

Editorial Note

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Jan Assmann passed away in February of this year. He leaves behind an impressive body of academic work as an Egyptologist and cultural scholar that will continue to serve as a source of inspiration for a long time to come. Jan has left his mark on this journal and, even more so, on research into the reception of ancient Egypt like no other. With the publication of *Moses the Egyptian* in 1998 and the method of mnemohistory applied and explained therein, he has given a methodological foundation to a specialised field which, despite some outstanding studies, was often ridiculed as a cabinet of curiosities. For this he deserves recognition and many thanks. Volume 3 of *Aegyptiaca* (<http://doi.org/10.11588/aegyp.2018.3>) is dedicated to Jan's work, we are delighted that we were able to publish three of his essays, and numerous authors of articles in this journal have been inspired by him. We and many others involved in this journal have not only lost a brilliant colleague, but also a good friend.

The process of change initiated by Jan Assmann continues, also for this journal: thematic and methodological innovations also require new forms of academic communication. Until 2023, *Aegyptiaca* has only been published in PDF format and has been pretty successful with it. In PDF and as Diamond Open Access (i.e. free of charge for authors and readers), we were able to reach a large international readership. More than 100,000 downloads show that the journal is meeting with great interest. However, online publishing offers significantly more possibilities that cannot be realised in PDF format alone. We have therefore decided, with the support of Heidelberg University Library, to publish *Aegyptiaca* in html format in future. The first articles in PDF and html have already been published last year as volume 7: <http://doi.org/10.11588/aegyp.2023.7>. However, getting there was much more complicated than expected, and volume 7 has not yet been published in its entirety. We will soon finalise this volume and in addition to the contributions already published, there will be more great essays.

The changeover has already paid off: although the articles can still be downloaded in pdf format, the additional html format offers numerous advantages: High-quality scans of images and books can be embedded in the texts and the links to the sources make it easy to check the authors' arguments and continue working on the digital sources yourself.

The study of the reception of ancient Egypt is currently in a process of transition. The distinction between high culture and popular culture is increasingly



disappearing, and this special issue of *Aegyptiaca*, edited by Eleanor Dobson and Leire Olabarria, shows how fruitful the study of the reception of ancient Egypt in popular culture can be. This eighth issue of *Aegyptiaca*, entitled *Do Ancient Egyptians Dream of Electric Sheep? The Reception of Ancient Egypt in Science Fiction* features numerous remarkable examples of this. Many of them reached an audience of millions, such as the film *Stargate* at the end of the 20th century. Scientific Egyptology was just as important for the creation of this film as the esotericism of Erich von Däniken. Even if these esoteric currents are scientifically unfounded, they are no less influential for the public image of ancient Egypt than scientific Egyptology. Moreover, they are deeply rooted in the history of the reception of ancient Egypt, in which Egypt was the home of alchemy and spirituality, a bridge to antediluvian knowledge and a hoard of material and spiritual treasures. Examining this form of reception of ancient Egypt also provides an interesting look at current social and academic issues such as post-colonialism, orientalism, sexism and racism, which are reflected in various forms in different media such as novels, comics, films, games (online and board games) and educational materials. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, Afrofuturism, novels by Roger Zelazny, Luc Besson's film *The Fifth Element*, computer games, Rick Riordan's adventure novels, Egyptian gods as superheroes, bestsellers by Jodi Picoult can be fruitfully analysed and understood as forms of the reception of ancient Egypt.

And it also becomes clear that research into pop culture cannot succeed as a mere description. A sensitive and methodologically reflective analysis is required in order to understand why Egypt is such a fascinating pop culture phenomenon. We would like to thank the editors Eleanor Dobson and Leire Olabarria, are delighted to be able to present this volume and hope you enjoy reading it and find it stimulating.