

Archaism and Modernism in the Reliefs of Hesy-Re:  
The Cultural Temporality of “Egyptianism” in the Third Dynasty

Preface

This monograph originated in my interest in the surveys and excavations undertaken by Professor George Andrew Reisner of Harvard University and his assistant William Stevenson Smith (Reisner’s successor at Harvard) at Giza and Saqqara in the 1930s – of which many records are housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where I served as a part-time assistant in the Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art from 1977 to 1982. The support and encouragement of the Department’s then-Curator, William Kelly Simpson, who employed me as editorial assistant in his revision of Smith’s *Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, was essential. My first studies of the reliefs of Hesy, conducted at the Cairo Museum in 1980 - 1981, were made possible by a Sheldon Fellowship from Harvard University. I was able to restudy the reliefs in 1986 and again in 1996. I am grateful to the authorities at the Cairo Museum for their assistance. No approach to the tombs and material culture of early dynastic and Third Dynasty Saqqara can be conducted without constant reference to the work of Walter Bryan Emery and latterly of Geoffrey T. Martin. The tomb of Hesy itself remains known to us chiefly through J. E. Quibell’s excavation report. My greatest regret in finishing this monograph has been that it has proved impossible, despite several attempts, to reinvestigate the site itself. I recognize that this likely hobbles a central section of my presentation. I can only hope, along with several other archaeologists who have expressed this view in print, that the tomb of Hesy will be re-surveyed some day. Much remains to be learned about the archaeology, iconography, and replication of the tomb stelae from Sakkara and Giza, to which the reliefs of Hesy appear to be closely related. But this immense topic can barely be broached here, and I have focused on a close consideration of the reliefs of Hesy as we know about them in their admittedly peculiar – even unique – funerary context.

In 2000, Peter J. Ucko, the Director of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London, asked me if I would write about “archaism” in Egyptian art for the series he was supervising—*Encounters with Ancient Egypt*, published in six volumes by University College London Press in 2003. This request motivated me to consolidate my materials on the reliefs and the tomb of Hesy, which I have able to do thanks in part to the superb resources of the Baer Library of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. A summary version of this monograph was published in “*Never Had The Like Occurred*”: *Egypt’s View of Its Past*, edited by John Tait, and I am deeply indebted to Peter Ucko for his intensive editorial work on this summary and for the many suggestions he made about the argument and framing of my analysis. The final preparation of this monograph has been assisted by a grant from the Shorb Research Fund of the Archaeological Research Facility at UC Berkeley.

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The surviving acacia-wood reliefs of the official Hesy, “Master of Scribes,” were taken from six of the eleven western “palace facade” niches in the innermost of the two corridors of his mastaba tomb at Saqqara. Five of the panels were recovered by the workmen of Auguste Mariette in their excavation of the tomb in 1860-61. They are usually labeled according to their numbers in the *Catalogue général* of the Cairo Museum (i.e., CG 1426-1430). A sixth panel (here designated “Q”) was retrieved by J. E. Quibell, who re-opened the tomb in 1911-12 (Mariette’s Tomb A3 = Quibell’s Saqqara No. 2405), from the northernmost or eleventh niche. Quibell also observed the “hopelessly decayed” remains of the five other panels (for the total of eleven niches), but they fell to

pieces upon discovery and no fragments were retrieved or recorded (Quibell 1913).<sup>1</sup>

The most completely preserved panels (CG 1426 and 1427) are 1.15 m. in height. The others – damaged chiefly at the bottom edge, where the panels were inserted into the flooring of their niches – are somewhat smaller (1428 and 1429 are 1.11 m. high; 1430, the most damaged panel, is 0.86 m. high). All of them bear a single depiction of Hesy – seated at his funerary table in one case (1426) and standing in all the others – and an inscription providing his name and titles. Probably all of the reliefs were fully painted, but nothing remains of the pigments. Wendy Wood (1978: 12) has suggested that we might reconstruct a leopard-skin pattern on the long tight-fitting garment worn by Hesy in 1426. The extraordinary attention paid by the sculptors to the modeling of Hesy’s bones, muscles, and flesh suggests that the uncovered parts of his body were not painted – the natural wood supplied the conventional reddish-brown coloration of the skin of the male body. On superficial inspection the panels appear to be quite similar one to the next. We can easily recognize Hesy in his portrayal in each case, although on each panel he has a distinctive pose or “action”; and the technique of carving – a comparatively shallow, finely modulated relief – is more or less the same on all of the panels. Although individual panels have frequently been illustrated on their own, it would seem that they were intended to be treated as a group if not as a series or as a sequence. Unfortunately the loss of five panels and persisting uncertainty about the original locations of the surviving panels in the series of eleven niches in the tomb has made it well-nigh impossible to evaluate the last-named possibility.

The panels have usually but not invariably been dated by Egyptologists and art historians to the Third Dynasty (*circa* 2600 B.C.). They would seem to constitute the earliest surviving examples of wooden tomb reliefs in Egypt,

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<sup>1</sup> For a bibliography, see Porter-Moss 1978, 439-40; for the history of excavation at Saqqara from Mariette onwards, see Lauer 1976. Black-and-white photographs provide more satisfactory representations of the panels than color photographs, which often erase features of contour, modeling, and interior detail. One of the surviving panels (CG 1428) was recently exhibited in a

although such artifacts had probably been made and used before.<sup>2</sup> Despite the relatively poor documentation of their context, they have long been regarded as prime examples – as masterpieces – of ancient Egyptian art. Moreover, they have often been regarded as paradigmatic examples of Egyptian depiction. For example, in his magisterial survey of the conventions of Egyptian two- and three-dimensional representation, first published in 1919, Heinrich Schäfer (1974) often used the reliefs of Hesy to illustrate fundamental procedures of Egyptian style as he identified them. Again, in her unjustly neglected study of “geometrical” constructions in Egyptian depiction the Norwegian artist Else Christie Kielland likewise focused on the reliefs: they provided her chief case in point. Finally, Erik Iversen’s reconstruction of the “canon of proportions” used in Egyptian depiction (Iversen 1955, Iversen and Shibata 1972) offered a painstaking analysis of one of the reliefs – the same relief (CG 1427), in fact, which had been singled out by Kielland. Iversen used his analysis of the relief to present many of his insights about the basic and the widest operations of the “canon” as it was used, he thought, throughout pharaonic Egyptian depiction.

Because of the attention lavished on them by Egyptological art historians like Schäfer and Iversen, in art history the reliefs of Hesy have become canonical – even though their actual cultural-historical identity or influence as canonical works within the Egyptian tradition itself remains largely uninvestigated and unconfirmed. In art-historical survey textbooks, the relief of Hesy seated at his funerary table (CG 1426) and the well-preserved relief of Hesy carrying his scribal kit and other accoutrements of his office (CG 1427)

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major international exhibition in Paris, New York, and Toronto (Arnold and Ziegler 1999: 188, no. 17), where it was possible to re-examine it in detail in light of the conclusions presented here.

<sup>2</sup> Tomb 1060 at Tarkhan, dated to the early dynastic period (i.e., some generations before Hesy’s tomb), had an unpainted niche into which a wooden panel might have been installed (Petrie and Wainwright 1913: 13, pls. 15[2], 18). For the decayed “wooden shrine” of the royal scribe Shepses at Reqaqneh (Tomb R64), installed in a niche in the tomb, see Garstang 1904: 49-50, 55, pls. 25, 28a, 29, and Weill 1908: 212-15. This tomb can be assigned to the reign of Snefru; it might – but need not – be later than the tomb of Hesy. Now in the Louvre, the wooden panel-relief of Merab, dated by Smith (1946: 172) to the Fourth Dynasty, has sometimes been compared with the panels of Hesy. It is now thought to have been assembled with other panels to create a false door (see Ziegler 1990: 194-7 – Fifth Dynasty?) – a function closely related to the apparent symbolic function of Hesy’s panels in their niches.

must count among the most widely-illustrated works of Egyptian art. As in the Egyptological literature, they are often used to introduce students to the basic features of ancient Egyptian depiction and style.

At the same time, however, Egyptological art historians have widely supposed that the reliefs *pre*-date the wholesale consolidation of canonical or classical norms in Egyptian depiction. This development has usually been assigned to the Fourth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom and to artists working two or three or more generations later than Hesy's sculptor or sculptors. If the reliefs of Hesy have been seen as classical, then, evidently they are also archaic. They seem to belong to an early period in the constitution of the artistic culture they have been used so often to represent.

Still, research on the formation of Egyptian style at the turn of the third millennium B.C. (e.g., Davis 1989: 135-71, Davis 1992) suggests that the reliefs did not belong to the *earliest* phase of "Egyptian" depiction – of depiction conforming to the matrix of constructive procedures and conventions said by Schäfer and Iversen to be characteristic of pharaonic Egyptian style throughout its life history. In relief sculpture of the First Dynasty – notably the carved schist palette of "King Narmer," found in the Main Deposit at Hierakonpolis – one finds characteristic features of "Egyptian" construction and composition, including the use of the canon of proportions that Iversen identified in the reliefs of Hesy. In relation to the earliest works in a proto-canonical Egyptian style – works which might well be called truly "archaic" – the reliefs of Hesy have a distinctively *modern* aspect, and their classicism – though it is not quite the classicism of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties of the Old Kingdom – can be understood as a *modernism*. Indeed, relative to the long-term replication of the canonical Egyptian style of depiction, the reliefs of Hesy simultaneously display archaic, classic, *and* modern aspects.

To be sure, these observations are rough and ready. Indeed, in one respect they are misleading: they require a survey – both retrospective and prospective – which comprehends the Narmer Palette in the First Dynasty and the reliefs of the Fourth or Fifth Dynasty in a single four-centuries-long art-

historical overview. We have little evidence, however, that the sculptors of Hesy's relief had seen relief sculptures of the early First Dynasty, though they might well have seen works somewhat like them in some respects. And it is obvious that they could not have seen relief sculptures of the Fourth or Fifth Dynasty, though again they might well have seen works somewhat like them in some respects. The replicatory position of the reliefs of Hesy in our art histories needs a more particular historical definition which would identify the cultural temporality of the reliefs as it seems to have been constituted by the makers of the reliefs themselves. To characterize this replicatory identity, to some extent we are constrained to use our own art-historical terminology; terms like archaism, classicism, and modernism must continue to serve. (Indeed, in Egyptological art studies these basic art-historical concepts have not really been used in their full historical and hermeneutic sense.) But it should be possible to specify the material and cultural dynamics of Hesy's reproduction of the past and projection of a future – his reliefs invent and assert his cultural-historical place and identity – in ways that respect the actual horizons of Hesy's artists. To address the question systematically, as I will try to do here, requires not only a thorough re-evaluation of the reliefs themselves. It also requires a re-assessment – it must be critical at times – of the methods of Egyptological art studies when it deals with the history and theory of depictive styles.

### §1. Smith's Approach to Dating the Reliefs of Hesy

In his comprehensive Harvard doctoral thesis on Egyptian sculpture and painting in the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period, submitted in 1940 and published after the Second World War, William Stevenson Smith (1946) assigned the relief panels of Hesy to the first of three phases within the Archaic horizon of Old Kingdom artistic culture. He identified these as (1) the "transition" from the Second to the Third Dynasty (for Smith it encompassed the reigns of Khasekhemuwy and Djoser), (2) the Third Dynasty, and (3) the "transition" from the Third to the Fourth Dynasty (for Smith it encompassed the

reigns of Huni and Snefru and certain aspects of production in the reign of Khufu).<sup>3</sup> Smith did not explicitly label these phases of Archaic artistic culture; we might designate them (though he did not) as his Archaic I, II, and III. Nevertheless, he divided his lengthy discussion of style and iconography in the decades around 2600 B.C. into separate sections in order to reflect his sense of the important developments. (In Smith 1946: 131-56, sections a/b = Archaic I or “transition” to the Third Dynasty and sections c/d = Archaic III or “transition” to the Fourth Dynasty. Somehow, however, his Archaic II, the “Third Dynasty” as such [Smith 1946: 131], tended to be absorbed into the other periods and to lack a fully distinct stylistic identity – a point to which we must return.) If he had named the phases he identified, he certainly could have called them Early, Middle, and Late Archaic or even, and more interesting, archaic, classical, and modern Archaic. In his substantive account of the materials he claimed the latter kind of cultural temporality for them – though in an order different from what we might ordinarily expect. As we will see, his Archaic I or Early Archaic can best be understood in culture-temporal terms as the *modernist* Archaic while his Archaic III or Late Archaic can best be understood in culture-temporal terms as the *classicist* Archaic.

The dated or at least the datable place of the reliefs of Hesy in this general historical scheme required Smith to emphasize supposedly contemporary parallels for them in the relief sculpture made for Djoser’s building projects at Saqqara, Heliopolis, and elsewhere. In terms of stylistic comparison he was not wrong, and many Egyptologists (e.g., Cherpion 1980: 84-85 and Bolshakov 1997: 34-36) have followed his lead. Smith conceived the royal works – they were produced by workshops making the most “high quality” and “advanced” statues and reliefs for the king’s buildings – to be the avant-garde of Archaic culture. This advance already distinguished the royal artistic culture of the early Third Dynasty (Archaic I or Early Archaic) from the preceding artistic culture of the

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout I use Smith’s orthography for the rendition of transliterated Egyptian names in order to make it easier for a reader to consult his discussions. They remain central not only to

early dynastic period (i.e., the First and Second Dynasties) – a culture which Smith considered to be a continuation of “predynastic” depiction (he described the entire pre-Archaic phase of the predynastic period and First and Second Dynasties as the “early period” of Egyptian depiction) (Smith 1946: 110-30). Later, in the Archaic II/III periods in Smith’s sense, some but not all aspects of the technique, construction, style, and iconography coordinated by the Djoserian avant-garde (inheriting Early or pre-Archaic depiction) would become classical – namely, the canonical art of the Old Kingdom (Smith 1946: 157-213).

The reliefs of Hesy had a special place in this general scheme in part because they seemed to Smith to belong to the cultural hinge between his Archaic I and his Archaic II/III – a period of Archaic artistic culture from which few works have survived (especially insofar as Smith considered the reliefs in other Second, Third, and early Fourth Dynasty tombs at Saqqara to be either earlier or later than Hesy’s reliefs). But the very notion of a fulcrum between the burst of invention among Djoser’s artists at the beginning of the Third Dynasty and the consolidation of the Old Kingdom style in the Fourth Dynasty depends on taking the reliefs of Hesy to instantiate the transition. And this transition might not exist art-historically in the first place without the reliefs of Hesy which Smith assigned to it.

As this suggests, at the same time as Smith specified an early Archaic date for the reliefs of Hesy he observed similarities between their artistic culture and the *later* Archaic artistic culture of the Third Dynasty, which would have been perfectly logical for him to have called *classical* Archaic artistic culture. In this later phase of Archaic civilization, some stone relief sculptures in private mastabas at Saqqara – Smith took them to be later than Hesy’s mastaba – provided what Smith took to be apposite parallels for Hesy’s wooden reliefs. (Strictly speaking, these parallels were anachronistic even in Smith’s own terms.) Relative to the highly contemporary or even avant-garde production of Djoserian artistic culture in the early Archaic period, one could see this

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any later research on Archaic and Old Kingdom depiction but also to the methodological and theoretical problems addressed in the present study.

subsequent artistic culture as modern in culture-temporal terms. It absorbed and retrospectively rendered classical what had already been constituted in an earlier (Djoserian) phase of artistic culture as new and original relative to a *pre*-Archaic (Early) culture. (In turn, this Early artistic culture would be rendered “pre-canonical” or even “prehistoric” in relation to its modernized classical descendant; in the “pre-canonical” or “prehistoric” phase itself, of course, no artist could have regarded himself as “pre-canonical”: indeed, he might well have considered himself to be eminently modern [see further Davis 1992: 27-37].) As noted, the “modern” Archaic culture of the Third Dynasty shortly became the stable canonical culture of the Old Kingdom – though there too we can continue to observe relatively more archaic and relatively more modern cultural temporalities in depiction. For Smith, the reliefs of Hesy in part culturally predated this classical modernization of the Early or Middle Archaic style in which they are chronologically placed – a modernization that Smith saw transpiring throughout the first, second, and third Archaic artistic cultures and Fourth Dynasty artistic culture. Thus the reliefs of Hesy could be seen from the retrospective classicizing vantage point to be culturally *as well as* chronologically archaic – even though in their *original* culture-temporal Djoserian context, in the artistic culture of the Early Archaic period, they were highly modern or contemporary. In the end, then, at the cost of some anachronism Smith’s account constituted the reliefs of Hesy as archaic *not only* in the relative-chronological sense – that is, as belonging to the Early or Middle Archaic phase of Archaic cultural tradition. The reliefs of Hesy were also archaic in the culture-temporal sense. They exemplified an older but nonetheless directly ancestral form of the classical coordination achieved by Archaic artistic culture *after* – and indeed partly stimulated by – the work of Hesy’s sculptors pursuing a Djoserian avant-garde.

## §2. The Date of Depiction and the Age of Depiction

Although I have tried to extract its logic as applied to the reliefs of Hesy, Smith did not fully explicate or rationalize his general chronocultural scheme for Archaic and Old Kingdom art in Egypt. The puzzles and contradictions of his account remind us that cultural temporalities – such as archaism and modernism – should be distinguished from replicatory histories such as the survivals and revivals which some Egyptological art studies have virtually identified with “archaism.”<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, survivals can survive into an archaism, a classicism, or a modernism, and revivals can be revived in or as an archaism, a classicism, or a modernism. And on the other hand, a survival can be archaistic, classicistic, or modernistic – just like a revival. We must be prepared to recognize such possibilities (however we choose to label them) as an archaistic modernist survival or a modernist classic revival – distinct and distinguishable aspects of the history of survival and revival, for example, in European replications of Egyptian and Greco-Roman architecture in “Egyptianizing” styles, “neoclassicism,” and “Greek revival” fashions in modern European or North American building. (A succinct overview of these movements *qua* survival and revival can be found in Carrott 1982.) Needless to say, if it is to be archaistic at all a form, style, or motif must be a revival precisely because it had to be rediscovered (see Barkan 1999). But this revival might also embody a *survival* because the form, style, or motif persisted from an earlier cultural era into the period of its rediscovery and revival, its archaistic replication. It remains to be determined whether or not it did so *as* the archaic phenomenon constituted in its latest and specifically archaizing replication *in* that survival and revival.

Behind all these considerations – they might seem to be superficial classificatory and terminological matters – lies a crucial distinction between the

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<sup>4</sup> For archaism, see especially Rather 1993; this useful study, broader than its title and specialized example might suggest, includes historiographical discussion of archaism in the arts and as a concept in archaeology and art theory from the 1870s to the 1940s. For the controversial doctrine of *Nachleben* or “survival” developed by Aby Warburg, see Warburg 1999, Didi-Huberman 1998, Rampley 2000, and Rose 2001. The most perspicuous treatment of revivals – in part contrasted with survivals – remains Panofsky’s classic *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Panofsky 1960, cf. Panofsky 1939, 1944). For detailed discussion of these and other concepts of the replicatory histories of depiction and style, see Davis 1996a.

*date* and the *age* of a form, style, or motif. It recognizes the fundamental difference between the mere dated duration of stylizations in depictive configuration on the one hand and their cultural-historical significances *as* dated durations on the other hand.

No one gainsays that for the purposes of historical interpretation we usually need to know the date of a picture, whether in absolute or in relative terms. Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, for example, was painted in A. D. 1656—a secure absolute date. Pablo Picasso painted a series of paintings in response to it not only in 1975 (a secure absolute date) but also “after” Velazquez's painting *and* in a “modern” style relative to it—two kinds of relative dates that might be secured without knowing the absolute date(s) of the paintings in Picasso's series. (At this point in his career Picasso often signed and dated his works to the day, month, and year of their putative production.) The second of these relative dates—Picasso's paintings are “modern” replications of Velazquez's painting—might be regarded as addressing the *age* of Picasso's paintings. From the vantage point of Picasso and his expected viewers, this date—“it's ‘modern’”—could be taken to state not only that Picasso's paintings were made later than Velazquez's, a duration to be measured by the 319-year difference between the two absolute dates. It also specifies how Picasso's paintings placed themselves in relation to the picture to which they obviously responded—a picture perhaps implicitly acknowledged to be *non-modern* for Picasso when he replicated it in his modern style.

Equally obvious, however, is the fact that the style as such cannot be the same thing as the age of the depiction. Let us imagine that as the very expression of his modernism or contemporaneity, Picasso painted his replications of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* as *faithful reproductions* of Velazquez's painting: he could have produced replications in Velazquez's mid-seventeenth-century and not in his own or any other identifiably later-twentieth-century style, and certainly not in the “personal” style characteristic of the *other* paintings produced in this period of his career. Nevertheless, these imaginary paintings by Picasso would still come “after” the Velazquez—even if they could be morphologically

indiscernible from it, i.e., even if they looked just like it. Needless to say, if we lacked independent absolute dates for Velazquez's and Picasso's pictures it might be difficult to prove this archaeologically because the Picassos and the Velazquez would appear to be very similar or wholly indiscernible. But however similar they might be, my imaginary Picassos would remain resolutely modern in relation to the Velazquez: despite their style, they would be "later" to its "earlier." They have a different, later age even if they appear to possess the earlier, older style.<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, their *cultural temporality* – their cultural age and its date or duration – would remain to be identified in more particular terms. On the one hand, the Picassos which we have imagined to be virtually identical to the Velazquez might well manifest a modernism: at that point in cultural history, perhaps only a modernism could imagine reproducing (reviving) Velazquez's (surviving) paintings. (Whether my thought experiment realistically reports what we understand art-historically about Velazquez and Picasso is immaterial here. The thought experiment models typical cases confronted by art historians.) On the other hand, the Picassos could manifest an archaism, namely, Picasso's (reviving) return to the (surviving) style of Velazquez – a style which we might know to be "earlier" than Picasso's painting but which could have been constituted for him as "older" than his painting. Indeed, in its cultural temporality Picasso's *classicism* (a familiar aspect of many paintings produced throughout his career) could be more modern than Picasso's seemingly *modern* style in his replications of a work, Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, constituted for him as archaic. In the cultural temporality which embeds *both* Picasso's classicizing paintings *and* his modernist replication of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* it could well turn out (as our thought experiment imagines) that Velazquez's *Las Meninas* had *itself* been constituted as "older" than the *classical* style that Picasso had already

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<sup>5</sup> For the heuristic device conceiving "morphologically indiscernible" depictive styles I am indebted to Arthur C. Danto's invocation of indiscernible artifacts – one of which is an artwork and the other of which is not – to illuminate certain problems in the history of modern and contemporary arts (Danto 1981, 1997). This is not to say that I endorse Danto's conclusions in this

developed – and despite *its* “date” in Classical Greek art and to an earlier period in Picasso’s own career than the replication of Velazquez’s painting. Arguably, for example, Picasso turned to Velazquez for replication in his modern work in order to discover aspects of the very origins of his modernism – a modernism which throughout much of his career required an engagement with Classical art in a classicizing style. In our thought experiment, the archaistic and the modernistic Picassos look exactly the same. Both reproduce Velazquez’s *Las Meninas* of 1656. But they have dramatically distinct cultural temporalities. Therefore they require different historical interpretations of Picasso’s situation and intentions in painting the pictures.

In our thought experiment, Velazquez’s *Las Meninas*, though later than Classical Greek art in absolute terms, might be archaic relative to the classicism replicated in Picasso’s modern art – a modernism which became archaistic in relation to its classicism when it reproduced Velazquez’s *Las Meninas* in Picasso’s *Las Meninas*. The thought experiment shows that cultural temporalities cannot be the same as datings, absolute *or* relative. Instead they are *histories* in a much deeper sense. For forensic purposes we usually need to know the date of a picture – although one can readily make far too much of knowing the mere date. But for the purposes of historical understanding the date will not be sufficient. It will be essential to know the age of the picture, its cultural temporality. As our thought experiment shows, to date the picture does not discover whether the picture presumes and solicits an archaic, a classical, or a modern cultural temporality or significance for consciousness. The latest picture could be the most archaic. One of the earliest could be extremely classical. A modern picture might have been produced by an archaizing classicist – and so forth and so on.

