

To my friends in Egypt.
May the future be brighter than the past.

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Abbreviations

Primary Texts

“ADiE”	“A Descent into Egypt”
<i>BNW</i>	<i>Brave New World</i>
<i>JoSS</i>	<i>The Jewel of Seven Stars</i>
<i>KSM</i>	<i>King Solomon’s Mines</i>
“LiaP”	“Lost in a Pyramid – A Mummy’s Curse”
“MNYE”	“My New Year’s Eve Among the Mummies”
“RoT”	“The Ring of Thoth”
“SatP”	“Smith and the Pharaohs”
<i>SoA</i>	<i>The Story of the Amulet</i>
“SWWaM”	“Some Words With a Mummy”
“THP”	“The Happy Prince”
“TMoTP”	“The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt”
<i>TMWwT</i>	<i>The Man Who was Thursday</i>
“TNoF”	“The Nemesis of Fire”
“TSoB”	“The Story of Baelbrow”
“TYK”	“The Young King”

Secondary Texts

<i>OEOAE</i>	<i>The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt</i>
<i>RoD</i>	<i>Rule of Darkness</i>
<i>TRL</i>	<i>The Reading Lesson</i>
<i>VL</i>	<i>Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies</i>

1. Introduction

‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’
(Shelley “Ozymandias”)

When Hosni Mubarak stepped down from his presidency on February 11, 2011, his defeat became known as ‘the fall of modern pharaoh.’¹ The pharaoh as a symbol of power in connection with Egypt is obvious and universally understood. However, while the term “pharaoh” signifies great power, and the “fall” represents the loss of this power, the reference to the ancient tradition of pharaohs ruthlessly ruling Egypt simultaneously criticizes the regime and characterises it as antiquated. The notion of comparing a modern leader with a historical institution reflects nostalgia – a longing for the past and the need to connect and contextualise topical with historical events.

Today, ancient Egypt is viewed as a former great empire with a highly developed culture, which has long ceased to exist and whose concepts are outdated and yet intriguing. This concept of ancient Egypt was of special concern for Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. While ancient Rome and Greece had shown great interest in ancient Egypt and incorporated numerous of Egypt’s deities and cultural concepts into their own culture, this fascination lessened throughout the following centuries. The crusades rekindled European interest in Egypt – an interest which was of a political nature (cf. Asbridge 265; Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 89). A renewed European fascination with ancient Egypt developed after the Napoleonic Campaign of 1798, Nelson’s victory over the French army, and the subsequent influx of Egyptian art and architecture to Europe. Egypt was one of the most important strategic locations, granting access to the *Dark Continent*. Both the military aspect of controlling Egypt and the scholarly interest in the art and architecture of the ancient Egyptians were important catalysts for the increasing European fascination with Egypt.

With the publication of Dominique-Vivant Baron Denon’s *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (1803), the *Description de l’Égypte*² (1809–1829) and the

1 cf. Tisdall “Hosni Mubarak: Egyptian ‘Pharaoh’ Dethroned Amid Gunfire and Blood”; Shehata “The Fall of the Pharaoh”; Vick “Egypt’s Last Pharaoh? The Rise and Fall of Hosni Mubarak”.

2 The whole title of the collection is *Description de l’Égypte ou Recueil des Observations et des Recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte Pendant l’Expédition de l’Armée Française, publié par les Ordres de sa Majesté*.

numerous Egyptian objects which were shipped to England as war booty and which found their way into private collections and museums offered Europeans immediate contact with the ancient culture. The deciphering of the hieroglyphs by Jean François Champollion in 1822 finally gave way to a century of European and American Egyptomania.³ The term 'Egyptomania' can be roughly defined as the recurring interest in ancient Egypt, its art, architecture, culture and religion. It is reflected in the increasing number of Egyptian objects in collections and exhibitions, in the development of Egyptology as a field of study, in "Egyptianising"⁴ architecture of both buildings and graveyards, the creation of diverse Egyptianising commodities such as tableware, furniture, and jewellery. The prominence of Egypt in Western and particularly in British culture is also reflected in literature. Egypt, both ancient and modern, features in numerous fantastic⁵ stories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The frequency of Egyptianising elements is striking enough to justify a closer look and analysis of the genre and to discuss the possible reasons for the extensive use and purpose of ancient Egypt in the writings of the time. This book explores why Egypt features so prominently in fantastic literature during that period and in how far works of Egyptianising fantastic literature can be read as critical texts which comment on the Orientalist mind-set of Europe, and especially Britain. Furthermore, this work will discuss the essential aspects of imperial self-esteem and politics as well as the historical developments which led to great changes during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This book aims to show how the image of an ancient culture was shaped not only by science, archaeology and historical research, but also by contemporary media, subjective travel reports, and imagination in a

l'Empereur Napoléon le Grand. The English translation is *Description of Egypt, or the Collection of Observations and Research which was Made in Egypt During the Expedition of the French Army, Published by the Order of his Majesty the Emperor Napoleon the Great*.

- 3 For a detailed account on nineteenth-century American Egyptomania, see *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* by Scott Trafton. For a survey of Egyptomania through the ages, see James Curl's *Egyptomania: the Egyptian Revival, A Recurring Theme in the History of Taste* and Elliott Colla's *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity*.
- 4 The term "Egyptianising" refers to the inclusion, depiction and interpretation of elements of ancient Egypt in literature, art and culture.
- 5 This book works with the term "Egyptianising fantastic fiction" to establish the sub-genre within fantasy or fantastic literature. All Egyptianising stories analysed for their auto-critical content and the interrelation between the *Other* and the *Self* are defined as such.

society with a general Orientalist mind-set. English nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century fiction was chiefly concerned with the Empire, and especially the last years of Queen Victoria's reign and the early twentieth century saw an increase in the publication of imperial literature. Archaeological discoveries and the first translations of Egyptian texts offered the world a glimpse into a past which had been considered lost or had been entirely unknown. While ancient Egypt had occasionally appeared in literature throughout the centuries preceding the nineteenth, the number of fictional and nonfictional texts and treatises featuring Egypt was rather small. William Shakespeare's Egyptian tragedy *Anthony and Cleopatra* was most certainly inspired by Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *οἱ βίοι παράλληλοι* (English: "Parallel Lives", commonly referred to as *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*).⁶ Plutarch (approximately 45–125 CE), together with Herodotus (fifth century BCE) and Diodorus Siculus (first century BCE), was considered to be one of the most reliable sources concerning ancient Egypt until the translation of Egyptian texts and the development of Egyptology finally offered new insights into ancient Egypt.⁷ Due to these often embellished and awe-inspiring narratives on ancient Egypt by the classical authors Egypt was commonly regarded as a mystical and strange place (cf. Moser 193). This mysticism and ambiguous image of ancient Egypt was aided by the sparse factual knowledge about the ancient culture and the vivid imagination of travellers and those who read these travel reports, in addition to the often ambiguous representation of Egypt in the Bible.⁸ At the same time, ancient Egypt served as a fantastical idea and ideal of a formerly great empire, which simultaneously conveyed a vision of loss and frailty, and a sense of doom, and served as a reminder that no matter how great an empire is, history has shown that it will eventually decline. Egypt was simultaneously a real and an imagined place; a perfect ingredient to create Gothic stories and magical events in connection with it.

6 Further tragedies inspired by Plutarch's work are *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*.

7 Even after the translation of Egyptian texts and Victorian treatises on ancient Egypt, the classical accounts were still considered to be great authorities, which inspired especially those scholars who were interested in the pyramids of Giza. Vyse, Perring, Taylor and Smyth all used Herodotus' account as the basis for their research (cf. chapter 5.6.2).

8 All references to Egypt in the King James Bible were selected and listed on the website kingjamesbible.org.

Not only the recovered language and subsequent translations of ancient texts fascinated the British⁹, but the sudden heightened interest in exploration and travel¹⁰ fed scientific facts as well as fantasies and rumours to an eager Europe. ‘Facts’ need to be understood herein as convention, because many of the ‘facts’ which were stated about ancient Egypt were informed guesses, subjective opinions and experiences, generated by the lack of a systematic study of archaeology and Egyptology before the late nineteenth century. As Edward Said argues, facts are subject to interpretation:

All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation [...] for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place. (Said *Covering Islam* 162)

The image of the Orient, and in this special case, Egypt, was subsequently expanded and adjusted. The interest in ancient Egypt and the Orient was encouraged further by Edward Lane’s translation of *Arabian Nights* in 1841, offering a glimpse into the supposedly genuine world of the exotic east. Giovanni Battista Belzoni, an Italian traveller and excavator who worked for the British, published his immensely popular *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries Within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia and of a Journey to the Coast of the Red Sea, in Search of the Ancient Berenice; and Another to the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon* in London in 1820. Edward Lane’s *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) and Sir John Gardner Wilkinson’s *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837) were certainly the most widely read and influential modern texts concerning the creation of a general idea of modern and ancient Egypt.

Eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century travel reports and treatises on modern Egypt generally avoid mysticism and any connection to the supernatural, merely commenting on certain practices of modern Egyptians which seemed strange, exotic or underdeveloped to the Orientalist. Despite the factual narrative of the works on modern Egypt and its ancient culture, ancient Egypt

9 Nineteenth-century Egyptomania was of course not exclusive to Britain, but affected most European countries as well as northern America.

10 Pasha Muhammad Ali opened up the country for tourists in the 1820s, allowing European and American tourists to travel to Egypt (cf. Murray *Milestones in Archaeology* 168).

has always been considered a somewhat magical place and the source of secret knowledge. Since the Rosicrucians¹¹ located their origin in Egyptian mysticism, the concept of an esoteric and mystical Egypt remained until the twenty-first century. Especially the late nineteenth century saw numerous attempts at attesting a magical quality to ancient Egypt. However, this concept did not only shape the representation of ancient Egypt in Victorian times, but it is still reflected in our contemporary perception of this ancient world. This can be seen in the large number of fictional and nonfictional texts published during the twentieth and twenty-first century in which Egypt almost always has magical or supernatural qualities.¹²

Egypt's importance in the nineteenth century lay in its political and cultural significance to Britain and France. Egypt's occupation by the French, and later by the English, not only detracted Mamluk power. As Napoleon's troops triumphed over the Mamluk army in the Battle of the Pyramids on July 21, 1798, they helped to secure Egypt for the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the British occupation destabilised the Ottoman rule, shifting the power over the Arabic world towards Europe. Presenting both a point of interest for military strategy allowing access to Africa, and, with the construction of the Suez Canal (1859–1869) a much faster route to India, ensuring Britain's status as the greatest sea power in the world, Egypt was a decidedly important country. Egypt furthermore became accessible beyond the scope of the Anglo-French conflict, and numerous British wealthy citizens spent their winters in Egypt to avoid the unhealthy London air and climate.¹³ Modern Egypt simply became an extension of Britain, in which the citizens of Egypt were seen more as a nuisance than the rightful owners of

11 'Rosicrucians' is a collective term for the members of numerous secret societies and orders which have their origin in the 17th century and whose founder is Christian Rosencreutz. The importance and popularity of the Rosicrucians and other secret orders and societies increased at the end of the nineteenth century.

12 For two contemporary examples of texts on magical Egypt, see Eleanor Harris' *Ancient Egyptian Magic and Divination* for a modern take on the practicality of Egyptian magic, Wilbour Smith's series on mysterious ancient Egypt, *The River God* (1994), *The Seventh Scroll* (1995), *Warlock* (2001), and *The Quest* (2008) and Zilpha Keatley Snyder's *The Egypt Game* (1967), to name only a few.

13 British citizens were not the only ones taking the opportunity to winter in Egypt. Contemporary accounts and stories, such as "An Unprotected Female at the Pyramids" by Anthony Trollope, Guy Boothby's "A Professor of Egyptology" or Rider Haggard's diary entries depict Egypt as a place of international touristic interest, naming Italians, Germans, French, Dutch, US Americans and other travellers from all over the "Western" countries.

the land. This attitude is strongly reflected in most travel literature of the time and also reappears in several of the fantastic texts. The role and representation of these 'natives' will be a recurring topic in this book, providing grounds of comparison between the Western view of ancient and modern Egypt.

Modern Egypt was seen as part of the 'Orient', and looking at contemporary sources it becomes clear that the major European colonisers, namely France and Britain, saw a chance in returning some of Egypt's former glory by bestowing their own culture and knowledge on the country.¹⁴ At the same time, European travellers viewed modern Egyptians with distaste and distrust. In 1829, Champollion received a letter from the French physician Étienne Pariset:

The more I think about it the more I am astonished by the antiquity of Egypt, its wisdom, genius, knowledge, power. And the more I see, the more I am convinced that modern-day Egypt should be placed at the centre of the type of nations that one should mistrust and flee from. (Pariset qtd. in Colla 100)

Apart from the need of the coloniser to restore 'order' to Egypt – an opinion which is in fact reflected in several of the Egyptianising texts – another aspect that is presented is criticism of British practices and ideas by the authors.¹⁵ In this book the term 'Egyptianising literature' is used to describe and define fiction which features aspects of ancient Egypt, which describes it and makes use of it. In order to avoid misunderstandings and complications, the term 'Egyptian literature' is used for literature that was in fact produced in Egypt.

Voltaire (1694–1778) already used the Orient as a geographically and culturally distant place to reflect on and criticise European conditions and ideas in his 1747 work *Zadig, ou La destinée, Histoire orientale*¹⁶ (cf. *Europa und der Orient* 327). While it is important to note that all Victorian texts reflect the general

14 Giuseppe Verdi's Egyptianising Opera *Aida* had its world premiere at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo on Christmas Eve 1871 and it clearly depicts the European romanticized view of Egypt. Incidentally, the Egyptian characters were exclusively Europeans to depict their superiority over Nubia.

15 Britain and British interests are in the focus of this book, however, if not noted otherwise in order to stress differences, the propositions and remarks on Orientalist practices and ideas include those of American and Australian authors whose works are discussed in this book.

16 Translation: *Zadig, or The Book of Fate*. Further European enlightenment thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant, Gottlieb Herder, Oliver Goldsmith and Diderot also criticised the European approach to colonisation and dehumanisation of the colonised. For further reading, see Srinivas Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (2011).

world view and ideology of the West, several of the Egyptianising texts are very self-aware of this practice. Egyptianising fantastic fiction therefore can, with few exceptions, be read as self-critical and self-aware. It is a subversive literature which on the one hand reflects the Victorian *weltanschauung*, and on the other hand criticises it. Egyptianising fantastic fiction presents a special case within nineteenth century literature, in whose context the notion of representation has to be addressed. What roles does representation play in the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction? What is represented and by whom? Does the representation of the *Other* by the *Self* annihilate the *Other*? Power relations and the practice of interpretation and erroneous or subjective attribution of qualities all need to be analysed and discussed with a focus on the interaction between the *Self* and the *Other*.

This book embeds Egyptianising fantastic fiction into the context of Neo-Gothic literature of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, this book will explore in how far it is possible to speak of Egyptianising fantastic fiction as a sub-genre within the genre or mode of fantastic fiction as proposed by Tzvetan Todorov in his *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973) and Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981). The question of what particular elements of Egypt are portrayed, represented and used in Victorian fantastic fiction will also be answered.

The book is structured into five larger units which are subdivided into smaller chapters. Chapter 2 offers an introduction into the construction of ancient Egypt by the West both in reality and in fiction. Using Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as a foundation for the discussion, the Western perception of ancient and modern Egypt will be explored. Following the description of the Western conception of the Orient and ancient Egypt, the practice of *Othering* in relation to ancient Egypt and its representation in fantastic literature is explored. The interference of Western thought and ideology is one of the major focal points of this book, which analyses in how far Western thought and stereotypes¹⁷ have led to the creation of a sub-genre in fantastic literature and what its political and social significance might have been. The Victorian fantastic narratives set in ancient Egypt offer an insight not only into the representation of ancient Egyptians, but also into the description and mind-set of the British protagonist. Edward Said's theories on 'Orientalism' have to be taken into account and will be discussed

17 For a detailed discussion of the creation and importance of stereotypes in the discourse of colonial fiction, see Homi Bhabha "The Other Question", 18–36 and Stuart Hall's "Stereotyping as a Signifying Practice", 257–268.

in detail. At the same time it is helpful to look at the process of creating and representing the *Other*. In this particular context, the creation of Ancient Egypt as the *Other* and the literary technique of creating it as a mirror image, a *doppelgänger* of the *Self* will be discussed.

Chapter 3 offers a concise overview over the most important Egyptianising texts which are analysed with regard to their depiction of ancient Egypt, beginning with Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827), covering the most representative Egyptianising novels and short stories of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, and concluding with Algernon Blackwood's occult short story "A Descent into Egypt" (1914). Moreover, the chapter explores the evolution of the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction by disclosing how the texts are interrelated.

Chapter 4 analyses Jane Loudon's seminal Egyptianising novel *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty Second Century* with regard to its major themes, its representation of ancient Egypt and its role as the defining work for nineteenth-century Egyptianising fantastic fiction. This text is very important as it represents a link between the Romantic image of ancient Egypt as well as the classical sources concerning ancient Egypt which were considered to be the most reliable, and the newly rediscovered ancient Egypt, which slowly emerged through the translation of the hieroglyphs as well as scientific explorations, travel reports and exhibitions. The novel perfectly reflects the image of ancient Egypt as perceived by a young woman who moved in literary and artistic circles and who was aware of the presence of ancient Egypt in the context of the British Empire. At the same time she makes strong use of the Gothic tradition, but strives to write a 'better' novel than Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It is almost a recension of *Frankenstein*, taking the main plot and moral questions and amplifying it with topics which seemed not only to be of her personal interest, but reflect topical themes of Regency England. Political instability and the question of the succession of George III and the possibility of the future reign of Princess Victoria are reflected in the novel. Ancient Egypt itself does not exactly seem like an obvious choice for a novel such as Loudon's, but considering the popular practice of the public unrolling of mummies and the recent deciphering of the hieroglyphs is likely to have presented the perfect basis for Loudon's idea about resurrecting an ancient Egyptian character. In addition to that she was most likely to have read the ancient Greek and Latin sources on Egypt as well as Belzoni's *Narrative* as elements of these narratives feature prominently in her novel.

Chapter 5 explores the major recurring themes in Egyptianising fantastic fiction in several subchapters. The section takes a closer look at the use of language

and the issue of communicating with the *Other*, followed by a discussion on the recurring theme of body transformations in Egyptianising texts. Furthermore, the frequent appearance of vampiric elements is analysed, succeeded by a discussion of the use of sleep and dreams in the presented texts.

Chapter 6 consists of two subchapters which are concerned with the depiction of magic in Egyptianising fantastic fiction and the appropriation of ancient Egypt by the West in the form of the origin of Western esoteric movements and the Victorian urge to link ancient Egypt with modern Britain.

In contemporary fantastic fiction and popular culture, ancient Egypt still carries the same attributes which were established in the nineteenth century. It is considered to be a place in which magic was likely to have been practiced, in which gods have the power to interfere with everyday life, and a place where modern civilisation was developed and where wisdom and secret knowledge were hidden from those who were not initiated and did not understand hieroglyphs. The image of ancient Egypt is especially visible in films like *The Mummy Lives* (1995), *Legend of the Mummy* (1997), which is an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, *Tale of the Mummy* (1998), *The Mummy* (1932, 1999) and its sequels as well as *The Scorpion King* (2002) and its sequels. The film *Staragate* (1994) and the SCI-FI's series based on the film (1997–2007) borrows heavily from Egyptian mythology and the ABC series *Lost* (2004–2010)¹⁸ features ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, art and elements of magic. The twentieth century saw the publication of numerous Egyptianising texts of which many belong to the mode of the fantastic. Edward Frederic Benson's "The Ape" (1920), "Bagnell Terrace" (1928), "Monkeys" (1934), Clifford Ball's "The Goddess Awakes" (1938), Larry Brand's *Birth Pyre* (1980), Robert Arthur's "Footsteps Invisible" (1968), Elisabeth Ogilvie's *The Face of Innocence* (1970), Nick Bantock's *The Gryphon, In Which the Extraordinary Correspondence of Griffin & Sabine Is Rediscovered* (2001), Donna Boyd's *The Alchemist* (2001) all feature elements of Egyptianising fantastic fiction which were established in the nineteenth century. The trend of setting a story in ancient Egypt, which started in the nineteenth century, is extensively reproduced in twentieth- and twenty-first-century fiction. A concise list of historiographic fiction featuring Egyptianising elements has been compiled by Noreen Doyle on her website *Egyptomania.org*. The popularity of texts including either an ancient Egyptian setting or a setting in modern Egypt which includes

18 James P. Allen, Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and Chair of Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies at Brown University and avid *Lost*-fan, actively participated in the discussion and analysis of Egyptian elements in the series (cf. Scottberg).

archaeological excavations can be explained with the extensive translation of ancient Egyptian texts and the need to narrate the translated stories by modern authors on the one hand, and the excitement which followed the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen on the other hand. Examples of these works are Agatha Christie's detective novel *Death on the Nile* (1937), the play *Akhnaton* (1937), and *Death Comes as the End* (1944), as well as Elisabeth Peter's mystery series about the female Egyptologist Amelia Peabody (1975–2010).

Ancient Egypt and Egyptianising elements have therefore remained a popular topic of Western literature and film, whose origin can be found in nineteenth-century literature. This book explores the establishment of these elements in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century literature in connection with historical events as well as cultural and social changes which mark the Victorian and Edwardian age.

2. Creating Egypt in Victorian and Edwardian Fantastic Fiction

*Egypt, the ancient Egypt, turned in her vast sarcophagus of
Desert, waking from her sleep of ages. ("Sand" 276)*

The following chapter is going to outline the possible sources of inspiration for writers of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, focussing on first-hand experiences through travels as well as second-hand experiences through travel reports and museum visits. Furthermore, the chapter suggests theoretical approaches towards the definition of history and reality, as well as their originators in connection to the establishment of power-relations between the West and the East. This book makes extensive use of the concepts of West and East as Edward Said presented them in his *Orientalism*.¹⁹ Furthermore, to narrow the discussion down and to be able to make general statements about the group of texts, it is necessary to place nineteenth and early twentieth century Egyptianising fantastic fiction into the broader context of literary theory and history, and to define a frame for the genre.

The creation or generation of meaning in a historical context will mark the first segment of this chapter – taking a New Historicist approach to discuss and analyse the texts within their historical and cultural context. Stephen Greenblatt coined the term “New Historicism” in 1982. He refers to it as a:

“[...] critical practice [which] challenges the assumptions that guarantee a secure distinction between ‘literary foreground’ and ‘political background’ or, more generally between artistic production and other kinds of social production. [...] These collective social constructions on the one hand define the range of aesthetic possibilities within a given representational mode and, on the other, link that mode to the complex network of institutions, practices, and beliefs that constitute culture as a whole.” (Greenblatt *The Power of Forms* 5–6)

19 I am fully aware of the limitations of his work and the exclusion of whole nations in his approach. The use of ‘Orient’ in this book will mostly regard Egypt and can therefore be read synonymously if not indicated otherwise. Furthermore, the terms *Self* and *Other* refer to the concepts coined by Lévinas and extended by Said, Foucault, Hall, Jandt and Tanno.

Furthermore, he stresses that:

Language, like other sign systems, is a collective construction; our interpretive task must be to grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text. (Greenblatt *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 5)

In the context of the interaction between text and reality, the supposed 'binary oppositions' of fact and fiction discussed in order to provide a better understanding of how narratives correspond to history and historical events. The Egyptianising texts which are considered herein have to be embedded into this discourse to show in how far this particular sub-genre of Victorian literature can be placed in a literary tradition.

Jody Dean and Paul Passavant refer to de Saussure and Derrida to explain the necessity of an *Other* to define the *Self*:

As linguistically oriented philosophy from Ferdinand de Saussure to Jacques Derrida has taught us, meaning is constituted in relations of difference, and a space of difference is essential to any act of communication, whether this be the space of difference between pointer and object or between acoustic signifier and conceptual signified. To gain an identity, one must make use of representational forms that are not oneself in order to represent one's identity. (Dean and Passavant 115)

The question of identity, meaning and reality and the processes of their creation is one of the most basic and at the same time most important topics discussed in philosophy, cultural theory, linguistics, and literature, as well as psychology and anthropology. "Reality is incessantly produced and reproduced [...]" (Genosko 56). It is, therefore, in constant flux and changes with every new individual perspective. By capturing reality as it is perceived at a certain time and under certain circumstances by writing it down, or narrating it, it becomes fixed in the sense that it can be used to form the opinions of, and create a reality for the reader and remain in that shape until additional data causes the individual to adapt to that reality. The individuals then identify with and place themselves within that reality; they choose what is inside and outside of that definition. Therefore, reality is highly subjective and constructed by external and internal influences.

György Lukács writes that "historical meaning had to be created, [and] was something to be realised by the free, conscious activity of a class of individuals acting collectively" (qtd. in Grumley 130). Michel Foucault, to put it in simple words, explains that meaning is created through discourse (Foucault *Archaeology* 131). He furthermore explains the creation of history through archaeology as a process: "Archaeology analyses the degree and form of permeability of a

discourse: it provides the principle of its articulation over a chain of successive events; it defines the operators by which the events are transcribed into statements" (Foucault *Archaeology* 185).

Linda Hutcheon continues this thought and discusses the difficulty which presents itself in the analysis of historical writing for its factuality:

[...] The distinction between fact and event is actually quite different from that other opposition which is central to criticism of the novel genre: that of fiction versus non-fiction. But because postmodern novels focus on the process of event becoming fact, they draw attention to the dubiousness of the positivist, empiricist hierarchy implied in the binary opposing of the real to the fictive, and they do so by suggesting that the non-fictional is as constructed and as narratively known as is fiction. (Hutcheon 73)

However, this blurring of lines not only occurs in postmodern novels, it also appears in numerous of the Victorian Egyptianising texts which are analysed in this book. The conscious and outspoken awareness of the narrator of dubious 'facts' and the constant reminder of the improbability of events set against the reality of their fantastic²⁰ narratives gives them a special and almost postmodern quality. Almost all of the presented texts have clear meta-fictional elements or speak to the reader directly. In most cases the aim of this practice is to reaffirm that the narrator of the story is just as surprised by the turn of events as the reader is. Confirmation that the events described in the story are true is achieved by presenting the text in form of a diary, part of an autobiography or an account by a trustworthy friend. Amongst others, Haggard's *She*, Boothby's "A Professor of Egyptology," Marsh's *The Beetle*, and Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" all make use of this narrative device in order to add to the credibility of their stories. In addition to these personal accounts, historical 'facts' and names, ancient or contemporary, are used to create a sense of reality. Linda Hutcheon remarks that "[h]istorical data traditionally enter nineteenth-century historical fiction in order to reinforce the text's claim to verifiability or at least to a persuasive rendering into fact of its events" (74).

All of these elements are part of the mode of the fantastic (Jackson 32). These stories begin in a mimetic mode, presenting themselves as realistic narratives, into which fantastic elements are introduced. Jackson, whose approach is based on Todorov's concepts, defines the fantastic as a mode of narration:

20 The supernatural elements are often placed into completely normal and realistic circumstances, thereby stressing the fantastic aspects of the narratives. The mimetic quality is upheld until supernatural elements trigger a shift into the fantastic mode. The reader, and often the protagonist, are kept in a state of liminality.

Fantastic narratives [...] pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and every day world [*read as: factual knowledge, however subjective*] into something more strange, into a world whose improbabilities are closer to the realm normally associated with the marvellous. The narrator is no clearer than the protagonist about what is going on, nor about interpretation; the status of what is being seen and recorded as 'real' is constantly in question. This instability of narrative is at the centre of fantastic as a mode. (Jackson 34)

The reader's perception of reality is changed through fantastic elements and new rules are introduced which alter reality within the narrative. It is very important that these changes are accepted by the reader as possible within the universe of the story, because as soon as the reader stops believing that what is happening in the story is factual within the bounds of the narrative, it becomes a metaphor or allegory and loses its fantastic quality (cf. Jackson 41). However, this does not mean that the fantastic elements cannot be analysed and interpreted as metaphors or allegories, but it is essential for a fantastic story to achieve that the reader believes in the reality of the narrative, no matter how improbable or impossible it may seem. The reader has to remain open to what the text has to offer as "[p]erception becomes increasingly confused, signs are vulnerable to multiple and contradictory interpretation, so that 'meanings' recede indefinitely, with 'truth' as a mere vanishing point of the text" (Jackson 38). Therefore, in fantastic fiction the reader has to accept the entire narrative as fact for it to work within its genre.

Linda Hutcheon examines the creation of reality not from the perspective of fantastic discourse, but she views history as narrative: "The facts of these fictional representations are as true – and false – as the facts of history-writing can be, for they always exist as facts, not events" (74). Furthermore, she explains that

[h]istoriographic metafiction like this is self-conscious about the paradox of the totalizing yet inevitably partial act of narrative representation. [...] It implies that, like fiction, history constructs its object, that events named become facts and thus both do and do not retain their status outside language. [...] The past really did exist, but we can only know it today through its textual [and archaeological] traces, its often complex and indirect representations in the present: documents, archives, but also photographs, paintings, architecture, films, and literature. (Hutcheon 75)

For Hutcheon it is essential to note that historical events did happen, but that their factuality is lost as soon as the event is in the past because what is transmitted as historical 'facts' are narratives which are by definition subjective. Similar thoughts have been published by Raymond Williams in *The Long Revolution*, particularly "The Analysis of Culture" (1961), in which he stresses the subjectivity of facts as recorded culture which is naturally reinterpreted by the generations

which follow those whose opinions and events were recorded. Hayden White formulates a similar thought:

The historical narrative does not, as narrative, dispel false beliefs about the past [...]; what it does is test the capacity of a culture's fictions to endow real events with the kinds of meaning that literature displays to consciousness through its fashioning of patterns of "imaginary" events. [...] Thus envisaged, the narrative figurates the body of events that served as its primary referent and transforms these events into intimations of patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce. (White 45)

History, for him, is narrated and therefore already artificially created. The author of an event will automatically ascribe meaning through representation. White goes on to criticise the Western approach to history as tainted with ideology, which subjects events to the opinion and world view of the author of historical narratives. Edward Said defines this intervention of Western thought concerning the East in narrative as 'Orientalism'. White explains his criticism:

I call ideology the central problem of intellectual history because intellectual history has to do with meaning, its production, distribution, and consumption, so to speak, in different historical epochs. But in the West at least, the question of meaning – or more precisely that of the meaning of meaning – has evolved against the background of a conviction of the irreconcilable opposition between science (conceived as some kind of objective view of reality) and ideology (conceived as a distorted, fragmentary, or otherwise deformed view, produced to serve the interest of a specific social group or class). (White 190)

Before discussing 'Orientalism' and power systems in the context of the shaping of historical narrative in more detail, it is important to look at the process of the creation of meaning itself. Ferdinand de Saussure examines the construction of meaning on the very basis of language and consciousness; however, the approach can easily be adapted for broader psychological and sociological developments. The awareness of the practice of creating meaning by placing an object or 'fact' into a certain context and thereby excluding other meanings, purposefully or by ignorance, is relevant when it comes to the representation of another culture; and in our case, ancient Egypt. Artefacts are placed in a context of a museum or private exhibition by curators or collectors and charged with characteristics and meaning. Any object that is actively charged with meaning changes in the eye of the beholder; becoming relevant or irrelevant, important or unimportant, beautiful or ugly. Lisa Zunshine summarises this approach as follows:

If you essentialize a natural kind, you end up understanding something (whether correctly or not) about the particular specimen in front of you, but if you essentialize an

artefact, you end up understanding something not about this artefact (e.g. a bullet) but about the man who keeps this bullet on his mantel. (Zunshine 17)

This simplified explanation is essential in this approach for the analysis and contextualisation of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, as the importance of Egypt and the conscious choice to write about it is rooted in the meaning which is subscribed to it by the author and the reading public. Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of creating meaning helps to understand the interaction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident': "The individual is *actively* orientated to the other and to the circuit as a whole by what these relations mean for the individual" (Thibault 142). Ferdinand de Saussure's observance of the arbitrariness of signs is a further aspect which shows how the representation of a culture can be used to generate meaning and create a world view that can be shared by a whole nation into whose socio-cultural background these meanings are placed and defined as facts (Haugaard 48). Dean and Passavant explain: "[...] Significance cannot do without the processes of representation. Indeed, representation is constitutive of meaning" (323).

Egyptianising fantastic fiction uses Egypt and Egyptian themes and mythology to contextualise the *Other* within the culture of the *Self*. It is therefore more self-reflecting than it might seem at a first glance. Edith Nesbit's protagonists of *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), for example, clearly act as children of their time and with the full awareness of their roles as citizens of the British Empire and subject of a monarch. They are generally conscious of belonging to a superior culture in comparison to the cultures they visit during their time and space travels. However, in the instance in which the four children travel into the future, their world-view changes drastically. They see not what was, but what will be, and it differs greatly from what they know. Future England is described as far superior to Edwardian England and the inhabitants of future London are deeply disturbed by the children's way of life. Grant Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" (1880), a short story in which the English protagonist finds himself in the role of the *Other* and is considered to be a barbarian with very poor taste in clothes and manners by an ancient Egyptian pharaoh, ends with the protagonist's wish to be mummified and woken up in the future in order to see how things will have changed. Grant Allen is likely to have recycled this idea from Edgar Allan Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy" (1845), in which the protagonist also plays with the thought of being mummified and later revived, because he is tired of the nineteenth century and would like a supernatural way out.

These texts are all aware of changing times and, seemingly, all protagonists are not entirely comfortable in their current situation, knowing that both the past

and the future might be better than their present. This mind-set ironically contrasts the Victorian, and in Poe's case, American general *Self*-awareness of having reached the peak of civilisation and, after Darwin, the pinnacle of evolution. This *Self*-image is disturbed by the Western protagonists interacting with the ancient Egyptian *Other*. In Nesbit's case, the ancient character of a priest of Ra has to merge with the soul of an English Egyptologist in order to find peace, making the Englishman partly ancient Egyptian. These crossings from the Western *Self* to the Egyptian *Other* and vice versa mark Egyptianising fantastic fiction.

Not only encounters with citizens of the ancient world present links to the past and the *Other*; but ruins, ancient architecture and ancient artefacts also play a fundamental role in representing the Gothic *Other* in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Monleón explains the importance of ruins in the context of Gothic thought.

Not only do they incarnate the image of marginality, of nature and artifice colliding, but they also project a perception of decay, of the ravages of time [...]. Within the context of the Gothic, the passage of time was no longer chronology, but progress. [...] the reasonable [enlightened] society could [...] be transformed, and could eventually disappear. Reason as a monolithic, universal, and natural attribute of mankind began to be questioned when history introduced the possibility that the "self" could eventually become the 'other.' (Monleón 44–45)

Monleón's argument strengthens the thesis that at the turn of the century, political instability and social uncertainty are reflected in Egyptianising fiction. Gothic texts make extensive use of settings which either recall the past or which are removed from the West in geography and time, and often both.²¹ These settings represent conflicts as the result of transgressions or injustice that originated in an epoch outside of the narrative frame. For a moment which might last only the length of a book, disorder, however subtle, threatens the principles of the reasonable society. For a moment, unreason is liberated from its confinements and brought to the forefront of cultural representation. At the same time, ruins serve as a constant reminder of the transience of everything, creating an uncanny impression of greatness in the past and failure in the future.

The blurred lines between the *Self* and the *Other* are also a very conspicuous aspect of Egyptianising literature. In several texts, ancient protagonists are re-born into British society, or have become immortal and slowly adjusted to their surroundings. In many cases those ancient souls cannot be clearly told apart

21 For a discussion on the geography of the Gothic, see Robert Mighall's *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*.

from British citizens. Just as Dracula becomes almost indistinguishable from an Englishman when he appears in London, there is usually only a slightly strange air about those characters which accentuates their extraneousness, but defies clear designation.

In texts like *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh the transformation of a monster into a human being is depicted, giving the reader an insight into the dubious and supernatural quality of the antagonist of the novel. In other Egyptianising texts, like Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" or Constanides in Guy Boothby's "A Professor of Egyptology", it is impossible to tell whether a character is who they say they are until they reveal their true identity to the protagonist. In another group of texts, characters of ancient Egyptian descent are not aware of their own history and only remember their origin when they are told by other ancient characters or special events trigger their memory, as happens to Smith in "Smith and the Pharaohs" and Cecilia in "A Professor of Egyptology". A fourth group includes Victorian or Edwardian characters which fall under a hypnotic or mesmeric spell or whose soul merges with that of an ancient Egyptian being. Examples of this last group are Marjorie Lindon in *The Beetle*²² and Margaret Trelawny in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. The mummy of Queen Tera never wakes up during the course of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, but her spirit merges with that of Margaret Trelawny, which gives the ancient queen ever growing control over the young woman. Her character of a well-behaved English lady shifts into that of a strong woman who is not dependent on men.

These different types of the merging, transformation and interaction of the *Other* and the *Self* are another major theme in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. José Monleón elaborates on this trend in Gothic literature:

A double and contradictory trend seemed, then, to shape the representation of unreason. On the one hand, monstrosity was perceived as an integral part of the self; on the other, monsters were portrayed as alien to bourgeois society. (88)

This 'inner threat' is also clearly portrayed in Victorian Gothic texts like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which 'good' and 'evil' manifest in different physical states. In Egyptianising fantastic fiction, the threatening elements are generally inherently *Other*. In *The Beetle*, the strange antagonist feeds

22 One of the many similarities between *The Beetle* and Stoker's *Dracula* are the female characters, namely Marjorie Lindon and Lucy Westenra. They both fall under the hypnotic spell of the *Other* and begin to defy 'proper' Victorian female behaviour. Margaret Trelawny in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* does not react as strongly to the control of the ancient being, but she also begins to act strangely and speaks out against her father.

off its victim's life-energy, giving it the power to slowly turn into a humanoid figure. It has mesmeric power and controls its victims, and either weakens or kills them. When Western characters 'turn bad', it is generally due to the negative influences of the *Other*. However, the fear of regression is ever present and finds an outlet in racism and Orientalist thought and behaviour. Monleón argues that

distortion served not only to portray monstrosity but also to reveal the familiarity of those images of unreason. Just as the contours of norm were recognized in "the other", so too could the signs of monstrosity be discovered in 'the self.' [...] Therefore it is not strange that fantastic representations adopted some introspective tendencies." (ibid.)

This notion has already been discussed in detail by Sigmund Freud in his essay "The Uncanny" (1919, original: "Das Unheimliche"), in which he explains the clash of the familiar with the unfamiliar and the subsequent confusion and mystification concerning the perception of subjective reality.

There are manifold ways in which the mode of the fantastic is used in Egyptianising fiction, and the supernatural elements vary in form and intensity. In the nineteenth century, accessible information on new findings about the ancient culture was distributed widely by the press and museums. The media helped to spread rumours of magical practices, stories about cursed mummies²³ and the obvious fascination of the Egyptians with death and the afterlife certainly triggered fantasies, both of authors and readers and culminated in a great number of Egyptianising stories at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. By frequently encountering a mix of facts, rumours and fictional stories the Victorian reader might have been more willing to believe in the supernatural occurrences which are depicted in Egyptianising stories just because ancient Egypt itself was made out to be such a mysterious and strangely ambiguous place.

Very little literary research has been in terms of ancient Egypt and fantastic fiction or fantasy. Literature with Egyptianising themes is referred to as "mummy fiction", although the term excludes texts which do not feature mummies. While film and media studies have been concerned with the depiction of mummies on screen, particularly in horror films, and their literary sources. There is no comprehensive and fundamental survey concerning Egyptianising elements in the context of fantasy or the fantastic. This thesis is trying offer a first possible approach to an in-depth analysis of ancient Egypt and fantastic fiction.

23 Roger Luckhurst recently published the history of the 'mummy's curse' and the supposed supernatural qualities of ancient Egyptian mummies in *The Mummy's Curse – The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (2012).

2.1 First and Second-Hand Experience with Ancient Egypt

*“In such a venerable institution
the past is ever present.”* (Caygill 4)

The fact that Egypt became the focal point of numerous English fictional and nonfictional texts from the eighteenth century on begs the question as to what might have inspired the authors to write about it and which sources they used. The most obvious part of the answer is that travellers to Egypt wrote letters, travel journals and later newspaper articles about their experiences. Since the Enlightenment, ancient Egypt had once more been brought into the focus of European interest. Even after Roman Egyptomania ceased²⁴, with Egypt's language and numerous aspects of its culture long forgotten, ancient Egypt still reappeared continuously in European literature. The crusades led many Europeans to Egypt, and despite the religious conflict, scholars always tried to decipher the ancient hieroglyphs; in most cases because they expected secret and sacred knowledge to be hidden in the writings of the ancient Egyptians (cf. Assman *Moses the Egyptian* 104). During the English Renaissance, an interest in Egyptian art flourished with the turn towards the past and the appreciation of classical art (cf. Curl *The Egyptian Revival* xxvii). *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt* (TOEoAE) gives a short account of European Egyptomania:

Over the course of history Egypt was always present, its art and architecture imitated and redefined. Thus the general image of ancient Egypt became more and more ‘Europeanized’, and until the publication of the *Description*, ancient Egypt had changed into something mythical, mystical and magical. Especially Athanasius Kircher, a Jesuit from seventeenth century wrote on Egyptological subjects, and he even tried to decipher them at which he failed. (1: 459/69)

While Egypt was visited by a small number of European travellers since the crusades, the nineteenth century saw a rise in tourism, and numerous travellers²⁵ made their way to Israel and Egypt to experience the Holy Land and places which were known from both the Old and the New Testament. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a scholarly interest in modern Egypt and its exotic past grew. “In the second half of the eighteenth century Josiah Wedgewood produced ceramic ware with Egyptian motifs” (TOEoAE 1: 460), introducing

24 For a concise survey on European interest in the Orient and Egypt see Henrik Budde and Gereon Sievernich's *Europa und der Orient 800–1900* (1989).

25 For example the Scotsman John Gordon, who travelled Egypt extensively and left his name on numerous ancient monuments in 1804.

Egyptianising objects into everyday life – or at least of those who could afford it. The interest in ancient Egypt grew steadily:

The nineteenth century's last Egyptomania binge occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, spurred by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; the Opera Aida (story by Auguste Mariette, music by Giuseppe Verdi) written to celebrate the opening of the Cairo Opera House in 1869 but first performed in 1871; and by the erection in New York (1869) and London (1878) of actual ancient obelisks. [...] Egyptian motifs were particularly evident in nineteenth-century furniture, interior design, and the decorative arts" (TOE-oAE 1: 461).

Orientalists visited Egypt in order to describe to Europeans what modern Egypt was like.²⁶ The Swiss traveller and archaeologist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1784–1817), who was called Sheykh Ibrahim Al-Barakat by the locals, lived in several African countries and later settled in Egypt from 1808 until 1817. There he perfected his Arabic to such an extent that he was completely integrated into Egyptian life and culture. He disliked Napoleon Bonaparte, and he supported the British occupation of Egypt, informing Giovanni Belzoni²⁷ of the temple of Abu Simbel and the location of the head of Memnon in the Ramesseum. Belzoni (1787–1823), who worked for the British under Henry Salt (1780–1827), excavated the former and then transported the Memnon head to London – where it became famous as the head of Ozymandias (cf. Fagan 80). Upon visiting Karnak and the Luxor temple, Belzoni exclaimed that it appeared to him “like entering a city of giants, who, after long conflict, were all destroyed, leaving the ruins of their former temples as the only proof of their former existence” (Belzoni qtd. in Fagan 82). Belzoni gave ancient Egypt both a romantic and a Gothic atmosphere. To him, the traces of a fallen empire are more than just a culture from the past; he dreams up larger-than-life characters to go with the larger-than-life architecture and statues. Furthermore, he describes most of the Egyptian architecture and art he encounters as beautiful, doubtlessly creating an expectation for extraordinary beauty in the readers of his *Narrative* (1820):

26 For a description of European travellers to Egypt and the Near East before the Victorian age, see Anita Damiani's *Enlightened Observers: British Travellers to the Near East, 1715–1850*.

27 Giovanni Battista Belzoni was an Italian strongman who went to Egypt to sell Pasha Muhammad Ali a water lifting device (Tyldesley 74). When his sales idea did not work out, he began exploring the ancient Egyptian tombs and pyramids, finding employment under the Swiss Archaeologist Jean Louis Burckhardt and Henry Salt, a collector with a deep interest in ancient Egypt (cf. Tyldesley 76, 78).

In the morning of the 27th long before the rising of the sun, I stood at the stern waiting the light to unveil that splendid sight the beautiful island of Philae. My anxiety to see the ruins was as great as my expectations, but when I beheld them they surpassed everything that imagination could anticipate. (*Narrative* 61)

However, not only the sights such as Philae with its temples, which were almost intact and not, as he suspected, ruins, inspired Belzoni to such flowery language. Egyptian craftsmanship and aesthetic seemed to leave a strong impression; such as an ensemble which he found in a small temple in the north of the first cataract:

The blocks of stone [...] were a beautiful group, consisting of the great god Osiris seated on his chair with an altar before him, receiving offerings from priests and female figures, the whole surrounded by flowers and hieroglyphics. (*Narrative* 97)

The special interest in hieroglyphics, which were as yet undeciphered but rightfully recognised as important elements of the ancient Egyptian culture and the key to gaining knowledge about it, is, from Belzoni's perspective, an aesthetic one. The description of a tomb – probably that of Seti I – underlines this sentiment:

Farther on you pass through a long gallery painted with the most beautiful hieroglyphics, in as good perfection as the former and in the great hall lies an enormous sarcophagus of one single piece of granite measuring ten feet long five wide six inches thick covered with hieroglyphics inside and out. (*Narrative* 181)

Belzoni was one of the great pioneers of Egyptology, even though the excavations, ordered by the British government or representatives thereof, can doubtlessly be described as grave robberies; transporting objects to Europe with the general disapproval of the local authorities, but with the financial means to bribe them to work. Belzoni was of course not the only one. The French savants²⁸ had already collected numerous objects to be transported to France; but these objects were then taken by the British after their victory over the French troops, and shipped to England instead. The head of Ramesses II had suffered several attempts at being brought to Europe, but Belzoni succeeded. However, unlike many of his colleagues and adversaries, Belzoni's interest in Egyptian antiquity was not motivated by a wish for monetary wealth; his passion lay in finding artefacts of the past in order to be able to learn more about it:

28 Napoleon was fascinated with ancient Egyptian monuments, and had his scientists set out to explore, measure, draw and describe everything which they came across. The collective work was eventually published in *Description de l'Égypte*, a seven-volume collection of drawings, paintings, xylographs, engravings and descriptions of the monuments of ancient Egypt as well as smaller objects that caught their attention.

Accordingly I went with [two acquaintances] to all the places I knew, and in particular to the tombs of the kings; the Memnonium, Medinet Abou, Carnak, Luxor etc. To me it was in general a source of pleasure to show these things to strangers, to hear their remarks, and to observe their astonishment and satisfaction after coming so far to view what cannot be seen anywhere else; at the same time no vexation can be greater to a lover of antiquity when, which is often the case, he witnesses indifference even to what is most striking. (*Narrative* 179)

This passion, as well as his impressive physical size and strength opened many doors for him. His passionate character also seemed helpful as he managed to always bargain with the locals and to save quite a bit of money on his journey through Egypt (cf. Fagan 88, 98 ff.). A second aspect of his success in sending so many objects to England was the rivalry between France and England. The Italian Giovanni Belzoni worked for the British consul Henry Salt, while his compatriot Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852) had been appointed as French consul by Napoleon after the French defeat. After the Anglo-French military conflict in Egypt, the two countries continuously fought over everything in Egypt, including reputation, power and antiquities.

Not only artists, archaeologists and military personnel travelled to Egypt. Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), who translated *One Thousand and One Nights* (1836), managed to enter Mecca disguised as an Arab (cf. Wolfe 197). Edward William Lane lived among Egyptians and wrote *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837), even sending for his sister in order to gain insight into the female spheres of modern Egyptian life (cf. Thompson 76). When tourism started to take off after the defeat of Napoleon by Horatio Nelson's army in 1801, many Europeans spent their winters in Egypt to get away from London for a while; among them many of the authors who wrote Egyptianising fantastic fiction, most notably Grant Allen and Rider Haggard. Grant Allen spent several winters in Egypt and wrote a treatise on "The Gods of Egypt" (1890) for the *Universal Review*²⁹ (cf. Greenslade *Grant Allen* 166), proving a scientific interest in the ancient culture and its religion. Terence Greenslade quotes Allen's opinion on the purpose of travel and sightseeing for education: "It is from things, not from words, that one may learn most of what is truly useful" (160). This sentiment is repeated in the whimsical ending of his Egyptianising short story "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies," in which the protagonist claims to have written down his meeting of royal mummies inside the pyramid of Abu Yilla in order to give the reader the chance to retrace his steps and prove his experiences to be true.

29 He published it in issue 8, August 1890, 51–65.

However, not all authors of Egyptianising fiction visited Egypt; most texts seem to have been inspired by museum visits. Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!* was most likely inspired by Belzoni's famous *Narrative* and she might have gone to see Belzoni's exhibition in Piccadilly or visited the British Museum's mummy collection. While there are no reliable sources on her inspiration, some passages of her writing clearly mirror sections of Giovanni Belzoni's *Narrative*.³⁰ Doyle's two Egyptianising short stories were published before he travelled to Egypt with his family in 1895. He had lived at 23 Montague Place, London, in 1891, which is just across from the British Museum whose library he frequented (cf. Duncan *Close to Holmes* 111–2). Edith Nesbit befriended the Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities of the British Museum, E. A. Wallis Budge³¹, who taught her about ancient Egypt so she could write about it in *The Story of the Amulet*. Edgar Allan Poe was very obviously inspired by Loudon's novel, and he added quite a few satirical elements and harsh critique of his contemporaries, both scientists and politicians. It is safe to say that travel accounts, both ancient and modern, were one major inspiration, whereas first-hand experience either in Egypt itself or in museums and private collections make up the other major source of inspiration for the writers of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Bram Stoker frequently visited the British Museum and its reading room from 1879 on. He used several of E. A. Wallis Budge's works on ancient Egypt as an inspiration for *The Jewel of Seven Stars*,³² in which he describes the excavation of an Egyptian royal tomb (cf. Senf *Science and Social Science* 78). Furthermore, he would have heard stories from his friends Richard Francis Burton, the Orientalist who translated *One Thousand and One Nights*, and Dr. William Wilde, Oscar Wilde's father, who was a hobby Egyptologist and avid Egypt traveller. The works by Flinders Petrie³³ were also widely available at the turn of the century, and considering Stoker's affinity with Egypt it seems likely that he was familiar with them. In *The Jewel of Seven Stars* Stoker projects both professional and popular ideas and ideals onto Egypt, describing that astronomy was extraordinarily highly developed and utilised (JoSS qtd. in Senf 81);

30 For a comparison of Belzoni's narrative and Loudon's *The Mummy!*, see chapter 4.4.

31 E.A. Wallis Budge was a scholar of limited ability. His work on ancient Egypt is often unscientific and popularist. While he achieved a name in the field for his treatises on ancient Egypt, he did not treat the classical sources critically, taking them for true accounts and aligning his research accordingly.

32 For a comparison of Wallis Budge's and Stoker's work, see chapter 5.5.

33 Petrie is known as the "Father of Egyptian Archaeology" and the "Father of Scientific Archaeology," who invented numerous archaeological methods which are still used today (Robins in Trope xiii).

an assumption upon which the entire plot of the novel rests, but which is historically inaccurate.³⁴ Further popular conceptions of ancient Egypt can be found in Stoker's descriptions of the transgression of the soul and reincarnation, as well as in the suggestion that the mummy of Queen Tera is able to control and influence the female protagonist Margaret through mesmeric power.

2.1.1 The Role of the British Museum in Shaping the Perception of Ancient Egypt

*Excavators discovered skeletons.
Museums everywhere stored them –
grinning, literal relics that told nothing.* ("Sand" 242)

The British Museum, and Egyptian collections and museums in general, played a great role in the shaping of the understanding and image of ancient Egypt in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Stephanie Moser explores the museum's role in the process of shaping the image of ancient Egypt for the British of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in *Wondrous Curiosities – Ancient Egypt at the British Museum*³⁵ (2006). Moser follows the five different displays of Egyptian objects between 1759 and 1880 at the British Museum and analyses what impact not only the selection of objects, but also their contextualisation within the different collections and exhibitions had on the visitors of the museum. "In a sense, museum displays are an important genre of representation because they construct narratives through the practice of arranging objects within a particular space" (Moser 2). Linda Hutcheon argues that the only chance we have to re-create and represent the past is to analyse historical documents and archival material (*Politics of Postmodernism* 55). "The representation of history becomes the history of representation" (ibid.), and the narratives of the past which are constructed in literature or museum displays, influence the process of future representation and interpretation. But not only the arrangement of objects creates

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- 34 While the ancient Egyptians practiced astronomy and created a working calendar, including leap days, and knew how to align buildings with the help of astronomical knowledge, they were not familiar with astrology and the interpretation or meaning of planetary or stellar constellations – at least not until the Late Kingdom. The famous Dendera Zodiac stems from the Ptolemaic period and was therefore created under Hellenistic influence.
- 35 Stephanie Moser's *Wondrous Curiosities* is the most comprehensive work concerning Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum and therefore serves as one of the major sources for this chapter.

meaning; the selection of the objects and the context into which they are placed, and possibly removed, are just as vital to the recipient. Museums do not only transmit knowledge, they create it (cf. Moser 2).

A museum can often be the closest thing to reality when it comes to experiencing other cultures and the interaction of the visitors with the objects creates narratives. It seems logical that the experience of seeing an object in real life leaves a more prominent impression than reading something in a book or seeing an image. However, just like a tourist can only ever gain limited insight into a visited culture, a museum can never tell the whole story. Instead, it displays one selective version of an image of a culture, historical period or idea. Raymond Williams suggests that records of a cultural period are not self-sufficient, but that the generations who follow that period selectively use those records to create traditions, significance and meaning (cf. Williams *The Long Revolution* 49–50; 53). “Museum exhibition[s make] use of [their] own distinctive conventions to create meaning” (Moser 3). This process of the creation of meaning goes two ways: experts and researchers create an exhibition to display ideas about a culture or concept, and simultaneously create a platform for the visitors to learn about that culture, which means that researchers also learn from museum displays. The purpose of studies herein lies in creating a context, and then learning from it, possibly creating another (cf. Moser 5). The selection of the objects on display can be used to serve different purposes as the information received by the visitors is pre-defined and target-oriented. Moser stresses the role of museums in the creation of national identity through exhibitions in the late eighteenth century:

[...] the establishment of the [British] museum in 1753 signified the creation of a major public institution that would serve to reinforce, and indeed, create, the nation's sense of identity. Thus, collections were not only acquired in order to increase knowledge and understanding of the world, but were accumulated as part of a wider agenda that involved guiding the public in their conception of taste and informing them about Britain's central role in international affairs. (6)

While other museums in Paris, Turin, Berlin and the Vatican had exhibited Egyptian artefacts in the early nineteenth century, it was the British Museum that “assembled the first large installation of ancient Egypt in a purpose-built gallery in 1808” (Moser 6). Marjorie Caygill furthermore stresses the importance of the British Museum as the first “national, public and secular museum in the world” (3). The role of the museum as a national museum is an interesting one as the collection mostly concerns objects from outside of Britain and former British colonies while Britain's history on the British Isles was and is largely omitted

(cf. Caygill 31). This selectivity stresses the importance of an *Other* in the process of defining the *Self*. In a sense, the British Museum defined the British Empire by displaying what it owned and what it had discovered instead of examining its own local past. Apart from the purpose of helping to establish a national identity, the display of curiosities and treasures also served to demonstrate wealth, scientific interest, knowledge and achievements of individuals. This was certainly one of the main reasons for the establishment of private collections; they were tokens of affluence. Moser explains that “[c]ollections were authored statements in the sense that they aimed to communicate something about the collector as much as they did about the meaning of the collection” (13), and what is displayed has been carefully selected to strengthen that sense. Selection and selectivity always have to be taken into consideration where collections and exhibitions are concerned. Sean Ulmer argues that “[t]he placing of one work by or near another establishes a dialogue between the works that shapes meaning for the viewer” (5). The display of Egyptian artefacts in rooms adjacent to the Greek and Roman rooms made the Egyptian objects stand out starkly and added to their strangeness next to the aesthetically pleasing classical objects.

Numerous aspects play into the compilation of a collection: objects are brought home and placed into collections because they were either found by chance and proved to be of interest, or an interest already existed and objects connected to that interest were sought out. This premise is followed by further selection: a collection or exhibition is dependent on what has been found in the first place. As most artefacts and objects of ancient cultures were destroyed throughout the centuries, the choice for a selection of objects of representation is very limited. Even an extensive exhibition which includes all available objects will only ever represent limited aspects of a culture. The selection is therefore a passive one that cannot be influenced by the finder. This passive process of ‘natural’ selection is followed by an active one. Objects are allocated a value; nowadays usually depending on the historical period, their rareness, their condition and their already established worth on the market based on the value of similar objects. Until the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822 it was literally impossible to sort texts and objects into categories, or to establish a history of the objects outside the excavation context. In the early collections the lack of context led to an interesting position of ancient Egyptian objects within museums: ancient Egypt and ancient Egyptian artefacts were seen as curiosities, while the classical objects of ancient Greece and Rome were considered to be superior art (cf. Moser 48). The main reason for this contextual displacement was the practice of the British Museum to obtain objects from private collectors and donors. These private collectors

only very rarely put down the excavation context; if they were even present for the excavation. Objects were often bought on the market so that the retracing to an origin was almost impossible. Thus acquired objects could merely be compared with other objects of the same kind; but it took the decipherment of the hieroglyphs and the establishment of Egyptology as a scientific study to be able to create a detailed dating system for the objects as it was established by Flinders Petrie.³⁶

Due to the fact that the Egyptian language had been lost after the third century BCE, and only Greek and Coptic remained a link to the latest period of Pharaonic Egypt, the culture itself seemed a curiosity. Strange deities and funerary traditions, architecture that spoke of megalomania, and oversized depictions of kings without the provision of textual explanation left the door wide open for speculation and wild interpretation of what ancient Egypt might have been like. Moser describes how presented ancient Egyptian “objects were designed to surprise and entertain, as opposed to those that were intended to inform and enlighten” (34) causing visitors to be “awestruck, delighted, shocked, and repulsed” (ibid.). Neither printed guidebooks nor personal guides were able to explain the objects, leaving everyone to marvel over the strange artefacts which were undoubtedly important, given their rather prominent positions in the museum, but the reason for that importance, apart from representing English victory over the French, remained a unclear.

Most objects acquired by the museum in its first years came from private donors. Among these donations was the mummy of Irtyru (EA 6695) from the 26th dynasty which was bequeathed to the museum by Colonel William Lethieullier in 1756. *Wondrous Curiosities* examines the Egyptian collection of the British Museum from this first acquisition on, in order to show in how far the arrangement of these objects for the public was responsible for the reception of the objects, and, by proxy, ancient Egypt itself (cf. Moser 8). That a mummy in its sarcophagus was the first major Egyptian acquisition of the British Museum foreshadows the main interest of the public in the Egyptian collection. Mummies had been of interest since the middle ages when *mumia* or *mumia* (powdered mummy) was sold for medical purposes throughout Europe (cf. Siraisi 230; Moser 39; El Daly 97ff.; Daly 24–26). When it was reported that 180,000 mummified cats

36 In 1893, Flinders Petrie became the first Edwards Professor of Egyptian Archaeology and Philology, a position at the University College London which was established by the will of Amelia Edwards. Petrie changed Egyptology by accurately mapping all excavation sites and taking extensive notes of every single object and fragment which was found (cf. Drower 172; 216).

had been shipped to Liverpool to be used as manure, *Punch Magazine* reacted with a comic, depicting a field full of revived cat-mummies terrorising farmers.

Illustration 1: "Punch Magazine on mummified cats".



Throughout the sixteenth century, mummies and Egyptian artefacts became a sought-after commodity³⁷, and the publications on ancient Egypt and Egyptian objects led to an even greater interest of collectors (cf. Moser 39). However, the British Museum was not initially interested in establishing an Egyptian collection; it was the donors whose collections included, among many others, Egyptian artefacts, who enabled the first exhibition of ancient Egyptian objects. Hans Sloane's personal substantial collection was the one which initially led to the creation of the British Museum, and which included several Egyptian objects. He kept them as curiosities, which were iconic because of their "unusual and rare" qualities (Moser 41). The interest in mummies therefore lay foremost in their supposed medical purpose rather than their role in the history of mankind.

Despite the initial lack of scientific interest in Egyptian objects, they were still among the most prominently featured collections in the British Museum:

37 For a detailed discussion of the role of mummies as a commodity, see Nicholas Daly's "Mummy Has Become Merchandise": The Mummy Story as Commodity Theory."

[...] Egyptian antiquities claimed a prime viewing position on account of being included in the select range of objects featured in the museum entrance and in the main hall, and more significantly because they were a central feature of the first exhibition room, which was reserved for donations. (Moser 44)

Comparing the numbers of objects of antiquity which were presented in the British Museum, Moser writes that “in the antiquities room [...] ten display cases were devoted to classical antiquities, of which only one was assigned to the Egyptian objects” (48). This stresses again the role of ancient Egypt in the collection and the estimation of its worth for history and science. Furthermore, Moser points out that there wasn’t one exhibition of ancient Egyptian objects as a “coherent entity” in the first years of the British Museum (*ibid.*), thereby not presenting ancient Egypt as a cultural complex in its own right.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) wrote an art history book, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), which was translated into English in 1873. In the book he portrays Egyptian art as a somewhat more primitive and stagnant form of art which the Greek managed to further and develop into their superb art forms. Winckelmann describes the evolution of art and proposes a scientific order in which to place art and art history. Ancient Egypt as a special case of interest was displayed as a curiosity among other objects of interest. They were placed among natural specimen, as the objects were usually without context and could not be properly placed into any specific group or order. Winckelmann clearly sees Egyptian art as a primitive predecessor (cf. Moser 49) of Greek art, which apprehended the Egyptian practices and made them their own, culminating in the great classical art.

Apart from Winckelmann’s typical Orientalist view on ancient cultures and a clear differentiation between ancient Egypt (Orient) and classical Greece (Occident), his view on Arabs is yet another glaring example of European perception of the differences between ancient and modern Egypt, exemplified in an explanation of the discrepancy between ancient Egyptian statues and tales of overweight Egyptians of Winckelmann’s time:

Die unglaubliche Bevölkerung machte die alten Ägypter mäßig und arbeitsam; ihre vornehmste Absicht ging auf den Ackerbau; ihre Speise bestand mehr in Früchten als in Fleisch, und es konnten also die Körper sich nicht mit vielem Fleisch behängen. Die heutigen Einwohner in Ägypten aber sind in der Faulheit eingeschläfert und suchen nur zu leben, nicht zu arbeiten, welches den starken Ansatz ihrer Körper verursacht.³⁸
(Winckelmann *Geschichte* 34)

38 “As a consequence of the incredible density of the population, the ancient Egyptians were frugal and industrious; their principal interest was in agriculture; their food

Following Winckelmann's approach, European museums soon started to adapt to a new system of order, trying to showcase a development in art; a display of progress. However, Egyptian objects were still considered mostly strange and "deemed appropriate for superficial consumption rather than deeper intellectual contemplation" and presented as "exotica mid the larger collections of classical art" (Moser 52).

While some visitors criticised Egyptian art as "monstrosities" (Hawthorne qtd. in Werner 88) and "grotesque" (cf. Fairholt 45 ff.), others simply did not consider it up to any standard of art:

All Egyptian sculpture and architecture were noticeable alike for massiveness and grotesqueness. But the massive and the grotesque are not enough to constitute 'the grand'. [...] there must be either exquisite proportion and physical beauty, or exquisite imitation. Neither of these classes of interest is attached to the abnormal and idol-like figures in the garden side of the Nave, sixty five feet in height. (*Illustrated London News* 1854: 70 qtd. in Werner 98)

In 1808 the first purpose-built gallery saw the opening of a specifically Egyptian installation (cf. Moser 65). Here, the role of the ancient artefacts was certainly foremost to embody the English victory over Napoleon and his troops as most of the objects showcased were war booty (cf. Sertima 55). Many of the objects shown in the exhibition are still among the most sought after by museum visitors today: statues of the lion-headed Sekhmet, the sarcophagus of Nectanebo II, the fist of Ramesses II, and, still the most prominent object for its importance to the European rediscovery of the ancient Egyptian culture through its language, the Rosetta Stone (cf. Moser 67; Parkinson *Cracking Codes* 8).

The demography of the visitors in the early years of the British Museum reflects a certain elitism. According to Moser, the potential visitors who applied for tickets to the museum "predominantly included scholars, artists, antiquarians, collectors, scientists, writers and travellers" (53). To gain entrance into the museum in the first half of the nineteenth century, one had to have connections or must have been famous and acknowledged as an intellectual (cf. Moser 53). The strict class system would have played a major role in this circumstance, as it seems unlikely that a working class member would be permitted to move in such illustrious circles.

consisted more of fruits than of meat; hence their bodies could not be covered with much flesh. The present occupants of the country, on the other hand, seeking only the means of living without labor, are sleeping in sloth; hence their tendency to corpulence." (Winckelmann translated by Lodge 229)

Illustration 2: “The Rosetta Stone at the British Museum”.



While the colossal statues were eyed less benevolently by some, others found them majestic. The head of Ramesses II, also known as Ozymandias or Memnon, was

brought to London by Giovanni Belzoni and Henry Salt in 1816. It was acquired by the British Museum in 1818, and inspired Percy Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" (1817). John Keats wrote at least seven poems on ancient Egypt after visiting the British Museum shortly after the arrival of colossal head of Ramesses II (cf. Colla 71), most famously "Endymion", "To the Nile", and "Hyperion."

