

Review:

Miguel John Versluys, ed. *Beyond Egyptomania. Objects, Styles and Agency* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020)

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This book is an edited volume comprising 17 contributions from international authors addressing various phenomena of the reception of ancient Egypt previously labelled as “Egyptomania” from an interdisciplinary perspective. The volume, based on a conference held at Leiden in 2016, is dedicated to Jan Assmann whose contributions to the topic are seminal and multifold. The importance of the book lies in its truly interdisciplinary approach and the multidisciplinary background of its authors. This book is an important and much-needed new approach to the reception of Ancient Egypt and clearly presents a milestone for the study of the Mnemohistory of Egypt and much more, primarily because of its focus on objects and material culture.

A preface by Caroline van Eck introduces the reader to the general aims of the book and focuses on “»Nachleben«, Mnemohistory and the Agency of Things Egyptian” (11–12). She refers to two surprising paradoxes, first of all Egypt as “the longest case of uninterrupted *Nachleben* in the West” (11) but with only rare studies on its entire “lifespan”, and secondly Aby Warburg’s neglecting of the *Nachleben* of Egypt. Van Eck explains the rethinking of Warburg’s *Mnemosyne* by Jan and Aleida Assmann as *Mnemohistory*. She also stresses the inspiration of the present volume in Warburg’s concept of *Bilderfabrzeuge*, which led to the *Dingfabrzeuge* investigating “the routes of objects and object types across time, from Assyria to 19th century St Petersburg” (12). She also mentions what the volume does not aim for; that is, a large-scale catalogue of case studies or biographies of objects. Rather, the book is an exercise in elaborating on how, why, where and when Egyptian artefacts “become actors in processes of interpretation, appropriation and transformation” (12) and are thus key to understanding the objective foundation of the survival of Egyptian material and visual culture.

The volume is then divided into three parts: Egypt and its Mnemohistory: Introductions (15–68), Objects, Style and Agency: A long-term overview (71–208) and Egypt’s Material Agency: Discussions (211–246).

Part 1 focuses on Egypt’s Mnemohistory and comprises four chapters which are methodological introductions. Miguel John Versluys presents “Haunted by Egypt. A Long-Term Perspective on History, Mnemohistory and Material Culture” (15–21), which is also a concise introduction to the book by the editor. He opens with the example of the South-African artist William Kentridge and his *Carnets d’Egypte* from 2010 to explain three points as working hypotheses of the book: 1) the concept of an inner geography of Egypt resulting in Egypt being part of us, “unavoidable, perpetual and haunting” (16); 2) the importance of objects in understanding our inner Egypt; and 3) objects being more than historical sources, “forming a bridge between history and mnemohistory” (16) since they also belong to the realm of mythology. Versluys then continues to outline the aims of the book and its object-oriented perspective: “This volume aims to provide a long-term and interdisciplinary perspective on Egypt and its impact, taking theories on objects and their agency as main points of departure” (16). *Why* Egyptian things and objects haunt us and *how* we can explain their impact are the main research questions investigated in the book for the intersections between history, Mnemohistory, and material culture of Egypt. Versluys explains the problems associated with the term Egyptomania, for which a clear definition is still lacking, and stresses the ambition of the present volume to “formulate a paradigm that goes *beyond Egyptomania*” (17) taking the survival of Egyptian things seriously without discarding major past contributions that use the term Egyptomania (e.g. the fundamental work by Jean-Marcel Humbert who also contributed to the volume, see below). He then outlines why the *longue durée* approach of the volume is much needed and where the difficulties and benefits of an object-oriented approach lie (18–19).

Jan Assmann and Florian Ebeling offer a concise overview of “The Mnemohistory of Egypt. Approaches Towards the Understanding of Egypt in Intellectual History” (23–38). This introduction first explains the basics of the different approaches of a “historical” and “mnemo-historical” methodology. They outline “mnemohistory as the history of memory” (24) but stress the need

to differentiate between *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Most importantly, the Mnemohistory of ancient Egypt does not contain facts about authentic knowledge of this past culture but rather reflects contemporary societal and cultural aspects. Assmann and Ebeling describe the exceptional case of the perception of ancient Egypt in the West as Mnemohistory par excellence, because until the nineteenth century CE no direct sources from Egypt were available and the picture established about Egypt is based on “a fundamental misunderstanding of ancient Egyptian culture and writing” (25). Using Egyptian mysteries as a case study, they explain these misunderstandings (25–28). They continue with an overview of the history of the reception of ancient Egypt (28–32), followed by a concise discussion of the terminology used for these studies (32–36). The chapter concludes with the ongoing reception of Egypt after the establishment of scientific Egyptology, for example in art and literature as is illustrated by examples like Paul Klee and Aleister Crowley, as well as the case of “Afrocentrism” (36–38).

