Art and Identity in the Age of Akhenaten

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate expressions of identity in the art of the Amarna Period, focusing on two main areas: firstly, artistic representations of the royal family and the Aten and, secondly, artistic representations of Amarna’s elite within their tombs. I argue that rapid social and theological change under Akhenaten had significant implications for not only conceptions of deity and kingship but also for artistic self-expression amongst Akhenaten’s officials. I illustrate this by comparison with earlier Eighteenth Dynasty tomb decoration.
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For the opportunity to write this thesis and for support in doing so, I am indebted to many dear and respected friends, family, mentors, and colleagues. Above all:

To my supervisors, Louise Hitchcock and Andrew Jamieson, who graciously read tens of thousands of words at a time, soothed my academic anxieties, and always encouraged me to do things my own way.

To my beloved partner, Holly; my dearest friends, Emily and Gabbi; and my whole family. Your love and support is everything. You are everything.

I am so humbled by what we have all achieved the past three years.
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I want to wish you a good morning because it is morning as I write this. It may be morning as you read it; it may not be. But here it is a cold, dark, beautiful morning in Sydney, Australia.

I’m lying in bed next to my sister—the blanket thief, still sleeping—because I’m visiting my parents, who have more house guests than beds. The dog’s bed is next to ours, on my sister’s side, and I can hear him snuffling in the dark. Otherwise, it’s quiet here. I’ve just woken up but I feel excited—a little nervous—because I’ve just decided that these are going to be the first words of my thesis: the introduction.

You are probably neither excited nor nervous, because this is not your thesis, but I will endeavour to imbue in these 100,000 words an enjoyable journey for you too. By their end, you should know me a little, because this is my voice and this is my research and if you did not know me at all it would feel dishonest. I am not an empirical third party to the happenings in ancient Egypt any more than I am an empirical third party to the happenings in my own world. I am a 25-year-old woman from Melbourne, via Sydney. My mother is a feisty, passionate, loving woman from Northern Ireland, who says things like “to be sure, to be sure” and “fil-im” with an epenthesis and who famously pronounced the word “bagel” as “badge-el” around the time she met my father: a devoted Sydney man, who loves to cook and spoils his dog. I’m a feminist and a queer woman. I have a partner, Holly; a brother, Ben; two sisters, Hannah and Kim; a dog, Baku; several tattoos; a septum piercing; and a thesis, which you are reading now, entitled Art and Identity in the Age of Akhenaten.
Throughout this thesis, the importance of self-awareness and self-reflexivity in scholarship is a recurring theme. I believe that no research is without bias, because no researcher is without bias, and that self-reflexive scholarship is not only an academic trend but an ethical choice, rooted in a desire to consolidate the integrity of the research itself. I believe that considering the impact of researchers on the direction, production, and applications of their research does not diminish scientific integrity; it increases it. Self-reflexivity opens research up to new questions—not only questions of where to lay ‘blame’ for specific viewpoints, but questions regarding the roles of research in our world and new ways of doing research—by making foundationally significant aspects of the academic process visible, rather than stifling them.

The questions we ask of our research have meaning, not only for our subject matter but for ourselves, as humans. Sometimes this is as blatant as seeking the histories of ‘ourselves’ and the familiar qualities with which we align ourselves. At other times, we write the histories of our preoccupations, even our anxieties. There is so much of myself—or perhaps, myselfs—in a project that asks: who are we? How do we express ourselves to the world? How are we constrained in this? And how can we ensure that we are correctly understood and not rejected? Each of these are threads that have run through my life: from my youth as a shy, queer girl in a Sydney Anglican school, through the anxious freedom of my undergraduate years, to the person I am now, carving out a professional identity, which refuses to preclude the personal.

I am also aware that the choices I am making now have been enabled by a number of significant blessings. I was born into a family that loves me, that has always been equipped to
take care of me, and which has exposed me to new worlds through travel, education, and differences of opinion. I attend a world-class university on stolen land and I know that, although I am an openly queer woman in a society still greatly afflicted by misogyny and homophobia, to many, my voice is not only more ‘reliable’ but also far more audible than those of others who have all—and more—of my passion and talent but none of my advantages.

I do not take this lightly. I have been considering the question of how best to apply this to my thesis as more than a guilty acknowledgement of unearned privilege and I believe that the best way to do so is to utilise my own individual voice, so that you—the reader—know at all times where the words you are reading originated: that they are not new ‘facts’ to be added to a history of everything but thoughts that came from one mind, inspired by others, which you are free to question but also to know, and which may have thought very different thoughts if it weren’t for the chain of events that have led it to formulate these precise words, to type them, and, on one morning in February 2019, to submit them to your judgment.
Introduction: Part B

The Research

The history and archaeology of ancient Egypt is not one of the tragically understudied subdisciplines in the history of our world. It is a region and an age that enamours the academic explorer with promises of grand monumentality, glittering riches, and an air of ‘culture’ that appeals to Western ideals surrounding ‘art,’ ‘literature,’ and ‘civilisation’. We have always been enamoured by the pyramids, the tombs, and the temples, the rulers and their grand historical narratives. In more recent decades, we have also begun to interrogate the materiality of the everyday, through household archaeologies, social archaeologies, and mortuary archaeologies of the non-elite. My interest, as a researcher, is in the connections between ideology, culture, and human experience. How does the historical context—politics, religion, and society—impact the way that humans conceptualise and express themselves: as individuals, in their communities, and in the world? What are the meaningful ways in which individuals express an ‘identity’, or facets thereof, and how are these self-expressions mediated by social pressures of which the individual may or may not be aware?

How does expression relate to reception, both in its original context and for us as researchers, millennia after the fact? Are our impressions of individuals in ancient Egypt always or ever reliable?

Identities are multifaceted things, difficult to pin down. They are self-concepts formed along intersecting axes of age, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, occupation, kinship, community, religiosity, values, and a thousand other constructed categories and lived experiences, which may hold more or less salience for different individuals, at different times. What we
express as ‘who we are’ at a given moment, in a given setting, is the ‘self’ of only that moment. Almost always, in some way, it is an ideal self. Amarna provides a fascinating locus for this kind of study. It is a city of migrants, who reformulated their self-conceptions and self-expressions in response to unprecedented political, religious, and social upheaval and in relation to a king, who was himself redefined in relation to an ambiguously gendered new deity: the Aten. In Amarna’s tombs, which represent the most lasting opportunity their occupants had to project their esteemed ‘selves’ to the world, we find the royal family taking up increasing space. The tomb owner’s centrality within his own memorial is compromised; his family, often excluded altogether. At the same time, in the Workshop of Thutmose at Amarna, we find some of the most clearly individualised ‘portraits’ in the history of Egyptian art. It is a contradiction with intriguing implications, which is not easily resolved but well worth investigating.

**Chapter 1** presents a review of pertinent literature, comprising a background to 1) concepts of ‘self’ and ‘identity’, 2) ‘portraiture’ and the human image in Egyptian art, 3) sex and gender theory, 4) Egyptological studies of sex, gender, and family, 5) the Amarna context, and 6) methodological issues surrounding artistic interpretation.

**Chapter 2** foregrounds royal and divine expressions of self and family. It interrogates changes to the represented figures and interactions of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters and frames them in relation to changing conceptions of deity in the Amarna Period.
Chapter 3 considers the impact of these changes upon the opportunities and methods by which non-royal individuals expressed their identity in the funerary context, comparing Amarna’s tomb decoration against that of the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs.

The scope of this thesis is deliberately limited: one city, two decades. It is the briefest snapshot of a society in a state of social, political, and religious upheaval. There is no assumption here that Amarna could or should be allowed to stand in for Egypt as a whole. Rather, the broadest applicability of this thesis should be sought in the contribution it makes to the existing and often conflicted dialogue surrounding Amarna art and the ‘heretic pharaoh’ and questions of whether—and how!—we might use art to investigate the inner lives of long gone persons.
Chapter 1

Literature Review

1.1 Identity: The Self-Conception in Art and Society

This thesis foregrounds familiar concepts of ‘identity’ and the ‘self’, which acquire from their widespread casual application some conceptual muddiness. For the anthropologists, sociologists, and archaeologists who grapple with these terms, the crux of the confusion lays in identity’s well-established duality. Does it implicate, first and foremost, a person’s conception of themselves as a unique individual: where ‘identity’ refers to the collection of interlocking traits by which one is identified as oneself and as no one else? Or does identity refer, more so, to a social system of belonging or not-belonging, sameness and difference: where ‘identity’ is the collection of traits by which one is identified with or not-with others?¹

The latter is the historical use and yet the former grows increasingly common. Many scholars combat this ambiguity by reaffirming a division between ‘individual’ or ‘personal’ and ‘social’ identities in one way or another.² Yet, the two are not easily disentangled.³

Self-conceptions are always formed in relation to conceptions of others.⁴ Likewise, conceptions of groups or social categories are inevitably tied to the individual’s sense of

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² MacKinnon and Heise 2010, 98; Hogg 2012, 503. For example: Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (2002, 161-2) refer to a “personal self” and a “collective self,” while Díaz-Andreu and Lucy (2005, 1) designate the former “personality” and only the latter “identity.” Brewer and Gardner (1996, 83-4) distinguish the “individual self” from both “relational” and “collective” selves. See also: Sedikides and Brewer 2016, 1; Hogg, Abrams, and Brewer 2017, 2.
³ Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012, 69) illustrate this well, defining ‘identities’ as “the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is.”
their own and others’ inclusion within or exclusion from those groups. Our ever-changing sense of who we are is the product of ongoing social comparison and negotiation, with real-world implications for our interactions with persons, places, and institutions. It is also multiple, founded on diverse principles, whose salience will vary both between individuals and over a singular life-course. The result is that each time we present ourselves to the world—whether in life or in art—we make choices about those characteristics and associations that we both emphasise and mask, which are fundamentally related to the context and audience of that self-presentation. ‘Identity’ becomes something “both individual and sociocultural,” rooted in the solo acts of perception, cognition, and categorisation but continually constructed and projected in response to social interaction, expectations, and motivations.

When it comes to studying identity in antiquity, the temptation is to take one contributing feature or social category and to analyse that feature in depth. Many incredibly valuable archaeological studies in previously undertheorised areas such as gender, sexuality, aging, ethnicity, religion, and (dis)ability are the products of such a deconstruction. Yet, as an unintended consequence, we risk formulating quite one-dimensional views of populations, assuming that the identity feature we are interested in studying was always a defining one in the lives of those we wish to study or that it can be neatly divided from other aspects of

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5 Markus and Wurf 1987, 300-1; Meskell 2002b, 281; Casella and Fowler 2005, 2; MacKinnon and Heise 2010, 3.
6 Ryan and Deci 2012, 225.
7 See, for example: Owens (2006, 210-1) and Schlenker (2012, 542-3) on ‘impression management’ in self-presentation.
8 Urietta 2018, 5.
identity. I originally came to this thesis wanting to write a better study of women in ancient Egypt, using the Amarna Period as a case study. I thought that what grated on me about so many books on ‘Women in Ancient Egypt’ was that they were based on an outdated idea of what a ‘woman’ was: each transplanting the same 1950’s housewife and her nuclear family onto the Egyptian landscape. I thought that if I could problematise this model, delve deeper into constructions and experiences of gender in the Amarna context, and (although I would never have put it this way) devise a new ‘Egyptian woman’ to replace the cardboard cut-out I disliked so much, this would go a way toward fixing the ‘problem’ with studies of women in ancient Egypt, as I saw it. Yet, this was only part of the problem. Ultimately, we cannot discuss ‘women’ or ‘women’s experiences’ without acknowledging that as much variation exists within this (and any other) social category as outside of it and that the existence of the category itself, let alone how it is expressed and received in society, is culturally contingent. My study of ‘women’ gave way to a study of ‘gender’ and, finally, to the study of individuals and their expressions of self, of which gender forms only one interlocking part.

Similar views are gaining traction in archaeology, as scholars “move away from attempting to look at specific types of identity in isolation.” They are supported by decades of feminist theory and, in particular, by understandings of ‘intersectionality’ developed by Black Feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectional feminist approaches to identity help us avoid oversimplifying human experiences by emphasising the differences

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9 Nor is ‘identity’ simply the sum of a finite collection of traits and categories. See, for example: Lawler 2014, 11; Schwartz, Meca, and Petrova 2017, 155.
between individuals who nonetheless share important features.\textsuperscript{12} They remind us that “social categories never exist in pure form”\textsuperscript{13} and therefore that investigations of singular identity-categories must form part of a broader analysis in order to be legitimate.\textsuperscript{14} To assume that ‘men’ and ‘women’ will always be more different than similar, for example, is a common fallacy, which does not take into account potential axes of similarity, such as age, race, and class\textsuperscript{15} or the potential for different components of an individual’s identity to have a weaker, stronger, or simply different impact on their experiences in different arenas.\textsuperscript{16} The values and ideals by which we define ourselves and which motivate our activities in society are vulnerable, unstable,\textsuperscript{17} and prone to change over time, making identity fundamentally dynamic and plural.\textsuperscript{18}

Intersectional feminist approaches are equally useful in foregrounding the relationship between identity and power: rooted in consideration of the intersecting oppressions faced by black women in North America. There are aspects of our identity that we cannot control, based in unchangeable factors such as skin colour and place-of-origin, some that are self-attributed and either wholly or partly within our control,\textsuperscript{19} and some that are attributed to us by others, wanted or unwanted.\textsuperscript{20} We may be ‘identified’ in ways that do not correlate with our own self-conceptions: given labels, which we might reject, subvert, claim, or

\textsuperscript{12} Mach 1993, 3; Meskell 1997, 601; Gamson and Moon 2004, 52-3; Myking 2005, 12; Brumfiel 2007, 2; Choo and Ferree 2010, 131-2; Warnke 2010, 324-5; Battle-Baptiste 2011, 56, 70, 164; Brekke and Reisel 2012, 16-7; Levy 2014, 232; Levon 2015, 296-7; Carastathis 2016, 1; Hawkesworth and Disch 2016, 8; Urietta 2018, 16.
\textsuperscript{13} Magnusson and Marecek 2012, 18.
\textsuperscript{14} Voss 2005, 68; Joyce 2017, 4.
\textsuperscript{15} Joyce 2017, 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Casella and Fowler 2005, 1-2, 6-7; Brekke and Reisel 2012, 17.
\textsuperscript{17} Markus and Wurf 1987, 302; Mach 1993, 4.
\textsuperscript{18} Geller 2009, 70; Moral 2016, 11; Prinz and Nichols 2017, 449.
\textsuperscript{19} Owens 2006, 208.
\textsuperscript{20} White and Beaudry 2009, 210; Lawler 2014, 11.
reclaim.\(^{21}\) The attribution of an ‘othered’ group identity may form the basis for discrimination, particularly where certain identity-groups hold a monopoly on positions of power. These powerful groups reserve the right to define their own membership and, by extension, to define who is excluded or disadvantaged.\(^{22}\) Even in our everyday interactions, the perception of difference versus sameness with those we meet—whether a person is or is not like us—has the potential to influence or retrospectively justify our treatment of them.\(^{23}\) In this thesis, I focus primarily on autonomous identity construction or “self-authorship,”\(^{24}\) investigating artistic expressions of identity in commissioned works. In theory, these individuals have the power to control which aspects of their identity they focus and those they minimise. Yet, in practice, these choices may be more complex. Social constraints on self-expression and the relationship of elite self-expression to royal power will recur as themes in Chapter 3.

These notions of ‘identity’, ‘self’, and ‘individuals’ are deeply valuable to us in the study of real persons and their social lives in antiquity, although they are sometimes dismissed as anachronistic. It is true that conceptions of the ‘self’ and its composition vary across cultures,\(^{25}\) yet there remain important universals. The cognitive and linguistic division between oneself and others, expressed through distinguishing names and pronouns is a constant. There is always an “I,” a “you,” an “us,” and a “them,” which we are wont to define by similarity and contrast. These definitions or identifications—whether attributed or self-devised—have inalienable social origins and consequences. They teach us with whom it

\(^{21}\) Stovel 2005, 145.
\(^{22}\) Urietta 2018, 5-6.
\(^{23}\) Mach 1993, 6.
\(^{24}\) Urietta 2018, 5.
\(^{25}\) Houston and Stuart 1998, 73; Borgatti 2008, 304.
is safe to interact and how. The urge to understand the world by categorising its constituents may even be considered a human impulse. Although these are not new ideas, conceptions of ‘the individual’ and ‘the self’ as modern inventions, inapplicable to the past, persist.

Many have argued that ancient persons experienced a less defined sense of ‘self’ or ‘individuality’ than we do today, functioning as a limb of the broader social system. This perspective is exemplified by a binary conception of the ‘Western self’ in opposition to the ‘non-Western self,’ in which the former is an enlightened, self-aware, singular being with all its individual qualities and ambitions and the latter is defined as its opposite: “dependent, unable to set itself reflexively apart from others, unable to distinguish between the individual and a role or status that individual occupies, unable to pursue its own goals independently of the goals of a group or community.” In the grand tradition of Western scholarship, this distinction defines the non-Western—the not-us—as a primitive and undifferentiated opposite; I don’t consider it useful. ‘Individual’ and ‘social’ identities are not only two sides of the same coin but deeply entangled across cultures. Lynn Meskell expresses this well when she writes that “the rise of philosophising about the individual might be highly topical today, but this does not negate the fact that the concept of the individual existed in the past and in other cultures.” Specific contexts, not general cultures,

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26 See the discussion in Spiro 1993, 110-1.
27 Meskell 1999, 10-1.
29 See, for example: Erchak (1992, 8), who contrasts “Western” conceptions of self with those of “simpler societies” and “particularly those [cultures] that are nonliterate and nonindustrial.”
30 Meskell 1999, 11.
define the extent to which ‘group identities’ and group-level motivations structure individual actions and self-concepts.\textsuperscript{31}

The real question is: if we accept that identity is a relevant and useful concept for archaeology—which, at its core, is the study of past lives—then how might we access or interpret it? In day-to-day life, individuals express relevant facets of their identity by way of names, fashions, hairstyles, ornamentation, gait, mannerisms, language use, associations and interactions. We express identity in our self-presentation and behaviour, in the presentation of the belongings and spaces that we curate and display to others, and in our interactions with built and natural environments.\textsuperscript{32} Some of these habitual actions leave archaeological traces.\textsuperscript{33} We can access spaces, bodies, belongings, and other physical markers of identity, insofar as they are preserved. The archaeology of settlements and households, as well as burials—although their context is not one of ‘daily life’—are vital to this kind of investigation.

In this thesis, however, I take a less archaeological, more (art-)historical approach, focusing on the ways in which individuals communicate identity through art and text. Many of the sources I consider, particularly in \textbf{Chapter 3}, come from a mortuary context and this, too, has an impact on their motivations and character. We see the tomb owner defined as an individual within a social world that was simultaneously intended to celebrate his mortal world and to model its ideal forms for transplantation into the afterlife. The purposes of tomb decoration were both commemorative and magical, representational and symbolic,

\textsuperscript{31} Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith 2012, 71-2.
\textsuperscript{32} Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983, 57.
\textsuperscript{33} Nelson 2002, 9; White and Beaudry 2009, 211-2.
often idealising. Yet these images need not be realistic to be informative: the constructed and projected self-concept or identity is the object of study, explored within the context of the social milieu in which it was produced and for which it was considered useful. We can read something about how the deceased wished to be remembered in the forms, symbols, and meanings that their artistic representations share with others in the same and different contexts, as well as in the ways they present themselves as distinct, unique.

In ancient Egypt, considerations of ‘identity’ and ‘self’, particularly in the mortuary sphere, are enriched by a unique conception of human multiplicity. Far from being a ‘primitive’ non-Western or pre-Western society in which singular persons were but ill-defined cogs in the social machine, the Egyptians had a detailed understanding of individuals and their internal composition, comprising numerous differentiated but related elements, which underwent a manner of “dissociation,” “fragmentation,” and/or “activation” after death. These included the corpse and its components, the *ka* (sometimes glossed as ‘life force’), the *ba* (associated with mobility after death), and the *akh* (the ‘transfigured spirit’ as a whole). Egyptian literature, in both mortuary and non-mortuary contexts, is preoccupied with morality and individual character. Certainly at Thebes in the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty and, in a different way perhaps, at Amarna too, there is a sense of individual agency in the achievement of a peaceful afterlife: the dead are judged as individuals by their actions on earth. Pre-Amarna, this is a judgment by the gods, in which the heart is weighed against the feather of *ma’at* and the individual recites a series of ‘negative confessions’ to demonstrate

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34 White and Beaudry 2009, 219.
35 Assmann 2005, 87.
38 Taylor 2000, 9; Assmann 2005, in full.
their justness; at Amarna, it is a judgment by the king, who provides both tomb and eternity to his favourites, still on account of their own merit.

The preservation of the ‘self’, both bodily and—loosely, because it is in fact far more complicated—spiritually, is the impetus for Egypt’s massive mortuary industry: each ritual, funerary text, amulet, offering, tomb statue, wall painting and relief. Texts in and outside Egyptian tombs plead that visitors recite not only crucial offering formulae but also the name and titles of the deceased; the preservation of his identity in the social world of the living is key to his preservation in the Hereafter. For this reason, studies into how identities are constructed, projected, and received in Egyptian art and text have the potential to deepen our understanding of some of the most fundamental and long-lasting practices of this ancient civilisation.
1.2 The Nature of Egyptian ‘Portraiture’ and Its Implications for the Study of Individuals and Identity

Whether representational or conceptual, portraits represent particular people and spring from a common impulse to remember and be remembered, whether the reasons are personal or political, ritual or social... That non-Western portraiture has suffered from a lack of recognition is part of a larger problem of cross-cultural understanding.³⁹

At the core of this thesis is the question of how Amarna’s population communicated ‘identity’ through art. It hinges upon the interpretation of commissioned human images and the messages these images conveyed to initiated audiences, whether intended or incidental (see Chapter 1.6). The ‘portrait’ is a crucial genre for this investigation but also a controversial one.⁴⁰ Egyptian art is often considered fundamentally generic or idealising, with little relationship to perceptual ‘reality’. Much of it, particularly in Chapter 3, derives from a mortuary context, functionally effective within a mythological and ritual world, which need not directly mirror the mortal plane. For these reasons, many claim that the Egyptians had no true ‘art’ or ‘portraiture’ and that these terms are both anachronistic and inextricably Western. However, I argue that both of these terms are important and can serve us well in the Egyptian context—particularly portraiture, with its strong relationship to the social practice of constructing and displaying one’s own image. Ethnocentrism is a recurring problem in the definition and application of these terms and their criteria but we need not abandon them or their analytical utility. We need only take care to ensure that we

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are indeed defining a broadly useful category and not only the most familiar manifestations thereof.

Although precise definitions vary, the portrait category does not and should not encompass all human images. It designates artistic representations of specific individuals only,\textsuperscript{41} often but not exclusively those commissioned by the subject from an artist. As a completed object, the portrait is a social tool, which communicates the intentionally constructed character of its subject to a desired audience and preserves it beyond the moment of production. By the purposeful application of similarity and difference, identification and distinction, the subject is positioned within the context of a social milieu, an artistic tradition, an epoch, even a \textit{Zeitgeist}, making the portrait an ideal locus for studying constructions and projections of identity, both individual and social. I argue that the grounds on which portraiture, as a genre, has been denied to Egyptian art—and, indeed, even the word ‘art’ has at times been denied to Egyptian antiquity\textsuperscript{42}—are unjustifiable and unnecessarily limiting. They rely upon a too-specific and yet woefully inconsistent understanding of portraiture, which unnecessarily privileges physiognomic likeness as the single most important criterion, rather than conceptualising likeness as one tool, an option, in the production of ‘cognitively recognisable’\textsuperscript{43} and socially valuable portraits of unique individuals. In \textbf{Chapter 2}, I apply the concept of portraiture to the highly symbolic constructed public images of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters; in \textbf{Chapter 3}, to the self-representations of Amarna’s elite in their tombs.

\textsuperscript{41} Hoffman 2018, 5.
\textsuperscript{42} Ranke 1936, 9.
\textsuperscript{43} Riggs 2014, 15.
There is an unspoken assumption amongst art historians that because today we have reified categories such as ‘art’ and ‘portraiture’, what came before must necessarily be pre-art and pre-portraiture—or, at best, proto-art and proto-portraiture—and this poses a major problem. It encourages a language of development, often applied uncritically to artistic traditions with little direct relation to one another. Egyptian art and the art of other ancient cultures, sometimes excepting Greece and Rome, suffers the injustice of being placed at a primitive point on an evolutionary scale, whose implicit pinnacle is modern Western art. In the case of Egyptian art, this is usually justified by a notion that art should be purely aesthetic: “l’art pour l’art” or “art for art’s sake.” Any kind of functionality, especially any magical effectiveness of the finished work, is seen to negate the aesthetic qualities of even the most skilfully crafted pieces, rendering them not-art. By this token, German historian Alexander Scharff could claim that “the artistic contemplation and enjoyment of a work of art as we understand it could scarcely have been understood by an Egyptian.”

Regardless of one’s position on whether or not art should be allowed non-aesthetic functions, we must acknowledge the double standard scholars continue to exhibit in the evaluation of ‘art’ (especially ‘fine art’) versus ‘craft’ and ‘aesthetic’ versus ‘functional’. For example, several scholars consider the magical function of Egyptian tomb statues as

44 Indeed, some have argued that “there is no non-Western art. The concept is a Western one.” See the commentary in Davies 2000, 200-1.
45 Eckenstein 1905, 164; Ranke 1936, 10; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 189.
46 Breckenridge 1968, 7; Robins 1986, 7; cf. Danto 2000, 131; Davies 2000, 199, 204; West 2004, 44.
47 Scharff 1937, 174.
48 Again, Alexander Scharff’s article on Egyptian Portrait-Sculpture (1937, 174) exemplifies this traditional view. He juxtaposes Egyptian art, on the one hand, and “Greek, Roman, medieval, and modern works” on the other, claiming that “in Egypt, artistic creation was handicraft in the best sense of the term.” See also: Nadali 2014, 469; Riggs 2014, 15.
'replacement bodies', receptacles for the *ka*, or instruments of the funerary cult sufficient to render this genre of sculpture not-art, in spite of the artistic principles and methods applied to it. However, paintings and sculptures of Christian religious figures, such as the Virgin Mary or Catholic saints, frequently appear in churches and cathedrals as objects of devotion and recipients of prayer and ritual care without losing their artistic status. The statues of Roman emperors also functioned as cult objects at times, yet few would deny a Classical marble statue the designation of ‘art’, even ‘high art’. It is in the same fashion that the images of Egyptian pharaohs are deemed not ‘portraits’ but, in a mutually exclusive sense, propagandistic public images and idealised constructions of the ruler, while arguably equally propagandistic images of historical European monarchs—which magnify and uplift them, while disguising or rejecting unflattering features—still fall comfortably into the category of portraiture, even typify it.

The interpretative repercussions of these double standards are magnified by an academic insistence upon definitions of art and portraiture that were never intended to extend to the ancient world. Rather than viewing modern Western contributions to art and portraiture as culturally-specific options within a much broader range of possibilities, evidenced historically and cross-culturally, art historians have defined these categories by the elite and proximal examples with which they are most familiar. From here, we arrive at the imagined developmental scale that sees ancient artistic endeavours as primitive, magical crafts and modern art, portraiture, and even religion as their complete and developed forms. The Egyptian examples are categorised as not- or not-yet-art, portraiture and religion, instead of

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50 Assmann 1990, 21, 32.
51 West 2004, 27.
as separate and developed approaches to these categories in their own right. Meanwhile, we continue to grapple, in the modern world, with artists who push at the boundaries of what art and portraiture are or could be, because the definitions we are accustomed to and have assumed to be fully developed are bound to a specific (and evaporating!) cultural and temporal context. The ‘modern’ lapses into the post-modern and post-post-modern ad infinitum. Fierce legal battles ensue when the Archibald Prize goes to a ‘portrait’ that critics deem unworthy of the designation but that the represented subject considers a good likeness.\(^{52}\)

Fortunately, this does not mean that art and portraiture are not useful terms for the ancient world. On the contrary, it is vital that we have at our disposal categories that relate to: 1) the generation of aesthetic products, ‘art’, whether or not these products have coexisting non-aesthetic functions, and 2) the subset of these aesthetic products that construct and display unique individuals, what we might call ‘portraits’, so that we can examine and compare them, within their specific contexts but also diachronically and cross-culturally. These would not be the first categories of analytical utility to be imported into a context from which they did not originate, nor will they be the last. For these terms to be useful, however, we must first reformulate them in a manner appropriate to the broad range of contexts in which they appear and not only to the examples of art and portraiture most easily recognisable to us from our own standpoints. Perhaps above all, we must destroy the notion that art is defined by a lack of functionality, a pure aesthetic focus, which is as untrue today as it has ever been.\(^{53}\) The social, political, and religious functions of art are multiple

\(^{52}\) Hylton 2003, 10.

and the arts are now, as ever, as much a centre for progressive thought, new ideas, and social change, as they are characterised by tradition and established genres, media, and practices.

Indeed, the interplay of tradition and innovation is a central feature of Egyptian art and the Amarna Period presents a prime example of how theological, political, and social change can be accompanied, maintained, and even reciprocally driven by equally radical artistic change. Through art we come to terms with the world as it is, as it is becoming, as we would like it to be or wish it still were—even as we fear it might be—and we define the normative and the “eccentric.”

This negotiation of constructed worlds and persons performs a vital cognitive and social function in all periods and places. As such, Edna Russmann has argued that “[Egyptian] art was a function of religion—but it was most certainly art,” which was appreciated, copied, innovated, and coveted by its ancient producers and receivers. The highest levels of Egyptian society commissioned the most accomplished work, perceiving and valuing artistic skill and desiring more than basic functionality. Variations and fashions in artistic practices from time to time, place to place, and work to work speak to connoisseurship and stylistic preference at both individual and group levels. So, if we cannot talk about “art for art’s sake” in ancient Egypt—and perhaps we cannot talk about it, puristically, in any context—we can certainly talk about artistry for artistry’s sake: functionally ‘unnecessary’ elaboration for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation.

54 Rabb and Brown 1986, 2.
55 Russmann 1989, 2-3; See also Frankfort 1932, 34: “If in Egypt, as elsewhere, a work of art was mostly created with an ulterior motive extraneous to art, none the less it possesses immanent aesthetic properties without which it would not be a work of art at all.”
When it comes to portraiture, definitions vary in both specificity and strictness. The result is a division between broad or common-usage definitions—such as art historian Shearer West’s characterisation of the portrait as “a work of art that represents a unique individual”\(^{57}\)—and a notion of ‘true portraiture’ as a subset that complies with more stringent definitions.\(^{58}\) Most definitions in both categories centre on the criterion of ‘likeness’ to a unique individual: often, although not exclusively, ‘realistic’, ‘naturalistic’, or ‘physiognomic’ likeness.\(^{59}\) Some definitions imply an intention to “overcome separation: to render a subject distant in time, space, spirit, eternally present,”\(^{60}\) for which a physiognomic likeness is presumed necessary to evoke the “illusion”\(^{61}\) of the absent person. Egyptological considerations of ‘portraiture’ or its lacking often juxtapose ‘portraits’ with idealised or generic ‘type’ images. For Dimitri Laboury, portraiture tends to require “a pictorial individualisation and relates to the notion of realism as an accurate and faithful rendering of objective reality... in contrast to idealisation,”\(^{62}\) incorporating contested notions of ‘realism’ and ‘objectivity’ in the perception and representation of real persons.\(^{63}\) Many definitions also require a manner of psychological realism, a gesture to the subject’s inner self,\(^{64}\) as in the criteria proposed by the archaeologist Bernhard Schweitzer, below:

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\(^{57}\) West 2004, 21.

\(^{58}\) Winter 2009, 266.

\(^{59}\) For example, art historian Joanna Woodall (1997, 1) posits a category of “naturalistic portraiture,” which requires “a physiognomic likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of the living or once-living person.”

\(^{60}\) Woodall 1997, 1.

\(^{61}\) Spiro 1990, 9-10.

\(^{62}\) Laboury 2010b, 1; cf. Grzęda and Walczak (2017, 2) whose analysis of a 1586 portrait of Polish queen regnant Anne Jagiellon “challenges the commonly accepted view of a portrait according to which this genre is considered simply a reproduction of a sitter’s real facial features.” They argue that this example “informs about the complexity of early modern portraiture in which such notions as likeness and type, presence and absence, identity and individuality constantly intermingle leaving a consistent definition of this genre highly problematic.”

\(^{63}\) See also: Laboury 2009, 178.

\(^{64}\) Meyers 2009, 156.
1) A portrait must represent a definite person, either living or of the past, with his distinctive human traits.

2) The person must be represented in such a manner that under no circumstances can his identity be confused with that of someone else.

3) As a work of art, a portrait must render the personality, i.e., the inner individuality, of the person represented in his outer form.\(^{65}\)

While these definitions may appear accurate and sensible when applied to the archetypical portraits of comparatively recent European history, such as Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, they quickly run into difficulty in most other contexts.\(^{66}\) They beg the question: how far from realistic physiognomic likeness can one stray—even for the purpose of elucidating something about the subject’s inner being—before the work ceases to be a ‘portrait’ or, perhaps, becomes a poor one?\(^{67}\) This evaluation is subjective and the answer appears to shift with the times, as stylistic trends and the most controversial entrants in the ranks of major portrait competitions will attest.

A criterion of stringent physical likeness does not only limit today’s portraiture and those pushing the boundaries at the forefront of our modern art. It is also fundamentally useless to any consideration of ancient portraiture, as we never can compare the face and form of the subject, exactly as they appeared in life, against artistic depictions of them.\(^{68}\) Even confirmed human remains and death masks attributable to specific persons distort the features of the living and preserve their approximate likeness only at the point of death.

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\(^{65}\) Schweitzer 1960, as quoted in Breckenridge 1968, 4.

\(^{66}\) Grzęda and Walczak 2017, 2-3.

\(^{67}\) Richard Brilliant (1991, 16) argues that the notion of ‘likeness’ itself implies some difference between subject and image.

\(^{68}\) Brilliant 1991, 16; Málek 1999, 109.
These are an overwhelmingly rare best-case-scenario for those seeking to ‘verify’ ancient portraits. Even for still-living subjects, Marcia Pointon argues that the degree of likeness cannot be flawlessly established: “we are not party to the portrait sitting, the conditions of the studio or the relationship between the artist and the sitter that determines the subject’s appearance.”

J69 udgments of ‘good’ or ‘allowable’ portraiture, much like art, are thus personally, contextually, and culturally contingent, while the question of ‘who decides?’ is tied to academic and artistic hierarchies, which privilege certain arts and artists over others.

Evaluations of likeness hinge upon rarely discussed factors, such as which elements of the face and body are considered most indicative of individual’s ‘true’ nature and which can be reasonably altered. Few would suggest that a painting that makes a man look slightly taller, leaner, or younger than he is, or which neglects to include a spot of acne or a scar, is not a true portrait. Even images that seem to represent the genuine features of specific now-deceased persons, by virtue of ‘individualising’ or ‘unflattering’ details, cannot be assumed perfect likenesses in all respects. 70 The representation of human bodies and faces is liable to follow fashions in desirable or visually meaningful traits, as much perhaps as fashions in clothing and ornamentation. So, as, in the case of most portrait subjects throughout both modern and ancient history, we have no capacity to compare the artwork against a living individual and neither do we have any reasonable and objective method for evaluating degree-of-likeness between portraits and living subjects, this would seem to be an unstable and unsuitable characteristic by which to define portraiture. As I consider this a genre well

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69 Pointon 2013, 17.
70 Borgatti 2008, 305.
worth diachronic and cross-cultural study, I would argue that definitions that privilege physiognomic likeness must be adapted for greater efficacy.

The Egyptian context exemplifies this, usually characterised as lacking ‘portraiture’ and consisting, in a mutually exclusive sense, of ‘type’ images: idealised or generalised figures, not intended to physically resemble any one person.\(^71\) By this token, instances of apparent—although unverifiable—realism are drawn out as extraordinary exceptions to a rule:\(^72\) the Giza reserve heads and the model heads from the Workshop of Thutmose at Amarna are canonical examples. Human figures in Egyptian art have been described as “oversized hieroglyphs,”\(^73\) whose forms and orientations were strictly controlled by an artistic ‘decorum’, including features such as hierarchical scale and a non-naturalistic composite perspective. Indeed, Jan Assmann argues that the nature of the hieroglyphic writing system itself predisposed the Egyptians to consider generalised ‘type’ images of a ‘man’ or ‘woman’ acceptable substitutes for the representation of unique individuals in art.\(^74\) This perspective has its advantages and the links between Egyptian art and writing are genuine and well-attested. However, it also has its limitations, predisposing us to search for consistencies and play down variation in the representation of individuals.

Dissimilarities and inconsistencies in Egypt’s ‘hieroglyphic’ art tend to be framed as developments of, or minor variations within, set types. They are not seen to interfere with

\(^{71}\) Laboury 2010b, 1.
\(^{72}\) Scharff 1937, 179; Winter 2009, 259-60.
\(^{74}\) Assmann 1990, 24.
an overarching quality of artistic homogeneity and non-creativity.\textsuperscript{75} Even in sculpture, which typically exhibits a broader range of expression and detail than two-dimensional art, the continuity of certain compositional types, such as scribal statues, encourages us to gloss over potentially meaningful variations between works from related contexts, instead seeking broader trends in the technological and stylistic development of the genre. We are barred interpretative access to the individual subject. Yet, the dichotomy between non-specific type images and highly specific portraits is ultimately a simplistic one.\textsuperscript{76} Maintaining a clear distinction requires the modern categoriser to ignore both individualising traits in the ‘type image’ and generic or idealising traits in the ‘portrait’. The tendency to group all Egyptian figures in the former category because they exhibit some generic traits has led many art historians to form dismissive, one-dimensional conclusions about Egyptian art as a whole. They do so from a modern standpoint that privileges complete realism as an indicator of artistic skill.

Barely more useful is the use of a sliding scale from ‘type image’ to ‘portrait’, which encourages the same problematic notion of the true portrait in contrast to lesser portraits discussed above. This approach implies a consistency of artistic intention across the image that may not exist. For example, a sculpture might have a distinctive face but a body that conforms to an idealised standard;\textsuperscript{77} a bust might have distinctive eyes or ears but a mouth or jawline that clearly reflects a common type, recognisable from other figures in the same

\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Carl Hausman (1979, 246), who disputes the notion that Egyptian artworks are too “repetitive, stylised, and unchanging with respect to their forms” to be considered truly creative. He reads creativity and novelty in the variations between even examples that share much in common and argues that “artists who work according to formulas are regarded as creative because they do not blindly conform to these.”

\textsuperscript{76} Laboury 2009, 178.

\textsuperscript{77} For example: Mâlek (1999, 109-10) refers to “the body common” of various artistic epochs. See also: Drioton 1950, 42-5, 49.
production context. Moreover, even where individualising features do appear—as distinct from generic ‘type’ features—it is often impossible to establish whether these were: 1) the ‘true’ features of a long-deceased individual; 2) arbitrary stylistic variations; or 3) markers of iconographic or symbolic significance within their original context.

Irene Winter has addressed the ‘portraiture’ debate in relation to the images of Mesopotamian kings. She concludes that, in many cases, their regular and individualising features probably did not reflect genuine physiognomic idiosyncrasies but were “signature element[s]—which, in concert with the often inscribed label of his name and titles... [allowed] for both recognition and the perpetuation of [the king’s] chosen ‘PR image’.”78 That is, Winter argues that individualising but fundamentally non-realistic features could nonetheless constitute intentional, specific, and regular characteristics of a person’s public image, particularly where these features coded an interpretable meaning in the iconographic language of the given culture. By her example, Gudea’s large ears, although consistent across his representations, should not be interpreted as a faithfully represented physical trait but a signifier of the virtue of being ‘wide of ear’, “one who was wise and could be attentive.”79 Conventional definitions of portraiture require us to exclude images where a physiognomic likeness is uncertain, unlikely, or incomplete and yet the images of figures like Gudea clearly do represent a unique and recognisable subject. Does the genre truly benefit from this exclusivity? Or, as I believe, are we better served by opening up the genre and understanding physiognomic likeness as one method by which the recognisable

78 Winter 2009, 258.
79 Winter 2009, 260.
‘portrait’ of an individual—the artistic communication of their identity, beyond only physical appearance—can be achieved?

Responding to this issue, some art historians now argue for a shift from ‘likeness’ to ‘recognition’ as a criterion in the classification of portraits. That is, for the image of any individual to be deemed a portrait, it should be recognisable as representing that individual to an informed viewer, whether by means of physical likeness or, for example, by the combination of a set of consistent features, regalia, names, titles, or epithets. These scholars argue that focusing on physical likeness is restrictive and reflects a modern, Western bias that privileges realism over other crucial elements of portraiture, such as the intention to represent a singular person and their singular qualities, not only physical but also psychological, personal, and social. This perspective allows us to compare the differing ways in which portraits are constructed within a given context but also cross-culturally and diachronically and to consider the utility of including generic and idealising traits, rather than assuming that they always connote a ‘primitive’ or unaccomplished piece. When direct likeness is not the sole or even primary factor in evaluating a portrait, space is opened up to discuss the benefits and impacts of alternative representative choices made by commissioners and artists.

Indeed, far from being uninformative, the decision to represent a person as wholly or partially conforming to a physical or moral ideal or as a ‘typical’ member of a certain social group may itself make a desired statement about the individual’s nature, without

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compromising their recognisability to an initiated viewer. Meaningful representative choices regarding physical features, dress, hair, posture, ornamentation, regalia, epithets, titles, company within the image, placement of the finished product, and other pertinent characteristics help to situate them in their social world, so that “portraits are filled with the external signs of a person’s socialised self,”81 their social identity, whether or not a physical likeness is complete.82 The external signs of belonging to a group may serve the needs of some individuals far better than accurate physiognomic likeness.

This is particularly true for cases where the intended audience or a subsection thereof has no first-hand knowledge of the individual’s appearance.83 For the Egyptian represented in his tomb, seeking visitors to recite offering formulae generations after his death, representing a close physiognomic likeness was less useful than constructing a meaningful portrait that would encourage these unknown visitors to engage with the mortuary cult. Even today, the portrait of a monarch, preserved on a coin, will continue to serve its social function and convey a message about the internal or external nature of that monarch, even if it travels a great distance and falls into the hands of someone who has never seen them in person and does not know whether or not the likeness is accurate. The same is true even if the portrait is viewed after the subject has aged significantly or even died. Such images arguably have far greater priorities than the simple transmission of physical likeness. They have an indivisible ideological and political purpose, concretising and externalising the intentionally constructed conception or self-conception of their subjects.

81 West 2004, 29-30.
82 Borgatti 2008, 304; Meyers 2009, 156.
Egyptian artists too were clearly cognisant of and capable of utilising the potential for superficially aesthetic choices in the representation of distinct individuals to convey meaning to viewers. Akhenaten’s royal portrait, with its deliberate otherness and gender play provides a fascinating example, to be addressed in Chapter 2. Edna Russman puts it well when she describes Akhenaten’s images as “deliberately unrealistic... exaggerations, abstractions, designed on the king’s orders, to suit his purposes.” It was not uncommon for royal portraits to change over the course of a reign, not only in a simple progression of aging features but in much more complex ways, as the needs of the monarch changed. Indeed, Amenhotep III de-ages late in his reign, following a symbolically revitalising Heb Sed ceremony. The art of his final decade has been characterised as having a “‘rejuvenation’ or ‘deification’ style,” which prioritised communication of this king’s interior qualities and proximity to divinity over faithful representation of his exterior. Major changes to Akhenaten’s royal portrait around the same time as his religious reforms and foundation of Amarna suggest a similar communicative intention.

Even earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut provides a tremendous example of a pharaoh who communicated changes to their publically projected identity through changes to the royal portrait, often adopting male-coded physical features in addition to traditionally masculine pharaonic regalia. It is clear that we should not interpret Hatshepsut's artistic gender transition as mirroring literal changes to her body; the Egyptian viewer, who had seen images of the iconographically female Hatshepsut as queen, would certainly not have assumed this. Rather, Hatshepsut chose to incorporate male-coded physiognomy as an

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optional, inconsistent component of her recognisable public image, making it, in essence, a component of the pharaonic costume that visually reinforced her right to rule. When Jaromír Málek wrote that “Egyptian royal sculpture aimed beyond portraiture,” he hinted at this notion of the value and utility of human images potentially being rooted elsewhere than in physiognomic likeness, which he took portraiture to require.

Consequently, where scholars tend to view generality and idealism—as opposed to individuality and realism—as indicative of lesser quality, I argue that in the examples of Hatshepsut, Amenhotep III, and Akhenaten, among doubtless others, the opposite is true. Here, the adoption of physiognomy that did not directly resemble the subject’s own did not make the portrait a lesser one—of poor quality because it was untrue to ‘reality’—but a greater one. Hatshepsut’s male-coded figure displayed the core component of her projected identity, her pharaonic nature, more clearly than direct likeness possibly could. The deliberately generic male body she adopted resembled those of her pharaonic forebears. It also resembled the body of Amun, whom Hatshepsut claimed as her divine father and whose support underpinned her right to rule. In constructing a portrait to promote the unquestionably pharaonic identity that Hatshepsut wished her public to receive, physical likeness provided less ideological utility and less cognitive recognisability than the adoption of an expectedly male-coded pharaonic portrait. Any proposition that “the general image cannot be specific but the representational one must be” is demonstrably flawed.

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87 Russmann 1989, 84.
89 Assmann 1990, 24.
90 Borgatti 2008, 305.
Moreover, at any given moment in Egyptian history, the artists devising royal portraits were working within approximately the same context as those devising the images of well-to-do private individuals. Workshops such as that of Thutmose at Amarna produced both royal and non-royal sculptures. Why shouldn’t we then assume that non-royal portraits, as much as royal ones, could be constructed with the intention to convey messages about the subject by means other than physiognomic likeness, both in their ‘generic’ or ‘ideal’ traits and in their individual ones? Of Greek and Roman sculpture, Shearer West notes that most were “like enough to enable a human association with the individual depicted but... idealised to reflect those qualities felt to be worthy of admiration and emulation.”91 Both the individualised and idealised components served vital functions. West cites the Greek philosopher Theophrastus (c. 371—287 BCE) here, with the quip: “Only a flatterer tells a man that he looks like his portrait.”92

I conclude that likeness to physical reality is a pointless requirement for all portraiture. It constitutes only one of numerous available methods of crafting distinct, recognisable individuals and, arguably, one that is privileged in a minority of artistic contexts cross-culturally. Intentional differentiation of one represented individual from another, in whatever form that may take, whether it be physical likeness, invented but meaningful physical features, or the inscription of names and titles—simply, the intention to create an image of one person that is not the image of another—should be enough to constitute a portrait. Partial visual identification with others and with broader social norms and values,

91 West 2004, 27.
92 Theophrastus, Characters 2:2 (after West 2004, 27).
through the adoption of generic or ideal traits can be an important part of visually defining such an individual.

I have found this pertinent to establish due to the centrality of human images in Egyptian art and, moreover, due to the strength of the connection between ‘identity’ as a concept and the ways in which individuals actively communicate meaningful images of themselves through art: what we can now securely call ‘portraiture’. For Assmann, the inherently social function of the Egyptian portrait makes it the iconic or artistic equivalent of the tomb biography: communicating to viewers an (edited) self-conception or ‘self-thematisation’ of the commissioner-subject.\(^93\) Indeed, portraiture’s eternalising and often idealising nature makes it a highly potent and appropriate genre for the Egyptian context. The portrait cements the intentionally constructed conception of an individual and imbues it with continuous reality. The subject is frozen at a particular point in their life-course, real or imagined, whether this is the present at the time of representation or a past or future time: the subject as a handsome younger man or a wise elder. This statically represented form can be repeatedly referenced, serving as a viewer’s mental image of a person even long after they have died or their appearance has changed. This stability and imperishability of the individual, achieved through art—and in Egypt, particularly through representation in stone—is highly relevant to Egyptian preoccupations with securing a perfected and functional form through which to experience the Hereafter, as well as surviving in living memory.

From the Old Kingdom onwards, we know that artistic representation and eternal preservation were not only symbolically linked but that Egyptian art was understood as magically effective and images as functional substitutes for persons.\textsuperscript{94} Funerary statues, originally enclosed in \textit{serdab} structures in the tomb and hidden from traditional ‘audiences’, were conceived in part as replacement bodies, providing a physical form inhabitable by the deceased’s \textit{ka}.\textsuperscript{95} Although the forms and functions of tomb statues changed over time—the \textit{serdab} disappears in the Middle Kingdom and the statue enters a more accessible part of the tomb or forecourt—the sense that an artistic representation \textit{is} or \textit{becomes} a component or tool of the deceased persisted.\textsuperscript{96} The funerary statue became a focal point for cultic attention from visitors to the tomb. As such, commissioning a portrait sculpture that was acceptable to the subject as an eternal form, both for the practical use of their spirit and as their figurehead, to be addressed by the living, was vital for those with the resources to do so. Some—and this was also affected by changing fashions—chose to include their spouses or children in double or group statues, entwining their afterlife experiences but also eternalising and memorialising their kinship, connectivity, and social identities.\textsuperscript{97}

Thus, while Richard Fazzini has argued that “portraiture was not necessary to the purposes for which Egyptian statues were made and some of these purposes mitigated against the creation of true portraiture,”\textsuperscript{98} it is direct physiognomic likeness that he implicates as unnecessary to the Egyptian context. When we adopt a broader definition, which foregrounds the intent to represent a distinct individual, whether via physiognomic likeness

\textsuperscript{94} Brewer and Teeter 2007, 189.
\textsuperscript{95} Assmann 1990, 21-2, 32; Malek 1999, 21.
\textsuperscript{96} Teeter 1994, 14; Smith 1998, 1; Ikram 2003, 25-7; Hawass 2009, 212.
\textsuperscript{97} Hayes 1959, 156.
\textsuperscript{98} Fazzini 1975, xxv.
or any other means, we can see that this genre was an intrinsic, productive, and incredibly long-spanning form within Egyptian art. Indeed, Assmann has argued that “portraiture is by far the most important and productive genre of Egyptian art, just as biography is the most ancient and productive genre of Egyptian literature. Both genres are self-thematisations of an individual subject, one in the medium of art, the other in the medium of language.”

Both are related to a deep cultural preoccupation with the construction, preservation, and communication of identity.

Assmann’s language of self-thematisation is useful because it encourages us to explore the conceptual link between artistic and literary genres engaged with the individual and their publically projected ‘self’. It also highlights the kinds of works that we are concerned with when we refer to ‘portraiture’ in ancient Egypt: not the images of the unnamed masses that populate the backgrounds of tomb scenes, but the specific representations of unique individuals that are the primary foci of commissioned works: that is, the images, in any medium, that a person has requested be made of themselves and/or individuals known to them, to their specifications, and for their purposes, from the social to the magical. This understanding of the portrait as a ‘self-thematisation’—which we might equally consider a self-definition or self-conception—gives us a lens through which to understand ancient individuals through how they understood and publically presented themselves and key elements of their personal and social identities. However, Assmann is himself aware that a primary benefit of his use of ‘self-thematisation’ is that it spares him “the thankless task of discussing whether there is any ‘real’ portraiture or biography in ancient Egypt.”

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100 See also: Meskell 2008, 28.
101 Assmann 1996, 55.
can be dispensed with or de-emphasised if we take the time to address the problem at hand and demand a definition of portraiture that is appropriate to ancient contexts, as much as modern ones, focusing on intended specificity and cognitive recognisability over physical likeness.

The Amarna Period, which is my focus here, provides a particularly interesting locus for studying individuals and their identities through portraiture: from monumental royal sculpture to elite tomb decoration and beyond, in a work of greater scope. It is an epoch characterised by an initial upheaval—major theological change and large-scale migration—and subsequent negotiation, in the adaptation and formulation of new communities and practices. As identity is so entangled in social connectivity and, conversely, division, we can assume that Amarna’s residents were, over time, altered in some way by their experiences and that this unique city came with its own fashions, ideas, and expectations: a mesh of tradition and innovation. Attitudes, items, persons, and practices were transplanted onto this virgin site from across Egypt. Some were transformed by their new context. In this transitional social and theological space, shifting identities are productively examined through shifting portraits.
1.3 Theorising ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’ in the Modern World and the Ancient Past

Gender is simultaneously easy and excruciatingly difficult to deal with in a classroom setting. On the one hand, getting students to talk about gender is never a problem, because they assume that what they know about the subject is (1) self-evident and (2) universally accepted. On the other hand, this is also why it is so difficult to engage in a critical discussion of the topic. The following assumptions tend to dominate: (1) gender and sex are the same thing; (2) there are only two genders corresponding to two sexes; (3) once an individual is assigned to a gender category (at birth) gender shifts do not occur; (3) Euro-American attitudes toward gender are universal; (4) gender does not affect students’ daily lives in any meaningful way. Responses to the idea that gender and sex are mutable and context-specific concepts range from astonished outrage and rejection to quiet epiphany, depending on the student’s life experiences. Engaged learning is never a problem, but managing the discussion to make sure that comments do not become derogatory or demeaning can be a challenge.102

When we come to the artistic expression of royal identities in Chapter 2, sex, gender, and familial relations will be recurring themes. However, these are contested areas in the scholarship, which first deserve theoretical attention. To some degree, conceptual muddiness is an unavoidable consequence of attempts to theorise the components of our identity that feel innate to us, as researchers. My sense of ‘being’ a queer woman, for example, cannot help but influence the ways in which I conceptualise and explore the categories of woman and queer. For me, they are fundamentally meaningful; they both reflect and continue to shape the ways that I construct my identity and interact with others, who may or may not share those identities. Yet, at the same time, there are others addressing the same theoretical issues, who have different experiences of woman and

queer than I do and who identify themselves in different ways. Moreover, for those who have never personally thought a great deal about gender or sexuality, attempts to theorise these concepts may seem unnecessarily complicated or, perhaps, relevant only to those whose sex, gender, or sexuality falls outside socially normative categories. LGBTQIA+ individuals themselves may shun these studies, in order to avoid ‘succumbing’ to stereotypes that mandate their interest in such matters or incurring accusations of bias.

Bettina Arnold’s description of teaching gender archaeology to undergraduates, quoted above, exemplifies the complexity of both academic and personal engagement with this subject. Theoretical studies cannot be dissociated from our own personal and social experience. Yet, it is crucial that the theories we develop regarding sex, gender, and sexuality do not apply only to ourselves and those we align ourselves with. We require a broadly applicable model, whose relevance extends beyond our own temporal, social, and political contexts as investigators: one that can be applied as easily to me as to the woman sitting beside me on the train, whom I overhear attributing transgender identity to excessive consumption of processed foods, and as easily to her as to any number of Western and non-Western cultures of the modern day and ancient past.

Perhaps another reason that these terms arouse such heated debate, however, is that the way we theorise them has implications for how we can and should treat individuals in our world. In particular, it has implications for the treatment of those who fall outside the normative categories proposed by our analyses, including marginalised queer and gender-diverse individuals, to whom we owe a duty not to oversimplify the extent of ancient
variation in bodies, experiences, and identities.\textsuperscript{103} There are ethical considerations for the theorisation of sex, gender, and sexuality in the twenty-first century, just as there are ethical considerations for studies of race and ethnicity. Temporal distance does not exempt historians from these considerations, nor does making a clear distinction between ancient social categories and modern ones. Here, I outline the development of these concepts, their past and present utility, and define the understandings of sex and gender, in particular, that I apply to this thesis. My hope is that they be theoretically sound, flexible, non-judgmental, and applicable to ancient Egypt without sacrificing their relevance to, or disguising their roots in, twentieth and twenty-first century discourses and experiences, including my own.

The theoretical distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ is rooted in 1970s and ‘80s feminism, where it served as a challenge to the argument that men and women are inherently (biologically) different and that our contrastive treatment and roles in society are natural reflections of this difference.\textsuperscript{104} Widespread contemporary views posited men as natural leaders, fighters, and professionals and women as natural mothers, wives, nurturers, and supporters—assertions that implicitly justified the greater focus and value attributed to men’s activities in history and a tendency to define women in terms of their relationships to men.\textsuperscript{105} Second-wave feminists problematised this state of affairs, demanding not only that women’s activities in antiquity receive greater attention but also that present-day women be granted greater access to the production of knowledge.\textsuperscript{106} Ensuing research has

\textsuperscript{103} Joyce 2017, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{105} Friedman and Wilks 1987, 58; Harding 1987, 29; Ginzberg 1987, 94; Conkey and Gero 1997, 425; Hays-Gilpin 2000, 94, 97; Harding 2004, 31; Balme and Bulbeck 2008, 3; Gustavsen 2009, 8; Nicholas 2009, 150; Moen 2010, 9; Rose 2010, 11-2; Spencer-Wood 2011, 5; Levy 2014, 228; Walrath 2017, 18-9.
\textsuperscript{106} Hays-Gilpin 2000, 96; Lundø 2002, 26; Rose 2010, 12.
demonstrated that societies do not ‘gender’ activities in uniform ways, that absolute
gendered divisions of labour are rare, and that—in the absence of specific taboos barring
one gender from a given occupation—changes to the broader social situation or
demography of the group may result in the redistribution of labour in unusual ways,
including the transgression of any pre-existing norms concerning ‘men’s work’ and
‘women’s work’. 107 This trend is observable in comparatively recent history, in dramatic
changes to women’s social and occupational roles in wartime and post-war.

Distinguishing ‘sex’ as a (presumed) stable biological category and ‘gender’ as a
categorisation based on socially acquired and coded behaviours and characteristics108
allowed feminists within and outside academia to argue that women’s positions in society
were not the result of biological difference but, rather, of subjective perceptions of and
responses to biological difference. 109 This theoretical distinction demanded a real-world
socially and politically located response. 110 If, indeed, women were equally biologically
capable of filling traditionally male-assigned roles, then they had the right to equal
participation, opportunities, and treatment in those roles. Men, likewise, had a right to
equal participation, opportunities, and treatment in traditionally female-assigned areas,

108 For use of a strict dichotomy between biological sex and cultural gender, see, for example: Oakley 1972, 16;
Gould 1977, 183; Apter 1985, 33; Friedman and Wilks 1987, 58-9; Gibbs 1987, 8. For commentary on this
usage, see: Hood-Williams 1996, 1; Meskell 1996, 2-3; Knapp 1998, 97; Meskell 2000b, 14-5; Voss 2000, 186-7;
Voss 2005, 57-8; Fausto-Sterling 2005, 1493-6; Skogstrand 2006, 114, 116; Richardson 2008, 4-6;
Vanwesenbeeck 2009, 885, 891; Moen 2010, 8; Warnke 2010, 324-5; Spencer-Wood 2011, 4-5; Williams 2011,
20; Collins 2012, 437; Gilchrist 2012, 13-4; Ghisleni, Jordan, and Fioccoprile 2016, 2-7; Moral 2016, 2-4.
109 Rubin 1975, 158; Friedman and Wilks 1987, 59; Hubbard 1988, 6-7; Badgett 1995, 122; Fuglestvedt 1997,
13; Voss 2005, 57-8; Valum 2007, 13; Gustavsen 2009, 9; Collins 2012, 437.
such as childcare. Then, as now, understandings of gender and sexual difference were as political as they were personal.

In addition to this political utility, distinguishing sex from gender provided a framework for addressing difference and variability.\(^{111}\) That is, because gender was now considered a socially constructed category, independent of biological sex\(^{112}\)—for which there were still presumed to be only two available categories: male and female—it could be theorised as something unstable. Scholars explored the ways in which gender and gendered behaviours could be ‘learned,’\(^{113}\) ‘constructed,’\(^{114}\) ‘negotiated,’\(^{115}\) ‘performed,’\(^{116}\) or ‘done’\(^{117}\) and proposed that the number and content of gender categories was constrained only by context: the nature of the categories deemed salient by a given group at a given time. The transference of modern gender categories and roles into the past was thus no longer something that could be undertaken uncritically; it had to be argued for.\(^{118}\) Equally, existing analyses of past societies, which assumed a stable link between ‘male’ and ‘female’ sexed individuals and what we would term ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ traits and roles, could now be effectively critiqued in terms of both androcentrism\(^{119}\) and ethnocentrism.\(^{120}\) So, feminist

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112 Hanen and Kelley 1992, 196; Rose 2010, 11.
117 West and Zimmerman 1987, 126; Poggio 2006, 226; Deutsch 2007, 106; Vanwesenbeeck 2009, 891.
120 See discussion in Moen 2010, 19; Rubio 2011, 26.
scholarship entered a ‘remedial’\textsuperscript{121} phase, re-evaluating women’s roles in past societies and in modern accounts of those societies.\textsuperscript{122} That such women-focused histories are now often considered incomplete\textsuperscript{123} or “gynocentric”\textsuperscript{124} does not diminish their remarkable impact on the discipline and it is worth challenging the motivations of those who continue to use critiques of the earliest forms of feminist research to discount feminism and feminist theory today.

Some of the earliest contributions to this tradition came from Norway, where female archaeologists presented papers addressing gender issues in archaeology as early as 1975, under the auspices of \textit{Norges allmennvitenskapelige forskningsråd (NAVF)}, the Norwegian National Research Council.\textsuperscript{125} In 1979, an NAVF conference titled “\textit{Var de alle menn?” (‘Were they all men?’) provided a forum for feminist archaeologists to converge, challenging androcentric models of antiquity and examining the contributions of prehistoric women within their communities.\textsuperscript{126} Although an important turning point and meeting point for these scholars, the papers were not so well received by others, including the NAVF itself. The female focus was decried as contrary to the conference’s aim of “researching individuals” but, likely more significantly, the subject matter was considered either uninteresting or inflammatory by many within the primarily male archaeological establishment, whose work it was critiquing.\textsuperscript{127} The notion of men as the bearers of ‘real’

\textsuperscript{121} Hendon 1996, 55; Knapp 1998, 100, 105; Lundø 2002, 33; Torsetnes 2004, 6-7; Arnold 2005, 85; Brumfiel and Robin 2008, 2; Spencer-Wood 2011, 2-6.
\textsuperscript{122} Hays-Gilpin 2000, 94.
\textsuperscript{123} Imber and Tuana 1988, 142; Hill 1998, 104; Arnold 2005, 85; Balme and Bulbeck 2008, 3, 6; Engelstad 2015, 766.
\textsuperscript{125} Lundø 2002, 28-9; Moen 2010, 18-9.
\textsuperscript{126} Hays-Gilpin 2000, 94; Lundø 2002, 29; Dommasnes and Montón-Subías 2012, 368, 371.
\textsuperscript{127} Lundø 2002, 29.
history and the relegation of women to a hidden sphere of mundane domesticity remained the norm.\textsuperscript{128} To question this was to question the foundations of how history was constructed and, in so doing, to undermine the authority of those in the business of constructing such histories.

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that six years passed before the proceedings of the 1979 conference were finally accepted for publication. By this time, feminist and otherwise gender-oriented archaeologies, as well as criticisms of processual archaeology more broadly,\textsuperscript{129} were gaining momentum in an international setting and the work was seen as having acquired sufficient relevance. Yet, it is unfortunate that an initial delay in publication, combined with the language barrier, prevented the work of Norway’s early feminist archaeologists from making a major international impact for many years. Even today, this body of work is often unmentioned, dismissed, or only tangentially referenced in gender archaeology reviews not written by Norwegian speakers\textsuperscript{130}—a likely unavoidable fact but one which, nevertheless, has been known to lend a bitter note to Norwegian-language reviews.

Gender’s emergence as a concern for English-language archaeologies was heralded in North America by the publication of what is now considered a seminal work in gender

\textsuperscript{128} The notion of the ‘public’ sphere as the domain of men and the ‘private’ sphere as the domain of women, although much criticised, remains widespread. See, for example: Dunn and Carney 2018, 1.


\textsuperscript{130} For example, Back Danielsson and Thedéen’s assessment (2012, 22) that “…gender research within archaeology started in the beginning or mid of the 1980s with early contributions by Conkey & Spector (1984, "Archaeology and the Study of Gender") and also Hodder (1984, “Burials, houses, women, and men in the Neolithic”). Prior to this, there were really only Norwegian archaeologists…” For English-language reviews of Norwegian contributions to early gender-archaeology, see Engelstad (2007, 2015) and Dommasnes and Montón-Subías (2012).
archaeology, even its “opening trumpet”:\textsuperscript{131} Archaeology and the Study of Gender (1984) by Margaret Conkey and Jane Spector.\textsuperscript{132} Preucel describes this as “the first widely read feminist contribution” in archaeology, an epithet by which he apparently distinguishes it from its foreign-language predecessors.\textsuperscript{133} Conkey and Spector argued that the way we do archaeology “reinforces values of which we are not always aware,”\textsuperscript{134} examining how interpretations of the past rely upon and reinforce “a set of culture specific beliefs about the meaning of masculine and feminine, about the capabilities of men and women, about their power relations, and about their appropriate roles in society.”\textsuperscript{135} Otherwise stated: a gender mythology, which only masquerades as objective fact insofar as it is unproblematically applied to analyses of past societies.\textsuperscript{136} Conkey and Spector aimed to problematise these ‘gender mythologies’, as well as to disseminate and apply contemporary feminist ideas developed outside of archaeology.\textsuperscript{137} As such, regardless of the extent to which modern gender archaeologists align themselves with feminist theory, the foundation of gender archaeology in the US, as in Norway,\textsuperscript{138} was a feminist act\textsuperscript{139} and one that was fundamentally interdisciplinary in the frameworks and terminologies it applied.