Interestingly, colossal art rarely appears in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction. While pyramids and tombs and their inventory are described, and mummies and figurines feature in museum narratives, colossal statues do not appear apart from Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*. In Marsh's novel a statue of Isis terrifies the protagonist simply because of its larger-than-life size. One reason for this lack of colossal objects in Egyptianising fiction might be found in the possibly subconscious idea that they portrayed Britain's greatness (cf. Moser 73). The fact that great Romantic poets felt inspired by the giant head of Ramesses II and the political implication of these objects as a sign of victory and greatness might have led to an intellectual annexation of those statues and objects as representatives of British grandeur, thereby becoming part of the *Self* without emanating the threat of mummies and supposedly magical objects such as amulets or ushabti figurines.³⁹ At the same time, with the arrival of colossal objects in Europe, the image of ancient Egypt was redefined for the museum visitors. Beforehand, Egyptian artefacts had been considered curiosities, strange objects which were sought after collectibles for their uniqueness and strangeness. With the arrival of the grand statues, sarcophagi and obelisks, the display and therefore representation of ancient Egypt to the British public became greater; its strangeness became a superlative. The lack of context and the random placement determined by size and shape rather than theme or chronology made the objects possibly more mysterious and frightening than they had seemed before. The crass reactions by museum visitors – as cited above – speak for themselves. But not only the size of the objects gave them a strange aura; the lighting of the objects also played a major part in that. Moser points out that

sidelighting had important implications for the presentation of the Egyptian sculpture, as not only would it have left the room quite dark at certain times of day, but more significantly, it would have cast an uneven light on the object, leaving many of their features in shadow. (80)

The mystery and Gothic quality this created around the objects is palpable. Peter Patmore describes Egyptian art in his *Guide to the Beauties of the British*

39 Ushabti are servant figurines which are placed into the tombs of the deceased in order to serve them in the afterlife.

Museum (1826): “[...] the figures lie upon the surface, not like imitations of anything real, but like shadows” (Patmore qtd. in Moser 117). The objects were also much larger in comparison to the Greek and Roman statues, whose rooms were of the same height. The Egyptian colossal statues would therefore have seemed even bigger, “bulky and oversized” (Moser 83). The lack of appreciation for the beauty of Egyptian objects is therefore more than comprehensible.

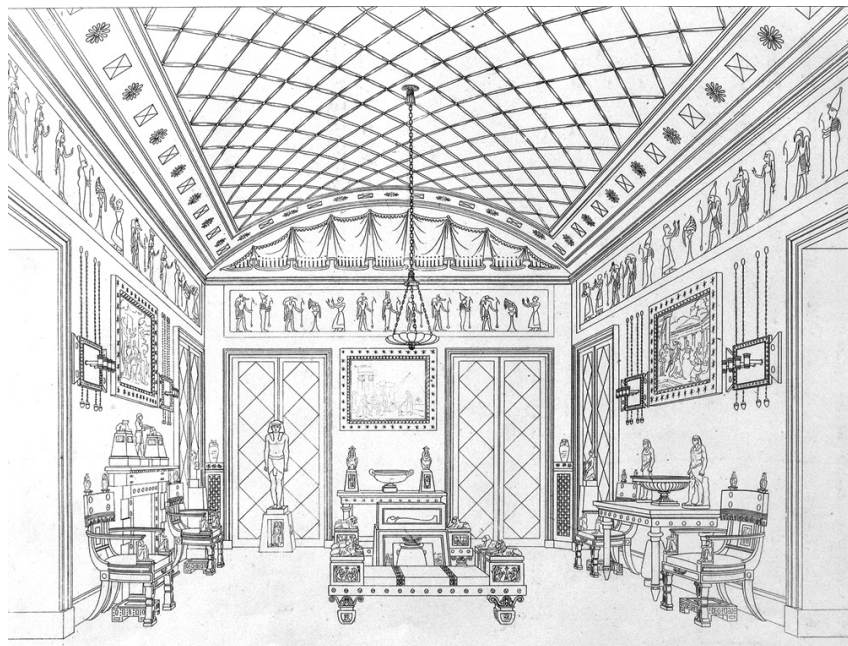
The transition of the visitors from the Greek to the Egyptian room and vice versa would have supported a clear appreciation of the former and a negative reaction to the latter, simply due to the lighting, the object size and general impression of the exhibition. Another aspect which distinguished the classical from the ancient Egyptian objects was the grade of respect shown by the museum goers. Moser speaks of a certain lack of respect that caused many visitors to engage more intimately with the Egyptian objects than they would have ever done with the Greek statues. She describes how men stood, peering into sarcophagi while a woman and a child seem to be portrayed touching Egyptian objects in a contemporary illustration (cf. Moser 91). (A similar behaviour of the visitors of the British Museum can be witnessed even today.) Richard Parkinson argues that the Rosetta Stone is partly so dark because visitors touched the object (Parkinson *Cracking Codes* 23). This intimacy shows that despite seeming frightening, the colossal statues were also perceived as something immediate and familiar; something more tangible than the far removed classical statues. In a sense, the reversal of the *Self* and the *Other* in the perception of and interaction with the objects occurred.

On the other hand, Egyptian art was not solely conceived as strange, grotesque or simply out of place. During the early nineteenth century, and gaining momentum during the 50s after the Great Exhibition, Egyptian stylistic elements were introduced into architecture, furniture, jewellery and even kitchen utensils and china. Interior designer Thomas Hope created numerous Egyptian themed objects of furniture and his designs greatly fed into the European Egyptomania of the nineteenth century.

Illustration 3: "The Egyptian Gallery at the British Museum".



Illustration 4: “Thomas Hope’s Egyptian Room”.



An appreciation of Egyptian art might have followed the publication of Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte* (1802), and its translation into English in 1803, as well as William Richard Hamilton's *Aegyptiaca* (1809), which describes several journeys through Egypt and the antiquities which can be seen on the way. Denon's book was the first text which could be used as a guide to the British Museum collection, creating at least partly a context for the exhibited objects and for Egyptian archaeology itself. The Italian inventor Giovanni Battista Belzoni is responsible for the acquisition of most of the colossal statues in the British Museum. He built a life-size replica of the tomb of Seti II in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (cf. Moser 112; Mayes 258), which was a great success. In the exhibition visitors could experience almost the same wonder that he felt when he entered the real tomb; he managed to build a sort of time travel device to transport English visitors back into Pharaonic Egypt. Considering the similarities of Jane Loudon's description of the pyramid of Cheops in *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* to Belzoni's description of the tomb, it seems highly likely that she visited the exhibition and modelled Cheops' tomb after Seti's tomb. Despite Belzoni's extremely popular and successful display, Moser explains that

the British Museum tried to be more conservative in their display of Egyptian art, both because they found the purpose of a museum to be an educational and not an entertaining one, and because it did not occur to them to showcase Egypt in such a different way from other objects in the museum (cf. Moser 113).

With Salt and Belzoni in Egypt and further acquisitions of Egyptian objects by the British Museum, the collection grew ever larger. While the display of Greek art, for example, consisted of a few chosen and carefully selected pieces, the Egyptian rooms were almost overcrowded as the museum tried to display as many objects as possible. The visual overload might have suggested an immense richness of Egyptian objects, therefore placing Egypt into a position of an endless source of material. At the same time, no discernible order apart from the placement of related objects in each other's immediate proximity existed. Moser points out that despite a certain order within the displays, "the arrangement as a whole was still reminiscent of a cabinet of curiosities" (159), not unlike private collections of Egyptian antiquities. This accumulation of objects finds its way into several stories in which private collections are described. Especially Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249", Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* take up the concept of an overflowing Egyptian collection, amassed in a single room or house, transforming the place into a cabinet of curiosities. A perfect example of such private collections are the house of Sir John Soane at 13 Lincoln's Inn Field, London, which was kept in its original state after the collector's death in 1837, and the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in the rooms of the University College London in Malet Place off Gower Street. Further publicly accessible collections were opened all over Great Britain.

Illustration 5: “The Petrie Museum in London”.



The Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge was given two Egyptian artefacts in 1822, marking the beginning of the museum’s Egyptian collection, which received a multitude of private donations from collectors over the years. In 1867, the private collector Joseph Mayer donated his collection to the Liverpool Free Library and Museum, which is now the World Museum.

The public opinion on ancient Egypt was initially shaped by very subjective reactions to seeing the exhibition in the British Museum, as well as reading travel accounts by those who had visited the real place – by both classical and modern travellers.⁴⁰ An example of a very amusing view on the hype of visiting Egyptian exhibitions can be found in Lady Blessington’s account “The Tomb” from 1823:

Of all the exhibitions that attract the lounge, in this overgrown metropolis, few present a more interesting study to the reflecting mind, or a more entertaining scene to the lovers of character, than the Egyptian Tomb. The period in which this excavation was formed is so remote, that its history is involved in an obscurity which adds to it still greater interest, and brings to the mind a thousand reflections on the vanity of all human efforts to force the natural course of events; it forms an admirable subject for the philosopher to contemplate, and illustrated the every-varying scenes of this mutable world:

40 Among famous travel accounts by women are Lucie Duff Gordon’s *Letters from Egypt* (1876) and Amelia Edwards’s *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877).

while the crowds of busy triflers, and listless loungers, that hover round, furnish ample food for amusement to the lovers of eccentricity and character. (55–56)

Her account then goes on to describe the visitors of the exhibition and the extensive use of Belzoni's *Narrative* for comparison and guidance (cf. 58) and the diverse opinions which the visitors have on the tomb and Egyptian art in general. From the 1830s on, newspapers and magazines began to play a great role in shaping the public opinion on any subject. A few magazines specialised in educational purposes and published articles about the British Museum, including the Egyptian collection. Guide books about London and London's museums and collections were published. Therefore, the subjective first-hand experience was filtered and guided by the accompanying literature now, taking away a bit of the immediacy of the experience, allowing for a more objective approach (cf. Moser 160). Egyptology as a scholarly subject was also slowly starting to emerge (161), finally offering more context and explanation to the objects in the museums and ancient Egyptian culture in general. Especially a shift in the concentration from colossal statues to smaller, everyday life objects offered a new understanding of Egypt's culture. Objects like make-up articles, mirrors, crockery and jewellery showcased that essentially, ancient Egyptians had not been so very different from the Victorians.

Research during the nineteenth century offered a clearer understanding of Egypt's ancient culture, art and architecture. With the newly acquired knowledge, the colossal statues were placed in a chronological order, displaying the development of Egyptian art during the ages. By the 1880s it had become increasingly difficult to transport objects to Europe, as the Egyptian government became concerned with the loss of their own antiquities (cf. Moser 173–4). This halt in the acquisition of ever more objects gave the museum the chance to consider changes in displays, leading to a much more organised exhibition of Egyptian artefacts. Egypt's rightful place in world history was also more firmly established as scholars and explorers published large volumes on its art and history. Christian Bunsen's *Aegyptens Stelle in der Weltgeschichte* (1845), Samuel Sharpe's *The Early History of Egypt* (1836), Karl Richard Lepsius' *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (1849–59), John Kendrick's *Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs* (1850), Reginald Poole's *Horae Aegyptiacae* (1851) and John Gardner Wilkinson's *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians* (1854) were considered to be ground-breaking works on ancient Egypt. Furthermore, specific guidebooks or chapters within guidebooks concerned with the Egyptian collection were produced, such as William Vaux's *Handbook to the Antiquities in the British Museum* (1851) or Thomas Nichol's *A Handy-book of the British Museum* (1870), which offered context and interpretations alike (cf. Moser 197).

Giovanni Battista Belzoni offered a new approach to learning about Egypt. His display of the spacious, colourful and bright displays of models of Abu Simbel, elements of the Karnak temple, a reconstruction of the tomb of Beni Hassan and the portico of Philae in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in 1821 (cf. Moser 201) would have presented a very different picture of ancient Egypt than the Egyptian rooms in the British Museum would have with their strange lighting and overcrowded galleries. An artistic appreciation of Egypt and its antiquities arose in Europe with displays of art and photography of Egyptian monuments in situ. David Roberts's art in *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, and Nubia* (1842–49) and Francis Frith's photography gave ancient Egypt a romantic, if not Gothic quality. Especially photography led to a new sense of (pseudo) first-hand experience, as photographs taken in Egypt offered a view on objects and places in situ (cf. Moser 200).

Illustration 6: "Francis Frith's photograph of the Kiosk of Trajan, Philae, 1857".



This new interest in Egypt in a historical context also reflected back onto the British Museum, which was now criticised for showcasing treasures instead of

serving educational purposes (cf. Moser 202). Samuel Birch, the British Museum's first Egyptologist, began working towards that change, creating a collection which served to inform people about life in the past, lessening the status of the objects as war trophies in favour of their scholarly value (cf. Moser 213; Tyldesley 136). Slowly the Egyptian objects' mysticism was replaced with knowledge and certainty grounded in academic research. Similarly to Foucault's idea that madness and the Gothic became part of the literary tradition when the ill, the mad and the dying were excluded from everyday life and banished to the outskirts of the cities (cf. Monleón 29), Egypt's role as a mysterious place only became part of fantastic literature when knowledge interfered with imagination. Fantastic literature therefore seeks to undermine and replace the overt, the stable and the explainable. The more factual knowledge of Egypt was acquired, the wilder and more fantastic the theories about Egyptian magic and secret knowledge grew, culminating in the foundation of the Theosophical Society by Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, William Quan Judge and others in 1875. Blavatsky claimed to have been initiated into the ancient Egyptian mysteries (cf. Sinnett 247).

In 1882 the Egypt Exploration Fund (now the Egypt Exploration Society) was founded by Amelia Edwards, a year after the discovery of the royal mummies in the Valley of the Kings and the year of the British occupation of Egypt. The late nineteenth century saw the 'Scramble for Africa', sparked by the Berlin Conference of 1884, which regulated European trade and colonization in Africa. Egyptianising fantastic fiction flourished in the years after, reflecting changes in society as well as an ever growing fear of cultural regression. In addition, the fear of the downfall – or at least the weakening – of the British Empire is clearly reflected in all Egyptianising texts of the late nineteenth century. Especially mummy fiction is a genre which projects these fears as well as critical thoughts about Britain and the Empire onto the pages of fantastic texts. The occurrence of upheaval as well as critical mummies in literature can be understood as a metaphor for the uprising of Egypt against the colonialists in the second half of the nineteenth century. When Moser lists the different effects which ancient Egyptian objects had in the British Museum in the first half of the nineteenth century, scientific and scholarly interest are conspicuously absent while emotional reactions are prominent:

Besides inspiring visitors to confront death as a personal issue, the Egyptian antiquities provided a source of amusement for children, served as a symbol of British military might, and presented an opportunity to express xenophobic ideas about foreigners. [...] By this ancient culture it was possible to be horrified, amused, informed, repulsed, mystified, shocked, fascinated, awestruck, insulted or entertained. (Moser 121–2)

In fact, scholarly interest played only a very minor role in Britain's interest in Egypt until Samuel Birch was appointed assistant in the Department of Antiquities in 1836. He was personally interested in Egyptology and ensured that ancient Egypt became a subject of scientific interest rather than a source of entertainment (cf. Moser 131). Egyptian objects were generally seen as "wondrous curiosities, colossal monstrosities, monumental masterpieces, accessible oddities and historical documents" (Moser 230). The multitude of emotions and perceptions the Egyptian objects created for different people at different times highlights the difficulty in defining ancient Egypt's role in Western culture and literature. Its role and perception changed constantly, while its objects remained stagnant in their colossal quality, hewn in stone, present and immediate to be appropriated in whichever way one chose. This special quality is decisive for the representation of ancient Egypt in Egyptianising fantastic fiction.

It is notable that apart from Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!*, no significant Egyptianising fantastic story was published until the French author Théophile Gautier's "The Mummy's Foot" (1840). In the story, a Frenchman purchases the mummified foot of an ancient Egyptian princess, Hermonthis, to whom the protagonist returns the foot when she appears to him. To thank him, she transports the protagonist to Egypt with her, where he asks for her hand in marriage. As plans are made (and rejected) for him to become embalmed, he is woken up by a servant, leaving the outcome of the story unknown. Grant Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" (1878) borrows heavily from Gautier's story and from Edgar Allan Poe's "Some Words With a Mummy," which was published in 1845. Jane Loudon's critical view of European arrogance and sense of superiority towards ancient Egypt almost certainly inspired later narratives like Gautier's novel *The Romance of a Mummy*, which was published in 1856 and translated into English in 1863. In the novel, Lord Evandale, an English nobleman, and Dr. Rumphius, a German Egyptologist, find the tomb and the mummy of the young woman Tahoser, who, after being unwrapped by the two, turns out to be perfectly preserved. In the tomb, they find a papyrus which documents the complicated life and love story of the young woman, including references to biblical figures such as Moses. Being incredibly touched by Tahoser's story, Lord Evandale falls in love with the mummy and never marries, despite him being the last surviving member of his aristocratic family. Louisa May Alcott followed Loudon, Poe and Gautier with her "Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse" in 1869. Egyptianising fantastic fiction gained momentum in the 1860s which saw the construction of the Suez Canal, strengthening the European interest in Egypt. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 which lasted until 1914 marks the greatest density of English Egyptianising fantastic texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Before going further into detail on why ancient Egypt was a culture applicable to the themes of Victorian fantastic fiction and to outline why it presents a special case within the genre of Gothic fiction, it is necessary to come back to Edward Said's concept of 'Orientalism':

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. (Said *Orientalism* 2–3)

The 'Orient' and the 'Occident' as its counterpart are constructs, superficially created entities to define two parts of the world (cf. Said *Orientalism* 1). They represent two systems, which are defined by negating or reflecting the characteristics of the respective *Other*. The Orient is a construct, which was created in the European mind to impose control over a certain part of the world by justifying a superior role of the *Self* regarding the *Other* (cf. *Orientalism* 3 and 7). Authority and power of one system over another, justified by supposed knowledge about the *Other* by the *Self*, is a concept which was already considered by Sir Francis Bacon in his essay *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597), defined in Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' (cf. Gramsci *Prison Notebooks Volume 1* 1929), and has furthermore been discussed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 162) and Stuart Hall (cf. "The Work of Representation" 1997). Concerning Foucault's understanding of the relation of knowledge and power, Peter Childs and Patrick Williams explain: "One does not occur without the other; knowledge gives rise to power, but it is also produced by the operations of power" (*An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* 98–9). Edward Said's ground-breaking work on the topic, *Orientalism* (1978) offers several approaches as to how these power relations are created and reflected in narratives. Said has certainly been criticised by many of his contemporaries on the grounds of generalisation and superficiality, but it is undeniable that his definition and discussion of the artificially created 'Orient' and its counterpart the 'Occident' are essential when working with texts that concern the Western perception and representation of the East.

In most of the Egyptianising stories, Western protagonists are presented as worldly, intelligent and usually white bourgeois⁴¹ British men who tell their

41 Male white bourgeois protagonists in Egyptianising fantastic fiction feature in "Some Words with a Mummy," "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies," "Lot No. 249," "The

stories⁴² about strange and uncanny experiences, always reminding the reader that they are anything but superstitious⁴³ and thereby set the tone of the story, which is distinctly mimetic in the beginning. When the protagonist starts to doubt⁴⁴, the reader doubts with him, because the narrative has established a realistic backdrop which is interrupted by the supernatural element. Therefore, the audience becomes immediately aware of the appearance of fantastic elements which occur in the text. At the same time, uncanny feelings are initially shrugged off and shadows and strange occurrences which clearly unsettle the protagonist are explained away. However, even as the supernatural elements are described as phantasms, they lead to a shift of the narrative mode from the mimetic into the fantastic.

2.2 Egypt as the *Other*

*The East may change its masters and its gods,
but its customers never change.*
(“Smith and the Pharaohs” 333)

In the context of Orientalism and nineteenth-century fantastic and Gothic fiction, the concept of the *Other* stands out as the most important one. The *Other* is herein to be understood as a social, political and psychological construct. An attempt at a definition is therefore only ever possible when the particular *Other* is embedded in a specific context. Michel Foucault explains that in the eighteenth century, *Otherness* was moved away from society.

The evil which men had attempted to exclude by confinement reappeared, to the horror of the public, in a fantastic guise. There appeared, ramifying in every direction, the themes of an evil, both physical and moral, that developed in this very ambiguity the mingled powers of corrosion and horror. (Foucault *Madness and Civilization* 193)

José Monleón resumes this idea and argues that the mentally ill and criminals, as well as the physically ill and the dead, were banished to the outskirts of the

Mummy of Thompson-Pratt,” “The Story of Beal brow,” *She*, “The Ring of Thoth,” “Smith and the Pharaohs,” “The Nemesis of Fire,” “Sand,” and “A Descent into Egypt.” The Beetle and The Story of the Amulet feature both white bourgeois male and female characters.

42 The answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything.

43 When the protagonist of Rider Haggard’s “Smith and the Pharaohs” wants to excavate at night, his workers are too afraid of evil spirits to keep working and they are even afraid of Smith himself: “‘Sons of cowards!’ roared Smith after them, in his most vigorous Arabic. ‘It is I, your master, not an afreet’” (Haggard “SatP” 320).

44 Tzvetan Todorov sees liminality, the doubt of the protagonist, as the decisive feature of the fantastic.

cities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (cf. Foucault *Madness and Civilization* 57). Subsequently, the ignorance of this natural, yet unstable and frightening part of life, led to the return of unreason in the mind rather than in reality (ibid.). Fear of this *Other* – the atypical or the unreasonable – flooded the minds of the people and is reflected in the wave of Gothic literature of the time (cf. Monleón 30; cf. Foucault *Madness and Civilization* 191–2). By alienating this particular aspect of daily life, it became a threat and returned in the form of unease, rumours and the irrational. The nineteenth-century interest in ancient Egypt and its representation in English literature and culture can be understood in the light of this notion. Not only did the dead ‘return’ by way of travel reports or stories, but they were also physically brought into the heart of British society. In London, mummies were exhibited and stripped of their bandages in public, putting the people into immediate contact with the image of death and the uncanny concept of immortality in death. Due to poor living conditions of the working class, Victorian Britain saw a high rate of death in the cities, with especially high child mortality numbers (cf. Jalland 120–1).⁴⁵ However, death in the family or neighbourhood and the showmanship that came with the display of the Egyptian dead are two very different concepts. Yet, a long European tradition of displaying the dead can be found in Christian traditions. Throughout Europe, human remains were displayed in catacombs, cloisters and other sacred places, but generally, these human remains were treated with more respect than Egyptian mummies. A very telling example of the contradictory treatment of contemporary and ancient bodies can be found in Loudon’s *The Mummy!* (1827), where the scientist Edric refuses to conduct experiments on fresh corpses, but chooses the mummy of the ancient pharaoh Cheops to try out a galvanic battery. Similarly, the burning of the sarcophagus and the body of the mummy in Louisa May Alcott’s “Lost in a Pyramid” (1869) speaks of a much decreased respect for the bodies of those who died thousands of years ago. These two, and other Egyptianising texts, criticise this irreverent treatment of human remains in so far as the protagonists or their loved ones have to suffer the consequences for their actions. The consequences for the Western *Self* originate both in the actions of the often vengeful *Other* as well as in circumstances which can only be ascribed to fate or a supernatural or transcendent moral authority.

45 Due to reforms and a general improvement of the living conditions in larger cities, the child mortality rate decreased towards the end of the century. At the same time, mummy fiction became more popular.

Notwithstanding Foucault's and Monleón's arguments, Egyptianising fantastic fiction does not immediately reflect the threat of the *Other* in what has been banned from society. Even though madness, mental regression and death all play a great role in Victorian literature, the threatening *Other* is usually placed further away, both in time and geography, namely in ancient civilizations and foreign countries or representative elements thereof. As a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, which also mark the beginning of the modern interest in ancient Egypt, the European concept of historical progress was established (cf. Ross "Historical Consciousness" 916). The idea of progress, memory and nostalgia also served as shaping elements of historical consciousness.⁴⁶ Concerning Egypt, this 'memory'⁴⁷ was colourfully displayed in the manifold drawings and reports in the *Description de l'Égypte*.⁴⁸ The *Description* was published between 1809 and 1829 in twenty-three volumes in the standard edition.⁴⁹ The impressive architecture, art, craftsmanship and intense alignment towards death and the dead, stood in stark contrast to the perception of modern rural Arabic Egypt. While the *Description de l'Égypte* gave proof of an immense former empire, this empire was in ruins, and had been so for centuries. The volumes full of exotic images of a country in which two very different cultures coexisted, one full of Arabic tradition and life, and the other full of ancient mystery and silent monuments, presented an Egypt from a European point of view. It was simultaneously a depiction of grandeur and immense architectural achievement and a reminder of the eventual downfall of any given empire, no matter how great it might be. This thought is especially present at the end of the nineteenth century and is strongly reflected in Rider Haggard's and other authors' works, marking the fear of the end of the British Empire in a time when it grew ever larger.⁵⁰

In addition to being a powerful reminder of the transience of empires, the illustrations in the *Description* created an uncanny atmosphere: many of them show ruins half covered in sand, seemingly forgotten and yet a constant proof of former greatness (cf. Monleón 44–45). Other images show Egyptians or French

46 For a further elaboration on these concepts, see John Lukacs' *Historical Consciousness*.

47 Memory is set in inverted commas here, because the depiction of Egypt by Napoleon's savants – despite being rather objective and truthful to the originals – were representations through the eyes of Europeans, whose perspective was naturally limited and selective.

48 The entire *Description de l'Égypte* has been made publically available online by the Bibliotheca Alexandria here: www.descegy.bibalex.org/.

49 Several editions were published and the numbers of volumes vary in the later editions.

50 The extension of the British Empire peaked in 1922.

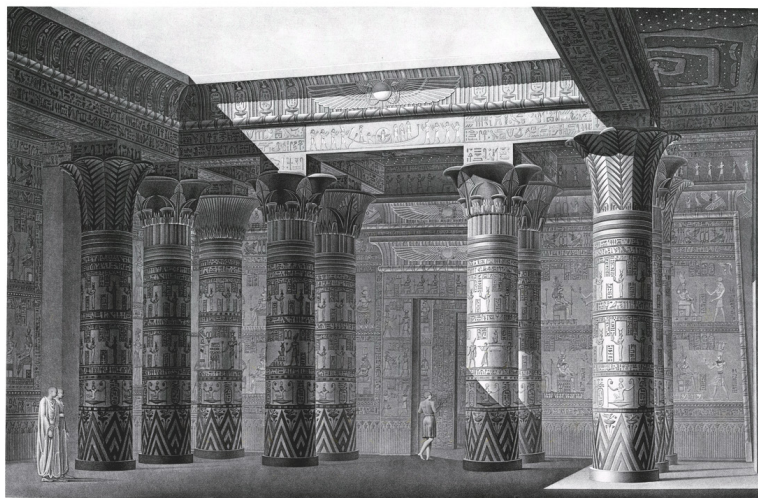
explorers sitting or standing in front of or on tombs and other ruins. Some of the buildings were almost completely preserved and seemingly braved time's destruction. A palimpsest of both ancient and modern layers was depicted; an entity which exists in one place but which simultaneously exists geographically in the present and the past. Some ancient Egyptian monuments and temples – the Hathor temple in Philae, for instance – were so perfectly preserved in build and colour that it was almost impossible to tell that it was actually thousands of years old – built during the reign of Nectanebo I between 380 and 362 BCE. This double quality is reflected in the textual depictions of tombs and other ancient constructions as gateways into the past. In many of the Egyptianising stories, tombs, temples and other edifices act as time travelling devices, propelling the protagonists into another time, and sometimes another place.⁵¹

Illustration 7: “Hathor Temple in Philae from the Description de l’Égypte”.

V. Vol I

ÎLE DE PHILAE.

Pl. 68



VUE PERSPECTIVE INTÉRIÈRE COLORIÉE, PRISE SOUS LE PORTIQUE DU GRAND TEMPLE.

51 A modern Gothic novel, in which property is used extensively, is *Die Prophezeiung* (1993) by Wolfgang and Heike Hohlbein, in which the protagonist constantly moves in between times and space triggered either by visiting a museum or being surrounded by ancient Egyptian objects. They write in the tradition of Egyptianising fantastic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In Egyptianising fantastic fiction, time is repeatedly used as a relative entity⁵²; and the activity span of the ancient protagonists varies from a certain moment in ancient history, reaching an important point in modern times, as in “The Ring of Thoth” or “A Professor of Egyptology”, to just a single day or even just a few minutes as in “My New Year’s Eve Among the Mummies” or “The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt”. Time, and with it progress and stagnation, and the concept of history in particular, are essential in the Victorian perception of ancient Egypt. Apart from changing the world’s concept of history, the ancient Egyptian civilization was perceived as one of the highest developed ancient cultures. By several British scholars it was even considered to be the only culture to come close to the grandeur of their own. Therefore a frantic search for a missing link between ancient Egypt and modern Britain began. Scientists like Charles Piazzi Smyth, following Richard William Howard Vyse’s, John Herschel’s and John Taylor’s disquisitions on the measurements of the Cheops Pyramid, proclaims in his *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (1864) to have found that link between the two cultures in the measurements of the Great Pyramid:

[The measurements of the Great Pyramid make] the ancient monument speak both intelligibly and most intellectually to the scientific understanding of the present day. Why, it seems almost to imply [...] that there was more of intercommunication in idea and knowledge between the architect of the Great Pyramid, and the origins of the Anglo-Saxon race. (Smyth 36–37)

But not only scientists were certain of the superiority of ancient Egypt to other cultures, both ancient and modern. Egypt’s role in Victorian and Edwardian politics was not just that of an important chess piece in military and economic strategy; its ancient history and former grandeur made it worthy of British and French attention. By the time of the British occupation of Egypt, its former glory was long lost, and yet Egypt was a country which the British claimed to know more intimately than any other Oriental country. In 1910, Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour addressed the House of Commons in a speech which clearly reflects his opinion on the matter.

‘I take up no attitude of superiority. But I ask [...] who has even the most superficial knowledge of history, if they will look in the face of the facts with which a British statesman has to deal when he is put in a position of supremacy over great races like the inhabitants of Egypt and countries in the East? We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it

52 Stretched or shortened through dreams, horrific experiences or memories.

more intimately; we know more about it. It goes far beyond the pretty span of the history of our race, which is lost in the prehistoric period at a time when the Egyptian civilization had already passed its prime. Look at the oriental countries. Do not talk about superiority or inferiority.' (Balfour qtd. in Said *Orientalism* 32)

He continues: "Is it a good thing for these great nations – I admit their greatness – that this absolute government should be exercised by us? I think it is a good thing" (Balfour qtd. in Said *Orientalism* 33). The imperial attitude is obvious; and so is the Orientalist approach.

Balfour's logic is interesting, not least for being completely consistent with the premises of his entire speech. England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes 'the very basis' of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation. (Said *Orientalism* 34)

Said points out Balfour's belief that "British knowledge of Egypt *is* Egypt [...]" (Said *Orientalism* 32), which mirrors the general Victorian and Edwardian idea of Egypt. Coleman and Johnson argue that the

[...] 'othering' of different places – of places viewed as 'modern' finding their inverse 'backward' – was established as a fundamental part of European thought at a time when nation-states and national identities were being formed and grounded within Europe. (Coleman and Johnson 867)

This kind of thinking stands in contrast to the ideas of the early anthropologists and later also Darwinists, who saw the peak of evolution in modern Western culture.⁵³ Ancient Rome, ancient Greece, and by the middle of the nineteenth century also ancient Egypt, were exceptions to that rule and were considered the sources of modern culture, philosophy and science. Nevertheless, scientists like Charles Piazzi Smyth saw more in ancient Egypt than in other ancient high cultures, suggesting that Great Britain was directly linked to ancient Egypt and its secret knowledge.⁵⁴ This poses the question of ancient Egypt's quality of the *Other*. While the created Orient can, according to Said, be defined in oppositional terms with the equally constructed Occident, this book discusses ancient

53 The fear of regression is one of the most prominent themes in colonial literature, triggered by the idea of evolution, which suggested that if there is progress, regress is possible, too (cf. Brantlinger *RoD* 186 and Lyn Pykett 209).

54 Charles Piazzi Smyth and others tried to link ancient Egypt to Great Britain by suggesting that measurements and geometrical knowledge were passed down to the British from the ancient Egyptians. For a more detailed discussion, see chapter 6.2.

Egyptian *Otherness* as it is created and used in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction, and which frequently overlaps with the *Self* and subverts the concept of the opposing East and West.

2.2.1 Qualities and Grades of *Otherness*

The absolutely other is the Other.
(Lévinas qtd. in Howitt 307)

To gain an insight into the complex role of Egypt in the Victorian mind its status as the *Other* – and at times as a reflection of the *Self* – has to be carefully examined. Richard Howitt's essay "Scale and the Other: Lévinas and Geography" (2000, revised 2002) discusses the theories of "embodiment, emplacement and difference" by Emmanuel Lévinas, focusing on the definition of the creation of meaning, communication and perception of the world in connection to the relations between the *Self* and the *Other* (Howitt 299). Geography and place are two components which are taken into consideration by Lévinas and Howitt:

[If] place is better understood as an event rather than a thing, perhaps scale is similarly better grasped as an event, a process, a relationship of movement and interaction rather than a discrete thing. (Howitt 304)

The concept of 'place' and 'scale' as constantly changing parameters is relevant to the reading of Egyptianising texts and their depiction of the *Other* as well as the *Other's* relationship with the Occidental *Self*. While Victorians viewed time and history as linear, the concept of change was not necessarily seen in relation to that linearity. From an Orientalist and therefore general Western point of view, the Orient was thought to be unchanging and downright immune to progress and in great need of betterment, which could be provided by British colonisation and implementation of the Western system.⁵⁵ At the same time, not only the urge to change the unchangeable was omnipresent in nineteenth century British mind-set, the need to possess the *Other* was just as prominent:

[T]he economic relationship of 'possession' reduces the other, and in many circumstances the landscape itself, to the interchangeable facelessness of a market commodity. Rather than providing the nourishment we enjoy in social (and environmental) relations, the act of possessing opens up the prospect of also being possessed. (Howitt 300)

55 A similar mind-set could still be found in US American politics under the Bush administration, as Sonja Hegasy argues in her essay "Die Mär von der Arabischen Stagnation" (2007).

Nicholas Daly cites Thomas Richards, who proposes that imperialists “portrayed [...] commodities as a magic medium through which English power and influence could be enforced and enlarged in the colonial world” (Daly *Modernism* 86). Daly argues that mummies and artefacts were treated as a commodity (cf. Daly *Modernism* 95); human remains stripped off their humanity and at the same time incorporated in the possession of the West, becoming both part of the *Self* while gaining *Otherness* through interpretation.

Since the beginning of a strategic and thorough exploration of the world in the middle of the fifteenth century, earth had been discovered and charted almost in its entirety. By the middle of the nineteenth century, there was almost nothing left to be explored on the surface of the earth; a factor which led to an interest in and focus on the otherworldly and the supernatural, and a movement away from fixed geography and time in literature to science and new religious concepts. Prominent examples of this literary shift from the earth’s surface to other spheres, below and above the ground, are *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) and *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) by Jules Verne, Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Coming Race* (1871)⁵⁶, H.G. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and, increasingly adding supernatural elements, Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Horror of the Heights” (1913).

The emergence of psychoanalysis and a focus on the depths of the human mind and consciousness marks the turn of the century, just as the interest in the invisible, transcendental and improbable is palpable in the manifold establishment of occult and esoteric societies and interest groups.⁵⁷ A clear parallel can be drawn between the rapid development of science, the all-encompassing discovery of planet Earth and the ever decreasing power of the church and a critical reflection on religion⁵⁸ on the one hand, and the interest in the occult, supernatural and otherworldly on the other. By encountering and creating the Oriental *Other* through travel, tourism and colonisation as well as through the corresponding

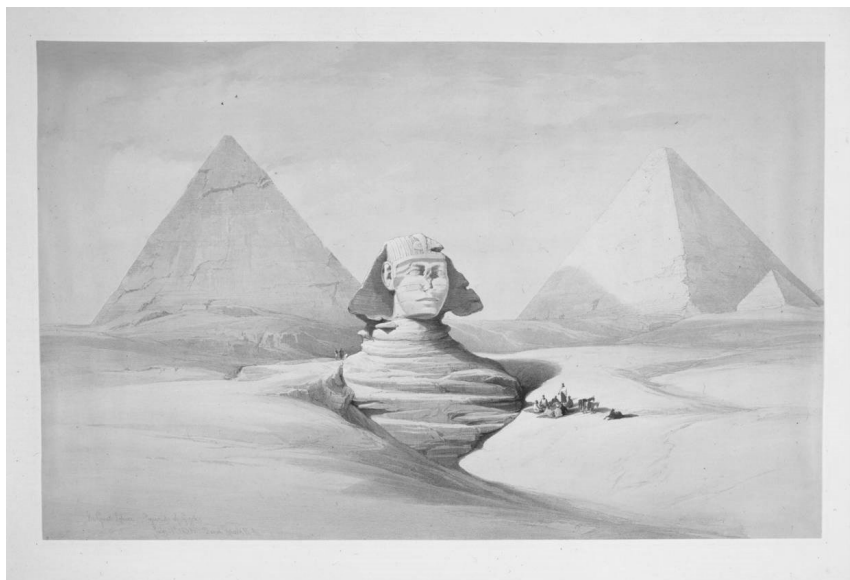
56 Lytton’s *A Strange Story* (1862) features Egyptianising elements in the form of alchemy (cf. *A Strange Story* 324) and a staff which serves as protection from snakes. The staff carries a talisman, a small stone which has to be applied to the snake bite and which cures the person who was bitten (cf. *A Strange Story* 217).

57 For a discussion on the development of occult and spiritualist interest in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain, see chapter 6.1.

58 Questions concerning the truth of the Bible were asked after Darwin and Lyell published their theories in the second half of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche and Freud drove secularisation forward at the end of the nineteenth century.

literature and newspaper reports, it became a known entity of which not much new was to be discovered.

Illustration 8: "David Roberts's 'The Great Sphinx' 17 July 1839".



After the publications of Baron Denon's *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (1803), the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1829), Belzoni's *Narrative* (1835), Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) and Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837), in addition to other travel reports, the general understanding and knowledge of Egypt was fixed in Western imagination. Although none of these reports refer to Egypt as a mysterious or supernatural place, ancient Egypt never lost a certain mystical and mythical quality and its inherent *Otherness*, which the formerly unreadable hieroglyphics, strange art and the culture's focus on death had created. While Egypt, both modern and ancient, clearly belonged to the *Oriental Other*, the supernatural and often metaphysical aspects connected with ancient Egypt added further layers to this *Otherness*. Hewitt cites Lévinas's thoughts on the metaphysical:

[Metaphysics]⁵⁹ appears as a movement going forth from a world that is familiar to us, whatever be the unknown lands that bound it or that it hides from view, from an 'at home' which we inhabit, toward an alien outside-of-oneself, toward a yonder. (Lévinas qtd. in Howitt 306)

The metaphysical *Other* which is sought can never be actually reached and therefore remains a constant unattainable goal in the pursuit of knowledge, control and ownership.

The term of this movement, the elsewhere or the other, is called *other* in an eminent sense. No journey, no change of climate or of scenery could satisfy the desire bent toward it. The other metaphysically desired is not 'other' like the bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape which I contemplate, like, sometimes, myself for myself, this 'I'; that 'other'. I can 'feed' on these realities and to a very great extent satisfy myself, as though I had been simply lacking them. The *alterity* is thereby reabsorbed into my own identity as a thinker or a possessor. The metaphysical desire tends toward *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other* (1969: 33, emphasis in the original). (Lévinas in Howitt 306)

The metaphysical *Other* cannot be reached or possessed by the *Self*. The obsession with the Oriental and, more specifically, the ancient Egyptian *Other* which is linked to magic and the supernatural, replaces the already familiar and owned, concrete *Other*. Metaphysical ancient Egypt, which is possessed and embraced by the *Self* once again, escapes the grasp of the *Self* and becomes an unreachable entity in its own right. The artificial creation of ancient Egypt as a supernatural place – both in literature and occult thought – conforms to the need to break out of the boundaries of the known and explainable.⁶⁰ Hence, the supernatural component serves to keep the *Other* in its unattainable state. Mummy fiction serves as an example. Theoretically, ancient Egyptian mummies represent the concrete *Other* – in time, place and cultural qualities. However, when those mummies become part of the Western modern world as physical possessions in the form of collectibles and objects in exhibitions, they are embedded into the history and culture of the West; just as the mummies who communicate with the Western protagonists in Egyptianising fantastic fiction become part of the colonial

59 Parenthesis added by Howitt.

60 Seyla Benhabib argues that the concrete *Other* never loses its quality as an *Other* entirely; it can always be identified (cf. Benhabib 10). Professor Constanides in "A Professor of Egyptology" speaks with a foreign accent and is described as foreign looking. Sosra in "The Ring of Thoth" seems much older than he should be, the beetle in the eponymous novel always remains strange and is referred to as "the Arab" in its humanoid form.

experience. It is very rarely the case that we are shown the influence of the West on modern Egyptian culture in those texts; which would mostly be considered either irrelevant to the narrative or a natural consequence of colonisation. An exception to the rule is Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827), which depicts an industrialised future Egypt that has become an economic extension of Britain and America. Most texts which include modern Egypt into their narrative portray it as stereotypically Oriental with inclusions of the changes which the Europeans brought to the country, including architecture, hotels, a general awareness of tourism and European life style choices. Edith Nesbit, whose protagonists would be able to influence the history of Egypt simply by being there, always has her children return to contemporary London whenever the place and time in which the protagonists find themselves seems to fall apart; mostly without any consequences for the history of that foreign place or modern London. While most of the adventures of the children hint at historical events, places and personalities, only one adventure directly influences the history of Europe: the children ironically cause the invasion of Britain⁶¹ in 55 and 54 BCE by advertising its beauty and progress to Julius Caesar – obviously that of Victorian Britain – to him, and he consequently decides to invade just to see what it really looks like. The irony lies not only in the made-up influence on history by the time travellers, but also in the notion that Julius Caesar⁶² expects a grand and highly developed country, which the Isles obviously were not at that time. Nevertheless, nineteenth century Egypt was strongly influenced and changed by industrialisation and the attempts of superimposing Western concepts and culture on Egypt, thereby also changing its traditions in many ways. The concept of the concrete *Other* as the opposite of the *Self*, however, is almost obliterated in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Communication between the *Self* and the *Other* is generally possible, even if the process is sometimes problematic and misunderstandings occur. At this point it is of course important to remember that all of the authors of Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction were generally Western – British, Irish, US American or Australian – and therefore could only write from the Western perspective. The inherent criticism of European practices and attitude towards the Orient in the genre is therefore a Western construction without any input by members of the defined *Other*.

61 In the story, the country which Caesar plans to invade is referred to as Britain; ignoring the notion that Britain as such did not exist back during that time.

62 Further irony lies in the idea that with the Roman invasion, modern civilisation was introduced to the Isles. Therefore Caesar represents both the *Other* and the *Self* in different aspects of history.

A further aspect concerning the supernatural *Other* lies in erotic fantasies, which, from a male point of view, often also denote possession and control. Those fantasies are yet another way of owning the *Other* and making it part of the *Self*. The fear of women, and especially exotic women,⁶³ can be eradicated by either making them fall in love with the male protagonists, or by destroying them; the latter option obliterating the concept of the personified *Other* completely. At the same time, some of the encounters with exotic, and in most cases Oriental ancient female characters, lead to the destruction or weakening of the *Self*. Numerous Egyptianising texts feature female characters representing the Western *Self* which are in constant danger of coming under the influence of the Oriental *Other*, adding to their state of the female *Other* within their patriarchal society. These female characters suffer in the stead of the Western male protagonist (cf. “Lost in a Pyramid”; *The Jewel of Seven Stars*; *The Beetle*; “The Story of Baelbrow”), while simultaneously representing the Western *Self* and the female *Other* in their weakness. This might simply be attributed to the gender roles in Victorian Britain, but it is noteworthy that females have to suffer for the exploits of men, both in texts by male and female authors. To take it a step further, cases of domination of the female Oriental *Other* and the subjugation of Western men appear in almost all Victorian Egyptianising texts. The supernatural female⁶⁴ therefore can be described to represent an extreme *Other*; a terrifying and dangerous and yet exciting *Other* which is to be adored and feared at the same time. The *Other* is simultaneously fascinating and dangerous and it triggers the impulse to get to know, to possess and to destroy it at the same time. In how far the *Self* creates and interacts with the *Other* is discussed in the following chapter.

2.2.2 Perceptual and Discursive Imperialism

*[He] truly believed that he had re-created the Orient,
as it really was, in his work. (Said Orientalism 88)*

Fred Jandt and Dolores Tanno speak of two kinds of imperialism: “perceptual imperialism and discursive imperialism” (120). They define perceptual imperialism as an interpretation of myths rather than facts; a view on an *Other* which is founded on reports, stories and ‘common knowledge’ rather than on experience and properly conducted research (cf. 120). It can be argued that perceptual

63 In other words: any woman not representing the quiet obedient Victorian woman.

64 The concept of the female as the other is very common in the discourse of Orientalism. The Occident was denoted as strong, intelligent and male while the Orient was considered weak, feeble-minded and female (cf. Said *Orientalism* 207).

imperialism concerns the majority of the Victorians; especially the lower classes which would have no access to first-hand experiences other than the altered⁶⁵ reality and context of objects in museums and exhibitions.

The binary oppositions of the Western *Self* and the Oriental or Egyptian *Other* are deeply rooted in national and cultural stereotypes, which are seldom questioned. Again, we have to carefully separate ancient from modern Egypt. Modern Egypt belonged to the *general* Orient, falling into the negative categories which stand in opposition to the positive ones with which the West identified itself.⁶⁶ Ancient Egypt still carried the notions of an underdeveloped, ancient and unchanging country, yet it was simultaneously admired for being one of the most durable and resilient great nations of the history of mankind. While modern Egypt went through great changes⁶⁷ during the nineteenth century following the Napoleonic conquest,⁶⁸ ancient Egypt had perceivably remained the same. Egypt's history⁶⁹ was certainly long and complex, and ancient Egypt underwent

65 This alteration is due to the question of how the Orient was represented by the Victorians; and most exhibitions depicting the Orient were certainly showing both the strange exoticism, and at the same time the supposed inferiority in comparison to the Empire (cf. Great Exhibition); for a further discussion on the creation of the *Other* in exhibitions see Stephanie Moser's *Monstrous Curiosities* and Ludmilla Jordanova's essay "History, 'Otherness,' and Display" in *Representing 'Otherness'* (eds. Elizabeth Hallam and Brian Street).

66 In order to be able to draw general conclusions this book uses and works with Said's concepts of generalising the West and the East, of the Orient and the Occident, the *Self* and the *Other*. As this book will show, Egyptianising texts play with the notion of the *Self* and the *Other* and used the two binary oppositions to either create a Gothic atmosphere, in which the *Other* is the indefinable and uncontrollable enemy or to create a humorous confrontation between the *Self* and an *Other* which causes *Self*-reflection and therefore a change and often a subversion of the *Self* into the *Other* from which the *Self* is trying to escape or ward off.

67 The history of Egypt before Napoleon within the context of local political developments was almost non-existent in the perception of the Britain.

68 The industrialization of Egypt in the nineteenth century, if reflected in Egyptianising literature, is seen as change brought to the country by the West, and it is not seen as a self-sufficient country. Therefore the Orientalist view of the Orient as stagnated and unchangeable is still kept up while actual changes are attributed to the Western influence. For further reading, see Ross Chambers, *The Writing of Melancholy: Modes of Opposition in Early French Modernism*, page 46 and Patricia Murphy, *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*, page 44.

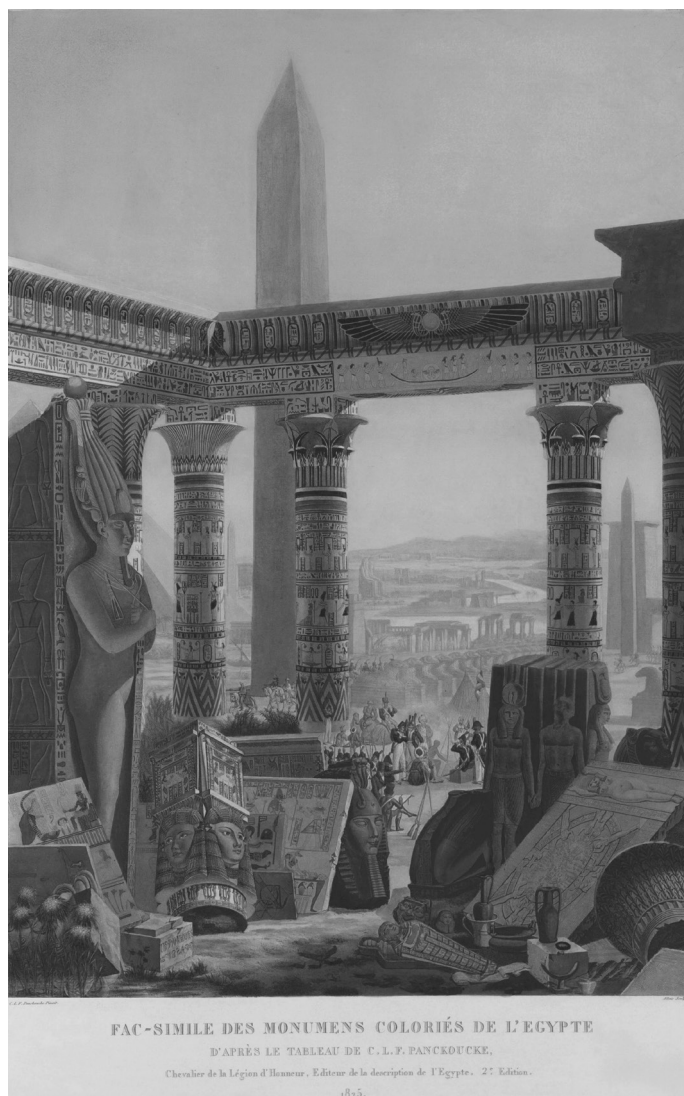
69 Conventionally we speak of ancient Egypt from the first beginnings of recorded civilization in 3150 BCE until 30 BCE when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

great changes in social, artistic, political and religious aspects during its time. However, it was considered to belong to ancient history, where it remained an unchanged concept.

Perceptual imperialism presupposes no active interaction between the subject and the object. As soon the Western *Self* interacts consciously with the (Oriental) *Other*, both are subject to change (cf. Jandt and Tanno 121). The *Self* acknowledges the *Other* and cannot but notice that the monolithic singular quality ascribed to it through generalisation is not feasible (ibid.). The perception of the *Other* and the world view of the *Self* are ultimately challenged; the deeper the confrontation or interaction goes, the more obvious the change will be. Jandt and Tanno refer to this process as a “cognitive change” of the *Self* (ibid.). Therefore, the *Self* has to reconsider and adapt its view, while the *Other* – as perceived and created by the *Self* and the physical members, traditions and history of the cultures falling under that definition – undergoes a change as well. When it is questioned, analysed and changed, it ceases to exist in its original form. This destruction or deconstruction is both conceptual and real; being brought about by punishment, re-education, forced assimilation, and, in the worst case, physical death. This physical destruction of the *Other* happened in modern Egypt. Industrialisation, political changes, restructuring of the educational, military and judicial systems all led to changes of what the stereotypical Egypt had been from Western perspective; it became an altered version of the *Self*, an appendix of the West. However, the concept of the ancient *Other* is more difficult to destroy or change once it is established. After Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign and the subsequent publication of Denon’s *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* and the *Description de l’Égypte*, the notion of ancient Egypt as such would certainly conjure up thoughts of mummies, pyramids, the desert, the Nile and possibly gods with animal heads – as it arguably still does.⁷⁰

70 This Western perception of ancient Egypt which modern tourists seek when travelling to Egypt is extensively used in the self-advertisement of Egyptian tourism. For further reading, see *A Poetics of Political Economy in Egypt* by Kristin Koptiuch.

Illustration 9: "The title image of the coloured prints volume of the Description de l'Égypte, second edition".



If we think of Egypt today, excluding the current political and economic issues which now certainly belong to the set of common knowledge about modern

Egypt, we are most likely to think of the tourist attractions and sights which are heavily advertised by Egypt's own tourism board (cf. *Egypt Tourism Authority*). They are entirely aware of the Western perception of ancient Egypt and have turned it into one of the most significant sectors in Egypt's economy (cf. CIA "Egypt"). This modern, twenty-first century perception of ancient Egypt and Egypt's self-portrayal, however, is purely based on monumental, artistic and historical aspects of the ancient Egyptian culture. When magic appears in advertisement, it is exclusively referring to obviously artificial Oriental aspects, often sexualised, and with a stress on exotic elements. Ancient Egypt is taken seriously and advertised in sober campaigns with a focus on archaeology and history. This ambiguous self-awareness of stereotypes is relatively new and was certainly driven forward by Zahi Hawass, former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs and Egypt's most prominent Egyptologist. Hawass presented ancient Egypt as a fascinating place in which magic was produced not by supernatural occurrences, but by the pure fascination brought about by the incredible achievements of the ancient Egyptians which he and modern Egyptologists and archaeologists unearthed. He positively produced magic where otherwise there would not necessarily have been anything but general scientific interest. His show-mastery gave ancient Egypt a renewed image of a country which, despite being now scientifically researched and regarded as a political and historical place of interest rather than one of magic and mystery, still seemed mysterious and somewhat alien. The fact that Hawass presented himself as a modern-day pharaoh, blending modern and ancient Egypt in his self-presentation, adds to the idea of a rediscovered mysterious place which has not yet reached modernity. His presentation of Egypt relied both on Orientalist stereotypes and modern international interest. By claiming international fame and selling ancient Egypt as a product, Hawass took on a Western perspective and role, becoming part of the Western *Self* who was seemingly just as baffled, mystified and surprised by ancient Egypt as his Western audience.

The fantastic ancient *Other* is harder to grasp conceptually than the stereotypical modern *Other*. It is further removed, possibly even completely incomprehensible in its supposed supernatural quality. It is therefore less easily touched; or, as explained above, deconstructed or destroyed. Its *Otherness* is less clearly defined, as well as further removed from the *Self* than the modern Orient. Its localisation in the past makes it a more flexible concept; a concept which can escape definition and thereby deconstruction by its geographical and temporal remoteness. It is open to multiple interpretations and offers room for ideas ranging from the Biblical Egypt of Moses ("Exodus" 1–40) or the place to which Mary

and Joseph fled with Jesus ("Matthew" 2: 13–23), to the origin of magic and a place of sacred knowledge. At the same time this elusiveness poses a threat to the *Self* which strives to define and know and therefore control the *Other*.

The ideas and visions of ancient Egypt were manifold and colourful and grew to be even more so throughout the nineteenth century. At the same time, literature reflects the need to define, own and deconstruct the expandable concept of ancient Egypt and the inherent threat it poses in its flexibility. In Egyptianising fantastic fiction some aspects of the ancient *Other* are destroyed after all; either by actual physical destruction or by assimilation into the *Self* (both actively and passively): the change which the *Other* undergoes happens to individual representatives of ancient Egypt; and they are often physically destroyed. Ayesha's physical form in *She* is destroyed by the column of fire which was supposed to grant her eternal life. Queen Tera's mummy in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* disappears during the "Great Experiment" which is supposed to revive her. In Doyle's "Lot No. 249", the mummy which poses a physical threat to the enemies of the Egyptologist Bellingham is cut into parts and burned together with the magical spell which helped bring it back to life. E. and H. Heron's "The Story of Baelbrow" also sees the destruction of a revived mummy by fire. In Doyle's other Egyptianising story, "The Ring of Thoth", the protagonist searches for an elixir which can reverse his immortality, and the end of the story sees him succeed and die. In Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*, the ancient priest of Ra cannot physically exist in the modern world, so his soul merges with that of Jimmy, the Edwardian Egyptologist, and thereby becomes part of the Western *Self*.

While the destruction concerns individuals as representatives, the image of ancient Egypt itself does not seem to change and is not questioned. The nineteenth-century-image of the ancient culture reflects the tradition of classical authors like Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, whose disquisitions on Egypt were taken for gospel until the decoding of the hieroglyphics by Champollion in 1822, when contemporary sources could finally be consulted. In fantastic fiction, Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!* (1827) is one of the earliest texts depicting aspects of ancient Egypt as the *Other*; her knowledge and idea of ancient Egypt clearly stemming from classical authors (cf. chapter 4.2.1). Her *Other*, however, soon turns out to be the moralistic voice of the *Self*, even if she takes great care to depict Cheops, her *Other*, as a lonely creature which is clearly an outsider to Western society in looks, behaviour, language and supernatural qualities.

Placing the *Other* in ancient rather than modern Egypt or any other Oriental country was a safe way to explore and reflect on the fears and fantasies of

the Victorians, because ancient Egyptians simply could not respond.⁷¹ At the same time ancient Egypt was much more open to interpretation than the Orient, which was a relatively fixed concept in the minds of the Victorians, while factual⁷² knowledge of the ancient culture was rather limited. Therefore, the freedom to project any kind of idea onto that ancient *Other* was almost unlimited. Ancient Egypt is a perfect canvas onto which to paint ideas, thoughts and fears which are recurring not only in the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, but also in the representation of ancient Egypt in the media and Egypt's role in secret orders and substitute religions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. All of those cases concern the confrontation of the Western *Self* with the Oriental or ancient Egyptian *Other*. The emancipation of the *Other* always threatens the *Self*; as the established borders surrounding the *Self* are blurred, disrupted or destroyed entirely. This emancipation is the trigger for the uncanny feeling Jonathan Harker describes⁷³ when he realises that Dracula has come to England; merging with the crowd, becoming one of them. While Dracula poses a physical threat to the people of London, Harker's fear reflects a more general fear of the Oriental *Other*; and the *Other* in general. The *Other* carries an ambiguous quality; it is both fascinating and threatening in its *Otherness* by not being understood, owned or controlled. The reaction to this fear is often destruction or oppression, which is connected to the second definition of imperialism by Jandt and Tanno, namely discursive imperialism.

According to Jandt and Tanno, discursive imperialism is inherent in texts or language marked by "self-interest, in-group favouritism, and ethnocentrism" (van Dijk qtd. in Jandt and Tanno 121). The oppression of the *Other* by the *Self* is said to be "motivated by fear, ignorance or blindness or both, loss, and a need for significance" (Jandt and Tanno 122). Placed into the context of the British Empire during the nineteenth century, all of these elements come into play. Fears and insecurities as well as the pursuit of significance can be traced back to the rapid changes which started with the beginning of the industrial revolution in

71 Taking into account that the *Other* is consciously created by the authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction to convey criticism, the inability to talk back is subverted in the sense that they use ancient Egyptian characters to criticise the West through *Self*-reflection which is supposedly done by the *Other*.

72 The perceptual imperialism and Orientalist view often neglect complex concepts, facts and developments of the *Other*, but the conventions about the general Orient were more fixed than those about ancient Egypt.

73 "Mina Harker's Journal, 25 September," (*Dracula* 222) and "Jonathan Harker's Journal, 26 September" (*Dracula* 225–6).

the eighteenth century and which continued during the nineteenth century. Religion changed with the development of modern science; *The Great Disappointment* of 1844,⁷⁴ Darwinism and similar theories concerning the history of mankind contradicted the historical accuracy of the Bible, which had until then been generally accepted.⁷⁵

Furthermore, rapid scientific development and a multitude of new mechanical inventions changed everyday life, philosophy and society. While some tried to hang on to the old ideas, others understood that change was inevitable. As a consequence, the paradigms of life and the perception of the world changed. As already pointed out earlier in this chapter, the comprehensive discovery and colonisation of great parts of the planet resulted in the notion that the known world was not enough anymore. The inherently human urge for discovery and the endeavour to gain knowledge breached the two-dimensional outlook⁷⁶ and reached for three-dimensionality,⁷⁷ a physical and psychological turn from the surface and the plainly visible towards both the outside and the inside occurred. These changes certainly were not entirely exclusive to the middle and the end of the nineteenth century, as great changes in ideology and belief had occurred before, most notably during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment as well as

74 “The Great Disappointment” happened in 1844 when scholars predicted the *Second Coming* of Christ deduced from the prophetic dreams of Daniel (“Daniel” 8–12) (cf. Damsteegt *Foundations* 310).

75 For a typical example of biblical historicism, see Alexander Keith, *The Signs of the Times, as Denoted by Fulfilment of Historical Predictions* (1832).

76 Two-dimensionality is used herein as a metaphor for the perception of the obvious and exterior along the North-South/ East-West axis. A similar image can be used to describe the change from the obvious and overt in regard to outward appearance and behaviour towards an analysis and inspection of the internal and transcendental. Although star gazing and interpretation of celestial constellations has been a great part of the development of civilization, as well as orientation and navigation in the world, the actual exploration of the skies began with the first balloons and other objects which were able to fly. Similarly, the oceans were explored only when machines were invented which allowed the divers to breathe under water. 1783 saw the first balloon flight and the first motorised flying machines were developed in the beginning of the nineteenth century by George Cayley (1804), which were followed by better and more successful inventions which eventually led to the development of aeroplanes. The invention of submarines, at least on paper, goes back to 1580, but the first working submarines were built in the nineteenth century, mostly for military reasons. (Harris “World Submarine History”).

77 Time-travel fantasies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century furthermore developed the concept of four-dimensionality.

Romanticism. However, the middle of the nineteenth century was marked by those great changes which altered the perception of the world drastically.

A clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural had existed before the nineteenth century, Gothic literature already foreshadows a shift from the binary pair of the believer and God towards a less defined idea of supernatural qualities in humans; a concept which had previously led to exorcism and inquisition of those who were suspected to possess or be possessed by supernatural powers. In the mid and late nineteenth century, the interest in the human condition and the psyche led to the emergence of psychoanalysis. At the same time, new sets of beliefs replaced the old or mixed with pre-existing ones. Spiritualism, esotericism, and other surrogate religions were explored and accepted by many Victorians, incidentally including most of the authors whose texts are discussed in this book. This development reflects a need for the supernatural after the Christian religion in Britain had been challenged by science in such a dramatic way. Simultaneously, the idea of the human as a medium or even a controlling authority of the supernatural was widely accepted and even welcomed. While fantastic fiction could easily concern itself with such themes within the framework of its inherently unrealistic attribution, the real fascination lies in the actual belief in mediums, clairvoyants and psychics of Victorians at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁸

Apart from the psychological and psychical research conducted in the late nineteenth century, several research fields developed and were established from the end of the eighteenth century on. Archaeology developed as a systematic study⁷⁹, and by the mid-nineteenth century, Egyptology had become a science in its own right being prompted by Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Anthropology, whose origins are to be found in the fifteenth century, developed into several specialized branches. On the one hand stood the studies of the classical texts, and on the other the actual exploration of societies and cultural groups in the colonies. Ethnology as the study of comparing human societies also became an important subject in the context of the British Empire and colonialism.

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) and Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941) were arguably the most prominent British representatives of late

78 Séances were held frequently, mediums supposedly conversed with the dead and the development of photography and photo-manipulation allowed for images of ectoplasm and ghosts, which served as supposed proof of supernatural activities. For further reading, see *The Table-Rappers: The Victorians and the Occult* by Ronald Pearsall.

79 For a detailed history of the development of modern Archaeology, including a chapter on Egyptology, see: Kevin Greene, *Archaeology: An Introduction: The History, Principles and Methods of Modern Archaeology*.

nineteenth-century ethnology and anthropology. Tylor's second volume of *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology* (1871) deals extensively with *animism* as the earliest stage of religion in primitive societies. Animism is important in the context of the changing religiousness, because one of its main ideas is that a divine spirit resides in every human being.⁸⁰ Therefore, if one believed in that concept, every human being would theoretically carry supernatural qualities, and be able to perform supernatural deeds such as a medium would (cf. Tylor 121). Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1890) strongly influenced the field of ethnology, philosophy and literature. His comparison of Christianity with, for example, Hinduism (cf. Frazer 72) and the conclusion that the modern Christmas was simply a continuation of an old pagan festival which celebrates the birthday of the sun (cf. Frazer 361) shows how much the role of Christianity and the Christian faith had changed in that time. It had become a religion to be studied as a cultural phenomenon among many others instead of the one true faith.

Literary Egypt itself, or literary representatives of the ancient culture, tend to have supernatural powers; something which the Western protagonists yearn to either possess or destroy. This ambiguous quality of ancient Egypt is certainly one of the main reasons why so many texts have been written about it during the nineteenth century, reflecting exactly this sentiment. Furthermore, Egypt's physical presence in British museums and exhibitions, as well as travel reports, meant that it had already become part of British culture, adding an uncanny quality to the strange ancient culture. Nicholas Royle defines the uncanny with the help of Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny":

The uncanny is an important term for contemporary thinking and debate across a range of public disciplines and discourses, including philosophy, literature, film studies, architecture, psychoanalysis and queer theory. Much of its importance can be traced to Sigmund Freud's essay of 1919 "Das Unheimliche" ("The Uncanny"). Freud was perhaps the first to foreground the distinctive nature of the uncanny as a feeling of something not simply weird and mysterious but, more specifically, as something strangely familiar. (Royle vii)

Furthermore, he explains the aspect of familiarity:

The uncanny is ghostly. It is concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural. The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being

80 For a concise description of animism, see Edward Clodd's *Animism: The Seed of Religion* (1921), reprinted in 1996, and Graham Harvey's *Animism: Respecting the Living World* from 2005.

experienced. [...] The uncanny is a crisis of the proper. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context. (Royle 1)

Sally MacDonald attempts a psychological interpretation as well, referring to C.G. Jung's theory of Archetypes: "The [...] decipherment of hieroglyphs by Champollion and his successors opened a doorway into an entirely new world: complex, magical, vastly distant from the 19th century, oddly reassuringly yet disturbingly familiar" (MacDonald 5). She suggests that one of the reasons that ancient Egypt, once it came to the fore, was so readily absorbed into the culture of the Western world is because of the archetypal character of so many of its forms⁸¹ (ibid). However, the archetypes gave ancient Egypt a distinctly uncanny quality, as they were recognisable and familiar, and at the same time strange and terrifying. Examples of the striking similarities between ancient Egypt and the modern West can be found in Egyptian and Christian symbolism. The holy trinity of the father, son and Holy Spirit can be found in the triads of Egyptian gods, for example the triad of Osiris, Isis and their son Horus (Witt 220) and in the concept of the three-parted soul, consisting of the Akh, the Ba and the Ka. Another important Christian image is that of Mary with the baby Jesus on her lap; a depiction which seems to have its origin in the image of Isis holding the Horus child.

