes of imperial edicts and the rise in power of the Christian Church leadership, polarization of ethno-religious groups began to be pushed upon the people, including that of the diverse city of Alexandria in the province of the Empire's breadbasket, Egypt. With the vast amount of textual and material evidence that survives from Roman Egypt, I chose to use Alexandria as my case study to determine what the tensions and problems were for the people living in a multi-cultural community of the Roman Empire. Through the lives of Philo, Origen and Hypatia, philosophers/teachers and all "monsters" who lived in two communities yet were not solidly a part of either, along with material culture from the Brooklyn Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art and the imperial edicts of the *Codex Theodosianus*¸Book 16, I tried to understand what tensions and problems arose and how they in turn affected Alexandrians from the first to the fourth and early fifth centuries, Common Era.

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List of Abbreviations

CTh: *Theodosian Code/Codex Theodosianus*

c.: circa/estimated date

CE: Common Era (equivalent to: AD)

Definition of Terms

***pax deorum*:** literally the "peace of the gods," was the central goal of the Roman state as it was thought that by keeping up with proper practice and observance of the deities, that prosperity would follow for everyone in the Empire.

***supplicatio*:** A ritual when calamity struck, such as a plague or drought; the Emperor would sometimes call for everyone to make a sacrifice, or *supplicatio,* to the imperial cult in order to turn the wrath of the gods away from the Empire.

***superstitio*:** a religious practice not accepted by the imperial state as it is often associated with a practice of religion that is founded upon an unhealthy obsession with the divine.

***cultus*:** the Latin term, which in English is "cult," pertaining to a religious practice/faith.

pagan: the term applied by later Christians to denote a follower of one of the traditional cults of Rome, Greece, Egypt, etc. It is a problematic term as it is literally translated from *paganus* to mean "hick" out in the countryside, however, a better term I have not found in modern scholarship as of yet.

Nicene Christianity: The branch of Christianity that became the orthodox, "right way" to believe and practice, after the Council of Nicaea in 325CE. It believed that Jesus was equally as divine as God, the Father. An eighth-century council added the Holy Spirit.

Catholic Church: Catholic or "universal" was equivalent to the Nicene Christian faith. Edicts compiled in the *Theodosian Code* often use this term to define it as the right, true way to practice Christianity.

heresy: Originally a Greek term meaning "choice," the Catholic Church and in edicts of the *Theodosian Code* used the term to denote it as a belief that contradicts what they thought to be the orthodox/right way. Over time, this term began to apply to various Christian and Jewish communities in the Empire who do not adhere to Nicene Christianity.

patron-client relationship: A foundational piece of traditional Roman society between the *patronus* and *clients*. It was a hierarchical relationship, which was of mutual benefit and although the patron was usually of a higher social class than his client, they might share the same social status. The benefit to this arrangement was more wealth, prestige, or power, and essentially was an ancient form of networking.

Introduction

Identity is a vital concept for people of the ancient world much as it is for the modern world. How people identify can determine many things, including one's livelihood, community, and future. Which culture do you ascribe yourself to and yet which are you pushed into? This challenging question can lead to the creation of tensions and problems, especially when there are outliers who are not accepted by any group yet have similarities to a few of them. In the Roman Empire, and especially in the multi-cultural community of Alexandria, Egypt a few such people across time come to mind, such as Philo and Hypatia. To unpack just why these two may have created change, we need to first ask, what are the tensions and problems for the people living in a multi-cultural community, such as Roman Alexandria?

Tensions and problems can be thought of as arising when too many differences occur between two or more groups. I want to challenge that thought though, with the help of a few scholars who are more adept with borderlands theory and narrative,[1] by arguing that tensions and problems that cause division between groups happen through the conceptual creation of boundaries through the narrative people tell themselves. Borderlands theory is a concept that aids scholars in understanding the relationship between the center and the periphery, the push of pull of various people groups affecting each other, culturally/socially, economically, etc. Borderlands theory, often applied to spatial boundaries between groups,[2] can also be used to explore a conceptual division between groups[3] whose desires to diminish their similarities through mentally-devised differences create a new group, "monsters." As seen in Elizabeth DePalma

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[1] Fredrik Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Pensumtjeneste, 1994), 9–37; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, "The Usefulness of Borderlands Concepts in Ancient History: The Case of Origen as Monster," n.d., 1–21; James F. Brooks, ed., "Seductions and Betrayals: La Frontera Gauchesque, Argentine Nationalism, and the Predicament of Hybridity," in *Small Worlds: Method, Meaning, and Narrative in Microhistory*, 2008, 247–64.

[2] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries."

[3] Digeser, "The Case of Origen as Monster."

Digeser's article, "The Usefulness of Borderlands Concepts in Ancient History: The Case of Origen as Monster," both the Greco-Roman philosophy circle and the dominant Christian circle kept a strong divide amidst the communities which he had been a part of in turn made Origen's memory into that of a monster.[4] These monsters are able to move between the various groups that they are alike and yet not accepted in. While we simultaneously view these groups to be "separate," we must also be careful when observing the tensions and problems which create these divisions.[5] Regardless of whether the Alexandrian, through a conscious or forced decision, identified with one group or another, as pointed out by Margaret R. Somers in her article, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," we have a duty to not draw hard and fast lines to create set categories. Somers argues that narrative forms identity and it is more of a fluid notion, recommending that we can avoid "the hazards of rigidifying aspects of identity into a misleading categorical entity" by combining the "categorically destabilizing dimensions of *time, space,* and *relationality*" and including in our analysis of people's identities "a *conceptual narrative*."[6] In other words, by complicating the picture through many sources, we can begin to truly understand that the multi-levels of narrative influence identity. Through these scholars' pieces along with others, to be discussed later, we can begin to unpack not only how Alexandrian conceptual boundary-forming identities played a role in developing these tensions and problems for the diverse people living there, but also how the narrative at the center (the Alexandrians) and how the narrative from the periphery (imperial edicts) caused the push and pull effect leading to the tensions and problems.

What were the tensions and problems for the Alexandrian community? By looking at the

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (October 1, 1994): 605–49.
[6] Ibid., 606.

voices from those living in Roman Alexandria, we may be able to decipher what some of them were. While not many of such sources survive for modern historians to examine, the first century philosophizing Hellenized Jew, Philo, has. An example of how a "monster" can be used as an emissary between two communities, Philo's life and struggles are evident in his *Embassy to Gaius*. This was a letter he wrote to the Emperor Gaius, also known as "Caligula," trying to negotiate better treatment of the Jewish community within Alexandria.[7] Pressures from the periphery caused tensions to occur and the clashes of conflicting religious narratives took place. Philo became a useful person to both of the communities that he was connected to through navigating between the two communities, of the Greco-Roman and the Jews, using rhetoric and philosophy along with the knowledge of Judaic beliefs. The material culture of Philo's time, I would argue from what I have seen at both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum, support this unique encouragement of the development of "monsters" or people who straddle different communities and can be the agents to go between these conceptual boundaries. As to be discussed in greater detail later, the funerary art portrayed in those such as Figures 1-3, depict a narrative that overlaps various cultures and can give the impression that identity was as Eric Rebillard[8] writes, on his study of Roman North Africa, very fluid.

Rebillard's book *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE*, like Somers, explores identity and also challenges the modern historian's way of categorizing. He cautions us away from making set groups and defining them as rigid forms of identity, especially in regards to religion, as it is unrealistic. In fact, it is with this very approach

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[7] Philo "of Alexandria" Judaeus, "Embassy to Gaius," in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993).
[8] Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE*, 1 edition (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2012).

that leads us "consequently, to treat religious conflicts as encounters between religious groups."[9] While his study was of a separate province from Egypt and mainly focused on Carthage, a connection can be drawn in his study of the formation of identity in a province and a city that was multi-cultural and heavily influenced by many narratives, like Alexandria. We have been focusing on the provinces, specifically the community of Alexandria in the province of Egypt, and so need to also see how this center of our research was affected by its periphery, the emperor and his imperial edicts.

Potentially we could look at each individual emperor and see what legislation has survived to support how they might have influenced Alexandria between the first through fifth centuries. For the sake of time, as the third century in particular went through a tremendous number of emperors, I would like to view Emperor Theodosius II's project, the *Codex Theodosianus*, or the *Theodosian Code*. While we have Philo as an eye-witness to the tensions and problems in Alexandria during the first century, we will use this compilation of legislation that spans between the third through fifth centuries and covers topics from tax payments to gladiators, the grain supplies of various cities to appointments and the duties of government officials, in order to view various narratives coming from the periphery, specifically turning the focus of this paper to Book 16, the religious laws. The edicts found in this book while still a large number, are more manageable to help us unpack some of the narratives being pushed onto Alexandria from the periphery. Through the work of two of the leading scholars on the *Theodosian Code*, John F. Matthews and Jill Harries, we can look not only at the edicts themselves but also begin to understand the narratives circulating them and how they might or might not have been enforced and therefore affect Alexandria's religious identities and

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[9] Ibid., 2.

narratives. With Matthews' book *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* and Harries' book *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*, the narratives of how and why the compilation of the *Code* came to be and the reception of the edicts can be unpacked. The periphery's push on the center through these narratives also helped in creating and furthering the tensions and problems within the Alexandrian community.