Jean-Marcel Humbert’s French contribution is a “Plaidoyer pour l’Égyptomanie, ou Comment s’Appropriier une Égypte Fantasmée” (39–52). He gives an overview of the many uses and abuses of the term Egyptomania in the last two centuries and pleas for retaining this terminology, stressing the diverse character and complex understanding of Egyptomania in various national settings. Humbert outlines the unique case of Egyptian art within general art history as being transformed and redesigned over the millennia, testifying to a “fascination” with Egypt. He agrees with Stephanie Moser (2015)¹ that although problematic, Egyptomania remains for now the most encompassing term.² This contrasts with the editor’s introduction in the book (and partly with Stephanie Moser’s own contribution in this volume, see below) but allows the reader to get an understanding of diverging perspectives and ongoing discussions.

¹ Stephanie Moser, “Reconstructing Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies, Archaeological Representation and the Interpretation of Ancient Egypt”, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 22 (4) (2015): 1263–1308.

² Without a definition, the usage remains problematic; for a recent example see: Jolene Zigarovich, “Egyptomania, English Pyramids and the Quest for Immortality”, in Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks, eds., *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination: Art, Literature and Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 105–116.

Pascal Griener concludes Part 1 of the volume with an introduction on “The Fascination for Egypt During the Eighteenth Century. History of a »Configuration«” (53–68). This chapter introduces the reader to “the ways in which Egyptian material was exploited by art historiography during the Enlightenment” (53). Under the header “Displacing ruins as an index of progress”, Griener outlines the “powerful narrative of cultural progress” (54) which used Ancient Egypt as tool to glorify developments and technology of the present, first of all by the raising of obelisks in Rome, starting with the famous relocation and erection of the so-called Vatican obelisk by Domenico Fontana for Pope Sixtus V in 1585. Fitting examples given by the author are also the chapters on modern technology in the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809) and the original intentions of the engineer Giovanni Belzoni who became famous in the nineteenth century as a discoverer of monuments and mover of statues like the so-called young Memnon, the largest piece of Egyptian sculpture now in the British Museum.

Griener then analyses “how the Egyptian material was constructed within the narrative of the history of art” (61), here taking a highly interesting, divergent approach through linguistics and narratology rather than the more common thematic approach (61). He starts with Johann Joachim Winckelmann and his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), mentions Ottavio de Guasco as major opponent of Winckelmann who advocated the “debt of Greek sculpture to Egyptian art” (64) before referring to Johann Gottfried Herder as the second example of an opposite position to Winckelmann. Griener shows that *mythistory* affected the artistic literature of the Enlightenment and shaped the interpretation of deep meaning associated with Egyptian objects.

Part 2 comprises eight case studies offering long-term overviews of selected aspects of Egypt's *Nachleben*, covering the period of the Iron Age to the nineteenth century. These contributions offer examples of new perspectives and fresh methodological approaches and provide stimulating new material for the discussion of the individual topics.

Ann C. Gunter discusses “Aegyptiaca. Investigating Style and Agency in the Iron Age Eastern Mediterranean” (71–86). She starts off with the intriguing question: “Do we artificially privilege a category of objects, and a mode of reception, that

more closely approximate modern responses to ancient Egypt than to their ancient contexts?” (71). Gunter engages with what she calls an early chapter of Egyptomania, presenting Egyptian-style votives from the sanctuary of Hera on Samos and Egyptian-style objects from tombs of queens in Nimrud. These case studies are exemplary, since during the Iron Age, Egypt’s influence is primarily performed by objects deposited in sanctuaries and burials.

Like other contributors to this volume, Gunter follows a new approach, here in shifting from a focus on human identity to material agency. She also addresses the question of exotica as a problematic category since these objects were much more than status symbols and held diverse meanings.