The depiction of the soul as a bird can be found in the depiction of one part of the soul, the Ka, in ancient Egyptian religious imagery.⁸² The cross resembles the ankh, the pyramids resemble church towers. Despite the perceived *Otherness* of ancient Egypt in time and geography, it seemed strangely and uncannily familiar. Furthermore, the translation of Egyptian texts gave insight into religious aspects as well as everyday life, creating a familiarity with something formerly unfamiliar and alien.

This strange familiarity already makes it difficult to draw the line between the *Self* and the concrete *Other*. It can be argued that this issue has been understood and utilised by the authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. To add to the potential *Otherness* of ancient Egypt, supernatural elements were added, which in turn were utilised to reflect on and criticise the *Self*, making Egyptianising fantastic fiction a genre of intensely self-critical literature.⁸³ Moreover, because the *Other* is always a construct, it automatically reflects on the *Self*, the creator of the

81 For further elaboration on the archetypal quality of ancient Egypt, see MacDonald, 2003.

82 For a more detailed explanation of the *Ka*, see chapter 3.15.2.

83 Niall Ferguson argues that throughout the exploits of the British Empire, there have always been liberal critical voices (cf. *Empire – How Britain Made the Modern World* xxiv).

Other. In which ways the process of conscious and unconscious *Othering* is used to criticise and depict the *Self* in Egyptianising fantastic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century will be analysed in the following chapter.

Illustration 10: "Isis nursing Horus".



3. Representative Egyptianising Texts

'I am waited for in Egypt,' [...] 'My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. ("THP" 157)

Nineteenth century Britain saw a rise in literacy, particularly among the growing middle class. While magazines in particular served to educate the reading masses (cf. Rauch *Useful Knowledge* 45), popular short stories and novels were widely read as entertainment.⁸⁴ The following chapter offers brief summaries of popular short stories and novels which were chosen as representative texts of Egyptianising fantastic fiction as they all feature elements of ancient Egypt. The corpus of Egyptianising fantastic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century encompasses approximately one-hundred known texts, of which not all are available in print or web sources.

The chosen literary works are sorted in chronological order by their publication date to give an overview of when which text was published. The abstracts allow for a tracing of themes and literary traditions which developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Furthermore, the intertextuality within the text corpus can be highlighted. The following texts were chosen as the subject matter for this analysis because all texts belong to fantastic fiction whose core narrative is rooted in Victorian or Edwardian Britain:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| 1. | <i>The Mummy! A Tale of the
Twenty-Second Century</i> | (Jane Loudon Webb, 1827) |
| 2. | "Some Words With a Mummy" | (Edgar Allan Poe, 1845) |
| 3. | "Lost in a Pyramid, or the
Mummy's Curse" | (Louisa May Alcott, 1869) |
| 4. | "My New Year's Eve Among
the Mummies" | (Grant Allen, 1878) |
| 5. | <i>She</i> | (Rider Haggard, 1887) |
| 6. | "The Happy Prince" | (Oscar Wilde, 1888) |
| 7. | "The Young King" | (Oscar Wilde, 1891) |

84 For a comprehensive study on the increasing literacy in the nineteenth century, see Alan Mitch's *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: the Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy* (1992).

8. "The Ring of Thoth" (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1890)
9. "Lot No. 249" (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1892)
10. *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (Bram Stoker, 1896)
11. *The Beetle – Strange Currencies* (Richard Marsh, 1897)
12. "The Story of Baelbrow" (E. and H. Heron, 1899)
13. "A Professor of Egyptology" (Guy Boothby, 1904)
14. "The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt" (Cutcliffe Wright Hyne, 1904)
15. *The Story of the Amulet* (Edith Nesbit, 1906)
16. "Smith and the Pharaohs" (Rider Haggard, 1912)
17. "The Nemesis of Fire" (Algernon Blackwood, 1908)
18. "Sand" (Algernon Blackwood, 1912)
19. "A Descent Into Egypt" (Algernon Blackwood, 1914)

Two texts are US American stories, which are included for their importance in the development of the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Loudon's text – important for its function as a link between Romantic and Victorian literature – is the only text which is not initially set in the nineteenth or early twentieth but in the twenty-second century, and which was written roughly a decade before Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne. However, it clearly lays the foundation for stories which were written later, and is therefore the starting point of the analysis in the context of literary representations of ancient Egypt in Victorian fantastic fiction. The texts by Edith Nesbit, Rider Haggard and Algernon Blackwood, on the other hand, which were written in the early twentieth century, are essential to illustrate how Egyptianising fantastic fiction developed and changed during the nineteenth and especially the late nineteenth century.

In this book, the term 'Victorian and Edwardian fantastic fiction' is used to refer to nineteenth century fantastic literature published between 1827 and 1914. Nicholas Ruddick defines "fantastic fiction" in the broadest sense of all fiction which represents something other than "consensual reality" (189):

The fantastic is here to be understood as a transhistorical fictional mode encompassing such past and present genres as folk and fairy tales, beast fables, parables, utopian fantasy, ghost stories, Gothic fiction, weird fiction, horror fiction, dark fantasy, heroic fantasy, scientific romance and science fiction. (Ruddick 189–190)

The working definition of fantastic literature in this book is analogous with that of Ruddick. The following prose texts were chosen for deeper analysis because their greatest common denominator is the use of elements of ancient Egypt described and represented from a British or Western perspective. While some of

the selected texts belong to different genres they all can be included in the literary mode of Egyptianising fantastic fiction.

3.1 Jane Loudon Webb's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827)

Jane Loudon (1807–1858), later Jane Loudon Webb, presumably wrote *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (*The Mummy!*) in 1825 and 1826.⁸⁵ It was published anonymously in three volumes by Henry Colburn in 1827, only eight years after Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was published. In the early science fiction⁸⁶ novel, Edric, a young man and his German teacher, Dr. Entwerfen, decide to go to Egypt in a balloon in order to resuscitate the mummy of Cheops with the help of a newly developed galvanic battery. The novel is set in the twenty-second century, and large parts of the text explain the new political system which was developed as an amalgam of all previously established systems in the English past: A constitutional monarchy in a Catholic state in which only a queen and no king is allowed to rule. Moreover, the queen has to remain unmarried, and the succession is regulated by an election of candidates which all have to be female close relatives to the ruling queen. The citizens of England seem to be content with the system, but the ruling Queen Claudia has been seriously ill for some time and her two young cousins, Rosabella and Elvira, are prepared to become potential successors.

In Egypt, the galvanic experiment is successful and Cheops is awakened from the dead. Initially confused by the strange occurrence, the revived mummy leaves his pyramid and boards the balloon in which Edric and Dr. Entwerfen flew to Egypt. He coincidentally lands in the middle of London, where Queen Claudia is out on a public appearance for the first time in months. She dies at the moment of his landing and consequently the mummy is blamed for her death. Soon, Cheops realises that Father Morris, who champions the young Rosabella, is trying to make her queen and abuses his power and the good will of the people around him in order to achieve his goals. Cheops manages to quickly see through all the little and great intrigues and plots and decides to interfere. He offers to help everyone with their plans, but makes sure that the morally sound ones succeed and that the evil ones come to no good. Cheops' multiple interferences eventually lead to a peace contract between England and Ireland – two nations previously at war with one another – as Elvira falls in love and marries the

85 No proper sources exist which verify the exact dates of her working process.

86 For further remarks concerning this classification, see chapter 4 of this book.

Irish king and establishes a sound and satisfactory new political system, in which the queen is allowed to marry. After setting things right in England and ensuring that Elvira is the happy Queen while Rosabella is punished for her scheming, Cheops returns to his pyramid. In Egypt, Edric learns of the mummy's history, which explains that the reason for Cheops' ethical and moral actions lies in his own failure as a ruler and family man in ancient times, for which he sought and was granted redemption.

The Mummy! is an incredibly complex work of fiction, which follows several narrative strands and sub-plots, frequently pointing out weaknesses in political and social spheres and analysing personal failures. The mummy Cheops acts as an uncanny supernatural guardian and trickster, being the only character to know of all the plans, plots and background stories, and who has the insight and longevity to influence the outcome of the story. Similarly to Mary Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein*, although Cheops is less easily influenced by it, the outsider comments on human failings and barbarous behaviour towards one another within a society outside of his own. By giving Cheops a background story of personal failings and an understanding of his own wrongdoings, he becomes a believable and reliable critic of the English society he visits. Loudon is the first author who creates an ancient Egyptian *Other* in order to reflect on the British *Self*.

3.2 Edgar Allan Poe's "Some Words With a Mummy" (1845)

Edgar Allan Poe's Egyptianising short story "Some Words With a Mummy" ("SWWaM") was published in 1845 in the April issue of the *American Review*. It is a highly satirical answer to Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, which embraces several themes and topics of Loudon's work, and updates them with criticism directed at contemporary American political and social issues. Poe (1809–1849) criticises the scientific and political thinking of his day, especially democracy and the concept of progress in the nineteenth century, which was greatly praised and considered to be one of the greatest achievements of civilisation (cf. Sova 223–4). Poe furthermore lashes out against the self-importance of the gentlemen in attendance, ridiculing two famous Orientalists of his day.⁸⁷ While the literary idea of the experimentally resurrected

87 James Silk Buckingham (1786–1855) was an English traveller, journalist and writer who started the *Oriental Herald and Colonial Review* (1824–9) and published two accounts of his experiences in the East in *Travels in Palestine* (1822) and *Travels Among the Arab Tribes Inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine* (1825). George

mummy certainly stems from Loudon's *The Mummy!*, several parallels to Robert Montgomery Bird's *Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself* (1835), a satire about American hypocrisy and capitalism, can be observed.

In "Some Words With a Mummy", four scientists, Mr Silk Buckingham, Mr Gliddon, Dr. Ponnonner and the unnamed narrator conduct a galvanic experiment with an ancient Egyptian mummy by the name of Allamistakeo. The four men unroll the mummy and find that it is complete, with no traces of any cuts or other typical injuries which were usually inflicted post mortem during the process of mummification. As in Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, which will be discussed later, the mummy seems like a sleeping body instead of a millennia-old corpse. By applying electric shocks to several body parts, they revive the mummy. Surprisingly, the gentlemen are able to communicate with the ancient character, and they begin to discuss the achievements of science and politics, comparing those of the nineteenth century United States of America with those of ancient Egypt. However, Allamistakeo's arguments repeatedly trump those of the scientists, and ancient Egypt appears far superior to the modern United States. From the political system to the railway system, everything which the gentlemen deem modern and innovative has, according to Allamistakeo, existed before and in superior ways. Even mesmerism, animal magnetism and phrenology are no foreign concepts to the millennia-old mummy. Desperate and deprived of their national pride, the Americans try to find at least one aspect which proves superiority over Egypt, and eventually they find it in Ponnonner's lozenges or Brandreth's pills, which are unknown to the mummy. Triumphant at last, the gentlemen congratulate each other, leaving the mummy sitting confounded in a corner. However, the narrator cannot bear to see Allamistakeo so defeated and goes home, where he considers getting embalmed himself in order to be able to see who will be President in 2045. Poe's satire achieves that for the Western reader the fantastic element of the short story is not the concept of a resurrected mummy, but the notion that the US scientists are obviously unable to prove the greatness and superiority of their own culture over that of ancient Egypt. Allamistakeo, just like Cheops, represents the *Other* as created by the *Self*, and his geographical, temporal and emotional distance to the USA allow him to see the West critically.

Robins Gliddon (1809–1857), an English Egyptologist who emigrated to America where he became a somewhat comical public figure when he unrolled a mummy in the most theatrical fashion, announcing a great Egyptian queen, which, upon being unwrapped, turned out to be a man (cf. Trafton 43).

3.3 Louisa May Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse" (1869)

After Loudon's and Poe's texts, which were published roughly two decades apart, it took another twenty-four years for a new Egyptianising text in connection to the two former stories to appear.⁸⁸ The American author Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) is most famous for her novel *Little Women*, which she published one year before she wrote "Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse" ("LiaP"). The short story is often considered to be the literary origin of the mummy's curse⁸⁹, which became a trend in twentieth-century Egyptianising fiction and which took on real life format when adventurers died, and were thought to have suffered their fates by being cursed by an Egyptian mummy.⁹⁰ Another rumour surrounding the curse of a mummy was that of the presence of a mummy on the Titanic which possibly caused the shipwreck (Daly *Modernism* 196, Luckhurst *Curse* 40–42). A few years later, when several members present during the excavation of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 lost their lives, the mummy's curse was established as an urban legend, and the idea still persists to this day (cf. Daly 164) and has been used as a driving plot point in several mummy films.⁹¹

In Alcott's short story, a young couple is about to be married. The bride to be, Evelyn, finds a box with strange flower seeds and asks her fiancée Paul Forsyth how it has come into his possession. He tells her of an expedition to Egypt and into the pyramid of Cheops, where he and his colleague, Professor Niles,⁹² found themselves lost inside the pyramid. Forsyth explains that in order to draw attention to themselves, they burned a coffin and finally also a mummy, who was clutching the box with the seeds. Forsyth took the box and burned the body, but found himself befallen with sudden terror. Eventually Forsyth and the professor are found and brought to safety. Having taken a few artefacts from the pyramid, Professor Niles deciphers a parchment which warns of a curse: "[T]he mummy

88 For a suggestion on the few stories in early Victorian fiction compared to the mass of Egyptianising fantastic texts at the end of the century, see chapter 2.1.1.

89 Dominic Montserrat suggested that Alcott May picked up the idea from one or another lively performance of the public unrolling of mummies (cf. Handwerk *Curse of the Mummy*).

90 For a more elaborate discussion on 'the mummy's curse,' see Roger Luckhurst's *The Mummy's Curse – The True History of a Dark Fantasy*.

91 For a list of films, see chapter 3.16.

92 The name of Professor Niles is most certainly a word play on the Nile.

we had so ungallantly burned was that of a famous sorceress who bequeathed her curse to whoever should disturb her rest" ("LiaP" 41).

Fascinated by the story, Evelyn wants to plant the seeds to see what might happen. Her fiancée forbids it and throws the seeds into the fire. However, two seeds fall to the ground and Evelyn secretly plants one while her husband decides to honour her wish and sends the seed to Professor Niles to grow. Evelyn watches as a strange flower grows and then wears the blossom on her wedding day. While she is almost supernaturally radiant on the morning of her wedding day, she soon grows pale and tired. In the evening, Paul receives a letter in which he is being told of Professor Niles's death, his testament warning him of the seeds and the curse, asking him to not meddle with the seeds. But it is too late. Paul Forsyth finds his new wife in a persistent vegetative state, in which she remains for the rest of her life.

While the Egyptian setting includes the pyramid of Cheops, possibly due to Loudon's story and the general fame of the Great Pyramid, the mummy itself is a female one, and her curse, despite also befalling Evelyn, causes the death of one man and a life full of misery and loneliness for the other, who is bound forever to his wife whose state resembles that of a ghostly mummy; being neither alive nor dead. The burning of the mummy in order to send a signal to the outside world is interesting for several reasons. The first one is the naiveté to burn anything at all, even a mummy, to produce smoke within the confinements of an immense stone structure with very narrow passage ways, which would be more likely to lead to the death of the men than to alert others of their being lost. Another aspect is the early reference to a common urban legend which Mark Twain jokingly refers to in his *The Innocents Abroad*, which was published in the same year as Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid":

I shall not speak of the railway, for it is like any other railway—I shall only say that the fuel they use for the locomotive is composed of mummies three thousand years old, purchased by the ton or by the graveyard for that purpose, and that sometimes one hears the profane engineer call out pettishly, "D—n these plebeians, they don't burn worth a cent—pass out a King;"—[Stated to me for a fact. I only tell it as I got it. I am willing to believe it. I can believe any thing.] (Twain *Innocents* 505)

Since Mark Twain published his humorous account of the alternative fuel, the notion⁹³ stuck and it is repeatedly referred to both in fictional and nonfictional texts about nineteenth-century Egypt. For example, the protagonist in Grant

93 Richard Parkinson pointed out the Amherst Papyrus from the 20th dynasty, whose text concerns tomb robberies under Ramesses IX, who reigned from 1129BCE to

Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" decides to become a mummy, but fears to be burned: "Besides, there was the awkward chance of being converted into fuel and dissipated into space before the arrival of the next waking day" ("MNYE" 75). Rider Haggard also refers to the notion and has the ghost of a pharaoh point out mistreatment of mummies by Westerners: "Others have been burnt with fire, others are scattered in small dust" ("SatP" 344). The bitumen used in the process of mummification burns very well and therefore mummies and body parts of mummies were used as torches or burned to lit tombs. May Alcott's curse can therefore be read as a warning of abuse and destruction of the ancient bodies.

3.4 Grant Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" (1878)

"My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" ("MNYE") by Grant Allen, who wrote the short story under the pseudonym of J. Arbuthnot Wilson, was published in 1878 in the *Belgravia Christmas Annual*, thirty-five years after Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy" and nine after Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid". While "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" is a humorous and critical text, it is not as cynical as Poe's satire on modern America. The story is set in modern Egypt, which the narrator and his fiancée's family visit for its mild climate. The party stays in an imaginary Egyptian town by the name of Abu Yilla, where an unopened pyramid has puzzled many scientists. The narrator is infected with malaria, which causes feverish insomnia. To distract himself, he takes a walk to the pyramid, and finds its entrance by happenstance. To his surprise he discovers a pharaoh, Thothmes XXVII, and his court at a banquet in a great hall. After the initial embarrassment at being clearly considered an inferior being by the Egyptians, the tourist begins to explain himself and dares to ask questions. Posing as a prince of his home country, the narrator is finally invited to join the feast. The ancient Egyptians explain that they died thousands of years ago but that a special technique of embalment enables them to wake up every thousand years and celebrate for one day. Similarly to Poe's discussion of great achievements, the narrator cannot help but give an account of modern society, mentioning "the steam-engine, the Permissive Prohibitory Bill, the telegraph, the House of Commons, Home Rule, [as well as] a brief resume of European history from the rise of the Greek culture to the Russo-Turkish war" ("MNYE" 54), managing to capture

1111 BCE. Apart from the plundering of the tombs in order to sell the grave goods, the papyrus also addresses the issue of the burning of mummies.

Pharaoh's attention and rise in the esteem of the king who has previously thought him to be a barbarian intruder from the uncivilised North (cf. "MNYE" 52). Incidentally, the narrator falls in love with Hatasou, Pharaoh's daughter, and as she reciprocates his feelings, he decides that he wants to be mummified as well in order to be able to wake up one day every thousand years to be with her – completely forgetting about his fiancée outside the pyramid.

However, just as a priest begins to cut open his body to remove his bowels, he falls asleep and wakes up in a hospital bed. No matter how much he insists on the accuracy of his story, which greatly upsets his fiancée and causes her to leave the country immediately, he cannot prove it to the present doctors. They explain that he was found with a deep cut across his chest on the steps of the unopened pyramid. In the end, the narrator explains that he wrote the story down and will bequeath it to the British Museum in order to enable one of his readers in one thousand years to return to Abu Yilla and look for the banquet inside the pyramid, and prove his story to be true.

Grant Allen's text is one of the more obviously critical ones within the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. The construction of criticism in Egyptianising fantastic fiction through the literary simulation of role-switching of the *Self* and the *Other* is particularly conspicuous in the text. Like Poe, Allen places the Western protagonist in the shoes of the outsider and establishes the superiority of the ancient Egyptian mummy in relation to the customs and lifestyle the protagonists lead at home, allowing for a critical view on the British Empire.

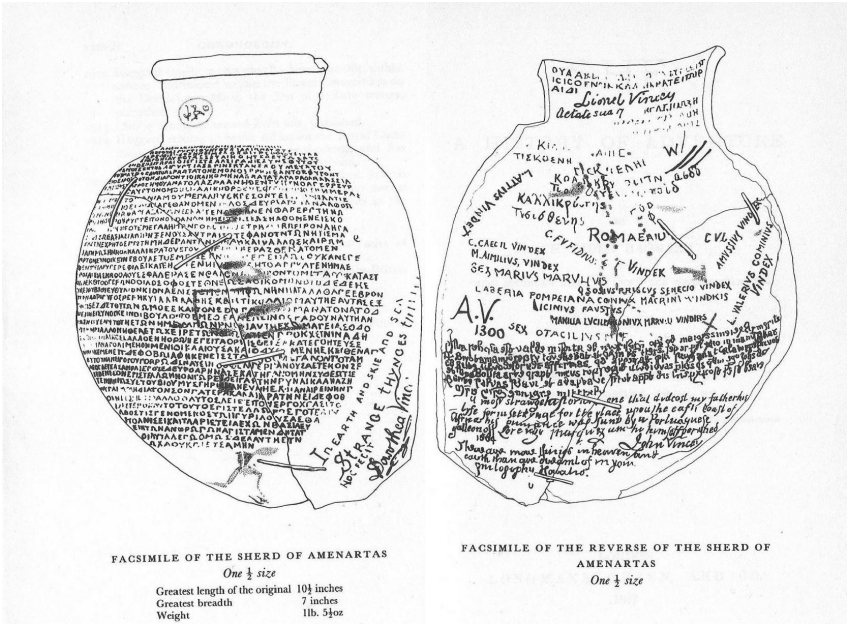
3.5 Rider Haggard's *She* (1887)

She constitutes the first of at least fifteen Egyptianising stories written between 1887 and 1925 by Rider Haggard (1856–1925). Haggard was keenly interested in ancient Egypt and visited Egypt several times during his life, expressing his interest in and love for the country and its ancient history in diary entries and letters. He had a substantial private collection of Egyptian artefacts and wore a ring of Queen Tiye, the wife of Amenhotep III (the ninth pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty) and mother of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaton. This ring, given to him in 1886 (cf. Luckhurst 194), and several other objects, inspired Haggard to write Egyptianising fantastic fiction, beginning with *She*. While *She* seems to only marginally touch on ancient Egypt, its basic conflict is rooted there and several themes and images which are common in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction can be found in this novel.

Horace Holly, the narrator of the story, is asked by his friend Vincy to raise his son Leo, knowing that Vincy will die soon, revealing to him his family history

and leaving a box to Leo, which he shall open on his twenty-fifth birthday. Holly agrees, and soon after his friend commits suicide. When Leo reaches the required age, he opens the box and finds a sherd⁹⁴ with Hieroglyphs, Coptic, Greek, Latin and English writing which tells his family's history.

Illustration 11: "Illustration from Rider Haggard's *She: The Sherd of Amenartas*".



The history begins with the Egyptians Amenartas and her husband Kallikrates, who has to leave the country because of their different social classes. Travelling all the way to Ethiopia, they are brought before a white queen, who wants Kallikrates for herself. He will not be separated from Amenartas, and in her rage the queen kills Kallikrates. Amenartas, who is pregnant, is taken away and gives birth to a son on a ship which takes her to Athens. The sherd is inscribed in Athens and is handed down through history with the request to travel back to Africa

94 Rider Haggard had the sherd created in the exact way he describes it in his novel. The accompanying illustration in the novel is a graphical illustration of this artificially created artifact. The sherd is on display at the Norwich Castle Museum alongside several genuinely ancient Egyptian artifacts from Rider Haggard's personal collection.

and kill the immortal queen who killed Kallikrates. Following the instructions on the “Sherd of Amenartas” (*She* 23), Leo, Holly, a servant, Job, and an Arab captain by the name of Mahomed begin a journey to Africa to seek out the white queen.

Encountering the tribe of the Amahagger people in an uncharted part of Eastern Africa, they are taken prisoners on the authority of ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’. Spending time with the Amahagger, the group learns of the traditions and the way of life of the strange tribe, but soon they come to realise that Mahomed is supposed to be cooked and eaten in the course of a ritual. They try to save him, but Mahomed dies in the uprising and Leo is badly injured. Billali, the chief of the Amahagger, saves them from certain death by declaring that they are under the protection of ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’. As Leo’s state worsens, he is being tended to by the Amahagger woman Ustane, who falls in love with Leo. When his injury does not heal, they are taken to ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’, who reveals her name to be Ayesha.⁹⁵ She heals Leo, but kills Ustane out of jealousy. Holly and Leo are drawn in by Ayesha’s beauty and cannot escape her lure. She tells them that she has lived in Kôr for more than two thousand years, and she is surprised to learn of the changing world outside her kingdom. As they talk it becomes clear that she believes Leo to be a reincarnation of Kallikrates and she shows him the perfectly preserved body⁹⁶ of the man she killed out of love. She wants Leo to become immortal and asks him to bathe in the column of fire, which made her immortal thousands of years ago. To show Leo that he has nothing to fear, she steps into the fire; but instead of being strengthened, her body withers away. Before she dies she exclaims that she cannot really die and will return. The novel ends with Holly thinking about what Ayesha’s words could mean and where and when she might be born again. Haggard thereby opened the door

95 For a comment on the importance of names in mythology, see a free translation of ancient Egyptian legends by M.A. Murray, “The Name of Ra”, p. 47–49. The original legend was found at Deir el Medinah on the following sources: Papyrus Turin 1993, Papyrus Chester Beatty 11, Ostrakon Petrie 7 (UC 39610), Ostrakon Deir el-Medina 1263, Ostrakon Queen’s College Oxford 1116). Following that tradition, with which Haggard was undoubtedly familiar, Ayesha becomes vulnerable by giving away her name. For a close Egyptian-English translation of the legend, see “Isis and the Name of Ra.”

96 Having kept the perfectly preserved body of Kallikrates, Ayesha displays her own feminine weakness to the men. Her action reverses the purpose of mummification; instead of acting in accordance with the faith of the mummified person, Ayesha keeps him in that perfect state in her own interest.

to several sequels and a prequel in which Ayesha returns in different incarnations. While Ayesha has strong European traits, she still represents the *Other*. By casting her spell on Leo and Holly, she embodies both men's desire for the exotic woman and by controlling them, poses a great threat which they cannot deter on their own. The Western protagonists are not saved by their own actions, but by an unforeseeable accident⁹⁷, stressing the weakness of the characters representing the Western *Self* in the face of the Oriental *Other*.

3.6 Two Fairy Tales by Oscar Wilde (1888 and 1891)

Oscar Wilde's fairy tale "The Happy Prince" ("THP") was published in 1888 in his first children's tales collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. A second fairy tale which features ancient Egypt is "The Young King" ("TYK"), which was published in 1891 in *A House of Pomegranates*. Oscar Wilde also used orientalist and Egyptianising⁹⁸ imagery in his poem "The Sphinx" (1887).

Both fairy tales stand out in the group of texts discussed in this book. This is partly due to their genre and partly due to Wilde's personal style and usage of the historical and Oriental *Other*. Egypt is a place entirely removed from the Western setting of both stories. In "The Happy Prince", it represents an escapist paradisiacal utopian place which can never be reached. In "The Young King", Egypt is a place simultaneously in the present and in the past; the origin of precious stones, but also a land riddled with pestilence and poverty, recalling the plagues of Moses as well as ancient Egyptian mythology.

3.6.1 "The Happy Prince" (1888)

The happy prince is a young and cheerful boy, who grows up in Sanssouci but dies at a young age. In remembrance of the prince's beauty and happiness, a statue of him is erected on a pedestal on the town square. Splendid to behold with

97 Elmar Schenkel suggests a parallel between the accidental salvation of the Western protagonists in *She* and in H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* to stress the helplessness of the *Self*. In Wells' novel the alien *Other* succumb to earthly bacteria against which mankind has become immune. A main difference between these two solutions lies in the cause of destruction of the *Other*. While the solution in *The War of the Worlds* lies in an inherently earthly and natural occurrence, Ayesha is killed by supernatural means which previously gave her eternal life.

98 In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Basil Hallward compares Dorian Gray's beauty to that of Antinous, the lover of the emperor Hadrian. Antinous became deified after his death and was worshipped as Osiris-Antinous by Hadrian.

his gold coating and jewels he overlooks the town in which he used to live. One day, a swallow, which is on its way to Egypt to stay there for the winter, but who is already late, looks for a sleeping place underneath the statue. Tears falling down from the prince's face wake it up and it enquires for the reason of the tears. The prince tells it about the sad and poor people he can see from his pedestal which make him incredibly sad. The proud bird is irritated and cannot quite understand the cause for his sadness. To brighten the prince's mood, it tells him about Egypt, and of its brothers which are already on their way there.

Being unable to move from his spot, the prince asks the small bird to take some of his beautiful gems to the poor and ill. As requested, the swallow carries the gems to those whom the prince saw and pitied. Whenever the swallow returns, the prince tells it of another person who needs their help, and the swallow tells the prince about Egypt, its descriptions becoming more and more fantastic and otherworldly. In the end, the prince has given away all his jewels and gold, and winter has come. The prince eventually finds the swallow frozen to death at his feet, and his leaden heart breaks. The people of the town notice how grey and unhappy the statue now looks, and they decide to take it down. Finding the dead bird at the feet of the once happy prince, they throw it away, together with the leaden heart of the prince, which could not be crafted into something else. At last, God takes them both into his kingdom, rewarding them for their heartfelt sadness and the unselfish help they offered to the poor of the town.

The three sequences about Egypt are presented as visions rather than memories. The swallow describes the Nile and several geographical locations in Egypt, but soon begins adding supernatural and fantastical elements to its narrative. Egypt becomes an unreachable and paradisiacal place in which ancient Gods rule and life is simple. It is never truly visited. As the swallow describes the land which it is supposed to fly to, and the longer the swallow stays, the further removed it becomes. Because the bird is already late when it meets the prince, Egypt is physically removed, and becomes more so with every day he waits and winter grows colder. This sense of distance is strengthened by ever more fantastical descriptions of Egypt. In the first account the little bird describes the river and the sand banks of the Nile, but soon Gods and mythological creatures become part of the greater picture the swallow paints. Edward Said describes the use of Egypt in this geographical and temporal sense:

For there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away. (*Orientalism* 55)

Egypt as the *Other* is, at first, still a clearly defined and geographically fixed place, but with every night the swallow waits, it becomes more ancient and gains supernatural qualities.

3.6.2 Oscar Wilde's "The Young King" (1891)

"The Young King" is a young boy, a shepherd's son and a social outsider, who has been raised in a poor village, and dresses in goatskin and wool. When the reigning king dies, the boy learns that he is the grandson of the late king and will therefore take his place. He is taken to the palace, whose beauty and splendour dazzles him and gives him a sense of belonging. In the night before his coronation, however, he has three very strange dreams. In his first dream he sees a famished weaver stitching a golden thread into his gown. In his second dream he witnesses the death of a boy who dives for pearls, and, in his third, he sees Egyptian men dying of disease and hunger as they search for rubies. He dreams of the blood and sweat of the people who make his beautiful attire for him: the gown, the pearls and rubies for his sceptre and crown, they are all connected to personal loss and suffering of those who produce or obtain them.

When he wakes up on the day of his coronation, the young king refuses to wear the robes and king's livery that have been made for him by the poor, dressing himself in his shepherd's clothes. The nobility consider him to be an unworthy sovereign without his regalia, and as the young boy walks to the cathedral in his simple clothing, the people who meet him on his way laugh at him, thinking he is mocking the king. In the cathedral a priest advises him to forget the dreams, for nobody can cope with all the evils in the world, and that no one is able to carry that weight on their shoulders all by themselves. This exclamation upsets the young king and in desperation he turns toward the altar and begins to pray. Mirroring the end of "The Happy Prince", God takes action and causes a streak of sunlight to shine upon the young king, making him appear more proud and beautiful than any worldly attire could.

Egypt is very inconspicuous in this fairy tale, but Wilde creates an image opposite to the one of "The Happy Prince." It is a dying country and "the priests have [c]ursed⁹⁹ Isis and Osiris", the Nile has not flooded the land so it has become an infertile country ("THP" 265). Reflecting the biblical plagues of Egypt, several stages lead to the annihilation of an entire Egyptian village. In "The Young King", death is personified and decides to bring these plagues on the country, but it can

99 In *The Complete Illustrated Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Bounty Books, 2004) "cursed" is misspelled as "nursed" on page 265.

clearly be read as an embodiment of poverty and poor living conditions which cause fatal diseases to spread quickly and kill many. In that way, Wilde connects ancient Egypt and modern Egypt, displaying the end of a great culture whose contemporary form seems unchanged in relation to its ancient past.

Both “The Happy Prince” and “The Young King” use elements of Egypt to criticise the present and the *Self*. In “The Happy Prince”, Egypt is presented as a counter-image of the poor town. Egypt gains in exotic and mystical splendour to the same degree as the prince grows grey and dull as he gives away his jewels to the sick and starving, trying desperately to spread happiness in a dark and unfair world. In “The Young King” the criticism is more overt in the sense that the short story directly depicts and criticises colonising practices.

3.7 Two Egyptianising Short Stories by Arthur Conan Doyle (1890 and 1892)

When Arthur Conan Doyle visited Paris in 1890, he went to see the Egyptian mummies in the Louvre (Lycett 147). This visit presumably inspired him to write two short stories concerning ancient Egyptian mummies. The first of these two stories is “The Ring of Thoth” (“TRoT”), published in 1890 by *The Cornhill Magazine*. It is a “clever variation on the old tradition of the Elixir of Life, and the only curious fact about its original publication [...] was that it appeared quite anonymously” (Haining 104). “Lot No. 249” is the second short story by Arthur Conan Doyle featuring ancient Egypt, and was published two years after “The Ring of Thoth” in 1892. In 1895 Doyle spent a winter in Egypt with his family, but that visit does not seem to have inspired him to write more on the topic, instead it took away some of the magic which museums and narratives had created for Doyle (cf. Lycett, 231).

3.7.1 “The Ring of Thoth” (1890)

“The Ring of Thoth” is set in the rooms of the Egyptian collection of the Louvre. Mr John Vansittart Smith¹⁰⁰, an Egyptologist, visits the collection to study a

100 The protagonist’s name “Smith” recurs in Haggard’s “Smith and the Pharaohs” (1912). The choice of name might be due to a volitional representation of the everyday British man, who could be anyone. It is impossible to say whether Haggard meant to refer to Doyle’s character, but he must have been familiar with the short stories. In September 2011, Arthur Conan Doyle’s first and until then unpublished novel *The Narrative of John Smith* was published by the British Library. However, John Smith of the novel and John V. Smith of “The Ring of Thoth” have little but their names in

papyrus. His attention is drawn to a strange man, who looks very old – almost “reptilian” to him (“TRoT” 106). As he engages the man in conversation, he discovers that he is employed at the museum. The workman strikes Smith as queer and foreign, and he asks him whether he is an Egyptian, to which the workman replies, “Non, monsieur; je suis français” (“TRoT” 107). Having received his answer, Smith starts taking notes on the object of his interest, and he is so involved in his work, sitting in a dark and remote corner of the museum, that he does not notice how time passes. He falls asleep, and being hidden in the shadows he is not noticed by the watchmen and is accidentally locked in.¹⁰¹ Past midnight, he wakes up, finding himself utterly alone in the Egyptian department. In the silence, he suddenly hears footsteps, and as Smith hides in the shadows, he watches an intruder take a mummy from its case and slowly unwrap it. The female mummy is perfect¹⁰² to a degree that it seems to Smith as if he was looking at a sleeping woman rather than an ancient mummy. However, seconds after the stranger unwraps her, she begins to wither and look like any mummy would. The strange man acts passionately towards the mummy, kissing her and speaking to her in a strange language.

Vansittart Smith accidentally betrays his hiding spot, and the stranger, whom he now identifies as the workman he has talked to earlier in the day. The man initially threatens him, but then recognises the scholar as one of the most knowledgeable men in the field of Egyptology, which consequently causes the man to tell Smith of his secret. He explains that he is an immortal Egyptian by the name of Sosra. In his youth, he found the elixir of life and made himself immortal. However, his true love, Atma, died before he managed to give her the elixir as well. In addition to that he was betrayed by his best friend, with whom he had shared his secret, but who also loved the young woman. The young priest of Thoth, Parmes, had found a remedy against the elixir and, by taking it, reversed the effect and died, following the woman who both men loved into the afterlife.

common. Doyle also named one of the protagonists in his other Egyptianising short story “Lot No. 249” Smith.

- 101 Doyle’s story seems to be a direct reference to the satirical newspaper story of Mr Grubbe, retold by Stephanie Moser, whose basic plot is also used by Rider Haggard in his “Smith and the Pharaohs” (cf. Moser 169).
- 102 The perfectly preserved mummy constantly reappears in Egyptianising fiction. Mummies or their body parts seem to belong to sleeping human beings rather than to the long dead (see Allamistakeo in “Some Words with a Mummy”, the preserved foot and the body of Kallikrates in *She*, Queen Tera and her hand in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Ma-Mee’s hand in “Smith and the Pharaohs”).

For centuries, Sosra has searched for the remedy, and finally, in this very night, he has found it in a ring which was buried together with the mummy of his beloved, Atma. After explaining the ordeal of his life to the Egyptologist, he asks him to leave and shows him the way outside, so that he can finally be reunited in death with the woman he loves. Upon his return to England, John Vansittart Smith reads in *The Times* that a man was found dead in the Louvre, clutching a mummy to his chest.

This tragic version of the story of Mr Grubbe (cf. Moser 169) incorporates imperial Gothic aspects in the character of the uncanny Sosra, who is both a modern Frenchman by assimilation as well as an ancient Egyptian, and the mummy, who ages several millennia in the span of a few minutes. Furthermore, Doyle includes alchemy in the narrative, adhering to Victorian ideas of Egypt as the origin of alchemy and a place of secret knowledge. To create the elixir of life¹⁰³ (which would, according to mythology, grant eternal life to the one who discovered and used it) was the greatest possible achievement in alchemy. The eponymous god, who was considered to be Hermes Trismegistos¹⁰⁴ by the Rosicrucians and other hermetic orders, personifies secret and sacred knowledge, and is therefore also connected to supernatural tradition which the Victorians (and others before them) ascribed to ancient Egypt. Doyle therefore portrays Egypt as incredibly advanced in mystical knowledge and practice, and at the same time blurs the borders between the *Other* and the *Self* by depicting ancient Egyptians as people who love, hate and scheme not unlike any other modern human being.

3.7.2 “Lot No. 249” (1892)

A very different story in comparison to “The Ring of Thoth” is “Lot No. 249”. The short story portrays the first evil mummy which served as the archetype for the vengeful mummy.¹⁰⁵ It reappears in later mummy fiction and numerous

103 The idea of the elixir of life occurs frequently in European mythology in several forms, such as the Golden Fleece in ancient Greek mythology, the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend, or the Philosopher’s Stone in an alchemical context.

104 Thoth was protector and overseer over the scribes and personified divine speech. The “lord of the sacred word” was also associated with astronomy, mathematics and, accounting. The principal cult centre of Thoth was Hermopolis in the Delta (*TOEoAE* III: 399). Hermes Trismegistos (Ἑρμῆς Τρισμέγιστος) is the Hellenised version of Thoth, ancient Egyptian god of letters and writing, to whom magic abilities and sacred knowledge has been ascribed since the Late Kingdom (Hornung 17).

105 One could argue that the mummy in “Lost in a Pyramid” by Louisa May Alcott is the first prototypically evil mummy, but in the short story, the revenge in the form of

films of the twentieth and twenty-first century, introducing the mummy into the group of literary monsters which include Frankenstein's monster as well as various vampires. "Lot No. 249" is set in Oxford in 1884 and tells the story of a student, Abercrombie Smith, who moves into a house with a very strange man by the name of Edward Bellingham. This neighbour is very apt in Eastern languages and has a great private collection of Egyptian antiquities, including a mummy which was sold to him in an auction under "Lot No. 249". A series of strange events begins when Bellingham has a nervous breakdown in his apartment, causing Smith and another neighbour to come to his aid. This event sparks a friendship between the student and the Egyptologist. However, Bellingham is disliked by most of the students of Oxford and he has a reputation of being brutal and selfish. Smith cannot quite believe that, but Bellingham becomes suspicious when Smith hears somebody moving around in his neighbour's apartment even though Bellingham is over for tea.

After two of his friends, whom Bellingham dislikes very much, are almost killed, the strange man is declared primary suspect. However, Smith has reason to believe that the delinquent is someone else – or rather something else. When he visits his neighbour's apartment, he is gone, and so is the mummy from its case. His suspicion proves to be true when he confronts Bellingham on the following day, threatening to reveal his secret to the public. As soon as he leaves the house to put his plan into practice, Abercrombie Smith notices that he is being pursued by a strange creature: the mummy. He manages to escape the hunter, and finds a safe place in a friend's house whom he asks for support in the matter. Being now certain of Bellingham's involvement in the two intended murders, as well as the threat to his own life, he decides to put an end to the terror. He returns home on the next day, armed with a knife, and forces Bellingham to cut apart and burn his mummy. Furthermore, he forces him to burn sheets of papyrus which carry the magical formula which have enabled the scholar to bring the mummy back to life. Smith thus rids Oxford of a potential murderer, who has used a mummy as a weapon to eliminate enemies.

While the mummy is a supernatural representative of ancient Egypt, the figure of Bellingham is much more ambiguous. He is known for his affinity to the East and is considered as much part of the *Western Self* as the *Eastern Other*.

the curse is a punishment for the disturbance of her eternal sleep. Therefore it is not a purely evil deed, but a justified revenge; threats like these can be found in several tombs of ancient Egyptian mummies, especially from the Old Kingdom (cf. David Silverman's *Ancient Egypt*, page 146).

This ambiguity of characters that seem to belong to both sides is explored to a much more elaborate degree in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*.

Doyle's two very different Egyptianising short stories are slightly less overtly critical as most of the stories analysed in this book. "The Ring of Thoth" places Vansittart Smith in the role of the outsider when Sosra explains to him that his treatises on ancient Egypt are mostly incorrect, but since he is in fact the most worthy of Egyptologists of his time, the immortal allows him to live and to hear his story. Within the museum, Smith is the *Other*, while the objects, including the mummy of Atma and the person of Sosra belong in the same world, into which Smith is allowed a glimpse. His experience his humbling and his lack of knowledge of his own specialised subject is repeatedly stressed. "Lot No. 249" is different in its depiction of the *Other* and in terms of *Self*-criticism. Rather than putting the protagonist into the position of an outsider, the antagonist Bellingham, albeit being British, represents the dangerous and unpredictable *Other*, who in turn controls a different quality of *Other* in the shape of the mummy. The short story stresses the powerlessness of the West against Eastern magic and while the gun in Abercrombie Smith's hand is a powerful weapon to threaten Bellingham, it is very likely that it would be useless against the revived mummy. Only fire is powerful enough to destroy the mummy and the magical paraphernalia entirely and dispose of the ancient threat. Bellingham is left alive and flees to the Middle East, where he is likely to engage in ancient magical practices again. Thereby, the threat of the *Other* is not entirely eliminated.

3.8 Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1896)

In 1896, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (JoSS) by Bram Stoker (1847–1912) was published by Heinemann in London. In 1912 a second, modified version with an alternative ending was printed. The novel has both elements of a detective story and that of a mystery novel. Supernatural elements connect with unsolved problems, which cannot immediately be explained with the help of logical thinking or by following clues. The text presents not only one, but several mysteries of which only a few are in fact explained or clarified, leaving much room for the reader's interpretation of the text.

In the novel the Egyptologist and enthusiastic collector of Egyptian antiquities, Abel Trelawny, is found injured and unconscious in his previously locked bedroom by his daughter. In panic, she sends for her friend Malcolm Ross, and together with a police detective and a doctor they try to find out what happened to Mr Trelawny. The situation is presented as a locked-room mystery in the sense that whoever attacked the Egyptologist must have been inside his bedroom,

which was locked and from which nobody escaped after the attack. Although being watched over by Mr Ross and a nurse, Mr Trelawny is repeatedly attacked, and the men run out of ideas as to the identity of the culprit, settling on the unlikely idea that a supernatural being must have tried to kill the man. Mr Corbeck, Abel Trelawny's friend and colleague, unexpectedly appears at the house and explains to Ross that he and Trelawny had been excavating a tomb in Egypt, and that Corbeck has found the final missing pieces which complete the inventory of the tomb in question. On the day after the arrival of his friend, Abel Trelawny awakens from his stupor and excitedly explains that the mummy of Queen Tera, whose tomb he and Corbeck have excavated, made plans which would ensure that she could be revived after thousands of years and that she is the one responsible for the strange events. He and his colleague have tried to find all the objects necessary for the revival of the mummy, which seems finally possible after Corbeck has found the missing pieces.

During the strange events of the novel, Margaret Trelawny changes slowly but noticeably from a very calm girl into an outspoken and self-confident one, insisting on taking the side of the mummy whenever important decisions are made. Queen Tera's spirit seems to possess and control her. A connection between these two women, apart from their names, is established when Abel Trelawny explains that on the day they found Tera with one hand detached from her wrist¹⁰⁶, Margaret was born to a dying mother, bearing a red birthmark on her wrist which bears great resemblance with Tera's wound. Mr Trelawny even admits that Margaret is "unlike her mother; but in both feature and colour she has a marvellous resemblance to the pictures of Queen Tera" (*JoSS* 171). He furthermore explains how the detached hand of the mummy is still perfectly preserved, but that she has seven fingers instead of five. The hand rested on a large scarab-shaped ruby which depicts the eponymous seven stars of the Pleiades (*JoSS* 142).

Abel Trelawny insists on helping Queen Tera to come back to life with what he calls the "Great Experiment"¹⁰⁷ (*JoSS* 239), for which the entire inventory of the tomb and a certain constellation of the stars are necessary. Mr Trelawny and Margaret, Mr Corbeck and Malcom Ross move the entire collection of artefacts

106 On the symbolism of hands in archaeological fiction, see Corriou 8.

107 The Great Experiment is reminiscent of the galvanization of Cheops in *The Mummy!* or the electrical currents applied to Allamistakeo in "Some Words with a Mummy." While those experiments are conducted with the help of modern science, the experiment to resurrect Queen Tera is entirely dependent on ancient wisdom and magical objects as well as external circumstances like the location, the weather and astronomy.

of Tera's tomb to a house on the coast of Cornwall where they plan to revive the mummified queen. At this point, the narrative develops in different directions in the two editions of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. It is unclear whether it was Stoker who rewrote the ending or whether someone else was asked to do it by Stoker's publisher. Whatever may have been the case, the ending of the first version of *The Jewel of Seven Stars* was deemed too gruesome by the publisher and therefore had to be changed (cf. McNally 223). In the original version, the experiment goes terribly wrong, and all except Mr Ross die. The exact reason for the failure of the experiment and the subsequent death of all present, including the disappearance of the mummy, is never explained. The reader is left to ponder on the subjective narrative of the only survivor, casting doubt on the reliability of Mr Ross's description of events.

The second version differs greatly from the shocking ending of the original text. Here the experiment does also achieve what the Egyptologists has planned, but Ross's narrative suggests that during the experiment, Queen Tera's spirit enters Miss Trelawny and they become one single person. The physical remains of the mummy, however, burn and are lost forever. Malcolm Ross and Margaret Trelawny get married, and she wears the mummy's shroud as her wedding dress. While both versions end with the physical destruction of the Egyptian queen, the revised ending is less terrible in the almost Hamletian destruction of all players. However, the merging of the two female souls and the macabre wedding still place the story firmly in the Egyptianising Gothic. The notion of the transmigration of souls from an ancient into a modern being also features in Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (cf. chapter 3.13). The reversal of this situation is depicted in Algernon Blackwood's "A Descent into Egypt," in which the protagonist's soul slowly leaves his body and merges with the vampiric soul of a mystical Egypt (cf. chapter 3.15.2).

The Jewel of Seven Stars, unlike Stoker's *Dracula*, does not depict the *Other* as the ultimate threat to the West, and yet a certain anxiety is palpable throughout the novel. The threat lies not so much in the actual actions of the *Other*, but in the hidden powers, the invisible and literally incomprehensible deeds which the sleeping Queen Tera performs without waking up. While the two Egyptologists are experts in their field, their pursuit to meddle with ancient Egyptian magical practices is punished by death in the original ending, and in the alternative ending by the transmigration of Tera's spirit into Margaret Trelawny's body. In that sense, Stoker expresses a similar warning as Louisa May Alcott in her "Lost in a Pyramid" in which the female character has to suffer to the transgression which

the men in the story committed. The *Other*, represented by the ancient Egyptian sorceress, can be neither understood nor controlled by the Western protagonists.

3.9 Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* – *Strange Currencies* (1897)

The Beetle was published by Skeffington and Sons in 1897, just two months after Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The mystery novel consists of four parts, which are all narrated from the first-person perspective of four different protagonists: Robert Holt, a clerk, Sydney Atherton, an inventor, Miss Marjorie Lindon, the daughter of a politician and the Honorary Augustus Champnell, Confidential Agent. The story of each individual overlaps with that of the previous narrative, and even though it is not an epistolary novel, this multi-perspective narrative is very similar to that of *Dracula*.

It is a novel in which various facets of late-Victorian modernity, science, parliamentary democracy, imperial identity, and, most generally expressed, the nineteenth-century investment in the attainability and efficiency of knowledge as a form of power and control are confronted by the non-rational, the inexplicable, the archaic, the *other*. (Wolfreys *The Beetle* 12)

Robert Holt's description of events starts with his arrival in London as a work- and penniless clerk. Searching for a place to spend the night, he climbs through the window of a seemingly empty house. To his horror, he finds himself trapped by a superhuman being which possesses mesmeric powers and abuses him as an agent to take revenge on a politician, Mr Lessingham. The creature is initially described as male and incredibly old and wrinkled, with a horrifying air around him. In the same room, Holt is confronted with a large beetle, which emanates pure evil. Forced by the creature's hypnotic power, he steals letters from Lessingham, and as the politician catches him in the act Holt yells, "THE BEETLE" (*The Beetle* 68), causing the lights to dim and the evil presence of the beetle to emerge. In terror, Holt flees from the house and runs into Mr Sydney Atherton, a friend and admirer of Lessingham's fiancée, Miss Marjorie Lindon. The clerk returns to the strange house and hands over the stolen letters to the creature; letters which turn out to be love letters by Miss Lindon to Lessingham. Holt begins to understand that the beetle and the strange person in the empty house are two forms of the same creature.

At this point, Atherton takes over the narration and explains that he is an inventor, experimenting with weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰⁸ He is visited by a mysterious Oriental man who possesses strong mesmeric powers. Explaining that he is one of the “children of Isis” (*The Beetle* 106) and that he bears a grudge against Lessingham, he offers Sydney Atherton help, because he knows that he dislikes the politician for being engaged to the woman he loves.¹⁰⁹ A strand of strange events follows the encounter. After the intrusion into his house, Lessingham seeks Sidney Atherton’s help and finds a picture of a *scarabaeus sacer* – the beetle – in the inventor’s laboratory, which horrifies him and causes him to have a nervous breakdown. Another odd incident occurs when Atherton almost kills a friend in an accident involving his chemicals and the Oriental, as which he is described by the inventor, appears and reanimates him. On the following morning, Marjorie Lindon comes to the laboratory and tells her friend that a strange man was brought into her house. She also describes how an evil creature entered her bedroom at night, giving her the greatest fright of her life. A short while after, Atherton is visited by the Oriental once more, and he manages to intimidate and scare him with his chemical knowledge and an experiment, which causes the strange man to transform into a beetle, and then back into human form. This second human form is that of a woman. In this part of the novel it is certain that the beetle has transformative powers and that the gender of the creature is not fixed but shifting.

The third part of the novel is told from Marjorie Lindon’s point of view. She recalls strange events, involving a perished homeless man, whom she brought into her house and who then warned her of the beetle. The man turns out to be Robert Holt, the narrator of the first part of the novel. Miss Lindon describes how she went to bed at night, feeling something evil in her room, only to discover a large beetle crawling up her body. Before it reached her face, she fainted in terror, and therefore she cannot recall what happened afterwards. The horrible creature is gone when she wakes up, but she implores Sydney Atherton to help her uncover the creature’s origins and mysterious properties. They find out that the man to whom she offered shelter and food was under mesmeric control of the beetle. Holt leads them to the empty house where he first encountered the

108 For other contemporary literary examples concerning terrorist acts and the idea of large-scale death caused by a single individual, see Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* and G. K. Chesterton’s *The Man who was Thursday*.

109 Similarly to *The Mummy!*, the creature interferes with all of the protagonists; however this time it is not for ethical reasons or morale but simply for the benefit of the beetle’s goals and lust for revenge.

creature and they try to find clues as to the identity of the creature. Believing the room to be empty, the men leave Marjorie alone in it. Soon the young woman realises their mistake and that somebody is hidden under a great pile of blankets on a bed. At this point, her narrative breaks off, leaving the reader in suspense.

The last of the four narrators is Augustus Champnell, a detective, who records Mr Paul Lessingham's testimony of a horrible experience from his youth in the light of recent events. The politician describes a visit to Egypt more than twenty years ago and remembers being held captive by a beautiful woman who gains his trust only to abuse it. Constricted by invisible bonds of hypnosis, he is forced to witness the cruel practices of a sect to which the woman evidently belongs. They burn young women alive as an offering to Isis and eat their ashes after performing what can only be interpreted as sexual acts (cf. Luckhurst *Curse* 172) with the victims: "A woman—a young and lovely Englishwoman, if I could believe the evidence of my own eyes, had been *outraged*, and burnt alive, while I lay there helpless, looking on" (*The Beetle* 244).

Lessingham learns that the members of this sect refer to themselves as the "children of Isis", which firmly establishes that the creature which has been controlling and terrorising Holt, Lindon and Atherton is the creature from the politician's past. Despite being held prisoner by the children of Isis, Lessingham manages to escape when the woman who has captured him morphs into a scarab beetle. When he feels the hypnotic fetters loosen, he runs for his life.

Years after this traumatic experience, he is haunted by the very same creature. The current events take a great toll on him and he cannot imagine how to end the horror of it. Augustus Champnell conducts an investigation in which Marjorie Lindon and Sydney Atherton take part. The narrative repeats Marjorie's description of events, but then continues at the point where she broke off. Champnell describes how they find the house in which the strange creature with hypnotic powers resides and where Holt was held captive, but they are tricked by the strange villain and leave Miss Lindon alone in the house, while the men follow a false trace. The creature, which is described by the tenant of the property as "the Arab party", hypnotises Marjorie and, together with Robert Holt, who is still under the mesmeric influence of the beetle, they board a train with the purpose of leaving the country. Marjorie's hair is cut off and she is turned into a boy by way of dress and appearance to look less like herself. The men suppose that Marjorie is chosen by the creature to be the next human sacrifice to Isis, and so the search for the woman begins. The novel ends with a horrible train crash, during which the creature escapes, leaving a highly disturbed Miss Lindon and an unsolved mystery behind.

Marsh's novel not only blurs the lines between the Oriental *Other* and the Western *Self* by having several characters act under the influence of the ancient Egyptian creature, but it also deconstructs and bends gender and sexual orientation. Several homoerotic scenes occur, all of them forced. Because the gender of the creature is not fixed, any sexual situation becomes automatically homosexual. Robert Holt and Marjorie Lindon are both sexually abused by the creature in the form of the scarab beetle while Lessingham experiences seduction by the female form of the creature. Marsh manages to create an extremely uncanny and unsettling narrative by bending and dissolving the limits and definitions which uphold the established balance between the *Self* and the *Other*.

3.10 E. and H. Heron's "The Story of Baelbrow" (1899)

E. and H. Heron are pseudonyms for Hesketh V. Pritchard (1876–1922) and his mother Kate O'Brien Ryall Prichard (1851–1935). Together they wrote six short stories about the occult psychologist and psychic detective Flaxman Low, all of which were published in *Pearson's Magazine* between 1898 and 1899. Mr Flaxman Low is one of several psychic detectives¹¹⁰ which were invented at the end of the nineteenth and remained popular throughout the beginning of the twentieth century. The short story borrows lightly from Doyle's "Lot No. 249," processing themes and giving an overall impression of a sequel to the mummy story from 1892.

"The Story of Baelbrow" ("TSoB") slightly diverts from the usual Victorian detective story in the sense that the detective does not have a sidekick who is present during the cases. However, the unnamed narrator acts as a biographer; using the first paragraph to explain the reasons for the telling of this particular story, wanting to focus on the darker aspects of Low's career ("TSoB" 125). Professor Van der Voort is a friend of the psychic detective and requests his help. He is spending the summer at the house of the Swaffam family in a place commonly referred to as Baelbrow. A ghost is said to have haunted the estate for generations, but the Professor insists that the ghost is not merely a trifle and urges Flaxman Low to help him get rid of it. Several women in the household are said to have been scared half to death, one maid never recovering from the shock. Flaxman Low agrees to help his friend and travels to Baelbrow where

110 For the development and occurrence of the psychic detective story, see Lember, Alexandra. "Thoughts are Things: Magical Objects, Objective Magic and Sax Rohmer's *The Dream-Detective*"; Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu is probably the most popular and most widely known of the psychic detectives in the early twentieth century.

he immediately notices the presence of a supernatural being. He sees a telling shadow and is aware of a strange clicking noise. Gaining answers from those who claimed to have seen the ghost, the description of a brown bony hand on a bandaged arm presents a valuable clue for the detective. Furthermore, he finds telling bite-marks on the throat of the maid who has died after an encounter with the ghost. Wanting to solve the case as quickly as possible, but knowing that the staff of the house is not in the state to do so, Harold Swaffam is enlisted to help.

Young Swaffam does not believe in the ghost and fears that the female members of the household are collectively suffering from hysteria ("TSoB" 129). Low and Swaffam send everyone away from the house for a night and lock themselves in, waiting for the ghost. When it appears, the detective is unable to catch it, but he begins to understand what it is that has been haunting the house for a long time now. Harold Swaffam's father, a traveller and collector, sent cases and objects to be set up in his very own museum; and Low guesses that among those cases must have been a mummy. As Swaffam waits in a locked room, still not believing in the ghost because he was asleep when Low saw it, the mummy attacks him. Flaxman Low tries to shoot it, but only manages to hit a foot. The men enter the private museum where they find a mummy with a crushed foot, lying unmoving in its coffin. Not wanting to risk another attack, Swaffam shoots the mummy repeatedly in the face. To make sure that it cannot hurt anyone anymore, they fasten the lid of the coffin and take the entire coffin out, place it on a boat in the sea and burn it. Low explains that the mummy must have been a vampire, who was affected by psychic seeds or germs ("TSoB" 135). Low explains that since the house is built on an old graveyard, supernatural powers managed to vitalise the ancient mummy. By burning the body of the fiend, they rid Baelbrow of its ghost.

"The Story of Baelbrow" criticises both the displacing of mummies as well as a general ignorance and lack of respect for the dead. Although the story itself seems accidentally comical at times, the Victorian readers were certainly scared of the vampire-mummy – a monster that unites Doyle's vengeful mummy with the vampires which featured in Victorian fiction. While the monster injured and actually kills members of the household, the reason for the haunting of the house lies in the inconsiderate placement of the mummy – and, going further back in time, in the acquisition of the mummy. The *Self* physically brought the *Other* home, and with it, the danger it poses to the Self by way of consumption of the blood of the victims.

3.11 Guy Boothby's "A Professor of Egyptology" (1904)

"A Professor of Egyptology" ("APoE") is an Egyptianising short story by the Australian writer Guy Newell Boothby (1867–1905), who moved to England in 1894. Boothby's story is reminiscent of Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" (1890), but the narrative is split; beginning with a male voice setting up the story and describing the circumstances only to let the female protagonist, Miss Cecilia Westmoreland, tell the story in her own words to make it more credible.

A group of international tourists spends the winter in the Hotel Occidental¹¹¹ in Cairo. The visitors are excited to meet one of the most renowned Egyptologists of his time, Professor Constanides. Miss Cecilia is fascinated by the man and an inappropriate friendship – as perceived as such by the other guests in the hotel (cf. "APoE" 113) – develops between the young lady and the Egyptologist. The narrator begins to hint at a strange event which he himself would have a difficult time believing if it were not for the hard facts. Those facts are merely a transfer to Cecilia's narrative, which resumes the tale where the unnamed male narrator ends his account. The young woman explains that she finds herself under a strange hypnotic influence of Constanides. Guided by the will of the man, she follows him out onto the street and is then taken to the Egyptian museum in the palace of the former Khedive Ismail. Still under his spell, she is taken inside, where Constanides unwraps a mummy which is strangely well preserved. The sight of the unwrapped mummy transports Cecilia back to ancient Egypt, 4000 years in the past where she experiences the fate of Nofrit, the wife of Usirtasen, the oldest son of Amenemhait and crown prince. However, Sinifihit¹¹², Nofrit's brother in law, also loves her and plans on killing his brother. Nofrit refuses to help him, but when she meets Usirtasen to refuse him, she realises that they have been followed and the plan has become known to the crown prince. However adamant Nofrit defends herself, Usirtasen does not believe her to be innocent. Sinifihit is called into the tent and confronted with the accusation of his plotting. He becomes aware of Nofrit's presence just when a messenger brings the news of the death of the pharaoh, Amenemhait, making Usirtasen the new pharaoh.

111 The name appears to be a pun, as the narrator remarks on the fact that while the party is very international, with thankfully not so many English citizens present, Egyptians are not numbered among the present nationalities. Therefore, the hotel seems to represent an entirely occidental enclave within the Orient.

112 In *Reading Ancient Egyptian Poetry*, Richard Parkinson connects Sinifihit with Sinuhe, the protagonist of an ancient Egyptian tale from approximately 1800 BCE (Parkinson, *Ancient Egyptian Poetry* 248–9).

While everyone is momentarily distracted by the news, Sinfihit attacks Nofrit and stabs her, thinking she has betrayed him. Cecilia cannot remember anything of what followed and finds herself in the present again, the hypnotic bond suddenly lifted from her. Professor Constanides explains that he is Sinfihit and after his death it was decreed that he should never find rest until Nofrit has forgiven him for his actions. Cecilia is the reborn spirit of Nofrit, and having been shown her own past, she forgives him. He covers the mummy again, explaining that it is the body of Sinfihit and that he will now be able to finally rest in peace. They both return to the hotel, but Constanides bids her farewell and explains that they will not meet again. In the morning Cecilia's mother remarks on her tired looks and delivers the news of Constanides's death.

Borrowing from Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth", Boothby's short story does not involve alchemy, yet the constellation of a love triangle between two male lovers and one woman is almost the same. The restless spirit of an ancient character which roams the world is a recurring theme in Egyptianising fantastic fiction and Gothic fiction in general. Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Brown Hand," for instance, also features a man who is in search of his lost hand before he can die properly and finally find peace.

Interestingly enough, "A Professor of Egyptology" does not criticise modern society by bringing in the *Other* to point out weaknesses or arrogance. If at all, the close-mindedness of the West is stressed when Cecilia discards social norms and strikes up a friendship with the Oriental professor and their potentially romantic attachment is kept secret from Cecilia's mother and other patrons. Furthermore, the character of Constanides is described as being different – an *Other* – who is extremely knowledgeable, polite and nevertheless not quite Western. He is the most intelligent and interesting character, and yet his fate is dependent on Cecilia, who learns that she is partly the *Other*, too, which explains the connection she has with the professor. The *Self*-criticism is rather muted, but the awareness of the *Other*, and the idea that the *Other* has indeed learned from past mistakes and is trying to make up for them is already found in Loudon's *The Mummy!*, and later in Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth." Therefore, the image of the stagnant ancient Egypt is crumbling and the *Other* is shown to be both willing and able to integrate into Western society and to be superior in manners and knowledge in comparison with the West.

3.12 Cutcliffe Wright Hyne's "The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt" (1904)

Charles John Cutcliffe Wright Hyne (1866–1944) was a British novelist who was well known for writing *The Lost Continent: The Story of Atlantis* (1899). "The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt" ("TMoTP") is a satire whose humour ties in with Edgar Allan Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy." It was published in *Atoms of Empire* in 1904.

The narrator of the story is a Cambridge student who describes two very different professors. Professor Gargrave is a renowned professor of Egyptology, whose lectures are so boring that most students only attend once and then never come back. The other professor is Thompson-Pratt, a demonstrator in Chemistry. The narrator does not like Gargrave, and the two professors are said to despise each other. It therefore comes as a great surprise to the narrator when Gargrave asks him to join him for an experiment. The Egyptologist argues that because the student dislikes him, his description of events will be objective and in no way favourable towards Gargrave. In the study of the Egyptologist he finds Thompson-Pratt and a mummy by the name of Menen-Ra, with whom Gargrave wants to conduct a great experiment. He has found that the three-thousand-year-old mummy and the chemistry professor share the same strange marking on their skin, and he concludes that they must be related. He wants to establish a connection between the two in order to use Thompson-Pratt as a medium to speak for the mummy and learn about the past from a real ancient Egyptian.

The narrator is supposed to be a neutral observer and record whatever is being said by the mummy. The experiment is successful in itself, but a few difficulties arise. Over the many years the mummy has been dead, it has forgotten its own language. When Professor Gargrave begins to speak in ancient Egyptian, he is asked to please speak in English so that the mummy can understand him. The second great surprise comes when Gargrave begins asking him questions about his life, feeling as if he has just found the holy grail of history. Very quickly his dream shatters because the mummy is not interested in telling the great secrets of his time, and only talks about parties he attended, his lovers and the dimensions of wine shops ("TMoTP" 157). In the end it becomes obvious that Menen-Ra had no idea of the greater workings of his time's politics and affairs of state. The mummy's description of his wild life in the past is certainly amusing to the narrator, whereas the Egyptologist is deeply disappointed. Years of work turn out to have been for nothing; at least nothing which would help to understand ancient Egyptian politics, religion or anything else than the very personal account of the private life of a flirtatious Egyptian. As in Poe's short story, the irony of "The

Mummy of Thompson-Pratt” is created through the notion that the experiment itself works perfectly, but that the true astonishing element lies in the narrative of the mummy rather than the science fiction behind it all. The story differs slightly from most other mummy fictions as the narrator is not personally affected by the events in the story but takes on the role of the critical viewer, resembling the critical reader who ends up being amused by the ordeal instead of questioning the reality-content of the story. “The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt” mocks both the spiritualist idea of being able to communicate with the dead as well as the Egyptological and archaeological search for detailed information about ancient Egypt. Coming as far as to be able to communicate with an ancient Egyptian just to learn that this once-in-a-life-time chance is wasted on an ancient playboy and drunkard is extremely sarcastic and critical of Egyptological and Spiritualist practices.