Although the social narratives coming from both the center and the periphery form the basis for group divisions, we must recall Somers. She writes that, "…social identities are constituted by the intricate interweaving of history, narrativity, social knowledge, and relationality, as well as institutional and cultural practices."[10] The push and pull, therefore, of the center and periphery's interaction, the various narratives within the cultural and religious sectors, along with the historical weave together to create identity and in turn the tensions and problems because of its complicated fluidity. The social conflict amongst the people of Egypt is not often seen in the surviving material culture, but it is written into its texts. Authors such as Rebillard and the later to be explored book *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* by Edward J. Watts tell us this by drawing on such surviving texts. The question we are often left with after exploring these is, what has modern scholarship found on the effects of the *Theodosian Code* on the multi-cultural and diverse religious populations of Egypt?

While it is difficult to sift through all of the scholarship out there, I believe that there has been quite a bit done within comparisons of pagans and Christians,[11] and between Christians and

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[10] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 634.

[11] By pagans, I mean to include anyone who is not a follower of Jesus or is of the Jewish tradition. For a sample of the comparison of pagans and Christians, see Digeser, "The Case of Origen as Monster"; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, "Lactantius, Porphyry, and the Debate over Religious Toleration," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (January 1, 1998): 129–46, doi:10.2307/300808; Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity : Topography and Social Conflict*, Ancient Society and History (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Walter M. Shandruk, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31–

Jews,[12] however I have not found very much scholarship done comparing all three religious "groups" within the context of Egypt and connecting to the religious identities. One interdisciplinary study that I believe is of note tried to bridge the gap between scholarship specifically on Jews and Christians in the late Roman world initiated through the University of Michigan, as written by the ancient historian Jason von Ehrenkrook. This inter-disciplinary study, launched in 2003 and called "Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity,"[13] emphasized how the Jewish Diaspora, along with interactions between the Jewish and Christian groups, may not have been as neatly divided in practice as is taught in modern scholarship, much as Rebillard has shown in his own study and Somers has explained in her complexity of narratives forming identity. University of Michigan's study focused on how Roman policies and military movements affected the interactions of Jews and Christians, such as with the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. However, the study focused on set religious groups and only two of the three "groups" that interacted, as well as missing later imperial edicts found in the *Theodosian Code*. I agree with von Ehrenkrook, Rebillard, and Somers' findings, that the clean divisions that modern scholarship often attributes to these groups are not very realistic. I also see that through utilizing their research and willingly working with various specialists in different fields than my own along with employing theory, we can begin to further explore the voices of Roman Alexandria such as Origen, but more so the great mathematician and philosopher Hypatia whose life is

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57, doi:10.1353/earl.2012.0003; Edward Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[12] For a sample of the comparison of Jews and Christians Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); David Brakke, "Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2001): 453–81, doi:10.1353/earl.2001.0055; Jason von Ehrenkrook, "Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity: An Interdisciplinary Research Initiative," *Journal of the International Institute* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2005), http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0013.109.

[13] von Ehrenkrook, "Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity."

unique in understanding the tensions and problems of Alexandria.

Unlike the monsters of Philo's time, according to our written sources the various religious communities were not as reciprocating to people who did not belong to one set communal identity, as seen in the life of the late fourth and early fifth century teacher of mathematics and astronomy, Hypatia of Alexandria. As Somers relates, "If identities are fixed there can be no room to accommodate changing power relations – or history itself – as they are constituted and reconstituted over time."[14] It appears, however, that the more dominant voices within the various communities around the end of her life desired fixed identities within fixed religious circles, as seen in the Christian community led by Bishop Theophilios whose mob destroyed in 391CE the Serapeum of Alexandria (the temple dedicated to the deity Serapis, a melding of both Hellene and Egyptian tradition). Although none of her work survives, the story of her life is related by the mid-fifth century church historian Scholasticus Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History*, the late sixth-century Neoplatonist philosopher Damascius whose work *Life of Isidore* survives through the reproduction of the work in the tenth-century work *The Suda*, and also in the late seventh-century church historian and bishop of Upper Egypt, John of Nikiû.

The depiction of Hypatia's life is slightly varied, however, it is evident from the accounts of her murder that being a Neoplatonist teacher and a woman who taught men holding various identities and views of religion was not acceptable by the beginning of the fifth century. Her death in 415CE was violent and done by an angry Christian mob for varying reasons, from being a sorceress leading men astray[15] to being a victim of political jealousy.[16] What was different in

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[14] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 611.
[15] John (Bishop of Nikiu), *Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu: Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text* (Arx Publishing, LLC, 2007), sec. 84.87–103.
[16] Socrates (Scholasticus), Henri de Valois, and Edward Walford, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, Surnamed Scholasticus, Or the Advocate: Comprising a History of the Church, in Seven Books, from the Accession of Constantine, A.D. 305, to the 38th Year of Theodosius II., Including a Period of 140 Years* (Henry G. Bohn, 1853), sec. VII.15 Damascius' Life of Isidore, in The Suda.

Hypatia's life than Philo's? Both ascribed to philosophy and interacted with more than one community, yet Philo was deemed helpful while Hypatia was found to be a threat. I believe the answer lies in the shift of the periphery's control over Alexandria and the shift in leadership created by the edicts found in the *Theodosian Code*. The narratives had shifted away from the emperor being the *pontifex maximus*, the chief priest over all of Rome's religions, with Emperor Gratian in c. 381CE and the imperial legislation in Book 16 began to shift the narrative of many acceptable religious practices to a singular form of the one "true faith" Catholic Christianity. At the same time, in order to understand this conclusion, we must first understand "that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories"[17] and through following the emplotted stories outlined above, we can deconstruct what the tensions and problems of the multi-cultural community of Alexandria were.

[17] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 613.

Part 1

To live in a multi-cultural community and not know who you are is a challenge for us now, but would it apply to people in the Roman imperial province of Alexandria? This challenge appears to be a human one as I understand it from Fredrik Barth in his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*.[18] While his work is on "ethnic boundaries and boundary maintenance," I believe that we can begin to understand the challenge of forming one's identity through his discussion of ethnicity. "Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity."[19] In other words and in the context of Alexandria, Barth is saying that a person may ascribe to belonging to a certain group or category and s/he has chosen to be viewed by others and to view themselves through those attributes of said group, such as Philo.

As a self-identifying Hellenized Jew, Philo viewed himself as a man whose ties were to both the Greek ("Hellene" essentially meaning "Greek") philosophical and Jewish traditions. He embraced the multiple narratives prevalent within first-century Alexandria, and much of the province of Egypt if figures 1-3 are an adequate survey of practice. The early first-century "Mummy Mask of a Man" (Figure 1) shows this multi-layered narrative. The young man appears to have wished to have his final portrait depict a set of narratives through identifying features from both the Egyptian and Roman traditions, as noted by the Curator of Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Middle Eastern Art, Edward Bleiberg in our walk through of the Brooklyn Museum's Egyptian exhibit.[20] The mummification process had been going on in Egypt for a few hundred

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[18] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries."
[19] Ibid., 14.
[20] Edward Bleiberg, Brooklyn Museum Curator of Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Middle Eastern Art Interview, interview by Brittany White, January 15, 2015.

years by the time of this man's death, however, the fashion depicted, such as the definition of his hairstyle, would be described as Roman. At the same time, it is clear that an individualized element is somewhat lacking and the symbols refer to the Egyptian god of death, Osiris, meaning the design pulls more from the traditional Egyptian culture than Roman. In a similar depiction of multiple narratives, the "Mummy Cartonnage of a Woman" (Figure 2) also from the first century and created in Egypt, depicts a woman with Roman dress, adornment, and hairstyle, while the objects she holds are for Isis (the Egyptian goddess of mourning, magical healing, and motherhood) and the way in which she was mummified were influences from Egypt. In Figure 3, there is more of the Roman influence evident, even though the body was preserved through the Egyptian mummification process. The depiction of the deceased was in the Fayum portrait-style of Egypt but executed in a naturalistic, individualistic style of painting, employed by Roman artists of the period. This style uses an encaustic paint mixture on a wooden panel, which was slipped into the linen wraps surrounding the face of the mummy. As the description from the Brooklyn Museum on Figure 2 relates, "Egyptians living under Roman rule made choices about their burials that emphasized either Roman or Egyptian characteristics." Nevertheless, they all chose to incorporate multiple narratives into the last portrayals of themselves, as can be said about Philo through his written works.