\textsuperscript{131} Hanen and Kelley 1992, 199.
\textsuperscript{132} Hill 1998, 101; Lundø 2002, 28, 30; Engelstad 2007, 217; Balme and Bulbeck 2008, 6; Geller 2009, 66; Moen 2010, 18; Dommasnes and Montón-Subías 2012, 368.
\textsuperscript{133} Preucel 1995, 155.
\textsuperscript{134} Conkey and Spector 1984, 1.
\textsuperscript{135} Conkey and Spector 1984, 1.
\textsuperscript{137} Conkey and Spector 1984, 2.
\textsuperscript{138} Engelstad 2007, 217; Engelstad 2015, 765.
\textsuperscript{139} Geller 2009, 66.
Particularly in its early years, gender archaeology was indivisibly political. It was influenced by, benefitting from, and sometimes hindered by the advances and perceptions of feminism in public discourse and academia. In 1985, following Conkey and Spector’s publication and the international interest it garnered, a group of female archaeologists, including Jenny Rita Næss and Gro Mandt, organised a seminar entitled Arkeologisk kvinneforskning og kvinner i arkeologisk forskning (roughly, “archaeological research into women and women in archaeological research”), belying this split focus between analyses of women in the past and women in academia. The same double focus is hinted at in the title of the journal, whose publication followed this 1985 seminar: ‘Kvinner i arkeologi i Norge’ (“Women in archaeology in Norway”), pointedly known by the acronym KAN (“can”). Ericka Engelstad argues that not only did KAN provide a mouthpiece for the articulation of women’s issues and the circulation of gendered and feminist research, it was also an empowering political statement. The free circulation of the first two issues amongst Norwegian archaeologists reflected one of the journal’s primary goals: spreading feminist ideas, research, and critiques and engaging the often stubborn archaeological community in order to exact practical and theoretical change. As in Conkey and Spector’s article, the “false notion of objectivity” that underlay processual archaeologies and the

\[140\] Lundø 2002, 29.
\[141\] Lundø 2002, 29.
\[143\] Engelstad 2007, 220. See also Lundø 2002, 29-30.
\[144\] Engelstad 2007, 220.
\[145\] Conkey and Spector 1984, 6.
sciences more broadly became a frequent target of feminist criticism, in Norway as in English-language academia.  

As gender archaeology progressed through the 1980s and into the ‘90s, its aims diversified. The remedial project of “finding the women,” where before they had been unnoticed or ignored—an “add women and stir” approach to archaeology—came under criticism from both within and outside the discipline. Increasingly, the focus became one of gender difference, gender relations, and gendered practices, which included men, women, and myriad other potential gendered subjects. Essentialist conceptions of ‘women’ and ‘men’ as oppositional and internally homogeneous categories were deemed insufficient, giving rise to ‘intersectional’ approaches, which foregrounded the multiplicity of identity. It became clear that shared gender categories do not always result in shared experiences; these are complicated by gender’s ‘intersection’ with other axes of identity, such as race, age, sexuality, ethnicity, kinship, class, occupation, [dis]ability, religion, and even personality—developments pioneered by Black Feminists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw.

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149 Badgett 1995, 122; Rotman 2005, 1, 6; Balme and Bulbeck 2008, 5; Moen 2010, 9; Warnke 2010, 325; Levy 2014, 232; Levon 2015, 295; Moral 2016, 11.
and related to growing public awareness of differences in the treatment and experiences of white women and women of colour in North America.\textsuperscript{152}

At the same time as intersectional feminists were advocating for gender to be considered part of a more complex system of identity construction, changes were occurring in the conceptualisation of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ themselves. Judith Butler, for example, proposed that gender is not something one ‘has’, so much as something one ‘performs’ or ‘does’ via the repetition of culturally ‘gendered’ acts and images.\textsuperscript{153} Performativity is thus “a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted... [norms], which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject, and which are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, displacement are to be forged.”\textsuperscript{154} That is, Butler defined gender as neither inherent nor static but maintained or disrupted through the (automatic or intentional;\textsuperscript{155} ritual, formal, or mundane\textsuperscript{156}) actions of the individual: gesture, movement, speech, posture, dress, ornamentation, and a range of culturally-contingent habits and activities.\textsuperscript{157} Modes of gender maintenance may range from the uncritical repetition of gendered habits learned and ‘naturalised’ through childhood socialisation to a kind of “project” of agentic gender expression.\textsuperscript{158} Normative gender attribution may be resisted by refusing to enact expected gender rituals or enacting those

\textsuperscript{152} Myking 2005, 12; Warnke 2010, 324-5.


\textsuperscript{154} Butler 1993b, 22. See also Roden 2005, 29.

\textsuperscript{155} Moral 2016, 10-11.

\textsuperscript{156} Perry and Joyce 2001, 66.


\textsuperscript{158} Butler 1986, 128; Poggio 2006, 226-7; Deutsch 2007, 108.
attributed to a different gender.\textsuperscript{159} Individuals may choose to ‘perform’ multiple or mixed gender characteristics or to perform gender differently across different social contexts. Performativity theory therefore imparts “a mosaic quality to gender rather than an overriding consistency.”\textsuperscript{160}

Butler’s performativity is a useful tool for historians interested in the representation of gendered individuals in art and writing.\textsuperscript{161} It enables us to interrogate the varying actions and iconographies associated with public projections of gender identity across cultures and eras. Gender ‘performances’ are also frequently linked to materiality, accessible to archaeologists through the tools and spaces of those performances, as well as the material remains of the performers, whose habitual actions might result in identifiable skeletal markers.\textsuperscript{162} As such, performativity provides a vital framework for considering human identity beyond the purely biological, as well as for investigating the “social mechanisms” behind the production of gender.\textsuperscript{163} Yet Butler has also been a proponent of claims that have been harder for archaeologists to grapple with: for example, that sex is not an immutable biological feature of all humans, but as much a social construct as gender,\textsuperscript{164} founded on culturally specific perceptions and interpretations of bodily difference.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{159} Engelstad 2015, 765.
\textsuperscript{160} Brumfiel 2007, 3. See also: Moral 2016, 11.
\textsuperscript{161} Voss 2005, 80.
\textsuperscript{162} Perry and Joyce 2001, 67-8.
\textsuperscript{163} Perry and Joyce 2001, 64.
\textsuperscript{165} Díaz-Andreu 2005, 14.
“Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature,” Butler argued, because “sex itself is a
gendered category.”\textsuperscript{166} This claim disrupted much of the previous literature across several
fields. In 1979, for example, Kessler and McKenna wrote that “we still generally treat gender
as dichotomous and most certainly treat sex that way. Even those who study biologically
‘mixed’ persons... prefer to treat those persons as special cases of dichotomous sex... [and]
do not consider sex to be overlapping in the way gender may be.”\textsuperscript{167} Nonetheless, Butler’s
deconstruction of sex and gender as an unproblematic body-mind dichotomy and her
challenge to the usefulness of these two categories as separate entities has been influential,
albeit to some more than others in archaeology.\textsuperscript{168} Almost two decades after Kessler and
McKenna’s above characterisation of the scholarship, in 1996, Lynn Meskell decried
archaeology’s reticence to deeply consider these issues. She fairly characterised
archaeologists in general as either maintaining the outdated division between the two
categories—sex as “the external manifestation of a biological given” and gender as “a
socially constituted elaboration which overlays itself on the former”\textsuperscript{169}—or simply refusing
to theorise them, taking both terms to refer to one messy socio-biological idea.

There are obvious reasons that archaeologists might hesitate to destabilise notions of
biological sex. Perhaps the most obvious is not based in gender theory at all, but in
practicality. Archaeology relies upon sex-identification from skeletal remains. What does it
then mean, for analyses of past societies, if measurement of a skeleton’s long bones no

\textsuperscript{167} Kessler and McKenna 1979, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{168} Skogstrand 2006, 111-2; Richardson 2008, 11; Hollimon 2017, 51.
\textsuperscript{169} Meskell 1996, 2-3. Even more recently, see Voss 2006, 107: “Generally, ‘sex’ is now used to refer specifically
to biological differences between males and females. ‘Gender’ refers to the cultural construction of men’s and
women’s roles and identities.”
longer provides a quick and easy link to a congruently sexed and gendered body?\textsuperscript{170} Peopled reconstructions of antiquity risk falling away entirely and, for some, this has made recent developments in feminist and queer theory too difficult or too dangerous to incorporate into a productive archaeological framework. Sometimes this choice is made explicit\textsuperscript{171} but, just as often, archaeologists find it easier to ignore this body of work and continue uncritically with the use of a simplified biological-sex/cultural-gender dichotomy.

In the 1996 publication cited above, Meskell opted to refer only to ‘sex’ in a multifaceted social\textit{ and} biological sense. She argued that gender, as a concept, is inadequate to express the varied levels on which sex is experienced and constructed, its fluidity over an individual’s lifetime, and its complex relation to sexuality.\textsuperscript{172} I consider Meskell’s decision sensible, although I don’t take the same route. If gender and sex are not two completely separate categories, then they should surely not be referred to as such, as use of the terms reifies those categories. Moreover, as Marie Louise Stig Sørensen notes, although archaeologists may “[pretend] to study gender… in fact most often we look at sex and sexual associations” and establish ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ on identical grounds, assuming a one-to-one relationship between them.\textsuperscript{173} Even so, the complete rejection of ‘gender’ is a decision that I find difficult: to completely step away from a term so firmly implicated in both the literature and folk understandings of identity. My approach is therefore to

\textsuperscript{170} Voss 2000, 186.
\textsuperscript{171} For example, Sarah Nelson (2004, 3) acknowledges the social construction of sex, yet concludes that “for our purposes, the distinction between biological sex and cultural gender is useful.”
\textsuperscript{172} Meskell 1996, 211.
\textsuperscript{173} Sørensen 1992, 35; Skogstrand 2006, 111.
explicate a clear and reasonable way of using these existing terms, rather than attempt to fundamentally redefine them or propose new vocabulary.

First, it is important to note that literature composed in languages other than English face related yet distinct terminological issues and also solutions. For example, the Norwegian term *kjønn* is common in Scandinavian gender archaeology, anthropology, and sociology and encapsulates English ‘sex’ and ‘gender’.¹⁷⁴ Sometimes, not always, *kjønn* is qualified as either *biologisk* or *sosialt* (‘biological’ or ‘social’), yet this does not neatly correspond to the English-language distinction between biological-sex and cultural-gender and Terje Østigård is not alone in arguing that *biologisk* and *sosialt kjønn* can be neither completely separated nor identified with one another.¹⁷⁶ In her 2006 paper, originally presented at a 2003 conference on “Kjønn og Arkeologi” at the Vitlyke Museum in Sweden, Lisbeth Skogstrand uses the English terms where she wishes to designate the English-language concepts of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, as distinct from *kjønn*. She notes that English ‘gender’, in particular, no longer corresponds neatly with Norwegian ‘sosialt kjønn’. This raises interesting questions about how we can best facilitate international dialogues surrounding gender theory’s key concepts and terminologies. Skogstrand goes on to argue that, as a consequence of Butler’s deconstruction of the sex/gender dichotomy, ‘gender’ may be seen to absorb ‘sex’ and create a holistic concept that, to a great degree, does correspond with Norwegian *kjønn*.¹⁷⁷ Addressing international approaches to gender studies in this way

¹⁷⁴ Skogstrand 2006, 112-3; Richardson 2008, 3-4. Richardson points out, here, that the same term is also used to connote both ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ in Slavic languages. I would imagine that this state of affairs is far more widespread in that, particularly in countries that have not involved themselves deeply with Western academic gender theory.

¹⁷⁶ For example: Storrutsen 2007, 7.

¹⁷⁷ Østigård 2000, 68-9; Gustavsen 2009, 10.

¹⁷⁷ Skogstrand 2006, 112-3.
warrants asking how our use of specific terms and distinctions impacts the way in which we see ‘gender’, ‘sex’, ‘kjønn’ and other such categories in the present and the past.

To conclude, I would like to summarise the understandings of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ that I stand behind for the purposes of this thesis.

**Sex,** I follow Butler, Skogstrand and others, in understanding as a medical abstraction, rather than an absolute biological reality. I concur that there can be no category of ‘sex’ independent from cultural meaning or interpretation: no “neutral and passive backdrop, or container, onto which gendered identity can be projected.” Rather, sex attributions result from cognition and the identification and categorisation of bodies by bodies, using language. It is therefore culture and practice that determine which bodily differences have meaning and any society’s division of bodies into discrete sexes necessarily minimises some kinds of bodily difference while emphasising others, creating a false sense of what is and is not ‘natural’. This is true of both physical features (height, body composition, hair patterns, *et cetera*) and physical experiences. For example, a woman who does not menstruate is still a woman in our society; a man who does not experience erection is still a man. “Clearly,” Warnke argues, “not all female human beings possess the same bodies or capacities.” Sexual preferences and practices, too, do not alter sex-attribution in our view.

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178 Butler 1986, 134; Moi 2002, 42; Skogstrand 2006, 114; Schep 2012, 865-6.
179 Colls 2012, 437.
180 Butler 1993a, 5-7; Skogstrand 2006, 112.
181 Skogstrand 2006, 114.
182 Warnke 2010, 324.
and the more that sex is researched, the more different possible means of sex-attribution seem to arise.

Chromosomal sex may be determined in contrast to hormonal sex, gonadal sex, sex based on internal reproductive organs, or sex based on external genitalia; not to mention a host of osteoarchaeological criteria.¹⁸³ An individual’s sex may be interpreted in conflicting ways depending on those criteria deemed pertinent by the interpreter, within their context. Indeed, although our society characterises as “intersex” any individual who does not neatly correspond to our categories of ‘male’ or ‘female’, this is not to say that there is anything inherently ‘other’ about intersex bodies—only that they are othered within a Western medical understanding of bodies as ‘ideally’ or ‘naturally’ either male or female.¹⁸⁴ It is equally dangerous to assume that the sexual differences we consider pertinent here, today, have or have not always and everywhere formed the basis for sex-attribution. Indeed, it becomes problematic to assume that humans are universally categorised into sex-groups at all¹⁸⁵ or that they are always categorised into only two, rather than three or more. A detailed study of the specific context under consideration is necessary for such determinations and may not always be possible, subject to available evidence.

**Gender**, I consider a second level of cultural interpretation. At the first level (‘sex’, above) individuals are categorised in a way that has traditionally been interpreted as concrete, often based primarily on external genitalia. Gender represents a second layer of

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¹⁸³ Hood-Williams 1996, 9-11; Muehlenhard, Peterson, Karwoski, Bryan and Lee 2003, 1; Richardson 2008, 7.
¹⁸⁴ Matić 2016a, 810-1.
interpretation, more open to ambiguity, and related to the presentation and reception of the individual in society. Therefore, we can look at someone whom we have coded as ‘male’ (-sexed) and see them as more or less ‘masculine’, without altering our initial sex-attribution. Contrary to absolute divisions between biological-sex and cultural-gender, I argue that gender too can be attributed on the basis of biological features; we can view someone we have ‘sexed’ as unambiguously male as having a feminine-presenting figure and perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, make judgments from this about their inner selves. Gender has also been linked to habitual practices and performances, which is an interpretation I will carry through my thesis, arguing in line with Butler that gender is not only expressed in these actions but also constituted by them, “acquir[ing] an apparent naturalness in their iteration,” without being internally pre-existing or innate.

In discussing gender, we encounter more purposive and/or transitional language, useful to the study of constructed and projected identities: words such as negotiating, doing, resisting, maintaining, acquiring, and becoming. ‘Gender’ may be more likely to be attributed (or re-attributed) to individuals on the basis of features that those individuals can control or which otherwise change over time: dress, movement, gesture, speech, body modification, body type and size, hairstyles, activities, occupations, and so on. This enables a greater, although not sole, potential for agency in the normative or subversive performance of gender. Social constraints particular to the context in question determine the ease with which gender boundaries may be transgressed, such that gender is equally

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186 Schep 2012, 868.
188 Butler 1986, 132.
defined by the individual’s sense of self and their interaction with society,\textsuperscript{189} much like other components of identity (see \textit{Chapter 1.1}).

Finally, and crucially, I do not consider sex and gender entirely separate categories. The two are mutually constituted and interact with one another, in the sense that our attribution of sex to ourselves and others will usually impact our attribution of gender and vice versa. Often, too, they will be conflated by the perceiver. In this thesis, I use the terms “male-coded” and “female-coded” to refer to characteristics which are either sexed or gendered within a specific cultural context. Still, I believe that there is enough analytical usefulness in the distinction between sex and gender—and the conceptualisation of these as two \textit{layers} of interpretation, as outlined above—to justify their continued use, at least for the time being. Certainly, the acknowledgment that both sex and gender are culturally constructed does not make either ‘unreal’, irrelevant, or unrelated to physicality or materiality.\textsuperscript{190} At the very least, to the extent that they are socially recognised and replicated, gender and sex distinctions should be considered ‘real’ in the genuine impact that they have on the structuring of social relations and identities.

\textsuperscript{189} Østigård 2000, 66.
\textsuperscript{190} Skogstrand 2006, 112.
1.4 Unpacking the Academic Canon Surrounding Sex, Gender, and the Family in Ancient Egypt

In Chapter 1.3, I gave a necessarily brief summary of developments in gender theory and gender archaeology from the 1970s through to the present day. However, it is not the case that as new scholarly ideas and practices arise the old are always abandoned. Triumphant accounts of great warrior pharaohs with little regard for the lives or contributions of women fail to surprise as the relics of past scholarly eras, yet remain dime-a-dozen today. Remedial attempts to “find the women”¹⁹¹ and write their complementary but separate histories have successfully arrived to fill the gaps and yet in Egyptology they are only beginning to give way to the more nuanced gendered analyses enjoyed by other disciplines. In the last decade, titles such as Zahi Hawass’ Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt (2009) and Kate Szpakowska’s Hidden Voices: Unveiling Women in Ancient Egypt (2012) speak to a continued feeling that the women of ancient Egypt remain tucked out of sight, waiting to be drawn into the open and accounted for.¹⁹² Egyptian women find their way into isolated chapters on ‘women,’ ‘family,’ and ‘domestic life’¹⁹³ and into monographs on ‘Egyptian women’ or ‘ancient women’,¹⁹⁴ yet exceedingly rarely do they appear as truly integrated actors within broader histories and archaeologies. As Lynn Meskell noted over twenty years ago, “studies of women as an undifferentiated group do not, in themselves, constitute a gendered

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¹⁹¹ See, for example, Barbara Watterson’s characterisation of the purpose of her book, Women in Ancient Egypt (1991, ix): “The role of women, who can be said to be ‘the other half of history’, has often been overlooked. In this book an attempt has been made to redress the balance for the women who lived in Egypt during the pharaonic period.”

¹⁹² This is not a comment on the quality of the works themselves.

¹⁹³ For examples, see: Strouhal 1992; Feucht 1997; Casson 2001. In Brewer and Teeter’s Egypt and the Egyptians (2009), the relevant chapter is entitled, ‘Society and Its Expectations,’ but it encompasses the familiar themes, including subheadings of ‘Marriage’ and ‘Sex, Childbearing, and Family Life.’

analysis and, moreover, gender is not commensurate with the category women: men, children, the aged and so on must all be considered."\textsuperscript{195} This criticism remains woefully relevant to the Egyptological context, even as genuinely interesting investigations into gender in ancient Egypt gain traction.

Isolating women as subjects and attempting to characterise their shared experiences across boundaries of class, age, localities, and eras—amongst other features—risks imparting a homogeneity to this social category that did not exist: particularly when the space allotted to ‘Egyptian women’ is so often a single chapter. Royal women remain the most visible.\textsuperscript{196} Caroline Dunn and Elizabeth Carney observed that, before the late 1970s, “biography was virtually the only way in which royal women appeared in political historiography,”\textsuperscript{197} a trend that remains strong in Egyptology. Although I do not dismiss the important contributions made by individual biographies of royal women, I do note that, as a genre, the biography requires researchers to seek out their subjects with purpose, rather than incorporating them into a broader narrative or discourse. They are also overwhelmingly produced for a small number of outstanding individuals, far removed from the daily experiences of the majority, which are themselves many and varied. Consequently, if royal biography is the only—or primary—locus for detailed study of individual Egyptian women, then the barrier

\textsuperscript{195} Meskell 1997, 597.

\textsuperscript{196} Writing on ‘women’s history,’ Amy Richlin (2009, 146) remarks: “Some women have always been noticed; even Carr, who largely ignores women, finds room for Cleopatra. What might be called “queens’ history” has a niche in the history of elite men, along with the exemplary women (Artemisia, Lucretia, Beruria, Mary) handed down to the Renaissance from antiquity.”

\textsuperscript{197} Dunn and Carney 2018, 1-2. In fact, while Dunn and Carney refer to a growing appreciation for the roles of royal women in monarchical histories, citing “the existence of the very series in which this volume appears—‘Queenship and Power’” as evidence, they note that its contributions focus heavily on medieval and early modern history, with few articles addressing the role of women in ancient monarchies. They note that “no general study of the part women played in either pharaonic or Ptolemaic Egyptian monarchy exists.”
between these studies and the male-dominated histories of ancient Egypt is preserved uncritically.

Even those royal women who do receive regular individual attention—Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, and Cleopatra VII, for example—tend to be conceptually linked across their vastly different contexts in a way that royal men are not. This connectivity is clear in that it is the same researchers who tend to be interested in them. For example, see Joyce Tyldesley’s publications, including Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt (1994), Hatchepsut: The Female Pharaoh (1996), Nefertiti: Egypt’s Sun Queen (1999), Cleopatra: Last Queen of Egypt (2008) and, most recently, Nefertiti’s Face (2018). When it comes to less famous queens or diachronic studies of the shifting institution of queenship, more research is required. Writing in 1997, Susan Tower Hollis remarked that while the study of Egyptian kingship—of ‘masculine royalty’—was well established, the study of Egyptian queenship and ‘feminine royalty’ was in its infancy.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps this results, in part, from an assumption that only atypical or radical examples of Egyptian womanhood are worth studying, while to study Egyptian men is simply to study ‘the Egyptians’.

These are not insignificant problems. When the common practice is to relegate the experiences of Egyptian women—across classes, abilities, ethnic origins, occupations, localities, communities, family types, eras, and so on—to a single chapter, the potential for in-depth and specific analyses of not only women but gender, as a social construct and practice, are limited. By recounting Egyptian women’s rights, occupations, and roles, we

proclaim to answer the question of how ‘gender’ structured social interactions in Egyptian society, without going so far as to interrogate social processes, non-normative expressions of gender, or even to consider men as gendered beings themselves. Even more troublingly, the proliferation of summary publications on ‘Egyptian women’ has generated a number of ‘truths’ about women’s experiences, which are assumed to have held for the entire pharaonic age with little variation. Many of these publications cite and re-cite the same evidence, such that from the moment you spy the chapter entitled ‘Women’ or ‘Family’ in the contents page, you can expect to read quotations from the Instructions of Any (“Act not the official over thy wife in her house, if thou knowest that she is excellent,”199 “Support [your mother] as she supported you,”200 “Take wife while you are young…”201) and Ptahhotep (“If you prosper, found your household, love your wife with ardor, fill her belly, clothe her back…”202) and the love poetry of the New Kingdom.203 You are also likely to encounter the much later comments of Herodotus or Diodorus Siculus,204 who interpret and exoticise Egyptian women through the lens of their own cultures, for the benefit of the non-Egyptian audiences of their own times.

By popular academic consensus, you will learn that the Egyptian woman’s “most important function”205 and greatest possible achievement was producing and rearing children:206 a cause for “wild excitement” on the part of the woman, according to Czech anthropologist

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200 Lesko 1996, 53; Teeter 2017, 146.
201 Strouhal 1992, 51.
205 Lacovara 2016, 131.
Eugen Strouhal. This primary biological function of Egyptian women was closely followed by a duty to support her husband in all things and to manage his household as ‘Mistress of the House’. At best, we are told, “a few [women] involved themselves in small business ventures” but modern authors rarely judge these to have been of real significance, whether at the level of family finances, of the broader economy, or as mixed-gendered social opportunities. Moreover, while the disclaimer that Egyptian women enjoyed greater freedoms and a broader variety of roles than women in other ancient societies is a common one, this has not dispelled stereotypical notions of the ancient Egyptian ‘housewife’ and her 1950s-esque nuclear family. Instead, it casts a pleasant and homogenising glow of heteronormative better-than-expectedness over the entirety of women’s experiences in pharaonic Egypt.

Rarely investigated are the vital significance and “complexities of household management,” particularly in ancient times; the economic roles of women inside and

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207 Strouhal 1992, 60.
208 Tyldesley 1998, 79.
211 See, likewise: Salisbury’s (2001, 92-3) comment that, “while women could function in some public roles (unlike their Greek counterparts), the heart of their role was at home within the family.” and Watterson’s (1991, 2) that, “Pharaonic Egypt was not an exclusively male-dominated society in which women were regarded by men merely as breeding machines or beasts of burden. Instead, it was one in which they were allowed to exert a degree of freedom and, in some cases, influence, beyond the confines of the home... Nevertheless, an Egyptian woman’s main occupations were marriage, running a household, and bearing children.”
213 The term “housewife” is, in fact, used by several authors. For example, see: Lesko 1996, 48. This modern term comes heavily laden with modern Western associations and assumptions regarding women’s roles, activities, and freedoms and should not be uncritically transferred to the ancient Egyptian context.
214 Salisbury 2001, 94.
outside the household;\textsuperscript{215} the careers, public offices, and leadership positions that could be held by women at various points in Egyptian history and their potential impact on women’s self-conceptions and social positioning; the social influence women exercised in rearing children, guiding formation of their outlooks, values, and identities; the lives and contributions of childless women or women whose children had died or left the household; the various ways in which individual men and women constructed and expressed gender; or the possibility for variation in family structure and gender roles in different parts of Egypt at different times. It is my view that, as members of a society that has seen so much change in the roles and identities of men, women, and gender-diverse individuals in the past few decades alone, it is absurd for us to cling to such unvaried interpretations of the lives and experiences of ‘men’ and ‘women’ in ‘ancient Egypt’, as if each of those were discrete, static entities: the quintessential ‘Egyptian wife’ and ‘Egyptian husband’ described by Robert Morton below.

Far from being a mere servant or toy, the Egyptian wife viewed herself and her husband as complementary companions, each aiming to fulfil their obligations to the satisfaction of their partner.

This, and the view in some quarters that Egyptian husbands were generally excessively fond of their wives, must go some way to explain the aura of domestic contentment emanating from the wall paintings.\textsuperscript{216}

\textsuperscript{215} Hughes and Hughes 1998, 8-10. These authors aptly note that “when no explicit accounting of women’s contributions to production and marketing is given, the implicit conclusion is that the economy was a male realm,” reinforcing these continuing biases in the production of ancient histories.

\textsuperscript{216} Morton 1995, 181.
The better-than-expected position of women in ancient Egypt, as compared to “other lands, modern as well as ancient,” is often attributed to a religious ideal of gender complementarity and harmony, which is assumed to have influenced marital relations, producing a state of *ma’at* at the level of each household. At times, this has led to generalising, idealistic conclusions that border on comedy, such as Morton’s, above, and Jon Manchip White’s characterisation of the Egyptians as “an intensely romantic race.” Such conclusions deny the complexity and dynamism of individual human relationships and take the ideals of a few elite male scribes, cherry-picked from different periods, and historically translated and interpreted by upper class Western men, as accurate portraits of Egyptian family life. They may also hint at the culturally and personally contingent assumptions of their modern interpreters: for example, that “domestic contentment” can be obtained by some degree of ‘fondness’ combined with a disposition to view oneself as an equal partner in fulfilling one’s marital duties, rather than as a “servant or toy,” perhaps regardless of the actual situation. When the scribe, Any, tells us to “act not the official over thy wife in her house,” we must assume that there is an audience to his words at risk of doing so.

We must consider Egyptian society a fundamentally patriarchal one. While it is true that one of Egyptian theology’s major precepts, *ma’at*, demanded the careful balance of binary oppositions, including male and female, and that Egyptian religion did not explicitly demand

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217 Casson 2001, 30. See also: Fazzini 1975, xix; Hollis 1987, 496; Hawass 2009, 17; and the condescending comments of Strouhal (1992, 58), who concludes: “All in all, the Egyptian woman could not complain of their lot in comparison with the lives of women in other countries, or indeed those of women in many an Eastern country now.”
219 White 1963, 171.
220 Hawass 2009, 16.
222 Strouhal 1992, 57; David 2014, 15.
men’s dominance over women, structural power was predominantly allocated to men. The result was one that Zahi Hawass believes “would certainly not please today’s feminists,” yet he argues that “women then were not encumbered with modern ideas of independence and equality. Nor were men!” This sense of women’s blissful naiveté seems to me deeply flawed. Hawass goes on to describe Egyptian women’s relative ‘equality’ to men, particularly in terms of their ability to undertake independent financial and legal action. He both underscores Egyptian women’s (finite but significant) rights and freedoms and, at the same time, implies that they did not care about them, expect them, or even have an awareness of them—that these aspects of women’s own experience were beyond their comprehension. I find this difficult to assume when so few writings of Egyptian women have been preserved. The notion of a ‘patriarchal’ society should not be used as a cookie-cutter designation that stops us from interrogating gender and gender relations at a deeper level.

Certainly, neither the stereotype of the oppressed pre-modern or ‘Eastern’ woman—often implicitly or explicitly compounded by the racial or cultural preconceptions and prejudices of the author—nor that of the proto-feminist, striving for gender equality, can illustrate the complexities and multiplicities of gendered lives in ancient Egypt. Nor have Egyptologists gone to great lengths to discuss matters more intricate than a simple ‘male experience’ or (more often) ‘female experience’. We see less, in this discipline, of the kinds of studies in masculinity, femininity, gender performativity, and gender variance that other

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224 Hawass 2009, 17.
225 See, for example: Erman’s (1971, 150) comment that “it has often been said that the essential difference between the civilisation of the West and the East consists in the different status of woman. In the West she is the companion of man, in the East his servant and his toy. In the West, at one time, the esteem in which woman was held rose to a cult, while in the East the question has been earnestly discussed whether woman really belonged to the human race.” See also: Feucht 1997, 315; Szpakowska 2012, 33.
Disciplines have been seen in recent years. Egyptian ‘gender studies’ still primarily connote ‘women’s studies’, leaving men functionally genderless and untheorised, and non-female and non-male gendered experiences unconsidered beyond the divine and sometimes royal spheres. In order to progress, studies of gender in ancient Egypt must advance beyond the remedial stage of ‘finding the women’ and defining ‘their’ implicitly singular experience.\textsuperscript{226} Men must be figured, not as the unproblematic default of the species, but as individuals, whose experiences and identities are also impacted by social constructions of gender. Everyday gender maintenances, subversions, and performances, which vary over time and across contexts, must receive their due consideration.

That is, twenty-first century ‘gender archaeologies’ should no longer be a shorthand for ‘women’s archaeologies’ or ‘women’s histories’: an association that stunts their development, restricts their purview, and “ghettoises gender studies,”\textsuperscript{227} removing the need for those not specifically studying gender to meaningfully incorporate it into their analyses. Studies of the body and of sexuality provide interesting arenas for archaeological considerations of gender, although a preference to sensualise and sexualise the study of women and female bodies more so than men and male bodies remains prevalent. Emergent studies of gender should be informed by intersectional analyses, acknowledging the internal diversity of individuals belonging to the broad categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’, ‘other’ and ‘third’ genders, and the potential for those internal differences to impact lived experiences and social relations.\textsuperscript{228} In Egypt, as in other societies where the literate and wealthy few

\textsuperscript{226} At best, separated into three categories: the experiences of royal, elite, and common women. See, for example: Hollis 1987, 499.
\textsuperscript{227} Meskell 2000a, 253-4.
\textsuperscript{228} These are not new ideas, but they have certainly not been taken up as broadly as they ought to have been; See, for example: Robins 1993b, 19; Meskell 1997, 597.
have produced the largest quantity of evidence, class must figure highly in these considerations; for the simplistic study of ‘women in ancient Egypt’ becomes even more so when you consider that they are moored in evidence relating predominantly to elite women, composed by elite men.

In this thesis, my interest in gender is specifically in its artistic expression: questioning what a portrait’s inclusion of various, sometimes incongruous or ambiguous, ‘gendered’ or ‘sexed’ traits might communicate about the interiority or identity of the subject. Chapter 2 is concerned with the communication of royal and divine identities. Royal gender-weirdness is read within the context of existing and developing religious understandings of the roles of gender, sex, and sexuality in creation. Developments in the Aten’s androgynous mother-and-father persona and aniconic representation spur images of not only Akhenaten but also Nefertiti that transgress traditional gender boundaries. Chapter 3, with its focus on elite expressions of identity in the mortuary context, is tightly bound to religious understandings of the deceased’s magico-sexual re-conception and rebirth. In addition, as components of the androgynised royal portrait trickle down into the images of private individuals, we might ask what impact changing royal and divine conceptions of gender had on conceptions of gender in Amarna society more broadly. Are gender ideologies and their royal and divine models completely distinct from individuals’ lived experiences, self-conceptions, and social interactions? Or, as they crafted their own eternal images in strange new ways and immersed themselves in Atenist theology, might some of Amarna’s residents have begun to relate to these shifting understandings and iconographies of gender? It is difficult to say, intriguing to wonder.
The fundamental background to both chapters is Egyptian understandings of gender as they relate to creation. Egyptian polytheism provided numerous accounts of the creation of the universe, the natural world, the gods, humans, and animals. Some are tied to specific locations or eras, their influence spreading and receding. At times, apparently conflicting accounts of creation coexist unproblematically; at others, they interact and develop in relation to one another. A number of common threads run through. The first is that, contrary to many Classical and Western understandings of creation, it was not the woman but the man who was primarily responsible for fertility. Ann Macy Roth argues this particularly thoroughly, using a broad range of primary sources, from the implications of private letters (“You are not a man, since you cannot make your wives pregnant like other men”\(^{229}\)) to linguistic evidence: conception is described as the woman ‘receiving’ or ‘taking’ the child, essentially fully formed, from her male partner.\(^{230}\)

The female contribution—also vital—was firstly, to stimulate her consort’s arousal and creative potency; secondly, to receive his semen, which would become the child; and finally, to nourish and feed the newborn.\(^{231}\) In the first stage, the woman is, in a sense, the aggressor. She begins the creative process and can exercise agency in doing so. In the second stage, the woman is conceptualised as a passive vessel: Nut swallows the sun as it sets, it travels through her body, and she births it at sunrise, but the sun itself is unchanged by its passage through her, already and essentially complete.\(^{232}\) Likewise, in the Amarna Period, the Hymn to the Aten proclaims this god as one “who brings into being foetuses in

\(^{229}\) A private letter cited by Robins (1993, 77) and Roth (2000, 190).
\(^{230}\) Roth 2000, 188-90.
\(^{231}\) Cooney 2008, 2; Graves-Brown 2015, 1.
\(^{232}\) Roth 2000, 189-90.
women,” utilising a metaphor of “the chick in the egg,” in which the ‘egg’ is the passive female womb, to illustrate the processes of his divine creativity (see Chapter 2.2). In this sense, the feminine aspect of creation is composed of dual active and passive roles, both of which are vital components of mythologised femininity and female divine identities.

When the chick is in the egg, speaking in the shell,
You give him breath within it to cause him to live;
And when you have made his appointed time for him, so that he may break himself out of the egg,
He comes out of the egg to speak at his appointed time and goes on his two legs
when he comes out of it. 233

The masculine (physical) origin of creation is expressed by the most common forms of creator gods: ithyphallic deities with penises erect and rams and bulls, evoking male sexual prowess. 234 A third key form, however, as described by Roth, was the ‘Nile God’ or ‘fecundity figure’: a deliberately androgynous, albeit “predominantly male” 235 figure, whose association with Egypt’s primordial waters, as they existed prior to the development of gender-differentiated beings, was central to its creative power. 236 Hapi is the quintessential example, often depicted with drooping breasts and a sagging stomach, which although they might simultaneously imply fatness as a result of abundant resources, are indivisible from

233 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
234 Roth 2000, 190; Troy 2001, 258; David 2014, 81. Although, if creation is viewed as a process, the origin is always the woman’s stimulation of the man’s creative power. Even in cases where the man procreates ‘alone’, there is often a metaphorical female component: for example, the hand of Atum in his creation-via-masturbation, sometimes “personified as a goddess.” See: Troy 2001, 243; Eaverly 2008, 10.
235 Roth 2000, 190; Similarly: Manley 2017, 222-3.
236 Indeed, these primordial waters have a strong female association, essentially the universal womb. See: Troy 2001, 241, 251.
the iconography of female breasts and pregnant bellies. In later periods, this is made explicit by Hapi’s depiction with fluid leaking from his breasts.

This notion of the predominantly male, yet deliberately androgynous creator, is that which I consider best suited to explain not only the Aten’s dual-gendered creative roles (see Chapter 2.2) but also the feminisation of Akhenaten’s royal portrait, so often deemed pathological (see Chapter 2.3). For scholars such as Gay Robins and Lana Troy, solo creative acts are necessarily androgynous: the original deity, whether Aten, Atum, or any other, “must have contained both male and female potential, which then separated out into the first divine couple.” The Aten places the fully formed child in the woman, taking on the father’s masculine creative role, but he is also repeatedly placed in the female roles of ‘mother’ and ‘nurse’: a duality which gives him independent creative power as a sole deity and which is mirrored by Akhenaten, as his offspring.

In the mortuary context, related processes of sexual reproduction are mythologised to enact the re-conception and rebirth of the deceased, such that removing (or artistically defacing) an enemy’s phallus was tantamount to cutting them off from their eternity. Tombs are filled with sensuous female images and, often, tools and furnishings related to conception and childbirth. The image of the tomb owner’s wife or other sensualised female figures

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237 Roth 2000, 190-1.
238 Robins 1993b, 17. See also Troy 2001, 239; Cooney 2008, 1. For Atum, the female principle is often deemed the hand with which he masturbates life into existence.
239 See also: Williams 2011, 169.
240 Bonanno 2016, 119.
241 Williams 2011, 43, 78-9; Booth 2015, 22-3; Graves-Brown 2015, 4.
242 See, in particular: Kroeter 2009, on Eighteenth Dynasty banquet scenes.
served as an essential catalyst for his creative power, a “vector of regeneration,” in death as in life.\textsuperscript{245} Rendered magically functional by her appearance in the tomb decoration, the deceased’s wife was able to receive the recreated tomb owner into her womb, to be reborn in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{246} For women, who themselves expected to be reborn after death, it is likely that the association of all deceased individuals with Osiris provided enough of a male element for them to initiate their own recreation, such that the woman functioned magically as her own husband and her own mother, in enacting her recreation.\textsuperscript{247} The Egyptians were not averse to this kind of mythological and magical gender play; indeed, the ambiguity and interplay of gender roles in creation and recreation are as fundamental to Egyptian understandings of these phenomena as the binary opposition of male and female.\textsuperscript{248}

Concepts of gender, sex, and sexuality are complexly constructed and multiple, broadly speaking but particularly clearly within the Egyptian context. Both the complementarity of male and female, their essential cosmic balance, and the blurring of those categories are equally characteristic of Egyptian understandings of sex, gender, and sexual reproduction. In this thesis, I will explore the Amarna context in more detail, drawing out both its incredible innovation and its relationship to existing traditions. Established androgynies and dualities in the conception of creator deities, working alone or in pairs, form the basis for my understanding of the Aten’s dual-gendered nature; that of Akhenaten, as his son; and that

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\textsuperscript{244} Bickel 2006, 95.  
\textsuperscript{245} Roth 1999, 27-8, 41-2; Meskell 2000a, 255-6; Hartwig 2004, 93-4; Eaverly 2008, 10; Kroeter 2009, 47.  
\textsuperscript{246} Roth 2000, 198.  
\textsuperscript{247} Roth 2000, 199; Graves-Brown 2015, 4. Cooney (2008, 6) further discusses the androgynisation or masculinisaton of deceased women for the purposes of their rebirth.  
\textsuperscript{248} Williams 2011, 140.
of Nefertiti, as her husband’s complement, perhaps implicitly as his divine twin. Changes to
the conceptualisation and expression of gendered identities spiral from their royal and
divine origins into images of the general population, giving the art of this era a unique visual
character, which scholars may never cease to debate.
1.5 The Spotlight on Amarna

The archaeological site now known as Tell el-Amarna, or simply Amarna, was, during the late Eighteenth Dynasty, a royal capital known as Akhet-Aten, ‘The Horizon of the Sun-Disk/Aten’. It was for the Aten, the primary deity of this period, that the city was founded by the pharaoh Akhenaten. Beginning in the fourth or fifth year of Akhenaten’s reign, c. 1353 BCE, Akhet-Aten was rapidly constructed at a site in Middle Egypt with no previous history of occupation or religious association. What the construction of this new city provided was a clean slate for a pharaoh who, to many looking back from modern times, has seemed personally intent upon, even obsessed with, revolutionising Egypt’s religion, neglecting the traditional pantheon in favour of the Aten. According to official records, including the boundary stelae erected by Akhenaten to demarcate the site, Akhet-Aten was intended as a cult centre for the dedicated worship of the Aten. However, it was also a

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250 Kemp 1977, 123; Uphill 1999, 1897-8; Montserrat 2000, 17; Chadwick 2005, 183; Stevens 2006, 5; Crowell 2007, 124; Dodson 2009, 8, 10; Panagiotakopulu, Buckland, and Kemp 2010, 474; Wendrich 2010, 204; Laboury 2011, 1; Tietze 2012, 57; Williamson 2015, 6; Stevens 2016, 6; Zakrzewski, Shortland, and Rowland 2016, 306; Tyldesley 2018, 9.
251 Petrie 1974, 2; David 2003, 174; Crowell 2007, 124-5; Brier and Hobbs 2009, 32; Hodgins 2012, 1; Kemp 2012b, 47; Dabbs and Zabecki 2015, 12; Williamson 2015, 6; Stevens 2016, 1; Tyldesley 2018, 12. See, in particular: inscriptions from Amarna’s boundary stelae (trans. Murnane 1995, 74-5).
253 Montserrat (2000, 23) claims that Akhet-Aten was built “as a performance space for Akhenaten’s own theology.” Other motivations may have been political—such as a desire to escape the influence or resistance of parts of the Theban elite and/or the priests of Amun-Re (see, for example: Málež 1999, 263; Spence 2007, 274; Snape 2011, 207; Williamson 2015, 6)—or related to a desire to emphasise the ‘builder’ aspect of Akhenaten’s identity as pharaoh. I don’t think any of these explanations are mutually exclusive; the decision to move the royal capital (indeed, to invest so much effort in planning and building a new capital) was probably not made based on a single motivation. It must have been considered an advantageous move on multiple fronts and been supported by enough influential individuals to make it happen. See also: Williamson 2009, 372-3.
diverse and functional city, with a population ranging from priests of the new religion to builders, whose engagement with ‘Atenism’ may have been virtually non-existent.

Population estimates range from 20,000 or 30,000 individuals\textsuperscript{254} to as high as 50,000.\textsuperscript{255} The range of responses experienced by this transplanted population is difficult to imagine.

Traditional wisdom states that the ancient Egyptians were a highly conservative people,\textsuperscript{256} by analogy with their well-attested artistic conservatism,\textsuperscript{257} and were horrified by the changes to Egypt’s state religion: that they were coerced into Aten-worship by a despotic ruler and likely lived under him in the city in the same way. For some, perhaps, this was true. However, I wonder if the high level of conservatism seen in Egyptian royal art and ideology is truly an accurate reflection of the attitudes and views of the Egyptian population, especially those at Amarna who benefitted most from association with the new regime. I also wonder, as have others in recent years, whether Atenism-as-monotheism was truly ‘enforced’ beyond or even throughout Amarna.\textsuperscript{258} Amulets, statuettes, paintings, and other objects from domestic contexts demonstrate that at least some at Amarna continued to worship traditional deities, with no visible ill consequences.\textsuperscript{259} It is likely too that the lower down the social hierarchy one fell and the greater one’s distance from Amarna, the less one would be directly affected by changes to the official religion.\textsuperscript{260}

\textsuperscript{254} D’Auria 1999,162; Lacovara 1999, 61; Kemp, Stevens, Dabbs, Zabecki, and Rose 2013, 65; Snape 2014, 162; Stevens 2016, 1; Tyldesley 2018, 13.

\textsuperscript{255} Kemp 1989, 269; D’Auria 1999, 162; Montserrat 2000, 24-5; Ruiz 2001, 183; Snape 2014, 162; Stevens 2017, 1.

\textsuperscript{256} Bober 1999, 30.

\textsuperscript{257} Molyneaux 1997, 108-9; Málek 1999, 25; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 189; Teeter 2015, 328.

\textsuperscript{258} Tyldesley 1998, 76; Montserrat 2000, 23; Chadwick 2005, 183; Kemp 2012a, 53; Kemp 2012b, 20, 27; Kulmar 2018, 120.

\textsuperscript{259} Kemp 2012b, 26.

\textsuperscript{260} Málek 1999, 263.
We should certainly consider the difficulties experienced by Amarna’s population—both emotionally, in leaving their homes, ancestors, extended families and communities, and physically, in terms of the labour required of those involved in the city’s rapid construction. Yet, perhaps we can also consider alternate views. Perhaps we can imagine an excitement, although likely a trepidatious one, amongst the ranks of Akhenaten’s court, at being involved in innovation on such a large scale. Without foreknowledge of the eventual collapse of Akhenaten’s new capital and religious regime, watching the city rise up from empty desert, being a part of such a wealthy and prosperous part of Egyptian royal history, how might those benefitting under the regime have responded to it? Was coercion and tyranny really so great a part of Akhenaten’s reign as has often been supposed? The question posed by Kemp of whether or not Amarna’s population migrated by choice\(^\text{261}\) has significant implications for the character of their experiences and yet it is so difficult to know. Indeed, the answer must have varied from individual to individual. Few must have left without doubts. Upon arrival and over time, attitudes to the new city and its king almost certainly fluctuated.

Often taken as evidence for a disdain, even hatred, for Akhenaten’s regime is the fact that his city was abandoned not long after his death, by approximately 1325 BCE\(^\text{262}\) early in the reign of Tutankhamen.\(^\text{263}\) Like Amarna’s initial foundation, however, its abandonment may have been a political decision made at a high level; it need not have reflected the desires of

\(^{261}\) Kemp 1977, 136; Kemp 2012b, 41.
\(^{262}\) Panagiotakopulu, Buckland, and Kemp 2010, 474.
the population who had by then been building their lives in this location for some time.

Amarna was, first and foremost, a cult centre and royal residence, although it was also home to tens-of-thousands. With both the Aten cult and the royal family gone, the need for the city disappeared and the jobs filled by its occupants moved as well. By the time the royal family and court departed the city, it was probably doomed to disappear, regardless of the feelings of its prior occupants.

### 1.5.1 Geographical Location and Layout

Amarna’s location is a curious one in terms of typical Egyptian settlement patterns, although it is not without its logic. The city falls roughly halfway between Thebes and Memphis, effectively distancing itself from both traditionally powerful cities without preferencing either. The isolation of Akhet-Aten, which Akhenaten refers to as “this distant place,” can only have been intentional and significant. It required massive effort to be expended in the transportation of building materials and other resources to the site. Amarna’s “barren” desert location was likewise both problematic and anomalous. Perhaps it was due, in part, to Akhenaten’s desire for a virgin site for the city, which ruled out more advantageous locations near the Nile floodplains and in the delta, likely to have long histories of habitation. Yet, descriptions of the founding process did not (and were unlikely to) refer to the decision as a difficult one. Rather, Amarna’s location is described as inspired by Aten and therefore the only suitable choice. Perhaps this divine inspiration was mere spin;

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265 Quoted in Montserrat 2000, 19.
266 Tietze 2012, 57-8; Zakrzewski, Shortland, and Rowland 2016, 306.
267 Dorman 1985-6, 6.
perhaps it stemmed from the city’s eastern cliffs, where the sun rising over the wadi mirrored the hieroglyph for the horizon, ‘akhet’, visually performing the city’s name, ‘Horizon of the Aten’, each day.

The city itself lay on the east bank of the river, with a vertical spread that approximately mirrored its course. It occupied only a small part of the total area of the desert plain and, as the city was unwalled, this would have allowed for much greater expansion, had history played out differently. For this reason, Petrie considered Amarna’s location “one of the most perfect sites that is possible for a great town.” Indeed, although the land immediately surrounding the city was not appropriate for farming, a large area of agricultural land on the west bank supplied the city and was included within the extent of its boundary stelae. Wells supplied most of the water to the city proper, while two major satellite settlements—the so-called Workmen’s Village and Stone Village—were apparently provisioned by the main city. These were established near the eastern cliffs, likely housing those working on the nearby tombs.

Below, I summarise the main areas subsumed within the archaeological site of Tell el-Amarna, moving north-to-south through the riverside settlement before discussing the tombs, cemeteries, and settlements along the eastern cliffs. The majority of the names used

269 Baines and Málek 1980, 123; Qurike and Spencer 1992, 81; Mallinson 1999, 75; Montserrat 2000, 19; Crowell 2007, 125; Hodgin 2012, 6; Tietze 2012, 67; Stevens 2016, 2.
270 Dodson 2009, 112.
272 Petrie 1974, 2.
273 Kemp 1977, 123; Lacovara 1999, 61; Shaw 2003, 153; Gates 2011, 110; Kemp 2012b, 47; Tietze 2012, 58.
275 Stevens 2016, 2.
below are not those used by the Egyptians themselves and the divisions between them have been retrospectively imposed by those planning and excavating the city. I use them, by convention, to facilitate references and comparisons between this work and others.

The North Riverside Palace and the North City

Although apparently Akhenaten’s primary residence, \(^{276}\) little remains of the North Riverside Palace, which has been damaged by a combination of Nile floods and modern agriculture. \(^{277}\) Today the size of the palace is only hinted at by surviving fragments, including part of a huge double wall and entranceway. \(^{278}\) Along with the North City houses, likely occupied by the most important members of Akhenaten’s court, \(^{279}\) the North Riverside Palace is relatively isolated from the city proper: its smells, noises, and crowds. \(^{280}\) The cliffs behind afforded privacy, security, and exclusivity. \(^{281}\) Today, the poor preservation of this area means that it has not been investigated or published as extensively as others. \(^{282}\)

The North Palace

The North Palace lies in the desert between the North City and the Main City and occupies a walled rectangular space measuring 148 x 115 m. \(^{283}\) This palace appears to have belonged to Meritaten, the eldest daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, as a relatively private harem-palace intended for herself and her household. \(^{284}\) The layout and extensive use of stone,

\(^{276}\) Kemp 1989, 276.

\(^{277}\) Lacovara 1999, 66-7; Shortland 2000, 116-8; Jørgensen 2005, 21; Kemp 2012b, 151; Stevens 2016, 8.

\(^{278}\) Kemp 1989, 276; Tietze 2012, 70; Stevens 2016, 8.

\(^{279}\) Shortland 2000, 116-8; Tietze 2012, 70.

\(^{280}\) Málek 1999, 278.

\(^{281}\) Kemp 1989, 294; Stevens 2016, 8.

\(^{282}\) Stevens 2016, 8.

\(^{283}\) Kemp 2012b, 146.

however, may indicate a more ceremonial function than is suggested for the North Riverside Palace.\textsuperscript{285} It included an open-air temple, outside which an unfinished relief of one of the Amarna princesses eating a roasted duck was found.\textsuperscript{286} At the time of its initial excavation, a number of wall paintings from the North Palace were relatively well preserved, including some of the most recognisable images of the Amarna royal family.\textsuperscript{287}

**The North Suburb**

The concept of a ‘suburb’ is an anachronous one in the description of ancient Egyptian settlements. However, it is a consequence of Amarna’s long history of excavation that several such questionable terms have become established in the literature. The designation ‘North Suburb’ refers to a group of approximately 300 houses\textsuperscript{288} spreading out from the northern edge of the Central City.\textsuperscript{289} The occupants of these houses appear to have been reasonably well-off\textsuperscript{290} and may have had functions related to the administrative, religious, and other major projects of the Central City. Anna Stevens has described them as likely “mid-level scribal officials.”\textsuperscript{291} This area has been quite thoroughly excavated but its condition is diminished by modern cultivation and construction.\textsuperscript{292}

\textsuperscript{285} Lacovara 1999, 65-6; Spence 2012, 76; Stevens 2016, 2.
\textsuperscript{286} D’Auria 1999, 221.
\textsuperscript{287} Stevens 2016, 10.
\textsuperscript{288} Bard 2008, 224.
\textsuperscript{289} Stevens 2016, 12.
\textsuperscript{290} Gates 2011, 112.
\textsuperscript{291} Stevens 2017, 2.
\textsuperscript{292} Shortland 2000, 118; Stevens 2006, 11.
The Central City

The Central City once comprised the administrative and religious heart of Akhet-Aten.\(^{293}\) It exhibits a high level of centralised planning, with a fairly neat orthogonal layout,\(^{294}\) and this reflects the official nature, large size, and stone construction of several of its chief structures, including the ‘Great Palace,’ the ‘King’s House,’ the ‘Large Aten Temple’ and the ‘Small Aten Temple.’\(^{295}\) This section of the city also contains a number of storehouses, barracks, stables, administrative buildings, and perhaps a few residences of important officials.\(^{296}\) The functions of several of the buildings in the Central City are ambiguous and names attributed in modern times do not necessarily reflect their original purposes.\(^{297}\) The ‘King’s House’, for example, is unlikely to be a true royal residence. Kate Spence has recently described it as an “institutional and governmental hub.” Administrative buildings cluster around it.\(^{298}\)

The Main City

The Main City is the name given to Akhet-Aten’s major residential sector: in general, one of the earliest of Amarna’s built areas.\(^{299}\) Unlike the Central City and Workmen’s Village, the Main City shows little evidence of centralised planning\(^{300}\) and appears to have arisen organically.\(^{301}\) Initially, larger houses would have been built in advantageous locations, such

\(^{293}\) Stevens 2006, 11; Stevens 2016, 4.
\(^{294}\) Bard 2008, 224; Gates 2011, 110; Tietze 2012, 70.
\(^{295}\) Tietze 2010, 45-54; Tietze 2012, 61-6.
\(^{296}\) Smith 1998, 182; Gates 2011, 110.
\(^{297}\) Stevens 2006, 11.
\(^{298}\) Spence 2015, 304.
\(^{299}\) Shortland 2000, 118; Stevens 2006, 13.
\(^{300}\) Kemp 1977, 126; James 1985, 216; Shortland 2000, 118; Williamson 2009, 372; Kemp and Stevens 2010, 75; Kemp 2012b, 47; Spence 2012, 71-2.
\(^{301}\) Stevens 2016, 6.
as along the waterfront and close to the city’s religious and administrative centre and major thoroughfares.\textsuperscript{302} Personal preference would have directed their placement.\textsuperscript{303} Smaller houses appear to have then clustered around the larger ones—perhaps influenced by dependency, client, or mutual industry-based relationships—creating a gradually denser area of occupation.\textsuperscript{304}

The majority of houses in the Main City are not extravagant.\textsuperscript{305} Akhet-Aten appears to have possessed a large working class, a small middle class, and an even smaller selection of elites and royal figures. This has been determined, in part, through analysis of housing sizes and layouts. The overriding trend is one of not huge differentiation below the top level of Amarna society.\textsuperscript{306} Inside and alongside domestic residences, industrial and economic activities formed a large part of the life of the Main City.

The South Suburb

The term ‘South Suburb’ designates an area of residential buildings south of the Main City. Houses here are not as densely packed as in the Main City and appear to be more recent.\textsuperscript{307} Consequently, the South Suburb may represent an expansion of Amarna’s residential area, which was ongoing at the end of the occupation period. This area included the houses of several important figures, including the Vizier Nakht (House K50.1). These individuals

\textsuperscript{302} Smith 1998, 182; Kemp and Stevens 2010, 163.
\textsuperscript{303} Kemp 1977, 126; Tietze 2012, 53.
\textsuperscript{304} Smith 1998, 182; Shortland 2000, 118; Richards 2005, 37; Grajetzki 2010, 193; Spence 2012, 71-2; Spence 2015, 308, 323; Stevens 2017, 2.
\textsuperscript{305} Montserrat 2000, 24-5; Kemp 2012b, 20.
\textsuperscript{306} Stevens 2017, 2.
\textsuperscript{307} Kemp and Garfi 1993, 73-6; Stevens 2006, 13.
inscribed their names and titles on stone doorframes, which survive better than the remainder of their mud-brick houses.\textsuperscript{308}

**Kom el-Nana**

At Kom el-Nana, southeast of the city proper, we find the ruins of a temple complex or other cultic site, whose original purpose is ongoing in its interpretation.\textsuperscript{309} The enclosure measures 228 x 213 m and comprises two courts, one including a podium.\textsuperscript{310} Given the extensive damage done to the site following Akhenaten’s reign, most current work at Kom el-Nana deals with reconstructing the complex’s decorative program, which Nefertiti’s image appears to dominate. Inscriptions on remnants of the original building material refer to a “Sunshade of Re”, which may have been dedicated to Nefertiti.\textsuperscript{311} It has been argued that Kom el-Nana may have been amongst the earliest of Akhenaten’s building projects at Amarna, representing the “Sunshade of Re” already planned out at the erection of the first Boundary Stelae.\textsuperscript{312} In 2017, Jacquelyn Williamson published new inscriptional evidence suggesting that the cultic complex at Kom el-Nana had “not only solar but also funerary implications.”\textsuperscript{313} She believes that the spirits of Amarna’s deceased tomb owners may have visited this complex to receive offerings provided by the king.\textsuperscript{314} Kemp has also noted a number of “service buildings” within the complex, including workshops and a bakery.\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{308} Snape 2014, 163.

\textsuperscript{309} Shortland 2000, 118; Stevens 2016, 26.

\textsuperscript{310} Stevens 2016, 27.

\textsuperscript{311} Williamson 2009, 402; Stevens 2016, 27; Williamson 2017, 1.

\textsuperscript{312} Williamson 2009, 399-401.

\textsuperscript{313} Williamson 2009, 1.

\textsuperscript{314} Williamson 2017, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{315} Kemp 1989, 285.
Maru-Aten

Like Kom el-Nana, Maru-Aten is a likely cultic complex, south of the Main City, divided into two precincts. They are not identical in plan but do share important features, including natural and botanical decorative motifs.\(^{316}\) Maru-Aten was probably a Sunshade of Re, dedicated to Akhenaten’s wife, Kiya, and later inherited by Meritaten, his eldest daughter by Nefertiti.\(^{317}\) Shortland describes it as “a set of gardens devoted to pleasure and prayer,”\(^{318}\) although perhaps this is too whimsical. Jørgensen describes it in more secular terms as “a royal garden,” complete with artificial lake and royal pavilions. Of course, it is likely that both Kom el-Nana and Maru-Aten were beautiful in their time,\(^{319}\) with their rich decoration and greenery. Both likely fulfilled recreational purposes, as well as religious and functional ones.

Tombs and Cemeteries

Contrary to the Egyptian preference for constructing tombs and placing cemeteries on the west bank of the Nile, Amarna’s cemeteries and tombs are found in the limestone cliffs to the city’s east.\(^{320}\) Elite tombs of the group referred to as the ‘North Tombs’ were the first to receive detailed scholarly attention. This group comprises six decorated tombs (AT 1—AT 6) and several more which were undecorated and have not been assigned numbers.\(^{321}\) None of the tombs appear to have been completed before the city’s abandonment but their decorative programmes reveal distinct differences to the pre-Amarna norm (see Chapter 3).

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\(^{316}\) Jørgensen 2005, 76; Williamson 2009, 408-12.

\(^{317}\) Kemp 1989, 285; Williamson 2017, 2.

\(^{318}\) Shortland 2000, 118.

\(^{319}\) Stevens 2016, 27.

\(^{320}\) Smith 1998, 182; David 2003, 174; Magli 2011, 33-4; Tietze 2012, 68; Snape 2014, 159.

\(^{321}\) Stevens 2016, 10.
Akhenaten’s rejection of Egypt’s traditional gods rendered the usual programme of funerary images inappropriate for use in the Amarna tombs.\textsuperscript{322} In their place, artisans rendered a new canon of scenes, emphasising the deceased’s relationship to the king and celebrating Akhenaten’s family in their own right. Many of these scenes incorporate representations of Amarna’s palaces and temples, highlighting its scale and natural bounty. They provide important, if imperfect, models for reconstruction of the archaeological remains.\textsuperscript{323}

The group of tombs referred to as the ‘South Tombs’—nineteen of which are numbered (AT 7—AT 25)\textsuperscript{324}—likewise catered to a small proportion of Amarna’s elite.\textsuperscript{325} The majority of residents could expect far simpler burials across a number of cemeteries, including those in the vicinity of each of the villages.\textsuperscript{326} Most of the graves were disturbed in antiquity, either by looters or, perhaps, relatives of the deceased who wished to bear items and remains away from the abandoned city.\textsuperscript{327} A number of these non-elite cemeteries have not yet been investigated, although extensive excavation has been carried out at the cemetery near the South Tombs since 2005, providing valuable insights into the lives of Amarna’s residents.\textsuperscript{328} Cranio metric analysis completed at this cemetery suggests a diverse population, drawn to Amarna from across Egypt, not directly transplanted from a single location.\textsuperscript{329}

\textsuperscript{322} Robins 1986, 44-5; Tyldesley 1999, 80; el-Saddik 2010, 267; Laboury 2011, 7.
\textsuperscript{323} Stevens 2016, 10.
\textsuperscript{324} Stevens 2016, 20.
\textsuperscript{325} Tietze 2012, 68.
\textsuperscript{326} Stevens 2016, 4; Stevens 2017, 2.
\textsuperscript{327} Dabbs and Zabecki 2014, 219, 238-40.
\textsuperscript{328} Stevens 2016, 10, 20.
\textsuperscript{329} Dabbs and Zabecki 2014, 219.
A long wadi, now referred to as the Royal Wadi, was the intended resting place of Akhenaten and his family.\textsuperscript{330} However, the majority of the Royal Tomb’s equipment and human remains was reinterred in Thebes after Amarna’s abandonment, leaving behind assorted pieces, including numerous royal \textit{shabti} figures, and elaborate wall decoration.\textsuperscript{331} This decoration remains an important source of information for Atenist mortuary practices and royal ideologies. It includes a rare depiction of the funeral of the king’s daughter, Meketaten, and perhaps that of another royal woman.

The Workmen’s Village

The Workmen’s Village is the name given to a peripheral settlement at Amarna, 1.2 km from the main site, in the shelter of the eastern cliffs.\textsuperscript{332} Due to this position, the village was quickly covered by sand after its abandonment and is better preserved than much of the site.\textsuperscript{333} It constitutes a walled rectangular complex, containing around 70 buildings of equal size,\textsuperscript{334} with one larger building likely belonging to an overseer.\textsuperscript{335} This, in addition to its regular grid layout points to a state-funded and planned settlement, comparable with the workmen’s village of Deir el-Medina, which served those working in the Valley of the Kings in the immediately preceding period.\textsuperscript{336} It is possible that the population of this village was drawn from Deir el-Medina to work on Amarna’s tombs.\textsuperscript{337} However, Kemp has pointed out that the Deir el-Medina workmen were primarily engaged in the construction of royal

\textsuperscript{330} Stevens 2016, 4.
\textsuperscript{331} Stevens 2016, 20.
\textsuperscript{332} Weatherhead and Kemp 2007, 5.
\textsuperscript{333} Weatherhead and Kemp 2007, 5.
\textsuperscript{335} Smith 1998; Spence 2012, 76; Stevens 2016, 24.
\textsuperscript{336} Kemp 1989, 273; Lacovara 1999, 68; Stevens 2006, 13; Spence 2012, 74; Stevens 2016, 24.
\textsuperscript{337} Dodson 2014, 115; Snape 2014, 86.
tombs, while the positioning of this village suggests that its residents were more likely occupied with the private tombs of the southern group.\footnote{Kemp 1989, 273.} Beyond the walled settlement, a series of painted chapels and other structures such as animal pens appear to have been constructed by the village occupants. Yet, the settlement would have been primarily reliant on provisions from the Main City, lacking even a well for its residents’ use.\footnote{Lacovara 1999, 69; Weatherhead and Kemp 2007, 5; Snape 2014, 87; Stevens 2016, 24.}

**The Stone Village**

The Stone Village, located in the eastern cliffs, southeast of the Workmen’s Village, also seems to have been intended for those working on the nearby tombs.\footnote{Bard 2008, 224. See also: Spence 2012, 76.} This settlement, however, does not demonstrate such a rigid planned structure. It is also far worse preserved and has received less academic attention, making its exact function difficult to determine with certainty.\footnote{Tietze 2012, 69.} It has been proposed that the Stone Village was built to cater to an increasing population of tomb-builders and others in the mortuary industry, who could not be contained within the finite space of the Workmen’s Village itself.\footnote{Dodson 2014, 115.} Ongoing excavations are certain to yield more detailed information.\footnote{Stevens 2006, 13.}

### 1.5.2 The Benefits of Studying Amarna

One of the most frequently cited advantages of studying Amarna is the short-term occupation of the site.\footnote{Peet 1921, 169; Kemp 1977, 125; Shaw 1995, 223; Smith 1998, 182; Tyldesley 1999, 7; Bard 2008, 208; Jeffreys 2010, 105; Wendrich 2010, 204; Gates 2011, 110; Hanus 2012, 35; Hodgin 2012, 1; Kuckens 2013, 1;} It presents a snapshot of only a few decades, unobscured by
evidence from either previous or subsequent occupations, which might result in interpretative inaccuracies or a greater preoccupation with site chronology. It is likely that we can thank Akhenaten directly for this situation: the pharaoh recorded a specific desire to establish his city on historically unoccupied land, excluding the kinds of extremely favourable locations near the floodplains or the Nile Delta on which Egyptian settlements have been continually rebuilt. Many of these sites have either been regularly disrupted, eroded by Nile floods, or cannot be excavated due to modern occupation or cultivation. Akhenaten’s city has not been substantially reoccupied in modern times and is thus relatively accessible and well preserved, although the encroachment of modern agriculture has been a concern. Amarna is also positioned far enough from the floodplain that its remains have largely been left uncovered by Nile silt. Today, the site is protected by guards and officials and has not suffered as some other sites have from instabilities in the region. This high level of preservation, in contrast to other Egyptian settlements, is a strong advantage for excavators and researchers, while the unfinished nature of some houses and burials provides new information about city planning, expansion, and construction methods.