3.13 Edith Nesbit’s *The Story of the Amulet* (1906)

The Story of the Amulet (SoA) by Edith Nesbit (1858–1924) was published in 1906 as the third part of a children’s book trilogy, the first two novels being *Five Children and It* (1902) and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904). One of the most important characters in all three novels, apart from four young English siblings, is the psammead, a fairy which has to fulfil anybody’s wishes. The children, Cyril, Robert, Anthea and Jane, make use of the psammead’s power, and the first two books of the trilogy give an account of the children’s adventures. The third novel, however, differs from the other two. The siblings never consider the consequences of their wishes, which lead to their actions always resulting in trouble, and the magical creature finally refuses to fulfil the children’s wishes at the beginning of *The Story of the Amulet*, the initial challenge which necessitates the use of the magical amulet instead of the psammead’s powers.

In the novel, the children are left alone by their parents, and their greatest heart’s desire is for them to return safe and sound to 300, Fitzroy Street, London (SoA 279).¹¹³ Since the fairy cannot, or at least refuses to, fulfil their wish, they have to find another way to reach their goal, which is presented to the children in the form of a broken Egyptian amulet, an Isis knot. The amulet enables the children to travel through time and space. The ultimate goal is to find the missing half, because only the complete amulet will be able to fulfil the children’s

113 In 1905, in which the story is set, the father of the children is in South Africa, working as a war correspondent, and the mother is away in Madeira with the youngest sibling for health reasons (SoA 272).

greatest wish. During the course of the novel Anthea and her siblings become friends with their neighbour, the Egyptologist Jimmy, to whom they refer as the learned gentleman, and whom they eventually take with them on their journeys. The broken amulet can be activated by using “the word of power”: Ur Hekau Setcheh (*SoA* 36); a hieroglyphic inscription which Jimmy translates and which the psammead teaches the children how to use. In order to find the missing half of the amulet, the children travel in time and space; for example to pre-dynastic Egypt, Babylon, Atlantis, and even into the future. Jimmy interprets the experiences as collective dreaming. At one point, when the children tell him about their first visit to Egypt, he calls it “make-believe” (*SoA* 81) and when they are witnessing the downfall of Atlantis, he puts everyone in danger because he insists on “seeing the end of the dream” (*SoA* 166).¹¹⁴

The critical point in the plot is reached when the children go back to pharaonic Egypt where they meet the priest of Amun-Ra, Rekh-Mara.¹¹⁵ He takes the children to Pharaoh, where they are supposed to display their ability of ‘magically’ making fire. Robert lights a match, and mutters a made-up incantation: “Union Jack, Printing Press, Gunpowder, Rule Britannia! Come, Fire, at the end of this little stick!” (*SoA* 200). The ‘magic’ amazes the court, and the children are imprisoned by Pharaoh, who orders them to show him more miracles. The psammead is taken away from the siblings, and because they do not want to leave the magical creature in the past, they refuse to escape from the prison with the help of the amulet. Only after they manage to trick a guard into bringing them the psammead they return home to London.

The Egyptian priest, who is later revealed to possess one half of the amulet as well, understands that it is possible to move to and fro in time as well as in space (*SoA* 262), and thus travels to the London of our protagonists. There, he thinks, he will find the missing half, but soon he and the children notice that their halves of the amulet are in fact the same piece, only in different times. Because it is physically impossible for the same object to exist in two different times in the same place, the two parts are drawn to each other like magnets and they melt into a single half Isis-knot. At this point it is revealed that Rekh-Mara is a very selfish person and hopes to be able to claim the complete amulet for himself. When the children understand how to gain the other part, they decide that

114 For a detailed discussion on the use of dreams in Egyptianising Fantastic Fiction see 5.4 of this book.

115 Budge suggested to Nesbit that “the Egyptian priest who pursues the children should be named Rekh Mara, after a high official whose painted tomb at Thebes had been the subject of much study and speculation” (Briggs 247).

both parties have an equal right to use the amulet, once it is whole again. With Jimmy's help they understand that they have to wish to go back to the time and place when the amulet was still intact, and as they do so, they find it in a place far back in time, which is called "the morning of the world" (SoA 270). With the complete amulet in their hands, they are able to ask for the fulfilment of their greatest desire. The children's wish, of course, is for their parents to come back home safely, and as soon as they return to London, the nurse tells them that their parents will arrive within a matter of a few hours.

A final problem arises when the children learn that Rekh-Mara will not be able to return to the past now that the amulet is whole again. The solution presents itself when the four children realise that the learned gentleman and the priest are much alike, despite the negative character traits of the priest, that they could easily be one and the same person. Through the power of the amulet, the two men become one in the same way as the amulet's halves melted into each other. Now that the children can be sure that their greatest wish will be granted, they want for the spirit of Rekh-Mara, who is now one with the learned gentleman, to get his wish as well. This is easily done, because his greatest desire was to know more than any other person before and to hold the whole amulet in his hands. The novel concludes with Anthea presenting the amulet to Jimmy, who still believes that everything he has experienced with the children has indeed been collective dreaming and who reacts very emotionally:

"Bless me! ... bless me! What a treasure! The dear children! It must be their affection that has given me these luminous aperçus. I seem to see so many things now – things I never saw before! The dear children! The dear, dear children." (SoA 244)

The idea that everything the children experience is only in dreams is a typical feature of Victorian children's literature – most famous is probably *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll – and Egyptianising fantastic fiction.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, one of the major themes in Nesbit's novel is the idea of merging spirits and objects which create one whole perfect entity, a concept clearly linked to alchemy. As a reversed idea of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the merging of Jimmy, the gentle neighbour, and the vicious priest creates one healthy and wise man.

Nesbit's criticism is especially visible in the episodes in which the children travel to a hyper-perfect future London as well as when they decide to take the orphan child back into the past, deeming contemporary London an unfit place

116 For a detailed discussion of the purpose of dreams in fantastic literature see chapter 5.4.

to look for foster parents. Similarly, the constant awareness that the children are English and therefore superior to any of the cultures they travel to is usually countered with a terrible event or powerful individuals which pose an actual threat to the protagonists. When the Queen of Babylon ‘invades’ London and begins extracting her possessions from the British library is the most obvious and immediate threat of the *Other* to the Western Self. The priest Rekh-Mara also poses a threat to the children as his wish to own the whole amulet seems to be the only impediment which keeps him from hurting the children. While the story has a happy ending and the children remain unscathed throughout the novel, instances of Self-criticism and a general awareness of the children’s Western based arrogance occur repeatedly in the book. The *Other* and the *Self* merge in the body of Jimmy, creating a strange third character which belongs to neither side, similarly to reborn characters in stories like “A Professor of Egyptology” or the immortal Sosra in “The Ring of Thoth.”

3.14 Rider Haggard’s “Smith and the Pharaohs” (1912)

“Smith and the Pharaohs” (“SatP”) was published in *Strand Magazine* in December 1912 and is one of Haggard’s most critical and self-aware texts. It reflects his opinion on ethical questions concerning the excavation of Egyptian antiquities and the display of mummies in museums.

The short story begins with a detailed description of the protagonist’s life and personal history. Mr James Ebenezer Smith visits the British Museum and notices a mask of an unknown queen, with whom he falls in love. Smith cannot stop thinking about the face and begins to conduct research regarding Egyptology and ancient Egypt. Slowly he becomes an expert in the field who participates in and leads excavations while he spends his winters in Egypt, claiming to have weak lungs in order to justify the annual journeys to his employer. A strange intuition leads him to a tomb in the Valley of the Queens, in which he finds the upper half of a golden statuette, which resembles the beautiful face of the queen he is searching for. Her name, Ma-Mee, is engraved on the statuette. Smith finds the hand of the mummy, which is “withered and paper-white”, but “delicately shaped” and “perfect” (“SatP” 327), and takes it with him, along with several other objects.

The mummy’s hand is reminiscent of Stoker’s *The Jewel of Seven Stars* or Doyle’s “The Brown Hand” (published in 1899 in the May issue of the *Stand Magazine*):

To my surprise he demurred very much to the suggestion, and he explained that according to his religion it was an all-important matter that the body should be reunited after death, and so make a perfect dwelling for the spirit. The belief is, of course, an old one,

and the mummies of the Egyptians arose from an analogous superstition. ("The Brown Hand" 21–22)

The director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo – presumably Gaston Maspero¹¹⁷, although he is not specifically named – allows Smith to keep the hand and one of the mummy's rings¹¹⁸, while the other objects are to stay in Cairo.

Back in England, Smith returns to the British Museum, and as he stares lovingly at the face of Ma-Mee, whose mummified hand he keeps always close, he falls asleep. Waking up, he witnesses an assembly of the spirits of all ancient Egyptian kings and queens, who discuss the destruction of their resting places and the shameless display of their remains in the show cases of the museums. Smith is discovered and put on trial as a representative of all Egyptologists and archaeologists. The fact that he still carries Ma-Mees hand with him makes his situation even worse. However, when most of the present spirits want to see him dead, Ma-Mee herself saves his life by explaining to the court that Smith has disturbed mummies in their eternal sleep because of love. Moreover, she claims that Smith is her reincarnated lover, and thereby not only saves his life, but explains his immediate and persisting infatuation with her. After the declaration all ghosts around him vanish, and Smith finds himself as if waking up from a dream. After this incident, he never returns to Egypt.

Haggard's short story is extremely critical of archaeological and Egyptological practices. He simultaneously criticises the Western lack of respect for the ancient dead and modern Egyptian tomb robbing. Ironically, Haggard himself owned several Egyptian objects taken from tombs and temporarily had a mummy at his home (cf. Luckhurst *Curse* 187). More clearly than in any other Egyptianising story, the ancient *Other* consciously threatens the *Self*, forcing Smith to take responsibility for his deeds. At the same time, the story criticises archaeologists and tomb robbers, acting as the judicative power which is represented by the ancient gods and royalty within the text.

3.15 Three Short Stories by Algernon Blackwood (1908, 1912 and 1914)

The last three texts analysed for their Egyptianising elements are Algernon Blackwood's "The Nemesis of Fire" (1908), "Sand" (1912) and "A Descent into

117 Gaston Camille Charles Maspero was a professor of Egyptology in Paris. He succeeded Auguste Mariette as the Director-General of the Antiquities Service in and as head of the Boulaq Museum in Cairo in 1881 (cf. Tyldesley 125).

118 The ring in the story is likely to be a reference to Haggard's own ring.

Egypt" (1914). Algernon Henry Blackwood (1869–1951) was an English author who published a great number of short stories, many of them concerned with the occult, as well as plays, novels and newspaper articles. In 1908 he published six short stories about Dr. John Silence, a psychic detective who solves cases where the supernatural and the occult are involved. "The Nemesis of Fire" is one of the six short stories and it centres on a case involving an ancient Egyptian mummy. "Sand" marks the end of an era. Its narrative bears strong modernist markers, and almost the entire tale is told in the narrative mode of stream of consciousness writing. It is clearly different from the previously discussed Victorian texts and therefore marks the end of Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Together with "A Descent into Egypt," a companion piece which was published two years later, "Sand" opens the door to new narrative styles and a new way of reading and presenting Egypt in literature. "Sand" is a fairly long short story, separated into ten sub-chapters, which sums up all Egyptianising themes which featured in Victorian fantastic fiction by placing it all in a psychological as well as esoteric and occult context. As in most Egyptianising texts which are discussed in this book, the outcome leaves the reader unsatisfied after a long build-up.

The youngest text analysed in this book, "A Descent into Egypt", picks up where "Sand" has left the reader unsatisfied by offering a proper resolution. Egypt itself becomes a protagonist; it acts as a vampiric bodiless monster whose past threatens the present. Just as the previous short story, "A Descent Into Egypt" represents the shift from Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction to modern supernatural fiction, expressing at the same time a strong feeling of nostalgia for the past, and also a warning of the same; urging the protagonists and the readers to focus on the present and the world as it is now.

3.15.1 Algernon Blackwood's "The Nemesis of Fire" (1908)

"The Nemesis of Fire" ("TNoF") is the third of the six John Silence adventures by Blackwood. The John Silence stories are very much in the tradition of the Victorian detective story, with the eccentric detective with special mental capacities, and a sidekick, Mr Hubbard, who narrates the stories. Dr. John Silence's special ability is not only that of a brilliant mind and deductive powers, but also a sense for the supernatural and the occult.

John Silence is called in for a case by Colonel Wragge due to strange events happening on his estate. As soon as the detective and his colleague arrive, they are aware of a strange heat, which does not seem to stem from any natural source. Having dinner with the Colonel, the two men are introduced to his wheelchair-bound sister, who wears a beautiful brooch with a scarab beetle made of green

jasper. Later in the story it is revealed that this clue has led Dr. Silence to the conclusion that the strange events must be connected to ancient Egypt. Further investigation leads him to conclude that a fire-elemental (“TNoF”18) has been awoken and is haunting the estate. The reason must be an unsettled spirit whose fury leads to spontaneous and uncontrolled fires. Dr. Silence and Mr Hubbard find a strange druid stone circle on the estate, but the detective rules out any immediate connection to the supernatural occurrences which trouble Mr Wragge. Instead he suggests that the reason for the upset fire-elemental can be linked to an occurrence on the estate. Finally they find out that the Colonel’s brother, who died in a fire, had brought an Egyptian mummy to his house, at which point the fires started. Thinking that the mummy was to blame, he buried it a good distance away from the house and built a druid stone circle above it in the hope of stopping the haunting. However, the death of the Colonel’s brother proves that burying the mummy again is not the solution to the problem. Silence, Hubbard and Wragge try to find the modern tomb of the mummy, and upon finding a tunnel, which leads into the chamber where the sarcophagus is placed, they find the mummy intact with all the usual ornaments, except for the scarab which Miss Wragge wears on her brooch. This missing scarab transpires to be the reason which angered the fire-elemental which consequently haunted the house, causing fires repeatedly. Just when the men come to this realisation, the sister of the Colonel comes crawling into the chamber, her face monstrously distorted. She throws herself on top of the mummy, thus returning the scarab to its rightful place; an action which costs her her life, but which leads to the final rest of the mummy and no further hauntings on the compound. The men carry the dead woman back to the house, and Dr. Silence remarks on the fact that her face was “scorched and blasted” after the incident (“TNoF” 34). Reminiscent of Doyle’s Lot No. 249, with the exception that the revenge of the ancient creature on humans is not controlled, but accidental, and triggered by the disturbance of the eternal peace ensured by the correct rituals and amulets on the mummy.

3.15.2 Algernon Blackwood’s “Sand” (1912)

“Sand” was first published in Algernon Blackwood’s collection *Pan’s Garden, A Volume of Nature Stories* in 1912 in London, by MacMillan and Co., and within two years, three editions of the collection were published, speaking of a great general interest in Blackwood’s work. Blackwood’s story borrows several elements from Edward Frederic Benson’s “Image in the Sand” (1905) in which a man tried to gain the favour of a young lady by conjuring up the spirit of Egypt. “Sand” is not a John Silence story, but it is even more focused on the connection

of ancient Egypt and the occult. The story's poetic language sets it apart from all the other Egyptianising texts discussed in this book. Great parts of the text appear in a 'stream of consciousness' mode. While most of the Western protagonists in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction tend to describe their feelings and thoughts in order to draw the reader into the story, Blackwood's "Sand" changes the narrative mode, marking the literary changes in the early twentieth century.

In the short story, the protagonist Felix Henriot goes to Egypt after the urge to travel, which is described as a "siren's call" ("Sand" 240), grows too strong to resist. In his London home he has visions of the desert and eventually packs his belongings and leaves for Helouan (حلوان)¹¹⁹, a town which also features in "A Descent into Egypt," a short story which can be read as a loose sequel to "Sand." In Helouan he meets the mysterious Lady Statham, who fascinates him from the moment he sees her for the first time. Her nephew, Richard Vance, a character who is immediately described as strange and nervous and uneasy ("Sand" 247), accompanies her. Being fascinated with the strange couple, the Londoner waits for an opportunity to become acquainted with them, and soon he is made an accomplice in their plan; they want to resurrect the most ancient Egyptian god, a spirit which encompasses the realm of the living and the dead. For the spirit to appear, they plan on creating a form for him out of desert sand, as the god needs a body in order to exist as one entity.

He had always been aware of it in this mysterious land, but it had ever hitherto eluded him. It hovered everywhere. He had felt it brooding behind the towering Colossi at Thebes, in the skeletons of wasted temples, in the uncouth comeliness of the Sphinx, and in the crude terror of the Pyramids even. Over the whole of Egypt hung its invisible wings. These were but isolated fragments of the Body that might express it. And the Desert remained its cleanest, truest symbol. Sand knew it closest. Sand might even give it bodily form and outline. ("Sand" 268)

Throughout the story, Felix Henriot has visions of the desert coming to life, flooding his hotel room and his thoughts, foreshadowing what might happen if the experiment would succeed. Being drawn deeper and deeper into the planning and the occult ideas of creating a physical form for the spirit of Egypt, Henriot becomes more and more aware of the transgression they are about to commit

119 Blackwood spent some time in Helouan between 1912 and 1914, which undoubtedly influenced and inspired him to write the two short stories about the place in Egypt. This detail was discussed by Roger Luckhurst at the "Visions of Egypt" conference in Kingston upon Hull on 7 September 2013 in his keynote lecture "Remote Viewing: Occult Visions of Egypt from Helena Blavatsky to Edgar Cayce."

and the danger which is evoked; a sentiment which goes back a century to the emotions which Edric has when he is about to revive Cheops in *The Mummy!*.

Trying to take his mind off the supernatural experiment looming on the horizon, Felix Henriot takes tourist trips through Egypt. However, he cannot escape his anxiety, and his visions of sand coming to life grow stronger and more threatening (cf. "Sand" 284). Eventually, the night of the experiment arrives. "The Desert everywhere stopped still, and turned. Some curtain, then, that for centuries had veiled the world, drew softly up, leaving a shaded vista down which the eyes of his soul peered towards long-forgotten pictures" ("Sand" 301). Henriot feels related to the ancient power which is slowly emerging from the past, coming alive in the present through the solid faith of Lady Stratham. But not only the spirit of ancient Egypt, its Ka¹²⁰, slowly emerges; Henriot feels himself changing: "His soul had moved amid similar evocations in some aeonian past" ("Sand" 303). On the night of the experiment – or rather ritual – which Lady Stratham is about to perform, Henriot is asked to witness the event from afar and to draw the shape which the sand will form during the evocation. Reaching the desert, he feels the awakening of Egypt's spirit. "The Ka of buried Egypt wakened out of sleep. She had heard the potent summons of her old, time-honoured ritual. She came. She stretched forth an arm towards the worshippers who evoked her" ("Sand" 306). Sand begins to move and to fall into shapes, none of which Henriot can clearly define or draw. Witnessing the transformation of sand into the body of an ancient spirit,¹²¹ he forgets the purpose of his presence, numbed by the glory of the apparition (cf. "Sand" 309). Just as the form becomes more definite and the spirit prepares to enter its magically created form, Richard Vance maliciously interrupts the evocation, causing the swirling sand to swallow up Lady Stratham. Moments later the sand settles and the spirit disappears from the scene, leaving Felix Henriot disappointed and scared, shocked into immobility by the events he has just witnessed. The story ends with Henriot watching Vance

120 The Ka, or *Double*, which was considered a "less solid duplicate of the corporal form" (Maspero *Manual* 111); one of the three entities of which the soul – the other being the Ba (Soul) and the Khu – which, according to Egyptian belief, always remained inside the body of the deceased, necessitating the body's preservation, which also meant a preservation of the *Double* (for further reading see Maspero *Manual* 111). Blackwood uses the concept of the Ka as the entire soul of a being without any further differentiation.

121 William Butler Yeats refers to the same concept as the *spiritus mundi* in his poem "The Second Coming" (1920).

slowly approaching him, the man suddenly becoming more horrific and dangerous than that supernatural being ever was.

The reader is left unsatisfied and confused by the turn of events. However, comparing the ending of this story with Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Blackwood uses a very similar open ending in which the supernatural has disappeared from the scene, but might yet still be present – invisible and waiting for a new chance to reappear.

3.15.3 Algernon Blackwood's "A Descent into Egypt" (1914)

"A Descent Into Egypt" ("ADiE") can be read as a sequel to "Sand," even though the protagonists and the theme are not the same in the stories. The unnamed female narrator¹²² tells the story of one her best friends, George Isley, whom she meets in Helouan where Isley is residing after having conducted excavations in Thebes for two years. From the first meeting on, the narrator feels as if her friend had changed in a strange way; as if his identity is lost (cf. "ADiE" 4). Isley describes to his friend how Egypt has affected him; but not contemporary Egypt. He speaks of ancient Egypt, hidden under layers of history, but ready to devour everyone who comes into the country and who cannot resist its lure. Ancient Egypt becomes a vampiric being which changes the visitor and drags him into the past, causing indifference towards the presence. This power has taken hold of George Isley and he has begun to change, wanting to descend into the past where the "real Egypt" ("ADiE" 3) lies. The narrator begins to feel the same effect, but she does not quite open herself up to the possibility, feeling uncannily threatened by what is happening to her friend. It is only when another Egyptologist, Moleson, comes to join them at Helouan the spirit of Egypt almost overpowers her.

Spending the evening with her friend and her friend's colleague, she witnesses her own partial transformation as Moleson begins to recite an ancient ritual after playing music on a piano, dragging all three into a sphere set apart from reality and the present. Her longing for the past is awakened and she feels as if Egypt and the universe itself are speaking to her. However, the narrator is still attached to the present and her mind refuses to let go entirely. Once they all regain consciousness, Moleson begins to explain the enormity of ancient Egypt, its magic and its gods. The narrator is at the same time fascinated and repulsed while she feels that his friend Isley has slipped out of reality even more. Despite having

122 The gender of the narrator is not of importance and only mentioned once. The narrative style makes it impossible to connect what is said with specific male or female traits. The relationship between the narrator and George Isley is entirely platonic.

recovered from the transcendental experience of Moleson's prayer, the narrator finds herself wandering out into the desert with her two companions; feeling that ancient Egypt is calling her, dragging her out of the present yet again. Before they enter the sandy desert which could well mean certain death for all of them, she comes to her senses and refuses to go any further. While the narrator returns to the hotel, the other two return much later and then immediately move on to Thebes. After a few days, Isley returns to Helouan, but he is only a shadow of his former self, his soul having migrated into the past. The narrator never sees Moleson again, but she knows that these two men have found a great secret which all Egyptologists are trying to find; a greater knowledge of the past. This knowledge, however, comes at the price of a lost soul, sacrificed to the great monstrous past of ancient Egypt.

Blackwood's short stories are extremely different from the early Egyptianising fantastic fiction, like Loudon's seminal Egyptianising novel *The Mummy!* or Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy." Egypt, and especially ancient Egypt, is still in the focus of the story, yet the ironic undertone as well as the inherent criticism and self-reflection which are present in all of the Egyptianising stories of the preceding century are changed in Blackwood's narrative mode. Egypt itself becomes a character; one which threatens Western civilisation and which gives it a universally dangerous feel. There is no monster, no mummy which is resurrected, but the country itself is the dangerous creature which slowly emerges from ancient times to consume the modern Western protagonists. Egypt is a powerful *Other*, which is more interesting than the *Self*. In both "Sand" and "A Descent into Egypt" Westerners are willing to commit to the *Other*, to become part of it and to admit to its universal power which annihilates both modern times and the European mind-set, dissolving the *Self* in a way. Blackwood was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.¹²³ The idea of a spiritual connection to ancient Egypt doubtlessly stems from the order's tradition and is strongly reflected in his work, marking the beginning of a new subgenre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. In "Nemesis of Fire," the Western protagonist himself shows traces of the *Other*, having supernatural abilities which help him solve mysterious cases. Blackwood has changed the tradition of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, mingling the Victorian tradition with a new, occult coloured

123 Edith Nesbit and Bram Stoker were also members of that order, although Stoker only remained a member for a short period of time.

one. Psychic detective stories¹²⁴ were to become a great hit in the early twentieth century and have remained popular to this day.

3.16 Closing Remarks

Not only has the First World War drastically changed English literature, but Egyptianising fantastic fiction changed as well. The esoteric and occult became of greater interest, and the influence of Theosophy and hermetic orders begins to feature more heavily in literature. For example, Sax Rohmer's fantastic stories frequently feature Egyptianising themes¹²⁵, which are often connected to occult practices; *Tales of Secret Egypt*, (1918), *Brood of the Witch-Queen* (1918), *The Green Eyes of Bâst* (1920) and *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (1928) to name a few. Sax Rohmer's work reflects and partly repeats the themes addressed in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Rohmer's *The Brood of the Witch-Queen* takes up elements which are included in earlier late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Egyptianising fantastic fiction, like the fire elemental and the control of a woman by a supernatural ancient power. In addition to Sax Rohmer, William Butler Yeats, Alistair Crowley and Rainer Maria Rilke all took up elements of the literary ancient Egypt of Victorian literature and adapted them for their occult and supernatural works.

A further change in Egyptianising fantastic fiction occurred after the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 and Lord Carnarvon's death only months after the discovery. Curse stories consequently flooded Europe and America, while hopes of making similar discoveries and becoming rich inspired treasure seeker stories. While the idea of the mummy's curse had been present since May Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid", the death of several members of the excavation triggered a mass reaction. Roger Luckhurst discusses the phenomenon extensively in *The Mummy's Curse – The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (2012). The third reason to choose Blackwood's stories as the last to analyse in this book is the emergence of film. From 1900 on, Egypt frequently featured in British short films and later in feature length films. The earliest example is *The Haunted Curiosity Shop* (1901) directed by Walter R. Booth, in which the owner of a curiosity shop is confronted with apparitions from several of his objects, including

124 For further reading see Colin Wilson's *The Psychic Detectives: Story of Psychometry and the Paranormal in Crime Detection* and Alexandra Lember's "Thoughts are Things – Magical Objects, Objective Magic and Sax Rohmer's *The Dream Detective*."

125 Rohmer's "The Mysterious Mummy" (1903) despite its title, is not a work of Egyptianising fiction, but a heist story.

a mummy. *Wanted, a Mummy* (1910), was directed by A.E. Coleby. In the silent film a tramp poses as a mummy and is accidentally sold as such to a professor. Both films are clearly in the tradition of Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction, banking on the humorous element of confusion and the uncanny; confronting the *Self* with the *Other*, disturbing the carefully upheld border between the two concepts. The two short films *The Mummy* (1912) and *The Live Mummy* (1915) follow the previous film in the way that the main character poses as a revived mummy in order to confuse others. In 1919, Marsh's *The Beetle* was made into a film.¹²⁶ *Tut-Tut and His Terrible Tomb* also known as *King Tut-Ankh-Amen's Eighth Wife* (1923) (cf. Soister 301) is a comedy, directed by Bertram Phillips, and written by Frank Miller which pokes fun at the already emerging mummy's curse and *Shadow of Egypt* (1924), directed by Sidney Morgan continues the curse narrative. These examples show clearly just how much Egyptianising fantastic fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century have shaped the popular literary and filmic reception of ancient Egypt of the twentieth and twenty-first century.¹²⁷

126 The film's synopsis already shows a strong diversion from the text: "Egyptian priest tries to burn MP's fiancée to avenge priestess whose soul inhabits monstrous beetle" (Jackson *Weird and Wonderful Movies*).

127 The trend continues into the twenty second century with the most recent example, the trash horror film *Isis Rising: Curse of the Lady Mummy* (2013) continues to re-work Victorian narratives.

4. Loudon's *The Mummy!* – The Creation of a Genre

Cheops moreover came, they said, to such a pitch of wickedness, that being in want of money he caused his own daughter to sit in the stews, and ordered her to obtain from those who came a certain amount of money. (Herodotus "Euterpe" 126)

Jane Loudon Webb's novel *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty Second Century* is many things. It is a late Romantic novel and in many aspects an ironic answer to or a rewriting of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. At the same time it marks the beginning of 'post-Rosetta'¹²⁸ Egyptianising fantastic fiction and lays the foundation for a popular sub-genre in Victorian fantastic fiction. Loudon's novel was published in three volumes in 1827 in a period when industrialisation caused political and social instability. Set in a supposedly stable futuristic political environment, the mummy of Cheops is revitalised¹²⁹ with the help of a "galvanic battery" (*The Mummy!* I: 35) and the ancient pharaoh travels to London where he is witness to the fight for the throne of England. The novel follows the adventures of the two scientists Dr. Entwerfen and Edric, Cheops and two of the potential future Queens, the gentle Elvira and the scheming Rosabella, as well as their supporters and enemies. Especially the fate of Edric strongly hints at Victor Frankenstein's trials and tribulations.

128 The term post-Rosetta refers to the time after the deciphering of the hieroglyphs by Champollion in 1822 and the subsequent unlocking of Egyptian history and culture by translating original texts and not having to trust Herodotus, Diodorus and other authors whose texts on Egypt had until then been the number one authority on anything ancient Egyptian. The post-Rosetta era therefore marks a new understanding of ancient Egypt, and demystification as well, as the hieroglyphs had often been understood as a code which hid secret knowledge. This thought did not quite vanish after the decipherment, but it certainly put things into perspective.

129 Upon thinking of reanimating a body from a grave yard, Edric has a reaction very similar to that of Victor Frankenstein when his conscience confronts him. However, later on he does not have to have as many scruples to reanimate a mummy in contrast to a recently buried body. It seems, and this is a trend throughout Egyptianising fiction, that mummies are not necessarily considered to be human beings, but commodities, objects or monsters, and not normal human corpses (cf. Daly *Modernism* 90, 113).

The inherently human pursuit of knowledge and control over the supernatural *Other* finds its most famous literary representation in Goethe's *Faust*, as well as in the earlier texts about Faust. The character of Heinrich Faust is presumably based on Johann Georg Faust (approximately 1480–1540), an alchemist and astrologist.¹³⁰ Faust is an archetype of a man who wants to go beyond what is normal, who wants to be more than a man, and who wants to transcend the limits of what is considered possible – a theme which recurs in *Frankenstein*, ten years after the publication of Goethe's masterpiece. But the idea is not solely a Romantic one. It is a reflection on the human condition in general; a reflection on the urge to learn “that I may understand whatever binds the world's innermost core together”¹³¹ (*Faust* Act I Scene I: 382–3). Science has always had daunting qualities (cf. Rauch *The Reading Lessons* 61), and as something going seemingly against nature or appearing unnatural and going against fixed rules and conventions of society and religion, science can appear blasphemous. The astronomers Galileo Galilei and Johannes Kepler were both accused of blasphemy in the seventeenth century, being faced with the wrath of the church because of their scientific discoveries. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's theories subverted his own faith and the teachings of the church. Charles Lyell supported Darwin's theories and contradicted the idea of catastrophism, believing that catastrophism¹³² was “invented [...] primarily to support religious traditionalism linked to a restricted time scale and the defence of Noah's flood” (Gould 484).

Even today, the quest for the Higgs boson (cf. “The Search for the Higgs Boson” and “Frequently Asked Questions: The Higgs!”), commonly referred to as the *God Particle*, and the successful landing of the rover *Curiosity* on Mars in August 2012 represent this transgression of borders.¹³³ All those instances are part of the quest for knowledge of the *Other* in order to make it part of our known world and therefore part of the *Self*. Heinrich Faust and Victor Frankenstein can be seen as archetypal characters (Adams 108) embodying the pursuit of the transcendental

130 For a biography on Johann Georg Faust, see Günther Mahal's *Faust*. The two most famous works about Faust, apart from Goethe's *Faust*, are Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* of 1604 and a rewriting of the material, Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947).

131 German original: “Dass ich erkenne, was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält.”

132 The theory of catastrophism supposes that in the history of the world, several sudden and violent events occurred which affected the entire globe.

133 In a way, the epic of Gilgamesh already describes the pursuit of knowledge which goes beyond that of a human scope.

and the search for the unknown. While the actions of Faust and Frankenstein are portrayed as blasphemous and worthy of punishment, today's secular approach to science seems less threatening. Yet, even though the possibility of the creation of a dangerous black hole through experiments with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) is non-existent (cf. Siegel "LHC Black Holes: Worst Case Scenario"), conspiracy theories and 'end of the world'-scenarios have sprouted since its initiation in 1989. A recent example can be found in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons* (2000) in which members of the Illuminati steal anti-matter from a laboratory of the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN) in order to destroy the Vatican. This shows that we still carry the fear of transgressing the known and the familiar. The combination of this fear and the simultaneous need to explore is embodied in the characters of Faust and Frankenstein. Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* is written in the same tradition. The German scientist Dr. Entwerfen and his young protégé Edric not only physically transcend the world by using a balloon to fly above the atmosphere, but they also manage to resuscitate the mummy of Cheops; an act which leaves Edric with nightmares and regret until the very last page of the story. At the same time, the active intervention of Cheops is imperative to the story. The story therefore aligns itself perfectly with the Romantic tradition and Edric becomes an archetypical Romantic hero (cf. Ousby 333). Apart from this motif, the novel furthermore sets the tone for Egyptianising fantastic fiction which was written in the subsequent decade, introducing major themes and ideas which define the genre throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Introduced by the narrator as a dream vision of the future (cf. *The Mummy!* I: iii–viii), the text is riddled with criticism addressing political instability, overcrowded cities, the class system, and moral decay. Simultaneously, it reflects radical changes in society and politics. The struggle for the right to strike and to form workers' unions in the early nineteenth century was conceived as a threat by the upper classes.¹³⁴ In Loudon's novel the citizens of London are a capricious mob which can make or break a monarch. They are always a threatening element; even more so due to the description of the public as being heavily influenced by collective mood changes and emotions rather than being capable of intelligent deliberation and wise decision-making. While the unpredictable behaviour of the people is portrayed as a threat, modern inventions are depicted in a very positive light. The invention of the steam engine and other modern machines in

134 For an elaboration on the development of unions during the nineteenth century, see Craig Calhoun's article "New Social Movements."

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century heavily influenced Loudon, as the book's future world is completely industrialised and numerous machines and gadgets are driven by steam power. While the text clearly shows elements of science fiction, in the context of contemporary scientific development most of the inventions must have seemed like scientific possibilities to the reader.

The vision which the narrator speaks of in the first chapter makes up the greater part of the novel with the explanatory narrative surrounding it only forming a slim frame. However, the author cleverly circumnavigates any questioning of the 'reality content' of her novel as the story is embedded into the aforementioned dream-like context. The main story is set in the year 2126 and follows four characters, Edmund, Edric, Elvira and Rosabella, as well as their friends, relations and enemies through their late teens and early twenties. In future London, balloons have become the most convenient vehicle for travel, and Dr. Entwerfen, teacher to Edmund and Edric, is certain that balloons could be used for space travel. Rain can be forced out of the sky: "It may be done immediately, for I saw a nice black heavy-looking cloud sailing by just now, and I can get the electrical machine out in five minutes to draw it down" (*The Mummy!* I: 28), and letters are shot from town to town with a canon. Several of the inventions Loudon introduced in her literature are not as farfetched as they might seem, considering the great advances which science had brought about during the preceding one hundred years.

The most important scientific tool, however, is without doubt the galvanising machine. The name of the inventor of the machine, Dr. Entwerfen, which stems from the German verb *entwerfen*, is a telling name, as it means *to design* or *to compose*. The galvanic battery is introduced as a powerful tool, but the first time the machine's abilities are shown it appears in an amusing episode in which Dr. Entwerfen galvanises himself.

When Edric entered the study of Dr. Entwerfen, he found him engaged in what [...] seemed a very extraordinary amusement. He was apparently dancing a hornpipe drawing his heels together, and alternately rising and sinking like a clown in a pantomime, twisting his face, in the mean time, into the most hideous grimaces. [...] 'I am galvanized' cried the doctor. (*The Mummy!* I: 111)

The humorous aspect of the accidental self-administration of electrical shocks soon becomes an entirely serious matter. Dr. Entwerfen and Edric set out to revive the mummy of Cheops. The reality of their quest, and the factuality of what they are about to do becomes almost oppressively terrifying.

[Edric] seized the machine, and resolutely advanced towards the sarcophagus, whilst the doctor gazed upon him with a horror that deprived him of either speech or motion. [...]

Whilst, as the flickering light of the lamp fell upon the face of the mummy, he fancied its stern features relaxed into a ghastly laugh of scornful mockery. (*The Mummy!* I: 218)

By means of the electrical device they manage to resuscitate the ancient body, laying the foundation for the events to come.

Being not solely a satirical work of early science fiction, the novel is difficult to define in clear literary terms; while being a work of science fiction, it is at the same time a political thriller, a moralistic coming-of-age novel and a satire. It is, in any case, an impressive work for a young woman of twenty years of age. The most prominent focus of her novel lies in the unchanging human character. Alan Rauch formulates the ultimate conclusion of the text and summarises that “human knowledge [no matter how advanced the world is] is distinctly secondary to moral values” (Rauch 62). *The Mummy!* criticises the problems of the 1820s overtly, despite its setting in the twenty-second century: “Corruption, indulgence, and ineptitude ran rampant through both church and state” (Rauch 66). Society as being easily corrupted is personified in the character of Father Morris, Rosabella’s supporter who has no scruples to betray those who trust him if he senses personal gain for himself – he is opportunistic and easily impressed by power, and equally easily influenced by a show of human emotions, which is a recurrent theme in the election of the monarch in future England. Loudon’s characterisation, albeit conspicuously exaggerated, is also extremely detailed and multi-layered. Each character has a different function and an important role to play. Despite the great number of characters in the text, none of them are understudies. Every named character is important for the plot.

Loudon created a complicated network of secret or unknown connections between characters, as well as intrigues and consequently misdirected emotional decisions. The novel is almost Shakespearean with its confusions, heroes, villains, as well as comical and dramatic elements. Themes such as misunderstandings brought about on purpose or evoked by unhappy circumstances reflect those found in *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as *King Lear* and *the Merchant of Venice*.

4.1 Political and Social Commentary in *The Mummy!*

The backdrop to the story is the question of succession to the English throne. After having gone through an endless series of different political systems (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 1–7), it has been decided that only unmarried female family members of the currently reigning Queen Claudia between the age of twenty and twenty-five can be elected queen. Eligible to vote are males above twenty-one. In the course of the story the flaws in this system, despite it being deemed the best

possible system of all, become obvious; such as the wish of the Queen to marry and the easy manipulation of votes.

Not only domestic politics are discussed in the text. International relations and wars are also frequently mentioned. In the novel, Ireland is the greatest enemy to Britain. Taking the social unrest in Ireland in the 1820s¹³⁵ into account, it is not surprising that it is the greatest and also the closest enemy to the British in the text. Making the threat an even greater one, Loudon's novel envisages a tunnel between the two islands, which brings the enemy much closer, but which also allows the recently elected Queen Elvira to flee the country and be saved by the Irish King Roderick when she is dethroned by her government and her cousin Rosabella (*The Mummy!* III: 256–7). The tunnel is then used by the Irish army to accompany Elvira back to London to reclaim the throne, where she marries the Irish King and unites the two countries. The latter part almost seems to be a reversed ending to *Romeo and Juliet*, where the two hostile families are united as one in the end. This important marriage of thrones certainly points back at the Act of Union of 1800. Covering political and social issues as well as education¹³⁶, Loudon draws a complex image of future England. The author makes sure not to correlate education and moral values. While education is of importance, it does not equal intelligence or wisdom, and the characters frequently speak of things which they have learned but do not understand. The most ironic take on this issue is the use of language of the servants and the lower classes in general. Once again, Loudon seems to borrow from Shakespeare, this time *The Merchant of Venice*'s Lancelot: the servants speak in a language which represents the highest standard of learning, using Latinates and technical terminology for everyday life events and objects. The use of language is a parody of unquestioned knowledge, which hinders action and free thought more than it furthers it.¹³⁷

A different aspect closely related to the general analysis of human behaviour and character is the fear of degeneration, an important theme especially in late-Victorian imperial fiction. However, Loudon's story shows that it was not a fear

135 The Catholic Emancipation in Ireland threatened the established Church of England as the dominant state religion of Ireland. It is important to note in this context that in Loudon's novel, Catholicism is the state religion of England. However, the characterisation of the clergymen in the novel depicts the state religion to be as faithful or corrupt as its representatives are; the latter being the norm (cf. Bloy "An Act for the Relief").

136 Edith Nesbit equally creates a future England where education is the most important value in society (cf. *The Story of the Amulet* 196–200).

137 For a closer look at the use of language in Loudon's *The Mummy!*, see chapter 5.1.

triggered by Darwin's theories but already a common notion in the early nineteenth century.¹³⁸

The blessings of civilization were indeed fast slipping away from them. [...] For, as all laws had been abolished, the strong tyrannized over the weak, and the most enlightened nation in the world was in imminent danger of degenerating into a horde of rapacious barbarians. (*The Mummy!* I: 7)

Overall, Loudon always portrays the masses as dangerous and unstable in their demands and needs. With their constantly changing opinions, queens are elected and dethroned, revolt never seems far away and throughout the story, the power of the people in great numbers is used by several parties in order to achieve individual goals, banking on the sheer force of mass. Loudon was clearly conscious of the power of the people and the need to pacify and at the same time control them. While the general public seems at a constant threat to fall into anarchy, the token monster, as proclaimed thus by the public as well as the named protagonists, is the character with the most relational understanding of humanity. Upon being awoken by Edric and Dr. Entwerfen, Cheops is at first made out to be a horrible supernatural creature:

Thunder now roared in tremendous peals through the Pyramids, shaking their enormous masses to the foundation, and vivid flashes of light darted round in quick succession. Edric stood aghast amidst this fearful convulsion of nature. [...] Still, he stood immovable, and gazing intently on the mummy, whose eyes had opened with the shock^[139], and were not fixed on those of Edric, shining with supernatural lustre. [...] The mummy's eyes still pursued him with their ghastly brightness; they seemed to possess the fabled fascination of those of the rattle-snake. (*The Mummy!* I: 219)

The mummy is thus resuscitated; a moment which triggers an avalanche of events, both comical and terrible as the mummy accidentally comes to England and causes great distress and confusion. Cheops, having learned from the mistakes he made in his own lifetime, is now in possession of both the wisdom and the power to set things right, even if nobody else in modern Britain seems to be

138 It can be argued that Shelley's *Frankenstein* is also very much concerned with degeneration, pitting Victor Frankenstein's creation against the creator, ending the book with a somewhat shocking notion that the man is the monster and the monster is much more humane than most humans he encountered.

139 "It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs" (*Frankenstein* 55).

able to muster such insight. The mummy is used as a device to expose manifold infidelity, corruption and plotting in British politics and society.

Not only history and politics in general seem to have inspired Loudon to write her ironic and moralistic novel. Alan Rauch suggests a strong autobiographical theme in *The Mummy!*, explaining that most characters are, in fact, motherless (63, 91). Loudon wrote the novel after her father's death, and paternal care and guidance are very strong concepts and repeatedly feature in the novel. Her father's death led to Loudon spending time in London in the care of friends, many of whom were writers themselves, and her time in London is most likely when she came in close contact with Egyptian antiquities (Rauch 63). Shortly after the Napoleonic campaign to Egypt and the defeat of the French forces against Lord Nelson and the British army, innumerable objects had been shipped to England as war bounty, including the Rosetta stone, which helped Champollion to decode the Egyptian hieroglyphics in 1822 – which in turn helped to unlock the literary door to ancient Egypt. By the time Loudon wrote *The Mummy!*, a large amount of Egyptian texts had been translated to test Champollion's findings. Apart from the ability to translate ancient Egyptian texts, public presentations of objects – the most popular being the unrolling of mummies and Giovanni Belzoni's exhibition of a reconstruction of the tomb of Seti I – placed Egypt into the public sphere and into the minds of the people, many of whom were not all too impressed by it (cf. Moser *Wondrous Curiosities* 193). Belzoni's name would for a long time carry the connotation of a man of historical import who managed to enter hidden places and conquer ancient history. Despite being mentioned only marginally, his name appears in *Little Dorrit* in a way which suggests that every one of Dickens' readers knew of Belzoni:

He crossed by Saint Paul's and went down [...]. Passing now the mouldy hall of some obsolete Worshipful Company, now the illuminated windows of a congregationless Church that seemed to be waiting for some adventurous Belzoni to dig it out and discover its history. (*Little Dorrit* 34)

Nevertheless, historical Egypt does not play a very prominent role in Loudon's novel. Apart from the completely imaginary description of the interior of the Great Pyramid, historical aspects and accuracies hardly matter. Cheops and his origin, however, are essential to the story. The mummy's perspective differs both in time and space from the Western protagonists. He has experiences as a ruler and a human being as well as his own moral value system; aspects which are much more important to the story than any historical accuracy. Cheops' role is that of the *Other*, which holds up the mirror to the depicted Western society. Ironically, the story evolves to show that the initially presumed *Otherness* of

Cheops is reflecting a better and wiser version of the English *Self*. Alan Rauch suggests that *The Mummy!* is a novel which gives great insight into the time of its creation and publication.

The novel offers an interesting look at the concerns of a well-educated but inexperienced novelist in the years between the Regency and Victoria. The 1820s were troubled by social, political, and intellectual instability, and Loudon's work is one of only a few novels that attempts to make sense of the times. (Rauch 62)

It can be argued that most of the later Egyptianising texts are very similar to Loudon's novel concerning the criticism of topical issues. Most of Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction uses very similar topics to address and comment on the fears and inconsistencies of their time while the Western point of view is criticised. The mummy functions to personify and at the same time identify and explore these fears. After Cheops is woken up by Edric and Dr. Entwerfen, and described as a horrifying creature (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 219), the shrouds of horror soon fall away with every detail that is disclosed about his person. Just as Shelley lets the reader participate in the process of self-discovery of the creature¹⁴⁰, Loudon uses an omniscient narrative perspective which focuses on the feelings and experiences of Cheops. The mummy's first conscious experiences after being woken up from eternal sleep follow shortly after the ghastly description of the experiment and resuscitation of Cheops from the perspective of Edric and Dr. Entwerfen:

And horrible were the sensations that throbbed through every nerve as returning consciousness brought with it all the pangs of his former existence, and renewed circulation thrilled through every vein. His first impulse was to quit the tomb in which he had been so long immured, and seek again the regions of light and day. Instinct seemed to guide him to this; for, as yet, a mist hung over his faculties, and ideas thronged in painful confusion through his mind, which he was incapable of either arranging or analysing. (*The Mummy!* I: 250–51)

Lisa Hopkins has written a concise comparison between Shelley's most famous work and *The Mummy!*, "Jane C. Loudon's *The Mummy!* – Mary Shelley Meets George Orwell, and They Go in a Balloon to Egypt" (2003). Apart from similarities in their biographies, such as the fact that they both published their books anonymously and were thought to be male authors, Hopkins outlines those of Shelley's ideas which occur in Loudon's work. The most obvious parallel is the

140 "My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them" (*Frankenstein* 124).

animation of a dead body. While Victor Frankenstein creates his ‘monster’ by composing a body out of several human and animal body parts¹⁴¹, the body in Loudon’s tale is that of the mummified pharaoh Cheops. Moreover, the preconditions of the resurrected characters are very different. While the Creature does not have any knowledge or memory – it has to learn everything just like a child would – Cheops has already lived a life and has learned from his own mistakes, as the end of the story discloses. Edric, the young man who uses the galvanising machine built by the German scientist Dr. Entwerfen, chooses a mummy for his experiment because he believes that “the ancient Egyptians did not imagine the souls of their dead remained in their bodies,” instead they “would return to them at the expiration of three thousand years” (*The Mummy!* I: 106)¹⁴², thereby finding an excuse for crossing the moralistic line which experimenting with a dead body would present.

It might appear strange that Loudon would choose the reanimation of the Egyptian mummy of Cheops as a vital event and plot point in her story, but once again, an explanation can be found in Loudon’s allusion to *Frankenstein*:

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A *mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch*¹⁴³. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived. (*Frankenstein* 56)

While the hideous wretch, as Frankenstein’s creature is perceived to be by his creator and everyone else, except for De Lacey, who is blind, suffers greatly because of his appearance and longs for human contact and love, the mummy is seemingly unperturbed by the terror his appearance provokes. Furthermore, in the instances when the mummy is described by the people as a fiend, monster or terror-inducing nightmarish creature, the reader is already familiar with the character of the mummy to the end that the fearfulness of the people comes across as comical.

While *Frankenstein* is an entirely serious text which carries both a warning of transgression as well as a reminder of the power of human interaction, *The Mummy!* takes on a slightly more humorous approach. The misunderstandings

141 Cf. “The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials.” (*Frankenstein* 52).

142 It is difficult to say why Loudon chose this inaccurate time frame as Cheops lived approximately from 2620 until 2580 BCE.

143 Italics were added by me for emphasis.

between the characters do not turn out to be deadly, lead to unexpected and occasionally absurd situations which amuse the reader. *The Mummy!* marks a change in tone concerning the altercation between the *Self* and the *Other*, laying the foundation for many works to come which also use humour to depict the conflict between the two opposing concepts.

4.2 Ancient and Modern Egypt in the Public Awareness in the 1820s and in *The Mummy!*

Despite the strong orientation on and discussion of themes from *Frankenstein*, Egypt is more than just a continuative concept from another novel. Egypt had been in the news since the Napoleonic Campaign to Egypt (1798–1801) and numerous Egyptian antiquities started to pour into Europe's museums and private collections. The public eye very much focussed on the impressive persona of Giovanni Belzoni, who sent the bust of Ramesses II – commonly referred to as Ozymandias – to England and was the first Westerner to enter the Second Pyramid¹⁴⁴ in 1818.

He published his *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia* in 1820 and opened an exhibition in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in 1821, showcasing numerous artefacts and a replica of the tomb of Seti I (KV 17), which he describes in detail in his *Narrative*. These colourful descriptions might have been what inspired Loudon's description of Cheops' tomb, despite the fact that a lack of decoration in the Great Pyramid and the Second Pyramid was noted by Belzoni (cf. *Narrative* 271). In addition to the very popular exhibition, the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1822¹⁴⁵ and the subsequent rediscovery of ancient Egypt through Egyptian texts was of utmost importance.

144 The pyramid of Chephren.

145 Because Jean-François Champollion was French, the British were reluctant to believe his work to be correct. However, when more and more texts were translated, it became obvious that he had indeed managed to decipher the hieroglyphs. Thomas Young, an Englishman who had almost managed to achieve what Champollion did and contributed greatly to the decoding of the hieroglyphs, praised his work (cf. Wood 231).

Illustration 12: “Ramses II in the Egyptian Gallery of the British Museum”.



4.2.1 Cheops and Loudon’s Egypt

In choosing Cheops as the mummy to be resurrected after three thousand years, Loudon introduces a well-known name to draw an immediate connection to Egypt; both to future and ancient Egypt. Herodotus wrote extensively about the pyramids and Cheops:

‘Cheops became king over them and brought them to every kind of evil: for he shut up all the temples, and having first kept them from sacrificing there, he then bade all the Egyptians work for him. [...] Cheops moreover came, they said, to such a pitch of wickedness, that being in want of money he caused his own daughter to sit in the stews, and ordered her to obtain from those who came a certain amount of money (how much it was they did not tell me).’ (“Euterpe” 124; 126)

However, Gaston Maspero (1846–1916) is somewhat reluctant to take Herodotus by his word, aware that he was also only informed by Egyptian guides (Maspero *Popular Stories* xlviii) in his time; guides who should not be trusted entirely, and he is aware of historical falsification and the possibility of the fictionality of texts, may they be contemporary of Herodotus or modern. He notes in *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*:

Without further information, I shall be content to regard the indications as to his character [of Ahmási/Ahmose] given in the demotic story and in the stories collected by Herodotus as no more authentic than these as to the character of Khufu or Ramesses II provided by the stories of Sesostri or Cheops. (*Popular Stories* 284)

Despite a great number of inconsistencies and erroneous statements about ancient Egypt in the text, Loudon’s lack of factual knowledge about ancient Egypt¹⁴⁶ does not stand in the way of her storytelling and the critical stance which Cheops embodies. The morale of the story and the personal history of this imaginary pharaoh are much more important than any historical accuracy while Loudon could trust the name to sound familiar to her readership.

Loudon and the Shelleys shared a publisher, and Jane Loudon not only read *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*¹⁴⁷ by Mary Shelley, but it is also very likely that she read Percy Shelley’s poem “Ozymandias” (1818) and similar literary works about the colossal statue of Ramesses II, changing the perception of ancient

146 One of the most obvious differences between historical fact and the fictional reality is the reign of Cheops, which Loudon places into the 1st century BC. Cheops reigned in the fourth dynasty, in the 26th century BCE. Alan Rauch argues that Cheops was estimated to have ruled 3000 years ago in the beginning of the nineteenth century, a “date which is not significantly different from current estimates, which place the reign of Cheops [...] at ca. 2680 [BCE]” (Rauch *Useful Knowledge* 222). Rauch apparently did not think of adding the two millennia to the number, which add up to almost 5000 years; a number which is indeed quite significantly different from Loudon’s estimation.

147 Both Hoskins and Rauch show that *The Last Man* (1826) was an additional inspiration to Loudon, as her discussion on morals and society are very similar to those expressed in Shelley’s novel.

Egyptian art (cf. Moser 114–5) towards a more favourable one and at the same time establishing an image of mighty kings of old. In addition, it is also very likely that she read the poem by Percy Shelley's friend Horace Smith, whose poetry was also published by Henry Colburn, and which addressed a mummy in Belzoni's exhibition (cf. Rauch 65).

In Cheops the young author found a name which was certainly familiar to her audience and which resonated with mystery and grandeur as well as terror and megalomania. The interest in the pyramids was on-going and would find its climax in the disquisitions on the Great Pyramid (1840) by Colonel Howard Vyse (1784–1853) and John Shae Perring (1813–1869), as well as Charles Piazzi Smyth (1819–1900) in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁸ Loudon already foreshadows the idea that Egyptians and the British are deeply connected. While Loudon uses common humanity, including common human failings as a link between cultures and times, Vyse, Perring and Smyth try to link their culture to a secret, long forgotten tribe which lived in Egypt and built Cheops's pyramid (cf. Smyth 7–8).

While ancient Egypt as a place is barely given any attention at all in the novel – the experiences of Cheops and his insight as a ruler are much more important than any historical events – future Egypt is an eerily realistic image of what was going to happen in the course of the nineteenth century; a process which had already started. "Commerce had waved her magic wand; and towns and cities, manufactories [sic] and canals, spread in all directions" (*The Mummy!* I: 191). This line clearly reflects the rapid development which had changed England and also many other parts of the world. In imagining a continued development similar to that of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the assumption that the entire world would be colonised and industrialised by the beginning of the twenty-second century seems only natural.

What reflects Loudon's familiarity with Herodotus and his history of Egypt is the syncretism of Egyptian and Greek gods. Not only does Herodotus draw a picture in which every high culture seems to have developed out of the Egyptian culture, but he also draws manifold parallels between ancient Egypt and Greece (Budde and Sievernich 18). Syncretism of Egyptian and Greek as well as Roman deities already existed in Ptolemaic Egypt (332–30 BCE), when the gods of Alexander the Great did not substitute the Egyptian deities, but became them. Herodotus explains the corresponding gods, their realms in Egypt and religious

148 For a detailed account of this trend, see chapter 6.2 on the appropriation of ancient Egypt and Pyramidology.

practices in his *Histories* (cf. “Euterpe” 42–44). Further on he draws a genealogy of the Grecian gods to prove they originated in Egypt, taking Hercules an example. “[...] The Egyptians did not derive the name of Hercules from the Grecians, but rather the Grecians [...] from the Egyptians” (“Euterpe” 42–44). Herodotus goes on to explain that he “has many other proofs to show [...] that the parents of this Hercules, Amphitrion and Alcmena, were both of Egyptian descent” (ibid.). Taking into account that Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica* Book I), Strabo (*Geography*), Eusebius (*Chronicle of Egypt*) and Plutarch (“Isis and Osiris” in *Moralia* 47) were the almost undisputed general sources for anything concerning ancient Egypt, Loudon’s introduction of Greek names and gods such as Arsinoë¹⁴⁹ and Typhon¹⁵⁰ is not surprising. When Cheops calls on his gods, Osiris is usually the god on the receiving end of his prayers (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 252, 299). Loudon’s idea of ancient Egypt is therefore strongly influenced by both classical authors and modern popular texts on ancient Egypt. However, Loudon’s future Egypt is also very much a reflection of European prejudice and Orientalism. “Egypt is certainly a fine country, but its inhabitants are a century behind us in civilization” (*The Mummy!* I: 194).

4.2.2 Stereotyping the Arab

The superstitious and corrupt Arab – not as a single person, but as a representative of a group at large – features on several occasions in the novel; and in all Egyptianising stories which feature Arabic characters. Homi K. Bhabha describes stereotypes as a “major discursive strategy” of Orientalism, which “is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (“The Other Question” 18). Egyptianising stories from Loudon’s text on carry reminders that modern Arabs can easily be identified and set apart from both Europeans and ancient Egyptians. One example which recurs frequently is the superstition of Arabs. When Dr. Entwerfen and Edric are put into prison for ‘practicing magic’ inside the pyramid, they manage to escape through a hole in the wall, hidden behind a loose stone. Rumours spread about two Western magicians who managed to escape by supernatural means, and people go mad with fear.

149 Arsinoë II was the wife of the minister Appolonius in the Ptolemaic Period (c. 285–246 BCE) (cf. Rice *Who was Who* 27).

150 In Greek mythology, Typhon is son of Gaia and Tartarus, enemy of Zeus and God of destruction and chaos (cf. Littleton ‘Zeus’ 1432–3).

‘They found, however, the belief of their supernatural disappearance too strongly impressed upon the minds of the multitude for even a suspicion of their existence to remain. [...] ‘Two sorcerers [...] have been taken into custody, for blowing up the Pyramids and bewitching the mummies.’ [...] All Grand Caro rings with it; several have gone mad, and others died with fear. (*The Mummy!* II: 172–3)

Thomas Moore pursues notions of superstition and capitalism in modern Egypt in *The Epicurean*¹⁵¹, published in 1827.

The Arabs, it seems, who are as fond of pigeons as the ancient Egyptians, have a superstitious notion that, if they place in their pigeon-houses small scraps of paper, written over with learned characters, the birds are always sure to thrive the better for the charm; and the monks, who are never slow in profiting by superstition, have, at all times, a supply of such amulets for purchasers. (*The Epicurean* vi)

Modern Egyptians seem ready to believe in magic; much more so than in any natural explanation for unusual events. This notion is highly ironic because Egypt was believed by many Westerners to be the origin of secret knowledge and magic.¹⁵² The superstition of modern Egyptians reappears much later in the century in Stoker’s *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) and Haggard’s “Smith and the Pharaohs” (1912). Interestingly, Loudon does not leave the notion of Arabic superstition undisputed. In almost all aspects, the text tries to show that humans are essentially the same, no matter the time or geographical place in which they live, shifting the concept of *Self* and *Other* away from the West and the East and placing it on humans versus the mummy. Simultaneously, Loudon challenges the boundaries of the *Self* and the *Other* representing the mummy as the sophisticated *Self* which would be expected to be found in English society, while the English protagonists become the evil *Other*. In the third volume of the novel, Edmund is put into prison for starting a duel with the German prince and is helped to flee by Rosabella and Father Morris. The reaction to the sudden disappearance mirrors that of the Egyptians after Edric and Dr. Entwerfen escape the Egyptian prison.

151 *The Epicurean* is a ‘translation’ of a manuscript which was supposedly found in Cairo. The narrator introduces the circumstances of this manuscript having been found among unearthened ancient manuscripts used as charms for pigeon houses. The manuscript printed in the book, however, was the only one left unscathed and the narrator readily bought it and translated it for everyone to read. This frame narrative supports the illusion that the story which follows is a real one; a common technique in Romantic and Victorian literature, especially Gothic literature.

152 Freemasons and Rosicrucians looked to Egypt when they searched for an origin for sacred knowledge (cf. chapter 6.2 Freemasons and Secret Orders).

'It is the Mummy that has done this,' said the people, whispering among themselves: 'some horrible event certainly hangs over us; and it is in vain to attempt to resist our destiny! All is supernatural, and we are merely blind instruments in the hands of fate.'^[153] (*The Mummy!* II: 171)

In 1864, Anthony Trollope reflects on the Western stereotyping of the Arabs in a highly ironic tone in "An Unprotected Female at the Pyramids" which is similar to Loudon's approach in comparing the superstition of Egyptians with the English.

It is not much that we deign to learn from these Orientals,—we who glory in our civilisation. We do not copy their silence or their abstemiousness, nor that invariable mindfulness of his own personal dignity which always adheres to a Turk or to an Arab. We chatter as much at Cairo as elsewhere, and eat as much and drink as much, and dress ourselves generally in the same old ugly costume. But we do usually take upon ourselves to wear red caps, and we do ride on donkeys. ("Unprotected Female" 1–2)

However, Loudon is not quite as blunt in her criticism, and mostly adheres to the Orientalist view when Arabs are explicitly described. The novel furthermore suggests that in the year 2126 it has become virtually impossible to speak of a modern Arabic or Egyptian nation, because the British and Americans are an overwhelming presence in Egypt.

Colonies of English and Americans peopled the country and produced a population that swarmed like bees over the land, and surpassed in numbers, even the wondrous throngs of the ancient Mizraim race.^[154] (*The Mummy!* II: 191)

On their way to Europe, Edric and Dr. Entwerfen take a boat down the Nile, and the Delta is busy with merchants: "The mouths of the Delta were at that time the seat of extensive, and almost universal commerce" (*The Mummy!* II: 171). However, the natives which the two scientists encounter clearly fit the image of the mercenary and superstitious Arab, a stereotype which would only become more prominent in the following decades as tourism to Egypt unsurprisingly led to more opportunities for Egyptians to earn money. The text hints at the fact that Dr. Entwerfen and Edric do not encounter problems in Egypt because they have money, which is described as "that certain road to the human heart" (*The Mummy!* II: 170). A very humorous depiction of money-craving Egyptians can be found in Trollope's "An Unprotected Female." While the short story does not necessarily stand in the tradition of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, a few

153 This sentence seems a parallel to Shakespeare's 'all the world's a stage' *As You Like it* Act II Scene VII.

154 Mizraim: Hebrew for Egypt, from مصر /Misr/.

themes which reappear in fantastic fiction are brought into focus by the English author. Similarly to Loudon, Trollope comments on the overwhelming presence of Europeans in Cairo: “A quarter of the town has in this way become inhabited by men wearing coats and waistcoats, and by women who are without veils; but the English tongue in Egypt finds its centre at Shepherd’s Hotel” (Trollope 2) The Shepherd’s Hotel is also named by Grant Allen in “My New Year’s Eve Among the Mummies” as the go-to place for British tourists in Cairo. Trollope is equally aware of the Western stereotypes of the Orient, especially concerning the notion of the greedy Arab:

‘Yes, yes, I say! Englishmen always take me;—me—me, and then no break him leg. Yes—yes—yes;—I go. Master, say yes. Only one leetle ten shillings!’ [...] No sooner had the coin dropped from her hand into that of the Arab, than she was surrounded by a cluster of beggars, who loudly made their petitions as though they would, each of them, individually be injured if treated with less liberality than that first comer. They took hold of her donkey, her bridle, her saddle, her legs, and at last her arms and hands, screaming for backsheish in voices that were neither sweet nor mild. (“Unprotected Female” 16–17)

Sarah Atkins, who wrote *Fruits of Enterprise Exhibited in the Travels of Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia for Children* (1824), employs the same stereotypes which would define the ‘Arab’ for the next centuries. The children in the story narrate Giovanni Belzoni’s adventures in Egypt, and their opinion clearly reflects the Orientalist point of view: “‘The mummy cave is there, you know: the cave into which Belzoni went with those selfish, deceitful Arabs’” (102). On the next page, the Arabs are called “treacherous” (Atkins 103). Further on, the apparent selfishness comes into play again.

‘Belzoni knew that nothing has so much influence on the mind of an Arab as reasoning with him about his own interest, and showing him the right way to benefit himself. He does not seem to understand anything else. I wish, mother, that Belzoni had had eighty honest Englishmen in the place of those eighty Arabs!’ (Atkins 157)

A similar, though more rational encounter, is described in *The Mummy!* when Edric and Dr. Entwerfen look for a guide to take them into Cheops’ pyramid:

‘These cottages at the foot of the Pyramids are all inhabited by guides, who get their living by showing the sights. They are sad rogues [...]’. There is a pleasure in showing wonders to a stranger, that only those who have little else to occupy their minds can properly estimate: a man of this kind feels his self-love gratified by the superiority his local knowledge gives him over a stranger; and as it is, perhaps, the only chance he ever can have to showing superiority, they must be unreasonable who blame him for making the most of it. (*The Mummy!* I: 199)

It must be noted that Loudon spends a great many pages in all three volumes explaining the human condition, highlighting the equality of human beings in contrast to showing off differences. It can therefore be argued that Loudon makes use of expected stereotypes to highlight their weaknesses, deconstructing the categories of the *Self* and the *Other* further than she does through the character of Cheops. Later Egyptianising fantastic fiction perpetuates this concept frequently, if not to such an extreme extent as Loudon did.