Needless to say, every discriminable phase of a tradition – or, more exactly, every phase of a tradition discriminated *by* the tradition in its on-going replication – can be registered in cultural temporality. As a legacy of the philosophies of consciousness absorbed by archaeology and art history, these

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domain (see Rollins 1993, Davis 2001). But the analytic device is a powerful one in focusing our attention on the deepest problems of the historicity of depiction.

phases have conventionally been broken by archaeologists and art historians into Archaic, Classical, and Modern, or Archaic, Classical, Baroque, and Modern, or Archaic, Classical, Modern, and Contemporary, or Prehistoric, Archaic, Classical, Modern, and Post-Modern . . . and so on. For strictly analytic purposes, however, it would be sufficient to observe a replicatory tradition which discriminated itself, at E, into phases A, B, C, D, E, etc. – producing depictions in E which must be A-izing + B-izing + C-izing + D-izing. An archaeologist might discover a phase, F, located chronologically between B and C, which E did not discriminate in its own replication because at that point it was unavailable for any such recognition. Although F has a narrow role to play in stylistic analysis (e.g., it might provide a stylistic “bridge” from B to C), it does not enter a consideration of the cultural temporality of style at E – even if that style “inherited” F as well as, or along with, B and C.

As these reflections imply, there is really no such thing as a picture that is “archaic” or “classical” or “modern” (to use the terminology of relative dates) or that is “archaizing” or “classicizing” or “modernist,” “modernistic,” or “modernizing” (to use established terms of cultural temporality). Every depiction will exemplify and perhaps represent aspects of *all* periods or strata of its internal sedimentation, its noetic history or significance for consciousness.<sup>6</sup> Therefore all pictures – indeed all coherent representations – will always manifest an interdetermination of archaizing, classicizing, and modernizing aspects relative to the cultural traditions and contemporary contexts to which they belong. The terminology of cultural temporality – here it opposes the terminology of relative dating – makes this perfectly plain. The very notion that

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<sup>6</sup> For the importance of phenomenological and deconstructive vocabularies in noetic history, see Davis 1996a, 1996b, and for an extended example in the realm of sculpture, see Davis 1996c. The vocabularies have some affinities with the psychoanalytic metapsychology which has often inflected notions of archaism – the persistence or return of infantile or primitive stages of consciousness – in art and cultural history (see Howard 1981). As I have argued elsewhere, depiction has an inherently replicatory structure. In the “canonical chain of replications” of marks which constitutes a particular set of marks as depicting something for an observer, an earlier mark must be made to “remark” by a later one (see Davis 1989b, 1996a: 36-94, 168-70). This internal stratigraphy of depiction should not be confused with any real material palimpsests or *pentimenti* in the picture; it is strictly a noetic history.

a picture could be “archaizing” implies classical or classicizing and modern or modernizing conventions and alternatives which the picture must make manifest in its “archaistic” replication of them – its replication of them as if it were archaic. For this reason, in the terminology of relative dating an “archaic” work simply manifests the characteristics – technical, iconographic, stylistic, rhetorical – of early works in the tradition to which it belongs. But in the terminology of cultural temporality, an “archaic” (or better an “archaizing” or “archaistic”) picture manifests a classicizing/modernizing replication of aspects of depiction constituted by classicizing/modernizing works in the tradition *as* archaic – for example, as pictures “older than classical” in relative-dating terms *even if* they are not “earlier-than-classical” in absolute-dating terms. As noted already, in form and style and motif this archaistic replication might look to us to be quite archaic *or* to be quite classical *or* to be quite modern. If Velazquez practiced what Picasso judged to be an “older” or even the “oldest” art, then Picasso’s modern-looking replication of *Las Meninas* was archaistic relative to his classicism.

Culture-temporal periodizations recognize the prospective and retrospective configuration of pictorial significance – what has sometimes been called the *nachträglich* constitution of meaning in consciousness, the delayed activation of the significance and status of what has been represented. By contrast, relative dates have a merely anachronistic aspect: an omniscient historian must command the entire duration of the tradition in order to range its supposedly early and late phases relative to one another. Naturally this raises a hermeneutic problem for putatively historical analysis. Egyptology and other practices of style studies in non-art-historical disciplines typically have not worried about their constant and perhaps even constitutive anachronism. One routinely finds supposedly art-historical publications in Egyptology which cite “parallels” for a particular stylistic trait or iconographical motif drawn from many later periods of the entire cultural tradition or cultural history in question. An early Fourth Dynasty sculpture or relief, for example, might be “paralleled” to supposed similars in sculptures or reliefs of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, from the Middle Kingdom, or even from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth

Dynasties of the New Kingdom – i.e., supposedly comparable instances ranging over fifteen hundred years of cultural history. Ordinarily this procedure would violate the most fundamental principle of iconological analysis – that iconography is “disjunctive” from one replication to the next (Panofsky 1960; see Davis 1992a: 24-27, 1996a: 117-27 for examples in prehistoric and Egyptological archaeology). In the ancient Egyptian context, the procedure might find a partial justification in terms of a robust understanding of a “canonical tradition” in Egyptian art (see Davis 1989a) – of a persistent intentional substitutability and intercomparability, or invariance, in the constructive and configurative traditions of depictive culture. But typically style studies in Egyptology have resisted this interpretation of the history they claim to reveal. Instead, they assert that they identify stylistic variation and “development.” However, if there was really stylistic development in ancient Egyptian depiction, then one cannot “parallel” earlier to later replications in the “developmental” history without gross anachronism – at least in the absence of a history of cultural temporality in Egyptian depiction which might warrant the anachronism because it identifies a real cultural *Nachträglichkeit* such as a retrospective “up-dating” or a modernization.

### §3. Canonical Tradition and Stylistic Variation

I will continue to use the familiar distinction of cultural temporality into Archaic, Classical, and Modern periods. But I do not mean to suggest that ancient Egyptian scribe-artists in the Third Dynasty really discriminated the history of depiction in their tradition into those three (and only those three) mutually determined phases. Needless to say, then, an element of circularity creeps into our analysis of their activities. Insofar as we use the categories Archaic (archaizing, archaistic), Classical (classicizing, classicist-ic), and Modern (modernizing, modernist-ic) to discriminate cultural temporalities at a given “dated” point in Egyptian cultural history, we might obscure temporalities which animated that history “from the Egyptians’ point of view.”

In part, as noted earlier, our terms serve as convenient place-holders for further analysis. To use the formula used already, in a tradition which discriminated itself at E into historical phases A, B, C, and D, it would have been possible to produce A-izing replications (older-than-B/C/D), B-izing replications (younger-than-A, older-than-C/D), C-izing replications (younger-than-A/B, older-than-D), and D-izing replications (younger-than-A/B/C) – all relative, of course, to E itself. Properly applied, stylistic analysis of the tradition should be able to distinguish these five phases, and, in E, the A-izing, B-izing, C-izing, and D-izing variants. For some purposes the label we give to each of the groups will be immaterial.

Nevertheless, we have warrant to suppose that “from the Egyptians’ point of view” there would have had to have been Archaic (i.e., older-than-classical), Classical (i.e., younger-than-archaic, older-than-modern), and Modern (i.e., younger-than-classical) cultural norms and alternatives in their tradition. A valid basis for this assertion is the hypothesis that Egyptian depiction manifested a “canonical tradition,” as I have called it (Davis 1982, 1989a). Partly as a function of its longevity, stability, and extensive history of replicatory variation, within a canonical tradition it must have been possible to distinguish not only earlier but also “older” (archaic) and not only later but also “younger” (modern) aspects of its normative traditional (classical and canonical) replication. Whereas any Archaic and Modern culture-times in a canonical tradition imply a relative dating – relative to one another and to the Classical norm – the Classical culture-time has been constituted at least partly to be *timeless*. It represents “what has always been,” “the way things are” *sub specie aeternitatis*. To be sure, in actual practice cultural life will display older and younger ways to do something (or this way and that way or some way over there). But the practice in question remains canonical. To the extent that ancient Egyptian depiction was largely canonical, it manifested Archaic and Modern cultural temporalities just insofar as it was possible within the tradition – and on the basis of all kinds of cues, clues, and claims – to identify its earlier and its later dates of replication. The cultural temporality of Egyptian depiction was not confined, of course, to the

cultural temporality (for example, the projection of classical timelessness) of the canonical tradition. The canonical tradition had its own complex cultural temporalities of historical emergence and consolidation (Davis 1989a: 116-91, 1992a) and its own shifting relations to pre-, non-, para-, and perhaps even anti-canonical depictive possibilities. But the canonical tradition dominated depiction in the pharaonic period, at least from the early Old Kingdom onwards.<sup>7</sup>

My description and interpretation of its canonical tradition does not assert that ancient Egyptian depiction was entirely governed by unchanging and rigid rules. Thus I devoted extensive discussion (e.g., 1989a: 59-93, 1992a: 161-200) to iconographic variation and disjunction. I proposed to identify six practices of transformation in the canonical tradition – namely, variation in the “expansion,” “contraction,” “expressive magnification,” “division,” “equivalent substitution,” and “nonequivalent substitution” of motifs. These replicatory modes account exhaustively for the self-evident fact that designers had “enormous flexibility in mediating the canonical image in, or more precisely, into its architectural context” (1989a: 93). Historical understanding of such processes of iconographic replication enables us to distinguish “true innovation” (1989a: 82-92) from merely personal or period styles and from creative expressiveness, neither of which constitutes aesthetic or cultural innovation as such. So far as I know, these proposals have not been refuted. Recent studies of the history of particular motifs in Egyptian depiction have tended to confirm them – and this despite a pervasive Egyptological tendency to decontextualize motif “types” by abstracting them from their narrative or other contexts of intelligibility. Nonetheless, as the concept of a *canonical* tradition suggests, I do wish to identify an invariant intelligibility in ancient Egyptian depiction – namely, its constant replication of several interacting constructive and configurative techniques. I identify them in section contour, in proportioning, in the “coordination of

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<sup>7</sup> This is not the place to rehearse the approaches advocated in earlier publications (Davis 1982, 1989a, 1992a). They have affiliations with Egyptological reflections on ancient Egyptian art and cultural history by Jan Assmann (e.g., 1991), Friedrich Junge (e.g., 1990) Roland Tefnin (e.g., 1991), and other scholars.

aspect” (most notably the frontal-profile depiction of the human body), and in register composition (1989a: 7-37).

To be sure, if one considered these techniques (quite erroneously) apart from the whole configurative context of a depiction, each one of them might display some and perhaps considerable historical variation in style. For example, as I noted (1989a: 20-27), proportioning configuration in Egyptian depiction seems to have varied (although see Harvey 2001: 633-36 for the Old Kingdom). But I contended that these were “straightforward variations on the main canon” (1989a: 26) because they always proportioned a figure *already* constructed to display *both* a well-defined array of section-contours *and* a particular aspect configured according to canonical convention – what I called an “integrated construction” (1989a: 10-13). To date no scholar has identified a proportioning of the represented human body in Egyptian depiction that *disobeys* or *contradicts* the integrated construction of section-contours and aspect; all known proportionings in Egyptian depiction – falling into a narrow and predictable field of variants – are entirely canonical in my sense.

Needless to say, one pre-eminent mode of proportioning the objects represented in a depiction decidedly *would* contradict Egyptian canonical construction – namely, linear perspective. (Panofsky’s [1926] history of naturalistic perspectival projection as a “symbolic form” began with the “symbolic form” he took to be diametrically – and to some extent dialectically – opposite to it, namely, “Egyptian” integrated construction.) In linear perspective the image maker plots the proportions of objects in the depictive field, fictively constituting a unitary field of view, according to their relative distance from an implied viewer’s standpoint on a line of coincidence with an implied eye-point or optical vanishing point (see further Damisch, Davis 1996b). There are many intriguing *spatializations* in pre-canonical and canonical Egyptian depiction (see especially Kraemer 1931, Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951); indeed, canonical conventions tried to coordinate them, and some of them will concern us later. But Egyptian depiction gives no evidence whatsoever that any mutually scaled proportioning of depicted objects (in an implied unitary “field of

view”) was conducted with reference to an implied sightline.<sup>8</sup> And Egyptian depiction gives every evidence that proportioning was conducted with reference to implied construction lines – especially an implied “median line” in the human body – in the coordination of the aspects of individual depicted objects (Davis 1989a: 13-15, 20-27). Most important, proportioning was a function of section-contour, the selection of aspect, and register composition – and not the other way around. If the canonical conventions of section-contour and aspect had been abandoned, proportioning in Egyptian depiction could – and probably would – have varied in ways never permitted or permissible in canonical contexts. At any rate, as its history of variation shows, proportioning – a stylistic phenomenon in the routine sense – was the least important of the basic constructive and configurative conventions. If I were writing an account of these conventions today, I would likely drop it from an enumeration of the constitutive criteria of canonical depiction: the proportional systems used by Egyptian configurators were epiphenomena of more important criteria of canonical depiction.

By far the most important criterion was the canonical configurators’ selection of so-called *geradansichtig-vorstellig* (literally, “straight-on-regarded-represented”) views of objects, to use the neologism applied by Heinrich Schäfer (1919, 1928) – in the case of the depicted human body, the distinctive combination of “frontal” representation of certain parts of the body and “profile” (if still “straight-on”) representation of other parts. Schäfer adapted his notion of *geradvorstellig* depiction from brilliant investigations of ancient arts by Richard Lepsius (1884), Julius Lange (1899) and Emanuel Löwy (1901) – especially the

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<sup>8</sup> Heinrich Schäfer made a special assessment of evidence for perceptual awareness of the optical effects of recession and diminution among “pre-Greek” artists. In writing his systematic treatise on Egyptian art, *Von aegyptischer Kunst* (1919), he was well aware that Egyptologists had identified possible cases of foreshortening in Egyptian picture making (e.g., Borchardt 1893, 1910; Klebs 1914). In fact, *Von aegyptischer Kunst* proceeded directly from his detailed studies of Egyptian “figured ostraca” (*Bildostraka*) or *Scherbenbilder*, a class of depiction in which seeming deviations from conventional Egyptian configurations can sometimes be found – including proto-perspectival constructions (Schafer 1916, cf. 1938). But in his review of these phenomena in his treatise, Schafer tended to reduce the effects in question: supposedly they were attempts to clarify

latter's identification of *drei-* and *vielansichtig* (three- and many-sided) constructions employed by Archaic and Classical Greek sculptors. In a revision of Schäfer's terms for a posthumous edition of his treatise, Emma Brunner-Traut (1963, 1974; cf. Brunner-Traut 1973, 1982) proposed to replace Schäfer's term *geradansichtig-vorstellig* with "*Aspektive*" – a substantive derived from *Aspekt-sehen*, "to see direct and closed views or images." Admittedly this neologism is less cumbersome than Schäfer's. Unfortunately, when rendered in English – "aspective" – it tends to connote the absence of perspective (a-spective = nonperspective). But in Schäfer's terms *geradansichtig-vorstellig* depiction in ancient Egypt certainly offered its *Ansicht* – a "point of view" or "perspective" on the world – even if it produced neither the "rendering of nature" (*Naturwiedergabe*) Löwy had found in the *vielansichtig* constructions of Classical Greek sculptors nor the naturalistic view constructed in linear perspective depiction, which inherently projects a correlated human subjective consciousness or standpoint. Strictly speaking the canonical Egyptian depiction – like axonometric and several other kinds of projection – provides a view (or views) or *Ansicht(en)* but not a standpoint or *Gesichtspunkt* (a useful discussion can be found in Hagen 1986).

In this regard, the term *Aspektive* fails to capture Schäfer's special theory – his only substantial contribution to *Kunstwissenschaft* – that the Egyptian image maker changed views around the surfaces (hence constructing "aspects") of an object according to a principle quite different from the Classical Greeks' multi-sided or uninterrupted circumambulation. To use the terms of a complementary *Kunstwissenschaft*, Schäfer opposed the Egyptians' "paratactic" configuration to the Greeks' "hypotactic" configuration, such as the *dreiansichtig* constructions identified by Löwy (see Schäfer 1928, Kraemer 1931). But paratactic and most hypotactic constructions are equally "aspective," for they select, combine, and integrate "straight-on" closed-contour views of the parts of an object. Whereas Löwy's *vielansichtig* construction can be seen as side-reducing

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an ambiguity in *geradvorstellig* configuration or sometimes just an error of modern copyists (Schäfer 1974: 117-18, 172-77, 259-76).

(in observing a highly naturalistic Greek statue, one is not aware of the “sidedness” of the sculpted body), Schäfer insisted that Egyptian *geradvorstellig-ansichtig* constructions were side-changing (one sees the “frontal,” “profile,” or other aspects – the sidedness – of the object). The term *Aspektive*, however, does not begin to clarify how and why the paratactic(-aspective) differs from the hypotactic(-aspective) configuration in the construction of this defining sidedness (or, in the highly naturalistic depiction, the appearance of unsidedness).

If we avoid the term *Aspektive*, Schäfer’s description of *geradvorstellig* construction is useful as far as it goes. But he failed to identify the essential underlying role of section-contour – the principle by which the parts themselves must be selected and depicted, irrespective of their “straight-on” aspect. Indeed, the “straight-on-ness” or “directness” of the graphic representation of an object or a part of an object (it can play a role in both paratactic and hypotactic constructions) can only be defined by the equidistance of the implied viewpoint from “edges” which have already been isolated conceptually – the constitutive problem of contour (Davis 1989a: 13-20). The issue of the visibility of the crucial “edges” in Greek sculpture had preoccupied Löwy – the problem of defining the thresholds between the two or three or more privileged views presented to the beholder in circumambulation.

Schäfer’s technical art theory was weak and even absurd, but his social psychology lent a kind of credibility to his art history within *Kunstwissenschaft*, where it had some influence beyond Egyptological art history (e.g., Gombrich 1961: 118-25). Schäfer claimed a strictly psychological determination for *geradvorstellig* construction: supposedly it was identical with the ancient Egyptian depictive mentality or perceptual and representational attitude. Equally important, Schäfer also identified it with a “pre-Greek” mental set; it is supposedly universal outside an artistic culture influenced by Greek tradition, and even in that “Greek” culture it can be found in young children’s untutored drawings. To be sure, Schäfer’s own sources in *Kunstwissenschaft* – Lange, Löwy, and to a lesser extent Alois Riegl (1901) – did not venture this kind of essentialist

interpretation of the distinctive *Ansichten* they identified in ancient Oriental, Greco-Roman, and late antique configurations (we could call these *Ansichten* “perspectives” if the term were not thoroughly identified with linear perspective projections). Notably, for example, Riegl had identified the *Ansichten* of “optic” and “haptic” styles in Roman art not so much with the psychology of entire peoples (given the multicultural and multiethnic composition of the Roman empire it would have been difficult) as with the *Weltanschauungen* of particular social groups *within* Roman society – i.e., with social ideology in the strict sense. (Indeed, Riegl’s historical sociology required that the transformation from “optic” to “haptic” constructions in depiction – a transformation instituted by and within late Roman society in its internal history of Christianization – must have been as much a social development as an expression of natural tendencies of the Roman mind. In Riegl’s view, if there was any “natural tendency” of the “Roman” mind in its social aspect or its “Romanness” regardless of cultural-ethnic location – arguably, a political tendency to seek *translocal* legibility and communicativeness, identified with both republican and imperial *Romanitas* – it manifested itself in both optic and haptic depiction.) But for Schäfer, insofar as the ancient Egyptians embodied the “pre-Greek” mental set – and instituted it in picture making – they represented an essential primitive phase of human cognitive development.

At root, then, Schäfer’s interpretation of *geradansichtig-vorstellig* construction was explicitly Hegelian and at least implicitly racist. As a non-Aryan and pre-Greek people, the ancient Egyptians were unable to convert their experience of “objective” relations in the world into the basis of their “subjective” self-representation in depiction. In Hegelian terms, and conforming to Hegel’s account of the Egyptian prehistory of Absolute Spirit, the Egyptians’ noetic grasp of objects in the world remained wholly disjunct from their consciousness of their symbolic projection of this world. By contrast, Herbert Senk, one of the most astute theorists of Egyptian style (and Schäfer’s most pointed critic), understood the proto-perspectival (or at least non-*geradvorstellig*) constructions one can find in Egyptian depictions to manifest a quite different – practically the

opposite – noetic and social history. For Senk, the official style of ancient Egyptian picture making (what I call the “canonical tradition” in depiction) involved a noetic struggle to preserve a preferred *geradvorstellig* or “aspective” symbolism (at its heart we can see an image of divine kingship [Davis 1989a: 192-224, 1992]) in the face of an “objective” tendency in representation – a tendency that could erupt in particular social circumstances in the representation of erotic, humorous, satirical, dissenting, or popular subjects (see especially Senk 1933, 1950, 1958a, 1958b, 1959, 1965). Engaging these materials (and Senk’s alternative history of Egyptian consciousness), in one area alone Schäfer (1936) admitted the possibility of an ancient Egyptian *Naturwiedergabe* – namely, in official Egyptian “portraits” of kings and high officials. Paradoxically, then, in Schäferian terms – and against the grain of his doctrine – the highly naturalistic portrayals of Hesy must be counted *both* as paradigms of the essential nonperspectivism and nonselfconsciousness of Egyptian style *and* as instances of its irrepressible self-reflexive attraction to self-representation as a “rendering of nature.” This basic theoretical contradiction – Egyptian art is said to be *both* “conceptual” *and* “naturalistic” – continues to be replicated within Egyptological art history and reflects its Schäferian origins and determinations, however much Egyptologists profess to renounce the essentialism and racialism of Schäfer’s social psychology and the historiographical amnesias and technical flaws of his art theory.

Needless to say, the wholesale identification of *geradvorstellig* construction (as a supposedly inherent mental set) and Egyptian conventions of depiction (as the expression of that set) can readily be disproved. Simply put, there are many well-formed *geradvorstellig* depictions that nonetheless would have been rejected in the “integrated construction” adopted in canonical Egyptian depiction (see Davis 1989a: 50-58). Canonical depiction used certain *geradvorstellig* configurations – sometimes in tension with different or even opposed constructive tendencies – but its basis is the entire interacting system of integrated construction in which the *geradvorstellig* or “aspective” coordination of *Ansichten* played one role. The invariance of the canonical tradition in my sense, then, did not derive from essential “aspective” (or nonperspectivist) Egyptian

habits of mind. Rather it lay in the constancy of interacting conventions – the cultural creation of a particular, distinctive, and stable kind of whole depiction of figures and scenes, an *image* (Davis 1989a: 191-224). So far as I know, this proposal has not been refuted. No one has proposed to discover an *alternative mode of representation* in any ancient Egyptian depiction produced for elite consumption or display, although the problems of what I have defined as pre-canonical and non-canonical depiction are well worth pursuing.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, there was considerable and continuous stylistic variation and development *within* canonical depiction. As already noted, particular elements of integrated construction – such as its approaches to modeling the contour of a depicted object or to proportioning the aspects it defined – had a history of routine stylistic variation. But the maintenance of canonical construction, *as* the style of depictive configuration as such, must be distinguished from the routine stylistic variation permitted within its parameters.

This is not to say, however, that Egyptological art studies have properly investigated stylistic variation and development even in their own terms – that is, in the terms of so-called stylistic development. Most Egyptological art studies do not even try to correlate stylistic datings and cultural temporalities, even though their stylistic analysis assumes a culture-temporal process that seems to be its analytic object, its methodological presumption, *and* its supposed historical conclusion. In her consideration of a “second style” in the canonical sculpture of the Sixth Dynasty, for example, Russmann (1995) offered implicit reflections – though not in theoretical terms, and not followed up – on what she saw (following Vandier [1958: 140]) as the “impulses of renewal and reaction

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<sup>9</sup> I have addressed some of them in a book devoted to late prehistoric depiction and its replication in the canonical tradition (Davis 1992a). For the Archaic period, the status of “pre-canonical” depictions has been clarified in rigorous and illuminating studies by Marianne Eaton-Krauss (1997, 1998, Eaton-Krauss and Loeben 1997); they are more comprehensive treatments than I could undertake in an overview of the canonical tradition (in Davis 1989a). In recent years, Egyptological archaeology has begun to focus on the visual culture of non-elite populations in ancient Egypt (e.g., Meskell 1999, 2002). This research complements rather than contradicts my concept of canonical tradition in elite depiction. It helps pinpoint the social specificity of canonical depiction and clarifies my point that the canonical mode of representation advanced a

against the past” in the distinctive style she wanted to identify (1995: 271). One cannot agree with Russmann, however, that this style “provides us with the *earliest documented occurrence of deliberate stylistic change in ancient art*” (1995: 173, italics original; cf. Harvey 2001: 5). On the one hand, Russmann’s formalism offered no criteria for distinguishing the supposed “deliberate” style of certain Sixth-Dynasty sculptors from undeliberated or unintentional style—i.e., the *Grundformen* or unreflective and habitual styles identified by the very connoisseurship that ostensibly constitutes the basis of many of her own observations (see Morelli 1892). On the other hand, it offered no demonstration that stylistic variation in late prehistoric, early dynastic, Archaic or Old Kingdom Egyptian depiction before the “second style” of the Sixth Dynasty was *not* “deliberate.” Indeed, Russmann’s “categorical” definition of style—“a visual language with a vocabulary of forms or motifs and a syntax governing their relationship” (Russmann 1995: 271 n. 30)—was not actually used in her descriptive observations; she did not attempt anything remotely approaching the syntactical analysis that some art historians (as her own definition requires) have seen as inherent in, or required for, stylistic analysis.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, Egyptological stylistic criticism fills journal after specialist journal with self-perpetuating publications on dating and style. But it has been vitiated by the lack of minimally necessary forensic and theoretical distinctions between form and style, between *Grundform* and conventional form, between morphological similarity and stylistic replication, between unique morphology and repeated morphology, between habit and mannerism, between style and convention, between unintended and intentional depictive activity, between configuration and motif, between reference and figuration, and between dating and temporality. In particular, Egyptological art studies often indulge a psychologization of Egyptian depictions of personages and their figured characters—for example,

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set of stylistic and iconographic selections rather than incarnated a natural expression of an ancient Egyptian perceptual attitude or mentality.

