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Reconstructing Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies, Archaeological Representation and the Interpretation of Ancient Egypt

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Abstract Archaeological studies of the reception and representation of the past have proliferated in recent years, but theoretical and methodological work on this area is limited. The wider cultural engagement with prehistoric and ancient cultures is a long-established practice that has continued from antiquity to the present. During this time, there has been an exchange of ideas between those who have investigated ancient material remains and others who have represented aspects of the past in more creative contexts. Such representations of prehistoric and ancient worlds play an important part in generating interpretations of the past, yet we still know little about how they relate to the archaeological process of creating knowledge. In the following discussion, concepts from the field of reception studies are considered in relation to establishing a sound basis for undertaking research on archaeological representation. A case study on the visual reception of ancient Egypt is presented as a means of suggesting how research on archaeologically inspired representations of the past might be structured.

Keywords Archaeological representation · Reception of the past · Archaeological interpretation · Archaeological visualisation · Ancient Egypt · Egyptomania

The reconstruction of life in prehistoric and ancient times is a highly complex interpretive process involving multiple methodological and theoretical dimensions. One of the lesser-known aspects of this process is the role that receptions and representations of ancient worlds play in generating knowledge about the past. Studies of the reception and representation of the past are not only useful in informing us about the ways in which non-archaeologists engage with the past, but are also important for understanding the ways in which we as specialists go about reconstructing it. Researchers concerned with the reception of the past look at the wider cultural engagement with prehistoric ancestors and ancient cultures from antiquity to the present, examining the two-way exchange of ideas between those who investigate the past and the many other

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audiences who represent prehistoric and ancient worlds. Specifically, work in this field explores the connections between the understanding of the past and its representation by artists/illustrators, writers, museum designers, filmmakers and theatre directors (to name a few). Major archaeological studies on the reception of the past have already demonstrated the potential of investigating its role in the knowledge-making process, showing how ancient ancestors, cultures and places have been defined by representations produced outside our disciplinary boundaries (e.g. Moser 1998, 2006, 2012a; Holtorf 2005, 2007; Sanders 2009; Seymour 2014). Above all, archaeology is now providing a distinctive perspective on how the wider interaction with the past feeds back into academic discourse. The proliferation of work on archaeological reception and representation in recent years, especially on archaeological visualisation and museum display, has seen this research area assume a place in mainstream debate as it has done in other disciplines concerned with the past, notably classics and history. Particularly strong in classics, 'reception studies' has been formally established in specialist journals and publication series dedicated to the subject, the inclusion of 'reception' chapters in classics handbooks, and the founding of university courses on classical receptions. Although reception studies have not yet achieved this level of institutional recognition in archaeology, the status of the subject within the area of 'archaeological method and theory' is being increasingly asserted through publications, conferences and university courses.

The aim of this account is to more fully establish reception analysis in archaeology and to promote theoretical and methodological rigour for the field. In order to achieve this, attention is focused on the delineation of characteristics and conventions of archaeological reception traditions. In seeking to encourage a more critical approach to studies of the 'consumption' of the past, this discussion reflects on the nature and qualities of archaeological receptions, identifying some of the mechanisms according to which they define ancient worlds. Before embarking on this enterprise, however, a brief overview of the development of reception studies as a research specialism within classics, history, art history and film studies is presented, followed by an outline of the related field of 'archaeological representation'. Attention then turns to ancient Egypt, which has been the subject of much public engagement over the centuries. Specifically, I consider how the representation of ancient Egypt in visual realms has made a significant contribution to the perception of this culture. The reception of ancient Egypt, it is argued, is not passive or derivative (from scholarly traditions), but has played a driving role in the creation of knowledge about Egyptian antiquity. We have been too ready perhaps to assume that the development of ideas about ancient Egypt results from the impacts of scholarly work, neglecting the role that representations created outside academic discourse play in influencing perceptions of antiquity. Accordingly, the subject of attention here is not ancient Egypt itself, but the way in which it has been enlisted for various purposes over time and how this has contributed to its conceptualisation.

When scholars began to more deeply scrutinise the social construction of knowledge in the 1960s and 1970s, the epistemological role of audience reception was highlighted as an important theoretical concept. 'Reception theory' was first articulated in the field of literary criticism, where the German scholars Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser outlined the concept of 'reader response' (Iser 1974, 1978; Jauss 1982). In a series of important works that were promptly translated into English, Jauss and Iser argued that

the responses of readers to texts (literary works) was significant in determining the meanings of a text and that in addition to analysing the intended messages of the author and offering criticism of their aims, researchers should also study how readers encounter such texts. Jauss and Iser established reception analysis by dismantling the premise that the inherent meaning of a text was an immutable static essence that could be retrieved. According to both authors, the understanding of a text lay in the interaction or dialogue between the reader and the text. The pioneering theoretical work of these scholars was pivotal in breaking down the distinction (and hierarchy) between academic meaning and audience engagement with the text, shifting the focus in literary analysis from author intent to reader response so as to determine how readers contribute to the meaning-making process. The theory was soon adopted beyond the realms of literary criticism, becoming a key concept in the social sciences and humanities (see e.g. Holub 1984; Machor and Goldstein 2001).

Since its introduction in literary theory, many disciplines have created their own versions of reception analysis to address how 'texts' (including material objects) are received and how the engagement with such sources plays a part in generating knowledge. Its adoption in the humanities, particularly cultural studies, demonstrates the extent to which theories of reception are seen as crucial for understanding how knowledge is acquired and established (see e.g. Staiger 2005). Work on audience and visitor analysis in the heritage and museums literature also testifies to the extent to which audiences have become a priority in understanding the way messages are communicated (e.g. see Black 2005), demonstrating the diversity of approaches to the concept of reception. An important aspect of reception theory that has significance for archaeological reception studies is the role assigned to the aesthetic tastes of the reader and the social and historical context in which they have encountered the text. Such factors have been critical in the engagement with the past and its subsequent definition. Indeed, for disciplines such as classics, history and archaeology, reception refers to the historical, social, political and cultural contexts of interpretation, as distinct from 'intellectual' history, which seeks to trace the evolution of various schools of disciplinary thought. Reception analysis is this case is thus concerned with documenting how subjects are construed in wider cultural domains. While such interpretations are not typically recognised as having the same bearing on knowledge formation as scholarly insights, we now know that they contribute to the process and that their epistemological role requires investigation.

Although many perspectives on reception theory have been articulated in the humanities and social sciences, the term reception itself requires further problematisation. Despite highlighting the importance of reader/audience response, reception specialists are yet to dismantle the somewhat passive connotations that the word reception implies. As the examples in the case study below suggest, the reception of the past can be characterised as an *active* and *selective engagement* with the subject of the past, reflecting the concerns of those audiences who consume it. The agency of reception, where the assertiveness of the reader/viewer/visitor in interpreting the source, needs to be emphasised and the 'receiving' aspect challenged (see also Martindale's comments below on the terminological issues arising from using the term reception versus 'appropriation'). Further work on other case studies will contribute to the theorisation of this term, assigning it with more 'punch' as an epistemological trope. Archaeology is in a strong position to contribute here as researchers have long

addressed the role of social and political contexts —notably colonialism and imperialism—in shaping the interpretation of the past, whereby non-archaeologists have asserted their own agendas in the reception of ancient materials.

One of the primary characteristics of reception studies concerned with the past is the diversity of time periods and genres of reception studied. Equally important is the range of different methods and theoretical frameworks employed to analyse them. A researcher concerned with the reception of ancient Greece, for example, may focus on a particular period such as the nineteenth century and might choose novels as their primary data. Others might specialise in eighteenth-century responses to prehistory as presented in art and illustration, whilst some may study the twentieth-century engagement with ancient Rome in film. Some reception specialists cover several time periods, while others study a combination of genres, and there are also those who focus on a single reception 'event' in great detail (e.g. a film or a body of receptions produced in response to one ancient source). In all of these cases, it is necessary to draw upon a variety of conceptual and methodological approaches and specialist knowledge. This, together with the fact that reception specialists come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, ensures that many different foci have been highlighted in the study of the reception of the past. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges for reception researchers is balancing expertise in the past (ancient times and places, historical responses) and the present (modern genres of reception, contemporary critical analysis). Added to this is an awareness of how our knowledge of ancient sources is constantly evolving and being revised, which in itself has an impact on receptions. While the tendency (and necessity) of combining different areas of expertise has left reception studies vulnerable to criticism, key publications in the field serve as important models for interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities. Work on reception, for instance, not only tells us about how people have interpreted the past in relation to changing historical and cultural contexts but also offers new insights on the past that may have not been revealed through conventional disciplinary investigation.

Ancient Egypt has been selected as the focus for this discussion on reception and knowledge formation for three reasons. First, Egyptian Revival traditions (which include the representation ancient Egypt in the arts from antiquity to the present), are generally perceived to be separate from and inconsequential to Egyptological research. Excluded from the narratives of the history of Egyptology, which like many histories of archaeology focus on key discoveries, publications and institutional developments, Egyptian Revival traditions are seen as 'creative' or imaginative responses to ancient Egypt as opposed to intellectual ones and accordingly, are treated as 'decorative by-products' of research rather than participants in the creation of disciplinary histories. Conversely, the constant production and recycling of representations of ancient cultures and the reworking of these views in light of new sources of influence are important components of the history of Egyptology and archaeology. A second reason for focusing on ancient Egypt is the extent to which it has attracted such an enormous range and wealth of reception responses, demonstrating how the past is of great interest and meaning to audiences beyond academia. Egyptologist Bob Brier's (2013:8) claim that 'Egypt excites people in ways no other country can', is closely linked to the abundance and reach of Egyptian Revival traditions. Indeed, the widespread use of ancient Egyptian subjects, forms and motifs in Western art is a field of research in its own right, having been defined as a distinctive movement in the history of art (see

below). The third reason for selecting ancient Egypt for reception analysis is that it is a highly suitable case study for challenging the tendency to privilege the study of the more learned and 'sophisticated' cultural responses to the past. Engagements with the past as manifested in popular culture have been assigned with a less significant role in understanding ancient cultures, yet we still know very little about the epistemological implications of such representations (i.e. their role in the creation/acquisition, establishment and dissemination of knowledge). While some genres of reception may have a more powerful impact on academic discourse than others (e.g. a museum exhibition versus designs on a cigarette box), *all* types of reception play their part in the process of generating ideas about the past.

Reception Study in Classics

Reception studies have transformed the discipline of classics, bringing about a much greater awareness of how responses to antiquity have shaped understandings of the classical world. Classicists working in reception studies address the ways in which ancient sources have been received and interpreted from antiquity to the present. Primarily focusing on the cultures of Greece and Rome, these specialists evaluate how the responses to antique writings (and to a lesser extent material culture) contribute to defining both classical antiquity and classics as a discipline. Through detailed studies of ancient works and their reception throughout the ages, classicists have shown how key sources have been interpreted and appropriated in relation to historical concerns and cultural practices. A central tenet of their research is that such enquiry not only informs us about changing perceptions of antiquity but also offers new insights on the ancient world. Accordingly, reception studies has been formally recognised as a subfield of classics, with its own set of questions, methods and theories. Signifying this status is the Oxford University Press series 'Studies in Classical Receptions: Classical Presences' (begun in 2006), the *Classical Receptions Journal* (Oxford University Press, established 2009), and the Cambridge University Press series 'Classics After Antiquity' (initiated in 2013). The Classical Reception Studies Network CRSN (hosted by the Open University, UK) reveals the proliferation of conferences on the subject and the e-journal *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* (Open University), demonstrates how the views of those engaging with the classical world outside academe are thought to be worthy of consideration by classics scholars. Finally, the Imagines Project is generating new perspectives on the impact of antiquity in the visual and performing arts, including amongst its members creative artists who draw on antiquity for their inspiration (see Knippschild and Morcillo 2013). The aim of the following discussion on reception studies in classics is to highlight the development of a distinctive view on the nature of reception as an *interactive* process that is central to the interpretation of the past.

Prior to the publication of field descriptors for reception studies in classics, the foundations for the subject were laid with publications on the 'legacy' of the ancient world. Of critical importance here is the work of Richard Jenkyns, who examined the Victorian response to classical culture in writing, art, poetry and opera. In *Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980), Jenkyns traced the links made between ancient Greek and British society, documenting how the classical world was presented as a model for the

British to aspire to. In his *Dignity and Decadence: Victorian Art and the Classical Inheritance* (1991) and the edited volume *The Legacy of Rome* (1992), the importance of art, literature, poetry and opera in creating powerful ideas about the past was further demonstrated. Other classicists soon began to widen the network of material considered appropriate for reception analysis. *Roman Presences* (1999), edited by Catharine Edwards, considered more popular responses to antiquity in the genres of film and novels, revealing the variety of ways in which ancient Rome was used to express national identities in Britain, France and Germany. More recently, the field has expanded its remit to include studies of the reception of antiquity in museum displays and public exhibitions (e.g. Hales 2006; Challis 2008; Whitehead 2009; Hales and Paul 2011; Nicols 2015), with a notable rise in the study of cinematic representations of the ancient world (see below). All of this work, although not explicitly defined as reception analysis, has contributed to establishing the importance of non-specialist audiences in shaping meaning.

