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MYTH AND MAGIC: INTERDISCIPLINARY READINGS OF
THE RECEPTION OF ANCIENT EGYPT



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Contents

<i>Editors' Note</i>	i
<i>Preface</i>	ii-iv
 <i>Articles</i>	
The Myths of Tiye and Nefertiti: the early historiography of the Amarna Period and its popular legacy Aidan Dodson (University of Bristol)	1-21
'Older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx': Egypt and the Mythic Past in Alternative Egyptology and the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft Jeb J. Card (Miami University)	22-44
'Birmingham Ware': Ancient Egypt as an Orientalist Construct Nolwenn Corriou (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)	45-66
Tea with King Tut at The Winter Palace Hotel Kathleen L. Sheppard (Missouri University of Science and Technology)	67-88
The Conjuror's Greatest Show: Belzoni and the Egyptian Hall Lizzie Glithero-West (The Heritage Alliance)	89-121
Ezekiel, Magic and Midwives: A Feminist Biblical Reading Rosalind Janssen (University College London)	122-142
A Biblical Prophecy and the Armour of Horus: The Myth of Horus and Seth in <i>Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation</i> Maiken Mosleth King (University of Bristol)	143-164
The <i>Museum of Lies</i> : Incorrect facts or advancing knowledge of ancient Egypt? Katharina Zinn (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter)	165-190
 <i>Reviews</i>	
<i>Searching for the Lost Tombs of Egypt</i> , by Chris Naunton Alice Baddeley (University of Liverpool)	191-193
 <i>Contributor Information</i>	194-196

Editors' Note

Conceptions of ancient Egypt do not exist in a vacuum. Throughout the centuries, the West's perception of Egypt's history have morphed and changed to suit the contemporary dynamics of its beholder, producing a body of knowledge which blends historical 'fact' with fiction and mysticism. It is at the intersection of these perspectives that attitudes towards colonialism, race, gender, class, and indeed historiography are revealed. Through interdisciplinary research, combining the fields of Egyptology, literature, history, and theology, a broad-ranging examination of what ancient Egypt *is* and what it *means* is made possible.

In 2015, Stephanie Moser suggested that 'representations of prehistoric and ancient worlds play an important part in generating interpretations of the past, yet we still know little about how they relate to the archaeological process of creating knowledge'. Recent scholarship on ancient Egypt has widened the field of reception studies, allowing for more enriched understandings of the way Egypt has been used throughout history. This encompasses scholars from the fields of Egyptology, History, English literature, Biblical studies, and, most recently, game studies. This special issue responds to the challenge of exploring the complexity of ancient Egypt's past and how this complexity has shaped the way it is viewed today. It is born out of the discussions begun in the 2017 and 2018 *Tea with the Sphinx* conferences and thus provides an important cross-section of engagement with ancient Egypt from numerous disciplines.

As such, this issue joins the thriving field of publications by Jasmine Day, Roger Luckhurst, Eleanor Dobson, Nichola Tonks, Maria Fleischhack, Erik Hornung, Elliott Colla, David Gange, Christina Riggs as well as many of our own contributors. All are concerned with tracing the ways in which ancient Egypt has been rediscovered and represented. The temporal and geographical boundaries of this special issue are broad in order to display the breadth and depth of fascination with ancient Egypt by both scholars and the peoples they study.

This issue came together through the hard work of our phenomenal contributors, dedicated peer reviewers, and many passionate colleagues. We are indebted to the general editors of the *Journal of History and Cultures* for giving us an interdisciplinary platform for this discussion.

Sara Woodward & Liam McLeod

Preface

The intimate relationship between present and past – or, rather, the past as perceived by those in the present – is to be seen in a wide range of human endeavours. At one extreme, the past can be a justification or confirmation of political policy, with the potential of condemning millions to their deaths. At the other, the past can be a playground in which the artist can set his or her characters, to interact with each other in a way not necessarily possible in the present. Yet the past is not only a ‘foreign country’ where ‘things are done differently’ (to paraphrase L.P. Hartley in *The Go-Between*), but also a place that, unlike a real foreign country, one cannot visit or observe directly.

All that we can do, through surviving written material and material culture, is to steal glimpses of the past through an ever-moving and distorting mirror. Indeed, as we move back in time, we do not even have a tolerably complete mirror, but one long-ago shattered into fragments, only a few of which have yet been found – or even still exist – and are still capable of reflecting light. Thus, the past has to be built up from distorted glimpses. The gaps – sometime vast – have then to be filled in by the modern observer from indirect sources, ranging from logical extrapolations and credible parallels, to what may be little more than deep-seated, often unrecognized, personal prejudices.

The ‘past’ as thus-created is often in reality no more than a working – and sometimes extremely tentative – hypothesis that needs constant testing against fresh glimpses of the ‘real’ past as revealed by ongoing research. Such testing may indicate that the current working hypothesis needs revision or even complete replacement. However, the nature of scholarship and its transmission to, and reception by, broader audiences means that such superseded working hypotheses may not die but take on a zombie-like life of their own. Such ‘zombie hypotheses’ can then endure long after further research has eclipsed generations of replacement reconstructions.

In some cases, this is simply the result of a scholar sneaking out a retraction of previously widely-announced ‘findings’ in an obscure footnote, leaving even their less-observant peers unaware that things have moved on (or back!). In others, especially if the idea is of a more-or-less sensational kind, it may be swept up by the popular media and, perhaps embroidered by non-specialists, to become in the wider mind a ‘fact’ – rather

than simply the working hypothesis it had hitherto been (and of course remains). From then onwards, its true 'zombie-life' may move apace, gaining further embellishments, and taking on an all-but-assailable status, unchallengeable in the public arena even by deep specialists aware of the zombie's true status, and its relationship to the current working hypothesis (or hypotheses) regarding the point in question.

Not only this, but modern popular hyperbole can further spice the mix, alleging that these are not only 'facts', but ones that have endured as such for centuries or even millennia. For example, one reads or hears statements along the lines that 'the memory of the beauty of Queen Nefertiti has endured for thousands of years' – yet in reality her existence, let alone appearance, was utterly forgotten for over three millennia. Indeed, as I point out in my contribution to this volume, she only re-emerged as a definable individual late in the late nineteenth century AD – rather a long way from her last documented sighting in the late fourteenth century BC. Zombies can thus gain the sheen of alleged age-old tradition, making them yet more difficult to kill.

Accordingly, our historical zombies make up many of the 'facts' that 'everyone knows' about ancient Egypt – alongside others actually taken directly from fiction, often further distorted through the lens of Hollywood. They are thus an important element of Egypt's 'myth and magic', the subject of this volume and its precursor conference, held at the University of Birmingham in June 2018.

Contributors have mined rich seams to address a wide range of such areas in which modern (and some ancient) myths of ancient Egypt and the magic often held to infuse its civilization have manifested themselves in the modern world. My own is a case-study in the way that two historical individuals emerged from the shadows of oblivion, to be the focus of numerous historical zombie-facts. The perceived otherworldly aspects of Egypt are discussed by Jeb Card through the writings of H.P. Lovecraft. Ancient Egypt re-imagined for the West is explored by Nolwenn Corriou through the writings of Sax Rohmer, and Kathleen Sheppard looks at how Howard Carter controlled information about Tutankhamun from Luxor's Winter Palace Hotel. Lizzie Glithero-West considers Egypt as an architectural inspiration in the form of the famous Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London, and Rosalind Janssen attempts to unravel the meaning behind the representation of Egyptian midwives in a particularly knotty Biblical passage in light of third-wave feminist biblical criticism. A relatively new popular mode of the reception of ancient Egypt is to be seen in video games, and Maiken Mosleth King explores an example

of the melding of archaeology and ancient myth in this context. Finally, Katharina Zinn considers the way that modern stories can be consciously woven around ancient artefacts as a way of presenting them to a wider audience.

These papers, of course, represent only a few strands of a dense web of material which has nodes in a wide range of disciplines, not only within the humanities, but also the sciences. The Tea with the Sphinx conferences, at the third of which many of the present papers were delivered, have proved a fine nexus for scholars and enthusiasts with a common interest in how their own specialisms impact on, and are impacted by, the study and perception of ancient Egypt. One looks forward to future instalments, and twists, of the story!

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Articles

The Myths of Tiye and Nefertiti: the early historiography of the Amarna Period and its popular legacy

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Key words: historiography; ancient Egypt; Nefertiti; Tiye; Akhenaten

Ancient Egyptian history is something of a movable feast: its symbiotic relationship with archaeology means that any account of events can usually be, at best, a working hypothesis, liable to radical change following perhaps just one new discovery, whether epigraphic, archaeological or both. Thus, what at one moment may seem a solid reconstruction of events, likely to stand the test of time, may become untenable overnight requiring replacement by something quite different. While this is generally understood in the world of academia, this is less the case with broader audiences, for whom 'history' is a more or less permanent thing. The idea that a carefully-constructed historical scenario, by a reputable scholar, could become utterly obsolete thus can be sometimes difficult to grasp. Accordingly, popular understanding of perceived 'facts' pertaining to Egyptian history can run many decades behind what current Egyptological and archaeological evidence can support.

While this variation of perception is present across the broad sweep of ancient Egyptian history, the long-standing and widespread interest in the Amarna Period has meant that the general perception of its history is often associated with a number of the more or less sensational ideas, many developed nearly a century (or more) ago. These out of date perceptions continue to constitute 'facts' for some ancient Egypt enthusiasts, and for some on-site tour guides in Egypt, in spite of a vast array of modern treatments of the period that exist.¹ Accordingly, this paper uses the modern reception of two of the key figures from this period – Queens Tiye and Nefertiti, the royal consorts of Kings

¹ E.g. the present writer's *Amarna Sunrise: Egypt from golden age to age of heresy* (Cairo, 2016) and *Amarna Sunset: Nefertiti, Tutankhamun, Ay, Horemheb and the Egyptian counter-reformation*, 2nd edition (Cairo, 2018), both with extensive bibliographies.

Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, respectively – as case-studies of this phenomenon. They are thus employed as lenses through which one can observe the routes through which ancient Egyptian historical figures emerged from the mists of time during the nineteenth century AD, how the first detailed assessments were made of their lives and characters, and the way in which some of those earliest assessments have continued to underpin popular views of these individuals long after scholarly consensus has moved on. By pure synchronicity, both of the queens in question are represented by famous sculptured heads in the Ägyptisches Museum Berlin (ÄM21834 and ÄM21300), that of Nefertiti constituting a visual icon that often transcends anything to do with her historical reality.² In focusing on these figures, I have made a point of quoting directly from the early protagonists, to give the reader a flavour of the modes of discourse of the late 19th and early 20th centuries AD. While one could have continued the exercise beyond the 1920s, it was by this time that many of what the present writer's preface to this volume has dubbed as 'zombie facts' had become established, and seems thus a good place to stop.

Tracing the history of these figures through the narrative voices of some of the earliest Egyptologists in the nineteenth century helps demonstrate how a few of the most persistent Amarna myths came into being. In particular, examining the ways in which Tiye and Nefertiti were represented as 'foreign' influences who undermined Akhenaten's rule, and how erasures of the names and figures of Akhenaten's other wife, Kiya, were misconstrued as indicating a 'split' between him and Nefertiti, and rolled into a further case of mistaken identity that gave Akhenaten a 'gay lover', whose advent was then linked to the alleged 'split', sheds light on how these myths have survived to the present day. By placing the early Egyptological narratives in dialogue with each other, a wider picture of Amarna's history is revealed, one which acknowledges the place of these zombie facts in the wider history of Amarna as a whole.

RESURRECTING THE AMARNA PHARAOHS

The rulers between the death of Amenhotep III and the accession of Horemheb were written out of history during the years immediately following their reigns, and were

² Cf. (e.g.) C. Breger, 'The "Berlin" Nefertiti Bust', in R. Schulte (ed.), *The Body of the Queen: gender and rule in the courtly world, 1500–2000* (Frankfurt & New York, 2006), pp. 281–305 and J. Tyldesley, *Nefertiti's Face: The Creation of an Icon* (London, 2018), both with references to other discussions.

accordingly omitted from the chronological sequences of kings presented in the temples of Sethy I and Rameses II at Abydos and in the tomb of Tjenry at Saqqara. Nevertheless, a memory of the kings of this 'erased' era was preserved down to the 3rd century BC writings of the Greek-writing historian Manetho,³ to whom we owe the dynastic structure of Egyptian history still used today. However, Manetho's original work has been lost, preserved only through quotations and summaries in the work of others, none of which are wholly in agreement with one another. In addition, they are frequently difficult to fully reconcile with contemporary data, suggesting a confusion probably based on the redacted state of the data available to Manetho. On the other hand, and significantly, this data appears to indicate that a woman had reigned during the late Eighteenth Dynasty between the two kings Amenhotep III and Horemheb. The extant principal excerptors of Manetho, Josephus, Africanus and Eusebius, give the following list of rulers subsequent to 'Amenôphis' (Amenhotep III) and prior to 'Ramessês' (Rameses I):⁴

Josephus	Africanus	Eusebius
Ôrus	Ôrus	Ôrus
Acenchêrês ('his daughter')	Acherrês	Achenchersês
Rathôtis ('her brother')	Rathôs	
Acenchêrês ('his son')	Chebrês	Acherrês
Acenchêrês II ('his son')	Acherrês	Cherrês
Harmaïs ('his son')	Armesis	Armaïs

'Ôrus' and 'Harmaïs'/'Armaïs' would seem to be dittographies of Horemheb, in both his 'official' position as successor of Amenhotep III and actual position between the Amarna kings and Rameses I. 'His daughter Acenchêrês' can only be the female king Neferneferuaten, with Akhenaten probably one of the male 'Acenchêrês'. "Rathô(ti)s" is probably Tutankhamun, leaving the remaining male 'Acenchêrês'/'Acherrês'/'Cherrês' as Ay.

Moving to modern times, the first glimpse of what was later dubbed the 'Amarna' period, derived from the initial phase of the decipherment of hieroglyphs, came during 1824/25, when Jean-François Champollion was studying the Egyptian collection in Turin.

³ W.G. Waddell, *Manetho* (Cambridge MA & London, 1940).

⁴ Waddell, *Manetho*, pp. 101-47.

He there identified 'Pharaon *Aménophis II*' (Amenhotep III) and his wife 'Taïa',⁵ but followed Manetho, and the newly-discovered king list from the temple of Rameses II at Abydos, in making 'Ôrus' Amenhotep III's direct successor, with Tiye possibly his mother. As for 'his daughter Acenchêrês', Champollion proposed that 'Tmauhmot' [Mutnedjmet], seated alongside Horemheb on his so-called 'coronation statue' in Turin, might have succeeded him on the throne and thus provided the prototype for 'Acenchêrês';⁶ this desire to reconcile Manetho with the monuments has been a feature of Egyptology throughout its history.

As for the names we now know came between Amenhotep III and Horemheb, but were unsuspected by Champollion, the latter was actually aware of Akhenaten's names, which he placed amongst a number of other monarchs⁷ who 'appear to have belonged to the XXth Dynasty, either by their similarity to the workmanship to monuments of the XIXth, that of the sculptures that recall the XIXth, or also *because the proper names appear to resemble those that Manetho gives to the princes of all other later dynasties, after and including the XXIst*'.⁸ Champollion makes no further remarks about the king, although discussing the rest of the individuals that he placed in this 'Twentieth Dynasty' group; thus, his exact source for knowing Akhenaten's cartouches is unclear.

While Champollion was in Turin, the tomb-chapels of Tell el-Amarna had been visited for the first time by (Sir) John Gardner Wilkinson (1797–1875),⁹ who was immediately struck by the oddity of their artistic style. He recognized that this was also to be found on a stela at Tuna el-Gebel (now known as Amarna Boundary Stela A) that had been known since 1714, when drawn by Claude Sicard (1677–1726),¹⁰ although the latter's published rendering bore little resemblance to the actual piece.¹¹ Claude Savary (1750-1788) also saw the stela in 1777.¹²

These oddities led to an assumption of foreign influence which has persistently clung to interpretations of the origins of Akhenaten's creed. Wilkinson comments that on such

⁵ J.F. Champollion, *Lettres à M. le duc de Blacas d'Aulps, Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre, Pair de France, etc., relatives au Musée Royal Égyptien de Turin* (Paris, 1824–24), I, p 46, 49 (author's translation from the French).

⁶ Champollion, *Lettres*, I, pp 56, 85–86.

⁷ The others being Pepy I, Nakhthorheb, Amenemhat II, Osorkon I, Herihor and Menkare.

⁸ Champollion, *Lettres*, II, p. 106, pl v (author's translation from the French).

⁹ M.L. Bierbrier, *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, 4th edition (London, 2012), pp. 587–88.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

¹¹ See B. van de Walle, 'La découverte d'Amarna et d'Akhenaton', *Revue d'égyptologie* 28 (1976), pp. 12–19.

¹² *Ibid.* 18–19.

monuments 'the sun itself is represented with rays terminating in hands ... which is never seen in other parts of Egypt; in addition to this the name of the King ... has been purposely effaced, tho (*sic*) I have managed to get a copy of it'.¹³ He also wondered if they might have Persian affiliations – the Persian Period being the principal known period of foreign domination at the time, and thus a possible source of the artistic oddities, especially as true Persian art was little known at the time. Based on Wilkinson's drawings, Sir William Gell (1777–1836)¹⁴ wondered whether the principal figures (who proved to be Akhenaten and Nefertiti) might be a pair of pregnant women.¹⁵

On the other hand, Wilkinson also wondered if the mysterious king might be Tutankhamun, using another name: he had found Tutankhamun's cartouches at Karnak, and identified him as a brother of Amenhotep III on the basis of their names having been found on the same isolated block.¹⁶ The mysterious ruler at Amarna was 'posterior, at all events, to Thothmes IV'.¹⁷ An attempt at naming and placing the Amarna protagonists was made by Nestor L'Hôte (1804–1842) in a letter written at Qena on 23 February 1838:

As for the royal personages who address their offerings to the deity, they are almost always accompanied by five cartiches, two of which, and the larger ones, seem to contain, as M. Rosellini thinks, the name and attributes of the Sun, which was especially revered at Psinaula.^[18] They are, in fact, placed near the legend of the Sun; but what could give clues to the true intention of these first two cartouches is that they are equally, and almost always, united to the truly royal cartouches. These, three in number, belong to the king, and the third to the queen, who always comes after him. It is to be noted that the word *Atnra* forms the principal element of the names contained in these cartouches, and that thus the legend of the god and that of the prince offer this continual repetition of a name common to the divinity, to the king, and even to the queen, because this one also bears the name of *Atnra*, plus the qualification of *lady four times good, Nofraït*, with the title of royal wife. As to the proper name of the king, it is completed by three signs which can be pronounced *Bechn* or *Bakhn*. One would be tempted to see there the *Bæon* of chronographers, or even better the *Apachnas*, if one could adhere to simple analogies. The cartouche-name of which one has the Coptic transcript does not solve the difficulty relative to the place which it must occupy in the

¹³ Letter dated 13 August 1925, quoted in J. Thompson, *Sir Gardner Wilkinson and his circle* (Austin, 1992), p. 68.

¹⁴ Bierbrier, *Who Was Who*, pp. 210–211.

¹⁵ Thompson, *Gardner Wilkinson*, pp. 67–68; some of the tombs were copied during 1830/33 by members of the Robert Hay expedition.

¹⁶ J.G. Wilkinson, *Materia hieroglyphica: containing the Egyptian pantheon, and the succession of the pharaohs, from the earliest times to the conquest by Alexander, and other hieroglyphical subjects* (Malta, 1828–30), p. 118.

¹⁷ J.G. Wilkinson, *Extracts from Several Hieroglyphical Subjects found at Thebes and Other Parts of Egypt* (Malta, 1830), p. 21

¹⁸ The Classical name at that time associated (wrongly) with Tell el-Amarna.

list of the ancient kings of Egypt, and the defective state of monuments whose examination can make a useful comparison, allows at most conjectures about it.¹⁹

The reading of the royal names corresponded to the state of the art in reading hieroglyphs. 'Bœon' and 'Apachnas' were the 'Bnon' and '[A]pachnan' listed by Manetho as members of the Hyksos Fifteenth Dynasty – not inconsistent with the perceived 'otherness' perceived in the art seen at Amarna. As well as recording many features of the area around Amarna, L'Hôte also collected together contemporary art at Thebes.²⁰ John Perring (1813–1869),²¹ who visited Amarna in February 1840, took a similar line to L'Hôte as to the likely date of the material:

It is quite certain that the temples of this race have been destroyed and their names obliterated by the kings of the eighteenth dynasty, – a dynasty of which Champollion thus speaks: "Its first princes drove out of Lower Egypt, and a portion of Middle Egypt, hordes of foreigners known as shepherds, whom the Egyptians called *ἡκωσ* Hykschos." From these facts I think it is fair to conclude, that these are some of the remains of the shepherd kings, who held Egypt in the period immediately preceding the eighteenth dynasty.²²

He likewise opined that the cartouches he had seen at Amarna 'somewhat resemble[d]' the names given by Manetho for the first three kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty.

Perring spotted the link between the Amarna material and the tomb of Ay (WV23), found by Belzoni in 1816, suggesting that as regards the latter king (whose name was at that time being read as 'Skhai'):

the features, the protuberant abdomen, the defacement of his name and features in his tomb, and the destruction of his edifices by the kings of the 18th dynasty, appear to identify him with the same intrusive race; and from the similarity of his phonetic name with the first shepherd monarch, I have ventured to place him, but without other authority.²³

¹⁹ N. L'Hôte, *Lettres écrites d'Égypte en 1838 et 1839* (Paris, 1840), p 55–56; author's translation from the French.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 92–94, including Berlin ÄM2072 and Louvre E.13482ter.

²¹ Bierbrier (ed.). *Who Was Who*, p. 425.

²² J.S. Perring, 'On some fragments from the ruins of a temple at El Tell', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature* 2nd ser. 1 (1843), p. 144; quotation from Champollion translated from the French by the author.

²³ Ibid.

Although himself clear that the Amarna material could not be pre-Eighteenth Dynasty, even Wilkinson remained not averse to the idea that there might be some kind of foreign link; writing in 1841, he stated:

The name Atin-re cannot fail to call to mind Atin, or Atys, the Phrygian Sun; and from the ovals of the King, who was noted for the peculiar worship of the Sun represented at the grottoes of Tel el Amarna, being always so systematically erased, some may argue the animosity of the people against a King, who had made an unwelcome foreign innovation in the religion of the country, or at least in the mode of worshipping that Deity. But the name of Atin-re already existed at a very early period; and though the subjects of Tel el Amarna rarely occur, except in those grottoes and the vicinity, some traces may elsewhere be found of the Sun represented with similar rays, in sculptures of the time of the great Remeses.²⁴

Samuel Sharpe's 1846 view of a typical Amarna wall scene agreed with Wilkinson's earlier thoughts on the date and influences of the material:

The Persian sun-worship was at this time not unknown in Egypt. On a wall in the city of Alabastron we see carved what we must understand to be Thannyras the [Persian] governor worshipping the sun ... itself, which is there called Adon-Ra, from the Hebrew title Adonai ... The worshipper is called Thaomra the successor of the Egyptian king Adonra-Bakan, a name which seems meant for Thannyras the son of Inarus. The bad state of the sculpture agrees with the fallen state of the nation.²⁵

However, Wilkinson's later position on the dating of the Amarna material much earlier had been reinforced by the discovery of blocks in 'Amarna' style at Karnak. These blocks, had been found during the partial demolition of Pylon X at Karnak by the local authorities in 1839/40,²⁶ some of them naming a hitherto-unknown King Amenhotep, whose nomen had been surcharged with the name now being read as 'Bekhenaten' in at least one case.²⁷

The gender of 'Bekhenaten' had continued to be an ongoing matter for debate, both on the basis of the mode of representation seen at Amarna and on Manetho's attribution of a female ruler to the late Eighteenth Dynasty. In 1845 Baron von Bunsen (1791–1860),²⁸

²⁴ J.G. Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 2nd series, I (London, 1841), pp. 297–298.

²⁵ S. Sharpe, *A History of Egypt, from the earliest times till the conquest by the Arabs A.D. 640* (London, 1859), p. 199.

²⁶ Cf. G.R. Gliddon, *An appeal to the Antiquaries of Europe on the Destruction of the Monuments of Egypt* (London, 1841), pp. 47–67.

²⁷ E. Prisse d'Avennes, 'Remarks on the Ancient Materials of the Propyla at Karnak', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, 2nd ser., 1 (1843), pp. 76–92. The blocks involved are also published in Prisse's *Monuments égyptiens: bas-reliefs, peintures, inscriptions, etc* (Paris, 1847), pl. x, xi.

²⁸ Bierbrier (ed.), *Who Was Who*, pp. 92–93.

in his great multi-volume work on Egyptian history and chronology, presented 'her' as the wife of Amenhotep IV (by then firmly identified as son of Amenhotep III), by some confusion also stating that 'she' also bore the name 'Nefru' (i.e. Nefertiti).²⁹ Richard Lepsius (1810–1884)³⁰ also initially accepted a feminine gender for 'Bekhenaten', making 'her' the widow and successor of Amenhotep IV.³¹ Rather later, Auguste Mariette (1821–1881), took a rather different approach to explaining Akhenaten's effeminate appearance, suggesting that he had been captured while campaigning in Nubia and been castrated.³²

However, following his visits to Amarna and Thebes while leading the Prussian expedition of 1843–45, Lepsius finally agreed with Wilkinson that 'Bekhenaten' was not only male, but also the same person as Amenhotep IV.³³ Edward Hincks, writing in 1844, agreed, but considered (as had Wilkinson) that Tutankhamun was Amenhotep III's brother, that Ay (whose name was still only provisionally read as 'Skhai') was Amenhotep III's son, and that it was he who was the father of Amenhotep IV. In Hincks's view, the latter two kings both ruled in Upper Egypt, while Horemheb ('Horus') reigned in the north.³⁴

In 1851, Lepsius set out his basic configuration of the period,³⁵ including recognizing the existence of Smenkhkare (whose name was at that time transcribed as 'Ra-aa-ter-u'),³⁶ which was then incorporated in the next volume of Bunsen's magnum opus (issued in 1856),³⁷ and the relevant parts of the revised English translation of the whole work. Nevertheless, the emerging relationships of the kings of the period still required correction. Akhenaten, Tutankhamun and Horemheb were all regarded as sons of Amenhotep III, with Horemheb facing the other two (and Smenkhkare) as rival rulers. Tey, wife of Ay, was also regarded as a further ruling sibling, and as the mother of

²⁹ C.C.J. Bunsen, *Aegyptens Stelle in der Weltgeschichte* (Hamburg/Gotha, 1845–57), III, pp. 88–89.

³⁰ Bierbrier (ed.), *Who Was Who*, pp. 324–326.

³¹ The idea that Akhenaten was a woman endured in some quarters until the end of the 1880s: E. Lefébure, 'Sur différents mots et noms égyptiens.–V', *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 12 (1889–90), pp. 478–83.

³² A. Mariette, 'Renseignements sur les soixante-quatre Apis trouvés dans les souterrains du Sérapéum', *Bulletin archéologique de l'Athénæum français*, 1 (1855), p. 57.

³³ R. Lepsius, *Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai*, translated by L. and J. B. Horner (London, 1853), p. 262 n., 278.

³⁴ E. Hincks, 'On the defacement of divine and royal names on Egyptian monuments', *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 21, polite literature (1848), pp. 105–113.

³⁵ Lepsius, *Über den ersten ägyptischen Götterkreis und seine geschichtlich-mythologische Entstehung* (Berlin, 1851).

³⁶ In particularly reading the *mnḥ*-sign as '3'.

³⁷ Bunsen, *Aegyptens Stelle* IV, 162.

Rameses I.³⁸ On the other hand, Nefertiti's place as Akhenaten's wife was now secure, albeit under a compressed form of her name, 'Nefru', although in 1851, Samuel Birch was attempting to embrace all the hieroglyphs in her cartouche by calling her 'Aten-neferu Taia-nefer.'³⁹

Nevertheless, the idea of a foreign influence behind the strangeness of Amarna art and religion endured, even though now divorced from the Hyksos and Persians. Wilkinson's 'take' in 1854 was that:

Towards the latter end of the (18th) dynasty, some "Stranger kings" obtained the sceptre, probably by right of marriage with the royal family of Egypt; (a plea on which the Ethiopian princes and others obtained the crown at different times,) and Egypt again groaned under a hateful tyranny. They even introduced very heretical changes in religion, they expelled the favourite god Amun from the Pantheon, and introduced a Sun worship unknown in Egypt. Their rule was not very long; and having been expelled, their monuments, as well as every record of them, were purposefully defaced.⁴⁰

The idea of a 'foreignness' of the Amarna kings would be long-enduring, and clearly lay at least implicitly behind the proposition that Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III, was of foreign origins. That she was not a royal princess had been ascertained early on by virtue of the so-called 'Marriage Scarabs', which named her parents as Yuya and Tjuiu, albeit without giving their titles. These titles were only determined following the discovery of their tomb (KV46) in 1905. Birch, writing in 1841, simply noted that they were 'private persons',⁴¹ but subsequently many writers (going back at least as far as Auguste Mariette in 1874)⁴² proposed that one or both were of foreign birth. Wallis Budge went so far as to state without query that Tiye was 'one of the Mesopotamian or North Syrian women whom Amen-hotep married',⁴³ further alleging that she was 'represented with a fair complexion and blue eyes'.⁴⁴

³⁸ C.C.J. Bunsen, *Egypt's Place in Universal History*, translated by C.H. Cottrell, II (London, 1854), pp. 539–542. In this equation, she is confounded with Tyti, wife of Rameses III (QV52), whose additional title of King's Mother is used as the basis for making her Rameses I's mother.

³⁹ S. Birch, 'On a Remarkable Object of the Reign of Amenophis III', *Archaeological Journal* VIII (1851), p. 407.

⁴⁰ Wilkinson, *A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians* (London: John Murray, 1854), I, p. 308.

⁴¹ Birch, *Archaeological Journal* VIII, p. 398.

⁴² A. Mariette, *Aperçu de l'histoire d'Égypte* (Cairo, 1874), pp. 70–71.

⁴³ E.A.W. Budge, *A History of Egypt from the end of the Neolithic period to the death of Cleopatra VII, B.C.* (London, 1902), IV, p. 96.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 98.

However, as Gaston Maspero pointed out fairly comprehensively in 1907, following the discovery of the couple's tomb, which showed that their titles were all purely Egyptian ones, all the 'facts' cited in support of such hypotheses were in error. These included the fact that Tiye had been misidentified with the later queen Tyti, a wife of Rameses III, and that the modes of depiction in the latter lady's tomb were misrepresented.⁴⁵ Maspero concluded that 'the hypothesis of Syrian origin for Queen Tiye rests upon a collection of mistaken theories and badly interpreted facts'.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the idea that Tiye was a 'foreigner' still lingers as a 'fact' in some modern, albeit mainly non-scholarly, works.

A further long-lived idea has been that Tiye's non-royal birth undermined Amenhotep IV's claim to the throne, and that it was this, perhaps even more than his religious beliefs, that led to his posthumous nullification. The idea that the right to the throne depended on a king marrying an 'heiress' was an outgrowth of the then-fashionable anthropological theory of 'primitive matriarchy', and endured for a long time. It was only definitively demolished in print by Gay Robins in 1983,⁴⁷ but it still infected later, especially non-professional, views. The alleged implications of this (in this case combined with Tiye's purported 'foreign' origins for Akhenaten) were forcefully set out by Heinrich Brugsch in 1877; given how influential his assessment would be, it is worth quoting in full:

The descent of this king, the son of Thi, from a house which was neither royal nor Egyptian, precluded him, according to the existing prescriptions regarding the succession, from any lawful claim to the throne. His deceased father had, by his misalliance, passed over the hereditary princesses of the royal race; and the son of the unfortunate marriage had to do penance for his father's fault. In the eyes of the priestly corporation of the imperial temple at Thebes, who jealously watched over the letter of the law on the succession to the throne, [...] the young king was an unlawful ruler, whose buildings in honour of the great Amon of Thebes could not mollify the excited feelings of the holy fathers and their dependants. To increase the existing difficulties, a circumstance occurred, which was alone sufficient to cause the excommunication of the new ruler. This was the aversion of Amenhotep IV., which is testified by the monuments, to [...] the worship of the greatly-venerated god of the empire, Amon, and of his fellow-gods, as it had been faithfully handed down to the heir of the throne from age to age, by law and teaching and education. In the house of his mother Thi, the

⁴⁵ Including the injudicious tinting used in E. Prisse d'Avennes, *Histoire de l'art égyptien d'après les monuments depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la domination romaine* (Paris, 1878-1879), II, pl. [52].

⁴⁶ Maspero, 'Notice on Iouiya and Touiyou', in T.M. Davis, *The Tomb of Iouiya and Touiyou* (London, 1907), xix-xxi. ; he had also pointed out the key points in his *Struggle of the Nations: Egypt, Syria and Assyria* (London, 1896), p. 315 n.1, with an overview of the debate to the 1890s.

⁴⁷ Robins, 'A critical examination of the theory that the right to the throne of ancient Egypt passed through the female line in the 18th Dynasty', *Göttinger Miszellen*, 62 (1983), pp. 68-69.

daughter of the foreigner, beloved by his father, hated by the priests, the young prince had willingly received the teaching about the one God of Light; and what the mouth of his mother had impressed upon his childish mind in tender youth became a firm faith when he arrived at man's estate To the great misfortune of the king himself, his out-ward appearance betrayed, in a very displeasing manner, his descent from his foreign mother. The soft womanish traits of his countenance, with a strongly advancing chin, the long narrow neck, the thin legs which supported his body, involuntarily reminded men of the foreign peculiarities which Nature had stamped upon him, and which to this day in Egypt, especially in the case of the Galla negroes, above all if they are eunuchs, constitute the most marked features of the black race. [...] Thus angry blood sprang up on both sides. To fill up the measure of hatred against the caste of the priests of Amon, and to give it public expression, the king issued a command to obliterate the names of Amon and of his wife Mut from the monuments of his royal ancestors. Hammer and chisel were put in active requisition on the engraved stones, and the scribes of the royal court sought with care the places, even to the very names of his forefathers, in which the word Amon met the reader's eye.⁴⁸

This vivid, if hyperbolic, statement of the 'facts' of the matter, presented by the leading historian of his time, had a long-term impact on popular understanding, especially as this assessment was still to be found in later (English) editions, the last of which was issued nearly a decade after the author's death in 1894.

In contrast to her mother-in-law, Nefertiti does not feature to any great degree in publications until the late nineteenth century when, like Tiye, she began to be presented as a foreigner. The meaning of her name, *Nfrt-īy.tī*, 'A beautiful woman has come', was rapidly combined with the mention in the Amarna Letters (found in 1887 and first published in 1896) of the Mitannian princess Tadukhepa, who arrived in Egypt as a diplomatic bride for Amenhotep III late in his reign,⁴⁹ and then became a wife of his successor.⁵⁰ While there is no evidence for such 'diplomatic brides' becoming formal

⁴⁸ Brugsch, *Egypt Under the Pharaohs: a history derived entirely from the monuments*, translated by H. Danby Seymour (London, 1879), I, p. 441–442, based on *Geschichte Aegypten's unter den Pharaonen: nach den Denkmälern* (Leipzig, 1877), pp. 419–420. Brugsch's highly-influential history had first appeared in French in 1859 (*Histoire d'Égypte des les premiers temps de son existence jusqu'a nos jours* [Leipzig]), and then revised for the German edition of 1877 (including the addition of the section quoted). This version was the basis of the first English in 1879, which then took on a separate existence, with a revised condensed edition produced by May Brodrick in 1891, with a number of emendations made by the editor; this was reissued in 1902, with a facsimile published in 1976.

⁴⁹ AL 22–24, 26–29 (W.L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992), pp. 57, 61, 68, 84, 86–87, 92, 98.

⁵⁰ With an attempt being made in 1891 to equate her with Tiye, via a misunderstanding of an initial reading of certain of the newly-discovered Amarna Letters, wherein it is alleged 'we hear the history of Queen Thi. It appears that she was the daughter of Tushratta, king of Mitanni ...; that Amen-hotep III., who was on a hunting expedition in that country, met the princess, fell in love with her, and in due course made her his queen. Thi went away to her new home accompanied by 317 of her principal ladies. Doubtless it was from his Semitic mother that Khu-n-aten learnt the worship of the sun's disk' (Brugsch, *Egypt Under the Pharaohs* [1891], p. 214), in spite of incoherence of the story [apparently added by the editor when preparing the new edition] with a statement further up the same page that Tiye was 'daughter of Jua and Thua'.

‘King’s Wives’ (*hmt-nsw*) during the Eighteenth Dynasty,⁵¹ the information was seized upon by many scholars to argue that, having married Amenhotep IV, Tadukhepa had been renamed Nefertiti. Although this presents a range of problems (as recognised early on by even Budge),⁵² the idea became a staple of the literature from this period onwards. Flinders Petrie took the position that ‘there can be scarcely a doubt but that [Tadukhepa] is the same person as the evidently foreign queen Nefertiti.’⁵³ Yet Petrie, interpreting Nefertiti’s title *irtt-p’t* as ‘Hereditary Princess’ (i.e. carrying a hereditary right to the throne),⁵⁴ was subsequently forced to argue that Tadukhepa’s father must have ‘married an Egyptian princess who became mother of Tadukhepa Nefertiti.’ Indeed, he went further to state that ‘[s]uch a marriage is very probable, the equality of terms between Dushratta and his brother-in-law Amenhotep III, and his asking as a matter of course for a wife for himself’.⁵⁵

In this, Petrie enlarges an earlier discussion, in which, in accordance with his understanding that it was ‘very doubtful if a king could reign except as the husband of the heiress of the kingdom’, he tries further to square the circle by applying the same reasoning to Tiye in order to accommodate the non-royal/foreign parentage that so offended Brugsch. For Petrie, Tiye thus ‘may easily have been the grand-daughter of an Egyptian king and queen, her mother Thuaa having been married to some north Syrian prince Yuua.’⁵⁶ Thus she would have the right to be a “princess of both lands”.⁵⁷

Maspero was one of the few who, rather, believed Nefertiti to be, an Egyptian princess of the pure solar race’,⁵⁸ albeit on rather weak grounds:

⁵¹ The isolated case of a Hittite princess who becoming a Great Wife of Rameses II cannot be held up as a parallel, as royal family customs were very different under the Nineteenth Dynasty.

⁵² Budge, *ibid.* IV, pp. 114–115.

⁵³ Petrie, *A History of Egypt during the XVIIth and XVIIIth Dynasties*, 3rd edition (London, 1899), p. 229.

⁵⁴ A common assumption at the time; it is now clear there is no connection between the title and any rights regarding the royal succession.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 210–11.

⁵⁶ A princely origin for Yuya seemed confirmed by the existence of a faience dish with texts calling him a ‘Prince Djahi’, in the collection of Edward Towry Whyte (now Fitzwilliam Museum E.81.1932), published by H.R. Hall in 1913 (‘Yuia the Syrian’, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 43 [1913], pp. 63–65). However, the hieroglyphs on the bowl proved to be forgery (C. Aldred, ‘The End of the El-Amarna Period’, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 43 [1957], p. 31 n.3), the bowl being a Middle Kingdom item, originally excavated a few years earlier in tomb 681 at Beni Hasan, with the spurious glyphs added between mid-1912 and early 1913 (J.D. Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals: Egyptian art in the Middle Kingdom* [Cambridge, 1988], p. 129 [122a]).

⁵⁷ Petrie, *History*, p. 183. This idea was echoed much more recently by Arielle Kozloff, proposing that Yuya was a Mitannian and closely linked to that state’s royal house – and even that Tiye was thus able to act as an interpreter from the Hurrian language for her husband (*Amenhotep III: Egypt’s Radiant Pharaoh* [New York, 2012], pp. 102–104).

⁵⁸ Maspero, *Struggle*, p. 316.

The place which she holds beside her husband is the same as that which belongs to legitimate queens, like Nofritari, Âhmosis, and Hâtshopsîtû, and the example of these princesses is enough to show us what was her real position; she was most probably a daughter of one of the princesses of the solar blood, perhaps of one of the sisters of Amenôthes III., and Amenôthes IV. married her so as to obtain through her the rights which were wanting to him through his mother Tîi.⁵⁹

A further long-standing thread of assertion about Tiye has concerned her influence over the young Amenhotep IV. It was suggested that her 'Syrian' background played a key role in the origin and development of Amarna religion and art, Petrie claiming her as 'undoubtedly the main mover of the change, as it was carried out completely just when she had the greatest power, as regent, after her husband's death, and controlled the boy-king', with 'Nefertiti—of the same race as Tyi— ... also a great supporter of the movement' and 'probably [whose] marriage precipitated it.'⁶⁰

While the likelihood that the Aten-cult was of wholly Egyptian origins has long-since been broadly accepted (although not excluding influence from the international religious milieu of the time),⁶¹ the idea that Tiye was in some way 'regent' during her son's first years has been rather more enduring. This has been based on the existence of an Amarna Letter which was written, uniquely, directly to her by Tushratta of Mitanni,⁶² and thus put forward as evidence of her holding executive authority. However, a careful reading of this communication indicates that she is being appealed to as witness to her late husband's agreement to send gold statues to Mitanni – rather than the gilded wood ones actually sent by her son, the rather less generous new king.⁶³

THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS AMARNA-MANIA

Wider public awareness of the Amarna Period and its personalities came as a result of the aforementioned recovery of the first Amarna Letters at Tell el-Amarna in 1887, followed by the first substantive excavations there: Petrie's during 1891/92 and those of Ludwig Borchardt, working for the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, between 1907 and 1914. In addition, Norman de Garis Davies, working for the Egypt Exploration Fund

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 316–317 n.6.

⁶⁰ Petrie, *History*, p. 211.

⁶¹ Dodson, *Amarna Sunrise*, pp. 34–36.

⁶² AL 26 (Moran, *Amarna Letters*, pp. 84–86).

⁶³ As was long ago noted by Cyril Aldred (*Akhenaten, Pharaoh of Egypt* [London, 1968], pp. 208–209; *Akhenaten, King of Egypt* [London, 1988], pp. 193–94).

copied the rock-cut tomb-chapels at the site during 1903–08.⁶⁴ Results from this fieldwork were incorporated into a popular biography of Akhenaten by Arthur Weigall, first published in 1910,⁶⁵ whose imaginative presentation (embracing many of the ‘myths’ noted above) has continued to influence public perceptions of the period and its personalities down to the present day.⁶⁶ Fieldwork was continued by the what was now the Egypt Exploration Society (EES) between 1921 and 1936. The EES began a new Amarna campaign in 1977 that still continues to the present day, although under the auspices of the Amarna Trust from 2008.

The German discovery of the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose (house P 47.2) during 1912/13 revealed a group of astonishingly lifelike three-dimensional heads, most strikingly a plastered and painted limestone bust of Nefertiti.⁶⁷ When the bust was revealed to the public in 1923, it rapidly became an internationally-famous icon. Combined with the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun the previous year, which also saw a second edition of Weigall’s biography, and some clever public relations by the EES team,⁶⁸ the hitherto-obscure Amarna royal family had now burst forth into public consciousness at the heart of a blizzard of Egyptomania.

The interpretation of discoveries during the 1920s excavations further contributed to the ongoing creation of myths surrounding the royal family, in particular Nefertiti. During the 1921/22 season, the EES, under the direction of Leonard Wooley, excavated the ‘Maru-Aten’, a cult-complex of a special kind now known as a ‘sunshade’. Amongst the finds were a number of reliefs showing the king and queen adoring the Aten – and in all of them the latter’s titles and name had been erased, and replaced with those of Meryetaten, eldest daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. Although nothing remained of the original texts, as Nefertiti was the only then-known wife of Akhenaten, Wooley drew following conclusions:

[H]ere, as nowhere else, the queen's name has in nearly every case carefully erased and that of her eldest daughter, Meryt-aten, written in palimpsest upon the stone, her distinctive attributes have been re-cut and her head enlarged to the dropsical cranium

⁶⁴ On the reception of the work at Amarna down to the end of the 1930s, see Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, pp. 67–94.

⁶⁵ *The Life and Times of Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt* (London, 1910).

⁶⁶ Cf. D. Montserrat, *Akhenaten: history, fantasy and ancient Egypt* (London, 2000), pp. 103–5, 141, 148.

⁶⁷ F. Seyfried, ‘The Workshop Complex of Thutmosis’, in F. Seyfried (ed.), *In the Light of Amarna: 100 years of the Nefertiti discovery* (Berlin, [2012]), pp. 170–86.

⁶⁸ Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, pp. 73–83.

of the Princess Royal Nefertiti, if alive, could hardly have agreed to so public an affront, nor would her death have been seized upon by so devoted a husband as an occasion to obliterate her memorials; are we to suppose that things were not so happy as they seemed in the royal household, and that a quarrel so serious as to lose the queen her position put an end to the idyll which had long been the standing theme of court artists?⁶⁹

The idea of a 'split' between Akhenaten and Nefertiti soon became a 'fact' and was further embroidered in a 1928 study by Percy Newberry.⁷⁰ This concluded that kings Smenkhkare and Neferneferuaten (both associated with Akhenaten in his latest years) were a single (male) individual, and that a stela showing two (unnamed) naked crowned individuals in an affectionate pose, which had at first been assumed to show Akhenaten and Nefertiti,⁷¹ actually

undoubtedly [depicted] Akhenaten and his co-regent Semenekhkarē'. The intimate relations between the Pharaoh and the boy as shown by the scene on this stela recall the relationship between the Emperor Hadrian and the youth Antinous.⁷²

Warming to his theme, Newberry continued by linking-in the apparent evidence from the Maru-Aten:

In regard to this love of Akhenaten for the youth it may be pointed out that ... at El-Ḥawâtah [Matu-Aten] ... the queen's name has in nearly every case been carefully erased and that of her eldest daughter, Merytaten, written in palimpsest upon the stone ...; are we to suppose that things were not happy as they seemed in the royal household?⁷³

The idea that Akhenaten and Smenkhkare were homosexual lovers soon became another staple 'fact' of Amarna Period, and retains wide currency.⁷⁴

However, both the 'Akhenaten-Nefertiti split' and 'gay lovers' theories actually proved to have been grounded on erroneous readings of the evidence. While for many years Nefertiti remained the only known wife of Akhenaten, in 1959 it was realised that there

⁶⁹ C.L. Woolley, 'Excavations at Tell el-Amarna', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 8 (1922), pp. 81-82.

⁷⁰ P. Newberry, 'Akhenaten's Eldest Son-in-Law 'Ankhkheprurē'', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 14 (1928), pp. 3-9.

⁷¹ H. Schäfer, 'Kunstwerke aus der Zeit Amenophis' IV.', *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 52 (1914), p. 76.

⁷² Newberry, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 14, p. 7.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, pp. 168-82.

was indeed a second wife, named Kiya,⁷⁵ and soon afterwards that she had at some point been disgraced and her names erased – including at the Maru-Aten,⁷⁶ and on many other blocks found in the 1940s, reused at Ashmunein, across the river from Amarna.⁷⁷

Thus, the deletions had had nothing to do with Nefertiti at all, and thus no evidence whatsoever existed for a ‘split’ between her and her husband. In any case, as Woolley had actually admitted, there were no examples of Nefertiti’s names being erased anywhere else, which would be odd if there had indeed been a significant falling-out between the couple. Nonetheless, the idea of a split between the ‘solar pair’ was an attractive one for those wishing to weave a ‘human’ story around the archaeology, and is still sometimes to be found in the stories told by tour-guides at Amarna. These are sometimes tied to an idea of Tiye as an ‘interfering mother-in-law’, perhaps a faint echo of the negative assessments of her by late nineteenth-century Egyptologists.

The question of Akhenaten’s sexuality was not unpicked until around the end of the 20th century. First, in 1974, John Harris noted that the presence of a female *t*-sign in some of the prenomen (first of a king’s two cartouche-names) regarded as belonging to Smenkhkare/Neferneferuaten suggested that the individual was actually a woman.⁷⁸ This was not generally accepted, in view of evidence that showed that Smenkhkare had been married to a woman – Meryetaten, eldest daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti – with suggestions that the woman in question (perhaps Meryetaten) might have been a secondary user of prenomen primarily used by (male) Smenkhkare/Neferneferuaten.⁷⁹

However, in 1988, James P. Allen pointed out that the equation of Smenkhkare and Neferneferuaten that had been an important part of Newberry’s theory was not necessarily correct, and although their prenomen shared a common core, their titularies were actually separate.⁸⁰ Thus, the way was clear to split them between a male Smenkhkare and a female Neferneferuaten – resolving most of the outstanding issues.

