OBJECT – SUBJECT – EGYPT

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In expounding the aims for this volume, the editor identifies two effects in particular, which amount to strategies for reconnecting the history of ideas and the study of material culture. In the first strategy, a material turn (chap. 1), ancient Egyptian artefacts and products in an ancient Egyptian style are seen to play the role of catalysts, active in their direct interventions over time, in diverse settings of Mediterranean and, later, European history.[1] In asserting the materials, forms and styles of artefacts and architecture as one dominant strand in the history of the impact of ancient Egypt, the collected papers should extend the domain of the twin histories of memory and impact, previously focussed on written sources. The introduction of material as active in history leads directly to the second effect, which is the chronological scope of memory and impact history. Material cultural evidence for the impact of Egypt on the ideas and arts of other lands extends far beyond the fifth century BCE *Researches* or *»Histories«* by Herodotus, the earliest substantial written source for ancient Egypt accessible in Europe until the 1822 decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs. The editor offers the label »prehistory« for this approach (chap. 1). Histories of ideas or impact studies would then start with periods accessed through a different kind of source, potentially in fuller engagement with the archaeology of art.

Versluys has earlier characterised the role of material culture as *»catalyst* or *protagonist«*, citing the dramatic example where a 1602 Amsterdam auction of captive cargo unleashed a taste for chinoiserie in the Netherlands.[2] The concept of catalyst is essential to understanding the role of objects, and probably attracts few opponents. Protagonist, however, may seem more problematic in its anthropomorphism, and indeed Assmann and Ebeling (chap. 2) contest a literal application that »the ancient Egyptian thing« might be an autono-

mous actor. Several openings out of this object=subject dilemma may be productive here. Diffusing the stark opposition between things and humans, historians have recalled the place of other creatures in the constellation, including at more recent periods in the Nile Valley.[3] On the spread of the term »agency« in Anglophone archaeological theory, Gavin Lucas questioned whether its agent is still the autonomous individual of Enlightenment European politics and philosophy.[4] In the decade before the emergence of »agency« in Angloamerican social sciences, Aleksei Leontiev was articulating in some detail the kindred term субъектность, in the development of activity theory from Lev Vygotsky.[5] This terrain might be useful to investigate in relation to the question of what »ancient Egyptian things/motifs« were doing or wanting, to take up the material cultural approach suggested by the editor (chap. 1). In another direction, a route through the analytic conflicts in talking about communication might be found from Iran, in the Arabic analyses of language by Abd Al-Qahir al-Jurjani.[6] Khalfallah translates the terms Jurjani uses into a Francophone interpretative frame, where we might seek to locate people, animals, birds, plants, things in each timespace where an »ancient Egyptian« impact meets us or strikes us:

mukhbir »émetteur produisant l'information«
mukhbar 'anhu »objet de l'énoncé«
mukhbar bihi »information la concernant«
khabar »un énoncé qui décrit cet objet«
mukhatab »destinataire qui reçoit l'information«

Khalfallah adds his own gloss that »la construction d'une assertion est donc un acte social et sémantique«, to which we might add an endnote that the object of speech is the topic, entirely neutral to our classifications into abstract, material, human etc.[7] If the *actant* in this network may be any one/thing, where does the term stop being a metaphor?

Assmann and Ebeling (chap. 2) ask further whether the history of ancient Egypt impacts can find unity in a principle such as the »thing Egyptian« as *agens*, or ought the phenomenon be considered rather a bundle of loose associations. This central and unsettling question of aims and method finds echo and reply in the ensuing papers in various forms. Here I would foreground the recurrent comments on the problem of the static-dynamic binary, as it concerns one of the most entrenched prejudices in current and past writing on ancient Egypt. Often as a foil to the dynamism of ancient (more particularly fifth century BCE) Greece, writing both in the European languages and in Arabic has tended to cast ancient Egypt as funereal, death-like, inert. The characterisation is not necessarily uniformly negative in itself, and immortality motifs in ancient Egyptian art offer different, vital associations. From the Middle Kingdom onwards, the wrapped body of deities and guardians alike may indicate alertness and readiness to act.[8] In New Kingdom temples, »Osiriform« statues of kings in inner courts seem poised, chrysalis-like, for rebirth as the forms in ceremonial garb of life in the outer courtyards.[9] Nevertheless, in European-language traditions since