<sup>10</sup> Russmann quoted her definition of style from a 1982 art-history survey textbook by Hugh Honour and John Fleming. For a trenchant critique of the “linguistic” claim in formalist style

imagining Djoser's "expression of ill humor" or Hesy's "nervosity" and "dryness of character" in one or another of their depictions (Cherpion 1980: 84-85, 1999; cf. Russmann 1995, Romano 1998 for similar statements; and see the sensible scepticism of Harpur 2001: 137). Endemic in Egyptological art studies of "style," "formal analysis" of this kind has been codified in the supposed connoisseurship of a few experts on Egyptian art – an expertise constituted by the observer's supposed mastery of, or his or her ability to "see," the morphological characteristics required by, or invented in, what can only be called this "unconnoisseurship." It is unlikely that they can be derived from the methodology of connoisseurship itself (i.e., from the Morellian concept of *Grundformen*) or from the analytic theory of style. Their impressionistic formalism is really grounded mostly in empathy, although the theoretical basis of empathy between modern Western observers, ancient Egyptian artists, and ancient Egyptian depicted personages or characters remains to be clarified.

As John Baines (1994: 88) has noted, my emphasis on basic constructive and configurative conventions in an elite ideology that was always self-involved in its social legitimation (Davis 1989a: 192-224) does not address "the actors' perspective." Quite so – and this is precisely its analytic rationale and its analytic advantage. Baines does not deny the "consistency of [Egyptian] style from the largest work of architecture to the smallest piece of decorative art" (1994: 73). Indeed, he himself deploys a notion of " 'classical' Egyptian conventions" (1994: 90 n. 11). According to Baines (e.g., 1990, cf. 1994), however, what I call canonical Egyptian depiction was a social practice of "decorum" – a propriety in depiction and other forums and practices of social life. Baines' several detailed reconstructions of the ancient Egyptian customs of decorum inside and outside depiction make essential contributions to the historical understanding of Egyptian art. To some extent Baines has based his reconstructions on the evidence of depictions interpreted on the assumption that they obeyed and even represented a general social propriety. This would lead to methodological

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studies, embodied in Honour and Fleming's definition, see Wollheim 1995 (cf. Davis 1996a: 132-98, with full references, and 1998).

circularity or analytic tautology if it were not for the fact, elegantly elaborated by Baines, that we have extradepictive testimony about customs of decorum. But “decorum” would merely be a *description* – helpful so far as it goes – of phenomena in depictive culture that require *explanation*.

Undoubtedly an ancient Egyptian scribe, painter, or sculptor working for an elite patron usually tried “to do the proper thing” in producing a depiction. From his “actor’s perspective,” possibly he obeyed standards of decorum in interacting with superior agents in elite or court culture, in honoring his social obligations and pursuing his social interests, and in fulfilling his religious convictions. But his self-description would tell us little about many aspects of the constructive and configurative systems of his depiction as such. To consider depiction as a kind of etiquette manual tends to downplay the agency – the creative power – of intersubjective norms and interactions, and to reify an implied notion of individual interested agency vested in artists or other “executants” and their patrons. By contrast, I contend that in ancient Egypt individual agency (including artists’ and patrons’ “executancy”) was organized in interaction with – and largely in subordination to – the canonical tradition. In other words, I consider the canonical tradition to have acted as the primary agent in its own cultural replication (for an influential model of transpersonal or “distributed” social agency in art, see Gell 1999, with Davis 2003). In this regard, I made no claims one way or another about the degree to which any aspect of the canonical tradition was (or was not) present to the awareness of individual social actors (also agents of replication) or relayed their “perspective.” My approach certainly does not exclude such an anthropology.

By the same token, however, it cannot simply reduce to such an anthropology. If Baines’s prescription were to be adopted in Egyptological art studies – if they really should treat form, style, or motif, let alone constructive and configurative techniques, exclusively “from the actor’s perspective” – it would be impossible to conduct a connoisseurship of the objects, of the paintings and sculptures produced in ancient Egyptian artistic culture. As noted above, connoisseurship requires us to identify formal and stylistic morphology

produced entirely *outside* the maker's intentions and wholly unconventionalized in his or her social interactions. In style as defined by connoisseurship, the "actors" or "executants" remain entirely unaware of – and therefore could have no "perspective" on – the constitutive features of their own replicatory activity in depiction. We will return to the methodological and theoretical importance of this fundamental art-historical principle at many points. A concept of canonical tradition allows us to see how fully *conventional* constructive and configurative depictive techniques nonetheless must have subsisted partly outside the makers' intentionality – and precisely because they were conventional. Naturally, then, I have advocated an approach to stylistic analysis that must be quite different from the stylistic analysis practiced in connoisseurship, which must always identify unintended and unconventionalized form. Either way, however, knowing the "actor's perspective" will be able to give us only part of the whole story – whether we consider *unconventionalized* form and style partly outside a maker's awareness or *conventionalized* configuration and construction partly outside a maker's awareness. None of this is to dismiss the actual history of intentional stylistic variation in Egyptian art – variation putatively to be found, for instance, in the "second style" of the Sixth Dynasty identified by Russmann as "deliberate stylistic change" (1995: 271). It is simply to recall that intentional stylistic variation can only be identified by considering the context and the history of the entire determination of stylistic variation, intentional or not.<sup>11</sup>

#### §4. Stylistic Dating, Cultural Temporality, and the Reliefs of Hesy

As we have seen, Smith was willing to focus as much on cultural temporality as on mere dating. But the dynamics of cultural temporality have tended to be obscured in Egyptology by excessive emphasis on the mere date for depictions – in the case in point here, the mere date selected by Smith (somewhat

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<sup>11</sup> For discussion of artistic or maker's intentionality as pursued in archaeological art history, see Davis 1996a: 94-127. The criteria there identified for the ascription of intentionality – an action is performed by the agent at the time of the ascribed intention in a self-reflexive fashion under the agent's direct sentient control – are enormously constraining; on this analysis, most stylistic

against the drift of his own culture-temporal observations) for the reliefs of Hesy, namely, the early Third Dynasty or the reign of Djoser. Some blame for this must attach to Smith himself. Despite his command of the evidence, he did not fully rationalize his culture-temporal chronologies – whether in their own terms (i.e., his Early, Archaic I, II, and III, and Fourth Dynasty artistic cultures) or in relation to the absolute and relative dates he derived from stratigraphic associations or inscriptional evidence. He failed to engage the theoretical literature – from Warburg’s concept of survivals to Panofsky’s consideration of resurgences, revivals, renaissances, and disjunctions – that many art historians had started to embrace in the same years that Smith prepared his dissertation at Harvard. This art history profoundly shaped mid-twentieth-century scholarship in the study of late antique, medieval, and Renaissance culture. But it did not reach Egyptology.

Indeed, Smith’s observations did not really conform to the accepted method of stylistic analysis in art history. He did not articulate the primary materials of his account in terms that could be used for the purposes of any art-historical paradigm of historical interpretation, such as Panofsky’s iconology, developed in the 1930s and 1940s in Germany, England, and the United States – let alone the “social history of art” and the “New Art History” that came to replace Panofskyan approaches in the discipline of art history in the 1960s and later. (Nelson and Schiff 1996, Cheetham et al. 1996, and Harris 2001 provide accounts of these disciplinary developments.) Smith compromised his idiosyncratic method of a putatively stylistic analysis by his tendency to confuse style with *form* and to conflate stylistic analysis with the procedures of *formal* analysis – a scrutiny of the configurative properties of artifacts and depictions that tends to overemphasize the individual, rare, or unique properties of the work under investigation at the expense of the expected, standard, or usual properties. (Formalism of this kind tends to be coupled with style-periodization, in which the observer tries to identify the features of an artifact that “date” it: while these

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phenomena could not possibly be intentional. It remains an open question how much importance we should give to style which we *do* discover to have been intentional.

traits cannot be unique – if they were, they could not date the artifact in any meaningful way – nonetheless they need to have well-defined chronological “ranges” or “durations.” At the limit, however, formalism, which seeks uniqueness, and style-periodization, which seeks parallelisms, must contradict one another; when we find them packaged indiscriminately, we must be cautious twice over.) It is never surprising to find this bias in museum-based art studies, which Smith pursued professionally in his long career as Curator in the Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts while also teaching as an adjunct member of the Department of Fine Arts at Harvard . A curator naturally wants to know what might be particular, and perhaps even different or unique, about an individual work on display – especially if the museum has gone to great lengths and considerable expense to acquire it. But pernicious art-market forces and modern ideologies of artistic creativity (they have little or nothing to do with ancient Egyptian ideologies of depictive configuration) often contribute to the incorrect estimation – usually the inflation – of the cultural significance of particular attributes singled out in formal analysis. In principle stylistic analysis – it tracks patterns of similarity or replication in artifacts (Davis 1996) – offers a corrective to formalist bias. But in Egyptological and similar art studies, unfortunately, formalism tends to hijack stylistic criticism.

Smith himself probably considered that he was practicing a “connoisseurship” of Egyptian art: by the late 1930s, when Smith prepared his dissertation, art history had developed connoisseurship into an extraordinary tool of art historical interpretation. Smith’s stylistic observations, however, did not fulfill the minimum criterion for attribution through style laid down by the method of connoisseurship. Indeed, they routinely violated it. True connoisseurship requires that the *Grundform* identified by the connoisseur as the habitual – and thus identifying or diagnostic – procedure of an artist at a particular point in time or in a particular place of his production remained entirely *unintended* in the maker’s original coordination of the production of the whole artifact; if intended, the form could be – it likely must be – conventional,

and thus it cannot identify an individual maker's habits of "hand" or "eye." Many of the features of depictions that Smith cited in his quasi-stylistic analysis in order, he thought, to effect attributions – attributions both to "artists" or "masters" and to stylistic periods or cultural phases – were clearly made intentionally. Therefore they could have absolutely no relevance to the *Grundformen* that index a maker's habits. Indeed, in principle Smith's explicitly stated aim to reveal the conventions of Egyptian style and iconography – especially "its mode of representation of the human figure" (1946: 272-350) – had to run counter to the requirement of stylistic analysis that *Grundformen* cited for attributive purposes must be entirely *unconventionalized* and in no way constitute a "mode of representation."

For these reasons, and in turn, Smith could not take full advantage (even though he recognized the value) of *Grundformen* in revealing the cultural temporality of artistic production – for instance, and to use Giovanni Morelli's paradigmatic example, the way in which Giorgionesque and then Raphaelesque and then Michelangesque features were all "in" the style of Sebastiano del Piombo at different points in his artistic career (see Morelli 1892: 40-46). In principle Morellian connoisseurship does not seek to attribute *Grundformen* to particular makers, to *this* artist, as has sometimes been thought. Rather, it attributes *Grundformen* to the temporalities – specifically, the interpersonal or intersubjective social relations – of their cultural situation, to *that* time in *these* artists' interaction, e.g., to the period (or maybe the place) "when Sebastiano followed Giorgione" or to the period or place "when Sebastiano studied with Raphael." In other words, connoisseurship identifies *artist-phases* – the cultural location of artistic replication. Hence, when properly used, it can be a powerful tool of fine-tuned historical differentiation; it can distinguish not only cultural traditions (e.g., the "high Renaissance" artistic culture that included Giorgione, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Sebastiano) but also artistic identities (e.g., Sebastiano's development as an artist responding in different if overlapping ways in different if overlapping places to Giorgione, Raphael, and Michelangelo).

(For further discussion, see Davis 1996a: 171-98, 1998, n.d. sect. 4; Neer 1997, 2002.)

Smith's academic background probably prevented him from coming to terms with the elementary art-historical concepts that would have helped him interpret his observations – a vast laundry list of formal and stylistic descriptions. His graduate mentors at Harvard and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, F. R. Grace and G. H. Chase, were classical archaeologists best known for building and publishing the Museum's collections of Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture and vases. They employed Smith on his first project – a survey of Egyptian sculpture in European collections (Smith 1935). Despite their Harvard appointments, both Grace and Chase practiced an essentially nineteenth-century or *pre*-Morellian style studies, and they were not connoisseurs except in the extended sense of having factual expertise in the objects that they collected and taught. Their methods of attribution and interpretation stressed the observer's impression of the *geistige Gehalt* – the “spiritual content” – of an artwork rather than a forensic identification of its unintended, unconventionalized *Grundformen*. In 1936, after completing his graduate studies, Smith attached himself to George A. Reisner's expedition at Giza. Reisner became Smith's archaeological and Egyptological mentor while Smith served as Reisner's field assistant at Saqqara and Giza. In particular, Smith prepared a topographical survey of Archaic Saqqara and helped in the preparation of Reisner's monumental History of the Giza Necropolis (1942), where he was credited as Reisner's co-author. Unfortunately, Reisner's pseudo-scientific obsession with typology and seriation – it was criticized by his fellow-archaeologists at Giza (see Junker 1950: 23) – distorted stylistic analysis. Despite his immense and often sensible grasp of Egyptian paintings and sculptures in their archaeological matrix, he had little familiarity with the history and procedures of *Kunstwissenschaft*, Morellian or otherwise. (Reisner rarely practiced a Morellian attribution of artifacts, and evinced little interest in the identity of their makers; he was chiefly concerned with the “relative dates” of the styles embodied in artifact types, where he applied and refined the techniques of seriation invited by Sir William Matthew

Flinders Petrie.) There is little evidence, then, that Smith learned the principles of connoisseurship as a student art historian or as an apprentice Egyptologist – despite the fact that by the late 1940s Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum had become the most famous center of connoisseurship in the United States.

In describing the Second Dynasty statues of Khasekhemuwy, for example, Smith (1946: 13) remarked that the “treatment of the ears [in the statues] was to be a problem never too satisfactorily solved by the Egyptian sculptor in any period.” We might take him to imply here that the artists’ depiction of the ears of the king might or could have achieved a conventional stabilization. But in Morellian stylistic criticism, of course, the ears (along with a small number of other traits of the depicted human figure) quintessentially display the unintended and unconventional features of a maker’s phase-style or cultural location: in no sense can they be a “problem” for the artist to “solve.” Of course, it is possible that ancient Egyptian *Grundformen* were not at all like the *Grundformen* of later medieval or early Italian Renaissance painting studied by Morelli and his followers – ears, fingernails, and so on – or like the *Grundformen* of Classical Greek vase painting studied by Sir John Beazley and his followers. But this would be an important, and puzzling, historical and cultural finding – and Smith never defended it systematically. The reader of his studies really has no idea whether the ears of Khasekhemuy – and hundreds of similar details in Egyptian depiction – are to be understood fundamentally as makers’ habits in or as cultural conventions of representation, or both, or neither.

Whatever the explanation, Smith’s gigantic *History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (1946) offered a partly undigested mass – a bewildering labyrinth – of formal and stylistic observations. Their methodological derivation is uncertain and one to the next they have wildly unequal theoretical weight. In too many cases they lack any analytic significance whatsoever. The last include cases in which Smith wanted to claim that the observed lack of an apparent “stylistic” parallel for a formal feature of a particular work of art constituted evidence for its maker’s independence or innovation – and hence for cultural temporalities of variation, development, and

creativity in conventional Egyptian depiction. (In particular, Smith considered the “delicate modeling” and “sharp outlines” of the figures of Hesire to be characteristic features of other examples of “early work.” But he went on to isolate more than half a dozen features of the series of panels that he took to be novel or distinctive – including the drawing of the thumb, the arrangement of the legs under the robe, the positions of the staff and other equipment, and the facial features. He felt that these features manifested an individual sculptor’s taste – his distinctive style.) But if everything in the pool of forms, including unique morphologies, is “stylistic,” then nothing is. As already noted, Smith did not stop to ask whether a formal morphology, stylistic or not, was a real *Grundform* or not – as required by true connoisseurship. But if everything in the pool of forms, stylistic or not, *Grundform* or not, conventional or not, might “date” a depiction, then nothing does. The real issues – to specify the date of morphology which has culture-temporal particularity, to specify the culture-temporal age of morphology which has chronological particularity – simply could not be joined. In this respect we must conclude that Smith’s researches were essentially pre-art-historical: at best, they provided raw material for art-historical investigation, and at worst, they prevented art-historical analysis from addressing properly clarified primary materials.<sup>12</sup>

Still, Smith did attend in a precritical way to the cultural temporality of depictions. His treatment of the reliefs of Hesy contained the seeds – perhaps even the sapling – of an art-historical interpretation. Although Smith accepted what he believed to be a secure *absolute* date for the reliefs, he also proceeded to offer – or felt obliged to offer – an essentially independent *art-historical* dating in the culture-temporal terms outlined above (see sect. 1).

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<sup>12</sup> Smith’s magnum opus, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Harmondsworth, 1958), 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> eds. by William Kelly Simpson (Harmondsworth, 1981, 199\*), was written as a contribution to the global Pelican History of Art. In it he generalized the method he had used to consider the Old Kingdom in his first book to the whole of ancient Egyptian art history from the prehistoric period to the time of the Greek conquest. His last book, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, 1965), a highly creative work, tackled a more narrowly conceived problem for which he needed a different procedure. In this study, “styles” were not yoked simplistically and loosely to makers and phases of cultural history, as in the earlier handbooks, but were conceived instead, and more dynamically, as vehicles of international and cross-cultural identification, communication, and cross-fertilization.

It must be a measure of the culture-temporal challenged posed by the reliefs of Hesy that when Ludwig Borchardt included them in the relevant volume of the *Catalogue général* of the Cairo Museum he dated them to the Fourth Dynasty (Borchardt 1937: 108-10). In Smith's terms this could be his Archaic III or his "transition to the Fourth Dynasty," which he might have accepted as a date for the reliefs, or his Fourth Dynasty (and post-Archaic) artistic culture *after* Snefru and Khufu, which he would not have accepted as a date for the reliefs. Borchardt's "Fourth Dynasty" dating did not distinguish these options, and hence its seeming conflict with Smith's *culture-temporal* dating, whatever his *absolute* dating, might be more imaginary than real.

Given the format of his catalogue, Borchardt could not expound reasons for his attributions; in many cases they were obvious in an archaeological context or inscriptional reference. But in the case of the reliefs of Hesy, Borchardt had to have proceeded like a connoisseur, though he did not explain his method and thus it is impossible to know whether he tried to obey the requirements of the formal and stylistic analysis of *Grundformen* and conventions. He might have considered that early dynastic and Archaic parallels for the reliefs of Hesy, such as those shortly to be cited by Smith, were not especially strong. And he must have believed – and in art-historical terms he was not wrong – that the reliefs displayed striking similarities with the pictorial procedures and styles of the Fourth Dynasty, especially in the apparently "classical" convention of the depicted figure of the tomb owner himself. We could say that Borchardt tried to reduce the anachronism implied in these parallels, hitherto accepted by all observers, by asserting their contemporaneity in dating the relief of Hesy to the Fourth Dynasty. If we follow Smith, we might understand the reliefs of Hesy, attributed to the early Third Dynasty, to manifest the *earliest* "classical" construction known to us in private tomb-depiction. But this dating must constitute them as precociously classical, given that the *classical* form of classical construction was known to Smith chiefly in the art of the Fourth Dynasty – just as Borchardt's attribution asserted.

No doubt Borchardt came down on the side of the Fourth Dynasty partly because of the high quality, the technical and artistic confidence, and the stylistic and iconographic distinctiveness (if not uniqueness) of some of the reliefs in the Cairo Museum. These characteristics made it difficult to affiliate the reliefs with Archaic artistic culture – for Archaic culture tended to be associated not only with an “older” form of the canonical or classical tradition in Egyptian depiction but also with a “primitive” precursor to it. Naturally there was some truth in this association – for as Smith himself recognized, the artistic culture of his Archaic I inherited, even as it revised, the artistic culture of his Early period of Egyptian depiction. (Here again the assumptions of Reisner might have made themselves felt – for it was Reisner, followed in this by Smith and others, who first described the late Second Dynasty and early Third Dynasty niche-stone slab-stelae from private contexts, the most direct functional comparanda for the reliefs of Hesy, as “primitive niche stones” [1936: 294-96].) Because the reliefs of Hesy were far from primitive – they were clearly something like its opposite, i.e., “contemporary” and “advanced” – Borchardt seems to have considered that they must be grouped – despite their distinctiveness – with the *post*-primitive cultural tradition to which they belong stylistically. As suggested already, the substantive point disputed between Smith and Borchardt, then, must be whether this post-primitive cultural tradition in the modernized “classical” form manifested in the reliefs of Hesy had an “early Archaic” (Archaic I = early Third Dynasty) origin and temporality (Archaic I = early Third Dynasty) *or* could only be assigned a “late Archaic” context (Archaic III = later Third Dynasty / early Fourth Dynasty). There is much less culture-temporal space between these possibilities than one might initially suppose.

In proposing an absolute date (early Third or early Fourth Dynasty) in a culture-temporal analysis essentially independent of an archaeological date-context, neither Smith nor Borchardt was wrong. Both scholars addressed salient aspects of the cultural temporality of the reliefs of Hesy. But the “dates” they offered to rationalize this art history differed drastically in absolute chronological terms: Borchardt’s date would place the reliefs of Hesy at least two or three

generations later than Smith's. Paradoxically, however, both datings, insofar as they were essentially independent of an archaeological date-context, tried to acknowledge the very *same* cultural temporality: both recognized the "archaic" precociousness or in-its-own-time post-primitive or modern proto-classicism of the reliefs of Hesy relative to the manifestations of later classical Egyptian depictive conventions.

Neither Borchardt nor Smith stopped to consider whether and how the reliefs of Hesy might have been *both* archaizing *and* modernizing simultaneously. On the one hand, in the early Fourth Dynasty they might have been produced classically to resemble a work of Archaic cultural tradition (in Borchardt's case). Thus they might really *be* Archaic – i.e., *not* classical or Fourth Dynasty as he proposed. On the other hand, in the early Third Dynasty (in Smith's case) they might have been produced to resemble what was *then* archaic, if perhaps by that point classically so – namely, early dynastic (Early) or even early Archaic depiction, by reference to which they might have appeared modern. Thus they might really *be* Archaic III / late Third Dynasty – i.e., *not* Archaic I or early Third Dynasty as Smith proposed. But it is from these reciprocal possibilities – a depiction always manifests an interdetermination of archaizing, classicizing, and modernizing aspects – that an account of the reliefs of Hesy could properly begin.

##### §5. The Archaeological Date-Contexts of the Reliefs of Hesy

Smith and Borchardt proposed absolute dates – stylistic periodizations – for the reliefs of Hesy essentially independent of an archaeological date-context, although Smith also accepted an archaeological date which Borchardt seemingly discounted. At this point we must consider the status – more exactly, the interference – of the archaeological date-context as such. As already suggested, this date-context influenced Smith's date for the reliefs of Hesy even though his implied characterization of the cultural temporality of the reliefs did not wholly support the correlation. He would have been better off if he had allowed his

culture-temporal dating to guide his assessment of the archaeological date-context and not the other way around. And if Borchardt recognized the archaeological date-context, he chose to ignore it. Although he may have been right to do so, his preferred dating was probably wrong.