⁷⁵ W.C. Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, II (New York, 1959), p. 294.

⁷⁶ Yu. Perepelkin, *Тайна золотого гроба* (Moscow, 1968) [= *The Secret of the Gold coffin* (Moscow, 1978), pp. 58–73], seconded by J.R. Harris, ‘Kiya’, *Chronique d’Égypte*, 49/97 (1974), pp. 25–30.

⁷⁷ R. Hanke, *Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis: neue Veröffentlichungen und Studien* (Hildesheim, 1978).

⁷⁸ J.R. Harris, ‘Neferneferuaten’, *Göttinger Miszellen*, 4 (1973), pp. 15–17; ‘Neferneferuaten Rediviva’, *Acta Orientalia*, 35 (1973), pp. 5–13; ‘Neferneferuaten Regnans’, *Acta Orientalia*, 36 (1974), pp. 11–21; ‘Akhenaten or Nefertiti?’ *Acta Orientalia*, 38 (1977), pp. 5–10.

⁷⁹ R. Krauss, *Das Ende der Amarnazeit* (Hildesheim, 1978), pp. 43–47.

⁸⁰ J.P. Allen, ‘Two altered inscriptions of the late Amarna period’, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 25 (1988), pp. 125–126; ‘Akhenaten’s “mystery” coregent and successor: were Ankhkheperure Neferneferuaten and Ankhkheperure Smenkhkare Djeserkheperure one and the same, or two different kings?’ *Amarna Letters*, 1 (1991), pp. 74–85.

Final proof of Neferneferuaten's gender came in 1998, when Marc Gabolde pointed out that a number of nomen-cartouches of Neferneferuaten contained the epithet *3ḥt-n-ḥꜥs* – 'beneficial for her husband'.⁸¹ As for the origins of this female king Neferneferuaten, shown by at least one inscription to have served as Akhenaten's co-ruler, the fact that Nefertiti's full name had been for much of her career 'Neferneferuaten-Nefertiti' made her identification with King Neferneferuaten fairly transparent (although still not universally agreed). Thus, Akhenaten's 'gay lover' turns out to have been – as originally suspected – none other than his (female) wife.

AMARNA: MYTHS AND REALITIES

The above by no means exhausts the various 'myths' that have been spun around Tiye and Nefertiti as part of early scholarly discourse – and does not even touch on those dreamt up outside academia. However, they are presented here as case studies of the way in which aspects of the history of ancient Egypt has come to be written since the ancient monuments and their texts first became available for study in the early nineteenth century. The endurance of long-disproved hypotheses as long-term 'myths', considered by many outside Egyptology as 'facts', presents an interesting challenge for those working with 'early literate' societies. These provide sufficient material to often allow a fairly good attempt to be made to not only provide a basic historical and chronological skeleton, but also produce credible working hypotheses concerning significant detail – which can be presented as 'history.'

However, there is the constant need to keep such 'history' under review, and understand how much a current working hypothesis relies on others, or physical remains that are liable to more than one interpretation. The metaphor of the 'house of cards' is of course a cliché, but no less true for that, especially if working hypotheses are woven together into higher-level ones. The challenge this presents when placing thus-grounded 'history' before a wider audience is thus clearly apparent: to be comprehensible to the non-deep specialist, it is necessary to tell a fluent 'story', while still trying to indicate areas of doubt or debate. Yet while this is possible for the scholar writing such a 'history', problems then arise when this 'history' is used by a non-specialist author, or writer of a television or radio script, with such elements stripped out, to produce something that

⁸¹ M. Gabolde, *D'Akhenaton à Toutânkhamon* (Lyon, 1998), pp. 153–157.

appears to be an unqualified narrative of past events and motivations. However, such things have now passed beyond scholarly control and take on lives of their own, reinforcing the cycle of the popular 'mythication' of the ancient world that seems to be getting ever-stronger in recent years.

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‘Older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx’: Egypt and the Mythic Past in Alternative Egyptology and the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft

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Ancient extraterrestrial civilizations, superscience hidden as occult lore, global prophecies of destruction encoded in inhumanly-old monuments and artifacts, heretic kings possessed of dark secrets, and contact with uncanny immaterial entities in realms of altered perception, could all describe television ‘archaeological’ documentaries as well as conspiracy screeds on streaming video. Yet, it could also describe the Cthulhu Mythos, the tales of weird fiction by author Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). Lovecraft’s work has had a major influence on the genres of fantasy, science fiction, and horror literature, film, and games. Both alternative archaeology and Lovecraft’s Mythos have roots in theosophical models of the ancient past that strategically draw upon early archaeologists to make their narratives seem more credible to their audiences. As discussed below, alternative archaeology also borrows from Lovecraft. Esoteric Egypt, as a stepping stone to greater truths, looms large in both alternative archaeology and Cthulhu Mythos fiction.

Lovecraft himself did not refer to his tales as the ‘Cthulhu Mythos’, but beginning with ‘The Call of Cthulhu’, linked his own creations with those of other authors in order to make the tales of preternatural horror seem more real. Lovecraft included versions of his creations in collaborative works credited to others, and advised his friends to borrow and modify his creations. Readers might find Yog-Sothoth in a Lovecraft story, Yog-Sototl in a story by another author, with both mentioning the *Necronomicon* alongside books actually found in libraries.¹ Lovecraft intended to give his creations the real-world messiness of historical and mythological drift, a tradition which continues in one of the oldest and most influential fantasy fandoms.² The stories of this Mythos generally mention Lovecraft’s fictional New England towns, the ancient gods or alien races created

¹ L. Sorensen, ‘A Weird Modernist Archive: Pulp Fiction, Pseudobiblia, H. P. Lovecraft’, *Modernism/modernity* 17 (3) (2010), pp. 507–508.

² M. Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 130–157.

by Lovecraft or his friends, or the prehuman ruins or artifacts associated with these aliens.³

A stereotypical protagonist of a 'Lovecraftian' tale might be a professor of archaeology from Miskatonic University.⁴ Lovecraft never graduated high school and despite tremendous interest in learning about science and ancient history,⁵ he left school after a personal breakdown in his late teens.⁶ Instead of pursuing formal education, Lovecraft was an impressive autodidact from an early age and surrounded himself with scholarly trappings.⁷ Despite increasing poverty, Lovecraft collected a library of over 1700 volumes focused on science, history, and antiquity.⁸ Among his collection of artifacts including Roman coins, a Balinese wooden monkey, Japanese sculpture, Maya stone 'idols', and replicas of Classical art, Lovecraft owned an Egyptian *shabti* and a bit of mummy linen.⁹

Although his time in New York fueled Lovecraft's fascination with Egypt and the occult (due to the interests of his friends who lived in the city), Lovecraft detested the few years (1924–1926) he lived there. The writings Lovecraft produced in New York and immediately after (begun while he lived in the city) were full of the xenophobia and racism that define his legacy. New York at this time teemed with immigrants, to the horror of the openly-xenophobic Lovecraft. It was a city bustling with economic growth and opportunity, but Lovecraft, styling himself an old New England gentlemen but without a high school diploma, struggled to find work and began to sink into poverty. The city's museums offered a refuge of antiquarianism and culture.¹⁰ From an early age Lovecraft viewed himself, after an Orientalist obsession with *The Arabian Nights*, as a Roman, so museum displays of Classical artwork filled Lovecraft with wonder.¹¹ But in

³ S. Joshi, *The Rise and Fall of the Cthulhu Mythos* (Poplar Bluff, 2008), pp. 16-18.

⁴ S. Dziemianowicz, 'Outsiders and Aliens: The Uses of Isolation in Lovecraft's Fiction', in *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft* (Rutherford, 1991), pp. 159–187; K. Hite, *Tour de Lovecraft: The Tales* (Alexandria, 2008), pp. 61-62.

⁵ H. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1932-1934*, Volume IV, A. Derleth and J. Turner (eds.) (Sauk City, 1976), p. 360.

⁶ H. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1911-1924*, Volume I, A. Derleth and D. Wandrei (eds.) (Sauk City, 1965), pp. 39–41.

⁷ S. Joshi 1996, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life* (West Warwick, 1996), pp. 22–26, 36–40, 50–54.

⁸ H. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1929-1931*, Volume III, A. Derleth and D. Wandrei (eds.) (Sauk City, 1971), p. 211.

⁹ H. Lovecraft, *SL IV*, pp. 335, 347; H. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1934–1937*. Volume V, A. Derleth and J. Turner (eds.) (Sauk City, 1976), p. 21.

¹⁰ Lovecraft *SL III*, p. 128.

¹¹ H. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1925–1929*, Volume II, A. Derleth and D. Wandrei (eds.) (Sauk City, 1968), pp. 259–260; Lovecraft *SL IV*, p. 335.

New York, in the wake of the excavation of the tomb of Tutankhamum, Lovecraft obsessed over artifacts from Egypt, or as Lovecraft called it, 'nighted Khem'. Despite an allergic reaction to the embalming spices emanating from mummies in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he visited the exhibit several times.¹² Spices and embalming bring a taste of Egypt to one of Lovecraft's non Mythos stories, 'Cool Air' (1926). The death-defying Dr. Muñoz blends science and ancient lore to stave off post-mortem decay in a room filled with Egyptian incense to smell like 'the vault of a sepulchered Pharaoh in the Valley of the Kings'.¹³

EGYPT IN LOVECRAFT'S STORIES

Archaeology is a core feature of Lovecraft's stories starting with his first tale, 'Dagon', in 1917.¹⁴ Egypt is not mentioned in the tale of an ancient monument thrust up from the sea, but the monument, a granite obelisk covered in 'hieroglyphics' comprised of naturalistic imagery, bears more than a passing resemblance to Egyptian obelisks, one of the major symbols of ancient Egypt adopted and co-opted by the outside world from the Romans on.

Egypt and Egyptology would feature directly in a few of Lovecraft's tales, but its more common use is as a signifier of great antiquity, mythic origin, and eldritch horrors. His early use of Egypt was influenced by similar use of Egypt and archaeology by authors including his idol Edgar Allan Poe.¹⁵ Egypt as signifier of mythic antiquity comes into clearer use in Lovecraft's 'Dreamland' cycle. Several of these tales are set in a distant past sometimes referenced in other stories, but they are also framed as a mystical realm which can be encountered in dream, influenced by the fantasy writing of Lord Dunsany. Several of these stories show traces of Egypt. 'The Doom that Came to Sarnath'¹⁶ echoes the Old Testament narrative of the Ark of the Covenant bringing down the idol of Dagon,¹⁷ but the name Sarnath may be partly inspired by Karnak, mentioned in the story as Thebes.¹⁸

¹² S. Davis, 'Lovecraft as I Knew Him' in *Something About Cats and Other Pieces*, H. Lovecraft, collected by A. Derleth (Plainview, 1948[1971]), pp. 234–246.

¹³ H. Lovecraft 'Cool Air', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 1999 [1926]), pp. 130–139.

¹⁴ Lovecraft, H., 'Dagon', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 1999 [1917]), pp. 1–6.

¹⁵ D. Norris, 'Lovecraft and Egypt: A Closer Examination', *The Lovecraft Annual* 10 (3) (2016), pp. 14–17.

¹⁶ H. Lovecraft, 'The Doom that Came to Sarnath', in *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 2004 [1919]), pp. 5–11.

¹⁷ D. Harms, *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia* (Lake Orion, 2008), p. 66.

¹⁸ Hite, *Tour de Lovecraft*, p. 9.

Another Dreamlands story, 'The Cats of Ulthar',¹⁹ draws upon an account by Greek historian Diodorus of a Roman soldier being punished for killing a cat in Egypt.²⁰ Lovecraft treats the people of Ulthar as survivals of the past, traveling in a caravan decorated with 'strange figures with human bodies and the heads of cats, hawks, rams, and lions'.²¹ One of the traveler's young boys is named Menes, and the leader of the caravan wears a 'head-dress with two horns and a curious disc betwixt the horns',²² invoking the bovine horn headdress worn by Hathor and others in Egyptian art. The overall effect is to blend ancient-Egyptian imagery with the alleged connections between the Roma and Egypt.²³

The greatest explicit impact of Egypt in Lovecraft's fiction is in a series of stories, including some ghostwriting for clients, featuring subterranean lost civilizations in Egypt or the desert wastes of North Africa and the Near East. The first of these is set in Arabia, but the Egyptian influences are difficult to ignore. Many Lovecraft scholars consider the 1921 story 'The Nameless City' to be the first Cthulhu Mythos. This tale introduces elements which are revisited or repurposed in later stories.²⁴ An unnamed narrator explores a subterranean ruin older than Irem, a lost city mentioned in the Quran and featured in *Arabian Nights* where Lovecraft encountered it.²⁵ The nameless city, to some degree conflated with Irem, is mentioned in subsequent Mythos tales as a center of ancient evil. The explorer compares the city with Memphis and the Colossi of Memnon to communicate its antiquity. The city, dotted with pyramids, has subterranean chambers faced with mural paintings (like an Egyptian tomb) and with mummies (of lizard creatures wearing finery) in glass sarcophagi along the walls.

Lovecraft revisited the idea of a reptilian lost civilization in the desert wastes of North Africa in two collaborative tales, 'The Last Test'²⁶ written with Adolphe de Castro in 1927

¹⁹ H. Lovecraft, 'The Cats of Ulthar', in *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 2004 [1920]), pp. 19–22.

²⁰ G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2006), p. 163.

²¹ Lovecraft, 'Cats', p. 20.

²² Lovecraft, 'Cats', p. 20.

²³ Norris, 'Lovecraft and Egypt', pp. 6–11.

²⁴ H. Lovecraft, 'The Nameless City', in *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 2004 [1921]), pp. 30–41; P. Cannon and S. Joshi, eds. *More Annotated H. P. Lovecraft* (New York, 1999), pp. 76n.12; P. Shreffler, *The H. P. Lovecraft Companion* (Westport, 1977), p. 84.

²⁵ Lovecraft, *SL I*, p. 122; Lovecraft *SL II*, pp. 105–113; H. Lovecraft, and W. Conover *Lovecraft at Last* (Arlington, 1975), pp. 200–211.

²⁶ A. de Castro, 'The Last Test' (1927) <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/fiction/lt.aspx>.

and ‘Medusa’s Coil’ written with Zealia Bishop in 1930.²⁷ In both stories dangerous individuals hide their ancient reptilian or saurian heritage. The notion of part-human part-reptile civilizations emerging from ancient Egyptian-like ruins began with ‘The Nameless City’ and incorporated Lovecraft’s interest in the idea that Atlantis may have been in North Africa, inspired in part by expeditions seeking Atlantis in the Sahara.²⁸ He was also inspired by the 1929 shapeshifting reptilian conspiracy story ‘The Shadow Kingdom’ by his correspondent friend Robert E. Howard.²⁹ The theme of reptilian humanoids controlling ancient civilizations spread to other members of the Lovecraft circle including Robert Bloch and Clark Ashton Smith.³⁰

After Lovecraft’s death the reptilian idea jumped into the ‘real world’ in the occult writings of Maurice Doreal about an ancient evil race of serpent-headed men. Doreal’s writings were influential in the early years of the flying saucer subculture and introduced the notion of ancient conspiracies of shapeshifting reptilian overlords into paranormal lore.³¹ Doreal claimed his secret knowledge came from the ‘Emerald Tablets of Thoth the Atlantean’, a text allegedly found in the Great Pyramid of Giza, though there are clear borrowings in Doreal’s text from Lovecraft’s ‘The Dunwich Horror’ and Lovecraft circle author Frank Belknap Long in his ‘The Hounds of Tindalos’.³² Doreal’s supposed ancient text draws conceptually from two fabled occult Egyptian texts. The *Emerald Tablets* have a long relationship with the legendary occult figure Hermes Trismegistus, a product of the Ptolemaic period combining the Greek god Hermes with the Egyptian god of knowledge Thoth, and received by later scholars and alchemists as an important scribe

²⁷ S. Mariconda, ‘Toward a Reader-Response Approach to the Lovecraft Mythos’ in *On the Emergence of ‘Cthulhu’ and Other Observations*, S. Mariconda (ed.) (West Warwick, 1995), p. 42.

²⁸ S. Branney and A. Leman, eds. *H. P. Lovecraft: The Spirit of Revision: Lovecraft’s Letters to Zelia Brown Reed Bishop* (Glendale, 2015), pp. 85-88; Lovecraft *SL* III, p. 39.

²⁹ R. Howard, ‘The Shadow Kingdom’, (1929), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Shadow_Kingdom ; Lovecraft, ‘Nameless City’.

³⁰ E. Bleiler, *The Guide to Supernatural Fiction* (Kent, 1983), p. 459; A. Warren, ‘The Curse’, in *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of our Worst Nightmares*, Vol. 1, S. Joshi (ed.), (Westport, 2007), p. 139.

³¹ M. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, 2003), pp. 110-115, 120-124; J. Clark, ‘Hollow Earth and UFOs’, in *The UFO Encyclopedia: The Phenomenon from the Beginning*, ed J. Clark (Detroit, 1998), pp. 520-524; C. Partridge, ‘Alien demonology: the Christian roots of the malevolent extraterrestrial in UFO religions and abduction spiritualities’, *Religion* 34 (2004), pp. 163-189.

³² Barkun *Culture of Conspiracy*, pp. 119-120; J. Colavito, ‘“The Emerald Tablets of Thoth”: A Lovecraftian Plagiarism’, (26 March 2014), <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/blog/the-emerald-tablets-of-thoth-a-lovecraftian-plagiarism>.

of sacred knowledge and founder of the Hermetic magical tradition.³³ Lovecraft became aware of this figure during occult research for other projects in the 1920s but thought little of the figure or his alleged works beyond being scraps of ancient mysticism stitched into grimoires.³⁴ While the name Thoth resembles Lovecraftian deity names Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth, in a 1934 letter Lovecraft explained these spellings ending in -th were intended to have an Arabic flavor to them.³⁵ The *Book of Thoth* also has a pedigree as an occult text,³⁶ and by the 1930s had become a popular conceit of fiction.³⁷ However the most famous version of a Book or Scroll of Thoth, that in the 1932 film *The Mummy*, appears to be inspired by the third-century BCE tale of *Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah*, discovered on a papyrus in 1864.³⁸ John Balderston, one of the authors of the film script, had been a journalist covering the Tutankhamun excavations and was an amateur Egyptologist.³⁹

The most explicitly Egyptian of Lovecraft's 'horrors under the sands' tales is the 1924 story known as both 'Imprisoned with the Pharaohs' and 'Under the Pyramids', resulting from the loss of the original typescript.⁴⁰ After the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in November 1922 sparked a renewed Egyptomania for the twentieth century, escape artist Harry Houdini, a master of multimedia promotion, commissioned Lovecraft to ghostwrite Houdini's adventure of being lowered into dark depths below the Pyramids. As Lovecraft soon discovered through researching Cairo and Giza (in part using the Tomb of Perneb at

³³ S. Burstein, 'Images of Egypt in Greek Historiography', in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, A. Loprieno ed. (Leiden, 1996), pp. 591–604; D. Dykstra, 'Pyramids, Prophets, and Progress: Ancient Egypt in the Writings of 'Alī Mubārak', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114 (1) (1994), pp. 54–65; E. Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (Ithaca, 2001), pp. 9–25, 50, 80–81, 90; E. Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 60, 76–77; Pinch, *Magic*, pp. 28–29.

³⁴ H. Lovecraft, *H. P. Lovecraft: Uncollected Letters* (West Warwick, 1986), p. 37; Lovecraft and Conover *Lovecraft at Last*, pp. 32–33, 44.

³⁵ Lovecraft, *SL* IV, p. 387.

³⁶ O. Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford, 2009), p. 69; Hornung, *Secret Lore*, pp. 147–154.

³⁷ C. Lupton, 'Mummymania' for the Masses – Is Egyptology Cursed by the Mummy's Curse?', in *Consuming Ancient Egypt*, S. MacDonald and M. Rice (eds.) (London, 2003), pp. 30–31.

³⁸ N. Reeves, *Ancient Egypt: The Great Discoveries, A Year-by-Year Chronicle* (London, 2000), p. 57.

³⁹ J. Card, *Spooky Archaeology: Myth and the Science of the Past* (Albuquerque, 2018), pp. 90–97; J. Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking world* (New York, 2006), pp. 67, 82, 190n4; D. Huckvale, *Ancient Egypt in the Popular Imagination: Building a Fantasy in Film, Literature, Music and Art* (Jefferson, 2012), pp. 13, 18; Lupton, 'Mummymania', p. 33; S. Smith, 'Unwrapping the Mummy: Hollywood Fantasies, Egyptian Realities', in *Box Office Archaeology: Refining Hollywood's Portrayals of the Past*, J. Schablitsky ed. (Walnut Creek, 2007), p. 20.

⁴⁰ S. Joshi, *A Dreamer and a Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in his Time* (Liverpool, 2001), p. 191; H. Lovecraft, 'The Shunned House', in *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi ed. (New York, 2004 [1924]), pp. 90–115.

the Metropolitan Museum of Art and an accompanying volume),⁴¹ Houdini's tale simply did not happen. Nonetheless Lovecraft produced a tale of conspiratorial modern Egyptians loyal to the 'old ways' (presumably of Dynastic Egypt), of limitless dark caverns under the Pyramids, of half-human/half-animal necromantic abominations similar to the iconographic forms of Egyptian gods, and of the true nature of the eldritch terror that inspired the carving of the Sphinx.⁴² 'Under the Pyramids' reflects not only fiction, drawing inspiration from Théophile Gautier's 'Une Nuit de Cléopâtre' (1838, translated into English in 1882), but also older Egyptological notions that continue to inspire 'alternative' Egyptology. The notion that the Great Sphinx had been recarved from an older image was proposed by E. A. Wallis-Budge⁴³ and has since helped inspire claims that the monument is much older than dated by mainstream science.⁴⁴

The most famous 'Egyptian' character in Lovecraft's canon is Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the Outer Gods and the most 'human' of the Lovecraft pantheon. The semi-Egyptian name was likely inspired by the use of Egyptian-style names by Lord Dunsany, an early influence on Lovecraft and his Dreamland stories. Lovecraft himself stated that the name appeared to him in a dream in 1920, along with some of the elements of his prose poem 'Nyarlathotep'.⁴⁵ This poem depicts an apocalyptic figure that rises 'out of the blackness of twenty-seven centuries' in Egypt and is 'of the old native blood and looked like a Pharaoh',⁴⁶ though the ensuing weird science and apocalypse are not particularly Egyptian-themed.

Nyarlathotep is further tied to Egypt in Lovecraft's last story, 'The Haunter of the Dark'.⁴⁷ The events of the tale are set in motion by the discovery of the Shining Trapezohedron in Egypt by archaeologist Professor Enoch Bowen who subsequently forms The Starry Wisdom Church to worship the Old Ones. The church's sanctuary featured an ankh on its altar rather than a Christian cross. Possible Egyptologist models

⁴¹ S. Joshi, *The Crawling Chaos and Others. The Annotated Revisions and Collaborations of H. P. Lovecraft*, Vol. 1 (Welches, 2012), pp. 377, 382n24; H. Lovecraft, 'Under the Pyramids', in *The Crawling Chaos and Others: The Annotated Revisions and Collaborations of H. P. Lovecraft*, Volume I, S. Joshi (ed.) (Welches 2012 [1924]), pp. 58–92.

⁴² Lovecraft, *SL I*, pp. 311–312, 317.

⁴³ Joshi, *Dreamer*, p. 192; Norris, 'Lovecraft and Egypt', pp. 25–27.

⁴⁴ P. Jordan, *Riddles of the Sphinx* (New York, 1998), pp. 8–9; R. Schoch, *Forgotten Civilization: The Roles of Solar Outbursts in Our Past and Future* (Rochester, 2012), pp. 24–26.

⁴⁵ H. Lovecraft, 'Nyarlathotep', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 1999 [1920]), pp. 31–33; Lovecraft, *SL I*, pp. 160–162; Norris 'Lovecraft and Egypt', pp. 12–14.

⁴⁶ Lovecraft, 'Nyarlathotep', p. 31.

⁴⁷ H. Lovecraft, 'The Haunter of the Dark', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 1999 [1935]), pp. 336–360.

for Bowen have been offered,⁴⁸ but the figure of an Egyptologist interested in religion or the occult is so common during Lovecraft's life and in the decades before that selecting any one would be difficult. Flinders Petrie was funded by the Egypt Exploration Fund to study possible Biblical remnants in Egypt, worked for a time at Amarna with its potential ties to Nephren-Ka as inspired by Akhenaten. Similarly, Egyptologist and folklorist Margaret Murray and her book *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* clearly inspired many of Lovecraft's Mythos tales including one, 'The Horror at Red Hook', with a debased cultist anthropologist who helps found a cult just as Enoch Bowen did.⁴⁹

Norris⁵⁰ correctly discusses these tales as forming a miniature Cthulhu Mythos Egyptian myth-cycle, but the Trapezohedron is much older than Egypt or humanity

it was fashioned on dark Yuggoth, before ever the Old Ones brought it to earth. It was treasured and placed in its curious box by the crinoid things of Antarctica, salvaged from their ruins by the serpent-men of Valusia, and peered at aeons later in Lemuria by the first human beings. It crossed strange lands and stranger seas, and sank with Atlantis before a Minoan fisher meshed it in his net and sold it to swarthy merchants from nighted Khem. The Pharaoh Nephren-Ka built around it a temple with a windowless crypt, and did that which caused his name to be stricken from all monuments and records. Then it slept in the ruins of that evil fane which the priests and the new Pharaoh destroyed, till the delver's spade once more brought it forth to curse mankind.⁵¹

Other Lovecraft stories hint at Nephren-Ka being a heretic figure suggestive of Akhenaten. Placing the Trapezohedron in Egypt to be discovered by Victorian archaeologists (as a prelude to the story, which takes place in the contemporary 1930s) signifies its antiquity, a more complicated version of the rhetorical tactic Lovecraft used elsewhere of communicating antiquity via comparisons to Babylon, Memphis, or Kish.

Rather than being inspired by actual Egypt, 'The Haunter of the Dark,' and Nyarlathotep generally owe more to the late Victorian fear of Egypt as a dark and racially-distinct place of antiquity and terror. This is the Egypt of the mummy's curse, a reaction to colonial failures in British North Africa.⁵² The media frenzy and subsequent narrative

⁴⁸ H. Lovecraft, *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft*, L. Klinger ed. (New York, 2014), p. 792n17.

⁴⁹ Card, *Spooky Archaeology*, pp. 228-232; H. Lovecraft, 'The Horror at Red Hook', in *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 2004 [1925]), pp. 116-137.

⁵⁰ Norris 'Lovecraft and Egypt', pp. 40-44.

⁵¹ Lovecraft, 'Haunter', pp. 350-351.

⁵² J. Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking world* (New York, 2006); R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford, 2012).

about archaeologists caused by the most famous of these curses, Tutankhamun's, seems to have been a major inspiration for Lovecraft's most influential tale, 'The Call of Cthulhu'.⁵³ This story is primarily set in February-April 1925 and was written from August 1925 to August 1926. An analysis of media reports from this time, particularly those Lovecraft likely consumed, suggests that 'Tut-mania' sparked the popular trope of archaeologists and dangerous, possibly supernatural, adventure. Newspaper reports emphasizing archaeologists dying or in peril, rather than lavishly presenting the wonders of the ancient world, increase precisely during the time period Lovecraft sets and writes 'The Call of Cthulhu'. 'The Call of Cthulhu' depicts archaeologists uncovering an ancient cult dedicated to Cthulhu, described as a priest lying undead ('that which is not dead can eternal lie, and with strange aeons, even death may die') in his tomb.⁵⁴ Any who inquire too deeply into this mystery soon die in suspicious ways. The parallels with Tutankhamun are clear. 'The Call of Cthulhu' captures the contemporary popular image of archaeology and prehistory, of archaeologists in peril from forbidden discoveries and allegations of ancient knowledge of lost continents and pre-modern races hidden within occult mysticism.⁵⁵ Lovecraft followed news of the 'Tut curse', commenting that the allegedly Tutankhamun-related suicide of Lord Westbury in 1930 was tied to a room 'full of strange Egyptian objects' and that the story was 'as good as any weird fictional plot yet written'.⁵⁶ In 'The Haunter of the Dark', Nyarlathotep is free to stalk and kill the protagonist Robert Blake only in a total blackout of Providence, the same conditions during which Lord Carnarvon allegedly died in 1923 as a result of Tutankhamun's curse.

As with the name Nyarlathotep, other aspects of 'The Call of Cthulhu' appeared in Lovecraft's dreams. The first part of the tale is named 'The Horror in Clay' after a bas-relief carved in the aftermath of a terrible dream by artist Robert Wilcox of an ancient sunken city and dread Cthulhu. Wilcox takes his carving to archaeologist Dr. George Gammell Angell, who doubts that the still wet clay has any purchase on antiquity. Wilcox responds that he carved the bas-relief after a dream, and that dreams are 'older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx or garden-girdled Babylon'.⁵⁷ This section of the story is taken almost verbatim from descriptions of a dream Lovecraft had in 1920 in

⁵³ H. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 1999 [1926]), pp. 139–170.

⁵⁴ Lovecraft, 'Cthulhu', p. 156.

⁵⁵ See Card, *Spooky Archaeology*, pp. 235–241.

⁵⁶ Lovecraft, *SL III*, p. 121.

⁵⁷ Lovecraft, 'Cthulhu', p. 143.

which he was the sculptor who presents his work to a museum curator. However in his dream Lovecraft carved not an alien dragon-octopus-man monstrosity in an alien city, but a procession of Egyptian priests. The skill and familiarity with ancient Egypt horrifies the curator in Lovecraft's dream, who believes Lovecraft to somehow be in contact with the ancient past, and who is willing to pay one million pounds sterling for the bas-relief.⁵⁸ This and 'Nyarlathotep' are not Lovecraft's only Egyptian-inspired dreams. In another he experienced a medieval hunt for a rubbery owl-faced thing, in which the hunters wield Egyptian ankhs as weapons.⁵⁹

The Tutankhamun curse also likely inspired aspects of Lovecraft's other famous creation, the *Necronomicon*. This infamous book of black magic and disturbing secrets had no physical reality prior to Lovecraft but has since appeared in numerous works of fiction and has several times been 'discovered' and published as a real world text.⁶⁰ The *Necronomicon* first appeared in the story 'The Hound'⁶¹ but with time came to be a signifier in Lovecraft's stories of secret knowledge of ancient antiquity, resembling on the one hand an occult Bible and on the other mirroring dubious grimoires such as Blavatsky's *Book of Dzyan* or the *Emerald Tablets*.

As the *Necronomicon* became an increasingly useful creation, Lovecraft developed notes on 'The History of the Necronomicon', published after his death.⁶² The details of these notes strongly resemble the claims of a book tied to the Tutankhamun curse by one of the progenitors of the curse, occult novelist Marie Corelli.⁶³ Her source of ancient lore was a book translated from Arabic by a scholar in the court of Louis XIV, remarkably similar to the history of the *Necronomicon*, in which the Arabic *Al Azif* is translated first into Latin and then into English by Dr. John Dee, the court astrologer for Elizabeth I.⁶⁴ Corelli based her statements on a real nineteenth century book *Egyptian History*, based

⁵⁸ Lovecraft, *SL I*, pp. 114–115.

⁵⁹ A. Derleth, 'Final Notes', in *The Dark Brotherhood and Other Pieces*, H. P. Lovecraft (Sauk City, 1966), pp. 316–317; Lovecraft, *SL IV*, p. 272.

⁶⁰ D. Harms and J. Gonce, III, *The Necronomicon Files: The Truth Behind the Legend* (Mountain View, 1998).

⁶¹ H. Lovecraft, 'The Hound', *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi ed. (New York, 1999 [1922]), pp. 81–38.

⁶² H. Lovecraft, 'History of the Necronomicon', in *The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft*, L. Klinger ed. (New York, 2014 [1927]), pp. 813–818; Lovecraft, *SL II*, pp. 201–202.

⁶³ *New York Times*, 'Topics of the Times: Eliminates Spirit Guardians' 26 March 1923, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Lovecraft, 'History of the Necronomicon'; Lovecraft, *SL II*, pp. 201–202.

on a medieval Arabic volume in turn based on the still older *Akhbār al-zamān*, which preserved Hermetic/Ptolemaic lore about Egypt.⁶⁵

LOVECRAFT'S ECHO IN ESOTERIC EGYPT

Lovecraft's works appeared alongside now mostly forgotten stories in *Weird Tales* and other pulp magazines, though some of the others in the 'Lovecraft Circle' such as Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith would leave their own impacts on fantasy literature. Two distinct elements led to the success of Cthulhu Mythos tales and inspired others to carry their legacy forward in fiction and 'nonfiction'. Lovecraft took substantial inspiration from existing works of early anthropology and archaeology as well as theosophy. Lovecraft intended to make his stories more effective by making them more credible, crafting them with 'all the care and verisimilitude of an actual *hoax*'.⁶⁶ But through playing with the boundaries of real and fiction, the Lovecraft circle inspired real-world mythology. Most Cthulhu Mythos stories center on Earthly traces of ancient extraterrestrial or extraterrestrial-influenced civilizations that inspired stories of gods and monsters, or of the leftovers of their advanced science now remembered as occult magic.⁶⁷ This notion is also the centerpiece of the most popular forms of alternative archaeology in the twenty-first century, and the similarity to Lovecraft's mythos has not gone unnoticed.⁶⁸ As discussed above, Lovecraft and Howard's reptilians of the Sahara/Arabia trope directly inspired the creation of reptilian UFO lore. His broader legacy can be found in the construction of the overall ancient extraterrestrials concept. Lovecraft's Mythos took inspiration from spiritualist-inclined Theosophy but turned the elementals into material extraterrestrials more likely to be found in the ruins of their ancient cities than via ancient wisdom channeled from the Akashic Record.⁶⁹ In the 1950s

⁶⁵ J. Colavito, 'The Secret Source Behind the Curse of King Tut' (10 June 2016), <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/blog/the-secret-source-behind-the-curse-of-king-tut>; J. Colavito, 'Uncovering the 'Real' Necronomicon' (6 June 2018), <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/blog/uncovering-the-real-necronomicon>; *New York Times*, 'Carnarvon's death spreads theories about vengeance' 6 April 1923, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Lovecraft, *SL III*, p. 193, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ Lovecraft, *SL IV*, pp. 70-71.

⁶⁸ J. Colavito, *The Cult of Alien Gods: H. P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture* (Amherst, 2005); C. Garofalo and R. Price, 'Chariots of the Old Ones?' *Crypt of Cthulhu* 1 (5) (1982).

⁶⁹ Lovecraft, *SL II*, pp. 57-58; Lovecraft, *SL IV*, pp. 153, 155, 165; Lovecraft, *SL V*, pp. 76, 213-214, 267-269; Lovecraft and Conover *Lovecraft at Last*, p. 33; R. Price, *H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos* (Mercer Island, 1990), pp. 12-19.

Lovecraft's fiction would be cited in works that boosted the notion of ancient extraterrestrials to the mainstream.⁷⁰

One particularly successful alternative archaeology 'site', particularly in mass media,⁷¹ has been an alternative archaeology of Egypt and particularly Giza, with striking similarities to Lovecraft's 'Under the Pyramids'. That tale served as the early foundation for Lovecraft's Egypt myth-cycle, featuring ancient dark secrets concealed in vast chambers hidden under the monuments of Giza, forgotten by outsiders but dimly remembered by locals, that testify to the otherworldly inhuman beings that are the real inspiration for the strange creatures and gods of Egyptian mythology. The idea that Giza lies over subterranean passages that conceal treasures and ancient antediluvian wisdom dates back to at least Herodotus. The search for these treasures inspired medieval attempts to enter the Great Pyramid.⁷² Sir Flinders Petrie first went to Egypt to study the 'Pyramid Inch', the notion that ancient wisdom and prophecy was encoded in the measurements of the Pyramids. He eventually abandoned the idea and turned towards scientific Egyptology.⁷³

In subsequent decades an 'alternative' Egyptology community merged the trappings of academia with a populist call in mass media for a more mystical approach to the secrets of Egypt. The focus of this community has been demonstrating that mainstream archaeology is wrong about, or is covering up that Egyptian monuments, especially those of the Giza plateau, are much older than the traditional Egyptological chronology, and that these monuments conceal secret chambers. Many of these efforts have been influenced by followers of faith healer Edgar Cayce, 'America's Sleeping Prophet'.⁷⁴ Cayce's hypnotic sessions and dreams channeled information from past lives, describing

⁷⁰ Card, *Spooky Archaeology*, pp. 249-255; Colavito, *Cult*, pp. 130-137; J. Colavito, 'Lovecraftian Themes in Bergier's Later Work' (2012), <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/lovecraft-in-bergier.html>; J. Colavito, 'Pauwels, Bergier, and Lovecraft: Establishing a Cthulhu-Ancient Astronaut Connection' (2014), <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/pauwels-bergier-and-lovecraft.html>.

⁷¹ C. Hale, 'The Atlantean Box', in *Archaeological Fantasies: How pseudoarchaeology misrepresents the past and misleads the public*, G. Fagan (ed.) (London, 2006), pp. 235-258; T. Schadla-Hall and G. Morris, 'Ancient Egypt on the Small Screen – From Fact to Faction in the UK', in *Consuming Ancient Egypt*, S. MacDonald and M. Rice eds. (London, 2003), pp. 203-209.

⁷² U. Haarmann, 'Medieval Muslim Perceptions of Pharaonic Egypt', in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, A. Loprieno, (ed.) (Leiden, 1996), p. 608; Hornung, *Secret Lore*, pp. 159-164; Jordan, *Sphinx*, pp. 128-129.

⁷³ M. Drower, *Flinders Petrie: A Life in Archaeology* (London, 1985), pp. 27-31, 41, 51, 178.

⁷⁴ L. Picknett and C. Prince, 'Alternative Egypts', in *Consuming Egypt*, S. MacDonald and M. Rice eds. (London, 2003), pp. 181-187; L. Wynn, *Pyramids and Nightclubs: A Travel Ethnography of Arab and Western Imaginations of Egypt from King Tut and a Colony of Atlantis to Rumors of Sex Orgies, Urban Legends about a Marauding Prince, and Blonde Belly Dancers* (Austin, 2007), pp. 97-99, 108-110.

the dispersal of humanity from Atlantis.⁷⁵ Cayce's discussion of a 'Hall of Records' under the paws of the Great Sphinx,⁷⁶ similar to existing Theosophical notions of repositories of ancient wisdom around the globe,⁷⁷ became the focus of alternative archaeological field work and sparring with academic Egyptologists and Egyptian government officials. The alternative Egyptology community focused in the 1990s on the idea that the Sphinx, and its hidden wisdom, predates 10,000 BCE, the date of Plato's destruction of Atlantis and of suggested apocalyptic events at the end of the Pleistocene.⁷⁸

Some of the sources for this ancient wisdom are earthly in origin ranging from lost hominin races, like the recently discovered Denisovans to technological/psychic human civilizations from regions now underwater or destroyed by comet impacts.⁷⁹ The potential secrets held in the Hall of Records likewise vary but knowledge of great metaphysical importance is generally expected, perhaps some kind of spiritual immortality signaled in the monuments by complex astronomical geometry.⁸⁰ *Beneath the Pyramids*, a coincidentally similar title to Lovecraft's 'Under the Pyramids', describes a network of natural caverns under Giza similar to that described by Lovecraft, perhaps tied to Edgar Cayce's visions of a Hall of Records through the psychically shared realm of the Akashic Record.⁸¹ Even when lost civilizations are invoked, they can be tied to psychical or other realms that have become increasingly important to alternative Egyptology in the late twentieth and especially early twenty-first century. Rather than the purely materialist version of ancient extraterrestrials, this perspective posits that the gods and spirits of Egypt and other ancient societies were eldritch entities from or communicating through other dimensions via dream or psychical visions like Lovecraft's Elder Gods.⁸² While the popular stereotype of alternative Egyptology may be flying

⁷⁵ R. Ellis, *Imaging Atlantis* (New York, 1998), pp. 72–75; C. Orser, Jr., *Race and Practice in Archaeological Interpretation. Archaeology, Culture, and Society* (Philadelphia, 2004), pp. 68-69.

⁷⁶ E. Cayce, *Edgar Cayce on Atlantis* (New York, 1968), pp. 144-148.

⁷⁷ H. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, Vol. 1 – Cosmogogenesis (2014 [1888]), pp. xxiv, xxxii-xxxiii.

⁷⁸ Picknett and Prince, 'Alternative Egypts.', pp. 184-186.

⁷⁹ A. Collins, *The Cygnus Key: The Denisovan Legacy, Göbekli Tepe, and the Birth of Egypt* (Rochester, 2018); G. Hancock, *Magicians of the Gods* (New York, 2015); G. Hancock, *America Before: The Key to Earth's Lost Civilization* (New York, 2019).

⁸⁰ G. Hancock and R. Bauval, *The Message of the Sphinx: A Quest for the Hidden Legacy of Mankind* (New York, 1996).

⁸¹ A. Collins, *Beneath the Pyramids: Egypt's Greatest Secret Uncovered* (Virginia Beach, 2008), pp. 216-219.

⁸² P. Coppens, *The Ancient Alien Question: A New Inquiry into the Existence, Evidence, and Influence of Ancient Visitors* (Pompton Plains, 2012), pp. 243-282; G. Hancock, *Supernatural: Meetings with the Ancient Teachers of Mankind* (New York, 2006); L. Picknett and C. Prince, *The Stargate Conspiracy: Revealing the truth behind extraterrestrial contact, military intelligence and the mysteries of ancient Egypt* (New York, 2001).

saucers constructing pyramids with tractor beams, a more accurate assessment might be a quantum-infused psychedelic shamanic spiritualist theosophy, similar in many respects to Lovecraft's mythos of dimension-jumping entities masquerading as gods and lurking in ancient ruins.

PLAYING WITH A DARK PAST

Related to Lovecraft's hoax-like writing was his encouragement for a circle of writers to share their creations, including his own, in an informal shared universe. Eldritch gods and forbidden grimoires from Lovecraft's friends would end up in his tales, while Cthulhu and the *Necronomicon* would appear in stories by August Derleth or Frank Belknap Long, who both wrote Egypt-themed tales.⁸³ Lovecraft included his creations into stories he ghostwrote, changing the spelling or nature of the entities slightly so as to suggest errors or variations in transmission as with real mythology.⁸⁴ This led readers to write Lovecraft asking for information about his secret knowledge and especially where they could obtain a copy of the *Necronomicon*. Lovecraft explained that his works were fiction, but after his death Lovecraft's creations became part of magical practices and paranormal lore.⁸⁵

Perhaps the most successful of the Lovecraft circle was protégé Robert Bloch who would go on to write numerous print and media stories including *Psycho*. Bloch's early stories included a number of Cthulhu Mythos pastiches and related weird stories, many of which had an Egyptian theme. Growing up in Chicago, Bloch took inspiration from the city's art galleries and museums.⁸⁶ Bloch was particularly taken with Nyarlathotep and expanded on Nephren-Ka and Lovecraft's Egypt myth-cycle.⁸⁷

Egypt as a place of ancient supernatural mystery waned from its height of the Tutankhamun excavations, particularly after the Second World War and the collapse of the European imperial world order. Two pop culture offerings in 1981 revived much of the potency of the original colonialist adventure trope. The first was the blockbuster film

⁸³ Bleiler, *Supernatural Fiction*, p. 154, 318.

⁸⁴ Mariconda, 'Reader-Response'.

⁸⁵ K. Grant, *The Magical Revival* (London, 1972), pp. 6, 115–118; Lovecraft, *SL IV*, pp. 270–271; J. Woodman, 'Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in "Lovecraftian Magick"', *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 2 (year?), pp. 13–47.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Warren, 'Curse', pp. 138–140.

⁸⁷ S. Joshi, 'The Cthulhu Mythos', in *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of our Worst Nightmares*, Vol. 1, S. Joshi (ed.) (Westport, 2007), p. 117.

Raiders of the Lost Ark. Despite emphasizing the Ark of the Covenant, an object constructed after the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt, most of the film is set in 1930s Egypt and much of its archaeological imagery is Egyptian. As in Lovecraft's tales, Egyptian culture is not important here, but instead acts a backdrop to signify mystic antiquity.

Less immediately popular but arguably quite influential was the 1981 publication of the role-playing game *Call of Cthulhu*. The role-playing game is an important step in the development of simulation culture, pioneering many of the conventions and assumptions found in later video games and anticipating the shared hallucinations of online communication and social media. *Call of Cthulhu* is the first horror-themed roleplaying game, and the second-oldest major roleplaying game still in print. The game is a direct adaptation of the Cthulhu Mythos. The first 'Lovecraft Renaissance' began in the 1970s when his works were published in mass media paperbacks.⁸⁸ However after 1981 the roleplaying game *Call of Cthulhu* is one of the most influential entryways to Lovecraft fandom, arriving at the moment this gaming genre first gained mainstream attention. Combined with the public domain nature of Lovecraft's tales *Call of Cthulhu* has inspired a small industry of board, card, and video games as well as other pastiche and fan works, and has influenced other games and media offerings implicitly.⁸⁹

The primary author of the game, Sandy Petersen, wanted to follow Lovecraft's model and set the game in the player's present, but the publishers of the game were intrigued by the 1920s setting of Lovecraft's original tales.⁹⁰ The majority of commercially-published Lovecraft tabletop and video games are set in the interwar period and feature gangsters and flappers but especially ancient ruins discovered by colonial explorers and professors of archaeology. A popular alternative are 'gaslight' adventures set primarily in late-Victorian London.⁹¹ In both settings characters often venture on expeditions to dark foreign locales, particularly Egypt and Latin America, or are threatened by artifacts and cults from these regions.

⁸⁸ Joshi, *Rise and Fall*, p. 228.

⁸⁹ W. Poole, *In the Mountains of Madness: The Life and Extraordinary Afterlife of H. P. Lovecraft* (Berkeley, 2016), pp. 258-262.

⁹⁰ A. Gauntlett, 'Even Death May Die: Sandy Petersen Talks Call of Cthulhu', *The Escapist* (11 August 2014), <http://www.escapistmagazine.com/news/view/136754-Even-Death-May-Die-Sandy-Petersen-Talks-Call-of-Cthulhu>.

⁹¹ W. Barton and K. Ross, *Cthulhu by Gaslight* (Hayward, 2012).

I have argued elsewhere that archaeology is a key element to Lovecraft's Mythos fiction, providing him with his 'voice'.⁹² The material written for the game *Call of Cthulhu* and related pop culture products heavily features adventures in archaeological ruins to the point where the stereotypical 'Lovecraftian' character has become an interwar Miskatonic University professor of archaeology and expert in the occult with a gun in one hand and the *Necronomicon* in the other (there is literally an action figure toy fitting this description). This description paraphrases that given to Professor Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* who spends much of the film evading traps and dangerous creatures in skeleton-strewn *Dungeons and Dragons*-like ruins in South America and Egypt. These images of explorers delving into exotic Latin American temples in the jungle or morbid Egyptian crypts can be found throughout *Call of Cthulhu* adventures and related gaming material.⁹³ Archaeologist James Holloway has also noted that, with its interwar setting and emphasis on solving ancient mysteries, *Call of Cthulhu* merged Lovecraftian tropes with colonial archaeological adventure to create a play style not well represented in Lovecraft's fiction, but well-suited for emulating *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.⁹⁴

No text makes this clearer than the most famous adventure scenario written for *Call of Cthulhu*. First published in 1984 but repeatedly revised and republished, *Masks of Nyarlathotep* has won several awards and is considered one of the most influential and highest-quality roleplaying game products ever published.⁹⁵ *Masks of Nyarlathotep* became the model for many subsequent *Call of Cthulhu* game scenarios and has been adapted as card and board games and recently as an audio play.⁹⁶ Set in 1925, *Masks of Nyarlathotep* links, in a manner reminiscent of the red line on a map sequences of the Indiana Jones films, different adventures around the world related to the fate of an archaeological expedition to Egypt and Kenya. The heart of the game involves an Egypt-focused occult underground in London and a descent into the quasi-metaphorical underworld of Egypt itself. Much of the opposition to the players comes from a global network of cults with ties to ancient Egypt, echoing hyperdiffusionary ideas about Egypt

⁹² Card, *Spooky Archaeology*, pp. 225-248.