Greek and Roman antiquity, the image of stasis has most often been deployed to the exclusion of any dynamic forms or readings, and with the intention of placing ancient Egypt on a lower rung of human history.[10] At one level of generalisation, the name of Winckelmann has come to represent this dominant strand of European objections to ancient Egyptian art (for a closer contextual account, see Griener, chap. 4). How wide and deep the negative attitude extends can be seen with the most prominent opponent in this debate, Piranesi; even as he champions ancient Egypt, his measure of quality remains ancient Greece, as Haslund Hansen finds against our expectations (chap. 10). In the turn to the next century, Denon takes up the case for ancient Egyptian art and architecture, against its characterisation by Quatremère de Quincy as funereal (Nouvel-Kammerer, chap. 11). The case-studies in this volume are important not least for recalling other and earlier responses to Egypt, as a source of fertility and protective powers, as Gunter indicates for Iron Age Mediterranean societies (chap. 5). These histories of the impact of ancient Egypt become essential guides inside and outside Egyptology, in revealing the variety of responses over time, and in historicising and so denaturalising our own continuing prejudices either for or against past peoples. Mason (chap. 9) retraces the thoughtlines of the meticulous juristically trained scholar Lorenzo Pignoria as counterfoil to his younger contemporary, arch-symbolist Athanasius Kircher. Drawing on the material focus of Alois Riegl and Walter Benjamin, Mason conveys how the two antagonists, virtual personification of rationalist and allegoric modes, generated equally wide-ranging object-based comparisons from ancient Egypt among other time-regions. In the results, he recalls the lesson of Riegl that no telling of a material object can be neutral.[11] Reflecting on our risks in retaining labels such as Egyptomania and »Aegyptiaca« for diverse material histories, Gunter warns against their exclusive emphasis on the static properties of objects, from her investigation of the earlier archaeological contexts. In this and other case-studies, the history of ideas and the archaeology of material culture converge, fulfilling the aims of the editor in delivering a shared thematic agenda for these two zones of study. In common with other regional archaeologies, Egyptology may play a connecting role here too, reflected in the distribution of authors through the volume.

Assmann and Ebeling (chap. 2) provide another possible bridge to the editorial aims, when they discuss the application of hermeneutics from Gadamer and reader-response theory to different original contexts. Writings on ideas from ancient Greece and Rome involve a line of less disrupted transmission, with continuous understanding of script and language. By contrast, they emphasise how, until decipherment, later European responses to ancient Egyptian ideas depended on indirect connection and chains of translation. In an environment of second-hand reception, the object might be expected to bear heightened intrusive potential, with more active effect alongside the ancient Hebrew, Greek and Latin writings. Here the historians of ideas may find ground to engage further with the object focus of the editor. The transparent opacity of the uninscribed or undeciphered object may also speak to the dilemma of whether an »I« can understand a »you«, whatever the script or language or space. The most familiar may be more unknowable than the strangest, by being assumed

as being known; in citing Goethe or Heaney in commentary on an ancient Egyptian writing, the European language-speaker forgets the alterity of those European writers too. We might here return to the analyses by Jurjani above. The material of the inscription or the page and ink perhaps offers a different route through the interpersonal labyrinth. As Assmann has explored elsewhere, the absolutist distinction between ideas/words and depictions/materials does not function well in the setting of ancient Egypt, where formal art and script cohabit a defined material space to install in the moment of inscription a perfect act and idea into eternity.[12] Haslund Hansen (chap. 10) analyses how the remarkable 1769 manifesto by Piranesi for ancient Egyptian art, *Diverse Maniere di adornare i Cammini* comprises a similarly simultaneously separate and unified pairing of text and illustrations »as the bringing together of two kindred statements«. Perhaps this effect is another example of his uncanny affinity for ancient Egyptian principles of organisation of art and script, amply demonstrated by Haslund Hansen in her contribution here. Between ancient Egyptian and 18th century Italian applications of this union of the two communicative codes, Iamblichus emphasised in the 4th century CE the visual side as the more essential, as Assmann has recounted.[13] From his anthropological fieldwork in Madagascar, Maurice Bloch concurs, in his argument on the pragmatics of learning and cognition, that the practice of a task such as operating a machine teaches more than the written manual can.[14] The critiques of logocentrism may provide further points of discussion, if not necessarily reunion, between history of ideas and material cultural studies. They also offer renewed ground for responses from Egyptology to the volume.