Important efforts to delineate the field of reception studies in classics have been made by Lorna Hardwick and Charles Martindale, both of whom have outlined the aims, methods and theoretical premises of the subject in a series of works published over the last decade. In her *Reception Studies* of 2003, Hardwick (2003:10) justified the value of the subject on the basis that receptions affect perceptions of the ancient world and thus require analysis. According to her, the focus of reception studies is the 'two-way relationship between the source text or culture and the new work and receiving culture' (Hardwick 2003:4). In addressing the interaction between ancient and modern texts and contexts, reception analysis is seen as having implications for the critical analysis of both past and present: 'It used sometimes to be said that reception studies only yield insights into the receiving society…but they also focus critical attention back towards the ancient source and sometimes frame new questions or retrieve aspects of the source which have been marginalised or forgotten' (Hardwick 2003:4). It is this latter claim about the potential of reception studies to offer new insights on antiquity that has been contentious and which has taken longer for classicists to accept than the more readily agreed notion that receptions are useful in informing us how audiences viewed the past throughout history. This has certainly been the case for archaeology as well, where receptions of the past are acknowledged to be useful in revealing the assumptions and ideas about ancient cultures that non-archaeological audiences hold, but are not thought to be significant in telling us about the past itself.

In defining classical reception studies, Hardwick is concerned to outline the appropriate methodological approaches required for this kind of research. Two distinct steps are outlined, including the examination of the nature of the reception and the discussion of how it is evaluated, described and analysed. The former centres on examining the artistic or intellectual processes involved in selecting, imitating or adapting ancient works, addressing how the source was received and 'refigured' by the artist, writer or designer. This first step also requires looking at the relationship between this process and the contexts in which it takes place. For instance, what is the receivers' knowledge of the source, how was this obtained and what was its purpose? The second aspect of reception analysis requires investigation of the way in which responses to ancient sources are defined and appraised. As Hardwick (2003:5) states, because our work is influenced by current interests, we should outline the criteria we employ to assess receptions. Similar methodological arguments have been made for the study of

archaeological receptions, where the need to identify and characterise the various epistemological 'devices' used in representations of the past has been emphasised (see below).

In 2006, Charles Martindale provided further clarification on the aims and aspirations of reception studies in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*. Providing a broad definition of the field: 'Reception within classics encompasses all work concerned with postclassical material', Martindale (2006:1,2) notes how other disciplines use different terminologies to address reception such as the history of scholarship, the history of the book and reader response. A more detailed account of the field is provided in his chapter on 'Reception' for the *Companion to the Classical Tradition*, where the foundational work of Jauss and Iser is outlined, notably the concept of 'dialogue' between source and receiver, which Martindale sees as central to defining reception (Martindale 2007:298). Importantly, Martindale notes that the distinction between the ancient source 'in itself' and the way it has been understood in later centuries is 'blurred', whereby the past is shaped by the present as much as the present is formed by the past. This is a point archaeologists have debated for many years, where the study of the socio-politics of archaeology has been central to the establishment of reception orientated research. Martindale also discusses the implications of the terminology used in association with reception, where reception is seen to reflect the dynamic and dialogic character of interpretation, whereas the term 'appropriation' is considered to downplay the 'possibility of dialogue, the capacity of the text to resist our attempts to master it, [and] its capacity to modify our sensibility' (Martindale 2007:300). The idea that it is the *engagement* with original sources and not the sources *per se* that plays the key part in generating knowledge about the ancient world is aptly summed up with the phrase 'reception does not claim that the customer is always right, just that she is always party to the transaction' (Martindale 2007:302).

Following her earlier statements on reception studies in classics, Hardwick (2010:312) went on to promote diversification in the research agenda by exploring the way ancient texts were 'refigured' in postcolonial contexts. In demonstrating how contemporary writers used 'classical referents as a way of exploring their own cultural identities and those of their societies', she opened up the field to avenues of enquiry not traditionally seen to be the concern of classics (Hardwick 2010:312). This broadening out of the reception agenda was promoted in *The Classical Tradition* (2010), edited by Antony Grafton, Glenn Most and Salvatore Settis. In their preface, the editors emphasise the continuing influence of Greece and Rome in the postclassical world, arguing that reflecting back on how classics have been used over the centuries 'may suggest new angles from which modern scholarship can view antiquity itself' (Grafton *et al.* 2010:ix). With the publication of *Companion to Classical Receptions* in 2011 (co-edited by Hardwick and Christopher Stray), reception studies was effectively sanctified by the discipline of classics. Here, a revised definition of reception is offered: 'By receptions, we mean the ways in which Greek and Roman material has been transmitted, translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imaged and represented' (Hardwick and Stray 2011:1). They also note that prior to the appearance of their volume, reception was typically placed in a separate section in classics companion volumes, where it was usually featured at the end. This, they argue, artificially divides reception processes from the analysis of the classical texts and contexts and denies the 'dialogical relationship between reception and the analysis of the ancient contexts' (Hardwick and

Stray 2011:4). This has also been the case for archaeology, where chapters on reception have been placed at the end of handbooks and reader volumes (Moser 2001, 2008, 2012b), suggesting that the study of wider cultural responses to archaeological sources is separate and detached from the more 'formal' archaeological analysis of the past.

Recognition of the 'dialogical relationship' between receptions and ancient texts was recently highlighted in the new Cambridge University Press series 'Classics After Antiquity', where the editors assert 'Rather than regarding reception as an epiphenomenon of Classics, we see it as the discipline's engine' (Blanshard *et al*. 2013:xi). Furthermore, with the works in the new series, the editors hope to show that the history of classics as a discipline cannot be separated from the 'roles that ancient literature and artefacts have played in subsequent epochs' (Blanshard *et al*. 2013:xi). That reception studies have significantly evolved since Hardwick provided her definition of the field in 2003 can be seen in the aims articulated for the new Classics After Antiquity series. The editors state, for instance, that the aim is to 'stimulate a re-evaluation of assumptions about the relationship between Greek and Roman classical pasts and modern histories', 'to stress the dynamism of the relationship between classical and postclassical worlds', to look at the 'remarkable variegated roles that ancient literature and artefacts have played in subsequent epochs', and to assert how 'history of 'Classics' as a discipline cannot be separated from these stories, even when they take us far beyond the classroom, library or museum' (Blanshard *et al*. 2013: xi-xii). Within the space of a decade, reception studies has significantly expanded its scope, refined its conceptual basis and dismantled the notion that classics is a discipline solely concerned with the study of ancient sources. This is an important development that has implications for other disciplines concerned with the study of the past. To see such a long-established discipline redefine itself as a consequence of the growing interest in understanding how knowledge about antiquity is shaped by responses to the past suggests that other disciplines might also embrace such changes. That reception studies have been more readily adopted in classics than other fields may be due to the fact that antiquity is the subject of such widespread treatment in cultural domains and popular cultures, but also derives from the established research methods of classics, which involve cross-period and cross-textual analysis. These two factors can certainly be said to be characteristic of archaeology as well, so we might expect reception studies to significantly evolve for our discipline as well.

Despite the fact that reception studies have been firmly placed on the map in classics, the parameters of the field remain a subject of debate. Although Martindale (2013:177,170) envisages a situation where reception analysis will be integral to research in classics and not an addition, he believes that researchers must acquire particular skills in order for reception studies to be taken seriously. This requirement stems from the 'cross-disciplinary character' of reception analysis and the 'need for credibility within all the disciplines involved' (Martindale 2013:170); a point that relates to my earlier comments about the interdisciplinary character of reception studies, where the necessity of mastering knowledge of antiquity, of different historical periods and of different genres of reception was highlighted. Another concern expressed by Martindale is the selection of receptions suitable for analysis. In noting the proliferation of publications on filmic portrayals of antiquity, Martindale (2013:176) determines that 'many of the films about antiquity that classicists tend to study are neither important works of art nor completely interesting, and much that is written

about them is frankly banal'. As an example, he criticises the film *Gladiator* because it 'does not present a thoroughly imagined classical world' (Martindale 2013:176). Interestingly, he acknowledges that while the film might achieve a level of thoroughness in terms of the material culture of the ancient world, even in that respect it 'hardly matches the visual sophistication of (say) the paintings of Alma-Tadema' (Martindale 2013:176). While his point that priority should be given to receptions that bring about a 'significant dialogue with antiquity' is a fair one, for an archaeologist, the material elements in *Gladiator* signify important developments in the interpretation of ancient objects. The way in which the architecture and objects have been represented for instance (i.e. photorealistic computer-generated imagery), raises significant issues about the epistemological impact of particular visual modes of portraying antiquity. Thus, while for classicists such a film might be deemed less worthy of attention than others, for our discipline at least, this is a reception worth writing about. Finally, in seeking to ensure the calibre of research in the field, Martindale expresses hostility to 'superficial reception studies' on the basis that they do not generate debate or inform us about the classical (Martindale 2013:177). In future discussions, there is bound to be more said on hierarchies of scholarly potential, but Martindale's comments reveal that there remain concerns about the quality of research in the field.

Reception Studies in History, Art History and Film Studies

Although researchers in history, art history and film studies have not published explicit field-defining statements on reception studies to the extent that classicists have, they have nevertheless made important and distinct contributions to work on the reception of the past. The bulk of reception analysis in history and art history has been carried out on the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most particularly in Europe, when an interest in the ancient world was articulated on many levels. An abundance of material is available for the reception specialist to consider here, including political, literary and educational writings, museum exhibitions, novels and poetry, the visual arts (painting, architecture, sculpture), theatre and opera, decorative arts (including design and illustration), photography, film and music. While reception researchers from art history have focused on the visual responses to the ancient world in the form of artworks and exhibitions, historians have considered how a suite of representational genres contribute to the reconstruction of the past. Archaeological reception work is aligned with both of these disciplinary traditions in that it recognises the significance of visual representations in generating powerful ideas about the past and is also concerned with exploring the diverse ways of communicating antiquity. The aim of the following section is to outline the way in which reception analysis has expanded well beyond literary theory to become a prominent area of investigation in disciplines concerned with historical research.

The contribution of historians to reception analysis is especially strong in the field of Victorian studies. Victorian specialists have addressed the ways in which British society sought to define its own culture via multiple engagements with classical antiquity. Through studies of major Victorian writers working in the realms of political philosophy, theology and education, historians have demonstrated how classics were central to expressions of national identity in Victorian Britain. An important early work on the

subject is Frank Turner's *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (1981), which documents the extensive preoccupation with antiquity on many levels of intellectual thinking. According to Turner (1981:xii), the Victorians made the 'antique past and its peoples uniquely their own' and the classics provided a 'means for achieving self-knowledge and cultural self-confidence within the emerging order of liberal democracy and secularism' (Turner 1981:xii). While Turner's concern with the Victorian response to the classical world was to gain insight into Victorian intellectual life (as opposed to learning about antiquity), studies like this were critical in demonstrating the extent to which audiences 'used' antiquity to make sense of the present (see also Vance 1997 on the reception of ancient Rome in Victorian culture).

The ways in which British thinkers and writers engaged with ancient Greece in the nineteenth century and their tendency to reconfigure antiquity to promote a particular kind of identity for Britain has remained of much interest to historians. More recent historical reception studies, however, have challenged the trend in the earlier accounts to focus on the appropriation of classics by cultural elites. Accordingly, a new tradition of reception research has been established by cultural historians who advocate a widening of the research programme to investigate the many other groups in society who engaged with antiquity. Notable examples include Simon Goldhill's *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity* (2011) and Edmund Richardson's *Classical Victorians: Scholars, Scoundrels and Generals in Pursuit of Antiquity* (2013), both of which emphasise the complexity and diversity of the engagement with classics in nineteenth-century Britain. According to Goldhill (2011:6), earlier studies of the role of classics in the nineteenth century emphasise its 'drive toward political conservatism and its role as the educator of imperial gentlemen'. Antiquity, he argues, was also embedded in other contemporary concerns such as political revolutionary idealism, sexual counter-culturalism and the articulation of a democratic political vision. Consequently, in Goldhill's account, Greece and Rome are shown to have influenced Victorian culture on many different cultural, political and social levels. This kind of exploration is also endorsed by Richardson (2013), who shows how antiquity functioned as a primary vehicle for expressing a host of identities and agendas. According to him 'Victorian classicism is labyrinthine'; 'it was never placid, but rather a space where grandeur and failure—centre and margins, scholar and murderer, bankrupt and aristocrat—were always finding one another, always entwined' (Richardson 2013:9,6). The value of works such as these is not only that that they elucidate upon aspects of the engagement with the past beyond appropriation and celebration but also that they embrace the more 'popular' responses to antiquity as important data for the reception specialist.

Art historians have made a significant contribution to the study of the reception of the ancient world with their examination of the representation of classical subjects in artworks produced since the Renaissance. Of central importance in understanding how ancient cultures were perceived and defined outside the realm of scholarly writing, their work shows how artists created powerful and influential interpretations of antiquity. Although largely imaginative in its response, the artistic interaction with antiquity informed the way in which the classical past came to be understood, and painters were no less important than writers in influencing the understanding of ancient times. Amongst the many scholars in this field are specialists in the historicist and archaeologically inspired paintings of the second half of the nineteenth century. Leading researchers here include Elizabeth Prettejohn and Rosemary Barrow, who have

researched portrayals of classical antiquity in Victorian painting (see also Bohrer [2003] who has examined the artistic reception of ancient Assyria). Prettejohn (1996a:33) notes how painters specialising in the portrayal of antiquity, such as Lawrence Alma-Tadema, created powerful and intimate visions of the ancient world by stripping it of heroes and mythological figures, and instead depicting detailed classical genre scenes. These scenes were characterised by an emphasis on the material aspects of the classical world, with great efforts devoted to incorporating archaeological details sourced from museum collections and publications. As Prettejohn (1996b:107) notes, however, although painters such as Alma-Tadema were thought to capture the world of antiquity with great fidelity, they were also criticised for failing to convey its 'soul'. Despite this limitation, the engagement with archaeological materials in such paintings redefined the ancient world in a manner that many could understand and relate to, challenging the notion it was solely the preserve of educated elites.