⁹³ B. Appleton, J. Crowe, III, B. Reynolds, and C. Staples, *The Mysteries of Mesoamerica* (Seattle, 2008).

⁹⁴ J. Holloway, 'Lairs of Cthulhu II: The Hollywood Years', (30 September 2013), <https://www.yogsothoth.com/forums/topic/26845-lairs-of-cthulhu-the-hollywood-years/>.

⁹⁵ Numerous editions exist, this article cites DiTillio, L. and L. Willis, *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep* (Oakland, 1996).

⁹⁶ <https://store.hplhs.org/products/dark-adventure-radio-theatre-masks-of-nyarlathotep>.

as the font of all ancient knowledge.⁹⁷ The chapter set in England focuses on an archaeological society clearly based on the Egypt Exploration Fund that funded the work of Sir Flinders Petrie and others, and a group of occultists obsessed with Egypt (echoing the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn).⁹⁸

The Egypt chapter of *Masks of Nyarlathotep* adapts Lovecraft's 'Under the Pyramids' and dramatically expands the Mythos Egypt myth-cycle, blending it with real-world Egyptology of the Old Kingdom, particularly Sneferu.⁹⁹ Egyptology, both contemporary scholarly institutions and ancient ruins, is a major focus of the game. The aforementioned radio play uses an Amarna monument for its cover image, underlining the equation of the dark Pharaoh Nephren-Ka and Akhenaten.

CONCLUSIONS: EGYPT IS NOT THE POINT

H. P. Lovecraft's use of Egypt in fiction reflects the theosophical sources that inspired him and the fictional and 'real' alternative archaeology that followed in his wake. Egypt is rarely the point. Sally MacDonald and Katherine Shaw find that visitors to museum exhibits are interested in a mythic pre-Ptolemy Egypt of magic, not a later mundane Egypt of people.¹⁰⁰ Museum visitors interpret exhibits through a colonial lens of foreign explorers and tomb raiders.¹⁰¹ Lovecraft used Egypt to signify dark mystical antiquity, a chthonic place from which inhuman fantastical horrors might still emerge in a materialist world. His initial love for the Orientalist exotic, centered mainly in a childhood love of *The Arabian Nights* but continued in his Dunsanian Dreamland tales, gave way (perhaps not coincidentally during his time in New York) to ancient Egypt as the eldest symbol of non-European-ness and the colonialist fear of non-white peoples. The mummy's curse motif of cursed artifacts has an obvious response: don't open the tomb, don't take the treasures. However, for Lovecraft, Egypt signified that eldritch horrors lay at the base of time and are inescapable as they are inherent to nature of civilization and the universe. The fictional entertainments based on Lovecraft's works continue in this vein, at times

⁹⁷ Ditillio and Willis, *Masks*, pp. 23, 37–39.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 65.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 85, 90, 103–104.

¹⁰⁰ S. MacDonald and C. Shaw, 'Uncovering Ancient Egypt: The Petrie Museum and its public', in *Public Archaeology*, N. Merriman (ed.) (London, 2004), pp. 119–121, 124–126.

¹⁰¹ A. Wiczorkiewicz, 'Unwrapping Mummies and Telling their Stories: Egyptian Mummies in Museum Rhetoric' in *Science, Magic, and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic*, M. Bouquet and N. Porto (eds.) (New York, 2006), pp. 56, 58–59.

unconvincingly bolting on Egyptological details that almost seem to get in the way of meeting Nyarlathotep and Nephren-Ka.

Alternative Egyptology may include aspects of Egyptian mythology (especially from early scholarship), but its goal is usually not to explore Egypt, but instead to use its deep antiquity to reach something further, older, beyond. One is reminded of Joseph Curwen importing Egyptian mummies in Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* in order to gain necromantic information from them of even older esoteric secrets.¹⁰² Or the real-world export of mummies, to satisfy questions about race and evolution that have little to do with Egypt.¹⁰³

These efforts mirror the Theosophists that sit at the base of alternative archaeology and much of modern esoterica, attempting to piece together dissociated knowledge to open up revelatory vistas of reality and of our position therein. Egypt, with its importance to the Abrahamic traditions, its value as the first Other of Victorian archaeology, and its bountiful yet seemingly intelligible imagery, will continue to be a playground for the popular imagination and alternative seeking not to explore Egypt itself, but to dig into the mythic past to find origins more meaningful than those provided by professional scholars.

¹⁰² H. Lovecraft, 'The Case of Charles Dexter Ward', in *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories*, S. Joshi (ed.) (New York, 2001 [1927]), pp. 90–205.

¹⁰³ Norris 'Lovecraft and Egypt', pp. 36-38.

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‘Birmingham Ware’: Ancient Egypt as an Orientalist Construct

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‘This was Cairo! – real yet less than his imaginings concerning it. / Vendors of fly whisks, of scarabs incredibly old, of necklaces from the tombs of queens, of red slippers, of all sorts of Birmingham ware, clamoured in a group beneath him’.¹ This exclamation, followed by the immediate expression of the narrator’s disappointment, can be found at the beginning of the tenth chapter of Sax Rohmer’s novel *She Who Sleeps* (1928). It introduces the paradoxical idea that Cairo is first and foremost an idea, an imagined space built within the Western character’s mind to satisfy his expectations regarding the Orient. As a consequence, the real Cairo is bound to disappoint the imaginative traveller and seems to be but a pale imitation of the exotic city the hero of Rohmer’s novel, Barry Cumberland, has built in his mind through his readings about Egypt and Egyptian antiquity. The imaginary as well as the real Cairo, however, appear to be peopled with objects which are manufactured in and by the West. Indeed, the ‘incredibly old’ scarabs as well as the jewels ‘from the tombs of queens’ are soon revealed to be fake antiques and no more than ‘Birmingham ware’.

These forged antiques found at every touristic location in Cairo and manufactured in Birmingham – or sometimes in Manchester – are a recurring theme in nineteenth-century fiction. In *Little Dorrit* (1857), Charles Dickens facetiously describes Mr. Meagles’ extensive collections thus:

There were antiquities from Central Italy, made by the best modern houses in that department of industry; bits of mummy from Egypt (and perhaps Birmingham); model gondolas from Venice; model villages from Switzerland; morsels of tessellated pavement from Herculaneum and Pompeii, like petrified minced veal; ashes out of tombs, and lava out of Vesuvius.²

¹ S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 83.

² C. Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (London, 1998), p. 210.

If some of the objects gathered by Mr. Meagles may be authentic and of great antiquity, many of them have been manufactured to satisfy the nineteenth-century craze of antiquarians for collecting 'old' and 'authentic' curios. The demand was such that the local Egyptian production of fake antiques was reinforced by a British production which supplied the Cairene markets with authentic-looking scarabs, amulets or papyri. The situation was considered so serious that in 1912, T. Wakeling published *Forged Egyptian Antiquities*, a book whose aim was to help tourists and people with an interest in ancient Egypt to avoid being 'defrauded of large sums of money by the plausible sellers of forged antiquities'.³ In fiction, being able to spot the forgery could be a matter of pride. In Marie Corelli's *Ziska* (1897), the narrator emphasises Doctor Dean's great intellectual qualities by pointing out to the reader that 'he understood the difference between 'royal cartouche' scarabei and Birmingham-manufactured ones'.⁴ Similarly, Mr. Meredith in George Fleming's *A Nile Novel* (1877) shows off his thorough knowledge of Egyptian antiquity when he encourages his companions to buy fake scarabs:

Antiques? My dear fellow, of course not. You won't find one authentic one in five hundred. I only thought you might care to encourage your native British industry by buying a few. These are all Manchester manufacture, and very well done indeed.⁵

Made-in-Manchester antiques are also mentioned in the short story 'The Ape' by E.F. Benson (1920) as Egyptian merchants discuss 'the iniquitous bargains they had made with the gullible Americans and English, who so innocently purchased the wares of Manchester'.⁶

This motif of the forged antique Egyptian artefact is pushed to extremes in Rohmer's novel *She Who Sleeps*. Indeed, the conclusion of the novel reveals that every single antique which served to construct the plot, from the papyrus to the mummy of the mysterious Zali-thea, was a forgery meant to trick the heroes – as well as the reader – into believing that the story followed the codes of late-nineteenth century mummy fiction. Instead, Rohmer presents the reader with a plot that subverts the conventions of mummy fiction

³ T.G. Wakeling, *Forged Egyptian Antiquities* (London, 1912), p. 1.

⁴ M. Corelli, *Ziska, The Problem of a Wicked Soul* (Bristol, 1897), p. 35.

⁵ G. Fleming, *A Nile Novel* (London, 1877), pp. 132-133.

⁶ E.F. Benson, 'The Ape', in C. Arment (ed.), *Out of the Sand: Mummies, Pyramids and Egyptology in Classic Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Landisville, 2008), p. 422.

while faithfully following the topoi of the genre. Thus the plot of *She Who Sleeps* echoes that of Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), H. Rider Haggard's 'Smith and the Pharaohs' (1913) or H.D. Everett's *Iras: A Mystery* (1896). In all these texts, a male archaeologist falls in love with a female mummy who may or may not have come back to life.⁷ Similarly, Rohmer's narrative focuses on the love story between the young Barry Cumberland, son of a famous American archaeologist, and Zali-thea, an Egyptian mummy magically kept alive since antiquity – who is eventually revealed to be a French actress impersonating a mummy.

The imperial genre of mummy fiction⁸ drew on – and contributed to – Orientalist constructions of Egypt, displacing the topoi of Orientalism from the description of modern Egypt to project them onto the representation of Ancient Egypt. The antique past of Egypt thus becomes an Orientalist construct, with antique objects, and mummies in particular, embodying the timeless charm attributed to the Orient by Western representations, as well as the threat it was believed to represent in a time of nationalist risings and decline of the British empire. This echoes Patrick Brantlinger's threefold definition of the imperial Gothic⁹ insofar as Western characters explore the past in order to find the adventures they can no longer experience in the modern world. By doing so, they are confronted with ancient occult forces that wreak havoc in the present they come back to life in.

In the wake of late-Victorian and Edwardian mummy fiction, Rohmer also constructs his novel as an Orientalist tale. The only difference is that the objects fuelling the Orientalist discourse are neither authentically Egyptian nor antique. However, Rohmer's novel emphasises the fact that the fake character of the objects described does not take away any of their value. Just like the Cairo imagined by Barry Cumberland, Egyptian antiques exist more as an idea than as a reality – or rather, what is most important is what is projected onto the object rather than the object itself. As it happens, the fake papyrus

⁷ In 1840, in his short story 'Le pied de momie', Théophile Gautier had already imagined a romance beyond time and death between a Frenchman and the mummy whose foot he bought as a curio.

⁸ In his article 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', Bradley Deane places the development of mummy fiction between the beginning of the occupation of Egypt in the early 1880s and the First World War. B. Deane, 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 51 (4) (2008), pp. 381-410.

⁹ Brantlinger states that 'the three principal themes of imperial Gothic are individual 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'. P. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, 1988), p. 230.

and the fake mummy are just as conducive to exotic romance and adventure as the authentic artefacts of nineteenth-century mummy fiction. Just like the 'real' fictional artefacts, they evoke the same Orientalist images of the eternal, seductive, mysterious but also dangerous Egypt described time and again in Victorian travelogues and by the authors of mummy fiction. Rohmer himself is mostly known for his unequivocally Orientalist representations of various 'Oriental' peoples, especially in his Fu Manchu novels. Answering Robert Irwin's claim that Edward Said showed a certain amount of snobbery by not examining writers such as Sax Rohmer,¹⁰ David Scott lists all the characteristics of Rohmer's description of the Orient (its mystery, its secrecy, its sensual allure, etc.) that would fit Said's definition of Orientalism.¹¹ In *She Who Sleeps*, however, Rohmer contributes to debunking the Orientalist imaginary associated to Egyptology in fiction, precisely by underlining its fictional character. Moreover, by eventually providing a rational explanation to the events described in the story, he dismisses the supernatural as a necessary attribute of the Orient and points to it as an 'import' from the West.¹²

THE ORIENTALIST SCIENCE OF EGYPTOLOGY

It is necessary to consider how Egyptology participated historically in a wider scientific discourse tainted by Orientalism, fuelling it through the knowledge of the past it produced and its very dynamics of excavation and exhibition. As late nineteenth-century mummy fiction developed, authors seized upon Egyptology as a narrative motif and decidedly located modern but also ancient Egypt within an Orientalist representation. Thus, the Egypt presented in mummy fiction had little to do with the reality of the country but was, much like the 'Birmingham ware' sold in the streets of Cairo in Rohmer's novel, designed for and by the West in order to please the occidental reader.

From the very start, archaeology – and Egyptology in particular – was closely linked with imperialism and the dynamics of Western domination in the East. Indeed, what is considered as the pivotal moment for modern archaeology as a systematic science –

¹⁰ R. Irwin, 'Popular Culture, Orientalism, and Edward Said', *Middle East Institute Viewpoints* (September 2009).

¹¹ D. Scott, 'Rohmer's 'Orient' - Pulp Orientalism?', *Oriental Archive*, 80 (3) (2012), pp. 505-532.

¹² In 'Gothic Colonies', Roger Luckhurst adds the supernatural to Brantlinger's definition of the imperial Gothic genre. Indeed, according to him, the supernatural constitutes a meeting point between the coloniser and the colonised and gives rise to a 'hybrid knowledge that works only in the very act of encounter'. R. Luckhurst, 'Gothic Colonies', in G. Byron, D. Townshend (eds.), *The Gothic World*, (Oxon, 2014), pp. 62-71, p. 68. In Rohmer's novel, however, the supernatural is superimposed upon Egyptian culture by the Western imagination of the heroes.

Napoleon's campaign in Egypt from 1798 onwards – was first and foremost a military operation meant to undermine the British empire while establishing Napoleon's authority in the East. Along with the regular army, came an army of scientists determined to conquer the mysteries of Egyptian antiquity and appropriate its objects. The military and territorial conquest, therefore, was also the historical conquest of Egypt's past whose objects would, throughout the nineteenth century, be at the core of many battles for ownership between the British and the French Egyptological expeditions.

In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said demonstrates the prominence of the discourse about the Orient which was produced by linguists, scientists, historians, economists and so on, as well as writers of fiction in the wake of Napoleon's campaign and throughout the nineteenth century. This discourse, invariably presented as an objective and scientific description and assessment of the languages, cultures, peoples, etc. that could be found in the Empire, is in fact part of a wider construction or invention of an Orient which only existed in the Western imagination. Conceived as a foil to a glorified Western civilisation, this imagined Orient served to justify the imperial ambitions of the French and the British.

Egyptology played an important part in the invention of a fantasised but also rationalised Orient¹³ whose essential mystery could be unravelled in the way the long mysterious hieroglyphs discovered in Egyptian tombs were eventually deciphered by Jean-François Champollion in 1822. Just like the Orient was presented as a riddle by Orientalist writers, its radical otherness making it all but impossible to understand for the traveller, the past of Egypt appeared utterly baffling to the layman as a consequence of the mystery of the hieroglyphs, the disturbing presence of its dead as well as the gigantic character of many of the monuments that were discovered. In *Wondrous Curiosities: Ancient Egypt at the British Museum*, Stephanie Moser exposes the struggle experienced by the British Museum to display massive sculptures and give them an immediately understandable meaning in the partly dark rooms. As a consequence, the very attempt to develop a scientific approach towards Egypt's antique past instead contributed to its mystery and the other character it acquired in fiction. As Maria Fleischhack underlines, 'the more factual knowledge of Egypt was acquired, the wilder

¹³ In 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', Bradley Deane notes that 'Egyptologists repaid the favor to the political system that enabled their work by colonizing Egypt's history' (pp. 387-88).

and more fantastic the theories about Egyptian magic and secret knowledge grew'.¹⁴ Therefore, even though Egyptian culture and its artefacts were greatly admired by a Western audience, they gradually grew to represent an instance of the essential mystery of the Orient in the collective consciousness, so outlandish did they appear to the museum visitors or the tourists who could see them *in situ*. The commonplace metaphor of the hieroglyphs, used to describe a situation or an object that does not seem to make any sense, is part of the literary devices that contributed to the Orientalist portrayal of Egypt and its past.

Egyptian antiquity became part of an Orientalist construction of the East, if only because it was submitted to the same imperial dynamics of exploitation and appropriation (through the processes of excavation and exhibition) as modern Egypt.¹⁵ Moreover, Egyptology participated in the constitution of what Thomas Richards, in his Foucauldian study of knowledge and the acquisition thereof in imperial Britain, names the imperial archive.¹⁶ He describes the British Museum as 'a prototype for a global system of domination through circulation, an apparatus for controlling territory by producing, distributing and consuming information about it'.¹⁷ Indeed, the constitution of this imperial archive pertains to a will, as Said demonstrated, 'to control, manipulate, even to incorporate what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world'.¹⁸ With the development of Egyptology in the Victorian era, antiquity paradoxically becomes a manifestly novel world – one that requires discovery and whose meaning needs to be uncovered in order to fully achieve the conquest of Egypt initiated by Napoleon's army.

It is this apparently inscrutable mystery of the Orient that literature – and mummy fiction in particular – reinforced in the popular imagination while staging plots that centre around the idea of unravelling this very mystery. The mummy became a familiar literary figure from the 1890s with short stories such as Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1890) and 'Lot No. 249' (1892) and novels such as *Pharos the Egyptian* by uy Boothby

¹⁴ M. Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt. The Representation of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Fantastic Fiction* (Frankfurt, 2015), p. 55.

¹⁵ Indeed, the work of excavation itself required a certain exploitation of the local workers while the appropriation and display of the artefacts thus found pertained to an attempt to claim (scientific) authority over the colonised past.

¹⁶ T. Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, New York, 1993).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁸ E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1995), p. 12.

(1898) or *The Jewel of Seven Stars* by Bram Stoker (1903).¹⁹ In these stories, as in many others, a number of Orientalist tropes are given a fictional form – often through the features of the mummy – which allows authors to dramatise the imperial dynamics at play in Orientalism.

Like the ‘Orientals’ described by Western thinkers and travellers, the mummy is defined as radically Other through a number of essential characteristics that set her apart from the archaeologist who discovers her. She is dead (or appears to be so), and hails from another time and place. She also challenges natural laws, by not dying or by being able to come back to life, by escaping decay inside her tomb as well as by her capacity to separate her soul from her body and reunite them at will. Finally – and perhaps most importantly – the mummy is also othered precisely on account of her identity as a woman. Most fictional mummies are indeed female, like Tera in Bram Stoker’s *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Iras in H.D. Everett’s *Iras: A Mystery* and Ma-Mee in Haggard’s ‘Smith and the Pharaohs’.²⁰ The gendering of the mummy is significant insofar as it sets her aside from the values of a patriarchal Victorian society, thus reinforcing her otherness while introducing between her and the (invariably male) archaeologist gendered dynamics which reproduce the imperial dynamics of domination analysed by Said. This echoes what Anne McClintock asserts in her analysis of gendered imperial relations when she writes that ‘gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise’.²¹ The metropolis, defined as male, had to portray the colonial territories as female in order to better subject them to its rule. Similarly, the female mummy can be appropriated, defined and thus controlled through a gendered relation which often morphs into a romantic relationship, allowing the male archaeologist to take possession of the antique artefact and lock it away in a glass case or in his bedroom (sometimes both). Bradley Deane analyses the themes of love and marriage as a narrative way to ask – and always fail to answer – the ‘Egyptian Question’, that is to say to define the

¹⁹ A few novels and short stories written earlier in the nineteenth century already featured mummies but, as Ailise Bulfin has argued, it was only in the later years of the Victorian era, following what she calls ‘the curse of the Suez canal’, that mummy fiction really emerged as a genre. A. Bulfin, ‘The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 54 (4) (2011), pp. 411-443.

²⁰ The nameless mummy of Conan Doyle’s ‘Lot No. 249’ and the mummy of Pharos in Guy Boothby’s eponymous novel are some of the rare exceptions to that rule.

²¹ A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, London, 1995), p. 7.

relation(ship) between Egypt and the British occupier.²² Everett's *Irás: A Mystery* describes such a process of appropriation whereby the archaeologist, Ralph Lavenham, acquires a nameless mummy to which he assigns a new identity before putting her under (wed)lock.²³

Once appropriated, the body of the mummy itself becomes the place of another sort of appropriation through the act of unwrapping which, in mummy fiction, can take on clear sexual undertones as is the case in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. The motif of the unwrapping echoes another common trope of Orientalist literature which is the idea of unveiling. The mystery of the Orient, or rather the inability of the West to apprehend what would be the essence of the East, often found a narrative form in the description of veiled women. More broadly, Said analyses how the 'cultural, temporal, and geographical distance [between the Orientalist and the Orient] was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise' so that 'phrases like 'the veils of an Eastern bride' or 'the inscrutable Orient' passed into the common language'.²⁴

Edward Lane's *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1860), which describes Egyptian women and their clothing at length, while trying to imagine what the robes may conceal, evinces this Western interest in unveiling the mystery represented by those women who could not be seen. Said identifies in the French writer Gustave Flaubert's relationship with the Egyptian courtesan Kuchuk Hanem, the paradigm according to which the Orient is constructed in Western discourse, whether scientific or literary.²⁵ He underlines the way the voiceless Oriental woman is described, and therefore invented by the Western writer. The mummy of mummy fiction appears as a variation on this Orientalist paradigm: like Kuchuk Hanem, she is deprived of a voice (Tera, in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, is never seen awake and is therefore never allowed to speak for herself). As an object exhibited in private or public museums, she is also

²² B. Deane, 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 51 (4) (2008), pp. 381-410.

²³ The very process of naming is reminiscent of imperial processes of appropriation, the conqueror naming the newly conquered place in reference to his own culture rather than to the local one. Similarly, Lavenham finds the identity of his mummy in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and names her Irás Charmian, after the names of the queen's maids. Even though the names do allude to Egyptian antiquity, they first and foremost refer to British culture by the association to a quintessential British cultural figure.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 222.

²⁵ 'He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically Oriental.' My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled'. E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1995), p. 6.

submitted to the male gaze and the wrappings that conceal her body only stoke the archaeologist's desire to unveil her in a vain attempt to unveil the truth of Ancient Egypt and, by extension, of the Orient.

Furthermore, what can be called the 'classic' plot of mummy fiction, since it is repeated in many novels and short stories through intertextual exchanges, is based on the very idea of unveiling insofar as the main processes of archaeology obviously suppose the idea of revealing what was previously hidden from view. By forcefully penetrating the mummy's tomb, opening the sarcophagus and finally unwrapping the body it contains to hopefully reveal the truth about ancient Egypt, the archaeologist stands as an Orientalist figure who strives to uncover and discover the mystery of the Orient – only to fall prey to the mummy's curse. In this sense, mummy fiction can be defined as a genre that popularised the contemporary Orientalist discourse by giving a narrative and entertaining form to the Orientalist enterprise as a whole. More broadly, mummy fiction employs the stock characters developed by travelogues and fictions set in the Near East: thus, the modern Egyptian working on a dig or guiding the British archaeologist to an extraordinary and mysterious site is represented as the stereotypical Oriental crook. Described as sly, cruel, superstitious and cowardly, he often becomes the butt of the British archaeologist's mockery. Ancient Egyptian men, although they are represented as far more frightening, are guilty of the same wrongs, as is exemplified by Pharos, the character of *Iras* Boothby's eponymous novel whose deviousness and extraordinary cruelty shape the entire plot.

Although the female Oriental, who appears in the shape of a reanimated mummy, is modestly veiled in antique wrappings and thus as unavailable as modern Egyptian women to the gaze of male travellers, she is also constructed as an alluring figure, calling to the archaeologist to discover and undress or unveil her in a ceremony that has sexual undertones. In *Iras: A Mystery*, the mummy manages to attract the archaeologist Ralph Lavenham by apparently initiating her own unwrapping thus partly revealing her body:

Thrown carelessly out of the disturbed wrappings, and hanging over the edge, was a woman's arm – slender, exquisitely rounded, warm with life. [...] The rotten shreds of tissue had been torn apart by the movement of the arm, and there within lay the sleeper in the perfect bloom of her young womanhood, white robed from throat to foot, the darkly fringed eyes still closed, the soft breathing just stirring the linen folds which veiled her breast.²⁶

²⁶ H.D. Everett, *Iras: A Mystery* (New York, 1896), p. 77.

This partial unwrapping appears as an invitation for the archaeologist to reveal what is still veiled, leading him to fall in love with the beautiful corpse he discovers.²⁷

However, this seductive image of the mummy / Orient is constantly nuanced by the abject character of the mummy which points to the danger she represents for those who come close to her and claim possession of her body. The beauty and appeal of Tera's mummy in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* are counterbalanced by the bloody stump left at the end of her arm by her severed hand. This abject detail points to the unnatural status of the queen as a living dead and denounces her charm as illusory and dangerous. Indeed, getting too close to the mummy exposes the archaeologist to all sorts of threats, ranging from madness (*Iras: A Mystery*) to death (in the original ending of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*). Lastly, the ability of the mummy to change the archaeologist into her own likeness, as happens to Abel Trelawny in Stoker's novel as he is lying unconscious, his arms wrapped in bandages that resemble the mummy's own wrappings, echoes the imperial fear of 'going native', one that can often be found in the imperial othic genre. As a consequence, the mummy, as a fictional embodiment of the Orient, has to be kept under control so as not to threaten the West, in the guise of the archaeologist. Her museification represents such an – often unsuccessful – attempt to contain the danger of the East.²⁸

An Orientalist genre, mummy fiction develops the many aspects of the representation of the Oriental Other propounded by Orientalist writings, staging the various feelings the Orient inspired: fascination, repulsion, fear or desire for possession and domination.

FAKE MUMMIES AND COUNTERFEIT PAPYRI: SAX ROHMER'S *SHE WHO SLEEPS*, A FARED TALE OF MUMMY FICTION

At first sight, the plot of Rohmer's novel, *She Who Sleeps*, published in 1928, appears as

²⁷ See Bradley Deane's article, 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', for an analysis of the link between the romantic and erotic themes of mummy fiction and imperial politics.

²⁸ Fictional archaeologists were not alone in finding it hard to contain mummies as mere objects inside the museum rooms. Indeed, in *The Mummy's Curse*, Roger Luckhurst describes the failure of the British Museum to reduce Egyptian antiques to their status as historical and cultural artefacts: 'That the British Museum became the location for cultural fantasies about reanimation implies that its enlightened, educative role was often subverted by these 'survivals' of magical thinking. Rumours about cursed objects might exasperate curators, but they are evidence that the disciplinary's role of the Museum never functioned perfectly or at all uniformly'. R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford, 2012), p. 141. The development of a gothic imaginary in relation to ancient Egypt and its objects is, as Roger Luckhurst demonstrates, partly a consequence of the difficult process of museification of Egyptian objects and the animist fantasies that were associated to them.

no different from the plot the Victorian and Edwardian reader may have discovered in a number of texts set on Egyptological digs or in museums. There is, however, one central difference that is revealed at the very end of the novel: in *She Who Sleeps*, every archaeological object is fake and has been forged for the purpose of tricking the main characters, John Cumberland and his son Barry, as well as the reader, into believing that this is indeed yet another classic Orientalist mummy story.

The plot of Rohmer's novel is constructed around an apparently wonderful discovery announced by the mysterious Danbazzar. Indeed, he claims to have found a tomb occupied by a young woman mummified alive in order to come back to life as a witness of the greatness of her historical era. To the reader familiar with Victorian and Edwardian mummy fiction, this introduction to the adventures about to be experienced by the protagonists on an Egyptian excavation site suggests that the plot will go along well-known lines. Barry Cumberland, the young romantic hero, will obviously fall in love with the revived mummy of the lovely Zali-thea, thus following in the footsteps of his predecessors in mummy fiction. Then Cumberland, confronted with troubling visions of Zali-thea and vague recollections of her, will be bound to discover or remember that he is in fact the reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian who was the lover of Zali-thea in bygone times. Until the final twist, Rohmer's reader seems to be reading what appears as a pleasant – albeit rather unoriginal – plot reminiscent of the most iconic texts of mummy fiction. Barry does indeed fall in love with Zali-thea and attributes his visions of her in New Jersey to a 'mysterious bond of sympathy'²⁹ between them, one which can be explained by the cycle of reincarnation: '*She* had slept, miraculously, living on; but *he* had died, in the ordinary way, and was now reborn – in the ordinary way!'.³⁰ The use of the word 'ordinary' to refer to supernatural happenings points ironically to the fact that the reader of mummy fiction has grown so used to the tropes of mummy fiction that a story hinging on the theme of reincarnation, in relation with ancient Egypt, is indeed quite ordinary.

The discovery, in the final chapters, that the whole story was a trick imagined by Danbazzar – who is, in reality, the actor Paul Ahmes – to avenge the death of the woman he loved, comes as a surprise for both reader and characters. In spite of the many clues scattered throughout the text that not everything may be as straightforward as it appears, the reader, along with Cumberland and his companions, is tricked into believing in the

²⁹ S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 197.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

fake archaeological discovery staged throughout the novel. The penultimate chapter – a letter of confession written by Marguerite Devina, the actress portraying Zalihea in the scenario imagined by Ahmes – reveals that what appeared as a classic plot of mummy fiction was in fact a fiction about a fake mummy, as well as an instance of fake mummy fiction. Thus, the forged artefacts and story of Zalihea result in the creation of what Gérard Genette calls a literary ‘forgery’ in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982). Genette identifies various forms of hypertextuality to understand the presence of former texts in any given text. He opposes satirical and parodical modes of imitation (such as pastiches) to the serious imitation of a novel or a genre which he names ‘forgerie’ in the original French text.

However, even though all the main diegetic elements are revealed as fake at the end of the novel, the romance announced in the subtitle – ‘A romance of New York and the Nile’ – is the only element that is not eventually denounced as illusory. This underlines the fact that the authenticity of archaeological artefacts in fiction is of little value: what is really significant is what is projected onto them – something that has been constructed by the authors of mummy fiction and by Orientalist writers before them. Egyptian artefacts in fiction conjure up romantic stories, the sensuality of a female body to be discovered and erotically unwrapped, the threat of curses and the uncanny feeling of being haunted by one’s past. These are indeed all the elements that the reader can find in Rohmer’s novel. The fake papyrus, tomb and mummy do not need to be genuine to inspire the feelings expected from the characters, but also the reader. What matters is that they fit into an imaginary Orientalist narrative which presents the Orient as a beguiling land of magic and mystery. Thus, the real Cairo is of no great import since, to quote Rohmer, it is ‘real yet less than [Barry’s] imaginings concerning it’.³¹

By emphasising the prominent role of imagination in the vision the young hero of *She Who Sleeps* has formed of Cairo – and, more broadly, of Egypt and the Orient – Rohmer points to the artificial character of Orientalist constructions of Egypt. In his analysis of some of the short stories from Rohmer’s collection, *Tales of Secret Egypt* (1918), Roger Luckhurst identifies the use of the ‘explained supernatural’ as a device debunking romantic constructions of the Orient.³² He concludes his observations by considering the

³¹ S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 83.

³² Orientalist scholars are not spared either: in *She Who Sleeps*, Horace Pain, ‘the celebrated Orientalist’, is mocked for being exactly what his name onomastically suggests: ‘a dry, slow-spoken scholar, whose only enthusiasm was for his subject’. Ibid., p. 65.

story entitled 'Harûn Pasha':

The cruel and monstrous Pasha, it transpires, is an Englishman merely impersonating the role, mockingly demonstrating the theory that the East is really a construction of the fantasies of the West. It is mildly alarming to discover that it is Sax Rohmer who is able to share something of Edward Said's central lesson that orientalism is fundamentally a 'textual attitude', the East a discursive construction of a Western library of pre-prepared representations and actions.³³

It is indeed surprising that the author of the adventures of Fu Manchu and of many fictions which rely heavily on Orientalist stereotypes³⁴ should have had the hindsight to denounce the representation of Egypt and of its past as an image generated in the West, much like the 'antiques' produced in Birmingham and sold in the streets of Cairo. It is perhaps no coincidence that Rohmer, himself born in Birmingham, chose this particular city as the manufacturing place of an Orient he himself produced time and again through his fiction.³⁵

The emphasis on the artificiality of the Orientalist narrative and the Orient it offers to the reader can be found throughout the novel in the shape of various clues which point to the literary forgery the characters – as well as the inattentive reader – may fall victim to. Indeed, Rohmer scatters a number of intertextual references in his text to underline the fictional character of the story being built by Danbazzar and his accomplice, Marguerite Devina. Barry Cumberland himself is described through various references to literary characters and is in turns compared to Sherlock Holmes,³⁶ a young romantic hero or the hero of a fairy tale. The stage is set for this modern Prince Charming to rush to the rescue of his princess – a princess immediately provided by Danbazzar as he prepares the narrative which will trap Cumberland and his companions in an exotic tale worthy of the *Arabian Nights*.

In the Orientalist tale offered to the Cumberlands, Ahmes appears as the figure of the author (or of the stage director). As such, he relies on all the Orientalist paradigms offered

³³ R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford, 2012), p. 171.

³⁴ Roger Luckhurst underlines how 'Rohmer rarely rises above reiterative racism, exploiting an undifferentiated and toxic orientalism'. Ibid., p. 169.

³⁵ Similarly, the narrator of Rohmer's *Tales of Secret Egypt*, Neville Kernaby, is himself the representative of a firm based in Birmingham whose business is described as the manufacturing of 'duplicates'. Kernaby may be interpreted as a figure of the author, roaming the Orient to glean objects he can replicate to construct an appropriate Oriental atmosphere.

³⁶ Ironically so, as it turns out, since he fails to pick up all the clues that are thrown in his path.

by Western culture and uses them as narrative devices which will shape a believable Orient for Barry whose worldview has been entirely informed by fiction. Ahmes carefully picks the stock characters necessary to the development of his plot and casts himself as the mysterious merchant of antiques who may also be an Oriental magician or perhaps a reincarnated ancient Egyptian. All that is left to do is prepare the set, forge the various props, apply the actors' make-up and write the lines they will deliver. *She Who Sleeps* demonstrates how easily the Orientalist tale will unfold as both the reader and the main protagonists follow the well-trodden interpretative path according to which the Orient essentially presents a mystery that needs to be unveiled.

The many clues scattered in the text, which suggest that the story offered by Danbazzar should not be taken at face value, are dismissed by the reader and Cumberland alike and interpreted through the hermeneutic prism constructed by mummy fiction. As well as the mention of the 'Birmingham ware' sold in Cairo, the text provides the reader with clues as to the fake character of the Egyptian artefacts described in the novel. Thus, the colouring of the papyrus containing the story of Zalitheia brought by Danbazzar is said to have 'retained much of its original freshness'.³⁷ To the reader of mummy fiction, this is a well-known leitmotif. In *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Stoker, describing Queen Tera's sarcophagus, notes that 'the deep blue of [the hieroglyphics'] colouring [were] showing up *fresh and sharply edged* in the yellow stone'.³⁸ Similarly, in 'Smith and the Pharaohs', Haggard describes the wall of paintings representing Queen Ma-Mee as 'covered with hieroglyphs *as fresh to-day as on that when the artist had limned them*'.³⁹ In mummy fiction, the idea of the freshness of the objects should be read as a clue indicating the remanence of the past and announcing the imminent return of a mummy who is never quite dead. Rohmer subverts this leitmotif and points to the forgery the reader and the Cumberlands have been presented with by suggesting a literal reading of the description: indeed, if the colouring of the papyrus seems so fresh, it is not because ancient Egypt is still alive, but because the painting is actually extremely fresh, the forged document having only recently been completed by Ahmes.

In the same way, the mummy of Zalitheia discovered by Barry Cumberland and his companions is described as 'mummylike'. This is a clue the reader familiar with mummy

³⁷ S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 52.

³⁸ B. Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (London, 2008), p. 92, my emphasis.

³⁹ H.R. Haggard, 'Smith and the Pharaohs', in *Smith and the Pharaohs and Other Tales* (Holicong, 2003), pp. 7-45, p. 18, my emphasis.

fiction is likely to miss, but one that reveals that just like the actress playing Zalthea only has the semblance of a mummy, the Orient described in Rohmer's novel is merely 'Orient-like'. As such, it offers the reader a recognisable image of an Orient imagined in and by the West which has little to do with reality.

PERFORMING THE ORIENT: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL STAGE

The archaeological plot inspired by late-Victorian and Edwardian mummy fiction allows Rohmer to stage a convincing tale of reincarnation and love beyond the grave. His choice to construct the central plot of *She Who Sleeps* as a story within the story – or rather, a play within the story – suggests the essentially theatrical character of tales dealing with the Orient. In revealing the Orient as a fictional narrative written, directed and performed by Westerners, Rohmer anticipates Said's analysis of representation as essentially theatrical: 'the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe'.⁴⁰ Edward Ziter takes this idea even further by demonstrating the role played by the Victorian theatre, as well as shows such as panoramas and dioramas, on the construction of a fictional Orient that shaped the public's vision of the Middle East.⁴¹

As the stage director of this mock tale of the mummy, Danbazzar uses all the necessary props offered by earlier mummy fiction in order to make his archaeological narrative believable. That is why he puts great efforts in forging a papyrus, preparing the fake mummy and, finally, setting the stage for the extraordinary discovery of a living mummy:

The entrance of the tomb lay in a fairly deep recess; and Danbazzar had constructed, in convenient sections, a huge screen – practically a piece of scenery. The material for this accounted for the presence of several strangely shaped cases among their baggage for which Barry had hitherto been unable to account.

Set in place before the entrance to the tomb, with top pieces and side pieces, or wings, it was joined with sand and rubbish to the rubble of the valley path. When lovingly finished by Danbazzar – seated upon a light scaffold – with odd dabs of paint applied to a wet surface upon which sand had been thrown, the result was magical.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

⁴¹ E. Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁴² S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), pp. 109-110.

The reader will probably read this scene as what it pretends to be, that is to say a description of the implements used to conceal the archaeological site. Indeed, the screen erected by Danbazzar is presented as the means by which he hides the site from view so that the members of the expedition may work without being disturbed by the local authorities or curious tourists. However, the end of the novel reveals that what is being built here is in fact the set of a perfectly realistic archaeological play. The magic mentioned at the end of this excerpt is that of the theatrical illusion achieved by Danbazzar: the reader, as well as protagonists of the novel, become the naïve spectators of the action that unfolds on what they really believe to be an archaeological site, as the actors waiting in the 'side pieces, or wings' are about to enter the stage to perform the various acts of an archaeological narrative. Here Danbazzar achieves the successful construction of Said's 'closed field' by presenting to the spectators or unwitting actors an immersive Orientalist panorama that they are willing to accept as real.

As a figure of the author, Danbazzar exploits the credulity of his victims and their readiness to believe in the magic of Egypt and the Orientalist mystery of the East. The story he constructs is repeatedly shown as a fraud, as the recurring theatrical metaphor emphasises. The Orient, it appears, is no more than a performance staged by the West – one that can be easily achieved with a few costumes and the shrewd choice of a few stock characters allegorically standing for the qualities attributed to the East: its mystery, its seductiveness, its magic and its eternal suspension in the past.

More broadly, Egypt and its antiquity often appear in fictional works as costumes, a disguise one can put on in order to perform an Orientalist tale worthy of *The Arabian Nights*. Indeed, a number of texts resort to fake archaeological objects as a narrative device in order to lead the reader (or the detective in the case of detective stories) onto false tracks. In Agatha Christie's 'The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb' (1924), Hercule Poirot himself – aware that any good Egyptological plot needs a curse – asks one of the workers on an excavation site to wear a mask representing the god Anubis to create a panic and trick the murderer into making a mistake and revealing his identity. In R. Austin Freeman's *The Eye of Osiris* (1911), the solution of the mystery also lies in a fake artefact, namely the mummy of Sebek-hotep displayed at the British Museum and which is revealed to be the body of the late John Bellingham – whose mysterious disappearance was at the core of the investigation – when it is X-rayed at the end of the novel.

Many years before writing *She Who Sleeps*, Rohmer had already experimented with

forged archaeological artefacts as a narrative device meant to blur the lines of interpretations. The plot of 'The Mysterious Mummy' (1903) is constructed around the inexplicable vanishing of a vase from a prestigious museum. The presence of an unknown mummy on the crime scene just before the theft is committed disrupts the investigation while this mystery within a mystery eventually takes pride of place as the most prominent event among the strange happenings described in the short story. The conclusion reveals that the mummy was in fact a disguise used by the thief to conceal himself inside the museum and blend with the collections displayed in it. Once the crime has been perpetrated, the mummy costume is dismissed by the thief, having achieved its role as a prop used not only to build a crime scene that suggests a supernatural explanation but to commit the crime itself.

Similarly, in *She Who Sleeps*, costumes play a major part in the construction of the plot and of the theatrical illusion. Very early in the story, Barry Cumberland's friend, Jim Sakers, suggests that the 'Egyptian princess' Barry briefly saw standing on the balcony of a house in New Jersey – just before his car crashed into a wall – may simply be a young lady getting ready for a fancy dress party (if not a figment of Barry's heated imagination, peopled with beautiful Egyptian priestesses and princesses). Cumberland immediately dismisses this rational explanation, preferring instead to believe that his vision of the one he will come to know as Zalihea was a prophetic event meant to remind him of his imaginary Egyptian past. Yet the motif of the fancy dress party is a very common one in fictions set in Egypt. A traditional moment of entertainment for the tourists spending the season in Egypt, the fancy dress party appears as a narrative turning point in many texts insofar as it contributes to blurring the lines between reality and supernatural phenomena, the modern present of the characters and the resurgence of the antique past. In Marie Corelli's novel, *Ziska*, some confusion arises when the eponymous character appears at a fancy dress party held at ezireh Palace Hotel dressed up as her antique namesake. As Ziska and Ziska-Charmazel are later revealed to be one and the same woman, the costume takes on a paradoxical meaning: instead of being used to play a part and hide the actual identity of its wearer, it serves to disclose Ziska's real and, until then, secret identity. Similarly, in Sax Rohmer's novel *Brood of the Witch-Queen* (1918), the arrival at a party of Antony Ferrara, wearing a crocodile-shaped mask, stirs up superstitious fears and brings about confusion regarding what is real and what is just a

mask as this disguise serves to reveal Ferrara's true, villainous nature.⁴³

In *She Who Sleeps*, Marguerite Devina dresses up as a mummy while Danbazzar asks his companions to don the costume of Egyptian priests to perform the mummy unwrapping. Somewhat unwittingly, they become part of the farce Ahmes has involved them in. In this Egyptian tale, there are only Western actors handling forged props. There is no need for authentic Egyptian objects to spin an Oriental tale of magic, reincarnation and immortal love. The Orient is a fiction which anyone can perform simply by donning a mask.

As well as the theatrical motif, a pictorial theme can be found in a number of texts to underline the fictional character of the Orient represented in fiction. Through the image of the Orient as a work of art, the authors hint at the origin of Orientalist representations and at the artistic tradition represented by the works of Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Léon érôme or David Roberts, among many others. In travelogues as well as in works of fiction, the Orient is perceived as essentially picturesque, as Amelia Edwards underlines it in *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877) when she describes a bazaar:

Every shop front, every street corner, every turbaned group is a ready-made picture. The old Turk who sets up his cake stall in the recess of a sculptured doorway; the donkey boy, with his gayly caparisoned ass, waiting for customers; the beggar asleep on the steps of the mosque; the veiled woman filling her water jar at the public fountain – they all look as if they had been put there expressly to be painted.⁴⁴

The use of the passive – 'to be painted' – suggest that the Orient is unable to represent itself and must therefore be represented, and thus invented, by the West. Many artists, real as well as fictional, took Edwards up on her invitation to try and paint Egypt and give it an entrancing representation for Western museum visitors. For instance, the French painters *ervase* in *Ziska* or Félix Henriot in Algernon Blackwood's novella, 'Sand' (1912) both travel to Egypt to try and discover the eternal mystery of the Orient and hopefully

⁴³ Conversely, in Robert Bloch's 'The Secret of Sebek' (1937), the arrival of a crocodile-headed guest at a party held in New Orleans is not immediately taken seriously by the party goers as they have all agreed to wear costumes inspired by Gothic fiction. However, panic soon ensues when the monstrous mask of the god Sebek turns out not to be a mask but the real head of a crocodile.

⁴⁴ A. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (New York, 1878), p. 3.

translate it into satisfying images.⁴⁵ In a passage echoing Edwards's description of the bazaar in Cairo, Corelli, through the narratorial voice in *Ziska*, derides the representation of Egypt as essentially picturesque:

You may take a little walk into 'Old' Cairo, and turning a corner you may catch glimpses of what Mark Twain calls 'Oriental simplicity,' namely, picturesquely-composed groups of 'dear delightful' Arabs whose clothing is no more than primitive custom makes strictly necessary. These kind of 'tableaux vivants' or 'art studies' give quite a thrill of novelty to Cairene-English Society, – a touch of savagery, – a *soupçon* of peculiarity which is entirely lacking to fashionable London.⁴⁶

The short quotes from Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), as well as the multiplication of quotation marks and the mockingly pretentious use of French words ironically point out the fact that the picturesque character of the Orient is alien to Egypt itself and has rather been imposed upon the country by Western (particularly French) representations.

Much like Barry Cumberland who is disappointed to discover that the real Cairo has little in common with 'his imaginings concerning it', fictional painters face a certain disillusionment when they realise that the real Egypt is far less 'real' than the image they have of it – an image shaped by literary and pictorial representations. As a consequence, their work consists of inventing and creating on the canvas what they do not find in Egypt itself, what they believe the 'real Orient' to be like. Rohmer's short story, 'The Whispering Mummy' (1918), published in the collection *Tales of Secret Egypt*, serves to point out artistic depictions of the Orient as fictions. In this text, the French painter Félix Bréton is working on an Orientalist representation of an eternal Egypt in which the past and the present merge in a 'danse funèbre' (that is the title of the painting) involving a mummy and a dancer who looks uncannily like the mummified priestess of Isis used by the painter. This resemblance immediately suggests a supernatural explanation as the young woman, Shejeret ed-Durr, is believed to be a reincarnation – or at least a descendent – of the mummy she stands for in the painting. If this explanation is eventually debunked, it is interesting to notice that Rohmer chooses again to represent Egypt – or, more broadly, the

⁴⁵ Whereas most of the characters of fictions set in Egypt are British, it is interesting to notice that the characters of painters are almost invariably French; a nod, perhaps, to the rich French pictorial tradition of Orientalism.

⁴⁶ M. Corelli, *Ziska, The Problem of a Wicked Soul* (Bristol, 1897), pp. 16-17.

Orient – as an artistic creation which is inspired by the Orient but fails to reproduce it faithfully. This echoes Ziter's analysis of theatrical representations of the Orient in the nineteenth century⁴⁷ which, while based on real elements of Oriental culture, architecture or history, also left a large part to imagination and fantasised exoticism.⁴⁸ Similarly, what Félix Bréton asks of the dancer is for her to perform *his* dream of the Orient and to become what will be offered to the Western audience as the real Orient: an image of magic that merges sensuality with a sense of the macabre.

'IN THE HANDS OF A MASTER ILLUSIONIST'

However surprising this may be for an author whose work consists largely in the obsessive rewriting of Orientalist stereotypes concerning both the threat and the exotic seduction exercised by the Orient, in *She Who Sleeps*, Rohmer also offers the reader a deconstruction of Orientalist paradigms. Indeed, this novel, as well as some of his short stories, betray an acute awareness that the Orient is, as Edward Said put it, 'a textual attitude'.⁴⁹ In Rohmer's narratives, Egypt and its antiquity appear as a fictional construct that can easily be replicated by the use of various tropes and the introduction in the narrative of archaeological artefacts which are as inauthentic as the archaeological narrative itself. Therefore, Rohmer's Egypt, like the 'Birmingham ware' sold on the streets of Cairo is no more than a British-made forgery, however appealing it may be to the Western readership. Like the mummy wrappings worn by Marguerite Devina in *She Who Sleeps* or by the criminal in 'The Mysterious Mummy', Egypt is a costume one can don to perform an Orientalist adventure or, in the case of Rohmer's novel, the most iconic scenes of the imperial genre of mummy fiction. Thus, Marguerite Devina's words to Barry Cumberland, as she reveals to him that she was the fake mummy of a fake archaeological tale, are also addressed to Rohmer's reader as s/he understands that *She Who Sleeps* was not the novel it appeared to be and that Orient is no more than a fiction: 'You were in the hands of a master illusionist!'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ E. Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁴⁸ The same happens in *She Who Sleeps* when Barry's fantasies about 'almond-eyed, slender priestesses [...] look[ing] down upon him, from wall paintings, vases, bas-reliefs' come to life in Danbazzar's Egyptian play. S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 6.