Gunter re-examines the proposal by Helga Bumke that the “Aegyptiaca” in the Heraion of Samos were offerings by Egyptians. This interpretation is not only based on the form and types of the votives but also on sociohistorical foundations, since this Greek sanctuary blossomed in a time when there was intensive exchange of stone working techniques between Greece and Egypt (80).³ Gunter’s concluding words are convincing and reflect her material agency perspective: “The objects do not simply reflect contact with Egypt – direct or indirect – but actually constitute cultural innovation, enabling the establishment of new votive practices and the participation of non-local visitors” (82).

The second case study is an assessment of Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects found in the queens’ tombs at Nimrud, datable to the eight century BCE (82–85). The inscribed gold bowl by queen Yabâ shows Egyptianising scenes like boats set in a papyrus marsh. These scenes have previously been interpreted as illustration of the Bastet festival as reported by Herodotus. The Nimrud bowls find a close parallel in a silver bowl from Cyprus now housed in Berlin for which a Phoenecian workmanship was proposed. Gunter argues rather for a workshop in the southern Levant with close connection to the Egyptian Nile delta and a

³ In relation to the “developments in monumental stone architecture and sculpture at Samos that manifestly drew on Egyptian traditions and technical expertise” (80) new evidence from Heliopolis with a monumental statue of king Psametik I could be mentioned. The exchange between Greek and Egyptian sculptors was perhaps even more direct than previously thought. See Aiman Ashmawy, Simon Connor and Dietrich Raue, “Psametik I in Heliopolis”, *Egyptian Archaeology* 55 (2019): 34–39; Dietrich Raue, *Reise zum Ursprung der Welt: die Ausgrabungen im Tempel von Heliopolis*. Unter Mitarbeit von Aiman Ashmawy (Darmstadt: wbg Philipp von Zabern, 2020).

date in the tenth century BCE, thus for use as “heirloom” in the tomb of queen Yabâ (with a secondary added inscription concealing one layer of its “Egyptianness”). This example underlines her convincing conclusion: we need to address the transformative potential of objects in the context of changing environments and the previously assumed homogenous meaning and character of “Aegyptiaca” is an illusion.

The contribution of Laurent Bricault is entitled “L’Égypte des uns n’est pas Toujours l’Égypte des Autres. À Propos d’une Drachme de Myndos” (87–95). He gives a Hellenistic case study of drachma from Myndos in Asia Minor and focuses on Egyptian-style elements in the iconography of deities on the coins. These deities belong primarily to the circle of Isis.⁴ Depictions of Sarapis and iconographic details like the *calathus*, the atef-crown, the crown of Isis and the *uraeus* are discussed as royal and divine symbols to support the author’s argument that there is not only one reflection of Egypt but regional patterns and reinterpretations, which is an extremely important result in the framework of Hellenistic universalism.

The next case study by Molly Swetnam-Burland presents “Aegyptiaca Romana. The »Black Room« from the Villa of Boscotrecase and the Aesthetics of Empire” (97–113). The frescos from the room in question are early examples of the so-called Third Pompeian Style and exhibited as a major attraction in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Two colourful panels in this room from a Roman villa of the Augustean era show scenes with Egyptian-style persons worshipping animals and gods. Swetnam-Burland investigates the agency of these images within their historical and spatial context. She first convincingly shows that the often-presumed association of the villa with the imperial family, owned by Agrippina Postumus (Augustus’ grandson), is not secure. This is of much relevance since politicised interpretations of the scenes such as those referring to Augustus’ conquest of Egypt must be discarded. Swetnam-Burland shows a strong association of the Egyptian-style motifs with

⁴ The author has published substantially on this topic, see the footnotes in the chapter. After publication of the book under review, a volume co-edited by Bricault on the reception of the deities around Isis was published: Laurent Bricault, Corinne Bonnet and Carole Gomez, eds., *Les mille et une vies d’Isis: la réception des divinités du cercle isiaque de la fin de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, Tempus 63 (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2020).

those found on luxury goods like obsidian cups and cameo glass. She also stresses the changing meaning of these images from the time of the first generation using the villa, to the final generation of viewers reflecting a complex evolution of Egypt's reflection in houses in Pompeii from Augustean times to 79 CE.