Further insights on the manner in which historicising artworks served to define the past have been made by Barrow (2001, 2007), in her work on the reception of the classical world in art. Similar to the classicists cited above, Barrow (2007:viii) explains that her work on reception concerns the 'two-way relationship between source and reception', where the aim is 'not only to shed light on Victorian receptions but to also consider if such receptions can also lead to renewed understandings of their sources'. That perceptions of the ancient world were transformed by the representation of antiquities in history paintings is an important aspect of reception analysis because it highlights the role of visual modes of communication in generating distinct perspectives on the past. Also highlighting the work of Alma-Tadema, Barrow (2001:6) describes this artist 'as a learned and conceptually sophisticated reader of the ancient world' who presented both a 'plausible visualisation of antiquity and an intriguing construction of ancient political and social life'. According to her, Alma-Tadema's paintings of ancient Rome reconciled the tradition of an idealised antiquity with a world realistically reconstructed from ancient sources (Barrow 2001:7). It is this fusion of past traditions of representing antiquity with an aspiration to convey the richness of the material dimension of life in the past that brought about a different appreciation and awareness of ancient worlds in the nineteenth century (Moser forthcoming).

The analysis of portrayals of antiquity in film constitutes one of the most rapidly growing areas of reception studies. Ancient civilisations were a primary focus of the cinema when it emerged around the turn of the century and an intense engagement with antiquity was maintained by the film industry throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The investigation of cinematic renditions of the ancient world was pioneered by the work of classicists Jon Solomon (1978[2001]), Martin Winkler (1991, 2001, 2004, 2006) and Maria Wyke (1997), all of whom have demonstrated how film writers and directors drew on the iconography of classical civilisations to tell stories about humanity in the past and present. The principles of reception analysis as it pertains to film have been more explicitly articulated in Joshel, Malamud and McGuire's *Imperial Projections* (2001), where the editors stress that the assessment of filmic portrayals in terms of whether they accurately capture antiquity is not the primary issue. Rather, they argue, we should regard such representations as 'dialogues with the past whose value resides precisely in how the past is reformulated in light of the present' (Joshel *et al.* 2001:2). Moreover, as L. Kirsten Day (2008:4) contends in *Celluloid Classics: New Perspectives on Classical Antiquity in Modern Cinema*, by examining how films

'change, adapt, or distort classical material, scholars can help audiences become better informed about antiquity'. Further clarification on the nature of reception analysis as applied to films featuring the ancient world is offered by Day (2008:2), who introduces her overview of the field as such: 'representation of classical antiquity in pop culture has grown into a vigorous sub-field of classics and is increasingly recognised as a legitimate means of exploring our past in relation to the present'. As she observes, however, this development has been controversial because the 'interest in film in classics was long hindered by the notion of a divide between high culture, where most classicists traditionally situate the objects of their study, and low, a label that many academics, at least in years past, would assign to filmic production because of the newness of the medium, its reproducibility, and its popular appeal' (Day 2008:2). This observation relates to the comments made above regarding the tendency to rate particular genres of reception above others in terms of their potential to yield meaningful insights on antiquity. With the publication of numerous studies on antiquity and film, the value of all types of films in defining the past is now being explored (e.g. Cyrino 2005; Nisbet 2006; Paul 2010, 2013; Theodorakopolous 2010; Michelakis and Wyke 2013; Morcillo *et al*. 2014).

Alongside the work of the classicists specialising in film are the insights of film historians on how classicism has been exploited to serve the aims and agendas of the film industry. An important example is *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism* (2013) by Michael Williams, which documents how Hollywood adopted antiquity as a means for encouraging an interest in Hollywood and its stars. More specifically, Williams (2013:4–5) shows how the leading actors of the early twentieth century were modelled on classical ideals, where the 'iconography of stardom implicitly and explicitly references a visual culture that frequently extends back to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration'. As with many other receptions of the past, the interest in antiquity as manifested in this context had little to do with trying to understand the classical world, but this does not mean such responses are outside the remit of classical reception studies. As film scholars like Williams (2013:202) show, the cinematic industry drew extensively on the Victorian love of the ancient world and reinvented its own visual 'aura of antiquity' to serve the interests of Hollywood. The study of such reinventions complements the research of classicists who are addressing the implications of film for the understanding of antiquity. As Michelakis and Wyke (2013:3) assert, the strong presence of ancient worlds in silent cinema opens up questions for the disciplines of film studies, Classics and Egyptology, and raises the key issue of how views of antiquity changed as a result of film.

Archaeological Representation and Theories of Reconstructing the Past

In the *Companion to Classical Receptions*, under the section entitled 'Material Reception Studies', James Porter (2011: 447) notes how 'Archaeology and material culture have reception histories of their own that deserve to be recovered'. Similar to classics reception scholars, archaeologists have endeavoured to establish how responses to the ancient past inform the reconstruction of long distant cultures and ancestors. Histories of archaeological reception have been produced since the 1990s, when archaeologists began to examine the portrayal of ancient material culture and ancient

humans in visual representations of the past (e.g. Moser 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999; Gifford-Gonzalez 1994; Holtorf 1995; Piccini 1996; James 1996; Molyneaux 2006). This research grew out of studies on archaeological theory and the socio-political contexts of archaeological practice, where archaeologists sought to establish how the circumstances of 'the present' shaped interpretations of the past (see Moser 2001:265). What distinguished the new wave of research on reception from this work in archaeological theory was the attention directed at 'non-academic' modes of reception, particularly visual representations and museum displays. The central idea developed in relation to these genres of communication was that responses to ancient life as articulated in images, art and museum displays played a role in the development of theories about the evolution of humanity. Since then, archaeologists have continued to scrutinise the wider cultural engagement with antiquity, casting the net much wider in terms of the types of reception that are studied (e.g. film, novels, television, computer games, comics and souvenirs; see references in Moser 2008, 2012b). Whereas in classical reception studies, it is film analysis that represents the biggest growth area; in archaeological reception, it is the analysis of images and museum displays that remain the primary subjects of investigation. This emphasis reflects the fact that the archaeological dimension of reception concerns the response to objects (artefacts/structures) and people/ancient humans (ancestors), and is accordingly heavily visual. It can also be linked to archaeology's close links with museum and heritage studies, where the dynamics of visual communication is a primary focus.

Just as classicists have written field-defining statements on reception studies, archaeologists have produced subject descriptors for the field in disciplinary handbooks. In 2001, the field of 'archaeological representation' was introduced as a subject specialism in *Archaeological Theory Today*, where it was said to address the 'ways in which knowledge about the past is constructed through the different modes of presenting our disciplinary findings' (Moser 2001:262). The premise for this field of study was outlined as such: 'the theory of archaeological representation asserts that non-academic forms of presentation are not merely by-products of academic research, but rather that they have their own distinctive ways of participating in the process of making meaning' (Moser 2001:262). Establishing the epistemological function of receptions was highlighted as a central concern in archaeology because this, it was felt, would help dismantle the notion that scholarly interpretations of ancient 'sources' are solely responsible for generating an understanding of the past. Reception researchers in archaeology aimed to show that in addition to the arguments based on academic investigation of primary data, there are a host of other interpretive forces involved in the reconstruction of the past. Most significantly perhaps, archaeologists believed that the latter could have an impact on disciplinary findings. In another 'handbook chapter', written with the expressed purpose of situating reception studies within mainstream archaeological research, the following definition was offered:

> Archaeological representation is a recently established research specialism within archaeology that centres on examining how non-academic representations of the past have contributed to the construction of knowledge about ancient societies and culture. Such representations exist in the form of illustrations, museum displays, media reports, artworks (including the decorative arts), literature, film, staged re-enactments, advertising and computer games. Archaeological representations can

> be two- or three-dimensional, visual or textual, static or performative. Furthermore, they can either depict past cultures, archaeological sites, or the material remains of ancient societies (Moser 2008:1048).

The question of how knowledge about the past has been shaped by forms of cultural expression such as art, literature, cinema and exhibitions is now being investigated by a growing community of researchers in the discipline (e.g. Finn 2004; Holtorf 2005, 2007; Moser 2006, 2012a; Parker 2009; Sanders 2009; Marwick 2010; Seymour 2014). Studies of visualisation are the fastest developing area of reception analysis in archaeology, where researchers have outlined the complex and varied ways in which images affect perceptions of the past and are integral to all levels of the interpretive enterprise in archaeology (e.g. Smiles and Moser 2005; Van Dyke 2006; Cochrane and Russell 2007; Perry 2009, 2011; Moser 2014). These publications have looked at the use of images in the discipline over time, revealing how particular types of imagery communicated ideas about ancient cultures that have 'fed back' into understandings of the past. Here, archaeologists have moved beyond addressing the material details of visual representation to interrogating the broader epistemological implications of the way the past has been visualised.

Despite the progress made in establishing reception studies in archaeology, one of the key challenges faced is the need to establish how intellectual traditions of interpretation relate to more creative forms of reception. While the former addresses how scholars and writers concerned with studying ancient cultures have construed antiquity throughout the ages, the latter concerns the wide variety of engagements with the past that occurred alongside (and intersected with) narratives of intellectual history. Thus, for archaeology, reception research does not centre on identifying successive traditions of scholarly enquiry in relation to major discoveries, methodological advances and institutional development but, instead, focuses on the engagement with the past outside the realms of academe. This does not mean that the history of disciplinary thinking is not important to reception specialists. Rather, reception traditions are believed to interact with intellectual history and the connection between the two is seen to warrant further scrutiny. Additionally, it is important to make a clear distinction between an expression of interest in ancient cultures as manifested in learned accounts and the translation of this interest into the arts and other realms of expression. The latter, for instance, are often designed with the intention of capturing a *sense* of the past; they are not intended to be an authoritative account or offer a comprehensive picture of ancient cultures. Intellectual curiosity about the past is one level of engagement, and the desire to 'interact' with the past in terms of creative expression is another. It is with the latter, in particular, that we see the re-shaping and defining of the past in more symbolic ways, which in themselves tap into and get enmeshed with its more academic definition.

While archaeological reception studies have demonstrated that responses to antiquity brought about particular views of the past, identifying the precise ways in which they have impacted knowledge of antiquity has been challenging. Because the connections between receptions and subject knowledge are not typically linked in a causal way, impact is often indirect and has to be traced through 'secondary routes' (see e.g. Moser 2012a: 211-247). Methodological work is clearly needed here, as in order to carry out more critical accounts of reception, we need clarity on terminology, appropriate categories/themes for analysis, and on the distinctive qualities of receptions relevant

to knowledge making. In the remainder of this discussion, previous attempts to identify the conventions and devices deployed by archaeological representations to generate meaning (Moser 2001, 2010) are developed in relation to identifying the attributes and themes characterising the reception of ancient Egypt.

The Visual Codification of Ancient Egypt

For many centuries, ancient Egypt has been successful in capturing the public imagination. The reception of ancient Egypt in the fine and decorative arts, in literature, film, exhibitions, theatre and the media has been extensive, and the history of its treatment in these areas reveals it to be a highly adaptable culture to represent. Not only is ancient Egypt visually striking, with a rich and colourful body of art to draw on, it is also associated with qualities such as monumentality, strength and immortality. There are of course deeper and more complex associations that have rendered ancient Egypt of great interest to people over the centuries, such as its status as an exotic culture that represented an early stage in Western civilisation, the symbolism of Egypt as a culture that sharply contrasts, yet is linked, with Western society, and the significance of ancient Egypt in biblical accounts. The aesthetic qualities of ancient Egyptian material culture, with its distinctive iconography and striking colour schemes, has been particularly influential, inspiring widespread treatment in numerous reception traditions. Whilst such responses to ancient Egypt have been cited in histories of Egyptology, they are rarely analysed as contributing factors in the formation of the discipline.

Research on the Egyptian Revival goes back to the 1920s, with an important attempt to define the subject made by Roos (1940) in relation to the North American 'manifestation' of the phenomenon (see Humbert 1989 for a comprehensive bibliography of publications in the field up to 1990). In the 1950s, art historians Hugh Honour (1954, 1955), and Nikolaus Pevsner and Susi Lang (1956) begun to document the reception of ancient Egypt in European art. They singled out highlights in the long trajectory of Egyptian Revival traditions, emphasising how the adaption of ancient Egyptian elements in art and design was a practice that evolved in significant ways since the Renaissance. While the publication of books that reproduced paintings of Egyptian monuments and historicising scenes of ancient Egypt demonstrated the existence of an immense body of artistic responses to the subject (e.g. Clayton 1982; De Meulenaere *et al.* 1992), efforts to define and scrutinise the wider cultural phenomenon described as 'Egyptomania' were pioneered from the 1970s by the Egyptologist and art historian Jean-Marcel Humbert (e.g. 1971, 1974, 1984, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1996, 1998), and the architectural historians Richard Carrott (1978) and James Stevens Curl (1982, 1994, 2005). While each of these scholars has made significant advances in documenting the wealth and variety of Egyptian-inspired artworks, Humbert is unparalleled in his efforts to assess Egyptomania as a pervasive and widespread cultural movement. Major exhibitions on the Egyptian Revival have also encouraged an appreciation of the extent to which Egyptian antiquities have been represented in all areas of Western art (e.g. Conner 1983; Brier 1992; Humbert *et al.* 1994). While art historians continued to develop the research topic (e.g. Esposito 2003; Curran 2007; Curran *et al.* 2009), archaeologists also began to contribute to the area, suggesting that the artistic

engagement with ancient Egypt in the West should be included in Egyptological research (e.g. Humbert and Price 2003; Jeffreys 2003; Macdonald and Rice 2003).