⁴⁹ E. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1995), p. 93.

⁵⁰ S. Rohmer, *She Who Sleeps: A Romance of New York and the Nile* (New York, 1928), p. 312.

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Tea with King Tut at The Winter Palace Hotel

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Key words: Geography of Knowledge; James Breasted; Howard Carter; Winter Palace Hotel; Tutankhamun

On 6 November 1922, Howard Carter sent a telegram from Luxor, Egypt, to his wealthy patron Lord Carnarvon in England: 'At last have made wonderful discovery in Valley; a magnificent tomb with seals intact; re-covered same for your arrival; congratulations'.¹ Carter waited eighteen long days for Carnarvon to arrive in Luxor, so he could continue to clear the steps, open the doorway, and read the complete seals on the door. The seals revealed the name of Tutankhamun – a known king from the 18th dynasty in Egypt's New Kingdom (c. 1550-1295 BCE).² Archaeologists had been looking for him: now they believed they had found him. On 26 November, a day Carter called 'the day of days, the most wonderful that I have ever lived through', they were able to clear the passage of debris and look into the doorway at the end.³ Carter made a tiny hole in the upper left hand corner of the doorway to test the stagnant air and to see if the next room or passage was empty, or full of debris. He put a candle in first, and, famously, described what he saw:

At first I could see nothing, the hot air escaping from the chamber causing the candle flame to flicker, but presently, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, details of the room within emerged slowly from the mist, strange animals, statues, and gold—everywhere the glint of gold. For the moment—an eternity it must have seemed to the others standing by—I was struck dumb with amazement, and when Lord Carnarvon, unable to stand the suspense any longer, inquired anxiously, 'Can you see anything?' it was all I could do to get out the words, 'Yes, wonderful things.' Then widening the hole a little further, so that we both could see, we inserted an electric torch.⁴

¹ H. Carter and A. C. Mace, *The tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen, discovered by the late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1923), p. 136.

² Dates adopted from S. Quirke and J. Spencer, eds. *The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1992), pp. 223-225.

³ Carter and Mace, *Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol. 1, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.

Most people have at least heard about the pharaoh who occupied what is now known as KV62 (the 62nd tomb found in the Kings Valley): King Tutankhamun was the thirteenth pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of ancient Egypt, ruling from c. 1336-1327 BCE. There are seemingly innumerable aspects to the story surrounding this discovery, and a number of ways it has been analyzed.⁵ One of the most well-known aspects of the story is that Carter's wonderful things were one of the main causes of the extreme interest the Western public took in Egyptian history in the early twentieth century.⁶ From the start, he knew he would have to manage the attention attracted to the find and the tomb, and he chose Luxor's Winter Palace Hotel from which to do it. By the 1920s, hotels in Egypt had been established as central sites of knowledge creation in Egyptology. Carter was able to take advantage of the Winter Palace Hotel as a contained site of Western privilege in Egypt in order to regulate the knowledge created and disseminated about the tomb and the material culture of ancient Egypt to the wider world.

The story of Carter controlling the knowledge and subsequent excitement about the Boy King takes place at two main sites in Egypt: a small tomb in Wadi Biban al-Muluk, or the Valley of the Kings, and a small suite of rooms in the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor, Egypt, eight miles away and on the other side of the Nile from the Valley. In order to understand the significance of this find, and of any Egyptologists working in and around Egypt in this period, we must understand the spaces in which they worked. Carter's scholarly activities must be placed within the conversation about spaces in which science is done. When discussing *how* knowledge is formed we must understand the *where* as well: in studying the geography of knowledge, understanding place is central. Thinking about scientific practice in this way helps to define what type of science is done and who

⁵ There are far too many to cite here, but for example see, The Griffith Institute, *Tutankhamun: Anatomy of an Investigation*, <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/discoveringTut/> (accessed 7 January 2019); I.E.S. Edwards, *Tutankhamun: His Tomb and Its Treasures* (New York, 1977); N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun: The King, the Tomb, the Royal Treasure* (London, 1995); C. Riggs, *Photographing Tutankhamun: Archaeology, Ancient Egypt, and the Archive* (London, 2018).

⁶ See T. Hardwick, 'Five Months Before Tut: Purchasers and Prices at the MacGregor Sale, 1922', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 23 (1) (2011), pp. 179-192. Hardwick demonstrates that the "existing taste for ancient Egyptian art" in early 1922 was already significant, and drove prices at the MacGregor sale. The prices were not as high as they likely would have been just a few months later, but there was substantial interest before Tutankhamun's tomb was found.

participates in the doing of it.⁷ Further, it allows us to see how a small tomb in a remote place most people had never visited before came to excite people all over the world.

When knowledge is manipulated in specific locations – like the hotel and the tomb site – it takes on a particular shape unique to its place. Carter, Carnarvon, and the team of Egyptologists that gathered in the Valley that winter formed an ephemeral scientific network and were part of an important cognitive topography.⁸ Further, the team worked together, at the tomb site and in their rooms at the Winter Palace, to shape the ways in which the Egyptian government and the French-led Department of Antiquities interacted with the artifacts themselves. This knowledge was framed inside a hotel, a veritable fortress of colonial power, which was located within a weakening former protectorate.⁹ The men in charge of the creation and dissemination of this knowledge were well aware of the rapidity with which they needed to communicate with their audiences and the influence they needed to maintain throughout the process. All the excitement that followed was part of a discovery of great historical importance, mediated by practitioners of a science who were concerned about losing their political and intellectual power in a rapidly destabilizing post-war world.

KNOWLEDGE CREATION IN EGYPTOLOGY

Western science has been performed in a variety of places, from labs and classrooms, to the breakfast table and home salons, to the pub and the coffee house and more.¹⁰ These meeting places, which encompass a mix of both public and private spaces, were places where people would meet with friends and colleagues to gossip, read newspapers and pamphlets, as well as to discuss philosophy, politics, and science. From the seventeenth to the twentieth century and beyond, people of all classes and genders were, at the very

⁷ For example, D.N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, 2003); S. Shapin, *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority* (Baltimore, 2010); *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, D.N. Livingstone and C.W.J. Withers (eds.), (Chicago, 2011).

⁸ M.J.S. Rudwick, *The Great Devonian Controversy: The Shaping of Scientific Knowledge among Gentlemanly Specialists* (Chicago, 1985), p. 425.

⁹ See B.C. Scott, 'Revolution at the hotel: Panama and luxury travel in the age of decolonization', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10 (2) (2018), pp. 146-164. In Egypt, hotels had frequently been, and would continue to be sites of testing and reasserting colonial power. See, for example, Sheikh A. Youssuf, 'Egypt's Reply to Colonel Roosevelt', *The North American Review*, 191 (655) (June 1910), pp. 729-737, especially p. 735.

¹⁰ A.B. Shteir, 'Botany in the Breakfast Room: Women and Early Nineteenth-Century British Plant Study', in *Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives: Women in Science, 1789-1979*, P. Abir-Am and D. Outram (eds.) (Rutgers, 1989), pp. 31-44; A. Secord, 'Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire', *History of Science*, 32 (1994), pp. 269-315; S. Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *The Journal of Modern History*, 67 (4) (1995), pp. 807-834.

least, allowed to listen to the debates in public meeting places, and women were especially creative within the home with children. As the lab or field scientist was concerned, however, it was their proximity to the science being done that made them 'real' or 'authentic' practitioners.¹¹ In the history of archaeology, scholars have largely favored the knowledge gained at the trowel's edge, which is to say in the field. It is in the field that scientists begin to create and refine their theories based on objects coming out of the ground.¹² Archaeologists making knowledge in the field were clearly imbued with professional status by displaying not only their heroic adventures, but also by producing field reports and new theories. As a lab is for chemistry, in archaeology especially the field has occupied the highest and most 'privileged place of knowledge generation'.¹³ These spaces were, usually, controlled by particular professional conventions and expectations. While sometimes these norms could be broken, access to each space was protected so that, if the rules were broken, the damage could be controlled.¹⁴

However, there are other locations in which archaeological work was done; spaces other than the field and museum held power in the production of archaeological knowledge. Recently, new locations, such as the classroom and local study societies, have been analyzed as equally important sites in archaeology.¹⁵ These professionals presented their ideas in print form, but not before many of them gave lectures, attended conferences and scholarly meetings, discussing their knowledge at length in these controlled, professional settings. We know knowledge 'bears the imprint of its location', therefore, it is crucial to analyze locations where archaeologists were not heavily controlled by scholarly convention.¹⁶ These archaeological 'truth spots' include dig houses, trains, boats, and end-of-the-day fireside chats.¹⁷ These are places that, as Thomas Gieryn argues, help people develop credible knowledge based on their geographic location and

¹¹ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 41.

¹² K.H. Nielsen, M. Harbsmeier, and C.J. Ries, 'Studying Scientists and Scholars in the Field: An Introduction', in *Scientists and Scholars in the Field: Studies in the History of Fieldwork and Expeditions*, Nielson, Harbsmeier, and Ries (eds.) (Aarhus, 2012), pp. 9-28.

¹³ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 20.

¹⁴ See M. Brusius and K. Singh (eds.), *Museum Storage and Meaning: Tales from the Crypt* (London, 2017).

¹⁵ K. Sheppard, 'Margaret Alice Murray and Archaeological Training in the Classroom: Preparing "Petrie's Pups"', in *Histories of Egyptology: Interdisciplinary Measures*, W. Carruthers (ed.) (London, 2014), pp. 113-128; also, J. Roberts, K. Sheppard, U. Hansson, J. Trigg, eds., *Communities of Knowledge Production in Archaeology* (Manchester, forthcoming).

¹⁶ Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, p. 13.

¹⁷ T. F. Gieryn, *Truth-Spots: How Places Make People Believe* (Chicago, 2018). For dig houses, for example, see C. Morgan and D. Eddisford, 'Dig Houses, Dwelling, and Knowledge Production in Archaeology', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*, 2 (1) (2015), pp. 169-193; W. Carruthers, 'Credibility, Civility, and the Archaeological Dig House in mid-1950s Egypt', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 19 (2) (2019), pp. 255-276.

the narrations that 'give the place distinctive meaning and value'.¹⁸ Truth-spots are spaces where ideas 'gain credibility' and are a 'vital cause of that enhanced believability'.¹⁹ In other words, they are places 'where an account and a potential believer intersect' that give a person (the potential believer) more of a likelihood of trusting certain ideas or assertions simply because of the place itself.²⁰ Scholars have largely overlooked the role of hotels as central places in Egypt where knowledge was constructed. They were central Egyptian truth spots and places of knowledge generation: they were important places where scientists would come together to work out new theories and prepare themselves for the coming season, as well as meet with old friends.

In Egypt, as in Europe and the United States, there were plenty of coffee and tea houses, but many of them were spaces for locals to meet where a foreigner would have been out of place.²¹ Instead, European and American visitors to Egypt usually made their way to a handful of European-run hotels in the urban centers of Alexandria, Cairo, and Luxor to stay, play, and work. The hotels contained elements of all of the meeting sites from home, but were far away. They also had the important colonial addition of keeping Egyptians out, so that their participation in discussions was restricted and monitored. Indeed, in the winter months of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century society, hotels in Egypt were the places to see and be seen for the tourist especially and for many archaeologists. There were dining rooms for polite discussion over breakfast, tea, and dinner and verandas for watching the world go by while drinking coffees or cocktails. There was also a wide range of people coming to stay who provided gossip and new friendships, and engaged in debates about philosophy and science. For archaeologists traveling to the field – a central place for their practice but geographically and scientifically on the periphery – and living in a hotel for any period of time made these places the least formal arenas for discussing new data and theories. The relative lack of professional rules in these spaces freed archaeologists from the formality of science at the site or in the museum and allowed their new ideas to flow more freely. As Robert Kohler has argued, these spaces also allowed more people than ever to participate in the practice of scientific discussion.²²

¹⁸ Gieryn, *Truth-Spots*, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ A. Tam, 'Coffeehouses and Coffeehouse Culture in Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Cairo' (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2018).

²² R. Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Lab-Field Border in Biology* (Chicago, 2002).

Archaeologists encountered tourists, journalists, and even women as they met and developed networks of scientific activity that lasted long after they left these intellectual and social spaces. Egyptian hotels were liminal spaces that allowed a mix of private and public behaviors and therefore a more dynamic private/public threshold. In the practice of science, there is often a distinct line between the domestic/private space and the public space.²³ The boundaries of these spaces shifted and changed, but were not all together absent.²⁴ At hotels, participants had to be invited to the conversation, either by having a physical seat at the table or being invited into someone's private room. Moreover, as tangible fortresses of European privilege and protectors of power dynamics, these Egyptian hotels depended on exclusion. In Luxor, much more than in Cairo, Egyptians who lived and worked in the town were kept out of the hotels. In Cairo, hotel terraces were right on the street, so Egyptians could interact with tourists from outside the gates: in Luxor, the terraces were raised or gardens fully cut off from the outside town. Most Egyptians were not allowed into hotels unless they worked in them or held seats of social or political power, so their voices could not be heard and their faces could not be seen. Hotels were places of exploited labor and became tense places in which both sides fought for control of the colonial past, present, and future.²⁵

The Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor is a central space in the science of studying the past. It was the place that contained the activities, ideas, and temperaments of a few temporary residents and, as such, Carter and his colleagues lent the sites of the Winter Palace Hotel credence in being an important place for the creation and propagation of knowledge. We will see the domestic and public threshold blurred, and the colonial tensions played out in the Carter/Tutankhamun story. The domestic setting of the private rooms at the Winter Palace was also public: a hotel in which hundreds of tourists and journalists were also staying. For Carter and others, hotels were important spaces not just because their colleagues were there, but also because they could have some control over the crowds of people vying for their time and attention. They could retreat to their rooms, or into semi-private discussions at tea. For many archaeologists operating in hotels, and especially in Carter's case, they also attempted to protect their knowledge and social and political power within the walls. The process of situating knowledge has a direct impact on the

²³ S. Shapin, 'The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England', *Isis*, 79 (3) (1988), pp. 373-404.

²⁴ Morgan and Eddisford also make this point in 'Dig Houses,' pp. 176-177.

²⁵ Scott, 'Revolution at the Hotel', p. 149.

shape of that knowledge.²⁶ Carter and his colleagues formed a dynamic and powerful, yet ephemeral, cognitive topography in the Winter Palace Hotel: at the end of each season, members of the group left Luxor, putting the discussion on hold until the following season. While the privileged field is far from the controlled lab-like conditions of the university or museum, the hotel on the way to the field is the furthest from it, and this location played a major role in what happened next.²⁷

LUXOR

The city of Luxor was an isolated village in the early twentieth century, which made it a much more privileged space for visitors to get to than Cairo was. First travelers had to get to Cairo from their point of origin: if they came from England or the rest of Continental Europe, this was relatively easy to do. From Europe, a boat journey of a few days brought travelers to the flat Northern coast of Egypt. From there, travelers would then take a four- to six-hour train ride to Cairo. Some would stay the entire winter in Cairo, enjoying the tourist and nightlife scene. Others might stay a few days or weeks in Cairo, getting ready to go up the Nile to see the sites along the way. The Nile journey could take from several hours by train to months on a dahabeya, or houseboat. Because of time and financial restraints, not everyone who went to Egypt went to Luxor. Those who did make it there for the fresh dry air and the artifacts only had the choice of one of a few hotels.

The Winter Palace Hotel

On 19 January 1907, the English-language *Egyptian Gazette* reported on the opening of the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor:

²⁶ Rudwick, *The Great Devonian Controversy*, p. 425; D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14 (3) (1988), pp. 575-599.

²⁷ It is important to note here that it was not just men who were participating in these spaces, even in the earliest days of the discipline of Egyptology. There were indeed a number of women archaeologists who depended on hotels as spaces for privacy, work, and interaction with other scholars, prominent visitors, and family. Women like Margaret Benson, who was the first woman to get a concession to dig in Egypt, and wealthy heiress and excavation patron Emma Andrews, among others, contributed, albeit in different ways than men did, to the study of Egypt's past within and among the visitors to these hotels. See: M. Benson and J. Gourlay, *The Temple of Mut in Asher* (London, 1899); J. M. Adams, *The Millionaire and the Mummies: Theodore Davis's Gilded Age in the Valley of the Kings* (New York, 2013). Andrews played an important role in the story of the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb, and so she is included here. Unfortunately, because women were barred from a number of locations where science was done in the field, there are not many in this particular story.

Built within two hundred yards of the historic [Luxor] Temple, its long wings facing close upon the river with its magnificent view, this latest addition to M. Pagnon's palaces in Upper Egypt is perhaps the finest and most elaborately-schemed hotel within the land of Egypt, and will accommodate some 200 guests. Facing the river on the west the whole of the back of the building looks over the garden and fertile ground to the mountains on the East, so that throughout the day the brilliant health-giving sunshine is pouring on to the balconies and terraces in either one direction or the other. A huge out-stretched horseshoe terrace built on colonnades makes a welcome lounge overlooking where Nile steamers have their moorings, and double marble staircases lead to the entrance-hall.²⁸

If the patio and gardens were attractive to visitors, the inside proved even more luxurious. There was a bar and billiard room, wine cellars, dining and tea rooms, music room, lounges, a restaurant, and a large back terrace over-looking the luscious green gardens that, for the moment, grew fruit and vegetables for hotel and steamer patrons. For every three bedrooms, there was a 'most complete bath and toilette room', as well as spacious apartment suites for wealthier guests who would stay the winter. There were also bedrooms and apartments for maids and valets of the wealthier patrons, and the domestic workers had their own dining room.

The hotel opened to great fanfare, with all of the big names in European-run Egyptian hostelry in attendance. As more people came to visit Luxor, the Winter Palace, large and imposing on the East bank of the Nile, became the chosen place to stay, eat, and work.²⁹ The Winter Palace quickly became the central place for archaeologists as well as tourists and journalists staying in Luxor for the season. Even for archaeologists who stayed in a dig house in Luxor, on the West Bank – like Carter did – or who stayed on their own boat – like millionaire patrons Theodore Davis and Emma Andrews – the Winter Palace was the place to see and be seen. It was the stage on which a number of archaeological dramas played out.

TEA WITH KING TUT AT THE WINTER PALACE HOTEL

Archaeological interest in finding King Tutankhamun's tomb began relatively early in the history of the field, long before his tomb was discovered. For historians, he was an

²⁸ 'Upper Egypt Hotels Co. Inauguration of Winter Palace', *The Egyptian Gazette*, 19 January 1907.

²⁹ A. Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt in the Golden Age of Travel* (Cairo, 2011), p. 180.

enigmatic ruler with a short reign of around ten years. When his father-in-law the King Akhenaten died, Tutankhamun ascended the throne. He was the first king to rule after the religious shift of the Amarna period, which worshipped the Aten (the Sun disc). By this point, evidence had been found of Tutankhamun's reign on temple walls in Luxor and in other documents, but questions about how he lived and ruled, and especially where he was buried, remained unanswered. Tutankhamun was not buried in Amarna, the city of his birth and early life, so finding him in the Valley of the Kings revealed much about his religious beliefs alone.³⁰

During the season of 1907-08, the excavation team sponsored by Emma Andrews and Theodore Davis made the Winter Palace a comfortable visiting spot while they excavated in the Valley. They usually centered their social and archaeological lives on their dahabeya, the *Bedauin*, but they found the Winter Palace was a more comfortable place to meet groups of visitors. At the Winter Palace the pair found the hotel's public setting easy to convert into a semi-private meeting space by inviting people to exclusive meals and teas. During this particular season, Davis and Andrews made finds indicating that the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb was imminent. After an uneventful January, on 25 February 1908 they found the entrance to the tomb of Horemheb (r. 1323-1295 BCE), last pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty of Egypt. Horemheb had been the commander-in-chief of the army under Tutankhamun and his successor, Ay; Horemheb ascended the throne after Ay's short and unsuccessful reign. Horemheb's tomb (KV 57) was an important find as it was believed that artifacts associated with Tutankhamun would be located in the tomb itself. In her diary, Andrews described the tomb as 'very long ... with corridors, well, chambers, etc. – walls beautifully ornamented with paintings, wonderfully fresh, of Gods, a magnificent sarcophagus, and figures in wood and marble – a few bones – no mummy – 200 ft long'.³¹ Davis described it much the same way (likely because he got his notes from Andrews' diary), and described the sarcophagus as being

³⁰ See D. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, 1984) for an explanation of the religious beliefs of the Amarna period. Tutankhamun's rejection of Akhenaten's worship of the Aten was made clear in his leaving Amarna and changing his name to Tutankhamun (Living image of Amun) from Tutankhaten (Living image of the Aten). Also, J. Thompson, *Wonderful Things: A History of Egyptology, Vol. 3: From 1914 to the Twenty-First Century* (Cairo, 2018), pp. 41-43.

³¹ *Emma B. Andrews Diary*, 29 February 1908, Egyptian Art Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, p 54.

‘made of red granite – 8 feet 11 inches in length, 3 feet 9 inches wide, and 4 feet in height – in perfect condition, and one of the most beautiful ever found’.³²

Further to the north of the tomb, Davis and Andrews, along with their crew, found a shaft tomb (now known as KV 54) about thirty feet long. It was full of five feet of gravel and dried mud along its entire length. In it, Andrews recorded, there was a ‘deposit of silver and gold objects of most unique importance and value...containing cartouches of Sety II and Tausert – all of which Theo [Davis] brought home with him’.³³ Based on some of the items the group had found (now known as the Tutankhamun cache), Davis thought that the shaft tomb had been used previously by Tutankhamun, but later robbed. The items they found included a ‘broken box containing several pieces of gold leaf stamped’ with the names of Tutankhamun and his wife, Ankhsunamun, a blue cup with Tutankhamun’s cartouche on it, an alabaster statuette, and a cloth with the king’s name.³⁴

At this time, it was possible for visitors to Luxor to watch all of the work going on around the *Bedauin* from the luxurious vantage point of the Winter Palace. After Horemheb’s tomb had been cleared, some of Davis’s and Andrews’s Luxor friends came across the river from the Winter Palace to the boat. Andrews wrote that ‘[t]hey said they had been watching from the [Winter Palace] Hotel opposite the royal entourage on the sand, waiting until it was over’.³⁵ Tourists staying in the hotel found it to be the prime spot from which to watch the procession of artifacts being brought out of the Valley and boarding the boat, centralizing the hotel space as one from which to observe the spectacle.³⁶

In 1912, Davis published *The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou*, the report about the team’s 1908 finds. In it, he stated: ‘I fear the Valley of the Tombs is now exhausted’.³⁷ Upon leaving Egypt for good in 1914, he officially gave up his monopolizing concession in the Valley after not having found anything for several seasons. Davis’ failing health (he died in 1915), both his and Andrews’ advancing age, and being tired of travelling far from home every winter were factors, too.³⁸

³² T. Davis, *The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou* (London, 1912), p. 2.

³³ *Emma B. Andrews Diary*, 12 January 1908, p 44.

³⁴ Davis, *Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou*, p. 3.

³⁵ *Emma B. Andrews Diary*, 2 March 1908, p 55.

³⁶ *Emma B. Andrews Diary*, 1 December 1908, p. 64

³⁷ Davis, *Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou*, p. 3.

³⁸ ‘Emma Andrews to Percy Newberry’, 1 August 1901, NEWB2/019, 3/7, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

Once Davis and Andrews had relinquished their concession in the main valley, Carter was well prepared to search the valley floor inch-by-inch.³⁹ Howard Carter had worked in Egypt since 1891, and in the Valley since 1905, with some of that time spent working for Andrews and Davis. In 1917, Carter's and Carnarvon's work in the Valley began in earnest.⁴⁰ Carter wrote of this renewed search that 'the only satisfactory thing to do was to dig systematically right down to bed-rock'.⁴¹ His goal was to ensure that no stone (or pile of stones) had been left unturned. He suggested to Carnarvon that they should,

take as a starting-point the triangle of ground defined by the tombs of Rameses II, Mer.en.Ptah, and Rameses VI, the area in which we hoped the tomb of Tut.ankh.Amen might be situated. It was rather a desperate undertaking, the site being piled high with enormous heaps of thrown-out rubbish, but I had reason to believe that the ground beneath had never been touched, and a strong conviction that we should find a tomb there.⁴²

They continued to clear a number of layers in this exact area, and, after five years of digging in this general spot, they found the tomb they had been searching for.

In and around Luxor at the time Carter found the 'wonderful things', there was a team of archaeologists, artists, linguists, and other experts, many of whom came to Carter's aid. This team included Britons Percy Newberry, Arthur Callender, and Alan Gardiner as well as the American Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptology crew, who had been excavating nearby – including Herbert Winlock, Albert Lythgoe, and photographer Harry Burton.⁴³ The crew tasked with opening the tomb was comprised of European and American men who were thus poised to take control of one of the most important finds in Egypt, both culturally and historically. The issue of ownership of the artifacts and the knowledge about them would be a major point of contention for the foreseeable future.

³⁹ N. Reeves and J. H. Taylor, *Howard Carter before Tutankhamun* (London, 1993), pp. 129-131.

⁴⁰ During the Great War of 1914, Egyptian hotels were either closed due to a lack of tourist or repurposed as British military headquarters or hospitals. Thomas Cook's first-class tourist steamers were used as troop transports, and the luxurious Winter Palace became a convalescent home, full of wounded soldiers and working nurses, instead of wealthy and leisured vacationers. After the war was over, the Winter Palace remained the 'home base for the all-nations corps of Egyptologists' for decades (Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, p. 183).

⁴¹ Carter and Mace, *Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol 1, p. 124.

⁴² Carter and Mace, *Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol 1, p. 124-25.

⁴³ Burton would later become famous for producing over 2000 images of the find. For further reading, see C. Riggs, *Photographing Tutankhamun* for a new look at Burton's work and the images he produced.

University of Chicago Egyptologist James Henry Breasted and his son, art historian and sometime-Egyptologist, Charles, were in Luxor around the time the tomb was found in November of 1922, but they missed the news by a few hours. When the Breasteds came back to Luxor on the 18 December, people were already abuzz over the tomb. To act as 'a prevention of a swarm of bees following', Carter sent the Breasteds intricate directions to the site.⁴⁴ Carter had instructed the Breasteds not to tell anyone where they were going because he felt he was 'being watched from every mechanism'.⁴⁵ Charles Breasted later recalled that, upon leaving their rooms at the Winter Palace, the pair followed the clear instructions Carter gave them:

we did exactly as he told us, casually crossed the river, mounted donkeys and rode to the great temples and ruins along the margin of the western desert. Presently we left our donkeys at the foot of the cliffs, and as if merely to get the view, ascended the old familiar trail. With no one following us or aware of our errand, we continued climbing to the crest of the great ridge, thence descended at once on the other side. At the entrance pit of the new find we were met by Howard Carter and his assistant Mr. Callender; and Mr. Harry Burton, expert photographer, and Mr. A.C. Mace, field archaeologist, respectively from the Metropolitan Museum's Expedition at Thebes and Lisht, the services of whose entire staff had been lent to Lord Carnarvon by the Museum.⁴⁶

From this point on, as tourists and journalists poured into Luxor, the Winter Palace, as one of the largest hotels in town, was the busiest, even if it was the most expensive. Despite the fact that Carter had a dig house, as did the Metropolitan Museum (Chicago House was not yet complete), the Winter Palace Hotel became 'the clearing house for most of the complications and difficulties which now began to overtake Carter and his discovery'.⁴⁷ It was here that Carnarvon met with heads of Egyptian ministries to discuss the excavations. He brokered agreements about the work, finances, finds, and politics over tea on the Winter Palace terrace. Carter and the Breasteds found solace in their rooms at the hotel, safe from reporters who had 'habitually divided their time between The Valley and the terrace of the Winter Palace Hotel, hoping for some new rumor or

⁴⁴ 'Carter to Breasted', 16 December 1922, Box: DOC III WB4 – Box A 1922, A-R (Breasted Corresp Office) Oriental Institute Archives, University of Chicago.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ C. Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past: The Story of James Henry Breasted, Archaeologist, Told by his Son, Charles Breasted* (New York, 1943), p. 335.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 358.

inadvertently dropped crumb of news which could be expanded into a cable dispatch'.⁴⁸ The men could and did lock themselves away to talk, write, and make important decisions regarding the tomb. In their private suites in this imposing symbol of European power, they reclaimed some control over the narrative that was quickly escaping their grasp. In doing so, they made the Winter Palace one of the main locations of the unfolding drama. It was from here that Carter would control access to the news and fight for the tomb and its contents.

In early 1923, during the first season clearing the tomb, Carnarvon sold the world copyright on news and images from Luxor to *The Times* in London for £5000 and 75 percent of future news royalties. *The Times* then sold its Tutankhamun coverage to newspapers around the world.⁴⁹ The money made from these sales went to support the excavation and clearing of the tomb.⁵⁰ Carter claimed that Carnarvon did this to 'avoid constant interruption, and consequent dangers of work', but most people in journalism were not happy about this, and neither was the fledgling Egyptian government.⁵¹ From the time Egypt had been granted some independence by the British Foreign Office in February of 1922, there had been power struggles between the two nations. The Tutankhamun find brought these issues into sharp relief.⁵² For instance, Egypt had been allowed to reorganize a number of offices, but Britain retained a lot of control over diplomatic matters. Therefore, when news broke of Carnarvon's lucrative deal with *The Times*, the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* maintained that *The Times* was forcing Egyptians to get news about their own history from a British outlet.⁵³ Within this context of conflict, *The Times* was guaranteed to get the scoop, and they published news in England before it could be published in Cairo or even Luxor, the locus of the work. The news arrangement also ensured that Carter could dictate all the information himself, which granted him ownership over the knowledge coming out of the excavation.

In addition to the problem of access to and control over information was the difficulty of physical ownership of the artifacts in the tomb and of the tomb itself. The tomb took

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ D. M. Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt: Archaeologies, Museums, & the Struggle for Identities from World War I to Nasser* (Cairo, 2015), pp. 63-64.

⁵⁰ C. Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 346.

⁵¹ H. Carter and A. C. Mace, *The tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen, Discovered by the late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1927), p. x; Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, Vol. 3, 55-56.

⁵² Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, p. 53-55.

⁵³ Ibid., 64.

over three years to completely record, clean, empty of artifacts and then pack, conserve, and send to the Cairo Museum. In that short period of time, the new, nationalist-leaning government tightened antiquities law, making it more difficult for Western excavators to retain finds.⁵⁴ These changes were much to the chagrin of many excavators in Egypt at the time, especially Carter and Carnarvon, who had hoped to continue the traditional (and original) concession agreement.⁵⁵

When they received the concession for the Valley in 1914, excavation agreements were vague in terms of the division of finds. Often, artifacts were equally divided between the excavator and the Department of Antiquities, which would take 'objects of capital importance' for Egypt and leave a number of good pieces for wealthy patrons to sell or keep in order to entice them to keep donating time and money. The definition of 'capital importance' was historically lax and included 'unique' objects, but, ultimately, the division was completed at the discretion of the French Head of Antiquities. Usually, excavators could use the situation to their advantage. They felt they could negotiate with the Department of Antiquities to be lenient in the division. According to the original agreement, Carnarvon would have been able to bring a number of objects back to England to sell, display, and donate, much as he, Davis, and others had done for years.⁵⁶ However, because the laws changed around the original agreement between Carnarvon and the Department of Antiquities, the vagaries became a liability for both parties.⁵⁷ Pierre Lacau, head of Antiquities in 1922, claimed that every item from the tomb fell under the 'objects of capital importance' clause and therefore retained everything excavated from the tomb for Egypt. He did this partly to quell Egyptian officials' frustrations and to satisfy those who made arguments about nationalist claims. Carter and Carnarvon also did not like the fact that the new Egyptian government – not particularly kind to the continued British presence in Egypt – was quickly taking control of their archaeological practice.⁵⁸

Lord Carnarvon's death on 5 April 1923 at the Continental Hotel in Cairo from a septic blood infection further complicated the concession. For Carter, losing his friend was difficult personally: losing his concession holder and powerfully wealthy patron was a

⁵⁴ See, for example, E. Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham, NC, 2007); Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, Vol. 3, pp. 62-64.

⁵⁶ Adams, *Millionaire and the Mummies*.

⁵⁷ Carter and Mace, *The tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol. 2, p. x.

⁵⁸ C. Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 347.

major problem professionally.⁵⁹ In Carnarvon's absence, Lacau happily granted a new, although more constraining, concession to Carnarvon's wife, Lady Almina. Yet there were struggles over this contract, and negotiations lasted for over a month. Breasted and other Carter surrogates worked out a new agreement on Carter's behalf that tried to accommodate both Carter and Egypt, but in the end, no one was happy with it.

By January 1924, Carter had grown tired of demands on him and his time, as well as his lack of control over his excavations. He was weary of the mountains of correspondence, the crowds of official people demanding to see the tomb, and other unwelcome guests he was forced to entertain. He felt that 'the government's increasingly unreasonable demands were rapidly bringing their work in The Valley to a virtual standstill'.⁶⁰ The only way he knew to deal with the situation was to frequently withdraw to the Winter Palace. While there, he often confided in his trusted friend, James Breasted. Working from inside the hotel, the Breasteds, with Carter's knowledge and unspoken assent, started to regain some control. A journalist by the name of George Waller Mecham suddenly appeared in Luxor, writing articles for the *Chicago Daily News* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.⁶¹ These pieces portrayed an insider's view of issues relating to the excavation and the troubles Carter was having with the Department of Antiquities and the Egyptian Government. Mecham, in fact, turned out to be none other than Charles Breasted, who was spending his days working with his father and Carter on the excavation, and his nights 'between midnight and 4 in the morning' at the Winter Palace writing the articles – much of the information likely suggested by Breasted and Carter.⁶²

Working together privately at the hotel in an effort to control the knowledge coming out of Luxor, their pieces gave a certain priority to these US-based newspapers, which in turn violated the concession agreement as well as the agreement Carnarvon had made with the *Times*.⁶³ Doing subversive work inside the Winter Palace made the hotel a truth spot for the stories surrounding the Tutankhamun find itself. Being in the same room with Carter and watching the drama unfold in real time made the Breasteds' rooms the

⁵⁹ In September of 1925, Carter was given Carnarvon's old rooms when he stayed at the Continental. The manager gave the rooms to Carter in memory of his old friend (A. Humphreys, *Grand Hotels of Egypt*, p. 129).

⁶⁰ Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 355.

⁶¹ For example, G. W. Mecham, 'Tut's Tomb becomes Mecca for Tourists', *The Chicago Daily News*, 6 February 1924, p. 2.

⁶² Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 355.

⁶³ J. Abt, *American Egyptologist: The Life of James Henry Breasted and the Creation of His Oriental Institute* (Chicago: 2011), p. 312.

epicenter of forming and modifying this particular knowledge. The environment of the hotel as a place of power lent its authority to the European and American men and their own account of the perceived injustices they felt at the hands of the Egyptian ministers.⁶⁴ At this point, however, no one knew who Meham was, so no one could stop him.

Despite the checks that the Department of Antiquities had placed on Carter, he continued with his work. On 12 February 1924, the Euro-American excavation team prepared to lift the lid of the outer yellow quartzite sarcophagus. As the group ate lunch in a separate, empty tomb, Carter read his correspondence for the day, including one informing him of the 'tomb program for the next two days'.⁶⁵ He set that aside, for the moment, and went to see what the coffin would hold. With an intricate pulley system and 'an ingenious scaffolding', Carter raised the lid, unrolled the linen shrouds covering the next coffin, and revealed the gold outer coffin.⁶⁶ The whole process took about an hour. Everyone left the tomb that day ready for a productive season. Carter, expecting to go back into the tomb the following morning, left the 1.5-ton quartzite lid hanging from its system of pulleys.

The following morning, Charles Breasted recalled that Carter 'burst in' to the Breasteds' hotel rooms at the Winter Palace, carrying orders from the Minister of Public Works in Egypt, Morcos Bey Hanna, stating that he was not to 'admit into the tomb of Tutenkhamon the wives or families of the collaborating scientists, as he had planned to do' that day.⁶⁷ As if it were an attempt to excuse an overuse of power, against ladies no less, by the Egyptian police, Breasted also recorded that the 'Minister had underscored these instructions by despatching an additional force of police to the tomb, so that if any American or English ladies invited by Carter had appeared, they would have been forcibly prevented from entering'.⁶⁸ Arguably, the Ministry wished to protect the find. Carter should have known from his time on Davis' digs that too many visitors to a delicate site could destroy the artifacts. On the other hand, Carter felt that Lacau and Morcos Bey Hanna were trying to have him removed from the job, and, in the meantime, to keep him from doing his job effectively, or at all. Carter was furious, as were the Breasteds, Mace, Lythgoe, Newberry, Gardiner and others who had, by this time, gathered in the Winter

⁶⁴ See Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, pp. 55-61 for a succinct depiction of the colonial views both Europeans and Americans held of Egyptian ability to govern themselves or run an excavation.

⁶⁵ Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 361.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 365-6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Palace suite.⁶⁹ According to Charles, Carter was 'fuming and pacing nervously up and down' his room. Carter dictated over a dozen versions of an announcement until he finally decided upon the following:

Owing to the impossible restrictions and discourtesies on the part of the Public Works Department and its Antiquity Service all my collaborators in protest have refused to work any further upon the scientific investigations of the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen.

I am therefore obliged to make known to the public that immediately after the Press view of the tomb this morning between 10 A.M and noon the tomb will be closed and no further work can be carried out.

(signed) Howard Carter⁷⁰

The announcement was posted all over Luxor, in the news, and spread around town by word of mouth, but it was *first* posted at the Winter Palace. Carter hoped journalists and tourists would see it and take up his cause. As he promised, after the press viewing that day, Carter locked the tomb. His professional colleagues tended to take Carter's side, even if they thought he was, as Alan Gardiner wrote, a 'difficult man, and by no means tactful'.⁷¹ They felt that Lacau's duty as the head of the Department of Antiquities was to Egyptologists and their work, and *not* to Egypt or the Egyptian government's interests. Nine days later, Charles Breasted wrote that the Egyptian government 'sponsored and abetted' an 'official breaking in' of the tomb, and 'despite superlative clumsiness and many bleeding fingers', cut through Carter's locks and doors and placed their own.⁷² Except for a Wafd national celebration upon the opening of the new parliament, the tomb sat virtually unvisited until the end of March 1924.⁷³

Carter had underestimated the power of the new Wafdist government. Further, he had not understood the ways in which public opinion could harm his case. In Egypt, both the Arabic and British press demonstrated that public opinion about European-dominated archaeology had soured quickly and Carter would have a fight on his hands.⁷⁴ During that March, there was a long legal battle between the Egyptian government and Carter, with

⁶⁹ T.G.H. James, *Howard Carter: The Path to Tutankhamun* (London, 1992), p. 337.

⁷⁰ Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 366.

⁷¹ James, *Howard Carter*, p. 343.

⁷² Ibid., p. 347; Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*, p. 367. Breasted continued to publish articles in the *Chicago Daily News* throughout the ordeal, all as Meham, for example: 'Breasted in Protest over Tut Tomb Ban', 14 February 1924, p. 2; 'Tut Tomb Discoverer Barred Out By Police', 15 February 1924, p. 2.

⁷³ Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 71.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 68-74.

James Breasted acting as Carter's mediator. Because Breasted had been there, virtually from the beginning, and his rooms at the Winter Palace were central to the crafting of Carter's announcement to close the tomb, he seemed like the perfect choice.⁷⁵ In the end, Breasted garnered a new agreement between Egypt's government and Carter so that Carter could finish excavating the tomb. Carter had to agree that he never had intended to, and never would, make a claim 'against the Egyptian government or against anyone else to any of the objects found in the Tomb of Tutankhamen'.⁷⁶ In the end, Carter regained the right to finish the excavation after he had made a tour of the US in the Spring and Winter of 1924. There was a new and lasting agreement, which gave some right to Lady Carnarvon to 'duplicates...wherever such duplicates can be separated from whole without damage to science'.⁷⁷ Carter signed the concession on 14 January 1925, full well knowing that there would be no such duplicates.

On 25 January, work resumed almost exactly where it had left off, except Carter had more control over the activities in the tomb than he had before. In 1927, Carter wrote of the new deal,

much valuable time was wasted over a controversy singularly remote from the calm spirit which should guide research. ...it became easier to work under the new conditions, especially when the rights of both parties were meticulously defined, and original claims of very old standing were forfeited for the good cause.⁷⁸

Carter may have been right. Some of the vagaries of the original agreement were to blame for the issues between him and the Egyptian government. However, this was the first clear battle that the new Egyptian government was able to win in order to gain control of their ancient past as well as the future of their history. The public excitement caused by the find gave the Egyptian government solid ground for controlling the rights to the country's past and decisions relating to it. Where Carter, the Breasteds, and other Europeans and Americans hoped to maintain control of the artifacts and the knowledge flowing out of Egypt, the newly-independent government saw an opportunity to change

⁷⁵ James, *Howard Carter*, p. 349.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, Vol. 3, p. 70.

⁷⁸ Carter and Mace, *Tut-ankh-Amen*, Vol. 2, p. xii.

the intellectual *and* political landscape. The issues of independence, nationalism, and ownership 'became embedded into the fabric of Egyptology and archaeology in Egypt'.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

In the story of Egyptology, hotels were central places where knowledge about a find was mediated, tested, discussed, transformed, and from where it was spread. In the case of the Tutankhamun find, the Winter Palace was not only where Carter found his colleagues to talk about the excavation activity and plan their work, but also where he found a stronghold of European authority in a rapidly collapsing system. He went there because the Winter Palace was, in Luxor, the symbol of British imperialism, a place which allowed him both comfort and power. Carter, Breasted and the other Westerners who worked on the tomb and throughout Egypt were navigating a whole new system in the post-war world. They did it in and from the comfort of their hotel rooms, in the domestic space where they maintained some control over the outcome of the policies they were manufacturing for implementation in public and professional places.

While it is difficult to say what Carter's memo or Charles Breasted's/George Meham's articles would have looked like if they had been written in a more public liminal space, such as a dig house, or a more professionally controlled space, such as a university or museum office, there are particular traits we are able to apply to the private hotel space. Because hotels in Egypt were sites of Western authority, power, and control, the policies, ideas, and actions that came out of them were imbued with the expectation that they would be held in high esteem. Carter expected that the construction of the Winter Palace as a truth spot in the colonial political system and the Egyptological world would bolster his claims over the tomb.

Carter and the Breasted's private discussions combined with the participation of other Western men in the cognitive topology present in Luxor during this period offered Carter the moral and political support he had become accustomed to. One thing that surprised these men was that they did not know how to navigate the new power structure in Egypt. Carter and others were being supervised by Egyptians, the very people they had been instrumental in disenfranchising from their own history for over a century. Almost everyone involved in the situation on both sides knew that the fight over King

⁷⁹ Thompson, *Wonderful Things*, Vol. 3, p. 70.

Tutankhamun's tomb would set the precedent for all future decisions over excavation rights. That is why they fought so hard from their mighty Palace fortress to obtain rights to continue their work on the project, much less own anything from it.

Since 1922, Egypt has maintained control over archaeological activities in country.⁸⁰ The Department of Antiquities have begun to ask for many of the pieces that were taken during the heyday of Egyptology to be returned.⁸¹ That conversation is still on-going. In the midst of the frenzy that arose around Carter, Tutankhamun, the gold and the news, one central calm place of respite, reflections and work was the Winter Palace. From rooms in the hotel, Carter worked with the Carnarvons, the Breasteds, the government, and others to try to control the work and the information that flowed through the hotel. Tutankhamun himself became a symbol of nationalism in Egypt – the power and glory of Egypt's past that can carry on into its present and future. The Winter Palace still stands in Luxor—its façade, aging and in need of some repairs, as imposing as ever on the Nile.

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⁸⁰ This is not to say that artifacts did not leave Egypt. See A. Stevenson, *Scattered Finds: Archaeology, Egyptology and Museums* (London, 2019), esp. pp. 259-260.

⁸¹ For example, T. Teicholz, 'The British Museum: The Problematic Yet Enduring Appeal of Antiquities', *Forbes* 14 October 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomteicholz/2018/10/14/the-british-museum-the-problematic-yet-enduring-appeal-of-antiquities/#314d6bf74244> (accessed 8 January 2019).

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The Conjuror's Greatest Show: Belzoni and the Egyptian Hall

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INTRODUCTION

Belzoni's highly popular 1821 exhibition of Ancient Egyptian artefacts and models at The Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly London has been credited with sparking a renaissance of interest in ancient Egypt in England.¹ Its fame popularised all things Egyptian, advancing the evolution of Egyptomania² in all branches of the decorative arts,³ and 'contributing significantly to the cultural dynamic which changed the perception of Egyptian antiquities from that of the well-bred interest of the eighteenth century to that of the popular sensationalism of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.⁴ The exhibition, its organiser, and the building in which it was housed have all been the subject of debate, but rarely do accounts consider their context, reception and impact holistically.⁵

In the first half of this paper, I examine the Egyptian Hall as a microcosm of late-Georgian exhibition culture through the lens of Belzoni's exhibition, which drew a number of complex and interconnected themes around taste for the Ancient Egyptian in the period into one building and one event. Belzoni's exhibition occupied terrain betwixt and between the museum, show, and art exhibition cultures of the early nineteenth century, overlapping with all yet belonging to none in particular. Social rituals of different

¹ H. Park, 'Going to Wake up Egypt' Exhibiting Empire in Edwin Drood', in *Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 538.

² The universal fascination with Egypt, where Egypt is given new life through new uses. Stephanie Moser describes Egyptomania as the most encompassing term we have for the reception of Ancient Egypt. See S. Moser, 'Reconstructing Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies, Archaeological Representation and Interpretation of Ancient Egypt' *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 22 (4) (2015), pp. 1280-1283.

³ J. S. Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (London, 2005), p. 263.

⁴ S. M. Pearce, 'Belzoni's Collecting and the Egyptian Taste', in C. Sicca & A. Yarrington (eds.), *The Lustrous Trade* (Leicester, 2000), p.204.

⁵ S. Pearce, 'Belzoni's Collecting'; R. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge MA, 1978) do provide good analyses in this area.

exhibition spaces were usually, as Andrew Hemingway suggests, 'qualitatively distinct'⁶ and therefore Belzoni's exhibition is a fascinating object of study for its ability to bridge and react to each of these social arenas. It was a product of its age – a time of exploration, rivalry, national pride and discovery, but it also catered for and adapted to a growing and diversifying public engaged with consuming art and artefacts, while building on and informing current and future tastes. Belzoni's exhibition was a highly significant moment in the development of tactile exhibition culture and was a precursor and influence for future performative genres.

In the second half of the paper, I demonstrate Belzoni's influence on the reception of ancient Egypt in the nineteenth century. Belzoni's work was pivotal in shaping the ways Egypt was consumed, both as entertainment and as a symbol of national pride. Through the Egyptian Hall, Egypt was re-introduced to England as a place to experience and explore – themes which would increase in momentum throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and beyond.

BELZONI'S EXHIBITION IN CONTEXT

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the gap was widening between different spheres of social and political life; between state and the court and between the public and private. Tony Bennett argues that mediating the relations between these various spheres was an array of new literary, artistic and cultural institutions in which new forms of assembly, debate, critique and commentary were developed.⁷ Meaning and value were no longer solely constructed by monarch or church, but also by the growing middle classes in debate with each other. Within this context, the role of art production, appreciation and criticism was hugely important.⁸ In architecture and design at the time, there was, what Cranfield describes as, an overflowing 'stylistic cornucopia...offering an enormous, even bewildering, number of choices'.⁹

The period was also flavoured by a strong geographical Anglo-French Rivalry in Egypt and growing national and imperialist values, kicked off by Napoleon's expedition and

⁶ A. Hemingway, 'Art Exhibitions as Leisure-Class Rituals in Early 19th Century London', in B. Allen (ed.), *Towards a Modern Art World* (Yale and London, 1995), p. 98.

⁷ T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London, 1995), p. 25.

⁸ By the 1750s, 60% of men and 40% of women could read, with higher literacy levels in London.