Amarna is one of the most broadly studied sites in Egypt, providing a wealth of information to researchers, rich in both existing information and potential for further study. This was

347 Gates 2011, 110.
348 Kemp 2012a, 52-3.
349 James 1985, 194; Bard 2008, 222; David 2014, 105; Stevens 2016, 6; Stevens 2017, 1.
a strong factor in my choice of the site for two reasons. Firstly, because even careful archaeological excavation is disruptive and destructive, I consider it important to make full use of data already (being) produced, rather than digging new sites for the sole sake of novelty. Secondly, because this site does have such a strong base of interest, as a result of its extensive excavation history, the large number of people currently working on related research, and the inherent public interest attached to the Amarna ‘heresy’ and its peculiar artistic forms, my research will enter a lively discourse and, hopefully, spark interesting responses.

As archaeological tides have turned from a focus on broad historical narratives and high status individuals and their treasures, toward a focus on society more broadly and the minutiae of everyday life, Amarna has presented researchers with a unique opportunity: the chance to break down and investigate a large and diverse settlement that included not only palaces, temples, and tombs, but also the houses of the lower echelons of society and their burials.\(^{351}\) Residences in different parts of the city have been the focus of archaeological investigation at the interlocking levels of individual households and their broader clusters and ‘communities’. There is significant potential, too, for comparisons to be drawn between the lives of individuals in different parts of the city, constructing an image of Amarna society at many levels, in many areas, and across many intersections, in a way that has not often been possible for Egyptologists.\(^{352}\)

\(^{351}\) Grajetzki 2010, 187; Kemp 2012b, 19; Stevens 2017, 1.

\(^{352}\) Montserrat 2000, 91; Wendrich 2010, 204; Tietze 2012, 61.
Indeed, researchers have been able to draw conclusions about the lives of individuals in the city and to reconstruct the spaces in which their lives can be imagined. Industry has also been a major focus of investigations at Amarna, both within households and in dedicated workshops, informing us about Amarna lifestyles, as well as technologies. The existence of cemeteries directly associated with this city allows for research into different and common elements in the treatment of the dead across the city and for specialised study into the human remains of Amarna’s one-time residents. Again, due to Amarna’s short-term occupation, we receive an image of a single but diverse population, suspended at a historical moment, in the cemeteries at Amarna. The sheer size and diversity of the site gives it value to a great variety of potential research interests and allows for the simultaneous development of separate projects in different areas.

1.5.3 Amarna as an Ideal Site for Research into Identity, Gender, and Family

The royal art from Amarna is a treasure trove of peculiar forms of gender expression, which has long confused modern Western viewers. Describing Boundary Stela A, near Tuna el-Gebel in 1714, Claude Sicard interpreted Akhenaten and Nefertiti as “priests” (whose gender he does not specifically identify and therefore we can probably assume he considered male) and the two princesses accompanying them as “two little boys.” When John Gardner Wilkinson visited Amarna in 1824 and 1826, he determined that the royal family must be foreign rulers, attributing their strange images to ethnic difference and

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353 Montserrat 2000, 68; Kemp 2012a, 53.
355 Hodgin 2012, 2.
357 Claude Sicard, quoted in Montserrat 2000, 59.
foreign art styles. However, when he forwarded a copy of an image of Akhenaten and Nefertiti at worship to Sir William Gell for his consideration, Gell interpreted the king and queen as two pregnant women.

Since then, attempts to account for the curious appearances of the Amarna royal family have focused primarily on two alternatives: 1) some form of disfiguring illness suffered by the king and/or other members of his family, which was purposely incorporated into a distinctive representative style; or 2) a purely artistic and/or religious development, which was not intended to reflect any real physical abnormality. These are the explicit interpretations of Akhenaten’s “effeminate,” “androgynous,” “non-sexed” or “dual-sexed” features—the long neck, slender face, slim waist and the exaggerated curves of his breasts, hips, and thighs. (Usually) less explicit interpretations are related to a constructed image of Akhenaten as a feminine, physically weak, militarily incompetent (or unconcerned), artistic, religious, academic, and potentially homosexual man, woman, or eunuch. “In his new city,” Chadwick writes, “[Akhenaten] became preoccupied with spiritual matters and spent most of his time writing poems and hymns to Aten.” It is clear that when we grapple with concepts of royal sex and gender, we face not only the task of

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360 Montserrat 2000, 56-7; Chadwick 2005, 186.
361 Chadwick 2005, 186.
362 Tyldesley 1999, 79.
363 Williams 2011, 224-5.
364 Chadwick 2005, 186; el-Saddik 2010, 264.
365 Velikovsky 1960, 201; Tyldesley 1998, 4; Montserrat 2000, 56-7; Chadwick 2005, 186; Brémaud 2010, 628; el-Saddik 2010, 259.
366 Chadwick 2005, 182.
uncovering complex gender and religious ideologies in the past, but also that of uncovering and challenging our own contextual gender ideologies and assumptions.

Recent scholarship has considered whether the representation of Akhenaten’s body might be viewed as intentionally and symbolically dual-sexed. By representing himself as simultaneously male and female, it has been argued, Akhenaten represented himself in the style of a creator god, emphasising his fertility and thereby also the productivity and prosperity of Egypt under his rule.\textsuperscript{367} The combination of male and female creative aspects into a single being likens Akhenaten to the Aten, who, as an aniconic deity, is represented as genuinely sexless, yet seems to fill both male and female gender roles in textual sources.\textsuperscript{368}

Variation in the ways that royal and divine gender was expressed at Amarna makes this site a unique locus for studies into artistic expressions of identity—and gender, sex, sexuality, and familial roles, as subsets thereof. A new repertoire of royal scenes, which have been interpreted as displaying a higher level of familial intimacy, may provide insights into ideal gender relations as modelled at the level of the royal family. Due to the specificity and short time frame of this historical context, this is not an analysis that could be undertaken at any other site in Egypt or elsewhere. It is therefore particularly fortunate that Amarna also provides a diverse range of non-royal housing and burials, through which gender ideologies and relations in the city more broadly might be compared or contrasted with those evident at the royal level as a subject for further research.

\textsuperscript{367} Chadwick 2005, 187; Williamson 2009, 447; el-Saddik 2010, 264; Williams 2011, 224-5.
\textsuperscript{368} Robins 1986, 43; Arnold 1996, 4; Tyldesley 1999, 78; Montserrat 2000, 23; Bard 2008, 222; Shih 2009, 59.
1.6 Critical Issues: Intention, Interpretation, and Self-Reflexivity

A thesis that relies upon the interpretation of ancient art encounters specific risks and a familiar academic anxiety: how do we know what we know? In particular, how do we know whether what we receive as the ‘message(s)’ or ‘meaning(s)’ of artworks are, firstly, true and, secondly, intended? Are our interpretations still valid if intentionality is unproven or disproven? Or can meaning enter a work without its author’s consent? These questions run to the core of long-standing debates regarding how meaning is constructed and received and, particularly in the context of the last half century’s feminist scholarship, who is (and is not) responsible for devising and circulating knowledge. In this section, I address some of these critical issues and lay bare the methodologies utilised within this thesis.

Answers to the question of how we interpret art are characterised by several recurring themes. Is art first and foremost something that is formal: to be analysed in terms of the mastery of technique, the use of colour, texture, perspective and other features inherent within the piece itself? Is it symbolic, even a ‘message’\textsuperscript{369} or a semiotic ‘sign’, whose intended meanings can be straightforwardly ‘read’ by a qualified audience with access to the appropriate cultural ‘code’?\textsuperscript{370} Or is art, at its core, a social tool: reflecting, stabilising, promoting, or instituting specific kinds of relations between individuals and groups and creating a complex discourse between artist, represented subject, and viewer with real world implications? At times, it seems that the differences between these schools of thought (and their complex systems of sub-disciplines) are a matter of focus, because art is all of these things, in a manner that is not only simultaneous but deeply entangled.

\textsuperscript{369} Gross 1985, 2.
\textsuperscript{370} D’Alleva 2005, 29-42.
Art historian Erwin Panofsky contributed to the discipline an early, yet still well-regarded, model of artistic analysis, focused on the interpretation of cultural meaning through form. His model included three levels of analysis: the pre-iconographic, the iconographic, and the iconological. The first level, the pre-iconographic, corresponds to a formal analysis: the basic perceptual experience of form, line, colour, texture, depth, perspective, composition, and other visual features of the image. The second level, the iconographic, corresponds to a basic attribution of meaning: the identification of individuals and motifs in the image, requiring a level of cultural or contextual information that is unnecessary for pre-iconographic analysis. The linguistics-inspired notion of the artwork as a sign or collection of signs intended to be ‘read’ by an ideal, initiated audience comes into play at this level of analysis. Finally, a third level, the iconological, extends this interpretative work with a deeper focus on the meaning of characters, motifs, and symbols within their cultural context, including the artist’s biography, environment, and influences; the commissioner’s specifications and motivations; and broader considerations of individual and local styles, cultural themes and preoccupations. The artwork may be considered in the context of the broader artistic programme or architectural space in which it appears or in comparison to other artworks, artefacts, and texts from similar or contrastive contexts. It may also be considered in terms of the societal values or beliefs that it expresses, maintains, or encourages. Iconological analysis asks why were these specific artistic choices made at

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374 D’Alleva 2005, 21-3, 26-7; Morgan 2009, 9; Cardarelli 2012, xxii, xxv.
375 Eastmond 2000, 20; Cardarelli 2012, xii.
this time, in this context? It requires the highest degree of contextual understanding and is tied to the real-world social functions of the artwork.

In reality, these ‘levels’ of analysis are not undertaken separately, one after the other. At all times, but particularly as researchers, we approach artworks with preconceptions and prior understandings that hinder a purely pre-iconographic analysis.\footnote{D’Alleva 2005, 22.} I will always see ‘the Aten’ before I see a round disk with straight lines radiating outward, ending in human hands, and in that moment of iconographic identification I am already making iconological associations with the Amarna context and Atenist theology. Moreover, we might later find that our initial understanding of a work was flawed: a formal misidentification has led us astray in our symbolic interpretations and, subsequently, in our interpretation of the meaning of the work in society. We might have to backtrack and re-evaluate the work at a ‘lower’ level in order to reach a sound conclusion. In this sense, artistic analysis is a fluid and continuous process, which must be undertaken self-reflexively, with an understanding of, firstly, what we are bringing to the interpretation in terms of our own standpoints and preconceptions and, secondly, exactly how we are using existing and acquired cultural knowledge to reach a conclusion. It is the transparency of this process that allows interpretations to be productively challenged and extended in academic discourse.

Although it is a necessary simplification of a much more complex process, Panofsky’s method has retained its place in art theory for so long because it covers a lot of bases: effectively, the formal, the symbolic, and the social or cultural. Semiotics has provided a
more ‘interdisciplinary’ approach, founded in linguistics, but much of its contribution is in its vocabulary. The fundamental questions of *what is conveyed, to whom, and how* are maintained, as is the interest in the role of the cultural and social context in fashioning the ‘form’ of the message. Criticisms of iconographic analyses as being too caught up in the search for ‘meaning’ and not concerned enough with the role of the artwork as a social tool—an object manipulated by agents in society—can be dealt with by extending iconological analyses or by producing complementary studies of artworks as social objects. These approaches are not mutually exclusive but differ in their primary foci and terminology. Elements of each wind through my thesis. I have a deep interest in the use of artistic self-representations as social objects in constructing and promoting individual and group identities; I also have a deep interest in how meaning is conveyed through symbolism and allegory, both of which are richly evident in Egyptian art. Perhaps my own background in linguistics conditions me to see the value in interpreting commissioned artworks, in particular, as ‘messages’ or ‘signs’, which might be read but equally misread in the present as in the past.

The semiotic perspective also highlights a major issue for artistic interpretation. If art is a ‘sign’ or ‘message’, which can be deciphered by reference to a ‘code’, then how does an incomplete understanding of the code affect our interpretations of art in antiquity? Acts of communication, amongst which we might group artistic expression, are not always successful. The message itself may be poorly constructed, the method of transmission may

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377 Tanner and Osborne 2007, 2.
378 Where the ‘code’ is the broader system of signs that are understood in relation to one another and which circulate within the environment ideally shared by both the message’s originator and recipient or addressee. See Kemp 1998, 183.
be inappropriate, or the receiver may not have the relevant understanding to interpret it. (Art) historians, as much as we try, must fall into this latter category more often than not.\footnote{Davies 2000, 200.}

We risk misapplying the ‘codes’ appropriate to interpreting signs in our own society to ancient signs, producing faulty translations.\footnote{Bourdieu 1984, 3.} As such, much of the ancient art historian’s work is to piece together the codes employed and understood in past societies with whatever information can be gathered: essentially, to reconstruct a language for which we have only random and incomplete data and no living speaker to translate.

The decipherment of art may thus be seen to mirror the decipherment of hieroglyphs—but with an added uncertainty. Written language virtually always encodes meaning. What we interpret as symbolic or meaningful in art might not be. What we view and interpret as ‘art’ \textit{might not be}.\footnote{Tanner and Osborne 2007, 2.} How do we know if our interpretations are correct and, more worryingly, how do we know if they are wrong? Is the meaning of the artwork the meaning (or meanings!) intended by the artist or are our interpretations also valid and true meanings, even if they are unintended or their intentionality cannot possibly be confirmed? Artistic interpretation is wildly interesting but is it ever a trustworthy method of acquiring historical knowledge?

Let’s assume for the moment that the meaning of the artwork is \textit{always} and \textit{only} what is intended by the artist, where the ‘intention’ to produce meaning is a desire substantiated by a conscious plan for action.\footnote{This is the essence of definitions of ‘intention’ proposed by scholars such as Livingstone (2005, 2, 8, 14-5).} That is: the artist has the desire to convey a certain

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\footnote{Davies 2000, 200.}
\footnote{Bourdieu 1984, 3.}
\footnote{Tanner and Osborne 2007, 2.}
\footnote{This is the essence of definitions of ‘intention’ proposed by scholars such as Livingstone (2005, 2, 8, 14-5).}
meaning through their artwork and they intend to do so using a specific communicative strategy, such as a symbol recognisable to the intended or ideal viewer. It is true that intentions stand behind all artworks. First, the artist must have an intention to create the piece itself but, every moment after that, choices are made in the execution of large and minor details, from the large-scale inclusion and organisation of figures and objects to the small-scale performance of brush-strokes, each contributing, consciously or unconsciously, to the work’s effect as a whole.

The artist is an agent, who actively begins and moves through the process of creating his artwork: the meanings and messages he intends to convey through his choices are undoubtedly relevant. The task of accessing this intended information is sometimes referred to as ‘retrieval’.\footnote{Stecker 1994, 194.} However, not every artistic choice will be carefully evaluated or meaningful.\footnote{Livingstone 2005, 39.} Some elements of the composition may even be downright mistakes and no one who has ever sat down to a painting can claim that the finished result was conceptually fully-formed from the outset and executed exactly to plan, down to the last detail. Intentions are formed and altered during the process of production, as well as at its outset.\footnote{Livingstone 2005, 42, 45.} Unconscious choices, not connected to any specific intention, may still inform us on the artist, his process of creation, and the underlying practices and preoccupations of his society: information that is deeply meaningful and \textit{useful} to art historians, whether or not it was intentionally conveyed.
These interpretative difficulties, amongst others, have led to many competing theories of the role of intention in the construction of meaning.\textsuperscript{386} For some, artistic intention is the primary or even sole locus of an artwork’s meaning. For others, it is all but irrelevant. Egyptian art presents a particularly difficult case, if we decide that artistic intention is paramount, because not only do we rarely know the individual artist or even specific production context of a work, but Egyptian artists typically worked collaboratively.\textsuperscript{387} The decoration of the tomb would be built up by various specialists, working together. Individual sculptures bear the work of many hands, deeply complicating any search for a singular, easily accessible intention. Moreover, when it comes to commissioned works such as tomb decoration and monumental architecture and sculpture, it is not only the artist’s (or artists’) intentions that inform the meaning of a work. It is also the commissioner’s (or commissioners’!). Someone has requested that the artwork be made, likely for a specific purpose, display context, and audience, whether broad or narrow. These purposes may, moreover, be multiple; the display context and the audience might change over time and with these changes the role of the object, its function, may also change.\textsuperscript{388} Is this not also a change in its meaning, if not its originally intended meaning? For Bourdieu and others, an artwork’s “objective meaning…. may have nothing to do with the author’s intention.”\textsuperscript{389}

Instead of taking artistic intention, which is often not directly accessible, as the sole source of ‘meaning’ in art, we can take a broader view, by which, “all public behaviour… no matter how non communicative in intent (as felt by the actor or assumed by an observer) can be

\textsuperscript{386} See, for example: Stecker 1994 and Livingstone 2005.
\textsuperscript{387} Laboury 2013, 28.
\textsuperscript{388} Morgan 2009, 8.
\textsuperscript{389} Bourdieu 1984, 2.
seen as taking place within a framework of symbolic codes governing potentially observable behaviour."

That is, all action has the potential to be read in a legitimately meaningful way, regardless of whether or not the actor intended to convey that—or any other—meaning through their action. When we see the portrait of an individual, deliberately commissioned for a specific purpose, we can certainly suggest possible intended meanings and messages for representative choices: the king is depicted wearing a crown as a visual expression of the regality by which he defines himself and his place in society and the artist can expect that an initiated audience, familiar with the meanings of crowns in this context, will understand this symbol. Yet, other elements may be less straightforward to interpret. Why might an artist include a small dog in the portrait of a king? To humanise the ruler and endear him to the people? To communicate his sincere love for his pet? To emphasise his great size by juxtaposition with a tiny lesser creature? Could this dog even be a status symbol, associated with upper class leisure pursuits, such as hunting for sport? Perhaps a comparison with other appearances of dogs in (royal) portraits of the time will yield fruitful insight but perhaps we will never know—indeed, we shan’t, because I’m referring to a hypothetical portrait, whose artistic intentions were never formulated in so much detail.

Is it then acceptable if we come to multiple conclusions about the meaning of a single artwork or a single element within it? This would seem a natural consequence of our each being unique individuals, with our own biographies, experiences, understandings, preoccupations, perceptions, and emotional responses.\footnote{Gross 1985, 3.} \footnote{Kemp 1998, 180.} We are each participating in our own process of receiving meaning via disrupted communication with the artist and

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\footnote{Gross 1985, 3.}
\footnote{Kemp 1998, 180.}
imagined subject. Are all of our conclusions equally valid, insofar as they make good sense within the artwork’s context, as we perceive it? Arguments abound for both sides and every shade in between. At one extreme is Critical Pluralism, “the view that there are many acceptable interpretations of many artworks that cannot be conjoined into a single correct interpretation;” at the other is Critical Monism, “the view that there is a single, comprehensive, true (correct) interpretation for each work of art.” I tend very much toward the former. The pluralistic view saves us from the bore—and the arrogance—of ever, even hypothetically, believing that we have completely ‘figured out’ a piece of art. However, it also saves us from having to make inevitably subjective and potentially prejudicial judgments about whose interpretation we deem ‘correct’ and whose we then dismiss, where they cannot comfortably coexist.

The question of who is allowed a voice and who is lent an ear in academia, as in all other realms of social life, is tied to the uneven distribution of power. If we were to try to establish whose understanding of the ‘meaning’ of Egyptian art is the correct one, the chances are high that a majority would settle on the understanding of one of the established, predominantly older, white, male professors, who hold privileged positions at well-funded and prestigious universities and museums. Perhaps the distribution of power in academia is slowly changing, yet this bias is far from being eradicated. Overwhelmingly, mainstream academia pays less attention to, or receives more critically, the ideas of people of colour, the ‘lower classes’, those whose English doesn’t neatly conform to an ‘academic’ standard, disabled academics, women—still, of course—but even more so: transgender and

otherwise gender-diverse academics, queer academics. Can we be trusted to make the right call on who is and who is not ‘correct’ in their interpretations, if we take the view that a finite set of correct interpretations does exist? Perhaps my motivation is political but I would rather assume that as many potentially correct interpretations exist as do interpreters and that the act of meaning-making is one in which who we are is fundamental and indivisible. Contrary to Critical Monism, this is a view by which inviting more people to the table has the potential to infinitely enrich our analyses and one in which the imaginative work of interpretation is never done. Some interpretations are better founded and better argued than others, based on more complete knowledge of the original context and ‘code’, but this is another matter entirely.

In response to charges of bias, we will just state that since all research is by necessity biased, it is far better to be aware of that fact, and take it into account in interpretations…than to live under the illusion that bias can be avoided.

Over the course of my reading and writing for this project, I have repeatedly found that a single human mind is a tiny and limited machine with which to address the full range and complexities of human experience. This is not a new anxiety for Western scholarship, but one in which I can comfort myself with centuries of exceptional company. Already in the eighteenth century, discourses were emerging that foregrounded the limitations of ‘knowledge’. “With the help of Kant,” Alcoff summarises, philosophers developed an understanding that “philosophy itself was limited by the intellectual and perceptual

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393 Bourdieu 1984, 5, 11.
394 Dommasnes and Montón-Subías 2012, 369.
attributes of man” and that therefore what we see and the reasoning that we use says as much about us as it does about the objects of our perception and reasoning. This interpretive anxiety has undergone many different permutations since then, with one significant wave of thought (or re-thinking) being the development of twentieth century feminist critiques of objectivity in science.

Feminist scholars such as Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway argued that, contrary to popular belief, science is not neutral and value-free if done ‘correctly’ or ‘well’, but rather that all scientific research involves and relies upon implicit subjective ideas that have traditionally gone unnoticed and un questioned. Some part of this unseen bias was seen to stem from ‘androcentric’ views that were not sufficiently problematised by the primarily male research community who propagated them. This problem was not restricted only to ‘bad’ science but to all scientific activity, influencing both the research questions deemed worthy of asking and the types of sources and methodologies considered valid in answering them. Androcentric research has historically reinforced the agendas and the truth-claims

399 Harding 1987, 20; Longino 1987, 54; Hanen and Kelley 1992, 200; Finlay 2002, 531; Rose 2010, 10; Dommasnes and Montón-Subías 2012, 375; Magnusson and Marecek 2012, 4; Gabaccia and Maynes 2013, 1; Katila and Meriläinen 2013, 214; Lewin 2016, 604-5.
of particular groups, of whom the archetypal representative is the white, middle-class, male, heterosexual academic.\textsuperscript{400}

Feminists have therefore encouraged understandings of science and scientific processes as socially, culturally, and politically located. As archaeologists we do not uncover the unambiguous ‘truth’ about the past but, inevitably, construct it through a highly personal process of interpretation.\textsuperscript{401} As regards Amarna, Juliette Bentley has noted that “in intervals of about twenty years, Akhenaten’s character and actions have been re-interpreted according to current values and attitudes”\textsuperscript{402} and indeed this is an ongoing process to which I now contribute. The problem, then, becomes one of: if science is not as neutral an endeavour as we once hoped, what can we do about it? Are all accounts and interpretations (of art, and of everything else) equally (in)valid, because they all derive from limited and biased minds or are some viewpoints better than others? Who decides upon this important epistemological point? For Harding, one solution was the construction of a distinction between ‘weak objectivity’—as a designation of traditional, romantic notions of an objective science free of bias—and ‘strong objectivity’—as a form of objectivity whose strength derives from accepting the fundamentally social and value-laden nature of scientific endeavour, questioning core cultural assumptions, and attempting to take multiple varying perspectives into account, rather than aiming for a singular, ‘objective’ truth.\textsuperscript{403}

\textsuperscript{400} Hubbard 1988, 5-6; Hollbach 1993, 1; Brooks 1997, 32-4, 42; Shih 2009, 5-6; Battle-Baptiste 2011, 37; Katila and Meriläinen 2013, 213.
\textsuperscript{401} Myking 2005, 10.
\textsuperscript{402} Bentley 1992, 7.
Harding foregrounds the importance of considering marginalised perspectives or ‘standpoints’ and scrutinising scientific inquiry from the perspective of outsiders and individuals who have a lesser stake in achieving the same view as the researcher.\textsuperscript{404} Contrary to much criticism, she nowhere claims that only marginalised people are capable of producing reliable science, only that non-mainstream or privileged accounts can raise new ideas, possibilities, or problems for research.\textsuperscript{405} This is not a threat but a tool: the consideration of traditionally ‘outside’ views adds weight and legitimacy to the research, creating a ‘stronger’ form of objectivity than is achievable by ignoring those perspectives and privileging the positions of certain kinds of researchers.

Related but not identical to this approach is the increasing interest in ‘self-reflexivity’ in research, which in archaeology is often tied to a post-processual framework.\textsuperscript{406} By understanding our own knowledges as socially-crafted and context-specific, we can begin to explore the ways in which our unique positioning influences the work that we do.\textsuperscript{407} For Levy, this kind of reflexivity is a “fundamental quality of feminist archaeology,”\textsuperscript{408} for Finlay, it is a tool capable of transforming “subjectivity in research…. from a problem to an opportunity.”\textsuperscript{409} Mandt and Næss have argued that when female archaeologists bring their own perceptions and specifically female experiences into the interpretation of

\textsuperscript{404} Harding 2004, 26.
\textsuperscript{405} Charles 1996, 7; Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, 20-1; Haely 2008, 56-7; Shih 2009, 18; Garry 2011, 828; Levy 2014, 231.
\textsuperscript{406} Hays-Gilpin 2000, 100-1; Shih 2009, 5-6; Harrison-Buck 2013, 343; Hollimon 2017, 51.
\textsuperscript{407} Harding 1987, 31-2; Pillow 2003, 176, 178-9; Gilmore and Kenny 2015, 56; Johnston 2015, 808.
\textsuperscript{408} Levy 2014, 231.
\textsuperscript{409} Finlay 2002, 531.
archaeological sources, they can contribute new and different understandings of these sources, which may not otherwise have been apparent.\textsuperscript{410}

At the same time, I note the frequency with which exciting promises of self-reflexivity are made at the beginning of a text only to fall by the wayside when it comes to the ‘real’ work of the project. I think this is at least partially due to a desire to retain an ‘academic’ (implicitly, ‘objective’) tone; a fear of being labelled immature, narcissistic, or self-indulgent;\textsuperscript{411} and also perhaps a paranoia on the part of authors that truly engaging with the subjectivities of their own viewpoints will discredit them to readers, particularly those who benefit from existing power structures in academia and might react defensively.\textsuperscript{412} There is such a fear of saying, \textit{I am biased in these ways, please critique my work in that light}, and accepting the real consequences of that statement, that we avoid the far more exciting possibility that our experiences will allow unique \textit{insights} into the evidence that others may not have considered. Superficial confessions of bias in which the author only announces that they are biased in the same, blameless way that \textit{all} individuals are biased, defeat the possibility for readers to engage honestly and authentically with that author, something that I consider quite a shame. The legacy of the association between ‘good science’ and ‘objectivity’ or ‘neutrality’ remains strong but I hope that it is something that can be worked on. As Helen Longino argued in 1987, we might conclude that “it is not necessarily in the nature of science to be value-free;” that “one can make explicit value commitments and still do ‘good’ science.”\textsuperscript{413}

\textsuperscript{410} Mandt and Næss 1986, 24; Østigård 2000, 66.
\textsuperscript{411} England 1994, 82; Finlay 2002, 532; Kobayashi 2003, 348; Pillow 2003, 176; Doyle 2013, 253; Badley 2015, 377-8; Gilmore and Kenny 2015, 57; Garrett 2013, 246; Ganesh 2016, 294.
\textsuperscript{412} Katila and Meriläinen 2013, 213.
\textsuperscript{413} Longino 1987, 56.
The view that I take in this work is that all knowledge is subjective and constructed. As a result, research—in all fields—should not be a search for ‘truth’ or for the perfectly-situated knower with the most ‘correct’ knowledge, but a self-conscious attempt to consider a full variety of voices, speaking their own truths, in a manner that is both coherent and accepting of ambiguity and difference. Perhaps, at my most radical, I move on from the pursuit of ‘strong objectivity’ and question why we need or desire objectivity at all. Even the most ‘objective’ outsider narrative, while it might ‘truly’ reflect some elements of the society under consideration, cannot possibly reflect the reality of all its constituent members. As human experiences are varied, so should the narrators of human experience be varied; their individual experiences giving them unique insights, which may be taken together to form a varied, genuine, and hopefully more complete picture—if not always a perfectly objective or balanced one when considered in isolation.

Indeed, I argue that because the concept of objective truth is fundamentally singular, it necessitates either ignoring or invalidating contrary experiences and ideas and creates a hierarchy of perspectives, which cannot reflect the varying extents to which those perspectives are experienced as ‘true’ by real and diverse people. Perhaps, the best way of ‘doing research’ is to give up trying to be the voice of authority on a subject—the author of the seminal work—and, instead, to each stand behind our own voices and position ourselves in conversation with one another. By finding value in the combination of unique and varied accounts, we might create a multiple exposure image of the past that approaches its true complexity and foster an academic environment that prizes and encourages its own diversity.
Chapter 2

Royal and Divine Identities in Flux: Amarna’s Changing Conceptions of Deity and Kingship, Gender and Family

2.1 An Introduction to Amarna Art

The art produced under Akhenaten, from around Year 4 onward, stands out from that produced in any other era of Egyptian history. It was a sustained and intentional departure from an artistic canon and mode of representation, whose core elements had preceded Akhenaten by over a millennium. The description of both a Chief Sculptor, Bak, and a Chief Builder, Maanakhtef, as “disciple[s] whom his Person instructed”\(^{414}\) is often considered evidence that Akhenaten himself played as great a role in Amarna’s artistic and architectural innovation as in its theological innovation.\(^ {415}\) Certainly, the three are closely entwined. Yet, even if Akhenaten’s personal direction in these domains was exaggerated,\(^ {416}\) his approval was necessary to standardise the dramatic changes made to his portrait and those of his family, allowing us to interpret Amarna art as reflecting Akhenaten’s interests.

For the artists themselves—not least of all, Bak, whose father had also been Chief Sculptor in his time—it is easy to envision a creative environment awash in potent tensions between emulation and innovation, stability and change. Later in Akhenaten’s reign, the most


\(^{415}\) Aldred 1951, 25; Smith 1998, 170-1; Freed, Markowitz, and D’Auria 1999, 128; Málek 1999, 266; Van Dijk 2000, 272; Mackowiak 2007, 7; Dodson 2014, 92; Hartwig 2015, 46.

\(^{416}\) Krauss 1986, 40-2; Baines 1994, 84-5.
extreme forms of the royal portrait softened in a manner often deemed ‘naturalistic’.\textsuperscript{417} Phyllis Pray Bober imagined a cohort of artists “bask[ing] in the relaxation of those set rules of representation” to which they had been accustomed.\textsuperscript{418} However, we cannot assume that this was a unanimous or uncomplicated response to the creation of art that no longer adhered to prior standards of excellence and appropriateness. Anxiety regarding the deviation from tradition—both religious and artistic—likely tempered the joy of creativity and vice versa. After Akhenaten’s death, as Atenism lost traction, the motivation for continued work in this style vanished, leaving a strong influence on the art of Tutankhamun but much less in subsequent periods.\textsuperscript{419} In the face of renewed social and political instability, a return to tradition must have seemed as wise in ‘the arts’ as in religion.

That said, although the differences between Amarna art and earlier New Kingdom art are striking, it was a series of continuities between the two that enabled Egyptian viewers to comprehend the new material. As ever in Egypt, Amarna ‘art’ was not only—or even primarily—aesthetic in nature.\textsuperscript{420} It was also functional, symbolic, conceptual, religious, and magically effective or performative.\textsuperscript{421} For images to be correctly ‘read’ by viewers and for them to perform their intended functions, they needed to be understandable in terms of pre-established Egyptian methods for visually encoding meaning. The organisation of

\textsuperscript{417} Smith 1960, 111; Breckenridge 1968, 52; Müller and Settgast 1976, 12; Baines 1994, 85; Smith 1998, 192; Van Dijk 2000, 272; Teeter 2015, 340.

\textsuperscript{418} Bober 1999, 37.

\textsuperscript{419} Smith 1960, 112; Baines 1994, 85; Molyneaux 1997, 114; Olivier 2008, 81; Brier and Hobbs 2009, 33; Shih 2009, 52; el-Saddik 2010, 256; Teeter 2015, 341.

\textsuperscript{420} Spanel 1988, 29.

\textsuperscript{421} Fazzini 1975, xxii; Simpson 1982, 266-7; Málek 1999, 22; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999, 153-4; Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 23; Étienne 2006, 96-7; Hawass 2009, 91; Szpakowska 2012, 27; David 2014, 84; Teeter 2015, 328.
complex images into ‘registers’ continued,\(^\text{422}\) as did the diagrammatic representation of objects, figures, and spaces from multiple perspectives,\(^\text{423}\) the use of size to indicate relative importance (hierarchical scale),\(^\text{424}\) a preoccupation with compositional balance,\(^\text{425}\) and the use of long-historied motifs such as the ‘smiting scene’,\(^\text{426}\) whose established meanings were divisible from association with the rejected pantheon. Large scale painting and relief continued to decorate palaces, temples, and tombs, and appeared less commonly in private houses. Their core themes, although reoriented toward Atenism, remained the elevation of the king and the god(s), now supplemented by Akhenaten’s immediate family.

Many of the greatest ‘novelties’ of Amarna art extended pre-existing Eighteenth Dynasty trends. Amenhotep III’s royal portrait, in particular, had undergone regular change and experimentation,\(^\text{427}\) which must have influenced his son’s understanding of art’s capacity to propagandise meaningful information about its subject. Amarna art is unique but not without context. A key change was that, because Akhenaten’s chief deity was conceived as sunlight itself, it could not be represented in the same fashion as Egypt’s prior deities. This forced the abandonment or reinterpretation of previously omnipresent scenes, as well as the development of new ones,\(^\text{428}\) many of which foregrounded the daily activities of the

\(^{422}\) Engelbach 1961, 158; Fazzini 1973, 302; Robins 1993b, 17-9, 48-9; Hawass 2009, 102, 106; el-Saddik 2010, 265.

\(^{423}\) This is sometimes viewed as ‘lacking perspective’. The object or person is depicted, not as encountered in the moment from a single angle, but rather with all its important components recorded, even those that could not be realistically viewed from a single point. See: Capart 1923, 148; Aldred 1951, 28; Bakir 1967, 161; Fazzini 1973, 302; Fazzini 1975, xxviii, 65; Baines and Málek 1980, 57-8, 60; Robins 1993b, 11-5; Spanel 1988, 9; Quirke and Spencer 1992, 150; Bober 1999, 32; Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 21; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 194-5; Hawass 2009, 102; Laboury 2011, 4; Peck 2014, 363-5.

\(^{424}\) Baines and Málek 1980, 58-9; Robins 1994, 33; Spence 2007, 275; el-Saddik 2010, 265; Davis 2015, 272-3.

\(^{425}\) Robins 1993b, 50.

\(^{426}\) Aldred 1980, 173-4; Tyldesley 2018, 37.

\(^{427}\) Johnson 1998, 80; Manley 2017, 220.

royal family in their new-built city, rather than interactions with the deity in a cosmic or eternal space.\textsuperscript{429} This emphasis on the royal family may be considered a deliberate strategy for filling the artistic void left by the old gods with subjects more versatile and relatable than the Aten.\textsuperscript{430} What is perhaps more complicated to explain is the change to royal bodies during the Amarna Period. How, for example, do we determine what was meant and understood by the thinning and lengthening of the royal face, the emphasis on the hips, thighs, and buttocks, the fullness of the lips, the inclusion of fat folds and bulging stomachs,\textsuperscript{431} revisions to established grids for human proportions,\textsuperscript{432} or the oft-cited ‘androgyne’ or ‘feminisation’ of Akhenaten?\textsuperscript{433} Gender, fat, and bodies in general have such complexly and variably constructed meanings, after all.

In this chapter, I argue that changes to the royal portrait expressed changes to the publically projected identities of Akhenaten and his family, particularly as they related to new conceptions of kingship, deity, and gender, informed by Atenism. I interpret the increased artistic focus on the royal family as both related to the mythology of the new religion and projecting a public model of ideal gender and kinship relations, which might inform us about contemporary values at Akhenaten’s capital.

\textsuperscript{429} Málek 1999, 261-2, 270.
\textsuperscript{431} Robins 1993b, 45; Vassiliki 1995, 62; Jørgensen 2005, 23; Bard 2008, 222; Brier and Hobbs 2009, 33; el-Saddik 2010, 256; Ashton 2016, 177. Ertman (2003, 212) notes that, while fat folds had previously appeared in non-royal portraits, their inclusion in the images of kings and queens was novel to Amarna.
\textsuperscript{432} Robins 1993b, 46-7; Málek 1999, 271; Jørgensen 2005, 94-101; el-Saddik 2010, 165.
2.2 Mother and Father of All That He Makes

As the apparent impetus for Amarna’s artistic innovation, it seems logical to begin with the Aten himself. Or should we say ‘itself’? Although the notional ‘father’ of Akhenaten, the Aten’s image is deliberately non-sexed: a sun disk with extended rays ending in human hands (Fig. 2.1). Earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut had legitimised her kingship using a divine conception narrative, which centred upon Amun’s literal, sexual impregnation of her mother. So, there can be no doubt that the sexless aniconism of Akhenaten’s divine father was an equally deliberate choice. Amarna texts define the Aten as a fundamentally lonesome creator, who “beg[at] himself day by day” and “constructed himself with his own two hands.” Thus, while Akhenaten promoted himself as the god’s “beloved son” and “child,” the Aten embodied a notion of fatherhood that was far removed from the physical fatherhood Amun had embodied for Hatshepsut: an unrelatable, asexual fatherhood, equally inapplicable to the experiences of Egyptian families.

Where Amun played only the male role in Hatshepsut’s conception, “impos[ing] his desire upon [Queen Ahmose],” the Aten was both “mother and father of all that [he made],” “mother of mothers and father of fathers,” and encapsulated both male and female creativities equally. In this section, I consider two potential or perhaps partial

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436 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 109). See also, for example, the inscriptions from the Royal Tomb at Amarna (trans. Murnane 1995, 93).
437 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane, 110).
439 Text from an inscription of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri (trans. Breasted 1906, 80).
interpretations of the Aten’s nature. Firstly: the Aten as a deliberately sexless but potentially male-gendered being, exemplified by the ‘sun disk’ symbol and the identification as Akhenaten’s ‘father’; and, secondly: the Aten as a fundamentally dual-gendered mother- and-father god, which is the impression received from the textual sources. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the Aten using both male and neutral pronouns (he/it), having found that neither feels consistently appropriate when used exclusively. Nowhere do I use male pronouns with the intention of stating that the Aten’s nature is solely or even primarily male, in contrast with authors such as Aldred, who maintain that, “while he is sometimes regarded as the mother and father of mankind, [the Aten] remains a distinctly male concept.”\textsuperscript{442}

It is often argued that the sun disk itself is not the object of Atenist worship.\textsuperscript{443} Rather, the disk is a hieroglyph, signifying the life-giving sunlight, with its extended arms or rays reflecting the belief that all life and creation came from within Aten and emanated outward from it.\textsuperscript{444} This assertion is supported by an early inscription from Karnak, in which Akhenaten juxtaposes the endurance of the immaterial Aten against the gradual decay of the cult statues and temples of other deities. “Look, I am speaking that I might inform [you concerning] the form of the gods,” Akhenaten announces; “I know [their (?)] temples [and I am versed in] the writings, (namely) the inventories of their primeval bodies [and I have beheld them] as they cease, one after the other, (whether) consisting of any sort of precious stone... [except for the god who begat] himself by himself, no one knowing the

\textsuperscript{442} Aldred 1978, 57.  
\textsuperscript{443} Arnold 1996, 4; Hornung 1999, 12; Tyldesley 1998, 73; Shih 2009, 49-50; Goldwasser 2010, 159; Tyldesley 2018, 11.  
\textsuperscript{444} Zhao 2016, 4.
That is, in contrast to other deities, who occupied cult statues, requiring maintenance and ritual care, the Aten was conceived from the outset as a different kind of deity, with “no craft knowing him” and therefore no cult statue capable of perishing. Instead, the Aten maintained an inescapable and enduring presence in the physical world: visible to all but knowable only to Akhenaten. He was distant in the heavens, yet his heat and light were felt on earth, making him paradoxically “far (yet) near.”

Although the Aten’s hands provided a visual means of illustrating his interactions with humankind, this was sparingly utilised. His place was at the upper centre of any given image or, otherwise, directly above the royal family, wherever they appeared. Thus, while Aten’s radiating hands might cover an offering or extend an ankh toward a royal nose (Fig. 2.2), this was the extent of the god’s visible activity. At best, his rays might evoke the sensation of being touched by the sun on a hot day. Yet, his being was fundamentally symbolic, abstract, and thereby distant. At times, the sun disk’s static nature reduces the god to a decorative motif, crowning a scene whose participants may not register its presence at all. This distance—although surely not endearing to the people—was essential to the Aten’s character, as presumably devised by the king. It allowed Akhenaten and Nefertiti to act as the sole mediators between the god and humankind. Prayers were directed to the Aten via the royal couple, while cult stelae found in domestic contexts foregrounded the familial

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447 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 115). See also, from the same tomb (trans. Murnane 1995, 113): “For although you are far away, your rays are upon the earth and you are perceived.”
449 Tyldesley 1998, 75; Montserrat 2000, 23; Shih 2009, 52.
450 Málek 1999, 266; Cashman 2006, 150.
relations between Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters, beneath the generic ‘stamp’ of the deity.\footnote{451 Stevens 2004, 107; Olivier 2008, 78; Spence 2015, 309.} That Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and occasionally also Akhenaten’s mother, Tiye, could receive prayers on the Aten’s behalf is sometimes considered evidence of their complete or partial deification within Atenist theology.

This imposed separation between the Aten and his subjects may explain why Atenism failed to outlast Akhenaten’s reign,\footnote{452 Shih 2009, 52.} particularly in the context of an era otherwise characterised by increasing public access to divinity, with non-royal offerings to Osiris common in New Kingdom mortuary art. At least for modern viewers—and perhaps also for viewers in the past—Amarna art’s greatest appeal is in its intimate visions of royal family life (see Chapter 2.5). As the major subjects of these images died, Akhenaten’s successors faced a difficult choice. They could either follow Akhenaten’s lead and fill the representational void with similar scenes of themselves and their families or they could revive the canon of scenes associated with Egypt’s traditional deities. In light of millennia of artistic and religious precedent, the latter may have seemed the simpler, safer option. Importantly for a fledgling king, it could also be framed as a return to ma’at. So, it is unsurprising that the young Tutankhaten took this path, restoring the royal court to Thebes and adopting the name Tutankhamun to mark his revival of Amun’s divine supremacy.

The Aten’s distance was probably compounded by its lack of a three-dimensional form. Not only was there no cult statue of the god—his sanctuary uniquely empty and open-air—there were also no figures that could be held in the hand, establishing a physical connection
between worshipper and worshipped. By contrast, personal religious items depicting other deities abound in Amarna’s private houses and burials, including numerous Bes and Taweret amulets and figures.453 Both deities were associated with highly personal, concrete interests, such as protection of the home and pregnant women.454 Anna Stevens has documented private religious items at Amarna in great detail, noting “over 500 provenanced items of jewellery bearing Bes-images” (Fig. 2.3) and 106 Taweret pendants (Fig. 2.4).455 ‘Fertility figurines’ featuring nude women were also common, numbering over 200 at Amarna, many of which were either sculpted upon beds or intended to rest upon separate model beds (Fig. 2.5).456 The Aten’s cartouches occasionally appeared in jewellery or upon ostraca but were far less common subjects than Egypt’s traditional gods and pre-existing magical symbols such as the wedjat eye.457 No three-dimensional images of the Aten survive, if they ever existed. Consequently, jewellery, figures, and other household items featuring the traditional gods continued to be implicated in the daily lives and experiences of Amarna’s population in ways that the Aten’s image could not.

Moreover, while Aten is textually designated both creator and ‘father’, inculcating notions of masculine fertility and sexual reproduction, sex and sexuality are not so vital to his nature as they were to Egypt’s old gods, whose spouses, consorts, and offspring were of great mythological concern. Previously, the iconography of even sole creators such as Atum, who created life via masturbation and self-impregnation458 exhibited and even emphasised ‘sex’

453 Brewer and Teeter 2007, 105.
457 Stevens 2006, 30.
attributes, such as the phallus, breasts, and pubic triangle,\footnote{In the case of Atum, the hand into which he masturbates is also metaphorically female.} or suggested a gendered identity through clothing and ornamentation.\footnote{David 2014, 81.} These sexed and/or gendered attributes needed not translate to a simple binary sex and, in fact, dual or ambiguous sex was a recurring feature of creators such as Hapi, whose at least partially male-coded form and dress were offset by the inclusion of breasts, sometimes leaking fluid from the nipples.\footnote{Quirke and Spencer 1992, 79; Pinch 2002, 136; Williams 2011, 155-6, 183; Graves-Brown 2015, 4.} The combination of male and female characteristics within a single form gave a deity full creative power as an individual,\footnote{Robins 1993b, 17; Williams 2011, 168-9; Bonanno 2016, 120.} such that Lana Troy has argued, “the origin of all life, the source of both creators and creation, was not asexual, nor presexual, but androgynous, incorporating both genders equally.”\footnote{Troy 2001, 239.} Even Khnum, whose creative aspect was relatively non-sexual, executed his creative act in a physically evocative way: modelling human figures on a potter’s wheel. His ram’s head was heavily associated with male sexuality, while his consort, Heket, who breathed life into his creations and nursed them,\footnote{Gad 2008, 88.} provided an after-the-fact female contribution to his creative act.\footnote{Hani 2011, 10.}

While these deities frequently collaborated, each with their own roles and often in male-female pairs, the Aten’s creativity is far more ambiguous. Amarna texts decree him both his own creator and the creator of all else that exists. Yet, no other Egyptian deity so determinedly defies any attempt to attribute a physical sex: singular, dual, or otherwise. Nowhere is the Aten’s creative process truly explicated, whether superficially literal, like Amun’s impregnation of Queen Ahmose, or metaphorical, like Khnum’s sculpting bodies
from clay. Still, while the sun disk itself is neither visibly sexed nor gendered, I argue that the Aten’s roles, actions, and titles are gendered and not uniformly so. Like gods such as Khnum, who created in collaboration with female consorts, and gods such as Hapi, whose iconography incorporated both male and female elements, the Aten’s creativity required both male and female input. As “the one who makes all that exists,” his nature necessarily encapsulated all of the ‘female’ and ‘male’, ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, elements that he reproduced on earth. Nothing existed without deriving from Aten.

This duality, by which the Aten became “mother and father of all that [he] make[s],” is well expressed in the excerpt from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten quoted below. Therein, we learn that not only did Aten provide the initial male creative force, as the one “who brings into being foetuses in women,” he was also the feminine force responsible for “nurs[ing] and comforting the child in the womb and the impetus for birth, making the chick’s “appointed time for him, so that he may break himself out of the egg, in a metaphor for the onset of labour. In opening the child’s mouth and “mak[ing] what he needs,” the Aten was also credited with the production of breast milk, furthering nursing imagery found elsewhere at Amarna: the Aten “nurse[d] himself” after his self-creation and he “nurse[s] every meadow when [he] shine[s].” The entire creative process thus fell within the

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468 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
469 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
470 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
471 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
473 Williams 2011, 169.
domain of Aten, who appropriated these responsibilities from Egypt’s prior cohort of variously sexed and gendered deities.

(O you) who brings into being foetuses in women,
Who makes fluid in people,
Who gives life to the son in his mother’s womb, and calms him by stopping his tears;
Nurse in the womb, who gives breath to animate all he makes
When it descends from the womb to breathe on the day it is born—
You open his mouth completely and make what he needs.
When the chick is in the egg, speaking in the shell,
You give him breath within it to cause him to live;
And when you have made his appointed time for him, so that he may break himself out of the egg,
He comes out of the egg to speak at his appointed time and goes on his two legs when he comes out of it. ⁴⁷⁴

This should be understood as a reimagining of existing notions of creation and parenthood, rather than a completely new invention. It places the Aten in the role of all other deities, male and female, in order to “render them superfluous.” ⁴⁷⁵ This is understandable too. Whatever the motivation of Akhenaten’s reforms—whether a reshuffling of power or serious theological meditation—the phenomena religion was required to explain and enact remained the same. Reallocating these important male- and female-coded duties to the Aten ensured the maintenance of the Egyptian order and the continual revivification of the natural world.

⁴⁷⁴ Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 113-6).
⁴⁷⁵ Málek 1999, 263.
In this sense, the Aten’s lack of physical form should not be considered limiting. Rather, it is an expression of the limitlessness by which Aten is defined. In the Amarna texts we encounter a god so transcendent and all-encompassing that a single male, female, or dual-sexed image of the customary type would have been insufficient to visually express his unique identity: embodying all possible outcomes of life, as its sole creator. This was not only a revolution in the representation and conception of deity. Its effects are seen in the representation of gender and gender relations throughout the Amarna population, beginning with the royal family and Akhenaten himself.
2.3 Regality, Divinity, and Gender Duality in Akhenaten’s Royal Portrait

I’m standing outside a lecture theatre at the University of Sydney, taking a tea-and-cake break from the National Archaeology Student Conference in August 2018. One gentleman asks me cheerfully what I’ll be presenting on. My paper is titled ‘Why are we still pathologising Akhenaten?’ and when the man hears it, he scoffs. “Akhenaten?” he repeats. “Wasn’t he a bit of a poof?” He asks me why I don’t write on a real pharaoh: a Thutmose or a Ramesses.

Casual homophobia aside, my colleague in Sydney was only repeating an understanding of Akhenaten that is deeply entrenched within the literature. Akhenaten’s royal portrait is famously ‘effeminate’ (see Figs. 2.6—2.8) and this has impacted the scholarship surrounding him, both implicitly and explicitly. Interpretations diverge along two main lines: 1) the pathological, which assumes that Akhenaten’s portrait realistically records some genetic abnormality, hormonal imbalance, or psychological condition, and 2) the ideological, which assumes that Akhenaten’s portrait was intentionally constructed to communicate some component(s) of his identity as king. I argue that not only do ideological interpretations cohere best with our understanding of the nature and functions of Egyptian portraiture (see Chapter 1.2) and of Akhenaten’s pharaonic persona, but also that unfounded pathological and psychological interpretations of his portrait can have serious unintended consequences. They impact the character of the histories we write about this king and, as my encounter outside the lecture theatre will attest, the character of our audience’s engagement with those histories. As far as I noticed, the gentleman who derided Akhenaten as a ‘poof’ did not attend my presentation.
Attempts to pathologise Akhenaten’s physiognomy long predate the discovery of human remains potentially identifiable as his: a KV55 mummy, also frequently identified as Smenkhkare,\textsuperscript{476} whose figure recent investigations do not consider congruent with Akhenaten’s portraits.\textsuperscript{477} Medical doctors and historians alike have proposed diagnoses solely on the basis of sculpture and relief. This is concerning, because the ability to accurately diagnose illness from art relies upon an artistic system that is realistic in all respects, which is far from the case in ancient Egypt.\textsuperscript{478} Egyptian two-dimensional art, in particular, is fundamentally non-realistic: conceptual, rather than perceptual.\textsuperscript{479} Even those who most fiercely advocate for the accuracy of Akhenaten’s portrait seem to self-consciously acknowledge this when they temper their claims of Amarna “naturalism” or “realism” with qualifiers such as ‘exaggerated’ or ‘distorted’.\textsuperscript{480} This begs the question: can the caricature implied by notions of exaggerated realism ever constitute appropriate grounds for diagnosis? If so, where can we reliably seek that kernel of truth we assume underpins the images we admit are too extreme to be believed? These questions are rarely addressed by those advancing diagnoses of the heretic king; they prefer to argue amongst themselves about the specific diagnoses to be applied. I don’t have the scope to consider

\textsuperscript{476} For example: Dunand and Lichtenberg 2006, 193.
\textsuperscript{477} Hawass et al 2010, 644; Kozloff 2012, 243; Hawass and Saleem 2016, 84, 125, 249.
\textsuperscript{478} Alfaro-Martinez 2014, 387. Even then, I challenge you to send a realistic drawing of yourself to a doctor and receive any response other than, “You’re really going to need to come in if you want a diagnosis…”
\textsuperscript{479} Arnold 1996, 55.
\textsuperscript{481} Pfeiffer 1963, 59; Leonard 1966, 93, 112, 114-6, 122; Samson 1973, 47, 49; Van Duyn 1974, 137; Fazzini 1975, 65; Bothmer 1979, 109; Montserrat 2000, 13, 44-7; Ruppert 2000, 35, 47-8; Spieser and Sprumont 2004, 170; el-Shahawy and Atiya 2005, 199; Mackowiak 2007, 10; Bard 2008, 222; Retief and Cilliers 2011, 628; Papacostas 2015, 65; Zhao 2016, 1.
\textsuperscript{482} For example: Drioton 1950, 89; Risse 1971, 16; Hoepli 1973, 8; Van Dijk 2000, 272; Eshraghian and Loeys 2012, 662.
these individually in this chapter, so I will allow their proponents to continue to rebut one another, while I target the methodology as a whole.

The difficulty with the argument that Amarna art was uniquely naturalistic or realistic and that *therefore* Akhenaten’s portrait can also be considered such is twofold.\(^{483}\) Firstly, these characterisations of Amarna art stem, at least in part, from interpretations of Akhenaten’s portrait and therefore cannot also provide evidence for those interpretations.\(^{484}\) Secondly and crucially, when we do talk about ‘naturalism’ or ‘realism’ in Amarna art, we are not talking about absolutes. There are certainly naturalistic elements in Amarna art—for example, an increased interest in manipulating space to express ongoing movement in relief\(^ {485}\)—and there are moments of (apparent) realism too—as in a number of model heads from the Workshop of Thutmose (Figs. 2.9—2.14, among others)\(^ {486}\) but Amarna art remains fundamentally conceptual and formulaic. The essential functions of the royal portrait and the cultural infrastructure for visually encoding meaning are the same under Akhenaten as in previous periods. We cannot assume that because Akhenaten’s portrait diverges from pre-existing standards, it must realistically reflect his individual physiognomy.\(^ {487}\) Within the broader context of millennia of Egyptian artistic production, it is far more likely that one non-realistic standardised form was here replaced by another, adapted to convey a different message. The alternative—that Akhenaten cultivated a brand new era of artistic

\(^{483}\) A particularly clear example of this argument can be found in Eshraghian and Loeys 2012, 662.

\(^{484}\) The logic is circular: Akhenaten’s portrait is realistic, therefore Amarna art is realistic; Amarna art is realistic, therefore Akhenaten’s portrait is realistic.

\(^{485}\) Zhao 2016, 5.

\(^{486}\) Murray 1930, 140-1; Scharff 1937, 181; Breckenridge 1968, 61; Fazzini 1973, 300; Freed 1999, 125-6; Sweeney 2004, 79. Although see Chapter 1.2 on the problem of assuming physiognomic likeness in ancient portraits. Remember, too, that alongside the apparently ‘realistic’ portrait heads from the Workshop of Thutmose, we find numerous clearly generic or idealised portrait heads; both ‘types’ co-exist and are equally characteristic of Amarna art. Moreover, the division between the two is not always clear or complete.

‘truth’ or “sincerity”\textsuperscript{488} so that he could intentionally publicise some physical weakness or deformity—makes little sense in the New Kingdom Egyptian context, which had already seen royal portraits undergo extreme non-realistic development as the needs of specific monarchs changed.\textsuperscript{489}

In addition to countless hormonal and genetic disorders, Akhenaten’s peculiar figure has been attributed to a kind of ‘psychological realism’, variably defining him as effeminate, artistic, poetic, weak, homosexual, narcissistic, autistic, eccentric, and even insane.\textsuperscript{490} Although this approach is decreasingly common—at least, as explicitly expressed—the resulting judgments are embedded in the scholarship and continue to pervade our histories. “Physically weak and unprepossessing, with a frail, effeminate body and an emaciated, lantern-jawed face, the new king had in him nothing of either the soldier or the statesman,”\textsuperscript{491} wrote William Hayes in 1959: equating the female-coded characteristics of Akhenaten’s portrait with a disinclination for traditionally male-coded activities. Gaston Maspero’s description of a seated statuette of Akhenaten (\textbf{Fig. 2.15}), quoted below, similarly exemplifies how subjective impressions of “the character of the person”\textsuperscript{492} can influence the interpretation of their images and vice versa. By comparing Akhenaten’s portrait with those of his predecessors, Maspero valorises those appropriately masculine

\textsuperscript{488} Drioton 1950, 89.
\textsuperscript{489} See the examples of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III given in \textbf{Chapter 1.2}.
\textsuperscript{490} Hayes 1959, 280; Velikovsky 1960, 201; Paulshock 1980, 160; Bentley 1992, 7-8; Tyldesley 1999, 4; Chadwick 2005, 186; Montserrat 2000, 168; Braverman, Redford, and Mackowiak 2009, 556; Papacostas 2015, 64.
\textsuperscript{491} Hayes 1959, 280.
\textsuperscript{492} Maspero 1913, 119-21.
rulers, while characterising the reign of the “weak and good-natured,” unduly feminine Akhenaten as a historical decline.

The pharaohs are usually seated with the head erect, the bust firm, in a posture of stiff dignity which did not lack grandeur. Here the royal stiffness has almost wholly disappeared. The head leans slightly forward, the bust sinks down, it seems as if the body, powerless to hold itself up, is going to slip off the seat; the abandon of the posture is in entire harmony with the character of the person. The back is slightly rounded, the hips are larger than are suitable for a man, the belly and chest inflated; the breasts are round like those of a woman, the puffed-out torso is wrinkled in folds of fat, the face is weak and good-natured. In all that, the artist has set aside the aesthetic rules usual in Egypt.

In my view, both of these interpretations of Akhenaten’s physiognomy, the pathological and the psychological, fall down in their assumption that his peculiar figure—and its reflections and variations in the bodies of Nefertiti and their daughters—was intended to accurately reflect any characteristic of Akhenaten, the man: whether illness or personality trait. I argue, instead, that Akhenaten’s body reflected changing conceptions of his identity as king, perhaps even as deity. It is an intentionally constructed and disseminated portrait, which propagandised Akhenaten and his family’s likeness to the Aten, as mother and father of mankind.

The likeness between Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s portraits is itself fundamentally non-realistic. It extends a pre-existing trend for the portraits of wives to mirror their husbands’ by including the body within this likeness. Prominent female-coded traits—a small waist,

493 Maspero 1913, 119-21.
494 Maspero 1913, 119-21.
large thighs, a heavy stomach and often chest—evoked a rotund, healthy sexuality and creative potential. Yet, even for Nefertiti, this potential was only implied and not actively displayed. Nowhere do we find genuinely realistic portraits of Nefertiti, throughout the stages of her six pregnancies and only rarely does she appear with features suggesting advancing age or a post-partum body. The princesses appear as miniature adults with the same exaggeratedly womanly figures from a young age, as was usual in Egyptian art but was certainly not ‘realistic’.\(^{495}\) Thus, while the royal family’s portraits do change from time-to-time and context-to-context, they do not exhibit the progressive chronological changes that we might expect of a radically realistic new art style. We must therefore assume that even where Amarna’s royal portraits were experimental and multiple, they too were carefully constructed ideals, with functions and implications beyond the passive reflection of momentary realities and physiognomic idiosyncrasies.

A sculptor’s trial piece from Amarna immortalises a royal face in profile (Fig. 2.16). The neck is slender with tendons defined and the frontally-oriented shoulders are traversed by prominent clavicles. Two schematic fat folds cross the upper neck and the chin is bulbous, evoking an inescapable ‘Amarna style’. The British Museum notes that this figure’s ‘Nubian wig’ and uraeus could identify them as either Akhenaten or Nefertiti but that Akhenaten is more likely.\(^{496}\) Certainly, the rounded chin and distinct clavicles are commonly associated with Akhenaten and the absence of fabric detailed at either shoulder rules out any garment, which might preference Nefertiti as subject. However, none of these indicators are

\(^{495}\) Cf. Suggested diagnoses of isosexual precocity. See: Braverman, Redford, and Mackowiak 2009, 558; Seshadri 2012, 430.

conclusive tests. A dress may not have been detailed because it was not the focus of this practice piece, which cuts off below the shoulders. The figure’s slenderness and facial physiognomy cohere just as well with images of Nefertiti as those of Akhenaten and, in larger compositions, the royal couple’s bodies are equally similar. This begs the question: how can we definitively distinguish queen from king without inscriptive evidence or distinctive regalia? And what does it mean if this problem arises more frequently under Akhenaten than any other king? I believe that, in Amarna art, the gender distinction between king and queen was intentionally reduced, with the portraits of both referring to a common model. This model was rooted in the iconography of fertility and the mythologisation of the royal couple as semi-divine twins, children of the divine mother-and-father, Aten. It may therefore be productively read as expressing a uniquely Atenist royal identity.

When considering fragmentary images, lacking clear inscriptive or iconographic markers of kingship or queenship, the royal subject is usually identified by an assumption that the most stylised and extreme images will represent Akhenaten, rather than Nefertiti. For example, the relief in Figure 2.17 is taken to represent Akhenaten, despite being truncated at the shoulders and preserving only half of the crown, which, in its damaged state, resembles both Akhenaten’s khepresh and Nefertiti’s flat-topped crown. The bulging chin and plump limbs, the pronounced nasolabial fold, pierced ears, narrow almond eyes, and creased neck are all features of Akhenaten’s most stylised portraits and, while they are not individually exclusive to him, their combination and exaggeration are taken to corroborate this identification. Still, we would have to revise our identification if we uncovered a missing fragment of the same relief, to be attached at right, which revealed a larger,
possibly more exaggerated royal figure preceding this one; the positioning of actors within the scene is perhaps the most conclusive means of identification. Another trial piece (Fig. 2.18) and a fragmented, poorly defined relief, possibly a mould for producing inlays (Fig. 2.19), appear to depict the same king, with his swollen lips and chin, yet suffer the same interpretive uncertainties.

Three-dimensional representations of Akhenaten endow him with a characteristically long face and nose and the same narrow, slanted eyes. These features could be executed particularly saliently in large-scale statuary, which enabled detailed rendering of facial and bodily contours, as well as a fully articulated frontal view unavailable to relief or painting. The Karnak colossus given in Figures 2.20—2.21 accentuates the king’s plump lips, upturned in a closed-mouthed smile, with nasolabial creases similar to those clearest in Figure 2.17. The rounded chin, consistent with the two-dimensional images above, is exaggerated further in three dimensions, particularly from the frontal view, by a pronounced narrowing of the face beneath the cheekbones. Several markers of kingship, as opposed to queenship, confirm the identification of this colossus: the nemes, the false beard, and the crook and flail, which cross the chest in typical ‘Osiride’ fashion. This figure can only be that of a king and the facial features allow it to be unambiguously read as Akhenaten.

Where Akhenaten and Nefertiti appear side by side, there is no ambiguity in their identification. Nor should this surprise us. Akhenaten is not, after all, the anti-Hatshepsut, intentionally representing his pharaonic persona as a female one. The kingship is still a male

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497 Hawass 2010, 150.
prerogative, to be filled by one who presents, at least primarily, as a man. Still, we cannot ignore that Akhenaten’s figure has been deliberately either (a) feminised—if we regard the sculptor’s aim as being to create a more female-presenting portrait, (b) androgynised—if we regard the sculptor’s aim as being sexual ambiguity, or (c) dual-sexed—if we regard the sculptor’s aim as being to capture both maleness and femaleness within the royal portrait. Akhenaten’s figure approaches Nefertiti’s but the two are not identified. As in previous periods, the size and positioning of figures coded information about their significance and relationships. In two dimensions, husbands preceded their wives, often but not always at a larger scale. An identification of Akhenaten-versus-Nefertiti, where the two appear together, can be made on these grounds. Certain activities are also more commonly associated with men than women and vice versa, whether these gender distinctions were genuine or artistic convention only.\footnote{498} The Amarna princesses frequently appear with sistra, while their parents offer to Aten. Where Nefertiti does the same, this female-coded ritual instrument, traditionally associated with Hathor, would easily distinguish her from Akhenaten. More often, however, she appears alongside Akhenaten, presenting offerings that resemble or equal his.

Perhaps this too can be read as a narrowing of the gap between Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s roles, culminating in Nefertiti’s unique appearance as a smiting queen. Differentiating king from queen was clearly not a primary goal of Akhenaten’s artistic innovations. Rather, Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s similar portraits and often similar activities propagandised their relationship to one another, their mutual dissimilarity from preceding rulers, and their

\footnote{498 See Bickel 2006, on this subject.}
relationship to Aten. This may cause us interpretive problems, worsened by the countless fragmentary images of these rulers.\textsuperscript{499} However, the Egyptian viewer, facing complete images of the royal couple in their original contexts, would have received a message of their similarity and complementarity, not complete identity. Although similar in form, the portraits of Akhenaten and Nefertiti remained cognitively recognisable via the inclusion of their usually distinct regalia and inscriptions or, at least, via their relative size and positioning within the composition.

The talatat block given in Figure 2.22 preserves one fragment of a larger scene, in which Akhenaten and Nefertiti presented offerings to the Aten. All that remains is the leftmost portion of one royal face—with nose and lips damaged and the back of the crown and chin missing—alongside three hands of the Aten, the offering being made, and an arc where the block cuts off at left. Due to the similarity of Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s portraits, it is often difficult to identify such a fragmentary subject more specifically than ‘Akhenaten or Nefertiti offering to the Aten’. Remnants of a crown and the Aten’s hands clearly indicate a royal figure but it is the flat top that differentiates Nefertiti’s blue crown most readily from Akhenaten’s and this detail is lost. Only by noticing the fragmentary curve at the far left and assuming that this curve represents the shoulder of a preceding figure, can we identify the subject as Nefertiti. Given the lack of anthropomorphic deities in Amarna royal art and the meticulousness of Egyptian adherence to hierarchical scale, it is impossible that it is Akhenaten who here stands behind another figure at a reduced scale. Analogous complete images from Amarna abound; for example, Figure 2.23.