In the “rubbish” which Quibell’s workmen removed from the burial chamber of the mastaba, “robbed and half full of broken stone,” two (or maybe three) fragments of a seal of the Horus Neterykhet appeared “in almost the last basketful of earth” (Quibell 1913: 3, 4, 12, 39 no. 23, pl. 18 no. 23). This phrase has been interpreted to mean that the seal fragments were recovered from the floor of the chamber in turn covered by fill, possibly a fairly undisturbed context (Cherpion 1989: 24 n. 25, cf. Cherpion 1999: 104 – where there are said to have been *two* seals). But this might just be wishful thinking. The tomb had been robbed in antiquity, and it was excavated twice, first by the workmen of Mariette (who may not have reached the underground chambers) and then by Quibell – both teams working quickly and rooting about for objects.

From the fill (though he did not say where) Quibell also recovered a bone dagger handle inscribed with Hesy’s name (1913: 3, 38, nos. 8-9, pl. 18) and “a much decayed bit of bone with an incomplete name and title, apparently not those of Hesy” (1913: 38, no. 12, pl. 18), though in fact this artifact does seem to give his title of “master of scribes of the king” (Kahl, Kloth, and Zimmermann 1995: 102-103). These two objects, however, provide no evidence for the absolute date of the tomb equipment – as the seal seems to do. Still, they reinforce the likelihood that the fill (as one would expect) contained remains of Hesy’s tomb equipment – possibly including a vessel with the seal of Horus Neterykhet. Only two other mastabas in the Archaic Cemetery can supposedly be dated on the basis of a seal of Horus Neterykhet – Tombs 2305 (Quibell 1923: 3, 30) and 3518 (Martin 1979: 18, no. 5, pl. 19[5]).

The seal, then, is decent but not watertight evidence. If a preponderance of other chronological considerations tended against it, it could be set aside. To my knowledge, Bolshakov (1997: 34) has been the only Egyptologist categorically to state that the sealing is “not reliable enough” for dating the tomb and its reliefs

and paintings. In her proposed “iconographical” criteria for dating Old Kingdom depictions—it ranges motif types (ways of depicting furniture, hair and wigs, etc.) according to their correlation with reference points which have absolute dates—Nadine Cherpion (1989: 24) has also abandoned the evidence of the seal. However, Cherpion does not dispute the date of the tomb of Hesy to the reign of Djoser, and indeed she accepts the dating on the basis of the find spot of the seal (cf. Cherpion 1980: 84). But in her method of dating, only kings’ names inscribed on the walls of the tombs (not kings’ names impressed on the stoppers of jars deposited in the tomb) can be admitted as secure date-correlations. To be consistent, then, and however useful the information would be, she cannot use Hesy’s tomb and the many motif-types that could be found among its depictions as an absolutely-dated anchor.

Most Egyptologists, however, have not adopted such a rigorous approach. The seal has been widely used to constitute the entire tomb of Hesy, including all its decorations and depictions, both painted and sculpted, as a reference point in the morphological or typological “dating” and the culture-temporal periodization of a good deal of the *other* production thought to belong to the Third Dynasty. Needless to say, this decision has had self-perpetuating ramifications. For example, Winfried Barta accepted the supposedly seal-dated panel of Hesy at his funerary table (CG 1426) to be one of the most important “fixed points” (1963: 29) in a typology and chronology of Archaic and early Old Kingdom offering lists. In turn, art historians have used Barta’s relative chronology to help date other table scenes of the Third Dynasty in relation to one another (e.g., Terrace and Fischer 1970: 40).

An even more serious problem in the archaeological dating of the wooden reliefs of Hesy in the context of the mastaba of Hesy—containing objects inscribed with his name or impressed with the seal of the king—has received less attention. Unlike most Archaic and Old Kingdom mastabas at Saqqara and Giza, the mastaba of Hesy was not constructed in a single building project in which the structure can be treated architecturally as a single unit and its decorations can be treated as a single design. For this reason the whole building project cannot be

assigned to one well-defined period – namely, the length of time it took to conceive and to complete the tomb and its decorations *as* any kind of supposedly unitary system. To be sure, as Bolshakov (1997: 42) has argued, in general we should consider the form and style of iconography in an ancient Egyptian tomb as a unitary system rather than extract individual motifs for “stylistic,” typological, and seriation analysis (see also Davis 1989: 59-64, 1992a: 22-27) – the kind of analysis, for example, in which we find wigs, chairs, attributes of clothing, depicted activities, and so forth, floating entirely free of their particular stylistic (or, as Russmann [1995: 271] defines it, “syntactic”), semantic, and narrative-figurative contexts. Unfortunately, however, the requisite semiological or narratological methods of analysis that would be required to consider the “system” of tomb depiction in Bolshakov’s sense are almost entirely lacking in Egyptology – even though more or less comprehensive handbooks of many cycles have readily available to each generation of Egyptological art historians (e.g., Klebs 1915, Vandier 1964-69, Harpur 1987). And in the case of the tomb of Hesy, the very assumption of system – and hence of semiotic and narrative coherence – must be interrogated.

In his publication of Tomb 3038 at Saqqara, Walter Bryan Emery (1949: 82-94, pls. 21-26) offered the most detailed presentation of a history of reconstruction in an early dynastic mastaba. Because the brick used in all three phases of the construction was uniform, Emery concluded that “no great interval” passed between the alterations. “But,” he added, “we can gain no clue to the reason for the changes or to the architectural conception behind the first two constructions” (1949: 83); the third and final phase, “with certain minor differences,” was the “usual type of ‘palace facade’ mastaba of the First Dynasty” (1949: 88). Emery did not cite other instances of substantial reconstruction. W. M. F. Petrie (1892) identified several phases of construction in the early Old Kingdom mastabas of Nefermaat (and Atet) and Rahotep (and Nefert) at Medum, and they have been clarified by recent studies (see Harpur 2001: 36-44, 48-51). Needless to say, it would be anachronistic to offer these important and informative examples as

parallels for the history of the tomb of Hesy, the construction of which probably commenced several decades earlier. But we might infer from them that architectural and even architectonic reorganizations of tombs were more common than we tend to presume in considering the system of their decorations.

The tomb of Hesy does not show the kind of radical reorganization seemingly to be observed in the earlier Tomb 3038. Instead, it presents a fairly smooth aggrandization; the process – a series of modifications – was architectonically coherent even if the (re)construction itself was temporally discontinuous. (It is precisely for this reason, of course, that its history has been overlooked as a factor in dating the tomb and the contents retrieved from various locations or relocations within it – including the reliefs.) The resulting aggregation has often been described as the “tomb of Hesy.” In fact, however, the later stages of the modification of the tomb likely post-dated the death of Hesy by a generation or more; perhaps they were conducted by descendants, and perhaps in the context of their own funerary preparations. Still, some part of the painted and sculpted decoration in an Old Kingdom tomb, as Bolshakov (1997: 194-97, 209) reminds us, must have been planned and made and perhaps even used ritually during the lifetime of the tomb owner who launched the project – that is, in this case, *pre*-dating the actual death and the burial of Hesy with his tomb equipment. Thus and strictly speaking the archaeological date for the wooden reliefs of Hesy in the “tomb of Hesy” must range over a period of tens of years, perhaps as much as half a century.

In absolute terms, the Third Dynasty from the beginning of the reign of Djoser to the beginning of the reign of Snefru in the Fourth Dynasty was little more than half a century long, c. 2630 – c. 2575 BC (see Arnold and Ziegler 1999: xx). If the reliefs were made in an earlier or the earliest segment of this range, in the lifetime of Hesy as an official of Djoser, the Horus Neterykhet, they would belong squarely to Smith’s first phase of Archaic artistic culture (Archaic I) – what I have called the Early Archaic period. But if the reliefs were made in a later segment of this range, in a modification of his tomb by Hesy, they could belong to Smith’s *second* phase of Archaic artistic culture (Archaic II) or even to

Smith's *third* phase of Archaic artistic culture (Archaic III) – his Late Archaic “transition” to the emergent classical culture of the Fourth Dynasty where Borchardt (1937) had already placed them. In their architectural location in the “tomb of Hesy,” the reliefs were situated in a part of the construction that had not been included in the *earliest* conception of the architectural form of the tomb and perhaps of its painted and sculpted elaboration.

Unfortunately, we have scanty information on the history – the relative dates and the cultural temporality – of the phases of construction in the tomb of Hesy. As Peter Janosi has recently noted, they remain “insufficiently investigated and documented.”<sup>13</sup> Most of our understanding derives from Quibell's four somewhat puzzling analytic representations of the tomb. In 1913, in the year following the campaign of excavation, he published plans of the superstructure and substructure (1913: pls. 1, 2[2]) and a north-south section of the entire tomb (1913: pl. 2[1]). Ten years later, in 1923, he published a map of the north group of tombs, including the tomb of Hesy, in the Archaic Cemetery at Saqqara; it presents the layout of the mastabas with plans of their superstructures (1923: pl. 2). As we will see, this 1923 plan of the superstructure differs from Quibell's 1913 plan in a small but for our purposes a crucial matter. In 1913, Quibell's written description of the tomb was fairly extensive (1913: 1-13), but it was vague, even confusing, about several points of construction.

In 1936, Reisner took note of the problems. Apparently using little more than Quibell's plans (though probably he had also inspected the site himself), he made sensible suggestions about the original sequence of events in the building of the tomb (Reisner 1936: 138, 248, 270-73. (In turn these seem to have accepted – and were well narrated – by Vandier [1952: 709-10].) Beginning in 1936, Smith assisted Reisner in establishing a chronology of the Archaic Cemetery at Saqqara. It was based in large measure on topographical

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<sup>13</sup> As he goes on to say, “because Hesi-Re's monument is unique in the context of the few other known mastabas of the late Third Dynasty, it is difficult to make a clear presentation of tomb development in this epoch based on its example” (1999: 37 n. 5; cf. Kaiser 1998). For the possible influence of the tomb of Hesy on some aspects of later tomb development, see Reisner 1936: 248, 270.

considerations though it also took account of seemingly dated or datable reference points. Smith sidestepped Reisner's awareness of the complexity of Hesy's construction. Using the dating suggested by the seal fragments found by Quibell, he assigned the tomb to the early Third Dynasty. In a circular fashion, Reisner and Smith shored up this dating by the late Second Dynasty dates they gave (largely on topographical grounds) to the group of mastabas immediately to the east (QS 2400) of the tomb of Hesy (QS 2405) and by the later Third and Fourth Dynasty dates they gave to the group of mastabas to the west (QS 3000-20)—conforming, it seemed, to the general westward development of the lines of tombs at Saqqara from the “front line” of First Dynasty mastabas. Reisner and Smith had various interlocking reasons for the dates given to these groups. But the dating of the tomb of Hesy to the early Third Dynasty figured prominently as one supposedly fixed point in the dates assigned to them on topographical grounds.

Smith also used dates assigned to stelae recovered in or around the eastern group and to reliefs preserved in mastabas of the western group (notably the mastabas of Kha-bau-sokar and Hathorneferhetep). None of these objects or decorations, however, could be assigned a convincing absolute date on archaeological or epigraphic grounds. The archaeological contexts of the eastern finds were poor; the western mastabas did not contain inscribed materials. Moreover, the stylistic dates were themselves influenced by Smith's sense that they could be seen as earlier or later (or culture-temporally older or younger) than the supposedly well-dated reliefs of Hesy. We will return to some of the chronological and cultural-temporal relations of the reliefs of Hesy to relief sculptures discovered nearby. Admitting the full archaeological date-range of the tomb of Hesy, it is fair to say, would require us to reconsider both the topographical and the stylistic dating of the supposed groups of Second, Third, and Fourth Dynasty tombs in its neighborhood. Smith's general scheme probably would not be changed substantially. But the tomb of Hesy (or particular phases of its construction) could be assigned to the period of either group or overlapped with one or both of them. Smith's topographical analysis allows for

this perfectly well even if he himself specified the date of the tomb of Hesy on the basis of the seal alone.

In turn, when Smith (1946) came to deal with the tomb of Hesy in his history of painting and sculpture, he treated it as having a unity of design. He saw all of its decorations as contemporary with one another, even though they belong to different phases of construction of the tomb identifiable in Quibell's plan and already reconstructed by Reisner. It was partly for this reason, I think, that the stylistic and iconographic identity and the cultural temporality of Hesy's decorations – the concatenation of wooden reliefs, several sets of paintings, and sculptures (though Smith did not cite them) – posed such challenges for Smith (see above, §§ 1, 4). He tried to give a single stylistic periodization, Early Archaic, correlated with the single absolute date given by the seal fragment (reign of Djoser), to a body of materials that may not have had the chronological and culture-temporal coherence he assumed for it.

Only re-excavation of what remains of the tomb of Hesy could settle many problems of its history. Here it suffices to sketch one plausible reconstruction of the vicissitudes represented on Quibell's plans.

*Hesy I*, "the older nucleus mastaba" (Reisner 1936: 271), was a considerably smaller building than the structure represented on Quibell's plan, approximately 45 m. by 24 m., even if we discount the obvious later (or latest) additions of the small integral mastabas on the east flank (QS 2411, 2412). It probably started life as a mastaba with a niched "palace facade" on the eastern face.<sup>14</sup> In earlier tradition, the "palace facade" was used on all four exterior faces of the tomb. The "Covington Tomb" at Giza (Giza T), which Reisner (1936: 248) dated to the reign of Khasekhemuwy (cf. Leclant and Berger 1997), apparently did so too (see Covington 1905: 200-2, and fig. 2), but it seems to have been the last of its type which has survived. In noting the antiquity of the design employed there, Petrie (1907: 7) implied its culture-temporal archaism (cf. Weill 1961: 311-21). In

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<sup>14</sup> For the "palace facade" tombs of the First Dynasty, see especially Emery 1949, 1954, 1958; for the painted decorations of the niches in the facade, see Emery 1958: pls. 6-8, 16-17, with which Hesy's painted decorations (Quibell 1913: pls. 4[1, 2], 5, 8, 9) might be compared and contrasted.

preserving an unbroken “palace façade” on the east, even though it was reorganized into an *interior* western wall, Hesy’s tomb, then, might have impressed a contemporary observer as architecturally archaic if not archaistic in this respect. As already suggested, the period of building the tomb had an absolute duration which would have permitted such revision or renovation of its significance as later (and “younger”) structures were built up around it: by the time the mastabas immediately to the west were completed, this feature of Hesy’s tomb could have seemed not only “earlier” but also “older.”

However they related to earlier tradition, Quibell described the “palace façade” niches in Hesy I as “hidden niches” in the mass of the mastaba, for they were entirely enclosed in the building and had been “filled in solid with brick” (1913: 3, 11). Quibell’s 1913 plan suggests that they belonged to an inaccessible inner corridor of the tomb. Indeed, as his name for them suggests, he believed that the hidden niches were conceived and constructed precisely in order to be hidden, perhaps because they had a “magical” function. Specifically, he believed that if the painted niches with the reliefs had been destroyed, the “hidden niches” might have served as a substitute (1913: 3) – though they were not plastered and painted and had no depictive elaboration (1913: 11). Evidently, then, he believed that the “hidden niches” and the “painted corridor” were built in one and the same project. Still, he did acknowledge that “the plan of the tomb may have been altered during the construction” and that the niches, “intended to be the final ones,” became useless after “the enlargement of the plan” (Quibell 1913: 3, 11). The mass of the mastaba was apparently not opened around all of the “hidden” niches – among other things, we do not know exactly how many there were – and it is not obvious that they were initially conceived to belong to an interior corridor, let alone an inaccessible one. It might be that Hesy I began life as a mastaba with an *exterior* “palace facade” on the east which subsequently montaged into a mastaba with an interior corridor with a “palace facade” wall on the west. In this case, we would need to identify *Hesy Ia* and *Hesy Ib*.

On his 1913 plan, Quibell showed that the corridor terminated in a short northern wall about 1.5 m. from the deep niche (see also pl. 24[3]) – the only one

actually excavated according to this plan. At the southern end of the corridor, although this area of the mass might not have been opened, presumably one could have found the entrance to the interior corridor within which this niched facade formed the western wall (at least in Hesy Ib). It is not clear, however, whether this corridor and entrance system was actually constructed, for in *Hesy II* the builders well-nigh doubled the whole mass and area of the mastaba. The niches and the incipient or completed interior corridor to which they belonged were totally absorbed and enclosed within the enlarged mastaba. Its new eastern face was (re)located more than six meters eastwards of the eastern wall of the now “hidden” niches. Possibly we should suppose that the builders did not bother to dismantle or fill in the niches and corridor when they enlarged the mass. They were “hidden” in the sense that they became vestigial.

It is not clear exactly where the northern and southern faces of Hesy I were built. Quibell’s 1913 plan suggests that they were two to four meters behind or within the northern and southern faces of Hesy II – perhaps more on the north. Quibell marked two east-west breaks in the bonding to the north of the shaft and “hidden niches” in the northern half of the mass of the mastaba; presumably one of these should be accepted as the original north outer face of Hesy I. Quibell’s north-south section (1913: pl. 2[1]) suggests that the innermost break represents the original north face; it had been battered and plastered before it was embedded in the enlarged structure (Quibell 1913: 11, and cf. pl. 24[3], where the joint is just visible at the far right of the photograph).

On the plan of 1913, one cannot quite determine whether the single deep niche shown in the “palace facade” wall of the corridor would have been complemented by a deep niche immediately south of it. On the plan of 1923, however, Quibell indicated part of a second deep niche immediately south of the deep niche beside the north terminal wall. On the basis of this evidence (though the grounds for Quibell’s correction were not stated), it would seem that there could have been no less than eight deep niches in the palace-facade wall of Hesy I, whether it was an exterior face of the mastaba (as in a hypothetical Hesy Ia) or an interior and later vestigial corridor (as in a hypothetical Hesy Ib).

Because the position of the north terminal wall of the corridor of “hidden niches” is known, the total number of niches in the “palace façade” depends, of course, on the location of the southern facade of Hesy I. But as with the northern façade, its position cannot be determined readily from the plans and section. It could be represented by the *inner* east-west break in the bonding marked by Quibell in the southern half of the mass, in which case Hesy I could have accommodated no more than eight niches in the “palace facade.” If we take the *outer* east-break break in the bonding in the southern half of the mass to represent the south façade of Hesy I (as it became Hesy II), we could suppose that *nine* niches were imagined for the tomb—but that in the process of construction the mastaba was actually enlarged into Hesy II (with eleven niches). The inner break in the bonding seems to be integral to Hesy II even if it was inherited from the conception and construction of Hesy I. In the most plausible scenario, the niches planned for Hesy I were not all constructed, or if constructed were abandoned, when the tomb-owner determined to enlarge the structure.

The builders of Hesy I probably intended depictions of Hesy to be displayed within the deep niches. They were probably meant to be floored and roofed with planks (Quibell says nothing about what, if anything, was found when the northernmost niche was opened); the depictive object—presumably a wooden panel, like the reliefs which survive—would likely have been installed in the way it was in Hesy II.<sup>15</sup> Whether the eleven wooden reliefs of Hesy installed in the interior “painted corridor”—the *second* series of niches—in Hesy II included any panels intended and made for Hesy I before it was enlarged must remain a tantalizing question. It is hard to imagine that the owner and the builders and artists of Hesy II—likely including some of the artisans, if not the very same artisans, who worked on Hesy I—would have abandoned any reliefs (possibly as many as eight or nine) made for Hesy I, especially if Hesy I, as seems likely,

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<sup>15</sup> Quibell described this installation for the panel he retrieved (badly drawn *in situ* by F. H. Darke [Quibell 1913: pl. 5]), and made a point of noting that the bottom of the relief touched or was inserted into the floor. Although Reisner (1936: 271-73) offered a plausible reconstruction, doubt remains about how the panels were installed. The notches to be observed on the surviving panels were probably used in installation.

smoothly became Hesy II. Moreover, it is easy to imagine that the enlargement of Hesy I occurred while the reliefs and other tomb furnishings were being produced and that Hesy II therefore required the manufacture of more reliefs than initially envisioned, completing its additional niches. Whether eleven reliefs were made “all at once” for Hesy II or included panels made “earlier” for Hesy I, and whether Hesy I was enlarged into Hesy II in a single project of construction or modified in the later lifetime of the owner, the reliefs display variation amongst themselves – as Smith among others noticed right away. These variations are consistent with the possibility – though they do not, of course, demonstrate the fact – that the reliefs, like the tomb itself, had *an internal cultural temporality*. Needless to say, it is difficult to correlate the chronology – and the cultural temporality – of tomb construction (such as the two or more phases of Hesy I and II) with the chronology – and the cultural temporality – of tomb decoration (such as the production of relief panels for the “hidden niches” of Hesy I and the “painted corridor” of Hesy II). Here it suffices to recognize that some panels initially planned for Hesy I could nonetheless have been installed in Hesy II even if Hesy II required the production of more panels than could have been accommodated in Hesy I. As we will see in more detail, the *absolute* lag of time in this replicatory series – whether ten days, ten weeks, or ten years – is much less consequential for our purposes than the fact of replicatory series itself, of “earlier” (and thus possibly “older”) and “later” (and thus possibly “younger”) entries in the series. Needless to say, a negligible chronological can be a substantial *culture-temporal* gap between replications. One should certainly be cautious in treating the reliefs as a *set* even though they formed a *sequence* when they were installed architecturally as a *group*.

In Hesy II, eleven wooden reliefs were installed in the “palace-facade” niches in the western wall of an interior corridor located a little more than 3 meters east of the vestigial corridor of “hidden niches” in Hesy I. The niches were elaborately painted to resemble woven hangings “stretched tight by a cord running through a series of loops and round a horizontal rod” (Quibell 1913: 16-17, pls. 8-9; see also Reisner 1936: 290-92). These paintings reached a height of

2.15 m. in the corridor. Above them, and presumably above the panels as well, “something new, projecting probably beyond the usual surface, had once existed at that level”; Quibell took these features to be the “elaborate false doors” found in Old Kingdom tombs (Quibell 1913: 16). Although support- or attachment-systems were observed by Quibell (1913: 5), nothing of this elaboration above the painted niches has survived.

Opposite the painted niches (each with its panel installed at the back), on the eastern wall of this corridor (nearly 30 meters in length) three registers of painting were laid down (Quibell 1913: pls. 10-23; the difference in tone across the surface of the painted wall, visible in one photograph published by Quibell [1913: pl. 6], was apparently due to the effects of the varnish applied by the copyists). Unfortunately, a graffito of the king’s name scrawled by one of the artists – and later painted over – is illegible just where the name should stand (Quibell 1913: 25, fig. 8, and pl. 12[18]). The lower register depicted the offerings and funerary equipment presented to Hesy, the middle register represented the textiles hung from the masts and rods which constituted the tent-like structure (the *‘ibu* or purification-tent) in which the offerings were displayed, and the upper register represented the “oil magazine” provided for Hesy in the tomb (Altenmüller). (Below these depictions, a red band edged with black runs the entire length of the east wall, about 65 cm. from the floor [it is visible at the bottom of the photograph in Quibell 1913: pl. 6]; it can be found at the same level on the western or niche wall [see Quibell 1913: pl. 4(2)] and in the entrance to Hesy II and helped tie together the various representations facing each other on the east and west walls. In the “outer corridor,” however, it appears at a higher level [Quibell 1913: 5] – perhaps another indication of the later date of that part of the tomb, here designated Hesy III, and its decorations and furnishings.) The tomb-owner himself was probably portrayed at the northern (left) end of the registers of paintings and facing towards the depicted presentations; one foot survives (Quibell 1913: pl. 16, left). According to Quibell, Hesy was depicted as a seated statue because this foot is so close to the mast of the tent sheltering the funerary presentations (a red vertical bar in the painting) “that it could not

belong to a standing figure" (Quibell 1913: 18). Four offering stands with bowls were painted in the short northern wall of the interior corridor (Quibell 1913: pl. 16). An offering list was painted in the inclined section of the wall next to the entrance at the southern end (Quibell 1913: 8, and pl. 22 [Door]). These were probably done at the same time as the main registers were completed. However, the reliefs and the paintings across from one another in the "painted corridor" need not have been contemporary (in either absolute chronological or culture-temporal terms or both) if some of the reliefs were "inherited" from Hesy I (or the period when Hesy I was first conceived) while the paintings could not have been made until Hesy II was almost completed. In one simple (but obviously hypothetical) scenario, as many as eight or nine wooden relief panels were planned and perhaps produced for Hesy I. They were followed by the planning and production of the paintings for Hesy II, a later entry in the program of decoration, and of two or three additional reliefs – whether these "new" reliefs were earlier or later than or contemporary with the paintings. Smith noted that the relief panels as a group and the paintings conceived as a single large composition do not display the same configurative features. Compared to the panels, for example, the proportioning and the spacing of hieroglyphs in the paintings are distinct. Probably the reliefs and paintings had different makers. (Still, because conventional script signs are likely not *Grundformen* of makers' habits, this "stylistic" difference between the reliefs and the paintings provides no evidence for attribution one way or another.)

