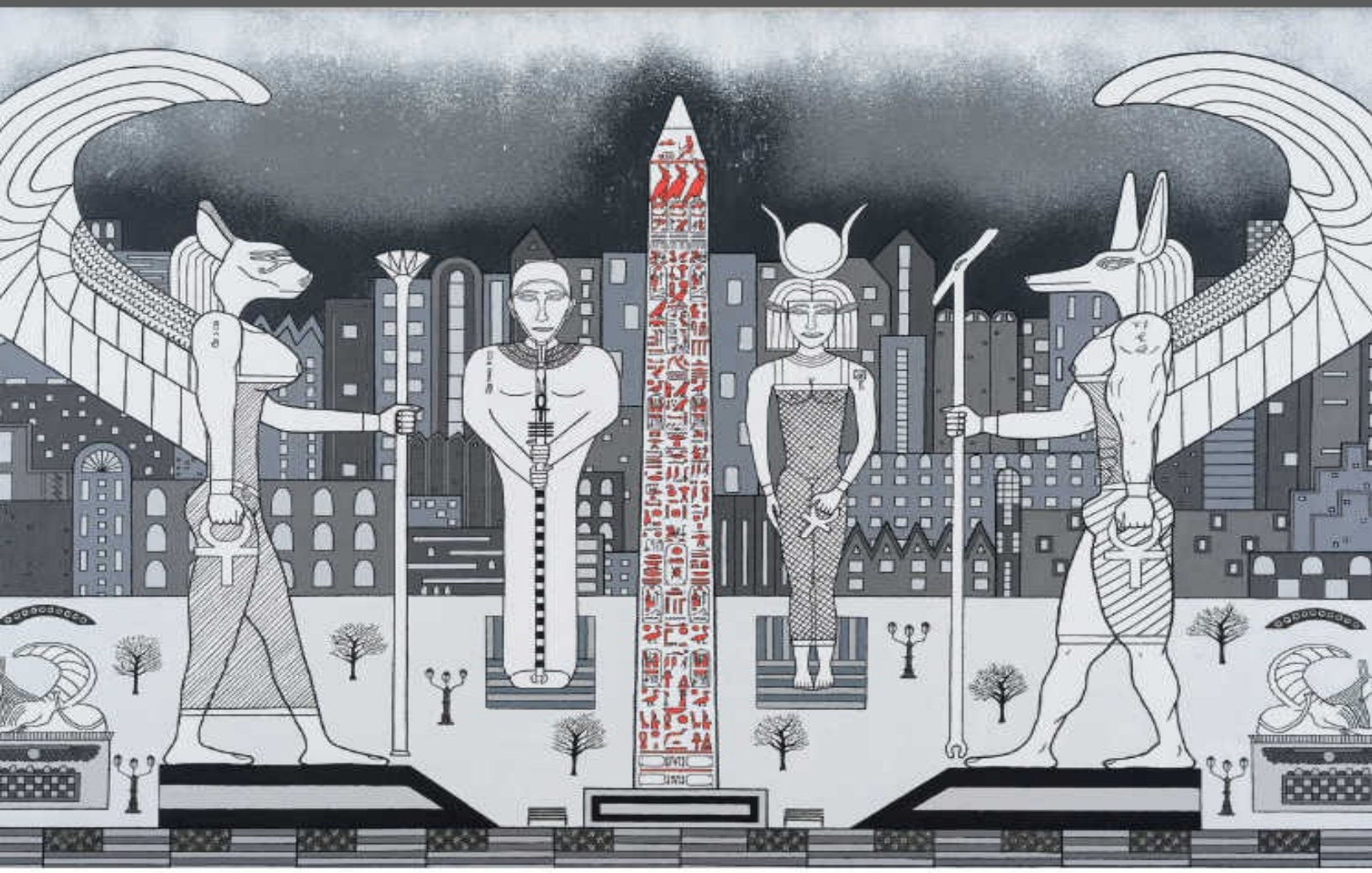
PROFANE EGYPTOLOGISTS

THE MODERN REVIVAL OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION



UCL INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY CRITICAL CULTURAL HERITAGE SERIES

13

PAUL HARRISON

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ROUTLEDGE

Profane Egyptologists

It is widely believed that the practice of ancient Egyptian religion ceased with the end of pharaonic culture and the rise of Christianity. However, an organised reconstruction and revival of the authentic practice of Egyptian, or *Kemetic* religion has been growing, almost undocumented, for nearly three decades. *Profane Egyptologists* is the first in-depth study of the now-global phenomenon of Kemeticism. Presenting key players in their own words, the book utilises extensive interviews to reveal a continuum of beliefs and practices spanning eight years of community growth.

The existence of competing visions of Egypt, which employ ancient material and academic resources, questions the position of Egyptology as a gatekeeper of Egypt's past. Exploring these boundaries, the book highlights the politised and economic factors driving the discipline's self-conception. Could an historically self-imposed insular nature have harmed Egyptology as a field, and how could inclusive discussion help guard against further isolationism?

Profane Egyptologists is both an Egyptological study of Kemeticism, and a critical study of the discipline of Egyptology itself. It will be of value to scholars and students of archaeology and Egyptology, cultural heritage, religion online, phenomenology, epistemology, pagan studies and ethnography, as well as Kemetics and devotees of Egyptian culture.

Paul Harrison gained an MA and PhD from UCL, where he is an Honorary Lecturer for the Institute of Archaeology. He has appeared on the History Channel and Sky News as an historical expert and lectured at UCL and the British Museum. His areas of research include Egyptomania, public engagement, political appropriations of the past, spirituality and the occult, and the intersection of history with ethnicity. His recent work focuses on historical communication in print and media. He is currently working on his

second book and finishing a documentary based on archaeological conservation.

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In memory of my brother Jacques
and my friend Richard Reidy In a better place

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Dr Paul Harrison

Abbreviations

ATR	African Traditional Religion
EES	Egypt Exploration Society
HAD	Honouring the Ancient Dead
KO	Kemetic Orthodoxy
KTR	Kemetic Traditional Religion
KTSJ	Kemetic Temple of San José
NRM	New Religious Movement
PC	The Pagan Cauldron (aka The Cauldron)
SCA	Supreme Council of Antiquities
SIG	Special Interest Group
ToR	Temple of Ra
UPG	Unverified Personal Gnosis

Glossary

Eclecticism: Commonly the process of blending traditions of different eras, peoples and regions; largely free of concerns of historical authenticity.

Kemetic: Used in distinct contexts, it is primarily employed in this work to describe a practitioner of Kemeticism. It is also employed in Afrocentric epistemes to describe a body of ancient African/Egyptian knowledge, and those who subscribe to this in the construction of post-diaspora African identity.

Kemetic continuum: A spectrum of Egypt-centred religions, which employ pharaonic cultural material to varying degrees of perceived authenticity in the reconstruction and revival of ancient Egyptian religion.

Kemetic Orthodoxy: A form of contemporary pharaonic religion which incorporates elements of African Traditional Religions in the reconstruction of its practices and ideology.

Kemeticism: Loosely defined as a re-creation of the religion of ancient Egypt.

Paganism: Paganism is employed in two contexts: modern neo-pagan movements; and broader historical uses which denote 'non-Christian' status (Pearson 2002, 2002a; Strimska 2005).

Reconstruction (recon) and revival: These terms are contested within the Kemetic continuum, sometimes employed interchangeably by a body to describe authenticity for the self, and eclecticism for the other.

Part I

Why Kemeticism?

1 Introduction

It is held that the authentic practice of ancient Egyptian religion ceased with the end of pharaonic culture and the rise of Christianity. However, this book is the result of a four-year ethnographic study of individuals and groups presently engaged in ancient Egyptian religion, self-described as the *Kemetic* community. 'Kemetic' originates from the ancient Egyptian name for Egypt itself, 'Kemet', roughly translated as 'Black Land'.[1] It is a term used in discrete, but non-exclusive contexts; one use of Kemet originates from the contours of Afrocentrism, touched upon herein, but warranting further study (Chapters 2 and 3). Another notable use is by communities engaged in the revival and/or reconstruction of ancient Egyptian religion and spirituality. In many cases, Kemet is used as a term of respect for the ancient culture and language of the Nile Valley's inhabitants, and 'Kemetic' can be employed to self-describe an individual adhering to one or more aspects of that culture. However, uses between politically/ethnically and spiritually motivated groups are often discrete, differing on several significant points. The Kemetic continuum consists of a range of present-day Egypt-centred religious practices: from the eclectic pagan at one end, building a personal religion from a variety of cultures, to reconstructionists at the other, who attempt to reconstruct the religion of pharaonic Egypt as *authentically* as possible. Reconstructionists utilise primary Egyptian texts and materials, in addition to the work of scholars and academics. Kemetic religion has a growing and active community, thousands of individuals reviving and living pharaonic practices in the modern world. These individuals might provide unique perspectives on the religion of ancient Egypt, as Kemeticism raises pertinent questions on the 'lived' aspect of Egyptian religiousity, and as such provides a unique opportunity for ethnography in Egyptology. Subsequently, this volume asks if archaeologists and Egyptologists could potentially benefit from Kemetic insights. Faced with a sparse record, archaeologists struggle to

engage with topics such as ‘taboo’, ritual performance and, significantly, gender, sexuality, religious identity and piety. Dealing with a culture that is no longer ‘lived’, archaeologists and Egyptologists attempt to construct a working understanding, based on the evidence, from texts and material remains. Yet the *experiential* aspects may become lost in *analysis and classification*. This work asks what biases are brought into play during such processes, particularly when reconstructing an alien culture through the lens of modern Western secular thought.

This volume was undertaken for several reasons: the first is to address a gap in Egyptological knowledge. At the genesis of this work (the period of my PhD, commencing in 2007) there was no study or mention of Kemeticism within the contours of Egyptology, and only one sociological study was present (Krogh and Pillifant 2004, 2004a). This research was also an attempt to provide space and voice to an assemblage who are currently sharing Egyptology’s resources, and might otherwise be conflated with other ‘revisionist/mystical’ approaches or uncritically overlooked by the field. Attempts to give voice to the ‘other’ are fraught with pitfalls, and studies of anthropological ‘insider/outsider’ research were undertaken, as explored below. The title of this work, *Profane Egyptologists*, is taken from the primary text of *The Temple of Set* (Aquino 2009: 27), a contemporary Egyptian-themed esoteric identity group. Although located outside Kemeticism, and subsequently the remit of this volume, the term’s employment highlights a perceived division between ‘alternative’ approaches to Egypt and mainstream academic research. The title also underscores questions raised by this and other works regarding the perceived status of Egyptology as a secular, scientific, post-colonial study of the ‘other’ (Carruthers 2014; Colla 2007; Moreno Garcia 2014; Reid 2002; Wengrow 2003).

A construct of history

The territory of Egyptology is complex, and has altered even since the inception of this research in 2007. The redefinition of the political landscape of Egypt has led to a questioning of ‘Egyptology’s’ scope. According to Jeffreys (2003: 4), Egyptology had, ‘an unusually precise meaning, being

specifically the study of society in the Nile Valley from 3000 BC (the beginning of unitary rule, or the dynastic period) to 330 BC (the arrival of Alexander), or at latest the first century AD'. Jeffreys' statement highlights the constructed and contested nature of both Egyptology and 'ancient Egypt', both of which can be argued as socially ordered categories (Carruthers 2014a: 9). The destruction and defacing of ancient Egyptian monuments and artefacts in the wake of the 2011–12 political upheaval inspired a process of public outcry, condemnation and debate, leading to increased interaction between self-described Egyptologists and contemporary concerns (Carruthers 2014; Riggs 2014a). Historically, such interaction emerges around moments of cultural crisis, such as the UNESCO rescue project in the Sudan, which ran from the 1960s to the 1980s (Soderbergh 1987). It has been argued (Jeffreys 2003: 6) that incursions on the field from 'outsiders' have limited impact on disciplinary norms, and 'Egyptology' soon returns to a default (sometimes isolationist) standpoint once a crisis has passed (ibid.; Moreno Garcia 2014; Riggs 2014a). Carruthers (2014a: 3) suggests that the history of Egyptology, if such a thing exists, is written at cross-purposes, 'everyone writing about it seems to think they know what it is, despite not reaching any sort of consensus'. The birth of 'Egyptology', as an '-ology', is closely tied to the development of modern scientific knowledge, 'the disciplined study of ancient Egypt' (ibid.: 1), in contrast to former antiquarian and esoteric approaches (Haycock 2003: 169; Hornung 1999). Writers such as Reid (2002) and Colla (2007) explore the notion that such a definition creates, legitimises and emphasises the exclusivity of the field, which subsequently requires a particular sort of training, from a 'certain sort of European institution centered on artifact discourse' (Carruthers 2014a: 8). As such, the 'purity' of the field can be conceived as intrinsically tied to political narratives in Egypt itself.

Political, religious and ethnological polemics have historically surrounded Egypt, enlivened by the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in the Renaissance period. The Hermeticum consists of a number of books of philosophy and apparent prophecies, commonly attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, or Hermes the Thrice Great, a philosopher named for the Greek version of the Egyptian god, Thoth (Djehuty) and, significantly – to early Christian authorities – perceived as a contemporary of Moses (Champion 2003). The Hermeticum subsequently occupies a unique space as being

employed ‘as evidence that Egyptian religion had both anticipated Christianity and influenced Greek philosophy’ (ibid.: 135). It was additionally employed to legitimise the notion of a continuity of learning, ‘wisdom’ passed from ancient to modern world; the idea of a chronological transition of knowledge is salient to the reconstruction narratives herein. Prior to the decipherment of hieroglyphs in the 1820s, unfamiliarity with the language of the ancient Egyptians had resulted in reliance upon Greek writers, such as Strabo and Herodotus. Following a Greek tradition of adding authority by virtue of antiquity (Lefkowitz 1996), such writers corroborated the notion of Egypt as the font of all wisdom, and the birthplace of learning (Hornung 1999). This perspective helped perpetuate the belief among scholars that the Greeks were the inheritors of the Egyptians – culturally, philosophically and scientifically. Education in Classical civilisation characterised eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western academic discourse, ‘From Petrarch to Sartre, the classics rivalled even the Bible as a widespread, flexible vehicle of Western thought’ (Reid 2002: 140). The Greek notion of an ‘Egyptian Mystery System’ and Egyptian systems of philosophy has been historically perpetuated in literature by writers such as Vail ([1909] 1991), who reference sources such as Plutarch’s *On Isis and Osiris* and Apelius’s *The Golden Ass* (Lefkowitz 1996: 93–121, and see Chapters 2 and 3). The Hermeticum was later determined to be a work not of ancient Egyptian origin, but likely penned between the first and third centuries CE. Hermeticism, however, endured in forms of Freemasonry, which further mythologised the nature of Egyptian culture (Champion 2003; Hornung 1999). This is not to say that Egypt has not contributed in these areas, and debates surrounding Egypt’s contribution to philosophy (and other fields) continue (Lefkowitz 1996; Obenga 1992; Rossi 2004). Rather, it is to propose that Western preconceptions and expectations have resulted in cycles of both fascination and disappointment with Egypt, which sometimes bear little relation to the ancient record itself (Jeffreys 2003; Rice and MacDonald 2003).

The Napoleonic expedition recruited Egypt into mainstream Western dialogues on an unprecedented scale. The advent of increased international travel, with the foundation of agents such as Thomas Cook, encouraged wider access to this once impenetrable land (Reid 2002). The prominence of Egypt in the *Old* and *New Testaments* resulted in archaeological expeditions to

verify biblical narratives. Roth (1995: 32) proposes that Egyptology was founded by American and European scholars whose 'primary interest was in confirming and explicating the Old and New Testaments for the furtherance of Christianity'. Biblical archaeology does appear to have had a powerful influence on the choice of early expeditions, while the evidence suggests that cultural interest was both broader and more deeply embedded (Ucko and Champion 2003). The Egypt Exploration Society (EES), founded by British author Amelia Edwards and Reginald Stuart Poole of the British Museum, was initially conceived as the 'Egypt Exploration Fund': in order 'to explore, survey, and excavate at ancient sites in Egypt and Sudan, and to publish the results of this work' (EES 2016). Notably, however, early publications included *Route of the Exodus* (1885), *Tanis* (1885), *Naucratis* (1886 and 1888) and *Mound of the Jew* (1890). Subsequently, a mindfulness of the religious lens of early Western archaeologists, and its influence on their interpretation of Egyptian spirituality and religion, might be advised.

Resulting from the foundational era of Egyptology is a complex relationship with race sciences and ethnicity narratives, which retain powerful cultural capital to this day (Challis 2013; Trafton 2004). Ethnologists, such as Morton (1844, as cited in Champion 2003: 168–70) employed measurement of European, African and, notably, Egyptian skulls in the construction of *craniology*. These controversial race 'sciences' followed an ever-increasing trend towards measurement and classification, and were employed to support a belief in the historical superiority of the Caucasian race. This resulted in friction regarding the classification of the then highly regarded ancient Egyptians, who were subsequently recruited into this narrative as *dark skinned Caucasians* (Champion 2003). While the status of Egypt in Western dialogues is highly protean (Chapters 2 and 3), craniology played a significant role in the removal of pharaonic Egypt from its African surroundings. Contemporary class systems were also projected onto ancient Egypt; employing a blend of craniology, biblical scholarship and an examination of monumental architecture, Nott and Gliddon (1854, in Champion 2003: 173) published *Types of Mankind*, proposed as 'proof' of their agenda: the 'permanence of racial difference' (ibid.). Craniology and race sciences were strongly biased by their political and social contexts, having emerged from institutionalised efforts to justify the slave trade, and promote the developing field of eugenics. Writers such as Derry ([1914]

1956) would later postulate the existence of a ‘Dynastic Race’ which was distinct from the predynastic population of the Nile Valley, also termed the *Hamite Hypothesis*. While the use of race science would decline in popularity and legitimacy when faced with the horror perpetuated by the Nazis during the Second World War, the idea of a Dynastic Race endured for some time (Emery 1952). The *whitewashing* of the ancient Egyptians remains a controversial aspect of popular culture to this day, as witnessed in the furore surrounding the casting of the 2016 film *Gods of Egypt.*[2] Debates surrounding race, Afrocentrism and the location and legacy of Egypt are significant to this work, and are explored throughout the text.

An unforeseen result of the interaction between biblical and race narratives with ancient Egypt is the development of ‘pyramidology’. This continuing phenomenon is frequently associated with ‘lunatic fringe’ and so-called ‘pyramidiots’ (Petrie 1883), yet finds its origin where religious and racial archaeology intersect. John Taylor (1859) was one of the first ‘modern’ commentators to propose that the Great Pyramid embodied and employed mathematical ideas usually attributed to the Greeks, such as Pi, and explored the idea that the pyramid was a scale representation of the Earth itself. Significantly, however, Taylor was also among the first to propose the notion that the architect of the Great Pyramid was a ‘biblical Israelite’, more specifically, Noah (ibid.). After correspondence with Taylor, Piazzi Smyth (1864) set out to examine the pyramid for himself. His publication, *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (1864) expanded on Taylor’s theories, employing a detailed analysis and measurement to ‘prove’ that the monument was a ‘perfect structure’. Smyth suggested that the peoples of the Old Testament built the pyramid as an artefact of divine inspiration, and that its measurements were the embodiment of a scientific proof of Christianity. He expanded on Taylor’s (1859) hypotheses surrounding the so-called ‘pyramid inch’, based upon the earlier works of Greaves (1706). Taylor suggested that the pyramid inch was a version of the sacred cubits of the Israelites and, as such, contained a system of divine prophecy. While perhaps incongruous on the surface, such narratives were seemingly included to counter the rise of the French *metric system*, and were significant to the cause of British nationalism for a brief period (Bloxam 1932). Such theories were later to be debunked by writers such as Petrie (1883), who coined the term ‘pyramidiot’, and

generally dismissed the subject thereafter, though this did not remove Petrie himself from race narratives (Challis 2013). Theories supporting a constructed association between an *Anglo-Saxon race* and the *Biblical Lost Tribes* persist, however. Smyth's ideas were later appropriated by then principal of what was to become the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, eventual founder of their spiritual descendants, the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Watch Tower Society would abandon pyramidology, but the theories were to be assimilated in 1932 into the separate British Israelite movement with the publication of *God's Stone Witness* (Bloxam 1932). These narratives persist, and descendant groups of the British Israelites, such as the British Israel World Federation, still hold numerous volumes of pyramidology in their online store, including an intellectual descendant of the above texts, Riffert's (1960) *Great Pyramid Proof of God*.[3]

The above examples should illustrate the sometimes-pernicious political ideologies which surround and intersect with the subject of Egypt (Chapters 2 and 3). This issue is illustrated by Carruthers (2014a: 3), who notes a binary between 'an internal disciplinary world and an external world of other goings on'. The question of what constitutes the history of Egyptology and, leading from this, Egyptology itself, is of direct interest to this work, which deals in the characterisation of disciplinary trends and boundaries. Carruthers (2014a) notes, of efforts to understand *interactions* between Egyptology and ideology, that a form of ideological 'purification' may be present. His critique includes the example of the *Journal of Egyptian History*, with reference to Schneider (2012, in Carruthers 2014a), who traces biographies of German Egyptologists under the Nazi regime. Carruthers (2014a: 4) observes that Schneider's work seeks to disentangle German Egyptology (and Egyptology more widely) from those works which may have been influenced by the political ideologies of the era. This speaks to an implication, intentional or not, 'In this frame… that Egyptology is at heart a "pure" discipline, an ordered and stable set of practices that objectively inquire into and constitute what is understood of ancient Egypt' (ibid.). He highlights that such a model also implies that corresponding practices can 'after appropriate historical reflection' be thought to be 'separated from pernicious political "ideology"' (ibid.). As such, practices deemed as 'inappropriate' to 'scholarly inquiry' may be placed 'outside the Egyptological sphere' and the discipline progress to

‘better, implicitly more correct, work’ (ibid.). Carruthers additionally notes that histories of Egyptology can take on biographical form, which, to greater or lesser extent, celebrate the pioneer while naturalising the discipline. This, he argues, acts as an adjunct to the ‘thrust of the narrative’, characterised by an ‘heroic disciplinary genealogy’ (ibid.: 4–5). Such a practice is likened to a process of purification, whereby individual histories and narratives self-regulate what is deemed appropriate to the field. This is a powerful notion, crucial to studies of the ‘other’, or narratives which may be perceived as originating ‘outside’ this located and purified set of practices. Carruthers (ibid.: 7) highlights a set of *knowledge practices* ‘that constitute the proper object of a field of inquiry, practices that contain the source of that field’s continued reproduction and relevance’, which, significantly, set the rules ‘..of who can and cannot partake in it… defining the worlds in which the field can be said to be connected’. Carruthers’ observations of these questionable disciplinary boundaries are seemingly supported herein, particularly in the case of Naydler (2005), whose text, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, has potentially been denoted as situated ‘outside’ the ‘proper’ practice of Egyptology (Part 1). The practice of disciplinary purification may be thought of in terms of a number of more or less powerful ‘claims to authority’ (Carruthers 2014a: 7), which in turn suggest that the notion of an uncontested and naturalised Egyptology should be recurrently examined and never assumed. Supporting the notion that claims are situated is the account of Middle Eastern archaeology presented by Scham (2001: 183), who relates the circumstances of contested pasts in Jerusalem. Scham emphasis the notion of multiple ‘pasts’ due to the ‘multivocal’ nature of the debate: two archaeologists, a Palestinian Muslim and a secular Israeli Jew, presented their views. These were proceeded by questions from the audience, ‘Who was here first?… and Does it Matter?’ Scham suggests that ‘it clearly did matter to most of those present, including the speakers’. Scham notes that the ‘postmodern critique of objectivity’ is unfamiliar in this context, a region which offers the ‘most proof’ of the post-modern claim, ‘that ideological bias has overtaken even our best intentioned efforts to know the past’ (ibid.: 184). When examined within the context of the corresponding archaeological record one might concede that, in such circumstances, cognitive and political bias strongly dictate interpretation and practice. This leads Scham to conclude that ‘confronting ideology in archaeological interpretation is not a

matter of conjecture but one of *practice*' (ibid.: 186, emphasis added).

The study of Kemeticism inherently questions Egyptology's boundaries; it lays at the heart of discourse which antagonises the right and authority of contributions to the story and meaning of Egypt's past. There are exceptions to such a characterisation of Egyptology, and a number of increasingly sensitive and provocative studies have emerged in the wake of the millennium. Such works examine the discipline and its historical location and cultural and political impact: the UCL Press 2003 *Encounters with Ancient Egypt* series (Ucko 2003) details numerous interactions between Egyptology and public discourse, emerging from a symposium which questioned Egyptology's place in an increasingly pluralist world; Butler's (2007) Alexandria ethnography moves 'beyond visitor response' models to an understanding of colonial narratives on the natives of Egypt, exploding Western conceptions of 'loss' and the ownership of heritage; Reid (2002) and Colla (2007) trace the history of Egyptology as a means of projecting imperial power which perpetuates colonial discourse; Luckhurst (2012) and Riggs (2014a) both highlight, in different ways, the role of Victorian conceptions of death and the body in Egyptology's disciplinary objectification of the other; Moser (2006) examines the manner in which the past becomes 'fixed' through museum narratives and interactions with Egyptology; and El-Daly (2005) and Quirke (2010) highlight work by Arabic Egyptologists and labourers, respectively, de-privileging the laterality of European Egyptology. With the addition of Carruthers' (2014) insightful historiography, and many other papers and smaller studies, one might be forgiven for thinking that all was well within the discipline, that change was afoot. However, this book sits in accord with Riggs (2014a), who argues that, 'Without a significant realignment of priorities and multiplicity of voices, the study and presentation of ancient Egypt increasingly risk stagnation, and that is why critical analysis… is as urgent as it is essential' (ibid.: 4). As such, this work treats Egyptology as a recognisable discipline, but one that is not fixed in place. It may be, at times, characterised by the problems of purification and stagnation mentioned by Carruthers (2014a) and Riggs (2014a), but is a discipline capable of producing self-reflexive works, even if these are not yet the most dominant trends of the field. 'Egyptology', within this work, refers to a body of texts focused on ancient Egypt and surrounding discourse, which are preserved and perpetuated by academic institutions; subsequently,

‘Egyptologists’ are those academics self-identifying as such, or having produced such a text within the tenets of the academy. Within this volume, I argue against ‘straw-man’ constructs, which all too easily homogenise a range of practices. However, this work supports a recognition that Egyptology, however defined from without or within, is a politically located, post-colonial discipline which carries problematic histories and discourse in its wake, from which it cannot ever be entirely cleared (see below).

Bodies in discourse

In 2000, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology commissioned market research by the Susie Fisher Group (Fisher 2000). The objective of this exercise was to better understand their target audiences’ perception of and attraction to Egypt. The museum kindly provided me with a copy of the research findings; these had been the basis for a later article by former director of UCL museums, Sally MacDonald (2003), titled, ‘Lost in time and space: ancient Egypt in museums’. The research and article highlight the mythologised nature of the museum encounter, and the notion that Egypt is perceived as a ‘construct rather than a country’ (Fisher 2000: 48), free of concerns of geography and ‘historical fact’ (ibid.: 8). The research also emphasises the role of popular culture and tourism on this construct, while highlighting preconceptions revealed in their public consultation. This included responses to questions about Egypt from social groups consisting of children aged nine to ten who had studied Egypt in school, two groups who had visited Egypt – one of backpackers and an ‘older group who had been on a cruise or organised tour… and two groups of UK-born people aged 25–45 (one white and one non-white) who had never visited Egypt. Each group contained 6-8 respondents and each discussion session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes’ (MacDonald, S. 2003: 87). The *Egypt* presented by the research ‘retains its hold because it is a compelling myth’, one which is not concerned with remaining ‘pure’ and ‘historically accurate’ (Fisher 2000: 48). It is ‘peopled by pharaohs and slaves’ (MacDonald, S. 2003: 89) and the everyday person is unknown or little thought about (ibid.). Spontaneous reactions displayed an association with pyramids, tombs, mummies, gods, heat, sand, mystery and, somewhat significantly, *archaeology* (Fisher 2000: 10–13, 44).

Modern-day Egypt ‘becomes a magnificent obstacle course’ (ibid.: 15), something with which one must *contend* in order to see the ancient remains. Fisher’s results showed some bias against modern-day Egyptians, and disassociative trends which disinherit modern Egyptians from pharaonic heritage are also implied, ‘All-encompassing but disappeared without trace’ (ibid.: 20). Such a trend may be reflective of embedded colonial paradigms (Chapters 2 and 3). Interestingly, this phenomenon was also observed of questioned ‘non-white’ groups (a problematic category in itself, which implies a *normative* stance). Black respondents viewed Egypt as a stolen African cultural capital in which they had a vested interest. Questions regarding the current indigenous population were not extensively explored. Egypt’s geographical placement in the continent of Africa is often highlighted by advocates of Afrocentrism and, in this book, by the leader of Kemetic Orthodoxy (Chapter 6). Consideration of African origins has led to research into ethnicity and the origins of Egyptian civilisation by some Egyptologists and Africanists (Diop 1981; O’Connor and Reid 2003; Obenga 1992; Chapter 2). Fisher’s study does little to distinguish between modern and ancient conceptions of geography and race, however. Nobody is asked to consider what conceptions the ancients may have had of their own identity and geography (Fisher 2000: 48–9). Popular views on Egyptian religion were of interest to this work as, ‘The Ancient Egyptians are believed to have had a well-developed religion and this gives dignity and resonance to the culture’ (ibid.: 22). Egyptian religion is depicted by the respondents as somewhat a jumble of disassociated gods, yet still viewed with respect, ‘The ancient Egyptians were more spiritual than us. They had so many different gods. The same as the American Indians’ (Nile Cruiser, ibid.: 22). However, the overall impression of Egyptian religion from the respondents was one of solemnity, morbidity, mystery and the thrill of the supernatural (ibid.: 21–3). Little distinction is made between religion and magic by the interviewees, in contrast to Egyptological practices, which have highlighted (and even created) a distinction (Gary 1931; Ritner 1997). This book acknowledges an historical distinction, but does not subscribe to any inherent division of Egyptian magic from religion, as both terms are arguably contentious (Ritner 1997; Chapters 4 and 5). From Fisher’s (2000) findings, it was concluded that Egypt could support a wide variety of readings and interpretations, even those which are contradictory, and the narratives described above support this

idea. However, there are obvious limits to the application of Fisher's study and S. MacDonald's (2003) consequent article. While the methods used for data acquisition may have been appropriate for the aims of the Petrie Museum's audience reception programmes, they may not be representative enough for more general extrapolation. This work utilises aspects of Fisher's market research as a springboard into a larger framework, cognisant of the divergent approaches of Egyptian interest groups.

This book occupies an emergent space between public archaeology, museum engagement, reception studies and anthropological pagan studies, with some influence from the sociology of religion online. The growth of museum studies and public archaeology reflects an increased engagement with archaeology's audiences in globalised discourse. The repatriation of human remains by ancestral groups highlights that 'Scientists, professional archaeologists, and museum curators cannot make an exclusive claim to human remains' (Joy 2014: 18). These key issues are highlighted by discussions surrounding the Lindow Man exhibition at the Manchester Museum. The Lindow Man is the name attributed to the remains of an adult human male discovered at Lindow Moss near Manchester, in 1984. The display of the 2,000-year-old human remains in the latter part of the 1980s met little controversy (Sitch 2009: 51), but a new display, running from April 2008 to April 2009, 'proved to be unexpectedly controversial' (ibid.). Given that the Manchester Museum had participated in numerous repatriations (Morris 2003), staff were sensitive to emerging discussions surrounding the display of human remains – especially in light of the nearby Body Worlds exhibition, Gunther von Hagens' controversial display of plastinated corpses (Leake 2010; Sitch 2010: 370–1). As such, when the British Museum offered to loan the remains to the museum for display in 2005, staff were mindful to incorporate voices from the community, and consulted a range of professional and community representatives. These included museum curators, 'archaeologists, students, a member of the Manchester City Council, and pagans' (Sitch 2010: 372). Although it is noted that tensions arose when discussions became too prescriptive in terms of layout and design (ibid.: 374), there was agreement that the remains should be displayed with sensitivity and respect. An interpretative display was eventually agreed upon, incorporating multiple perspectives on the meaning of the Lindow Man. It was decided to explore Lindow Man's meaning, 'through the eyes of a

forensic scientist, a landscape archaeologist, two museum curators, the person who discovered the body, a former peat worker, a member of the Lindow community and a pagan' (ibid.: 375). Of these consultants, the pagan consultant is of direct interest to this study, being representative of a group which presents a special interest from a non-secular perspective. Pagans in the UK have been involved in requests to re-inter human remains, as a respectful treatment of what they feel can be reasonably considered their ancestors (Joy 2014; Restall Orr 2006). The pagan consultant was Druid priest and writer Emma Restall Orr, founder and council member of Honouring the Ancient Dead (HAD). Restall Orr stressed that death did not necessitate the removal of a member from a community, and that exposure to the human remains should be an optional aspect of the exhibition (ibid.; Sitch 2010). The museum claimed to be unable to accommodate this suggestion due to practical constraints and, indeed, this was apparently the case for many suggestions from the range of consultants. However, initially 'there was very positive feedback about the consultation' (Sitch 2010: 374). Reactions to the exhibit from its audience – and the consultants, themselves – were mixed, even 'vitriolic' (ibid.: 376). Local media were critical of the approach, 'how far should we allow spirituality into museums? Will it end with a priest; an imam and a "pagan" in institutions supposedly dedicated to reason not superstition… Just give us the facts please' (Scofield 2008, in Sitch 2010: 376). Others questioned the 'justification for including the voice of a pagan' alongside that of a forensic scientist (Sitch 2010: 376). Other critiques of the polyvocal approach focused on the attention these diverted from the Lindow Man himself and, while some found the exhibit – and the pagan perspective – 'refreshing', more 'traditional' museum goers 'clearly expected a straightforward presentation of Iron Age life' (Joy 2014: 16). Restall Orr welcomed the museum's inclusion of an offerings box, which the HAD requested for visitors to voluntarily leave tokens of respect. However, she felt that the exhibition had missed the key elements of the consultation, placing Lindow Man's display in the middle of the exhibition and not clarifying (or perhaps emphasising) the importance of the landscape and the Lindow Man's connection to it (Sitch 2010: 379). However, she 'acknowledged the courage of the Manchester Museum' and the 'radical, profoundly ethical vision based on sound consultation' with which staff approached the exhibition: 'That the remit provided by that consultation didn't produce quite what was expected is

perhaps a useful reminder about how we communicate and what it is that we share' (ibid.). It is interesting to note the prominence of the pagan consultant within these dialogues. Perhaps this was enhanced by the inclusion of voices which have been called marginalised (Restall Orr and Bienkowski 2006), and the subsequent controversy this raised. That Restall Orr (2006) does not claim to speak for all pagans is also an important point, which highlights that there is 'no single "Pagan voice" or group which represents all Pagan views', and not all pagans support reburial (Joy 2014: 12). The self-determination of the pagan identity and lack of corroborative identification are also paramount to discussions which seek to establish inclusive debate, as will be explored (Strimska 2005; Chapter 5). The exhibition itself was a 'success' as measured by attendance, and sparked academic response which was varied, but 'on the whole positive' (Sitch 2010: 380). Debates continue as to whether relinquishing their traditional role as gatekeepers is constructive or 'gratuitous' and self-destructive, but the challenging of traditional hierarchies has, arguably, added productive layers to museum discourse (Brown 2011; Exell 2013). It is interesting to note that one of the most controversial aspects of this exhibition, based upon public feedback, was the 'equality of authority' implied by the polyvocal approach. According to Sitch (2010: 386), the level of public criticism caught the museum staff off-guard, and the inclusion and elevation of consultants, and a pagan voice in particular, to the level of acknowledged experts was anathema to some contributors of the *Manchester Confidential* website and Lindow Man blog. This suggests that presenting all of the voices in the exhibition 'as of equal value' was interpreted by some as the 'de-privileging of traditionally authoritative figures such as a forensic scientist' (personal communication, Pete Brown, in Sitch 2010: 386). As such, the Lindow Man exhibition offers a thought-provoking example as to how debates sparked by inclusivism are becoming key in the interaction and representation of the ancient past to archaeology's audiences. Subsequently, the understanding of contemporary revivalism and reconstruction encountered in this work, and the communities that are given voice, should prove a useful contribution to this discussion, and hopefully become an important extension of reception studies. Additionally, concerns regarding the de-privileging of traditional authority tie debates on polyvocal inclusion into contemporary discussion on the authority of Egyptology/ists, explored above (Carruthers 2014).

Participation or pretence?

The subject and methodology of this work, while emerging from an 'Egyptology department', straddles and parallels emerging studies in anthropology. In her pioneering 1989 study of British witchcraft, Luhrmann (1989: 17) wrote 'I am one of the few anthropologists who could not be distinguished from their field. I am white, middle-class, and intellectual.' Such a position is now common in the ethnography of contemporary alternative religion and paganisms, leading to the dissolution of the most apparent boundaries between researcher and participant, and highlights an increased potential for transformative interactions. The value of emic (insider) research is becoming more widely accepted in the fields of anthropology and sociology. There are inherent difficulties in studying outsider narratives, not least of which is the ability to interpret and describe them using appropriate language and techniques. One concern is the notion of 'giving voice', which is not only a question of, to paraphrase Said (1989) – 'who speaks, for what and to whom', but also to recognise concerns of 'Who is not speaking?' (Hamer 1996); this remains an important consideration when interacting with participants and handling and interpreting findings. Additionally, the cultural lens through which the subject is viewed may be skewed by several biases, and the anthropological researcher is encouraged to be cognisant of their own positionality. One of the core aims of pagan studies is to engage *horizontally* and describe with empathy, even where true insider perspectives may not be available to 'objective' institutional worlds. However, within this emerging field there is a sense that pagans and neo-shamans have yet to be taken seriously by the establishment, with many studies thus far coming from an 'insider's' perspective: 'This does not mean that only insiders – Pagans – can produce quality research on Pagans; it does mean that to date, in the early years of researching Paganisms, practitioner/academic research has been the most productive' (Wallis 2004: 193). Wallis highlights a notion which reveals two core themes in this study of the 'other': that of the limitations and coercive influence of a positivist anthropological paradigm, and the ongoing dichotomy of insider/outsider duality. Until the rise of 'insider/researcher' (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006;

Pearson 2002b; Wallis 2003, 2004) this was a division often taken as 'self-evident' by the anthropological community (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006: 3). This phenomenon is not merely an historical product of the anthropologists' cultural separation from their subjects, however, but reflects the ideological boundaries which the field has constructed around itself. As a *descriptive* discipline, anthropology 'has a great archaeological interest in religion and magic', but as a normative discipline 'it represents the modern secular thought' (Salomonsen 2004: 48). Salomonsen claims this is exacerbated by the 'paradoxical structures' of anthropology, that one must interpret 'ethnographic phenomena horizontally' without 'going native' (ibid.: 47). The fear of 'going native', described by Pearson (2002b: 103) as 'one of the few taboos remaining in anthropology', reflects both ideological and practical concerns. On the one hand, the practitioner who 'goes native' might shift ideologically to the world-view of their subjects,[4] risks losing the ability to be reflexive (Salomonsen 2004: 43) and their perceived objectivity is challenged (Strimska 2005a). Equally, the researcher who acknowledges that their participants 'may know something about the human condition that might be personally valid also for the anthropologist' runs the risk of 'abandonment by the scientific community' (Salomonsen 1999: 7, in Wallis 2003: 7; also see Pearson 2002b: 103). This concern is reflected by the Kemetic *practitioner academics* noted herein (see Chapters 12 and 13). A dilemma might be seen to arise from what Wallis (2003: 3) terms 'science envy', which demands scholarly 'detachment' and reinforces the dualistic antagonisms of the insider–outsider divide. This may lead to the incongruity that the researcher is somehow expected to draw something valid from the observation of, or participation in, religious or spiritual practice, all the while 'recognising' that religious beliefs are 'inferior, cognitive representations that, in the era of modernity, both can and should be substituted for superior ones' (Salomonsen 2004: 47).

The research herein was obtained through the position of an 'informed' outsider, steeped in research and extensive correspondence rather than questionable attempts at participation (Chapter 6). Perhaps one 'can never enjoy full access to our respondents' mental worlds' (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006: 16), but while 'blindness' cannot be completely eradicated, an attempt to counter the effects of academic bias by employing the 'honesty' suggested

by the writers herein can be made. ‘Honesty’, in that one is ‘politically explicit’ (Wallis 2003: 7) without claiming ‘dubious credentials of objectivity’ (ibid.) which is potentially a cover for academic certitude. Such practice does not undermine the aim of objectivity; it forces researchers to antagonise the parameters of their own subjectivity (Strimska 2005a; Chapter 6). The aim is to recognise sympathies and antipathies for one’s research subjects, while acknowledging that the historian ‘cannot be separated from the history’ (Wallis 2003: 11), a point highlighted by the authors presented in Carruthers (2014). Likewise, self-aware ‘insider-researchers’ might blend their standpoint theory with ‘constructive criticism’ and ‘empirical enquiry’ (ibid.) all the while taking care not to simply impart an autobiographical account which ignores the larger context of their work. As such, I have not engaged in Kemetic religious rituals, nor shared in the practices of the reconstructionist movements in this work. I am, on reflection, sympathetic to their cause and this has likely been evident when conversing with certain key figures. My own religious views remain, as they have been from the start of this work, undefined. This study works under a model which allows for the individual’s freedom to choose their religiosity. It supports the notion of equality and validity in the *choice* of spiritual entities. It does not presume to pass judgement of the *actual existence* of such entities, as, in the context of this study, such a question is irrelevant. But in the spirit of Howell (2007: 385), who treats her Christian ethnography as a ‘view from somewhere’, I cannot claim immunity from the context of my secular upbringing and therefore must remain aware of my own preference and bias; I have attempted to treat the beliefs of the Egyptian reconstructionists with as much respect as any of the world religions, heightened by their sensitive status as a new, ‘subaltern’ religion with which I’ve had a great deal of contact. I must also acknowledge a bias of the work towards academic verification. After Howell, I realised that such tastes and sympathies could be treated as a ‘subject position’ situated within cultural climes, rather than a factor of ‘otherness’. As a researcher, I am subsequently encouraged to deal ‘honestly’ with the sympathies and compassion I may have developed for Kemetic practitioners. However, seeking to avoid ethical quandary, the research herein was obtained explicitly through consent informed by revealing my identity, academic associations and aims. Unlike Luhrmann (1989), I *intentionally* emphasised my ‘outsider status’, using methods such as questionnaires, and

initially faced a number of difficulties on Kemetic discussion forums because of this; members did not appreciate an academic researcher ‘plundering’ their virtual communities for information (Chapter 6). I was challenged repeatedly for several months when first attempting to undertake research on Kemetic Orthodoxy’s boards, for instance, by members who explicitly stated that they would *never* give permission for me to employ their names or comments within the study. Despite this, however, many members approached me directly, and were instrumental in aiding this research (Chapter 6).

Resulting from readings of ‘insider’ research, the many shortcomings of which ‘outsider’ studies are accused have been noted. As an agent of a secular discipline, arguably now participating in an ‘atheist hegemonic discourse’ (Ewing 1994, in Salomonsen 2004: 47), one faces the dilemma of missing the point with *analysis and categorisation* (see above), the very tools upon which the positivist discipline of Egyptology was founded (Moreno Garcia 2014). How could one hope to capture the ‘transformative potentials’ (Salomonsen 2004: 46) of the rituals and materials studied if I, like many ‘outsider’ researchers before me, simply applied ‘theory over findings’ (ibid.: 45) in a top-down hierarchical exercise? Attempts to understand the reconstructionist movement from the perspective of an insider may not have been truly possible in my own position (Chapter 6). So, I instead asked these communities and individuals to represent themselves, in their own words. This work has subsequently become centred on fair representation of intersubjectivities.

Reading this book

Part I focuses on prevalent cultural paradigms and establishes the context of the study. It examines how a legacy of colonial and museological practice have contributed to Egyptology’s sometimes regressive practices and relative isolation from parallel fields. I explore the sometimes-contradictory readings of Egyptian heritage/legacy as manifestations of social power/personal empowerment, cultural excorporation/incorporation and reclamation of grass-roots religion from institutionalised ideas of the identity of Egypt. These readings are often incongruous but not mutually exclusive, and demonstrate the ability of Egypt to support a multitude of oppositional views. Chapters 2

and 3 introduce the models employed throughout and interrogate academic boundary-marking by example of case studies (Naydler 2005). The mechanisms by which these resources are commodified and cycle between both *institutionally endorsed* and *resistant readings* are explored.

Readers wishing to forego the theoretical debates of Part I may move straight into Part II with few problems. Beginning with Chapter 4, Part II examines the religion of ancient Egypt and seeks to understand what might be left in the record to revive or reconstruct. Egyptologists are less than harmonious regarding the existence of religiousity and piety in ancient Egypt, and in these chapters the intersection of state and domestic religion are explored with reference to Gramscian models of social power and resistance. These relationships are found to be interdependent, in some cases, and potentially resistant, in others. I propose a notion that state religion did not necessarily descend deterministically from elites down to population, so much as provide the *means* for the creation of individual religiousity. These chapters highlight questions for Egyptology inspired by the practices of my participants, and it is my hope that they will contribute to Egyptological approaches to religiousity as a set of *processes*, rather than crystallised phenomena. The establishment of *piety* in ancient Egypt may create space for reconstruction in contemporary settings, despite vastly different socio-political contexts, providing a 'bridge' to the past for many modern practitioners.

Chapter 6 informs Part III, which concentrates on fieldwork methodology and key themes of paganism and Kemeticism, introducing readings of foundational 'esoterica'. This chapter also details the ways that the qualitative study was approached. Following my training in ethical research at UCL, it was decided early in the study that all research would be gained through explicit informed consent; to this end I employed legal disclaimers and a web page detailing the study's aims, along with my academic 'credentials' (which may also be interpreted as 'positionality').[5] Subsequently, this study straddles the etic/emic divide by underpinning 'outsider' critiques with the words of my informants wherever possible. This has the advantage of safeguarding against misrepresentation, and provides space for the insights of these situated insiders.

Chapters 7 through 12 explore the fieldwork findings through Kemetic

Orthodoxy (7); schisms; splinter movements; solo practitioners (8); and the reconstuctionists of the Temple of Ra and the Kemetic Temple of San José (8). Ideologies (9); Practices (10); and Objects (11) are then examined. This is followed by the Discussion (12), which seeks to critically evaluate responses, and the Conclusion (13), which seeks to synthesise the three parts of this work into a cohesive whole. The Conclusion asks what Kemeticism and academia can teach each other, highlighting the current one-way interaction between the two. Additionally, counter to the cultural commentators herein, the idea that the meaning of symbols may not be culturally bestowed is discussed through aesthetic theory – as an adjunct to works that posit Egyptian motifs as early examples of Jungian archetypes (Rice and MacDonald 2003; Chapters 11 and 12). This is critically approached to problematise the theoretical framework employed herein and address the seemingly continuous appeal of Egypt throughout history (albeit embedded in Western perspectives).

There is an emerging trend among adherents of reconstructed Egyptian religion to go 'back to the source' and establish practices which bypass the last 2,000 years of intellectual lineage. It is not the intention of this work to determine the possibility, validity or authenticity of Kemeticism itself, or declare if it is possible for Kemetics to contact their deities. Between extensive correspondence with leading figures from Kemetic movements spanning over eight years, forum participation and the inclusion of Kemetic material (LaBorde 2010; Reidy 2010; Siuda 2004, 2005, 2005a, 2006), and the incorporation of pagan studies and sociological studies of Kemeticism (Krogh and Pillifant 2004, 2004a), this volume collects a substantial and fairly representative 'snapshot' of the cultural moment spanning the years of study (2008–12) with amendments and updates from 2015–16. Attempts have been undertaken to understand the context of participants' subject worlds and strengthen the legitimacy and relevance of their responses with thorough contextualisation (Chapter 6–11).

This research raises questions on perpetual cultural stereotyping, the nature of authenticity, the standing of Egyptology in the public eye and the status assigned to knowledge production. Kemeticism holds the potential to offer fresh, alternative perspectives on many aspects of Egyptian religion, and even expose Egyptology's disciplinary oversights. Issues regarding gender, taboo and the technical details of Egyptian ritual may well benefit from the

phenomenological approach of Kemetic ‘insiders’. However, it would be remiss not to note that the ‘New Religious Movements’ explored provide support for their members in the form of communities and interpersonal relationships; in addition to providing a framework of responses and support to the difficulties of daily life, and the heartfelt expression of personal faith. The validity of such is not open to question herein, rather it is the intersect of Kemeticism and Egyptology which is the focus. This is not the final word on Kemeticism. It is a snapshot and a first step, which I hope, in the tradition of Wepwawet, will open the way to further dialogues.

Notes

1 ‘Black Land’ is employed within Egyptology in an almost exclusively agricultural context, used to describe the fertile banks of soil framing the Nile river after inundation (Snowden 1996), rather than, where ‘Black’ refers to ethnicity as understood in modern terms (Diop 1974). These debates are subject to scrutiny in Bernal (1987), Diop (1981), Lefkowitz (1996, 1996a), MacDonald, K.C. (2003), Obenga (1992), among others mentioned herein (Chapter 3).

2 http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/nov/13/gods-of-egypt-posters-anger-whitewashed-cast-twitter-exodus. It is interesting to note that a 2016 production of the Philip Glass opera, *Akhenaten*, with a similarly white-dominated cast, has thus far escaped such controversy (February 2016).

3 http://www.covpub.co.uk/search.php?Search=pyramid&Submit=Go%21

4 Wallis (2003: 4) employs the term ‘collaborators’ to highlight the two-way learning process involved in post-modern ethnographic work.

5 http://profaneegyptologists.blogspot.co.uk/2009/06/what-is-project-legal-notes.html

2 Establishing orthodoxy

The Napoleonic expedition of 1798 is said to mark the birth of modern Egyptology and the first major incursion of Western imperialism into the Middle East (Jeffreys 2003). Though primarily a strategic move regarding Britain's access to India, for many in the West it represented a military action designed to liberate the inhabitants of Egypt from the oppressive rule of its Mamluk leaders. Napoleon employed the evocation of Greek Classical figures in this venture, and likened himself to a modern Alexander the Great, marching into a welcoming Egypt and overthrowing an 'illegitimate' ruling class. The reality of the situation is somewhat different, and the contemporary Egyptian likely perceived only the exchange of one form of oppression for another (Reid 2002). The cultural impact of this enterprise was undeniable, however. The weight of scholarly attention employed by Napoleon's savants opened Egypt to Western audiences on a scale previously unseen, inspiring artist, writers, poets and, later, filmmakers, heralding the beginning of the phenomenon of *Egyptomania*. A curious development, Egyptomania is often treated with some sense of ambivalence within Egyptology, as manifestations are often indelicate, exploitative and unreflective. Frequently, examples from popular culture and advertising liberally 'borrow' the aesthetics and terminology of pharaonic Egypt to employ them out of context, adequate for entertainment, but often not considered worthy of serious academic study.[1] Rice and MacDonald (2003) describe the emergence of a fictional 'Supra-Egypt', free of the restraints of historical and geographical concerns. Supra-Egypt issues forth from myth, a result of its imposing monuments, beautiful artefacts and romanticised personalities.

Paradoxically, a sense of exoticism and mystery endures despite a perceived familiarity with Egypt in the West (Moreno Garcia 2014; Rice and MacDonald 2003). Famously a victim of its success, pharaonic culture remains popular with casual observer and amateur detective alike. A broad

interest in history, but dissatisfaction with the explanations of academics, has resulted in the emergence of 'alternative' archaeologies, which position themselves counter to the establishment, often among accusations of the suppression of (often far more fantastical) 'truths'. The potential for individual investigation, encouraged by resurgent cyclical trends of Egyptomania (often prompted by discoveries, tours and even the calendar) and further enabled by the information age, make Egypt a highly contested hotbed for discussion.[2] Over time, and seemingly as a reaction to this, Egyptology's 'orthodoxy' developed, defined as much, if not more, by its opponents as it was the Egyptologists themselves (Picknett and Prince 2003; Roth 1995; Scham 2003). Ultimately, this resulted in the marking of boundaries, and a perceived set of binary oppositions: 'professional' vs 'fringe theory', 'us' vs 'them'. The reality is far closer to a spectrum of practices, as will be explored, but the result, in practice, is that works which aimed to reinterpret or revise established theories often struggled to penetrate the discipline from without, or risked marginalisation and consignment to the 'lunatic fringe' from within (Naydler 2005; Roth 1998; Scham 2003).

However, the criteria for acceptance by the academy are not always clear-cut and can be reflective of overarching cultural trends, including those set in motion many years prior in the foundational years of Egyptology, and the broader pressures of normative secular disciplines (Salomonsen 2004; Wallis 2004). Such factors could feasibly reflect and exacerbate the insular nature of Egyptology, a discipline of which the 'vast data set', 'has tended to be a closed territory', despite 'cross-boundary potential' (Riggs 2014a: 2). As far back as 1979, Donald Redford (1979: 12) noted that the phenomenon of conferences for Egyptologists by Egyptologists might only intensify matters: 'Egyptologists have generally favoured secession by Egyptologists from large Oriental congresses and the setting up of conferences specifically devoted to Egypt. Won't such self-imposed isolation tend to increase our blindness?' Redford noted the irony that the insular nature of Egyptology reflects the enclosed environment of the Nile Valley itself, musing that this may very well be a contributing factor. This problem has since been recognised (Moreno Garcia 2014; Jeffreys 2003; Wengrow 2003) and is being gradually addressed, though not exclusively by Egyptologists.[3] Redford (1979) also critiques the underdeveloped field methodology of the era when

compared to complementary fields, with particular reference to stratigraphy and recording.[4] As Moreno Garcia (2014: 56) notes, 'philology, digging, and the study of beautiful objects left little time, opportunity, or consideration for more in-depth attention to theoretical or comparative issues or, simply, for dialogue with other disciplines'. This reflects both the mortuary bias in the record and the culture-historical trends of the discipline's foundations (Colla 2007; Jeffreys 2003). The foundational model of discovery and acquisition dies hard, and hermeneutics often take a back seat to display, a testimony to the discipline's museological origins (Moreno Garcia 2014; MacDonald, S. 2003; Moser 2006). Describing the British Museum's acquisition strategy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Stephanie Moser (2006: 219) observes that the possession of aesthetic qualities was the primary motivating attribute for acquisition and display. This situation is potentially exacerbated by the compartmentalisation and specialisation of museums over time. Different periods, areas and even categories from the same period are often managed by different departments, with increasingly divergent goals, while curatorial influence wanes as museums become more commercialised. It has been noted that, 'much of the presentation of archaeological material is geared to the instant appreciation and visual stimulation demanded by the video generation; like fast-food, there is a "fast-past"' (Yoffee and Sherratt 1993: 1).

On balance, the relatively high public profile of Egyptology requires that Egyptologists are often forced to defend their position against the criticisms and revisions of other views of the past. One of the problems arising from the aforementioned creation of binary positions is the caricatured portrayal of academic Egyptologists as narrow-minded conservative rationalists begrudgingly forced to respond to alternative polemics by the media (noted by both Roth 1998, and Picknett and Prince 2003). Worse yet, there is a sense of reductionism from both orthodox and alternative camps that is not truly reflective of the *range* of opinion and research of both parties. Analysis of events and players involved in Egyptomania highlight that, if anything, these boundaries are far more permeable than commonly envisaged, such as when academic Egyptologists allied with 'alternative theorists' due to the very public attention placed on the Giza plateau during the run-up to the end of the last millennium (Picknett and Prince 2000, 2003). However, to cross this

perceived division from within academia, or show interest in areas deemed too esoteric or mystical, can cause career anxieties, as reflected in the concerns of anthopological participant observers such as Luhmann (1989), Pearson (2002), Salomonsen (2004) and Wallis (2003, 2004).

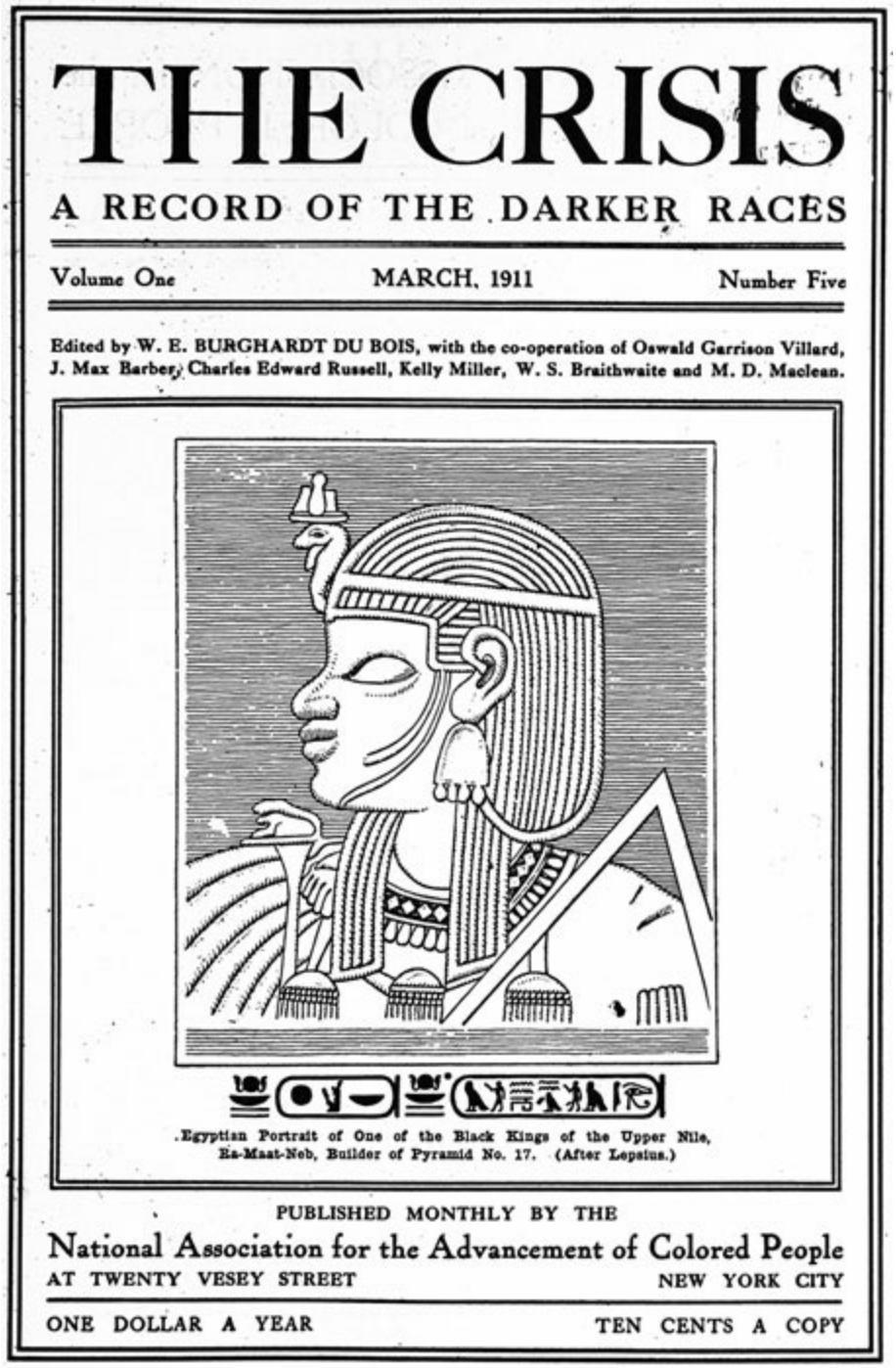
Wallis asserts that 'Archaeologists have only recently come to consider "world religions" such as Buddhism and Islam… let alone contemporary "religious" practices such as neo-Shamanisms' (Wallis 2003: 10). For Wallis, academic marginalisation of this kind reflects a 'hegemony implicit in archaeological/anthropological discourses… in which it is assumed that "science" is the base-line, and holds the *real* answers, while alternative archaeologies are misguided "pseudo-science"' (ibid.). He ascribes the 'positivist's denial' to a 'vestige of imperialism' (ibid.: 8) and such vestiges are overwhelmingly present within the contours of Egyptological discourse (Butler 2007, 2008; Colla 2007; Reid 2002). Arguably, this is not simply a result of the 'developed' West's judgemental monologue on the 'exotic' East, but a facet of the foundational principles of the discipline itself (Saadawi 1997; Said 1978). Therefore, to engage such contention, I will explore the assertion that the former two centuries of Egyptology have both reflected and perpetuated a positivist hegemonic discourse.[5] As Meskell (1997: ¶ 5) succinctly states, 'It is now axiomatic that not all pasts are equal.'