⁹ I. Cranfield, *Georgian House Style* (Devon, 2001), p. 6. By the nineteenth century there had already been several waves of Egyptian revival in art. Egyptianising designs, albeit through a classical sieve, were already in the public eye.

compounded by the race to decipher the Rosetta stone, particularly between Thomas Young in Britain and Jean-François Champollion in France. Increased exploration led to discoveries which were recounted to the public in illustrated travel accounts. These, along with the arrival in Britain of antiquities, stimulated interest in ancient Egypt. It was into this archaeological battlefield and climate of competition that Belzoni charged in the summer of 1815.

Born in Padua in 1778 to a relatively poor family, Giovanni Belzoni had already made himself known in England as a sideshow giant, an experienced performer and conjuror. He had gone to Egypt to attract attention as a water engineer, providing hydraulic solutions to aid irrigation. This endeavour was unsuccessful, but he gained an opportunity as a field agent for Henry Salt, the Consul General in Egypt, who was a collector of antiquities. Clayton argues that 'Salt's commissioning of Belzoni to collect, was the turning point that changed him literally and metaphorically into one of the giants of the early days of exploratory Egyptology'.¹⁰ Following his retrieval of the seven tonne 'Memnon' head of Rameses II from Karnak, Belzoni was increasingly fortunate with his discoveries at Abu Simbel and Karnak and his opening of the second pyramid of Giza. On 16 October 1817 he located the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings which was brightly decorated and contained a finely-carved alabaster sarcophagus.

Belzoni immediately made careful records of the tomb reliefs, assisted by Dr Alessandro Ricci. He also took impressions of everything in wax and what he describes as 'faithful copies' of all the 500 hieroglyphs on the site himself. Belzoni's writings anticipate the recreation of the tomb: 'The drawings show the respective places of the figures, so that if a building were erected exactly on the same plan, and of the same size, the figures might be placed in their situations precisely as in the original and thus produce in Europe a tomb, in every point equal to that of Thebes, which I hope to execute if possible'.¹¹

Belzoni returned to London in 1820 with his artefacts, models, scale drawings and wax impressions, and was keen to exhibit them as soon as possible.¹² First, following Denon's

¹⁰ P. Clayton, 'A Pioneer Egyptologist: Giovanni Baptista Belzoni', in P. and J. Starkey (eds.), *Travellers in Egypt* (London, 1998), p. 42.

¹¹ S. Pearce, quoting Belzoni's *Narrative* in 'Giovanni Battista Belzoni's exhibition of the reconstructed tomb of Pharaoh Seti I in 1821' *Journal of the History of Collections*, 12(1) (2000), pp. 109-125, p. 111.

¹² Bristol Museum now holds some of these. See *Ibid.* for a detailed description of the models and paintings.

successful precedent,¹³ he published his book *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* in both a text and folio volumes of 34 plates.¹⁴ This not only disseminated news of his discoveries to the public, but served as an advertisement for his forthcoming exhibition, particularly as the work was well received by many newspapers and serious journals, with *The Times* claiming for him the gratitude of every scholar.¹⁵



Figure 1 “The Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly”. Reproduced with Permission from the British Museum.

¹³ As part of his expedition, Napoleon intended to record everything observed in Egypt – ancient, modern, scientific and cultural. His *Commission des Sciences et des Arts*, made up of 170 scholars of all disciplines, eventually produced the *Description de L’Egypte* (1809-1828), a meticulous and illustrated survey that was invaluable to the future understanding of ancient Egypt. Vivant Denon, in effect Napoleon’s chief agent in matters of art, made sketches wherever he went. His *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* was published in London in 1802-3, and despite its French authorship at a time of extreme rivalry, his colourful writing and meticulous drawings caught the public eye and inspired tastes for Egyptian designs.

¹⁴ *Narrative* will be used hereafter as shorthand for the longer title of Belzoni’s book.

¹⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 1 April and 2 August, 1820 and *The Times*, 28 December, 1820 p. 3.

The much awaited and pre-reviewed exhibition finally opened in the Egyptian Hall to glowing reviews on Tuesday 1 May 1821.¹⁶ *The Times* on Monday 30 April had exclaimed that '[e]very eye must be gratified by this singular combination and skilful arrangement of objects so new and in themselves so striking'. The *Morning Chronicle* of 27 April made the exhibition a must-see, and May's *Gentleman's Magazine* devoted four pages to the exhibits. The show was an immediate success. The guest list for a private viewing had been vetted by Belzoni's publisher, John Murray, who, as Richard Altick notes, 'had the power to invite the cream of society and the intelligentsia'.¹⁷ On the first day, 1900 people attended, paying 2s 6d per head for admission.¹⁸ The exhibition ran until June 1822, when, in order to raise money, Belzoni offered its contents up for auction.¹⁹

The exhibition could not hold a model of the entire tomb so Belzoni displayed reproductions of two full size chambers in the main hall.²⁰ The 'Room of Beauties' was lined with representations of the pharaoh and Gods, and beyond this was a replica of a much larger room, 'eerily resplendent with representations of ibis headed gods, snakes, demons without arms, mummies stretched on couches, a painted group entering on Osiris enthroned'.²¹ Belzoni also produced a 1:6 scale model of the entire tomb and displayed Egyptian artefacts seldom seen in London at this time, including two mummies. An article in the *Derby Mercury* of 7 November 1821 announced that a number of new models were added to the exhibition, including a wax model and cross-section of the second pyramid.²² This produced a new swathe of publicity and even inspired the composition of poems praising the way in which the exhibition was able to stimulate the imagination. Horace Smith wrote an address to one of the mummies, first wondering what wisdom he could reveal if alive, and finally pondering his humanity: 'Have children climbed those knees, and kissed that face? What was thy name and station, age and race?'²³ Reverend Bowles, another visitor, recorded the atmospheric impact of the

¹⁶ *The Times* March 30, *Exeter Flying Post* April 2, *Morning Chronicle* April 27, *The Times* April 28 and 30, *The Liverpool Mercury* May 4.

¹⁷ R. Altick, *The Shows of London* p. 244.

¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, p. 4 for a caution about the numbers quoted for audiences, which were used for publicity purposes.

¹⁹ An annotated copy of the sale catalogue can be seen at the British Library.

²⁰ Bristol Museum's conservation process showed that the models were constructed with sackings stretched across wooden frames.

²¹ Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 245.

²² 'Belzoni's Tombs', *The Derby Mercury*, Wednesday, 7 November 1821.

²³ H. Smith, 'Address to the Mummy at Belzoni's Exhibition' quoted in S. Mayes, *The Great Belzoni: The Circus Strongman Who Discovered Egypt's Treasures* (London, 2003 [1953]), p. 263. See also full poem at <https://bartleby.com/360/6/86.html>.

experience: '[o]nce more I heard the sounds of earthly strife, and the streets ringing to the stir of life'.²⁴

The exhibition of 1821 represented a popular spectacle and a leisure occupation of choice for the public of London where rival exhibitions vied for attention and provided alternatives to the more institutionalised forums such as the Royal Academy and the British Museum. The discovery of the tomb of Seti I, the return to London of the larger-than-life character of Belzoni, some controversy surrounding his treatment by the British Museum regarding the acquisition of the sarcophagus, swelling coronation crowds, and a growing interest in mummies all created the conditions for its success.²⁵ The critics obviously approved, or wanted to be seen to do so, and the accompanying literature was re-issued several times. I contend that Belzoni's success was not only due to such appropriate conditions and timing, but to the exhibit's ability to cater for its late Georgian public, who were able to put high demands on their entertainment, and both to harness and catalyse the period's taste for all things Ancient Egyptian.

Bullock's Museum, in which the exhibition was held, was integral to this success. Both in its background and appearance, the Egyptian Hall, which was the first building to be built entirely in an Egyptian style,²⁶ paved the way for Belzoni's choice of presentation and formed the lens through which it was seen. William Bullock had created a space which was a mixture of proto-museum, art exhibition and spectacle, and both he and Belzoni built on each of these to accomplish something new.

Firstly, Altick notes that Bullock's museum was 'suitably named and endowed with a façade which advertised the nature of the show so faithfully that no words were necessary. It was as if the Egyptian Hall had been built expressly for Belzoni'.²⁷ Designed by Peter Frederick Robinson, the central façade built in 1811-12 and inspired by the temple at Hathor at Dendera, was itself temple-like and crowned by a huge cornice supported by sphinxes and two colossal nude statues of Isis and Osiris. Alongside the

²⁴ See *Derby Mercury*, November 7, 1821, for Rev. Bowles' full poem.

²⁵ The trustees of the British Museum had only paid £2000 for Salt's collection and declined Seti I's magnificent sarcophagus in stark contrast to the £35,000 and £19,000 that had recently been paid for the Elgin and Phigaleian marbles. Sadly, Belzoni was also not able to gain permission to include the sarcophagus as his proposed centrepiece for the exhibition.

²⁶ J. Humbert and C. Price, 'Introduction: An Architecture between Dream and Meaning', in J. Humbert and C. Price (eds.) *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* (London, 2003), p. 10; *Survey of London: 'Piccadilly, South Side' Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, St James Westminster, Part 1*, ed. F H W Sheppard (London, 1960), pp. 251-270. It can be accessed here: *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1> [accessed 4 October 2019].

²⁷ Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 244.

door were short lotus columns and surfaces were decorated with bogus hieroglyphics. In 1819, J.B. Papworth had also re-styled the great apartment into an Egyptian Hall. Bullock had intended its design to be unusual, and for some, the Hall epitomised the regency architectural spirit of exoticism, but not everybody liked it. Indeed, it attracted more attention for the time than any other exhibition space, soon becoming a landmark.

The façade led James Henry Leigh Hunt to argue that:

Egyptian architecture will do nowhere but in Egypt... in such a climate as this it is worth nothing but an uncouth assembly. The absurdity, however, renders it a good advertisement. There is no missing its great lumpish face as you go along. It gives a blow to the mind, like a heavy practical joke.²⁸



Figure 2 “Bullock’s Museum, (Egyptian Hall or London Museum)”. Piccadilly. Coloured aquatint, attributed to T. H. Shepherd, 1815. Reproduced with permission from the Wellcome Collection.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 261.

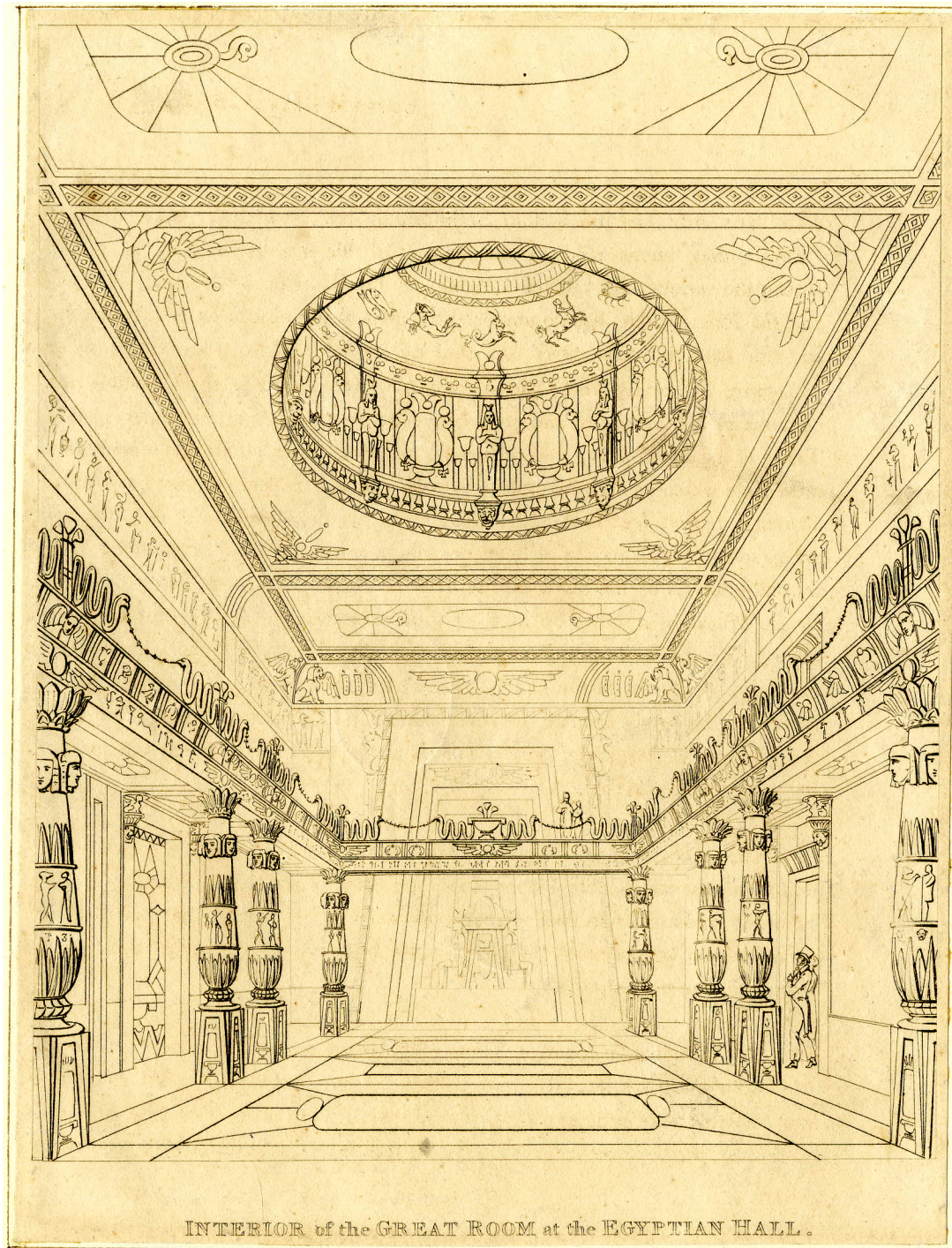


Figure 3 “The Great Room of the Egyptian Hall as redesigned by J.B. Papworth 1819”.
Reproduced with permission from the British Museum. ©Trustees of the British Museum.

Secondly, Bullock’s museum was both scientifically progressive and had a particular exhibitionary style which suited Belzoni’s tomb well. Bullock was the first museum-keeper to arrange his specimens in habitat groups with attention to postures and physical

surroundings, which also gave a more interactive and entertaining experience for his customers.²⁹ Just as Belzoni had done later with the model of his tomb, Bullock's museum constructed an illusion of place and an immersive distance from the busy metropolis beyond its dioramas of tropical forests or basaltic caverns.³⁰

Thirdly, following a sale of his collections from 1820, Bullock's exhibition space was also used to promote the names and works of individual exhibitors, such as Benjamin Haydon and his popular single-painting exhibition of *Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*. This identified the space as one where reputations could be made aside from the formal institutions such as the Royal Academy and the British Museum. It stood in contrast and perhaps at times in reaction to these institutions, offering alternative ways to exhibit. Belzoni succeeded Haydon as Bullock's tenant.

Finally, and probably due to its novelty, the museum was popular. Early in 1810 *Bell's Weekly Messenger* reported that the museum had 'become the most fashionable place of amusement in London; more than 22,000 have already visited it during the month it has been opened'.³¹ By June this total rose to 80,000.

It was in these multiple contexts of dramatic display that Belzoni mounted his exhibition. Altick describes the flavour of Bullock's museum as 'a motley potpourri of late Regency and early Victorian entertainments for every taste and every social class'.³² This was its strength. It displayed some elements of the rational, scientific and educational elements of the proto-museums of the time, while retaining the sense of awe of a cabinet of curiosities. It was also able to be reactive, creative, to change with fashion and to adapt to the tastes of the educated classes. In this way it moved within the sphere of the independent art exhibitions of the day. Finally, it represented a commercial sphere of entertainment that was more carnivalesque and accessible to a range of classes. In this sense it was more akin to the show, the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall Gardens and the origins of the theme-park or cinema. Its various exhibitions ranged from the archaeological to the bizarre with clairvoyants and performers.

For the second part of this paper, I explore in further detail four major ways in which a study of Belzoni's exhibition, situated within this unique context of Bullock's Egyptian Hall, bring into clear relief the taste for things Ancient Egyptian in the early nineteenth century,

²⁹ See R. Altick, *The Shows of London*, Chapter 18 for an in-depth study of Bullock's museum.

³⁰ See R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 94-95.

³¹ Figures from Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 235, Refer also to footnote 19.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

and demonstrate the pivotal role it played in setting the tone for future Egyptomania, shaping the development of the tactile museum experience and inspiring a legacy of Ancient Egypt as entertainment.

A TASTE FOR ANCIENT EGYPT AS ART

The Egyptian Hall, and the contents of Belzoni's unprecedented display within it, both betrayed an oscillating taste for Ancient Egyptian ornament and shaped design in the future.

With the Conte de Caylus's publications of 1752-67, which extolled Ancient Egyptian art's virtues of grandeur, simplicity, primitivism and massiveness, Egypt had begun to be associated with the sublime due to its potential to 'induce emotional reactions like terror, awe, dread, amazement, passion, fear and gloom'.³³ Then, prompted by Piranesi in the 1760s there had been what Curl describes as 'a full blooded Egyptian revival'³⁴ with his use of coherent Egyptianising forms applied to contemporary interiors.³⁵

From the 1780s a group of influential English architects and designers had begun to study continental taste for the Ancient Egyptian.³⁶ Following a visit to France, James Playfair designed the first true Egyptian revival room at Cairness House, Aberdeenshire in 1789. Such designs gained popularity and entered the art scene.³⁷ Joseph Bonomi built a pyramidal mausoleum at Blickling, Norfolk, in 1794, and his designs gained recognition through their exhibition in the Royal Academy. That same year the architect Charles Tatham went to Rome, subsequently publishing a source book of ancient ornamental architecture which had a profound effect on the use of Egyptian elements in design.³⁸ Thomas Hope, who had himself visited Egypt and returned with antiquities, took Piranesi's designs, and copies of ornaments from temples at Thebes and Dendera, and merged them

³³ Discussed in Curl, *Egyptian Revival* p. 154. Sophie Thomas focusses on the way Belzoni's exhibition taps into the sublime in 'Displaying Egypt: Archaeology, Spectacle, and the Museum in the Early Nineteenth Century' *Journal of Literature and Science*, 5 (1) (2012), pp. 6-22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁵ Egypt as a seat of wisdom was also closely connected with the development of Freemasonry at this time. Lodges were often decorated with Egyptianising forms. Belzoni himself was a freemason. See J. S. Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (London, 1991), p. 118.

³⁶ See Pearce, 'Belzoni's Collecting' pp. 192-4 for an interesting analysis of their correspondence.

³⁷ There is a huge number of examples of these developments detailed in Curl, *Egyptian Revival* pp. 146-220.

³⁸ Charles Tatham's book is *Etchings of Ancient Ornamental Architecture Drawn from the Originals in Rome and other Parts of Italy during the years 1794, 1795 and 1797* (1799-1800) and is discussed in Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, p. 188.

with archaeologically-inspired designs for his house in Duchess St, Portland Place.³⁹ Such a climate of experimental design led others to follow.⁴⁰

Ancient Egypt had also invaded the decorative arts, those everyday objects which ensured Egypt became a domestic phenomenon as well as a public one. Josiah Wedgwood used Egyptianising motifs in his pottery. Table centrepieces, doorknockers, dinner sets, chairs with crocodile embellishments and animal legs, and upward tapering bookcases were modelled on Egyptian designs.⁴¹ A type of small round table resembling a palm tree, with winged cats at its side was also popular.⁴² This Egyptomania was so pronounced by 1807 that it led Robert Southey to comment in his *Letters from England* that 'Everything had to be Egyptian, for the ladies wear crocodile ornaments, and you sit upon a sphinx in a room hung round with mummies, and the long black lean-armed long-nosed hieroglyphical men...are enough to make the children afraid to go to bed'.⁴³

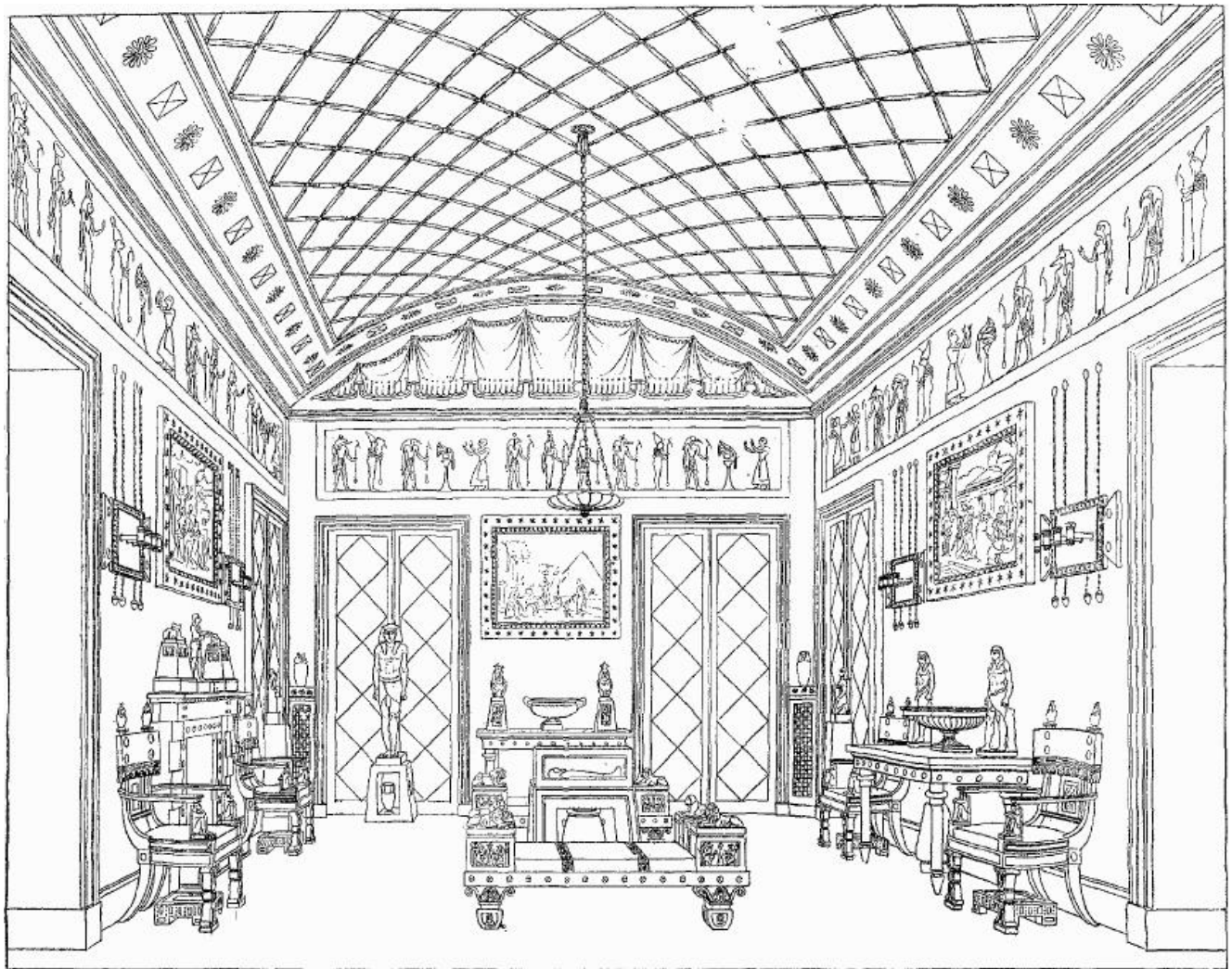
³⁹ (1799-1804) See A. Werner, 'Egypt in London – Public and Private Displays in the 19th Century Metropolis', in J. Humbert and C. Price (eds.), *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* (London, 2003), p. 81.

⁴⁰ Sir John Soane's house at Lincoln's Inn Fields had Egyptian elements in its decoration and George Smith also popularised the Egyptian-Heboid style with his *Collections of Designs for Household Furniture* (1808). The Brighton Royal Pavilion was known to have contained a couch in the form of a papyrus river-boat on crocodile feet.

⁴¹ See Cranfield, *Georgian House Style* p. 133 for sources and Curl *Egyptian Revival*, p. 221.

⁴² See Cranfield, *Georgian House Style* p. 133 for sources.

⁴³ R. Southey, *Letters from England*, Letter LXXI, 1807.



DESIGN OF A ROOM, IN THE CLASSIC STYLE, BY THOMAS HOPE, ARCHITECT, IN 1807.

Figure 4 “Design of a Room in the Classic Style” T. Hope 1807. This work is in the Public domain.

It was also the subject of political and social satire in the popular caricature market of the day. Great numbers of satirical prints were produced ‘in which crocodiles, pyramids, mummies, sphinxes and other motives appeared in various combinations and permutations’.⁴⁴ James Gillray ridiculed the French Expedition and the Anglo-French rivalry, whilst Rowlandson’s 1806 caricature, *Modern Antiques*, satirises the English taste for Egyptian antiquities.

⁴⁴ Curl, *Egyptian Revival*, p. 204.



Figure 5 “Modern Antiques”. Thomas Rowlandson. This image is in the public domain.

Thus, by the early years of the nineteenth century when the Egyptian Hall was built, the interest in Egyptian design was already significant, Curl argues, and embraced three distinctive attitudes – playful and eclectic; picturesque Romantic Classicism; and the (still developing) archaeological.⁴⁵

It was to the last of these that Belzoni’s exhibition gave its major legacy in delivering ancient Egypt to Britain from first-hand sources and not through a classical lens. Despite the fact that Denon considered his drawings of pylons and sphinxes and hieroglyphs as both a record of the past and as patterns for future designers, many designs still came from

⁴⁵ Discussed in great detail in *Ibid.*, pp. 165-234.

distorted classical sources and often freely mixed Egyptian and classical elements together.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hopper had created the Egyptian Hall at Craven Cottage, Fulham in 1806, which was influenced by Denon's drawings, as was Bullock's Egyptian Hall, but Belzoni's exhibition took this one step further. Visitors could see life-sized models, follow the rooms and passages, and see the accurate colours and images that Belzoni himself experienced when he discovered the tomb. The items in this exhibition, and the colourful plates in Belzoni's accessible *Narrative*, have been credited by Bob Brier as the inspiration for hundreds of consequent items in the Egyptian style produced by furniture and clockmakers across England and France.⁴⁷

Before the Egyptian Hall, coherent Egyptian designs had been rarely used for complete exteriors. The success of Bullock's museum inspired other architectural, show-piece creations, some extremely similar. More broadly cemeteries, factories, roller-coasters, prisons and suspension bridges began to be built in the likeness of Egyptian monuments. Garden and funerary monuments were particularly favoured, appropriate perhaps, as the public associated Egypt with its own mortuary practices.⁴⁸ Two particularly notable examples of the direct influence of the Egyptian Hall were the 1823 Civil and Military Library in Devonport, Plymouth, and The Egyptian House, Penzance, built in 1835-6.⁴⁹ The latter was erected as a museum but functioned as a shop and was particularly close in composition and function to the original. Papworth had, in 1827, become interested in a scheme for building an ideal city in America, and although this was never realised, his ideas caught the interest of a Mrs Trollope who had a shop and tea room in Cincinnati built, which was intended at least, to be a 'reproduction or modification' of Bullock's Hall.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ See C. Eames, *The Emperor's Cabinet* in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series Vol.17 No.4 (December 1958), pp.108-112 for a fascinating analysis of the piece of furniture.

⁴⁷ Cited in S. Moser, *Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies*, p. 1290.

⁴⁸ See C. Elliott, *Egypt in England* (Swindon, 2012) for a tour of Egyptian Revival architecture created in England that can be seen today.

⁴⁹ See Curl, *Egyptian Revival* p. 263 for a fuller discussion.

⁵⁰ R.G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments and Meaning 1808-1858* (London 1978), p. 56.



Figure 6 Egyptian Hall, Devonport, Plymouth, built 1823. Photograph via Creative Commons: Mike Lyne / The 'Odd Fellows Hall', Ker Street, Devonport



Figure 7 Egyptian House Penzance. Built 1835, photograph author's own.

Finally, with the 'rediscovery' of ancient Egypt by the West, showcased in exhibitions such as Belzoni's, its culture and past entered the repertoire of history painters. The literate public who read publications and travel literature on Egypt and political reports of British military engagements in the region, as K. Dian Kriz notes, 'was coextensive with

the polite public that attended Royal Academy exhibitions and read about the arts in the London press'.⁵¹ Turner's *Fifth Plague of Egypt*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1800, was an early example of a painting which spoke to a higher form of art (history painting) while also appealing to a range of consumer interests. It evoked national pride, a means of 'knowing' or possessing Egypt, and it hinted at familiar, biblical narratives. Belzoni's customers would already have viewed such art at the Royal Academy and other gallery spaces, raising Egyptian artefacts in some minds from frivolous entertainment or cabinet of curiosity to high art.

The excitement of the first decades of the nineteenth century, including Denon and Belzoni's work in Egypt, set off an explosion of interest in painting, and indeed poetry, of Egypt, past and present. Poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley with his 'Ozymandias' (1818) written in anticipation of the arrival in London of Belzoni's Memnon Head, helped to create an excitement around the artefact.⁵² Elliott Colla notes that the poem's 'light no doubt helped illuminate the object itself', informing the museum-goer's experience just as Belzoni's narrative must have done for his own exhibition visitors.

Belzoni's exhibition contributed to contemporary artistic portrayals of Egypt and through them inspired future artistic representations.⁵³ There was a large body of work produced specialising in historic recreation. Both biblical and famous Egyptian personalities found a place in this corpus, along with scenes of daily life. Artists such as Benjamin Haydon, William Bankes, David Roberts, and Owen Jones translated their expeditions to Egypt into their artwork so that the public could experience Egypt for themselves.⁵⁴ Haydon recorded in his diary that he drew on the *Description* and Denon's work, met Belzoni and 'assiduously examined the sarcophagus of Seti I and everything in

⁵¹ See K. Kriz's interesting analysis of Turner's paintings and colonialism in *Dido versus the Pirates*, Oxford Art Journal, 18 (1995), pp. 116-132.

⁵² Glirastes (1818), 'Original Poetry. Ozymandias', *The Examiner, A Sunday Paper*, on politics, domestic economy and theatricals for the year 1818, London: John Hunt, p. 24.

⁵³ For further reading on artistic representations of Egypt in the nineteenth century see H. Whitehouse, 'Archaeology Wedded to Art: Egyptian Architecture in 19th Century Painting', in J. Humbert and C. Price *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* (London, 2003), p.41; P. Clayton *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt*.

⁵⁴ Owen Jones travelled in Egypt, making detailed observations, which led to his 1856 *Grammar of Ornament* and his designs for the Sydenham Crystal Palace which in turn inspired later manifestations of Egyptian-inspired design, not least Cartier's Egyptian revival jewellery in the 1920s and 1930s. See L. Glithero-West, 'Tutankhartier: Death, Rebirth and Decoration; or, Tutmania in the 1920s as a Metaphor for a Society in Recovery after World War One', in E. Dobson and N. Tonks (eds), *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination: Art, Literature and Culture* (New York, Forthcoming).

the museum'.⁵⁵ Jean-León Gérôme's *The Prisoner* (exhibited in 1861) combined ancient backdrops with the 'colour, mystery, cruelty and sometimes overt sensuality'⁵⁶ of modern Egyptian life. What Helen Whitehouse identifies in these works is their usual 'pedantic accuracy' and whilst Egypt had long featured in paintings, 'the concern for authenticity, the wealth of archaeological detail, and the often didactic purpose' was both new and coincided with the growth of Egyptian archaeology and tourism more generally.⁵⁷ Several Victorian painters focused heavily on Egyptian imagery and drew on real antiquities they observed in museums, such as Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema from the 1850s, Edwin Long and Edward Poynter, several of whom later became very involved in the Committee for the Preservation of Monuments of Ancient Egypt.⁵⁸ Innovative yet meticulous exhibitions such as Belzoni's tomb, alongside his publications, were an important source for these artists in their own search for immortality, who in turn with their architectural creations, scale and atmospheric scenes, influenced the epics of the 20th Century film industry.⁵⁹ This legacy is particularly significant because the Egypt of these history paintings, Whitehouse argues, 'probably supplied more people with their ideas of Egyptian architecture than any purely academic source, just as the cinema has definitively shaped more recent concepts of built Egypt'.⁶⁰

A TASTE FOR INSTRUCTION AND INVESTIGATION INTO ANTIQUITY

Another major theme in the taste for Ancient Egypt at the time of the 1821 exhibition, when Egypt was still relatively unknown and the race to decipher the Rosetta stone was still underway, was that of scholarly investigation. In his biography of *The Great Belzoni*, Stanley Mayes lauds the enquiring mind and rigour that Giovanni displayed in his fieldwork. 'It was from such efforts eventually that the science of Egyptology was born'.⁶¹

At the time of the 1821 exhibition, museums were still at their formative stage and many Egyptian collections were unremarkable and difficult to access for the public. The

⁵⁵ Cited in J. Humbert, M. Pantazzi, and C. Zeigler (eds.), *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930* (National Gallery of Canada, 1994), p. 24.

⁵⁶ H. Whitehouse, 'Egyptian Architecture in 19th Century Painting' p. 41.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵⁸ See also P. Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt*, which deals with the issue of Egypt and the artist.

⁵⁹ See H. Whitehouse, 'Egyptian Architecture in 19th Century Painting', p. 50.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

⁶¹ S. Mayes, *The Great Belzoni* p. 257. In the 1820s many British copyists went to Egypt to produce detailed sketches and paintings of its landscape and antiquities and, in 1821, John Gardener Wilkinson, known as the father of Egyptology, arrived in Egypt and remained there for twelve years, doing intensive fieldwork.

British Museum's 1808 installation of Egyptian antiquities, Stephanie Moser notes, did not yet put them on a par with classical works, which were considered to have greater aesthetic quality and they were consequently 'denied the same display conditions as the other antiquities collections'.⁶² The works were viewed by various contemporary sources as primitive and alien. In 1823, the Museum acquired a major collection from Henry Salt (again due largely to the work of Belzoni), which secured its 'status as the world leader in the presentation of Egyptian antiquity'.⁶³ The bust of Ramesses II, in particular,⁶⁴ began to change views about the quality of Egyptian design: these acquisitions acted more broadly as proud totems to victory over the French.

Visitors, inspired by popular works such as Belzoni's *Narrative*, began to flock to the Egyptian galleries but were disappointed with the lack of spectacle. Despite the success of Belzoni's experiential approach to showcasing Egypt, and the urging of the *New Monthly Magazine* for the British Museum to take inspiration and house similarly accessible models, the trustees remained reluctant to 'adopt such theatrical modes of presentation...presenting a restrained and conservative vision of ancient Egypt'.⁶⁵ The British Museum, in contrast, did not see its role as a provider of entertainment, indeed it had purged its antiquities galleries of items that might be considered 'curios', including natural history and medical collections. Serious scholarship replaced wonder and Egyptian antiquities were viewed in relation to Classical art traditions.⁶⁶ The museum was still 'a place intended only for the amusement of the curious and rich, useless for the nation at large'.⁶⁷ The failure of museums such as these to provide for their public adequately was arguably Belzoni's gain. The competition and pressure from fashionable and popular exhibitions such as Belzoni's and the positive press that accompanied them, must ultimately have contributed to the improvements in accessibility and quality of display for collections later in the nineteenth century.

⁶² S. Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities, Ancient Egypt at the British Museum* (London, 2006), pp. 91-92.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 93. Although the trustees only paid £2000 for Salt's collection and declined Seti I's magnificent sarcophagus in stark contrast to the £35,000 and £19,000 that had recently been paid for the Elgin and Phigaleian marbles.

⁶⁴ Donated by Salt in 1818.

⁶⁵ S. Moser, *Wondrous Curiosities* p. 113.

⁶⁶ See E. Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities* pp. 50-51.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

A TASTE FOR ANCIENT EGYPT AS SPECTACLE

Belzoni's Egypt was well placed to appeal to the growing nineteenth century demand for 'education sugar-coated with entertainment'.⁶⁸ A 'Letter to the Examiner' of 7 March 1824 described Britain not as a nation of shopkeepers but of 'show-keepers' who ministered to 'the desire to be amused or instructed, the indulgence of curiosity and the sheer sense of wonder'.⁶⁹ Altick argues that exhibitions 'were a prime means by which the mind and the imagination could be exercised and daily routine experience given occasional welcome patches of variety and colour'.⁷⁰ Belzoni's exhibition, described by Susan Pearce as 'vulgar and deliberately sensational', heralded 'the beginning of a new kind of popular culture which emphasises viewing over participation'.⁷¹ He catered to the demand for the spectacular, his exhibition evoked emotion, and it provided a platform for the fashionable to see and be seen. In this way it was more like the art exhibitions of the day, a place of 'congenial urban lounging and social circulation', than the British Museum.⁷²

The Countess of Blessington, a society journalist of the day, demonstrated the exhibition's significant role in the London social scene through an essay in the *Literary Gazette*. Though satirical, this essay was one of the few extended attempts ever made to portray the company at a London Exhibition.⁷³ Perhaps in parody of the penchant for portraits of the day, she describes '[s]choolboys impishly discovering likenesses of one another in the monstrous deities'.⁷⁴ A child asks what a pyramid is, and is told it is 'a pretty ornament for the centre of a table'.⁷⁵ This implies that some exhibition-goers related first to the Egyptianising decorative arts of their homes than the real antiquities of Egypt. Other children are told by image-conscious parents 'not to ask questions as it would lead people to think them ignorant'.⁷⁶ The *Morning Herald* in 1810 mocked exhibition-goers for criticising 'subjects of which they have no knowledge themselves',⁷⁷ and this figure of the ignorant visitor, who always flocked to the most popular works,

⁶⁸ R. Altick, *The Shows of London* p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Pearce, 'Belzoni's Collecting', p. 207.

⁷² See R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 98.

⁷³ *Literary Gazette*, March 9th 1822, p. 153-154 See Altick *The Shows of London* p. 245 for a full account.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

⁷⁷ See A. Hemingway, 'Art Exhibitions as Leisure-Class Rituals in Early 19th Century London', in Allen, B. *Towards a Modern Art World* (Yale, 1995), p. 102.

became a stereotype of criticism – a label which this particular mother was hoping to avoid.



Figure 8 “M. Belzoni’s Exhibition of an ancient Egyptian Tomb” © The British Library Board

Crach.1.Tab.4.b.4 f262

Other fashionable visitors are scoffed at for their self-satisfied ignorance and single-minded pursuit of fashion when they exclaim: ‘[d]o pray let us leave this tiresome and stupid place, where there is not a single thing to be seen worth looking at, and where the company is so intolerably vulgar I really fancied it was a fashionable morning lounge, where one could meet every soul worth meeting in town’.⁷⁸

Ivor Hume also notes the impact of the exhibition on fashion with a popular dress in January 1822 being ‘a white satin slip tied behind of the Belzoni or Egyptian plaid’.⁷⁹ The editor of the *Lady’s Monthly Museum* commented on the absurdity of the application of

⁷⁸ *Literary Gazette*, March 9th 1822 p.153-154.

⁷⁹ I.N. Hume, *Belzoni, The Giant Archaeologists Love to Hate* (Virginia, 2011), p. 218.

the 'term Egyptian to the Scotch word plaid, when given to the chequers on a mummy's tomb of two thousand years ago'.⁸⁰ A century before the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb splashed Nile Style across the pages of *Vogue*,⁸¹ regency designers were looking to Ancient Egyptian patterns and themes as inspiration for clothing the socially informed. With its reference to 'Belzoni plaid', the association with this lion of the London season was both intentional and explicit.

Belzoni's exhibition should also be situated within the history of display as a pioneer of tactile exhibition culture, and as a precursor and an influence for other performative genres, such as the cinema. Angela Stienne notes that Belzoni offered a future format for the 'temporary exhibition, with its prior marketing, spectacular format and ephemeral existence'.⁸² The low roof and lamps sought to recreate Belzoni's own first impressions as he entered the tomb and led to a scene of 'the nightmare creatures of the underworld'.⁸³ Belzoni himself became fashionable and 'no party was considered complete without him'.⁸⁴ Though he was sensitive about his theatrical past, both he and his wife Sarah used their experience of showmanship to promote their show with billboard carriers known as 'peripatetic placards'.⁸⁵

Other than 'sugar coated' instruction, there were other tastes for the Egyptian into which Belzoni's exhibition tapped, on one hand the scientific, and on the other the macabre and fantastic. One of the most highly prized objects in any seventeenth-century museum or collection was the mummy, largely associated with anatomical rather than antiquarian investigation during this period.⁸⁶ When Bullock's museum was still in Liverpool, one of the biggest attractions of 1804 was a mummy 'captured' from the French. Antonia Lant suggests that 'perhaps the pull of this object, a trophy of Anglo-French rivalry over Egypt, encouraged Bullock to encase his entire entertainment in the

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 218 quoting the '*Lady's Monthly Museum*' January 1822.

⁸¹ See L. Glithero-West, 'Tutankhartier: Death, Rebirth and Decoration; or, Tutmania in the 1920s as a Metaphor for a Society in Recovery after World War One', in E. Dobson and N. Tonks (eds.), (eds), *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination: Art, Literature and Culture* (New York, Forthcoming).

⁸² A. Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies* (1753-1858) (Leicester, 2018), p. 192.

⁸³ See S. Mayes, *The Great Belzoni* p. 261.

⁸⁴ C. Clair, *Strong Man Egyptologist; Being the Dramatised Story of Giovanni Belzoni* (Norwich, 1957), p. 151.

⁸⁵ I.N. Hume, *Belzoni* p. 218. This was 'a massive, pole carried sign announcing 'Belzoni's Egyptian at the Egyptian Hall' under an imaginary painting of the entrance to the tomb.

⁸⁶ See A. Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies* Chapter 2, and p. 82. This changed, with the incorporation of Sir Hans Sloane's collections into the British Museum when the Egyptian mummy became part of Egyptian material culture.

Egyptianate style when he moved to London.’⁸⁷ Even in the British Museum in the 1760s, there was an interactive mummy exhibit where the coffin could be turned by a handle.⁸⁸ Belzoni’s exhibition also featured a mummy, described by him as ‘the most perfect’ of any he had unfolded during his time in Egypt. The display, formed in a composite manner with the case displayed above the mummy, was a configuration which may have been pioneered in London by Belzoni and later became the standard for the British Museum’s Egyptian displays.⁸⁹ Belzoni’s theatrical unwrapping of his ‘perfect’ mummy in a private performance by surgeon Thomas Pettigrew, days before his exhibition opened, may have been the first instance of what became a popular spectacle until the late 1830s.⁹⁰ Here investigation into mummies, ‘mummy unrolling’, which often involved an opportunity for the audience to touch, smell and taste fragments and associated artefacts,⁹¹ was reframed through the lens of performance and entertainment, transforming public interaction with them ‘breaking boundaries between medical practice and spectatorship, and creating new barriers between scholarship and public entertainment’.⁹² People in the period were fascinated by the way a body could be preserved after death,⁹³ and although contemporary parallels were drawn between the opening of tombs and resurrection men, the anatomical analysis of an Ancient Egyptian may have seemed more palatable in the wake of body snatching controversies during the period.⁹⁴

Belzoni’s exhibition-related mummy unwrapping was a very clever publicity stunt, which also anticipated a growth in popular sensationalism throughout the nineteenth

⁸⁷ A. Lant, ‘The Curse of the Pharaoh, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania’ *October*, 59 (Winter, 1992), p. 99.

⁸⁸ See Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies*, pp. 79-81. The new Egyptian Galleries at the British Museum established in 1837 also included a coffin that could be rotated for examination. pp. 102-3.

⁸⁹ See Werner, ‘Egypt in London’ p. 86.

⁹⁰ Caledonian Mercury and Exeter Post, April 2, 1821.

⁹¹ G. Moshenska, ‘Unrolling Egyptian Mummies in Nineteenth Century Britain’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* (September, 2013), p. 4. See also C. Classen, ‘Touching the Deep Past’, *The Senses and Society*, 9 (3) 2014, pp. 268-283.

⁹² Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies* p. 181-182 See also pp. 193-205 for a detailed exploration of how Belzoni’s involvement inspired Pettigrew, who in turn transformed the concept of the public mummy and produced the first modern history of both the study and reception of mummies. Also refer to p. 251.

⁹³ During this period the mummy also became a means of investigation into race theories, and the origin of the Ancient Egyptians. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

⁹⁴ C. Rigg, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt* (London, 2014), p. 48.

century.⁹⁵ Pearce argues that his exhibition tapped into a repressed fascination with horror in the spectator and a desire to confront one's own mortality,⁹⁶ and that the gross consumption of such shows that objectified and alienated the mummy were forms of 'narcissistic experience', a 'carnival' for 'historical titillation rather than history'.⁹⁷ Stienne, however, advises caution that 'mummy unrollings' were produced by and within cultural and intellectual contexts of the age, by individuals who made a significant intellectual contribution to their field.⁹⁸ The audiences, including either men of science, or the prestigious and fashionable, themselves became part of the spectacle and created what Gabriel Moshenska describes as 'complex and multifaceted events that illuminate the interfaces between science, culture and society in 19th Century Britain'.⁹⁹ These performance spaces with their atmospheric backdrops (rather like the art exhibitions of the day) were places to be seen and where social capital could be gifted. It is clear that these spectacles, from Belzoni's onwards, were capitalised for marketing purposes.¹⁰⁰

Belzoni achieved an atmospheric exhibition, tactile and immersive, and like cinema managed later with its many Egyptian themes, he attempted to 'breathe life into the dust of Egypt'¹⁰¹ by creating an experience rather than a static display. Belzoni further added to the showmanship of this aspect of his exhibition through the 'sensationalist, macabre style' in which he wrote in *Travels* which is reflected in later Egyptian-themed fiction. 'It is scarcely possible by description to convey an adequate idea of these subterranean abodes, or the strange and horrible figures with which they are filled.'¹⁰² In this sense

⁹⁵ Etienne Gaspard Robertson's *Fantasmagorie* was a popular show in post-revolutionary France, which included scenarios of encounters with mummies and skeletons. Antonia Lant cites contemporary accounts which report a cowering audience. Versions of Robertson's show came to London in 1801, influencing taste for the gothic. It ran for two years at the Lyceum on the Strand, alongside *Aegyptiana*, based on prints from Denon's book. The unlikely connection of these two shows pre-empts what Belzoni seems to have achieved in his 1821 exhibition. Lant observes that *Fantasmagorie* begins 'the affinity between ideas about ancient Egypt, with its elaborate culture of death, and an entertainment form produced out of the dark'. See A. Lant, 'The Curse of the Pharaoh, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania' p. 91

⁹⁶ See Pearce 'Belzoni's Collecting' p. 202 onwards. R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse* pp. 98 takes a different position on this – believing Belzoni stood above this 'childish magical thinking'.

⁹⁷ S. Pearce 'Bodies in Exile: Egyptian Mummies in the Early Nineteenth Century and their Cultural Implications', in S. Ouditt (ed.), *Displaced Persons: Studies in European Cultural Transition*, Vol. 14 (Hants, 2002), p. 55. Pearce argues that the early all male private audiences, particularly in the context of the unwrapping of female mummies, represented an othering of the mummy and a form of theatrical and erotic striptease, which also led the viewer to face their own inevitable demise.

⁹⁸ Likewise, G. Moshenska discusses Pettigrew's scientific approach and his involvement in the formation of the British Archaeological Association. G. Moshenska 'Unrolling Egyptian Mummies in Nineteenth Century Britain', pp. 12-13

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ A. Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies* p. 182, p. 188.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁰² Belzoni quoted in Park 'Going to Wake up Egypt' p.540 and Lant 'The Curse of the Pharaohs' p. 108.

Belzoni's writing, alongside the unrollings, inspired the new genre of 'mummy literature' which emerged in the middle of the century, literary representations that, in turn, spawned cinematic creations from the early 20th Century. The earliest known literary work featuring a revived mummy was Jane Webb Loudon's *The Mummy – A Tale of the 22nd Century*, which was published in 1827 and focused on the degeneracy of a society 300 years into the future. As Carter Lupton identifies, both Loudon and Mary Shelley a decade before 'used revitalisation of deceased humans as a mechanism to explore the potential dangers of scientific/technological progress unfettered by moral boundaries'¹⁰³ and he notes how unsurprising it was that Loudon chose a mummy in the wake of the exploits of Belzoni. Stienne observes that from Gautier's *Le Pied de Momie* (1840) onwards, much literature on Egyptian mummies attempted to reconcile mummy unrolling with the concept of the mummy as a person, and authors used contemporary archaeological research to produce accessible fictional narratives.¹⁰⁴ Gautier's tomb in *Roman de la Momie* was directly inspired by Seti I's, and by transposing non-fiction narratives such as those of Belzoni, 'Gautier enabled his readers to experience the discovery of the mummy, and then to encounter the mummy by entering its ancient world'.¹⁰⁵ The last great mummy unrolling of 1889 at University College London, following sixty years of Belzoni's legacy, was attended by H. Rider Haggard, the author of *She* (1886) and *Cleopatra* (1889).