Above the door of the southern entrance to the "painted corridor" in Hesy II the builders installed some kind of sculptural decoration. Quibell found a battered limestone hawk "of the familiar archaic type" in the fill in front of the southern entrance to the corridor; he supposed that it had been installed over one of the three small niches flanking either side of the entrance or "above a stela fixed over the door" (1913: 4, 9). As this object (which he did not illustrate) was said to be quite weathered, we can infer that the eastern facade of Hesy II (perpendicular to the line of entrance through its decorated southern door into the "painted corridor" opposite the southernmost deep niche) formed the *exterior*

eastern facade of the mastaba for some time – perhaps many years. In turn this facade was later enclosed as the two-niched western wall of what Quibell called the “outer corridor” of the tomb of Hesy, i.e., *Hesy III*. This new corridor was constructed by enlarging the mastaba yet again – adding a new brick facing (less than one meter thick) on the western, southern, and northern facades to accommodate the new footprint and proportions created by building a large new structure opposite the eastern exterior facade of Hesy II. Evidently this structure was not entirely satisfactory because its northern segment, where ordinarily the northern niche would be sited, was already occupied by an earlier mastaba (QS 2406) – whether or not this tomb was earlier than Hesy II and Hesy I as well.

At the southern end of the eastern addition in Hesy III, a serdab was built south of a passage-chamber leading back to the (former) southern entrance of Hesy II in turn feeding back to the southernmost deep niche of its “painted corridor.” A stone block at the back of this room had been cut with sinkings to support three statues (Quibell 1913: 10, and pl. 24[2]); two larger statues of the tomb owner, placed side by side, might have been complemented by a third and smaller figure. Quibell found “fragments of one or of two human skeletons” in the burial chamber, including “parts of two human skulls,” and formed the impression that one of the bodies was female (1913: 4, 12). The bones were not successfully retrieved, but Quibell’s comment raises the possibility that the tomb was opened after Hesy’s burial to permit another burial and perhaps the enlargement of the tomb itself. Although it seems likely, there is no way definitively to determine whether all of the statues depicted the same occupant of the tomb and whether this person (or one of them at any rate) was the Hesy apparently buried in Hesy II and whose likenesses adorn the “palace facade” niches of his enlarged mastaba and some of which possibly had been taken from an earlier siting (i.e., Hesy I). The statues in the serdab of Hesy III must have been made later than the reliefs (some of which might have a vintage in Hesy I) that had stood for some considerable time in the painted corridor of Hesy II.

Although the three statues do not survive, evidence for the absolute date of Hesy III derives from the badly damaged paintings discovered on the west wall

of the “outer corridor,” which, unlike the east wall of the painted corridor, was noticeably battered (Quibell 1913: 10, and visible also in pls. 3 and 4[3]) – suggesting, of course, that at one point it had been an exterior face of the mastaba. In addition, a “geometrical pattern,” part of a frieze, was painted in the entrance-chamber to the east of the “outer corridor” and giving on to the serdab (Quibell 1913: 9-10, and fig. 1); probably this was made at the same time as the paintings in the outer corridor and likewise belongs to the building of Hesy III. In the corridor, the surviving elements of the program (preserved only on the west wall but probably painted on the east wall as well) depicted four cattle, two human figures, and a “crocodile waiting at a ford” (Quibell 1913: 4, pl. 7[2], and probably pl. 15 [4, 5, 6]). (The niche at the north end of the corridor was painted to represent a hinged wooden door flanked by geometrical designs [1913: pl. 24(2).) As Smith (1946: 155, 269-70) noted, they appear to belong to a “swamp scene” such as we find in the tomb decoration of the Old Kingdom. In their technique, construction, and style they display effects, such as sophisticated stippling, that are also characteristic of Old Kingdom painting. For Smith, then, they provided important and (in virtue of the supposed lack of any parallel for them in the reign of Djoser) surprising evidence of the “earlier” appearance of this iconography and style – perhaps betokening a lost ancestral painting tradition of “Old Kingdom” type in the preceding Archaic culture.<sup>16</sup> In a complementary way, they have contributed to an overall sense of the advanced – the modern or even avant-garde – nature of Hesy’s tomb, including the reliefs and paintings in Hesy I/II. Smith’s opinion of the swamp scene in the “outer corridor” was entirely predicated on taking Hesy III to be part of a unitary project of construction and decoration of a mastaba that included Hesy I and Hesy II. As we have seen, however, the statues in the serdab and the paintings in the “outer corridor” of Hesy III probably post-dated Hesy I/II. Even if the

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<sup>16</sup> Compare Harpur 1987: 177, 2001: 55, for a more temperate view; and as she (2001: 71, 75, 287 n. 23) points out elsewhere (Harpur 2001: 71, 75, 287 n. 35), the painted reliefs in the tombs of Nefermaat and Rahotep at Medum might imply the existence of an earlier tradition of “swamp scenes,” though she does not specifically invoke Hesy’s paintings as evidence for it, but there

Hesyt of Hesyt III (if indeed he was Hesyt) was the builder and owner of Hesyt I/II, he built his tomb and completed its depictive furnishings over a period of many years.<sup>17</sup>

## §6. Replicatory Relations in the Reliefs of Hesyt

Mariette retrieved five reliefs (CG 1426-30) from the southern niches of the “painted corridor” in Hesyt II. The sixth panel (Q) was retrieved *in situ* in the northernmost (eleventh) niche by Quibell. Although Quibell saw their remains, the five panels originally installed in the intervening niches did not survive. Mariette’s numbering for 1426 (= Mariette’s A5) suggested to Reisner (1936: 273) that this panel came from the fifth niche from the south, where it would have been situated roughly opposite the burial. As Wendy Wood (1978: 9-10) has pointed out, however, Mariette’s numbers for the panels probably did not reflect the location of the panels as his workmen found them *in situ*. (Elsewhere in her study of the panels, however, she presents evidence to show that Mariette did know the sequence of the reliefs [Wood 1978: 18].) In Hesyt II, as we have seen, the mastaba had become a tomb with two niches in the exterior eastern face and an interior “palace-façade” corridor. In this unusual architectural configuration, as Wood noted (1978: 10), it might have been appropriate to put the panel of the deceased seated at his offering table in the first deep niche in the “painted corridor” – i.e., all the way within the southern entrance/niche complementing the newly constructed northern niche on the east face of the tomb (see Reisner

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need be no reason for the “earlier” paintings to have resembled the later ones, as Smith presumed.

<sup>17</sup> In still later elaborations of the tomb, *Hesyt IV* and *Hesyt V*, not worth pursuing here, the eastern chambers and facades of the tomb continued to be modified. They came to include two small integral mastabas (QS 2411 and 2412) which were reached, like the mastaba of Hesyt I/II/III whose latest eastern facade they walled up, by way of a long corridor. It threaded past QS 2406 and gave access at the other end to the interior corridor of the large mastaba to the east of Hesyt’s tomb (QS 2407, dated by Reisner/Smith [1936: 305] to the end of the Second Dynasty; see Quibell 1923: 38-39). The long “storehouse or magazine” (QS 2408) between Hesyt IV/V and 2407 would seem to have been constructed earlier than or at the same time as the long corridor; its western and northern faces constituted the corridor (see Quibell 1923: 39, pl. 33[2]). It is not clear whether this building had any relation to the tomb(s) of Hesyt.

1936: 271). Wood points out (1978: 11) that the panel in this position was the only one that could be seen by a viewer standing in the entrance. Hence it might have served as a symbol introducing the set or sequence of reliefs. Still, Reisner's original point remains valid: in a set or sequence of eleven reliefs of the tomb owner, the relief of Hesy seated (1426) might properly belong opposite the tomb in the middle of the "painted corridor." Really we know only that the eleventh panel (Q) belonged to the northernmost niche, where it was actually found.

In her own provocative analysis, Wood (1978) dispensed with Reisner's suggestion. Based on the evidence of the six surviving panels, she tried to reconstruct the location of each of the eleven panels partly by distinguishing between the "active" and "passive" (or "more active" and "more passive") poses of the depicted figures of Hesy. As already noted, she proposed that the sole depiction of Hesy seated (1426), supposedly the most "passive" presentation of the tomb owner, must have been placed in the southernmost (first) niche. Working from this, she proposed to place the best-preserved panel of Hesy standing (1427) in the second niche, an "active" presentation of the tomb owner, next to it—and so on, establishing an alternating sequence of "passive" and "active" depictions. But all of the panels depict the figure of the Hesy to be engaged in highly individuated poses, gestures, and actions, and it is hard to say, except in the most impressionistic terms, how one might be more or less "passive" or "active" than another. Indeed, as we will see, because we do not know exactly what some of Hesy's poses or gestures might mean—what he is "doing" or "saying"—it must be impossible to specify how active he is supposed to be.

Wood addressed the overall programmatic significance of the tomb decoration; she took it to be "formally and iconographically unified" (Wood 1978: 10). In particular, she tried to identify a *narrative* sequence in the six surviving reliefs—both assuming and concluding that they constituted a group. To be sure, the installation of reliefs could have been narrativized by their viewers, whether or not it was specifically in terms of Wood's "active" and "passive" configurations of the tomb owner. (Narrative is an imaginative

construction rather than an inherent property of depiction [see Davis 1992a: 234-55, with references].) But in itself this does not address the replicatory and cultural temporality of the very constitution of narrative or other programmatic significance – of its constructed and configurative possibility. As our earlier considerations suggest, however, though the relief panels were installed as a group (at least in Hesy II) and must have been experienced in a sequence (insofar as one can only enter the “painted corridor” opposite the “first” deep niche), they need not have been made as a single set. Indeed, it has never been pointed out explicitly, so far as I know, that the sequence of reliefs in Hesy II (or better, the group of six surviving panels) divides into *two* sets.

One set consists of 1427, 1429, 1430, and Q. 1427, the best-preserved (and much-reproduced) panel in this group, shows Hesy gripping his staff and his scribe’s kit in his left hand, held out as if in front of him. This construction means to show him with left arm – it is clearly unflexed--carrying the implements loosely or lightly swinging at his side; the attitude can be contrasted with another panel in the set (1429) which shows Hesy “stride-standing” with the staff, grasped in his left hand, planted firmly before or in front of him (here his left arm is strongly flexed). The four panels in the set are distinguished from the other set (i.e., 1426 and 1428) in two ways. First, they have been divided into a section of hieroglyphs on the top third of the panel and a section presenting the figure on the bottom two-thirds. These sections are not quite metrically but they do appear optically to be in the geometrical ratio 1 : 2. Second, the top sections on all four panels present exactly the same titles of the owner, Hesy, shown below.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For the titles and other inscriptions on the panels and paintings in the “painted corridor,” see Kahl, Kloth, and Zimmermann 1995: 88-101, 104-11. In these four reliefs, though the titles are the same in all of them, the short offering lists included in front of the figure in two of the four, 1430 and Q, are not the same as each other nor the same as the short lists included in front of the figure in 1426 and 1428. Further, the hieroglyphs in Q face away from the deceased, as it were a de-reversal of the reversal of the signs probably intended on the other panels to emphasize that Hesy is the beneficiary of the offerings (Terrace and Fischer 1979: 37). Partly for this reason, Wood (1978: 14-16, 19) suggested that Q depicts Hesy *making* offerings to a personage she proposed to reconstruct from the single foot preserved in the northernmost section of the painting on the eastern wall of the “painted corridor” – namely, she proposed, the king (for her, the Horus

In all four panels, the top sections of hieroglyphs were raised above the bottom sections containing the figure of the tomb owner; the disjunction in the levels served as a kind of register line. In fact, the bottom section is twice as deep as the top section relative to the most forward plane of the panel itself, which in all six of the surviving reliefs seems to frame the entire field of depiction and inscription. But this outer border of the panel, though it is visible to us today, evidently was obscured when the panel was bricked and plastered into its niche, as Quibell's description of Q *in situ* suggests. (See Quibell 1913: 4-5, pl. 5; this feature has been overlooked in a reconstruction of the panels' installation published by Malek and Baines 1980: 63 and redrawn by Friedman 1995: 16, fig. 10[b].) In fact, when installed the wooden panels at the back of the niche would have been framed by a narrow strip painted on the plaster to resemble a decorative textile; it was presented as if hanging behind a painted wooden plank that presumably would have seemed continuous with the actual planking used to install the panel and to roof the niche (see Quibell 1913: 4-5, and pl. 8; on pl. 4[1], a segment of plank set into the outermost embrasure of the niche is visible: it was probably used to support the roof planks). Therefore the topmost plane of the wooden panel itself should be discounted in considering the configuration of the two interior sections. Still, their difference from one another would have been fully visible: the bottom section is clearly deeper than the top, which would have seemed to be the forward plane of the relief panel.

Perhaps the principal function of the division between the sections was strictly compositional: it helped clarify the distinction between hieroglyphs and depicted figures and between the name and titles of Hesy and the enumeration of his funerary offerings. Visual distinctions of this kind had been involved in the conventionalization of the canonical Egyptian style since the early dynastic period and even before (see Fischer 1986, Baines 1989). (It has often been

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Neterykhet named on the seal). Although Hesy in Q might be an offering maker (see Fischer 1973) and although Hesy's tomb is unique in many ways, this iconography would have been an extraordinary invention. More likely, the de-reversal of hieroglyphs in Q simply accepts that one could begin "reading" the inscriptions from the northern end of the sequence of reliefs as well as

proposed that a “reform” of script – of the morphology of hieroglyphs and of the general configuration of writing – was undertaken in the reign of Djoser [see recently Kahl 1994: 161-63], and we might associate the wooden reliefs of Hesy with this cultural event whether or not they were contemporary with it.) Still, it would have been possible to separate the top from the bottom sections in the reliefs in several other ways – for example, by actually carving a register line in relief. Therefore we might suppose that the device used by Hesy’s sculptors had some kind of architectonic function or even a symbolic significance.

When the panels were installed in the painted niches, roofed with wood and floored with stone, the top section of each panel probably would have appeared more prominent – “closer” to the viewer – and the bottom section of the panel would have appeared “retracted,” “further” from the viewer, as if showing what lies “beyond” or “behind” the opening of the niche and “inside” the panel underneath the inscription – namely, the figure of the tomb owner. Moreover, as Quibell’s illustration of *Q in situ* shows, a narrow painted red band (stripped with black at bottom and top edges) ran the entire horizontal length of the “painted corridor” on both east and west walls – tying together the representations facing one another – and on the west wall it seems to have been carried around the several edges of the niches and right up to the panels. Placed about 65 cm. from the floor, its bottom edge corresponded with the division between the top third and bottom two-thirds of the wooden panels. The painted woven hangings were shown, then, as if they came down to a point just above this band, as if revealing – or concealing – the inscriptions and depicted figure on the wooden panel “behind” it (Quibell 1913: pl. 5, and cf. pl. 4[1, 2]).

The effects used to organize this viewing situation – including the “illusionistic” paintings – involved a fairly extreme manipulation of the viewer’s own posture and actions. The “painted corridor” was only about one meter wide and the niche was a little more than a meter deep. And whereas the roof of the corridor was set about one-and-a-half meters higher than the full height of a

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from the southern end. As Quibell originally proposed, the foot in the painting on the opposite wall would belong to a depiction of Hesy – the tomb owner himself or a statue of him.

viewer, the roof of the niche sat only about half a meter higher than the height of a viewer. On each panel, the top of Hesy's head – more than a meter from the front of the niche – was only about 65 cm. from the floor (see Reisner 1936: 271-72 and fig. 266, 288-89; Wood 1978: 15). Thus most viewers would practically have had to crouch down in the cramped corridor (their backsides almost pressed against the east wall) to peer under the lintel right above the panel (Quibell 1913: 4-5) and into the bottom of the back of the niche – as if looking “under” the hangings in front of it – in order to make out the depicted figures.<sup>19</sup> If offering stands were used in the niches, of course, they would have blocked any view of the panels. It is possible (though puzzling) that the tomb builders intended the neck-wrenching configuration of the reliefs in the niches precisely to place the images out of direct view and to make the viewer take a specific action in order to “see” them.

The upper part of the niches – at the viewer's eye level or above – might have contained another wooden panel, as the remains of “ties or pegs” found by Quibell suggested (1913: 5). Although nothing of this part of the installation survives, it might have provided a counterpoint to the wooden reliefs installed below. The “ties or pegs” were found fixed into the walls in either side of the niches about 2 meters from the floor. Whatever they helped to support must be distinguished from the wooden lintel stretched across the niche directly above the reliefs (i.e., about 1.15 m. from the floor of the niche). Discovered in the southernmost niche, one of these lintels was 20 cm. broad and suggests that the upper part of the installation, whatever it was, projected beyond the wooden reliefs in the lower part by 10 cm. or more. To be sure, Quibell (1913: 5)

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to incorrectly showing the way in which the panel was actually installed in the niche, the reconstruction published by Baines and Malek (1980: 63) and redrawn by Friedman (1995: 16 [fig. 10b]) does not reconstruct the entire niche. Thus it does not really represent the viewer's unusual corporeal and visual experience – the “actors' perspective” – in this situation. But in virtue of its angle of projection Friedman's drawing does suggest the strong and perhaps peculiar sense of “looking down” on the image that a real viewer must have experienced. It can be distinguished sharply from the corporeal and visual experience of the underground reliefs of Djoser at Saqqara which Friedman offers as a supposed parallel for the reliefs of Hesy. The depicted figures of Djoser were placed at eye level or above eye level in a shallow doorway

suggested that the reliefs must have been flush with the lintel, i.e., that they would have been about 20 cm. thick. But the thickest of the surviving panels is only 11 cm. deep. Although it is impossible to say exactly how the entire installation in the niche was configured, evidently it proceeded in several “steps” from front to back (and perhaps from top to bottom) of the niche.

Although no other examples of such symbolism survive from the Archaic period (and in the Old Kingdom the iconography of the tomb had developed beyond Hesy’s), the entire “painted corridor” might have been intended to represent the interior of the light, temporary tent-like enclosure within which Hesy’s funerary offerings would have been displayed before burial—as it were its permanent representation in the tomb. The east wall depicted the offerings themselves, backed by painted textiles representing the “east” side and the roof of the tent. The corridor itself became the space within which the funerary officiants were fictively placed; in regular ritual in the tomb after the burial, the funerary cult was actually conducted in the corridor. Likely enough, the ceiling and floor of the corridor were painted or otherwise decorated, heightening the impression that it was an enclosure whose particular identity was specified in the painted illusion of mats, hangings, planking, and poles on both long walls. The west wall symbolized the “west” (and death-oriented) side of the offering enclosure, with the wooden relief-carved images “outside” or “beyond” it—that is, “inside” the tomb itself—showing Hesy himself coming “forward” to participate in the ceremonies or seated at his offering table. As the reliefs were brightly painted, they would have seemed to be part of the overall image—the virtual reality—created by and in the “painted corridor.”

In this context the carved relief-panels of Hesy might have been versions of the fully three-dimensional statue or statues of the deceased later placed in the serdab of the mastaba, which for a considerable period of time had lacked these features. As we have seen, Hesy III also added the “outer corridor” with its “swamp scene” representing both the earthly existence of the deceased and his

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whereas the depicted figures of Hesy, placed in the bottom of the back of a fairly deep niche, were no higher than a viewer’s groin.

continued command of his estates and workmen in the afterlife. No such reference can be found in the symbolism of the reliefs and paintings in the “painted corridor” in Hesy II. In the reliefs – as in tomb statues – Hesy seems to be presented in his official aspects and the paintings do not depict the daily labor of his estate but rather the funerary offerings produced thereby. As it were walled up inside the tomb, nonetheless the statues (or in this case the reliefs) depicting the deceased *sub specie aeternitatis* can communicate with the world of the living, with his descendants and funerary priests. The images can “see” and can “be seen” and to some extent they can act across the material and mystical divide of death.

Although the segmentation of the panels might have contributed to this architectonic and symbolic effect, only four of the surviving examples display it – perhaps suggesting that they were made in a special awareness of or an alertness to formal and visual issues, whatever they might have been, that did not attract the attention of the sculptors of the two other surviving panels. Indeed, the fact that we *do not* find the segmentation on two of the panels of Hesy is perhaps more puzzling than the fact that we *do* find it on four of them.

The second set of panels (1426 and 1428) differs from the first set in both of the respects which define it. First, and as just noted, the sculptors made no division of the section of hieroglyphs from the section depicting the tomb owner by raising the top section above the bottom section or in any other way. Hesy’s titles, above the figure, smoothly abut the enumeration of offerings in front of the figure with no visual definition of separation between them. Indeed, the beautifully formed hieroglyphs on the panels (especially 1426) seem to be spaced precisely in order to create and to fill a unitary field extending from top to bottom and from side to side of the entire sunk portion of the relief. (As already mentioned, the sunk portions of the relief were the only parts of the panel that would have been visible when it was bricked and plastered into the niche.) The virtually geometrical ratio of the two sections in the first set of panels consequently does not appear in the second set. In 1426, showing Hesy seated, it is possible to locate the horizontal bisection of the relief, its geometrical halving,

in the space just above Hesy's head and just below his titles. But the viewer does not sense it as strongly as the proportioning of the sections of the panel in the other set, clearly marked by the segmentation of levels. And in 1428, although the full height of the figure is approximately two-thirds the height of the entire relief-carved area of the panel, this relation is not as visible as it is in the first set of reliefs because the hieroglyphs and picture seem to be crowded together.

Second, unlike the first set of reliefs, in which the same titles appear on each example, in the second set each of the two panels presents an individual configuration of titles. In 1426, which provides considerably more room for hieroglyphic inscription than any other panel, four titles not found on any other panel (including 1428) are given, and although 1426 includes the four other titles *also* given on 1428, they occur in different order. Moreover, 1426 is the only panel in the surviving six panels to give the short form of Hesy's name. Although 1428 presents the four titles also given on all the panels in the first set of panels, it gives them in a different order, and it omits one of the titles given by them (and by 1426).

What accounts for the two sets of panels? It would be tempting to suppose that they refer to different states or qualities of the social being of the tomb owner—for example, different identities in or aspects of his official career. But despite differences in the attributes and postures of Hesy in the four panels of the first set, all of them give him exactly the same titles. And despite the four different titles given to Hesy in the second set, one of the panels in the set (1428) is more or less continuous with the first set in depicting Hesy in his official identity and in giving him all but one of those titles which are given in the first set. All of the panels put great emphasis—both in text and in picture—on the social identity of Hesy as “master of scribes.” To date no interpretation has succeeded in showing how the five panels of Hesy standing—each of them has certainly been particularized or individualized in terms of the postural attitudes, the hairdress, and perhaps the facial expression of the deceased—might reflect five different and distinguishable personal, public, and/or official identities of the tomb owner. Moreover, the most obvious difference between the five

surviving depictions of Hesy standing and the single surviving depiction of Hesy seated is chiefly due to the special nature of the table scene and its role in the funerary cult.

It would also be tempting to suppose that the first set of panels was made by one sculptor and the second set was made by another sculptor. To be sure, the attribution of the six surviving panels has not been addressed systematically by scholars; in particular, Smith (1946) had nothing to say on the matter despite his attentiveness to the form and style of the reliefs. For Schäfer, Iversen, and other Egyptologists, it would appear that at least implicitly the six surviving reliefs can all be taken to be equally “canonical” (even though 1426 and 1427 have invariably been the reliefs to be illustrated) – a presumption that would tend to deny both an internal cultural temporality in the group (the matter to be explored below) as well as the possibility that different sculptors, whether contemporary or not, were differently oriented to or involved with the necessary “classical” conventionalization of depiction. The attribution of canonicity to depiction, of course, does not have to imply the attribution of high quality to the technique and form of its construction. And more important, it does not have to imply that canonicity was intended or achieved in a single phase-moment in the development of a style in turn bespeaking a unified cultural temporality – namely, a single unified cultural-temporal moment of classical conventionalization, whatever its chronological duration might have been. Nevertheless, the assumption that all the reliefs of Hesy represent an early canonical – or perhaps a late “pre-canonical” – conventionalization of depiction in ancient Egypt tends to interfere with recognizing how *each* relief might relate to this chronological and cultural-temporal horizon. That question forces itself on us as soon as we acknowledge that the reliefs might have been made – and likely were made – by different artists whose chronological and cultural-temporal identities need to be specified.