Major studies that have focused on the concept of reception in relation to the cultural 'consumption' of ancient Egypt include *Akhenaten, History, fantasy and ancient Egypt* (Montserrat 2000), *Holding Egypt, tracing the reception of the Description de l'Égypte in nineteenth century Great Britain* (Bednarski 2005), *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Curran 2007), *The Mummy's Curse. Mummymania in the English-speaking world* (Day 2006), *Wondrous Curiosities, Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (Moser 2006), *Designing Antiquity, Owen Jones, the Crystal Palace and Ancient Egypt* (Moser 2012a), *Egypt in England* (Elliott 2012), and *Egyptomania, our three thousand year obsession with the land of the Pharaohs* (Brier 2013). While Brier's book is a general and popular treatment of the subject aimed at a wide audience, he nevertheless makes the critical point that the reception of Egypt has 'its own stratigraphy, its own chronology' and that the history of Egyptomania is a 'story worth telling' (Brier 2013:17). Outlining this chronology, establishing the key events in the 'story', and assessing the impact of reception events on knowledge of ancient Egypt remains an important challenge for Egyptologists and reception specialists. Because the trajectory of the reception of ancient Egypt is long (beginning in antiquity) and manifests itself in such a diverse range of traditions (from art styles to religious cults), there are many parts of this history that remain unexplored. Furthermore, detailed critical analysis of how the engagement with ancient Egypt contributed to the interpretation of this culture is limited and more conceptual work needs to be undertaken so that we can ascertain the impact of such receptions on knowledge production.

Recent work on the reception of ancient Egypt and its impact on the cultural imagination and artistic expression of Europe, North America and other nations has highlighted the potential of exploring the two-way exchange between the 'formal' or academic characterisations of ancient Egypt and more creative representations of it. This development relates to the growing interest in classics, history and archaeology in the way receptions feed back into scholarly discourse and influence understandings of the past. Work on ancient Egypt as featured in literature, politics and the formation of modern identities in Egypt has also contributed to recognition of the connections between receptions and knowledge formation (e.g. Reid 2001; Trafton 2004; Colla 2007), as have recent histories of Egyptology which are becoming more sensitive to reception (e.g. Carruthers 2015; Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology. Vol. I: From Antiquity to 1881*, forthcoming). Research on ancient Egypt in film is also contributing to an awareness of the implications of reception, revealing how a highly influential tradition for defining this civilisation was established very early on. Jasmine Day's (2006) study of mummymania in film sought to dismantle the artificial distinction between academic and popular notions of ancient Egypt, and as Antonia Lant (2013:53) emphasises, ancient Egypt had a 'special bond' to cinema, which was manifested in a 'powerfully recognisable visual iconography' (see also Lant 1992; Cowie and Johnson 2002; Tyson Smith 2007; Huckvale 2012). Related to this research are studies of the cinematic visions of ancient Egypt incorporated within the themed architectural constructions combining entertainment and retail. As Margaret Malamud (2000:38) explains, 'One of the striking aspects of Las Vegas's simulation of Egypt is the totalising of the themed experience….The Luxor's architecture, interior design, and immersive cinematic technologies provide a set for performing the romance of Egypt, and they exploit and perpetuate Western fantasies of ancient Egypt'. Again, although

such receptions are not intended to present a sophisticated scholarly interpretation of ancient cultures, their highly visual and immersive nature and the constant referencing to archaeological elements lend weight to the ideas of ancient Egypt that are communicated.

In the account that follows, the concern is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the reception of ancient Egypt. As Whitehouse (1997:161) has already remarked, 'Egyptomania has been amply documented in its visible manifestations; the focus should now shift to a more penetrating analysis of the mental constructs of Egypt that lie behind this selective use of its imagery'. Accordingly, the objective here is to tease out some of the major characteristics of this highly compelling tradition in the reception of the ancient world and to outline key conceptual issues concerning its investigation. Examples are primarily drawn from the nineteenth century when there was a proliferation of responses to ancient Egypt and when the reception of ancient Egypt closely intersected with the establishment of archaeology as a discipline. Similarly, although textual/literary receptions are an important component of the representation of ancient Egypt, it is the visual modes of engagement that are considered here. This emphasis stems from the wealth and depth of engagement with ancient Egypt in visual realms and the fact that visual analysis is my area of expertise. Images, it is argued, are important 'sites' where knowledge is enacted and where ideas about the past are mapped out. Another focus of this discussion is the reception of ancient Egypt in the Western world. Again, while representations of ancient Egypt in the art and culture of the Islamic world are a significant part of the topic, it is the European and North American traditions of Egyptomania that have occupied reception scholars and with which I am most familiar. Finally, while there are bound to be relevant themes other than those singled out here, a preliminary attempt to identify useful tropes for the study of Egyptian receptions is offered including: terminologies and typologies for the reception of ancient Egypt; foundations and phases of Egyptomania; contexts of reception; sources, causes and triggers; the constitutive nature of receptions; iconography and modes of representation; and hierarchies of significance and impact.

Terminologies and Typologies for the Reception of Ancient Egypt

It is vital to address issues of terminology and typology as they apply to the reception of ancient Egypt because so many different terms are used to describe the subject, and there is little consensus on the types of receptions included. While various terms have been used to refer to the reception of ancient Egypt in realms beyond scholarship, notably Egyptian Revival, Egyptian Style, Egyptian taste, Nile Style, Neo-Egyptian, Egyptiaca, Egyptologia and Egyptomania, it is the latter that is the most widely used term. Egyptomania appears to have been introduced by Egyptologist Jean Leclant (1969), but it was Humbert who explicitly defined and applied the term from the 1970s. In English speaking publications, early use of Egyptomania was made by the art historian Rudolf Wittkower (1975) in his account of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Egyptian inspired designs of the eighteenth century (see below). The term was then employed in wider public domains when Egyptologist Bob Brier (1992) used it as the title for an exhibition in the USA in 1992, and again, when it was assigned as the title for a major international exhibition shown in Paris, Ottawa and Vienna in 1994 (Humbert *et al.* 1994). While Brier (1992:41) adopted an all-encompassing definition

of Egyptomania as the 'universal fascination with Egypt', Humbert defined Egyptomania as 'a single and specific phenomenon' that 'consists of a borrowing, of the most spectacular elements, from the grammar of ornament that is the original essence of ancient Egyptian art; these decorative elements are then given new life through new uses' (Humbert 1994:21). It is the latter phrase, 'given new life through new uses', that is perhaps most significant, as here Humbert is suggesting that examples of Egyptomania offer re-interpretations of ancient Egypt that assign it with new meanings. He continues, 'Egyptomania is more than a simple mania for Egypt. It is not enough to copy Egyptian forms—artists must "re-create" them in the cauldron of their sensibility and in the context of their times, or must give them an appearance of renewed vitality, a function other than the purpose for which they were originally intended' (Humbert 1994:21). This reference to the way receptions mould ancient forms according to the concerns and aspirations of the society in which they were created is of paramount importance in understanding the power of receptions to generate meanings.

Whilst Humbert's notion of 'renewed vitality' is critical, we should perhaps reconsider excluding the copying of Egyptian forms from Egyptomania, as copying can also assign Egyptian antiquities with meanings other than for the 'purpose for which they were originally intended'. Recent archaeological research on antiquarian illustration, which examines the modes of graphic representation used to record antiquities, has demonstrated that although ostensibly 'scientific', images intended to accurately document antiquities are also laden with representational complexities that can in themselves confer new identities on the objects (Moser 2014). Consequently, genres of representation such as artefact illustration can also be included within the remit of research on Egyptomania. The display of Egyptian antiquities in collections, which Humbert also excludes from Egyptomania, might also be studied as part of the Egyptomania phenomenon because as recent investigations have shown, practices of display and exhibition have been instrumental in attributing new meanings and identities to Egyptian antiquities (Moser 2006, 2012a; Doyon 2008; Riggs 2010, 2013). Even though the motives are different, in that copies and displays of Egyptian antiquities are designed to impart knowledge in a didactic way, whereas ceramics incorporating Egyptian iconography (for example) are not intended as 'serious' interpretations of ancient Egypt, *both* have the ability to imbue ancient Egypt with 'new life'. As reception specialists have argued, the boundaries between the more artistic and creative re-workings of ancient Egypt and those produced within contexts of scholarly reception are much more blurred than previously thought.

Beyond Humbert's critical efforts to characterise Egyptomania, many others have sought to clarify what the term means. For most, it refers to a fascination for ancient Egypt outside the walls of academe and whilst some adopt the term in a positive manner (e.g. Brier defines it as a love for ancient Egypt), others reflect on the negative connotations of the term. Helen Whitehouse (1997:158) for instance, describes it as an 'inelegant term' that refers to the 'craze' for things Egyptian and Egyptianising (see also Manassa 2013:22 on the association of the word with obsessive behaviour). Additionally, the use of the term Egyptomania has been questioned by Alison Moore (2002:531) who believes it 'suggests a compulsion, rather than a deliberate action within a political hegemony'. Commensurate with these concerns is the lack of consensus on the temporal limitations of Egyptomania. Some mark its beginnings in

the nineteenth century in direct association with Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt of 1798 (e.g. Manassa 2013:22), whilst others attribute its origins to the ancient Greeks (e.g. Brier 1992:41). Although Egyptomania is a pejorative word that evokes a sense of disproportionate and unconstrained passion for ancient Egypt, it is nevertheless the most encompassing term we have for the reception of ancient Egypt. 'Egyptian Revival' sounds more promising in that it does not have the same implications of an obsessive fixation with ancient Egypt, but this too has its limitations in that it suggests the reception of ancient Egypt is primarily an artistic movement ('Revival' being a term that is widely adopted in art history). 'Representations of ancient Egypt' is certainly more neutral as a description, but it does not convey the fact that this is a long established and widespread cultural movement, nor does it communicate the extent and level of engagement with this culture that the alternative terms offer. Because the reception of ancient Egypt is characterised by an intensity of interest and the engagement with this culture 'spread' so quickly to all areas of popular culture, the term Egyptomania is perhaps best maintained as the better of the options. Although it remains a problematic term, the emotive aspect of 'Egyptomania' conveys a certain truth about the treatment of the subject over the centuries.

The Foundation and Phases of Egyptomania

Egyptologists, art historians and archaeologists have identified a set of principal phases of Egyptomania in Western art and culture, including responses to Egypt in antiquity, rare examples from the Medieval period, Renaissance and early modern engagements, eighteenth century developments, the prolific nineteenth century response (connected with Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt of 1798), and the popular twentieth-century receptions (linked with the films of Cleopatra and the discovery of Tutankhamun) (e.g. Curl 1994; Humbert *et al.* 1994; Miles 2011; Brier 2013; Manassa 2013). Within some of these phases there were multiple distinct reception events, particularly in the nineteenth century phase, when a host of nations responded to discoveries in Egypt including, France, Germany, Italy, Britain and North America. In these countries alone, there were numerous 'episodes' that could be labelled as discreet phases in the reception of ancient Egypt. As further studies on the subject are carried out and different national trends in reception more fully documented, the phases of Egyptomania will be no doubt be significantly expanded and refined.

The visual reception history of ancient Egypt begins with the representation of Egyptian art forms in the art of Greece, Rome, Persia and Meroe. It can be traced to the first millennium BC, when the Canaanite (Late Bronze Age)/Phoenician (Iron Age) adoption of Egyptian motifs and themes made them favourable across the Near East and Mediterranean for luxury goods such as ivory furniture fittings and metal bowls. Of the reception traditions initiated in antiquity, it was the Roman response that evolved in significant ways (e.g. Roullet 1972; Ziegler 1994; Versluys 2002; Ashton 2004). Initially manifested in the erection of a series of Egyptian obelisks in Rome (Iverson 1972; Sorek 2006; Curran *et al*. 2009), the Roman engagement with ancient Egypt expanded to include the manufacturing of artworks incorporating Egyptian elements. The re-presentation of Egyptian antiquities in new architectural contexts, together with the creation of Egyptianising works, ensured that at this early stage in its reception history, Egyptian art was deemed amenable to adaptation and stylistic appropriation. Of

particular significance were the Egyptianising efforts of Roman sculptors, who with their representations of sphinxes, lions and zoomorphic gods, laid the foundations for successive artistic traditions based on Egyptian motifs and elements. Complementing their work were the artists who decorated Roman interiors with mosaics and wall paintings based on Egyptian themes, particularly those featuring Nilotic scenes with pyramids, crocodiles and hippopotami. As Margaret Miles (2011:5) has observed, 'by the second century C.E. distinctively Egyptian decoration, styles, architecture, and religion had become part of the cultural fabric of Roman Italy, with official imperial approval and sponsorship'. Brier (2013:23) differentiates this later development from the earlier erection of obelisks by Roman emperors, on the basis that the installation of obelisks was essentially a political statement to reinforce Roman power and dominance. According to him, it was with the later Roman emperors like Hadrian that 'true Egyptomania begins' (Brier 2013:23). Here, we see the emperor incorporating Egyptianising elements at his villa in Tivoli, notably the sculptures of his lover Antinous as the god Osiris, which Brier (2013:25) describes as 'very early Egyptomania'. Although there was a difference in the motivation behind the earlier and later treatment of ancient Egypt by the Romans, both responses are significant in terms of shaping perceptions of this culture (see below).