Philo's *Embassy to Gaius* gives us a lasting impression of how he wanted to be portrayed. He was a defender of the Jewish rights and also a man of great rhetoric and understanding of the Greco-Roman tradition, including being well-versed in the myths of the gods and heroes. This portrayal makes sense given what Somers tells us that scholars have found, "people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and

cultural narratives."[21] He was a man of his time, his multi-cultural community, and he was chosen even in his diversity to be the bridge between the two cultures. The question remains, what was he defending the Jews from and why was he, a "monster" in so far as he resembled multiple communities, chosen as the emissary? His letter to Emperor Caligula was in response to the riots and strike against the Jewish community in which many Jews were killed. The ancient historian Christopher Haas' book, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*, explains that tension "between the dominant pagan majority and Alexandria's sizable Jewish community"[22] occurred in the early Roman imperial period.

In this case, the final straw was not the Jewish religious beliefs, though that had fueled the fire, but their aid in the Romans taking over Egypt and in turn the eventual installation of the new prefect A. Avillius Flaccus by Emperor Gaius Caligula, as explained by Peter Schäfer in his book *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*.[23] Flaccus encouraged the unrest within the Alexandrian community against the Jews, including allowing the installation of the emperor's image into the synagogues "(an act which made them unfit for worship) and even to confiscate the synagogues," along with the confiscation of property and the mass-killing of many in the Jewish community.[24] This brings into focus, the way in which political leaders and edicts could shape the unrest within the community, through adding a new narrative into the complex narrativity already occurring; as "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities."[25] The social narrative most pulled on in such an instance by

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[21] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 614.
[22] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 331.
[23] Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 136.
[24] Ibid., 141–140.
[25] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 606.

Philo, who focused on the aspect of the Jewish community's identity as one in which while preferring to remain set apart in religious practices especially, they had special rights granted by the Roman leadership. This belief was how they made "sense of the social world" and could continue to live within Alexandria as the tensions amongst "ethno-religious groups"[26] went through its cycle of surfacing and then resettling.

The Jews argued for their rights to be set apart, specifically in relation to religious practice, as presented by Tessa Rajak in her article "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?" Rajak explains that while the Roman Empire was vast, the rulings and imperial edicts set down were often provincially-based and not empire-wide. "None the less, the decrees were all that the Jews had and they clung to them tenaciously and relied on them vigorously in their political battle."[27] Though the Romans may not have viewed these decrees as empire-wide, nor set rights for the Jews so much as privileges granted at a previous time, the Jewish community fought for their religious and civic beliefs in a way that explains the source of tension which had been apparent in Alexandria for centuries between their own and the Greek and pagan communities dwelling there.

At the same time, the strong sense of narratives about their social and ethno-religious identity that the Jewish community held sometimes became layered with the other narratives within Alexandria from Philo's time through even the fourth century. We can view this in material culture, such as Figure 4, dated between circa third through fourth century CE. Though this funerary mask incorporates the part of the Empire that it originated in, it ties back into the Jewish community through his corkscrew locks of hair. This figure is from Southwestern Arabia

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[26] As referenced in Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*.
[27] Tessa Rajak, "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (January 1, 1984): 120, doi:10.2307/299011.

and made between the third and fourth centuries CE. Named by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Head of a man" this alabaster sculpture really embodies the multiple narratives that this man identified with. He is depicted as a man of rank or potentially royalty, from the laurel wreath upon his head, a Greek symbol. It is also of note to look at his stubble-beard and well-groomed mustache, which reminds me also of Ancient Greece. The tiny ringlet or corkscrew of hair depicted on his left cheek, taps into his Jewish identity. "This last detail," as noted by the description placard at the Metropolitan Museum, "is undoubtedly significant since it is, to this day, characteristic of the hairstyle of Yemeni Jews." This layering of multiple narrative identities reminds us of what Somers, Rebillard and Haas have pointed to time and again, individuals are multi-faceted and draw on many inspirations and communal identifying markers throughout their lifetimes.

Philo was no exception to this, as from his own words we know that he identified with two communities throughout his life. As Barth explains, however, Philo would not have been able to be this multi-cultural emissary had not his social system held loose constraints, enabling him to employ a "variety of statuses and roles."[28] With the positive outcome of Philo's visit to Rome and Emperor Caligula, the Alexandrian community began to resettle itself as shortly thereafter Flaccus was removed and a new treaty formed.[29] On the flipside, the strength and pride of Jewish narratives did not slow, even with the attack by this temporary local leader. This Jewish narrative of identity is often difficult to find in material culture, as Judaism is an iconoclastic religion, meaning that they reject all religious iconography. However, some material culture picturing religious celebration does surface on occasion. As the description by The Metropolitan Museum of Art for Figure 5 states, "This rare example of Jewish gold glass depicts

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[28] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 18.
[29] Judaeus, "Embassy to Gaius."

an open Torah ark, with rolled scrolls on its shelves, and ritual implements of the temple—including two menorot (candelabra), a shofar (ram's horn), and an etrog (citron). Originally, a banqueting scene was shown below, with a fish on the tripod table in front of a cushion." While this piece was most likely from Rome and dated later than Philo's lifetime, the sentiment of celebration is key. Figure 5 was made circa 300-350CE and describes a celebration, most likely connected with the religious aspect of the Judaic community. Part of the Latin inscription survives, wishing the person holding the bowl base to "Drink with blessing in preparation…" (Metropolitan Museum placard). We can see that the joy and celebration found in the Jewish community was not tampered by its past, nor too worried about its future. Philo played a role in this first century victory, however the narratives had begun to change within Alexandria and continued to with the constant push from the periphery in the form of edicts, as we can see in the *Theodosian Code*.

The changing narratives, it can be argued, are seen in the edicts of the third through fifth centuries. As mentioned previously, these edicts come down to us in the form of the fifth-century Emperor Theodosius II's codified law code, known as *Codex Theodosianus* or the *Theodosian Code*. In part, this selection is incomplete as these edicts are missing their preambles and there are certain edicts that were left out, including the majority of the religious edicts issued by that of the last pagan emperor, Julian. The dates of each edict mentioned have varying dates which "have been indicated where scholars disagree."[30] Why does the *Theodosian Code* matter to a person living in Alexandria in these centuries? This is a good question, and as Barth explains about scholarship, "Though the naïve assumption that each tribe and people has maintained its culture through a bellicose ignorance of its neighbours is no longer entertained, the simplistic

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[30] Clyde Pharr, trans., "Book 16," in *The Theodosian Code and Novels and The Sirmondian Constitutions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), vii.

view that geographical and social isolation have been the critical factors in sustaining cultural diversity persists."[31] Continuing with his line of argument against such a simple viewpoint, I would argue that in short, provinces, such as Egypt, were not sectioned off and away from the rest of the Roman Empire just because they were geographically separate. Furthermore there was constant contact within different communities, especially in the areas that had changed ruling hands multiple times, such as Egypt. This meant that while Philo went to the periphery, from an Alexandrian's point of view, by going to speak with the emperor in what ultimately created change by the center, the periphery through imperial edicts and provincial government enforcement would also have the potential to change the center, Alexandria and its narratives.

Before we begin to evaluate the edicts' impact on Alexandria, we need to comprehend the background of these edicts. The leading scholars of the *Code*, as previously mentioned, are John F. Matthews and Jill Harries whose works explain the complexities of the edicts themselves, the *Code*'s compilation, and what the understanding was of the imperial edicts which came in different forms over the centuries. The Late Roman social, economic, and legal historian, Matthews studies the creation of the *Code* and how to use it as a source for Roman law in his book. How and why the *Code* came to be, he says, in part was due to the immense size and the ambiguity of the laws so that "a case for its systematic codification could have been made at any time; in a sense, what is most surprising is the belatedness with which it was in fact undertaken."[32] While this is true, we must keep in mind that the *Theodosian Code* is the earliest extant (surviving) codification of laws and not the first; law code compilations such as those from Ulpian under the Severans in early third century to Gregorius and Hermogenianus in late

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[31] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 9.
[32] John F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 19.

third century, were two contemporary works of compiled law codes that had occurred before the *Theodosian Code*. Nevertheless, Matthews continues by explaining that "The question [of] why…codification should be undertaken at any particular time relates in part to the juristic and general intellectual culture of an age, and also to the political climate."[33] What caused Theodosius to take on such an endeavor and what was the culture of his age, especially the political climate, like?

According to Matthews, the unity of the empire, east and west, was Emperor Theodosius II's desire and the codification of the *Code* was a project which could present this image. The Roman Empire during his reign was divided between east and west with an emperor in each part. The relationship between east and west was strenuous in part due to the vast expanse of the empire and because each emperor faced different problems, such as seen from the time of the tetrarchy founded by Diocletian in the beginning of the fourth century (with the lack of uniformity of the enforcement of laws including during the various stages of the "Great Persecution"). "To Alexandrians of the later Roman period," according to Haas, "the emperor [in the east] was more than just a distant figure presiding over his far-flung empire from Constantinople. At times, the emperor found it necessary to intervene directly in the internal affairs of the city." In addition to Theodosius' desire for solidarity and uniformity in rule with his western counterpart over the Roman Empire, another objective I would argue for the codification, and possibly a more practical reason for the daily life of the wealthy citizen, was that it came at a time when the practice and study of Roman law in the east was rising. Schools in the east, especially in the Eastern Roman Empire's capital Constantinople, were becoming regulated, as per *CTh* 14.9.3; 15.1.53 two excerpts which regulate "the practice of higher

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[33] Ibid., 20.

education at Constantinople"[34] and also allowed for a separation of legal schools and schools of philosophy. By codifying these edicts, Emperor Theodosius was announcing a set form of rules that allowed for study of legislation beginning in the third century through a dating system which gave law students the knowledge of not only the past but the current laws.

