Altering Images
Iconoclasm in Egypt

VOLUME 1

Edited by

Vera Elizabeth ALLEN
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Cover: Head of the limestone sphinx of Tutankhamun, in the courtyard of Karnak Temple. Image: S. Connor.

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Vol. I: Texts

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Image Defacement as Score Settling in the Theban Necropolis: a Reception Perspective

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1. INTRODUCTION

Defaced figures appear ubiquitously in ancient Egypt's monumental architecture. Interestingly, although erased from the wall surface, they often maintain some kind of conspicuous presence, or attractiveness, in the eyes of the passer-by, who generally notices them, be he aware or not of the original appearance of the representation (fig. 1). Hatshepsut's meticulously hacked figures from her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari are indeed well known to the tourists, since local guides like to comment on them. We might go as far as to say that their state of preservation as mere shapes deprived of content has, in some circumstances, made them even more attractive, as they *visually* stand out from the rest of the well-preserved, colourfully painted wall.[2] However, these figures were meant to disappear from the scene, that is, from a certain metaphysical dimension, and obviously from the historical records as well, as evidenced by later king lists.[3] Cursing formulae protecting from such unwanted fate reveal the peril ancient Egyptians associated with this harmful, sometimes punitive, act.[4] Still, one may wonder whether Thutmosis III really expected people would no longer be able to *recognise* the owner of the defaced figures or, in compliance with Hatshepsut's condemnation to non-existence, solely wanted to pull them out drastically from the performative iconographic syntax of the scene—as, for instance, seems to have been the case in the sanctuary of Amun at Karnak, which the king ordered be masked by the Annals.[5] Had the queen vanished from people's minds a few generations later? Or, on the contrary, did she eventually become the most prominent case of *damnatio memoriae*, to the point that any defaced royal figure or cartouche would implicitly indicate her "presence" *in absentia* in a large number of monuments? Same questions arise about Akhenaten, whose reform and aesthetics left perhaps even better documented marks

2   See for example Beaux 2012: pls. 5, 9, 10–12, 20.

3   Among others, on the Abydos King List, see Redford 1986.

4   Colledge 2015: 33–37. On the tradition of cursing as a form of punishment, see Assmann 1992a. For explicit textual evidence regarding image and name erasures, see Quack 2019: 47–55.

5   Laboury 1998: 44, 487, fig. 286; Dorman 1988: 60–61; Barguet 1962: 141, 148. On the notion of non-existence and its *emic* value, see Quack 2019: 53–54.

in time and monumental landscapes.[6] Here, the power of indexicality becomes evident: because of their high distinctness within a multiplicity of architectural settings, these erased figures still have the capacity to address informed visitors who can identify them. Therefore, images potentially become highly efficient iconographic affirmations (or *indications*) of non-existence; some kind of permanent negative publicity we may verbalise as: "Remember to forget me."[7] If, on the contrary, the beholders were not aware of the identity of the individual's defaced figure, the intended outcome remained the same insofar as the victim of the *damnatio* procedure had simply never existed in their mind.

As is generally agreed upon, (only) mutilated figures do not suffer the potential problem of loss of recognisability, while they do lose their efficacy as performative agents. Although often hacked out, the erected phallus of Min is, indeed, probably the most distinctive feature of the god. Like other kinds of depictions, intentionally erased or mutilated hieroglyphic signs associated with evil and chaos illustrate this too: the words in which they function as signs do not lose their readability despite the fact that their integrity is physically hindered.[8] We thus generally assume it is the magical efficiency of their iconicity that was targeted: no horned viper should come to existence in a royal tomb, yet the text must operate as a message within the communicative sphere.

From the image reception perspective, a wide range of variability is at stake when addressing this fascinating question: why (and how) did ancient Egyptians (and many of their descendants), in their trademark, precautionary attitude to life, take such care to deface images which stood for disliked realities? The perpetrators of damage may have despised the very *subject* that the figure depicted; they could also have wanted to show opposition towards what this subject evoked on a *symbolic* level. Alternatively, it was maybe the sheer *functionality* of the figure, within a performative frame or as rhetorical tool, that was the cause for disturb. Finally, the simple fact that some subject was depicted—that is, its *iconicity*—could have been a reason for destruction too. From an anthropological viewpoint, these acts also attest to the multifaceted agency ancient Egyptian culture attributed to the representations it produced.[9]

Similarly to the aforementioned royal examples, in the more intimate, yet accessible, context of the private tomb-chapels of the Theban necropolis, ancient people apparently attacked depictions as a means for inflicting harm to their *owner*.[10] The owner, namely the victim, was either the represented individual and/or the tomb owner, according to the "eponymous" nature of these depictions.[11] In general, this distinction does not apply, as the defaced depiction simply represented the tomb owner.

In several cases, along with the damaged representation, it seems possible to distinguish the

6   See among others Laboury 2010: 357–364; Brand 2008; Assmann 2004.

7   I owe this brilliant phrasing to my colleague Simon Connor (see Connor 2022: 232–233). In the same line of thought, see Quack 2019: 50.

8   See other examples of negation processes in Wilson 2005; Winand & Angenot 2016: 166–167.

9   On the agency of the image, which can be problematic to establish as soon as it is not conferred upon by an actual beholder (the recipient), see the richly nuanced views by Stejskal 2015; Davis 2011: 184–185; also Davis 2008, based on Gell 1998; *contra* Mitchell 2005. For an overview of the recent anthropological turn in visual studies, see Alloa 2015.

10 On the global issue of iconoclasm in the private Theban necropolis, mainly focused on the proscription of Hatshepsut and the Amarna episode, which will not be discussed in the present article, see Schulman 1969–1970; Wilson 2005: 120–124; Bryan 2012; McClymont 2018; and Quack 2019: 72–81, adopting a diachronic approach to the issue of name and image erasures in private tomb-chapels.

11 See note 29.

systemic nature of these attacks on images from numerous, non-systemic, hostile actions from which the decorations have suffered throughout history,[12] partly at the hands of the Coptic monks of the 6th to the 8th centuries, and more recently of the modern Qurnawi villagers. Concretely, the assessment lies in determining the core objective and achievement of the procedure: what is purposely targeted in the depiction? How does the attack have an impact on its nature, function, and efficiency within a defined socio-cultural environment and system of beliefs—what can be referred to, in our case, as the ancient Egyptian culture's implicit theory of the image (induced from practicality)[13] and "visuality"?[14] In other words, what are the outcomes of the procedure, and more importantly, to what extent does it benefit a certain individual in a specific socio-cultural context?[15] Naturally, any other material evidence in the form of a reaction to image(s), and with the same aim, should be taken into account, as we shall do below.

In the context of the Theban private tomb-chapels, red inked Coptic crosses drawn next to frantically defaced female figures, as can be observed, for example, in the tomb of Paser

(TT 367), should probably point to the reuse of the chapel as a place of prayer, in which it was deemed suitable to remove any potential alluring figure in the worshipper's plain sight. Similarly, alteration of motifs like the retouching of scantily-clad female servants in the banquet scene of the tomb of Djehuty, reused by Djehutyemheb (TT 45),[16] can be related, in terms of intention (i.e. the complete iconographic and stylistic refashioning of the tomb-chapel's decoration), to the scenes added, for religious purpose, in the opposite part of the hall (stylistically dated to the 20th Dynasty).[17] It can be indeed understood that, as the head of the weavers and fabricant of fine linen of Amun, the Ramesside occupant wanted the female figures of his newly acquired decorative setting to conform to his own perception and professional expertise—or his visuality—of Ramesside fashion, in view of gaining social credibility among his peers, that is, the targeted audience. Moreover, in terms of individual religiosity,[18] completing the unfinished decoration with scenes showing him and his family in front of deities must have met the Ramesside urge for divine proximity. All in all, the idea that some sense of religious prudery

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12   On the concept of "systemic" or "non-systemic" reuse of sacred space, see Polz 1987: 123–124. On the methodological difficulty of such a distinction, see Wilson 2005: 116–118.

13   See e.g. Assmann 2009; Weiss 2015. On the creation of cult images and its relevance in regard to their possible destruction, see Bryan 2012: 363–365. On this matter, see also more recently Volokhine 2021.

14   I here refer to Whitney Davis's concept of *visuality* as the visual part of culture and the cultural part of vision (Davis 2011: 8). One may reflect on how a culture arises in images, then, somehow conversely, how it engages with the images it produces (through agents), and how does its vision of the world determine the fashioning and attributions of visual representations. On the repercussion of *socio-professional* visualities, see note 15.

15   Taking into consideration Alfred Gell's theoretical definition of the agency of the image, one should ideally always keep in mind the necessary interactions between the creator/artist (plus the commissioner, in accordance with the ancient Egyptian context of image production, see here below), the depiction as an object (= index), the model or referent that the depiction takes on or represents (= prototype), and finally the beholder (= recipient), see Gell 1998: 29. In my Ph.D. thesis (University of Liège, 2019), I proposed to approach the ancient Egyptian beholders in regard to their socio-professional identity (self-centred personal needs, expectations, knowledge and experience conditioned by communal background situation) that the iconographic environment of the chapel can potentially reflect and serve, see Den Doncker 2023; forthcoming.

16   On this famous retouching, see Schott 1939: 100–106; Davies 1948: 3–10; Wachsmann 1987: 48; Polz 1990: 304–307; Quack 2003; Hofmann 2015, II: 58–59; Bács 2015: 6–7; 2018: 25–27; Den Doncker 2019: 187–189; 2023: 287.

17   Hofmann 2015, I: 64–69.

18   On this expression, see Bickel 2002: 63–90.

would have motivated these retouching obviously reflects modern Western concerns, projections and visuality.[19]

Likewise, although the following statement is admittedly tentative, it is more likely that any damage of clear anthropogenic nature was caused to serve a purpose, rather than done purely haphazardly by a passer-by fighting boredom. Besides, from the image reception perspective, it can be methodologically useful to approach the author of the attack, henceforth the "destroyer",[20] as the beholder of the image.[21] It should be clarified that it is the beholder who recognised in the representation a certain agency, and thereby played a part in the image's functioning, in our case by either executing an order or acting on his own initiative. How does his action against the representation betray a specific outlook on it, inducing a certain understanding of it? In semiotic words, what is the meaning he accordingly attributed to the depiction, that of an icon, a symbol, or an index?[22] In this respect, we can ask ourselves how does this hostile action against the representation impact 1) its agency, as perceived initially by the destroyer, 2) the very operation of the iconographic syntax of the whole scene, that is, its functionality?[23]

Furthermore, it could be beneficiary to wonder whether it is the representation itself as a material *object* that urged the attack, or the *subject* that it once depicted. From a broader perspective, what did the destroyer expect from his attack? What does this expectation imply in the way he understood and engaged with the representation? Does the outcome of the attack reflect *emic* conceptions as conveyed by (meta-)textual sources referring to image and/or name defacement[24] (notably proscription rituals and cursing formulae connected to image protection/destruction)? Did the destroyer attempt to cause his victim's "second death",[25] or was his act just a simple threat? Moreover, in order to better gauge the intention behind the attack and the associated construal of the image, we may wonder equally whether the act of defacement was spontaneous or carefully premeditated. We could then interpret the evidence in a more positivist way: what is the material aspect of damage? Does it correspond to a tool which the destroyer possibly used, and if so, did he bring that tool with him? In such a case, did he plan the attack, or simply pick the first stone he found on the ground? To what extent is damage coherent or systematic? Does consistency correspond to some notion of effectiveness relating to the destroyer's intended goal and visuality? Was such consistency relevant to his personal interpretation and application—somehow as an autonomous cultural agent—of what can be referred to as the "Egyptian implicit theory of the image"?[26] Presumably, official procedures would involve logistical means to

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19   In reference to Schott 1939: 100–106.

20   Egyptian ḥḏ, as he is often referred to in the cursing formulae: Colledge 2015: 55.

21   For a theoretical framework for image reception taking into account the individual agency (subjectivity) of the real beholder as distinguished from a certain ideal and lasting recipient, see Schulz 2014.

22   In reference to Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory: Hartshorne, Weiss & Burks 1965. For its application to ancient Egypt's visual culture, see Gillen forthcoming.

23   It is important to remember that we are dealing here with images additionally imparted with some magical efficacy in the frame of a significant scene (as the sacred environment of the tomb-chapel is known to be a sacralising support). On this aspect of monumentality, see Vernus 1989.

24   See Quack 2019: 47–55, who insists comprehensively on the significance of name erasure reflecting the value of the name as one of the adversary's individual components.

25   On the emic conception of second death, I refer to Bochi 1999: 76–77.

26   See notes 13–15.

achieve consistency in terms of image and name destruction, whereas individuals operating *solo* must have somehow remained hidden from public view, quickly and discretely. Following Joachim Fr. Quack, it may be assumed that, outside official procedures, attacking one's funerary monument for personal reasons would have indeed entailed considerable risks. Unless political shifts would have occurred in the meantime in favour of the destroyer, it would have surely caused retribution at the hands of the victim's relatives and clan. According to the few textual sources referring to image and name destruction as a punishment, the tomb owner's family was supposedly involved in such matters.[27] Therefore, Quack has suggested that most of the more or less systematic defacements of figures and names of the deceased in private tomb-chapels—materialising to some extent the emic conception of *damnatio memoriae*— were executed by official decree.[28] It can be added, however, that responses—including possible acts of vengeance—might have well been carried out regardless of the nature of the tomb damage and without necessarily leaving material evidence (such as, for example, the restoration of the defaced figures in the damaged tomb-chapel like in TT 40 or TT 295, see below § 4). Furthermore, we should perhaps not take for granted that the coercive power of the legal authority, or the king himself, was automatically ruling these decisions as official stances—especially as such conflictive

matters precisely concerned individuals from the socio-professional sphere that was involved in the executive branch.

In order to turn these reflections into practical analyses, the following article will present different case studies with the aim of showing the range of ways visual representations within Theban tomb-chapels were attacked, with the clear intention to harm their owner—namely, the depicted individual or just its commissioner, i.e. the tomb owner.[29] It seems indeed that ancient Egyptians made extensive use of image destruction, defacement, mutilation, etc., to directly target potential enemies through depictions. These various forms of aggression towards images validate Étienne Drioton's sensible remark that the accessibility of decorated tomb-chapels transformed their owner's depictions into "subsidiary bodies", somehow intrinsically vulnerable to any ill-intent person.[30]

For methodological convenience, only simple cases have been selected. As for their dating, which is obviously the major difficulty of the issue of image defacement, we can assume that in most cases the destroyers knew their victim, as they must have belonged to the same social sphere: in some way, their relationship must have been at stake. However, although some kind of unsettled conflict can be basically presumed, the motivations of the destroyer, either personal or political, often remain undefinable, for destructive actions

27   Quack 2019: 72–73. Notably an excerpt from the Teaching for Merykare E 21–24 (= M II, 5–10), quoted by Quack 2019: 47–48: "If you find him as someone whose relatives are not (…), the citizens know him, his partisans are numerous in the council (…), who is constantly seditious and demagogic, repress him, kill [his] children, erase his name, [destroy] his family, suppress his memory and the partisans who like him (…)."