Although rare, examples of the Egyptian Revival have been documented for the medieval period in the form of human-headed sphinxes and lion sculptures from thirteenth century Rome. As Colleen Manassa (2013:19) observes, the sculptors of these works were 'attempting to resurrect an ancient form, without necessarily recognizing the Egyptian nature of the sphinx'. It was not until the Renaissance that Egyptian forms were explicitly adopted in Western art. Curran (2007) provides a detailed account of how the Egyptian obelisks and sculptures brought to Rome in antiquity, the representation of ancient Egypt in paintings (such as those decorating the Vatican) and the development of an intellectual tradition for studying ancient Egypt, played a part in the agenda of aligning Rome with power and wisdom. From the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, ancient Egypt was shown to be useful in legitimising the rule of Roman popes, where Egyptian antiquities were perceived as elements of a Roman world as opposed to 'speaking for' ancient Egypt itself. Also, prompting an engagement with ancient Egypt at this time was the increasing appearance of Egyptian antiquities in collections and proto-museums (Moser 2006:26–30). Within this latter context, Egyptian antiquities were interpreted as exotic 'curiosities' that were part of a larger collection of interesting and unusual things, as without an established tradition of research to provide context and meaning for the objects, ancient Egypt was defined by such modes of presentation. There were notable exceptions, however, such as the display of Egyptian antiquities in the museum of Athanasius Kircher in Rome. Presented in connection with Kircher's publications on Egyptian hieroglyphs (e.g. *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* 1652–1654), the Egyptian artefacts displayed here assumed importance as items worthy of scholarly scrutiny (Fig. 1; see Stolzenberg (2013) on the significance of Kircher's publications on Egyptian antiquities).

The Egyptian Revival in Europe took a significant turn in the eighteenth century when detailed drawings of Egyptian antiquities were included in the first published antiquarian compendiums of artefacts. The primary examples are Bernard de Montfaucon's *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* of 1719–1722 and the Comte de Caylus's *Recueil d'Antiquités Égyptiennes, Étrusques, Grecques, Romaines*

Fig. 1 Egyptian antiquities from the museum of Athanasius Kircher (Collegio Romano) in Rome. Engraving in Philip Buonanni *Musaeum Kircherianum*, 1709, pl.XIX. Image courtesy of Heidelberg University Library

et Gauloises of 1752–1767, both which highlighted the potential of a systematic approach to the study of antiquities (Moser 2014). In these large multi-volume works, Egyptian antiquities were presented alongside other antiquities from the ancient world, where they were for the first time presented as valuable evidence for reconstructing ancient life. Pesvner (1956:230) refers to this 'new spirit' in representing Egypt (particularly in Caylus's *Recueil*), where we see the 'earliest appreciation of specific aesthetic qualities in Egyptian art' and the treatment of Egyptian art as 'art in its own right' (Fig. 2). The Egyptian plates in the *Recueil*, which predominantly featured smaller figurines and statues, demonstrate how the illustrators aspired to capture the distinctive attributes of the objects and convey the unique aesthetic approach the Egyptians had to representing the human form. Significantly, these recordings of ancient Egyptian artefacts were not only critical in assigning Egyptian antiquities a worthy place in antiquarian studies, but also, in promoting their potential for stylistic adaption in architecture and design.

This development in the graphic representation of Egyptian antiquities had major ramifications for the wider portrayal of ancient Egypt and is closely linked to the use of ancient Egypt in design schemes. In 1769, the artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi

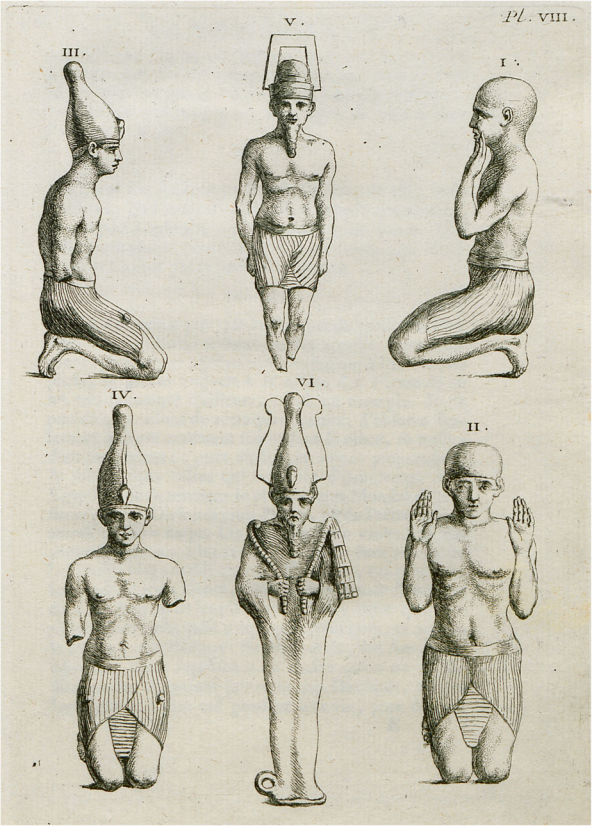

Fig. 2 Illustrations of Egyptian antiquities in the Comte de Caylus's *Recueil d'Antiquitiés Égyptiennes, Étrusqnes, Grecques, Romaines et Gauloises*, 1752-67, volume 2, plate 8. Image courtesy Heidelberg University Library

published a set of Egyptian themed designs in his *Diverse Maniere d'adornare I Cammini ed ogni altra parte deglie edifizi* (*Divers Manners of ornamenting chimneys and all other parts of houses*). Thirteen of the 36 plates in this book were devoted to Egyptian-inspired designs, supporting the claims Piranesi made in his introduction about the decorative power of ancient Egyptian art (Fig. 3). In qualifying the veracity of his designs, Piranesi (1769:4) informs his readers that his plates were produced 'after having long frequented the ruins and remains of ancient buildings, after a long study of the ancient monuments, and after having collected a considerable quantity of designs of all kinds of furniture and ornaments'. He also refers to the work of Caylus and the collections in the Vatican and the Roman College (Kircher's Museum) as sources (Piranesi 1769:19). The complexity of detail in his designs demonstrate that Piranesi did not simply 'lift' elements from various sources and slot them together in a visually pleasing way, but rather, that he thoughtfully assembled carefully selected elements so as to unite them in an 'artful and masterly manner' (Piranesi 1769:2). The aim was to 'shew [sic] what use an able architect may make of the ancient monuments by properly adapting them to our own manners and customs'; the phrase 'proper adaption' suggesting a systematic approach to the use of ancient art. Specifically, he instructs artists and designers to follow the practice of the ancients and 'observe the kinds of ornaments

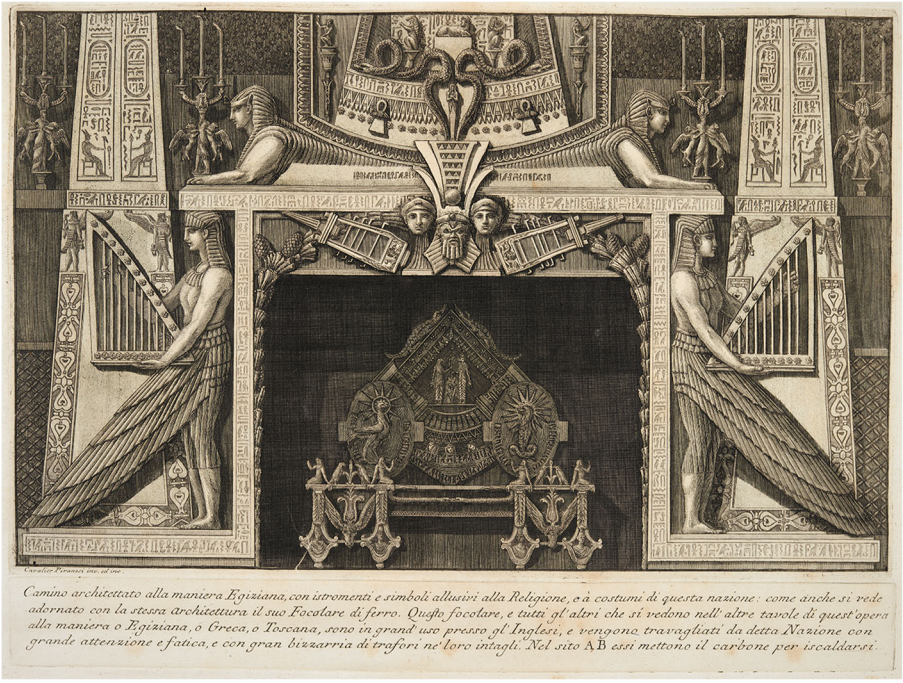

Fig. 3 Designs for a chimney in the Egyptian style by Giovanni Piranesi. In his *Divers Manners of ornamenting chimneys and all other parts of houses taken from Egyptian, Tuscan, and Grecian architecture*, 1769, plate 18. Image © The British Library Board

used by them, the manner in which they disposed them to make them harmonious with the whole and the modifications by which the Egyptian and Tuscan manners were adapted to other species of architecture' (Piranesi 1769:3). This was a strategy that paid respect to the original use and status of motifs in Egyptian art, demonstrating how such revivals of Egyptian art were intimately related to an understanding of it.

The zest with which Piranesi championed the qualities of Egyptian art is powerfully translated into his designs. Challenging the tendency to perceive Egyptian art as 'bold, hard, and stiff', Piranesi (1769:4) reflects that Egyptian art was not simply intended to imitate nature 'but those beauties of nature modified and corrected; I mean reduced to other artificial beauties more adapted to architecture'. He further explains that the lack of 'elasticity' in Egyptian figures is 'not from any negligence, but that they might correspond…with that majesty and gravity which characterises the architecture of the Egyptians' (Piranesi 1769:13). This appraisal of the nature of Egyptian art is of fundamental importance in assessing the impact of Piranesi's work. The claim, for instance, that the character of Egyptian art 'did not proceed from any want or ignorance in the Egyptians, nor from their having stopped short in the way to perfection, but from mature consideration, and from their having passed that perfection, which is denied them', reveals a deep appreciation that is carried over into his own creations (Piranesi 1769:14). Indeed, the visual power of the plates of *Diverse Maniere* ensured they were quickly adopted as exemplars for successive Egyptian inspired designs, emerging as a cornerstone of later Egyptian Revivals. As Pesvner (1956:216) notes, Piranesi's *Diverse Maniere* was in itself a 'primary' source for the Egyptian Revival.

Significantly, while the treatment of ancient Egypt in Caylus's work was didactic in its aims and Piranesi's work offered a more imaginative interpretation, these different approaches to the subject were produced in dialogue with each other and continued to inform ideas about ancient Egypt for centuries to come.

Whilst numerous other examples of Egyptomania have been documented from the eighteenth century (see Curl 1982, 1994, 2005; Humbert *et al*. 1994), it was in the nineteenth century that the reception of ancient Egypt expanded and diversified into a unique cultural phenomenon. As John Wilton Ely (2008) observes, by the early 1800s 'Egyptian Revival taste proved to be as international a style as the Pompeian and Greek counterparts'. Furthermore, during this time, distinct national responses to ancient Egypt were generated in Europe (particularly in France, Germany and Britain) and later in North America. Also, characteristic of this nineteenth century phase of Egyptomania was the reception of ancient Egypt in domains beyond the fine and decorative arts, especially in theatre, literature, commercial manufacturing (e.g. cigarette and cigar labels), jewellery, music, satire and advertising. This migration into all areas of popular culture has led to Egyptologists such as Manassa (2013:22) to define the nineteenth century phase as still on-going. The establishment of 'mummymania' as a cultural phenomenon during this period further augmented and escalated the Egyptomania movement (e.g. Day 2006). Characterised by public events such as mummy unwrappings (see Sheppard 2012; Riggs 2014), the publication of mummy novels (e.g. *Romance of a Mummy* by Théophile Gautier (1958), and the discovery of mummies in Egypt (such as those found in Deir el-Bahri in 1881), mummymania attracted even larger audiences to the subject of ancient Egypt. The interest in mummies also had special significance in relation to colonial projects such as the construction of racial typologies and the occupation of Egypt (see e.g. Deane 2008; Luckhurst 2012). Furthermore, consumerism and industrialisation fostered an even more intense engagement with the culture; as Brier (1992:44) notes, 'the industrial revolution had created the phenomenon of mass production, which was the direct cause of the democratization of Egyptomania'. The evolution of Egyptomania in the twentieth century followed this 'democratic' path, spreading quickly to all areas of manufacturing and production. While much of the research on the reception of ancient Egypt in this century has focused on film (particularly on the portrayals of Cleopatra), museum exhibition and heritage tourism have also been addressed (e.g. Doyon 2008; Malamud 2000; Wieczorkiewicz 2006; Riggs 2013). Much more could be said on the stages and national variations of Egyptomania over the centuries, but discussion now turns to some of the themes that might help structure our analysis of this phenomenon.

Contexts of Interpretation

In seeking to establish how receptions imbued ancient Egypt with meaning, it is necessary to consider the historical frameworks or contexts in which they were created. Developments in political, economic, military and social history, in religion and cultural movements, in art and in industry all played a part in shaping the representation of ancient Egypt. As Humbert (1994:24/5) contends, we must not reduce the study of Egyptomania to a mere history of stylistic evolution or to a simple comparison with its archaeological sources, a point that is reaffirmed by Moore (2002:531), who critiques the tendency to place the Egyptian Revival 'within a simple series of stylistic changes'. In order to establish the

impact of the reception of ancient Egypt on how it has come to be known, we must look beyond art history and archaeology. The meanings assigned to ancient Egypt in receptions represent a complex interaction of multiple factors, each which contribute to the overall 'picture' created. Of central importance in framing Western idea of ancient Egypt is the Bible, particularly the stories of Joseph and of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt to build a new kingdom in the Holy Land. From the Renaissance, numerous representations of ancient Egypt in paintings and book illustrations were inspired by a desire to portray biblical subjects in more dramatic, pictorial and exotic settings.