The study of Kemeticism's encounters with Egyptology highlights the often-unequal interactions between disciplines and their audiences. To understand how these interactions are framed within a hierarchy, the theories of Gramsci (1891–1937) and John Fiske (1989, 2003) are employed. Fiske proposes that commodities may be used to construct 'meanings of self, of social identity, and social relations' (2003: 112). Fiske's (1989, 2003) theories utilise the concept of *culture as a commodity*, a categorisation I apply to 'Egypt' in certain contexts within this work reflective of the manner in which Egypt is frequently commoditised by capitalist ventures such as advertising and cinema, reproduced in museums and bazaars as replicas, and applied to unrelated material as a form of *branding.* As a form of historical branding, few other civilisations compete with the rich aesthetics of Egypt (Rice and MacDonald 2003).

Fiske (1989, 2003) describes a recurrent cycle of what he terms *incorporation* and *excorporation.* When a party wishes to subvert the

resources of the dominant system, they partake in what Fiske (2003: 114) terms cultural excorporation, 'the process by which the subordinate make their own culture out of the resources and commodities provided by the dominant system'. This is central to popular culture in Fiske's model, and to this enterprise, for he further posits that, in an industrial society, the resources from which the subordinate creates subcultures are provided 'by the system that subordinates them'.[6] Take, for example, the grass-roots movement of Afrocentrism found in publications such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP's)[7] *The Crisis* magazine, published in the early twentieth century (Lewis 2009; Figure 2.1). This magazine was the one of the earliest examples of the strategic use of Egyptian-themed imagery as a resistant reading of the origins of the African diaspora. The depiction of ancient Egyptians as distinctly African capitalised on the Western popularity of Egypt in that period, and popular perceptions of Egypt's importance to Western civilisation. Such a depiction, an *excorporation*, could have been highly controversial in the USA in this period, and represents an early manifestation of debates which would reach new heights in the *culture wars* of the 1990s (Chapter 3). However, due to the commodified nature of Egypt in this context, one of rich symbol and aesthetic, the system controls and co-opts dissent by incorporating this reading – in this case, for example, casting Gina Torres, an African American actress, as Cleopatra in the television show, *Xena: Warrior Princess*. The resistant has been incorporated by the establishment. What Fiske is describing is the manner in which subcultures and resistant readings are noted by the establishment, or dominant force (in this case free-market capitalism), and adopted, adapted and re-manufactured by the producers of commodities, and then *sold back to those groups*. They are no longer subversive, but on trend, and *incorporated* into the ruling system, because 'incorporation robs subordinate groups of any oppositional language they may produce: it deprives them of the means to speak their opposition and thus, ultimately, of their opposition itself. It can also be understood as a form of containment' (Fiske 2003: 114). Notably, however, the use of such incorporations carries no guarantor as to their actual acceptance, and such depictions can be easily usurped and replaced when market forces dictate. One recent example is the casting of white Europeans as Egyptian deities in the 2016 film *Gods of*

Egypt, despite decades of high-profile debates on Egyptian ethnicity (Chapter 3). Incorporation, then, is 'a permitted and controlled gesture of dissent that acts as a safety valve [which] thus strengthens the dominant social order by demonstrating its ability to cope with dissenters or protesters' (ibid.). This phenomenon is of particular relevance to contemporary debates framed in post-industrial capitalism, particularly high-profile political debates such as Afrocentrism – which face the challenge of working through deeply entrenched Western epistemes in the foundation of new modes of resistant dialogue (Chapter 3). Fiske's model may also be employed to examine ancient evidence for resistance and dissent, as explored in Chapter 4's investigation of piety.



THE CRISIS

A RECORD OF THE DARKER RACES

Volume One MARCH, 1911 Number Five

Edited by W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS, with the co-operation of Oswald Garrison Villard, J. Max Barber, Charles Edward Russell, Kelly Miller, W. S. Braithwaite and M. D. Maclean.

Egyptian Portrait of One of the Black Kings of the Upper Nile, Ra-Maat-Neb, Builder of Pyramid No. 17. (After Lepsius.)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

AT TWENTY VESEY STREET NEW YORK CITY

ONE DOLLAR A YEAR TEN CENTS A COPY

Figure 2.1 *The Crisis*, March 1911.

Fiske's theories propose a perpetual cycle of incorporation by elites, excorporation by subaltern groups and reincorporation, ad infinitum. Of course, one could argue that ancient Egyptian resources were not created

within the framework of our industrialised society, and arguably should not be considered the same kind of commodity. However, recent research highlights the role of the West in the construction of modern conceptions of Egypt, that this 'Egypt' is not a geographical fact so much as an historical construct, an Egypt that is as much a result and constituent of modern culture as other cultural resources (Colla 2007; Fisher 2000; MacDonald and Rice 2003). Should these approaches be viewed as appropriation or simply a 'non-traditional' interpretation? Viewing material in this manner, I am forced to consider if this is a discourse of social hegemony and personal empowerment and, further, how these conflicting patterns operate and interact in the arena of social discourse.

This model proposes that Egyptology's interactions in the public sphere are subject to forces of cultural hegemony. Hegemony, like culture, is a concept fraught with challenges. It is a way of marking out ever-shifting, highly protean relationships of *power* which can 'assume quite different forms in different contexts' (Crehan 2002: 101). Hegemony may be employed to describe the processes by which a dominant class enforces and reinforces economic, political and *ideological* power over others. It is a sense of reality for most people in society (Williams 1977: 100), which goes 'beyond culture' (ibid.: 108).[8] In other words, hegemony is 'rule by stealth', the exploitation of culture, manipulation of values and the neutralisation of political and cultural leaders (Day 2006: 10). Fiske (1989: 2) speaks of cultural resources carrying the interests of the 'economically and ideologically dominant'; 'they have lines of force within them that are hegemonic and work in favour of the status quo'. However, he emphasises that hegemonic power relies on the *interplay between power and resistance*. This ensures that all commodities, in order to become successful within culture, must contain within them contradictory 'lines of force' which can be utilised by the consumer,

> If the cultural commodities or texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not become popular.
>
> Ibid.

I contend that Egyptian material, and readings thereof, contain such *lines of force*, which are utilised in divergent ways by Egypt's audience, such as the Afrocentric and so-called alternative approaches explored herein. I also treat Egyptian material as a 'text' to be *decoded*, in Stuart Hall's ([1980] 1993) model, or *interpreted* in Stanley Fish's (1980). The understanding of Egypt's 'texts' (and in this context I refer to all its materials, not simply its writings) and sources is fragmentary, and relies upon many decades of sometimes contradictory research. Additionally, within the popular realm, is the phenomenon of piling 'fantasy on illusion', which leads to sometimes confused and muddied interpretations (Rice and MacDonald 2003: 8). Even when dealing with the same original material, appropriations and interpretations will vary remarkably, and the nature of this variation often reflects its context.

One example of this is the 2005 volume, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, by Jeremy Naydler, a radical reinterpretation of said Pyramid Texts.[9] The work was an extension of Naydler's PhD, and in addition to the insightful examination of the texts themselves, Part 1 serves as a critique of the history of Egyptological bias and positivism. His central argument states that the Pyramid Texts represent a corpus of mystical wisdom, akin to that found in modern conceptions of shamanism.[10] Naydler argues that this conception, one of Egyptian religion intended for the *living*, has been marginalised since the foundation of positivist trends in Egyptology, and asserts that the dismissal of ancient Egyptian mysticism as 'fringe' can be traced back to the foundational practices and perceptions of early Egyptologists: 'From the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been a broad consensus within Egyptology against the existence of any form of mysticism in ancient Egypt' (ibid.: 3).

This consensus, Naydler asserts, stems from questions of definition, cultural and religious bias, positivism and post-enlightenment thinking, leading to an emphasis on a *funerary* rather than mystical interpretation of Egyptian religious practices. Subsequently, one might acknowledge two criteria when viewing Naydler's work: the assertion that there exists a mystical phenomenon in Egyptian literature (specifically the earliest surviving Egyptian literature) and that increasingly positivist trends in Egyptology have marginalised any interpretation of Egyptian ritual practices

other than funerary. Both assertions have powerful ramifications for my own project and, as such, deserve attention in this book. However, it is necessary to unpack and critique some of Naydler's historiography, if only to better understand where his arguments are supported in the record.

Naydler's theories involve the expansion of both the nature and extent of Egyptian achievements. Naydler traces the 'fall of Egypt' in a manner evocative of Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987). Naydler cites the elevated position of Egypt in the minds of the Greeks and Romans, highlighting their perception of the *mystical* basis of Egyptian religion and Egypt's reputation as the 'fountainhead of esoteric knowledge and wisdom' (Naydler 2005: 22). He notes that Greek and Roman accounts are respectful and sensitive towards the deeper spiritual import of Egyptian religion, that 'mystical experience was the wellspring of this esoteric wisdom'. This mystical interpretation, which is examined in turn, is a supporting argument for Naydler's later revision of Egyptian religion,

> Indeed, not a single commentator seems to have thought the funerary cult held a paramount place in ancient Egyptian religious life. Instead of the funerary cult, we find writers such as Herodotus, Plutarch, and Iamblichus referring a great deal to mysteries, initiation, and mystical experience… Greek religion and philosophy were often portrayed as but a pale reflection of the earlier Egyptian wisdom.
>
> Ibid.: 23

This is ostensibly a valid point, though a reliance upon sources such as Herodotus, Plutarch and secondary readings of these sources by Bernal (1987) does not lend Naydler's argument the support one might assume. As in *Black Athena*, the text does little to address disagreements between Classical authors, failing to consider the biases and motivations of ancient commentators, while conversely highlighting the biases of modern scholars. Naydler neglects to note that contrary accounts appear in later periods (Kákosy 1995).[11] Lefkowitz (1996) describes Greek and Roman perceptions and 'misconceptions' of Egyptian religion at length, as have numerous responses to Bernal from the field of Classics (Lefkowitz and Rogers 1996; North 2003; Snowden 1996), though these are largely unaddressed. Naydler

instead follows the premise set by early Freemasons, accrediting a *mystery religion* to Egypt. The work adheres to the notion that Greek and Roman commentators, 'had the advantage of direct or indirect contact with contemporary Egyptian priests… were spiritually far closer than we… and for this reason their testimony carries considerable weight' (Naydler 2005: 23), even though Naydler acknowledges that: 'In most other respects, our knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture is far more accurate and comprehensive than that of the ancient Greeks and Romans, who, with a few exceptions (like Pythagoras), were not able to read hieroglyphs' (ibid.). The work could consider the negative perceptions from corresponding Greek and Roman sources, which sometimes derided and lampooned Egyptian religion for its animal-headed deities (DuQuesne 2003).[12] There are some sources which deny concepts of mysticism in Egypt and disparage it where recognised, but such sources also go unaddressed (Pliny or Heraclitus, in Hornung 2001: 25). The question remains, if the ancient Greeks and Romans held Egyptian religion in such high esteem, and indeed understood it as well as Naydler (and Classical sources) claim that they do, why do Greek and Roman mystery traditions *appear* to be so fundamentally different in character from Egyptian religious practice? While there are discussions on the *Book of Gates* and *Book of Two Ways* which *support* potential for mysticism in Egypt (Federn 1960; Pinch 2002; Wente 1982), many of the arguments levelled against Bernal (1987), see next chapter, apply to Naydler's (2005) treatment of Classical sources, a common problem in the mythologisation of Egypt's past.

To attribute to the Egyptians possibly greater accomplishment than their already substantial achievements, particularly in the areas of scientific, mathematical and architectural advancement, is not uncommon, and has been a matter of debate for centuries.[13] Roth (1998: 224) argues that the field of Egyptian achievement is frequently employed to bolster the legitimacy of spurious claims, and that 'Egypto-mystics [in addition to Afrocentrists]… tend to glorify Egyptian achievements, in both the technological and intellectual spheres, and hope to show that the Egyptians had greater knowledge and skills than has been acknowledged by Egyptologists.' There are interesting arguments on both sides, and it is easy to become invested in debates which may not be supported by substantial evidence. But what of

evidence which might be passed over due to institutional positivism and bias?

The Napoleonic expedition led to the subsequent foundation of Western Egyptology[14] and the eventual translation of hieroglyphs and Egyptian texts, to which Naydler (2005: 24–5) attributes the realignment of Egyptology from a position of genuine reverence to conceiving Egyptian religious literature as 'riddled with primitive superstition and muddled, if somewhat grandiose, beliefs'. Supporting this notion, Naydler cites the opinion of Maspero on his original translation of the Pyramid Texts 'that they… did not show any of the profound wisdom that others (before him) had seen in them' (Maspero 1893: 277, in Naydler 2005: 24), and highlights concomitant comments by Erman that the Pyramid Texts were a 'jumble' of 'confusion' (Erman 1907: 98–9, in Naydler 2005: 24). Erman went further to suggest of the *Book of the Dead* that it 'scarcely repays the labor of attempting to disentangle it' (ibid.: 113, in Naydler 2005: 24). Naydler highlights a number of other Egyptologists, from Peet (1934) to Hornung (1992), to support a model of Egyptological insularity. Naydler's argument is certainly not unfounded, though he somewhat neglects a longstanding tradition within Egyptology dealing with aspects of spiritualism, as shall be explored. Further, not all such treatments have been so dismissive. For instance, the complexities of dealing with hermeneutics in Egyptology were tackled by Bleeker (1967: 1–15) and Weeks (1979: 59–75) many decades ago, where they argue a now common mantra: that we must be careful not to project our own cultural biases onto ancient Egyptian works. In addition, as far back as 1959, Clark (1959: 12) writes,

> The study of Egyptian religion is still in its infancy. In the last few years there has been a notable tendency to treat the texts with greater respect for their contents than was usual a generation ago. The religious literature cannot be understood without some sympathy for the outlook of its authors.

Naydler acknowledges the work of Wente (1982), and the works of Federn (1960) and Roberts (2000), all of which deal with the concept of mysticism in some manner. He claims these as minority voices, however, and while located 'within' Egyptology this 'alternative stream of thought' is not 'compatible with the underlying philosophical orientation of the discipline…

Egyptology has used the funerary interpretation as a bulwark against the infiltration into Egyptological thinking of mystical and esoteric perspectives' (Naydler 2005: 46–7). That there have been overarching *trends* towards funerary interpretations within Egyptology *is* indisputable, but there are an increasing number of notable exceptions to such trends, as shall be discussed.

That the 'underlying philosophical orientation' of Egyptology should be periodically revised, or even critically re-evaluated, is a potent idea which should be addressed. However, 'Egyptology' does not necessarily conform to the construct Naydler describes. It is not an entity disassociated from its practitioners. The notable exceptions to the funerary interpretation which Naydler mentions are significant contributors to the discipline. To propose that Assmann's or Wente's work are minority voices, marginalised by the larger contours of Egyptology, is a controversial point which requires more substantiation than provided. The Egyptology Naydler describes displays some signs of a constructed straw-man. The strength of academic investigation does not lay in textual knowledge or technical skills (although these are of irrefutable value when contextualising the past), but rather in the attempt to be critical of evidence. One might find examples from within and without academia of predetermined hypothesis leading to unsupportable assertions, but the overall *objective* of any thorough study is to draw hypotheses from data by finding the 'consistent patterns' in it (Roth 1998: 228). In this sense, the problem lies not within the aims of the academy, but rather in recognition of a researcher's *standpoint*, and the construction of knowledge with light to distortions caused by contextual biases.

Revisionist arguments, ranging from reconsiderations of religious material, to politics, mathematics, philosophy and genealogy, could be viewed as dialectical when examined in Saler's (2006) terms. Saler traces the historiography of 'modernity' and 'enchantment', antagonising the binary opposition of the two concepts, ultimately asserting the permeability of boundaries and the multi-valency of the terminology involved. Naydler's exposition fits the somewhat antiquated models of binary opposition; he co-opts Egyptian religion for the living over the dead, he delineates boundaries between disciplines in an Enlightenment manner and draws a line in the sand beyond which Egyptology cannot pass. In this sense the work appears to assume that the majority of Egyptological approaches to spiritualism conform to a binary model, all the while supporting the implicit assumptions of a

dialectical approach. A binary approach depicts ‘contemporary turns to the irrational and spiritual as atavistic and marginal reactions to the rational and secular tenets of modernity’, whereas the dialectical approach ‘posits modernity itself as inherently irrational, a mythic construct no less enchanted than the myths it sought to overcome’. So-called ‘universal promises’ are exposed as ‘self-interested ideologies, false consciousness, and bad faith’ (Saler 2006: ¶ 14).[15] Such ‘either/or’ approaches are challenged by recent re-evaluation of concepts of ‘modernity’, however, reflective of a critical scrutiny of distinctions between ‘modernity and tradition’ and ‘secularism and superstition’ inspired by post-modern and post-colonial debate (ibid.: ¶ 18; Partridge 2004). Saler asserts that ‘universal’ distinctions cannot endure ‘when viewed from the “periphery” of non-Western cultures negotiating processes of modernization in complex ways’ and that binary and dialectical approaches ‘are in the process of being replaced by the recognition that modernity is characterized by fruitful tensions between seemingly irreconcilable forces and ideas’ (ibid.: ¶18–19). However, that such studies have been influenced by overarching trends towards positivism becomes a potent assertion. Even where early ‘forward-thinking’ Egyptologists such as Clark (1959) recognise that ‘The rationalistic and slightly contemptuous objectivity of the traditional Orientalist can no longer be upheld in this field’ (ibid.: 13), he still upholds implicitly positivist and essentialist notions: that myth had a dual purpose both ‘cosmological’ and ‘psychological’ (ibid.: 32–3) and that:

> psychologists and anthropologists have been showing with increasingly convincing evidence that the major psychic, religious and social problems are common to all mankind. If then, the thinking of any people makes no sense to us it must be that we have not yet understood the unfamiliar terms in which it is presented.
>
> Ibid.: 11

In his model, everything obscure or occult about this civilisation may be explained by further dissection and reclassification into existing models of categorisation.

The acceptance (or denial) of the marginalisation proposition subsequently

rests on an understanding of the present state of Egyptology. This notion is complex, as it is both a continuation of the practices of imperialist and colonialist forebears and a reaction to, and criticism of, such practices. If Egyptology can be characterised by 'fruitful tensions' between seemingly 'irreconcilable' ideas, Naydler's argument is harder to support. If, however, there is a notable trend towards positivism and marginalisation, it would lend validity to this claim. On the surface, overarching trends within Egyptology eventually follow more general social and academic trends. Diachronically, Egyptology has proceeded from Renaissance interest, which piqued the curiosity of the earliest travellers. The 'culture-historical' approach developed alongside broader trends in archaeology, until Flinders Petrie (1890, 1891) developed what was to become the foundation of modern archaeology, utilising models of classification and seriation, with lesser acknowledged contributions from others.[16] Petrie's work inspired the beginning of what recent commentators have termed 'scientific' *Egyptology* as an 'ology' or 'science' (Scham 2003; Wengrow 2003: 193).

In the present day, forensic archaeology, emblematic of a broader scientific paradigm, is now a favoured method in the examination of Egyptian human remains, a somewhat ironic continuation of the 'traditional' examination of mummies, once a spectacle for Victorian voyeurs (Riggs 2014a).[17] Overall, despite some accusations towards Egyptology that it is 'behind' other fields, methodologically and theoretically, this still reflects the trend towards positivism and notions of progress, both of which have contributed towards the delineation of the boundaries of the field.[18] These boundaries are the crux of the issue, for they define, to varying degrees, what an Egyptologist can and cannot study if they are to stay *within* the purview of their academic peers. Thusly, Naydler (2005: 12) asserts that 'in taking religion and religious experience seriously, one has crossed over into a subject that is no longer strictly speaking Egyptology… when religion is the subject of our work, we cannot exclude ourselves from it'. This activity, Naydler suggests, requires an act of subjective engagement not favoured by the Egyptological establishment: 'For Assmann, keenly aware of the dangers of subjectivity in interpretation, the key to objective understanding is classification and structural analysis of texts' (ibid.: 13). Naydler highlights Assmann's view that ventures into hermeneutics engender arbitrariness and subjectivity 'that

most Egyptologists wish to steer clear of' (ibid.: 12), while cautioning that Egyptology cannot avoid hermeneutics and, subsequently, subjectivity. This is an issue, Naydler asserts, which follows from the position of 'being a "neutral" observer located in the nonreligious universe of modernity' (ibid.: 13). Naydler (ibid.) uses this example to highlight the distinction between his approach and that of the Egyptologists thus: 'Where the Egyptologist is content to subject this material to analysis and classification,… the phenomenologist will attempt to relive the original experience, no matter how complex it is and how far it may be from what is familiar to us today.'

Drawing from anthropological theories, one might find agreement that attempts to *understand* the religious world of the Egyptians 'necessarily involve an activity – a "subjective" activity – of interpretation' (ibid.: 12). However, is this activity possible, or even necessary, in Egyptology? If this is a productive method for examining Egyptian religion (itself contentious), how should one reconcile such an undertaking with the presently perceived boundaries of the discipline? One might argue that such an approach is reminiscent of archaeological attempts at phenomenology (Thomas 1999; Tilley 1994), and recognition of agency (Gero 2000). Yet Naydler asserts that a revised understanding of the Pyramid Texts as a mystical corpus for the living is currently unattainable when adhering to Egyptological techniques, that for the phenomenologist 'encounter' is paramount to empathic understanding:

> This is not to criticize Egyptology, but simply to distinguish two different kinds of approach to the same subject matter. Within… Egyptology, it may be sufficient to define *understanding* as 'analysing and sorting the material' in order to reduce complexity and 'uncover meaningful and… intelligible contexts.' But the methodology of analysis and classification by itself will result in a mode of understanding that inevitably remains external to the living content of the religious text.
>
> Naydler 2005: 14–15

This argument certainly has merit, but it raises several questions. What are the criteria when determining a fitting degree of religious sensitivity, and who has the right to decide? Who, if anybody, can impart this? One definition of

Egyptology may be as a scientific study of the 'other' (Wengrow 2003: 193), but one must beware of the exclusive delineation of tasks, particularly when accusing our contemporaries of exclusionist practices and insularity. For Naydler, the task of encounter is too *subjective* for the objective scientific Egyptologist. Such an assertion exacerbates the very boundaries Naydler criticises and homogenises Egyptology into one positivistic camp, far from the epistemic reality. For instance, Meskell (1999: 2) notes that her investigations into Egyptian social life through the lens of gender and class probably do not lie within the 'traditional' bounds of Egyptology, yet it remains an important contribution to, and expansion of, the Egyptological body of knowledge. Additionally, writers such as DuQuesne (1994, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2007a), Hornung (1992, 1996), Quirke (1992, 2001) and Roberts (1997, 2000) seek a form of 'engagement' with Egyptian religion, even where this is not phenomenological. DuQuesne deplores the way Egyptologists have misrepresented Egyptian religion (1994: 29), and asserts its value to the modern world of the living (2003: 22–3). The requirement of this statement supports Naydler's stance, while DuQuesne's action, itself, problematises it.

The vindication of silence

At this stage, it would be fitting to enlist responses to Naydler (2005) from the fields of Egyptology, anthropology or, perhaps, theology, yet few have been undertaken, at least in print.[19] Reasons for this are speculative, but it would appear that Naydler's work could be subject to the very mariginalisation of which he speaks. Naydler's PhD, upon which the 2005 volume is based, was undertaken at the University of Kent as a thesis in religious studies, supervised by Dr Leon Schlamm, with consultation for the treatment of the Pyramid Texts by Dr Alison Roberts (ibid.: ix). As such, it was undertaken outside a 'traditional' Egyptology department and, one might assume, was not examined as an Egyptological text – that is to say, by Egyptologists.

But is the classification of the book as something 'other' to Egyptology justified or a symptom of academic conservatism? It appears to serve as an example of an aforementioned Egyptological blindness. For Naydler the task

of penetrating the religious mindset of the Egyptians necessitated crossing into areas of theology and phenomenology. Such a requirement led him to the work of Schlamm (2001), who employs a phenomenological approach. As such, a polarisation within the work itself might be inferred: the theoretical segment of Naydler's work undertaken with advice from an academic situated 'outside' of Egyptology and the subsequent examination of Egyptian religious texts with external support from an Egyptologist not directly linked to the institution. Naydler's construction of the phenomenological approach (2005: 123–45) does not establish itself within broader trends of archaeology, so much as philosophy. There is no mention of foundational works of archaeological theory, such as Tilley (1994: 7–11), whose exploration of the phenomenological experience of space and landscapes begins with reference to prior archaeological and geographical paradigms. Naydler is aware of Bleeker (1963, 1967), identified as an early advocate in the phenomenological approach to Egyptian religion (Naydler 2005: 128–9). However, rather than expanding upon the value of this work as a remarkably theoretically cogent reflection on Egyptian religion for its era (Bleeker 1967: 141–4), Naydler briefly enlists Bleeker into a broader study of *epoché* (Naydler 2005: 123–9). This is not necessarily inappropriate for Naydler's venture, but highlights the particular position of the work, absent and, perhaps, askance of the influence of an Egyptological department. One is left to wonder what influence such a department might have had on the research. None of this is to say that the quality of the research was affected detrimentally simply because Egyptologists did not supervise it, but rather that the work sits outside Egyptology by virtue of its limited exposure to its practitioners.

The lack of institutional attention Naydler's (2005) work has received compared to parallel examinations of institutional exegesis on religion and spirituality, such as Salomonsen (2002) or Wallis (2003) or even Bernal's (1987) *Black Athena*, is notable. Granted, Bernal's work was situated in a receptive political clime, where the boundaries of post-modernism and multi-vocality were beginning to take a strong hold of academic institutions, reflective of overarching cultural paradigms. Subsequently, one may not expect Naydler's (2005) work to elicit the unprecedented responses to *Black Athena*, yet in the current climate of religious awareness, including the recent acknowledgement of paganism as a world religion, Naydler's work receives

almost no academic treatment. Were this strictly an 'outsider' work, it might be understandable (though not necessarily excusable). However, Naydler's was a study located within an academic context and subject to peer review. Under such circumstances its exclusion from discussion seems untenable, even negligent.

Observing the Egypt Exploration Society's (EES's) bookshelves, for instance, found Naydler's (2005) work was firmly located among the works of 'fringe' writers such as Bauval (1999) and Hancock (2001) on their 'alternative theories' (see: 'Lunatic Fringe') bookcase.[20] This reflects both Roth's (1998) homogenising of Egypto-mysticism with other 'fringe' polemics and that of online forums such as the Egyptologist's Electronic Forum (see Chapter 3). Could this delineation of 'other' be resultant of the title *Shamanic Wisdom*? Publishers often suggest titles, so it is entirely possible that Inner Traditions envisaged a different market space for the work than that of the shelves of Egyptology departments. As such, this sidelining from academia could be as much a result of preconceived 'target demographics' within publishing houses as it is academic hegemony, enlisting capitalism and consumerism into the debate. However, does the work's rejection from Egyptological orthodoxy justify its sidelining from *academia* altogether? In light of the preceding texts, one could argue that it does not, and that the title choice has contributed greatly to the book's marginalisation, further removing it from the sight of both Egyptology and academia en masse. It is a shame, as Naydler's (2005: Part 1) argument is an example of any number of well-rehearsed, studious, intelligent, if imperfect, treatments of Egyptological insularity, and Part 2 of his volume (not subject to review herein, but recommended for those interested in Egyptian spirituality) is a fascinating revision of primary Egyptian texts, which deserves more attention and critical response from the field.

There is an emergent commentary on the trend towards Egyptology as a science – in particular, a forensic science (Carruthers 2014; Riggs 2014a). The former director general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities' (SCA's) interest in royal personages and tombs led to his support of forensic analysis, and the establishment of the first laboratory in Egypt dedicated 'exclusively' to the analysis of ancient DNA: 'We are in the process of establishing a second, independent DNA lab to verify our results in accordance with the

highest *scientific standards*' (Hawass 2007, emphasis added).[21] The value of increased knowledge of ancient celebrities is subject to debate, but the methodology and focus of this endeavour even more so. Egyptologist Christina Riggs comments on her frustration regarding the preoccupations of Egyptology:

> Reading a report from the 1820s or the 1920s, or websites and news articles today, I couldn't help but feel stuck in a rut, as if the only thing that had changed about research on Egyptian mummies was the technology we use, not the fundamental issues at stake.
>
> Riggs 2014a

Such preoccupations could also be seated in pragmatic concerns. Critiques of Egyptology as a 'cursed' discipline have observed its dependence on its *public personae*, 'popularity and show', the 'wonderful things' of celebrated discoveries (Moreno Garcia 2014: 58–9; and see Colla 2007). These ancient celebrities do much for the profile of Egyptology as a field, resulting in a skewed perspective of pharaohs, mummies and tombs, an ironic reflection of our archaeological heritage, and continued impediment to a view of the Egypt which lies behind the centripetal sources of elites (MacDonald, S. 2003). Recessions, budgetary cuts, and the shrinking of departments require Egyptologists to 'pre-sell' their endeavours in an increasingly competitive marketplace. As such, museum and media focus on the royal dead and their paraphernalia appears to be assured – and may only increase should Egyptology be further sidelined as a discipline. It would seem fair to propose, then, that the very public move towards scientific, multidisciplinary approaches is a survival strategy, a desperate dash for a train which has been building momentum in other social and historical fields for many decades. But what could this mean in an era of political upheaval, reduced access to sites and fiercely contested ownership of the Egyptian past?

Notes

1 Though see Day (2006) in addition to the overview by MacDonald and Rice (2003).
2 See, for instance, the millennial furore surrounding the Giza plateau in Picknett and Prince (2003).

3 See Betro (1996: 13), who examines Levantine artistic influences on Egypt; Mitchell (1999), who studied the influence of Mesopotamia on early Egyptian writing systems; and Bard (1996), Postgate *et al*. (1995) and Ray (1986), who trace the developments of these texts (and Egyptian language) in the context of the Near East. The ancient Near East is an area that is examined in greater depth in Szuchman (2009), particularly the work of Barnard (2009), who examines the archaeology of pastoral nomads between the Nile and the Red Sea. Additionally, tying into Africanist works, MacDonald (2003) and Wengrow (2003a) consider sub-Saharan and African influences on the foundations of predynastic Egypt.

4 Supported by Butzer (1982), also see Soderbergh (1987) on the scientific attention bought to Egypt under the banner of the UNESCO project in the Sudan, and the wave of scientific progress under Mohammed Ali in the early nineteenth century, which Jeffreys (2003) asserts has not had a lasting impact on field techniques.

5 See Naydler (2005: 4–44) for examples of this assertion.

6 Fiske also argues that popular culture is 'made by various formations of subordinated or disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that disempowers them' (Fiske 1989: 1–2).

7 'The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination' (http://www.naacp.org/pages/our-mission).

8 In order for the hegemonic class to project its world-view onto a subordinate or subaltern class, it is understood that there must be a form of consent, such as that the subordinated class 'accept' that the asymmetrical social structure is an implicit aspect of existence. This 'acceptance' is not a conscious comprehension of reality, and is outlined in Gramsci's conception of 'Common sense': a complex concept, 'Common sense' for Gramsci describes the 'folklore of philosophy' – 'in conformity with the social and cultural position of the masses whose philosophy it is' (Gramsci SPN: 419–20, in Crehan 2002). It is not an 'active' philosophy, or an intellectualised lens through which to examine the world, rather it is the unconscious patterning found in a society, with particular reference to a subaltern class. It is the implicit assumptions of its culture, 'the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed' (ibid.).

9 Though see the discourse established by Federn (1960) and Wente (1982).

10 See Wallis (2003: 79–141) for a discussion of shamanism centred *outside* the practices of the spirit workers of Siberia. See Strimska (2005) for more general discussion of these themes.

11 'Writing around 280, Manetho felt obliged to correct Herodotus on a number of points' (Kákosy 1995: 6).

12 Anaxandrides and Juvenal in Hornung (2001: 25); also see Aristophanes in Kákosy (1995: 5).

13 Badawy (1965), Bauval (1997, 1999), Greaves (1706), Petrie (1883) and Smyth (1864, 1867), to name a few. Flinders Petrie travelled to Egypt in 1880 to investigate Piazzi Smyth's theories of 'Pyramidology'. This included, but was not limited to, investigation of the use of Pi in the construction of the Great Pyramid, and of the contentious 'Pyramid Inch', which he summarily dismissed (1883). Debate continued, and symbolist Schwaller de Lubicz ([1949] 1977: 132), who made his home next to the Temple of Karnak decades later in order to better study it's mysteries, argued that 'there is, in pharaonic Egypt, geodetic, astronomical, and physiological knowledge surpassing that which Egyptology has hitherto been able to concede'.

14 See El-Daly 2005 for an account of Arabic and native Egyptian Egyptology.

15 Also see Asad (2003) and Mitchell ([1988] 1992).

16 See El-Daly (2003), Jeffreys (2003, 2010, the latter for an examination of Hekekyan's overlooked contributions) and Reid (2002).

17 Boddington *et al*. (1987: 217–24) and Raxter *et al*. (2008: 147–55), and see Meskell (1998) for a description of the now famous ‘mummy unwrapping’ parties.
18 Also see Butzer’s critique on Kromer’s (1978, in Butzer 1982) loss of a wealth of archaeological data from the neglect of stratigraphy at a tertiary dump site on the Giza plateau.
19 The site, ‘Glyphdoctors’ (now defunct), contained a brief post by Dr Edmund Meltzer, Egyptologist.
20 The staff were unaware of the work’s academic origin, assuming it was simply ‘revisionist work’ (EES, personal communication 2009).
21 Known as the Ministry of State for Antiquities (MSA) (http://www.sca-egypt.org/eng/main.htm) as of 2011. This quote dates prior to the replacement of Hawass in 2011.

3 Breaking down the doors

The colonial practices of early anthropology, archaeology and Egyptology stand wide open to the criticisms of writers such as Saadawi (1997) and Said (1978, 1989), who followed in the wake of emancipated Egyptian nationals proceeding from the political revolution under Nasser (Hassan 1998).[1] The 1950s and 60s heralded a new age of Egyptian nationalism (Mitchell [1988] 1992, [1955] 2002) and an anti-colonial sentiment that is still being discussed to this day.[2] Scham (2001: 191) argues that post-colonial theory has irrevocably laid bare the foundations of Egyptology, 'from the overt racism of Flinders Petrie to the smug western rationalism of new archaeologists, that it is all we can do to determine whether it is worth persevering with our "torn and wounded epistemes"'.[3]

Foucault's (1972, 1979) critiques of institutional power and knowledge signalled a wider paradigm shift of critical theory in the post-modern era, where the lens turned from the 'other', to the producers of language, culture, symbol and power (Barthes 1973; Derrida 1978; Hall [1980] 1993; Jameson 1981; Williams 1977, 1981). Into this arena of discourse came Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which antagonised the layers of power and cultural hegemony involved in the process of the West's construction and depiction of the exotic 'other', including the construction of 'Egypt'. This period also delineated a move away from Egyptian identity narratives focused on pharaonic Egypt towards a discourse that was situated 'within the folds of Arab Nationalism' (Hassan 1998: 208). Almost simultaneously in the West, the emergence of the American Civil Rights movement vastly altered the landscape of public discourse with the inclusion of previously unheard Black voices, in what Cornell West dubs the 'end of the Age of Europe' (West 1993: 258). Such paradigm shifts did not guarantee inclusive debate, however. The practical means of access to academia – whether through social and economic background, political or geographic concerns – has often

limited the intellectual involvement of communities and social strata, and led to many instances of under-representation (Franklin 1997; Hamer 1996; Zeder 1997, 1998). Arguably, such trends are replicated implicitly to this day, the very worst cases marked by forms of institutional marginalisation which contribute to the intellectual oppression of social strata, as attested in a recent critique of the UK establishment: 'British universities remain ivory towers in which the legacy of racism affects and damages academic judgments and hierarchies of value' (Anim-Addo and Back 2008: ¶ 20).

Such a legacy suggests potential for broader marginalisation, and within archaeology this may also be attested by the numbers represented in the archaeological and anthropological sciences in the USA. A survey by the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in 1994 cited only two Black American respondents from 1,700 replies (around 1,500 responded to the 'ethnicity' category of 5,000 questionnaires), 98 per cent of those who responded indicated 'European American'. The remaining 2 per cent consisted 'mostly of Latin American nationals' (Franklin 1997: ¶ 4, after Zeder 1997, 1998). Significantly, it is noted that nearly every American archaeologist is White; some now,

> acknowledge that their (often self-promoted) public image as sole authorities of the past, their privileged access to cultural resources and the ideological power generated by their socio-politically conditioned interpretations of the past can have dire consequences for descendant communities, including African Americans.
>
> Ibid ¶2

This occurs against the background of the Civil Rights movement, and an historical precedent of African Americans campaigning for equal access to higher education, in the face of the segregation of races (Darling 1998). Slavery and emancipation form a powerful influence on social movements and ethnicity discourse in the USA. Contention between the Black population of America and educational authorities first manifested in a denial of education, particularly in the southern states, resulting in a literacy rate of only 18.6 per cent among African Americans in 1870 (ibid.: 127). Black Americans could rarely expect an education on a par with their White

neighbours, if at all, and turned to their own communities, particularly church schools, such as Morehouse (ibid.). Educational segregation was deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1954, and was abolished (Adams 1998: 45), coinciding with what West (1993: 258) terms the 'end of the Age of Europe' and the emergence of the USA as a world power. Trends in decolonisation were reflected in American society, and brought with them 'new perspectives on that long festering underside of the Age of Europe' (ibid.: 260). The Jim Crow Laws of the southern states in America, abolished in 1964, were local and state laws which enforced ethnic segregation, under which educational facilities could be fined up to 500 dollars for employing a Black teacher in a White faculty (Darling 1998). The deaths of Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr in 1965 and 1968, respectively, galvanised Black, and many White, students into political action, leading to their occupation of colleges and universities, where lists of demands were eventually met. The establishment of Black History courses, originating in Cornell University after the student occupation of 1968, swept across the USA, eventually creating and supporting a new Black intelligentsia (Adams 1998; West 1993). Institutions were finally forced to incorporate Black teachers. The Deans of Cornell were required to establish Black cultural studies departments and the creation of Black History courses (Adams 1998; Darling 1998). It was not long before other institutions were faced with similar demands, and many obliged. Adams (1998: 32) suggests that these institutions may have initially believed this to be a short-lived phenomenon. However, 'Of the sixty-odd full-fledged departments organized since 1969, fewer than half dozen have been abolished or merged' (ibid.). The year 1968, a time of social and educational reform in the USA, was mirrored in the UK by institutional racism, race riots and Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech (James 1992). The dichotomy may stem from the variance in circumstances surrounding immigration in the UK. Although Black Britons are recorded from as early as the Roman period (Sandhu 2011), two of the most significant increases in the Black population of Britain were as the result of transatlantic slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the post-war 'Windrush', named for the ship which carried the first significant wave of immigrants to the UK from the Caribbean in 1948 (Procter 2000). Slavery, while never having been legal within England in common law, was still a subject of debate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with regard to

former slaves – especially those originating in former colonies of the British Empire, with Liverpool a major stronghold of the European slave trade. Many slaves were eventually freed and integrated within the population, albeit in conditions of poverty, with little or no government support (Costello 2001). The next major migration occurred during and proceeding the Second World War, and began with servicemen and wartime workers from the Caribbean and West Africa aiding the European war effort (Rose 2001). This was followed by a more significant post-war immigration between 1948 and 1962, when the British government began to curb and restrict immigration with the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and the Immigration Act 1971. Phillips (Ebony Towers 2005), a leading Black British intellectual, asserts that Caribbean people were not encouraged to partake in education: 'There was no real sense that you were welcome within education establishments… and that went for secondary and higher education.' Although Ford (2014) argues that there has been a decline in British racism from the 1980s to the present, it is still suggested that 'black British thinkers remain routinely marginalized', albeit, seated in a longstanding and powerful tradition (Warmington 2014). The notable increase in race-related hate crimes in the UK following the EU referendum of 2016 unfortunately implies that the reality of progress is, sadly, not so linear.[4]

In the US, Franklin (1997: ¶6) suggests that Black Americans who have obtained a degree are now perhaps pursuing careers which provide greater social and economic mobility than the humanities, or those which better serve the immediate needs of the community, 'pursuing careers where they may have more immediate effects on public policy, health care, civil rights legislation, etc.' While Black scholars do exist in the fields of archaeology, anthropology and studies of the Middle East (Fikes 2004), the numbers attested do reflect a notable scarcity, given the proportion of Black academics in America. Contributing to this absence are the existence of academically endorsed alternative approaches to history (Adams 1998; Roth 1995, 1998). *Kemetology*, the popular name for institutionalised Africa-centred or Afrocentric history, provides an alternative for Black students inclined towards historical subjects, which actively question colonial discourse, the grand historical narratives of the West and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) epistemes (West 1993: 260). Kemetology, or the science of 'Kemet'

– literally, ‘the Black Land’ in the ancient Egyptian language – is sometimes described as a form of Nile Valley Afrocentrism (Roth 1995), focused specifically on the culture of the Nile in pharaonic times. It seeks, as a reaction to colonial appropriation, to relocate Egypt from narratives dominated by Western and imperialist history, into Africana and Black history. It is taught in American universities, and prevalent in African American cultural studies, gaining a particularly high profile during the 1990s. It should be highlighted that Kemetology and Kemeticism (herein Kemetic Revival and Reconstructionism) are not the same thing: one is a political movement which employs Egypt in the restatement of African history and cultural significance, the other, a revival of the spiritual and theological practices of ancient Egyptians. Given the shared focus of their work – Egypt, or Kemet – these fields do inherently intersect, as attested by the leader of Kemetic Orthdoxy, Tamara Siuda: ‘Ancient (and current) Egypt are in Africa. Any religion founded in the traditions of that culture country, regardless of its temporal placement, would be an African Traditional Religion, would it not?’ (Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February).

So, while Kemetology is quite distinct from the form of Egyptian Reconstructionism and ‘Kemeticism’ examined in this volume, the fields do overlap, and terminology becomes contested on occasion. While entire volumes may (and should) be devoted to this fascinating aspect of interactions with Egypt, Kemetology and Nile Valley Afrocentrism are only briefly examined here to better highlight the manner in which the academy interacts, ignores and co-opts alternative epistemes.

Afrocentrism is frequently used as a ‘catch all’ term for arguments from an African perspective, though this conflation is countered in Adams (1998: 39–41), who identifies four separate Afrocentric approaches: *Nile Valley, Continental, Infusionist* and *Social* (ibid.). Each utilises its own unique paradigms and aims; however, ‘all of them [reject] epistemologies of marginality and [stress] the absolute significance of the experience of black people in human affairs’ (ibid.). Nile Valley Afrocentrism is distinct from broader Afrocentrism, originating from ‘the polemics of the epistemological contest’ (ibid.: 39).[5] Nile Valley Afrocentrism has roots in Prince Hall Freemasonry (otherwise known as Black Freemasonry) and the NAACP publication, *The Crisis* (1910–present, see Chapter 2, especially Figure 2.1)

(Lefkowitz 1996; Lewis 2009). However, the publication of George James' *Stolen Legacy* ([1954] 2002) was a landmark for its dissemination of Nile Valley theories. The work also embodies a political momentum which had been gathering within Black intelligentsia for many decades, represented in the works of W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 2012), Marcus Garvey (1923) and C.G. Woodson ([1933] 1990). *Stolen Legacy* is the earliest work of Nile Valley Afrocentrism produced from within the academic institution, and retains a powerful influence on Afrocentric discourse.

Nile Valley Afrocentrism holds that ancient Egypt is the cradle of civilisation, thus denoting Africa as the parent of modern Western civilisation by association of the two. Martin Bernal's (1987) work, *Black Athena*, has been occasionally employed towards this end, though to place the work as intentionally Afrocentric would be misleading. Bernal's focus is to highlight the debt owed by the Greeks to ancient Egyptian and Levantine civilisations. Its high profile in Western Afrocentric discourse is arguably as much a result of its publication by a Caucasian scholar of the Classics during the 1990s *culture wars* as its subject matter, which Black scholars have debated for many decades (James [1954] 2002; ben-Jochannan [1971] 1988; Diop 1974, 1981). There has been much focus and controversy surrounding the works of Martin Bernal in the 20 years since the publication of *Black Athena* (1987).

To briefly summarise Bernal's central theories:

- According to ancient literature, ancient Egypt is the wellspring of science, philosophy, mathematics, language and high culture.
- Allowing for this, it follows that ancient Greece owes a great cultural debt to Egyptian civilisation, as it was they who instructed the Greeks in many aspects of culture, and by proxy bestowed civilisation upon the world.
- That the ancient pharaonic Egyptians were primarily of African descent, which has encouraged racial bias in academic and cultural practices.
- That the history of Egyptology and the study of Classical civilisation are fraught with racism and prejudice which have affected the foundations and construction of historical and archaeological knowledge. This racism subsequently led to the abandonment of what Bernal terms the 'ancient model' (sometimes termed the 'Phoenician theory'), in favour of a prejudiced Aryan model.
- This conspiracy among academics through the ages to conceal the ancient

model in favour of the Aryan model is perpetuated in order that Whites may lay claim to the genesis of civilisation by proxy of Greece.

Bernal's core thesis, that knowledge is a construct subject to cultural bias, is an important one, which is supported by many decades of critical theory, as noted above. However, while Bernal is credited for bringing this argument to the attention of scholars (though see below), there are many criticisms on his methodology, which includes a heavy reliance on selective ancient sources (Lefkowitz 1996, 1996a; North 2003; Snowden 1996). The fact that many of Bernal's detractors are Classicists and not Egyptologists or Africanist-archaeologists additionally highlights the Eurocentric nature of the debate. In Bernal's attempt to deconstruct anachronistic Eurocentric epistemologies, he employs many of these very techniques and sources, firmly ensconcing them within Classical studies and, subsequently, the self-same epistemes. This type of contradiction was summarised succinctly by Cornell West, when he stated that 'the very notion of a deconstructive social theory is oxymoronic' (West 1993: 264).

Independently of this, Kemetology has become an institutionally recognised alternative to Egyptology, and is taught in American institutions, such as at Howard University, where an Egyptology department resides alongside the Kemetology course, leading to some tensions between the two (Roth 1995, 1998). Perhaps it should be noted, then, that exclusion is no longer a singularly active force set against a passive assemblage, and resistance and boycott have become institutionally powerful. This could be understood as a form of opposition to a system many (understandably) perceive as rooted in inequality, from without and within (Fritze 2009; Obenga 1992). Boycott might also be understood as an attempt to relocate the centre of discourse. Afrocentric currents may, additionally, be synthesised with spiritual practices, resulting in the parallel use of *Kemetic* terminology. Occasionally, these approaches to Egyptian material overlap with non-Afrocentric spiritual concerns, particularly online. This is exacerbated by the search criteria of engines such as Google, and further illustrates the inherently contested nature of terminology in the internet landscape (see Chapters 5 and 11).

It would be misleading to draw a direct parallel between the strategies of Afrocentric and neo-religious groups, as this would be a discredit to the

complexities and inequalities involved between them. Rather, in the spirit of Scham (2001) – who identifies the disenfranchised in a global sense – this study asks how groups pursuing similar themes might be disengaged from Egyptology, or implicitly encouraged to do so. The problem is one of spanning the divide between the communities and building an inclusive forum. Some scholars of Nile Valley Afrocentrism have disengaged from mainstream academia (Obenga 1992; Welsing 1991; and see Roth 1995). Additionally, in the UK, Afrocentric teachings have failed to penetrate institutions, and attempts at engagement from Afrocentric scholars have sometimes met little response. For instance, Obenga (1992), building on the work of Diop (1974), held a series of lectures on the origins of Egyptian civilisation at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, which were later collected in his own volume (Obenga 1992). A pioneering interjection of Afrocentric thought into British academia in an institutional setting, the concomitant disengagement of academia is noted:

> The lectures were given a half-page exposure in the centre's termly bulletin, yet only two lecturers turned up. This demonstrated, if any further proof were needed, that any direction which veered away from the traditional monopoly of falsely proclaimed truth, would be ignored.
>
> Saakana, in Obenga 1992: 12

To bring the issue full circle, a limited representation of Black archaeologists in the USA, despite strong educational reform, perhaps informs the low proportion of archaeologists and Egyptologists of Black origin in the UK, and subsequent engagement with these issues. But where American institutions offer an alternative, in the form of Kemetology and Black History courses, there are correspondingly fewer options in the UK. For this reason, there may never have existed a fertile institutional environment to plant the seeds of Kemetology in British academia, and Nile Valley Afrocentrism instead manifested in street culture and media. Access to the means of publication and the criteria by which academic libraries stock titles is also a significant factor here.

What of those who attempt to speak on the behalf of the disenfranchised? As Said (1989: 212) remarks: 'Who speaks? For what and to whom?' When

faced with arguments presented within their ‘jurisdiction’, are the academy as guilty of disengagement and apathy as critics suggest? Responses to Nile Valley Afrocentrism specifically from Egyptologists have been limited.[6] One salient contention, however, is that it took the publication of *Black Athena* (1987) by a White Western academic to warrant response and attention from the institution, generating what Scham (2001: 193) refers to as ‘an academic cottage industry in Bernal criticism’.[7] However, Bernal’s argument is only partially relevant to the Afrocentric debate. Despite the title, *Black Athena* does not focus on the race of the Egyptians so much as the revision of European knowledge constructs, indirectly supporting the interests of the Black diaspora (Fritze 2009; Roth 1995). However, by comparison, a disturbing point about academic insularity en masse is revealed: responses to Bernal have arguably provoked as much, if not more academic engagement with Afrocentrism in the last 20 years than decades of Black scholarship preceding them. James ([1954] 2002), Diop (1974, 1981, 1991) and ben-Jochannan ([1971] 1988) have all approached this topic, largely met with academic silence – a fact which appears to support Obenga’s (1992) accusation of academic *boundary-marking*. There are other significant factors at play here, such as the academic attention the Civil Rights movement received, which is likely to have co-opted work from other forms of African Nationalism (Adams 1998; West 1993). Academic reactions to Bernal and, through him, to broader Afrocentric discourse have been framed within a receptive climate. Fritze (2009) states that Bernal’s book was released at the culmination of ‘acrimonious debates over political correctness that escalated into the culture wars’. *Black Athena* tapped into potent notions of institutional racism, which, in the political climes of American academia, could not go uncontested. Fritze asserts that ‘Some observers and participants in the *Black Athena* controversy have also pointed out that Bernal actively courted attention from the press and media, more so than was considered normal or even possibly seemly for academic celebrities’ (ibid.: 231). Sometimes responses to Bernal can display a tendency to homogenise and generalise, such as Lefkowitz (1996, 1996a), who, while methodologically concise, treats some discourse on Afrocentrism as an insult to academic practice, to be countered on principle, without necessarily taking the time to discern between the full range of Afrocentric models (Adams 1998: 39–41). One

cannot assume that *Afrocentrism* simply implies *Nile Valley Afrocentrism*, let alone the most extreme and nationalistic versions thereof. Such a tendency towards homogenisation is also observed in Egyptological treatments of esoteric and spiritual commentators. One of the great values of the Afrocentric debate is that it forces Western academics to re-evaluate their positions, or the 'archaeology of the enfranchised', and re-examine the evidence at hand. It could even encourage new investigations into both the origins of Egyptian civilisation and the notable achievements of sub-Saharan African cultures (O'Connor and Reid 2003). MacDonald, K.C. (2003) and Wengrow's (2003a) respective articles, which explore the origins of Egyptian society, are salient examples of this and even where Afrocentrism is not a direct inspiration to investigation it provides fertile grounds for discussion.

However, uncritical *truth-ism*, as contended by Roth (1995) and Lefkowitz (1996), especially when founded on essentialist nationalist notions, only serves to undermine the validity of the enquiry itself; the process of questioning the assumptions and biases present in the foundations of the disciplines of history, the Classics and Egyptology. Rhetoric is counter-productive to opening the debate multi-vocally and establishing an inclusive forum. The notion that Western knowledge is politically constructed, located and partial is potent, and an essential aspect of these arguments concerns the *hierarchy* of knowledge production. It serves as a warning, if any more were needed, that our own positionality requires exploration rather than simply acknowledgement. The *recognition* of competing epistemes does not, in practice, equate to *inclusive* interaction. For example, while advocating engagement, Roth (1998) still exercises polarisation of academic/Afrocentrist models.[8] Roth suggests that most American Egyptologists ignore competing claims on pharaonic Egyptian achievements. She highlights that books and films by 'non-professionals' are rarely reviewed in professional journals and that 'mystical claims' and Afrocentrist views are seldom broached within the classroom, unless to be quickly dismissed: 'The academic field of Egyptology sees itself as above the fray of the popular claims about ancient Egypt, patiently conducting its research without reference to them' (Roth 1998: 227).

Roth notes an emergent trend in disengagement and a retreat towards more unfathomable specialisation within the discipline; there are many external

factors which might encourage such – allowing for the provision towards specialisation within disciplines as they develop. A fear of being accused of the kind of bigotry and racism which Bernal implies permeates the fields of history and the Classics. Lefkowitz (1996) and Roth (1995) acknowledge and refute such concerns, asserting that interaction and dialogue are the best methods for diffusing such apprehensions, though, in practice, this is not always the case (Fritze 2009; Lefkowitz 2008).[9] More broadly, there appears to be a notion of genuine 'disinterest' from Egyptologists, noted by Roth (1998), a dismissal of 'dubious revisionist' theories as relativism or unchecked pluralism, which is, in some cases, founded.[10] There is a more pervasive reason for the disengagement of the Egyptologist, archaeologist or Classicist, however, that is both more immediate and difficult to counter: the archaeologies of the disinfranchised exist because of the personal and political experiences of practitioners, necessitating an immediacy and familiarity with which 'many of us feel inadequate to cope' (Scham 2001: 186). Such notions are becoming difficult to defend, however, in light of developments in the fields of public archaeology and cultural heritage, which require a certain amount of political awareness on the part of archaeologists for adequate engagement to occur.[11]

In the intellectual Babel of Afrocentric debate, certain voices carry louder and further than others, provoking engagement from the academy, where others are passed over, supporting the notion that this is a politically charged contest of knowledge that not only questions the foundational assumptions of a discipline, but also highlights the inequalities inherent therein. Such a power matrix is reflected on institutional web forums. Meskell (1997) describes the situation for the Ancient Near East (ANE) bulletin board, University of Chicago. The ANE board was closed by its webmaster in July 1996 'due to its inundation by fringe inquiries and submissions: Egypt plays a major role in this forum' (ibid.: ¶ 5). It was claimed that the board 'no longer served the function for which it was intended' (ibid.). In 1997 the ANE board was reopened with a set of guidelines, many of which were standard ethical concerns, others, arguably, more contentious, including 'modern occult readings of the texts', 'personal visionary and revelatory experiences' and 'modern sectarian or political agendas'. Transgressors can face permanent removal; this has prompted questions of unconstitutional

censorship.

Roth (1998), perhaps inadvertently, implies a parallel between Masonic traditions, dubious sensationalist revisionists and Egyptian-themed mysticism. Her treatment of Afrocentrism is more balanced and inclusive, and Roth recognises a tendency towards Egyptological insularity, promoting engagement with both 'mystical' and Afrocentric ideas. This might suggest that exposure and forced response to Afrocentric theory has highlighted specific, nuanced concerns that Egyptology (as an institution) may have previously overlooked, and begs the question of whether it takes a repeat of the American 'culture wars' of the 1990s for the academy to re-evaluate its stance on other contested visions of the past, including spiritual and so-called 'mystical' interpretations (Wallis 2003, 2004).