\textsuperscript{499} A consequence of both targeted iconoclasm and the recycling of Amarna talatat blocks by later rulers.
In this image of the royal family at worship, the clothing, hairstyles, and crowns of the royal couple easily distinguish them, although both share similar facial and bodily physiognomies, occupy an identical stance, and dedicate similar offerings. Akhenaten wears his favoured khepresh, easily confused with Nefertiti’s flat-topped crown in fragmentary images such as Figure 2.22 but unambiguous where complete. Nefertiti wears an equally distinctive queenly crown, consisting of a sun disk, horns, and double plumes. Perhaps due to its Hathoric associations, this crown rarely appears at Amarna, with Nefertiti’s flat-topped crown providing a novel alternative, unique to her, yet curiously close in colour and form to Akhenaten’s khepresh.\textsuperscript{500} This similarity between the couple’s blue crowns was likely intentional, with Nefertiti’s crown “chosen”—even designed—“to match the khepresh so often worn by her husband.”\textsuperscript{501} Both also regularly adopted the more casual and gender-neutral ‘Nubian wig’. Indeed, the fragmentary royal figure wearing this wig in Figure 2.24 is ambiguous enough that the Cleveland Museum of Art covers its bases by providing two titles: the heading reads ‘Talatat: Portrait of Nefertiti’ but an ‘alternative title’ ‘Relief Portrait of Akhenaten’ appears below.\textsuperscript{502}

In Figure 2.23, Nefertiti’s long dress also distinguishes her clearly from Akhenaten, contrasting his asymmetrical knee-length kilt. Both garments are ‘sheer’ enough to define the parted legs, while Nefertiti’s also exhibits a defined pubic mound. The two princesses behind mirror her dress and form, while Akhenaten’s genitals are obscured, in line with

\textsuperscript{500} Samson 1973, 47; Ertman 1976, 64; Green 1992, 31; Hawass 2009, 49.
\textsuperscript{501} Aldred 1978, 57.
Egyptian decorum, the leading edge of his closest thigh extends across his pubic area to meet the farther one. In addition, while the royal couple’s facial features are similar in this image—plump lips, narrow eyes, large ears, jutting chin—as are their general body shapes, the king’s quite pronounced chest is shaped differently to Nefertiti’s. It slants outward and upward at an angle, rather than forming a rounded breast. The figures’ relative sizes convey both an internal familial hierarchy (father/husband > mother/wife > oldest to youngest children) and an external positional hierarchy (king > queen > oldest to youngest princesses), each of which includes a gendered component. There is no ambiguity in identifying these two adult figures as king and queen, male and female.

However, one of the greatest causes to dispute interpretations of Akhenaten’s figure as realistic is that it is so inconsistent. The talatat given in Figure 2.25 exemplifies Akhenaten’s figure at the male-coded end of the sexual spectrum. His body is composed of relatively straight lines and although his waist is thin and chest reasonably pronounced, it is again pointedly unrounded. Akhenaten’s back, too, runs almost completely straight down to the curve of his hip and the raised back of his kilt. The decorated balustrade given in Figure 2.26 provides a useful counterpoint. While the chest is still less rounded than Nefertiti’s, beside him, Akhenaten’s figure has acquired dramatic curves. Both king and queen occupy the same stance and share highly similar builds, with huge thighs and buttocks juxtaposed against spindly arms, calves, and waists. The curve at the base of Akhenaten’s stomach, emphasised by the raised back of his kilt, pointedly mirrors the curve of Nefertiti’s pubic mound, enhancing the visual parallel between the two without interfering with the

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503 Robins 1990, 46.
decorous representation of Akhenaten’s genitalia. The princess behind Nefertiti replicates the pattern at a reduced scale, so that the entire family coheres to more-or-less the same model. If Akhenaten’s portrait is deemed realistic and therefore pathological: which Akhenaten is the real one?

In each of these examples, Akhenaten’s kilt distinguishes him from Nefertiti, revealing the chest but masking the genitalia. Yet, while Nefertiti almost never wears such a kilt, Akhenaten repeatedly adopts long garments similar to Nefertiti’s. One example appears on a fragmentary household stela (Fig. 2.27). Here, the king sits at right, wearing the khepresh. One hand rests behind him on a cushioned seat, while the other is raised. By analogy with similar stelae, the completed image likely included Nefertiti seated opposite with one or more princesses (see Chapter 2.5). What is clear from this fragment is that Akhenaten wears a long, pleated garment, which we would certainly label a ‘dress’ if worn by Nefertiti. It is tied beneath the chest and covers the upper arms but opens over the stomach, as Nefertiti’s does in Figure 2.23. The question of how to represent male-coded genitalia in such a garment is bypassed by the king’s seated posture, with thighs obscuring the pubic area. A quartzite statue of Akhenaten, whose body is inscribed with Aten cartouches, clearly wears a similar garment, with incised pleats covering the chest, and a crook and flail confirming the pharaonic identification (Fig. 2.28). Only the torso remains and this garment does not appear to open at the front, perhaps because the figure was a standing one. Yet, it is a shame that we have been robbed of the opportunity to see how the problem of artistically

\[504\] But see Nefertiti’s smiting scenes, addressed below.
representing the king’s genitalia—and, more broadly, the Amarna tension between masculinity and femininity—was handled in this instance.

Sculptural representations of Akhenaten’s body vary as much as relief. At times, his figure is distinctly masculine, as in the limestone torso with Aten-cartouches given in Figure 2.29, with its carefully rendered pectoral and abdominal muscles. Figure 2.30 provides a variation on the same theme: another limestone torso with three sets of Aten-cartouches incised over the chest. However, in this example, the waist is slimmer, the stomach less muscular, and there is a greater contrast between the circumferences of the upper chest and waist. The chest is also more explicitly divided into separate and rounded ‘breasts’, a distinction emphasised by the contrastive placement of the cartouches: one just above each ‘breast’ and one centred below them, almost at the waist. This placement frames the feminised chest without obscuring it; cf. Figure 2.29, in which the cartouches are crowded over and between the relatively flat pectoral muscles. Perhaps this choice was made consciously, to avoid warping the cartouches by inscribing them over such a rounded surface. In the statuette already given in Figure 2.8, Akhenaten’s chest appears to refer even more explicitly to a feminine model. Their roundness and vertical separation rivals many images of the Amarna princesses, if not always Nefertiti (compare Figs. 2.31 and 2.32). This, combined with Akhenaten’s slender figure and exaggerated hips, gives this statuette such a feminine appearance that only the crown and kilt clearly identify its subject as king, rather than queen.

The canonical example of Akhenaten’s sexual ambiguity, however, is the piece known as the ‘asexual colossus’ (Fig. 2.6), which has sometimes been misidentified as representing
Nefertiti. What marks this particular colossus as “asexual” for Tyldesley, “hermaphroditic” for Trigger et al., “sexless” for Hartwig, and of “[sex] indeterminate” for Aldred is its nude appearance, which clearly defines neither male-coded genitalia nor female-coded breasts. The feminised figure with small waist and exaggerated hips, which are now-familiar components of Akhenaten’s royal portrait, are also key considerations. However, attributing ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ is a more complex process than it may appear, whether we are discussing living individuals, artistic representations, or human remains.

Regardless of how strong the concept of a sexual binary stands in a given society—and I would argue that, in Egypt’s divine and royal spheres, the concept was malleable—we receive our impressions of sex and gender based on an accumulation of culturally coded features (see Chapter 1.3). While we might try to ‘confirm’ sex by peering at the chest or the genitals, many more features play into our categorisations. Consciously or subconsciously, we take in a person’s height, length of limbs, adiposity, musculature, weight distribution, hair patterns, and facial physiognomy. Simultaneously received ‘gendered’ traits, such as posture, gesture, dress, coiffure, and ornamentation may confirm or confuse those interpretations. Ultimately, we expect to be able to attribute an absolute biological sex, which is more-or-less confirmed by culturally-contingent gender markers, even if this refers to a simplified understanding of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ that is rapidly becoming out of date. Where our immediate reception of an individual’s features as male- or female-coded

505 See: Harris 1977, 7-10; Vandersleyen 1984, 5-13; and, commenting: Robins 1993a, 29; Ashrafian 2012, 25.
506 Tyldesley 1999, pl. 10.
507 Trigger, Kemp, O’Connor, and Lloyd 1983, 221.
508 Hartwig 2015, 46.
509 Aldred 1951, 73.
is particularly inconsistent, many in our society react with bewilderment, even anger or
disgust. The same essential phenomenon that has led scholars to label Akhenaten’s portrait
“grotesque,”510 “bizarre,”511 or “deform[ed],”512 today puts transgender people at
disproportionate risk of harassment and violence.

The ambiguity of Akhenaten’s ‘asexual’513 colossus is not that it contains no male- or
female-coded sex or gender attributes; it is that those attributes don’t neatly cohere to our
expectations. The large hips, ‘hourglass’ shape, and loosely defined pubic mound are
female-coded, yet the flatter chest and narrow, unrounded face are male-coded. The
Osiride posture, false beard, and pharaonic regalia, too, code an inherently masculine
gender role, which seems to contradict the partial feminisation of the physical body. At the
same time, the arms held close to the body and thighs pressed together may give today’s
viewers a ‘feminine’ impression, when juxtaposed against the triumphant masculinity of a
striding statue. These sexed and gendered characteristics are as inescapable as they are
inconsistent; thus, the concept of ‘asexuality’ is misapplied. The colossus should be read as
inconsistently or dually sexed and gendered.

Osiride statues were a staple of Egyptian kings: bold architectural statements, usually
displayed outside temples, which propagandised royal power, immortality, and ties to

510 Terrace and Fischer 1970, 121; Spanel 1988, 23; Assmann 1990, 25; Brier and Hobbs 2009, 190; Hawass et
al 2010, 644 – amongst countless others. The descriptor is canonical within the literature on Amarna art.
511 Hoedl 1989, 202; Mackowiak 2007, 10; Braverman, Redford, and Mackowiak 2009, 557; Kozma 2010, 290;
Eshraghian and Loeys 2012, 661; Zanatta et al 2014, 63.
513 This term is problematic in itself, as ‘asexuality’ can also refer to 1) non-sexual reproduction and 2) a lack of
sexual attraction. The latter definition, in particular, is increasingly widespread. ‘Sexless’ is, at least, less
ambiguous.
divinity. The king stood tall, crowned, and usually endowed with the false beard, crook, and flail, as in Figure 2.6. The posing of the body with legs together and arms crossed over the chest implicated the iconography of the mummified dead and of Osiris, identifying the mortal ruler with the immortal god after death. Because the Osiride king was intended to be understood as wrapped for burial, his body was rarely defined in detail, typically occupying a smooth, standardised shape, exemplified by the Osiride statue of Amenhotep I given in Figure 2.33. Smaller scale *shabti* figures exhibit the same mummiform shape, even under Akhenaten (Figs. 2.34—2.35).\(^5\) In this context, what is strange about Akhenaten’s ‘asexual’ colossus is not that the genitalia are poorly defined, it is that they are defined and present as female. Akhenaten appears with a pubic triangle analogous to Nefertiti’s. Still, there is little reason to interpret this statue as genuinely and revolutionarily ‘nude’, rather than a traditional mummiform statue executed in a novel way.\(^6\) If I were to suggest one, it would be to further the implications of fertility embedded in the notion of a dual-sexed king, likened to a mother-and-father god.

One possible explanation for this unique experiment in the Osiride form is that, under Akhenaten, direct association with the rejected underworld god was no longer desirable—except perhaps in implying Akhenaten’s usurpation of Osiris’s roles. Traditional deities had vanished from royal art, creating a void increasingly filled by royal family members. Here, however, Akhenaten may have wished to retain the Osiride statue’s strong image of the larger-than-life eternal pharaoh, as well as the impact it contributed to temple architecture. Perhaps this encouraged the retention of the form with changes that weakened Osiride

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\(^5\) Spanel 1988, 89.

\(^6\) Cf. Quirke and Spencer (1992, 79), who describe this statue as “naked… [and] missing genitalia,” and Foster (1999, 107), who describes it as “nude but sexless.”
associations and emphasised Atenist ones. Further Akhenaten colossi from Karnak, all kilted rather than mummiform but retaining the pose with crook and flail, may represent a further step away from association with Osiris (Fig. 2.7). Like the ‘asexual’ colossus, each exhibits a figure that, particularly in the lower body, conveys an “unmistakably female look.”

Terrace and Fisher read these pointedly non-mummiform, kilted colossi as representing “the living image of [Akhenaten] as the Aten.”

As for the ‘asexual’ colossus: whether or not we are intended to read Akhenaten’s genitalia as genuinely ‘female’ in this instance, it is significant that the artist chose to represent them in a manner that so clearly resembles and thereby evokes (if not directly represents) female sex. With this feature, in addition to generally fleshy, rounded contours, this colossus compares well with sculptures of Nefertiti (such as Fig. 2.36). In fact, although the colossus’ breasts are less pronounced—perhaps partly due to the difficulty of clearly sculpting breasts beneath the king’s crossed arms—the contrast in size between waist and hips is even more apparent in this figure of Akhenaten. On the other hand, the colossus’ pubic triangle is not as well-defined as in several other Amarna Period sculptures, such as the red quartzite figure of a royal woman given in Figure 2.37.

What then, can we conclude about Akhenaten’s pharaonic identity from his shifting portrait and complex sexual presentation? His body is never quite ‘female’ and, where he appears with Nefertiti, her figure is always more exaggeratedly ‘feminine’ than his. Still, the reduction of sexual difference between the two is indisputable; Akhenaten is more female

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517 Terrace and Fischer 1970, 121.
than we expect him to be, creating controversy in the interpretation of artefacts like the ‘asexual’ colossus and inviting widespread accusations of hormonal imbalance and deformity. The roles Akhenaten fills as pharaoh remain predominantly masculine and yet he seems to add a deliberate ‘female’ component to his image, which does not negate his underlying ‘maleness’. He becomes more female without becoming less male, dual-sexed rather than sexless. This is best understood through the lens of his relationship to Aten and by analogy with the traditional iconography of androgynous creators and fecundity figures (see Chapter 1.4).

Assertions of Akhenaten’s similarity to Aten abound in the Amarna texts. While Aten is conceived as a sole creator, Akhenaten occupies a unique position as his son: the only one with whom the god shares an explicitly defined familial relationship. We read that “[Akhenaten’s] nature is like Aten’s,”518 “he is like Aten, his father,”519 “unique like Aten,”520 “[Aten’s] son and [his] image,”521 and he appears on his chariot “like Aten when he rises in the horizon.”522 In his tomb (AT 25), Ay records the prayer: “May you [Aten] construct him in your image like Aten”523 and similar prayers in the tombs of May (AT 14) and Tutu (AT 8) read, “May you love him and cause him to be like Aten.”524 Similar examples are so widespread that likeness to Aten should be considered one of the most fundamental components of Akhenaten’s pharaonic identity. This makes Akhenaten’s royal portrait the

closest thing we have to an anthropomorphic image of the deity and we can read in its iconography some their shared features. The Aten is “mother and father of all that [he] make[s]” and Akhenaten both “the mother who begets everyone” and “the one who constructs people,” an identity that he expresses by regularly incorporating female-coded characteristics into his portrait.

The exaggerated hips of not only Akhenaten but also Nefertiti and their daughters evoke an image of fertility and readiness to give birth. The extended belly, too, may evoke pregnancy, without being pronounced enough that this be taken literally; see, for example, Akhenaten’s sloping belly in Figure 2.38. These features emphasise a potential for creation, which aligns well with Akhenaten’s emphasis on his family’s ties to the creator god, his own creative role as “Builder of Akhet-Aten” and “builder” of individuals, his public celebration of his daughters, and his quasi-parental relationship with the Egyptian people, as “one who nourished millions by means of [his] Ka.” Given a political system in which the right to rule was inextricably tied to the gods, the creation and dissemination of a royal portrait that promoted Akhenaten’s likeness to the Aten helped to legitimise his reign. Emily Teeter interprets the ‘asexual’ colossus, along these lines, as a propagandistic image of “the king as the Creator God,” an interpretation supported by the colossus’ massive size and public

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528 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 112).
530 An epithet recorded in several tombs. See, for example: Murnane 1995, 159, 171, 173, 175.
532 Asante 2015, 24.
533 Teeter 2015, 340.
accessibility at the temple exterior. Both of these characteristics position it well to serve an ideological purpose, communicating a vital component of Akhenaten’s identity to the public.

Indeed, at times, the praises and roles of Akhenaten and the Aten seem to merge, as in the text from Panehesy’s tomb (AT 6) quoted below. Here, Akhenaten is credited with not only concrete earthly activities, such as rewarding Panehesy, but also the initial act of ‘building’ him, as if Akhenaten himself were the creator god. The epithet used here, “Nile of the entire world,” epitomises this conception of Akhenaten as creator and sustainer of life, while also implicating the feminine or androgynous principle of watery environments in Egyptian creation mythologies and perhaps also the androgynous Nile god, Hapi. However, it is not only Akhenaten that is likened to Aten; their identities are reciprocally constituted and the Aten’s, too, is bound to the kingship. The Amarna practice of enclosing the god’s name in cartouches, a royal prerogative, exemplifies the conflation of their identities. It posits Aten as either an abstract, divinised manifestation of Akhenaten himself or as his divine co-regent, making them an indivisible pair. This practice extends a longstanding tradition in Egyptian royal ideology and art, by which pharaohs reinforced their kingship by publicising their relationship to the gods and the gods’ faces mimicked the living king’s, implicating them as either identified deities or ruling twins.

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534 See also, an address to Akhenaten in the Tomb of Meryre I: “O Nile, at whose command one grows rich, food and provisions for Egypt; O good ruler, my builder, who made me, brought me up and caused me to mingle with officialdom” (trans. Murnane 1995, 159).

535 Related to the waters of the womb but also semen. The beginnings of the universe were characterised as a watery nothingness. See, for example: Roth 2000, 195; Troy 2001, 241, 251; Williams 2011, 51, 82.


537 Bell 1997, 181.

538 Jørgensen 2015, 165, 173.
“Adoration to you, my god who built me, the one who fated good things for me; the one who brought me into being, who gave me bread, who made my property by means of his Ka; the ruler who made me from among humankind, who caused me to mingle with his favourites, who caused every eye to know me when you distinguished me from the hindermost, who caused me to be powerful when I had been poor. [...] I adore the Lord of the Two Lands, Akhenaten, the fate which gives life, master of what is ordained, the light (=Shu) of every land, by the seeing of whom one lives; the Nile of the entire world, [through] whose Ka one is satisfied; the god who makes officialdom and builds up the commons, the breeze of every nose, through whom it is allowed to breathe.”

Thus, while scholars such as Jaromír Málek argue that the Aten’s aniconism means that “[Akhenaten’s figure] can hardly be explained by likeness to a deity,” I believe that Akhenaten’s likeness to Aten and the concomitant blurring of the boundary between god and king is the most fruitful lens through which his dually sexed and gendered image can be read. What has been historically less fruitful is the assumption that Akhenaten’s royal portrait reflects either a genuine physical abnormality or an abnormal psychological state or effeminate personality. As above, the first case requires an ability to accurately diagnose pathology from portraiture, hinging upon an artistic realism that is—at best—currently unproven. In the second case, we are forced to grapple with the ways in which

542 Tyldesley (1999, 4) offers Velikovsky’s amusing assessment as an example: “Were it possible for King Akhnaton to cross the time barrier and lie down on an analyst’s couch, the analysis would at an early stage reveal autistic or narcissistic traits, a homosexual tendency, with sadism suppressed and feminine traits coming to the fore, and a strong unsuppressed Oedipus complex.”
modern biases and notions of ‘effeminacy’ in men have impacted the histories we produce of Akhenaten.

In Chapter 1.6, I raised the question of artistic intention, its relationship to meaning, and whether or not we can know if we have ‘read’ an artwork correctly—particularly where the context of our interpretation is distant from that of the artwork’s ‘ideal beholder’. From a semiotic perspective: can we ever assume that the ‘code’ we have reconstructed to read the artwork as a ‘sign’ is complete or accurate? Here, I have outlined one way of reading developments in Akhenaten’s public portrait, through their relationship to contemporary developments in religious ideology and pre-existing understandings and iconographies of androgynous creation. I consider Akhenaten’s portrait an intentionally constructed expression of his royal identity, which propagandised his relationship to the mother-and-father god, Aten, as his semi-divinised son and metaphorical co-regent. I also consider the purposeful likeness of Akhenaten’s portrait to Nefertiti’s—beyond what was normal for kings and queens—to express the uniqueness of their relationship and complementarity; perhaps as implicitly divinised twins, analogous to Atum’s offspring, Shu and Tefnut.

What is important is not necessarily which interpretation—out of these and many others—is ‘correct’ or ‘most correct’ or even how well they can be layered on top of one another, for Egyptian religion was famously tolerant of ambiguity and multiplicity. It is that we build these understandings, to the best of our ability, upon an understanding of the New Kingdom Egyptian context and relate them to the known ways in which the Egyptians conceptualised kingship, deity, and gender, and expressed meaning through art. This is in contrast to pathological or psychological interpretations of Akhenaten’s portrait, which are rooted in
historical and modern interpreters’ aesthetic and cultural distaste for male ‘effeminacy’, as well as a culturally-specific fascination with medical curiosities.

Repeatedly, Akhenaten is characterised as a weak and girlish ruler, obsessed with art and religion at the expense of border control and military expansionism: the traits which, from a Western imperialist standpoint, have long served as the markers of a great king. Brier and Hobbs refer to an “unhappy” army “who stood idle while the visionary Akhenaten preached a message of love and peace and Egypt’s territories rebelled.”543 This is despite numerous representations of active soldiers at Amarna and the high status of Akhenaten’s military officials.544 Several of Amarna’s elite tomb owners possessed military titles, including the Chief of the Medjay, Mahu; the Troop Leader and Master of the Horse, Ay; and the generals Ramose, May, and Pa-Aten-emheb. In the city, large houses with inscribed stone lintels also distinguished military men, including a Chief Bowman and Master of the Horse, Nekhu-em-pa-Aten; the Chief Charioteer and Master of the Horse of the Entire Stable, Ranofer; and the same general Ramose. These positions imbued their occupants with the prestige and financial reward needed to express their pre-eminence architecturally. We can therefore infer that they were of genuine use to Akhenaten and, likely, neither idle nor unhappy with their lot.

Unfounded assumptions of Akhenaten’s physical incapability, personal disinterest in war, and origins as a disfigured last-resort ruler, who had grown up “hidden from public

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543 Brier and Hobbs 2009, 34. For similar views, at varying levels of extremity, see also: Aldred 1961, 39; Risse 1971, 4; Hoedl 1989, 201; Tyldesley 1999, 80; David 2003, 91.
544 Spence 2007, 288.
have major implications for our judgements and narratives of his reign and reforms. Schulman wrote, with much certainty, that “because of his physical weakness, it is quite understandable why Akhenaton alone of the kings of the Thutmoside House is not represented as an active participant in those pastimes of horsemanship, archery, and seasmanship in which his forebears excelled.” Ruiz stated, equally categorically, that “Akhenaten was not a warrior; he was a poet, a philosopher, a spiritualist, and a peace-loving family man” under whom “the empire began to fall apart.” And I have already quoted Chadwick’s indefensible claim that Akhenaten “spent most of his time writing poems and hymns to the Aten.” By contrast, then, we have Tyldesley’s somewhat more moderate assertion that “while no one could claim Akhenaten as one of the great Egyptian warrior pharaohs, the empire certainly did not collapse during his reign” and Gordon’s more positive but militarily neutral claim that “the Amarna Age was one of internationalism,” as evidenced by the Amarna Letters. This is, militarily and diplomatically, about the best rap Akhenaten ever gets.

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546 Risse (1971, 3) is amongst several who have wondered whether Akhenaten’s illness or disfigurement was the cause for his religious and political reforms. See also, assumptions that Akhenaten’s sun worship was related to vitamin D deficiency, weak eyesight, or cold sensitivity as a symptom of some broader pathology: Burridge 1996, 127; Eshraghian and Loeys 2012, 663; Brandt 2013, 255.
547 Schulman 1964, 51. Albretsen (1999, 1115) makes a similar claim that lethargy, resulting from some endocrine disorder, prevented Akhenaten from effectively defending Egypt’s borders; he also suggests that Akhenaten’s institution of the Aten as sole deity may reflect “et savn av en varm morsskikkelse” — or, the lack of a warm mother figure, reflecting a persistent tendency to psychoanalyse this king. See also Brémaud 2010, 627-33.
550 Tyldesley 1999, 80.
551 Gordon 1940, 243.
I believe that the historical vision of Akhenaten as an effeminate poet—perhaps a woman,\textsuperscript{552} a eunuch,\textsuperscript{553} or a homosexual\textsuperscript{554}—compounded by a misogynistic and homophobic cultural bias that automatically denigrates those traits, has prevented us from achieving a balanced view of this king. A return to the primary sources can shed much light on the military aspects of both Akhenaten’s reign and his identity as pharaoh. I want to end this consideration of Akhenaten’s pharaonic identity and its artistic expression by considering some of those sources. I don’t do this to elevate militarism as the most suitable method of judging Akhenaten’s reign a success or failure but to quash the broadly attested misconceptions cited above and to demonstrate the unproblematic coexistence of Akhenaten’s partially female-coded royal portrait with his traditionally male-coded roles as a warrior and king in their original context.

The artistic repertoire employed by Egyptian kings included numerous images intended to demonstrate pharaonic valour and suppression of foreign lands. To read these as purely factual accounts in any period is a risky interpretative move. However, it may be that historians are quicker to dismiss Akhenaten’s claims to military superiority than those of more accepted ‘warrior pharaohs,’ due to preconceptions of his effeminacy, weakness, and military disinterest.\textsuperscript{555} For example, Schulman reads Akhenaten’s artistic preference for both the \textit{khepresh} and the Nubian wig, with their noted Eighteenth Dynasty military associations,\textsuperscript{556} as a “fiction,” intended to offset his “physical deficiency,” rather than as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[552] Mackowiak 2007, 11.
\item[553] Aldred and Sandison 1962, 307; Mackowiak 2007, 11; Retief and Cilliers (2011, 628-9) refer to Akhenaten’s physiognomy as “eunuchoid” but do not consider him a “true eunuch”.
\item[554] Murray 1930, 136; Velikovsky 1960, 201; Tyldesley 1999, 4; Chadwick 2005, 186; Morkot 2005, 123; el-Saddik 2010, 259.
\item[555] Van Dijk 2000, 269.
\item[556] Spanel 1988, 93; Jørgensen 2005, 54.
\end{footnotes}
evidence of genuine military interest or association.\textsuperscript{557} It is a tendency that mimics characterisations of the female king Hatshepsut as a pacifist, requiring historians to downplay or ignore records of her military campaigns in Nubia\textsuperscript{558} and to interpret her Punt expedition as an entirely peaceful trading mission, despite her army’s documented role in this enterprise.\textsuperscript{559} Indeed, the military triumphs we associate with Hatshepsut’s junior co-regent and successor, Thutmose III, would have been impossible without the stable foundation of Hatshepsut’s reign.\textsuperscript{560} Like Hatshepsut, Akhenaten represented himself in many of the traditional guises of a ‘warrior pharaoh’, contrary to assessments that he “does not seem to have utilised the image of a military conqueror in his public identity at Amarna”\textsuperscript{561} or that his use of traditional military images was sparing.\textsuperscript{562} Indeed, Akhenaten promoted a militaristic self-image even in non-military contexts: royal chariots process through the city, accompanied by a generous soldierly escort, in the tombs of Panehesy (Fig. 2.39), Mahu (Fig. 2.40), Meryre I (Fig. 2.41), and Ahmose,\textsuperscript{563} amongst whom only Mahu bears a military title.

Just as Akhenaten’s \textit{khepresh} has been interpreted as de-militarised or facetious, these scenes are frequently understood to subvert or neutralise the militaristic nature of chariot

\textsuperscript{557} Schulman 1964, 52.
\textsuperscript{558} Carney (2001, 32-3) quotes two inscriptions in which Hatshepsut’s officials recorded seeing her successful in combat, including the Aswan inscription of a treasurer, Ty, who claimed to have witnessed Hatshepsut “overthrowing the (Nubian) nomads… [and] destroying the land of Nubia” and another of Djehuty, at Dra Abu’l-Naga, who “saw the collection of booty by this mighty ruler from the vile Kush, who are deemed cowards.” See also: Robins 1999, 174.
\textsuperscript{559} Robins 1993b, 47-8. For example: Smith (1960, 105) emphasises that Hatshepsut’s reign was “peaceful” and implicitly undermines her authority as ruler by repeatedly foregrounding her support by “a group of able and powerful men,” stating for example that she “felt powerful enough, with this able support, to declare herself supreme ruler of the country.” See, similarly: Engelbach 1961, 39.
\textsuperscript{560} Hollis 1997, 224.
\textsuperscript{561} Cashman 2006, 151.
\textsuperscript{562} Spieser and Sprumont 2004, 173.
\textsuperscript{563} See Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 32.
imagery, particularly where they include the princesses and female attendants also riding in chariots (Fig. 2.42). Yet, I would argue that it is impossible to demilitarise the image of armed soldiers running alongside a vehicle introduced in wartime and utilised almost exclusively in militaristic scenes before and after the Amarna Period. If Queen Elizabeth were to ride a tank in a procession of armed soldiers through the streets of London, the image would not lose its militaristic connotations by centring a woman or taking place away from the battlefront. The depiction of chariot processions involving the royal family at Amarna not only contributes a sense of occasion to their movements, it also implies a strong relationship between this king and his military, intentionally showcasing their strength, loyalty, and numbers in a novel way.

Tribute or inw scenes, in which the leaders of primarily foreign lands present gifts to the pharaoh show the other side of the coin: the efficacy of Akhenaten’s army outside Egypt (see Chapter 3.7). One event, which took place in Akhenaten’s Year 12, was significant enough to be immortalised in the tombs of two officials, Huya and Meryre II. It is uncertain whether this reception of inw was one of a number of such events over the city’s lifetime, commemorated another important occasion or anniversary in Year 12, or was the result of some successful military action, such as Akhenaten’s suppression of a Nubian rebellion, also in Year 12. Regardless, the strength and influence of both Akhenaten and his army was a necessary precondition for this represented influx of prestigious foreign gifts.

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564 Cashman 2006, 150.
567 Although we obviously cannot take the representations themselves as unproblematically true-to-reality.
The caption to the scene in Meryre’s tomb (Fig. 2.43) describes “the chieftains of every foreign land... presenting [products to the king and] begging peace from him, so that [they might be] allowed to breathe the breath [of] life” but the activities taking place in the surrounding registers are far more varied. There is the presentation of jewellery, incense, live animals, and other products to Akhenaten, but also scenes of celebration, including musicians at work and an apparent wrestling contest between Egyptian and Nubian figures (Fig. 2.44). For Scott Carroll, this image of the triumphant Egyptian soldier standing with raised arms over the prone body of his Nubian opponent is the culmination of a “dramatisation of Egyptian superiority over their subjugated enemies.” It reminds the viewer of the military triumphs that have enabled Egypt to extract inw from its neighbours, implicating Egypt’s triumphant victory in a scene equally devoted to non-militaristic diplomatic relations. The scene’s inscriptions further explicate its military significance and maintain the ideology of Egypt’s—and Akhenaten’s—god-given ascendency over the foreign lands.

[The Aten] causes [the king] to plunder every foreign country on which he shines, and he bequeaths the whole circuit to him in order to slake his heart with them [and to do what pleases his Ka], for they are under the feet of Waenre, the one beloved like the [Aten], [until] the sea [gets up] on legs, until the mountains stand up to go, until water flows backwards. O beautiful ruler of the Aten, you are... the Aten. May he cause your southern borders [to extend as far as the] wind, and your northern one to what Aten illuminates. It is your strength which protects the Two Lands, and your might which makes the subjects live, (O) Waenre, beloved like Aten, long [in his lifetime].

\[569\] Carroll 1988, 123-4.
While here it is Aten, rather than Amun or another traditional deity, who empowers Akhenaten to rule Egypt and dominate foreign lands, this is expressed in a conventional fashion. At Amarna, as in preceding periods, common textual motifs related to Egypt’s military superiority included plundering foreign lands, trampling enemies (or placing them beneath the king’s feet or sandals), and the reporting of Egypt’s boundaries, either in literal or symbolic terms. By utilising these motifs, Akhenaten positioned himself amongst the ranks of his predecessors, as a pharaoh chosen by the god to forcibly preserve Egyptian ma’at. The same effect was achieved by Akhenaten’s adoption of iconographic motifs, which expressed and magically safeguarded his pharaonic might and his enemies’ inferiority. Figure 2.45 reproduces a section of decorative flooring from Amarna’s Great Palace. At left are the remnants of a repeating pattern of bound foreigners with bows, representing Egypt’s canonical enemies, the ‘Nine Bows’. By creating an architectural context in which foreign bodies routinely fell beneath Egyptian feet, Akhenaten gave a physical reality to the trampling motif described above, which had been a feature of Egyptian art since Predynastic times. This motif simultaneously humiliated defeated foreigners and celebrated Egyptian dominance, an effect repeated in the decoration of Akhenaten’s Window of Appearances, whose base was sometimes ornamented with bound foreigners, over whom the royal family would stand (Figs. 2.46—2.47).

571 For example, the Semneh Inscription, referring to Akhenaten’s father and immediate predecessor, Amenhotep III: “Thou hast slain all thy enemies, overthrown beneath thy feet” (trans. Breasted 1906, vol. II, 341).
572 For example, an inscription of Hatshepsut on the base of the fallen obelisk at Karnak: “My southern boundary is as far as the lands of Punt, and ----; my eastern boundary is as far as the marshes of Asia, and the Asiatics are in my grasp; my western boundary is as far as the mountain of Manu...” (trans. Breasted 1906, vol. II, 135-6).
573 For example, on the Abydos Stela of Thutmose I: “I made the boundaries of Egypt as far as that which the sun encircles”—a very similar statement to “what the Aten illuminates” above (trans. Breasted 1906, vol. II, 40).
574 Davis 1992, 120, 122. See early examples on the Battlefield Palette (c. 3000 BCE) and the Narmer Palette (c. 3000-2920 BCE).
Perhaps the most striking motif of pharaonic dominance, however, was that of the smiting king. Like the trampling motif, this image originated in the Predynastic Period—first attested around 3300 BCE\textsuperscript{575}—and was deeply embedded in royal iconography. It featured the enlarged, striding pharaoh grasping a smaller foreign enemy in one hand and hoisting a weapon in the other. Its significance as a statement of pharaonic valour and the triumph of Egyptian ma’at over foreign isfet is evidenced by its consistent repetition across the dynasties, not only at the monumental scale of temples, tombs, and palaces, but also in numerous smaller-scale media, both royal and non-royal.\textsuperscript{576} Occasionally, gods could also appear in the smiting pose but, prior to the Amarna Period, the pharaoh was its only mortal subject, belying symbolic and likely magical, apotropaic implications beyond the literal act of dispatching an enemy. Akhenaten not only unconsciously replicated this scene with himself in the role of smiting ruler, but consciously developed it: including Nefertiti as an alternative subject\textsuperscript{577} and sometimes also including his daughters as witnesses, in the role of protective goddesses. This militaristic icon was elaborated to express Nefertiti’s identity as Akhenaten’s ‘twin’ and female complement—smiting Egypt’s female enemies, while he smites the male—as well as the implicit divinisation of Amarna’s royal women.

At least two separate contexts preserve scenes of Nefertiti smiting female foreigners. The first is a set of relief images, alternating between the twin militaristic motifs of Nefertiti as smiting ruler and as trampling sphinx (Fig. 2.48). While the representation of a smiting

\textsuperscript{575} Hall 1986, 4; Luiselli 2011, 13; Hikade 2007, 3.
\textsuperscript{576} See: Hall 1986, in full.
queen was unique to Nefertiti, female sphinxes were more acceptable and had particular precedent in the immediately foregoing reign of Akhenaten’s mother, Tiye, who trampled Egypt’s female enemies in this guise.\(^5\)\(^7\) The rarity of the images presented in this fragment makes its poor preservation and unknown context particularly disappointing. We can only guess at the motivation behind this militaristic reimagining of the queen’s role and, especially, Nefertiti’s valorisation here as a warrior queen. Still, it seems clear that Akhenaten, following a trend that was developing throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty—from the reign of Queen Ahhotep, awarded the Gold of Valour, to Tiye, as trampling sphinx—was intentionally expanding his application of martial imagery, not rejecting it in favour of peaceful religious contemplation.

A second smiting scene featuring Nefertiti is far better preserved. It forms part of a larger relief, surviving across several talatat blocks (Figs. 2.49—2.50), and so must have originated from a monumental stone building, likely a temple or palace. Fragments of several royal barges remain. The rightmost in Figure 2.49 is Nefertiti’s, her likeness capping the oars, and the leftmost is Akhenaten’s. On her barge, Nefertiti stands in a kiosk topped with the protective and sanctioning image of Aten, and smites a female enemy. She is unambiguously identifiable by her flat-topped crown. Perhaps more curiously, Nefertiti here appears to wear a kilt resembling Akhenaten’s, exposing the chest but open at the front, much like her usual dresses: a queenly revision to the pharaonic costume typical of this scene. Combined with the similarity of her blue crown to Akhenaten’s \textit{khepresh}, discussed above, this too may reflect an intentional likening of queen to king, compounded by the fact

that Akhenaten, at left,\textsuperscript{579} appears in a long garment, not unlike Nefertiti’s usual dress. These costumes contribute to the blurring of gender roles evoked by the inclusion of a female smiting scene alongside, and probably alternating with, the male. A binary complementary is expressed here in that Nefertiti and Akhenaten each dispatch their own same-gendered enemies and yet there is also a clear convergence or equivalence between the two in terms of their gender presentation and functions. Perhaps this is best understood through the notion of Akhenaten and Nefertiti as ‘divine twins’, the original male-and-female pair born from an androgynous creator, with whom they remained closely associated.

Ultimately, we cannot know the extent to which symbolic images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in military guises reflected their actual participation in militaristic activities or rituals. However, this statement is true of every pharaoh who utilised the same artistic and textual formulae of foreign control. We do know that Amarna possessed a military presence, attested archaeologically via the so-called ‘barracks’ in the Central City, as well as textually and artistically. We know, too, that military officials enjoyed high status under Akhenaten, known from both private tombs and inscribed stone lintels in their houses: a prerogative of the elite, usually associated with larger residences. We know that, whether or not Akhenaten or Nefertiti personally participated in military expeditions, they were concerned with maintaining traditional imagery and ideologies of Egypt’s power and influence, which cannot have been a complete fiction if deliveries of \textit{inw} were indeed still being made by Year 12. Finally, we can assume that neither Akhenaten’s unprecedented break from

\textsuperscript{579} Although his upper body is not preserved, we can assume that this figure represents Akhenaten because the enemy he smites is male.
religious orthodoxy nor the relocation of his capital could have been accomplished without military backing and likely also that, had Akhenaten exhibited any remarkable weakness, there would be greater evidence of—potentially very successful—foreign rebellion during his reign. Consequently, while Amarna’s foundation and innovation in art and religion may have diverted some royal attention from military pursuits, the image of Akhenaten as a weak, diseased, and effeminate king, who locked himself away and shunned his military is grossly unfounded.

In this section, I have argued for a theological and ideological interpretation of Akhenaten’s royal portrait, as expressing a uniquely Atenist royal identity. There is no good evidence that Akhenaten’s feminised or dual-gendered figure resulted from either medical pathology or physical weakness. Study of the only viable candidate for Akhenaten’s mummy fails to support this and the artistic evidence is unconvincing, bearing no provable relationship to physical reality. As such, the effects these assumptions have had on histories of Akhenaten must be critically reviewed. Indeed, there is little evidence that innovations in the artistic representation of royal sex and gender attributes and roles at Amarna had any bearing on the activities performed by the royal couple or that they were perceived as having such an effect by anyone prior to modern Western commentators. Rather than weakening Akhenaten’s image, I believe that the adoption of dual-sexed characteristics and expanded gender roles—particularly in the symbolic, quasi-mythological domain, as a nurturing creator, even mother—were intended to empower and legitimise Akhenaten as king, via his likeness to Aten. In spite of his troubled reception, both after his death and now millennia

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580 Schulman 1964, 51.
later, I wonder if we can even claim that Akhenaten’s intentions were never realised in his own city at the height of his—and the Aten’s—historical moment.
2.4 Nefertiti: The Smiting Ruler, Sweet of Love

In Chapter 2.3, I argued that Nefertiti could be understood as Akhenaten’s ‘divine twin’, the Tefnut to his Shu: at once, the female complement to the male portion of his identity as king and a figure as ambiguously gendered as he. Her body is unmistakably female, yet she appears in male-coded roles we expect to be restricted to Akhenaten, smiting Egypt’s enemies and, occasionally, offering to the Aten alone. The ideological significance of her fertile union with Akhenaten is evidenced in that their six daughters are the most visible princesses in Egyptian history.\(^582\) It is worth re-investigating Nefertiti and her shifting roles and images, because, like Akhenaten, she has been the subject of particularly loaded histories. She has been pigeonholed into roles such as the ‘proto-feminist hero’ and ‘quietly supportive model wife’, each of which answers to modern Western social agendas and understandings of ancient gender relations and neither of which is sufficient to understand this contested figure. I don’t claim to be any more objective than those who have preceded me but I would certainly like to add my voice to the squabble and consider what artistic and textual representations of Nefertiti might express about her identity, as a queen or even as a goddess, in the context of changing conceptions of regality, divinity, and gender at Amarna.

Firstly, we must not view competing conceptions of Nefertiti as active and agentive or passive and supportive as either mutually exclusive or absolute. Each time the queen appeared, the artist(s) and commissioner(s) of the work made representative choices, which conveyed messages about her status, character, and the roles and activities appropriate for

\(^{582}\) Budin 2011, 113.
her to perform. Each of these are attributes unlikely to remain consistent throughout Nefertiti’s reign, across all of the contexts in which she appeared, making the search for a singular ‘Nefertiti’ futile. In this section, I examine the choices—both cohesive and contrastive—made in the representation of Akhenaten’s primary queen: what the Egyptian viewer may have understood from them and what we might understand from them now. I also wonder whether we should consider Nefertiti a completely unique figure, bearing no relation to the women of her time, or whether it is possible to consider this “Mistress of all woman” a kind of public model for Egyptian women, endorsed by both Akhenaten and the Aten. How might Nefertiti have been received, through her unusual prominence and the diversity of her roles? And how might the image of Egyptian womanhood and queenship that Nefertiti projects support or challenge the accepted wisdoms produced by historical studies of women in ancient Egypt (see Chapter 1.4)?

Although it is easy to isolate Nefertiti, whose painted bust has become the iconic image of Egyptian queenship (Fig. 2.51), it is important to remember that her prominent position was not a complete anomaly. It was built upon a precedent of powerful Eighteenth Dynasty queens, playing ever-greater roles in both religious and political spheres. Important priestly positions were increasingly granted to Eighteenth Dynasty queens, beginning with Queen Ahhotep, mother of Ahmose I, as ‘God’s Wife of Amun,’ and Hatshepsut as ‘Hand of God’ during her husband’s reign. With these titles came increasing participation and visibility in temple rituals and festivals and so we should consider this a genuine increase in queenly influence, not only an empty honour. Hatshepsut’s rise to the pharaonic throne was

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founded upon a strong relationship to Amun’s priesthood, who supported her mythologised narrative of divine conception.

Indeed, Nefertiti’s immediate predecessor, Tiye, appeared in art more frequently, more prominently, and on a more even footing with her husband than any queen before her, adopting Hathoric regalia, as well as potent symbolic images, such as that of the sphinx. At Sedeinga, in Nubia, she was worshipped as a goddess in connection with Hathor, epitomising a religious and political context in which both queen and king—Tiye and Amenhotep III—promoted themselves as deities on earth, more overtly than ever before. On at least two occasions, Tiye adopted a role usually held only by deities and rarely by the king, in offering her enthroned husband palm ribs, implicating the gift of a long life and reign. Her authority and ability to do so should be considered the mark of a queenly identity extending beyond that of pharaoh’s earthly wife.

This was the context into which Nefertiti was born and ascended the throne. Her model of, and expectations for, queenship were supplied by a long-reigning queen who was herself revolutionary. With the rejection of Egypt’s traditional deities and the introduction of the Aten, the queen’s roles as quasi-divine priestess and supporter of her husband’s reign grew even more significant. Indeed, the centrality of creation and the ‘mother/father’ persona within Atenism intensified a pre-existing ideological emphasis on royal fertility and the royal family unit, already evident in the Hathorisation of Queen Tiye and the visibility of her four daughters: Sitamen, Henuttaneb, Isis, and Nebetah (Figs. 2.52—2.53). Akhenaten and

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587 Manniche 2008, 133.
Nefertiti arose as the first children of the Aten, analogous to the divine twins, Shu and Tefnut, in traditional mythology;\textsuperscript{588} they adopted highly similar physiognomies, which emphasised their fertility via the inclusion of exaggeratedly feminine curves; and they were tailed by an entourage of princesses, who provided the physical evidence of their fertile union (see Chapter 2.5). The Amarna moment, in art and religion, was one that built on a pre-existing ambition to refashion the royal couple as a divine pair. At Amarna, this did not entail only two more gods added to a vast pantheon, as perhaps in the reign of Tiye and Amenhotep III; Akhenaten and Nefertiti were second only to a singular primordial god.

Indeed, while Nefertiti may be viewed as adopting masculine gender roles, such as smiting foreign enemies, her body remained unambiguously female throughout the Amarna Period. She exhibits the same physical characteristics we interpret as feminising Akhenaten, often to an even greater degree, with large hips, buttocks, and thighs, juxtaposed against short, lean calves, spindly arms, and a slim waist. The small of her back and her navel is higher than Akhenaten’s\textsuperscript{589} and her chest is usually more rounded, if not always larger. The elite fashion of transparent linen clothing showcases the figures of Amarna’s royalty as if they were nude, allowing for the delineation of each thigh and the female-presenting pubic mounds of the queen and princesses. This transparency has the additional benefit of highlighting correspondences and variations between the bodies of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, even where they wear contrastive clothing. It likely constituted, at least in part, an intentional strategy of disseminating the ideological information contained in the royal physiognomy.

\textsuperscript{588} Arnold 1996, 108; Foster 1999, 107; Johnson 1999, 47; Reeves 1999, 87; Van Dijk 2000, 268; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 105; Manniche 2008, 133; Assmann 2009, 80; Manniche 2010a, 17.

\textsuperscript{589} Eaton-Krauss 1981, 262.
In the lunette from Boundary Stela A (Fig 2.54), an early monument from Amarna, Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s bodies are almost identically constituted. Both stand before an offering table with long, thin arms raised toward the Aten. Their skulls are distended and supplemented in length by tall crowns: the khepresh for Akhenaten and the sun disk with feathers and horns for Nefertiti. Both necks crane forward, Akhenaten’s to a slightly greater degree, and the chests of both king and queen are rounded, with the upper edge curving in toward the neck, rather than extending vertically upward or outward to form a more ‘masculine’ chest (cf. Fig. 2.25). For both figures, the waist is high and from here a relatively smooth arc is formed over the front of the body, down to the knee, with the calf then angled forward in a striding position. At each figure’s back, a more dramatic, sloping curve terminates under high, rounded buttocks. The primary difference between Akhenaten and Nefertiti in this image is that the leading edge of Akhenaten’s nearer thigh extends right across his body, obscuring his genitals, where Nefertiti’s leads instead to a defined pubic triangle. The imperative to mask the king’s genitalia was conventional in Egyptian art. However, its effect is almost bypassed by the curve of Akhenaten’s belly, falling over the tops of his thighs. Combined with the asymmetrical waistline of his kilt, it gives a very similar shape to Nefertiti’s pubic triangle. Perhaps this, too, was intentional and symbolically significant, propagandising the notion of Akhenaten and Nefertiti as divine twins and Akhenaten as the dual-sexed creator, analogous to his father, Aten.

The extreme feminisation of Amarna royal physiognomy has implications for understandings of Nefertiti and her ties to divinity, as much as for Akhenaten. Independently, she has been considered Atenism’s “Venus figure” or “mother goddess”—a designation that sometimes
extends to her daughters—providing a conceptual substitute for Egypt’s rejected goddesses and particularly Hathor, who had been so intimately connected with her predecessor, Tiye. As a pair with Akhenaten, Nefertiti is posited as his twin and non-biological sister-wife, forming a familial triad headed by the Aten, their father, that was central to Atenist theology. Prayers dedicated to the Aten via Nefertiti confirm their close relationship and her authority, like Akhenaten’s, to act as his intermediary. A secondary religious triad has also been suggested, equating the king, queen, and a daughter with familial triads of the traditional religion: Amun-Re, Mut, and Khonsu or Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Novel representations of Akhenaten’s family fill the artistic void created by the rejection of the old gods and, in this process, the royal family achieve an implicit divinity, which is reinforced by their otherworldly proportions.

Often, the divinised royal figure, with its fertile implications, is foregrounded by open garments, which expose the belly or chest. This trend is evident in several images already cited; see, for example, Nefertiti’s exposed stomach, pubis, and legs in Figure 2.23 and Akhenaten’s exposed stomach in Figure 2.27. Significantly, their partial nudity neither reduces their dignity nor alters the purpose or execution of the remainder of the scene. Rather, if the Amarna royal body is considered the physicalisation of a unique connection or equivalence with Aten, then unveiling it—even in a limited manner, aware of elite Egyptian

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590 Green 1992, 35.
591 Williamson 2017, 5. And, indeed, the crown Nefertiti wears on the lunette of Boundary Stela A has strong Hathoric associations.
592 Hawass 2009, 51; Troy 2003, 101; Olivier 2008, 78.
593 Green 1992, 38.
594 Freed 1999, 121.
595 Only the lower classes or sometimes deities were generally depicted nude. See: Robins 1993a, 29; Robins 1999, 58; Salisbury 2001, 96; White 1963, 90; Williams 2011, 37, 74-6, 154-5; Booth 2015, 30-1.
sensibilities—is a statement of religious ideology and a divinised identity. Partial nudity becomes a tool, not to sexualise or denigrate Akhenaten or Nefertiti, but to proclaim the unique (semi-)divinity that placed them outside standards of modesty applicable to others in the court.

A particularly interesting example is the image of Nefertiti as the smiting ruler cited in Chapter 2.3 (Figs. 2.49—2.50). Here, Nefertiti wears a high-backed kilt, which fastens at the front but covers only the waist and the back of her lower body, leaving her breasts, stomach, pubic area, and the front of both legs exposed. This contrasts the pharaonic kilt, which always obscures the pubic area, in accordance with artistic standards governing male-coded genitalia. As such, not only does Nefertiti usurp and adapt the smiting motif here, she also usurps and adapts its traditional costume, the pharaonic kilt, creating a unique queenly variant that reinforces the radical nature of her actions. In this context, Nefertiti’s semi-nudity is a visual tool, which associates her with both Aten and Akhenaten, as the king’s female complement—his metaphorical and mythological twin—smiting Egypt’s female enemies, while he smites the male. The Aten, shining its rays over the smiting queen, implicitly approves this role for her and emphasises their connection, even in Akhenaten’s immediate absence. The result is a revolutionary image of the queen displaying pharaonic power and authority, which has been read as evidencing both the elevation of royal women in this period and Nefertiti’s personal elevation and “influence over the king.”

596 Freed, Markowitz and D’Auria 1999, 238.
597 Málek 1999, 270.
As compelling as this image is, the warrior queen smiting Egypt’s enemies is not a common component of Nefertiti’s character in the extant sources. It is rare in art and non-existent, as far as I have seen, in her epithets, while Akhenaten is repeatedly “Mighty bull,”598 “Master of strength,”599 “Great in victory,”600 and “Ruler of the Nine Bows.”601 The Amarna historian must strike a delicate balance between giving due attention to militaristic images of Nefertiti for their genuine uniqueness and meaningfulness and acknowledging that to imply that the warrior queen image was at all typical of Nefertiti’s iconography would be seriously misleading.

Textual epithets provide another piece to the puzzle of Nefertiti’s multiply constituted identity. Although subject to potential translation bias and bearing an uncertain relationship to ‘reality’, Nefertiti’s epithets illustrate both the domains in which she held publically acknowledged influence and the personality traits considered virtues for Akhenaten’s chief wife. In particular, they inform us on the values and ideals of Amarna’s elite men, via the choices scribes make in characterising key figures, as well as the royal will behind those choices. Recurring themes for Nefertiti’s epithets include: 1) the relationship between her, Akhenaten, and the Aten; 2) effective leadership, particularly of women; and 3) ‘feminine’ virtues such as charm, love, joy, and beauty; each of which will be addressed below.

600 Text from a libation bowl, found at Karnak (trans. Murnane 1995, 100).
While Akhenaten’s officials boasted of their relationship with Akhenaten in their tombs, using epithets such as “one who approaches the god’s flesh”\textsuperscript{602} and king’s “confidant”\textsuperscript{603} or “companion,”\textsuperscript{604} the queen possessed a unique and unrivalled form of access to the pharaoh, which imbued her with special status. Repeatedly, she appears as his “beloved,”\textsuperscript{605} one who “sees the ruler in splendour, without ceasing,”\textsuperscript{606} “beside Waenre”\textsuperscript{607} (continually).\textsuperscript{608} To her is attributed the task of “cleans[ing] the heart of the king in his house,”\textsuperscript{609} evoking privileged access to the king, his heart, and the palace interior. Indeed, in the ‘Earlier Proclamation’ recorded on Amarna’s boundary stelae, the strength of Nefertiti’s influence on Akhenaten is used as a tool to demonstrate his unflinching obedience to Aten.

Narrating Amarna’s foundation, Akhenaten proclaims that he cannot be swayed in his choice of location because it was selected by the god himself. He emphasises this point by listing the people he will not allow to dissuade him, beginning—at the highest level—with Nefertiti, before descending through his officials, chamberlains, and the common people.\textsuperscript{610} This is in spite of describing Nefertiti, earlier in the same passage, as one “for whom is done what she has said about any[thing],”\textsuperscript{611} in an unambiguous statement of Nefertiti’s status, influence, and the esteem in which she is held.

\textsuperscript{602} Text from the Tomb of Pentu (trans. Murnane 1995, 180).
\textsuperscript{603} Text from the Tombs of Hatiay, May, and Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 130, 146, 109, 119).
\textsuperscript{604} Text from the Tombs of Ahmose, May, and Meryre I (trans. Murnane 1995, 120-1, 144, 155, 159, 161).
\textsuperscript{605} Text from the Amarna tombs (trans. Murnane 1995, 37, 74, 82, 87, 92-3, 98, 109, 112-3, 117, 126, 128, 133, 144-4, 160-1, 169, 172, virtually ad infinitum).
\textsuperscript{606} Text from the Tomb of Tutu (trans. Murnane 1995, 190).
\textsuperscript{607} = Akhenaten.
\textsuperscript{608} Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 110, 112).
\textsuperscript{609} Text from the Tomb of Panehesy (trans. Murnane 1995, 169).
\textsuperscript{610} Text from the Amarna Boundary Stelae (trans. Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 40).
\textsuperscript{611} Text from the Amarna Boundary Stelae (trans. Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 36).
Lana Troy has identified proximity to the king as one of the major sources of queenly authority, whereby “sight and touch of the divine person of the king imbued those closest to him with elements of his power.” 612 Certainly, this was considered a source of status for royal and non-royal individuals alike. However, Troy has also identified another significant theme in queenly epithets: references to their voices. She argues that “throughout Egyptian history, the royal women were said to express power through their voices, using either the spoken or the sung word.” 613 I consider this a particularly interesting observation with regard to Amarna, where references to the voice are common and not restricted to women or queens. The distinction between the spoken and sung word is also interesting, as it is rarely textually explicit. Nefertiti’s voice, for example, is characterised in several ways. She is one “who satisfies the Aten with a sweet voice and with her lovely hands bearing the sistrum” 614 and one “sweet of voice in the palace” 615 but also one “at the hearing of whose voice one rejoices” 616 and “at whose every utterance one is content.” 617

The first example, with the combination of voice, sistrum, and satisfying the Aten, easily evokes a female-associated musical aspect of temple ritual that is well attested in Egypt, suggesting that Nefertiti’s “sweet voice” is here a singing one. Yet can be the same be assumed when Nefertiti is referred to as “sweet of voice in the palace”? 618 References to Akhenaten’s “sweet voice” also appear at Amarna, with the official Ay begging, “let me hear

612 Troy 2003, 94; See also Robins 1993b, 20.
613 Troy 2003, 94.
your sweet voice in the Mansion of the Benben, when you do what your father, the living Aten, favours.”

Judgments of whether or not this comment refers to religious singing are likely to, at least subconsciously, hinge on gender. We are far more likely to think of a king’s voice in terms of giving commands or, at Amarna, teaching or proselytising, than we are to think of him singing, even in a religious space such as the Mansion of the Benben. The opposite bias may be true of Nefertiti, when it comes to ambiguous statements like “at the hearing of whose voice one rejoices.” Whether this epithet evokes for us the queen as an authority, conveying orders to her subjects, or the queen as a religious devotee, singing the Aten’s praises, may rely more upon our personal conceptions of Nefertiti than we would like to admit. I consider both to reflect valid components of Nefertiti’s identity as queen.

This ambiguity is heightened by further references to ‘voice’ in the Amarna tombs. “I listened to [Akhenaten’s] voice without cease,” Ay claims in his tomb, “and the result of this is the reward of an old age in peace”—surely a reward for commands or teachings adhered to, rather than listening to the king’s singing. This is probably also the sense of ‘voice’ that Ay invokes in decreeing, “my voice is not loud in the king’s house” and “my greatness was in being close-mouthed,” implying that he suppressed his own judgment to listen to the king’s words, “act[ing] only according to what [Akhenaten] decrees.”

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621 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 118); this is more explicit in the Tomb of May, when May claims that, “My lord advanced me so that I might execute his teachings as I listened to his voice without cease,” making a direct connection between following the king’s teachings and listening to voice (trans. Murnane 1995, 144).
the utilisation of one’s voice, particularly in royal company or in a religious context, addressing the god, was a privilege and a mark of status, whether speaking, singing, commanding, teaching, worshipping, or any combination thereof.

In this context, Nefertiti’s description as one “at the hearing of whose voice one rejoices”\(^{625}\) and one “for whom, when she says anything, it is done”\(^{626}\) may be read as propagandising not only her right to speak in the palace and temples but also the unwavering willingness of others to listen to her: a statement of authority and respectability, as likely or as much as the kind of feminine musicality patriarchal histories might be inclined to dismiss as insignificant. To “express power through [one’s voice]”\(^{627}\) was therefore not only a characteristic of Egyptian queens, as Troy aptly states, but characteristic of a broader conception of the power of the voice in this period, utilised in the epithets of kings, queens, and courtiers alike. Amarna’s scribes utilised this broader metaphor of the voice as an instrument of power to promote Nefertiti’s independent status and influence.

Opportunities for Nefertiti to exercise the authority of her voice must have abounded in Amarna’s palaces, given the influence—if not explicit activities—attributed to her in epithets of leadership such as “Chieftainess [of] the Aten’s female entourage,”\(^{628}\) “Mistress of all women,”\(^{629}\) “King’s Chief Wife,”\(^{630}\) and “Great (one) in the palace”\(^{631}\) and, likewise, as

\(^{627}\) Troy 2003, 94.
\(^{630}\) Text from the Amarna tombs (trans. Murnane 1995, 57, 100-1, 131, 133, 137-8, et al.)
\(^{631}\) Text from the Amarna tombs (trans. Murnane 1995, 74, 82, 94, 144).
the primary authority over her six daughters by Akhenaten, each of whom were “under the hand of the King’s Wife, their mother.”\textsuperscript{632} Importantly, Nefertiti’s authority is rarely characterised as subordinate to Akhenaten’s.\textsuperscript{633} Akhenaten does not hold equivalent titles, articulating his command over the same domains that are attributed to Nefertiti. Rather, he is associated primarily with activities outside the palace—building monuments, administering and defending Egypt, receiving foreign \textit{inw}, and making offerings—leaving the administration of the palaces and their occupants and perhaps also some external estates as essentially Nefertiti’s responsibility. Thus, Nefertiti appears as one “whose arrangements please the Lord of the Two Lands,”\textsuperscript{634} an epithet which suggests agency and skill in decision making, the authority to independently action her decisions, and Akhenaten’s unilateral support of Nefertiti, not only vice versa, as is commonly emphasised. In the public image constructed by the royal couple, we may therefore identify a model of martial harmony and complementarity that goes beyond the hierarchical, patriarchal model of the effective husband and his passively supportive wife, by allotting each a unique power in their respective domains and promoting respect for the agentive work of each within those domains.

How well this model cohered to reality likely fluctuated and it is impossible to recreate the complex dynamics of palace life from archaeological and historical evidence alone. The extent to which Nefertiti’s authority was respected in Akhenaten’s absence and how the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{632} Text from the ‘Later Proclamation’ (trans. Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 101).
\textsuperscript{633} One exception being: the same text that describes the princesses as “under the hand” of Nefertiti also describes Nefertiti as “under the hand of pharaoh,” explicitly laying out their familial hierarchy (trans. Murnane and Van Siclen 1993, 101).
\textsuperscript{634} Text from the ‘Earlier Proclamation’ (trans. Murnane 1995, 74).
\end{flushright}
two interacted behind closed doors are only two of the innumerable questions whose answers are impossible to ascertain from the available evidence. It is not the individual personalities of Akhenaten and Nefertiti that we reconstruct from textual and artistic representations of them but a public-facing ideal: in this case, an ideal of gender complementarity. In this context, what is significant is not only that Nefertiti had stated authority over the harem and princesses but that Akhenaten did not. Similarly, even when Nefertiti adopts traditionally pharaonic roles, such as smiting foreigners, she does so in a way that avoids detracting from Akhenaten’s authority or crossing too far into his domain: she smites women, while he smites men. This should not be read as limiting Nefertiti’s symbolic power, suggesting that she was *incapable* of defeating a male enemy; it need not even suggest that her power was less than Akhenaten’s. Rather, the assignment of male enemies to Akhenaten and female to Nefertiti constituted an ideological statement of the complementarity of their roles and identities as king and queen, mythological ‘twins’. In this complementarity, both became essential for the totality of foreigners—all male and all female—to be overcome.

A religious ideal of gender complementarity should not be invoked to mask the hierarchical nature of New Kingdom society, for which an imbalance of power between men and women is indisputable. *Decorum* is the art historical term used to describe cultural standards for what was and was not acceptable for artistic representation, including not only the content of scenes but also the arrangement, actions, and interactions of their constituents.635 Although sometimes transgressed for particular effect,636 these standards reflect both the

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635 Baines 2007, 14-7.
training of artisans and the framework within which they exercised creativity.\textsuperscript{637} Egyptian decorum included stringent unwritten rules for the hierarchical representation of human figures, using size, positioning, posture, dress, colouring, activities, and interactions to show the relative status of individuals in the represented context.\textsuperscript{638} Consequently, ‘decorous’ images not only reflect but reinforce social hierarchies. The formulaic compositions of Egyptian painting and relief \textit{required} that choices be made about who was the foremost figure in the scene, as well as the ranking of those beneath them, and these choices could be read by viewers in a consistent fashion. Superior status was associated with figures of the largest size, who were positioned ahead of or overlapping others, who interacted with those of equal or higher statuses, such as kings or gods, and who were endowed with the most prestigious forms of dress.

Repeatedly, although not exclusively, Egyptian art presents us with enlarged husbands placed ahead of smaller wives and wives ahead of both male and female children.\textsuperscript{639} Gods and goddesses appear ahead of kings, ahead of named elite Egyptians, ahead of nonspecific elite Egyptians, ahead of lower class Egyptians, ahead of foreigners, ahead of animals. These decisions were likely not consciously made on a case-to-case basis but were standard requirements of Egyptian decorum, learned by artisans from their instructors. For Akhenaten and Nefertiti, the precedence of king over queen reinforced additional layers of social inequality: namely, the precedence of husband over wife and man over women, where all else is equal. Consequently, Nefertiti never appears at Amarna at a larger scale.

\textsuperscript{637} Riggs 2013, 157.

\textsuperscript{638} Fazzini 1975, 65; Schäfer 1986, 231-4; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 201-4; Peck 2014, 363.

\textsuperscript{639} Robins 1994, 33; Roth 2005, 212.
than Akhenaten and only rarely does she stand or sit ahead of him (Figs. 2.55—2.56) or overlap his body with hers as the closer of the two (Figs. 2.57—2.58). The reverse is the accepted norm.

An offering scene from the Tomb of Meryre I exemplifies the expected progression of king, followed by queen, followed by princesses in order of birth (Fig. 2.59). They descend in height in the same order, double-marking their ranking in the scene. Two priests at right are bowed at almost ninety-degree angles, signalling their inferior status to the upright royal family, including even the smallest princesses. They extend their offerings toward the royal family, rather than directly to the Aten, demonstrating that even a presumably strong position within Amarna’s religious hierarchy was insufficient to allow direct access to the god. From this image, we can suggest several intersecting points of identity, which combine to influence hierarchical positioning in Amarna art: divinity, semi-divinity, or humanity; royalty or lack thereof; class and status; occupation; gender; age; and kinship ties.

The divine Aten appears, obligatorily, as the principal figure at the top of the image. It constitutes a clear focal point, drawing the viewer’s eye not only by its own extended rays but also the diagonal line implied by the figures of the royal family, ascending in height as they near the Aten. At the next greatest level of significance is Akhenaten, the Aten’s son. He is the largest humanoid figure in the scene and closest to Aten, distinguished by his exclusively pharaonic regalia. Akhenaten also executes the most expansive gesture, which, in combination with the streamers protruding from his kilt, opens up a portion of blank space in front of him that invites greater attention toward both his body and his activities. Next follows Nefertiti, whose importance is signalled by both her size—the second largest in
the scene—and her proximity to Akhenaten, her hand extending almost to his shoulder. Her ranking is determined by her relationship to Akhenaten, her queenship, her female gender, and her familial roles as wife and mother, as well as the relationship to the Aten encapsulated by her worshipful gesture. Behind her, the princesses, only children, appear at a smaller scale, similar to the priests standing opposite but with straight backs, closer proximity to the king and queen and the same direct relationship to the Aten, each raising a hand after the fashion of their parents. Their membership within the royal family places them at an advantage to the two priests, in spite of their age and gender. The priests’ bowed heads conspicuously reach only the bottom of the offering table; their stature is intentionally diminished. The same hierarchical arrangement characterises every image of the royal family cited thus far.

When depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti seated side-by-side in two dimensions, the Amarna artist had two main options. The first, exemplified by royal feasts in Huya’s tomb (Figs. 2.60—2.61), was to place Nefertiti’s chair behind Akhenaten’s, separated and at a smaller scale. The second, exemplified by the inw scene from the Tomb of Meryre II (Figs. 2.43 and 2.62) was to overlay the queen’s figure with that of the king, as if the viewer were observing the two side-on as a single unit, with the king as the closer of the two. The latter technique is similarly employed with standing figures of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in Figure 2.63. Both methods cohere to the standards of Egyptian decorum by privileging the king’s figure over the queen’s, yet the latter is comparatively rare in Egyptian art as a whole, possibly because artistic representation of the entire body was considered important in magically preserving
the entire body.\textsuperscript{640} A desire for all significant actors to occupy their due space in the scene may also be a factor.

However, while depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti separately, one after the other, had the advantage of fully displaying each figure, it necessitated a division between king and queen that was out of touch with the Amarna ideal of familial unity and the conception of Akhenaten and Nefertiti as divine twins. I propose that we read images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti overlapped as a single unit as a statement of their unity and equivalence, which placed them at the same hierarchical level in terms of the horizontal arrangement of the scene, if not in terms of their degree of visibility. This impression is reinforced by Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s clasped hands in Figure 2.62 (similar to Fig. 2.57), as well as the placement of her arm around his waist. This unified image may come at the expense of Nefertiti’s portrayal as a fully articulated individual but it is certainly an attempt to bring her visually closer to Akhenaten, which can only increase her status in the scene, propagandising an intimate relationship to the king as a core component of her queenly identity.

Figure 2.55 presents a rare alternative to these two methods of representing the royal couple side-by-side. Here, Akhenaten and Nefertiti sit in relaxed postures, embracing, while their daughters approach with fans. What is unusual about the execution of this scene is that Nefertiti precedes Akhenaten, in what would usually be the elevated hierarchical position. In addition, his arm is partially obscured as it passes behind Nefertiti’s back to touch her shoulder, while his knees obscure her buttocks in what seems like an intentional

\textsuperscript{640} Meskell 2002a, 29.
compromise in the sharing of compositional space. Regardless, several factors reassure the viewer that their king remains the foremost figure in the scene. Akhenaten appears at a larger size than Nefertiti, the highest mortal point in the ascending progression from youngest princess to Aten above; his regalia is pointedly pharaonic, while Nefertiti adopts the less dramatic Nubian wig with uraeus; and his hand at her shoulder gives an impression of support and guidance as much as affection, reinforced by the manner in which she leans her elbow on his thigh and glances back toward him, rather than ahead to receive their daughters. Still, in contrast to the methods of arranging the king and queen described above, this reciprocal and fairly minimal overlapping of the royal couple is useful in allowing them to physically interact, while still displaying the majority of both of their bodies. It is a compromise between the completely separate and completely overlapping examples given in Figures 2.60—2.63 and demonstrates one way in which Amarna artists both utilised and subverted artistic decorum to create more intimate and unified images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, without compromising the hierarchical arrangements necessitated by their different status.

By the same standard, it seems that the only option an artist had for representing a queen as the most significant actor in a scene was to represent her outside her husband’s company. This solution is repeatedly attested in the fragmentary remains of a gateway and set of pillars depicting Nefertiti and a single daughter offering to Aten at Karnak (Figs. 2.64—2.65). With Akhenaten absent, it is possible to present her as the primary ritual actor without diminishing either her own status (by representing her behind Akhenaten) or his (by representing him behind Nefertiti). Instead, the contrast in size between Nefertiti and her daughter, barely reaching Nefertiti’s knee in Figure 2.64, emphasises the singularity of
Nefertiti’s role in this context. She alone offers directly to Aten, while her daughter rattles a sistrum: a distinction that likens Nefertiti’s cultic role more to Akhenaten’s, in spite of their gender difference, than to her daughter’s.

This much is true even in ritual scenes including both Akhenaten and Nefertiti. The lunette of Boundary Stela S (Fig. 2.1) depicts both Nefertiti and Akhenaten raising their hands before the Aten in an identical fashion, while the two princesses behind shake sistra. Repeatedly, Nefertiti makes offerings of the same or similar kinds to Akhenaten, while their daughters are relegated to this contrastive cultic role (see also: Figs. 2.23 and 2.26). In fact, although Nefertiti is referred to in Ay’s tomb as “she who satisfies the Aten with a sweet voice and with her lovely hands bearing the sistra,”\(^\text{641}\) one would be hard pressed to find an image from Amarna in which Nefertiti does bear a sistrum. By contrast, the princesses only rarely make direct offerings to the Aten and it is always the eldest princess(es) who do so (Fig. 2.66). Arguably, the princesses’ regular participation in Atenist ritual allowed Nefertiti to delegate these lesser duties and assume more significant roles, on par with Akhenaten. In Nefertiti’s own offering scenes, her daughter with the sistrum functions almost as her queen.

These scenes usually incur two major interpretations. First, it has been argued that they demonstrate Nefertiti’s unique and independent significance in the Aten cult, at an equal or near-equal level to Akhenaten.\(^\text{642}\) Based on this assumption, the fact that similar scenes have not been found at Amarna is taken to suggest that Nefertiti’s religious significance

\(^{641}\) Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 112).
\(^{642}\) Green 1992, 38; Fazzini 1975, xviii-xix; Aldred 1978, 57; Kloska 2016, 160.
declined after migrating to the new capital. Second, it has been argued, as above, that Nefertiti’s solo appearances demonstrate her fundamental inequality to Akhenaten, because the only way for an artist to highlight her contribution was to neglect to include Akhenaten’s inevitably greater one. This argument does not require the same decline in Nefertiti’s religious significance—from ‘equal’ to ‘inferior’ between Thebes and Amarna—because it relies upon the notion that, at least in terms of the hierarchies reflected in Egyptian art, the queen was always understood as her husband’s inferior, even where she was a demonstrably significant figure.

In addition to these competing interpretations of Nefertiti’s solo worship scenes, however, there is the issue of their context. Both the pillars and the gateway cited above contain repeated iterations of the same or similar scenes of Nefertiti and her daughter at worship, with Akhenaten deliberately absent from all of them. Arguably, this implies an architectural context devoted to either a feminine or queenly aspect of the Aten cult. Therefore, drawing conclusions about the meaning of a lack of similar scenes at Amarna is problematic, if we cannot confirm that an equivalent architectural context was available there for the potential appearance of similar images. Amarna’s fragmented archaeological record should also temper conclusions based on a lack of evidence. Ann Macy Roth has proposed that these images of Nefertiti offering without Akhenaten suggest a very specific context: a mortuary monument to Nefertiti, built on the east bank of the Nile, as the Amarna tombs would later be. She bases this on an established pattern by which women’s husbands were excluded

from monuments and objects they owned or dedicated as individuals, where these were of a funerary nature.\footnote{Roth 1999, 53.}

For my part, I note that monumental gateways such as that given in Figure 2.64 have the potential to strongly impact passersby, drawing attention to the scenes represented upon them. In this case, the gateway’s bold architectural statement has been utilised to exclusively promote and celebrate Nefertiti’s role in the Aten religion and—by Akhenaten’s absence—the independent strength of her own relationship to the god. In my view, a decision has been made here, presumably by Akhenaten himself, to provide such a space: whether it was for Nefertiti’s use, a celebration of her cultic activities elsewhere, or a funerary monument to her. This choice necessitated considerable planning, engineering, materials, time, creative energy, labour, and likely an ongoing commitment in terms of staffing, offerings, and maintenance. We can therefore assume that, at this point, before the move to Amarna, Nefertiti’s role in Aten’s cult was both significant and supported—theoretically and materially—by Akhenaten. I believe that these monuments reflect an actioned desire to promote Nefertiti as an agent of independent religious power, which must have come from the level of the king and perhaps also the queen herself, and which was carried out in a public and labour-intensive fashion. This argument stands regardless of the obvious fact that Akhenaten’s role in the Aten religion, as in government, was more significant and regardless of whether Nefertiti’s significance later increased, remained the same, or declined.
In light of this, however, how should we interpret scenes of the royal family in which Nefertiti’s figure is inarguably minimised? The corpus of royal art from Karnak to Amarna is varied, comprising examples in which the figures and activities of the royal couple are both exceedingly similar and highly differentiated. By selecting certain images, it would be easy to construct a counter-narrative of Nefertiti’s utter insignificance. For example, it is difficult to see a great ruler in a figure so diminished that the top of her head barely clears Akhenaten’s waist (Fig. 2.67). However, it is not likely a coincidence that, of all the images I have gathered, those in which Nefertiti’s figure is most diminished in comparison to Akhenaten’s all fall into the same category: balustrades illustrated with comparable scenes of the king, queen, and a single princess offering to Aten (Figs. 2.26, 2.67, and 2.68). Each includes an offering table at far right, the principal figure of the king offering directly before it, a far smaller Nefertiti offering behind—her height sometimes bolstered by a tall double-plumed crown—and a single princess with a sistrum behind her, far smaller again. In each example, any negative space is almost completely filled by hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Given the tall, narrow shape of these balustrades, I consider Nefertiti’s unusually small size not a statement of diminished authority but a result of the constraints of this particular architectural feature. Representing Nefertiti at a larger scale would likely disallow the inclusion of a princess behind her—already unnaturally small—eliminating a component of the composition that was particularly significant in the Amarna Period (see Chapter 2.5). Aesthetic considerations likely also factored in this composition, with the descending heights of king, queen, and princess continuing the visual effect of the Aten’s descending heights.

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646 See: Shaw 1994, in full.
rays. As such, practical concerns have here overridden any implication of Nefertiti’s substantial inferiority to Akhenaten, a conclusion that is supported in that I can find no example in which the queen is equally diminished where space was available for her to be represented at a larger scale.

Rather than taking hierarchical scale as a direct measure of status, we should consider the actions individuals are empowered to take. Although the balustrade in Figure 2.67 is too badly damaged to determine Akhenaten’s activities, in both Figures 2.26 and 2.68, the actions and offerings of Akhenaten and Nefertiti are identical, while their daughter is differentiated by her sistrum. In choosing to represent the actions of the king and queen in the same way, the artist expresses an equivalence between their cultic roles, in spite of their exaggerated size difference. Similar equivalences or near-equivalences can be observed in numerous examples from Amarna, beyond the category of temple and palace balustrades. Repeatedly, although not exclusively, Akhenaten and Nefertiti offer similar or identical goods or enact identical gestures of worship, such as the raising of both arms in Figure 2.1 and a single hand each in Figure 2.59. Even in the Tomb of Panehesy (Fig. 2.69) where Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s offerings differ substantially, these differences are offset by their almost identical poses, similarly—albeit not equally—extravagant crowns, and similar costumes: both in long linen robes and sandals.

This is a period of Egyptian history in which the visual relationship between the king and queen is at its strongest. For the first time, we find images of Nefertiti, as well as Akhenaten, travelling by chariot, even in the company of their daughters (Figs. 2.56, 2.70—2.71), something utterly unique to Amarna and subverting the usually strictly male associations of
chariots in New Kingdom Egypt. We also find images of Nefertiti as both smiting ruler and trampling sphinx: unique in the first case and rare in the second. This level of innovation in Nefertiti’s queenly persona and the reduction in difference between her and Akhenaten, both bodily and in terms of represented activities, indicates a consistent and intentional programme of artistic development, with the apparent aim of elevating Nefertiti in addition to and in connection with Akhenaten. It aligned with an increased focus on the royal family in general and its significance as a divine or semi-divine unit within the Aten religion.

To close this section, I would like to consider Nefertiti’s representation specifically in the guise of a mother: something that Egyptian women are often reduced to but which, I hope I have demonstrated, constitutes only one component of Nefertiti’s multiply constructed identity. Certainly, it seems, there was a social expectation—borne out in art—for Nefertiti to be more closely associated with her female children than Akhenaten. This is in spite of the well-attested fact that the degree of interaction between king, queen, and princesses was far greater at Amarna than in any preceding period (see Chapter 2.5). Almost without fail, where Akhenaten is shown holding or interacting with a princess, Nefertiti appears adjacent with two or more (Fig. 2.72). Nefertiti is also more likely to appear in direct contact with her children—balancing them on her lap or upper body—than Akhenaten, who is shown on several occasions interacting with his daughters only indirectly: for example, offering a piece of jewellery toward the outstretched hand of an independently standing princess (Figs 2.73—2.74).

In some tomb scenes, where the depicted event is a public or otherwise official one, Akhenaten does not acknowledge his daughters’ presence at all, while Nefertiti may be represented either 1) paying full attention to and participating in official proceedings, 2) with her head turned away from proceedings, distracted instead by her daughters, or 3) dividing her attention between the two (compare Figs. 2.46, 2.75—2.76). In Figure 2.76, a reward scene from Ay’s tomb, a balance is reached, whereby Nefertiti interacts with the princesses in relation to the main action of the scene: they too participate in the presentation of gold. However, it is always Nefertiti, rather than Akhenaten, who mediates the princesses’ participation in these activities (see also Fig. 2.47), visually confirming the claim in Akhenaten’s ‘Later Proclamation’ that the princesses are “under the hand [authority] of the King’s Wife, their mother.”

A scene from Tutu’s tomb depicts Akhenaten and Nefertiti receiving Tutu at the palace entrance (Fig. 2.77). Although much of Nefertiti’s figure is not preserved, she is clearly identifiable enthroned behind Akhenaten, with the miniature legs of two princesses hanging over her lap. The inscription identifies them as her youngest and eldest daughters. What is most interesting about this scene is a combination of the semi-public nature of the represented event and the broader funerary context in which it appears: Tutu’s private tomb. Elsewhere at Amarna, the representation of a princess in the lap or arms of a parent most often appears on cult stelae found in the homes of Akhenaten’s officials: a specific context associated with domestic ritual and, arguably, the (semi-)divinisation of the royal family unit. In this unique scene, however, Tutu is invited into the palace: a privileged

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sphere of royal domesticity, which is signalled by the princesses resting on their mother’s lap. Such an image likely expressed the special status of the deceased, via his access to the royal family in a (comparatively) private domain.

No parallel image in which Akhenaten displays affection towards or holds a daughter in a scene involving non-royal figures appears in the whole corpus of Amarna art. It is rare for Akhenaten to acknowledge the princesses at all in tomb decoration, with their generally ‘public’ represented contexts. His focus is usually diverted by the primary action of these scenes: receiving an official, distributing gold, or enacting rituals. In this sense, tomb decoration distinguishes the worlds and activities of the royal daughters from those of their parents, with Nefertiti acting as a liminal figure, capable of accessing either or both groups.

As queen, she holds dual identities as a public figure and as a symbol of the king’s private life. These identities were not mutually exclusive and this image from Tutu’s tomb, in particular, illustrates how Nefertiti could at once be elevated and respected as a public figure—on the same level and similar in size to Akhenaten, occupying the same pose, wearing a similar costume, and enthroned in the same way—and appear as a mother of children and mistress of the royal household, balancing her daughters on her knee.

Akhenaten’s ability to effectively run the official activities of a given scene, while the queen and princesses created a vibrant and intimate diversion behind him, as in Figure 2.75, enabled such scenes to both serve the tomb owner’s needs and contribute to the corpus of Amarna propaganda celebrating the royal family.650

In this section, I have identified three central components of Nefertiti’s identity as expressed through art and, secondarily, through text. Firstly, she is the female component of a divinised male/female royal coupling, whose relationship to the dual-sexed Aten is emphasised by the convergence of their respective physiognomies on a single model. Secondly, she a royal wife of the highest possible status, authority, and access to the king: his beloved, “for whom, when she says anything, it is done.”651 Finally, she typifies an ideal wife and queen, in terms of her leadership and organisation as Mistress of the (royal) House; in terms of traditional virtues, such as beauty, charm, love, and joy; and in terms of her production and nurturing of the king’s children, who are “under [her] hand forever and ever.”652 What unites these elements of Nefertiti’s character, at least from the publically projected royal perspective, is a high level of respect, which is reinforced by Nefertiti’s prominence in the art from both Thebes and Amarna and the wide range of scenes in which she participates. What Nefertiti was genuinely ‘like’—from how capable to how beautiful—is impossible to determine. Yet the creative effort channelled into her novel image, as well as the individual components of that image, should suggest to us, at the very least, the theological and political advantages of promoting a great queen, as well as contemporary notions of what greatness entailed for the most powerful woman of her time.

2.5 Intelligent design: Constructed Ideals and Intimacies of the Amarna Royal Family

“The scenes of Amarna are no closer to reality... than their predecessors. By their strategic nature, they are maps of relations, an intense defining and ordering of the world in order to keep everything in its place, fashioned with the fictive naturalism of a state that aspired to control both ideology and social activity.”

In Chapter 2.3, I argued that misconceptions of Amarna art as fundamentally naturalistic, realistic, or truthful have led us to undervalue its symbolically constructed and communicative nature. These assumptions of ‘sincerity’ limit not only our understanding of individual royal portraits, such as Akhenaten’s, but also our understanding of the roles and functions of the royal family in Amarna art more broadly. While many pieces give an undoubtedly intentional impression of familial intimacy and the accessibility of the royal family to the public eye, I argue that they too are politicised, mythologised, and deliberately exclusive. The positioning of the royal family as a discrete, semi-divine unit, often sharing affectionate touches and private glances, makes outsiders of even the highest officials, most notably in their own tomb decoration (see Chapter 3). As with Akhenaten’s portrait, this is not a case of the traditional standards and icons of Egyptian art being replaced by a new commitment to realism or naturalism; it is the implementation of new but equally consciously designed standards, specific to the theology, ideology, and socio-political context of Akhenaten’s reign. Akhenaten may well have been a devoted “family man” but

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653 Molyneaux 1997, 127.
this was not the primary message of the public-facing images he constructed of his private relationships.

We might well ask, then: why? What did the deliberate illusion of familial intimacy—expressed even in scenes whose main activity was neither domestic nor intimate—contribute to the public images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti or express about their identities as individuals? In modern Western society, public figures are often judged on their children’s behaviour. Recall the public scrutiny of Sasha and Malia Obama during their father’s presidency or tabloid fixations with the youngest British royals. Their successes are celebrated, while missteps become international scandals, particularly in the still-advancing age of televised addresses, leaked photographs and videos, and their propagation and reinterpretation via social media. By contrast, the lives of Egypt’s royal children can be difficult to reconstruct. Many are only known to Egyptologists by their representation in the tombs of their tutors and nurses, with no recorded presence in their parents’ monuments. Even at Amarna, it is only Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s daughters who are promoted in this curious way. The future king Tutankhamun is all but invisible prior to his coronation and what, indeed, is the likelihood that Nefertiti gave birth to six surviving daughters but no sons?¹⁶⁵ Where are the children of Akhenaten’s other wives? It is clear that Akhenaten did not simply choose to represent ‘his family’ in a more public and apparently intimate manner but to specifically include his daughters by Nefertiti and to celebrate those relationships, where others remained invisible. Did he do so to make a statement about his coherence to

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¹⁶⁵ Cf. Tyldesley (1998, 54) who notes that princes were often excluded from Egyptian art, even where princesses did appear, but who believes that if Nefertiti had borne any sons, they are still likely to have been included within artistic representations of Akhenaten’s “loving family group.”
notions of ideal fatherhood ("He was clearly a loving and involved father"\textsuperscript{656}), about Nefertiti’s successes in household management and the rearing of their daughters, about the princesses’ own merits, or about the ideal family as a unit? Or is this change, too, related to the ideology and mythology of the new religion, with the royal daughters and their relationship to their parents and the god conveying some important meaning, relevant to Atenism?

Often, the princesses exhibit a marked bodily similarity to their parents, bearing the exaggeratedly feminine hallmarks of what we might call the Amarna royal portrait. Consider the three princesses in Figure 2.73. Although still young enough to appear naked—their youth conventionally signaled by the option of either a shaved head or a single sidelock of hair—the princesses all share a defined hourglass shape. Their bulky hips and thighs are offset by spindly waists, arms, and calves, directly mirroring those of their parents at either side. Each royal figure refers to a near-identical model, something that is even clearer where the royal family adopt similar poses (see Fig. 2.1). Yet, the princesses’ figures, like their parents’, do exhibit some variance. The statuettes given in Figures 2.78—2.80, although not all complete, display far more believably childlike figures than tend to appear in relief. The heads are larger in proportion to the body, the curves less exaggerated. The princess in Figure 2.78, in particular, has a youthful softness to her face and a far narrower figure than was usual in Amarna royal art. It is a strikingly different approach to the sharp-faced and voluptuous princesses who shake sistra in Figure 2.81.

\textsuperscript{656} Josephson 2015, 71.
This distinction should encourage us to see the Amarna Period as a time of purposeful experimentation with the design and execution of royal portraits, from Akhenaten’s to his daughters’, rather than one of blind attention to truth or realism. Both coherence to the generalised Amarna royal portrait, with its implications of productive fertility and likeness to the Aten, and experimentation with distinctly childlike figures conveyed important information about these princesses. As infants, they formed part of a generational hierarchy, headed by the Aten: the creative products of the royal couple but also the ‘grandchildren’ of the god. As ‘adults’, or by their depiction with adult traits, the princesses became potential creators in their own right. That is, the variation in their artistic representation expressed an essential duality to their public facing identities; they are conceived simultaneously as children and as future child-bearers.

This double identity is shared by each of the princesses, who are functionally interchangeable in Amarna art. While they are often explicitly or implicitly identifiable by inscriptions, relative size, activities, ornamentation, and artefact dating, artistic details rarely distinguish them in any way other than birth order. No princess is regularly stockier or slimmer, dresses differently, or bears any individualising physical feature or externalised personality trait. Some of the most standardised scenes from Amarna are those in which the royal family offers to the Aten: Akhenaten, followed by Nefertiti, with one or more daughters following behind, usually bearing sistra. The interpretation of such scenes is unaffected by either the number or identities of the princesses involved, such that the cultic role indicated by representation with the sistrum—traditionally, the pacification of the gods
and the suppression of chaotic forces—could be filled equally well by any or all of Akhenaten’s daughters (see Figs. 2.1, 2.23, 2.26, 2.38, 2.59, 2.67—2.69, and 2.81—2.93). Where the princesses themselves make offerings, this activity is preferentially allocated to older daughters but not restricted to any particular actor (see Figs. 2.63 and 2.94—2.95).

Only rarely do scenes of the royal family at worship diverge from these standardised postures. Where, in other contexts, the princesses frequently interact, exchanging casual glances and touches, these scenes exhibit a very particular etiquette, which in general discourages any distraction from the act of worship. Yet, one offering scene from the Tomb of Panehesy (Fig. 2.96) presents a rare exception, although Davies dismisses it as having “no features of exceptional interest.” The royal couple are the focal point of the scene, offering bouquets beneath the Aten’s rays. Panehesy, doubled over, assists by supplying the royal couple; he is unable to offer directly to Aten, whose rays are pointedly prevented from reaching him by an upper register of food and floral offerings. All this accords with expectations. However, two registers of princesses behind the royal couple deserve further attention. None appear in the traditional posture of sistrum-bearer but neither do all conform to standard offering postures. In the upper register, the leftmost princess turns her head and upper body back—away from the Aten—to observe and touch the jaw of her younger sister, who reaches for her elbow in return. She extends her lotus offering not toward the god but toward her sister’s nose.

The lotus held long-spanning symbolic connotations in Egyptian art. By their cyclical opening and closing, and rising and sinking into the river, these flowers acquired an association with the solar cycle and with rebirth after death: a sexually re-creative process, in which sexuality and fertility were inextricably embedded. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, lotuses were a regular feature of magically effective tomb scenes, particularly those of banqueting and offering to the deceased (see Chapter 3.3—3.4). However, the same features made the lotus symbol ideally suited to Atenism and the Amarna artistic context (Figs. 2.97—2.98). This was a theology centred upon a sole creator and a natural world in which “all kinds of flowers are continually alive, growing on the ground and made to flourish because of [the Aten’s] rising.” In light of these creative solar associations, perhaps we can understand why Panehesy’s offering scene, utterly dominated by lotus imagery, might have a stronger focus on the royal daughters than other offering scenes. Like the lotus, the Amarna princesses may be read as potent symbols of creation. In this scene, a connection seems to be drawn between them and the creative powers that exist in nature, exemplified by the lotus. The princess who offers a blossom to her sister’s nose offers her a wish for magical regeneration after death that the tomb owner, Panehesy, must have shared, executed in a gesture common to the sensualised banquet scenes of the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty.

From this symbolic standpoint, it should not surprise us that Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s daughters appear so frequently at Amarna or that they so often shared their parents’ exaggerated sexual characteristics. The princesses embodied not only the successful


creative unity of Akhenaten and Nefertiti but also the potential for future productivity: the perpetuity of the king’s bloodline and, arguably, of his theological innovations too. Indeed, the physical similarity of the figures of father, mother, and daughters may be considered a statement of this intergenerational continuity, reinforced by the compositional tendency to depict one after the other in a continuously descending line (Fig. 2.59). It was, of course, usual for children to be represented as miniature adults in Egyptian art. However, such major revisions to the Amarna royal portrait and the canon for human proportions may have required a more deliberate choice be made, as to whether or not to extend Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s unique figures to their daughters. The most believably childlike figures of the princesses, moreover, are often tied to a specific context: representation with the pomegranate fruit, which was a symbol of love and sexuality, bearing intrinsic relation to the infant component of their identities (Figs 2.78—2.79). The princesses should be read here as the products of royal fertility and perhaps, implicitly, as replacements for rejected goddesses such as Hathor, who were traditionally associated with such sensual traits.

These symbolic and ideological connotations of the princesses’ public portraits are compounded by the additional detail of a distended skull (Figs. 2.99—2.104). This has been variously interpreted as 1) evidence of Artificial Cranial Deformation or genetic abnormality, 2) a statement of the princesses’ regality, mirroring their parents’ long

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661 See also, the depiction of a sculptural workshop from the Tomb of Huya, which features artists at work alongside a similar statue of an Amarna princess holding a fruit: Davies 2004, pt. II, pl. 22. Pomegranates also feature in the domestic stela given in Figure 2.58, which had its own relation to royal fertility and productivity, while a combination of pomegranates and lotuses are held by daughters of the deceased on an Amarna Period (and Amarna style) private stela from Heliopolis (see: Bakry 1972, figs. 1-2).

662 Olivier 2008, 16.

663 Spieser and Sprumont 2004, 175-7. However, there is no skeletal evidence of ACD at Amarna or anywhere else in Egypt at this time. See: Ayer et al. 2010, 2; Kozma 2010, 290-1.

664 Spieser and Sprumont 2004, 175-7; Ayer et al. 2010, 2; Braverman and Mackowiak 2010, 2472-3; Eshraghian and Loeys 2013, 663; Seshadri 2012, 430; Brandt 2013, 251; Mackowiak 2013, 12; cf. Hawass et al
crows,\textsuperscript{665} 3) a symbolic reference to the egg, another potent creative icon employed at Amarna,\textsuperscript{666} or 4) a reference to the skull shape typical of newborns,\textsuperscript{667} reinforcing the mythological significance of their roles as children within Atenist mythology. Regardless of how it is interpreted, this distinctive shape was a “stylistic essential of the new [art] school\textsuperscript{668} and formed part of the princesses’ carefully constructed and regularised public image. ACD and inbreeding are medical buzzwords that draw much attention but they are not, as yet, well evidenced and the Egyptians were not known to practice any kind of skull modelling.

I believe that the figures of the Amarna princesses, including their cranial physiognomy—which varies greatly in terms of its subtlety and exaggeration—are best understood as a visual expression of religious and royal ideologies. They can be seen as expressing a public identity, which defined the princesses as both products and perpetuators of royal creativity, in a cyclical manner, easily related to their association with the lotus. Certainly, the regularity and frequency of the princesses’ appearances in Amarna art suggests a strong political or theological utility to their portraits. Their accumulation over the years, culminating in representations of all six daughters in succession, may be read as a statement of the continuous—as opposed to only initial or primeval—creation of the Aten and the royal couple.

\textsuperscript{(2010, 642)} who found that neither Tutankhamun nor the KV55 mummy usually identified as Akhenaten had a cephalic index diagnostic of dolichocephaly, i.e. the abnormally elongated skull presumed to be a familial deformity based on artistic representations.

\textsuperscript{665} Jørgensen 2005, 25.
\textsuperscript{666} See the extended metaphor of the chick in the egg in the Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 111-2); Arnold 1996, 39; Williams 2011, 146.
\textsuperscript{667} Spieser and Sprumont 2004, 182.
\textsuperscript{668} Drioton 1950, 93.
That said, a number of representations would seem to challenge a purely functional or symbolic interpretation of the princesses’ roles in Amarna art. It is extremely tempting to view images of the princesses interacting amongst themselves in the background of official proceedings represented in elite tombs as gratuitous expressions of sentimentality: the rejection of Egyptian art’s traditional formality in favour of capturing genuine moments of familial affection (Figs. 2.105—2.107). Yet, we must appreciate the ways in which such interactions were also standardised at Amarna. These whimsical faux-private exchanges were themselves constructed and constructed with enough regularity to suggest that they formed a conscious part of Akhenaten’s artistic programme, rather than spontaneous moments of artistic appreciation. This is supported by the limited contexts in which the princesses’ actions diverge from the main action of the scene. In worship and offering scenes, this was exceedingly rare (but see Fig. 2.96, above), probably to avoid implying the princesses’ disrespect toward or disinterest in religious proceedings or distracting the viewer too much from those proceedings. However, in non-religious tomb scenes involving the public appearance of the royal family, the apparent distraction or disinterest of two or more princesses was common, even the norm; it was acceptable for them to draw attention from the tomb owner in a way that it was not acceptable for them to draw attention from the Aten.

Take for example, the award of Parennefer (Figs. 2.105—2.106). Award scenes are certainly attested in earlier Eighteenth Dynasty tombs but underwent significant development at

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669 See, for example: Málek 1999, 279.
Amarna (see Chapter 3.6). They now deliberately centred the royal couple, often in an elevated structure known as the Window of Appearances. Officials gathered around to watch the tomb owner receive his reward and then processed him away in celebration. Although the essential theme of royal and community recognition remained the same at Amarna as previously, developments such as the institution of this monumental window, framing a gigantified royal couple, took the visual differentiation in status between the king and his subject to a new level. Combined with the loss of numerous tomb scenes, which had previously centred and valorised the tomb owner as an individual, this reimagining of the award scene may be fruitfully read as yet another opportunity for the royal couple to state their superiority at his expense. Texts accompanying Amarna’s award scenes stress the recipient’s humbleness in juxtaposition with the greatness of the king who elevates him, reinforcing this disparity in represented status.

I was a poor man on both my father’s and my mother’s side – but the ruler built me up, he caused me to develop, he fed me by means of his Ka when I was without property. He caused me to acquire people in numbers. He caused my brothers and sisters to be many, he caused all my people to assemble for me when I became master of my town, and he caused me to mingle with officials and courtiers when I was the least of underlings. He gave me sustenance and food every day when I was begging for the bread which he gives.\textsuperscript{670}

I argue that the princesses’ intimate public interactions should also be read, in this light, as a means of diverting attention from the awarded official to the royal family. Even in his own tomb, Parennefer is an outsider to their secret touches and glances, taking place in the

\textsuperscript{670} Text from the award scene in the Tomb of May (trans. Murnane 1995, 145).
register directly behind the Window of Appearances. Along with two attendants and Nefertiti’s sister, the girls’ aunt, Mutnodjmet, they create a charming sub-scene, centred on the youngest princess, Ankhsenpaaten. Her attendants fawn over her, with a hand at her head and her thigh, while her elder sister, Meketaten turns away at the crucial moment of Parennefer’s award to instead touch Ankhsenpaaten’s chin. Even the eldest princess, Meritaten, who faces ahead to watch the official proceedings, is tied into this diversion by Meketaten’s hand, holding hers. It is important to remember that this is not a photograph, capturing a genuine moment of distraction amongst young children observing a protracted ceremony. The artist has made a deliberate choice between representing the princesses at attention, not interacting with one another at all, as in the majority of religious scenes at Amarna, and representing them with a clear focus away from the tomb owner, as occurs here. The diverting ‘bubble’ of their intimate interactions is one that necessarily excludes the deceased, even as he receives an incredible honour from Akhenaten.

Perhaps this trend is best understood within Amarna’s unique historical context. The city arose as a replacement capital, independent from traditional centres of pharaonic and religious power and intended as the seat of both the royal court and the Aten religion. For those who accompanied Akhenaten to Amarna, public expressions of loyalty, humility, and dependence may have soothed royal anxieties surrounding resistance to the new regime, increasing the likelihood of promotion. This impression coheres with repeated textual assertions that all good things come through the king. It is Akhenaten “who makes a good fate for his favourite;”671 “lifetime is at [his] hand, and [he] grant[s] it to whomever [he]  

wish[es]. The land lives only on what [he] assign[s].” Consequently, the commissioners and crafters of Amarna’s tombs had a delicate balance to strike between 1) a desire to valorise the deceased at the crucial moment of his transition to the afterlife and 2) a social imperative not to imply that this individual held power or influence capable of rivalling Akhenaten’s. Even Ay, who would later be king, records his greatest virtues as unambiguously passive traits, including “patien[ce],” “being closed-mouthed” and “desiring authoritative direction.” His advice to those desiring equal rewards is just as telling: “worship the king, unique like the Aten, without another who is great except for him.” I therefore interpret the princesses’ subtle disinterest, particularly in award scenes, not as a sweet naturalistic touch on the part of individual artists but as a regular method of asserting the superiority and exclusivity of the royal family, at the tomb owner’s expense.

In Panehesy’s award scene, the tomb owner’s minimisation before the royal family is particularly blatant (Figs. 2.75 and 2.107). Not even Nefertiti looks upon him as he stands before them, adorned with gold and unguent, his arms raised in praise. Instead, she stands with one arm around Akhenaten’s waist and the other around the shoulders of her eldest daughter, Meritaten, who joins them in the Window of Appearances. By turning her head away from both Akhenaten and Panehesy, Nefertiti’s gaze provides an alternative line of sight, which leads the viewer’s eye in the opposite direction to Akhenaten’s gaze. It can be traced over Meritaten, beside her, and beyond to the three younger princesses in the register behind. This division of attention is emphasised by the vee-shape formed by

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Nefertiti and Akhenaten’s diverging figures, leaning in opposite directions, and elevates the royal daughters to a level of prominence that approaches Panehesy’s, in spite of his larger scale. Of the entire royal family, only Akhenaten himself is unambiguously attentive to the deceased, making this ceremony almost a parody of his royal recognition. In Panehesy’s own tomb, which he must have primarily intended to preserve his own status, it cannot be insignificant that he is so thoroughly ignored by both Nefertiti and her daughters, who instead embrace and gaze upon one another.

Regardless of its original motivations, this trend in Amarna’s elite tombs provided an ostensibly innocent means of diverting attention from the deceased and his family onto the cult and ideology of the royal family and the Aten. Although far from ‘public spaces’, the decorated tomb chapels of the Eighteenth Dynasty were intended to be revisited: primarily by immediate family and friends—presenting offerings, reciting prayers, even celebrating festivals in or around the tomb—but also by broader audiences. Inscriptions regularly solicit passersby to inspect the tombs of strangers and participate in their mortuary cults.676 This gave non-elite tombs a potential propagandistic value, from the royal perspective, in addition to the magical effectiveness with which all tomb decoration was endowed: preserving an ideal world to be mirrored onto the Afterlife.

In all these scenes, Akhenaten himself maintains an air of plausible deniability. He is always fully engaged with the task at hand, attentive to his audience. It is his daughters—sometimes even his wife—who draw attention away from the deceased and onto

676 Williams 1981, 3, 12; Lesko 1991, 8; Muhlestein 2007, 124.
themselves. Sometimes this is dramatic, as in Panehesy’s award scene, but at other times it is far subtler: a princess reaching up to touch her mother’s arm or chin, as if trying to steal only her attention (Fig. 2.108—2.109). The monumental scale and physical elevation of the royal family in their Window of Appearances gives them a compositional dominance, which both holds the viewer’s eye and physicalises their overwhelming superiority. Even when the award takes place away from the Window of Appearances, major differentiation in size between the king and the deceased preserves this impression (Fig. 2.110). This phenomenon will be explored further in Chapter 3.6.

In my view, Amarna’s heightened focus on the royal daughters was intended to fill an artistic void: a crater left by scenes no longer deemed appropriate for representation. In private tombs, this included scenes featuring Egypt’s traditional deities and religious practices, such as festive banquets associated with Hathor, but also scenes which valorised the tomb owner as an individual: fishing and fowling scenes, in which he appeared as the primary actor, and agricultural scenes, in which he supervised the working of his land, at the head of his social inferiors. Where royal appearances in non-royal tombs were fairly rare prior to the Amarna Period, under Akhenaten they are the norm, such that the represented status of the deceased was almost always mitigated by the inescapably greater status of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters.

Beyond the tomb, we find the royal family standing in for Egypt’s rejected deities as a ‘humanised’ focus for the Aten religion. We know that Amarna’s residents absolutely continued to worship traditional deities, particularly in their own homes, with one residence in the Workmen’s Village unabashedly showcasing a mural of Bes and Taweret (Fig. 2.111).
However, perhaps this was less acceptable for Akhenaten’s own officials. A small number of ‘household stelae’ or ‘domestic stelae’ found in Amarna’s privileged residences take the faux-private intimacies of the royal family as a central theme. Perhaps these served as the ritual paraphernalia of a royal familial cult, which explicitly deified Akhenaten, Nefertiti and their daughters, or perhaps it framed them only as intermediaries in the addressing of prayers to the Aten. Certainly it seems to suggest a new form of Atenist domestic worship, enjoyed by Amarna’s upper classes, in which the affectionate relations between Akhenaten, his wife, and his daughters obtained a religious or ideological significance.\footnote{Arnold 1996, 97-9; Tyldesley 1999, 82; Freed, Markowitz and D’Auria 1999, 220; el-Shahawy and Atiya 2005, 199; Williamson 2008, 351-2.}

Only a small number of examples have been preserved but their similar shapes, contexts, themes, and compositions allow them to be interpreted as a distinct category of artefacts with presumably related functions. They typically feature the royal couple enthroned opposite one another (Figs. 2.27, 2.72—2.73), although one fragmentary example appears to show Nefertiti seated with her daughters in Akhenaten’s lap (Fig. 2.58).\footnote{See also: a fragmentary example featuring Akhenaten, presumably seated across from Nefertiti and their daughters (British Museum, EA 63778) and one featuring Amenhotep III and Tiye seated side-by-side, from the House of Panehesy at Amarna (British Museum, EA 57399).} The scenes are completed by the inclusion of two or three princesses, either in their parents’ arms, laps, or standing between them. Participation in these scenes is exclusive to Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters, with no additional figures, either royal or non-royal, present in any extant example. In Figure 2.58, the space freed by piling Nefertiti and the princesses onto Akhenaten’s lap is occupied, not by any other figure, but by a basket stacked with fruits, including pomegranates and mandrakes or persea with their reproductive and sexual connotations. A bouquet of lotus blossoms and buds draped over the top likewise
emphasise the (re-)creative and solar associations of this scene, beyond a mere snapshot of the royal family, overseen by the god.

The deliberate artistic isolation of the immediate royal family, seated—never standing or striding—beneath the Aten leaves little doubt that what was being celebrated here was not an active ritual endeavour or event but the royal family as a unit and as associated with the god. The shapes and bordering details of these stelae reflect conventions surrounding traditional Egyptian devotional objects, suggesting that they held ritual functions, perhaps as the recipient of the household’s prayers, intended to replace or supplement pre-existing forms of domestic worship. This is supported by their placement, in at least a couple of cases where provenance is known, toward the entrance of the house: a space sometimes associated with domestic religious practice and ‘female’ concerns of conception and childbirth. The example given in Figure 2.73 gives the clearest indication of a ritual function, with protruding posts at either side fitted to allow wooden shutters to be drawn over the image when not in use, in the manner of a shrine.

We need not consider this surprising. The individual forms and personalities of Egypt’s deities, the relationships between them, and their association with the major concerns of Egyptian life were much of what made this theological system accessible and relevant to the people. Bes and Taweret, in particular, were regularly worshipped in New Kingdom Egyptian homes, because they promised security in areas of immediate and constant significance to Egyptian families: marriage, sex, fertility, and childbirth. That these concerns and their

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681 Saleh and Sourouzian 1987, cat. no. 167; Arnold 1996, 97; El-Shahawy and Atiya 2005, 199.
associated deities retained their significance at Amarna is evidenced by countless amulets, figurines, and other minor religious items found in the city (Figs. 2.3—2.4). Yet, it makes good sense that Akhenaten’s fledgling religious system was also expected to provide its devotees with recourse for the fundamental concerns of their daily life. We can read this newly articulated domestic aspect of the royal family’s identities—in which they sit together, kiss, and embrace—as an alternative focus for household religion. By praying to Aten, who has granted the royal family such an ostensibly contented and productive family life, and perhaps also by praying to the king and queen themselves, a household might receive the same domestic blessings without resorting to the worship of officially rejected deities. It is difficult to ascertain whether this alternative was encouraged at all levels of the population, despite only being clearly observable in the homes of Akhenaten’s officials, or whether—as murals of Bes and Taweret from the Workmen’s Village might suggest—less concern was had for the private religious practices of lower class families at Amarna’s outskirts and beyond.

It is certainly too simplistic to consider these domestic stelae the sentimental expressions of genuine familial love they are so often taken to be: exemplifying an Amarna tendency toward ‘naturalism’ and a novel commitment to representing ‘moments’ of daily life, populated by truthfully rendered individuals. While the princesses do not appear at Amarna in the most generic form available to artists, with a finger tucked in the mouth to resemble the hieroglyphic representation of a child, they remain artistically and functionally interchangeable. For example, take the household stela given in Figure 2.73. Akhenaten

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682 Freed 1999, 121.
occupies a relaxed seated posture, with one hand supporting his weight as he leans back in his chair. With his free hand, he offers a daughter standing by his knee the gift of an earring. The façade of a great warrior king is absent from this image; Akhenaten appears to our eyes as the loving father and his daughter eagerly receives her gift with legs parted, knees bent, and hands raised in a posture that easily evokes childish excitement.  

Yet, while we might be tempted to read this scene as spontaneously affectionate—a uniquely captured moment of domestic harmony—and perhaps we are intended to read it this way, the actions and gestures of both Akhenaten and his daughter are directly mirrored elsewhere at Amarna.

This gift of an earring does not recreate a singular happy moment, in which the king came home bearing presents for his family, but is clearly repeated on the talatat block given in Figure 2.74. In this fragmentary image, part of a larger architectural scene, we are left with the head and arms of one princess, reaching up for her prize, while Nefertiti stands behind with an encouraging hand at her back, holding a second princess against her chest. The presenter of the earring is not preserved but we must assume that this is Akhenaten: a variation on the same motif, executed in a different context, suggesting that neither represented a unique event. It is not impossible, either, that an additional household stela—which preserves only Akhenaten seated with his arm raised and outstretched—represents a similar motif, although this cannot be confirmed. Ultimately, how the exchange is interpreted may depend on where one lays their focus: on Akhenaten, in his fatherly role as benefactor, or on his daughter, as recipient, perhaps in analogy with the privileged officials

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684 An increased sense of movement is frequently drawn out as a characteristic of Amarna art, which contributes to evaluations of it as, in general, more ‘naturalistic’. See, for example: Málek 1999, 271.

685 See the British Museum stela, EA 63778.
who receive jewellery from the king on the walls of their tombs, as evidence of their admirable work and character.

If we return to the household stela in Figure 2.73, we might also be charmed by the princess who stands in Nefertiti’s lap, reaching up to touch her mother’s chin. This gesture also recurs at Amarna and it is difficult to say whether it was ever a concrete action, performed in reality, or only a symbolic marker of familial affection and the direction of attention. We see the same standardised gesture executed between princesses in the tombs of Panehesy (Fig. 2.96), Parennefer (Figs. 2.106), and Meryre II (Fig. 2.62), while Nefertiti is again the recipient of the touch in the Tomb of Ay (Fig. 2.109). In the King’s House in Amarna’s Central City, it is a feature of the famous image known as the Princesses Panel (Fig. 2.112). Here, two naked princesses sit on plush cushions, adorned with necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and earrings of the same type gifted by Akhenaten in Figures 2.73—2.74. The leftmost princess extends an arm around her sister’s back, while the rightmost turns her head back to touch her chin. While the image is certainly a sweet one, the affection it conveys is expressed utterly conventionally, which makes it difficult for me to read as evidence of the kind of revolutionary truthfulness and sentimentality that Amarna art is so often credited with.

Most often, this gesture—combined with the turning of the head—functions as a means of signalling emotional and familial closeness between participants who, for conventional reasons, have been represented one in front of the other, rather than side by side. Clasped hands, slightly overlapping figures, and arms extending behind shoulders or waists constituted similar methods by which familial unity and affection were formulaically expressed in Amarna art. These were not restricted only to reliefs and paintings but are
similarly preserved in statue(tte) groups (Figs. 2.113—2.114) and small finds such as furniture inlays (Fig. 2.115; compare the similar relief in Fig. 2.104). However, one relief (Fig. 2.116) is particularly interesting for the legitimately novel approach it takes to a similar interaction, with one princess sculpted with the torso facing frontally and both breasts protruding, as she reaches out to touch her sister’s head, receiving a touch in return at her elbow; as are three exceedingly rare royal kisses, one between Akhenaten and a royal woman wearing the Nubian wig (Fig. 2.117), one between Nefertiti and a daughter (Fig. 2.118), and another between Akhenaten and Nefertiti, each also embracing one of their daughters (Fig. 2.119). What the widespread appearance of the former gestures does clearly suggest, as do the latter more novel examples, is that the stable, loving relationships between Akhenaten and his immediate family constituted an important part of their public-facing identities: part of an intentional artistic programme with real ideological utility. But is that all?

How do we reach a balanced conclusion, if we experience a sense of genuine intimacy between represented members of Akhenaten’s family, yet recognise that we are most often—if not always—led to this experience in formulaic ways and that the authenticity of these apparently sincere images may be complicated by political and religious agendas? How do we reconcile the impression that we are being allowed to see something real and private—in contrast to centuries of far more reserved pharaonic art with far less visibility allowed to the royal family—with the knowledge that these images too were intentionally constructed and, to some extent, public? Is it simply wishful thinking to read any genuine sincerity into Amarna art? Are the Amarna princesses really just symbols, filler material in a
dramatically depleted artistic repertoire, ravaged by the shift to Atenism, or a cynical means of detracting from the represented influence of Akhenaten’s officials?

Ultimately, I feel that even if the methods by which intimacy was represented at Amarna were symbolic, rather than the genuinely individual family snapshots they have often been considered, we must still acknowledge that the decision to display such casual and intimate- seeming images, so frequently, was a deliberate change, if one that built on a budding precedent in the reign of Amenhotep III. It is up to the individual interpreter whether to be entirely cynical, in reading this choice as primarily practical, political, or theological, or to allow a degree of sentimentality to enter their analyses. One might wonder, for example, whether such a pervasive artistic programme promoting Nefertiti and the princesses could have arisen from the consciousness of a father and husband who did not genuinely love and value his family. We might also ask whether this artistic practice could ever have become so pervasive if it did not reflect a high value placed on the family unit in Amarna society more broadly. Was this the pre-existing social condition from which those designing Akhenaten’s artistic programme considered it logical and useful to propagate images of royal familial intimacy on such a large scale: in tombs, temples, palaces, non-royal households, and even on the boundary stelae that celebrated the foundation and identity of the city itself?

If we make the focus broader social values surrounding the family in Egyptian society, then the extent to which Akhenaten’s elevation of his daughters stemmed from his own genuine love of his children becomes moot, as perhaps it always should have been. While it may be
pleasant to think of this ancient king as a “loving and involved father,”⁶⁸⁶ a simple man “with a happy family life,”⁶⁸⁷ it is not necessary to produce a cogent interpretation of royal familial imagery at Amarna or to appreciate their genuine political and religious utility, providing a relatable focus for Atenist religion in the household context. Historical preoccupations with Amarna ‘realism’ and ‘naturalism’ aside, we can only ever really know these ancient figures and their relationships through the lens of created images and texts, so that what we perceive in them as ‘natural’ or ‘truthful’ is always constructed and purposefully so.

⁶⁸⁶ Josephson 2015, 71.
⁶⁸⁷ El-Shahawy and Atiya 2005, 199.
Chapter 3

Constructing an Identity for Eternity: Change and Continuity in Tomb Decoration from Thebes to Amarna

3.1 Introduction

Not only kings and queens but also non-royal individuals constructed public images, which selectively expressed the components of their identities they considered most salient, appropriate, or beneficial. This occurred in life, as in death, utilising modes of dress, language, movement, and activity imbued with social meaning but seldom preserved in any way beyond society’s upper strata. Wealth and status are required to commission the kinds of lasting monuments that commit their subjects to history as named individuals: chief among them, Egypt’s decorated tombs. Where lower class Egyptians appear in art, it is typically in the monuments of their social ‘betters’. They are the servants on the palace walls and labourers in agrarian tomb scenes, where their images do not reflect individual features or personal autonomy but are, instead, motivated by the self-promotion of elites. They are simply dressed bowers and scrapers, providing a neat point of comparison, against which the tomb owner stands upright, awash in the markers of his status—pleated robes, gold collars, sandals, and unguent cones—irrespective of the costume of his daily life.

For the lucky individual permitted to carve out a tomb in the rock cliffs of western Thebes or eastern Amarna, this was an opportunity to both commemorate and magically eternalise an ideal self and society. By the scenes and texts he chose to include and the way he positioned himself and his family in relation to others, he transmitted through time and into the
afterlife an identity that corresponded to his values and those of his peers.\textsuperscript{688} He included what he considered his greatest achievements and fashioned himself as a civilian of the highest calibre. Where possible, he emphasised his proximity to royalty, because wealth, status, and power came from no other source. These twin commemorative and magical functions make tomb decoration a potent source for the study of Egyptian individuals: their intentionally constructed personal and social identities, their ideals, their aspirations, and their afterlife expectations. By comparing the decoration of the Eighteenth Dynasty tombs at Thebes and Amarna, this chapter considers the question of how Akhenaten’s social and religious reforms impacted the ways in which his officials defined themselves, their families, and their roles in society in the ideal world of the tomb.

The Eighteenth Dynasty was a time of increasing opulence for those at the highest levels of society, with luxury items and materials entering Egypt via its foreign vassals and diplomatic contacts in ever greater quantities. Military victories by pharaohs such as Thutmose I, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep II provided Egypt with the resources and impetus for future expansion, building, and technological and artistic development.\textsuperscript{689} Elite fashions grew more extravagant; linen garments so fine as to appear transparent were a trademark of the period, as were copious quantities of gold and beaded jewellery, scented unguents, and cosmetics housed in beautifully crafted receptacles.\textsuperscript{690} Unsurprisingly, this luxurious milieu

\textsuperscript{688} Anthony 2017, 18.
\textsuperscript{689} Smith 1960, 103-4; Málek 1999, 213; Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 3; Van Dijk 2000, 265; Panagiotopoulos 2006, 370-1; Spence 2007, 274; Olivier 2008, 73-5; Dodson 2009, 1-2; Kroeter 2009, 47; Hartwig 2013, 165. It should also be noted that much of this wealth was channeled to and through Egypt’s temples, most prominently those of Amun. The resulting wealth and power of Amun’s priesthood at the onset of the Amarna Period is often understood as a catalyst for Akhenaten’s rejection of the traditional gods and the redirection of priestly and divine power to himself and to the Aten, a god of his own devising. See Smith 1998, 148.
\textsuperscript{690} Brewer and Teeter 2007, 118-9; Spence 2015, 322.
finds exquisite representation in the Theban tombs. Their owners employed great care in manipulating their burials not only to secure a pleasant afterlife but also to publically display their status, wealth, and successes. The living provided an expected audience for decorated tomb chapels, whether participating in the ongoing mortuary cult, enjoying festive days, or simply passing through, solicited by an external inscription to enter and pronounce the offering formulae or the name of the deceased. The tomb’s architecture and decoration established the deceased’s worthiness of this attention. In particular, ‘daily life’ scenes in the tomb chapel situated him within an ongoing social world, comprising both living and dead. Egyptian tombs may therefore be construed as a statement of their owner’s carefully constructed public image or identity: both as a distinguished individual and in relation to his family, community, king, and the values that underpinned his social world.

A comparison of private tomb decoration from Eighteenth Dynasty Thebes and Amarna reveals a drastic reduction in the range of contexts available for the representation of the deceased and his family. Under Akhenaten, the tomb owner’s primacy within his own tomb decoration is eclipsed by a new priority of centring and magnifying the royal family. The deceased’s own family all but vanishes from view, such that Amarna’s tombs stand as much as monuments to Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters as to the deceased, with their decoration often mirroring that of the temples and palaces. Although this chapter lacks the space to deeply consider the full range of scenes that appear in the Theban tombs, a representative sample shows clear trends in the types of scenes that were abandoned at Amarna, those that were preserved, and the kinds of adaptations that were required by the

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691 Hawass 2009, 69.
transition. Based on the analysis presented in this chapter, I argue that the personal prestige of non-royal individuals was intentionally deemphasised and that Amarna’s tomb owners constructed public-facing images and identities that branded them, first and foremost, as the king’s humble admirers, reproducing royal images in the tomb more frequently than ever before. Perhaps we can attribute this to the political insecurity of a monarch responsible for unprecedented religious change and the social upheaval of the migration to Amarna.
3.2 The Setting, Structure, and Decoration of the Tombs at Thebes and Amarna

In the early- to mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, Thebes was Egypt’s undisputed religious capital: the cult centre of Amun-Re, whose prominence was ever-rising.\textsuperscript{692} A burial in the Theban necropolis entailed proximity to the domain of this important god, as well as to the burial of the pharaoh, interred at a secret location in the Valley of the Kings. In general, Theban tombs were rock-cut and comprised three vertical levels: firstly, a superstructure, such as a pyramidion or stela; secondly, a ground-level forecourt leading into a decorated chapel, accessible for cultic purposes; and, finally, a burial chamber, conceptually associated with the Osirian underworld and inaccessible after the funeral.\textsuperscript{693} During this period, an approximately T-shaped tomb chapel structure was developed and executed at Thebes in variations. Its essential components were a ‘broad hall’ (also: ‘transverse hall’), commonly decorated with vignettes from the tomb owner’s life or a symbolic construction thereof and a ‘long hall’ (also: ‘corridor’), which intersected it to give the characteristic T-shape.\textsuperscript{694} In contrast to the life or life-like scenes of the broad hall, the long hall’s decoration was devoted to funerary rites and the journey to the afterlife, so that just as the tomb chapel was divided into two primary areas, so too was its decoration.\textsuperscript{695} Because the tombs were oriented on an east-west axis where possible, with the broad hall at the eastern end and the long corridor running to the west, this thematic or artistic distinction mirrored the

\textsuperscript{692} Snape 2011, 179-80.
\textsuperscript{695} Davies 1917, 21-2, 25; Smith 1998, 149; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999, 161; Hawass 2009, 108; Snape 2011, 187-8, 191-2; Anthony 2017, 16-7; Although a simple division of ‘ritual’ from ‘daily life’ can be problematic when the symbolic and magico-religious nature of the ‘daily life’ scenes is considered. See Robins 1990, 47-8; Hartwig 2004, 50; Bickel 2006, 84, 87-8, 92, 96, 102; Bryan 2009, 19; Angenot 2011, 257.
mythological journey of the deceased from east, land of the living, to west, that of the dead.\cite{696}

Under Akhenaten, Amarna’s most privileged residents were likewise provisioned to construct rock-cut tombs, although not on the west bank, as was traditional, but instead in the city’s eastern cliffs. Two main groups are designated the North Tombs (comprising seventeen) and the South Tombs (twenty-seven) but there is no consensus as to whether tomb owners in each group considered the division meaningful.\cite{697} Twenty-five of the tombs from both groups were deemed significant enough to be given reference numbers by early excavators (AT 1 through AT 25). All are incomplete, to varying degrees, and only eighteen preserve their owners’ names and titles. Exceedingly few preserve the names, epithets, or images of their owners’ wives or children, while the Tomb of Any is unique in including six votive stelae, dedicated by friends, family, and servants, providing a small insight into his social circle. The lack of analogous artefacts—or much at all—in Amarna’s remaining tombs suggests that these tombs were either less complete or more thoroughly emptied upon the city’s abandonment.

Structurally, the Amarna tombs resemble their Theban counterparts, usually including an outer court, a chapel with a columned broad hall and long hall, a burial shaft, and a niche for the display of mortuary statues.\cite{698} It is the decorative programme that distinguishes the Amarna tombs most readily from the Theban, in medium as well as content, with a

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \cite{696} Hawass 2009, 72-3; Hartwig 2010, 14.
\item \cite{697} Snape 2011, 209; cf. Shaw 2003, 161.
\item \cite{698} Baines and Málek 1980, 124-5.
\end{itemize}
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preference for relief carved directly into the rock walls over painted plaster decoration.\textsuperscript{699} It will not surprise that the advent of pseudo-monotheistic Atenism made the usual funerary scenes, with their profusion of deities, untenable for reproduction at Amarna. Yet, many of the ‘daily life’ scenes that abounded in the Eighteenth Dynasty are also absent, suggesting that these scenes, in the tomb context, held a deeper meaning: one whose symbolic and religious language was well enough understood to be considered categorically inappropriate for representation under Akhenaten.\textsuperscript{700}

The shift from painted plaster to relief, the innovation of new scene types, and the adaption of the old gives Amarna’s tombs a wholly different visual character to their predecessors. This is significant not only on an aesthetic or broadly (art-)historical level but also at the level of individual experiences and afterlife expectations. A long-spanning cultural preoccupation with death and afterlife is evident in the energy and resources the Egyptians expended toward mortuary practices and, prior to the Amarna Period, this afterlife was a fundamentally ‘Osirian’ one. Decoration of the tomb or ‘House of Eternity’ (\textit{hwt n nhh or pr ḏt})\textsuperscript{701} allowed the deceased to define the image of themselves that would persist in perpetuity, to ensure a safe passage to the afterlife, and to magically guarantee their spirit’s sustenance. The tomb was also a physical locus for the enactment of cult, wherein a mortuary statue might stand in for the deceased or a false door enable his spirit to come out from the burial place to receive offerings or prayers.\textsuperscript{702} At the most basic level, the tomb

\textsuperscript{699} Snape 2011, 209-11.
\textsuperscript{700} Manniche 2003, 45; cf. authors such as Bakir (1967, 159-60), who have seen the ‘daily life’ scenes in the tombs as solely reflecting the activities of the deceased on earth and a desire to continue those activities in the afterlife.
\textsuperscript{701} Hartwig 2004, 5.
\textsuperscript{702} Fazzini 1975, xxii; Baines and Málek 1980, 62; Simpson 1978, 19; Bryan 2002, 60; Assmann 2003, 47; Ikram 2003, 187; Dorman 2003, 30; Hartwig 2004, 1, 5; Étienne 2006, 96, 99; Hawass 2009, 211-2; Snape 2011, 192,
was also the resting place of the corpse, whose protection from humans, animals, and the elements was vital to a safe afterlife.\textsuperscript{703} In the Egyptian worldview, life on earth was short; existence in the hereafter, eternal. Thus, not only the scenes included in the tomb but also the minute details of their symbolism and composition worked to ensure the owner’s rebirth, re-animation, and eternal preservation, as well as to commemorate them and perpetuate their name (\textit{rn}) amongst the living.\textsuperscript{704}

At Thebes, a programmatic way of accomplishing this had developed, although it varied according to unique facets of the identity, status, and career of the deceased. This programme represented the accumulation of over a thousand years’ religious theorisation and artistic development, layered with innovations and adaptations specific to the Eighteenth Dynasty context. It is difficult to imagine the psychological impact of contemplating an afterlife totally empty of the gods who once ensured it: one in which all pre-existing ‘paths’ to a successful afterlife were voided and eternities were granted at the whim of the king. Yet this must have been the sobering reality for Amarna’s tomb owners. This chapter will explore artistic responses to Amarna’s unique theological and political milieu, addressing both what was lost and what was gained in the transition, and consider the consequences of these changes for individuals, in terms of the images of themselves and their families now acceptable and desirable to submit to eternity.


This study requires a significant caveat. Because the Amarna tombs are almost uniformly incomplete, certain lackings—such as the exceeding rarity of the deceased’s family in tomb decoration—may appear more extreme than was intended. Even so, the emergence of new scenes of the royal family offering to the Aten and undertaking the tasks of their ritualised ‘daily lives’ as a matter of course in Amarna’s tombs, replacing images of the deceased and his family in focal settings, is a definite trend, which may well have unsettled individuals concerned with establishing their own status and ensuring their own afterlives. I find it extraordinary how few officials’ wives, parents, and children find lasting representation in their tombs; only one official, Panehesy appears with his children. Given that marrying and producing heirs were social imperatives of Egypt’s elites, \(^{705}\) we must assume that most of these men were indeed married but that the new priority of focusing the royal family in the tomb meant that these non-royal families never received due commemoration during the lifetime of the city. Otherwise, by some trick of fate, their images have consistently been among those since destroyed.

3.3 Offerings for the Dead

Eternal life without the resources to make it comfortable and pleasurable would be a terrible prospect. Certainly, it is one that preoccupied the ancient Egyptian and one that he or she fought, both by the construction of the tomb as locus for physical offerings and by including artistic representations of such offerings prominently in the decoration. If one’s descendants lapsed in their duty to administer the mortuary cult—whether due to negligence, poverty, or the end of the family line—these scenes would ensure an afterlife replete with blessed food and drink. What was represented in the eternal time and space of the tomb was for eternity, so that images of the offerings, events, and rituals to be discussed in this chapter were not only—and not necessarily in any way—records of actual events but also the means by which they continually recurred. The magical significance of offering scenes, in particular, is suggested by their longevity, as one of Egyptian art’s oldest icons. However, a commemorative element was also at play here. In seeing the tomb owner and his wife or mother as richly dressed justified spirits, receiving not only basic sustenance but often elaborate and sumptuous goods, the visitor was reminded of their status and worthiness in life; the representation of offerings becomes a prompt for their performance, encouraging continued social awareness of and interaction with the deceased. Inscriptions inside or outside the tomb frequently explicate this desire to engage visitors in ritual services. They may even incentivise it by promising magical aid in return, as

708 Bickel 2006, 86; Brewer and Teeter 2007, 170, 189.
709 Hawass 2009, 214.
in the example from Iamnedjeh’s tomb (TT 84) below, which also strongly hints at the tomb’s commemorative function: recording “what [the deceased] [has] done on earth.”

"[O all living... (damaged)] who shall enter my tomb in order to look at what I have done upon earth, consisting of what is effective on behalf of the great god, may [Amun] favor you, ... (damaged) may you be made not to know death, and may you remember life; may the king of your time love you, and may your nose be revivified with [life, according as you say 'a gift which the king gives' ...] for the ka of Iamnedjeh."

Figure 3.1 reproduces an offering scene from the Tomb of Pairy (TT 139), a ‘Wab-Priest of Amun’ and ‘High Priest of Ptah’ under Amenhotep III. During this time, Egypt prospered and the majority of her wealth was housed in the temples, most prominently that of Amun. Pairy’s positions in these temple hierarchies must have afforded him considerable status and access to resources. With his wife, the ‘Mistress of the House’ Henutnofret, he fathered four sons and perhaps also four daughters, who appear throughout his tomb, performing acts of filial piety such as offering. That each of Pairy’s sons was a ‘Child of the Kap’ and at least one daughter was a royal ‘Lady in Waiting’ suggests a strong familial connection with the pharaoh’s court, extending to the education and occupation of Pairy’s children. Their titled presence in the scene uplifts him further.

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711 Text from the Tomb of Iamnedjeh (TT 84) (after Bryan 2009, 24).
712 Text from the Tomb of Iamnedjeh (TT 84) (after Bryan 2009, 24).
713 O’Neill 2015, 6.
714 O’Neill 2015, 17.
It is a son named Amenhotep who offers Pairy and Henutnofret flowers in Figure 3.1. The couple sits on overlapping chairs, atop a mat or low platform, and are separated from Amenhotep by a small offering table, raised above Pairy’s feet. Much has already been written about the symbolism of bouquets offered by the living to the dead. Although varying in composition—this one includes a regenerative and protective combination of lotus flowers, papyrus stalks, and poppy petals—716 they were known collectively by the Egyptians as ankh, written in the same manner as the Egyptian word for ‘life’.717 Extending an ankh bouquet toward the nose of the deceased may be considered a non-royal parallel to the common motif by which a god offers the ankh symbol to the pharaoh’s nose, granting him eternal life.718 Its aim, explicated in the Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), was that the “heart may partake of its tender growth, and that [the deceased] may do whatever [his] spirit desires for ever and ever.” 719 By touching the bouquet and breathing in its scent, Pairy receives the offering’s magical qualities and secures his own eternity, while the interceding offering table ensures his spirit’s sustenance. The depiction of food offerings may also connect this reception of eternal life with the initial feast attended by the deceased after being judged worthy by Osiris—or any number of other ritual meals. As such, offering scenes had the potential to benefit the deceased on multiple levels, guaranteeing his access to and wellbeing in the afterlife.

Yet, offering scenes also presented an opportunity for the deceased, as likely commissioner of the images, to express his social status. Pairy and Henutnofret’s elaborate dress marks

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716 O’Neill 2015, 34.
719 Text from the Tomb of Rekhmire (after Teeter 2011, 72).
both as worthy recipients of cultic attention and commemoration, not only from their children but from the full range of hoped-for visitors.\textsuperscript{720} Their postures are upright, dignified, and conventional, with Pairy appearing slightly ahead of his wife, his chair overlapping hers, although they are certainly to be interpreted as sitting side-by-side and embracing. Each chair, with its delicate lion’s feet, is a status symbol in itself, bolstered by an abundance of jewellery and ornamentation: bracelets, collars, unguent cones, heavy curled wigs, Henutnofret’s floral diadem and huge earrings, and Pairy’s sandals. Henutnofret’s gown is accentuated by a textured golden shawl and Pairy’s kilt by a secondary layer, which glows transparent over his calves, perhaps indicating a fine, costly material. Amenhotep’s comparatively plain costume confirms that the particular richness and status of the deceased couple is part of the intentional message of this scene.