28   Quack 2019: 73.

29   Keeping in mind Jan Assmann's notion of "eponymous" art, which refers to the fact that ancient Egyptian representations always belong to whom they present, and *preserve* the identity, we can consider that any figure within a decorative programme relates, even indirectly, to the tomb owner. Both when depicting the latter, and when representing relative, or contributing anonymously to the owner's afterlife, the damaged depiction always refers to the tomb owner, causing him to be the victim of these attacks—though he may not be necessarily targeted as such by the destroyer: *"Die ägyptische Kunst, darin sehe ich ihre Einzigartigkeit, ist fast durchweg „eponym", d.h. jedes Kunstwerk steht in Beziehung zu einem Namen, allerdings nicht dem des Künstlers, sondern dem des Auftraggebers, der auch der Dargestellte ist"* (Assmann 1991: 139).

30   Drioton 1952: 351, focusing on Old Kingdom mastabas, quoted by Bochi 1999: 78, n. 26. See also Allen's contribution to the present volume.

always carry some kind of muteness in terms of impetus. Anyhow, in most cases, the defacement must therefore be more or less contemporary to the tomb owner. To some extent, as was pointed out by Emmanuel Jambon in his presentation on the private statues of the Karnak Cachette, it is clear that most of the involved people would quickly disappear from the collective memory after their death.[31] This would have occurred solely because their influence on the lives of the living had come to an end, hence the need to have their name pronounced and their memory commemorated, which corresponded to the main social function of the private tomb-chapel.[32]

In this respect, the Theban necropolis could be considered as an ideal place for settling scores, even maybe in the form of some kind of *vendettas* among high officials and the small communities surrounding them (their family and subordinates, namely their clan), reflecting real life matters, rivalries, contentions, altercations, etc. In this context, damaging tomb decoration was performed as a threat, for revenge, or, in some cases, as an official punishment, perhaps even possibly expressing hostility from the winning side of the conflict, as suggested by Quack.[33] These hostile actions against presumably dead enemies or opponents' post-mortem existence[34] might have even been more easily "manageable" than actual initiatives in their lifetime: breaking the nose of a depiction of an army general, whether dead or alive—like Amenemheb-Mahu (TT 85)—was undoubtedly safer and shrewder than punching him in person.

2. Attacks to bodily integrity/ autonomy vs. social memory

2.1. Mutilation as technical breakage of shape continuity

The first case study consists of the mutilation of most of Nakhtmin's figures in his tomb-chapel (TT 87), dated to the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III. This damage illustrates the purely technical aspect of the image defacement procedure: only selected parts of the figures were neatly targeted with apparently no intention to properly *destroy* them. On the lintel of the painted stela that frames the door leading to the innermost room of the chapel,[35] two different techniques can even be observed (fig. 2). First, it seems that some kind of moistened cloth was used here, on this double-scene, to rub out the arms of the two figures of the deceased and that of his son, Menkheperreseneb (owner of the neighbouring TT 79). On the figures of Nakhtmin, only the arm with the hand holding the *seneb* folded cloth ∥ (S29) was targeted. The same occurred to Menkheperreseneb's "performing" arm presenting the offering, in correspondence to the gesture of invocation 𓀃 (A26). Moreover, a sharp tool, possibly some kind of stone chisel, was used to cut out the nose, eye and mouth of each figure.[36] The destroyer's lack of precision was most probably due to the high placement of the scene. However, he was able to mutilate more carefully the arms of the figure, thereby cutting off the physical connection of the deceased to the offering table and

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31   Lecture by Emmanuel Jambon on December 3rd, 2020, workshop "Altering Images: Iconoclasm in Egypt", Basel chapter. See also Davies, 1930: 4; Quack 2019: 72.

32   See e.g. Assmann 1987; 1995; 1996; Hartwig 2004: 5–52.

33   Quack 2019: 53.

34   Despite few exceptions, the defaced figures were never restored. While this cannot, of course, be used as an argument for the assumption that the victims were already dead, it remains likely that the figures would have been restored, even roughly, as it was notably the case in TT 40 and TT 295 (outside of any tomb reuse context) (see § 4).

35   PM I², 1: 179 (7). For a detailed description of the scene, see Guksch 1995a: 61–62, pl. 9.

36   The two names of the deceased are also missing. According to Heike Guksch, the damage was caused recently by a wasp nest (Guksch 1995a: 61, a). This observation should not exclude that they were nonetheless erased.

the invocational power of the son's gesture. In addition, the right hand of Nakhtmin's left figure was also more roughly chiselled out, perhaps because the slash on the arm was not sufficient. It can be presumed that the two inscriptions bearing his name suffered from the same attack, while the other text erasures can be safely attributed to Amarna hackers. Finally, it seems likely that both techniques correspond to two different intentions in regard to the tomb owner: namely, a two-step approach to affecting the figures' efficiency. What about the time gap that separated the two procedures, and the possible events that occurred in between?

Firstly, erasing the arm related to the *seneb* cloth may have been seen as a way to prevent the claim to eternal health. It might have been, therefore, only some kind of threat, a simple caveat. The action was maybe impulsive as simply water and a piece of cloth were needed to achieve the defacement aims. Secondly, cutting out vital parts of the figures' body was clearly more drastic and fateful. Apparently, the destroyer paid less attention to the other hieroglyphic inscriptions of the tomb-chapel, for he left untouched the names of the deceased, even those preserved on the well-lit focal walls of the transverse hall. Unexpectedly, the figure of Nakhtmin in front of Anubis and the Western goddess on the outer lintel leading to the long hall[37] is still intact. As concerns image performativity, this apparent lack of consistency in the whole damaging procedure seems to indicate that the destroyer(s) focused above all on the representations related to the post-mortem existence of the victims, and on their bodily integrity/autonomy. Besides, Nakhtmin's son Menkheperreseneb did not suffer such damage in his own tomb-chapel.[38] He was attacked in TT 87 only as the supplier of his father's offering.

In sum, strictly speaking, the damage in TT 87 has nothing, or less, to do with the social memory of the tomb owner or his assimilation to a non-being:[39] the destroyer simply undermined the latter's physical access to offerings, while his name was only targeted in the commented scene. Therefore, since the self-imagery of the deceased contributing to the social dimension of his survival was apparently not the focus of the two attacks, we should technically not speak of a proscription performance like the so-called "ritual" of *damnatio memoriae*, which, for instance, Patricia A. Bochi has studied on the basis of execration figurines.[40] In both cases, it is clear that the damaging rested indeed on the strict breakage of definite parts of the figure's outline, as though the activated image was perceived as a sort of electrical circuit to be disrupted in precise sections—which easily reminds us of the Osirian dismemberment or, somehow conversely, ritual acts against Apophis.[41] Even the barely outlined figure of the deceased preserved on the right rear wall of the inner room had its nose distinctly slashed out.[42] In neither case was there an intention to damage the representation of the deceased according to its depictive function, that is, its iconic value. It is rather the effectiveness as a performative, symbolic body that was targeted; somehow as the exact opposite action of the Opening of the Mouth ritual (or the *ꜥnḫ-wḏꜣ-snb* formula with respect to the first attack). In this regard, we should recall

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37   PM I², 1: 178 (5); Guksch 1995a: 55–56, pl. 7

38   Guksch 1995a: 122–178, pls. 25–52.

39   I refer to the proper ritual of *damnatio memoriae* as defined by Bochi 1999: 81. See more recently Quack 2019: 50–55.

40   Bochi 1999: 79–83. On the magical process of ritualised, symbolic killings, see Ritner 2012.

41   Quack 2019: 53, in reference to P. Bremmer-Rhind 33, 8–10: "Come and see with your own eyes what I have done to the limbs of Apophis. His house is demolished, his walls crumbled, his body perished on the battlefield hill."

42   PM I², 1: 179 (9); Guksch 1995a: 68–69, pl. 10. Perhaps as way to prevent the victim to enjoy "the sweet north wind" as referred to in the text placed right above his figure?

the symbolic dimension of the procedure, based on common beliefs about the functionality of the living image (as a magical support inhabited by the individual's *ba*—i.e. Assmann's *Einwohnung*) [43] and its agency within the sacred environment of the funerary monument.

By comparison with curses against potential wrongdoers entering one's tomb-chapel, we immediately understand that such actions of defacement were highly feared among the community of tomb owners. In view of the variety of cursing formulae intended to prevent the attacks—did the cursers (i.e. the tomb owners) have a guilty conscience to ease, or some reason to *watch their back*?—tomb damaging appears equally to have been a common practice, already in the Old Kingdom. The outcomes resulting, on a like-for-like basis, from these hostile actions against the monument and its contents (cultic material), including the defacement of the owner's images (statues and wall decoration), led to numerous issues impacting the wrongdoer's afterlife. [44] Significantly for our concern, they also involved bodily retribution as a means of equitable retaliation:

> As for any dignitary (…) who will rip out any stone or any brick from this tomb of mine, (…) I will wring his neck like a bird [tomb of Nenki, South Saqqara, reign of Pepy II; Leipzig Ägyptisches Museum inv. 359]. [45]

> As for any person (…) who will damage its inscriptions, who will destroy its images, they will submit to the wrath of Thoth [tomb of Djefayhapy I, T Asyut 1, reign of Senusret I]. [46]

Unsurprisingly enough, these matches between damage and its outcomes reveal clearly how the preservation of the integrity of the deceased's images and his permanent access to offerings were of vital importance. In some cases, it is telling that the semantic field of the wrongdoer's punishment is dominated by the idea of cutting, [47] which seems to be reminiscent of the materiality of the proper mutilation and its related tool:

> As for any ruler (…) who will do an evil or bad thing (…) against any cultic objects of this tomb, his arm will be chopped off (…) [tomb of Ankhtifi, Mo'alla, reign of Neferkare, 10th Dynasty]. [48]

> As for any governor (…) who will take it (= a meat offering) from my statue, his arm will be chopped off like this bull, his neck will be snapped like a bird (…) [stela of Sarenput I, sanctuary of Heqaib at Elephantine, reign of Senusret I; Aswan Museum inv. 1373]. [49]

> Words spoken: "He who will injure here[in], that [knife] of Horus [shall injure him]" [tomb of Qenamun, TT 93, Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, reign of Amenhotep II]. [50]

> As for the one who will go against this stela in place, he is for the slaughter of the powerful king (…) [donation stela of Horkhebe, Bubastis, 23rd Dynasty; Florence National Archaeological Museum, inv. 7207]. [51]

In addition to the magical efficiency of preventive curses, and other well-attested symbolic killings, based on the inscription of Ankhtifi, it has been suggested that in response to the desecration of

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43   On this process related to the explicit theory of the ʿḥm-image, see Assmann 2001: 40–43; 2009: 74–103.

44   Colledge 2015: 47–58, 206.

45   Colledge 2015: 228; *Urk.* I: 260, 12–18.

46   Colledge 2015: 219–220; Griffith 1889: 9–10, pl. 4.

47   See parallel evidence in Quack 2019: 51–52, focusing on the use of the verb *šʿt*.

48   Colledge 2015: 218–219; Vandier 1950: 206.

49   Colledge 2015: 248–249; Franke 1994, pl. 1 (stela no. 9).

50   Davies 1930: 45, n. 1, pl. 45b; McClymont 2018; Den Doncker 2019: 181.

51   Colledge 2015: 251–252; Caminos 1969: 42–46, pl. 2; Nordh 1996: 66.

sacred monuments—like tomb violation—real punishments occurred in ancient Egypt. Death penalty in the form of a ritualised human sacrifice was among the sanctions. These executions sometimes accompanied merely symbolic procedures.[52] We may therefore suppose that, conversely, figure mutilation was carried out somehow reflexively, driven on a psycho-cultural level by the ritualistic patterns of such killings, as a means to inflict corporal punishment to enemies, whose real bodies were in fact not physically targetable. We should not exclude that, in addition, more zealous image destroyers managed to access burial chambers and vandalised the tomb owner's coffin and mummy.[53] However, outside official circumstances (by decree, official order?), such operation would have needed means, time and relative discretion. This is exactly what seems to have lacked in TT 87 and other analogous cases, considering the low consistency, simplicity and bare functionality of the defacement of the deceased's figures.

As for Nakhtmin specifically, although he once belonged to Hatshepsut's state administration, contrary to some of his former colleagues, he was one of the high officials who were able to pursue their career under Thutmosis III without difficulty, as it appears at first glance.[54] In comparison to what occurred in his tomb-chapel,

the decoration of his two shrines at the Gebel es-Silsila do not show any comparable defacement, although one of them (earlier Shrine 23) has suffered from the complete erasure of the names and titles of Hatshepsut.[55] In addition, the private name inscriptions on all his known statues are preserved—contrary to the evidence observed for example in TT 76 (see below).[56] For these reasons, concerning Nakhtmin, a *damnatio memoriae* procedure or proscription ordered by an official entity is hard to prove. On the contrary, the defacements in TT 87 point to a more personal quarrel between Nakhtmin and, perhaps, a colleague or subordinate. The destroyer seems to have acted spontaneously and with few resources, focusing directly on the bodily integrity and physical survival of his victim via the latter's depictions, which he had the opportunity to access in certain (possibly unforeseen) circumstances. Furthermore, it might be tentatively supposed that Nakhtmin paid the price for his prestige, just like Qenamun in TT 93 (see below). As a matter of fact, he belonged to the very close circle of Hatshepsut's high dignitaries who could boast having, like kings, a decorated burial chamber in the necropolis. Besides funerary beliefs, this highly sophisticated apparatus[57] could have been seen, above all, as a demonstration of wealth among the Theban elite and its relatives.

52 See Willems 1990: 46–51.

53 In this respect, it might be even interesting to distinguish, among the human remains found in elite cemeteries, between actually *mistreated* mummies, and what we often recognise as simply *plundered* mummies. For evidence of post-deposit dismembered and decapitated bodies from the Predynastic Period, see Bryan 2012: 364–365, fig. 12.1.

54 On this matter, see Dziobek 1995. For the career of Nakhtmin, see Shirley 2005: 122–138.

55 Caminos & James 1963: 74–77, pls. 56–59 (earlier Shrine 23); 35–36, pls. 28–29 (later Shrine 12). On the attribution of the two shrines to the same Nakhtmin, see Shirley, 2005: 123–128.