The idea of an academic conspiracy to hide perceived truths about Egyptian technology, achievements, advancement and, notably, race is longstanding. Notions of academic, Masonic and racial conspiracy can be traced at least as far back as Marcus Garvey (1923). Commenting on the detachment of ancient Egyptian and modern African peoples, Garvey states:

> It is not surprising… that white men should resort to every means to keep Negroes in ignorance of their history, it would be a great shock to their pride to admit to the world today that 3,000 years ago black men excelled in government and were the founders and teachers of art, science and literature.
>
> Garvey 1923, in Lefkowitz 1996: 132

This is a powerful point which, as continued debate suggests, remains unsettled (Fritze 2009). The notion of academic conspiracy to hide *discoveries* finds support in other fields, albeit askance, such as articles in so-called fringe publications and several volumes surrounding the furore on the Giza plateau and 'Hall of Records' around the last millennium (Bauval 1999; Coppens 2009: 43; Picknet and Prince 2000, 2003).

There are works which vie against overarching trends to explore the validity and urgency of the subaltern, even from 'within' the establishment. As Scham (2001: 185) states, 'The modern world of metahistory's hegemony… is rapidly giving way to the postmodern world where many

localized narratives of the past, present, and future struggle for supremacy.'[12] This does not necessarily open doors to unchecked relativism, however. When espousing a hermeneutic approach, for instance, Wallis (2003: 11–12) asserts,

> I am not promoting judgemental relativism; representing multiple voices does not mean 'anything goes'… The key is to embrace a diversity of interpretative narratives which contribute to an on-going debate, rather than promote a monolithic and judgemental view in which academic standpoints are privileged over other, alternative positions.

Scham (2001: 207) agrees that inclusion of 'other views' in archaeology enhances understanding of the past, and should also help to move from 'opposition to collaboration with respect to "majority and minority" archaeological interpretations'. However, in contrast to Wallis (2003), she notes that giving voice to the 'disenfranchised' is not equitable to accepting them, or even considering them as 'authoritative' as 'our own' views (Scham 2001: 187). She lists four proposals for encountering the archaeology of the 'disenfranchised', which have been addressed to varying degrees. To, 'as many have done' (ibid.: 206), ignore such polemics in favour of 'our own pursuits', retreating into more 'detailed scientific analysis' of settlement materials and the like, akin to Roth's (1998: 228) observation of 'cutting (our)selves off' from the polemics surrounding the subject. This approach may occlude findings from those who wish to appropriate them, but Roth notes that it may also hide the 'value of our work from those in other academic fields and disciplines' (ibid.), further marginalising Egyptology from its academic contemporaries. Scham also notes that it is possible to become champions of disenfranchised views, 'even though it is unlikely that we will very fully understand what precisely it is that we are supporting' (Scham 2001: 206). One might, in a token manner, 'pay lip service to the necessity to include alternate views' (ibid.), though this reflects the concern noted above regarding patronisation. Lastly, to 'reassess and revise our standards and methodologies for research, publication, and funding in order to assure that such views are heard' (ibid.). Scham notes that this is the only proposal likely to attain the objective, but is the least likely to happen, due to the bureaucratic and financial constraints involved in the process of research

and publication, for if ‘scholarly journals and funding organisations reconsider and revise their policies for soliciting, reviewing, and selecting manuscripts or for determining the eligibility of projects for funding’, to be inclusive of ‘other’ viewpoints, then ‘it will undoubtedly mean that for some of us our manuscripts will go unpublished and our projects unfunded’ (ibid.). This smacks of cultural hegemony, and establishes a subtext for the motivation of academic marginalisation. Nile Valley Afrocentrism is a salient example of a movement which has adapted itself into institutional forms in order to counter the biases inherent in Western education systems. Afrocentric readings of the Egyptian past arguably deserve far more hearing than they have been given, to date, and the malaise which surrounds engagement from Egyptology reflects the disciplinary concerns highlighted within.

Conclusion to Part I: idealism vs pragmatism

> The task of looking at ancient Egypt is ethnographic, it involves ourselves.
>
> Quirke 1992: 19

It appears that a legacy of cultural hegemony does have a tangible effect on the boundaries and contours of academic disciplines. Funding mandates additionally affect such contours, as do overarching cultural trends and the everyday concerns of speaking against the accepted mores of one’s peers. However, equally troubling is the notion that perceived ‘target demographics’ have a bearing on the labelling and presentation of ideas, reducing *ranges to emblems*, perhaps in an effort to simplify. This is not merely a process of domination, however, and hegemonic forces are not passive forms of dominance (Williams 1977). They inherently produce their own forms of counter culture or, in Fiske’s (1989, 2003) model, carry ‘lines of force’ which enable an interplay between power and resistance. Nile Valley Afrocentrism is an example of this, where the status and power assigned to ancient Egypt by Western culture becomes a powerful tool for disenfranchised groups to use in the construction of social identity.

There appear to be at least three processes at work with regard to the

interaction of Egyptology with outsider material. The first, exemplified in the case of Afrocentrism, is *partiality*. For example, Egyptology (and Western academia en masse) stands accused of marginalising Afrocentric debate due to its cultural partiality; in this model, Egyptologists, knowingly or not, perpetuate the undervaluation or downplaying of non-Western cultures in the story of Western progress (Bernal 1987; Diop 1974; Obenga 1992). This is a powerful notion which has yet to be adequately contested. Of course, partiality is not limited to the institution; anti-institutional sentiment in Kemetology, for example, can be an impediment to the efforts of both parties, when one attempts to engage the other (Lefkowitz 2008; Obenga 1992; Roth 1995). The second process, which follows the first, but is more passively bound within disciplinary mores, is *insularity*. This process is both a cause of and reaction to the conflict of contact with competing fields, and strengthens disciplinary boundaries as a reaction to this. The third is *resistance*, which, in this case, does not inherently denote *disengagement*, but might be broadened to include resistant, subversive acts of excorporation and even *boycott*. Resistance may be employed from within and exterior to the institution.

Significantly, the preceding discussions suggest that these processes are mutually supportive, often appearing to the outsider to be *one* active process, which has garnered accusations of conspiracy and cultural hegemony by Egyptology's critics. The legacy of colonialist, imperialist, racist and hegemonic practices is something with which modern archaeologists and historians have struggled to contend, caught between a desire to give voice to the disfranchised while concurrently protecting their subject from relativism, rhetoric and more extreme cases of dogma. This has led to two seemingly irreconcilable movements within these disciplines: *engagement*, which frequently leads to *confrontation*; and *retreat* into more obscure, but less contested specialist realms.

Egyptology is sometimes characterised by its 'pioneers' and even fictional figures, while it struggles to emerge from the political baggage of its foundational (mis)practices (Colla 2007; Fagan 1992).[13] One notion to consider in the face of such reductionism is what such parties might make of each other, when forced to engage in this new blend of voices. In a post-modern polarisation, would Kemetics (majority Western) be regarded by modern Egyptians as marginalised communities or false claimants to

Egyptian spiritualism? Marginalised majorities, perhaps? Subsequently, such practices can embody powerful identity narratives for those involved and might also entail their own problems, including the reinforcement of dominant actors both past and present (Scham 2001: 198, after Gero 2000).

Some academics are wary of the sanitation or depoliticising of the 'other' in its defence or support, arguing that alternative epistemes may contain radically counteractive ideas (Meskell 1998a; Hassan 1998). However, couldn't the countering of radical ideas also be productive, leading to the 'fruitful tensions' proposed by Saler (2006), arguably improving both the quality and visibility of the debate? Lefkowitz (1996: 165) asserts that, 'Whether freedom of speech extends to the classroom is another question. Academic freedom and tenure are not intended to protect the expression of uninformed or frivolous opinions.' But such criticisms are not neutral: they are located within the mores of institutional culture wars (Fritze 2009). Commenting on Afrocentric Kemetology, Lefkowitz held a more universalist stance, stating that: 'courses that are designed to conceal a considerable body of evidence, or that are intended to instil resentment and distrust in place of discussion, have no place in the curriculum' (ibid.: 164), though one could argue that knowledge and the institution have never been free of political, racial or social bias, which raises the question of how one might distinguish such a course from its approved peers. Additionally, who gets to decide what is and isn't partial? Ironically, even 20 years after the so-called 'culture wars' this is a debate still in its infancy, with a long road ahead of it (Butler 2008; Carruthers 2014; Hamer 1996; Reid 2002).

The current situation in American institutions, one of epistemelogical contest, is borne of trajectories set in motion centuries ago; knowledge is still constructed within deeply embedded political contexts. Meskell (1998a) suggests that one might celebrate difference, diversity and multivocality, and that such attempts do not involve leaving critical criteria behind. It seems wisest to follow such a course, rather than assume that the most menacing ideological biases in archaeology, from any corner, are no longer a threat (Kohl 1993). Indeed, Meskell (1998a: 4) notes of *Orientalism* (1978) that 'Said pacifies, feminises and depoliticises his orient' stating that we must critique all metanarratives, including those of Said. That the 'grand narratives' of the past may have lost their power in face of 'smaller local narratives' is a matter of debate, but the fact remains that those who remain

are working in their aftermath, that the shadow of the monolith remains (Said 1989: 220–5). As such, Egyptology carries a legacy of 'colonising' in its wake, and interactions may not mitigate former 'radical acts of violence' (Butler 2008). Discriminatory criteria must be antagonised and critical awareness of assumptions and anachronisms retained. But what of the forum of debate? As observed with interpretative communities, not all voices carry as loud and far, nor will they all be considered equal. Open forum and inclusion are ideals which should be supported, but there remain practical concerns, including the unequal representation of all viewpoints and, conversely, the risk of a chaotic blending of plurality. Scham (2001: 185) notes that, 'the "loss of fixed points" implied by the postmodern agenda' could create 'something of a chaotic situation for many archaeological interpreters'. Further, it is unlikely to have a 'lasting effect on the practice of archaeology without a greater commitment on the part of the archaeologist to incorporating alternative views of the past into standard theory and practice'. Egyptologists and archaeologists could do well to heed the advantages of such interaction, however, not the least of which is the enhancement of understanding of other views of the past. Scham (ibid.: 207) posits that such inclusion could help move from 'opposition to collaboration'.

Religious revision

Naydler's (2005) reinterpretation poses an interesting quandary. Dealing, first, with his assertion of a 'bulwark' against mystical interpretations, the evidence does suggest that bias certainly exists in the record, but refutes that Egyptology has strictly defined Egyptian religion as funerary. It is true that Wente (1982) and Federn's (1960) detractors (Buchberger 1993; Willems 1996) have emphasised the 'primacy' of such an interpretation. However, as shall be explored, Egyptian religious practices engender a range of responses, with definitions and refinements of terminology including, but not limited to: funerary, practical, personal, folk, *Gottesnähe* and, significantly, piety (see next chapter). Such a range strongly argues against 'strict' definition, and it should be noted that the 'mystical' interpretation has not only been proposed by writers before Naydler, but also debated and contested.[14] Perhaps this contributed to the disengagement of Egyptology with Naydler's analysis of

the Pyramid Texts, but the fact remains that it has been over three decades since such an analysis was last attempted, and there is some implication that the marginalisation which Naydler has faced is not rooted in the established nature of the discourse, but rather his relation to (outside or against) Egyptological orthodoxy. A further consideration is that Naydler's (2005) thesis is the kind of resistant reading highlighted by Fiske (1989, 2003). Naydler employs the resources of the dominant (or established) order and creates a resistant reading that can (and has) been utilised in personal empowerment and the construction of identity. For example, Naydler (2005) is a core text for the members of the Temple of Ra (Chapter 8).[15] It has also located itself as counter to prevailing Egyptological mores, which has exacerbated its marginalisation, but proven to garner attention from other 'alternative' proponents.

Naydler's assessment of the discipline of Egyptology somewhat follows the pattern established by revisionists, and repeats the contentions of Classical writers and modern commentators such as Bernal (1987), with little critical questioning of these sources. Naydler's oversights do not inherently undermine his broader premise, however. That the Greeks were possibly less well-informed than assumed does not contradict the argument that Egyptian mysticism and religion have been marginalised and misinterpreted, it merely robs it of authoritative supporters (DuQuesne 2003: 12). His point that ideals of progress skew perceptions is not something easily countered or dismissed. I do not attempt such a heuristic exercise as Naydler in this volume, but Naydler's enterprise and, more importantly, Egyptological orthodoxy's reaction to it (or lack thereof) have much to offer. Reactions to such works as Bernal (1987), Naydler (2005) and Wente (1982) highlight that there might be salient concerns over the inclusion of the works of 'other' specialists (i.e. specialists from other academic disciplines) into the body of Egyptological knowledge. The irony is one of an academically marginalised field continuing the practice of marginalisation. With regard to assertions that Egyptology is subject to positivism and insularity, one might find support in notions highlighted by Anim-Addo and Back (2008), Carruthers (2014), Franklin (1997), Moreno Garcia (2014), Obenga (1992), Riggs (2014), West (1993) and other works cited above, suggesting that such trends persist.

However, the reduction of a *range* of Egyptological responses to Egypt's

religion is both outdated and misinformed. The construction of Egyptological 'straw-men' polarises what should be an *extension* of the discipline, and alienates potential allies. Critiques must be more careful not to paint the academy with such broad strokes, and the regurgitation of anachronistic models of binary opposition and culture historical models exacerbate the boundaries that academia's critics seek to antagonise. The myths of the 'conservative rationalist academic', the 'unqualified' revisionist and the heroic alternative 'truth seeker' need to be displaced in favour of something less ideologically contentious, requiring critical reflection on all sides. The boundaries and territories of each 'side', if there were such a thing, require thorough re-examination and renegotiation.

It should be noted that within any field exists a vast range and quality of research, and no singular take on the narrative in question should readily be adopted as emblematic. Unfortunately, however, this has been the case with the multifaceted nature of Afrocentrism being incorrectly embodied in discourse with Bernal (1987) and Lefkowitz (1996), and 'alternative' and 'mystical' conceptions falsely conflated and associated with a 'lunatic fringe'. To engage, include and even counter polemics, the close examination of each movement in its own specific context is required. This aids differentiation, highlights significant trends and parallels, and reveals common origins. In a more pragmatic sense, familiarity and perspective appear to play a significant role in interpretative and categorisation strategies. However, the realities of status, publication and disciplinary trends may present a homogenised perspective to observers. This trend emerges from standpoint, it seems, and leads to the conflation of movements, where detail and specificity lose prominence over accessibility and pigeon-holing. This is more than a question of relativism, and antagonises the presumed access of a discipline to dissect contested pasts. Chambers (1996, in Meskell 1998a: 5) succinctly notes that, 'As authority slips from my hands into the hands of others, they, too, become the authors, the subjects, not simply the effects or objects of my ethnography.'

Notes

1 This section was written before the 2011 revolution in Egypt.

2 Asad (2003), Butler (2007, 2008), Reid (2002), Saadawi (1997) and Said (1978, 1989) to name a few.
3 For the accusations against Petrie, see Montserrat (2000: 6–11).
4 ‘Racist or religious abuse incidents recorded by police in England and Wales jumped 41% in the month after the UK voted to quit the EU, figures show.’ http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37640982
5 Additionally, see Roth (1998: 223) for an Egyptological perspective.
6 The largest number of responses have been from the fields of Classical studies, but see Hornung (2001), authors in O’Connor and Reid (2003) (not all of whom are Egyptologists, but see MacDonald, K.C. (2003), Wengrow (2003a)), Meskell (1998) and Roth (1995, 1998).
7 See Fritze (2009), Howe (1999), Lefkowitz (1996), Lefkowitz and Rogers (1996) (a response featuring a number of authors debating Bernal’s premise on a case by case basis), MacDonald, K.C. (2003), North (2003), O’Connor and Reid (2003), Roth (1995, 1998) and Scham (2001), to name a few.
8 Roth originally asserts that Afrocentrism is ‘less a scholarly field than a political and educational movement’ (Roth 1995: ¶ 3).
9 See Bernal’s own review of Lefkowitz. http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1996/96.04.05.html
10 See, for instance, the revisionist theories surrounding the Giza plateau in the Millennium (Picknett and Prince 2003).
11 Butler (2007, 2008), Kohl and Fawcett (1996), Leone *et al*. (1987), Meskell (1998) and Scham (2001).
12 Also, see Said’s critique of Lyotard (1984) on the causes behind the fall of ‘Great Narratives’ (Said 1989: 222).
13 Such as Champollion in my pilot study, and ‘Indiana Jones’ in Fisher (2000).
14 Barguet (1967), Federn (1960), Pinch (2002) and Wente (1982). Also note that the works of G. Thausing, T. Kerszt-Kratschmann, H. Goedicke and M. Guilmot in Buchberger (Willems 1993: 279, n. 1614, in Buchberger 1993), who Willems notes ‘approached the problem from a similar angle’. These other works are not alluded to or referenced in this work, however.
15 Reidy 2010; personal communication, 31 August.

Part II

Pharaonic Religion

4 Power station, people's opiate or proof of piety?

Upon translation of the Rosetta stone and subsequent pharaonic religious material, conceptions of Egyptian philosophy and spirituality, previously held in high esteem, swiftly fell from grace (Erman 1894, [1905] 1907; Jeffreys 2003; Maspero 1893). As texts failed to meet the expectations of an audience raised on Greek Classical misinformation, the conception of Egyptian society as the *enlightened forebears of the Greek Classical world* was replaced with that of Egyptians as *semi-barbarians* (Maspero 1893).[1] In light of Petrie's research at Abydos and the publication of Maspero's translation of the Pyramid Texts (1884), early assertions of Christian-styled monotheism were 'quietly dropped' (Hornung 1996: 24).[2] In place of their cultural fantasies, new 'pragmatic' models of funerary and political activity took precedence, which have since been accused of occluding notions of faith and piety in studies of Egyptian religion (Naydler 2005).

Accusations that Egyptology has employed the funerary model of interpretation as a method to disarm alternative perspectives are now well rehearsed and not entirely unfounded. Even the title bestowed upon ancient Egyptian culture, 'Pharaonic', brooks a crucial question regarding the perception of what ancient Egyptian religion *actually is* and whether a focus on *royal funerary ritual* and paraphernalia leaves room for the religion of non-elites. Can one even employ the term 'religion' to a set of practices which have, up to this point, been largely interpreted within academia as a set of social and political ritual functions? I wished to avoid digression into the etymology and politics of the historical use of the term 'religion' (Ives 2004) and debates surrounding secularisation (Partridge 2004), though analysis of these terms within Egyptology is unavoidable. Could concepts such as 'piety' and 'faith', let alone 'mysticism' and 'shamanism' be usefully applied to

such a set of practices? Significantly, to this work, if Egyptian religion wasn't considered as such, what material was available to reconstruct or revive? Since the participants of my research were going 'back to the source' for authentic Egyptian religion, it became significant to examine what they were likely to find at said source, if only to better understand their use of it afterward. Subsequently, the establishment of the nature of Egyptian religion in both elite and non-elite contexts should clarify the extent to which there is material available to the modern-day practitioner to reconstruct.

The evolutionary view of ancient religions holds that Egyptian religion is a state force, a reflection of the central economic institution (Luiselli 2008: 5). Such a model of religion is inherently bound within political narratives and may not lend well to reconstruction bereft of its original state context, nor does it aid in elucidating the enduring appeal of Egyptian religious motifs. In recognition of the perceived prevalence of the evolutionary model, then, this chapter will examine the nature of Egyptian state religion and, importantly, how it might prevent, obfuscate or even facilitate *personal piety.* This section seeks to first approach the topic of the religion of elites and royals, examine our understanding of *boundaries* and *sacred space* and then, through analysis of Jan Assmann and John Baines's categorisations of personal piety, note the many readings of piety and 'practical religion' attested both in the archaeological record and the 'spaces' therein (Assmann 2002; Baines 1987: 92). Following the rehearsal of critique against the 'funerary interpretation' in previous chapters (Naydler 2005), I examine established alternatives. Accounts of domestic and 'practical' ritual behaviour are plentiful and well noted in certain periods and locales; these will be explored. This section also investigates phenomenological studies of personal religion, where the individual search for a god was 'a phenomenon that affected Egyptian cultural identity as a whole' (Luiselli 2008: 5). Exploration of social and functional topics that focus less on the investigation of religious emotions than on the study of religious practices will follow (ibid.). For brevity, and sheer wealth of analysis, I focus on the tomb-builders village of Deir el-Medina, a notably rich cache of domestic (if arguably semi-elite) practices from the New Kingdom. However, for balance, reference will be made to salient evidence from New Kingdom settlement el-Amarna, in addition to the Middle Kingdom site and settlements of Lahun and nearby Kahun.

A morass of interpretations: religion

It has been noted that there is no Egyptian word for ‘religion’ at all and this applies equally to ‘piety’ – but this should not be read as an indication of their absence (Assmann 2002: 229; Dunand and Zivie-Coche 2004: ix; Luiselli 2008: 1). Before the advent of the first millennium, and the spread of philosophical and theological ideas from the Greeks and Hebrews, people didn’t necessarily draw the same boundaries between the natural, the supernatural and the social (Trigger 1993: 87). Indeed, before the advent of monotheistic and transcendental religions, it was not unusual to see the natural world as ‘suffused by supernatural energy which endowed trees, animals, rocks, and stars with reason, emotions, power, and will’ (ibid.), all of which contributed to enabling human interactions with, and petitioning to, nature and the divine. As such, modern preconceptions regarding terminology and distinctions of categories, regarding Egyptology’s discourse, must be acknowledged.

Quirke is cautious when ascribing the term ‘religion’ to Egyptian practices at all. Religion, in his model, serves two functions in society: ‘answering personal dilemmas concerning the nature of the world, and binding a community together’ (1992: 8).

He warns us that our preconceived notions of religion may occlude our understanding of specific Egyptian practices. However, Quirke does not entertain questions of ‘if the Egyptians really believed in their gods and goddesses’ or whether the Egyptians were ‘cynically manipulated by the priests’, as two popular modern questions run, because if religion is regarded in the sense defined above, ‘neither question has any meaning’ (ibid.). In this instance, ‘personal belief’ and, ultimately, piety becomes submerged in the practices of the society. While this is an inclusive definition, it is perhaps too broad to be of use in the current project.

Baines’s model of Egyptian religion could be relevant here, as such a religion need not be conceived as a ‘single, homogeneous mode of discourse’ and, as such, there is no cause, ‘apart from some overarching theory’, to insist that ‘a single form of it pervaded all of life from the beginning of history’ and ‘diversity and sacralization become real possibilities’. In such a context, the ‘practical religion’ Baines refers to ‘could be termed more loosely and explicitly “non-material modes of action and response”’ (1987: 80).

Baines's definition of 'non-material modes of action and response' are of primary concern to the practices, rituals and even objects described herein. Additionally, this model is more encompassing than modes of 'personal piety' explored before him.

Extracting faith from the material record

Luiselli (2008: 1–2) identifies three issues which she asserts are 'crucial' to studies of personal piety:

- the apparent intimacy and strong internalisation of the individual's emotions related to religiosity;
- the identification of religiosity as an innovation of the New Kingdom;
- the occurrence of religiosity within a lower social stratum.

From the discussions herein, I reflect on the following considerations: the 'appropriateness' and concomitant cultural values of the terminology employed; the extent to which the archaeological record can reveal meaning; and, leading directly from this, the extent to which decorum occludes our interpretations.

Adolf Erman and James Henry Breasted, foundational and influential Egyptologists of the early twentieth century, were among the first to use the term 'piety' in the context of Egyptian archaeological classification (Erman 1911: 1086; Breasted 1912: 349). However, this use was specific, employed to describe the texts and domestic context of Ramesside votive stelae. Because of the context of this find, that of New Kingdom Egypt (*c*. 1550–1069 BCE), the phenomenon of personal piety was interpreted as an *innovation* of that period and not extant in the prior record. This interpretation has endured the decades, if implicitly, and affected Egyptology's interpretations of 'religious' and 'magical' practices (Assmann 2006; Bickel 2003; Brunner 1982; Kemp 1995).

Jan Assmann approaches the issue using a variety of theoretical approaches not employed by foundational Egyptologists. His conclusions may allow space for piety earlier than Erman and Breasted. Assmann uses 'piety' as a blanket term, and sometimes employs it in strikingly distinct and

contrasting ways (Assmann 2001, 2002). He utilises a more specific terminology for personal faith, *Gottesnähe* or 'closeness to god', as found in expressions of mourning from and following the Amarna period – that is, New Kingdom Egypt (Assmann 2001).[3] This concept follows from Assmann's (ibid.) discrete mode of examination, where he separates religion in its wider sense (which he denotes as the realisation of Ma'at) from the narrower sense of contact with the divine. For Assmann, the desire for Gottesnähe ultimately derives from developments in the conception of god, a gradual advance, beginning in the Middle Kingdom, which Assmann posits emerges with *theodicy*, itself a reaction to social change: notably, the collapse of the Old Kingdom and centralised political (and religious) authority.

The development of theodicy is instructive in tracing the potential development of piety. Theodicy has been defined within Egyptology as 'an attempt to reconcile belief in divine justice with the existence of evil and suffering in the world' (Enmarch 2008: 1). Questioning the 'justness' of the divine is prominent in Middle Kingdom literature,[4] though Enmarch highlights that such literature does not strictly undermine these normative ideologies so much as make a plea for 'closer and more discriminating divine (and royal) intervention in the world, to ensure that justice really is done' (ibid.: 3). Theodicean challenges to divine justice appear less frequently from the New Kingdom, with its emphasis on a personal relationship between non-royal individuals and the gods, where the existence of evil and suffering was not denied, 'but individuals increasingly placed their faith in a specific divine patron and protector who would prevent anything bad happening specifically to them' (ibid.).[5]

Dealing with piety in the New Kingdom, Assmann (2002) concentrates on the last of his sub-categories, these 'new forms of religiosity' with special attention to the notion to 'put god into one's heart' (ibid.: 230). Contemporary Egyptologist Barry Kemp (1995) considers such religiosity scant preceding New Kingdom elite representations, and positions them within temples and, therefore, state practices. As such, piety for Kemp appears to be virtually imposed by the state. However, other writers have explored the possibility of forms of religiosity existing prior to Amarna and New Kingdom contexts, and consider the possibility that piety is a continuation of long-term phenomena, not limited to Ramesside contexts.[6]

Bickel (2002) examines the terminology of ‘piety’ and notes the term’s problematic associations with Christianity (ibid.: 66–7). Bickel therefore proposes the terminology ‘religiousité individuelle’ as more appropriate, due to its more *positivité* or ‘postive character’ (Luiselli 2008: 3). Opening the discussion further, Geraldine Pinch (1993: 325) makes a distinction between ‘personal piety’, ‘popular religion’ and ‘folk religion’.[7] ‘Personal’, in this sense, refers to ‘individual’ as distinct from ‘corporate’ piety, but retaining a focus on state deities and cults. ‘Popular’ is defined as ‘religious beliefs and practices, whether corporate or individual, of ordinary Egyptians in daily life’ and ‘folk religion’ is described as ‘religious or magical beliefs and practices of the populace, independent of the state cults and centred on the home and family’ (ibid.). Sadek (1979, 1987) likewise employs the term ‘popular religion’ when examining votive finds in New Kingdom contexts, though his use is broader and more encompassing. Luiselli (2008: 4) proposes that Assmann’s term ‘Gottesnähe’ is potentially valuable because ‘it can express a state to which one aspired either through practical religious activity or through emotion’. She notes that Gottesnähe should be translated as ‘closeness to a deity’ rather than ‘closeness to God’, however, in order to better avoid its more implicit modern implications, echoing Bickel’s concerns.

Magic and *heka*

Magical practice and religious practice can be almost indistinguishable in the material record and, indeed, are difficult to differentiate within the Egyptians’ own records. Distinctions made between ‘religion’ and ‘magic’ within Egyptology have often used anachronistic criteria, such as *hubris* for magic and *humility* for religion (Ritner 1997). Szpakowska (2008: 122) notes that, in the modern Western world, magic is dismissed as trivial, at one extreme, and reviled and feared as the ‘illegitimate counterpart to sanctioned religion’, at the other. Supporting this assertion is an example from the early days of Egyptology; Gary (1931: 6), dealing with Egypt as *The Home of the Occult Sciences*, writes that ‘magic may be considered a barbarous offshoot of religion’, even if the ‘oldest and most persistent’ mode of worship. Magic, from this early perspective, was of two kinds: ‘That which was employed for

legitimate purposes; benefiting the living or the dead' and, more sinister, 'that which was more used for illegitimate purposes in furtherance of nefarious plots and schemes, and bringing misfortune on anyone against whom it was directed'. Further, 'It is perfectly obvious that there was no check on it, and that the noxious magic weed flourished at the expense of the fruitful plant religion.'

It seems fair to propose that the earliest disciplinary treatments of magic were often viewed through a pejorative lens, oft borne of early conservative Christian views. Subsequently, they were not balanced or objective treatments of the importance of magic in everyday Egyptian life. The ancient Egyptians did have a term for magic, *heka*, which derives from (or gives name to) their deity of magic. Again, this is a context-specific and culturally loaded term. Robert Ritner (1997) tracks, in great depth, the difficulties involved in ascribing the category of magic to material from ancient Egypt, proposing that the contemporary, culturally loaded definition of magic is not the equivalent of the ancient Egyptian term for *heka*. The Egyptologist is 'confronted by unmistakable archaeological and textual evidence of hostile magic, and must presume that accusations of magical practice could well be true' (ibid.: 12). The effectiveness of magical practice may be subject to debate, but its existence is not. Such presumption would run in contrast to traditional models of anthropology, as highlighted by Douglas, where it is always assumed that accusations are *false* (Douglas 1970: xxxiv). Baines (1987: 86) notes that manifestations of witchcraft and sorcery are not prominent in Egyptian material, although 'this may be a chance of the record'. However, both Quirke (1992: 124–6) and Ritner (1997: 13, n. 46) provide accounts of the plot against Ramses III, which utilised 'evil practices' (Quirke 1992: 124) or 'sorcery' (Ritner 1997: 13). Quirke questions the extent of the actual *practice* of harmful techniques, and highlights that most accounts imply a *fear* of evil action, rather than attesting to its actual employment.

Definitions of magic have been constructed in the West in many ways and religious stigma – and subsequent persecution motivated by accusations of magical practice – should be noted (ibid.: 4, 236).[8] Also significant are the anthropological models of writers such as Frazer (1910) and Malinowski (1948).[9] The influence of Frazer's dichotomy between magic and religion

should not be understated, and Malinowski follows his premise – which Ritner accuses of being 'reductionistic' stating that such models cannot usefully distinguish the 'differences in magical practices of one culture or era from another' (Ritner 1997: 10). Ritner then highlights the culturally specific writings of influential researchers such as E.E. Evans-Prichard on the Zande in the Sudan, whose culturally specific models emphasise the social processes which 'surround accusations of magic' and stress the *normative* role of magical beliefs in sustaining the moral system and social codes of the Zande (ibid.: 10–12).

None of these models can be efficiently applied to the practices found in Egypt, and such parallels are inappropriate given the wide-scale social significance and institutionalised character of magical practices, be they state ritual acts or 'public religion', such as amulets and spells dealing with affliction and protection.[10] Of relevance to this study, however, is Ritner's definition based in 'activity', which serves as the 'diagnostic criterion' denoting any activity which seeks to circumvent the natural laws of cause and effect to obtain its goal 'as magical' in the modern Western sense (ibid.: 1, 236–49). Rather than conflate Western and Egyptian definitions, which are culturally loaded and incompatible, this model allows for a working definition which recognises the unique nature of the *tenets* of religion along with the *techniques* of religion, asserting that 'The "private" magician is revealed to be none other than the cultic priest, in "private practice" during interims in temple services' (ibid.: 2).

One area which reveals such techniques is disease and affliction. Baines (1987) notes that where religious practice relates to affliction it may be prophylactic, aimed at keeping influential forces well disposed, or a corrective response to affliction. In the former, observance could be of any type, from official cult, to participation in festivals, to wearing amulets and making superstitious gestures, '"religion" blends into "magic" and the two should not be separated' (ibid.: 84).

Subsequently, classifications applied to notions of Egyptian religious 'practices' are multifaceted, culturally loaded and difficult to define. The aim of this exploration is not to redefine Egyptian 'religion', or even settle on any of the definitions above, but rather to explore manifestations, in both state and private life, of interactions with deities and, ultimately, construct a

working model. If the religious practices that are associated with piety and faith cannot be found to exist in ancient Egypt, the ‘reconstruction’ of Egyptian practices or rather an interpretation of their practices would be called into question.

Non-funerary action: the pharaonic power station

The Pyramid Texts are foundational passages, thought to be the origin of much of the Egyptian religious writings which follow. They consist of around 800 funerary spells originating in the burial chambers of nine Old Kingdom pyramids. It is from these that the later Coffin Texts and, ultimately, the *Book of the Dead* (also known as the *Book of Coming Forth by Day*) are thought to have emerged. It is long held within Egyptology, based on this context, that these texts are primarily aimed towards the afterlife, which leads to an historical tendency of Egyptologists to locate Egyptian religious practices within funerary and political contexts. As explored in previous chapters, Naydler (2005) seeks to relocate the body of the Pyramid Texts from a funerary to a shamanic/mystical interpretation. One problem for Naydler’s model, and potentially the Kemetic Reconstructionist movement, is that many exceptions to the funerary interpretation of Egyptian religion emphasise a different, yet equally inaccessible royal and political reading of Egyptian religion.

For instance, Quirke highlights that while nomenclature employed for ‘royal mortuary temples’ implies that their use was intended for the cult of the king following his death, evidence suggests that such temples were constructed from the outset of a king’s reign, and would have been employed *during* this reign for offerings made by priests on their behalf. As such, the term ‘mortuary temple’ could be replaced with the designation ‘temple for the royal cult’ (Quirke 1992: 81). The relocation of these temples into the purview of the living does not support a ‘mystical’ model, though it does substantially support the notion of religious ‘performance’. Baines describes the regular cult as *performative*, maybe even mechanistic, leaving no access to the officiants’ attitudes, ‘which need not include personal involvement’ (Baines 1987: 94). Stevens (2009: 3) correspondingly notes that when investigating the domestic setting, archaeological evidence ‘is most

informative for studying the actual performance of domestic cult, rather than its underlying belief system', though Shanks and Tilley (1982: 133) assert that 'Material culture forms part of the phenomenal form of ideology.' Gillam (2005: 149–51) highlights the differentiation between Egyptian modes of performance with modern conceptions of the act. In ancient Egypt the utterance or speech-act takes on a greater significance than in modern 'drama', serving a reciprocal function by the depiction and establishment of Ma'at, universal order and harmony. Quirke's model highlights the proposition that 'all cult in Egypt was royal cult', that 'every offering is performed by the king' and that 'priests merely substituted for the king' when they made offerings (Quirke 1992: 81). Trigger echoes this notion, stating that it was only in the king's name that offerings were made to the gods, royal ancestors and even the dead. The notion of 'religion' as inextricably entwined within political conceptions of kinghood and state reflects the 'new theology' which emerged during the third millennium BCE (Trigger 1993: 99). Pinch notes that, 'In theory it was the King himself who officiated in every temple, daily adorning the image of the resident deity, and presenting offerings. In practice this task was delegated to the higher ranks of the priesthood,' and that deities were honoured 'to ensure their continuing benevolence towards Egypt, so the daily ritual was carried out on behalf of the whole community, with little place for any expression of individual needs' (Pinch 1982: 138).

Tobin takes this concept further still and argues that the use of myth in the Pyramid Texts was primarily political. He asserts that the role of myth in legitimating the rule of the king may have been 'the primary purpose of myth in the Pyramid Texts' (Tobin 1993: 107). To this end, Tobin's interpretation of foundational Egyptian 'religious' texts is strictly ideological.[11] The basic content of the Pyramid Text myth lay not in the gods but in the monarch (ibid.: 109). If viewed with reference to the centred requirement of the king, the upholding of Egyptian cosmological order becomes the paramount aim of ritual practice; within Egyptian religion the will of the gods was 'bound up with the maintenance of the cosmic process' (Assmann 2002: 205). As such, ritual re-enactment of this kind was designed to preserve the cosmic process. Quirke (1992: 70) describes the temple in Egypt as a 'machine for the preservation of the universe', asserting that the closest analogy for this is not

the church or mosque ‘in which the faithful congregate to offer prayers and hymns’, but rather the *power station* ‘in which society produces the energy it needs to function and survive’. Unlike the churches, synagogues and mosques of later cultures, the temples of the early civilisations were ‘usually designed to be the earthly dwellings of gods rather than assembly places for communal worship’ (Trigger 1990: 121). Pinch (1982: 138) opens her early study of votive offerings to Hathor by stating that the great temples of ancient Egypt are ‘monuments to the state cults rather than to personal piety’. In accordance with these standpoints, Szpakowska (2008: 138) notes that Egyptian temples ‘functioned as an economic institution and as a home for the god(s), with access restricted to the priests (who worked on a part-time basis at this period and in shifts [during the Middle Kingdom]) and other temple staff’.[12]

Additionally, such temples are often conceived as exclusive, sacred spaces, their formidable walls a barrier to the populace and their inscriptions further prohibitive to a population of questionable literacy. The naos, which housed the sacred statue of the prominent deity, was the exclusive domain of the god and their priest. The practice of tending to the cult statue took place in a sanctuary deep within the temple, where observers weren’t permitted (Pinch 1982: 138). Physical proximity was restricted to a high priest, or *hem-netjer*, a servant of the god. Nonetheless, there was perhaps a precedent for limited access and public supplication at Luxor, Esna and Philae. The hypostyle hall at Karnak was named ‘the place of acclamation of the people’ (Dunand and Zivie-Coche 2004: 112), though whether this term was used in a literal or strictly symbolic or political sense is difficult to definitively state.

However, it is vital to note the bias of the material record towards preserving sources from the state. Royal objects and temples were made of durable materials, crafted by dedicated and skilled stone-cutters and scribes, and conceived to endure for eternity. The context of the clear majority of Egyptian religious material which has survived (and both been discovered and preserved) is an elite context; the royal temples, statuary and vignettes from the state. These are, arguably, the ‘expressions of royal power’ which follow the conventions of their purpose and context (Trigger 1990: 125). There remain correspondingly fewer papyri,[13] votive offerings from more widespread areas and eras, and fewer still traces of domestic and ‘practical’

religious practices, which says less about the Egyptians themselves than it does the practices, preservation and values of excavation and museum strategies. As Baines crucially notes: ‘The king dominates human society and appears to stand between mankind and the gods – but this appearance may be in part an illusion created by centripetal sources’ (Baines 1987: 80).

State-sponsored celebration

It would appear that pilgrimages were not a requirement of Egyptian religion; however, there is complementary New Kingdom evidence for visitation to local temples and cemeteries, such as the placement of votive offerings. There is also some archaeological evidence that inhabitants of smaller settlements could have travelled to larger towns to participate in festivals and the public practices of the elites. For example, textual evidence supports the idea that inhabitants of Lahun may have travelled south to Abydos to participate in the annual festival dedicated to the god Osiris-KhentyAmentiu (Szpakowska 2008: 145).

It was established practice for an intermediary priest to hear supplications on behalf of the gods and/or the king, which may support the elite-centric model of Egyptian religion on the surface. Further, intermediary statues of priests and officials were installed in some temples. These statues acted as mediator between petitioner and deity in the absence of a live temple official, and could petition the gods on behalf of the supplicant, in return for libations or food offerings (Meskell 2004: 98). Does this highlight a familiarity and interest of ‘normal’ or non-elite worshippers in state religion, or simply provide additional evidence of a ‘top-down’ imposition of elites interposing between supplicant and god? Stevens (2009: 9) attests that domestic ritual practices draw upon the same ritual actions used in temple and mortuary contexts, ‘presenting offerings of food, incense, liquids, and small objects’. A votive marker at Abydos by a ‘washerman’ may indicate that the erection of temple stelae was not a ‘completely exclusive privilege but was accessible to a range of social classes’ (Szpakowska 2008: 146), though it should be noted that we do not fully understand the social role of a ‘washerman’ in this context. Additionally, one might argue that the presence of an intermediary in the form of a statue alludes to the exclusivity and prestige assigned to the

inner workings of the temple. That such intermediary statues bear inscriptions does not necessitate a reader. The unknown, but possibly limited levels of literacy in ancient Egypt problematises assumptions of an audience, as well as conceptions of elites and non-elites, raising the question as to whether the lowest social strata were meant to be included at all.

Examples of larger-scale celebration of Egyptian divinity may be found in festivals and processions of the gods, which would attract large crowds of natives and, eventually, 'tourists', as attested by large numbers of New Kingdom ostraca and graffiti (Fortmeyer 1989). An example of this practice is the annual journey of the cult statue of Hathor, which travelled up the Nile from Dendera to Edfu, where it would partake in a symbolic affirmation of the marriage of the two gods. Processions and festivals potentially highlight a popular interest in state religion and, more significantly, question the boundaries of how state and 'practical' religion was perceived in Egypt. Is it possible that such festivals served a multiple purpose then: a political restatement, a symbolic function, a local celebration and, perhaps, a more personal meaning for individuals, comparable to piety?

During the Beautiful Festival of the Valley, ostraca were placed in the path of the processional image of Amun on his journey from east to west banks of the Nile at Thebes. These ostraca, usually comprising limestone flakes and chips of stone, are thought to have been readily available and cheap to obtain, implying that a wide range of social strata may have used them. Such ostraca, named 'prayer ostraca' in this case, contained literature intended to directly address the gods, and may provide evidence of personal belief and investment not tied to political purpose. Assmann (2002: 231) interprets this evidence as the manner in which New Kingdom developments allowed for attendees to address the god 'in person', 'without the mediation of cult and state'. It should be noted, however, that attendees would likely only see the *housed* cult statue, often from afar, if the numbers of festival goers were as high as evidence suggests (Fortmeyer 1989). Is it possible that there could have been a hierarchy in place for access to the procession itself, which would dictate an individual's vicinity to the image of the god based on social rank?

Assmann (2002) traces the conception of personal piety as devotion to deity as 'local authority', not to be interpreted in this instance as a personal form of 'religiosity' (or Gottesnähe) per se. Rather, in this model, civic

loyalty was ‘transformed into religion’ – festivals defined the individual’s social and political relationship (ibid.: 232). The visible representative of a town was not the mayor, but rather the likeness of the local deity, whose presence was experienced most immediately at festivals. The relationship of the individual with the congregational community was bound within social norms, for the state was dependent on its citizens for manpower. The secular social contract and religious activity are inherently bound with notions of duty and service in this model, where the manpower of the community is organised by the local temple. Subsequently, it might be inferred that Assmann’s interpretation of piety is something akin to a relationship with deity as part of a more encompassing social contract with the state. This ideological and prominently functionalist interpretation raises crucial questions about the dualistic nature of Egyptian practices, ritual and ‘religion’ in different periods and locations. However, cosmologically, even the most ‘sacred’ and exclusive of rites implied the support of the entire community; Gillam (2005: 155) interprets this to imply that many large-scale festivals would have had small-scale equivalents. Indeed, evidence suggests that village shrines, temples and festivals continued to be maintained ‘long after the great temples had closed down’. What would this imply for complex notions of identity as conceived through community and religion?

The Khoiak festival of Osiris is well attested in Egyptology, though this is more a reflection of access to the written accounts of visiting Greeks. Dating back to pharaonic times, the Khoiak took on greater prominence by the Ptolemaic period, a period from which many surviving written accounts of Egyptian festivals originate. This has coloured the perceptions of many classical writers and subsequent students of the Classics, whose reliance on the Greek view of contemporary Egypt has caused many misinterpretations, not least of which being the character of Egyptian religion and ‘mystery rites’: ‘By the fifth century BC, Isis and Osiris had appeared to a Greek tourist to be the only nationwide deities of the Egyptians, while the others seemed to be merely local in character’ (Fortmeyer 1989: 214–15).

Reminiscent of the mythological dismemberment of Osiris into 42 pieces, 42 priests take part in a procession, themselves representative of the 42 Egyptian nomes.[14] In the first instance, the ritual emphasises diversity, as the nomes and nome capitals are listed with all their specific local features

(Assmann 2002: 410). Egypt is, in this case, cosmologically regionalised. The 42 bodies of sacred knowledge each formed an entire library of essential sacred books. These bodies are analogy for the temples and regions of Egypt. The Khoiak rituals seek to avert the demise of Egyptian culture, not only by uniting the 42 nomes 'in analogy to the reconstitution of Osiris' torn limbs', but additionally by compiling lists and liturgies which preserve the 'immense fund of cultural knowledge that had accumulated in and around those nomes' (ibid.: 411). Egyptian knowledge and, thereby, Egypt itself, is reunited, embalmed in ritual. Evidence suggests that the Khoiak festival claims its roots in the cult of the dead – specifically, unsurprisingly, in the embalming ritual: 'Not until the Late Period did it acquire political meaning' (ibid.: 410). Indeed, the Khoiak's initial character was much more closely linked to the symbolic model of the regenerative powers of Osiris, where seeds were sown into the earth in moulds that invoked the form of the god, using an act one might (inaccurately) describe as 'sympathetic magic' to assure successful harvest.[15] The Khoiak appears to have morphed over time, accumulating wider political significance onto its original social and symbolic function. This adaptation questions the oft implicit assumption that Egyptian religion remained static outside the Amarna 'deviation', and hints at the developments of function and associated cosmology from what could have been small-scale or, indeed, socially widespread 'grass-roots' religion.

Rituals and public processions such as these strongly influenced Greek and Roman conceptions of Egyptian religion and, subsequently, later Western preconceptions. Graffiti from Greek and Roman periods attests to the significant number of 'tourists' that attended festivals in Egypt (Fortmeyer 1989).[16] Plutarch's famous work *De Iside et Osiride* attempts to find deeper philosophical and allegorical meaning in the Osiris myth: '[Plutarch] refused to believe the literal truth of the story, which he found unworthy of the religious mind' (Kákosy 1995: 9).

While this point illustrates that Egyptian religion mystified some writers even in the first century (CE), it is also of note that the projection of foreign mindsets onto these practices began while they were *still operative*. A striking example of this is the latter-day misuse of the descriptions of Clement of Alexandria (150–215CE), who speaks of 42 treatise 'containing all of Egyptian philosophy', when describing the festival of the Khoiak

(Lefkowitz 1996: 99). Clement's use of the term 'philosophy' (*philosophia* – love of wisdom/knowledge) attests to his cultural bias as the material he describes, which concerns Egyptian astrology, astronomy, cosmography, geography and the sacred writings (i.e. hieroglyphs), does not match what is traditionally considered 'philosophy' as understood by the Greeks and Romans of his era. While the use of the term *may* have been appropriate in that period, modern interpretations thereof are not so befitting. This terminology was enrolled when twentieth-century African American writer George James ([1954] 2002) developed the now notorious argument that the Greeks, namely, Aristotle, stole their philosophy from Egypt, specifically the library of Alexandria (which was notably founded around 323 by Greek settlers *after* the campaign of Alexander the Great and the recorded death of Aristotle). Quite aside from observations that Greek philosophy appears to bear little resemblance to Egyptian texts (with a few notable exceptions in Chapter 3), James' assertions are arguably entrenched in the misinterpretations of the Freemasons, whose dissemination of myth as historical fact is discussed in Lefkowitz (1996) and elsewhere in this work.

Notes

1 '[T]hey [Egyptian religious texts] did not show any of the profound wisdom that others had seen in them. I cannot be accused of wanting to depreciate the Egyptians and I am convinced that they were one of the great people of humanity, one of the most original and the most creative, but they always remained semi-barbarians' (Maspero 1893, in Naydler 2005: 24).

2 DuQuesne (1994: 30) asserts that conceptions of monotheism in pharaonic Egypt are the result of 'unconscious ethnocentrism'. Whatever the case, when viewing Egypt through our own cultural lens, the monolith of monotheism casts a long shadow.

3 Also see Brunner 1977.

4 See, for instance, *Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All* (text: Enmarch 2005; translation: Parkinson 1997: 166–99), in Enmarch (2008: 2–3).

5 Enmarch utilises the biography of Simut-Kyky (text: Negm (1997, pls 44–63) and Frood (2007: 84–9)).

6 Such as Bickel (2003), Blumenthal (1998), Pinch (1982, 1993), Stevens (2009) and Szpakowska (2008).

7 First implied in Pinch 1982: 139, fully realised in Pinch 1993: 325.

8 It is also worth noting Assmann's (2008: 30–3) contention that both polytheism and monotheism can promote violence, and that it is the different forms this violence takes that should be explored, rather than an uncritical essentialist view of monotheism's violence against 'peaceful pagans'.

9 Also see Naydler (2005: 34, 357, n. 57) on how this relates to positivist notions of progress.

10 The Middle Kingdom text, *Instructions of Merikare*, lists magic as one of the divine gifts 'as a

weapon to ward off the blow of events' (Szpakowska 2008: 123).

11 Ideology 'may be regarded as a practice which operates to secure the reproduction of relations of dominance and to conceal contradictions between the structural principles orienting the actions of individuals and groups within the social formation' (Shanks and Tilley 1982: 130).

12 Szpakowska's (2008: 138) reference is to temple access at Lahun, a primarily Middle Kingdom site.

13 Though with regard to papyri, significantly, 'literate' therefore 'elite' readings might still be applied (Baines 1987: 93).

14 See Hare (1999: 10–43) for a detailed examination of the cultural significance of this dismemberment.

15 Ritner (1997: 9–10) states that since publication of Frazer's (1910) *The Golden Bough*, 'few authors… have been able to resist the term "sympathetic magic"', which he notes is culturally situated and specific. Like much terminology developed in anthropology, it is not necessarily 'neutral' enough that we might apply it consistently to ancient Egyptian material.

16 See Lefkowitz (1996: 122–54) for discussion on Greek interpretations.

5 Faith or decorum?

Tracing Amarna upheaval, mourning and mysticism in text and archaeology

A significant shift in funerary ideology would be reflective of wider trends in Egyptian society and, if so, could leave ‘space’ for the individual’s ‘search for divinity’ (Luiselli 2008: 3). The dissemination of the *Book of the Dead* at the end of the Second Intermediate Period may be evidence of the first ‘widespread’ use of funerary material, previously observed only in elite contexts. It was after this period, featuring a notable lack of centralised authority, that material largely derived from the Coffin Texts, and the Pyramid Texts before them, became available, at least in theory, to all social strata. While there is an emerging view that such democratisation may be more the result of modern assumption than ancient practice (Willems 2014), the archaeological evidence suggests somewhat more widespread use of texts. Practical considerations, such as cost and access to a literate scribe may have prevented the very poorest from ownership. Indeed, literacy levels are uncertain enough that it remains unclear how many owners of such scrolls would be capable of reading them in this life, let alone the next. What these developments may reveal, however, is a shift towards non-elite individuals identifying themselves with Osiris after death, by investment in a *Book of the Dead*. Where only the king could be identified with Horus, the advent of this new religious ‘freedom’ indicates at least an awareness of, and investment in, royal religion. But does this truly represent religious choice and freedom, or could it be a further example of an increasing encroachment of state and local authority in the representation of piety?

If so, religion and ‘civic loyalty’ become conflated and assurance of life eternal came no longer from the king, once named ‘lord of the burial’, but the local deity and, subsequently, the local temple. We read in the *Book of the Dead* (138):

Blessed he who works justice for the god who dwells there!
Who does this will be given old age,
The advancement to a tomb owner,
And at length a happy funeral
And burial in the Sacred Precinct.

Is the reader being instructed that ‘Keeping faith with god’ equates to ‘serving one’s native city’? ‘[Amun is] father and mother for him who gives him onto his heart,

But he turns away from him who passes by his town heedlessly’

(Assmann 2002: 233). From this, Assmann infers that ‘Piety entailed remaining faithful to the town or city of one’s god. The reward for such a life was a fine burial, provided by the god’ (ibid.). However, just how accurately elite texts might reflect wider social mores is questioned by the existence of social decorum, which limits access to notions of piety beyond elite representations, particularly prior to the New Kingdom (Baines 1987, 1990).

In certain periods, however, the formal expression of religious devotion becomes a unique window to inner religious sentiments and reactions, specifically from the Amarna period, the most significant upheaval of religious thought in Egyptian history prior to the advent of Christianity. During this notorious period of Egyptian history, Amenhotep IV (1352–1336 BCE) took on the title ‘Akhenaten’, in honour of the ‘Aten’ – literally, the sun disc – and promoted his new religion to the exclusion of all others. Aside from the inevitable political upheaval, religious sentiment from and immediately following the period may suggest that the absence of the traditional deities was felt as a state of mourning. Evidence based on Ramesside prayers copied on ostraca by Egyptian pupils, tomb inscriptions and royal temple inscriptions could account for individual religious feelings of ‘faith’ as a form of piety opposed to the state religion of the Aten (Assmann 2001: 222–4). This is a form of piety bought on by the ‘culture shock’ of the Amarna period, which traditional studies often picture ‘as an era that was inspired by light, that rejoiced in nature, and was open to the world, not as a time of religious intolerance, persecution, and police control’ (ibid.: 222). Despite the potentially limited effects of such religious upheaval in a time before mass media and national dissemination, it is likely that the force of this upheaval and new religious intolerance was felt across the nation

due to the cessation of cults, expulsion of priests and, significantly, the closing and destruction of temples and desecration of divine representations in name and image.

A text left by a wab-priest of Amun in a tomb ‘in a relatively hidden spot’ highlights a sense of loss and bereavement and alludes to a form of expressive language of mourning and personal faith ‘coined in the Amarna period’ (ibid.: 224). In his response to the lamentations of Smenkhkare, Assmann notes that the concepts employed – praising the ‘inner experience of a divine presence that has become detached from all external signs: satiety without eating, intoxication without drinking’ – are ‘precise metaphors for the almost mystical experience of the divine presence’ (ibid.). However, though Assmann states that the images are ‘unquestionably mystical’, he also asserts that ‘mysticism’ is an inappropriate and anachronistic concept in this connection, asserting that the mystic ‘absolutizes the inner presence of the divine and takes satisfaction in it’ (ibid.). In this instance, it is the *banishment* of the external presence of the deity that causes the ‘mourning’ expressed by the wab-priest in the mortuary temple of Smenkhkare, in the face of his external experience of the god.

Naydler (2005) rejects Assmann’s stance on mysticism, but notes that ‘Assmann has established an essential principle: that the location of a text in a tomb does not automatically mean that it is a funerary text’ (ibid.: 45–7).[1] Naydler contends that the terminology of ‘mysticism’ has been defined in two ways. The first is *states of consciousness*, in which union with the ultimate source of reality is experienced (ibid.: 4). This understanding of mysticism, ‘has dominated scholarly studies of mysticism during the twentieth century’ (ibid.: 5). The second definition is broader and more encompassing, and ranges from ‘revelatory insights and déjà vu at one end to more overtly religious ecstasies and unitive experiences at the other’ (ibid.). Here, Naydler highlights the question of definitions, asserting that Egyptian religious texts only fall under the jurisdiction of the ‘pre-mystical’ because of more general assumptions that mysticism simply did not exist before the Upanishads (ibid.: 6). This serves to highlight that a narrow definition of mysticism cannot cope with archaic spirituality, as he (ibid.: 6–7) notes:

> Rather than deny that mysticism existed in ancient Egypt, on the grounds that there appear to be no ancient Egyptian references to the kind of

> nondualistic experience of mystic union that we find in the Upanishads, Shankara, or Meister Eckhart, it is surely more fruitful to accept that while the experience of union or identity with the absolute is an extremely important mystical experience, it is not the only kind of experience that may legitimately be called mystical.

Further, he suggests that,

> If we set up Meister Eckhart or Shankara as providing the norm of what mysticism is, then we deprive ourselves of the means to understand the mystical significance of the visionary experiences of Black Elk, or the coronation text of the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmosis III, which describes the living king rising to heaven in the form of a falcon.
>
> Ibid.

Naydler refutes Assmann's denial of mysticism and ecstasy in Egyptian material.[2] He also highlights the influential nature of Morenz (1973) in the demarcation of Egypt as the home of funerary rites. Morenz proffered that in Egypt, 'the deceased becomes Osiris and enters into God by the performance of the funerary rites', whereas, 'in the Hellenistic world it was the LIVING who were so consecrated and thereby saved from their state of worldly terror' (Morenz 1973: 250, in Naydler 2005: 49). Where the Egyptian found unity in death, the Hellenistic model strove to unite and elevate the living into unity with the gods. Supporting Naydler's accusations are comments from Hornung (2001: 16) that 'no one, not even Pharaoh himself, could become an Osiris during life; only death opened this possibility'. It should be noted that Hornung does acknowledge the underpinnings of mysticism in Egyptian thought, though he prescribes it as attainable only post-mortem (Hornung 1992: 12).

Naydler then proposes a philosophical reversal in Egyptian thought, which he asserts has also contributed to the separation of Egyptian religion from mysticism. He suggests that post-pharaonic ideals of mysticism envisage the universe as *imperfect*, requiring a 'release' therefrom. Naydler notes that the Egyptian universe was a creation and expression of the gods and Ma'at. Subsequently, in Egypt, harmony *with* the universe was tantamount to

modern conceptions of transcendence *from*. This is a conceptual difference, based on an 'alternate' worldview, which does not inherently confer inferiority (Naydler 2005: 6–9). This is a powerful point, but such an interpretation could be argued as a simplification, a projection of one interpretation of early texts onto broader, fluid patterns of Egyptian practices. Such a unilateral approach downplays the radical conceptual changes of both the Amarna period and the First Intermediate period. Rather than attempt to open up existing interpretations of the Pyramid Texts to be *inclusive* of mysticism, Naydler seemingly inverts them. Such an interpretation need not be mutually exclusive of application by the living *and* the dead; an example of dual reading may be found in DuQuesne (1994: 35), who asserts that 'For the Egyptians it is perfectly clear that "funerary" texts were to be read or recited in the here and now, and that they were also seen as guides to the topography of the hereafter.' Naydler's approach appears to relocate these rituals and edifices within living contexts, though perhaps not exclusively:

> if we read the Pyramid Texts as mystical initiatory texts, we could find that they make considerably more sense than if we read them simply as funerary texts. Since the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead are in the same genre as – and indeed are to a large extent derived from – the Pyramid Texts, the same inference may apply to them as well. A radical re-reading of the 'funerary' literature of ancient Egypt would therefore seem to be required.
>
> Naydler 2005: 81

It is advisable to exercise caution when attempting to understand and empathise with the Egyptian mindset. This is arguably not as simple as merely inverting the philosophical paradigm and challenging the boundaries of mysticism. Such an approach, where Egyptian practices potentially become a *mystery religion*, echoes earlier approaches, such as Terrasson ([1731] 1732), who's line of reasoning arguably formed the basis for much misinterpretation found in the beliefs and myths of the Freemasons (Hornung 2001). Such an approach occludes the possibility of multiple readings, and ignores an abundance of evidence for the funerary context of Egyptian texts. Equally, that Egyptian religion might be harnessed for the living does not

necessitate that it is *mystical*; early commentators have alluded to variant readings: ‘the subtler texts are hardly about death at all but are really about the nature of the human soul and nature and God’ (Clark 1959: 31). In Naydler’s (2005) model, a denial of mysticism is (implicitly) tantamount to a denial of the religiosity of Egyptian religion: ‘The trouble with this (non-mystical) view of Egyptian religion is that the essentially religious – the lived encounter with the numinous or sacred – is effectively denied’ (ibid.: 50). This is a problematic position. That a ‘lived encounter’ with the sacred is an essential ingredient in religious experience is a point with which contemporary practitioners of non-mystical religions would likely contend.