Even common icons such as offering scenes may display their commissioners’ unique identities, intentions, and priorities, with countless possible variations marking possible semantic differences. Here, the artist draws special attention to Henutnofret’s heavily bejewelled arms by having them completely encircle Pairy’s chest. While this posture may appear stiff to modern eyes, it is one of the more relaxed and affectionate embraces depicted at Thebes during the Eighteenth Dynasty and must have conveyed such a relationship to viewers. It is also a position of prominence for Henutnofret, who approximately equals her husband in size and whose figure overlaps his at two points: her knees over his buttocks and her arm over his chest and right arm. By contrast, only a small part of Henutnofret’s left arm is obscured where it passes behind Pairy’s shoulder and neck.

\textsuperscript{720} We know that the Egyptians visited the tombs of past generations, because they occasionally left graffiti, recording their visits, and because tomb artisans often directly copied or adapted specific vignettes from older tombs into later compositions. On the former phenomenon, see: Richards 2005, 50.
making this instance one in which the artist has clearly privileged the display of Henutnofret’s figure over her husband’s. The same is not true across the entire decoration of Pairy’s tomb and yet this example holds weight, suggesting perhaps both Henutnofret’s own status and the status that Pairy might acquire through her. Respect is inherent in the space allocated to her.

In addition to its magically sustaining and commemorative value, the offering scene was steeped in the symbolism of eroticism and regeneration, which the Egyptians considered to be deeply related. Rebirth into the afterlife was conceived as just that, a second birth, requiring a second conception (see Chapter 1.4). 721 Given that the Egyptians saw a woman’s role in conception as two-fold—first, to stimulate her consort’s creative power and, second, to carry and nourish the foetus—it may be that a wife’s elaborate adornment in the tomb was intended to stimulate the deceased and facilitate his (and her) re-conception and rebirth. 722 A hope for continued beauty and sexual satisfaction in the afterlife may also have been expressed. 723 Certainly, the fit, youthful bodies of both Henutnofret and Pairy, whose erect nipple is exposed, as well as their clinging or transparent garments, emphasise their sexual maturity and potential union. The appearances of their children throughout the tomb reinforce this, as the literal products of that union.

The omnipresence of the lotus blossom—in the Theban tombs generally but particularly here, in Henutnofret’s hair, in Pairy’s hand, in the bouquet, and atop the offering table—is

723 Morton 1995, 182; Williams 2011, 43.
also telling. By their cyclical opening and closing, rising and sinking, the Egyptians considered lotuses potent symbols of the solar cycle, namely the daily rebirth of the sun after passing through the ‘womb’ of the underworld. The lotus may also be read as a visual metaphor for the vagina: an association explicated in the Egyptian love poetry of later periods. Potential narcotic uses in religious festivities, although unproven, may also have furthered the lotus’s erotic associations in this context (see Chapter 3.4), along with their scent—and that of the unguent cones worn by the deceased couple—given the well-attested association between scent and sexuality in Egyptian literature.

Yet, it is important to remember that the figures of both husband and wife are sexualised in this context, not only the wife. We should beware analyses of tomb decoration, which imply either that 1) only women played magical, sexual roles in the regeneration of the dead, or 2) the sole significance of women’s presence in the tomb was a sexual or magically sexual one. Reducing women to sexual symbols in the ‘reading’ of tomb scenes denies any desire of tomb owners to commemorate their wives, daughters, and mothers as individuals in their own rights or to provide for their afterlife needs. This seems unlikely, if tombs are understood as monuments to real families that existed in antiquity. On a related note, Carolyn Graves-Brown warns against interpreting touch and “gestures of affection” between married couples as automatically sexual in nature, arguing that these may equally be related to power dynamics, by analogy with the embraces between pharaohs and gods.

Considerations of the tomb’s magical functions must be balanced against their social utility and meanings for the living.

**Figure 3.2** reproduces a second offering scene from around the reign of Amenhotep III, this one from the tomb of the court florist, Nakht (TT 161).\(^{728}\) True to his profession, Nakht’s tomb is filled with extravagant floral imagery, perhaps expressing a proud professional identity. In **Figure 3.2**, Nakht receives the offering of an *ankh* bouquet alongside his wife, Tahmet. Appearing to extend from within the lotus blossom, already discussed as a symbol of rebirth reminiscent of the vagina, is a rounded yellow fruit, which may be either of the virtually identically represented mandrake and persea. Like the lotus, both fruits were sexual and reproductive symbols.\(^{729}\) Charlotte Booth cites the example of an Egyptian love poem in which the female object of the writer’s desire is described with a mouth like a lotus and breasts like mandrake fruits,\(^{730}\) while Chloe Kroeter argues that the lotus represented the vagina and the mandrake the penis: an interpretation that, if one subscribes to it, would certainly compound the sexual implications of this image of a fruit protruding from (or conversely, entering into) a lotus. An alternative—or additional—reading of the protruding fruit as representative of the rising sun also evokes the symbolism of rebirth that was so potent in the tomb context.\(^{731}\)

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\(^{728}\) Not to be confused with the more famous Tomb of Nakht (TT 52), who was a scribe and functionary in the temple of Amun under Thutmose IV.

\(^{729}\) Riggs 2014, 86-7; Graves-Brown 2015, 2.

\(^{730}\) Booth 2015, 29; Graves-Brown 2015, 2.

\(^{731}\) See, for example, Bryan (2009, 20), who applies this interpretation to a bouquet in the banquet scene from the Tomb of Amenemheb (TT 85).
Further iterations of the lotus in this scene, held in the hand and worn in the hair, are consistent with the offering scene from Pairy’s tomb, although here the wife and not the husband holds the lotus in their hand. The couple’s elaborate dress is also consistent, although not identical. Instead of Pairy’s opaque kilt and sheer over-garment, both of which bare the chest, Nakht wears a completely opaque and partially sleeved garment, in addition to a collar and wig, resembling Pairy’s. Still, in this example, the offering scene’s sexual undertones are hinted at arguably more strongly by the exposure of Tahmet’s nipple, darker than the surrounding skin. Lacking Henutnofret’s golden shawl, Tahmet models a gown that falls asymmetrically over her chest, covering the left breast but exposing the right, with a transparent swath of fabric covering only her left arm. The lotus blossom crowning her heavy wig is open, where Henutnofret wears closed buds, and she too embraces her husband, although at a slightly greater distance than in the example from Pairy’s tomb. These two scenes are variations on a motif omnipresent in the Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs, relating at once to the provisioning of the deceased couple, their commemoration as distinguished individuals, and the subtler, symbolic agenda of creating a sexually charged space for their magical regeneration.

It is often remarked that, under Akhenaten, the traditional Osirian afterlife was banished at a blow. Gone were the swath of deities involved in death, rebirth, and all their ritual requirements. If the Aten was to be a sole all-creating and all-encompassing deity, this makes good sense. However, it is less clear why so many of the Amarna tombs neglect to include an icon as fundamental as the offering scene, which did not traditionally include any explicitly represented deity. The scene is not completely absent at Amarna; one good example is preserved in the Tomb of Panehesy (Fig. 3.3) and there are two more, somewhat
less detailed, in the Tomb of Any (Figs. 3.4—3.5), along with several examples preserved on a smaller scale beyond the narrow context of Amarna’s tomb decoration. Yet, as a decorative element that was once virtually obligatory in Egyptian tombs, the offering scene undergoes an inarguable decline under Akhenaten, becoming an anomaly, rather than a guarantee. This begs the question of why. Specifically: did the overwhelming lack of offering scenes at Amarna relate to: 1) a new conception of the afterlife in which continual offerings were no longer required to sustain the deceased; 2) the availability of new sources of eternal sustenance under Akhenaten; or 3) only the incomplete nature of the tombs, among which many shrines remained undecorated?732

The first suggestion is easily rebutted. Although little is known of the Amarna tomb owner’s expectations for his afterlife transition, with few funeral scenes preserved, textual evidence indicates a persistent expectation of offerings. The Tomb of Meryre I contains numerous prayers and adorations to the royal couple, which demonstrate whence he expected such favours to come, begging from them “a good old age” and “lengthy lifetime,” followed by “a good funeral... and interment at the favoured ones’ cemetery.”733 Comparable texts appear in a similar location in Panehesy’s tomb, suggesting that new ideas regarding an Atenist afterlife were indeed devised and shared amongst Amarna’s elite. It was, likewise, Akhenaten who “grant[ed] the receiving of offering loaves that are issued in the (divine) presence, and of libations and offerings in the House of Aten.”734 More than ever, a good life on earth and the provision of the tomb, funeral, and mortuary offerings, depended on

733 Text from the Tomb of Meryre I (trans. Murnane 1995, 160). See similar wishes for a funeral from the king in the Tomb of May (Murnane 1995, 144), the Tomb of Ay (Murnane 1995, 109-10), the tomb of Parennefer (Murnane 1995, 177-8), and the Tomb of Ahmose (Murnane 1995, 122), amongst others.
the ruler’s good will, falling under the banner of “a gift which the king gives.”\textsuperscript{735} This traditional formula probably referred to the practice of royal offerings to the gods being repurposed as offerings to individual mortuary cults,\textsuperscript{736} as attested above with the divine offering loaves and in further examples from the tombs of Ay and Ahmose.\textsuperscript{737} However, Salima Ikram argues that it may also implicate a historical notion that everything on earth was the king’s own property, such that even when the offering was made by another party, the pharaoh was acknowledged as its original source.\textsuperscript{738} This concept aligns well with the impression I receive from the Amarna texts, which emphasise complete dependency on Akhenaten, even amongst his highest officials.

\begin{quote}
“May the children of your house libate for you (with) bread, beer, water, and breath

for you Ka... May you be given offerings and provisions from the offering-trough of the House of Aten.

May you be given incense and libation from the ‘staircase of the living one’, Aten. It is the king, the Aten’s son, who decrees it to you continually.”\textsuperscript{739}
\end{quote}

These mechanisms of sustaining the deceased may explain the comparative lack of offering scenes in the Amarna tombs. They suggest that, wherever we see the royal family making offerings to the Aten—addressed in \textbf{Chapter 2} as a common theme of Amarna tomb decoration—the offerings depicted would eventually become accessible not only to the god but to the tomb owner himself. In this context, it may have been pragmatic to choose a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{735} D’Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig 1988, 58.
\textsuperscript{736} Hartwig 2004, 87.
\textsuperscript{737} See the text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 165), which includes a prayer to the king for “milk coming forth on the offering table, and all sorts of offerings - all kinds of vegetables, bread, beer, and foodstuffs at every place of yours, all good and sweet things;” and another from the Tomb of Ahmose (trans. Murnane 1995, 121), asking the king for “offering loaves from his offerings.”
\textsuperscript{738} Ikram 2003, 192; see also, on this subject, Bleiberg 1996, 95.
\textsuperscript{739} Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 120). Emphasis mine.
\end{flushright}
royal offering scene over one of the tomb owner’s children offering directly to the deceased, something that could be otherwise secured by prayers to Akhenaten or the Aten, as in the example from Ay’s tomb above. Unlike the non-royal offering scenes popular at Thebes, the royal variant fulfils two crucial objectives: both the continual provisioning the dead and the specific Amarna Period prerogative of foregrounding the royal family and the Aten in the tomb. It seems that this dual usefulness outweighed the commemorative benefits of representing the deceased as the direct recipient of cultic attention. If “the permanence of rest in [one’s] tomb,” “the pronounce[ment] of [one’s] name continually forever,”\textsuperscript{740} eternal sustenance, and the continual piety of one’s children could all be granted by prayers to Akhenaten and the inclusion of royal offering scenes, then scenes in which these benefits were procured by non-royal means became redundant.

That said, the offering scene from Panehesy’s tomb (Fig. 3.3) is significant, not only because it appears so rarely at Amarna as a type but also because Panehesy is the only Amarna tomb owner to ever appear with his children. This stands in stark contrast to the Theban tombs, in which the deceased’s family frequently enjoyed important cultic and non-cultic roles. Like its Theban predecessors, Panehesy’s offering scene focuses on the tomb owner and his wife seated before an offering table with a third figure approaching from the right bearing an ankh bouquet. However, in this example, Panehesy or his artist has chosen to depict his children not as adults, performing their filial piety by providing offerings, but as corecipients with their parents. Panehesy’s son occupies a smaller stool, overlapping his father’s, while two daughters stand before their mother, labka’s, chair. One charmingly

\textsuperscript{740} Text from the Tomb of Meryre I (trans. Murnane 1995, 160-1).
grasps her sister’s arm, while the other mirrors her mother’s posture: raising her hand in a gesture of receiving offerings. The entire family is elaborately dressed, visually affirming their status and worthiness: labka in her long gown and wig, topped with an unguent cone and lotus blossom, and Panehesy wearing a long, pleated kilt with half-sleeved tunic in the Amarna style. In his hand is a handkerchief, signifying nobility,\(^\text{741}\) while labka holds a bunch of lotuses with drooping blossoms: now-familiar symbols of rebirth.

The placement of Panehesy’s children is particularly interesting. In the earlier Theban tombs, the deceased’s children typically appeared as adult offering-bearers (although see Figs. 3.6—3.7). It was in this role that they functioned most usefully in the context of their parents’ tombs: deliverers of eternal sustenance, conforming to a social ideal of filial piety that uplifted themselves and their parents. Thus, at Thebes, where smaller figures overlap the tomb owner’s, it is most often his wife, as illustrated by an example from Pairy’s tomb (Fig. 3.8) and another from Sennefer’s (Fig. 3.9). Even more commonly, his wife appeared seated behind, while the space beneath her chair and his was reserved for symbolic objects and animals: a scribal palette, evoking literacy; or a cat, mirror, or cosmetic vessel, evoking female sexuality (Fig. 3.10).\(^\text{742}\) In Panehesy’s tomb, a deliberate choice was made to include his children within the context of receiving offerings, rather than presenting them. The effect is to display the family as a singular unit, commemorated across two generations, even if this means that Panehesy’s son, with his youthful sidelock, and his daughters, more ambiguously, are preserved as eternally dependent children, rather than benefactors of their parents’ cult.

\(^{741}\) Hawass 2009, 216; Leprohon 2015, 317.
Perhaps this unusual depiction of Panehesy and Iabka’s children receiving offerings alongside their parents was related to the increased visibility of the royal couple and princesses as a holistic family unit at Amarna. As representations of royal children acquired greater ideological significance,educing At enist preoccupations with fertility, creativity, and the family, Panehesy may have commissioned this image of his family in an attempt to emulate that royal model. Indeed, the scene compares well with scenes of Akhenaten’s family at table preserved in Huya’s tomb (see Figs. 2.60—2.61 and the discussion in Chapter 3.4). Although the context differs, Tiye’s daughter Baketaten and two of Nefertiti’s daughters are here depicted seated or standing alongside their mothers, before tables laden with food and lotuses. Like Panehesy’s children, they both mirror their parents’ postures and interact sweetly with one another. Perhaps by depicting Panehesy’s children as co-recipients of offerings, rather than as adult offering-bearers, the artist or patron communicated a flattering affinity between the families of Panehesy and Akhenaten, even between Panehesy and Akhenaten as individuals. The promotion of the deceased’s identity as the head of a prosperous family was privileged over illustrating the future and eternal roles of his children in the mortuary cult. All exhibit physiognomies modelled on the royal portrait, furthering the impression that their artistic representation and the constructed identities they communicated were fundamentally defined in relation to Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters.
Yet, if we take this view, then it is surprising that we do not find similar images of children elsewhere in the Amarna tombs. Even tomb owners’ wives appear only rarely, where at Thebes their presence or that of the deceased’s mother was standard. This situation likely results, in part, from the unfinished nature of Amarna’s tombs. However, it is also a function of a deliberate increase in scenes centring the royal family. These scenes, if not intended to completely replace those of the deceased’s own family, at least appeared first and in focal positions usually devoted to more varied scenes. Indeed, regardless of the reason, the paucity of these traditional offering scenes in Amarna’s tombs eliminates one of the most frequent contexts in which an official’s children might reasonably appear, alongside funeral scenes and those of fishing and fowling in the marshes. The only other examples of offering scenes in the wall decoration of Amarna’s tombs are far less elaborate. They appear in the Tomb of Ay and include only Ay and his wife Tiy, both in fairly standard postures, with no children included either as providers or co-recipients of offerings (Figs. 3.4—3.5).

Additional offering scenes do survive from Amarna, beyond the tomb decorative context. This suggests that, despite changing artistic practices within this narrow domain, offering scenes retained their prior magical or symbolic significance during Akhenaten’s reign. This is understandable, too, given that provision of offerings for the dead and assurance of this via pictorial or textual representation had long been one of the most basic mortuary requirements. One example is found on a grave marker from the South Tombs Cemetery at Amarna (Fig. 3.11). At the top of this triangular-faced stela, a pattern of zig-zags and wedjat eyes, associated with the protection of Horus, conveyed the divine protection of the

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743 Panehesy’s son appears just once more, mirroring his father in a standard worshipful posture. See Davies 2004, pt. II, pl. 22.
deceased in symbolic terms. None of Egypt’s traditional funerary deities were deemed fit for
depiction on this stela and nor was the Aten, who almost exclusively sits above the royal
family, to the exclusion of common people. As a result, the artist was able to foreground the
deceased couple themselves, who occupy the majority of the decorated surface, along with
a far smaller, shaven-headed priest bearing a hes vase.

Perhaps curiously, given the Egyptian imperative to richly provision the dead, the offerings
themselves—like the priest—are allocated little space. The figures of the seated couple,
from the back legs of the woman’s chair to the tips of the man’s toes, extend across the
entire horizontal space of the stela, while the priest and two small offering stands are
crammed into the irregular portion of negative space between their bodies, the border, and
the inscription above. Rather than highlighting the reception of offerings as the main action
of the scene, the artist has paid particular attention to the couple’s relaxed, affectionate
embrace, which compares easily with intimate depictions of Akhenaten and Nefertiti (see,
for example, Figs. 2.55 and 3.12). The result is that the offering component of the scene,
with its crucial magical effectiveness, becomes secondary to the commemoration of the
deceased couple and the closeness of their relationship, even into death.

This shift in focus, combined with changes in the depiction of the human body, coheres with
a broader trend by which Amarna individuals commissioned images of themselves that
mirrored the public images of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, promoting a visual association and
identification between themselves and the royal couple. In this example, both husband and
wife appear with rounded bellies, giving them the impression of slouching or relaxing in
their seats. Their embrace is reciprocal—each has an arm around the other and she grasps
his hand where it passes over her shoulder—in contrast to the noted trend in Egyptian art by which wives tended to supportively embrace their husbands, while they appeared indifferent or elsewhere focused (for example, Figs. 3.1—3.2, 3.6—3.7, and 3.9—3.10).\(^{744}\) Indeed, although this husband rests a hand by his knee in what might be loosely considered a gesture of receiving offerings, his attention is not on those offerings at all. Instead, he turns his head back toward his wife, using his sightline to detract attention from the priest and his goods. It appears that, in the absence of the traditional gods and given an afterlife that relied primarily upon royal provisions made via the Aten cult, this couple as patrons or the artist himself chose to foreground the figures of the deceased, whose most prominent characteristics were not a profusion of status-affirming adornments or offerings but, instead, the naturalistic intimacy of their embrace.

Given the symbolic and religious significance royal familial relations developed under Akhenaten, this mirroring of the royal couple’s physiognomy and interactions may have highlighted the parallel nobility and virtuousness of the deceased pair. Perhaps to adopt the style and central preoccupations of Amarna art was, equally, a statement of loyalty to the king whose rule precipitated that art, such that to appear with an ‘Amarna figure’ in such a posture communicated devotion to Akhenaten and, by extension, the Aten as a central component of one’s public image or identity. The same trend is evident beyond Akhenaten’s capital in the offering scenes that adorn an Amarna Period stela from Saqqara (Fig. 3.13). In the central register here, a husband and wife appear seated on lion-footed chairs before an offering table. The wife is notably larger. In her lap she holds a child in a manner that clearly

\(^{744}\) Watterson 1991, 5.
mirrors scenes of the royal family at Amarna (see Figs. 2.58, 2.72—2.73, and 2.77) and beneath her chair is a stylised bouquet, which we might associate with life or creation in the context of receiving offerings to revitalise and sustain the deceased.

Another stela from Amarna Period Saqqara gives a similar impression (Fig. 3.14). It includes a fragmentary offering scene in which the wife holds one child in her lap, while another sits beneath her chair. In a charming play on the Egyptian practice of placing symbolic or otherwise significant elements beneath the chair, the seated child appears to play with a mirror and a lily, each with their classic associations of feminine sexuality and rebirth. By its positioning with these motifs beneath the chair, the child becomes a symbol in itself, evidencing the couple’s fertile sexual union. The manner of execution also strongly implicates the Amarna flirtation with what we might call a ‘constructed naturalism’ and royal-religious preoccupations with the family unit. These are adaptations specific to the Amarna cultural context. At the level of the individual, they imply a desire to express familial harmony and productivity and ideally executed familial roles as core components of the publicised identities of the deceased.

A possible painted offering scene from the Main Chapel of Amarna’s Workmen’s Village is also worth considering (Figs. 3.15—3.16). Although only partly reconstructed, it aligns well with the canonical offering scenes of Eighteenth Dynasty Thebes. A man and wife sit on

745 According to Ockinga and Binder’s (2013, 504) interpretation. The blossom is ambiguously defined in their reconstruction.

746 See also: a comparable stela from Amarna Period Heliopolis, given in Bakry 1972, 56-7. Bakry, however, interprets the inclusion of the daughter squatting beneath her father’s chair as “a sentimental parental gesture.”

747 Weatherhead and Kemp 2007, 298, 361.
lion-footed chairs at left, each adorned with collars and unguent cones and holding bouquets. Lotus buds drape over the woman’s long wig and she extends an arm around her husband’s shoulders in the traditional unreciprocated fashion. Although no trace of offerings is preserved, a man approaching the couple from the right stands in an appropriate position to be an offering-bearer, while chantresses shaking sistra at far right confirm a ritual context for this scene. The deceased couple’s bouquets further this impression, composed of lotus flowers and buds, representing rebirth, as well as either mandrake or persea fruits, with their implications of fertility, sexuality, and the solar cycle (Fig. 3.16). Lotus petals also formed a significant part of the patterned frieze above, reinforcing the symbolism of rebirth, while the papyrus flower held by the woman was associated with youth and protection.\footnote{Ruiz 2001, 139.}

While the Main Chapel’s function is uncertain, a funerary association seems clearly in evidence. Barry Kemp has suggested an intent for “family gatherings,”\footnote{Kemp 1989, 273. See also, p. 304.} likely in a funerary or post-funerary ritual context. The chapel’s decoration is largely destroyed, preserving no image or certain textual reference to any deity. One possible reference to Amun has suggested to Weatherhead and Kemp that the chapel may date between Akhenaten’s death and Amarna’s abandonment,\footnote{Weatherhead and Kemp 2007, 361. See also: Kemp 1989, 273.} which might explain the very traditional execution of this offering scene, rare at Amarna. However, too little evidence remains to be certain at present. Still, if we read examples such as the Saqqara stelae and Panehesy’s offering scene, above, as indicative of individuals’ intentions to express something about their identity by publicly emulating Amarna royal forms, then perhaps this offering scene reflects the
opposite: a statement of identity tied to traditional forms and mediums. Both the couple’s physiognomy and their costume conforms to a pre-Amarna standard, most evident with regard to the man: his lean, triangular torso and simple kilt contrasting the bulging stomachs and fluttering half-sleeved robes typical of Amarna’s elite.

Regardless of the manner of their appearance in art, it is certain that offerings for the deceased remained a crucial component of Amarna mortuary practice. Tomb statues continued to be produced, often carved directly into the rock walls and sometimes including the tomb owner’s wife by his side (Figs. 3.17—3.18). We can assume that these statues retained their prior significance as receptacles for deceased’s ka, with their enclosing niches resembling doors, through which the spirit might pass to receive offerings or prayers. Uniquely, Any’s tomb also included a series of six votive stelae, dedicated to the deceased by friends, servants, and relatives. Of these, four include small-scale offering scenes, dedicated by one Pakha, an ‘Overseer of Works Projects’, a brother named Ptahmay, and two servants, Anymen and Ay (Figs. 3.19—3.22). In varying levels of elaboration, each stela depicts Any seated before an offering table or basket of offerings, while the stela’s commissioner appears in the role of offering-bearer at right. Pakha and Any each offer the deceased the traditional ankh bouquet, while Anymen offers a jar, and Ptahmay raises only his empty hand, apparently gesturing as he offers a verbal prayer for his brother’s wellbeing. That four of Any’s six votive stelae preserve offering scenes suggests that individuals close to the deceased considered this a key means of expressing their respect for, and fulfilling their duties toward, him.
Specific costume differs between the stelae but common elements are Any’s pointed wig, the Amarna style kilt and half-sleeved tunic, and sometimes collars, sandals, and unguent cones, which compare well with earlier Eighteenth Dynasty offering scenes. We can certainly read, in these pieces, the same desire to commemorate the deceased as a distinguished individual. Each stela memorialises the relationship between Any and the commissioner, preserving that relationship into the afterlife. They uplift the deceased by proving him a respected figure within his social circle: a worthy brother, peer, or employer. They might also express the commissioner’s desire to elevate their own social standing by memorialising their connection to a deceased individual who may yet have held considerable sway amongst the living and who might, moreover, provide supernatural assistance as a justified spirit. Any’s votive stelae help to illustrate something that is often suppressed in Amarna’s tomb decoration: the respect and authority granted to non-royal individuals by their peers in contexts to which Akhenaten and his god bore little relevance.

To conclude this subject with an amusing piece: one more source of the offering scene at Amarna may be found in its apparent ‘apeing’ for a number of statuettes, in which one or two monkeys crouch by tables piled with food (Figs. 3.23—3.24). Yet, the fact that this analysis has so quickly descended into monkey figurines should remind us just how rare the offering scene is, as a rule, in Akhenaten’s capital: particularly in tomb decoration and particularly in comparison to its omnipresence at Thebes. It appears that under Akhenaten the need for this scene was eclipsed by a new focus on the king as the distributor of offerings from the temples of Aten, such that a combination of scenes of 1) the royal family

751 See also: the stela dedicated by the charioteer, Ptahmay, which depicts the commissioner transporting Any as a (presumably) deceased spirit, depicted with an unguent cone and shebyu collars. Davies 2004, pt. V, pl. 22.
offering to Aten, 2) temples and palaces filled with food and drink, and 3) the region’s natural abundance provided the major artistic sources of sustenance for the dead. The implication, borne out in the Amarna texts, appears to have been that through faithfulness to the king and through the king’s faithfulness to the Aten, the deceased would continue to live out his afterlife on earth with access to palatial luxury and abundant resources, regardless of the concrete cultic actions of his descendants. Still, as always at Amarna, the incomplete nature of the tombs, the few examples that do remain, and the fragmentary or selective nature of the evidence more broadly preserved should prevent us from suggesting that offering scenes were intentionally proscribed in any way.
3.4 Banqueting and the Beautiful Feast of the Valley

Celebrate the holiday, O god’s father!
Put incense and fine oil
Together to your nostrils
And garlands of water lilies and
Mandrakes on your breast,
While your sister whom you love
Sits at your side.
Put song and music before you.
Ignore all evil, recall for yourself joy.
Until that day of landing comes
At the land that loves silence.

To your Ka. Spend an optimal day, you favoured
by Amun. May he cause for you to enter and exit
his god’s chapel to see the completeness of his
face. Receive snw-bread, which his Ka gives at
every feast of heaven and earth.

A song accompanying a banqueting scene.
After Harrington 2013, 122.

The offering scene’s subdued eroticism is made explicit in scenes of festive banqueting, with
which they share several important features. Here again, the deceased couple appears,
 splendidly dressed, before a table laden with food. Yet, rather than appearing alone before
a priest or family member bearing an offering, the setting is a party: copious guests,
musicians playing instruments or clapping their hands, attendants pouring wine or
spreading ointments, even turning to expose a breast or butt-cheek to the viewer in rare
frontal perspective (Fig. 3.25). Inscriptions record the musicians’ songs or well-wishes for
the tomb owner and his guests. A recurring formula—“Spend a pleasant day”—urges
mindful enjoyment of the spectacle. Although omnipresent at Thebes, these banquets
disappear completely from the Amarna tombs, lending their themes and iconography only
in part to newly devised scenes of the royal family sharing a meal, in which the tomb owner
himself plays a service role. A lavish banquet, situating the deceased at the resplendent

After Gregersen 2015, 80.
centre of his social world, is replaced by yet another opportunity to celebrate the king and his kin and to define the dead in terms of their usefulness to Akhenaten.

Perhaps this is partly because, where inscriptional evidence offers a specific context for these banquets, it is usually the Beautiful Feast of the Valley: a religious festival strongly associated with Hathor and an Osirian afterlife. More often, however, captions are non-specific, empowering the depicted banquet to stand in for any number of occasions, including festivals the tomb owner attended in life, the revivifying post-funeral meal, and feasts to be enjoyed after death as a justified spirit. The Beautiful Feast followed each year’s harvest and from its connection to seasonal regeneration it acquired an analogous association with personal regeneration after death. The festival was rooted simultaneously in the transition from life to death and its reverse: the restoration of the deceased’s ability to participate in the social world of the living. The liminal space of the tomb provided an ideal locus for this communion: of magical benefit to the deceased but surely also emotional benefit to their survivors, as an opportunity for joint remembrance and commemoration of the dead.

A major component of this festival was the procession from the east bank of the Nile, land of the living, to the west, land of the dead. During this procession, the cult statue of Amun-Re visited the mortuary temples of Egypt’s past kings. Festival-goers followed the statue

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752 Riggs 2014, 87; Bryan 2015, 187.
753 Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 15; Hawass 2009, 211, 229.
to the west bank, where they revisited their own relatives’ tombs and enjoyed a lavish meal together with the deceased. In these scenes, living and dead participants are not always clearly differentiated,757 mingling as one crowd, and it is this total revivification of the dead that necessitated the abundance of sexual imagery we find here. Consistently, banquet scenes foreground richly adorned young bodies, sensuous touch and scent, music, dance, intoxication, and even potentially narcotic indulgence, all of which combined to stimulate the temporary re-emergence or rebirth of the deceased and create a transcendent, otherworldly experience for the living.758

The positioning of the deceased couple at the banquet mirrors their positioning in the offering scenes discussed above. Typically, they sit side-by-side before a table heaped with food, attended by women, who may bear wine, ointments, or other goods. It is the surrounding context of guests, musicians, and servants that best differentiates banquets from offerings. The arrangement of guests is itself worth noting. Men and women may sit together as couples, mirroring the tomb owner and his wife, but guests are most often segregated by gender. Thus, while the suggestion of eroticism is widespread, the potential for actual sexual union and magical regeneration is available only to the deceased couple and, optionally, to a small number of other couples, usually family members or named peers. The total absence of children amongst the guests reinforces the impression of an adult-oriented, implicitly erotic event. Sensual—as distinct from sexual—touch between same-gendered individuals is given a rare arena for display, while adolescent serving girls,

757 Manniche 2003, 44; Bickel 2006, 86; Gregersen 2015, 80. See also: the text from TT 161 quoted at the beginning of this section, which records a wish for the deceased to exit the tomb to receive sustenance from feasts given by the living.
sometimes nude, provide an additional hint at sexuality: pouring drinks and adorning guests with collars and ointments. Food is never explicitly consumed\textsuperscript{759} but alcohol is omnipresent and sometimes consumed to the point of vomiting.

The banquet from the Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100) is a classic example, exhibiting a clear division between male and female guests (Figs. 3.26—3.27). Thirty-three female guests appear between these two figures, with the majority kneeling on mats, one knee parallel to the ground and the other bent with the knee approaching the chest. Some sit individually, while others overlap with one or two peers. One woman is granted the highest status in the group by her unique allocation of a feline-footed chair at the far left of the lowest register in Figure 3.26. A dedicated table of food sits before her and bracelets adorn each wrist. An inscription identifies her, to the literate viewer, as Rekhmire’s “beloved mother, the royal ornament, Bet,”\textsuperscript{760} justifying her elevation by her relationship to both the deceased and the royal court. It is likely that Bet, having predeceased her son, is one of the dead who has materialised for the purposes of the banquet, which may also be a factor in her distinction from the other guests.\textsuperscript{761} With one hand resting delicately in her lap, she lifts a bowl to receive the wine poured by her attendant: one of twenty-nine such attendants and six musicians present to serve the thirty-three women. This significant number suggests that their presence was crucial, either as a demonstration of the feast’s extravagance or due to a perceived symbolic or magical value, perhaps by their perpetual availability to serve the

\textsuperscript{759} Manniche 1987, 41; Bober 1999, 46; Green 2004, 204, 213; Bickel 2006, 93; Harrington 2013, 115-6; cf. Amarna royal banquets in which eating is sometimes directly shown.

\textsuperscript{760} Davis 1973, 62.

\textsuperscript{761} Harrington 2013, 15.
deceased in his tomb or as contributors to the aura of sexuality that might facilitate his rebirth.

The regular inclusion of musicians in banquet scenes also deserves consideration. Rekhmire’s banquet includes a single woman, playing a long-necked instrument in the second register of Figure 3.26 and two groups of musicians, one female and one male, performing for guests in Figure 3.27. The former group comprises a harpist, a lutenist, a tambourinist, and two women clapping and singing; the latter, only a harpist and lutenist. Each is associated with a same-gendered audience. In this festive, funerary context, including musicians served several overlapping purposes. Firstly, it evoked an association with music as an instrument of temple ritual and with Hathor, as a goddess of music, dance, sexuality, intoxication, and afterlife. From this perspective, the music may relate as much to the magical process of drawing out deceased spirits as to the banquet’s entertainment. Secondly, the inclusion of musicians contributed to a broader sensory experience embedded in the scene’s iconography. In life, music and dance may evoke powerful emotive or spiritual responses; in art, representations of sensory experiences such as sound and movement may elicit similarly potent memories. For example, we have the visual suggestion of sound, in the inclusion of actively playing musicians; of scent, in the gesture of holding a flower to the nose; of taste, by a fruit held toward the lips or tables piled with food; of touch, by a servant’s hands rubbing ointment into the skin; and the cognitive sensation of intoxication, by the pouring of wine or raising a vessel to drink. The banquet is frozen in an eternal moment of wine flowing, fruit about to be tasted, music always playing.

762 Vivante 2007, 12-3; Graves-Brown 2015, 2.
At Rekhmire’s banquet, the musicians’ postures, like the guests’, are largely stiff and formulaic. However, an attempt has been made in the top register of Figure 3.27 to enliven the figure of a female tambourinist, who holds her instrument over her shoulder and bends parted knees. A more striking attempt to relax the strictures of Egyptian artistic representation is evident in the lowest register of Figure 3.26, in which a pouring girl turns to display her back and buttocks to the viewer. These small breaches of Egyptian decorum are permissible as exceptions to a rule. On a purely artistic level, they add variety and interest to the broader depiction of canonical figures in the tomb. Yet the positioning of women’s bodies in unusual ways and the exposure of parts usually hidden also bolsters the scene’s sexual undertones and a sense of transgressing normal boundaries that is highly appropriate to the context of festivities undertaken with the dead in the tomb. 763

The same effect is achieved by the twisting body of a nude but heavily ornamented dancing lutenist in the banquet scene from the Tomb of Nakht (TT 52) (Fig. 3.28). This artist 764 has similarly relaxed artistic conventions surrounding the human image to display the lutenist’s exposed breasts from a frontal perspective: one bare and the other playfully masked by the similarly shaped body of her instrument. This composition is the more masterful of the two. Each of its three musicians is distinct, with individualised collars and wigs, and the harpist’s instrument ornamented by a swath of animal skin. The musicians are closely grouped, overlapping at points, and the lutenist turns her head back to share an intimate look with the flautist behind her: so close that the lotuses crowning each of their hairpieces brush.

764 Or, as ever, more likely in the context of Egyptian tomb decoration: ‘these artists’.
The lutenist’s thighs press together, as was usual for a woman in Egyptian art, but her calves are separated, with both heels raised to evoke movement in time to music. The sweep of braids over her shoulder furthers this lively sensuality and the illusion of movement continues down to each woman’s fingers, arranged in the midst of play, so that the music may continue eternally. A similar lutenist in the second register of Djeserkerasoneb’s banquet scene (Fig. 3.25) throws her head back in an emotive display. The result is, doubly, the evocative recreation of a festive occasion, enjoyable to look at, and a vehicle for the magical transformations that would enable the deceased to, first, become a justified spirit and, later, return to dine with the living. Sensual movement, touch, and gaze, partial nudity, and erotically fine adornment offer a promise of sexual stimulation and rebirth central to the designs of Egyptian tomb decoration.

It may be a consequence of tomb decoration’s predominantly male direction and execution that female banqueters such as these are consistently more elaborately and interestingly conceived than the male. In Rekhmire’s tomb, markedly less consideration has been imparted to the men’s banquet (Fig. 3.27). While the women appear alone, in pairs, or in threes, the men invariably appear in triads, overlapping one another to the greatest possible extent. Thirty-three men are present, balancing the women in number, yet they occupy less space. Moreover, they are attended by only twelve servers and two musicians, compared to twenty-nine and six, respectively, in the women’s banquet. These attendants are identically dressed with shaven heads and simple kilts and the guests, too, are barely distinguishable from one another—wearing short, flat hairstyles, unguent cones, kilts, and collars; holding either lotus flowers, buds, cups, or handkerchiefs—where the women show at least some variation in hairstyle and ornamentation.
The result is that, while the actions and iconography of the two banquets compare well, the male portion appears less thoughtfully executed. This extends to its inscriptions. Where female attendants are captioned with comments and well wishes, such as “For thy ka! Spend a festive day!”, the male attendants are silent; their musicians’ songs are truncated in comparison to the women’s. This has led Norman de Garis Davies to dismiss the men’s portion of Rekhmire’s banquet entirely, calling it “so commonplace as to call for no remark” and finding it “amusing to note what vivacity the artist has conferred on the scene above and what dullness on the men’s entertainment below.” Kanawati makes a similar generalisation regarding banquet scenes: that, “in general, the artists showed great vitality in women’s parties and formality in those of men,” but likewise provides no interpretation of this differentiation.

Perhaps we are witnessing a gendered distinction in acceptable behaviour, whereby women could exhibit some looseness or carelessness and interact more intimately amongst themselves, while more decorous behaviour was expected of elite men, more likely to hold the sobering responsibilities of public office. However, we might also consider this discrepancy the result of twin biases, beginning with that of the artist. If these banquets were genuinely carried out in two parts, with men and women celebrating separately, then male artists may have taken more joy in imagining what the women were doing without them than in recording their own festivities. In the absence of experience, they may have conjured up something lively and sensual, complete with lithe, young bodies, twisting coyly

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766 Davies 1973, 63.
767 Kanawati 2001, 103.
to display their backsides to the viewer: a male-oriented design for a female-exclusive event. Conversely, even if the segregation of single men and women was an artistic convention and the two banquets were, in reality, one, the assumption that the majority of Egyptian artisans experienced some attraction to women provides a simple explanation for why women’s bodies and activities were afforded more interest and sensual attention in the festive context.

From a magical perspective, too, it was women who were perceived as needing to stimulate the creative energy of the deceased to facilitate their rebirth. This created a practical incentive for the representation of alluring female bodies that did not necessarily exist for men and may explain the innovation of new modes of representing female movement. To these considerations, we must add the biases of modern viewers, from Davies to myself, in allocating interest and value to a scene based on such subjective features as liveliness, naturalism, and sensuality, rather than to what was likely more relevant: the scene’s ability to perform its intended magical and commemorative functions. What we read as inadequate in the men’s banquet, as compared to the women’s, must have been deemed sufficient by the patron that demanded it and the artists that executed it. It was the performative effect of both images and texts, with their well-wishes for the deceased, that was paramount in the tomb context.

There is much of a symbolic nature to unpack in these scenes, as Egyptian art was never solely representational but always encoded layers of symbolic or religious meaning.

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768 Roth 2000, 194, 198.
769 Robins 1986, 7.
Mortuary ‘art’ was primarily oriented toward the goal of regeneration after death. The nature of the banquet as a communion between the living and the dead is also relevant. This communion necessitated a weakening of worldly boundaries, experienced via intoxication and perhaps also narcotic indulgence, indicated by the pouring of wine or beer, the mixing of substances, and the frequent inclusion of lotuses and mandrakes. Intoxication itself was conceptually tied to the erotic, both through its bodily effects and its association with Hathor, ‘Lady of Drunkenness’. For participants in the banquet, “a good drunkenness” heightened the diverse sensory experiences indicated by music—also conceptually linked to ritual and sexuality—in combination with rich-scented unguents and ointments, the sight of alluring bodies, and the sensation of touch: fastening a collar around the neck, rubbing ointment into the skin.

In Figure 3.29, the same sensation of touch is evoked by a nude serving girl, who bows to adjust the earrings of a seated guest, part of an overlapping group of three women. The artist draws special attention to this girl by framing her figure with the extended arms of two guests, which converge at either side of her lower thighs. Although apparently young and smaller in scale than the women she serves, the girl is endowed with substantial breasts. Folds of fat at her torso, arising as she leans forward to her task, promote an impression of youth and health. The large breasts of the two women in front of her, each with nipples prominently displayed through golden shawls, further suggest a sexual subtext to the interaction, with their colour and roundness recalling the symbolically erotic

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771 Text from a banquet scene in the tomb of Amenemheb (TT 85) (after Bryan 2009, 20).
772 Quirke and Spencer 1992, 151, 153; Manniche 2003, 35, 44; Emerit 2013, 7; Graves-Brown 2015, 2.
mandrake fruit held by the rightmost woman in the group.\textsuperscript{773} Heightened sensuality is also evident in Djeserkarasonob’s tomb (Fig. 3.30), where a nude serving girl—herself exquisitely ornamented with a braided wig, fillet, unguent cone, and long necklace—bows to adjust the wig of a seated woman, while another stands by with a floral collar and lotuses ready to bestow. For the Egyptians, hair and wigs held a deep sexual significance, borne out in writing and iconography,\textsuperscript{774} making the adjustment of the wig by a nude girl a suggestive image, which must have been understood as such in its original context.

Elsewhere amongst the Theban tombs, it is not only attendants who touch the guests, in rendering their services, but also guests of equal status, who touch and interact with one another, often in an implicitly homoerotic manner. This occurs in a few common motifs. Note, for example, the woman in the upper register of Djeserkarasonob’s banquet (Fig. 3.25) who offers her companion a mandrake fruit, which the Egyptians considered an aphrodisiac and may have had narcotic or soporific properties.\textsuperscript{775} This motif must bear some significance, because it recurs across numerous Theban tombs, including TT 175 (Fig. 3.31), the Tomb of Nakht (Fig. 3.32), and the Tomb of Nebseny (Fig. 3.33). In the latter example, the same sexually-suggestive gift of a mandrake is accompanied by a gesture that would never be interpreted as other than romantic or sexual if it took place between a man and a woman: the placement of a hand upon the recipient’s thigh, almost brushing her own hand.

\textsuperscript{773} An association between these golden shawls, common in banquet scenes, and Hathor ‘the Golden One’ would likewise suit the banquet context well. For this epithet, see: Pinch 1982, 150.
\textsuperscript{774} Watterson 1991, 8; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999, 156; Graves-Brown 2015, 1.
\textsuperscript{775} Derchain 1976, 8; Emboden 1981, 50-3; Manniche 1987, 42; Manniche 1997, 31; Hartwig 2004, 99.
Affectionate or sensual touches between female guests appear elsewhere in Nebseny’s banquet scene. At the left of the second register in Figure 3.34 is a charming group of three women, kneeling on mats. The leftmost wraps an arm around the woman to her right in a fashion that directly parallels the male-female couples seated on chairs in the registers above and below. At the same time, the rightmost woman in the triad turns her head back to communicate with central figure, offering the scent of a lotus to her nose. As was appropriate for such scenes, each woman is the picture of youth, prosperity, and sexuality, with long wigs banded with lotus-ornamented fillets, large hoop earrings, bracelets, armlets, and unguent cones. Similar exchanges, in which one person turns against the grain to offer the scent of a lotus to the person behind them, recur throughout the Theban tombs and notably in both the male and female portions of the banquet in Pairy’s tomb (Figs. 3.35—3.36). Note also the reciprocal embrace of two women in the second register of the banquet in TT 175 (Fig. 3.37), one of whom sits with an arm around her neighbour’s waist in a position common between husbands and wives and the other, who turns back and raises a hand to touch her partner’s face or wig. This same-sex play on a spousal embrace is juxtaposed with the enlarged figures of the tomb owner at his wife at the left of the scene: the wife encircling her husband’s waist in the same fashion.

I have already mentioned the two female musicians from the Tomb of Nakht, whose faces come so close that the lotuses in their hairpieces touch (Figs. 3.28 and 3.38) and although the male participants in banquet scenes interact with one another far less freely than the women, vignettes such as that in Djeserkarasonet’s tomb, where one man turns back to assist or comfort a vomiting friend (Fig. 3.25) provide as much amusement as charming closeness. With one hand at the vomiting man’s waist and the other extending to his
shoulder, this too might be read as loosely playing on the posture of the husband and wife seated at the far left of the same register: she with one hand holding a lotus bud at her husband’s waist and the other touching his shoulder. Certainly, in these banquet scenes, we are given an intentional display of close proximities and social connectivities, as well as one of personal luxury and status; indeed, the sensuality of the participants’ interactions is part of that imagery of indulgence.

However, to speak of the banqueting scene’s transference from Thebes to Amarna is to speak of a transference in part and of parts. Only elements of this rich iconography were carried down the Nile to Akhenaten’s capital. For example, an icon of pouring wine or beer, independent from drinking it, has been much discussed in symbolic terms (see Theban banquet examples in Figs. 3.26—3.27). It is often considered a visual pun, whereby the verb stj ‘to pour’ is conflated with an additional meaning, ‘to ejaculate’ or ‘to impregnate’, which was a requirement for the magical re-conception that facilitated rebirth in the afterlife. This sexual interpretation of the pouring motif, which continues to appear at Amarna, is worth considering due to the frequent interplay of writing and art in ancient Egypt, the Egyptian tendency to reference sexual acts obliquely rather than explicitly, and the sense that it makes in both the physical context of the tomb and the iconography of Akhenaten, as a pharaoh who strongly emphasised concepts of fertility and creation. The act of pouring someone’s cup, like supplying them with ornaments and ointments, may equally be read as mirroring cultic activities undertaken before statues of the gods or the

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776 Manniche 1987, 42; Robins 1990, 52; Robins 1993b, 189; Manniche 1997, 33; Bickel 2006, 94; Graves-Brown 2015, 3.
dead. By evoking ritual care, this pouring motif may further guarantee the regeneration and posterity of its recipient, whether a deceased tomb owner or the Amarna royal couple.

Both drinking and sexuality were key to the conception of the goddess Hathor, who was often invoked in inscriptions accompanying banquet scenes. She is probably the goddess implicated in the TT 82 banquet, where a musician sings, “the goddess is like a woman, who sits drunken outside her room with locks of hair falling on her breast,” illustrating the conceptual link between drunkenness and desire in this festive context. The act of pouring is fundamental in facilitating a sexually-suggestive drunkenness and thereby also in the magical sexual union necessary for the deceased to transgress the life-death boundary and feast with the living. In this way, interpretations of pouring as a visual metaphor for sex and impregnation cohere with one of the most fundamental purposes of the New Kingdom tomb: being, to facilitate a continuous connection between the living and the dead. The placement of banquet scenes in the transverse hall—the most accessible decorated part of the tomb, close to its entrance—reflects their important role in facilitating this connection.

Although outside the context of the banqueting scene, motifs of pouring and drinking appear at Amarna in both royal and non-royal examples. In each case, a wife pours into her husband’s cup—perhaps contradictorily if we view pouring as a direct metaphor for impregnation but understandably if we take into account the cultural preference to show

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778 Bickel 2006, 93.
780 Excerpt from a song accompanying a banqueting scene in TT 82 (after Manniche 1997, 32).
781 Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 30.
women serving their husbands, rather than the reverse. Among Amarna’s examples of the pouring motif are an unfinished stela featuring Akhenaten and Nefertiti (Fig. 3.39), a similar but more detailed royal pouring scene from the Tomb of Meryre II (Fig. 3.40), and a private funerary stela belonging to two men, Menena and Yaya, both of whom receive cups from their wives, Mery and Tashety, although this is not explicitly a pouring scene (Fig. 3.41).

The question is then, firstly, whether any consistent meaning can be applied to this broad category of scenes in which husbands receive drinks from their wives and, secondly, whether this can be justifiably related to the pouring motif as it appears in offering and banqueting scenes at Thebes. Sigrid Hodel-Hoenes had suggested a romantic or sexual interpretation for a husband’s reception of a cup from his wife represented twice in the Eighteenth Dynasty Theban Tomb of Sennefer, citing the emphasis on touch in each example: Meryt supporting Sennefer’s elbow in one and touching his thigh in another.782 However, none of the three Amarna examples foreground touch in this way, although in each case the contact between vessels or the stream of liquid itself indirectly connects husband to wife. Bernhard Riefling draws a comparison between a scene in the Theban Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky (Fig. 3.42) and the Amarna stela belonging to Menena and Yaya (Fig. 3.41). Both scenes feature husbands seated before their standing wives, unguent cones atop the wives’ heads, and the provision of drink from two differently shaped vessels. In the royal pouring scene from the Tomb of Meryre II (Fig. 3.40), these vessels appear again, as Nefertiti strains the contents of a long, narrow jug into Akhenaten’s cup. The

782 Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 133; Riefling 2016, 168.
strainer is absent from a similar royal pouring scene on an unfinished stela from Amarna (Fig. 3.39).

Each iteration of this motif, in spite of their differences, gives the distinct impression of a ritual act. If an offering table were inserted between each husband and wife, the scenes would easily mirror the offering scene with seated recipient, standing provisioner, and—in the higher class examples—lavish dress, often including the ritually suggestive unguent cone.\footnote{Riefling 2016, 169.} The ceremonial or otherwise symbolic nature of this motif is most evident in the elaborate example from Meryre’s tomb (Fig. 3.40). This scene shares much with both offering and banqueting scenes from Thebes, including extensive botanical imagery: from the papyrus pillars of the royal kiosk, to the flowers hanging from its roof and the lotuses held by Akhenaten and carried before him by one daughter. Three princesses accompany Nefertiti here, each presenting offerings to their father, while female musicians play below: their music implying an ambiguous or double context of entertainment and religiosity, as in Theban banquet scenes. The extent of the botanical imagery in this scene suggests a symbolic meaning beyond the obvious activity it represents, with the papyrus signifying protection and kingship and the lotus, rebirth, sexuality, and the solar cycle\footnote{Wilkinson 1992, 121, 123; Manniche 1997, 30-1; Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 30; Manniche 2003, 43; Hartwig 2004, 63-4, 67; Kroeter 2009, 54; Booth 2015, 27-8.}—all highly potent concepts for Akhenaten’s theology.

In each of these examples, as in the banquet scene itself, pouring another’s drink is an act of service or care, ritual or otherwise. Moreover, the almost completely unidirectional representation of this act between husbands and wives suggests that it reflected a
hierarchically gendered and potentially romantic or sexual care. Perhaps this is why the royal example from Meryre’s tomb appears to play so blatantly upon the iconography of the Theban banquet, with the bestowal of flowers and drink in the presence of musicians; the banquet’s well-attested sensual themes are being purposefully evoked. In this royal example, the princesses appear as a physicalisation of the ideal end result of the royal sexual union: numerous offspring, who physically resemble their mother and likewise serve Akhenaten. In each example, the recipient’s status is raised by the depiction of services rendered to him, expressing his superiority as an individual and implicitly reinforcing the gendered hierarchies that maintain that superiority.

That the imagery of wives serving their husbands is taken up by both the king and private individuals across class boundaries at Amarna suggests a defined cultural meaning that was probably consistently understood and whose specific relation to the mortuary context may sensibly suggest a link to sexuality and rebirth. The motif of queen pouring for king would be repeated, after Akhenaten’s death, on an Amarna-style golden shrine from Tutankhamun’s tomb, featuring one of Akhenaten’s daughters under the revised name Ankhsenamun (Fig. 3.43). Another scene on this shrine, which depicts Tutankhamun, enthroned, pouring from a similar vessel into Ankhsenamun’s hand, held by her mouth, curiously reverses the expected pattern (Fig. 3.44). However, its implications may be similar: Ankhsenamun appears beneath him, seated on a cushion by his feet, maintaining their gendered hierarchy, and Tutankhamun holds lotuses and fruits in his opposite hand, maintaining the scene’s sexual implications. Remembering the play on words discussed above—*stj*, ‘to pour’ or ‘to impregnate’—this scene should be considered related, with Ankhsenamun’s bare breast peeking past her gown furthering the scene’s sexual suggestiveness. A third scene depicted
on the same shrine (Fig. 3.45), showing Ankhsenamun fastening a floral collar around Tutankhamun’s neck seems to confirm a relationship to the iconography of the banquet scene.

This motif of bestowing a floral collar also appears in a partial stela of Akhenaten and Nefertiti (Fig. 3.46). Dorothea Arnold characterises this common element of Theban banquet scenes as “imply[ing] a festive atmosphere and convey[ing] a wish for the recipient’s well-being.” It is often associated with a call for the recipient to “spend a festive day” (iri hrw nfr), a term which may have had sexual as well as festive implications. Melinda Hartwig stresses these collars’ floral nature and their inbuilt symbolism of rebirth and regeneration, which gave them particular significance in the mortuary banquet context. For the royal stela in Figure 3.46, we lack the benefit of a definite represented context. However, assuming from its size and framing that the fragment once formed part of a domestic altar, related to the private worship of the Aten via the royal couple, we can relate this image to several themes that recur in this context: the intimacy expressed between royal family members, the relationship of the royal family to the Aten, the creative power of the royal couple, and the regality and/or divinity of the king.

785 Arnold 1996, 104-5.
786 Davies 1973, 62. This phrase is variously translated. Gregersen (2015, 58) suggests that “optimal day” is a better translation, expressing the perfection and completeness implicated by Egyptian nfr.
787 Orriols-Llonch 2016, 196. The author describes the use of temporal phrases such as “spend a beautiful day” to imply sexual intercourse in Egyptian love poetry. Although this love poetry stems from a later period, the correlation between much of their imagery and the imagery of the Theban banquets may suggest related sexual implications.
Therefore, we should note the king’s relaxed posture, as he rests an arm against the back of his chair and the close proximity of Nefertiti’s face to his, both of which mirror the later example from Tutankhamun’s shrine (Fig. 3.45). If the image were complete, we might expect to see the equally relaxed slouch of Akhenaten’s stomach, as in comparable examples (Figs. 2.27, 2.72—2.73), with stylised fat folds to match those at his neck. Riefling has proposed two possible reconstructions for this stela, which show Nefertiti alternatively standing and sitting in Akhenaten’s lap (Fig. 3.47).789 Both preserve the impression of a private scene, to which the viewer is granted special access, although without the possibility of interaction. Directly above Nefertiti is the Aten, at a close distance, implicitly blessing the couple. Tall papyrus flowers behind Akhenaten’s chair reinforce his pharaonic status and divine protection, as does his unusually tall khepresh. In the Tutankhamun example, divine protection and the granting of eternity is evoked by a sacred vulture holding a shen ring by the young king’s head.

A key difference between Nefertiti’s bestowal of a collar on the presumed domestic stela (Fig. 3.46) and the same action, as represented in Theban banquet scenes, is its non-mortuary context. Yet, Nicola Harrington has argued that it was exactly this usurpation of elements of the banqueting scene and their transplantation from the private tomb context into an arguably secularised (or Atenised) royal context that prevented the return of banquet scenes to Theban tomb decoration following the Amarna Period.790 That is, where other rejected scenes, such as those of fishing and fowling, reappeared soon after Amarna’s abandonment, banquet scenes never regained their prior prominence. It is unlikely that the

789 Riefling 2013, 81-90.
790 Harrington 2013, 30-1.
Amarna Period caused such a disruption that traditional feasts held within or outside the tomb ceased to occur. Yet, their inclusion in tomb decoration fell out of favour, either because—as Harrington suggests—they were now too heavily associated with Akhenaten and Atenism or because the post-Amarna restoration favoured scenes that more explicitly referenced the old gods, rather than focusing on the deceased and his community, as the banquet scene does. For whatever reason, the fashion passed: a peculiar casualty of the Amarna interlude.

The last hurrah of the banqueting scene, in its secularised form, occurs in Amarna tomb and palace decoration, where it foregrounds palatial opulence and the riches of the royal family, to be shared at their discretion with non-royal favourites. The explicit consumption of food, exceedingly rare in Egyptian art prior to the Amarna Period, emerged here as a demonstration of the royal family’s health and prosperity. A naked daughter of Akhenaten sits on a plush cushion in Amarna’s North Palace and holds an entire roast duck to her lips (Fig. 3.48). Although unfinished, the relief is full of charming details: the relaxed curve of the princess’s stomach, like her father’s, is reinforced by a carved line incised below her navel to emphasise her belly fat. The healthful fat at her neck is similarly expressed by two lines, as was common at Amarna; yet the artist goes further than usual here, making this less of a stylistic quirk applied to an otherwise slender neck by including two small curves in its outline (cf. Figs. 2.16—2.17). Her chin also exhibits an endearing bulb, while the distinctive egg of her skull is evident beneath her side-lock. The image’s contours are round and soft, tying into the imagery of royal luxury and healthfulness. Her free hand is already poised to pluck a fruit from the basket before her.
Such motifs preserve fragments of a characteristically Eighteenth Dynasty banqueting tradition that must have been sorely missed if, indeed, it was excluded from living practice at Amarna. If we take the relief decoration of Amarna’s elite tombs as our sole point of evidence, the kind of festive communion enjoyed by participants in Theban banquet scenes seems to disappear completely. The living continued to provide for the deceased in the form of offerings, yet the magical potential for real-time interaction, by which the dead became social actors in the immediate sense was gone. Perhaps, however, the lack of banquet scenes at Amarna did not reflect a proscription but a loss of relevance. Few of these unfinished tombs ever contained bodies. The deceased relatives of Amarna’s population, barring those interred in non-elite cemeteries during the city’s lifetime, remained in the towns they had left to join Akhenaten in the city he called “this distant place.” These must have included spouses, children, and siblings, as well as parents, grandparents, and more distant ancestors and friends. Could they still be reached so far from the doors to their own burials, in an east-bank tomb?

Regardless of whether or not this festival or similar ones continued under Akhenaten, the loss of the banqueting scene from the artistic repertoire of the tomb was a loss for its owner. They presented a major opportunity for the deceased to favourably display himself and his family and to commemorate their position within a community of peers and ancestors, spanning generations. If new Atenist festivals appeared to fill the void of these events, they do not appear in the Amarna tombs. In most cases, banquet scenes disappear without any comparable replacement. Otherwise, where music, food, wine, and festivities

appear, they are in connection with the palace and the temple, rather than the deceased’s own family, and with that shift in context their meanings and benefits to the tomb owner are warped.

The reimagining of the banqueting scene as a royal prerogative deserves attention here, because it relates to a broader trend of de-emphasising the tomb owner in the context of his own memorial and framing his identity almost solely in terms of his usefulness to Akhenaten. Royal banquet scenes were not common at Amarna, comprising only a few examples, notably from the tombs of Huya and, secondarily, Ahmose and Pentu. In each case, it is the royal family who feasts, while the tomb owners appear as miniature servants, carrying food and drink. Huya’s titles included ‘Overseer of the Royal Quarters and Steward in the House of the King’s Chief Wife, Tiye’ and we can interpret the inclusion of private meals enjoyed by the royal family in his tomb decoration as a statement of his privileged access to the palace and its occupants through these positions. By including Akhenaten’s mother Tiye, her daughter Baketaten, and even Tiye’s then-late husband Amenhotep III in several prominent scenes in his tomb, Huya emphasised the unique status his royal connections afforded him.

Tiye’s absence from most Amarna tombs is often considered evidence that she did not live at Amarna and that Huya’s reliefs record only a brief visit or perhaps her migration later in Akhenaten’s reign. Yet, I consider this poor evidence, as it is only Huya whose position, 

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792 Pentu’s royal banquet scene, however, is too fragmented to warrant much discussion. See Davies 2004, pt. IV, pl. 10.
794 Johnson 1992, 60; Montserrat 2000, 25.
directly related to Tiye’s household, gives him the special right or incentive to represent her activities in his tomb. Fragments of a sarcophagus inscribed for Tiye in Amarna’s Royal Tomb suggest that at some time she was, or was intended to be, interred there with her son. In Huya’s tomb she appears approaching a sunshade temple, which Akhenaten has dedicated for her (Fig. 3.49), seated across from Amenhotep III with her daughter in a double scene with Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters (Fig. 2.55), and again in a pair of ‘banquet’ scenes, in which she eats and drinks with Akhenaten’s immediate family and her own daughter (Figs. 2.60—2.61). A comparable banquet scene from Ahmose’s tomb (Fig. 3.50) includes neither Tiye nor Baketaten but nor should we expect it to; where Huya is Tiye’s steward, Ahmose is ‘Steward in the House of Akhenaten’. He acquires his status from a different source.

What the two banquets from Huya’s tomb and the single example from Ahmose’s share with the Eighteenth Dynasty Theban banquets is their imagery of communal indulgence and luxury, attended by servants and musicians. They share a funerary context, too, in that both are decorative themes appropriate for tomb decoration. However, the represented contexts of the Amarna royal banquet and the Theban feasts with the dead are different. Participation in the former was more exclusive, with the tomb owner appearing as a servant before the royal family, far from the guest of honour he would have been at Thebes. Like the Theban banquets, Amarna royal feasts were distinguished from entirely mundane meals by excessive quantities of food and drink, offering tables topped with bouquets, and musical...
performances, although curiously not so much by elaborate costuming and ornamentation.

In Figure 2.60, the Aten sits uplifted at the scene’s centre, with rays extending over the banquet’s royal participants, as well as the offering tables piled around them. He extends his ankhs toward not only Akhenaten and Neferiti but also Tiye, who was both the wife and mother of a king, highly visible throughout her husband’s reign, and derived considerable status from this. All three sit in lion-footed chairs, their curved bellies giving the impression of a comfortable slouch, in addition to health and prosperity, doubly indicated by the masses of available food and the large, prestigious cuts of meat. Their dress, however, is not excessively elaborate. Where the non-royal banqueters of the Theban tombs were laden with floral collars, armlets, lotus hairpieces, unguent cones, earrings, and golden shawls, these details are largely absent from Huya’s royal banquets. Nefertiti’s ‘Nubian wig’, although distinguished by its uraeus, was of a style worn by royal and non-royal figures alike and Akhenaten, too, chooses a simple khat or ‘bag wig’ over his signature khepresh. The three princesses wear gowns like their mothers’ in Figure 2.61 but are apparently nude in Figure 2.60, bypassing an opportunity for elaboration here too. The effect is that, despite the excesses of food and the presence of musicians in the registers below (Figs. 3.51—3.52), the scene retains a sense of informality and the everyday much unlike the happy anomaly of the Theban banquets.

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797 Green 2004, 205.
798 Green 2004, 220.
Although overseen by the Aten, these scenes are as easily read as a royal ‘lunch’ or ‘dinner’ as a specific festive occasion. In Figure 2.60, Tiye passes her daughter food from her own table, while Nefertiti’s two daughters sit facing one another so that they can casually interact, knees brushing and hands almost touching as they eat. Huya himself performs everyday tasks, appearing serving in the upper register and again below (Fig. 3.51), directing his subordinates and personally testing Tiye’s food in his capacity as her steward.\footnote{D’Auria 1999, 172.} Social relations, more than ritual or mythology, are the focus of this royal feast: the intimacy of the royal family dining in the palace and the tomb owner’s special access, as a privileged—if fundamentally excluded—observer. Those witnessing the royal banquet second-hand, as visitors to Huya’s tomb, experience the royal family’s meal at a further distance, with Huya as their honoured mediator. As such, the royal feast depicted in non-royal tombs may be read as a ‘diacritical feast’: one “at which social and political hierarchies are delineated or reinforced through positioning of the participants and sharing of food, drink, and other special luxury items” and which places emphasis on the display of status, “exclusion from an elite group, and institutionalisation of inequality.”\footnote{Green 2004, 207-8. See also: Hayden 1996, 127-48.}

\textbf{Figure 2.61} gives the adjacent scene from Huya’s tomb, which mirrors the first in several respects. Here, however, the royal family are depicted drinking, rather than eating, with the exception of the children. The participants’ positions are reversed, to create a symmetrical impression, and the princesses stand now, rather than sitting: Baketaten by the back leg of her mother’s chair, one of Nefertiti’s daughters by the back leg of hers (and charmingly eating a fruit from one hand while reaching for another with the opposite), and another
standing on Nefertiti’s footstool and holding onto her mother’s seat, while she too eats from a raised hand. Aided by the playful depiction of Nefertiti’s daughters, this scene also exhibits a measure of intimacy and informality and we should view this as deliberate on the tomb owner’s part. Anyone privileged with a rock-cut tomb at Amarna could boast of Akhenaten’s favour, yet additional status was attributable to those welcome inside the palace, privy to the private lives of the royal family, and trusted to provide their food and drink. In this context, Nefertiti is described with epithets relating to both her private character and her public queenly identity, appearing at length as “hereditary princess, great of favour, lady of charm, sweet of love, mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, King’s Chief Wife, his beloved, the mistress of the Two Lands, Nefernefruaten-Nefertiti.” The intimate textual characterisation of Nefertiti as a charming, loving, and beloved wife is mirrored visually by the close proximity of her daughters, who function in part to soften her image and emphasise her motherly aspect.