Dimitri Laboury and Marie Lekane focus on “Lost in Translation? On »Aegyptiaca« in the Middle Ages” (115–131). The time between the Late Antique period and the Renaissance has often been considered irrelevant for the reception of ancient Egypt. The Arabic conquest of Egypt resulted in a loss of direct contact between Europe and ancient Egypt, making the objects imported or created by the Roman empire the only available sources for imaginations of Egypt (116).⁵

Within the framework of a predominance of textual references to the ancient Egyptian culture in the Middle Ages, the authors present Egyptian-looking sphinxes and lions from Rome of the thirteenth century CE as an exceptional case (123-131) to argue “that »Aegyptiaca« and the Egyptian style were not completely lost in the artistic translation of the past that characterises the Middle Ages” (131).

Peter Manson's contribution is entitled: “Periculosae Plenum Opus Aleae. The »Mensa Isiaca«, Lorenzo Pignoria and the Perils of Cultural Translation” (133–149). Lorenzo Pignoria (1571–1631) is one of those who compared an ancient culture from the Old World with native cultures of the New, of America. He studied and, with much circumspection, proposed an explanation of the signs and images of the Mensa Isiaca. Manson described Pignoria's interest in the material object and his comparative method. Pignoria saw the object itself and we know that he used Enea Vico's engraving from 1559 for his comments. Pignoria used two types of sources to help interpret the Mensa Isiaca: contemporaneous scholars and objects in private collections. Mason elaborates

⁵ The authors should have made it clearer in their title that they are focusing on “Middle Ages in the West/Europe”; the situation in the East with the abundant Arabic sources is only very briefly addressed. For the latter see the seminal study Okasha El Daly, *Egyptology: the Missing Millennium. Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings* (London: UCL Press 2005); cf. also Stephen Quirke, “The Writing of the Birds: Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs Before and After the Founding of Alexandria”, *Electryone* 5 (1) (2017): 32–43.

on the latter, naming collectors and specific objects for this remarkable archaeological interpretation. For example, for the Egyptian symbol of an *ankh* sign, Pignoria used both obelisks and symbols on gems.

Mason gives further examples like the interpretation of the figure of a deity in the bottom row of the Mensa Isiaca which was of the greatest difficulty for Pignoria. He interprets it as Horus; modern scholars identify the god as Ptah. This image reappears in several of his works, and he also presents parallels between deities from the New World and from Egypt, nicely coinciding with the time when Mesoamerican codices were interpreted as hieroglyphs. But most importantly, in the general context of art history “Pignoria and his contemporaries were grappling with the problem of interpretation of ancient artefacts that we would today call iconography” (147). The specific kind of iconography of Pignoria is grounded at the micro-level on a small set of objects and at the macro-level on “a comparative endeavour that spans millennia and continents” (149) and which had a long history leading, according to Manson, to elaborate comparative projects like the one of Lévi-Strauss with structure in place of material.

Anne Haslund Hansen presents “A Food Chain of Objects. The Selection of Use of Egyptian Antiquities in Piranesi’s »Diverse Maniere«” (151–168). That Giambattista Piranesi used several antiquarian sources for his *Diverse Maniere* (1769), especially Caylus’ *Recueil d’Antiquités*, is well established. Hansen investigates the use of the Egyptian antiquities by Piranesi and what this tells us about his understanding of ancient Egypt. Piranesi is well known for his assessment of Egyptian art as distinctive and clearly distinguishable from Greek and Roman art, and as kind of a predecessor of/comparison to Tuscan art (155). The choice of the motifs for the *Diverse Maniere*, their modification to render them as Egyptianizing, and the use of the Antinous figure “as intermediary between the Egyptian and Classical style” (168) are all part of Piranesi’s attempt to promote Egyptian art and its visual impact. This argument, however, was embedded in his main aim to stress the closeness of Tuscan art to Greek art.