Significantly, the question of a form of mysticism for the *living*, in ancient Egypt, is not untouched ground within Egyptology. Federn (1960: 241–57) is among the first commentators to suggest that ‘transformation spells’ from the Coffin Texts were not merely funerary devices, but actually primarily intended for the living. In his model, these texts are ‘meditative’ and facilitate access to metaphysical realms for the participant. Federn also proposes a model of both initiation and exclusivity. The existence of the latter is more widely accepted an aspect of Egyptian models of religion, but emphasis on initiation has led to uncritical parallels with later ‘mystery cults’ (Lefkowitz 1996; Hornung 2001), and Federn’s relocation of such texts to initiatory practices, while not unreasonable, feeds such conceptions. Barguet (1967) notes the ‘remarkable similarity’ of the *Book of Two Ways* to the initiation of Lucius in *The Golden Ass of Apuleius* (Wente 1982: 161). Wente (1982) undertakes a re-examination of source material, which leads him to state that, ‘As we become aware that at least some of the vast amount of funerary literature was familiar to living Egyptians, perhaps the almost apodictic stand against mystical identification and initiation in ancient Egypt deserves some questioning’ (ibid.: 161–2; also Bleeker 1965: 49–58). DuQuesne (1994: 34–5) asserts that it is a ‘serious’ and ‘persistent’ misconception that ‘for the Egyptians, texts and iconography had only post-mortem relevance’, citing the *Book of Amduat*’s claim that ‘it is useful on earth and in heaven’, later highlighting his ‘heretical’ belief that the *Book of the Dead* might be considered an initiatory text ‘in this life’ (2003: 15). Pinch (2002: 15) notes of the *Book of Two Ways* that ‘The extraordinary visual detail in which the afterlife is presented has a hallucinatory quality similar to that of the “spirit

voyages" induced by shamans in many cultures.'[3] Her comment follows Wente's (1982) critical re-evaluation of the *Book of Amduat* and the *Book of Gates*, where he concludes,

> To be among those who witness the sun god's nightly voyage and participate in his transformation from death to life in the netherworld was a means for attaining total identification in a religion which in its own kind of logic allowed for the mutual existence of the many and the one… I would hesitate to describe such activities, either in pharaonic Egypt or at the Isis temple in Kenchreai as cultic Schauspiel, for this is perhaps impugning the religious sensitivity and sincerity of those involved.
>
> Ibid.: 179

However, Willems (1996: 280) argues that while Wente's evaluation of the grammar of the texts is sound, his interpretations (which he criticises for being close to Federn's) raise more problems than they resolve. He does not refute the location of aspects of the *Book of Gates* or *Book of Amduat* 'with earthly life', but contests both authors' respective assertions that since such texts were 'designed for use on earth' they could not be primarily 'funerary in character'. Willems proposes that there is 'nothing unusual about funerary rites being performed on earth'. Further, in the spirit of Assmann (1995, 2001), Willems does not equate a desire to take part in the life of the hereafter before death 'and even, according to some texts, to temporarily "become a mummy"' (Willems 1996: 280, on Wente 1982: 171) with 'mysticism'. He states that such a practice is not enough to ascribe mysticism to 'other cultures' (though he does not mention which cultures) and, further, that the intention behind such rituals remains obscure. Thusly, he contests Federn's (1960: 245) assertion that the experience of such transformations was 'pleasurable', and questions the underlying assumption of 'benefit' in Wente's (1982: 175) statement that the officiant did not have to 'wait until his death to receive such benefits' through such acts. Also of significance, he notes that Wente is unable to 'circumscribe the groups of initiated persons more closely' and fears it will be 'difficult to trace evidence for them in the literature'. Ultimately complimenting Baines' (1987, 1991) assertion that decorum occludes our understanding of the underlying tenets of Egyptian

ritual practice, Willems notes that we should not be too hasty when proposing the existence of congregations of mystics on religiosity and cult action.

The political reversal of the roles of king and state may reflect continuation of a deeper sense of mistrust inherited from the political upheaval of Amarna. That the first explicit expression of 'faith' is found within the angst caused by mourning could be significant. It is thought that a new dimension emerges within Egyptian religion at this point, which Assmann (2001) terms 'Gottesnähe'. Whether this is reflective of the individualisation/internalisation of religious belief or simply a rebellion against prior rules of decorum is difficult to ascertain, however, and remains a matter of much debate.[4] Iconography of the New Kingdom, specifically the 'apotheosis' of Amenhotep III, is employed by Bickel (2002) to argue for the role of the state in *supporting* the individual's religious feelings. Luiselli (2008: 3–4) notes a subtle distinction here, between the state playing a *supporting* role or an *activating* one regarding personal piety.

There is a salient question as to whether ideas of practical religion and piety are strictly developments of the New Kingdom or if they might be traced to earlier practices. In Assmann's (2002: 229) model, piety becomes a *consequence* of the Amarna period, something opposed to state religion (Luiselli 2008; Brunner 1982). His concept of piety is somewhat a blanket term, standing for four separate phenomena,

> *Local forms of religion*, as distinct from the official supra- and interlocal state religion
>
> *Domestic and individual forms* of religiosity (for example, private cult chapels at Amarna and Deir el-Medina) as distinct from priestly temple religion
>
> *Popular religion* (for example amulets, Bes figurines, magic objects, graffiti, votive figures in sanctuaries) as distinct from the religion and theology of the religious elite
>
> *New forms of religiosity* peculiar to the New Kingdom, as distinct from traditional religiosity
>
> These religious developments of the New Kingdom allowed for the recognition of the intervention of deities in personal life, who are no longer limited to warfare or political history.
>
> Assmann 2002: 229, emphasis added

Evidence for local, domestic and popular religion is increasingly forthcoming from the New Kingdom onwards, though whether this is due to patterns of preservation and investigation is unknown (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 3). No sizeable deposits of votive offerings have been removed from within Middle Kingdom state-run temples, suggesting that this may be reflective of a shift back towards state religion in that era. The religious life of private individuals in this period may have been focused on domestic shrines and funerary cults (ibid.). Old Kingdom contexts, such as found at workers' settlements at Giza, are not forthcoming for archaeological traces of religious practices; even sites with a well-documented continuum at Elephantine show limited signs of domestic cult activity prior to the New Kingdom (Kaiser *et al*. 1999; Lehner 2002; Stevens 2009).

However, evidence for *domestic* ritual practices and private votive deposits from the Middle Kingdom is somewhat more substantial, and includes fertility figurines, amulets and plaques excavated in the vicinity of a Hathor shrine at the mining site of Gebel Zeit (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 3, after Castel *et al.* 1984), offering stands, figurines of divinities, offering trays, ivory clappers, mud figurines, a magic rod and a possible *Bes* mask from Lahun (Stevens 2009: 3, 13; Szpakowska 2008: 125–42). Additional finds from fortresses at Buhen (Emery *et al*. 1979) and Askut (Badawy 1964, 1965) and houses at Lisht (Arnold 1996; Mace 1921, see Stevens 2009) hint at domestic or ancestor cult activity, but, as with Lahun, much contextual information has been lost; subsequently, the religious nature of such findings cannot be taken for granted.[5] However, similarities between findings at Lahun and later findings at sites such as Deir el-Medina (which are likely religious contexts) indicate that religious function is not an unreasonable attribution. These finds include a statuette of a hippopotamus goddess (likely Tawaret), other leonine-hippopotamus figurines, of females, animals, a lion-masked figure, offering trays, ivory clappers, a magic rod, lamps and incense burners (Stevens 2009; Szpakowska 2008; Quirke 2005). However, the greatest range, quantity and quality of finds are attributed to the New Kingdom from sites such as Deir el-Medina, El-Amarna, ostraca from the Theban necropolis, Memphis, El-Ashmunen (Hermopolis) and, later, Tell el-Muqdam and Luxor (Pinch and Waraksa 2009; Stevens 2009). Whether this is reflective of changes in practice or the denuded nature of later sites has not

been established.[6]

Practical magic at Deir el-Medina

Examples of ‘practical religion’ which involve material modes of action and response are found in relative abundance at El-Amarna and, significantly, Deir el-Medina. The ‘workmen’ of Deir el-Medina served as craftsmen in the construction of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. The village itself could therefore have been largely occupied by skilled ‘elite’, with an exceptionally high rate of literacy. Personal stela, written prayers, letters, dream texts and literature attest to the possibility that a large proportion of the inhabitants of the site were proficient in hieratic, if not fully versed in hieroglyphic use (Bierbrier 1982: 78). Subsequently, it would first seem salient to question if sites of such a skilled workforce are truly representative sources for personal piety, being as they are, inherently tied to state practices.

The bias of the archaeological record and the durability of elite contexts over, for instance, chapels of mud brick, stress a partiality that such sites might in some way counter. That the record is statistically sparse inherently necessitates that such investigation ‘be approached through constructing hypotheses rather than accumulating evidence’ (Baines 1987: 73). Following Baines, one might consider the ‘shape’ of the religion, given the limited amount of data at hand, which is difficult to consider representative. Notable of the site is evidence of interaction with deity outside the institutionalised cult, and Dunand and Zivie-Coche (2004: 132) hold the opinion that it, ‘is probable that these are not exceptional cases, and that there were similar practices elsewhere in Egypt’.

It is not known how truly representative Deir el-Medina might be; however, analogous findings in El-Amarna and Lahun do attest to similar practices of votive offerings and domestic ‘cult’ practices, as may findings from the Salakhana Tomb at Asyut, despite their mortuary setting (DuQuesne 2007a, 2008). The extent to which elite contexts might be subsumed within state decorum is also significant, but the material evidence points towards religion, whether ‘personal’, ‘practical’, ‘popular’ or ‘folk’, being an immediate, if occluded, force in everyday life.[7]

Deir el-Medina boasts a high frequency of findings relating to religious

activity. Small chapels occupy the nearby cliff face, in addition to temples to the north and north-east. Domestic altars are particularly well represented here and at El-Amarna, incorporating paintings and models of Bes and ‘female figures’, which fall within a long tradition of building shrines within homes (Stevens 2009: 4). That private dwellings in Deir el-Medina contained altars to figures such as Bes and Hathor likely alludes to a desire for fertility and, significantly, protection in childbirth. Although a multifaceted goddess, the placement of Hathor in domestic settings highlights these associations, but also points to the ‘practical’, ‘personal’ and ‘folk’ appropriation of a state-centred deity.[8] Correspondingly, it has been noted that many votive objects associated with fertility do not conform to the standard conventions of Egyptian art ‘and appear to belong to the sphere of folk religion’ (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 6).[9] Stevens (2009: 10) asserts that a focus on the protection of women and children should be understood ‘as a more general concern for fertility, extending to all aspects of conception, childbirth, and child-rearing’.[10] Such concerns are possibly reflected in the numerous figurines of nude females (of varying age and ‘build’, Pinch 1982: 146–7, also 145: Plate 4) found from the early Dynastic period through to the Roman period (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 6), but additionally ‘ubiquitous at New Kingdom settlement sites’ (Stevens 2009: 10).

In addition to their use as charms to stimulate fertility, Waraksa proposes that such figures may have had a use in healing rites: ‘Magical spells calling for female figures of clay and wood reveal that such objects were ritually manipulated in rites to repel venomous creatures and heal stomachaches.’ These spells, alongside ‘the excavation of female figurines as part of a magician’s kit, suggest that the owners and users of female figurines were literate priests/magicians’ (Waraksa 2008: 3).

Other, less gender-specific figurines composed of materials including mud and clay are attested from Lahun, and Szpakowska (2008: 127) posits that the crudeness of many of these items suggests a non-specialist origin, which highlights a potential for non-elite action. Whether such figurines express continuity or a range of responses has yet to be concluded. Pinch (1982: 146–8), Quirke (1992: 124) and Waraksa (2008: 3) refute the proposition that such ‘fertility figurines’ might be viewed as toys or symbolic of sexual partners for the afterlife (concubines ‘du mort’, Waraksa 2008: 3), given their appearance

in adult, child and female funerary contexts. Pinch (1982: 148) also notes that such figures might 'have embodied the identification of the ordinary women with the Divine Mother' asserting that, 'The concept of identification with mythical persons and events… is most prominent in connection with the twin crises of birth and rebirth. In both these crises, Hathor was one of the deities most often appealed to for aid.' However, while Waraksa (2008: 3) agrees that the archaeological evidence associates many of these figurines with Hathor and Mut, she also proposes that the iconography of painted wooden figurines suggests an association with Nut and Taweret. 'Magical spells explicitly link female figurines to Isis and Selqet. It is likely that female figurines were fashioned as generic females so that they could serve as any one of numerous goddesses, depending on the situation at hand' (ibid.).

Complementary findings from a pair of adjacent houses at Lahun comprise of a pair of ivory clappers and 'Bes-like' statuette and mask, which may have been used in birth magic. The significance of this mask lies in the possibility that it was designed for use by the living, for openings for the eyes and nose would enable breathing and vision. Its domestic context does not necessarily denote a domestic use, of course, and could extend to festival, or processional dances and customs, though most likely it would be intended for a priest or 'magician' for adornment in childbirth or healing rites (Szpakowska 2008: 141).

One might expect figures such as Tawaret to hold a more exclusive prominence in domestic settings if subversive forms of 'piety' were *opposed* to the state, as advanced by Assmann (2001). However, it appears from context that Hathor retains a form of popular dominance, despite, or more likely because of, her wide-scale state dissemination, for it is Hathor who is described as '"The Mistress of Birth" and "the One Who Saves Pregnant Women"' (Pinch 1982: 147, after Borghouts 1971: 153). Szpakowska (2008: 124) suggests that Hathor was 'arguably the most popular goddess for most of Egypt's history'. The involvement of major deities in birth could be 'an experience and affirmation of centripetal religious concerns that left the rest of life relatively untouched', though it might also have a 'broader reference' (Baines 1987: 96). It should be noted that there are variant readings of the prominence of female-centred domestic items, and Meskell (2002: 62) highlights that such items bearing the image of Hathor could also be reflective of broader gender narratives. It is certainly the case that studies on

domestic items and votive offerings have focused more on class differentiation than gender, but it is encouraging to see that this appears to be a growth area.[11]

Votive offerings – from the latin *votum*, meaning *promise* (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 2) – could be dedicated by both males and females, and appear to have been placed in shrines and temples from early Dynastic periods (Pinch 1993: 342–5). It has been noted that while certain objects, such as child figurines, occur at many sites, others – such as 'hedgehog plaques' at Elephantine or scorpion figures at Hierakonpolis – are more limited or particular in distribution, pointing to a distinction between state iconography and diverse local traditions (ibid.). Additionally, Kemp (2006: 111–28) notes that early votive offerings often show no correspondence to the religious iconography of their temple contexts, which he proposes reflects traditional beliefs independent of state religion. Pinch and Waraksa (2009: 5) propose that the majority of surviving votive offerings fall into 'at least one' of three categories. Representations of divine powers/qualities are the 'most characteristic' and can include depictions of the cult statue of a deity (rather than the deity itself) and manifestations of the deity in animal forms, which may have been considered more accessible than human forms. Additionally, particular attributes or epithets of deities may be emphasised, as attested by the multiple votive 'ears' to deities such as Amun-Ra, Hathor, Thoth and Ptah, who 'acquired prayer-related epithets such as "the one who hears petitions"' (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 3, Figs 3 and 4). Cult objects follow, including inscribed vessels (situlae: ceremonial water carriers, ibid.: 6, Fig. 7) and miniature representations or models of objects employed in temple rituals, such as model sistra rattles or plaques depicting sistra. The authors note that such models may have been thought to carry the same 'spiritual benefits' or efficacy, regardless of functionality. The last category they ascribe is that of fertility figures, as described above. Significantly, Pinch and Waraksa assert that rituals, such as an abbreviated version of the 'Opening of the Mouth' ritual, are likely to have been performed 'to animate even miniature offerings of deities' and other types may have had 'spells said over them to identify them with the things or beings they represented' (ibid.: 6). Again, this would allude to the actors involved being aware of temple rituals, and questions the boundaries, and dissemination, of state temple practices.[12]

Further, they propose that ‘It may have been a requirement for objects to be purified or blessed by priests before they could be offered up to a deity’ (ibid.). If this were the case, even allowing for a cynical interpretation based on increased temple revenue, such a notion may still support Bickel’s (2002: 66–7) assertion that state religion played a supporting role with regards to ‘individual religiosity’. Blessings, sacralisation and divine embodiment may attest to the reason it ‘appears to have been considered sacrilegious to recycle or destroy votive objects’ (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 7 and see Chapter 11). Given Stevens’ (2009: 9) assertion that ritual practices from domestic settings ‘drew upon the same set of ritual actions used in temple and mortuary contexts’, a significant overlap between these seemingly contradictory contexts might be noted.

Quirke (1992: 10) asserts that the appearance of deities in personal names, spanning the full range of pharaonic civilisation, ‘dent(s) a common notion in modern studies that personal links to deities were not widely experienced until the mid-fourteenth century BC’. Evidence relating to ‘the most fundamental transition of all, birth’ (Baines 1987: 95) highlights that many children were named for the gods, though not necessarily directly after them. Such names could refer to ‘relevant aspect or action’ of a deity or a sense of belonging to the deity. It should also be noted that if such practices simply reflected a pragmatic concern for the mother and child’s survival during childbirth (where a name is chosen to appease or mollify fears of ‘divine caprice’), one might expect to find a much higher frequency of names associated with such protective deities. ‘It is therefore significant that most theophoric names refer to major deities, not to the liminal figures like Bes and Taweret’ (ibid.: 95–6). Szpakowska (2008: 125) notes that Bes and Tawaret were two of the most common household deities ‘at all levels of society’; this may indirectly support Baines’ assertion.

Responses to affliction

Like birth, regular transitions may be ‘the subject of rites of passage’, whereas ‘irregular’ disturbances Baines (1987: 83, 95) denotes as ‘afflictions’. It is in the spheres of sickness, misfortune and miraculous healing that these traces are most notable in many religious contexts.

Enmarch (2008: 3) highlights that human affliction ‘in this life and the next’ could be perceived as divine punishment ‘requiring contrition and forgiveness’. This position stems from the ‘essentially negative cosmology’ which ‘potentially absolved the gods of blame for the world’s imperfections by inculpating humanity’ (ibid.: 2), and might also be related back to the dissemination of the concept of posthumous moral judgement. Subsequently, the ‘gradual’ literary acknowledgement that ‘good conduct will not necessarily lead to earthly success’ is countered by the promise of reward in the next life, subsequently ensuring the necessity for appeasement and offering to ward off affliction.[13]

Domestic religious practices were largely concerned with the ‘uncertainty and threat that formed the backdrop to everyday life’, sources of which varied from ‘dangerous animals, the disgruntled dead, evil spirits and human adversaries’ (Stevens 2009: 10). In order to circumvent such tragedies as illness and misfortune, domestic practices often turned from the more recognisable forms of ritual found in the state to what one might term ‘practical’ and ‘magical’ acts. As such, response to affliction could offer a significant window into the concerns of all, regardless of status (though the actions themselves may vary) and provide a practical basis for modern reconstructionists.

In the sphere of personal responses are a range of practices represented at Deir el-Medina. Numerous anthropoid busts and stelae have been excavated from both chapels and domestic dwellings, which attest to widespread ancestor worship centred on private individuals.[14] Stevens (2009: 11) notes that their presence ‘can be placed within a problem-solving network’, but also implies an added desire to remember the deceased and maintain a mortuary cult. Deceased members of family and community were given the title *excellent spirits of Ra*. Stelae, often picturing a deceased individual sitting or kneeling by a table of offerings clutching a lotus flower, frequently bear the offering formula for the ka of the excellent spirit of Ra, ‘that is, the deceased at one with the gods of the afterlife and in possession of the power to intervene in the affairs of the living’ (ibid.). As such, it appears prudent to make efforts to appease the deceased through offerings and maintenance of cults and, correspondingly, appeals to them for aid through letters may be viewed as equally efficacious. The use of letters may also problematise our

conceptions of literacy and social strata:

> One early letter asks that the deceased 'intercede' on the writer's behalf, perhaps in a next-worldly tribunal, while only the latest preserved letter uses the deceased explicitly as intermediaries to gods. Is this interaction between the living and the dead the literate tip of a non-literate iceberg?
>
> Baines 1987: 87

Familiarity, breeding both fear and, conversely, hope, might also explain why cults of the dead which focus on non-royal private individuals tend to fade after a generation or two.

The lack of substantial votive deposits at state temples during the Middle Kingdom could indicate a focus of the religious life of private individuals on domestic shrines and funerary cults (Pinch and Waraksa 2009: 2–3). On the cult of Heqaib, Baines (1987: 88) notes multi-sited activity for such cults. As the focus of these cults is communication with the dead, the necropolis 'is an obvious focus for them', but 'parallel worship in settlements is possible'. A forerunner of Heqaib's sanctuary is attested at Elephantine Island, 'so that mortuary cults of late Old Kingdom notables may have been conducted both in the town and in the necropolis' (ibid.). The close proximity of Heqaib's shrine to domestic dwellings has been noted (Kemp 2006: Fig. 70), indicating potential for integration and even crossover (Stevens 2009: 11). That such 'parallels' are on display in domestic contexts indicates a distinct possibility that these practices were more common and further reaching, both chronologically and geographically, than the record currently suggests.

Response to affliction may also lead to a desire to discover its cause and avert it, which 'in an overarching supernatural context' (Baines 1987: 84–5) often involves divination in the first instance, and subsequent appeals to the gods, the dead and recourse to magic. With regard to state-centred practices, oracles were frequently consulted in the form of 'worker-priests' bearing the image of a god. Such was undertaken for even the most banal of considerations, such as when to embark on a journey or even how to find a lost item (Dunand and Zivie-Coche 2004: 119–20).

Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari were both petitioned for oracles post-mortem (Stevens 2009: 11). Conversely, documents from Deir el-Medina

attest to the ‘most definite evidence’ for the employment of a ‘seer’, ‘a person who has privileged insight or techniques of insight into events and their causation’; ‘In one, a man writes to a woman, perhaps his wife, about what should be done on the death of two children, and refers to possible consultations with another woman who is called *ta rht*, ‘the wise woman’ (Baines 1987: 93). This testimony highlights a potential divergence between state practices (oracles and intermediaries) and possible ‘grass-roots’ versions, such as the seer. Other such ‘practical’ approaches to forthcoming events are attested in the ‘calendars of lucky and unlucky days’ which have been interpreted as similar to ‘horoscopes’ in the extent to which they affect everyday life (Drenkhahn 1972). Such items offer advice on when to engage in certain activities, such as pacification of spirits or when to avoid leaving the house. Other ‘predictions’ are more ominous, indicating that persons born on a specific day might die through serpent bite if they undertake specific actions (Leitz 1999; Parkinson and Quirke 1995; Stevens 2009). While most surviving fragments surface from Ramesside contexts, they are attested from at least the Middle Kingdom (Collier and Quirke 2004; Parkinson and Quirke 1995). Other works include the *Dream Book* belonging to the Nineteenth Dynasty scribe ‘Qeniherkhepshef’, followed by ‘Khaemamen’ and ‘Amennakht’ (McDowell 1999; Szpakowska 2003). Significant to this text is the use of spells to counteract inauspicious visions, again providing response to affliction based on direct action rather than recourse to the state.

It seems difficult, at best, to infer priority due to function. Could such non-state variations, if extant, be explained by the access one would have to private response over state methods, or might it be something more subversive? Baines (1987: 94) suggests that while the use of oracles and intermediaries might be interpreted as ‘manipulative’ by purists, ‘for the user they involve active response by the deity and positive engagement by the supplicant. The deity plays a direct part in people’s lives, at least at moments of decision, affliction, and change.’ Further, ‘If the possibility that there were oracles in earlier times is admitted, this may provide an additional stimulus to searching for traces of piety’ (ibid.). He also notes that because the earliest examples of oracular activity relate to the state and, in particular, to war, it is often assumed that they filtered down from these contexts to everyday concerns. He concludes on this matter that, ‘The divinatory process might thus be many-layered. The allusions all appear to be matter-of-fact,

suggesting that recourse to the “wise woman” was normal’ (ibid.: 93). Assistance from seers tallies with letters to the dead and finds parallels in other cultures, ‘where such specialists are often women’ (ibid.).

That direct response included magical action based in state mythology is attested in the images found on amulets and jewellery. Such items seem to evoke the powers or protection of the associated deity or myth by use of symbolic designs, such as the Wadjet or Eye of Horus, depiction of deities, or even symbolic use of colour. Horus cippi, dating from the New Kingdom, but increasingly popular in Late, Ptolemaic and Roman periods, employed both image and text, commonly depicting a triumphant youthful Horus trampling crocodiles and crushing snakes and scorpions, while the text ‘spells’ allude to the healing of Horus by the heka of the gods. Such cippi are part of a continuum of healing images ‘attested at all periods’, which includes ‘not only other small amulets and figures of faience, clay, wax, wood, metal, or stone, but also vignettes on papyrus and large scale images of healing “intermediaries”’ (Ritner 1997: 246, n. 1129). This is significant, for it implies that the underlying ‘rationale’ for the effectiveness of such figures (and corresponding amuletic charms and figurines) corresponded to temple cult practice. Szpakowska (2008: 129) notes that the ‘crux’ of a spell’s effectiveness was that both predicament and cure were set ‘within a religious context through the use of myth’. Supplicants appealed to the deities for aid, ‘and both the healer and the patient were identified with gods’.

If this principle is to be called ‘magic’, ‘then magic was necessarily a constant element in Egyptian religion that cannot be meaningfully said to have increased or decreased’, even in the Amarna period, where the destruction of cult images attests to the potency of imagery (Ritner 1997: 246, n. 1129).[15] Such spells were possibly originally priestly creations, dedicated by priests or the king (ibid.: 207, n. 956). It is often proposed that individuals did not memorise or even read the inscriptions, but rather engaged in a more ‘passive’ act of pouring water over the image and ingesting the magically changed effluent.

However, it should be noted that, given the association of ‘magical’ efficacy with the spoken word, one should not preclude that such texts were spoken aloud in ‘private’ contexts. This is particularly salient with spells based upon papyrus texts and when the texts identify the sufferer or healer

directly with the deity (often Isis) in question (Quirke 1992: 113–14). Correspondingly, Pinch (1982: 142) notes a New Kingdom spell in which a mother is made to say to her sick child: 'My hands are upon this child and the hands of Isis are upon him, just as her hands were upon her son Horus', further indicating a spoken component of such healing actions. Rituals designed to render hostile forces ineffective often incorporate 'the use of text, object and gesture'; it is not merely the hostile action, but even the threat of hostile action that engenders response in texts, highlighting the power of both the spoken word and intent (Szpakowska 2008: 127–8). It is possible that spells were memorised and transmitted orally, as at Luhun, where it is thought that many 'if not all' of the inhabitants were illiterate (ibid.: 123, 130). However, this begs a question of the purpose of the papyrus, which may have been expensive to obtain.

Conclusion to Part II: the one and the many

These chapters were undertaken for three purposes, the primary being the identification of non-funerary, non-state forms of religion, which might better lend themselves to reconstruction in modern contexts than evolutionary and ideological standpoints, such as asserted by Kemp (1995), Tobin (1993) and Trigger (1993). The second, which follows directly from this, is the exploration of piety and individual religiosity, evidence of which contests notions of Egyptian religion as merely *performative* with little internalised emotion. Finally, there is Naydler's (2005) contention (preceded by Federn 1960 and Wente 1982) of a form of shamanism or mysticism to be found within the Pyramid Texts (and by extension the Coffin Texts and beyond).

Regarding the first two stipulations, which are inherently bound together, the seemingly copious examples of crossover between state, domestic, individual and 'popular' religious practices are too abundant to ignore and attest to more synergy than Assmann's (2001, 2002) position appears to accommodate. Should the binary opposition he posits, a form of antagonism or subversion, be accepted? Or perhaps that of Baines (1987) and Bickel (2002), that state religion and 'popular', 'practical' and 'individual' religion could be supportive rather than 'activating'? Arguably, these propositions are not as mutually exclusive as they appear. I have attempted to display that

forms of resistance and dissent often utilise the resources of the dominant order. In this sense the state can both provide and define the modes of response employed. Assmann's model posits an either/or position, yet it would follow from this that acts of 'piety' were uncontrolled, 'outside' or positioned against the dominant order. The realities and challenges of daily life likely held more immediate concerns than the source of one's resources. As such, utilising theories proposed by Fiske (2003), one might explore the notion that such modes are more involved in a process of internalised cultural exchange than a simple pattern of dominance and resistance.[16] Subsequently, cycles of 'incorporation and excorporation' lead more readily to crossover, as the archaeological record may suggest.

For example, with regard to divinatory practices, Baines (1987: 94) notes that these might be viewed as 'integrating a variety of approaches to comprehending and coping with problems of normal existence that centre around the individual or the social group'. That state and folk versions existed might subsequently be less significant than the preparation or reaction to the situation itself. The employment of one source does not appear to preclude the other. However, we cannot know the specific circumstances, unspoken rules of conduct or, perhaps, the implicit assumptions of the cultural setting that likely made up a significant portion of one's worldview in these instances.[17] It should be noted that if there were choices available in this respect, a criterion for discrimination is subsequently implied. Further, this apparent 'overlap' appears to span multiple contexts.[18]

Parallels between state and domestic practices and the integration of these seemingly irreconcilable modes of worship are still subject to much debate, though these relationships appear too complex to polarise. Findings arguably occlude notions of social stratum determining religious activity (in contrast to Gunn 1916), and it seems possible, from the archaeological evidence, that while the lowest tier could embrace integrated state deities in forms of piety and 'folk' practices, the highest elites were potentially also familiar with folk religion, but possibly restricted from representing such, due to decorum (Baines 1987: 82, 84).

Assmann's (2001: 222–4) examination of the mourning literature resultant from the Amarna period highlights a form of religiosity. Although his analysis focuses only on one key inscription, a limited textual source in the

absence of further archaeological evidence, the unique expression of the 'Psalm of Mourning' (ibid.: 223) possibly functions as an entry point to further discourse based upon Ramesside prayers 'copied in school papyri of the Ramesside Period' (Luiselli 2008: 2). Mourning the absence of *specific divine figures* attests to some form of 'personal relationship' for 'non-royals', though the examples of this practice remain 'elite' (Enmarch 2008: 3). Assmann (2006) has later explored the notion of personal piety as a secondary religious experience. Contrary to a direct primary experience of the divine, of the kind Naydler (2005) argues for, Assmann argues that this form of mysticism is not inappropriate even where it can be interpreted as piety or Gottesnähe. Following Assmann's assertion that 'the mystic absolutizes the inner presence of the divine and takes satisfaction in it', it appears impossible to reconcile such a definition with the loss and mourning expressed in Egyptian literature following the crisis of the Amarna period (Assmann 2001: 224). Assmann's (2006: 275) definition of piety as a secondary mode of religious experience denies direct knowledge of the divine in Egypt, which is supplemented by the individual's faith and personal relationship with god. This definition only stands if one accepts Assmann's strict definition of mysticism, however, and once again raises the question of the terminology in play.[19] One positive result of such a definition is that a 'personal relationship' with god can be viewed in the archaeological record, with respect to the votive offerings, texts, traces of domestic religion and perhaps even in 'magical' objects, which employ the invocation of 'mythic' elements to potentially tap into the heka of more powerful forces on the supplicant's behalf. Whether responses to the Amarna period in text, and apparent changes in attitudes towards god, attest to internalised trauma as much as acts of social dissent is, I feel, a subject worthy of further investigation.

I would note an interesting (if indirect) parallel with Stuart Hall's ([1980] 1993: 514) notion of resources as 'structured in dominance' – that is, that the dominant cultural milieu determines the resources available for both accord and resistance, in Fiske's (2003) words, 'lines of resistance'. Was the emergence of the literature of mourning a phenomenon of religious piety or a form of cultural excorporation and meaning-making (ibid.: 114)? After Gillam (2005: 155), I would support the notion that performances are

documented in the context of religious events, not due to ideological coercion or 'belief', 'but because this way of thinking provided both a conceptual framework and an operating system for people who lived there, in much the same way as free-market capitalism does for us' (ibid.).

It is impossible to state definitively how far an interest in state religion is inspired by feelings of piety or rules of decorum. Baines and Frood (2011) explore notions of selection and active involvement. In this example, they attempt to limit application of the term 'piety' to sources where traces of choice can be recognised, 'thus marking the borderline between piety and more general religious practices' (Luiselli 2008: 4). Such a thesis stresses the human agency and individual's 'choice' of a patron deity as discerning piety from state-imposed practices.[20] Following Fiske's (1989: 160–1) examination of social power and subordinate power ('the power of resistance to power'), one might note that the exercising of such choice could have had profound social significance and, subsequently, attests to forms of expression of internalised religiosity and *dissent*, the contexts of which are now lost to us.

How one might infer 'choice' archaeologically seems limited to making assumptions from 'aberrant' samples in context, however, such as the variant votive figurines found at Old Kingdom sites or, perhaps, in the depiction of non-local (or non-cult) deities in the home (Stevens 2009: 6–7). Given the current understanding of symbolic representation and function in Egyptian practices, however (such as the fertility figurines discussed above), one would imagine it difficult to tease such notions as 'choice' from the record without some very creative assumptions. Likewise, when evaluating the evidence for the origins of piety, the record can be teasing; while the most abundant examples of 'folk' religion are attested at New Kingdom sites, the traces at Lahun, Buhen, Lisht and Askut all raise interesting questions regarding a continuum of practices. This might also be said of the literary traces, many of which appear based in forms of literature or language occurring prior to the New Kingdom, such as with the Ramesside *Dream Book*, the language of which could suggest composition as early as the Middle Kingdom (Quirke 1992: 122; Szpakowska 2003).

Such notions challenge evolutionary stances to Egyptian society, prompting the replacement of anachronistic conceptions of *increasing complexity* with multifaceted models of private interaction, with reference to

an inconstant state rule. Is the relative lack of votive findings from Middle Kingdom contexts reflective of patterns of preservation and a shift in theology (or rather ideology), as suggested by Pinch and Waraksa (2009: 2–3)? If the religious life of private individuals shifted to funerary cults and domestic shrines this early, then the material record (such as at Middle Kingdom sites) may indicate a potential for piety at least as early as the Middle Kingdom. It would be fascinating to see more examination of predynastic settlement sites in the search for the origins of these practices.

There appears to be ample space, and even evidence, for a range of forms of religiosity spanning the three millennia of pharaonic civilisation. That decorum obscures the record is an impediment when discerning the internalised attitudes of elites. However, in certain instances (such as the Amarna 'crisis') such decorum, and the subversion thereof, can be revelatory. Further, the range of votive artefacts corresponding to known deities (and their symbolic significance) implies intent of purpose, as do inscriptions on offerings asking for prayers to be heard or desiring specific results. However, that these appear to be employed in parallel to 'non-state' 'folk' items, such as fertility figures, implies less *conflict* (as in Assmann's model) than *synthesis*, as part of the reaction of individuals to their daily needs, drawing upon, and reshaping, the resources available to them.

The archaeological evidence discussed above hints at an actualisation of the search for 'a god' through ritual practice, rather than a full individualisation (Luiselli 2008: 3). My interpretation of this matter is that we are witnessing the actualisation of a 'search for deity', *with intent*, and this might be usefully equated with 'piety' or whatever culturally neutral term might substitute for this, perhaps 'Gottesnähe'. Following this, both in the spheres of response to affliction and the use of heka to attain desired results, faith in the *results* of this activity might be inferred, not only from its continued practice (which arguably attests to decorum only), but also from the *range* of contexts from which objects have been excavated, many of which are domestic. Subsequently, the range of specifically employed items in 'private' contexts presupposes no form of state coercion or constraint in the enactment of 'folk' religion.

While many items and practices could be viewed as methods and symbols of the state, this does not dictate a correspondingly *passive acceptance* of forms of hegemony. Rather, it attests, after Fiske (1989, 2003), that the

resources of the dominant culture are those commonly appropriated for individual practice. It does not rule out subversion, so much as attest that private activity – recourse to 'wise women' rather than state oracles and even the use of mud and clay figurines, such as at Lahun, and spells in the form of 'folk' heka – may, in fact, have been *inherently* subversive *until* New Kingdom forms of religiosity officially allowed for interaction with the divine without a royal intermediary, a point supported by reference to signs of potential dissent in Middle Kingdom literature (Parkinson 2002).

With reference to the issue of mysticism itself, one might observe resistance to the concept in the works of Assmann (2001), Buchberger (1993) and Willems (1996), though this denial is based upon limited definitions and a general ambivalence towards both the 'appropriateness' of the category and terminology. Perhaps the more salient criticism lies not in such wordplay, but rather in the idea that the hermeneutic divide is simply too grand a chasm to bridge. Not only this, but that due to decorum, and a lack of corroborative evidence (ibid.), it is impossible to definitively state one way or the other something that has become a question of modern interpretation, categorisation and definition. I believe this is primarily an argument of semantics. While it appears acceptable to propose the existence of forms of individual religiosity, it is impossible to locate an instance where this was *internalised* anywhere in the archaeological record. To propose a broader definition of mysticism potentially undermines the notion itself. Additionally, after Willems (ibid.), it is difficult to locate the participants who performed such acts as titled 'mystics' in the record. Extant examples of religiosity, such as the mourning of an absent external deity, do not appear to attest to internalisation. Egyptian notions of transcendence, or unity, are inherently bound within culturally *specific* conceptions of deity and cosmology that do not find direct analogues in later Eastern forms of mysticism. As such, that it requires a philosophical reversal to accommodate mysticism into Naydler's (2005) model indicates that the terminology is perhaps not appropriate. This does not necessarily mean that Naydler's premise is without merit, however. Rather, it indicates that the phenomenon that Naydler and others have identified is a potential form of ritual interpretation that may warrant both further research and more appropriate classification. If patterns in the primary material that supports Naydler, Wente and Federn's assertions can be identified, then not only should the 'primary' funerary interpretation be

reconsidered, but additionally the terminology should be antagonised in a manner reminiscent of the explorations of piety mentioned herein. The need to readdress the funerary interpretation of pre-New Kingdom literature highlighted by Naydler's work seems valid. The alternative, even if not strictly 'mysticism' by definition, may open possibilities for the examination of piety in much earlier periods than previously presumed, and hint at a continuum of practices, rather than merely a reaction to the Amarna period.

It may be misleading to create 'comparative' 'all-encompassing' models that ignore and downplay the role of the individual in the 'story' of civilisation, all too often examined with reference to economics and political stability. Such narratives downplay the inner sentiments and motivations of the individual. While I do not deny the significance of societal factors, the role of agency in individual responses to one's surroundings often yields the more unique aspects of a civilisation, and hints at the culturally specific means through which their needs and desires were achieved, or at least expressed. Even though we may not easily access the mindset of such individuals, to surrender the task of interpretation in the face of adversity undermines the enterprise. In light of the evidence, to deny the Egyptians' belief in their gods and practices in favour of a model of coercion or performance is ill-conceived at best. Moreover, when tackling the assertions of 'outsiders' contesting the same religious resources, it should be acknowledged that Egyptologists' positions on this topic are hardly conclusive or unified. This may be seen as a positive circumstance, as it almost certainly leaves space for phenomenological investigations and the ethnographic study of contemporary practitioners.

Notes

1 Also see Naydler (2005: 361, n. 100).

2 Naydler quotes Assmann's stance, who writes that mysticism is as 'deeply contrary to Egyptian thought… the mystical path was as little realized in Egypt as the ecstatic' (Assmann 2001: 155, in Naydler 2005: 362).

3 Pinch also notes Hornung's description of the *Book of Two Ways* as 'the results of government-funded research into the hereafter', but points out that 'research' may be too academic a word (Pinch 2002: 15, after Hornung 1999: 11).

4 See Assmann (2001, 2002), Baines (1987, 1991, 2002), Kemp (1995), Luiselli (2005, 2008) and Morgan (2006), to name but a few.

5 A listing and treatment of which may be found in Stevens (2009).
6 For Deir el-Medina, see Demarée (1983), Friedman (1985, 1994), Meskell (1998, 1999, 2002), Pinch (1982, 1993), Pinch and Waraksa (2009), Sadek (1987), Szpakowska (2003) and Stevens (2009). For El-Amarna, Arnold (1996), Kemp (1979, 1995) and Stevens (2006, 2009). For Theban necropolis, Assmann (2002: 231); Memphis, Giddy (1999) and Jeffreys (2006); El-Ashmunen (Hermopolis), Spencer (1993); Tell el-Muqdam, see Redmount (1997) and Redmount and Friedman (1994); and Luxor, Anus and Sa'ad (1971).
7 Baines (1987, 1991, 2002), DuQuesne (2007, 2007a, 2008), Pinch (1982, 1993), Pinch and Waraksa (2009), Sadek (1979, 1987) and Stevens (2006, 2009).
8 According to DuQuesne (2005: 10–11) Hathor is the goddess of 'love', 'ecstatic states', archetype of the 'Eternal Feminine' and can be 'lover, mother, daughter, and healer. One of Hathor's most important epithets is… "lady of intoxication". Hathor, as "domain (or mansion) of Horus" possesses correspondingly "cosmological" associations with kingship and rebirth' (Pinch 2002: 137), also see Roberts (1997).
9 Additionally, DuQuesne (2007a: 60–1) highlights the possible tensions between 'canonical and idiosyncratic modes of artistic expression' on the Salakhana stelae. Also see Kemp (2006: 111–28).
10 Also see Quirke (1992: 126–7).
11 DuQuesne (2005, 2008), Luiselli (2008), Meskell (2000, 2002) and Roberts (1997); also see Gero and Conkey (1997) for more general discussion.
12 Though the rotation of temple staff with the local elite populace should be borne in mind as enabling access to a local lector priest familiar with the internal workings of the temple (Szpakowska 2008: 130).
13 Such as found in the teaching of Amenemope, Laisney 2007; English trans. Lichtheim (1976: 146–63), and the *Demotic Wisdom Book* (Papyrus Insinger, text: Lexa 1926; Volten 1941; English trans. Lichtheim (1980: 184–217), in Enmarch (2008: 3)).
14 E.g. Bierbrier (1982), Demarée (1983), Friedman (1985, 1994) and Stevens (2009).
15 Also see Stevens (2009: 12) regarding the 'cult of the living king' in domestic contexts.
16 As explored in Chapters 2 and 3.
17 See Crehan (2002) on Gramsci.
18 E.g. oracles into the official cult; letters to the dead (mortuary practices and ancestor cults); other forms of divination into religious action: 'all of these modes of action may overlap with "official" and secular ones such as recourse to courts of law. What seems to have changed over the centuries is the nexus of everyday religious action in local, non-official, individual concerns' (Baines 1987: 94).
19 However, his denial of mysticism finds support in the works of both Buchberger (1993) and Willems (1996).
20 See the biography of Simut-Kyky: text: Negm (1997, pls 44–63) trans: Frood (2007: 84–9), after Enmarch (2008: 3).

Part III

Esoterica and Egyptology

6 Early encounters

When first encountering modern Kemetic religion, it was unclear what elements of Egyptian religious practice, if it even were traditional Egyptian religious practice, were being employed. Was this movement an extension of paganism, witchcraft or something new altogether? There was also a sociological interest in the adoption of Egyptian themes as a constituent of the reclamation of grass-roots religion from institutionalised ideas of both Egypt and religion more generally. For example, Brasher (2004: 25–44) speaks of the bypassing of formal religious *hierarchies* through the medium of cyberspace. Seeking to understand Kemetic religion on its own terms was not a simple matter; many of the communities in question seemed 'virtual' in nature and in diaspora. Additionally, the adoption of Egyptian material appeared to inspire a vast range of responses and practices. It was initially unclear if these were common to paganism or specific to particular groups. The subtleties and variations might make a distinct difference to 'analysis' and 'classification', let alone any form of understanding. As such, this section begins with an analysis of terminology, much of which is often taken for granted.

The terms 'pagan', 'Wiccan' and 'New Age' represent distinct positions, for example, and while there is considerable overlap (Hutton 1999: 409–16; Pearson 2002, 2002a), these should not be conflated. The reason for this lies in the distinct origins of Wicca and 'New Age'-ism, in addition to the maleable nature of the terms in question. In the etymology of the term 'pagan', current definitions include 'heathen', 'idolator' and 'worshipper of many gods', in addition to 'non-Christian, non-Jewish, non-Muslim' (Strimska 2005: 4). Indeed, conservative Christian author Richard Rives (1996: 130–1) notes a negative association between the 'Golden Calf' of biblical idolatry, and the Egyptian cults of Hathor and Ap(h)is. As such, contemporary Christians and Muslims may infer a direct connection between

Egyptian-themed practices and biblical heresy.[1] In addition are definitions which describe pagans as bereft of beliefs altogether. Strimska (2005: 4–5) notes that this position can be explained by the negative classification of the term, a classification 'rooted in earlier periods of religious wars and persecution in European history'. The person 'who does not worship the *right* god, the god of monotheistic religions, is assumed to be either nonreligious or wrongly and badly religious'.

Defining paganisms

The term itself derives from the Latin term *paganus*, which is broadly interpreted as 'country dweller', 'rustic, peasant, citizen, civilian, non-Christian (in Christian literature), non-Jewish' (Strimska 2005: 4).[2] Other studies (Luhrmann 1989) have highlighted the association of paganism with nature-worshipping groups who do not require a process of initiation into a closed fraternity, though this definition is questionable. Paganism has become an 'umbrella' term, 'a somewhat arbitrary boundary drawn around a variety of traditions and practices' (Pearson 2002: 2), often confused with 'New Age'-ism. According to Hutton (1999), pagan witchcraft predates the 'New Age' phenomenon, being a movement originating in the United Kingdom in the 1950s. He notes that the New Age attained its current enduring form in the USA of the 1970s and, subsequently, 'The former therefore cannot possibly be an aspect or outgrowth of the latter' (ibid.: 411). He notes that the New Age movement has, to some extent, attempted to appropriate pagan witchcraft, however. Pearson (2002: 6) also contests 'the inclusion of Paganism under the New Age rubric', highlighting the more overtly religious nature of Wicca[3] and the pragmatic nature of paganism (as inclusive of death and renewal), as distinct from the more generally utopian paradigm embraced by the New Age (healing and light). Thus, while there are areas of overlap, self-identification becomes paramount in classification. Strimska (2005: 13) states that it is worth observing 'the simple courtesy of calling people by the names they wish to be known by and not calling them by names they reject of are uncomfortable with', and instances of a strong desire on the part of Reconstructionists and Revivalists to be differentiated from paganism, 'ecclectic Wicca' and even each other are present herein (LaBorde 2010: 7).

The terminologies employed in this study require working definitions, however contentious they may remain. With regards to paganism, there are noted commonalities, including:

> reverence for nature as sacred, drawing inspiration from pagan religions of the past, the creative use of ritual and myth, a seasonal cycle of festivals, and a tendency towards polytheism and pantheism rather than monotheism, … accepting the divine as both male and female… thus including both gods and goddesses.
>
> Pearson 2002: 2

Subsequently, Pearson locates Wicca, pagan Druidry, Asatru/Heathenism,[4] pagan shamanism and unaligned groups which do not identify with the above but 'simply call themselves "Pagans"' within this model (ibid.: 3). Ritual is a common characteristic shared by pagan groups, though not all pagans practice ritual and, further, not all ritualists might be considered pagan. Wicca is a movement more easily identified as having an origin in '1950s Britain' as mentioned. Though the intricacies of this origin are outside the current scope, it should be noted that Gerald Gardner is widely accepted as its founder, albeit against the contestations of those who claimed a lineage in hereditary witchcraft (Pearson 2002a: 33–5).[5]

Thelema: the *devil* in the details

Matters are further complicated if allowing for the influence on foundational Gardnerian Wicca of Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism and the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), of which Gardner was a member (Hutton 1999: 205–6; Pearson 2002a: 32). The OTO has been described as a 'German pseudo-masonic organization' (Koenig 2003: 252), assumed by Aleister Crowley in the 1920s (DuQuesne 2003: 14–15). It includes a 'Gnostic mass' devised by Crowley as a public theatrical version of the OTO's more private rites. The mass is said to be Crowley's own interpretation of the Christian Eucharist, but 'thoroughly pagan in tone, and includes symbolism from Wagner's *Parsifal*' (ibid.). In a colourful account, Greenfield (2003: 275) implies that

Wicca is, at its root, something ‘cooked up’ by Crowley and Gardner as a popularist form of their earlier ritual practices, with the additional ‘benefit’ that it involved female nudity.[6] His assertion is that early aspects of Wicca are derived directly from OTO and *Thelemic* practices.

Thelema is the name of the movement that Crowley ([1938] 1976) established after scribing the *Liber Al vel Legis*, *The Book of the Law* (Sutin [1951] 2000). Crowley claimed that this book was ‘dictated’ to him by an entity named Aiwass over the course of three days – 8, 9 and 10 April, in the year 1904 – while he stayed in Cairo with his wife. Though the work incorporates Egyptian divinities and imagery in its prose, the cosmology espoused in the work ranges from recognisably Egyptian derivatives to disintelligible prose. Notably, the text itself was inspired by a stele from the Bulaq Museum, stele 666, or the Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu (Crowley [1938] 1976, 1991). Greenfield’s (2003) assertions therefore antagonise the foundational feminist premise of later politicised religious movements such as *Reclaiming* witchcraft (Salomonsen 2002; Starhawk 1979). Greenfield claims that, the foundations of feminist Wicca and the ‘modern cult of the goddess’ are ‘challenged with the fact that the goddess in question is Nuit, her manifestation the sworn whore, Our Lady Babalon, the Scarlet Woman. Transform what you will shall be the whole of history, but THIS makes what Marx did to Hegel look like slavish devotion’ (Greenfield 2003: 274).

He alludes here to the Thelemic maxim, ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law’, the precursor to the Wiccan, ‘Do what thou wilt but harm thee none’. This phrasing appears to find its origins in the satirical writings of François Rabelais (1494–1553). Rabelais ([1653] 2004) describes the Abbey of Thélème, a utopian critique on society, where the only rule was ‘Do what thou wilt’. The influence of Rabelais on Crowley’s Thelema movement is apparent (Crowley [1938] 1976, 1991). It should be noted that Greenfield (2003: 272) recognises a ‘core of valid experience’ under the Wiccan-neopagan heading, but equates this to the same core exposed by ‘the dreaded bogey-man Aleister Crowley and the “wicked” pansexualism of Crowley’s Law of Thelema’. He further suggests that, allowing for this, ‘Radical feminist Neopagans’ took the balance intended by inclusion of the goddess element and altered it ‘into a political feminist agenda, centred around a near-monotheistic worship of the female principle, in a bizarre caricature of

patriarchal Christianity'. It is notable that Salomonsen (2002, 2004), in her research into the feminist witchcraft *Reclaiming* tradition, comes to a similar conclusion, describing the movement as a form of recentred monotheism, much to the chagrin of her participants.[7]

An adjunct to this movement is the branch of Wicca established by Alex Sanders, Alexandrian Wicca, which provided competition and antagonism to the Gardnerian school, before a truce was called (Pearson 2002a: 34). Hutton also notes the influence of Frazer's (1910) *The Golden Bough*, Margaret Murray's (1921) *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* and, later, (1931) *The God of the Witches*; this recruits the influence of the Folklore Society into a mix of romanticised notions of European pagan religion and mythology (Hutton 1999: 112–31; also see Strimska 2005: 7). Allowing for the additional influence of Crowley on modern Wicca or paganism (contentious but feasible), then one might also consider the indirect influence of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddel MacGregor Mathers, on Crowley himself (Hutton 1999: 66–83).

Florence Farr: the lost Egyptologist?

In addition to the Egyptian currents inherited by the Golden Dawn through the Masonic practices of its three founding members, one might emphasise the influential nature of the works of Florence Farr (1860–1917). Primarily known as an actress and playwright, co-creator of plays *The Beloved of Hathor* and *Shrine of the Golden Hawk* (Farr and Shakespeare ([*c.* 1902] 2006), she was, significantly, a First Wave Feminist, a leader in the Golden Dawn, amateur Egyptologist and author of *Egyptian Magic: Occult Mysteries in Ancient Egypt* ([1896] 1997).[8] Hutton (1999: 81) describes Farr and Elaine Simpson, inspired by ritual, sharing a vision of Isis, which would later be shared by Samuel Liddel MacGregor Mathers.[9] Farr's influence, most notably her unusual attention to Egyptian primary sources (which, given the mythologised nature of Masonic practices, was somewhat exceptional at the time), potentially altered the nature of the Egyptian-themed 'eclecticism' of the Golden Dawn (Farr [1896] 1997). Traditionally, the Golden Dawn had symbolic roots in the Egyptian-themed miscellany of Freemasonry and

Rosicrucianism (Hornung 2001; Hutton 1999). Farr's interests and, arguably, her influence, took the movement from ecclecticism to something closer to 'revivalism' (though likely not as far as reconstructionism). Certainly, the Golden Dawn already possessed a 'powerful image of female divinity' (Hutton 1999: 80), though it should be noted that this was not a 'pure' form of the goddess Isis so much as a syncretised abstraction (ibid.: 79). Supporting this, Evans (2007) notes the similarities in imagery between Farr's ([*c.* 1902] 2006) plays and Crowley's ([1938] 1976) later *Book of the Law* (transcribed in 1904). These factors potentially highlight Farr's location as an overlooked pivotal figure in the development of esoteric practices, not least the reception of Egyptian material in the occult nexus of nineteenth-century London. It is no small irony, however, that accepting Crowley's influence on Gardner's Wicca may leave space for the indirect influence of First Wave Feminists, when viewed in light of the influence of Florence Farr on the Golden Dawn and Thelema.

This occurs against a backdrop of the Victorian fascination with the 'Orient', emboldened by the Napoleonic expedition and subsequent discoveries, accompanied by an influx of Egyptian/ised paraphernalia into London. The cultural and *literal* (in both senses) consumption of ancient Egyptian bodies and culture has prompted dialogues on colonial and imperialist appropriations of Egypt. These form a backdrop and context against which esoteric groups of the era must be viewed (Luckhurst 2012). From the acquisition of antiquities as the hallmark of emerging nationalism and race-construction (Challis 2013; Colla 2007; Trafton 2004); the exhibitionism in the creation of the cultural 'other' (Butler 2008; Lant 1992); and the desecration, denuding and visual and physical digestion of Egyptian bodies (Meskell 1998b, Riggs 2014a), the Victorian era provides a framework in which fantasies of the magic of Egypt were commonly subject to fetishisation and frequently held to heighten ones allure, health, and sexual prowess (ibid.). It is not so surprising, then, to find that groups of the era incorporated aspects of Egyptian, or *Egyptian-ised*, magic. While many Reconstructionists seek to bypass Egyptian esoterica in favour of Egyptian primary sources (LaBorde 2010; Reidy 2010; Siuda 2005a), over two centuries of dialogue on these subjects, including many mythologisations, have accrued layers of meaning (Hornung 2001).

Discovering reconstructionism

Pearson cautions that while feminist witchcraft and even paganism may have developed out of Wicca, 'Wicca itself is not wholly situated within Paganism' (Pearson 2002a: 44–5). It is central to both paganism and witchcraft, but also on the margins of both, further highlighting the difficulties involved in generalising religious identity narratives. Strimska (2005: 19) describes a continuum, ranging from eclectic practices which 'freely blend traditions of different areas, peoples, and time periods', at one end, and those 'that aim to reconstruct the ancient religious traditions of a particular ethnic group or a linguistic or geographic area to the highest degree possible', described as Reconstructionists, at the other.

Strimska highlights the scholarly dedication of Reconstructionists, noting that, for this group, 'the older the evidence that gives information about the Pagan of the past, the better' (ibid.). Granted, the older the primary evidence, the arguably closer it is to the 'source'; however, there is an additional caveat with regards to Egyptian religion. Having spanned three millennia and undergone changes both drastic and subtle, if Egyptian-themed Reconstructionists wished to follow a form of historical accuracy, did they settle on one period or cosmology? Strimska (ibid.: 18) also notes that while Reconstructionists might 'take liberties' creating their own 'interpretations and adaptations to suit modern values and lifestyles', generally they regard older traditions as 'better established, more authoritative, and more authentic than those that are newly created or vaguely imagined'. This is not to imply that eclectic traditions pay no heed to historical or archaeological understanding, merely that, in this model, they feel less 'bound' by them, selecting 'religious ideas, practices, and even deities from a wide variety of sources… to combine them based on what they take to be their similarity or complementarity' (ibid.: 20). However, from Strimska's discussion, it is both the types of resource employed and the conservatism of their application that locates the practitioner on this 'Recon-Eclectic' continuum. If such practices were occurring with Egyptian material, what resources were being employed in the reconstruction of Egyptian ritual practices? Who were the key figures in this movement and were there any 'nodal' texts being propagated? Additionally, given Strimska's assertion of the scholarly interest of Reconstructionists, what role did Egyptology play in such practices?

Attempting to ascertain the growth of movements using the internet is also highly problematic. While Cowan (2005: 195) does not dispute that 'modern Paganism is growing, both in popularity and in participant numbers', he asks us to question the statistics behind such growth, including those that declare paganism as 'among the fastest-growing religions in the United States' (as proposed by Strimska 2005: 1). Strimska (ibid.) states that research from the American Religious Identity Survey (ARIS) puts the number of self-identified Wiccans, pagans and Druids in the USA as 307,000 in 2001. Curiously, Cowan (2005: 194–5) employs the same source, but only lists the number of self-identified 'Wiccans' specifically, rising from 8,000 in 1990 to 134,000 in 2001.