BEYOND EGYPTOMANIA: CONTRIBUTIONS TO AND FROM EGYPTOLOGY

The past half-century of study has brought several cogent critiques of Egyptology, notably at the border with archaeology, where fieldwork directors witness how a focus on monument and language diverts resources from the recording of sites under threat.[15] The 21st century discipline continues to be anchored worldwide primarily in language training, and not in disciplinary linguistics, but for the ability to read written sources from ancient Egypt. If the *Description de l'Egypte* constituted an imperialist grasping of the *logos* or subject-matter of Egypt, across natural history, the modern land, and every accessible period of its history,[16] its successors confined Egyptology to the main language of most ancient inscriptions in Egypt (cf Assmann and Ebeling, chap. 2). Egypt*i*ology might be a more accurate label. The centrality of reading has brought major advances in philology and in the understanding of what was written, but arguably at the cost of professionalism in other aspects of those sections of the Egyptian past when hieroglyphs were in use. In most universities where Egyptology is taught,[17] students cannot often train formally in other disciplines beyond an initial year or two; inevitably their classroom learning tends to be limit-

ed or inexistent in the plethora of relevant fields, from archaeological techniques and theory, anthropology, art history, linguistics, literary studies, to philosophy and history and the separate fields of history of religion and history/philosophy science. Degree programmes may offer little or no curricular space for the other languages of the Egyptian past, ancient Greek, Latin, classical Arabic, Turkish, or for the language of Egypt today, Arabic in its modern standard and vernacular variants. Many of these disciplines find some representation across Egyptological research literature, but generally through informal or supplementary initiatives on the part of individuals at different stages of their careers. Within the social history of knowledge, such a weakly professionalised interdisciplinary profile may be characteristic of low-demographic disciplines in general. These constraints should be factored into any expectations and evaluations of an Egyptological response, not least my own, here.

Nevertheless, while limited training in other disciplines among Egyptologists complicates attempts at dialogue on both sides, the variety of informal multidisciplinary interests and experience in Egyptology as an area study should encourage wider impact on, and constructive responses, from within Egyptology to initiatives such as the present volume.[18] The Egyptological contributors to Parts One and Two exemplify the exceptions to any rule of intradisciplinary introversion and isolation, and ensure a productive ground for developing the debates raised here.

ANCIENT EGYPT BEYOND ITSELF: PRESENCES AND ABSENCES

The substantial series of case-studies in different contexts can pave the way for further, collective analyses and comparison, whether or not these move toward a consensus on the (re-)definition of »Egyptomania« (cf Humbert, chap. 3). Parts One and Two combined offer a telling series of instances where select factors have converged as a constellation or »configuration« (Griener, chap. 4) of material impact over variable spans in space and time. Crucially for the historian and Egyptologist, a range of possible reactions may be generated from the particular configuration; ancient Egyptian material may be fêted or ignored, given equal billing or a minor supporting role in the cast of philosophical or aesthetic production of the new age. Faced with an array of examples in one volume, an Egyptological reader may risk missing the message of unpredictability within the variation. Therefore, at this point, the consequences of context bear repeating.