56 See *Urk.* IV: 1182–1190. For a complete list of Nakhtmin's monuments, see Guksch 1995a: 87–88. Their unequal state of preservation does not enable thorough examination of possible mutilation marks. Black granite cuboid statue CG 42124 from the Karnak Cachette (= CK 467) and Nakhtmin's figures on his limestone naos from Giza were certainly not mutilated (Schulz 1992: 251–252, pl. 57; Hassan 1960: 33–35, pls. IX–XI). Whether Cairo Egyptian Museum's unnumbered black granite niche statue coming from TT 87 suffered from mutilations cannot be determined, since only the lower half has been preserved (Daressy 1894: 43, no. XCII). According to Ludwig Borchardt's description, sandstone statue CG 613, possibly coming from TT 87, does not show any trace of hostile acts against it (Borchardt 1925: 160–161).

57 For a presentation of its rich textual contents, see Lüscher 2013: 9–24; also Guksch 1995a: 71–75, pls. 14–18. On the context of socio-professional emulation that gave rise to the practice of decorating burial chambers in the early 18th Dynasty, see Den Doncker 2017: 345–346.

In contrast, technical breakages of image were performed on a potentially wide range of iconographic units. By disrupting the continuity of the outline, ancient destroyers presumably believed they could impede the figure's agency within the depicted scene—independently from the work of any beholder who might still be able to identify the original representation. In that respect, in anthropological terms, two types of image agency should be distinguished in the ancient Egyptian context: on the one hand, the agency conferred upon by the beholder as stated above,[58] on the other hand, the mere quality/potential of a figure of being active/activated and operating independently and efficiently in a certain iconographic frame or environment (a typical ancient Egyptian feature). It is not because the motif of the hand of the deceased touching the pile of offerings is no longer visible by someone that it has lost its efficiency as an image. Apparently, it is rather because the shape of the hand was broken up and therefore disconnected from the rest of the body. Such a short-circuit was thus sufficient to deactivate the performativity of the representation.

In specific, meaningful positions, these "breakages" could impact in varied ways the deceased's afterlife, not only on his bodily integrity/autonomy and physical survival by means of offerings. From the image reception standpoint, this practice reveals how these scenes were perceived as syntactic constructions of a set of isolatable elements not exclusively dependent on each other. For instance, in the tomb-chapel of Amenemheb (TT 85), dated to the time of Thutmosis III and Amenhotep II, the destroyer even proceeded with a certain care. In the offering scene of the northern front wall of the transverse hall,[59] he neatly targeted two

powerful iconographic units which are functional in securing the afterlife, because symbols of regeneration and transfiguration (fig. 3): 1) the arm of the tomb owner's wife embracing her husband as a gesture of love associated to (pro)creation, 2) the blossom of the *ankh*-bouquet containing divine essence and operating, on another level, as an illustration of the eternal rebirth of the morning sun.[60] Interestingly, the face of the wife was preserved as well as the rest of the bouquet. She was not the target; her performance was. However, it seems likely that the destroyer was illiterate for he missed the word for *ankh*-bouquet placed just over the son's arm, so that for the sake of the deceased the performativity of the textual statement has been conserved. Moreover, the destroyer also cut the two arms and face of the deceased's son making the offering, as well as the figures of two offering-bearers on the second register behind. The large hole on the first register may have been originally caused upon the hacking of a third offering figure. As for the names of the deceased included in the inscription, only their theophoric component—the name of Amun—has been erased. They can be safely attributed to the Amarna period.

The same mode of breakage appears in the tomb-chapel of Nebenkemet (TT 256), dated to the reign of Amenhotep II. In this case, the destroyer used a sharp tool to hack out only the arm of a male servant bringing a cup of wine to a guest, depicted on the topmost register of the banquet scene of the southern front wall of the transverse hall.[61] However, in this case, he did not touch the figure of the guest to whom the cup was once proffered (fig. 4), as though the latter was not his target. It even seems likely that serving of wine was more problematic than the very drink, since the

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58   See note 9.

59   PM I², 1: 171 (11). See also Heye 2023.

60   For the significance and meaning of this bouquet in offerings scenes, see Hartwig 2004: 94–96.

61   PM I², 1: 341 (2).

destroyer deliberately spared the cup—this will be discussed further below.[62] As a result, the access to wine enjoyment and symbolic performance via the servant's action was disrupted.

Corresponding to the same pattern of severing performative units in a scene or single figure, we may recall the rather frequent erasure of name inscriptions placed next to human depictions in the process of image usurpation (or appropriation), which occurred especially in the context of tomb reuse (fig. 5). The destructive aspect of this procedure lies in the obliteration of the name of the original individual (often the image owner and commissioner). In this regard, it is worth mentioning a secondary inscription from the late 6th Dynasty mastaba of Nyankhpepy at Saqqara. It has been suggested that the author of this inscription was the destroyer, and that he left it as an explanation not only of the almost complete defacement of the original tomb owner's figure next to which he placed it, but also of the usurpation of the tomb.[63] The text bears interesting witness to the vindictive aspect of name erasure and image mutilation, and the potentially consequent usurpation of the funerary monument as some kind of retribution:

> You chained me up (?), you beat my father.
> I am satisfied (?): who are you to repel my hand? My father is satisfied (?) [tomb of Nyankhpepy, Saqqara, late 6th Dynasty].[64]

Beside usurpation, name erasure also seems to relate materially, yet not necessarily conceptually, to a severe punishment some have called "debaptism" (see here below).[65] Conversely, in other cases of tomb reuse the original owner's name was intentionally preserved, or even re-commemorated, together with the new occupant. In this latter respect, it seems appropriate to reassess the assumption that one figure had to be exclusively related to a single name, that is supporting a single individual's identity, or *ba*, to be more exact. Apparently, the compliance to this tacit rule or custom (an Egyptological construal?) depended above all on the image beholder/user's own understanding and application of beliefs, namely explicit and implicit theories supposedly regulating evenly what we conceptualise as *Bildpraxis*.[66] This is exemplified in the tomb of Senemiah (TT 127), dated to the time of Hatshepsut and reused in the late 19th–early 20th Dynasty by a man named Piay. There, we can observe, for example, that the name of the original tomb owner was kept alongside the new occupant's in relation to a same depiction of the deceased (fig. 7) (see here below § 4). Moreover, from the opposite perspective, individuals also used to appropriate previously unnamed

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62 The destroyer also left untouched two analogous representations of cup-serving placed next to oil jars within the same scene, which tends to exclude a later non-pharaonic dating. Thinking tentatively of possible entrants, if we were indeed to attribute a priori the erasure to a Muslim passerby based upon the well-known Islamic proscription of alcohol, we might assume the one would hardly be able to recognise wine amphorae as such and distinguish them from oil jars. Perhaps, as compared to image defacement in other tomb-chapels, we might also expect him, as well as a Coptic monk, to have reacted to the female depictions (see Wilson 2005: 117, in reference to Griggs 1990: 104). Yet the rest of the scene is intact.

63 Drioton 1952: 354. Regarding the intention of the procedure, it might nonetheless be questioned whether the mutilation of the figure really fitted in the usurpation of the tomb. Alternatively, the destroyer and the usurper could possibly have been two distinct individuals.

64 Drioton 1952: 353. This hieroglyphic inscription comprises numerous epigraphic difficulties, especially the very doubtful shape of the alleged *ḥtp* signs in the two formulae referring to the satisfaction caused by the retaliation and the reuse of the tomb by the destroyer (fig. 6). I would like to thank Philipp Seyr for the precious photographs that he has just sent me from Saqqara, as I am about to submit the present article to the editors.

65 Bochi 1999: 77, n. 19; referring to Posener 1946; see also Quack 2019. For this social aspect of death and related methods of symbolic killing, see § 2.2.

66 In reference to Assmann 2009. See note 13.

figures by writing their name right next to them (fig. 8). This practice is already attested in the Old Kingdom.[67]

2.2. Complete erasure of name and image as *damnatio memoriae*

As previously demonstrated, image defacement could be aimed at variably destroying symbolic funerary devices, impeding thereby the victim's access to physical existence in the afterlife. However, the same practice could be used as a way to achieve, on another level, what may be called "*social* homicide", linked to the Egyptian conception of death as social isolation.[68] Far from partial mutilations of definite iconographic units, these *damnationes memoriae* were based instead, in principle, on the complete erasure of all the victim's figures and names.[69] Clear textual evidence indicates that this form of killing could be ordered and performed as a punishment on an institutional level.[70] Next to partial modification or replacement, name suppression had fatal consequences. Post-mortem social connectivity (a victim's posterity among the community) was apparently the

real target of such sentence, formerly referred to as "debaptism".[71] Outside these official procedures, it can be suggested that more informal vindictive ventures consisted of more or less consistent individual interpretation and actualisation of these institutionalised patterns. Needless to say, killing an individual by erasing his name and image (intended as components of individuality, with an image standing for an actual body) from the social memory responds directly to the famous maxim "one lives, if his name is mentioned".[72] On the one hand, it underlines the essential link between the signifier and the signified, namely between one's name and whom it designates.[73] On the other hand, it obviously reflects overarching cultural principles tied to the high significance of communities with respect to individual survival, that is, one's vital dependence on society. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that in some cases, like in the tomb of Amenmose (TT 89), dated to the reign of Amenhotep III, the thorough erasures of figures, along with names, occur more specifically in scenes depicting the tomb owner living and commemorating his social life, whereas strictly funerary scenes were left aside (fig. 9).[74]

67   See notably Hamilton 2016; Pieke 2018, as well as Nathalie Beaux's, Julia C.F. Hamilton's, and Gabriele Pieke's contributions to this volume. For New Kingdom examples, see Den Doncker 2025, with bibliography.

68   As defined by Assmann 2005: 39.

69   Quack 2019: 72–73; see also Schulman 1969–1970: 36–37. In her article on *damnatio memoriae* practices, Bochi has grouped together different types of ritual killings under the single concept of *damnatio memoriae* (Bochi 1999: 77–78). However, it seems relevant in our context to account for some motivational nuances between mutilation and complete defacement, conceived as two distinguished types of symbolic killing.

70   See for example the decree of Nubkheperre-Antef in the temple of Coptos (Posener 1946: 54; Goebs 2003; Wilson 2005: 116): "Remove his writings from the temple of Min, from the Treasury, in every scroll likewise." Another interesting example mentioned by Quack is the case of Iyray, who was accused in the course of the harem conspiracy against Ramesses III. His name is only partly hacked out on his monuments. As clearly expressed in the records, he was found guilty and then committed suicide. It could therefore be assumed that the erasure of his name was done carelessly. It is the only case, so far, in which a name erasure can be positively correlated with a textually documented persecution by the state (Quack 2019: 80). For a discussion on the division between mutilations (labelled as "iconoclasm") and procedures of *damnatio memoriae*, see Schulman 1969–1970: 36–37.

71   See note 65.

72   Assmann 2005: 41–52.

73   Vernus 1982: col. 320.

74   Davies & Davies 1941. It looks as though the destroyer did not complete his task and first proceeded with the scenes he probably deemed more significant in regard to his goal, perhaps working in a hurry through force of inconvenient

On the other hand, in the slightly earlier tomb of Tjenuna (TT 76), dated to the reign of Thutmosis IV, every figure and name of the tomb owner and his family was fully erased.[75] In addition, we can see that the destroyer, or possibly a second perpetrator, also produced large gashes over the tomb owner's chest and the *ankh* bouquet presented to him in the offering scene in the transverse hall (fig. 11).[76] The gesture must have required some strength and brutality, perhaps pointing to some enactment of *drama* such as that described by Bochi in the "ritual of *damnatio memoriae*" performed on execration figurines. Besides, it seems unlikely that the tool used was a simple stone taken from the ground. The cuts are large and straight. We may want to consider a more elaborate cutter, probably some kind of long blunt chisel or dagger—thereby pointing at a well-equipped man. As it appears, Tjenuna then suffered from both social homicide and an attack to his bodily autonomy, for it is clear that the gashes over his chest and the bouquet are dated later than the erasure of the figure, and the tool and intention differ—we will observe the same pattern in the well-known tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), discussed below. Now, the total absence of marks resulting from such violent action on the other tomb owner's figures, and equally on his cult statue (fig. 12),[77] betrays some incoherency. It should, therefore, not be excluded that these large gashes were made more impetuously, and had not been premeditated (as the type of tool might indicate at first glance).

It is tempting to correlate social homicides as a declination of death penalties, even paired with the victim's natural death, to the nature of the blame. The accusation could have been precisely bound to the function of the accused person (= the victim of the *damnatio*) as an official,[78] if not simply to his position as an individual vis-à-vis a socio-professional community acting as the civil party. Rather than reflecting personal conflicts between two adversaries, these *damnatio* procedures could be understood as a more "political" practice, although possibly concerning only a few individuals. In one way or another, in Thebes the borders between the elite's interfamilial relationships and political matters were indeed often blurred, since we are dealing with a rather small community of individuals in control of several administrative spheres or posts.[79]

The case of Amenmose's *damnatio* brings about another issue: in order for the oblivion to be someday really effective, the destroyers had to completely erase the figures. Still, above all, the names of the victim also had to disappear from the decoration, as they represented the sole objective clues of the latter's identity in connection within the monument. Yet, in TT 89, many of these inscriptions are preserved as well as some figures of the tomb owner.[80] As to any victim's contemporaries, no fully completed erasure procedure could effectively prevent them from

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circumstances (difficult accessibility to the monument located on the uppermost terrace of the Sheikh Abd el-Qurna hill, coupled with the illegality of the procedure). The depictions that he did attack are coarsely defaced, while the others were simply omitted (fig. 10). This apparent lack of commitment might also point to a commissioned destroyer acting on behalf of someone else (i.e. the victim's opponent). It should be mentioned that Amarna hackers did not enter TT 89 (Davies & Davies 1941: 131), probably because it is not easily accessible.

75   Quack 2019: 78, in reference to Bryan 2012: 376, fig. 12.16; Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 50–51; Helck 1939: 46, 48, 53.

76   PM I², 1: 150 (3).

77   Vienna KHM ÄS 63. The aspect of the statue's erased inscription is very similar to that of the erasure technique observed in the tomb-chapel. It is likely that this statue was part of the same *damnatio* procedure.