Given the complications regarding the inaccurate conflation of such movements from without, and desire for discreet categories from within, such statistical models can be both confusing and misleading. There are other significant factors which should also be addressed, including the ability to self-represent, which has arguably increased in some areas since both the establishment of the internet and a perceived increased tolerance in popular culture towards 'alternative' religious views. However, it is of crucial importance to note that this increase is not universal, as expressed in a 'digital divide' (Dawson and Cowan 2004: 5). Some reports indicate that, in 2001, less than 1 per cent of Africa's population were internet users and that London possessed more internet domains than the entirety of Africa – reflecting 'deeply embedded social and cultural division' and contributing to them (Castells 2001, in Dawson and Cowan 2004: 5). While the spread of the internet has been exponential in some areas since, this illustrates a geographical discrepancy.

Respondents might additionally mislead or misrepresent for reasons other than religious concerns, highlighted by the near 400,000 Britons who responded to the 2001 UK census as 'Jedi Knights' (Cowan 2005: 195).[10] Such an act may be undertaken simply for the respondent's own amusement or as a unified act of dissent, which engenders the possibility that respondents to religious surveys may employ the term 'pagan' for similar reasons in certain instances. That the term 'pagan' still engenders negative labelling might additionally dissuade genuine pagan respondents from declaring their religion in non-anonymous surveys (such as the UK census). As such, this

study supports Cowan's (2005) premise that statistical analysis can only take us so far, especially with regards to internet usage. It was for this reason that I focused on a multi-sited study, which not only reflected the practices of my participants, who engage in both real-world ('offline') and online activity,[11] but enabled the contextualisation of small samples of online responses utilising both online and 'traditional' resources, as Mitchell asserts: 'The validity of the extrapolation depends not on the typicality or representativeness of the case but upon the cogency of the theoretical reasoning' (Mitchell [1956] 2006: 39).

Disclosure and positionality

I began this work with a set of research questions initially inspired by the audience studies of Fisher (2000) and S. MacDonald (2003), who questioned the appeal of Egypt and proposed that conceptions thereof were based on modern cultural constructions, largely free from concerns of authenticity or accuracy. Studies of paganisms and reflexive dialogue with members of the Kemetic continuum gradually informed and shaped the work beyond 'audience response' models, leading to the evolution of my research questions. The result was an expansion from investigative exposition to critical interrogation of the wider context and implications of Kemeticism, and a characterisation of both this phenomenon and academia/Egyptology. Questions informing the study included:

- What are these movements, and where did they originate? Do they tie into established dialogues on Egyptian esoterica or form their own unique epistemes?
- Are these movements embodied in one group or are a range of practices occurring under an umbrella term?
- What is the significance of nodal figures and original texts produced from within these epistemes? What original research is being undertaken, if any?
- What Egyptian practices, beliefs, rituals, personas and objects are focused upon, and what are the criteria for inclusion?
- What role do resources, such as texts and objects play, and how are their uses reconciled with 'authentic' (i.e Egyptian pharaonic) practices and

Egyptological perceptions?

- What academic resources, if any, are being employed? What status is applied to these resources compared to practitioner-led research?
- How do perceptions of 'authenticity' affect and define these practices? Are conceptions of authenticity and 'appropriate' usage of material employed by academia to define academic boundaries?
- How do these movements fit into current contours of Egyptological discourse and broader cultural uses of Egyptian material?
- How do they relate, in terms of social and cultural power, to such discourse? How do they fit into established cultural hierarchies?

Participation and observation are staples of anthropological practice and techniques I had considered employing early in the research of Kemetic movements. There are advantages to such practices: participation, in particular, is seen as the surest (if not the fundamental) technique for understanding an 'insider's' perspective in the field of anthropology. However, there are theoretical blind spots involved in such an exercise, and this technique requires great care to utilise effectively. For instance, in the aforementioned ground-breaking, if controversial (Ezzy 2004; Harrington 2004; Pearson 2002b), study of London-based occult groups in the 1980s, Luhrmann (1989: 15) writes optimistically of the utility of participation: 'to some extent, the anthropologist who genuinely participates in a cultural practice can take himself as a subject'. However, contrary to 'going native', Luhrmann is accused of allowing a normative perspective to colour her perception while participating. At the end of the introduction, Luhrmann (ibid.: 18) states, 'I never have and do not now "believe" in magic', further proposing, 'Certainly magicians are themselves evidence of the limitations of reason's scope' (ibid.: 344). Pearson (2002b: 101) suggests that Luhrmann fails to question her own premise: that Western magicians in the 1980s 'must fool themselves into believing in magic'. Criticised for denying her own experience in her ethnography (ibid.: 103) and never once questioning 'the orthodoxy of her own belief' (Harrington 2004: 75) – despite her explicitly 'atheistic' methodology (Ezzy 2004: 118–19) – Luhrmann is also accused of approaching her participants with a predetermined set of notions on the validity (or lack thereof) of their practices, ultimately portraying the witches in her study as 'somewhat childish and irrational' (Pearson 2002b: 103).

Furthermore, Luhrmann is accused of rejecting her subjects' beliefs, 'not because of her own experience or evidence, but because of the paradigms of acceptable practice among academics' (Ezzy 2004: 119). The notion that a discipline such as anthropology creates and reinforces normative trends is highlighted by Luhrmann's own apprehensions:

> The only reason I continued to think of myself as an anthropologist, rather than a witch, was that I had a strong disincentive against asserting that rituals had an effect upon the material world… I stood to gain nothing by belief except power which I was told I could exercise unconsciously even if I made no explicit acceptance, but I stood to lose credibility and career by adherence.
>
> Luhrmann 1989: 320–1

Ezzy (2004: 119) asserts that: 'The methodological atheism at the heart of Luhrmann's thesis does not derive from an attempt to sensitively understand the experiences of Witches, but from her enforced adherence, on pain of significant social sanction, to the atheistic tenets of academe.' Such tenets, if verified, become inherently problematic for the researcher who bases an interpretative study on the participation model, placing into serious doubt whether one could ever genuinely participate in these rituals at all (Asad 2003). It additionally attests to the normative affect any study of the 'other' might engender. Flaherty (1991: 154–5) praises Luhrmann for 'preserving her anthropological integrity… anthropology at its very best'; however, surely the ethics of observations made while 'masquerading' as a participant deserves some interrogation. While Luhrmann (1989: 17) was initially 'honest about (her) enterprise', her intention to 'fit in' and 'dispel outsider status' meant that she 'was rather relieved when people forgot what (she) had so carefully told them'. This even affected her research strategy, as she refrained from engaging in practices which would denote her as an outsider, such as using questionnaires, for instance (ibid.). Pearson (2002b: 103) highlights the ethical problems of this approach, accusing Luhrmann of misrepresenting herself and betraying the trust of her participants, some of whom felt that she acted covertly, later revealing information publicly which was given in confidence. However, these critiques, while valid, potentially side-line the usefulness of Luhrmann's 1989 study as a benchmark.

Luhrmann spent many years studying witchcraft and appears to have joined a number magical groups over that time, prior to the publication of *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* (Luhrmann 1989). An imaginative child, she was preoccupied by daydreams, the intensity and vividness of which sometimes disturbed her (ibid.). She states that her interest in the study of witchcraft derives from a 'means to come to intellectual terms' with her past (ibid.: 18), highlighting a personal investment behind her academic interest. Her own experiences, occasional acceptance or concession of the effectiveness of her participants' practices (regardless of their real-world verity) attests to some genuine attempt at participation, even if prevalent anthropological paradigms would not support its practice: 'The remarkable feature of this training (in magical techniques) is that it works. That is, if you studiously undergo training, your awareness of your inner life changes, as does your experience of its isolation from an outer world' (ibid.: 181). Further, she reveals the epistemological tightrope straddled during her study, and displays the 'cognitive dissonance' prevalent in anthropology:

> the neither-true-nor-false status of an imaginative, fiction-laden language can serve a vital role (in) making culturally peculiar remarks believable, by providing a way in which one can know the terms and their reference without ever committing oneself to their truth or falsity.
>
> Ibid.: 220

It is, perhaps, a missed opportunity that Luhrmann was unable to reconcile her own status with the pressures seemingly imposed by her academic positionality, which may be instructive to this work.

In an attempt to bridge this dichotomy, Ganiel and Mitchell (2006) integrate a complementary approach into their theological/anthropological study, with emphasis on the notion that distinctions of standpoint are social constructions, not realities. They assert that, since it is no longer assumed that researchers can remain objective during ethnographic research, it is more productive to highlight how they might acknowledge the manner in which subjectivity affects their work (ibid.: 4). In harmony with such, Wallis (2003: 9) candidly states, 'My autoarchaeological approach vis-à-vis neo-Shamanisms in not neutral and impartial, but rather a politically located

representation informed by my situated standpoint… only by being politically explicit can [we] do honest research.' Further, Ganiel and Mitchell (2006: 4) attempt to conceptualise 'the subjective construction of meaning between researchers and participants', tackling the problems posed by 'multiple identities' and 'bias' by confrontation of the researcher's socially constructed position. This, they argue, is not 'ingrained', but 'ambiguous and permeable', from which one might infer the same of previously 'self-evident' insider/outsider categories. This does not mean that the terms become meaningless, however, as the authors do not attempt to dispel social boundaries into a 'haze of post-modern relativism'. Rather, they suggest, 'it is pertinent to question when and how pre-existing, imagined boundaries might be "subjective, ambiguous and transformable"' (ibid.). In Luhrmann's case, her aim of objectivity, however well-intentioned, was undermined by her conformity to positivist norms, which damaged her ability to be reflexive. Rather than ask 'a text's theory about itself' (Salomonsen 2004: 47) we find theory applied over findings, highlighting the hierarchy between *observer* and *observed*.

Luhrmann's work, from a *methodological* perspective, was ground-breaking for its time – it is thorough and aware of its academic context, perhaps too aware, and, reading it, one cannot help but feel it embodies a missed opportunity. Her work could have initiated extensive dialogue between modern pagan groups and academia, but the credibility of academic outsider-participants was damaged when she (allegedly) betrayed the confidence of her contributors and alienated her demographic. Salomonsen's body of work, more accepting of the validity of subjective experience, is more critically accepted, but also carries its share of problems, both in the foundational mistakes she notes of her early studies (Salomonsen 1986, in 2004: 44–6) and her assertions regarding the origins of modern witchcraft, which are a theorising of observations, rather than the conclusions of her participants. Ultimately, though, both succeed in gaining acceptance from their research communities, gathering their evidence and meeting their aims – though there is some concern over how representative Luhrmann's (1989) study can be, focused as it is upon one group (Pearson 2002b).

In Luhrmann's case, this 'self-defined outsider' status is actively encouraged by her discipline; one might note the pressures exerted by peers, departments and career anxieties, whether imagined, conscious or not

(Strimska 2005a). Most significantly, this case highlights the negative effects of the discipline of anthropology as an actively reductionist force, as secularism itself being a *normative narrative* (Asad 2003; and Chapter 3). Said (1989: 222) asserts that 'narratives are either politically and ideologically permissible, or not', and that, 'there is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or ever has stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality' (ibid.: 211). However, to simply cast Luhrmann as the casualty of her discipline is an equally problematic form of reductionism that, if applied laterally, leaves no room for individual creation and interpretation. After Geertz (1993), relationships to systems of meaning might be considered dynamic, not merely a rigid hierarchical expression of hegemonic power (ibid.: Chapter 3). The writers in this chapter make a strong argument for the negative effects that *positivist* practice and the pursuit of *unreflective objectivity* can entail. However, this does not necessitate that objectivity should be rejected outright. Commenting on the volume, *Researching Paganisms* (Blain, Ezzy and Harvey 2004), Strimska (2005a: 249) critiques that 'it is nonsense to speak of a wholesale rejection of objectivity'. He concedes that it is no longer useful, 'or even credible for a scholarly author to adopt the phenomenological pose of an all-knowing, omniscient viewer who dispassionately observes and describes the universe', but he also suggests that the researchers featured in *Researching Paganisms* 'have not rejected the pursuit of objectivity' (ibid.). He notes that 'all involved have clearly made strenuous and praiseworthy efforts to provide accurate, truthful, factual accounts of their topics of research, and also of themselves'.

Reading the accounts of the researchers in *Researching Paganisms* reveals a set of notably self-aware investigators, who have gone to great lengths to understand where their work serves the *academy* or the *religion*, and what their own biases entail. Strimska (2005a: 248–9) postulates that rather than *rejecting* objectivity, 'they have extended its reach, to encompass not merely the social world "outside" the researcher, but their internal thoughts, feelings, and experiences as well'. There are caveats, and 'cruel facts of religious demography and institutional politics' (ibid.: 250), which may serve to stem potential tides of academics expressing their personal religious perspectives and inhibit the dialogues between communities and an academy 'truly, as

opposed to superficially tolerant and inclusive' (ibid.). Universities and colleges today are, he states, 'market driven, semi-corporate institutions' catering to the needs of their 'students, alumni, and corporate sponsors'. Strimska (ibid.) proposes that those religious studies departments in 'Christian majority nations such as the United Kingdom and United States' may well be majority populated by Christian theologians and scholars and present a potential for the marginalisation of members of 'marginal religions' at the time of 'hiring or tenure as well'. These observations, though conjecture, do reflect the concerns of both the writers above and participants herein (see Chapters 11 and 12), signalling a need to critically examine the current epistemelogical limits of the academy – of what it can, and will not, support. *Researching Paganisms* highlights potential spaces for new breeds of researchers to underscore academic shortcomings while exploring avenues of improvement. Insider/outsider categories are no longer the paradigmatic terms they may once have been – they can be useful as descriptive tools, subject to greater explication, specific to the circumstance of the study. In this sense they are necessary reminders of an ongoing need to acknowledge, and not ignore, standpoint theory. Such a confrontation is crucial to a fair representation of participants' subject-worlds.

During the course of my research, I approached potential participants explicitly, with informed consent, eventually setting up a website to describe my background, research and aims.[12] I sought insights from 'lay'-membership and nodal figures (temple founders and authors of source material). The largest and most visible online manifestation of Kemetic 'Reconstruction', Kemetic Orthodoxy, seemed a reasonable place to begin (Krogh and Pillifant 2004, 2004a).[13] I joined their discussion board,[14] and placed a short post in March 2008, which requested that those interested in engaging in my voluntary research could contact me for a questionnaire. I was almost immediately challenged. Certain members of the board pointed out that, since I was not a member of Kemetic Orthodoxy, my presence as academic researcher would require authorisation before it was welcome.[15] Additionally, as the research had not been approved by the board moderators or any senior member of the priesthood, I should remove my post. It appeared that I was facing a hierarchy on this forum, not at all the multi-vocal democracy alluded to in Brasher's work (2004: xiii), though responses

weren't unanimously united against the research. I did receive a small number of private message responses, from the members Lapis and Senut (2008, personal communications, March), who were willing to help if I was willing to go through the proper channels.

In addition to obtaining permissions and introducing me on the boards, I was pointed to other sites which the members thought I'd find helpful, including the multi-denomination 'Pagan Cauldron'. This forum hosted a variety of boards, from eclectic practices to reconstructionist, for a range of different 'ancient' civilisations.[16] I focused on the 'Reformed Kemetic SIG', as suggested, as different boards had different moderators, and I had been informally introduced to this board's moderator, Darkhawk. As I learned more about the various offshoots, schisms and movements, I attempted to contact more board moderators, including those of Per Ankh,[17] Per Heh,[18] Sekhem School of Religion,[19] Ta Noutri,[20] the Temple of Aten,[21] Akhet Hwt-Hrw,[22] Children of Kemet[23] and Following the Sun.[24] The latter two were discussion forums in the manner of the Pagan Cauldron, rather than online temples themselves.[25] I achieved varying degrees of success in my endeavours, sometimes establishing contact with founders and authors, which led to plentiful communications (including meetings and extended correspondence with author Richard Reidy (2010)); other instances elicited no response, even from multiple emails.[26] Due to the transient nature of online forums, many sites which once were considered central, or significant, simply disappeared during the course of my research; even more have become defunct since. Others, such as Per Ma'at[27] have since appeared, though activity on new sites apparently takes time to establish, if at all (S. LaBorde 2010, personal communication, 4 April).

Three waves of questions developed, each dealing with different aspects of the Recon phenomenon. The first related to studies of Egyptian special interest, such as museum response and Egyptomania. I sought to understand the self-described motivations behind explicitly Egypt-focused religions. From the initial question set I identified key aspects of 'Kemetic' practice and ideology which required further analysis, leading to a second wave of research, which focused on theological questions. This included conceptions of sin, taboo and sacred space. The idea of sacred space seemed pertinent in an age where once-sacrosanct temples were now filled with thousands of

annual tourist groups. This question set tied most closely into the establishment of ideology and group identity in diaspora. The third wave focused on the technical aspects of contemporary ritual practice, such as primary sources, objects and gestures, an area of the study which provides the most interface and variety between Egyptological and Kemetic activity; for this reason the discriminatory criteria of my participants was a focal point.

In an attempt to counter bias in my questionnaires, I asked participants to address areas they felt were incorrect or omitted, and later conducted at-length correspondence with participants, allowing them to contribute their own experiences and topics. In this sense, even though there were defined research questions and topics from the outset, my question sets evolved reflexively, in order to accommodate and critically engage with research topics of which I was previously unaware (Waves One, Two and Three). Additionally, participants would sometimes question my wording, including its neutrality and specificity (Makoto 2009, Wave One). These were concerns that I felt were best addressed by reflexive engagement, and by allowing my surveys to evolve organically. Participant replies would unpack my questions and aims, and I would, in turn, unpack their replies and engage with their responses.

A consideration which emerges from the reflexive methodology is the authority imbued upon a range of respondents. Cowan (2005: 3–4) highlights a ‘crisis of credibility and authority’ emerging from the phenomenon of the ‘instant expert’. Due to the proliferation of information online, there are fewer controls on its quality or authenticity. I did not require my participants’ practices to be ‘authentically’ Egyptian, but I did require their representations of themselves and their practices to be authentic and, where possible, located. Once again, this was addressed by contextualisation and the identification of patterns; while ‘aberrant’ or ‘unique’ responses are included (and in some cases highlighted) to avoid misrepresentation and homogenisation, the list of thematic responses places an emphasis on *correlation* in order to counter concerns of credibility. In addition to these measures, I placed questions on public forums in order to gain a range of responses which could be openly discussed with reference to other practitioners. I sought out permission to employ existing threads that I found to be particularly salient or informative. This carried the additional benefit of the possibility of those practitioners who had not actively participated in the surveys to opt in with existing comments,

and allowed for a more comprehensive picture of Kemeticism to be constructed that was not entirely dependent on the most forthcoming, invested members of the community.

Ultimately, findings would depend less on broad surveys, which were used to denote trends, and more on personal correspondence. Once my credentials had been established, and rapport had been developed with enough members of the Kemetic community for the work to be taken seriously, I began to focus my communications on 'nodal' figures, the leaders, authors and web-hosts of the Kemetic range of religions. Indeed, some of these figures even acted as test subjects for planned surveys, giving me valuable feedback as to omissions or issues related to my questions. Using this array of techniques, I hoped to counter the weaknesses inherent in such a study.

Notes

1 See http://www.remnantofgod.org/nl0612.htm and http://www.globalfreemasonry.com/global_freemasonry_02.html, respectively.
2 Also see Pearson (2002a: 16) for deeper analysis.
3 Her inclusion of Wicca in paganism is intended in this instance (Pearson 2002).
4 Influenced by Scandanavian and Teutonic myth (Pearson 2002: 2).
5 See details related in Valiente (1989).
6 Greenfield (2003: 261) refers to a 'dream' or flight of fancy, where Crowley and Gardner joke about stripping 'beautiful ladies naked', satirising the Wiccan practice of 'Skyclad' (i.e. to undertake rituals bereft of clothing).
7 Described regarding her 1989 work in Salomonsen (2004).
8 Farr's *Modern Woman: Her Intentions* (1910) challenges patriarchal models and leads early discussion on the vote (ibid.: 15–21). Indeed, the work opens with the boldly progressive statement, 'This is to be the woman's century.'
9 Blavatsky's ([1877] 1997) influence and, concomitantly, that of the Theosophical Society might be credited with repositioning Isis into the esoteric limelight in this period.
10 390,000, more precisely, which in the UK is counted as a 'No religion' response, see: http://census-campaign.org.uk/faq/jedi-knights/
11 It is of note that 'offline' activity in the 'real world' is defined with reference to the internet when engaged in discussion of 'online religion/religion online'. See Dawson and Cohen (2004) for a discussion of the differences and overlaps between these worlds.
12 http://profaneegyptologists.blogspot.co.uk/ (in particular, the posts from 2009).
13 Kemetic Orthodoxy, otherwise known as the House of Netjer, operate two websites, http://www.netjer.org, which comprises their forums and interactive components, and http://www.kemet.org/, a site dedicated to information about their religion, beliefs and foundation. Within this text, and my participant feedback, this movement is commonly referred to as the House of Netjer, HoN or KO. Quotations and access during the period of study occured between 2008 and 2011 and, as such, many pages no longer exist. In order to keep the work as relevant as possible, I

have replaced specific page references with the current home page for the organisations in question.

14 http://www.netjer.org

15 This conversation string has since been deleted from the Netjer.org boards.

16 From Asatru to Hellenic, see http://www.ecauldron.net/forum/index.php?board=75.0

17 http://www.per-ankh.org/cgi-sys/suspendedpage.cgi (site deactivated).

18 http://forums.per-heh.org

19 http://sekhemschool.com/school/ (site deactivated).

20 A French and European continent-based Kemetic community. While their home site (http://www.ta-noutri.com/phpBB2/index.php) is no longer active, they are described here: https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta_Noutri

21 http://www.templeofaten.org

22 http://www.hwt-hrw.com (site deactivated) and see below.

23 http://www.childrenofkemet.org/ (site deactivated).

24 http://followingthesun.freeforums.org/ and see LaBorde (2010) and below.

25 Though 'Following the Sun' shares it title with LaBorde's (2010) publication, and this name was chosen to be mutually supportive in the marketplace.

26 As was the case with Per Ankh, Per Heh, Ta Noutri (which may be due to my communiqué having been written in English) and the Temple of Aten. I would email up to three times, often using each contact detail supplied on the page. Above this number of attempts I felt might verge on harassment, however.

27 http://kemetictemple.com/forum

7 Kemetic Orthodoxy and the House of Netjer

Kemetic Orthodoxy (KO) is currently the only New Religious movement in this work to receive prior academic attention, albeit from sociology, not Egyptology (Krogh and Pillifant 2004, 2004a). Previous studies have focused on the origins, spread and structure of KO, and place emphasis on the utility of the internet as a medium for community, activity and recruitment/reproduction. This chapter avoids re-treading this ground in favour of a re-reading, with emphasis on specifically Egyptian activities over the sociological considerations of 'religion online'. There is some necessary overlap, however, in the presentation and discussion of origins, organisation, authority and beliefs and practices. This chapter establishes a format for the chapters and case studies that follow, which lead into thematically arranged discussion of the ethnography. The chapters are a snapshot of the cultural moment of Kemetic revival and reconstruction *c*. 2009–11, with additional material provided by conversations between 2014 and 2015 with Richard Reidy of the Kemetic Temple of Ra, and 2016 with Kemetic Orthodoxy's founder, leader and Nisut, Tamara Siuda.

Kemetic Orthodoxy is the first to be explored, not only because of its primacy on the World Wide Web, but also because it has become an emblematic movement, alongside or against which many Kemetics and counter movements have defined themselves. Much of the information on KO presented throughout was initially gleaned through extensive correspondence with Senut (a member of KO clergy, not to be confused with the ritual of the same name), the work of Krogh and Pillifant (2004, 2004a), the KO websites[1] and responses to my three waves of surveys. I was, at an early point in the research, invited to undertake the Probationer's Group, as Krogh and Pillifant had done (2004: 11). I declined, however, as I felt that, in

my search for a range of responses, an insider's perspective of only one group could lead to a representative bias that might be difficult to counter. I feared participation might compromise objectivity and place a strain on my 'fidelity' should I be privy to ritual or confidential material.[2] Additionally, a more practical concern was the length of the beginner's course (up to 16 weeks), which took place on American time and occurred over the course of my PhD upgrade process, which was rapidly enlisting time away from fieldwork. As such, while additional insight was desirable, many of the rituals of KO required full conversion before revelation. I would have been excluded from these as a researcher, regardless, as were Krogh and Pillifant (2004). I have deferred the presentation of most participant responses from this chapter, in favour of exploration of a range of Kemetic beliefs and practices in Chapters 9 and 10. This had the advantage of allowing for a comparative analysis of the range of topics encountered thematically, and helped more evenly distribute what was, in effect, an unbalanced (if proportionate) set of responses, ensuring that smaller groups and individual voices were not marginalised due to disembodiment.

My initial forays onto KO's boards were met with some amount of suspicion and contestation. However, Senut, an ordained member of the KO clergy, was the first of my respondents, and an early supporter of my work:

> I would like to see more discussion and publications along this line; I believe it's much-needed in these difficult times. Our world has seen too much hatred, suspicion, division and downright murder – all in the name of God and religion. We need to start looking at other religions more positively and in an inclusive manner.
>
> Senut 2009, personal communication, 3 March

Senut's aid was central to the acquisition of access to the HoN boards, as without permission my posts and questions would not only be challenged (as noted above) but could be deleted altogether, with subsequent infringements resulting in a potential ban (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 212–13).[3]

Origins

Kemetic Orthodoxy was established under the leadership of Tamara L. Siuda, the current 'Nisut', often translated as 'Authority' (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: ¶ 2). It began with a meditative trance in 1988, which Siuda had undertaken as part of her initiation as a Wiccan priestess.[4] Siuda claims to have felt contacted by ancient Egyptian deities, and charged to revive 'Kemet's long-forgotten ways and bring them to a new generation of the faithful, helping to return the love and wisdom of *ma'at* to a modern world sorely in need of it' (Kemet 2010). She subsequently left the Wiccan faith and began meeting with a small group of college friends for study and worship (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 209). According to the webpage dedicated to the Nisut, the appeal of Egypt was longstanding for Siuda: 'Ancient Egypt called to her imagination, to her strong sense of history and tradition, and finally to her innermost heart' (Kemet 2010). It is of note that this phrasing of calling and the phenomena of contact, invited or no, are recurrent themes when studying Kemeticism, locating the religion within a framework of wider religious terminology.

Kemetic Orthodoxy subsequently grew out of real-world connections and activities, online activity emerging as a 'natural extension' (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 210) of their offline interactions, particularly given that Siuda and co-founder, Robert, were working as advisors and interfaith managers for the Spirituality Forum of America Online from 1994–8.[5] As noted, KO currently employs two main websites, kemet.org, established in 1996, which presents essays, a glossary of gods and goddesses, image library, devotional writings and a 'virtual ancestor shrine' (Krogh and Pillifant 2004a: ¶ 4), and Netjer.org, the official community site for the House of Netjer, 'a church of the Kemetic Orthodox faith', established in 1999, offering forums, an events calendar and access to 'a range of more private interactions' (ibid.: ¶ 5). By August 2000, the sites of Kemetic Orthodoxy had received 'over 100,000 hits, averaging 20,000 hits per year'[6] (ibid.). HoN statistics as of 8 April 2015 attest to 1,798 board members, 228,915 total posts and 14,904 topics (Netjer 2015). However, rather than attempt to build an online, or 'virtual' community through such technologies, Siuda states that the internet is primarily employed in order to reach enough people 'to improve their offline connections' (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 206–7).

Organisation

KO's website states that they do not actively seek converts or engage in proselytising, describing Kemetic Orthodoxy as primarily a 'religion of converts', that enjoys 'slow yet steady growth'. They do not 'actively recruit members or do missionary work' (Kemet 2010).[7] As such, those who come to the faith do so through their own investigations, with some finding KO through word of mouth. A strong internet presence allows KO to unite this Kemetic diaspora, drawing 'from around the globe', and as such 'the Internet unites a large segment of our devotees' (ibid.). However, Cowan (2005: 5) stresses the dependency of modern paganisms on the 'metatechnology' of the internet and World Wide Web, and Dawson and Cowan (2004: 5) further highlight the uneven distribution of such technologies *world-wide*. As such, it might be inferred that KO, or Kemeticism more widely, cannot reach those faced with technological, linguistic and financial barriers. Subsequently, most members 'live in America, scattered throughout thirty-eight states', however '10 percent live in other countries'.[8] This percentage was compiled in 1999 – and has likely altered since, with the gradual dissemination of internet service. In 2003 active membership was around 400: 'Of those four hundred, about three hundred are active members and about one hundred are inactive' (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 210).

As of 2016, Siuda attests to slow, steady growth:

> Currently we have approximately 600 active members in more than 30 countries. By active I mean people that participate somehow with others on a monthly basis or more. Over the last 20 years, we have conducted slightly less than 50 'beginner's classes' for people who might be interested in our religion (Krogh and Pillifant wrote about one they participated in, for example), and in the last two years, attendance at those classes has been anywhere from 50 to 100 people at a time. Of our membership, our last survey taken last fall indicated that about 60% of the respondents were active as Shemsu.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

The temple and seminary for KO was 'recognized as a temple and seminary

by the State of Illinois in 1993 and gained federal 501(c)3 tax-exempt temple status in 1999' (Kemet 2010); it retains this status in the USA in 2016 (ibid.). The temple itself was named the 'House of Netjer' and located in Chicago, Illinois. According to Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 3), by 2002, Kemetic Orthodoxy had grown to 'almost 300 members' and established a retreat centre in Harbor County, Michigan, replacing rented facilities in late 2003, when the group purchased a building in Chicago.[9] However, while the physical centres have been used for annual retreats, due to the widespread nature of the community 'most people learn about Kemetic Orthodoxy, meet other believers, convert, and worship online' (ibid.).

> I think we have also entered a time when centralization, the thing I wanted very much when the 2004 document was researched, has actually become less important to our members. They are not as interested in a single meeting place, but in regional and local meetings, in the religion coming to them where they are. We're shifting our focus toward enabling more events, online and offline, and on acknowledging the very diverse and international membership and their differing needs within the umbrella of the Kemetic Orthodox culture we're creating together.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Applicants to KO are offered a free online beginner's class, which includes education on the faith and an introduction to the community (Kemet 2010). Titled the Probationer's Lessons and Groups, newcomers convene online every three to four months for around 16 weeks (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 211). These classes establish a model for further activity, which occurs through 'synchronous, password-protected Internet Relay Chat discussions, supplemented by listserv email correspondence and postings on the password-protected side of the web site' (ibid.). Upon completion, the applicant may simply leave if they find KO not to their taste or needs, or they may continue as a community member 'without a formal commitment to the religion as a Remetj (the ancient word for the 'people of Kemet')' (Kemet 2010). Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 212) note that 'Over half of the people who have completed Probationer's Groups have gone on to become members.' If more dedication is desired, a Remetj can choose to fully convert, undergoing

divination and initiation as a Shemsu, or ‘follower’. Beyond the level of Remetj, one begins to gain access to private sessions, for discussion and disclosure of other rites, the technical specifics of which are kept exclusive. It has been suggested that the primary reason for the restriction of ritual is fear of online plagiarism (HoN 2010). Subsequently, KO has doubled in size of active membership since 2002, from under 300 to approximately 600 (Krogh and Pillifant 2004; Siuda 2016), implying that it is not a transient movement, but an increasing cultural presence in Kemeticism.

Hierarchy

Brasher (2004: xiii) noted ‘anti’ or ‘absent’ authoritarianism regarding ‘online religion’. However, Kemetic Orthodoxy operates in a hierarchical model, centred on the teachings of the Nisut, Tamara L. Siuda, and the priesthood.[10] Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 17) state that ‘the authority of the Nisut is not pragmatically based; instead, it is based on signs of divine validation in rituals and oracles’. In KO’s own words:

> As the current Nisut-bityt (often shortened to ‘Nisut’) Her Holiness is recognized by the Kemetic Orthodox as the current incarnation of the *kingly ka*, or the invested spirit of Heru, the Kemetic aspect of divinity incarnate in its spiritual leaders.
>
> Kemet 2010

‘Nisut’ is commonly translated as ‘King’, ‘Dual King’ and ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’ (Allen 2004: 65). Krogh and Pillifant (2004: ¶ 2) relate that ‘Nisut means *The Incarnation* or *Authority*.’ This authority was bestowed on Siuda through a coronation ritual enacted in 1996 in Egypt ‘at the traditional places such rituals are conducted, in the ancient ritual forms’. While these sources do not mention by whom, or under which authority, it seems reasonable to suggest that Kemetic deities take this role. ‘Upon coronation, our Nisut, believed to be the 196th of the lineage, received Kemetic names charging Her with spiritual responsibility for, and setting the course of Her mission within, the Kemetic Orthodox faith’ (Kemet 2010).

KO maintain that Siuda is *not* worshiped as divine, however, stating that, 'We do not worship Her as a goddess. The person Who bears the kingly ka, is a mortal human, just as all those who went before Her on the Heru throne' (ibid.).

Honorific titles are bestowed upon the Nisut, as they would have been in ancient Egypt, including capitalisation of the Nisut's pronouns and titles (ibid.). Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 17–18) suggest that: 'As a "bridge between Netjer and the faithful" the Nisut has a semi-divine status. Consequently, authority flows downward from the Nisut, to the priests, to the followers of Kemetic Orthodoxy.' Given the honorific titles bestowed upon Siuda (which include 'Her Holiness', 'Sekhenet-Ma'at-Ra setep-en-Ra Hekatawy I', 'Nisut-Bityt of the Kemetic Orthodox faith' or, simply, affectionately, as *Hemet* – an ancient word translated either as 'majesty' or 'sacred incarnation') and the status she holds as the divinely ordained authority, some have argued that KO resembles a 'cult of personality' or 'charismatic authority'.[11] While there was no apparent elective process in Siuda's ordination, Siuda and the priesthood maintain that it is not a cult of personality, but a recognised religion, with a temple board which guards against the abuse of power,

> As far as how to guard against a cult of personality, our temple is a registered 501(c)(3) church in the United States: http://www.irs.gov/app/pub-78/… we are listed and recognized just like any other formally-recognized religious organization in the USA. And we have official, legal bylaws that establish both a temple board and a chain of command that prevent any one person from controlling that body.
>
> Siuda, via Senut 2011, personal communication, 5 June

Revelation and ritual

KO's website states that KO is a ritual or cultic religion, as opposed to a 'revealed or scriptural religion', highlighting that a revealed religion 'extends from Deity to humans', where 'the Divine speaks directly to Its practitioners via divinely-authored scripture, where the faithful are expected to follow

divine instructions given in holy writ' (Kemet 2010). Whereas, a ritual or cultic religion, in their terms, 'maintains that the experience of Deity begins with humans and extends to Deity', and that humans, 'through correct living, correct actions and the practice of the proper liturgy, hymns and rites, can experience the Divine, which may or may not speak in the form of scriptures and/or written dogma' (Kemet 2010). Further, Siuda states that,

> A cultic religion does not preclude the idea of asking the gods if They like what you're doing for Them. It simply describes a religion where actions are privileged over creeds or belief systems. It is not about what we believe about the gods, as much as how we act toward Them.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Such a stance emphasises *community* and *correct action*, which potentially insures against the misuse or abuse of 'revelation' by any party. The designation of what is 'correct' is reliant on the community and, potentially, in the interpretation of texts and ancient Egyptian resources.

Speaking directly with the priesthood about ritual practices, the first ritual mentioned was the 'Senut': 'There is a Rite of Senut which is a daily meditation that many Shemsu perform; however, it is not a rite of antiquity, but one of revelation by our Nisut, Rev. Tamara Siuda' (Senut 2009, personal communication, 29 January).

The Senut ritual is described by Siuda (2005a: Chapter 2, emphasis original) as 'not intended to be a dumbed-down version of temple ritual… but a fully functional ritual for individual use, containing all the necessary elements of *all* Kemetic ritual, whether practiced by one or a thousand.' The ritual has been created by Siuda based on ancient (and many academic) sources, with rubric drawing inspiration from the rubric of the Laws of Horemheb, 'who penned a new body of laws to re-establish Ma'at in the land after the Amarna period'. However, it was undertaken with 'input, encouragement, and approval from the god Djehuty via an oracle', implying both divine and academic origin (ibid.). I asked for clarification as to whether this was considered a revealed rite, as described by Senut, above, or liturgy. Siuda obliged:

> A revealed rite in my mind would imply the idea that the deity wrote it and a person simply mediated the process (for example, Muhammad wrote down what the angel said, etc.). No deity forced me to write the Senut. What you describe here is simply the general process in most African traditions, where a thing is created, and then divination is done to see if that thing (which was created by people) is acceptable to the gods or spirits. The described oracle was a possessory experience (what we call Saq) where the deity was directly asked if He approved of the manner in which the Senut had been organized. I don't really consider that to be revealed in the same way that this term is usually used.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

The Senut ritual is available to all and serves to create continuity among otherwise 'free-form personal practice…: I would describe Senut as a modern ritual, unique to Kemetic Orthodoxy, based in the tradition of daily temple ritual of antiquity, and approved for modern usage by our clergy and our deities' (ibid.).

ATRs, revival, reconstruction

Siuda places KO within a framework of African Traditional Religions (ATRs):

> Ancient (and current) Egypt are in Africa. Any religion founded in the traditions of that culture country, regardless of its temporal placement, would be an African Traditional Religion, would it not? Other forms of ATRs are also practiced in the Western Hemisphere from some remove from their classical or pre-modern forms as well. I also believe firmly that this classification reminds people that Egypt is African and not some southern outpost of European paganism.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

This is a significant stance, which ties into debates on Afrocentrism and African history and, potentially, results in the inclusion of African

Continental materials which arguably may have been conceptually foreign to the ancient Egyptians (see Chapters 8–10). Attesting to the incorporation of African practice is the Rite of Parent Divination, a form of naming ceremony within Kemetic Orthodoxy, taken from Vodou. In keeping with KO as a form of Orthodoxy, differentiated from Wicca or eclectic practices, the Parent deity is one ordained, not chosen; many Kemetics appear comfortable with the idea of the Netjer (gods) claiming (or 'calling' as is often used) followers.

Additionally, Siuda possesses students in the Haitian Vodou tradition separate from the role of Nisut of Kemetic Orthodoxy, and holds the title of mambo in Haitian Vodou (since July 2001).[12] As a mambo she is known as 'Mambo T', or by the public name of '*Mambo Chita Tann*'.[13] This highlights the perceived compatibility between practices of African origin and Egyptian spirituality, though it did lead some Kemetics to question why the Nisut role was not seemingly exclusive, given that Shemsu (full converts/followers) undergo an initiatory rite which dedicates them 'specifically to the service of a particular god or goddess', which urges them to 'make a total commitment to Netjer', specifically, 'setting aside previous non-Kemetic Orthodox work as part of that vow' (Kemet 2010).

The issue raised being that, subsequently, regardless of the compatibility of the two practices (see Chapters 9–12), the leader of KO is inferred as not as exclusively Kemetic as are the priesthood. In correspondence with Siuda, the Nisut acknowledged these concerns, but explained how, to her, this position highlights the difference between Vodou *practice* and *religion*, and distinguishes between the Shemsu role and the role of Nisut:

> Shemsu vows require that a Shemsu honors their Kemetic deity or deities first before others, not exclusively. As Nisut, I am not a Shemsu nor have I ever taken Shemsu vows. However, that doesn't preclude me from the Nisut vows, that require me to put Kemetic Orthodoxy first before any other spiritual or religious practices. Additionally, I do not practice Vodou as a religion, but as an ancestral magical tradition. Most Haitians don't consider Vodou a religion either; the vast majority of Haitian Vodouisants will tell you they are Catholics. The application of the definition 'religion' to Vodou is generally made from the outside. As Nisut I serve specific deities and the community of worshipers, and this is my primary religious direction in life. If I ever had to choose between priorities, Kemetic

> Orthodoxy would always come first. The Shemsu would do the same.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Many respondents from KO noted, and were comfortable with, the idea that KO is a 'revival' religion, *not* a reconstruction (see following chapters). Notably, Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 2) somewhat inaccurately state that: 'Kemetic Orthodoxy is a *reconstruction* of the religion of Egypt circa 4500 BCE to 500 C.E.… the intention of this group [is] to practice an authentic form of ancient Egyptian religion' (emphasis added).

However, according to KO, Kemetic Orthodoxy represents a 'modern revival' and is 'in no way an unbroken transmission from antiquity' (Kemet 2010). When asked specifically about this apparent contradiction, Siuda further clarified:

> I do not see any suggestion that what we do is unbroken from antiquity. We base our research for our revival (those things that we practice that are in keeping with ancient traditions) on pharaonic and late classical Egypt before the Arab conquest. We are not however simply playing religious theatre or dress-up with ancient rites. I prefer the term revival, as it implies the renewal of a previous (and lost) thing. Reconstruction, which unfortunately is the preferred buzzword amongst neopagans interested in classical pagan religions, to me implies a lifeless attempt to copy something old, to create a replica. Kemetic Orthodoxy, to paraphrase the Japanese poet Basho, does not seek to copy the men of old, but seeks what they sought. We do this within the framework of the ancient Egyptian philosophy and religious practice, but we know we are not and never will be ancient Egyptians nor will our world be that world, so things adapt within that framework accordingly. It is possible to revive a thing and still acknowledge that it was lost.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

In perspective

Contestation regarding approaches to Egypt, terminology, hierarchy and inclusion of ATRs appears to have resulted in schism, as explored in the following chapters. Offshoot splinter movements and competing visions of Kemetic practice have begun to vie for hearing in the Babel of religious movements online (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 216). Not all visions of Kemetic revival and reconstruction begin with Tamara Siuda, though KO was one of the first entities to employ the 'metatechnology' which has allowed them to proliferate both online and off (Cowan 2005: 5). As Siuda notes, 'As the internet becomes faster and more dispersed, we will continue to grow. (Growth has been steady all along)' (Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February).

However, while they may not officially sanction the range of Kemetic revivalist and reconstructions, KO do not display signs of cultic possessiveness, nor do they outwardly speak against any other movement. According to Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 211), the House of Netjer 'welcomes visitors, instructs novices, rewards regular members, empowers leaders, and honors elders' in the furtherance of its mission to honour the gods of Kemet, support Ma'at and build community links (HoN 2010).

The sense of community built around the worship of Egyptian deities appears to be strong. The value of the HoN site to its members not only lies in the 'Online Ministry',[14] but in the relationships that members develop with each other and their gods.[15] With the addition of daily ritual and a perceived contribution to the establishment of Ma'at, it is easy to see how KO can become a very significant aspect of its member's lives, and the focus of a great deal of work for its priesthood and members.[16] Indeed, even a disillusioned member from a 'Kemetics against KO' livejournal thread notes the extensive work and prayer that Siuda undertakes on behalf of her members and followers.[17]

As mentioned, KO does not request payments for their beginner's class. Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 216) noted no instruction regarding financial obligation to KO during the Probationer's Group, and comment that most of the financial contributions for the maintenance of KO come 'from the priests', highlighting only an inherent interest in maintenance. KO only requires a one-time contribution from their members, the sum of 20 dollars when undergoing the Parent Name Divination, a required rite of full

conversion to KO (ibid.). Members undertake fund-raisers, and the Kemet.org and Netjer.org sites both contain links to a donation page, though this is not unusual for any non-profit organisation. Judging from feedback from members and former members, as well as their community forums, it appears that financial concerns are secondary to community building at KO; it seems to be anything but a profit-based endeavour.

Due to its multi-sited nature, KO might be defined as both a 'religion online' to select, local members and an 'online religion' to others. However, the 'Orthodoxy' with which Kemetic Orthodoxy operates can appear inconsistent; KO defines this orthodoxy as 'a sect conforming to established doctrine especially in religion' (Kemet 2010). Given that KO defines itself as 'ritual/cultic' in contrast to a 'revealed' or 'scriptural' religion, this is an interesting choice of naming. Additionally, the degree to which members seek and perceive authenticity within KO is decidedly individual. A KO page notes that, 'In many ways, and especially the manner in which the religion is administered and sacerdotal functions, Kemetic Orthodoxy is much more similar to the Judeo-Christian family of religions than with Neo-Pagan or New Age ones' (ibid.), which raises some interesting questions about its self-conception. KO firmly situates itself outside, and in contrast to modern paganism, stating that Kemetic Orthodoxy differs from other '"Egyptian" or "Kemetic" spiritual organizations based upon New Age or Neo-Pagan models', significantly in 'the areas of interaction with Deity, organization of priesthood, and liturgical practice'. They note that while Kemetic Orthodoxy might be understood to be a 'pagan' religion 'in the context of the Roman Catholic Church'.[18] '[W]e do not classify ourselves as Pagan as we neither follow the spiritual teachings of the Holy See', nor do their spiritual practices derive from the practices of 'spiritual groups which do refer to themselves as Pagan or Neo-Pagan today' (ibid.).

As such, self-identification within such circles again becomes paramount and adds increasing difficulty when attempting categorisation, as members within KO occasionally *self-identify* as pagan (Chapter 9). As such, for the purpose of this study, I tentatively place KO towards the centre of Strimska's (2005) 'eclectic-reconstructionist' continuum, although this assumes the acceptance of 'Tameran Wicca' as a form of Egyptian-themed eclectica at one margin[19] and, further, that 'reconstructionist' practices will be more

strictly authentic/conservative than those found within KO, at the other. In addition, the range of responses received varies in the definition and interpretation of this issue.

Conclusion: ‘Egyptian-ness’

So, what is specifically ‘Egyptian’ about this movement, given its potentially Judeo-Chrisitian structure, majority location in the USA and meta-location on the internet? Foremost is the devotion to pharaonic deities, specifically referred to with their Egyptian or Kemetic names, in contrast to the more commonly known Greek names. Subsequently, Isis becomes Aset, removed of her later attributions and relocated from the centre of preceding Egypt-focused practice. Given recent employment of the term ‘ISIS’ in media to represent militant Islamic State, there may be additional benefits to this. Horus becomes more authentically conceived as several Netjer, such as Heru-Behdety (‘Heru of the city of Behdet’), Her-Wer (‘Great Heru’ or Heru the Elder) and the more commonly known Heru-sa-Aset (Heru, son of Aset, or Horus, son of Isis). Although terminology might be employed to reinforce exclusivity, much of KO’s terminology is demystified on its website and subsequently appears to concern authenticity rather than hierarchy (Kemet 2015).

Next, there is the attribution of Egyptian names for converts, specifically linked to their Parent Divinity. While there is scant evidence for such practice originating in ancient Egypt (though note ancient naming conventions mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5), the members appear to make full use of this aspect of the faith, including their divined names in their online posts as signatures and frequently deriving their nick-names or web-handles from this name. Following this, for more involved members and priests are the *rituals* and *rites* of KO. These are discussed in more detail in the following chapters and while their *historical* authenticity might be open to debate, they are constructed with reference to the perceived *aims* of the ancient Egyptians, if not strictly adhering to the record itself.

Lastly, but most significant to this movement, is the presence of a ‘Nisut’ which, paradoxically perhaps, places Siuda, an academically trained Egyptologist, as the ‘bridge between Netjer and the faithful’ (Krogh and

Pillifant 2004a: ¶ 17). The official standpoint is that the placement of Siuda as Nisut is intended to replicate the spiritual functions of the pharaoh, divested of traditional political authority. The central authority of the Nisut is implied by determination of who may join and fully convert to KO through the Parent Name Divination, and in the selection of liturgy and ritual:

> For any practitioner who wishes to practice in a traditional manner, the role of the Nisut is integral to the entire philosophy and structure of the religion. Ancient Egypt was a theocracy in most periods, and a monarchy or the client state of a monarchic republic in its later periods. Even the religious literature speaks of 'time without kings' as being chaotic and undesirable. The Nisut as a symbol unites the community and reinforces the connection between the people and the deities they honor. As far as Kemeticism as a whole and outside my own religion.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

As such, it could be argued that KO's current formation is dependent on the hierarchy and figure of the Nisut, though whether the role of Nisut requires Siuda is another question altogether, and Siuda has stated that she will be replaced upon her passing:

> Retirement is not an option for a Nisut, on a theological level. One prepares the nation and then there are mechanisms for creating the next Nisut on my death, both in the ritual sense and in the legal sense of having someone else become the head of the organization. These mechanisms are in place and our priesthood knows what to do when that day comes. Kemetic Orthodoxy will continue after I am gone, and is already administered by more than two dozen very effective priests and administration members in addition to me. I do not do this all by myself. (thank the gods!).
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Notes

1 Kemetic Orthodoxy currently operates through two main sites, www.kemet.org and www.netjer.org (aka the House of Netjer (HoN)), as well as maintaining web presence through

social networking sites.

2 See Pearson (2002b) on Luhrmann (1989) for a discussion of both of these concerns.

3 The original pages which provided the source of much of the material of this chapter have unfortunately been replaced and are no longer available. Updated versions of much of this material are available on http://www.kemet.org, however.

4 Notably, Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 7) claim that only 5 per cent of KO membership 'report prior affiliation with New Age, Wicca or other neo-pagan religions', indicating that either: my own respondents represent an unusually high section of that dynamic; the proportion has significantly altered in recent years; or that internet representation has particular appeal to Wiccans (a seemingly strange notion until one considers the work of Cowan (2005), Dawson and Cowan (2004) and O'Leary (1996)).

5 Robert is mentioned in Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 209) as an early contributor to KO, but the name employed is a pseudonym.

6 'A hit is the number of times the site is visited by a different Internet Service Provider' (Krogh and Pillifant: 2004a ¶ 4).

7 See, also, Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 16).

8 Krogh and Pillifant's (2004a: ¶ 7) social profile follows, as of 1999: 53 per cent KO female. 64 per cent 25–44 years old. Common occupations – education and communications. 56 per cent report prior Christian affiliation, 10 per cent no previous religious background. Remainder a mix of non-Christian backgrounds. Only roughly 5 per cent of members 'report prior affiliation with New Age, Wicca or other neo-pagan religions'. These statistics actually originate not from Krogh and Pillifant (2004), but from KO itself (Kemet 2010).

9 'At its founding, the temple was called the House of Bast (a Name of Netjer to Whom a number of original House members were dedicated, in part), but changed its name in 1993 in order to reflect, more accurately, that all Names of Netjer are worshipped here' (Kemet 2010).

10 Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 18) also note that this practice runs contrary to many Wiccan models, though they do note that Gardnerian Wicca advances implicit group authority.

11 Anon. 2009.

12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamara_Siuda

13 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamara_Siuda, also see http://www.legba.biz/about/

14 Including '24-hour emotional and spiritual support and counseling, daily, weekly and biweekly chats via Internet Relay Chat (IRC) for fellowship and ritual at all membership levels, as well as structured courses in Kemetic Orthodox spirituality and religious topics provided by our spiritual leader and the Kemetic Orthodox clergy.' In addition, distance-worship, or online ritual, is convened twice monthly in the form of an IRC chat called *Dua* (the Kemetic word for 'worship' or 'praise') (http://www.kemet.org/join).

15 See Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 214–17) for the positive and negative effects of community within KO.

16 Occasionally too much of a focus, creating divisions between members and those people already in their lives (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 217).

17 Permission to reprint not obtained.

18 'i.e., a religion not of Christian or Biblical origins' (Kemet 2010).

19 Notably not directly studied in this work, though the opinions of such practitioners are included in my fieldwork, as active members of the Pagan Cauldron (see next chapter).

8 Independent practitioners and splinter movements

A range of movements have sprung up around, exterior and counter to Kemetic Orthodoxy. Far less information is available on these movements, their having never been critically evaluated by academia prior to this work. This chapter attempts to understand varying approaches to Kemetic organisation, and the context of individuals and splinter groups in relation to Kemetic Orthodoxy and each other.

Having met some resistance in my earliest ventures onto the HoN boards, I followed the suggestion of Lapis, and joined the online forum of the Pagan Cauldron.[1] I familiarised myself with the boards (or 'lurked'), and made contact with the moderators.[2] During the course of my contact with members of the Pagan Cauldron and, eventually, the Children of Kemet boards, I encountered practitioners who eschewed Kemetic Orthodoxy in favour of more tailored approaches to Kemetic practice. The location of these practices on Strimska's (2005) 'continuum' – which I soon began to call the 'Kemetic continuum' – varied with practitioner, but as my focus centred on reconstructionist movements, specifically *Reformed Kemeticism*, many respondents remained somewhere around the 'midpoint', with some venturing towards a more 'conservative/reconstruction' direction. It was in venturing into a multi-denominational symposium that I first became aware of the contestations that arose over terminology, however, and it soon became clear that terms like 'revivalist', 'reconstructionist' and 'eclectic' could be used in a pejorative sense by parties, against the 'other' in a valuation of the 'correctness' of their approach. This is not to assign the role of antagonist exclusively to those outside Kemetic Orthodoxy, but rather to highlight the contested nature of these terms *once they enter the arena of cultural discourse*.

Multi-denomination forums: The Cauldron SIGs

The Cauldron: A Pagan Forum was established in 1997 with the purpose ‘to foster an interfaith community of Pagans and their friends where all members could learn and grow spiritually and intellectually through discussion and debate – and have a good time doing so’ (Ecauldron 2010). The aspirations of the ‘Reformed Kemetic SIG’ (‘Special Interest Group’ (RK SIG)), a specialist board within the site, were more substantial, however: ‘The primary purpose of this is to develop a modern Kemetic religion that is strongly informed by academic information on ancient Kemetic beliefs and practices’ (ibid.).

Co-host and administrator Randall states that the inspiration for the boards originated in a post which asked, ‘Is It Time For a “Reformed” Hellenic Paganism?’ He asserts that, ‘Like Hellenic polytheism, Kemeticism cannot reasonably be recreated as it was in the days when it was the state religion’ (ibid.). Working from this assumption, The Cauldron posits the following characteristics of their take on pagan Reconstructionism (aka ‘Recon’) as: ‘a lesser-known modern Pagan movement, that differs from other types of modern Paganism primarily on its reliance on solid academic and historical sources regarding deities, worship and symbolism’ (ibid.).[3]

While its intention is not to strictly reconstruct ancient practices, it posits the following differences between ‘Recon’ and ‘other’ paganisms, with the following points:

- The rejection of eclectic practices in favor of cultural specificity.
- A respectful attitude toward ancient religious authority along with acknowledgement of the need for reasonable religious innovation.
- An emphasis on ‘hard’ polytheism (many deities, each as a separate and distinct being).
- A skeptical attitude toward modern unifying theologies, such as (1) Wiccan duotheism (‘All gods are one God; all goddesses, one Goddess.’); (2) the triple goddess paradigm (Maiden–Mother–Crone); and (3) Jungian archetypalism.
- A respect for individual spiritual inspiration (personal gnosis), while making a clear distinction between practices derived from such inspiration and those based on historical precedent.

Ibid.[4]

Taking these points in turn, The Cauldron hosts seven SIGs, six of which are culturally specific and three of which (Asatru and Heathenry, Reformed Kemeticism and Ta Hiera Hellenic Polytheism) are aimed at reconstruction. With reference to point two, note Randall's emphasis that this SIG 'intends to create a modern Kemetic religion, not to duplicate ancient Kemeticism' (ibid.). He describes this intention as an attempt to create a modern Kemetic religion suited to the realities of the modern world. This includes being 'in diaspora', which, significantly, rules out mass celebrations and the option of a pharaoh. These are crucial points, where the board is not only distancing itself from Kemetic Orthodoxy, but also positioning itself askance, by eschewing pharaoh and congregation. He reinforces this stance by stating that: 'These ideas might offend some of the more strict recons. There are, however, plenty of groups that they might find more welcoming to their ideas – this SIG is not, and will not try to be one of them' (ibid.). In practice, the board has KO members and never appears overtly exclusivist. This stance is further emphasised by point three, however, where 'hard polytheism', the distinction of gods as separate entities, is proffered instead of KO's conception of monolatry, where deities might be interpreted as manifestations of a godhead (Kemet 2010).[5]

In a further differentiation from its peers, 'many of the core ideas are set – we are looking to build a framework for modern practice of the old religion, not yet another brand of Wicca' (Ecauldron 2010). Presumably this refers to an eclectic form of Egyptianised Wicca, Tameric or Tameran Wicca (LaBorde 2010). However, despite these very specific criteria, the RK SIG strongly discourages what it delicately terms 'pissing contests'; 'The Gods are welcome to judge who is a true worshipper and who is not if they wish, but it is hubris for humans to do it for them' (ibid.). Subsequently, the boards are host to an entire range of participation, from members of KO to eclectic Wiccans; while these voices may not bear authority in this setting (as KO priests do on their own boards),[6] they freely engage with other voices on matters of Kemetic Reconstruction. It should also be noted that these are strictly contextual criteria, and many other boards within the same site cater for 'other' pagan and Wiccan approaches.

It was on the RK SIG that I first encountered Neb and Banu. Neb, a self-

described ‘Heliopolitan Reconstructionist’, was, additionally, a student of Egyptology at a major British institution, which made Neb’s reconciliation of these seemingly disparate practices of particular interest. Neb additionally turned my attention to the Children of Kemet boards, a specialist forum solely aimed at Kemetic Reconstructionists, which they described as ‘very laid back and open to “outsiders”’. Though permission to research was granted swiftly, Children of Kemet was soon closed and, unfortunately, I did not receive as much feedback as hoped. Additionally, several members overlapped with the RK SIG, although to my knowledge I did not encounter anybody from KO. It was on the Children of Kemet boards that I met Sharon ‘Tut’ LaBorde, author of Kemetic primer *Following the Sun* (2010), and founder and moderator of a board of the same name, which rose from the ashes of Children of Kemet. Her insights on the range of Kemetic practices were positioned in notable opposition to KO’s hierarchy, segments of which are included herein.

Banu, whom I had also met on the RK SIG, had purportedly experienced several of the movements, splinter groups and forums (which sometimes double as virtual temples), and provided me with a great deal of information on these from her experiences as a Kemetic ‘wayfarer’ of sorts. It was through Banu that I discovered another two leading voices in Kemetic Reconstruction, which had manifested in two real-world groups with little to no online activity, these being the Kemetic Temple of Ra (ToR) in San Francisco and the Kemetic Temple of San José (KTSJ). Banu had purportedly witnessed the origins of Per Ankh, a group I’d had no success contacting through my own investigations, in addition to her time with KO, Akhet Hwt-Hrw and her last stop at the Temple of Ra. Lastly, the moderator of the RK SIG, Darkhawk, helpfully participated in my forum discussions, surveys and some correspondence where she could.