Devoted to the appreciation as well as the study of ancient Egypt, we may tend to concentrate our research on the examples of presence rather than absence. However, in order to understand past instances of Egypt-appreciation, the impacts charted in this volume, then the absences and oppositions call for equal attention in our identification and assessment of the factors at work. One historical configuration of factors may lead to a thorough de-activation of any impact. Laboury and Lekane (chap. 8) articulate this possibility in a

fourfold detachment of the »visual brain« from ancient Egyptian material, that occurred in Latin-Germanic Europe from late antiquity to the early modern period: (1) a physical disconnect from the monumental landscape, (2) an ideology founded against imagery perceived as idolatry, (3) a word-centred culture of depiction/description, (4) the »neutralisation« of time into eternal present, eliding past tense and completed aspect. Yet, in the middle of this anti-receptive ground, they also find one group of 13th century sculptors at Rome who were moved to their own extraordinary creative output by the magnificent lion sculptures inscribed for Pharaoh Nakhtnebef, after the relocation from the Isis temple at the heart of the city. Similarly, we can anticipate multiple reactions to »the ancient Egyptian«; in a particular historical context, the recognition of a motif which originated in Egypt may not involve recognition of its »ancient Egyptianness« primarily or even at all. By meticulous reconstruction of the political history and cultural associations of specific motifs of Ptolemaic coins in the second century BCE, Bricault (chap. 6) is able to detect the divergence in meanings of a crown between Pharaonic inheritance at the Alexandrian metropolis and Hellenistic power in its Greek province. At the heart of Hellenistic universalism, the matter of power remains intensely localised.

Gunter observes from her comparison between early Iron Age Aegean and Assyria (chap. 5), how we can only understand each engagement with ancient Egyptian material and style if we ourselves engage with the detail of that non-Egyptian immediate environment. Interpretation depends here on documented archaeological contexts, for individual and grouped artefacts and by distribution maps of object types. In the Aegean context, a concentration of bronze votive figurines on Samos is exceptional, indicating a different focus at the site, perhaps a distinct group of donors; Gunter develops the argument by Helga Bumke that visitors from Egypt may have dedicated these. In Assyria, a gold bowl with ancient Egyptian design found in the company of diverse precious vessels at Nimrud may foreground Assyrian queenship in the imperial palace, rather than individual regional provenances. The ontology of the »ancient Egyptian thing« is thereby destabilised in a productive move, which prompts us to sharper analytical precision at each social historical setting. Gunter cites the investigation by Sarah Murray into early Iron Age funerary practices at Perati in Attica, with non-local artefacts such as Egyptian faience amulets in both richer and poorer burials, casting doubt on the recurrent assumption that imports involve »elites«. From Nimrud to Perati, the wider category of »exotica« is proving problematic. According to these case-studies, any degree of »Egyptianness« inhabits a more or less tightly drawn cultural space, both inside and outside Egypt, and must be reconstructed, as Bricault shows, rather than imposed from 19th or 20th or 21st century habits of style. The problem also arises, as to where the line should be drawn between study of ancient Egypt and study of its impact. If Ptolemy II is Pharaoh, if ancient Egyptian visitors to Middle Bronze Age Byblos or Iron Age Samos dedicate items made in Egypt, the impact is no afterlife, but contemporary, further blurring our analytical categories. In reverse direction, the presence of non-Egyptian material and artefacts within Egypt problematises the core on which our

terms *Nachleben* and Egyptomania are predicated. These complications are to be welcomed as the complexity of any social interaction, whether the participants are categorised as humans, creatures more generally, or all »things«.

In these case-studies, artefact space itself is unstable in its time; at their extreme point on the spectrum of portability, the coin and the amulet abroad have travelled to the dots on their archaeological distribution maps, and are exuding new meanings at each turn. A built space too finds different audiences, when its function changes, as Swetnam-Burland establishes from the finds and graffiti in the »Egyptianising« room of the imperial Roman villa at Boscotrecase, converted to store in its final years (chap. 7). Her study expands the scope of enquiry to wider sections of society, from owners and guests across to servants and enslaved, and broadens the range of associative material to encompass Egyptian staples as well as luxuries, in a context of greater access to African and Asian foods and goods in Augustan Italy. These variables fluctuate in ways we recognise from economic history, and affect the role and proportion of »Egyptian presence« in the consciousness of viewers of each social background across the generations. Swetnam-Burland brings these dimensions of social diversity and time flow directly into 21st century New York, where the reconstructed »Egyptianising« room attracts its current generations of viewers-users.