4.3 Secrets Unveiled

Loudon writes not only about the commonality of all people in her novel, but she also links her text to other literary works in which human striving for greater knowledge and power and resulting failure or wisdom are discussed. The two tragic heroes of *Frankenstein* and *The Mummy!* are both obsessed with the idea of being able to go beyond the rational and moral borders of nature and science, and they day-dream about the possibilities which would present themselves if they managed to interfere with nature. Loudon, however, links this dangerous knowledge to ancient Egypt, supporting an idea which appeared repeatedly throughout history and was strengthened to a great extent by the Freemasons¹⁵⁵ and Rosicrucians – the concept of secret and possibly sacred knowledge which the ancient Egyptians supposedly possessed.

Interpretation of hieroglyphs was based on the belief that sacred and eternal truths had been concealed therein, and that their meaning was inadequately expressed in mere words. This notion was derived from a consideration of obscure passages in Scripture and in other writings, for the more obscure, the more minds strove to interpret meaning. From the awe felt for the hieroglyphs grew the evolution of the emblem and symbol as means of expressing ideas, truths, and meaning which had to be concealed from the ignorant and profane, but which could be read by the pure and the initiated. (Curl *Art and Architecture* 41)

At the beginning of the text, Dr. Entwerfen suggests for Edric to follow his dream and make the impossible possible:

155 An influential work on the Egyptian connection in freemasonic circles was *Sethos, histoire ou vie tirée des monuments anecdotes de l'ancienne Égypte* by Abbé Jean Terrasson in 1731. The book was translated into several languages, among others German (1732 and 1777), English (1732) and Italian (1734). Moore's *The Epicurean* is loosely based on the story (Curl *Freemasonry* 136–37). For a further discussion of the role of Egypt in freemasonry, see chapter 6.2 on Freemasons and Secret Orders.

“Egypt is rich in monuments of antiquity; and all historians unite in declaring her ancient inhabitants to have possessed knowledge and science far beyond even the boasted improvements of modern times.” (*The Mummy!* I: 107)

The idea is furthered by Edric’s elaborations on Egyptian religion and belief, suggesting that even though Christianity was not a known concept, they still believed in the divinity of nature; an inherently Christian concept¹⁵⁶:

“They worshipped Nature [sic], though they disguised her under the symbols of her attributes, and gratified the vulgar taste by giving them tangible objects of represent ideas too sublime for their unenlightened comprehension. That they entertained the divine idea of a resurrection, and of rewards and punishment in a future life, is evident, not only from their favourite fable of the Phoenix, and the use they made of the now hackneyed image of the Butterfly; but by the care they bestowed upon the preservation of the body; their mournings for the loss of Osiris, and rejoicings when he was found; and the kind of trial to which they subjected the human corpse after death, when, if serious crimes were alleged, and proved against it, it was denied the rites of sepulchre, and let to decay unlamented.” (*The Mummy!* I: 108)

This paragraph is extremely interesting, as it presents a completely undifferentiated and uncommented composition of rumours, facts and apparently made-up ideas about ancient Egyptian religion and religious custom. The notion that nature was personified in gods is certainly a claim which can be supported, but the concept of resurrection is much more complex than it appears to be in this story. Resurrection in the world of the living was not an inherently Egyptian idea, but entered the field of Egyptian mysticism when the Hindu concept of reincarnation and the Christian notion of resurrection were mingled with the Egyptian idea of an afterlife as a whole and perfect person in the nineteenth century. Notions of the spirits of the dead returning to the realm of the living and necromancy in ancient Egyptian literature and religious notions seems to have led to a belief in the possibility of physical resurrection.

This is also the point where a special interest of the German scientist comes into play. Dr. Entwerfen’s motive to explore Egypt is not just limited to travel. He wants to explore and unveil the secrets of Egypt. “We will explore these monuments, [...] we may be the favoured mortals destined to raise the mystic veil which so long has covered them” (*The Mummy!* I: 40). The scientist wants to resuscitate a mummy to gain secret knowledge: “We shall visit the pyramids, we shall animate the mummies, and we shall attain immortality” (ibid.)

156 A Christian concept in so far as it is believed that nature was created by God and is therefore sacred in its existence. Nature plays an important role in all religions, but Loudon seems to take Christianity as the foundation for any other religious alignment.

The megalomania which is embodied in Dr. Entwerfen and Edric, who both strongly regret waking up the mummy in the course of the story until it is returned to the pyramid and dies yet again, is very Faustian¹⁵⁷ in its morale.

Ironically, neither Dr. Entwerfen nor Edric – nor anybody else for that matter – actually ask Cheops for information about ancient Egypt. Only in the very last chapter Edric learns of the personal history of Cheops and the sins he committed, as well as the reason why he was allowed to live again for a short while. But nothing about ancient Egypt actually comes to light, despite a multitude of opportunities and the fact that the mummy learns all about modern England – presenting the mummy as the actual explorer and Edric and Dr. Entwerfen as incapable of embodying the diligent and exploring Westerners. The pyramids of Giza, the destination of the two European travellers, evoke amazement and wonder.

‘What noble piles! What majesty and grandeur they display in their formation, and yet what dignified simplicity.’ [...] ‘It is strange,’ observed Edric, ‘that, in this age of speculation and discovery, nothing certain should be known concerning them.’ ‘It is,’ returned the doctor: ‘but the thick mysterious veil that has rested upon them for so many ages, seems not intended to be removed by mortal hands. They remind one of the sublime inscriptions upon the temple of the goddess Isis, at Sais: – ‘I am whatever was, whatever is, and whatever shall be; but no mortal has, as yet, presumed to raise the veil that covers me.’ (*The Mummy!* I: 191–2)

The unveiling of mysteries, often also interpreted in a sexual sense, was part of Orientalist thought (cf. Jason Thompson *Egyptian Encounters* Volume 23: 50ff). Rana Kabbani cites Edward Lane’s thoughts in his *Description of Egypt* (1825) “As I approached the shore, I felt like an Eastern bridegroom, about to lift the veil of his bride, and to see, for the first time, the features that were to charm, or disappoint, or disgust him (qtd. in Kabbani 67).

Understanding the deeper mysteries of the ancient culture from which, according to Herodotus (cf. “Euterpe” 4), all other high cultures emerged, was one of the main interests of Western explorers in the nineteenth century.

Edric [resumed], ‘Indeed, Nature appears to be the deity which the ancient Egyptians worshipped, under all the various forms in which she presents herself; and their strange and animal deities were but reverences as her symbols. It was Nature which they worshipped as Isis; it was Nature that was typified in the Pyramids; and the good taste of the Egyptians made them prefer the simple, the majestic, and the sublime, in those works which they destined to last for ages. Formerly, from the immensity of their population,

157 Goethe’s version of *Faust*, as god saves him in the end despite his misconduct.

and high state of their civilization, labour was so divided, and consequently so lightened that multitudes were enabled to exist exempt from toil.' (*The Mummy!* I: 192)

This idea depicts Egypt as an almost perfect state – a utopia. A subsequent paragraph highlights Egyptian secret knowledge and deep understanding of nature:

'These persons, devoting themselves to study, became *initiate*;¹⁵⁸ and either enrolled themselves amongst the priesthood, or passed their lives in making themselves masters of the most abstract sciences. The consequences were natural: [...] they penetrated into the most profound secrets of Nature, and traced all her wonders in her works: aware however, of the taste of the vulgar for any thing [sic] above their comprehension, and of the natural craving of the human mind for mystery, they wrapped the discoveries they had made in a deep impenetrable veil, and concealed awful and sublime significations under the meanest and most disgusting images.' (*The Mummy!* I: 192–3)

An entire philosophy can be found in this paragraph. In its most basic proposition, the man claims that human nature always strives for mysticism; a claim which has been proven time and time again since the beginning of occult sciences. Furthermore, the renewed interest in the supernatural found in Romantic thought, which gained in strength and depth in Victorian literature, owes many of its ideas and concepts to Romantic literature.

Edric strives to explain the basic formula of the ancient Egyptian religion¹⁵⁹, the belief in Nature¹⁶⁰ and not in supernatural beings or gods. He believes that Isis and all the other gods are representatives of nature, worshipped because the Egyptians were able to understand and demystify nature, but knowing that the mere truth was too simple, they decided to wrap it in a veil¹⁶¹ of mysterious incarnations and concepts, creating the arcane image of Egypt which they now have. The root for this idea of supposed secret knowledge and wisdom is to be found in the hypothesis that ancient Egypt had an ideal social and political system which

158 Initiation constituting one of the most important elements of Freemasonic thought and practice (cf. James Curl *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* 137 and 159).

159 Jan Assman detailed comments on the significance of nature for the ancient Egyptian religion (cf. Assman *Religio Duplex* 66, 135).

160 Nature is capitalised here for the personification it is charged with within in the text.

161 Assman discusses Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* which names three aspects of the importance of secrecy and initiation in the ancient Egyptian religion: the symbolism of sphinxes as keepers of secrets and wisdom, the veiled image of Isis at Sais and the God Amun as "the hidden one" (cf. Assmann *Religio Duplex* 88). The inscription of the veiled Isis at Sais reads: "I am all that has been, is, and shall be; no mortal has ever lifted my veil" (Plutarch qtd. in Assmann *Religio Duplex* 88).

allowed a large number of Egyptians to spend their time with scientific research (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 192). The term *initiati*¹⁶² is introduced by Loudon, which is a masonic concept and which plays a large role in late Victorian interpretations of Egyptian mysticism and secret knowledge. Furthermore, Edric's ideas reflect a common sentiment about Egyptian art and architecture, something which Moser pointed out in *Monstrous Curiosities* (cf. 193): the British generally found Egyptian art and architecture ugly and strange, "[mean] and most disgusting" (*The Mummy!* I: 193).

However, this discussion of ancient Egyptian religion and intention is not yet over. Dr. Entwerfen believes that the pyramids were not built by the Egyptians, but by a race which possessed higher knowledge. Edric suggests the Pallic race to be responsible for the construction of the pyramids, a notion which reflects the wide-spread belief in the mid and late nineteenth century that at least the Great Pyramid of Cheops had not been built by the Egyptians themselves. The Pallic race is mentioned in two other fictional texts in the early nineteenth century; namely *Rameses – an Egyptian Tale* by Edward Upham¹⁶³ (1824) and *The Romance of Ancient History: Egypt* by John Gunning Seymer:

'Some of the astonishing wonders of Egypt [...] have survived, and prove their existence at a very remote period of antiquity, and confirm the sagacious remark of Ferguson: – 'The Romans are thought to have learned from the Greeks, and the moderns of Europe from both: the Greek was a copy of the Egyptian, and even the Egyptian was an imitator, though we have lost sight of the model on which it was formed.' (*Rameses* I: vi)

The text claims historical accuracy by citing the works about Egypt by authors of antiquity, such as Herodotus, Plutarch and Diodorus, as well as contemporary works such as Prichard's *Egyptian Mythology* and the *Description de l'Égypte* as its sources. The book is a survey of Egyptian politics set in the context of a more

162 Herodotus describes the tradition of the initiation into the mysteries of the Cabeiroi and the consequent knowledge which is denied others in "Euterpe": 51. The concept of initiation constituted one of the main pillars of their esoteric belief and tradition, especially for Theosophists. Helena Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877) extensively discusses initiation in connection with ancient secret knowledge and practice and Rudolf Steiner gave several lectures concerning initiation in Leipzig between 2 September and 14 September 1908 (cf. Steiner *Ägyptische Mythen*).

163 Each of the three volumes has a large appendix with notes and explanations concerning the text. The most cited authorities on ancient Egypt are by a margin Herodotus, Plutarch and James D. Hamilton, who wrote a travel guide to Egypt, drawing heavily on the two aforementioned authors of antiquity (cf. Hamilton *Sinai, the Hedjaz, and Soudan*).

personal story of Ramesses II and delivers an interesting overview of the knowledge about Egypt which was available to scholars and a more general interested public in the first half of the nineteenth century.

‘The Colchians appear to be of Egyptian origin. Herodotus considers the Egyptians accurate in deeming them descendants of the troops of Sesostris, because they are black, and have hair short and curling. Another and better argument, Herodotus says, is, that the inhabitants of Colchos, Egypt, and Ethiopia, are the only people who from time to time immemorial have used circumcision. The Colchians have another mark of resemblance to the Egyptians –their manufacture of linen [...]. In this passage we see much ground for connecting the Colchians with the Pallic conquerors of Egypt, who possessed that country long enough to become confounded with the native Mizraim. Ethiopia, according to the whole course of tradition, was peopled by their race. [...] The Colchians most probably were a colony of Palli, expelled from Egypt by the Mizraim.’ (*Rameses I*: 302–3)

The third text, apart from Upham’s and Loudon’s works, is *The Romance of Ancient History: Egypt* by John Gunning Seymer, which was published in London 1834. Loudon’s novel therefore can be placed in this particular discourse of theorising about an ancient lost civilisation.

The conscious act of hiding and throwing a veil over the secret knowledge of ancient Egypt is an aspect which has defined the perception of Egypt since the Roman age and is touched upon by Dr. Entwerfen in the novel. The scientist wants to lift the mysterious veil and look into the secrets which have been hidden from human eyes for so long. This concept is one which reappears in later Egyptianising fantastic fiction; unsurprisingly only in texts written by male authors. It is remarkable that the young Jane Loudon was aware of this predominantly male desire to unveil Egypt to gain access to its secrets, not unlike one would unveil a woman to see her in her true form.

The oriental woman, represented in painting in the [19th century], was veiled in mystery. Just as languages, cultures, religions, and behaviour of the Orient was incomprehensible to the European voyeur, the Oriental Woman was depicted as the shrouded Other, and not simply because she was always depicted with a veil. Dressing the oriental woman in a veil was an index to something denied to the male Orientalist. (Singleton 70)

The veil was closely linked to female sexuality (cf. Pal-Lapinski 71), and, discovering Egypt and possessing it – be it by entering an as yet unopened tomb, ruling over the country with European superiority or taking parts of it back to Europe – equals the lifting of a veil; uncovering the secrets and thereby gaining power over it.

4.4 Giovanni Belzoni's Influence on *The Mummy!* and other Egyptianising Fantastic Fiction

The description of the interior of the Great Pyramid and Cheops' tomb does not correspond to the actual king's chamber inside the pyramid, but was likely inspired by Belzoni's replica of the tomb of Seti I in Piccadilly in 1821 (Cowie 40). Whether Loudon ever visited the exhibition herself or whether she just read about it is not known, but her descriptions are strongly reminiscent of the inventory of Seti I's tomb. In case she visited the Egyptian Hall, it might have been there that Loudon first heard about someone entering the Great Pyramid, and, even more astonishingly, Belzoni finding the entrance to the second pyramid of Chephren and entering it as the first Westerner.

The replica of Seti's tomb left a strong impression on the visitors, which is not surprising when one has seen the incredibly detailed decoration of the tomb. Stephanie Moser describes Seti's tomb in Piccadilly:

Belzoni's exhibition [created] a truly atmospheric visiting experience. With its low ceiling and candlelit chambers, the tomb display provided the visitor with a real sense of the cramped environment of such ancient sites. (Moser 113)

Belzoni's *Narrative* extensively describes the interior of the tomb. "The painted figures on the wall are so perfect, that they are the best adapted of any I ever saw to give a correct and clear idea of the Egyptian taste" (272). His description is full of praise for detail:

'We found a sarcophagus of granite, with two mummies in it, and in a corner a statue standing erect, six feet six inches high, and beautifully cut out of sycamore-wood: it is nearly perfect except the nose. We found also a number of little images of wood, well carved, representing symbolical figures. Some had a lion's head, others a fox's, others a monkey.' (Belzoni *Narrative* 229)

Loudon's text almost mirrors Belzoni's images in her description of Cheops' tomb:

They found [...] two colossal figures, who, placed in a sitting posture, seemed guarding an enormous portal, surmounted by the image of a fox, the constant guardian of an Egyptian tomb. (*The Mummy!* I: 211)

A further passage from which Loudon borrowed extensively describes the inside of Seti's burial chamber:

Immediately within the entrance into the first passage, on the left hand, are two figures as large as life, one of which appears to be the hero entering into the tomb. He is received by a deity with a hawk's head, on which are the globe and the serpent. Both figures are

surrounded by hieroglyphics: and farther on, near the ground, is a crocodile very neatly sculptured. [...] Beyond the first passage is a staircase with a niche on each side, adorned with curious figures with human bodies and the heads of various animals, &c. At each side of the door at the bottom of the stairs is a female figure kneeling, with her hands over a globe. Above each of these figures is the fox, which, according to Egyptian custom is always placed to watch the doors of sepulchres. (Belzoni *Narrative* 240)

A year after the publication of Belzoni's *Narrative*, in 1821, Thomas De Quincey's description of opium induced Oriental nightmares in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater (Confessions)* sounds strikingly familiar:

I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud. (*Confessions* 73)

Belzoni's account of discovering Seti's tomb also seems to have inspired Rider Haggard's "Smith and the Pharaohs," which was written almost a century after Belzoni's account: "[...] I caused the earth to be opened at the foot of a steep hill, and under a torrent, which, when it rains, pours a great quantity of water over the very spot" (*Narrative* 231). In Haggard's text, an English hobby-archaeologist decides to dig in an unlikely place.

[S]omething seemed to attract him towards a little wadi, or bay, in the hillside that was filled with tumbled rocks and sand. There were scores of such places, and this one looked no more promising than any of the others had proved to be. Yet it attracted him. Thoroughly dispirited, he walked past it twenty paces or more, then turned.

'Where go you, sah?' asked his head-man, Mahomet.

He pointed to the recess in the cliff.

'No good, sah,' said Mahomet. 'No tomb there. Bed-rock too near top. Too much water run in there; dead queen like keep dry!'

But Smith went on, and the others followed obediently. ("SATP" 318)

Belzoni's *Narrative* and his exhibition in London therefore helped greatly to shape the public image and imagination of ancient Egypt and found reflection in several Egyptianising fantastic texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

4.5 The Mummy as the Monstrous *Other* and the Civilised *Self*

For both Edric and Dr. Entwerfen Egypt becomes a nightmarish place after they enter the pyramid. The experience of resurrecting Cheops terrifies them and scars young Edric for life. The two scientists seem to expect evil and create a

fearful atmosphere subconsciously, reflecting on the magnitude of the transgression they are about to commit. While it is not explicitly explained to be so by the narrator, it seems as if the fear of what they will do is transferred to the fear of what they will create; not unlike the sudden realisation by Victor Frankenstein that he has created a “wretch – the miserable monster” (*Frankenstein* 56) without once considering the positive aspects, throwing himself into fear and remorse and thereby causing his own doom. This foreboding feeling is very clearly expressed in the description of the pyramid, and the terror increases with every step Dr. Entwerfen and Edric take towards accomplishing their experiment.

Nothing could be now more terrific than their situation: immured in the recesses of the tomb, involved in darkness, and their bosoms throbbing with hopes that they scarcely dared avow even to themselves; with faltering steps they proceeded slowly along the path [...]. (*The Mummy!* I: 210)

Moving deeper into the pyramid, their footsteps are the only noise which breaks “the solemn silence that reigned throughout these fearful regions of terror and the tomb” (*The Mummy!* I: 210–11). Like a dreadful warning, no doubt intended to be understood as exactly that, the two Europeans find themselves in a room dedicated to “Typhon, the evil spirit” (*The Mummy!* I: 212), before they can go through to the tomb of Cheops. The mummy’s death mask is already horrific in a strange light which shines in the chamber: “The doctor [...] shuddered as the crimson tinge of the everlasting lamp fell upon the hideous and distorted features [...]. This sepulchral light [...] added unspeakable horror to the scene” (*The Mummy!* I: 213).

The description of the sarcophagus as “beautifully sculptured” (*The Mummy!* I: 214) initially seems to stand in stark contrast with the mummy which lies therein. Taking a closer look, however, Edric realises that the sculptured images on the sarcophagus depict the gruesome history of the dead pharaoh.¹⁶⁴ Once they remove the lid with the frightening image of Cheops from the coffin, they are confronted with the linen-wrapped body of the pharaoh.¹⁶⁵

Yes, it was indeed the same, but the fierce expression of fiery and ungoverned passions depicted upon the countenance of the marble figure, had settled down to a calm, vindictive, and concentrated hatred upon that of its mummy prototype in the tomb. Awful,

164 Upon Edric’s return to the pyramid in the end of the story he learns that Cheops killed his father and raped his sister and that some of the images refer to his crimes.

165 He is not bandaged like one would expect an Egyptian mummy to be, but wrapped in large sheets of red and white linen, leaving his head uncovered (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 213).

indeed, was the gloom that sat upon that brow, and bitter the sardonic smile that curled those haughty lips. (*The Mummy!* I: 217)

The image of the mummy as a fearful fiend is created rather impressively through the eyes of the two protagonists in this scene. The perception of the mummy's appearance by the people in London furthermore defines him as a nightmarish creature; a public image which does not change until the very end of the story. Loudon's use of an omniscient narrative perspective, however, allows the reader to understand that the mummy is very different from what the characters in the novel make it out to be based on his appearance.

A concept which features in mummy fiction throughout the nineteenth century is that of the perfectly preserved mummy. While the mummy of Cheops is not exactly the white-skinned Queen Tera of Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, he is described like a man very recently deceased. "All was perfect as though life still animated the form before them, and it had only reclined there to seek a short repose" (*The Mummy!* I: 217). Strangely enough, after the description of his fearful character, even in death, the description of Cheops' features paints a very different picture. "The dark eyebrows, the thick raven hair which hung upon the forehead, and the snow-white teeth seen through the half open lips, forbade the idea of death" (ibid.). The darkness of his hair seems to hint at a sinister character, and at the same time this description evokes the image of a vampire.¹⁶⁶

Both Edric and Dr. Entwerfen hear a bodiless voice warning them to leave and to not conduct their experiment. However, Edric cannot be stopped and he attaches the wires of the galvanic battery to the mummy's body. What follows seems like a behind-the-scenes look of what the reader was never able to witness in *Frankenstein*. The process of how the dead body comes back to life is described.

Thunder now roared in tremendous peals through the Pyramids, shaking their enormous masses to the foundation, and vivid flash of light darted round in quick succession. [...] A horrid creeping seemed to run through every vein, every nerve feeling as though drawn from its extremity, and wrapped in icy chillness around [Edric's] heart. Still, he stood immovable, and gazing intently on the mummy, whose eyes had opened with the shock, and were now fixed on those of Edric, shining with supernatural lustre. [...] Another peal of thunder now rolled in lengthened vibrations above his head, and

166 See Chapter 5.3 Vampiric Qualities of Ancient Egyptian Characters. Loudon's description is similar to Polidori's *The Vampyre*: "Yet there was a stillness about her face that seemed almost as attaching as the life that once dwelt there" (*The Vampyre* 48).

the Mummy rose slowly, his eyes still fixed upon Edric, from his marble tomb. (*The Mummy!* I: 219–20)

The reaction of the two scientists to witnessing the resuscitation of the mummy once more mirrors that of Victor Frankenstein; they flee.

Having entered the country with the superiority of the British over their colony, they quickly have to face the consequences of their action of having meddled with the mummy. Not only does the horror they have experienced change their perception of the place they have previously discussed as being very worthy of visiting, but the Egyptians they encounter outside arrest them for sorcery. Egypt becomes a terrifying country for them, in which they are both robbed of their inherent right of freedom as colonisers of the country and of their belief in their scientific actions. They are imprisoned in a room whose walls are covered in hieroglyphs, which Dr. Entwurfen is able, at least partly, to translate. “‘This wall is evidently built of stones gathered from some ancient ruin’” (*The Mummy!* I: 245). This notion is very likely inspired by the curious incident of finding the Rosetta stone embedded into a wall as part of a house (cf. Parkinson *Cracking Codes* 20); its significance strengthened by the almost accidental discovery which would change the perception of ancient Egypt profoundly. In their Egyptian prison, Dr. Entwurfen explains the Egyptian gods to Edric and again he uses Egyptian and Greek deities synonymously.

‘Though the Egyptians had a number of divinities, they clearly worshipped only two, viz. The principles of good and evil. Osiris, Isis, Cneph¹⁶⁷, Phtah [sic], Horus, and all their host of inferior deities, were clearly types of the first, and light and life were their essence; whilst Typhon, Campsa¹⁶⁸, and the malignant deities, exemplified the second, and their attributes were invariably darkness and death.’ (*The Mummy!* I: 246)

167 Cneph was mentioned to be an Egyptian god closely resembling Osiris in an article by Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke on a statue of ‘Cneph’ at the British Museum in the *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, Volume 33, in which the author tries to ascribe a statue to Cneph, mentioning that he is merely guessing because nobody can understand the hieroglyphs on the statue (page 336). James Cowles Prichard lists ancient authors who mentioned Cneph in *An Analysis of the Egyptian Mythology*, and explains that he was considered to be the creator of the earth. (Prichard 170). Cneph must be a variant of Chnum, the Egyptian creator god, father of Heka (Magic). In *The Pictorial Bible* (1836), Charles Knight links Cneph to both, Amun the creator god and Chnum. However, the only link he draws is that of the similarity of the two names Cneph and Chnum and the notion of Plutarch, who described Cneph as the greatest of the Egyptian gods (Knight 442–447).

168 “The Coptic of Crocodile is *Campsa*” (Faber 381).

This description of Egyptian religion is oversimplified, because several gods possess both very positive and very negative traits and are not easily defined as belonging to a 'good' or 'bad' side.¹⁶⁹ However, since Loudon's novel reflects a Christian-centred moral system, the fight of good against evil or light versus darkness is transferred to Egyptian deism.

The character of the mummy seems completely unattached to the philosophy which Dr. Entwerfen discloses to Edric and the reader at this point. Seemingly disconnected from his own religion, Cheops possesses a supernatural power, however subtly deployed. He can control people through a hypnotic or mesmeric power.¹⁷⁰ Repeatedly, characters who come into contact with him are not only frightened by his physical appearance and rather awful laugh, but also by the control he has over them. "The influence he exercised over the minds of all those he came in contact with was astonishing" (*The Mummy!* II: 133). While the mummy does not control thoughts, he has the power to control basic actions in others. "Clara now [followed] her strange guide, whose dictum, indeed, few mortals could resist" (*The Mummy!* III: 107). Father Morris suffers most from the Mummy's mesmeric influence over him.

The priest was fixed in a fearful trance: in imagination, he still felt the cold and iron grasp of the Mummy, whose eyes seemed as though they were still looking into his very soul, and whose solemn accents were even now scaring his faculties. (*The Mummy!* II: 35)

However, the description of this influence on Father Morris hints more at self-loathing and a bad conscience than at real supernatural powers. The priest is aware that Cheops knows about his evil schemes and therefore he becomes a threatening creature to him. Again, the mummy transforms into an evil character in the face of human transgression; not by action, but interpretation. Apart from this supernatural influence, the mummy is a very human character, with insight gained

169 See chapter 5.3 Vampiric Qualities of Ancient Egyptian Characters for the transformation of the raging Sekhmet into the tame Bastet.

170 Mesmeric or hypnotic powers employed by ancient Egyptian characters feature throughout nineteenth and early twentieth century Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Examples are "A Professor of Egyptology", *The Beetle* and *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Mesmerism was an ambiguously viewed concept. By some, mesmerism was traced back to ancient Egypt (cf. Gregory *Animal Magnetism* 1909) and by a group of people believed that Jesus learned mesmerism in Egypt (cf. Sandby's *Mesmerism and Its Opponents* 243). Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "The Parasite" depicts mesmeric powers in the hand of the wrong person as extremely dangerous, but he did not use the notion of mesmerism in his Egyptianising short stories. For further reading, see Maria Tatar's *Spellbound: Studies in Mesmerism and Literature*.

through experience. While the mummy prays and refers to Egyptian and Greek gods throughout the novel, he does not use any power distributed from their side.

Overall, his gods could be any gods or guiding figures of no real relevance to the action. Even at the end of the novel, a divine power is acknowledged by the mummy which is in no way related to the Egyptians gods of Cheops.

4.6 The Quest for Redemption

While Dr. Entwerfen and Edric are imprisoned, the newly awakened mummy accidentally flies to England in the balloon which the two travellers have left. The two prisoners manage to escape (*The Mummy!* II: 170) and take almost the entire narrated time of the novel to return to England via Spain. Egypt as a setting is left behind and only returned to at the very end of the text when Edric follows the mummy to the pyramid where they are both absolved from their sins. Upon his return to Egypt, it is still a dreadful country for Edric:

[...] when he saw the towers and temples, and, above all, the pyramids of this mysterious country lying beneath his feet, his agitation increased almost to agony. [...] Once more [he] entered that awful receptacle of fallen greatness. (*The Mummy!* III: 303)

The description of the pyramid from his first contact has changed profoundly, and this attitude is not connected to any action of the mummy, but it is solely a self-inflicted horror, caused by the realisation of his dream of resuscitating the mummy. While “fallen greatness” (ibid.) could certainly refer to Cheops, it clearly also hints at the realisation of his megalomania; a castigation of his own transgressions.

Inside the pyramid, Edric is confronted by Cheops, who mocks him and explicates Edric’s shortcomings.

“Why art thou silent? Why does thy heart seem to wither in my presence? Alas! Alas! Is no mortal to be found free from the debasing influence of fear? Thou art called bold, courageous, and noble. Thou hast dared to soar above thy fellow-men, and thou hast ardently wished to see me. Behold! I am here; and now, weak, fearful, and inconsistent as thou art, thou shunest my approach.” (*The Mummy!* III: 306)

Little is left of the ardent scientist who wanted to conquer the world with his skill. Cheops, confused by Edric’s apprehensive demeanour, offers to answer all of Edric’s questions, but warns him that “wretchedness will await upon my words” (*The Mummy!* III: 307). Returned to the place where he sought sacred wisdom and secret knowledge, he now does not want to know of these things anymore. “I can learn wisdom from experience. Thus, then, I tear the tormenting doubts, which so long have haunted me from my mind, and bid them farewell for ever!” (ibid.). Cheops is satisfied with Edric’s decision, finding his task for which he was allowed to roam

the earth for another year fulfilled. Finding that the young man does not seek supernatural knowledge, he discloses his personal history to Edric, explaining how he killed his father as he stood between him and his sister Arsinoë, causing him eternal misery from which he sought escape by helping the good and punishing the evil.

The novel concludes with the second death and the salvation of Cheops, granted by “the power” that gave him life, and Edric’s realisation that the superhuman knowledge he strove for is not really what he aspires to gain. By concluding the novel on this very moralistic and Christian tone, Loudon wraps up the story with a happy ending for the morally strong and a rather unhappy ending for the evil characters in the text, most of whom pay with their lives. The last scene is set inside the pyramid, and Egypt is depicted as a place where supernatural occurrences are likely to happen, as the presence of the divine power which granted the mummy his additional time and concluded it suggests, but overall it is just as non-magical as the rest of the completely colonised and explored planet.

4.7 Criticism From an Outside Perspective

Stephen Arata’s Essay “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” discusses the fear of the Victorians of their colonised subjects, illustrated with the example of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. The aspect of the *occidental tourist* is already a prominent theme in Loudon’s novel and Egyptianising fantastic fiction in general. The mummy is an outsider, geographically and chronologically, and yet he has greater insight into events and the motivation for human action than any of the other characters in the novel. His otherness, however, puts him in a position in which he can freely criticise those around him. The character of the mummy not only serves as an element which threatens the established order – or, in the case of Loudon’s novel, the established chaos – but as an analyst of the events and of the protagonist’s character, serving the reader as a moral guide and commentator. This double assignment is a common occurrence in late nineteenth-century Egyptianising fantastic fiction. It enables authors to criticise and at the same time reflect on the fears of their own society with the help of an outside perspective. Resurrected mummies or reincarnated Egyptians usually fulfil exactly this function. However, the outsider is not always an ancient character. Sometimes criticism is enunciated by characters much closer to the actual events, but they are outsiders nevertheless.¹⁷¹

171 An early eighteenth-century example of such European criticism of the West expressed through the eyes of the East can be found in the *Persian Letters* (original: *Lettres Persanes*) by Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu (1721).

In *An Unprotected Female at the Pyramids* (1860) Anthony Trollope introduces Miss Dawkins, the respective unprotected female, as a somewhat extraordinary person. Not only is she travelling alone and rather unusual in her conduct, but she also criticises her own country: “The horridness I speak of does not attach to him personally, but to his stiff, respectable, ungainly, well-behaved, irrational, and uncivilised country. You see I am not very patriotic” (Trollope 11). Loudon chose both members of the West and East to criticise England; the Irish King Roderick and Cheops, both representing an *Other*. The Irish king is a Napoleonic character; very much loved by his people, respected by others, eloquent and at the same a strict ruler. He represents an ideal which the English have not managed to achieve, despite all their efforts. Roderick criticises the English for their inability to love passionately: “You English are too reasoning and prudent to fall violently in love. Your blood is as cold as your climate” (*The Mummy!* III: 34). Ironically, Cheops finds the exact opposite to be true, criticising the hot-bloodedness of the English which forces them to make rash decisions: “How blind is human reason when passions intervene” (*The Mummy!* III: 69). A little further on, Rosabella says: “O Cheops! ‘tis useless to resist – we are thy slaves, – do with us as thou wilt! ‘Say rather you are the slaves of your own passions,’ murmured the Mummy” (*The Mummy!* III: 70). Interestingly enough, Cheops does not only speak of the English and in particular about Elvira and Rosabella, but, in hindsight, he addresses his own passions and rash decisions, which had caused him to kill his father and take his sister for his lover. Cheops criticises the English from the perspective of someone with a different cultural background, and he also judges mortal human beings in general from the perspective of an immortal.

‘How feeble is this race of men!’ resumed the Mummy, ‘how different from the sons of ancient Mizraim, from the Macrobian Ethiopians, or even our Pallic foes; degenerate in from as well as spirit, their souls no longer seem emanations from the Divinity.’ (*The Mummy!* II: 48)

Loudon reverses the common belief that the English were the most civilised and highly developed people in the world, a concept which would define British politics during Queen Victoria’s reign and after, and find expression in many texts to come. Here, even the Western enemies of the ancient Egyptians are declared to be more civilised than the English. London, largest and greatest city in the world in Loudon’s time, is still depicted as such in her future England. However, where the English see a proud city, the mummy looks down on it with distaste; not only provoked by its architecture, but mostly by its inhabitants: “Human nature is still the same when in this remote corner of the globe” (*The Mummy!* II: 46). Loudon

deviates the perspective of the Orientalist world view by using the mummy's country of origin as the focal point. "[...] I am indeed torn from all I prize and love, to be cast upon this secluded spot, where all seems strange and insignificant?" (ibid.). The Anglocentric point of view is exchanged for an Egyptocentric one; that of the presumed *Other*.

By choosing an omniscient narrator who manipulates the readers' opinions through subjective commentary, and giving the reader extensive insight into the thoughts and plans of each of the characters, Loudon creates a wonderful paradox. The reader learns about the mummy's misgivings about ending up in future London and also witnesses his prayers to his gods, and his interpretation of his resuscitation as punishment. At the same time the reader is entirely aware of the horror which the mummy triggers in modern Egyptian and British citizens. Its supernatural appearance and ugliness are constantly referred to and the reader as an observer has insight into both points of view. Just like a member of the audience of a play in which soliloquies disclose the innermost thoughts and realisations of a character only to the audience, it creates tension for the reader who possesses deeper knowledge than the characters in the text. Loudon therefore does not only borrow from Shakespearean themes, but her narrative structure reflects that of a typical Shakespearean comedy. In reference to the preface of the text in which the narrator explains that the story which follows is a dream vision, the entire novel is given a detached quality, not unlike *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the audience is told in the epilogue that none of the aforementioned events are to be taken as reality:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream [...]. (V, 1: 440–455)

By framing the story with a vision or a dream, Loudon distances herself from her text and the inherent criticism of her country and culture, dampening the possible offence which her story might have caused her contemporaries. At the same time her three-volume long novel places the headstone for a literary genre which would subsist for the following century.

5. Major Themes in Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Egyptianising Fantastic Fiction

Horus and Isis and Osiris peeped down from every niche and shelf, while across the ceiling a true son of the Old Nile, a great, hanging-jawed crocodile, was slung in a double noose. ("Lot" 82)

Loudon's seminal text lays the foundations for the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. The Egyptianising fantastic stories written during the nineteenth and early twentieth century share several aspects and issues, apart from featuring elements of ancient Egypt. While not all the following themes appear in all of the texts, at least two of these aspects feature in every story which is discussed in this book. This chapter will highlight these major themes and discuss their function in relation to the representation of ancient Egypt in the texts.

The first theme, which is not always directly addressed but which is essential and at times poses a problem, is the possibility or the impossibility of communication between the Western *Self* and the Egyptian *Other*. In most cases, the cultural, geographical and temporal distance between the West and the East is reduced by the ability to communicate with each other. Very often the authors are aware of the fact that the ability to communicate does not necessarily ensure actual understanding; the humorous texts in particular make use of cultural misunderstandings which can only occur because of communication. These misapprehensions are then used to criticise the West. In other texts, the impossibility to communicate with the *Other* creates terror; as someone who cannot be argued with is more frightening than someone who is at least willing or able to understand and respond to the protagonists.

A second theme which frequently appears in Egyptianising fantastic fiction is the transformation of the body, and very often also the transmigration of the soul from the *Other* to the *Self*. These transformations and transmigrations can be understood to represent the anxiety which the *Self* experiences when the *Other* begins to take over control. The process of reversed colonisation is frequently presented in Egyptianising fantastic fiction and it often extends the mere presence of an *Other* being, but includes physical possession and mental control of the *Self* by the *Other*. Closely related to physical transformations are the frequent occurrence of vampiric characteristics in ancient Egyptian beings. Ancient

characters often have vampiric traits,¹⁷² gaining strength through either the physical consummation of Westerners or by absorbing life energy from Western victims; two actions which ensure the longevity and at times age reversal and empowerment of the *Other*.

A third common theme in Egyptianising fantastic fiction is the presence of magical objects, which are occasionally appropriated by the *Self* in order to either establish a connection with or to control the *Other*. The supposed magical properties of objects reflect the cultural shift from the aesthetic of surface to the aesthetic of content during the nineteenth century.¹⁷³ Objects were seen as containing meaning through their history without being ascribed one. This shift enabled the idea of objects acting, hence leading to the idea that mummies, which were seen as objects could become active and act upon subjects. Especially old and ancient objects carry the past within them and are seen as such, gaining in historical value and becoming agents which bring the past into the present and which can act on their own accord. It is therefore not the subject that acts upon the object, but the object can act upon the subject.¹⁷⁴ Magical objects in Egyptianising fantastic fiction, as well as ancient objects in general which actively influence the action, are part of this shift. From amulets which serve as devices to enable time travel to caskets and lamps which are needed to conduct experiments, magical objects feature regularly in Egyptianising texts. Chapter 5.5 of this book analyses the appearance and usage of these objects and their role in the stories as a link between the Western *Self* and the ancient Egyptian *Other*.

The fourth part of this chapter is concerned with sleep, dreams and visions. At least one of the three aspects features in every story analysed in this book. The common denominator of the usage of dreams is almost always a bid to make the supernatural or shocking events appear less threatening, taking the edge off the criticism which the stories contain. Furthermore, dreams and visions serve

172 Contemporary television series frequently connect the concept of mummies and vampires to a similar extent as the film *The Mummy* has done. Both *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime, 2014) and the *Doctor Who* Episode “Mummy on the Orient Express” (BBC, Season 8, Episode 8, 11. October 2014) feature vampire-mummies.

173 This shift was discussed by Susan Pearce in her keynote lecture “The Birth of the Object” at the “Visions of Egypt” conference in Kingston upon Hull on 6 September 2013. For further reading on the topic, see Susan Pearce’s *On Collecting: An Investigation Into Collecting in the European Tradition* (1995).

174 The notion of the active object was also discussed by Susan Pearce during her lecture “The Birth of the Object.”

as a gateway into ancient Egypt, allowing for protagonists to travel into the past without physically going there.

The fifth subchapter discusses magic, magical objects and secret knowledge – elements which feature frequently in Egyptianising texts and which represent the supernatural elements of the genre. As ancient Egypt is generally connected to magic and secret knowledge it is not surprising that numerous magical objects and supernatural occurrences can be found in Egyptianising texts.

The idea that magic originates from ancient Egypt and that the hieroglyphs encode secret knowledge is not solely visible in literature. The last subchapter presents a discursion into the appropriation of ancient Egypt and its supposed magic and secret knowledge by groups such as theosophists and freemasons, and discusses pyramidology – the notion that the pyramid of Cheops was not built by Egyptians, but by a chosen race and that the construction was ordered by the Christian God. Furthermore, Victorian scientists tried to establish a connection between ancient Egypt and Britain, based on a similarity of ancient and modern measurements.

5.1 Language and Intercultural Communication

*‘There was this odd thing about the words I uttered,
that they came from me, not in response to my will
power, but in response to his.’ (The Beetle 54)*

Communication of the Western protagonists with the ancient Egyptian *Other* constitutes one of the major focal points of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. While an entirely Orientalist approach would imply a lack of communication, assuming the Western point of view to be the only relevant and valid one, nineteenth century Egyptianising fantastic fiction creates a dialogue between the *Self* and the *Other*. By focusing on the use of language in Egyptianising stories, the following chapter will analyse to what extent language and its allocation to individual characters are markers of *Self*-representation and *Self*-criticism.

It can be argued that the potential *Self*-representation reflects the *Self*-criticism inherent in the genre and that it reflects on arrogance, ignorance and assumed superiority on the part of the English. As there is a generally a gap in time, geography and culture between the Western and the ancient Egyptian protagonists, communication is likely to pose a problem under any circumstances. The strategies with which the authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction solve this problem and in which ways communication and understanding is possible or impossible will be discussed in the following chapter.

Considering the representation of the occidental *Self* in Victorian literature in general, it can be assumed that in Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction the most common means of communication between the European (or American) and the ancient characters would be the English language. The contemporary imperial attitude towards the rest of the world elicits the presupposition that everyone should be able to speak and understand English. The reflection on language in the context of colonisation has been long and on-going, constituting an entire research field in postcolonial studies. The discussion usually focuses on the loss of language and the subsequent loss of home, culture and the *Self* of the colonised through linguistic domination of the coloniser (cf. Margulis and Nowakoski).¹⁷⁵ On the one hand, not speaking English¹⁷⁶ equals weakness from the occidental perspective – an admittance of not belonging to the dominant party rather than preserving and protecting the *Self* (of the colonised). On the other hand, the enlightened position of understanding ancient Egyptian seems to reflect the willingness of the Westerners to learn and use the language of the *Other* culture. This interest is anchored in the Western urge to know, and therefore possess and control; and because of a lack of living users of the ancient Egyptian languages, verbal communication is virtually impossible.

A different aspect concerning the role of the language of the coloniser or Western power can be found in the utilisation and therefore empowerment of the colonised.¹⁷⁷ Janina Brutt-Griffler points out that by learning the language of the coloniser, the colonised “empowered themselves to resist” being colonised (Brutt-Griffler 65). Shakespeare already gave voice to that thought through Caliban in *The Tempest*:

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. (I, 2: 517)

In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), the savage John Smith learns hate through the works of Shakespeare, which offer him an entirely new range of vocabulary, which he did not learn from his mother or in the language he was brought up speaking.

“What did the words exactly mean? He only half knew. But their magic was strong and went on rumbling in his head, and somehow it was as though he had never really

175 See Jennifer Margulis and Peter Nowakoski, “Language.”

176 English or any of the colonisers' languages.

177 Learning and using the language of the coloniser adds to the fear of the other, the occidental tourist, an empowerment of the subordinated.

hated Popé before; never really hated him. But now he had these words, these words like drums and singing and magic [...] they made his hatred more real.” (BNW 114)

In contrast, Abdulla Al-Dabbagh points out that “British imperialists [...] knew of the importance of knowing the languages of the people they intended to rule and control” (Al-Dabbagh 105). Edward William Lane tried to integrate himself into Egyptian society, learning Arabic in order to be able to work without a translator, even sending for his sister so she could enter the female spheres; all to be able to show the English a true picture of modern Egypt. His *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836) was the result of his efforts. While the account is certainly capacious, he wrote from an Orientalist point of view, naturally failing to remain objective in most aspects, especially concerning his descriptions of women and sexuality, which tended to focus on exceptional occurrences, perversions and obscure subjective perceptions.

Almost a century after Lane, Thomas Edward Lawrence, who gained notoriety as Lawrence of Arabia, reflects on his experience in Egypt in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (written between 1919 and 1926):

In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was an affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and has become like Mohammed's coffin in our legend, with a resultant feeling of intense loneliness in life, and a contempt, not for other men, but for all they do. [...] Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then madness was very near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments. (Lawrence *Seven Pillars* 29)

Lane's book helped greatly to shape the British public's image of modern Egypt (cf. Thompson “Account”) just as Lawrence's book was seen as a work of great authority on the political and military conflicts and everyday life of early twentieth-century Egypt. In contrast to Lawrence, Lane learned Arabic in order to understand and get to know the modern Egyptians, similar to the decoding of the hieroglyphs, which opened the door to ancient Egypt for the West. Egyptology is a field of study that could only be established by the access to and understanding of ancient sources, therefore language played a vital part in the development of the field of study.

The readers of Egyptianising fiction in general and Egyptianising fantastic fiction in particular were unlikely to be familiar with either Arabic or any of the ancient Egyptian languages. It was a challenge for the writers to find a solution to the language problem. They were confronted with the need to solve the language

problem in order to make communication between their characters possible; at least in those texts which necessitate communication in order to drive the plot forward. At the same time, the issue of language and communication stresses the Western authorship of the texts. It is never the real Egyptian *Other* who is given a voice, but always the literary construction of it. Therefore, power always remains with the Western authors, even if they defend the Orient and the Egyptian *Other*, which subsequently remains re-presented and written by the West.

Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* pays close attention to the possibilities which lie in the use of language as a humorous element, not unlike Shakespeare and other writers, who use language to differentiate between social classes.¹⁷⁸ However, the communication process of the English citizens with Cheops is slightly more complicated. The mummy generally speaks ancient Egyptian, which is initially used to amplify the image of the mummy as a monster:

[...] The Mummy looked yet more hideous than before, when animated by human passions, and his deep hollow voice, speaking in a language he did not understand, fell heavily upon [Gregory's] ear, like the groans of fiends. (*The Mummy!* I: 254)

Here, the use of a foreign language, and in this case more than just a contemporary foreign language, not only strengthens the quality of *Otherness* in the mummy, but it also marks him as an inferior being. "Groans of fiends" (*ibid.*) is reminiscent of the groans of animals or other threatening and barbarous creatures. Ironically, Edric, the man who helps to resuscitate Cheops, explains that "the only use of language is to convey the ideas of one person to the understanding of the other" (*The Mummy!* I: 119). While he is speaking about poetry at this point, his remark clearly juxtaposes the use of language in the text in general, as misunderstandings litter the text. The narrative perspectives of *The Mummy!* always focus on one character and their perception of their surroundings before moving on to the next. Because of this playful way of giving the reader multiple perspectives, we learn that Cheops is, in fact, speaking his own language¹⁷⁹, but that it is perceived as something inferior and frightening. It is not the content of his speech that is frightening; the reason for the perceived threat lies in the inability of the listener to understand what Cheops is saying.

A similar picture is drawn in an instance when a girl witnesses a very humane and endearing moment during which the mummy mourns the death of a cat.

178 See *The Mummy!* I: 55 and 307 for examples of Abelard's exaggerated use of language.

179 Loudon does not specify which language that is (cf. *The Mummy!* I: 301).

Due to Cheops' horrid appearance and his foreign speech, the humane episode becomes frightening and disturbing for the girl.

'Oh yes, ma'am!' cried the panting girl; 'its eyes flare like fire, and it stares so wildly round it! and as it went along, it saw a dead cat lying in the street: and it knelt down and took the creature up, and kissed it, and lamented over it in such a strange way, and in such a strange language! I never heard anything like it in my life.' (*The Mummy!* I: 296–7)

This egocentric perspective is typical of Victorian literature and might be expected in a Gothic novel, because Gothic literature is often concerned with very personal experiences and fears. However, *The Mummy!* is more complex than that and breaks out of the dark fearful mode which is characteristic of its inspiration, *Frankenstein*. The mummy's speech not only supports the perception of Cheops as a monster, but it also helps to identify him as an ancient Egyptian. Abelard, the servant, for instance, cannot understand what the mummy says, but he is able to identify him as ancient Egyptian by his language. "It is evidently an Egyptian Mummy," observed Abelard [...]. 'Its language and its dress bespeak its origin, but what strange event it has been resuscitated'" (*The Mummy!* I: 301).

Contradictory to the introduction of the subject, where it appears that nobody seems to actually understand Cheops, the narrator suddenly changes the rules:

Dreading alike to trust, or enrage this mysterious being, and cursing the evil chance that had led him to that spot, Father Morris, who, *like all the English in those days*¹⁸⁰, was a universal linguist, found himself obliged partially to obey this injunction, and inform the Mummy of his design. Cheops burst into one of his terrific laughs of derision. (*The Mummy!* II: 37–38)

This remark causes an inconsistency in the approach to language within the text, but it is likely to be an unconscious or accidental change. The rule established here remains intact for the rest of the story, as all characters can in fact understand Cheops thereafter. It is highly probable that the strangeness and the initial inability to understand the mummy were simply used to create a foreign and monstrous aura, which adds to the image of the monster created in the preceding chapters, but did not serve any precise purpose other than that.

An important yet unsurprising notion is that all of the modern Egyptians speak "broad English" (*The Mummy!* I: 197). The universal linguists of England therefore do not have to concern themselves with the Arabic language – again, a highly ironic notion, which seemingly reflects on and criticises the Orientalist point of view. However, as far as the description and characterisation of modern

180 Italics added for stress.

Egyptians is concerned, the language issue seems to be the only element which puts them into a positive light¹⁸¹ as they are generally described as superstitious, lazy, and not trustworthy. Cheops, the only ancient Egyptian in the text, is treated with contempt and fear, but turns out to be the most cunning and intelligent of all characters. At the beginning of the novel, there seem to be limits to his knowledge where languages are concerned; he appears to be unable to understand English:

Cheops thus tauntingly addressed the priest.

‘You were conspiring mischief. Though the language your lips employed was unknown to me, that of your looks was clear. Men do not cast their eyes upon the earth, and murmur forth their accents as though they trembled at the sound of their own voices, when their purposes are such as will bear avowal.’ (*The Mummy!* II: 32)

Similarly to the sudden change in understanding Cheops, the mummy’s inability to understand father Morris is soon annihilated, and is not mentioned again in the remainder of the text. Cheops turns out to spend quite a lot of time listening in on Morris and other English-speaking characters. We can therefore conclude that despite Loudon’s careful observations about the uses of language and the limits to understanding and communication, no clear purpose for it is established and the language barrier is used only initially to trigger conflict. In the end the plot can only work if all parties involved understand each other and verbal communication ceases to be a specified problem.

Edgar Allan Poe’s satire of Loudon’s *The Mummy!; A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, “Some Words With a Mummy” (1845), stresses the importance of being familiar with the ancient Egyptian language as part of the *savoir-vivre* and superiority of the learned American gentleman. While Loudon sets her story in the distant future, Poe’s story takes place in contemporary America, and he limits the knowledge of ancient Egyptian to two of the characters, who need to translate the conversation with the mummy for the others present. These two learned men are Mr Gliddon and Dr. Ponnonner, two names which are clear references to the two famous American Egyptologists of Poe’s time.¹⁸²

181 Even the fact that they are all capable of speaking English does not necessarily qualify them as intelligent, but it seems a natural consequence to the complete colonisation of Egypt by English-speaking cultures, especially since the nineteenth-century stereotypes concerning Arabs are kept intact throughout *The Mummy!*.

182 For a further discussion on the public image of the two men, see Trafton, *Egypt Land*, 132–139.

When the mummy by the name of Allamistakeo is resuscitated by an electrical current, in a clear reference to Loudon's *The Mummy!*, the somewhat confused ancient Egyptian immediately begins to talk to those present:

[I]t addressed them, in very capital Egyptian, thus:

'I must say, gentlemen, that I am as much surprised as I am mortified at your behaviour. Of Doctor Ponnonner nothing better was to be expected. He is a poor little fat fool who knows no better. I pity and forgive him. But you, Mr. Gliddon – and you, Silk – who have travelled and resided in Egypt until one might imagine you to the manner born-you, I say who have been so much among us that you speak Egyptian fully as well, I think, as you write your mother tongue-you, whom I have always been led to regard as the firm friend of the mummies-I really did anticipate more gentlemanly conduct from you. [...] It will be taken for granted, no doubt, that upon hearing this speech under the circumstances, we all either made for the door, or fell into violent hysterics, or went off in a general swoon.' ("SWWaM" 526–7)

While Loudon merely mentions the superior knowledge of any English person in the future and the natural consequence that they would understand ancient Egyptian, Poe makes a point in humorously stressing the details of the conversation in Egyptian.

Mr. Gliddon replied at great length, in phonetics; and but for the deficiency of American printing-offices in hieroglyphical type, it would afford me much pleasure to record here, in the original, the whole of his very excellent speech. ("SWWaM" 527)

The first-person narrator of the short story speaks directly to the reader, and he digresses occasionally from the narrative itself to explain details which he finds important for his audience to know.

I may as well take this occasion to remark, that all the subsequent conversation in which the Mummy took a part, was carried on in primitive Egyptian, through the medium [...] of Messieurs Gliddon and Buckingham, as interpreters. These gentlemen spoke the mother tongue of the Mummy with inimitable fluency and grace; but I could not help observing that (owing, no doubt, to the introduction of images entirely modern, and, of course, entirely novel to the stranger) the two travellers were reduced, occasionally, to the employment of sensible forms for the purpose of conveying a particular meaning. ("SWWaM" 527–8)

Poe diverts into the absurd at this point, claiming that modern terms like politics might actually be made understandable by producing a drawing of a stereotype with which the mummy would be just as unfamiliar as it would be with the term itself:

Mr. Gliddon, at one period, for example, could not make the Egyptian comprehend the term 'politics,' until he sketched upon the wall, with a bit of charcoal a little

carbuncle-nosed gentleman, out at elbows, standing upon a stump, with his left leg drawn back, right arm thrown forward, with his fist shut, the eyes rolled up toward Heaven, and the mouth open at an angle of ninety degrees. ("SWWaM" 528)

Even though the mummy cannot speak or understand English and the scientists have to revert to nonverbal communication in the form of gestures and drawings to explain their cultural achievements to the Egyptian, Allamistakeo cannot truly be described as the *Other*. During the course of the conversation, each achievement named by the Americans is trumped by something the ancient Egyptians already had, determining that ancient Egypt was a well-developed early version of the United States of America or the West *per se*. While most of the achievements mentioned by the mummy in the text are fictional, the underlying sense of superiority of ancient Egypt mirrors the arrogance which the United States (and most European countries) showcased in the nineteenth century in relation to 'less developed' countries and cultures. The communication with Allamistakeo, whose name is just one of many examples of the sarcastic tone of the short story, serves to hold up a mirror to American society and the display of superiority towards the *Other*. In some ways, Poe's short story manages to do on very few pages what Loudon achieves in her three-volume novel. This criticism could only be obtained by direct communication with a character from the distant past. It can be argued that ancient Egypt is, in both Loudon's and Poe's work, not the ancient Egypt of magic, mystery and ancient secret wisdom, but a canvas onto which criticism can be projected and an image of the *Self* as seen through a critical eye can be perceived; a practice which features in most Egyptianising fantastic texts of the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. These two fantastic Egyptianising stories can therefore be considered the forerunners and defining works of the popular genre.

Grant Allen utilises ancient Egypt in a similar fashion as Loudon and Poe do. In Allen's short story "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" (1880), the British protagonist finds himself in the role of the *Other* as soon as he enters the pyramid of Abu Yilla and is confronted with the Egyptian royal family residing within. While he is immediately recognised and defined as different by the ancient Egyptians, who judge his clothes and behaviour as barbarous and uncivilised, communication does not pose a problem. Grant Allen chooses for his protagonist to mysteriously understand the language which the ancient Egyptians speak:

'May I ask you,' she said in Ancient Egyptian, 'who you are, and why you come hither to disturb us?' I was never aware before that I spoke or understood the language of the

hieroglyphics: yet I found I had not the slightest difficulty in comprehending or answering her question. ("MNYE" 51)

The obvious explanation, namely that the protagonist is dreaming and imagining the entire episode, is suspended in favour of a rather humorous and sexualised one:

To say the truth, Ancient Egyptian, though an extremely tough tongue to decipher in its written form, becomes as easy as love-making when spoken by a pair of lips like that Pharaonic princess's. It is really very much the same as English, pronounced in a rapid and somewhat indefinite whisper, and with all the vowels left out.¹⁸³ (ibid.)

The ancient Egyptian languages¹⁸⁴ have very little in common with English. Turning ancient Egyptian into a language which can be understood when motivated by love or desire is certainly amusing to anyone who has taken up the task of learning one of the ancient Egyptian languages. The irony also partly lies in the fact that it is almost impossible to know how the language sounded. The vocalisation of any of the earlier ancient Egyptian¹⁸⁵ languages is unclear and mostly convention, supported by diachronic analysis and comparison of contemporary languages which used Egyptian loan words, as well as the pronunciation of Coptic, which reflects at least the later stages of the pronunciation of Late Egyptian and Demotic. It is one aspect of ancient Egypt which cannot be truly uncovered, despite intensive research and comparative linguistics. In the context of fantastic fiction, Grant Allen can make his characters understand Egyptian, despite or perhaps specifically because of this lack of knowledge about the pronunciation of the language. This lack of knowledge offers a blank which can be filled by the authors in whichever way they choose to make communication possible.

183 The ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic script does not feature vowels, which Allen proves to have been aware of by explicitly mentioning it in this passage.

184 There are five stages of the ancient Egyptian language into which Egyptologists group the languages which were used in ancient Egypt between 3000 BCE and 1300 CE, namely Old Egyptian (3000–2000 BCE), Middle Egyptian (approx. 2000–1300 BCE), Late Egyptian (approx. 1300–700 BCE), Demotic (seventh century BCE – fifth century CE) and Coptic (fourth century – fourteenth century CE) (Loprieno 5–7). All language stages can of course be partitioned further as they all underwent great changes during the time when each language was used. For a short introduction of the specifics of each language stage, see James P. Allen *Middle Egyptian*, particularly chapter one, "Egyptian Language and Writing", 1–12.

185 The vocalisation of ancient Egyptian had been hotly debated by Egyptologists. Antonio Loprieno has discussed the issue in *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction*, 28–50.

Moreover, the awareness of the importance of communication and language is applied consciously to reverse the role of the *Self* and the *Other*. The role of the tourist as an intruder and a foreigner is stressed several times during the initial exchange between him, the pharaoh and his court; the protagonist is mocked not only for his dress and conduct, but also for his strange language.

‘An uncouth and almost unpronounceable designation truly,’ commented his Majesty to the Grand Chamberlain beside him. ‘These savages speak strange languages, widely different from the flowing tongue of Memnon and Sesostris.’ (“MNYE” 53)

Hatasou, the royal daughter of Thothmes XXVII, seems to like him well enough and offers to answer all of his questions, and volunteers to help him be turned into a mummy so they can spend eternity with each other.

The sarcasm employed in this short story is reminiscent of that of “Some Words With a Mummy,” perhaps driving the point home somewhat more gently than Poe’s satire. At the same time, the sarcasm and role reversal of the *Self* and the *Other* clearly criticises and exposes the conventional Orientalist attitude of the British. While ancient Egypt is portrayed as a superior culture in this short story – its representatives not only considering themselves to be superior to other neighbouring countries, but also to the “savage” intruder – this perception clearly mirrors the Victorian imperialist attitude. Pharaoh Thothmes XXVII could easily be substituted with any British general and the conversation would have been quite the same:

‘Nonsense, Hatasou,’ replied Thothmes XXVII testily. ‘Savages have no feelings, and they are as incapable of appreciating Egyptian sensibility as the chattering crow is incapable of attaining the dignified reserve of the sacred crocodile.’ (“MNYE” 53)

Grant Allen has written a highly self-critical short story, in which he uses an imaginary and almost grotesque version of ancient Egypt to hold up the mirror to the British tourist and explorer, and therefore to the British Empire itself. This criticism can only be achieved through barrier-free communication between the two parties in the story.

A slightly different case is presented by Rider Haggard, author of numerous imperial novels. He was a well-known amateur Egyptologist in his day and he studied some of the Egyptian languages. His name is listed in M.L. Bierbrier’s *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (1905) and he spent several winters in Egypt, keeping diaries of his experiences and thoughts. He accumulated a private collection of Egyptian artefacts and was very passionate about both modern and ancient Egypt. In his autobiography *The Days of My Life*, published posthumously in 1926, Haggard writes that he had been fascinated by ancient Egypt since he was

a boy and that he had read everything he could find about it (cf. 254). He was very interested in the history of mankind and in the changes which took place throughout history. He felt as if he understood the ancient and, by Victorian standards, uncivilised cultures much better than the people of his own time (cf. *The Days of My Life* 255). Continuously taking the side of the *Other*, and often criticising modern tourists, he seems to have almost forgotten that he was also a representative of the West.

In *She*, Holly, whose ward Leo is supposed to attain only the highest education in accordance to his deceased father's wishes, takes Arabic lessons with the boy to be able to help him with his studies. "I learnt [Arabic] in order to help to teach it to him, but after five years of it he knew it as well as I did—almost as well as the professor who instructed us both" (*She* 21). To fulfil his father's last wish, Leo travels to Africa to find out about his family history. A sherd¹⁸⁶ which was bequeathed to him by his father depicts his family line dating back to the fourth century BCE:

"I, Amenartes, of the Royal House of the Pharaohs of Egypt, wife of Kallikrates (the Beautiful in Strength), a Priest of Isis whom the gods cherish and the demons obey, being about to die, to my little son Tisisthenes (the Mighty Avenger). I fled with thy father from Egypt in the days of Nectanebes,[...] causing him through love to break the vows that he had vowed. (*She* 30)

Trying to escape her father's wrath, they are captured by an African queen, who falls in love with Kallikrates. He refuses to kill Amanartes¹⁸⁷ when the queen promises to make him immortal. In her rage, Ayesha kills him and mourns him for the rest of her immortal days. The sherd addresses Amenartes' son, whom she must have conceived before Ayesha killed Kallikrates, and she urges him to seek out the queen and avenge his father's death:

Now I say to thee, my son, Tisisthenes, seek out the woman, and learn the secret of Life, and if thou mayest find a way slay her, because of thy father Kallikrates; and if thou dost

186 The sherd bears several texts in different languages; the greatest part of the text being ancient Greek, and several smaller graffiti of names and remarks in Middle Egyptian, Latin and English. The Greek text is translated into English and Latin by Leo's late father, adding a touch of academic consideration to the sherd and its content.

187 It is mentioned on the inscription of the sherd that Amanartes cannot be touched by the queen because of the magic of her own people. This means that in the story, Egyptian magic seems superior to the magic which Ayesha can employ, even though Egyptian magic itself is not described nor mentioned in any other part of the story (cf. *She* 31).

fear or fail, this I say to all thy seed who come after thee, till at last a brave man be found among them who shall bathe in the fire and sit in the place of the Pharaohs. I speak of those things, that though they be past belief, yet I have known, and I lie not.” (*She* 31)

Sporting the imperial attitude of well raised and adventurous British citizens, they travel to central Africa where they are captured by a group of natives who are described as terrifying and yet strangely familiar by Holly (cf. *She* 77). Haggard’s descriptions of the African people his characters encounter might appear racist at times, but compared to other descriptions of Africans in his time he takes care to describe their dress and conduct like an anthropologist would; with a scientific descriptive mindset. What is also striking in Haggard’s description of the first meetings between natives and the European travellers is that usually the Africans are willing to talk to the foreigners, giving them a chance to explain themselves. The threatening quality of barbarian tribes who lust for blood, which is created in cases where communication is not possible because neither party understands the language of the other¹⁸⁸, is thereby reduced. Haggard gives all characters a voice.

‘Peace,’ said a voice, speaking in Arabic, or rather in some dialect into which Arabic entered very largely; ‘who are ye who come hither swimming on the water? Speak or ye die,’ and the steel pressed sharply against my throat, sending a cold chill through me. (*She* 74)

The general threat is still there, though they are not slaughtered in their sleep, but are greeted with “peace”, which might, however, refer to the common Arabic greeting السلام عليكم¹⁸⁹ and not to an explicit peace offer. Nevertheless, the British are allowed to answer for themselves:

‘We are travellers, and have come hither by chance,’ I answered in my best Arabic, which appeared to be understood, for the man turned his head, and, addressing a tall form that towered up in the background, said, ‘Father, shall we slay?’ (*She* 74)

The further conversation between the man who spoke first and his father (the leader of the group, referred to as father) is held in Arabic and shows that it is not the decision of the natives to let them stay alive, but that they were ordered by ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’ to bring any people of white colour to her. They

188 The description of African natives in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, for example, makes them out to be threatening uncivilized and primitive beings with gruesome traditions, who communicate with the Europeans only through fearful noises and violence.

189 /As-salam alaykum/, the Arabic greeting which can be closely translated into “peace be upon you.”

are seated in palanquins and taken away. On the journey, Holly wonders about the strange people they encountered:

Of what race could these people be? Their language was a bastard Arabic, and yet they were not Arabs; I was quite sure of that. For one thing they were too dark, or rather yellow. I could not say why, but I know that their appearance filled me with a sick fear of which I felt ashamed. (*She* 77)

It is quite a surprise to see that Holly is aware of his racism and feels ashamed for it. But he overcomes his shame and tries to use his anthropological knowledge to identify the tribe. This sentiment might actually be a reflection of Haggard's own personal feelings towards the matter. Interracial love plays a role in almost all of his stories and he himself was supposedly in a relationship with a Zulu woman.¹⁹⁰ Haggard's literature frequently reflects his own thoughts on imperialism, and racism, and, in contrast to most of his fellow Victorians, he saw the origin of mankind in Africa; something which made him not think of it as inferior, but as something worthy of exploration and respect. This is reflected in the formulation that Holly would not be afraid of 'typical' Arabs or feel particularly uncomfortable around them. One possibility is certainly that Arabs were generally seen and depicted as inferior to Europeans, but were not considered completely primitive as perhaps people from central Africa would have been. However, Holly realises that he is very afraid of those strange natives who he cannot match with any former experiences. He cannot explain his irrational fear, which seems to stem from the uncanny mixture of a familiar language with a completely foreign and unknown physical appearance which represents the *Other* so clearly. Being confronted with a "bastardisation" of a language which he is familiar with, Holly perceives it as something out of the order and therefore as threatening.¹⁹¹ He is threatened by his own inability to place the man into a known category.