Per Ankh and Per Heh

I learned of Per Ankh (‘The House of Life’)[7] and Per Heh (‘The House of Eternity’)[8] from sources on the aforementioned forums,[9] and it appeared that these were splinter groups, the result of a schism with KO. I attempted contact with the moderators of these boards multiple times, but did not

receive any replies.[10] I then attempted to locate their members on the multi-denominational forum of the RK SIG and on Children of Kemet, again with no luck. I did, however, receive a reply from Banu on the RK SIG private message system, stating:

> I was part of Per Ankh back when it first began, though I went my own way after a few years. One of the original two founders is still a friend of mine, and we are both members of a local temple group which meets offline at members' homes. I can't get you in touch with [the founders],[11] and I can't tell you about their current practices, but if you're interested in an early view of Per Ankh I can help with that.
>
> Banu 2009, personal communication, 16 July[12]

The insight and breadth of Banu's knowledge had impressed me during my time on the RK SIG. It appeared that Banu could be a reliable (if potentially subjective) source, and I welcomed her offer of help. During the early stages of what became extensive correspondence, Banu explained that the founders of Per Ankh were two women, both of whom had been members of other temples. Apparently, there had been some discontent between a founding member of Per Ankh and KO, resulting in the splinter movement. Banu continues,

> [One founder] encouraged me to leave with [them] – [they] sent me a link to a temple named Akhet Hwt-Hrw, of which I had previously not been aware – and said [they'd] met someone there [they'd] like me to meet. This turned out to be [the other founder]. I don't know the particulars, but apparently during their discussions [they] felt that Sekhmet had charged them with building a temple and a community. The three of us attended Akhet Hwt-Hrw for a few more months, and [the founders] spoke with Kerry Wisner (the founder of Akhet Hwt-Hrw) about creating their own temple distinct from Akhet Hwt-Hrw. The result of their efforts was the temple Per Ankh, and the related community Kemet OnLine.
>
> Banu 2009, personal communication, 17 July

Kemet Online served Per Ankh much as the House of Netjer site had Kemetic Orthodoxy.[13] Though there were some format differences, it housed a forum and reading list and the basic introductory information denoting it as the online community to Per Ankh's 'temple' site.

> I joined both once their associated websites were up and running. [The founders] called their interpretation of Kemetic religion 'Kemetic Traditional Religion,' or KTR for short. One of the main differences between KTR and KO is the lack of a Nisut – instead, [one founder] was the Heri Tep Hem Netjer (the head priest of the temple, who acted on behalf of the king but was not the king) and [the other founder] was the Second Prophet (basically the second in command). Another unique trait of KTR is their interest in African Traditional Religions ([ATRs] this was the inspiration for the KTR label itself). KTR openly makes use of existing African Traditional Religions as examples of living religions from the same family to which Kemetic religion would have belonged had it continued unbroken to this day.
>
> Ibid.

The ATR aspect of practice appeared to be a direct parallel of the practices of KO, who placed Kemetic religion firmly within the confines of ATRs' and used such material to 'flesh out' anything they felt was missing. I was curious to see what else had survived the transplant from KO, and it became apparent that the model of KO's Probationer's Group had survived in some form, with an emphasis on ATRs:

> Their beginners' courses when I went through them made use of authors such as Malidoma Patrice Some and John S. Mbiti [1990] in addition to the usual Egyptological sources – these were authors who analyzed the characteristics and common elements of various African Traditional Religions. The cultures of the ATR were used as a background for understanding the ancient Egyptian worldview, and as an example for how such a worldview adapts to modern times. I should probably mention that this was strictly a cultural concern, not an ethnic concern – no one in Per Ankh or KOL was required to have African ancestry, nor was anyone

advanced on account of their genetic heritage.

Ibid.

As with Siuda's transposition of Vodoun practices into Kemetic Orthodoxy, the incorporation of such ATRs appeared potentially problematic. The homogenising of the great breadth of African culture and uncritical conflation of Egypt with Africa has caused ongoing debate. In a later correspondence, I asked Banu, 'from a strictly anthropological perspective, how much one can extrapolate from ATRs with regards to Egyptian spirituality, given the vastly different social and geographical contexts of their usage[?]' (Banu 2009, personal communication, 20 July).

Banu's reply:

> There are definite limits, because the field of African Traditional Religions is wide and varied – and just because something was practiced or believed in one ATR does not mean that it would translate smoothly into the belief system of another ATR. John S. Mbiti believes that he has isolated a few common characteristics among them, however, and his book 'African Religions and Philosophy (Second Edition)' [(1969) 1990] was one of the books used in the Per Ankh beginners' course when I took it.
>
> Banu 2009, personal communication, 26 July[14]

From an Egyptological perspective, there appeared to be a potential oversight regarding such cultural links: those of Kerma and Kushite culture. If Kemetic Reconstructionists were appropriating practices from the broader African continent, had they paid any attention to these significant civilisations? I asked if Kerma culture and the areas now classified as the Sudan had been considered in Per Ankh's reconstruction, but was informed that there was 'no specific research into Kerma culture, although that does sound very interesting and insightful' (ibid.).

Banu related the remainder of her time with Per Ankh, highlighting the powerful effects personal relationships between founders might have on the longevity of a group:

> I was one of the guinea pigs on whom [the founders] developed their beginners' courses. I later became an assistant for those courses, and fielded questions from the students when [the founders] were unavailable. I was also the first of several students who entered their priesthood training program. Unfortunately, for most of my time there it was not very well organized – but that's what happens at the start of things.
>
> Ibid.

The model of a beginner's course and establishment of a priesthood echoed the structures found in Kemetic Orthodoxy, and it appears that Per Ankh's hierarchy may have mirrored KO's in some respects. Banu left Per Ankh after a few years,

> due to communication problems with [the founders]…. [One founder] left the temple shortly after I did, and that was when [a founder's partner] stepped up to become Heri Tep…. The interesting part is that [this individual] was not Kemetic prior to this point – [they were] an Ifa priest in service to Orunmila, and a devotee of Obatala and Yemoja. [The individual] had accompanied us on previous retreats and workshops because [they were a founder's partner], but had previously refused to become involved with the temple itself. [Their] promotion to head of the temple is perhaps a dramatic testimony to KTR's blend of existing ATRs with traditional Egyptology.
>
> Ibid.

ATR blending, perhaps, but one might also infer partiality, or evidence of hierarchy.

> About 4 years or so later [the other founder] approached me and explained what had happened, from [their] perspective, during my break with Per Ankh. We've resumed our friendship and [the individual] has since joined me in the Kemetic Temple of San Jose – a local group here in the San Francisco Bay area, and sister temple to San Francisco's Temple of Ra.
>
> Banu 2009, personal communication, 17 July

The transient nature of Banu's experience highlights the fluid nature of the Kemetic community, where an individual might experiment with several approaches, both online and in social groups. Banu's enduring relationships also highlights the strength of bonds that might be developed within the Kemetic community. However, this work required more than the experience, however extensive, of one of my respondents to objectively detail these other movements. As such, investigation of the Kemetic temples and key players, whom Banu had mentioned, was necessary.

Akhet Hwt-Hrw

Internet searches led me to the Akhet Hwt-Hrw's main site, established and maintained by Kerry Wisner, as Banu had suggested. I managed to contact Wisner and, after addressing his concerns about my research and identity, he was forthcoming about his work. According to his site, Wisner was introduced, through his father, 'to many different metaphysical concepts as a child' (Akhet Hwt-Hrw 2009), and is a student of astrology and Western mystery traditions, 'as well as a separate Heremtic Ceremonial Order'.

Wisner's site notes that he began his research into ancient Egyptian religion and magical practices 'in the mid-1980s', which became an obsession as 'the depth and complexity of this wonderful spiritual tradition' were realised. In the early 1990s Kerry and his wife Linda started to establish 'practices that would evolve into Akhet Hwt-Hrw'. There is an emphasis here on Egyptological influence, as the site states that it was in drawing 'directly from Egyptian temple inscriptions and academic texts' that the two practised the religion of Egypt 'in private for a number of years'. Strong emphasis was placed on the traditions associated with the goddess Hwt-Hrw (Greek name: Hathor) from the outset, 'particularly the rituals associated with the ancient temple of Dendera'. However, the 'teachings and rituals of all the other Neteru/Gods of Egypt also came to form a part of Akhet Hwt-Hrw' (ibid.).

I asked Wisner what had inspired him to become an educational figure in this field:

> I honestly don't know. I had been compiling this information for years; practicing rituals, writing notes and small papers for myself. A family

> member was so impressed that they had felt I should make this accessible to others…. At the time, too, I didn't like the way that other 'Kemetic' groups were structured, nor the way that they held back information in a controlling manner. Again, I have very strong feelings about authority, and sincerely dislike the idea or practice of people setting themselves up as God-Kings. So I decided to set up this school and website, making it accessible to all. No Kings, no holding back of information. I wanted to present quality information so that anyone could study and practice this religion at whatever level that they felt comfortable with.
>
> Wisner 2009, personal communication, 27 November

As such, Akhet Hwt-Hrw acts as Wisner's attempt to offer an alternative approach to Kemeticism, disseminate his literature, explore Egyptian cosmology, mythology and philosophy, and explore, engage and promote his fascination with astrology, including his belief that the Egyptians may have been essential to the evolution of the art of astrology. As noted, Wisner had concerns about my research and identity. More significant, however, were his concerns regarding academic conflation of his practices with other Kemetic movements:

> [A] concern is that I, nor Akhet Hwt-Hrw, not be tied closely with other 'Kemetic' organizations that are in existence.… I really would like it clear that I nor Akhet Hwt-Hrw are not associated with other organizations or groups.
>
> Wisner 2009, personal communication, 6 December[15]

After explaining my premise and assuring Wisner that the research was a serious effort, he was very supportive and contributed valuable information regarding his approach, sources and practices to the study. He places an emphasis on scholarly works in the reconstruction of Egyptian rituals and is respectful of Egyptological authors and works, often quoting the likes of Assmann and Hornung.

While the relevance of astrology to ancient Egyptians is a matter of some debate (the famous zodiac at Dendera is a Greco-Roman addition), Wisner's

ritual reconstructions and attention to archaeological detail were notable. It seemed that the deeper into 'Kemetic' practices I searched, the closer to the *reconstruction* end of Strimska's (2005) continuum my participants became. This proved to be the case with the last of the movements studied, those based around San Francisco and San José.

The Temple of Ra and the Kemetic Temple of San José

The San Francisco-based Temple of Ra was formally founded by Richard Reidy and Allan Phillips, among others, in 1998, and has continued uninterrupted to the present day (Reidy 2010, personal communication, 31 August).[16] In extensive correspondence and meetings with Richard Reidy, founder of the Temple of Ra and author of *Eternal Egypt* (Reidy 2010), he described for me the origins of the temple, and his own inspiration:

> When I first came out of university as a credentialed teacher I taught English composition and literature for quite a few years and so I have some idea of how to present information to the public. I have always had a special place in my heart for Egypt, so my path unfolded rather naturally in that direction. I also have a Master of Divinity degree so I am well aware of how theology develops and how I might investigate an ancient religion by utilizing original documents and academic sources.
>
> Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

Before the Temple of Ra was established, Reidy would meet informally with four esotericist friends; they eventually founded the Temple of Ra together. Housing the temple in the 'real world' (offline) only and stressing the importance of interpersonal communication proved a successful formula, and in *c.* 2005 Reidy helped found the sister temple of the Kemetic Temple of San José (KTSJ) 'with a couple of Kemetic reconstructionists living there' (Banu 2011, personal communication, 19 May). However, unlike many other Kemetic movements, these temples did not grow from the yolk of Kemetic Orthodoxy, as illustrated by KTSJ member, Banu, who had experienced KO:

> Moving between the House of Netjer, Akhet Hwt-Hrw, and Per Ankh I noticed many similarities between them… KTSJ was different. It grew completely independently of the House of Netjer, and it wasn't really until I'd seen the rituals of this group that I realized how much the 'Daily Rites' of the other temples (at least, the beginning versions of these rites) were related.
>
> Banu, Wave Two[17]

An independent origin would potentially mark the Temple of Ra and sister Temple of San José as two of the earliest 'alternatives' to Kemetic Orthodoxy, alongside Akhet Hwt-Hrw, within the Kemetic continuum.

> The rituals of KTSJ are drawn more directly from translations of temple inscriptions, and while the goal of the House of Netjer's Senut was to create a Kemetic but modern ritual for modern people, the goal of KTSJ was to preserve as many of the traditional forms as it could. In keeping with those respective goals, the House of Netjer allows for a great deal more innovation and addition to the religion than KTSJ does.
>
> Ibid.

Unlike many Kemetic movements, the Temple of Ra does not house any of its religious activity online. Rather, the temple seeks to act as a focus for worship and ritual, discussion of Egyptological texts and primary sources, and social interaction. According to Reidy, for the foundational two years, the Temple of Ra held ritual twice monthly, then, eventually, once per month, with emphasis on discussion during a post-ritual meal (Reidy 2010, personal communication, 31 August). Reading topics are assigned, frequently on Egyptological and primary Egyptian sources. Reidy notes that while the temple in San José follows a similar structure, their ritual days are longer, 'starting at 11 a.m. and usually ending by 5 or 6 p.m. These are lengthy days, but very rewarding ones' (ibid.). These are private temples and while Reidy was supportive and forthcoming with technical detail, members were understandably guarded about disclosing too much detail about themselves.

An indicator of the lack of central authority within the Temple of Ra and

the KTSJ is the absence of a Nisut, although this does not preclude the presence of status or hierarchy. I would note, however, that after extensive correspondence with KTSJ members Banu and HiC there were no signs that Reidy, or anybody for that matter, held an authoritarian position within the group. This is supported by the way new members are evaluated for suitability and, ultimately, permitted access:

> Candidates for membership are asked to meet with one or another temple member between 6 and 12 times during which they are interviewed about one or another reading assignment. There is this range (6 to 12) depending on the temple member's evaluation of the candidate's background and preparedness. These meetings last between two and three hours, giving adequate time for fairly in-depth discussion. Occasionally a candidate advances quickly through six meetings and is then ready to be presented to the entire temple membership for a final interview. By this time it is pretty much assumed that it will be a good match with us, but we think it is important that all members get a chance to help in the final determination. We hope that by doing it this way all members have ownership in the decision.
>
> Reidy 2010, personal communication, 31 August

Reidy also notes that membership is about service to the gods. Attendance is mandatory, barring illness or pressing personal matters. 'Merely not being "in the mood" is not sufficient excuse. Consequently attendance is quite high' (ibid.).

With regards to the status of roles, Reidy states,

> It is our temples' practice of not heaping titles upon any of our members. This is one more grave difference between us and KO. We are aware that in ancient Egypt there were quite a number of types of priests geared for specific duties. We have avoided this entirely in order to encourage a more egalitarian movement. Of course we are aware that this is not in conformity with the ancient practice. We hold that individual merit alone gives any of us the privilege of being recognized for our contribution in any area of temple service. We regard titles as a sort of temptation for self-

> aggrandizement, and not really in service to the Netjeru. Titles, we think, lead easily to notions of self-importance.
>
> Reidy 2010, personal communication, 31 May

In perspective

Information on authority and structure is somewhat difficult to discern from the outside and, despite my rapport with Reidy, it was clear that membership was viewed, understandably, as a private matter. Additionally, because of their location as strictly 'offline', these temples did not lend themselves readily to social stratification and profiling as had KO; this explained both their lower profile and the time it took for me to discover them. Naturally, the role of the internet was significant in the visibility of these groups, but its absence led to a localised phenomenon, which displayed longevity compared to the many virtual temples that appeared, altered and/or dissipated within the duration of my research, and many since. While these temples have since gained an online presence, the focus of their practice remains strictly 'offline' and, as such, the Temple of Ra and KTSJ might not be considered 'online religions' or perhaps even 'religions online'.

However, it should be noted that Reidy himself notes Kerry Wisner's influence on his earliest instruction, potentially implying a less independent origin than noted by Banu (Reidy 2010: 189), though as with the case of Wisner and KO, exposure does not inherently imply influence, and Banu's experience of the ToR's beliefs and practices seem to mark them as distinct. It is notable that there exist real-world social overlaps between these otherwise discrete approaches to Kemeticism. The location of Kemetic Orthodoxy as the spiritual 'yardstick' against which many other movements defined themselves is notable, and highlights its cultural impact and substantial internet presence. This is the visible tip of the spiritual iceberg, however, reflecting the centripetal appearance of elite sources in the archaeological record. The evidence indicates that there exist a large range of solo and 'unaligned' practitioners, as indicated by the numbers visiting sites such as the Pagan Cauldron. In addition, KO is not the first movement to 'revive' ancient Egyptian religion; there is a well-noted historical precedent

for this, although the ‘authenticity’ and terminology vary wildly. But KO’s foundational influence on the methods and terminology of the Kemetic cultural moment are undeniable, despite the existence of movements such as Akhet Hwt-Hrw, and the Kemetic Temples of San Francisco and San José.

Notes

1 http://www.ecauldron.net/index.php, I later found that this was simply the common parlance for The Cauldron: A Pagan Forum. My membership was activated on 22 July 2008.
2 I was granted permission to engage in research on the ‘Reformed Kemeticism SIG’ on 15 January 2009.
3 http://www.ecauldron.net/reconindex.php
4 http://www.ecauldron.net/reconindex.php; this page also contains a link to an article highlighting the differences between Wicca and the Reconstructionist movement of Asatru, noting the problems that variant uses of terminology can engender.
5 Originally available at http://www.kemet.org/kemexp1.html, though a site update has rendered this link void. All quotes from KO’s websites, therefore, will find equivalent updated information at http://www.kemet.org/
6 Where they have the power to delete posts and determine threads (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: 213), and though they claim this is largely unnecessary, accusations of censorship have emerged from other quarters (http://christohellenism.bravehost.com/Netjer/Netjer-review.html).
7 http://www.per-ankh.org (site deactivated), not to be confused with the British Egyptological site of the same name, http://www.per-ankh.co.uk
8 http://forums.per-heh.org (site deactivated).
9 This post lists a few of the groups I contacted, though it did not exist at the time I embarked on my research http://www.ecauldron.net/forum/index.php?topic=12353.0
10 I later learned that both of these boards had gone down for maintenance shortly after my contact. Other users have noted similar problems when attempting to contact Per Ankh’s representatives, so I do not infer that it was simply my status as a researcher that caused this problem. See http://mysticwicks.com/archive/index.php/t-137522.html, for example. Per Heh was restored in 2012, but is deactivated as of this writing.
11 Identities withheld for privacy.
12 Sent via The Cauldron’s PM system.
13 Kemet Online (kemetonline.com) has been down for some time, see http://mysticwicks.com/archive/index.php/t-137522.html
14 Originally published in 1969, Mbiti’s work was ground-breaking in its sympathetic documentation and evaluation of ATRs. Mbiti did receive criticism for failing to propose ‘any theological classification or typology of the phenomena he is discussing’, however (Shorter 1970: 391), which exacerbates the problems noted for conflating ATRs and KTRs. Also see Kalumba (2005).
15 Krogh and Pillifant (2004: 216) refer to Akhet Hwt-Hrw (established by Kerry Wisner) as originating from KO, though Kerry Wisner, founder, argues that his temple’s origin is distinct from all other Kemetic movements. This highlights that exposure does not necessarily signify influence.
16 And Reidy (2010: ix), though see Introduction.
17 Note that this is a subjective opinion and is not meant to undermine Wisner’s claim of the

independent origin of his temple.

9 Ideologies

This chapter is presented thematically, with a view to fairer representation, ease of comparison and clarity. The themes are presented under four headings: Conceptions, Beliefs, Practices and Sources, and further categorised into sub-headings. Given the obvious overlap between these subject areas, cross-referencing is employed where necessary. Due to factors, such as time, personal investment, vested interest and the interpersonal nature of correspondence and rapport, some participants supplied much more information than others and only samples of these ample contributions can be included herein. Due to space considerations, I chose to avoid a quote by quote presentation of responses in favour of the analysis of patterns and trends; this chapter summarises and distils several tens of thousands of words of feedback into its core themes. This inherently involves a risk of homogenisation and bias, so I present varying ranges of response by group affiliation or independent status. Because respondents sometimes referred to multiple or extended topics, I note *responses* specifically over particular *respondents*. When dealing with the themes raised in the first wave of questions, such as appeal, background, culture, travel, ethnicity and archaeology, it is important to note the high occurrence of respondents originating from Kemetic Orthodoxy. This is likely because my initial wave of questions was released synchronously with my first contacts with KO. Discussion of these findings is largely reserved for the following chapter.[1]

Conceptions

In museum audience response surveys, Fisher (2000: 10) proposed a ‘wide consistency in peoples’ attitudes towards Egypt’ despite a selection of respondents from a variety of backgrounds. Concepts frequently associated

with ‘Egypt’ (in this case, almost universally assumed to imply ‘ancient’) by adult respondents were, in no particular order, pyramids, Indiana Jones, tombs, camels, kohl, mystery, sand, heat, robes, sphinx, Cairo and Cleopatra, though it is stated that ‘Pyramids dominate perceptions’ (ibid.: 13).

In reaction to Fisher’s research, the first survey (Wave One) opened with a question on free associations, asking what came to mind when thinking about Egypt.[2] Perhaps predictably, given the context, the highest proportion of responses, 13 of 33, related to the gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt. This number was followed with 12 remarking ‘pyramids’, consistent with Fisher’s (2000) respondents. The Nile follows with nine, then sand and desert (seven), heat (six), temples (five), the sun (four), mythology (four), statues (three), hieroglyphs (three), ruins (three) and history (three). Curiously, and contrary to expectations, only two respondents mentioned magic or mystery. The same number mentioned the sky, the sphinx, dust and Islam. Identification of the prefix *ancient* was mentioned by three respondents, eternity or time by two; likewise only two identified modern cities and towns. What remained was a scattershot of concepts all receiving just one mention, including treasure and artefacts, beauty, people, art, gold, civilisation, metaphysics, prosperity, ethics, architecture, monuments, the sea, roads, politics, cats, falcons, light, nature, palm trees, gardens and ‘deeply embedded spirituality’. Curiously, ‘faith’ only garnered one mention. Pejorative terms referring to modern Egypt were likewise scarce, with one mention of ‘peasants’ and one of destruction and loss, with regard to monuments. While deities were named, royal personages were not, contrary to an emphasis on these in Fisher (2000).

With regard to deities, there were clearly leading figures in the initial surveys, though these were not based around the Osiris/Isis/Horus trinity that once took the focus of Western esoteric groups following the likes of Crowley, the Fellowship of Isis and forms of Tameran Wicca (LaBorde 2010: 9–10). Indeed, in the first wave and over the course of the study, it became evident that Hathor (Hethert, Hwt-Hrw, Het-Heret) was one of the most prominent deities within the Kemetic continuum, playing particular prominence for figures such as Kerry Wisner. This seemed apt, given the prominence of this deity in pharaonic Egypt, though it should be noted that ‘household’ deities such as Tawaret and Bes garnered far fewer mentions. Horus (Heru, in various forms), Bast, Sekhmet and Thoth (as Tehuti or

Djehuti) also received frequent mentions, with Ra also receiving a number of references. As noted, Isis (Aset) and Osiris (Wesir) only received six and four mentions, respectively. Participants employed Egyptian (Kemetic) terminology over Anglicised Greek, even including the more familiar terms in parenthesis for my benefit, highlighting a desire for specificity over generality, and perhaps emphasising perceptions of the exclusive nature of their knowledge. It should be noted that many Kemetics follow multiple deities and mention only 'parent deities' in survey responses.

Fisher (2000: 30) asserts that respondents, British and European, felt that, spiritually, 'Ancient Egypt belongs to them too' and this is reflected in the key terms which permeated my fieldwork; there are frequent mentions of personal relationships with deities or of Egyptian culture calling to participants, and that Egyptian religion 'fitted' or 'clicked', one respondent stating that 'it just feels like home spiritually' (Covusvitae, Wave One). One respondent even claims to have unknowingly had Yinepu (Anubis) as an imaginary friend from the age of 'five or six' which they simply called 'Annu' (Phoenix Falls, Wave One). The occurrence of contact from deities through dreams and vision, whether invited or unexpected is noted (Niankhsekhmet, Wave One; Nehet, Wave Two). This seems fitting, given the way KO's leader also claims to have been contacted by the deities of Kemet and charged with reviving 'Kemet's long-forgotten ways' (Kemet 2010). However, it is also important to note the 'mundane' manner many participants became involved with Egypt, many of which reflect those highlighted in Fisher (2000). Several primary contacts occurred during childhood and frequently involved school, third and sixth grade, and the ages of five to 12.[3] Correspondingly, family, children's books, films and school museum trips are cited (Banu; Corvusvitae; Siwy, Wave One). Key terminology included 'fascination', being 'transfixed' or even 'obsessed' with Egypt, or rather a concept of Egypt which *resonated* for most. I should note here that it is, in the majority, a conception, rather than an experience of Egypt that is evoked. Only a minority of respondents had actually travelled to Egypt. Only one had travelled there frequently, visiting at least once per year (Neb, Wave One). Other respondents remarked on one visit to Egypt, stating a desire to return (Jedmehdu; The Torch, Wave One). Respondents' reactions to modern Egypt were moderately positive, though there were concerns

regarding preservation of sites (Neb, Wave One). Senut (Wave One) had visited before she was a part of KO, and did not experience the 'spiritual and past-life connection' that she had expected. Penwich (Wave One) highlighted that there was 'no comparison' between modern and ancient Egypt. There were hints of disillusion with regards to contending with modern Egypt in order to experience the ancient (Elin; Luwana, Wave One), though this was by no means universal. Given that high expectations may contribute to disappointment or disenchantment with modern Egypt, I did not observe the overwhelmingly negative attitude portrayed of respondents to Fisher's (2000) market research, though few had directly experienced the country.[4]

When questioned about participation in 'pre-millenial' Egyptomania (i.e. the high-profile 'alternative' archaeology trends of the late 1990s) respondents replied in the resoundingly negative, although some were unclear on what phenomena I was referring to. There were more reactions *against* alternative archaeologies than voices in favour. 'Alien' theories were described as 'inherently racist' (The Torch, Wave One), 'silly' (Corvusvitae, Wave One) and even '*a bunch of crap*' (Jedmehdu, Wave One), and respondents strongly preferred to attribute the achievements of the ancient Egyptians *to* the ancient Egyptians themselves.[5] I note this in contrast to the somewhat pejorative conflation of 'esoteric' or 'mystical' interests with such 'UFO' Däniken-esque theories on the Egyptologists Electronic Forum boards, and even within such works as Roth (1998: 219–22). Similarly, while media played a role in initial exposure for many, the role of media and pop culture in respondents' practices *specifically* was diminutive. Senut (Wave One) noted that 'There's really nothing much that impresses me about pop culture!', while Neb (Wave One) reflected that,

> I tend to regard pop culture as feeding off my religion, rather than shaping it. It's saddening to see the reputation of Gods I worship and love being twisted, and it seems the gods of Egypt are particularly open to such things because of the rich and 'exotic' culture which revered Them.

While many respondents stated that they enjoyed some instances of popular use of Egyptian culture, it was less influential in actually *shaping* their perceptions than has been suggested in other works (Fisher 2000; Lupton 2003; S. MacDonald 2003; Roth 1998). As Luwana (Wave One) states,

‘Stargate did not influence my perception, and it did not strictly speaking increase my attraction to the Egyptian culture, but it certainly fed my obsession with it.’

With regard to ‘mainstream’ religion[6] and perceptions of the appeal of alternatives, respondents expressed a full range of responses. There was limited criticism, largely focused on politicisation (Jedmehdu, Wave One) and the exercise of power and control by a minority (HiC, Wave One). Curiously, two commentators noted the ‘outdated’ feel of these religions, implying that a more ancient precursor was more relevant to modern life (Corvusvitae; Luwana, Wave One). Overall, a range was represented, from complete contempt, ‘I cannot worship a god that claims copyright on creation and hates everyone that does not accept this’ (Elin, Wave One), to reservation:

> I think there are many wonderful people who belong to mainstream religions and find great beauty in their beliefs. However, I think that in general monotheistic ‘book religions’ encourage narrow-mindedness and hatred toward those who do not share their beliefs.
>
> Atlas, Wave One

And indifference: ‘Each to their own, in my opinion’ (Temwa, Wave One).

Several members held concerns over the homophobic stance of mainstream religions; this may point to an additional factor in the opting for an alternative spirituality. However, Atlas (Wave One), Dw3t-Hthr (Wave Two) and LaBorde (2010, personal communication, 21 April) saliently note that it is likely the religious *liberty* of our age, when matched with the ‘information age’, which is spawning new movements and facilitating the practice of such beliefs.

Definitions

Closely linked to conceptions of Egypt are participants’ perceptions of the *nature* of their beliefs and practices. Writing as a Kemetic ‘insider’, LaBorde (2010: 9–13) identifies three ‘primary branches’ of Egyptian paganism,

which include:

Tameran Wicca: This uses the same basic structure as popular forms of Wicca, including the Wheel of the Year, Sabbat and Esbat rituals. LaBorde (ibid.: 9–10) further divides this branch into the *Isian* tradition, which originates in the 1974 founding of the Star of the Gold Cross coven,[7] and Kemetic Wicca, which she claims focuses on Mother–Father–Child conceptions of the Triad, rather than God–Goddess duality.[8]

Kemetic Reconstructionism: LaBorde notes this as the largest sect 'in terms of its internal diversity' (ibid.: 10), and conflates reconstructionism and revivalism, both of which are classified therein as part of Egyptian paganism (ibid.), with qualifiers. This classification does not reflect the self-identification of groups such as Kemetic Orthodoxy (see below).

Finally, *Eclectic Neo-Egyptian*, which blends and appropriates more liberally, including 'Egyptian yoga', 'Kemetic diets' and 'Kemetic' retreats.

'Many, but not all, of these groups are Afrocentric in theme' (ibid.: 11).

Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 8) note that 'members of Kemetic Orthodoxy believe their religion is a recovery of the indigenous faith of ancient Egypt', though it should be noted that the terminology 'revival' is employed over 'reconstruction', and these authors mislabel KO.

> Reconstruction, which unfortunately is the preferred buzzword amongst neopagans interested in classical pagan religions, to me implies a lifeless attempt to copy something old, to create a replica. Kemetic Orthodoxy, to paraphrase the Japanese poet Basho, does not seek to copy the men of old, but seeks what they sought.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

As previously noted, Kemetic Orthodoxy officially locates itself firmly outside paganism, emphasising its hierarchical nature and theological structure by comparing itself to the 'Judeo-Christian family of religions'. When asked about the relationship of their practices to paganism, however, KO respondents expressed a range, because of the personal connotations the

term held for them. An anonymous KO respondent stated that:

> the deeper my Kemetic Orthodox practices sink in, the more distant I feel from other pagan religions. I have no festivals in common with them, I follow a completely different calendar, we do not share a ritual form at all.
>
> Anon, Wave One

These points rest on the equation of *paganism* with Wicca, however, rather than as an umbrella term for anything prior to or situated outside, monotheistic religions:

> I intensely dislike the word Paganism being a catchall for anything that is not J, C, or I. I do not believe we are any more 'Pagan' than Hindus are or most Indigenous American Indians are in their various Indigenous Faiths. Just call members of either of these groups, 'Pagans' and see just how warmly you are greeted!
>
> NiankhSekhmet, Wave Two

The belief that Kemeticism – further, KO – was akin to an indigenous religion seemed incongruous given the explicitly revivalist nature of the religion. However, the participant went on to describe a 'blurring' of the lines with particular branches of Kemetic paganism, eventually stating that,

> Kemetic religion does not need to be pigeonholed – no religion needs to be. Self-definition is a right of all religions and anthropologists and religious 'experts' should maybe talk about their own religions rather than those of others of which they do not entirely grasp the subtleties of. I find that many people have many opinions about ancient Kemetic religion, but far too few of them have a real clue what it is or is not.
>
> Ibid.

This criticism highlights the research advanced by 'insider' writers, such as Wallis (2003; and see Blain *et al*. 2004). However, what exactly 'Kemeticism' *is* appears to be subject to interpretation, even within KO:

> I see Kemeticism as a polytheistic, Pagan path.… I do not think modern Kemetics should separate themselves from the Pagan community as some groups have done. So many of us are eclectic… I sort of see the Pagan community as its own nation, and being part of that is a big part of my identity…. I am not comfortable with the efforts of some Kemetic groups to distance themselves from the Neopagan movement. To me it smacks of elitism.
>
> Nehet, Wave Two

Further, in correspondence with a member of the KO priesthood, or *Kai-Imakhu*, the terminology of revivalism and reconstruction was again highlighted. I had unintentionally conflated KO with 'Recon' movements in an email to Senut, who replied, stating,

> I want to make one thing clear: The House of Netjer, i.e. Kemetic Orthodoxy, is not a 'recon(structed)' religion, but instead is 'revivalist.' For me, a reconstructed religion is one in which little and/or scattered information exists about it, and so its practitioners have to 'reconstruct' the religion in piecemeal fashion as they think it might have been practiced. This is especially true of religions that relied heavily on oral traditions in the past.
>
> Senut 2011, personal communication, 13 May

This position echoes that of Siuda (2016; Chapter 3). I had not intended to include KO members within the Recon movement, and my mistake highlights the sometimes-problematic nature of terminology within the Kemetic continuum. Senut goes on to mention Druidry as an example of a movement that did not use written records for their belief systems, necessitating the need for reconstruction in that context. However, in Senut's opinion, this was not the case for Egypt: 'the priests of ancient Egypt were highly literate and left many records about their religion; therefore, we *know* how it was practiced. So ours was the task of collecting all of this information and *reviving* the religion' (Ibid., emphasis original).

The House of Netjer's use of non-historical pharaonic rituals, such as the

Senut ritual, may complicate the issue, therefore, to a constituency whom appear to simultaneously embrace and eschew historical material. Definitions were further problematised by the literature of the website, which stated that 'what we teach within Kemetic Orthodoxy will always be the formal "state" religion of Kemet's past' (Kemet 2010).

As noted, Siuda places KO firmly within ATRs and, due to conceptual transfers, this has had a significant impact upon the development of splinter movements, such as Per Ankh. I have noted Banu's testimony on the inclusion of works by writers such as Mbiti (1990) in the foundation of such KTRs. However, perhaps highlighting conceptual differences between KO's revivalism and paganism, LaBorde (2010: 19) contests that, 'Egyptian Paganism is not an "African Traditional" religion.' LaBorde asserts that it is a fallacy to group Egyptian paganism with Voudon, Santaria and Candomle, or other African Diaspora religions, and suggests that such conflation denies the diversity of cultures and beliefs that span the African continent and fails to take into account the direction of human trade routes and migration: 'The Egyptians held close ties to the Mediterranean world, modern Syria and Lebanon, and what is now Sudan. None of these areas traded with the Niger River valley civilizations, from which Voudon and similar faiths originated' (ibid.).

Although current understanding of such trade routes is far from comprehensive (O'Connor and Reid 2003) – LaBorde's assertion does highlight a striking polarisation within modern Kemeticism that reflects aspects of the Afrocentric discussion. ATRs inspired a binary response – participants either allowed for the influence of ATRs or they did not. As Banu notes, after joining the Kemetic Reconstructionist KTSJ, 'I no longer consider myself ATR, but simply a Kemetic reconstructionist' (Banu 2009, personal communication, 26 July).

Conceptions of the nature of divinity within Kemetic Orthodoxy also spark debate. The House of Netjer promotes the idea of *Monolatry*, which it defines as 'a special form of polytheism, having a multi-god structure still providing the possibility of understanding all divine beings as part of one divine source' (Kemet 2011). They attribute this concept to Egyptologists, notably 'Erich Winter and Siegfried Morenz in reference to Near Eastern conceptions of God, and applied to ancient Egypt by Erik Hornung, Jan Assmann, and other Egyptologists and students of religion' (ibid.). As one might expect, this

definition inspires lengthy discussion among the Kemetic continuum, many of whom are attracted to Egypt because of an apparent variety of deities, only to be told they are manifestations of but one.[9]

Taboo

Conceptions of ‘taboo’ were of particular interest to the study. It became clear as the work progressed that this issue was emblematic of the ideological differences between Kemetic movements. Additionally, the declaration of specific ritual taboos, such as blood, urine and faeces, were potential indicators of the spread of KO’s specific form of ATR revivalism. These issues were also indicative of the practical concerns and problems faced when reconstructing ritual. As taboo, or *bw.t*, in ancient Egypt is a fairly recent matter of debate, it was interesting to glimpse how this subject had been interpreted and implemented.[10]

Banu was a primary source of information on this subject, though survey respondents corroborated her observations. She notes the three main taboos taught to her during her time with the House of Netjer (KO), that of blood, urine and faeces:

> The blood taboo was understood to refer both to a woman’s menses and also to any bleeding wound – on a man or a woman. Blood is a potent carrier of the life force, and to have it flowing out of the body represents a disruption of the natural order of things… The taboo against urine and dung plays a strong role in Kemetic preferences for loose incense. Some manufacturers of stick and cone incense in India use cow manure as an inexpensive base for their formulations… and many manufacturers of incense all over the world use urea as a sweetener in perfume oils.
>
> Banu, Wave Two

Nehet (a KO Remetj) states that, ‘There is a general understanding that wearing wool or silk is ritually impure. Urine and feces are obviously offensive.… I have heard that some types of Indian incense blends, like Nag Champa, use cow dung. So I am very careful about what type of incense I

use' (Nehet, Wave Two).

Kerry Wisner, founder of Akhet Hwt-Hrw, looks to Egyptian primary sources, stating that:

> Yes, in Ancient Egypt there were some taboos. These largely depended on the God or Goddess that one served. I would suggest looking to the 'instructions of Imhotep' in Egypt for a view of what the Egyptians felt was taboo.
>
> K. Wisner 2009, personal communication, 25 November

LaBorde (2010: 216–26) includes a section on the creation of ritual wear, and also mentions the prohibition against wool in Egyptian temples. Many of these beliefs appear to be group specific, as Bastemhet notes, 'The only things I've heard of as taboo (i.e. giving pork to Aset as an offering, doing KO senut while menstruating) were perpetuated by members of Kemetic Orthodox. I cannot attest to the historical precedent to these beliefs, however' (Bastemhet, Wave Two). Banu (ibid.) suggests the place of KO in the dissemination of such ideas:

> When I joined Akhet Hwt-Hrw, and later Per Ankh, I found the same taboos being held. With three temples all teaching the same thing, I felt confident that these were traditional taboos and directed my reading elsewhere for many years… I never really questioned the Big Three until joining up with the Kemetic Temple of San Jose.

Further asserting the influential nature of KO, she states:

> When I learned that KTSJ and her parent temple the Temple of Ra did not observe the blood taboo, I was really surprised – could it be that the blood taboo, which I had accepted for so long, was after all a modern innovation? Was it a carry-over from the ATRs which sometimes influence the development of modern Kemetic religion?
>
> Ibid.

However, Banu saliently notes that these are *not* '*taboos' in the strictly*

anthropological use of the term, which would entail a more comprehensive exclusion from everyday settings, such as when the *hsmn* women of Deir el-Medina are thought by Wilfong (1999: 428–30) to have relocated outside the workers' village:

> when you hear Kemetics speaking of 'taboos,' what they generally mean are ritual purity taboos… So while a person in a 'taboo' state of impurity from a modern Kemetic point of view may only be restricted from formal ritual, in the original anthropological concept of the term that person would also be secluded from everyday social settings. She or he would be considered 'infectious' in all contact with other people, who would pick up his or her unclean state through physical proximity or casual interaction.
>
> Banu, Wave Two

This differentiation reflects Egyptological limited understanding of the contexts of taboo in ancient Egypt, and Banu went to great lengths to seek Egyptological material on the matter.[11] In this context, however, conceptions of taboo highlight the practical and immediate concerns faced by women, in particular, when attempting ritual: 'Being the woman that I am, you can imagine how this discrepancy was brought to my attention on a regular – monthly – basis. I followed any lead I got to either verify or disprove the blood taboo' (ibid.).

However, Banu claims to continue to follow the blood taboo in a few of her private rituals, despite her eschewing of ATR or KTR status, and against the practices of her current temple, the KTSJ.[12] As noted, The Temple of Ra and Kemetic Temple of San José do not follow the menstrual taboo, and this position is explained and explored on their site.[13] Richard Reidy, founder and moderator of the Temple of Ra, explained to me that this stance,

> is not because of our origins outside of KO, but it is due to the fact that we want to avoid basing our practices on obviously outdated medical beliefs concerning the human body, its anatomy, and how the body functions. Just as we would not want our members to base their medical practices on those of the ancient Egyptians as found in the great medical papyri, so we do not regard the ancient taboos, including dietary restrictions as well as the blood

> taboo, to be necessary in our service to the Netjeru or in reestablishing the Kemetic religion… In fact, it is our position that the observance of such practices smacks of a misplaced and ill-informed fundamentalism, a backwards looking emphasis on questionable ethnic customs, ultimately unrelated to the ancient religion's theological vision. We are aware that different Nomes held a variety of unique and sometimes highly unusual beliefs regarding taboos (v. Papyrus Jumilac, the interdiction about certain species of dog!!). We have no interest in resurrecting them in the name of a claimed 'authenticity'.
>
> R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 31 May

In addition, the psychological effects such prohibitions might have are of paramount concern to female practitioners. Banu notes that a temple friend explained his position on the matter, having been raised and trained within Russian Orthodox religion:

> He told me stories of bitter, angry debates with tearful women who were prohibited from taking part in communion because they were on their cycle. He pointed out the psychological effects this has had on women and their views of their body – feelings of shame and the devaluation of the physical world which are not compatible with the Kemetic view of the body as a gift created by (and sometimes from) the gods, and the wonder of a conception of divinity as immanent in the world around us.
>
> Banu, Wave Two

She also notes that the Temple of Ra and KTSJ maintain a vigilant stance regarding such contentious points that may be rooted in dogma: 'we should not accept a rule just because it was written down somewhere by someone…. menstrual taboos may have been an anomaly – after all, we only have clear records for these two gods' (ibid.).[14]

More recurrent themes were respect, ritual cleanliness and more general ethical considerations. Some respondents noted no specific taboo subjects, one even joking,

'Oh, there are probably such things. As a Set-worshipper, I don't much

care. ;)' (Anon., Wave Two). Arguably, this stance only applies to religious taboo, and should not be inferred to represent any wider stance.

Other 'taboos' appear to centre on more modern, social conceptions of wrongdoing. Kemetic Orthodoxy maintains a strong stance against child abuse, for instance, and established a charity, the Udjat Foundation, to raise both funds and awareness of neglected and abused children:

> We believe all children are entitled to the basic necessities of life – a safe, secure home; adequate, regular nourishment; and opportunities for education – as well as absolute protection from exploitation and abuse. These are not negotiable concepts: they are absolute necessities for any nation that dares call itself civilized.
>
> Udjat 2011[15]

The site is promoted with the Egyptian Eye of Horus (Udjat), which is employed for its associations with *health*, *wholeness* and *protection*. Some KO respondents echoed this position: 'Intentional injury of children, murder, sexual abuse of any kind, kidnapping… the major crimes against person and society are also abhorrent to us' (Anon., Wave Two). 'The molestation of children under the age of what would be considered age of consent. Destroying the innocence of someone who has been entrusted to adults to safeguard and protect – that's pretty serious' (NiankhSekhmet, Wave Two).

Sin and Ma'at

There was a more unified response when asked about conceptions of sin. Despite reservations about the language employed, it was generally noted that working against Ma'at, promoting Isfet, or chaos, and willfully unethical behaviour was frowned upon. Banu and Nehet (Wave Two) mentioned the Negative Confessions, but also noted that these varied between tomb contexts, and did not equate them to the 'Commandments' of Abrahamic religion. Conversely, Ma'at, and the actualisation of Ma'at, was considered sacred as were 'open' statues of deities (see Chapter 11), the self, language, words and speech. The conception and support of Ma'at appears to unite the

disparate approaches to Kemeticism. Siuda states that:

> The central ritual focus of the ancient Egyptian religion and its modern derivative the Kemetic Orthodox Faith… is *Ma'at*, the concept (and the Goddess) of truth, order, and what is right. Our purpose… is to further the influence and purpose of Ma'at in the universe to the best of our ability.
>
> Siuda 2005a: Chapter 2

Siuda advances that prayer (and subsequently the Senut ritual) is an important manner in which to establish a personal relationship with Ma'at. Likewise, LaBorde (2010: 22) similarly asserts that 'Egyptian Paganism promotes the ethical treatment of our fellow beings', equating these ethical standards with Ma'at.[16] Though it is presented here as an adjunct of taboo and sin, the central place and significance of Ma'at to modern Kemetics cannot be overstated.

Afterlife

Conceptions of the afterlife varied; many viewed it as simply a transitional period. Senut and SitenWosret mention judgement before the gods, in the vein of the *Book of the Dead*, but the explicit mention of this was exceptional. Banu notes that judgement may be a possibility, as might reincarnation, or even 'nothing at all', a prospect mirrored by Bastemhet (Wave Two). Most respondents state that leading one's life *well* is an appropriate, even practical response to death. There was, significantly, little mention of reincarnation, despite common associations between Egypt and reincarnation within popular culture (Lupton 2003), highlighting the nuanced nature of Kemetic beliefs.

The 'blessed dead' or *Akhu* take on a significant role (e.g. Senut, Tahotepirty, The Torch, Wave One, Banu, NiankhSekhmet, Tuwer, Wave Two). As attested at Deir el-Medina, ancestor worship, in the form of shrine images and busts, appears to have been commonplace. Reconstructionists and revivalists alike place emphasis on this practice as an important aspect of ritual and theological practice (see below). The House of Netjer maintains a

web page for the people to leave virtual offerings in the form of the 'Virtual Abdju.' (Kemet 2011). Styled as a virtual pilgrimage to Abdju (or Abydos),[17] visitors can leave a virtual 'pot' containing a message to a passed colleague or loved one, the purpose of this site being described as 'to remember and reflect. Many of us have ancestors and friends who touched our lives and have now since passed on to the realm of Wesir, Ruler of the Blessed Dead. This is our tribute to them, our note-filled pots, our letters in the sand' (ibid.).

Members of Kemetic Orthodoxy who have passed are identified with Osiris (in the form of *Wesir*), and are positioned at the top of the page. There follows a number of dedicatory 'pots' (also referred to as 'letters') of differing styles (150 as of May 2011) placed by members on behalf of people they knew, or the Akhu more generally. Non-members may submit letters also, but the process is different and they do not appear to be displayed on the same page as pots, but as part of a text list. Senut, of KO, described an afterlife at once more in keeping with Egyptological understanding of Egyptian beliefs yet imbued with belief in reincarnation: 'I believe that the ka (soul) goes through a 70-day journey to reach Judgment, after which it is "justified"… I also believe that at some time we can choose to reincarnate if we so desire – or not' (Senut, Wave One). She suggests that this belief in reincarnation is common among members of KO, though not official doctrine.

Subscribing to an Egyptian afterlife may involve obstacles of a more pragmatic nature. Mummification is not generally an available or affordable practice in the modern age. Tombs are beyond the price range of most, not to mention the lack of skilled embalmers trained in traditional Egyptian techniques. However, this does not deter practitioners versed in the rites and language of the culture from preparations for the afterlife. Richard Reidy of the Temple of Ra prepared an amulet in the form of a, '4 inch replica of the scarab': 'We have written out the Book of Coming Forth by Day Spell 30 "O Heart of My Mother." It will be used as an amulet for myself when the time comes' (R Reidy 2015, personal communication, 3 March). Sadly, Richard passed away in November 2015. He was buried, accompanied by an *Opening of the Mouth ritual*, in early December.

Kingship

The last theme to present in this section of beliefs is likely the most definitive. Continuing the exploration of the boundaries of each movement, I asked respondents if a Nisut or head of faith was a required concept in Kemeticism. As one might expect, KO members responded in the affirmative, though NiankhSekhmet assures that this stance did not reflect a mutually exclusive position against other interpretations:

> In my Temple, the House of Netjer we have a Nisut. There is most definitely a hierarchy, and it works for us. Other branches of Kemetic Faith, however, believe that having a Nisut is entirely unnecessary. And honestly, that is perfectly fine for them. We don't care how anyone else does it – to each their own.
>
> NiankhSekhmet, Wave Two

This sentiment was echoed by SitenWosret and Tuwer (Wave Two), both of whom were associated with KO. However, Kerry Wisner of Akhet Hwt-Hrw referred me to his website, where he makes observations regarding the problems he feels are inherent in accepting the premise of contemporary divine kingship. The first of these are pragmatic in nature, regarding competition between movements:

> one has to ask, if such a claim is legitimate does this mean that the individual involved is the King of all reconstructionists of ancient Egyptian religion whether the others are part of the person's particular organization or not? If not and the status of divine Kingship only applies when the person is addressing members of their own organization then does this mean that other Kemetic groups with individuals claiming a right to divine Kingship too have been conferred this through the Gods? Are each and every one of these 'Kings' the direct heir to the throne of Egypt? Is it possible to have more than one King at any one time? If so, is one 'King' more legitimate than another?
>
> Akhet Hwt-Hrw 2011

In order to solve this dilemma, Wisner looks to Egyptological sources for temples in which priests would act on pharaoh's behalf, governed by a 'governing council', or *knbt.* From this evidence, Wisner concludes that there is 'absolutely' no need for a Nisut, nor does Akhet Hwt-Hrw recognise such,

> Because there is no Nisu[t] Akhet Hwt-Hrw is structured on the ancient principle noted above of governing through a council. All decisions are made by a council with careful consideration given to each person's views, usually with a fair amount of debate… the wisdom of the council lays in the individual member's experience and training. Not by virtue of a title.
>
> Ibid.

Indeed, the idea of a democracy of voices was strong among solo practitioners and leaders of alternative movements. Nehet stated:

> I live in a democracy, and I am proud of that. We have a president. I voted for him.… The Pharaoh was the leader of Kemet, and it was his responsibility to maintain Ma'at for his people. In a democracy, it is the responsibility of voters to uphold Ma'at. Isn't that empowering?
>
> Nehet, Wave Two

Banu echoes this notion, drawing in conceptions of nationality:

> When I first began studying Kemetic religion, the concept of the king really freaked me out. After all, I'm a United States citizen – our country was founded in part on the idea of 'no more kings,' and there is a kind of cultural phobia and fascination surrounding the concept of monarchy here. I think it's really ironic that the Kemetic movement has taken as much of a hold as it has in the States, given our distrust of monarchies and theocracies in general.
>
> Banu, Wave Two

Though it should be noted that, even as ex-KO, Banu speaks very well of both the movement and the Nisut, Tamara Siuda. For Banu the issue of Nisut

remains ‘undecided’.

LaBorde (2010: 19–20) suggests that there is ‘considerably dangerous potential from abuse of power from such a position’, and notes that in the absence of pharaoh, Petosiris ‘reorganized local temples himself and performed kingly duties in groundbreaking ceremonies. But he never took on any kingly titles to do so… faith in the gods does not require a king by any name.’

Richard Reidy summed up the position of his temple, even if not the explicit position of all members, thus:

> There is no need for such a figure. In fact, such a figure in today’s world presents a real liability. It infantilizes adherents. It promotes the paradigm of obedience to the leader and not the healthy questioning needed for a mature approach to all aspects of the religion. After all, who is so bold as to challenge the edict of the living Horus, the pharaoh? As for an ‘ordained’ or appointed priesthood, it is equally unnecessary. The priesthood of believers means than each person can make offerings to the gods, each person can care for the divine presence in the world. Anything else is superfluous and in fact may not be pleasing to the gods since its very hierarchical structure promotes unhealthy ranking of adherents – for no good purpose I believe.
>
> R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

With regard to the removal of the context of the Egyptian nation and the effect of this upon contemporary religious practices, he suggests,

> I regard coronation rites and the heb sed festival as superfluous and anachronistic. We need neither a modern day pharaoh, nor an elaborate hierarchy of priests replete with titles and privileges. In essence the pharaoh was the ‘corporate personality’ of Egypt. He re-presented his people to the gods. Today we can have a more developed, more democratic understanding of each person’s re-presenting humankind. We each can offer and *do* ma’at. History is not static. We need not adopt the political paradigm of ancient Egypt.

Ibid., emphasis original

Senut, of KO, offers a stance based in historical authenticity:

> As for the 'need' for a Nisut, well… that's just part of the 'orthodoxy' in Kemetic Orthodoxy. A 'divine ordination' was part of this process in ancient times where the ka/spirit of Heru (Horus), who was associated with Kemetic kingship, was transferred to the ruling Pharaoh via religious ritual.… Rev. Siuda is far more lenient and 'democratic' in her kingship than her ancient counterparts were!

Senut 2011, personal communication, 13 May

Siuda, in addition to her theological and social arguments supporting the historical precedent of the Nisut role (Chapter 3), suggests that her presence benefits the community en masse, irrespective of one's perspective on the requirement of a Nisut:

> I think that other Kemetics outside Kemetic Orthodoxy also benefit from my presence in a number of ways. The vast majority of them have been or currently still are students of mine, and even those who have not have benefited from the work that we have done with the House of Netjer over the last two decades. My continued effort to translate ancient documents and provide them for our devotional use also benefits everyone and not just my own people.

Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

This notion, which might spark debate along the Kemetic continuum, suggests that the very existence of KO, and their work, provides resources with which, or against which, other Kemetics operate. This is an interesting assertion which ties into Fiske's notions of incorporation/excorporation (Chapter 3) and is explored later in the context of the Kemetic community (Chapter 11).

Taboo: an Egyptological perspective

Although debates around the observation of blood taboo among Kemetics have been noted, it would be salient to address the issue with regard to Egyptological understanding. Related to 'blood taboo', the issue of 'menstrual taboo' has received limited attention within Egyptology. It has been partly explored by Frandsen (2007), Toivari-Viitala (2001) and Wilfong (1999), after Janssen (1980). Frandsen (2007) analyses worker absences at Deir el-Medina attributed to the *hsmn* of their wives; 'hsmn' is a term which has generated some debate, but is variously attributed the meanings 'menstruation', 'purification', 'natron' and even post-childbirth purification (Janssen 1980: 141–3, Toivari-Viitala 2001: 164). Frandsen (2007: 84) asserts that the accumulated evidence for the term 'hsmn' 'excludes any interpretation other than "menstruation."… As a term for menstruation, "purification" might simply be a euphemism or perhaps even a so-called taboo-word.' Toivari-Viitala (2001: 163–7) contests the menstrual interpretation, analysing the social contexts and profiles of absent worker males:

> the coming of *hsmn*'ing women was not only an event which found its way into written documentation, but mention of it was made in different kinds of contexts, consisting of a record of festival offerings… and a statement concerning property.
>
> Ibid.: 165

Noting that 'the Egyptian language lacked specific "technical" terminology for many occurences' (ibid.: 168), Toivari-Viitala posits that references to hsmn 'show clearly an established practice, or ritual, which was connected to women's lives, probably marking transitions, which also affected men close to these women' (ibid.). Further, it is asserted that 'this type of practice might be associated to different kinds of life transitions, such as circumcision, first menstruation, perhaps even regular menstruation, post-natal purification, miscarriage and abortion' (ibid.). Despite this open interpretation, Frandsen (2007: 105) highlights a conceptual incompatibility between menstruating women and sacred funerary space, due to concerns over mundane and sacred modes of procreation based in 'Sacramental Interpretation'. He posits, 'For the benefit of both worlds, fertility in this world, eternal participation in the

solar cycle in the other world, menstruation and the sacred space of funerary regeneration had to be kept apart.' However, his argument here is general, and it should be noted that his article posits several interpretations of the data (ibid.: 99), highlighting the difficulty of assigning meaning when bereft of contextual information. Wilfong (1999: 422–31), analysing the same material, is careful to note that explicit interdiction against menstruating women is not extant until the Greco-Roman period, leading Wilfong to conclude that there is no universal taboo against women in Egypt. This is the crux of the issue: taboo, or bw.t, appears to have been *nome* specific, not customary, or even necessarily deity specific.[18] Additionally, given the absolute nature of Egyptian funerary space and the transient (and in some senses, less liminal) nature of most *Kemetic* worship spaces (mostly domestic with the exception of KO's Tawy House), it is very difficult to ascertain whether such a taboo would apply to contemporary or ancient *domestic* worship. Further challenging the notion of taboo, Toivari-Viitala (2001: 162) asserts that what appear to be 'sanitary towels and/or loincloths to be used during the menstruation period… are mentioned in laundry lists'; as such, there were 'probably no marked notions of social pollution attached to these garments'. We might look to Deir el-Medina, or the Letter of Lady Ir (Quirke and Collier 2002), for clues as to the prohibition of menstruating women from domestic and temple worship contexts, but interpretations of this issue vary within Egyptology and, subsequently, along the Kemetic continuum. Bw.t may well signify socio-*political* concerns over theological, making the transference of such prohibitions to contemporary settings questionable, even irrelevant. These debates highlight how inherently ensconced within academic debates the Kemetic continuum's paradigms and practices can be. The technical specifics of this subject inspired readings of the above materials by Banu and others and, in turn, the imposition of taboo upon Kemetics engendered my own investigations. I would argue that, allowing for modern ethical considerations, the reason for the lack of consensus within the Kemetic continuum reflects an equivalent lack of academic agreement. This will become a crucial point to which I shall return.

Beliefs in continuum

Egypt is perhaps a model example of a message ‘framed throughout by meanings and ideas’ (Hall [1980] 1993: 509), as exemplified in the consistent free-form associations provoked in respondents from both my own and other studies (Fisher 2000; MacDonald and Rice 2003). While I do not believe the kinds of uncritical associations with Egypt mentioned by tourists (MacDonald, K.C. 2003) to be particularly instructive beyond this point, the themes highlighted in this study may act as emblems of the manner in which Western culture has crafted the lens through which it views the Egyptian past (Butler 2007; Reid 2002). Beginning with the *beliefs* reported by respondents, an emphasis on deities of the Old to New Kingdoms is notable, with far less emphasis on Isis and Osiris than has been extant in preceding Egyptian esotericism (Hutton 1999). This is perhaps explained by two notions. Principally, while contemporary perceptions of Egyptian deities are influenced by their popularity in Late and Greco-Roman periods (and subsequent Renaissance re-emergence),[19] centrally located ‘nodal’ reconstructionists, and revivalists, focus on middle Egyptian language and the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms for their rituals, texts and cosmologies (LaBorde 2010; Reidy 2010; Siuda 2005a). Subsequently, while figures such as ‘Isis’ and ‘Osiris’ were most certainly significant in these eras, it was only after the ‘fall’ of pharaonic culture proper that these deities, in their Greek and, arguably, ‘less authentic’ forms attained primary prominence for Western audiences. Additionally, due to the dominance of Isis in forms of Wicca and Goddess religion, a certain distance between Kemeticism and such forms of eclecticism is created by focusing on the more authentic and less familiar (in contemporary culture) versions of Kemetic deities. Moreover, these are arguments for *authenticity*, which, although not the focus of this qualitative study (in a comparative sense), remains a significant focal point for many Kemetics and, consequently, central to this undertaking. In the context of deity, it is highlighted in the use of such marginalised deities as Tananet and Iunyt in the Temple of Ra’s Lunar Rite – Hymn to the Crescent Moon, employed for their legitimacy, rather than popularity, and tribute to lesser-known deities, such as Hatmehit, by solo practitioners (Reidy 2010; Devo, Chapter 11).

