The year 2022 marks the bicentenary of Champollion’s decipherment of the hieroglyphic script, marking the start of the modern study of the ancient Egyptian language, as well as its public reception. Yet interest in and engagement with hieroglyphs is not a modern phenomenon, and this volume aims to address a gap both in the history of their study and the reception of pharaonic history. Drawing upon classical (i.e., Greek and Roman) writers and early Christian authors, Westerfeld explores different ways that hieroglyphs were interpreted, reinterpreted, and utilised in late antiquity.

The first chapter primarily consists of background information for readers unfamiliar with the hieroglyphic writing system, as well as questions of literacy, status, priesthood, multilingualism, and script obsolescence. The treatment of the late antique sources starts in the following chapter. Here, two main points are tackled: classical and late antique authors’ understandings of the invention of the hieroglyphic script and Egyptian history writing practices. The role accredited to Thoth (and the syncretic Thoth-Hermes-Mercury) in the invention of writing is discussed. A key feature that Westerfeld returns to throughout this volume is how the Christian sources came to terms with earlier discourses and the strategies that different individuals had for dealing with them. In this case, Thoth is reduced to a man, not a god. For example, for Clement of Alexandria (second–third century CE theologian) Hermes was a priest, while for Augustine (fourth–fifth century CE) Mercury was a human cultural hero. Augustine also offers an alternative tradition in which Isis (the deified version of a human queen, Io) is accredited as the inventor of writing. These authors faced an additional issue in dealing with the Egyptian historical tradition and their use of it in the establishment of a universal chronology. On one hand, the Egyptian records provided Christians with a claim to greater antiquity than the Greeks, but the length of Egyptian chronologies also provided a conundrum with how to align such histories with the stricter Biblical genealogies and not assign them greater antiquity than the Hebrew prophets.

Moving from the invention of hieroglyphs and the Egyptian historical tradition, Chapter 3 examines how the script itself was understood. The general attitude found across the sources is that hieroglyphs were symbolic in nature, designed to conceal priestly wisdom. While highlighting this general misunderstanding of the script, Westerfeld also notes the Egyptian use of cryptographic scripts (such as that of the hymn to Khnum at Esna, which consists of variations of ram and crocodile signs), which provide a precedent for the actual use of hieroglyphs to conceal knowledge. As the hymn is largely contemporaneous with the early classical authors (including the first century BCE historian Diodorus Siculus), how much it establishes such a precedent is somewhat questionable. A pragmatic point is also raised here, but is not developed, namely how low literacy levels concealed the meaning of hieroglyphs to the majority of the population. The focus on mythic secrecy therefore somewhat obscures how the knowledge contained within the hieroglyphic script (let alone cryptographic scripts) was inaccessible to almost everybody who encountered them. Moving from classical to Christian authors, another source of tension is encountered in the figure of Moses. His Egyptian education cannot be denied, but it can be problematized. Augustine, for example, condemns Egyptian pride in their wisdom tradition as foolish and vainglorious; after all, Moses beat the Egyptians at their own game, demonstrating the superiority of divine intervention. Late antiquity also saw the emergence of other sources of intellectual authority, principally monasticism, and in particular the trope of the uneducated monk. This topic is introduced but not further developed.

This mention of monks transitions the discussion to one of the most important figures of Egyptian monasticism, Shenoute of Atripe (late fourth and fifth century CE).

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1 On script change during this period, see now Edward O. D. Love, Script Switching in Roman Egypt Case Studies in Script Conventions, Domains, Shift, and Obsolescence from Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, Demotic, and Old Coptic Manuscripts (Berlin, 2021).

2 On this trope and more generally monastic education, see now the collected articles in Lillian Larsen and Samuel Rubenson (eds.), Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia (Cambridge-New York, 2018).
Shenoute was a prolific writer, and this chapter focuses on his work known as Acephalous work 6, which contains an in-\textit{victive} against hieroglyphs. Westerfeld not only discusses the local, Egyptian element (attitudes towards hieroglyphs) of this passage but also the wider tropes in Christian literature on which it draws (the conversion of temples to churches). On one hand, Shenoute presents a realistic description of hieroglyphs, but he characterises them as a locus of spiritual danger, of idolatry, animal worship, and blood sacrifice. Each of these accusations is situated within the broader literary tradition, drawing upon Biblical parallels in particular. Westerfeld notes that Shenoute’s recognition of the power of hieroglyphs is “not out of keeping” (p. 113) with beliefs from earlier periods. However, while recognising an inherent power in the signs, Shenoute’s reasoning is very different and the attempt to connect late antique responses to their ancient predecessors seems to this reviewer a bit of a reach. Furthermore, Shenoute’s strategy is to undermine the power of the signs by emphasising that they are the works of human hands, and as such are open to ridicule (a rhetorical practice witnessed in other examples presented throughout this study), which diminishes their threat.