The old chief of the group appreciates that Holly can understand him, especially since strangers usually do not come to that part of the earth. In this scenario, Haggard bluntly refers to the British as "aliens", labelling them as the *Other*.

190 This rumour appears in several secondary texts, but Haggard himself never mentioned it in his diaries. Two of the secondary texts are Lee Server and Sonlight Christian's *Encyclopedia of Pulp Fiction Writers: The Essential Guide to More Than 200 Pulp Pioneers and Mass-market Masters*, 131, and Lindy Stiebel's *Imagining Africa: Landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African Romances*, 24.

191 If we consider that Arabic has many dialects, not only in each Arabic speaking country, but in every bigger village, we can assume that the Englishmen learned Fusha (الْفصحى), standard Arabic, and not any of the dialects. The bastardisation therefore would probably be a local variety of a dialect.

‘From whatever country thou camest,’ he said, ‘and by the way it must be from one where somewhat of our language is known, they teach their children courtesy there, my stranger son. And now wherefore comest thou unto this land, which scarce an alien foot has pressed from the time that man knoweth? Art thou and those with thee weary of life?’ (*She* 78)

Holly, despite being scared of the man, defends their presence and tries to underline the bravery of his own people:

‘We came to find new things,’ I answered boldly. ‘We are tired of the old things; we have come up out of the sea to know that which is unknown. We are of a brave race who fear not death, my very much respected father—that is, if we can get a little information before we die.’ (*She* 78)

However, his bravery is later denoted as foolishness by Ayesha; another chip in the self-perception by the British travellers as being superior. But even ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’ is impressed that the travellers speak and understand her language:

‘What came ye for to see? How is it that ye hold your lives so cheap as to place them in the hollow of the hand of Hiya, into the hand of ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’? Tell me also how come ye to know the tongue I talk. It is an ancient tongue, that sweet child of the old Syriac. Liveth it yet in the world? Thou seest I dwell among the caves and the dead, and naught know I of the affairs of men, nor have I cared to know.’ (*She* 143)

Ayesha notices that Arabic has apparently evolved since the time of her birth, which is noteworthy, since the Orient and its constituents were usually considered to be unchanging. This conversation breaks with that perception.

‘Now, Holly,’ she said, ‘how comest thou to speak Arabic? It is my own dear tongue, for Arabian am I by my birth, even ‘al Arab al Ariba’ (an Arab of the Arabs), and of the race of our father Yárab, the son of Káhtan, for in that fair and ancient city Ozal was I born, in the province of Yaman the Happy. Yet dost thou not speak it as we used to speak. Thy talk doth lack the music of the sweet tongue of the tribes of Hamyar which I was wont to hear. Some of the words too seemed changed, even as among these Amahagger, who have debased and defiled its purity, so that I must speak with them in what is to me another tongue.’ (*She* 146)

Holly informs her that Arabic is indeed still spoken in several parts of the world, including Egypt, to which Ayesha reacts as someone isolated from the world for many centuries would. “So it is still spoken, and there is yet an Egypt? And what Pharaoh sits upon the throne? Still one of the spawn of the Persian Ochús, or are the Achæmenians gone, for far is it to the days of Ochús” (*She* 146). Holly sums up the history of Egypt and other countries of her interest, refuting her apparent

disinterest in the history of the world (cf. 147). She is again positively surprised by his knowledge of languages, which she also understands:

‘Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant’¹⁹², I suggested.

‘Ah, thou canst speak the Latin tongue, too!’ she said, in surprise. ‘It hath a strange ring in my ears after all these days, and it seems to me that thy accent does not fall as the Romans put it. Who was it wrote that? I know not the saying, but it is a true one of that great people. It seems that I have found a learned man—one whose hands have held the water of the world’s knowledge. Knowest thou Greek also?’

‘Yes, oh Queen, and something of Hebrew, but not to speak them well. They are all dead languages now.’ (*She* 148)

In the end, the knowledge of any of the ancient and modern languages helps neither Holly nor Leo to resist the lure of Ayesha. Having learned a great deal of the history of the world since she settled in Kôr, she wants to renew her immortality and give the same gift to Leo, in whom she sees a reincarnation of Kallikrates. But her magic and wisdom cannot save her when, in demonstration for Leo, she steps into a column of fire and, instead of being rejuvenated, her body is destroyed.

Language in *She* is especially important to display Holly’s ability, not only at learning languages, but at being able to impress an immortal ancient queen with that knowledge. Despite being a rather unfortunate-looking man, Holly is an English gentleman and explorer, and it is made very obvious in his conversation with Ayesha. His linguistic ability is vital for the plot of the story, and while Leo represents the reincarnation of the man whom the queen once loved, his equal ability to communicate is ignored and Holly assumes the role of the mediator between the *Self* and the *Other*. This allocation of roles is also reflected in Holly’s outward appearance, which is hinted to be reminiscent of an ape (cf. *She* 8), and which therefore gives him a touch of the *Other*, justifying his status.

In Haggard’s later short story “Smith and the Pharaohs” (1912), mummies – or rather spirits of mummies – communicate with each other without problems. Haggard was well-read in Egyptology, and he must have known about language development and the changes within the Egyptian language. However, for the purpose of fantastic fiction, he must have chosen to combine them into one seemingly universal Egyptian language through which all ancient Egyptians can communicate. This generalisation suits the Orientalist consideration of ancient Egypt as one unchangeable entity. James Ebenezer Smith, the protagonist of the short story, is a banker who occasionally goes to the British Museum to relax, with no real purpose or destination in mind. He is rather baffled by the Egyptian

192 “They create a desert and call it peace.” It is a quote from Tacitus’ *Agricola* 30: 5.

rooms: "The place bewildered him somewhat, for he knew nothing of Egyptology; indeed, there remained upon his mind only a sense of wonderment not unmingled with awe" ("SatP" 315). What Haggard describes here is very close to the average museum visitor in Victorian times. Even though Egypt had become a well-beloved destination for travellers and had entered European culture via architecture and everyday life objects, the genuine Egyptian artefacts were – and are – bound to impress (cf. Moser 49). Haggard's knowledge on the subject casually shows in small sequences in which the narrator explains details to the reader: "Smith did not stop him to explain that he had not the faintest idea what a uraeus might be, seeing that he was utterly unfamiliar with the snake-headed crest of Egyptian royalty" ("SatP" 316).

Smith finds a bust of an Egyptian queen and falls in love with the image. He begins to do research on ancient Egypt and finally travels to Egypt during winter, claiming to be in need of the mild climate for health reasons. In Cairo he visits the Egyptian museum and takes part in several excavations. Throughout the story, modern and ancient time overlap repeatedly, and Smith seems to see how things were thousands of years ago. After he leaves the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, he watches how several Egyptians drag a sarcophagus into the building, chanting in Arabic.

Just so, reflected Smith, had their forefathers sung when, millenniums ago, they dragged that very sarcophagus from the quarries to the Nile, and from the Nile to the tomb whence it reappeared to-day, or when they slid the casing blocks of the pyramids up the great causeway and smooth slope of sand, and laid them in their dizzy resting-places. [...] The East may change its masters and its gods, but its customs never change, and if to-day Allah wore the feathers of Amen one wonders whether the worshippers would find the difference so very great. ("SatP" 332–3)

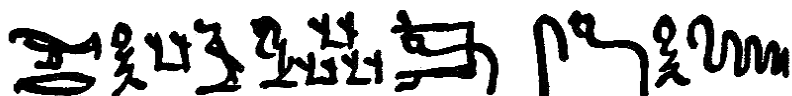
Again, these visions serve as sustainers, as markers that despite the long period of time between events, nothing in Egypt has really changed. This might both be due to the preserved image of the Orient as unchanging, or to Haggard's personal nostalgia concerning Egypt. Smith manages to find the tomb of the queen with whose image he fell in love, and he manages to find a stele of the queen Ma-Mee, a perfectly preserved hand with two rings and a few other artefacts, which he takes back to the Egyptian Museum. Being entranced by the new-found reproduction of Ma-Mee's features, Smith falls asleep in the museum and wakes up to a meeting of the ghosts of the mummies kept in the museum. He can understand what they say to each other, but even though he is said to possess a basic knowledge of hieroglyphics, it would not suffice to actually understand ancient Egyptian. However, by adding supernatural elements to the short story,

Haggard avoids the question of probability of Smith's talent. "There [...] was the long-necked Khu-en-aten, talking somewhat angrily to the imperial Ramesses II. Smith could understand what he said, for this power seemed to have been given to him" ("SatP" 340). His ability therefore also allows Smith to communicate with Ma-Mee, and his ability is furthermore explained in his identification as the reincarnation of Ma-Mee's ancient Egyptian lover. Instead of being made responsible for archaeologists and tomb robber's deeds, he suddenly becomes part of the world of the *Others* – a mediator who is part of both worlds. Learning his lesson, he returns home and never participates in archaeological excavations again. This turn of events seems to be triggered both by the threat he feels when he is found by the ghosts in the museum as well as his new appreciation for his 'own kind.' His ability to communicate with the ghosts of the ancient kings and queens is essential for this outcome of the story.

Other stories in which the Western protagonists find out that they are reincarnations of ancient Egyptians do not point out the question of language, but simply presuppose that the characters can understand the ancient language. In "A Professor of Egyptology," Cecilia, who is identified to be the reincarnation of Nofrit, an ancient Egyptian princess, is put into a trance to become witness to the fate of her ancient double. Even though Cecilia is English, she has no trouble understanding the language that is spoken by her husband and his brother. However, Boothby chooses a slightly antiquated version of English to depict the language of his ancient characters in order to differentiate between the modern and the ancient setting:

'Is it thou, Nofrit?' he asked as soon as he saw me. 'It is I!' I replied. 'You are late, Sinfihit. You tarry too long over the wine cups.' 'You wrong me, Nofrit,' he answered [...] 'I have drunk no wine this night. Had I not been kept by the Captain of the Guard I should have been here sooner. Thou art not angry with me, Nofrit?' 'Nay, that were presumption on my part, my lord,' I answered. ("APoE" 118)

In Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*, communication with the people who the children encounter does not pose a problem. The protagonists can communicate with all those whom they meet on their adventures. The amulet which allows the children to travel through time and space carries an Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription, which the children have to decipher and pronounce in order to activate it. As the children cannot read Egyptian, they have to turn to their neighbour Jimmy, who is an Egyptologist, translates the inscription on the amulet for them. The inscription reads "Ur Hekau Setcheh" (SoA 38): the words of power which, once spoken, cause a mysterious voice to appear, which explains the function of the amulet to them.



The narrator comments on the strange ability of the children to understand the voice: “I cannot tell you what language the voice used. I only know that everyone present understood it perfectly. If you come to think of it, there must be some language that everyone could understand, if we only knew what it was” (*SoA* 38). Once the children travel into the past, they are able to communicate with the people they meet by using the same mysterious universal language:

Perhaps the children had found out the universal language which everyone can understand, and which wise men so far have not found. [...] The fact remains that in all their adventures the muddle-headed inventions which we call foreign languages never bothered them in the least. They could always understand and be understood. (*SoA* 49–50)

In other texts, English is understood and spoken by the ancient characters in the texts. The beetle in Richard Marsh’s novel has no trouble understanding and communicating in English. While almost every aspect of the beetle is ambiguous, the question of language is simply solved through the longevity of the ancient being and the consequent acquisition of English, similar to how Dracula learns English. However, while Dracula is clearly portrayed as an intellectual in Stoker’s novel, the beetle does not seem as deliberate and calculating in order to eventually assimilate himself into English society, but he nevertheless learns English and is therefore able to communicate with the English protagonists.

In Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Ring of Thoth,” John Vansittart Smith, who is one of the most knowledgeable Egyptologists of his time and who is fluent in all ancient Egyptian languages, encounters Sosra, an ancient Egyptian priest and alchemist who found the elixir of life and is immortal, having lived for 3500 years (“RoT” 69). For all those years he has been searching the world’s museums for the mummy of his long-dead love – and a ring which contains the antidote to the elixir which was buried with her. Smith meets Sosra in the Louvre in Paris where they first communicate in French, but later speak English with each other. Again, similar to the beetle and Count Dracula, the ancient Egyptian has learned many languages within the span of his long lifetime, allowing him to assimilate into any given culture. While his language skills enable him to find work in museums, his physical appearance strikes several visitors, including Smith, as strange and unnaturally old. Especially Sosra’s eyes give away his age and betray his cover (cf. “RoT” 64). Just as the beetle remains a foreigner in his male human form,

even after he regains his youth by feeding off the life energy of his victims, Sosra cannot quite fit in with the modern world. His perfection of the language of the country he resides in, however, allows him to avoid exposure. "I have travelled in all lands and I have dwelt with all nations. Every tongue is the same to me. I learned them all to pass the weary time" ("RoT" 75). He looks foreign, but his use of language identifies him as French, and identified him as being a citizen of any country he lived in in the past. While he is not a threat to the West, his immortality and his knowledge of alchemical science, which he claims has nothing to do with magic, marks him as the *Other*. His abilities exceed those of any European intellectual. Once more an ancient Egyptian character triumphs over the European, and even Sosra's one failure is redeemed by his finding the antidote at last and being able to die, holding the remains of his true love in his arms, finally at peace. Smith, being witness to Sosra's final hour, gains a lot of information from the priest, which he would not have been able to acquire otherwise. His scientific interest in ancient Egypt and a presentation on El Kab, which Sosra judges to be "contemptible", but still "superior" to any other European disquisition on the subject ("RoT" 68), qualify him in the eyes of the ancient Egyptian to be worthy of witnessing the events of the evening and to hear his story. Sosra feels that Smith is concentrating too much on "inscriptions or monuments" and not enough on the "hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge" of Egypt (ibid.). Sosra therefore does not only allow him to remain inside the museum because of his scientific interest, but he wants to teach him about the real achievements of ancient Egyptians, which he sees in alchemy. While Smith is in the museum to conduct research, he learns more than he expected. The 'object' of his research becomes the teacher, the *Other* educates the *Self*, switching the poles. While Smith is criticised for his ignorance in one field of research, he can fill this blank with the help of Sosra, who accepts him to be worthy of hearing his story. Because Smith could have doubtlessly somehow communicated with Sosra in an Egyptian language, Doyle gives the ancient Egyptian a reason to learn the world languages to pass the time and to assimilate into whichever society he might choose. For the course of the story, Sosra is simultaneously the *Other* and the *Self*. He exists in both spheres without losing his footing in either. Even in death he is believed to have been a modern man who, under the guise of working at the museum, suffered a heart attack when he tried to steal a mummy from the museum in order to sell it to a private collector. Only Smith – and the reader – is aware of Sosra's true identity.

A very humorous take on the problem of communication between modern and ancient beings is displayed in "The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt," in which

an Egyptologist attempts to communicate with an ancient Egyptian mummy through the medium of a colleague who shares the blood of the mummy.

He turned to the mummy and said something in a tongue I could not understand, enunciating each syllable most distinctly. I distinguished the word 'Menen-Ra,' but could make out nothing else. Neither the mummy nor Thompson-Pratt gave any sign of having heard. He repeated the sentence again, varying the pronunciation of the words, and this time got a reply. 'You must speak English if you wish me to understand,' came the answer in a stifled, dusty voice directly from the mummy's lips. Gargrave started, and I think he swore. 'Why?' he asked savagely. 'Because I have forgotten the other—the old tongue.' ("TMoTP" 155)

In this scenario Cutcliffe Hyne clearly comments on the European tendency to approach ancient Egypt with arrogance as well as with an intellectual objective which serves only the Western *Self*. The whole story is highly ironic, and the conversation between Gargrave and the mummy culminates in the mummy only offering him 'useless' information about his lifetime and no 'scientifically relevant' facts which would make the Egyptologist famous and which would make him understand ancient Egypt better.

The short story is a fantasy of every Egyptologist and the hope and need to gain first-hand information, which is, apart from reading and translating ancient texts or analysing and interpreting ancient objects (and nowadays through the analysis of DNA samples), impossible. While Edric and Dr. Entwerfen in *The Mummy!* do not make use of the opportunity to learn about Cheops' life and the Egyptian mysteries they are so interested in before reviving the pharaoh, Gargrave makes use of the opportunity and is severely disappointed. In Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy," Allamistakeo spends the first hours after his revival explaining to the American scientists that America has nothing on ancient Egypt concerning culture and politics, exposing the stereotypical American arrogance towards the *Other*, while Sosra takes it on himself to educate Vansittart Smith on the truly important aspects of ancient Egyptian life in "The Ring of Thoth." The mummy of Menen-Ra in Cutcliffe Hyne's story disappoints by being too close to the European *Self* – enjoying drink and women and embodying the stereotype of an adventurous young man who was neither particularly religious, nor interested in political matters of his time. He could just as well have been a character out of a Dickens novel, such as Henry Gowan or Edmund Sparkler from *Little Dorrit*. While communication is possible in "The Mummy of Thompson-Pratt" – much easier, in fact, than the Egyptologist has anticipated – no relevant information can be gained in this conversation, and Gargrave is left extremely flustered and frustrated, having managed to do the impossible and talk to an actual contemporary witness, only to gain knowledge of a life which was in essence not very

different from that of every single one of Gargrave's students. The *Other* is simply a version of the *Self*, an unexpected fact which irritates the scientist and amuses the eye-witness and the medium through which the mummy speaks.

In all of these stories, the Western protagonists are able to communicate with the ancient *Other*, often being proven wrong in their expectations and supposed knowledge on ancient Egypt. In all of the cases, except for *The Beetle*, the possibility of communication reduces the threat of the *Other* towards the *Self*. The *Other* poses a much greater threat when communication is impossible. While the beetle understands and speaks English, his prerogative is to find Paul Lessingham and to hurt him and those he loves, and his ability to communicate is used only to further this goal. Marsh's novel therefore presents a special case, in which the *Other* is especially threatening because his agenda is clear and none of the Western protagonists are able to actively prevent him from executing his plan. To add to the threat, the beetle finds an understanding party in Sidney Atherton, who has no qualms supporting the creature's plan to hurt Lessingham as he sees him as his rival for the love of Marjorie Lindon. Being able to communicate with the *Other* is therefore mostly harmful to the Western *Self*, adding a further layer to the helplessness which the protagonists experience when confronted with the beetle.

Other texts make use of one-sided communication to create horror. These stories feature messages which are sent by the *Other* and which are interpreted by the Western *Self*, and often bring harm to the Westerners. In "Lost in a Pyramid," Professor Niles translates a parchment, which is found "among the spoils" of the mummy they burned and which carries an inscription which says "that the mummy [...] was that of a famous sorceress who bequeathed her curse to whoever should disturb her rest" ("LiaP" 41). Ignoring the curse, the protagonists eventually suffer for their act of burning the ancient mummy. Of course, within the curse narrative the question remains open whether the protagonists would have suffered the same fate if they had not been able to translate the curse and become aware of it. Nevertheless, the seeds which Professor Niles and Evelyn plant turn into vampiric flowers which suck away the life from those who planted them. Within the universe of the text the awareness of the curse does not influence the outcome of the story, but triggers an initial fear in the reader which turns out to be legitimate as the curse kills Professor Niles and causes Evelyn to fall into a vegetative state for the rest of her life.

In Doyle's "Lot No. 249," the Egyptologist Bellingham is able to revive a mummy with the help of an ancient magical spell and a mysterious plant. He is able to control the mummy and uses it as his personal weapon to take revenge on

his enemies. When the protagonist Abercrombie Smith meets Bellingham for the first time, he already knows that he is not like the other students at Oxford. Bellingham is an outsider, too familiar with Eastern languages and culture to be entirely accepted among the British:

'Eastern languages. He's a demon at them. Chillingworth met him somewhere above the second cataract last long, and he told me that he just prattled to the Arabs as if he had been born and nursed and weaned among them. He talked Coptic to the Copts, and Hebrew to the Jews, and Arabic to the Bedouins, and they were all ready to kiss the hem of his frock-coat.' ("Lot No. 249" 79–80)

Despite the acceptance of Egyptology as a sincere field of study, and the fact that the regard for the ancient Egyptian languages and the ability to read them was high during Doyle's life time, Bellingham represents the *Other* by proxy. He is too familiar with the East, too respected by them to be respected among his own kind. Bellingham is the perfect villain being able to move in both worlds, his own and that of the Oriental *Other*. At the same time he is at home not only in the Orient, but he also knows more about ancient Egypt than anybody else; and he is able to magically revive a mummy and use it as a weapon which hurts and kills those whom Bellingham sees as his enemies. The mummy does not seem to have a will on its own. It is merely an instrument activated by a magical spell Bellingham can read and apply correctly.

Stoker's Queen Tera remains physically dead throughout *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Nevertheless, her mind and soul seem to be alive and active, slowly taking control of Margaret Trelawny. Being able to change Margaret's mentality and opinions, the queen can communicate at least partly through Margaret. However, the great experiment which marks the climax¹⁹³ of the novel is conducted not because Tera communicates that wish through her Western *doppelgänger*, but Mr Corbeck finds a Dutch folio of the experiences of Nicholas van Huyn of Hoorn, which he manages to translate and thereby learns of the discovery of Queen Tera's tomb (cf. JoSS 151). Wanting to further his language studies in order to understand the traveller's work, Corbeck studies in Leiden where he meets the Egyptologist Abel Trelawny. Together they decide to look for the strange tomb of which van Huyn of Hoorn wrote. They translate the inscription on the tomb, which appears to be a curse, but which they later find out to be a security measure taken by Tera in order to remain undisturbed by her contemporaries. Not being superstitious – in contrast to the workers they brought with them and

193 Whose preparation of unwrapping the mummy resembles a sexual act reminiscent of rape (cf. Corriou 5).

whom they do not tell of the curse (cf. *JoSS* 156) – the two Englishmen begin with the excavation of the tomb and find the mummy of Tera and inscriptions which identify her as the daughter of King Antef of the eleventh dynasty. While Tera is a fictional Egyptian queen, several rulers of Egypt of the eleventh dynasty carried the name Antef. Stoker therefore gives authority to his fantastic story by embedding his fictional characters into an historical context.

Translating the texts which cover the sarcophagus of the queen and the inner walls of the tomb, the two explorers learn that Antef taught his daughter magic (cf. *JoSS* 161) and that she was mummified in a way which would allow her to wake up again in the future and roam the earth as a living being. The men furthermore learn that for her to reawaken, a ritual will need to be performed in which all objects which were buried with her have to be in the exact same position as they were in when she ‘died,’ and that the stars need to stand in the exact same constellation as well. The men are set on conducting the experiment; and throughout the entire book the translation of the texts which were left in Tera’s tomb drive the action forward. Only because Abel Trelawny can read hieroglyphs, the explorers find the tomb and bring the mummy to England, which triggers all the tragic events of the story. While the curse on Tera’s tomb is supposedly only a warning to keep tomb robbers at bay in order to leave the sleeping queen undisturbed and all objects necessarily for her revival intact and in place, the dire original ending of the novel leaves the question open whether the curse is not real after all. Without the men’s ability to read hieroglyphs, none of the events depicted in the story would have taken place. Language therefore plays an essential role for the story itself and serves to drive the plot forward as well as to present Mr Trelawny and his colleague as great European scholars who manage to decipher the descriptions of a magical ritual which they try to execute. However, despite their knowledge and the extensive research which goes into the planning of the “Great Experiment” (*JoSS* 232), they fail. In the end, everything comes to nothing and all characters who are involved in the experiment directly are killed, except for the narrator, who lives to tell the story. The ancient Egyptian *Other* is a force which cannot be entirely controlled by the modern Western *Self*, despite the expertise in the field. Ancient magic poses a threat and the consequences for the West are dire. Tera is not exactly a monster, certainly not in the way that the beetle or the mummy in “Lot No. 249” are, but she is too powerful, even in her lifeless form, to be controlled and entirely known and understood by the English protagonists.

Language and the problems of communication are diversely approached by the authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Two larger fields can be established:

the conscious use of language which ensures communication between the *Self* and the *Other*, which then leads to an often humorous criticism of the Western *Self* through the eyes of the ancient *Other*; and the inability to actually communicate, which causes terror and which highlights the dangers of meddling with the *Other* even if the Western protagonists believe to understand the issues at hand. The latter approach also criticises the West by pointing out the arrogance or inability to control the *Other*, while it simultaneously places the *Other* above the *Self* concerning power relations. If the *Other* understands and can communicate with the *Self*, and the ancient characters can communicate with the West in the language of the West, the *Other* has knowledge of the *Self* and therefore power. The colonised becomes the potential coloniser.

5.2 Body Transformations in Egyptianising Texts

*When I saw it first, was that it was as large as the man had been [...]
But, the moment it came in view, it began to dwindle, and [...]
in a couple of seconds at most, a little heap of drapery was
lying on the floor, on which was a truly astonishing example
of the coleoptera. It appeared to be a beetle. (The Beetle 137)*

One of the most intriguing characteristics of characters representing the *Other* is their ability to transform and transgress physically as well as spiritually, proving uncontrollable and terrifying. Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* was published by Skeffington and Sons in 1897, just two months after Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Julian Wolfreys points out that Stoker and Marsh were rumoured to compete in writing the most successful supernatural story (*The Beetle* 11). Both texts bear complex references to the issues of the time in which they were written and are similar in many aspects, such as the characterisation of their protagonists, their 'monsters,' and their criticism. While *Dracula* is a shape-shifting vampire, the beetle is a shape-shifting scarab beetle. Furthermore, both creatures pose a threat to British society as they come to London to spread terror and persecute their victims.¹⁹⁴ However, *The Beetle* is not the only Egyptianising text in which bodily and spiritual transformation is in the focus of the story. "The Happy Prince,"¹⁹⁵

194 Chapter 5.3 of this book takes a closer look at the vampiric elements in these two novels and in which way vampirism and ancient Egypt are linked.

195 The outward transformation of the statue reflects the inner transformation of the bird. While these transformations are essential to the morale of the story, they are independent of the Egyptianising theme of the short story.

The Jewel of Seven Stars, *The Story of the Amulet*, “Nemesis of Fire”, “Sand” and “Descent into Egypt” also share this theme. Because of this regularity of the appearance of this motif, it can be argued that the process of transformation is one of the major themes in Egyptianising Victorian fantastic fiction. The transformations vary in their extent and quality, but especially in late-Victorian literature, the aspect of spiritual control over humans by an ancient Egyptian character – a transformation from a living into a mummified body and vice versa or the process of *Othering* through personal experience of the *Other* by the Western protagonists – are common themes. The described body transformations can be closely linked to the political and social unrest and anxiety of the late-Victorians.

The uncanny experience of being forced into another body or mind as well as being controlled by a being outside one’s own social background mark the Victorian Gothic and speak of the fear of reversed colonisation. At this point, the late nineteenth century interest in mesmerism and hypnotism also come into play. While body transformations have always been part of numerous culture’s mythologies and religious ideas, giving them an almost archetypal quality, the regularity and frequency of the motif in late-Victorian fantastic literature are striking. In her introduction to *Fantastic Body Transformations in English Literature*, Sabine Coelsch-Foisner places textual body transformations into the literary tradition of folk tales:

Works of antiquity as well as folk traditions abound in representations of the human body as unstable and transgressing its biological boundaries, its appearance, performance, and essential make-up. (1)

Especially in the late-Victorian period, in which doubt concerning the evolutionary theories of the time as well as the ever-growing Empire led to a multitude of anxieties, resulting in a literary re-imagining of the human body, which could be employed as a powerful tool to trigger fear and to re-define the human body in a supernatural sense. Through the discussion of concepts like transmutation in fantastic literature, a belief in supernatural abilities of human beings could be established even outside of literature. Limits and possibilities of our own humanity, which were very clearly touched on by modern medicine and science, were demonstrated. An example concerning ancient Egypt in this discourse would be the public showcasing of sometimes unwrapped mummies and the growing number of exhibitions, featuring ancient magical instruments and objects connected to death and the Egyptian belief in afterlife. Being confronted with death and simultaneously with the endurance of the human form, a change in perspective must have occurred as a consequence. At the same time, the possibility of the changeability of the human body was explored in numerous late-Victorian texts

(for example *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*), considering the physical and mental aspects, as well as the impact of a supernatural influence on individuals.

Coelsch-Foisner notes that the concept of transmutation and bodily transformation is in no way a new concept, having occurred even in ancient texts, but that it certainly regained popularity in Gothic fiction from the mid-eighteenth century on (1).

Re-imagining the human body in strange, alien, or non-human shapes is not only a powerful aesthetic device that lends itself to a variety of purposes, but obviously a fundamental way of coming to terms with both the limits *and* the possibilities of our humanity (ibid.).

Body transformations in Egyptianising texts only occur in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁶ The concept of spiritual transformation and of possession by spirits occurs throughout nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction. This trend can be attributed to the development of mass media and the very public mystification of mummies in connection with other supernatural ideas concerning bodily and spiritual transformations. Kafka's novella *Metamorphosis* (1915) is a younger example of this concept, in his case used as a rather ironic metaphor for stagnation.¹⁹⁷ What *The Beetle* and *Metamorphosis* have in common is that they are both Gothic texts which share the uncanny element of a human being's transformation into an insect. The main themes in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* are the transmutation of a supernatural being into an insect and back into a humanoid form, reversed aging, as well as a shift from male to female and vice versa. However, the transmutation in Marsh's text is very different from Kafka's

196 Social and scientific changes in the second half of the nineteenth century certainly play a part in the occurrence of the theme. However, especially in context with Egyptianising fantastic fiction, the political relationship between Britain and Egypt as well as the mystical connection which was attributed to ancient Egypt by esoteric groups must have triggered the idea of a flux in physical and mental constituents. Furthermore, Richard Parkinson pointed out to me that *The Book of the Dead*, which was translated into German in 1842, contains "transformation spells," which enable the dead to transform into an animal. Apart from the actual text which would have been available to an interested reader, depictions of such transformations were also accessible in the nineteenth century.

197 For a further discussion on the element of stagnation in *Metamorphosis*, see Greg Houwer's *Into the White – Kafka and his Metamorphoses*, 21.

concept. While the mutation into a scarab beetle¹⁹⁸ by the protagonist in *Metamorphosis* is an event which portrays the personal conflict of the protagonist, and the subsequent inability to act reflects the mental state of the main character, Marsh's beetle is an ancient god-like creature, which has the ability to shape-shift, not only from human to insect, but also from male to female and old to young. Mariaconcetta Costantini suggests that the beetle embodies the numerous anxieties of the late nineteenth century, threatening "traditional paradigms of manliness, civilization, and nationality' in Victorian Society" (Costantini qtd. in Coelsch-Foiser 2).

Fantastic literature goes beyond borders – not only of realism, but also of cultural factuality. It defines the indefinable and gives room for interpretation and fascination. It imagines the impossible and makes it possible; at least within the text. The horizon of the mental capability of its readership is widened, which in turn leads to reflections on reality and a re-evaluation thereof. Therefore, it can break with an established order or convention just as much as philosophical pamphlets or political speeches can. Fantastic fiction explores the realm beyond convention and redefines established concepts and re-charges signs with different meanings, creating new realities within the universe of the text. It can be argued that bodily transformations like that of *The Beetle* display insecurity in traditional notions and conventions of the late-Victorians. They break with old structures and lead to new and ambiguous concepts, which cannot be so easily defined. *The Beetle* is a text which strongly reflects the anxieties of the late nineteenth century more prominently than other similar texts of that period, perhaps with the exception of Stoker's *Dracula*. As a typical late-Victorian Gothic novel it shocks, unsettles and frightens the reader. In creating something foreign or *Other*, which is supposedly familiar yet becomes unfamiliar and supernatural through transformation, it triggers a very basic fear; the fear of the unknown and unexplainable and therefore the uncontrollable. It poses a threat to cultural identification, the *Self*, and, in a very basic sense, it displays the fear of dehumanisation.

As Sigmund Freud argues in his essay "The Uncanny," the familiar can be equally frightening if it becomes connected with the unknown. Discussing this atmosphere, José Monleón cites Brion:

198 In the text the creature Gregor Samsa turns into is described as a dung-beetle, a *Mistkäfer* (cf. Kafka *Die Verwandlung* 47).

"There is a familiar sentiment of mystery felt for those things that we agree to qualify as mysterious; but the supreme sentiment is the unfamiliar sentiment of mystery felt for those things that we agree to find natural, familiar" (Brion qtd. in Monleón 102).

Pascal Nicklas uses the example of *Dracula* to define the fears which bodily transformations reflect:

[Dracula] not only threatens the individual but becomes a threat to cultural identification. His power of transformation is not only feared because he himself becomes difficult to define and consequently difficult to confine but his power of transformation is also transitive. He transforms his victims. (236)

The transformation does not only happen with the character of the beetle, or with Count Dracula in Stoker's case, but the victims of these characters are also transformed and, in turn, give power to the creature. This bilateral change is inherently vampiric, and it depicts the necessity of interdependence. Marjorie Lindon, for example, is under the mesmeric influence of the beetle while the creature feeds off her energy in order to gain physical strength and youth, causing her character to change greatly. From a respected and well-behaved Victorian lady she turns into an independent woman and starts to make decisions without consulting her father. Similarly, Lucy Westenra turns into a wildly sexual creature, shocking everyone who sees her after she is bitten by the vampire. A different variety of this bilateral change appears in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, in which Margaret Trelawny, a young and healthy Victorian woman, slowly changes under the spiritual influence of the mummy of Queen Tera and becomes apathetic and distant from what is happening around her.

Louisa May Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy's Curse" ("LiaP"), first published in 1869, might be the origin of this particular element in Gothic fiction. In her short story, the female protagonist's fate becomes dependent on an Egyptian seed which drains her life energy from her. Wearing the blossom of the flower which grows from the seed, "she glow[s] like a pomegranate-flower, her eyes [are] full of fire, her lips scarlet, and all her old vivacity seem[s] to have returned" (May Alcott "LiaP" 44). Before Professor Niles dies after being in contact with the strange plant as well, he manages to write a warning letter to the young couple, explaining that "[t]he plant slowly absorbs the vitality of whoever cultivates it, and the blossom, worn for two or three hours, produces either madness or death" (May Alcott "LiaP" 45). Evelyn changes from a healthy and happy woman into a shadow of her former self, completely unaware of her surroundings and Forsyth's care. While the transformation into a rather strong and beautiful woman is more than welcomed by her fiancée, the fate which awaits her is indeed a high price to pay. Evelyn degenerates into a living corpse, a creature unable to interact with the

world. The flower acts on behalf of the burned mummy, sucking out the life from those who have been in touch with it in a vampiric fashion. However, Evelyn, in contrast to Professor Niles, does not die, but ends up in a vegetative state, neither dead nor alive but entombed in her own body. She regresses into a being which is unable to participate in life and society, while her husband is confronted with his own guilt every day that he has to take care of his wife.

The fear of regression or cultural or social atavism¹⁹⁹ certainly play a part in May Alcott's short story as much as it is a topic in *The Beetle* and Stoker's texts – in both *Dracula* and *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Rider Haggard's adventure stories frequently reflect on the fear of regression. When he describes Captain John Good in *King Solomon's Mines*, Good is the ideal of the English gentleman, even in the unlikelyst of situations:

Here he sat upon a leather bag, looking just as though he had come in from a comfortable day's shooting in a civilised country, absolutely clean, tidy, and well dressed. He wore a shooting suit of brown tweed, with a hat to match, and neat gaiters. As usual, he was beautifully shaved, his eye-glass and his false teeth appeared to be in perfect order, and altogether he looked the neatest man I ever had to do with in the wilderness. He even sported a collar, of which he had a supply, made of white gutta-percha. (KSM 47)

During their adventure, Captain Good tries to keep up appearances and represents the flawless image of the British coloniser and soldier. However, the Captain is injured and consequently falls ill. He suffers from high fever and becomes delirious and impossible to interact with: "Good tossing to and fro, his features emaciated, his eyes shining large and luminous, and jabbering nonsense by the yard" (KSM 228). For the time of his illness he loses all of these stereotypically British traits. He turns into a babbling mess and can only be saved by a native woman and her medical care.

This fear of degeneration is also expressed in Marsh's text when Marjorie Lindon becomes rebellious and disobedient to her father in *The Beetle* – a development which is certainly also a reflection on emancipation and the "New Woman".²⁰⁰ Marjorie becomes less controllable to the men in the story, triggering the fear of the female *Other*, and the New Woman, which represents a threat to the established male-dominated system and therefore a regression, while

199 For a discussion on cultural atavism, see Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness*, chapter 8: "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in British Adventure Novels 1880–1914," 227–254.

200 For a detailed discussion of the New Woman in late-nineteenth century fiction, see Sally Ledger's *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*.

representing female emancipation at the same time. The independence and autonomy of women, however, never goes unpunished in literature, as for instance in Henry James' works²⁰¹ depicting the New Woman. Marjorie Lindon also has to suffer for her transgression, as she is raped, forced to cross-dress and is finally readjusted to her 'proper' role as a weak woman.

Another example is Robert Holt, who is mentally controlled by the beetle and falls ill as he is abused as a medium and a source of strength by the creature. In both instances, social conventions seem to be disregarded and control is taken out of the hands of the formerly powerful.²⁰² Stephen Arata speaks of reversed colonisation in his article "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (1990). He does not only refer to the geographical aspect and the threat of the colonised subject invading the space of the coloniser, but he goes even further in explaining the process of *Dracula* colonising the body of the coloniser and ruling over it; overpowering those who were in control before. Therefore, the threat turns inward and cannot be placed outside of the *Self* anymore, but becomes part of it. The same concept re-appears in Louisa May Alcott's "Lost in a Pyramid – or the Mummy's Curse", Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. The *Other* becomes part of the *Self* and partly takes over control, while the *Self* is unable to understand and fight against the *Other*.

This re-localisation of terror is closely connected to bodily and spiritual transformations. It represents another major theme in late Victorian Gothic literature and can be accounted for also in numerous non-Egyptianising texts, as for instance Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) or Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Costantini claims that the 1890s saw a climax of the "fascination with monstrosity and fantasy" for reasons which were "social, political and epistemological" and that "Gothic embodied the anxieties of a society threatened by anomie" (Costantini 139). José Monleón also notes that "at the turn of the twentieth century, unreason finally broke its chains of confinement and extended its presence across the entire social landscape" (103).

It can be argued that these anxieties were both those of society, but also, on a smaller scale, that of individuals. However, a differentiation between the author's fears and anxieties rooted in reality and the narrated ones as representations of those fears needs to be upheld. While the authors might not have been

201 Examples for James' work featuring the New Woman are *The Bostonians* (1886), *Daisy Miller* (1878) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

202 However, both Marjorie Lindon, by being a woman, and Robert Holt, by being poor, are somewhat excluded from the image of the strong British citizen.

personally involved or reflected on personal fears, the Gothic texts produced at the turn of the century consciously or subconsciously reflect society's anxieties.

Costantini notes that "[t]he Victorian idea of the 'fully human' becomes destabilised" (239). Not only political groups with agendas different from those in the past, such as socialists or feminists, but also immigrants from all over the Empire posed a threat to the established system. A change in political or social systems always also implies a change in identity and the need to redefine that identity. Costantini argues that this was the reason why so many monstrosities and uncertainties are reflected in the literature of the *fin de siècle*, especially confusion and blurring of gender, class and national boundaries. Furthermore, she argues that scientific developments not only in biology, but also psychology, have changed the perception of what 'human' actually is (ibid.). Human frailty is addressed repeatedly in Egyptianising fantastic fiction of the time – physical transformations, or, as a paradoxical opposite, the eternal preservation of the human body are constant occurrences in these texts. But not only physicality is questioned; transmutations of the human mind and its frailty are also discussed. Especially the minds of British or Western women are often described as fragile and can easily be entered and controlled by vicious ancient spirits. Examples can be found in Marjorie Lindon in *The Beetle*, Margaret in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, the female characters in *She* with the exclusion of Ayesha herself, and Evelyn in "Lost in a Pyramid – or the Mummy's Curse".

But not only women and their role in society are represented in these texts. By the late nineteenth century, men are also repeatedly confronted with their own weaknesses and are often depicted showing effeminate character traits. This issue can be considered a commentary or reflection on the fear of degeneration and a confrontation with weakness. Gender confusion is a prominent theme in *The Beetle*. Not only is the beetle a sexually ambiguous figure, shifting between being male and female, but its victims also suffer from gender confusion after being confronted with the beetle. Paul Lessingham, for example, a formerly self-assured politician falls prey to hysteria – a mental pathology that was conventionally associated with women – when he sees a picture of a scarab beetle:

On the instant a look came on to his face which, literally, transfigured him. His hat and umbrella fell from his grasp to the floor. He retreated, gibbering, his hands held out as if to ward something off from him, until he reached the wall on the other side of the room. [...] he backed away from me, shrieking, trembling as with palsy. [...] His agitation was so unnatural. (*The Beetle* 114, 116)

At the beginning of the novel, Paul Lessingham is described as a "fine specimen of manhood" (*The Beetle* 64). Ironically enough, this description comes from

the beetle: “he is straight, – straight as the mast of a ship, – he is tall, – his skin is white; he is strong – do I now know that he is strong – how strong! – oh yes!” (*The Beetle* 64). At this point it becomes obvious that the beetle’s interest in Lessingham is romantic, or at least a sexual one. The question as to the gender identity of the creature is posed in the next part, where the beetle seemingly speaks of Marjorie, but actually means itself: “Is there a better thing than to be his wife? His well-beloved? Oh no, not one! His wife! [...] To be his wife, – oh yes! – the wife of his scorn! The despised and rejected!” (ibid.). Later on, the reader learns that Lessingham and the creature did indeed have a one-sided relationship in Cairo; a relationship in which Lessingham was forced by drugs and hypnotism to endure her caresses.²⁰³ Confronted with this memory of sexual harassment by the beetle in form of a woman, he is reduced to a shrieking, weak mess.

Robert Holt, the first character to be confronted with the beetle in the book, describes his loss of manhood after being raped by the beetle (Costantini 242):

Fingers were pressed into my cheeks, they were thrust into my mouth, they touched my staring eyes, shut my eyelids, then opened them again, and – horror of horrors! – the blubber lips were pressed to mine – the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss. Then this travesty of manhood reascended to his feet [...]. (*The Beetle* 57)

By being under the hypnotic influence of the beetle, Robert Holt feels as if his control, and therefore his manhood, is taken from him:

‘There was this odd thing about the words I uttered, that they came from me, not in response to my will power, but in response to his. It was not I who willed that I should speak; it was he [...]. For the time I was not longer a man; my manhood was merged in his.’ (*The Beetle* 54)

Incidentally, something similar happens in Doyle’s “Lot No. 249” in which the protagonist is confronted with the revived ancient Egyptian mummy and, feeling helpless, exclaims that “[he] was never so unmanned before” (“Lot” 101). In contrast, Marjory is given the clothes of a man after she is kidnapped by the beetle:

‘He cut off her hair; he hid it and her clothes under the floor where we found them.’ [...] ‘Can it be possible that that humorous professor of hankey-pankey [...] can have sent Marjorie Lindon, the daintiest damsel in the land! – into the streets of London out in Holt’s old togs!’ [...] ‘In men’s clothing.’ [...] ‘Great Potiphar!’²⁰⁴ To think of Marjorie like that!’ (*The Beetle* 286)

203 Lessingham reports his experiences to the police and refers to the beetle as doubtlessly female.

204 As Julian Wolfreys remarks, this exclamation is highly ironic, as Potiphar is mentioned in the Bible as Pharaoh’s captain of the guard, who buys Joseph as a

During the course of the text, Marjorie becomes more and more independent of her father and claims her own sexual and social freedom (243). It is rather telling that she needs extensive medical care and spends many years in a mental asylum to cope with the experiences which she had while being under the influence of the Beetle. The change in her physical appearance, not only into a man, but also into a vagabond, and therefore a lesser being, is described as the worst of her experiences, which she thankfully does not remember after being healed from her mental breakdown: "Nothing has been said to her about the fateful day on which she was – consciously or unconsciously – paraded through London in the tattered masculine habiliments of a vagabond."

These changes, brought about by the indefinable Oriental creature, reflect a deeply rooted fear in the change of social order. The Beetle defies definition. It is neither human nor animal; neither male nor female; it disappears in the end, leaving the question of its existence open. This quality makes it probably one of the most horrifying 'monsters' in literature.

Brantlinger suggests that by "reaching its apogee in the 1880s and '90s, imperialist ideology [...] registered anxiety about the purity and permanence of its racial categories. Many late-Victorian stories and novels used Gothic elements to suggest that the Anglo-Saxon race or the Empire itself was imperilled" (Brantlinger VL 45). However, not only racial categories, but also those of gender and social standing led to this literary trend, which Brantlinger calls the *Imperial Gothic*. *The Beetle* is written in the tradition of the Imperial Gothic. Richard Marsh uses Egypt to create a mystical enemy. While some authors created a fictional ancient Egypt which was not only highly civilized to the extent that it could be compared to the British Empire, but also as a place which offers knowledge and, in some cases, even power, Marsh's Egypt, both modern and ancient, is negative. The text was published in a time of several revolts of Egyptians against the English and it was a very difficult protectorate to control regarding resources,

slave. ("Genesis" 39: 1). After Joseph refuses the seduction of Potiphar's wife, she accuses him of rape and he is thrown into prison, where he starts interpreting dreams and is brought before Pharaoh, where he begins his career at court. ("Genesis" 39: 10–20). On the one hand it is an allusion to the culture from whence the beetle stems, and on the other hand the character of Potiphar (as well as Joseph) were deceived by woman. It is farfetched, but, considering that Marsh certainly chose this curse for a specific purpose, this outcry could elude to the betrayal of a woman, in this case, Marjorie, who betrays her own sex and her fiancé by coming under the control of the beetle.

military presence and international pressure, as well as rising poverty and social unrest in Britain (*The Beetle* 20–22).

In the novel, Lessingham goes to Egypt in an attempt to spite his dead parents and ends up ill in Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, the go-to hotel for English society in the nineteenth century (*The Beetle* 238). After feeling better, Lessingham leaves the hotel and wanders through Cairo: "It was a narrow street, and, of course, a dirty one, ill-lit, and, apparently, at the moment of my appearance, deserted [...] the dirty street, the evil smells, the imperfect light [...]" (ibid.). When he hears a French song being sung in a small building, he enters, feeling somewhat more at home in "one of those places which are found all over the Continent"²⁰⁵ (*The Beetle* 239). However, the familiarity of the scene is quickly infiltrated by terror as he is drugged and forced to witness a cannibalistic ritual by a group which calls itself the 'children of Isis'. Lessingham is brought into another room, whose "walls and roof were of bare stone [...]" It seemed to be some sort of temple, and was redolent with the most extraordinary odour. An altar stood about the centre [...] (*The Beetle* 241). In the room, Lessingham notices the statue of a woman, which seems incredibly frightening to him: "Behind it was a huge bronze figure, more than life size. It was in a sitting posture, and represented a woman. [...] I came [...] to understand that it was meant for Isis" (ibid.). It seems almost comical that he should be so afraid of a statue of a woman when the only explicitly named frightening element is her size. While he is under the mesmeric control of the woman²⁰⁶, Lessingham is witness to cannibalistic rituals:

I saw [...] a human sacrifice offered on that stone altar, presumably to the grim image which looked down on it. [...] In each case the sacrificial object was a woman, stripped to the skin, as white as you and I, – and before they burned her they subjected her to every variety of outrage of which even the minds of demons could conceive.' (*The Beetle* 243)

Again, rape and homosexual practices are mentioned in connection with the women/the Beetle. The stereotype of a widely sexualised Egypt was established through popular accounts by Orientalists like Edward Lane (*Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* 1836). Apart from the rape, the sacrifices are clearly inhumane and exemplify the outrageous faith in ancient gods and degeneration. Brantlinger notes that the most common regression fantasy involved

205 As is typical in Britain, Lessingham refers to Europe as "the Continent".

206 Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "The Parasite" (1894) is an elaboration on the emasculation and helplessness of a man who is under the mesmeric spell of a woman, who abuses him mentally and physically.

cannibalism (Brantlinger *RoD* 246). Not only is this true for *The Beetle* in a sense that the creature feeds off its victim's life energy, but during this ritual, the ashes of the burned women are eaten by the children of Isis (cf. *The Beetle* 244). During this experience, Paul Lessingham also witnesses the transformation of the beetle. He does not immediately make the connection with the woman who has kept him as her slave since he came to the café, but when he manages to break the hypnotic spell he is put under, he witnesses the transformation himself. "Without the slightest warning, in an instant he had vanished, and where, not a moment before, she herself had been, I found myself confronting a monstrous beetle" (*The Beetle* 245).

In her essay on *The Beetle*, Mariaconcetta Costantini claims that "Egyptology, in particular, played a crucial role in reviving beliefs in reincarnation and occultism, which were 'imported' into Britain and became an essential part of the new spiritualistic movement" (248). This is not quite correct, as the concept of reincarnation of the soul in the body of a different human being did not exist in ancient Egypt. While early Egyptologists discussed the concept of reincarnation in ancient Egypt due to references in classical account, no evidence of the belief in reincarnation in the world of the living can be found in ancient Egyptian sources. There are only very few instances in which a concept related to reincarnation – namely the threat of a return of revenants in special cases²⁰⁷ – are accounted for in ancient Egypt. The concept of reincarnation is one which was imported from India and became mixed with Egyptian concepts during the late nineteenth century, when it was readily picked up and explored in several Egyptianising and other Gothic texts. Yet, in connection with the Egyptian symbolism of the scarab beetle, a form of rebirth was in fact subscribed to the insect, as the dung beetle lays its eggs into the dung ball from which the new-born beetles crawl. The Egyptians believed that the beetles were reproducing themselves and therefore became a symbol for the sun which was reborn every morning.

Surprisingly enough, Marsh gave the beetle one very positive quality. While the creature feeds off the life energy of its victims to gain physical and mental strength, the beetle's vampirism goes both ways. It does not only feed off energy, but it can also save lives, as it does when Percy Woodville is poisoned and the beetle revives him again. The ambiguity of its character therefore does not only lie in its transformations, but also in the complex emotional range which it portrays. One possible reading of *The Beetle* could adhere to Marsh's criticism of modern science. The character of the beetle represents a link between man and

207 For more details on revenants in ancient Egypt, see chapter 5.3.

nature; the green man²⁰⁸ personified – a warning against the drifting away towards science and forgetting nature, a romantic concept as described in William Wordsworth's sonnet "The World Is Too Much With Us" (1807):

Little we see in Nature that is ours; We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
[...] For this, for everything, we are out of tune. ("The World" 518)

Wordsworth goes on recalling the ancient Greek gods, wishing himself to be part of a more holistic world.

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. ("The World" 518)

This turn towards ancient pagan concepts is a typical phenomenon of the late nineteenth century and found its expression in the creation of numerous secret orders and trends like Theosophy and a return to occult practices:²⁰⁹

Revived in the West by Theosophy and other doctrines, transmigration and animal power suggested the existence of a link between spiritualism and nature, which was also confirmed by the etymological origin of the noun *animal*, derived from the Latin word *anima* (soul). (Costantini 252)

The transmigration of the spirit features as a major theme in several Egyptianising texts.

Brantlinger links the scientific development with the renewed interest in the supernatural and the occult: "Along with the rise of Spiritualism and interest in the occult, the return to the Gothic was also a reaction to novelistic realism and to science, or at least to scientific materialism" (Brantlinger VL 49). For him the 'Imperial Gothic' is defined through "seemingly scientific and progressive [...] ideology" with the "antithetical interest in the occult" (Brantlinger RoD 227). As Rosemary Jackson stated, the fantastic, and, in this case, the Gothic, reflects on the established order and explores the limits of that order (Jackson 4). If literature went beyond these borders to explore what society did not offer, a similar process must have happened in everyday life, sparking an interest in the supernatural. Brantlinger goes on to explain that: "Imperialism and occultism both function as *ersatz* religions, but their fusion in Imperial Gothic represents something different from a search for new faiths" (Brantlinger RoD 229). Not only Darwin's theory, but also the extension of the Empire and the subsequent confrontation with social unrest and political instability in Britain triggered the fear

208 For a disquisition of the *green man*, see William Anderson's *Green Man: The Archetype of Our Oneness With the Earth*.

209 For further elaborations on Egypt in connection with occult practices, see chapter 6.

of degeneration and an insecurity concerning the future of Britain. The British system, which had been believed to be stable and superior in all aspects of life, was threatened from without and within (Brantlinger *RoD* 229–30). The literary transgression from the known and the rational to the unknown and often supernatural depicts the insecurity and deep-rooted anxiety of the future of the British Empire. “The subjectivism of Gothic romance as a genre thus intersects with the atavistic character of both imperialist ideology and occult belief” (Brantlinger *RoD* 245). Through occultism, the *Other* is often brought home purposefully. The British characters go native by practicing ancient or Oriental magic, often because it is the only chance to defeat the enemy or get to know and explore the supernatural. In five Egyptianising fantastic texts, namely “Lot No. 249”, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *The Story of the Amulet*, “Sand” and “Descent in into Egypt”, British characters practice ancient magic in order to explore or go beyond the borders of the known.

It can be argued that the strong dependence on Gothic and supernatural elements in late Victorian fiction not only reflects the fear of the unknown and uncertainty concerning the future, but the trend possibly also indicates a very different element: after the white spaces on the maps have been filled almost entirely, the world seems sufficiently explored. If reality and the present are not enough, the future and transcendence become the focus of interest for explorers, and in our case, authors.

Furthermore, the past as an unexplored or forgotten concept becomes interesting again. Quite a number of Egyptianising fantastic texts do not so much look ahead as back in time. They explore a civilisation which has been obliterated almost entirely, but is now in the process of being re-established – at least in museums and the artistic as well as the linguistic sense. Therefore one of the greatest and oldest civilisations was lost but found again. Egypt might not only serve as a reminder of the instability and possible collapse of a great nation, but it might also still serve as a small beacon of hope for the endurance of the British nation. The beetle and his magical abilities are therefore also a remnant of an ancient time, a reminder of what the great ancient civilisation was able to do.

“Divided between attraction and repulsion, the colonizers were scared of being haunted at home by the spiritual powers of their new subjects, which they were unable to understand and, therefore, to exorcize” (Costantini 244). This fear explains why, at least in fiction, the colonisers or British characters in general often have to resort to ancient magic to fight off the ‘enemy’ as their own weapons fail. In a sense it enables the fictional characters to act on their fears and fight the enemy in ways which would be impossible in reality. “[...] Much of the

nineteenth-century writing about the Empire was ambivalent, at once approving and disapproving” (Brantlinger VL 2). It is ironic that so many Europeans kept mummies and other ancient ‘magical’ objects in their private collections, therefore bringing the *Other* home, while simultaneously fearing it. It almost seems as if they wanted to be confronted with something ‘irrationally’ dangerous. The collection of ancient artefacts might therefore not only be explained with the imperial need to own the *Other*, organise and control it, but it was also a subconscious longing for supernatural occurrences in a scientific world. “Instead of admiring the ‘magic’ of science [...], late-Victorians were more and more enchanted by the ‘magic of uncanny phenomena” (Costantini 248). This trend has also been discussed by José Monleón: “Unreason was presented everywhere; emptiness had no form, but was capable of assuming them all; meaning seemed to be inapprehensible [...] how could otherness be distinguished from the self?” (Monleón 99).

Bringing home the Empire and therefore the *Other* in form of artefacts and myths, the threat towards the British Empire still comes from outside, the fear of the destruction of British civilisation goes hand in hand with the increasing number of immigrants coming to Britain from the colonies. The strong and, by definition, occidental quality of the British was undermined and ‘orientalised’ as a consequence of the conquests. This backfiring of global rule certainly posed a palpable threat to the British, as Arata has pointed out. For Julian Wolfreys, Egypt clearly represents what Said calls the *Other*:

It is a novel in which the various facets of late-Victorian modernity, science, parliamentary democracy, imperial identity, and, most generally expressed, the nineteenth-century investment in the attainability and efficacy of knowledge as a form of power and control are confronted by the non-rational, the inexplicable, the archaic, *the other*. (*The Beetle* 12)

The *Other* becomes the *Self*, which is in itself confusing and breaks up the conventional identity and counter-identity. There are no more clear boundaries if the *Other* can become part of the *Self*, both physically and mentally. This cognitive change, to which Jandt and Tanno refer (121) when the *Self* has to engage with the *Other*, consequently leads to deconstruction of both artificially created concepts. This change occurs not through an active reflection on the roles of the *Self* and *Other*, but through force. The ancient *Other* either places itself or is placed in the midst of the Western *Self* and a confrontation is unavoidable. In *The Beetle*, a number of formerly fixed categories become blurred: young and old, human and animal, dead and living, oriental and occidental, male and female, white and black (cf. Costantini 240). “Marsh crafted a whole cluster of meanings

onto his weird creature, whose body becomes a ‘monstrous text’ that conveys disquiet through its semantic openness” (241).

Even the text itself is not clearly defined through a singular narrative or a frame narrative. It is a compilation of four different narratives, all unreliable first-person narrators, whose accounts sometimes overlap but often show only one side of the story. The narrative is, therefore, as fragmented and ambiguous as the beetle itself.

Brantlinger names three major themes in texts which he places into the genre of Imperial Gothic: “[I]ndividual regression or going native; an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world” (*RoD* 230). The fear of regression, as already demonstrated with examples from *The Beetle*, also appears in other Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Robert Chambers’s *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844) was one of the key texts prior to Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) which espoused a theory of evolution. Concerning the evolution of humans, Chambers argued that the non-white races were all regressions and that only the white race had progressed (cf. Brantlinger *VL* 37).

This common sentiment would explain the mind-set of the authors and artists who depict ancient Egyptians with European features, especially women, who tend to adhere to the European standards of beauty, often being depicted as white-skinned and fair or as somewhat Oriental with dark skin, hair and eyes but who still bear marks of European beauty. Rana Kabbani argues that the “desirable woman in Orientalist painting was hardly ever ‘foreign’ looking. She conformed closely with conventional standards of European beauty” (Kabbani 81). Egyptian characters – if they were to play positive roles in the texts – no matter if they were mummified, reborn Egyptians from the past or ghosts of themselves, are usually described as surprisingly European. If they have Asian or African features, they are always ‘weak enough to still be beautiful’, such as Ma-Mee in “Smith and the Pharaohs”. Had they been black, they would automatically have been referred to as a regressed race. The difference between the descriptions of male and female ancient characters is quite striking in their obvious dissimilarity:

Ma-Mee. Oh! there she stood, without a doubt, only ten times more beautiful than he had ever pictured her. She was tall and *somewhat fair-complexioned*²¹⁰, with slumbrous, dark eyes, and on her face gleamed the mystic smile he loved. She wore a robe of simple white and a purple-broidered apron, a crown of golden *uraei* with turquoise eyes was set

210 Stress added by me to mark the European feature in Ma-Mee.

upon her dark hair as in her statue, and on her breast and arms were the very necklace and bracelets that he had taken from her tomb. ("SatP" 341)

Following the characterization of Ma-Mee, the next paragraph offers a description of a male character; and the dichotomy in the two descriptions is almost comical in its brevity and bluntness: "Presently a Pharaoh, a black-browed, vigorous man with thick lips, drew near" ("SatP" 341).

In *King Solomon's Mines*²¹¹, Sir Henry, whom Allen Quatermain compares with an ancient Dane upon their first meeting²¹² because of his general bearing and his blond hair, becomes a noble savage during a fight, and Quatermain conjures up this image:

A pair of sandals, a leglet of goat's hair, a heavy battle-axe with a rhinoceros-horn handle, a round iron shield covered with white ox-hide, and the regulation number of *tollas*, or throwing-knives, made up his equipment, to which, however, he added his revolver. The dress was, no doubt, a savage one, but I am bound to say that I seldom saw a finer sight than Sir Henry Curtis presented in this guise. (*KSM* 184)

In this case, the comparison to an ancient being is not so frightening, as Sir Henry represents a strong white warrior, and therefore remains a representative of the strong European.

In the 1880s, both pre- and post-Darwinian race scientists typically assumed that 'savagery' characterized the most inferior races – a condition that, it was held, doomed at least some races to complete extinction. Thus, 'savagery' as often viewed as a main cause of extinction, rather than either disease or the violence inflicted on them through colonization. (Brantlinger VL 37)

If one follows this line of argumentation, it would, at least in part, explain the fear of atavism²¹³ in the second half of the nineteenth century. To a British citizen degeneration would not only mean a regression from a highly civilised and intellectual society, but it would also pose a physical threat to those who became 'weak and lesser beings'.

211 *King Solomon's Mines* is not strictly an Egyptianising text, but structured very similarly to Haggard's other Egyptian romances.

212 Here, the 'editor' remarks that Quatermain possibly mixed up the races of the ancient Danes and Anglo-Saxons, because Sir Henry's hair is blond, and not, as the editor explains to have been typical for the ancient Danes, dark (cf. *KSM* 5).

213 This fear, which is widely reflected in nineteenth-century literature and culture, was called "degeneracy" („Entartung“) by Max Nordau (cf. Nordau 496). The term later gained a different connotation when used by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s to define art which did not meet the political approval of the leaders of the NSDAP.

To stress the threat of the *Other* in *The Beetle*, besides depicting the physical and spiritual abuse performed by the Oriental antagonist, the creature escapes unhindered, as the novel concludes with an accident. The train in which the beetle and the hypnotised Marjorie Lindon are leaving London crashes. This incident can be read as a warning against the human pursuit of knowledge, and the invention of always bigger and faster machines and scientific development in general. A similar, although smaller-scale incident also serves as a warning of human transgression concerning science. Sidney Atherton's character is depicted as a typical young man from a Victorian adventure novel. He takes risks in his private, as well as in his public life, and he is an explorer from the heart. He invents a potential weapon of mass destruction, which shows that the concept of chemical warfare was already a notion discussed by the end of the nineteenth century: "I went into my laboratory to plan murder—legalised murder—on the biggest scale it ever has been planned" (*The Beetle* 97). This invention seems rather strange, but it bears a great resemblance to Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, which was published in 1906. In Conrad's novel the incorruptible Professor takes pleasure in building bombs and constantly carries one around with him, reveling in the power to be able to destroy many lives at any given moment. Building a bomb which might kill on a large scale seems to be of great interest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an interest which, eventually, leads to the invention of real weapons of mass destruction, like lethal gas, grenades and bombs, and, as the most destructive of all, the atomic bomb.

When Percy Woodville, a friend of Atherton's, joins him for an experiment on a cat – which dies in the course of said experiment – he is not comfortable with the transgression his acquaintance commits. His discomfort grows when Atherton explains to him his fantastical vision of the future:

'Reflect! think of a huge bomb, filled with what we'll call Atherton's Magic Vapour, fired, say, from a hundred and twenty ton gun, bursting at a given elevation over the heads of an opposing force. Properly managed, in less than an instant of time, a hundred thousand men, —quite possibly more!—would drop down dead, as if smitten by the lightning of the skies. Isn't that something like a weapon, sir?' (*The Beetle* 137)

Gilbert Keith Chesterton imagined a similar concept a decade after *The Beetle* in *The Man Who was Thursday* (1908, *TMWwT*):

An anarchist is an artist. The man who throws a bomb is an artist, because he prefers a great moment to everything. He sees how much more valuable is one burst of blazing light, one peal of perfect thunder, than the mere common bodies of a few shapeless policemen. An artist disregards all governments, abolishes all conventions. The poet delights in disorder only. (*TMWwT* 4)

Being shocked by so much aggressive potential in Atherton, Woodville accidentally breaks a beaker containing the toxic fluid, and dies. Only the sudden appearance of the beetle in human form can save him. It is not explained how the beetle saves the life of Percy Woodville, but it is obvious that it is through some ancient wisdom, magic or practice, pitching deadly modern science against ancient healing powers. Similar to the final train accident, the chemical accident illustrates human improvidence and megalomania.

Both accidents put things into perspective. While the beetle has harmed a handful of people over the course of the novel, the train-crash obliterates many lives in the course of a single event. This thought can certainly be linked to events at the turn of the century, and in a sense it already foreshadows events in the twentieth century which were triggered by megalomania, like the sinking of the *Titanic* or the use of modern warfare which occurred during World War I. Leaving the ending open with the death of many, a disturbed Marjorie Lindon, who has to undergo medical treatment to be able to return to her normal and designated role as a Victorian proper woman, and the escape of the beetle, the novel does not offer a satisfactory conclusion to the reader; and on top of it all, the question remains whether modern science, represented in Sidney Atherton, is not more dangerous than an ancient creature on a personal vendetta. The established order is threatened, not only from the outside and the *Other*, but also from the inside. This twist makes this novel more unnerving and thought-provoking than many of the other Egyptianising texts.

While *The Beetle* is the novel which makes the most extensive use of body transformations, the theme is present in numerous of the Egyptianising fantastic texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The anxiety of spiritual and mental control of the *Other* over the *Self* finds expression in the concept of transmigration and physical change. In fantastic literature, female characters seem to be particularly vulnerable and susceptible to the *Other* which can easily control and change them. Evelyn in "Lost in a Pyramid," Margaret Trelawny in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Marjorie Lindon in *The Beetle*, the maids in "The Story of Baelbrow," and Miss Wragge in "The Nemesis of Fire" all share the fate of female characters who have to suffer a violation by the *Other* and who are changed – and sometimes killed – by the contact. A few male characters, like Lessingham and Robert Holt in *The Beetle* and George Isley in "A Descent into Egypt" are not excluded from falling prey to the *Other* which changes them physically and mentally. The ancient Egyptian *Other* therefore causes a disruption of the established order, presenting a threat to the Western system, and reflects a fear of being physically possessed by the *Other*, reversing the colonial idea of possessing

and controlling the *Other*. The theme of transformations of and by the *Other* thus reflects a general fear of change in Victorian Britain. Moreover, the British Empire sees itself confronted with its own weakness and the fear of not being in control is depicted in Egyptianising fantastic fiction, and in particular through the transgression and transformation of the *Other* into the *Self*.