Belzoni, Stienne argues, was 'crucial in shaping the mummy as an object of intellectual curiosity and, simultaneously, an object of entertainment – museums are today the recipient of these frameworks of knowledge construction'.¹⁰⁶ His exhibition also anticipated the dual approach of Victorian theatre where 'spectacle and authenticity went hand in hand with the recreation of the ancient world'.¹⁰⁷

Films were first shown in existing buildings from music halls or theatres to other public spaces. The Egyptian Hall itself became a cinema in 1896, the second in the country, ensuring that 'popularised Egyptology and the infant cinema were rubbing

¹⁰³ C. Lupton 'Mummymania for the Masses – Is Egyptology Cursed by the Mummy's Curse?', in S MacDonald and M. Rice *Consuming Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ A. Stienne, *Encountering Egyptian Mummies* p. 233 and p. 236.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 236-237.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 252.

¹⁰⁷ J. Richards 'The ancient world on the Victorian and Edwardian Stage (Basingstoke, 2009) quoted in S. Moser 'Reconstructing Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies, p. 1288.

shoulders under the same roof'.¹⁰⁸ Mummy Films began to be produced as early as 1899.¹⁰⁹ Edwin Heathcote notes that the 'architecture of entertainment' of the later purpose-built cinemas combined aspects of their forbears, with the Egyptian Hall being the most spectacular example of 'bizarre and mystical buildings [which] were constructed as a blend of fairground hyperbole and architectural billboard'.¹¹⁰ 'The monumental self-advertisement' of Bullock's Hall, '...rich with stage-set historicism, became a paradigm for later cinema architects'¹¹¹ who revived the fashion over a century later in their quest to create illusions of escapism, fantasy, childish awe and luxury. Antonia Lant draws the striking parallels between 'the blackened enclosure of silent cinema and that of the Egyptian tomb',¹¹² likening the process of mummification to the immortalisation of images through film, and it is notable that various luxurious cinemas were created in an Egyptianising style, four in London alone between 1928 and 1930.¹¹³

The idea also of the educational exhibition, before the advent of television and accessible tourism, as experience and leisure pursuit yet designed through first-hand knowledge, situates Belzoni's exhibition as a forebear of the Egyptian Halls at the 1854 Sydenham Crystal Palace¹¹⁴ and, therefore, as an influence on the concept of the world fair.¹¹⁵ Each of these did a great deal to influence the decorative arts and solidify the concept of a certain perspective of Ancient Egypt in the minds of their consumers. Roger Luckhurst identifies the pleasures of immersion and the temporal and spatial displacement that Belzoni's tomb recreation traded upon.¹¹⁶ Although Owen Jones would have only been eighteen at the time, Moser notes that 'he may well have seen the display and witnessed its impact on visitors'.¹¹⁷ Contemporary critics of the Crystal Palace also

¹⁰⁸ Lant, 'The Curse of the Pharaoh' pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁹ Lupton, 'Mummymania for the Masses' p. 36.

¹¹⁰ E. Heathcote, *Cinema Builders* (London, 2001), p. 11.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹² Lant, 'The Curse of the Pharaoh, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania' p. 90.

¹¹³ See C. Elliot, K. Griffis-Greenberg & R. Lunn, 'Egypt in London – Entertainment and Commerce in the 20th Century Metropolis', in J. Humbert and C. Price (eds.), (eds), *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* (London, 2003), pp. 105-122, pp. 111-114.

¹¹⁴ The company's prospectus for the Crystal Palace intended it 'to blend for them instruction with pleasure.'

¹¹⁵ A hundred years on in 1924, a copy of the newly discovered Tomb of Tutankhamun was also opened, to Howard Carter's consternation, at the British Empire exhibition in London. Whilst '20s Egyptomania needed little impetus from such a 'show', Carter's questionable handling of some of the publicity around his discovery (leading to the alienation of journalists and the birth of the 'curse') compared to Belzoni's canny capitalisation in the case of Seti I is an interesting area for comparison.

¹¹⁶ R. Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 97.

¹¹⁷ S. Moser, *Designing Antiquity: Owen Jones, Ancient Egypt and the Crystal Palace* (New Haven and London, 2012), p. 108.

made the connection, with Charles Boutell in his *Art Journal* review of the Egyptian Court in 1857, remarking that the 'vivid realisation of a rock-cut tomb' provided by Belzoni, was lacking in Sydenham, although again a tomb was re-created at reduced scale.¹¹⁸ As Moser argues, the representation of ancient Egypt in public exhibitions is rather a forgotten history, and though they played a major role in generating both knowledge and taste, owing to their commercial and ephemeral nature, exhibitions such as Owen's have been excluded from narratives about the development of the discipline. The same can be said of Belzoni's exhibition. This more popular and appealing way to facilitate learning and viewing through experience and entertainment had a significant impact on the appreciation of decoration and ornament, positioning ancient-Egyptian art in a new light and leading to a host of future expressions of Egyptian Revival design from jewellery and clothing to architecture.

A TASTE FOR ANCIENT EGYPT AS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL PRIDE

Bullock's museum, as it turned out, was a highly appropriate venue for the celebration of what was a resounding British archaeological success, as it had always been associated with themes of Napoleonic defeat. In 1816 Bullock had exhibited Napoleon's carriage, which attracted more people than any previous London exhibition. This Anglo-French rivalry was keenly felt by Belzoni himself on the ground with his well-documented race against Drovetti, who collected for the French.¹¹⁹ It has been argued that nineteenth-century material culture packaged the Empire into public entertainment,¹²⁰ and it seems that Belzoni's exhibition was no exception.

In the early nineteenth century, Egypt was a symbol of British success against the French. Acquisitions were seen as tangible victories on behalf of a nation. The trustees of the British Museum, aware that the temporary sheds for Egyptian antiquities were incongruent with their status as symbols of Nelson's victory, had already been successful in their petition to Government for greater funds.¹²¹ Arriving at Thebes, Denon described

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 177. Owen Jones had also intended an additional Egyptian tomb in the basement, but this didn't emerge in the final designs.

¹¹⁹ See I. N. Hume, *Belzoni, The Giant Archaeologists Love to Hate* for a full exploration of Belzoni's time in Egypt.

¹²⁰ Park, 'Going to Wake up Egypt', p. 530.

¹²¹ See also Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities* p. 60 who argues that the increased attention to the value of Egyptian antiquities and improvements to their display owed more to Anglo-French rivalry than scholarly or aesthetic factors.

his pride at being a Frenchman.¹²² In his account of the archaeological situation in Egypt at this time, Donald Malcolm Reid observes that ‘the nationalist dimensions of these intra-European rivalries would have embarrassed 18th Century aristocrats...but 20 years of revolutionary warfare took their toll on cosmopolitanism in science and culture’.¹²³

Art began to show strong nationalistic tendencies and the Grand Tour was extended to Egypt where travellers picked up antiquities for display in their homes. Egypt’s stability, monumentality, antiquity and rootedness – and worth noting in a revolutionary period – hierarchical and monarchical structures, alongside its association with achievement and order, were attractive in a period of flux.¹²⁴ William Capon even proposed a design for a gigantic pyramid to be erected on Shooter’s Hill as a national monument, and in 1925 Thomas Willson designed a pyramidal mausoleum to house the bodies of up to five million Londoners on Primrose Hill.¹²⁵ Medals were disseminated to celebrate successes on either side and following a failure of a version of Belzoni’s tomb in France, *The Times* blamed the French for a lack of interest rather than the exhibition.¹²⁶

Belzoni’s exhibition of 1821 deserves greater recognition as a pivotal moment for art and museum history, contributing both to the development of trends in painting and design, and to a new tactile exhibition culture and the genesis of the cinema. Though it built on the context in which it was created, the exhibition also did something new for Egypt and was a driving force in the development of Egyptianising style as a symbol of national pride and progress. Belzoni never felt fully accepted by the academic institutions of the day and to some critics, such as Brian Fagan he was ‘the greatest plunderer of them all’¹²⁷ or to Hyungi Park, ‘he remains forever a performer of cheap tricks, the one-time strongman in London now showing off acrobatic archaeological tasks’.¹²⁸ However, these ‘tricks’ were some of his greatest strengths.

Belzoni knew his audience’s expectations and desires and was not only able to adapt his presentation to amaze and engage, but also successfully build on Bullock’s precedent

¹²² V. Denon *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (Translated by Arthur Aikin) (London, 1802-1803) Vol. I, p. 315, Vol. II, p. 85.

¹²³ D. M. Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (California, 2002), p. 39

¹²⁴ See M. Rice and S. MacDonald, ‘Introduction – Tea With a Mummy: The Consumer’s View of Egypt’s Immemorial Appeal’, in M. Rice and S. MacDonald, *Consuming Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), p. 7.

¹²⁵ See C. Elliott, *Egypt in England*, p. 24.

¹²⁶ *The Times*, April 26, 1824

¹²⁷ B. Fagan, ‘Belzoni the Plunderer’ *Archaeology*, 26 (1973), pp. 48, 50.

¹²⁸ Park, ‘Going to Wake up Egypt’, p. 542.

to draw together a plethora of differing interests and tastes in Egypt. When Belzoni died and his widow Sarah exhibited the Seti I exhibition again in 1925 in a different venue, it was, sadly for her, much less successful.¹²⁹ Perhaps the novelty had passed, but more likely the unique conditions of its earlier spectacle were no longer quite so fortuitous, 'with too many rival attractions at the time'.¹³⁰ The *Cambridge Chronicle* noted with sadness 'we cannot help lamenting the apathy which prevailed in London with regard to the Exhibition in Leicester Square'.¹³¹ Although the moment had passed for Belzoni's exhibition, its legacy was significant. Without Belzoni and his inventive show, interest in Egypt would still have been great within the early nineteenth century, but through location, understanding and clever showmanship, this colourful character harnessed it in particular ways and set the Egyptian Revival forever on a trajectory that is indebted to his work.

¹²⁹ It had already cost a great deal to move it from Paris to the new location and within a month James Curtin, who had been responsible for the exhibition was dead – see R. Morkot, 'The 'Irish Lad' James Curtin, 'servant' to the Belzonis', *Astene Bulletin*, 56 (Summer) (2013), p. 18.

¹³⁰ S. Mayes, *The Great Belzoni* p.288. 'the new Diorama in Regent's Park... the Cosmorama in Regent Street; the 'Apollonicon' which provided mechanical music in St Martin's; the 'Magic Cave', in the Lowther arcade...'

¹³¹ Morkot, 'The 'Irish Lad' p. 19.

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Ezekiel, Magic and Midwives: A Feminist Biblical Reading

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Key words: exorcist; prophetesses; midwives; birth bricks; wise women

‘the exposure of patterns of dominance and subordination in which knowledge is produced and legitimated.’¹

INTRODUCTION

The entire thirteenth chapter of the biblical book of Ezekiel is devoted to the condemnation of false prophets. By verse 17, this fiery prophet – identified by Paul Joyce as an authentic historical figure whose ministry was conducted in Babylonia during the period of the Exile in the sixth-century BCE – has turned his attention to those among them that are women.² Using an oracle he condemns these prophetesses, who are engaged in some kind of magical or divinatory activity, as false. It is a tirade which he continues to the end of the chapter at verse 23. This article places the core Ezekiel text in intertextual dialogue with the story of the midwives Shiprah and Puah from Exodus 1.³ Such intertextuality is one of the core devices of feminist biblical hermeneutics, the remit of which has been recently summed up by Ann Jeffers in the quotation given at the outset.

This article is divided into two distinct sections. Part one seeks to gain a solid understanding of the importance of third-wave feminist biblical criticism as a methodological framework. In part two, I draw on these discussions of Ancient Near Eastern texts and gender archaeology to tease out a suppressed biblical reading of Ezekiel 13:17-23. I firstly explore why Ezekiel felt the need to work himself up into such a frenzy about these prophetesses. Who were they exactly, and why did he consider them so powerful and dangerous? Remaining fully cognisant throughout that there is no universal

¹ A. Jeffers, ‘Forget It. The Case of Women’s Rituals in Ancient Israel, or How to Remember the Woman of Endor’, in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible and Feminism. Remapping the Field* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 276-295 (p. 278).

² P.M. Joyce, *Ezekiel. A Commentary*, The Library of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies 482 (New York, 2007), pp. 3-5.

³ Since published as R. Janssen, ‘A New Reading of Shiprah and Puah – Recovering their Voices’, *Feminist Theology* 27 (1) (2018), pp. 1-17.

answer to this question, I secondly consider the possible reception of Ezekiel's polemic among contemporary Israelite women and men. In this section, particular emphasis is placed on the real life role of the "wise woman." I argue that they were powerful diviners who operated in liminal space, thereby bridging the worlds of the living and the dead.

PART 1: THIRD-WAVE FEMINIST BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Feminist biblical criticism arose out of the 1960s women's movement: it had, by the late 1970s, become a recognised branch of biblical studies. Womanist biblical hermeneutics constituted a distinct 1979 response to the perceived Eurocentric racist bias of feminist criticism.⁴ Drawing on current third-wave biblical feminism, which therefore lags behind the acknowledged arrival of fourth-wave feminism, I now consider what it seeks to do, and how it goes about it.⁵

The recent appearance of Yvonne Sherwood's weighty edited volume on third-wave biblical feminism helps identify four burgeoning trends.⁶ Firstly, feminist criticism has now moved beyond a study of the Bible in relation to its past to one that promotes 'anachronistic encounters between the Bible and socio-political issues.'⁷ Secondly, feminist research continues to expand on its repertoire of forgotten and absent subjects. Moving away from a 'great women' narrative, it is nameless biblical women and also increasingly men who are put under the feminist spotlight. Thus, in the person of 'great man' Moses, Jennifer Koosed applies masculinity studies to feminist interpretation.⁸ Thirdly, Sherwood references a challenge to the boundaries of feminist hermeneutics, as a result of which the Bible has become 'decentralised.'⁹ Now regarded as just one of many archival tools, it must compete with other, often quite unexpected, texts such as Jorunn Økland's use of the 1967 *SCUM Manifesto*.¹⁰ Eryl Davies confirms that 'few would deny that the Bible is an overwhelmingly patriarchal book.'¹¹ Because women are 'presented

⁴ It offers a post-colonial discourse for the liberation of African-American women. See P.-A. Johnson, 'Womanist Theology as Counter-Narrative', in R. Radford Ruether (ed.), *Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion. Views from the Other Side* (Minneapolis, 2002), pp. 197-214.

⁵ N. Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave. Turning Tides* (London, 2017).

⁶ Y. Sherwood, 'Introduction', in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible and Feminism. Remapping the Field* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 1-11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸ J.L. Koosed, 'Moses, Feminism, and the Male Subject', in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible and Feminism. Remapping the Field* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 223-239.

⁹ Sherwood, 'Introduction', p. 10.

¹⁰ J. Økland, 'Death and the Maiden. Manifestos, Gender, Self-canonization, and Violence', in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible and Feminism. Remapping the Field* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 15-44.

¹¹ E.W. Davies, *The Dissenting Reader. Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 1.

in terms of the attitudes of male authors', Carol Meyers sums up its texts as products of 'the male gaze' rather than 'the lived reality.'¹² J. Cheryl Exum similarly envisages such biblical women as 'male constructs' who tell us 'more about the men who produced them than about actual women.'¹³ Moreover, women's stories are merely 'parts of the more cohesive stories of their fathers, husbands, and sons.'¹⁴ Philip Davies reminds us of the urban nature of the biblical text and its resultant ideology.¹⁵ Meyers confirms that, while most of its writers probably lived in Jerusalem, most women and men would have lived in unrepresented, rural agrarian settlements.¹⁶ As a result, the aim of this article is to employ third-wave biblical feminism to defy that fixed male gaze of the redactors of the book of Ezekiel.

Third-wave biblical feminism considers women, men, and third-gender in relation to other axes of identity, namely class, ethnicity, religion, age and kinship. As defined by Gilbert Herdt, third-gender here refers to a fluidity of identity constructions that may lead to the abandonment of the absolute contrast implied by a simple male / female binary.¹⁷ Feminists have often described their strategy as a subversive reading against the grain of a text.¹⁸ Alice Bach neatly suggests that: 'turning the text on its head is what feminists do.'¹⁹ Elsewhere she advises us 'to step outside the reader's appointed place' as 'ideal reader' to become instead a 'suspicious narratee.'²⁰ Similarly, Donna Noble Fewell and David Gunn state: 'we have learned to seek out the different and the discordant [...] and to build a reading around it.'²¹ Exum asks 'whose interests are being served?' as a

¹² C. Meyers, 'Seeing Double. Textual and Archaeological Images of Israelite Women', in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible as Feminism. Remapping the Field* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 514-533 (p. 517).

¹³ J.C. Exum, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted. Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, Gender, Culture, Theory 3. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Series 215 (Sheffield, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁴ J.C. Exum, *Fragmented Women. Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 163 (Sheffield, 1993), p. 9.

¹⁵ P. Davies, 'Urban Religion and Rural Religion', in F. Stavrakopoulou and J. Barton (eds.), *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (London, 2010), pp. 104-117.

¹⁶ Meyers, 'Seeing Double', p. 514.

¹⁷ G. Herdt, *Third Sex, Third Gender. Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York, 1996).

¹⁸ J.C. Exum, 'Feminist Criticism. Whose Interests are Being Served?', in G.A. Yee (ed.), *Judges and Method. New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 65-90 (p. 68).

¹⁹ A. Bach, 'Introduction. Man's World, Women's Place. Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible', in A. Bach (ed.) *Women in the Hebrew Bible. A Reader*, (New York, 1999), xiii-xxvi (xxvi).

²⁰ A. Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 14-15.

²¹ D.N. Fewell and D.M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise, The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville, TN, 1993), p. 16.

particularly insightful question.²² Meanwhile, Bach identifies three major questions to ask the narrative: who speaks, who sees, and who acts?²³

Bach further suggests the possibility that civilizational 'disciplinary separation is an artificial one maintained to protect the territory of the interpreter, not the fictive world of the story.'²⁴ This implies that it is also perfectly acceptable to transverse those narrative boundaries imposed by the Hebrew canon. Aligning the Nevi'im (Prophets) with the Torah, I will therefore engage in biblical intertextuality and compare the nameless false prophetesses of Ezekiel 13 with the named midwives Shiprah and Puah of Exodus 1.

HEGEMONIC LITERARY TEXTS

This article retrieves a cross-cultural, feminist voice from a rich comparative corpus of Ancient Near Eastern texts, albeit one that is hegemonic. Back in the 1980s, Mieke Bal was already arguing for an intersemiotic approach to literary texts.²⁵ Similarly, John Pilch has asserted that feminist methodology 'will fare best by recognising its task as basically cross-cultural.'²⁶ As demonstrated by James Pritchard's classic volume, Ancient Near Eastern texts form an outstandingly rich archival source.²⁷ Moreover, it is a depository that can be aligned cross-culturally due to what David Levinson reiterates was the 'historical contact between the neighbouring cultures.'²⁸

Nonetheless, as with the biblical writers discussed above, the narrators of Ancient Near Eastern texts were a male literate elite divorced from the mass of the population. Producing documents for a predominantly male readership in an era of minuscule literacy, their output presents particular obstacles when analysing female roles. In this connection, the mere one per cent literacy rate proposed by John Baines for Ancient Egypt

²² Exum, 'Feminist Criticism', p. 70.

²³ Bach, 'Man's World', xxv.

²⁴ Bach, *Women, Seduction*, p. 27.

²⁵ Bal, M., *Murder and Difference. Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*, trans. M. Gumpert (Bloomington, IN, 1988), p. viii. Bal here talks about how 'we will discover the importance, the urgency of that [interdisciplinary] approach by way of the limits of the disciplinary discourse, whose inadequacy will become progressively manifest as we proceed'.

²⁶ J.J. Pilch, 'Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective. An Approach for Feminist Interpreters of the Bible', in A. Brenner and C. Fontaine (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible. Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield, 1997), pp. 306-323 (p. 308).

²⁷ J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with Supplement (Princeton, 1969).

²⁸ D. Levinson, 'Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective', in V.B. Van Hasselt, R.L. Morrison, A.S. Bellack and M. Hersen (eds.), *Handbook of Family Violence* (New York, 1988), pp. 435-455 (p. 437).

should be noted.²⁹ The only hope of critiquing the blatant patriarchal ideology of such texts is to turn to the alternate discipline of gender archaeology. According to Lynn Meskell and Rosemary Joyce, gender archaeology possesses the innate capacity to 'hint at more subversive trends that explicitly defy the hegemony of the textual record.'³⁰

SUBVERSIVE GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY

Like feminist biblical criticism, gender archaeology arose out of the patriarchy envisaged by the women's movement, although this did not happen until the 1980s.³¹ Having moved beyond its exclusive emphasis on the roles and status of women, it too is now concerned, as Elisabeth Brumfiel points out, 'with the inclusion of women, men, and other genders into a single frame of analysis.'³² The resultant ability to engage in cross-gender comparison serves 'to identify the extent of difference between gender categories.'³³ It also parallels third-wave feminist biblical criticism in that there is now increased attention as to how gender relations impact on most notably age (which will become paramount in the discussion below), but also the variables of class, ethnicity, religion, and kinship.³⁴ As recently as 2017, it is possible to add – as will be further explored below – the additional intersection of violence.³⁵ In evaluating Ezekiel's fiery condemnation of the female prophetesses, attention will be placed on two specific aspects of gender archaeology: material culture, and the social situation in ancient Israel. It is now imperative to assess the pitfalls inherent in each.

Meyers confirms that artefacts are not 'gender noisy', their silence being 'especially acute with respect to who used them.'³⁶ Back in 1994, Tove Hjørungdal pointed to the androcentric practice of attributing to weapons versus jewellery 'the status of metaphors

²⁹ J. Baines, 'Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society', *Man*, 18 (3) (1983), pp. 572-599.

³⁰ L.M. Meskell, and R.A. Joyce, *Embodied Lives. Figuring Ancient Maya and Egyptian Experience* (London, 2003), p. 4.

³¹ S.M. Nelson, 'Introduction. Archaeological Perspectives on Gender', in S.M. Nelson (ed.), *Handbook of Gender Archaeology*, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 1-27.

³² E. Brumfiel, 'Methods in Feminist and Gender Archaeology. A Feeling for Difference—and Likeness', in S.M. Nelson (ed.), *Handbook of Gender Archaeology* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 31-58 (p. 31).

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁴ J. Gero; rev. by M.L.S. Sørensen, 'Gender', in N.A. Silberman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2012), pp. 594-596 (p. 595).

³⁵ U. Matić and B. Jensen, *Archaeologies of Gender and Violence* (Oxford, 2017).

³⁶ C. Meyers, 'Recovering Objects, Re-Visioning Subjects. Archaeology and Feminist Biblical Study', in A. Brenner and C. Fontaine (eds.), *Reading the Bible. Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield, 1997), pp. 270-284 (p. 279).

par excellence of “malehood” and “womanhood” within archaeology.’³⁷ Most recently, Laura Whitehouse has challenged male warrior identity in relation to the presence of weaponry in female, third-gender, and child Anglo-Saxon burials.³⁸ Margarita Díaz-Andreu had previously shown that third-gender individuals can be identified through the presence of grave goods traditionally associated with their sexual counterpart.³⁹ Whitehouse rightly notes that such ‘confused’ burials, including those of the berdache, hijra, and eunuch, have been overlooked in archaeology.⁴⁰

The ‘jewellery equals women’ approach is equally unreliable. Noted biblical archaeologist Jodi Magness fell into an androcentric trap when, back in 2002, she argued against the presence of women at the Qumran cemetery based on the absence of jewellery and cosmetics.⁴¹ She was at the time attempting to refute Joan Taylor’s previous argument for the marginality of women at the site, which was based on equally-unreliable gendered mortuary goods, such as a spindle whorl and a comb.⁴² These examples are salutary confirmation of Marie Louise Sørensen’s assertion that objects are never neutral because they are ‘imbedded within society’.⁴³

Meyers argues for heterarchy rather than hierarchy to explain the social system in Ancient Israel.⁴⁴ Operating at the intersections of age and class, this flexible model suggests that: ‘a woman’s position would vary over time according to other facts, such as age, participation in community activities and role in the informal network of women formed by her work patterns.’⁴⁵ Moreover, in envisaging the female role as pivotal ‘especially in relation to women’s expertise in many economic tasks’, heterarchy challenges the notion of their subordination in patriarchal biblical texts.⁴⁶ Subordination was never the daily life reality in an Israelite agrarian community. I therefore reach the

³⁷ T. Hjørungdal, ‘Poles Apart. Have there been any Male and Female Graves?’, *Current Swedish Archaeology* 2 (1994), pp. 141-148 (p. 144).

³⁸ L.M. Whitehouse, ‘The Weapons make the Man? A Re-analysis of Early Anglo-Saxon Weapon Burial and Interpretation’, in U. Matić and B. Jensen (eds.), *Archaeologies of Gender and Violence* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 223-246. We too acknowledge gender as a construct and seek to emphasise its fluidity by challenging gendered space as purely binary.

³⁹ M. Díaz-Andreu, ‘Gender Identity’, in M. Díaz-Andreu, S. Lucy, S. Baić, and D.N. Edwards (eds.), *Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (Routledge, 2005), pp. 13-42.

⁴⁰ Whitehouse, ‘The Weapons’, p. 226.

⁴¹ J. Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, 2002), pp. 182-185.

⁴² J.E. Taylor, ‘The Cemeteries of Khirbet Qumran and Women’s Presence at the Site’, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 6 (3) (1999), pp. 285-323.

⁴³ M.L.S. Sørensen, *Gender Archaeology* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 79.

⁴⁴ C. Meyers, *Discovering Eve. Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 194-199.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

methodological conclusion that, only by closely aligning hegemonic written texts with the subversive archaeological record, is it possible to undertake a successful exegesis of the following obscure biblical passage.

PART 2: EZEKIEL 13: 17-23

The NSRV renders these seven verses as follows:⁴⁷

¹⁷ As for you, mortal, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own imagination; prophesy against them ¹⁸ and say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew bands on all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every height, in the hunt for human lives! Will you hunt down lives among my people, and maintain your own lives? ¹⁹ You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death persons who should not die and keeping alive persons who should not live, by your lies to my people, who listen to lies. ²⁰ Therefore thus says the Lord God: I am against your bands with which you hunt lives; I will tear them from your arms, and let the lives go free, the lives that you hunt down like birds. ²¹ I will tear off your veils, and save my people from your hands; they shall no longer be prey in your hands; and you shall know that I am the Lord. ²² Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened them, and you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives; ²³ therefore you shall no longer see false visions or practice divination; I will save my people from your hand. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Bowen has aptly demonstrated how Ezekiel's oracle follows the pattern of the Maqlû exorcist ritual in Mesopotamia, both being 'designed to remove any influence or power of the "witch" in the community.'⁴⁸ This would neatly align with the exilic date of the text. Bowen's breakdown of this anti-witchcraft language is as follows: the women are first judged for their harmful anti-community actions (verses 18-19; 22).⁴⁹ God (Yahweh) as judge then announces their sentence (verses 20-21; 23). His removal of the women's bands and veils symbolically negates their actions. Finally, God negates their power by banning and separating the prophetesses from the community (verses 20; 23).

⁴⁷ The NSRV is referenced throughout.

⁴⁸ N.R. Bowen, 'The Daughters of Your People. Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999), pp. 417-433 (footnote 20 on p. 421).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

The imagery then in verses 18, 20, and 21 is that of the binding and untying of knots or bands of cloth. In a skilful updating of the NSRV, Nancy Bowen has rendered the first sentence of verse 18 as: 'Woe to the women who sew bindings on all their wrists and the women who make head bands on the heads of every height in order to make souls dizzy.'⁵⁰ Such wrist bindings can be neatly linked to the delivery of Tamar's twins in Genesis 38:27-30, where the midwife places an identification band of scarlet thread around the hand of the first baby. Writing back in 1941, Israeli medical doctor Bear Gordon was in awe of this minute obstetric detail in the Hebrew Bible; he states that it 'rivals the technique used in our modern obstetrical nurseries.'⁵¹ But it was by no means unique in the Ancient Near East: Jo Ann Scurlock references the frequent use of knotted red wool for binding the wrists or other body parts of expectant mothers in Mesopotamian pregnancy and childbirth incantations.⁵² Such knots were slackened during labour, just as in ancient Egypt the woman's tightly bound hair was loosened to accelerate childbirth by sympathetic magic.⁵³ Furthermore, the barley and bread referenced in verse 19 recalls the grain and bread used in Mesopotamian birthing practices. Scurlock references how the midwife created a circle of flour on the floor, into which she placed an unbaked birthing brick.⁵⁴ I discuss below the function of this brick, within what Scurlock argues was a demon-secure magic circle.⁵⁵

Ezekiel's female exorcists, 'who make head bands' in verse 18 and are threatened that their veils will be torn off in verse 22, can therefore be identified as midwives. Scurlock references *šatsūtu*, lit. 'the one who knows the inside', as the Akkadian word for midwife.⁵⁶ It was not until 2000 that Henry Fischer identified three rare Old Kingdom instances of *in't* as the Egyptian word for midwife.⁵⁷ Significantly, he states that it is 'an occupation of some importance.'⁵⁸ The determinative of *in't* features a seated woman who wears a kerchief which is knotted at the back of her head (Figure 1).

⁵⁰ Ibid., footnote 51 on p. 429.

⁵¹ M. Bear Gordon, 'Medicine among the Ancient Hebrews', *Isis* 33 (1941), pp. 454-485 (p. 467). Similarly, he states that the midwife's advance determination of twins is 'by no means a simple feat even today'.

⁵² J.A. Scurlock, 'Baby-snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth. Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Incognita* 2 (1991), pp. 135-183 (pp. 138-140; 144). Used to prevent vaginal bleeding and miscarriage.

⁵³ R.M. Janssen and J.J. Janssen, *Growing Up and Getting Old in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2007), p. 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁶ Scurlock, 'Baby-snatching', p. 142.

⁵⁷ G.H. Fischer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and Heracleopolitan Period*. 2nd rev. ed. (New York, 2000), pp. 27-30 and figs. 24-26. Unfortunately not (yet) attested outside this period.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 27.



Figure 1 “The *in’t* Midwife Determinative”. G. Fischer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and Heracleopolitan Period*, fig. 24, p. 28. Reprinted with permission, courtesy of Marsha Hill, Egyptian Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fischer’s three midwives hold significant titles. Neferhoteps, who is represented in the Sixth Dynasty tomb chapel of Watetkhether at Saqqara, is described as *rht nswt* ‘she who is known to the king.’⁵⁹ This leads Fischer to confirm that she is ‘therefore of a certain status.’⁶⁰ Even more pertinently, not only are Meret-ib and Khenti-kauwes, who each own a small libation vessel, designated *rht nswt*, but they also function as overseers of a plurality of *in’wt* midwives.⁶¹ Fischer speculates that they may even have been related.⁶²

Describing Egyptian birth practices back in 1990, my husband and I confidently wrote that: ‘It is doubtful whether trained midwives existed. It has been suggested that the profession was “impure” and hence not highly esteemed.’⁶³ Instead, we envisaged elderly female relatives performing this essential role. Gordon supported this to the extent that, citing 1 Samuel 4:20, he too believed that it was normally friends or family who assisted

⁵⁹ Ibid., fig. 24 (left) on p. 28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶¹ Ibid., figs. 25-26 on pp. 29-30. These libation vessels were originally in the possession of the Greek collector George Michailides.

⁶² Ibid., p. 28.

⁶³ R.M. Janssen and J.J. Janssen, *Growing Up in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1990), p. 6.

at deliveries in ancient Israel.⁶⁴ However, at the same time, he references the semi-professional midwives who were present at both Rachel's difficult delivery in Genesis 35:16-17 and the birth of Tamar's twins in Genesis 38:27-30.⁶⁵ With Fischer's *in't* discovery not only have we been proven mistaken, but, even more importantly, Egyptian midwifery is revealed as highly professionalised.

BIRTH-BRICKS

Birth-bricks were important artefacts in Ancient Near Eastern cultures, and Scurlock's reference to the presence of an unbaked brick in Mesopotamian birthing rituals has already been cited.⁶⁶ Moreover, Marten Stol highlights birth-bricks in Sumerian and Neo-Assyrian texts, and further argues for the possible existence of one in Ugartic literature linking this with the *'obnayim* in Exodus 1:16.⁶⁷ This verse, the words of Pharaoh to the midwives Shiprah and Puah, reads as follows: 'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.' However, the translators of the NSRV have failed to appreciate that *'obnayim*, which they translate as 'birthstool,' is a Hebrew dual.⁶⁸ In line with the NSRV, Fischer erroneously identified the rectangular object held by the midwife in the *in't* determinative as one of the 'pair of blocks that served as a birthstool' (Figure 1).⁶⁹ Thanks to gender archaeology, this can now be identified as a birthing brick.

Made from unbaked mud, and measuring 17 by 35 centimetres, this birth-brick was discovered at South Abydos in 2001 by a University of Pennsylvania team led by Professor Josef Wegner (Figure 2).⁷⁰ In his extensive 2009 publication, Wegner dates the brick to the late Middle Kingdom (c. 1650 BCE) on account of its find spot in the female quarters of the Mayor's residence, in association with the seal impressions of a

⁶⁴ Bear Gordon, 'Medicine', p. 470.

⁶⁵ Fischer, *Egyptian Women*, p. 470.

⁶⁶ Scurlock, 'Baby-snatching', p. 142.

⁶⁷ M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen, 2000), pp. 119-122.

⁶⁸ The only other mention of *'obnayim* in the Hebrew Bible occurs in Jeremiah 18:3 in reference to a potter's wheel: 'So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel'.

⁶⁹ Fischer, *Egyptian Women*, p. 27 and fig. 24 (right) on p. 28.

⁷⁰ First published by J. Wegner, 'A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos', *Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (2002), pp. 3-4.

Princess Reniseneb.⁷¹ While there is no proof that it belonged to Reniseneb, the high-quality decoration proclaims it as an elite woman's brick. The magio-religious imagery, such as the protective anthropomorphic animal deities flanking each of the sides, confirm its function (Figure 3). The central scene, flanked with Hathor standards, symbolically merges two temporal stages: the moment of delivery with two female attendants, and the post-partum successful birth designated by the seated mother and her healthy male child (Figure 4). This constitutes the underside of the brick: the upper surface has completely worn away from repeated use, although there are no traces of bodily fluids (Figure 2).⁷²



Figure 2 "The Underside of the Abydos Birth Brick". J. Wegner, 'A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos. New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in the Middle Kingdom', fig. 1, p. 449. Reprinted with permission from the original scan, courtesy of Josef Wegner.

⁷¹ J. Wegner, 'A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos. New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in the Middle Kingdom', in D.P. Silverman, W.K. Simpson and J. Wegner (eds.), *Archaism and Innovation. Studies in the Culture of Middle Kingdom Egypt* (New Haven, 2009), pp. 447-496 (p. 489). 'It is quite possible that Reniseneb was the wife of one of the mayors of the town'.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 476-477. Wegner suggests that protective cloth padding may have been used.

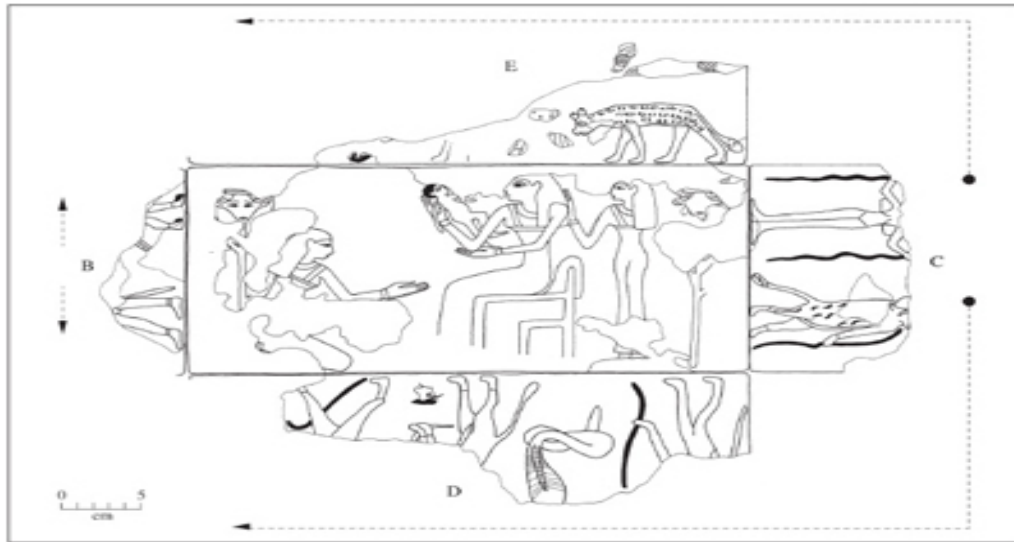


Figure 3 “Line drawing showing the mother and child scene with surrounding protective deities”. J. Wegner, ‘A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos. New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in the Middle Kingdom’, fig. 6, p. 476. Reprinted with permission from the original scan, courtesy of Josef Wegner.



Figure 4 “Line drawing detailing the mother and child scene”. J. Wegner, ‘A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos. New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in the Middle Kingdom’, fig. 4, p. 451. Reprinted with permission from the original scan, courtesy of Josef Wegner.

Textual evidence, spanning the Old Kingdom to the Coptic Period, references the beneficial upright position for delivery in conjunction with such bricks.⁷³ From a philological perspective, Egyptian birthing bricks are called *meskhenet*, literally ‘place of causing to alight’, their name being synonymous with Meskhenet, a birth goddess who is sometimes depicted as a personified brick. Wegner’s conclusion is that ‘the presence of painted magical imagery on the Abydos brick should be taken [...] as a compelling indication that the brick *was* intended to function as a *meskhenet* brick in actual delivery.’⁷⁴ On the other hand, Susanne Töpfer has more recently used the magical iconography to argue that this particular brick was ‘without an active or rather physical use.’⁷⁵ Her arguments are here rejected since she refers to the ‘good state of its preservation’, thereby ignoring Wenger’s comments about its worn upper surface.⁷⁶

Wenger supports the persuasive arguments of Ann Macy Roth and Catharine Roehrig for the probable use of four such bricks stacked in pairs.⁷⁷ He further concurs with these authors concerning the immediate re-use of the bricks as a protective baby platform, representing the goddess Meskhenet.⁷⁸ Such multi-functionality seems reasonable, especially since the ancient Egyptians believed that fate in life was determined at birth and Meskhenet was the goddess of fate.⁷⁹ It was while the baby was on the brick platform that the midwife would prophesy what Meskhenet had decreed to be the new-born’s social destiny. The Egyptian midwife is further equated with the earthly embodiment of Meskhenet since Roth identifies the object which the goddess wears on her head as the archaic flint *psš-kf* knife used to cut the umbilical cord.⁸⁰ As referenced in Ezekiel 16:4, this cutting would have taken place after washing the child, and therefore directly before laying it down on the reconstructed baby platform.

⁷³ J. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina. A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen’s Community During the Ramesside Period*. Egyptologische Uitgaven 15 (Leiden, 2001), p. 174. Here, on a Deir el-Medina stela (Turin N5008), a man describes his pain as: ‘I was sitting on the (birthing) bricks like a woman in labour.’

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁷⁵ S. Töpfer, ‘The Physical Activity of Parturition in Ancient Egypt. Textual and Epigraphical Sources’, *Dynamis* 34 (2) (2014), 317-335 (pp. 331-332).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁷⁷ A.M. Roth and C.H. Roehrig, ‘Magical Brick and the Bricks of Birth’, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 88 (2002), pp. 121-139 (p. 130). Contrary to earlier arguments that only two were used.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁷⁹ I. Shaw and P. Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1995), p. 186.

⁸⁰ A.M. Roth, ‘The *psš-kf* and the “Opening of the Mouth” Ceremony. A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth’, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992), pp. 113-147 (pp. 144-145).

The midwife would also have had direct charge of the placenta, the delivery of which occurs sometime after the actual birth. The afterbirth in Mesopotamia may have been conceived of as an aborted twin engaging in demonic activity and attempting to kill its new-born sibling.⁸¹ Cross-culturally, the placenta was regarded as a 'double' in Ancient Egypt.⁸² An essential role of the midwife would therefore have been the instigation of an appropriate apotropaic ritual to negate its power. Scurlock makes the logical suggestion that in Mesopotamia this involved the placenta being given a twin in the form of a surrogate brick with which the baby had been in contact.⁸³ Anne Kilmer believes that, in this culture, unbaked bricks had 'a deeper meaning and significance': they were linked to placental material, which is reddish brown and shaped like a plano-convex brick.⁸⁴ Based on the fact that Egyptian children and their *kas* were created by Khnum on a potter's wheel and hence made of clay, this is again a metaphor that can be extended to ancient Egypt. Moreover, this links to the only other mention of '*obnayim*' in the Hebrew Bible which occurs in Jeremiah 18:3: 'So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel.'

Based on the materiality, the most logical reconstruction of '*obnayim*' in Exodus 1:16 is that the Pharaoh instructs Shiprah and Puah to 'see them [the Hebrew women] on the birth bricks.' Taking on the guise of Meskenet, they should then decide the social destiny of each new-born as he or she lay naked and exposed on the reconstructed platform. Aligning to the 'prey in your hands' of Ezekiel 13:21, their role of prognosis enabled them to determine, through divination, whether their charges would live or die.⁸⁵ In Exodus 1:19, Shiprah and Puah ambiguously tell Pharaoh: 'the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.'⁸⁶ The function of a prophet is to speak up or out, and, acting as tricksters, this is exactly what these midwives do before Pharaoh, who is himself a god.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Scurlock, 'Baby-snatching', p. 153.

⁸² Roth, 'The psš-kf', p. 127.

⁸³ Scurlock, 'Baby-snatching', p. 153.

⁸⁴ A.D. Kilmer, "'The Brick of Birth'", *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987), pp. 211-213 (p. 212).

⁸⁵ Bowen, 'The Daughters', p. 427.

⁸⁶ Compare Exodus 4:24-26, where Zipporah, the wife of Moses, most likely tricks the attacking deity by giving him the excessive amounts of blood that result from circumcision, rather than the blood of slaughter. As the daughter of a priest, she acts as a powerful ritual practitioner.

⁸⁷ Explored in detail in Janssen, 'A New Reading', pp. 19-22.

In 1998, Martti Nissinen confirmed the growing tendency among Ancient Near Eastern scholars to regard prophesy 'as an integral part' of divination.⁸⁸ In this section, I too have argued that a midwife was ultimately both a diviner and a prophetess. The exiled Ezekiel therefore took on the role of a Babylonian exorcist. I agree with Bowen that the reason was twofold: representing the no longer appropriate 'diversity of preexilic Yahwistic belief and practice', he feared that these midwife prophetesses were 'giving false prognoses' and therefore engaged in 'medical malpractice.'⁸⁹

THE RECEPTION OF EZEKIEL 13:17-23

With the repeated mentions in verses 20 and 21 of God threatening to 'tear off' respectively the armbands and the veils from these prophetesses, Ezekiel employs violent and patriarchal language, such as conforms to Andrea Dworkin's classic feminist definition of pornography.⁹⁰ It can be analysed in terms of Susanne Moraw's feminist critique of the pornographic gaze, in what is the first anthology devoted to the intersection of the three disciplines of violence, gender, and archaeology.⁹¹ In her 'Death and the Maiden' chapter, Moraw deconstructs a range of Late Antique Roman artefacts which depict nubile girls as victims of violence. She analyses them in terms of hierarchical power relationships, female sexualisation, and an elite male ideal viewer, concluding that the vast majority 'need a male participant for their pornographic effect.'⁹² Involving 'the presentation of females in a way that sexualises and objectifies them, often violently', this in turn represents 'the essence of gender relations in a patriarchal society.'⁹³ Ezekiel's language similarly requires an ideal elite male audience for its pornographic effect.

Nonetheless, a female audience would have been able to defy the fixed gaze of the male narrator since, as argued above, the notion of binding and unbinding, loosening and tying was directly linked to Ancient Near Eastern midwifery and its related spirit world. Moreover, it epitomises the sphere of gendered isolation. Kristine Henriksen Garroway has recently confirmed that in ancient Israel 'men were not a part of the birthing ritual

⁸⁸ M. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*. State Archives of Assyrian Studies 7 (Helsinki, 1998), p. 6.

⁸⁹ Bowen, 'The Daughters', pp. 431; 427.

⁹⁰ A. Dworkin, *Pornography. Men Possessing Women* (New York, 1979).

⁹¹ S. Moraw, 'Death and the Maiden. Late Antique Images of Nubile Females as Agents and Victims of Lethal Violence', in U. Matić and B. Jensen (eds.), *Archaeologies of Gender and Violence*, (Oxford, 2017), pp. 151-178.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

and were not even allowed in the birth chamber.’⁹⁴ A similar situation pertained in ancient Egypt where I have previously argued that ‘[t]here is no indication that the husband was present at the birth, and the special pavilion indeed points to separation.’⁹⁵ By contrast, the menfolk of our female audience might well have become fearful of Ezekiel’s entry into the uncharted territory of childbirth, involving, as it did in the Babylonian Exile, the presence of magical bricks and demonic placentas.

However, such ordinary men may well have had their own encounters with such prophetesses. This is because so-called ‘wise women’ formed significant members of an Ancient Near Eastern community, and could therefore be the very prophetesses to whom Ezekiel is referring. Camp discusses how the wise women of Tekoa and Abel, who appear in 2 Samuel 14 and 20 respectively, play key roles in mediating disputes.⁹⁶ Confirming the Ezekiel 13 analysis, Joris Borghouts notes that ancient Egyptian wise women acted as diviners and healers; they were able to predict future events.⁹⁷

Six private letters from Deir el-Medina, the New Kingdom Village of Pharaoh’s artisans, portray the wise women as real life practitioners. There was only one such person at any one time: she is always referred to by her title *t3 rht* ‘the knowing woman’, omitting her personal name. Clearly, this emphasises the social status of her occupation as a woman of power. Moreover, her title suggests the wisdom that modern psychologists reveal comes from experience and is therefore a product of later life.⁹⁸ Combined with what has been stated above about age and heterarchy (see p. 6), it is no wonder that Silvia Schroer convincingly argues that in ancient Israel, wise women were older women.⁹⁹ I have argued for a similar situation at Deir el-Medina.¹⁰⁰ Garroway notes that among Palestinian Arabs, ‘midwives must be old women who are past menopause, which is important for they are not in danger of becoming impure through menses.’¹⁰¹ Most

⁹⁴ K.H. Garroway, *Growing Up in Ancient Israel. Children in Material Culture and Biblical Texts* (Atlanta, 2018), p. 51.

⁹⁵ Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up and Getting Old*, p. 6.

⁹⁶ C.V. Camp, ‘The Wise Women of 2 Samuel. A Role Model for Women in Early Israel?’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981), pp. 14-29.

⁹⁷ J.F. Borghouts, ‘Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and its Manifestation (*b3w*)’, in R.J. Demarée and J.J. Janssen (eds.), *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*. Egyptologische Uitgaven 1 (Leiden, 1982), pp. 1-70 (pp. 24-27).

⁹⁸ For a literature review, see: R.J. Sternberg, ‘Older but not Wiser? The Relationship between Age and Wisdom’, *Ageing International* 301 (2005), pp. 5-26.

⁹⁹ For Israel: S. Schroer, ‘Weise Frauen und Ratgeberinnen in Israel—literarische und historische Vorbilder der personifizierten Chokmah’, *Biblische Notizen* 51 (1990), pp. 41-60 (p. 45).