As Harries writes of Theodosius' public announcement, the Novella of 438CE, the *Code* is meant to be taken "as a statement of the legal rights of the citizen, of protection against the abuse of power, or of access to justice regardless of influence of an opponent,"[35] with two exceptions. The first exception coming from the model of generality, which implied equality for citizens legally as the law was meant for everyone. The second, dealt with the concern of litigants being told truthfully what was going on in their case by the jurists, who are implied to often "exploit the obscurities of the law and frighten their clients."[36] In other words, Theodosius felt that this compilation would offer a "new legal era" centering on "knowledge, brevity, and certainty."[37] He intended a fresh start and equality amongst the Roman Empire's citizens, so how did they receive this announcement?

Social narratives again are at the forefront. "Historically Roman law had always contained a moral dimension, meaning that it was responsive to the social mores of the time, and it was an accepted part of juristic theory that the application of some laws was heavily dependent on social attitudes."[38] In part, this historical tradition explains why the edicts within the *Theodosian Code*, show legislation that progressively changed the political and religious climate for the various communities of pagans, Jews, and Christians who lived within the empire.

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[34] Ibid., 26.
[35] Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 3.

Political changes such as the mid-fourth century edicts of *CTh* 16.2.9-11, which outline more exemptions for clergy along with their slaves and sons, created change. The continuous exemptions including of taxes when running their own private businesses as those monies were used to care for the poor (*CTh* 16.2.9,11) and from public duties as decurions and from doing municipal duties in order to help more people through church organizations (*CTh* 162.10, 11).

Why does this matter? With being excluded from public duties such as decurion work, the wealthy families of the Roman Empire could exclude themselves from the economic foundations that the Empire was built on. These people who went into the Church life either through pouring all of their wealth into the Church before joining into their ranks or through the monastic, celibate life of the Church became less a part of the cycle of life from their wealth being flushed into the economy to their lack of offspring and continued support of the Roman way of life. This decision was supported through such tax breaks as seen in the quote, "This indulgence We [the emperors] grant to their wives, children, and servants, to males and females equally, for We command that they also shall continue exempt from tax assessments" (*CTh* 16.2.11). Economic changes were also spurred by imperial shifts of political and religious climate.

In practice, one's employment was not synonymous with one's religious adherence, yet with the implementation of *CTh* 16.10.21 and 16.8.24 during the time of Theodosius II, if one was of a particular ethno-religious group one would be barred from certain occupations. Both edicts expelled ethno-religious groups from the imperial service positions, *CTh* 16.10.21 the pagans and *CTh* 16.8.24 the Jews. The pagans, determined to be of "the profane false doctrine or [participating in the] crime of pagan rites," were barred from entering imperial service and from becoming administrators or judges. *CTh* 16.8.24 goes into greater detail about the now

superstitio known as Judaism which barred Jews from imperial service and outlined the process of phasing the Jews out of their imperial positions, with the exception of those bearing arms who were promptly dismissed. As further clarified by the Emperors, "Indeed, We do not prohibit Jews instructed in liberal studies from acting as advocates, and We permit them to enjoy the honor of the cumpulsory public services of decurions" which was passed down through birth. The Emperors stated that being allowed to have these continued privileges should suffice in keeping the Jews happy and they were not to look at the loss of imperial jobs as a "mark of infamy." All-in-all, would this have affected the Alexandrians? As a province, with imperial offices within the city of Alexandria and greater Egypt, I would argue that the Alexandrians would have felt this shift and greater conflict arose with these imperial rulings.

At the same time, Harries encourages us to dig deeper, finding that "Roman law became the victim of a deep-seated conflict within Roman society between rules, which were universal, and power, which was arbitrary."[39] Just because the emperor set down such a compilation does not mean that it was equally enforced by the local governments, as even the emperor was caught between the legal and the social order, often summarized in the patron-client relationship.[40] This conflict between the private and public spheres is not new to Roman society. What is new, is that as various religious narratives grew and a dominant form of Catholic Christianity emerged (after the Council of Nicaea under Constantine I in 325CE) the Alexandrian tensions rose to riotous proportions once more, including raids on pagan temples such as the Serapeum and a shrine outside of the city to Isis;[41] raising the question, who was truly ruling Alexandria? Somers tells us that we must not look at these events as separate from each other, but rather in relation to each

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[39] Ibid., 77.
[40] Ibid., 77–78.
[41] Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities.*

other, for "the chief characteristic of narrative is that it renders understanding only by *connecting* (however unstably) *parts* to a constructed *configuration* or a *social network* of relationships (however incoherent or unrealizable) composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices."[42] In order to understand what exactly was going on in Alexandria from the successful murder of the brilliant philosopher Hypatia in the early years of the fifth century to the looting and destroying of temples in the late fifth century, we must look at the transformation of the "monster" from the bridge, as Philo was, to the enemy who threatens to unravel the divisions between the religious narratives.

Philo was an acceptable emissary in the first century Alexandrian community and so was the philosopher Origen who was active in "the first half of the third century," at least until a shift in the narratives of Alexandria occurred upon his death.[43] What caused this shift? Digeser explains that "he seems to define a borderlands between Hellenes and Christians at the cusp of the fourth century, and it is his monstrous character to both groups which signals that this [being a "monster"] is his role."[44] Both groups, the Hellene Platonists and the various Christian communities that he was connected to ended up labeling him such, showing that "he occupied a conceptual borderlands between them, indeed that for each group the traits that marked him as a hybrid were precisely those attributes that he shared with the other group."[45] He was embraced in his diverse approach to Platonist philosophies applied to Christian Scripture during his lifetime, with the worst thing to occur being an excommunication from the Alexandrian bishop for disobeying him by "teaching and preaching outside his native Alexandria."[46] The narratives of

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[42] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 616.
[43] Digeser, "The Case of Origen as Monster," 1, 3.
[44] Ibid., 4.
[45] Ibid., 2.
[46] Ibid., 9.

the Christian and the Platonist communities for the most part supported him being a bridge, much like Philo had been two centuries before. With the shift after his death, however, he became vilified by both communities "because he bore too many attributes from the 'other side,' [which] suggests that Origen's career unfolded in the borderlands *between* two groups who were fashioning their identities in opposition to one another--without perhaps there being very many truly salient differences between them."[47] This connects back to Barth's argument, as Digeser states in a footnote "that it is the process of interaction that creates boundaries, not the list of descriptors that 'define' each group."[48]

The material culture dating to Origen's lifetime also shows the multi-cultural narrative being embraced as seen in figures 6-9. In particular, the signet rings and molds depict a fluid reception of the deities who are a conglomeration of multiple gods into one and are said to be protective amulets connected with the divine/magic. Protective amulets often with various deities and magical inscriptions or powers were worn as jewelry throughout the Empire, especially in Egypt. This can be referenced to in these figures, where I have collected a few of the magic amulets that the Metropolitan Museum has to offer which showcase the multiple narratives within the ethno-religious groups in Egypt. They are described as "Magical Amulets and Gems" which are characterized under the widespread use of magic such as through the "use of spells, potions, fortune-telling, and other sorts of magic" as "ordinary Romans were acutely aware of the supernatural." Before digging further into the material culture of magical protective amulets and other jewelry pieces associated with magical deities, we must first understand that "magic" is a term more so connected with the supernatural/the divine and even with science such as astrology; as hinted at by John of Nikiû's depiction of Hypatia as a sorceress, when in fact she

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[47] Ibid., 7.
[48] Ibid., 7; fn. 18.

was an active learner of the planetary system and Neo-Platonist philosophy. With understanding that magic is more or less a loose term associated with practices relating to the supernatural world, we can look to textual evidence of who the users of magic were in Late Antique Egypt.