5.3 Vampiric Qualities of Ancient Egyptian Characters

*Here we have every indication of a vampire intelligence
touching into life and energy the dead human frame.
Hence the mark on the neck of its victims, and their
bloodless and anæmic condition. For a vampire, as
you know, sucks blood.* (“Baelbrow” 135)

While they are not as prominent as other major themes, vampiric qualities in the ancient *Other* still feature frequently in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Mummies and vampires are both representative literary figures in Romantic and Victorian Gothic fiction, and although they have quite a few aspects in common, they usually appear to be understood as completely different literary and cultural concepts. When Bram Stoker wrote his bestselling novel *Dracula* (1897), he created a character which is now almost synonymous with the term vampire. However, vampires have populated English literature since John Stagg’s poem “The Vampyre” (1810), Byron’s “Fragment” (1816) and the subsequent novel by Polidori *The Vampyre* (1819), followed by *Varney – The Vampire* by Thomas Preskett Prest in 1845. Bram Stoker combined the characteristics of vampires from previous stories and folklore thus creating *the* stereotypical vampire.

The term *vampire* entered the English language for the first time in 1734. It had made its way into English via the German and French *Vampir*, but supposedly originates from the Kazan Tatar term *ubyr*, which translates into “witch” (OED “Vampire”). It was applied to a blood-sucking bat species by the French scientist Buffon, henceforward linking the mammal with the fictional or mythological character. A female vampire has been referred to as *lamia*, a term which was applied by Keats in his homonymous poem. *Lamia* appeared in the English language in 1382, much earlier than *vampire*, and it originates from the Greek word λαιμός, meaning “throat.” The Latin loan word *lemurs* means “spirit of the dead” (OED “Lamia”).

Egypt is not listed in the etymologies, and yet it is possible that the concept of vampires could originate in the region of Egypt, Babylonia and Mesopotamia (Carter 2). The notion of the “undead” was one of the strongest religious

paradigms of Egypt.²¹⁴ However, the term “undead” does not mean a formerly dead human being who physically returns to the realm of the living, but refers to a much more complex religious aspect, which supposes that once dead and after the performance of all necessary rituals, a person would come to life in a different transcendent form, united with a god. The coffin texts²¹⁵ speak of death as a necessary step into a new, eternal life (Hodel-Hoenes 1). This collective denial of death, as Jan Assmann calls it (Assmann *Death and Salvation* 17), was necessary to keep Ma’at²¹⁶, the world order, and prevent chaos, which would have meant an absolute death.

Herman Kees describes the role of the lion goddess Sekhmet, who was created by Ra, the oldest god, in order to destroy his mortal enemies (6). She killed too many and her blood thirst was not stilled even after all her enemies had died. To prevent her from killing all mankind, Ra tricked her by turning the colour of the Nile red by substituting water with beer and ochre, making it seem as if it was blood, and as she grew drunk she became a gentler aspect of herself, Hathor (Kees 6). However, Sekhmet is not only violent, but also a protector of women and menstruation. Again, blood plays an important role. She causes and cures diseases, is pestilence and physician in one person.²¹⁷ The attribution of Sekhmet as the bringer of the plague puts her into the same category as a vampire, as vampires have been associated with carrying diseases and being responsible for the plague. Her being could therefore be described as vampiric. Deities with similar characteristics appear all around the world. Besides goddesses that resemble vampiric characters at least in some aspects, the religion of ancient Egypt was, in fact, mostly concerned with death and afterlife.

The ancient Egyptians did not accept death as the end of life. The incredible tombs and monuments built for the deceased were therefore a way of building against death, of keeping the dead alive and not letting them die, as Jan Assmann

214 For further reading on this issue, see Rune Nyord’s *Breathing Flesh: Conceptions of the Body in the Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*.

215 Coffin texts are prayers and texts that were placed in pyramids, tombs and on coffins, describing the journey of the dead after the initial death. For a German translation of the *Book of the Dead*, see Erik Hornung’s *Das Totenbuch der Ägypter* (1979).

216 For further reading, see Jan Assmann’s *Maat. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*.

217 This particular aspect features in Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* when the creature which becomes younger as it drains its victims of life energy also displays its ability and willingness to save Percy Woodville after he accidentally dies from one of Sidney Atherton’s experiments.

explains in *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (18). Even if physical death is unavoidable, the sphere of social life was established by remembering the dead through all the corresponding rituals and practices. However, as the first coffin- and pyramid texts were translated, and possibly understood in a literal sense, it must have seemed as if the Egyptians practised the reviving of the dead and therefore created “undead” humans; a notion which is likely to inspire supernatural stories.

Illustration 14: “The Sarcophagus of Sasobek at the British Museum”.



The German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius translated a selection of the texts in 1842 and called them *The Book of the Dead*, a title that was not used by the

Egyptians²¹⁸ but which seemed to hint at an active part of writing or conducting on the side of the dead, which would make them thus “undead.” They contain an extremely detailed description of what awaits ancient Egyptians after death. In several passages the dead body is brought back to life – is able to breathe, eat and drink and to walk again.

A small number of texts speak of dead ancestors returning to the realm of the living²¹⁹ to haunt their unfaithful relatives in the form of revenants if they did not take proper care of their graves. This haunting is said to take place in dreams. The night also had a quality of death, as the Egyptians feared that the sun would not win the nightly battle against its greatest enemies and fail to return in the morning. Every time the Egyptians fell asleep, they believed they died (Assmann *Death and Salvation* 104).

An inscription from the Twelfth Dynasty (1991–1802 BC) is meant to protect the offerings left to the statue in the image of the deceased:

As for every mayor, every *Wʿb*-priest, every scribe and every nobleman who shall take [the offering] from the statue, his arm shall be cut off like that of this bull, his neck shall be twisted off like that of a bird, his office shall not exist, the position of his son shall not exist, his house shall not exist in Nubia, his tomb shall not exist in the necropolis, his god shall not accept his white bread, his flesh shall belong to the fire, his children shall belong to the fire, his corpse shall not be to the ground, I shall be against him as a crocodile on the water, as a serpent on earth, and as an enemy in the necropolis. (Nordth 60)

A further example from the Twentieth or Twenty-first Dynasty²²⁰, “His name shall not exist in the land of Egypt” (Nordth 60). These are only a few aspects with which the Victorians found themselves confronted by Egyptological findings. With more and more Egyptian literature translated the public learned of this strange culture and religion, and as many elements of Egyptian religion are obviously predecessors of Christian religion²²¹, other aspects seemed too abstract and uncanny not to be embraced by Gothic literature and to intermingle with already established concepts.

218 The German term “Totenbuch” was previously used as a register, a list of the dead of a parish etc. Lepsius’ usage of the word gave it a very new and very different meaning.

219 For further reading, see David Silverman’s *Ancient Egypt*, 142 ff.

220 Inscription on a statue of the high priest Herihor, 20–21. Dynasty.

221 For a popular scientific but important comparison of the ancient Egyptian Religion and its link to Christianity, see Achmed Osman’s *Christianity: An Ancient Egyptian Religion* and Jan Assmann’s *Moses the Egyptian – The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.

The display of mummies in exhibitions must have had an even greater impact on the imagination of the Victorians than the translations of the ancient texts. Despite the withered state of the bodies, a freshly unrolled mummy would still amaze by its clear resemblance to a perfectly preserved human body. This immediate confrontation with death in the form of these ‘not-quite’ humans inspired Victorian writers, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote his two “Egyptian” short stories²²² after visiting the British Museum’s mummy collection.

Carol Senf summarises four characteristics which are proposed by Margaret Carter to be typical of vampires in English literature (Senf 13). Firstly, vampires are reanimated human corpses, and not a different species. Secondly, vampires sustain their immortality by drinking blood. Thirdly, the vampire’s need for blood can destroy the victim or, fourthly, turn the victim into a vampire as well. A fifth rule concerns the practice of killing vampires. Whereas garlic, holy water and crosses can keep vampires at bay²²³, and stakes through the heart and beheading seem very often the most effective way of killing a vampire, the only absolute way of complete destruction is cremation (Carter 3; Zandee 133).²²⁴ This practice has been used at all times and all over the world to destroy enemies, be they real or a fragment of imagination (Carter 3). The same practice is used in Doyle’s “Lot No. 249”, where a villainous mummy can only be completely destroyed by fire. Rider Haggard’s queen Ayesha also dies in a fire. Sunlight, of course, is another powerful ally to the living. The sun represents growth and life and therefore is, in contrast to darkness and night, the domain of the living.

Margaret Carter notes in her survey concerning vampirism in literature that many of the prominent vampires in English literature are aristocrats, for example Lord Ruthven in *The Vampyre*, Count Dracula, and Sir Francis Varney (cf. Senf 13). This notion can be explained with the common practice in Gothic literature to set stories away from society in large buildings such as country estates or castles. A further reason can be found in the close connection of

222 “The Ring of Toth” and “Lot No. 249.”

223 Since vampires in literature are fictitious, it is impossible to claim that these rules hold true in all cases, as authors have worked with different concepts of and sources for their vampires.

224 It was also a common practice in ancient Egypt to burn wax figurines representing the enemy as wax leaves no traces when it is burnt. The vicarious destruction of the icons meant the symbolic complete destruction of the enemy (cf. Ritner 150). For a discussion on the iconography of fire in ancient Egypt, see Hosna Abd el-Samie Mahmoud, “Representations of Fire from Icons to Symbols.”

vampires with decadence and social decay, which was associated with nobility in Victorian times.²²⁵

The ancient Egyptian *Other* is very often also embodied by a royal character.²²⁶ Most of the mummies or immortal Egyptian characters belong to the nobility of their time, for example Ayesha in Rider Haggard's novels, Stoker's Queen Tera in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Thothmes XXVII and his daughter Hatasou in Grant Allen's "My New Years' Eve Among the Mummies." In contrast to the aristocratic vampires, the Egyptian nobility seems an obvious choice, as most of the mummies that were found and put on display in the 19th century were in fact pharaohs and their families or members of the court.

Literary vampires usually have the supernatural ability to shift shape and to control animals and the elements. In chapter eighteen of *Dracula*, Van Helsing explains how vampires can change shapes:

[H]e can, within limitations, appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are to him; he can, within his range, direct the elements: the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat – the moth, and the fox, and the wolf, he can grow and become small [...]. (*Dracula* 283)

Other shapes that vampires, according to the literary convention, can also take on are those of snakes, poisonous insects, wolves or dogs (Carter 61). In contrast, shape shifting is not a typical feature prescribed to mummies in Egyptian fiction. However, in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* the villain can shift shapes from a beetle to a human being. Over the course of the novel the human form also changes, from an ancient male into a distinctly female, young body. The vampiric ability of shape shifting has been employed in the movie "The Mummy" (1932) and its modernized version (1999), in which the revived mummy is able to turn into sand and to control beetles and other insects.

Vampires and literary mummies are generally considered to be 'undead' – of having come back to life after having died. However, not all ancient Egyptian characters have indeed been previously dead. Numerous fictional mummies have been embalmed alive in order to remain so for eternity. The idea of "hibernating" within the tomb, facilitated by ancient Egyptian secret knowledge and practical magic, seems more convenient than a return from the dead for most writers of mummy fiction. In Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy," the newly

225 For further reading, see Susan Navarette's *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence*.

226 The term Egyptian fiction is used in this book to refer to Victorian Gothic literature with Egypt as its theme and not ancient Egyptian literature.

revived Allamistakeo declares that he belongs to a special tribe of ancient Egyptians who are able to hibernate for hundreds of years in order to awaken every few centuries and take notes on the major changes which have occurred since the last time they went to sleep (Poe “MNYE” 31). In Grant Allen’s “My New Year’s Eve Among the Mummies,” princess Hatasou²²⁷ and her father Thothmes XXVII, together with the complete court, have been embalmed alive in order to awake every thousand years and have a feast. Bram Stoker’s Queen Tera lets herself be buried before her time in order to be reawakened in the nineteenth century. But not all mummies have been hibernating in their tombs. Several others have actually died and are revived either by modern science, like Cheops in *The Mummy!*²²⁸, or by ancient magic such as the mummy in “Lot No. 249” which is revived through an ancient ritual. A fascinating and unique idea stems from Louisa May Alcott’s “Lost in a Pyramid,” in which a plant acts on the will of a sorceress who is burned by the male Western protagonists, ensuring that her curse to harm those who harmed her comes over Professor Niles and Forsyth, and, by proxy, his fiancée. While the flower itself is “ghostly-white”, it has scarlet stamens like “forked tongues” (43–44). As the plant grows, it sucks out the life from its victims, and it reacts to human proximity by turning a shade of deeper red. On her wedding day, Evelyn wears the blossoming flower which drains her of energy. Forsyth remarks: “How pale you are, and how thin you grow!” to which Evelyn answers: “Neither sleep, food, nor air gives me strength, and a curious mist seems to cloud my mind at times. (“LiaP” 43). Her physical appearance is similar to how Stoker describes Lucy Westenra’s appearance in *Dracula* thirty years after Loudon’s short story, after the vampire begins to drink her blood: “She was ghastly, chalkily pale. The red seemed to have gone even from her lips and gums, and the bones of her face stood out prominently” (*Dracula* 147). It appears that in May Alcott’s story, not only energy, but also blood is taken from Evelyn. A few hours later, after their wedding, Forsyth finds his new wife in a vegetative state and he quickly finds out what caused her demise. “There was no need for her to answer, for there, gleaming spectrally on her bosom, was the evil blossom, its white petals spotted now with flecks of scarlet, vivid as drops of newly spilt blood” (“LiaP 46). May Alcott’s story is one of the earliest in which an ancient Egyptian creature displays vampiric characteristics, but it is certainly not the last.

227 A spelling of Queen Hatshepsut (approx. 1479–1458 BC), made popular by Amelia Edwards.

228 Although Cheops was shocked into life by Dr. Entwerfen’s galvanizing machine, a higher power also had a hand in his reanimation, granting him a chance to redeem himself and atone for his sins in future England.

The depiction of mummies in Victorian literature can be placed into two categories. One is a naturalistic image with the mummy's skin old and crumpled, almost falling apart and smelling of death and decay. The other is perfection. In some texts, mummies are unrolled and brought back to life by magic or modern tools, such as electric shocks in Poe's "Some Words With a Mummy" or Doyle's "Lot No. 249." In many other texts, mummies appear unharmed by time or natural powers. The mummy's foot in Rider Haggard's "She" is perfectly preserved with white soft skin. Equally beautiful and perfect is the mummy of Queen Tera in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. This depiction of a perfectly conserved body reflects the amazement and subsequent exaggeration of the beauty of the literary mummies.

The notion that the ancient Egyptians mummified their dead in order to make them immortal corresponds perfectly with the idea of the vampire. "The Story of Baelbrow" by E. and H. Heron (1898), published only a year after Stoker's *Dracula*, features the mummy of a vampire – a combination of both established Gothic creatures into one terrifying monster which haunts the household of Mr Swaffam, who leases his estate to Professor Van der Voort. The psychic detective²²⁹ Flaxman Low is called to the scene and soon finds out that the creature who haunts the estate is in fact a piece of Swaffam's private collection of curiosities – a mummy. Taking into consideration that several of the victims are drained of blood, detective Low soon deduces that the mummy became a vampire while being placed in Swaffam's house:

'It is held by some authorities on these subjects that under certain conditions a vampire may be self-created. You tell me that this house is built upon an ancient barrow, in fact, on a spot where we might naturally expect to find such an elemental psychic germ. In those dead human systems were contained all the seeds for good and evil. The power which causes these psychic seeds or germs to grow is thought, and from being long dwelt on and indulged, a thought might finally gain a mysterious vitality. [...] Here we have every indication of a vampire intelligence touching into life and energy the dead human frame. Hence the mark on the neck of its victims, and their bloodless and anæmic condition. For a vampire, as you know, sucks blood.' ("Baelbrow" 135)

E. and H. Heron's short story is the only Egyptianising story of the period which takes the step towards combining a mummy with a vampire as distinctly. Other texts tend to use one of the typical features of vampires and apply them to mummies. Bram Stoker's Queen Tera from *The Jewel of Seven Stars* is a version of the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut or Hatasu²³⁰, notably also a member of the Egyptian

229 Flaxman Low is a psychic version of Sherlock Holmes; and the essential structure of Doyle's detective stories can be found in "The Story of Baelbrow".

230 Hatasou is also the princess in Grant Allen's short story.

nobility. In contrast to most of the mummies in the Victorian stories, Queen Tera is not actually revived, but enters and controls the mind of the young Margaret Trelawny through mesmeric power. Mind control is also a prominent theme in Stokers *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, the two novels that are used here to exemplify the blurry lines between mummies and vampires in late Victorian Gothic literature. Richard Marsh wrote *The Beetle* in 1897, in a time when Flinders Petrie had been excavating in Egypt for almost twenty years, enhancing the collection of the British Museum and thereby keeping ancient Egypt in the news. Whether Marsh ever went to the collection is unknown. He was, however, friends with Bram Stoker who was very interested in and knowledgeable about ancient Egypt. *Dracula* was published only four months later, but Marsh's novel was by far more popular (cf. Vuohelainen 94).

The ancient creature in *The Beetle* is not a mummy, but a Gothic shape shifter who eats human flesh and consumes its victim's life energy. These practices are clearly vampiric, just as the spell by which the beetle controls and paralyses its victims. As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the movie *The Mummy* (1932, remake 1999) took up the concept of energy-vampirism and thus created the character of Imhotep, who grows younger with each person he kills. A noteworthy aspect of *The Beetle* is that the victims are both male and female in contrast to Margaret Carter's claim that vampires usually choose victims of the opposite sex (cf. Carter 2). However, it is not surprising, as one of the major themes of the novel is gender confusion. The creature seems male at first, but its features become more and more female with each day that it lives off Robert Holt's energy.

The beetle as such is not a very Gothic symbol *per se*. It was used by Kafka and by Poe²³¹, and both were described as Scarab beetles, but they both have very different purposes. However, Kafka's beetle is a transformed human being and therefore similar to Marsh's beetle. Marsh made use of the insect to portray a horrifyingly beautiful creature in contrast to the old and crumpled but equally horrifying ancient human being.

There was not a hair upon his face or head, but, to make up for it, the skin, which was a saffron yellow, was an amazing mass of wrinkles. The cranium, and, indeed, the whole skull, was so small as to be disagreeably suggestive of something animal. The nose, on the other hand, was abnormally large; so extravagant were its dimensions, and

231 Poe's "The Gold Bug" (1843) is a short story at whose centre lies a mathematical code whose deciphering leads to a hidden treasure. The original reason for the treasure hunt as well as the solution to the question of the location of the treasure is solved with the help of a golden scarab beetle. There is no connection to Egypt in this story which focuses on the treasure hunt in which the beetle acts mostly as a red herring.

so peculiar its shape, it resembled the beak of some bird of prey. A characteristic of the face—and an uncomfortable one—was that, practically, it stopped short at the mouth. The mouth, with its blubber lips, came immediately underneath the nose, and chin, to all intents and purposes, there was none. This deformity—for the absence of chin amounted to that—it was which gave to the face the appearance of something not human,—that, and the eyes. (*The Beetle* 61)

The description of Sydney Atherton seems to add to that of Robert Holt, but he witnesses the transformation of the human being into the beetle:

My impression, when I saw it first, was that it was as large as the man had been, and that it was, in some way, standing up on end, the legs towards me. But, the moment it came in view, it began to dwindle, and that so rapidly that, in a couple of seconds at most, a little heap of drapery was lying on the floor, on which was a truly astonishing example of the coleoptera. It appeared to be a beetle. It was, perhaps, six or seven inches high, and about a foot in length. Its scales were of a vivid golden green. I could distinctly see where the wings were sheathed along the back, and, as they seemed to be slightly agitated, I looked, every moment, to see them opened, and the thing take wing. (*The Beetle* 137–8)

The scarab is used for purposes other than it would have been used in an ancient Egyptian context.

Illustration 15: “Scarab at the British Museum”.



The purely positive quality of the insect as well as its religious significance for the Egyptians is reversed into a terrifying and evil creature, which is only remotely connected to its smaller relatives. The scarab in ancient Egypt represented one aspect of the creator god Ra, because it was thought that the beetle produced life out of the dungball he rolled up. Therefore, the word for scarab, Chepre, means “to come into existence”, and “to be”. To reverse the original purpose of the symbol is Marsh’s way of using the uncanny to create horror.

The body of the beetle is described as beautiful, with shimmering wings and an astonishing green colour. This beauty stands in stark contrast to its evil character. Phobia of insects is and was certainly widely spread among urban citizens. Whether it is the alien form or the mere number in which insects populate the planet triggers fear or aggression, it is obvious that Marsh made use of this fear as a vehicle for the uncanny quality of *The Beetle*. The transformation or transmigration²³² from an insect into a strange person, or rather creature takes place several times over the course of the story.

Another vampiric Egyptian creature was introduced by Bram Stoker in 1903 in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. It seems not surprising that the novel should have vampiric elements, as almost all of Stokers stories deal with vampires in one way or another. The archaeologist Abel Trelawny finds the tomb of the ancient Egyptian Queen Tera, who left instructions to reanimate her in the future. The precondition is that all of her tomb’s inventory would have to be assembled in the exact way that it was in her tomb and that the stars stand in a certain constellation. The constellation is depicted in the eponymous huge blood-red jewel, in the form of a scarab, which the mummy holds in her perfectly preserved hand when she is found. During the course of the novel, the spirit of the mummy, who is kept in the bedroom of the archaeologist, takes possession of his daughter Margaret. The young woman is eventually under complete control of the queen, and even though the mummy remains a dead body during the course of the story, she dictates the action. Again, it is not blood that a vampire drinks from its victim, but it is control over and the usage of a human being that is the vampiric element. Just as in Marsh’s story, the ancient character disappears in the end. While the Egyptologist executes what he calls the “Great Experiment,” all except the narrator die.

232 The transformation is called apotheosis as well as transmigration in the text. Apotheosis (αποθεώω) is the Greek word for “to deify”, whereas transmigration is “[a]nother word for reincarnation [...]”. Especially in the [modern] Orient the concept of falling back on the ladder of evolution and becoming an animal again is widely spread” (Cranston and Williams 214). Cranston refers to the Hindu belief in reincarnation. Such a concept does not exist in Islam.

Stoker had to rewrite the original ending, as the first one was considered too dire for his readership. In the second edition, the narrator marries Tera's *doppelgänger* Margaret Trelawny, who wears the shroud of the mummy as her wedding dress. The second ending is also different in the way that it is obvious that the spirit of Queen Tera has merged with Margaret's by the end of the novel. The vampiric possession of the victim is just as obvious as in *Dracula*, where Lucy and several other characters are controlled by the count just as Robert Holt is controlled by the beetle. Cheops in *The Mummy!* also has a certain ability to control the minds of those around him, although he does not make extensive use of it.

Yet another special combination of ancient Egypt and the concept of vampirism can be found in Algernon Blackwood's "The Decent into Egypt." In Blackwood's short story, ancient Egypt itself is personified. While the *Ka* of Egypt features in Blackwood's preceding Egyptianising short story "Sand" and the protagonists attempt to create a body which can host the collective soul of the country, Egypt's role is a more dangerous one in "The Descent into Egypt." Those explorers who are truly interested in Egypt's past become distant from the present as Egypt slowly drags their souls into the past and away from the here and now. "And this word 'soul' remained with me to the end. Egypt was taking his soul away into the Past" ("ADiE" 9). George Isley, the narrator's friend, who is gladly offering his soul to Egypt, is already addicted to the pull from the past and aware that modern times do not matter to him anymore. The narrator tries to describe the process:

The ancient, buried, hidden Egypt had cast her net about his soul. Grown shadowy in the Present, his life was being transferred into some golden, reconstructed Past, where it was real. Some countries give, while others take away. ("ADiE" 11)

She goes on to describe the process which she is witnessing: "I thought of those abominable insects that paralyse the motor systems of their victims and then devour them at their leisure –alive" (*ibid.*). Here the vampiric theme is clearly visible. Furthermore, the notion that once bitten by a vampire, the victim turns into a vampire as well is referenced when Isley tries to explain his willingness to have his soul turned. "The soul assumes the qualities of the deity it worships. The powers of its deity possess it and transform it into its own likeness" ("ADiE" 27). At the end of the story George Isley's physical form remains in the present, but his soul has vanished into the past.

[H]is appearance shocked me inexpressibly: there was nothing in him – nothing. It was the representation of George Isley that came back from Thebes; the outer simulacra; the shell that walks the London streets today. I met no vestige of the man I used to know. George Isley had disappeared. ("ADiE" 31)

Ancient Egypt therefore acts as a vampiric character that breaks into the present and lures the souls of willing victims into the past. In a way, Blackwood's character suffers a similar fate to May Alcott's Evelyn, only that Evelyn's soul is trapped in her lifeless body while George Isley's body is still normal, but his soul has disappeared.

These examples show how frequent vampiric themes are in nineteenth and early twentieth century Egyptianising fantastic fiction. The vampiric component is convenient in the context of Egyptianising fantastic fiction as the *Other* not only threatens the *Self* by its mere presence, but also through physical or mental appropriation. Today, vampires and mummies are both stereotypical Gothic characters and both equally popular as Halloween costumes. It is striking that beside Pharaoh's curse, a concept which became popular after the discovery of King Tut's tomb and the subsequent death of a few archaeologists, many mummies in twentieth century literature and film tend to hunt down victims and feed off them, thereby acting as vampires.

5.4 Sleep and Dreams in Egyptianising Fantastic Fiction

To sleep, perchance to dream. (Hamlet III, 1: 65)

In fantastic fiction sleep regularly precedes supernatural occurrences in texts which begin in a mimetic mode. Sleep usually serves as a frame to a story, like it does in Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It allows for the literary creation of a world in which supernatural events can occur without the reader having to question their actuality. Through sleep, two alternative realities are created; the real world of which the sleeper is unaware during sleep and a dream world in which supernatural events or occurrences are not necessarily questioned. It is not a coincidence that sleep and dreams feature so heavily in Egyptianising stories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century:

The dream, as a concept, can be used as a metaphor for a state of unreality or fantasy, but it is also regarded as a something which has an objective existence as a means of communication between the divine and human sphere and as a source of divine assistance to human beings. (Lloyd 88)

In these texts, sleep is not merely a marker of supernatural elements, but it also serves as a device in which the fourth dimension²³³ is explored. Time and space

233 I am referring to the fourth dimension in the way Rudy Rucker describes it in his *The Fourth Dimension – A Guided Tour of the Higher Universes* (1984). In this book

can be overcome in dreams, and it is possible to introduce time and space travel in literature through dreams, be they sleep-induced or daydreams.

It is striking how often the concept of sleep, dreams or visions is chosen in Egyptianising fiction to link to the past or to open a door to the ancient or supernatural *Other*. In such cases, confrontations with an ancient object or person are in the focus of an otherwise realistic story.²³⁴ With the rising interest in spiritualism at the end of the nineteenth century dream-like states or trances were induced to break through to the realm of the dead and to communicate with them. This concept was incredibly popular during the *fin de siècle* and most of the authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction were either interested in spiritualism and the occult or were actively practicing it.²³⁵ Furthermore, ancient Egypt itself was considered to be a somewhat otherworldly place and Egyptian art was often described as nightmare inducing or something out of a feverish dream:

Attempting to define precisely what it is that Egyptian sculpture aims to achieve, [Peter] Patmore describes it [in his *Guide to the Beauties of the British Museum*, 1826] as having a 'shadowy' character, where the forms were imaginative and not intended to represent anything real. To make this idea comprehensible, he presents a comparison between Egyptian sculpture and the forms we 'see in feverish dreams, and which haunt us in that nervous affection called the *night-mare*.' (Patmore qtd. In Moser 117)

Taking this sentiment into account, it is no miracle that dreams play such an important role in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Several different uses of sleep and dreams are to be found in the primary texts which are analysed in this book. The first kind of unconsciousness or sleep in connection with supernatural elements is induced by handling ancient artefacts or confrontations with Egyptians. Secondly, sleep is used in numerous texts as a frame to the story, usually adding a

Rucker also cites P.D. Ouspensky who wrote the essay "The Fourth Dimension" in 1908, summing up contemporary assumptions on the topic: "[...] we must recognize ourselves as beings of four dimensions. Do we not in sleep live in a fantastic fairy kingdom where everything is capable of transformation, where there is no stability belonging to the physical world [...]. All this taken together shows us that we have no need to think that the spirits that appear or fail to appear as spiritualistic séances must be the only possible beings of four dimensions. We have very good reason for saying that we are ourselves beings of four dimensions [...]" (59).

234 With the exception of Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*, in which the psammead is already a supernatural element in a realistic setting and Oscar Wilde's *Fairy Tales* "The Happy Prince" and "The Young King".

235 Authors who were part of either occult or spiritualist groups or organizations were Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Edith Nesbit, Grant Allen, Oscar Wilde, Rider Haggard, and Sax Rohmer.

fantastic quality to the text, often in connection with being woken from sleep by something supernatural or uncanny. A third function of sleep in Egyptianising fantastic fiction is slightly more complex because of its varieties: it is sleep as a plot point woven into the narrative and linked to supernatural elements, trance, coma, nightmares or visions – all connected to Egypt. Sleep is furthermore used to shift the literary mode from the mimetic to the fantastic within stories which begin in a realistic mode into which fantastic elements enter.

In “Lost in a Pyramid” by Louisa May Alcott, Paul Forsyth tells his fiancée the story of finding strange-looking seed inside the Cheops pyramid. He describes how, after entering the pyramid of Cheops, he, Professor Niles, and their guide explore the labyrinth of passageways and catacombs. They eventually decide to split up, because Forsyth wants to leave, but the professor is obsessed with the pyramid and wants to explore further. They wait for a second guide so that each can leave: “The professor sat down to take notes of his researches, and stretching myself on the soft sand, I fell asleep.” (“LiaP” 38) Until then, the story has not been much more than the report of a journey into the pyramid, but with sleep comes fear: “I was roused by that indescribable thrill which instinctively warns us of danger, and springing up, I found myself alone.” (ibid.). After searching for the professor in the dark, he finds him, but also finds that they both are lost. To draw attention to themselves, they set a coffin, and later a mummy on fire. When the mummy starts to burn, however, Paul Forsyth is affected quite strongly:

‘A dull blaze sprung up, and a heavy smoke rose from the burning mummy, rolling in volumes through the low passages, and threatening to suffocate us with its fragrant mist. My brain grew dizzy, the light danced before my eyes, strange phantoms seemed to people the air, and, in the act of asking Niles why he gasped and looked so pale, I lost consciousness.’ (“LiaP” 41)

The narrative is cut short afterwards. Forsyth simply tells his fiancée that they were found by their guide and brought to safety.

In Poe’s “Some Words with a Mummy”, sleep frames the story, and it is not immediately related to a confrontation with an Egyptian object or person. However, it allows for a seamless introduction into a fantastic story.

Having [...] concluded a frugal meal, and donned my night-cap, with the serene hope of enjoying it till noon the next day, I placed my head upon the pillow, and, through the aid of a capital conscience, fell into a profound slumber forthwith. (“SWWaM” 21)

However, the narrator is woken up again after a short while and called to join an unrolling of a male mummy, who, after receiving several electrical shocks,

wakes from its slumber²³⁶ and converses with the gentlemen who conducted the experiment. After this quite humorous conversation in which the mummy slams modern American inventions and its political system, but has to eventually admit that American cough drops are far superior to any ancient Egyptian knowledge or medicine²³⁷, the narrator returns home to sleep and finishes his account with the wish to be mummified himself to be able to see what the future brings.

Upon getting home I found it past four o'clock, and went immediately to bed. It is now ten A.M. I have been up since seven, penning these memoranda for the benefit of my family and of mankind. The former I shall behold no more. My wife is a shrew. The truth is, I am heartily sick of this life and of the nineteenth century in general. I am convinced that everything is going wrong. Besides, I am anxious to know who will be President in 2045. ("SWWaM" 36)

Grant Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" is equally framed by sleep. The narrator travels to Egypt with his fiancée Editha Fitz-Simkins and friends for the winter to get away from the rough London climate in order to help Editha's mother's health to be restored. Ironically, the narrator falls ill himself. "I went to bed that night, in my hammock on deck, with feelings far from satisfactory [...]. I felt wretched and feverish" ("MNYE" 48). Unable to find rest, he rises and seeks out the unopened pyramid of Abu Yilla, describing his state as "[...] awake, half asleep, and altogether feverish" ("MNYE" 49). Despite (or maybe because) of his state, he finds the secret entrance into the pyramid and encounters the court of Thothmes XXVII, where he learns that all the mummies inside the pyramid have been embalmed in such a way that they can wake up again once every thousand years. At first the narrator is astonished that his knowledge and civility is not recognised as superior to that of the ancient Egyptians, but he soon falls in love with pharaoh's daughter, Hatasou, and decides to be embalmed himself to be able to be with her, even if it is only every once in a millennium. Just as the priests start the process of speed-mummification on him, he becomes unconscious, and then awakes again:

When I awoke again, my first impression led me to believe that the thousand years were over, and that I had come to life once more to feast with Hatasou and Thothmes in the Pyramid of Abu Yilla. But second thoughts, combined with closer observation of the

236 The mummy says that he has never been dead but belongs to a family whose members are mummified and then called back to life from a comatose state later.

237 The short story is highly ironic and clearly criticises the general American arrogance towards other cultures and self-importance. Another literary example is Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost" (1887).

surroundings, convinced me that I was really lying in a bedroom of Shepherd's Hotel at Cairo. ("MNYE" 58)

The story ends with the narrator passing on the story to us, the readers, in the hope that it will survive long enough that after one thousand years, someone will seek out the pyramid and see whether the mummies come to live again to prove his narrative to be right. With this whimsical remark, he both tries to justify his account as an actuality, and at the same time discredits his reliability. Therefore, the fever dream is identified as exactly that, a dream.

The Jewel of Seven Stars begins as the narrator Malcolm Ross is woken from sleep²³⁸ and called to the help of Margaret Trelawny. At the house of Abel Trelawny and his daughter, Malcolm Ross is confronted with the dreadful fact that Margaret woke up from sleep in the middle of the night to find her father bleeding and comatose in his room. For Miss Trelawny, the story also begins with sleep and with her being woken from it to find herself in a very real nightmare.

I was awakened by some sound; I do not know what. I only know that it came from my sleep, for all at once I found myself awake, with my heart beating wildly, listening anxiously for some sound from my father's room. [...] There was not any noise of moving, or no kind of cry at all; but there was a queer kind of dragging sound, and a slow, heavy breathing. Oh! It was dreadful, waiting there in the dark and the silence, fearing – fearing I did not know what.²³⁹ (*JoSS* 7)

For both protagonists, the events which are to follow begin after they are woken up from sleep. While Malcolm Ross is dragged from his bed by Margaret's letter (cf. *JoSS* 4), Margaret herself is in fact woken by something supernatural. The reader is never told what exactly it is that she hears, but by the description of how her father is found outside of his bed and bleeding and by what he tells upon waking up, it can be assumed that it is the mummy which Margaret hears. "There was some active intelligence awake. I am convinced of it. And it wielded a power which it never lacks. I believe that on both those occasions hypnotism was the power wielded" (*JoSS* 130).

238 The first paragraph of *The Jewel of Seven Stars* already warns us of the dream-like and unrealistic nature of the narrative which will follow: "It all seemed so real that I could hardly imagine that it had ever occurred before; and yet each episode came, not as a fresh step in the logic of things, but as something expected. It is in such a wise that memory plays its pranks for good or ill; for pleasure or pain; for weal or woe. It is thus that life is bittersweet, and that which has been done becomes eternal" (*JoSS* 3).

239 The uncertainty of what she heard and what had woken her in her own house is a prime example of the uncanny.

Ross' confrontation with supernatural events occurs in the house after he himself falls asleep while watching over the sleeping²⁴⁰ Mr Trelawny, who has been attacked and is injured while he is in a coma:

It must have been that the passing of this disturbing thought made for repose of mind, which is the corollary of bodily rest, for, though I really cannot remember being asleep or waking from it, I saw a vision—I dreamed a dream, I scarcely know which. [...] I sat as one entranced. At last I felt, as in nightmare, that this was sleep, and that in the passing of its portals all my will had gone. All at once my senses were full awake. A shriek rang in my ears. [...] The sight which met my eyes had the horror of a dream within a dream, with the certainty of reality added. (*JoSS* 27–28)

While Malcolm Ross is indeed only asleep, having worn a respirator against a strange smell emanating from the mummy of Queen Tera, which stands in the bedroom of Mr Trelawny, everyone else in the room is affected by exactly that smell and falls into a trance. From this moment on, initiated by sleep, supernatural occurrences and strange events happen in Malcolm Ross' presence.

Several times the narrator falls asleep only to be woken up by strange occurrences: "The sight which met my eyes had the horror of a dream within a dream, with the certainty of reality added" (*JoSS* 28). Later on, when Abel Trelawny tells his story to the narrator, Malcolm Ross, he says:

'For sixteen years I have never ceased to think of that adventure, or to try to find a clue to the mysteries which came before us; but never until last night did I seem to find a solution. I think I must have dreamed of it, for I woke all on fire about it. I jumped out of bed with a determination of doing something, before I quite knew what it was that I wished to do. (*JoSS* 107)

But dreams and sleep are not merely a marker for supernatural events, they become part of the discussion about ancient Egyptian magic when Mr Trelawny elaborates on his theories:

'We know from their records, and inferentially also, that the Egyptians studied the properties of herbs and minerals for magic purposes—white magic as well as black. We know that some of the wizards of old could induce from sleep dreams of any given kind. That this purpose was mainly effected by hypnotism, which was another art or science of Old Nile, I have little doubt. But still, they must have had a mastery of drugs that is far beyond anything we know. With our own pharmacopoeia we can, to a certain extent, induce dreams. We may even differentiate between good and bad—dreams of pleasure, or disturbing and harrowing dreams. But these old practitioners seemed to have been

240 The chapter in which he awakes from his coma is named "Awaking from the Trance", so Mr Trelawny's state is defined as being a consequence of the mummy's hypnotic powers.

able to command at will any form or colour of dreaming; could work round any given subject or thought in almost any ways required. In that coffer, which you have seen, may rest a very armoury of dreams. Indeed, some of the forces that lie within it may have been already used in my household.' (*JoSS* 130)

Mr Trelawny believes that the mummy has not been dead, but slumbering and, upon being found by archaeologists, disturbed in her dreams and put into a semi-awake state, in which she can influence those around her.

'Her dream must have been broken when the Dutch explorer entered her sculptured cavern, and his follower violated the sacred privacy of her tomb by his rude outrage in the theft of her hand.' (*JoSS* 135)

During the "Great Experiment" the protagonists light ancient lamps, which in turn cause black smoke to ooze into the room from a box which belongs to Tera's funerary equipment and which had until then remained unopened. In the original ending this event leads to the death of all characters except the narrator, while the alternative ending sees everyone lose consciousness. In the alternative ending the protagonists survive the experiment in which the mummy of Queen Tera is supposed to be resurrected. Both versions have in common that the mummy disappears.

Deeper and deeper grew the black mist, and its pungency began to assail my nostrils as well as my eyes. [...] Sick at heart, and with a terror which has no name, I [...] went to look for my companions. I found them all where they had stood. They had sunk down on the floor, and were gazing upward with fixed eyes of unspeakable terror. Margaret had put her hands before her face, but the glassy stare of her eyes through her fingers was more terrible than an open glare [...] It was merciful that I was spared the pain of hoping. (*JoSS* 184–85)

The description of the alternative ending is slightly less drastic, although even more uncanny than the original ending:

I waited and waited, expecting every instant to hear the command to turn up the light; but none came. I waited still, and looked with harrowing intensity at the rolling billows of smoke still pouring out of the glowing casket, whilst the lamps sank down and went out one by one. [...] A few seconds made a perceptible change as the thick, black smoke began to roll out of the windows. Then the lights began to grow into strength and I could see the room. All the men were overcome. Beside the couch Doctor Winchester lay on his back as though he had sunk down and rolled over; and on the farther side of the sarcophagus, where they had stood, lay Mr. Trelawny and Mr. Corbeck. It was a relief to me to see that, though they were unconscious, all three were breathing heavily as though in a stupor. (*JoSS* 185–86)

The fatal experiment at the end of the novel is an attempt to wake her from this state. Margaret Trelawny is immediately affected by the semi-wakeful state of the mummy as Queen Tera's spirit transmigrates into her body and changes her. While the men notice a change in her behaviour, they welcome the sudden intellectuality and insight which Margaret presents when they speak about the mummy:

'To me, then, it is given to understand what was the dream of this great and far-thinking and high-souled lady of old; the dream that held her soul in patient waiting for its realisation through the passing of all those tens of centuries. The dream of a love that might be; a love that she felt she might, even under new conditions, herself evoke. The love that is the dream of every woman's life; of the Old and of the New; Pagan or Christian; under whatever sun; in whatever rank or calling; however may have been the joy or pain of her life in other ways. Oh! I know it! I know it! I am a woman, and I know a woman's heart.' [...] 'Surely, surely, such a one had nobler dreams! I can feel them in my heart; I can see them with my sleeping eyes!' As she spoke she seemed to be inspired; and her eyes had a far-away look as though they saw something beyond mortal sight. And then the deep eyes filled up with unshed tears of great emotion. The very soul of the woman seemed to speak in her voice; whilst we who listened sat entranced. 'I can see her in her loneliness and in the silence of her mighty pride, dreaming her own dream of things far different from those around her.' (JoSS 136–37)

Margaret Trelawny is possessed, or at least controlled and guided by the spirit of Queen Tera. She changes throughout the text until she acts entirely on account of the mummy's spirit. Margaret marries Ross in the mummy's shroud in the alternative ending, having become a different woman than the one she is at the beginning of the text. She remains under the spell and thereby gives life to Queen Tera's dream.

In Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, the politician Lessingham recalls an event in his youth when he visits Cairo. He describes how he is drugged and put under a hypnotic spell by a woman, who turns out to be a god-like creature; a changeling which can transform into a scarab beetle, but also switch between male and female. Lessingham explains how he enters a French coffee house in Cairo, lured there by the voice of the woman, who passes him a drink and entrances him with further songs:

So enthralled was I by the display of the girl's astonishing gifts that I did not notice what it was I was drinking. Looking back I can only surmise that it was some poisonous concoction of the creature's own. That one small glass had on me the strangest effect. (*The Beetle* 239–240)

After being drugged and hypnotised, Lessingham loses consciousness: "[...] a curtain seems to descend. There comes a period of oblivion" (*The Beetle* 240).

The man does not wake up for a long time, but finds himself in a state in which he has no power of his body, but sees and hears everything. It is in this semi-vigil state in which he has to witness nightmarish scenes of sexual orgies, human sacrifices and cannibalism. Eventually the bond breaks and he manages to escape, only to be haunted by the creature twenty years after this nightmare. The beetle can here be seen as one of the sleep-inducing Egyptian elements. It has hypnotic or mesmeric powers and can control whoever it chooses to control. Its victims grow weaker and lose their own will, and their gender identity is challenged. The influence of the trance therefore does not only connect the characters with the supernatural, but it affects them physically and mentally.

Oscar Wilde's two Egyptianising fairy tales, also link Egypt to the present of the narrative through dreams and visions. In "The Happy Prince", the swallow is on its way to Egypt to winter there, but, having fallen in love with a reed and foolishly stayed too long, is separated from his brothers and lands on the statue of the happy prince to spend the night. While the prince asks the swallow to bring the jewels which adorn the statue to the poor and needy, the swallow keeps dreaming of Egypt, explaining the wonders of the far-off land to which it is supposed to fly. The longer the swallow stays with the prince, the more mystical and supernatural Egypt becomes. It is not a dream experienced while sleeping, but a vision of what could be if the swallow had left in time. While the story, being a fairy tale, has supernatural elements, the present of the swallow and the prince stands in stark contrast to the almost paradisiacal place that is the swallow's vision of Egypt.

In the beginning, the swallow describes Egypt as one might think of it after having read about the Egyptian mummies and landscape of Egypt:²⁴¹

'I am waited for in Egypt,' said the Swallow. 'My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.' ("THP" 157)

However, as time passes the chance of the swallow to reach Egypt grows smaller and the descriptions become more fantastic, but also geographically defined:

'I am waited for in Egypt,' answered the Swallow. 'To-morrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the

241 Egypt is not specified as ancient Egypt. It does not seem relevant at this point. It is, however, free from any modern Arabic settlement or any other hint of a contemporary real place.

morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract. ("THP" 158)

Already aware that it is too late to leave now, the swallow imagines his brothers as they are in Egypt: "My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other" ("THP" 160). Finally, in his last, fruitless dream, the swallow finally drifts off into an entirely fantastic Egypt:

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies. ("THP" 160-161)

Egypt serves as a glimpse of hope rather than a real place, and the colder it gets and the more dire the situation for the swallow becomes, the more paradisiacal and supernatural Egypt becomes in the bird's imagination. A similar approach is chosen by Hans Christian Andersen in his "The Little Match Girl" (1845), in which a little girl lights the matches she is supposed to sell on New Year's Eve in order to keep warm, and sees visions of her grandmother which grow more vivid and comfortable the colder it gets. In the end the girl freezes to death and the vision of her grandmother carries her into heaven. Wilde seems to have borrowed extensively from Andersen's fairy tale.

The Egypt in Oscar Wilde's "The Young King" is a very different one, and yet it is indeed seen in a dream. A young boy is identified as the rightful king and, taken from the fields where he has worked as a shepherd, moved into the palace and prepared for his coronation. While his clothes and regalia are prepared, he has three dreams, and in each dream he sees the horrid circumstances which people have to suffer in order to get him his gems and jewels. Death wipes out many just so the king will have his proper clothes. Egypt is one of those places from which jewels are produced, and in which people suffer greatly for it. In the beginning, Egypt is described as a source for magical turquoise as it is found buried with the mummies:

All rare and costly materials had certainly a great fascination for him, and in his eagerness to procure them he had sent away many merchants, some to traffic for amber with

the rough fisher-folk of the north seas, some to Egypt to look for that curious green turquoise which is found only in the tombs of kings, and is said to possess magical properties [...]. ("TYK" 261)

But soon, this magical place becomes a nightmarish place, overrun with death and despair:

"There is famine in the walled cities of Egypt, and the locusts have come up from the desert. The Nile has not overflowed its banks, and the priests have cursed Isis and Osiris.' [...] And Death laughed again, and he whistled through his fingers, and a woman came flying through the air. Plague was written upon her forehead, and a crowd of lean vultures wheeled round her. She covered the valley with her wings, and no man was left alive. [...] And out of the slime at the bottom of the valley crept dragons and horrible things with scales, and the jackals came trotting along the sand, sniffing up the air with their nostrils. ("TYK" 265)

The dream serves as a way of making the young boy see reason and act responsibly and humane. Egypt is, again, neither the nineteenth century Egypt, nor the ancient Egypt from the history books and scientific accounts. It is a place set apart from reality, a magical place, displaying clear qualities of a fairy-tale land, where death is personified and takes away lives at his will and sends diseases and dragons. Egypt turns into a nightmarish place. This development can possibly be read as a comment on the changes of Egyptian history and a reflection on the difference between ancient and modern Egypt, but at the same time it refers to Moses' plagues while the Irish Famine between 1845 and 1852 might also come into play at this point.²⁴² This reading would again suggest that Egypt as the *Other* as used in Wilde's story is a distorted reflection of the *Self*.

A second text in which a vision of ancient Egypt seems to appear in the middle of the night in what can be interpreted as a dream is Rider Haggard's "Smith and the Pharaohs." The protagonist Mr James Ebenezer Smith, a self-taught student of Egyptology, searches for the tomb of a princess with whom he found himself in love after seeing her counterfeit in a museum. Paying for the excavations himself, he travels to Egypt to dig in a wadi where he believes the tomb is to be found. He finds the entrance to a tomb, but has to break off work, as his Egyptian workers are too superstitious to remain in the proximity of the tomb, fearing the spirits of the dead. Smith is unimpressed and decides to spend the night at the mouth of the tomb.

242 Wilde's Irish mother published the poem "The Famine Year" in 1847, which suggests that he was familiar with the hardship of those years in Ireland.

Collecting his goods, or as many of them as he wanted, he thrust them into the pockets of the great-coat and returned to the mouth of the tomb. Here he made his simple meal by the light of the lantern, and afterwards tried to go to sleep. But sleep he could not. Something always woke him. ("SatP" 321)

Unable to sleep, or, perhaps as he comments himself later, dreaming very vividly to be awake, Smith walks around to keep himself warm and has a vision:

Once, thousands of years ago, a procession had wound up along the roadway which was doubtless buried beneath the sand whereon he stood towards the dark door of this sepulchre. He could see it as it passed in and out between the rocks. The priests, shaven-headed and robed in leopards' skins, or some of them in pure white, bearing the mystic symbols of their office. The funeral sledge drawn by oxen, and on it the great rectangular case that contained the outer and the inner coffins, and within them the mummy of some departed Majesty; in the Egyptian formula, 'the hawk that had spread its wings and flown into the bosom of Osiris,' God of Death. Behind, the mourners, rending the air with their lamentations. Then those who bore the funeral furniture and offerings. Then the high officers of State and the first priests of Amen and of the other gods. Then the sister queens, leading by the hand a wondering child or two. Then the sons of Pharaoh, young men carrying the emblems of their rank. ("SatP" 322)

Smith watches on as he is presented with a vision from the past, but finally it ends. "The vision passed. It was so real that Smith thought he must have been dreaming" (ibid.). The vision of another time in the same space is not the only dream-related adventure Smith has. After entering the tomb and finding that it is indeed that of the Egyptian princess Ma-Mee²⁴³, he returns his findings to the Egyptian museum in Cairo, where he meets the director Mariette to deliver the objects, keeping a ring for himself, before he returns to the exhibition to look at the face of his beloved Ma-Mee.

243 The name being an obvious play on words with 'mummy'. Bradley Deane points out a Freudian reading of Ma-Mee as 'mummy' or mother, both the "mother of Western civilization and the object of its modern desire" (Deane 386). Furthermore, a French reading of 'Ma mie' (my darling) has been suggested (ibid.). Freudian readings of mummy fiction in general were also suggested by Jasmine Day in *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-Speaking World* (2006) and Lynn Parramore in *Reading the Sphinx: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture* (2008). Both books discuss several of the texts which this book analyses. However, Day's highly subjective defence of mummies against a Western stereotype of the mummy as a monster and Parramore's choice to narrow her analysis down to a mostly feminist and psychoanalytic reading, offers only limited insight into the genre and excludes or even rejects other possible readings.

Starting to compare his finds with the statuette of Ma-Mee in the museum, he doesn't notice the museum closing and eventually finds himself alone in the deserted halls. Smith finds a place to sleep in the museum, behind some statuettes and wooden boats: "Smith did ultimately fall asleep, for how long he never knew. At any rate, it is certain that, if so, he woke up again." The remark that it is certain that he woke up again is ironic in the context of what happens next. The ghosts of all the mummies in the museum gather in the main hall and discuss the outrageous practice of modern men to drag them from their graves and display them, sometimes naked, in museums.²⁴⁴ Giving himself away through clumsiness, Smith is discovered and put on trial. However, during the trial, Ma-Mee explains that Smith is the reincarnation of her lover Horu, and therefore deserves to have her things and is advised by her to wear her ring until he dies yet again to take it into his grave with him. Then she explains to him that he will, upon waking, think that he has only dreamt the episode:

'Now hearken. When Ra the great sun arises again and you awake you will think that you have dreamed a dream. You will think that in this dream you saw and spoke with a lady of Egypt who died more than three thousand years ago, but whose beauty, carved in stone and bronze, has charmed your heart to-day. So let it be, yet know, O man, who once was named Horu, that such dreams are oft-times a shadow of the truth.' ("SatP" 351-2)

Indeed, he wakes up to find that he lies where he went to sleep the night before.

It was a very cold and a very stiff Smith who awoke on the following morning, to find himself exactly where he had lain down—namely, on a cement floor beneath the keel of a funeral boat in the central hall of the Cairo Museum. ("SatP" 352)

However, his need to find the princess is stilled and, once back at home in England, he never returns to Egypt again, being contented with his experience.

While Haggard's short story was published rather late (1912), it is clearly an homage to two other narratives, one being Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" and the other, undoubtedly the inspiration for both later short stories, being an anonymously published story in the *Illustrated Magazine* from 1843. The inspiration to both short stories seems to be the tale of Withers Grubbe. The story²⁴⁵ was published in 1843 in the *Illustrated Magazine*, intended as a parody of the growing interest in Egyptian antiquity and museum culture. The protagonist falls asleep in the British Museum to later be confronted with

244 For Haggard a way of propagating the re-burial of mummies after scientific examination.

245 Name and author of the story are unknown. Stephanie Moser cites the first edition of the *Illustrated Magazine* in 1843, page 33.

objects around him coming to life. In the story, an antiquarian by the name of Withers Grubbe gets drunk and ends up going to the British Museum, where he finds himself in the Egyptian gallery. Once there, he complains about the rude behaviour of school boys and other visitors towards the Egyptian monuments and artefacts, finding they deserve care and real interest rather than laughter and ridicule. Furthermore, he thinks of himself as superior, possessing deeper knowledge of the objects than the other visitors, thereby stressing his self-import. In his drunken state, Mr Grubbe falls asleep behind some statues and wakes only after nightfall, when the gallery is empty of visitors. But then, in the moonlight, the objects around him come to life. At first only a scarab starts to move, but soon the huge colossal statues are equally alive and moving, and soon something which he describes as ‘the orgies of Memnon’²⁴⁶ (cf. Moser 169) take place in the gallery. When Mr Grubbe awakes in the morning, the gallery seems unchanged. However, he takes the nightly events as fact and feels that he has been part of something extraordinary (cf. Moser 169).

In Doyle’s “The Ring of Thoth”, John Vansittart Smith²⁴⁷ falls asleep while he is immersed in his work in the Egyptian rooms of the Louvre:

The student sat down again in his quiet corner, and continued to work at his notes [...] For a time his pencil travelled rapidly over the paper, but soon the lines became less level, the words more blurred and finally the pencil tinkled down upon the floor and the head of the student dropped heavily forward upon his chest. Tired out by his journey, he slept so soundly [...] that neither the clanking civil guard, nor the footsteps of the sightseers [...] were sufficient to arouse him. (“RoT” 64)

Upon waking, he is not really disconcerted, but in the silence he realises that “[h]e was alone with the dead men of a dead civilisation” (“RoT” 65). After trying to find a way outside, he finds that he is locked in, and, to his surprise, that he is not alone. A guard, whom he had found curious for his oriental appearance and uncertain age, is still in the gallery. The man drags out a mummy from the case and starts unrolling it. The mummy is at first perfectly preserved, her skin white and her hair shining, but as soon as the air hits her body, she starts to whither.²⁴⁸ Smith gives himself away just in that moment and the guard, being caught in the act, confesses his story to the student of Egyptian history.

246 Moser refers to the ‘Orgies of Memnon’ as an Orientalist fantasy, which affirmed the primitive and wild nature of the *Other* ancient Egypt (cf. Moser 169).

247 The fact that Haggard also names his protagonist Smith is a clear hint at a connection to Doyle’s story.

248 This process is, overall, the only supernatural occurrence which Smith witnesses himself. The rest is simply the story of the guide.

The guard explains that he is an ancient Egyptian by the name of Sosra and that he has found an elixir which allows him to live a prolonged life, which he wanted to share with the woman, who is now a mummy in the Louvre. She died before he could share the elixir with her and has now finally found the antidote to be able to die himself. Smith is astonished, but listens to the story in its entirety before the guard lets him outside and he goes home. He does not consciously wake up in the museum, like James Ebenezer Smith does later in Haggard's story, but returns to his hotel and later to London. In London, he reads a newspaper article in *The Times* which confirms the death of a guard in the Louvre, clutching a mummy to himself. Therefore, sleep introduces events, which could be seen both as supernatural and as a fictional story within a realistic story. The newspaper article explains that the guard has presumably died from a heart attack while trying to steal the mummy's treasures. Sosra, or whoever he might have been, could have just made up a story to get away with his crime as Smith interrupted him. The story is told in such a way that the reader, and the student Vansittart Smith, believe in the romantic outcome, which reunites the two lovers.

Rosemary Jackson argues that the fantastic does “not introduce scenes *as if* they were real: it insists upon the *actuality* of the transformation (Jackson 49). The exceptions to this rule are allegories, dream visions or marvellous elements (ibid.). The examples above underline this statement, and yet, the stories never entirely rule out the actuality of the events, even if framed by sleep. Several texts claim ‘reality’ while they clearly are set in a fantastic mode, asking the reader to trust the accounts of those who told the story. Other texts doubt their own reality by second-guessing supernatural events, but most of the texts use sleep, dreams and visions to shift the mood from realistic to fantastic without interrupting the reading process. At the same time, dreams are an important element which can be consciously used to dampen the criticism expressed in the texts. Furthermore, shocking descriptions of unacceptable behaviour or terrible occurrences are wrapped in a dream narrative which places the events further away from the reader.

5.5 Magic, Magical Objects and Secret Knowledge

“There are more things in Heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”
(*Hamlet* I, 5: 159–167)

The late nineteenth century saw a rise of occult beliefs, esoteric orders and a turn to supernatural and transcendental world views: Spiritualism, Mesmerism and

the belief in universal religious truths as promoted by the Theosophical Society (founded in 1887) and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (active between 1888 and 1908), to name the most prominent examples. The belief that secret and often magical knowledge was taught and passed on through the generations of initiates from ancient Egypt until Victorian times was a widespread belief among the members of these orders and societies. The Victorian idea that (initiated) ancient Egyptians possessed the ability and knowledge to perform magic can be traced back to the descriptions of the use of magic in Egypt in the Old Testament.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. [...] For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. ("Exodus" 7: 8–12)

In Exodus, magic is depicted as inherently Egyptian: "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments" ("Exodus" 7: 11). The fact that Egypt has sorcerers is not questioned, only the strength of the magic that is performed is relevant – magic which cannot compete with that of God. The Biblical plagues are also brought about by Egyptian magicians (cf. "Exodus" 8: 7 and 8: 18). While Egyptian magic is powerful, God always triumphs over them. A similar concept can be found in Genesis 41: 8, in which the pharaoh suffers from nightmares, which he wants his wise men to explain to him:

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. ("Genesis" 41: 8)

In order to fulfil his wish, the young Hebrew Joseph is then brought to the palace, who then correctly interprets his dreams. Once more, the Bible depicts the Hebrew god and those who believe in him as stronger than those who rely on Egyptian magic.

While Egypt is not depicted as entirely negative, the confrontation of Moses and the pharaoh can certainly be considered common knowledge of Christians. Shakespeare already picks up on the idea of a magical Egypt, assigning a magical spell to Desdemona's love for Othello: "Dammed as thou art, thou hast enchanted her, for I'll refer me to all things of sense, if she in chains of magic were not bound." (*Othello* I, 2: 65–67). These 'magical chains' were attached to

Desdemona by the handkerchief which Othello gives to Desdemona to keep. Its origin is Egyptian:

That's a fault: That Handkerchiefe
Did an aegyptian to my Mother giue:
She was a Charmer, and could almost read
The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,
'T would make her Amiable, and subdue my Father
Intirely to her loue. (*Othello* III, 4: 49–51)

The Ptolemaic pharaoh Cleopatra VII, the last pharaoh of Egypt, is described by Shakespeare as an enchantress who makes Anthony “the noble ruin of her magic” (*Anthony and Cleopatra* III, 10: 18). The image of magical Egypt as presented in the Bible remained intact throughout the centuries and certainly found approval in the nineteenth century when the European and American interest in ancient Egypt was triggered by the Napoleonic Campaign and its cultural and political aftermath. Joseph Comstock wrote a survey about nineteenth century general knowledge and topical scientific and philosophic acquisitions in which, at one point, he simply adds to a list of “pretenders of magical arts” which were present in all nations in all times (*The Tongue of Time* 202). “Egypt had its sorcerers and magicians” (ibid.). The connection of Egypt and magic, whether it was believed to be real or just pretence, was always present.

Karl Richard Lepsius’ 1842 translation of the *Book of Going Forth By Day* and *The Pyramid Texts* into German, which Gaston Maspero translated into French between 1882 and 1893, introduced the Egyptian view of the afterlife to the interested public. While most of the magical Egyptian texts were translated at the end of the nineteenth century, like the *Westcar Papyrus* (P. Berlin 3033), which was translated into German in 1890 by Adolf Erman, and the entire *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* into English by Wallis Budge in 1895, the concept of magical Egypt had already taken hold in the mind of those who were interested in spiritualism, occultism and esotericism. In Victorian fantastic literature, ancient Egypt is a place of magic and the supernatural. The notion seems almost undisputed, and while fantastic fiction varies in its presentation and description of this magic, it constantly recurs as a theme and is one of the most prominent qualities ancient Egypt has in the minds of the Victorian writers. As late as 1953, Bernard Bromage published *The Occult Arts of Ancient Egypt*, in which he argues that “[m]agic is an Egyptian thing. [...] Actually all magic, as we know it, can be said to descend from an Ancient Egyptian origin” (117). He is utterly convinced that the ancient Egyptians knew and practiced both white and black magic. While this idea seems out of place in the middle of the twentieth century,

his argumentation with examples from roughly translated Egyptian texts and the common ideas about Egypt as a magical place inherited both from his English childhood in late Victorian Britain and Egyptian tales almost seems conclusive. Bromage writes as if he knows the Egyptians inside out; he writes from the perspective of the Egyptians and builds his arguments on rumours and translations which he explains to have paraphrased in the notes to his text. And while his book – for lack of sources – is rendered unusable for academia, it shows how easily people believed ancient Egypt to be the source of all magic.

An even younger example of a modern belief in ancient Egyptian magic from 1998 is Eleanor Harris, who published *Ancient Egyptian Magic and Divination*; a manual for using ancient spells to invoke Egyptian gods. The blurb on the back of the book reads:

In this practical manual, Eleanor Harris takes you step-by-step through ancient Egyptian religions, magical philosophy, techniques of divination, and magical formulae thousands of years old. No previous experience with the subject is necessary – Harris explains the ‘how’s’ and ‘whys’ of magical tools, amulets, words of power, divination, ceremony, and spells. Advanced practitioners will find especially useful instruction on actual Egyptian magical script as found in the ancient papyri such as The Leyden Papyrus, The Papyrus Ani (the Egyptian Book of the Dead), and other important works. Learn to:

- Invoke Egyptian Gods and spirits for divination and magic
- Scry with fire, oil, and water
- Evoke messengers and spirits of the dead
- Have dream visions
- Sound the secret names of the deities
- Shape-shift into god forms
- Cast spells for love, protection, and healing
- Create ritual clothing and magical tools.

This one book frees you from the tedium of researching the ancient magical papyri and other historical literature – Harris has done all the footwork. Everything you need to start practicing these ancient techniques is here in your hands! (Harris)

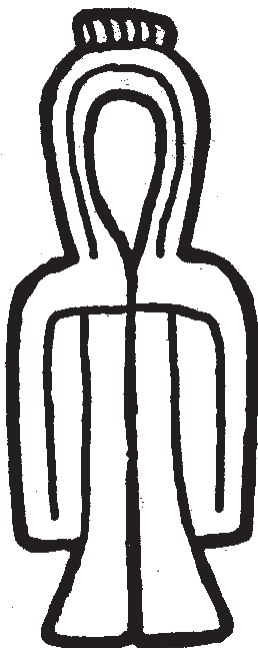
This is just one example of a great number of modern-day publications on the practicality of Egyptian magic, reflecting both the eagerness and willingness to believe in the reality of the idea. Whereas the success of fantastic literature like Harry Potter shows the attraction which magic holds in our modern-day secularised society, Victorians were just as eager to engage with the theory and at times the practice of magic. The infinite number of strange-looking objects, figurines and amulets which flooded into museums would have strengthened the

probability of magical practices in ancient Egypt; especially in the first half of the nineteenth century when they were displayed without context or explanation.

A general concept connected to magic is that there needs to be an object which helps a person to perform magic. Amulets, wands, potions and staffs belong to the most common objects which those carry who perform magic. But what exactly are magical objects? “Taken literally, magical objects are things to do magic with or items that are believed to possess magical power” (Lembert 128). Christoph Houswitschka argues that magical objects work through “sympathetic magic”, which supposes a “universal link [...] between everything that is considered to belong together through special proximity or relation to the object” (59). This special relation between an object and its surrounding is implemented through the performance of magic. The object itself can either react on its own if previously activated, or it can be appropriated and used by someone who knows how to activate the object to perform magic. Closely connected to the question of what magical objects are, is the question of who can actually use such objects; a question which is explored in literature. Magical objects are not merely objects, but they possess qualities which can be evoked and controlled by those who know how. Magical objects communicate with those who make use of them as the person who uses a magical object acts, and the object reacts. This actor needs to have special knowledge or talent in order to use the magical object – an idea which is updated in the most popular contemporary work of fantastic fiction on magic – *Harry Potter*. Potter has the blood of a wizard and is able to perform magic, while Muggles who do not have the wizard-gene are not. In contrast, the protagonists in Egyptianising fantastic fiction who use magic, either learn how to perform magic with the help of extensive research, or they are helped by ancient or supernatural beings who explain how to make use of the magical objects. Furthermore, the occurrence of magic is almost always a prerequisite to advance the plot. The most prominent example of the use of an Egyptian magical object is Edith Nesbit’s *The Story of the Amulet*. The novel ties in with two previous novels by Nesbit, *Five Children and It* (1902) and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) in which the psammead, a magical creature which can fulfil wishes, is introduced; the amulet is the vital magical object which lies in the focus of the story. On the one hand, the Egyptian amulet allows the children to wish for the fulfilment of their heart’s desire, as the psammead refuses to fulfil any more wishes for the children because they have always caused trouble. On the other hand, it allows Nesbit to tie in her knowledge of ancient Egypt which she has acquired by visiting the British Museum and learning from Wallis Budge.