78   Bryan 2012: 376.

79   See Shirley 2005. For quantitative estimations, see Strudwick 1995.

80   See note 74.

recognising and remembering him through his defaced depictions—the procedure of the *damnatio* operated then on a merely symbolic level. However, with regards to future generations coming to the tomb-chapel, as long as a single name inscription remained in the textual programme they would still be able to identify the victim. The question of consistency thus arises since, in most cases, devoted Egyptologists were indeed able to guess the name of the misfortunate from the few remaining sign lines. First of all, just like the Amarna hackers, it is clear that destroyers sometimes missed inscriptions probably because, like most of their fellows, they were illiterate, or did not know much about the hieroglyphic writing.[81] Furthermore, despite the support of possible artificial lighting equipment such as torches, in general the natural illumination of the tomb-chapels was weak—this is the case of TT 89. In regard to the Amarna hackings in the Theban necropolis, this can explain some mistakenly erased iconographic units as well. Finally, lack of consistency may also point to lack of material means (not only appropriated tools but also ladders to target inaccessible texts and images) and diligent workforce, regardless of the possible official nature of the procedure.

Whether the execution of *damnatio memoriae* reflects official proscriptions, with supposedly necessary means, or personal initiatives, remains an issue that cannot be fully answered outside contextual anchoring to historical data. Only a few cases can be interpreted in light of such data, so as to consider the reasons why a tomb owner suffered such fate.[82] The case of the tomb-chapel of the vizier Rekhmire (TT 100), dated to the time of Thutmosis III and Amenhotep II, can be explored in that direction. His *damnatio* matches well with the decline of his powerful clan from the political sphere of influence surrounding the Thutmoside kingship since the reign of Thutmosis I, and the shift of his lineage's tenure and grip on the vizierate to a new family by the time of Amenhotep II.[83]

To begin, it should be settled that the attacks to his tomb-chapel were carried out gradually. However, unlike TT 87, where the destroyers proceeded only by image mutilation (see above), the first focus of Rekhmire's aggressor was obviously the complete erasure of his figures and names from the scenes in the transverse hall and those reachable (at human height) in the famous high-ceilinged long hall.[84] With this aim in mind, the destroyer probably made use of a water-soaked cloth in order to rub out the figures, which, as a result, appear as wide, fuzzy, pinkish stains because of the mix of the red pigment of the skin with the white of the long vizier dress (figs. 13–15).[85] In terms of iconography, although this decorative programme visually mirrors that of Rekhmire's uncle and predecessor Useramun (TT 131), in such a way that displayed his membership to his prestigious clan and his status as vizier, it also distinctively stands out from this vizierial tradition in many ways.[86] Since the scenes were cleverly designed to present and commemorate the unique identity of Rekhmire as a vizier, it is clear that the target of this first attack was his posterity within social memory. Besides, it must be stated that the community sharing that memory extended not only to that of certain dignitaries or court elite members, but probably to the whole

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81   Manuelian 1999; McClymont 2018; Vernus 1990: 37–39.

82   Probably the best study case in this regard is that of Senenmut. Among others, see Schulman 1969–1970; Dorman 1988: 141–157; 1991: 66–69, 147.

83   On this prominent Theban family, see Shirley 2005: 75–100.

84   Davies 1943: 6–7.

85   Davies 1943: 7 refers to "red paint" applied as a coat over the erasure. In some scenes, as that of the vizier's office, a first attempt to hack out the figure of the victim can indeed be observed.

86   See Den Doncker 2017: 346–349.

Theban population, since the vizier was doubtless the major local figure of power in Thebes. One of these scenes, namely that of the vizier's office (also referred to as "the judgement hall"), is of particular interest because it is the only typical vizierial iconographic device of the Theban repertoire, aside from the depiction of the vizier wearing his distinctive dress (fig. 13).[87] Differently from previous cases, this scene was meant to operate, for that reason, as a unique identity marker. We could speak of the visual counterpart of the *Duties of the vizier* text, placed next to it. Such a text was probably ever read thoroughly by very few people, as it is long and must have been too complicated for most audiences.[88] Concerning the iconography, the painter involved in this composition used Useramun's version (in TT 131) as a model, which he was able to develop further in TT 100. As for Rekhmire's successor, Amenemopet-Pairy, who served as the new vizier of Amenhotep II, he asked the painter to replicate the scene, which resulted in an almost exact copy of Rekhmire's version in his nearby tomb-chapel (TT 29).[89] In terms of tomb decoration rhetoric and self-fashioning, visually conforming to the vizierial iconographic tradition that his predecessor largely upgraded in many respects, was indeed a way to outdo him, as at the same time he promoted himself through valuable

funerary assets and apparatus, notably a tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 48).

In this context of legitimisation and the global political turn of that time,[90] it seems likely that Amenemopet himself could have ordered the obliteration of Rekhmire's figures in TT 100. Possibly owing to his position as the executive head of the justice bureaucracy, this procedure may have aimed at expressing his hostility and success over his victim, and visually asserting the eviction of the latter's clan.[91] Moreover, we should indeed add that, using the same erasure technique, the destroyer also rubbed out the figures of Rekhmire's father, sons and uncle (Useramun), depicted on the often called "wall of ancestors" in the vizierial tomb-chapels (fig. 16).[92] This proves his intention to obliterate any possible clues of Rekhmire's family relation to the vizierate. In the process the destroyer also targeted his victim's offspring: perhaps a threat to prevent any possible vendetta in return. However, one figure was left untouched in the scene: the figure of Rekhmire's grandfather Ahmose-Aametju. Either it was simply not accessible because of its placement high up on the first wall register, or it was spared intentionally. Aametju was maybe chronologically too distant from the destroyer's interests. It could also be hypothesised that Aametju was equally the ancestor of less significant—yet still living—branches of

87   PM I², 1: 206 (2); Davies 1943: 30–32, pls. XXIV–XXV.

88   It is written in retrograde and contains several archaising features, notably in connection to orthography, which was made up to look old. See van den Boorn 1988: 291–308.

89   PM I², 1: 46 (4). On this pattern of "identifying-copy", see Den Doncker 2017: 349–351; 2022: 63–65; forthcoming.

90   Amenemopet's accession to the vizierate is rooted in the broader scheme that Amenhotep II put forward as a reaction to his father's apparent dissent with Rekhmire and his predecessors starting from the time of Useramun's appointment instated by his father, Ahmose-Aametju. By that time, the clan had taken significant advantage from Hatshepsut's coregency to increase its political control of the Theban administration and influence over the kingship, which consequently caused some troubles to Thutmosis's III supremacy. Spoiling the social memory of this family's long relationship with the vizierate, and the related dark period of the coregency, was an efficient way for the new king to proceed with a new administration and faithful dignitaries, and break up definitively with the overwhelming authority of Aametju's clan. On this matter, see Shirley 2005: 246–259; Roehrig 1990: 336–337.

91   See Quack 2019: 53. It has been suggested, unfortunately without any clear reason provided, that the erasures of the figures and names of Rekhmire and his wife occurred during the reign of Amenhotep III (Wilson 2005: 123).

92   PM I², 1: 210 (9); Shirley 2005: 88–95; Dziobek 1998: 126–128.

the same family that the destroyer did not want to involve. As a matter of fact, no trace of erasure can be found in Aametju's (TT 83) and Useramun's (TT 61 and TT 131) respective tombs, implying that Rekhmire's monument was the real and only target of the order.

In any case, concerning the aforementioned vizier's office icon, withdrawing carefully Rekhmire from such composition, working as a strong socio-professional identifier in the eyes of the passerby, resulted above all in the fact that Amenemopet became the only individual (and *agent* in terms of iconographic syntax) associated to this meaningful scene in the necropolis—Useramun's version being far different in several respects (composition, style and technique). Thereby, Amenemopet was able to appropriate the scene exclusively: we might speak of "scene usurpation" from one chapel to another. It has to be stressed that he placed his tomb-chapel only a few meters higher uphill in the same area of the necropolis as Rekhmire's. Furthermore, regardless of the indexical value of his copied version pointing always to the nearby TT 100,[93] Rekhmire's model version eventually looked incomplete, as its agent was visually absent due to the thorough obliteration. Distracted visitors to TT 100 might even have missed the "presence" of the erased (and unnamed) figure.

However, this perpetrated attack was apparently not sufficient. Similar to TT 87, it happens that the destroyers went further as they focused, assumedly in a second step, on the bodily integrity of the figures of Rekhmire that had been left aside, since they are indeed hardly within reach (even with the help of a modern ladder and a keen colleague). Whereas the first attack was limited to the defacements of these accessible figures (figs. 17–18), we might interpret this second operation as a finishing work, more engaged and with a

decisive and fateful outcome: the physical death of the victim through the destruction of his sensory organs (as seen above). With the exception of the first decorated section of the long hall, these figures all belong to funerary scenes.

This time, the destroyers proceeded by figure mutilation in order to simply impair the images' efficacy. In spite of the apparent commitment to target figures placed at a height of 8m, this operation was done somehow haphazardly (probably because of the difficult access to the elevated scenes and a lack of good equipment). In certain scenes, an arm and/or half of the face were cut, in others the eye or nose of the figure were broken (fig. 18). In the famous Opening of the Mouth scene, while several figures of the deceased had already been rubbed out—presumably during the first attack, and even high up on the wall—others were mutilated in many ways. A few of them were also left intact. Although it seems clear that the purpose was to break the scene's efficacy, contrary to the later Amarna hackings, which reveal much more appropriate means and higher consistency (as indicated by the neat erasure of all the *sem* priests), the perpetrators of this second attack obviously did not benefit from ideal work conditions. As it happens, Rekhmire's figures and names on the red granite false-door preserved in the Louvre are also untouched, while references to Amun are there carefully erased, as in the rest of the tomb-chapel.[94] Compared additionally to the neater obliterations of the first attack, to what extent could this evidence betray a less "official" undertaking? Although the identification of vizier Amenemopet as the commissioner of the attack remains uncertain, it is worth considering: does every royal, vizierial, or coercive commission necessarily imply consistency? It could be argued that it does not. Should we consider royal tomb decorations, we would not be surprised to encounter

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93   Den Doncker 2022: 65.

94   Louvre C 74. On the Petrie Museum limestone statuette part of base UC 14655, the name of Rekhmire is well preserved. As for TT 100, see Davies 1943: 7.

occasional mistakes and omissions, which are generally attributable to human—whether conscious or not—oversight or neglect. Besides, in terms of evidence, consistency may also indicate a diligent—yet unofficial—individual operation. In this respect, tomb destruction, be it commissioned by high officials or undertaken by lone individuals, should be no exception to the rule.

3. Image as subject vs. image as object: harming people, ruining paintings

It goes without saying that the distinction between partial mutilation and complete obliteration of figure as products of the distinct notions of physical and social death is also reminiscent of the two main functions attributed to the private tomb-chapel, namely a place for cult performance and social self-presentation.[95] Simplifying, it may be even assumed that the destroyers mentally categorised their activity as such, which resulted in various operational modes. On the one hand, they would focus on damaging the cultic function of the monument, along with statues and, presumably, the ritual equipment stocked inside the chapel. On the other hand, when responding to a possible commission or "official" order, they would target specifically the tomb owner's image and posterity through his figures (and name inscriptions) as his proper *depictions* (in the sense of portrayals). In doing so, the destroyers would, moreover, inhibit the agency of these figures working as the most visible and prominent (yet physically

non-individualised) elements of the visual rhetoric of self-thematisation, that is, as the very *subject* of a whole iconographic syntax—the rest of the decoration functioning as the determinative predicate of such subject.

In addition, once again from the perspective of image reception, another distinction—perhaps operating also in the minds of ancient observers—can be proposed. The case of the tomb-chapel of Qenamun (TT 93), dated to the reign of Amenhotep II, provides interesting evidence in this regard. Like Rekhmire, Qenamun was one of the highest dignitaries of his time.[96] He could even boast being the foster brother of the king, for his mother was the chief nurse among Amenhotep's II nine royal nurses.[97] Concerning what caused his *damnatio memoriae*, we may argue that the somehow excessive demonstration of wealth in his tomb chapel reflects a social behaviour and positioning—achieved through accumulation of power—that could easily lead to making enemies, among which the king himself.[98] At that time, TT 93 was the largest and finest tomb-chapel of the necropolis, presenting exceptional artistic quality and unique aesthetic and iconographic features. Qenamun also benefited from a particularly high number of statues in temples, as well as several extra-sepulchral depots containing numerous finely cut shabtis.[99] This uncommon treatment points to an unparalleled royal gift act,[100] stressing his close connection to the king in person—a favourable position that he inherited from his mother, and that would always distinguish him from his counterparts at the royal

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95   Assmann 1995; 2005: 39–41; see also Hartwig 2004: 5–52.

96   List of titles in Davies 1930: 10–16.

97   See Roehrig 1990: 78–198. On his particularly close relationship with King Amenhotep II, see also Pumpenmeier 1998: 16–18.

98   See Betrò 2018: 135, with reference to Helck 1939: 53; 1994: 44, who eventually placed Qenamun's fall after Thutmosis's IV accession to the throne. See also Shirley 2005: 280–282; Quack 2019: 77.

99   Pumpenmeier 1998; Delvaux 2010: 73–74.

100   Convincingly argued by Delvaux 2010.

court.[101] It is well attested that these royal gift procedures went along with public ceremonies, such as the one represented in the southern front wall of the transverse hall in TT 93.[102] For sure, such enviable favours and events attracted attention, doubtless amongst colleagues and subordinates. It is also known that Qenamun held a leading position in the administration of the harbour of Peru-nefer (Tell el-Dab'a),[103] which presupposes significant economic advantages (and abuses?). In terms of evidence, regardless of the defacements, which themselves serve as a clue, we should especially mention the imprecation spell located on the northern small wall of the transverse hall (quoted here above § 2.1). As this preventive cursing formula—taken from the Pyramid Texts[104]—stands out from the usual textual programmes found in Theban tomb-chapels, it might support the hypothesis of a highly privileged royal courtier dealing with covetous opponents while taking excessive advantages of his unequalled proximity to the king. For this reason, Qenamun implemented for his afterlife several protective "devices", which seem to indicate that he was exposed to actual threats by the end of his life.

We may interpret the greyish-white lime plaster coating spread extensively all over most of the scenes of Qenamun's tomb-chapel as one such warning (figs. 19–20). As the areas covered stop exactly and systematically at the edges of the later hackings corresponding to the *damnatio*

memoriae procedure, it is clear that this whitewash is anterior to them—if not, it would have gone over, even a little. Moreover, whereas early 19th Dynasty graffiti—including some attributed to the vizier Paser—were inscribed over the whitewash (among others on the northern rear wall of the transverse hall), the two episodes of damage must have occurred before the Ramesside inspection(s) of the tomb.[105]

Just like in TT 87 and TT 100, it thus seems that the damage of the decoration again points at two different operations: a symbolic warning followed by a symbolic killing. However, in contrast to the two previous cases, the first defacement— carried out with the whitewash—did not make any distinction between the representations, or the texts. Even the blank spaces between textual and iconographic units disappeared under the coating. Differently from the later *damnatio memoriae* brought about by the complete hackings of the figures and names of Qenamun and other members of his family, the first destroyer's targets were apparently the painted walls themselves, seen in their entirety. Purely decorative motifs like the *kheker* friezes, as well as divine and royal figures and insignia of high symbolic significance (e.g. Osiris and the Western goddess, Amenhotep's II depictions, cartouches and regalia), were covered, notwithstanding their iconic value and meaning.[106] Strictly speaking, no specific depiction was at stake here. Instead of approaching the images as living

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101   Shirley 2005: 265–282.