Another risk with enthusiasm for ancient Egypt is the dual tendency to universalise the appetitite for ancient Egyptian material and motifs, and, as Gunter (chap. 5) warns, to homogenise diverse sets of phenomena. Against the temptation to clock up every new instance of an ancient Egyptian material presence, Laboury and Lekane (chap. 8) adopt the method from the *Studies in Iconology* (1939) by Erwin Panofsky, to separate form and content at the level of analysis: the same form might be made a second time with another meaning, and, conversely the same theme might be rendered a second time through another form. Griener (chap. 4) looks to other sources to achieve the same insistence on variance within a content, the linguistic analyses by Benveniste and Bakhtin and his associates. [19] Instead of defining the scope of a particular term in one setting, such as the qualities as assigned to ancient Egyptian art, Greiner adopts the maxim that each new enunciation changes a content, even within one passage of writing by one author. In these debates over sameness and difference, we might note how enthusiasts for ancient Egypt in the same place at the same historical moment may react differently in their practice. Haslund Hansen (chap. 10) observes that Frederik Norden and Richard Pococke may have sailed the Nile at the same time, but only one canopic jar can be ascribed to the Norden expedition, whereas Pococke seems to have acquired antiquities at several locations on his way. Across these contexts, each »ancient Egyptian?« artefact might appear to inhabit a unitary timespace of its own, as it crosses diverse landscapes such as the totalising present of 4th–16th century Latin European thought. Launched like a spoken word from a moment of utterance, its physical matter might have stabilised its reference across time, as the monad which Walter Benjamin imagined rolling through the cataclysms of history, accruing the imprints of every creature and thing it encountered.[20] Such an embedded

artificial intelligence might defuse the ert/inert blockage in the debate on moving beyond one or other side of research, idea or material, into the impact of ancient Egypt outside its time spaces.

BEYOND DISCIPLINARY AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONFINES – FROM THE CONTOURS OF RESEARCH

From the very first pages, where the editor cites the reflections of William Kentridge, the volume invites openings beyond academia, in its turn to the arena of contemporary art. Towards the close of Part Two, Nouvel-Kammerer finds ancient Egypt staged as start and end of time in the pairing of the Sèvres Egyptian centrepiece of 1808 and its aftermath of 1978, by Anne and Patrick Poirier. On contemporary art, the museum presence of Egyptology has generated a substantial corpus of exhibitions and associated bibliography,[21] continuing the longer history of collecting and display covered here in particular by Humbert (chap. 3), Mason (chap. 9), Haslund Hansen (chap. 10), and Hurley (chap. 12). On this cue, the contours of study charted in the present volume may be read as a possible outline of future directions of new studies, whether interdisciplinary or, like the studio of the artist, beyond the institutions of research.

One direction of research, combining verbal and tangible material, would be the historicity of »the ancient Egyptian thing«, in its ellisions and associations. When does the »Egyptian« thing shift from present to past, from »of the contemporary land of the living Egyptians« to »of a long-past, *ancient*, <ancient> Egypt«? Doubtless repeated over history, outside and inside Egypt itself, the change in enunciation of »Egypt« can sometimes be captured in our midst. For the 1851 Exhibition of Industry of All Nations, housed at the first Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, central London, one »nation« »Egypt« denoted the contemporary land, then a largely autonomous province of another »nation« Ottoman »Turkey«, both being present for their contemporary manufacturing output rather than their ancient histories. Today the two names can still be read in the select list of exhibiting »nations« along the borders of the mosaic in the north pediment of 1866 in the courtyard of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. As Stephanie Moser has documented and discussed in detail,[22] by 1854 the longer-term relocation of the Crystal Palace in south-east London presented a drastically different »Egypt«, with vividly coloured, mainly scaled-down reproductions of ancient monuments (see Hurley, chap. 12). During the short reign of Abbas I, governor of Egypt 1848–1854, the haunting »<ancient> Egypt« has arrived. In other locations outside Egypt, past and present Egypt obtained equal space, as Mariette achieved so effectively for the second successor of Abbas, Ismail, in the Paris Exhibition of 1867, when Egypt was financially attractive to European capital but still self-governing (see the detailed comparative analysis in Hurley, chap. 12). The imperial world displays provide one arena in which the name of Egypt can be followed. At later moments of geopolitical crisis – 1882,