“The Egyptian Centrepiece of the Sèvres Manufactory” which was offered by Napoleon Bonaparte to Tsar Alexander I is discussed by Odile Nouvel-Kammerer (169–183). Napoleon engaged Vivant Denon (famous for his book

Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, 1802) in the commission of a porcelain service which was intended to illustrate the glory of the nation and was meant as a present for the Tsar from the beginning. This centrepiece comprises architectural monuments all reflecting drafts for the plates of *Description de l'Égypte*. In the middle stands the so-called Roman kiosk of Philae, flanked by two obelisks on each side and the temple of Dendera and the temple of Edfu as represented in the *Description*. This design must have been composed in the knowledge of the contemporaneous manufacturing of an Olympic centrepiece by the Sèvres porcelain factory (172–174). Both centrepieces were ordered by the emperor to be finished in 1806, composing a unique diplomatic gift. Nouvel-Kammerer meticulously outlines the manufacturing process and the involved judgements and ideas about Egyptian, Roman and Greek architecture and which culture was superior to another. In presenting Tsar Alexander the Egyptian and Olympic centrepieces, Napoleon offered his own view of a continuum and his legitimation: the Western civilisation as both heir to the Greek-Roman tradition and in inheritance of ancient Egypt – the latter not only as an early civilisation but also as a link between the East and the West.

Cecilia Hurley offers an analysis entitled “Pharaohs, Papyri and Hookahs. Displaying and Staging Egyptian Antiquities in Nineteenth Century European Exhibitions” (185–208). She summarises the general nature of the Egyptian collections in Europe resulting from the surveys conducted by the three main powers – France, Prussia and the United Kingdom. The 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris is presented as a case study since this was the first occasion for Egypt as a now independent national state to present itself under the new Khedive Ismail Pasha (who appointed Auguste Mariette as a committee member for the show). The Egyptian Park comprised various buildings and illustrated Egyptian life and customs. Hurley summarises recent assessments of this Egyptian Park and stresses that postcolonial perspectives highlight its illustration of “voyeuristic tendencies of Europeans” (190). However, she quotes an article of Alfred Maury who attested in 1867 that this show was more instructive and didactic about ancient Egypt than any collection in Europe. Hurley described Mariette’s exhibition strategy with a life-like copy of an ancient temple and numerous masterpieces from Bulaq museum – a small but obviously convincing collection in the end. In assessing in detail the contemporaneous, much larger

collections in Paris, Rome/Turin, Berlin/Vienna and London, Hurley's argument becomes convincing; the success of the 1867 Egyptian Park in Paris was based on Mariette's staging of the show, allowing the nineteenth century public to visit Egyptian antiquities in a colourful and exotic setup.

Part 3 presents four discussions from four different disciplinary fields which all elaborate on the central concepts of the book – objects, style, and agency. This is one of the particularly strong parts of the book because the discussions exemplify the coherence of the volume (despite a certain ambiguity when it comes to terminology and methods) and open up future lines of investigation.

David Fontijn poses and answers as a prehistorian the question “Ancient Egypt: Do Things Matter?” (211–217), focusing on the role that Egyptian things play in the various concepts of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. “In our case, the following question matters: is »ancient Egypt« conceivable for someone who has never seen »ancient Egyptian things«? This is a question that is less often asked, but one that lurks in the background of this book and is hinted at by Versluys in his introduction” (214). Fontijn mentions new insights from cognitive science and neuropsychology and stresses the relevance of the visibility and invisibility of things for cultural memory. He thinks that a key reason for the prominent role of Egypt in western discourses is the following: “Narratives of ancient Egyptian people hiding special things from the living for the afterlife, and the possibility that one day, modern people may retrieve those things again are among the most appealing features of ancient Egypt since the Napoleonic expeditions” (215–216).⁶ I would concur with Fontijn in his outlook that there is much potential for future studies “seeing things *as if* they were alive” (217) and focusing on the questions of how and by whom they were treated, used and set up in space.

Stijn Bussels and Bram van Oostveldt discuss from the perspective of art history and performing arts “Egypt and/as Style” (219–224). They start with examples from postmodern popular culture to show “that every culture has its own

⁶ Cf. the recent assessment about the etic perspective on Pharaonic culture as allegedly being obsessed with immortality: Martin Fitzenreiter, “Die Unsterblichkeit ist nicht Jedermanns Sache: Bemerkungen zum Tod und den Toten im pharaonischen Ägypten und ihrem Nach-(er)-Leben”, in Dina Serova, Burkhard Backes, and Matthieu W. Götz, eds., *(Un)Sterblichkeit: Schrift - Körper - Kult. Beiträge des neunten Berliner Arbeitskreises Junge Ägyptologie* (BAJA 9), 30.11.–2.12.2018, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 9–27.