102   PM I², 1: 190 (3). See Davies: 38–43, pls. XXXIX–XLII; Den Doncker 2019: 181–182, fig. 11.6.

103   Shirley 2005: 280.

104   PT 601, identified by Davies 1930: 45, n. 1.

105   PM I², 1: 192 (16)-(17); Den Doncker 2019: 183–186. The use of whitewash for damaging purposes is attested in Akhenaten's Boundary Stela inscription: "(…) It shall not be washed out, it shall not be hacked out, it shall not be (white)washed with plaster" (Wilson 2005: 116, after Murnane & Van Siclen 1993: 96, 103). For graffiti attesting to private tomb inspections, see also Ragazzoli 2021.

106   For that possible reason, Davies interpreted this "slight tinge of gray" as a deliberate wish to temper the strong contrast of the background yellow tone with the bright white of some motifs caused by the extensive application of varnish (Davies 1930: 60). Considering the cost and scarcity of resinous varnishes, the expected glossy effect that these substances were, by that time, already known to produce on wall paintings (see Den Doncker & Tavier 2018), and the outstanding technical mastery of the painters involved in the decoration, this scenario seems unlikely.

subjects appearing[107] in the form of icons imbued with magical efficacy (for example, as supports for divine entities),[108] it is likely that the destroyer focused on inhibiting their agency as mere visual representations. Ruining the decoration as an aesthetic *object*—or artistic work, and thereby undermining the very *materiality* of Qenamun's funerary monument,[109] also reveals how the destroyer could himself possibly engage with the depictions as physical objects, while implicitly acknowledging their agency as purely *visual* devices. Simply formulated, there is a difference between a "beautiful person's picture" (focus on the image approached as a subject) and a "person's beautiful picture" (focus on the image approached as an object).

Parallel evidence observed in the earlier tomb of User (TT 21), dated to the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III, led Norman de Garis Davies to interpret a coating very similar to that in TT 93 as a later adjustment for tomb reuse.[110] Still, the parietal stratigraphy in TT 93 proves otherwise, unless the reuse occurred right after the end of the decoration work (or the funeral) but before the *damnatio* procedure, which is doubtful in this case: why would someone plan a complete refashioning of such an outsized tomb-chapel and let so many hackings be made in the meantime (considered the time one would imply in filling the holes)? Besides, very similar destructive actions can be observed in the tomb of Antefiqer and Senet (TT 60), dated however to the time of Senusret I. In that case, a pinkish lime plaster coat was applied over the figures of the tomb owner, whereas the latter were scratched out afterwards.[111] This said, in regard to TT 93, it might be wondered why the second destroyer—the perpetrator of the actual *damnatio memoriae*—decided to go further in the destruction process, chiseling out depictions that had become barely discernible (particularly in the extremely dark environment of the tomb-chapel) (fig. 19). In these conditions, the operation was certainly time-consuming and hard work, most probably commissioned by an extremely determined instigator—maybe the newly enthroned Thutmosis IV, as suggested by H. Wolfgang Helck.[112]

In terms of image agency, this brings us back to the initial issue of the hacking of Hatshepsut's figures in the sanctuary of Amun at Karnak, which Thutmosis III additionally walled up; it is understood that a visual representation can be performative (i.e. performing magically) although no longer visible. In TT 93, images were probably believed to operate efficiently under the plaster coating, somehow as did those behind the stone blocks in Karnak. In this respect, Qenamun's *damnatio memoriae* procedure was not only a social killing. As worded above, it was also a measure aiming at the very destruction of his funerary monument's

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107   In reference to the phenomenological aspect of such encounter as experienced by the beholder.

108   See note 43.

109   For the sake of art history, since the painters of TT 93 made extensive use of varnish all over the walls, the paintings were somehow protected under the thick resinous layer so that later conservative clearing, already begun in the Ramesside period (Den Doncker 2019: 185), was technically feasible (see here below § 4).

110   Davies 1913: 20. Yet, in most cases, later tomb occupants tended to preserve the original scenes to the largest extent in order to appropriate them with limited resources, generally via added inscriptions. In the case of the reuse of the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (TT 112), which is hitherto the case of tomb reuse with the most extensively altered decoration areas, the Ramesside occupant only recoated the long hall funerary scenes, while leaving untouched most of the original scenes in the transverse hall (Davies 1933: 18–26).

111   Davies 1920: 6. The pink lime plaster coat corresponds to the type of limestone found in the vicinity of TT 60 on the top of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna hill, from where it was most probably extracted. On Antefiqer's *damnatio memoriae*, see Posener 1988; Quack 2019: 75.

112   Helck 1994: 44. However, Helck's argumentation remains very tentative, see Quack 2019: 79.

functionality, since damage affected every scene (images and texts) in which he is represented or referred to by name (from the transverse hall's social and commemorative *Blickpunktsbilder,* to the funerary and adoration scenes of the innermost shrine). The destruction programme extended to almost every family member, even maybe Qenamun's dog.[113] As the paintings had already been whitewashed, it can be suggested that the *damnatio* procedure was carried out on top of that, as a performance possibly involving an audience.

Moreover, we should draw attention to the fact that the second destroyer even cut out the cursing formula cited here above. This formula was written in retrograde and discretely placed in one of the darkest areas of the transverse hall. Obviously, in order to do so, the destroyer must have either been highly literate,[114] and thus read carefully all the tomb-chapel's hieroglyphic inscriptions until he came across the one to avoid at all costs, or been previously told that this spell existed in that specific position. In any case, it was worth removing so as to thwart its actualisation, which reveals a particularly cautious approach to image destruction, and not the contrary. The destroyer's clear focus on this particular performative formula among many others implies that, far from being disregarded,[115] these powerful spells were actual, feared concerns. Their power was to be controlled, conceivably prior to initiating any further hostile actions. Analogous behaviour in regard to the effectiveness of images as *subjects* emerges from

the interesting case of the "blinded" deities in the temple of Thutmosis III at Deir el-Bahari.[116] As Jadwiga Lipińska interpreted it, by the end of the Ramesside period, workers meticulously picked the eyes of these figures in anticipation of block reuse, to prevent the gods inhabiting[117] them from seeing the desecration of the images. Somehow, the purpose of this cautious action was to annihilate the agency of the image as subject: that is, deactivate its performativity, and turn its support into a plain material entity, a mere object.[118] In relation to ancient perspectives on image agency, such procedure is therefore clearly distinct from the extensive use of whitewash with the aim of spoiling the aesthetic nature of tomb decoration by focusing on its physical aspect, as observed in TT 93. This supports the idea that the distinction between image as subject and image as object is not merely a modern construct, but was evidently a meaningful concern in ancient times as well.

4. IMAGE AS SUBJECT VS. IMAGE AS OBJECT: RESTORATION PROCEDURES

Image defacement thus reveals two distinct approaches to visual representations: as individualised subjects (inhabited, performative receptacles of a person's *ba*), or as valuable aesthetic/artistic objects, apprehended through their materiality. In this respect, we can attribute to these images a bipartite, or "polarised", agency. Such agentive potential was determined by the

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113 Davies 1930: 20, pls. IX, XXI, XXXV.

114 Assuming very few literate people were able to decipher and understand the hieroglyphic writing, see Vernus 1990: 37–39.

115 Based on the same evidence, Alice McClymont has considered, on the contrary, destruction as the proof that such warnings did not perturb the destroyers, assuming the aim of the erasure was to nullify the threat (McClymont 2018: 115).

116 Lipińska 1992. The practice can be compared with the actions carried out on statues of Hatshepsut in connection with her *damnatio memoriae* (MMA 29.3.1 and 31.3.167), see Connor 2018: 153, fig. 4. To escape from any possible threat, before breaking the statues into fragments, the uraei were destroyed and Hatshepsut's eyes carefully picked. It may be questioned what the destroyers targeted first. Perhaps, they started with the uraeus, as it was meant to protect the king from danger.

117 See note 43.

118 See Connor 2018.

viewer's use, that is, one's *productive reception* of an iconographic unit or environment. Although we should admit that this categorisation remains relevant from our *etic* standpoint, it is nevertheless doubtless that among those people engaged with visual representations, there were patrons and artisans involved in their very conception and production. This has allowed us to presuppose this specific outlook on the image: a perspective focused on the technical and morphological aspects of a representation seen as a mere iconic, man-made object, not solely as a substitute of a subject endowed with symbolic values and magical properties.

In this regard, the case of TT 93 is even more interesting since, in response to the decoration's aesthetic significance (the target of the first destroyer), later visitors to the tomb-chapel apparently decided to clear the thin layer of lime plaster coat and uncover scenes and figures they deemed of any interest. While it remains difficult to attribute the various stages of this proper conservation work to the different phases of the tomb history, the operation most probably began following vizier Paser's inspection of the tomb in the early 19th Dynasty. On the one hand, in terms of reception, he is the only name associated with the visit of the tomb at that time. On the other hand, it can be assumed it was he who ordered to trace squaring-up grids over at least three iconographic units of the tomb-chapel decoration in order to reproduce them in other monuments (notably in the temple of Seti I at Abydos, of which he oversaw the decoration works). It is likely that he also commissioned, accordingly, the clearance of the paintings; otherwise, the motifs could have hardly been copied.[119]

Besides, Paser's keen interest in ancient aesthetics and iconography is also reflected in his own tomb-chapel (TT 106), which he variously modelled on 18th Dynasty patterns.[120] In the scene of inspecting the workshops in the temple of Amun he praises a sculptor's work: "(…) How beautiful is this statue of the Lord you have done! (…)" To which the sculptor replies: "(…) Because your teachings spread throughout the workshop you open the mind of every craftsman."[121] Whereas Paser might well have regarded and appreciated the squared motifs because of his expertise and a certain connoisseurship (due to his own professional experience, and personal curiosity, as someone involved in the conception of decorative programmes), it is tempting to find similar visuality and outlooks on tomb decoration, and the consequent image agency, in analogous contexts of image reception.

With this in mind, other forms of alteration of image warrant further investigation, for they tend to confirm implicitly, yet from an emic perspective, the suggested distinction between the image as a subject and the image as an object. These two attributions (or conditions) can potentially coexist in a single representation: it is the activity of the beholder that discloses one or the other, and makes the image perform accordingly as an agent in a certain context. Marcel Duchamp's famous *Fountain* is clearly a ready-made fountain to those who acknowledge it, but it still is a porcelain urinal to those who deny it (or cannot read the inscription beneath), albeit the artist's performative ontological statement. Somehow, this was ironically the case of the late Pierre Pinoncelli who, as a tribute to Duchamp, incongruously urinated into the *Fountain*—should we then say urinal?—and struck it with a hammer during an exhibition

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119 His name and titles are present in the form of secondary inscriptions (at least one graffito) perfectly aligned with the copy gridlines (Den Doncker 2019: 183–185; Ragazzoli 2021: 229–231; Davies 1930: 21–22, pls. XI, LXVIII A). On Paser's activity in the temple of Abydos, see Brand 2000: 158–159, 169–170, 356–357.

120 Den Doncker 2019: 184–185; Hofmann 2015, I: 42–51.

121 PM I², 1: 221 (6). On this scene, see Assmann 1992b.

held in Nîmes in 1993.[122] To what extent should an image be exclusively either a subject (as equivalent of a concept) or an object—both conditions being therefore possibly contradictory—was most probably an irrelevant theoretical issue in ancient Egypt, according to the principle of the multiplicity of approaches. However, in the context of tomb reuse, it is quite clear that image transformation (restoration, completion, refashioning, addition, etc.) went implicitly through such kinds of differentiation in regard to the beholders' perspectives on the concerned iconographic units.

Restoration of individual figures generally occurred as part of tomb reuse, especially in the Ramesside period, when cultic activities in 18th Dynasty tomb-chapels ceased progressively, particularly as a consequence of the Amarna period. In most cases, however, only archaeological evidence bears witness to the actual reuse of the burial chamber(s), which sometimes dates back to the 18th Dynasty when the practice was already well established in the necropolis.[123] In some other cases, means were at hand to renew the cultic spaces of the tomb-chapel as well, including transformation of iconographic or textual units of the original decorative programme. We might differentiate, in this respect, tomb reuse for mere burial purpose from (tomb-)chapel reuse intended as a solution for cultic activities and, above all, social commemoration. The latter pattern appears as some kind of sophisticated enterprise, only accessible to people dealing in some way with the sphere of image/text production or monumental decoration. Still, to render a defaced or mutilated figure functional within the iconographic syntax of the scene in which it operates, no great skills or scarce material were apparently needed.

In the tomb of Djehutymose-Paray (TT 295), dated to the time of Thutmosis IV to Amenhotep III, a large number of figures were beheaded; still only in the southern half of the transverse hall.[124] While the reason for this apparently inconsistent yet fierce action remains unclear,[125] later on someone, perhaps one of Djehutymose's descendants, set out to systematically repaint the missing faces (fig. 21).[126] The discrepancy between the style and quality of the original figures and those of the restored units is striking. Obviously, the restoration was merely functional, focused on rehabilitating the magical

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122   For which he spent a month in prison and was fined circa 33,000€. Likewise, in 2006, he notched the example preserved in Paris at the Centre Pompidou, where he got arrested again and charged of damaging the property of others (Riding 2006). The famous art museum claimed damages of 427,000 € for an artwork estimated at 2,8 million €, arguing for a "possible loss of value", which the court finally ruled out of order in response to Pinoncelli's lawyer pleading about the difference between the concept and the object: *"Nous ne pensons pas que cet urinoir est une œuvre d'art, mais un simple objet, multiple qui plus est, qui a été conceptualisé par Marcel Duchamp"* (as reported by Bellet 2007).

123   See relevant case studies of early New Kingdom tomb reuse in Engelmann-von Carnap 1999: 10–27; see also Polz 1990; Guksch 1995b.

124   PM I², 1: 376–377 (1)-(3); Hegazy & Tosi 1983: 26–27.

125   Most of the targeted figures are not related to inscriptions: the columns above them were originally left blank or unfinished. Following Polz 1990: 333, since different individuals from a same family, mainly Djehutymose and his granduncle Paray (after whom the former got his nickname) made use of this tomb and left their imprint on the tomb-chapel's decoration, it can be suggested that the destroyer intended to focus his attack only on Djehutymose's scenes. Analyses of the familial relationships of the individuals represented in TT 295 can be found in Polz 1990: 326–333; Whale 1989: 218–226.