Notes

1 The three ‘waves’ of initial surveys were collected between 22 June 2009 and 31 October 2011. References to these are presented in the format ‘Wave One’, ‘Wave Two’ and ‘Wave Three’, which closed on 22 September 2011, 30 September 2010 and 31 October 2011, respectively. Further personal communications are dated individually. I make distinction between the surveys and personal communications to highlight the development of my formal questions from the more organic conversations that later took place.

2 See Appendix.

3 Notably, these are American classifications. In the UK ‘ancient Egypt’ is frequently a Key Stage 2 subject, first taught during junior school. Subsequently, these findings reflect those of Fisher (2000: 34–5).

4 Though the number of respondents to my first wave was close to the five groups of six to eight respondents questioned in Fisher’s (2000: 6) research.

5 See KO’s official position on this topic here: http://www.kemet.org/faq

6 Which I employed as an intentionally vague umbrella term for the Abrahamic faiths, though Makoto (Wave One) quite rightly challenged my terminology, stating that ‘I feel there is no such thing as “alternative” or “mainstream” religion, there are always minority religions. Most of the “mainstream religions” started out this way.’

7 See http://www.pagannews.com/cgi-bin/traditions1.pl?160, for example.

8 This God–Goddess duality is a core theological tenet of foundational Wicca.

9 http://www.ecauldron.net/forum/index.php?topic=10893.0 [2011 version].

10 Buckley and Gottileb 1988, Frandsen 2007, Janssen 1980, Wilfong 1999 and see Chapter 12, Discussion.

11 See Frandsen (2007), Janssen (1980), Wilfong (1999), who interpret evidence of *hsmn* and *bw.t* differently, and see Chapter 12, Discussion.

12 ‘I have discontinued my observation of the “blood taboo” with all gods except those for Whom the menstrual taboo is specifically documented, but I do think that it is wise to continue observation and research for this taboo with respect to Them’ (Banu, Wave Two).

13 http://kemetictemple.org/Kemetic_Temple/ArticleTaboo.html

14 ‘Anpu (Anubis) and another, less clear, divinity Who may be Heru (Horus)’ (Banu, Wave Two). See Chapter 12, Discussion.

15 http://www.udjat.org/

16 Also see LaBorde 2010: 90–3 for fuller exegesis of her conception of Ma’at.

17 See Dawson and Cowan (2004: 3) for an account of virtual pilgrimage in Hinduism.

18 See Frandsen (2007: 88, Table 1), and the account of Papyrus Jumilhac (ibid.: 89).

19 I return to Fortmeyer’s (1989: 214) observation that by the fifth century BC Isis and Osiris had appeared to the Greek tourist to be the only nationwide deities of the Egyptians (see chapter 3).

10 Practices

Where beliefs are part of a complex web of cultural and social concerns, practices reveal far more concrete, traceable modes of worship. As such, this is an area where the *tenets* of religion meet the *techniques* (to borrow from Ritner), and is highly revelatory in the analysis of shared resources. Although this work was never conceived as a critique of authenticity, the *rituals*, *language*, *gesture* and, in the next chapter, *objects* analysed herein paint a picture that self-description cannot. My questions focus on sources and interpretation over the specific details of a given ritual – though this can easily be examined by following references of Kemetic insider publications (LaBorde 2010; Reidy 2010; Siuda 2005). I felt it was more instructive to ask respondents for explanation in their own words rather than scrutinise that which is adapted by admission and, as such, I have preserved as much of the context of conversations as possible. While there is no lengthy exegesis of technical detail herein, I employ an examination of key deviations, adaptations and, where salient, consistencies with ancient practices, the better to establish the range of responses to sources, both primary and Egyptological. Because each ritual has its own specific source this will also be listed with it, rather than in the following discussion, which details the source materials more broadly employed within the Kemetic continuum. These practices challenge the notion that all Egyptian religious activity might be conflated with 'eclectic' forms of paganism. Rather than an uncritical appropriation of Wiccan- and Western-based occultist practices (such as Freemasonry and Golden Dawn narratives), these activities are largely based on both primary Egyptian sources and Egyptological treatments of such, providing fertile ground for comparative analysis.

Ritual

In *The Ancient Egyptian Prayerbook*, Siuda (2005a: Chapter 2) describes the rituals requested of members of KO. The Remetj (Kemet 2010) are asked to perform the Senut ritual once per day, lasting at least 15 minutes. This can be done when convenient or simultaneously with the state rituals, which are performed by w'abu (pure ones) once per day and the Nisut (king) three times per day.[1] According to Senut,

> The House of Netjer has both a State Religion and personal piety practices; neither is viewed as contradictory to the other. The State Religion mainly functions to organize public rituals and events, such as our annual Retreat for the Faithful each August in Joliet, Illinois (US). The Imakhiu (ordained priests) and W'abu (lay priests) maintain State Shrines to their Spiritual Parents and perform The Rite of the House of the Morning as often as they can in order to honor their Parents and to bring Ma'at into the world. The State Religion in Kemetic Orthodoxy consists of meticulously researched materials from antiquity in keeping with the orthodox nature of our religion.
>
> Senut, Wave One

As noted, very little information on the technical details of KO's state rituals is available outside the priesthood, although some details are available in Siuda's (2005a) publications. Practices such as the Senut are contemporary constructs intended for modern literate individuals, which do not mimic the state rituals but rather are inspired by pharaonic practices. Siuda explains that this was because she was unable to find enough information on personal piety in Egypt to adapt 'complete individual rituals' (ibid.) for use in KO, though she notes that over the years she has uncovered more material, which is constantly integrated into the Kemetic Orthodox canon, perhaps reflecting increased attention on piety within Egyptology in recent years (Chapters 4 and 5). This has not removed elements of individualism from these practices, however, as Senut of the KO priesthood explains: 'In personal piety, however, each Shemsu experiences Netjer and his/her Parents uniquely. There is no book or other source of "received wisdom" which dictates how they "should" experience God' (Senut, Wave One).

The Senut ritual forms a core devotional practice for members of KO, and

the majority of KO-affiliated respondents attested to practising it, if not daily, then as regularly as possible.[2] Siuda (2005a: Chapter 2) details the Senut as beginning with a ritual purification. This is undertaken by first blessing a bowl of clean water and a separate bowl of natron. Natron itself is of interest here, as it is, at this time of writing, illegal to export Egyptian natron. As such, its extensive Kemetic ritual use demanded alternative sourcing. Curiously, rather than source natron domestically,[3] it appears common practice to create one's own, with many guides available in the literature and online, with debates over the purity of the varying types of salt one might employ (Ecauldron 2010; LaBorde 2010: 208–12; Siuda 2005a: Chapter 2).

The participant then takes a purification bath, which involves bathing in clean water sprinkled with natron, and dresses in clean clothing, often dedicated ritual wear, such as a jellabiya/galabaya.[4] I highlight this aspect of the Senut ritual, as a form of cleansing ritual which finds parallels in much of the Kemetic continuum, including those temples which do not share a common origin.[5] The ritual begins with a rubric which describes the Nisut taking council with her ka on how she might expel evil, suppress lying and repel violence in the land, in a style reminiscent of the rubric of the laws of Horemheb of D18 (Siuda 2005a: Chapter 2). There follows a purification ritual which appears inspired by the rites of King Unas, with origins in the Pyramid Texts (PT35).[6] This is followed by the lighting of incense with a prayer also taken from the Pyramid Texts (Siuda 2005a: Chapter 2, n. 3). What follows is a fourfold libation of water, which Siuda connects to practices of 'state temple rituals'. However, she explains that due to the incomplete and contradictory nature of the wording in surviving fragments, the ritual was adapted from West African Yoruba practices. As a KO member attests,

> It involves libations to certain deities or groups, and offering of scent and flame, as well as time set aside within it for personal prayer.… I strive to make my practices not authentic (in the sense of being a perfect copy of old rituals), but true to the spirit and style of old practices. Within ritual I prefer to use gestures, standards of conduct and dress, and phrasings common to the old practices.
>
> Luwana, Wave One

As such, it is the intention behind the ritual, one of personal piety over historical authenticity, that is significant here.

Within KO there is an acknowledgement of differentiation between the responsibilities attached to the roles of differently titled followers:

> I do the daily Senut as given to us by Rev. Tamara Siuda. As a priest there is a State Rite that is performed daily, this is historically authentic and is only performed by the Priests on behalf of the People and Kemet.
>
> NiankhSekhmet, Wave One[7]

The daily Senut is seemingly distinguished from KO's state rituals by a factor of authenticity, which appears more significant for rituals that do not focus on personal piety:

> The first is a modern ritual, created by Her Holiness, Rev. Tamara Siuda (the Ritual of Senut, performed by all Kemetic Orthodox). The second is the State Ritual, which is derived from ancient practice, and is performed by all W'abu… from what I know, it is also only a Kemetic Orthodox ritual; however, I have not gone to other temples or asked non-KO Kemetics if they perform such a ritual.
>
> Tuwer, Wave Three

Banu was the only commentator to mention the Yoruba origin of the Senut ritual:

> HoN's ritual of the Senut does include a fourfold water libation which was inspired by a similar ritual of the Yoruba – along with examples of libation as part of traditional ancient Egyptian ritual, of course. In their beginner's class, the class literature mentions this alongside a belief among the Yoruba that some of their practices (including this water libation) were taught to them by priests of Egypt. I have not been able to verify or disprove the origin of this practice, but it may well be the belief of the Yoruba.
>
> Banu 2009, personal communication, 26 July

Banu adds that,

> It's amazing to me sometimes how many people of Kemetic Orthodoxy do not remember the Yoruba origin of the fourfold water libation, despite the fact that it is clearly stated in one of the early lessons – given alongside the ritual when it is passed out.
>
> Ibid.

Another popular aspect of KO is the facility for online ritual, which is believed to enable access and 'a sense of involvement and community to people who cannot be physically in the same space' (The Torch, Wave One).[8] Among those rituals practised online is the Rite of Parent Divination (RPD) naming ceremony, which one participant described as 'electric' (Luwana, Wave One). Online practice is clearly a matter of personal taste, however, and many non-KO respondents appeared disinterested, one commenting that, 'Using a computer does not generally put me in a spiritual state of mind' (Sefiru, Wave One).· This in no way lessens the popularity of HoN's forums as a place for community building, however. Krogh and Pillifant (2004a: ¶ 26) note that 'most' of the collective temple rituals of KO are conducted simultaneously 'online' and 'offline', stating that,

> The ritual elements of physical co-presence, coordinated voices and gestures and sacred objects… are translated from the temple into online temporal co-presence, coordinated text messages, and the manipulation of ritual objects by individuals sitting in front of their computers.

This raises interesting questions regarding the role of objects and the status assigned thereof (see next chapter), though computers themselves did not appear to be regarded as a *component* of one's ritual tools.

The House of Netjer also engages in divinatory forms of ritual. Krogh and Pillifant (ibid.: ¶ 13) describe 'saq' as the 'climactic' form of the collective divinatory ritual. The saq is 'full trance possession where Netjer is understood to give messages and answer questions through the body of a priest'. According to Siuda (ibid.), this practice is closely related to possession in Vodou, further locating KO within the ATR category. Indeed,

testimony for human possession by deities in pharaonic Egypt, while present, is somewhat scant.[9] Possession/occupation of a cult statue by a deity is attested at Deir el-Medina, and Baines (1987) examines the phenomena of the 'wise woman' in the role of oracle. Szpakowska (2003) examines the role of dream interpretation and divination in Egypt, with particular reference to the Ramesside *Dream Book*, which she notes is specific in its audience, males (ibid.: 68),[10] and further delineates between two categories of males; followers of Horus (sms.w Hr), and followers of Seth. Szpakowska (ibid.: 74) notes that the existence of this category implies that the Sethian male was considered as much a part of Egyptian society as his counterpart,[11] and such specific detail alludes to divination as highly reflective of, and embedded within, contextual social norms.

I highlight this factor as a comparative of Egyptian divinatory techniques. Bereft of this social context, KO utilises cowrie shell divination, as utilised in the RPD. In this, shells are cast and interpreted by the Nisut in order to ascertain the parent divinity that will ultimately determine the components of the member's KO name, should they commit to KO by undergoing the naming ceremony. There is a possibility for comparison in the casting of bones and knuckles in pharaonic Egypt, though little is known about this practice. The choice in cowrie shell divination appears to be more firmly ensconced in ATRs than knuckle casting. When asked, Siuda clarified:

> The Rite of Parent Divination itself, our only official Kemetic Orthodox divination system that uses the shells, is a completely modern construction, just like the Senut. It is not nor has it ever been presented as an ancient practice. The use of cowrie shells was not a specific intention; it simply evolved that way from the need to create a binary divination system for that ritual. We also have another form of divination that uses sticks that are flat on one side and rounded on another, from the sticks that were known to be used in ancient Egyptian games and gambling. The shells were a technology decision, also derived from a West African claim that Egyptians taught them how to use analogous systems, and were not intended to be or pretend to be Egyptian.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

That technology could determine practice is significant, and ties closely to the exploration of objects and art as piety. Consequently, I did not note any common denominators for divination throughout the Kemetic continuum, though a remarkable number of Egypt-inspired Tarot cards available in the marketplace does attest to broad interest from the more eclectic end of the spectrum.

It should be noted that the aforementioned veneration of the Akhu, a major focus of KO, is a common denominator of the Kemetic continuum (Reidy 2010: 123–45; Siuda 2005a: Chapter 5).[12] Akhu veneration can take a more personal form, where pictures or belongings of the deceased might be kept on one's shrine, though there is sometimes concern regarding the approval of the deceased when venerated in this context, especially for those who have passed who followed another religion (Banu, Wave One).

The range of Kemetic practices can be as regimented as KO's state rituals and as individual and personal as piety, as one might expect. Richard Reidy of the Temple of Ra and Kemetic Temple of San José approaches reconstruction in a pragmatic, if conservative manner, espousing an attempt towards historical authenticity, while bearing in mind the practical demands, and context, of modern life:

> We no longer have the luxury of state-sponsored temples replete with a professional priesthood. Therefore, we need to make accommodation for our present situation. The Kemetics I know are well aware that our worship of and service to the gods can only very partially reflect the ancient practice. But we believe the essential elements can be restored.
>
> R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

The daily ritual advanced in Reidy's *Eternal Egypt* (2010) is a reconstruction of the Morning Ritual of Amun-Ra, and is based on a number of liturgical texts, notably academic translations of primary sources.[13] It differs significantly from KO's daily ritual of Senut in source, content and length, comprising thirty-two ceremonies plus a concluding utterance. Reidy (ibid.: 19–20) composed this ritual with the intention of offering a rite usable by contemporary practitioners, 'enabling them to worship this important deity in a manner and spirit completely consistent with authentic Egyptian practices',

and is careful to note that his project has ‘not been in any way an exercise in eclectic syncretism’. As such, there appears at first to be little space for personal piety in this rite, which attempts to be recognisable to a priest of ancient Egypt, while allowing for the palettes of the modern reader/ritualist (ibid.: 20). It should be noted, however, that Reidy informed me that,

> On page 17 I do advise, ‘At some point one or another Utterance or action may touch your heart in a personal way. Adopt it. Make it your own.’ I do wish that I had addressed this issue in a clearer manner in the book.
>
> R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

It is complemented by another daily rite, that of The Nightime Ritual of the Mystical Union of Ra with Ausir, which focuses on the concepts of destiny and bond with the Akhu, and honours the sun god Ra in his journey through the Duat. Like its forerunner, the ritual is based on primary sources and academic translations, with only a few changes (such as pronouns) to enable for individual readings.[14] Interestingly, Reidy also cross references Kerry Wisner, of Akhet Hwt-Hrw, referring to the required purifications with water and natron, ‘in the usual manner’ (ibid.: 53), indicating the development of a standard.[15] At the risk of over-simplification, the practices attested in Reidy’s (2010) text consist of recitation (in English) largely based in Egyptological translations of primary sources. They subsequently focus on the reconstruction of traditional ceremonies such as transfiguration liturgies for Radiant Spirits (Akhu veneration, ibid.: 89) and magical actions to aid in overthrowing Apep (which includes the burning of a papyrus bearing the name of the serpent, ibid.: 147), in addition to the daily rites mentioned above. Reidy also presents ‘general rituals’ which, while distinguished from eclecticism, do not follow a rigid ‘theology of repetition’ (ibid.: 193). Reidy (ibid.: 193–4) is willing to concede that Egypt did not exist in a vacuum and neither should the Kemetic community, no matter how self-contained their rituals may be. As such, the Temple of Ra self-identify as ‘creative conservators’, ‘using expert knowledge to modify rites when truly necessary but always working to preserve their underlying ideologies’ (ibid.: 194).

Innovation follows standard patterns from within Egyptian tradition, allowing for relevance to present-day circumstance and material resources.

Utterances, prayers and ritual actions for the ‘general rituals’ are based upon authentic (i.e. Egyptian) texts[16] and, serve as a means to worship deities who weren’t the focus of prior daily rituals – in some cases this acts in the stead of forms of personal piety as found in the Senut ritual of KO. The general rituals also follow a ‘standard format’ (ibid.: 207) which includes:

- utterance (recitation) outside the Temple Chamber;
- recitations for opening the doors of the Temple Chamber and the Kar-Shrine;
- presentation of water and natron;
- purification of the Temple Chamber;
- lighting the candle or oil lamp;
- offering incense;
- address to the Netjer or Netjeret;
- offering incense;
- the Henu Rite – Embracing the Earth, the Fourfold Salute;
- offering Ma’at;
- a water libation;
- the Sand Rite;
- offering wine;
- offering food;
- the ‘Peret er kheru’ recitation;
- presentation of the Ankh (life);
- presentation of the Ib (heart);
- meditation and/or magical action;
- ‘Removing of the foot’ ceremony;
- reversion of offerings.[17]

The above illustrates the formal and tradition-oriented nature of these rites and bestows an understanding of the types of ritual being performed outside the daily state-inspired practices. However, rather than extensively list the ritual details from Reidy’s (2010) work, it is enough to understand the approach and sources involved in this movement’s reconstruction.

There was a notable sentiment against ‘theatre’ and ‘pomp’ from both the leader of KO, and the founder/moderator of the Temple of Ra: ‘We are not… simply playing religious theatre or dress-up with ancient rites’ (Siuda 2016,

personal communication, 2 February).

Reidy emphasises that, for the members of the Temple of Ra and the KTSJ, reconstruction is not strictly a practice of re-enactment:

> I hope that Kemetics do not get caught up with costume or ritual paraphernalia other than the bare essentials absolutely necessary for any particular ritual. I have actively discouraged any focus on pomp or superfluous 'props.' We are not doing theatre. The lists of items given throughout Eternal Egypt are meant as aids to the ritualist. I do regret that I did not stress the importance of not getting sidetracked with having precisely the correct ritual objects, or the mistaken belief that the ritualist must always perform the rituals exactly as I have given them in all their details. A Kemetic must begin somewhere. It might be with only small steps, with only selected portions of a ritual. This is not a bad thing.
>
> R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

Additionally, it was noted that too much emphasis on objects might be prohibitive to some participants, 'All religions present the temptation to mistake externals for the inner spirit' (ibid.).

Language and gesture

A compromise that is commonly made for the modern palette is one of linguistics. While Siuda (2005a) includes a scattering of Egyptian language phrases throughout the *Prayerbook*, the overwhelming majority of prayers are spoken in English, in Siuda's own translations (2005a: Chapter 1):

> Every time a culture's language is translated into something else, something will be lost. We maintain most of our ritual in the mother tongue of the practitioner, however, to assure that the basics are understood. (Senut is translated into more than a dozen languages and we encourage people to do it in their own language, for example). However, some state ritual is conducted with portions in ancient Egyptian, and some of our songs are in ancient Egyptian.

Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Perhaps more surprisingly, the reconstructionists enact all of their rituals in English, or their native tongues. The potency imbued on the Egyptian spoken word is a virtue of the divine origin of the ancient Egyptian language, itself. The ontological explanation for the efficacy of magic resides 'in the word itself', based on the theological exposition of magic from the Coffin Text Spell 261, 'To Become the God Heka' (Ritner 1997: 17). As such, it seemed surprising that reconstructionists would eschew this seemingly fundamental aspect of Egyptian culture for the sake of recitation. I asked Richard Reidy if the spoken component of ritual suffered from translation to English. Could ritual retain its potency in translation? His answers not only focused on the justification of this choice, but also the antagonism of our own understanding of Egyptian linguistics:

> I do not believe the ritual suffers significantly from translation into a modern language such as English.… the modern world unconsciously subscribes to a Nominalist understanding of language where words are sounds without any intrinsic reference to the things named. The ancient Egyptians, on the other hand, were, with Plato, Realists who recognized that there is a deep metaphysical link between words, what they signify, and how they relate to similar sounding words. This, of course, has been lost in modern society. Egyptology's Nominalist bias is evidenced by its almost universal adoption of the term 'pun' to describe the ancient practice.

R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

Reidy utilises the example of the Eastern Orthodox Church to demonstrate how a liturgy can be an adequate vehicle of expression for its clergy and people, no matter what language it is translated to or presented in. There were also pragmatic considerations:

> Since today we have an incomplete understanding of how ancient Egyptian actually sounded, it seems to me to be premature and unnecessary to introduce any concocted version of the spoken language into ritual. Even if

> the day should arrive when we had a much better grasp of vowel placement, it serves no purpose to retain the ancient tongue, except perhaps with a relatively small group of initiates who are fluent in the ancient language of the rituals. Contemporary languages are, I think, the best vehicle for our times, and for the growth of the Kemetic movement.
>
> Ibid.

Subsequently, the practical constraints regarding language overwhelm ideas of ritual accuracy in this case, and problematise ideas of authenticity. The Egyptian priest enacting ritual in his native tongue is arguably far more aware of the subtle nuanced intricacies of the text than the non-native speaker and, in this, Reidy has a strong point. To recreate rituals 'verbatim' perhaps disconnects the contemporary practitioner from the ritual in a manner that is no longer 'authentic'.

Gesture, however, appears to lend more directly to reconstruction. There seems to be a precedent for adopting those gestures presented in Egyptian art and vignettes across the Kemetic continuum; LaBorde, Reidy, Siuda and Wisner all espouse a ritual gesture based upon the observation of primary sources, described as Henu: 'Henu gestures are the ritual body postures used in both ancient and Kemetic Orthodox ritual' (Siuda 2005a: Chapter 2, n. 5).

The Henu is further categorised by KO as dua, a gesture of praise and greeting, with the arms raised and palms facing forward, and sahu, which is made by striking the chest with a fist while raising the other hand in a dua posture. These gestures may be practised standing or, as is advised, on one knee, though allowance is made for physical ability (ibid.).

LaBorde attests to using a gesture she learned in Buddhism, the gassho, palms together and head slightly bowed, and she acknowledges that this is not in keeping with Kemetic practices (LaBorde, Wave Three). Other gestures, and their origins, tapped into both museological themes and the contestation of terminology noted above,

> While in the Hatshepsut exhibit I remember learning another gesture, which is to place the hands palms-down in front of the thighs. One of the statues of Hatshepsut herself was in that pose. The third is what I consider a more sane version of the gesture some Kemetics call henu… It looks

> quite similar to the hundreds of ancient depictions of citizens adoring their gods.
>
> Ibid.

Reidy offered a take on the use of the *representation of praise* as a basis for ritual gesture which corresponded to those above:

> Many temple reliefs depict the pharaoh engaging in a variety of ritual acts. The fact that the same scenario reappears in other temples, accompanied with similar recitational texts for specific cultic acts, points in the direction of there having existed a set of canonical body postures to accompany specific recitations. On those copies of the Book of Going Forth by Day that contain illustrations accompanying the text we also encounter series of standard postures for the people depicted as they interact with gods, offer praise, present offerings, etc. I think it is fair to conclude the illustrated actions and postures reflect those of their era and culture.
>
> R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

Notes

1 At sunrise, noon and sunset, including midnight during the festival year. These times will obviously vary with time zone, however.
2 Demai, Elin, Luwana, maainakhtsen, Niankhsekhmet, Phoenix_Falls, Rana, Raem, TahaiBast, The Torch, Zebi, Quentin, Tuwer (Waves One and Two).
3 Theoretically, natron may be sourced from any saline lake bed in an arid environment, http://webmineral.com/data/Natron.shtml
4 Galabayas are available on http://www.tearsofisis.com/honfunds.htm, for example.
5 See, for instance, the Morning Rite for Bathing in Reidy (2010: 199–201).
6 See ‘The Offering Ritual’, Allen and Manuelian (2005: 19–20, ¶ 23–4), for example.
7 Also attested by maainakhtsen (Wave One) and Tuwer (Wave Three).
8 Echoed by Demai, Luwana, Makoto, Niankhsekhmet, Penwich, Phoenix_Falls, Raem, Rana, Siwy, TahaiBast, Tahotepirty, Temwa (Waves One, Two and Three).
9 Such as in the Report of Wenamun, or the Battle of Khadesh (Lichtheim 1976).
10 Sections specifically for women are attested from the later *Demotic Dream Book* (Szpakowska 2003: 68).
11 One cannot easily deduce whether these categories were self-determined, though the descriptive element noting the characteristics of the ‘Sethian’ male do point to identification on the part of the reader (Szpakowska 2003: 73–4). However, since such characteristics were far from the

understood ‘ideal’, it seems unlikely that many would readily identify themselves as ‘Sethian’ males.

12 And see ‘Lesson Four: Trance in Ancient Egyptian Ritual’ by Kerry Wisner on http://www.hwt-hrw.com/page3.php

13 Moret (1902), which he advances as more reliable than Budge (1909) (Reidy 2010: 18).

14 Reidy (2010: 56) references Piankoff’s *The Litany of Re* (1964) for a complete English translation, and Quirke (2001) as a qualification of the Litany’s significance.

15 Wisner, K. *Eye of the Sun* (2000: 17ff). This also points to Reidy’s time studying with Wisner (Reidy 2010: 189).

16 Primary sources from Karnak, Abydos or Theban liturgies, and the Berlin Papyrus (No. 3055) (Reidy 2010: 203).

17 Used with permission from Reidy (2010: 207).

11 Objects

For both the Egyptologist and the Kemetic, objects have become part of the ‘language’ of ancient Egypt. For the archaeologist, the object serves as an expository tool, an artefact to be collected, interpreted and, often, displayed as part of a museum’s collection of ‘art’. Analysis involves both a hermeneutical exercise and a semiotic one. Hermeneutics is understood as the art, skill, theory and philosophy of understanding and interpretation, with particular reference to texts (Darvill 2002: 176). This process is of assistance when interpreting and identifying the category to which an item belongs and its likely use. It is often employed alongside scientific methodology to explore technical details, such as age and composition. However, as noted, the material record, in many instances, may be treated as a *text*, which subsequently opens up the possibility for the application of semiotics. This involves the study of ‘the life of signs within society’ (Saussure 1974: 16), and is often undertaken to understand meaning which is intrinsic, occluded and obscured by culture (Barthes 1967). The first level, primary signification (signifier – signified), involves understanding that which is *denoted* by the symbols employed – that is, the signifier ‘cat’ produces the signified, a feline mammal (Storey 2012: 120). In certain circumstances, this process additionally allows a glimpse at what is *connoted*, the second level of signification. This is a much more complex process, and is most often the level with which archaeologists struggle. It involves analysis of *meanings*, and the ideologies behind a sign, where myth is produced for consumption (Barthes 1967). These concepts allow one to unpack what is, on the surface, a reasonably ‘simple’ set of contemporary activities, to understand the deeply complex processes which the use of ‘Egyptian’ material inherently involves, including antagonism of categories such as ‘art’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘purpose’.

Objects used within the Kemetic continuum appear to be of a pragmatic nature, being primarily those items required to perform a ritual, place objects

in a shrine and give praise to a deity. Sharon LaBorde (2010: 167) notes that an altar is not simply an accumulation of objects and deities, set up to perform spells: ‘An altar is an installation wherein worship takes place’, whether that worship be prayer, meditation, or other. It is ‘a spiritual place, not a mere magical tool’.

Tamara Siuda (2005: Chapter 2) describes the shrine as a *seat of divinity* and recommends areas for placement, avoiding open areas and those of high traffic. According to KO belief, a shrine should be enclosed (have doors or a lid), does not require images of gods and requires items for ritual (offering bowls and light source), which once given to the shrine are no longer available ‘for any other purpose’ (ibid.). Examples of KO shrines are available on their website (Kemet 2015).[1]

LaBorde (2010) juxtaposes Kemetic worship with that of Eastern Buddhism and Hinduism, asserting that those in the West have ‘forgotten’ how to use the forms of religion still extant in these practices. This approach both reflects and challenges Meskell’s (2004: 106) assertion that, ‘Since Pharaonic religious practice is no longer a living tradition we lack a comparative ethnographic, or even ethnohistoric, counterpart with which to reflexively dialogue.’

Meskell’s study of embodied Egyptian objects seeks to understand materiality and the creation of sacred forms, which ultimately transcend subject/object categories. For contemporary examples, Meskell looks to Hindu practices involving sacred statuary, or *murthi.* Echoing this, LaBorde (2010: 169–70) suggests three parallel elements between Hindu and Buddhist practices, and those of ancient Egypt; icons (images and statuary), personal shrines (spiritual installations) and personal rituals (which make use of these shrines). Through this she notes parallels in consecration rites for statuary and the maintenance of a sacred space in the home – with particular reference to the Buddhist ‘butsudan’ and the ancient shrines found in the homes of the village of Deir el-Medina and, finally, the practice of providing offerings of food to the ka, or spirit, of the gods (as in Hinduism), where the food is then consumed after the ritual is completed, and the deity is finished with it.

As in Egypt, the sacred Hindu statue is created through fabrication of an object, but the infusion of the presence of a deity brings the image alive ‘through a complex ritual establishment that invokes the deity into its

material support' (Meskell 2004: 107). In both Buddhist and Hindu practice, the creation of the sacred image is steeped in ritual; recitations and prayers are spoken over the raw materials which make up the final figure. While understanding of the creation of Egyptian statuary is far more fragmentary, 11th Dynasty and Ramesside period stelae indicate not only the importance of secret knowledge, but also that sculptors may have gained access to the inner sanctum of the gods (ibid.: 104–5). Sculptors in ancient Egypt appear to occupy indeterminate roles as half technician, half priests, and evidence suggests that they were, in some form, initiates into sacred knowledge (Gell 1992, in Meskell 2004). Even the term for sculptor, *s-ankh*, means 'to keep alive' or 'he who keeps alive', highlighting the *living materiality* of the sculpture (Meskell 2004: 89; Riggs 2014a: 44).

In light of this, how do modern Kemetics, who source predominently mass-produced artefacts through third parties (with exceptions noted below), justify imbuing items (created within mundane contexts) with sacred status? How are these considered a fitting home for their deities?

Echoing Meskell and the liminal nature of the object, Siuda, KO's Nisut, states that,

> There are rites to divinize statuary for the purpose of state religion. These rites are preserved from antiquity and can still be used to create the icons for state shrines. However, the icons themselves are never gods and we do not worship idols. The icons become places where the deity can be approached, where you can see it and it can see you, in the same manner as the darshan and murties of Hinduism. In personal practice, icons aren't even required for a shrine.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

The Temple of Ra's Richard Reidy offered the following:

> What defines the sacred and the profane? Ritual? Activation? Intent? Everything is sacred. That which we regard as profane is the result of an individual's blindness to see divinity around him. That blindness comes from our secular mindset and the surrounding material culture.

R. Reidy 2014, personal communication, 18 December

There are hints at the liminal nature of these divine statues even in pharaonic times. At once divine, or potentially the vessel of divinity, the statue was still subject to the rigours of haggling and negotiation. Commissions for the statues are preserved on ostraca from Deir el-Medina. One record relates a dispute over the monetary value being taken to an oracle, who sides with the plaintiff and presumably ensures a lower selling price. Other records hint at statues being ultimately passed on without payment (Meskell 2004: 103–4). In light of this, Meskell notes, 'it is not uncommon to query the level of divinity or authenticity of a so-called divine embodiment' (ibid.). While these records only hint at what may have been a highly complex set of practices and decorum now lost to us, it appears that the practices of the ancients are not only far less utopian and deterministic than might be assumed, but additionally more likely to find parallels in modern practices than previously imagined.

There exists a precedent in Kemeticism for the consecration of Egyptian statuary, and equipment, in the form of an 'opening the mouth' ceremony. LaBorde's (2010) ceremony, aimed at independent groups and the solo practitioner, utilises a number of ritual objects, including natron, incense, candles, libation bowls, two cups (one black, one white) to represent the eyes of Horus, essential oil and, significantly, an adze (which can be substituted with a ceremonial knife, or *athame*) (ibid.: 195–6). This ritual is adapted from Allen's (2004) translation of the Pyramid Texts, and performed in English. It finds parallels in the practices of both KO and the Temple of Ra. It is of interest that this is a negotiable aspect of practice, even at the more 'conservative' end of the Kemetic continuum, as noted by Reidy:

> Before the image is ritually opened, in my view, in its existence as a statue qua statue, it is an artifact produced by human hands or by some mass-produced method. But lots of Kemetics do not 'open' their statues. However, they do pray to the deity depicted. They present offerings before the image. They give it a place of honor on their altars. Certainly the gods recognize the devotion of their devotees. This devotion, I think, draws the god to the image – to 'visit' the worshiper; perhaps to become incarnate in the image.

R. Reidy 2014, personal communication, 18 December

Sacralisation, therefore, takes a back seat to intent, faith and the agency of both the deity and the supplicant: ‘There are many things which are unattainable for rituals but it is the meaning/effort/symbolism of the offering that truly matters’ (Hem Ka Jason, Wave Three). Further:

> Are secular images of the divine purely ornaments until activated? I think that activation does not occur solely [through] the Opening of the Mouth. The gods can inhabit objects as they see fit. This is not to say that such inhabiting is merely up to some sort of divine whim. For me it is part of a divine urge to divinize man, nature, the cosmos.

R. Reidy 2014, personal communication, 18 December

The nature of the will of the gods becomes an implicit aspect of these modes of worship. These statements, from the Temple of Ma’at and the Temple of Ra, respectively, proffer some form of ‘immutable essence’ attached to the representation, the symbology overriding the origin of the object. Questions arise regarding the nature of the symbol – whether it is immutable, constant or requires activation. In such a set of processes, where does agency lie?

> The Romantic poets sensed this presence in nature. In the ancient rituals the priest addresses the water, the incense cup, the incense itself. This originally struck me as unusual. Then I began to realize that all things can serve as vessels for a conscious presence. Are we the necessary ingredient, or do they maintain that essence in our absence?

Ibid.

Symbolism and agency are explored in more detail below, but, for now, it seems salient to keep these points in mind as we explore specific examples, volunteered by participants in the Kemetic community. The presentation of the following objects is by no means an exhaustive list, but, having been weighed against a large body of examples available online and described in forums and Kemetic literature, I believe it representative. The addition of art inspired by piety is another category of interest and, perhaps, alludes to an

undeveloped aspect of investigations into the practices of piety in ancient Egypt. The pictures herein were volunteered by participants, and represent those objects purchased, crafted and in use. Please note that while I did not reproduce examples from KO, examples of certain objects and shrines are available on their website (Kemet 2015).[2]

Objects: Temple of Ra and the Kemetic Temple of San José

Allan Phillips, a member of the Temple of Ra, San Francisco, kindly took photos of ritual equipment, with minor modifications (such as the removal of photos of the deceased from Akhu shrines) (R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 10 March). Commentary is taken from accompanying emails from the 9–14 March 2011 and 18 December–3 March 2015.



Figure 11.1 Djehuty shrine © Allan Phillips 2011.

‘The Djehuty shrine is at the entrance to the temple proper. Before starting ritual we always invoke the Lord of Sacred Words’ (R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 9 March). Djehuty is perhaps more commonly known by the

Greek form, Thoth, and is the Netjer of writing, magic and wisdom. This use attests to conformity to ancient accounts of his status and associations.



Figure 11.2 Akhu shrine with offerings. ‘The composite image of Heru, Ausir and Aset’ © Allan Phillips 2011.

The stele shown in Figure 11.2 is a replica of the Stele of Dedia, Master Draftsman for Amun. This New Kingdom stele, currently housed in the Louvre, Paris, is dedicated to the family of Osiris, here termed ‘Ausir’, framed by Horus (Heru), the son, and Isis (Aset), the mother. Again, the Kemetic use of ancient Egyptian terminology evokes authenticity, bereft of the cultural interjection of the Greeks. The original stele is noted for the complex use of symmetry and harmonious composition in the dedication to Ausir and the names of Dedia’s ancestors adorning the rear. It is an excellent example of image interwoven with text. Thus, it is of particular interest in this case that the front side exactly replicates the original in hieroglyphic composition (Ziegler *et al.* 1997: 141). However, Reidy notes that the rear hieroglyphs have not been included as the item is intended for ‘decoration’. ‘As a consequence today we must write out appropriate spells and affix them to the back of such stele’ (R. Reidy 2015, personal communication, 3 March). Also, note the additive-free bread.[3]



Figure 11.3 Amun-Ra shrine with offerings © Allan Phillips 2011.

Figure 11.3 shows a modern painting with associated symbolism and colour use. Note replica *sistrum* rattle, used in ancient Egyptian ritual to ward off evil and in the praise of Hathor and Bast, in particular. Art and ritual

embodiment also intersect in the work of *Ptahmassu*, who creates iconography of Egyptian deities incorporating precious materials into the works, in the fashion of ancient artisans and sculptors.[4]



Figure 11.4 Naos for Hwt-Hrw © Allan Phillips 2011.

The doors shown in Figure 11.4 conceal the cult image, to protect it from profane activity. These would be opened only for praise and ritual, when the petitioner is ritually cleansed and appropriately garbed, highlighting a division of sacred and profane activity and space.



Figure 11.5 Adze, libation bowl, oil pot (Egyptian artefact), sistra © Allan Phillips 2011.

> The libation bowl comes from a now defunct Artisans Guild International here in California. It had a quality line of reproductions of ancient Egyptian artifacts but went out of business once the import trade from China came on the scene about 8 years ago… The libation bowl, as I'm sure you'll recognize, is a copy of one from Tut's tomb. Since it is made of resin we don't hesitate to pour water into it. On the other hand the small ointment container is real 18th Dynasty alabaster – a gift to me from a

> wealthy friend. We use it to store a small glass vial of anointing oil. The oil never comes in direct contact with the alabaster.
>
> R Reidy 2011, personal communication, 9 March

The adze, a ceremonial ‘knife’ of a sort, based on the ancient tool, is commonly employed in Kemetic workings, for opening the mouth ceremonies, among other uses, based upon interpretations of ancient rituals. As noted by LaBorde (2010), the adze is sometimes substituted with an athame, a ritually consecrated knife traditionally used in Wiccan practices – an allusion to the influence of other traditions in the absence of access to Egyptian material. Other improvisations may also be made, as attested by Quentin:

> I use mostly modern implements… a modern type of oil lamp, modern decorations on my shrine, etc. When I was more of a solo practitioner I would use modern versions of ancient tools… for example, the adze is important in ancient Egyptian ritual practice, but the new adzes around here are different. They work, though.
>
> Quentin, Wave Three



Figure 11.6 Was sceptre head © Bridget 2015.

The sceptre shown in Figure 11.6 (fabricated and photographed by Bridget from the Kemetic Temple of Colorado) appears to be inspired by the 'Set-animal' head used to identify that deity. Set is often maligned in pop-culture references as a deity of evil and chaos, stemming from Graeco-Roman accounts originating from the Temple of Edfu, and other post-New Kingdom and Late Period sources. Kemetics often eschew this one-sided view in favour of one that acknowledges Set's importance throughout Egyptian dynastic history and his role in defending Ra's boat against the forces of chaos.[5] As such, Set enjoys acceptance not as a deity of evil, but as a 'necessary force in the universe' (Kemet 2015).

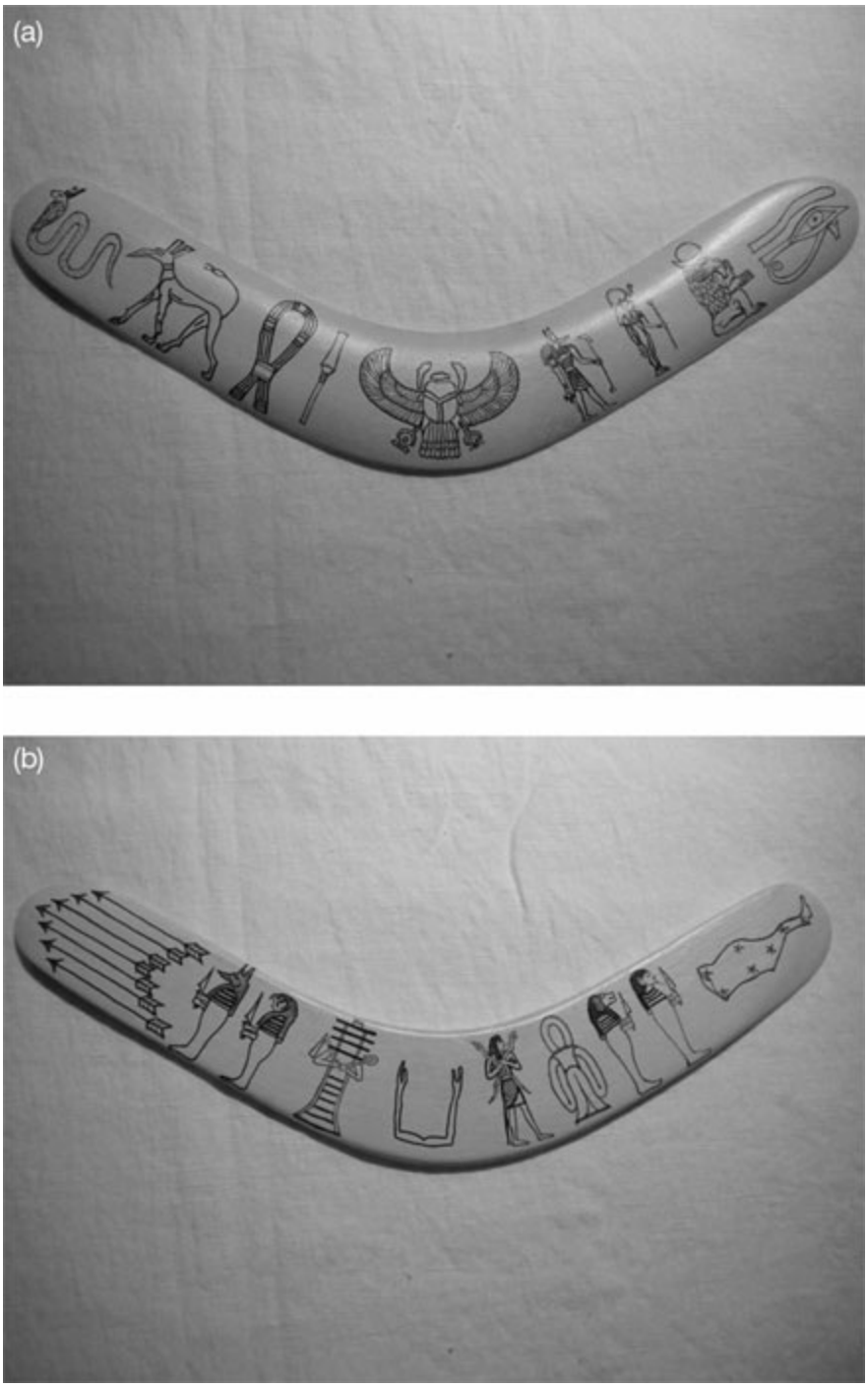


Figure 11.7 *(a) and (b)* Heka wand (front and reverse) created by Richard Reidy © Allan Phillips 2011.

‘The heka wand is used for defensive as well as offensive magic as you can see from the images on the wand’s two sides’ (R. Reidy 2011, personal

communication, 9 March).[6] Apotropaic wands such as that shown in Figure 11.7 were likely employed to ward off evil. They have been attributed to the sphere of childbirth, though their discovery in tombs (albeit, broken) attests to other possible uses. Some examples with one particularly worn end are thought to have been used to draw a magic circle.[7] As this is a bespoke design, interesting questions regarding the 'chemistry' invoked by the placement and arrangement of these deities are raised, including how they are intended to work together. While there is scholarship on such wands in the record, there are no *ancient* written sources or clear functional contexts describing their design, including both physical depiction and arrangement of figures, or intent. As such, the contemporary creation of such items could prompt interesting phenomenological enquiry.



Figure 11.8 Reconciliation kar, 'Ma'at, ankh, ib' © Allan Phillips 2011.

Ma'at, the Netjer of harmony, balance and justice, is often depicted with the feather headdress (see Figure 11.8), accompanied by symbols for life (Ankh) and a heart (Ib), which would be weighed against a feather in the underworld.



Figure 11.9 Eye of Heru with ‘segments for “Filling the Eye” with sand’ (R. Reidy 2014, personal communication, 18 December) © Allan Phillips 2011.

Solo practitioners

Devo

The following figures show shrines and statuary as might be encountered in Kemetic practices, kindly provided by Devo. A tendency towards improvisation might be noted among those who practice individually, though this in no way undermines the intent and legitimacy of these practices. Devo revealed the following:

> Most of my statuary is purchased at a local store. The markings on the statues are all the same, though. Some company that I assume is in China, yet doesn’t seem to have a website. You can find almost any of my statues

anywhere online. However, I like to be able to see my statue, and feel it before I purchase it. Something about being able to handle it first is important for me.

Devo 2011, personal communication, 26 May[8]



Figure 11.10 ‘View of the candles lit in Setekh’s shrine area’ (Devo 2011, personal communication, 26 May). Setekh’s altar © Devo 2011.

Figure 11.10 shows Set, removed once more from the narrative of ‘Egyptian Satan’ and reincorporated into earlier dynastic use as a beneficial deity.



Figure 11.11 ‘Transit’ altar © Devo 2011.

Raising interesting questions regarding the shrine installation described above, is the practice of taking the shrine on your travels (see Figure 11.11). Devo describes the ‘Current altar that I’m working with while in transit. Aset

is sitting on top of an amp, and everyone else is on a box of Christmas ornaments. Used a shirt to cover it, and voila!'(ibid.).



Figure 11.12 Aset 'travel shrine' © Devo 2011.

Figure 11.12 shows 'A project I took on recently – creating a travel shrine to Aset. This is attached to my purse – so that it can go with me anywhere' (ibid.).



Figure 11.13 Hatmehit's shrine © Devo 2011.

Figure 11.13 shows an interesting example of an arguably 'lesser-known' deity, 'Current setup for Hatmehit's shrine. Lots of jewel tones and color for her' (ibid.).

Devotional objects as art and piety

In addition to those items utilised in ritual, there are instances where acts of piety result in items one might consider art or jewellery. The example shown in Figure 11.14 was volunteered by a member of The Cauldron, and may represent a practice common among Kemetics skilled in arts and crafts.



Figure 11.14 Wepwawet statuary © Jennifer Wheatley.

> [The statues are] based on the ‘type’ where he is shown on his standard. Several examples exist at the Petrie Museum and I myself own an ancient example as well as part of my small jackal-deity focused antiquities collection. I had my clay sculpture cast into bronze to also be in keeping with the ancient examples.
>
> Wheatley 2011, personal communication, 25 May

The crafting of items, outside of ritual purpose, highlights an oft neglected aspect of archaeological interpretation. Objects such as the female figurines or ‘dolls’ examined in Chapters 3 and 4, for instance, are invariably inferred to carry a purpose, be it ritual, fertility, toy or ‘afterlife concubine’. The spontaneous creation of religious iconography as decorative *art*, such as Jennifer Wheatley’s Wepwawet statuary, implies a form of piety not frequently allowed for in the record. Such items, bereft of ritual purpose, carry a personal *meaning* for the creator, which the creator attaches to their own acts. Of course, to allow for this in the ancient record one would have to allow for the vastly different social and economic contexts involved, access to materials and potential differences between cognitive schemata. Subsequently, while the presence of this form of activity in the record cannot be *assumed*, provision for it could be made.

Egyptian statuary: art or fetish?

The objects employed by Kemetics ranged from items formed in pharaonic Egypt itself, to pieces specifically crafted as a form of piety, to those replicas and fabrications so often interpreted as ‘art’. To deal with these in turn, original items such as Reidy’s alabaster ointment container have been reconceptualised by collectors of ‘curiousities’ to be items of aesthetic display rather than *use*. While Reidy’s employment of the container (even with care) may open up criticism from the archaeological community on the responsibility of preservation, it is interesting to note that the prevailing approach to Egyptian objects tends to be one of ‘museum strategy’, with educational tasks of items, in major museums, often taking a back seat to display and preservation.[9] Subsequently, one might perceive a museum’s use

of ancient objects as an excorporation or rather an aberrant use against that which was originally intended. Following this model, Reidy's use and employment of the vase in ritual context (serving the deities of Egypt), might be akin to a reincorporation. Sadly, however, the provenance of the item is unknown: one cannot know if its use was domestic or otherwise and if it actually possessed any ritual connotations. However, Reidy couldn't help but wonder, 'what the ancient owner would think about his/her alabaster vase being used in America by people who worship the same deities as she/he did' (R Reidy 2011, personal communication, 10 March). His musing opens a very salient line of enquiry about the cognitive schemata at play and hermeneutic considerations which require extensive unpacking. Ritual and object cut to the heart of this discussion and force one to ask if there are enough common signifiers for modern Kemetics to enter the mindset of the Egyptian, in the same manner that the archaeologist faces obstacles when attempting to understand the subjectivity of people from other cultural contexts. For Schutz ([1932] 1972: 105) we attempt to understand these 'intersubjectivites' by projection of our own experience of an imagined similar 'project'. However, the sometimes-vast differences between context and experience can be obstacles to an intersubjective understanding.

Regarding these objects, and through them, texts (as in this context, these are inherently bound), how does 'art' and representation compare in these vastly divergent contexts? 'Art' is not a term readily applied to material from Egypt, as perceptions of the artistic paradigm have been subject to considerable change over time. Meskell (2004: 89) proposes that, in order to understand Egyptian material, 'we have to divorce ourselves from Western notions of art as a discursive category… Egyptian representations were not solely "to be looked at"'. Arguably, the earliest examples of art find their origin in magical and religious contexts (Benjamin 2000: 326). Benjamin attributes items with a unique and 'sensitive nucleus' which he terms an *aura*. The aura is significant to this issue because it speaks of the authenticity of a work of art, 'the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced' (ibid.: 324). This, he asserts, is the essence of what is lost in the age of mechanical reproduction. However, Benjamin additionally asserts that it is significant that 'the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its *ritual function*' (ibid., emphasis

added). Following this, my participants' use of reproductions in ritual is not necessarily undermined, as their aura or, perhaps more appropriately, meaning, might be established with usage. Heidegger (2000: 81) explores the origin of the work of art, suggesting that it is not the corporeal 'thing' or, indeed, physical properties which identify it. Rather, the art work is something 'over and above the thingly element'. He takes this further, noting that in a work of art, 'something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring together is, in Greek, *sumballein*. The work is a symbol.' But symbols arguably have subjective meanings, dependent on their contexts, histories and the subjectivities of their interpreters. How might one be certain to approach these symbols in a 'correct' or 'authentic' manner when reconstructing rituals?

The symbolist Schwaller de Lubicz (1978: 45–6) marks a distinction between 'objectifiable' exoteric symbols and esoteric symbols. An objectifiable symbol, such as use of a trademark to evoke the groups it represents, 'means nothing symbolically without a previous explanation'. This kind of symbol stands firmly within the contours of deconstruction narratives, where an interpretive community determines meaning. For Fish (1980) (and before him, Derrida 1976: 50–60) external reference to contemporary meaning is futile, for in a plurality of interpretation, objects and texts carry no *intrinsic* meaning. Fish (1980: 136) seeks to preserve 'the distinction between the fictional and the true by understanding it as a conventional or community-specific distinction rather than as one rooted in nature and eternity'.[10] This model causes distinct problems for the archaeologist and, in turn, the Kemetic. As Layton (2000: 49), commenting on prehistoric rock art problematises:

> If current meanings are established by usage, in juxtaposition to the meanings which preceded them, there is no system that outlives and generates usage, no collective consciousness, in which to anchor transient practices. Speech is real, language is not.

Exploring this conundrum, Layton (ibid.: 50–1) builds on the criticisms of Eco (1990: 45), for whom even an open-ended text might direct the reader 'toward particular readings' due to its location in the context of discourse.[11] Following this, Layton (2000: 50) employs the idea of reference points and

distinguishes between ‘hard (Derrida inspired) postmodernism and the softer postmodernists of Foucault and Eco’, asserting that the crucial difference is ‘whether the author accepts the possibility of reference’. This reference, he posits, is ‘the way in which we use language to draw attention to what we are talking about’, and is essential to his model of intersubjective understanding.[12] Layton states thus,

> Referential meaning is that meaning, from out of the range of possible meanings that a word or phrase might have, which is determined by: either elements of meaning which point away from the act of communication to objects in a world experienced by both speaker and listener (denotation), or the more general cultural tradition (discourse) in which the word or phrase is produced.
>
> Ibid.: 50

While Layton’s exercise argues strongly for an empowerment of the archaeologist’s ability to ‘read’ rock art (ibid.: 49–52), it ultimately fails to overcome the hermeneutical chasm it establishes: ‘I accept, nonetheless, that correlations between style and context can do no more than allow us to reconstruct empty semiotic systems. Signification is only accessible through interaction with members of the cultural tradition’ (ibid.: 49).

However, Egyptologists and Kemetics focus on practices and deities which are attested by substantial context and corresponding textual information. While this additional information is no more accessible in Derrida (1976) or Fish’s (1980) model, due to a lack of correspondence between far-removed interpretive communities, it does, in Layton’s model, provide many more *reference points* from which an interpreter may be enabled to identify choices, or see the ‘shadow of former systems of signification’ (Layton 2000: 52). However, he warns that, ‘Purely referential meaning leaves the analyst with an ‘empty’ system of signification. The desire to fill the empty signs with meaning almost invariably leads the analyst to create a *surrogate discourse*’ (ibid.). This can be witnessed in the contours of Western dialogues on Egypt, where one might note instances of the following: ‘Either (s)he attributes modern values to a prehistoric tradition (religion), inverts modern values to create a system based on magic and superstition, or imports

ethnographic meanings drawn from other cultures (shamanism or totemism)' (ibid.). Debates surrounding such practices might be witnessed throughout the history of Egyptology, highlighted in the ongoing discussions surrounding the nature and terminology of 'religion' and 'magic' (Chapters 4 and 5). Likewise, one might note Naydler's (2005) attribution of *shamanism* and *mysticism* when reinterpreting the Pyramid Texts and, significantly, the continued employment of modern reference points in Kemetic Orthodoxy's adaptation of ATRs.

Schwaller de Lubicz (1978: 46) asserts the notion that esoteric symbols are a 'natural or artificial fact which elicits an abstract vital response'. The weakness of the esoteric hypothesis is that it assumes the existence of a collective, a *noosphere* upon which symbols draw their resonance and, indeed, evokes a form of biological or psychological essentialism that the post-modern commentator seeks to avoid. There is further support for the power of objects, and therefore symbol, from Dufrenne's (2000: 148) assertion that the aesthetic object represents its *own world*, not one made with external reference. It does not attempt to represent the real, but represents a world which 'cannot be reduced to the objective world'. Such a self-contained world is then embellished with our imaginings, which allows for the variation between uses of the same objects. Although divested of the 'testimony' to their history (Benjamin 2000: 324), reproductions carry the same forms and inherent symbolism of the original, even reinforcing the status of the original in contemporary cultural contexts (MacDonald, K.C. 2003: 95). Subsequently, their function as aesthetic and ritual items need not be mutually exclusive.

Therefore, where Derrida (1976), Fish (1980) and even Layton's (2000) model require a symbol to function by external reference points, points which cannot be inferred between vastly divergent contexts, in the models of Heidegger (2000), Dufrenne (2000) and Schwaller de Lubicz (1978), and implicitly bound within Kemeticism, there is a potency to the idea of the image, object and, perhaps, even gesture (as imitated from original artistic depiction), as a gateway to a previously disembodied past. This, I would posit, marks the significance of objects to such movements, as they employ the power of the symbol, esoteric or aesthetic, to act *as a bridge to conceptualised pasts*.

Emancipation

Due to changes in society, politics and industrialisation, art was ‘emancipated’ from ‘its parasitical dependence on ritual’ (Benjamin 2000: 326). However, my participants are reappropriating *reproductions* of ancient (often) ‘ritual’ objects, intended as modern ‘art’ objects, and reincorporating them back into their perceived original purpose or meaning. This practice reverses the process of the liberation of pure art and relocates objects within the ritual technologies ‘of the self’ (Krogh and Pillifant 2004: ¶ 21). It is at the stage where one might impose meanings upon the past and create a ‘surrogate discourse’ where Layton (2000: 52) asserts ‘writing once more becomes oppressive and we should stop’ – however, both Kemeticism *and* Egyptology frequently go beyond this boundary. What these arguments highlight is yet another shared difficulty faced by Egyptology and Kemeticism: that of the hermeneutical dilemma, for when viewing the past, ‘the universality of the hermeneutical perspective is all encompassing’ (Gadamer 2000: 186). However, while the post-modern critiques above might problematise the use of objects and rituals, one might sidestep this by looking to their aesthetic qualities and engaging a reversal of the ‘active’ process from the observer to the work itself. Reimbuing the object, text and ritual with intrinsic value through a process of aesthetic theorising is no less problematic than divesting them of all meaning through philosophical deconstruction, but does fit the premise of this study, where location is structured, if not ‘fixed’ (i.e. defined), within a hierarchy. Although meaning remains contested and is always in process (but never arrived at), the interpreters themselves exist within a contemporary cultural context, not a vacuum, and cannot be depoliticised.