The lower registers of both of Huya’s ‘banquet’ scenes (Figs. 3.51—3.52) provide a background snapshot, populated by the officials and servants responsible for the feast and the musicians providing entertainment. We see the supplies from which the royal meal has been drawn: storerooms, replete with variously shaped vases and vessels. Huya appears both here, undertaking the same or similar tasks to his peers and above, amongst a more exclusive group with direct access to the royal family. In this sense, he posits himself as an intermediary between the palace’s royal occupants and its broader population of workers. He is part of an inner circle that makes him pre-eminent amongst both his non-royal peers.

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in the palace and the visitors to his tomb. The careful arrangement of social actors by status in Egyptian art is borne out here by the representation of Egyptian musicians—five women, led by a harpist in Figure 3.51 and five men, led in the same way in Figure 3.52—consistently above a second group of foreign musicians, appearing in the bottom register with their rounded caps, long garments, and two-person standing lyres. Even as they play for the royal family, these foreigners appear symbolically beneath their Egyptian counterparts and beneath the Egyptian king.

The royal banquet from Ahmose’s tomb survives in less detail, both in terms of decoration and inscriptions. Figure 3.50 reconstructs the scene. Akhenaten sits at right, his chair preceding Nefertiti’s with no overlap. Both are depicted eating—he, apparently a large cooked fowl, and she, a meat-covered bone of equally large proportions—while Nefertiti simultaneously balances a daughter in her lap and reaches for a cup offered by the miniscule figure of Ahmose below. Although privileged by his proximity to Nefertiti, Ahmose is hardly glorified by this size: bowed in deference, failing to meet her knee even with both arms raised, and barely clearing the heads of two seated, proportionally larger, princesses. It is clear that Ahmose constitutes only one small part of the vibrant sphere of interaction here centred on Nefertiti, with her three daughters.

Behind her, we are offered a view of the palace (Fig. 3.53), associating the banquet with a familiar setting of luxury and musicality but also with the private domain of royal domesticity, which we are led to believe Ahmose has been privy to, by its representation in his tomb. Overlapping female musicians, the foremost of whom plays a large bow harp, play directly behind Nefertiti, separated from her by a tall pillar, which stretches most of the
scene’s vertical extent. In a separate room, behind, another group either practices or simply entertains themselves. One harpist sits to play, while a lutenist occupies a more dynamic posture: her instrument raised and knees separated and bent. In a sub-register above and to the left, a seated figure plays the lyre, while a lutenist opposite sits in a wonderfully natural position, one leg bent and the other casually extended as she plays. Around them are storerooms filled with food, gold, and other luxuries, offering tables and servants cleaning and carrying. The scene is simultaneously one of relaxation and the conscientious performance of the tomb owner’s duties under the eye of the royal family.

Although his tomb is poorly preserved, Ahmose was a man of many titles. Some were related to his duties, real or symbolic; others were epithets that commemorated his royal favour and access to the king. He is framed as “one beloved of his lord every day,” “the sole companion” or “first of the companions,” “one who can approach the god’s flesh,” and one “in the following of the good god everywhere he went.”

Like Huya, it is probably this access that Ahmose celebrated by depicting the royal family banqueting in his own tomb. Each man may also have hoped to share in the luxuries they observed and delivered to Akhenaten in life: the magical creativity and efficacy of the tomb decoration making those blessings available to them as justified spirits. As such, it seems that the themes of banqueting and festivity continued to be useful to Amarna’s tomb owners but in a fundamentally different way to the banquets that had appeared at Thebes.

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803 For all of the above epithets, see the texts from the Tomb of Ahmose (trans. Murnane 1995, 120-2).
804 Spence 2007, 295.
These banquets celebrate the deceased’s privileged position in the professional and social hierarchy of the palace, rather than his position in a broader community of family members, peers, and ancestors. He appears at the intersection of two social spheres: that of the royal family, in which he is demonstrably lesser, and that of his non-royal colleagues, in which he can represent himself as the most honourable amongst them. His access to the royal family is a source of pride and yet, perhaps contradictorily, their presence forces him to adopt a lesser role. He appears smaller in scale and serving, rather than partaking in the meal himself. This is in contrast to Theban banqueting scenes which, by excluding the royal family and focusing on the deceased’s immediate community, were able to unambiguously celebrate his primacy and that of any member of his family or peer group he chose to distinguish.

Both types of banqueting scene commemorated the deceased’s privileged position in society and both probably allowed his spirit to access the represented food, drink, magical symbols, and other luxuries. Yet, at Amarna, the importance of the tomb owner as an individual is diminished. His identity, at all times, is tied to his service to Akhenaten and we lose the opportunity to glimpse his world in almost any sense beyond the palace and the immediate periphery of the royal family.
3.5 Fishing and Fowling

Enjoying and beholding beauty, spending leisure with the work of the marsh goddess by the confederate of the Mistress of the Catch, the Observer of Hours of A[mun], the scribe, Nakht, justified. His wife, the Chantress of [Amun], the Mistress of the House, Tawy, she says, “Enjoy the work of the goddess of the marsh! Waterfowl were assigned to him, for his time.”  

Scenes of fishing and fowling constitute some of the most memorable from amongst the Theban tombs. To one side, the tomb owner takes a broad striding stance upon a papyrus skiff and raises a throwstick toward a flock of birds; to the other, his image is reversed as he impales Nile fish on his spear. Very often, his wife and children participate or spectate in some way. The same pattern recurs across centuries in countless iterations, yet these scenes—and hunting scenes in general—still draw competing interpretations. This is partly due to the long period of their use, from the Old Kingdom through the New, and the many variations in their execution across time and space. However, it is also due to a genuine multiplicity of meanings embedded within this motif and Egyptian art generally. We can acknowledge these without forcing them to compete for primacy by understanding them as either equally and simultaneously true or true to different extents at different times, in different places. This attitude is exemplified by Valérie Angenot, whose hermeneutic approach to the analysis of fishing and fowling scenes identifies numerous layers of meaning, ranging from the literal to the mythological. Accepting a multiplicity of meaning and recognising that specific individuals will have perceived and valued these meanings

805 Caption from a fishing and fowling scene in the Tomb of Nakht (after Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 39).
806 Robins 1990, 45, 47.
807 See Angenot 2011, especially p. 269.
differently allows us to move beyond some interpretive roadblocks and suggest several reasons why this long-historied scene might have fallen out of favour under Akhenaten.

For example, compelling readings of the fishing and fowling motif as a metaphor for the sexual union of the deceased couple, culminating in their rebirth, have been hindered by examples—particularly Old Kingdom examples—in which the deceased’s wife or children do not appear. Conversely, those who read these scenes as literally illustrating an Egyptian sport or moments in the idealised or actual ‘daily life’ of the deceased often find support in their hieroglyphic captions, yet struggle to express what about this scene was so potent in the minds of the Egyptians to warrant its preservation over millennia or its sudden rejection at Amarna. Surely if this scene were a simple status symbol or the record of a hobby, there would be no cause for its absence from the Amarna tombs, which were already suffering from the loss of scenes that more explicitly invoked traditional deities.

To fully understand the fishing and fowling scene—and tomb decoration more broadly—we must dispense with the assumption that continuities in form and style correlate with absolute consistency in meaning, even across centuries of repetition and reinterpretation. In passing down artistic forms, the Egyptians displayed much conservatism but also innovation and it should not surprise us to see variation in areas such as a scene’s participants, costume, and activities, perhaps reflecting broader social and ideological changes over time. Consequently, I focus specifically on Eighteenth Dynasty Theban examples in my comparison.

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808 Feucht 1992, 157-60.
809 Fazzini 1975, xxii; D’Auria 1999, 165; Snape 2011, 191-2; Müller 2014, 86; cf. Hartwig (2004, 49-52), who rebuts a flat distinction between ‘ritual’ and ‘daily life’ scenes and argues that even apparently mundane aspects of tomb decoration had symbolic meanings and ritual functions.
810 Manniche 2003, 43.
with the Amarna tombs: what functions they served and what their inclusion and execution conveyed about the identity of the deceased and their family in this context. I then address the question of why these scenes are absent from Amarna and consider the effect of this exclusion on the means individuals had to convey the same information and complete the same functions.

One difficulty of examining the ‘deeper meanings’ of fishing and fowling scenes is that the captions to these scenes are generally phrased in a superficial, descriptive manner that would seem to belie such meanings. Older references to this scene are overwhelmingly literal, appearing in chapters on Egyptian ‘Recreation’811 or ‘Sports and Pastimes’,812 often without any consideration of the images’ funerary context. Such readings are not necessarily incorrect—the caption from Nakht’s tomb explicitly characterises the tomb owner as “taking recreation”813—but nor are they complete. Why include an image of the deceased taking recreation in the tomb, beyond simply recording activities undertaken in life? Why define such a recognisable standard for this scene: the double image with the tomb owner in his distinctive striding stance? What does engaging in leisure activities say about a person? At the very least, it suggests the time and resources to engage in such an activity: to be at leisure in contrast to being at work.814

Indeed, these scenes frequently juxtapose work and leisure. Nakht’s tomb, with its textual emphasis on recreation and pleasure, exemplifies this, via the surrounding registers of non-

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811 For example: Erman 1971, 234-45.
812 For example: White 1963, 182-3.
813 See the epigraph to this section.
814 Leprohon 2015, 316.
elite labourers, plucking grapes from vines, making wine, netting fish, plucking birds, and carrying produce (Fig. 3.54). There is a class distinction here, reinforced by the workers’ simple kilts and loincloths, beside Nakht’s family’s elaborate dress and ornamentation. The workers, virtually interchangeable within their groups, lack individual identities. They engage in the production of food resources, which they will enjoy themselves only in part, if at all. Nakht, by contrast, fishes and fowls for pleasure, owning all he catches. His position in the composition is also privileged; he takes up the most space, huge in size and expansive in posture, such that the simple act of hunting on the Nile is constructed as a statement of class, wealth, and status, by juxtaposition with those—metaphorically and literally—beneath him. We can read this scene as part of a broader strategy of preserving the deceased’s status, both in the afterlife and in the memory of visitors to his tomb.815

Related to ‘leisure’ is the concept of ‘sport’, which extends this literally-minded interpretation of fishing and fowling scenes. From this perspective, the body and activities of the deceased are part of the message of the scene. Nakht appears at the pinnacle of youth and good health, lean and muscular, with by far the most active posture in the scene. His stride is wide, one heel lifting off the ground in a display of motion; one raised arm is eternally poised ready to strike. No other figure matches the dynamism of Nakht’s posture. The labourers’ strides are short with both heels grounded. Others sit to work. If we consider the funerary context of this scene, we can interpret these dynamic images of the deceased as a wish to preserve or posthumously improve certain aspects of his life: health and physical ability, the leisure time to enjoy sport upon the Nile with family, and the eternal

815 Bickel 2006, 86.
availability of food and wine. While water fowl frequently appeared on offering lists for the deceased, their representation here secured an independent supply. A represented workforce performed the same function as a shabti figure, intended to perform any necessary labour in the afterlife. So, we begin to see the ways in which magical functions relevant to the tomb might be layered beneath literal readings of the tomb decoration.

However, we must also consider Nakht’s posture in terms of what it must have evoked for the Egyptian viewer, as a strong visual simile or allegory for the pharaonic smiting scene. The fowling stance in particular—striding with a weapon raised above the head, ready to strike at a bird grasped in the lower hand—directly mirrors the smiting icon, which dates at least as far back as Egypt’s earliest known king, Narmer (Fig. 3.55). In this icon, the king holds a foreign enemy in place with one hand, while raising a weapon to strike in the other. It is commonly understood as a statement of pharaoh’s suppression of the chaotic forces embodied by foreigners. By mirroring this stance, even in a superficially different context, the deceased accesses its long-spanning implications of the triumphant victory of ma’at over isfet and identifies himself with the victorious pharaoh. The similarity of the costume of this scene to the king’s shendyt kilt reinforces the intentionality of this association.

The association makes good sense too. Taking Nakht’s fishing and fowling scene as a whole, one of its prevailing impressions is that of mankind’s triumph over nature. The upper register gives the fishing and fowling motif, set in the papyrus thicket, with two carefully

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816 Manley 2017, 93.
817 Brewer and Teeter 2007, 189.
818 Quirke and Spencer 1992, 151; Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 23; Angenot 2011, 265; Manley 2017, 125.
819 Angenot 2011, 269.
balanced figures of Nakht trapping a chaotic mass of different and variously angled birds in flight;820 two small hippopotamuses, emblematic of Seth,821 and a hill of water with two varieties of fish. In the lower registers, nature’s chaos, which Nakht is in the eternal act of subduing above, is juxtaposed with the everyday routines of its harvesting and ordering.

Grapes are plucked from the vine and physically trampled into wine before being displayed in neatly aligned amphorae, ready for consumption. Birds are netted, then plucked and strung up in a row. The end products are stacked aplenty for the tomb owner’s eternal benefit: his triumph over the chaos of nature, effected by the smiting-like postures of fishing and fowling, is reinforced by its transfiguration into vital resources in the registers below.

By framing this scene as an analogy for the smiting pharaoh’s victory over foreigners, the deceased identified himself as a preserver of ma’at, like the king. In the tomb context, this was a statement of both broad cosmological significance for Egypt’s stability and specific apotropaic significance for the safe afterlife transition of the deceased.822 Yet, the image was no revolutionary usurpation of royal power. The tomb owner’s actions were sanctioned, perhaps ritualised or mythologised, by the implicit presence of the gods; Nakht engages in “the craft of the marsh goddess,”823 while the Amarna Period erasure of geese from some earlier fishing and fowling scenes suggests that these were read as emblems of Amun and indicated his divine presence. The marsh setting, too, was heavily associated with creative mythologies, relevant to the task of re-creating the deceased in the Hereafter.824 It

820 Wilkinson (1992, 95) reads the symbolism of the duck, in particular, as both erotic and related to the kinds of “evil spirits” that were thought to manifest in the marshes, making capturing ducks an inherently apotropaic symbol. See also: Robins 1993b, 188.
821 Hawass 2009, 156.
823 Text from the Tomb of Nakht (after Hodel-Hoenes 2000, 39).
824 Robins 1990, 51.
was a liminal space, neither completely land nor water, just as the tomb was a liminal space, straddling the dual terrains of life and death. The tomb owner’s mastery over this represented environment was thus symbolically related to his successful navigation between the two worlds, as assisted by the gods.

Of course, a key difference between royal smiting scenes and fishing and fowling scenes is that, prior to the Amarna Period, family members never accompanied the smiting pharaoh. So, why does the tomb owner’s family acquire such significance in the fishing and fowling scenes of the Eighteenth Dynasty? Nakht appears with two different familial cohorts: his wife, an adolescent daughter, and a young son in the fowling scene, and his wife, an adolescent daughter, a female child, and apparently a male servant in the fishing scene. The differentiation between actors at either side of the double scene—and even between the two figures of the deceased, wearing a different wig at each side—is interesting in itself for an image otherwise so concerned with compositional and cosmological balance. However, we should not expect the preoccupations and meanings of this scene to cohere completely with those of the smiting scene; their context is fundamentally different. By appearing only in the tombs of non-royal individuals, fishing and fowling scenes acquired additional purposes specific to that context. One of these, which I will return to, was the need for tomb decoration to facilitate the sexual re-conception and rebirth of the deceased, which for the ancient Egyptians required the inclusion of stimulating female figures. Another was the preservation of an ‘ideal’ or desired social order, which transported into the afterlife the entangled hierarchies and expectations of class, gender, and kinship.

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825 Manley 2017, 93.
In considering fishing and fowling scenes through a ‘sporting’ lens, I noted the dynamism of the deceased’s posture compared to his social inferiors. This contrast exemplifies the ideological connotations of activity and active positioning in Egyptian art, whereby ‘activity’ is superior to ‘passivity’ amongst men, while passivity is preferred in the depiction of women. The tomb owner’s broad stride connotes fitness and physicality but may also suggest to the viewer psychological traits, such as ambition, determination, or masculinity and the absence of traits such as laziness, weakness, or effeminacy. In this sense, Nakht gains status in the scene by presenting himself as its most active participant, as does his son, by mirroring Nakht’s fowling posture at a reduced scale and intensity. Contrastive social expectations of elite women mean that Nakht’s wife and daughters acquire status in the same scene by their represented passivity, regardless of their personalities or activities in actuality. Women never occupy the active positions of fisher or fowler, even in the Amarna Period, when shifting royal gender ideologies briefly empowered Queen Nefertiti to act as smiter of Egypt’s (female) enemies. The non-elite workers in these scenes also play a role in the preservation or achievement of a desired social order: as men, they are judged on the same scale as Nakht and uplift him by juxtaposition, with their smaller sizes, narrower strides, and grounded heels. Their arms never lift as high as Nakht’s and they work with already subdued animals, rather than actively capturing them, promoting the deceased as a superior example of Egyptian masculinity.

Nakht’s female relatives perform clear supportive roles in his fishing and fowling scenes. His wife appears at a minor scale, kneeling between his legs and grasping his shin, while daughters hold his waist and touch his thigh: gestures that may be interpreted as either
drawing support from him or giving support to him by stabilising his position on the skiff.

The standing daughters appear with legs together, while Nakht’s kneeling wife maintains an equally tight, formal posture, juxtaposed against his own expansiveness. Female contributions to the action of this scene are subtle: the adolescent daughter at left holds a small bird, while the others hold only flowers: common props for women in these scenes. By contrast, Nakht’s son plays the active role of apprentice, holding a decoy bird in one hand and raising a throwstick in the other. His junior role is indicated by a narrower stride and the way he looks up to Nakht, as if for guidance, but we are certainly to understand him as the tomb owner’s successor, following in his footsteps.

Directly opposite Nakht’s fowling son, at the head of the skiff in the fishing portion of the scene, is a similarly aged daughter. She appears with legs closer together, a lighter skin tone, and empty hands, even as she mirrors the positioning of his—and her father’s—arms. Lifting a hand to Nakht’s thigh allows this daughter to balance the scene’s composition without encroaching on the masculine act of hunting herself. Indeed, the weighing of daughter against son, male against female, at either side of this double scene may itself be read as expressing the Egyptian order, in which gender constituted one of a number of presumed binary principles, which needed to be kept in harmony. So, within this scene, dedicated to the triumph of order over chaos, the deceased’s valorisation as the ideal man, and the provisioning of his afterlife, we can also discern a statement of ideal family relations amongst the elite: one hinging on male activity, female supportiveness, and the son as his father’s apprentice and successor. The paltry iconographic distinction between Nakht’s wife and daughters implies, equally, that they will follow in her footsteps.
In Nakht’s fishing and fowling scene, the dependence of his female relatives is further emphasised by the fact that each lays a hand on him, while his son and male servant are physically more independent, although all orbit the tomb owner. The two youngest children, with their mirrored postures but contrastive actions, demonstrate a differentiation in gendered life expectations from the earliest age. Although both appear naked with the sidelock of youth, the artist pointedly differentiates their gender in both their activities and their adornment: a greater number of bracelets and an ornate girdle for Nakht’s daughter and a distinctive necklace for his son. In this way, Egyptian art both reflected and maintained an appropriate social order at the level of the family but also more broadly. By its hierarchical nature, it conveyed messages about the desirable state of the tomb owner’s social world, which included his own primacy at the head of his family and in contrast to lesser men.

Elite families appear in similar configurations across numerous Eighteenth Dynasty fishing and fowling scenes. The Theban Tomb of Menna contains a usefully contrastive example, in which Menna’s female relatives adopt somewhat more independent, yet still markedly gendered, roles (Fig. 3.56). Part of the contrast between the women’s activities in these two tombs may stem from the superior quality of Menna’s fishing and fowling scene. Its depiction of the Nile is livelier, full of lilies, fish, and waterfowl, not only in the central mound of water but also beneath the boats. A mouse and cat climb the papyrus stalks and a butterfly flutters amongst the birds. The family’s adornment is also given richer detail and, while Menna’s position is standard, his figure is individualised by folds of fat at the leading edge of his torso, reinforcing wellness and prosperity as part of the scene’s broader message. Yet there is also a clear contrast within this double scene, whereby the
participants in the fishing portion appear in more standard poses than those in the fowling portion. Whether this is due to different artists working on either side or contrastive efforts of the same artists is difficult to say but the result is a far less symmetrical image than appears in Nakht’s tomb and, arguably, a more interesting one.

The fishing scene evokes a familiar impression of women’s dependence upon their patriarch. Both Menna’s wife, Henuttawy, and his daughter hold lotus flowers. The suggestion is that they have gathered these from the river but that act is not explicitly shown. Instead, they grasp Menna’s shin and chest with their free hands, supporting or being supported by him using the same gestures as in Nakht’s tomb. Menna’s fowling scene presents a more varied image. It also includes a greater number of children, which could suggest that this less traditional portion of the image was completed later, particularly if we take Henuttawy’s unguent cone, worn on this side only, to suggest that she is now deceased. In the fowling scene, Henuttawy’s gesture with hands raised in adoration toward her husband clearly indicates respect and deference. Yet, neither she nor her daughters cling to him here, each claiming their own space in the scene.

Between Menna’s legs, one daughter is old enough to have forsaken the sidelock of youth but still young enough to be depicted naked, adorned with bracelets and a girdle similar to that worn by Nakht’s youngest daughter. However, in contrast to Nakht’s daughter and in defiance of being restrictively positioned between her father’s legs, Menna’s daughter engages in independent activity: leaning outside the confined space of the boat to gather

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826 Hartwig (2004, 99), for example, associates the unguent cone with “the state of resurrection and vindication”.

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flowers from the river. Her fists are closed around a stalk, elbows bent, ready to tug it up from the water. Her role in the scene extends beyond validating Menna’s position as head-of-household, as she actively procures a material of symbolic and magical significance to the deceased: lotus flowers, signifying rebirth after death.

The same trend of increased independence is echoed by the daughter standing at the back of the boat. Rather than crowding around Menna, performing her dependence by clinging or gesturing to him in some way, this daughter turns her head away. By diverting her gaze, she detracts from the attention paid to Menna, as observers follow her gaze in the opposite direction. Even more interestingly, this daughter appears with not only the apparently ‘feminine’ paraphernalia of gathered flowers but also several captured ducks, implicating her in the scene’s broader apotropaic symbolism and masculine hunting activities. Arguably, her role is more significant and independent than that of the male servant at the front of the boat—although shown in the midst of picking a papyrus flower and also holding a number of ducks—by virtue of both her heavier load and the fact that she looks away from Menna, rather than up toward him, for confirmation or instruction. In a sub-register above, another richly adorned woman, presumably another daughter, is seated with three lotuses in her lower hand, raising a fourth to her nose: a motif that has been interpreted as both magically life-restoring and erotic in offering and banqueting scenes. Thus, to my eyes, this fowling scene in Menna’s tomb constitutes a far greater acknowledgment of his female relatives’ varied activities and contributions, whether actual or symbolic, than more standard examples, in which they might idly cling to the deceased. Its juxtaposition with the more traditionally executed fishing scene immediately adjacent makes the distinction a striking one.
Whether or not family outings fishing and fowling on the Nile were a genuine pastime of Egypt’s elite is difficult to determine. It doesn’t seem unlikely: taking leisure on the river in the Egyptian heat would seem sensible and captions to these scenes frequently support a recreational interpretation. Yet, as we have seen, this does not necessarily mean that fishing and fowling as represented in the tomb had a meaning that was purely recreational or representational. The scene’s costume is far from casual or sporting, with participants displaying elaborate clothing and jewellery. Menna’s transparent over-garment, through which a pleated kilt is also visible, should certainly be considered a sign of status, denoting the fineness of the linen. He and Henuttawy both wear ornate collars and neatly curled wigs, hers further adorned by a hairpiece, lotus bud, and, in the fowling portion of the scene, an unguent cone. Each woman wears several bracelets, armlets, and large round earrings. Even the nude daughter is richly ornamented. One explanation, which does not undermine interpretations of this scene as one of casual recreation, lies in the commemorative and magical functions of tomb decoration: the tomb owner’s prerogative to display himself and his family at their best to visitors and to magically effect a state of eternal luxury and leisure.

The family’s over-elaborate dress may also be explained by sexual or erotic interpretations of the fishing and fowling motif. The abundance of animal and botanical life contained in these scenes presents an image of fecundity and fertility, providing an environmental parallel for the tomb owner’s own fertile re-conception and rebirth. However, the specific

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827 Baines and Málek 1980, 206; Robins 1990, 49; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999, 156; Manley 2017, 125.
symbolism of these animals and plants may also be relevant: for example, the well-attested sexual and regenerative associations of the lotuses gathered by Menna’s daughters; the Hathoric associations of the duck and cat who climb the papyrus stalks;\textsuperscript{828} the papyrus thicket itself, as the mythological birthplace of Horus and a wet, generative environment;\textsuperscript{829} and the centrality of the tilapia and the lates fish, which the Egyptians associated with rebirth.\textsuperscript{830}

The consistent centrality of these two fish in fishing and fowling scenes, although they prefer different environments in nature,\textsuperscript{831} suggests that they encode some meaning or magical effectiveness that was prioritised above environmental accuracy, one as fundamental to this scene’s interpretation as they are to its composition. Surely this is the association with reproduction and cycles of rebirth: qualities crucial to the tomb context, which we might view the deceased as taking power over by successfully spearing the two fish. If we understand the central action of this scene as the deceased securing his own rebirth, it becomes clear why it is exclusive to the tomb context. Perhaps it also explains why these scenes disappear under Akhenaten, who promoted himself and his god as the sole means of access to the afterlife.

In this magically sexual context, the tomb owner’s beautifully dressed wife likely also served a practical purpose, providing a magical means and vehicle for his rebirth. The inclusion of the tomb owner’s children likewise both commemorated them as beloved family members

\textsuperscript{829} Vassilika 1995, 50; Hartwig 2004, 63-4; Kroeter 2009, 49.
\textsuperscript{830} Derchain 1976, 8; Manniche 1987, 40; Robins 1990, 50; Robins 1993b, 188; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999, 156; Hawass 2009, 156; Kroeter 2009, 49; Riggs 2014, 86; Hartwig 2015, 53.
\textsuperscript{831} Kanawati 2001, 93.
and reinforced the guarantee of rebirth by demonstrating his and his wife’s reproductive capabilities. As potential stimulants of male creative power in themselves, each daughter appears eternally youthful, beautiful, and elaborately dressed. Even the daughter young enough to appear nude in Menna’s tomb has been endowed with a large, rounded breast and perky nipple, evoking sexual maturity and a capacity to nourish the reborn. Others in the scene also feature prominent nipples, both male and female, although the extent to which this was considered an inalienably sexual characteristic is debatable. The scene’s central action, the throwing of a spear or harpoon, may itself be sexual in nature, comprising a visual pun on the verb *stj* ‘to throw’, whose additional meanings included ‘to impregnate’ and ‘to ejaculate’. 832 Similarly, the act of using a throwstick (the verb, *qm3*) has the additional meanings ‘to create’ or ‘to beget’. 833 If these meanings were intended in the design of the fishing and fowling scene, this would implicate sexual symbolism and the tomb owner’s re-conception as a primary meaning or ‘intention’ of the type. Yet, we need not assume that these double meanings were intended—either at the scene’s initial conception or later in its development—to recognise that sexual symbolism abounds in, and is a key component of, fishing and fowling in the tomb.

By this analysis, fishing and fowling scenes, as executed in the Eighteenth Dynasty before the Amarna Period, can be understood as performing multiple functions for the deceased, which may contrast but need not contradict one another. These include, in no hierarchical order: a) the eternal provision of food for the deceased; b) the commemoration of himself

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832 A pun on the same verb, in its sense of ‘to pour’, is cited in relation to banqueting scenes in Chapter 3.4. See also: Graves-Brown 2015, 3.
833 Manniche 1987, 42; Robins 1990, 51; Robins 1993b, 188; Manniche 2003, 43; Kroeter 2009, 49; Angenot 2011, 269, 271; Hartwig 2015, 52.
and his family as wealthy, high class individuals; c) the deceased’s valorisation as a suppressor of nature’s chaos and a proponent of ma’at; d) his protection via that suppression of chaos; e) the guarantee of sexual stimulation and rebirth after death; f) the maintenance of idealised family relations, including the support of a man by his wife and daughters and the rearing of the son in his father’s image; and g) the continuation of pleasant days at leisure with one’s family after death.

This begs the question: if fishing and fowling scenes truly benefitted the deceased on all of these levels, some of them, or even more of them—as suggested by its longevity and the frequency of its appearance prior to Amarna—then why is it excluded from the Amarna tombs? Although the caption in Nakht’s tomb describes fishing and fowling as “the craft of the marsh goddess,” no traditional deities appear as actors in these scenes, giving no obvious reason for Akhenaten to proscribe it. Other scenes, such as inv scenes (see Chapter 3.7), whose captions were rife with references to traditional deities, were successfully adapted at Amarna—why not this one? Surely not, as Ruiz proposes, because, under Akhenaten, “fish spearing and bird catching were recognised as cruel sports and were therefore banned.” I will address this question by considering the functions of the scene as defined above, arguing that it was primarily the tomb owner’s agency and self-sufficiency in securing a good afterlife that conflicted with the Amarna context.

Firstly, I argue that the provision of food for the afterlife was, to some extent, taken out of the tomb owner’s hands at Amarna, with the loss of a number of scenes partly or primarily

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834 Davies 1936, 94, 126.
835 Ruiz 2001, 184.
dedicated to this goal, including banquet scenes and agricultural scenes. Offering scenes depicting the deceased’s relatives or priests bestowing food and ankh bouquets also become far less common, with only a few examples preserved in Amarna’s tombs. This loss in the tomb decoration was offset by a greater emphasis on the pre-existing notion that good fortune, afterlife accessibility, and sustenance were dependent on the king, rather than individuals themselves and their positive assessment by the gods.\textsuperscript{836} This shift was likely related to Amarna’s socio-political climate. Those awarded rock-cut tombs at Amarna achieved their status by following Akhenaten to his new capital and committing themselves to him and his theology. Such upheaval required the support of a strong bureaucracy and we should not be surprised to note a strategic strengthening of the notion that loyalty to the king was a man’s greatest virtue—standing against him, implicitly, the greatest sin. The image of the deceased as a valiant individual in the fishing and fowling scene, supported by his family and community in going out to procure his own afterlife, is incongruous with the Amarna notion that only Akhenaten could provide his subjects with eternity and security.

Likewise, the tomb owner’s valorisation as a defender of ma’at, analogous with the smiting pharaoh, may have seemed threatening to the head of a revolutionary theological regime in its infancy. The rejection of long-established opportunities to promote the deceased and his family as significant private individuals and the inclusion, instead, of large-scale scenes centred on Akhenaten’s family may be considered one means of suppressing the influence of possible rivals to royal power. The image of the (allegorically) smiting deceased may have encroached too far on a vulnerable pharaoh’s prerogative to be the sole guarantor of ma’at,

\textsuperscript{836} Ockinga 2008, 29-30.
suppressor of chaos, and protector of Egypt. Removing it from the decorative programme of Amarna’s tombs eliminated this threat. For protection against chaos, the deceased turned once again to the royal couple, represented in his tomb traversing the city in chariots with military escorts and, elsewhere, smiting Egypt’s enemies and in the protective guise of sphinxes (Figs. 2.39—2.42, 2.48—2.50, 3.57—3.58).

Regarding the usefulness of fishing and fowling scenes as a concretisation of both ideal family relations and the deceased’s successful creative power, I connect this scene’s omission at Amarna with a broader tendency to replace images of the tomb owner’s family with those of Akhenaten’s. By excluding the deceased’s own relatives in all but a few contexts, greater emphasis fell to the sole creative (and thereby re-creative) power of the royal family, who achieved this by virtue of their relationship to Aten. The royal family could also provide a model of ideal familial relations to be transplanted into the afterlife—if required. We must address the fact that the Atenist conception of the afterlife was fundamentally different to the Osirian. Texts from Amarna characterise death as something vague and dark, correlated with notions of night and sleep, relevant to the solar religion\(^\text{837}\) and exemplified by the excerpt from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten below. These texts often give the impression of an afterlife not yet fully formed conceptually, as we might expect of such a young religion. Certainly, there appears to have been less emphasis placed on the deceased’s magically sexual role in his own re-conception and rebirth and less of a concrete notion of his activities in the afterlife, such as might allow him to engage in sport with his

\(^{837}\) Lemos 2012, 90-1.
family for eternity. These functions of the fishing and fowling scene may simply have lost relevance to the decoration of an Atenist tomb.

When your [Aten’s] movements vanish and you set in the western horizon,
The land is in darkness, in the manner of death.
(People), they lie in bed chambers, heads covered up, and one eye does not see its fellow.
All their property is robbed, although it is under their heads, and they do not realise it.
Every lion is out of its den, all creeping things bite.
Darkness gathers, the land is silent.
The one who made them is set in his horizon.

At other times, the Atenist afterlife comes across as an earth-bound experience of death, in which the deceased lived within the tomb but hoped to exit it, either to visit the Aten’s temples or simply to relive their mortal days, such that Pentu begs to “stride to the place of [his] heart’s determining, in the grooves which [he] made on earth; that [he] might drink water at the edge of [his] pool every day without cease.” The intricate landscapes of afterlife and underworld and their cast of gods and demons were voided in favour of an afterlife that oscillated between the dark and feared unknown and the eternal re-enactment of one’s familiar earthly life. Perhaps this loss also contributed to a focus on the activities of the living royal family and the Amarna landscape in tomb decoration, relieving

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838 Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 113). See, similarly, from the Tomb of Pentu (trans. Murnane 1995, 181): “When you [Aten] set from life and joy, all eyes are wailing: they are benighted (?) after you have set and become enfolded in [the sky...].”
artists of the necessity of depicting the portion of the Atenist afterlife that remained dangerously undefined.  

Ultimately, rejecting the fishing and fowling scene at Amarna reduced the agency and independence of the deceased in both securing his own afterlife and modelling how it, ideally, might look. It also deleted a key opportunity for him to communicate his identity, power, and status as an individual and restored the king to the position of sole preserver of ma’at and bestower of afterlives. In place of this scene, we find novel representations of the deceased in the following of the royal family, who constitute the main actors in almost every scene type identifiable at Amarna. The notion that wealth and power were exclusive gifts of the ruler was not new to the Amarna Period but it was elaborated and emphasised here, to the extent that Akhenaten was only rarely absent from any given scene. Triumphant and independent depictions of the deceased such as occurred in fishing, fowling, and other hunting scenes became inappropriate for representation in the tomb. He no longer appeared as the sun around which his family orbited but, rather, orbited himself around the figures of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters.

With this change, a frequent arena for the inclusion of the tomb owner’s family was also lost, contributing to their usually complete absence from Amarna’s tombs. The deceased was also robbed of another opportunity to commemorate his place in the social hierarchy, both at an immediate level, as head of his family, and more broadly, via the juxtaposition of hunting for leisure with the demanding tasks of large-scale food production undertaken in

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the surrounding registers. This loss exemplifies one of the most characteristic features of Amarna’s private tomb decoration: a shift in attention from the owner and commissioner of the monument to the royal family, by which the deceased’s significance as an individual and in society was systematically diminished for Akhenaten’s benefit.
3.6 Awards and Promotions

The chapter thus far has highlighted several significant decorative themes that were either lost or reduced at Amarna. Yet, royal reward and promotion scenes seem to defy this pattern: more common and elaborate at Amarna than at Thebes. In the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty, award scenes constituted a particular and comparatively rare honour for elite tomb owners. Many extant examples are badly damaged and some can only tentatively be attributed to this type, hindering analyses as detailed as have been applied to other scenes.\(^{842}\) By contrast, most of Amarna’s substantially decorated tombs contained at least one award scene, now frequently centred on a novel structure known as the Window of Appearances, from which the elevated royal family could maintain their distance from the awardee.\(^{843}\) The recipients of awards are diverse, extending for the first time across gender lines to include Nefertiti’s wet-nurse, Tiy. The elaboration of a scene ostensibly devoted to uplifting Akhenaten’s officials might seem to contradict the broader trend I have identified, by which their primacy in the tomb was ceded to the royal family. Yet, I argue that the specific changes made to Amarna’s award scenes—including the centring and enlargement of Nefertiti and the princesses, in addition to Akhenaten—provide the best explanation for their growth. These award scenes provided another opportunity to showcase the royal family in the tomb. They also reinforced the ideologically significant dependency by which even Amarna’s highest officials relied upon Akhenaten for recognition, crucial to the success of a radical pharaoh who, himself, must have depended heavily on backing from his court.

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\(^{842}\) Hartwig 2004, 81-2.

\(^{843}\) Spence 2007, 284.
Regardless of the contrastive political contexts of the Amarna Period and the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty, the official’s primary aim in representing a royal reward in his tomb must have been a commemorative one. A crucial form for this award was the golden shebyu collar, often accompanied by further goods: bracelets, armlets, clothing, even slaves and fields.  

Hartwig describes the Eighteenth Dynasty recipients of this ‘Gold of Honour’ as “those whose loyalty was critical for the success of the pharaoh and Egypt’s internal management,” with offices varying according to the priorities of the sitting king. The award delivered an increase in personal status, both in terms of its symbolic significance and its concrete value as a luxury item. Recognition of this heightened status by lesser peers was a common theme of award sequences, which—in addition to the award itself—might include the deceased’s arrival into the king’s presence, his leaving laden with gifts, and his procession home amidst a jubilant crowd.

In this regard, the tomb owner’s desire to display his pre-eminence in his community cohered with the king’s desire to demonstrate that such preeminent positions were his alone to bestow. By representing royal rewards in his tomb, the deceased may also have hoped to encourage the gods to judge him favourably or to encourage visitors to consider him worthy of offerings or prayers.  

Certainly, captions to award scenes, such as that from Kenamun’s tomb (TT 93) below, suggest that the royal reward was not only a one-time gift but a symbolically or literally ongoing provision, by which his eternal wellbeing was ensured.
This extends the scene’s significance and usefulness to the deceased far beyond commemorating an important moment in his career.

Our master comes (?). He has received (?) favour;

I rejoice as one in a happy mood,

Seeing that he is provided for daily to the end of eternity.\textsuperscript{849}

The promise of a well-provisioned afterlife makes the inclusion of award scenes doubly useful to the deceased. Yet, I argue that, particularly at Amarna, award scenes and the distribution of awards more broadly were also beneficial to the king, reinforcing a social order that maintained the ruler and his family at its pinnacle and all others, even the highest of officials, beneath them. A hierarchical distinction is inherent between the giver and receiver of an award. The giver is the original and rightful owner of that which he bestows, whether it be physical (a golden collar), metaphorical (the status implicated by the collar and the right to wear it), or some title or office. It is the superior who recognises and rewards his inferior, at his discretion, with the implication that was is given could equally be withheld or taken away. Consequently, while Amarna tomb decoration tended to minimise the deceased, eliminating opportunities for his valorisation as an individual, reward scenes remained acceptable, even gained popularity, because they reinforced appropriate power relations between the king and his subjects. They also promoted the notion that all good things derived from the king and therefore fit well within the Amarna trend of positing the king as the ultimate focus of the tomb decoration, while avoiding overstating the independent influence of any official.

\textsuperscript{849} Text from the Tomb of Kenamun (after Hartwig 2004, 82).
Comparing earlier award scenes with those found at Amarna supports this conclusion by demonstrating a significant increase in the power differential represented between the pharaoh and the deceased, particularly in the allocation of space. Figure 3.59 reconstructs an award from the Theban Tomb of Sobekhotep, a mayor under Thutmose IV. What is immediately apparent, by comparison with Amarna examples, is how close in scale and proximity the tomb owner is to the king (cf. Figs. 2.46—2.47 and 2.76). The separation between the two is clear: Thutmose IV sits in a raised kiosk, distinguished by his pharaonic regalia, and Sobekhotep does not transgress the boundary of this royal structure. Yet, in terms of the vertical space occupied by the king, as compared to the deceased, who appears three times, the distinction is not overwhelming. Nor is the horizontal space between them excessive. A sense of immediacy survives the imposed barrier of the kiosk.

Sobekhotep’s award may be read from left to right, beginning with his arrival at the royal kiosk. In the central vignette, an attendant fastens the double-stranded shebyu collar around Sobekhotep’s neck, acting as an intermediary in a fashion that saves the king from physically touching his subject: a separation that is not only preserved but extended at Amarna. Still, Sobekhotep maintains an upright posture, like the king and contra several Amarna awardees (see Figs. 2.47 and 3.60), enhancing the impression of his status beside the bowed attendant. Finally, at left, a third figure of Sobekhotep departs his royal audience amidst a procession of celebrating peers, whose depiction at a miniature scale further uplifts Sobekhotep himself. He leaves bearing not only the shebyu collar but also a long staff
and handkerchief, as symbols of his authority.\textsuperscript{850} In each iteration, Sobekhotep appears in activities of interest: carrying a large floral bouquet before the pharaoh, receiving a great honour, and occupying the privileged position in a public procession. The outward signs of his status and community recognition are given particular attention. Conversely, although the king is marginally larger than Sobekhotep, he appears only once, seated with arms crossed, more emblem than individual. He holds the highest status in the scene but he is not its primary focus. This is in stark contrast to Amarna’s award scenes, in which the pharaoh is blown up at a massive scale, alongside his wife and daughters, and appears in far more active postures. The use of distinct ‘episodes’ in the award sequence, however, is retained, allowing the tomb owner to assert his significance through the number—if not the scale—of his appearances.\textsuperscript{851}

**Figure 3.61** reconstructs a damaged scene from the tomb of Amenhotep-si-se (TT 75). Here, two figures of the deceased, Second Prophet of Amun under Thutmose IV, have been purposely excised. However, enough contextual details remain to identify the scene as depicting a royal reward. As with Sobekhotep’s award, the royal kiosk appears at far right, this time decorated with a pattern of $nb$ baskets (signifying lordship), topped by an *ankh* (life), *djed* pillar (stability), and *was* sceptre (dominion) in a repeating sequence. The kiosk’s architecture, with its supporting pillars and raised platform, physically separates Thutmose IV from his subject, whom the caption describes as bringing a Bouquet of Amun and good wishes for the pharaoh.\textsuperscript{852} Behind Amenhotep-si-se, masses of luxurious goods are arrayed, intended for Amun’s temple precinct, with which the deceased was affiliated and likely

\textsuperscript{850} Hartwig 2004, 81-4; Leprohon 2015, 316-7.
\textsuperscript{851} Molyneaux 1997, 120.
\textsuperscript{852} Laboury 2015, 330-2.
wished to emphasise his service to. These goods separate the figure of Amenhotep-si-se at the royal kiosk from a second iteration of himself, also excised, but standing before the telling figure of a bowed attendant, whose arms extend toward his neck, clearly in the act of fastening a collar. The caption records his award with “the favours of the Lord of the Two Lands in gold,” as well as his going out “praised and beloved in the presence of His Majesty.”

A fragmentary example from the Tomb of Ptahemhet (TT 77) (Fig. 3.62) preserves enough detail to suggest a similar formula, against whose consistencies we can compare the Amarna examples.

At Amarna, award scenes were elaborated to bestow increased focus on both Akhenaten and his family, often—although not always—raised high above their audience and depicted at a massive scale. If Queen Tiye transgressed any unspoken boundary when she appeared passively seated behind Amenhotep III in an award scene from Kheruef’s tomb (TT 192) (Fig. 3.63), then this boundary was trodden to dust by both Nefertiti, as her successor, and the Amarna princesses, who appear as a matter of course in Amarna’s award scenes in increasingly active roles; compare the award from the early Amarna Period Tomb of Ramose (TT 55) with later such scenes from Amarna (Fig. 3.64 and, for example, Fig. 2.109). Unlike at Thebes, award scenes feature in the majority of Amarna tombs preserving any significant decoration. This suggests either that Akhenaten, more so than previous pharaohs, used promises of gold and status to secure the loyalty of his uprooted bureaucracy or that these occasions and their artistic representation acquired some other novel use to him,

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853 Hartwig 2003, 303.
854 Text from the Tomb of Amenhotep-si-se (after Laboury 2015, 332).
855 Susanne Binder’s research (2008, 83) suggests that this was the first appearance of a queen in award scenes, otherwise restricted to the Amarna Period and concluding with a final example from the reign of Ay.
856 Green 2004, 207.
perhaps as opportunities for the public display of his family, who had become central to Amarna ideology and theology.

The quintessential example of the Amarna award scene is that from the Tomb of Ay, although it is far from typical (Fig. 2.76). Here, for the first time, we see a woman receiving the Gold of Honour—Ay’s wife, Tiy—something that occurs again only once, during Ay’s own reign as pharaoh. The venerated couple held titles such as “the God’s Father” (Ay) and “Nurse of the King’s Great Wife, Nefertiti” or “Nurse of the Goddess” (Tiy), which connoted prominent positions in the palace hierarchy and intimate connection to the royal family. To be a royal nurse, responsible for breast-feeding princes and princesses was perhaps the most privileged position a noblewoman could attain, bringing honour to herself as an individual, to her husband, and to her children, who might be reared alongside future rulers in the royal kap ‘nursery’. For Tiy, this position warranted not only her then-unique inclusion in an award scene but also her depiction at an equal scale to her husband, if not slightly larger. A novel vignette in which those outside the palace inquire about the loud celebrations within comes to the conclusion, “the shouting is made for Ay, the God’s Father, and Tiy: they are become people of gold,” making explicit that the ceremony honours both, equally.

Yet, despite their prominent positions, there is a significant disparity between the space allotted to the recipients of award and the royal family. The artist has struck a delicate

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857 Binder 2008, 89, 232-5. Although a small number of other women are also depicted wearing or possibly wearing shebyu collars, including a wet-nurse of Tutankhamun, Maia.
859 Alameen 2013, 123.
balance in presenting the awarded couple as great and honourable beside their peers, yet paling in comparison to their rulers. The scene centres upon Amarna’s monumental Window of Appearances, with the rich palace interior laid out in plan beyond. The Aten, above, bathes the royal family in its rays, unambiguously conferring its blessings and focusing the viewer’s eye upon them alone. Inside the window, Akhenaten and Nefertiti are shown from the hips upward, with one daughter standing alongside them, and two younger princesses standing on the window ledge, shown in full. Unlike Theban awards, in which the king sits stiffly to one side, usually with arms crossed over his chest, the royal family’s gestures are expansive and natural. Akhenaten rests an elbow on the window sill in a casual posture alien to traditional pharaonic iconography; Nefertiti cradles her youngest daughter’s head as she and the princesses help to distribute shebyu collars. Another princess reaches behind Nefertiti’s neck to touch her sister’s elbow. The princesses’ inclusion in the ceremony is charming and visually interesting but it also reinforces the propagandistic undertones of this scene: disrupting the smooth movement of the eye right and downward toward the recipients of gold and holding the viewer’s eye on the royal family a moment longer.

Although richly adorned with gold, heavy wigs, and unguent cones, Ay and Tiy appear at a minor scale. Unlike the awarded Theban officials, their bodies are bowed, perhaps because the intermediary has been dispensed with here and Akhenaten himself bestows their award, albeit from a distance. Regardless, Ay and Tiy’s diminished size is so marked that even with arms raised and unguent cones topping their wigs, they occupy less space than just the visible portion of Akhenaten’s upper body. Vertically, they match barely two-thirds the height of the window ledge, let alone the Window of Appearances in its entirety. Two smaller figures, bowed at deeper angles, follow the couple, indicating that they are at least
higher in status than their immediate peers. However, given just how massive the discrepancy between the royal family and the awarded couple is, this seems a minor concession to their dignity.

The crowd’s focus is probably intentionally ambiguous. The mismatched group gathered at right includes scribes, fan- and standard-bearers, unusually jubilant male dancers, and foreigners of broadly Syrian and Nubian types. Their presence adds weight and a sense of celebration to the ceremony and, certainly, Ay and Tiy had a commemorative interest in displaying a large crowd. Yet, for the non-literate or only partly literate viewer of this scene, the tomb owners are not its primary focus. The onlooking crowd is easily (mis)interpreted as worshipfully arrayed before the royal family alone, with bowed backs and raised hands. Their gazes track telling toward the royal family, rather than Ay and Tiy themselves. Perhaps to balance this increased focus on the royal family and to give the deceased an outlet to express the personal prestige he must have wished to immortalise in his tomb, scenes of the post-award procession were also elaborated at Amarna. Where the royal family appeared—during the presentation itself—it was necessary to represent them so large as to dwarf even the superficially honoured officials. However, once the deceased had departed the king’s company, he could be more overtly celebrated. Still, we never find, at Amarna, representations of the deceased at the truly great scales that we do at Thebes (for example, Fig. 3.65), suggesting intentional limits on such displays.

Figure 3.66 focuses the next scene in Ay’s award sequence. Here, he stands outside the palace gates wearing multiple shebyu collars—their number an interesting iconographic
innovation of the Amarna Period\textsuperscript{861}—accompanied by four servants, whose arms are laden with royal gifts. One stands directly behind Ay and three occupy the register above. Above them, the presence of chariots awaiting the deceased communicated his prestige in a society where ownership or access to horses and chariots, foreign to Egypt, were obvious status markers.\textsuperscript{862} Approaching from the right, a crowd of revellers raise their arms in celebration, so that Ay finally receives undivided attention. Even Tiy, awarded alongside him in the palace, has since disappeared, leaving him to receive public congratulations alone. Contrastive status is signalled between those oriented as if leaving the palace, who have presumably enjoyed access to it—Ay, chief among them—and those arriving at its gates, who have been excluded from the ceremony and concomitant proximity to Akhenaten.

Here, Ay’s peers have been arranged to draw the utmost attention to him: their varying heights and outstretched hands drawing the viewer’s eye upward toward his face and neck, laden with collars. One man kneels to kiss Ay’s feet in a gesture of obeisance to a superior and, although Ay is not much taller than his closest compatriot, his costume is by far the most elaborate, with seven shebyu collars, large disk earrings, bracelets, and a wig ornamented by a fillet and unguent cone. He has even received the rare gift of a pair of gloves, which the revellers highlight by touching each hand.\textsuperscript{863} Perhaps the allure of this last vestige of the deceased’s power to display his high status in the community in the tomb decoration is to blame for Tiy’s disappearance. The artist, or Ay himself, opportunistically excludes both his wife and the royal family here, to emphasise his status as an individual,

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\textsuperscript{861} Binder 2008, 84, 212.  
\textsuperscript{862} Leprohon 2015, 318. A votive stela dedicated to Ay by a charioteer, Tchay, suggests that this access to chariots was genuine, not only represented in the tomb to promote a higher status than he attained in life. See Davies 2004, pt. V, pl. XXII.  
\textsuperscript{863} D’Auria 1999, 171-2.
\end{flushleft}
unmitigated by the distracting inclusion of either equals or superiors. Otherwise, Tiy’s exclusion may reflect a reticence to interfere with the usual implication of the homeward procession: that the honoured official will be met by his wife at the door, as if the return to his waiting family is itself part of his reward. In either case, the Aten’s rays extending over the palace gates behind Ay remind the viewer of higher authorities, with whom he cannot compare. Even on this august occasion, the Aten’s rays are not permitted to cover the ‘God’s Father’.

Variations upon the award scene at the Window of Appearances appear in the tombs of Meryre I (Fig. 2.108), Parennefer (Fig. 2.105), Huya (Fig. 3.60), Tutu (Fig. 3.67), Panehesy (Fig. 2.75), Meryre II (Fig. 2.47), and possibly also Mahu (Fig. 3.68). The scenes share a propensity to enlarge and uplift the royal family at the tomb owner’s expense, albeit to varying degrees. In the Tomb of Meryre II, the differentiation in status between king and official is particularly marked. Akhenaten and Nefertiti are magnified within their Window of Appearances, its base decorated with archetypal figures of Egypt’s enemies, bound with arms behind their backs. This motif was a common one, expressing the pharaoh’s maintenance of *ma’at* via the subjugation of chaotic foreigners. By displaying this motif across the base of the window, a further layer of meaning was added, by which the royal couple stood victorious over their defeated enemies, as if trampling them down. Above, Aten’s sprawling rays highlighted the royal couple’s uniquely privileged position and its divine ordinance, while, below, Meryre II was accorded far less dignity. Although finely

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864 The preserved set-up with the royal couple at the Window of Appearances seems to suggest this and Mahu appears elsewhere in his tomb wearing *shebyu* collars but Binder (2008, 80-1) considers this scene too fragmentary to be conclusive: “the presence of a Window of Appearances does not necessarily point to a rewarding scene.”
dressed and ornamented, his position below the window, overlapping its rightmost pillar, placed him too almost directly beneath Akhenaten in a clear statement of inferiority. Even the bound foreigners, although lesser in scale, appear at a higher vertical level than Meryre II, giving them arguably greater visual prominence and centrality in the scene. Certainly, they enjoy closer proximity to the royal couple, whereas the deceased, via his proximity to these foreigners, might even be read as similarly under Akhenaten’s control, if in a different sense.

Even with arms raised and royal gifts hoisted over his head, Meryre II is puny. The artist renders him barely larger than the officials directly behind, although their lack of adornment and the deeper angle of their bows reminds us that Meryre is, at least, preeminent amongst these peers. Moreover, as argued in Chapter 2.5, the inclusion of five royal daughters in the registers behind their parents, embracing and assisting with the distribution of gold, provides an interesting diversion from Meryre’s award. If we follow the contour of Nefertiti’s arm, our attention is naturally drawn outside the window to her daughters, providing a counterbalance to the attention we might pay Meryre himself, if we follow Akhenaten in the task of handing down gifts, and creating a split focus for the viewer. Like Akhenaten and Nefertiti, the princesses are raised above Meryre and, although only children, the two eldest rival his size.

Following the example of Ay’s award scene, we might expect Meryre II to acquire greater prominence upon leaving the palace. However, even the figure of the deceased, departing by chariot in a procession of men and women below, is minor in scale and the revellers’ postures are static and hieroglyphic in their expression of celebration. This renders them far
less visually interesting than, for example, the princesses tenderly embracing above or the massive figures of Akhenaten and Nefertiti with their relaxed postures. The curve of Akhenaten’s back and the casual lean onto his elbow only emphasise how much he must diminish his great stature in order to award the diminutive Meryre below. The result is that both figures of the deceased, although elegantly dressed and nominally the ceremony’s focus, actually blend into the background of a scene that, at first glance, showcases the royal couple as its central feature, positioning them as the primary focus of congregated courtiers, scribes, and foreign envoys, victorious above a row of bound captives.

By contrast, the award and promotion of an unrelated official, Meryre I, in which he is named Greatest of Seers of the Aten, demonstrates perhaps the smallest degree of separation between the royal family and a decorated official preserved at Amarna (Fig. 2.108). Not only is this Window of Appearances lower than others, Meryre himself is uniquely uplifted, borne toward Akhenaten on his peers’ shoulders. The composition of this gaggle of officials is interesting and lively, demanding attention. The foremost in the group is, in fact, a second figure of Meryre, kneeling before Akhenaten with arms lifted in praise. Several men behind him bow at similar angles but differentiated heights, giving the impression of a crowd of unique individuals. Two carry feather-shaped fans, pointing backwards at an upward angle and directing the eye up toward Meryre, rather than forward toward Akhenaten. Behind Meryre, a particularly short, bald man overlaps taller figures, layering the composition. Another man wears a Nubian-style wig, in contrast to the majority of his peers, who are shaven-headed and likely associated with the priesthood, like Meryre himself. These individualising features and varied postures enable the crowd bearing Meryre to the king to capture attention in a way that those accompanying Meryre II in his
chiariot procession do not. Moreover, in this scene, Akhenaten’s bowed figure seems not to emphasise the distance between him and the deceased but to minimise it. There is the impression that, if Akhenaten only extended his hand a little further, he could touch Meryre’s, in dramatic contrast to the impression given by the awards of Ay, Meryre II, and Parennefer.

What is most surprising about the investiture of Meryre I is not that he is celebrated by his peers at all—this was a common feature of award sequences, before and during the Amarna Period—but that this celebration occurs directly before Akhenaten. It isn’t restricted to a homeward procession after the ceremony (cf. Figs. 3.66 and 3.69—3.70). Meryre and Akhenaten are simultaneously praised and uplifted by their audience, contrary to the noted Amarna impulse to minimise the deceased’s significance most pointedly in royal company. In the registers below, part of the usual procession away from the place of award is also preserved, displaying remnants of a chariot and lively crowd: men in varying postures, carrying distinguishing objects, a number of women, including musicians and dancers, and at least one child. The artistic effort and creativity espoused here contrasts the more formulaic example from the Tomb of Meryre II.

How can we account for this distinction? What was it about Meryre I that enabled him to thwart, to some extent, this Amarna tendency to minimise the deceased in royal company and to diminish, rather than elaborate, opportunities for his valorisation as an individual? The answer may lie in Meryre’s particular necessity to Akhenaten in the development and practice of his new theology. Although it was Ay, with his more secular titles, that would later become king, Meryre must have held immense influence at Amarna, while Atenism
flourished, holding the highest calibre of religious titles. The position he receives here, ‘Greatest of Seers of the Aten’, represents the pinnacle of his career, while his family’s privileged access to both the palace and temple is suggested by epithets of both Meryre and his wife Tenre’s close connection to royal couple: he is “one whom his lord loves” and she, “the great favourite of the Lady of the Two Lands.”  

Meryre’s tomb is the second closest to completion and, had it been completed within Amarna’s lifetime, it may well have been “the largest and finest tomb in the El Amarna private necropolis.” It is easy to imagine that Meryre, as the primary non-royal officiant of the Aten religion at Amarna, must have been a key ally for Akhenaten. His epithets included several emphasising the king’s satisfaction with him, including “one uniquely excellent and beloved of his lord,” “one whom the Lord of the Two Lands favoured on account of his character,” and “the favourite whom the Lord of the Two Lands fostered.” So ‘fostered’ by Akhenaten, Meryre must have been one of the greatest beneficiaries of the Aten’s institution as sole state deity. With Akhenaten reliant on a strong priesthood to promote the controversial theology by which he validated his kingship, it is understandable that the relationship between Meryre and Akhenaten appears, in this scene, to be more of an (unequal) partnership than in any other Amarna tomb. Still, the scene’s caption, recording Akhenaten’s speech, reminds the onlooker that it is only through obedience and loyalty that Meryre has achieved such uncommon status.

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“Behold I am attaching you to myself, to be the Greatest of Seers of the Aten in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten. I do this for love of you, specifically because you are my servant, who listens to the instruction. As for every mission which you undertake, my heart is content with it.”

Obedience and attention to Akhenaten are among the most commonly praised qualities of Amarna’s elite. The epithet referring to Meryre as one ‘fostered’ by Akhenaten implicates a related theme: the promise that those loyal to him will be cared for in life and death. Judging by the comparative grandeur of his tomb, it seems that Meryre did well from his appointment, something that would have been abundantly clear to visitors, were its construction and decoration ever completed. The unique image of Meryre, carried before Akhenaten on his peers’ shoulders, exemplified to visitors the heights one might reach through unwavering loyalty to the king and his chief deity. It posited Meryre as the most favoured one of the king and reflected an anxiety for royal recognition and its associated rewards, which was mirrored throughout Amarna’s tombs, at a time when the usual mechanisms for securing divine support and a pleasant afterlife had been disrupted. The extent of the rewards enabled by royal favour are further emphasised in a second award of Meryre I, captioned as below:

That which is said by the King... “Let the Superintendent of the Treasury of Golden Rings take (?) the High Priest of the Aten in Akhetaten, Meryre, and put gold on his neck to the top of it, and gold on his feet, because of his obedience to the doctrine of Pharaoh.”

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A second variety of award scene, occurring away from the Window of Appearances, also existed at Amarna and Meryre I was among a small group that included both varieties in their tombs, sometimes more than once. Here, the conferral of awards might take place in the palace or its courtyard, with the royal couple seated on thrones or standing to receive the deceased (see Figs. 3.71—3.74). In each of these examples, from the tombs of Pentu, Meryre I, and Meryre II, the deceased appears before the royal couple with arms raised in jubilation, sometimes with an attendant fastening a shebyu collar around their neck after the fashion common at Thebes. The re-emergence of attendants acting as intermediaries here reinforces the ideological imperative of maintaining separation between the royal family and their subjects in a scene that is otherwise more intimate than the conferral of awards at the Window of Appearances. Without this architectural barrier (particularly in Figs. 3.72—3.73), interceding figures return to act as a buffer and the royal couple retain a massive size, which preserves the expected power differential between awardee and awardee.

Less common than awards and promotions at the Window of Appearances, these scenes may express the recipient's particular privilege or status. They appear in the tombs of officials close to the royal family and their household or, otherwise, high up in the Aten religion. These included Pentu, as ‘Chief Physician’ and ‘First Servant of the Aten in the Mansion of Aten in Akhet-Aten’, Meryre I, as ‘Greatest of Seers of the Aten in the House of Aten in Akhet-Aten’, and Meryre II, as ‘Overseer of the Houses of the Royal Quarters’. Architectural elements, such as doorways and surrounding walls, rooms, and furnishings, suggest locations internal to walled palace or temple complexes, emphasising the status of
the recipients via their access to these privileged interiors. Although not completely private, the crowds are lesser here, giving the impression of a select group.

Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s costumes also approach something more casual or, at least, varied in these scenes. Nefertiti wears a simple cap-crown with uraeus in examples from the tombs of Meryre I (Fig. 3.73) and Meryre II (Fig. 3.74), while Akhenaten wears the red crown in one example from Pentu’s tomb (Fig. 3.72) and a short ‘Nubian’ wig in the Tomb of Meryre I (Fig. 3.73), a head-covering that could equally be worn by the queen and non-royal individuals, in varying degrees of elaboration. Meryre II is particularly curiously placed in this scene: elevated on a low platform, while his peers kneel and bow toward him at each side (Fig. 3.74). This platform raises Meryre above the ground line occupied by Akhenaten and Nefertiti, to whom several of Meryre’s peers turn their backs as they praise him. This seems to me an unusual move in the context of the Amarna tombs. However, it is balanced by the huge size of the royal couple beneath the Aten’s rays; even in these circumstances, they cannot help but draw the greatest portion of the viewer’s attention.

The elaboration of award and promotion scenes, comprising two main varieties at Amarna, provides a counterbalance to the broader trend of minimising the deceased in his tomb in order to foreground the royal family. With the loss of several scenes traditionally used to express the tomb owner’s status, valour, and privileged positions in society, award scenes expanded to fill the void, celebrating the achievements and social identity of the deceased. Even so, Amarna’s award scenes, particularly those at the Window of Appearances, place far greater emphasis on the royal family than the awarded official. The queen and princesses become a characteristic element of these scenes, rather than a rare exception, and the
increasing naturalism of their gestures diverts attention from the miniaturised awardee. The increased size and centrality of Akhenaten’s family in the composition and the appearance of the Aten above, crowning them with its rays, furthers an impression that the focus of these scenes was as much the royal family as the deceased: their wealth and generosity in bestowing awards as much as the awardee’s deservingness of them. These scenes remained acceptable in the face of less attention generally paid to non-royal individuals because they maintained and even exaggerated the appropriate power dynamic between a king and his subjects and expressed an important ideological message: that all advantages, in life and death, were acquired through loyalty to Akhenaten. With inscriptions describing the tombs themselves as gifts of the king, the orientation of Amarna’s tomb decoration towards Akhenaten’s interests, more so than the deceased’s, is less surprising than it might initially appear.
3.7 The Reception of Inw

Scenes featuring Egypt’s reception of the goods of different lands (inw) constitute some of the largest and most impressive sequences in both the Theban and Amarna tombs. Unlike offering or fishing and fowling, the reception of inw was not a centuries-old traditional component of tomb decoration but a product of the unique socio-political context of the Eighteenth Dynasty. These scenes first appear in private tombs during the coregency of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, enjoying only a brief historical moment before disappearing in the Nineteenth Dynasty.\textsuperscript{870} Although several good examples survive, they draw competing interpretations, particularly with regard to the status of the foreign emissaries who deliver their products to the pharaoh, the political and economic significance of those deliveries, and the purpose(s) of their inclusion in private tombs.

Traditionally, the goods themselves are referred to as ‘tribute’ and the deliverers ‘tributaries’. However, these terms are fundamentally hierarchical in a way that Egyptian inw ‘what is brought’ was not.\textsuperscript{871} Those bearing goods in inw scenes were not only defeated enemies but also unconquered diplomatic and economic contacts. They included Aegeans, Hittites, Puntites, Mitanni, and sometimes even native Egyptians.\textsuperscript{872} Consequently, recent scholarship is moving away from interpretations of inw scenes as simple propagandistic records of war booty, forced extractions of luxury items, or even one-sided gifts from foreign inferiors to Egyptian superiors.\textsuperscript{873} To be credited is the contextually-aware argument that these gifts, albeit perhaps to varying degrees, were given and received reciprocally as a

\textsuperscript{870} Panagiotopoulos 2001, 263; Sainz 2015, 353.
\textsuperscript{871} Panagiotopoulos 2001, 270; Cashman 2006, 139; Sainz 2015, 353-4.
\textsuperscript{872} Bleiberg 1984, 158, 167; Bleiberg 1996, 114; Rehak 1998, 40; Panagiotopoulos 2001, 263, 268, 274; cf. Davies 1934, 190.
\textsuperscript{873} Panagiotopoulos 2001, 265; Panagiotopoulos 2006, 378.
regular aspect of ancient Near Eastern diplomacy.\textsuperscript{874} By this token, the bowing and scraping of the emissaries of even unconquered states before the pharaoh may be considered more in keeping with local court etiquette—and perhaps an acknowledgment of individual, personal inferiority to the Egyptian king—than a state or group-level acknowledgment of submission to Egypt.\textsuperscript{875} The appearance of these scenes in private tombs, moreover, suggests at least as much personal motivation for their inclusion as political. Yet, the benefits of commissioning an inw scene for the deceased himself has only rarely been considered in detail.