Political and nationalistic agendas also framed the way ancient Egypt was portrayed. A good example is documented by Moore (2002), who shows that the early nineteenth century Egyptian Revival was a strategy laden with political significance. In discussing how the Egyptian style functioned as a political tool, Moore traces how images of ancient Egypt were constructed in the context of nationalist agenda. Specifically, she traces how the illustrations in Denon's *Voyage* were aligned with the ambitions of France to dominate Europe. According to Moore (2002:541), 'Denon uses Egypt as a paradigm for French world rule', an agenda that was achieved by producing 'recognisable' images linking France to ancient Egypt (Moore 2002:534). Thus, beyond offering more detailed images that contributed to bringing about a significant change in the way ancient Egypt was represented, Denon's images purposely constructed ancient Egypt in a particular way. As Moore (2002:546) surmises, 'France's annexation of Egypt is illustrated and codified by Denon'. Other important insights on the ways in which key texts on ancient Egypt deployed a colonial agenda are offered by David Prochaska (1994) and Anne Godlewska (1995) in their accounts of the *Description de L'Egypte*. Related to this is the impact that Britain's military success over the French in 1798 had on the reception of ancient Egypt in Britain. Whilst not appropriated by the British in the same way as the French had done, ancient Egypt assumed a powerful symbolic role in signifying victory over an enemy. The inscription carved into the obelisk obtained by the British from the French in 1802, 'presented by King George and captured in Egypt by the British Army', is testimony to this symbolic status. The proliferation of representations of ancient Egypt in Britain in the early decades of the century both tapped into and escalated the wave of national celebration and assertion of empire.

Different cultural contexts also shaped the various traditions of representing ancient Egypt. Taking Victorian Britain as an example, it is important to note that the passion expressed for ancient cultures at this time was not solely derived from archaeological discoveries but resonated with a broader appetite for 'consuming' other cultures, other places and other times (an appetite that was fuelled by imperialist endeavours). The public shows, exhibitions, panoramas and theatre performances (including opera) that flourished in the cities of Britain were characterised by a celebration of the exotic and sensational (e.g. Altick 1978; Comment 1999[2003]). This observation has been made by Jeffrey Richards (2009:23) in his study of Victorian theatres, where 'spectacle and authenticity went hand in hand in the recreation of the Ancient World'. Ancient Egypt slotted perfectly into this wider cultural movement, offering the raw ingredients of mystery, colour, exotica and drama in plentiful supply. The mummy unwrapping events that were performed in front of enthusiastic audiences further encouraged interest in things Egyptian (see Sheppard 2012; Riggs 2014), and the rich legacy of Egyptomania lent itself to vivid renditions in performance, where stage sets, props and costumes emphasised the splendour and richness of ancient Egyptian society. Museum displays and public exhibitions both inspired and interacted with these more imaginative visions

of the past, with the former providing a rapidly growing 'databank' from which the objects of the past could be sourced and the latter offering enticing scenarios within which to place such material. While numerous other cultural developments and practices informed the way in which receptions cast ancient Egypt as a civilisation, the rise of the antiques trade and the emergence of a commercial art market for the middle classes exerted an important influence. In the second half of the nineteenth century a fast growing community of collectors sought to acquire objects from the ancient world and also to obtain artworks in which the subject of antiquity was represented (e.g. Macleod 1996; Webster and Helmreich 2011). Through their designation of particular types or classes of objects as more desirable than others and with their commissioning of artworks on specific subjects and themes, collectors contributed to the definition of the ancient world.

Closely connected to the relationship between theatre and performance and the reconstruction of ancient worlds were the developments in industry, manufacturing and technologies of presentation. Illustrated newspapers, magazines, popular books and commercial prints provided an endless source of visual stimulation and opportunities to engage with the past. Greater accessibility of such products (especially engravings) reinforced the capability of this visual milieu to shape views of ancient Egypt. Illustrated bibles with Egyptian subjects and settings, and popular books with plates featuring Egyptian monuments enhanced awareness of this visually appealing culture (e.g. the lithographs of Egypt by David Roberts in 1842–9). As Kate Flint (2000:1) points out, the visual was the dominant mode of interpretation in the Victorian period, so in this sense, advances in visual communication encouraged a more intense response to ancient Egypt. Furthermore, a preoccupation with the visual coalesced with the establishment of archaeology as a discipline, and it was within this context of the Victorian appetite for images that audiences became particularly responsive to archaeological material and its detailed representation. Furthermore, as Flint (2000:2) adds, Victorian society was 'characterised not just by the accelerated expansion of diverse opportunities for differing sorts of spectatorship, but by a growing concern with the very practice of looking'. This development had implications for the reception of ancient Egypt in that it raises the issue of how those seeking to reconstruct antiquity adopted a more materialist focus in their portrayal of the past. More specifically, the concern of artists and illustrators to incorporate as much detail as possible in their reconstructions derived not just from an awareness of increasing archaeological discoveries, but also from a wish to feed the desire of spectators to look closely and immerse themselves in the visual complexity of images. Interestingly, art critics were highly critical of the obsessive concern for archaeological accuracy, which was seen to compromise the 'meaning' of painting and provide vacuous interpretations of Egyptian antiquity (Moser forthcoming). Paradoxically, archaeology was celebrated as a major new source of inspiration for creative works, yet at the same time, it was dismissed as threatening the 'poetry' of reconstructing the past.

Sources, Causes and Triggers

The inspiration for various traditions of Egyptomania has been attributed to major 'triggers' thought to bring about waves of interest in ancient Egypt. While the engagement with ancient Egypt is a long-standing and vigorous tradition that has continued since antiquity, episodes of more intense interest have been prompted by major

archaeological and Egyptological and historic events. While Brier (1992:41) refers to such episodes as 'crests in the waves of Egyptomania', Humbert (1994:22) describes these as 'highpoints'. Included amongst the most commonly cited triggers for an increased interest in ancient Egypt are the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 (e.g. Whitehouse 1997:158; Miles 2011:6; Brier 1992:41). More specific causal connections have been made in relation to national traditions of Egyptomania, such as military successes and the publication of landmark Egyptological works. Curl (1994, 2005:218), for instance, states that the 'Egyptian Revival in England sprang from an archaeological interest and from the popularity of Egyptian motifs after Nelson's spectacular victory at Aboukir Bay', and similarly, the publication of core texts such as Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* (1802) and the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–28) are attributed with bringing about new phases in the reception of ancient Egypt in France and Britain (e.g. Bednarski 2005). For most researchers of Egyptomania, however, it is Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign of 1798 that is typically cited as the principal catalyst in bringing about Egyptomania 'proper'. While the significance of this event cannot be overestimated, we also need to look more closely at other factors that played a part in bringing about the nineteenth-century explosion of responses to ancient Egypt. Thus, while Brier's (2013:67) assertion that the French campaign of 1798 'created an unparalleled wave of Egyptomania' is not necessarily untrue, it did so in partnership with several other noteworthy developments.

In exercising caution over the designation of single causes and triggers for Egyptomania, we might take the example of the major publication *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–28), which was the primary output of the French expedition to Egypt in 1798. Often cited as the key trigger that caused a major 'round' of Egyptomania in Europe (e.g. Miles 2011:6), *Description de l'Égypte* was a monumental multi-volume enterprise that was not widely accessible due to the vast number of plates it contained and its corresponding cost (see Thompson, *Wonderful things: A history of Egyptology. Vol. I: From Antiquity to 1881*, forthcoming). Because of the scientific significance of this work, we have tended to assume that its impact was profound, yet it is more likely that other widely distributed works and popular events spawned the proliferation of creative responses to ancient Egypt early in the nineteenth century. For example, the public exhibition of a scale model and life-size partial reconstruction of the tomb of the Egyptian king Sethy I in London in 1821 by Giovanni Belzoni caused a sensation (Fig. 4; see Pearce 2000), and together with his highly popular 'travelogue' *Voyages Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia* (1820), this exhibition might equally be considered inspiration for the wave of Egyptomania at this time. Indeed, in referring to the 'colourful' publications of the early nineteenth century that inspired a wave of decorative products in Egyptian style, Brier (1992:44) cites the colour plates in Belzoni's *Narrative* as prompting furniture and clock makers in England and France to produce hundreds of items using Egyptian motifs.

Added to popular publications, we might consider the impact of the opening of the first major public display of Egyptian antiquities in 1809 at the British Museum and the production of Egyptian-inspired architecture and design in the late eighteenth century (Fig. 5). The interest in things Egyptian was widespread in the 1700s, and many of the objects attributed to the early years of the nineteenth century were produced in the eighteenth century (see Honour 1955:243). The coalescence of all these developments,

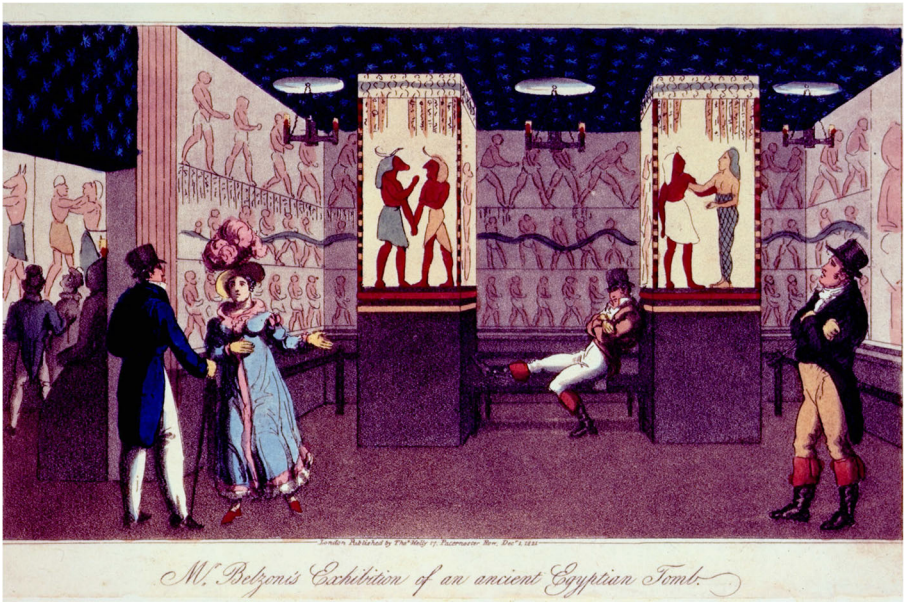

Fig. 4 Exhibition of a reconstruction of one of the chambers of the tomb of King Sethy I at the Egyptian Hall in London by Giovanni Belzoni, 1821. Lithograph in British Library, Add. MS. Crach I Tab 4.b.4. vol. 14,f.262. Image © The British Library Board

together with the British triumph over the French at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, is likely to have had more impact than the *Description de l'Égypte* when it came to the explosion of Egyptomania in early nineteenth century Britain. Furthermore, while major discoveries in Egypt, historical events and the publication of core texts on Egyptian antiquities undoubtedly spurred on new traditions of Egyptomania, they were not always singularly responsible for them. The connections between the history of the discipline and the history of receptions are not unidirectional, where developments in the former are seen as bringing about or leading to the latter. Rather, responses to ancient Egypt intersected and 'cross-fertilised' with a range of disciplinary, historical and cultural developments, and also with past traditions of reception. It was not simply major discoveries that caused a craze for ancient Egypt, but rather, the interaction between existing visual traditions of representation (which were vibrant and strong), an emerging academic discourse on Egyptian antiquities, and discourses of colonialism and imperialism. Thus, although it seems reasonable to assert that the decoding of the Rosetta Stone, the opening up of the Suez Canal and the arrival of Cleopatra's Needle in Britain brought about distinct waves of Egyptomania, we need more detailed research on each reception tradition before we can be confident in understanding what inspired them and their subsequent impact.

Related to the delineation of causes for Egyptomania is the issue of what sources were drawn on and how these were used in conjunction with other less 'primary' materials to inspire new receptions. As Humbert (1994:21) has noted, the sources for Egyptomania include both original (ancient) material and also copies of it. Thus, we see a trend whereby receptions adopt elements from earlier representations; Egyptomania is effectively 'feeding upon itself' (Humbert 1994:22). The decipherment of hieroglyphs and the increasing

Fig. 5 Egyptian (Townley) Gallery, British Museum, 1810, as illustrated in *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics,* 1810, *3*(16), plate 23. Image, author's copy

availability of books with detailed archaeological illustrations undoubtedly provided new sources of inspiration for those wishing to represent ancient Egypt, but the references drawn upon for such reconstructions were even more wide ranging and harked back to previous examples of Egyptomania. For example, research on the Egyptian Court designed for the Crystal Palace in London in 1854 demonstrates the complex manner in which the creators of the exhibit 'blended' original archaeological evidence with other sources to form a unique vision of ancient Egypt (Fig. 6; Moser 2012a). Similarly, a study of the nineteenth-century Egyptian-themed paintings of Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edward Poynter and Edwin Long shows that their work, whilst heavily dependent on archaeological detail, constituted a sophisticated mixing of fact with the other visual sources, resulting in new ways of thinking about ancient Egyptian society (Fig. 7; Moser forthcoming).