126   It has been suggested on archaeological grounds that the author of the restoration might be one of the Ramesside individuals who reused the tomb for burial (Hegazy & Tosi 1983: 27). This is supported by the style of the restored faces of the beheaded figures. However, the Ramesside restorer did not take the opportunity to add his name to the decorative programme, contrary to most cases of tomb-chapel reuse. We might therefore think of a considerate restoration of the original tomb owner's cult place by a later descendant, who reinvested a familial funerary monument (as attested in TT 54, see Polz 1990: 301–303; 1997: 125–135).

efficiency of the mutilated figures, and thereby the operation of the scenes in which they perform as subjects and agents. The restored faces are indeed very roughly executed, sometimes with improper pigments; clearly, the result is a bit clumsy. It may be presupposed that the commissioner did not have the means to hire a professionally equipped painter. However, we should not exclude the possibility that he simply did not attach importance to the aesthetic continuity of the decoration.

Likewise, in the tomb of Huy (TT 54), dated to the reign of Amenhotep III and reused by Kel—presented as "his son"—at the beginning of the 19th Dynasty, two figures of officiating men in purification and offering scenes related to the Opening of the Mouth ritual were barely sketched in. They substitute the original *sem* priests, who were completely hacked out during the Amarna period (fig. 22).[127] While inscriptions bearing the name of the original tomb owner and that of Amun were nonetheless diligently restored, the painter who redrew the figures in question left them unfinished. Seemingly, that was considered fair enough, for Kel rather emphasised completing new scenes—at least onto the initially undecorated adjacent wall, where he included Huy as recipient.[128] The issue here was not a lack of means, but rather a deliberate decision to focus on adding new scenes, relying instead on the basic functionality of minimally restored representations serving merely as operational supports for individuals. This mode of productive reception reflects, once more, the notion of image as subject. Hence, as the exact opposite of acts of figure mutilation, this restoration approach appears to have been driven by the goal of repairing the integrity and continuity of figure outlines, with the intention of reinstating their autonomy/efficacy within the sacred context of the tomb-chapel. No professional painter would be necessarily required in this regard, as was probably the case for TT 295.

In terms of painting, other tomb-chapels display a much higher degree of aesthetically elaborate restorations. In the tomb of Nebamun (TT 17), dated to the reign of Amenhotep II, the man offering a bouquet of papyrus instead of, most likely, the previously hacked figure of a *sem* priest exemplifies this well (fig. 23).[129] The style of the restored figure, along with the post-Amarna kilt, argues for a dating in between the 18th and 19th Dynasties at the latest; that is, shortly after the erasures. These elements reflect the work of a skilled professional painter. At first sight, since the tomb owner's name containing that of Amun was clearly chiselled out, the evidence could match with the aforementioned case of *sem* priest figures restored as simple officiating men in TT 54. It is as though their distinctive panther skin outfit was no longer deemed necessary, despite its persistency in newly composed scenes. However, this study case appears to be more puzzling. First of all, this time the restorer did not fill the blank left by the hacked signs of the god Amun included in the original tomb owner's name. He moreover did not assign someone else's name to this empty space. While in the same chapel two other lacunae, where once stood the cancelled figures of *sem* priest were re-plastered, they were left unpainted. It can also be observed that rubbed-out text columns and plastered inscriptions related to the figures of the original tomb owner and family members were not reinscribed (figs. 24–25).[130] All these elements could indicate a partial appropriation of an uncompleted tomb-chapel following the Amarna period (and perhaps its neglected state during this time).

127   PM I², 1: 104 (3); Polz 1997: 38–48, pls. 9a, 18.

128   PM I², 1: 105 (4); Polz 1997: 48–55, pl. 19.

129   PM I², 1: 30 (5); Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 23, pls. XXI, XXVIII (2).

130   PM I², 1: 31 (12)–(13); Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 31, pls. XXVI, XXIX.

In this context, it is worth wondering 1) why did the new occupant—presumably, the commissioner of the restoration—not reinscribe the erased inscriptions (are these defacements later in date?), 2) why did he complete the restoration of the only scene he did not appropriate as a new recipient, 3) why does this fully restored figure, offering a bouquet of papyrus, bear the same name—"Sheny", added in red next to the figure—as that of Nebamun's brother, who is offering to him in the opposite scene.[131] In his publication of the tomb, Torgny Säve-Söderbergh suggested that this Sheny was the one who ordered the restoration of the figure, implying that the original decoration, the defacements and the restoration works were almost contemporary.[132] Considering the difference of style between the restored figure and the original depictions, for simple chronological reasons (a gap of, at the very least, fifty years between the two brothers), this seems rather unlikely. Nonetheless, it should not be excluded that Sheny could be the one who appropriated the tomb, introducing himself as the original tomb owner's "brother" (more likely a cousin),[133] in order to legitimate his act.

Analogous bipartitions of chapel decoration occurred in other cases of tomb reuse. Still, the depicted cultic space of the new occupant, namely the scenes to which he added his name, is generally more substantial than the sections left to the original owner. This can be seen for example in the tomb of Djehuty reused by Djehutyemheb (TT 45), where only two scenes remained devoted to Djehuty.[134] In TT 17, it can be assumed that Sheny was in a position to benefit from a relative's tomb in the necropolis and a painter in a hurry.

The latter could not finish his possibly too ambitious work of transformation within his allotted time. To some extent, this could bear witness to the scarcity of that kind of labour at that time. Whether the absence of new inscriptions in the rubbed-out text columns stems from the painter's limited competence, the unavailability of a skilled scribe, or the priority Sheny accorded to visual representations cannot be determined with certainty.[135] In any case, he surely wanted to stress his connection to the original tomb owner, by acting as the latter's cult main performer rather than presenting himself as the new tomb occupant. In this respect, a commemorative depiction with aesthetic qualities was obviously more efficient in terms of visual agency than barely sketched outlines operating strictly on the image's performativity, as observed in TT 54.

From deliberate decisions to grasped opportunities, tomb-chapel reuse, as figure restoration illustrates, encompasses a large (if not unlimited) range of practices, which do not seem to be regulated by strict rules regarding image conception and theory. We are generally dealing here with members of the lower elite, who, despite limited means, succeeded in enhancing not only the architectural aspect but also the social dimension of their cultic and funerary monument through the use of visible imagery. Some exceptions to this broad pattern exist, as for example the famous case of the tomb of Nebamun (TT 65), dated to the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III, and reused and transformed by Iymiseba during the reign of Ramesses IX.[136]

Regarding the social role of the tomb-chapel as a place for commemoration, certain restoration

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131   Säve-Söderberg 1957: 25, pl. XXIII.

132   Säve-Söderberg 1957: 23, 25.

133   Compare to the case of Amenemopet (TT 29) and Sennefer (TT 96), who also referred to each other as "brother", although textual evidence proves they were actually cousins (Laboury 2007: 44–45).

134   Polz 1990: 306.

135   All in all, the issue is worth keeping in mind, as it appears that painters were sometimes literate. On this matter, see Laboury 2013: 32–34; 2016.

136   See among others Bács 2011; 2015: 9–18.

procedures attest more specifically to responses to *damnatio memoriae*. Since the defacements did not only concern the performativity of depictions as funerary cult images but were rather aimed at spoiling their meaning as social indexes, these "social killings" led, to some extent, to the need for re-establishing the representations' material significance as sheer *objects*. Considering the visitors as beholders, the restorers focused on "saving" the artistic part of the decoration by implementing some aesthetic value to the restored figures. The tomb of Amenhotep-Huy (TT 40),[137] dated to the reign of Tutankhamun, offers a good example of these unusual undertakings. In response to the partial and incomplete defacement of every figure of the tomb owner (head and upper part of the body), most probably connected to the hacking of Tutankhamun's cartouches in the three kiosk scenes,[138] someone had them restored (figs. 26–28). Sections of the original varnished depictions are still visible today (particularly under UV rays) under the repainted figures (figs. 27–28). The defacements did not consistently affect the entire body of the figures, which were only partially damaged. The result was not the complete obliteration of the tomb owner's figures, as has been previously seen in the case of Rekhmire (TT 100) (see above § 2.2). In comparison to other circumstances, this apparent lack of consistency (perhaps due to inappropriate equipment) may question the definition of *damnatio memoriae* proposed by Quack.[139] In view of the context of Tutankhamun's persecution initiated by Horemheb, we may interpret the defacements in TT 40 as broadly motivated by the will to take on Tutankhamun's claimed political initiatives regarding the restoration of the cult of Amun, while at the same time breaking definitively with Akhenaten's offspring.[140] As one of the young king's favoured dignitaries, Huy could have been held accountable by Horemheb's partisans.[141] Anyhow, it seems that the defacements of his figures were executed somehow haphazardly, without any clear intention to make them disappear. As a matter of fact, the royal cartouches were never re-inscribed,[142] as though the destroyers were more motivated to cause damage to the figures of the tomb owner, ruining his imagery somehow globally. Besides, almost all the inscriptions bearing his name were preserved. As Simon Connor suggests, these acts may have taken place as part of a performance, potentially in the presence of an audience,[143] which seems to have been, in the end, the real aim of the destroyer.

With regard to the restoration of the damaged figures, the result shows technical skill. It is not easy to discern everywhere in detail how the restorer exactly proceeded (fig. 28). He must have been a well-trained professional painter. First, he was able to completely re-plaster the damaged areas with a whitish *muna* coating, quite similar to the original in colour nuance. Second, the figures that he repainted are well proportioned, although no grid lines—the standard procedure of that time—were used. Third, the motifs are finely traced,

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137 See the recent examination of this tomb, including a reassessment of its date, by Pieke 2021: 163–164.

138 As paralleled in many altered monuments of Tutankhamun, see Gabolde 1987; Eaton-Krauss 2016: 53–101.

139 Quack 2019: 72.

140 See references in notes 141142.

141 As this was the case of some court officials like the general Nakhtmin, whom Horemheb went after in response of his progressive exclusion from Tutankhamun's close circle of influencing people headed by Ay (Gabolde 1987: 59–60, n. 66). This hypothesis should of course be supported by further evidence.

142 Such apparent inconsistency is also reflected on some of Tutankhamun's statues and reliefs usurped by Horemheb, see Eaton-Krauss 2015; concrete examples in Eaton-Krauss 2016: 53–101. Nevertheless, as the author convincingly argues, this lack of conscientiousness in pursuing the programme of re-inscribing should not be used as an argument against the intent (Eaton-Krauss 2015: 104).

143 See Connor's contribution to the present volume.

including sophisticated elements like the hair locks. There is definitely a stylistic improvement in the figure design, as compared to the same scale original ones that were not attacked.[144] However, it is clear that the defaced figures were only partially destroyed, since the restorer could obviously retrace the exact shapes of certain elements (arms, legs, chests, and parts of faces). In fact, he was able to integrate these residual elements into the new figures, so that, as a result, no technical and stylistic discrepancy would stand out.

From an art historical viewpoint, this case points to highly developed approaches to painting, including notions of artistic continuity and aesthetic homogeneity. It can be suggested that these restoration works occurred soon after the defacements, probably already by the end of the reign of Horemheb or the very beginning of the 19th Dynasty, as indicated by the style of the new figures. It could be therefore assumed the tomb owner was still alive and commissioned himself the restoration of his representations. Alternatively, his direct descendants may have been involved in the procedure, although no second tomb owner is attested in the decoration. In any case, a question remains: why did the restorer leave the highly conspicuous hacked cartouches of Tutankhamun empty, whereas in similar circumstances they were replaced by the names of Horemheb?[145] Should we again consider this lapse as a simple incompletion caused by the possible lack of a literate restorer, or was it done consciously? We might indeed tentatively suppose the tomb owner would never have liked to stand before Horemheb, since the latter was a former opponent (even possibly the instigator of the defacements), nor come to terms with his allegiance to a proscribed king.

The attack at the hands of Amarna hackers in the aforementioned tomb of Senemiah, reused by Piay (TT 127),[146] provides us with a second example of what can be referred to as a process of "artistic restoration". No personal vendetta against the original tomb owner occurred here, rather the will to re-establish his afterlife existence through the restoration of damaged scenes required for that purpose—namely the representation of the Opening of the Mouth ritual (fig. 29).[147] In this respect, the use of the *sʿnḫ.(w) rn.f* formula set in a perfectly laid out text and, moreover, inscribed on one of the most visible walls of the tomb-chapel (amidst *Blickpunktsbilder*, i.e. focal point representations),[148] was surely a way to demonstrate the intention of the occupant (fig. 30). This formula appears regularly in the frame of dedicatory inscriptions. It was meant to revivify and celebrate illustrious individuals, somehow *in absentia*, as revealed by its use on Abydene cenotaphs.[149]

As for how the new occupant proceeded with the restoration, it is clear that his professional experience and expertise played a role in the way he engaged with the original decorative programme and the damaged iconographic units. Aside from his title of *wab* priest, Piay was the chief *sankh* sculptor in the temple of Amun at Karnak. This position possibly helped him to obtain a tomb concession in the necropolis, and easily recruit the

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144   In contrast with Quack 2019: 79, who speaks of very roughly restored figures.

145   This was for example the case in the tomb of Parennefer/Wenennefer (TT 162), see Eaton-Krauss 2016: 72; also Quack 2019: 80; Pieke 2021: 172–173.

146   This case is briefly commented on by Bács 2015: 3–4, fig. 1; Polz 1990: 312–313; Den Doncker forthcoming. On the Amarna hackings, see McClymont 2018: 116.

147   We should not exclude the possibility that the restoration procedure intended for the benefit of Senemiah was part of some deal, or legal agreement, that enabled Piay to reuse the tomb. To that extent, the pretended filial relationship between Piay and Senemiah might have served as some kind of requisite argument. The use of the *in sꜣ.f sʿnḫ.(w) rn.f* formula as performative statement is also attested in TT 54, see Polz 1990: 303.

148   On the use of *Blickpunktsbilder* as instruments of visual rhetoric, see Hartwig 2004: 51 with extended bibliography.