The tomb owners in question included some of Egypt’s highest officials. Often, they are viziers, second only to pharaoh himself in the administrative hierarchy. In these scenes, they either act as intermediaries between the king and the inw-bearers or they substitute the king entirely, accepting the proffered goods on his behalf. The scene’s message may certainly be considered a ‘propagandistic’ one, communicating Egypt’s wealth and international standing to the limited audience of visitors to the tomb. However, more significant to visiting friends and family and for the deceased himself in his quest for eternal glory, is the tomb owner’s prominence within the scene. He stands at the forefront of a major ceremonial event, acting as the king’s agent in a manner that must have distinguished him from even his most eminent peers. He must also have hoped that these riches would become available to him: in life, by the pharaoh’s good will and selective redistribution,\textsuperscript{876} and in death, by their representation in his tomb. Inw scenes thereby sustained the deceased, commemorated an exceptional moment in his career, and celebrated his position

\textsuperscript{874} Bleiberg 1996, 99, 114; Panagiotopoulos 2006, 396.
\textsuperscript{876} See Bleiberg (1984, 156) on the uses of inw by the pharaoh.
within the king’s inner circle. Each of these motives persisted for the two Amarna officials whose tombs also contained inw scenes, Huya and Meryre II. However, it is notable that here, as elsewhere at Amarna, their roles were diminished in favour of the royal family’s. Unsurprisingly, the Theban variant of the inw scene, in which the king was absent and the deceased received the products of the foreign lands on his behalf, does not appear at Amarna.

At Thebes, inw scenes decorate the tombs of men whose offices provided them personal access to the royal court and key roles within the ceremony itself, whether as royal representative, diplomatic intermediary, or scribe, recording the incoming goods.\textsuperscript{877} The reception—sometimes specifically dated but otherwise occurring continually within the ‘eternal time’ of the tomb—recalls a key event in the deceased’s career or, perhaps more generally, a number of similar events in which he participated. This position must have been an enviable one. In Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, where status was marked by access to the monarch and the palace interior,\textsuperscript{878} acting as the king’s agent must have been the pinnacle of a career of royal service. Officials recorded it both iconographically and textually in their tombs, on stelae, and in other inscriptions. A private stela of Hor-meni recalls, “I spent many years as mayor of Hierakonpolis, having presented its inw to the Lord of the Two Lands,” singling this out as a major event.\textsuperscript{879} The great size of many tomb owners within their inw scenes—at least, at Thebes—emphasises the honour and dignity associated with these roles, per the artistic principle of hierarchical scale.

\textsuperscript{877} Hartwig 2004, 73; Snape 2011, 192.
\textsuperscript{878} Panagiotopoulos 2001, 269, 272-3; Panagiotopoulos 2006, 500; Spence 2007, 291-4; Sainz 2015, 360.
\textsuperscript{879} Bleiberg 1996, 92.
Figure 3.75 reproduces the *inw* scene from the Tomb of Sobekhotep (TT 63), Overseer of the Seal (or ‘Treasurer’) under Thutmose IV. It is this connection to the treasury that gives Sobekhotep the privilege of accepting foreign gifts and delivering them personally to his king. In this double-role, Sobekhotep appears twice, back-to-back, centred between the royal kiosk at left and four registers of foreigners approaching from the right. The closest bow and prostrate themselves toward not only Thutmose IV but Sobekhotep himself, standing in between them. The right-hand figure of Sobekhotep acknowledges or directs these visitors with a raised hand, while in the other he holds the icons of his authority. At left, Sobekhotep appears in the honourable position of enriching his king, although he is not the originator of the gifts he bears. This is a position of distinction and the space and centrality given to Sobekhotep’s twin images, as well as their proximity to the king, illustrate this well, even to illiterate observers.

The *inw*-bearers themselves, with their exotic gifts, are clearly distinguished from traditional images of the chaotic, uncivilised foreigner, whom the pharaoh must smite to maintain *ma’at*. This distinction is expressed within the scene itself, by the juxtaposition of *inw*-bearers—neatly arranged into registers, dressed in elaborate costumes, and bringing luxury items and exotic animals—against the bound foreigners who decorate the royal kiosk. A key difference is the diversity of the *inw*-bearers, in terms of their costume, goods, and even age, with several children appearing. Their gestures also differ and they execute different tasks; one man in the second register turns to look back at the man behind, as if in conversation. By contrast, the captives decorating the royal kiosk are every bit the archetypal foreign enemy: indistinguishable from one another within generic ‘ethnic’ types, forming a repeating pattern. All face right and appear with hands bound behind their backs.
in an evenly spaced line at the kiosk’s base. The king’s dominant position, above, evokes the common textual motif by which foreigners fall beneath his feet or sandals.\footnote{For example, see the Amarna Period inscription from the Tomb of Meryre I, proclaiming that, “The Nine Bows are [in] his Person’s presence and their chiefs are gathered under his sandals” (trans. Murnane 1995, 161).} The result is a composition that reinforces traditional ideologies of Egyptian superiority, yet simultaneously illustrates another side of Egypt’s foreign relations, key to the Eighteenth Dynasty: that of peaceful diplomatic exchange, in which visitors to Egypt maintained good relations by delivering gifts and exhibiting appropriate court etiquette.

Consequently, by including an inw scene in his tomb, the deceased positioned himself at the centre of a new climate of internationalism and diplomacy, which heralded major economic growth via the influx of luxury materials and foreign labour. He also demonstrated the respect his position afforded him not only amongst Egyptians but amongst foreigners. The exoticism of the inw-bearers and their gifts, both occasionally hybridised, as well as the vastness of the ceremony with all its interesting details celebrated the incredible experiences of the deceased within his lifetime, characterising him as a man of privilege and distinction to those visiting his tomb.\footnote{Panagiotopoulos 2006, 404; Sainz 2015, 354-5.} Therefore, we need not read these scenes as pure pharaonic propaganda. A commemorative motive for their inclusion in private tombs is clear.

Nonetheless, scenes centring the delivery of inw by respectful, prostrating foreigners likely did serve some apotropaic and broadly propagandistic function. Although the represented peoples were not all genuine ‘enemies’ of Egypt, their iconographic foreignness made them
conceptually so. By the Eighteenth Dynasty, foreign typologies were inextricably tied to the ideology of foreignness as dangerous and chaotic, via their origins and ongoing inclusion in contexts that denigrated and alienated non-Egyptians. This provenance means that we cannot entirely separate the foreign inw-bearers represented in private tombs from the political motivations that shaped their representative standards, even while they are clearly differentiated from, for example, the bound foreigners decorating the royal kiosk in Sobekhotep’s tomb. Regardless of context, these images must have reminded the viewer of widespread icons such as the smiting or trampling of foreigners by the king, which had been in circulation since the beginning of the Dynastic Period.

Through this lens, we can read the neat organisation of foreign emissaries in registers as a statement of Egyptian control over potentially dangerous forces. By their appearance at the Egyptian court and compliance with its rituals and etiquette—bowing, prostrating, and bearing gifts—the threatening aspects of their foreignness were neutralised, moulded to fit within the Egyptian order. Captions describe them praising the pharaoh, proclaiming in the Tomb of Amenemhab (TT 85), “How great is thy fame, victorious king, sovereign beloved of Re! Thou has set fear of thee in all the lands and awe of thee throughout all foreign countries. Behold us then beneath thy sandals.” Some tombs of military officials also include the arrival of prisoners of war in this otherwise diplomatic icon. With the threatening aspects of the foreign suppressed, the message becomes one of Egyptian supremacy and ma’at maintained, magically protecting deceased against potential dangers in the afterlife. Inw scenes thereby served apotropaic functions similar to scenes of fishing

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882 Text from the Tomb of Amenemhab (after Davies 1934, 189-90).
and fowling but in a manner specific to the increasingly international context of the Eighteenth Dynasty. They empowered the deceased to express his role in changing diplomatic relations, as well as the benefits of those relations, within the context of an iconographical and ideological tradition that forbade the representation of foreigners as equal to Egyptians. Similar deliveries of Egyptian goods were likely made to foreign courts, in which Egyptian emissaries too must have complied with local ceremonial standards. Yet these are not deemed relevant to include in the Egyptian tomb context, either because the deceased himself was not involved or because these activities could not comfortably fit within an iconography of Egyptian dominance.

In the Tomb of Haremhab (TT 78), Superintendent of the Sacred Cattle and Captain of the Archers under Thutmose III and Amenhotep III, the focal wall exhibits a double scene of the reception of inw (Figs. 3.76—3.77). Each scene follows a similar pattern to Sobekhotep’s example. The royal kiosk is poised to one side and the deceased approaches bearing gifts. Behind him are several registers of foreign emissaries, here greater in number, more densely packed, and more varied than in Sobekhotep’s tomb. Mothers hold their children by the hand, carry them in baskets on their backs, or hoist them up on their shoulders, while male dancers leap about in the lowest registers of Figure 3.77, one with both feet raised from the ground line, others with bodies contorting in unusual ways. The inw-bearers interact with one another, sharing glances and touches and occupying dynamic postures, which give the scene an air of celebration, while in Figure 3.76, Egyptian scribes are hard at

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883 Similarly, see: Hawass 2009, 122.
884 Panagiotopoulos 2006, 396.
work, recording the quantities of goods received, their overseers bearing staffs and lifting their arms in gestures of direction.

The overall impression of Haremhab’s inw scene is one of busyness, abundance, and exoticism, at the centre of which he himself stands. It is Haremhab who conveys these wonders to the pharaoh, making his position one of crucial importance. Visually interesting details engage visitors to the tomb, awing them with delightful excesses of a nature perhaps far beyond their own experience. They are drawn deep into this scene, which valorises the huge figure of the deceased: visually more similar to pharaoh himself than to either the inw-bearers or his fellow Egyptian administrators. Yet, when we turn to Amarna’s receptions of inw, several differences in composition and focus are evident. The tomb owner’s role has been predictably decimated. He no longer “appear[s] in kinglike splendour” before the foreign emissaries but, instead, sinks into the crowd of spectators. The royal family are blown up as the central focus of the scene, uniquely represented in two phases: first, a procession toward the ceremony, depicted in Huya’s tomb (Figs. 3.78—3.79) and, second, the reception ceremony itself, depicted in Meryre II’s (Fig. 2.43—2.44).

Inscriptions and shared visual markers indicate that the occasion depicted in both tombs was identical, taking place in Akhenaten’s Year 12 on the eighth day of the second month of Peret. Inw was delivered to Akhenaten by “every foreign country united altogether as one,” including “the islands in the middle of the sea,” whose identity is debated but who were certainly not a conquered people. Egyptian soldiers attending the procession and

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886 Panagiotopoulos (2006, 382), referring specifically to the inw scene in the Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100).
887 Text from the Tomb of Huya (after Davies 1995, 22). See also, the caption from the Tomb of Meryre II (after Davies 1995, 20).
ceremony were part of Akhenaten’s usual entourage and do not indicate a connection between this reception of inw and any specific military activity. As they approach the king, the inw-bearers beg in return his “breath of life,” a request which recurs in these scenes and in the Amarna Letters and which should be read, along with bowing and prostration, as part of the formal etiquette of the occasion.

Huya’s inw scene, recording the royal family’s procession from the palace, depicted at left, to the ceremonial site, at right, is interesting for several reasons (Figs. 3.78—3.79). Firstly, it provides a novel means of expanding the already-grand ceremonial narrative of the reception of inw and the royal family’s role within it. Beyond that, however, this procession by palanquin ties into a broader theme in Amarna tomb decoration, whereby the royal family’s movements across the city acquired a ritual or mythological significance. Typically, these movements involved chariot processions between palace and temple, accompanied by the deceased amidst an escort of soldiers and officials. They appear in the tombs of Panehesy (Fig. 2.39), Mahu (Figs. 2.40, 2.56, and 2.71), and Meryre I (Figs. 2.41—2.42) and occupy large swaths of space, despite bearing only marginal relevance to the deceased’s individual standing. Above Akhenaten, as always, is the sun disk with rays extended, traversing the city in sync with the royal chariot in a simulation of the solar cycle. Indeed, as Akhenaten’s appearance in art requires the Aten’s, his movements may be read as pulling the Aten across the sky, via their unique connection. The result is to bring the very passing of time within royal power, uniquely mythologising a scene that could otherwise be

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890 Müller and Settgast 1976, 18-20; Spence 2015, 311; Hays 2018, 49.
891 Barry Kemp (1989, 286) suggests Amarna’s ‘desert altars’ as a possible site for this event in Year 12.
described in terms as mundane as ‘the royal commute’. The excerpt below, from a Hymn to the Aten, reinforces this identification of king and god via their movements.

“All the world is calling out to your [Akhenaten’s] Ka, for they belong to you, their ruler, adoring your course in the sky in order to achieve power like the living Aten.”

In the procession toward the ceremony, the solar metaphor of the king’s movements is bolstered by his means of transport: a leonine palanquin and sphinx throne, composed of precious metal. Both lion and sphinx were traditionally associated with solar deities, perhaps partly because of their golden colour, such that Amun was characterised as a “fierce red-eyed lion.” This leonine palanquin appears again in the Tomb of Meryre II, waiting empty beneath the royal kiosk (Fig. 2.43). If it existed in actuality, we might expect the bright metal to have caught the sunlight during its open-air transit, further evoking the sun’s journey across the sky. It must also have constituted an intimidating display of luxury for visiting foreigners, to be carried home by word of mouth, augmenting Akhenaten’s international status. In Huya’s procession scene (Figs. 3.78—3.79), the palanquin has been thoughtfully positioned, with the lines of fans raised over the royal couple coinciding with the Aten’s rays, as if extending them to completely surround and further exalt Akhenaten and Nefertiti.

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893 Variously translated as electrum (Murnane 1995, 135) or gold (Davies 2004, pt. III, 9).
894 After Hart 2005, 14.
Huya himself appears directly beneath the royal palanquin, yet, in spite of this proximity, plays a minor role in the scene. Identified by a small inscription, he appears between colleagues in the midst of a register of various officials, soldiers, and inw-bearers, all of whom bow at virtually ninety-degree angles. Not only is this degree of bowing extreme for the owner of the tomb in which the image appears, but Huya does not even appear at the forefront of his immediate peers. His dignity is preserved only by the additional artistic attention paid to his figure: the more detailed pleating and fuller shape of his kilt and the deliberate folds of his belly, evoking health and prosperity in the Amarna style. Huya’s sandals are also a status marker, although they are not exclusive to him; the two figures immediately preceding share the same privilege. In this sense, the artist paints a picture of Huya as amongst the social betters of those depicted, yet he is given nowhere near the compositional prominence he might have expected for playing a role in the same ceremony in the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty.

Perhaps this is because Huya’s role in the Year 12 reception of inw was genuinely small, witnessing its grandeur as a minor participant only. However, Huya was one of only two individuals to include this event in his tomb and he was certainly one of Akhenaten’s foremost officials, by virtue of the fact that he was granted a tomb at all. So, it seems reasonable to suggest that, whatever his role in the ceremony, it has been deliberately minimised, in line with the general practice at Amarna to devote fuller attention to the royal family. Indeed, given that this scene traditionally displayed the deceased at the pinnacle of his career in a position of immense responsibility, even as the king’s sole agent and representative, it is easy to imagine that this vanishingly small image of Huya, heavily bowed amidst a crowd, was privately resented. Of far greater visual interest are the many registers
of exotically dressed foreigners, bearing their inw toward the ceremonial site: men carrying chariots in pairs and leading monkeys on leashes, while dancers and musicians provided a festive atmosphere. At the rightmost edge of the image, waiting beyond a cluster of structures overseen by the Aten, masses of foreigners with Egyptian escorts spectate the oncoming procession. Why would the eye linger upon Huya?

The artist’s decision to combine the imagery of the king’s solar journey with that of the inw scene is particularly interesting in this context. It reflects a conscious shift in focus from the ceremony itself, as the most important event for depiction, to the ritual movement of the king, now taking place over registers of foreign inw-bearers. The effect is to posit Akhenaten himself as the sun, which passes over all lands and all peoples, in accordance with the uniquely international tendencies of Amarna theology, which brought the foreign lands within the designs, authority, and even protection of the Aten. Hymns to Aten, such as appear below, reinforce the intentionality of this inclusivity, which flies in the face of traditional notions of Egypt as the universe’s stable centre and the foreign lands as its chaotic periphery. So, perhaps when Huya vanishes into the crowd of his own inw scene, the artist makes a visual statement of this Amarna worldview: one in which elite Egyptians and foreigners alike, although differently constructed, fell equally beneath the authority of Akhenaten and the Aten.

“You create the earth according to your wish, being alone—

People, all large and small animals,

All things which are on earth, which go on legs, which rise up and fly by means of their wings,

The foreign countries of Kharu and Kush, (and) the land of Egypt.
You set every man in his place, you make their requirements, each one having his food and the reckoning of his lifetime.

Their tongues differ in speech, their natures likewise.

Their skins are distinct, for you have made foreigners to be distinct...

The lord of every land, who rises for them,

The orb of the daytime, whose awesomeness is great!"^896

The reception of *inw* in the Tomb of Meryre II (Figs. 2.43—2.44 and 2.62) is marginally more traditional, at least in terms of its timing and, to some extent, staging. Like earlier Eighteenth Dynasty *inw* scenes, it depicts the reception eternally at its climax upon the walls of the tomb. However, upon examination, even this scene is far removed from its Theban predecessors. Its scale is massive and the unusual choice has been made to position the royal kiosk at the upper centre of the scene, blocking it in with foreigners approaching from three sides, rather than setting it to one side and having visitors approach unidirectionally in a clear order. Very little space is allocated to inscriptions, with the viewer’s focus falling, first, upon the royal family in their kiosk—Akhenaten and Nefertiti with all six daughters—and, second, upon the visual feast of rows upon rows of foreigners and officials, varying gloriously in their dress, gifts, and gestures. The scene is lively. Dancers leap with one or both feet raised from the ground, performing directly before Akhenaten, while, above them, a wrestling contest unfolds in stages (Fig. 2.44). It ends at the point closest to Akhenaten with the Egyptian contestant besting his Nubian opponent in an amusing vignette of Egyptian superiority, which we should nonetheless consider an apotropaic victory of Egyptian *ma’at* over foreign *isfet*.

^896 Text from Ay’s Hymn to the Aten (trans. Murnane 1995, 114-5). The hymn goes on to describe the Aten’s nurturing of the foreign lands, making for them “an inundation in heaven [i.e. rainfall], which is for the foreigners (and) for all foreign flocks which go on legs.”
Bound prisoners or slaves also appear amongst the southern *inw*, led before Akhenaten in the two registers above the wrestling matches, furthering this implicit foreign subjugation. These are not, however, defeated soldiers but a varied bunch of men, women, and children, who gesture their deference to Akhenaten on approach. Children walk hand-in-hand with their parents and sit upon their fathers’ shoulders or in baskets upon their mothers’ backs. In the register above, more intricately dressed southerners of an evidently higher class are not bound but rather occupied with the transportation of exotic animals and valuable goods. Behind the kiosk, at left, the northerners present their *inw*: again, consisting of valuable goods, animals, and human captives. Even within their groups, they vary in height, posture, and costume, creating a varied image intended to fascinate visitors to the tomb. Akhenaten as the esteemed focus of all this grandeur and festivity is clearly the primary message of this composition, well expressed by the centring of the royal kiosk within the scene.

Prior to the Amarna Period, *inw* scenes fell firmly within a subset of tomb decoration related to the career of the deceased, intended to demonstrate his proud professional identity, his close relationship to royalty, and the greatness of the tasks entrusted to him. This personally commemorative value justified the inclusion of *inw* scenes in elite tombs, rather than royal monuments, in spite of their clear propagandistic undertones. Observers of the two Amarna examples, however, are confronted with an unusual question: where exactly is the tomb owner? What is his role? A small caption distinguishes Huya’s bowed figure from his peers’—although useless to the illiterate observer—but in the Tomb of Meryre II, we can
only assume that the deceased is amongst the Egyptian officials approaching Akhenaten. For his sake, we hope he is at least the foremost one.

These officials approach, bowed forward, without having acquired anything to present to Akhenaten, so they are not quite fulfilling the traditional role of the deceased as an intermediary in the presentation of inw. In a small vignette above them, a minor award appears to be taking place: an attendant fastens a collar around the neck of a deeply bowed and poorly preserved figure, while his peers, standing behind, offer their congratulations. Further collars are stacked in the register above, suggesting at least a potential for further rewards. There is, however, no inscriptive effort made to clarify Meryre’s identity, his role in the scene, or whether any of these goods are intended for him. If either Huya or Meryre genuinely played significant roles in this reception of tribute in Year 12, then their interests in commemorating those roles in their tombs have been severely neglected.

That is, while Amarna’s inw scenes are massive and intriguing, they communicate less about the deceased’s identity as an individual than their Theban counterparts. Particularly in Huya’s tomb, the elaboration of the sequence is oriented toward extending the mythology of the royal family, not contributing new information about Huya himself. He is an observer only in a scene previously devoted to celebrating his professional accomplishments and personal relationship to the ruler. This was apparently an indignity that Huya and Meryre II were forced to shoulder, reflecting a recurring theme of Amarna tomb decoration, whereby the deceased’s commemoration as an individual received scant attention. Instead, these officials were directed to lay their hopes for status in life and death upon the king, who would provide for those he deemed worthy. With Akhenaten’s favour now the primary
means of achieving a desirable afterlife, many of the traditional mechanisms employed for this purpose and the scenes in which they appeared were bypassed or refocused. Paying deference to the royal family and the Aten became the only formally recognised method of providing for one’s afterlife and so it occupied every facet of the tomb decoration.

Perhaps this, too, was a sign of the greater universality and equality of opportunity expressed as an ideal under Akhenaten. If we consider texts such as Hymns to the Aten as accurately reflecting the new theology and having genuine practical implications, then anyone could benefit from the Aten’s blessings in the right circumstances. Officials such as Panehesy, Sutau, and May describe how the king raised them up from humble origins, nurturing, and providing for them.\textsuperscript{897} If accurate and not hyperbolic performances of humility, these men would have been grossly indebted to Akhenaten for their lifestyles and may have wanted to celebrate this in their tombs. Alternatively, if the tombs themselves were gifts from the king, as inscriptions suggest,\textsuperscript{898} then Akhenaten may himself have had a hand in their decoration, having a clear motive to privilege himself and his family. In either case, it is clear that afterlife prospects at Amarna relied far more upon loyalty to Akhenaten and the Aten than the individual character or accomplishments of the deceased and this is evident in the focus of the tomb decoration.

The advent of Atenism is often characterised in terms of what was lost: traditional deities, rituals, and festivities, and security in a relatively ‘known’ afterlife. However, the Amarna tombs also provide an opposite statement of what was gained. Their decoration assures us

\textsuperscript{897} See inscriptions from the tombs of these men (trans. Murnane 1995, 145, 171, 186).
\textsuperscript{898} See, for example, an inscription from the Tomb of Meryre I: “May he [Akhenaten] give a tomb chapel... that the \textit{ba} may rest upon its corpse <in> the place of continuity” (trans. Murnane 1995, 154).
that the ruler and his god are great; their familial unit, secure and fertile; defer to them and you will be cared for in life and in death. The architecture of the palaces and temples, between which the king so often travels in the tomb, call to us: look at this incredible city Akhenaten has built; the scenes of inw: look at the prosperity and universal influence of our state. They reassure the viewer of Egypt’s stability and simultaneously magically ensure it. In this sense, Amarna’s tomb decoration paints a powerful picture but one to which the deceased as an individual has lost precious relevance.
3.8 Theological and Social Responses to Death in Ritual and Funeral

I want to end this chapter with a brief consideration of death and the social functions fulfilled by funeral and ritual, which provides essential context for studying tomb decoration. Death is a problem faced by all human societies—an interruption to the social lives, practices, and hierarchies of kin and communities—and it is inherently uncomfortable. Our loved ones enter a new existence or they don’t; they might go on to a good place or a bad one; terrifyingly, they might cease to exist altogether, leaving us to contemplate the absoluteness of non-existence, the unequivocal nature of loss, and our own trajectory toward the same fate. Across the world and over millennia, humans have developed strategies for comprehending and coping with the unknowns of what follows death. For the Egyptians, this included preservation of the body. Poorer families wrapped their dead in reed mats and deposited them in desert graves, where they would be naturally preserved in the dry environment. The wealthy developed more complex methods of mummification, secreting their dead away in lavish tombs. With the body, they left items they expected the deceased to require for the onward journey, from shabti workers and magical amulets to items of daily use: food, cosmetics, and furnishings. The kings deposited treasure troves and the broader population, a few personal items that were within their means to part with, but the imperative to provide a burial and some measure of aid to the deceased was consistent across class lines. Ideally, it was extended by a duty to return to the burial at intervals to recite prayers, dedicate offerings, and pronounce the name of the deceased: to preserve their identity and social connectivity through the departure from life.

Indeed, although the practices of average Egyptians are inevitably lesser known, elite tombs provide ample evidence for their occupants’ expectations of the funeral, afterlife, and
ongoing cult. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, pre-Amarna, the afterlife was in many ways a mirror image, preserving the best of the deceased’s experiences on earth: his most youthful and healthful figure, his highest status, and his family too. The goal was a peaceful existence in which labour could be delegated and leisure was the standard. If the deceased was appropriately interred and judged worthy—something the wealthy could ensure by depicting the necessary rituals in their tombs—he would be transfigured into an effective spirit. If not, he risked being swallowed up by the chaos that haunted the periphery of the Egyptian order or roaming the earth as a force of evil. Anxieties about the dangers of not receiving a proper funeral or of dying outside Egypt abound in tales such as that of Sinuhe and are further evidenced by the consistent effort and resources the Egyptians devoted to mortuary practices.

Under Akhenaten, however, these anxieties had due cause to flare up in the extreme. The Osirian afterlife and established protocols for how to access it were banished at a blow. What awaited the unlucky soul, whose misfortune it was to perish at Amarna? What new strategies could Akhenaten offer to deal with the great ‘problem’ of death, in the absence of the traditional pantheon? These questions are not easily answered. Yet, Amarna’s tombs do illuminate a few novel means of ensuring that (some of) the deceased’s expectations were met. Regardless of the mechanisms, these officials still demanded preservation, protection, and provisions. They expected to be reanimated, to move about and find some favourable existence on a new plane, and they hoped that prayers to Aten might sway this distant god to “give power on earth, effectiveness in the underworld, and the Ba’s coming out and
refreshing itself in the tomb.” Moreover, although few Amarna tombs were ever filled, we can assume that they were intended to serve many of the same functions as in earlier times and that the dead did too.

An Egyptian was never gone, if properly cared for, but remained a peripheral part of his community, housed in a physical location to which the living could return, whether indicated by a small stone grave marker or a lavish tomb. The dead could be solicited for advice or assistance, contacted via ‘letters to the dead’, animated via their tomb statues, and could affect the mortal world by means of both curses and blessings: a good reason to keep their burials well-provisioned and well-attended. At Thebes, regular festivals such as the Beautiful Feast of the Valley ensured that the lines of communication remained open and, ideally, that the dead were not forgotten but continued to participate in their communities. We must assume that these ideas retained salience at Amarna, even if traditional religious festivals are no longer directly evidenced. Mortuary care of the deceased, appropriate deposition of the body, and periodic return to the gravesite provided emotional support for the bereaved, as much as magical or practical utility to the deceased, mitigating feelings of loss or failure related to death.

That is, while the dead may have begun the conception and construction of their tombs—and even finished them, where they had the time and resources to do so—it was the living who adopted responsibility for the burial, its maintenance, and the funeral after their

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900 D'Auria, Lacovara, and Roehrig 1988, 59; Bickel 2006, 86.
901 Fazzini 1975, xxii.
passing. Nicola Harrington has argued that “the main purpose of a funeral is to separate the living from the dead; it is an act of severance from the community,” which rectifies “the disruption to society caused by biological death... by adherence to established patterns of behaviour, and by continued communication with the deceased via regular visits to the tomb and through media such as anthropoid busts and stelae.”

Although otherwise astute, there is a contradiction here in the use of the term “severance” to describe the shifting relationship between the living and the dead. Where modern Western funerals are easily understood as acts of severance, providing ‘closure’ so that the bereaved might ‘move on’ in a world without the deceased, this misrepresents the goal of the Egyptian funeral. Far from a severance from community, the Egyptian funeral redefined the deceased’s place in that community, allocating them a new role and social status as an effective spirit: still with power, reality, and connectivity but in a different sense to that experienced in life. The living were expected to maintain regular contact with the deceased, who, in turn, retained the ability to help or hinder them. Disconnection from society, one’s name being forgotten, was a feared obliteration: in a sense, true death. Conversely, eternal social integration—remembrance and connectivity—was eternal life.

Egyptian funerals avoided the deceased’s severance from society by acknowledging a change in the nature of their inclusion and establishing an ongoing means of communication: for example, restoring their senses and abilities by ritually opening the mouth, eyes, ears and nose. What makes Atenism difficult to fathom, at times, is that

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903 Harrington 2013, 102.
904 Although, see Assmann (2005, 14): “There is probably no culture in the world that does not stand in some kind of relationship with its dead.”
905 Meskell 2008, 30.
Amarna tomb decoration pays such scant attention to funerary practices. This is probably due to the tombs’ unfinished nature, with few members of Akhenaten’s inner circle dying within the city’s lifetime and requiring the enactment of the highest order of Atenist mortuary practice. Most of those who died at Amarna did so in undocumented ways and received modest cemetery burials. As such, many dark spots remain in our understanding of Atenist funerals and afterlives.

Elite mortuary practices tended to be elaborate, led by either a priest or by the deceased’s eldest son. Rich sequences of funeral preparations and rituals decorate the passages of the Theban tombs, yet disappear almost entirely at Amarna. These scenes included the deceased’s pilgrimage by barque to Abydos (Fig. 3.80)—whether genuinely undertaken or only symbolic, magically realised by its appearance in the tomb—as well public processions to the tomb (Fig. 3.81) and rites such as the Opening of the Mouth, intended to reanimate and restore functionality to the mummified dead¹⁰⁶ (Fig. 3.82). Following these rituals, undertaken at the tomb as the meeting point of earthly life and afterlife, the deceased was empowered to move forward. He met with underworld gods and faced a final judgment, often recorded in ‘Books of the Dead,’¹⁰⁷ in which his heart was weighed against the feather of ma’at. Perfect balance entitled him to a blessed afterlife; imbalance suffered him to be consumed by Ammet, the Devourer, a goddess taking the form of a composite beast. Of course, for the lucky owner of a Book of the Dead, there was no question of succeeding the

¹⁰⁶ Hays 2010, 7-8.
¹⁰⁷ These texts included a variable number of ‘chapters’ or ‘spells’, which could be hand-chosen at one’s own discretion. Chapter 125, the Judgement of the Dead or the Weighing of the Heart, was one of the most extensive and popular chapters.
trial. The heart and feather consistently appear in balance and a ‘negative confession’ proved the deceased innocent of wrongdoing, allowing him to progress.\textsuperscript{908}

The decoration of the tomb chapel, which remained accessible to visitors, celebrated his life and career to those who entered and might deem him worthy of offerings or prayers. However, it also had implications for the character of his afterlife, embedded with symbolic meanings and magical outcomes.\textsuperscript{909} Scenes depicting the deceased at banquet or fishing and fowling on the Nile are easily read as records of activities enjoyed during life. Yet, they were also idealised models for activities to be enjoyed after death and had magical implications for the re-conception, rebirth, protection, and provisioning of the dead. As such, the tomb decoration and real-life fulfilment of ritual requirements guaranteed the deceased a relatively ‘known’ afterlife, which mirrored in many ways his earthly life. The living could relax somewhat in sending their loved ones onward to such a state. Perhaps they also felt some reassurance regarding their own mortality, although the fear of death is difficult to eliminate.

Amarna provides only two sets of images relating directly to death and the funeral: one from the Tomb of Huya (Figs. 3.83—3.85) and the other from the Royal Tomb, sensitively recording the premature death of Meketaten in Room Gamma (Figs. 3.86—3.89) and perhaps a second royal woman in Room Alpha (Fig. 3.90).\textsuperscript{910} Huya’s tomb, far from being one of the earliest begun and more complete for this reason, was one of the last

\textsuperscript{908} Galán 1999, 18.
\textsuperscript{909} Bickel 2006, 85.
\textsuperscript{910} McCarthy 2016, 7.
constructed at Amarna.\footnote{Johnson 1992, 60.} Perhaps his funeral scenes were included by necessity, because Huya, unlike most of his compatriots, actually died during Amarna’s tenure as capital. Perhaps he was even interred there, his body later removed by departing family members, who wished to keep him close and maintain his mortuary cult locally. This theory is not currently confirmed by material evidence\footnote{D’Auria 1999, 172-3.} but if Huya’s funeral scenes were completed by necessity upon his death, this would suggest that Amarna’s remaining tombs were also intended to include funeral scenes. So, we need not consider their rarity evidence of proscription. This is doubly true, given that funeral scenes appear in two separate locations in the Royal Tomb, which we should consider indicative of official Atenist practices. While the explicit mythology and participation of the old gods disappears in both contexts, individual practices such as mummification and funerary lamentation are preserved.\footnote{Ockinga 2008, 25-6.}

On the east wall of Huya’s shrine, he appears upright and mummiform before a stack of offerings, the closest of which are floral (\textbf{Fig. 3.84}). Although the Egyptian pantheon is excluded from Amarna tomb decoration, there is a clear nod to Osiris here. According to Egyptian tradition, the deceased was identified with Osiris after death. Mummification was inextricably linked to his mythology: as the first mummy, lamented and cared for by his consort, Isis. Although Ockinga has argued that “[Huya’s representation as a mummy] does not necessarily have any Osirid implications,”\footnote{Ockinga 2008, 26.} for the sensible reason that the imperative of preserving the corpse overrode the practice’s mythological associations, I tend to disagree. Huya’s false beard seems an unnecessary inclusion, if the artist were trying, as


\footnote{Johnson 1992, 60.} \footnote{D’Auria 1999, 172-3.} \footnote{Ockinga 2008, 25-6.} \footnote{Ockinga 2008, 26.}
much as possible, to sever the Osiride connection. These were only worn by non-royal figures when they appeared as mummies and were part of the divine iconography associating them with Osiris. If this association were being minimised to the fullest possible extent, the beard would surely be omitted. Explicit references to the deceased as ‘the Osiris’ do not survive at Amarna but they do appear elsewhere in Egypt during Akhenaten’s reign, even in contexts which also refer to the Aten.915 Perhaps the persistent image of the mummified dead, complete with false beard, was intended to evoke the protective presence of a deity at the funeral, where the Aten itself could not appear without the royal family present. The inscription accompanying Figure 3.84 reinforces this anxiety for divine support by requesting recitations be made to the Aten, in addition to physical offerings for the deceased.

"May there be made for thee a dy hetep seten of thy bread and the beer of thy house; may there be poured out for thee water from thy cistern; may there be brought to thee [fruit] from thy trees; may a recitation be made for thee from (?) the written lore (?) of Aten; may food be deposited for thee on the altar for thy ka [every day (?)]; may thy name be remembered, Superintendent of the royal harem and of the Treasuries, Huya, maakheru!"916

In this scene, the deceased finally achieves a position of sole visual prominence, evidently because the royal family have not arrived at the funeral to usurp the viewer’s attention. Huya’s mummy stands at the scene’s approximate centre, at a considerable size, equivalent to two registers of female mourners at left and three registers of male mourners at right. Although their identifying inscriptions are damaged, the women—depicted at a larger scale

915 Ockinga and Binder 2013, 509.
916 Text from the Tomb of Huya (after Davies 2004, 16-7).
than both the male mourners and Huya’s priest—are almost certainly his female relatives, including his mother, Tuy, and perhaps also his wife, Wenher, each of whom appears at the entrance to his shrine, as well as the sisters who attend the funeral procession in Figure 3.83. Their mourning gestures resemble those of the men opposite, with one hand raised to touch the crown of the head or to cast dust over it and the other hanging down: in front of the women’s bodies and behind the men’s. Their dresses are tied low to expose the breast, expressing a controlled disarray appropriate to grieving women in the funerary context (compare Fig. 3.91, from the Theban Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky). Like the men, probably including Huya’s friends, family and/or professional mourners, these women’s postures are neat and formulaic, contrasting the wilder postures that appear in the Royal Tomb (Figs. 3.86—3.88 and 3.90).

The funeral procession on the west wall of Huya’s shrine (Fig. 3.83) illustrates another portion of the preparations for his afterlife transition. A wider variety of mourners appears here, including several likely family members, once individually identified by captions. Only one remains somewhat legible: “his sister, Kherpu.” Another woman, in the topmost register, carries a baby as she leads a queue of distressed women. A number of men bear Huya’s burial equipment toward the tomb: tables laden with loaves, flowers, and jars; papyrus flowers; and boxes of furnishings suspended from poles carried over the shoulders. The full suite of tomb equipment is even more lavish, recorded in detail in the shrine, at either side of Huya’s funerary statue (Fig. 3.85). It includes markers of high social status, such as chariots, sandals, and lion-footed chairs and couches, most appearing in pairs and

917 Murnane 1995, 139-41; Davies 2004, pt. III, 16.
918 Davies (2004, pt. III, 17) associates the sash worn by those in the lower register with hired mourners.
likely intended for not only Huya but also his wife, although she occupies little space in his tomb decoration.920

These few scenes from Huya’s tomb provide the clearest view of elite expectations for both the funeral and afterlife at Amarna. However, as they are unique amongst the private tombs, they can be neither corroborated nor challenged by a wider corpus of evidence, making the information they provide desperately appreciated but ultimately limited. They inform us, at least, that the dead still expected to be mummified and considered their physical preservation imperative. While bodily preservation may be undertaken for sentimental and practical purposes, in the context of long-spanning Egyptian beliefs and continued textual references to providing for the deceased after death, we can assume that mummification continued to provide Amarna’s dead with a functional vessel for his spirit to occupy in the afterlife. This is supported by items such as coffins and canopic jars found in the Royal Tomb, although Huya’s tomb preserves only artistic representations of his desired funerary equipment. These images, displaying both basic necessities and luxuries, teach us that a man of Huya’s status expected not only to travel after death but to do so in style, as a member of an elite group with access to a personal chariot. It is clear that he envisioned or hoped for a comfortable, peaceful afterlife, in spite of the period’s social and theological upheaval.

Moreover, despite the loss of numerous traditional scenes that cemented the deceased’s social standing after death, it is clear that Huya too expected to maintain a privileged

position in his community. Familial ties and the duties they incurred retained salience and Huya himself retained a manner of ongoing property ownership, obligating his family to deliver to his tomb at intervals, as above, the bread and beer of his own house, the fruit of his trees, and the water from his cistern. Huya’s family were also bound by social expectations tied to the funeral, including appropriate displays of grief. Both men and women executed ritualised gestures of mourning, by which they acknowledged the loss of an important individual and hired mourners apparently remained an acceptable way of supplementing funeral attendance, emphasising Huya’s respectability and increasing for him the magical benefits of those activities. The actualised social ritual of the funeral would have continued to serve practical purposes for the living too: allowing them to express and process their grief, to propagandise the greatness of their relative in a manner that benefitted them by association, and to publicly fulfil their familial duties in a laudable manner. For the deceased, the funeral and procession continued to serve the dual purposes of preparing them to enter the afterlife and demonstrating their social clout and worthiness at the moment of that transition.

While, throughout his tomb, Huya was suffered to occupy minor roles in Akhenaten’s shadow, these funeral scenes focus entirely upon him, his enlarged figure dominating their composition. In this way, Huya positioned himself as a prominent figure in his community, illustrating the social hierarchy that had privileged him in life and that he must have hoped would guarantee him an equally favourable afterlife. This status was bolstered by the repetition of his name and titles throughout the tomb. Indeed, Huya’s request for offerings, partially quoted above, links the pronouncement of his name to the provision of physical offerings, equally vital to his continued existence in the Hereafter: “May thy name be
remembered, Superintendent of the royal harem and of the Treasuries, Huya, *maakheru*\(^\text{921}\) It is implicit that, with his name, we should also remember Huya’s titles, suggesting that even in death, such earthly epithets, emblazoned across the walls of the tomb, placed Huya at some advantage. Therefore, we should assume an Amarna conception of the afterlife in which the deceased retained his unique personality and a capacity for social interaction, resulting in a preoccupation with personal status and identity that transcended death.

Beyond this, however, we know little about the processes by which the deceased accessed the afterlife or what form he took within it. Rituals that might clarify this, such as Opening of the Mouth sequences, intended to reanimate and restore functionality to the deceased, are notably absent. Yet, the continued practice of soliciting and providing offerings implies a capacity to receive and benefit from those offerings, as in previous periods. Likewise, although the mechanisms are obscured, the afterlife transition probably continued to involve some kind of rebirth: a key concept for a solar religion deeply concerned with the rising and setting sun and its relation to life and death. A lotus flower angled toward the nose of Huya’s mummy in Figure 3.8 further implicates the iconography of rebirth, evocative of the presentation of an *ankh* bouquet to the deceased, as occurs in the Theban tombs and in Panehesy’s Amarna tomb (see Chapter 3.3). The baby carried in Huya’s funeral procession (Fig. 3.83) may also be considered a symbol of rebirth, by which his death is juxtaposed and balanced with new life.

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\(^{921}\) Text from the Tomb of Huya (trans. Davies 2004, 16-7).
Funerary literature such as Books of the Dead, which had begun to appear early in the New Kingdom, do not survive from Amarna. Little tomb equipment remains in any regard but these texts were saturated with references to Egypt’s traditional deities and were therefore unlikely to appear in the tombs of Akhenaten’s officials. With this omission, we lose evidence for previously vital aspects of the afterlife transition, including the deceased’s moral judgment at the Weighing of the Heart ceremony and his recitation of ‘negative confessions’, denying wrongdoing on earth. In general, Amarna texts deemphasise this notion that just actions on earth will lead to a peaceful afterlife granted by the gods. Instead, obedience and loyalty to Akhenaten constituted the key ‘moral’ attributes, which he himself would reward with both a burial and eternity within it. To this end, Amarna’s officials are praised by telling epithets, such as “desiring authoritative direction,”\textsuperscript{922} “worthy of trust,”\textsuperscript{923} “[one] who listens to the instruction,”\textsuperscript{924} and “effective for the king, because of hearkening to his teaching and executing his laws... being close-mouthed.”\textsuperscript{925} The following is an excerpt from the Tomb of May:

“My lord advanced me so that I might execute his teachings as I listened to his voice without cease... How fortunate is the one who listens to your teaching of life—for he shall be sated with seeing you and he shall reach old age! May you grant me the good funeral which is your Ka’s to give, in the tomb in which you decreed for me to rest—the mountain of Akhet-Aten, the place of the favoured ones.”\textsuperscript{926}

\textsuperscript{922} Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 118).
\textsuperscript{923} Text from the Tomb of May (trans. Murnane 1995, 147).
\textsuperscript{924} Text from the Tomb of Meryre I (trans. Murnane 1995, 151).
\textsuperscript{925} Text from the Tomb of Ay (trans. Murnane 1995, 117).
\textsuperscript{926} Text from the Tomb of May (trans. Murnane 1995, 144).
May offers the reader instructions for how to achieve a favourable burial and afterlife at Amarna: first and foremost, by loyally following Akhenaten and his ‘teachings’. The inscribed lintel of a Chief Bowman in the city, quoted below, demonstrates that similar rhetoric was alive amongst those who were well-placed in society but did not yet warrant a tomb gifted by the king. Perhaps such individuals perceived a genuine potential for social mobility, whose favourable outcome was proclaimed throughout Amarna’s tombs, with officials regularly claiming humble origins and indebtedness to Akhenaten through epithets such as “a servant whom his lord developed and whom he buried.”

“I adore your beauty like the Aten’s. (O) [Akhenaten], the ruler, the love of whom is bright, as you are continually! May you celebrate jubilees and conduct generations of people like the Aten, while I follow you continually like one whom you favour.”

“Adoration to your Ka, O living Aten... May you cause me to see the king every day, following him continually—the reward (?) [of] an official who knows his instruction. May you give me life according to [my] desire [because of] my well-disposedness.”

Of course, for the royal family, rich burials were expected and not conceived in the same manner as generous gifts of the king or rewards for obedience. The Royal Tomb was intended for Akhenaten’s own interment. However, before his death, at least one other royal person was interred there: Princess Meketaten, perhaps around ten-years-old. Scenes associated with the deaths of royal women appear in two separate but proximate locations in the Royal Tomb. One is Room Gamma, in which the decoration of all four walls (A—D)

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relates to Meketaten’s death and in which she would have been interred (Figs. 3.86—3.89). The other is Room Alpha, which includes two scenes related to a royal woman’s death on Wall F (Fig. 3.90) but whose remaining walls are thematically unrelated. Due to similarities in the decoration of both rooms, the Alpha scenes are often assumed to be two additional scenes related to Meketaten’s death. Yet, this seems superfluous and illogical, given that Room Alpha is not even adjacent to Meketaten’s burial chamber. More likely, this room was converted from another purpose to serve as the burial for a second royal woman, whose death may not have been foreseen. The problem of identification is unresolvable with the available evidence, as both the inscriptions and the figure of the deceased herself are damaged, but this need not impede analysis of their iconography.

The funerary scenes from Rooms Alpha and Gamma support several of the suppositions already made regarding Atenist funerals and afterlives. These funerals, too, were social events, characterised by performative mourning. Food and drink offerings piled on tables indicate a continued need for sustenance after death, while the tomb equipment in Figure 3.89 confirms a need for other practical and lifestyle items. Indeed, some royal funerary equipment was actually preserved in this tomb, elucidating some of the materials that those at the forefront of the Aten cult considered essential to the burial. We have, for example, fragments of sarcophagi intended for both Akhenaten and Meketaten and a canopic chest (Fig. 3.92), confirming the continuation of mummification practices, including the removal and preservation of vital organs.\textsuperscript{929} That Akhenaten’s sarcophagus is decorated with images of the Aten and places Nefertiti at each corner in positions traditionally occupied by

\textsuperscript{929} Martin 1989, vol. I, 30-1.
protective goddesses\textsuperscript{930} illustrates the expected source of his own eternal security and perhaps also Nefertiti’s magical role as the stimulator of his rebirth within the symbolic ‘womb’ of the sarcophagus (Fig. 3.93). Numerous shabti of Akhenaten are also preserved, along with several belonging to private individuals from beyond the Amarna tombs.\textsuperscript{931}

Traditionally, these small mummiform figures were animated by Spell 6 from the Book of the Dead, empowering them to fulfil the deceased’s unwanted responsibilities in the afterlife. This was predictably achieved by invoking the gods and Osiris in particular. At Amarna we find a curious mix of shabti, including those that continued to invoke traditional deities (perhaps older and/or brought by residents from their hometowns to Amarna), those that invoked the Aten (presumably produced at Amarna), and those that combined both types.\textsuperscript{932} Akhenaten’s shabti typically preserve his titles in variations.\textsuperscript{933} However, one inscribed for a noblewoman named Py includes the following inscription, from which we might discern that the Atenist afterlife continued to involve: 1) a potential for danger, requiring protection; 2) a need for bodily preservation; 3) a need for the practical necessities of daily life; 4) responsibilities and even labour; and 5) an existence that involved, at least in part, the ‘following’ of the Aten, whether literal or metaphorical, in his daily movements.

May you breathe the fragrant breezes of north wind,

May you go forth into the sky on the arm of the living Aten,

Your limbs protected,

\textsuperscript{932} D’Auria 1999, 173.
\textsuperscript{933} Martin 1989, vol. II, 40.
Your heart content,
Without anything evil happening to your limbs,
Being whole, without putrefying.
May you follow Aten when he rises at dawn, until his setting from life occurs,
(With) water for your heart,
Bread to your belly,
Clothing to cover your limbs.
O shabti: if you are detailed for work, if you are summoned, if you are assessed for work, “I will do it, here I am!”—so will you say. The true favourite of Waenre, she whom the king adorned, Py, may she live, may she be healthy!934

The funerary scenes depicted in the Royal Tomb are unusual. Both Rooms Alpha and Gamma include similar compositions in which Akhenaten and Nefertiti occupy a walled chamber at left, appearing to grieve over the corpse of a recently deceased royal woman (Figs. 3.86 and 3.90). Exiting the chamber in both scenes is a woman carrying a baby, shaded by an open fan. The literally minded interpretation is that the royal woman in each case has died in childbirth and that it is her child who is subsequently borne out of the chamber toward a waiting crowd.935 I don’t reject this interpretation. However, we should remember that Meketaten, who is certainly the royal woman—or rather, child—whose death is recorded in Room Gamma, would have been remarkably young, even in ancient times, to have fallen pregnant and carried a baby somewhat to term.936 It is worth considering that these infants were not intended to be understood as the literal children of the deceased but

935 For example, Martin (1989, vol. II, 39) indicates that “the episode must be interpreted as a birth scene.” See also: Málek 1999, 283.
936 For example: Arnold 1996, 115.
were instead symbolic, representative of rebirth and new life, guaranteed at the very moment of death.

Of course, I am wary of rejecting the obvious interpretation of a scene whose meaning appears to be straightforwardly laid out for the viewer and nor do I consider the two interpretations mutually exclusive; there is no reason that the babies could not have both existed in actuality and been included in the composition for symbolic reasons, in spite of “the well-known unwillingness of Egyptians to depict anything like the cause of death.” It is also not impossible that a very young Meketaten might still have become pregnant, perhaps itself contributing to her death in childbirth. However, one supporting factor in interpreting the baby’s presence as symbolic—which has not, to my knowledge, yet been noted—is that an infant also features prominently in Huya’s funeral procession (Fig. 3.83). Although the scenes are by no means equivalent, the fact that all three examples of Amarna funerary scenes incorporated a babe in arms, in some respect, could suggest a shared symbolic meaning. This might simply be the celebration of new life in immediate juxtaposition to the tragedy of loss or it might reflect a wish or magical guarantee of resurrection, implicating a natural cycle of rising (birth) and setting (death) that was central to Atenist theology. Indeed, each woman’s representation on a bed in a private chamber could be interpreted as reflecting not (only) the setting of her death in childbirth, but also (or otherwise) the setting of her magical sexual re-conception and regeneration.

Regenerative imagery likewise pervades the scene on Wall B of Meketaten’s burial chamber (Fig. 3.87), in which the princess or her statue stands in what has been tentatively described as a ‘birth pavilion’, with papyrus columns decorated by convolvulus leaves, “perhaps a symbol of female fertility and motherhood.”

A tall bouquet is angled toward Meketaten’s nose, while Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and three princesses approach with breasts bared in mourning. Rather morbidly, Geoffrey Martin has suggested that Meketaten, or her statue, was returned to the birth pavilion in which she had recently died for a public mourning event.939 Yet, this seems unlikely, particularly if we believe—as Martin seems to—that Meketaten’s death has just occurred at another location entirely: the clearly differentiated chamber represented on Wall A (Fig. 3.86). The literature surrounding Egyptian childbirth and its settings is divisive, so I hesitate to concur with Martin in designating this structure a ‘birth pavilion’. Certainly, however, Meketaten or her image has been positioned in a privileged location for viewing by mourners and that location is one replete with floral symbols of birth and rebirth. This symbolism should be unsurprising, comparable with that which appears across the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs.

The depiction of the royal family in mourning, however, is novel to the Amarna Period,940 cohering with a broader Amarna trend to display them in increasingly intimate and emotive contexts. In Figure 3.87, the mourning postures of Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters are generic, each with their forward arm raised above their heads, cohering to pre-existing non-royal standards. However, the crowd behind is more dynamic. Women cover their faces, lift their hands in despair, and crumple to the ground in expressions of grief far

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beyond what was apparently appropriate for royal actors. They continue all the way across Wall C. On Wall A (Fig. 3.86), one woman in the top register is so distraught that her companion has to hold her back from Meketaten’s chamber with both arms tight around her waist. In Room Alpha, this motif recurs in the upper register, while a figure below is weak with grief, hoisted upright by two of their peers (Fig. 3.90).

As Akhenaten leans over the body of this unknown royal woman, he reaches a hand back to grasp Nefertiti’s wrist, either supporting her or seeking support himself. It is an uncommon display of negative emotion in an Egyptian king, almost evoking weakness or a loss of control and likely endearing to the Royal Tomb’s—of course, exceedingly limited—viewers. In fact, there is surprisingly little differentiation in size here, between the royal couple and the non-royal onlookers: something incongruent with Amarna’s tomb decoration more broadly. Either this royal death was not considered an appropriate moment to display the godliness of the royal couple or the artist has made a genuine attempt to humanise them in their grief, which has extended to their scale. We see Akhenaten and Nefertiti as human parents, comforting one another after the loss of a child and we are granted the extraordinary opportunity to empathise with them. Offering tables depicted upside down in Figure 3.90 appear to have been knocked aside in grief, contributing to the scene’s overall impression of despair and the subversion of order by death.

It is clear from the limited evidence of the Amarna tombs that many foundational ideas about death, rebirth, and the Hereafter were preserved under Akhenaten. An element of mystery and anxiety is certainly evident in the notion that one followed the Aten by day, while the nights were dark and unknown. Yet, on the whole, the fact that several key
components of the funeral, tomb equipment, and ongoing ritual remained consistent from Thebes to Amarna suggests an afterlife conception not completely alien. The deceased still needed to be preserved, provisioned, and processed to the tomb, where they would receive cultic attention both at the point of interment and at intervals thereafter. As in earlier periods, the deceased maintained status and relevance within their communities, although the character of their interactions with the living was altered. To make ongoing ritual commitments worthwhile to the living, it is likely too that the dead retained their ability to impact the mortal world via blessings and curses. Finally, we have little reason to believe that every ritual and practice that vanished from Amarna’s tomb decoration actually ceased to occur. Many must have continued to be undertaken, perhaps with Atenist variations. Nor is there any way of knowing what manner of funerary and other scenes might have come to decorate the remainder of Amarna’s tombs, had the city persisted as capital. We can only hope, for the sake of the deceased, that the gamble undertaken in allotting so much space and attention to the royal family in the tomb—and so little to the deceased, his own family, and their identities—was justified and that Akhenaten delivered all his faithful into the peaceful eternity he promised them.
Art and Identity in the Age of Akhenaten

A Conclusion

Through art, we construct our subjects and communicate our definitions of them to the world. To commission an image of oneself is therefore a kind of self-definition, what Assmann calls a “self-thematisation.”\textsuperscript{941} It conveys information about the identity of the subject, which can be interpreted by viewers familiar with the culturally specific methods of encoding meaning in art.

The Amarna artistic context has invited much controversy. Many of us think we know the ‘code’ through which its meanings can be read, yet our cultural and temporal distance from Amarna Egypt renders these inevitably incomplete. In this thesis, I have proposed one set of interpretations regarding the expression of identity in Amarna art, based as much as possible on my understanding of the Amarna context and Egyptian artistic production more broadly. Further investigation into these areas, as well as complementary threads of archaeological investigation and collaboration with colleagues whose understandings differ from my own, can only enrich these interpretations. I look forward to that.

To summarise my conclusions, as they currently stand:

In Chapter 2, I investigated expressions of identity in Amarna royal portraits. I rejected pathological interpretations of Akhenaten’s ‘effeminate’ physiognomy in favor of an

\textsuperscript{941} Assmann 1990, 17-8.
interpretation driven by the consideration of Amarna’s specific theological and political context. I argued that the convergence of Akhenaten and Nefertiti’s portraits upon a single feminised or dual-gendered model correlates with their mythological roles as divine twins and children of the Aten: an androgynous creator god, fashioned as “mother and father” of humankind. I also rejected related claims that Amarna art aimed to be fundamentally ‘realistic’, ‘naturalistic’ or ‘sincere’, not only in the representation of Akhenaten’s body but also in the representation of his family, proposing additional political and ideological motives for their unusually privileged positions in Amarna art. At their core, changes to the representation of the Amarna royal family were grounded in the expression of a uniquely Atenist royal identity, which implicitly divinised them and held major mythological implications for their represented activities.

In Chapter 3, I turned to expressions of identity amongst Amarna’s elite in the context of their tomb decoration. I found that, under Akhenaten, opportunities for—particularly triumphant, valorising—self-expression were reduced, as compared to the decoration of the Theban tombs of the immediately preceding period. Popular standard scenes, which celebrated the deceased as a distinguished individual at the head of his community were either omitted or underwent heavy adaptation, while images of the royal family increasingly occupied focal positions in the tomb. More than ever, the tomb owner’s identity was expressed in relation to Akhenaten and, where the royal family was foregrounded, the deceased’s own family and community fell out of focus.

These contrastive insights into the expression of identity in art, both stemming from the same temporal, geographical, and cultural context, highlight the relationship of identity to
power. As humans, we conceptualise and express our identity in ways that are inextricably tied to social practice, expectations, and implicit or explicit constraints. At Amarna, creative effort and resources were liberally expended in the artistic development and projection of royal identities, suited to an evolving socio-political and religious context. In the face of this expansion, even Amarna’s most privileged elites shrank into the shadows of their own tombs. More so than ever before in Egyptian history, they used their constructed public images to express their identity in relation to the ruling king.
Figures

Chapter Two

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**Fig. 2.13.** Model head of a non-royal individual from the Workshop of Thutmose. Gypsum plaster. 26.5 cm x 16.5 cm. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin: ÄM 21280. After Fitzenreiter 2010, abb. 4.

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Fig. 2.17. Relief depicting the head and neck of Akhenaten in profile. Limestone. 15.5 x 11.5 x 3.2 cm. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin: ÄM 14513. Photograph by Margarete Büsing via the online collection of the Ägyptisches Museum. License: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Germany. Accessed 10 December, 2016.

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**Fig. 2.25.** Talatat block depicting Akhenaten offering to the Aten, with a princess behind waving a sistrum. Painted limestone. 22.2 x 51.7 cm. Brooklyn Museum: 60.197.6. Photograph from the online collection of the Brooklyn Museum. License: Creative Commons-BY. Accessed 27 December, 2016.
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Fig. 2.56. Line drawing of a scene from the Tomb of Mahu (AT 9) showing Akhenaten and Nefertiti sharing a chariot beneath the rays of the Aten. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Seyfried 2012, fig. 4.
Please seek this image at the location cited below.

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![Figure 2.80](image)

Fig. 2.81. Relief of two princesses. Painted limestone. 16.6 cm x 5 cm x 24 cm. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Brooklyn Museum: 35.2000. Photograph from the online collection of the Brooklyn Museum. License: Creative Commons-BY. Accessed 12 December, 2018.
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14.5 cm x 9.0 cm. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology: UC 035. After Pendlebury 1951, pl. CV.

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Hermopolis. Reign of Akhenaten. After Roeder 1969, pl. 16 (406-VII A)
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Please seek this image at the location cited below.

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Fig. 3.1. Scene from the Tomb of Pairy (TT 139), showing Pairy’s son, named Amenhotep, offering an ankh-bouquet to his mother and father. Painted plaster. Thebes. Reign of Amenhotep III. After Hartwig 2004, col. pl. 4.1.

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Fig. 3.28. Facsimile of part of a banqueting scene from the tomb of Nakht (TT 52), featuring three female musicians. Original from Thebes. Reign of Thutmose IV. Facsimile by Lancelot Crane. After Davies 1917, frontispiece.
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Limestone. 19.7 x 17.2 x 4.9 cm. Found outside the walls of House R.44.2 at Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. San Diego Museum of Man, San Diego: 14881. After Freed, Markowitz and D'Auria 1999, cat. no. 175.
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Fig. 3.43. A golden shrine from the Tomb of Tutankhamun (KV 62). This vignette shows Ankhsenamun pouring for Tutankhamun. Thebes. Reign of Tutankhamun. After Edwards 1976, p. 47.
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**Fig. 3.48.** Unfinished relief of a princess eating a roasted duck. Limestone. 23.5 x 22.3 x 3 cm. Found at the North Palace, Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Cairo Museum: JE 48035. After Smith 1998, fig. 3.15.

**Fig. 3.49.** Line drawing of a scene from the Tomb of Huya (AT 1), in which Akhenaten leads his mother, Tiye, accompanied by her daughter, Baketaten, and an entourage, to her sunshade temple. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 8.
Fig. 3.50. Reconstructed line drawing of a royal banquet from the Tomb of Ahmose (AT 3), featuring Akhenaten at right and Nefertiti at left, with one daughter in her lap and two seated beside her. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 34.
**Fig. 3.51.** Line drawing of the lower registers of a feasting scene in the Tomb of Huya (AT 1) (see Fig. 2.60).


**Fig. 3.52.** Line drawing of the lower registers of a drinking scene in the Tomb of Huya (AT 1) (see Fig. 2.61).

Fig. 3.53. Line drawing of the registers directly to the left of the royal banquet scene in the Tomb of Ahmose (AT 3) (see Fig. 3.50). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 33.
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*Fig. 3.54.* Colour facsimile of the fishing and fowling scene from the Tomb of Nakht (TT 52). Original from Thebes. Reign of Thutmose IV. After Shedid and Seidel 1991, p. 57.
Fig. 3.55. Cast of the Narmer Palette, featuring the Egyptian king in an early iteration of the smiting pose. 64 x 42 x 2.5 cm. Plaster [original: greywacke]. Original from Hierakonpolis. First Dynasty. British Museum: EA 35714. Photograph via the online collection of the British Museum. License: Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International. Accessed 6 February, 2019.

Fig. 3.56. The fishing and fowling scene from the Tomb of Menna (TT 69). Thebes. Eighteenth Dynasty. After Wildung 1988, cat. no. 58-59.
**Fig. 3.57.** Akhenaten in the guise of a sphinx with human arms upholding the cartouches of the Aten. Limestone. 51 x 105.5 x 5.2 cm. Probably from Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: 64.1944. Photograph via the online collection of the Museum of Fine Arts. Accessed 24 December, 2016.

**Fig. 3.58.** Akhenaten in the guise of a sphinx with human hands, making an offering to the Aten. Limestone. 56.7 x 93.2 x 6 cm. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Kestner-Museum, Hannover: 1964.3. After Freed, Markowitz, and D’Auria 1999, no. 90.
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Fig. 3.62. Line drawing of an award scene from the Tomb of Ptahemhet (TT 77). Thebes. Reign of Thutmose IV. After Hartwig 2004, fig. 22.
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Fig. 3.65. Line drawing of a scene from the Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), demonstrating the scale that could be applied to tomb owners of the earlier Eighteenth Dynasty, particularly in scenes related to their supervisory roles. Thebes. Reign of Thutmose III – Amenhotep II. After Davies 1973, vol. I, pl. 72.

Fig. 3.66. Line drawing focusing the public reception of Ay following his award. From the Tomb of Ay (AT 25). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. VI, pl. 30.
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**Fig. 3.68.** Line drawing of a fragmentary scene from the Tomb of Mahu (AT 9), giving the base of the Window of Appearances and the lower portions of figures of the king and queen. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. IV, pl. 29.
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**Fig. 3.71.** Line drawing of an award scene from the Tomb of Pentu (AT 5). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Binder 2008, fig. 8.14.
Fig. 3.72. Line drawing of a second award scene from the Tomb of Pentu (AT 5). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten.

After Binder 2008, fig. 8.13.

Fig. 3.73. Line drawing of an award scene from the Tomb of Meryre I (AT 4). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten.

After Binder 2008, fig. 8.11.
**Fig. 3.74.** Line drawing of an award scene from the Tomb of Meryre II (AT 2). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten.

After Binder 2008, fig. 8.10.

**Fig. 3.75.** Line drawing of an *inw* scene from the Tomb of Sobekhotep (TT 63), featuring the tomb owner as the intermediary between foreign emissaries and the king. Thebes. Reign of Thutmose IV. After Hartwig 2004, fig. 12.
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**Fig. 3.76.** Line drawing of the left half of a double *inw* scene from the Tomb of Haremhab (TT 78). Thebes.


Please seek this image at the location cited below.

**Fig. 3.77.** Line drawing of the right half of a double *inw* scene from the Tomb of Haremhab (TT 78). Thebes.

Reign of Thutmose III – Amenhotep III. After Hartwig 2004, fig. 25.
**Fig. 3.78.** Line drawing of a novel *inw* scene from the Tomb of Huya (AT 1), focusing on palanquin of the royal couple, carried before the foreign emissaries and their goods. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Fitzenreiter 2009, Abb. 1.

**Fig. 3.79.** Line drawing of a portion of the *inw* scene from the Tomb of Huya (AT 1) given above. Huya appears at the left of the upper register, which is positioned directly beneath the royal palanquin. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, Pt. III, Pl. 15.
Fig. 3.80. A pilgrimage to Abydos undertaken by the deceased and his wife, as represented in the Tomb of Sennefer (TT 96). They sit before an offering table and are accompanied by a priest. Thebes. Reign of Amenhotep II. After El Mallakh and Bianchi 1980, p. 116.
Fig. 3.81. A portion of the funerary procession from TT 92. Thebes. Reign of Amenhotep II. After Bryan 2009, fig. 14.
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Fig. 3.83. Line drawing of the funeral procession for Huya. From the west wall of the shrine in the Tomb of Huya (AT 1). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 23.

Fig. 3.84. Line drawing of the funerary rites completed before Huya’s Mummy. From the east wall of the shrine in the Tomb of Huya (AT 1). Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Davies 2004, pt. III, pl. 22.
Fig. 3.85. Line drawing of the equipment for Huya, as represented at either side of the statue in his shrine.


Fig. 3.86. Line drawing of Wall A, Room Gamma, from the Royal Tomb at Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Martin 1989, vol. II, fig. 8.
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Fig. 3.88. Line drawing of the remainder of Wall C from Room Gamma of the Royal Tomb at Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Martin 1989, vol. II, fig. 12.
Fig. 3.89. Line drawing of Wall D from Room Gamma of the Royal Tomb. A damaged representation of tomb equipment intended for Princess Meketaten. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Martin 1989, vol. II, pl. 79.

Fig. 3.90. Line drawing of Wall F from Room Alpha of the Royal Tomb. Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. Image after Martin 1989, vol. II, fig. 7.
Fig. 3.91. The deceased's wife kneels at the feet of his mummy, casting dust over her head in a traditional display of mourning, one breast exposed. From the Tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky (TT 181). Reign of Amenhotep III - Akhenaten. After Wilkinson 1983, fig. 9.

Fig. 3.93. Detail of a figure of Nefertiti in the guise of a protective goddess, from corner b of a sarcophagus belonging to Akhenaten. From the Royal Tomb at Amarna. Reign of Akhenaten. After Martin 1974, vol. I, pl. 19.
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