However, this approach sits in contrast with Reidy’s own testimony, which highlights a more complex set of interactions between deity and practitioner which do not rely upon any form of ‘innate’ symbolism. The agency and will of the gods, as well as the intent and faith of the practitioner are paramount in modern Kemetic practices. LaBorde (2010: 176–7) warns that some modern statuary are modern ‘flights of fancy’, and notes that a printed image of the god will suffice in absence of a statue, with the added advantage that one might employ an authentic Egyptian image of the deity. Is this image not also a reproduction? With new technologies of laser scanning and 3D printing,

one might argue that replicas, particularly museum replicas, are more accurate than ever… where does the original object begin and where does it end? With the aura conceived by Benjamin, which requires the testimony of history? Does ritual reimbue an item with an aura? Will authentic ritual confer that authenticity? Even a replica carries over 'forms of signification' by virtue of its relationship to the original:

> Material objects, made by human hands, thus transcend their makers, albeit through human intentionality and artifice. It is not simply the power of the invisible hand to decide fate, since the tacit materiality of the object has a force in itself. Thus it is not a tabula rasa onto which signification is assigned by humans: we too are inherently molded and shaped by the matter that surrounds us.
>
> Meskell 2004: 100

Revisiting the Eastern comparison once again, note that momentary embodiments occur in festival rituals, where images of the god Shiva may be spontaneously formed from clay. The clay image can receive prayer and even offerings before the divine presence is given leave and the clay is taken to revert to a simple lump of clay once more (ibid.: 108). The change of status thus removes concerns of reverent treatment and the item may be discarded. Such a phenomenon is strong testament to the role of agency and intent.

There is no straightforward approach or solution to the issues raised by object use. But these are academic interests and, seemingly, of less concern to the practitioner, who requires only a focus for the true purpose of ritual – the expression of faith and communication with their deities; such practices are not restricted by archaeologically preconceived notions of 'authenticity'. In Kemeticism, as in ancient Egypt, the image becomes the god, facilitating and enhancing relationship between worshipper and deity. The object does not stand between the faithful and the deity, but opens the way:

> Twenty five years ago when I visited the British Museum and encountered those large seated statues of Sekhmet, I felt a strong presence – serious, intense, and VERY awake. In those days I had not yet explored the Kemetic path, but I was still taken back by the intensity. What was it if not

the continued presence of a great goddess? It was for me an encounter with the numinous. If you give prayer and offering to an unopened statue, does the God hear it? Yes, individual deities are aware of their worshippers. Will/can the statue open itself? In my view it is the god that opens – i.e., inhabits – the image. Many temple members express the sense that they have just encountered one or another god being worshipped in ritual. They'll remark 'Wow! That was intense!' or 'I could feel Setekh's presence. Amazing!'

R. Reidy 2014, personal communication, 18 December

Notes

1 http://www.kemet.org/community/shrines
2 Ibid.
3 'For anointing we use essential oils mixed with jojoba or almond oil base. For bread we use individual whole loaves made of natural ingredients – no chemical additives or white flour. The foods which we offer during ritual revert to us for a wonderful feast afterwards. We will need sustenance since our ritual meeting time extends from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a Sunday for the San Jose temple and from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. for the Temple of Ra. We leave a small loaf of bread and a pitcher of water before the Kar shrine whereas the other foods are removed' (R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 9 March).
4 http://www.iconsofkmt.com/ and see Meskell (2004) for this practice.
5 See http://www.kemet.org/taxonomy/term/111 for KO's version of this, which succinctly lays out the reasons for rejection of post-New Kingdom representations of Set.
6 Compare to similar wand (labelled 'curved staff') in Quirke 1992: 113, Figure 64.
7 Hayes 1953; Robins 1993; Szpakowska 2008; Quirke 1992: 113, Figure 64.
8 http://pics.livejournal.com/seshemherkekew/gallery/000087yf (Employed with permission).
9 There are exceptions, such as the Petrie Museum's teaching collection; however, even this is subject to the requirements of conservation and aesthetic presentation.
10 However, Bagwell (1983: 133) refutes Fish's claim, stating that, 'What removes the relativism and "preserves" the distinction between the fictional and the true here is, it seems to me, only another kind of relativism, that of the "conventional or community-specific."'
11 Reminiscent of Stuart Hall's reading of meaning fixed in structures of dominance ([1980] 1993).
12 After Rommetveit (1987: 86).

12 Discussion

‘Contested’ resources or continuum?

Dialogues with several authors and leaders of Kemeticism revealed a significant concentration and investment in Egyptian primary sources, notably, texts and academic treatments thereof (Reidy 2010; Siuda 2005a; Wisner 2000). Supporting the feedback from my participants, which was generally positive towards Egyptology, were the reading lists and bibliographies of the major online temples, all replete with academic references, including a number of internal consistencies.[1] The foremost of these is the presence of Hornung’s (1996) *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, which appears on almost every reading list observed of Kemetic movements, and is employed by KO to authenticate its interpretation of Egyptian religion as a monolatry. Other frequently referenced writers include Assmann (2001), Faulkner (1969, 1996, 1998), Lesko (1999), Lichtheim (1976), Pinch (1994, 2002), Roberts (1997, 2000) and Quirke (1992, 2001). Although it would be impossible to trace specific practices and beliefs to divergent readings of Egyptological works, some commonalities between the resources being employed are noted (Reidy 2010). Further, if it is recognised that there exists a shared language – that of Western Egyptological interpretation – it may open the possibility that the same *internalised set of rules* are being shared between the two fields of Egyptology and Kemeticism, with a few notable exceptions, such as the acceptance of a spiritual reality. As such, it seems fitting to explore the position of the Kemetic continuum in relation to Egyptological practices.

One manner in which the identification process employs authenticity appears to be the strategic use of terminology, as one solo practitioner asserted:

Terminology is [a] minefield in modern Egyptian religion. A lot of it

> ultimately does boil down to the friction between rival groups. All these factions use terminology aggressively against the other, as well as to reinforce their own identity and exclusivity by incorporating Egyptian terminology into their own group vocabulary, which is rather ironically 'authentic' in more ways than one.
>
> Neb 2009, personal communication, 29 April

There was noted discontinuity in the employment of terminology across the spectrum of practices, particularly 'reconstruction' and 'revival', terms which are used to embody a group's approach to Egyptian material (Chapters 7 and 8). But were these terms exclusively employed *aggressively*, or was this also a case of reinforcing *internal consistency*? The meaning placed on the terminology employed for the self could potentially be used to invoke authenticity, where the practices of the other become 'eclectic', or 'inauthentic'. As an exercise in legitimacy based in authenticity, the determination of terminology is a powerful tool. However, it is also, arguably, a necessity when involving large groups in diaspora. Terminology, and the employment of 'authentic' ancient terminology, can also be used as a means of *community-building*, with frequent use of such terms as 'Em Hotep' ('in peace') and 'Senebty' (often used as a parting phrase, 'may you be well') highlighting the sense of *shared reference points* within movements such as KO and across the Kemetic continuum (Krogh and Pillifant 2004). Some inconsistencies in the comments of KO's clergy regarding definitions of 'revival', 'authenticity' and 'paganism' may be an example of a 'lack of equivalence' (Hall [1980] 1993: 510) between the source (Siuda) and receivers, but it should also be noted that the movement leaves room for personal interpretation and agency. The extant practices of the KO religion are evidently an eclectic blend of pharaonic practices and imports, such as the *Saq* rituals and blood taboo, codified under the banner of ATR. However, in their reconstruction of the past, the Temple of Ra are *also* forced to improvise, undertaking ritual in English and maintaining the 'essence' or spirit of the practices, where exact reconstruction is impossible. Siuda also emphasises the why, the *intent* of the action over the action itself. As such, one might allow some room for improvisation at all points along the Kemetic continuum, given the vastly differing contexts of ancient Egypt and the

modern world.

The conception of divinity or divine authority is arguably emphasised by the use of deific or deitic pronouns; the employment of uppercase in 'Netjer' appears to be an extension of the trend to use proper nouns as pronouns when referring to deities (i.e. in His name, upon Her shrine). This is a system which finds parallels in biblical practices, though this particular usage may not be descended from Abrahamic tradition. It might be argued as a form of *honorific transposition* in this context, the practice of emphasising the name of a deity, as was tradition in ancient Egypt (see Allen 2004: 42). In Egyptian hieroglyphs, this was achieved by placing the name of the deity first in order of writing. In modern Western script, capitalisation is an effective means of showing such respect.

Articles of control and prohibition do lend authority to New Religious movements (Kim 2000) and interpretations of the past, framed by rules of conduct (whether established for the benefit of the few or the many), could increase the sense of legitimacy a participant assigns to a New Religious movement. The enforcement of taboo, as part of a community-building strategy (Krogh and Pillifant 2004), helps define diaspora communities against what they might perceive as a range of eclectic outsiders engaged in an unstructured plethora of appropriations of Egyptian practices and imagery. The valorising of specific ethical stances (as an extension of Ma'at), mixed with more controversial, but still acceptable social restriction (such as the blood taboo), bestow reference points of potentially authentic and specific social norms which, in turn, impart a framework within which, or against which, the participant might define themselves. Of course, this is a critical reading of stances which may have equally emerged from the practical considerations of a fledgling religion's attempts at self-definition. The existence of prohibition inherently entails an authoritarian stance, but where that authority lies is open to debate when one considers the agency and freedom of participants. Nowhere within the Kemetic continuum did this author witness signs of cultic possessiveness or punishment and, as such, authority is perhaps more *implied* than executed.

Areas of contention appear related to what authenticity *is* and (to risk oversimplification) whether this is based on religion as: ritual practice, where ritual is (broadly) an historical-based expression of devotion to deities and Ma'at ('recon'); or religion as community (with hierarchy) and personal piety

to a godhead and Ma’at (KO). As noted, these two positions represent only two points along the Kemetic continuum and do not crystallise them, but rather represent two emblematic stances. This is also not intended to undermine the genuine sense of piety attested from all points on the continuum. Rather, it is to emphasise that while Kemetic Reconstructionists seek to serve the gods and Ma’at primarily through ritual, Kemetic Orthodoxy appears to uphold Ma’at by virtue of building and serving its community, eschewing devotion to historically attested ritual in favour of a more accessible, contemporary approach to Egyptian religion. Ma’at and the Kemetic deities are central features of both approaches, however, and, subsequently, I would not position these as adversarial, so much as different colours on a spectrum. Consequently, I would place Kemetic *Orthodoxy* towards the *centre* of this Kemetic spectrum, as defined (and self-defined) against both eclectic pagan practices (including Tameran Wicca), at the one end, and more conservative historically centred reconstruction (as observed in this study and cognisant of Siuda’s use of the term), towards the other.

With regard to rituals and sources, concern with authenticity and historical accuracy is reflective of one’s place on said Kemetic continuum. Rituals express a range of practices: the ‘eclectic’ approaches of Tameran Wicca; the structured, yet contemporary daily rites and piety of KO’s Senut; *deeply personal*, yet structured Akhu veneration; and the functional, yet *deeply moving* (Reidy 2010) rituals aimed at the establishment and maintenance of Ma’at. Rituals centred on the maintenance of Ma’at are reconstructed from both primary Egyptian texts and Egyptological sources, and found in both KO *and* Reconstructionism, representing a shared focus for the Kemetic continuum.

The sheer numbers of online participants from KO’s House of Netjer increase its social power and help keep it prominent in the internet hierarchy of discussion, however, as attested by its academic treatment (Krogh and Pillifant 2004, 2004a). There are enough discussions around KO’s belief systems, both online and, as my fieldwork implies, between local social groups, to aid in the dissemination of KO’s hegemony. Given its high profile and a large and vocal membership (the majority of my early research respondents were KO members), it appears that KO and thus Siuda’s interpretations and translations of pharaonic and Egyptological material do set an ‘industry standard’ against which other groups (and even KO’s

membership) both conform and contend. In this interpretation, I must consider the possibility that KO acts as a ‘corporate’ form of modern Kemeticism, akin to the manner in which Egyptian state ritual is defined as distinct from ‘folk’ practice. Contrary to this interpretation, however, one might note the heavy emphasis on state ritual at the ‘reconstruction’ end of the Kemetic scale (Reidy 2010), and the ‘space’ left within KO for personal forms of piety. Subsequently, while KO’s hierarchy is effectively a top-down approach, its framework contains ‘resources’ or ‘lines of force’ (Fiske 1989: 2, 2003) which might be utilised by participants in the construction of meaning and identity. It is where KO was able to incorporate personal forms of ritual – that is, piety – as an internalised form of *Orthodoxy* that it found mass appeal. Members have access to internally ratified information and, later, exclusive access to specialised knowledge after a form of initiation, which consists of undergoing the multi-part parent divination RPD and naming ceremonies. All the paraphernalia of religion, such as objects, accoutrements and, most significantly, sanctified space for personal piety (in the Senut) is available, while remaining part of a large and prevalent (within the Kemetic continuum) congregation. Further, with the enabling technology of the internet, participants can engage from their own living rooms. Following from the above point, it is important to recognise that the Nisut, Siuda, though leader, is not wholly representative of KO or the range of practices and opinions expressed throughout its membership, nor can she be held responsible for that range of interpretations and opinions. An overzealous application of ‘theory over findings’ (Salomonsen 2004: 45) might be overly pejorative in this instance, and overlooks the significant efforts involved in the active membership of this religion, and Kemeticism more generally.

Roadies for God

Not all Kemetic movements are based online, but, regardless of location, commitment to any Kemetic movement can require significant contributions of time, energy and devotion.

There is a perennial challenge with working on an organization that is

> entirely supported by volunteer time. If we were larger or had a bigger financial foundation/base, we would be able to pay people to work for us and perhaps be able to find more people willing or able to have the time to do the work. Given that we have relied on volunteer time all these years (the sole exception being that I can occasionally take a salary when donations exceed expenses), I think we've done a fairly good job of holding it together.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

Additionally, adherents to Kemetic (and minority) spiritual paths and religions face not only potential marginalisation or derision, but also, in a much more immediate and significant way, the potential contempt and alienation of their peers, both social and occupational (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006; Wallis 2003). They also face a lack of fixed societal reference points (such as recourse to state religion) and foster no expansive or aggressive recruitment process to ensure ongoing support. As Reidy explains, on the position of the Temple of Ra,

> We are, as it were, a Kemetic diaspora, scattered across the world, picking up followers by 'conversion' at this time, not through force (as with post-Constantinian Christianity) and not through birth (as with Judaism). We no longer have or desire to have a state-supported religion, or one led by a pharaoh – no matter how important that office was in ancient Egypt.
>
> R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 1 July

Reidy's comments underscore the notion that not only can one not conflate the various stances of the Kemetic continuum, but also there are some salient obstacles that all within that continuum, regardless of approach, will face:

> The Kemetic Diaspora faces a number of realities that will forever distinguish it from its original manifestation in Egypt.… Unlike the ancient Egyptians we do not live in a society that simply assumes the correctness of our way of life, our beliefs and cultic practices.… One of the great strengths of modern Kemetics is that we do not have to rely on the trappings of king or state religion to justify or support our way of life. Each

> Kemetic has made a conscious choice to honor the ancient gods, not because either family or society tells us to do so. For me this is a special type of strength impossible because it was unnecessary in ancient times.
>
> R. Reidy 2011, personal communication, 3 July

Despite the authority of KO's priesthood and leadership, concerns regarding the nature of Kemetic diaspora are reflected by Siuda:

> The challenge of a dispersed membership in many places in the world but not in many significant local or regional concentrations is also difficult. When some members are the only people in their entire country who belong to the religion, for example, it is far more challenging than would be an offline organization that had a central membership in one city or region.
>
> Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February

This conscious choice to serve entails an aspect often overlooked; rather than a fanciful 'dressing' for an otherwise mundane existence (the lure of a misunderstood exoticism, for instance), Kemetic adherents often comprehend the role of ritual practice as vital to the maintenance of Ma'at, as the ancients appear to have understood their own priesthood and king (Quirke 1992). While this could be interpreted as an attempt to elevate one's own self-worth, it also entails a responsibility and duty towards ritual and service not emphasised in many studies of paganism or shamanism, and can require a great deal of commitment and self-sacrifice. This is especially true where members must meet and engage in ritual in real space/time in order to fulfil their obligations to Ma'at. Likewise, the ordained priesthood of Kemetic Orthodoxy's House of Netjer face similar responsibilities towards consistent ritual participation and maintenance of state shrines, personal shrines and cult objects. This sense of duty is even extant amongst solo practitioners, which is particularly interesting, given that this group are sometimes overlooked or inferred to be 'eclectic' pagans, with few responsibilities to 'service'. While this may, arguably, be interpreted as another aspect of the construction of identity and purpose, the cost/benefit appears rather high if this were simply

the case:

> We all have to pay bills and most of us have jobs. Desire and Bliss are not occupations. Religion is not a dodge. It takes hard work. Being a Priest, for example, is far less about being out in front and the centre of attention and mainly being ‘Roadies for God’.
>
> NiankhSekhmet, Wave One

Moreover, the deep sense of responsibility which many Kemetics in the study attested for their faith did not always have a positive impact on their lives, as Neb testifies:

> A sense of responsibility, of belief and faith is a point I really did want to make, as I’m aware that ‘alternative’ religious beliefs (what is alternative, anyway?) tend to be regarded as having less genuine faith and commitment, and that the followers of that religion only do so because they, for want of a better term, feel like it. Rather, I would suggest that serving the Gods of Egypt in modern Europe demands an extremely strong belief, sense of responsibility and respect, as in many cases we have little or no sources of support. A Christian, here in the UK may, in a moment of spiritual crisis, go to a church and speak to a priest, or join in some communal prayer or celebration that supports his faith. Those who follow the Gods of Egypt do not have that, and often we do face hardships that others would not.
>
> Neb 2009, personal communication, 29 April

This particular participant faced an additional obstacle. Neb attended advanced study in Egyptology at a British institution.

> I mentioned about academic life. I have no idea what would happen if I were to openly state my beliefs, then write an entirely factual dissertation on the development of the Sun Temples. The fact I’m genuinely afraid of finding out (being a person who is normally completely dismissive of such paranoia) says a lot.

Ibid.

This fear was also reflected in an account from Senut:

> We… have another member… who is working on [their] PhD in Egyptology who has contributed greatly to this collection [of information necessary for the practice of KO] as well, but… prefers to remain anonymous because of the risk to [their] career should it be revealed that [the individual] actually believes in and practices the ancient Egyptian religion. This is sadly unfair, but that's just the way it is in US academia just now. Apparently the Egyptian religion is intended to be studied with a cold, scientific eye and is certainly not considered to be a viable practice except for New Age 'loonies'.
>
> Senut 2011, personal communication, 13 May

'Us' and 'them'

The existence of academic Kemetics or, more specifically, Kemetic *academics*, is, for this writer, rather telling. The preceding studies display a continuum with a similar preoccupation for historical authenticity and accuracy as found within Egyptology. It may differ in focus and goals, but still lies within the same set of cultural resources that academics draw upon. Additionally, these resources can face similar types of contestation within Kemeticism as they do in academia, highlighted in a parallel set of concerns over, say, taboo or ethnicity, for instance. Illustrating this, KO's official position on ethnicity is almost a parallel of Egyptology's stance. They note the antiquated nature of the 'Dynastic Race' theory (Derry [1914] 1956) and employ academic research, citing 'current data from Predynastic history' and linguistics, noting that this 'points to multiple origins of Kemetic society, including northern African, Levantine and Sub-Saharan strains'. KO's site proffers that,

> ancient Egyptians resembled their modern descendants in many ways – and if you have ever been to Egypt, you know that this means a number of

> skin colors and several ethnic backgrounds, with no one really ‘white’ or ‘black’ as understood in current American parlance.
>
> Kemet 2010

Most significantly, KO note a lack of conceptualised ethnicity in ancient Egypt (Kemet), ‘what made a person “Kemetic” was not his or her skin color, hair type or parentage, but whether or not he or she was a member of Kemetic society, born and bred within its religion and culture’ (ibid.). This is promoted as ‘Kemet’s’ most significant lesson: one of love from its deities irrespective of ethnic origin.

Although the object lesson is different, the politicised nature of the argument is the same and highlights the shared cultural milieu between the discipline of Egyptology and Kemetic beliefs. Subsequently, I am forced to consider if the normatised polarisation between ‘Egyptology’ and the ‘other’ is an anachronistic set of binary oppositions and academic boundary-marking. For instance, in this work, I have argued against Naydler’s (2005) reductionist stance on Egyptology; it should be noted that trends towards positivism and the scientific study of the ‘other’ have begun to be reviewed from within the discipline (Carruthers 2014; Moreno Garcia 2014; Riggs 2014a; Introduction). While I criticised Naydler’s boundary-marking as exacerbating the very problems that he claimed to be countering, it is noted that the self-conception of disciplines, especially within studies of the ‘other’, are indeed often rife with problems of positionality and positivism (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006; Wallis 2003). Additionally, this work highlights a trend in the self-conceptualisation of modern Egyptology as a scientific discipline, though this is by no means a universal stance (Colla 2007; Moreno Garcia 2014; Riggs 2014a). It is framed against a background of less clearly defined practices, including the explorations into mysticism of writers such as Barguet (1967), Federn (1960) and Wente (1982). Other historical examples of this blurred boundary include the translation of the Stele of Ankh-ef-en-Khonsu I for Aleister Crowley by Gardiner and Gunn (Vinson and Gunn 2014). As described in Chapter 6, this object was central to Crowley’s transcribing of the *Book of the Law* ([1938] 1976) and further, the establishment of Thelema, an Egyptian-themed occult movement with widespread influence within esoteric circles. There are foundational

‘crossovers’ in the works of Petrie’s student and nodal Egyptologist, Margaret Murray (1921, 1931) with the Folklore Society and the establishment of the British Pagan movement. Such crossovers need not be as overt as this to express ‘sympathy’ or, perhaps, ‘analogy’ between the practices of ‘Egyptologists’, historically, and Kemetic practitioners. Perhaps even unknowingly, the sympathetic treatments of Egyptian spirituality and religion by authors such as Assmann (1990, 1995, 2001, 2002), Hornung (1992, 1996, 1999, 2001), Lesko (1999), Pinch (1993, 2002), Roberts (1997, 2000), Szpakowska (2003, 2008) and Quirke (1992, 2001) contain the seeds, the ‘lines of force’ (Fiske 1989, 2003) that have been utilised by Kemetics. These ‘crossovers’ attest less to individual pioneers or ‘mavericks’ crossing into the territory of the ‘other’ so much as a range of practices by individuals, further problematising sweeping characterisations of the discipline.

Note

1 For Siuda and Kemetic Orthodoxy, see http://www.kemet.org/resources/bookstore; for the list of recommended readings for new members of the Kemetic Recon forum at The Cauldron, see http://www.ecauldron.net/reconegypt.php and http://www.ecauldron.net/forum/index.php?topic=12354.0

13 Conclusion

‘Recon’-ceptualising Egypt

At the outset of this research my primary interest was the way these movements interacted with and/or challenged the discipline of Egyptology, and what contests existed over shared resources, if any. Ganiel and Mitchell’s (2006: 4) proposition, that boundaries and positionality might be subjective, ambiguous and permeable forced me to consider that many of the perceived boundaries at the heart of my study were a result of the mores of cultural trends, rather than absolute, fixed confines. I established myself as an Egyptological ‘outsider’ to my participants, acting in a fixed external role, which eschewed participation in favour of dialogue, and highlighted description over experience. This was a position I felt was necessary in an ethical representation of myself to my respondents. However, it did entail inherent obstructions when garnering a representation of the community, which I attempted to mitigate by rigorous investigation of the contexts surrounding Kemetic beliefs and practices – by interaction with their communities and correspondence with Kemeticism’s leading figures. However, I felt it imperative that I only garnered information by explicit, informed consent, which entailed a lengthy process of permission-seeking, reputation establishment and rapport-building. In hindsight, I must acknowledge the difficulties I felt when attempting to view my participants’ worlds ‘horizontally’ (Salomonsen 2004) while maintaining the critical criteria necessary for an acceptably ‘academic’ interpretation.

The difficulties of such an approach are apparent within and without, such as the way I was initially received with caution, and occasionally hostility, by Kemetic individuals. It is my hope that this work highlights the need for more sensitive and nuanced treatments of ‘alternative’ epistemes, to combat the sometimes-sweeping generalisations and reductionism faced in the study of ‘non-academic’ commentary on the past. Such competing narratives are

composed of a range of critiques and hypotheses, sometimes classified as *archaeologies of the disenfranchised* (Scham 2001, 2003). I have attempted to demonstrate there is a tendency towards the oversimplification of these 'outsider' narratives, and that no critique is exempt from such homogenisation. Egyptological, Afrocentric, revisionist and 'mystical' or 'esoteric' treatments of the 'other' frequently entail the construction of 'straw-men' and 'scapegoats'. My contention is that these trends have become so normatised as to be akin to Gramsci's notion of 'common sense', an internalisation of the manner in which facile attempts at boundary-marking become commonplace, reflecting, perhaps, the hegemonic constructs ingrained within Western culture. Following from this, I would suggest that the *binary* structures so often associated with the interaction between the 'orthodoxy' (embodied in this study as Egyptology) and the 'alternative' (herein, Kemeticism, Afrocentrism or 'revisionist' ideas) are an outdated polarisation, resultant from the enchantments of constructed conceptions of modernity and positivism as 'common sense' *norms*, as opposed to the 'hypotheses' they once constituted at their origin (Gramsci, in Crehan 2002; Saler 2006; Shanks and Tilley 1992).

The manner in which 'alternative' polemics are often presented within Egyptology/archaeology/history is often one of a challenge from unqualified outsiders (Fritze 2009; Lefkowitz 1996), a threat with potential opportunity (Picknett and Prince 2003; Roth 1995) and sometimes marked polarisation and conflation, even where sympathy is intended (Roth 1998). A key differentiating factor for Kemeticism is that the source material for their discussions frequently emerges from within current, recognised, Egyptological works. This perhaps contrasts with some parallel revisionist approaches, for instance, which sometimes recruit anachronistic visions of the past in support of debates (Lefkowitz and Rogers 1996; Scham 2003). In this sense, then, Egyptology's pivotal role in the construction of its own competing narratives was not, to this point, thoroughly examined. In Williams' (1977) terms, Egyptology is producing its own counter-culture, but, contrary to the way that Fiske's (1989, 2003) culture works in a cycle of 'excorporation' and 'reincorporation', many academics appear reticent to engage, or reincorporate. This reluctance has been explained as a sometimes-excusable caution, given the complex, sensitive and immediate nature of outsider epistemology (Meskell 1998; Scham 2003). I would posit that there

is an additional fear of ‘infection’ raised by the interaction between Egyptology and its audience ‘competitors’. This seems unjustified given that the history of Egyptology as a discipline consists of a range of approaches not nearly so defined or so scientific as envisaged by participants or by Egyptology’s critics. This may well be to the credit of those Egyptologists who blurred disciplinary boundaries with receptive exploration of the magical and the mystical, and highlights that, despite disciplinary trends, there also exists a range of responses from ‘within’.

A shared thread embedded within Egyptological and Kemetic paradigms is that of *authenticity* and, despite some problems with that terminology (Wallis 2003), this is perhaps the most significant area of crossover. The status of authenticity within the Kemetic continuum attests to pivotal themes. The first is that of cultural pressure, and relates to the location of these practices in a continuum of Western dialogues on Egypt. Such dialogues operate in a hierarchy of value, which, in turn, is suspended on the overarching cultural paradigm, in this case, economic (capitalist) constraints (Fiske 1989). These prevalent mores affect implicit (though notably not universal) trends of *modernity* (Saler 2006) and *positivism* (Shanks and Tilley 1992) within archaeology and Egyptology, exemplified in an increasing emphasis on the techniques of forensic science (Riggs 2014a). Egyptology has often been accused of lagging behind other fields both in theory and practice and, as such, it should come as little surprise that critiques of scientific methodology have yet to truly permeate the field (Carruthers 2014). Additionally, there is a sometimes idealised conception of Egyptology’s progress from the antiquated practice of cultural-historical analysis to a ratified and relevant scientific field (Jeffreys 2003). In a time when the arts and humanities are threatened by funding cuts, the effects of such pressures on the discipline are difficult to ignore. As such, there appears to be increasing pressure to privilege ‘hard’ science within the field of Egyptology, furthered by broader disciplinary trends and the implicit promise of continued economic support and return.

Considering this, one wonders why those within the Kemetic continuum, who are debatably free from the constraints of positivism and academic bias (and subsequent appeals for funding), are concerned with Egyptological understandings of authenticity at all. The hierarchy resultant from forms of cultural hegemony appears to inherently elevate the status of academia, locating it at the ‘centre’ of current debates. This is reinforced by ‘locational’

internal terminology, which stresses ‘margins’ (in marginalisation), at best (Scham 2001), and a lunatic ‘fringe’, at worst (Roth 1998). This work proposes that the ‘fringe’ is nothing of the kind, and would be more accurately described in terms of either an ‘exterior’, where academic boundary-marking is determinative (such as with the excise of Naydler’s 2005 publication), or ‘limit’, where one accepts that all processes exist on a spectrum of Egypt-centred practice. Should such language be internalised by ‘outsider’ readers, as in Hall’s ([1980] 1993) model, this might support the implicit acceptance of the central location of Egyptology in debates surrounding ancient Egyptian material. One could challenge this notion of an internalised hierarchy by observing Afrocentric and revisionist dialogues as examples of the rejection of the status of Egyptology, though I would posit this is an oversimplification and, possibly, a misreading. Notably, both of those movements employ a perception of Egyptology against which to define themselves and excorporate Egyptological resources – that is, translations and primary sources excavated by Egyptologists – in the furtherance of their own epistemes (Fiske 2003).

Until the revolution under Nasser, Western Egyptologists controlled significant access to pharaonic material. This notion lies at the heart of the debate: access to and ownership of Egyptian/Egyptological material, and determination of its ultimate use and meaning. It is the defence of ratified perceptions of ‘appropriate’ use of resources that occasionally forces academics to evaluate (and often decry) alternative approaches, be they centred on ethnicity (Diop 1974, 1981 vs North 2003), chronology/conventions (Hancock 2001; West 1995 vs Picknett and Prince 2000, 2003), scientific accomplishment (Schwaller de Lubicz [1949] 1977 vs Rossi 2004) or epistemology (Bernal 1987 vs Lefkowitz 1996, and a *host* of others). Although Western Egyptology[1] ‘officially’ finds its origins in the Napoleonic expedition, there exists a deeply ingrained set of Egypt-centred practices from the Renaissance onward, embodied in such figures as Kircher, and the Freemasons (Hornung 2001; Jeffreys 2003). These polemics are historically embedded, each end of the spectrum defined in relation to the other, and valued or dismissed by the observer’s situated standpoint. However, given my criticism of Naydler (2005) for his generalisations and straw-man characterisation of Egyptology, it would be remiss to accept these

societal pressures as a top-down overbearing force, blindly followed by Egyptologists and others. Subsequently, I would conclude that such constraints exist in perpetual cycles of dominance and resistance, as a form of resisted hegemony (Williams 1977).

Despite these concerns, early contact with my participants suggested that many Egypt-centred religious practitioners do not appear unreceptive to academia, nor, in initial findings, does there appear to be a predetermined negative disposition towards Egyptology. Contrary to the 'revisionist' school of archaeology, it seems that instead of a desire to *challenge* the underlying precepts of the discipline there is a greater tendency to *adapt*, co-opt and run in parallel with them. As such, it is misleading to frame Kemeticism simply as a form of 'revisionism', despite some divergent aims. Kemeticism might be more appropriately framed as an *expansion* of a set of Western practices that already push the boundaries of the appropriation of a foreign culture (Hassan 1998; Scham 2003). Contrary to theories centred on Afrocentric and Arabic epistemes, I do not believe Kemeticism inherently embodies a *contending* vision of the past (Roth 1998). Rather, Kemeticism employs the universalist concept of ancient Egypt 'for the ages' (Scham 2003: 171) 'that informed Egyptology for so many years' as a legitimising gateway into that past. While these are techniques similarly employed in Afrocentric epistemes, Kemetics are not inherently challenging Western perceptions of pharaonic culture, but rather relocating it within a spiritual reality. Indeed, the real difficulty would lie in endorsing Kemetic practices if they were found to be based in anachronistic and litigious *European* and *post-colonial* visions of the past – which are now under serious scrutiny from claims of history's biased Western construction, such as extant in Afrocentric and Arabic-Egyptian identity narratives (Challis 2013; Reid 2002; Said 1978). KO's definition of pharaonic culture as African (and ATR) may help alleviate this anxiety, but far from closes the debate on Western appropriations of Egypt's past.

However, fruitful tension between academic and Kemetic practice needn't be interpreted in the cynical terms of an epistemological contest. Egyptology appears to provide many of the *reference points* (Layton 2000) required for the authenticity-based pursuance of Kemeticism. This works despite the hermeneutic anxieties of post-structural theorising around a lack of fixed points (Derrida 1976; Fish 1980). Authenticity may be employed to bolster the status of the associative group, but, perhaps most significantly, it is a

desired end unto itself. This notion ties directly into historical expressions of *piety*. In Chapters 4 and 5, I examined the development of notions of piety in ancient Egypt, as a form of individual faith or Gottensnähe, expressed by the employment of objects, rituals and spells in domestic contexts. I argued (against Assmann 2001, 2002) that, in addition to 'local' expressions of religious activity (Pinch and Waraksa 2009; Stevens 2009), the state may have acted as a source of the means of individual expression of 'religion' *before* the conceptual 'overhaul' of the New Kingdom, and that evidence from domestic and cult contexts suggests a continuum of 'individual' practices chronologically (Pinch and Waraksa 2009; Stevens 2009). This was expressed through a range of responses to everyday life, including dedication of votive offerings (Pinch 1982, 1993; Sadek 1987; Waraksa 2008), heka (Ritner 1997), oracular 'wise women' (Baines 1987) and dream interpretation (Szpakowska 2003). These were not centred on conceptions of deity through *monarchy* or social forces – the primacy of which is resultant from *archaeological bias*. In addition, I advance the strong possibility of forms of piety that are founded in the actualisation of the search for the deity, with intent, counter to Kemp's (1995) hypothesis of a largely secular Egypt engaged in socially symbolic practices.

Much as the state *provided the means* for individual expressions of faith, so does Egyptology continue to supply a range of materials for those unable to access primary Egyptian texts, which may be utilised as presented, or adapted and co-opted. As such, what may, in a pejorative sense, be framed as a *contest of authenticity*, including the recruitment of academic sources, primary materials and even objects into Kemetic Reconstruction, might also be interpreted in terms of *piety* and a desire to do the gods of Egypt genuine service as authentically – that is, as closely to the original practitioners – as possible, while allowing for the practicalities of their social context. The range of approaches within Kemeticism is, conversely, far more 'scholastic' and 'academic' than Egyptologists have acknowledged of 'spiritual approaches' to date. The fact that there exists such a crossover is telling and I believe it is possible that there are more academics actively involved in Kemeticism and practicing Kemetic religion than currently disclosed. One Kemetic suggested,

You would be absolutely surprised at how many Egyptologists worship the

> deities that they study. And you would probably be equally surprised at the number of those who absolutely will not admit to it for fear of being ostracised by their peers.
>
> NiankhSekhmet, Wave Two

While these examples may be anecdotal, the existence of Kemetic Egyptologists was later referred to in conversation with Siuda (Siuda 2016, personal communication, 2 February), and this consistency hints at what could be a deeply interesting phenomenon, which would not only support the anxieties documented by other 'pagan insider' researchers, but somewhat substantiate the current perception of Egyptology as increasingly steeped in positivism (Ganiel and Mitchell 2006; Howell 2007; Moreno-Garcia 2014; Pearson 2002b; Riggs 2014a; Strimska 2005, 2005a; Wallis 2003, 2004).

In addition, Neb, a student of Egyptology in the UK, proposed that this phenomenon could be a positive thing for Egyptology:

> I'm surprised there aren't more, truth be told. Having a more diverse group of people within Egyptology would be beneficial to the study and interpretation of Egyptian civilization. Although there are a lot of dedicated and extremely skilled people in the field, if everyone is, even subconsciously, viewing it through the same cultural-religious prism (Abrahamic), that's not particularly beneficial to generating meaningful debate and new interpretations.
>
> Neb 2009, personal communication, 29 April

Given the professional anxieties outlined by 'insider researchers' within anthropology, the assertion that Kemetic academics would be reluctant to come forward is hardly surprising. This is coupled with an historical legacy of the marginalisation of alt/pagan religions since the dominance of the Abrahamic religions (Hutton 1999; Starhawk 1979; Strimska 2005) and 'witch-hunts' and accusations still attested in parts of the world today (Ritner 1997).[2] It is the very social pressures of which these respondents speak that encourage and are, in turn, reinforced by normative positivist trends within academia (Strimska 2005a). Perceptions of Egyptology and concomitant

conceptions of ‘competing claims’, from within and without, have become self-limiting constructs in need of critical rethinking.

From the findings herein, it appears that the appeal of Egypt is multifaceted and only partially dependent on the ‘popularist’ factors previously explored by Fisher (2000), K.C. McDonald (2003) and the like. Those factors, a constructed ‘bubble’ free from context and concerns over geography, history and ethnicity for some, or representative of stolen cultural capital for others, do indeed play a part, as was expressed in the responses to aesthetic perceptions of Egypt. However, regarding Kemeticism, conceptions of Egypt, or Kemet, appear deeper and more critical than the ‘layman’ responses of audience studies (ibid.) and are inherently entangled with conceptions of deity, responsibility, authenticity and piety. The appeal of Kemeticism over and above the ‘big three’ world religions is multifaceted and dependent on one’s position: *generally*, it involves a rejection of the discriminatory and exclusivist practices of monotheism, the establishment of their own ethical universe and an attraction to Egyptian religious practice. For Tameran Wiccans at the more ‘eclectic’ end of the continuum, there is an embrace of the religious freedom of paganism, with a pantheon upon which to focus one’s practices (with reference to a longstanding tradition of Isis goddess worship within Wicca). For the Kemetic Orthodoxy, there is organisational and community support – albeit limited by number and geography, but akin to what one might find in a Christian congregation – with the additional appeal of a plurality of deities, any of whom can become a parent figure, for the development of a personal relationship. Further, KO offers its services online, allowing for the bridging of vast distances and the unification of a religious diaspora. For Kemetic Revivalists and Reconstructionists alike, there is the benefit of decades of technical information on the rituals, practices and beliefs of the Egyptians.

Egyptologists only need accept the abstract intellectualised existence of the gods for an understanding of the mythological context of the creation of structures and artefacts in ancient Egypt. They do not always accept the existence of piety in this process, let alone internalised religiosity. However, within Kemeticism there is expressed a deep personal connection to deities and a reciprocal relationship of support and devotion. For all involved in Kemeticism there is the exercising of *choice*, that they are able to determine their religious commitments, due to societal, cultural and technological

changes (Brasher 2004; Cowan 2005; Dawson and Cowan 2004a; Strimska 2005). There is, for the more aesthetically inclined, the criterion to create one's own shrine, imbue objects with significant, even sacred status – and this, additionally, applies to one's own creations. The creation of objects as a form of piety devoid of ritual *function* attests to a practice that might find parallels in the archaeological record, one that is admittedly very difficult to detect. There are instances in this work where insights from the practical experience of Kemetics highlight considerations that Egyptologists may not be forced to consider during the classification process. Areas such as taboo (specifically blood taboo) or practical constraints for the ritual use of items (such as the use of an 'opening of the mouth' ceremony on votive statuary)[3] draw attention to areas of investigation which could inspire further dialogue. At the very least, I would suggest that interaction with Kemetic groups might highlight some of Egyptology's own blindnesses and, if taken further, the discipline might benefit from phenomenological insights or considerations of *agency*, which are arguably obscured by the Egyptologist's *etic* approach. Like Neb above, Kerry Wisner felt a relationship between Egyptology and Kemeticism could be mutually beneficial:

> Perhaps, in discussing the religion with people today who are striving to live the philosophy and actually practice the rituals, Egyptologists may gain a greater insight into the deeper meaning of some of the more enigmatic aspects of the texts.
>
> K. Wisner 2009, personal communication, 27 November

Richard Reidy was more pensive:

> We Kemetics have important questions that the professional academic can help answer or at least point us to possibly helpful research. My regret is that in general Egyptologists do not want to appear to their colleagues to be assisting people in their Kemetic religious quest. This may be due to academia's own religious – or irreligious – bias, or simply that Egyptologists see a gulf between themselves and the non-academic world encountered in the Kemetic/pagan communities.

R. Reidy 2010, personal communication, 16 August

Closing thoughts

In the original draft of my PhD, which forms a large part of the basis of this book, my treatment of Kemetic Orthodoxy was undoubtedly influenced by an academic tendency towards historical authenticity, which inherently problematised the adoption of non-pharaonic material. I struggled to reconcile conceptions of authenticity with terms such as 'revivalism' and the inclusion and categorisation of ATRs. This was despite my overall very positive and pleasant experiences with Kemeticism, the priesthood of KO and Tamara Siuda, herself – all of whom have been extremely helpful and instrumental in my understanding of KO's inner workings and beliefs. Conversely, I might also note an early bias in favour of those movements focused on 'authentic', 'conservative' reconstruction, which appealed to my archaeological sensibilities. In facing my own bias, and attempting to reconcile the often-divergent aims of *sympathy* and *critique*, I became my own subject and straddled the very boundaries examined herein. In the half-decade(!) since this research was *concluded*, I feel fortunate for the opportunity to re-examine the assumptions and underlying biases inherent in this work, and hope that I have addressed these to reflect a more objective (assuming, after Strimska (2005a), that such a thing is possible) account of the Kemetic continuum en masse, to whom I am extremely grateful for allowing me access to their worlds.

The sophisticated criteria required for the assessment and inclusion of outsider material can only be developed by further engagement. There are, of course, potential problems that must be considered. For instance, Hassan (1998: 202) welcomes the 'current concern for an archaeology of the future', citing the significance of archaeology in contemporary world affairs. He notes that the past is employed to legitimate forms of political rhetoric, particularly in the establishment of new regimes (ibid.: 201–2). Hassan also acknowledges the potential uses of science for criminal or evil causes, but asserts that scholarly knowledge (or 'Science in the broad sense of the word') is:

> a mode of inquiry that in principle rejects dogmatism and endorses critical thinking, eschews pre-judicial claims in favour of collective, reflective judgement, subjects individual observations and statements to cross-examination and scrutiny, and offers a guarantee against fascist regimes, religious fanatics, intellectual tyranny and solipsistic nihilism.
>
> Ibid.

It could be argued that this is an inherently located viewpoint which does not acknowledge the negative effects of the discipline on the *subjects* of study, such as highlighted by Salomonsen (2004), Griffin (2003), Reid (2002), Said (1989) and Scham (2001, 2003). A corollary argument is raised in West's (1993) account of the concerns raised by the interaction of Afrocentric discourse with White Western hegemonic forces. This is a fear of a 'co-opted progressive', 'dilution of critiques' and 'diffusion of *prophetic energy*' (ibid.: 259–66, emphasis added).[4]

Representation necessitates a familiarity on the part of the archaeologist that many do not possess, and places great responsibility into the hands of those who choose to give voice to such groups. It also raises questions of the representative's motivations, their criteria for inclusion and their sympathy or antipathy for the narratives at hand. Ensuing dialogues must be faced with the critical self-awareness of their situated, mediated nature, in addition to the effects of a discipline's positivistic micro-narratives (Meskell 1998; Said 1989; Scham 2001, 2003). However, after observing the current trend towards homogeneity and reductionism in discussions of 'alternative' and 'revisionist' works, it would appear further work is required in the establishment of a heterogonous discourse. From this, one might better query patterns in the production of knowledge, understand and counter radical and contrary ideologies, and question the production of 'truths' (Hamilakis 1999). Recognition of the dangers of uncritical endorsement should guard against 'proselytising' (Salomonsen 2004: 53) – conversely, acknowledgement that disciplines appear *structurally ingrained* to make value judgements should, one might hope, encourage a more inclusive discussion.

There are numerous areas for further investigation herein and, given the space and time, one could take such a study in a variety of fruitful directions, such as gender, sexuality and audience studies. For instance, despite

observations that the Kemetic continuum is composed of a roughly even gender distribution, implying no inherent gender biases, Kemetic practices tap into several gender issues, such as critical rethinking of past gender roles, depiction of gender in the record and its inference in modern contexts. Additionally, considerations such as blood taboo highlight specific obstacles for women in contemporary contexts, which could lead to fruitful discussion and investigations. I was particularly impressed with the depth of investigation of Banu, a female reconstructionist, with regards to the blood taboo. While the contested nature of this topic reflects ongoing academic debates, there is an immediacy and a sense of urgency to be found in Kemetic discussions of such matters that are not extant in Egyptology. Following directly from this topic are treatments of sexuality, and I refer to discussions which highlight the impartial, even welcoming attitude of many Kemetic religions towards bi- and homosexual practitioners. That one participant attests to a chapter composed entirely of gay males implies a correspondence that warrants further study, and demonstrates the possibility of 'queer readings' as applied to Egypt outside of current Egyptological debates (Meskell 1998, 2000, 2002). Another, obvious route would be a thorough investigation of agency and phenomenology in modern contexts, as applied to Egyptian material by Kemetics; these are likely the tip of the 'research iceberg'. The application of 'Actor Network theory' might also contribute to an understanding of the creation of, and interaction with, objects (Byrne *et al*. 2011). I would posit that the critical examination of the appeal of certain rituals, deities and objects could additionally be of great value to 'reception' studies of Egyptology and, potentially (somewhat cynically), to museum strategists looking to explore alternative audiences. It should certainly be of interest to publishing houses seeking to span the divide of 'popularist' Egyptology with accessible but thoroughly researched books on Egyptian religion, everyday life (an area many Kemetics are fascinated by) and unabridged primary religious texts – something participants like Kerry Wisner stated were sorely lacking from the 'layman's' access to Egyptian literature.

It is the conceit of this work that disciplines are periodically required to face themselves, even where this forces acceptance of limitations and contrivances. It is in the recognition of its weaknesses and limitations that Egyptology might become more reflexive and allow for the considered

critical study of agency and standpoints (Carruthers 2014; Exell 2013). Furthermore, these challenges are extant in contemporary contexts, with Kemetics being open to interaction and even willing to aid Egyptologists in their emic understanding of Egyptian religion, even as Egyptology, in turn, provides etic descriptive material upon which many practices are constructed. I conclude that while Kemeticism certainly contains potential for radical counter movements, as does any vision of the past embedded in a political context, it does not overtly contribute to epistemological contests outside of its own continuum. Rather, it implicitly continues the interpretations set in motion by the Napoleonic expedition, and its contributions to Egyptian-centred narratives appear to derive from its basis in Egyptology. Further, Kemeticism is more compatible with, and shares more in common with Egyptology than most academics might comfortably admit; I would posit that this only highlights a requirement to engage and debate, should Kemetics be willing. This all assumes that Kemeticism will remain open to the critiques of Egyptology, and does not begin to resent a perceived 'friendly enemy' deconstructing its epistemes and revealing its survival strategies. Care must be taken to respect their worlds, engage reflexively and build bridges which benefit both parties, not just academic interest.

I would be hesitant to follow in the vein of Bernal (1987) or even Naydler (2005) in asserting that there was any single overbearingly influential force on the current state of academia. It would appear from discussions herein that positivism, imperialism, colonialism, modernity and, supporting these, cultural hegemony are complex phenomena, processes which are entangled, co-dependent and mutually supportive. The fact remains that the employment of any model or group of models ignores the range of resistant ideas in any movement, conflates often diametric approaches and does not account for the contradictory ability of culture to both support and activate resistance by *carrying* the means of that resistance (Fiske 2003). The interaction of hierarchies and market forces continues to limit some voices while bolstering others. It is my hope that I have argued conclusively against the forms of marginalisation and insularity which see movements such as Kemeticism and works such as Naydler's (2005) sidelined, while my concomitant critiques indicate that critical criteria should remain in place. Moreover, however, the commentators in the preceding chapters might highlight that academic evaluations cannot, and should not, be the final word, but segue into

discussion where needed. This, if anything, will encourage the ‘fruitful tensions’ that drive us further towards an understanding of the past, not for ourselves, not for the ‘West’ or even for ‘science’, but on its own terms.

When faced with modern attempts at revival/reconstruction, the question is, perhaps, more suitably not what Egyptologists should make of them, but rather, would an ancient Egyptian recognise the practices described herein? I would argue, technological and linguistic familiarity notwithstanding, that, yes, they would. The recreation of ritual, based on known texts; the imitation of gesture; vocal structure (even where language is divergent); and, most significantly, the use of objects which attest to an aesthetic continuity would likely be recognisable to an ancient Egyptian priest when observing Kemeticism today. So, the question remains, why are Kemetics not recognised by Egyptologists?

Egyptology is a discipline accused of cultural genocide, terrorism and rape (Saadawi 1997; Fagan 1992). In the engagement and critique of the ‘other’, one might at once be reminded of its ‘narcissistic’ scope (Butler 2007: 78–80), which not only confronts one with the humanity of the ‘other’ but also forces recognition of the discipline’s troubled origins. In the new cultural politics of difference, true multi-vocality questions the right to describe and investigate, particularly with respect to ‘other’ peoples’ pasts. With Egyptologists’ numerous attempts to treat Egyptian religion with respect, sensitivity and understanding, it is paradoxical that the same courtesy is not extended to those who seek to reconstruct and practice it today. As Scham (2001: 207) succinctly notes, ‘Ultimately in arguing for the inclusion of other views, we are also laying the groundwork for the inclusion of our own.’

Notes

1 Herein treated as distinct from Eastern, or Arabic Egyptology, as advanced by El-Daly (2005) in origin.

2 Also see the efforts of ‘Safe Child Africa’ which works to defend the rights of children accused of witchcraft today. http://www.safechildafrica.org/childwitches/ [Accessed 7 March 2016].

3 Employed by the Temple of Ra before Richard Reidy had seen the practice suggested by Pinch and Waraksa (2009).

4 Also Said (1989: 210).

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Appendix

The initial three waves of survey questions are presented below. These were later supplemented with forum participation and extensive correspondence with community leaders and participants.

The three ‘waves’ of initial surveys were collected between 22 June 2009 and 31 October 2011. References to these are presented in the format ‘Wave One’, ‘Wave Two’ and ‘Wave Three’, which closed on 22 September 2011, 30 September 2010 and 31 October 2011, respectively. Further personal communications were dated individually. I made distinction between the surveys and personal communications to highlight the development of my formal questions from the more organic conversations that later took place.

Wave One

The first wave of questions, initially sent out via email for ‘beta testing’, was later incorporated into Opinio software online. Subsequently, some responses are longer and more in-depth than my online response versions, though they all represent the same initial set of questions.

Question 1

Part 1. Please provide the following:

Web handle (your identity will not be disclosed to any other party; subsequently your web handle will be your assured anonymous point of reference. It does not have to match the name you use in online forums).

Question 2

Please provide a valid email address. This will be used only should I need to contact you, and will not be disclosed to any other party.

Question 3
(Optional) Age/Gender/Ethnicity/Occupation.

Question 4
What are the first things that come to mind when you think of Egypt?

Question 5
What was your first contact with ancient Egyptian culture and what about it appealed to you?

Question 6
What appeal do the gods of Egypt have for you, and which gods in particular?

Do you worship Egyptian gods exclusively? If not, what other pantheons have appeal, and how do you incorporate multiple cultural facets into your faith?

Question 7
What are your views on mainstream religions, and why do you think so many people opt to follow alternative religions nowadays?

Question 8
Are you part of a group that worships together?

What attracted you to this particular group (for example, Egyptian theme, social networking, the structural approach of the group or, alternatively, informal approach)?

Question 9
Have you ever been a part of any other esoteric group or movement?

Question 10
Do you partake in online group ritual?

What does this aspect bring to the faith?

Question 11
What is the gender distribution, roughly, and do you find one gender is more attracted to your faith?

Is Egypt itself gendered?

Question 12
What comprises your daily devotions? Do you make offerings/prayers/rituals?

Do you strive to make these historically authentic, or prefer a more interpretive approach?

Question 13
Do you practice magic(k) at all?

If so, what systems/practices do you favour?

How did you come into contact with this aspect of practice?

Question 14
Is Egypt inherently magical, and is that important to its attraction?

Question 15
What of figures such as Crowley or Florence Farr, and groups such as the Golden Dawn? Were there any influential persons/movements and/or books that were instrumental in your interest and access to Egyptian esoterica?

Question 16
How significant is the role of the book to your form of practice? What sources would you go to for technical specifics, should you want them?

Do books make adequate instructors?

Question 17
Does any aspect of your faith reflect the faith of everyday Egyptians?

Do you worship any ancient household gods or concentrate more on pharaonic religions?

What of Greek, Roman and later Egyptian? Do you incorporate Serapis or Hermes Tresmegistus?

Question 18
Do you enjoy fantastic elements and stories of this culture? Film/novel/comic books/video games/role playing games?

Are there any examples from pop culture which have influenced your perception of Egypt and alternative religions, or increased your attraction to this culture?

Question 19
What of phenomena like *Harry Potter* and *Buffy*? Do you feel that these have made alternative religions and magical practice more acceptable?

Question 20
Did you partake of any of the Egyptomania that swept the West just before the millennium (for instance, Graham Hancock books, Alternative Egypt conferences etc.)?

How do you feel about theories that the ancient Egyptian civilisation was founded by extraterrestrials (specifically aliens, not deities), and theories of Atlantis?

Question 21
Have you been to Egypt?

Did it meet your expectations?

How does modern Egypt compare with the material we associate with ancient Egypt in the West?

Question 22
Are debates on the ethnicity of the ancient Egyptians of any relevance to your practices?

Do you assign them any type of ethnicity in your mind?

Where did the ancient Egyptians ‘go’? Can we find a modern equivalent?

Question 23
Is there a legacy from ancient East to modern West?

What about modern East to West?

Do you feel that there is a lineage from ancient Egyptian practices to your own?

Question 24
What is your opinion on Egyptology and archaeology? Do they maintain a status as reliable information on ancient Egypt?

Do new developments in these fields (and in ancient linguistics/philology) inform or influence your practices?

Question 25

Do you feel that the West should return artefacts to Egypt?

How do you feel about private ownership of ancient Egyptian material?

Should we still be searching the sands for ancient treasures or, rather, returning pharaohs to their tombs?

Question 26

(Optional) Please feel free to use this space to address any issues you feel may be relevant to this research.

Question 27

(Optional) Suggestions: I realise that this survey is long, and the acquisition of detail data sadly demands such. However, how might I improve this survey, and what aspects did you like/dislike?

Wave Two

Wave Two comprises specific theological questions, in addition to considerations of faith and how the secular interacts with the once sacred (such as tourism in Egypt and artefacts in museums).

Question 1

Web handle (if you have completed the previous survey please use the same handle). This should not contain personally identifiable elements (such as real full name).

Question 2

Group identification (i.e. House of Netjer (HoN), Per Ankh, solo practitioner etc.).

Question 3

Age and occupation (optional).

Question 4

Are there any texts which are considered ‘Scripture’?

Question 5

Is there a concept of ‘Sin’ in your theological worldview? How does this translate to everyday interactions?

Question 6
What, if anything, is considered ‘blasphemous’ or taboo?

Question 7
What is considered sacred/regarded with reverence (this can include concepts and artefacts/objects)?

Question 8
How do you view death and dying? How does your view of the afterlife affect your approach to death?

Question 9
Is a Nisut or head of faith a required concept in Kemeticism?

Question 10
Is Kemeticism one religion? Are the various Kemetic groups simply branches thereof? What do you think of such an assertion?

Question 11
Does Kemeticism relate to polytheism or paganism in your opinion? Can such practices be related or is this a form of reductionism?

Question 12
This begins part 2: Faith within the world (contextual):
How long have you been involved in Kemetic practices?

Question 13
What bought you to Kemetic religion specifically?

Question 14
How does your faith affect your interactions with public spaces (i.e. do you view environments such as Egyptian temples in a different light now)?

Question 15

What about churches, temples or other sacred spaces? Are these absolute (set in space) or a product of their congregation?

Question 16
What about profane practices in sacred space (i.e. tourism in Egyptian temples)?

Question 17
Can secular establishments (i.e. museums) be a suitable place for sacred objects?

Question 18
How do you feel about secular (and 'popular') representations of your deities since joining your current faith?

Question 19
Have you ever studied Egyptology or archaeology at a secular institution? Did you find the practices compatible?

Question 20
What areas of investigation would you like to see explored in future Egyptological undertakings?

Question 21
Do you think the concept of a Nisut is compatible with life in the modern West? If you are a resident of the USA, how does this fit with your perceptions of royalty and divine ordination?

Question 22
Please enter an email address. This will only be used for further enquiry and will not be shared with any other party.

Wave Three

Wave Three is comprised of technical questions specifically regarding aspects of reconstructed ritual.

Question 1
What aspects of ancient Egyptian ritual or magical practice are most significant to your path/belief system?

Question 2
Do you engage in any form of Egyptian ritual? Is this directly derived from ancient practice or an adapted form?

Question 3
What sources do you employ for technical guidance?

Question 4
How regular is this practice, and to what extent do ideological and/or practical factors affect this?

Question 5
What materials and/or implements do you employ in such practices and what is the origin of their use? Do you have to substitute any particular materials for those that are unattainable? If so, what, and how does it match the absent material symbolically?

Question 6
Do specific ritual poses and gestures play any part in your practice, and if so what are the sources of such ritual enactment?

Question 7
To what extent does the availability of materials (including translations of rituals themselves) determine potential practices? Do you research and translate your own material if there is none available?

Question 8
What are the criteria when choosing a translated ritual? For instance, do you prefer to use the latest versions of a translated text, or one author over another?

Question 9
Please enter a Web handle or pseudonym you are happy to identify with this

work.

Question 10
Please enter a valid email address.

Question 11
Please enter group affiliation, if any (such as HoN, Per Ankh, ToS or solo practitioner).

Question 12
This question is optional: Age, gender, location and occupation help frame the context, but are not vital. If you are happy to share such information please enter it here.

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