Walter M. Shandruk, a Classical Historian, explored this difficult task through his article, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt." He explained that it is challenging to determine if Christians were practicing magic so late into the Roman Empire if one bases their analysis solely on whether Christian motifs do or do not appear on the magical texts. After all, these images are not evidence enough to determine whether the magic user identified as a Christian or as a pagan. The argument by Church leaders that Christians did not use magic though not new, argues Shandruk, it lacks credibility as "it is clear from numerous papyrological evidence that Christians did indeed make use of 'magical' incantations" and that there is evidence of clergy of all levels being condemned as users of magic.[49] Shandruk furthers his argument that Christians did in fact use magic, using the canonical and apocryphal texts of the Christian faith that point to "incantations" or in other words, using the "power" found in the name of Jesus as Origen is even found to have said.[50] Through such an approach paired with an onomastic (proper name-based) analysis of multiple texts, Shandruk has determined that there is enough data to suggest Christians are documented as practicing magic during at least "the first six centuries CE"[51] using "Christian names, ideas, or symbols to establish or bolster the efficacy of the intended magic."[52] So, if through this study of the data alone, we can prove that Christians were using magic, what can we learn from the material culture?

Material culture can, as has been seen in all of the pieces thus far, portray fluidity in

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[49] Shandruk, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt," 32.
[50] Ibid., 32–33.
[51] Ibid., 42.
[52] Ibid., 46.

personal identity. Somers explains that "The study of identity formation touches on the area of *ontology* – a theory of *being*,"[53] and that through "An energetic engagement with this new ontological narrativity," we are able "to infuse the study of identity formation with a relational and historical approach that avoids categorical rigidities by emphasizing the embeddedness of identity in overlapping networks of relations that shift over time and space."[54] In other words, Christians in Egypt may have been using magic as had been taught to them or they had come into contact with, through the relationships of Alexandrians who shared a multi-cultural community full of fluid identities, including that of religious practices. What position did the Roman emperors take on this matter though? Through looking at the *Theodosian Code* edicts once more, uses of the word or phrases hinting towards the use of magic appear in multiple books, Book 9 being the most frequent and having a chapter dedicated to "Magicians, Astrologers, and Like Criminals." This paper's focus is on Book 16, however, and through searching this portion of the text, I have found that there are two edicts mentioning magic as well as various others such as *CTh* 16.10.1[55] which make reference to divination and soothsayers. The main fear of the emperors here appears to be that the common person would seek out information of the future that would do harm to the emperor. This fear, however, did not stop people from practicing magical arts as the edicts in Book 9, chapter 16 show, the last edict in which dates to circa 409CE, and the material evidence that Shandruk has related in his study paired with my own research of material culture.

The data from Shandruk's study also suggests that "Christian and non-Christian names are associated with a very similar rate of use for all three spell types, especially amulets. Stated a

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[53] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 615.
[54] Ibid., 607.
[55] Pharr, "Theodosian Code Book 16," 16.10.1 on divination, carrying on the old traditions after lightning hits a building yet outlawing divination for personal use.

bit more strongly, Christians use amulets equally as much as non-Christians, and vary insignificantly in their use of binding spells."[56] Could Shandruk's argument support that figures 7-9, made between the second and third century CE, show a fluidity between the various communal identities? I would argue that it does and that through Shandruk's other finding, "until just before the fourth century turned into the fifth (before no. 44) [of his data set], all eleven Christian names are associated with exclusively non-Christian magic, after which there is a reversal and the remaining ten become associated exclusively with Christian magic....[along with] an upsurge in the use of amulets,"[57] we can begin to see the transition of how fluidity amongst the social narratives became more polarized. With this in mind, let us explore each amulet and gem closer.

Beginning with Figure 6, the Gold amulet cases, which is dated to the first through third centuries, the Metropolitan Museum says these cases were thought to hold spells that called upon protection from the deities, and were "written on thin sheets of gold or on papyrus." The description goes on to tell us that while, "the practice originated in Egypt," it later moved onto Phoenicia "from whom it is likely that it was passed on not only to Cyprus but also to Carthage. Amulet cases continued to be made well into Roman times and may be seen as the prototype for Islamic amulets." This reminds us that the center can affect the periphery and cause a ripple effect of change and additions to community narratives. Did the community of Alexandria want their fluid form of narratives to change?

It is difficult for me to answer this question, because every individual who made up the various groups in Alexandria does not have a voice that comes down to us. However, we are able to look at the material culture, and see that as the following figures show, a multi-cultured

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[56] Shandruk, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt," 51.
[57] Ibid., 50.

identity narrative including that of religious practices did continue for some individuals into at least the third century. The "Gold ring with carnelian intaglio" (Figure 7) and the "Chalcedony intaglio" (Figure 8) can be looked at together, as they both represent a mixed set of divine narratives brought together to depict one deity being invoked to protect the wearer. Figure 7 is a ring projecting the image of Jupiter Ammon who is the horned and bearded combination of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian deities. This deity becomes clearer in figure 8, which depicts the individual components of each cultural narrative's deity being borrowed from, such as Jupiter's ram's horns, Serapis' modius headdress, and Sol Invictus' rays across the back of his head. The communal identity of Egyptians as a whole is expressed further in figure 9, the "Jasper intaglio," which invokes the Persian god that was adopted by the Roman soldiers, known as Mithras, along with the sun deity, Sol Invictus/Helios. The sun deity is standing in his four-horse chariot on one side and the on the reverse, it shows the Mithraic deity in his traditional depiction, slaughtering a bull. These figures show a communal narrative of multi-layered identities along with a common interest in connecting with the divine across the pagan and Christian communities.

While this fluidity of multi-layered identity narratives did continue for some, for others as a different community began to gain traction and create a new tension within Alexandria, especially during the fourth through fifth centuries, polarization of identity narratives began to occur. The multi-layered identities within the Alexandrian Christian communities alone, however, made it a mess that could not stand united until after the Great Persecution (303-311CE) and later imperial backing, and so did not present a united threat to the fluidity of narratives within Alexandria until the end of the fourth century.[58] Nevertheless, at the end of the third century as we can see from "Origen's experience," argues Digeser, "a certain segment of

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[58] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 333.

Roman educated, scholarly society changed from being pluralistic or ecumenical to one in which identities became increasingly polarized."[59] This change set the stage for the life of the fourth and fifth-century Alexandrian.

Hypatia was born into this changing world, yet chose to continue to identify with the multi-cultural narratives of Alexandria. She is described, by the mid-fifth-century Christian Church historian Socrates Scholasticus, as being Theon the philosopher's daughter "who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time," and teaching at "the school of Plato and Plotinus…the principles of philosophy to her auditors, many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions." She was known to give council to the prefect of the city, Orestes, which earned her "political jealousy" and rumors spread about her "preventing Orestes from being reconciled to the bishop" causing a Christian mob to drag her to the church known as Caesareum, strip her, and kill her. This brings us back to what made Hypatia any different from Philo or even Origen for that matter? Philo lived in peace with his philosophical and Jewish narratives. Origen was similarly able to live out his life with multiple narratives, and it was not until after his death being hated by both communities of philosophy and Christianity. The shift of narrativity being fluid and multi-cultural by the middle of the third century had begun to shift. Edicts in the *Theodosian Code* such as *CTh* 16.2.1 and *CTh* 16.10.1 depict the subtle changes.

By the end of the fourth century, not only had the Roman Emperor Gratian in 381CE relinquished the title of *pontifex maximus*, or chief priest, and with that the control over maintaining all of the Roman religions/traditions, but *CTh* 16.11.1 was also passed in 399CE by the Emperors Arcadius and Honorius; "Whenever there is an action involving matters of religion,

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[59] Digeser, "The Case of Origen as Monster," 5.

the bishops must conduct such action. But all other cases which belong to the judges ordinary and to the usage of the secular law must be heard in accordance with the laws." In other words, there was a shift from the emperor to the Christian Church leaders ruling over the religious practices and identities. I would argue that this helped in forming more solid identity narratives within the empire, even in the provincial cities like Alexandria. Hypatia was a threat to the strict divisions that the religious authorities wanted and she was popular enough, according to Damascius, that crowds would come to her house to be greeted by her and listen to her speak. Similarly, the shift in power relations is unable to occur "if identities are fixed"[60] which is seen in Watts' description of the mid-fifth century riot sparked from the questioning of the philosophical narratives by a young man named Paralius.[61] Paralius was sent to Alexandria to learn from the philosophical school's intellectuals and there met not only the pagan circle he was to learn from, but also a group that bordered on the "monster" category, known as the scholastic-*philoponoi*. This group "enjoyed a sort of dual identity" as they were able to connect with both the secular, intellectual community and with the Alexandrian bishop and monastic tradition.[62] Through Paralius' arguments against the fluid philosophical and multi-cultural narratives within the school, and the consequent beating that he received because of his challenge, the scholastic-*philoponoi* group seized their chance to stir up the Christian community. They pulled on the historical tensions between the various communities of pagan and Christian seen most recently in the life of Hypatia whom Damascius recorded, was "still vivid among the [memories of] the Alexandrians." As Somers explains, "people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or

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[60] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 611.
[61] Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities*.
[62] Ibid., 91–93.

more narratives,"[63] including that of the historical narratives passed down amongst the changing identities of Alexandria, leading to the destruction and looting of the shrine to Isis which had sparked Paralius' argument. As Barth, working from J.S. Furnivall's "analysis of plural society" in 1944, wrote "…a poly-ethnic society integrated in the market place, under the control of a state system dominated by one of the groups, but leaving large areas of cultural diversity in the religious and domestic sectors of activity"[64] create "constraints on a person's behaviour which spring from his ethnic [or in this case his narrative of ethno-religious] identity…and the component moral and social conventions are made further resistant to change by being joined in stereotyped clusters as characteristics of one single identity."[65] In other words, with the emerging strength of the bishop in Alexandria supporting such conflict led by the Catholic-Christian community, the restrictions of how a person could act and identify themselves became limited. In revisiting the life of Hypatia, we can see the foundations for the polarization/limitation on self-ascription by such a shift in power. This shift brings into question whether the later historian, John of Nikiû, felt compelled to villainize Hypatia's memory in order to make clearer divisions between the communities. James F. Brooks presents a case that causes me to reflect on this.