In her analysis of a possible narrative in the sequence of reliefs, Wood presumed a single artist who “designed the series” (Wood 1978: 11); like virtually all other commentators, she overlooked the existence of the two sets of

reliefs identified here. The existence of a narrative sequence in the depictions might complement the discovery of an internal cultural temporality in them as well, but Wood understood the reliefs to derive from a unified symbolic program and hence, it seems, from a single cultural moment. Nevertheless, she also observed the varying quality of the six surviving depictions of Hesy, suggesting that we can see two or more “workshop” artists rather than the master artist at work in at least some of them (Wood 1978: 12-13). At the same time, she considered all the hieroglyphs on all the panels to be “uniformly well made” (p. 12), which seems to imply that she believed the depicted figures of Hesy and the hieroglyphs giving his name and titles (and enumerating his funerary offerings?) were drawn or at least carved by different hands. The hieroglyphs on 1426 and on 1428, however, are not “uniformly well made”; the latter are chunkier and clumsier than the former and not as well spaced. There is really no evidence to suppose that the depiction of Hesy and the hieroglyphs on a single panel were produced by different artists, and indeed, as we will see, there is good reason to consider that they were made – as would seem natural – by the same artist.

Wood and I would concur in attributing 1426 and 1427 to the same master artist, but – returning to the particular point at issue here – he does not seem to have been responsible for just one of the sets of reliefs identified here. Rather, I suggest we can find one and the same sculptor, a great master, at work in *both* sets – although in only *one* relief in each set, namely, 1427 (in the first set) and 1426 (in the second set). Although these two reliefs are admittedly the best preserved in the group, overall they also display the highest quality. Notably, for example, in both reliefs the extremely slender and finely cut hieroglyphs, not matched on any other panel, have been spaced with exquisite finesse.

Equally striking, both reliefs present a similar handling of two difficult constructions of the postural attitudes of the seated and the standing figure (1426 and 1427 respectively) in relation to his depicted actions and accoutrements – attitudes seemingly related or mutually referring to one another insofar as Hesy carries three of the same implements (staff, scepter, and scribe’s kit) in both depictions. (In 1426, he carries the flail in addition to these

implements; in 1427, in addition he carries the rod.) These constructions would seem to have been quite distinctive, even unique, in the history of pre-canonical and early canonical depiction in the early dynastic and Archaic periods. One of the closest parallels for the configuration of Hesy's accoutrements on 1426 – he grasps his staff and scepter in his left hand, arm held close across his breast – might be found in the First Dynasty stela of Merka from Saqqara (Emery 1958: pl. 39; Davis 1989a: 166-67); here the deceased seems to rest his long staff, touching the ground in front of him, across his breast on his right shoulder. But Merka's sculptor did not show Merka gripping two implements in his left hand – let alone show, as Hesy's sculptor would do, how one of them, the scepter, was held "behind" the staff and closer to Hesy's body, and how yet another implement, the flail, was laid across Hesy's breast with its stick tucked underneath Hesy's right armpit beneath the scribe's kit. If the staff and scepter had been depicted "side by side," let alone if the stick of the flail had been added to the bundle, the sculptor would have had to give Hesy a disproportionately large hand and likely would have been unable to show how the knot and strings of the flail rest on his shoulder.

A similar problem – and similarly inventive solution – occurred on the other panel. In 1427, the sculptor presented a virtuoso configuration of Hesy's action and posture in holding a bundle of objects in his left hand. There appear to be three of them – the scribe's kit, a wand, and the staff. But the sculptor neatly disguises the fact that Hesy is not actually gripping the staff; although it seems to belong to the bundle of implements he carries in his hand, really it passes *behind* his hand. Smith remarked this fact in his analytic line drawing of the figure (Smith 1946: 273, fig. 103) but he still indulged the sculptor's illusion when he said that Hesy "holds [his staff] raised." If the sculptor had carved Hesy holding the staff, of course, he would have been obliged to give him a disproportionately large hand. At the same time, the wand – one of the two objects Hesy does actually hold in his hand – has been slightly bent to the left above Hesy's hand for the same reason and in order to help disguise the impossible position of the staff. (The presentation of the wand on 1427, then, adopts a solution exactly

inverse to the solution of the depiction of the scepter on 1427, and one might even imagine that the sculptor intended his viewers to notice and admire the interplay.) We might find a partial parallel in the figure of the “commander of the expedition” placed to the right of the reliefs in the Wady Maghara depicting the Horus Sekhemkhet: he carries both a bow and a weapon of some kind in one hand (Gardiner et al. 1955: 52).<sup>20</sup> But this personage carries two implements, not three, and we do not seem to find the painstaking and even self-referential engagement with configurative challenges that Hesy’s reliefs set for themselves in 1426 and 1427.

Here it is worth a remark on the methodological problem posed by seemingly unique motifs and configurations. How do we know they are unique – and how can we place hermeneutic emphasis on them when we do – when it might be that another depiction will be discovered on which the same motif or configuration can be found? (A parallel question bedevils the issue of the “earliest known” and “latest known” examples of a motif or configuration even if they are *not* unique: might we not find still earlier or still later examples?) These are good questions, but we can be virtually certain that configurations such as the postural attitudes of Hesy on 1426 and 1427 were indeed unique – for they were generated largely within the replicatory relations of the sequence of reliefs. In all kinds of ways 1426 and 1427 replicate *each other* as much as they replicate any general motif type of which they ostensibly present the tokens. The typology of motifs tends to distract us from the phenomena of configuration, which in an important sense are *always* unique – always relative to an individual depictive context.

If 1426 or 1427 do not really have obvious close replications – possible direct prototypes – in earlier depictions, the likelihood that they were *sui generis* – inventions of and responses to highly individualized depictive

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<sup>20</sup> At the time he wrote about them these reliefs were dated to the First Dynasty, but Raymond Weill had the insight to say that it was “extremely probable that this relief [of the officer] belongs to the Memphite period” i.e., to the period in which Hesy’s reliefs were supposedly produced rather than the First Dynasty to which the reliefs of the king were assigned at the time (Weill

interests – provides some reason to suppose that they were produced by one and the same intelligence. His distinctive construction of the figures could not have been conventional strictly speaking just to the extent that it was unique in the tradition – whether earlier, contemporary, or later. But this virtuoso nonconventionality was embedded and attained within the conventional framework of a canonical construction of the aspects and proportions of the figures. Such distinctiveness *within* a classicism encourages us to explore the connotations of archaism and modernism in the figures – the ways in which their novelty could have helped to consolidate their cultural conventionality. To unravel such matters, formal and stylistic observations inherently require culture-temporal interpretation.

Moreover, the two reliefs (1426 and 1427) display particular ways of drawing and carving which seem to betray individualized if not personal pictorial procedures in the formation of graphic conventions – in *stylization*. These decisions were replicated in certain other panels *not* attributable to the master sculptor (e.g., 1428). For just that reason, however, these details cannot be seen as habits – as an individual artist’s unintended, nonconventional mannerisms in the connoisseur’s sense. Hence they cannot be regarded as *Grundformen* in the connoisseur’s sense – criteria for an attribution to an individual artist *at a particular stage in his artistic development*, the “analytic individual” picked out in connoisseurship as it tracks the vicissitudes of an artist’s habits. Instead, they constitute criteria for a stylistic distinction between the two reliefs and other reliefs in both sets which nonetheless permits the two reliefs to belong to *different* phases of an individual artist’s development (rather than one particular stage in it) – just as the existence of two distinguishable sets of reliefs might suggest. Art history has not really given a name to stylistic traits of this kind. Although they have been organized in intersubjective replicatory temporalities, they are neither wholly conventional (in the semiologist’s sense of the arbitrary configuration deployed in a formal “syntax”) nor strictly habitual

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1904: 99, and cf. Weill 1908: 134-35; see Petrie 1906: pls. 45-47; Smith 1946: 115-16, and fig. 32; Gardiner et al. 1955: 52). He might well have been thinking of the parallel of 1427.

(in the connoisseur's sense of the individual artist's *Grundformen*). They are "intentional" in a sense not admitted in either one of these other kinds of stylization. But it is not necessarily the intentionality of full self-awareness – of the "actor's perspective."

One example will have to suffice. Both 1426 and 1427 show Hesy carrying his scribe's palette of inkpaints; in 1426, Hesy slings the palette over his right shoulder, and in 1427, he carries it in his left hand. In both cases, the two slightly raised interior circles in the palette have been lightly but carefully and firmly bisected by a single incised line. The circles represent the two basins of red and black inkpaint, and the segmentation might depict some kind of cover.<sup>21</sup> This detail, however, is not found in 1429 and 1430 (the relevant part of the object depicted in Q has cracked away). It does appear in 1428 – a member, with 1426, of the second set of panels as I have defined it. But here the half-circles have been carved in relief, showing the upper half of the basin raised well above the lower half. Although 1428 tried to depict the same feature of the object, then, and possibly should be seen as imitating 1426, its pair, it did so using a completely different technique.

The detail also appears with nearly the same distribution among the panels in the carving of the hieroglyph (Sign List Y4) in Hesy's title "master of scribes": in 1426 and 1428 (the second set of panels), the segmentation of the basins appears and in 1429 and 1430 (in the first set of panels) it does not appear. 1427 presents a mixed case. On this panel the segmentation fails to appear in the hieroglyph,<sup>22</sup> although it does appear in 1426, which I would assign to the same master sculptor, and in the same object as it was depicted in the relief – Hesy's palette grasped in his left hand along with his staff and wand. But the two

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<sup>21</sup> An analytic line drawing of Hesy's scribal kit in 1427 (Drioton 1942; republished by Terrace and Fischer 1970: 33) incorrectly renders the position of the implements in Hesy's left hand and fails to include the segmentation of the basins clearly visible on the original panel and in good black-and-white photographs. It is more readily visible in Borchartd 1937: pl. 25, though the photograph is very dark, than in Quibell 1913: pl. 29b. Even in the best color photographs it is quite hard to see (e.g., Michalowski 1969: fig. 67).

<sup>22</sup> This is clearly visible in a good detail photograph of the hieroglyphs on 1427 published by Terrace and Fischer (1970: 36).

palettes on the relief are not really the same: the figurative depiction of the palette in 1427 “reverses” the hieroglyphic depiction, or *vice versa* – the only instance of this kind of interplay in all the panels. In this replicatory context, it is almost as if the segmentation of the circles helps precisely to distinguish the depictive figuration from the hieroglyphic depiction of the object: whereas the segmented palette carried in his left hand seems to depict the “real thing” carried by Hesy, the hieroglyph in 1427 spreads the three parts of the kit as if flat on a surface (namely, the “surface” of writing itself), presenting a simple graphic formalization of the object. Presumably these graphic distinctions in the figurative and hieroglyphic depictions of the object denoted in both cases were correlated with symbolic ones. In the figuration, the palette would seem to connote Hesy’s easy familiarity with the object, carried in the same hand as his staff and wand and swinging loosely at his side. In the hieroglyph, the orderly analysis of the palette categorically signifies Hesy’s status.

Such differences between figurative-depictive and script-depictive representation were broadly characteristic of canonical Egyptian depiction, although they can also be seen as distinctive of this master artist’s configurative approach. In themselves, however, they do not account for the presence and absence of the segmentation of the basins of inkpaint. As I have argued elsewhere, depictive figuration includes perturbations in graphic formalization connected with representations of the maker’s and the patron’s sense of social identity and its contradictions and crises – whether intentional or not (see Davis 1996a: 232-56, 266-85). Earlier pre-canonical or incipient canonical depiction in Egypt gives extensive evidence of these ruptures (see Davis 1992a: 201-16). Likewise, I suspect, 1427 exhibits an internal history – a stratigraphy – of conflict between convention and mannerism. In carving the palette hieroglyph, the sculptor “forgot” that in figuratively depicting the object he could and that he would (and that he had or that he will) segment the basins of inkpaints – or he “resisted” doing so. The segmentation was clearly not a wholly *conventional* distinction between the hieroglyphic form and the figurative rendition – for in 1426 the segmentation appears in *both* hieroglyphic and figurative depiction.

Alternatively, perhaps the segmentation of the circles in the hieroglyph in 1426—here it matched the palette slung over Hesy’s shoulder—was a form of forgetting-resistance, that is, a personalized drawing of the hieroglyph, which ought to have been—but was not—differentiated in this respect from the figuration if 1427 represents the intended norm of the form. These replicatory phenomena cannot simply be reduced to “mistakes” in depiction or writing. If the master sculptor erroneously segmented the hieroglyph in 1426 which he “knew” (e.g., in 1427) should remain unsegmented, why did the sculptor of 1428 replicate the error? And if there were two contemporary ways of drawing the palette, neither way of drawing it could have been a mistake.

Needless to say, the psychic “content” or motivation of these formal relations—for example, some kind of self-subversion or transgression of an incipient normalization of depiction—remains largely unknown to us (see Davis 1996a: 266-85). Either way, the sculptor of 1428, the complement of 1426 in the second set of reliefs, replicated his master in this individualization; almost certainly he was an immediate apprentice or junior of the master sculptor of 1426/27. In turn, however, as already noted his replication had its own distinction: though he carved a segmentation of the inkpaint basins in both the depicted object and the hieroglyph, as his master had done in 1426, he employed a visible relief instead of a light incision. By contrast, the sculptors of 1429 and 1430—panels belonging to the first set of reliefs—did not notice or at least did not replicate this detail of the palette *in any way*. This constitutes one ground, among others, which suggests that they belonged to a substantially different replicatory context of production in the overall history of the two sets of reliefs.

If the interplay of relations in the master sculptor’s works (1426 and 1427) and in the set of reliefs by the master sculptor and an immediate close follower (1426-27 and 1428) shows us something of the “subjectivity” of the maker producing replications, the interplay of relations between the reliefs (1426, 1427, and 1428) which engage the possibility of segmenting the basins, whether or not they actually do so, and the reliefs which do not engage the possibility (1429 and 1430) shows us something of the “intersubjectivity” of the replicatory context.

Whatever the psychological and social determination of the former set of relations might have been, the emergent formalization of the detail, not wholly or successfully normalized even in the immediate context of its replicatory invention and dissemination, did not “jump” to the formalization of the depiction of the palette accepted in the latter set of relations; the detail did not become canonical. Even if the master artist exerted thorough-going control over the production of all of the reliefs – as implied, for example, in Wood’s contention that he “designed” them all – he did not regulate or regularize this aspect of their production. Although his own production and the production of a follower evinces alertness or attention to the detail, we cannot say that he overlooked it in the work of others. But we can say that the work of others – and maybe insofar as it was others’ work – did not require it. Probably the master sculptor recognized but ignored the difference between the replications in question.

All in all, in the vicissitudes of the depictive detail considered here it seems that we see the master sculptor (in both sets of reliefs) playing out a quirk (it is both mannerism and perturbation) in his stylization of convention – helping us to identify and to some extent to understand him. The process or the performance was picked up by one of his followers or juniors – helping us to identify and to some extent to understand him *as* a follower or junior. And it was distributed differentially between two sets of reliefs (helping us to identify and understand them *as* distinguished from one another) some of which were made by artisans different from both the artist who carved 1426/1427 and the artist who carved 1428 – helping us to identify and understand them *as* different. Reverting to our motivating question, forensics of this kind – the example just given could be complemented by several others – suggest that the first and second sets of reliefs were not produced by two different individual artists respectively. Rather, the two sets of reliefs were likely produced by two different teams of artists (though they might have overlapped in or shared some or even all of their actual members) under the supervision of one and the same master sculptor whose style of depiction, throughout identifiable as uniquely his own,

displays internal distinction or development and disjunction between the sets – as do the replicatory styles of the junior sculptors in part modeling the style of and in part replicating the ruptures in their leader’s procedures in depiction.

We can readily interpret a replicatory temporality of this kind in terms of an actual *chronological* distinction between the sets of reliefs. I have already raised the possibility that as many as eight or nine reliefs were conceived and perhaps manufactured in the context of the conception and perhaps the construction of Hesy I, although eleven reliefs were eventually installed in Hesy II, requiring the production of at least two “new” reliefs – reliefs made for the enlarged tomb. The most obvious candidates for such “new” reliefs can be found in the two panels which belong to what I have identified as the second set of panels, namely, 1426 and 1428. It need not have been the case that any new reliefs were actually made *later* than the existing reliefs, just as it is not necessary to suppose that Hesy I substantially predated Hesy II. It suffices to suppose that they were *younger*, even if the production process was an entirely continuous and coherent project. As already observed, the master-sculptor worked on both the first and the second set of reliefs identified here. If we should distinguish these sets as earlier-older and later-younger respectively, then we can readily understand how the detail of the segmented inkpots might have been introduced into (or dropped out of) the replicatory sequence even if we cannot specify the scenario with complete precision.

Perhaps, for example, the segmentation characterized the master’s way of *depicting* Hesy’s palette in 1427. But by the time he made 1426 – the absolute lag of time in question could have ranged from a single day to many years – it had become his way of *drawing* Hesy’s or perhaps any scribe’s palette, whether in figurative or in hieroglyphic depictions. In other words, we watch a conventionalization of a mannerism – in theoretical terms, an intersubjective or “cultural” normalization of a personal style-phase, whether unintended or deliberated. For this reason it is only superficially that the segmented palette seems to be the same *motif* on 1427 and 1426. On each panel it has a distinct and

particular formal, stylistic, and culture-temporal significance. Strictly speaking, although the palettes depicted on 1426 and 1427 might be the same motif in *iconographical* terms, in the more important historical terms of *iconology* they are not the same symbol or image, and a mere typology or chronology of the motif, its iconography, would entirely overlook its culture-temporal contexts and history.

In turn, the master's drawing in 1426 was depicted by the follower in 1428. Nevertheless, the follower's conventionalization in 1428 might well have been different from the conventionalization achieved in 1426. The master sculptor of 1426 might have been unaware of his personal convention – his manner – for depicting the scribe's palette. But the junior sculptor evidently replicated it with considerable care and deliberation: he carefully carved in relief what his master had indicated with a simple incision. Whereas his master deployed the mannerism as *one* way (one of his ways) of drawing the form, his follower adopted it as *the* way (his master's way) of drawing the form. Again, what would seem to be the same motif on two of the panels (here, 1426 and 1428) reveals itself to have distinct and disjunct meanings in its replicatory contexts – a particular formal constitution and distinct stylistic determination in each context. Obviously we can envision other scenarios that would encompass these phenomena. The larger point, however, would remain: the replicatory temporality of depiction inherently relays – it absorbs, it constructs, and it projects – particular cultural temporalities.

We would need an entire monograph to address the replicatory temporalities of the full range of depictions on the panels of Hesy. They can be identified, for example, among the three surviving panels seemingly made by junior sculptors or sculptors less skilled than the master sculptor – that is, on 1429, 1430, and Q. Conceivably 1429 and 1430 were made by the *same* junior sculptor. (Q is too badly damaged to be assessed in these terms.) Of these two reliefs, however, the attitude of the depicted figure in 1429 is the more “classical” in relation both to established convention and to the later canonical tradition in part projected from achievements such as this sculptor's. By contrast, the

configuration of the attitude of the figure in 1430 (as in 1426, 1427, and 1428) has certain more unusual features. On the relief it appears, for example, that Hesy holds his staff in his left hand close against his chest; its vertical line runs right between his clavicles. At the same time, his scribal kit is slung over his right shoulder – one would think rather precariously – and rests at a slight angle against Hesy's breast (on 1430 it seems to hang straight down). The configuration may have been intended to alleviate the awkward impression that the figure's right shoulder is crowded right up against the left edge of the relief.

Hesy's puzzling posture in 1430 has sometimes been thought to be a two-dimensional depiction (albeit carved in relief) of the posture of the official Sepa in his two tomb-statues, dated to the Third Dynasty, and similar sculptures (see Eaton-Krauss and Loeben 1997: 85, with references): [describe]. In the relief, however, Hesy seems to hold his staff off the ground – an action suggested by the very acute bend which the configuration gives to his left elbow, and not readily depicted in stone statuary. (The actual length of the staff provides no guidance to this matter. On 1429, Hesy's staff rests on the ground and comes up to his hairline; on 1427, the same staff comes up to his hairline but is held off the ground. The sculptors' presentation of the length of the staff, then, clearly responds to configurative as much as objective realities.) On 1430, the angle between arm and torso at Hesy's left armpit is several degrees more acute than the angle depicted in 1429. In 1429, if Hesy were to bring his left arm in this position across his chest, his staff would pass right in front of the scribe's kit slung over his left shoulder. In 1430, by contrast, the upper end of the staff seems practically to be touching the wig of its owner where it hangs over his right ear. Although 1430 is badly damaged below Hesy's belt-line, the lower end of the staff can be seen extending below the bottom line of Hesy's skirt; it hangs straight down between his legs as they emerge from the skirt. Presumably, then, the construction overall means to depict Hesy holding his staff up in front of his nose. Still, the configuration is inherently ambiguous about just how far away from his face the staff might be.

As these observations suggest, even if this *configuration* has been carefully particularized it remains unclear whether a special *gesture* must have been depicted thereby – in this case, perhaps a gesture of salute or acknowledgement. Some commentators have tried to correlate the conventionality or canonicity of Egyptian depiction with the decorum – for example, the conventionalized or choreographed gestural communication – of elite Egyptian social life. But the inference from one to the other would be unwise without full forensic evaluation of the status of depictive stylizations in their individual replicatory contexts. The examples of Hesy's scribal kit and staff in 1430 are cases in point. Rather than depicting a "real" and highly specific gestural action, perhaps 1430 simply provided a feasible resolution of or an experimental solution to the problem of replicating a figure like 1429 on a field which included a short offering list in front of the figure, crowding it both to the right and to the left. The junior sculptor of 1428 confronted a similar problem and solved it by eliminating Hesy's staff altogether.

In these replicatory aspects of 1430, we probably see a complex admixture of – and an accommodation between – the counterthrusting pressures of constructive convention, of configurative clarity, and of depictive particularity in the description of "real" attitudes and actions. Needless to say, we can see this in all of the reliefs. For example, 1426 might be said to replicate the figure of Hesy standing – carrying his staff and with his scribal kit slung over his shoulder (in 1427, 1429, and 1430) – in the seated posture. Hesy's action and gesture in 1426 would seem, however, to interfere with the principal objective business of the deceased in this situation: while he reaches his right hand toward the table, he must tuck his staff and wand under his right arm along with the flail resting across his chest and against his left shoulder and the palette resting on his right breast against his upper arm. This configuration is visually and aesthetically compelling. But it cannot be said to depict a plausible and particularized ritual-gestural posture or real action undertaken by the tomb owner. Recognizability is not the same thing as objectivity, just as objectivity – the denotation of actualities in the real world – is not the same thing as naturalism. In the same way,

whether or not the depiction in 1430 represents a particular gestural action – and hence has a “real-world” or objective denotation – the configuration must render it distinctively and to a considerable extent implausibly and ambiguously in order to accommodate deeper constructive principles. In the configuration, for example, Hesy’s staff seems to rest near his ear rather than in front of his face, as it must “really” have been held in any ritualized gesture – an arrangement which reflects the sculptor’s respect for the configurative coordination of aspects of the figure as much as its objective description.

### §7. Cultural Temporality in the Reliefs of Hesy

I have suggested that the relief of Hesy seated before his offering table (1426) can be grouped with 1428 to constitute one of two sets in the sequence of eleven reliefs installed in Hesy II and that it might be attributed to the same master sculptor as 1427. As noted already, 1426 and 1427 have long been recognized to be “key monuments” in our grasp of canonical Egyptian depiction. They seem not only to exemplify its basic principles or practices but also to have helped *establish* these principles and practices in the first place (see above, §1). One of the most acute students of early dynastic depiction, Raymond Weill, noted nearly a century ago that the reliefs of Hesy manifested a “very pure and very correct Egyptianism [*égyptianisme*]” (Weill 1908: 482). Undoubtedly “Egyptianism” was the most important cultural temporality in ancient Egyptian depiction. The most basic constructive and configurative techniques and conventions of the canonical tradition enshrined it for three millennia (Davis 1989a: 192-224). In the terms pursued here, the “Egyptianist” or “Egyptianizing” reliefs of Hesy seem to have been *both* traditional, certainly classical though perhaps archaically so, *and* modern – to be both conventional *and* innovative. But as our consideration of replicatory relations in the group of reliefs should suggest, in this broad field of possibility each relief manifests its own particular and subtle cultural temporality.