Egyptian styles” (220). A definition of style follows in which they stress not only the problematic aspects of it, but also a possible function of style as “a gateway to the past” (220) and that “style is constitutive for the invention of tradition and the construction of history” (221). Nowadays, as also exemplified in the present book, style is not used as means of categorisation but rather to study effects, like for example, “how style travels from one period to another” (221). For Egypt, Bussels and van Oostveldt stress a fascinating paradox: “Egyptian style travelling across time relies on its everlasting aura but is in the same time initiator of stylistic change” (221). This paradox is convincingly explained with the fact that it only became possible as Egyptian style outside of its original context.

Stephanie Moser presents as an archaeologist “The Magic of the Material. Receptions of Ancient Egypt and their Impacts” (225–236) and starts with inter- and multidisciplinary interests in Egyptian *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. She then summarises the achievements of the present volume and outlines key aspects about the shift towards an object-oriented approach. Moser comes back to the question of the suitability of the term Egyptomania and stresses one important aspect: other than the study of Greek and Roman cultures associated with a certain intellectual domain, no comparable scholarly tradition existed for Egyptian antiquities prior to the decipherment of the hieroglyphs (227), it was open to all and herewith lie perhaps both the motivation for and the concerns with the term “Egyptomania”. She continues with some examples illustrating the material agency which is evident in the displays of Egyptian antiquities around the world and can also be found in archaeological genre paintings like the famous *Egyptian Widow* of Alma-Tadema (1872).

Stephen Quirke’s Egyptological contribution “Object – Subject – Egypt” (237–246) concludes the volume. He starts with a review of the individual contributions of the volume and focuses on the “object=subject dilemma” (238) which, for example, becomes obvious in Chapter 2 by Assmann and Ebeling who contest the Egyptian thing being a protagonist or autonomous actor (as characterised by Versluys). Quirke foregrounds one of the most relevant prejudices in current and past writings about ancient Egypt: the static-dynamic binary (238). Since Greek and Roman antiquity, translations, and images of Egypt as static have placed the pharaonic culture on a lower rung and these

European objections were put on a new level by Winckelmann. Quirke continues with a description of the twenty-first century discipline of Egyptology, its still prevailing confinement to language and the resulting problems such as a limited training in interdisciplinary dialogue. He then addresses the important topic of presences and absences, thus the need to also engage with contexts and periods of a lack of Egyptian things (see Chapter 8 by Laboury and Lekane). Quirke finishes his extremely thought-provoking contribution with ideas about the need for a spatial shift for ancient Egyptian impact studies beyond disciplinary and geographical confines as well as for a focus on sources as illustrated by the present volume.

In conclusion, the book strongly and convincingly argues for fresh long-term interdisciplinary studies of the reception of Egypt. The volume contributes to the crucial question of how this discipline can move forward and integrate “current debates on the agency of artefacts across archaeology, anthropology, and art history” (16). For me, this is the most stimulating aspect of the book, illustrating its interdisciplinary approach and the value of studies about the Mnemohistory of Egypt which goes well beyond the field of Egyptology. Notable are also several disputes about well-established terminology in the volume, e.g., regarding Egyptomania and Aegyptiaca. These illustrate how important it is to define terms used in the field of study since there exist not only diachronic differences, but also variations between the disciplines and between nations (and languages).

This thought-provoking book will clearly be a must read for anyone interested in understanding state-of-the-art approaches to the reception of ancient Egypt, which still poses a large set of open questions and requires the development of a new set of methodologies. The present volume advocates for the need to study Egyptian things and concepts from both a long-term and an object-oriented perspective in order to break away from modern myths like the character of Egyptian culture as static and as without stylistic development. This new understanding of dynamics and complex processes ties in with a general new understanding of material culture in archaeology and recent approaches to ancient Egypt from a combined theory-based and material-informed

perspective.⁷ Although not everybody will agree that studies of the reception of ancient Egypt form (or should form) an integral part of Egyptology,⁸ I think that these parallel developments in both Egyptology/Egyptian archaeology and ancient Egyptian impact studies are important steps towards a more concise understanding of Egyptian material and visual culture throughout the ages and beyond the Nile Valley.