In his article "Seductions and Betrayals: *La fronters gauchesque, Argentine Nationalism, and the Predicaments of Hybridity*," he relates a story by Jorge Luis Borges about a "captive woman" who meets a fellow European woman in an outpost and refuses to return to European society after being away since an Indian raid when she was a child. The European woman is said to have met this "captive woman" once more in passing as she leapt from her horse to drink up the fresh blood of a sheep being killed. As Brooks explains, "We are left to wonder whether the

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[63] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 613–614.
[64] Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," 16.
[65] Ibid., 17.

girl did so "because she was no longer capable of acting in any other way" or "as a challenge, a sign" to her erstwhile English sister. The question of whether this is a tale of seduction or betrayal Borges leaves unresolved (Borges 1998:210)."[66] As seemingly unrelated as this case in Argentina may be, I would argue that Hypatia is much like the "captive woman" in that she is connected to two communities, and yet vilified by the dominant narrative (such as the European woman from the outpost and that of John of Nikiû's account) in order to distance themselves from the "other." Hypatia can be both the seductress and the betrayer of the various communities she lived. She is portrayed as the seductress in leading good men, such as Orestes and those in the marketplace who listened to her philosophical rhetoric, astray and the betrayer of the leaders such as Orestes and the magistrates as she challenged not only the bishop's power through such actions, but also kept them from being good Christian men through the association with pagans.

Another case from Brooks' article brings in a different aspect of the narrative, through the life of another European woman who straddled two communities and as such held a multi-layered narrative identity, Petronila Pérez. She, though living with the Indians since childhood after a raid, had fluent knowledge of Spanish which she had learned from the other Spanish women within her tribe. Unlike the "captive woman," she is depicted as staying not because of the seductivity of living with the "other" so much as her narratives overlapping with both cultures, having her creole siblings still come visit her and her family during their salt runs. "While Petronila's creole kinsmen might visit her during annual salt expeditions, other creoles would see her encampment as a den of thieves." [67] Narrative identity is a complex concept and will never be seen exactly the same by two groups who define themselves differently. We see

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[66] Brooks, "Seductions and Betrayals: La Frontera Gauchesque, Argentine Nationalism, and the Predicament of Hybridity," 248.
[67] Ibid., 251–253.

that while Petronila's siblings would be able to understand her tribe's customs as they had an intimate view into the multi-layered narratives within both societies, someone with only one available set of narratives to base their conclusions on would be more likely to believe the worst in this "opposing" group. Hypatia's life, I would argue, is depicted in a similar way. While Socrates Scholasticus who was writing within the same century and even Damascius one century later, wrote about Hypatia's life in a praiseworthy manner and her death as a brutal testament to the Christian Church leaders' political jealousy, the later author John of Nikiû saw and wrote the opposite. Even though both Scholasticus and Nikiû were Church historians, their accounts of her life vary and reflect not only the availability of sources, but also and more importantly the desire to reflect on the complex narrative relations of both groups that she was connected to.

Could this clear division that Nikiû is trying so hard to depict in his telling of Hypatia's life be in response to a lack of clear, uniform division within the daily lives of multi-cultural Alexandrians, especially that of the Christian communities? It would not be the first instance of leaders of the Church trying to separate the narratives amidst the interweaved-religious communities.[68] In fact, Origen is a prime example of this. During his lifetime and even a little after his death, he was revered for living in both worlds, yet later (much like Hypatia) he was vilified and cast out. Even to this day though, Origen is a monster in that he is disputed within the Christian communities of the twenty-first century. Likewise, I would argue that Hypatia is a similar figure. While Hypatia may appear different from Origen and Philo's monster-dom in that it may be said that she was only socially a monster, I disagree. Through chapter eight in William Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon's book *The Sacred Is the Profane: The Political Nature of "Religion,"* religion is redefined for me. Their argument that religion as the twenty-first century

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[68] Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), sec. 5.2: Lupercalia.

person defines it, often conjuring images of once a week meetings and certain religious practices during special celebratory days, is not how the ancient peoples, such as those in the Roman Empire would have viewed it. They would have, for the most part, viewed religious practice as a part of one's social life.[69] Therefore, if Hypatia was socially a monster, she was *also* similar to Origen and Philo in straddling two communities with various religious practices. The interweaving of communities occur with the creation of these monster-people. Through doing their duty as the go-between, fluidity amongst the communities can also still exist, often appearing within the material culture.

Within the different Christian communities the material culture encompasses this fluidity, especially seen in the various ways Christianity's central figure, Jesus, was depicted. One of particular interest is how he is shown performing miracles; from western Germany, to Sicily, and even Rome, Jesus is holding a magical wand. Figures 10-12 show us this image etched into different kinds of glass. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in both figures 11 and 12 which are engraved onto dishware that would presumably have been used daily for drinking and eating off of. According to the description for figure 12 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "The magic wand in Christ's hand, often seen in early Christian images, conveys his powers as a worker of miracles." Now could it be that Christ was looked upon as a magician?

Within the Christian community, as these images were commonly made there, I would argue that the spread of Christianity by Paul to the Gentile (non-Jewish) communities brought with it the challenge of explaining a miracle-worker through a comprehensible means. I believe that, as heroes or demi-gods were spoken of as having special powers from their divine parents,

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[69] William Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon, "Chapter 8: The Origins of Christianity Within, and Without, 'Religion': A Case Study," in *The Sacred Is the Profane: The Political Nature of "Religion,"* 1 edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 139.

it would not be difficult to say that Jesus as the "Son of G-d"/a deity's son had powers similar to Isis, who could heal through magic. Magic, as previously described, could mean a connection with the supernatural. The description for figure 9 furthers the idea that there was a continued multi-cultural narrative and set of religious beliefs amongst the various communities, even though as seen with Nikiû the leaders of the Christian Church were trying to keep strong divisions between the communal identities. As described by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Among the earliest popular depictions of Christ were those recalling Roman images of magicians, with Christ shown using a wand to work miracles, as in the image on this medallion and the adjacent bowl base [figure 10]. This medallion was probably inset into a piece of jewelry and may have been worn as a protective amulet." This fluid notion of identity narratives persisted in the fourth through early sixth-century artwork and medallions which commonly depict Jesus as performing miracles with a wand and also surrounded by other Roman magicians (figures 10-12). Even with the tensions and problems within a multi-cultural community, such as Alexandria, the narrative traditions of the people as Catholic Christian leaders began to push for clearer divisions of identity narratives, continued to be fluid at least in their artwork for many centuries to come.

Conclusion

The changing of the multiple layers of narrative and fluidity of the Alexandrian identities shifted into a dichotomized set of groups according to our written sources. The material culture, on the other hand, leaves us unclear as to how fluid these narrative identities remained within the Roman Empire, especially within the province of Egypt. I began this paper with the question, what are the tensions and problems for the people living in a multi-cultural community, such as Roman Alexandria? Through closer analysis, the tensions and problems I would argue stem from a change in religious leadership and in turn a push for a more polarized set of narratives which conflicted with the way Alexandrians had previously viewed themselves, through a multicultural fluid set of narratives.

We have seen through the course of this paper that "monsters" or people who ascribe to more than one narrative identity transitioned from being the emissaries, such as the first-century Alexandrian Philo, to the third century's Origen who was accepted in his fluidity until his death. After his death, his memory was changed into that of an outcast born between two conceptual borderlands without acceptance. Finally, we have Hypatia who was also a person of philosophy and sought after for her wisdom, who made a convoluted mess of the divisions between the various identities of the fourth and fifth-century narratives and as such posed a threat to the Church leadership over Alexandria, as seen in Christian mob who killed her. Haas reminds us that,

> Despite our focus on Alexandria's ethno-religious communities, it should be noted that communal identity functioned simultaneously on several levels in late antiquity. The city's inhabitants saw themselves as pagans, Jews, or Christians, but they also saw themselves as Alexandrians....for the individual Alexandrian, the city's ethno-religious communities provided a primary group affiliation across this period. The boundaries between groups were not always impermeable.[1]

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[1] Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 333.

The various narratives found in the material culture samples, support Haas' assessment through their depiction of a multi-cultural community within Egypt along with other parts of the Roman Empire.