The Constitutive Nature of Receptions of Ancient Egypt

Reception research is now revealing the many levels upon which representations of antiquity generate ideas about the cultures they depict. The ways in which ancient Egyptian elements are incorporated in receptions not only informs us about how the

Fig. 6 Part of the Egyptian Court at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, London 1854. Image © The British Library Board

Fig. 7 'An Egyptian Widow' by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1872, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Image courtesy Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

'source material' is employed but also, more significantly perhaps, tells us how such usage might affect knowledge construction. This 'constitutive' aspect of representations refers to their epistemological capacity and the way they make or shape understandings of the subject portrayed. The first assumption to address here is that Egyptian motifs have simply been adopted as an exotic element, reflecting a decorative trend in artistic revival styles. As Whitehouse (1997:161) writes, 'Creations in the Egyptian style were either outright pastiches or alien forms to which Egyptian details were eclectically applied'; yet, this does not mean they should be excluded from the history of Egyptology and deemed irrelevant to the formation of ideas about ancient Egyptian culture. Emerging in Europe from the Renaissance, the artistic revivals identified in relation to the ancient world (Pompeian Revival, Greek Revival, Classical Revival, Egyptian Revival and Assyrian Revival) have all been studied as distinctive movements in their own right. While such traditions were initially examined in relation to paintings, architecture, sculpture, decorative arts and interior design, they have more recently been studied in areas of popular culture such as films, clothes and jewellery, and commercial merchandise. What distinguishes revival traditions is the way in which they select particular subjects or motifs from ancient art and reconfigure them in newly created contexts. This process of adaptation has important epistemological implications because it generates new associations and meanings. When motifs are translated into different visual and historical contexts, for instance, distinctive ideas about ancient cultures are created and these play a role in the knowledge-making 'cycle'. This ability to contribute new ideas occurs irrespective of whether the use of subjects and motifs is accurate and sensitive to original contexts of use, or cavalier and completely decontextualized from the source. The fact that the reasons behind the selection of subjects and motifs vary, often serving completely different aims and agendas, does not diminish the potential of receptions to confer meaning about the past.

Although not intended to represent antiquity in a comprehensive or didactic manner, revival works have had an effect on the understanding of ancient worlds. The products of Egyptian Revival art and design are not simply a benign form of emulation; their reworking of 'original sources' in new and varied contexts represents a unique way of generating ideas. Functioning as a hybrid of art and science, such representations constitute interpretations in their own right. Distinguished by the way in which select motifs were taken from Egyptian art and imaginatively rearranged into a novel schema, the designs of Piranesi are a good example of this (Fig. 3). Indeed, the seductive merging of accurate and creative elements was so cohesive that it appeared as a plausible interpretation of Egyptian ornament. Above all, when Egyptian motifs were divorced from their original contexts and featured as 'patterns' in design schemes such as these, ancient Egypt was assigned a particular identity. With the emphasis on unusual and visually striking design elements, ancient Egypt was defined as a mysterious and exotic culture fixated with abstracted forms of visual representation. Furthermore, the translation of Piranesi's work into English had an important impact on the dissemination of his designs. As Honour (1955:243) notes, Piranesi's book 'found its way into many a 'gentleman's library' in England, and it would have been strange if it had exercised no influence'. Beyond simply providing a resource for designers, the images of Piranesi served to characterise and evoke an ancient culture; they assumed a constitutive role in the development of ideas about ancient Egypt because they added something unique—something extra to the 'knowledge base'.

Other attributes of Egyptian Revival traditions contributed to assigning meaning to Egyptian antiquities. In his *Etchings, Representing the Best Examples of Ancient*

Ornamental Architecture (1799:3), architect Charles Heathcote Tatham sought to provide an 'accurate delineation of some of the best specimens' of antique ornament in which he included eight Egyptian and Egyptianising examples (Fig. 8). Although he felt the public were indebted to Piranesi for the 'singular fertility of his inventive

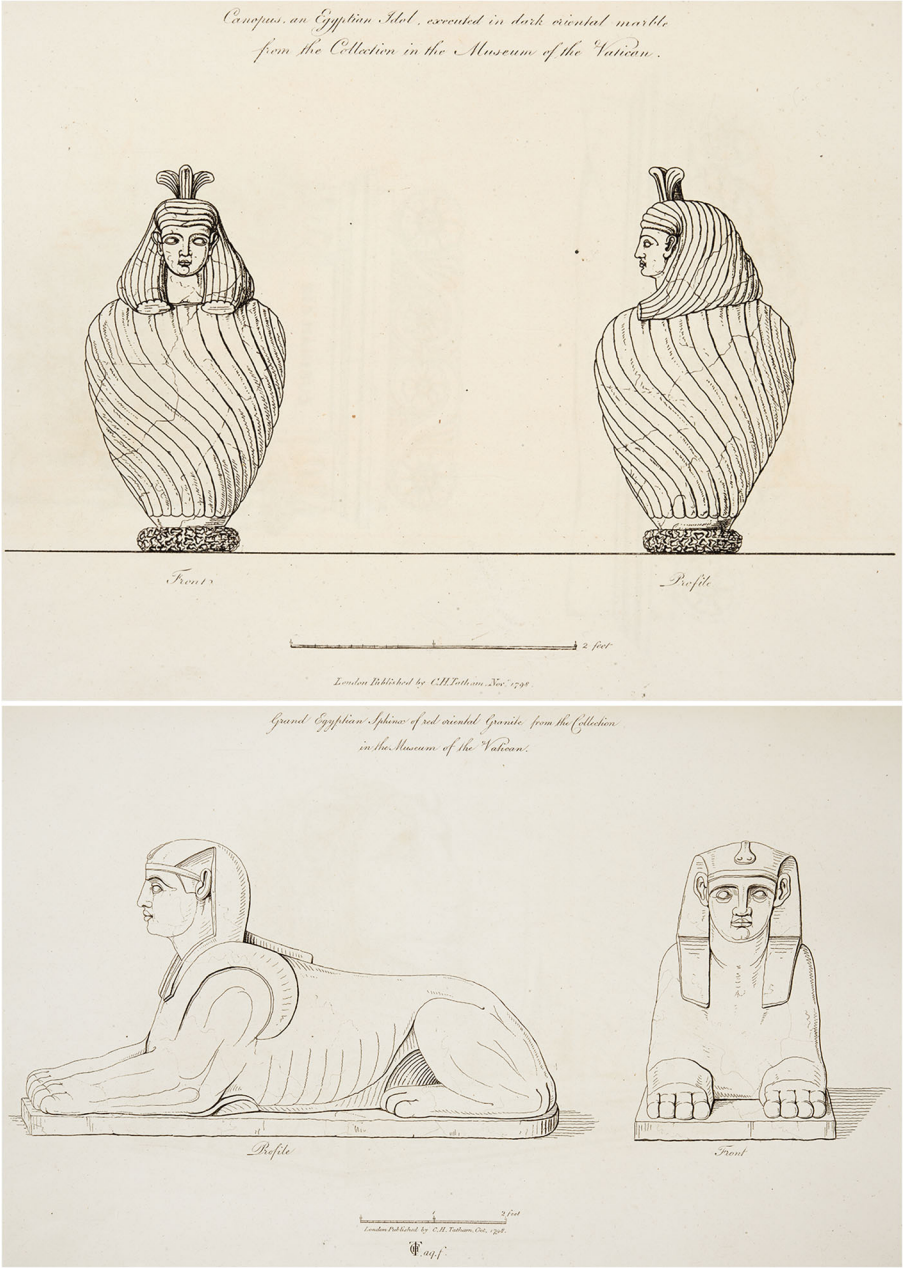

Fig. 8 Egyptian examples of 'ornament' from Charles Tatham's *Etchings, Representing the Best Examples of Ancient Ornamental Architecture*, 1799, plates 78,71. Image © The British Library Board

powers, his intimate acquaintance with picturesque effect and above all, his masterly boldness of execution', Tatham (1799:3–4) took issue with Piranesi's 'incorrectness of delineation' and sought to offer more authentic recordings of surviving objects. With his images, Tatham felt students would have a clearer picture of what the originals looked like, his collation of drawings providing a reliable source from which designers could obtain inspiration. This had important consequences for defining ancient Egypt because, as Elliott (2012:51) observes, by including Egyptian and Egyptianising examples alongside his classical ones, Tatham 'indicated that they were also suitable models for designers and architects'. Moreover, by making the association between Roman (and some Etruscan) and Egyptian examples of ancient ornamental art, Tatham communicated a clear message about Egyptian art, suggesting that it was part of the story of classical art. Numerous design manuals published throughout the nineteenth century reinforced this idea by continuing to include ancient Egypt as one of a variety of ancient art styles suitable for aesthetic manipulation in the design industry. Such receptions projected the idea that ancient Egypt, although exotic, was connected to Western art and had a place in its development.

The pervasiveness of this emerging iconographic tradition for representing ancient Egypt is suggested by the fact that when more detailed and accurate source material on ancient Egypt became available, those producing receptions did not abandon their creative impulses and devote themselves to authentic reproduction. The way in which receptions of ancient Egypt capitalised on new archaeological sources, yet continued to assert their own visual interpretations of ancient Egypt, can be observed in the important example of Thomas Hope's Egyptian-inspired interior in London, created early in the nineteenth century (Fig. 9). Hope (1807) published a series of engravings of

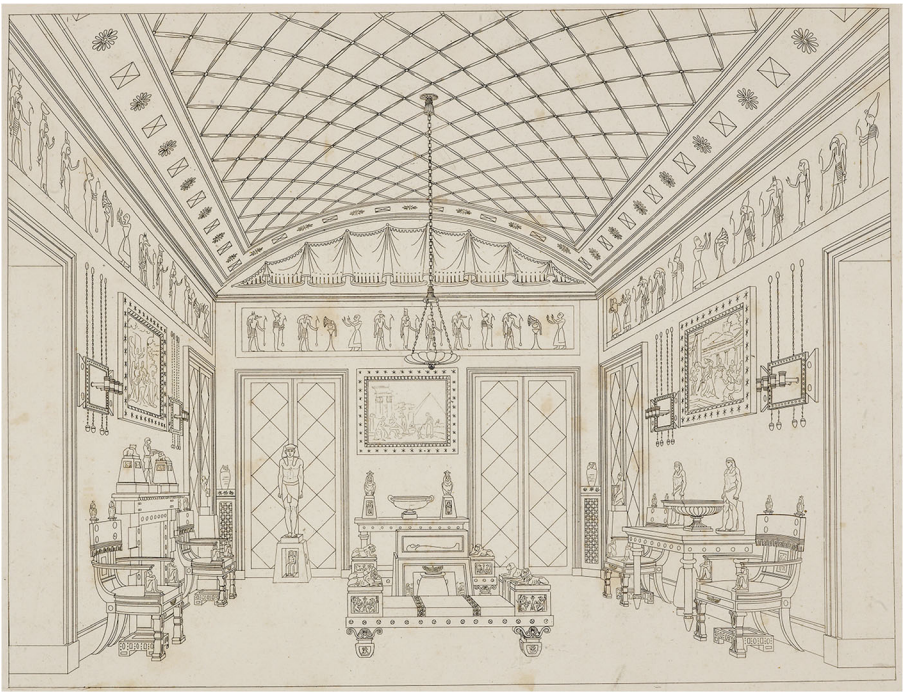

Fig. 9 Egyptian room designed by Thomas Hope as illustrated in his *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, plate VIII, opp. page 26. Image © The British Library Board

the furniture and interior arrangements of his house, revealing a passionate engagement with ancient ornament and decoration. As Curl (2005:218) has already remarked, 'Hope's Egyptianisms were robust yet refined, scholarly yet imaginative'. Warning against 'servile copying', which he felt led artists into 'an eternal round of undeviating sameness', Hope (1807:17) informed his readers how he copied objects directly from collections in Italy and from key works on the subject in an 'attempt to animate the different pieces of furniture here described, and to give each a peculiar countenance and character, a pleasing outline, and an appropriate meaning' (Hope 1807:51). It is the notion of 'peculiar countenance' that is central here, in that Hope, like many other authors of such receptions, actively interpreted the past with his own 'take' on the sources. Furthermore, while Hope's interior has been described as the 'most accomplished interior of the Egyptian Revival' (Wilton-Ely 2008), the extent to which it was derived from published works on Egyptian antiquities remains debatable. Although David St Leger Kelly (2004) does not doubt that Denon's *Voyage* played a role in the nineteenth-century Egyptian revival, he challenges the idea that it was the main source upon which Hope based his furniture designs in the Egyptian style. In his view, there is no similarity between Hope's designs and those in Denon's work; instead, argues St Leger Kelly (2004:88–90), Hope's Egyptian designs were created before Denon's work was published and the motifs he employed were part of the 'common visual vocabulary of designs' that existed before Denon's work was published. More specifically, they represented his particular interpretation of the style based on travels in Europe and consultation with other Egyptian Revival works. As Hope (1807:26) himself stated, the decoration in the Egyptian room, which was designed to have some 'analogy to' its contents, was 'partly taken from scrolls of papyrus…[and] Egyptian mummycases'. Again, this does not mean that Denon's work was not significant, but rather, that its role was more in 'feeding' the growing appetite for representing ancient Egypt. It is reasonable to assume that artists and designers would have been influenced by the appearance of major illustrative works on Egyptian antiquities, but we need to consider the nature of the relationship between sources and 'receivers' as a two-way negotiation.