Discussion: Towards an Objectscape of Things Egyptian

As an archaeologist specialised in material and visual culture, the following remarks mirror my own personal interests, for example possible ways to address the impact objects have left on past societies within the framework of intercultural exchange.

Shortly after this book was published, the editor of the reviewed volume co-authored an important article on a specific aspect of material agency. This article is noteworthy because the concept has already had some influence on Egyptian archaeology. Furthermore, I would suggest that the approach in question will also work for the reception of Egyptian things.⁹ I refer to *Objectscares* as defined by Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys which is not simply another trendy “-scape” approach embedded in theoretical frameworks, but offers several advantages in studying material culture within the contexts of cultural encounters because “an objectscape comprises a dynamic repertoire of objects in motion”.¹⁰ Egyptologist Rennan Lemos convincingly demonstrated that the

⁷ See, e.g., Juan Carlos Moreno García, *The State of Ancient Egypt. Power, Challenges and Dynamics* (London et al.: Bloomsbury Academics, 2020) with references.

⁸ I would, however, concur with Martin Fitzenreiter that Egyptology is also a kind of reception of Egypt, see Martin Fitzenreiter, “Europäische Konstruktionen Altägyptens – Der Fall Ägyptologie”, in Thomas Glück and Ludwig Morenz, eds., *Exotisch, Weisheitlich und Uralt. Europäische Konstruktionen Altägyptens* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2007), 323–347.

⁹ See already Miguel John Versluys, “Exploring Aegyptiaca and their Material Agency Throughout Global History”, *Aegyptiaca* 1 (2017), 122–144.

¹⁰ Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys, “Objectscares: A Manifesto for Investigating the Impacts of Object Flows on Past Societies,” *Antiquity* 95 (380) (2021): 367–381 (with references to earlier works of both authors). My current archaeological project in Sudan combines this approach with an understanding of contact space as a fluid space shaped by actors and objects, see Julia Budka, “Cultural diversity in the Middle Nile: New approaches towards ‘contact space biographies’”, *The Project Repository Journal*, Jan 2020 – Volume 4 (2020): 20–23.

Objectscape approach works for Egyptian archaeology and that phenomena become traceable within the material culture which offer new insights into various social realities reflecting lived experiences and local choices.¹¹

I believe the *Objectscapes* concept will become an important tool not only for Egyptian archaeology but also for future studies of the reception of Egyptian things. Following the important input by the book discussed here, it indeed promises “new kinds of histories of human-thing entanglements”¹². Key words in this respect are transformation, temporality and individual choices, thus aspects concerning both the human and the thing world. As highlighted in the present volume, the potential outcome of a material approach considering the diversity of things are new narratives beyond the ones established based on textual sources. For example, as stressed by Gunter: “Issues of authorship, style, place of origin, and means of transfer have largely dominated approaches to Egyptian (and Egyptian-looking) objects found in new cultural settings” (74) – the current approach now shifts towards processes, manufacture, and agency of objects and offers already new insights in past dynamics which need to be investigated further in the future.

Minor comments

As an edited volume, this book is remarkably well structured, and the contents well linked to each other. Each chapter uses endnotes. There is no general list of references, which might have been useful for the readers. Since the authors are representatives of various disciplines, short CVs or at least the present affiliation/position could have helped the reader to better contextualise each specific contribution.

¹¹ Rennan Lemos, “Material Culture and Colonization in Ancient Nubia: Evidence from the New Kingdom Cemeteries”, in Claire Smith, ed., *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_3307-1. Another example for an *Objectscape* approach in Egyptian archaeology: Johannes Auenmüller and Rennan Lemos, “Chapter 11: Khnumose and a group of New Kingdom stone shabtis – insights into colonial society in 18th Dynasty Nubia”, in Julia Budka, *Tomb 26 on Sai Island: A New Kingdom elite tomb and its relevance for Sai and beyond* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2021), 305–349.

¹² Pitts and Versluys, *Antiquity* 95 (380) (2021): 367.