Pairing conceptual borderlands with an ontological view of narrative, the bigger picture of a shifting society filled with diverse cultural and religious practices can be understood. While the Alexandrians felt the push and pull relationship with the periphery through imperial edicts as observed in the *Codex Theodosianus*, along within their own changing social narratives, they were able to express in their artwork and jewelry their desire for fluid identities. As Haas writes, "After the destabilized era of the fourth and early fifth centuries," however, "marked by intercommunal competition, Alexandrian society had achieved a measure of reintegration."[2] The material culture of the Roman Empire supports this overlapping of narratives and intercommunal relationships as each individual brought his own personal identity to add to the communal mix.

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[2] Ibid.

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Appendix 1: Material Culture

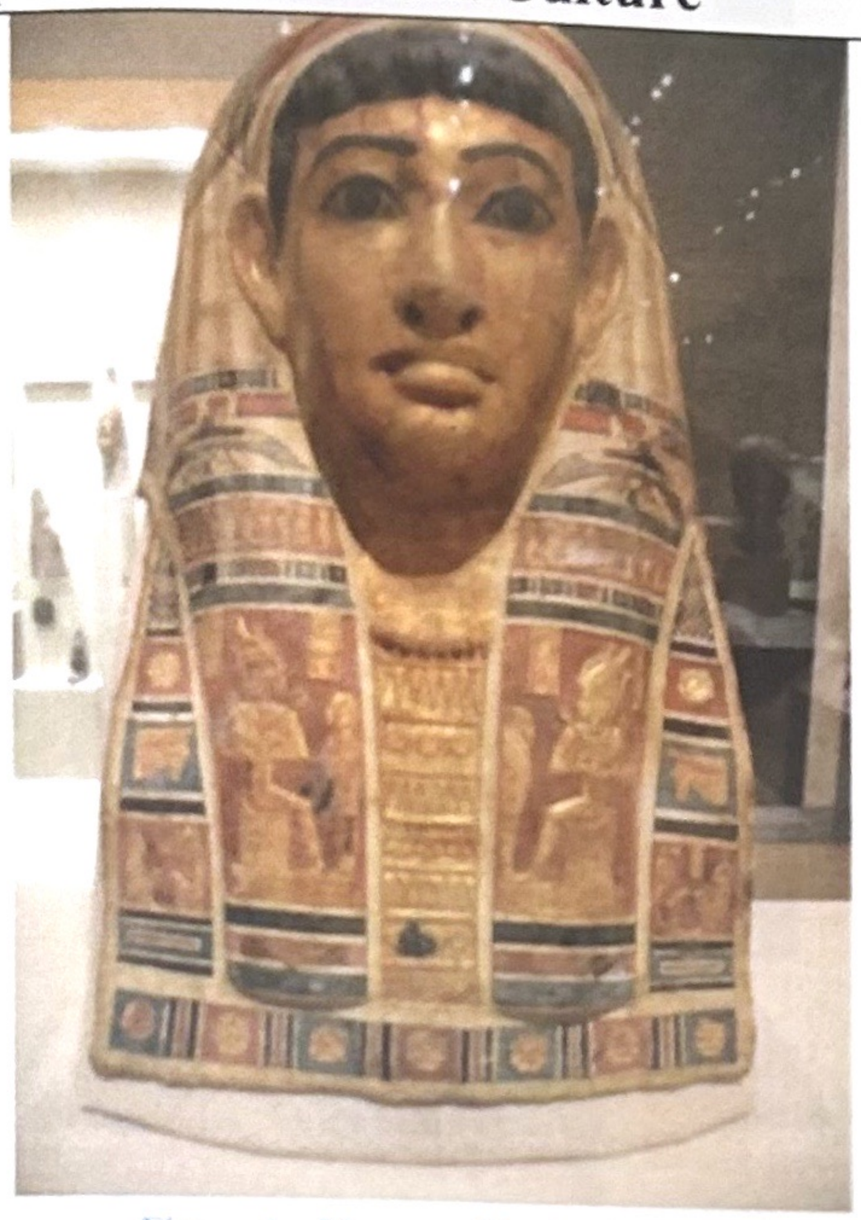


Figure 1 - Mummy Mask of a Man
Egypt
Roman Period, early 1st c. CE
Stucco, gilded and painted
Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 72.57
Housed in the Brooklyn Museum
Photo Courtesy of: Self

Figure 2 - Mummy Cartonnage of a Woman
Possible Hawara, Egypt
Roman period, 1st c. CE
Linen, gilded gesso, glass, faience
Housed in the Brooklyn Museum
Photo Courtesy of: Self

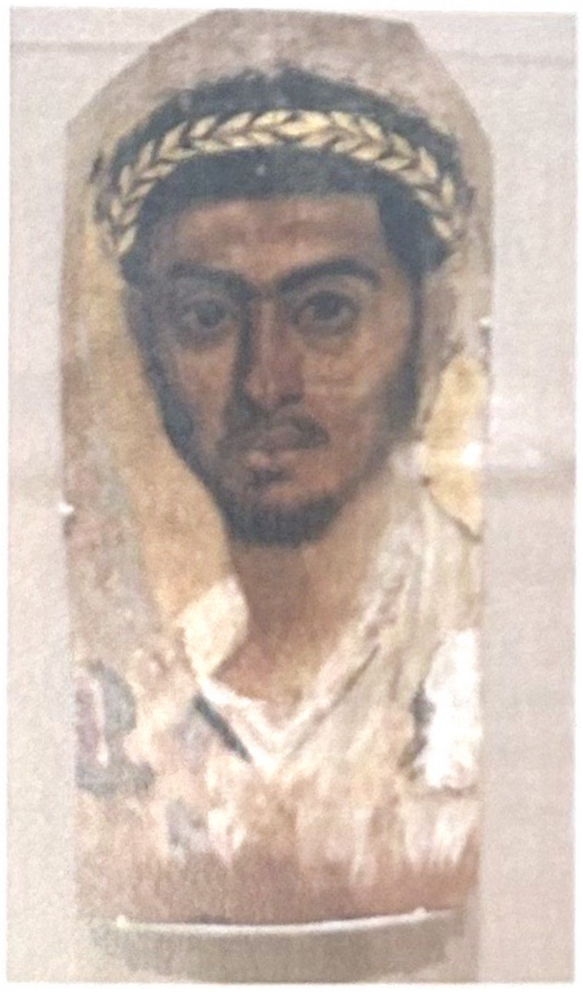


Figure 3 -Fayum Mummy Portrait of a Man
Encaustic on wood panel
From Egypt, Roman Period, reign of Hadrian, c. 120-130 CE
Provenance not known
Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 40.386
Housed in Brooklyn Museum
Photo Courtesy of: Self

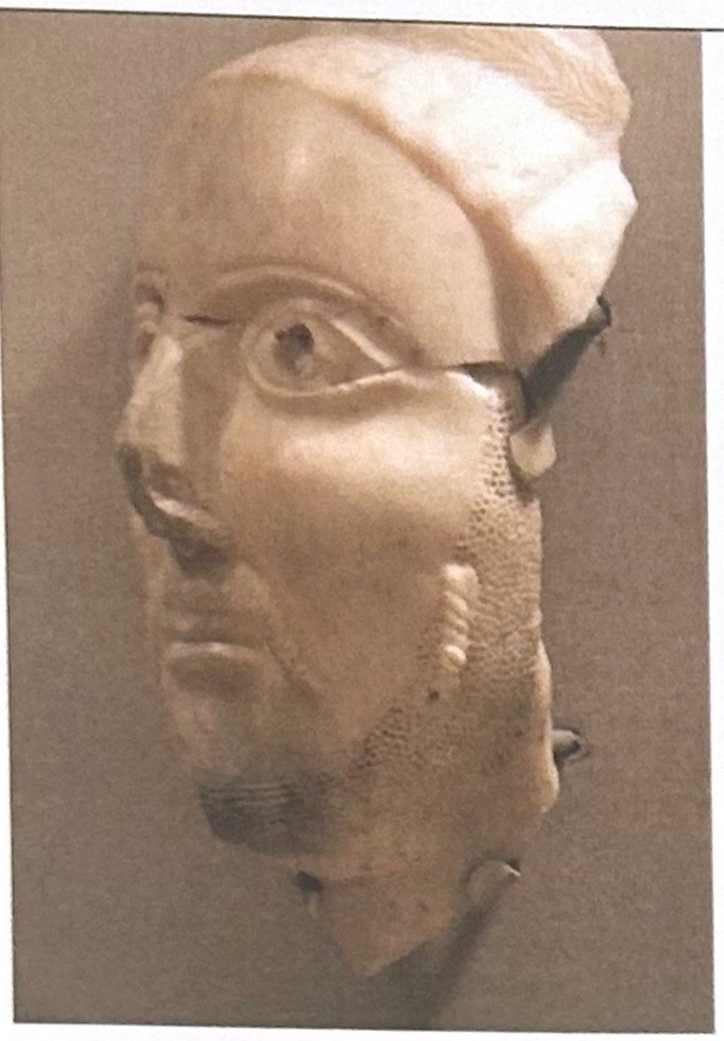


Figure 4 - Head of a man
Alabaster (gypsum)
Southwestern Arabia
3rd-4th century A.D.
Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Spear Jr.
Gift, 1982 (1982.317.1)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: Self