The final chapter turns to the problem of translating hieroglyphs and the use of hieroglyphs in constructing authority in late antiquity. Three main case studies are provided: obelisks in Rome, the destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria during the reign of Theodosius I (c. 391 CE), and a literary episode involving the patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria. In the first of these examples, the focus is on the translation accredited to Hermapiion of Rameses II’s obelisk that today stands in the Piazza del Popolo in Rome, particularly Hermapiion’s translation choices, through a comparison with the actual text. While the newly carved obelisk of Domitian in Piazza Navona is mentioned, such obelisks produced and inscribed in Rome during the imperial period are not discussed in any detail. An opportunity has therefore been lost to examine translation into Egyptian during this period and the range of questions that it raises concerning knowledge of hieroglyphs outside of Egypt at this time, which itself would also further the discussion about classical understanding of hieroglyphs.\footnote{On other monuments carved during the reign of Domitian, the twin obelisks of Benevento, see Luigi Prada, “‘To Isis the Great, Lady of Benevento’: Privately Dedicated Egyptian Obelisks in Imperial Rome and the Twin Obelisks of Benevento Rededicated,” in Jeffrey Spier and Sara E. Cole (eds.), \textit{Egypt and the Classical World: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Antiquity} (Los Angeles, 2022).}

The other two case studies focus rather on the (re-)interpretation of certain signs. The ankhsign, as seen in the Serapeum, provides the opportunity for an excursus on the use of the ank in late-antique Egypt, for example, in reliefs and on textiles. In the second case, Theophilus interprets the meaning of three thetas on a temple relief, but what he reads as the Greek letter θ is probably the sun disk with uraeai on either side. In this instance, the hieroglyphic signs are converted into Christian messages, the understanding of which is only possible through inspiration of the holy spirit. Westerfeld argues that such readings are examples of the Christian exhortation of authority over the signs being translated.

In addition to drawing together the main arguments from across the five chapters, Westerfeld also uses the relatively short conclusion to propose two avenues for future research. The first of these is to bridge the gap between the late-antique Christian treatment of hieroglyphs to that in the early medieval Islamic sources, to examine whether and how Arabic authors were in dialogue with earlier works. The second avenue is to focus not on the discourse surrounding hieroglyphs but the material aspects of late-antique responses to inscriptions. Westerfeld in part already demonstrates the potential for reinterpreting spaces in her brief discussion of the graffito of the monk Jacob in KV2 (the tomb of Rameses IV), in which she addresses the uncritical comments of previous scholarship.\footnote{A color image of this graffito, as well as others written throughout KV2, are available to view on the Theban Mapping Project website (https://thebanmappingproject.com).} The practice of transforming temples and tombs into villages, churches, and monastic complexes throughout this period offers considerable case studies and potential for such a study.

There are many points to recommend this volume. Throughout, Westerfeld draws upon a broad range of sources, in terms of both genre (primarily literary texts, but also documents and the epigraphic record) and languages (Demotic, Coptic, Greek, Latin), and manages to present the diverse material and arguments in a clear and engaging writing style. In so doing, she challenges previous scholarship that has tended to oversimplify the attitudes of late antique authors towards the pharaonic past. However, one critique of the volume is that it is not always clear who the intended audience is. While one of Westerfeld’s main goals is to address a significant gap in the reception of pharaonic Egypt, the presentation of the material seems to be directed mainly at classicists and late-antique scholars who will be familiar already with many of the sources. Readers without this background may get lost in the array of authors and works discussed, most of whom are given only very brief introductions. This audience may also be more confident with how select words and phrases from the original text (mainly Greek, but on occasion Egyptian in transliteration and Latin) are interspersed within the provided translations. The utility of such inclusions, rather than the entire original passage, which appear with irregular frequency across the relevant extracts is also questionable: those who can read the original may prefer the entire passage, while those who cannot read the original may find their presence distracting from the translation. One possible suggestion for the future, based on the wealth of sources included throughout this...
volume, is a sourcebook that brings together the relevant passages, together with contextual information and commentary, such that audiences with diverse backgrounds, but all interested in the history of the reception of pharaonic history, can confidently access the material.

Ultimately, this desire for more information is testament to the possibilities that Westerfeld highlights in her monograph, and how she has paved the way for further enquiry. *Egyptian Hieroglyphs in the Late Antique Imagination* is an important addition to the reception of hieroglyphs and of pharaonic culture. Westerfeld provides a nuanced treatment of the classical and Christian works, understanding them on their own merit and within their own context, demonstrating that their responses to hieroglyphs were more complex than has often been portrayed. Westerfeld highlights what can be achieved through exploration of these sources and opens up exciting new routes of further enquiry.

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