149   Grallert 2001: 101–106; Nelson-Hurst 2010; see also Rizzo 2015.

workers involved in the transformation of the decorative programme: his son, the chief draughtsman Amenemheb-Pairy, together with the scribe and sculptor Nebnefer, and another draughtsman called Tjauenhuy-Panaadju. These were mentioned among the added inscriptions of the tomb-chapel, which are all stylistically consistent.[150]

While, as we have just seen, restoration can simply consist of the tracing of a few outlines, the project of Piay was, on the contrary, well planned and highly elaborated. Apart from a few inscriptions on the southern focal wall of the transverse hall (including the group [*nṯr.w nb.w ḥr.t-nṯr*] and a title of Senemiah bearing the name of [Montu] of Iunu (Armant)), he clearly focused on the Opening of the Mouth ritual. First of all, he re-plastered the lacunae caused by the hacking of the *sem* priests, and carved new officiating figures, exactly as in TT 54. However, from a stylistic and technical angle, the result betrays a very specific attention to the artistic quality of the restored figures and a clear sense of aesthetics, complying with professional mastery.

Secondly, when the original vignette bore initially no text, Piay took the chance to add his name to the figure of the mummy and, in some instances, those of his colleagues to the restored officiating figures. He was also skilled enough to somehow "compose" simple ritualistic-like formulae in order to complete the vignettes, and quell some kind of *horror vacui* in the process. This denotes certain knowledge—presumably that of a Ramesside *wab* priest—in coping with the textual rendering of a major ritual scene that was created as such, i.e. as an iconographic unit, in the 18th Dynasty.[151] As for the texts that were initially completed, he simply introduced his presence through an inscription referring to him as the officiating son, that is, for the benefit of Senemiah. In this way, Piay smartly integrated every scene of the decorative programme. While he appropriated most of the initially unnamed figures as the deceased Osiris, he simply added an inscription introducing him as a new agent (namely "his son") to the scenes with the figures of Senemiah.[152] As a result, the cultic environment of the tomb-chapel, including its ritual tools, was split in two, not spatially but *functionally*.

In terms of layout, these alterations were aptly conceived and designed. Eventually, on a strict visual level the most prominent large scaled figures of the deceased could all be associated with Senemiah and Piay in the same time. In this respect, it should be noted that the added inscriptions were carved with the apparent intention to imitate the style of the original ones, inasmuch as they visually blend in with the initial textual programme. As for the unique iconographic addition of Piay, namely the two pairs of figures of him and his wife depicted on the doorjambs leading to the long hall, the sculptor included distinctive Thutmoside iconographic elements to the representations, noticeably the type of kilt and the shape of the nose (that was obviously reworked) (fig. 31). Although globally the style of the figures (face outline, elongated upper face, mouth curves,

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150 Den Doncker forthcoming.

151 On the gap between the iconographic expression of this ancient ritual and its actual performance, see Assmann 2005: 229–329, esp. 304–310. The discrepancy between Piay's added texts and the allegedly more "accurate" standard versions of the 18th Dynasty (Settgast 1963: 95, 112–114) is better reflected in the funerary rites scenes. There, somehow even more tentatively, Piay filled the registers with short inscriptions consisting of simple formal descriptions of the depicted scenes, whose meaning and function are, as we all know, fairly complex (see Settgast 1963). For example, the famous theme of the Navigation to Sais, which traditionally comprises multiple symbolic go-and-return crossings to mythical locations such like Sais, the doors of Pe, Hut-ser, etc., was reduced to a simple *"boat ride"* (*ir wꜣ*), see Den Doncker forthcoming. In a sense, Piay did not know the mysteries of this intricate iconography as exactly as Jürgen Settgast did. In spite of that, he was able to make the most of his knowledge and skills so that the scene looks complete and somewhat coherent as regards the relationships between the texts and the images.

152 See § 2.1.

overall shape, dress and hair of the wife), and the technique itself (two-dimensional approach to relief sculpting), point to the turn of the 19th to the 20th Dynasty,[153] these iconographic hints were surely meant to bring the figures into line with the 18th Dynasty style of the human depictions. Besides, Piay most probably modelled his figures after that of Senemiah from the northern door-jamb of the entry to the tomb-chapel (fig. 32).[154] In brief, he could integrate his image into the early aesthetic environment of the tomb-chapel, which he was able to appreciate from a purely artistic perspective, owing to his educational background and experience as sculptor in the workshops of the temple of Amun. Beyond simply repairing the functionality of the altered scenes, the restoration of the damaged iconographic and textual units betrays, in this case again, a material-oriented approach to the image. The agency thereof seems to have operated, above all, as a formalised aesthetic *object* seen from this very specific beholder's perspective.

5.   The drunken cellar boy: towards pure iconoclasm?

"Iconoclasm" generally refers to violent reactions against institutional or religious values that are communicated through visual representations. It is sometimes the very iconicity of the depicted entity that is problematic, as in the case of the portrayal of God in Islam, which would be in contradiction with his invisibility. We may wonder if such consideration were also taken into account in ancient Egypt; not so much on a broad cultural level, rather from the outlook of selected individuals. If a representation was potentially harmful due to its iconicity, solutions existed to

prevent its performativity—we have seen as reference the mutilated horn viper here above.[155] As read by Valérie Angenot, it is the iconicity of the dangerous animal that needs to be negated so that only the value of the sign as suffix pronoun remains.[156] From this perspective, it could be interesting to look for analogous processes in private tomb-chapels environment. For our purpose, these actions should however comply with more profane issues, somehow out of any ritualistic pattern. Could the defacement of some depiction just be a response to the image as a simple material, not even aesthetic, object used to visualise something, and not necessarily a hostile action symbolically performed in order to harm, or kill, whom it represents? In other words, should we assume that under certain circumstances image defacement was a simple, gratuitous act that was done without any real metaphysical/magical expectation?

One particularly intriguing illustration of such *a priori* needless defacements can be observed in the tomb of Antef (TT 155), dated to the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III. We should first consider the figure of the hippopotamus in the fishing and fowling scene, depicted on the northern rear wall of the transverse hall. There appear to be clear marks of stabbing on the animal's body. Although this pattern is not common in Theban private tomb-chapels, the marks can be explained by the connection of the animal to the god Seth. The action could be therefore understood as some kind of precautious measure similar to cutting the horned viper in a sacred environment (fig. 33). By contrast, on the sub-register of the same wall, right below the hippopotamus, someone damaged another motif, presumably for a completely different reason, and probably not as a precautionary approach to potentially dangerous images.

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153   Hofmann 2015 I, p. 55–63, esp. 62, identifies stylistic features characteristic of the reign of Seti II, drawing comparisons with figures depicted in TT 189 and TT 194.

154   PM I², 1: 241 (1).

155   See § 1.

156   Winand & Angenot 2016: 166–167.

The defacement targeted precisely the motif of a seated boy in a cellar, depicted in front of rows of wine jars and leaning on his hand as if he were sleeping (fig. 34). Ancient literate visitors could learn, from the almost vanished captions over the two jar-bearers at the door of the cellar, that its sleepy guardian is actually drunk: "The servant is asleep"; "he is wine drunk!", to which the cellar boy responds, not without humour: "I'm not really asleep!"[157]

As it happened, someone responded to the scene by doggedly scratching, in different directions, the motif of the drunk boy. It should be stressed that the destroyer had to be able to decipher the hieroglyphic texts captioning the image in order to understand the scene and its implicit meaning: as a matter of fact, on a strict iconographic level, the attitude of the cellar boy is not evident; it can only be inferred by the accompanying texts. Hence, the destroyer was almost certainly a highly literate scribe, who, standing in front of the hippopotamus, found some interest or fun in targeting the figure of the drunk cellar boy, wanting to hide his penchant for wine. Although the destroyer aimed at the very content of the image, notwithstanding the representation's functionality, aesthetic quality or relevance to the tomb owner's status, could it be that he was driven by some kind of "ethical" reading of the image, since the scene presents what was depicted elsewhere as reprehensible misbehaviour? It goes without saying that the cellar boy was far out of the league of more famous scandalous Theban drunkards. Let us recall, for instance, the chief-workman Paneb, accused of having drunk from funerary wine jars

in the tomb of Seti II, over the latter's sarcophagus.[158] However, from a scribe's perspective, the depiction did probably echo a behaviour—idleness, drunkenness, neglect—that literate people associated, as a satirical *topos*, with dissipated pupils, and which they greeted with mockery, especially in the Ramesside period, as attested in the corpus of the Late Egyptian Miscellanies.[159] In this intellectual atmosphere, it could be suggested that the scratching of the figure was a form of taunting or rebuking action. In such case, the destroyer would have most probably performed in front of an audience, to prove his social allegiance to the community of scribes by taking distance from what the representation stood for—and thereby implicitly showing that he was, above all, able to read the inscriptions.[160]

Conclusion

Among the anthropogenic traces left on private tomb decorations, image defacements are somehow the most explicit reaction to iconographic and textual content, despite their non-verbal nature. Nonetheless, the destroyer's incentives for settling a score with some inimical person by damaging his depictions far on the Theban west bank are, in general, largely hypothetical.[161] For instance, secondary inscriptions like graffiti provide more implicit responses to images, yet the motivations of the graffitists are generally less obscure.[162] In every studied case, it is doubtless that the damaged motif (or motif detail) was the clear target of the destroyer; it wasn't destroyed somehow accidentally. Since these images operated within the complex performative syntax of the iconographic

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157 Säve-Söderbergh 1957: 18, pl. XV; Vernus 2009: 486–487.

158 P. Salt 124, r° 1, 11–12, see Vernus 2009b: 118–120.

159 See Caminos 1954: 83–85, 164–168, 182–188, 226–229, 231–232, 250–253, 262–265, 319–321, 377–381, 436–437, 450–452. See also the recent reassessment of the corpus by Ragazzoli 2015; 2019: 62–66. I would like to thank Sylvie Donnat-Beauquier for having brought these references to my attention.

160 Same processes of social distancing existed in tomb-chapel decorative programmes, see Vernus 2012.

161 In accordance with Quack 2019: 45.

162 On this matter, see Den Doncker 2012.

programme in the sacred environment of the tomb, we can safely assume it was precisely their function as part of these mechanics that was intentionally undermined. Besides, it is likely that the very performance of the attack on the image helped its efficiency, assuming blows and cuts onto iconographic units mirror, to some extent, real mutilations on the human body.[163] In certain cases, such violence could imply the notion of "death by drama" that Bochi developed in her study of execration figurines.[164] Moreover, the repetitiveness of gestures could have been intended to improve the very breaking of the depiction's performativity, somehow comparably to the principle of gemination of verbal roots expressing the intensity of the action; like for example in *sksk*, "destroy".[165] In addition to this focus on the functionality and performativity of neatly targeted images, the apparent orderliness of the defacement procedures confirms that we are not dealing with purely gratuitous, subversive actions, but with planned actions. To each specific, envisioned objective corresponded a different defacement pattern. Whether they could have convened more than a single destroyer (or group of destroyers), staged, destructive acts easily shed light on overarching cultural conceptions and ritual practices, although subject to individual comprehension and agency.

On one side, the patterns of defacement seem to relate to the functions usually attributed to the private funerary tomb-chapel: the tomb owner's commemoration linked to the social sphere, his rejuvenation through ritual actions as an *akh*-transcendental body, and his afterlife existence by means of food offerings. Whereas destroyers used mutilation to interfere with their victim's afterlife, notably by depriving him of sustenance through interrupting any physical connection to food supplies (thereby leading to physical death), they did not particularly try to counteract the funerary rites and the deceased's rebirth itself: the incompleteness of the defacement of Rekhmire's Opening of the Mouth ritual scene is quite relevant in this regard.[166] By contrast, social connectivity and the social dimension of survival led to "social killing", namely *damnatio memoriae*. In those cases, the complete obliteration of the victim's depictions was somehow needed to remove him visually from the self-presentation textual and iconographic rhetoric as the very subject of the commemoration. Without proper depicted subjects, the scenes lost their determinative value and could even be reused as new indexes. Following Penelope Wilson, whether such a clear-cut division between partial mutilation and thorough erasures existed in the destroyer's mind, cannot be positively ascertained.[167] We should always be cautious when inferring rules as concerns practical application of cultural principles and practices seen under the prism of individual agency.

Likewise, these various patterns of defacement bring out the manifold agency of the images, which the destroyers (as beholders) recognised in them within such ideal contexts of visualisation and self-presentation. Using images to harm one's opponent implies the destroyer acknowledges the depiction's potential as being ontologically tied to his victim—assumedly through supporting the latter's *ba* as seen from the explicit theory scheme. Moreover, under the emic perspective, the notions of image as *snn*-likeness, or "replica", and as *ꜥḥm*-inhabited representation, well match the

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163 See Ritner 2012.

164 Bochi 1999.

165 Wb. IV, 319.8–14. This idea was suggested by Gaëlle Chantrain during a department meeting (University of Liège, 20th April 2022).

166 Otherwise, it should be admitted that the distinction between both functions (i.e. rejuvenation and afterlife existence) might be more significant to Egyptologists than to ancient Egyptian image destroyers.

167 Wilson 2005: 123–124, in response to Schulman 1969–1970: 36–37.

evidence.[168] It seems clear that, in response to the depiction's agency as an actual *living* entity, the destroyer's emotional mindset must have affected his engagement in the harmful action, potentially stimulating some kind of pugnacity. Such violence could be purely motional, as physically reflected in his brutal gesture (remember the large gashes over the tomb owner's chest in TT 76), or may have also been more implicitly expressed through the targeted motif (like the neatly cut heads in TT 295). In semiotic terms, this process of actualisation reduces considerably the gap between the signified and the signifier. It is likely that the destroyers were, to some extent, conscious of the symbolic dimension of their action, insofar as they could discern beyond question the physical difference between a person and a representation. Still, we can presume that they may have really felt, under these circumstances, the real *presence* of their victim through the latter's depictions. This must have been even more profoundly experienced with individual statues, due to their three-dimensionality, and some kind of supplementary corporeal authority as *Gestalt*.

As distinct from statue mutilation, which often resulted in an apparent disfiguration of the represented person's face and hence, to the loss of its agency as individual portrait, defacement of two-dimensional images did not necessarily hinder such image agency. Assuming this diverse experience and engagement with images, it might be argued that, in tomb-chapels, only mutilated depictions generally preserved some kind of agentive individuality (independently from their non-individualised appearance and more conceptually codified formality). This continuing presence of the victim behind his mutilated depictions was probably even stronger when embedded in a highly individualised "picscape",[169] that is, an iconographic environment showing a high level of *Selbstthematisierung*.[170] Then, the targeted depictions were just technically no longer performative in the capacity of magical support. Consequently, images rather approached as indexes of social prestige, perhaps considered too powerful, had to be, on the contrary, entirely erased. The point was to cancel definitively any possible agentive activity, not only as functioning iconographic units within an autonomous system, but especially as visible depictions (also) designed to address an audience. To that extent, strictly speaking, no proper *damnatio memoriae* could be symbolically operative; it required concrete and practical endeavour. This meant the complete obliteration of the victim's images (plus name inscriptions). Ideally, some time gap was also needed for the following generations to forget, so much so that the shape of the chiselled subject would lose any indexical value, even as negative publicity to those who might remember, or be taught, who was formerly depicted.