Finally, in discussing the epistemological significance of representations of ancient Egypt, it is also important to challenge the notion that the Egyptian Revival differs from other revivals on account of its predominantly decorative character. Whereas it is widely known that the Greek Revival was adopted throughout Europe in relation to expressions of national identity, the Egyptian Revival is not thought to have made the same appeals to political symbolism. Wilton-Ely (2008) for instance, observes that 'Unlike its Greek and Gothic counterparts, the Egyptian Revival never constituted a coherent movement with ethical or social implications…. [it] can be seen as one in a series of sporadic waves of European taste in art and design'. The Egyptian Revival, however, was not simply a 'sporadic wave' in artistic taste; it too was firmly aligned with political agendas and movements in framing national identity (e.g. Porterfield 1998; Moore 2002). Furthermore, the decorative emphasis of the reception of ancient Egypt also had a meaning and significance beyond that of artistic taste. As research has shown, the ornamental designs based on ancient Egyptian art assumed a deeply symbolic dimension that communicated powerful ideas about the nature of ancient Egyptian society (Moser 2012a). It is thus no longer tenable to cast Egyptian Revival designs as more superficial than the other revival traditions on account of their eclectic mixing of elements for visual effect.

Iconography and Modes of Presentation

Critical to the analysis of the reception of ancient Egypt is the investigation of how a distinctive repertoire of graphic subjects and motifs was established and then reaffirmed in successive reception traditions. Also important is the manner or mode in which Egyptian antiquities were depicted in representations of ancient Egypt. Initiated in antiquity, the practice of depicting Egyptian elements was characterised by the selection and repetition of a core set of motifs including pyramids, obelisks, sphinxes, lotus flowers, animal-headed gods, symbols such as the winged sun-disk, and abstracted symmetrical patterns. With the establishment of several visual traditions of representing ancient Egypt in the Renaissance (painting, sculpture, designs and illustration of antiquities), the earlier suite of motifs was maintained and simultaneously expanded to include other Egyptian elements such as hieroglyphs and mummies. Since then, the essential repertoire of Egyptian motifs has been retained, with successive reception traditions making their own additions and variations. The basis upon which motifs were selected was that they were thought to capture and convey something of the 'essence' of ancient Egypt, both aesthetically and symbolically (Moser 2012a). While for some, the motifs were selected because of their visual appeal; for others, it was the meaning invoked by the motif that saw them incorporated in new works of art and design. Indeed, one of the major points to emerge from research on the reception of ancient Egypt is the extent to which a flourishing iconographic tradition of representing ancient Egypt existed prior to the existence of Egyptology (Curl 1982, 1994, 2005; Humbert 1989). This vibrant tradition secured the existence of an iconographic 'nucleus' for representing ancient Egypt, which in turn served as a basis for defining the culture (and still does). The constant re-use of the same motifs over time reinforced the idea that ancient Egypt could be instantly grasped and understood through visual icons. This reductive quality renders the iconography highly adaptable for use, and the availability of such an easily grasped 'shorthand' increases the frequency with which ancient Egypt is invoked in popular culture. Indeed, the highly selective nature of the process, whereby a limited number of motifs were extracted from Egyptian art in order to reference and signify the ancient culture, alerts us to the extremely effective way in which images have defined antiquity. The immediacy of this iconographic mode of representation ensures they have a lasting and powerful cognitive effect, essentially instructing the viewer how to perceive ancient cultures and thus contributing in a significant way to the reconstruction of the past.

In considering the mode in which ancient Egypt has been portrayed in visual representations, other attributes worth singling out are the meanings conferred by visual associations between Egyptian antiquities and those from other ancient cultures, and the presentation of motifs, objects and portions of monuments in isolation. Both traits can be observed in the first major publication resulting from the French expedition to Egypt in 1798—Vivant Denon's *Voyage* of 1802. This landmark work greatly affected the understanding of ancient Egypt, not only because it provided a comprehensive and detailed view of the monuments painstakingly recorded by the Frenc, but also because of the manner and style in which the antiquities were presented. As Elliott (2012:17) has observed, Denon's images 'classicised' features of the Egyptian monuments (particularly the figures in the reliefs), which subsequently influenced those who consulted his images when making their own designs. Moreover, through this classicising mode of illustration, Egyptian antiquities were effectively 'tamed' or 'normalised', adopting an air of

familiarity that made them amenable to the French agenda of promoting the expedition as a lasting cultural victory (as opposed to a military defeat). The fragmented mode of presenting Egyptian antiquities in the *Voyage* also had interpretive consequences. Here, the illustrations of column capitals (without shafts), sections of hieroglyphs from various temples, and a variety of designs taken from architectural friezes, presented ancient Egypt within the tradition of antiquarian artefact encyclopaedias and architectural design manuals (Fig. 10). This de-contextualised mode of presentation, Elliott (2012:17) argues, 'made it easy for subsequent designers to use them in ways that were not archaeologically accurate'. Thus, despite providing highly detailed recordings of the monuments, Denon adopted a style of graphic representation that presented ancient Egypt in the mode of a design or pattern book. This 'way of seeing' encouraged viewers to perceive Egyptian art as primarily decorative in nature and although ostensibly communicating an archaeological view of ancient Egypt, Denon's images drew on previous illustrative traditions that had their own interpretive implications.

Another way in which visual modes of presentation have the effect of 'stamping' meaning onto Egyptian antiquities is the tendency of receptions to retain motifs from out-dated sources, despite the availability of new accurate recordings made in Egypt. As Whitehouse (1997:161) notes, the Egyptian 'style has remained tenaciously wedded to its predecipherment sources'; Manassa (2013:25) also reports how 'fanciful Egyptian designs continued to be used even after the more accurate and detailed publications of the

Fig. 10 Egyptian column capitals in Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte*, 1802, vol. 3, pl. LXIV. Image courtesy Heidelberg University Library

Napoleonic expedition became available'. Scholarly outputs resulting from archaeological work in Egypt were instrumental in providing a much expanded database of Egyptian antiquities for artists and designers to consult; however, the loyalty to 'old favourites' continued. A good illustration of this is the range of Egyptian-inspired ceramics of Josiah Wedgwood, which were produced from the 1770s and culminated in 1808 with the tea service commemorating Admiral Nelson's defeat of Bonaparte at the Battle of the Nile (Fig. 11). As Elliott (2012:47) notes, 'Wedgwood's Egyptian-inspired designs drew on a variety of sources, but all of these sources presented Ancient-Egyptian elements in isolation from their cultural background'. Despite the availability of new images from sources such as Denon, Wedgwood retained his early repertoire of forms. While this type of engagement with ancient Egypt was entirely commensurate with the practice of designing architectural and interior schemes and decorating manufactured items, it did not mean that Wedgewood's vision of ancient Egypt was inconsequential to the understanding of Egyptian antiquities. Rather, this mode of reception represented an important way of relating to the past, where attributes of previous Egyptian revivals were 'woven into' new archaeologically based receptions. This pattern is noted by Curl (2005:246–7) who states that 'One of the oddities of the Egyptian Revival was that, even though there were modern, accurate, archaeologically-based source-books such as Denon and the *Description*, many designers persisted in using inaccurate and old fashioned 'sources' such

Fig. 11 Egyptian themed canopic jar designed by Wedgwood & Bentley, c. 1773, Brooklyn Museum. Image courtesy Brooklyn Museum

as the works of Piranesi, Montfaucon, and even Kircher'. Considering the nature and epistemic power of visual representation, this loyalty to old images and the habit of referencing out-dated sources is not so odd at all. Indeed, that motifs sourced from newly available works based on firsthand observation were combined with less accurate elements from previous centuries is a common attribute of receptions of antiquity. Authors of 'new' representations sought to be innovative yet stayed wedded to old habits, revealing both an unintentional dependence on the familiar and a strategic way of making their creations seem more plausible. It also appears that designers intentionally referenced their predecessors as if in dialogue with them. Finally, to simply dispense with the existing and 'successful' visual repertoire goes against the long established tradition of recycling visual forms in the history of visual culture.

Hierarchies of Significance and Impact

The notion that some receptions are more significant than others when it comes to the reconstruction of ancient worlds was referred to earlier on. Establishing a hierarchy of significance, however, where some types of reception are deemed less relevant because they are not thought to be as sophisticated or as academically engaged as others, is problematic. Before we start dismissing certain types of reception as less worthy in the scheme of making knowledge, we need to identify criteria for measuring the relative importance of receptions. In outlining the appropriate criteria for determining significance from an archaeological perspective, the receptions that focus on the accurate portrayal of ancient material culture and which have more didactic intentions might seem the most worthy of attention. However, if significance is measured according to the impact receptions have on understanding the past, then these more scientifically inspired receptions might not be the most deserving of top place in the hierarchy. The most widely distributed, reproduced and accessible receptions might equally be deemed the most significant, but quantity does not necessarily equate with 'quality' (whatever this is) when it comes to affecting understandings of a subject. Another contender is impact, but is it impact in art and design or impact on scholarly thought that we are talking about? Significance could also be measured in terms of whether a marked difference can be detected in the intentions behind the use of Egyptian forms. Clearly, significance relates to various disciplinary and subject-based concerns, and for archaeology, the most meaningful receptions are those that can be shown to have affected the definition and characterisation of ancient and prehistoric cultures.

There is little doubt that receptions of ancient Egypt have made their mark in the cultural sector. As Curl (2005:225) declares, the 'influence of Egyptian and Egyptianising design on the West was enormous and cannot be overestimated'. The extent to which such receptions affected disciplinary thinking, however, is yet to be fully explored. That specific receptions had a significant impact on the understanding of the past can be demonstrated with the example of the Egyptian Court, designed for the Crystal Palace London by British designer Owen Jones in 1854 (Fig. 6). Partnered with Jones's landmark compendium of styles of ornament, *Grammar of Ornament* of 1856, the Egyptian Court came to influence archaeological thinking later in the century through its assertion of the role of ornament in ancient art (Moser 2012a). More specifically, the striking plates of ancient Egyptian designs created for the *Grammar*

Fig. 12 Schemes of Egyptian ornament designed by Owen Jones for his *Grammar of Ornament* 1856, pl. 7. Image, author's copy

of Ornament had a profound impact on the way archaeologists came to view the significance of ornament in Egyptian art (Fig. 12). In a series of nine plates designed to capture the language of Egyptian ornament, Jones highlighted the complex and highly sophisticated symbolic system of ancient Egyptian ornament, encouraging archaeologists to reflect on the manner in which decoration embodied ancient views of the world.

In considering the impacts of receptions on the reconstruction of the past, we need to be careful when evaluating the significance of archaeological accuracy. Major discoveries did

inform receptions, promoting greater attention to archaeological details; however, as we have seen above, there are many other elements in a representation that serve to create meaning. Furthermore, a concern with fidelity was not necessarily aligned with a didactic aim to portray the past. References to archaeological items were often made to achieve a particular visual effect or to make an imaginative scene seem more convincing. On a superficial level, the representation of artefacts was focused on getting the details right; however, on another, the focus on details had a wider symbolic function, serving as a metaphor for the beauty of the material world (Moser forthcoming). An important example is the work of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, which utilised archaeological evidence in a way that receptions had not done before (Fig. 7). Famous as an 'archaeological' painter, Alma-Tadema drew heavily on archaeological material, but for him, the value of such details was not 'educational'. Perfectly rendered artefacts and ancient settings were painted by this artist in order to create a fully immersive scene that celebrated the beauty of objects. As De Meulenaere *et al*. (1992:124) argues, while such paintings may have been 'lacking in profound feelings and deep thoughts, their work nevertheless possess considerable power and savoury vigour due to the wonderful pictorial resources they display'. Alma-Tadema created highly atmospheric pictures that would instantly transport viewers to antiquity, seductively using archaeological details to convince audiences that his visions could have been real.

Reception, Representation and Archaeological Knowledge

Reception studies are finally making their mark on the discipline of archaeology. To ensure that the field produces critical analyses that contribute to debates about the nature of knowledge construction in archaeology, more theoretical and methodological works are necessary. The aim of this paper has not been to promote a single 'right' method for conducting research on reception in archaeology but to make suggestions on what kinds of approaches might be adopted and to foster a culture in which these topics are discussed. Building on preliminary efforts made in this direction, this account identifies several themes that can be used to inform analyses of the reception of ancient Egypt and which might apply more broadly in archaeology. The essential point underlying all the themes is that the relationship between archaeological discoveries, research and reception must not be seen as unilinear or unidirectional. The connection between these three elements of reconstructing the past is complex and it is the 'to-ing and fro-ing' between them that is of primary importance in determining how we come to *know* the past. In seeking to ascertain the nature of this relationship, we need to break down the distinction between the 'academic' and the 'popular', since it is the fusion of the two and the way they work in concert with each other that is the basis of making ideas.

Through their iconographic power, receptions inform and alter archaeological knowledge. A host of non-archaeological professionals have fixed images of the ancient world upon the wider imagination, and these images have influenced archaeologists in their reconstructions of the past. Research on this process shows that there is a dynamic relationship between the archaeological evidence, the questions researchers ask of this material and wider cultural responses to the past. In the case study on ancient Egypt presented here, some of the distinguishing attributes of the phenomenon have been identified and themes warranting consideration when studying Egyptomania outlined.

Egyptomania, it is believed, has the potential to inform us about the variety of representational mechanisms underlying the definition of ancient cultures. Representations of ancient Egypt are shown to have been created in 'dialogue' with scholarly and cultural developments and with previous traditions of reception. The cumulative effect of representations, where 'new' images build upon previous receptions is particularly significant because it has ensured their survival as influential agents in the reconstruction of the past. When more research is carried out on the dynamic and two-way interaction between academic thinking and cultural representation, we will be in an even better position to assess the impacts of reception on archaeological knowledge.

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