To revert to the example addressed at the end of the previous section, in 1430 the novelty in the postural attitude and action of the figure – it was probably driven both by configurative and objective interests – might be seen as “modern,” if not as a modernism, relative to the classicism of 1429. Except for including the scribe’s kit ubiquitous in the depictions of Hesy, the latter panel has obvious antecedents not only in Archaic but also in early dynastic (Early) artistic culture. Even if the same sculptor made both panels, in 1429 he worked closer to the by-now-classicized conventions of tradition whereas in 1430 he worked closer to the “contemporary” interests and problems of this particular sculptural project – namely, the representation of the specific identity of Hesy (with his special accoutrements) in a unique configurative context. Did 1429, the more familiar and traditional solution, seem “archaic” or even archaistic to him *in its “classicism”*? How did the contemporaneity of 1430, its solution of the particular new problem, signify to him, to his fellow sculptors, and to his patron and likely viewers in this context? The presence of an enumeration of offerings in 1430 in itself might not be modern or a modernism. Indeed, given the well-established history of the format, it might have constituted an *archaism*: the crowding of offering-glyphs and figure as well as the crunching of the figure’s configuration in rendering his implied (and somewhat puzzling) gestural activity might well have been reminiscent of earlier and “primitive” niche stones – the oldest configurative possibility in the tradition.

The impression of “archaic” or perhaps better an “old” type of crowding partly derives from the lack of dividing lines in the inscriptions and of clear separation between the inscriptional and figurative depictions – traits which have often been considered distinctively archaic in terms of morphological dating (e.g., Cherpion 1980: 83). Indeed, in later recrudescences this style of configuration can sometimes be considered archaistic (see Cherpion 1998: 107); vertical dividers had already been deployed in inscriptions made by the sculptors of Khasekhemuwy at Hierakonpolis at the end of the Second Dynasty (see Alexanian 1998: 19, and figs. 21-22), although their use would not become

quite general – though never universal in all inscriptional contexts – until well after the production of Hesy’s reliefs.

Whatever the long-term history of the style might be, the sculptor of 1430 evidently conducted an archaic or “old” crowding of forms with some contemporary deliberation – for in 1429, of course, it was avoided or eschewed. (The sculptor of 1430 was undoubtedly no less skilled than the sculptor of 1429; as we have already seen, he confronted a configurative challenge with considerable ingenuity.) In this respect the archaic feature of 1430, if archaic it is, actually tends to *modernize* the classicism of the configuration – the incipiently canonical construction of the depicted figure – and tends to spread through the whole relief as a kind of *archaized modern classicism*. This cultural temporality (a precipitate of the replicatory relations between the reliefs) can be distinguished from the *modernist archaic classicism* of 1429. Even if 1429 and 1430 were made by the same sculptor, in the configurative tasks undertaken in each relief he found himself in a particular culture-temporal context. Each relief relayed its maker’s sense – whether deliberate or not, whether a matter of his self-aware “perspective” or not – of the complex cultural temporality of his practice in its traditional and its contemporary situations.

As Smith (1946) stressed, the reliefs of Hesy – especially those which show Hesy standing in his official capacities – can be associated in many respects with contemporary reliefs of the Horus Neterykhet and other more shadowy rulers of the earlier Archaic period (his “Archaic I”) at Saqqara and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> These disparate materials remind us that the artistic culture of Smith’s “Archaic I” was widespread – the earliest “national style” in pharaonic Egypt (Davis 1989a: 159-71) even though it manifested internal stylistic and iconographic distinctions and variations. Within this style, Djoser’s reliefs in his funerary complex at Saqqara,

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<sup>23</sup> The relief fragments from a small shrine at Heliopolis seem to be securely dated to the reign of Djoser (Weill 1912: 9-26; Smith 1946: 133-37, figs. 48-53). Blocks from a temple of Hathor at Gebelein, probably datable to the end of the Second Dynasty (Davis 1989a: 169, Alexanian 1998: 13), could be given to the Third Dynasty (as in Smith 1946: 137) if one sees their style as “archaic”; whatever the case might be, they cannot be far removed from Djoser’s construction at Saqqara. For the unprovenanced stela of the Horus Qahedjet acquired by the Louvre in 1968, see Ziegler 1990: 54-57.

the major monument of the period, constitute the most substantial Early Archaic corpus of comparanda for the reliefs of Hesy. Probably the sculptors of Hesy found their training and patronage largely in the royal (chiefly Djoserian) projects of the early Third Dynasty. In turn the depictions presented on Djoser's monuments had inherited the early dynastic tradition of the iconography of rulership which had selectively replicated – reproduced, revised, and refuted – an ancient, ramified, and heterogeneous late prehistoric depictive culture (Baines 1990, Davis 1992a [with which cf. Wilkinson 2000: 27-28], Sourouzian 1995). So much can be taken for granted about the art history of the early and later Third Dynasty (Smith's Archaic I, II, and III) and about the place of Hesy's reliefs within it.

At the same time, as we have had occasion to see already, the entire group of Hesy's reliefs and especially the relief of Hesy seated at his offering table (1426) must be related to the niche-stone slab-stelae and tablets, or "primitive niche stones," retrieved from mastabas at Saqqara or thought to have belonged to such mastabas. The earliest of these artifacts apparently can be dated to the end of the Second Dynasty (for recent reviews, see Bolshakov 1997: 30-34, Sourouzian 1998).<sup>24</sup> Other slab-stelae have been dated to the Third Dynasty on morphological and epigraphic grounds (Barta 1963).<sup>25</sup> These datings, however, are essentially stylistic. As noted earlier, Barta used the morphology of the offering list to date slab-stelae with a "fixed point" in the reliefs of Hesy, dated by Barta on the evidence of the seal to the reign of Djoser. And as we have seen, to recognize that the reliefs of Hesy might well be "later" in both absolute and culture-temporal terms would require some revision in the morphological typologies built around it. For our purposes here, it suffices to note that most of

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<sup>24</sup> See especially the stelae of Gem-n-sesher (Scharff 1932; Barta 1963: 14-26), Sehenefer (Quibell 1923: pls. 26, 27; Barta 1963: 16-18; Smith 1946: pl. 32), a "royal daughter" (*z3t nswt*) (Smith 1958: pl. 14; Barta 1963: 22), *jmt* (Smith 1958: pl. 13; Barta 1963: 26-27), and the two stelae found in tomb contexts, though not in their original installations, by Quibell at Saqqara (1923: pl. 28 [1, 2]).

<sup>25</sup> See especially the stelae of Wa'ten and Weser-neb-nt (Moret 1919; Barta 1963: 27-28; Ziegler 1990: 157-63), Teti-ankh-ni (Weill 1908: 225-30; Barta 1963: 31), and Zefa-nesuwt (von Bissing 1914: I, pl. 14).

them were culture-temporally older, whether or not they were earlier, relative to modernizations undertaken in the reliefs of Hesy.

The same might be said for different reasons about the stone stela of Samera found within a “brick enclosure” – a niche? – on the eastern side of Tomb R88A at Reqaqneh (Garstang 1904: 45, 58, pl. 28[a]; Weill 1908: 210-12). Dated to the Third Dynasty, this relief “in the old style” might have been roughly contemporary with the tomb of Hesy or even a generation or two later. Raymond Weill took it to be “a first attempt” at the kind of depictive configuration realized in the panels of Hesy (see further Weill 1908: 403-406 for comments on aspects of archaic survival at Reqaqneh). Smith, however, did not find it to be a useful parallel because of its supposedly “provincial” character (Smith 1946: 142) – primitive and *retardataire* rather than archaic-classical or archaizing. Still, it might show that the “old” style survived throughout the considerable period of the construction and decoration of the tomb of Hesy; as already suggested (above, §6), it might have become Hesy’s object of replication, perhaps including an archaistic revival or renovation of the archaism. Some such points of reference would have been required in order to constitute Hesy’s depictions *as* modernizing or *as* having-achieved-classicism. Hesy’s and similar high-quality private production at Saqqara might have established themselves as classic-traditional achievements *and* as “cutting edge” – in a word, as elite – in relation to less advanced possibilities like those supposedly manifested at Reqaqneh. Still, it stretches plausibility to imagine that Hesy’s sculptors had seen this particular distant “provincialism.” More likely they responded to the existing production of “primitive niche-stones” in and around Saqqara itself.

The tradition of the format used in all these stelae, including Hesy’s wooden reliefs, went back several generations to the tall and narrow stone stelae used in the First Dynasty. One such early dynastic monument, a stela belonging to the official Merka, might have been set in the embrasure of the subsidiary grave in Tomb 3505 at Saqqara (Emery 1958: 13, 30-31, pl. 39, Davis 1989a: 166-67); its roughly rectangular field of depiction (130 cm. high) was slightly larger than the entire panel in the reliefs of Hesy (115 cm. high). In turn these monuments likely

expressed a kinship with the round-topped stone stelae from royal funerary establishments at Abydos in the First Dynasty (Petrie 1900-1, Vandier 1952: 740-42, Davis 1989a: 164-68). The slab-stelae of the Second Dynasty and later differ from these round-topped stelae in using a more or less square format for the table scene – appropriate for the architectural installation of the images in the southern offering niche of the tomb. Nevertheless, one of the “primitive niche-stones,” the Bankfield Stela (Gardiner 1917, Barta 1963: 22), presents a virtual cross between the round-topped format of the Abydene royal stelae, the tall narrow format of the stela of Merka, and the squared-off format of the late early dynastic or Early Archaic table scenes on slab-stelae. (Needless to say, however, both the chronological and the culture-temporal date of the “table scene” in the broadest sense – that is, as it was used not only in stone markers in the tomb but also in cylinder-seal imagery and elsewhere – had a late prehistoric period of origin and culture-temporal vintage [von Bissing 1952].) Whether or not the Bankfield Stela had actually been produced in the Second Dynasty, it presents an intriguing synthesis of early dynastic and Archaic formats – perhaps even an archaistic aspect not far in its culture-temporal determination from the replicatory context of Hesy’s reliefs.

Like the Bankfield Stela, though far more sophisticated in its configuration of the motif, the relief panel of Hesy seated at his offering table would seem to have a traditional, even archaic, flavor insofar as the table scene – at Saqqara it had already been presented on the squarish fields of earlier niche stones (e.g., Quibell 1923: pl. 18 [nos. 1, 2]; Smith 1958: pls. 13, 14) – has been squeezed by the sculptor of 1426/1427 into a tall, narrow format which could have reminded viewers of much earlier royal and private funerary monuments like the stela of Merka. Perhaps it continued or revived them; we can reasonably assume that some of the monuments in question were still visible at Saqqara when the sculptors of Hesy began their work (for the “historic landscape” of Memphis in the early dynastic period, see Jeffreys and Tavares 1994). Of course, in setting the overall shape of the field of the table scene the sculptor of 1426 had no real choice. Even if the panel had been made later than the other panels, it had to

conform to the architectural morphology of all the panels; it had to fit into the same kind of site in the tomb as all the others. Like them, then, it would look modern in relation to the tall narrow prototypes of the First Dynasty. But at the same time it might also look even more contemporary (“younger”) than the panels depicting the standing figure of the tomb owner, high official, or ruler – one of the most ancient iconographies in late prehistoric, Early, and Archaic Egyptian depiction. It could be seen to mediate a more recently invented or “newer” iconography originating in that format only a generation or two earlier and intensively developed thereafter (namely, the table scene on slab-stelae) into a different depictive setting (namely, the tall stelae) in turn associated with considerably older traditions (namely, the early dynastic royal and private stelae) – thus modernizing that tradition. Compared, then, to niche-stone slab-stelae from Saqqara which might be dated a generation or two earlier, noted above, the table scene presented on 1426 would have appeared overall to be both old *and* new – a contemporary version of a modern image which gave it a traditional configuration and at the same time modernized the very tradition it replicated precisely by producing a highly contemporary treatment of a classicized image.

In relation to this achievement, the table scene attained its fully “classic” formulation in subsequent generations – for example, in the stela of Isi now in Copenhagen (Koefed-Petersen 1956: 24-25, no. 17) and the stela of Nefer from Tomb G2110 at Giza, now in the Museo Barracco, thought to date to the reign of Khafre immediately succeeding Smith’s “Archaic III,” the “transition to the Fourth Dynasty” (Smith 1946: 163, Careddu 1985: 3-4, pl. 1). In its classicist Old Kingdom representation, the table scene had a number of well-defined and highly particularized features. To take one example, usually the legs and feet of the deceased were separated from the forward leg and bull’s-leg support of the chair or stool on which he or she sits – its right front or left front leg depending on the orientation of the scene. This was not invariably the case, however, for sometimes the legs and feet of the deceased in Old Kingdom table scenes, however classicist or canonical in other respects, obscured the front support of

the seat. This had been a configurative preference, if not a general convention, in earlier Archaic artistic culture – appearing in Hesy’s 1426, in the stela of Abneb (a virtual epitome of the traditional contemporaneity to be found in Hesy’s relief) (Boeser 1905: I, pl. 23, Weill 1908: 219-25), and elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

To be sure, a convention, as just noted, need not be universal. On some of the “ceiling stelae” at Helwan (generally thought to date to the Second Dynasty, and likely installed above the false door in the tomb chapel [Haeny 1971]) the front leg of the deceased’s seat seems to have been depicted; it was not obscured by the deceased’s legs and feet.<sup>27</sup> Whatever determined the configurative practices of the sculptors at Helwan, they probably did not produce this rendition *as* a new, or later and younger, convention. In this context of replication the motif had no conventional circulation in the first place: the great heterogeneity of the depictive motifs on the “ceiling stelae” suggests that they had little or no standardization and that each motif had little or no integration with covarying motifs. Those Old Kingdom artists who *also* rendered the deceased’s seat with unobscured front leg had probably taken little or no account of the Second Dynasty ceiling stelae at Helwan even if they had seen them. More likely they replicated the achievements of Archaic artistic culture – such as the reliefs of Hesy, which, as we will see momentarily, had already been leading the way toward this very revision, namely, the transformation of the obscured seat leg to an unobscured seat leg.

In turn, then, in classicist artistic culture of the Old Kingdom any rendition *obscuring* the forward legs of the seat had the potential to appear to be archaic, earlier and perhaps “older,” if only because the *unobscured* seat was a later and likely was understood to be a “younger” motif relative to it. To be sure,

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<sup>26</sup> As an item of real furniture, of course, the seat with bull’s-leg supports had an early dynastic and earlier origin; both a chair and a stool with such supports were depicted among Hesy’s offerings on the eastern wall of the “painted corridor” (Quibell 1913: pl. 18, nos. 38, 40).

<sup>27</sup> See Tombs 175 H.8 (Saad 1957: pl. 2); 889 H.8 (pl. 3); 964 H.8 (pl. 4); 114 H.9 (pl. 5); 167 H.3 (pl. 6); 246 H.8 (pl. 7); 810 H.3 (pl. 9) (a “plan view” of seat bottom + “side” view of legs?); 416 H.8 (pl. 12) (an attempt to show the front seat leg and the deceased’s legs and feet “tucked” under the table?). These are somewhat dubious cases; only 133 H.8 (pl. 13), 235 H.8 (pl. 17), and possibly 175 H.8 (pl. 16) clearly produced a version of the usual later, “younger” convention. 9 further slabs in Kaplony 1966: 261-69 check. Stylistic sequencing in Drioton 1957: XII-XV.

Cherpion (1989: 41) has recalled that in absolute chronological terms the deceased's seat with obscured front leg, like the unobscured version, can be found throughout Old Kingdom depiction. Whether it represented a continuous tradition of representation – a depictive possibility constantly available to canonical artists – remains unclear. Like many motifs in Egyptian iconography, it appears to “come and go” in the tradition (the phrase is Harpur's [2001: 288 n. 41]) and therefore it might not have had a single date-period. For that very reason, however, it cannot be a “dating criterion” in Cherpion's sense. Useful as her method can be within its limits, it exclusively considers *date-periodized* motifs. In her terms, the obscured leg of the deceased's seat cannot be assigned an absolute date or placed in a relative chronology specific enough for purposes of “dating.” For this reason, her method can say nothing one way or another about its replicatory vicissitudes and their historical significance.

Cherpion's method is strictly iconographical and as it were pre-art-historical; it does not address – nor was it really devised to address – the hermeneutic problems of iconology. Nevertheless, to understand depiction and style in art-historical terms we must be able to address configurations which have and can have no particular style-period or cultural-phase date despite the fact that they must have had a cultural age in each one of their many uses. In particular, Cherpion's method cannot consider many canonical configurations – they have date-ranges coterminous with the entire style-period of “integrated construction” in the canonical tradition (see above, §3) – in the cultural temporality of their archaism, classicism, and modernism, the art-historical entity or event examined here. Cherpion says that we simply do not find “archaistic” depictions in private tombs of the Old Kingdom – and this is quite correct if by this we have to mean, as she puts it, that one can find “all the characteristics of art of the Fourth Dynasty” in a tomb inscribed with a king's name of the Sixth Dynasty (Cherpion 1989: 80-110). But the art-historical concepts of archaism, classicism, and modernism in depiction – of archaic, classic, and modern cultural temporalities – do not require, and in fact tend to vitiate, any such possibility in the first place. We could never find a Sixth

Dynasty tomb with “all the characteristics” of a Fourth Dynasty tomb; even if the depictions were morphologically identical or indiscernible they would still be distinguished by occupying different replicatory places in the tradition – one “earlier,” and maybe “older,” and one “later,” and maybe “younger.” Moreover, in their cultural temporality all depictions exemplify some degree of “synthèse hétérogène” (Baud 1998: 75) – a complex stratigraphy and interdetermination of archaic, classical, and modern aspects. In the case of Hesy’s table scene, we must consider whether and how a configuration with an earlier vintage helped to establish the cultural temporality of any later depiction in which it was used.

Given the close regional proximity of the sculptures made at Helwan (the “second cemetery” of Memphis [Wilkinson 1996: 348]) to the sculptures made at Saqqara, including Hesy’s, we could imagine that Hesy’s sculptor knew from Helwan that the seat and legs of the deceased could be rendered and had been rendered differently from the way he would configure them. But in his case we do not need the “ceiling stelae” to make the point. Manufactured a generation or two earlier than Hesy’s reliefs, stelae from Saqqara had distinguished the deceased’s legs from the front leg of the seat (Smith 1958: 27-28, pls. 13, 14). Both of these stelae were found in “Second Dynasty” tombs. For Smith, this pre-Archaic or Early Archaic absolute date would correlate with the diagnostically “archaic” presentation of “fumbling disproportions” in one of them, the stela of a “royal daughter” (*z3t nswt*) (Smith 1958: 27, pl. 14, Barta 1963: 22). But in culture-temporal terms this stela was quite novel (in its “archaic” Archaic context – in Smith’s Early Archaic or Archaic I – it included modernizing or avant-garde aspects): the sculptor paid elaborate attention to the deceased’s wig and especially to the seat, where he painstakingly clarified the spatial relations of the forward (right side) rung of the seat, the front bull’s-leg support, and the deceased’s right and left (front and back) legs and feet. This finicky depiction can be contrasted with the real “fumbling” found on the other stela, the stela of *jmt* (Smith 1958: 28, pl. 13, Barta 1963: 26-27), though this stela also displays the seat leg unobscured. Finally, the slab-stela of the “royal daughter” Sehenefer from Tomb 2146E at Saqqara (Quibell 1923: pls. 26, 27, Smith 1946: pl. 32, Barta

1963: 16-18), also dated to the Second Dynasty, likewise presented the front leg of the seat unobscured by the deceased's legs and feet. But here the sculptor depicted a chair which was quite different from the usual – it is actually a kind of throne, reminiscent of early dynastic examples and similar to the throne depicted on the stela of the “royal son” (*z3 nswt*) buried at Helwan (Saad 1957: 9). This iconographic fact might have provided an objective determination for the configuration. In the other two stelae, if the configuration had an objective determination it was not to render a special kind of seat but rather to render the relations of the deceased's legs to the usual kind of seat.

The archaeological contexts and dates for these three stelae are less than satisfactory. It must be acknowledged, then, that their attribution to the Second Dynasty (to Smith's “Archaic I” or even to a pre-Archaic period) depends in part simply on the impression that their depictions and inscriptions look “archaic,” as both Quibell and Smith put it, relative to the best work supposedly to be placed in the early and mid Third Dynasty (Smith's “Archaic II/III”), such as the reliefs of Hesy. At the least, however, the unobscured leg of the seat would have been novel in this chronological context and thus likely would have been seen not as an archaic trait at all (i.e., as a feature consistent with contemporary traditions and conventions of Early Archaic artistic culture) but rather as a modernism or avant-gardism. The question arises, then, whether the stelae really are Second Dynasty in the first place. For our purposes here, it is enough to suppose that they were produced *no later* than Hesy's reliefs. In one particular respect and even at that time they constituted a possible example of culture-temporal modernism.

In relation to the earlier or contemporary stelae presenting an unobscured seat-leg, Hesy's obscured seat-leg would have had the status of a traditionalism – even an archaism. This is to say that Hesy's obscured seat leg – in the context of an alternative depictive possibility – did not have the same culture-temporal status as the obscured seat-leg simply presented as *contemporary* convention, as might have been the case earlier and elsewhere in Archaic artistic culture. In this way the configuration helped attach a younger

depiction (as we have already seen, overall it had a modernizing aspect) to an older tradition—at once respecting the tradition by re-inscribing it *in* the depiction and thereby highlighting the creative modernism *of* the depiction. One of the most “archaic” motifs deployed on 1426—the configuration of the deceased’s legs obscuring his seat—would largely turn out to be in the service of its modernism. And a motif which appears within the “datings” of style- and motif-periodization to require an archaic date would turn out to have a modernizing cultural temporality. In the context of Archaic artistic culture, Hesy’s sculptor was avant-garde in his archaic renderings.

In the later culture-temporal context of Old Kingdom artistic culture, canonical image makers were indebted to Hesy’s and similar modernistic traditionalisms as the very origin of their own classicism. But they would transmute the particular detail in question here into an *archaism* when they revised, replaced, and refuted it by wholly “de-obscuring” the front leg of the deceased’s seat in some (but not in all) of their replications of the table scene. At this point in the cultural temporality of canonical iconography, if the earlier Archaic reliefs were still accessible most of them—including Hesy’s modernism—would retrospectively have appeared to be “older” in their classicism in displaying the earlier configurative detail. The avant-garde quality of Hesy’s sculptor’s archaism, then, would become a classicism as the image itself aged. At the same time, if later image makers could appreciate the “classical” quality of Hesy’s relief could be appreciated, perhaps they could still appreciate the modernism of the archaism—the archaistic qualities—of his configuration. If the contemporary “de-obscured” seat was considered to be the norm in the Old Kingdom, a repetition or even a revival of the earlier and older motif would appear to construct an *archaistic* classicism—an effort, in a sense, to recall the originary qualities (the earlier *and* older culture-temporal status) of Hesy’s and similar productions in the subsequent development and transformation of canonical iconography.

To evaluate such possibilities we would need a systematic consideration of cultural temporalities in depiction in the Old Kingdom, a matter far beyond our

scope here. For instance, archaistic depictions in canonical depiction – a means of establishing canonicity itself – would have to be distinguished from cases in which the “archaic” convention of obscured legs persisted as a merely archaic and even pre-canonical survival *in* canonical depiction. One example might be the peculiar stela found in fragments near the main terrace of the temple in the Sacred Animal Necropolis at Saqqara (Martin 1979: 13, pl. 20). In the general configuration of the deceased seated between family members, the depiction would seem to date to the later Old Kingdom. But this need not be the whole story of its cultural temporality. In the configuration of the deceased’s obscured seat it would seem to retain or to include a more archaic temporality, a survival, or by reviving it to date itself culturally in part to an archaic tradition – an archaistic revival. The question might be resolved in favor of the latter possibility: the excavator of the stela has suggested a parallel between the wig of the seated figure and the seated figure of Hesy, and it might be that the sculptor tried to suggest or evoke an earlier and older prototype in this aspect of the depiction too. In order to avoid intricate problems of survivals and revivals in this depiction, of course, one might simply date it to the Third Dynasty: it could actually be archaic. But in this case one would have to deal with its precociousness.<sup>28</sup>

Once broached, relations of cultural temporality tend to ramify extensively. “Modernism” in art typically makes a claim that in future replication it will achieve a completeness and timelessness; it projects its *future* classicism. In 1426 Hesy’s sculptor might have been *anticipating* retrospective interpretations of his configurative choices by artists working within the tradition projected from his own work. If he used certain traditional and classic forms, the modernism of his configuration in 1426 tended to produce them *as* traditionalisms and classicisms: the sculptor integrated them with extraordinary, even unique, contemporary configurative choices, especially in the postural attitudes of the figures. Once

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<sup>28</sup> For a possible “classic revival” table scene, in which some morphological aspects of the deceased’s seat appear to be contemporary (i.e., Fifth Dynasty) and others to be “older” (i.e., Fourth Dynasty), see Ziegler 1990: 280-81 (where the stela is said to be possibly *archaisant*).

brought to awareness in this way, they could henceforth be treated *as such* in future tradition – namely, as traditionalisms which can become “archaic” in relation to the “classic” and the “modern” reproductions, reformulations, and revisions. This temporality – the achievement of outdating oneself – constitutes one of the basic procedures of modernism on its way toward reconstituting itself as classicism, on its way toward giving itself – despite its origin in contemporaneity – an inevitable internal history of tradition and renovation. Herein it can configure and claim what would otherwise be a paradox – namely, the originary and normative status of its continuous contemporaneity. It would not be surprising, then, that later canonical configurators could recognize this “originariness” in an archaizing modernism they could retrospectively reproduce as archaistic classicism. This pro- and retrospective replicatory history stitching together a fabric of earlier (if “younger”) and later (if “older”) configurations helped to constitute canonical depiction as the very manifestation of “Egyptianism” – as the transhistorical whole of cultural temporality as such.