In contrast to the significance these representations entailed as subjects, other destroyers' reactions provide evidence for the emic consistence of the notion of image as mere object, regardless of the value of the signified (which presupposes a completely different kind of agency). In these few cases, it seems that the destroyers did not so much consider what or who was depicted but rather what the depiction stated implicitly in quality of material object, as index, *about* its owner, the commissioner. By comparison with cases of image restoration, it can be suggested that this mode of reception originated characteristically from professional milieus involved in the production of images. As proven by the graffiti written in Theban tomb-chapels, a large part of the people attested in these secondary inscriptions

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168   As conveyed in the Teaching of Amenemhat I, § 5: "Oh you my living replicas, my human heirs (= you who share mortality with me), make mourning for me, mourning such as has never been heard (…)!" (P. Mill I, 9–11). Translation adapted from Simpson 2003: 168; and Vernus 2010: 220. See also note 43.

169   I borrow this brilliant expression from Andreas Dorn.

170   On this aspect of tomb decoration, see Assmann 1987; 1996.

were specifically related to image production. Excluding individuals only labelled as "scribes" (meaning "literate"),[171] draughtsmen (sš-ḳd) form about two-thirds of the audience. As beholders, this class of people was used to deal with the materiality and the technical conception of the images they were commissioned to produce. Inevitably, their professional experience and related education and knowledge had an impact (if not a direct influence) on the way they engaged with the tomb-chapel decorations. Such socio-professional conditioning also provided some more analytical perception of their iconographic components and fine appraisal of their aesthetic and artistic properties. This particular visuality may well characterise the destroyers who therefore perceived, at first glance, this material dimension of the images they damaged and could objectify them accordingly by overcoming their agency as subject.

With that being said, and following Wilson,[172] it must be acknowledged that an overly rigid categorisation of the mental processes underlying the diverse interactions with images—particularly in the specific context of their reception—risks producing a biased reconstruction of image defacement as a cultural practice aimed at settling scores. We are not dealing with a homogeneous system obeying to well-defined principles. Although image defacement was apparently rooted in a broad cultural *Bildpraxis*,[173] it did not really instantiate, beyond its aforesaid orderliness, predetermined operating chains or standardised protocols. The practice was perhaps, on the contrary, as varied as the motives that prompted the destroyers to act under certain circumstances, using differing methods.

These sacred spaces of individual publicity granted destroyers the chance to alter harmfully an opponent's images in the course of specific events. This opportunity must have been early recognised, and taken advantage of to efficiently settle scores: that is, permanently in the desert and outside the profane world of the living (where the rivalries and disputes originated and were actually lived). However, in these private contexts, the practice was not necessarily inherent to the tomb's systemic life, and regulated by strict codes of conduct somehow aimed at absolute efficacy. Image defacement in private contexts rather bears witness to the comprehension and application of global cultural structures regarding the conception and essence of visual representations in association with notions of physical and social death. Individual agency clearly played a central role in the damage procedures, as it integrated one's visuality with numerous factors influencing the reception of the image itself. Among all the potential meanings a representation could convey, it reflected someone's mindset at a particular moment in time, shaped by the external conditions in which it was transmitted. Within these varying conjectures, we must consider the fact that, aside from the presumably good accessibility of tomb-chapels—even outside of any official context—hostile actions in the necropolis would likely not have gone unnoticed, especially in these close-knit communities of individuals.

All these aspects could leave one perplexed by the apparent inconsistencies in the actions taken, especially when considering achievements that stand out to the modern interpreter. In this respect, despite the article's appearance as an interpretative discussion based on study cases, the analytical framework proposed here should serve above all as a methodological support for further reflections on image defacement in same or analogous contexts.

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171 Among which we know that some were active in tomb production and monumental decoration commissioning, see Den Doncker 2012: 30–31; 2017: 335–336, 343–345; 2019: 184–185.

172 See note 167.

173 See note 13.

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Collection *Ægyptiaca Leodiensia* 14

Altering Images
Iconoclasm in Egypt
Vol. II: Plates

Edited by

Vera Elizabeth ALLEN and Simon CONNOR

Image Defacement as Score Settling in the Theban Necropolis: a Reception Perspective

Alexis Den Doncker

Fig. 1: Hacked out figure of Hatshepsut in her temple at Deir el-Bahari.
© Laboury/University of Liège.

Fig. 2: Mutilated figures of the tomb owner and his son (TT 87). © Tefnin/MANT.

Fig. 3: Mutilated figures of the tomb owner, his wife and officiating son (TT 85). © Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 4: Mutilated arm of a male servant at banquet (TT 256). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 5: Erased name inscription of an offering bearer and later addition of personal name (graffito G.82.1 of the scribe Amenemopet) as a process of figure appropriation (TT 82). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 6: Addition of inscription and figure in association with image defacements and
tomb-chapel reuse (tomb of Nyankhpepy, Saqqara). © Philipp Seyr.

Fig. 7: Non-exclusive appropriation of tomb owner figures in the context of tomb reuse (TT 127).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 8: Addition of personal name (= barely preserved graffito G.161.3 of the offering bearer Amennakht) as a process of figure appropriation in the context of tomb visiting (TT 161). © Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 9: Erased and preserved figures of the tomb owner together with defaced figures of offering bearers (TT 89). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 10: Erased and preserved figures of the tomb owner (TT 89). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 11: Erased and mutilated figure of the tomb owner (TT 76). © Laboury/University of Liège.

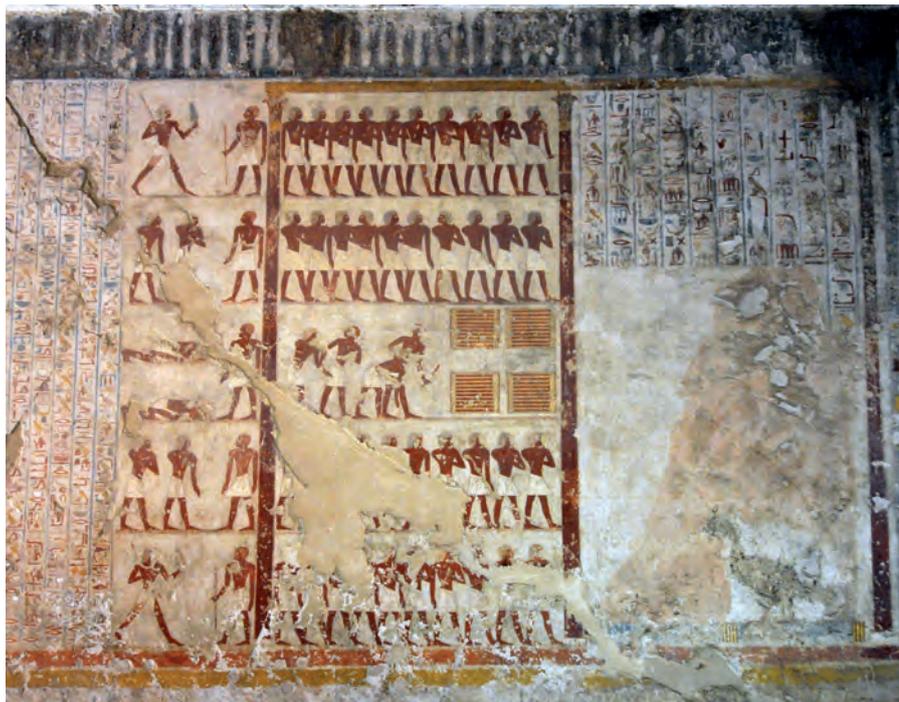Fig. 12: Cult statue of Tjenuna with carefully erased inscription (Vienna KHM ÄS 63) © KHM-Museumsverband.

Fig. 13: Rubbed-out figure of the tomb owner (TT 100). © Laboury/University of Liège.

Fig. 14: Rubbed-out figures of the tomb owner (TT 100). © Laboury/University of Liège.

Fig. 15: Scratched and rubbed-out figure of the tomb owner (with incompletely rubbed-out figures of tomb owner's statues directly above) (TT 100). © Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 16: Rubbed-out figures of the tomb owner and family relatives (TT 100). © Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 17: Partially rubbed-out and scratched figures of the tomb owner and his wife (TT 100).
© Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 18: Rubbed-out and mutilated figures of the tomb owner (TT 100).
© Den Doncker/University of Liège.

Fig. 19: Hacked out figure of the tomb owner amidst preserved areas of an earlier coat of greyish whitewash covering the whole scene, including the divine figures in the kiosk (TT 93). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 20: Well preserved area of whitewash covering a whole scene (TT 93). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 21: Restoration of beheaded figures (TT 295). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 22: Restored figure of *sem* priest as an officiating man (TT 54).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 23: Restored figure of *sem* priest as a man named Sheny bringing bouquet (TT 17). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.
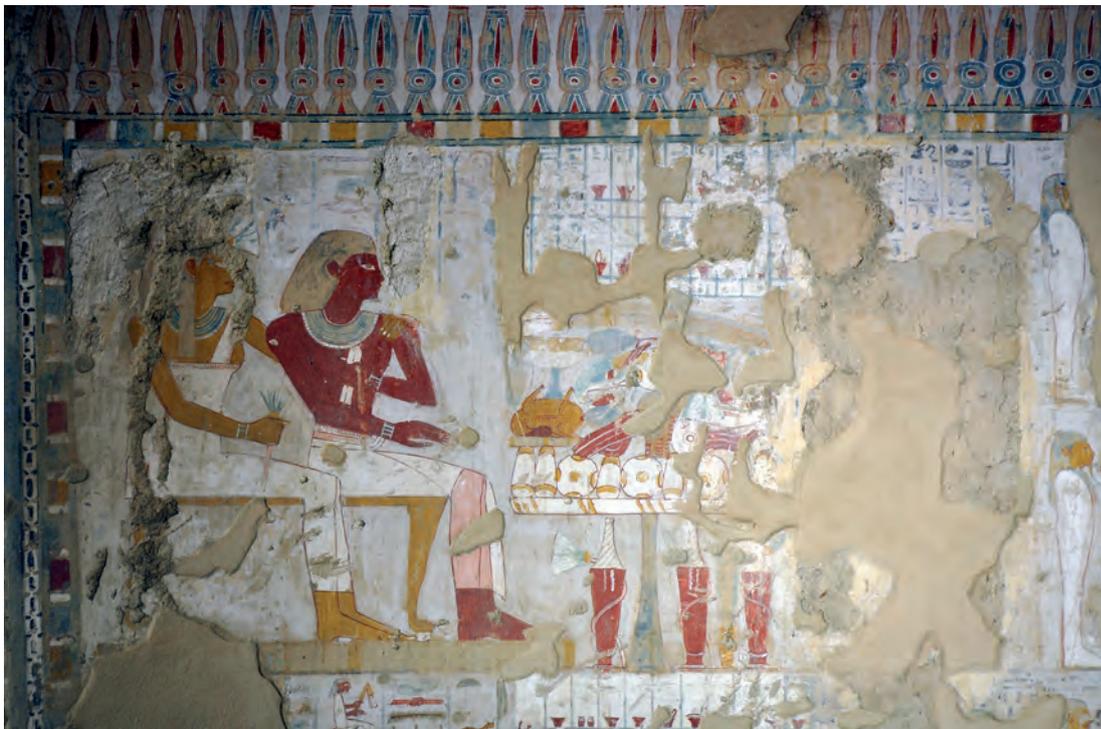

Fig. 24: Re-plastering of a *sem* priest figure and name inscriptions (TT 17).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 25: Rubbed-out and re-plastered inscriptions in the context of tomb reuse (TT 17).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 26: Re-plastered and repainted figures of the tomb owner (TT 40).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 27: Detail of a repainted figure of the tomb owner (under UV rays).
Yellow areas correspond to the varnished complexions of the damaged original figure (TT 40).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 28: Restored figure of the tomb owner executed over the damaged original one (still visible
under the hands and part of the left shoulder) (TT 40). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.
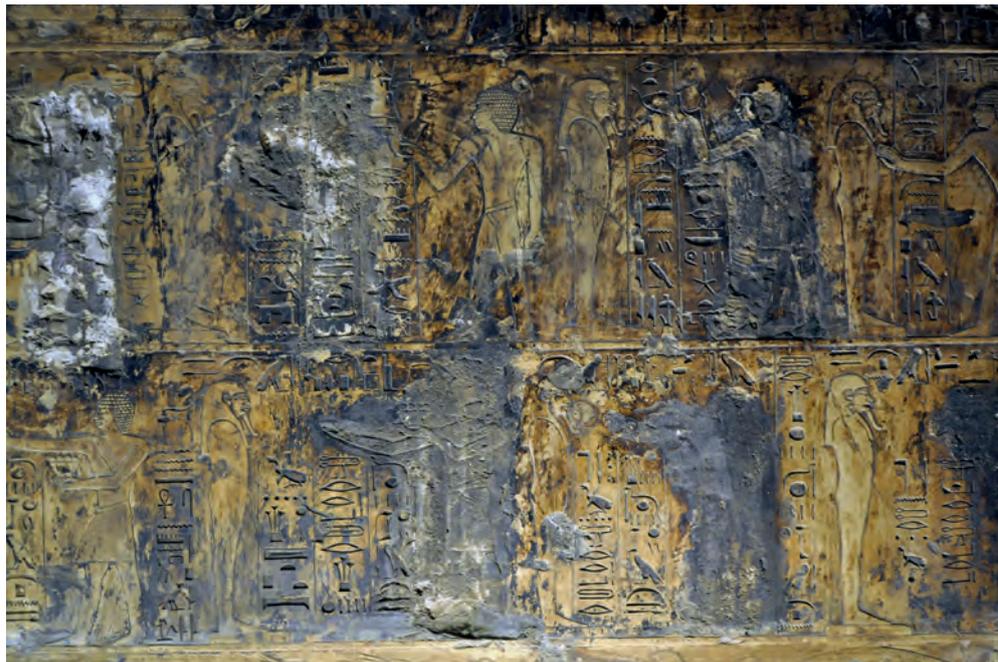
Fig. 29: Restored figures of *sem* priests as officiating men, in association with secondary inscriptions, in the context of tomb reuse (TT 127). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 30: Secondary inscription left in the context of tomb reuse (TT 127).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 31: Added figures of the new tomb occupant and his wife (TT 127).
© Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 32: Figure of the original tomb owner (TT 127). © Den Doncker & Tavier/University of Liège.

Fig. 33: Mutilated figure of hippopotamus (TT 155). © Tefnin/MANT.

Fig. 34: Scratched figure of drunken cellar boy (TT 155). ©Tefnin/MANT.