¹⁰⁰ R.M. Janssen and J.J. Janssen, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1996), p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Garroway, *Growing Up in Ancient Israel*, p. 51.

recently, Ada Nifosi has pointed to Isis as a *rht* and knowledgeable about childbirth, concluding that the word most likely points to midwifery.¹⁰² With this in mind, it is evident that I too readily dismissed a midwifery role for the Deir el-Medina wise woman.¹⁰³

The implication is that her post-menopausal status was non-threatening. It is therefore not surprising that Jaana Toivari-Viitala tells us that at Deir el-Medina the wise woman could be consulted by both men and women.¹⁰⁴ It was also the case that ‘one needed not even to be present in person in order to get a consultation, orders to go to the *rht* woman with specific problems could be administered through letters, even across the “sex-boundaries.”’¹⁰⁵ The implication then is that, rather than being called in, people went to see her. The villagers consulted her in moments of crises when they felt threatened and uncertain because there had been a ‘manifestation’ of the gods, implying a divine punishment for which no immediate explanation could be found. The reason for this was wrong behaviour which had offended the god in question, such as a false oath. The sign was often physical symptoms: distress, blindness, and pain in all limbs, or even the death of one’s children.

The latter situation is evidenced in Ostrakon Letellier, by far the clearest and the most poignant of the five texts.¹⁰⁶ The workman Qenhikhopshef writes a letter to Inerwau, perhaps the nurse of his two sons who have died in suspicious circumstances. He wonders why Inerwau did not on her own initiative consult the wise woman. He wants to know why his two boys died, and whether his life and that of their mother is now in danger, and especially which deity was responsible for his misfortune. It is therefore not surprising that Doris Karl argues that the wise woman possessed a deeper knowledge of the relations between the realms of the living, the gods, and the deceased and acting as an oracle could help to restore normality and harmony.¹⁰⁷ Knowledge travelled through her, enabling her to name the spirit causing the problem.

¹⁰² A. Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Women’s Bodies, Society and Domestic Space* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 228.

¹⁰³ Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up in Ancient Egypt*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, pp. 228-231.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁶ For a translation, see E. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta, 1990), nr. 184 on pp. 141-142.

¹⁰⁷ D. Karl, ‘Funktion und Bedeutung einer weisen Frau im alten Ägypten’, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 28 (2000), pp. 131-160 (p. 157).

Qenhikhopshef's involvement with the wise woman of Deir el-Medina can be compared to Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:19. Here, men in sixth-century BCE Judah and Jerusalem actively support their wives in a domestic cult to the Queen of Heaven. Bearing in mind that Francesca Stavrakopoulou dismisses the notion of 'women's religion' in ancient Israel as a construct, a male audience might therefore have shown every sympathy for Ezekiel's much maligned prophetesses.¹⁰⁸

Engaging in cross-cultural comparisons and biblical intertextuality, while balancing such hegemonic written sources with the materiality of gendered archaeology, prophetesses are clearly identified in this particularly difficult Ezekiel 13:17-23 passage as practicing midwives. An examination of their social situation in the Ancient Near East has shown them simultaneously dealing with the religious realm. No wonder then that Ezekiel, together with his companion prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, plus that foolish Pharaoh in Exodus 1, had cause to fear such powerful women as dangerous others. Finally, in teasing out the possible ancient reception of the Ezekiel prophetesses, I have concluded that the reason for the prophet's patriarchal, violent language would have been far more obvious to ordinary men and women than it is today. In view of his Babylonian context, Ezekiel had good reason to be fearful of female birthing isolation. Here, operating at the very edges of liminality, midwives functioned as diviners with power over life and death. Finally, in considering the significant activities of the wise woman as midwife and prophetess, I can agree with Sharon Moughtin-Mumby who, as a result of her exegesis of Judah in Jeremiah 3:2, discovered 'a female who is far more self-possessed and coherent than this caricaturing prophetic poetry would suggest.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ F. Stavrakopoulou, 'The Ancient Goddess, the Biblical Scholar, and the Religious Past. Re-imagining Divine Women', in Y. Sherwood (ed.), *The Bible as Feminism. Remapping the Field*, (Oxford, 2017), pp. 495-513 (p. 503).

¹⁰⁹ S. Moughtin-Mumby, *Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel*. Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford, 2008), p. 271.

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A Biblical Prophecy and the Armour of Horus: The Myth of Horus and Seth in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*

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Key words: computer games, cinema, mythology, the Bible, Seth.

INTRODUCTION

The computer game *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* was released in November 1999, as the fourth installation of the popular franchise. The first game was released in 1996, designed for the platforms Microsoft Windows, PlayStation and Sega Saturn, and within five years had spawned a series of comic books and a film adaptation starring Angelina Jolie. At the centre of the franchise is the female heroine Lara Croft, an aristocratic and highly intelligent British woman who travels the world exploring ancient ruins in the search of powerful and legendary artefacts. As a female character in a male-dominated gaming industry, modelled on masculine characters such as Indiana Jones, she has been the centre of much attention. There have already been a number of studies discussing Lara Croft, her appearance and her relationship with feminism and gender politics.¹ For example, Germaine Greer once described her as a 'sergeant major with balloons stuffed up his shirt'.² Kurt Lancaster highlights her 'pouting red lips, her long pony tail reaching to her waist, and her over-sized breasts and eyes all carved from the virtual media world of an ideal sexuality'.³ Maria Schleiner describes her as 'an idealized, eternally young female automaton, a malleable, well-trained techno-puppet created by and for the male gaze'.⁴ Maja Mikula describes Lara's body as 'excessively feminine'.⁵ In the recent reboot heralded by the 2013 game *Tomb Raider*, Lara's chest size was substantially reduced and

¹ For a discussion of the relationship between Lara Croft and feminism, see H. W. Kennedy, 'Lara Croft: feminist icon or cyberbimbo? On the limits of textual analysis', *Game Studies: International Journal of Computer Games Research* 2 (2) (2002), n.p.. <http://gamestudies.org/0202/kennedy/>.

² C. Lowbridge, 'How Lara Croft became a game changer', *BBC*, 25 October 2016, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-37619114>.

³ K. Lancaster, 'Lara Croft: The Ultimate Young Adventure Girl or the Unending Media Desire for Models, Sex and Fantasy', *A Journal of Performance and Art* 26 (3) (2004), pp. 87-97 (p. 88).

⁴ M. Schleiner, 'Does Lara Croft Wear Fake Polygons? Gender and Gender-Role Subversion in Computer Adventure Games', *Leonardo* 34 (3) (2001), pp. 221-226 (p. 222).

⁵ M. Mikula, 'Gender and Videogames: the political valency of Lara Croft', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 17(1) (2003), pp.79-87 (p. 79).

her trademark shorts were replaced by long trousers. The storyline was written by Rhianna Pratchett, who aimed to desexualise the character and make her more relatable to a female audience.⁶

The purpose of this article is two-fold; the first aim is to move away from the disproportionate focus on Lara's appearance and sexuality, and to instead examine her as the protagonist of narrative. The second aim of the article is to analyse the franchise's fourth game as an example of the modern reception of the myth of Horus and Seth. As such, I will explore how and why the ancient myth has been adapted and re-produced for a contemporary audience. In particular, I will focus on the apocalyptic nature of the narrative, how and why the ancient myth has been changed and adapted to fit the apocalyptic framework, and what purpose the apocalyptic theme serves. I will also explore the relationship between archaeology and gameplay, why the narrative is of a supernatural and religious nature, and how the narrative relates to 'Egyptomania' and portrayals of archaeology in contemporary popular culture.

The Last Revelation is not the only game in the franchise to feature Egyptian locations; the 1996 game *Tomb Raider* and its 2007 remake *Tomb Raider: Anniversary* centre on a fictional Atlantean artefact known as the Scion, whose three components are hidden in Peru, Greece and Egypt.⁷ However, *The Last Revelation* is the only game in the franchise to draw its central premise directly from the ancient-Egyptian mythological repertoire. The main narrative begins when Lara unwittingly releases the god Seth from his coffin-prison, located in his fictional tomb in the Valley of the Kings, by removing a magical *ankh*-shaped amulet from his anthropoid sarcophagus. This Ankh contains the first part of an ancient prophecy written by the priest Semerkhet, who narrates the prophecy in a cinematic cutscene. He is shown to possess secret knowledge and thus essentially embodies the abstract concept of ancient-Egyptian wisdom. The prophecy explains how the release of Seth has the potential to bring about the apocalypse, and how to prevent this from happening. Throughout the game, Lara travels from Luxor to Alexandria and Cairo in order to locate the remaining parts of the prophecy, helped by information and guidance from Jean-Yves, a French archaeologist and field director. However, the

⁶ See for example M. Butler, 'Rhianna Pratchett: I wanted to make Lara Croft human again', *The i*, 7 October 2016, <https://inews.co.uk/culture/gaming/rhianna-pratchett-lara-croft-discworld/>.

⁷ A central premise of these games is that the Incan, Greek and Egyptian civilisations were founded by Atlanteans. This pseudo-scientific theory was originally formulated by I. L. Donnelly: *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (New York, 1882). There is no mention of Atlantis in *The Last Revelation*, and the Atlantean theory plays no part in the narrative.

prophecy on its own is not sufficient, and two additional supernatural artefacts are required; the sacred armour of the god Horus and a tablet inscribed with binding incantations. The prophecy dictates that this armour, which has been divided into multiple pieces, must be reassembled and placed on a statue of Horus that is located in a hidden chamber beneath the pyramid of Khufu at Giza. This action will allow Horus to manifest in the flesh and ultimately defeat Seth in a cosmic off-screen battle.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE PARAMETERS OF GAMEPLAY

The narrative represents a translation of ancient source material into English, as a hybrid of the ancient-Egyptian religious tradition and the Christian tradition, as a transplant of the ancient myth into a new context and cultural framework, and as an adaptation of the ancient myth.⁸ This adaption relies heavily on intertextual references.⁹ Intertextuality refers to the relationship between different texts, meaning that one text can be influenced by another. Two such texts are defined by Gérard Genette as the hypertext and the hypotext.¹⁰ Films and computer games are based on written scripts and can therefore act both as hypertexts and hypotexts. The relationship of the hypertext to the hypotext is not one of commentary, but rather one where the hypertext is derived from the hypotext and becomes an original in its own right. It is also possible for a hypertext to be derived from multiple hypotexts.

Intertextual references can be deliberate on the part of the author and expressed by literary devices such as direct quotation, parody and imitation. Intertextual references can also be accidental, and are thus subjectively inferred by the audience independently of the author's intentions. As such, the audience's response to a text is impacted by other texts they have previously encountered. Roland Barthes rejected the concept of the authoritative writer, whom he termed 'the Author-God', and argued that a text's meaning is derived from its linguistic-cultural context rather than from the consciousness of the writer.¹¹ For this reason, a text's meaning cannot be assumed to be fixed or set in stone, and the meaning is not transmitted from the mind of the writer to the mind of the reader. Instead, meaning is actively created by the reader in

⁸ Based on the definitions proposed by L. Hardwick, *Reception Studies* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 9-10.

⁹ The term was first coined by J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York, 1980), p. 69.

¹⁰ G. Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, 1997), p. 5.

¹¹ R. Barthes, *Image – Music – Text* (New York, 1977), pp. 146-7.

a subjective process. Within this theoretical framework, the game represents the hypertext, and the other texts alluded to within the narrative function as hypotexts. The audience's interpretation of and response to the ludonarrative will vary according to their familiarity with the hypotexts, and depends on their own linguistic-cultural background.

Computer games differ from films in that they offer an additional immersive and interactive dimension. The player is not merely a passive viewer who experiences the world of the protagonist from the outside, but essentially becomes the hero-archaeologist by controlling his/her actions. Through the medium of the third-person perspective, the player can simultaneously see and identify with the protagonist. The player's response to and interpretation of the game is influenced both by intertextuality and by gaming literacy. Gaming literacy is defined as the ability to navigate the gaming space and achieve goals in the gaming environment, and the degree to which the player is gaming literate influences the strategies they employ and the choices they make.¹² Jesper Juul defines gameplay as the result of the interaction between the rules of the game, the player's pursuit of the goal and the player's repertoire of strategies.¹³ Rules form an integral part of a computer game, and function to restrict and direct the player's actions. In action-adventure games, the player has a certain degree of freedom and can influence the protagonist's actions, but in many games the internal rules and scripted cutscenes ensure that the player cannot deviate very far from the established personality and moral character of the hero-protagonist.

Violence is a necessary part of the gameplay; Lara is frequently attacked by animal, human and supernatural enemies, which leaves the player with the choice of having to kill or being killed. The player is supposed to like and identify with the hero-protagonist, but the protagonist's violent actions cause a dilemma known as ludonarrative dissonance.¹⁴ *The Last Revelation* attempts to resolve this dissonance by framing the narrative as a good-versus-evil conflict. The player is not allowed the option of supporting Seth, and thus acts as a proxy for Horus by default throughout the game. The player is told in no uncertain terms that Seth represents evil, and that failure to defeat

¹² G. Dudeney, N. Hockly & M. Pegrum, *Digital Literacies* (Abingdon, 2013), p. 14.

¹³ J. Juul, *Half-Real: Videogames between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 90-1.

¹⁴ The term was coined by C. Hocking, 'Ludonarrative Dissonance in Bioshock', *Click Nothing: Design from a Long Time Ago*, October 7, 2007, https://clicknothing.typepad.com/click_nothing/2007/10/ludonarrative-d.html.

him will lead to catastrophic consequences for humanity. The game's world is linear, as opposed to multicursal or open, and this creates a narrative with a clear beginning and clear end.¹⁵ Lara must move through the game's locations in a predetermined order, and the end is scripted and cannot be altered by the player's actions. The ending shows the victory of Horus over Seth, following the ancient myth. Violence is thus portrayed as a tool to achieve the victory of Horus, resulting in the greater good.

THE MYTH OF HORUS AND SETH: THE ANCIENT SOURCES

The myth of Horus and Seth functions as an important hypotext to *The Last Revelation*. This myth forms part of the Osirian myth-cycle, which relates how Osiris, the king of the gods, is murdered by his brother Seth in an attempt to usurp the throne. He then divides the body into pieces and scatters the pieces throughout Egypt. Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, uses her magic skills to collect the pieces, resurrect Osiris and conceive Horus. As Horus grows up, he is determined to avenge his father and inherit his kingship. This results in a lengthy conflict between Horus and Seth, with Horus ultimately emerging as the rightful king.

The most complete Pharaonic source for the myth is the Late Egyptian literary text *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, which dates to the 20th dynasty.¹⁶ This text portrays the conflict between Horus and Seth as a difficult legal dispute, which starts out as verbal sparring and argumentation in the divine court. The pantheon of gods tries to decide who should inherit the kingship of Osiris. However, this proves to be difficult as the gods are divided in opinion, with some supporting Seth and others supporting Horus. As the gods are unable to reach a consensus, Horus and Seth resort to trickery and physical fighting. However, the two are equally underhanded and physically strong, and the other gods therefore seek advice from Osiris, the ruler of the underworld. Osiris insists that the kingship should be awarded to his son Horus, threatening to send his deadly messengers to any god who disobeys his request. Horus is then finally proclaimed the victor, and Seth himself agrees to acknowledge Horus as the legitimate king.

¹⁵ Following the definitions of E. Aarseth: 'A narrative theory of games', May 2012, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Espen_Aarseth/publication/254006015_A_narrative_theory_of_games/links/57fb37a708ae280dd0bf9983/A-narrative-theory-of-games.pdf.

¹⁶ Translated by W. Kelly Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (Cairo, 2003), pp. 91-103.

In the ludonarrative, Seth's imprisonment in a coffin is an intertextual reference to the murder of Osiris as recorded by Plutarch in his Greek essay collection *Moralia* from the 1st century AD.¹⁷ In this version, a coffin is the murder weapon used by Seth, identified here with the Greek monster Typhon, to murder Osiris. In this story, Seth has previously measured Osiris' body in order to ensure that the coffin fits only him, and he accomplishes his goal of entombing Osiris in the coffin through an elaborate ruse. The ludonarrative thus keeps the murder weapon of this hypotext, but Seth's role is inverted so that he becomes the victim rather than the murderer. The concept of the release of Seth is also derived from Plutarch's version, which states that Seth's release from his bound state and subsequent battle with Horus is a cyclical recurring event on a cosmic scale.¹⁸

As an adaptation of the myth of Horus and Seth, the ludonarrative retains several features; the conflict between the two gods, the use of a coffin as a murder weapon, and the ultimate victory of Horus over Seth. However, the myth is re-worked and embedded in an apocalyptic framework derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is also noteworthy that *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* is somewhat ambiguous in that both Horus and Seth are portrayed as potential candidates for the kingship of Osiris, with neither god being the obvious heir. This ambiguity does not translate into the game adaptation, which reframes the conflict as a clear-cut battle between good and evil according to a Biblical model. Furthermore, *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* is a story entirely about gods, and human beings therefore play no role in the myth. By contrast, *The Last Revelation* is essentially a story about humans and their actions within the moral universe in which they exist. The other gods of the Egyptian pantheon are only vaguely alluded to and play no role in the narrative.¹⁹ The perceived need to adapt the myth in this manner suggests that the original story is somehow too alien and exotic to be relevant to the intended audience, and this view of ancient Egypt as a type of 'other' has long-established roots in the West.

¹⁷ Plut. *Mor.* Translated by F. Cole Babbitt, *Plutarch Moralia Volume V* (Cambridge, 1936).

¹⁸ Babbitt, *Plutarch*, p. 105.

¹⁹ The other gods are primarily referred to via in-game objects associated with them; Lara must use an object referred to as the Hathor Effigy to gain entry into Cleopatra's throne room, and she locates four artefacts referred to as the Stones of Atum, Khepri, Re and Maat in the underground passages underneath the Sphinx. Isis is explicitly shown in the form of a statue in Cleopatra's palace.

EGYPTOMANIA AND THE 'OTHERING' OF ANCIENT EGYPT

The concept of heritage is intimately linked to ownership; any one heritage is believed to belong to one group but not another. The past, real or imagined, can be used as a tool for shaping a collective identity in the present, particularly in emerging nation states and newly independent countries.²⁰ Egyptology as a subject is not taught at school level in Western countries, and ancient Egyptian texts are not generally considered to be part of 'our' heritage. In Western scholarship, ancient Egypt has often been studied under the umbrella of 'Oriental studies', and this classification is still used by a number of major universities and museum collections. The subject is thus distinguished from the study of Greek and Latin, typically studied under the term 'Classics.' These languages are thought to form an important part of the cultural heritage and national identity of many European countries. 'The Orient' is by definition not part of the West, and is perceived as a type of 'other' that is located outside the boundaries of familiar Western society.²¹ For this reason, Western game developers and audiences are much more likely to be familiar with Greek and Roman writers than with ancient-Egyptian texts.

Pharaonic texts never explicitly describe the death of Osiris and the events leading up to the conflict of Horus and Seth, likely due to a religious taboo. Plutarch's *Moralia* therefore represents the most complete ancient account of Osirian myth-cycle. As such, introductory books on ancient Egyptian mythology and religion tend to use the writings of Plutarch as their primary source material on the death of Osiris and the resulting conflict of Horus and Seth.²² This kind of literature is much more accessible for a non-specialist audience, defined here as an audience without in-depth knowledge of archaeology and/or ancient Egyptian history, language and culture. By extension, Plutarch's account therefore almost inevitably forms the majority of popular culture's inspiration and source material.

The game recreates multiple well-known locations in Egypt; the Valley of the Kings, the Karnak temple, Cairo's City of the Dead and Citadel of Saladin, the Great Library in Alexandria, and the Giza plateau. The in-game textures are taken from real-life objects and images, but these images are scattered around in a rather haphazard manner

²⁰ D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country - revisited* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 99, 499-502.

²¹ E. W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York, 1978), p. 67.

²² See for example L. Gahlin, *The Myths and Mythology of Ancient Egypt: A Comprehensive Guide to the Mysteries of Creation, Life and Death* (London, 2003), pp. 58-9. J. Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2001), pp. 25-7.

without much regard for context or time period. For example, the walls of the tomb of Semerkhet in the Karnak temple are decorated with Ptolemaic images of Amun-Serapis, the walls of the tomb of Seth are decorated with numerous cartouches inscribed with the name of Tutankhamun, and the Ptolemaic palace in Alexandria is filled with Amarna-period wall paintings. The purpose of these images is not to associate the narrative or the locations with any particular rulers or time periods, but quite simply function as shorthand for 'ancient Egyptian'. To an Egyptologist these visuals may appear random and nonsensical, but this usage of such images follows a long tradition already established by various 'revival' movements.

Western artistic and architectural revival traditions, such as the so-called Egyptomania that emerged in the West following Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, take particular subjects or motifs from ancient art and use them in a new context, thereby constructing new meanings for these images.²³ Egyptomania can be loosely defined as a fascination with ancient Egyptian history and visual culture. Jean-Marcel Humbert argues that the most important feature of Egyptomania is the practice of borrowing the most visually-striking elements from ancient Egyptian art and using them in new contexts such as architecture, cinema, theatre and computer games.²⁴ Images are chosen because they are thought to somehow express the essence of the ancient culture, and their original meaning is treated as largely irrelevant. This kind of treatment is typical of orientalist works, in which objects from ancient, non-Western cultures are significant insofar as they reflect Western impressions of the society in question.²⁵ As such, *The Last Revelation* is an expression of Egyptomania and an attempt by the writers to cater to contemporary audiences' fascination with the ancient culture.

²³ For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see S. Moser, 'Reconstructing Ancient Worlds: Reception Studies, Archaeological Representation and the Interpretation of Ancient Egypt', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 22 (4) (2015), pp. 1263-1308.

²⁴ J.J. Humbert, 'Egyptomania: a current concept from the Renaissance to postmodernism', in J. Humbert, M. Pantazzi & C. Ziegler (eds.) *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930* (Paris & Ottawa, 1994), p. 21.

²⁵ Focus on particular objects, decontextualised from its culture and time period, is also a driving principle behind pseudo-archaeology, which is typically a Western pursuit fuelled by racist and anti-indigenous biases. G. Moshenska, 'Alternative archaeologies', in G. Moshenska (ed.) *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology* (London, 2017), pp. 122-137 (p. 126). P. Andersson, 'Alternative Archaeology: Many Pasts in Our Present', *Numen* 59 (2/3)(2012), pp. 125-137 (pp. 132-3).

TOMB RAIDER AND THE LEGACY OF INDIANA JONES

The *Indiana Jones* franchise, whose protagonist is a university professor of archaeology, is another example of the embedding of ancient Egyptian visuals in a contemporary narrative. This franchise is the spiritual predecessor of Tomb Raider, and the games contain several visual references to the character. In the original *Tomb Raider*, released in 1996, Lara's mansion contains the Ark from the 1981 film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In *Tomb Raider III*, released in 1998, we see that her private artefact collection includes the Chachapoyan Idol from the opening scene of the same film. In the prologue of *The Last Revelation*, Lara finds a skeleton next to Indiana Jones' characteristic hat and whip. The parallels between Lara and Indiana Jones are thus made obvious, and the audience is therefore likely to base their expectations of the game on their previous experiences with the *Indiana Jones* franchise. The two franchises have a number of similarities; the athletic and adventurous hero-protagonist encounters and outwits unscrupulous rivals, there are ancient ruins filled with puzzles and booby-traps, and the protagonist seeks mysterious artefacts that channel supernatural powers.

Raiders of the Lost Ark parallels *The Last Revelation* in that a Biblical narrative is set in Egypt. The film follows Indiana Jones as he searches for the Ark of the Covenant, which is revealed to have been brought to Egypt in antiquity by Pharaoh 'Shishak.' In the fictionalised city of Tanis, the Ark is hidden in an underground chamber, where it is guarded by frightening statues of Anubis. We are told that the Judeo-Christian god caused the chamber to be hidden in a sandstorm, and Indiana Jones must therefore use his skills and knowledge to locate it. In doing so he must use the so-called Headpiece to the Staff of Ra, a fictional Egyptian-manufactured medallion inscribed with paleo-Hebrew letters. Despite the ancient-Egyptian visuals, the Biblical worldview is shown to be ultimately authoritative; the Ark really does contain the power of God, and the impious Nazis are punished with death when they attempt to uncover the Ark's contents. The statues of Anubis are shown to be utterly useless in protecting the Ark, and only the divine forces inside the Ark can punish the transgressors. By extension of this, the audience can infer that the Egyptian religion is superstitious and foolish, and the Judeo-Christian tradition is correct.

As has been noted by Peter Hiscock, cinematic films embody contemporary stereotypes and mythologies even when the subject matter is historical, and this is particularly apparent in adventure-archaeology film franchises like *Indiana Jones* and

Tomb Raider.²⁶ The same principle applies to computer games. As such, computer games that deal with archaeology are influenced by cultural perceptions of what archaeologists do and the abilities they possess, and by contemporary ideas regarding ancient cultures, magic and the supernatural. Like their cinematic equivalents, computer games embed the archaeological activities of their protagonists in a supernatural world. Cornelius Holtorf has argued that non-specialist audiences are not particularly concerned with the work of academic archaeologists, and are instead much more likely to respond favourably to fictional portrayals of archaeologists as adventurous heroes.²⁷ This type of fiction allows the audience to experience the enjoyable and exciting aspects of archaeology. For this reason portrayals of archaeology in popular culture are rarely, if ever, aimed at archaeologists, and therefore do not require scientific accuracy.

In the context of adventure-archaeology films and games, certain ancient objects are presented as inherently valuable and important, whilst others can be dismissed as irrelevant and discarded. These valuable objects act as 'MacGuffins' and drive the narrative; the story essentially takes the form of a quest, with the MacGuffin as the ultimate goal and an end in itself.²⁸ As such, archaeology is not presented as a meticulous science, but as the search for particular objects. There is little attempt to date these objects accurately, and their origin is seen as largely irrelevant altogether. This same principle is operative in the ludonarrative space, as Lara does not record her finds or take any photographs of the ancient ruins she explores. The 'irrelevant' objects both drive the narrative and serve to provide the player with agency; the player is encouraged to destroy ceramic pots and wooden chests, as these frequently and inexplicably contain ammunition for weapons and the medical supplies Lara requires to heal her injuries.²⁹ It is also necessary to smash ancient doors and walls in order to progress through the in-game locations. As such, ancient architectural features are treated as obstacles to overcome rather than sources of historical information. In reality, pottery is of course very important to archaeologists as it is used for dating purposes. This is another example

²⁶ P. Hiscock, 'Cinema, Supernatural Archaeology, and the Hidden Human Past', *Numen* 59 (2/3) (2012), pp.156-177 (p. 163).

²⁷ C. Holtorf, *Archaeology is a Brand! The Meaning of Archaeology in Contemporary Popular Culture* (Walnut Creek, 2007), p. 103.

²⁸ G. Moshenska, 'Archaeologists in Popular Culture', in G. Moshenska (ed.) *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology* (London, 2017), pp. 151-165 (pp. 157-8).

²⁹ E. Aarseth (2012) notes that the malleability of objects affects both the player's freedom and the narrative control the game itself has.

of ludonarrative dissonance; there is a lack of harmony between Lara's profession as an archaeologist and her treatment of ancient objects.

The Tomb Raider games make little effort to explain the origin of the relevant artefacts, which has the effect of shrouding them in mystery. There is an implication that such powerful objects cannot have an origin or maker to speak of, and that their existence is a mystery beyond human understanding.³⁰ Due to this internal logic, there is no real attempt to date the Ankh or establish a timeframe for Seth's imprisonment in the coffin. What is important to the narrative is that the Ankh is 'ancient' and possesses mystical powers. These qualities are implied to transcend time and place, which allows the Ankh to be transported between different locations, at different points in history, without losing any of its significance or purpose.

THE BIBLICAL AND APOCALYPTIC FRAMEWORK

The release of Seth is treated as an event taking place at the end of a linear timeline, which displays a strong Biblical influence. Semerkhet's prophecy predicts that the battle between Horus and Seth is to take place on New Year's Eve in 1999, right before the start of the year 2000. This timeline only makes sense in relation to the birth of Jesus Christ, and would therefore have been a meaningless designation of time in Pharaonic Egypt. The purpose of this timeline is thus to make the narrative relevant to the contemporary concerns regarding the turn of the millennium. During the late 90s there was much speculation in Western media that the new millennium would cause widespread problems with computer software, as computers could only recognise two-digit year entries. There was even some speculation that these problems would cause widespread system malfunctions in chemical and nuclear plants, leading to cataclysmic events.³¹ Within some sects of Christianity, particularly in the United States, there was a strong belief that the Second Coming of Christ as described in the Book of Revelation would coincide with the new millennium and begin the Biblical apocalypse.³² The timing of the

³⁰ The concept of the unknowable object of supernatural or non-human origin is another common feature of pseudo-archaeology. Erich von Däniken hypothesised that many ancient objects are too technologically advanced to have been manufactured by human cultures, and must therefore be extra-terrestrial in origin. E. von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* (London, 1969).

³¹ R. F. Bennett, 'The Y2K Problem', *Science* 284 (5413) (1999), pp. 438-439 (p. 438). R. Chepesiuk, 'Y2K: The Moment of Truth', *Environmental Health Perspective* 107, no. 5 (1999), pp. 252-255 (p. 252).

³² A. Hoplight Tapia, 'Techno-Armageddon: The Millennial Christian Response to Y2K', *Review of Religious Research* 43 (3) (2002), pp. 266-286 (p. 269).

game's release, as well as its title, played on contemporary fears surrounding the end times. However, whilst the Y2K hysteria in the media primarily centred on technology, the game rejects the premise of a technological apocalypse. Indeed, the in-game dialogue never uses the phrase 'Y2K' at all, preferring instead the New Testament term 'Armageddon'.³³ The reason for this is that an apocalypse of a technological nature would not readily fit into the narrative of the skilled hero-archaeologist who navigates a hidden supernatural world using their esoteric knowledge of ancient cultures and artefacts.

One of the fragments of Semerkhet's prophecy is recorded on a Hebrew scroll, which refers to Seth as 'the bringer of plagues'. This phrase, combined with the usage of the Hebrew language, serves to make the relationship between Semerkhet's prophecy and the Bible explicit. The Biblical format of the prophecy imbues it with authority, and the audience is meant to understand that it is infallible. In a cutscene we are shown that the release of Seth causes the skies to turn dark, which echoes the plague of darkness in Exodus 10:21:

Then the LORD said to Moses: 'Stretch out your hand towards the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt – darkness that can be felt.' So Moses stretched out his hand towards the sky, and total darkness covered all of Egypt for three days.³⁴

The relationship between Seth and the plague of darkness is further emphasised by the Hebrew Scroll, in which he is described as 'the bringer of plagues'.

This Biblical framework also influences the game's visuals. Seth is portrayed as a man with the head of the characteristic Seth animal, and this animal is conflated with the jackal due to the visual similarity between the two. Jackals make a number of appearances in conjunction with Seth or his proxy Von Croy. They are depicted with black fur and glowing red eyes, and act as dangerous in-game enemies. Their visual appearance and aggressive behaviour imbues them with supernatural and 'demonic' qualities. In ancient Egyptian iconography, the gods Anubis, Wepwawet and Duamutef all have jackal forms.³⁵

³³ Although the term 'Ἀρμαγεδών' only occurs in Revelation 16:16, where the meaning is somewhat obscure, the term has become synonymous with 'apocalypse' in colloquial speech. For a recent discussion on the term and its meaning, see M. Jauhiainen 'The OT Background to "Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16) Revisited', *Novum Testamentum* 47 (4) (2005), pp. 381-393.

³⁴ *Holy Bible New International Version*.

³⁵ The iconography bears strong similarities with the golden jackal (*Canis aureus*). As this canine has light-coloured fur, the black colouring in Egyptian iconography is likely a reference to the fertile black soil, a symbol of resurrection. See D. J. Osborn, *The Mammals of Ancient Egypt* (Warminster, 1998), pp. 55-79.

These gods are associated with the funerary realm; Anubis is the god of embalming, Wepwawet clears the obstacles faced by the deceased on the journey to the afterlife, and Duamutef is the protector of inner organs as one of the four Sons of Horus. Although these deities are perfectly benign in the Egyptian religion, contemporary audiences are more likely to interpret their jackal appearance as fierce and malevolent.³⁶ As such, the jackal gods do not easily fit into the Biblical good-versus-evil paradigm, and the narrative resolves this issue by absorbing them into Seth's orbit.

Horus is depicted according to ancient-Egyptian tradition as a man with a golden falcon head. However, the game alters his appearance by providing him with armour. This armour is the object that allows him to physically manifest and defeat Seth. The armour is not an element from the Pharaonic myth and does not feature in the iconography of Horus prior to the Roman period.³⁷ By contrast, the concept of the armour-clad divine saviour is widespread in Christianity, both in textual and artistic traditions.³⁸ Several figures are commonly depicted in iconography wearing armour; Michael the Archangel and the saints George, Demetrios and Theodore.³⁹ The three saints are often depicted on horseback, spearing enemies in the shape of humans or dragons, fulfilling the role of *milites Christi*.⁴⁰ Michael is frequently portrayed standing on top of a dragon, a representation of Satan, forcing the monster into submission with his spear or sword.⁴¹ As such, the armour of Horus signals to Western audiences that he fulfils the role of these holy Christian beings, and functions to visually conflate the conflict of Horus and Seth with the conflict of the Christian pantheon and Satan.

Lara ultimately entombs Seth in the chamber beneath the pyramid of Khufu by sealing it shut with the Ankh. The Ankh is a visually striking symbol that is instantly recognisable as 'Egyptian', but it is also similar to the Christian cross and serves to highlight how the battle between Horus and Seth is essentially Biblical in nature. The

³⁶ Contemporary visual representations of Anubis typically portray him as warlike and aggressive. See T. G. Wilfong, *Death Dogs: The Jackal Gods of Ancient Egypt* (Ann Arbor, 2015), pp. 108-9.

³⁷ The gods Horus, Bes, Anubis are all depicted in military armour during the Roman period. See D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 3-4, plates 1 & 14. A Roman-period window panel in the Louvre Museum (accession number 4850) portrays Horus as a Roman soldier on horseback, bearing striking similarity to later depictions of the warrior saints.

³⁸ Paul encourages Christians to take up the 'armour of God' and the 'shield of faith' in Ephesians 6:10-18, thus framing the cosmic struggle between good and evil as a military battle.

³⁹ See C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (New York, 2003), pp. 44-94 & 109-44.

⁴⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the warrior ideal in Western medieval Christianity, see K. Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge, 2011).

⁴¹ R. Freeman Johnson, *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge, 2005). pp. 33-4.

Ankh is a tool that is used by Horus, through the actions of his proxies, to contain and neutralise Seth's destructive powers. Horus's falcon-headed appearance can make him appear alien and even ferocious to a contemporary audience, but the armour and the Ankh render him instantly more recognisable and acceptable as a representative of good. These tools transform him from an animal-headed 'other' to a familiar figure modelled on Jesus Christ, St Michael and the Christian 'warrior saints'. This reinforces how he stands in direct opposition to Seth, who represents the cosmic forces of evil and fulfils a role akin to Satan. Seth's demonic nature is highlighted by his ability to possess Werner Von Croy, the game's human antagonist and Lara's former mentor.

FOR THE GREATER GOOD: ETHICS AND THE TOMB RAIDER UNIVERSE

Von Croy, an arrogant self-proclaimed 'adventurer-archaeologist,' acts as a rival to Lara and schemes to steal the Ankh from her. He stands in sharp opposition to Lara in his dismissal of ancient curses and prophecies as 'hocus-pocus,' and he searches for ancient artefacts purely to achieve fame and glory. Indeed, the game's prologue shows us how he suffers a debilitating leg injury in the Cambodian ruins of Angkor Wat as a result of his failure to heed a written warning protecting the temple's powerful artefact. It is implied that his greed and arrogance make him easy to manipulate and possess, whereas Lara takes the prophecy at face value and does not delay in following its instructions. Her diligence, sense of duty and respect towards the artefact enable her to overcome the obstacles along the way and ultimately save the world by preventing the apocalypse.

This paradigm of the victorious believer versus the non-believer who inevitably gets his comeuppance follows a pattern well established in adventure-archaeology media, as they explore essentially religious issues such as redemption, salvation, faith and obedience.⁴² In this game, 'faith' constitutes a firm belief in the supernatural origins and powers of the artefacts and the prophecy. This belief results in Lara's obedience to the prophecy's instructions, which she adheres to for the greater good rather than for personal gain. This signals to the audience that she is good-natured and has a strong internal moral compass, and therefore worthy of victory.

Throughout the course of the game Lara kills a large number of people, primarily the thugs hired by Von Croy. Violent films and computer games raise the question of whether

⁴² P. Hiscock, *Cinema*, p. 164.

the audience should root for a character capable of murdering people in cold blood, and this is at the core a philosophical issue.⁴³ By presenting this problem, films and games allow the audience to explore issues such as the value of a human life, what it means to be a good person, and whether one should sacrifice the few to save the many.

The internal rules of the Tomb Raider games prevent the player from playing Lara as 'evil.' Although each game forms a stand-alone story with a clear beginning and end, the games all follow the same paradigm; Lara searches for a legendary artefact with supernatural powers, whilst competing with and outwitting evil organisations and individuals who seek the artefacts for selfish gain. As the heroine of the game's universe Lara always triumphs, and ends up storing the powerful artefact in a secret room in her mansion so that it will never fall into the wrong hands. She thus acts as the guardian of such artefacts, protecting the world from their destructive powers. The player is never presented with moral dilemmas, and fights on the 'good' side by default. A recurrent theme is that Lara is simply forced to kill, as the act of killing is carried out both in self-defence and for the greater good. Failure to kill the in-game enemies would allow Seth and his proxy Von Croy to be victorious, which would ultimately result in the annihilation of humanity. As such, Lara's moral ambiguity is neutralised, and this allows the audience to recognise her as a hero and as an agent acting on behalf of the good side of the cosmic battle.

NEAR EASTERN GODS AS DEMONIC 'OTHERS'

Seth's role as the representative of evil is emphasised both by in-game dialogue and cinematic cutscenes. One such cutscene shows the possessed Von Croy accompanied by a swarm of locusts. In the book of Exodus a swarm of locusts is the eighth plague of Egypt, signalling divine displeasure.⁴⁴ In the 1977 film *Exorcist II: The Heretic*, the antagonist Pazuzu manifests through a swarm of locusts. There is a clear parallel between Pazuzu and Seth in that they are both Near Eastern deities of somewhat ambiguous nature, which in their original religious contexts allows them to perform both negative and positive functions. Pazuzu is presented in neo-Assyrian art as a monstrous winged creature, and he was seen as the bringer of winds and famine.⁴⁵ However, his image also served an

⁴³ For an analysis on the game player as a moral agent who is presented with ethical dilemmas, see M. Sicart, *The Ethics of Computer Games* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 61-106.

⁴⁴ Exodus 10:12-15.

⁴⁵ J. Black & A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Austin, 1992), pp. 147-8.

important apotropaic, protective and healing function.⁴⁶ In the *Exorcist* franchise he is re-conceptualised within a Catholic framework as an evil demon with a malevolent attitude towards humans and the ability to possess human bodies. Although he has distinctly supernatural abilities such as telekinesis and mindreading, Pazuzu is neither divine nor omnipotent. He also is shown to be below Satan in the hierarchy of demons.

Like Horus and Seth in the ludonarrative, Pazuzu relies on human agency and powerful artefacts to achieve his goals. He cannot simply inhabit the body of whomever he wishes, but must essentially be invited through communication with the human host. The artefact in question is the Ouija board, which functions as a conduit for Pazuzu and portal of communication between the physical and spiritual realms. However, despite having been demoted from deity to demon, Pazuzu's powers remain real and dangerous, and he can only be defeated by Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Christ also relies on human agency and a powerful artefact to defeat Pazuzu. This artefact is the book *Rituale Romanum*, which contains the ritual of exorcism. The exorcism must be carried out by ordained Catholic priests, acting as proxies for Christ.

The phenomenon of re-imagining Near Eastern gods within a Biblical framework is an extension of the Orientalist dichotomy between the West and the East. Within this dichotomy Greek and Roman gods are admired and made the subject of numerous pieces of art and literature, whereas 'Eastern' deities are conceptualised as 'others'.⁴⁷ Such deities are particularly problematic when their nature is ambiguous, as is the case with Pazuzu and Seth. They are therefore made comprehensible by simplifying their nature and embedding them within a dualistic good-versus-evil framework derived from the Western Judeo-Christian tradition. The deities, and by extension their worshippers, are aligned with Satan.

The re-conceptualisation of Seth also finds an ancient parallel in Plutarch's *Moralia*, which refers to Seth by the name Typhon. In Greek mythology Typhon is not a deity, but the monstrous offspring of the primordial entities Gaia and Tartarus. Typhon acts as a chaotic and destructive force that threatens the established divine order, and attempts to overthrow Zeus and establish himself as the ruler of the cosmos. He is ultimately defeated

⁴⁶ An Assyrian magical-medical tablet from Nimrud calls for a Pazuzu statue to be placed on the patient's head. See M. J. Geller, "Fragments of Magic, Medicine and Mythology from Nimrud", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 63 (3) (2000), pp. 331-339 (p. 336).

⁴⁷ The use of Classical mythology in the Western artistic tradition goes back to the Renaissance. See for example L. Freedman, *Classical Myths in Italian Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge, 2015).

by Zeus' thunderbolts and buried beneath Mount Etna.⁴⁸ The identification with Typhon suggests that Seth had no direct equivalent in the Greek pantheon, and that his ambiguity made him unrecognisable to Greeks as a deity. As such, he was re-conceptualised in Greek literature as an enemy of the gods and the established cosmic order. This same basic principle applies to the portrayal of Seth in *The Last Revelation*.

THE EGYPTIAN CURSE: CINEMATIC PARALLELS

In addition to the Biblical framework, the ludonarrative also borrows elements from the concept of the ancient-Egyptian curse. The ludonarrative displays several similarities with the film *The Mummy*, starring Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz, which was also released in 1999. This film is an adaptation of the 1932 film by the same name, starring Boris Karloff, with the storyline and characters substantially fleshed out. The basic premise is the same as that of the game; an evil being is released from his coffin-prison by an unwitting treasure hunter through the vehicle of a legendary artefact, and this evil being has the potential to bring about the apocalypse. In the Mummy franchise, the evil being is the ancient Egyptian priest Imhotep.

The 1999 film employs the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* as the powerful artefact in question, which is presented here as an actual book rather than a collection of papyri. This book causes the mummified corpse of Imhotep to reanimate when read aloud, and he returns to life as a semi-divine being with supernatural abilities. There is an ambiguous element to Imhotep's nature; he is shown to be motivated primarily by love for the long-dead Egyptian concubine Anck-Su-Namun, whom he wishes to resurrect. However, his sinister character is emphasised by his murderous actions and his ability to exercise mind control over innocent individuals. As such, his release threatens doom to humanity, and this looming apocalypse must be prevented by the heroic adventurer Rick O'Connell and his learned sidekick Evelyn Carnahan by locating another legendary artefact, the fictional *Book of the Living*. This book's sacred spells will banish Imhotep to the realm of the dead and restore the world to its proper order. The film draws on Biblical imagery, and Imhotep's release is accompanied by the Ten Plagues. The theme of faith is an important one; at the start of the narrative Rick is self-serving, flippant and utterly sceptical of the supernatural, and he rejects the notion of

⁴⁸ W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 127 & 280.

Egyptian curses. At the end of the film we see him as a transformed and respectful believer in the supernatural, who saves Evelyn and the world from the apocalypse.

The imprisonment and release of Imhotep and Seth both function like a curse. In popular culture Egyptian curses are associated with particular places, such as tombs, or with particular objects, such as mummies. Being in the vicinity of or possessing such objects is presented as a direct cause of bad luck, illness or death through the workings of mysterious magic.⁴⁹ In *The Mummy*, the curse is triggered by the *Book of the Dead*, and must be ended by the *Book of the Living*. In *The Last Revelation* the curse is triggered by removing the Ankh, and the Armour of Horus and the binding tablet are required to end it. The film and the game both follow a pattern in which Egyptian curses are easy to trigger, but difficult to end. As such, this type of media has a didactic element; archaeology and treasure hunting are conflated, and both are presented as inherently risky and dangerous.

This perceived danger is reinforced by the ending of *The Last Revelation*. After having completed the ritual required to allow Horus to defeat Seth, Lara is buried alive when the pyramid of Khufu collapses as she attempts to exit. In the final cutscene, she is seen emerging from a dark tunnel, and Von Croy is waiting for her outside. He is now free from his possession and remorseful of his actions, but is forced to watch helplessly as the pyramid collapses with Lara still in the tunnel. As such, both Lara and Von Croy are punished for their actions; Lara faces an almost certain death as a result of her initial recklessness, and Von Croy is left traumatised by seeing the consequences of his greed and arrogance. This theme continues in the two subsequent games; although Lara is shown to have survived the collapse of the pyramid, she and Von Croy are both permanently changed and affected as a result of their experiences in Egypt. As such, the Egyptian curse is presented as having far-reaching and permanent consequences. The overarching message is that ancient artefacts are vehicles for dangerous spiritual forces that should not be tampered with, and even the heroic archaeologist places his/her life at risk by pursuing such objects.

⁴⁹ J. Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World* (London, 2006), p. 4. See also R. Luckhurst *The Mummy's Curse* (Oxford, 2012).

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the game's supernatural narrative continues a pattern already established by the previous games and other similar franchises like *Indiana Jones*, in which archaeologists are portrayed as heroes who possess special skills and knowledge. Within this established pattern, the protagonist must face and compete against a rival who seeks ancient artefacts for fame and fortune. In the game, Lara fulfils the role of the hero-archaeologist who overcomes adversity, triumphs over her greedy rival and redeems herself through faith and obedience. The apocalyptic theme reinforces her heroic nature and transforms her from treasure hunter to saviour of the world.

The game's Egyptian images are not intended to convey historically-accurate information, but are instead a way to compress and contain 'ancient Egypt' in bitesize chunks for easy consumption. In other words, the images are an attempt to present ancient Egypt 'in a nutshell' for the purpose of entertainment rather than education.⁵⁰ Egyptomania as a phenomenon in art, architecture and visual media is a result of contemporary audiences' fascination with ancient Egypt, which goes back to the Egyptian expedition of Napoleon in 1798. At the same time, ancient Egypt can be difficult to comprehend due to its exotic otherness, and elements of ancient Egyptian culture are therefore re-interpreted and re-contextualised within a Biblical framework in order to be better comprehended by the audience. Although the ludonarrative is set in Egypt, the overall paradigm of good-versus-evil is derived from a Biblical worldview.

Plutarch's *Moralia* and the Egyptian *Contendings of Horus and Seth* both function as hypotexts for the game's narrative, but the source material has been extensively re-worked. The ancient myth is reframed as a battle between good and evil on a cosmic scale, and the narrative plays out according to a linear timeline based on a Biblical model. The year 2000 is associated with a global threat, and the narrative follows the

⁵⁰ The link between computer games and education has been more emphasised in recent years and is explored to a great extent in the 2017 game *Assassin's Creed: Origins* (Ubisoft Montreal). The narrative is set in Egypt during the reign of Cleopatra VII, and includes a number of historical figures as supporting characters. The game recreates a large number of real historical locations and monuments, and the player is given the option of exploring Egypt virtually in a combat-free 'educational mode'. See for example A. Webster, "Assassin's Creed Origins' new educational mode is a violence-free tour through ancient Egypt", *The Verge*, 20 February 2018, <https://www.theverge.com/2018/2/20/17033024/assassins-creed-origins-discovery-tour-educational-mode-release>.

Christian convention of framing the threat as a spiritual one in which the forces of good will fight the forces of evil.

Like the cinematic franchises *The Mummy* and *The Exorcist*, the game re-conceptualises an ancient Near Eastern polytheistic religion within a Judeo-Christian framework. In this framework good and evil operate according to a dualistic paradigm, and there is little room for deities of more ambiguous nature and function. As a tool of cultural reception, the ambiguous natures of such deities are simplified and aligned with the Judeo-Christian concept of evil. This serves to make these deities more comprehensible and recognisable to contemporary audiences.

The Biblical framework of these films and game serves to emphasise the authoritative nature of Christianity, which appeals in particular to Christian audiences. In the game, the Biblical narrative also functions as a tool that neutralises some of the otherness of ancient Egypt, and allows the audience to recognise familiar and culturally relevant religious themes such as the apocalypse, salvation, and the importance of faith. The Egyptian setting also allows the audience to experience ancient Egypt virtually whilst exploring non-Biblical themes such as curses, magical artefacts, ancient Egyptian wisdom and hidden history.

The need to adapt ancient source material also suggests that Egyptian gods often appear as alien to a modern audience as they did to many Greek and Roman writers. As such, the Classical reception of ancient Egyptian gods lives on in modern popular culture, filtered through a Biblical lens, where we encounter them in either demonic or angelic guise, fighting cosmic battles that will lead to the destruction or salvation of humanity.