Figure 5 - Gold Glass Bowl Base with Jewish Symbols
Roman, probably from Rome
Made 300-350
Inscribed in Latin: *Drink with blessing in preparation…*
Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.145.1a, b)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

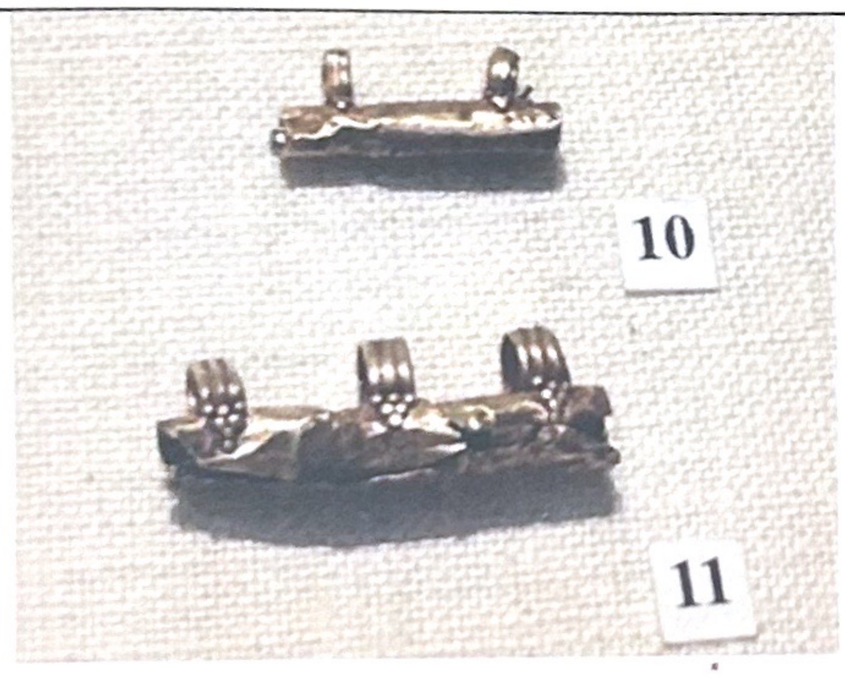


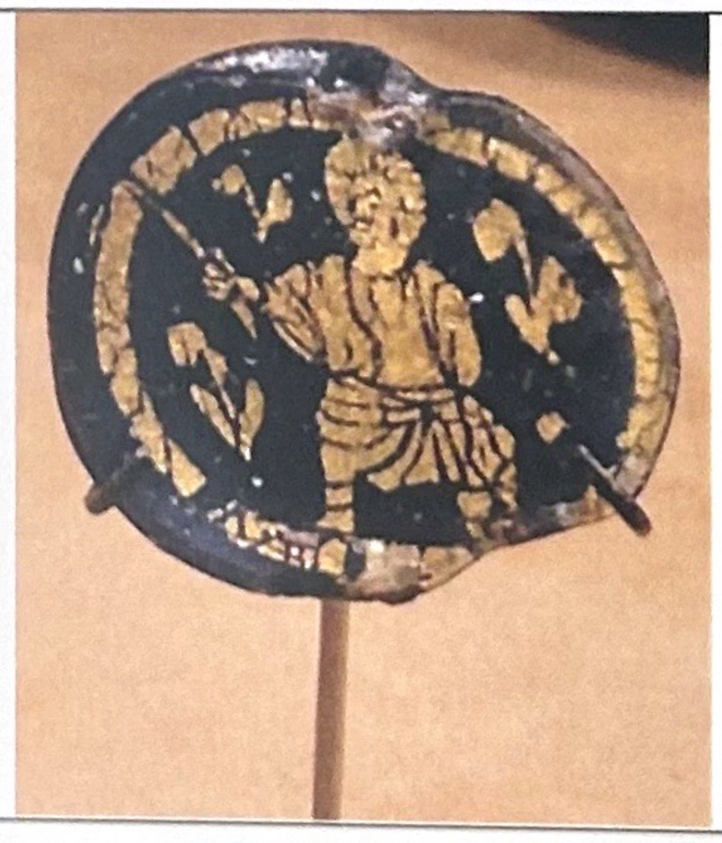
Figure 6 - Gold amulet cases
Roman
1st-3rd century A.D. (74.51.3319, .3320)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: Self

Figure 7 - Gold ring with carnelian intaglio
3rd century A.D.
Gift of John Taylor Johnston, 1881 (81.6.55)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: Self

Figure 8 - Chalcedony intaglio
1st-3rd century A.D.
Gift of John Taylor Johnston, 1881 (81.6.56)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 9 - Jasper intaglio
2nd-3rd century A.D.
Gift of John Taylor Johnston, 1881 (81.6.297)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 10 - Gold Glass Medallion with Christ as a Miracle Worker
Roman or Byzantine
Made 300-500, possibly in Rome
Rogers Fund, 1918 (18.145.8)
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: Self



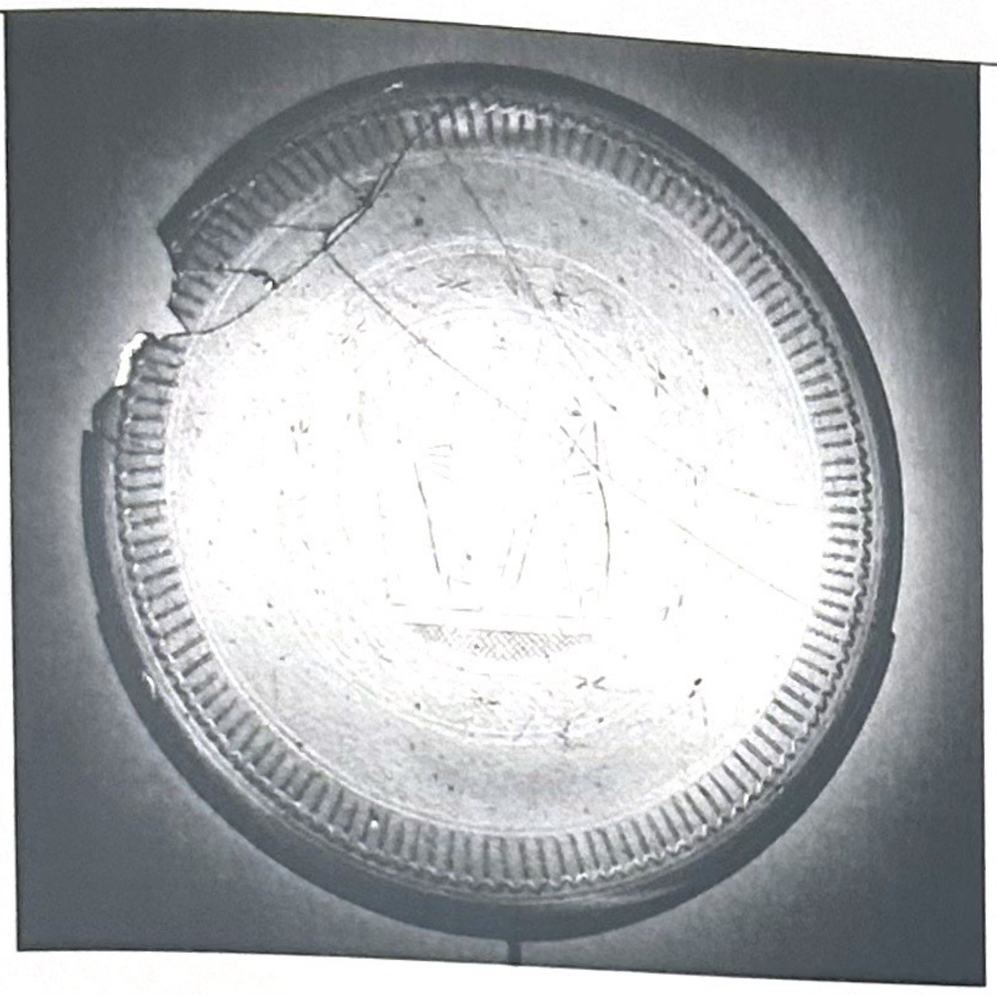


Figure 11 – Glass Dish with an Engraving of the Raising of Lazarus
Green Glass, engraved
4th-5th century
Late Roman
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917
Met Online 17.190.492
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 12 - Fragment of a Bowl
Glass (greenish), engraved
4th-5th century
Late Roman
Rogers Fund, 1918
Met Online 18.145.4
Housed in The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo Courtesy of: The Metropolitan Museum of Art