David Fontijn rightly points out that not all the contributions in the volume share the same methodological approach and theoretic background (212) – for example, not all chapters in Part 2 discuss material agency, reflecting the controversy attached to this concept despite the material turn. Furthermore, this is strongly related to the different disciplinary backgrounds and varying traditions in the UK, the US, the Netherlands, France and Belgium.

The chapters in Part 1 are all designed as introductions to specific topics – as such they work very well, and their references are up to date. Nevertheless, in some cases some additions would have been possible, for example in Chapter 4 by Griener, p. 54, footnote 3 on obelisks in Rome and their transport/re-erecting. Apart from Iversen and Wiersching, other studies could have been named: Labib Habachi, *Die unsterblichen Obelisken Ägyptens*. Edited by Carola Vogel. Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie; Sonderbände der Antiken Welt (Mainz: Zabern, 2000); Rolf Michael Schneider, “Nicht mehr Ägypten, sondern Rom: der neue Lebensraum der Obelisken”, in P.C. Bol, G. Kaminski and C. Maderna, eds., *Fremdheit - Eigenheit: Ägypten, Griechenland und Rom. Austausch und Verständnis* (München: Prestel, 2004), 155–179.

On Herder’s ambivalent – and not exclusively opposite as claimed by Griener (64) – attitude towards Winckelmann see for example Katherine Harloe, “276. Kritische Zeitgenossen: Lessing, Heyne, Herder”, in Martin Disselkamp and Fausto Testa, eds., *Winckelmann-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2017), 258–67.

In Chapter 5, the following sentence about Nubia and the southern Levant in New Kingdom is somehow problematic: “Precisely what this »Egyptianisation« reflects is much debated – foreign military or administrative control, for example, or local elite emulation for foreign styles – but the material impact manifestly accompanied Egypt’s commanding role in both political and commercial spheres throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Near East” (72). The relevant footnote 3 comprises a wide range of studies for the Levant and only one for Nubia. The latter, P.W. van Pelt 2013, is correctly cited with introducing the material cultural entanglement concept after Stockhammer for Nubia (instead of Egyptianisation), but uninformed readers will not be able to judge considerable differences in the situation in the Levant or in Nubia. For the

latter, we know very well and *precisely* what Egyptianisation reflects in this respect: the concept, well established in earlier discussions of Egyptian-Nubian relations, took not only a one-dimensional view of culture but is also deeply embedded in colonial studies and Egyptocentric views.¹³ A homogenisation of Nubian society during the colonial period of the New Kingdom caused by the overwhelming appearance of Egyptian material culture is a modern illusion and currently challenged by several research projects working with an object-based approach, among others by the LMU ERC DiverseNile project.¹⁴

In Chapter 7 by M. Swetnam-Burland, some comments on Figure 2, a scene from an Egyptian tomb, are mandatory. She describes the person carrying the gazelle as “wearing a Nubian wig” (105). This is misleading – it is an ordinary short wig used by Egyptians with curled hair, typical of the mid-18th Dynasty. The term “Nubian wig” or “Nubian style wig” is disputed in Egyptology and usually used for a specific wig worn by royal women during the Amarna period.¹⁵ The scene of Figure 2 is labelled as “tomb of Ounsou from Luxor-Thebes” (106) which is very unspecific for a New Kingdom tomb. A more elaborate caption would have been useful. The tomb painting is today in Paris, Musée du Louvre and the tomb in question is TT A.4 in Dra Abu el-Naga. The English transliteration of the name should be Wensw (Ounsou being the French variant).

¹³ As stressed by David N. Edwards, *The Nubian Past. An Archaeology of the Sudan* (London: Routledge, 2004), 7–9; see also Rennan Lemos and Sam Tipper, “Sudanese and Nubian Archaeology: Scholarship Past and Present”, in Rennan Lemos and Sam Tipper, eds., *Current Research in Sudanese and Nubian Archaeology: A Collection of Papers Presented at the Second Sudan Studies Research Conference, Cambridge* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021), 1–12 with references.

¹⁴ <https://www.sudansurvey.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/index.php/erc-project-diversenile>.

¹⁵ Cf. Julia Samson, “Amarna crowns and wigs: unpublished pieces from statues and inlays in the Petrie Collection at University College, London”, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 59 (1973): 47–59.