The four children Anthea, Cyril, Robert and Jane purchase a broken ancient Egyptian amulet – an Isis-knot (*tjt*).

Illustration 16: “The Isis knot from The Story of the Amulet”.



The psammead explains what the amulet can do: “This thing is half of an Amulet that can do all sorts of things; it can make the corn grow, and the waters flow, and the trees bear fruit, and the little new beautiful babies come” (SoA 27–28) However, the whole amulet could work much stronger magic: “The complete Amulet can keep off all the things that make people unhappy—jealousy, bad temper, pride, disagreeableness, greediness, selfishness, laziness. Evil spirits, people called them when the Amulet was made” (SoA 28). Nesbit clearly refers to the actual use of the Isis-knot in ancient Egypt, which would grant the protection of the bearer by the goddess Isis. Spell 156 in *The Book of the Dead* (Papyrus Ani) concerns the Isis-knot:

You have your blood, O Isis; you have your power, O Isis; you have your magic, O Isis; The amulet is a protection for this Great One which will drive away whoever would commit a crime against him. – To be said over a knot-amulet of red jasper [...]” (Von Dassow 83)

Together with the heart scarab, *djed* pillar, heart and headrest, the Isis knot is one of the most common amulets placed with mummies (cf. Taylor *Journey Through the Afterlife* 110). Nesbit was certainly aware of the subliminal implications Isis as a mother figure had for the children whose greatest wish is for their parents to return home to them.

Illustration 17: "Egyptian Amulets at the Louvre".



For their greatest wish to come true and for the ancient magic to work, the children have to travel through time and space in order to find the second half of the charm. Their neighbour Jimmy, who has a small private collection of Egyptian artefacts in his study upstairs, is able to translate an inscription that they find on the amulet [Image]. It reads "Ur Hekau Setcheh" which can be translated into "Great of magic is the Setcheh-snake." However, the meaning of the words does not matter to the story, but the mere magical quality of the words is what is important. Once they recite them, a mystical voice appears, which explains to the children that they can use the amulet to move in time and space and that only the completion of the quest to find the other half will grant them their wish. From this moment on, the children have to choose where and when they want to go, and they visit ancient Egypt in several stages of history, Babylon, Atlantis and past and future London. The small amulet therefore serves as a time machine.

The link to H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) is unmistakable. He even features in Nesbit's novel as "the great reformer" and his name is a popular name for boys in future England (cf. *SoA* 200).

While most of the characters the children encounter during their journeys are normal people, they eventually meet an Egyptian priest of Amen, who is in fact able to perform magic and who has the same piece of the amulet that the children have – only in another time. Both parties want to find the other half in order to have their greatest desire fulfilled. However, the children's wish is very different from that of the priest, who seeks immense power and who is willing to go to great lengths to gain that power. Nevertheless, he is very protective of his own faith. A section in the novel shows Nesbit's well-founded knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture and religion, or, in this case, magic:

'Beware how you insult the god,' said the priest sternly. 'I also can do magic. I can make a waxen image of you, and I can say words which, as the wax image melts before the fire, will make you dwindle away and at last perish miserably.' (*SoA* 200)

The priest threatens the children, who remain unimpressed as their belief system does not include the ritualistic burning of the enemy. In ancient Egypt the burning of wax figures was considered to be one of the most powerful ways to ensure the weakening of the enemy. Wax burns without leaving traces, thereby ensuring the complete symbolical destruction of the enemy in a culture where the preservation of the body was essential for a person to be able to enter the afterlife and not die a second death. Even though the priest does not go through with his threat, he follows the children on their journey through time and space in order to find the missing half of the amulet. Eventually, he succeeds and shows up in London where the children place the parts of the amulet next to each other on a bed, where they merge into a single amulet:

And then, as one drop of water mingles with another on a rain-wrinkled window-pane, as one bead of quick-silver is drawn into another bead, Rekh-mara's Amulet slipped into the other one, and, behold! there was no more but the one Amulet! 'Black magic!' cried Rekh-mara, and sprang forward to snatch the Amulet that had swallowed his. (*SoA* 230)

Not only the amulet becomes whole again, and the children's greatest wish is fulfilled, but Jimmy, the Egyptologist whom the children told of their adventures and who even came along for one is given the whole amulet to keep – and the spirit of Rekh-mara merges with his own, giving him first-hand experience of the past he has until this point only studied from books and silent objects, fulfilling his greatest dream as well.

In *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, several magical objects feature. Queen Tera's entire tomb inventory has magical properties. The eponymous jewel itself, the lamps and the mysterious box which cannot be opened are all more than just a gift to the dead queen; they are necessary for her planned resurrection. Queen Tera herself is raised as a sorceress:

'But the King had gone to further lengths, and had had his daughter taught magic, by which she had power over Sleep and Will. This was real magic—"black" magic; not the magic of the temples, which, I may explain, was of the harmless or "white" order, and was intended to impress rather than to effect. She had been an apt pupil; and had gone further than her teachers.' (*JoSS* 161)

Stoker makes the same differentiation which Nesbit makes in her novel, ascribing the knowledge and use of "black" and "white magic" to the ancient Egyptians. An example of late nineteenth and early twentieth century understanding of ancient Egyptian magic can be found in the cultural anthropologist James Frazer's work, whose *The Golden Bough* (published between 1890 and 1936) largely defines magic as something very similar to science. According to Frazer, magic is the appropriation of the natural order of things to help the magician (cf. Stegbauer 16). Frazer follows Edward Burnett Taylor's approach in so far that he also believes that religion has developed out of magic, and out of the realisation that there are things which humans cannot influence, from which stems the concept of a transcendent higher being (*ibid*). Tylor has an evolutionary approach to the concept of magic and claims that 'primitive' cultures could not differentiate between the *Subjective* and the *Objective* (cf. Stegbauer 15). For Edward Taylor, magic is a preamble to religion; a claim which can be disproven with the Egyptian concept of magic (*ibid*), which is very closely linked, if not an inherent part of religion. Taylor's ideas were published in 1873 and have strongly influenced the common notion of ancient magic as something outside of, almost opposite to religion. In addition to this definition, black magic has always been linked to Christian concepts, presenting a threat to the order of things and to humankind.

Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge (1857–1934), keeper of Egyptian and Syrian Antiquities at the British Museum (1891–1924) was also suspicious of Egyptian magic. For him, Egyptian magical practices were juvenile, and his considerations reflect a strictly Christian point of view. Wallis Budge also proposes that Egyptians made use of white and black magic and that they had dealings with the devil (cf. Stegbauer 25). Wallis Budge was very prejudiced towards ancient Egyptian peasants, ascribing misinterpretation of the 'proper' religion and superstition to them:

[T]here is little to wonder at when we find that beliefs and superstitions of the most degraded character flourished with rank luxuriance among the peasants and working classes of that country, who failed to understand the symbolism of the elaborate ceremonies which were performed in the temples, and who were too ignorant to distinguish the spiritual conceptions which lay at their root—to meet the religious needs of such people the magician, and in later times the priest. (Wallis Budge *Magic* xi–xii)

He furthermore argues that:

This magic degenerated into sorcery, and demonology, and witchcraft, and those who dealt in it were regarded as associates of the Devil, and servants of the powers of darkness, and workers of the 'black art.' In the 'white' and 'black' magic of the Egyptians most of the magic known in the other countries of the world may be found; it is impossible yet to say exactly how much the beliefs and religious systems of other nations were influenced by them, but there is no doubt that certain views and religious ideas of many heathen and Christian sects may be traced directly to them. (Wallis Budge *Magic* xii–xiii)

According to modern research on ancient Egyptian magic, a distinction between a Christian understanding of magic and the Egyptian concept is necessary as they differ greatly. John Baines expresses the opinion that “[in] Egypt, magic was used by those who could gain access to it, perhaps by everyone, and was neither a ‘black art’ that might be termed ‘sorcery’ in terms of modern [...] values, nor a deviant practice” (Baines 1). Alen Lloyd also tries to find a definition of the Egyptian concept of magic, *heka*. He argues that “to the Egyptians *heka* was an intrinsic part of the fabric of the universe which they physically and mentally inhabited” (Lloyd 71). According to Lloyd, “[*h*]*eka* may be defined as the Egyptian conviction that a knowledge of words and actions of power can confer a capacity to alter radically the world of normal experience” (ibid.).

In the early twentieth century Sir Alan Gardiner’s²⁴⁹ new definition of ancient Egyptian magic somewhat changed the perception thereof, but the general concept of magic was dictated by a Christian reading of magic like that of Taylor, Frazer and Wallis Budge, which is strongly reflected in the literary depiction of ancient Egyptian magic in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

As a supposed member of The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn²⁵⁰, Bram Stoker consciously comments on the *status quo* of the discussion of Egyptian magic in Egyptological as well as esoteric circles. “The astral body, which is a part of Buddhist belief, long subsequent to the time I speak of, and which is an accepted fact of modern mysticism, had its rise in Ancient Egypt; at least, so far

249 Cf. Allan Gardiner’s “Magic” (Egyptian), 262a–269a.

250 Cf. Picknett, Lynn. *The Templar Revelation: Secret Guardians of the True Identity of Christ*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 2004. 201. Print.

as we know” (JoSS 219) Abel Trelawny then goes on to explain the different parts of the soul.

‘First there is the “Ka”, or “Double”, which, as Doctor Budge explains, may be defined as “an abstract individuality of personality” which was imbued with all the characteristic attributes of the individual it represented, and possessed an absolutely independent existence. It was free to move from place to place on earth at will; and it could enter into heaven and hold converse with the gods. Then there was the “Ba”, or “soul”, which dwelt in the ‘Ka, and had the power of becoming corporeal or incorporeal at will. (ibid.)

This explanation is lifted right out of Wallis Budge’s *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (cf. 86–92), and it is necessary to explain why Tera can act despite not being actually revived. Her Ka is able to move outside her physical body, which explains the strange occurrences around her mummy. At the same time Stoker has found a relatively plausible justification for the spiritual transmigration during which Tera’s soul slowly merges with Margaret’s. By citing Wallis Budge and his up-to-date research results on the topic, Stoker can incorporate Egyptian magic both in a fantastic as well as in a realistic mode. While the actual supernatural events in the novel clearly belong to the fantastic, the theory behind it corresponds with late Victorian Egyptological research. However, to add the element of the unknown and the unexplainable, Stoker makes Tera more than an Egyptian who was initiated in the normal religious concepts – but a sorceress, who possesses deeper knowledge of magic than Trelawny can say. Similarly to Poe’s and Allen’s stories, the Egyptologist compares Egyptian knowledge with modern scientific accomplishments and realizes that modern science cannot explain ancient Egypt entirely:

‘Bear in mind also that the Egyptians knew sciences, of which today, despite all our advantages, we are profoundly ignorant. Acoustics, for instance, an exact science with the builders of the temples of Karnak, of Luxor, of the Pyramids, is today a mystery to Bell and Kelvin, and Edison, and Marconi. ... That Magic Coffin of Queen Tera is probably a magic box in more ways than one. It may – possibly it does – contain forces that we know not of.’ (JoSS 211)

Trelawny furthermore sees the potential of great danger in the implementation of Egyptian magic:

‘There is another belief of the ancient Egyptian which you must bear in mind; that regarding the ushaptiu figures of Osiris, which were placed with the dead to its work in the Under World. The enlargement of this idea came to a belief that it was possible to transmit, by magical formulae, the soul and qualities of any living creature to a figure made in its image. This would give a terrible extension of power to one who held the gift of magic.’ (JoSS 220)

This concept is also used in Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249," which was published a decade prior to *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, in which a student of Egyptian culture, and by extension magic, revives a mummy with the help of an ancient magical spell and a plant which also has magical properties. Since Bellingham controls the mummy and uses it in order to hurt his enemies, the notion corresponds perfectly with the one explained by Abel Trelawny in Stoker's novel. Doyle's mummy therefore is not naturally evil, but a part of Bellingham's soul enters the body of the mummy and acts for him. Although Tera is not alive, and remains dead throughout the novel, her hand, which is detached from her arm, is free to move according to her will and it injures and kills those who pose a danger to the queen and the inventory of her tomb. At the same time, the mesmeric or hypnotic power of ancient beings is explained. Through magic, the mind and soul of an ancient person or being can take control over an image of a person – or an actual person. This idea is very prominently explored in late-Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction.

In all cases, the Western protagonists are helpless against the power of ancient magic, and very often the only chance to escape it or defy it is to destroy the object of the actual being, a feat which can only be achieved by fire. Robert Edwards writes:

The uncanny in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* designates the coexistence of the sense of the ancient past as alien with the sense of it as familiar, hence the feeling of ambivalence towards the past. Its appearance in the novel is the sign of the insecurity of the present's values. The prosaic present of the novel defines itself by having "surmounted" or "grown out of" the magical beliefs of the past in general and, in this particular case, the ancient Egyptian, such as belief in the existence of the "astral body" and in resurrection after death. ("The Alien and the Familiar" 107)

And while Atterby argues that "[magic] is accepted in a work of fantasy as part of its fictional ground rules, one of the defining characteristics of its universe" (55), magic always occurs as either a danger to the Western *Self* performed by the *Other* or as something which cannot be fully comprehended, thereby eluding complete control over it and triggering anxiety. With the exception of Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*, in which magic is generally used to help the Western protagonists, all other Egyptianising texts treat ancient magic as a clear marker of the *Other*. In Oscar Wilde's "The Young King," the boy who will be crowned king is fascinated by "rare and costly materials" and sends out merchants to obtain them for his coronation; and from Egypt he requests "curious green turquoise which is found only in the tombs of kings, and is said to possess magical properties [...]" ("TYK" 261). The result of his request is a nightmare in which

the boy witnesses a mystical scene where Death spreads diseases and Avarice is responsible for the land being barren and death. The boy's greed for the magical stones and the subsequent consequences are projected by his subconscious in the form of a dream. In a roundabout way, Wilde criticises the practices of archaeologists and treasure seekers, despite being an avid collector of antiquities himself. The magical quality of the stones is not important for actual use, but the idea of them having supernatural properties heightens the boy's interest in them. The mysterious seeds²⁵¹ in "Lost in a Pyramid" can be read in a similar context. The interest in the seeds is only awakened when Evelyn learns of their origin – an almost macabre notion. That interest, however, is a presupposition for the curse to work, therefore the seeds play an active role in making Evelyn want to see what will grow out of them. While the seeds seem to have greater power over the woman, Evelyn's wish to see what happens to them if planted is (albeit secretly) fulfilled by Forsyth – an act which leads to the death of Professor Niles and Forsyth's punishment in the form of a lifeless wife, who now resembles a mummy much more than a young healthy woman.

Another object which claims the life of an innocent woman is the heart scarab in Blackwood's "The Nemesis of Fire." In the story, a mummy is brought to England where it now rests on the estate of Colonel Wragge – a fact which is only deduced by the psychic detective after holding a séance during which the spirit of the mummy recited verses from the *Book of the Dead* (cf. "TNoF" 222–25). The mummy's rest was disturbed as the amulet of the heart-scarab was removed from its embalmed body. John Silence immediately concludes that it must be

[t]he mummy of some important person—a priest most likely—protected from disturbance and desecration by the ceremonial magic of the time. For they understood how to attach to the mummy, to lock up with it in the tomb, an elemental force that would direct itself even after ages upon any one who dared to molest it. In this case it was an elemental of fire.' ("TNoF" 228)

In the story two very different concepts are mixed, clearly reflecting Blackwood's interest in Theosophy and the occult and the mingling of different religious and mythological ideas. While the mummy is in fact missing one decisive element which is necessary to guarantee an unproblematic passing into the afterlife, a protective spirit in the form of a fire-elemental is introduced which, while the

251 Seeds which were found in ancient tombs and sprouted afterwards were commonly referred to as "mummy wheat" and were believed to have supernatural powers (cf. Knapp 87–88).

mummy itself lies motionless in its coffin, can avenge the disturbance of the mummy's peace, resulting in numerous fires on the estate.

'The general belief,' [John Silent] went on, anticipating my questions, 'held, of course, that the perpetuity of the mummy guaranteed that of its Ka,—the owner's spirit,—but it is not improbable that the magical embalming was also used to retard reincarnation, the preservation of the body preventing the return of the spirit to the toil and discipline of earth-life; and, in any case, they knew how to attach powerful guardian-forces to keep off trespassers.' ("TNoF" 229–30)

Colonel Wragge's sister, who has been wearing the missing scarab around her neck from the first moment John Silence meets her, has to suffer for her brother's misconduct. The spirit of the mummy takes possession of her, and eventually forces her to return the amulet – an act that calms the mummy's wrath, but which costs her life. Once again, a woman has to suffer for the actions of a man, while the general moralistic undertone warns of a disruption of the ancient dead.

In Doyle's "Lot No. 249" and Blackwood's "Sand," Westerners appropriate Egyptian magic in order to achieve supernatural goals. While Edric and Dr. Entwerfen in *The Mummy!* and the scientists in Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy" make use of modern science in order to revive a mummy, Bellingham in "Lot No. 249" is able to perform ancient Egyptian magic in order to revive a mummy and use it as his personal weapon. He is introduced as a strange character and outsider, who is suspicious because of his knowledge of Eastern languages. The narrator in "Sand" immediately notices Lady Statham because of her strange almost supernatural aura. "[...] there *was* this touch of darkness and of power in the way she came that made him think of some sphinx-like figure of stone, some idol motionless in all its parts but moving as a whole, and gliding across—sand" ("Sand" 260). The protagonist Henriot is immediately fascinated and soon learns of her plan to try to create a body for the *Ka* of Egypt through ancient spells. Both Bellingham and Lady Statham are introduced as strange, mysterious characters, automatically placing them somewhere between the *Self* and the *Other*. Through their actions in the stories, they move further away from the *Self* until they become the *Other* entirely. They both use ancient magic to conjure up ancient powers, which will help them gain power over both, the *Self* and the *Other*. However, they both fail; Bellingham because he is found out, and his mummy, the papyrus with the magical spell and the strange plants which he needs to perform the spell are burned; and Lady Statham because her nephew interrupts the ritual which leads to her death. They are both punished for their transgression, but while Bellingham simply moves on to live in the East, the would-be sorceress of Blackwood's story pays with her life. The question remains whether the

incantation did indeed work and whether the body of Lady Statham's nephew is used as a vessel by the spirit of Egypt. The story cuts off before the reader learns anything in specific, but it is unquestionable that Henriot would be entirely powerless in the face of the manifestation of Egypt's soul.

The use of magic in Egyptianising fantastic fiction corresponds with contemporary Egyptological and anthropological research. Taylor, Frazer and Wallis Budge's work on ancient Egyptian magic greatly shaped the depiction and perception of ancient magic in Egyptianising fiction. While Loudon took her inspiration from classical authors and their take on Egyptian magic, late Victorian and Edwardian fiction writers also worked with contemporary sources, creating supernatural aspects which marked the *Other* in their texts and simultaneously reflecting the topical discussions in Egyptology as well as ideas which were made popular by the esoteric societies of the 1880s.

6. The Appropriation of Ancient Egypt by the West

'We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it.'

(Balfour qtd. in Said *Orientalism* 32)

The following paragraphs offer a brief excursion into the history of the perception of ancient Egypt as a culture of secret knowledge and magic; a perception which is reflected in the practices, traditions and beliefs of Freemasons²⁵², Theosophists, and other esoteric and occult orders. The topic is very complex and difficult to discuss cohesively, as most cases of appropriation of Egypt seem random and arbitrary. Nevertheless, especially the late nineteenth century saw such a great number of groups which refer and allude to Egypt in their traditions and make up that it is impossible to leave out of the discussion.

Erik Hornung's *Das Geheime Wissen der Ägypter* (English: *The Secret Lore of Ancient Egypt*) traces the origins of Egyptian symbolism and belief in ancient Egyptian magic in secret orders from their earliest appearances in the guiding texts of the orders. As previously shown in this book the interest in ancient Egypt as the origin of secret knowledge and magic persevered throughout the centuries. Hornung calls this fascination with ancient Egypt, and especially its religion and magic, 'Egyptosophy'. He defines it as a deep interest in Egypt's religion and culture which is close to religious faith and often functions as a substitute religion (*Das Geheime Wissen* 9–10). Elliot Colla points out that ancient Egypt has always borne meaning to different groups, pointing out the appropriation of ancient monuments, which were ascribed magical or supernatural qualities by Egyptian Muslims and Copts alike (cf. Colla 91). Similarly, claims on ancient Egypt, mostly connected to an attempt to trace the origins of a certain group back to ancient Egyptian roots were made by "Platonists, Rosicrucians, [and] Freemasons" (Colla 21). He explains that the Jewish tradition of Passover stems from the deliverance of the Jews from the oppressor Egypt, and in the Hermetic

252 A very obvious example of the appropriation of ancient Egyptian elements by Freemasons can be seen in the various stages built for performances of the Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*. Several Masonic stages were built for productions of the Opera which resemble Egyptian temples. For illustrations, see James Curl's *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry*, 144–156.

Tradition, ancient Egypt is seen as the place of origin of “magic and alchemy, rationalism and spiritualism” (ibid.).

The Renaissance Hermetic tradition appears to have developed through Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) and Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), and gained a new lease of life in the seventeenth century. Robert Fludd was an adherent of the philosophy of the ‘Egyptian’ priest Hermes Trismegistus (identified with Euclid, Thoth, and others), as is apparent in his *Apologia Compendiaria Fraternitatem de Rosea Cruce suspicionis & infamia aspersam, veritatis quasi fluctibus abluens & abstergens* (1616) and *Tractatus Apologeticus Integritatem Societatis de Rosa Cruce defendens* (1617). Fludd’s works set out the basic scheme developed by Pico della Mirandola when he added the Kabbala to the revival of Hermetic philosophy, encouraged by Ficino’s interpretation of the recovered Hermetic texts (Curl *Art and Architecture* 41).

The perception of Egyptian sculpture and architecture changed in the early nineteenth century. While its grandeur had always been recognised and historical proof of the appreciation of Egyptian architecture could be found throughout the former Roman Empire, ancient Egyptian art and architecture was not considered to be beautiful but rather mystical and monstrous. Elliot Colla argues that Enlightenment thought changed this perception, offering the example of Giovanni Belzoni’s comments in his *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* (1820) on the beauty of Egyptian artefacts which “belong to an Enlightenment aesthetic tradition [...], in which beauty was said to be a product of experience and perception” (Belzoni qtd. in Colla 34). He furthermore argues that the decoding of the hieroglyphs by Champollion led to a new understanding of the objects in the museums, broadening the context and specifying the historical relevance, placing Egyptian art into the aesthetic discourse of antique art. By the 1840s, Egyptian art was included in the discussion of relevant artistic contributions in human history next to Greek and Roman art which had been considered to be superior to any other art (cf. Colla 54). Stephanie Moser suggests that the rather free interpretation of magical aspects in Egyptian art and therefore culture emanates from the lack of context of the objects during the nineteenth century before Egyptology became a better organised field of study. The missing factual knowledge left room for interpretation and imagination. Furthermore, the immediate contact with the artefacts in the museum’s exhibitions, where visitors were allowed to touch and get much closer to the objects, made Egyptian art both more intimate and yet stranger than other object, such as Greek sculptures which were not allowed to be touched (cf. Moser 91). On the one hand side,

museum visitors could experience art and history on a much more intimate level than usual and on the other hand, the close observation did not necessarily help to learn the history of the objects. Seeing the meticulously chiselled hieroglyphs on a sarcophagus from a few inches away did not help the visitor to understand what they meant. It is therefore not surprising that Egypt inspired many to appropriate its mystery and supposed magic to transcend the materialistic world of the nineteenth century.

6.1 Theosophy, Freemasons and Secret Orders

Hornung defines 'Egyptosophy' as an esoteric belief which sees Egypt as the source of all secret knowledge – a substitute-religion whose founder and messiah is Hermes Trismegistos (cf. 11). It is noteworthy that descriptions of secret orders and occult or spiritual groups rarely feature in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. It is difficult to define an absence of a concept, but considering the number of such groups and their interest in ancient Egypt, this absence is conspicuous. The only direct reference to the Theosophical Society²⁵³, for instance, can be found in Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*. When the Queen of Babylon follows the children to London and magically retrieves her property (in the past) from the British Museum, a journalist enquires about the queen's identity:

A journalist, who was just leaving the museum, spoke to Robert as he passed.

'Theosophy, I suppose?' he said. 'Is she Mrs Besant?'

'YES,' said Robert recklessly.

The journalist passed through the gates just before they were shut.

He rushed off to Fleet Street, and his paper got out a new edition within half an hour.

MRS BESANT AND THEOSOPHY

IMPERTINENT MIRACLE AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

People saw it in fat, black letters on the boards carried by the sellers of newspapers.

(SoA 122)

Annie Besant was Nesbit's fellow Fabian Socialist and one of the leading members of the Theosophical Society, whose president she became in 1907, one year after the publication of *The Story of the Amulet*. Nesbit's use of Besant's name is both a nod towards the Theosophical Society and a jest, commenting on the

253 The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge. The aim of the society was to study the connection of the world religions with a special interest in the occult and mysterious. Blavatsky claimed that the goddess Isis personally instructed her and passed down her knowledge to her.

hype surrounding the society in early-twentieth-century London. The doubtlessly most influential and important work of Theosophy is Helena Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877). She writes about the Egyptian deities as if they communicate with her on a daily basis, using an authoritative tone which suggests profound secret wisdom which she is passing on to outsiders.

For Blavatsky, and many members of the Theosophical Society and other occult or spiritual orders, initiation plays a major role. "According to occult teachings, it was possible for carefully prepared adepts to gain control over the supernatural forces in the world by practicing ritual magic, but an individual's will required rigorous training if this dangerous venture was to succeed" (Clover 84). According to Blavatsky, initiation is perceivably necessary, as only a few select and worthy are able to learn and understand the mystical and secret knowledge of the ancient Egyptians (cf. Blavatsky 84). The process of initiation is subscribed to Moses, whom she calls a priest of Osiris (cf. Blavatsky 555). However, during the only actual description of initiation in her book, Blavatsky refers to a Hindu tradition similar to the Christian sacrament, in which a liquid is transformed into a holy fluid through prayers and the singing of mantras (Blavatsky xli). Blavatsky borrows heavily from all world religions, and yet the ancient Egyptian mysteries form the basis for Theosophy. Similarly to Blavatsky's practice, the late esoteric movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century repeatedly establishes links between Egypt and the Kabbalah, and Moses and his connection to Egyptian wisdom plays an important role in many Christian texts (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 86). Robert Gould argues that the Kabbalah originates in a combination of "[a]ll ancient learning, Oriental, Jewish, Pythagorean, Platonic, Aristotelian, combined with that of Egypt" (Gould *History* 64). The ancient Jewish tradition already sees Moses as an Egyptian who is identical with Hermes [...] or who stands next to him. (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 87). In Blavatsky's work, Egypt is described as the origin of all wisdom and Champollion is congratulated on managing to corroborate the "accuracy of the writings of the mysterious Hermes Trismegistus" by translating the hieroglyphs (cf. Blavatsky 24). According to Ennemoser, "Herodotus, Thales, Parmenides, Empedocles, Orpheus, and Pythagoras" spent time in Egypt and that "Moses acquired his wisdom" there, and "Jesus passed the earlier years of his life" in Egypt, suggesting his role as an initiate into the Egyptian mysteries (Ennemoser qtd. in Blavatsky 24). Hermes and the other Egyptian gods are treated as historical figures rather than mythological gods. "There were two Hermes: the elder was the Trismegistus, and the second and emanation, or 'permutation' of himself; the friend and instructor of Isis and Osiris" (Blavatsky xxxiii). The idea of a necessary

initiation connected to Thoth's or Hermes' knowledge stands in contrast to the ancient Egyptian description of Thoth, where he is depicted as "accessible to human pleas" and willing to share his knowledge (Lindsay *Origins* 166). However, especially the nineteenth century was very susceptible to the idea of the *initiate*. Boris de Zirkoff explains why *Isis Unveiled* had such an impact on its readers:

As far as the Occident was concerned, the background was one of heavy and dull materialism which permeated most avenues of human endeavour. A climate in which scientific denial of all spirituality, self-righteous smugness of organised religion, artificial respectability of social customs, and barrenness of intellectual speculation were the prevailing influences of the day [...]. The very existence of occult knowledge, of perfected men and initiates, or the latent powers in the human being, and of a secret path which leads to the attainment of that knowledge, were practically unknown [...]. Against this background of materialistic denial and curiosity in the occult, the appearance of *Isis Unveiled* was somewhat similar to an exploding bomb, the repercussions of which jolted many established opinions, entrenched dogmas and crystallized beliefs in the entire range of current thought. (Zirkoff qtd. in Blavatsky 4)

Blavatsky claims that Egyptian priests were able to communicate through waves in the air from one temple to another (cf. Blavatsky 127), and she discusses Paracelsus' theory of the astral body whose spirit is free to roam the spheres and communicate with its "starry parents" during sleep (Paracelsus qtd. in Blavatsky 170). The concept of the astral body and the free roaming spirit appears in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Queen Tera is treated as an initiate into the 'ancient Egyptian' mysteries, as they are proposed to have existed by Blavatsky. At the same time the actual ancient Egyptian concept of the Ka, as described by Wallis Budge at the turn of the century, perfectly aligns itself with the Theosophical idea proposed by Paracelsus and Blavatsky. Tombs were therefore considered to be perfect places for initiation, and the Great Pyramid served as such for the Theosophists (Barbarin qtd. in Guénon 306–7; Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 123).

Alchemy, whose origin Blavatsky also sees in ancient Egypt, is closely linked to Theosophy (*Isis* 541). "Early alchemical philosophy germinated in Hellenistic Egypt, within a similar complex melding of Western classical philosophy, Eastern mystical belief, and practical experimentation" (Warlick 4). Again, Hermes plays an important role as the inventor of letters and the keeper of knowledge and wisdom. Jack Lindsay points out that *The Emerald Table of Hermes* (*Tabula Smaragdina*), the basis for modern alchemy, and important to Rosicrucians, Freemasons and Theosophists alike, is rooted in Graeco-Roman alchemy (Lindsay 185).

Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth" refers to alchemy and secret knowledge of the ancient Egyptians in describing a young priest who finds a

substance which grants him eternal life – the most highly desired achievement of alchemical practice. However, the priest takes great care to underline the fact that his research was not magical, but chemical and purely scientific, and that there are no supernatural elements involved in his discovery. The fact that he is a priest of Thoth supports the general role of Thoth as the god of writing and knowledge, even though Doyle was very likely familiar with the role Thoth-Hermes was ascribed to by occultists and spiritualism.²⁵⁴ However, Doyle clearly refers to Thoth's role in composing a book in which a magical spell is found which makes the one who utters it defeat death and see Ra in his true form. It is curious that Doyle chose to strengthen the fact that the alchemical research was purely scientific and natural: "There was nothing of mystery or magic in the matter. It was simply a chemical discovery, which may well be made again" ("RoT" 70). The alchemical tradition in Doyle's story seems to stem more from that of Paracelsus and his "Chemiatrie" (Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 95). He made use of alchemical knowledge to try to find remedies. Richard Parkinson argues that the *Description de l'Égypte* implied European ideas of religion as "a cult of nature, and of its priests as seekers after scientific truth rather than theologians" (Parkinson *The Rosetta Stone* 25).

In Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, the 'children of Isis' seem to be either some sort of cannibalistic sect, or an ancient religious group which worships the great goddess Isis and follows her will. In Marsh's novel, Isis is not the mother goddess, but a much crueller version of herself; a femme fatale and matriarch who rules ruthlessly without ever once taking a physical form other than that of a statue. The introduction of the beetle as one of the children of Isis can be seen as a loose reinterpretation of the Christian god and Jesus, his son who is sent to absolve humanity. Marsh turns this concept into the opposite, sending the child of Isis to control and destroy human beings; a highly ironic notion when read in that way. The interpretation of Isis and her child, the beetle, as a vampiric, human flesh devouring demon is definitely a modern interpretation of the goddess by Richard Marsh and might stem from ideas shared by secret societies at the end of the nineteenth century. As we have almost no information on Richard Marsh's life and no mention of any involvement in a secret order, we can only guess that his interpretation of Isis in such a changed way from the ancient Egyptian concept is either his own idea²⁵⁵, turning the mother goddess and symbol of femininity

254 Doyle wrote about Mesmer's theory animal magnetism and mind control in "The Parasite." Elements of Mesmerism feature in spiritualist ideas.

255 Wolfreys suggests that Marsh was homosexual and his depiction of Isis might be a reflection of his problems with a threatening female figure; or females in general.

into one of the most threatening symbols in his story or a general interpretation of the veiled woman as someone threatening from the perspective of a male dominated world.

Osiris, the prototypical resurrected god (or one son of the god Ra), is mentioned in both Loudon's *The Mummy!* and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. The Osiris mysteries depicted on the temple of Isis in Philae and on the Osireion in Abydos led to the belief by esoteric groups that the ancient Egyptians possessed secret and sacred knowledge. The relief has not only been read as a depiction of the resuscitation of Osiris, but also as the depiction of an initiation rite, which is assumed to be an essential part of the culture by many esoteric branches. The mysteries are mentioned, but not described in Haggard's "Smith and the Pharaohs."

He sat there in the utter darkness and the utter silence. At length the light came again, first as a blue spark, then in upward pouring rays, and lastly pervading all. There stood Menes on the steps, and there in front of him was gathered the same royal throng. 'The mysteries are finished,' said the old king. 'Now, if any have aught to say, let it be said openly.' ("SaP" 344)

The so-called Osiris mysteries of Abydos were already repeatedly interpreted as initiation rites in the Hellenistic tradition (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 21; Burkert 99). Cut into pieces by his brother Seth his body parts are spread out over the forty-two nomes of Egypt. Isis retrieves the pieces and finds all of them, except for the phallus. Consequently, she crafts a replacement and "revives" her husband, and conceives their son Horus with him.

Connected to the resuscitation of Osiris is the idea of Thoth as the keeper of the secret knowledge of resurrection. The demotic tale of Setna Khaemwas²⁵⁶ depicts magical practices, originating in Thoth's secret knowledge. Hornung explains that Thoth was already considered to be a personification of wisdom in the 11th dynasty, and an expedition leader in Wadi Hammamat calls himself 'wider than Thoth.' In the coffin texts of the Middle Kingdom, the "Book of Thoth" is mentioned for the first time (III 249b; VII 118) and further instances occur in which individuals claim to have been educated by Thoth (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 13). According to Hornung, this can be defined as the starting

The only other female in the story is Marjorie Lindon, who is forced into the dress of a man and consequently suffers a mental breakdown.

256 Haggard refers to the tale by naming one of the ancient characters, a magician, Khaemuas, a version of Khaemwas. Ironically, in the Demotic tale, Setna Khamemwas is the transgressor and in Haggard's tale, he acts as a judge in the trial.

point of the tradition which sees Thoth as the author of sacred texts (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* ohh14).

The illegibility of the hieroglyphs 1500 years preceding the decoding strengthened the Egyptian language's prestige even further. It was assumed that the secret knowledge of the Egyptians was hidden in the hieroglyphs (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 20–21). This idea of hiding secret knowledge in plain sight remained true for European scholars from the time when the knowledge of hieroglyphics was lost until they were decoded by Champollion in 1822; only that the 'secret knowledge' included everything from simple descriptions of trade and material lists to prayers and literature (ibid.). For those who could not read the ancient Egyptian languages, every word could have, theoretically, been a magical spell or the answer to universal questions. This incapability to understand the entire corpus of ancient Egyptian texts certainly led to a common belief that ancient Egypt was a mystical place which harboured all kinds of secrets. However, something which is not taken into consideration by those who believed in the exclusion of the majority of the population of ancient Egypt from the contents of the texts was that in ancient Egypt written texts, especially prayers and incantations, were not read silently, but always recited in order to take effect.

Considering the number of symbolic references to Egypt in Freemasonry, such as pyramids, the eye of Thoth and the Ankh, it is rather surprising that no historical links to Pharaonic Egypt can be found. "There is nothing definite which points to the country wherein the mysteries²⁵⁷ were first introduced. The most ancient, indeed, are generally supposed to have been those of Isis and Osiris, in Egypt" (Gould *Freemasonry* 4). What we encounter here is clearly a mixture of invented tradition and misreading or purposeful confusion by authors whose texts later became reference works, like the *Tabula Smaragdina* and the *Corpus Hermeticum*. These texts were then used as references and proof of a link between ancient Egypt and Freemasons. Of course, it can be argued that Freemasons chose archetypal symbols, therefore needing no historical link to ancient Egypt, but making use of unconscious collective symbols and archetypes, using them for their own interpretation. However, the writings which speak about the secret lore of Egypt are justified as being certified knowledge which is passed on from one generation to the next, never mind the fact that Freemasonry as it was practiced in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a modern invention.

257 Part of the Osiris mysteries was the creation of a corn-effigy of Osiris to represent his life after death reflected in the circle of life and death in the seasons (cf. "Mysterien" 276) and the dramatic performance of rituals featuring Osiris and other gods (cf. "Myterien" 277).

The concept of initiation as proposed to be the road to wisdom by Blavatsky and Steiner is loosely based on the Hellenistic mysteries, in which the adept becomes part of the sun cycle and sees the sun at midnight as the deepest and most sacred of secrets. In the Egyptian tradition, this momentum is experienced by everyone after they die, and they become part of the sun cycle. However, this experience is reserved solely for the dead and no living person can experience it (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 23). “Secret knowledge” can be acquired by the living through research and the study of sacred texts. No initiation is necessary, and in the social makeup of Egypt, whose religion was a state religion, no reference to a circle of “initiated” can be found. Priests had open access to the writings, and the pharaoh, who employed priests (and all other officials), had complete access to all written material. Several pharaohs claim to have acquired their knowledge through extensive studies of the ancient texts (ibid.).

The lack of clear references to initiation practices in ancient Egypt is often explained with the claim that it concerned secret knowledge, and that it was to remain a secret to those who had not earned the right to be initiated. Nevertheless, the classical authors had no qualms writing about the rites of the Egyptians, some of which were extensively discussed and used as a basis for Victorian esoteric ideas. Herodotus was astonished by the seemingly bizarre animal cult, the strange culture and way of life of the ancient Egyptians, and he was impressed by the immense chronological depth of the culture which easily reached back three-hundred generations. Yet his work is entirely free of esotericism, and while he is aware of the syncretism of the Egyptian and Greek gods, which mark the entire Hellenistic period, Hermes does not play a special role in his accounts (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 26). Plato, however, describes Hermes as the inventor of letters and proposes that Pythagoras was initiated into all of Egypt’s mysteries. Diodorus Siculus pursues this train of thought, and writes that Pythagoras learned about the transmigration of the soul in Egypt (cf. Hornung *Das Geheime Wissen* 29). Blavatsky refers to those sources in *Isis Unveiled*, taking the classical accounts literally, without questioning their subjectivity or accuracy. Plato, Herodotus and Diodorus strongly influenced the perception of ancient Egypt until Victorian times, when Egyptology slowly started to straighten out some of the misconceptions about ancient Egypt.

However, the idea of the ancient Egyptians encoding secret messages remained fascinating even in the nineteenth century. Benjamin Isaac Disraeli suggests that “a people denied the freedom of speech or of writing have usually left some memorials of their feelings in that silent language which addresses itself to the eye” (Disraeli qtd. in Gould *Freemasonry* 23). The absence of proof is therefore seen

as an intelligent way of hiding secret knowledge which is only accessible to those who are initiated – providing an explanation for the need of initiation, even if there is no secret knowledge hidden in the Egyptian hieroglyphic writings. The lack of secret knowledge in turn provides free space for interpretation of the actual texts, which eventually leads to the creation of ‘knowledge’ which is treated as secret by those who are initiated.

6.2 Linking Ancient Egypt to Britain – Pyramidology

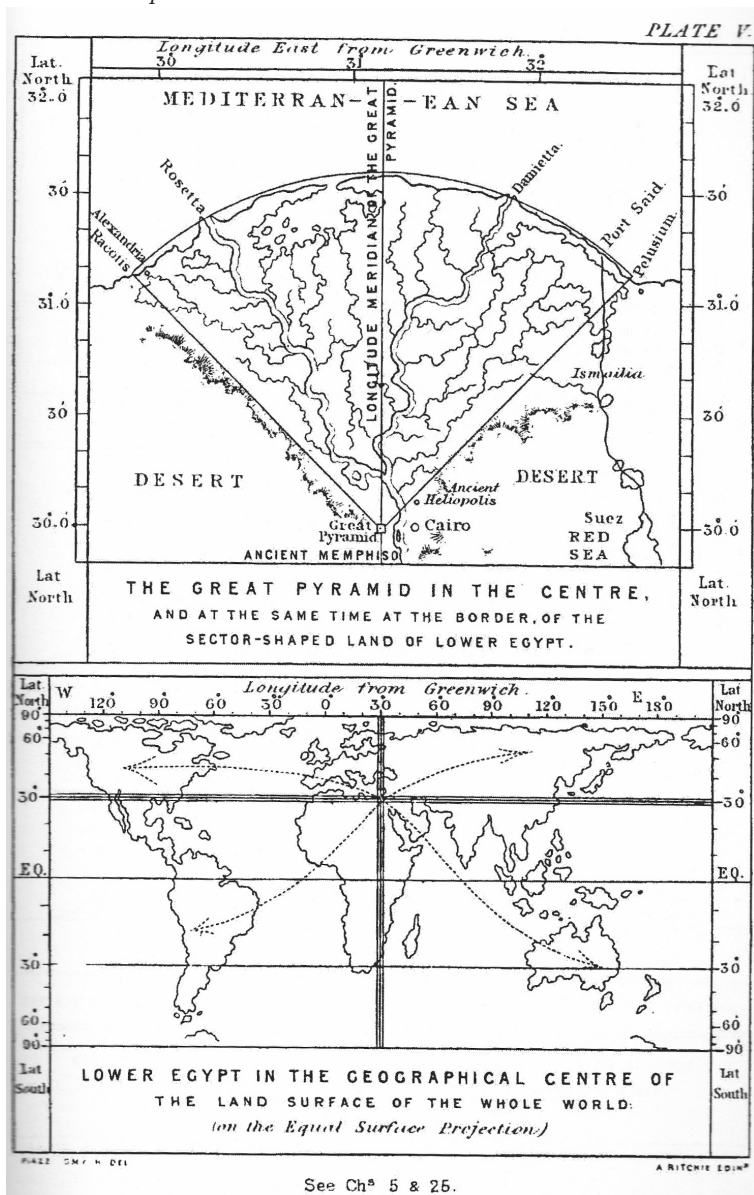
Solch eine äußere Umgebung, in der ein Inneres
verborgen ruht, sind die Pyramiden.
(Hegel *Vorlesung über Die Ästhetik* 448)

The pyramids of Giza have been a great source of inspiration and debate throughout history. While they were considered places of initiation by Theosophists, others refer to them as the “granaries of Joseph” (Vollkommer 31), and Erich von Däniken unremittingly defends the theory that the pyramids were in fact built by aliens (cf. von Däniken), an idea which was originally (sarcastically) suggested in *Edison’s Conquest of Mars*, a humorous science fiction novel by Garrett Serviss from 1898. Serviss suggests that the Great Pyramid was not built by a special or chosen group of human beings, as many theorists have previously suggested, but that humans were not involved at all:

Here, then, was the explanation of how those gigantic blocks that constitute the great Pyramid of Cheops had been swung to their lofty elevation. It was not the work of puny man, as many an engineer had declared that it could not be, but the work of these giants of Mars. (Serviss 196)

Charles Piazzi Smyth (1819–1900) had a different theory. He wanted to prove that the Cheops Pyramid was built not by the ancient Egyptians, but by a ‘chosen race’ whose line runs all the way to modern Britain. Smyth was greatly interested in the pyramids of Giza, thinking that their contraction had been inspired by god. He went to Egypt to measure the pyramids of Giza, trying to prove that the ancient Egyptian measurements reflected the British measurements, which he considered God-given (cf. Smyth 120–22), concluding that the ancient Egyptians could not have built such a perfect construction as the Great Pyramid (cf. Smyth 68; 193).

Illustration 18: "Charles Piazzi Smyth's Theory on the Importance of the Pyramid of Cheops".



At the same time he uses his theory to defend the British measuring system and to strongly oppose the French decimal system (cf. Smyth 37; 484–5). His theories are therefore motivated by an interest in ancient Egypt as an inherently Christian antecessor and by Francophobic sentiment. Smyth based his research on John Taylor's investigation on Christian elements in the pyramids, arguing that God had directed the construction of the pyramid of Cheops in his books *The Great Pyramid, Why Was It Built and Who Built It?* (1859) (cf. Smyth 440). Taylor had never been to Egypt and based his theories on measurements put down by Richard William Howard Vyse (1784–1853) and John Shae Perring (1813–1869), who in turn became interested in the pyramids through the descriptions by Diodorus and Herodotus. They had published their research on the Great Pyramid in *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh in 1837* (1840) and *The Pyramids of Gizeh* (3 volumes, 1839 to 1842) after extensive excavations in Giza with the help of Giovanni Battista Caviglia (1770–1845). Smyth took it on himself to prove Taylor right, travelling to Egypt to measure the pyramid, dedicating *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (1864) to Taylor. John Taylor claimed that a circle with the radius of the height of the Cheops Pyramid has a circumference equal to the perimeter of the base $1:2\pi$ (cf. Schmidt 112) and that the Egyptian inch, foot and mile correspond with the English equivalents. Smith's measurements proved him right and led to Smith's assumption that the Great Pyramid was indeed built after God's ideal (cf. Smyth 433) and that for some reason, the ancient wisdom and knowledge of the sacred measurements was hidden from all cultures which followed those who built the Cheops Pyramid until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the truth became known to modern British scholars like himself (cf. Smyth 459). Smyth was contacted by the Grand Secretary of the Freemasons from a lodge in Cornwall to disclose to the Freemasons whether any of their marks were to be found inside the Great Pyramid. Smyth declined, commenting that there were no such marks. He comments that the "Freemasons had in so far, on their own showing, had no hand in raising that sacred and pure building, whatever they had been doing in subsequent ages for idolatrous Assyrian kings [...]" (Smyth 128–29). Smyth clearly believed that the ancient Egyptians did not build the pyramid, but that a different tribe, a "chosen race", was commissioned by God to build it – and certainly not as a tomb for a pharaoh (cf. Smyth 10). Following this train of thought and trying to prove that the British still use measurements which correspond with those which can be found in the Great Pyramid, the logical conclusion would be that Great Britain is immediately connected to the chosen race. Taylor and Smyth therefore tried to legitimise Britain's role as the greatest nation on earth.

Ironically, the person who wanted to prove Smyth right was a young student of Smyth's who travelled to Egypt to take more accurate measurements of the Great Pyramid in 1880. This young student was William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942), whose father had been close friends with Smyth. Petrie's measurements were indeed more accurate than Vyse and Perring's and Smyth's had been, and he consequently proved Taylor's and Smyth's theories wrong.

Illustration 19: "The Pyramid of Cheops".



These theories illustrate an aspect of the interest in ancient Egypt which is often ignored in the context of the relationship of Britain and Egypt in the nineteenth century. An almost fundamentalist Christian movement opposed the post-Darwinian secularisation of Britain, and Taylor and Smyth belonged to a group which wanted to prove a biblical inheritance in modern Britain. David Gange argues that one of the greatest motivators for archaeologists and Egyptologists in the second half of the nineteenth century was a profound interest in Egypt as a biblical country and that the new methods developed were seen as a great possibility to prove the Scripture right (cf. Gange "Religion and Science" 1086). This approach reflects the urge to incorporate the *Other* into the *Self* on a cultural level, simultaneously denying the *Otherness* of aspects which would otherwise be clearly defined as such. In fantastic fiction, these theories feature only on the

surface and only very sporadically. In fact, the pyramids which are described, namely the Cheops Pyramid in *The Mummy!* and “Lost in a Pyramid” resemble the exhibition of Belzoni’s tomb of Seti I in Piccadilly, and Grant Allen’s pyramid of Abu Yilla is entirely fictional. However, the awareness of archaeological excavations and the rising number of collections of Egyptian artefacts also suggests the incorporation of the *Other* into the culture of the *Self*. This annexation occurs through the invention of tradition, both in reality and in fiction, linking the ancient Oriental *Other* with the modern Occidental *Self*.

Today, pyramidology is wildly frowned upon, and widely practiced. Those who do not believe that the pyramids were in fact built as tombs and try to prove one of the numerous theories about the construction of the pyramids were referred to as ‘pyramidiots’ by Zahi Hawass (cf. MacDonald *Consuming Ancient Egypt* 175). The most popular theory of the late twentieth-century is Robert Bauval’s *The Orion Mystery* 1994, in which he claims that the pyramids of Giza were constructed to reflect the constellation of Osiris. This fascination, which often borders on obsession, shows that despite extensive archaeological research, ancient Egypt still holds mysteries which the West tries to unveil.

7. Conclusion

This book analyses the representation of ancient Egypt and discerns the patterns which feature in Egyptianising fantastic texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in order to explore the inherent *Self*-criticism in the texts, as well as to describe the power relations between the Western *Self* and the purposefully constructed ancient Egyptian *Other*. Ancient Egypt features repeatedly in fantastic fiction of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century and the representation of elements of ancient Egypt or Egyptian characters are constructed as the *Other* in order to criticise or threaten the West. To explain and elaborate on this occurrence, Stephen Arata's notion of reversed colonisation and Edward Said's concept of the Western *Self* and the Oriental or Eastern *Other*, as well as Jandt and Tanno's discussion of perceptual and discursive imperialism, have been taken into account to explore the genre with a focus on the representation of ancient Egypt and its role. Furthermore, Rosemary Jackson's definition of fantastic fiction as a subversive genre has been tested. Considering the arrogance and superiority which was openly displayed by the British Empire and which drove colonisation, the fictional reversal of Britain's role as the superior power and the threat which the ancient *Other* emanates in the texts clearly supports her claim. It is striking that despite the factual and even Egyptological knowledge of most of the authors, Egypt's main purpose in fantastic fiction of the time is to criticise the cultures of the authors.

Egypt is consciously chosen and narrated in a way typical for the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. As this book has shown, within the genre, Egypt is not merely a setting, but the origin of critical voices which (re-)turn to Great Britain in order to confront it with its arrogant and superior behaviour and mind-set. Strong subversive characteristics appear even in the most imperialist of the stories, in particular Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet*.

While most of the primary texts have been discussed and analysed in different context and different constellations already, this book brings together the all of the most important and representative texts which were available at the time of writing to compare them and discuss their representation of ancient Egypt and Egyptianising elements. Important works concerning the representation and depiction of ancient Egypt in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fiction have previously been published. Among other, Nicholas Daly has written about Egyptian objects and especially mummies as commodities and in the context of materialism in "That Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity

Culture and Fictions of the Mummy” and “Mummy Has Become Merchandise’: The Mummy Story as Commodity Theory.” Jasmine Day’s *The Mummy’s Curse: Mummymania in the English Speaking World* constitutes a defence of the Egyptian mummy against the Western interpretation and stereotyping as a monster in literature and film, while Lynn Parramore’s *Reading the Sphinx: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture* focusses on issues of gender, sexuality and psychoanalysis and Roger Luckhurst’s *The Mummy’s Curse* extensively discusses the curse’ emergence and development in Western thought. Taking all of these and other works into account, this book takes a new historicist approach to analyse nineteen Egyptianising texts, which were published in the span of one hundred years, in search of common themes and issues as well as the development and change thereof during the set time frame. Several elements proved to be consistently addressed in all of the text, although the extent and severity of these themes varies. Of all these elements the most obvious is a critical undertone towards the British, the British Empire or the West in general which features in all of the Egyptianising fantastic stories of the period. Ancient Egypt is constructed by the authors of this genre to portray an *Other* which has the ability to challenge the *Self* and its supposed superiority. The initial encounter lies in a political and scientific interest, and the historical developments of the colonising practices of the British Empire reflect the strong urge to learn about the colonies and therefore possess them. The fictional ancient *Other* takes control and is quick to learn – or already more knowledgeable and learned – and able to see through the workings of the modern West while the West is unable to fully understand and control the Eastern *Other*. This shift in control is portrayed both through characters, but also through objects which become active participants instead of being acted upon. While objects were brought to Britain as war booty or for the purpose of scientific research or personal prestige, they begin to act on their own accord in the stories. Objects become subjects and start to colonise the coloniser. Especially the difficult definition of mummies as something between a human being and an object or commodity plays a large role in this development. The resuscitation and revival of mummies which were brought to Britain as collectors’ items and who become active participants – even driving forces – in the action of the plot of the stories reflects this shift of power.

The West, and more precisely, Britain (and the USA) construct the *Other* in order to create conflict and a potential threat, which reflects the Orientalist mind-set and actual anxiety which came with colonisation. While the Orient was generally seen as the opposite of the Occident, it was a foreign place to which the West came, but not vice versa. However, the fear that the *Other* could actually

invade Europe is reflected strongly in the literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the ever growing private and, somewhat later, public collections the Empire was brought home and exhibited in world fairs and national and local museums of Britain. Mummies were also brought to Europe, and their presence is significant in Egyptianising fantastic fiction. They represent the *Other* which has come to confront the British with their own colonising practices. This confrontation of the *Self* with the *Other* leads to a deconstruction of both concepts, as Jandt and Tanno argue. The *Other* becomes a double (in the Jungian sense) of the *Self* and therefore loses its *Otherness*. Instead of being the opposite, it becomes a version of the *Self*, an uncanny entity which is too similar to be comfortably seen as an opposite or something completely different.

A critical writing of ancient Egypt empowers the *Other* and places it in a position to pose an actual (albeit fictional) threat to the *Self*. Western weapons are usually useless, especially when magic is involved in any way. British protagonists are forced to accept and make use of magic in order to defeat the ancient Egyptian characters. The threat does not have to be a physical one, as in "Lot No. 249", "The Story of Baelbrow" or "The Nemesis of Fire", but the threat to British superiority is occasionally enough for the West to accept and use supernatural practices in order to stand against the *Other* – or, in some rare cases, even accept ancient Egypt as superior and wanting to become part of it, as, for example, Edgar Allan Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy", Grant Allen's "My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies" and "A Descent into Egypt" show. Even though the West sees itself above the East by default, Britain repeatedly has to accept its helplessness in the direct confrontation with the supernatural or simply powerful and knowledgeable ancient Egypt in fantastic fiction. The regularity with which this shift in power relations occurs in the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, especially during the time when the British Empire had reached its greatest extent, the fear of the superior *Other* reflects what can be described as Great Britain's inferiority complex. The critical voices which were constantly present throughout the history of the British Empire, as Ferguson has argued (xxiv), are especially vocal in Egyptianising fantastic fiction.

This book places a special focus on Loudon's work for several reasons. Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!* marks the emergence of the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction; and while it still adheres to Romantic themes it already carries all the critical elements which feature in the genre during the next hundred years. Very little has been written about the text and only a reprint of the original exists. Nevertheless, it is a seminal work for the genre and foreshadows all of the important themes and topics which are revisited in later Egyptianising stories

of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The underlying moralistic tone serves to criticise the urge to transcend naturally established borders, reflecting the fast scientific and industrial development of the early nineteenth century. At the same time, Loudon relies heavily on the accounts by Diodorus Siculus and Herodotus, which are the most common sources concerning ancient Egypt used by Victorian writers, and refers to Belzoni's exhibitions of the 1820s in London. Themes from her three-volume novel can be found in all the Egyptianising texts which follow the publication of Loudon's text.

Considering the numerous colonies and foreign countries which could have inspired Victorian and Edwardian writers, Egypt proves to be a special case and seems predestined for the construction of its fictional character. Ancient Egypt is ambiguous as it presents an ancient (and therefore conceivably inferior) and a high culture at the same time. It is an entire culture which is dead and entirely rooted in the past, but through its rediscovery and re-construction in private collections, museums and public displays, it comes 'back to life' and begins to haunt the West. For several reasons, including the lack of sources and context as well as the climate- and weather-induced destruction of the majority of ancient Egyptian objects and architecture, ancient Egypt cannot be properly and sufficiently understood, so it offers a perfect canvas onto which constructed ideas and ideals, stereotypes and fantasies can be projected.

The reasons for the prominence of Egypt in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantastic fiction can be found in the rekindled European interest in ancient Egypt following the Napoleonic Expedition in 1798 and the subsequent publication of material on Egypt. Modern Egypt gained in political importance during the nineteenth century, and the deciphering of the hieroglyphs in 1822 as well as the publication of the *Description de l'Égypte* and similar collections and descriptions of Egypt caused a European Egyptomania. The British troops defeated Napoleon's Army in Egypt in 1801 and numerous ancient Egyptian objects found their way into British private collections, and eventually the British Museum. When Pasha Muhammad Ali opened Egypt up for tourism, Europeans came to Egypt to visit the biblical settings and to enjoy Egypt's mild climate. It was no longer foreign, but known and a popular place to travel to. The growing familiarity with Egypt and its ancient artefacts is reflected in the literature of the time. Ancient Egypt features heavily in fantastic texts, and several texts constitute a sub-genre within fantastic fiction: Egyptianising fantastic fiction. This subgenre consists of two modes: the Gothic and the comedic. Most of the texts, including Jane Loudon's ground-breaking *The Mummy!* comprise features of both. An element which almost all Egyptianising texts have in common, as

this book has shown, is criticism of the West. Furthermore, authors of Victorian Egyptianising fantastic fiction use ancient Egypt or aspects thereof to express fear of the *Other*; in this case the Oriental *Other*, which is at the same time immediately present in Victorian imperial politics, but also removed both in geography and time concerning the ancient Egyptian *Other*. Moreover, Egyptianising fantastic fiction displays the urge to communicate with the *Other*, not necessarily to understand it, but rather to possess it and to annex it to the *Self* in order to seize control over it. This urge is often mocked and criticized through the portrayal of the inability of the fictional Western protagonists to gain control, leaving the entire process open for criticism and offering new ways of looking at the supposed *Other* and questioning the *Self*. A general awareness of British (and American) imperial arrogance and Anglocentricity features in Victorian Egyptianising fiction, which is reflected in satirical or often moralistic tales between approximately 1828 and 1914 by authors such as Jane Loudon Webb, Edgar Allan Poe, Louisa May Alcott, Arthur Conan Doyle, Richard Marsh, Grant Allen and Rider Haggard.

As the analysis of the texts has shown, several major themes appear with a high frequency, framing the genre in connection to the Egyptianising elements and adding to the critical tone of the stories. The depiction of ancient Egypt is very different from the representation of modern or Arabic Egyptians. While the modern Orient remains a place of contrast to the West, ancient Egypt is treated as a place of magic and the supernatural, and often as superior in knowledge and culture to the West. This representation of ancient Egypt serves to criticise Britain, the British Empire and the West in general, as the texts are written by European and US-American authors who create the outside perspective to reflect on the anxieties and arrogance of the West towards the East. By using the *Other* to criticise the *Self*, authors of Egyptianising fantastic fiction subvert the Victorian and Edwardian world view – voicing overt criticism though the genre of fantastic fiction.

Further themes and recurring elements are the problem of language and communication between the *Self* and the *Other*, physical transformations, and, on occasion, spiritual transmigration, an issue which is closely connected to the third major theme of vampiric elements in ancient Egyptian characters. Furthermore, sleep, dreams and visions appear in almost all of the analysed texts while magic, magical objects and secret knowledge are repeatedly connected with ancient Egypt and Egyptian characters. The issue of language is complex and underlines the power relations between the Western and ancient Egyptian characters. Generally, communication is possible while actual understanding repeatedly fails,

causing friction and often leading to humorous situations in which the British characters are faced with their deficiencies and weaknesses which disprove their presupposed superiority.

Moreover, physical and spiritual transformations are commonly addressed in the Egyptianising texts. Through such transformations of both ancient Egyptian as well as the Western protagonists, the identity of a character is challenged; the *Self* is threatened by inconsistency and the unexplainable and the Western *Self* is confronted with its weaknesses and shortcomings. This confrontation with the West's inability to control the *Other* is one of the major common themes of Egyptianising fantastic fiction. Being closely related to physical change and occasionally spiritual transmigration are vampiric characteristics which are often ascribed to ancient Egyptian characters. Vampirism denotes a physical threat to the West by the Orient and the *Other*. The *Other* enters the West, and begins to exploit it for its own purposes. Egyptian characters often have mesmeric or hypnotic powers, reflecting nineteenth-century scientific ideas and connected anxieties, such as the fear of degeneration or foreign control. Other important aspects closely connected to vampirism are sexuality and the seductive power which were attributed to ancient Egypt and Egyptian (female) characters, as stressed especially in Blackwood's work, but which is already mentioned by May Alcott in "Lost in a Pyramid" and which plays a major role in Marsh's *The Beetle*.

The recurring theme of sleep and dreams adds another level of extenuation, while *Self*-criticism remains an evident feature of the genre. The attempt of the authors to distance themselves from the criticism voiced in dream sequences does not lessen the criticism but simply transfers it into a different register. Critical aspects of the stories usually appear in sequences framed by sleep, thereby implying the possibility of dreams and therefore an unreliable narration of events. While the Egyptianising stories usually begin in the mimetic mode, the use of bodily and spiritual transformations of the protagonist or the ancient antagonist often occurs in connection to sleep, dreams and trance-like conditions of the protagonists, and shift the mode into the fantastic though the introduction of supernatural elements.

The fifth element which occurs repeatedly in connection with ancient Egypt is magic. The use and practice of magic is closely linked to ancient Egypt in Egyptianising fiction and commonly involves a shift in power relations. While the West is unable to uphold its presupposed superiority against the magical or supernatural *Other*, a shift happens not only in power-relations, but of the mind-set of the West concerning the supernatural. The Western enlightened protagonists have to accept the existence of the supernatural. Therefore the *Self* is challenged

and is changed in the face of an *Other* which confronts the *Self* with its limited mind-set and understanding of the world. The frequent reference to magic and the supernatural in fantastic fiction reflects the urge of the Victorians to experience the supernatural; an impulse which culminated in the establishment of numerous esoteric groups and orders who sought to connect with the magical aspects of ancient Egypt.

Especially Helena Blavatsky's work for the Theosophical society, as well as the approaches of numerous other esoteric groups which were founded in the late nineteenth century, reflect the need for and belief in the supernatural, particularly in connection with ancient Egypt. At the same time, a different strand of interest in ancient Egypt can be found in the theories of pyramidologists who tried to find a connection between ancient Egypt and Britain, claiming that the Great Pyramid had been built by a chosen race which is supposedly a predecessor of the British. Following this approach, the ancient Egyptian *Other* and the Western *Self* become the same and no longer constitute opposites. While these trends were very prominent in British cultural thought at the turn of the century, they rarely appear in the texts discussed in this book, with very few exceptions. The occult and esoteric connections with ancient Egypt feature strongly in literature following the First World War, especially in the works of Alistair Crowley and Sax Rohmer. The emergence of occult themes, but also the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen led to a change in Egyptianising fantastic fiction which focuses more on the mummy's curse and treasure seeking. At the same time, the withdrawal of the British forces from Egypt in 1922 and the collapse of the British Empire in the first half of the twentieth century change the outlook on Egypt. Furthermore, a shift from Egyptianising fiction to Egyptianising cinema redefines the outlook on and perception of ancient Egypt.

In connection to the findings of this book it would certainly be worthy to open up the field of research to contemporary Egyptianising fantastic fiction in order to analyse the development after the First World War in depth. Furthermore, a comparison and discussion on realistic fiction concerning ancient Egypt which was written during the nineteenth and early twentieth century would contribute to the field of research and widen its horizon. As is shown in several examples of realistic or mimetic fiction, criticism towards the Empire is also part of those texts and an in depth analysis would certainly strengthen the thesis. At the same time, lost or unpublished texts are being found in archives and libraries around the world and the corpus of relevant texts will undoubtedly grow in the coming years. A future return to this book and an additional analysis of the yet to be republished texts will be an exciting venture.

The current interest in the representation and the image of Egypt by the West and the East in the fields of literature, Egyptology, art history, politics and archaeology was evident during the conference “Visions of Egypt” at Kingston upon Hull on September 6 and 7, 2013. The papers presented at the conference were exclusively concerned with interpretations and representations of ancient and modern Egypt in literature, art and the media and the discussions proved very fruitful for the interdisciplinary research of the field. While modern Egypt and the Arab Spring were discussed in detail, ancient Egypt and its literary and artistic presentation and import also constituted a main focus of the conference. Despite the fact that the literary works discussed in this book have been published over a century ago, they prove to be highly relevant to current literary and art history research and discussions. This book sought to contribute to this interdisciplinary field of study both in the sense of a literary analysis of the texts concerning the genre of Egyptianising fantastic fiction, as well as establishing a historical and cultural frame for the discourse of ancient Egypt as the constructed *Other* and its role as a criticising element in Self-critical writings of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fantastic fiction.

While Victorian Britain, and the Orientalist mind-set in general, have been thoroughly criticised in the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first century, this book has shown that this criticism is not, in fact, something new or modern, but has been practiced by the Victorians themselves – and unconsciously even by those who thought the British Empire to be the greatest civilisation on earth. A close reading of other texts from this period might prove to be similarly critical, yet Egyptianising fantastic fiction appears to be the most Self-critical of all literatures of the time. While this book has made various valid points which confirm that Egyptianising fantastic fiction is a genre of its own, the self-critical quality of the texts can be highlighted as the most prominent feature of the genre.

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Note: The works listed in the bibliography are the texts that were used as sources for this book. Remarks concerning the initial publication dates of the texts are made in the book. Where it was possible I tried to work with first editions of the primary texts and contemporary secondary texts and therefore used scans provided by Project Muse, Google Books and others. The links to the according scans are provided in the bibliography.

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