### The Intentionality of Cultural Temporality in Depiction

However he conceived the cultural temporality of his work, the sculptor of Hesy’s 1426 did not replicate an archaic configurative convention – the rendition of the front leg of the deceased’s seat obscured by his legs and feet – simply because he was an Archaic artist living and working in the Archaic style-period. He replicated the configuration intentionally in a self-aware and deliberate construction. For this reason, connoisseurship cannot cite this passage of his depiction as a *Grundform* – a manifestation of his depictive habits in a particular phase of his stylistic development and in an interaction with depictions made by other artists. But if we cannot use the configuration to attribute the artistic authorship of the relief, we can use it to “attribute” its cultural temporality.

Under the arch of Hesy’s forward (right) foot, the sculptor included the bottom band of the hoof on the bull’s-leg support of the seat: we are meant to see the bull’s leg *behind* the deceased’s foot. (In other words, it is not quite correct to

say, as Borchardt did, that on 1426 there is “nur ein Stuhlfuß” [1937: 108].) One might take this small oblong bit of wood beneath Hesy’s foot simply to be a bit of the panel “left over” in the small gap below the arch of the foot. But in other cases in Archaic reliefs, sculptors showed the deceased’s foot fully flat to the ground along its whole length (leaving no material or space below it) or slightly arched, usually without any in-fill of any kind below it. Whatever appears in the gap below the foot of Hesy, then, must have tended to acquire – if it did not originate in – some kind of figurative significance.

In this regard, a viewer might be tempted to see the oblong as a depiction of the heel of Hesy’s back (left) foot. This construal certainly would have been available. But it would have created the impression that Hesy’s back left foot had swelled out of all proportion (or that it had a club-foot conformation) rather than indicated that it has been set down slightly “in front of” – or slightly advanced in relation to – his front right foot (even if they are really supposed to be “side by side”). A grossly swollen foot appeared on the stela of Imet (Smith 1958: 28, pl. 13) and for precisely this reason: the sculptor tried to show the back (right) heel beneath the deceased’s front (left) arch. We can see how he struggled to configure this area of the depiction – for example, by cutting back the front leg of the seat and cutting down the deceased’s right foot in order both to distinguish and to scale the forms properly. These cuttings or recuttings were probably undertaken as a kind of correction after the outline of the configuration had been blocked in (cf. Davis 1992a: 205-16). In light of the sculptor’s palpable failure to solve his problem we can appreciate why Hesy’s sculptor instead determined to use the “archaic” configuration of the obscured seat leg even as he tried to modify and modernize it spatially. His effort to produce a “correct” spatialization of the scene spread *through* the scene all the way from the shins and ankles of Hesy to the bottom of the offering table placed a few inches “in front of” him. Although the relief is damaged at this point, we can see how the sculptor tried to tuck the toes of Hesy’s two feet “between” the divided legs or stands of the offering table itself. Its left (or “back”) support comes down to the

ground “behind” Hesy’s left (or back) foot, and its right (or “front”) support comes down to the ground just “in front of” Hesy’s front (or right) foot.

The construction cannot fully clarify what this arrangement actually depicts, i.e., whether the table spread its two legs “across” Hesy’s feet tucked between them or Hesy’s feet were settled “between” his seat and the table. (This ambiguity in part feeds on and in part contributes to the complementary ambiguity concerning the “real” position of Hesy’s feet – one in advance of the other or side by side.) Needless to say, in fact, it is difficult to understand exactly how the table stands up on two supporting legs divided in this way in the first place. As Cherpion has noted, the depicted construction of Hesy’s offering table (*qua* item of “real” furniture) can be found elsewhere only in the table scenes of Abneb (Boeser 1905: I, pl. 23) and of Kha-bauw-sokar and Hathor-nefer-hetep (Murray 1905: pls. 1, 2); “there exists no other example, neither among the monuments said to be archaic nor later” (Cherpion 1980: 81). The table itself (perhaps a wooden tripod of some kind?) must have been different from the table with a unitary stand, slitted or slotted in the base (e.g., Saad 1957: pl. 36[b]), commonly found in later depictions of the table scene (see Cherpion 1989: 42-52). But it is not necessary to seek a “real-world” or objective correlate of the depiction produced by Hesy’s sculptor. The construction should probably be considered to be a perturbation in the replicatory formation of depictive conventions. We can associate it with the avant-gardism of depiction in four closely related Archaic tombs (i.e., Hesy’s and the three tombs just mentioned) – a topic to which we will return.

Despite all his care, as already noted Hesy’s sculptor could not escape awkwardness and ambiguity in this passage of the depiction, even in its new configurative and compositional terms. Other sculptors who appear to have studied this solution – or to have confronted the same problem in the same way – found themselves in the same boat (they included Abneb’s and Waten’s sculptors). Perhaps their difficulties helped impell the later and canonically final clarification – for example, in the stelae of Wepemnofret (Smith 1946: pl. 32[b]) or Nefertiabet (Zeigler 1990: 187-89). There the sculptors included all three

elements in question in Hesy's relief: the right front bull's-leg support of the seat, now fully revealed, the gap under the arch of the deceased's right foot, and the heel of the deceased's left foot visible beneath ("behind") it – distinguishing, then, what Hesy's and other sculptors visually conflated (namely, the bottom of the seat-leg and the rear of the deceased's back heel). Wepemnofret's artist succeeded where Imet's artist failed because he *overlapped* the back left shin, ankle, and foot of the figure with the front right shin, ankle, and foot. Thus the right foot appears both "larger" and "in front" of the left foot and compensates for the excessively long heel (it still appears to be slightly swollen) it has to have "in back."

It is not anachronistic to cite the example of the stela of Wepemnofret precisely because we can see Hesy's predecessors, and Hesy's sculptor himself, investigating the same configurative problem. The truly "archaic" feature of the earlier depictions, including Hesy's was not that they showed the front bull's-leg support of the deceased's seat to be entirely occluded – for they did not. Rather it was that they presented the deceased's legs just above the ankles to be equally wide – as if they intended the back leg to be advanced fully in front of the forward leg instead of remaining partly or even wholly hidden by it, as the overlapping of the feet would require. (Later, one could find this "archaic" trait as it were in survival. But because Wepemnofret's artist and other classicizing modernists of the Fourth Dynasty had advanced a more "classical" solution of the configurative problem, this survival or "regression" – it was not exactly an archaism – might exhibit a "forgetting" of their achievement. In general it seems that the construction of the mutually scaled widths of the deceased's legs in the table scene never achieved a single stable conventionalization. Admittedly the table scene always tended to have an archaic aspect all round – perhaps partly sustained by archaisticism.) In the case of Hesy's sculptor in 1426, this archaic aspect of his configurative work – it "dates" him to the Archaic style- and motif-period – constituted a kind of inertial drag on his contemporaneity and on his modernization of archaic-classical configuration even as he mastered and renovated or revised it. At the time, however, this aspect of his culture-temporal

identity could not have been known to him as such – for otherwise, of course, he would have revised it, as he tried to do when he included the hoof of the seat-leg visible below the arch of Hesy's foot. The configuration of the deceased's legs above the ankles, then, could not have been archaic *for him*. Instead, and relative to the configuration of the deceased's feet, it manifested a contradiction in his configurative practice which not only exemplified his cultural period. It also expressed his cultural *age* – his attempt, successful or not, to come to terms with his period and to replicate it in an appropriately traditional and appropriately modern form. Here we see something like the “decorum” that Baines (1990, 1994) has taken to be the fundamental motive force in canonical Egyptian depiction. We can see in this case, however, that the “decorum” can only take on cultural temporality – it can only have content or significance for the consciousness of its practitioners – in its constitution in convention and configuration partly outside any self-awareness and “perspective” which the participants might have had. The sculptor's self-awareness – the intentionality of the configurative practice and self-conscious grasp of its cultural temporality – fluctuated from passage to passage and aspect to aspect in his depiction. In the deceased's legs above the ankles he unintentionally exhibited the style of his day; as it was conventional at this time it does not, of course, index his own style, which we see nearby: in the deceased's feet he intentionally constructed his modification of archaic convention – a modernized archaism.

Much the same can be said about the notorious right hand and thumb of Hesy seated at his offering table (see Smith 1946: 274-89). As in many Archaic depictions and in the stabilization of this “error” conventionalized in such later canonical works as the stela of Wepemnofret, in the most general sense Hesy's “wrong thumb” in 1426 tried to make the best of an impossible configurative situation in the terms of canonical construction, even though no fully general conventional solution had been achieved at the time. Obviously the thumb of Hesy's right hand should be “on top” of his hand. But in that position, to make it at all visible the artist would have had to draw it sticking up (like a hitchhiker's) or at least curving up, even if the thumb was supposed to be held tight against

the other fingers in the clasped or gripping position. In some Archaic stelae (and in later works which might be regarded as primitive, slipshod, erroneous, or regressive, though probably not archaistic), we do see this “out-curving” thumb – positioned, however, on the wrong (bottom) side of the fingers, as if the thumb were on the right side of the right hand (seen from the back) rather than the left side. But equally obvious, in the table scene a hand with thumb sticking out or curving up in any way is not what the depiction refers to: in the table scene, the deceased reaches out to the table in order to cup his or her hand around a half loaf of bread. Indeed, if the hand were quite fully cupped, the thumb would touch the ends of the fingers or wrap around or mesh with the fingers. Hesy’s sculptor tried to suggest this not only by *up*-curving the thumb on the “wrong” side of the hand; other Archaic artists seem to have attempted this “bent” thumb too. He also *folded* the hand and fingers: Hesy’s fingers seem to go upward from his knuckles and then downward to make an upside-down V – the sculptor’s rendition of the bending of Hesy’s finger joints and/or the prominence of his tendons in this action. (Hesy’s sculptor took care to distinguish the “bent” thumb of the cupped right hand from the gripping clasp, with out-stuck thumb, of the left hand: two little wrinkles below the nail on the left thumb in 1426 show the folds of skin created around the joint when the thumb is held straight.) In other Archaic depictions, no such upside-down V appeared in the fingers, which often were not separated from one another at all, and no tendons in the hand were included; instead the hand had the dolphin’s-flipper appearance which it came to have in canonical convention. In early classical canonical convention (as in Rahotep’s table scene [Petrie 1892: pl. 13] or in Wepemnofret’s), a good solution to the depictive problem of the outreached hand (whether right or left) touched the upcurving “wrong” thumb to the closed fingers of the hand held straight out (with fingers straight or gently curved), as if to recognize depictively – as Hesy’s sculptor failed to do – that the thumb is located at the bottom of the palm of the hand and the fingers at the top. Hesy’s sculptor “knew” this, of course, because he showed it successfully on the *left* hand of the standing figure in 1427 and similar depictive contexts. But in the

configuration of the table scene, a different motif organized in its own particular and in this case distinctive orders of replication, cultural temporality, and intentionality, he could not represent it.

To be sure, Egyptian art has frequently been characterized as depicting “what the artist knows rather than what he sees” – or, to use Smith’s formulation, “to represent things as [the artist] knew them to be, not in aspects which may have appeared to him transitory” (1946: xiii). (This cliché can be found *ad nauseam* – and *ad absurdum* – within Egyptological art studies, perhaps explaining why Egyptological art studies of style, despite their self-professed attentiveness to the formal organization of depictions, has been unable to address their noetic history in any substantial way. And to be fair, the dichotomy between “seeing” and “knowing” remains one of the hoariest and most debilitating fallacies of general art history.) The example of Hesy’s thumb in 1426 (and there are countless other examples) shows why this largely rhetorical claim – mostly it is intended to imply an invidious misleading contrast with post-medieval Western depiction (e.g., Schäfer 1928) – must be entirely beside the point. It is extremely doubtful that the ancient Egyptians “knew” the thumb to be on the right side of the left hand (palm up) and the left side of the right hand (palm up): this eternal nontransitory thumb-*Eidos*, whatever it might be, could not encompass or designate or idealize Hesy’s or any other human thumb. The relations between knowledge and representation, understanding and convention, and reference and figuration were quite differently situated. In this little example, Hesy’s sculptor certainly saw how the thumb and hand actually work in a certain action. And he certainly knew their ordinary (and perfectly nontransitory) anatomical relationship, which he rendered perfectly well elsewhere. But here he did not represent or figure it. This was neither an error or an oversight nor the pressure of convention “overruling” objective understanding. It was a paraintentional aspect – a motivated replicatory precipitate – of the cultural temporality of intentionally directed configurative work. Hesy’s sculptor addressed a configurative problem he had recognized to be latent but not yet made fully manifest in the contemporary iconography of the

table scene. To be sure, he did not attain a fully satisfactory solution to what would seem to have been an endemic ambiguity in the conventional work of other Archaic artists. Nevertheless, subsequent canonical stabilization of the “wrong thumb” as a routinely available convention would have been unthinkable without his demonstration (he was the sole Archaic sculptor known to us to have made it) that fingers which are “too long” are even less desirable than a thumb “in the wrong place.” Not every avant-gardism finds its way into a modernizing tradition as it constructs its preferred solutions to depictive and expressive problems. But the modernization could not occur in the way and at the pace it did without the preceding avant-gardism.

Smith pointed to features of the depiction of Hesy seated at the offering table which for him associated it with relief sculptures he regarded to be later in the absolute chronology of Archaic and early Old Kingdom tomb decoration. Needless to say, an obstacle to direct comparison between Hesy’s and the other reliefs – contemporary or not – must be the fact that Hesy’s wooden panels were carved in a workshop while the stone reliefs were carved *in situ* in the tomb. As Harpur (2001: 161-64) has suggested, the arduous conditions of production in the small rooms and narrow corridors of a tomb or tomb chapel probably imposed substantial technical and iconographic constraints on the artists. Nonetheless, the “sharp-edged” cutting of the outline of Hesy’s figure in 1426, which Smith dated to the first phase of Archaic artistic culture (the “transition” from the Second to the Third Dynasty), reminded him of the “high reliefs on stone” of his third phase of Archaic artistic culture, the “transition” from the Third to the Fourth Dynasty – namely, the “bold” reliefs in the funerary chapels of the mastabas of Kha-bauw-sokar and Hathor-nefer-hetep (Murray 1905: 2-4, Borchardt 1937: 44-47) and of Akhet-a’a at Saqqara (Smith 1942: 518-20, Ziegler 1990: 96-101, Arnold and Ziegler 1999: 189-90). “Sharp-edged” and “bold” reliefs present a high straight edge, casting a strong shadow in sunlight, against a well-smoothed background.<sup>29</sup> In addition, “bold” relief tends to use large, chunky

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<sup>29</sup> Admittedly, “sharp-edged” outlines characterized certain protodynastic and early dynastic reliefs. Smith himself (1958: 28) noted them in Imet’s table scene, which he dated to the Second

forms (see Smith 1949: 149-53). At the time these procedures were distinctive enough to imply that sculptors who used them were closely affiliated with, or at least well versed in, one another's work. In a careful study of Archaic tomb reliefs, Cherpion (1980) confirmed Smith's general impression; identifying several "éléments de parenté," she grouped Hesy, Kha-bauw-sokar, and the tomb of Abneb known from its stela alone. As she noted, however, one of her principal criteria for the stylistic affiliation—a "thickening" of the relief carving despite its sharp edges and bold forms—cannot be found in Hesy's panels (Cherpion: 1980: 80 n. 4).

Neither Smith nor Cherpion offered an explicit chronological interpretation of these observations. Smith took the architecture of the mastabas of Kha-bauw-sokar and Hathor-nefer-hetep, just to the west of Hesy's, to be an "obvious imitation" of Hesy's (see Reisner 1936: 388)—as if they were later than Hesy's. In a later consideration of the chapel of Kha-bauw-sokar he moved it from the end to the middle of the Third Dynasty (Smith 1958: 37)—as if it were contemporary with Hesy's. Evidently agreeing with this assessment, it would seem that Cherpion took the several tomb-reliefs in the group to be contemporary rather than involving an earlier prototype and its later "imitations." At any rate, despite certain differences in their circumstances and technique of production, and whatever the chronology in question, Kha-bauw-sokar's reliefs were unthinkable without Hesy's. They unified the table scene and the rendition of the tomb owner standing in his public status as an official of the state—as Hesy's sculptors began to do in melding these iconographies in the sequence of tomb panels for Hesy II. Using a horizontal line, Kha-bauw-sokar's artist separated the deceased's titles from the short offering list, although the two sections of hieroglyphs do not divide, as in Hesy's first set of reliefs, into an upper and a

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Dynasty, though he did not make a connection with Hesy's 1426. In relation to this work, the smooth gradations and interior modeling in Hesy's reliefs and other works of the Third Dynasty would have appeared novel. Smith seemed to imply that the relief of Hesy seated, 1426, can be distinguished from the other reliefs, such as 1427, in being "sharp-edged." But close inspection shows 1426 and 1427, at least, to be very similar in relief technique, as we might expect if they were produced by the same master artisan.

lower field.<sup>30</sup> Kha-bauw-sokar's artist expanded and renovated the emerging conventions, explored with such virtuosity in Hesy's 1427, for the standing figure – for example, attempting the mirror-reversal of left-facing and right-facing figures, requiring tricky adjustments required in feet, hands (finger and thumbs), and accoutrements.

By the same token, the configuration of the table scene in the chapels of Kha-bauw-sokar and Hathor-nefer-hetep was not far from Hesy's. For example, it exhibited the "archaic" tendency to present the deceased's lower legs just above his or her ankles as equally wide. But in the very same area of the depictive configuration – the example we have been pursuing in this section – these reliefs were culturally younger: both clarified the problem of overlapped chair legs and feet which Hesy's sculptor struggled to solve – even though they did not offer a fully canonical solution either. They did not quite "de-obscure" the front legs of the deceased's seat (perhaps they did not consider it as an object which had been occluded in the first place). But they did "un-obscure" it more fully than Hesy's 1426 – as it were revealing and fully consolidating what Hesy's artist had recognized and configured provisionally.

As I have already suggested, in 1426 Hesy's sculptor, subjected to the inertial drag of existing tradition, also attached or re-attached himself *to* tradition by replicating earlier and older configurations in the context of his modernism and contemporaneity, even his avant-gardism. If he attempted to constitute his works as original, and to project his modernism for a cultural future in such a way that it could become classical, then in a sense he succeeded. The reliefs of Kha-bauw-sokar might be regarded as the requisite classicism to his modernism: Kha-bauw-sokar's sculptor stabilized as convention what emerged as unique

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<sup>30</sup> Below Kha-bauw-sokar's table scene, beneath both the "groundline" set below the seated figure of the deceased and another register line carved below it, a long list of offerings was introduced. It differed from the usual list presented later in canonical iconography of the Old Kingdom, but it cannot be fully compared with one of its analogues and possible precursors – the boxes of offerings depicted on the eastern wall of the "painted corridor" of Hesy II opposite the wooden panels in the western niches. Barta dated the form of Kha-bauw-sokar's offering list to the end of the Third Dynasty (1963: 32-35); as noted earlier, his morphological datings do not speak one way or another to culture-temporal identities.

experiment in Hesy's reliefs. Perhaps the enlargement of Hesy I into Hesy II was partly motivated by an effort to keep up with the large mastabas constructed behind Hesy's own, most notably Kha-bauw-sokar's. (As we have seen, the absolute chronological date-range of the mastaba of Hesy probably permits this.) In this particular context Hesy's sculptor would have had every reason to produce constructions and configurations which were *both* traditional and even archaically originary *and* fully contemporary though classically correct. His contemporaneity, then, had a fluctuating and disjunctive significance as it related on the one hand to the reliefs of the king – here Hesy's production expressed the allegiances of a follower – and as it related on the other hand to the reliefs of younger men, where Hesy's production established him as a leader and innovator both in his own “self-out-dating” even if they their “out-dated” him. Such stylistic differentiations, machinations, and negotiations have always been the stock-in-trade of aristocratic patrons and their artists.

If the mastabas of Hesy and Kha-bauw-sokar were culturally overlapped – if the former was “older” to the latter's “younger” in replicatory relations nonetheless bespeaking their close interaction – the same master sculptor of Hesy's 1426 (and 1427) might have been at work on the reliefs of Kha-bauw-sokar. Smith (1946: 138-40) observed the possibility – without seeing quite how he could accommodate it in his absolute stylistic datings – when he noted the strong similarity between certain aspects of the face of Hesy in 1426 and the face of Kha-bauw-sokar in *all* his renditions in his chapel, in particular the deep naso-labial fold and furrow.<sup>31</sup> The naso-labial furrow marks what has often been said to be an “older” (that is, an elderly) Hesy, as he certainly seems to be in 1426, but in Kha-bauw-sokar's reliefs it would have to indicate his authority or maturity; as Smith noted, these reliefs “idealize” the depiction of the patron's actual age (whatever it was) at the time of production (Smith 1946: 139, and see Terrace and

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<sup>31</sup> Alexanian 1998: 19 has observed that the “full mouth” placed close under the principal figure's nose can also be found on both the reliefs of Hesy and Kha-bauw-sokar. Because this seems to be a broadly Archaic and even Early trait – as she notes, it can be found in statues of the Second Dynasty (see Davis 1989a: 186-87) – it cannot be said to distinguish this particular group of sculptors at Saqqara.

Fischer 1970: 38, Cherpion 1999: 104). Both patrons might have been imitating the king's depiction: the naso-labial furrow can be found on the great statue of Djoser (Harpur 2001: 297 n. 34). Smith was not sure whether the naso-labial furrow effected a "portrait" of Hesy precisely because it appears on Kha-bauw-sokar as well. But there need be no contradiction here. Hesy really might have looked rather like the older man of 1426 at the time the relief was made. And the sculptor of Kha-bauw-sokar's reliefs, whether or not he was Hesy's sculptor as well, might readily have adopted this configuration in recognition and imitation of the "modern classicism" of the work – especially if the style in general and this feature in particular connoted regal grandeur. Of course, if the naso-labial furrow constituted a real *Grundform* in the true connoisseur's sense, then we *must* attribute Hesy's 1426 and Kha-bauw-sokar's reliefs to the same sculptor. Although Smith could not readily encompass the possibility in his datings, it remains entirely feasible in culture-temporal terms.

However the naso-labial furrow might have been replicated in Djoserian statuary and in Kha-bauw-sokar's and other reliefs, it had its own replicatory relations and interdeterminations in the sequence of Hesy's reliefs. The naso-labial furrow does *not* appear, for example, in Hesy's 1427, attributed here to the master sculptor of 1426. This poses no problem for connoisseurship, for connoisseurship seeks not to discover artists as such but rather their habits at certain points in their development and interaction. As we have seen, 1427 probably belonged to a different set of reliefs and a different cultural phase and possibly to a different chronological period of the depictive career of the sculptor of 1426. (As I have stressed throughout, however, the latter possibility is not required by the former.) And the naso-labial furrow *does* appear in 1428, which I have *not* attributed to the master sculptor of 1426/27. But neither does this pose a problem for connoisseurship – for in part for connoisseurship discovers artists' interaction with one another at a particular intersection of their developments. As we have seen, the sculptors of 1426 and 1428 probably enjoyed close interaction – as master and junior, apprentice, or follower – in the culture-temporal phase (whatever its date and duration) which encompasses these two

depictions, despite their difference of authorship. Still, it is methodologically gratifying to be able to distinguish 1426/1427 and 1428 as culturally contemporary works by different artists not in terms of stylistic habits, the connoisseur's terms, but instead in the terms of intentional cultural temporalities.

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[Final section in progress]

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