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The *Museum of Lies*: Incorrect facts or advancing knowledge of ancient Egypt?

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Keywords: museum, object, object biography, material culture, Egyptology

“Die Lüge im Dienste der Wahrheit wäscht den Staub des Alltags von den Sternen.”¹

(The lie in the service of truth washes the dust of the daily routine off the stars.)²

INTRODUCTION

In his seminal work *The Mind of Egypt*, Egyptologist Jan Assmann expressed very prominently the connection of memory, knowledge and reception: ‘We are what we remember, which is another way of saying that we are nothing other than the stories we can tell about ourselves and our past.’³ This statement is not only valuable for the remembrance of specific pasts in area studies or specific historical disciplines, but is equally applicable to reception studies. To remember the past helps to balance and contend with the present – or, to follow Assmann again: ‘Narratives look to the past in order to shed light on the present; memories are the fictions of coherence out of which we organize our experience.’⁴

Following the premise set out by Assmann, this paper will introduce the activities of, and ideas behind, the *Museum of Lies* project which is part of an annual cycle of exhibitions around Egyptian artefacts belonging to the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales (UK). The *Museum of Lies* is the latest component of the Cyfarthfa Castle Project which started in 2011/12 with cooperation between the museum and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Wales (UWTSD), Lampeter Campus led

¹ Lügenmuseum (ed.), *Lügenmuseum: Katalog zur Ausstellung* (Gantikow, 2007), Front cover.

² Trans. K. Zinn.

³ J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and meaning in the time of the pharaohs* (New York, 2002), p.10.

⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

by the author. The overarching venture is aimed at the literal and cultural (re-)discovery of ancient Egyptian artefacts.⁵

The Egyptian artefacts of Cyfarthfa Castle Museum could be subsumed under what Alice Stevenson defines as *scattered finds* which are to be found 'between national museums, public schools, masonic lodges, royal palaces, universities and auction houses.'⁶ Most of the objects dealt with in this project fall under the category of being *unassuming*. As this regional museum serves the South Wales valleys by offering an insight in the daily life and history of this region, the museum personnel found it very difficult to incorporate the Egyptian collection into the narrative of their permanent exhibition. The situation is complicated even more by the fact that most of the objects are unprovenanced. Nothing or very little is known about where they came from, when they were acquired, or if there were several owners in modern times. The objects lack their archaeological and – in most parts – collection records and have therefore lost much of the information traditionally seen as being necessary to establish an object biography.⁷

The entire project surrounding the Egyptian collection at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum is focused on 'unpacking the collection', with the intention of tracing the 'networks of material and social agency.'⁸ In order to do this, participants such as researchers,

⁵ For a short overview to this project see K. Zinn, 'Object Biographies and Political Expectations: Egyptian Artefacts, Welsh Heritage and the Regional Community Museum', in G. Rosati and M.C. Guidotti (eds.), *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Egyptologists, Florence, Italy 23-30 August 2015* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 693-700; and the following introductory project documentary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx616808TjE>. For the collection, see P. Nicholson and S. Stevenson, 'The Egyptian collection at Cyfarthfa Castle, Merthyr Tydfil', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 12 (1998), pp. 11-13.

⁶ A. Stevenson, *Scattered Finds: Archaeology, Egyptology and Museums* (London, 2019), p. 1.

⁷ It would take far too long to discuss *object biography* in the scope of this article, though it is one of the main underlying concepts. For further discussion on objects and their value see A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge, 1986) – especially the chapters by A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the production of value', *Ibid.*, pp. 3-63, and I. Kopytoff ('The cultural biography of things: commodization as process', *Ibid.*, pp. 64-91). Following on from that, we have seen extensive discussion of objects, their value and agency as well as their different life-cycles over the last 30 years. See also R.A. Joyce and S.D. Gillespie (eds.), *Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice* (Santa Fe, 2015); L. Malafouris and C. Renfrew, 'The cognitive life of things: Archaeology, material engagement and the extended mind' in L. Malafouris and C. Renfrew (eds.) *The cognitive life of things: Recasting the boundaries of the mind* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 1-12.; and J. Joy, 'Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives' in *World Archaeology*, 41 (2009) 4, pp.540-556.; Y. Marshall and C. Gosden (eds), 'The cultural biography of objects' in *World Archaeology*, 31(1999) 2, pp. 169–320. For Egypt, see: L.M. Meskell, *Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt: Material Biographies Past and Present* (Oxford, 2004); and P.Š. Rezníček, 'Artefact (Re)contextualization: Comparative Context Analysis from the Egyptian Collection in Zagreb', in J. Chyla, K. Rosińska-Balik, J. Dębowska Ludwin and C. Walsh (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 17 (Oxford, 2017), pp. 209–224.

⁸ As such, this project is addresses the title of S. Byrne et al [*Unpacking the collection: Networks of material and social agency in the museum*. (New York, 2011).] and seeks to contribute to this discussion. S. Byrne, et al., *Unpacking the collection: Networks of material and social agency in the museum*. (New York, 2011).

students, artists, and the wider public create academic object biographies – making them available for Egyptologists – and also generate their own narratives about the objects by telling stories surrounding these artefacts to interest the audience of the museum and other involved communities. This two-tier approach connects these unprovenanced ancient objects with the modern identities of the several communities.

This spans from the local community of Merthyr Tydfil in rural Wales. This is the location of the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum which houses collections from the Crawshay family and other acquisitions. The second distinct community is the students of UWTSD in Lampeter 75 miles to the west who are involved in primary research and as a consequence offer the objects to a wider community around Lampeter – the population in this area, local school children and visitors. The final community connected to the artefacts is the international academy of scholars. The Lampeter community and academics were interested in the project's intent to bring the objects back to life due to the fact that their – the object's – exhibition and study could hold great interest for a variety of disciplines. All interested parties follow and are actively involved in the simultaneous creation of different types of cultural representations via academic outputs, exhibitions, story-telling, and – since 2017 – a *Museum of Lies*.

This undertaking, which could be called “playing around with your wonderful things”⁹ and lends this paper its name, describes a collection of events, fictional stories and artwork inspired by the shown items. These representations of the *Museum of Lies* are exhibited together with the tangible objects and their traditional Egyptological and archaeological description in order to inspire and draw in the audience beyond traditional discipline-specific narratives. The definition of ‘lies’ is beyond the so-called ‘black lie’ which constitutes anti-social behaviour defining a liar as someone who benefits from deceiving, resulting in the audience being affected by the lie. In the context of this article, ‘lie’ is defined in a provocative way as being the opposite of a perceived (academic) truth which this article intends to challenge. The approach to the *Museum of Lies* exhibition constitutes new perceptions promoting both audience as well as academic discussion. This is especially necessary and helpful when dealing with unprovenanced

⁹ Posterpresentation “Playing around with a few of your favourite things – forgotten Egyptian objects, lost provenance and the *Museum of Lies*”; British Museum, ‘Displaying Egypt’, Annual Egyptological Colloquium, July 19-20, 2018.

objects and their historical complexities. The exhibition draws attention to them and highlights so the complexities involved in defining them.

The inspiration for the *Museum of Lies* came from the *Lügenmuseum* in Radebeul, Germany (formerly in Gantikow, growing out of the *Kunsthaus Babe*)¹⁰ as well as Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* – both as a novel and museum, and the follow-up documentary *The Innocence of Memories*.¹¹ Both museums deliberately displace objects from their common or natural setting by inserting them into a fictional or unusual situation.¹² It is striking that this moving position reaffirms the original idea, meaning or identity the objects (might have) had but did not reveal anymore. A good example to highlight this phenomenon are the below mentioned wooden Sokar birds.¹³ Being robbed of their original setting they appeared to be simple little bird figurines. Both the fictional short stories as well as the triptych created by artist Julie Davis reconnected these ornaments with their original ancient Egyptian idea of flying and overcoming space and time.

The points raised here are to be seen as a work in progress.¹⁴ The approach, set out by the *Museum of Lies* from the beginning, interconnects theory and specific activities with the objects. This article shall not be seen as the final answer to questions such as 'What the extent of academic knowledge is,' or 'What shall be called the truth?' Though this discussion is happening in an academic environment, it has and will have a direct

¹⁰ Lügenmuseum, *Lügenmuseum* and the museum's website <https://luegenmuseum.de/>.

¹¹ For the novel, see O. Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence* (London, 2009). For the museum accompanying the novel: O. Pamuk, *The Innocence of Objects* (New York, 2012) and the museum's website <https://masumiyetmuzesi-en.myshopio.com/>. Following on from the novel and capturing the spirit of the museum as a story or fiction is the documentary *The Innocence of Memories: Orhan Pamuk's Museum & Istanbul*. DVD. Directed by G. Gee (London, 2016).

¹² This article does not give enough space for a more detailed unpacking of the methodologies and approaches undertaken by these two unusual museum projects. The author plans to outline this in a later publication.

¹³ CCM 1694.004 and CCM 1681.004.

¹⁴ An article covering questions about how to reinvigorate dormant Egyptian objects or even collections outside and within non-Egyptian regional museums will be published later this year (K. Zinn, 'Pop up or pop down to beat oblivion? – Reinvigorating dormant Egyptian collections outside and within non-Egyptian regional museums', *CIPEG Journal: Ancient Egyptian & Sudanese Collections and Museums* 3 (2019), forthcoming). Another contribution addressing the seemingly controversial connection of academic object biography, Egyptological truth and stories we have to tell was prepared for a conference on *Displaying Egypt* at the British Museum (19-20 July, 2018). This paper will also discuss questions of how distinctive settings shaped displays of Egypt and vice versa. The main point raised will focus on how non-display/storage/display of certain artefacts influenced research on, and perceptions of, Egypt. Does the formation of (alternative) narratives, as undertaken as part of this project, justify to use lies in the sense of non-academic narratives within the academic research of these objects? What role does narrative play in the part of this project, and how do narratives contribute to material culture research? What problems could such an approach bring for Egyptologists? The contributions of this conference will be prepared for publication in 2020.

relevance for non-Egyptologists and non-scholarly persons. Therefore, this article will further the interrogation of such concepts as the meaning of lies, the interdisciplinary nomenclature of Egyptology, Museum, or Reception Studies, and the relevance of these activities for the displaying Egypt as part of non-traditional approaches.

MUSEUM: CURIOSITY OR TRUTH?

In 1971, Duncan F. Cameron claimed that

The museum provides opportunity for reaffirmation of the faith; it is a place for private and intimate experience, although it is shared with many others; it is, in concept, the temple of the muses where today's personal experience of life can be viewed.¹⁵

He was pleading to define the museum as a forum instead of a temple, but it took nearly 40-50 years until the discussion of the importance of *curiosity* was brought back into the debate.¹⁶ Curiosity is here understood as an eagerness to experience new things or to re-experience already known ideas / phenomena. Nicholas Thomas connects this with the fact that material culture is forming collections and forcing us – in a good way – to tell stories.¹⁷ It is often said that visitors go to museums to participate in the canonised, where all of the things that they expect to see in exhibitions are presented in a tangible form. In contrast to that, it seems that it is the unexpected that we are curious about.¹⁸ Being curious enables a narrative to be formed and recontextualises things. Applied to the particular case of the *Museum of Lies* that means that the objects in the exhibition are appraised beyond scholarly description.¹⁹ The new or altered narrative and its initiated refocus on the object renews the minds of everyone connected with this process, and in a circular fashion reinvigorates the objects talked about and the museum / exhibition displaying these artefacts. The ambiguous *Freude am Neuen* (delight in the new) stands against the oft harboured idea of the museum as a dusty institution harbouring things which are real but dead. The German term *museal* not only means to be pertinent to a museum but also expresses the connotation of being something of a bygone time.

¹⁵ D.F. Cameron, 'The Museum, a Temple or the Forum', *Curator: the Museum Journal* 14 (1971), p. 17.

¹⁶ N. Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are good for in the 21st Century* (London, 2016).

¹⁷ Thomas, *The Return of Curiosity*, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁹ In the context of this particular part of the article, object and thing could be seen synonyms as we are dealing with tangible phenomena which have a physical existence (object). The author is fully aware of the discussion in regard of differences between *object* and *thing* which has a wider definition which includes objects, but also concepts and qualities. See Appadurai, *Social Life of Things* and B. Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2000) 1, pp. 1-22.

How does the curiosity of audiences, inherent possibilities of the objects, and the idea of truth understood as “the real thing” come together? Museums have always had a tainted or troubled relationship with truth, authenticity and “the real thing”.²⁰ Truth is not always the opposite of fiction and the understanding of these terms differs with time and complicates them even further. How does emotion and cognition fit into this? The framework which sets the boundaries for this discussion needs to include the tangible object as well as the intangible world of relations, context and narratives.²¹ What is usually perceived as the *truth* of these objects is often reduced to either their biography before the time of their acquisition, or to the nature prescribed for them by archaeologists and Egyptologists. Traditionally, this comprised the archaeological provenance of the artefacts, often included the function these objects had in their first life cycle and – as recently started – might be extended post discovery with facts about collectors and museums. This correlates to a narrow understanding of object biography and follows a very binary stance in regard to story vs. history.²² However, objects operate at the borderlines between such frontiers, too. These borderlines are also creating truth, despite being ambiguous and incoherent. The power of the tales in-between, of different representations was and still is underestimated and often being silent about.²³

All these questions indicate that this project could have a place in the current discourse around the “museums are not neutral” movement. This development grew out of evaluations of the impact of American art museums and aims to challenge the understanding that museums are objective and unbiased. The *Museum of Lies* takes part in this discourse by questioning what is exhibited and how it is shown, problematising who *should* or *could* make this decision.²⁴ What is the impact of connecting audiences and objects via alternative methods as part of this process?

²⁰ V. Golding, ‘Museums and Truth: The Elephant in the Room’, in A.B. Fromm, V. Golding, and P.B. Rekda, *Museums and Truth* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), p. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ If we go beyond the object, then we can state that here lies one of the reasons for the present sparked debate around the latest ICOM definition of *museums* – see Z. Small, ‘A New Definition of “Museum” Sparks International Debate’, *Hyperallergic*, August 19, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/513858/icom-museum-definition/>.

²⁴ L. Raicovich, ‘Museum Resolution: Dismantle the Myth of Neutrality’, *Walker Art Magazine*, Walker Art Center, January 8, 2019, <https://walkerart.org/magazine/soundboard-museum-resolutions-laura-raicovich>

FORGOTTEN AND UNLOVED?

Very few pieces of the Egyptian collection of Cyfarthfa Castle Museum were exhibited since arriving at the museum. Most objects having been housed in storerooms for the last 100 years. The written guide to the museum from the year 1956 mentions Egyptian artefacts in the *Natural History and Antiquities Gallery* without presenting images as would be expected from a catalogue.²⁵ Emphasis was laid on the Southey bequest which forms the largest part of the collection.²⁶ Neither the public nor Egyptologists had seen the full range of objects. Many of them were forgotten in boxes in the store rooms.

Forgetting is a process often seen in museums, especially small museums. Curators, scholars and the public alike are dealing with (archaeological) objects whose provenances are absent. Such artefacts are often called *unprovenanced*. Their source where they have been found or point of origin is known. In discussion about ethical implication of looting of antiquities and illicit trade, the term unprovenanced objects is often used synonymously for looted artefacts. Even I refer here to objects which have come to the museum about 100 years ago and we can exclude the latter, we still do not know the history of these objects. This is cut off by displacing them from their point of origin – in this particular case from Egypt to West Wales. This often leads to objects being misplaced in the museum which furthers the danger of being forgotten or misinterpreted despite the fact that one is made to believe that “museums are forever” or, in other words, that museums themselves and their contents are timeless and permanent.²⁷ However, it does not have to come to a disaster such as the fire in Rio de Janeiro’s (Brazil) 200-year-old Museu Nacional in September 2018 to realise that museum objects or even whole collections disappear. The world of museum studies has even a specific term for this phenomenon – *museum taphonomy*.²⁸ It seems contradictory that one pleads against forgetting in times when deliberate *de-growing of museums* is discussed.²⁹ However, regional museums face different challenges and responsibilities while “facing new

²⁵ County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, “What to see” at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery. (Merthyr Tydfil, 1956), p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁷ S. Lubar et al., ‘Lost Museums’ *Museum History Journal*, 10 (2017) 1, pp. 1-14.

²⁸ C.S. Fowler and D.D. Fowler, ‘Formation processes of ethnographic collections: Examples from the Great Basin of Western North America.’, in W. D. Kingery (ed.), *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies* (Washington DC, 1996), pp. 129–144.

²⁹ J. Morgan and S. Macdonald, ‘De-growing museum collections for new heritage futures’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1530289>.

heritage futures”.³⁰ Before deciding to de-grow museums – or parallel to this decision – museum staff need to fulfil their obligations to care for their museum collections in order to enable the future to know about the past, our present and themselves.³¹ This can sometimes simply mean re-discovering forgotten or neglected parts of their collections and making them accessible to audiences in order to weed out and make space. The *Museum of Lies* presented below is an example of the importance of taking objects out of storage.³² This postulated idea for contemporary material culture³³ is even more applicable when dealing with neglected ancient artefacts, even the handling of or dealing with these objects should be different insofar as this could be guided by the idea of rediscovery and curiosity.

As mentioned above, the overall Cyfarthfa project, including the annual exhibition with the *Museum of Lies*, aims to bring objects back to life by creating different simultaneous types of cultural representations. These representations include academic outputs,³⁴ annual Egyptological exhibitions through pop-up exhibitions outside the retaining museum, catalogues, story-telling, and the *Museum of Lies* exhibit. The latter includes artworks which are incorporated into the exhibition alongside objects. These versions not only aim for traditional audiences such as academics or visitors, but are also used for teaching in school curricula and for modules in the Higher Education sector. These approaches are employed to promote the interactive element of objects; the process of doing so ultimately shedding light on our perception and understanding of them. We feel them, feel better about them and feel better with them, they become ‘our favourite thing’³⁵. Tangible objects and our intangible ideas and feelings will be un-earthed when

³⁰ Ibid., p. [1].

³¹ M.A. Mares, ‘The Moral Obligations Incumbent upon Institutions, Administrators and Directors in Maintaining and Caring for Museum Collections,’ in H. H. Genoways (ed.) *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century* (Lanham, 2006), p. 96.

³² S. Brennan, ‘Making Room by Letting Go’, *Preservation Nation*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Blog, August 12, 2014, <http://blog.preservationleadershipforum.org/2014/08/12/collections-making-room-by-lettinggo/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ K. Zinn, ‘Object Biographies’, pp. 693-700; K. Zinn, ‘Lacklustre offering plates? Symbolic food consumption, ritual, and representations in ancient Egyptian funerary culture’, in L. Steel and K. Zinn (eds.), *Exploring the Materiality of Food 'Stuffs': Transformations, symbolic consumption and embodiments*. (London, 2017), pp. 205-225; K. Elliott, ‘A happy ancient Egyptian family? The bronze statuettes of Osiris, Horus, and Isis (Cyfarthfa Castle, Merthyr Tydfil 1697.004, 1699.004, 1705.004)’ *The Student Researcher, Journal of Undergraduate Research University of Wales Trinity Saint David*, 3 (2014) 1, pp. 7-18.

³⁵ This emphatic approach follows loosely I. Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Chichester, 2012). For the term of the “favourite thing” please see Posterpresentation “Playing around with a few of your favourite things – forgotten Egyptian objects, lost provenance and the *Museum of Lies*”; British Museum, ‘Displaying Egypt’, Annual Egyptological Colloquium, July 19-20, 2018.

we create concepts which will help us to transform objects which are non-cared for and therefore not appreciated. As we are connected and entangled with them through interaction and attachment, it is important to understand that humans depend on things in the same way as things depend on humans.³⁶ Taking this concept together with the idea of the shifting social identities of objects, it can be postulated that they are not connected to just their original setting, but also to any new habitat, including the current one they inhabit.³⁷ This can be taken further to suggest that these objects can be brought into self-created habitats within the 'storied world' of the 21st century AD.³⁸ Creating such stories defies the conundrum of a fixed space and time and helps visitors and scholars alike to remember, research and understand objects in all phases of their life cycle.

ENCHANTED AND CHARISMATIC OBJECTS

Every year, Cyfarthfa Castle Museum loans 5-10 artefacts to UWTSO's Lampeter campus. Studying these objects is not only part of staff research projects but is also incorporated into the teaching process in order to give students first-hand research experience. This part of the process centres mainly on the traditional Egyptological object biography. On a voluntary basis and outside of the syllabus, students can participate in the preparation of annual exhibitions for the public around Lampeter including workshops for local schools, home-schooled children and several societies in Lampeter. In this way they learn practical skills in writing catalogue entries, curating, teaching in schools and taking part in outreach. The combination of these activities with the fact that the objects are unprovenanced creates a need for gap filling where the incorporation of *story-telling* fits into the framework.

Story-telling techniques and public engagement have previously been used in the field of science,³⁹ but the humanities and social sciences took longer to engage.⁴⁰ These projects take a new spin on 'creative imagination' which was used by past Egyptologists

³⁶ Hodder, *Entangled*; I. Hodder, *Studies in Human-Thing Entanglement*, 2016. last updated February 18, 2019, <http://www.ian-hodder.com/books/studies-human-thing-entanglement>.

³⁷ T. Insoll (ed.), *The Archaeology of Identities: A Reader* (Abingdon, 2007).

³⁸ T. Ingold, *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 141-176.

³⁹ Wellcome Trust, 'Telling Stories: how the Public can engage with Science: Bangalore 2009 Conference Report'. Published 2009. https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtx062632_0.pdf.

⁴⁰ See projects like E. Kavanagh, *Layers in the Landscape*. <http://www.geomythkavanagh.com/layers-in-the-landscape> or the recent discussion at TAG Chester 2018 (TAG Deva: 40th Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference, 17th-19th December 2018, session *Creative Frontiers* – organisers: Erin Kavanagh and Eloise Gouvier - and *Applying Theory: An Archaeopoetic Installation – Exhibition* – E. Kavanagh).

to fill gaps with educated guesses. By deliberately creating different counter narratives in addition to the expected traditional object biography which are then set in relation to each other, one can understand all layers inherent to the objects.⁴¹ Creating stories delivers a narrative beyond the Egyptological analysis and initiates a bond between the storyteller(s) – which in this case includes Egyptologists and students of Egyptology– and their audience via the object. Researchers, audiences and objects engage with each other by using academic knowledge to create new settings. The newly formed / altered narrative is a more embracing biography refocused on the object. Story-telling and activities related to objects of antiquity from outside of academic disciplines are often dismissed by professional academia. However, it is important to consider the way that we understand these objects. By being serious about the frivolous and frivolous about the serious, individuals can interact with the past on a deeply personal level. This helps to create *charismatic objects*⁴² due to the shared emotional character of both the storytelling process and what it imbues into the object. This term, applied originally to a Buddha statue, is transferable due to the objects discussed gaining ‘unusual qualities of the material object itself, beyond the details of its age, value and “art-historical” significance, which demand a response from those humans who encounter it face to face’.⁴³ Narratives highlight the culture-bearing qualities of objects by showcasing their enchantment to a particular culture/audience.

My first encounter of thinking about the emotive power of objects started by accident during research on a Graeco-Roman plaster burial mask.⁴⁴ When preparing the catalogue for the exhibition *Scarabs and Dragons: A taste of Ancient Egypt in Lampeter*,⁴⁵ the author experimented with ways to photograph the objects and did so by setting archaeological photographs against more atmospheric ones (Fig. 1 and 2). The latter resonated with the visitors to the exhibition and was marked as a highlight. As reason for this choice, visitors named the lightening in the photo as well as the fact that the mask was half hidden behind the tissue paper and stated that this created a mysterious atmosphere. Some visitors did

⁴¹ As such I follow the idea raised by Renfrew and Bahn: “Archaeology is partly the discovery of the treasures of the past, partly the meticulous work of the scientific analyst, partly the exercise of the creative imagination.” (C. Renfrew and P. Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories and Methods in Practice* (London, 2000), p. 11.

⁴² C. Wingfield, ‘Touching the Buddha: encounters with a charismatic object’, in S. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London, 2010).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴⁴ CCM 331.004. Plaster, Roman Period, 1st or 2nd Century AD.

⁴⁵ Exhibition, 2012, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, UWTSO.

not recognise the real mask in the exhibition and asked for the more interesting and enigmatic one.



Figure 1 “archaeological photograph”. CCM 331.004, © Steven Thomas.



Figure 2 “atmospheric photograph”. CCM 331.004, © Katharina Zinn.

The aforementioned approach was piloted in a teaching module where a small offering dish⁴⁶ was examined under very diverse yet complementing angles. The object in question was an example of a red coarse ware pottery bowl made from Nile silt, 5cm in diameter and 1.4cm high. The miniature bowl is hand moulded with a level base. It is well preserved, except for some areas of the rim which are broken away. As the students had

⁴⁶ CCM 308.004, for an academic discussion of this dish see Zinn, ‘Lacklustre offering plates?’, pp. 205-225.

dubbed this object as boring and nobody wanted to work on it, I set it as my aim to raise their interest by creating a whole module around that object. Some of the sessions were pre-dominantly Egyptological/archaeological in nature (excavations, sites, dating issues etc.), while others focused on making a replica dish, thinking about the physical engagement with the material and the emerging form in the process of making, exploring ways to imbue additional layers of meaning by placing the dish in certain situations/environments, writing hieroglyphs on it and so forth. During the final session, we talked about an execration ritual in which one would write the name of an enemy / adversary on the bowl before smashing it.

I knew I had succeeded in giving the object meaning and building up an emotional response towards it when the students “celebrated” their dishes before shattering them. They photographed their objects in particular aesthetically-pleasing settings and placed an offering on it. As it was the week before Easter, they chose little chocolate Easter eggs (Fig. 3). This created a symbiosis between the ancient Egyptian functionality and a modern setting which they could all relate to. It was the perfect transition of the ancient Egyptian object we had started with into the present world. This translation process of bringing meaning to an object created a situation in which the lifeless thing had become part of the identity of the students. Their emotional response removed the initial classification of the objects as *boring*.



Figure 3: “Easter eggs and execration ritual”. CCM 308.004, © Steven Thomas (archaeological photograph) and Katharina Zinn.

This was not only a personal outcome for the participating students: they were also able to communicate a sense of being entangled with and enchanted by the dish in the extra-curricular activities connected with the annual exhibition. When teaching sessions to school children as part of the Welsh curriculum in Religious Education, having workshops with home-educated children or delivering public talks, all students were able to communicate their stories to an audience and gain their interest. This seemingly lacklustre object became entangled in a variety of community events from teaching to the Lampeter Food Festival. The dish was included in the accompanying academic programme *Food for Thought*⁴⁷ which connected the offering plate with cooking activities that followed recipes inspired by ancient Egypt, sharing the food with the audience afterwards. The unprovenanced offering dish was able to act as a tool of learning in a variety of ways for modern audiences finding a new step in its life-cycle and usefulness in current culture.

THE MUSEUM OF LIES

Having come to the realisation about charismatic/enchanting objects through teaching and thinking creatively, it was not difficult to coin the *Museum of Lies*. This sub-project uses some already-existing partners (local schools, students of adjacent programmes and local artists) to develop strategic project deliverables. Collecting fictional stories inspired by the objects aim to create new tools for a successful process of unpacking the collection and assist therefore the overall Cyfarthfa Castle project.

The first *Museum of Lies* was set out as a project to accompany the 2017 exhibition *The Materiality of the Ancient Egyptian Afterlife*.⁴⁸ Partners in this project were the pupils of Ysgol Bro Pedr school, Lampeter⁴⁹ who wrote phenomenal and funny short stories which were inspired by the objects. In the workshops organised for the collection of stories, I presented photographs of the artefacts and deliberately withheld information about the objects. The students could choose the object they found either most appealing or most boring. While they were writing, I delivered further details about the objects not seen in the images and I answered any questions that they raised. Most of the pupils were in

⁴⁷ Food for Thought / Rhywbeth I Gnoi Cil Drosto, 25 July 2015, UWTSD, Lampeter, session: Eat like an Egyptian / Bwyta fel Eifftiwr (Katharina Zinn).

⁴⁸ Exhibition, 2017, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, UWTSD.

⁴⁹ I would like to thank Ysgol Bro Pedr, Lampeter for the support, especially to Year 10 English (academic year 2016/17) and their teacher Ms Phillips.

agreement that they wanted to refrain from knowing too much of the Egyptological explanations for the objects. The resulting narratives were fictional and deliberately imaginative stories inspired by the items. The pupils' enthusiasm and amazement surrounding the objects led them to invent the most incredibly crazy, funny and peculiar "untruths".

One pupil's observation of an incompletely preserved, yet beautifully made headrest of elegant proportions (Fig. 4)⁵⁰ inspired the following story:

How much longer do we have to use these for? I think I've made it really clear that I don't like them, especially since my brother and I broke off the stem and used it as a Boomerang. I don't think anyone likes them, Cindy broke the stem of hers and used it as a headband to hold her hair back! Sleeping on concrete is bad enough without these stiff headrests. My back is so, so sore. At least the aliens are coming tomorrow to help build the pyramids. Even Tupac is coming to help! I wonder if he'll bring Biggie? ⁵¹

These two co-writers wanted to know the purpose of this object, but nothing else. What is unfortunately impossible to replicate here is the performance of this story during the workshop which catapulted this imaginative and "wonderfully bonkers"⁵² narrative into the realm of potential truth through its performative-narrative style.⁵³ This extra dimension was re-created when this story was exhibited together with the object itself using images of headrests and the unique catalogue entry written by the students.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ CCM189.996; K. Zinn, 'Did you sleep well on your headrest? – Anthropological Perspectives on an Ancient Egyptian Implement', *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*, 17 (2018), pp. 203–204.

⁵¹ Written by Chloe George and Nia Evans.

⁵² Oral feedback of a visitor to the exhibition.

⁵³ I was reminded of this moment when watching the film/documentary *Innocence of Memories*.

⁵⁴ K. Zinn (ed.), *The Materiality of the Ancient Egyptian Afterlife: Catalogue of 2017* (Lampeter, 2017), pp. 6–10. Object analysis by Bethan Phillips and Olivia Berry, sketch by Leon Collie.



Figure 4 CCM 189.996, © Steven Thomas.

The pupils' perspective of an ancient object coupled with Egyptological and archaeological understanding add to the burgeoning dimension of the object's history. Looking at the Egyptological explanation, headrests are implements on which one person was able to sleep. The shape of this particular headrest examined by the students was so common and timeless, used during several periods of the Egyptian history, that it is nearly impossible to date. Only existing archaeological context or known provenance would help narrow down the date. None of these were available with this artefact. Being completely unprovenanced is typical for objects which entered Western collections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Taking all this into account, the easiest way to interest audiences in this curious piece of wood would be via a recreation of its original *Sitz im Leben* – the original context⁵⁵ – in order to replace the lost contextual information. This is a common approach when dealing with the material culture of past civilisations in museums. In our exhibitions, this was achieved by the catalogue entry which compared this object to similar existing ones. However, this was not thought to be sufficient, so the headrest was combined with experimental and experiential archaeology. Together with a skilled carpenter,⁵⁶ a replica was crafted enabling the experience of sleeping on a

⁵⁵ Zinn, 'Did you sleep well on your headrest', pp. 207–209.

⁵⁶ I would like to thank Steve Parsons for making the replica following without hesitation and in a trial and error procedure all my requests in regard to material, form and size.

headrest (Fig. 5). This replica was then used for the outreach programmes as part of the exhibition.



Figure 5 “Replica and sleeping on a headrest”. © Katharina Zinn.

Leading up to the 2018 exhibition,⁵⁷ I decided to run the creative writing workshops again for years 10 and 11 (aged between 14 and 16) to produce alternative, yet complementing, narratives of objects. In addition, I approached local artist Julie Davis who agreed to take part in the project by creating an artistic narrative for which she chose the two Sokar birds⁵⁸ as inspiration for a triptych titled *Into the Light* (Fig. 6). She artistically captured many of the notions behind the representations of the funerary god Sokar⁵⁹ though being unfamiliar with Egyptological scholarship. The triptych features three panels with the actual object⁶⁰ painted on the left (as seen from the viewer), the capture of the biological bird species on the right and a scene which gave the triptych its name (a bird having come to life flying out of a dark space into the light) in the middle panel. The latter, as well as the idea to use recycled wood as the material on which to

⁵⁷ *"I have flown up in primeval time" – Ancient Egyptian Funerary Beliefs*. Exhibition, 2018, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, UWTSD.

⁵⁸ Sokar Bird (large, painted) – CCM 1694.004, Sokar Bird (small) – CCM 1681.004.

⁵⁹ R. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of ancient Egypt* (New York, 2003), pp. 209-211.

⁶⁰ Sokar Bird (large, painted) – CCM 1694.004.

paint, captures the ancient Egyptian idea of rebirth and overcoming death.⁶¹ Further narratives on the Sokar birds were provided in different formats including a catalogue entry,⁶² research scrapbooks illustrating the imaginative research process of the students as part of the group, workshops, and the short stories written by the pupils of Ysgol Bro Pedr. From the collection of short stories in the supplementary booklet "Museum of Lies 2018", the following emphasises the unique element of a pupil's narrative about the Sokar bird:

It's been a long distressing Sunday, full of working and never ending cleaning. The dog has been hysterically hyped since sunrise this morning. At about 6:20 Bobster, the dog, was driving me insane and I thought he needed an adventurous walk. He was trailing me along the tall straight grass by pulling me through to the other side. He was drastic to adventure the woods! We had not been for an exercise all day, so here we go.

Bobster tiptoed across the bridal path and started nosing in a hill of red leaves. He dug and stared when he saw a wooden detailed bird. I plunged down and tried working out what the little creature was. I went and picked it up before it flew off and was unseen.

A little wooden bird which turned into being colourful and alive.⁶³

In the exhibition, I included the objects, triptych, the above quoted short story, a well-illustrated research scrapbooks in which the students documented their research progress, detailed photographs, and a modern artistic take on a Sokar Bird created by one of the students (Fig. 7). The ancient Egyptian objects of antiquity have and continue to inspire art, performative and written narratives. These part truths of modern cultural interpretation contribute to the understanding of the objects and reveal their emotive character. The Sokar birds' exhibition from the *Museum of Lies* was the best received exhibit attracting a long staying audience who expressed their enjoyment of the exhibition.

⁶¹ For an interview with the artist which highlights the artistic process see 'Museum of Lies, Julie Davis' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vz5yxPYPTU8&feature=youtu.be>. (Interview conducted by UWTS Technology Enhanced Learning).

⁶² K. Zinn (ed.), *"I have flown up in primeval time" – Ancient Egyptian Funerary Beliefs: Catalogue of the Special Exhibition 2018*. (Lampeter, 2018), pp. 16-21. *Sokar Bird (painted)* written by Molly Gogh; *Sokar Bird (small)* by Hannah Pickering.

⁶³ Anonymous submission (Special Exhibition 2018: *I have flown up in primeval time" – Ancient Egyptian Funerary Beliefs*).



Figure 6: "Into the Light". Julie Davis, 2018. (Triptych: oil/acrylic on wooden panels), © Katharina Zinn.



Figure 7: "Exhibiting the Sokar Birds". CCM 1694.004 and CCM 1681.004, © Katharina Zinn.

Following this line of thought, and accepting artefacts as being constantly negotiated through interaction in both their material and intangible characteristics,⁶⁴ these narrated, yet unprovenanced objects deliver an advance in knowledge within and beyond Egyptology. This is happening from un-orthodox angles by the inclusion of narratives

⁶⁴ S. Knell, 'The intangibility of things', in S.H. Dudley (ed.), *Museum Objects: Experiencing the Properties of Things* (London, 2012), p. 327.

rarely used in an academic discipline specific or even interdisciplinary object biography. In addition to the advance in knowledge, this kind of story-telling fosters discussion with new audiences. Both sides connect modern sensibilities with the past. In so doing, objects make sense of the past by helping audiences to appreciate and understand what could have been and what was happening, and work with both time and space. Telling lies to find the truth therefore takes the remoteness of the past away and creates a sense of place for both the objects and (potential) audiences.

INSPIRATION IS EVERYWHERE

As previously mentioned above, two museum projects provided the underlying idea for the above outlined activities: the *Lügenmuseum* in Radebeul, Germany (formerly in Gantikow, developed from the *Kunsthaus Babe*)⁶⁵ as well as Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence* – both as a novel and museum as well as the follow-up documentary *The Innocence of Memories*.⁶⁶ Both museums are 'using objects to explore the world'.⁶⁷

Founded in 1989 by Reinhard Zabka, the *Lügenmuseum* promotes the idea that an interesting and unknown collection of things – similar to a cabinet of curiosities – revives the creativity of visitors, playing with their associations and enabling communications. Materials and objects, classified as rubbish to be discarded, receive a new and meaningful life when they are included in larger themes circling around change, movement and migration. To achieve this, Zabka chose constellations of objects which tell lies in order to serve the truth.⁶⁸ Even the history of the museum starts with a fairy tale or legend. Zabka attributed the foundation of the *Lügenmuseum* to the half-fictional character Emma von Hohenbüssow⁶⁹ in the year 1884 when she started her collection of non-existent items such as a hole of Mozart's Magic Flute, the cut-off ear of Vincent van Gogh and

⁶⁵ Lügenmuseum, *Lügenmuseum* and the museum's website <https://luegenmuseum.de/>.

⁶⁶ Pamuk, *The Innocence of Objects* and the museum's website <https://masumiyetmuzesi-en.myshopio.com/>.

⁶⁷ O. Pamuk, *The Innocence of Memories: Screenplay* (London, 2018), p. 69

⁶⁸ Lügenmuseum, *Lügenmuseum*, p. 16.

⁶⁹ In my interpretation, this character is to be seen as a parallel to the half fictional and half historic figure of Baron von Münchhausen. German novelist Rudolf Erich Raspe created in 1785 the fictional character of a German nobleman as the main protagonist of his book "Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia" written in the first person. The character is loosely based on Hieronymus Karl Friedrich, Freiherr von Münchhausen replicating some of his embellishing reports on his military career. Outside Germany this person is mainly known as the eponym of the factitious mental disorder called Munchausen Syndrome. Reinhard Zabka in his capacity as director of the Lügenmuseum calls himself the Lügenbaron (Baron of Lies), one of the epithets used by Münchhausen.

similar things. At one point the items were said to be lost and reappeared miraculously in the 1980s as relics of happy times.

Later, added installations dealt with the social situation that existed in East Germany before 1989, the feelings and events during the re-unification of Germany and explanations of seemingly hopeless or unwinnable situations. Harsh reality is countered with laughter and winking following the museum's musing and equally amusing motto: "Es gibt Lügen, da hört der Spaß auf. Es gibt Lügen, da fängt der Spaß an,"⁷⁰ This wordplay, which translates as "There are lies where the fun stops. There are lies where the fun begins",⁷¹ refers to the dual nature of lies. Even lying is a form of deception, but this does not always involve bad intention. Deceit in the sense of misleading communication can be used as strategic measure to achieve a certain goal. If this goal is to avoid hurting someone's feelings or even protect them, then we speak of a white lie. In a museum setting lies as communicated information which the creator know not to be true can be used to highlight objects.

This museum, whose development I followed since the 1990s (shortly after their move from the *Kunsthause Babe* to Gantikow) not only lends its name to the project talked about here, but also reveals the dangers, as well as the chances, that exist in the forgetting of things, their original settings and connected cultural moments. Beyond that, it has encouraged me to approach what might appear as frivolous amusement as serious possibilities of using academic knowledge to create a new setting with new narratives or object biographies which then help to re-focus on the object in question.

A second line of inspiration and encouragement comes from the specific planned setup of Orhan Pamuk's *Museum of Innocence*. The Museum of Innocence is not only a fictional and encyclopaedic novel, as well as a physical museum, it was also planned with this duality from the onset. The novel and the museum follow a structure inspired by objects, places and concepts.⁷² The objects that illustrate the narrative of the novel were bought in junk shops around the area where the museum is currently situated. The museum house is featured as the living place of the main protagonists in the novel. Due to the close relationship of place, objects and ideas, the novel illustrates the real and intangible history of Istanbul based on actual and tangible objects for which fictional

⁷⁰ Lügenmuseum, 'Home,' *Lügenmuseum*, <https://luegenmuseum.de/>.

⁷¹ Trans. K. Zinn.

⁷² Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*, p. 15.

narratives are told. Pamuk's museum is inspired by small Turkish house museums collected by 'hoarders' who tried to preserve the old Istanbul in dignity as 'eternally patient guardians of a community's sacred relics, symbols, and banners'.⁷³ Moving away from the hopelessness he felt with these house museums, Pamuk entered the past by joyfully and optimistically telling challenging stories through arranging objects 'with love and care.'⁷⁴

INSTEAD OF A SUMMARY – CREATING TRUTH

My prince⁷⁵ was not going to be real. But because he was going to display and describe real objects in a museum, visitors would soon [be] persuaded that he was real, just as they would realize with amazement that Kemal is a real person. I wanted to collect and exhibit the 'real' objects of a fictional story in a museum and write a novel based on these objects.⁷⁶

I end this paper with one statement and one question: *Reception comes in many disguises and who decides what is truth?*

Orhan Pamuk's *Modest manifesto for museums* states that we had 'epics, representation, monuments, histories, nations, groups and team[s], large and expensive'.⁷⁷ We now need 'novels, expression, homes, stories, persons, individuals, small and cheap'."⁷⁸ I use this way of thinking to formulate a manifesto for objects that require:

- Stories
- Attention
- Awareness for materiality
- Identity (receiving and giving)
- Any scale

Unprovenanced objects are *non-compliant things*⁷⁹ and need much more of the above mentioned in order to reveal their strength and full emotive power. Stories give attention

⁷³ Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*, p. 50.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁵ His Imperial Highness Prince Ali Vâsib, see Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. [57].

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. [57].

⁷⁹ C. Dorsett, 'Things and Theories: The unstable Presence of Exhibited Objects', in S. Dudley et al., *The Thing about Museums: Objects and Experiences, Representation and Contestation* (London, 2012), pp. 102.

and identity, heightening the awareness of materiality. These stories do not have to be true in an academic, intradisciplinary or interdisciplinary sense, but they need to be true or accurate in the realisation of the potential inherent to these artefacts and what advancement that they can provide in the understanding of the world that they create. In this way, 'lies' create different truths for everyone reading, watching and hearing them. All of these part-truths create the understanding of the object, its *Sitz im Leben* in the past and present and therefore its potential for the future.

As mentioned before, the project of the *Museum of Lies* is work in progress. When looking to the future – then I ask myself what to do with the *lies*? The experiences of the last three years (2017-2019) are encouraging, revealing and raising an interesting debate, yet they are still too anecdotal in terms of evidence of effectiveness and detailed evaluation. Most of the feedback received was passing comments in unscheduled discussion. Capturing visitor responses and their strategic interpretation would need to be increased after this first testing phase. One particular point to discuss with the wider audience would be the fact if they understand how the different parts of the exhibition are playing with the truth. Even the exhibition design clearly states what is archaeological truth and fictional truth. It would be interesting to discuss the liminal spaces in-between: where do the visitors draw the line between one and the other?

However, this project is deliberately slowly delivered and set out to use experiences from one year to steer the next. This patient perseverance is vital when working with local museums and audiences as we are touching sensitive areas of identity proving the current discourse that “museums are not neutral”.⁸⁰

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⁸⁰ For a short introduction and reading, see L.T. Autry, T. Raiford and M. Murawski ‘Museums Are Not Neutral’. <https://artstuffmatters.wordpress.com/museums-are-not-neutral/>.

previously. And last – but definitely not least – my thanks goes to the editors of this special issue who made the editing process an enjoyable academic discussion.

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Reviews

Searching for the Lost Tombs of Egypt by Chris Naunton. Thames and Hudson, 2018, 288 pp. ISBN: 978-0-500-05199-3, Hardback, £19.95

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It seems that every month, there is a new discovery in Egypt that makes headlines worldwide thus throwing the subject of Egyptology into sharp relief. At the time of writing this review, a Ptolemaic burial has been discovered at Tuna el-Gebel in February 2019, and in December 2018 a 5th Dynasty tomb was uncovered at Saqqara. Chris Naunton's book does much to encourage the excitement that these discoveries bring with them but sets it firmly within the realm of good scientific practice. In this way he skilfully navigates the various expectations a range of readers have on the concept of Ancient Egypt. Beginning with the Old Kingdom and the search for the tomb of Imhotep, the book takes readers through an array of famous names across Egyptian history including the Amarna royals and Cleopatra VII. The text assumes no previous knowledge of the history of Egypt or of Egyptology itself and includes useful reference points such as maps and king lists at the back of the book. The introduction includes some helpful explanations of the more complex aspects of Egyptology that may cause confusion to non-specialists, particularly with regards to the Dynastic chronology, the conventions regarding Pharaoh's names and the official number designations of tombs in key sites such as the Valley of the Kings. The tone of the book is also set here when Naunton shares a personal anecdote from 2006 when he was invited to visit KV 63 before the objects were removed. The awe the sight inspired in Naunton and his enthusiasm for his subject is keenly felt within the book's narrative of discoveries and theories, many of which are ongoing. Indeed, the book asks not only if there are still tombs to be found, which is almost certainly true, but whether archaeologists have found some of these famous tombs already.

The chapters are ordered chronologically following a basic, effective structure. The tomb or tombs are introduced with a brief contextualisation of their time and place within Egyptian history wherein follows a discussion of the excavations and efforts to locate them. As noted above, the book is primarily interested in the great names of

Egyptian history whose tombs have not (yet?) been found. Accordingly, the chapters deal with Imhotep, Amenhotep I, The Amarna royals, Herihor, a survey of Third Intermediate royal tombs, Alexander the Great and Cleopatra VII. The brief contextualisation is of a suitable length and detail for non-specialist readers to access an understanding of an excavation without losing interest in the initial focus of the chapter. Naunton's easy, narrative style summarises the episodes of complicated history that he covers into a compelling read particularly in chapters three, six and seven which deal with the Amarna Royals, Cleopatra VII and Alexander the Great. The book features 107 photos and diagrams which serve to anchor Naunton's descriptions and illuminates them to the reader. Included are photos of the author investigating coffins in the Egyptian Museum alongside old excavation photos and survey photos of the sites where Egyptian cities, such as Sais, once stood, demonstrating the drastic difference in the landscape over the centuries.

Generally, the structure of the chapters works well. However, in some places the relevance of passages is not immediately clear to the reader. For example, when discussing the transitional period of the 17th Dynasty into the 18th in chapter two, Naunton describes Amenhotep I's place in history before taking the reader all the way back to 'the evolution of the Egyptian pyramid' in the 3rd Dynasty. This aside is intended to explain the process by which Pharaohs went from 'advertising' their burial place with grand monuments in favour of a secretive burial within the Valley of the Kings. However, to the unfamiliar, a six-page digression may be too much on this point. It does serve as a good overview of the main period's funerary developments and it is certainly needed for context, but its placement in the text seems discordant and takes readers out of the initial line of thought.

In its survey of these tombs, Naunton does not ignore more speculative claims, but instead gives them careful consideration and explains the potential flaws with their hypothesis. In chapter seven Naunton considers the claims of Kathleen Martínez who has been working on a theory that sees Cleopatra and Anthony buried inside the temple of Taposiris Magna. This work was the subject of a documentary on Channel 4 and received much media attention lending it an air of credibility which is why Naunton deems it worthy of study here. However, as Naunton points out Ms. Martínez is not archaeologically trained herself and much of her reasoning for this location, as a place of

royal burial, is circumstantial and there has yet to be significant evidence to support it, despite long running investigations.

As if in testament to just how quickly Egyptology can re-write the history books, in chapter three Naunton makes references to Dr. Nicholas Reeves claim of a concealed chamber in the antechamber of Tutankhamun's tomb. At the time Naunton was writing, this was still unconfirmed despite two rounds of scans by research teams. In May 2018, it was announced, on behalf of Mostafa Waziri, that the scans conducted by the Polytechnic University of Turin revealed no further chambers.

Searching for the Lost Tombs of Egypt is a joyous book that has at its heart a love for ancient Egyptian history and a desire to share that with people. Naunton makes pains throughout to enable readers not only to learn about his subject, with an extensive bibliography included at the back, but also to share in it, to decide for themselves what they think regarding some of the most famous faces of the ancient world and their final resting places. It is unpretentious but never belittling. Naunton balances between popular narratives and current research to provide a thoroughly enjoyable book

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