1919, 1956, 2011 – the ellision is dropped, and a land of the living reasserts itself in the European-language urban consciousness. These histories might be traced back through the histories of ideas and material culture in the lexical distribution of Aegyptus and »Aegyptiaca« and their correlates in other languages, as well as in writings without explicit reference to the land of Egypt. When Burra-Buriyash, king of Babylon asks Napkhurareya king of Egypt to send new images of wild creatures of land or sea, or to send old ones until new ones can be made,[23] what time might »old« cover, and would these images from Egypt be thought »Egyptian« in an age of »international style«?[24]

A turn to wider horizons recurs through the twelve chapters of Parts One and Two, looking towards the continental horizons of Africa (chap. 2) and America (chap. 9). In that spirit, I would first turn the gaze inwards, to ask »who is we?«, as we define the contours of our study, and then to seek other stories of impact in the process of being told. How different would a Greek history of *Beyond Egyptomania* be? Perhaps starting from the first production of scarab-shaped amulets outside Egypt, just a few generations after the scarab became a standard motif for stamp-seals at the end of the third millennium BC,[25] the flow might take us with Ptolemaic Aegean coins (Bricault, chap. 6) through hegemonic Byzantine presence, to experiences of Ottoman rule including the life of Muhammad Ali, born in northern Greece at Kavala, ruler of Egypt 1805–1848,[26] so presiding over the first sustained large-scale extractions of ancient Egyptian material from Upper Egypt to cities in Europe and beyond.[27] A Greek history begins to unlock the activities of intermediaries on whom Egyptomania in the sense of Humbert (chap. 3) so largely depends, in particular Ioannis Athanasiou organising 1820s–1830s extractions at Thebes and Abydos, and Ioannis Anastasiou, envoy of Sweden-Norway at the court of Muhammad Ali, amassing the finest quality material from Abydos and Saqqara.[28] Between Cairo, Alexandria, Paris and London, a Greek archive joins Africa and Europe in the history of Egyptology and Egyptomania alike. Historians beyond the present concentrations of finance have long been working on, and expanding the archive omitted or inaccessible to those in ostensibly better resourced research centres.[29] Researchers in a European city may seek to become aware, and to contribute to those existing endeavours with our own results, towards a »dialogue of cultures« in the terms of Alioune Diop, if they remember the warning that precedes, that it would »be an illusion to imagine that the Western world could assign itself a legitimate mission of integrating, absorbing, and assimilating into the vigor of its own vitality, the contributions of other civilizations«.[30] Does such a mission define the phenomenon of 16th–19th century European Egyptomania, in its accompaniment to the genocidal enslavement industry by European and then Euroamerican powers across the Black Atlantic?[31] For Hosam Aboul Ela, »representations of regional histories by the colonizer are incapable of freeing themselves from the self-aggrandizing presumptions that fuel and underwrite the colonial project«.[32] Any would-be participant in the already existing dialogues begins with steep learning curves in literatures and languages. University disciplines may not structurally enable such learning among themselves in the concourse of the education market. Yet

the resonance of »the ancient Egyptian matter«, whether object or motif, acquires far sharper resonance in this context, hinted at through this volume in the acknowledgments of Arab World and African horizons – the studies of *athar* »traces« of ancient Egypt in Arabic literature, from Colla and El-Daly, and the many independent African-centred writings on ancient Egypt by a long line of African authors from the 19th century.[33] The reorientation of horizons relies not on belief in a Golden Age, so much as an insistence on an *effect*ive tracing of how it was, including every localised urban and rural participant as well as every foreign and regional violence in the dislocation and annihilation of people.[34] A model for the turn to global history might be the study of antiquarianism, where Alain Schnapp transfers a European narrative to comparative timescapes.[35] Ancient Egyptian impact studies may require both that spatial shift and a collective return to sources, to dissolve assumed parameters of time and space, and to reconceive the theoretical and methodological premises. The *Beyond Egyptomania* contributors point, for me, toward those changes.